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HISTORY AND STORIES OF THE TENNESSEE VALLEY



Tallulah Bankhead, Huntsville's “Dahling”

As a young girl, Tallulah was pudgy and fair, while her older sister Eugenia was slim and very pretty. Because of this Tallulah did everything she could think of to get more attention; running around the house doing cartwheels, singing and reciting literature, throwing tantrums and rolling around on the floor.

She would hold her breath until her face turned blue, when her grandmother would threaten to throw a bucket of cold water on her to calm her down.

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Tallulah Bankhead, Huntsville's "Dahling"

Actress Tallulah Bankhead was an enigma to many people. But to others there was no mystery at all about her. She was scandalous, sexually provocative, and the epitome of everything about which the preachers raved from their pulpits.

Tallulah Brockman Bankhead was born on January 31, 1902 in an apartment in the Schiffman Building on the southeast square of Huntsville. Her mother, Ada, was a native of Mississippi and was already engaged to another man when she met William Bankhead on a trip to Huntsville, Alabama to shop for a wedding dress. Will and Ada fell in love immediately and following a whirlwind romance, married on January 31, 1900 in Memphis, Tennessee. They returned to Huntsville and lived in an apartment in the Schiffman Building.

Their first child was a girl by the name of Ada Eugenia born in 1901. The following year Tallulah was born, on the couple's anniversary. Tragically, her mother Ada died tragically of blood poisoning when Tallulah

was just 3 weeks old. On her deathbed, she told Will's sister to "take care of Eugenia, Tallulah will always be able to take care of herself."

In a macabre, yet touching, ceremony, Tallulah was christened beside her mother's casket and given the name of her grandmother. Years later, when Tallulah became interested in spiritualism, she claimed to have memories of being held over the casket while being sprinkled with water.

Immediately after the christening, Tallulah and her sister were bundled up and carried to their grandparent's home. Her father, Will, remained in Huntsville where he continued to practice law. He was completely devastated by his young bride's untimely death and began drinking staggering amounts of moonshine whiskey. Many contemporary accounts of that day describe William Bankhead as "a town drunk," and an "alcoholic banister." He remained in Huntsville but sent his young daughters to Sunset, his parent's home in Jasper, Alabama. The girls would divide their time between Sunset and their aunt Marie Owen's home in Montgomery, Alabama.

As a young girl, Tallulah was pudgy and fair, while the older sister Eugenia was slim and very pretty. Because of this Tallulah did everything she could think of to get more attention; running around the house doing cartwheels, singing and reciting

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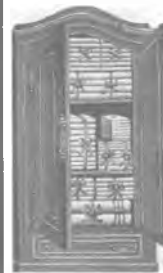
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literature, throwing tantrums and rolling around on the floor. She would hold her breath until her face turned blue, when her grandmother would threaten to throw a bucket of cold water on her to calm her down.

Tallulah discovered at an early age that theatrics were a great outlet for gaining the attention she craved. She had a gift for mimicry and entertained her classmates by imitating the school teachers. She could memorize poems and plays and recite them with much drama. She was happiest when all eyes were upon her.

The sisters' grandmother was determined to make proper southern ladies out of the girls, but it was obvious both were quickly becoming a handful. Will proposed enrolling them in a convent school to help tame them. In 1912, both girls were enrolled at the Convent of the Sacred Heart in Manhattanville, NY. It was the only boarding school they could find that would take girls as young as ten.

Tallulah absolutely hated the school but her family was very impressed by her new manners. From then on they were enrolled in a series of boarding schools, as Will's career took

him to Washington, D.C.

Tallulah remained with her grandparents and eventually moved to Washington, D.C., where her grandfather was still a member of Congress. In 1917, her father joined her after being elected to the U.S. Senate, an office he had sought previously but had been soundly defeated. His opponent at that time had charged that Will Bankhead "was not only a drunk, but an unrepentant drunk who chose to educate his daughters outside the glorious South!"

Of course, it was widely accepted that the success of Will's election was largely through the efforts of his father, who had given up on his son making a go of it in private business.

In her autobiography, Bankhead claimed that her "first performance" was witnessed by none other than the Wright brothers, Orvill and Wilbur. Her Aunt Marie gave the famous brothers a party at her home near Montgomery, Alabama, in which the guests were asked to entertain. "I won the prize for the top performance, with an imitation of my kindergarten teacher," Bankhead wrote. The judges were the Wright brothers.

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Tallulah was fifteen years old when she suddenly matured into a beautiful young lady, while her sister Eugenia, at sixteen, was getting married. That summer in 1917, Tallulah, as a lark, entered a contest which Picture-Play Magazine was sponsoring. Entrants were invited to fill out short questionnaires and submit recent photographs of themselves. The winner was to receive a part as an extra in a motion picture being produced by Frank Powell, a well-known producer of the day.

Several months later, Tallulah, while visiting the neighborhood candy store, picked up a copy of the magazine. Idly flipping through the issue she was shocked to see her photograph. She was one of the winners.

Unfortunately, after hastily reading the article, she discovered that she had forgotten to include her name and address on the entry form. The magazine was now referring to her as the beautiful "Mystery Woman" and asking that she contact the magazine. Also upsetting was the fact that numerous other women had stepped forth claiming to be the mystery woman whose picture was in the magazine.

A letter from Senator Bankhead, on senatorial stationery, quickly cleared up the misunderstanding, but now the family was faced with another problem. Tallulah was only fifteen years old - should she be allowed to go to New York to perform in the play? She was desperate to go. Her father knew that there would be no peace for anyone until he gave permission for her to go, so he agreed on the condition that her aunt serve as a chaperone, a stipulation to which Tallulah gladly agreed.

Sad to say, upon their arrival in New York, it was learned the magazine had no intentions of living up to the terms of the contest. Again, a few letters from Senator Bankhead and the threat of a government investigation helped smooth matters. Tallulah was hired for three weeks with a small part in "Who Loved Him Best" and was paid the "exorbitant" sum of twenty-five dollars a week. Although the film was never released, Tallulah was in heaven. She spent most of her time lounging in the lobby of the Algonquin watching the comings and goings of such notables as Ethel Barrymore and Douglas Fairbanks, Jr. Tallulah played bit parts in

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several productions but she was a huge hit on the social scene. A natural beauty with a vivacious personality, she captivated everyone she came in contact with. She wanted to experience everything, and when she turned 18 she left for a visit to Paris where she first experienced cocaine and marijuana. She had promised her father she would avoid alcohol so that she did.

Tallulah was really becoming known for her wit and intelligence. Some compared her to Dorothy Parker, who was not thrilled about the competition. Tallulah talked non-stop and at a young age was already garnering much attention. At one warm summer party, the hostess invited all to swim in the pool after donning bathing suits. "I never wear a suit," declared Tallulah, who, good to her word, was soon standing on the diving board dressed in nothing but her pearls. When asked later why she did it, she said "I just wanted to prove that I was a natural ash blonde."

In 1921, Tallulah was given a part in "Nice People," a play that not only gave her a chance to work, but allowed

her to play a role she wanted: a hard-drinking, loud-talking and sexually liberated woman, which seemed to reflect the newly emerging film and stage industry.

Tallulah embraced the character so well that soon it was almost impossible to tell when she was acting and when she was being her real self. With her eccentric and liberated personality, she soon became the toast of New York.

Party hosts vied for her attention as she was always a good topic of conversation, especially after she had left the gathering. At one such party, Tallulah, who always demanded center stage, was abruptly ignored when a more prestigious, guest showed up. Rather than accept the snub, she excused herself and retired to a bathroom where she completely disrobed. Returning to the party, clad only in a martini glass held casually in her right hand, Tallulah mingled with the shocked guests as if her natural state were completely normal.

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wrote that "her outfit was the most alluring of the evening!"

With antics such as these, Tallulah quickly became a much sought-after and controversial actress, and in the same year was invited to appear in a play in London. The play, "The Dancers," was a mediocre affair that nevertheless propelled Tallulah towards becoming a cult figure.

While in London, Tallulah bought herself a Bentley, which she loved to drive. She wasn't very competent with directions, however, and constantly found herself lost in the London streets. She would telephone a taxi and pay the driver to drive to her destination while she followed behind in her new car.

During her eight years on the London stage, Bankhead earned a reputation for making the most out of inferior material. For example, in her autobiography, Bankhead described the opening night of a play called Conchita:

"In the second act.. I came on carrying a monkey...On opening night the monkey went berserk... (he) snatched my black wig from my head, leaped from my arms and scampered down to the footlights. There he paused, peered out at the audience, then waved my wig over his head.. The audience had been giggling at the absurd plot even before this simian had at me. Now it became hysterical." What did Tallulah do in this crisis? "I turned a cartwheel! The audience roared.. After the monkey business I was afraid they might boo me. Instead I received an ovation."

It was during this time that Tallulah had begun to drink.

She told a friend that her doctor had advised her to eat an apple every time she had to urge to drink. She arched an eyebrow and added, "But really, dahlings, sixty apples a day!"

Regardless of her antics and sexual mores, Tallulah had developed into a talented actress and when she returned to New York in 1930, she was a star much in demand. The next several years saw her established as a fixture in the Hollywood movie industry.

One of the more intriguing anecdotes about Tallulah during this period concerns her mother's grave in Huntsville's Maple Hill Cemetery. Several years earlier she had purchased a tall memorial to replace the small marker that had originally been placed on her mother's grave. Although her mother had died when Tallulah was only days



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old, Tallulah was fascinated by the memories she claimed to have of her.

Several of her friends had told her of a well-known spiritualist in Hollywood who could, supposedly, put her in contact with her dead mother. During a séance, the seer conjured up an image purporting to be Tallulah's mother. The ghostly figure, after thanking Tallulah for the monument on her grave, then declared it was too heavy and she should move it over a few inches.

Tallulah, shaken by the experience, called an old friend in Huntsville to relate the incident. The friend, scoffing at the idea, and probably in an attempt to pacify Tallulah, nevertheless went to Maple Hill and checked on the monument.

Several hours later, Tallulah received a phone call from her incredulous friend who told her that

the top part of the monument had been moved several inches and was now off center from its base! No explanation was ever given about how the monument moved and though Tallulah remained a firm believer in spiritualism until she died, she never again attended a séance.

In 1936, David Selznick bought the movie rights to "Gone With the Wind" and

immediately announced a nationwide search for an actress to portray Scarlett O'Hara. Whoever received the role was guaranteed to become Hollywood's top actress. Tallulah desperately wanted the part. For a while it seemed as if Tallulah might get the part. Her supporters in Alabama carefully orchestrated a "Tallulah for Scarlett" campaign that had all



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the trappings of a major political campaign. The Alabama Public Service Commission, along with the Daughters of the Confederacy, joined the campaign by writing and sending Selznick literally thousands of telegrams. Even the governor of Alabama jumped into the campaign by sending Selznick a telegram asking, "Why don't you give Tallulah the part and be done with it?"

Unfortunately, the part was not to be hers. Hollywood gossip claimed that Tallulah, though at one time seriously considered for the role, was too scandalous for the part. Tallulah was crushed.

"They don't know what scandalous is," she confided to her friends. "If they want scandal, then that's what they will get!"

Tallulah had always been good copy for the gossip columns, but now she seemed determined to enlarge her image as much as possible. Her numerous affairs became legendary in a Hollywood not known for

its prudishness. Any party she attended was guaranteed to become a success, with half the party-goers hoping she would keep her clothes on and the other half hoping she would not.

She was heavily into alcohol, marijuana and cocaine. When one of her friends chided her about using cocaine, saying it was addictive, she replied, "Don't be ridiculous, I've been using it for years!"

Regardless of her absurd behavior, Tallulah was still one of the reigning queens of film and stage. She was also the darling of Alabama. Her father, Will, had become Majority Leader in

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the Senate, and not having time to wage an effective reelection campaign, beseeched Tallulah to help.

In probably one of the strangest elections in Alabama history, Tallulah hit the campaign trail. Appearing at rural cross roads stores, Tallulah, with a martini glass in her hand, would announce to the star-struck crowds, "Dahling, I want you to vote for Will Bankhead, 'cause he's my Daddy."

While stopping in Hazel Green one day, a lady who took great pride in being known as a pillar of righteousness took Tallulah to task about her moral turpitude. Raising her glass in the air in an imaginary toast, Tallulah replied, "Lady, I ain't done nothing you haven't done. I've just done more of it!"

Tallulah Bankhead, in the years between 1930 and 1960 became one of the legendary greats of show business. Her face, and her films, had become familiar to every man, woman, and child in America.

Ted Hook, one of Tallulah's very good friends, was afraid to leave her when she was drinking. One night, after a few hours out, he returned to her townhouse and smelled smoke. He rushed into her bedroom and found that Tallulah's Maltese Doloras, who ordinarily slept above Tallulah's head, was on fire like a flaming halo. She had apparently fallen asleep, after flicking her ashes onto the sleeping dog. Ted rushed into the room for water, screaming "Tallulah, Doloras is on fire!" She was wakened, "What is it?" "Tallulah, Doloras is on fire!" "Well, for chrissakes, put her out," she said and promptly went back to sleep.

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A fiercely loyal democrat, Tallulah made her last visit to Huntsville in 1960 when John F. Kennedy was campaigning here for President.

In 1967, she traveled once again to Hollywood where she appeared in the role as the Dragon Lady for the television series "Batman." Though not a prestigious role, Tallulah had asked for it simply because she thought it was "camp." This was her last film role.

The following year, on December 12, 1968, Tallulah Bankhead died at age 66. She was buried in one of her favorite silk robes, cigarette burns and all. She died from double pneumonia, complicated by emphysema and malnutrition. She was buried in St. Paul's Churchyard, Chestertown, Maryland.

After the funeral, a small group of her friends gathered to tell "Tallulah" stories and to have a drink in her memory.

"A fitting epitaph," one of her friends remarked.



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- For furniture and floors - wipe with cedar oil

- For window sills and shelves, paint undersides with scented lacquer.

- Leave scented bath soaps in opened packages in your linen closet.

- Hang pomander balls or pine cones painted with pine oil in the closets. You can also line the closets with cedar and use sachets in coat hanger padding.

- For bureau drawers, lay scented flannel at bottom. Use lavender bags, sachets, scented lacquers. Insert sachets in pads and mattresses of your beds. Use pine pillows.

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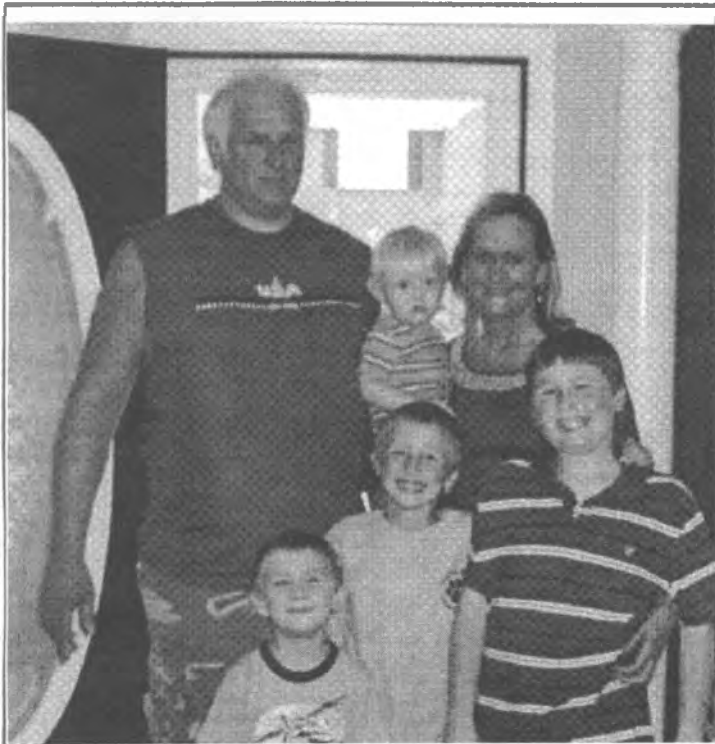
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Seven years ago, Lewis McCurdy paid zero attention to polo.

Now, by his own admission, he's obsessed with it.

"I never imagined myself riding a horse, using an English saddle and swinging a stick at a little white ball," said McCurdy, a prominent Huntsville veterinarian whose athleticism and riding skills helped lead the Huntsville Polo Club to a 15-7 victory Sunday over the Scuppernong Club of Atlanta in the fourth annual Cavalry Cup.

"But I just didn't know what I was missing," McCurdy said. "This is about as fun as it gets."

McCurdy is so taken by the sport that he now owns 10 polo horses.

A spirited crowd watched the Huntsville-Scuppernong game from the hillside and from a covered tent alongside the 10-acre playing field on the site of a former cotton field at Stew and Ariene Stewart's Harris Hill Farm, just off U.S. 72 near the intersection of Moore's Mill Road.

McCurdy and most of his teammates were recruited by the Stewarts, who organized the Huntsville Polo Club in 1994. The team plays regular home-and-away matches with clubs from Atlanta, Birmingham, Florence, Knoxville, Nashville, Franklin, Tenn., and Oxford, Miss.

One of the annual highlights of the schedule is the Cavalry Cup, sponsored by retired Army colonel Fred Lee and his wife, Helen.

"For us, this is a family

thing," said Lee, whose father, grandfather and uncle served in the 1st Cavalry Division in the late 1930s and early 1940 when it was a horse-mounted division.

"We see it as a good way to honor all the old horse soldiers of that bygone era."

Among the spectators at Sunday's game were two former World War II cavalymen from the 15th Regiment, Bob Hamsley of Pulaski, Tenn., and Lee Grubbs of Decatur.

A small Civil War reenactment unit entertained the crowd between the six periods of play, known as "chuckers."

Many in the crowd were watching their first polo game, which is contested between two teams of four mounted players on a field that measures 300 yards long by 160 yards wide, with sets of goal posts at each end.

McCurdy, whose practice includes both a large and small animal clinic, took up the game at the urging of Ariene Stewart, a noted realtor whose Harris Hill Farm is equipped with pastures, stables and barns for 40 horses, a lighted riding ring, two polo fields, a tack building and a clubhouse.

Rodrigo and Gonzalo Salinas, two polo professionals and horse trainers from Argentina, also work for the

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Stewarts as club pros.

Not surprisingly, the brothers are the star players on this year's Huntsville Polo Club team.

"With those two, we're pretty hard to handle," said McCurdy, who grew up on a farm near Lowndesboro in Lowndes County, played the traditional sports - football, basketball and baseball - in high school, graduated from the Auburn University vet school in 1974 and began his practice in Huntsville the same year.

Jack Cashin, the 74-year-old patron of the Scuppernon Club, was quick to agree with McCurdy's assessment.

"This was probably some of the best polo ever played on this field," said Cashin. Those two Argentinians put on a pretty good clinic out there. They're a pretty good show."

Silver-haired Jack Cashin is a pretty good show in his own right. A former football player at Colgate in the '40s, he later took up a variety

of offbeat sports, including skydiving, scuba diving and squash.

His father, Leo I. Cashin, was an old cavalryman and polo player before and after World War I, but Jack - who once published an existentialist magazine call Dare and worked in a variety of northern cities - didn't become interested in horses, or polo, until he moved to the Atlanta area in 1973. By then, he had sold the magazine to Ohio senator Howard Metzenbaum.

Cashin now owns nearly 40 thoroughbreds and quarter-horses at his sprawling Chukker Farm in Cherokee County, Ga., about 50 miles north of Atlanta. Polo has become his hobby and his passion.

"For people who don't know polo," Cashin said, "I like to describe it as a combination of soccer, hockey and basketball, on a horse traveling at 35 miles per hour, trying to hit a baseball with a stretched-out croquet mallet.

"A polo player is a combination of a cowboy and a cavalryman."

Scuppernon's best player is Jack's son, Jason Cashin, an equine dentist. Among the club's other players are a computer analyst, a graphic artist, a marketing specialist, the president of a German concrete company and a handful of entrepreneurs.

"That's the thing about polo," Cashin said. "We cut across the whole landscape."

Postscript: Huntsville veterinarian Lewis McCurdy, owner of McCurdy Animal Clinic, died Feb. 28, 2011 after being thrown from a horse while fox hunting in Georgia.

Editor's note: This column was originally published in the Huntsville Times on July 31, 2000 by John Pruett.

**"I planted some bird seed.
A bird came up. Now
I don't know what to
feed it."**

Tim Spencer, Athens



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News from 1923

Firemen Not Active, but Ready (June 5, 1923)

The Huntsville fire department hasn't had a run for a matter of nearly three weeks, not even a false alarm. However, members of the department are always ready and always prepared to respond to calls when they come.

Gurley Boy Drowned in River

While swimming in Paint Rock river Sunday afternoon, Leslie Thomas, aged 13, was drowned. The body was recovered and removed to the home of his parents in Gurley, where the funeral was held Monday afternoon. According to those who were swimming with young Thomas, he dove from the bank into the stream and never came up. They became frightened and called for help which was soon forthcoming and after a long search the body

was recovered. It is supposed the young man's head hit the bottom of the stream and rendered him unconscious.

Laughlins to Stay in City

The many friends of Mr. and Mrs. Laughlin will be glad to know that they will remain in Huntsville instead of moving to South Alabama as they had expected.

Arab Child Chews on Dynamite and lives

Mrs. C. E. Brewster called frantically for police when she found her three-year-old daughter, Frances, eating the neighbor's dynamite. Police said the child was chewing on the end of a half pound when they arrived and removed it from her tiny hands.

Baptists want more room

The First Baptist church will offer \$11,000 for the Smith and Vaughn property, west and north side of the church. If the offer is accepted the church, it is stated, will be enlarged and other improvements made.

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You Make Me

by Judy C. Smith

Growing up in Huntsville did have its advantages in the fifties. One could walk anywhere they wished to go. It was 1959 and we lived on White Circle that was a good walk into town, but certainly within walking distance. However on this particular day, my sister Melinda, age eleven and whom I dearly loved, and would do anything for, wanted to go to Parkway City shopping. Parkway City was just a strip shopping center, long before the 1974 tornadoes tore it up and it later was made into a mall. Parkway City was much further away than downtown and one had to drive there, not walk.

I had a 1937 Chevy and my father was at work with the only other car. The '37 Chevy was a straight shift and my mother couldn't drive it. So I was the only one who could satisfy Melinda's request. I was seventeen and had been driving since I was fifteen, having visited my grandmother in Mississippi and told everyone I had gotten a license to drive in that state. I had obtained an old license from a friend there and written my name on it. The paper licenses were easy to change in those days. I got my driving experience from driving Sally Fleming Walker's father's truck in a sheep field. The field was across Whitesburg Drive from the Fleming home in what is now Piedmont Estates.

At the time Melinda wanted to go shopping, I was designing a dress for home economics class and didn't hurry fast enough. After a big confrontation, which was unusual for us because we didn't fight, I said "You Make Me" and she used a bat to hit me in the right temple, and knocked me to the ground.

As I lay semi-conscious, Melinda was standing over me, saying, "Please don't die, I'll give you anything or do anything, just don't tell Mom or Dad." It was decided that I would say that I fell down the stairs and that would explain how the mysterious baseball size knot appeared on my temple, but in return for keeping my mouth shut, Melinda would give me her whole month's allowance. A deal was a deal. I kept my mouth shut. But believe me, I learned the hard way; I will never utter the words to anyone again, YOU MAKE ME.

FRUIT JAR DRINKERS

Do you know how to tell if anyone is a fruit-jar drinker? People who drink their shine from fruit jars have a ridge across their noses. That is where the top of the fruit jar hits their nose while they are drinking.



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Heard On the Street

by *Cathey Carney*

The winner for the September Photo of the Month was **John Vaughn**, a Golden K Kiwanian. He said when he saw that face it had to be **Chuck Bobo!** Chuck is also a member of the Golden K's. Congratulations to John!

We were so sorry to hear of the death of our friend **Tillman Williams, Jr.** Tillman was an insurance broker for the past 58 years and was the first person in Huntsville to become a member of the insurance profession's prestigious "Million Dollar Round Table." He had lost his loving wife **Helen** after 66 years of marriage, so we know he's with her now. We send our deepest sympathy to Tillman's daughter, **Sallie Dean** (husband **Hilton**) and son **Joel Williams** (wife **Dail**) and his many grand and great-grand children he leaves, as well as the rest of his family and many friends who will miss this very special man.

Jenny Hedges is that very efficient & friendly interior decorator you'll see when you go into **Haley's Flooring**. I did some business with her recently and she's the best!

Mildred Banks was a loving



Mom, wife, sister and friend to many. She passed away at the age of 91 recently. She had worked at several places in Huntsville that many might remember, such as **General Shoe Co.**, **Huntsville Park Variety Store** as owner & operator, **Singer Sewing Machine Co.** and **Mason Jewelers**. We send our condolences to her son **Danny Banks, Jr.** and his wife **Jennifer Lynn**, granddaughter **Page Ann Banks**, sister **Nancy Robertson**, brother **Andy Majors** and many other family & friends who will miss her.

Happy Birthday to that handsome **Joe Owens** of Largo, Florida!

Jean McIntosh is SO proud of her daughter **Lynn Albritton**, who in August was honored with the coveted **Silver Snoopy award**. This award is given to outstanding civil service and contractor employees who have significantly contributed to the

human spaceflight program. The honor is awarded by an astronaut and includes a silver pin that was flown onboard a shuttle mission. We are very proud of Lynn!

Happy birthday to **Bob Larkin**, who will turn 80 in October. Bob is married to **Leo Larkin** and step dad to **Shane Adkins**. Bob and Leo are that talented duo you can hear play music at the gazebo at **Bennett's Nurseries** nearly every weekend in October. Bob is well known, was concertmaster of the **Huntsville Symphony** from 1962-1977. He was also assistant Conductor.

One of the nicest young men I've met in a long time is **Chandler Hall**, a sophomore at **Madison County High School**. Chandler is a soccer player for the school and according to his proud mom **Audra Wilson** (**Salon Bella** owner) he is the best player on the team! We're positive she's not biased!

Cheryl Tribble, our good friend from **Woodstock, GA.** tells us that when she cleans her blinds she uses dryer sheets to wipe them down, and it really

Photo of The Month

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

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Hint: This baby now knows some very interesting history of higher places.



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Happy October birthday to **Diane Owens**, we Love you!

Fred and Peggy Simpson recently celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary hosted by their children and grandchildren: **Bryan Simpson** of Kennesaw, GA., **Derek and Shannon Simpson**, **Tim and Cindy Howard**, **Betsy, Sally, Charlie and Sam Howard** and **Kate, Jane and Will Simpson**. Fred is retired District Attorney here and is an excellent photographer with a book that I love, "Huntsville Then and Now" with before and after photographs of Huntsville. Peggy and Fred are a beautiful couple and we wish them many more anniversaries.

Helen Holden Plaxco was 87 when she passed away at her residence. She was a long-time member of the **Covenant Presbyterian Church**, and she loved her church dearly. She worked for years at Belk Department store and later at Mary Shoppe. Our deepest sympathy to **Mickey Plaxco**, her son; **Cliff**, her son; and her daughter **Laurie** and their families & friends.

Leslie & Drew Lockhart hosted a really fun block party on East Clinton Avenue recently and many who attended couldn't believe how good the BBQ was that Drew smoked all day. It made all of Old Town smell fabulous!

Not sure if you've noticed but

Maple Hill cemetery is really getting spruced up. The staff & workers there are spending time everyday cleaning out old faded flowers, trinkets and any objects that may get in the way of the mowers. Even something like a ceramic angel or toy can get in the blades of the mowers and become airborne, possibly hitting people, cars or the people who work there. Therefore the decision was made to clean up everything that may be unsafe. It would be a good idea if you are taking care of a grave site to replace the faded flowers, and to pick up cherubs, angels, etc. that belong to you, otherwise they will be disposed of by the cemetery workers. If you have questions you should call the cemetery office at (256) 427-5730.

Shane Adkins, local songwriter & musician, recently had a bluegrass group called "Country Gentlemen" record his song "One Mile East of Hazel Green" and as of very recently the song is #30 out of 40 in the bluegrass charts in the U.S. In Europe and Australia it was #8. Shane's mom is **Leo Larkin** and is SO proud of her son.

Marie Melochick was a long-time member of the **Latham United Methodist Church**, an original resident at **Redstone Village**, a loving mother & grandmother, a very good golfer and a friend to many. Marie passed away at the age of 85 in

early September, and we will miss her smiling face and loving personality. Marie leaves her daughters **Donna Henry** & husband **George "Sonny" Henry** and **Dee Dee Moss**, son **George Melochick**, granddaughters **Ashley Marie Rawls** and **Courtney Childress**, and sisters **Hazel Noell** and **Opal Smith**. We will always remember Marie's kindness and empathy towards others, and we know she's with her beloved husband **George Melochick** now.

Be sure and let your loved one know how much you love him or her. Life is really short.

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From the Kitchen of Karen Maroon

Overnight Coffee Cake

3/4 c. softened unsalted butter

1 c. sugar (or substitute)

2 eggs

2 c. plain flour

1 t. baking soda

1 t. ground nutmeg

1/2 t. salt

1 c. sour cream

Topping:

3/4 c. brown sugar or sub

1/2 c. chopped pecans

1 t. ground cinnamon

Glaze:

1 1/2 c. powdered sugar

3 T. milk

In a large mixing bowl, cream butter and sugar, add eggs and beat well. Combine flour, soda, nutmeg and salt in a smaller bowl and add it to the creamed mixture, alternating with the sour cream. Pour into a 13x9" baking dish.

Combine brown sugar, pe-

cans and cinnamon and sprinkle this over the cake mixture. Cover all and refrigerate overnight. In the morning, bake at 350 uncovered for 35-40 minutes and a toothpick inserted comes out clean. Cool on wire rack for 10 minutes. Combine the powdered sugar and milk and drizzle over the cake. Serve warm and there won't be any leftover!

White Chocolate Pretzels

1 - 8 oz. white chocolate - melted in double boiler

3 c. miniature pretzels or broken pretzel sticks

2 c. salt peanuts

Mix together and spread on parchment paper-lined cookie sheet.

Let cool and break into pieces. The sweet & salty taste is addictive!

Baked Chicken Salad

3 c. cooked, cubed chicken (can use rotisserie chicken)

1 1/2 c. diced celery or broccoli

3/4 c. slivered almonds

1 6-oz. can sliced water chestnuts

1/2 t. salt & pepper

Paprika to taste

1/2 c. chopped onion

3 t. fresh lemon juice

1 can undiluted cream of mushroom soup

3/4 c. grated sharp Cheddar cheese

1 1/2 c. crushed potato chips

Combine all ingredients except cheese and chips in a greased 9x13" casserole.

Sprinkle cheese and chips on top. Bake in preheated 325 degree oven for 45 minutes, and top is lightly browned.

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 2 T. finely chopped parsley
 1 T. chopped green onion
 1 t. fresh lemon juice
 1/8 t. black pepper
 Combine ingredients, mixing til well blended. Chill, serve with crackers. Makes 2 cups. This can easily be doubled to serve at a party.

Hash Brown Casserole

1 - 32 oz. pkg. frozen shredded hash browns, thawed
 2 cans undiluted potato soup
 2 - 8 oz. cartons sour cream
 2 c. shredded sharp Cheddar cheese
 3/4 c. grated parmesan
 3 T. fresh chopped chives
 1 T. fresh chopped flat-leaf parsley
 Combine all ingredients well, spoon into greased 9x13" baking dish. Bake at 350 degrees for 40 minutes.

Baked Beans with Pineapple (modified from Paula Dean)

4 - 16 oz. cans pork 'n beans
 1 - 20 oz. can crushed pineapple, drained
 1 c. molasses
 1 c. BBQ sauce

2 T. mustard
 5 slices cooked bacon, crumbled
 1 - 6 oz. can French-fried onion rings, crushed.

Salt & Pepper to taste
 Preheat your oven to 350 degrees. In a large bowl mix together beans, pineapple, molasses, BBQ sauce, mustard, part of the bacon and 1/3 of the onions. Add salt and pepper to taste.

Pour mixture into a 9x13" casserole dish and sprinkle with remaining crushed onions and bacon on top. Bake for one hour and beans are brown and bubbling. Serve warm.

Potato Sausage Dressing

1 lb. bulk sausage
 1 c. chopped onion
 3/4 c. finely chopped celery
 1 t. poultry seasoning
 Packaged instant mashed potatoes - enough for 8 servings.

2 eggs
 Cook the sausage, onion and celery til meat is browned, then drain. Stir in the poultry seasoning and 1/4 teaspoonful black pepper.

Prepare potatoes following the package directions, but reduce salt the 1/2 teaspoon. Beat in eggs. Stir in the meat mixture.

Bake, covered, in a 2 quart casserole at 325 degrees for 30 minutes. This will make 6 cups.



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MEMORIES OF DALLAS VILLAGE

by Linda Strange

The cotton mill villages in Huntsville have played a large role in defining our city the way it is today. Though it may seem centuries ago to some of us, many of the people who occupied those villages are still around to tell their stories. The burning of the old Dallas mill in the fall of 1991 could not erase the memories of a unique way of life that once inhabited Madison County. Take a drive down Stevens Street or Humes Avenue and there is history that lives on from days past...

Mrs. Cecil Gustin lived in Lincoln village until 1928 when she got married. Her new husband found a job at Dallas mill which moved the newly-weds to Dallas mill village in 1932. At the time, there were 3 cotton mills still in operation in town out of the original 9 mills in and around Madison County: Huntsville park, Lincoln mill, and Dallas mill. Each mill hosted its own mill villages to house and provide for it's employees.


People who worked at the mills tended to live in the villages not only for the close proximity to work, but because the mills provided low-cost housing at 75 cents a month for a three bedroom house, and the cost of the electricity bill was taken out of the paycheck of each mill worker.

The Gustin's paid \$1600.00 for their first house in the village in 1932, although he made only \$7.14 a week in the mill's carding department. "People thought we were crazy for paying so much money, but we were bound and determined to own our own home."

Every weekday at 4:30 a.m., the first whistle, called the wake-up whistle, sounded at the mill. The whistle blew again at 5:30, and once more at 5:45, warning the workers they were going to be late if they did not hurry! At the sound of the last whistle men would start running from their homes in order to be at work by 6 a.m.

The workdays were a long 12 hours, Monday through Friday, with occasional work on Saturday. Mrs. Gustin's day was spent doing household chores with the other village wives,

You never know when it will strike, but there comes a moment at work when you know that you just aren't going to do anything productive for the rest of the day.




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and basically helping each other out.

"Times were hard," she recalled. "It was a lot different from today. Back then no one had much money so everyone would help one another."

Most folks, remembers Mrs. Gustin, made their own bread every morning, and like herself, fixed lunch for their husbands and other family who worked in the mill.

On weekends, about the only form of entertainment was the movie at the YMCA, which was across the street from the mill, or the ball games at the YMCA for the children. A movie and popcorn was only 15 cents, and if you wanted to go somewhere else, Huntsville had a trolley car that ran from Stevens Street to town, to Huntsville park and over to Lincoln mill, so you could ride just about any place you wanted outside the village.

For those who worked and lived in the village, many services were furnished by the mill so employees and their families had little need to stray from the boundaries of the village. When Mr. and Mrs. Gustin's first child was born in 1934, Martha Myhand, the village nurse, made house calls to Mrs. Gustin every day for 9 days to bathe the baby and change her bed. Mrs. Myhand lived in a big two story house on the corner of Andrew Jackson Way and Oakwood, and attended to the sick and needy villagers of Dallas mill village through a contract she had with the mill. Another benefit to the mill families was the opening of Rison school. Mr. J. R. Rison was one of the first owners of Dallas mill, and erected the school (which no longer stands) especially for the chil-

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dren of Dallas mill village. Mrs. Gustin and her husband both attended Rison school as did their children.

But life in the village wasn't easy. Mrs. Gustin's husband was asthmatic and not in perfect health when they married, and as the years went on, he would miss 6-8 weeks of work in the spring and fall due to illness. Because Mr. Gustin was a good worker, he was granted time off, although without pay. Mrs. Gustin doesn't remember Dallas mill giving paid sick leave or vacations while her husband worked there, although she says she remembers receiving sheets and pillowcases from the mill at Christmas. These were goods manufactured at their own Dallas mill. But without her husband's salary during his bouts with illness, Mrs. Gustin says they may not have made it without the help of her father.

Her family lived near Fayetteville, Tennessee and her father would come to Huntsville frequently to sell firewood. On his trips, he would bring garden vegetables, fresh eggs and milk to his daughter and son-in-law, and having the vegetables for meals and canning helped them through some rough times. With the help of her parents, explained Mrs. Gustin, they managed to live better than a lot of the mill families.

Dallas mill was the first of

"You can't buy love, but you pay heavily for it."

Frank Still, Athens

the remaining three mills to close it's doors in Huntsville. Strikes began among the workers, many of the younger ones going to the new arsenal to work.

The mill was losing so much help to the arsenal they made a rule that no one who worked at the arsenal could live in the village; that included Mrs. Gustin's brother who came to live with the Gustin family in 1941 to work at the arsenal. Because the mill was firing employees who housed arsenal workers, Mrs. Gustin's brother had to leave.

Still, most folks were loyal to the mill and stayed with it until it closed, before moving to jobs at the remaining mills around town. Mr. Gustin went to work at Lincoln mill after the closing of Dallas mill, then to the Huntsville park mill where he occasionally received paid sick time as his illness worsened. After 35 years of work in the mills, 25 of those at Dallas mill, Mr. Gustin retired from Huntsville park in 1964 with health problems. After 59 years of marriage to Mrs. Gustin, he passed away at the age of 78.

"Times were better then," said Mrs. Gustin who still lives in the Humes Avenue village

home that she and her husband bought in 1939. "Even though we didn't have much, people thought more of each other. Neighbors looked out for one another."

And indeed they did. The village communities presented a way of life almost independent of the town in which they were nestled. Generation after generation stayed in the village to work at the mill, just as sons followed in their father's footsteps to Floyd Hardin's barber shop for a hair cut. Floyd still works in what is now known as Jackson Way Styling Salon and is often referred to as the unofficial "mayor of Dallas village."

As the village of Dallas mill celebrates it's anniversary this year, (started in 1892) the once independent block of streets in the heart of Huntsville contain remnants of a not so distant past.

They call our language the mother tongue because the father seldom gets to speak.

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From July 1873
Newspaper

A girl who all day turns out of her way to avoid stepping into a tub of soap suds which ought to have been emptied out the day the washing was finished, cannot be recommended as a good housekeeper.

Moreover, if she empties, cleanses and sets the tub away at the proper time, but leaves a knife in the butter crock, a spoon in the applesauce jar, and a ten inch platter with a mouthful of meat and a spoon on it on a shelf behind the door; or if you find in the bread bowl an old towel and a piece of table cloth, both mildewed, with bits of moldy bread of all sizes, from crumbs to half loaves, dumped in with a fresh batch, she cannot be called tidy.

Or, if the water-pitchers on the wash-stands through the house are black with dust in the bottom, or the soap-dishes make good suds without any other application of soap than that which has been clinging to it for a month or two; or if there are a lot of dust and feathers under the bed; and the pillows are hard for want of airing and the windows are so dirty that a sunny day looks dark and cloudy through them; and young spiders are practicing the art of spinning, by running

down your nose on nice little fringes of cob webs; be sure the girl in charge has been disappointed in love, or is a poor stick of a thing naturally.

All this is bad enough, but think of eating after her cooking; no doubt she wipes up the floor with the dish cloth; washes tea-cups and saucers after greasy plates and candlesticks; uses the frying pan from day to day without washing; substitutes her apron or dress for a holder, or a dish-towel; mixes up pancakes with her fingers, after combing her hair; and pounds beef-steak on a table where she has been scouring knives.

The only guard against starvation, if you must submit to such a state of things, is never to go near the kitchen. Even then there is danger of being poisoned, or of dying from eating your peck of dirt in too much of a hurry.

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MR. J. D. WIGLEY, TEACHER, MENTOR, AND FRIEND

There is a man in Madison County who had a tremendous influence on the lives of hundreds of students over the years. Mr. J. D. Wigley taught vocational agriculture at Riverton High School for a number of years and when Buckhorn High opened in 1958, Wigley became the agriculture teacher and the Future Farmers of America (FFA) advisor there.

There are many good teachers in Madison County, but there are very few whom students remember long into their adult lives. This is the case with Mr. Wigley. Some of his students were Frank Riddick, Homer Tate, Buddy Darwin and Bobby Green.

At that time the FFA had public speaking competitions, and Wigley required all of his Vocational Ag students to write a speech and then to present it to the faculty and student body.

Judge Frank Riddick recalled, "Writing that speech was bad enough but having to present it to a large group was even worse. But as I recollect, I see how it enhanced my ability to communicate effectively,

which contributed greatly to any career success I have had."

Roger Jones, a Madison County Commissioner and Buckhorn student, said that Mr. Wigley's FFA chapter was second to none. Under his leadership, Buckhorn won more than any of the other chapters in the state under.

Winning seemed to be the theme that ran through all of the communications from Mr. Wigley to his students. "He not only taught life-long skills," said Homer Tate, "he instilled in us self-confidence and qualities of life that were needed throughout our entire lives."

Tate focused that drive to win into a successful farming career in Madison County.

Judge Riddick characterized Wigley's method of teaching as "unique."

"He not

only taught from the books, so to speak, but he taught common sense things that would be helpful in achieving success in any endeavor you should choose later on in your life."

Bobby Green graduated from Riverton High School in 1951 and vividly recalls his FFA years with Mr. Wigley. "During that period under Mr.

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Wigley our FFA chapter won every county, district, state and national contest we entered, and we entered them all."

"He had the ability to take any poor, bashful, country boy and make him into a proud, confident, motivated individual who could stand up before a civic group of successful men and give a speech without fear or hesitation."

Green also praised Mr. Wigley's wife, Lou, who really did her part as well. She taught Home Ec as a school substitute and manners as a life subject. And there weren't just women in the class, either. Students remember being taught respect for parents, teachers and elders. They were instilled with social graces allowing them to act with confidence in any social gathering or event.

Sam (Buddy) Darwin remembers when the boys would go into the Home Ec classes and they had to learn manners and setting the table just like the girls did! Buddy remembers his years with Mr. Wigley. "Even though my father taught me how to work and succeed, Mr. Wigley reinforced this work ethic all through High School. I was President of the FFA at Riverton from 1955-56, and not only did we have to write our speeches and deliver them to the audience, we had to memorize them! This taught me self-confidence that lasted all my life. He encouraged me to succeed in anything I tried to do. At that time I was on the livestock judging team composed of 3 boys that won the national livestock judging title in Kansas City, MO. in

1955. Mr. Wigley encouraged me to carry fat show calves to Kansas City to the American Royal in '56. I won the pen of 3 categories that year, having trained the steers to lead on separate halters. When I was awarded the American Farmers Degree that same year, President Dwight Eisenhower attended the Banquet when I received the award. I owe so much to Mr. Wigley."

Roger Jones has lots of memories of growing up, going to Buckhorn and what Mr. Wigley meant to him.

"When I went to Buckhorn in the 10th grade from Walnut Grove, I was a backward, "Red neck" farm boy that knew 'nothing about nothing.' I was

'Green as a Gourd' and 'Lost as a goose' in a new environment. I didn't realize it then but I probably wasn't the only one. My



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"You know you're getting older when your best friend is dating something half their age and isn't breaking any laws."

Sam Keith, Huntsville

only interest then was farming and maybe 'girls' and I sure would not have admitted to that back then.

"I took Voc Ag in the 10th grade and Mr. Wigley and I soon became good friends. I had a calf in the County Calf Show that first year and Mr. & Mrs. Wigley would come to my house after school and advise me on what feed mixture to use and how much. One thing about Mr. Wigley - he sure knew cattle and how they would respond to different feed rations. Now back then the county calf show was a big deal. It was held on the East side of the Courthouse square and the county schools would turn out. It also made the front page of the Huntsville Times. My calf won 1st place. This was the first time I had won anything in my life. But not for Mr. Wigley - one of his students would win nearly every year.

"The Buckhorn FFA and FHA Chapters gained lots of state-wide recognition by winning more than our share of the different competitions.

"Through my association with Mr. Wigley and Buckhorn FFA, I had the opportunity to make trips to state meetings in Auburn, Al. This was really new for me because I had never been anywhere. During my senior year four of us from Buckhorn attended the National FFA Convention in Kansas City. On this trip, I met boys from all over the state - some that I would see later while I was at Auburn, and become good friends with - such as Dr. Billy Powell, Executive Director of Alabama Cattleman's Association. These things wouldn't have happened had it not been for Mr. Wigley. He gave us the self confidence we needed to be successful in our lives."

Frank Riddick, Buddy Darwin, Roger Jones and Bobby Green were among his many students who nominated Mr. Wigley for the prestigious Alabama FFA Wall of Honor back in 2009. His name was placed on the Wall of Honor in that same year.

But, even more incredibly, Mr. Wigley was 97 years old when he received the award that year. And just 2 days ago, September 9, 2011, Mr. Wigley turned 99 years old! He no doubt still inspires people of all ages, instilling in them the will to

succeed and to find the confidence they need in order to do that.

A man like Mr. J. D. Wigley is so rare to know, and there's no doubt he has created a lasting legacy among all the students and others who were so lucky to have known him.

Happy Birthday to you, Mr. Wigley!



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FIRST IMPRESSIONS OF HUNTSVILLE

by Donna Peacher

When we arrived in Huntsville in 1961, we found a small cotton town with one red light on Memorial Parkway.

The population, however, was growing by leaps and bounds! It had gained around 50,000 people in the past ten years and it was really hard to find a place to live. As I think Walter Cronkite said on a later visit to Huntsville, the Parkway was a roller coaster full of wild-eyed drivers!

It seemed that every time I closed my eyes, another building, sub-division or street seemed to appear. Huntsville was a "boom" town in every sense of the word.

It also became immediately apparent that this small town

had some very special civic-minded leaders. These leaders came together at the right time and place to put Huntsville on a path to excellence.

Marshall Space Flight Center was less than a year old. There was no Research Park. The contractors involved in military and space support had to move into empty warehouses and buildings wherever they could find them.

I specifically remember

driving past the HIC Building complex (or was it HIEC? but, certainly not HICK!) and its parking lot on Meridian Street, filled to the brim with various contractors, and saying "What in the world is going on there?"

Huntsville had one strip mall, Pearsall Shopping Center on North Memorial Parkway. Its biggest claim to fame, as far as we were concerned, was Terry's Pizza, the first in Huntsville.

A little later, Big Ed's Piz-

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za on Oakwood Avenue appeared. Through the years, my husband and I have bounced back and forth between Terry's and Big Ed's. Their delicious pizzas vie with each other to this day, fifty years later!

The Heart of Huntsville Mall was under construction on Memorial Parkway. When completed, it would have a Sears & Roebuck! It would be Huntsville's first enclosed mall. It was just north of the present day Governors Drive intersection.

However, in 1961, there was no Governors Drive. Therefore, Dunnavant's Mall at the corner of Governors Drive and The Parkway had not yet been built.

An interesting bit of information was much later given to my husband by a fellow employee to the effect that he could have purchased the land which eventually became home to Dunnavant's Mall (and then still later became the Huntsville Hospital Medical Mall) for \$300.00, but he thought it was much too swampy!)

Of course, neither the Heart of Huntsville Mall nor Dunnavant's Mall exists today, becoming victims of progress. However in 1961, as I recall, I enjoyed shopping at the Dunnavant's Department Store on Washington Street downtown, together with a Kress Five and Dime and a Belk-Hudson Department Store.

I do so regret that the old original courthouse was torn down. It was a southern structure in every sense of the word. It was such a stately building, with civil war statues on the front lawn and huge white columns. It displayed the very essence of our historic Huntsville.

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ON LIVING IN A CAT HOUSE

By *CHUCK BOBO*

Like any normal man (at least I think I'm normal) I have always wondered what life would be like in a "cat house." At the ripe old age of (past 80) I now have had that experience. I LOVE IT, but it has taken some adjustment and a four-day stay at Huntsville Hospital.

The adventure began about a year ago when I opened my apartment door for my morning paper at about 5 a.m., and a yellow Tabby was sitting outside the door and bounded into the room. I was so startled for a few minutes that I did not know what to do. So, I just watched as the cat moved around my apartment and inspected every nook and cranny. By this time I had guessed the yellow Tabby was a female, though I had not gotten close enough for a full inspection.

She came back to me, rubbed against my leg, looked up and meowed a couple of times, which I guessed was saying, "Feed me!" Having no cat food, I sorted through my canned food until I found a small can of tuna, which I opened and spooned a few bites into a bowl.

I put it on the floor

before her and she smelled and sniffed it and then very slowly ate about half. She then continued inspecting my apartment, looking in every nook and cranny and even under my skirted foot stool.

She looked up and gave me a long "Meoooooww?" I interpreted this to be a question. "Where is the litter box?"

Having none, I quickly compromised. I found a square plastic storage container and quickly tore an old newspaper into small pieces. That was exactly what she was looking for.

She did her business and carefully covered it with scraps of the paper and looked at me with a broad grin. It was as much to say, "I am well trained"

Now, I was trying to decide what I should do next. I had seldom seen cats around outside in my apartment complex. I decided that she had wandered from her home or her owners had moved away and left her.

I decided to take photos of her, make FOUND CAT posters and post them in the area. This was done fairly quickly and I dressed to go out and place

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them around the neighborhood.

She was again sitting beside her now empty food bowl, so I added more tuna and a dish of water before I covered the neighborhood with photo CAT FOUND posters. When I returned she met me at the door, went bounding under my foot stool and peeped out from under the skirt.

A couple of days went by with no response to the posters, so I figured she was abandoned. I had laid in a supply of cat food and real litter for her "potty." I had become accustomed to having her around. A cat had not owned me since my children were growing up. I traveled a lot and did not want to leave an animal alone or have to leave one in someone else's care.

In a few days she had gotten me trained. I moved a book case under each window with a pillow on top so she could view the outside world (her television) with birds and squirrels playing on the lawn - and the coming and going of our neighbors.

She was home and she left no doubt about it. When I opened the door to go out of the apartment, she made no effort to leave. Didn't even take a look in the hallway, but rather went for her safe place under the foot stool.

Whomever had her before had trained her well. Miss Tabby didn't jump on beds, furniture or counters and used a scratch pad I had gotten for her instead of the carpet to

sharpen her claws.

She had even learned the daily Huntsville Times was delivered at about 4:30 each morning. When she heard the doorknob rattle when the newspaper was hung on it, she came to my bedroom and "meowed" a couple of time to let me know. We established a morning ritual.

1. I would get up and visit the bath room.
2. I would get the newspaper off the door knob.
3. I would open a can of her favorite food and feed her.
4. Then I would make my morning coffee, read the paper, etc.

This ritual was going smoothly for about two weeks. Then one morning after eating she decided she wanted to be in my lap. She sat before me until she got my attention and started to jump into my lap. This had not happened before and I moved my hand right to the place she intended to land. To keep from falling, she dug her claws into my hand and it began bleeding.

She scampered off and hid, knowing that something had gone wrong. I cleaned and dressed the wounds from the claws into the back of my hand, but in a few hours my hand was swelling. I phoned

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the doctor to make an appointment to have the claw wounds examined.

The doctor informed me the infection was serious and I would have to be admitted to the hospital. I phoned my friend, Terry the Cat Slave (Terry Morgan) who lived across town and asked if she would look in on Miss Tabby and keep food and water out for her while I was hospitalized.

When I was released after four days, I had decided to keep the cat. No one had claimed her and I had already invested too much in her. While I was hospitalized, Terry came to my apartment a couple of time a day to feed and check on the cat.

Terry drove me and the cat to the vet where I was informed

Miss Tabby had been "fixed" and there was no chance for a litter of kittens. She got her shots and license and a new name: "Her Royal Majesty Queen Tabitha."

She is now the Queen of the Cat House, and she has learned one lesson. She never jumps into my lap until she is invited. When she wants to be in my lap, she sits patiently before me until I give her the sign to come up and she never digs out her claws.

I now not only have the experience of living in a Cat House - I own one!



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Albert Einstein

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Jan. 19, 1895

Two weeks have elapsed since I wrote in this book and much has happened since Sunday, two weeks from when I wrote last. I am at home sitting by a big fire in my rocker. I never thought I would be here when I went to bed in the old college for the last time on the night of the fourth.

Tuesday morning at half past ten I was in the art room painting on my cow picture when Mary Dashiell ran in saying that the college was on fire. We jumped up, leaving everything and went out into the hall. At the west end was much smoke pouring through the cracks in the floor. All of us ran for water and kept the three faucets going while we filled pitchers from the bedrooms and poured water on the cracks in the west room. Soon the fire engine came and the firemen swarmed the fourth floor.

We girls ran down to our rooms and began to take out our things. I grabbed my trunk and carried it down two flights of stairs. When the firemen ran up the steps they had to jump over our trunks to get by. At the bottom of the stairs a man took my trunk and pulled it out into the back yard. By this time the college and yard were crowded with men and boys. They bumped trunks down the steps and they threw things

out the windows. They carried some of the pianos down but they were so badly damaged it would take a good deal of time to repair them. The flames soon enveloped the 4th story. From there to all the west rooms nothing was saved. Mary Whitfield and her young niece, Mariannie, lost everything. Also Beulah Matthews, May Carney and Emmie Hughes. Very little was saved from the Art room. All of my pictures except the first one were destroyed. Mary Whitfield ran in there and got an armful of canvasses, six of her pictures and one of mine. I lost six.

We girls were directed over to Dr. Jones' home while the college was burning. The articles which the men saved were being carried over there and piled up in one room. Things were also carried to Mrs. Harrison's and to Mrs. Figures'. Bed clothing and mattresses were being picked up from front and back yards and carried to safely. One bedstead fell on Mr. Harrison and he was badly hurt. While a fireman was standing on the corner of the roof with a hose, the fire broke out behind him and he was surrounded by flames. He jumped six feet to a

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tin gutter pipe which led down and he slid four stories to the ground. I did not see this personally, but heard about it. Dr. Jones went into the north-west room on the fourth floor where the white smoke was boiling up. He was overcome with smoke and fell across the bed. Emmie Hughes went in there to try to save some of her belongings. She had been stopped at the door by the matron, Mrs. Tyner, but she went in anyway and saw Dr. Jones' feet through the smoke. She dragged him out somehow and saved his life. We felt so sorry for Dr. Jones, when he came over to his house he was crying. A lady poured him a stiff drink of whiskey. Mrs. Jones was cool and collected all the while. Jim Jones was crying like a baby.

The citizens of Huntsville soon began to come for some of the girls. My roommates, Mary and Hattie Delaney and Corinne Trice, went to Judge Richardson's. Mary Whitfield, Mariannie, Miss Clark and I were invited to Mr. Martin's by his daughter Miss Gipsey, an art student. I had no cloak nor hat and I was wearing my old satine dress. Ramell Anderson went with us to the Martin home. She loaned me her cape which I put over my head for it was very cold that day. A strong wind was blowing from the east and at one time it was feared that Dr. Jones' home would catch fire. The men tore down the latticed walk between the two buildings and sprayed the house on that side of the college. The dining room was the last room to burn. They saved most of the dishes, napkin rings and other silver, etc. A girl reported that she saw stacks of light bread on the porch at Mrs. Figures (east side). I wish that abominable stuff had burned and I could have saved my paintings.

After we got to Miss Gipsey Martin's we soon had dinner. We were treated elegantly.

They had fine meals. Three courses every day. We played the piano whenever we wanted. Joe Whitsey boards there. He is such a nice fellow. We had fun everyday for five days. Vernon White, Erskine Matthews, Otto Hustis... were up there every night. We played every kind of game there was. Miss Gipsey and Miss Carrie played with

us. Mr. Martin is the cashier of the First National Bank. We only saw him at meals. He was educated in Scotland and came to America just before the war. They live over the bank and have seven rooms. The house is furnished mostly with old fashioned furniture and neatly carpeted. They carry on in style, having two servants. The bank

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is just above the Big Spring. We girls caught colds from being exposed to the bitter weather. I returned to Dr. Jones' home several times to try to find some of my belongings. The first time I went I found Miss Gipsey's plush cape and toque hat. I looked like Joe in "Little Women."

I did find many of my things from our closets which I never expected to see again. I put on my cloak (a kind merchant on the square gave many of the girls black sailors). I bundled up my belongings in an old blue dress and carried them back to Mr. Martins' - right through the main part of town.

The day after the fire my brother Jeff came to see me and left me some money. We were waiting to see if school would open in a few days in Huntsville. I was so glad to see my Buddy.

Dr. Jones tried to get the Seminary. It was not large enough to hold the boarders. There was no public building in

Huntsville that was adequate. He received offers from other cities for him to come there. It was said that he received 10 offers. He and Mrs. Jones inquired about Birmingham, but there was no place open there.

It was decided that the Seminary would be used for day pupils only and they sent us home. Miss Jennie Robinson, Mrs. Babb, Miss Bradford, Miss De Witt, Miss Coulter, Miss Clark and Miss Hardie will teach there.

I hear that Dr. Jones will open a select school in a large hotel on top of a mountain in

Gadsden. I believe I am to go to Athens College to finish this year.



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* SEA CAPTAINS WOULD NEVER TAKE A CAT ABOARD. (ENGLISH)

* IT'S BAD LUCK TO THROW A CAT OVERBOARD, THE ONE WHO THROWS IT WON'T LIVE TO GO HOME. (IRISH). A BLACK CAT IS BAD LUCK. (ENGLISH, SCOTCH AND IRISH)

* A BLACK CAT CROSSING YOUR PATH OR RUNNING ACROSS THE ROAD IN FRONT OF YOU IS BAD LUCK (ENGLISH, IRISH, SCOTCH AND ACADIAN FRENCH)

* IF A CAT WASHES ITS FACE, THE WEATHER WILL COME FROM THE DIRECTION THE CAT IS POINTING. (NEW ENGLAND)

* WHEN A CAT WASHES ITS FACE, COMPANY IS COMING. (ENGLISH)

* TO KEEP A KITTEN FROM WANDERING, RUB ITS FOREPAWS WITH BUTTER. (ENGLISH)

* WHEN YOU MOVE, IT IS BAD LUCK TO TAKE A CAT WITH YOU. (ENGLISH)

* A CAT SHOULD NOT BE LEFT IN A ROOM WITH A SLEEPING BABY LEST IT GET ON ITS CHEST AND STRANGLE IT. (ENGLISH)

* IT IS AN OLD SAYING THAT A CAT HAS NINE LIVES. (ENGLISH)

* IF YOU LOSE A TOOTH AND YOU THROW IT OUT AND A DOG OR CAT

GETS IT, YOU WILL GROW A DOG'S OR CAT'S TOOTH IN ITS PLACE. (NEW ENGLAND)

* WHEN A CAT LAYS ON HER EAR IT IS A SIGN OF RAIN. (GERMAN)

* CATS RUN AND JUMP BEFORE A WIND STORM. (ENGLISH)



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All of God's Creatures

By Cathey Carney

He was struggling for life when she found him - a very small bird in a very large pond. He was just a baby, a little brown bird with a yellow beak, completely submerged except for one eye and part of his beak. After she scooped him out of the water he was very still in her hand, though one eye was half opened.

She cradled the limp being in her hands, trying to support the tiny head. The warmth of her hands gradually revived him somewhat. Occasionally, he would open his eyes and look at the giant who was now patting his feathers with her blouse. "Come on, little bird," she thought to him, "You can do it."

As he tried to right himself, all he could manage was to flex his feet slowly, one at a time.

Soon the warmth of the sun began drying his feathers, and he lifted his head. Wrapping each foot securely around her finger, he began to rock back and forth, slowly, weakly at first then a little stronger.

He was able to open both eyes now, and was getting a bit stronger. It was a warm breezy day, as she sat quietly in the sun with the little animal. The back courtyard was a haven for birds of all kinds, feasting on seeds, nuts and fruit. That's how the bird had run into trouble in the first place, balancing on the fountain and trying to get a drink of water.

By now the baby, fully dried and no longer shivering, had traveled from his place on the her chest to her neck - he seemed to like her hair and nestled there, listening intently to the chirping of the other birds.

She kissed the tip of his little yellow beak and he seemed surprised but allowed it. "I'm happy you are doing better," she thought. "You were almost gone."

She lifted him from underneath her hair and he looked up at her from his perch on her finger, tried out his wings, then was gone. She watched him fly from branch to branch of a small tree in the courtyard. "Watch out for cats, little bird," she said. "And ponds."

Maybe it was her imagination, but as she turned to go into the house, it seemed as if the birds were singing much louder than normal.



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- 1 T. VANILLA

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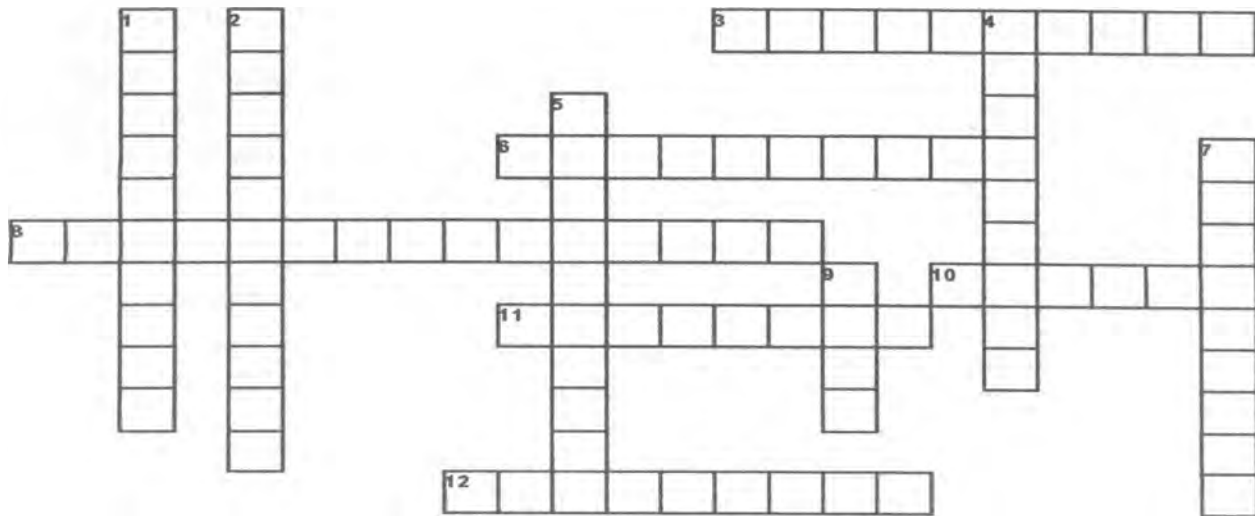
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Old Huntsville Crossword Puzzle

The information for this crossword puzzle comes from this issue! See how well you can do! Solution will be in next month's magazine.



Across

- 3 Avoid this by staying out of the kitchen
- 6 My nerves! My heart!
- 8 Town Drunk
- 10 Founded by Dr. Fearn
- 11 This sister was able to take care of herself
- 12 Medical Spring

Down

- 1 A cowboy and a cavalryman
- 2 Harry's sidekick
- 4 Rodrigo and Gonzalo hailed from here
- 5 Patron of Scuppernon club
- 7 A beloved's name is carved in stone here
- 9 Gets rid of fish odors in your pots

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Right Ear:

Someone is not speaking well of you.

Left Ear:

Your lover or a loved one is thinking of you.

Right Palm:

If the palm of the right

hand itches, money is coming to you.

Left Palm:

Money will have to be paid out by you! Rub your palms on wood for good luck in both cases.

Feet:

If the underpart of the foot

itches, you will soon tread on strange grounds.

Nose:

An itching nose means you will be kissed, cursed, or vexed, run against a gatepost, or shake hands with a fool.

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Tweetie's Pet Tips



* If your dog or cat has asthma and is on the heavy side, time to put him on a diet! That extra weight is making it harder for your pet to breathe. A humidifier will help him to breath easier too.

* Does your pet have an itch that she just won't let alone? Dab a bit of apple cider vinegar on it for relief.

* See a tick on your pet? Simply put a dab of Vaseline on and around the tick, let set for 10 minutes. The tick will loosen his hold to get air, just remove him with a Kleenex and squash him.

* If your pet suffers from a urinary tract infection, mix 1-2 oz. of cranberry juice into your pet's food, this boosts the acidity of the urine which will help relieve his discomfort.

* When you give your dog a bath don't get water in the ears - could cause ear infection. If she has dirty ears, just wipe with a soft cloth that has been dipped into a 1/2 water and 1/2 vinegar solution.

* If your pet's food and water dishes keep sliding around on the floor, just put them on a rubber mat.

* Want to keep ants from getting in the food dish? Put the

food dish into a larger pan with 1/2 inch of water in it.

* If your pooch likes to dig in the back yard, just pour a little cayenne pepper into the hole, he'll not be crazy about that weird feeling he gets on his tootsies.

* Dr. Gullett tells us that a toxin for dogs & cats is grapes & raisins, as they cause anemia. Some pets might be OK, but why take the chance?

* A reader wrote that when her dog gets constipated she just mixes a tablespoon of coconut or olive oil into the food for a day or two - does the trick!

* Don't ever give your pet mineral oil - if it gets ingested into the lungs it will be there for life and can cause major problems down the road.

* For your asthmatic cat, use only dust-free cat litter - this will make a huge difference.



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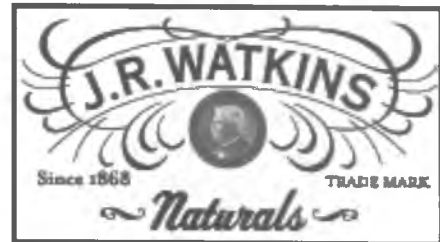
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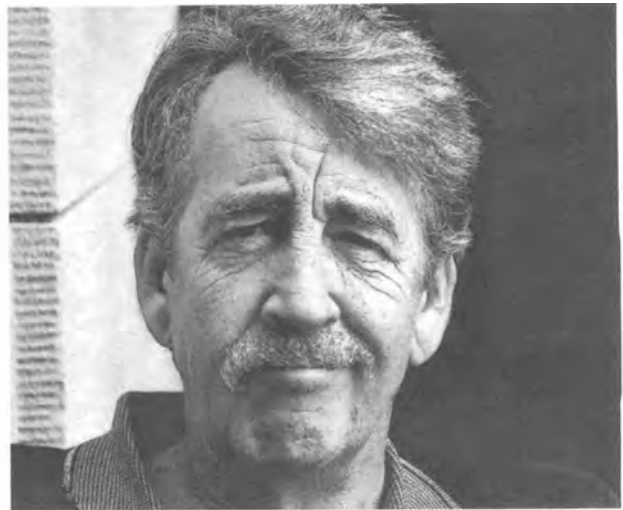
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From the Desk of Tom Carney

As our readers may not know, all of the stories you have been reading for the last 22 years that had no author listed, were written by Tom. He just called himself the copy boy, but he was so much more than that.



La' Overture Toussaint

Teaching school was just about the worst job he could imagine. Confined in a classroom for eight hours a day, it seemed to spell the end to his musical aspirations.

But for Willie Handy, it was a job. At least it put food on the table.

Born in 1873, as the son of a Methodist preacher, Willie decided at a young age he wanted to be a musician. But his family, all stalwart hell-fire and brimstone, God-fearing people, thought a musician was nothing but a blatant sinner in disguise.

In an effort to pacify his father, who wanted him to become a minister, Willie agreed to finish school and take the examination to become a schoolteacher. After graduation, however, he found the job opportunities in Birmingham to be much more profitable. He soon landed a job at one of the iron mills working as a laborer, making more money than he could ever expect to make as a teacher.

Willie had not lost his desire to be a musician, though. He quickly became friends with most of the black musicians in Birmingham and it was not long before he had formed his own group and was playing around town at night while still working in the mills during the day. One of the first gigs he had in Birmingham, according to leg-

end, was playing in a notorious dive. The owner, after listening to the audition, asked what the group's name was.

"Don't have one." Willie replied.

"Well, what's your name?"

"Willie."

"Sounds like a damn Uncle Tom name to me. What's your whole name?"

"William Christopher."

"Hell, that's even worse! We'll just call you by your initials."

W.C. Handy soon tired of Birmingham, though, and moved to Huntsville where he got a job teaching at Alabama A&M as a music instructor. Among his many duties as an instructor, Handy was also responsible for organizing recitals for his students.

Unfortunately, the headmaster at A&M believed that classical music was the only music that should be performed. He even insisted on personally approving the programs for every recital.

For his first recital Handy chose a piece, written by an obscure song-writer, he said, entitled, "La' Overture Toussaint." With a name like that, it was no trouble getting the headmaster to approve it. Handy diligently

rehearsed the students, who were by this time enraptured with the new musical composition.

The day of the concert arrived and it was an instant success. Even the staid headmaster was seen sitting in the front row tapping his foot to the music.

W.C. Handy's career as an instructor did not last long. He was still determined to make his mark as a musician. After leaving Huntsville, he moved to Memphis where he wrote the all-time classic, "Memphis Blues," which he sold for \$100. Still a poor man, he next ended up in St. Louis, and after being forced to sleep in alleys and pool rooms, composed the song "Saint Louis Blues," a song that made him wealthy and famous and earned him the title of "Father of the Blues."

Ironically, he was to become best known for the piece he had composed while teaching at A&M—after he changed its name to "My Ragtime Baby."

"I've been called many things, but never an intellectual."

Tallulah Bankhead

THE HISTORIC VILLAGE OF VIDUTA ON MONTE SANO

Monte Sano mountain sits just above downtown Huntsville. It has since the early 1800's been an escape for valley residents. The Village of Viduta was founded atop the mountain by Dr. Thomas Fern and his brothers Robert and George in the 1830s as a summer getaway for wealthy local residents: it was centered in the northern portion of Monte Sano's flat top around what was believed to be a medicinal spring.

By the late 1800s, however, the town had become so acclaimed that the North Alabama Improvement Company, with the assistance of Michael and James O'Shaughnessy, set forth to construct a health resort and spa to capitalize on the area's reputed healing properties.

The result was the Hotel Monte Sano, a three-story, 223-room, Queen-Anne-style hotel that would eventually come to accommodate patrons from as far away as Atlanta, Nashville, and Memphis. The hotel became more popular than ever as a result, and soon expanded its offerings to include horseback riding, parties, lawn bowling, and croquet, among other leisurely activities. As for the guest list, it also expanded, and would eventually include such notable dignitaries as William H. Vanderbilt, Jay Gould, and William Waldorf Astor.

But the hotel's most famous guests were, at the time, not that famous at all. A local legend tells of a young couple who met at the hotel one summer; they spent hours gazing at the view from a rock that sat not too far from the hotel. Eventually they fell in love, and many years later, the man returned and purchased the property for his beloved - including the rock, into which he had carved her name. Thus, the rock became known far and wide as "Ella's Rock."

Sadly, Ella passed away as a young woman. But each year, her devoted husband continued to celebrate her life by inviting family and friends to meet him at Ella's Rock for a champagne toast to her.



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THE BEST OF TIMES AND THE WORST OF TIMES

By Malcolm Miller

When this story comes out it will be the beginning of October and that means cotton picking time, a time that I dreaded as a farm boy because picking cotton to me was the worst job on the farm. Believe me there were a lot of hard jobs on the farm always needing to be done all the year round, however nothing I had to do was as hard as bending over picking cotton and pulling that seven and a half foot cotton sack. To make matters worse there were the cotton burs sticking in my fingers till they bled and stayed sore all the time, and just when you thought things couldn't get any worse a stinging worm would nail you and it felt like a coal of red hot fire had hit your hand.

I have had back trouble all my life and bending over all day under the hot sun made my back hurt terribly, finally when I was about twelve or thirteen years old I managed some how to get a pair of knee pads, this helped a lot as far as relieving both my knee and back pain.

I remember like it was yesterday picking cotton and watching the rural mail carriers flying by in their shiny cars; however never in my wildest dreams did I think I would some day be the mail carrier driving by and see-

ing those poor souls bent over dragging those cotton sacks. My back would hurt just watching them. At the time I got my rural route a lot of people had gone to cotton picking machines but there were still some folks out there pulling those sacks and it made me feel like the luckiest man alive. I often offered a little prayer of thanks that I no longer had to pull a cotton sack ever again and another prayer for those poor people in the Alabama sun.

In the title of this story I said it was the best of times and the worst of times. I already told you the worst of times now comes the best of times part of the story. Along about the last of September or the first of October came the most exciting time of the year for this farm boy. We usually had picked and sold several bales of cotton so it was time for our yearly trip into town. I was always so excited that I couldn't sleep the night before and we were up before sun up and as soon as the feeding of the stock and the milking was done Papa would hitch two mules to the old two horse wagon and we would head to town. I don't remember how many of us went because some of the older boys had married and my brother Gib went into the army when I was nine years

old - that would be nineteen thirty six.

The roads were not very good in those days and it was an awfully bumpy ride from Ryland to Huntsville in a mule drawn wagon but I was willing to endure the bumpy ride because I knew what it meant to go on this trip.

There were two parking lots for wagons that I remember, one was behind Dunnnavants and the other behind Dobsons, both on Washington Street, and both parking lots were about full of wagons and mules when we got there. As soon as we piled out of the wagon we most always headed up Washington Street


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to J. C. Penneys. It seems that Papa always bought our clothes and shoes there. I got the same exact kind of shoes every year, I remember they were brown and had a narrow cap on the toe, they had rubber soles and I still remember they were called panco soles.

We would get two pairs of overalls, two shirts, two pairs of long handle under wear, two or three pairs of socks, a jacket of some kind and a cap.

Keep in mind these things had to last us a whole year and when we went to town to buy these things we had on the clothes and shoes we bought the year before, with patches on top of patches on my overalls and shirt and shoes that Papa had repaired over and over. Lots of times I would have cardboard in my shoes to stop up the holes in the soles.

My mother never had store bought clothes. She made hers from sugar and flour sacks and an occasional piece of material bought from the traveling store. She would trade a chicken or two for that material. After we left J.C.Penneys Papa would go buy the staple food supplies that

we didn't raise. He would buy what was called a barrel of flower which was either twenty four or forty eight pounds, a stand of pure lard, coffee, sugar, salt and other bare essentials. For some reason I can't remember where Papa bought the groceries.

Usually when the shopping was done we would head for the Little Jem Cafe for hamburgers and drinks and if there was enough time and money left we would take in a picture show before heading back home on that long bumpy ride.

I recall one year after I got a little older Papa let me buy a pair of wing tip dress shoes. It sounds foolish now but they were the first dress shoes I ever owned so I would sit with one foot sticking over the wagon side until I got out of the city limits. I was so proud of my shiny new dress shoes. At that moment my thrill over the wonderful trip and my new shoes made all the toiling with a cotton sack completely worth while.



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How a Northern Man Sees Huntsville, 1875

This letter was written by Mr. H. Mears, who recently located to Huntsville. He sent the letter back to his friends in the frozen regions about Port Huran, in Michigan. It describes what he experienced in Huntsville, and wants his old friends to get a feeling of our city. His letter was published in both the Huntsville and the Port Huran newspapers in 1875.

"We left Decatur Monday morning, and one hour's ride brought us to the beautiful city of Huntsville, called the Garden City of the South. A more beautiful spot I never have seen. Surrounded by high hills, it lies in a valley, one side is the Monte Sano. Upon the top of this mountain you can get one of the finest views in this country. Here you can see the Tennessee Valley, the Allegany and Cumberland Mountains and a general view of the country for miles around. This city has a public square, and the principal businesses face round the square. Here they have a very fine Court House with a city clock sounding the hours plain enough to be heard all around. The business houses are brick, similar to those in Port Huron and about as many. Around the immediate vicinity of Huntsville are several old Planters Homes.

Here within half a mile you can take your choice of as fine land as you ever saw cultivated for \$10-20 per acre. Just think of what your lots on the Reserve cost, and they are not to be compared to anything here. A lot that would be considered cheap (100x75 feet) at \$100 in Port Huron here with the same money you could buy 40 acres of land right in sight of the city, where you could grow everything except tropical fruits. You could raise your corn and sell it quick

for \$1.25 a bushel. The people here seem to be cotton-crazy. If they left cotton more alone and devoted their attention to raising wheat, corn, potatoes and garden vegetables a man would be wealthy in just a few years. Yesterday I rode and saw some farms owned by Northern men

farming. When you see the two farms as you do here, side by side, you can see at once what northern white labor can do. The large landowners here are willing to do almost anything to get white people to come here from the North to work. Nowhere can you go and be met

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with such warm friendships as with the people of Huntsville. I was introduced to L. P. Walker, Jeff Davis' Secretary of War, a splendid man and a gentleman. He expressed himself warmly in regard to getting good working white men to come south and laughed at the idea of a northern man not being allowed to live here.

I have been introduced to all prominent people here and they are brim full of kindness and don't hesitate to do all they can to make you comfortable and happy. This is election day in Huntsville, and the law is that the day previous to the election, day of election and day after, no liquor is allowed to be sold anywhere.

There is a wonderful spring here. It rushes out from the side of a rock about 70 feet high, is cool and clear as St. Clair river water and has force enough to turn the water wheel and forces water through pipes leading all over the city with as much force as your celebrated Holly Works. Here is beautiful air, pure water, fine land and the most beautiful scenery as to be seen anywhere North. There are the kindest and most wonderful people you'll ever meet. I am satisfied and pleased to squat here and try to make a home for myself and family. The city is situated in the northern part of the state, on the Memphis & Charleston railroad. A railroad from St. Louis to the seaboard via Huntsville will soon be completed and several other roads are spoken of. It is the largest city of North Alabama and the business center of that part of the State. Extreme cold is never known here, the summers are free from extreme heat and it is a great resort for invalids from the North. Come, all you coughing, weak-lunged people, here you will get a new lease on life and soon lose your old hacking coughs you all enjoy so freely up in Port Huran. Huntsville has a female college,

a female seminary, two high schools for boys, besides a free school; churches of all denominations, good hotels especially the Huntsville House - a large elegant building facing almost upon the public square and within a few steps of the great spring. Several manufacturing houses are in operation and the farming land cannot be beat.

I hope someday to see all my old friends come down here to live and enjoy life. There is plenty of room, business is good and the people all will welcome you with warm hearts to your new homes." Yours truly, H. Mears

Here is the letter Mears received back from the Mayor of Port Huran:

"Friend Mears. Your kind letter, informing us of the safe arrival of yourself and your family at Huntsville, Ala. has been received.

While we were loath to lose you in our town, we are happy to hear of the good fortune you find in Huntsville. You are one

of the most energetic, hard-driving businessmen and my friend, and will be missed.

There is one thing, however, that I must find fault with, particularly as I am a resident here and at the head of the city government: the fact that you wrote to our newspaper in Port Huran and your letter was published. I am unhappy about that because it has turned the heads of one half of our citizens southward. If you keep on writing I am fearful that you will draw away a large number of our people. I was talking with the editor of the "Commercial Herald" today about it and told him that if it continued, I would have to place an embargo on his paper.

I cannot blame you however for being so delighted with the weather. I know what it is and can certainly appreciate it, but for heavens sake don't depopulate our city.

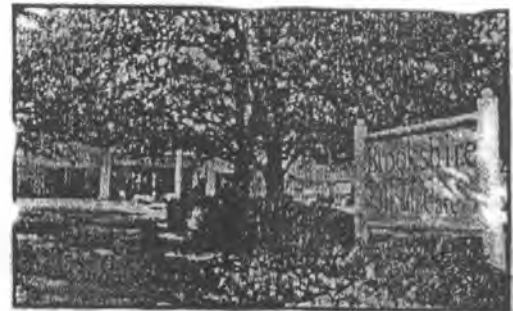
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THE SAGA OF HARRY COONS

by Charlie Lyle

My friend Harry Coons was born about 1928-29. Harry was a happy, jovial, care free and well liked individual. His father was a well known and respected dentist. Harry had two sisters Sue and Viola. Dentistry had come a long way from whisky and pliers. When I knew I had to go to the dentist I was terrified of the needle and the drill.

Harry lived on the north east corner of Williams and Gates street, just a couple of blocks from where I lived in an apartment house.

Back during the early forties and World War II, citizens were asked to plant vegetable gardens and other food products. So Harry and I had a vegetable garden and we bought some little yellow chickens. We worked on our project after school and later sold our goods for spending money.

One day I was looking at a catalog and something caught my eye, it was a devise that had a microphone and a small electronic box that could break through a radio frequency and do so in a quiet way.

I was overwhelmed that such a thing was possible. I saved my money and ordered the device unbeknownst to my parents. When I told Harry about it the wheels started spinning. People in those days kept their radios on all the time for soap operas and war news and so on, so we came up with an idea to scare Mrs. Coons, Harry's mother.

We planned to get in a secluded place in Harry's house. We said "Ladies and gentlemen there has been a terrible earth quake and tidal wave in California, the whole coast is in chaos. Many experts say it is the end of the world." We made crashing wave sounds with our mouth.

Harry's sister Sue was in town so she was a lady an-

nouncer. Mrs. Coons could be heard saying "I've got to call Harry Sr. at work." We immediately announced, "Please by all means do not use your telephones, they are needed desperately."

Can you imagine when our plot was discovered what happened? Dr. Coons sat us down and gave us a terse sermon on what we had done. He said it frayed Ms. Coons nerves and one could have a heart attack with such disturbing news. You could tell he was not to happy about the whole thing.

The wheels were always spinning with Harry. Harry's great passion was to be a magician. I was to be Harry's side kick and announcer. After all, Harry was older than I.

Well, a big show was advertised and to be held at West Clinton grammar school. The big day finally came.

Harry had a special introduction I was supposed to say, so I stood out in front of the curtain and announced with a strong voice, "Ladies and gentlemen I present to you the fantastic, the wizard of magic, professor, Harry, Joshua, milky way mars bars and forever yours Harry Coons." Well,

Harry like most magicians did his card tricks, coin tricks and the old shell game trick.

But every one was so excited about how he was going to make a man float. Harry had perfected a float trick that used two wooden golf clubs with shoes and socks and a sheet over the person whose torso was embedded in sheets so when the person raised the shoes on the clubs up in the air and swayed back and forth, he looked just like a person floating and made his exit at the other side of the stage. The kids could not believe their very eyes - they were ecstatic. He must be a person with great magical powers.

Harry Coons passed away a few years ago. Harry may be gone, but never forgotten. Harry may have had magical powers that we were not aware of.

This article is dedicated to the family of Harry Coons.

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MY MEMORIES OF TOM CARNEY

by Andy Myers

As long as I can remember, and given that I was born in 1986 my physical memory is limited to that of a mere twenty-four years, there have always been stacks of Old Huntsville magazines displayed around my mother's house. From the sun drenched living room coffee table to the cavernous upstairs bathroom we lovingly call the "library", the crinkling sound of the fragile newsprint always heralded in a peaceful half hour or so of reading.

The stories always struck a nerve with me and knowing every nook and cranny of Huntsville I could always recall the streets and places mentioned or ask my Grandmother if she knew of a certain person from long past. I collected the stories in my mind, treasuring them and retelling the tales to all I knew. From Judge Lawler to Isham Hobbs, John Hunt to General Mitchell, the stories ran through my veins making me feel as though I had been alive a thousand years as well as turning the land of Huntsville into a hotbed of history for a young boy.

When the annual Trade Day on the Square downtown would arrive my two posts would always be the Army surplus man and the Old Huntsville table where they sold stacks of back issues for next to nothing. Walking home loaded with two armfuls of magazines and possibly an Army flashlight or a new pocketknife, my mind swam with the hours I would spend pouring over these items.

As the seasons changed and the years flew by with reckless abandon I watched my hometown go through a boom and

expand well beyond its swelling borders. The old farmland was scarred and gashed with dozer blades, the ancient trees that saw our county's earliest settlers toppled and shredded to tons of mulch.

Even the forgotten cemeteries, tangled with Virginia creeper and greenbrier, the tombstones leaning with words of faded sentimentality, the crushed bones beneath the forested depths still warm from the heat of living, even they would fall victim to the vicious blades of progress.

With them, the elder members of our community began to disappear, the ones who served in World War I, the ones who worked in the mills, the ones who remembered the way the world once was. Like a shadow in the setting sun they faded into memory, some into the bleached walled wards of nursing homes where the fluorescent bulbs would numb a spirit into a perpetual twilight, and some into the hallowed grounds of Maple Hill Cemetery to lie with their ancestors for an eternity.

Their houses were emptied of furniture with family members taking what they wanted and the rest distributed to strangers through weekend estate sales where people piled through the private places and dug through old books and the pictures of a life quickly fading.

Their homes would sit empty until a prospective buyer surveyed the grounds and walked the halls seeing the worn door-knobs and radiators. Soon the ancient plaster walls, crafted by hand and held together with lime and horsehair would fall victim to the crash of a demolition hammer. The walls would be gutted, porches torn off, well loved gardens becoming the nighttime resting places of bulldozers and trailers filled with the house's memory-soaked walls.

As this pattern began to swim all around my neighborhood, devouring up the people and places I knew as home, I began to see the duty before me of recording in some way the memories of this old society that was fast disappearing. I began an extensive genealogical research project knowing that I had bitten off more than I could chew, perhaps in a subconscious act of penance for not being born earlier.

I learned how to read old census records, land records, and plat maps. I poured over wills and tax records, I began to question my grandmother about every old photograph in her plantation desk. I learned how my ancestors spent their days, when they came to Madison County, what kind of crops they grew, when they lost children, or when they lost their own lives for their beliefs.

I took on a cemetery restoration project, clearing out privet and dead trees to expose the periwinkle traditionally planted around cemeteries. And finally a picture began to emerge, a stark, nearly biblical epoch that mirrors a thousand other families and carves out a raw story of human struggle and existence, of hopes lost and gained, and of fears triumphed and realized.

After a routine midday excursion into the dark recesses of the Huntsville library, I went to visit my Uncle Hall at his Holmes Avenue office and share

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Slice country cured ham in 1/2" slices. Cut gashes in the fat to keep the ham from curling up, then place the slices in a heavy skillet. Cook slowly, turn a couple of times until meat is browned.

Remove from pan and add half a cup of hot water to the drippings. Cook til the gravy turns red, then add 1/4 cup black coffee. Serve hot with Ham & Biscuits.

a little of what I had recently turned up.

After spending twenty or so minutes looking over the documents and making plans to go through some old photographs he had at his house, I began to collect my belongings and noticed a new edition of Old Huntsville on his desk. He saw me reading the headline and asked me if I had read through that issue yet. After telling him I had not, he tossed the magazine towards me and said to take it home. He paused a moment and took it back, opening to the first few pages.

"There's someone I want you to meet today," he told me. Soon Uncle Hall was on his phone and his face lit up with conversation. Deep guffaws of laughter peppered his conversation as he told this mysterious person on the other end of his nephew and how he was coming to see him in just a few minutes. "Alright Andy, I want you to go to this address, that's where Tom Carney lives, he writes the Old Huntsville magazine, he knows you're coming."

As I got into my car and drove over to Clinton Avenue my head swam blankly as to what I would say to such a legendary person, a person whose words I had read for the bulk of my life. Thinking of Uncle Hall's oft repeated rewording of the old adage, "You can bring your horse to water but you can't make him drink", I ambled up to their front door.

I knocked several times and a woman I recognized from the Heard on the Street section of Old Huntsville appeared and welcomed me into their home. She said that Hall had called and that Tom was in his office above their garage. I walked up the flight of wood deck stairs and through the door's windows could see a man sitting in a chair at his desk seemingly in deep thought. I quietly knocked and he motioned for me to come in.

As I entered the room, Tom Carney stood up and, towering over me, reached out to shake my hand to introduce himself. He welcomed me to sit down and my eyes scanned the room. His office was filled with old books, periodicals, and an array of antique memorabilia leaning against the walls.

He asked to see my genealogical book and so I showed him what I had found out so far with names, birthdays, death dates, and marriage dates. We small-talked for a while about Huntsville, and I told of how I had been reading his magazine nearly my entire life. He spoke of growing up in Hurricane Valley with his grandfather, who had raised him, his expressions accented by the movements of his thick mustache and eyebrows.

We spoke of music and history with him telling me the story of Elvis playing at the Huntsville Coliseum in the 1950's and not receiving the warmest of welcomes. I relayed a story of playing in Germany on a music tour and we talked about why Europeans are so interested in Southern American culture.

Towards the end of our conversation I mentioned that I wrote as well and Tom invited me to write a story for him. This honor excited and inspired me and after I shook his hand goodbye he invited me to come back anytime. Driving home my mind burned with a deep enthusiasm as the day's serendipitous occurrences replayed through my head.

Over the next few days I began to write my story and the words began to pour out sometimes at a languid pace and occasionally in coffee-infused spurts. I read and reread the finished product and when the right time came I drove back over to Mr. Carney's home and delivered the paper to him.

I continued my daily tasks for the day of cutting various

lawns and working in my vegetable garden and in a short time my phone rang with an unknown number. I answered the call and soon realized it as the deep voice of Tom Carney. The connection was going in and out and I struggled to make out some words though the ones I heard brought a proud smile to my face as Tom Carney told me of how much he enjoyed reading my article and how it would be in the next issue of Old Huntsville.

For the next day or so it would hard to wipe the smile off my face as I thought of Mr. Carney's kind words. Within a month the story was released and it soon proudly found its way to the top of the other Old Huntsville magazines on my mother's coffee table.

As the summer began I vowed to write more stories and go visit Mr. Carney again, though the events of that particular day always stood in the way and soon several months had passed.

In mid June on a visit to see friends in Raleigh, North Carolina, I received an early morning phone call from my Uncle Hall telling me that Tom Carney had died a few days before.

I thought of Mr. Carney throughout the day regretting not visiting him again and not writing more and thinking of how time and fate plays with our lives.

Upon my return home to Huntsville I began to reread some of the early issues of Old Huntsville with a new sense of perspective of the man who so fervently collected and told these stories of our town and who so humbly wished only to be credited as the "copy boy" not knowing the great impact he truly had on myself and the many more he reached with his words.



HEARD AROUND TOWN IN 1923

A minister gets a thrashing

A local minister whom we will not name had a bad day of it recently. He received a sound thrashing by the new groom in return for a "fatherly" kiss bestowed on the pretty bride. "He grabbed me about the waist, and held me so tight and I was fighting so that he got a terrible scratch. He was trying to reach my mouth."

After struggling for about 5 minutes he succeeded in kissing her on the cheek, right before he received the thrashing by the furious groom.

Community House Baths

Mrs. Hewlett of the Community House wishes to announce that the Baths will be open for three days a week now. Hot and cold shower baths will be in operation.

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For two or three year lease - 5 room bungalow on Locust street, currently occupied by E. P. Kingsway, \$40 per month. Also a 5 room house on West Holmes, currently occupied by Dr. Laughlin at \$35 per month. Finally, a 4-room house with large garage, large garden, electric lights, lower end Locust street. Now occupied by Dr. D. E. White, \$17.50 per month

Lost - broach pin, crescent shape, pearls and other stones between Elks theatre and business section. Finder call Miss

"Complete set of Encyclopaedia Britannica, 45 volumes for sale. No longer needed - got married, wife knows everything."

Recent classified ad

Ethel Dennis, 307 Calhoun, phone 3745. No questions asked.

For sale - household goods from parlor to kitchen. Also one Ford Sedan. See Mrs. S. E. McNatt, 205 East Clinton street. Get a bargain.

Lost - gold breast pin. Finder please return to bungalow, corner White and Randolph streets.

Mr. And Mrs. Charles T. Landman have moved to their apartments in Minis Court For Sale - one flat top mahogany finish desk. Call and see at 427 White street.

For rent - 429 W. Holmes - an apartment consisting of three connecting rooms, front porch and large back porch, also large garden. Phone 154-W

For sale - cheap hogs and pigs. If you want pigs or hogs come to see me. D. B. Jett, Brownsboro, Route 1

For sale - Liquid Waxine, the famous furniture floor and automobile cleaner and polisher. Nothing better, can be bought at the home of W. S. Garvin, 708 Randolph Street

One case in City Court

There was only one case in City Court this morning, that of Floyd Wallace, colored, who was up on a charge of disorderly

conduct. He plead guilty to hitting a Negro woman in the head with a hatchet and was fined \$10.

A. C. Cruse died yesterday

A. C. Cruse died yesterday at noon after an illness of several days with pneumonia at his home on Pike street in Huntsville and his remains were shipped over the N&C Railway today to Carlisle, his old home, for burial. Mr. Cruse was 52 years of age and is survived by three sons and two daughters.

City Council Squabbles

Mrs. White and Mrs. Schiffman were present representing the Library board and stated that the Library was in need of a heating apparatus in view of the fact that it was heated by the same furnace that heats the city hall and that after the city hall closed in the afternoon the library had to close on account of being without heat. The council voted to install gas heaters in the library to be used when needed to heat the building.

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ONLY HALF GUILTY

from 1902 newspaper

A fellow named Donks was tried recently for entering a boarding house and stealing the owner's wallet containing \$84.

The testimony showed that he had once been employed there, and knew exactly where the owner kept his wallet; that on the specified day he raised a window, reached, in and took the wallet off the dresser and then ran off.

Jim Duller, the principal witness, testified that he saw the window being raised, saw the man reach in, and heard him run away. "I rushed after him at once," continued the witness, "but when I caught him I didn't find the wallet. But it was found afterward where he had thrown it."

"How far did he enter the house when he took the wallet?" asked the counsel.

"Well, he was stooping over, halfway in, I should say," said the witness.

"May it please your Honor," interposed the counsel. "The indictment isn't sustained, and I shall demand an acquittal of the court. The prisoner is on trial for entering a dwelling in the night time, with intent to steal. The testimony was clear that he made an opening, through which he protruded himself about halfway, and stretching, committed the theft. But the indictment charges that he actually entered the dwelling. How, your Honor, can a man enter a dwelling when one half of his body is in and the other half is out?"

The jury brought in a verdict of "guilty as to half of the body and not guilty as to the other half."

The judge sentenced the guilty party to two year's imprisonment, leaving it to the prisoner's option to have the innocent part cut off or take it along with him.



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Top 10 Books of Local & Regional Interest

1. *Growing up in the Rocket City: A Baby Boomer's Guide* (over 200 photos/illustrations) by Tommy Towery \$15
2. *Treasured Alabama Recipes (signed)* by Kathryn Tucker Windham \$15.95
3. *Huntsville Entertains* by Historic Huntsville Foundation \$18.95
4. *Remembering Huntsville: 131 Vintage Photographs* by Jacque Reeves \$16.95
5. *Change Huntsville 1890-1899* by Elizabeth Humes Chapman \$10.00
6. **BEST SELLER: Project Paperclip: German Scientists and the Cold War** \$18.95
Kathryn Tucker Windham \$7.95
7. *Shadows on the Wall - Life and Works of Howard Weeden* by Roberts & Fisk \$30
8. *Long Ago in Madison County* by Allie Norris Kenny & Sarah Huff Fisk \$7.95
9. **BEST SELLER: Historic Plantations of Alabama's Black Belt** by Jennifer Hale \$18.95
10. *Lost Writings of Howard Weeden* by Fisk & Riley \$20.00

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