



No. 227

January 2012



Old Huntsville

HISTORY AND STORIES OF THE TENNESSEE VALLEY

THE LIFE OF HERMAN MERCER



Herman Mercer was a homeless man. You could not get him to stay away from his camp for very long. He was worried to death that someone would get his spot, or go through his meager belongings, or worse, make a mess.

His compulsive, protective attitude towards his camp probably cost him his life.

Also in this issue: Civil War Memories

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**A Hardware Store....
The Way You Remember Them**

Domie Lewter
Mac Lewter

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Herman Mercer

by Steve Johnson

I'll never forget it as long as I live. Heading west up Chapman Mountain towards Huntsville, on the east-bound side of I-565 was Herman Mercer. He was moving pretty good, too. My wife and I were driving into town from our Maysville home. I told her who he was, and that he would be at our family business tomorrow, and he was.

We had not seen Herman at Aluminum Can Buyers in quite a while. We were taken by this homeless man, his stories and mannerisms. We'd had mixed results with the homeless and Reagan Refugees. They once had a camp behind our shop, and the squalor was horrible. Humans living as rats. Still, we tried compassion when we could, and got tough when we had to. Herman seemed different, and I was glad to see him.

Herman was born in south Georgia, and by a circuitous route, wound up in Huntsville. Twice. He came from a large family, of which he rarely spoke. He had a criminal background, including prison stints

in various states. Once, it was for assaulting a police officer. I never questioned him about it, I believed and still believe he'd had all of prison he wanted. You could barely get him to sleep under a roof. He was a loner, an almost feral man. I could never have imagined how his life could have become so intertwined with mine.

He stood about five foot four, and might have weighed 150 pounds. With a cinder block in his back pocket. He had dark hair, which he slicked down with lotion. Please don't ask me why, he just did. He had that red clay farm boy look, one that I knew well from growing up in north Alabama.

Herman's parents were hard-scrabble farmers, according to him. He came from a family of eight children, but I never met any of his brothers or sisters. This only mattered to me when I wanted to give him a decent burial.

Herman came to Huntsville from Chattanooga, returned there, and was on his way back when we saw him. They had a tight clamp on the homeless, and he got caught up in it.

He was in court, told his lawyer he was going to the restroom, and, knowing him, did not slow down much until he got here. He said Huntsville had a reputation for being easy on the homeless.

He hunkered down close to Pinhook Creek under one of the elevated downtown exchanges.

"I find that the harder I work, the more luck I seem to have."

Thomas Jefferson



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716 East Clinton Ave.
Huntsville, Ala. 35801

(256) 534-0502

Email - oldhuntsville@knology.net
Internet Home Page
www.oldhuntsville.com

Advertising - (256) 534-0502

Sales & Mrktg. - Cathey Carney

Editor - Cheryl Tribble

Gen. Manager - Ron Eyestone

Copy Boy - Tom Carney (in memory)

Contributing Writers:

Malcolm Miller

Chuck Bobo

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**Belinda @ (256) 603-1166
belindabuford@yahoo.com**

**Pat @ (256) 797-0196
patjeffries55@yahoo.com**

It became his home. It was close to the new police facility on Wheeler, and several other homeless people lived around him. He considered himself royalty amongst them, and kept his distance. It was, at best, a rough crowd. Alcohol and drug abuse, and mental illness the order of the day. Herman had an alcohol problem, and was likely mentally ill. These people aren't living this way for the amenities.

He was proud of his camp. He bragged a lot about how the Homeless Coalition said his camp was the cleanest and neatest of anyone's. He considered the missions to be beneath him, and rarely went to them.

You could not get Herman to stay away from his camp for very long. He was worried to death that someone would get his spot, or go through his meager belongings, or worse, make a mess. His compulsive, protective attitude towards his camp probably cost him his life.

Herman was a scrounger and a scrapper. He got up early and hit the bar and fast food parking lots looking for change. Dove dumpsters for aluminum cans and whatever else he might make a little money on. He started coming back to our scrap

yard a lot. We talked and what not, and I began to get to know him a little better. Herman had worked at a scrap yard in Chattanooga and really knew the business.

One day we had a forklift down with a problem in the hydraulic pump. An extremely difficult and expensive repair job. Herman saw it, took it off the machine, fixed it and made it look easy. I asked him why he never told us he could repair stuff. He just smirked and said we'd never asked. Thus began a new era with Herman. One that would change my outlook on people and life forever.

We started letting him work some. It did not take long to see he could not be depended on. He worked on his own schedule, and had more excuses than Alibi Ike. I would get angry and frustrated with him, and dream up a myriad of ways to cause him agony, pain, and worse. Nothing worked, it was

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Henny Youngman

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all water off a duck's back. But, he was a good worker when he showed up, did repairs that had been costing us a fortune, and my men and the customers liked him.

Sometimes he would just up and leave in the middle of the day. I caught up with him a couple of times, and brought him back to work. After a couple of times of that, he told me I would never catch him again, and by golly he was right. Houdini would have been proud...

Pretty soon other talents became apparent. He was a meticulous painter, "merickulous" according to him, a pretty good carpenter, and sheer hell with a weedeater. He washed our cars and trucks and they shined like new money. He raked and trimmed our yard and had all the neighbors howling for his services. He was supremely confident that he was better than anyone else at the things he did, and he was not far off.

Herman had worked regular jobs. He worked at a GM plant in Georgia, did farm work, and once had a paint contracting company. He bragged that he could build a house from the ground up, and I believed it.

One of his prison stints was where they made the DC over-

alls and clothes. Drinking and a bad temper cost him his jobs. I suspect a bad case of being at the wrong place at the right time landed him in jail most of the time. He studiously avoided trouble when I knew him.

Herman never mentioned being married, but with his personality I'm sure he must have had plenty of women in his life. Most of the homeless guys I got to know before him traced their problems to a failed relationship or romance. Herman was way too independent to let a woman get to him. We never talked about when, where, or why he chose to be homeless. We were too busy talking about our lives, the scrap business, or just stuff. He was a very bright and glib man.

He came and went from our business. We would see him a lot and then he would disappear. He got himself a bicycle and then you would see him all over town on it. Herman and his ever present back pack.

"You know you're getting older when your doctor doesn't give you Xrays anymore, but just holds you up to the light."
Bill Drake, Huntsville

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He got to where he wanted to work less and less. Started talking about drawing his social security, and getting an apartment. I got all caught up in it, and after a lot of phone calls I got him his birth certificate from a county in south Georgia that I cannot remember. I got mad at him once and gave it back to him and he promptly lost it. This turned out to be a terrible mistake, as it could have helped us locate his family when he was killed.

A couple of years before his death, Herman had a heart attack, his second. He was able to get to the police facility near his camp, and the police called an ambulance, thus saving his life.

The hospital called us, since Herman told them we were his next of kin. I walked down to the hospital (I had moved back to Huntsville by then) stopped at the drugstore and got him a magazine, and went to his room. The nurses looked at me kind of funny, but I thought nothing of it. Herman was all cleaned up and looked like he was enjoying his stay. When I left, one of the nurses stopped me and asked how I knew Herman. She said

they almost didn't allow me into the room. When I asked why, she said he had the worst case of crab lice they had ever seen. They weren't sure they had gotten them all.

The story surprised us, but it shouldn't have. He had spent so much time at our houses and our office. He never spread them to us, thank goodness.

We are country people, and helping people is, or was, just second nature. We would get mad at Herman and swear he was barred from our business forever. Then he would come in blue from the cold or red from the heat, and we would compete to see who could do the most for him. We ignored the signs of mental illness in Herman. Herman was to us, I guess, what we could have been, with just a slight turn of the hand of fate, our own selves.

Once Herman came in mad and said I owed him thirty dollars. I knew I didn't owe him anything but offered five dollars anyway. He left in a snit.

Pretty soon, people started coming in saying they had seen Herman at our competitors, giving me the business. The

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thirty dollars had become thirty thousand. Then they would see him working for me a few days later. They thought I was crazy. I had, however, just accepted that Herman was Herman, and he was not going to change nor be made right.

It was a great relief to me to finally accept Herman as he was. I am pretty hard bit and jaded myself, and far from perfect. He really came to amuse rather than anger me. Taking care of him as best I could became my priority with him, not trying to change him. He did a lot for me, too, including making a life-hardened heart a little softer. He never tried to take advantage of me.

One time when Herman was doing some painting for me, I drove up to see him shirtless in the front yard. I asked him why, and he said he was pretty sure the woman down the street was interested in him. I bit my tongue. However, I could envision them in her \$85,000 sports car, her hair blowing in the wind. Herman's hair would not have moved at 200 mph.

We let Herman work even after it became more and more obvious that he was going down. He rode around with my Daddy and helped him in his yard and garden as the symptoms of Dad's Alzheimers worsened. Herman seemed to be drinking more and not feeling well. Still, he seemed to have a lot of life left in him.

I had my October trip to Panama City planned for 2005, and Herman promised to work that week. I saw him right before I left, and it was frightening. I had been to city court on Wheeler to prosecute a mis-

creant that had stolen from our business. Herman blew by me on his bike as I was leaving, ranting about something. I followed him to Pratt Avenue and cornered him in front of a business there, and he just seemed to look right through me. He was ranting to beat the band, and had a wild look in his eyes. I had never seen him quite like that. I was in a hurry, and just kind of blew it off.

My friend, my confidant, Herman Mercer. It was the last time I saw him alive.

I went on to Panama City and the weather and the oysters were perfect. Called the office and found out that Herman had worked Monday and Tuesday. He did not show up Wednesday.

I was supposed to leave that Saturday, but I woke up Thursday morning and something just seemed terribly wrong. The ocean was raging, the surf pounding, and the mist heavy. I just did not feel right. I packed my bags and drove back to Huntsville.

When I got back to town, I saw in the Huntsville Times where a homeless man had been shot by the police while they were pursuing an escaped person whom they were booking at the Wheeler Annex. It did not name the victim, but every time a homeless person got flattened walking or biking, or got killed in some newsworthy manner, I always held my breath until I found out it was not Herman. I had a terrible premonition when

I went to bed that night.

Friday's paper came, and Herman was on the front page. The escapee had lit out towards Governors Drive with the police in hot pursuit. Three of them came up on Herman at his camp. They said he had a 13" knife and aggressively confronted them. Herman Mercer was at the wrong place at the right time, one last time. He was shot to death.

When I read the story, I was shattered, heartsick, and angry. Over time, I am simply heartsick for everyone involved. The anger and bitterness have been replaced by the reality of the tough job that is placed on



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"Where will you be sitting in eternity? Smoking or Non-Smoking?"

Seen in church bulletin

a policeman or policewoman. I would not want to deal with some of the people they do, on a regular basis.

Herman had one of our pay stubs on him when he died, and we were contacted by the police.

They were trying to notify next of kin. I called them and the coroner daily to try to arrange a burial for Herman. They needed to find his family, which I understand, before releasing his body. My God, why did I, in my childish anger, give Herman his birth certificate back?

I did not sleep for eight days after Herman's death. I could not sort everything out quite right. This gifted man choosing the path he chose in life, and seemingly happy with it. What happened in Herman's life could have happened to anyone.

The last time I called the police, he said to call the coroner, he thought they had already buried Herman. The coroner verified this, and told me where,

a wonderful site in New Market.

I drove out the next day. I climbed the hill to the cemetery, which has a historical marker as one of the original settlements of Madison County. It is a beautiful place, with old growth trees and the Flint River flowing from Tennessee nearby. Herman would have approved.

I finally found Herman's grave site, a trench where a handful of other of God's wayward children (whose families either did not know or did not care about their deaths) were also buried. I asked God to have mercy on Herman Mercer's soul, and to make him whole again.

A feeling of peace came over me, and I went home. I slept well that night knowing I had done all for Herman that I could.



Amaretto Cookies

2/3 c. butter
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 1 c. sugar
 2/3 c. plain flour
 1/2 c. finely chopped almonds
 1/4 c. corn syrup
 1/4 c. Amaretto di Amore Liquor
 1/2 t. salt

Preheat your oven to 375 degrees. Line cookie sheets with foil and spray lightly with butter spray. In a medium saucepan melt the butter. Remove it from heat, stir in remaining ingredients. Drop by rounded teaspoonfuls 3 inches apart onto the cookie sheets.

Spread each cookie with a spoon to make it thin. Bake for 8-11 minutes until golden. Cool completely on the cookie sheets. Remove and spread filling on the flat side of each cookie, top with another cookie.

Filling:

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And the Moral of the Story...

by M. D. Smith IV

My first interest in cars started when I got a learners permit in 1955 and learned to drive in my father's Buick Special. When I turned 16, they presented me with a wonderful present that was a mixed blessing.


It was a new, 1957 Ford Fairlane 500 two door hardtop. I was thrilled, but soon learned I could not drive it because it was a straight shift and I had learned to drive in an automatic transmission car. Well, let me tell you, I believe in one single afternoon, I mastered a "three on the tree" and in another week, I was shifting and letting out the clutch like a pro.

I promptly used my savings money to replace the two-barrel carburetor with a four-barrel, and the single exhaust system with Dual Exhaust and glass pack mufflers. I may have picked up a few horsepower, but the sound

of it made me feel like I was in a Thunderbird.

It was not too much longer that my father told me a story of when he was younger, he had drilled a hole, put a spark plug in the rear of the exhaust pipe and hooked it through a spark coil and a switch. When he coasted in gear with the ignition off, he could shoot flames out the tail pipe for quite a distance from the raw gas vapor pouring out.

Do YOU think I tried the same thing? You betcha! Blew off the chrome tail pipe extension but what a flame came out as I was coasting down a large hill in gear, cut the ignition and after a few seconds, threw the manual switch on my spark coil hookup. I also got a few mild explosions and after I blew the muffler off of one side of the duals, I decided that I would not do that with the new exhaust pipe. My father was not angry, what could he say? He did



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the same thing. When we traded the car, they wanted to know what that chrome toggle switch mounted on the dashboard near the steering column was used for. We said it was for some extra lights we had taken off.

I was at a boarding school just south of Birmingham, Indian Springs, and had to park my car and leave the keys at the office until Friday afternoon and head into town. The first thing I did was go on a highway that was 5 miles long and straight as an arrow, where we also did our private drag races, and see if my 57 Ford would hit 115 mph. Anything less than 110 and it was going the shop Saturday morning. I put a lot of points and plugs in that car. I remember trying to explain why I needed a new set of rear tires after just 8,000 miles and not much later, why my clutch was slipping so badly my car would not make it up steep hills. I was told the next clutch plate and tires was on my savings, so I stopped drag racing after that.

I was a fairly intelligent boy in school, but I had lots of diversions from girls to guns and hunting. One of my teachers, noting that I was smart but didn't really apply myself, once said to me, "M.D.. you have the right aim in life, but I worry you won't pull the trigger."

By 1962 I was married and attending the University of Alabama, and driving a Chevy, the kind of car that I lost most of my drag races to in earlier years. It was a 3 speed stick also. Judy and I would attend football games when Bear Bryant was coaching and Joe Nameth was the star quarterback. I had a class with Joe and some of the players. It was not a hard class - the History of the Christian Church. But this helped me love to attend the football games because I had transferred from the University of Virginia and they did not win a single game the year and a half that I attended.

Judy and I were at a ball game one Saturday, and there were some nuns in full habit sitting

slightly in front and to the side of us. Behind them were some Tuscaloosa rednecks complaining out loud because some of their view was blocked. One said, "I think I am going to Utah, there only 100 nuns there." The second guy said, "I'm moving to Montana, there are only 50 nuns there." And the third guy said, "Well I'm going to Idaho, there are only 25 nuns living there." As this point one of the nuns turned around and said in a very sweet voice, "Why don't you go to hell, there aren't any nuns there." Love football games.

Our TV station ran live broadcasts from Jackson Way Baptist Church for 30 years. I sometimes attended their services instead of our regular church. We were at a Wednesday night dinner at Jackson Way and they were having and a guest speaker, but he was running late.

The Preacher was starting the after-dinner party. He said when he first came to the church, one of the first confidential talks he had was with a young man who admitted that he had stolen a TV set from a friend, burglarized several homes, lied to everyone, been arrested, loved to smoke dope and had given VD to his

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sister. Lately he was paying for his drugs by stealing from his parents. The preacher said that made a horrible first impression of Huntsville on him and he thought, "What have I gotten myself into?" He went on to say everyone else was nothing like that and he loved the town and all the church members. As he was wrapping up his speech, in comes a local Huntsville politician walking briskly up to the podium and apologizing for being late to give his talk.

He began his talk and his opening lines were, "I am glad to be here, and I'll never forget the very first day our Pastor arrived at the church. I was the very first person to welcome him to Huntsville and to have a long chat with him."

"MORAL of Story, don't be late for Meetings!"

I have a large family. My wife and I have had 8 children and now have 8 grandchildren. Often just a family gathering including Judy's sister and her two kids and a girlfriend or two is 25 people. The youngest is 25 and the oldest is 48. We have had one or two come home to roost for a while, but we strongly encourage all grown children to have their own place to keep harmony in the family. We love them all.

When I was young, they said about love, "If you love something, set it free. If it comes back, it was and always will be yours. If it never returns, it was not yours to begin with." That's a real wise saying. Think of it as a canary in your hand, free to fly. If you hang

on to it too tight, you will surely squeeze it to death and it will die.

But then there is the addendum to this moral. "However, if it sits in your living room, messes up your stuff, eats your food, uses your telephone, takes your money, and never behaves as if you actually set it free in the first place, you either married it or gave birth to it."

I was speaking about my 8 grandchildren. I took one of them shopping around Christmas time and it's easy to lose a 5 year old and this one wandered away and for a short time, I lost him. Soon a mall cop was holding him on his shoulders and walking around and I spotted them. The mall cop said he stopped the boy who said he'd lost his grandpa.

"What's he like?" the mall cop asked my grandson, who promptly replied, "FISHING.. CROWN ROYAL.. AND WOMEN WITH BIG KNOCKERS."

Never tell grandkids something you don't want repeated.



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O'le Dad's Bar-B-Q menu

O'le Dad's Main Course

Pork plate
Rib plates
1/2 Chicken Plate
Ribs (Slab)
Ribs (1/2 Slab)
Whole Chicken
Whole Shoulders

Sandwiches

Pork Sandwich
Turkey sandwich
Rib Sandwich

Sides

French Fries
Potato Salad Pies
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Salads
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Surviving The Depression

by Evelyn Hayden Hodges

The Hoover Administration had hardly begun when the stock market crashed in the fall of 1929.

After the crash, the country sank into the worst depression of its history. Millions of people lost every cent they owned. More factories shut down, stores closed, businesses were paralyzed. Local governments could not collect half their taxes. By the end of 1931 there were 12 million people out of work.

Now, how did the average, everyday person in Huntsville cope with the depression?

First, there was no money. Everybody was scrambling to find work wherever they could. Men and boys rode freight trains from one place to another, looking for work. Even when they found work, it paid very little. A ten-hour workday in the field — hoeing cotton or tobacco — paid 25 cents a day and people picked cotton for 50 cents per hundred pounds. The farmers had a rough time too. All farm prices dropped — cotton fell from \$1 to 5 cents a pound. Corn sold for 25 cents a bushel. Most farmers were deep in debt at the end of the year.

One man recalls that his father, grandfather and uncle all worked at a sawmill for 25 cents a day. On payday, instead of receiving \$1.25 in cash, they were required to take the equivalent in trade at the company store.

Another tells about the people who worked in the cotton mills, eleven hours a day, 6 a.m. to 6 p.m., with an hour off for lunch. The mills owned the houses where most of the workers lived and they would take out the money for rent and utilities. The employee's take home pay was about \$4 a week. This fellow also said that, when

he was fourteen years old, he worked in the mill during the summer vacation and was paid 10 cents an hour. Some jobs paid a little better. My brother worked at a drug store for a dollar a day. One man, who had been a traveling salesman for a Nashville wholesale grocery company, was out of work. So he bought and butchered hogs and ground them, except the hams, into sausage. He cured the hams for use at home and sold the sausage to the public for 20 cents a pound or two pounds for 35 cents.

Groceries were dirt cheap but nobody had any money. So everybody who had any space at all raised a garden. We moved outside the Huntsville city limits so we could keep a cow. We rented a six-room stucco house with a carport and a basement for \$20 a month. We had a large lot with plenty of room for the cow, chickens and a large garden. We had our own milk, butter, eggs and vegetables. We not only grew vegetables for the table in the summer, we canned and pre-

served everything available for winter.

We had fruit trees too. One year we had a big crop of peaches. I recall that my mother sold the surplus fruit to a grocery in town.

I don't remember how many peaches she sold but, I do recall, that they paid her \$15 in gold - a ten dollar and a five dollar gold piece. We never figured out why they paid in gold but that \$15 seemed like a lot of money then.

During the Depression, I was teaching at Rison School for \$65 a month. The highest salary paid to any Madison County teacher then was \$146 to a high school principal. For two or three years Alabama had only enough money to run the schools for seven months. Parents who could afford it, paid tuition for the other two months so their children could complete the full term.

One year the state was so short of funds that they couldn't pay the teachers. So for three



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months they gave us warrants (IOUs). Nobody wanted the warrants but the Alabama Power Company would take them in trade. So I traded my three warrants to the power company for our first electric refrigerator.

Madison County, like the state, also ran short of funds. They didn't have the money to pay people for jury duty. They gave them IOUs called script. There were two or three men in town who bought the script at a big discount from the jurors. Then they collected the full amount when it became due.

Real estate prices fell lower than ever before. In 1935 a farmer, who had 44 acres of land with a house, two barns, and a crib sold it all for \$1,000. Then he bought 153 acres with a house, two barns and a smokehouse for \$1,800. He paid the thousand he got from the sale of his property and signed a mortgage for the \$800. He paid that after he sold his crop the next year.

Young people also felt the pinch of hard times. Getting gasoline for their cars was a problem. Four or five boys would

get together or couples would double-date so they could split the cost of the gasoline. They had no money for movies, so they would go up on Monte Sano and park at one of their favorite gathering places. Sometimes several couples would get together at the home of one of the girls and, if a piano or a guitar were handy, that made it all the better. Picnics, swimming and other inexpensive pastimes were also popular.

There were the popular flour-sack dresses. Back then flour came packed in white cloth bags with the label printed on the front of the bag. It was packed in 24 and 48 pound bags. The milling companies hit upon the idea of packing the flour in cloth bags that were printed in colored designs. A woman would select a pattern that she liked and then she bought flour in that same print until she had enough material to make a dress or other garment for herself or another member of the family.

Prices were in line with what people earned back then but they seem almost unbelievable

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to us today. For example, a lunch consisting of a hot dog, a pint of milk and a piece of pie cost 20 cents, a five pound bucket of peanut butter cost 60 cents and a pound of crackers was 50 cents. Before blue jeans, men and boys wore overalls which cost 50 cents a pair. A four-door model A Ford cost \$665.

By 1937 times were some better but not by a whole lot. I recall that we could buy groceries for two people for \$5.00 a week. That included flour, sugar, coffee, bacon, potatoes, a beef roast and other smaller items.

Times were slowly improving. Even as the Depression wound down and World War II had begun, a frame house sold for three or four thousand dollars and a brick house could be built for around \$5,000.

Most of us survived the Great Depression and it is something we shall never forget, but we truly hope that there will never be another one.



Bigamist Marries Mother, Daughter and Niece

DECATUR, 1914 — Thomas "Piker" Easley, a former resident of our county, is behind bars in the County Jail on a charge of bigamy, having married three women in the same family: the mother, her daughter and a niece.

The marriages were over a period of ten years, during which time he worked as a sawmill hand during the day and a stablehand at night.

The arrest was made on an affidavit sworn by Deputy Sheriff A. S. Grubbs before Magistrate

E.R Raney of Decatur. Sheriff Forman had heard several times of Easley's misbehavior involving damsels in Jackson and Madison counties and was successful Saturday in capturing the man. He was courting another lass at the time.

The sheriff expects to have a hard time finding witnesses willing to testify against Easley. The womenfolk who became his spouses are hesitant to find disfavor with him, saying instead that they would be willing to continue on with him as an amorous quartet.

The defendant, Mr. Easley, however, has rejected attempts to be freed on bond, preferring to stay sheltered safely in the jail house.

Judge John C. Eyster is expected to preside at what should be an interesting trial.

HUNTSVILLE, 1875

* Huntsville was left in total darkness last night, because of the flooded condition of the gas works. Two bridges across Flint River, one at Brownsboro and the other at Three Forks, were washed away on Wednesday night due to the storm.

* Two men have applied as candidates for Mayor of the City of Huntsville. John A. Erwin is one of the two, and the other is Jere Murphy.

* Building lot for sale - one of the most desirable lots in the city, adjoining the City Brewery and one block from the Huntsville Hotel. 80 feet front by 190 back. Price \$700. Well fenced, good stable, fruit trees and grapes on the lot. Contact Christian Fromm.

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Huntsville News from 1875

* Someone broke into the smokehouse of John Giles and stole all the meat he had, except just enough for one day's rations for his family. Not long ago some villain killed one of Mr. Giles' cows, skinned her, took the hide and, strange to say, left the meat.

* If you want a portrait painted go to W. J. Halsey. He will also paint your signs.

* Public Library - S. D. Cabaniss Jr. has supplied a need long felt in Huntsville - a Public Library. It is an elegantly fitted up room in the rear portion of his book store, in Col. Hundley's new building, opposite the Huntsville Hotel. The Library contains many valuable works and a large amount of light reading.

* Halsey's Carriage Shop, corner of Green Street and Meridianville Pike, has an elegant display of Phaetons, Rockaways, Spring Wagons and buggies. The departments include wood-work, ironwork, trimming, painting and varnishing.

* For Rent or Sale - the new brick house of C. G. Smith, on Adams Avenue. The house is large and conveniently built, in a good neighborhood and a healthy locality. I will also sell the former residence of Dr. Smith on Adams, now occupied by Dr. A. J. Green. A. McDonnell, Jr., attorney

* For Sale - by the Probate Court of Madison County, the estate of John Gurley, deceased, will sell at public outcry, for cash, to the highest bidder.

* We hear that a couple living in Guntersville has thirteen children, the oldest of whom is ten years old. Six pairs of twins are among the number, and all the thirteen are girls.

* To Taxpayers - all parties whose taxes are not paid by the first day of February next, will find their property advertised in the Huntsville papers. My office is in the Hickman Block, one door above Mrs. Schlack's old stand. William

Lawler is my authorized agent in my absence. J. F. Morrow, Tax Collector of Madison County.

* D. B. Young will open an English and Classical School for Boys at his residence on Franklin Street on Monday. Terms: \$4, \$5 and \$6 per month, payable monthly.

* For Sale - one half interest in the Machine Shop and Foundry situated on Jefferson Street in Huntsville - D. Brainerd Nelson

* For Rent - several very desirable offices on Bank Row, adjoining the building of Hon. C. C. Clay. Apply to W. A. Goodman or J. D. Weeden

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Heard On the Street

by *Cathey Carney*



Congratulations to **Wanda Loveday** who was the first correct caller to identify that sweet boy with his dog as that of Ryland native **Malcolm Miller**. Wanda grew up in Ryland and knew the Millers. She worked at The Orthopedic Center in the insurance office for over 13 years. Her uncle **John Loveday** ran the dairy barn in Cedar Gap that was owned by **Harry Rhett**, many years ago.

Then, the winner of the downtown landmark photo was **Linda Darwin**, who recognized that the statue was the one in the garden of the Church of the Nativity downtown. Linda wins a free subscription for being the first caller to ID that picture. Linda worked for 40 years at Management Engineering Activity on the Arsenal. Congratulations to you Linda!

We were so very sorry to hear of the death of **Bill Agnew**, of Lebanon, Tn. Bill lived in Huntsville years ago and worked as a postal worker here. His sister is **Jane Tippett**, and his children are **William Agnew** and **Netrean Morris**. The family was very close and he will be missed so much.

Recently I was able to catch up with **Charlie Garner**, who worked for Lockheed Martin for 32 years. He moved to Huntsville in 1967 and now that he's retired he wonders how he ever had time to do so much while he was working!

Many in Huntsville have been to the store called **Pearly Gates** at sometime or the other. It is the health food store that **Myrna Copeland** operated for nearly 40 years. Myrna was a woman of strong will, and was an activist during one of the more turbulent periods of history and was a member of the NAACP. She died in mid-December at the young age of 73. We send our condolences to her daughter **Deanna McGrew**, and the people who loved and remember Myrna.

I met a really sweet guy recently - **Dean Jones** is the Assistant Creative Services Director for Fox 54 and he was really fun to talk with.

In last month's issue we ran

a full page ad for the **People's Law School**, listing the schedule of classes & instructors for the coming year. There is a correction to that: **Mike Wisner's** topic of Feb. 27, 2012 at 6:30 pm will be "Dealing with IRS Collections and Audits."

It was so good talking with **William Weller** recently. He and his wife used to live in Huntsville but have moved to Neptune, New Jersey. He has to deal with lots more snow than we do here but I really enjoyed talking with him and he misses it here!

Last month we ran a question asking our readers whatever happened to the **4-sided clock & weather vane** that were located on top of the **old courthouse** in Huntsville in the late fifties - the courthouse that was here before the one we have now. **Louise Manning** called, she is a Huntsville native, and she says the weather vane is on top of the old bank building downtown on West Side Square. She thinks the clock faces were put on each of the outside doors of the present courthouse, over the doors. Louise is 86 years old and she

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 lady has kept the City Council on their toes for many, many years!



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remembers that when that clock chimed, you could hear it all over Huntsville, it was so loud!

The Twickenham Historic Spirit of Christmas Past was just beautiful during December, with 6 beautiful, warm homes opened up for people to walk through and enjoy. The Weeden house was looking good, too!

Rosemary Leatherwood of Ole Dad's in Hazel Green is having a birthday Jan. 28. Also her grandson **Alex Leatherwood** is turning 4 on Jan. 31. Proud parents are **Billy Leatherwood III** and **Melissa**. Happy birthday to you guys!

A special hello to **Steve Burcham**, we're thinking about you!

There's going to be a great jewelry auction at **Alpha Estate sales** on 1214 Meridian Street on Jan. 29 at 1:30pm. Call them at 256.536.3117 for more information.

Mischelle Ross, who works at BB&T Bank on Church Street, wants to wish her sweet sister-in-law a happy birthday in February. A couple of January birthdays among the BB&T staff are **Miriam Huell**, Jan. 9, and **Mischelle Ross**, Jan. 12. Happy birthday to you ladies!

Another important birthday is that of **Mary Dudley**, with special wishes sent to her by her best friend **Peggy Hutson**!

The **Golden K Kiwanis** held their annual Christmas party luncheon at Brookdale Place at Jones Valley, and the company and food were fabulous. In addition, the entertainment was by

the **Trinity Methodist Church Bell Ringers**. That group was so good, people were wondering if they had a CD of Christmas music. Just beautiful. The members of the Golden K all brought toys for the Toys for Tots for the U.S. Marine Corps, and in addition donated a large check to them.

Also in December we were fortunate enough to hear the Christmas program put on by the **Whitesburg Middle School Choral Department**, lead by Choral Director **Wallace E. Lee**. The students did an outstanding job in singing beautiful Christmas songs, and proud principal **Greg Hicks** was there to cheer them on!

It was great to see **Nancy Stephens** recently - Nancy is married to sweet hubby **Garlin E. Stephens, Jr.** and they love living in Gurley and reading about this area's history.

One of the saddest days ever was when we found out that **Barbara Chapman** had lost her battle with cancer. Barbara was such an accomplished woman, as the owner and founder of Durham Advertising. She was not only beautiful, but also a loving mom and friend to many. You would always see her and her love **Buddy Chapman** together, before he passed away several years ago. They had been married 30 years, and I know they are together now. Barbara is survived by her mom **Juanita Keel Durham**; sons **Bill Chapman**, **Reuben Chapman VI** and wife **Missy**, and **King**

Chapman; daughter **Brandy Hand** and husband **Mike**, special friends **Donna and Bobby DeNeefe**, and many other dear friends and family.

I read recently that the **Greater Huntsville Humane Society** is working to find **senior owners for senior pets**, at very reduced prices. Applicants have to be at least 50 years old. Call them at 256.881.8081 for more info.

A special hello to our dear friend **Cecil Ashburn**, who's under the weather a bit but is such a fighter. We love you Cecil.

Have a warm January and watch over your neighbors!

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Depression Recipes

Carnation Pancakes

Beat: 6 eggs, slightly
Add: Dash Salt and
1 12-oz. can Carnation milk
Mix and Add:
1/2 c. flour or enough for a
very thin batter.

Pour from pitcher into hot
fat, baking one at a time. Turn
and lift pan to make dinner
plate size pancake. Serve with
syrup and sausages.

Bavarian Potato Dodge

Grate or grind 3 lbs. raw pota-
toes, drained well in colander
Add: 1 c. flour

1 egg
Salt and pepper

Mix well and pour into well
greased 8x12" pan.

Bake for 30 minutes at 350 F.
Add lean side pork strips and
bake til pork is crisp and pota-
toes are done. Cut in squares
and serve.

This was often enjoyed on
cold winter days as a sup-
per dish. The starch from the
drained potatoes was washed,
dried and used for cooking.

Mother's Sauerkraut

Drain 1 qt. sauerkraut, re-
serve juice; add enough water
to cover. In a fry pan, saute 1/2
lb. bacon halfway through.

Drain 1/2 the grease; add
1 large chopped onion. Saute
with bacon and add:

1/2 t. caraway seed
2 T. brown sugar
1 c. shredded cabbage
1 can mushrooms, drained
1 potato, cooked and mashed
Salt and pepper

Cook on low, heat til ten-
der; adding kraut juice if de-
sired and to taste. This is great
with any pork dish and you'll
love it on these cold nights.

Spinach Balls

1 pkg. chopped spinach,
cooked & drained
1 lg. onion, chopped fine
4 eggs, beaten
1 stick butter, melted
1/4 t. pepper
1/2 t. garlic salt
1 t. Parmesan cheese
2 c. herb stuffing mix

Mix all ingredients, chill
several hours. Roll into walnut
sized balls and bake for 20 min.
at 350 degrees.

Mushroom Potatoes

1 lb. of fresh mushrooms,
sliced or chopped
1 lg. onion, chopped
3 cloves garlic, crushed or
sliced

2 T. soy sauce
2 T. water
6 med. potatoes, baked
Combine everything but

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Never Fail White Cake

Cream: 1-1/2 c. sugar
1/2 c. butter

Add: 1 c. sweet milk with
2 c. flour
2 t. baking powder
1 t. vanilla extract

Fold in stiffly beaten whites of 4 eggs. Bake in moderate oven. Toothpick test, after approximately 25 minutes.

Soft Chocolate Frosting

Melt: 6 oz. chocolate in saucepan over hot water.

Beat: 3 egg yolks til very thick, add 1-1/4 c. sugar and beat til smooth

Add: 3/4 c. milk and 1-1/2 teasp. butter, stirring well.

Cook over very low heat, stirring constantly. Bring to a boil and boil for 1 minute only. Remove from heat, stir in chocolate, add salt and vanilla (1/2 t. vanilla & pinch salt.)

Beat until of spreading consistency. This icing stays soft and is sufficient for a large pan cake.

Poor Man's Pudding

Combine: 1/3 c. brown sugar
1 c. flour

1 t. baking powder
Pinch salt
1/2 c. milk
Spread this in a baking pan
Mix: 1 c. brown sugar
2 c. hot water
1 T. butter
1/2 t. nutmeg
Pour over batter and bake at 350 degrees for 1/2 hour.

Marquarites

Beat 4 egg whites stiff but not dry. Gradually add 1-1/2 cup sugar while beating til stiff peaks form. Add 1 teaspoon vanilla. Fold in finely chopped walnut meats, about 1 cup.

Drop by spoonfuls on soda crackers, bake in 300 degree oven til golden brown, about 25-35 minutes.

Old Fashioned Macaroons

Beat 2 egg whites with 1/8 t. salt and 1/8 t. cream of tartar til soft peaks form

Add 1 t. vanilla and 3/4 cup sugar very gradually, beating til stiff peaks form

Fold in 1-1/2 c. moist coconut
Drop from a teaspoon onto greased cookie sheet. Bake 25 to 30 minutes and macaroons are golden and baked through.

For variation, try adding some grated orange peel.



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WORLD WAR II VETERANS AND FAMILY

BY LEO LARKIN


A flood of memories returns when I think of the WWII veterans in my family. This story presents those memories and other family lore gleaned from those veterans and their families.

On December 7, 1941, Japan viciously attacked Pearl Harbor. I was born on January 1, 1942, to the parents of James L. Wilcutt and Jewel Thomas Wilcutt. Although Daddy had already served in the Army, he was drafted into the Navy. He could have gone into the Army with a commission, but said he believed he'd try the Navy. When we questioned him as to why, his reply was "You eat better in the Navy and you always had a dry place to sleep."

I was six months old when my mother and I went to Cleaton, KY. to live with my maternal grandparents. Fast forward to my earliest remembrances of about 3 years old. My mother, whom I called Jewel, was lying in bed encased in a body cast from above her waist to her toes on one leg and to her knee on the other. She endured the long hot summer by using a small black fan to provide a little relief. Even at my young age of three, the hot and humid weather made an impression on me, probably because she suffered so much from the heat. She and her brother John were in a motorcycle accident while enroute to visit another brother. A Jewel Tea truck pulled out in front of them, causing a wreck, and my mother flew over the hood and onto the pavement. My grandmother (whom I called "Mama") was overcoming a broken hip and was in an arm cast as a result of falling in the doctor's office.

I was just at the age to study the wonder of God's creation, especially the part that was, like me, closest to the ground. The insect world was so fascinating and my main focus was on caterpillars. On a good day, that was the part of creation that made Jewel deathly afraid. Now, these were bad days. I delighted in bringing the creatures in the house for her to see. She was afraid one would get inside her cast and she'd yell "Ma-ma!" I was out of sight and reach by the time Mama hobbled in there on her crutches. Looking back, I'm sure there was a lot of devilment somewhere in there.

Mama would lie down to rest in the afternoon. The screen doors were secured by two hooks attached at the top and bottom in an effort to keep the world out and me in. If she dozed off to sleep, I took one of her crutches, unfastened the top hook, let myself out, and played to my



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heart's content.

My grandfather (Dad) was chasing me with a switch (he was in his seventies). I ran from him and can remember that I was running so fast that it seemed my knees were hitting my chest. I looked back to see how close he was, stepped in a hole and fell down. He had me by the arm and was about to apply the switch when I said "Don't hit me hard, Dad, hit me easy." He laughed so hard he just couldn't whip me. Another time he told me that he'd whipped me more than all four of his children put together and I retorted "I know it!" These are just a few of the trying times I put them through.

One day, the house next door was on fire and there was no fire department. Older men in the town came with buckets and drew water from the cistern to wet down our house. One man, who was bald, came in and said, "Mrs. Thomas, the top of my head is burning, do you have anything to put on it?" Mama got Dad's wool night cap, wet it, and he put it on. Her beautiful hand-made quilts with the little-bitty stitches were dipped in the cistern and thrown on the roof. I was standing in the window watching when my mother ran though the room and saw me. She snatched me away from the window and seconds later the window shattered from the heat. Our house was saved, but not the neighbor's.

Uncle Bernard Thomas had seen me as an infant and then shipped out in the Army. He served in Louisiana, guarding the German prisoners. After he returned home, he married Betty and years later

"A fool and his money can throw one heck of a party."

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she had a stroke and he cared for her at home until her death. They did not have children and loved me like their own. He also drove 40 miles one-way to see his parents every Sunday. He spent the last eight years of his life in a nursing home and delighted in telling the staff about my escapades as a child. He was 75 years old when he died.

Daddy's brothers, Uncle Howard and Uncle Bill, were in the Navy. Uncle Howard served on the aircraft carrier USS Essex. When he returned to the States for discharge, he shipped a little dog all the way from Seattle, Washington. I went with the family to the train station to get her.

She was small, golden brown, with a white spot on the back of her neck: probably with some terrier in her. She loved lettuce and stood at the refrigerator, jumping up and down on her short legs, until Mama Wilcutt gave her some lettuce.

She also had to be covered up at night with Papa's discarded sweater, regardless of the heat. I have come to believe that she was on the ship with him as one of the many pets that were adopted by the sailors and others in the Armed Forces. Her name was "Judy," which became "Judy Bug." She was a good mouser and pointed at birds. She lived a long and rich doggie life with our family. Uncle Howard became a sheet metal worker, married and had one child. He died at age 47 without ever holding his unborn granddaughter.

Uncle Bill went into the Navy at age 18. He served on a destroyer, USS Humphrey, and rode shotgun on the landing craft that transported marines to the beaches in the South Pacific. When he returned home, he had a lot of mental anguish from the horrific events he had witnessed. In spite of that, he went to college and became a teacher, then principal, and later the Assistant Superintendent of Muhlenberg County Schools.

He never married, but gave his life to young people, bringing home boys that had been thrown out by step-fathers. Stray dogs were also included. When a friend died, he took his son, Dale Todd, under his wing, helped educate him, blessed his marriage and baby-sat his children. This young man went on to be a coach, teacher and is now Superintendent of Muhlenberg County Schools in Kentucky.

He wishes Uncle Bill was still here to guide him. Uncle Bill was involved in politics, serving as Mayor of Drakesboro, KY, and worked behind the scenes in county and state politics. He'd travel over 3 counties in one evening, meeting men over coffee and

discussing politics. He lived at home with his parents and when his mother succumbed to Alzheimer's, he gave up the foot-loose and fancy-free life for four years. He and Daddy hired two women to stay with her during the day and Uncle Bill cared for her at night and weekends. He was 74 years old when he died.

Daddy served on a tanker, the USS Chipola. He was separated from us for over 3 years. I vividly remember the day he came home. My mother, grandmother and I stood on the front porch of the old white frame, columned, story-and-a-half house as the navy-blue clad sailor got out of a cab and ran long-leggedly up the steps of the hill in our front-yard. My mother and grandmother excitedly told me, "There's your Daddy!"

He bounded up the final steps to the porch and grabbed the two women under his arms, swinging them around and around. I thought, "Who-o-o is that?" with a certain amount of wonder and a hint of disdain at all of the hullaballoo this black-haired stranger was

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causing. In later years, I learned that he sat in the swing on the porch and cried because I didn't know him. My Daddy's nerves were pretty well shot, and he had no patience. We didn't start off on the best of terms.

The brothers were only in one convoy together, in the invasion of Truk Island.

Cousin Jack was on the USS Tennessee during the attack on Pearl Harbor. He manned the guns in his underwear. Surviving the war, he spent the last years of his life caring for his ill wife.

Daddy had a job as a mechanic waiting in Jeffersonville IN., and borrowed a truck to move us there. He was loading the truck and I was unloading it, saying, "I'm not going!"

I put my rocking chair in the cellar and it stayed there until the death of my grandparents and uncle and the house was sold. Dad Thomas was crying and I said, "Don't worry Dad, I'll be home Tuesday." Now, I didn't know Tuesday from any other day but it became evident that my parents couldn't keep me. I'd throw tantrums and say, "You're not my mama and daddy, and I want to go home."

I started making that journey "home" before I was six. It

was against railroad policy for a child under the age of 12 to ride alone. Daddy would buy a full-fare ticket and tell the conductor to be sure I got off at the right place. Then, he would go down the car until he found someone who was going to be on longer than I was. I was always afraid I would go to sleep and miss my stop. I rode the trains pulled by steam engines and as I was about to board they'd spit their steam at me and I couldn't help but jump.

I was eight years old on one of those trips. None of my folks had a phone, and there wasn't time to write to tell them I was coming. My mother pinned a note in my clothes, telling my grandmother to have me go to Hultz's store where she would call at 4:00 p.m. to check on my safe arrival. She also gave me some instructions. The train came into Central City, which was four miles from Cleaton, on a high trestle. Usually, there were cabs waiting at the station, but if there wasn't one, I was to

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go into the station and tell Mr. Hayes who my granddaddy was and have him call Jewell Gray, a cab driver, to pick me up and take me to Cleaton.

No other passengers got off with me and I walked down those dark, spooky, metal, hollow-sounding steps alone. The trip was four hours long and my instructions had gotten fuzzy by then. I remember walking around trying to decide what to do as there were no cabs waiting. Finally, I guess an angel whispered to me and I remembered my instructions. Mr. Hayes called Jewell Gray and I arrived in front of my grandparents home. Mama looked out the window and saw a little blonde girl with a suitcase getting out. As she was changing my clothes, she found the note in my dress. I had completely forgotten about my instructions.

I went to the store at the appointed time, the phone rang and my mother, I'm sure, was relieved to hear my small voice. I spent every vacation with my grandparents. I had to make the train trip back to Indiana, on my birthday, to start school after holiday. It was a sad time for me. If there was a car going to Kentucky, I was in it.

Some boys never outgrow their boyishness and love to tease. Daddy was one of those,

but at the same time was a strict disciplinarian. We did not get really close until I was sixteen and we moved to Hazel Green. Immediately he relaxed; I think it was because we were in a farming and church-going community.

I fell in love with the countryside and the people. I had friends who loved the same things I did; horses, guns and tomboy things. Daddy had tried everything to turn me into a boy, hence the name "Leo". He also enjoyed my friends; tying our pants legs in knots and putting rocks in our shoes at my slumber parties. I spent my last summer with my grandparents at age 17. Daddy took it hard when I married, but he adored my sons. When Dad Thomas was near death, Daddy managed his nursing care; tenderly wetting his lips and comforting him. Before his own father died, he and Uncle Bill did all of his nursing care. My mother died at age 62 and daddy lived to 68 years.

My family grew up in a coal-mining boom town and knew firsthand that violence was common. At various times, two men died in my grandmother's arms and another

was carried into her home and put to bed. All three resulted from gunshot wounds. No wonder that the Wilcutt men wore an invisible sign that said, "Don't tread on me." That also extended to their families and later their country.

All men and women who served, and who serve, make a tremendous sacrifice. Some don't return home; some are disabled mentally and/or physically. Their families also suffer, but I am proud to live in a country that values freedom. I eventually married a Korean War veteran who didn't see his newborn daughter for a year.

I am so honored to be part of a family which was part of the "Greatest Generation," and who were unselfishly devoted to their families and willing to make that sacrifice.



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Sanders Series, Fourth Book
dated 1843, by Charles Sanders*

Submitted by Dale Rhoades

Almost every object that attracts our notice has its bright and its dark side. He who habituates himself to look at the displeasing side, will sour his disposition, and, consequently, impair his happiness; while he who constantly beholds it on the bright side, insensibly meliorates his temper, and in consequence of it, improves his own happiness, and the happiness of all about him.

Arachne and Melissa are two friends. They are both women in years, and alike in birth, fortune, education, and accomplishments. They were originally alike in temper too; but, by different management, have grown the reverse of each other.

Arachne has accustomed herself to look only on the dark side of every object. If a new poem makes its appearance with a thousand brilliancies and but one or two blemishes, she slightly skims over the passages that should give her pleasure, and dwells upon those only that fill her with dislike.

If you show her a very excellent portrait, she looks at some part of the drapery which has been neglected, or to a hand or finger which has been left unfinished.

“Television could perform a great service in mass education, but there’s no indication its sponsors have anything like this on their minds.”

Tallulah Bankhead

Her garden is a very beautiful one, and kept with great neatness and elegance; but, if you take a walk with her in it, she talks to you of nothing but blights and storms, of snails and caterpillars, and how impossible it is to keep it from the litter of falling leaves.

If you sit down in one of her temples, to enjoy a delightful prospect, she observes to you that there is too much wood, or too little water; that the day is too sunny, or too gloomy; that it is sultry, or windy; and finishes with a long harangue upon the wretchedness of our climate.

When you return with her to her company, in hopes of a little cheerful conversation, she casts a gloom over all, by giving you

the history of her own bad health, or of some melancholy accident that has befallen one of her daughter’s children.



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Thus she insensibly sinks her own spirits, and the spirits of all around her, and at last discovers, she knows not why, that her friends are grave and quiet.

Melissa is the reverse of all this. By constantly habituating herself to look only on the bright side of objects, she preserves a perpetual cheerfulness in herself, which, by a kind of happy contagion, she communicates to all about her. If any misfortune has befallen her, she considers it might have been worse, and is thankful to Providence for an escape. She rejoices in solitude, as it gives her an opportunity of knowing herself; and in society, because she can communicate the happiness she enjoys.

She opposes every man's virtues to his failings, and can find out something to cherish and applaud in the very worst of her acquaintance. She opens every book with a desire to be entertained or instructed, and therefore seldom fails of securing her object. Walk with her, though it be on a mountain or a field, and she will discover numberless beauties, unobserved before, in the hills, the dales, the brooms, brakes, and the variegated flowers of weeds and poppies.

She enjoys every change of weather and of season, as bringing with it something of health or convenience. In conversation, it is a rule with her, never to start a subject that leads to any thing gloomy or disagreeable. You therefore never hear her repeating her own grievances, or those of her neighbors, or, what is worst of all, their faults and imperfections. If any thing of the latter kind be mentioned in her hearing, she has the address to turn it into entertainment, by changing the most odious railing into a pleasant conversation.

Thus Melissa, like the bee, gathers honey from every weed while Arachne, like the spider, sucks poison from the fairest flowers. The consequence is, that of two tempers once very nearly allied, the one is ever sour and dissatisfied, the other always gay and cheerful; the one spreads a universal gloom, the other a continual sunshine.

There is nothing more worthy of our attention, than this art of happiness. In conversation, as well as life, happiness very often depends upon the

slightest incidents.

The taking notice of the badness of the weather, a north-east wind, the approach of winter, or any trifling circumstance of the disagreeable kind, will insensibly rob a whole company of its good humor, and fling every member of it into the vapors. If, instead, we would be happy in ourselves, and are desirous of communicating that happiness to all about us, it can make all the difference in the world not only to us, but all those around us.



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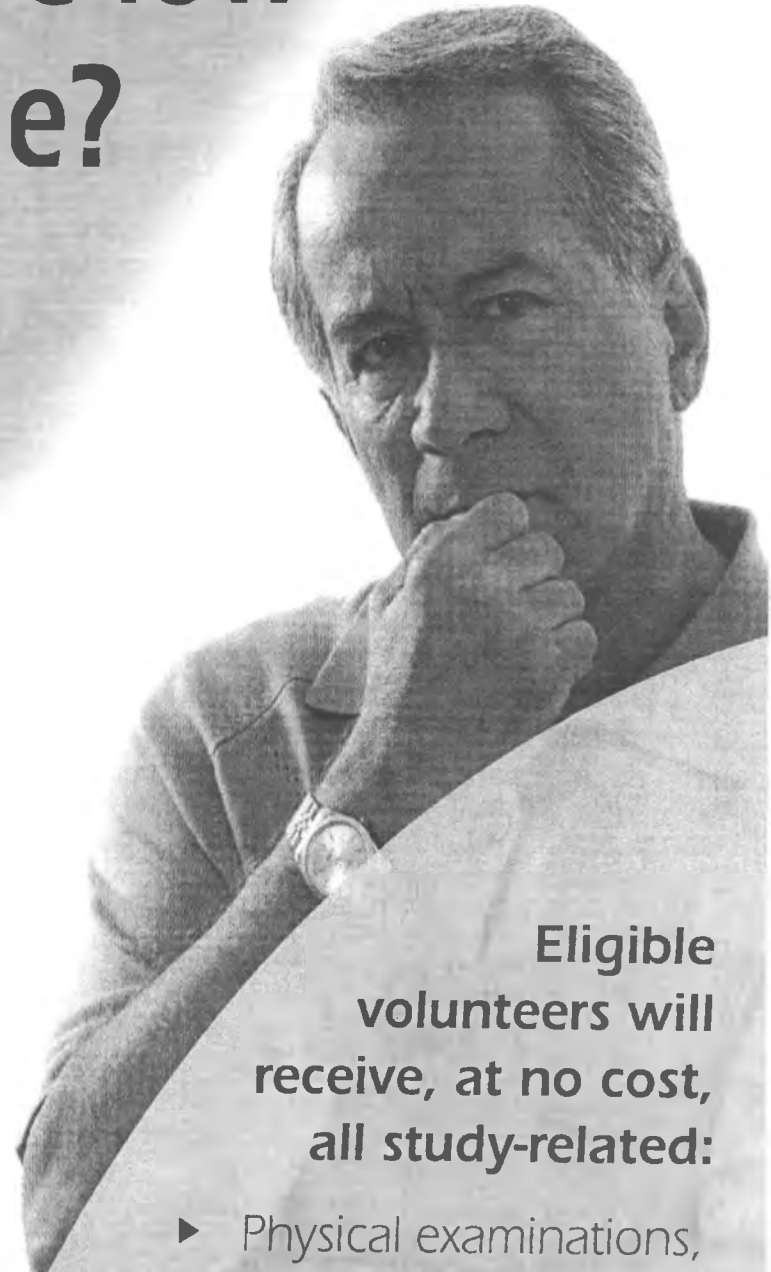
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Giving Away the Treasure Chest

By MICHAEL RHODEN

There was a large cardboard box in my closet. At one time in 1968, it held a 15" television. Some considered me lucky. I was an "only child." I usually got what I wanted, not that I ever used that to my advantage. I didn't know the meaning of the term "spoiled" then. I only felt incredibly loved. In my room, there was the 15" television, a stereo, my records, my toys, and my box in the closet. The box was filled with wonderful treasures, wonderful worlds to discover and revisit when they called me.

The inhabitants of these worlds were like none other. They could shoot webs from their wrists and scale the sides of tall buildings without falling, they could fly in the air and outrun trains and stop bullets with their bare hands. Some wore green and wore rings shaped like lanterns that gave them immense powers. Some wore red and could run as fast as light. Another had a sacred hammer that gave him the power of an Olympian. One even took on the appearance of a creature of the night to invoke fear in evildoers of his city.

I was 5 years old and the box was so heavy that I thought there wasn't any way to get it out of my closet except by having super powers of my own, or maybe Tojo Yamamoto could come over to help us move it one Saturday

morning before his wrestling match on Channel 19 that afternoon. Surely, if I needed him to, Tojo could heft it up on his hairy back and, Atlas-like, carry it for me wherever I wanted it to go. But, as far as I was concerned, it was unmovable and it would never be moved.

My mother is a very loving and understanding person. I want to make that perfectly clear before I go any further in the telling of this tale. A 5 year old doesn't completely understand why parents do what they do sometimes. For that matter, a parent doesn't completely understand why they do what they do sometimes.

One day, my mother came home early from work and found me in my room. She asked me to pick out just a few of my cherished comic books from the box, "The ones you just can't live without." She did all this with a very calm and caring demeanor. She didn't know, and I don't blame her for this, that I really couldn't live without any of them. But, I carefully picked out a small, select stack from the heaps in the box and held them dearly to my chest. My father came in and, somehow, helped us get the box to the trunk of our car. At that moment, I saw my father with fresh eyes. He was stronger than I had ever imagined.

I don't remember cry-

ing about the situation, perhaps because I just couldn't imagine that it was happening. But, I do recall that it was a dark and rainy afternoon. To this day, I see the whole thing in black and white. Kind of like the John Kennedy funeral on television.

My mother worked at The Bank of Huntsville on North Parkway in front of The Mall and The Alabama Theater. I would often get a thrill out of getting to go to work with my parents. But, as my mother and I pulled up to the bank's parking lot, I began to get sick to my stomach. Being the optimistic child, somewhere in the back of my mind, I kept thinking a good thought, "Maybe this would be a safer place for my box. I can't get to it as easy, but it is a safer place. They have alarms here for bank robbers."

With the help of a fellow employee that my mother knew well, we grunted and heaved the box with my remaining jewels up the carpeted stairs to an ornate office and sat it at the feet of a

"The wind always seems to blow against catchers when they are running."
Joe Garagiola

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balding man wearing a dark suit, my mother's boss, Birch Gray.

Apparently, he was as good as a boss could be to my mother, but to this day, I don't think he deserved this prize. I have a mental block about the period after the box was placed at his highly polished black shoes. I do remember Mr. Gray treated me the way all bankers treat kids. He gave me a smile, ruffled my blonde hair, and gave me a sucker. The treasure chest was left there. I never saw it or its inhabitants again.

During the comic book boom of the 1980's, I would often ask Mother why she gave Mr. Gray my box, "Do you realize how much they would be worth today?" She would just shake her head. She really didn't know why she did it either.

But, when I would ask her that question, I instantly felt some degree of guilt. My treasure box had been a box of incredible dreams when I was 5. In my 20's, it had become a box of capital wealth. The dream that I had longed to hold onto as a child, had changed over time to the reality of a young adult. I still collected comic books, but in the comics of the early 80's, my heroes were darker, grittier. Although they were more anchored in the reality of the day, they were a little less heroic.

My son is 5. He loves super heroes and through his eyes, I have once again experienced the dreams and treasures that I

thought I had lost forever at the feet of Birch Gray. A child's innocence is a gift of God. It should be held deep and dear in the treasure chest of our hearts.

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old television box down the road that one of my neighbors is threatening to throw away. My son's collection of comics is small, but so was mine at one time.



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SEGREGATION LAWS & THE MAILMAN

by James E. Taylor

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

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

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

Around 1948 or 49, the local postmaster contacted me and advised that Clarence's fellow workers at the post office wanted to give him a retirement party but didn't know how to get around the state segregation laws. (Remember - in 1948 there was only one post office in Huntsville and not very many postmen).

Our blue room would seat 50 persons which was about the number in attendance. In the center of a dividing wall, there was a door to an adjoining room. We removed the door and placed a separate single table for Clarence in the door to give him the ap-

pearance of being the guest of honor, which he was. Thus, we legally beat the segregation laws.

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

Depression

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Memories of the Civil War

by Marshall Wilson
written in 1902

The Federal Army, under Gen. Buell, advanced cautiously toward the Tennessee Valley and by midsummer strong detachments were encamped at strategic points and raids sent out in various directions to seize grain, stock, etc. You will remember that the Federal Army often subsisted entirely on the country invaded. All through this valley every man under 60 and all boys over 16 were at the front - nobody remained at home but the old men, women and children, and the slaves. I remember well the wild rumors that preceded the advance of Gen. Mitchell, who commanded these raiding parties. One was that he marched under a banner, bearing the device of a broom indicative of his intention to sweep the valley clean. Another, that the Yankees ransacked the houses for firearms, food, clothes and any kind of liquors. We were expecting them at our place at any hour, and someone was on the watch for them.

One day when the family was seated at the dinner table, Joanna, a little negro maid, ran in exclaiming, "The Yankees are coming, the Yankees are coming." We looked out the windows and sure enough, they were already at the gate, about a hundred of them. Some were hitching their horses to the fence. Others had torn down part of the fence and were riding onto the lawn, while some dismounted and were running to the front door that was open.

My father, at the first alarm, ran to the back hall to get his hat and cane, and then fled across the backyard, dodging behind trees, making a dash for the garden gate. Joanna alone had witnessed her master's flight and it had amused her. She rushed again into the house, now full of soldiers searching everywhere for firearms, and she cried gleefully, "I tell you, old master made the dust fly!" Some of the men gathered around her, asking, "Which way did he go?" but before she could point the way, Harriet, a house maid, knocked her senseless to the floor and my father made his escape.

It was on one of the days of this raid my Mother was seated on the porch talking to an officer and trying to persuade him to send a letter through the lines to one of my brothers in prison at Camp Chase. The yard was full of men riding over the lawn, the

shrubby and the flower borders and we could see a train of wagons going to the barn for loads of corn. The house had been searched and the locked doors and drawers of furniture beaten in, trunks opened while two negro maids were going from room to room protesting that they ought to be ashamed of themselves. The cellar had been emptied. A cask of wine, one of two demi Johns, some bottles and jugs had been carried to the front lawn and the men were getting jolly drunk.

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Pistols were fired freely. I was terrified and had squatted on the floor by my mother's chair. I can see her as well as hear her yet, pleading, "He is just a lad and I know he must be homesick; he has never been more than 25 miles from home before and a letter from his mother would comfort him. I would be perfectly willing for you to read every word of it." The officer was explaining politely the difficulties over communicating with prisoners. The letter could hardly be sent. Orders were very strict.

Just at this moment one of my sisters and a cousin appeared, wearing every frock they owned and, naturally, the last layers refused to meet so as to be buttoned up. My mother, in amazement, said "What do you girls mean by dressing this way?", and they answered, "We heard the Yankees would take all the clothes, so we put ours on to keep them from getting them." The officer laughed immediately and then sat down to wait while my mother wrote the letter; and I heard him solemnly assure her as he sealed the letter himself that it would be delivered. It was delivered to my brother, as we learned from a comrade of my brother,

more than a year after his death. (This was William, who died in prison.)

Gen. Mitchell's troops swept the valley clean, and we had little food left. Alabama had never been a cattle country, but depended for meat mainly upon the sheep and hog. The grain was loaded and sent away to the army.

The horses and mules were seized on, but ours were left as we thought. One morning we woke up to find that about 25 of our negroes, mostly men and well-grown boys, had slipped away in the night, taking with them every horse and mule in the stables.

This was a staggering blow, but we soon saw there was some comfort in the loss of slaves. It had become a serious problem to provide their food and clothing. The slaves remaining on the place recognized the responsibility, too. There was no more thought of planting cotton: the

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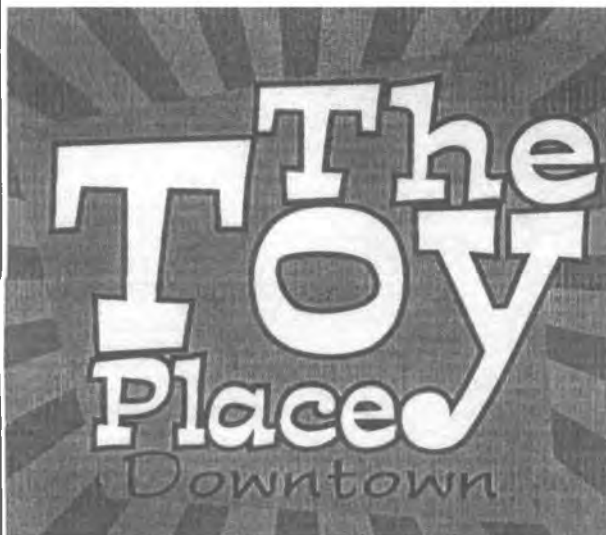
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energies of everyone on the place were bent on one purpose of getting food and clothes. My father at this time organized all his forces - everybody was put to work, even the small children. The women were cutting, sewing, and knitting from early morning till late bedtime. The negro women were spinning and weaving and some helping in the fields; the old men and little boys were cultivating the fields with hoes. A large crop of cow-peas was planted for food. My father got some medical books to read and he learned to make some of the simple medicines. He went from place to place to see the sick and prescribe for them as though he were a physician. You know that in those days blisters were thought to be indispensable for inflammations, pneumonia, etc.

There were no drugstores to furnish supplies - we could not even buy a mustard plaster. My father had been experimenting with plants, trying to find a blistering agent. One day it was reported to him that the lightning bugs were eating all the leaves from the potato plants. We were growing potatoes on a large scale because it was a food that could be easily concealed in case of a raid. He found that some rows, at least, were swarming with a bug that looked like the firefly, and he ordered the boys to knock them into the water. This was done, but some of the boys reported that their hands blistered. Then these bugs were

gathered up, dried, pulverized, mixed with lard, and the mixture proved a fine blistering agent and was sent far and wide for this purpose. The bugs had never appeared before and never came again. Long afterward, we learned that they were the real Spanish fly.

My father also learned to make various colored dyes from roots and bark; cultivated indigo and learned to ferment the plant to get the blue dye. He also found out how to make cheese and taught the blacksmith how to make wrought nails.

Singularly enough, one of the most precious of articles at this time was common salt. Now salt was needed to season food, but it was absolutely necessary to preserve meat, and the plantation depended for its meat supply on salt pork. On the plantations there were large smokehouses where, winter after winter, many slaughtered porkers would be salted down and much salt wasted on the dirt floors, so this floor was dug up


to the depth of two feet and the earth leached with water and the water evaporated off. We got bushels and bushels of salt this way. There was no soda, but we made a substitute for the lye of wood ashes. Parched rye was used as a substitute for coffee - it tasted something like the modern postum. For sugar, we cultivated the sorghum cane and made many barrels of molasses, and when this molasses was all out of the barrel, we usually found a few pounds of sugar. Our writing paper gave out very early and at first we tore out the blank leaves from father's old ledgers, and when these were exhausted, we moistened the wallpaper on the walls, tore it off in strips and used the blank side. Sometimes letters went off, decorated on one side with a picture of George Washington crossing the Delaware, or with a wreath of roses. There were no pencils, but we learned to make very good ink from oak balls and copperas, and any boy with a pocket knife could make



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a perfectly good pen from a goose quill.

There was but one copy of Webster's Blue Back Spelling Book in the community, but the whole school used it by making out a schedule of time when each could have the book. I remember once walking five miles and back to get the book for an hour to learn the next day's lesson.

My own tasks in this new economy were varied and were shared for the most part by my little negro playmate. (We were about seven years old.) We went back and forth to carry leather to the shoemakers and then to bring the shoes home (there were some forty people on the place to shoe). It seemed to me the shoemaker was always drunk when we called, and never had the work done. Then we were sent all around the neighborhood to exchange garden seed, to borrow a tool or lend one, to carry news or gather it, and to do errands generally. I think our gala days came when we were put to melting up tallow and molding it into candles, or to bringing up pails of lye for the soap kettle and keeping the fire going.

I believe we were fairly happy, but even we children had our anxious moments and talked of what we would do if the Yankees came upon us while away from home. Once we were tested and ignominiously hid under the floor of an old house by the roadside.

The war wore wearily on - reverses in arms now alternated with victory; we were becoming poorer and poorer. Still we had no thought of giving up and worked all the harder.

I remember working all day for days scraping lint from old linen tablecloths and sheets and tearing off bandages to be sent to the nearest hospital. During these years, every yard of cloth was used for clothing, bedding, for table; in fact, every yard re-

quired for the forty people on the place, as well as for blankets and clothing for many soldiers, was spun and woven on the place - and in these four years we didn't spend five dollars for anything. There was nothing to buy.

I have seen my mother working whole days, working and sizing the thread for the looms. About this time, I learned the art of platting straw in several different patterns and mother sewed the braid into straw hats which we bleached with sulphur, and we used for hat bands with strips of black silk torn from old worn-out dresses.

I could not possibly make anyone understand the isolation in which communities lived. The railroads were torn up, the steamboats burned, the roads mostly impassable. Our heavy

old carriage could hardly have gone over them, even if there had been horses to draw them.

One day we had a merry surprise over the arrival of a stately old lady who lived five miles away. All of her horses and mules had been taken; she wanted to visit us but couldn't walk the five miles. Old Ben, her carriage driver, was called in and asked if he could hitch two yoke of oxen to her carriage. He said he would try; so about noon we heard loud cries of "Gee! Wah! Come! Get up!", and then we saw Mrs. Harris' big carriage slowly coming up the hill while she was leaning out the window, waving gaily.

But most of the times were terribly serious. There was far more weeping than laughter. Women sometimes grew white-headed worrying for news of

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their sons.

By this time, there was no mail and no newspapers. The only news we got was rumors caught from carriers bearing dispatches. We often heard a rumor of a great battle, and then wait days and weeks in suspense before knowing anything. Sometimes, if the front were not too far away, my brothers would send their servant George on horseback with their letters and some gathered up from their friends. We were always on the lookout for George, though he came only a few times a year; and then we dreaded to ask him questions, or to open the letters.

Every time there would be heavy tidings for some of the neighbors, and my father would go as comforter to the house of mourning. He read over and over his son's letters telling how this boy or that had died fighting for his country. And then, in turn, the black news came to us, and our neighbors came to share our grief!

At last came Gen. Lee's sur-

render to Gen. Grant and we knew the end had come. About a month after this, in May 1865, my three surviving brothers (James, Charles, and Walter) rode home in tattered uniforms, with no possessions but their horses.

They found us without money and little food except the vegetables growing in the garden. The stock, except a few sheep and milk cows, was gone; the fences burnt, as well as the gin house, and packs of wolves were prowling about. The red fields were intersected with deep red gullies and dotted with

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thickets of bushes.

Such is the picture of desolation I remember so vividly; and such it was throughout Alabama.

We had lost - lost our cause, the flower of our manhood, our slaves, our property, our all, except our families and the land.

In 1861 Alabama had barely 600,000 white population, yet she sent 123,000 soldiers to the war - over one out of every five of her whole population; 33,000 of these soldiers lay buried on the battlefields.

That is one out of every eighteen people, and many thousands of those who returned were maimed and broken, but they went to work.

Though some came back lacking a leg or arm and some brought back bullets imbedded in flesh or bone, none had shell shock. These young fellows went to work to fell trees, split rails, build fences and barns, and cultivate food crops. The women and children went on spinning, weaving and making the things needed in the home.



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A HUNTSVILLE TRADITION

by Libby Sanders

I just found out that yet another local icon is leaving us. Shoney's on the Parkway is closing its doors. I don't know when exactly they opened them, but my first trip was on one of my very first dates in late 1961. I was hooked. If you were a young person in those days your dating sites were three drive-ins, two indoor theaters downtown, and the route between Shoney's Drive In and Jerry's Drive In. There were speakers and you pulled up to and ordered a coke and preceded to visit with and or flirt with everyone in the cars around you. After about 30 minutes you left whichever restaurant you were at and drove to the other and repeated the process. You continued this until it was time to go up on the mountain and "look at the lights of the city", or go home. We were much more innocent in those days, or at least my brothers and I were. I had to take 1 or 2 of them on almost all my dates. I was the oldest of 10 and eight of them were brothers.

When my grandmother arrived on the Greyhound for one of her visits, the first place she wanted to go was Shoney's. She was addicted to their hot fudge cake and who were we to argue with our beloved elder? One time the hot fudge sauce was scorched and the cook insisted that we sit and wait while he made a fresh batch for Grandma. She drank endless cups of coffee and waited patiently, not something she normally did, until it was ready. We left with a satisfied Grandma and a pleased cook. Smiles all around.

When I got married in 1962 my husband and I eloped to the courthouse and then went

to Shoney's for our wedding supper. He had worked there as a bus boy and when they discovered we had just gotten married, dinner was their treat and our wedding cake was, you guessed it, hot fudge cake.

After plays, movies, dances, proms and bowling night everyone always went to Shoney's for coffee or dessert. You never felt rushed and could sit and

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talk and relax. It was a social place and you felt right at home. These days people text and talk on cell phones and electronically stay in touch. It is not, and never will be, the same as sitting face-to-face and sharing real time, with a piece of pie and a cup of coffee. I will miss the places that made getting together special.

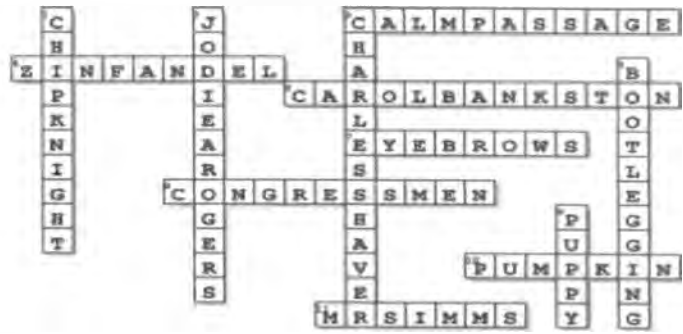
Cooks, not chefs, waitresses who called you honey and kept your cup full and asked if there was anything else you wanted and they told you to take your time and enjoy your visit.

That's what Shoney's gave us and it will be missed, not only by me but my kids and grand-kids and I suspect many of you.

So long, Shoney's Big Boy.



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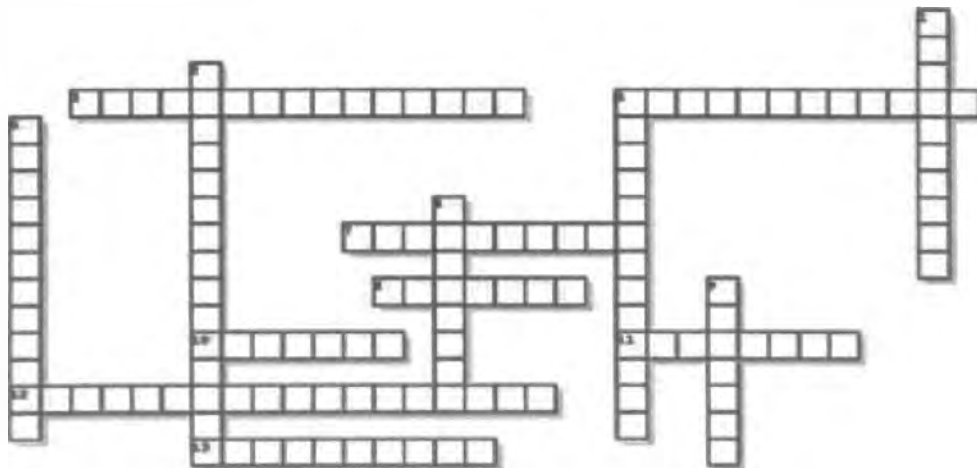
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Old Huntsville Crossword Puzzle

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 Neither of these solves problems
- 4 Her wedding supper was at Shoney's
- 7 Alabama schools were open 7 months/year during this
- 8 Only entertained 6 Presidents
- 10 She gathers honey like a bee
- 11 McGhee kept his money in Decatur for this
- 12 A nun told them "Go to Hell"
- 13 His match was the Federal Government

Down

- 1 Create these to fool nightcrawlers
- 2 All of us have both of these
- 4 The real Spanish Fly
- 5 A fool and his money can throw one
- 6 Herman had the worst case the nurses had ever seen
- 9 She slept with Papa's sweater

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

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

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

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

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

Check your cup of coffee in the morning. If the bubbles on the surface float in your direction, you will soon come into some money you didn't expect.

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SATURDAY, JANUARY 28th, 2012 @ 2:00pm: HUGE SALE, featuring Eddie from PA. Eddie's been hauling for weeks some of his BEST-ANTIQUe Furniture, Collectibles, Glassware, Advertisement, Tray Deals, and other Miscellaneous & Unique Items for this date. *Due to the overwhelming amount of items up for bidding in this sale, notice our early start time at 2:00pm. Still, we're not sure we can sell it all, but we'll certainly try! You will NOT want to miss this sale!!

*For pictures and directions, log onto www.auctionzip.com - Auctioneer I.D. #5484

Tweetie's Pet Tips

Tweetie knows that cats and dogs often have accidents with urine. He tells me that parakeets do not do that and are much cleaner. However, following are a couple of tried & true formulas for neutralizing the acid, bacteria & odor when there has been an accident by your cat or dog.

If you don't know where the urine spot is, get a handheld black light and in a dark room with only the black light on, the urine stain will glow! Now make your urine remover: 1 - 16 oz. bottle of Hydrogen Peroxide, 1 tablespoon of baking soda, and 1 teaspoon liquid dish detergent. Mix all in a plastic or glass bowl (never metal), stir with a plastic spoon til completely dissolved. Pour into a plastic squirt bottle.

Let solution set for an hour before using. Test the solution on a small hidden part of the rug, carpet or furniture. Completely saturate the urine stain and allow the solution to soak in. Do not blot, do not scrub.

Don't walk on the spot. Allow it to air dry, then vacuum up any residue left by the baking soda. Gentle brushing with a towel or soft brush may help. This WORKS!



Cats, male or female, love to urinate on comforters and duvets. Even though you wash them it happens again, because they can still smell the urine. So do this. Buy a large bottle of malt vinegar and add it into your main wash. After washing you won't be able to smell the vinegar but your cat will and she won't like it. This also works on any area where cats or dogs urinate, like carpets.

* This one from Margie Smallwood, of Huntsville. She found that if she took a regular spray bottle and added Original Listerine, and sprayed it on the spot a couple times a day for 2 days, the smell was gone and never returned. You would never know there had been a problem.



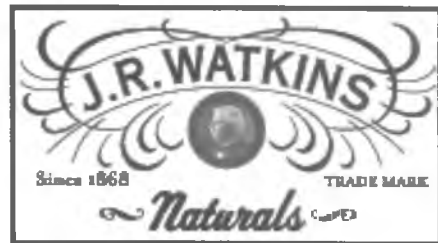
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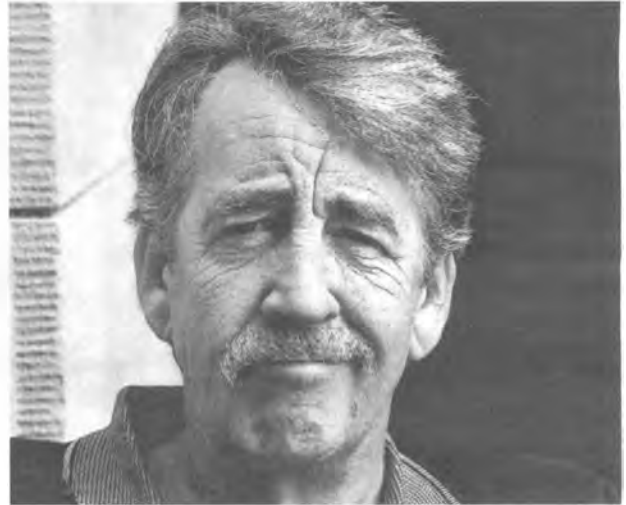
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From the Desk of Tom Carney

SIMP MCGHEE



Capt. Simp McGhee was a fiery character whose nautical exploits were many, and about which legends abounded. He was a large man and sported an impressive belly.

Just before reaching Chattanooga, there was a treacherous three-mile area of the Tennessee River called "The Chute," known nowadays as Hale Town. It was dangerously rocky, swift, and narrow. This was long before the TVA widened and deepened the river so as to aid in flood control and navigation.

Most boat captains dreaded "The Chute," but Simp McGhee saw it as a challenge. An adventure, so to speak. Unlike many boats, not once had his snagged a boulder, bumped the banks in the fog, or run aground in a storm. And he piloted the James Trigg with the grace and skill that only a veteran boatman could muster.

"Grab your shovels, hold onto to your britches, and kiss your girlfriend g'bye," he would yell. "We're gonna race the devil up the Chute!"

On one such occasion he was navigating "the Chute" while the passengers watched anxiously. The deckhands quickly manned their stations. Four of the men grabbed heavy shovels and began shoveling coal furiously into the vessel's furnace.

Others took up positions along the flanks of the ship, ready to call out if the treacherous rocks appeared too close.

The Chute had, between the time of the Civil War and the turn of the Twentieth century, become a veritable junk-yard of wrecked ships as one captain after another misjudged the dangerous rapids

and deep-sixed their ships, or at least sent them to dry-dock for major repairs.

It was almost impossible for a steamboat to navigate upstream through the chute. The current was almost as swift as the fastest ship, and any captain foolhardy enough to try it would find his ship standing still in the current, bouncing from one rock to the next.

In the 1800s, the government installed a winch at the head of the rapids which was used to pull steamboats safely through the dangerous waters. Unfortunately, there was usually a long line of boats waiting to be pulled through and Capt. McGhee was not a patient man.

McGhee, however, could navigate the Chute in 30 minutes.

"Hold on, men!" he bellowed as the gushing water began to pummel the front of the vessel. "We're going in!"

While other boats waited in line, McGhee opened the throttle full-blast and barreled his way through the churning waters. The boat trembled. Every timber in its frame groaned in protest as it furiously battled the oncoming rapids.

When the boat was almost at a standstill, McGhee gave the order to "Lay the fat on!"

Instantly, the deckhands began stoking the furnace with four sides of fat that had been reserved especially for this occasion.

With its boilers red hot and sweat pouring from the begrimed deck hands, the ship once again started making headway. The

steamboat was quivering from the strain it was under, but not McGhee. He simply gritted his teeth, and ordered more coal thrown in the furnace. Then, with one final shudder, the Trigg shot through the last of the treacherous waters to safety.

And Simp McGhee swaggered up and down the deck, with his head thrown back, laughing at the cowardly riverboat captains still waiting in line. Once again, he had proved that he was king of the Tennessee riverboat captains!

No one knew much about Simp McGhee's early days. Some said he was born into a wealthy family who had lost everything during the Civil War, while others claimed that his family had kicked him out at a young age. Years later, when anyone questioned him about his youth, he would throw his head back and loudly proclaim, "My Daddy was a gambling man, my Mama was the Tennessee River. I'm too mean for dry land, too gentle for the river, but when I die, there's gonna be hell to pay ... cause hell ain't big enough for both the Devil and Simp McGhee!"

As a youth, Simp was a rambunctious devil-may-care lad who got his first job as a riverboat deckhand at the age of 13. He supplemented his income by playing poker or by selling a few pigs that

he just happened to find "running loose."

After he became a captain, his boat became known for serving the finest meals on the Tennessee River. Passengers never questioned why the pigs and chickens were always delivered late at night by suspicious looking characters.

With such shrewd business practices, it was little wonder that Simp became a prosperous businessman. He spent much of his time, between river trips, in saloons around Huntsville and Decatur.

He opened his own tavern, which quickly became a success, where he served such culinary delights as S.I.T. beef (stolen in Tennessee beef).

He even opened a bordello in Decatur, rather than see Decatur's dollars spent in places like Huntsville and Athens. "It's my duty as a citizen to keep those dollars in Decatur," he reasoned when accosted by church people.

By this time, Simp's reputation had grown and there were few people who had not heard of him or his legendary exploits. One of his most famous escapades concerned a duel in the middle of the Tennessee River.

Simp's riverboat was running a few minutes behind schedule. Heading into Decatur, he saw another riverboat in front of him headed for the same dock. Rather than wait his turn, Simp called for more steam. With black smoke billowing from the smokestacks, he quickly gained on the boat and cut in front of it, reaching the dock first and almost swamping the other boat. The captain of the other boat was furious.

Later that night both of the captains ran into one another at Simp's favorite watering hole. Seeing Simp sitting there nonchalantly drinking his beer enraged the captain even more. He marched up to Simp and demanded satisfaction.

"Wait a minute. You're challenging me to a duel?" Simp asked.

"Call it what you like!" snarled the enraged captain.

"Well, if you're challenging me, I reckon I have the right to pick the time and place," said McGhee. "We're both river men, so get your boat and I'll get mine and we'll meet in the middle of the river and shoot it out at 25 paces."

The bar emptied as news of the impending duel spread. Simp's boat left first, journeyed a few hundred yards and dropped anchor.

The other boat left shortly, with the enraged and slightly inebriated captain standing on the foredeck, a dueling pistol in his hand. As the two boats approached each other, the fog began to clear, and what the captain saw then was enough to cause him to change his mind about dueling and to leave Decatur forever.

Standing unruffled on the foredeck of his boat was Simp McGhee, a mug of beer in one hand and a cigar in the other, casually aiming an old Civil War cannon.

Like so many other legendary figures, it was only a matter of time until Simp McGhee would meet his match. In his case, it would be the Federal Government.

After the Civil War, the government passed several navigation laws to ensure safety on the waterways. For years these laws were ignored, with the government having no way to enforce them. Finally, around the turn of this century, after hearing numerous complaints, the government de-

cidated to take action against Simp.

McGhee had been warned that government men were after him so he was not surprised when a well-dressed "Yankee-sounding" gent boarded the boat and asked to be led to the captain. Simp, chewing on a cigar, told the agent he was sorry, but that the captain wasn't on board.

"Simp's at his summer home. But don't worry, we're going right by there and I will be glad to give you a lift."

The Federal man sat back to enjoy his trip and in about an hour the boat pulled up to an island.

"Right over there," Simp said. "Just go through that brush and you'll be almost on his front porch. And he'll be glad to give you a lift back to town."

Witnesses said the Federal man stumbled around Hobbs Island for two days before he realized he had already met the legendary captain. He also became the first Federal agent to swim from Hobbs Island.

McGhee died at age 58 on June 16, 1917, just a few weeks after his riverboat piloting license was pulled by the government, citing "passenger endangerment" while running "the Chute."

He was buried in a grave a few feet from the Tennessee River's northern shore near Gunter'sville. Black deck hands were his pallbearers.



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A Farmer's Life

by Nolan Myrick,
Fayetteville, Tenn.
(written in 1987)

Let me tell you about farming as it really is, to me. It's hard to describe with words on paper, but it has to be the hardest life on earth, if you are in debt. If you are debt-free, it's the only way to go.

Each day you see mystery after mystery unfold before your very eyes. God is so real. The birds sing and the sun shines in this world of dew and marigolds. Little puppies and kittens march to a beat that only nature could provide.

You never know what tomorrow will bring, but past experience will always provide you with the knowledge and grace to handle any circumstance. The problems are more pronounced now, than when I was young. That has been the cry of all generations, I am told. My eyes look to the sky and my heart beats with the earth, and my solutions and problems are never the same. Someone must tell America that the farmer needs help, he cannot carry this load. Look at history and let us all save our country from depression.

Farmers are beset with disease, drought, bad prices and all other things that make then the most faith-relying people on earth. Each year he must put his whole existence on the line.

This year may be bad, but if we succeed this year, next year will be the one that will put us over the top.

People who do not know ask, "Why do you keep on? Why not just quit?" First of all, you keep on because you are called to farm. It is not a profession, but a calling. Second, it is a wholesome way of living, one-on-one with the Creator. I cannot quit because to do so would

mean to give up my home, and everything I am. This farm is me, it is how I see life and how I want life to see me. I learned to love the land at my grandfather's side. I can still picture him in his faded, patched coveralls, his callused hands guiding the mule-drawn plow.

I am proud of America and what it stands for. In this land of plenty I have had twenty-five jobs to sustain my ambition to farm. I could not have made this choice anywhere else in the world.

At this time, I must apologize to my family, friends, community and country. I am forty-three

years old, and I am weary. We are in a lot of trouble on the farm. My tractor is worn out and the truck needs a used transmission.

We must return to being a nation of workers, not a service economy, but a production economy. We must become a nation with real compassion - based on love. We need to become like a mustard seed; the smallest of all seed, and when planted we will become big, and people of the world will find refuge in our branches.

To me, farming is my contribution to my country and my God, and the earthly heritage that I leave to my children and yours. Let's not kill the farmer - instead let's treat him like we would any other endangered species.

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Children's Advocacy Center, Downtown Rescue Mission,
Court Appointed Juvenile Advocate, Huntsville Achievement School,
Huntsville-Madison County Library, Second Mile,
Riley Behavioral & Education Center, Salvation Army, Second Mile,
Toys for Tots, Madison County Special Olympics,
Veterans Memorial Museum**

and scholarships for

Alabama A&M, Oakwood and Calhoun Community College

Golden K members distribute Old Huntsville magazine raising some \$20,000 a year for these community activities

Huntsville Golden K Kiwanians meet Thursdays at 8 a.m. at the Downtown Rescue Mission, 1400 Evangel Drive, for breakfast and programs of interest. Men and women are invited to join us for breakfast. Give us a phone call at 256-468-5059 and we'll set another place at the table for you.

January Speakers:

Jan. 5—Congressman Mo Brooks; Jan. 12—Col. John Reitzell, retired Army Special Forces; Jan. 19—Dr. Jenn Cox, St. Jude Clinic, Huntsville Hospital.

Visit our website: www.GoldenKHsv.org.

Golden K Kiwanis of Huntsville, AL

The Bridegroom Arrested

From 1890 Huntsville newspaper

A sensation occurred at the depot today. An old man caused the arrest of a rawboned swain and a country bride. She looked not more than sixteen years of age.

When the procession reached police headquarters, the prisoner turned to the old man who had caused his arrest and said, "Say, look here, Jim Burns, I've done married the gal, and you can't do no good by kicking up a row."

"I don't believe you are married to Ginnie. You've got to prove that," the old man replied.

Someone was sent to the courthouse and it was ascertained that a marriage license had been issued to Ben Morris and Virginia Burns, and Pat Owens had performed the ceremony.

"Good God, is my gal the wife of a horse thief?" the old man exclaimed when the news

was told him. "But I'll make them suffer, Ginnie," he said, turning to the girl, "You and Ben stole \$45 when you left my house, and you've got to give it back to me now this very minute."

"I love Ben," the young girl said, "and now we are married. I am happy. We didn't take but \$18, and you can have it back."

"Then, Mr. Policeman, take that fellow to jail for stealing my money," exclaimed the old man, who was white with rage. The policeman took hold of the young man, and after some trouble, with a pistol as a factor, the bridegroom was behind the bars. When he saw what had actually happened, the old man's heart softened, and upon the payment of \$18 by the girl he agreed not to prosecute her husband.



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Frannie Winston, Arab



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Tips from Liz

* A gentleman in one of our Southern states came up with a great idea to keep squirrels away from his bird feeder. He had gotten one of those obnoxious singing Santas for a past Christmas, the motion-activated type that has movement and music. He placed it at the bottom of his bird feeder and as soon as a squirrel walked around the Santa/birdfeeder the Santa started singing and dancing. The squirrel ran head first into the bird feeder, and the man had no problems after that.

* Most of us use credit cards for our purchases, eating out, etc. Don't assume you'll get the right credit card back - oftentimes the waiter will have several to process at once and you could get someone else's. ALWAYS look at your card to make sure it's yours - it'll save you HOURS of time later.

* Green tea is a good appetite suppressant. At night, when I get to feeling hungry and want something sweet, I brew up a cup of green tea and after drinking it, have no desire to eat anything. Try it yourself!

* A good friend of mine, Carlton, pointed out the other day that people can be rude without meaning to be. When you are getting ready to pay for a purchase of any kind, rather than just tossing the money/credit card on the counter for the person to scramble after, why not just hand it to him/her? It's much kinder.

* If you're getting ready to really binge on ice cream or desserts, polish your nails. It takes a few minutes to dry, and usually by that time your raging impulse will have subsided.

* For a sore throat, try one of these: Sip a glass of pineapple juice every couple of hours; or swallow a spoonful of honey; or, buy Airborne at the drug store and take right away - it contains Zinc which can shorten a cold.

* If you see a shooting star

and can repeat "Money before the Week's Out" five times before the star disappears, your wish will come true.

* If you can't get rid of the hiccups, just lay a broom on the floor and jump over it six times. Or soak a sugar cube in lemon juice and suck on it slowly.

* Nuts are really good for you, especially almonds. Eating just 6 almonds a day will improve your memory substantially, if you can remember to do it!

* Wrought iron will clean up with a few drops of melted paraffin on a soft clean cloth.

* If you wrap your vidalia onions in foil and toss them in the fridge, they will stay fresher longer!

* A very effective make-up remover is Crisco. Just massage it onto your skin and wipe off with a tissue. You won't believe how soft your face will feel.

* If you have picky eaters, let them help you prepare dishes - chances are, they'll be more likely to try it if they helped make it.

The 2012 Annual Dog Ball



February 10, 2012 • VBC South Hall

This year's Greater Huntsville Humane Society benefit "Prancing with the Stars 2012" promises to be a night filled with Huntsville's finest "Celebridogs"! The VID (Very Important Dog) lineup each year consists of purebreds, rescued dogs, small, medium, and large dogs all with their own stories and humor. What they all have in common are families that love them. In addition to the beloved pet companions, there will be a presentation of shelter dogs looking for forever homes to call their own. The Ball begins at 5:45 PM in the VBC South Hall and will include dinner, silent auction, and socializing with all the VIDs presented during the evening.

Please join us for an elegant evening that will have you dancing in your seats knowing you have helped the beloved shelter animals that need the care, food, and shelter provided by the GHHS.....that is until they find their place as part of a loving family thanks to you!

Greater Huntsville Humane Society
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Fax: (256)881-5210
Hours of Operation
Tuesday - Saturday 10:00 AM-4:30 PM

Phone: (256)881-8081
for ticket information



REMEMBERING TOBY

By Cathy Bowen Bridges

For several years after I was born, we lived with my paternal grandmother on what once was Tracey Street, off of Meridian Street.

Shortly after that we moved to Virginia Boulevard, which is off of Oakwood Avenue. That is when I got my first dog, Toby. He was just a mutt, but daddy didn't care about that. He always said that mutts made the best pets. Daddy loved dogs, so he wanted me to have one. This was sometime in early 1957, and I was not even 2 years old yet.

My grandmother was living out of state with my aunt at the time, but was in Huntsville for a visit, and she was staying with us.

My mom's family lived in New Market, and one Sunday, we all loaded up and went for an afternoon ride to visit them. Toby went also, and was in the back seat with my grandmother

and me. It was a warm day, and of course we did not have air conditioning in the car back then. Rolling the windows down to get some air was all that could be done.

Daddy was driving northeast along Winchester Road, which was pretty much nothing but cotton fields and cow pastures at the time. Toby was hanging out the window looking at the cows, and my grandmother was complaining that the dog smelled. Since I was still a baby, I was doing whatever baby's do when they are in the back seat on a hot day with their beloved dog, when taking a long ride with a complaining grandmother.

I don't remember any of this, and I am just going by what my parent's told me when I was older. I wish they had never even told me at all. According to daddy, we were about where Hensen Hills is now. It was just pastures full of cows back then. My grandmother kept complaining about Toby smelling so badly,

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"Angels work for God and watch over kids when God has to go do something else."

Mitch, age 7

and daddy kept ignoring her. My mom would just look back and smile. Well, she kept on and on. She even told daddy that he ought to stop and put the dog out, because she could not bear the smell. Daddy ignored her a little longer, and finally before we got to the Riverton area, he stopped, got out, and opened the back door. Of course Toby leaped out thinking that was what he was supposed to do. Daddy got back in the car, and took off leaving my dog behind. Toby ran behind us for a little ways, and I cried the rest of the way to New Market. I could not understand why daddy let my dog out and went off and left him.

After we got to my other grandparent's house at New Market, daddy let us out of the car, and while my mom tried to console me, daddy went back to try to find Toby. He felt so guilty for letting my dog out that he was hoping that he could find him and bring him back to me. Daddy never found Toby.

That was a long time ago, I am now in my 50s, my parents, and grandparents are all gone. I forgave my grandmother and Daddy a long time ago, but that does not keep me from thinking about it from time to tune.

I live in New Market now myself, so I go up and down Winchester Road all the time. Sometimes I let my mind wonder back to that particular time when I travel through Riverton, or pass Hensen Hills with all the houses built where cows once grazed in large green pastures.

What happened to Toby? I hope some family with children took him in, and gave him a loving home, but I guess that I never will really know.

Fishing & Hunting Tips

- Leave the fire-blackened bottoms of your camp cooking pots black, as they'll heat faster and more evenly.
- Don't bury leftover food at the campsite as it will attract animals to the campsite area.
- To fool night crawlers, many fishermen's favorite bait, into surfacing from their holes, create vibrations. One way is to bang a piece of wood into the ground and rub the top of it with either very rough sandpaper or another piece of wood.
- Rub salt on your fingers to provide traction when cleaning slippery fish.
- Your catch will stay fresh-tasting longer if before you freeze the fish, you cover it with water.
- Don't panic if you've forgotten your life vests or life preserver. If someone falls into the water and needs help, throw anything buoyant, such as an empty Styrofoam cooler or an empty sealed gallon jug, to help keep a nonswimmer afloat.
- On fishing or hunting trips, carry your belongings in covered 5-gallon plastic buckets—they'll keep everything dry and will float if dropped in water. And you can sit on them to bait hooks, reload or eat lunch.



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