



No. 235
September 2012



Old Huntsville

HISTORY AND STORIES OF THE TENNESSEE VALLEY



THE STORY OF CECIL ASHBURN

Also in this issue: Humor in a Cotton Field

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

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The Life of Cecil Ashburn

by Tom Carney

By the time James Cecil Ashburn was born in 1920, his family had already been part of Madison County for well over a hundred years. Originally from North Carolina, the family had followed the emigrant trail to East Tennessee where they settled briefly before joining thousands of others who came to Madison County in search of cheap lands and adventure.

As they settled and began to clear the lands, their family history became a part of our history. A small log cabin was built in Ashburn Cove (now Big Cove) where they raised a family. Their children grew up, got married and had children. Some of them fought with Andrew Jackson during the war of 1812. Their grandchildren took up arms in defense of the South during the Civil War while their wives stayed at home, struggling to keep body, soul and family together.

Reconstruction found the family trying to rebuild from the ashes of a horrible war. With the country devastated and cotton prices at all time lows, it was almost impossible for small farmers to earn a living. By the early 1900's the Ashburns had moved to Killingsworth Cove where they opened up a small general store.

"The store was the center of the community," Cecil remembered. "Many people still traveled by horse and wagon and the roads were so bad that most people rarely came to Huntsville. We sold about everything you could imagine, from coal oil to patent medicines. If we didn't have it, we would order it."

The Ashburn family, like millions of others, found it harder and harder to make a living as the country slid into the Great Depression. "Back then," said Cecil, "most people didn't pay cash. They would buy on credit and pay when they sold their crops. When they went broke, we were right behind them."

The family moved across the mountain to a small house in Sharps Cove where they began farming. Tom Carney laughs as he remembers living in the same house years later. "Cecil might have lived there," he said, "but he sure didn't fix any cracks in the walls or ceilings. I remember one time it snowed and I woke up the next morning with snow on top of the bed."

Money was tight and Cecil, although a small boy, was expected to help in any way he could.

"Cecil was determined to make money," recalled J.B. Tucker, of Hurricane Creek. "One year he decided he was going to grow a bed of tobacco seedlings. That was just about the hardest thing anyone could grow around here because it took so much work, patience



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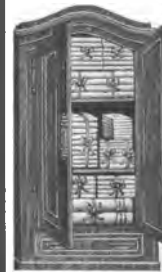


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and luck. Everyone told him he couldn't do it but he just kept on anyway. Every morning and every afternoon, after school, he would be out there watering, pulling weeds and picking worms. After a while everyone in the neighborhood began stopping by to watch."

"Cecil probably grew the best bed of tobacco any one had ever seen around here and when they got big enough to transplant Mr. St. Clair bought them for \$500. It was the most money anyone had ever paid and people still talk about it today."

When asked what happened to the money, Cecil laughed, "I don't know, Mama got it!"

Cecil's first real experience in road building came while living on Hurricane Creek.

"Back then," Cecil recalled, "You could pay your land taxes by working on the roads. We paid ours with a team of mules spreading gravel!"

"Motivation is simple. You eliminate those who are not motivated."

Lou Holtz/Notre Dame

Notice of Price Increase

Effective October 2012 the cost of the "Old Huntsville" magazine will be going up to \$.75 each. When you pick the magazine up in the honor boxes and newspaper stands, the money you spend all goes to the Golden K Kiwanis charities geared toward children.

In 1989 when Tom & I started the magazine, each issue sold for \$.50 and the price has never risen, in over 22 years. As with everything else, costs associated with all charities have also increased, and we apologize for any inconvenience.

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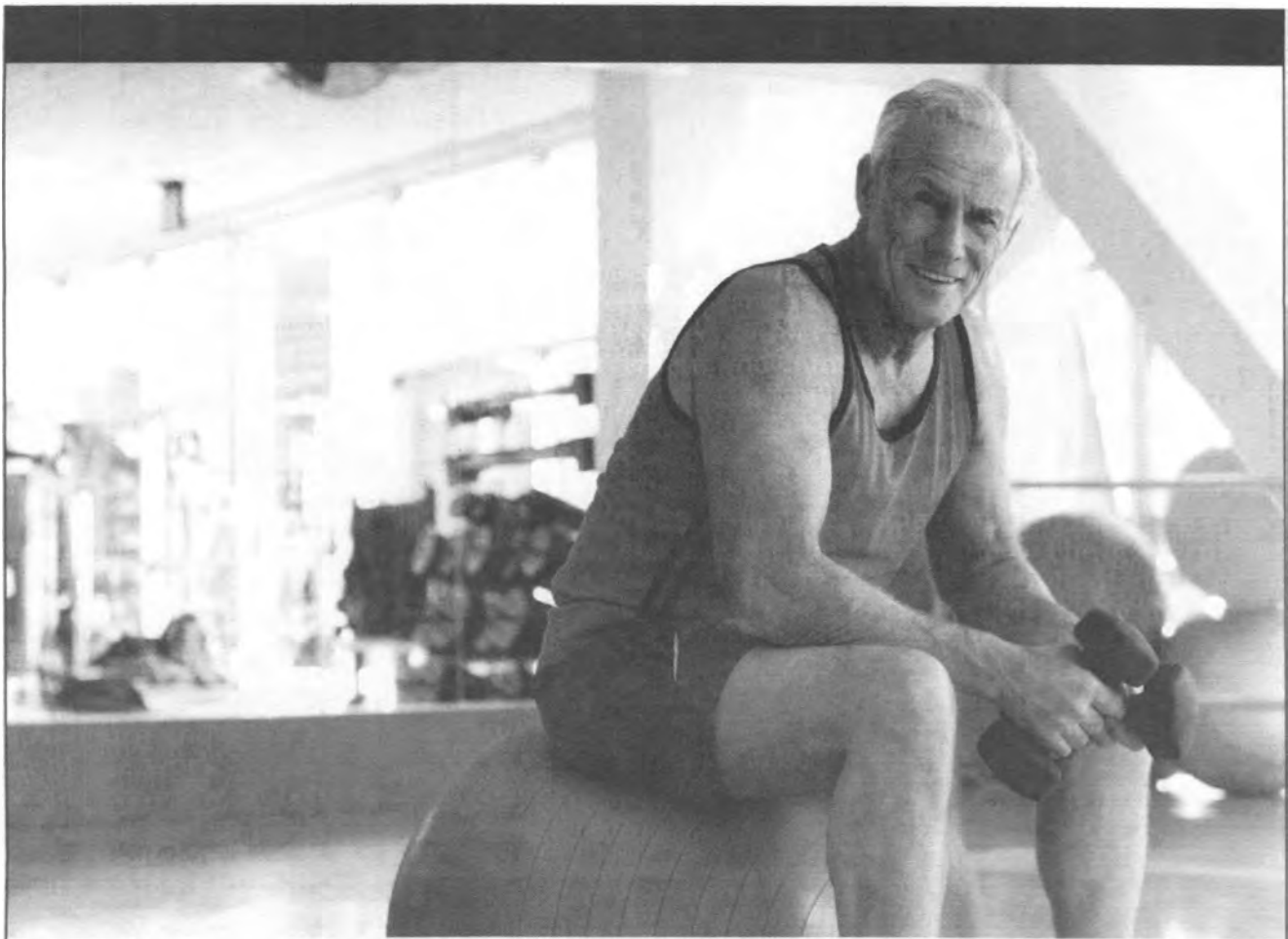


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"My grandfather was a road commissioner back then. He was paid \$100 a month which was good money for those days."

At that time the government passed a law saying that every road project had to have an engineer assigned to it, and assigned them a pay scale of \$150 a month.

"I will never forget," laughed Cecil, "about my grandfather shaking his head and telling me I needed to be an engineer. 'That's where the real money is,' he told me."

In 1937 Cecil graduated from Riverton High School and went to work for Arthur Milsap helping run a general store in Maysville. As part of the Federal Farm Program the government was paying farmers a certain amount per acre not to plant certain crops, but they insisted on accurate surveys before that could happen. In 1939 and 1940 he worked on this program.

"I got to know every creek, hill and hollow in that part of the county," Cecil said. "One thing I noticed was that much of the land was worthless because it flooded during every hard rain."

"Everyone knew war was coming," remembered Cecil.

"I knew it was just a matter of time before I got drafted so I decided to enlist so I could pick my branch of service. They asked me what experience I had. I replied I had been a surveyor, so they said they were going to make me an engineer."

"They sent me to Engineering School at Fort Belvoir, Virginia. It was hard but it was also probably the best education money could buy. As part of our class work we visited the New Jersey Turnpike that was under construction. It was amazing! Thousands of cars going back and forth on well-built highways, while back home we couldn't even go to town unless we carried a shovel to dig ourselves out of mud holes!"

"I knew right then that someday I was going to build roads in Madison County."

After finishing school he was sent to a camp in Louisiana where they were issued summer uniforms.

"We were supposed to have been going to Trinidad, in the Caribbean, but when we got on the train and it started in the opposite direction I told the boys, 'This doesn't look good!'"

A few days later they ended up in Cold Bay, Alaska, in the Aleutians, where the Army had

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decided to build an air base.

"That was about the most miserable place in the known world," Cecil remembered. The closest town was about thirty miles away and it wasn't really a town, just a fish canning factory. The only thing to do was work and play poker."

"I had a Major who stayed drunk all the time and a Colonel who didn't care so they just let me build the air base anyway I wanted to. I made every mistake in the book but I learned from my mistakes."

"There weren't many books to tell you how to build an air base on a frozen island. That was really on-the-job training."

In 1944, while home on leave, he married his childhood sweetheart, the beautiful Margaret Goodson.

The honeymoon was brief, however, as he soon received orders for France where he was assigned the task of helping rebuild the bombed-out docks and shipping ports.

"It was a huge job," remembered Cecil, "but we had all the help we could use from the nearby German POW camps. Sometimes I would be the only

American on the job with hundreds of POWs working for me. I didn't worry about them escaping, though. Their homes were behind the Russian lines and that was the last place they wanted to go."

After returning home in December of 1945, he talked to his uncle, Pat Gray, about the possibility of going into the road building business. Gray also had a certain amount of experience, having worked on the massive TVA project in Knoxville.

A short time later they formed the partnership of Ashburn and Gray.

"We had a business," recalled Cecil, "but no equipment and no customers. All we had was an old pick up truck and a little money I had saved from playing poker while in service."

"We heard about a government surplus sale in Atlanta where they were selling equipment. We drove over there but couldn't afford a hotel room so we slept in the back of the pick up. The way the sale was set up, we went to the desk, looked at the listings of what was for sale and then went out to the yard

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and inspected the equipment. Once we found what we wanted we went back to the desk to pay for it."

"The first day we went in, inspected the equipment and went to pay for it but they told us it had already sold. The second day we got there at the crack of dawn but the same thing happened - it had already sold. We quickly figured out that someone had inside information and while everyone else was out inspecting the equipment, they were paying for it."

"That night we parked our pickup right in front of the door and when it opened the next morning we were first in. We scanned the list as fast as we could, picked out a couple of pieces of equipment and told them we wanted to pay."

"Aren't you going to inspect it?" they asked. "No," I said, "I'm first in line and I want to buy it."

"They weren't very happy about it but we got a bulldozer and dragline for \$1,600 - the rest of my poker winnings."

The first job they got was cleaning a ditch in Hurricane Creek. As part of the Government Flood Control Plan the government was paying half the costs for landowners to dredge creeks and ditches to prevent flooding. Their first job was for \$40 but when the owner said he couldn't afford to pay his half, Cecil agreed to do it for the \$20 the government paid.

Cecil remembered his days as a surveyor when much of the land he walked over was useless because of flooding. During the next year he talked to about every farmer in the county explaining how the government would pay half the cost and their land would be worth much more.

As the reputation of Ashburn and Gray grew, they began to attract other jobs. At first it was small jobs - driveways, clearing lots or straightening creeks.

Then they decided to get in the pavement business.

"He had built a company that was already the envy of most businesses," recalled a friend. "But he wasn't satisfied, he wanted to build roads."

At that time many of the road builders, asphalt plants and concrete companies were conspiring to keep prices high. The closest asphalt plant was in Birmingham and if a road builder got a contract in North Alabama, he had to pay shipping fees to have the asphalt shipped in by rail. This could add millions of dollars to road projects.

Cecil solved the problem in a manner that would become his trademark. He built his own asphalt plant. In the next few years he applied the same philosophy to other parts of his business. If he needed fill dirt he would buy the land rather than the dirt. If he needed gravel he would purchase his own gravel pit and have his own trucks haul it.

In the early 1950s Ashburn and Gray was awarded the contract to build a 27-mile highway through Bankhead Forest, a job that would take almost two years to complete.

"It was the kind of job Cecil had always wanted," recalled a friend, "and he never looked

back. After that job there was no stopping him!"

As Huntsville began to grow, so did Ashburn and Gray. Thousands of people were flocking to Huntsville to work on the space program and they needed lots cleared, roads paved and highways built. Before long it was almost impossible to go anywhere in Huntsville, or on the Arsenal, without seeing a piece of equipment with the name Ashburn and Gray on it.

The rocket program changed the face of Huntsville but it was "Big Jim" Folsom who changed the roads.

While Folsom was running for Governor in 1952 he spent a lot of time out in the county



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shaking hands and introducing himself. Most of the roads, once you left the city limits, were either red clay or gravel. In dry weather cars would raise billowing clouds of red dust behind them. Folsom noticed how every time the housewives saw a car coming in the distance they would rush to get their clean laundry off the lines before the dust settled on them.

The promise of good roads (and clean laundry) became a major part of Folsom's campaign and he easily carried the rural votes. After being elected he sent his Highway Director, Herman Nelson, to Huntsville with simple instructions, "Get those roads built!"

The next decade saw one of the biggest road building projects in Alabama's history, with Ashburn and Gray doing much of the work. The company quickly grew to become one of the largest in the coun-

try with branch offices in other cities and jobs spanning all of the southeast. Their projects included everything from simple driveways, rocket test towers, highways and even airports.

Of all the projects Ashburn and Gray was involved in, it is probably the Parkway that most people remember. Ironically, it could have been their last. The day it opened two deer hunters ran off the pavement and into one of the company's Caterpillars. A lawsuit was filed, but fortunately the company won.

Bill Miller recalled Cecil helping many people get a state license while serving on the state licensing board. "I remember when I approached Cecil he said, 'I need somebody to subcontract building bridges for me.' So I got the license and we have been building bridges since then."

Today Miller and Miller Construction Co. is one of the largest

bridge-building companies in Alabama.

"Cecil was always thinking about business," remembered a friend. "Once we were watching a baseball game and he made the comment that there was a lot of money to be made in that business. I thought he was talking about playing baseball so I didn't think anything of it. A few months later I learned he had signed a contract to supply Major League baseball fields with red Alabama dirt!"

In 1970 the company was faced with its biggest crisis when Pat Gray, one of the partners, died. The government levied huge inheritance taxes on his heirs. Their only alternatives were to sell part of the company, go public or close the business, none of which Cecil wanted to do. He decided to borrow the money and buy the heirs out.

"Mr. Ashburn called a bunch of his key people together,"

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remembered a long time employee," and explained what he was up against. He told us he couldn't promise us anything right then but if we would help him he would make sure we were taken care of. For the next year every employee he had must have worked twice as hard. Mr. Ashburn was a man of his word - he made some millionaires and took care of a lot of families!"

It was almost an unspoken rule at Ashburn and Gray to hire college students during the summer. Calvin Perkins remembers working for the company while going to school at Auburn. "Mr. Ashburn stopped by the job site one day and asked me how school was going. I told him that I was thinking about quitting and working full time. Mr. Ashburn looked at me for a moment then asked when school started back. When I told him he said, "Son, I hate to tell you this but your job ends the week before school starts. Go on back to school and your job will

be waiting for you next year."

Ashburn always attributed his success to his employees and the people of Huntsville. Years earlier he had vowed that if he was ever successful he would give part of it back to the community. In 1993 he donated 100 acres of land to Madison Academy for their new campus. Several years later he gave the land for the Children's Advocacy Center on Pratt Avenue in Huntsville, in addition to donations to numerous other projects.

In 1991 Cecil retired but he left a legacy that will forever be a part of Huntsville. He had built one of the largest road building companies in America and today it is almost impossible to go anywhere in Huntsville or North Alabama without driving on a road built by Ashburn



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and Gray. It has been estimated that they have employed over six thousand people and paved enough roads to stretch from New York to California and back. He was also the first living person to ever be inducted into the Alabama Roadbuilders Hall of Fame.

In 2002 the Huntsville City Council, acting on a resolution introduced by City Councilman Glenn Watson, named a road in his honor. The very scenic road, Cecil Ashburn Drive, crosses Huntsville Mountain to Big Cove.

At the official dedication, Cecil sat on the stage with his wife, Margaret, surrounded by well-wishers and life-long friends. Even though Margaret had been ill with Alzthheimers for many years, Cecil insisted that she be right by his side for the dedication and his first words were how much he loved and appreciated his wife of so many years.

There was a marching band and politicians made speeches. Everyone agreed it was a fine day.

All during the ceremony, however, he kept looking over his shoulder at the mountains behind him with a far-away look in his eyes. Perhaps he was remembering his ancestors who crossed the same mountains almost two hundred years earlier.



Cecil Ashburn passed away this year on July 20, at 92 years old. He leaves behind his daughter Judy and her husband Glenn Nayman, their children and his late daughter Jenny Ashburn, her children & grandchildren, his brother Bill and sister Rita, nephew John and his family. Cecil was a fair man in business, a kind and understanding boss, a voracious reader and a sweet guy who loved watching & photographing sunsets. A book couldn't cover all the accomplishments this man made in his lifetime, but most of all his friendships. We will miss you, Cecil.

Mexican Orange Candy

3 c. sugar
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 1 c. evaporated milk
 1 orange (grated rind)
 1 c. chopped pecans
 Dash salt

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* Will Weaver entered the offices of the Mercury this morning with a huge rattlesnake which measured four feet three inches in circumference. The snake had been killed a few hours previously by Squire Cornelius on A. J. Esslinger's place. It was adorned with thirteen rattles and a button.

* The new residence of Mr. Jackson Rand on Randolph St. is nearing completion, and will very soon receive the last finishing touch. It is a large, ten-room building and promises to be one of the handsomest of the many beautiful homes for which Huntsville is so justly noted.

* The Female Colleges of our city are receiving new pupils every day. The prospects of both are very flattering. Our

educational advantages are very superior, and Huntsville ought to be one of the greatest seats of learning in the city.

*Query to the Daily Mercury

Please publish the names of all the policemen of Huntsville on the day and night force, and when they are changed from day to night duty, and what pay they receive per month. What was the population of Huntsville in 1880?

Respectfully, a Subscriber

The names of the day force are Britton Franks, City Marshal; and Wm. Blakemore, Mounted Police. The night force consists of Z. P. Davis, Chief; A. E. Bailey and Signey Pentecost. We have not learned what salaries they get. There is no change made from day to night that we know of. The night police come on duty at 8 pm and remain on duty until 5 am. The population of Huntsville in 1880, as per the Census returns, was 4,998.

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My Memories of Big M Farms

by Nolan Myrick

I baled hay for Mr. Powell Sr. at Big M Farms in the late 1960s. I helped around the farm in the winter, too, when I had time. Counting the mountain land, I believe he had 750 acres. It was a big operation, and they even had hay fields in Gurley on rented land. One week we baled 6,000 bales and put them in barns in Maysville near Gurley. I cut hay so late at night that when I would get tired I would turn the engine off and sleep in the field on a pile of green hay.

When they started selling land for houses they did it in stages, and we kept cutting hay on the land not being developed. Mr. Powell gave me keys to the gates and I cut hay most all the time in summer. I got 60% of hay and he got 40%. We stacked it in the sale barn where they used to break the calves to lead. Mr. Powell would drive his Lincoln out to the edge of the field and sit and watch me cut hay. Sometimes he would bring out a hamburger and glass of tea. Everywhere you saw him he would have his little brown dog named Missy.

You could sit on a tractor for hours working anywhere around Maysville or Hurricane Creek and enjoy looking at the mountains. The only thing better than the mountains were the people. When we moved there in 1958, there weren't many people around. Some of the best people on earth lived in Maysville and Hurricane. I guess I knew all of them.

I would go sit and talk to Mr. Powell alot. I started cutting hay when I was 13 years old

on Mr. Frank Powell's farm on Highway 72 East. He was Mr. Dudley Powell, Sr.'s father. He had a big house on 72 next to Chapman Mountain. It's still there and there's an old graveyard with some trees on it. It's across the road from what used to be Chase Nursery. When I cut hay there I used a big barn behind the house to store hay. Mr. Frank raised mules and rented them to the mills in Huntsville. The old house is said to have one of the first ceramic tile baths in Huntsville. Mr. Dudley Sr. would sit for hours and tell me stories of his tire business. When he had the tire store, tires

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were hard to get. He worked a lot of hours at the tire store.

He always called me boy. One year it got real dry. The year before I moved to Fayetteville, I had about 60 head of Hereford cattle I had got from him. Every time they had a cow die having a calf, he would give the calf to me. I would raise the calf on a Jersey cow or powdered milk. If the calf lived, he would give me the papers on it. All I had to do was pay to have it registered. The drought took all my grass, and he had a field next to Salty Bottom Road, and he let me move my cows to Big M. I guess I had the last cows on Big M while he owned it.

Mr. Powell would laugh while we talked and tell me he was going to name a road after me at Big M before he got through developing it. I thought he was joking. After I had been gone maybe 5 years, he sent me a survey showing my road: Nolan Drive. It made me feel good and still does to know my name is still in Maysville.

Time moved on, and one Christmas Mrs. Powell called

and said Mr. Powell would like to see me. I smoked cigarettes when I was young and Mr. Powell smoked. As I talked to him over the years he had a habit of playing with a Zippo cigarette lighter. He would flip the top open and shut. Joyce and I rode down to the big house on Adams Street. You could pull in beside the house and not park on the street. Our old truck looked out of place as we parked and went in. Mr. Powell was waiting. I remember he said, "Come on in boy and set down." He handed me a little present wrapped in a neat package. I opened it up and he had given me a Zippo cigarette lighter. I lost the lighter years later in a barn unloading hay.

I guess that was the last time I saw Mr. Powell Sr. I can't remember when I didn't know someone in the Powell family. And I've still got Hereford cows.

What do you call a fish with no eyes? A fsh.

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A Reverent Walk Through Rice Cemetery

Mother's Day Weekend 2012

By Cathy Bowen Bridges

My husband and I took a long stroll through Rice Cemetery yesterday among the huge old cedar trees that have been there for years and years. The more we walked, the more enthralled I became with all the very old and faded headstones from the 1800s, graves of Confederate soldiers and so many graves of infants that went on to become little angels. Some of them were related to me. My Grandma and Grandpa Hillis had 2 infant daughters that were stillborn a few years apart in the 1920s.

Our purpose of coming to the cemetery was to clean off my mother-in-law's grave before Mother's Day. After doing so, we took a walk, as we needed the exercise anyway. I also have 2 brother's-in-law buried there, plus great-grandparents, great aunts and uncles and all kinds of distant cousins. When you have so many relatives buried in one cemetery, it's a good way to have a nice relaxing walk, and visit their graves also.

We walked past family names like Walker, Rice, Jones, Cantrell, Bridges, Ricketts, Farrow, Latham, White, Preston, Sharp, Sisk, Hereford, Harbin, Stone, Smith, Clark, Cagle, Lamb and many more that are equally important. Some of the headstones were so old that they have faded, cracked or broken in two and fallen. Some were just propped up against a tree. A56lot of the graves are so old, that there are no living relatives to care for them, so they look neglected.

There are a good many

Confederate soldiers buried there, and tears came to my eyes each time my husband tipped his hat to them in respect. How long ago it was that they fought a terrible battle that claimed so many lives. As we walked, we even saw a few graves of brave men that were born in the 1700s, and fought in the Revolutionary War! We could barely read those!

Rice Cemetery is on the left going toward New Market on Winchester Road, and has been there since 1835. That is 177 years! I'm sure there are more people buried there, than there are headstones. It is a nice quiet rural cemetery to walk through, much, much smaller than Maple Hill. It faces beautiful mountains, plus fields where farmers toiled for hours to feed their families, or make a living. On each side of it and behind it, are pastures and fields also. It is definitely still in use, because I see where they are preparing a new grave almost every week.

My husband wants to be buried at Rice's, and I would be honored to be laid to rest among many relatives of my mom. My

parents are not buried there, but I know they would not mind their daughter buying her last plot of land at such an old, peaceful cemetery that means so much to so many people. If you are ever in the area, stop by and take a walk. You will see what I mean.



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Please Note that this is written solely to present folklore medical remedies, and cures only. Any remedy - from any source - should be employed with caution, common sense and the approval of your doctor/ physician.

- **Cough** - Mix one teaspoon of whiskey with a pinch of sugar, heat over a fire, and drink. Eat a mixture of honey and vinegar. Put some ground ginger from the store in a saucer and add a little sugar. Put it on the tongue just before bedtime. It burns the throat and most of the time will stop coughs. Take some rock candy with tea. Dissolve four sticks of horehound candy in a pint of whiskey and take a couple of spoonfuls a day.

- **Cramps** - To cure cramps in the feet, turn your shoes upside down before going to bed.

- **Croup** - squeeze the juice out of a roasted onion and drink. Add a little vinegar, lemon, or onion to honey and eat. Put a drop of turpentine in a spoonful of sugar and eat. Drink a thick syrup made of onion juice and honey. Boil an onion, some turpentine, and some lard together. Pour the juice on a cloth and put it on the chest.

-- **Earache** - Pour drops of juice from the buddie blooms (sweet shrub) into ear. Dissolve table salt in lukewarm water and pour this into ear. This dissolves the wax which is causing the pain. Pour castor oil, or sweet oil into ear. Break apart a Betty bug at the neck, and squeeze one or two drops of blood into ear. Warm a spoonful of urine and put a few drops in ear. Put a few ashes in an old rag. Dampen it with hot water and sleep with your head on it.

- **Gall Bladder Trouble** - Take a spoonful of pure corn whiskey and Black Draught

- **Headaches** - Bind wilted beet leaves on the forehead. Tie a flour sack around your head. Put several ginseng roots in a piece of brown paper and tie to your head. Put turpentine and beef tallow in a bandage and tie it tightly around your head. Smear brow with crushed onions. Rub camphor and whiskey on head.

- **Hiccups** - Take a teaspoon of peanut butter, (this always works for me). Put half a teacup of dried apples in a teacup of water in a pot. Bring to a boil, stirring occasionally. Strain out the remains of the apples, and drink the juice while hot.

- **Pain Killer** - Roast some poke roots by the fire. Scrape them clean with a knife and grind up. Make a poultice out of the powder and apply to the bottom of the foot. It will draw pain out of anywhere in the body.

- **Toothache** - Put drops of vanilla straight from the bottle on the tooth. Hold whiskey or turpentine on the tooth.

- **Car Sickness** - Suck on a lemon to cure car sickness!



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Heard On the Street

by *Cathey Carney*

The winner of the Photo of The Month for August was **Joyce Hoover**, of Gurley. She recognized the picture to be that of city watchdog **Jackie Reed**, who everyone knows and is running currently for Mayor. Joyce is loving retirement and enjoys playing cards. She also celebrated her 48th wedding anniversary to her husband **Roy Hoover** on Aug. 25th. Congratulations to you Joyce!

There are some visiting **Yankees** in Huntsville you need to know about! Welcome to the **Irontown High School class of 1956** - that's in Ohio. This is **Chuck Saunder's** class and he and wife **Barb** are hosting the group who will be here for several days. They have never been in Huntsville and we hope they lve it!

Sheila Hosch sure has a lot of good friends. Her friend **Frankie Glassco** organized a benefit for her at **LeeAnn's Restaurant** recently to help defray some of the costs of cancer treatment, which Sheila is going through right now. There were hundreds of people there who all love her, and were able to raise over \$5,000. I was there, **Sam Keith** was there and many others who came from many miles away. What a great event. **Star Market** donated the food, **LeeAnn**



donated her space, and **Valley Planet** notified everyone.

Lynette Laster Brazier had a birthday on August 28th and it was the same day she celebrated her 3rd wedding anniversary to her handsome sweetie **David**.

Recently a huge tree in front of my home started to rot from the inside out and had to be taken down. This tree was probably 80 years old. I hate to see old trees taken down but when it presents a threat to homes it become necessary. The city contracts with **Nelson Tree Service** and what a great job they did. I spoke with **Tim Rugart** who loves what he does. Some of the other men who were working hard were **Chris Tillett, Chris May, Richey Tillett, Thomas Haggermaker** and **Sam Yost**. I think it only took a couple of days to work on a tree that was probably 60 feet high, and in a residential area. I was so impressed with their professionalism and skill!

Gale wants to send out a special

Happy Birthday wish to her friend **Joy Morris** who is the Property Manager at **Montclair Apartments** in Athens. Joy is a beautiful lady, inside and out!

The **Schrader** family is one that many people in this area are familiar with, starting & running restaurants such as **Cafe Berlin, Ole Heidelberg, Luciano's, Tortellini and Sante Fe Grill**, among others. **Vaun Dieter Schrader** was the young man who was brilliant in his opening & managing several of these, including **Sante Fe Grill** and **Luciano's**. In addition he was a master chef in the 90s and early 2000s. Vaun died at the very young age of 42. We send our deepest sympathy to his parents, **Dieter and Sonja Schrader**, his grandmothers **Charlotte Mrazek** and **Ruth Bond**, his sisters **Aunia Schrader** and **Andrea Coffin** and other family members and good friends.

A beautiful wedding ceremony was held recently at the **St. Bartley P.B. Church** on **Belafonte Ave.** in Huntsville. The church was SO pretty with all the stained glass & just had a peaceful feeling. **Laquanda Marie Ford** married **Terrance Deshon Holman** and had a packed reception at the

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 little girl loves going green and sees lots of granite.



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Heritage Club in their new location in Bridge Street. Mom of the bride, **Liz Ford**, was so proud! While there I also met **Casey and Adrienne Henry** (Casey owns KCs Mechanical Service); and **Reuben Taylor, Sr.** with his sweet wife **Enger Taylor**.

Happy Birthday on 9/11 (of all days) to my beautiful Mom **Annelie Owens**. Mom will be 92 and I'm so happy she's in my life!

We wanted to send out a special hello to **Austin Miller** who recently underwent some medical procedures. Austin is a great writer who has written many stories for Old Huntsville, and just an all-around nice guy. We're thinking about you Austin!

We have lots more September birthdays, too - **Barb Eyestone** of Madison is on the 17th, **Darryl Goldman** is in the 15th, **Peggy Rhoden** also on the 15th, Peggy's son **Joey** on the 23rd, **Ken Gentle**, **Dale Cassidy** and **Sam Keith** all have September birthdays. Happy Birthday to you!

A special hello to **Jane Eller** who works at BB&T on Church Street. She will go above and beyond to help with any banking needs you have - love her.

Also, speaking of great service, **Redstone Federal Credit Union** has some of the best employees. I recently worked with **Erica Weir**, who is a Member Services Representative, and she was so thorough and helpful. Then the smiling face that greets you when you come into the main entrance is **Beth Dunson**, who is Teller & Greeter. **Ray Pheiffer** is in the Investments area and I can't say enough good

things about him! All these folks work at the South Parkway location, just south of Drake.

Happy 75th birthday in August to **Tom Pruitt** of Old Town. You're lookin' good!

I have to pass along a warning here, to all you people like me, who trust other people. I was recently putting in some flowers at Tom's grave (my late husband) at Maple Hill Cemetery and parked maybe 30 feet away from where the grave is. I wasn't there 2 minutes when I saw a **man inside my truck** (I had left it unlocked, stupidly). He stole my wallet with everything in it. I was terribly upset but **Joy McKee**, Manager of the cemetery, and the police who showed up did a great job in getting information about the thief. I don't expect to ever find my property, but I want to pass this along because I know a lot of people visit the cemetery on a daily basis. Whether this happens a lot, I don't know, but regardless you always need to be very watchful and **ALWAYS lock your car**. Especially if you're attending a funeral service and park your car for the duration of the service, always lock up.

Carol Ann Samples was someone who always thought about others, especially those less fortunate. She co-developed SCAN (Stop Child Abuse & Neglect), worked tirelessly for the Red Cross, Grace Club Auxiliary and Central Presbyterian Church. She passed away at the young age of 74 and leaves so many who grieve for her, especially **Ty Samples**, her husband; her sons **Mark Samples** (wife **Darnee**) and **Michael Sam-**

ples (wife **Colleen**); daughter **Alice Bentley** with husband **Bryan**, as well as many other family & friends. We send our deepest condolences to her many dear friends and family.

If you've never been to the **NEACA fall craft show**, you've got to try it - it's free! Sep.. 21-23 at the Civic Center South Hall!

Remember to mark your calendar for September 8 from 8 am til 4 pm for **Trade Day around the Square**. There will be food, crafts, entertainment, back copies of "Old Huntsville" magazine - please come support your local artists & crafts people!

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RECIPES

Spicy Fall Fare

Spicy Baked Turkey

- 1 10-15 lb. turkey
- 1 clove garlic, chopped fine
- 1 T. salt
- 1 t. black pepper
- 1 t. cayenne pepper
- Vegetable oil

Wash your turkey and rub the cavity with salt and pepper. Make a mixture of more salt, pepper, cayenne pepper and garlic. Make slits in the turkey and plug them liberally with this mixture. Rub the outside of the turkey with oil, salt, pepper and a sprinkle of the cayenne pepper. Bake at 350 degrees in large roasting pan, for 15 minutes per pound.

Hot Pepper Fried Onion Rings

- 4 large onions
- 2/3 c. milk
- 1/2 c. flour
- salt & pepper

- 1 t. dried red pepper flakes
- Oil for frying

Cut cleaned onions into 1/4" slices and separate into rings. Soak the rings in milk for 15 minutes. Mix the flour, salt, pepper and dried red pepper. Dredge rings in flour mixture, then fry in oil heated to 356 degrees a few at a time, til well-browned, 2 or 3 minutes. Drain on paper toweling and season, serve.

Spinach & Jalapeno Cheese

- 20 oz. frozen spinach, chopped, cooked and drained
- 1/2 c. reserved spinach juice
- 4 T. butter
- 2 T. flour
- 2 T. onion, chopped
- 1/4 c. evaporated milk
- 1/2 t. black pepper
- 1 t. celery salt
- 1 t. garlic powder

- 1 t. Worcestershire sauce
- Red pepper to taste
- 6 oz. jalapeno cheese

Melt butter, add flour, stir, blend til smooth. Add onions, cook til soft but not brown. Add vegetable juice and milk, stirring constantly. Add seasonings and cut-up cheese. Stir til cheese is melted. Combine with spinach and serve hot with chips.

Spicy Nuts

- 1 egg white
- 1 T. water
- 3 c. nuts - macadamias, pecans, almonds or walnuts
- 1/4 c. sugar
- 1/2 t. salt
- 1 t. ground cinnamon
- 1/4 t. ground cloves
- 1/4 t. ground nutmeg

Beat egg white with the water til foamy, then stir in the nuts, coating well. Combine the sugar and remaining ingredients, sprinkle this over the nuts

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and stir til evenly coated.

Spread the nuts one layer deep on a lightly buttered pan and bake at 300 degrees for 30 minutes, stirring every 10 minutes or so.

Spicy Lentil Soup with Smoked Ham

- 1/2 lb. dry lentils
- 4 c. water
- 1 smoked ham hock
- 1/2 lb. chopped smoked ham
- 1 bay leaf
- 1/2 c. onion, chopped
- 1/3 c. carrots, chopped
- 1/2 c. celery, chopped
- 1/2 t. seasoned salt
- 1 t. garlic powder
- 1/2 t. cayenne pepper

Wash, sort and pick over lentils. Combine all ingredients in a large pot with lid. Bring to a boil, reduce heat, cover and simmer til done, about 45 minutes or so. Really good when served with a dollop of sour cream on top.

Hot Congo Squares

- 2 sticks butter, melted
- 2-3/4 c. self-rising flour
- 3 eggs
- 1 box brown sugar
- 1 c. pecans, chopped
- 1 12-oz. bag semi-sweet chocolate chips
- 1/2 t. cayenne pepper

Mix butter with brown sugar; add flour, then the eggs and mix well. Stir in the nuts,

chocolate chips and cayenne pepper, pour into 9x13 inch greased baking pan. Bake at 300 degrees for 35-45 minutes.

Hot & Savory Sausage Balls

- 1 lb. hot sausage
- 2 c. grated sharp Cheddar cheese
- 2 c. Bisquick mix
- 1/2 t. cayenne pepper

Remove all your jewelry, like your rings. In a large bowl add the sausage, cheddar, Bisquick and pepper. Mix well with your hands, til all is well blended.

Bake in pre-heated oven at 325 degrees for 25 minutes or so - check to make sure the cheese is lightly browned.

Coffee Diablo

- 1/2 c. sugar
- 2 t. grated orange rind
- 1/2 t. grated lemon rind
- 1/4 t. finely grated bay leaf
- Instant coffee, your favorite Brandy

Combine the sugar, rinds and bay leaf in a small bowl, add the coffee granules and mix well. Store in a glass container, covered.

When ready to serve, add one and a half teaspoon of the mix to five ounces of hot water. Add one teaspoon brandy (or half a teaspoon brandy extract) and mix well.



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Bill and Catherine

by Jim Walden

The war had ended 3 months earlier. The man and woman who were marrying had served admirably during the world's deadliest conflict.

In October, 1941 the man was in the first batch of young men required to register for the draft. He was one of the first Americans drafted. He served 41 months overseas and did not return to the States until he was discharged in October, 1945.

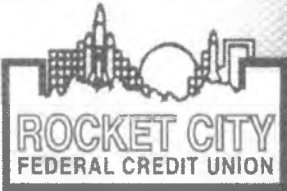
The 41st Infantry Division was the first American combat unit to be sent overseas, and the "Butchers" as the Japanese called them, because they took the least number of prisoners of any unit in World War II, was the first American combat unit to engage in offensive operations against the Japanese.

He was a Master Sergeant in Company K, 186th Infantry Regiment of the 41st. He was a squad leader who was charged with training and commanding 12 men. He led them in New Guinea and the Philippines; his unit once served 75 days in combat eating only C-Rations, with no relief. It's still a record among American combat units.

She enlisted in the WAVES (Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service) which was the Navy's branch for women. The WAVES were full members of the Navy with the same rank and ratings as their male counterparts.

She enlisted on October 26, 1943. She did her basic training at Hunter College in the middle of the Bronx, New York. After basic training she was ordered to Jacksonville, Florida to complete her training as a Hospital Corpsman. As a Hospital Apprentice Class she freed a male counterpart to serve overseas. After hospital training she was sent to Pensacola, Florida to train as a Dental Hygienist. When she returned home after the war she was the first dental hygienist in Huntsville, Alabama.

The war ended in August of 1945. She spotted a newspaper article that read, "Married WAVES could be discharged." She sent it to him and asked "What are you going to do about this article?" and it wasn't long before



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he proposed.

The candles burned brightly at the First Presbyterian Church in Pensacola, as she exchanged vows with her husband. It was November 9, 1945. They fulfilled their vow 'til death do us part.'

They had met at the Snow White on the North Side of the square in 1940. She fell in love with his sweet smile. He fell for her winning and lovable personality and her ability to cook a fine meal. He was hooked. Both were born and raised in Madison County and graduated from Riverton School.

After they married he moved her to a house on Ryland Pike. He did a little farming and worked for Ashburn & Gray. She cleaned teeth. They both raised a son, Stanley.

They were fixtures in Ryland. Never failing to help a neighbor in need, they became loved and respected and I'm sure many of the folks from that area remember them fondly.

He passed away several years ago. She moved to Florida to live with her son and daughter-in-law and lives close to the Pensacola Naval Air Station where she was stationed so many years ago.

I miss them and think of them often. He was my "Uncle Bill" Mitchell, and she was his wife and my "Aunt Catherine." They were part of the "Greatest Generation," and the world could use more good folks like them again.

Before you criticize someone, you should walk a mile in their shoes. That way, when you criticize him, you're a mile away and you have his shoes.



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THE ENLIGHTENMENT OF DEATH

by Robin Scott

It was early in spring about thirteen years ago. The day that began the funeral process for my grandmother was a bright sunny day. The family gathered on my grandmother's front porch. I stood there and thought of her, the situation, and reflected on the past.

I thought in two weeks she would have been nine-two! She had been a widow for twenty-nine years. I remembered that my grandmother was the eldest daughter of thirteen children, and that she was well-adapted to life in the country. Everything that she planted would come to life in abundance. As a child I was amazed at the beauty of all the flowers, bushes, and trees in her yard. Memories flashed through my mind of the love that we shared in her home. Connected by a well-trodden path in the field, her home was within two-hundred yards of the home that my father built. All of us walked this path so many times. She was often at the other end of the path with her arms extended.

Then, my brother touched my shoulder. We were thirteen months apart in age and had many of the same experiences

of our grandmother. He was the one that hesitantly informed me "Maggie died today." We both knew that she had been ill for a long time, and her death created the aura of finality. We both loved our grandmother dearly. I questioned him about what he knew of her final days and hours. Never being one to express extreme emotion, he discussed the last time that he had talked with her and what was said. I also informed him of my last experience with her.

Initially, after having spoken with Tim, I chastised myself that I should have done more.

She had taken very good care of me as a child and I felt that I had failed her. There had been many close calls with her health before. My husband, my children and I had spent days by her side, but this did not keep her from eventually dying. My husband came and stated "It's time to go."

My husband, two sons and I rode together on the way to the funeral home. For some reason, I had the demeanor of a childlike innocence. I was wondering if her spirit had gone to Heaven yet. Within that moment, I looked to the sky and noticed a single cloud. My mind and eyes interpreted the cloud as a long, thin, beautiful woman

and the thought came to me that she wasn't suffering anymore and was going to Heaven. My husband and I also took this time to talk with our young sons so that they would be prepared to enter the funeral home. This was the first time they had ever had this type of experience. Upon our arrival, we walked to the room where she was placed.

As I walked up to the coffin, I felt the need to communicate to her. There were things that I wanted to say and ask which I did in silence. I looked at her face and it was smoother without the stress of pain. Just in case there was some mistake, I looked to her chest to be sure that she wasn't breathing. I was still in a state of not totally accepting her death. I then had to touch the hand that had held mine so many times and made so many beautiful things. I then gathered my husband and sons and brought them up to view the body. My husband was very respectful and reverent. My sons reached for her and said Mamaw. They didn't ask why she did not say anything back. We visited family and friends, and then we left.

The following day we returned for the funeral service. I was blessed to see her one more time. Then, they closed the coffin. I remembered feeling the gasping motion of my chest

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as tears rolled uncontrollably down my face. I listened earnestly to someone's summation of my grandmother's entire life in a matter of minutes. Then the pallbearers carried her coffin and placed it in a hearse to take her to the cemetery.

The next step in saying goodbye was at the cemetery when she was laid next to my grandfather. The service took place and I listened with fervor to every word the minister said as I clung to my son who sat quietly on my lap. The service was over, and they were going to place the coffin in the ground. Her death's reality took hold of my being. I thought, she's not coming back. Everyone spoke of the wonderful service and started to gradually leave.

A short while later my immediate family and I returned.

I looked to her headstone and noticed for the first time that the difference in her and my grandfather's age, twelve years and four months, was the same gap in age between my husband and me. I felt this overwhelming feeling of guilt and that it was terrible to leave her there. Eventually, my husband gently prompted me to leave.

After the last formal process of my grandmother's funeral, we arrived back at our home. I felt the need to be alone. I sat in a chair in the backyard and closed my eyes. An unknown amount of time later the birds started singing loudly, and with such clarity that I had never heard before. It was as if they were telling me grandmother was now in Heaven.



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Other than an occasional lecturer or a visiting politician, there were few amusements in early-day Huntsville. In the winter of 1818-1819, N.M. Ludlow, a manager for a troupe of actors, visited Huntsville and staged the first professional play ever performed in Alabama. In 1871 he wrote the following account of the performance.

Our commencement at Huntsville was with considerable misgivings of success. First, because the town was very limited in point of population and, secondly, because there did not appear much expression of a desire to witness theatricals. Both of these apprehensions disappeared, however, as we came to understand that the wealthiest and best informed classes, those from whom we really obtained our principal support, resided not generally within the town limits, but from two to five miles around in the adjacent country, being mostly planters, and men of wealth and leisure. These would frequently come to town in their carriages and bring their families to witness our performances; and they soon began to consider theatrical amusements necessary to their pleasure. As our company was so very small, and half of it entire novices, we were much troubled to find pieces we could place before the public with any probability of affording satisfaction; but, with some skill in managing on our part, and a large share of indulgence on the part of our actors, we succeeded, I believe, in meeting their expectations.

The opening play was Tobin's comedy, in five acts, called the "Honeymoon," but cut down by me to three acts, and performed under the title of the "Duke's Marriage." It was the first time, I imagine, it was ever played under that name. The whole piece was not badly played, except that Mr. Flanagan made the Spanish Count an Irish Count. Our opening farce was Sam Foote's "Liar."


We were not able to procure musicians enough to form even a quartet band, so had to rely upon one instrument, a piano, played by an Irishman named Thomas, who

gave marches and waltzes during the intervals of the entertainments. The price of admission was \$1 for each person, adult or child, to which no one objected; by this rule every seat was made to sell, and we were not much annoyed with crying children.

Now I will desire of my readers to bear in mind that this was the first company of professional actors that ever performed in Alabama, throughout the whole Territory or State.

We performed in Huntsville about ten weeks, giving entertainments only three nights of each week: Mondays, Wednesdays, and Saturdays. We could not, with our novices, get pieces ready oftener; and even then had to make many "repeats."

Our season may be said to have been a success, inasmuch as we gave pretty general satisfaction; and though we made little or no money, we did not leave the town in debt, or fail to pay our company their weekly salaries. We made many pleasant acquaintances, who seemed anxious to have us return at some future day.



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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Ms. Carney,

Back in the late seventies and early eighties, I visited the National Museum of the U.S. Air Force and discovered a carrier pigeon named Stumpy John. I later wrote a note about Stumpy because he was wounded in the chest and lost a leg in World War I. I recently read my note on Stumpy John to a meeting of writers. Ms. Leo Larkin pointed me to an article in the July issue of Old Huntsville about a carrier pigeon named Cher Ami. Cher Ami had also been wounded in the chest and lost a leg in World War I.

I wondered if the two pigeons could be the same. I did some research on the internet and found information on both pigeons.

They both served in the Army Signal Corp. and both were wounded in the Meuse-Argonne Offensive, the 2-month battle that ended World War I. Cher Ami was wounded on 4 October 1918. After losing an eye, being wounded in the chest, and losing a leg, Cher Ami delivered a message that saved the lives of approximately 200 men. For his bravery, Cher Ami was awarded the French Crois de guerre with a palm leaf. After a partial recovery and being fitted with a wooden leg, Cher Ami was shipped back to the states. He died of his wounds on 13 June 1919. He was preserved by a taxidermist and now resides in the National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D. C.

Years ago, I made a number of business trips to Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Dayton, Ohio. The base happens to be the home of the National Museum of the U.S. Air Force. I visited the museum at every opportunity. In the early days, the museum had a section dedicated to World War I. This is where I came to know Stumpy John, a carrier pigeon.

Stumpy John's full name is Stumpy John Silver. Stumpy was wounded on 21 October 1918. His chest was pierced by a machine gun bullet and he had a number of shrapnel wounds. His right leg was also missing. Although severely wounded, Stumpy delivered the message attached to his left leg. After recovering from his injuries, Stumpy was fitted with a prosthetic device and was discharged from service.

He died on 6 December 1935. Stumpy was preserved by a taxidermist and is on display in the Early Years Gallery at the National Museum of the U.S. Air Force in Dayton, Ohio.

Regards, Curt Nail

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HUMOR IN A COTTON FIELD

by Derek Robertson

The Bible says, "Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls." Jeremiah 6:16.

I find rest for my soul when I converse with people a generation older than me and hear them tell stories about the "old ways." Throughout my life I have always enjoyed keeping company with people much older than me. I have learned many things from our conversations such as; gardening tips, old country favorite recipes, how to repair a tractor, raising hogs, and keeping goats out of a garden, Jesus, heaven and hell. I especially love hearing my dad tell stories about growing up in Alabama in the days of plowing with mules and picking cotton by hand. My grandfather lived through the depression and times were hard for raising a family even after the depression was over. However, in those difficult but simple times people had a better ability to see and enjoy the little things in life. My dad shared many stories about his childhood days with me and each one therein I discovered a valuable lesson amongst his words. I enjoyed all the stories my father shared with me. So much so, I sometimes wish I had grown up in those simpler

times.

My dad often spoke about times when money was scarce. He always said. "Being poor was nothing to be ashamed about, it was just unhandy at times." He also said they never had a want for anything. Somehow and some way all their needs were always met.

I recall a story my dad told me about a time when he was a young boy when he looked in my grandmother's ice box and saw there was barely any food on the shelves. Sometimes

it would worry him because he wondered what he would be eating for supper. He said miraculously somehow my granny would have a meal prepared fit for a king and enough to feed an army come supper time.

He wondered how she was able to pull it off with what little was available in the ice box. Somehow she always managed.

My grandfather was very stern and serious. Most of the stories I heard about him were about how honest and hard working a man he was. Casey Robertson was all business and very strict. I once asked my dad if my grandfather ever liked to joke or tease any of my aunts and uncles. My dad replied very little. "Your grandfather," he said, "was too busy worrying about taking care of his family

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in those days.”

However, my dad recalled a time when they were picking cotton, something funny my grandpa said that was funny in a dry sense of humor sort of way. My dad did not think it was humorous back then but today he laughs heartily when he retells that story.

It was summertime and dreadfully hot and humid. All of my dad's brothers and sisters were expected to go to the fields and pick cotton. My grandmother even went to the field in the mornings to pick for a couple of hours. Then she would head back to the house to prepare the midday meal they called “dinner” in those days - today folks call it lunch.

My grandpa was the first one to get to the cotton field in the mornings. I imagine he liked the few moments of solitude. Maybe this was the time he did his worrying but more than likely I think he did his praying.

When everyone arrived in the cotton field they gathered around my grandfather. My grandfather stood up from an old pile of cotton sacks he was sitting on, crushed out his hand-rolled cigarette, stretched and yawned and said, “Man, am I tired.” One of my aunts replied with a smart aleck comment, “Hello, tired, my name is Edith.” My dad said grandpa picked up his cotton sack, straightened his hat, and looked over at my aunt with a smirk on his face and said, “I will have your name changed to tired before the day is over.”

Those days are long gone now. It seems everyone looks for stories, values and lessons through Google or Facebook. Stories have to be precise

in their meaning and definition for people to understand nowadays. People do not behold the words and meaning behind those words in stories told by people wiser than they are, searching for value or something they can use in their own lives. This of course would mean a person would have to actually take time and listen to benefit from the utterances spoken.

I learned that my grandfather, despite his angst over taking care of

the family and where the next meal was coming from - still had a little hope and fun in his heart. The one and only joke I ever heard that my grandfather told made me realize that no matter the difficult times life can bring, it is noble to make the best of what you have and bring laughter into life no matter where a person finds themselves - even if it is in a cotton field.

“Thousands of years ago cats were worshipped as gods. Cats have never forgotten this.”

Anonymous



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WHAT I REMEMBER

by Billy Stone

I am a native of a farming community located in a beautiful valley in North Alabama called Big Cove. I am the first born of eleven children and the son of a preacher. I am not famous, rich, or handsome.

I am retired from the Alabama Unified Judicial System as a court Assistant to the Presiding Judge of Madison County, Alabama. My retirement came because of a stroke. It cut my career short at a younger age than I expected, and now I am trying to recover by exercising my brain and short-term memory.

Why do I write about Big Cove? Because of some people that lived there and experiences that made an impression on my life. Some were not necessarily good or bad, but they were impressions that will last my lifetime.

I have tried not to write an autobiography of my life, but to write about the hard times and the closeness of the Cove community, its ties to the Church, the land, and its roots. I believe that anyone raised in the country can relate to some of the same things I did and to some of the people in the Cove. The other reason I wrote about Big Cove is; it has been discovered. It is the place of choice for many newcomers to North Alabama, and it is rapidly changing.

When I started making notes about Big Cove many years ago, I never thought that my directions would change about the way I wanted to write. My notes were more of a chronicle of my life in Big Cove, but now I have deleted more than fifty percent of them and I have tried to focus more on the community and its people.

I have always wanted to write, but I have never been

able to pull my talent together, that is if I have any.

I just want you to get inside my head and relive some of my memories and the things my Mother, Daddy, and others told me.

During my teenage years, Huntsville, Alabama, the nearest city to my home in the country (Big Cove) began to bustle. It was moving out of the cotton town image to the rocket age. It seemed that I was stuck in the middle of the old and the new age.

Redstone Arsenal, the home of NASA's Marshall Space Flight Center, was coming alive. Some of the best scientists in the world, such as Dr. Werner von Braun and his team, were pioneering a new age of technology and Big Cove would eventually feel the impact. In addition, the Army at Redstone Ar-

senal had begun to develop new technology for a defense system for our country. Big Cove was in the shadow of this looming giant of the new modern age but it was still in the country and many childhood memories were forever formed in my mind there.

As a youngster, I would stand in the cotton field just across Green Mountain from Redstone Arsenal and listen to the roaring of the rocket engines. I could feel the shuttering of the earth as the mighty engines were test fired from a strapped down position on the

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test stand. The roaring of the rocket engines could be heard as far away as 70 miles; but, I was close enough to Redstone Arsenal that it felt like the rocket engines were in the cotton fields with me. However, none of that space age stuff stopped me from learning the lessons of life in what seemed to be in another world just across the mountain.

Living in the country is one of the most rewarding experiences a young person can have. You learn to survive on your own wits if you're fortunate enough to have parents that would give you the freedom to roam the countryside and explore the things nature has provided for you.

When you are a youngster, those experiences can be bigger than life to you. They will carry over into adulthood and give you a more realistic view of life. You will look back and say, how did I do that? How did I survive those experiences? How did I survive that swim in the dangerous muddy river? Why did a rattlesnake while I was picking blackberries in a thick briar patch not bite me? Why did I not fall while climbing that steep bluff on the mountain? Why did I not sink into the quicksand while crossing the sand fields of the bottomland? Why did my best friend not accidentally shoot me while rabbit hunting with his first 410-gauge shotgun? Why did I not fall out of that big oak tree that I was climbing, or cut off my toes while chopping cotton barefoot? Why did I not break my neck swinging from a rope and diving into the muddy river after a big rain? Why did I not chop my foot off while cutting timber in the mountain? Why did I not fall into a sinkhole that I discovered while playing in the mountain? How did I survive that ride down a steep hill after getting in an oil drum or a big tractor tire and riding them to the bottom? Why did I not turn the tractor over while plowing on the side of a steep hill after I just learned to drive?

After asking all those "why" questions and the only answer you can come up with is, "it's part of life's plan", then your memory kicks in. The memory starts feeding off all of those "whys" and the first thing you know; you have a lifetime of memories.

I remember walking a mile to catch the school bus in the rain, cold, heat, and walking a mile to church with my best friends almost every weekend.

I remember sitting around the big Warm Morning stove at the country store eating hoop cheese, crackers, and drinking R. C. Colas.

I remember mixing corn bread in ice tea and biscuits in hot chocolate and eating it.

I remember drawing water from a hand dug well and I remember milking cows on the coldest day of the year.

I remember trying to get a stubborn mule to pull the plow in the garden. I remember playing basketball in the back yard with a homemade rim and backboard nailed to the back of the barn.

I remember pulling corn by hand in the heat of

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I remember trying to pick more cotton in a day than my friends, and I remember picking scrap cotton and corn on a cold day to make an extra dollar to buy winter clothes.

I remember cutting cane in the river bottoms to make a fishing pole so I could fish in the gravel pits near the river.

I remember picking up arrowheads, flint stones, and other Indian relics along the riverbank and fresh plowed fields with my friends.

I remember shooting my first swamp rabbit in the bottom lands of the Flint River and shooting my first squirrel on Green Mountain.

I remember making a bow and a whistle from a hickory limb that I had cut.

I remember pulling rosin from a big sweet gum tree on a fencerow and chewing it.

I remember helping my mother kill a chicken and cleaning it for Sunday dinner.

I remember sitting in the front porch swing with my friend, James Treece, and pretending to play a guitar and trying to sing like Bill Monroe and Roy Acuff of the Grand Ole Opry.

I remember jumping from a barn loft with my cousin and trying to fly like superman. Moreover, I remember using an umbrella as a parachute and jumping from a tree and the barn loft.

I remember tying strings around the legs of June bugs and July flies and watching them fly in circles.

I remember catching lightning bugs and putting them

in a fruit jar.

I remember picking rusted coat apples from a tree in the cow pasture. I remember milking the cows and drinking the milk after the cows had eaten bitter weeds.

I remember picking fresh tomatoes that were still hot from the sun and making sandwiches without anything else between the bread.

I remember eating a plain onion sandwich.

I remember rolling up thread and cloth strips to make softballs.

I remember playing mumble peg under the shade tree with friends.

I remember when I was chased by a swarm of yellow jackets on the riverbank while I was swimming in the buff.

I remember looking for crawfish and gigging for frogs in a snake-infested pond or ditch full of water.

I remember getting my friends together after church and racing them to the top of Green Mountain.

I remember playing church

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in a barn loft with my friends.

I remember hanging upside down from a tall tree limb and swinging from a crosscut vine that was hanging in the tree.

I remember walking five miles to the little country town of Owens Cross Roads to get an ice cream cone.

I remember ordering toys and clothes from a Spiegel catalog.

I remember helping dig new potatoes and spreading them under the floor, or in a cool cellar.

I remember helping my daddy and uncle kill hogs on the first cold day of winter.

I remember that I was chased

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by a swarm of mad hornets that were a little bit disturbed at me.

I remember hunting for that buried treasure that is hid somewhere at the foot of Green Mountain.

I remember going to the old house that was haunted, so they say, because a murder by hanging took place there during the Civil War.

I remember the family spending the night in a cold storm cellar because of stormy weather.

I remember standing in the cotton field watching the rain follow the mountain, wishing it would come my way so I could go home for the day.

I remember cutting sorghum cane and peeling the stalk to get out the sweet juice.

I remember cutting a sas-safra's limb and making tooth brushes out of it.

I remember getting in my uncle's watermelon patch with my cousin. Hoping we would not be caught as we broke open the melons and ate just the hearts.

I remember de-tasseling corn on the hottest day of the year.

I remember going to the cotton gin in Owens Cross Roads for the first time.

I remember working in the hay fields in the heat of the day.

I remember the pain of a caterpillar worm's sting after I was stung while picking cotton.

I remember working in the fields when it was too hot, or too cold, and never just right.

I remember shelling corn to make corn meal, or to feed the hogs and cows.

I remember salting down the fresh pork in a large saltbox in the smokehouse.

I remember making toys from anything that was usable, because often we could not afford new ones.

I remember riding an old skinny back mule to the fields and not being able to walk very

well after I got off.

I remember meeting the old rolling store peddler on the roadside and trading chickens and vegetables for flour, meal, sugar, and candy.

I remember when we got our first electric cook stove, refrigerator, washing machine, hot water heater, window fan, telephone, and indoor toilet.

I remember going to the coal piles and getting a scuttle full of coal on the coldest day of the year.

I remember putting cardboard in my shoes and tacking the floppy soul back on them.

I remember going to school in the spring of the year without shoes. No matter how harsh some of these things seem... they are beautiful memories. These are things most kids will not experience living in the city, and today, most country kids will not. Seeing the beauty of the country will make memories come back.

As I get older, I wish everybody could live those experiences as I did. Every community has certain characters that stand out in their mind. They are part of the makeup of that community. Each had their uniqueness. Most of them will never do anything outstanding; they just live normal lives.

They do leave impressions, experiences, and memories and Big Cove is where I found them.



SUPERSTITIONS ABOUT YOUR HAIR

- Should a person's hair burn brightly when thrown into a fire, it is said to indicate a long life. The brighter the flame, the longer the duration. Should hair smolder and refuse to burn in a fire, however, it is thought to indicate the approach of death.

- Should a married woman suddenly develop two curls on her forehead, when normally her hair was straight, she must watch out for her husband. He does not have long to live.

- Some believe that hair cut on a Tuesday guarantees a long life. Cutting one's hair on Thursday would bring a great deal of luck. On Friday, one would never be rich. On Monday or Sunday, one would attract bad luck.

- One should never cut one's own hair, since it will bring terrible events for those living in the home.

- In southern Italy, a coin is placed in the hand of a child whose hair is cut for the first time.

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THE COON HUNT

by Malcolm Miller

When I was a small boy growing up in Ryland, Alabama, possum and coon hunting were very popular activities, both from the standpoint of sport and also putting food on the family table. My older brothers would go on many hunts as food was scarce, especially meat, and we had to eat anything we could get. The family ate the possums and saved the coons hides to sell. I have eaten coon meat but it was kind of tough and stringy. The possum meat was good if you were terribly hungry and you baked it with sweet potatoes surrounding it. These days I don't believe I would ever be hungry enough to eat either possum or coon. It really wouldn't matter if I would eat it or not as I don't believe I could find anyone that would cook it for me.

The Ryland community is halfway surrounded by mountains and on almost any given still fall night my friends and I could look toward the mountain and see slow moving lantern lights along the side of the mountains. These would be other hunters following their hunting dogs and waiting for them to tree either a possum or a coon.

My dog, old Fuzzy, was the best possum dog in the whole

community and other people would come by and borrow him to go on their hunts. Fuzzy loved that as he looked forward to locating the possums and the coons and he always returned tired and very proud of himself.

The majority of this activity took place in the late nineteen twenties and through the nineteen thirties when I was too little to take part in these hunts. However, after I was grown I took part in a coon hunt that I will remember as long as I live. I didn't realize what I was getting into when I agreed to go on a coon hunt with Walter Pigg, Les Webster, Wiley Hopkins and Arnie Eliff.

This turned out to be one of the worst experiences of

my life. We hunted in Banyon Bottom which was located somewhere west of Hazel Green. First of all the place was nothing much but a very large swamp foil of mud holes and

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streams and I was the only one in the group that didn't have on boots. Arnie Eliff, who along with me is the only one still living, would carry me on his back across the streams and water holes even though he was short and I was six four. He had to be really strong to do that.

And now, as Paul Harvey use to say, here is the rest of the story. The only thing the dogs treed that evening was a skunk. The hunting dogs caught and killed the skunk on the ground, getting sprayed with that wonderful skunk perfume in the process. That skunk perfume remained in my memory for a very long time. It also remained on the hunting dogs for a long period of time.

Finally we got back out on a gravel road. Meanwhile everyone except Arnie and I was dog drunk on moonshine whiskey and shooting a shot gun in every direction and yelling at the top of their lungs. When we started home I had to sit in the back with three coon dogs next to me and their recently acquired perfume permeating the air. Needless to say when I got home I had to leave my clothes on the front porch.

This coon hunt happened over sixty-five years ago. That was enough coon hunting to last a lifetime and the memories still linger in my mind.



"Don't argue with an idiot. People watching may not know the difference."

Bill Drake, Huntsville

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A BRIEF HISTORY OF TRIANA

SUBMITTED BY CHARLIE POLK LYLE
AND DECATED TO HIS FATHER,
CHARLES DILLARD LYLE.

Charles Dillard Lyle was born in Triana in 1883. Charlie or Charles was the son of John Lyle and Florence Halsey Lyle. He had three brothers and one sister. The Lyle lineage goes back to the people of 'The Isle' or (Lyle). They were ship builders living on an island off the coast of Scotland.

Triana was named for Captain Triana (pronounced Treeana) who commanded one of the three ships making up the convoy of Christopher Columbus.

When the first settlers explored Madison County, it was about the time of John Hunt, who built his cabin above The Big Spring in 1805. They found an immense forest growth, a tract of land as clear of timber and undergrowth as a town meadow. This cleared spot was once a large Indian town known to the few Indian traders who preceded the white settlers as "Chickasaw old Fields" and called "Big Prairie" by the Indians. It was on this spot later that the town of Triana was built.

According to Judge Taylor's history, between 1805 and 1809 large numbers of wealthy and cultured people came into Madison County, principally from Georgia, Virginia and South Carolina. It was not until the creation of Madison County by proclamation of Governor Robert Williams of the Mississippi Territory on December 13, 1808 and about a year later when provision was made by the Federal Government to have this land sold at public auction in Nashville, Tennessee.

Four days after the inauguration of Governor Bibb, Alabama's first Governor at Huntsville on November 9, 1819, a bill was passed by the legislature incorporating the town of Triana. This act was amended to provide a governing board consisting of five trustees. Shortly thereafter the trustees proceeded to divide the

town into streets, lots and blocks.

Prior to the incorporation of the town, several large landowners owned immense tracts of land in the Triana Township, an area of about six miles square. Among those mentioned in Judge's history were Merriweather Lewis, J.G. Dillard and three Toney brothers, Harris, Caleb and Edmund.

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At this time, the best cotton land in the county was located along the Tennessee River from Whitesburg, and then known as Ditto Landing to a point three miles west of Triana.

Madison County, as we all know, has led all counties in the state in cotton production practically without interruption since its creation in 1808. In 1816 Madison County produced ten thousand bales for the market, which according to The Nations Intelligencer, was twice the production of any county of its size in the U.S.

The big problem facing the cotton merchants was transportation with no railroads. The only means of transportation was by navigation. As early as 1815 the leading businessmen of the county were making plans to meet the situation. Cotton had to reach the Tennessee River to be loaded on stream boats and transported to New Orleans via Paducah, Kentucky down the Ohio River to Cairo and thence into the Mississippi for its ultimate destination. Triana was an excellent site for a port being located on a high bluff at a point where the wide and deep Indian Creek emptied into the Tennessee River.

This made Triana a perfect port town with the potential of being one of the larger towns in Alabama.

The idea of building a canal from Huntsville to Triana using the Big Spring Branch and Indian Creek seemed to be the solution.

I find the records in conflict as to the time this canal was dug. One historian claims the canal was open to the flat boats in 1827 being drawn by mules walking along the banks. These barges or flatboats were called Keelboats capable of carrying 80 to 100 bales of cotton.

Another claims no action was taken until the Indian River Navigation Co. was incorporated December 21, 1830 and that the project was later abandoned. It was found impossible to obtain sufficient water even with a system of expensive locks to operate these flat boats except at certain times of the year when the water

supply was plentiful. I guess it will remain for future generations to settle this point. Regardless of the fact as to whether the canal was a failure or a success, enthusiasm ran high and two years later when the canal was completed there was a wild scramble to purchase property along the Tennessee River in Triana. City lots were sold at prices ranging from \$700.00 to \$1,400.00. Warehouses, public buildings, a bank, hotel, stores were built. Triana was on a boom. It was thought that Triana would become the principal inland shipping point for cotton in the South.

Act of State approved January 21, 1832 chartered Triana Academy in 1832. Alas, for the hopes and aspirations of its people, its doom was sealed. When the Memphis and Charleston Railroad was extended some years later from Decatur to Chattanooga.

The foregoing seems to cover the highlights in Triana's growth and development.

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I come here today to pay my last respects to my good friend, James Cecil Ashburn. A man who left his tracks in the middle of the road for all to see. Cecil built over 1,200 miles of road, 523 subdivisions and 900 Industrials Parks in 46 years he was in business as Ashburn and Gray.

Cecil is gone now. He will never be back. He's up there on the streets of gold building and paving roads as he goes. Cecil told me one day that if you are a contractor there are no dead end roads.

We will go back to Cecil's place, but Cecil will not be there. He is gone now. It will never be the same. Most of all Cecil, thanks for being my friend. May God bless.

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A FEW WISDOMS FOR SUCCESS & HAPPINESS

by David Hardwick

1. Just go do the next right thing ~ per my Preacher Dees
2. Never do anything that will hurt your conscience ~ per my Pappy
3. Truth, Honest & Integrity are absolutely the best long range policies ~ Mother
4. Seldom let others use you & more importantly, never use or abuse others ~ my motto
5. Things are never as bad as they seem, when going bad; or that good when going good ~ Woody Hays
6. I can't -- never could ~ per the Little Engine That Could that thought: I Can & Did.
7. In the final analysis, only you can put pressure upon yourself ~ per Pat Dye
8. It's wise to think of life as one gigantic self-improvement course ~ the story of my life
9. Remember: most people are normal until you really get to know them ~ the voice of experience
10. It is not wise to encourage a verbal bully by letting them get to you: just laugh it off.
11. Good judgment comes from experience. The wise learn from the experiences of others.
12. Twenty years ago, I was smarter. Because I am wiser now, I accomplish more ~ Don Spurling
13. Possessing true wisdom is far superior to merely being smart and intelligent ~ Mother
14. Walking in the right direction is far wiser than flying in the wrong direction ~ Sara Palin
15. To truly solve any problem (not just its symptoms), you must accurately diagnose it.
16. A journey of a thousand miles is started by just taking that all important first step ~ Chinese wisdom
17. Learn & understand the material and the grades will take care of themselves ~ Mother
18. The real winner of a debate is the one who learns the most ~ my debate winning Mother.



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Tweetie's Pet Tips

Tweetie wanted to mention here that he still can't believe cats need so much work and attention from their people, and that parakeets require much less and are just as much fun.



Kitty has decided to use something other than the litter box for his "business." Don't throw him outside, just take some steps to retrain him.

* Try to find out why he stopped using the box, or began to use other places. Is he stressed out over a major change in the home? Does he have a urinary infection? Is he spraying or urinating? (He will squat to urinate. If he is standing up to urinate, he is spraying/marking his territory.) Whatever the reason, you must take steps to remove the stressor, or help Kitty manage his stress.

* With urinary infections, you will need to follow your vet's instructions, but also ask about urinary infection maintenance foods, your water quality, and any other things you should do to help your Kitty recover.

* NEVER DISCIPLINE A CAT FOR MISTAKES. This will lead to other behavior problems. Instead, work on retraining him.

* Clean all of the accidents with more than plain soap and water. Look in your pet store for

better formulas and products to clean pet stains.

* Add another litter box to the household in a place different than the other boxes. Show Kitty this new box, and praise him for investigating it, but don't expect him to use it right then.

* Replace the old litter box and sand. Kitty may have stopped using the old litter box, not because you couldn't keep it clean, but because the plastic box retains odors.

* Give your Kitty lots of praise and affection around the new boxes, so he will want to please you, by using the boxes.

* If he continues to use one particular spot, place a litter box in that spot and slowly move it to a location you can be satisfied with. This is a last resort measure, because it could take several months to move the box.



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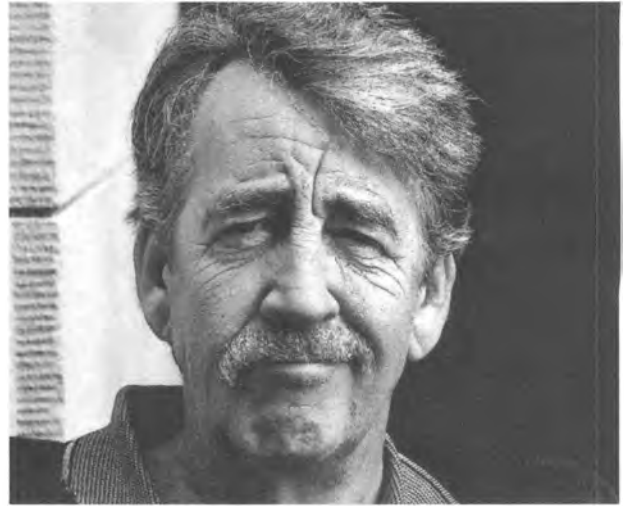
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From the Desk of Tom Carney

Vance Morris and the Alabama Playboys

by Tom Carney



People in Huntsville know him as the gentle, philosophical grandfather who operates Vance Morris Motors, a garage out on Oakwood Avenue.

But travel a few miles north, to Nashville, walk through the Country Music Hall of Fame, talk to some of the older stars of the music industry and you will hear tales of a living legend.

They will tell you stories of a time, almost half a century ago, when Vance Morris and the Alabama Playboys thrilled audiences and dance crowds in giant dance parlors and ballrooms all across the eastern United States.

Others will laugh and remember stories about times when they dodged flying beer bottles while performing on stage.

But regardless of who you talk to, they all remember.

"I would never have gotten into music if it hadn't been for an old mule," recalled Vance Morris.

"We had this old plow mule on our Oklahoma farm and one day I was following along behind it and I got to studying it.

"It never looked ahead to see where it was going, nor did it look off to the side to see what it was missing. He just plowed ahead for 12 hours a day with nothing to look forward to.

"That's when I decided that I didn't want to go through life hooked to the wrong end of a mule."

His father was an avid lover of country music and was friends with the legendary country star Bob Wills. It was Wills who influenced Vance in his choice of a musical career.

Determined to be a musician, he bought a guitar for five dollars and spent hours trying to emulate Wills' style.

Unfortunately, the Great Depression and the dust bowl put Vance's budding career on hold.

"My father had been a prosperous man, but when the Depression hit, it just about wiped him out. A few years later the dust bowl came along and took what we had left. My mother had kin in Mississippi so we moved there. If we were to be poor it may as well be around family."

A few years later he came to Huntsville to visit a friend.

"I took a drink of spring water, bought a pair of shoes, and decided to stay," says the amiable guitarist.

Another inducement to staying here, according to a niece,

had something to do with a Mississippi sheriff who was not very understanding of young people and their street-screaming hot rods.

The sheriff had attempted to put a halt to racing in the city limits by harassing everyone who owned a hot rod. Angered by the sheriff's high-handed actions, the spirited young men planned their revenge.

Creeping into town late one night, they attached a length of chain from the rear axle of the sheriff's car to a nearby tree, then raced their noisy hot rods past the jail. The sheriff, livid by this time, ran out of the jail to give chase. Unfortunately, his patrol car only went the length of the chain. The county got a large repair bill, the sheriff got a warrant and Vance got a sudden interest in Huntsville.

Vance grew up listening to a type of music which was unfamiliar to many Southerners. It was a combination of Dixieland jazz, black man's blues, and country sounds. After moving to Huntsville, he began experimenting with this new sound, which was called Texas swing.

"Our music lessons consisted of listening to the radio

and trying to copy the same sounds." He recalled.

In 1943, Morris organized the "Alabama Playboys." With 13 members, it was one of the largest bands in this part of the country.

Among the members was young W.C. Williams, whom everyone called "Hank." Years later he had to change his moniker because a young upstart named Hiram Williams from south Alabama began using the same name and became famous.

"At first we just played at store openings and street dances," recalled Williams. "But then we started getting invitations to play out of town, and not from the sheriff, either."

A local radio station featured the swing orchestra. It was during World War II and for a country accustomed to daily doses of depressing news, the fresh sound of the "Alabama Playboys" was just what the doctor ordered.

Offers came from all over the country asking the band to perform.

"We would pack ourselves into a couple of cars, like sardines in a can and drive like the dickens to Arkansas or wherever we were playing. Often, when we finished playing, we'd load up and drive back home the same night. Most of the boys had families and day jobs here in Huntsville."

Vance had also established himself as a pretty good race car driver. En route to dance gigs in faraway cities, band members said, he often slid the car around curves at 90 miles an hour, a practice which certain members of the band found upsetting. A few years later he would win the Tennessee State Championship for stock cars, driving a 1933 modified Ford with, as he described it, "a few

goodies under the hood."

The "Alabama Playboys" continued to gain in popularity. Within a period of five or six years they had become the most popular swing band east of the Mississippi River.

Vance and his band traveled continuously, making personal appearances on radio stations all across the country and playing to overflowing crowds at every stop.

In 1948, the "Alabama Playboys" were offered a contract with the Saturday night Grand

Ole Opry.

"I had already opened up my garage by this time and we were still playing major Saturday night gigs all over the country. It didn't seem like a good thing to do at the time, to give everything up just to work on the Opry. Most of the boys felt the same way."

"Besides," Vance said as he grinned, "they only offered me \$60 a week."

Hank Snow, during the same period, was paid only \$46 a week as an Opry regular.

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Versions of several of Vance's songs such as "Faded Love," "Crazy About the Boogie," and "Some of These Days" were well on their way to becoming classics.

With the band's popularity growing by leaps and bounds, record companies began to take interest. In 1952, the band signed a contract to cut a series of records for a Nashville recording company. Several of the songs became big hits nationally, as well as in Asia, Europe, and elsewhere.

Unfortunately for Morris, fame was all he got. The record companies, after discovering he had not copyrighted the songs, released them under another artist's name.

Disillusioned by Nashville and stardom, the "Alabama Playboys" returned to Huntsville, where Vance began spending more time in building up his automotive repair business.

He quickly earned a reputation for building "custom" cars that were in great demand at the time.

"This was back in the whiskey running days," recalled one old-timer. "His cars looked just like any other car on the road, but there wasn't a police car around that could stay up with them. And if the police did catch them they couldn't find the whiskey!"

"Vance had secret compartments built all over those cars. Why, he even had the headlights fixed where you could unscrew them and hide a case of whiskey in the fender behind each one of them."

Music was in his blood, though, and it wasn't long before the band was performing again. This time, instead of traveling, they chose to play in area night spots.

Among these night spots,

and probably the most infamous, was the White Castle, which was located at the intersection of Winchester Road and Meridian Street. It was illegal to sell alcohol in those days, but the management of the White Castle had made "certain arrangements" with the local authorities.

The White Castle was a rough establishment, but the owner, Laurel Hardin, had her own way of keeping order.

When a fight would break out, "Aunt Laurel" would wade into the fracas, pushing people right and left. Grabbing the offenders by their shirt collars, she would shove her .45 caliber pistol in their faces.

"Boys," she would say, "you can fight in here or you can go outside, but if you fight in here you better call yourselves an ambulance. Cause when I get done, you'll need one!"

W.C. "Hank" Williams remembered playing at the Castle during its heyday. "You could say it was good exercise. If they ever had a contest for dodging flying beer bottles we would have won easily. One night they had a fight and sev-

eral beer bottles came flying on stage. I managed to get out of the way, but when I looked down I saw that one of the bottles had hit my bass and was sticking out by its neck!"

"We had a good time playing there," Morris said. "But we couldn't take any breaks. Every time a fight would start, Aunt Laurel would holler at us, "Play, boys, play!"

By the mid 1950s the band members started drifting their separate ways. Guitarist Malcolm Buffaloe moved to Chicago where he continued to perform until recently. "Hank" Williams opened a small gas station that has today grown into a chain of Williams Oil Company service stations. Other members moved away and never returned.

In 1981, twelve recordings by Vance and the "Playboys" were placed into the Country Music Hall of Fame at Nashville. In 1986, the band was reunited in Chicago, where they played their last public performance to a standing ovation.



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ASHES OVER LAKE GUNTERSVILLE

by Don Broome

An old friend of mine was married for many years to a very sweet and timid girl and they had a daughter. I can't tell any names in this story or I won't be welcome at his home anymore.

His father-in-law was really nice and my friend enjoyed fishing and working on cars with him. The other side of the coin was the mother-in-law. If you took her out to eat, she'd take everything off the table. Take her to a garden center and she loaded the trunk with pottery. She delighted in causing trouble and meddling was her middle name. Her husband of 39 years had had enough. He'd been to a lawyer and was preparing to leave her. Apparently she found out and emptied all of the joint investments and put everything in her name. Legally, she could do it and do it she did. If he had left, he would have had a small pension and would have had to split it with her. He was stuck. She made his life even more miserable after that.

Three years later he developed lung cancer. He said it was his way out. His will left his granddaughter all of his estate. There wasn't much to it, considering. He made his granddaughter promise that his wife would never get his ashes. He was horrified that she would put him on the mantle and when people would come over she would gain sympathy by crying over him. She would, too!

He wanted his ashes to be taken out in the woods near a lake and let the wind carry him away.

After the brief service, Granddaughter and her husband departed with Granddad under her arm. Not long after the service, Grandmother realize that the ashes were gone and was told that, as arranged, her granddaughter had taken possession of them.

That's when all hell broke

loose, starting with daily phone calls escalating to hourly phone calls. Finally, Granddaughter agreed to return the ashes. A nice covered dish was taken from the cabinet and she went over to the fireplace. Carefully sifting the ashes from the fireplace, she filled the dish. Tape was put around the rim to seal it.

When they arrived back in Huntsville to deliver "Grandfather's Ashes", Grandmother informed them that she wanted to be taken to Guntersville, have a pilot fly everyone over Lake Guntersville, where he loved to fish. Nothing would do but for this to happen and happen now.

So after many phone calls, arrangements were made and they drove to a little airfield off Highway 431. Grandmother took over as she always did and seated everyone where she wanted them

to be. The plane took off and was flying over the lake.

Grandmother opened a window and ripped off the tape sealing "Grandfather". The wind was blowing into the cabin pretty hard and as she unsealed the covered dish, his ashes filled the plane. Hysteria reigned as Grandmother screamed in horror.

Granddaughter and her husband were also hysterical but hiding their laughter under their hands. The pilot was trying to find a place to land and worried that he would never get anyone else to come up in his plane again, where human ashes might be left behind. After a few minutes they landed the plane and the pilot, who was really mad by this time, was taken aside and let in on what was really going on.

Cleaning Grandfather from the plane was arranged and finally we were able to take Grandmother home.

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Basic Rules for Cats who have a House to Run, VI

by Harold Reynolds

DOORS. Do not allow closed doors in any room. To get a door opened, stand on hind legs and hammer with forepaws. Once a door is open, it is not necessary to use it. After you have ordered an outside door opened, stand halfway in and halfway out and think about several things. This is particularly important during cold weather, rain, snow and mosquito season.

CHAIRS & RUGS. If you have to throw up, get into a chair quickly. If there is no oriental rug, shag is good.

GUESTS. Quickly determine which guest hates cats the most. Sit on that human's lap. If you can arrange to have Fish'n Liver on your breath, so much the better.

For sitting on laps or rubbing against trousers, select a fabric color which contrasts well with your fur. For example: white-furred cats go next to black wool clothing (what else with basic black?)

For guests who gush, "Oh, how darling, I just love kitties," be ready with aloof disdain; apply claws to stockings or use a quick nip on the ankle.

When walking among dishes

on the dinner table, with guests present, be prepared to look surprised and hurt when scolded. The idea is to convey, "But you always allow me on the table when company isn't here."

WORK. If one of your humans is sewing or writing and another is idle, stay with the busy one. This is called helping, or otherwise known as hampering.

PLAY. It is very important. Get enough sleep in the daytime so you are fresh for playing catch mouse, or King-of-the-Hill on the bed between 2 am and 4 am.

TRAINING. Begin people-training early and you will have a smooth-running household. Humans need to know basic rules.

They can be taught if you start early and are consistent.

Rules for Hampering:

1. When supervising cooking, sit behind the left heel of the the cook. You cannot be seen and thereby stand a better chance of being stepped on, then picked up and consoled.

2. For book readers, get in close under the chin, between the human's eyes and the book, unless you can lie across the book itself.

3. For knitting projects, curl up quietly onto the lap of the knitter and pretend to nap. Occasionally reach out and slap the knitting needles sharply. This can cause dropped stitches or split yarn. The knitter may try to distract you with a scrap ball of yarn. Ignore it. Remember, the aim is to hamper work.

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LIFE IN THE GARDEN

by Leo Larkin

The sun shone brightly, but the August heat was not unbearable yet. I brought the two-way radio, ignition key and a cooler full of ice water out to the shuttle. I started the silent golf cart shuttle and eased it out onto the path to cruise the Huntsville Botanical Garden. As I approached the nature trail, a red-tailed hawk flew over me, screaming angrily. She landed in a tall water oak and sat there watching me as I was watching her. "Wonder what's wrong with her," I thought. Unbeknownst to me, her baby, who was just learning to attack and kill its prey, had attacked a deer fawn. Mama had taught it to kill for food, but it hadn't learned that the size of the prey mattered. The fawn couldn't defend itself and received several scratches. Luckily, Niki Sothers and Vernon Bush heard the commotion and rescued the fawn. It was taken to the vet and returned to its mama. Unfortunately, the doe wouldn't accept her baby. The little fawn was taken to a wildlife refuge.

The garden is a playground for small children. There are places to safely play in water, with lots of room to run and just be kids.

There are folks who come to walk for exercise. They're in no danger of being hit by a car,

mugged or harmed in any way. One retired couple walks the garden frequently. They bring bread to feed the turtles, ducks and fish in the lake. They say that, when the turtles see them, they stick their heads up out of the water waiting for a bite. The bream line up for their treat and will follow them as they walk around the lake. The ducks are mighty appreciative also. A garden employee, Tina, says she doesn't have to feed them because so many folks are bringing them lunch.

As a volunteer, I drive the garden, looking for folks who find the walking distance more than they can handle. The garden has 112 acres, 65 acres developed. If I see anyone struggling with the heat, I offer a ride and ice water. Sometimes I drive to the parking lot to pick up people who are unable to walk, give them a tour and return them to their cars.

The shuttle can be reserved in advance. It's always a good idea, so the staff will make sure someone is available to drive.

One volunteer, Vernon Bush, is there every day to work at the garden. He led a group, cleared the land for azaleas and hydrangeas, propagated and planted over 400 plants; including other species scattered among them.

At one time, a pair of Canadian geese visited the garden and

raised a family in the aquatic garden. The staff roped off the area for them and Papa patrolled it. Woe to the one who was nosy and got too close to mama and her eggs. The goslings were very small when they were marched to the larger lake - not an easy walk for such short little legs. The pair returned for several years and then, evidently, something happened to one or both. One of their babies, Gary the Goose, was born with a birth defect. He had a damaged wing and couldn't fly. He lived at the lake for several years and then disappeared. Speculation is that he fell prey to a coyote or fox. Life and death are natural parts of this living garden.

One year, at the same time the geese were in the aquatic garden, a pair of mallard ducks took up residence there. Mama mallard nested in a large pot of flowers. She laid 27 eggs and Papa left. The garden is home to many critters and someone got into the nest and ate all but seven of the eggs. When they hatched, the staff put a plank from the water to the pot so the youngsters could come and go. The critters also got the ducklings. You see, Papa wasn't there to protect them.

A groundhog lives under the tool shed at the vegetable

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garden which is maintained by the Master Gardeners. They trap and relocate him, but he returns 'cause he knows where the groceries are. One day, I was there when they had trapped him. He was so mad, he really squealed. I believe he must weigh 40 to 45 pounds. As I tell the visiting kids, it's because he eats his veggies.

On the nature trail you're apt to see Dene Matthews. Dean is nearly 86 years old and very agile. She is at the garden every day, working on the nature trail. If you don't see her, she's probably in the greenhouse. A group that call themselves the Grubbers, come on Tuesdays to help her weed.

The trillium garden (one of the largest in the nation) is beautiful in the early spring. The trillium is called the death flower in the Appalachians; it blooms in February and is the only flower available to put on caskets in cold months.

Close to the trillium garden is the paw-paw patch. We've sung about picking paw-paws, but who has ever seen them? Well, you can see them at the garden. Wildflowers have been rescued (with permission) and brought to the nature trail from the subdivisions being built on the mountains. In the spring, the trail is ablaze in color. The red buckeye feeds the hummingbirds in the spring and the jewel weed feeds them as they fly south in the fall. The Euonymus, better known as Strawberry Bush, or Heart's-a-Bustin', feed the deer. Faces adorn our trees. It was done for the children, but adults love it just as well. Our beautiful fern garden is accessorized with rocks of all sizes and shapes.

As we leave the shade of the forest we travel to the daylily

garden. Father's Day is celebrated with gorgeous blooms. There are over 800 cultivators. Across the road is the herb garden. The amount of work and care by the Herb Society is evident. There are herbs of all kinds: fragrant and medicinal. A beautiful Dwarf Pomegranate tree, sporting orange blossoms, lends a festive color.

The lovely Garden of Hope, sponsored by Intergraph Corporation, provides a peaceful spot for those who have lost loved ones to pray and reflect on their memories.

One must not miss the Trading Post tree house. It is made entirely of cedar from one farm near Scottsboro. As you open the door, the murals beckon you to come in. It will make you want to put a bed in there and stay.

If any one thing can top all of this, it's the butterfly house. It is the largest seasonal butterfly house in the nation. The meandering walkway is bordered by shallow streams and colorful flowers; and it takes you underneath a waterfall. All of the plants supply the butterflies with food and a place to lay their eggs. Most of the butterflies come by UPS from butterfly ranches; each is a sleep,


enclosed in a tissue envelope, and just waiting to wake up in your warm, open hand. Within 30 seconds they will fly away.

The red-eared slider turtles sun on the logs and will even come to say "hello." There are also caged snakes and box turtles, but the real joy comes when you spot the Button Quail. They live in the foliage, but may cross right in front of you. At only 4 inches in length, they don't fly, but are fast on their feet.

As you pass the lake, notice the Purple Martins diving for insects; always capturing their food in flight.

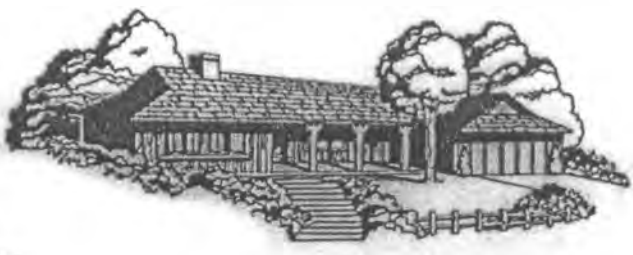
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