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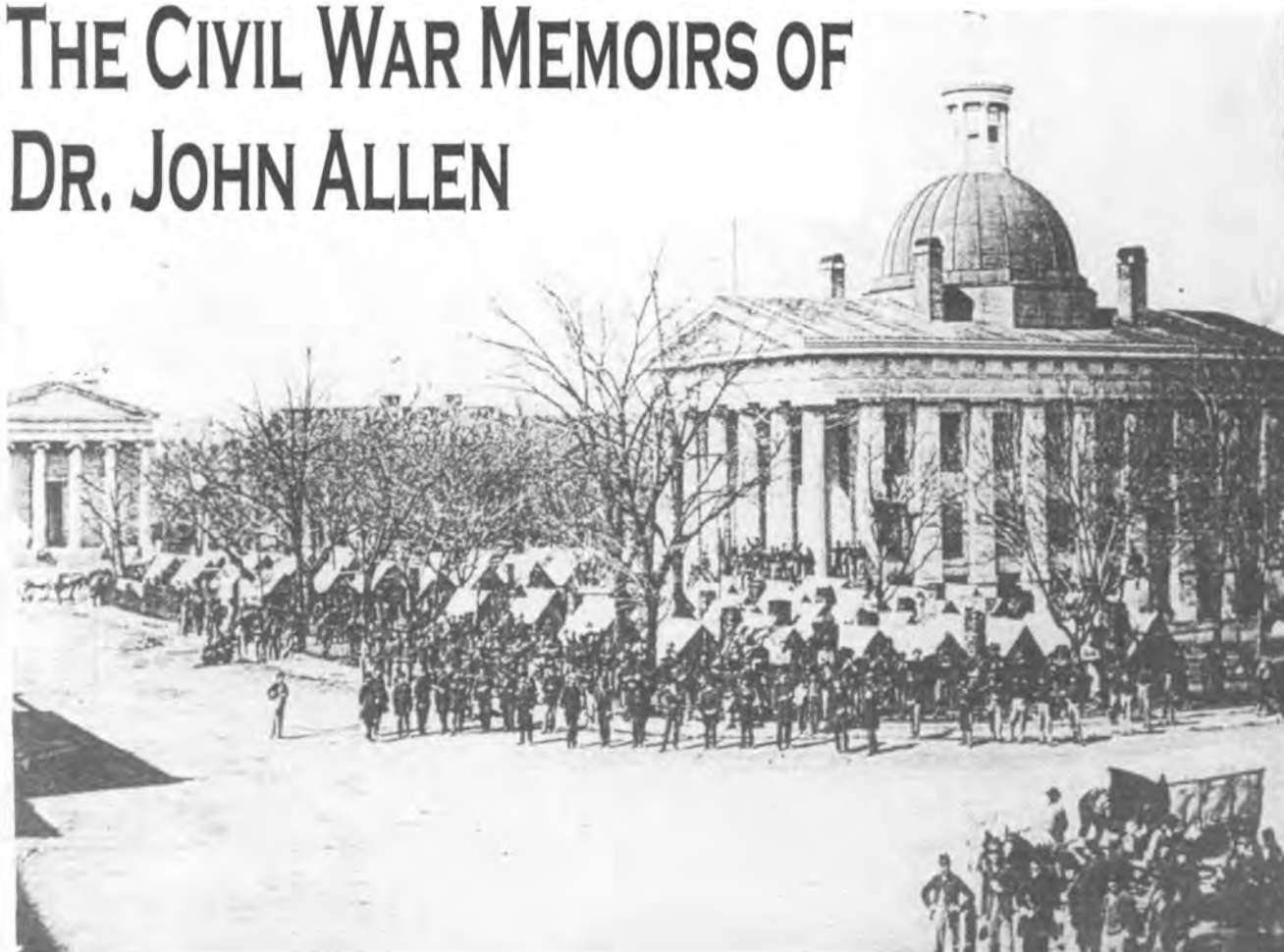
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# Old Huntsville

HISTORY AND STORIES OF THE TENNESSEE VALLEY

## THE CIVIL WAR MEMOIRS OF DR. JOHN ALLEN



*Also in this issue:* Bomber Crashes Near Monrovia

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*Domie Lewter*

*Mac Lewter*

# THE CIVIL WAR MEMOIRS OF DR. JOHN ALLEN

*Originally published in 1911*

When the prison tunnel in which I was interested was near completion, on the day before the attempt to escape was to be made, I removed the heel of one boot, and with my knife made a cavity in the thick leather large enough to hold a ten and a five dollar greenback bill. This had been given to me by my aunt who came to visit me while I was in the hospital with pneumonia. The bills were folded or crumpled into the smallest possible bulk, which for better protection was enveloped in a bit of letter-paper, and the heel nailed again in place.

When the attempt failed I had no need of the money, and I allowed it to remain undisturbed until I reached home some four months later. When the war ended a month thereafter, this was the sum total of current funds in our immediate family.

All the railroads in the South which could be operated were taken over and run by the United States government. This gave our family transportation to Decatur, Alabama, by train and thence up the Tennessee River by steamboat to where Guntersville had been.

With the exception of half a dozen dwellings, which were spared because they sheltered the sick or wounded too feeble to be removed, the village had disappeared. Nothing but tumble-down walls and a mass of brick debris was left of our home. The nearest shelter which could be obtained was in a log house on Sand Mountain, five miles from town, and in this my parents found a temporary abode.

We were not wholly unprepared for the scene of desolation about us. As we came west on the train nothing but lonesome-looking chimneys remained of the villages and farmhouses. They were suggestive of tombstones in graveyards in Bridgeport, Stevenson, Bellefonte, Scottsboro, Larkinsville, Woodville, Paint Rock - in fact, every town in northern Alabama to and including Decatur and Huntsville, which, being used as headquarters, had been

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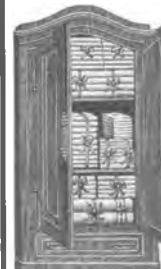
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spared. These towns had been wiped out by the war policy of starvation by fire. Farmhouses, gins, fences and cattle were gone. From a hilltop in the farming district a few miles from New Market, I counted the chimneys of the houses of six different plantations which had been destroyed. About the fireplaces of some of these, small huts of poles had been erected for temporary shelter.

Northern Alabama had paid dearly for the devotion of her people to the cause of the South. Nowhere in the Confederacy had such ruin been wrought, save in the path of desolation along which the march to the sea was made, or perhaps in the valley of Virginia, in obedience to the order to leave it so desolate

that "a crow flying over here would have to carry his rations." Our county of Marshall had suffered in a double sense, being overrun for the last year and a half by bands of marauders who robbed the defenseless people of the little the two armies had left.

The story of one tragedy which was enacted on a small island in the Tennessee river may give an idea of the awful conditions which prevailed. Buck Island was then almost wholly covered with dense cane. Hither five men, non-combatants, had fled for a hiding place, and had taken with them the few cattle which had escaped impressment. In the depths of the canebrake they had constructed a pole cabin for shelter.

A Confederate soldier named C. L. Hardcastle, (wounded and on furlough), a relation or friend and neighbor, slipping in to visit his family, came to stay all night with the refugees. Toward morning they were aroused from sleep to find their cabin surrounded and themselves in the hands of

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the notorious Ben Harris and his band, who had learned of their retreat, and had come for their cattle.

Being a farsighted man and well known to the Rodens and their guest, Harris gave them five minutes for prayer, after which he made them stand in a row along the river bank, (to make sure of a clean job, with his six-shooter) he put a bullet through the hearts of five of the six. He thought he had done the same with the sixth man. This sixth man was Hardcastle, who told me that as Harris came down the line, he placed the muzzle close to the left side of the chest of each victim as he fired. Hardcastle made up his mind to drop quickly a little before he was shot, which he did, and the ball missed a vital spot.

Feigning death, he was dragged with the other five bodies and thrown into the river, the current of which washed them downstream as they were sinking. Holding his breath, he floated under some driftwood lodged against a fallen tree and concealed himself behind a log.

The bullet had struck a rib and taken a superficial course. When the murderers walked off to round up the cattle he crawled out and into the cane, and in this way made this marvelous escape from death.

I knew the men who were killed.

The war experiences of the home people were, however, not wholly tragic. There were occasional glimpses in which

the comical features predominated. Our natures are such that we love to turn away from sad things and forget them by laughing when we may.

One of these experiences was Uncle Dan's retreat from Guntersville when the Union batteries first shelled this unfortunate village. Another, as the Sheriff related it, was his narrow escape from the Fourth Ohio Cavalry when in 1862 it dashed into the town early one morning, to the surprise of everybody. I have yet to tell how two young lads belonging to the same company surprised and captured themselves in the streets of their native village in 1864.

The two actors were playmates of mine who were old enough to see service as "Home Guards" the last year or two of the war. They told it on themselves to me, and it was witnessed by several resi-

dents. It went as follows:

During all of 1864 and the spring of 1865, Marshall County was the scene of active hostilities, not only between scouting parties of soldiers of the Union and Confederate Armies, but between bands of Tory marauders, who paraded in Federal uniforms, and small squads of Confederate Home

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Guards under partisan leaders. Some of the Tories had been Union men all along, but were wise enough to keep discreetly quiet until the Federals occupied the country. Most of them were poor whites who had dodged conscription by hiding out in the mountains near their cabins when the Confederates were in control, and came into view as soon as the Federals appeared.

Some few were deserters from our army, but all were united now in their love of country by the cohesive strength of a desire to plunder the helpless.

As these men of the two sides had known one another before the war, it may be imagined that what is described as "feeling" ran about as "high" between them as it could run. Toward the last it was considered a waste of time to surrender, even if cornered without hope of escape. The recognized practice was to sell out as dearly as possible and keep shooting as long as a trigger could be pulled.

Ben Harris had led off in a practice of extermination (which put Cromwell to the blush). The conqueror of Ireland knocked only every tenth prisoner on the head, but Captain Ben overlooked none, and just to be sure that no detail was omitted he was his own executioner.

On the day in question Bent Adams, from a commanding eminence, scanned the valley and saw hanging on the clothesline in his mother's yard something white, which signal meant "the town is clear." Had it been red or blue Bent would have rested content upon the distant height.

As it was, he rode into the village, and, sitting on his horse (for in those perilous days nobody dismounted in town) was conversing with his mother at the gate. Tom Anderson, a member of Bent's squad, had from another hill also read the signals, and he cautiously rode into the suburb. Having been successful as scouts, these two enterprising youths had acquired and, as it was a frosty morning, were wearing each a warm, very blue Yankee overcoat.

As Tom's horse turned the corner of Main Street, some three hundred yards off, he saw a lone Yankee or Tory - I wasn't sure which - in the road ahead of him. His first impulse was to turn and run; but Bent was too quick for him and ran first. Neither of these two men was a coward, but the circumstances fully justified what Sheriff James Swiver called "quick action" and the practice of that discretion which ancient Falstaff declared to be "the better part of valor." Bent didn't know how many more

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Yankees were coming round the corner following their leader, and felt sure it was better to gain the other side of the Long Bridge, a mile away, and find out there than to take the foolish risk, allowing a whole squad to get right on him at full speed before he started. Therefore he wheeled and ran as fast as his steed could go.

Seeing only one Yankee or Tory, and that one running away, Tom changed his mind and tactics simultaneously and, whipping out his six-shooter, he stuck the spurs to his charger and began pursuit.

For half a mile down Main Street the two horsemen sped, the women and children leaning out of the windows, not certain whether it was a fight or a horse-race. Tom's mount was so much superior to Bent's that by the time the latter was checking up to make a safe turn around the corner at Cornwell's store to get into

the straight stretch of roadway leading to the bridge, the pursuer was near enough to begin to empty his army pistol at the fugitive, who, to avoid being hit, was now lying as flat on his horse's neck as his anatomy could be applied.

Having made the turn with safety, Bent ventured to glance back, and, seeing only a single pursuer who had already expended four of his six shots without effect while his own battery was as yet intact, took his pistol out of the holster and eased up on his speed, determined to settle accounts at close quarters.

A few moments later, pulling the reins and wheeling suddenly about, he was in the act of firing into Tom's chest at close range when Thomas, recognizing his chum, yelled out as loud and distinctly as he could shape the sentence, "Don't shoot, Bent; it's me!" and Bent, not yet lowering his weapon, replied: "Tom, you d— fool! I've a great notion to blow your brains out, anyhow."



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*Jenni Blackmon, Gurley*



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# Earthbound

*In Memory of Millie McDonald, 1990*

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For example: Use less water and don't flood the soil. Check the chemical content of the fertilizer and the length of time the hazardous portion of the fertilizer will remain in the soil. Use natural compost

(organic material) when possible.

Do not plant the same annual plants in the same area each year to prevent depletion. Let the earth rest, restore and rejuvenate itself.

If there is soil erosion, terrace the area, or use a bulkhead if you live near a river or lake. Do not litter at any time or any place. Trash spoils the beauty of nature and is a detriment to the environment.

Consider the earth as a breathing symbol of life and treat it accordingly. Our environment is so important today. Let's all do our part to preserve it.



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# The Fridge

by Judy Chandler Smith

I'm so excited I can barely contain myself. While out running some errands for M.D., I found myself in Home Depot and there it was: a Hot Point refrigerator in the aisle beckoning to me. She was a real beauty. It had ice cubes, crushed ice and even water in the door. I couldn't help making the purchase. It was to be delivered in just two days.

I bought something I had really wanted and used to have 32 years ago. You ask what— well, I'll tell you and anyone else who will stand still long enough.

In the summer of 1974,

I taught swimming all summer to buy a GE refrigerator. I was so determined to acquire this luxury, although I was eight months pregnant and that would not stop me. When I approached M.D. about the purchase, he said, "Who needs a refrigerator with an ice maker when I've got you to fill up the ice trays?"

Now you know what inspired me to teach swimming, all summer, 32 years

**"There's no trick in being a humorist when you have the whole government working for you."**

*Will Rogers*



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ago, to make enough money (\$800) to buy the refrigerator with ice cubes, crushed ice, and water in the door. No more filling ice trays - that's in the past.

I remembered the reaction M.D. had many years ago about buying a new fridge, when the old one was working fine, so I decided not to tell him about it and just "surprise" him when he got home that night. I remember the old expression, "It's easier to get forgiveness than it is to get permission," so I thought I'd just wait. What I had forgotten was that when I bought it and was arranging for delivery, I gave them both our cell phone numbers to call in case mine was not on.

When the delivery man finally got in touch with me to find out if I was going to be home since he was on his way to deliver it from Birmingham, I told him that if he could get there mid-afternoon that would be best because I wanted to "surprise" my husband.

Then he replied, "Well, I don't think he gonna be too surprised. I already talked to him on his cell phone and he thought I had called the wrong number because he didn't know anything 'bout a new fridge." Whoops! There went that surprise. And you can probably guess

who called me next on my cell phone after I got off from talking to the delivery man.

The two men, who brought the fridge in loaded the 21 year-old one onto our truck. It doesn't make ice, but will serve us well in the garage at the lake house, and the one at the lake will go to Habitat or someone else who is in need of a free fridge to help them out.

The men, along with Champ (one of our best employees) helped get it through the door.

When the delivery truck arrived, I was waiting in the driveway. I was thinking, in a matter of minutes, filling ice trays will be a thing of the past. Modern technology has finally returned, but M.D. will say, "Don't throw away those double and single aluminum trays - you might need them someday."



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*Maryanne Joyner, Madison*

# Back When

by Alice A. Hall

I was a teenager in late 1928, and one of the fondest memories I recall was back then everything was sweet and simple. My mother died when I was a toddler, and she left my two brothers in their teens, one sister, my father and me.

We had a housekeeper and my Godmother who kept us all together. We thank God for that.

One Saturday afternoon my dad brought home a brand new 1928 Ford touring car. It was a shiny dark green car with a black top – a Model A. A neighbor had placed an order for one; but when it came in, he couldn't pay for it. He asked my father if he wanted to take the order, and my dad said yes.

So, he made the arrangements, paid \$398.00 for the car, and my brother Harry drove it home. We were so proud of that car. We lived about twelve miles out, at the foot of

a mountain in Big Cove. Gas was 13 cents a gallon.

We would go to town on Saturday, and my father always sat on the benches around the courthouse square. The men told tall tales and talked about farming and other things while the ladies would buy the provisions they needed.



Sausage was 25 cents a pound, coffee was 48 cents, bacon was 25 cents a pound and haircuts were 40 cents. In 1928 Herbert Hoover became president, defeating Democrat Al Smith.

The teenagers on Saturday would sit around the soda fountain with their friends at Kress or Woolworth's drug store. If they had the money, they would go to the movies which were silent in those days.

We always looked forward to trade day on Saturday to see our neighbors and friends in Huntsville.

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# Bomber Crashes Near Monrovia

by Charles Wells

On an early summer morning in June of 1944, I decided to go fishing. With Mama and Daddy's permission, I found my fishing pole, dug a can of worms, got my new (to me) bicycle and got ready to leave. I had celebrated my fourteenth birthday about three weeks earlier (June 2nd), and Daddy had scrounged together enough money (\$6.00) to buy me a Hienz 57 used bicycle. By this, I mean it had oversize handlebars, no chain guard, a 26-inch wheel in the back and a 24-inch in the front. I was always going downhill. I rolled up my right overall leg to keep it from being caught in the sprocket and headed over to one of my favorite fishing holes on Indian Creek.

After traveling about three or four miles, I had gotten to the hill on the west side of the creek and the north side of 72 Highway. I was pushing my bicycle along a cow path that ran about halfway up the side of the hill. As I was nearing the highway, I heard a huge explosion to the south and looked that way. It appeared that the whole end of Rainbow Mountain was gone. There was fire and a lot of smoke, and I could see trees falling from the sky.

I looked up and saw a plane (B-26 Marauder) coming toward me. It was on fire and smoke was coming out of the cockpit and the bomb bay doors. It was losing altitude rapidly as it passed over me and headed toward a cultivated field at the top

of the hill. Its nose was down at a very steep angle and did not flair out before impact. Upon impact, the nosewheel collapsed, the nose of the plane dug into the ground, the tail went up into the air and a matter of seconds later, it blew up. The pilot had apparently dropped part of his bomb load on Rainbow Mountain.

I made my way closer to the crash site. The pilot must have radioed the base that he was in trouble because only minutes after the crash, the area was crawling with MPs,

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police cars and ambulances. Within minutes, they had formed a circle of guards around the site. There were several planes flying around the area. Curiosity seekers began to gather on the highway but were not allowed to approach the crash site.

No one questioned me as to what I may have seen. I was told to leave the area immediately. I guess a freckled face, barefoot boy dressed in overalls, carrying a fishing pole in one hand and a can of worms in the other and holding on to a weird-looking bicycle could not tell them anything they wanted to know.

I was not questioned then or later. An article in the Huntsville Times stated that the only witness to the crash was a Negro woman who could not tell them very much.

Besides myself, the McMurtrie family, working in their field across the highway, were also witnesses to the

crash. For whatever reason, none of us were ever questioned about the crash.

I had seen the plane many times before. Almost daily, depending on the weather, it would come over the farm several times — always approaching from a southeasterly direction, pass over and then go on to the southwest. A few minutes later, we would hear the report of exploding bombs dropping on a mock village on the Arsenal. Sometimes it would be flying low enough that we could clearly see the pilots. We would wave and sometimes they would wave back or dip their wings to let us know that they had seen us.

The crash site is now occupied by Huntsville Memory Gardens. Perhaps a fitting tribute to the three men who perished there.



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## The Stone Warrior

by Ken Owens

Most of us are familiar with the statue of the Confederate soldier on the courthouse lawn, but some don't realize there's some interesting history behind him, too.

The idea of a memorial originated with the United Daughters of the Confederacy shortly after the turn of the century. They felt that the spirit of Southern fighting men during the Civil War should be preserved for the future, and what bet-

The nurse who can smile when things go wrong is probably going off duty.

ter way than a statue?

They sponsored many socials, rummage sales, teas and parties in the Huntsville area to raise money for the project. Finally, they accumulated \$2,500 and began to put the plan together.

Today, \$2,500 doesn't sound like a lot, but in 1905, it was enough to buy an exquisite piece of Vermont granite and hire a sculptor to perform the work.

Huntsville had a pretty decent sculpting artist in 1905 by the name of Oscar Hummel, to whom the UDC wanted to give the job. However, since he was a local artist, some felt he wouldn't be able to do as good a job as other sculptors somewhere else.

As a sort of test, he was assigned to sculpt an Indian head. If the Indian head was satisfactory, he would get the job. It was, and he did.

Hummel set up shop on the site that is today a parking lot next to the Church of the Visitation in downtown Huntsville. As soon as the granite arrived, Hummel began his work. His model was Jim Mott Robinson, of Hazel Green.

In those days, a blacksmith shop was at the corner of



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Washington Street close to Hummel's shop. People would watch the progress of the statue while they waited their turn to have their buggies and surreys repaired by the blacksmith. Most were amazed and pleased with the progress as Hummel tirelessly continued. At last, the statue was complete and dedication plans were being finalized.

November 21, 1905, was a wonderfully festive day. Wagons, carts, horses and people jammed the courthouse square for the dedication. Dignitaries were on hand with windy speeches and well-wishes, including the Mayor of Huntsville, the County Commissioner, and the Governor of Alabama.

Thirteen pretty young ladies (one for each state of the former Confederacy) laid a large wreath at the pedestal base of the statue while Monroe's band played heart-stirring music. There wasn't a dry eye on the square that day.

The years passed... and the old soldier silently stood his ceaseless vigil as sentry, facing south in honor of those who fought for the Confederacy.

In 1966, plans were underway to tear down the old courthouse and replace it with a modern new one. Obviously, the statue had to be moved out of the way before the work started. A crane was called in to perform the task, which went well and without incident. The crane merely lifted the statue from the courthouse lawn, swung it across the street, and carefully set it down on the front lawn of the First National Bank.

This was to be the soldier's temporary home until the new courthouse was completed.

Before the completion of the courthouse, demolition of Cotton Row began in order to make way for the construction of the new State National Bank Building. The fateful day was June 29, 1966. During the destruction of Cotton Row, one of the walls fell on the warrior, knocking him down and breaking off his head, both hands, and his feet.

Since the UDC actually owned the statue, the Huntsville chapter President, Mrs. R.G. Moore, was notified. She came to the scene via a police car that picked her up at home. She was both horrified and sickened by the sight of the old soldier, in pieces, before her. Absently, she tried to pick up the head for safekeeping before she realized it was too heavy.

Then began the long process of replacement, including insurance claims and legal actions.

At first, it appeared that molds could be made of the damaged parts for replacement,

since the body of the statue was undamaged. However, that wasn't possible, and it was determined that a new sculpture had to be made... so the insurance appraisal was done that way.

The legal process took an unbelievable two-year period, but eventually, the courts found in favor of the UDC in March, 1968. The re-sculpting process could at last begin.

The work was awarded to the Georgia Marble Works, one of only five granite sculptors in the country. The granite used was Georgia granite... good, but not as visually appealing as Vermont granite.

The original undamaged pedestal was used, but the difference in the granites necessitated some re-sanding for a color match.

The new warrior's hands and face are exactly as the old one's were; the body is pretty close to the original except for some minor differences in the folds and creases of the uniform.

The original statue was surrounded by an iron picket fence, which has been officially (are you ready for this?), "misplaced."

In case you're wondering what happened to the original statue, last word was that it is in the good care of Mrs. George C. Crome in Memphis, Tennessee.

The next time you have business at the courthouse, you might pause a moment to reflect on the stone warrior who, like countless thousands on both sides during the Civil War, moved up to replace a fallen comrade.

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# Heard On the Street

by *Cathey Carney*



Congratulations to last month's winner of the Photo of the Month. The little boy was **Sheriff Blake Dorning** and he hasn't changed a bit - so many callers recognized that sweet little face! But only the first one wins, and this time it was **Mickey Phillips** who lives in Elkmont but works here in Huntsville at Jackson Way Styling Salon, as a barber. Congratulations to you Mickey! With the price increase, your subscription is now worth \$25!

It was so good to see **Curtis J. Hall** recently. He is still looking good and is a fabulous banjo picker, for you baby boomers who remember following **Tony Mason & Curtis** to where ever they were performing great music.

**Michael Sylvester** (MS Masonry) is one of the nicest guys you'll ever meet. He wanted to be sure and wish his brother **James Sylvester** a happy birthday in January. James lives in Hazel Green. Michael wanted to send out another birthday wish to his brother-in-law **James Davis**, another January birthday. James Davis is married to Michael's sister **Rachel**, and they live in Fort Campbell where James is a Green Beret. Thank you for what you do

for our country, James!

A past birthday in the Sylvester family was actually right on Christmas Day. Michael's brother **Wesley** turned 35 on Dec. 25. Michael wants to wish all our readers a happy and healthy 2013!

I was warm and cozy in my home recently on a cold and blustery day, when it was starting to get dark, and I saw our mailman delivering mail to each mailbox in my neighborhood. I know it's a job and there's some good exercise involved, but I have so much admiration for these people who are out every day except Sunday no matter what kind of weather it is. **Thank you postal men & women** for your hard work every day, even under some hard circumstances. We appreciate you so much!

**Rosemary Leatherwood** of Ole Dad's BBQ has so many birthdays during this time of year. Her own birthday is coming up January 28. Her grandson **Austin Pinkerton**

turned 14 on Dec. 28, and her son **Billy Leatherwood** (who is a great cook at the restaurant) celebrated his birthday on Dec. 18.

Her January parties will include birthdays for grandson **Alex Leatherwood**, 5, and her own, of course!

And what a day to have a birthday - **Audra Wilson** of Salon Bella has a Dec. 26 birthday! Happy Birthday to you my friend!

The **Golden K Kiwanis** held their annual Christmas/Toys for Tots party in mid-December at Brookdale and the entertainment they had was so good. Singing Christmas & jazz songs were the Alabama A&M Choir Vocal Jazz Ensemble, led by **Dr. Horace Carney**. The harmony was beautiful and everyone in the room enjoyed it thoroughly. Congratulations to the talented group, it was a pleasure to listen to. There were two young Marines there who told us that 28,000 children get gifts/toys who ordinarily would get nothing for Christmas.

**Bill Galloway** was a name that many people knew; as a co-worker, gentle husband, dad, and a definite pet-lover. Bill died way too early of lung cancer, at the age of 70, and leaves behind

## 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: These cute kids are brother & sister and live across the street from each other in a historic district.



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many who just don't want him to be gone. Bill and his wife **Becky** were married 43 years, had one daughter **Jan Galloway** of Huntsville, nephew **Brian Galloway**; sister-in-law **Irma Galloway**, brother-in-law and sister-in-law **Robert & Martha Lambert**; niece **Emily Messer** and great-nephew **Levi**.

Becky and Bill were the caretakers of their 3 large rescue dogs and they miss Bill too. We send our deepest condolences to the family & friends he leaves behind.

Happy Birthday to a super sweet lady who lives in Ardmore, Alabama. **Elva Gayle Lilly** was 71 years old in December and we hope you celebrated in style!

**Diane Owens** came up with a few ideas that are time-proven and may help some people during this cold weather. First of all, a bar of soap placed under the sheets by your feet is said to work for foot and leg cramps. You should use a regular soap, not a creamy soap like Dove. Secondly, if you have a bad cough at night that keeps you awake, try rubbing Vick's Vapor Rub on the bottom of your feet. I know, I know, I can hear the skeptics already but it won't hurt to just try it, right? Finally, several people who have complained of migraine headaches found vast relief when they went on a gluten-free (wheat) diet. That's nothing with wheat in it. There are plenty of substitutes out there and it seems either the preservatives or the wheat itself caused much of the migraines.

Diane's beautiful mama **Lola**

**Blaxton-Stutts** lives in the Shoals and can take credit for a few of these remedies! You'll never know til you try, right?

We were so sorry to hear of the death of **Lawrence "Buck" Beasley, III** who lived in California. He graduated from Grissom here in Huntsville and moved to California for a graphics career. He had a beautiful smile and was a great dad and devoted husband. His Mom is **Carolyn House Rountree** (husband **Jim**) and father is **Lawrence H. Beasley, Jr. (Sue)**; brothers **Bradley Michael Beasley** and **James Henry Beasley**, and sister **Annie Beasley Holmes**. His wife is **Deirdre O'Leary Beasley** and sons are **Lawrence Horace (Luke) Beasley IV** and **Connor Michael Beasley**. He will be so missed by his friends & family.

**David Milly** made sure his Dad had a rocking birthday party with about 20 people at Applebee's. That's because **John Milly** was born in 1922, so on his birthday in December he turned 90. You have some good genes, David!

**Leon Crawford** is a name that many knew, first as a banker then as a Huntsville real estate broker and instructor for many years. He was also a former City Councilman and volunteered his time unselfishly in civic organizations. We were sorry to hear that he had passed away, leaving wife **Betty Tabor Crawford** and son **Michael L. Crawford (wife Lynn)**. He loved his granddaughters, **Malory** and **Tara Crawford**.

**Linda Wikberg Goldman** retired from civil service (PM

Apache and the Army) after 25 years of dedicated work. There was quite a party to celebrate her and many spoke of her accomplishments. We hope you take it easy, Linda, but knowing you, that's not going to happen. Linda's handsome husband is **Darryl Goldman**, who works for Keller Williams and is glad to have her home!

Days are getting longer - that's great news. Darkness makes alot of folks sad this time of year - bring on the sunshine!

Also remember to **Always lock your car up** when you're away from it or at night

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# RECIPES

## Cold Weather Comfort Foods

### Mushroom Casserole

- 4 slices bread, lavishly buttered and toasted to brittle
- 1 pint fresh mushrooms, sliced
- Salt and pepper
- Melted butter
- 1 c. whipping cream

Break up 1-1/2 slices of the bread into a greased casserole; add 1/2 of the sliced mushrooms, salt and pepper. Repeat with 1-1/2 slices of bread, mushrooms, salt and pepper. Break the last slice of bread into crumbs and sprinkle on top. Pour a little melted butter over the top, then pour cream evenly all over. Bake at 325 degrees for 45 minutes.

### Pepper Steaks

- 1 lb. lean round steak, cut into strips
- 1 T. paprika

- 1 T. butter
- 2 cloves garlic, chopped
- 1-1/2 c. beef broth
- 1 c. sliced onion rings
- 2 c. sliced green pepper
- 2 T. cornstarch
- 1/4 c. water
- 1/2 c. soy sauce

Sprinkle steak with paprika. Brown in butter, add garlic. Add broth. Cover and simmer for 30 minutes. Stir in onions and peppers and simmer for 10 minutes. Blend cornstarch, water and soy sauce. Stir this into the steak mixture. Serve over hot steamed rice.

### Stuffed Baked Pork Chops

- 6 double pork chops
- 2 c. herb seasoned stuffing mix
- 4 T. butter, melted and divided
- 1 small onion, minced
- 1/2 t. Worcestershire

- 1/4 t. salt
- Dash pepper
- 1-1/2 c. water
- 4 T. ketchup

Cut a pocket in each chop. Make a dressing of stuffing mix, 2 tablespoons of the butter, onion, seasonings and a small amount of water. Place dressing in the pocket of each chop. Place chops in a roasting pan. Cover with sauce made by combining 1-1/2 cups water and ketchup. Bake at 400 degrees about 45 minutes, basting frequently.

### Chicken Casserole

- 8 chicken breasts
- 2 c. water chestnuts, sliced
- 2 (10 oz.) cans mushroom soup
- 2 c. chicken stock, divided
- 1- 8-oz. carton sour cream
- 1 pkg. Pepperidge Farm herb stuffing
- 1/2 c. butter, melted

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Simmer chicken breasts in water to cover until tender. Cool and bone chicken and cut into bite-sized pieces. Reserve stock. Place chicken in bottom of a casserole dish and sprinkle with water chestnuts. Combine soup, 1 cup of the chicken stock and sour cream. Pour over the chicken. Combine herb stuffing, melted butter and remaining cup of chicken stock. Pour mixture over chicken. Bake at 375 degrees for 45 minutes.

**Turtle Point's Chess Pie**

- 1-1/2 c. sugar
- 1/2 c. butter, softened
- 3 eggs
- 1 (5.3 oz) can evaporated milk
- 1 T. vanilla
- 1 8-inch pastry shell

Mix all ingredients together well, beating by hand. Pour into pastry shell and bake at 350 degrees for 45-60 minutes.

**Mrs. Griffin's Coconut Cake**

- 2 c. sugar
- 1 c. shortening
- 5 eggs
- 1 c. milk
- 1 t. vanilla extract
- 2-1/2 c. self-rising flour

In a large bowl, cream shortening and sugar til light. Add eggs one at a time, beating well after each addition. Add vanilla to milk. Add flour and milk alternately to shortening, beating well with each addition. Pour into 3 (9-inch) cake pans and

bake at 350 degrees til done, 30-35 minutes (check doneness with straw).

**Filling:**

- 2 c. sugar
- 1 c. milk
- 3 T. butter
- 1 t. vanilla extract
- 1 c. grated fresh coconut

Bring sugar, milk and butter to a boil and cook til thickened; add vanilla, cool. Spread between layers and on top of cake. Sprinkle with more coconut.

**Peanut Butter Cream Pie**

- 3 egg yolks
- 3 c. milk
- 1 c. sugar
- 1/2 c. cornstarch
- 1/4 t. salt
- 1/3 c. chunky peanut butter
- 2 t. vanilla extract
- 2 pastry shells, baked
- 1/2 c. whipping cream, whipped with 1 T. brown sugar
- Chopped peanuts

Combine egg yolks and milk in a medium saucepan, blending well. Combine sugar, cornstarch and salt; stir into egg mixture. Cook, stirring constantly, til thick.

Pour hot filling into a bowl; cover with waxed paper and chill. Whip chilled mixture with electric mixer til creamy. Add peanut butter and vanilla, beating til smooth.

Pour filling into pastry shell; spoon whipped cream around edges. Sprinkle chopped peanuts over top.



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# A Story of Love



Our 14-year-old dog Abbey died last month. The day after she passed away my 4 year-old daughter Meredith was crying and talking about how much she missed Abbey.

She asked if we could write a letter to God so that when Abbey got to heaven, God would recognize her. I told her that I thought we could so, and she dictated these words:

*"Dear God, ....  
Will you please take care of my dog? She died yesterday and is with you in heaven. I miss her very much.  
I'm happy that you let me have her as my dog even though she got sick. I hope you will play with her. She likes to swim and play with balls. I am sending a picture of her so when you see her you will know that she is my dog. I really miss her.  
Love, Meredith"*

We put the letter in an envelope with a picture of Abbey & Meredith, addressed it to God in care of Heaven. We put our return address on it.

Meredith pasted several stamps on the front of the envelope because she said it would take lots of stamps to get the letter all the way to heaven.

That afternoon she dropped it into the letter box at the post office.

A few days later, she asked if God had gotten

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the letter yet.

I told her that I thought He had.

Yesterday, there was a package wrapped in gold paper on our front porch addressed, "To Meredith" in an unfamiliar hand. Meredith opened it. Inside was a little book by Mr. Rogers called, "When a Pet Dies."

Taped to the inside front cover was the letter we had written to God in its opened envelope. On the opposite page was the picture of Abbey & Meredith and this note:

*"Dear Meredith,*

*Abbey arrived safely in heaven. Having the picture was a big help and I recognized her right away. Abbey isn't sick anymore. Her spirit is here with me just like it stays in your heart. Abbey loved being your dog.*

*Since we don't need our bodies in heaven, I don't have any pockets to keep your picture in so I'm sending it back to you in this little book for you to keep and have something to remember Abbey by.*

*Thank you for the beautiful letter and thank your mother for helping you write it and send it to me. What a wonderful mother you have. I picked her especially for you.*

*I send my blessings every day and remember that I love you very much.*

*By the way, I'm easy to find. I am wherever there is love.*

*Love, God"*

The letter from Meredith was received, and answered, by an anonymous worker at the Post Office.

*Special thanks to Malcolm Miller for finding and submitting this story.*





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# Huntsville News in 1911

\* **Edward E. Ezell**, aged 28 years, is dead. He died this morning at 5 o'clock at his home on McClung Street, where he had suffered typhoid fever for several weeks. Mr. Ezell was thought to be better until yesterday when he suffered two hemorrhages and another late in the evening, which hastened his death.

A heart-broken young widow and two little children survive, besides the father and the mother, and one sister.

The remains will be shipped to Mr. Ezell's old home at Elkton, TN tonight on the 1:35 train, going via Pulaski, and from there by private conveyance to his home out at Elkton, where the funeral will be held tomorrow at noon.

The news of the death will be read as a shock to all of his friends and the business world. Mr. Ezell was vice president and general manager of the Ezell Bros. & Terry Co. department store in this city. He was recognized as one of our shrewdest business men and was always found in the lead with any movement looking to the development and building of Huntsville. The big store of which Mr. Ezell was manager is closed out of respect to his memory, but will be continued on the same big scale as he had conducted it. The whole town is in gloom over the death of young Mr. Ezell, who, although he had not been a resident of city but a

few months, had won his way into the hearts and affections of our people.

\* **Miss Willie Harris** is reported to be seriously ill at her home on Adams Avenue.

\* **Found** - a buggy lap robe on Franklin Street. Owner return to this office and recover by describing the robe and paying for this ad.

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passed through here to Fayetteville last week. Upon his return he did some veterinary work for Mr. Fred Baeder and also removed a large piece of cob from the mouth of one of Mr. Hense Lowe's horses that had been unable to eat for five days because of it, causing said horse and the owner to feel much better. Dr. Lockwood certainly understands his business. He spent Sunday night with Dr. McCowan.

**The Wedding Went On**

A wagon crash on Holmes Street in which the bridegroom, his parents and his best man were riding and were more or less seriously injured was not enough to cancel the wedding of Philip Schaeffer to Miss Beatrice Weil. Mr. Schaeffer, his wedding suit torn and dirty and with several bruises on his neck and face, took the hand of his bride and quietly answered questions put to him by the minister. The best man limped and was considerably shaken up, but did his duty effectively as if he had not been hurt.

The parents of Mr. Schaeffer had to be propped up in chairs, but they gave their blessings to the bride and groom.

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# BOBBY JACKSON

by Austin Miller

Bobby Jackson was born in 1935 at Hazel Green. His parents were sharecroppers. My parents were not sharecroppers but we were as poor as sharecroppers, maybe even more so than some tenant farmers.

I got acquainted with him and his wife Anne at Holmes Street United Methodist Church. I don't remember how it first came up but we had many discussions about how much we both disliked picking cotton. He was a much better picker than me; the most I ever picked in one day was 237 pounds and that was in good cotton working from daylight until dark. In contrast, Bobby could pick about 300 pounds a day on average.

The common experience of hard work and poverty in our youth made me feel a unique bond with Bobby.

He graduated from Hazel Green High School in 1953. That in itself was not a remarkable feat. What made it extraordinary was that Bobby could not talk until he was eighteen years old. He went through twelve years of school and graduated without being able to say more than a few words.

I asked him how in the world he accomplish this; he said his brothers helped him, his mother made him go to school whether he wanted to or not and he was very good in math.

I wonder how many people there are in the world that could not talk, went to a regular school for twelve years and graduated. It took me thirteen

years and I could talk.

Bobby's first job off the farm at Hazel Green was detasseling corn at Lily Flag. For years a company out of Illinois rented land from the Fleming family to raise corn to produce seed. Every summer, local teenagers were hired to cut off corn tassels. Bobby said one day it was about a hundred degrees and he sat down a few minutes to rest. The boss told him to get back to work and Bobby told him not until he cooled off; he was fired on the spot.

He went from there to the then new downtown Kroger

Store that once stood at the corner of Lincoln and Clinton Streets, to see a friend that worked there. The friend introduced him to the manager whose name was Bedford Creacy. Mr. Creacy offered him a job and he went to work part-time for Kroger sacking groceries. Earlier he had applied for a job at Hills but the manger told him they did not hire handicapped people. This of course was long before the "Americans with Disabilities Act."

In the fifties there was a program in Madison County operated by the Health



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Department called the Red Feather Program. In this program four or five handicapped students that needed special help could be chosen from each school. Bobby was recommended by his teacher and selected. This meant he had to go to Tuscaloosa for three months to take speech therapy.

Bobby at first said he didn't want to go because he would lose his job at Kroger. Mr. Creacy told him that if he didn't go he would be fired, but if he did go, his job would be waiting for him when he got back.

Altogether he spent six months in Tuscaloosa taking speech therapy. It paid off, he learned to talk! Mr. Creacy was true to his word and not only did Bobby get his old job back, he was offered a full-time job.

Bobby and his wife Anne have been married 55 years. They have two daughters, both attended Lee High School; one lives in Florida, the other lives here in Huntsville. Bobby and Anne moved to Huntsville in 1957 when the population was only seventeen thousand. In 1957 Oakwood Avenue was not in the city limits.

After they moved, Bobby took the postal exam for a job as a city mail carrier. The test in those days was very difficult and only a very few could pass; Bobby made a score of 88 and was offered a job. His boss at Kroger, still Mr. Creacy, told him if he stayed at Kroger he would have a job as long as he wanted and Bobby stayed with Kroger.

My friend Bucky Hoffmeyer and I took him to breakfast the other morning and he told us that staying with Kroger was the best decision he ever made. The job lasted

for 45 years. He worked his way up the ladder from part time sack boy to co-manager of the Kroger store on Drake Avenue. He retired in 1998 from the store on Logan Drive in south Huntsville.

He had a stroke in 1997 that makes it hard for him to get around but his indomitable spirit is not diminished. One evening two or three years ago when Bobby and Anne drove up in the yard at their home on Giles Avenue, a robber came up and demanded his money. Bobby refused and fought the criminal off; he was injured in the scuffle but he kept his money and the robber ran away.

Physically impaired or not, it doesn't pay to mess with or underestimate Bobby Jackson.

He has a certificate signed in 1972 by Governor George C. Wallace that states: "Bobby Jackson is a positive example for handicapped people and all mankind!"

That certificate

pretty much sums him up in a nutshell!

In my life I have had the privilege of knowing people from all walks of life at different levels of success and station. Some were eccentric, some lived outside the bounds of normal society and others were successful against all odds. They were all interesting and I have written stories about many of them.

But of all I have known, none set a more positive example for their fellow man than Bobby Jackson.

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# OLD HUNTSVILLE RADIO PARTS STORES

by M.D. Smith, IV

It's 1961 and recently married, I was living in the University of Alabama student apartments. I had gotten my Novice Amateur Radio License. It was such a thrill to talk via Morse code to people all over the U.S. and occasionally in other countries. "Ham" operators sent QSL postcards to each other confirming the contact and I built a wonderful collection from everywhere and decorated the walls with them. Judy insisted that the cards be in plastic holders that held twenty cards each, and not taped or stapled to the walls. I was willing to compromise on that issue.


To get my "General" Ham license, I had to pass a higher speed code test. I was told that "Bull" Durham in Huntsville at Curie Radio Store, on a small street just off Meridian (near the Furniture Factory restaurant and behind Sound Cell 601) on Cleveland Avenue, would give me the test. I had already been there a number of times to buy electronic parts, tubes and other items. Charlie E. Curie owned Curie Radio, AD4F, and he was licensed in 1951 in Tennessee. Charlie owned stores in Nashville, Chattanooga and Huntsville. Charlie is still doing well at 81 and active on "Ham" radio in Ooltewah, TN.

Well, I got my test and passed it with flying colors, even though "Bull" scared me so much, I had a very hard time concentrating on the Morse code that he was sending. WN4DXP became WA4DXP and I was no longer a novice.

I already had a "FCC First Phone Radiotelephone" license to be able to be a disk jockey and engineer at WAAY Radio during night hours. I had started building my own electronic sets from scratch and parts. I had built hi-fi amplifiers from EICO, Knight-Kit, Dyna-Kit

and Heath-Kit. I still have a pair of huge Acrosound Ultra Linear power amplifiers that used the "sexy" (well they are to a ham radio person) EL34 output tubes in the finals. I frequented the electronic stores like Curie Radio, Wallace & Webb, EW and Mock Electronics during these years for parts, boxes, knobs, labels and more.

Electronic Wholesalers or EW for short, came to town a bit later, but also closed after a few years. They were located on Bob Wallace Avenue next to the drainage creek. One of the other stores around for a long time was Wallace & Webb and later just Webb Electronics in the plaza near Mock and Service Merchandise.



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Mock Radio & Electronics has quite a history. The Mock's first store was in Decatur in 1946. The first Huntsville store was originally located on Pratt Avenue, somewhere between Church and Washington Streets in the mid-fifties.

In 1961 Mr. Mock and Arnold Hornbuckle built the current strip of stores on the Parkway at Mock Road. Hornbuckle owned all the buildings and his record shop, but the Mocks owned their store. Mrs. Mock took over running the new store after she and her husband divorced in 1961. She continued to drive over from her home in Decatur every single day until she turned over the management of the store to her daughter, Barbara, around 1996.

Mrs. Mock's health continued to decline and she died in May 2000. Now her daughter runs the store, and Mr. Mock continued to own the store, until he died in February of 2012.

Barbara makes the same drive from Decatur every day that her mother made for so many years. The short little road that runs in front of the store off the Parkway is Mock Road. Barbara said the store looks, operates (and customers say it smells) the same as

it did 40 years ago. For small electronic parts, wires, resistors, capacitors, volume controls and more, this is still the best place to come for those electronic needs.

The alternative to doing it yourself was for the TV service man to come pick up your set, fix it and return it in a week or two. This was fairly expensive, if it was only a single tube that needed replacing.

But if replacing tubes didn't solve the problem, it was likely a bad component such as a capacitor, resistor, flyback transformer or other part that had to be unsoldered and replaced.

A picture tube needing replacement was sometimes a death sentence for a small table set, but not a console. Some sets cost several hundred dollars to the big consoles that might be




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almost a thousand dollars, and you sure didn't discard it when it stopped working. The mahogany cases themselves were fine pieces of furniture and an attractive part of your home furnishing, which lasted for many years. Can you imagine it being like today when a stereo stops working; you find it cheaper to buy a new one than to get it fixed?

Barbara Mock said there are still a few antique electronic repair shops in business that someone can take a tube set to have repaired. These people buy most of their tubes from Mock. Barbara said that recently a man came in and was in awe and wonder that the store he had not been inside for over 30 years, still looked the same, smelled the same and stocked many of the same parts he came to get with his father long ago. He said it was like a trip back in time. It is that for certain.

Barbara said not only that, but they still do business the same old way, pretty much by hand. They handwrite out your receipt when you pay for parts and don't have to rely on any kind of computer to do business. They do take charge cards, as it was a necessary part of continuing to do business in these days and times. "But," Barbara said, "when the power goes out, we just bring out our flashlights and battery lanterns and keep on doing business when other stores have to lock the doors." That's one of

the benefits of doing business the way you did 40 years ago.

That was the early sixties in Huntsville for radio parts shops, which certainly have changed over the years. Most of these stores are gone, replaced by the Radio Shacks, WalMarts and Circuit City centers. Even the small Radio Shack stores are decreasing in numbers. Some of the old TVs, radios and stereos are still with us, and it's good to know there are still a few places to go when they need tubes.

Sometimes I feel like an old tube type TV set, still working but parts are pretty hard to find and repair is more difficult.



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**DOG BALL TO BENEFIT GREATER  
HUNTSVILLE HUMANE SOCIETY**

THE GREATER HUNTSVILLE HUMANE SOCIETY (GHHS) 24TH ANNUAL DOG BALL IS SLATED FOR FEBRUARY 8, 2013 AT 5:45 PM.

HELD IN THE VON BRAUN CENTER SOUTH HALL 2, GUESTS WILL JOIN LOCAL LITE 96.9 RADIO PERSONALITIES JOHN MALONE AND BONNY O'BRIEN FOR AN EVENING OF COCKTAILS, DINNER AND SILENT AUCTION TO SUPPORT NORTH ALABAMA'S LARGEST "DOG EVENT" AND GHHS'S MOST IMPORTANT FUNDRAISING EVENT OF THE YEAR.

DURING THE EVENING, 50 OF THE AREAS "VERY IMPORTANT DOGS" AND SEVERAL SHELTER DOGS TAKE THE FLOOR TO ENTERTAIN GUESTS AND WALK TO A "DISCO DOWN WITH THE HOUNDS" THEMED EVENT. CLOSING THE EVENING, A GRAND PRIZE DRAWING WILL BE HELD AND THE WINNER ANNOUNCED FOR TWO TICKETS TO THE 2014 WESTMINSTER DOG SHOW AND A \$2,000 VISA CARD. PARADISE PET RESORT AND SPA IS THE SIGNATURE SPONSOR FOR THE DRAWING.

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*John F. Kerry*

# MADISON COUNTY HIT HARD BY HEAVY STORM

**ONE KILLED, MANY HURT  
JANUARY 13, 1916**

One dead, several children injured, many houses and churches demolished and property damage in the amount of thousands of dollars is the net result of a terrific wind and rain storm that passed over northeast Madison County and this city late yesterday afternoon.

Following the receipt of Associated Press dispatches to The Daily Times yesterday afternoon telling of the great storm west of the Mississippi and that it would reach the Atlantic by Thursday, the storm burst upon Huntsville about 4 pm. The day had been beautifully sunny but as in the twinkling of an eye, the calm and stillness of the day was broken into a thunderous storm.

The streets were soon flooded and again about 6 pm the heavy rain and wind repeated itself. Huntsville did not suffer except for flooded conditions and the blowing off of a few roofs. But in the Cameron Church neighborhood above Maysville northeast of here, the home of Thomas Riddick, an old and respected citizen, was blown down and he was killed. Mr. Riddick, however, lived several hours into the night but before Dr. Howard reached him. There was no hope of recovery from medical aid.

Mr. Riddick died about 11 o'clock last night. He was the father of Fred Riddick and Archie Riddick, electrical engineer of Guntersville.

In the Maysville neighborhood, Walter Cawthon and John Cawthon each lost houses in the wake of the storm. John Rodgers and Gus Rodgers in that community also suffered

a loss. One little child was hurt near Maysville and others were injured by flying timbers.

When the wind picked up two houses together with their occupants north of Maysville in the Hurricane community, it was a miracle that no one was killed. The homes were placed several feet away after having been airborne.

The Cameron Methodist Church was blown away and several other churches in the northern part of the county are reported to be demolished.

Between Huntsville and Athens a water spout appeared and nearly killed townsman W. L. Wall, who was returning from Athens in his car. He was caught between the Beasley place on Athens Pike and was engulfed in the spout. Herculean like, Mr. Wall

managed to hold his car until the storm had passed over and then he ploughed his way back to Huntsville through a regular lake of water.

No deaths are reported other than that of Mr. Riddick, but it is conceded that the property damaged from last night's storm was probably the heaviest that ever visited this section.



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# HILLBILLY HEAVEN

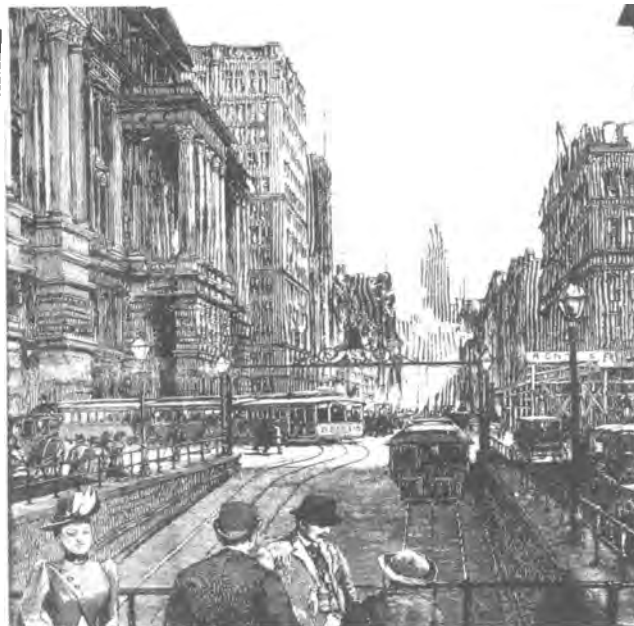
by Tom Carney

It was a fairly small neighborhood, bordered on one side by working class Polish emigrants and outlined by the tall, coal blackened smokestacks that made up the heart of Chicago's industrial might.

The first thing you noticed as you entered the neighborhood was the music. The music seemed to come from everywhere. Every one of the cold water flats lining the streets appeared to have a radio in the window turned to a country music station. The cars clogging the streets seemed to compete with one another in who could play the music the loudest. Adding to the noise were the honky-tonks and bars lining the streets.

Packed in tightly among the bars and dilapidated apartment buildings were small neighborhood restaurants serving such delicacies as grits, cracklin' bread and black eyed peas. Occasionally, one might see a hand written notice, stuck haphazardly on a restaurant window: "Going to Huntsville on Friday. Will share gas."

A stranger didn't have to ask where he was. All he had to do was look at the car tags. Hundreds, if not thousands of the



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tags bore the slogan "Heart of Dixie," telling the world that their owners were from Alabama.

The place was "Hillbilly Heaven," a place of dreams, hopes, and sometimes broken hearts.

The end of World War II saw the largest exodus of the Southern working class from the homeland since the end of the Civil War. Young men, newly discharged from the armed forces and having experienced the thrills and excitement of London, New York and Paris, were no longer content to return home to a life of cotton farming.

Realizing there were few jobs to be had in North Alabama, many of the men turned their sights northward to Chicago, Pittsburgh, Cincinnati and Detroit.

It was Chicago, however, that attracted the most people from Madison County. With the end of the war, and the growing, almost unquenchable demand for consumer goods, Chicago's manufacturing plants were experiencing an unprecedented boom. Soon, signs advertising "Help Wanted," became a common sight in front of the plants.

As word of the good jobs began filtering into North Alabama, many men decided to make the move. With only a twelve hour drive separating Huntsville and Chicago, the choice between a well paying job, and staying in Huntsville doing nothing, became easier.

Lola Hendrix remembers the move to Chicago her family made in 1947. "Pa packed our clothes and pots and pans in the back floorboard of the car. On top of them he placed a featherbed mattress, and that's where my sister and I rode. There was a big cardboard box

in the trunk where Mama had stowed the groceries. Packed in every crevice and corner of the car were jars of her canned goods and preserves. Every time we had a flat tire, or hit a big bump, we could hear another jar breaking. My Sunday dress smelled like pickles for weeks afterwards."

"Pa tied our beds on top of the car and every time we saw a car with a mattress on top we would look to see if they were from Alabama."

The part of Chicago drawing most of the Southern immigrants would soon become known as Hillbilly Heaven. Poor, working class neighborhoods were abundant here and the rents were cheap. Most of the brownstone buildings in this area had been built in the last century and were often in bad repair.

For many of the people who had never been out of Alabama the cultural differences were shocking.

"I remember all the people," recalled Kenneth Gentry. "Everywhere you looked were people and they were always in a hurry. The biggest thing I missed about home, were trees. Chicago just didn't have many."

"We moved into a three room flat on the sixth floor of an apartment building. One of our neighbors was a family from Hazel Green and on the floor below us were a bunch

of men from Decatur. Almost everyone worked at the same place."

It was fairly easy for the newcomers to gain employment at one of the nearby plants. The Southerners had

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already acquired a reputation for being hard workers and were in demand. Most of the time it merely took a word from a cousin or brother-in-law who was already working there.

One of the plants was S.K. Wayne, a company manufacturing automotive tools. By 1950, over half of its work force was made up of people from Alabama, many of whom were related. One company actually had to post a notice on the bulletin board prohibiting more than 5 members of a family from taking off at the same time.

By 1951, the Southern influence had spread throughout the neighborhood. Honky-tonks with such names as the "Alabama Rose" and "The Decatur Bucket" began replacing the older neighborhood bars. Polish ethnic music was replaced by country ballads and restaurants that had once specialized in Polish and Italian food now began serving Southern cuisine.

Many of the men, unable to regard Chicago as "home," chose to leave their wives and children in Alabama, making the long commute every weekend. Friday afternoons would see an exodus of men from the neighborhood as they piled into cars for the trip home. Often with six or seven men in the cars, sharing the driving and gas expenses, they would drive all night, arriving in Huntsville before daylight, where each one would be let off at his home.

Saturdays would be a day of catching up, and shopping with the families. Without the wages earned in Chicago, many families in Madison County would have been destitute. One survey, taken in 1956, declared that 17% of rural families had members working "up north."

Sunday was a day of church, fried chicken and potato salad. Always in the back of their minds however, was the fact they had to leave for the long trip back to Chicago in a few hours.

Normally about 5 or 6 o'clock in the evening, a car would pull to a stop in front of the houses and blow its horn. It was time to go. With a last kiss for his wife and a pat on the children's heads, each man would rush for the waiting car.

The trip back would be made in silence most of the time, with the men lost in thoughts of

their families and the problems they were forced to leave behind, and thinking ahead of the next trip home, next week.

Many of the men who immigrated to Chicago in search of work were young and single, and it was these that made Hillbilly Heaven notorious. With more money than they had ever dreamed of before, and nothing but good times to spend it on, the neighborhood took on a raucous, and slightly seedy look at night.

High wages and an abun-

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**George Carlin**



dance of nightspots helped to make it a mecca for country music fans. Top Southern recording artists such as Hank Williams, Patsy Cline, and the Delmore brothers all made Hillbilly Heaven part of their tours.

Chicago natives who ventured into the area at night soon discovered that the violent reputation of the "Hillbillys" was not exaggerated. For a "Northerner" to make a pass at one of the ladies, or to insult one of the Southerners, could become a deadly mistake. Sometimes the Southerners themselves would become involved in fights with one another.

Lew Daniels was forced to leave Decatur suddenly when he was caught with another man's wife. Traveling to Chicago, the first place he went to was the "Rebel Star," a bar in Hillbilly Heaven notorious for its many fights. Before Daniels even had time to order a beer, he was recognized by the man's brother, who promptly shot him dead.

The constant traveling back and forth between Alabama and Chicago gave birth to many entrepreneurial enterprises. Workers from North Alabama soon discovered that cars rusted out from the salt spread on Chicago's streets, or rust bombs as they were more commonly known, could be purchased cheaply. Thousands of these cars ended up in North Alabama, where it seemed as if everyone had a brother in-law, or cousin who was skilled in applying "bondo."

There were so many body shops on Sand Mountain that it became known as the "bondo capital" of the world. Many a Huntsville native can still tell stories of having purchased a

sharp looking car, only to have a chunk of it fall off when the car hit a rut in the road.

By the mid 1960s Hillbilly Heaven was but a ghost of its former self. Most of the Southerners had returned home where they were now able to find jobs. Other immigrants, this time from eastern Europe, began moving into the neighborhood, bringing with them their own cultural identity.

Occasionally,

one might still find a dusty Rebel flag hanging behind the bar in an old honky-tonk, or even an Alabama car tag nailed to a wall, but the people who made Hillbilly Heaven the home away from home it was, have long been gone.

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# Eighty-Five Years of Change

by Malcolm Miller

I was born August tenth, nineteen twenty-seven on a hillside in a tenant house just off what is now Wall Road in the Ryland community. We were dirt poor as were a lot of folks back then. My earliest memories are of the cold winters when the wind would blow the snow in through the cracks of the walls and on to the beds where we were sleeping. I remember Papa would get out of bed first and build a fire in the fireplace and the wood stove. Then Mama would get up later and cook breakfast for her and Papa and seven boys.

As soon as Papa got the fires going he would dump the ice out of the water bucket and wash pan, go to the well and get a fresh bucket of water and start to make coffee. We never owned a real coffeepot so he used an iron teakettle. Because times were so hard and money was scarce, Papa would boil the same coffee grounds over and over until they turned white, slowly adding new grounds on occasion.

We went to town every fall and bought food and supplies for the winter but we often ran out of things in the middle of winter. We would run out of sugar and we would have to sweeten the coffee with molasses that was turning to sugar. We would run out of flour so we would have corn bread and corn meal gravy for breakfast. Have you heard the term "saw mill gravy"? Well this is where the term originated; it was like eating saw dust.

We lived at this location until I was six years old, then we moved about a mile up the road

to another tenant house that was no better than the one before, but Papa, when he was renting didn't pay too much attention to the kind of house we would be living in. He only considered the land we would be working and the kind of deal he could make with the landlord, who usually would get one third of the cotton and one fourth of the corn. All of the seven boys and Papa chopped and picked cotton. We lived at this location two years and then we moved to a farm bordered on one side by the Flint River. This was a good move; the house was a lot bigger and in a little better shape.

This was the beginning of my happiest days growing up because I loved that river as a source of food the year round and had a lot of fun fishing and swimming.

When

I was nine years old a big change came about in our lives. We made a good crop and Papa went to Sterchi Brothers furniture store and bought a brand new Philco battery radio. This opened up a whole new world for us. The Philco battery-operated radio was the first modern convenience we had ever had. That same year Papa bought a one-row Farmall tractor, we could have bought a two-row



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for about the same money but Papa said that a two-row tractor would never work. Just think, now they have tractors that plow twelve rows.

After living on the river for seven years the land owner decided to sell the farm and offered to sell it to us but Papa didn't want to go in debt. So when I was fifteen years old we moved from the Ryland community to a farm on Bob Wade Lane near Meridianville. We stayed there a year then moved to Burwell Road. We lived there a year then back to a farm in Ryland.

All this time we never lived in a house with electricity or any modern conveniences. By this time I was seventeen years old, World War II was still going on and I persuaded Papa to sign the papers for me to go to the Navy. When I received my notice to report for duty I was in the field chopping cotton. I threw my hoe in the air and said I will never chop another row of cotton as long as I live.

The Navy was a whole new world for me since I had never been out of Madison County. After boot camp I was shipped to the Pacific coast and finally ended up on board a supply ship as a store keeper. When I enlisted in the Navy I made out an allotment to my parents, and because I had dependents I found out that I soon had enough points to be discharged.

I came back home in nineteen forty-six and my parents had moved into my grandmother's house on Toll Gate Road. Grandmother's house had electricity, one bulb hanging down on a wire in each room. We still had an outhouse and Mama cooked on a wood stove, however we no longer used those coal oil lamps,

When I was aboard ship my skipper had played basketball for Penn State and after we went over on the Island of Guam and played basketball he assured me that I was good enough to get a college scholarship playing ball.

Instead I came home, got a job at the local shoe factory, went to school at night and got married.

When my first wife and I were newly married, life was rough for a long time. Our baby girl was born and I really didn't make enough money to get by. I started barbering part-time since I was the ship's barber in the Navy but most of the business was shaving men with a straight razor and I really didn't like doing that. Then I started working at General Shoe Corporation. Finally after nearly ten years of sweatshop labor making shoes, I passed the test and was hired as a letter carrier with the Post Office. Things got lots better, we had an electric stove, a refrigerator and even a television,

I will never forget the first TV I ever saw was in a bar in Brooklyn, the Dodgers were playing the Giants. I asked someone what is this and they said it was TV. That was before they had net-

works and not nearly the television channels and stations they have now.

Fast forward to today, the whole world has changed from the time I was born until now. Men have walked on the moon; airline flight is an everyday occurrence. Everyone is walking around with cell phones, iPods, Black Berries, Kindle Fires, and whatever you call some of those gadgets and I at eighty-five years of age am sitting here writing this story on a computer.

Friends, I believe I might have just come full circle.

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# The Wife's Commandments

1. Thou shalt have no other wife than me.
2. Thou shalt not take into thy home any beautiful brazen image of a servant girl, to bow down to her and serve her; for I am a jealous wife.
3. Thou shalt not take the name of thy wife in vain.
4. Remember thy wife to keep her respectable.
5. Honor thy wife's father and mother.
6. Thou shalt not fret.
7. Thou shalt not find fault with any dinner.
8. Thou shalt chew no tobacco.
9. Thou shalt not be brazen with thy neighbor.
10. Thou shalt not visit the rum tavern; thou shalt not covet the tavern keeper's rum, nor his brandy, nor his gin, nor his whiskey, nor his wine, nor his wife, nor anything that is behind the bar of the rum seller.
11. Thou shalt not visit billiard halls neither for worshipping in chance nor heaps of money that lie on the table.
12. Thou shalt not grow peevish, and contort thy beauty and physiognomy because of being called to foot store bills, which thy dear wife hath made without thy advice or consent; for verily she knows the want of the household.
13. Thou shalt not stay out after nine o'clock at night.
14. Thou shalt not set at naught the commandments of thy beloved wife.

From 1878 newspaper

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# Tweetie's Pet Tips

As you know, I'm not a big fan of cats. However, many of you are, so I found some good tips for Cat care!

## Tweetie



### \* Cats Love Running Water

Cats find cool, running water to be very appealing. They tend to always be dehydrated and many health problems for cats can be dispelled by lots of water. Look for a pet drinking fountain, your kitty will love it!

### \* Cat Allergies

While no cat is guaranteed to not be an allergy trigger — and people with life-threatening reactions are better off without a cat — it's possible to pick a pet who might be less of a problem. Black, un-neutered males are purported the worst choice for people with allergies, since they typically have higher levels in their saliva of FelD1, the protein that triggers sneezing and wheezing.

Some breeds of cat, most notably the Siberian, have a high number of individual animals with low levels of FelD1. If you're paying for a "hypo-allergenic" cat, insist on saliva testing. If you're choosing a kitten, choose a light-colored female, and get her spayed.

### \* Canned Cat Food Is Preferred

Veterinarians will recommend feeding canned cat food over dry. Canned foods have a higher percentage of protein and fat than dry foods and are significantly higher in water content than kibble (70 percent vs. 10 percent). Also, canned foods tend to be more palatable to cats that are finicky, elderly or have dental problems. Better health for your cat can start by feeding measured amounts of a good canned food. Talk to your veterinarian.

### \* Want a Cat to Love You? Look Away!

What can you do to get a cat to come to you? Avoid eye contact. Cats don't like eye contact, so will almost always go to the person who's not looking at them. This also is the answer to the age-old mystery of why cats always seem to go to the one person in the room who doesn't like cats. It's because

she may be the only one not staring.

### \* Surprising Signs of a Cat in Pain

Chronic pain is not uncommon in cats, especially as they age. Cat lovers miss the signs of a pet in pain because cats are good at hiding it. Any cat observed as being hesitant to jump up or climb, not using the litter box, not able to groom themselves as well, more aggressive or more withdrawn need to see the veterinarian.


### \* What Litter Do Cats Really Prefer?

Forget the people-pleasing scents. Forget special formulas or alternative ingredients. Your cat is more likely to prefer unscented clumping litter, according to preference tests. And if you want to keep your cat using "the bathroom," be sure to keep it clean, place it in a quiet, cat-friendly place and don't use any liners in the box - cats don't like them. None of these changes will address a cat who has stopped using the box because of illness. Urinary tract infections and other health issues need to be addressed

by your veterinarian before box re-training can commence,

### \* Don't Toss That Ratty Scratching Post

When a post starts looking worn is when a cat starts liking it best. Get a new one and your cat may switch to the arm of the couch. Instead, refresh your cat's post by adding some coils of fresh sisal rope - it's cheap, easy to add and cats love to dig their claws into it.



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# From the Desk of Tom Carney

## THE SLEEPING PREACHER

by Tom Carney

His head split open from just above his eyes in the center of his forehead to the top, and from the top down near each ear. His head drew up until the features of his face seemed to be reversed. His hands drew into an immovable position against his chest and throat. His feet and legs twisted into a position almost opposite their normal position. His eyes bled and the blood ran down his cheeks. These grotesque symptoms were accompanied by an almost unbearable headache which caused him to cry out in pain.

The grim depiction above is a description of the Reverend Constantine Blackmon Sanders while under the influence of his secondary personality, which oddly called itself,  $X + Y = Z$ .

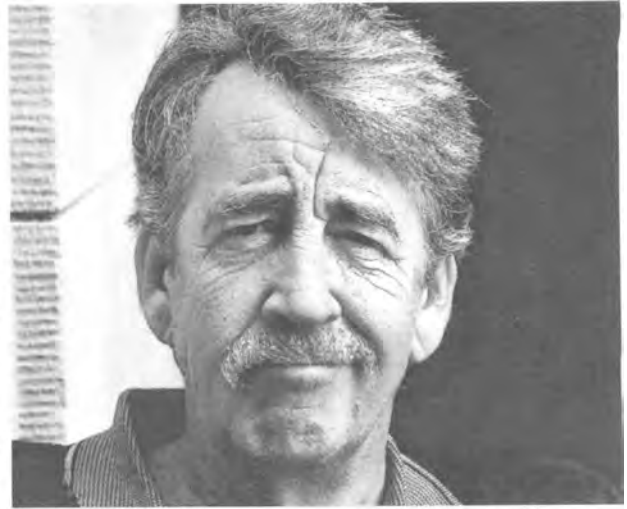
Mr. Sanders was born on July 2, 1831, in northern Madison County, about sixteen miles north of Huntsville. He became intensely interested in religion after attending a revival meeting at a country church about twelve miles north of Huntsville on September 5, 1851. The next day he joined the Cumberland Presbyterian Church at Concord. He had never received the benefit of formal education, but he wanted to become a preacher, so in 1854 he enrolled in a school in Elkton, Tennessee. Three months following his enrollment, the young Mr. Sanders became ill of a flux (diarrhea or dysentery), followed by an attack of typhoid fever. This condition lasted for several weeks. It was during this illness in the home of Mr. and Mrs. M. A. Harlow, with whom he boarded, that Mr. Sanders received his first visit from  $X + Y = Z$ , and that he first showed the psychic powers for which he would become well-known in the area.

Mrs. Harlow reported: "He remarked to me, There will be a

burying here tomorrow evening, but it will not be any of your family. About one hour after this, a gentleman (Mr. McNeely) rode up and requested the privilege of burying a corpse in our private cemetery on the next day, which was granted."

"This death was said to have occurred some three miles distant, and we had not even heard, and I am confident Mr. Sanders had not, of the sickness, nor the death of the individual." Mrs. Harlow also stated that on this occasion the separation of the skull was large enough to lay her little finger in near the top.

Years earlier, in 1855, Mr. Sanders married Miss Duanna A. White of Madison County. After receiving his ordination in the Cumberland Presbyterian ministry in 1862, the Reverend and Mrs. Sanders made their home in the county and he served several churches including Maysville, Meridianville, and Mooresville. The visitations from the secondary personality continued. When he received a visit from  $X + Y = Z$ , he would fall into a semi-conscious state and would not remember



what had occurred upon awaking.

Since he gave the appearance of sleep, he became known as "The Sleeping Preacher." Often while in this state, Sanders would write, not knowing what he had written until he reviewed his notes later. His writings were discourses from the secondary personality. In the beginning, the writings were mainly religious in nature, but later covered diagnoses of illnesses for patients he had never seen as well as prescriptions for their illnesses.

He also translated from Latin without error, even though he had never studied the language. He was able to locate lost articles and often knew of distant deaths as soon as they occurred. The convulsions

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had stopped by 1859, but the headaches were almost continuous for more than twenty years beginning in 1854.

While experiencing one of his "sleeps," Mr. Sanders exhibited amazing psychic powers before scores of witnesses. The Reverend M.B. DeWitt, a Cumberland Presbyterian minister of Huntsville, asked Reverend G.W. Mitchell of Athens to assist him in a series of meetings he had planned for his church in November, 1867. Reverend DeWitt sent a letter to Reverend Mitchell confirming the dates. Mr. Mitchell never received the letter but was met by Mr. Sanders in Mooresville, where Sanders was visiting for a few days, and Sanders told him about the letter and related the contents to him. Reverend Mitchell met his appointment in Huntsville, thanks to the information given him by Mr. Sanders. When asked about the letter by Mr. DeWitt, although he had never received it, Mr. Mitchell was able to correctly quote its contents from what Mr. Sanders had told him.

As you might expect, not everyone in the community believed Reverend Sanders had the ability to perform the psychic feats for which he had become known. While many believed the power was the work of God, others credited it to the devil, and still others thought that the accounts of his prowess were a complete hoax. The debate became so heated in the church, as well as in the community, that measures had to be taken to keep him from being dismissed from the ministry. His detractors called him "Reverend Mountebank," "a vile pretender," and a "specious hypocrite," among other things. This unschooled, backwoods, itinerant preacher was causing quite a stir in North Alabama.

One evening in 1874, Mr. Sanders, who lived in Meridianville, desired to go to Huntsville, twelve miles away, to hear a sermon by a Dr. Ross, but was unable to attend. That night, under the influence of the X + Y = Z personality, Sanders called for a pen, ink, and paper. In his "sleep" state he wrote for more than an hour. The following morning he was told by his wife about the writing. Upon reading what he had written, he found an outline of the sermon delivered by Dr. Ross the

previous evening in Huntsville. Mr. Sanders took the train to Huntsville that morning and went directly to the home of Reverend H.R. Smith. Mr. Smith expressed his regrets that Mr. Sanders had not been able to hear the previous night's sermon. Mr. Sanders informed him that he had heard the sermon and enjoyed it all very much. He then preceded to give a detailed exposition of the sermon including text, major divisions, and leading thoughts from beginning to end. Mr. Smith stated that it was impossible for Mr. Sanders to have been informed of the sermon in such detail, since it had been preached the night before while Sanders slept and he had come directly from his home in Meridianville to Smith's home in Huntsville early the next morning.

In February, 1866, Mr. Sanders was confined to his bed with a dislocated thigh and was being visited by his friend, J.W. Pruitt. Mr. Pruitt reported that during the visit, Sanders began to laugh. When Mr. Pruitt asked him why he was laughing, Mr. Sanders said he was laughing at DeWitt who was "having a hard scuffle to keep from falling off the fence, for the top rail was turning with him and he was trying to keep from falling over it." Mr. Pruitt stated that about ten or fifteen minutes later, Mr. DeWitt arrived carrying a bowl of custard and a bag of peas his wife had sent to Mr. Sanders. DeWitt related his difficulty in negotiating the rail fence with his hands full. He stated that the fence shook and twisted and he nearly fell off. To Mr. Pruitt, it sounded curiously like what Mr. Sanders had laughed about fifteen

minutes before.

Reverend G.W. Mitchell and Dr. J.S. Blair of Athens reported that on either October 31 or November 1, 1866, Mr. Sanders was sitting in front of a window when he began to say "poor fellow" and "what a pity." Sanders began to exhibit signs of sadness and distress and said, "He's gone! Gone! Gone!"

When questioned about his actions, Sanders told the men that Lieutenant McClure had just died from an internal hemorrhage near Clarksville, Tennessee. Early the next morning, Lieutenant McClure's wife in Athens received a telegram informing her of her husband's death some one hundred and fifty miles away near Clarksville, Tennessee, of an internal hemorrhage.

In February, 1867, Mr. Sanders encountered Mrs. Mary A. Brown in Meridianville. Mrs. Brown expressed concern for her relatives in Salisbury, North Carolina, whom she had not heard from in a long time. Mr. Sanders informed Mrs. Brown that he had gone to see them the night before and they were well as usual. Mr. Sanders also told Mrs. Brown that there had been a fire in Salisbury the night before. He told her the fire had started in a tin shop and burned to the corner of the Wheeler block. He assured the woman that all her relatives were safe. Mrs. Brown wrote a letter to her sister living in the Salisbury area and inquired about the fire. In time she received a reply which confirmed all Mr. Sanders had said, including the time it occurred, the tin shop where it started, and the extent of the damage.

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In the summer of 1867, Mr. Sanders told Miss Sallie Humphey that Miss Mattie Banks in Decatur had just been struck by lightning and described her injuries. Miss Humphey told her sisters what Mr. Sanders had said and the three decided to check the next newspaper to see if any account was given of the incident. When the paper arrived, it contained the story of Miss Banks' accident, confirming what Mr. Sanders had said down to the time and specific injuries he had mentioned.

On several occasions Mr. Sanders directed people to items they had lost and had previously been unable to find. Once when an insane woman wandered off and could not be located, Mr. Sanders gave directions that allowed searchers to go directly to where she was and bring her back.

The Reverend Sanders suffered under the possession of  $X + Y = Z$  for twenty-two years. On many occasions over the years, he had begged the secondary personality to leave him. On February 2, 1876,  $X + Y = Z$ , calling Sanders "My Casket" as he always did in written communications to him, consented to leave him for an indefinite time. In this communication,  $X + Y = Z$  also promised (or perhaps threatened) to return at a later date. There is no documentation as to whether the secondary personality actually kept its promise to return.

Constantine Blackmon Sanders. Was he psychic or charlatan? He was investigated by the Boston Society for Psychic Research, and more than sixty people including physicians, ministers, civic leaders, judges, and people from all walks of life and of high moral character gave written testimony to his psychic powers. Apparently those who saw him perform these feats believed.

The believers saw the exit of the secondary personality as an act of God for the relief of His dedicated servant. Detractors thought otherwise. Some believed that the visitor left, not because of a pact with God, but with the devil from whom it had come.

Over a century and a half later it is impossible to determine the source of Reverend Sanders' power.

Whatever your opinion may be, he will always be remembered in Madison County as "The Sleeping Preacher."

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**Smoked Boston Butt:** Slowly smoked, tender and juicy hand pulled, served with BBQ sauce. Served with two side items.

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**ALABAMA ASSOCIATION FOR JUSTICE PRESENTS:  
THE PEOPLE'S LAW SCHOOL**

**When:** January 28, 2013 - April 9, 2013; Monday Nights 6:30 - 8:40 p.m.  
**Where:** City Public Safety Building, Courtroom A.  
 815 Wheeler Ave., Huntsville, Alabama 35801  
**Cost:** \$45.00 Registration Fee for the whole program

**For More Information Contact:**  
**Brinkley & Chesnut**  
**Attorneys At Law**  
 307 Randolph Avenue  
 Huntsville, Alabama 35801  
 (256) 533-3333 [Allen@huntsvilleattorneys.com](mailto:Allen@huntsvilleattorneys.com)

**SCHEDULE FOR SPRING 2013**

January 28	6:30	Brian Clark	Criminal Law
	7:40	Frank Caprio	Patents, Copy Rights.
February 4	6:30	Mayor Battle	City Government
	7:40	Joan Harris	Immigration Law
February 11	6:30	Phil Price	DUI Law
	7:40	Judge Donna Pate	The Court System
February 18	6:30	Connie Glass	Elder Law
	7:40	Perry Shuttlesworth	Nursing Home Law
February 25	6:30	Josh Hayes	Roll on 18- Wheeler
	7:40	Mike Wisner	Tax Law, Fighting the IRS
March 4	6:30	Carolyn Johnson	Domestic Relations
	7:40	Jim Richardson	Insurance Law
March 11	6:30	Charles Edgar	Private Investigators
	7:40	Matt Glover	Industrial Accident Investigation
March 18	6:30	Ed Gentle	Mass Torts
	7:40	Kerri Riley	Employment Law
March 25	6:30	Bob Prince	How Insurance Companies defend claims
	7:40	Richard Chesnut	Real Estate Law
April 1	6:30	Don McKenna	Defective Medica Devices
	7:40	Joan Marie Dean	Divorce Law
April 8	6:30	Derek Simpson & Barton Warren	Trial Techniques
	7:40	Allen Brinkley	Top 10 Most Dangerous Toys

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**METHOD OF PAYMENT ACCEPTED: CHECK or MONEY ORDER**  
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All programs will be taped and televised throughout the year on Comcast Channel 3 on the following schedule:  
 Monday, Wednesday, Friday at 6:00 am, 2:00 pm, 6:00 pm, 10:00 pm, and Sundays at 2:00 pm.



## A Dog Story

Almost anyone in the construction business has a thousand stories to tell and Phil Radzinski is no exception.

About ten years ago, Phil went to a lady's house to give an estimate on remodeling her kitchen. It was an expensive home with manicured lawns and shrubbery. It also had a dog. It was a small dog, the kind that's too small to kick and too big to ignore. As Phil begins ringing the doorbell the dog begins chewing on his new Gucci shoes (\$149.47 on sale). The lady answers the door, Phil goes in and the dog follows. He does his measuring and figuring, and all the time the dog is still chewing away.

The one cardinal rule about giving estimates is that the customer is always right. If it takes

putting up with a dog that eats Gucci shoes for lunch, well, you do whatever you have to do to get on the good side of a customer.

After the preliminary figuring, Phil and the lady sit down to discuss the price. By this time the dog had finished one and a half shoes and had started on a pants leg. The lady looks at Phil with a weird expression on her face and says, "You really like dogs, don't you?"

About that time the miniature monster looks up at Phil, spits out two square inches of polyester, takes a leap, lands in his lap, and begins chewing on Phil's new tie (Christmas present).

"Oh, yes Ma'am, I sure do," Phil replies as the dog began hungrily eyeing his monogrammed shirt pocket. "Why, I think everybody should have one."

Needless to say, Phil rushed through the estimate and left while he still had a few clothes intact. He's walking down the drive, back to his truck, when the woman comes to the door and hollers, "Mr. Radzinski, don't forget your dog. And please don't tell my husband you brought your dog with you, he doesn't allow pets in the house."

**"Don't let aging get you down  
It's too hard to get back up."**

*John Wagner*

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# The Red Cowboy Outfit

by Leo Larkin

I was my father's only son; a petite blonde girl and an only child. He gave me the handle of "Leo" (named for a next door neighbor who took him to school on his first day and who was named for her father). Deep down in his heart, Daddy wanted a boy and he set about raising me like one; but he also loved me with a passion. He never called me "Leo" unless he was angry. He called me "boy" or "buckaroo".

I learned to handle a gun from the age of six and was an excellent shot. I was taught from an early age to be a survivor. I can't ever remember being cuddled and pampered. We wrestled, scuffled, shadow boxed and he chewed my ears every chance he got. Daddy thought I was 6'2" and could do anything. I rotated the tires on the car, and if he had decided to pick up one end of the car, he'd have expected me to lift the other end.

His fellow workers thought he had a son as he referred to me as his "boy." Their faces were pictures of surprise when they finally met me. The typical comment was, "Why, Jim, I thought you had a son," to which Daddy would proudly reply, "This is the only boy I have."

I am so thankful that I was raised to be tough and independent. The two sayings that stand out in my memory are: "If so-and-so wanted to put his head in the fire, would you do it?" And also, "Babe, you have to roll with the punches."

My roots go back to Muhlenberg County, Kentucky, where

coal mining was the main source of making a living. It takes a special kind of person to go down into the mines with a pick and shovel to scrape out an existence. The punches are hard and they breed toughness and Daddy, being a WWII veteran, wanted me to be able to handle any situation.

I grew up, married, and gave my father what he always wanted - sons. My marriage of 18 years ended with their father leaving us. I am thankful that I had inbred strength and the strength of the Lord to endure the suffering of divorce and raising sons alone. I was 37 and can remember thinking, "Who in the world would want a 40-year old female harmonica player?"

I had the musical talent that is especially prevalent in the hills of Kentucky. My grandparents had been musicians, but had stopped playing before I was born. I was not aware of this until I started bringing in musical instruments. Even though they no longer played, every Saturday night the Grand Ole Opry was tuned in on the radio, and many times the rug was rolled back so we could dance. My grandmother was always the instigator of this; and my

grandfather laughed and made comments about her dancing with her "fanny". Daddy did the "wing and tip" and my bachelor Uncle Bill would dance with the family dog in his arms. These were the days before air conditioning. In the summertime you could walk though the entire town of Drakesboro and not miss any of the "Opry".

My grandfather gave me the only harmonica lesson I ever had. I played guitar, banjo and harmonicas at home, but the piano was the only thing played after I married and had children; and that extended to church and nursing homes.

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One night my husband and I had a pickin' and grinnin' with some friends. When they started to play their guitars, I found my three old, rusty harmonicas that had been stored in a dresser drawer for many years. They were in such bad shape that only two of them would play - out of tune. Even though they were in such a condition and I hadn't played in years, the people were impressed and put me in touch with the Folk Musicians Association.

I participated in some concerts with them and they practically pushed me into competing in the harmonica division of a fiddler's convention. Much to my surprise, I beat 14 men who had been playing all their lives; and that's when I knew I had something! Later, I was asked to join a country band and, with my husband, I did so.

One Sunday morning, while worshipping in church, the organist was playing something very softly. The Lord spoke to me in His still voice and said, "That would be so pretty on the harmonica." I was excited because I knew it was the Holy Spirit speaking. I approached our minister after church about using the harmonica during church services. He hesitantly said, "Well, I don't know." Next, I tried our choir director. "Maybe on Sunday nights," she said. Unwilling to be defeated, I brought my harmonicas to choir practice that night and there has never been a question as to the beauty and appropriateness of the instrument since then.

I was sharing my music in my own church and also traveling as a team member of the Lay Witness Mission. In the

meantime, Mama Adams, my spiritual mother, gave a prophecy that I would travel with an evangelistic team. A few years later she had a vision and saw me playing in a huge place.

She and Papa went to the United Methodist Congress on Evangelism at Oral Roberts University that year. On return, she excitedly told me that was where she saw me playing in her vision. She said that the next year's Congress would be held in Pennsylvania and I should plan on going. But, the

next year, Papa was sick and there were blizzards; of course, the Lord's timing was not right to go.

I had never experienced the Congress first hand, so I forgot about it. Winter and spring faded away, and late summer arrived. In my mind's eye, I began to see a vision of myself dressed in a red cowboy outfit with fringe - just like Barbara Mandrell would wear. Since I was raised in western shirts, jeans and boots while riding horses and shooting guns, the



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vision didn't get much thought. Beside that, I wouldn't have worn red to a dog fight.

The vision persisted for three weeks before it came apparent that God was trying to get my attention. I called my friend, Carolyn, who is my "Prayer Warrior" as well as an excellent seamstress. We made plans to go together to select the proper materials to match the vision.

Shortly after that, I went to visit Mama Adams; going with a strange sort of expectancy that she had something to tell me. She said, no, she didn't have anything special to tell me. But later, in the course of the conversation, she said, "By the way, the Congress is at Opryland this year. We're going and you can go with us."

Immediately, I knew that the vision was for this! Where else would you need a red cowboy outfit but at Opryland in Nashville, Tennessee - the home of country music?

January of 1982 finally arrived and, I went to the Opryland Hotel with a red cowboy outfit and a suitcase full of harmonicas; not knowing how, but trusting that I would be part of the program.

I was auditioned, along with other musicians, and was scheduled for the program the next night. I walked out on the stage in front of 3500 ministers and lay people from across the nation, dressed in a red-fringed cowboy outfit with a silver Indian belt and red high heels. I played "Jesus Loves Me" and then shared briefly the story of my name. The audience was in a great mood and ready to be entertained. They nearly cracked up with laughter to think of that petite blonde boxing and enduring the growing up years with her father who really wanted a boy.

Then I played "It is Well With My Soul" and the anoint-

ing of the Holy Spirit fell across the rollicking audience and they sat as if spellbound and you could have heard a pin drop. They became a worshipping body of believers during that song.

When I finished, the whole congregation stood and gave me a standing ovation that went on and on. The Master of Ceremonies had to encourage them to be seated again. I buried my face in my hands. I was totally surprised at the response and I remembered what I had said about who would want a 40-year old female harmonica player. My 40th birthday was just the week before and 3500 people wanted me. But, MOST of all, Jesus wanted me.

I played many times that week and even for a country music show that was performed for the Congress. I

couldn't leave my hotel room without allowing extra time to reach my destination because of people wanting to talk with me. The whole Congress made me their sweetheart.

I became known as a music evangelist on a national level from that week in Nashville. The next year, when I walked into a hotel in San Antonio, Texas, for the Congress I was greeted by my name "Leo" and I knew I had not been forgotten. I appeared in many states from New Hampshire to Florida, and from Ohio to Texas, as a result of that week at the Opryland Hotel.

When the whole Congress had been expecting to experience the "Country Music Capitol," Nashville, the Lord had provided them with a harmonica player in a cowboy outfit. Red became my favorite color and fringe my trademark. I

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3. *Historic Huntsville: (2002 edition)* by Elise Hopkins Stephens \$18 (new price)
4. *Growing up in the Rocket City: A Baby Boomer's Guide* (over 200 Photos/illustrations) by Tommy Towery \$15
5. *1861 Civil War Map of Huntsville* (with historic points of interest) \$4.95
6. *Remembering Margaret Mitchell* by Huntsvillian Lucille Thompson Love \$18
7. *True Tales of Old Madison County - back in stock* - by Pat Jones \$7.95
8. *Huntsville Entertains - History & Recipes* by Historic Huntsville Foundation \$12
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10. *Lost Writings of Howard Weeden* by Fisk & Riley \$20.00