



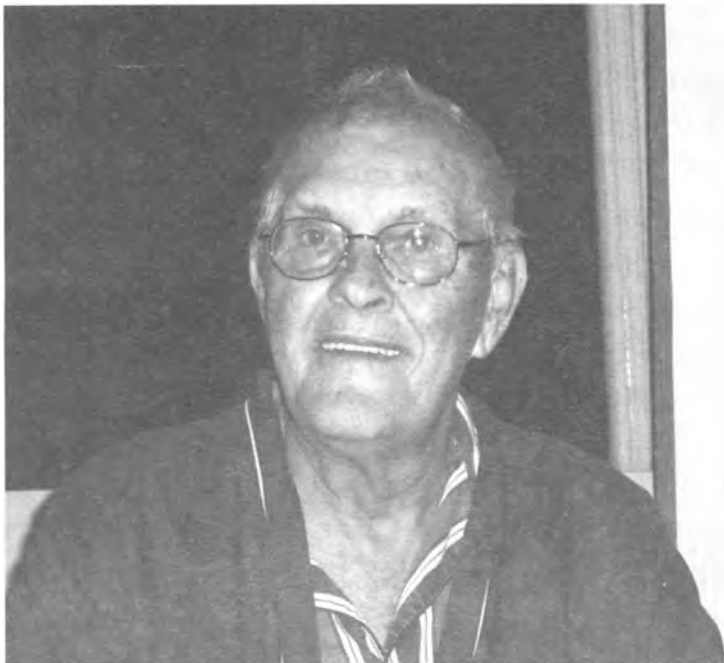
No. 243
May 2013



Old Huntsville

HISTORY AND STORIES OF THE TENNESSEE VALLEY

Huntsville, Alabama - A City of Music Legends



*Norman Stephens, The
"Singing Policeman"*

From Norman Stephens to Ernie Ashworth, from Charley Lyle to Vance Morris, from Monte Sano Crowder to Malcolm Miller, Curtis J. Hall and Ray Brand - Huntsville has been home to some of the best songwriters, singers & pickers this country has ever heard.

Also in this issue: **The Snuffdippers' Ball**

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Domie Lewter

Mac Lewter

Norm Stephens - The Singing Policeman

by Johnny Johnston

He was walking the beat in downtown Huntsville on a Saturday night in 1959 when he could have been singing at a local nightclub or one of a hundred different gatherings of his fans across the valley. This particular night things were slow except that Pee Wee King was playing at the Snuffdippers' Ball upstairs above the Grand Theatre on Jefferson Street. The policeman walked by several times resisting the temptation to go up the stairs to hear just a few minutes of that great music he was so familiar with.

When Norman Stephens was in the first grade his mother taught him two cords on the old guitar which had been around the house for many years. He had a gift for music and picked up the rest of the cords on his own which later in life would give him a glimpse of life in the fast lane and carry him

throughout the country.

Along about eleven o'clock in the evening he couldn't stand it any longer, his shift was over at twelve midnight and things were slow anyway. He had only arrested a couple of drunks that night so he slipped up the stairs to listen for awhile to Mr. King and his magic guitar licks which had been heard all over the world.

Someone told Mr. King that the "Singing Policeman" was in the room so Norman was invited to swap guitar licks with Pee Wee King. Everything went great except he forgot about the time. Police Sergeant Tom Butler started looking for his evening shift to clock out at twelve but Officer Stephens was not to be found. At twelve-thirty Butler put out an all points bulletin for the missing policeman. The entire shift was held over and sent out over Huntsville expecting the worst possible ending to a fairly uneventful Saturday evening in the small town of Huntsville.

About two in the morning one of the officers heard the wild guitar music coming from upstairs on Jefferson Street and considered how long into the morning the Snuffdippers' Ball was lasting. Upon investigating he found the well-known guitarist Pee Wee King and the

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Jimmy Durante



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Sales & Mrktg. - Cathey Carney
Editor - Cheryl Tribble
Gen. Manager - Ron Eyestone
Copy Boy - Tom Carney (in memory)

"Old Huntsville" magazine is a monthly publication. Annual subscriptions are \$25 per year.

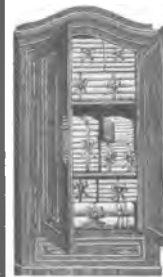
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missing policeman Buford Norman Stephens swapping lick for lick on the guitars.

I was in the first grade at Lincoln School when I discovered the steam coming from the heating system which discharged into the school yard. I was very lonesome and shy and needed a friend when I started playing in the steam, imagining I was able to go into the steam and just disappear. Another first grader, also shy, was doing the same thing and that is where and when I met Norman.

Norman was raised on Cottage Street in the Mill Village along with his family in one half of a small house. They did, I believe, have room for a small garden where some vegetables were raised. The Stephens family, like most everyone else in the Village, were extremely poor. Usually the mother worked the night shift at Lincoln Mill and the father worked the day shift. It was hard to make a living and harder yet to have

anything extra for your children. The Goens family lived in similar circumstances just down Cottage Street. Gene Goens was also a lifetime friend of Norman and contributed to this story.

When in the seventh grade I joined the Kiwanis Crossing Guards that worked in front of Lincoln School helping the students cross Meridian Street. On Friday we got into the Lyric Theatre free to see a movie so I wanted my friends to go to the movie with me. I approached Norman to see if he would join me in the crossing guards so we could go to the movie together. He said "My Mother won't let me but you can ask her."

I went home with him one afternoon proudly wearing that white strap that school crossing guards wear, and

"Thou shalt not steal the copper from the AC unit."

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told her how we wanted to be together in the guards and how we could go to the movies free on Friday. Mrs. Stephens was a woman of strong will and could get a point across quickly. She said "NO." That was the end of Norman's future with the crossing guards but I like to think it gave him an interest in his choice of police work as an adult.

Most everyone calls me "Johnny" since the late 50s, Norman was adamant that I should be called Dalton. In 1990 he and his wife drove from Florida to visit at our home in Huntsville. Norman had a beautiful belt buckle made with the name "Dalton" engraved on it for me to remember my correct name.

Norman, by many accounts, could get more information from an interview when he became a homicide detective than just about anybody. This played an important part in the solving of the "Thomas Killing" in the mid 60s. Someone had gone into a home in southeast Huntsville as a salesman, attempted rape and then eventually knifed the beautiful mother 17 times with the children watching.

This was a horrific crime in any newspaper. Norman was contacted by an old friend, (then an ex-con), who wanted a secret meeting to give information. Norman set up a meeting behind the old Lincoln Union Store at midnight with the informant who gave

"Please excuse Jimmy for being absent yesterday. He had diarrhea, and his boots leak."

School excuse for absence

him the name of the killer. The killer happened to be an old acquaintance who grew up in the Lincoln neighborhood. All of us knew him but we will just call him "Bill" for the purpose of this story. Norman arrested Bill, who denied the killing, but was sentenced to death in the Alabama penal system. A week before Bill was to die in the electric chair he was still maintaining innocence to all the press and gaining support from activist groups who were opposed to the electric chair.

Norman was contacted by the Madison County Sheriff shortly before the sentence was to take place. Bill wanted to see the arresting policeman; he wanted to visit with the detective who had provided most of the evidence that had convicted him of this horrible crime. Norman obliged with a drive to the

prison.

When he sat down with Bill and started the conversation, Bill told him "Norman, I don't want anyone feeling sorry for me, I have made peace with my Savior but just have one thing to say to you - you got the right man for the murder." With that Bill went

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back to his cell and a few days later sat in the infamous electric chair.

We were all about eight years old when Norman and one of his brothers got a fifteen minute radio show on WFUN. It aired early on Saturday mornings. The walk from their home in Lincoln to the studio on West Holmes was about a half-hour walk. The show started with his theme song "Gathering Flowers for the Master's Bouquet" then continued with old country favorites. He played for many churches and schools then later sang with quartets and gospel groups, but his fame came in song writing.

I remember with a sincere proud feeling that I was one of the boys who walked from Lincoln to WFUN with "The Stephens Brothers".

Our 1955 graduating class of Butler High School has been a close group all these years. Norman entertained the 35th reunion in 1990 with songs he had written and was a total hit. Everyone liked Norman and considered him a friend.

Just a few years ago while attending the Lincoln school reunion, I had the opportunity to look at all the grades of students since the twenties. I looked at mine which were average or a little less and

some friends who had good grades but then I looked at Norman's grades. Year after year, at every reporting, Norman had nothing but straight A's. I asked him about that a few years ago. He said should he go home with anything but an "A" on his report card it, it would result in a "butt whipping" from his Dad.

While living in Houston during the sixties I bought a Flatt and Scruggs Album. On the back of the album was well-written credit to Norman for writing "Streets of Houston" which was included. He wrote songs recorded by Roy Rogers, Wayne Newton and others. His best song was "Daddy Don't You Walk So Fast" which got him to Nashville and on tour for several weeks.

Norman talked of his home in Brentwood where songwriters were always hanging out writing with him. He was proud of the help he gave to other new people in the business. He helped to write hundreds of songs for others, some of them mega hits. He was also very proud of his

grass cutter and handyman in Nashville whose name was Eddie Rabbit. Eddie became a super star before his death with throat cancer.

While he was doing so well, living in Nashville, associating with country stars

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and touring on his American Eagle Bus, his wife Shirley became ill with cancer. He became so very affected that he moved back to Huntsville, tried to take care of Shirley but found money was a problem. He walked away from a long term contract with Capital Records and sold his biggest hit "Daddy Don't You Walk so Fast" to Wayne Newton which helped pay for the cancer care of his wife Shirley.

Among his closest friends in Nashville were Waylon Jennings, Ray Stephens, Curley Putman and other stars of country music.

Norman had several clubs in Huntsville at different times and used local talent including Ken Elmore "Kinky", and Curtis Hall. Norman told me in 2010 that Curtis was the best banjo player in the southeastern United States.

Many of his Nashville friends came down to be with him in his club. Gene Goens tells a great story. While sitting in the "Little Brown Jug", Curly Putman (the number one Country Music writer in the world) came over and sat

with him. He said "Gene, I did the dumbest thing of my life last week, I allowed a 13 year old to record one of my songs, and I thought it was a pretty good song." The song was "Delta Dawn", the singer was Tanya Tucker. That was nearly 40 years ago and the song, as well as the singer, is still going strong.

Norman spent six years in the service, most of it on Bikini Atoll in the Marshalls which led him into Atomic Energy Security after his career at the Huntsville Police Department and as Security Chief at Von Braun Civic Center.

Norman, after a very long illness, passed away on August 24th, just a couple of weeks after his 75th birthday. Norman suffered a stroke in 1991 while on a business trip which led to many brain seizures and many surgeries. He passed away from heart trouble but was cursed with several medical problems which could have taken his life.

Norman was married to Shirley Clanton until her death in 1975. He married

Linda Lester in 1982 who survives him. He also is survived by his brother Vernon and three Daughters, all who live in Huntsville. Norman and Linda lived in Florida for over twenty years.



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A company led by Captain Peyton S. White was formed in the spring of 1836, and after a short provisioning period, marched to Texas and war. Among the members of this company were George Spotwood, Green Hamlet, C. Grayson, William Wilson and a free black man by the name of Peter Daniels.

Peter Daniels was a well-liked barber in Huntsville who was also known for his ability to play the fife. When the company was formed he became their fifer.

It appears as if Daniels' reputation as a fifer had spread into Mexico, and when he was captured in a skirmish with Mexican troops, he was immediately offered a position as their fifer. Daniels refused, saying he would rather die than play one note for them.

The Mexican troops then offered him a choice... life or death. Still he refused to join their army. Marched to the edge of a ravine, he was placed in front of a firing squad and offered one last chance to live. "Shoot me," he replied, "I am an American."

His body lies in an unmarked grave somewhere in the lonely sands of Texas. In Huntsville the only remembrance of him is a footnote in a book published almost 100 years ago.

Peter Daniels, a true Huntsville hero, deserves more.



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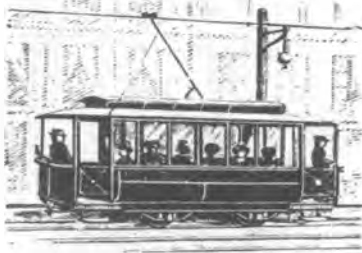
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Had it not been for the streetcars, transportation would have been a big problem for the early residents of the community - many of whom did not own a horse and buggy. The cars started running about four months before No. 1 Mill (Merimack Mill) was completed, as evidenced by the following announcement in the March 3, 1900 issue of the "Republican."

"TAKE A RIDE: Huntsville's electric railway has at last started. The cars began running

regular Wednesday morning. The first car leaves the barn at 6:00 in the a.m. and the last car at midnight."

At this time the railway company had four cars in operation. The fare was five cents.

Not only was it a great convenience for the early residents to ride the trolley, but an exciting thrill as well. The fact that the line extended within the village limits brought many town sightseers to the new community. The Brahan Spring, close to the end of the car line, was a popular spot for city wide events, such as Fourth of July celebrations. Sometimes the electric railway offered a special rate of five cents for the round trip to those who wished to attend the day long events at Brahan Spring.

The last streetcar ran on February 23, 1931.



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Music, a Big Part of My Life

by Malcolm Miller



Music has always been a very important part of this writer's life, from the time I toddled around my Mama's feet listening to her sing such songs as "Old Crumple Horn" or when she sang me to sleep to the tune of "Bye Baby Bunting", I have loved music.

I remember the day Daddy came home from town in our only means of transportation, a two horse wagon, with a wind-up Victrola, or record player as we call it in today's time. This Victrola was given to us by relatives in the city as there was no way Daddy could afford or would purchase such an item.

We no longer worried about having to eat corn bread and sawmill gravy for breakfast and coffee sweetened with molasses. We were enthralled with listening to records by Jimmy Rogers and the Carter family. This Victrola was played all day long and into the wee hours of the night. We changed records and wound up the Victrola by the light of the open fireplace. Daddy would not let us burn lamp oil as it cost too much to be burning a lamp so late. I believe the cost of the lamp oil was somewhere around ten cents a gallon and Daddy thought that was a lot.

During hot summer nights the whole family would sit out in the yard after supper because

the house was so hot from the sun beating down on the tin roof all day. My Uncle Curt, my father's brother, who spent much time at our house, would light up his pipe filled with "homemade" tobacco. Then he would pick up his fiddle and thump the strings a few times.

Soon the night air was filled with the aroma of pipe smoke and the foot-patting tunes such as "June Bug Settin' on a Sweet Tater Vine", "Hop Light Katie" and "Soldier's Joy." Some of the tunes he played made cold chills run over me, almost as much as the ghost stories that were told in between tunes.

Finally, with the hour growing late, I reluctantly would go to bed, chilled by the night air, the stories that were told, and with the sounds of the mournful fiddle wailing in the night. I couldn't help but think

that maybe someday I would have a fiddle and be able to play it like Uncle Curt. That idea was certainly in my dreams as I lay down thinking about the evening.

To this day, when I hear an old-timey fiddle tune, chills still come over me. If I close my eyes it seems I can smell the faint aroma of "homemade" tobacco pipe smoke and the tunes that were played when I was a child run through my mind.

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MONTE SANO CROWDER

by Tom Carney, written in 1991

Monte Sano Crowder was born on the mountain that he was named for in 1914. When Monte was only six years old his mother died, leaving his father with a whole house full of kids, and very little money. Monte's father was a natural musician and often, when times were especially hard, he would wrap his Sears and Roebuck fiddle in an old flour sack and "take off fiddling for a week or two, in order to keep food on the table."

Monte began fiddling when he was about ten years old. His dad kept his fiddle laying on the bed and while he was fixing supper, Monte would slip into the bedroom and saw very quietly on the fiddle. His dad came in one day and told him to "go ahead and play it, only don't break anything." From that day on, Monte was a fiddle player.

Like his father, Monte and his brothers were all natural born musicians. In 1928 Monte and his brother began playing

together as the Crowder Brothers. The oldest brother A.P. was the manager of the band. A P. Crowder later moved to Illinois where he became known as the top fiddle player in the state.

Monte recalls that back in those days people would plan barn dances sometimes a year in advance. There would be cold drinks and ice cream and the street would be roped off and sawdust spread down for people to dance on. Sometimes the dancing would go on till the wee hours of the morning. The band tried to charge \$15 a night for the entire group, three or four dollars apiece was pretty good money in those days.

"Times were gettin' kind of lean back then and I was gettin' tired of chopping wood, so one day I tell Leon, my brother, I say 'Let's go to Texas or someplace where we can make music and make a little money, too.' Leon, he looked at me and laughed and said 'we can't play that good!' 'Well, by golly, we can at least try, I told him.' The next day we took off for Texas."

"We were hitchhiking and didn't have no money so we carried our cotton sacks with us. We figured that if we didn't make no money making music, we could still pay our way by picking cotton.

It's a good thing we had them

sacks, 'cause when we got to Texas, they had mosquitoes as big as birds and we had to crawl into those sacks to sleep, otherwise they would have eat us alive."

"Well, we got to Texas, we started making music on the sidewalks. We would stand

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there and play all the tunes that we knew and if we were lucky someone would put a little spare change in the hat, and then we could eat, again. We had been doing this for a couple of days when this guy with a medicine show hires us to play for his show. We would make music, people would gather around, and then this medicine man would sell his goods. We must have spent most of that summer in Dallas making music. That's when we got to thinking that we were genuine musicians."

Monte returned to Alabama, convinced that he could make a living playing the fiddle. In 1937, Slim Daniel gave Monte his first job in Huntsville. Word of the young man and his fiddle playing spread throughout the Tennessee Valley, and it wasn't long before he was in great demand.

"Those were the days when a man put his heart and his soul into his music. I remember back in 1939, or maybe '40 when some guy by the name of Hank Williams called me and wanted me to make music with him. I played with him for a while but he wanted to go to Louisiana and make some records. I told him that I didn't care nothing about being famous, I had everything I wanted right here in Huntsville, Alabama."

Hank Williams went to Louisiana where he auditioned for the "Louisiana Hayride", the show that was to propel him into worldwide fame within a few years. In 1941 a man appeared at Monte's door and asked him to take a job playing for a square dance. The man

told him that they weren't making much money and couldn't afford to pay anything except a percentage of the gate. The square dance was commonly known as the "Snuffdippers' Ball" and Monte went on to play there for the next thirty-two years.

The Snuffdippers' Ball was located upstairs at the old Temple Theatre, in a room normally used for Union meetings, on Jefferson Street. The lot on which it stood is now a parking lot across from the Kaffeeklatsch.

Walking down the street years ago, the only evidence you would see of the ball was a narrow doorway and a long, steep set of stairs. No signs, no neon lights, you had to know what you were looking for in

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"You had to climb the steps, pay a fifty cents admission, and then you'd be in this big room. The room itself wasn't much to look at, it was just a big room with a few chairs on the side, had a place to sell potato chips and soft drinks, and yes, back in the old days it even had spittoons for people that dipped snuff or chewed tobacco."

"But it wasn't the room that made the ball, it was the people. Use to, most everyone lived out in the country and they had to work hard for a living, and Saturday night was the only night they had to have a little fun and let off a little steam. There would be people dressed in their Sunday best, their hair slicked down, and a Sunday-go-to-meeting shine on their shoes. And over there, against that wall, would be the boys that picked cotton all week, still dressed in their overalls."

"Grandpa would be back in a corner holding court with all the other men while the missus would be sitting there clapping her hands to the music. There'd

be so many people packed in that smoky room that it was a wonder that the old wooden floor didn't just cave in with all that stompin' and dancin' going on."

"Lord, if that old building was still there, and if those walls could talk, there would be a thousand ghosts in that room, and they would all be tapping their feet to the memories of all the good music that was played there."

With the new fiddle player taking the lead, the Snuffdippers' Ball became an instant success, with throngs of people lining up in front of the door hours before it opened. Its success created a new entertainment district downtown. No alcohol was served on the premises of the Ball so bars began to spring up around it to cater to the thirsty crowds. An oldtimer claims that "you could always tell when Monte took a break. When the music stopped, the people would swarm out of the Ball, like bees on honey, headed for the bars, but when Monte picked that fiddle up again, the

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bars would empty out and the sidewalks that were crowded with noisy people a few minutes earlier would grow silent."

By this time the Snuffdippers' Ball had acquired such a reputation that it was posted "Off Limits" to military personnel, as far away as Nashville, Tennessee. Ironically, this was one of the few places of entertainment downtown that did not serve alcohol, but a lot of people had bottles of "cough medicine" in brown paper bags, sticking out of their back pockets.

Monte recalls, "There was never no trouble inside my place. It was all outside. I would tell those boys that if they wanted to fight they could go outside and do it. I wouldn't put up with that in the Ball. Why, there was even people that would drop their kids off with us while they took off to the bars!"

The fact that Monte was a professional wrestler undoubtedly helped persuade some of the local rowdies to keep the peace. He first stepped in the ring in 1937 and over the next 15 years would wrestle as a professional in over 200 matches, under the name of "The Break-down Wrestler". Asked if he was any good, Monte replied "I didn't win very much, but I made me a little money."

Earl Frazier, a retired Madison County Deputy Sheriff, recalls "working Jefferson Street in front of the Ball every Saturday night. We never had no trouble in the Ball itself, but whenever the band took a break we got ready. A lot of those boys would go outside and try their best to see how fast they could get drunk. Most Saturday nights, we would arrest forty, fifty or maybe sometimes even

sixty people on the sidewalks in front of the Snuffdippers' Ball. It wasn't really as bad as it sounds, most of them were the same people every week. The Sheriff's department had regular customers back then."

"One night, me and Ed Norton was working the sidewalks in front of the Ball. We had already arrested one drunk and had him in the car and we were putting the handcuffs on another one when a third drunk staggered by. When I saw the third one, knowing that we didn't have any more room in the car, I reached over and tapped him on the shoulder and told him that he was under arrest. 'Just walk on down to the jail,' I told him. 'We'll be down there directly to take care of you.' Sure enough, in about 15 minutes when we got to the jail to drop off another load of prisoners, there the guy

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was, sitting on the curb waiting for us to put him in jail. Something like that would never happen today."

Life was treating Monte pretty good in those days. He recalls, "I was married and had a son, I was making a little money and only had to work one night a week. Somewhere around 1947 or '48 some guys come to me and ask me if I want to do a radio show. It was WHBS, and was down there where we pay our utilities at now. So I ask these guys, "What's in it for me?"

"We are going to sell twelve sponsors at \$3 apiece, and you'll get \$12 and we'll get \$24."

"That didn't sound like too bad a deal to me so I became a Radio Announcer. I'm making twelve bucks an hour for sitting there talking just like I been doing all my life for nothing. I had this show called 'Crowder's Corn Crib' and I talked and played music, only thing I didn't like was doing the weather. Most of the time the weather forecast back then was wrong, so they would give me this sheet of paper with the weather on it and I would go on the air and say, 'I don't believe a word of it, but this sheet of paper says that the weather is gonna be ...'"

"Only thing was that this job was interfering with my fishing. Got to where every time they wanted me at the station, the fish would be biting. Well, anyway they call me in the office one day and tell me that I have to choose between fishing and doing radio. That was a dumb thing for them to do, cause I had my fishing rod in the car all ready to go."

In 1972 progress caught up with the Snuff-dippers' Ball. Nightclubs began selling drinks over the bar, a practice not allowed until the late sixties, and most had free entertainment. People that had been going to the Ball for years slowly began to drift away, and Monte was forced to close it down.

Monte Sano Crowder, the King of the Snuff-dippers' Ball, became one of the most well-known fiddle players in the Southeast, recording numerous tapes and records, with his music being used in two movies made in Alabama.

The man who claimed to be able to play six types of music on his fiddle said that "there still ain't no music like mountain music. Most of the young kids coming up today, they make a lot of noise but they don't make much music. You got Tony Mason, maybe one or two others that can still play good music like my Daddy taught me, but there ain't many of us left."

"When you get old there ain't much to do except sit under a shade tree and drink Double Cola and remember. You try to remember all the things you've done and all the people you've met."

"And I've loved every minute of it."

**"Never slap a man who's chewing tobacco."
Will Rogers**



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Heard On the Street

by **Cathey Carney**



Many of you called to identify the photo in last month's contest and the young girl was none other than **Jane Tippett**, who with her husband **Louie** owns and operates the Historic Lowry House on Kildare Avenue. But only the first caller with correct info wins, and that was **Dale Rhoades** - Congratulations! Dale said that the picture of Jane looked exactly like Jane's daughter **Pam**, and Pam was in Dale's Brownie troop on Monte Sano years ago. (Dale was troop leader).

When **Sam Zeman** had his birthday party in April, I told you he was turning 80 (because he doesn't even look 70). He actually turned 85! Congratulations to you Sam! While at that party I met the most delightful lady - **Elaine Kittrell**. She was lots of fun to talk with and loves living here in Huntsville - says the people are the best!

Archie & Carol (Allen) Young celebrated a very important anniversary recently - on Feb. 9 of this year they have been married for 50 years. With kids, spouses, grandkids and great-grandkids there are now 17 of them! When you think about it, that's what life is all about. Carol's dad was **Morton**

Allen who lived in Old Town on Holmes Avenue for many years and wrote several stories of his memories. We miss him. Congratulations to you lovebirds!

Our hearts go out to the family of **William Ivy, Jr.** who recently passed away at 88. He was a gentle, quiet Southerner who was a proud patriot and very happy being a family man. We send our condolences to his wife of 60 years, **Audrey**, son **William III** and their many friends and family.

Walking around **East Clinton school grounds** recently several residents found the small cement memorials in the ground in front of and to the right of the front door. They are imbedded with little pieces of jewelry, marbles, chains, etc. and are dedicated to either students or teachers who had died. They've been there for many years. If any of our readers know anything about this PLEASE contact me at the Old Huntsville # so that I can pass it along - many people want to know the back-

ground of this.

Try this sometime if you want an inexpensive cleanser that cleans EVERYTHING. Put 1/4 cup baking soda in a bowl, add enough peroxide to make a paste. Rub on with fingers or sponge, this will clean stove, oven, pans, stainless steel appliances, even fridge - in and outside! Wipe off all residue and you'll see a great shine.

We were glad to hear that Hero Collectibles has relocated to Limestone Flea Market on the way to Athens. If you newcomers haven't been to Limestone FM yet, it's worth the drive out there just to look around - anything you want from rugs to relish and hundreds of tables set up every weekend. They're not open during the week - just on Fridays and Saturdays.

At a meeting recently I met **Gary Watson** (proud husband of **Margaret**) of Five Points. Gary was telling me that his Mom is **Rachel Watson**, and in August she will be 94 years old. She's still independent and proud of it! Love people like her. The Watson family loves the rich history of Old Town & all our historic districts, and are very passionate about keeping the East Clinton School building.

Good to see a crowd in **Lee-Ann's Restaurant & Bar** recently

Photo of The Month

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

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Hint: This little boy has been doing this for a long time and is one of 5 in the city.



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with **Sam Keith, Ron Eyestone, and Darryl & Linda Goldman.** Music starts a little later, usually when the old folks are home and in bed! But the food is terrific and it's always great to have **Fran** take care of us.

A special hello to that sweet lady **Mary Dudley (Mrs. Robert E.)** whose great grandfather **John Frederick Hummel** created the monument outside the courthouse. She came by recently and told me that her great grandfather was the man who donated the metal lion that is located at Big Spring park, that many children sat on for photos over the years. It is a good memory in the hearts of many who either lived in or visited Huntsville.

Becky Sanford is a landscaper who worked for years in the downtown neighborhoods and it was so good to catch up with her recently. She works now at Brooks Market on Cook Avenue. Some of you may remember when Ayers was on one end and Taylors on the other. Ayers has since moved to the Parkway/Governors Drive location and it is so good to have more Farmers markets open and do well. Nowadays we don't have any idea what's in the food we buy and it's alot more healthy to eat local produce, like in the old days. I'll bet in the 1940s you didn't find any fruit from Chile in the stores! Our farmers need our help now more than ever so support them by getting your fresh produce at your Farmers markets.

It's really important to get your colonoscopy - it seems like the least troublesome procedure you can have, that can prevent

some really major problems later on. In that spirit I went to see that handsome **Dr. Michael Dohrenwend.** He explained all about it and nowadays you don't have to drink the massive amount of stuff you had to do in the old days. And it might even taste better.

Pat Cobb is the very efficient scheduler in his office and she was great in getting me updated on what I need to do. She is married to her love **David Cobb** (who works for a contractor on the Arsenal) and in June they will be married 44 years! Pat said she was born in Huntsville Hospital and her daughter **Michelle** was born there too! Daughter **Misty** lives in Georgia. Pat said she and David love riding motorcycles and just enjoying each other!

Barry Blake is still looking for information regarding a post Civil War gang of "buggers." He said there's a story about these criminals and the leader was supposedly caught, hung and buried near the entrance to the Florence, Al. cemetery. He would greatly appreciate any information on this if anyone can shed more light on it - contact him through Old Huntsville.

Happy Birthday to **Ron Eyestone** (May 8), **Linda Goldman** (May 25), and **Mary Barksdale** (May 5).

The Historic Lowry House is getting ready to kick off another season of school field trips, which bring hundreds of 3rd graders to the historic site to go through the building and learn about how it was to live and work in the 1800's and early 1900's. This is the 3rd year and the feedback from the

teachers & students has been excellent. **Jane Tippet** works really hard on this project and the kids learn alot.

Mother's Day comes up in May and if your Mom is still with you, give her a call to tell her how much you love her, and if you can be with her, give her a huge hug. We only have today with those we love, and we never know when changes will happen in our lives.

It's great weather for getting out there and walking - get some good shoes and get good exercise no matter where you walk!

Happy Mother's Day to All the sweet Mom's out there.

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RECIPES

Sweets Just for Mom

Mandarin Orange Cake

- 1 box butter recipe golden cake mix
- 1/4 c. Crisco oil
- 3 eggs
- 1 sm. can Madarin oranges, juice and all

Mix in order, cook in 3 round layer pans per box directions. Let cool before icing.

Icing:

- 1 9 oz. Cool Whip
 - 1 lg. pkg. instant vanilla pudding
 - 1 lg. can crushed pineapple
- Mix in order; whip and spread between and over all layers.

Amaretto Liqueur

- 2 c. water
- 3 c. sugar
- Lemon peel from 1 lemon
- 6 T. almond extract

- 1 T. chocolate extract
- 3 c. good vodka
- 1/2 c. bourbon
- 2 T. vanilla extract

In large pot add the sugar, water and lemon peel. Bring to boil; simmer for 20 minutes. Remove from heat, add almond, vanilla and chocolate extracts. Remove lemon peel and add vodka. Enjoy this in coffee, on ice cream, in a cocktail glass with sweet cream on top.

For Praline Liqueur: Use the same recipe but substitute maple flavoring for the almond.

Coconut Balls

- 1 c. sugar
- 2 beaten eggs
- 4 t. butter
- 8 oz. box chopped dates
- 1 t. vanilla extract
- 2 c. chopped pecans
- 2 c. Rice Krispies
- 1 sm. can coconut

Mix sugar, butter, eggs and dates together in a sauce pan and cook for 7 minutes. Add vanilla, nuts and Rice Krispies. Butter hands, roll into small balls, then roll the balls in coconut.

Old Time Popcorn Balls

- 2 c. granulated sugar
- 1-1/2 c. water
- 1/2 t. salt
- 1/2 c. light corn syrup
- 1 t. vinegar
- 1 t. vanilla extract
- 5 qts. popped corn

Butter the sides of a saucepan. In it, combine sugar, water, salt, syrup and vinegar. Cook to hard ball stage (250 degrees). Stir in vanilla.

Slowly pour over popped corn, stirring just to mix well. Butter hands lightly; shape balls. Makes 15-20 balls.

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Peanut Butter Candy

- 2 c. sugar
- 1 c. milk
- 1 stick butter
- 1 jar marshmallow creme
- 1-12oz. jar crunchy peanut butter
- 1 t. vanilla extract

Cook sugar, milk and butter for 15 minutes. Add marshmallow creme, peanut butter and vanilla. Mix well and cool it a bit, then pour into buttered dish. Break into pieces.

New Orleans Pecan Pralines

- 1/2 c. sugar
- 1 c. milk
- 1-1/2 c. sugar
- 2 c. chopped pecans
- 1 T. butter
- 1 t. vanilla extract

Brown and caramelize 1/2 cup of the sugar. Add 1 cup warm milk. Let this mixture boil 3 minutes. Add 1-1/2 cups sugar and 2 cups pecans. Cook 12 minutes or more. Remove from stove. Add 1 tablespoon butter and 1 teaspoon vanilla. Beat well and drop by large tablespoons onto waxed paper.

Tea Tassies

- 1 stick butter
- 3 oz. cream cheese
- 1 c. plain flour
- 1 egg

- 2/3 c. light brown sugar
- 1 T. butter
- 1 t. vanilla extract
- 2/3 c. pecans

Mix stick of butter, cream cheese and cup of flour, then refrigerate for an hour. Make into small balls, approximately 24; press into small muffin tins. For filling mix the egg, light brown sugar, butter, vanilla and pecans. Put into pastry lined tins and bake at 325 degrees for 30 minutes.

Banana Nut Cake

- 1 lrg. Cool Whip
- 1 8 or 9 oz. can crushed pineapple, drained
- 6 T. lemon juice
- 1 can Eagle Brand condensed milk
- 2 mashed bananas
- 1 c. chopped pecans
- 2 baked or vanilla wafer pie crusts

Mix all ingredients together in large bowl. Pour into the two crusts and chill for 3 hours prior to serving.

Caramel Brownies

- 1-2/3 sticks butter
- 1-1/2 c. brown sugar
- 2 eggs
- 1 c. self-rising flour
- 1 c. chopped pecans
- 1 T. vanilla extract

Melt the butter and mix with the sugar til creamy, then add rest of ingredients. Bake at 350 degrees til done.



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FROM HILLBILLY TO COUNTRY

by Malcolm W. Miller

When I first started listening to and playing music it was called hillbilly music. In fact there was a very popular song back in the forties called: "Hillbilly Fever is Going Round". Then over the years this hillbilly music evolved into what they call it today, country music. Over the years the music has changed so much that the old traditional music is almost a thing of the past.

I started playing music when I got my first harmonica for Christmas when I was only about six years old. Then when I was around nine my brother Frank ordered a Silver Tone guitar from Sears Roebuck for eleven dollars. Three of the seven brothers in my family kept that old Silver Tone busy. I remember well sitting in our front yard under the tree and playing and singing and really enjoying life.

Paul played right handed and since Frank and I were left handed, we had to play the guitar left handed upside down or choose to try learning with the right hand. I chose to play left handed and upside down making up my own way of chording. Frank tried to play right handed and never could master the guitar that way. Today when people see me play left handed and upside down they always comment about how different it looks.

Music has meant a great deal to me throughout my life. In the late nineteen thirties after we were able to buy a battery radio I would listen to the local radio stations on Saturdays. There would be one hillbilly band after another playing live. I remem-

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ber such bands as Smokey Daniel, Monte Crowder, Kerman Hall and the Maysville Cotton Choppers, Vance Morris and the Alabama Play Boys, then later on the Hornbuckle Brothers, Tommy Crutcher and Jesse Lee Bunch, just to name a few.

As I listened to these musicians I developed a strong desire to join them and play and sing over the radio. Finally I got the opportunity one Saturday in the studio when Jimmy O'Rear and his band were doing a show and they needed another singer. I will never forget the first song I sang on the radio - it was the Eddie Arnold hit "Many Tears Ago". After that I became a regular on the show and soon I was singing with other local bands.

Some time in the late forties I started writing songs and this opened up a whole new world for me. The first song that I had recorded was sung by Slim Lay, a very popular local disc jockey. The title of the song was "Susie's Poodle Dog." The record was an immediate hit in this area.

An interesting side note, the steel guitar player on this recording was none other than the now famous song writer Curly Putman. After this Curly and I became very close friends; in fact I still keep in touch with Curly and his wife Bernice.

I once teamed up with Alton Del-

"If you ate pasta and antipasta, would you still be hungry?"
George Carlin



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more after his brother Rabon passed away. Some of you may not know about the Delmores - they were very popular on the Grand Ole Opry and are members of the Country Music Hall of Fame.

Anyway Alton and I teamed up as co-writers. Well, to show you how wrong I have been at times, Alton came up with a song called "Safronie". I hated the song and told him I didn't want my name on it. The rest of the story is that blue grass great Jimmy Martin recorded the song and it is still being played on the radio today. I hear it on 105.7 regularly. 105.7 plays a lot of the old hillbilly and country songs that I love to hear.

In the nineteen sixties BCB records contacted me about writing songs and recording for them, they also wanted other singers. I told them I knew just the man for them, my buddy and fellow mail carrier Rudy Strickland, since we had been performing together at various schools around the area. So we ended up going to Nashville and we both recorded some of my songs.

One song that Rudy recorded that I wrote was "What Are You Gonna Do With Me?" This song got up

as high as number fifteen in some of the charts.

One of the songs I recorded called "Snuff Dipper" was picked up by Hee Haw and Opry star Mike Snider. Mike has turned this song into a classic, selling well over 250,000 copies and it is still going. There are several places on Youtube where you can see and here this song. You can find Mike Snider on the web singing this song as well as others, including me.

Since Mike recorded the song I have been able to spend a lot of time back stage at the Opry. I have also met and become friends with most of the greats in the business like Roy Acuff, Brother Oswald, Bill Monroe, Jimmy Newman, Little Jimmy Dickens, the list goes on and on.

I haven't made a whole

lot of money in the music business but it has been a long, interesting ride and I will always be grateful for the privilege of being a small part of what I still call "Hillbilly" music.

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- 2 T. whipping cream

Soak bread pieces in half a cup of the milk for about 20 minutes, then make a custard of the rest of the milk, eggs, and maple sugar by just cooking them together over medium heat til thickened.

Pour it hot over the bread. Beat egg whites with a tablespoon of the sugar and the cream. Fold into the custard, bake at 350 for 30 minutes.

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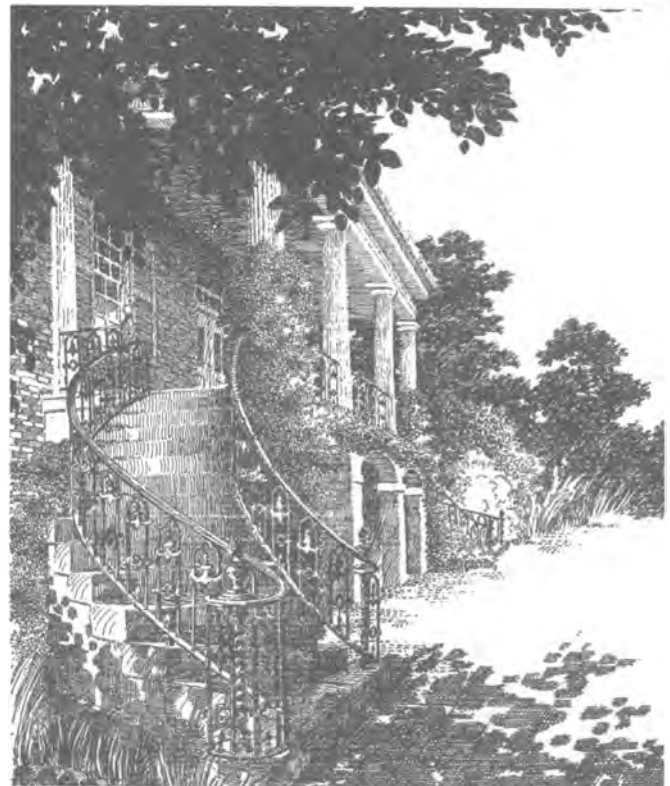
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The Frugal Reader

- Shop the baby aisle for inexpensive skin care products for yourself. Baby lotion is great for the face and the shampoo is very mild.

- Office paper is expensive. When you use a stack of paper that you would normally throw out, just flip it over and use it again. It will go through your printer and you get twice the use out of it.

- Take cash with you to the grocery store instead of checks or credit card - you'll spend less.

- Have a clothing swap with friends once a season. Everyone brings clothes they no longer wear and make an evening of it - whatever's left goes to charity.

- Host a "plant exchange" where friends bring dug-up perennial plants from their gardens - everyone gets a new plant!

- To save money on magazine subscriptions, exchange magazines you've read with friends. You each get to read the latest and only pay for one.

- If you unwrap your new bars of soap and allow them to sit opened in your linen closet, they will harden and not turn to mush in the soap dish. Also, the linens will smell great!

- For an inexpensive facial exfoliator, sprinkle a little baking soda onto your hand and mix with your normal facial cleanser or soap. The soda will gently scrub off the dead skin.

- Always buy frozen concentrate juice instead of pre-mixed

juice in bottles or cans, otherwise you're paying for water you could provide yourself. When mixing it, add an extra cup or so of water - the juice won't be quite as sweet and you'll have more.

- Buy large packages of meat on sale, and separate them into small portions. Put them into zipper bags with a marinade and freeze. When you thaw - already seasoned and delicious!

- Plant a little garden! You'd be amazed at the number of vegetables you can get in a small space - if you have no space to plant, use containers on your patio.

- Fill up your car with gas

in the morning rather than late in the day, and you'll get about 1 free gallon. The reason is, the gas expands in the tanks at the gas station during the heat of the day, especially in hot months. You get less for your money later in the day. A free gallon adds up at today's prices!

- Save money on groceries by shopping your pantry and freezer first. Make a meal schedule a week ahead and only buy the items you need.

- Use coupons for groceries. Most stores now will double up to \$.50, and that will add up in a hurry. Just don't buy what you normally wouldn't, just because you have a coupon for it.



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A FEW MEMORIES OF YESTERYEAR

by Charlie Lyle

Most everyone has heard of Dr. Burritt and his museum. Dr. Burritt was an odd fellow but very pleasant to visitors.

One day my parents and I were taking a trip to Monte Sano on a Sunday afternoon. We decided to pay Mr. Burritt a visit. He loved to show off his house to everyone. He said that his house was absolutely acoustically correct. He had a piano or key board that could be heard virtually any place in the house.

The doctor was extremely pleased that his house was insulated with straw which he had been strongly advised against doing. One night there was a huge fire on the top of Monte Sano and you could see it for miles. The townspeople were stunned but exclaimed, "There goes Dr. Burritt's house with his straw insulation." The doctor immediately built another house.

Dr. Burritt enjoyed raising goats. His handy man delivered goat milk to many of the towns' people. He claimed that the milk was very good for ulcers.


He married into a family of great wealth, as I recall, a tobacco fortune. This is how he got his wealth. It is said that his ashes are in an urn at the gateway to his property. He wanted people to think he was a prosperous farmer and did have a live-in lady housekeeper.

Huntsville was not a town of much population; in fact, Decatur and Gadsden out-ranked us most of the time. It was not a "hot spot" on the map.

Huntsville was known nationally for its watercress. It seems as though

the ponds out in northeast Madison County, for some reason, had the perfect water temperature and other factors to grow watercress in abundance.

The owner, Mr. Dennis, was sending watercress, which makes a fantastic salad, all over the country. He was sending it to prestigious hotels and restaurants such as the Waldorf Astoria Hotel in New York City and many others.



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"Four of us slept in the same bed. When it got cold, my mother just threw on another brother."

Bob Hope

June Weddings, 1882 Style



Married at the Decatur residence of the bride's father, at 3:00 o'clock Thursday afternoon by the Rev. John S. Frierson of the Presbyterian Church, were Mr. Ben Lambert and Miss Minnie Lou Grubbs, eldest daughter of Rev. and Mrs. L. Hensley Grubbs of Decatur, Alabama.

The romantic marriage ceremony over, congratulations of friends received, the couple left by the 3:30 eastbound train for Huntsville where they will make their home.

Among the presents received by the young couple were an ingeniously hand-wrought bedroom lace set, by the groom's grandmother, Mrs. H. Easley of Huntsville.

They received beautiful snowdrop tulle, from Mrs. R. D. Horton of Decatur. An elegantly polished brass and cut-glass lamp with ornamental Egyptian shade, from Miss Katie Finn, Decatur, was received.

Also given was a beautifully and artistically arranged floral

collection from Miss Lou Leadingham and Mrs. S.A. Bissett, Decatur.

An exquisitely handsome colored Satin cushion and toilet case from Misses Celesste, Frankie and Katie Lambert of New York was received.

An unknown lady friend gave them a Damask table linen set. A lovely white feathered fan was received from Walter and Lelia Grubbs of Decatur. An elab-

orately embroidered black satin parasol was given by Thomas Grubbs of Decatur.

Then there were a silver knife and fork set (100 pieces); gilt French China; black walnut heavily carved chamber set; large bevel board and an illustrated family Bible all from the parents of the bride.

It was heard mentioned that after a wedding, all the father has left to give away is the bride.

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REMNANTS OF THE WAR

NEW HOPE NATIVE BURNS LOGS AND BLOWS UP NEIGHBORHOOD

From 1891 newspaper

From a reliable source a Mercury reporter was informed that on last Saturday at a point in the vicinity of New Hope, but on the Marshall County side of the river, an explosion occurred that has recalled the war and nearly scared the life out of an honest old man.

It seems that John Roberts was burning logs for the purpose of clearing up, and he had set fire to a heap which ignited a large dead tree. Suddenly a most terrific explosion occurred, one that was heard for miles, and the old tree was shivered and scattered to the winds.

Roberts, who was a hundred yards distant, took his departure without troubling himself with an investigation. A party who finally visited the spot where the tree once stood and made an investigation found from the surroundings every evidence that the explosion was that of a bombshell that had been imbedded in the tree during the war.

It is known that there was a good deal of firing from cannon loaded with shell at this point during the war, a point that commanded the river. The circumstances can admit of two theories, one that the shell became imbedded in the tree by being fired from a cannon and failed to explode. The other that it had been left in the hollow, if there was any in the tree, as a sort of keepsake, hoping at some future day that it would get in its work. The first theory, however, is

"The other day someone told me that I could make ice cubes with leftover wine. I was confused... What is leftover wine?"

Vivian Kruse

the most probable.

The report was heard far into Madison County and occasioned considerable wonder. It is said the Mr. Roberts will burn no more brush in that neighborhood.

BICYCLISTS HELPING BUDGET

1888 newspaper

The city is now realizing a nice income from parties who are making it a habit to ride bicycles on the sidewalks. In the past few days not less than fifteen or twenty cyclists have been arraigned in the city court on this charge, the fine they receive for the first offense being one dollar, the second two dollars and so on.

The police wish to thank the bicyclists who are doing their part to help maintain the department's budget.

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ERNIE ASHWORTH

by Johnny Johnston

The Army NCO club was dark except for the lights on stage and a small lamp on each table enabling attendants to sample a drink and snack while awaiting the entertainment. Soldiers and guests were scattered throughout the club, talking, drinking beer and anticipating good old country music which would soon begin. Army's highest ranking Sergeant, a Sergeant Major, stood tall in his dress uniform near the door greeting each enlisted man and those officers who were guests of the NCOs.

Back home all over the United States, Grand Ole Opry Stars had scattered singing and picking for an awful lot of people but here in Kaiserslautern, Germany only a few natives were expected; they were invited by an NCO member.

Tonight the entertainment was for the U. S. Army, that same week he had performed publicly in Germany with excellent attendance. This entertainer was well known all over Europe as proven by the many record sales and invitations he enjoyed especially in Germany, the British Isles and France. Tonight

"When I was a kid I had alot of pimples. One day I fell asleep in the library. When I woke up a blind guy was reading my face."

Rodney Dangerfield

he would be among a few friends from back home.

First Sergeant Lloyd A. Himes was the neatest neatnik around. He was an organizer and producer who led his group of men through whatever training was to be accomplished or through whatever program had to be performed.

His car was not just cleaned outside but also inside, even the engine was subject to his attention as it was scrubbed beyond belief.

Sgt. Himes was in the audience and had brought his wife Nell to be present but had kept the singers identity to himself as he guided her blindly through the night into the NCO club. They were sitting near the stage drinking a beer each and having conversation with friends. The entertainment was announced.

"On our stage tonight you will see a singer songwriter from Nashville, Tennessee who has written many great songs for the Acuff Rose Publishing Company. He is an accomplished singer who has performed at ra-

dio stations in Huntsville, Alabama, Nashville, Tennessee and all across the United States and Europe. Mr. Ernie Ashworth also has a surprise for our audience."

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Nell Himes almost came to tears. Ernie had attended Lincoln School in Huntsville with her in the mid 1940s but had gone off to Nashville before graduation so she had not seen him in years. She wondered if this big star from Nashville would remember her.

Ernie had written songs which were recorded by big stars Jimmy Dickens, Carl Smith and crossed over with a song called "I Wish," for rock 'n roll singer Paul Anka in 1955. Ernie performed that song and a couple of others on stage that night in Germany. He then stepped close to the microphone and said, "I have an old school friend in the house tonight and would love for her to come on stage. Nelly Johnston, I think you got married to a soldier but I want you to come up here."

She had to be pushed and cajoled to walk up to embrace Ernie on stage in front of all those people. She had not done anything like that, not ever. He kept her there for his next song! It seems Nell had mentioned to her husband that she had attended Lincoln School near

Huntsville with Ernie, so Lloyd placed a few phone calls and arranged to meet Ernie before the show. The surprise event went over great and Ernie was spectacular while playing and singing in Germany for a few friends and one very old friend.

Ernie recorded in 1963 a song penned by John D. Loudermilk called "Talk Back Trembling Lips," which became number one throughout the United States and Europe.

Ernie gave up the music business in 1957, thinking it impossible to make a living for his family, but continued to write and send in songs to his publisher while working at Redstone Arsenal. Wesley Rose of Acuff Rose Publishing Co. still had Ernie on contract as a writer and would not give up on his writing skills.

He was re-billed as Ernest Ashworth and be-

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came successful with "Each Moment Spent With You," in 1960 and made it to the top 5 popular records with this single. He also made, the same year, the top 10 with "You Can't Pick a Rose in December". There were several songs Ernie had great success with including "Everybody but Me," and the next year was his big hit with the Loudermilk song which became his signature song.

Ernie was voted "Most Promising Male Artist by Cashbox, Billboard and Record World Magazines in 1963 and 1964." He was elected to the Alabama Music Hall of Fame in 2008 and during his career he was voted by country music fans in Europe as the most popular American Country Music Artist in Europe.

In 1964 it was "I Love to Dance with Annie," and success with other songs which earned an invitation to join the Grand Ole Opry.

Ernie retired to his farm in Lewisburg, Tennessee in the mid 1970s where he lived until his death in 2009. His wife Betty had become ill causing him to stop entertaining for several years to take care of her. He did buy a radio station "WSLV" in Ardmore, TN in 1987 and operated it during this period.

Ernest Bert Ashworth grew up in Lincoln with his family who earned their living working in Lincoln Mills. As a young man he was seen

many times on street corners in Huntsville singing for pennies, working odd jobs and trying to survive. Lincoln School in those days produced more singers and music makers than just about any school. They displayed trophies for sports, many of them, but the trophy case at Lincoln was full of trophies won by groups and singles singing all over the southeastern United States.

I remember the last time I saw Ernie, he was entertaining for a Madison County Sheriff's candidate. He sang his signature song "Lips", did a great job, then returned to Lewisburg.

There was a good interview with him in a recent Reunion DVD of Opry Stars. He talked about his loving wife and her very lengthy illness resulting in her death a couple of years before. When he sang "Lips," on the reunion tape he remarked it was the first time in two years he had sung in public. Also appearing on the same show was Jimmy Dickens, the singer who recorded Ashworth's first song in 1948.

What happened to Sgt. Himes? He stayed in the Army and made Command Sgt. Maj. the highest ranking non-commissioned officer in

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the Army, then lost his life in Vietnam in January 1968.

And Nell? My sister Nell died just a few years after Lloyd was killed in action. She was only 46 years of age.

"All of us could learn a lesson from the weather. It pays no attention to criticism."


Bill Drake, Huntsville



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Aunt Virgie's Beauty Shop

by Rob Zimmerman

During one of my many summer visits to Huntsville, Uncle Jack and I had gone to Aunt Virgie's beauty shop, Virgie & Virginia's (they did all of Huntsville's blue hairs) at the corner of Madison Street & Lowe Avenue (then a dead end), to clean up so Aunt Virgie could come home early. While Uncle Jack and I were inside doing our chores, someone stole his golf clubs from the trunk of Smokey (a Volkswagen in which the trunk was in the front). Uncle Jack decided we should ride around downtown Huntsville to see if we might spot someone with his clubs.

When we got to the old Dunnavants Building, there a man was on the sidewalk with Uncle Jack's clubs (every golfer knows his own clubs by sight). At the

same time, a Huntsville police patrol car pulled up behind us. Uncle Jack and I got out and Uncle Jack explained the situation to the officer. We walked up to the person alongside the officer.

The officer asked this rather seedy looking fellow "Been playing golf long?" The man replied, "Yeah, for some time now." The officer asked him what his handicap was and the man replied, "Oh, my left leg

hurts a little sometimes!"

Uncle Jack got his clubs back right there on the spot and the officer let the man go, telling him not to come near the beauty shop ever again. Uncle Jack must have had some political pull back then. He was friends with the Mayor,

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the Sheriff and was on Dr. Von Braun's staff at NASA. He even got a small roadway named for me, Robin Lane, just off the corner of Drake Avenue and Whitesburg Drive. It was common for new roadways to be named after family members of affluent Huntsville people even before then. Some examples are White Street, Monroe Street, Russell Street, Lowry and Beirne Avenues and so on and on. Robin Lane started out in zip code 35801 but is now in 35802. Huntsville, like other towns and cities, at one time had no zip codes. Then one, then two and so on. Now there are countless zip codes with the plus zip four extensions that take you right down to the very house you live in.

My Grandmother used to talk about when she and PaPa lived on Sivley Road. It was way out in the county then. Now it crosses Drake Avenue just below Whitesburg. And, Redstone Arsenal, where my Grandfather was a civilian guard, was a thirty minute ride from the house. My Grandfather had made a career change from being the operator of Falls Mill in Salem, Tn. when they moved to Huntsville. She also told me in my youth how no one would drive out to "The Mall" (Then known as "The Fountain") to shop because it was just too far out.

Don't you know that if she was alive now, she would really be flipping out! She saw everything from horse and buggies to men landing on the moon.

Now, I can't tell you about

The U.S. Postal Service sent out a message to all their letter carriers a few years back to put a sheet of Bounce in their uniform pockets to keep yellow jackets away.

Uncle Jack and not tell you about Aunt Virgie. During one of my summer trips to Huntsville, I wanted her to streak my hair (that was the new "In thing"). After getting Mother's permission, Aunt Virgie set me down in her chair at the shop, put a rubber skull cap on, pulled hair through it with some sort of hook type instrument, bleached it and put me under the drier.

As I had alluded to earlier, Aunt Virgie was a very good-hearted person. She (for years) had let this man who was a deaf/mute come into the shop a time or two a week. He would

walk around showing people a little card that read "Please help me with your spare change, I'm a deaf/mute".

The little old blue hairs would dig into their purses and fork over the coins and sometimes even dollars. As the man worked his way around the shop he finally got to me. He flashed his card at me. When I stood up to get him money out of my pocket, he took one look at my hair, jumped back and said "Holy Moses!"

Needless to say, Aunt Virgie never let him back in the shop again.



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An Old Cook's Secrets



- Keep your salt in a small bowl. When you season, use your fingers instead of a shaker, you'll be less likely to over-salt.

- Cold water brings out flavor, while hot water seals it in. Therefore, always start a stock with cold water.

- To give your rice a good Mediterranean flavor, add a bit of olive oil and lemon zest to the cooking water.

- For easy clean-up while your pots are still hot, drizzle with a little vinegar, sprinkle with salt, rub with a sponge and rinse.

- Keep a special carafe handy for red wines left over from your dinner table. When you've collected enough, use it for sauces and salad dressings.

- New way with potatoes: Wrap each baking potato in aluminum foil with a dab of butter, a dash of garlic powder, a grind of fresh black pepper and one or more of the following: chives, dill, tarragon, rosemary, parsley. Bake at 425 degrees for 25 minutes. Great flavor and low in fat!

- Peppermint tea is great for moodiness. Drink it warm and strong, it will relax you.

- Italian chefs use this delicious dressing for steamed vegetables: Mix roasted sesame seeds with plain yogurt. Pour over steamed broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage or use as a dip for raw vegetables. (I would add a bit of garlic or onion powder)

- Take some sweet potatoes and wrap them well in heavy-duty aluminum foil. Wait til you have some good red-hot coals in the grill, then place the potatoes in the middle of them. Ours take about 45 minutes to an hour, and we unwrap them, cut them in half and add a bit of butter, salt and fresh-ground black pepper. You wouldn't believe anything could taste this good!

- Chicken roasted in Pastry? Sure, do it this way. Make a dough of flour and water. Roll out in a large circle. Sprinkle the cavity of a whole chicken with rosemary, stuff with 2 lemons that have been cut in half. Wrap the chicken in the dough and roast it, the wrapping of bread will absorb all of the fat (Just toss it out) and will make your chicken extra healthy.

- For extra crispy veggies and lettuce for your salads, do this. Put all the ingredients, cut and ready, into a large bowl, without dressing. Cover the veggies with a couple of layers of damp paper towels, put in fridge for an hour or two before you eat.

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MY EXPERIENCE AT THE SNUFFDIPPERS' BALL

by Malcolm Miller

When I was a teenager my friends and I heard a lot about the Snuffdippers' Ball in downtown Huntsville. The Snuffdippers Ball was located on Jefferson Street in a building called the Labor Temple. Every Saturday night there would be music and dancing on the second floor of that building.

I was sixteen years old in 1943 and my friends and I could not wait to see what the action was. Also I had heard that they had plenty of hill-billy music and that was my love. Many nights you could hear the great sounds of the

music on the streets below.

As my friends and I climbed the long stairs to the second floor we were very scared. However, we were able to get in and for the first time we saw a lot of dancing going on and heard some of the best music we had ever heard before that time. For the first time we saw musicians with microphones and a sound system and their music could be heard loud and clear almost bouncing off the walls. I still remember many of the songs played that night. Music was my love and I loved this type of music.

It was at this ball that I met my long time friend Monte

Sano Crowder. Monte was named after the mountain where he was born. I never played at the Snuffdippers' Ball but I got to know most all the musicians who played there. There was Buster Holloway, Luther Maze, Charlie Hanes, Gene Jennings, Joe Sharp and sometimes Monte's brother Leon would join with his tenor banjo. I understand Monte's dad was a musician and all three of his boys - Monte, Leon and Arlie - were very talented musicians. No doubt Monte was known as one of the best old time fiddlers in the business in this

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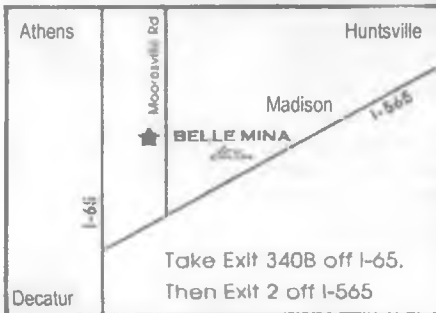
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area.

Back to the first time I ever set foot in the Ball, it was a sight to behold. There were the folks from all the Mill Villages ready for some fun after a long hard week of labor in the mills. There were country folks who left the fields early to get out and kick up their heels; and kick up their heels they did. There were cuspidors placed all around the walls for dancers to spit their snuff and tobacco in but you know when you are swinging your partner and dancing around the dance floor it's awfully hard to aim at a cuspidor and most of the time it went onto the floor. Oh well, a bit of snuff just made it easier to glide across the floor.

The security officer at the Ball was a large man who only

had one arm but he carried a slap stick with a chunk of lead sewn in a piece of leather and he could really get someone's attention with that. I saw him hit a man in the head with that thing because he was causing trouble and the man rolled all the way down that long flight of stairs. This was quite a sight for several teenage boys to see.

I would venture to say that Monte Crowder made more money playing music in Huntsville than anyone before or since. He only worked one night a week for between thirty and forty years paying for his home on Washington Street and a farm in Tennessee. There will never be another like Monte Sano Crowder and I feel proud that he considered me a good friend.

BROCCOLI PIQUANT

- 1 lrg. bunch broccoli or 2 pkgs. frozen
- 2 T. butter
- 2 T minced onion
- 1-1/2 c. sour cream
- 1/2 t. salt
- 2 t. sugar
- 1 t. white vinegar
- 1/2 t. poppy seeds
- 1/2 t. paprika
- Dash pepper

Cook broccoli until it is just tender and drain well. Melt butter and saute onion til clear. Remove from heat and stir in sour cream, sugar, vinegar, poppy seeds, paprika, salt and pepper. Pour over warm broccoli and serve.

Note: Deliciously different and good over other vegetables, too!

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Tweetie's Pet Tips

Well it's about time. Enough with those dog and cat tips already. This column's all about ME! (Tweetie)

Parakeet Tips

* Give your birds a variety of toys. Something they can chew, something they can swing on, and maybe even something they can cuddle with. Rotate toys often so your bird doesn't get bored.

* When you're not home, leave the TV or radio on for your birds to keep them entertained. They love music!

* Birds need at least one new toy a month. Toys are a necessity, not a luxury, for birds.

* When giving your bird fresh fruits or veggies, try an interesting presentation. If it's just sitting in the food bowl, it may not be too appetizing.

* Spend quality time every day with your bird. Read a book or newspaper to him, or just chat and feed treats.

* Make sure your bird gets adequate rest every day. 10 to 12 hours of sleep in spring and summer, and 12 to 14 hours in fall and winter is a good amount. Make sure your bird sleeps in a quiet, dark room.

* Watch your bird carefully for signs of illness (sitting on the bottom of the cage puffed up, not eating). They usually don't show they're sick until it's really serious.

* Talk to your parakeet a lot. Every time you pass by, stop a minute and talk to him; it doesn't matter what you tell him - he'll just like hearing your voice and the attention. You can also whistle and make



clicking noises. Soon enough, you'll hear whistles and maybe even words.

* Be sure his basic needs are fulfilled. Give him fresh food and water every day, keep a slightly cool temperature in the room, and let him fly freely through the room for at least an hour or two a day. When you are feeding him/her, try to make sure you are feeding it so your bird will look forward to each feeding with a variety of seeds.

* Don't expect him to be a bird genius instantly. It's true parakeets' intelligence rivals that of some primates, but don't expect your bird to be having conversations with the whole family and using a toilet tray as soon as you get him. Be realistic.

* Don't actually pet him unless he's a real baby. Most birds detest being stroked. If you are disappointed in this, you can try train-

ing the bird cool tricks, and maybe even teach him to perch on your arm.

* Remember to always handle your parakeet carefully. They are small and delicate. You don't need to act like you're walking on eggshells with him, but always remember that he is a small bird, not a stress ball.

* Never hit or do anything rough with your bird. This will only frighten him.

* Line your bird's cage with newspaper sheets. It fits perfectly, it's cheap, safe, and the ink actually helps slow the growth of micro-organisms.

* Birds need to bathe to keep their feathers clean. Bird "bathtubs" can be a shallow bowl or pie plate filled with water, or you can fill a sink with a couple inches of water for them to take a bath in. Some birds enjoy being misted with a spray bottle too, specially when it gets hot.

* Make friends with your bird, also, make sure to spend time with him, speak to him, and to keep him comfy in your home. He/she is a part of your family, too.

* If you don't want another bird, then put mirrors in the cage. They are attracted to shiny things.

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From the Desk of Tom Carney

VANCE MORRIS AND THE ALABAMA PLAYBOYS

by Tom Carney, written in 1993

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

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

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

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

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

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

Unfortunately the Great Depression and the Dust Bowl put Vance's budding career on hold.

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

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

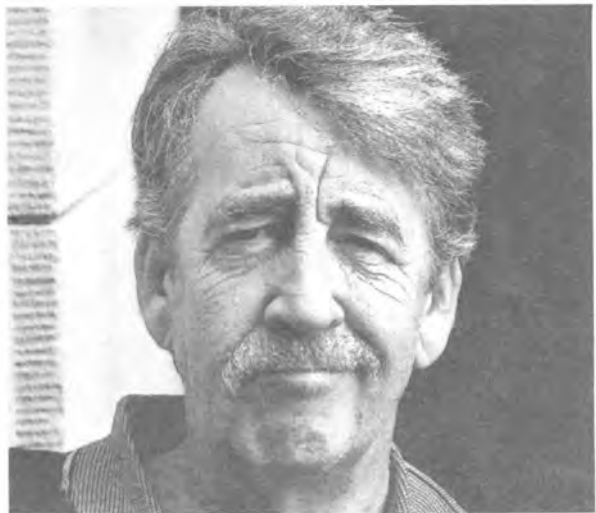
"I took a drink of spring water, bought a pair of shoes and

decided to stay," says the amiable guitarist.

Another inducement to staying here, according to a niece, had something to do with a Mississippi Sheriff who was not very understanding of young people and their street-screaming hot rods.

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

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



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

"Our music lessons consisted of listening to the radio and trying to copy the same sounds," he recalls.

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

Among the members was young W.C. Williams, whom

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everyone called 'Hank.' Years later he had to change his moniker because a young up-start named Hiram Williams from South Alabama began using the same name and became famous.

"At first we just played at store openings and street dances," recalls Williams, who is still one of Vance's best friends. "But then we started getting invitations to play out of town, and not from the Sheriff, either."

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

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

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

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

The Alabama Playboys

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

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

In 1948 the Alabama Playboys were offered a contract with the Saturday night Grand Ole Opry.

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

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

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

Versions of several of Vance's songs such as "Faded Love," "Crazy about the Boogie" and "Some of These Days"

were well on their way to becoming classics.

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

Unfortunately for Morris, fame was his only reward. The record company kept the money.

"We didn't have a lawyer. A handshake was enough for us," Vance remembers. "That, and the record company's way of figuring was our biggest mistakes. No matter how much money we figured we were owed, the company figured they owed nothing." The record company, after discovering that Vance had not copyrighted many of the songs, had also recorded them under another artist's name. That practice was widespread among disreputable recording executives in those days.

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Do illiterate people get the full effect of Alphabet Soup?

Janie Smithers, Arab

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

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

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

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

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

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

The White Castle was a rough establishment, but its lady owner, Laurel Hardin, whom everyone called Aunt Laurel, had her own way of keeping order.

When a fight would break out, Aunt Laurel would wade

into the fracas, pushing people right and left. Grabbing the offenders by their shirt collars, she would shove her .45 caliber pistol in their faces.

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

W.C. "Hank" Williams remembers playing at the Castle during its heyday. "You could say it was good exercise. If they ever had a contest for dodging flying beer bottles we would have won easily. One night they had a little fight and several beer bottles came flying on stage. I managed to get out of the way, but when I looked down I saw that one of the bottles had hit my bass and was sticking out by its neck!"

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

"Play, boys, play!"

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

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

Today Vance sits behind a desk at his auto repair business. Time has been good to him and after talking to him for a while you begin to understand the meaning of the sign on his wall: "Lord, help me remember that nothing is going to happen to me today that you and I together can't handle."

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Anton Chekhov



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My Mama, the Avon Lady

by Lisa White



My mother, Emma "Jean" Avery Swafford, was born on October 1, 1926 in Tunica, Mississippi to James (Jim) and Myrtle Avery and big sister Annie Ruth. This small family moved to Maysville, Alabama around 1930 to start a new life after losing everything they owned in a house fire.

Jim worked for the county and Myrtle owned a store. Jean attended Central School and it's been said more than once that she was the prettiest girl there at the time. Jean fell in love at the age of 15 and married Norman Swafford on October 27, 1942 in Tupelo, Mississippi four days after he was inducted into the Army and 26 days after she turned 16. Norman left shortly after for Northern France.

Emma Jean stayed in Maysville waiting on Norman to come home on leave. It was told that their oldest son was conceived when Norman was given a pass that belonged to one of his best friends, Morland Tipton, so he could see his pretty young wife.

Nine months later Emma Jean suffered through a horrible breech delivery - her parents were even asked by the doctor if you could choose, which one would you want us to save? Emma Jean finally gave birth on April 3, 1944 to Chuck who weighed over 11 pounds and was referred to as "little soldier". He was relatively healthy except for broken bones in both arms.

You would have thought that giving birth to an 11 pound breech baby would mean Chuck was an only child but this was not the case. Two years later Emma Jean gave birth to Dennis. Five years after that he was followed by Janice and ten years after that Lisa was born. The following year Emma Jean started selling Avon.

Avon was not only a job for Emma Jean - it was her life. She won many awards for her sales - usually ranking in the top

three in her district.


During her Avon career she never missed sending in an order. Even in 1974 when she was in a terrible car accident (she was hit by a drunk driver) while out selling Avon. The accident was followed six weeks later by the devastating April 3 tornadoes, one of which destroyed the Swafford home. Most of the people Emma Jean sold Avon to were not only her customers, but her friends. To some of the older customers, Emma Jean was the only visitor they had. They looked forward to seeing her every two weeks.

She carried pictures in her wallet of many of her customers' children and grandchildren, right beside pictures of her own family. Some of her customers knew that she had been complaining with chest pains and pain in her left arm for a few weeks while family members had no idea.

Emma Jean sacked her last Avon order on January 22, 2006. She was found dead the following morning. She carried the title of "The Avon Lady" for 43 years and was married to the love of her life for 63 years. Norman was so devastated by Emma Jean's death that he died just 89 days later.

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Tom Porter, Scottsboro**

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THE STORY OF CHARLIE HAYNES

by *Charlie Lyle*

If there was one thing that made Charlie Haynes very mad, it was to be confused with Walking Charlie. Walking Charlie was a vagrant who lived under the bridge and was accused of attempted rape so there was a problem as to who was who, and what was what.

Charlie and his mother took up residency in the projects at Butler Terrace. There was just Charlie and his mother. No one had seen hide nor hair of Charlie's father in years. Charlie's mother was a sweet old lady who did the best she could for Charlie. She took in ironing and washing and sewing to meet her expenses.

Charlie, unfortunately, did have a problem. It seems as though one of his eyes did not match up with the other and had a tendency to jump. No more school for Charlie.

There was an attempt to have Charlie's eyes fixed so an eye doctor named Dr. Mormon

was consulted. He said to leave it alone because it might change his mind set. Unfortunately this did not help his love life.

There were three things that were very important in his life; chasing women, playing his bass fiddle, and wearing nice clothes. Charlie was a fair bass player but he had very good rhythm. One night while playing in the band, one of the musicians said, "Charlie, how about playing a different note every now and then?"

Charlie was best at his rendition of the Tennessee Waltz. He could sing this song better than any one I know and could make tears come to the eyes of the listener.

Charlie would get angry if he was not playing with other bands. Charlie got so angry, he decided to go to the IRS office and report all the musicians in this area about taxes. The revenue office did look in to the matter to get Charlie off their backs. It was rumored that certain musicians were quite angry. It was reported that Charlie did not come to town for about a year.

Charlie had an obsession about time. We all thought that Charlie must be going by west-

ern union every day and setting his watch. This made him feel very important in his knowing the correct time. He would go around to everyone he knew to see if they had the correct time. He prided himself on this accomplishment.

One night we musicians were listening to our car radio on the way to a job. The radio announcer said it is 2 pm in Paris, France and 8 pm in Paris, Tennessee. Just before that, Charlie had every one set their watches to the correct time. The only thing wrong was it was not the same time as Charlie's. A musician by the name of Howard Lanier said that everybody in the world was wrong except him. Well, Charlie's mind couldn't fathom such. He almost came unglued because this was not the accurate time as stated.

One night while playing a dance job in Fayetteville, I missed Charlie because he usually helped bring in the equipment. I looked inside the building. There was a man way up high on a ladder moving the hands of a clock and Charlie saying, "big hand a little more passed eight."

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As mentioned before, one of Charlie's passions was his clothes. He usually was quite well dressed. This had a lot to do with his mother who always saw he had nice clean clothes. This helped Charlie's feelings of well being. He did his share of window shopping at clothing stores. If he saw something he liked, he had a practice of putting everything on lay-away. Merchants kept hounding him to pay up and get his goods out of lay-away but without success.

Charlie might have appeared to be dumb but he was as sly as a fox. The clothes would be out of style and out of season and so on and the merchants would give up on him and many times just give the clothes to him. If he was walking downtown he avoided certain clothing stores.

One day I was walking by the Grand Shine Parlor. Charlie made himself feel important by getting up on the stand and getting his shoes shined while reading a newspaper. I stepped in the parlor and someone said, "Charlie, let's turn your paper right side up so you can read it better."

Charlie had a passion for booking a band and he had learned this from others. The way he did it was to simply get a playing job first and then get the musicians. If a musician was offered a playing job and paid enough money, then he would most likely take it. He would get people to carry equipment and give him a ride. If he had any problems, he could always count on his friend Howard Lanier.

Charlie would sometimes get mad because he couldn't book jobs and especially on the Arse-

nal. People really didn't know him there. So he would call the General and would say, "My name is Charlie Haynes. How come I'm not getting any jobs out there?" This made the secretary very mad. This lady, I know to this very day, validated this information. The General said, "Who in the hell is this nut who keeps calling me?"

Charlie never had to work until he was offered a job at the Arsenal cafeteria. His job was to return all of the dirty dishes, as demanded by the chef. Charlie ran into trouble with the chef because he wasn't getting the dirty dishes back fast enough. It was said that Charlie got so excited and started hussling dishes so fast that he was taking them off the tables before people had gotten through their meals. Especially those people who had only left their tables briefly. That was the end of this particular job.

Charlie liked to carry an umbrella. All dressed up, he waited until it rained to offer his umbrella to any damsel in distress. Charlie liked the ladies. The only problem was, his eyes spooked the ladies and frightened them especially if approached by him.

Charlie had a lot of time on his hands; no school, no work,

so he liked to talk on the phone. I guess he knew maybe that he could approach the ladies in this way better with more success. He had a list of numbers that he would contact incessantly. This is where people called him a nuisance. People didn't want him to call but he would call anyways.

These were some of the escapades of Charlie Haynes. I didn't know he died in Scottsboro. Charlie was a real character. I never knew anyone like him. He would try your patience to the utmost degree but he was harmless and definitely interesting. He talked well about his fellow man.

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"This afternoon there will be a meeting in the South and North ends of the church. Children will be baptized at both ends."

Seen in church bulletin

My Tail's in the Gravy

The Heart and Soul of an Ex-Alley Cat

by Cynthia Cabiness Brown

They sure didn't need that animal, and looks like to me, our feline vote might 'near tied the kids. But that woman did it this time. She finally gave in to claiming a yard dog, and the sneaking varmint's weaseled his way straight to her naive heart. I didn't need this in my golden years.

I've paid my dues - done my time in the street, lost a few lives in my prime, and was seasoning quite well out the edge of town, when up he waltzed, claiming to be some Huskey half-breed. More like the devil in sheep's clothes.

And if the white fur and blue eyes weren't enough, there was some story following him about how his family had abandoned him, moved off to South Carolina. (Isn't that always the way?) I tell you, those kids ought not repeat sheer rumor.

Besides, there's mighty strong misinformation in that tale. I hang out with some fairly acute felines, but it's common knowledge that there's not one ounce of pedigree to that pooch. Besides, if he were a true thoroughbred, I'd be at ease. Immediately.

I have my own aura of blue bloodedness. My meow's as eloquent and concise as a telegram, tailored coat's fairly clean, and nails razor sharp. And I'm well-rounded for a critter. Being sports minded, I

enjoy hunting. Indoors and out. I'm an expert fisherman and trapper (goldfish and hamsters are choice catches).

Pushing good looks and intelligence aside, I have morals, scruples and principles - qualities that a degenerate dog could never understand. And I have connections down at the pound. It wasn't mere coincidence that caused the mangy mutt to get a ticket last Monday. Vagrancy is a serious offense, and I intend to do what I can to stop crime in the streets, especially when it can be traced back to a no-good canine.

Every Sunday morning the sleazy scalawag flatters with an embezzled, hot off the press paper. He's a downright thief. Shoes

are his specialty and may be his downfall. He even knows the name brands. Fit the little one right into a pair of brand new hi-top Reeboks. But where in

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"My mom and dad have something in common. They both don't want any more kids."

Lori, age 7

these parts did he sniff out the Gucci loafers?

He's got 'em fooled all right. But we cats know, by instinct, that things and creatures aren't always what they seem. So, despite the so-called loyalty of the dog, despite many things, we cats can outwit, and we show how it's done aristocratically, effortlessly, with our own private power of suggestion. For all they know, I may hold the secret thoughts of an entire country.

Reserving those thoughts for later, here's the plan for now.....One cool moonlit night, when they're all settled in, thinking everything's in place (they should know better) that's the night I'll steer a different course. I'll live up to a tom cat's reputation and disappear for days. I'll lie low out there somewhere until it comes a downpour. It'll be raining pitchforks, as they say.

And then I'll make sure I'm thoroughly soaked before I stagger to their front step. A wet cat will always garner sympathy. I'll let out my famous "Rraow" and they'll all light up, rush to meet me, feed me, hold me the way they ought to right now. I'll get the full attention I deserve. My old buddy, Tom, said it best, and it's true:

"I've a war-scarred face from a hundred fights with neighbors' cats on moonlit nights.

But I'm a wise old tom, and I can hold my own, and make the dogs let me alone."

Excerpt from Tom Blanding's 'Vagabond House'

You know the economy is bad when the parents in Hollywood fire their nannies and have to learn their children's names.

Chocolate Sunday Pie

1 env. gelatin (unflavored)
 1/4 c. cold water
 3 egg yolks
 1/2 c. sugar
 1/4 t. salt
 1 c. scalded milk
 1/2 t. vanilla extract
 3 egg whites, beaten stiff
 1 c. heavy cream, whipped
 1 oz. chocolate slivers
 1/2 c. pecans, chopped fine
 2 pie shells, deep-dish, thawed

Soften gelatin in cold water, let it stand. Combine next three ingredients and slowly add the scalded milk. Cook in double boiler til mixture coats back of spoon, sticking to it.

Add softened gelatin and stir til dissolved, cool. Add vanilla, fold in egg whites, whipped cream and pour all into thawed crusts.

Sprinkle chopped pecans and slivered chocolate over top of pies, chill thoroughly.

Gale Nichols

Each day is a gift.



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