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Old Huntsville

HISTORY AND STORIES OF THE TENNESSEE VALLEY



“What If?” A True Love Story

When I came home from the hospital to tell my children their mother had died, what a surprise when one sobbed twice, looked up and asked if I was going to marry again. I told her I was so confused I hardly knew where I was.

That was April 22, 1969.

Also in this issue: **Traveling to Huntsville in 1929**

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Domie Lewter

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“What If?” A True Love Story

by *Charlie Edgar*



When I came home from the hospital to tell my children their mother had died, what a surprise when one sobbed twice, looked up and asked if I was going to marry again. I told her I was so confused I hardly knew where I was. That was April 22, 1969.

Nothing got any better for a totally undomesticated father who could not cook, operate a dishwasher or any appliance for that matter, and had just started a new business that required being out to 7 or 7:30 almost every night.

I could not come up with a viable plan, but late in May, I was by myself caring for the kids. Sunday night on the way to church we picked up some hamburgers and were eating them in the car in the church

yard when a couple of teenagers pulled up beside us and one of my girls asked if they were married. I told her they were dating. I had to explain what dating was, then I was asked when I was going to start dating.

Dating made sense. Some think it shouldn't start for a year, but I had heard that the Biblical period of mourning was about 10 days. I knew a year wouldn't make me forget how happy I'd been in my marriage.

So—my campaign began.

I started to tell everyone that I wanted to find a wife. When I was younger I had read a number of Pearl Buck novels and knew of arranged marriages. I also knew that statistics showed that they were often more successful than "romantic" marriages. This was probably because parents were looking for values that would contribute to the success of the marriage. I then began to look for a wife and told people to find me a cute Christian girl who knew what it was to go to church Sunday morn-

“I refuse to participate in any sport that has an ambulance at the bottom of a hill.”

Karl Peterson, Madison



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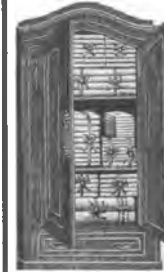
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ing, Sunday night, Wednesday and any other time the doors were open. I told them I didn't have time to reform anyone.

I began dating in June and had 16 dates during that month. I fancied myself a young businessman, and kept index cards on all of them. I was going to throw them away after I married my future wife, but she kept them.

With the criteria I established, I ended up with a pattern. This was Alabama and most of the girls were about 25, Baptist, had attended Samford University and were in Huntsville teaching. I was an officer in the Navy Reserve and put out my request at Reserves one night. The next day the wife of one of the officers called and had lined me up with a girl from her church — Baptist, of course!

She then started to ask me about my quest. I told her what was happening and then mentioned that I really should find a widow, because she would know what was going on. I still was dealing with lots of memories. Her reply was "I know a widow with two boys and

they need a Daddy." "Perfect," I replied "She can be Mamma to my kids and I'll be Daddy to hers and we can fight on equal terms."

"But you have to call Patsy because I've already talked to her," she said. I assured her that I would and that I was in phase one just meeting people.

I called Patsy, and this was July 3, and she was going home for the weekend. We made a date for Monday.

I then called a lady named Joyce and we made a date for the next night, the Fourth. I had asked her to a movie, but I wanted to talk, so we went to a July Fourth celebration and we talked and talked. We clicked!

The next day I was going to take some things that were left in the car to Patsy but Joyce suggested we take all the kids swimming.

We were standing about 6 feet behind my 5 year-old Chip

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About 1.9 million brain cells die every minute a stroke goes untreated.



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and her 6 year-old William. Chip said "My Mommy was killed in a car wreck" and William replied, "My Daddy was killed in a plane crash."

Chip said, "Maybe they're on a date up in heaven."

Joyce asked where Jenny was buried. I told her I couldn't describe cemeteries but the grave next to hers had a crucifix for a headstone. She told me our loved one's graves were about 40 feet apart and just across the road from each other!

The kids had a great time together and we stayed until late afternoon. I was getting worried because I had a date that night and I was worried about time. Suddenly one of the girls said "Daddy, we're having a good time, why don't you get some Kentucky Fried so we can eat?"

Since I had a date planned for that night, I had to assure her that Mrs. McKinney had plans for that night as well.

Monday night I went out with Patsy. Another nice girl, I really believe I could have married any of the girls I dated and been happy. In the course of our conversation I learned that Patsy's Daddy was a Presbyterian and Momma a Baptist. Momma and the kids went to the Baptist church and Daddy to the Presbyterian. Our whole life had been in the church and I realized this was a real problem.

On Tuesday night I went out with Joyce again. Another great time! On the way home I told her I wanted to ask her out again, but I had been thinking about the church matter. I told her I respected her background and knew she had worked at

the church. Her father was a Deacon and they were involved. I told her I did not want to rush anything but felt that we needed to talk about this, since I was an Elder, Chairman of the Westminster School Board and Moderator of Presbytery, and had been preaching. It was impossible for me to change and if she couldn't, it might not be good to see each other again. I told her I was not trying to get too serious, but "What if?"

Her answer was more or less, "Whither thou goest, I will go." Then she told me that she wanted to ask a "what if." For the rest of the evening our conversation centered around "what if's."

Wednesday night was Reserves and I decided to stop by her place after our meeting and show off as a Navy Officer. We spent an hour or so on "what if." Virtually every comment was prefaced with "what if." Joyce invited me to have dinner with

her boys Thursday night and we spent most of that evening on more "what if's".

On Saturday night we went out to dinner at a nice restaurant and again it was all "What If." By this time we had discussed finance, discipline, family life, church life, Christian education, and a host of other things of life. On the way out of the restaurant

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as we were walking across the parking lot, I said "Joyce, we've 'what- if'd' enough - WHY NOT?"

She said "Is that supposed to be a proposal?" I allowed that I believed it was. She said "It's not very romantic". I dropped down on one knee in the middle of the parking lot and said "Will you marry me - is that romantic enough?"

We were married on August 16, about a month later, and have been blessed for almost 44 years.

I had been doing investigations since college days except for a couple of years in the real estate business. I started a private investigation business and then was ordained in the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church. I took a church in Lincoln County and have preached there for 37 years.

Joyce and I had a daughter about three years after we married, so there were 6 children! At one time we had 43 rental units and I was in a partnership that had 40. Joyce managed the 83 units. We lived in Tennessee, at the parsonage. Our children were in Westminster Christian

Academy, so she left every morning with the children, took care of the apartments and was mother to six! She has been an outstanding preacher's wife.

We moved back when interest rates were so high in the early 80s, and I restarted the investigation business. Joyce helped by retrieving records from courthouses all over North Alabama. What a wife and mother she is and how she rescued me from what seemed an impossible situation!

Our family has grown from 6 to over 30. We have 18 grandchildren including 3 adopted from China. We have a lawyer, a preacher, computer experts, engineers, teachers and managers. The grandchildren are following right along, with one getting a PHD at Princeton, one on an academic scholarship at Auburn, and a softball player who has signed with Troy.

Did they blend? Just one illustration. Remember the two boys that introduced themselves by explaining how their parents had died? William visited Chip's church a while back. He came in at the end of Sunday School and a discussion of pacifism. William was a Paramedic and a Corpsman in the Navy. He joined in and pointed out that being a corpsman did not require using weapons. Chip had to end the discussion period but said he wanted to point out that the last speaker, his brother, who sounded so

"peace-loving", had actually spent his childhood trying to "kill" him.

What seemed to be a nightmare at one time - and was, has worked out well and much to the credit of a wonderful AND VERY STRONG MOTHER.

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* It is a great pity that the Hotel Monte Sano will not be a reality this summer. Our people should come together and help complete the car line to Monte Sano, that being one of the necessary adjuncts to Huntsville's future success.

* R. Lee Penney, aged 46 years, died yesterday at 1:50 o'clock at his home on Madison Street after a short illness with a complication of diseases. He was buried this afternoon, the funeral having been conducted from the residence at 2 o'clock by Rev. H. E. Rice, assisted by Rev. R. S. Gavin and interment was made in Maple Hill Cemetery. A widow and three children, Misses Julia Mae and Josephine and one son, Richard, survive. Following were the pallbearers: Lee Ford, George Wilson, Will Macon Strong, T. W. Jones, Frank Power, Dr. Bushong, S. R. Butler and W. E. Pettus.

* Mr. Theo. Hereford, Deputy Sheriff, had a very exciting race last night after a man who stole a cow in Madison some time ago. He had the good luck to

capture his man about 4 o'clock in the morning after running after him all night.

* **For sale** - a handsome eight foot walnut store wall case - phone 208 or see Edwin Hall.

* An argument for the good health of Huntsville speaks for itself in the little fact about the old negro who had lived here 106 years. During all that time he had not lost more than a year's time from actual labor.

* It is remarkable how some people can wear good clothes, sport around and enjoy life and not work. We were never able to work that combination.

* Next time you drive into town, you'll be wanting during your stay a real good drink. Something to quench your thirst. Drink Coca-Cola. No matter how thirsty you are, or how tired you are or how particular you are, you'll like Coca-Cola because it hits that dry spot - relieves fatigue and tickles the palate all the way down. Delicious - refreshing - wholesome. Send for our free booklet "The Truth about CC" tells all about CC, what it is and why it is so

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*** In the Jail - a Concealed Razor found on one Man - both in Jail**

John Griffin and Jim Brown were arrested and placed in jail here by Deputy Sheriffs Pierce and Robinson on charges of gaming and public drunkenness. Deputy Pierce also found a concealed razor on the person of Brown. Griffin it is believed is wanted in Gadsden on a charge of murder and will be held here until officials of that place advised disposition.

*** Heavy Draft Horse for Sale**

We have a good heavy draft horse in good work condition for sale cheap. Address "Horse"

care of the Times.

* Thos. P. Hay, proprietor of the Huntsville Hotel News Stand, this afternoon moved in his new quarters in the building adjoining the north side of R. E. & W. E. Pettus' wholesale house on Jefferson Street in front of the McGee Hotel. Mr. Hay is elaborately fitted up for business and invites all of his friends and the public to call and see him.


* I have 2 good houses for sale both desirably located. Paul Speake, Elks Building

* Wanted - board in private family, for young couple, central location desired. Phone 208

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* Wanted - good nurse and housekeeper, white or colored. Address in care of the Times.



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* Tomorrow - the Real Live Buster Brown and his dog Tiger will be at our store giving his famous shows of fun and frolic for the children for free. We want every child in Huntsville to see him. Don't forget the time, tomorrow (Tuesday) all day. The Cash Store - Ezell Bros. & Terry Co. (saves you money).

* William Moore is being held here for charges of forgery and bigamy. He tried to commit suicide in his cell by eating the heads of a large number of matches. Women companions had returned to get help. The jailor discovered his plight and

administered medicine. Before eating the matches he wrote a letter to his mother, companion and chief detectives.

* A local woman, asserted that for months she had been abused and threatened by her husband. Mrs. Ethel Olsen, formerly of England, and later of Huntsville, sent a pistol bullet at her husband in a crowded street near the courthouse here late Sunday, missed him and powder-burned a passerby. She declares she fired to protect her face from a dash of muriatic acid which she charges her husband was preparing to cast at her. She was arrested and charged with assault with intent of murder. She tells a story of her husband's alleged cruel treatment of her and their children.



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Traveling to Huntsville in 1929

by *Carnell (Thorny) Thorne*



Boy, that was some ride. Can you imagine nine people jammed in a T-Model Ford? Seven children, some of them teenagers. I was the little one of the bunch, but I had two younger brothers, so the youngest one always sat up front with Mama and Dad.

Six were on the back seat and they had to take time about sitting on the edge of the seat so that I could sit behind them. So much fun. Of course I couldn't see a thing but that was alright - I was warmer than they were.

It was a pretty cool trip. We lived at Salem, Alabama, which is about 14 miles north of Athens. You can imagine how long it took us to get to Huntsville back in those days, driving about 25 or 30 miles an hour. Uncle Marcus worked at the Mills and they lived somewhere close by. We left home early and we

got there just before lunch. Uncle Marcus and Aunt Lula Thorne had 4 kids so we got there in time to get into mischief before lunch.

Right after we had lunch they took us to the Big Spring park, which was nothing at

all like it is now. We were playing around and all of a sudden we heard singing and a lot of other noises and I looked up the street and there were a lot of people coming down the street in white robes.

It scared me to death. I thought the world was coming to an end. I grabbed my

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sister from the back around her waist and you couldn't have gotten me loose with a crow bar. I don't remember the trip home but I guess it was about as exciting as it was going down. We made a lot of trips down there because Aunt Lula and Uncle Marcus were our favorite kinfolks.

As the years went by we made a lot of trips to their house and they came to visit us too. We always had so much fun since my parents and my Uncle & Aunt always made sure we kids were entertained.

I got into so much mischief just by myself. Dad had built a "paling" fence around the yard (fence with a flat board on top) and I liked to walk the 2x4 that was what the palings were nailed to.

Dad had told me one day when he caught me walking on top of the fence on the 2x4 that the next time he caught me he was going to give me a spanking.

One day he and Mama went to Athens and of course I took advantage of their being gone. Well, I climbed to the very top of that fence, in my dress, (we girls weren't allowed to wear pants back then).

When I lost my balance and fell, my dress caught on the top of the fence and I was just hanging there near the top. My brothers thought this was the funniest thing

and I begged them to get me off that fence but of course they didn't.

I was still hanging around when my parents got back from town. They acted like I wasn't even there, went in the house and put up the groceries. When Dad came out he got me off the fence and said, "Do you remember what I told you if I caught you on the fence again?" "Yessir," I said. He swatted me 2 times and I looked up at him and said, "Is that all?" He said, "Would you like some more?" Of course I didn't because 2 times was more than plenty.

Years went by and I remember one Sunday we made another trip to Huntsville. I know by that time we had gotten rid of the T-Model. I was 15 years old at that time and Aunt Lula was my mother's sister and she had married my future father-in-law's brother.

Well, the two families met up that Sunday. Pete Thorne and I sat next to each other at lunch time. We were both 15 years old and never dreamed we would get further than that, on that Sunday. Pete went into the Army at age 18 and we started to write back and forth. With the help of Aunt Lula giving me his

address - to make a long story short - I married that Tennessee hillbilly and we began our lives together. He came home December of 1945 and we got married in April of 1946 and were together for 61 years.

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Shopping Memories in Huntsville, Alabama

by Cynthia Cabiness Brown

Having grown up in a small, outlying town, my first memory of Huntsville dates back to the late fifties. Coming to Huntsville was exciting. It still is. In the early days, it was usually a biannual shopping trip for our small family of three - a long, but peaceful hour's drive in a two-tone green '56 Chevy with the windows rolled down.

The old Chevy loped along Highway 72. There were very few houses and if you met a dozen cars from the time you left Scottsboro, it was unusual, nothing compared to today's hectic pace. It was many years later before the last stretch of construction bridged the four-lane bypassing Larkinsville, Limrock, and Woodville. You never actually saw Limrock, even then. There were no stores or houses that I remember, you just knew Limrock came between Larkinsville and Woodville.

By the time we got to Gurley, we were hungry and had a habit of stopping at Sanders Restaurant for a cheeseburger or bar-b-que sandwich. It was hard to miss Sanders, you could smell their food from the county line, but in case you missed it, there was a gigantic neon sign directly across the highway from Sanders pointing to the brand new Myrick Motel.

Once you got to Sanders, you were almost there. "Huntsvull", as it was known to us, was just over the hill. Each time we topped Chapman

Mountain, I was in awe. We meandered through the older sections to get downtown.

Being tall for my age, I had a long, narrow foot. Dunnavants carried hard to find shoe sizes needed in my early years so we traded with Dunnavants. It would be years later before I understood the term "trading" in terms of shopping.

Mama used to tell about the rolling store coming back into a cove where she had grown up in the early 40s. She said it was rare that anything was purchased, things were more often traded; i.e. they traded eggs for flour, or maybe butter for sugar. The first thing she would hear with respect to the rolling store, would be the rattle of the chicken cages tied onto the

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back bumper of his truck. Some people traded their chickens. I really wish somebody would reinvent the rolling store, minus the chickens. Back to town.

Dunnavant's opened another store on the Parkway, and in conjunction with that one was a nice cafeteria, Britlings (I think). Someone recently mentioned the Fountain Mall in a story, which is actually what triggered these memories.

The new mall was called "The Mall" and was built in the early 60s on the corner of University and Memorial Parkway. It was a thrill to shop there! They had Loveman's on one end, Penney's on the other, and all sorts of interesting shops in between.

Daddy would drop us off and give us two hours on the clock before we were to meet him back at the fountain. If we finished shopping early, which wasn't likely, he'd be in the bookstore looking at either maps or magic books. Everything in that mall smelled of delicious smoky cheese from the store who offered all the

samples. (Obviously the name escaped me.) (Editors note - Hickory Farms). We didn't go to the mall without going thru the sample line. A lot of people must have liked it too, the line was always out the door. Picadilly's was located there too, and a favorite place to eat after shopping.

When it came time to shop for clothes, my mother was thrifty. She sewed quite well with or without a pattern. So she was a shopper extraordinaire. She always felt like she got her money's worth at Penney's. She thought about that a little longer at Loveman's and Casual Corner. She'd whisper, "There's nothing to that skirt - there's not a yard of fabric, and I'm not paying that for it when I can make one just like it."

And she did. We purchased very little outside necessities for special occasions. She made most all my dresses, even coats. There were two times of year that we went all out - one was at Easter and the other at Christmas. She was really big on Easter; shoes, socks, gloves,

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dress, down to the slip.

Sometimes in the dressing room at Loveman's she'd whisper, "Don't you tell your Daddy what I'm paying for this." The truth is he wouldn't have minded. She cared about being thrifty and extravagance bothered her. She would, no doubt, work this out down the road, saving here and there to make up for it. She never changed, thank goodness.

Our trips to Huntsville increased over time, and shopping priorities shifted once Mama discovered the S&H stamp redemption store on North Parkway. That became our new "first stop". She patiently saved her stamps from Piggly Wiggly, buying groceries on double-stamp day.

By counting and pasting zillions of tiny stamps into book after book that would be trad-

ed for something she would otherwise never purchase... bathroom scales, a cuckoo clock, fold-out stadium seats, tall picnic thermos bottles with carrier, luggage, clock-radio, and finally, an electric chord organ. She loved that organ and taught herself to play with numbered books she'd found at the music store on Traylor Island. She memorized "Blessed Assurance" among others.

By the mid-sixties, we were traveling in a white '62 Ford Fairlane back and forth to Huntsville on a monthly basis for my orthodontist visits. The windows were rolled down on the Ford, as the radiator was prone to overheat. The red vinyl seats were scorching hot in summer and ice cold in winter.

Our town didn't have an orthodontist then. Most of our shopping was done at home.

We went to Huntsville for special purchases. One of my favorite pastimes was window shopping with Mama, no matter where we shopped. We loved to walk the sidewalks of our downtown square until one of us remembered the parking meter. The only way to avoid the parking meter was to parallel park across the street. It wasn't unusual in those days to feed a few pennies into someone else's meter whose time had expired. Parking tickets were \$2.00.

It was a slower time, because we took things slower. We had both fun and excitement at special times in the simplest ways. I threw away a small fortune in pennies making wishes in the mall fountain while shopping there. A lot of them came true. I miss that fountain and the mall.

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CITY NEWS - 1923

*** The Bradleyan, a Work of Art - 1923**

The Bradleyan, the annual of Bradley school, is out and being circulated among graduates and subscribers now. The annual this year is surprisingly good, and complete, being at once a register of events that have happened and hopes that have been formed for the future, containing pictures and records of the various classes, athletics of all kinds for both boys and girls, which will make it a valued keepsake in the years to come when hopes have been realized or blasted as the case may be.

The Bradleyan is beautifully printed, made up and bound, making it worth a place on any library shelf or center table. The school itself is recognized as one of the most complete and efficient in the state, every provision being made to carry on the best and highest school work for the students attending.

*** Found Baby on Front Porch**

Attracted by the crying of a baby, Mr. and Mrs. Harry Baldwin, living on Randolph Street, investigated and found a 2-day old baby boy wrapped in a quilt lying on their front porch. The finders notified Dr. G. A. Cryer of the presence of the baby at their home and the official turned the infant over to Mr. and Mrs. Charles A. Davison, who had expressed a desire to adopt it.

*** Claims he was Married While Hypnotized**

Wm. Dobbins of this city, dragged into the court today on a charge of bigamy, declared his second wife hypnotized him and forced him to marry her against his will.

"I don't know how it happened," he claimed. "All of a sudden I was in the church, saw many people, stood before the altar and was required to kneel. A priest stood before us. I was very much wrought up. Beside me stood my bride, who at every opportunity looked piercingly into my eyes so that I saw glittering before me all the colors of the rainbow. And so I was married a second time. As if in a semi-slumber, I left the church.

The court, however, sentenced him to 2 months in jail and a \$20 fine.

*** Woman on Kildare Wounded**

Mrs. John Dobbs was severely wounded this week when she opened the door to a group of young thieves who wanted to take what meager belongings she had. She gave what she had including her wedding ring but they weren't satisfied until she was beaten and unconscious. Her husband found her a few hours later and notified the police. A search is underway.

A chicken coop has two doors because if it had four doors, it would be a sedan.



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Heard On the Street

by *Cathey Carney*



Jerry Bentley was our first correct caller to identify **Bill Kling** (one of the Huntsville City Councilmen) as the young boy in last month's Photo. We had callers from all over this time, but only the first one wins, so congratulations to Jerry! He is retired from Ashburn and Gray and enjoys meeting his friends for lunch and being retired!

We heard that the beautiful **Evelyn Rochelle** turned 90 on May 25th! She is really part of the rich history of Huntsville and loves her family - Happy Birthday to you Evelyn. You were one of Tom's favorite relatives.

Joyce Billingsley contacted us recently to help put the word out that the Huntsville Genealogical Computing Society will be meeting on June 17 at 7pm in the main library auditorium. The speaker will be professional genealogist **Phillip B. Adderley, CG** who was from Huntsville but currently lives in Louisiana. The title of his talk will be "Assembling and Correlating Evidence: Was Robert William Jemison a Planter, District Attorney, Traitor, or All of These?" Be sure and check their website for more information - www.hgcsociety.org.

Rosemary & Bill Leatherwood, owners of Ole Dad's BBQ in Hazel

Green, sure have lots of celebrations in June. In June they will have been serving up BBQ for 18 years! Then Rosemary has two sisters who have June birthdays - **Dot Branche** (June 8) and **Lynn Green** (June 14). Bill & Rosemary's anniversary is June 1 - they will have been married for 36 years! Their son-in-law **Allen Woods** has a June 6 birthday. Lots of parties in Hazel Green in June!

Karen Maroon is so proud of her Mom **Helen Miller** who lives in Cameron, MO. and just turned 95! Helen is very interested in current events and can discuss U.S. politics with anyone! Happy Birthday to Helen.

Lots of wedding anniversaries in June! Happy 43rd anniversary to **Ken and Diane Owens** who make their home in southeast Huntsville.

Happy Birthday to **Evan Troup** who has a 10th birthday in June! The best grandson ever!

We are so proud of **Weathery Heights Elementary School** for their hard work in recycling old phone directories. Huntsville

Mayor Tommy Battle will present the school with a check for \$1,500. The school has won a spot in the contest for the past 3 years - congratulations to the teachers & kids!

Andrew and Elizabeth Lyon celebrated their 65th wedding anniversary on May 14. Their children hosted a luncheon in their honor. Their children are **Dr. Gilda Lyon** of Atlanta; **Randy and Nanette Lyon** of West Blocton, Alabama; **Bruce Lyon** of Nashville; and **Tanjie and Councilman Bill Kling** of Huntsville. They have four children and 7 great-grandchildren. The couple were married May 14, 1948 at Big Spring Park in Huntsville. They have been residents of Huntsville since 1948. Tanjie's Dad had the additional celebration of having his 88th birthday same week! He's a loving Dad and husband. So proud of this amazing family!

Community Watch groups are really forming more and more in Huntsville. One of the best results from a CW organization is that the whole neighborhood looks out for each other - if anyone sees anything strange or suspicious they call the police # 256.722.7100 and an officer comes out immediately to check it out. Something you can do yourself is take an inventory of your valuables and make a note of the serial #s of TVs, comput-

Photo of The Month

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

Call (256) 534-0502

Hint: This little boy has been principal at Chapman, teacher/coach at Stone MS & Lee, asst. principal at Whitesburg MS & Grissom HS.



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Wallace E. Lee is a very talented and respected Choral Director at Whitesburg Middle School and recently the school presented their Spring Program to a standing room only crowd at the First Christian Church on Whitesburg Drive. The sixth, seventh and eighth grades Beginning, Concert, Show and Advanced choirs put on such a great show and it ended with the audience on their feet for a standing ovation.

We were so sad to hear of the May death of **Jim Marek**. Jim was a tireless worker for historic preservation in Huntsville and worked with Huntsville Historic Foundation to have Merrimack Mill Village listed on the National Register of Historic Places. He was 69 years old. He had so many lasting accomplishments and will be so missed. We send our deepest condolences to his wife **Charlotte Schilling**; sons **Christopher Marek** of San Diego, CA and **David Marek** of Durham, NC. and other family & many friends.

Mischelle Ross and **Amy Goen** both work as tellers at BBT bank (Mischelle at Church St. and Amy at Northwest) and they want everyone to know how much fun it is to take part in the Huntsville Ghost Tours in which ghost stories

are told and they hear interesting history. They recommend it!

Jerry and Jack Phelps are a sweet married couple who live in Assisted Living at Redstone Village. Jerry recently fell and hurt her hip and we just wanted to say we're thinking about you and to get well soon! Plus they're getting lots of visits from their sons.

Happy Birthday in early May to that delightful lady **Lola Stutts-Blaxton** of Muscle Shoals - we love her!

Have you ever thought about doing something really different and perhaps rappeling off the Times building downtown? Recently I met with **Brenda Hennessee** who is Director of Strategic Initiatives for the YMCA corporate office. She told me this is an annual event that features people climbing down the side of the 13 story Times building. It starts June 15 and gets huge crowds. **Steve Burcham** did it last year right after he had a heart replacement, so if he can do it, you know you can. The theme for this year is "Toss your Boss" and allows you to put up money to toss your boss over the side of the building, in a safe way. For more information visit YOHSV.com for registration information or email events@ymca-huntsville.org for questions.

Linda Goldman had a birthday in late May and celebrated in style with handsome hubby **Darryl Goldman** - happy birthday to you!

I heard that recently while cleaning up a family cemetery, **Berns Miller** was hit by a large tree that caused lung collapse, broken ribs and other injuries. He and other family members had gotten together at the little cemetery to do some cleanup when the accident

happened. I just want to let Berns know we're thinking of you and saying lots of prayers for your recovery - you're young and healthy and I know you'll be OK.

Kim Essex, the very popular news anchor on WAFF Channel 48 here in Huntsville, just celebrated her birthday in mid May so Happy Birthday to you Kim! Kim does not love cold weather and her comments during our recent cold spells were really funny to listen to.

Happy Father's Day - Love to all the Dad's & Granddads out there - remembering Dads who are no longer with us and giving big hugs to the Dad's whom we are still lucky to have in our families.

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Father's Day Favorites

These recipes taken from "Huntsville Entertains" by Historic Huntsville Foundation and can be purchased at P.O. Box 786, Hsv, Al 35804

Texas Dried Beef Dip

- 1 jar dried beef, chopped
- 1/2 lg. green pepper, chopped
- 1/2 medium onion, chopped
- 1/2 c. sour cream
- 1/2 c. mayonnaise
- 1 8-oz. pkg. cream cheese
- 1 t. chili powder
- 1 t. garlic powder

Combine all ingredients and refrigerate. Remove 2 hours before using and thin with buttermilk. Don't add any salt, and use on crackers that's aren't too salty as the beef is salty enough!

Deviled Eggs

- 6 hard-cooked eggs
- 1/2 c. mayonnaise
- 1 t. vinegar

- 1/2 t. Worcestershire sauce
- 1/4 t. dry mustard
- Chopped bottled pimento pieces

Peel eggs and cut in half lengthwise. Remove egg yolks, being careful not to break whites. Mash yolks with a fork and mix with mayonnaise, vinegar, Worcestershire and dry mustard. Spoon mixture into egg white halves. Refrigerate til ready to serve. Garnish tops with piece of pimento.

Bow-Ties

- 1 lb. thin sliced bacon
- 1 box Waverly crackers
- Parmesan Cheese, freshly grated

Wrap one half slice bacon around middle of one cracker. Sprinkle with the cheese. Place on a broiler pan so bacon will drip into the bottom of the pan.

Bake at 200 degrees for 2 hours. This is best served from

the oven but still good cold, and can be frozen for later.

Chicken Dijon

- 4 medium chicken breasts, split, skinned and deboned
- 3 T. butter
- 3 T. flour
- 1 c. chicken broth
- 3/4 c. light cream
- 2 T. Grey Poupon dijon mustard

Brown chicken in butter for about 20 minutes, until done. Remove chicken from pan, stir flour into skillet drippings. Add the chicken broth and light cream.

Cook and stir over medium heat for 10 minutes. Stir in the mustard. This is good over pasta or rice.

Southern Hushpuppies

- 1 T. flour
- 1 c. plain corn meal

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- 3/4 t. salt
- 2 t. baking powder
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 1 egg
- 6 T. milk

Mix all ingredients together and shape into balls, drop in hot oil and drain on paper towels.

Drunk Hot Dogs

- 1 pkg. hot dogs
- 3/4 c. whiskey
- 1/2 c. water
- 1/2 c. brown sugar
- 1-1/2 c. catsup
- 2 t. minced onion

Cut hot dogs into bite size pieces or use cocktail hot dogs. Combine all ingredients and let simmer a couple of hours on low. Serve from chafing dish with tooth picks.

Mexican Meatballs

- 1 lb. ground beef
- 1 c. fine dry bread crumbs
- 3/4 c. milk
- 1 egg, well beaten
- 1 small onion, minced
- 1 T. butter, softened
- 4 T. minced chili
- 1/2 t. oregano
- Salt & pepper to taste

In a medium bowl, combine the beef, bread crumbs, milk, egg, onion, butter, chili, oregano, salt and pepper. Mix well and shape into balls. Bake on a greased baking sheet at 350 degrees for 15 minutes. These can be frozen for use later. Serve with toothpicks.

Party Cubes

- 6 slices chopped ham
- 2 slices square pumpernickel bread
- 3 oz. cream cheese with chives, softened

Spread 3 ounces of the cream cheese between slices; 2 slices ham, 1 slice bread, 2 slices ham. Wrap tight and chill. Trim edges and cut into small cubes to serve.

Godiva Fudge Cookies

- 6 oz. Godiva dark chocolate, melted
- 1/2 c. butter, softened
- 1 c. sugar
- 2 eggs
- 1-1/2 c. plain flour
- 1/2 t. salt
- 1-1/2 c. coarsely chopped pecans or walnuts

Melt the chocolate in pan over hot water and cool slightly. Meanwhile cream butter, sugar and eggs until batter is smooth. Stir in cooled chocolate. Combine salt and flour, mix into batter.

Add nuts and blend well. Chill for one hour, until dough is firm. Drop rounded teaspoonfuls 2 inches apart on a buttered cookie sheet.

Bake in a preheated oven at 375 degrees for 10-12 minutes and cookies are slightly firm when touched. You want them to be soft and chewy on the inside.



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One Hot Summer Day in 1976, The Adventures of Me and Markie Boy

by Steve Burcham

"The Adventures of Me and Markie Boy" are a recollection of the mostly harmless, mischievous acts and antics of a group of teenagers who grew up in and around Coronado Drive in southeast Huntsville during the 1970s.

Back then, IBM had computers and families lived in split-level or ranch style homes and made do with one telephone and three channels of TV, unless they were lucky enough to have a cable run to their house from the pole, which added ten more channels. Without today's modern conveniences enabled by the internet and fancy devices like the I-Pad, I-Phone, and laptop computers, the phrase "information super highway" might have been considered an inference to the long streets and avenues laid out in checkerboard patterns in former cotton fields throughout suburbia Huntsville. In the day, parents with little tolerance of kids "loafing around the inside the house" demanded and often "shooed" the kids outside to "play" with one another.

During the long hot summer months that spanned from the time at "school's out" in May until after Labor Day, when a new school year would go back in session, kids followed their parents' rules to "play outside" by gathering up with each other in the neighborhood pools, yards, vacant fields, streets and cul-de-sacs.

Maybe these kids had too much time on their hands or didn't fully understand what the command "playing outside" meant. WWII & early Boomers read ahead to learn just what those kids of yours "were up to" during those long hot summer southern days and nights and

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decide for yourselves.

Boomers & Tail-enders: read on and relive the 70s. Gen X & Y's, sorry your parents made you stay indoors. Millennial's and younger: don't try any of these acts and antics today - you may be captured, fingerprinted and jailed by the authorities.

Getting Ready for Independence Day

An annoying clanging sound was coming from the alarm clock as I fumbled with my right hand sweeping across the top surface of the end table in a jerky attempt to silence the excruciatingly painful noise reaching my ears. I knew when I took this morning newspaper route delivering the Huntsville News that I would have to have something close to a nuclear blast or Deep Purple's "Smoke on the Water" playing through my stereo speakers to wake me up every day.

Last night before bed, searching our house high and low, I located an unused two-bell-on-top wind-up alarm clock. Setting it carefully before turning in, this morning, my first day on the job, it worked. Finally finding and flipping the little lever on the side of the round metal casing with my index finger, there's silence - again - nice. After sweeping the sleep out of my eyes in the pre-dawn darkness that still has a grip on my bedroom, I press the button on the side

"A bra factory was robbed of thousands of dollars. My Dad said they could've prevented the robbery if they'd had a booby trap."

Justin, age 8



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of my Texas Instruments LED watch on my left wrist. The red 7-segment display confirms that it is 5:03.

Throwing my legs to the right, staggering out of bed and tripping over my clothes and used towels that have piled up on my bedroom floor, I make it to the downstairs bathroom adjacent to my room and family den. If the bathroom light were on, the reflection in the mirror would reveal a scrawny, scrappy-looking, tow-headed boy weighing in at about 80 pounds.

"I've got it made down here," I thought, as I stood in front of the john taking a leak in the darkness, making sure the tinkling noise sounded more like water-pouring-into-water rather than water-pouring-on-to-porcelain. Just like seventy percent of the families in this neighborhood in Jones Valley, our house is a split-level design. That means, there's a "living" room on the left and a set of steps on the right leading to 3 bedrooms and 2 bathrooms on the second floor. Six steps inside the front door, there's a kitchen and dining area with an exit on the left to the attached 2-car garage. And to the right, there's a den and, to my sweet benefit, a master's suite that has a queen bed and private bath, the one I'm using right now.

Ground-level ingress and egress to my bedroom can be achieved through; a) the sliding glass door that goes from the den to the back patio; b) any window in my bedroom; and c) quietly through the kitchen and out through the door into the garage. With this arrangement and my bedroom being downstairs, coming and going undetected at any hour of the day is no problem.

Our family of seven consisting of three girls, two boys, and Mom and Dad has always lived shoehorned in the up-

stairs area, sharing rooms and bathrooms. One day during dinner time I asked, "Why doesn't anyone sleep downstairs?"

"We like to be up here with you kids," my parents said in unison.

"Eww, it's scary down there!" my 3 sisters chimed in. Seeing a golden opportunity, I offered, "Does anyone mind if I move down there?"

Not interrupting their dinner further, shaking heads gave me the answer I was looking for, so I staked my claim.

Finishing my morning restroom break, I threw on my gym shorts over my white briefs, pulled on my favorite t-shirt, the one with the fluorescent colored peace sign on the front, and then pulled my white tube socks all the way to my knee caps and put on my canvas All Star tennis shoes.

As I quietly made my way out through the kitchen into the garage, after tripping and stumbling over all my projects in the garage that included a go cart & mini-bike both needing minor re-

pairs, I threw open the metal 4-windowpane garage door and navigated my way thru the two columns of parked cars in our doublewide driveway to the

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street. Having 3 sisters with boy-friends, all who park their jalopies at our house, makes our driveway look as full as the UtoteM convenience store parking lot during lunchtime.

"Another hot June day ahead," I thought, as I saw the bundle of papers waiting for me at the end of the driveway, just like my route manager, Mrs. Langhout, said they would be.

Back inside, sitting on the couch in the dimly lit den, I go about the task of "rolling" the papers for delivery. With a huge stack on the funky colored shag carpet floor to my left, a small stack on the coffee table with a pile of red rubber bands in front of me and my canvas shoulder pack on my right, I begin making quick work of the task. After a while of mostly thoughtless mechanical movements, I notice that my bag is almost completely filled with newspapers that look like white tubes. With about 150 customers, it is going to take me about an hour to deliver all of these papers to houses lining the many rows and columns of streets that make up our section of the neighborhood.

Built in the 1960's in the middle of endless cotton fields bordered by Huntsville Mountain and Monte Sano Mountain, these southeast Huntsville neighborhoods have become a hamlet for the middle-class. With hundreds of kids my age, many great schools, like Whitesburg and Jones Valley Elementary and Grissom High, plus the good jobs brought on by the "space race" and mostly cool parents, I can't think of anywhere else I would rather grow up.

Now, with a full newspaper sack over my head and shoulders, resting on the front handlebars of my JC Penny Foremost 10-speed bicycle, I turn out of the driveway and head west to the next intersection. There I will take a quick left and then a quick

"You can tell it's going to be a rotten day when your car horn goes off accidentally and remains stuck as you follow a group of Hell's Angels down the highway."

Bill Drake, Huntsville

right and that's where my paper route starts, on Mira Vista Drive. I will deliver papers to my customers all the way to Aldridge Creek just this side of Sherwood Hill and weave my way to and fro back to our house. Taking some advice from other paperboys, I have already mapped the route and painted tiny blue dots on the curbs next to the mailboxes of my customers. No brains required, just ride my bike in darkened silence

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and throw papers left and right whenever I see a blue dot!

Initially, it's midnight dark outside; the only illumination comes from the white and sometimes amber colored streetlights. Occasionally, I see an early bird leaving for work, hear a dog bark, or a cat meow, but mostly it's just silent and dark. As I round the first bend on Mira Vista, I see an old Nash Metropolitan parked on the side of the road with semi-filled tires. "That's the ugliest damn car I have ever seen in my life, no wonder it's sitting out here rusting away, I wouldn't trade my bicycle for that piece of junk," I thought to myself, as I navigated around it by leaning slightly left.

While throwing newspapers, I do not put my hands on the handlebars for almost the entire hour. Over time, I've learned to ride a 10-speed like a circus actor. One day, while trying to show-off for my friends, the stunt I attempted to perform for the onlookers didn't go as planned. Not only was I riding on the street without any hands on the handlebars; I had completely stood up on the tiny saddle seat. And about the time I had fully stretched my arms out looking for applause and admiration, the damned handlebars did a quick jerk to the left sending me face first into the pavement! Fortunately, I got up with all my teeth, a few strawberries, and a bruised ego. While attempting to pretend the wipeout was part of the stunt, I silently vowed to myself to never try that trick again. Short of that

one though, I really could do almost anything on a 10-speed.

As I close in on the creek, I have a few customers down here who want their paper delivered to their front porch; their houses are marked with red dots. Wanting to provide service with a smile, I simply lean right at the entrance to their driveway, navigate my bike across their dew-covered front lawn, toss their paper on the front porch, lean left and exit the yard via the neighbor's driveway entrance. Special requests, no problem!

I didn't get any complaints about my methods until I traded my mini-bike and some

cash for a Honda 50 motorcycle. Then, when collecting my monthly fee of one dollar and seventy cents, I heard on occasion, "Young man, you're making a trail in my front yard!" I always acted quite concerned and apologetic as I stuffed the money in my zipper Henderson bank bag, but never managed to change my habits.

With a much lighter paper sack and the sun now peaking over Huntsville Mountain, I'm in my final stretch and on my way home. Suddenly, there is an alarming intrusion into my quiet morning work. To my surprise, Mrs. Smith's damn little yippy Chihuahua dog is

"I told my wife I was seeing a psychiatrist. She told me she was seeing a psychiatrist, 2 plumbers and a lawyer."

Seth Bankston, Woodville



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now off her front porch and is in a full sprint towards me barking and growling! I've had to deal with this little chump of a dog nearly everyday on my way home from school.

Just my luck that he's out for a potty break at just before 6 am. My usual trick of pedaling a bit faster and ignoring him isn't working today. Maybe it's early hour that has him on a higher alert status. About the time I decide to grab the handlebars and stand-up to pedal even faster, his attempt to bite my ankle is successful. My first thought is to take my foot off the pedal and give my leg a violent shake to free my leg from his tight grip. But as I looked down, I noticed that his little expression quickly changed from anger to despair! While the bite stung for a second, he ended up with a mouth full of tube sock instead of skin.

As I pedaled around for another spin, the little booger's legs left the ground as his body was now being lifted up by my pedaling action - his canine teeth were hung in the cotton fibers of my sock and he couldn't shake them free! With adrenaline now controlling my actions, I just kept peddling and the little feller got a miniature Ferris wheel ride for about 2 more spins before he managed to shake free. I busted out laughing as he, with his tail between his legs, headed back up to his front porch occasionally turning back and giving me an indignant look and grunt. "I bet he's not going to chase me anymore," I thought as I turned into my driveway.

Parking my bike in the garage, hanging my bag on a hook, entering the kitchen, I greet my dad who is having his pre-workday breakfast of cereal and juice and bounce downstairs to go back to bed. "Another day, another dollar," I thought as I jumped over the piles of clothes and back under the covers.

As I drifted in and out of sleep, I thought about today's plan. Later, me and Mark, my younger brother by two years, plan to ride our bikes across the Tennessee River to buy some fireworks. With the 4th of July just around the corner, we didn't want to be caught without the usual arsenal of fireworks and small explosives. Usually by the 5th of July, there is some level of property damage imposed on Coronado Drive, either our own property or others


"I'm always relieved when someone is giving a eulogy and I realize I'm able to listen to it."

George Carlin

who have unwittingly fallen prey to our desire to get the most out of our holiday fireworks stash. It seems as though I had just dozed back off to sleep when suddenly I heard echoing through the house, "Markie boy! Stevie boy! Where are y'all? I'm hungry, come make me some bacon and eggs!"

"Oh, Donny looking for some breakfast again," I thought rolling over and getting out of bed for the 2nd time today.

"Don't worry, I'll get started. Where's your



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frying pan?"

By now I'm moving fast through the den towards the fully sunlit kitchen. Mark and I end up meeting each other a split second later and find our friend, Donny, one year older than us and about twice our size, with a big grin on his face, a healthy appetite and a frying pan in one hand. By now the parents are gone and only my sisters are around, but they won't be waking up until noon.

Mark and I somewhat idolize Donny, one of four kids of a local eye surgeon. His family lives four houses down on the other side of the street. In their yard, they have a swimming pool, goldfish pond and game room with a pool table, a far-out Realistic stereo and speaker system from Radio Shack plus a fully stocked bar. We refer to his game room as "Headquarters." Donny is the mastermind of all mischievous projects planned and executed in the neighborhood. Me and Mark are simply the hapless pawns carrying out the missions conjured up during summer nights and weekends over a few beers and shots of Rebel Yell at Headquarters.

Could Donny eat breakfast at home? Absolutely. Does he choose to come down here for breakfast? Yes. Why? Because here at our house we have a cooked-to-order breakfast every morning which probably sounds better to him than his cold cereal. Bacon, sausage,

eggs, biscuits, pancakes, whatever we want to cook up we do - we city boys were raised like our country boy relatives - with a huge breakfast to start the day every day.

Why did we run to the kitchen so fast when Donny arrived? Because Donny wouldn't know how to cook an egg if his life depended on it! Mark and I were unified in our fear of the outcome if we stayed in bed and left the preparation of breakfast up to him.

Grabbing the skillet from Donny I ask, "What will you have this morning, Donny?"

"Oh, just the usual, bacon, eggs and some toast."

As I began to retrieve stuff from the refrigerator, Mark begins to add water to the teapot. For some reason, since we were little boys, our Mom, Marjorie, got us hooked on hot tea. There's no coffee around our house, or if there is I surely wouldn't

know where to find it.

It wasn't long before the three of us were sitting at the kitchen table stuffing down bacon, eggs, toast and jelly with sides of orange juice and hot tea. Taking a long sip of tea from his cup, Donny says, "So what are y'all doing today?"

"Me and Mark are riding across the river and picking up some fireworks, want to go with us?"

"No, I'll hang out here;

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We Kiwanians, "*the world's oldest newspaper boys*," thank you for supporting area youth activities by buying **Old Huntsville** from area magazine racks.

Golden K members meet Thursdays at 7 a.m. at the Downtown Rescue Mission, 1400 Evangel Drive, for breakfast and programs of interest. Join us for breakfast and we will set another place at the table.

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Mom has a project for me in the back yard." Pulling out three dollars, Donny continues sternly.

"Pick me up a gross of bottle rockets. Make sure they are Black Cats this time. That blue-label crap you guys brought back last time - all duds. How can I hassle my sisters and Michelle next door with duds? And make sure to put a few M-80s in my bag." (M80s have 5 grams of powder and are quite impressive explosives.)

"Got it," I said putting the money in my sock behind my calf.

After breakfast, I'm standing next to my 10-speed in the driveway. It's going to be a long hot ride, I thought. Fireworks are illegal in Madison County so we have two options. We travel south across the river into Morgan County or north to the state line. It's a 20 mile round trip to the river and a 50 mile round trip to the state line, so we are heading south. Mark appears with a bag and canteen around his neck, grabs the chopper handlebars of his single-speed banana-seat bike and walks over to me handing me the bag.

"Good thinking," I said while smiling at him. Mark is even smaller than I with brown hair and fair complexion. Looking inside the bag I see beef jerky, summer sausage sticks, two pull-top cans of Vienna sausages and some cheese and crackers. I secure our lunch to my book-rack on the back of my bike while Mark ties the green canvas colored canteen to the back chrome loop of the

back of his seat.

"Ready?" I threw one leg over and kicked up the stand.

Our dad has given us one rule for our travels: stay off the main roads and highways. On our long journey today, we'll weave our way through the neighborhoods and will only have to break his rule once. The two-lane bridge that crosses the Tennessee does not have sidewalks, so we'll have to be careful there, otherwise we'll be mostly in compliance. Not in any hurry, it takes us an hour and one-half to reach the fireworks stand in Gasoline Alley.

The area is known as Gasoline Alley because right across the river, the road is lined on both sides with about four to six filling stations selling gas for 26 cents a gallon or about two to four cents a gallon cheaper than in town because of the lower county tax rates. This place goes crazy on Saturdays because most families living in southeast Huntsville drive over-the-river for cheap gas refilling their tanks for the next workweek. I remember last year's energy crisis created lines all the way down the road and back

up to the river.

Approaching the fireworks stand, me and Mark marvel at all the new fireworks and large family-sized assortments in fancy packaging lining the back

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**"The patient was increasingly worried and concerned about the lack of anxiety in her life."
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wall of the small trailer. After a few minutes of just staring at us, the toothless dude with a ball cap asks us what we are looking for. We know we don't have enough money for the big assortments, but it's fun to look and dream.

"Give me two gross of bottle rockets, Black Cats, two ten-packs of firecrackers, a box of smoke bombs, a dozen red-neck chasers, and a dozen M-80s please," I tell the guy who springs into action with a brown paper bag in one hand and a cigarette in his mouth. Thumping the cigarette into the gravel parking lot, he begins to fill my order loading the paper bag. Mark is "picking up" a few things for himself from the front display I think he wants to add to the bag.

"Don't 'cha know these M-80s are illegal in the city, boys?" the toothless dude says.

"How do you know we're from the city?" I snapped smartly back at him.

"Well, the bikes and the clothes might have tipped me off, but the fact that y'all rode up from yonder cinched it. City: that-a-way. Country: that-a-way," he slowly said pointing both ways as he finished loading my bag.

"Yeah, we know they're il-

The butcher backed up into the meat grinder by mistake and got a little behind in his work.

legal. Make sure you give us the good ones, OK?"

As I pay the guy, Mark sneaks a handful of single fireworks he's chosen from the front counter. The toothless dude didn't notice me opening the bag while Mark pitched them in. Grabbing a fist full of punks, the brown "incense like" firecracker lighters, we kick up our kickstands in unison and start walking our bikes with bag in hand on the handlebars towards the road.

Needing to make stowage room for our holiday loot, Mark and I decide to have our lunch at a concrete roadside picnic table adjacent the fireworks stand. With faded white paint flaking, we brush off the top and open the bag.

"One for you, one for me..." I say sorting out the lunch items my little brother packed for us. By now, he's across from me, sweating in the mid-day sun, sipping on the canteen, ready to open his Vienna sausages when I say, "I can't wait to get back to the

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A summer parade in Huntsville, looking down Washington Street - July 4, 1916

Picture Courtesy of Fred Simpson, from his book, "A Walk through Downtown Huntsville, Then and Now."

house so we can blow something up!" Not able to reply because he's already got two sausages in his mouth, he just smiles and drools a big drop of juice while leaning forward onto the table, and nods back grinning.

"Let's stop at the river and cool down on the way back," I suggest.

After we finished our sack lunch and pedaled across the bridge, exiting the shoulder of the road, we made our way down a path leading to a rope swing hanging from a large tree by the river's bank near the bridge. Laying our bikes up against the bank, we shuck off everything but our gym shorts and run for the swing. Mark won. He beat me to the rope and he's already flying in mid-air heading for the Tennessee River. As he lets go, the rope swings back to me and I'm off to join him. The cool water felt great in the mid-afternoon sun glimmering off the rippled surface of the water.

"Did you put on sunscreen today, knucklehead?" I asked looking at Mark whose fair freckly complexion is now starting to look beet red.

"Well hell, I didn't think we would be gone all day!" he fired back with an attitude.

"Crap! He gets burnt so easy and I'll take the rap for it," I thought. After a quick dip, we put our shirt and shoes back on, balance our bikes on our shoulders and walk back up the trail to the road.

Pulling into our driveway less than an hour later, Jill, our neighbor who lives across the

street, takes notice of our arrival. As we get off our bikes, she senses that we are up to something and begins to make her way over to our house to see what's up. Mark parks his bike and runs into the house and returns with a couple of sodas and an old coffee can.

Grabbing a soda from him and pulling the top, I take a big swig before I start rummaging through the bag that's still on the back of my bike for an M-80. By this time, a few more neighborhood kids have wandered up, curiosity getting the best of them. Putting my kickstand down, I walk to the center of the street with an M-80 in one hand and a Big K cola in the other. Squatting and bending over, I tell Mark, "OK, I'm going to put the M-80 on the street and light it. Then you put the coffee can on top and we run like hell, got it?"

"Got it," he says confidently.

"Where are the matches?"

Looking up, Mark is already running back to the house to get some matches. Meanwhile, I finish my cola, crunch the can on my forehead and toss it in the front yard. Returning a few minutes later, both of us hunch over the M-80 for a closer look. Striking a match on the pavement, I hold it close to the fuse while Mark watches intently until we finally see the focused flame shooting out of the end with a hiss.

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"It's lit! Put the coffee can down on top of it and run," I yell as I'm already backing away.

Seconds later, we meet and stop in the front yard and look back.

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The loudest window-rattling sound we've ever heard reaches our ears. Living in the Rocket City, sonic booms and prolonged rocket engine tests are a way of life and usually draw little attention from the adults. When the smoke clears, there's no longer a can sitting on the street!

"Where's the can?" I'm thinking when I look over at Mark who is pointing up high into the sky.

"Look, it's up fifty feet!" he yells.

Moments later, right next to where the smoke cleared in the road, a coffee can that now looks like a burnt football falls back to the street with a clinkety, clinkety-clink; finally coming to a rest on the pavement. Everyone stood in brief silence staring at one another and then busted out in hysterical laughing fits holding their sides, dropping down and eventually rolling around in the grass laughing to tears.

"Do it again!" one of the neighborhood kids yells out loud. "Do it again!"

"Not yet, we've still got a long way to go before the 4th, we've got to use these babies sparingly!" I inform the crowd of onlookers as I roll the bag up from the top down.

"Hey, after dark, we're going to roll Suzy's yard on Riviera. Are y'all in?" I asked trying to change the subject and conserve our artillery for another day. "If so, we'll need everyone to bring some rolls of toilet paper."

About that time, we notice Dad navigating his green Plymouth Fury 4-door land-yacht into the driveway. Mark, who sprang into action to hide the evidence on the road, is already rounding the corner to the back of the house carrying the smoldering can like a hot potato headed to the trash can.

Unaware of our antics, Dad gets out of his car with briefcase in hand and says, "Hey boys, what have y'all been up to today?"

"Aw, nothin'," I say.

"Don't wander off, we are going to have some turnip greens, corn on the cob, cabbage, and some squash for dinner," he says as he makes his way in through the front door of our house.

"Uh. Another mid-summer meal right out of his garden," I sighed.

We may have to sneak off with Donny to Taco Bell later tonight for some real grub in his dad's Lincoln Town Car. Keys left in the

dash and good friends working the drive-thru enable our tasteful nighttime treks to Taco Bell.

Just another day in the neighborhood!



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There must have been a guy from Florida back there because I could hear him yelling something about a 'Sunny Beach', and saw him waving in a funny way with only his middle finger stuck up in the air."

"I had recently asked my two grandsons what that meant. They kind of squirmed, looked at each other, giggled and told me that it was the Hawaiian Good Luck Sign, so I leaned out the window and gave him the good luck sign back."

"A couple of the people were so caught up in the joy of the moment that they got out of their cars and were walking towards me. I bet they wanted to pray, too, but

just then I noticed that the light had changed, and I stepped on the gas."

"It's a good thing I did, because I was the only car to get across the intersection. I looked back at them standing there. I leaned out the window, gave them a big smile and held up the Hawaiian Good Luck Sign as I drove away."

"Praise the Lord for such wonderful folks!"

Love to ya'll, Granny

"They've discovered a food proven to reduce a woman's sex drive by 90%. It's called Wedding Cake."

Seth Johnson, Athens

Granny bought a bumper sticker for her old Buick. She wrote me about it:

"The other day I went to my local religious bookstore where I saw a 'Honk if you Really Love Jesus' bumper sticker. I bought it and put it on the back bumper of my car and I'm really glad I did. What an uplifting experience followed."

"I was stopped at the light of a busy intersection - just lost in thought about the Lord, and I didn't notice that the light had changed."

"That bumper sticker really worked! I found lots of people who love Jesus. Why, the guy behind me started to honk like crazy. He must really love the Lord because pretty soon he leaned out his window and yelled, 'Jesus Christ!!' as loud as he could. Why, it was like a football game with him shouting, 'Go, Jesus Christ, Go!'"

"Everyone else started honking too, so I leaned out my window and waved and smiled to all

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A Piece of History

by Austin Miller

Recently I got a call from Ralph Pylant, an old friend of my youth that I had not seen since 1958. I remember the first day that he came to Central School in the fourth or fifth grade. At recess, on his first day at Central, he and I had a fight. After we got all that settled we became friends. Ralph was a good basketball player but his main sport was boxing; he loved to box and would take on all comers usually to the detriment of his opponent.

Finally, the only people that would box with him were unsuspecting boys visiting from other schools for sports events. He boxed in the Navy and told me that he considered going professional. Ralph joined the Navy at seventeen and the last time I saw him before he called the other day was when he was home on leave from Boot Camp. I was in the tenth grade at Gurley and played hooky from school to go see him. Some of his other buddies also came by and I met a boy named Wayne Hill. About a year later Wayne married my first cousin Faye Miller and he and I became friends. The friendship lasted until Wayne's untimely death of a heart attack in the early 1990s.

After his call, I met Ralph at Mayes Body Shop, located about four miles out of Huntsville on Highway 72 East. I recognized him without any trouble and after we started talking I could see a lot of the old Ralph from

our school days. To me the remarkable thing was the ease of our conversation after we had not seen each other in 65 years.

One reason we met was so he could give me some information on a possible story about a 1928 Ford A-Model car that has been restored by Mr. Mayes. The car was originally owned by a gentleman named Pete McPeters. Ralph was friends with Mr. McPeters' sister, Hallie Kilpatrick. He told me that Mrs. Hallie had hoped to see the car restored but died in December of 2010 and didn't get to see it finished.

She was a well known citizen of Maysville and lived in the same house at Maysville as far back as I can remember. Her house still stands and is located about the length of a football field down Brownsboro Road from the center of downtown Maysville. She was a long time member of the Maysville Church of Christ and worked in the lunch room at Central school for a number of years. I knew her two sons Harold and Joe. Harold was a grade or two ahead of

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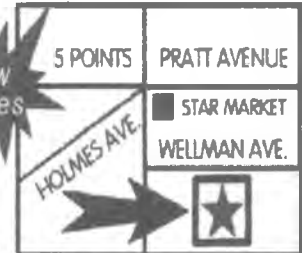
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me in school. He married Rosie Furlough, one of his Madison County High School classmates and they still live in Madison County. Joe was a classmate of mine and currently lives in Austin, Texas. Because of his friendship with Mrs. Hallie, Ralph asked me to write the story of Mr. McPeter's old A-Model.

This was an easy story to write because I remember the car traveling up and down what is now Ryland Pike during my growing up years. According to Ralph, Mr. McPeters ordered the car in 1928 from Sears and Roebuck for seven hundred fifty-six dollars and a few cents. He went to the Huntsville depot to pick it up in a two-horse wagon pulled by mules.

It came in three packets; a front axel and two tires, a rear axel and two tires and the chassis and motor in another crate. Mr. McPeters hauled the car in

the wagon and put it together when he got home. In 1928 there was no Highway 72 or paved roads between Huntsville and Gurley. The two main roads then were old Gurley Road that took you east to Gurley and west to Huntsville via Chase Road. When the car was new the only paved places around were the brick paved streets in downtown Huntsville. When I first remember Mr. McPeters and the car, it sat at his house on Highway 72 about three miles out of Huntsville. By then it was the late forties and two lanes of Highway 72 had been built and paved. The front porch of the house was about ten feet from the highway and when the car was not in use it sat in front of the house. It is astonishing to realize that when I first saw the car as a child it was already twenty years old.

For parts of five decades or

almost forty years, the car was a common sight on the roads of Ryland and Maysville. And they say they make better cars now than they did in the past! A lot of the miles on the car were made between Mr. McPeter's house on Highway 72 and his sister's house in Maysville. I wish I had a dollar for every time I saw it travel in front of our house on what is now Ryland Pike on the way to and from Maysville.

A lot of history occurred during the years Mr. McPeters drove the car; two different generations grew up, the stock market crashed in 1929. The country suffered through a

"She grew on him like she was a colony of Ecoli and he was room-temperature Canadian Beef."

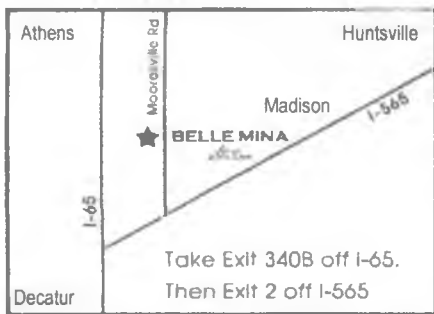
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Great Depression, World War II came and went as did the Korean War. And closer to home Huntsville changed from a small cotton town to the space capitol of the world spawning explosive growth in Madison County.

My friend Bill Gossett told me that in the late forties and early fifties he and Harvey McPeters used to go on dates in the car. Harvey is Mr. Pete's son. I knew Harvey's brother Billy who was in my grade at Central for a while; Billy died young and is buried in Ryland Cemetery. I know there are other members of this family but I did not know the others.

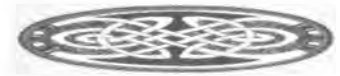
After Mr. McPeters died his son Harvey owned the car, later it was owned by Joe Kilpatrick and then Eugene Renefroe. Mr. Wayne Mayes bought the car from Mr. Renefroe about seven years ago and restored it. Mr.

Mayes said the car came to him in pieces. Now it is back on the road again.

Last week I saw it going down Ryland Pike toward Maysville running like a sewing machine. It has been restored to its original color, Vagabond Green. Every part of the car is like new. The restoration was a work of art that resulted in a beautiful vintage vehicle and a striking piece of history. If you saw an old newsreel circa the Roaring Twenties, you just

might see a car like it on the big screen.

They say what goes around comes around. The car traveled the roads and sat in the McPeter's front yard on Highway 72 for nearly forty years. Now it is traveling the same roads again and sits at Mayes Body Shop on Hwy. 72 approximately two miles from the spot where I first saw it about 65 years ago.



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Tweetie's Pet Tips

Handling Aggression between Cats

I know, hard to believe cats can get aggressive. I personally LOVE a good cat fight. Here are some tips to deal with this behavior.

Tweetie

Adding a second cat

Many people adopt a second cat thinking that the resident cat will be happy. This is a risky move. Just because your cat is sweet and loving with you doesn't mean he's going to be sweet to another cat.

Although you can increase the chances that they will get along or at least tolerate one another by making proper introductions, there's no way to predict whether cats will get along with each other. Unfortunately, there's no training method that can guarantee that they ever will. But we're here to help negotiate a truce.

Territorial aggression

This occurs when a cat feels that an intruder has invaded her territory.

- A cat may be aggressive toward one cat (usually the most passive), yet friendly and tolerant with another.

- Problems often occur when a new cat is brought home, a young kitten reaches maturity, or a cat sees or encounters neighborhood cats outside.

- Typical behavior includes stalking, chasing, ambushing, hissing, loud meowing, swatting and preventing access to places (such as the litter box, bedroom, etc.).

- Female cats can be just as territorial as males.



Inter-male aggression

Adult male cats may threaten, and sometimes fight with, other males. This is more common among unneutered cats. They may fight over a female for a higher place in the pecking order or to defend territory.

Cats stalk, stare, yowl, howl and puff up their fur (picture the arched back of the Halloween cat) to threaten each other. If one does back down and walk away, the aggressor, having made his point, will usually walk away as well.

If no one backs down, cats may actually fight. They may roll around biting, kicking, swatting, and screaming, suddenly stop, resume posturing, fight again, or walk away. If you see signs that a fight may occur, distract the cats by clapping loudly, tossing a pillow nearby, or squirting them with water. These actions can also be used to break up a fight. Keep your distance, and never put body parts in the middle of a fight; you could be injured.

Defensive Aggression

This behavior occurs when a cat tries to protect himself from an animal or human attacker he believes he can't escape. This can occur in response to the following:

- Punishment or the threat of punishment from a person.

- An attack or attempted attack from another cat.

- Any incident that makes the animal feel threatened or afraid.

Redirected aggression

Cats direct this type of aggression toward another animal, or even a person, who didn't initially provoke the behavior. For example, your cat is sitting in the window and sees an outdoor cat walk across the front yard. He gets very agitated because that cat is in his territory. You pet him; he turns and bites you. He doesn't even know who you are at that point—he's so worked up about the cat outside that he attacks the first thing that crosses his path.

Consult with a veterinarian

Your first step should always be to contact your veterinarian for a thorough health examination. Cats often hide symptoms of illness until they're seriously ill; your aggressive cat may be feeling sick and taking out his misery on others.

If your cat gets a clean bill of health, consult your vet or an animal behavior specialist for help. A behaviorist will advise you on what can be done.

You may need to start the introduction process all over again, keep the cats in separate areas of your home, or even find one of the cats a new home if the aggression is extreme and can't be resolved.

Consult with your veterinarian about a short course of anti-anxiety medication for your cats while you're working on changing their behavior.

Never medicate your cat on your own.

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From the Desk of Tom Carney

Days of the Ku Klux Klan

by Tom Carney

On January 3, 1869, a school teacher by the name of Jonathan Everest was taken from his home and hanged by the Ku Klux Klan. Before putting the rope around his neck, they allowed him to write a letter to his wife who lived in Illinois.

Part of his letter read:

"I know I will never see you again, as they are about to kill me. Please take care of our son and tell him when he is grown how much I loved him. Please do not grieve too much ... you are a young woman and I hope you will marry again so to have someone to take care of you in your old age.... They say it is time. I have to go."

Jonathan Everest's only crime was being a Northerner who had the misfortune to be assigned a teaching post in Alabama.

The Ku Klux Klan was originally founded in Pulaski, Tenn. in 1865 and the idea of it quickly spread to other parts of the South. Disorganized bands of men calling themselves Ku Kluxers began operating in Madison County as early as 1866, independent of each other with no central control.

Huntsville and Madison County were in the grip of carpetbagger rule. Men were

being denied the right to hold political office because of their wartime service to the Confederacy and the men and women of Huntsville were starving. In 1865, over 5,000 rations were distributed in one month in an effort to alleviate the hunger. With the advent of the Klan, Southerners saw a way to fight back through fear and intimidation.

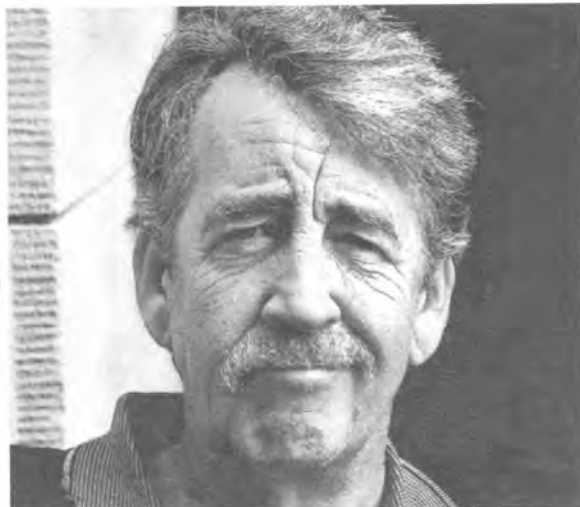
In the spring of 1867, a group of leading citizens from Huntsville traveled to Nashville where they met with a representative of Gen. Nathan Bedford Forrest and received a charter to open a Den (local branch). Gen. Forrest was the Imperial Wizard (President) of the national organization of the Ku Klux Klan.

Evidence suggests the first meeting of the newly chartered Den was held at the Otey Mansion in Meridian-

ville, where a man with the initials F.G. (Frank Gurley?) was elected Grand Cyclop. An individual by the name of Coltart or Coltard was elected Grand Magi (Vice-President) and the post of Grand Turk (Adjutant) went to a Mr. Jenkins.

The Den moved quickly to take control of all the unorganized bands operating under the auspices of the Klan. Within months new Dens were formed throughout Madison County, while the Huntsville branch assumed control of all North Alabama Klan activities.

The citizens of Huntsville



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were quick to embrace the Klan and its law and order platform. Veterans who had returned home after the war to find their whole way of life destroyed were again part of an organization fighting for the Southern cause. Widows and housewives showed their support by sewing Klan robes and acting as informants. By 1868, the Ku Klux Klan in Madison County had grown to over three thousand members.

A common misconception today is to think of the Klan as a few diehard radical racists struggling to maintain the remnants of a society based on slavery. This is not true. Unfortunately, it had wide support among all segments of society. It would be a safe assumption to say that almost every Southern born public official in Huntsville at that time was a Ku Kluxer or a sympathizer. The Klan had become one of the major powers in Madison County.

In early 1868, Union military troops were sent to New Market to arrest a man accused of being a Klan member. Every few miles, between Huntsville and New Market, the soldiers would spot small bands of robed men on the horizon, sitting absolutely still on their horses ... watching. Entering the small town, the soldiers found the streets deserted. Not a soul was to be seen anywhere—except for 150 robed and hooded Ku Kluxers.

Klansmen were lined up on both sides of the road and at the shrill command of a whistle, reined their horses into formation completely blocking the street.

The soldiers paused, and deciding discretion was the better part of valor, turned their horses back toward

Huntsville, without the prisoner.

On November 8, 1868, a meeting was held in Huntsville on the courthouse square by the freed slaves and "scalawags." Speeches were made protesting the reign of Klan terror, with carpetbag politicians promising to put an end to it, if they were elected.

Midway through the meeting, the speeches were interrupted by the loud piercing shrill of a whistle. Obeying the command of the whistle, Ku Kluxers mounted on their horses, began encircling the square. Later, a congressional investigation would estimate there were at least 500 robed Klansmen taking part.

The crowd grew silent, intimidated by the robed threat. A shot rang out. No one knows who fired it. Instantly, the courthouse square became bedlam as carpetbaggers and freed slaves all began firing. The square became a battleground with bullets ricocheting off buildings and bloody, bruised bodies lying

everywhere. When the firing ceased, Judge Thurlow of Athens lay dead.

Historians would later claim that the Ku Klux Klan fired no shots.

Ex-Confederates were not allowed to vote and were terrified the newly freed slaves would take control of county and state politics. The Klan's primary function at this time (as they saw it) was to insure this did not happen.

The Klan terror began to escalate, with no one being safe from the midnight riders. A husband accused of not working was taken out and whipped. Black men would be hanged for not being "respectful." A tenant farmer would be threatened with a whipping if he tried to leave and work for someone else.

But the best way to incur the Klan's wrath was to vote Republican. The Klan was also impartial—it would whip or hang anyone, regardless of their race.

By the early 1870s the once-proud Ku Klux Klan had

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become an object of revulsion to most people in Madison County. The organization that was once controlled by the aristocrats of Huntsville had become a catchall for riff-raff and "white trash."

Klan terror had become so bad in Madison County and surrounding areas that the United States Government sent a congressional committee to Huntsville to investigate the outrages and try to put a stop to them. The testimony they heard was so damning that even the Klansmen were disgusted.

Huntsville's leading citizens were called to testify about their knowledge of the Klan. Supposedly, they knew nothing. The most damning testimony came from the victims. Among the crimes the Klan had committed were:

Caleb Beasley - whipped; Thomas Regney - whipped; Clem Dougerty - hung; Lisa Meadows - raped; John Clark - whipped; Henry Clung - hung; Bill Williams - shot; Elliot Fearon - shot.

John Wagner, a Northerner who had been collecting information on Klan activities, testified to reports of Klan atrocities of which he had personal knowledge:

"Elijah Townsend, men in disguise took his gun, and William Thompson at the same time was whipped by these men in disguise. Matt Hammond reported that last spring, 1870, he received a letter sent to him by the Ku Klux ordering him to leave his home, and stating that he should not live within twenty miles or he would be hung. John Jones, was confronted at the same time and was whipped. He reports that his wife was sick in bed, on her death bed, and these men, to scare her and make her tell

where Jones was, shot their pistols off over the bed."

In all, the commission heard reports of almost one hundred crimes committed by the Klan in Madison County. The townspeople, once loyal supporters of the Klan, were shocked when confronted with the evidence.

On November 23, 1873, a

meeting of the leading Huntsville Klan officers was held at the McGee Hotel in Huntsville, where it was officially dissolved.

Sporadic and half-hearted attempts would be made over the years to form another Klan, but never again would they enjoy the support of Huntsville's citizens.

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Ocie Sparkman

by Malcolm Miller

There were several remarkable characters in downtown Huntsville's heyday during the nineteen forties and fifties, some that stand out in my mind still today. One of these individuals was a crippled man named Ocie Sparkman. He was a kind and gentle man who was always cheerful and had a big smile on his face.

The first time I ever remember seeing Ocie was around nineteen forty-three or four. They were having a type of Pentecostal revival in a house on Bob Wade Lane and I, along with some of my buddies, were hanging around outside a window trying to talk to the girls who seemed to always find seats by windows so they could talk to the boys. The people in the church were standing up singing and shouting inside and while Ocie was standing a small child crawled up on the bench under him and went to sleep. Finally, when the singing ended Ocie started to sit down and when he would touch the child he would raise back up, this went on for several times until he finally sat down and the kid yelled. Ocie moved very quickly for a crippled man and jumped straight up. I always remember this sight as it was hilarious.

After I was discharged from the Navy after World W II, I came back home and got a job at the General Shoe Factory. Since I had been the ship's barber while in the Navy, I started working part time as a barber;

first at the South Side Barber Shop just off the square next door to the fire hall, (incidentally the only one in town at that time). Later on I moved to the Roosevelt Barber Shop on the west side of the square in a basement located below the cotton buyers' offices. This is where I really got to know Ocie Sparkman. He made his daily rounds to all the businesses with a large basket on one arm selling apples and chewing gum. It got to where I always looked forward to seeing Ocie, carefully descending the stairs into the shop. As I have said previously, Ocie was very crippled and how he carried that heavy basket full of apples and chewing gum all day I will never know.

The owner of the Roosevelt Barber Shop at that time was a man named Guy Spencer and he loved to joke and pull pranks on everyone. I know this because he used a large safety pin to fasten the chair cloth around the customers and I could not count the times I was stuck by that big old pin. When Ocie would come in the

shop Guy would buy either an apple or a pack of gum from him and then try to give it back to him. This would upset Ocie to no end, however Guy Spencer continued this ritual with him each time he came in the barber shop, reenacting the same ritual many times.

Finally Ocie's luck ran out, he had been hobbling around the streets of Huntsville for years until finally he was hit by a car and spent a long time in Huntsville Hospital. Finally when he was able to move around some they sat him up a chair in the lobby of the hospital where he could sell his apples and chewing gum in a comfortable place.

The last time I saw Ocie Sparkman I was eating breakfast at the Big Spring Cafe on Governors Drive and Ocie was there. We talked about old times a while then he asked me if I would drive him home; you see he lived just across Governor's Drive and he could hardly walk. I told him that I would be glad to drive him home.

I really don't know a lot about Ocie's family or whether he lived alone - I only know that little frail crippled man made an impression on me that has lasted all through the years.



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Will Rogers

Courting in the Early Days of Huntsville

by Linda Strange, written in 1991



Have you ever wondered where folks went on dates in Huntsville back in the 1930s and 1940s, when Huntsville was still just a sleepy little cotton town? When the boundaries of the city went from Meridian and Washington Streets on the north to Huntsville Hospital on the south?

Well, I started wondering about that very thing the other day and decided to ask some long-time Huntsville residents just where they went on a date.

I called about eight folks and each had a unique version of Huntsville as a place to date years ago. Each person I talked to told me of fun times spent at the old Lyric Theater downtown and also at the Grand Theater, around the corner from the Lyric.

A few mentioned the Elks, an old opera house on the square that once had good stage shows. Also a few told about the Princess Theater on Church Street.

When asked about restaurants, one place was mentioned unanimously as having the best burgers in town. A place called Swaims, where many took their dates. One fellow said you could smell those delicious burgers when you got within a mile of the place.

Some other favorite hangouts for kids with dates were the old Post Office Cafe downtown, the Central Cafe, Broadway's Restaurant (where Roper's Flowers is now located). And the Mullins Cafe. Mullins used

to be on Stevens Street before moving to its present location on Andrew Jackson Way. One guy said you could get a good sized burger at Mullins at that time for a dime. Two other nice places were McKnights and Adcock's.

One fellow mentioned that Huntsville had many honky-tonks during this time. A few were pretty notorious and you didn't take a date there. Mostly you went drinking there with the guys. Places like the White Castle, better known as the "Bloody Bucket", because of all the Saturday night fights there, were all well known. And then, of course, was the Snuffdipper's Ball on Jefferson Street.

A few other clubs mentioned were Galley's and Midway. Steadman's also was a nice place to eat and

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dance. It was located where the present Big B Drugs is, near Huntsville Hospital.

Almost unanimously the folks I talked to raved about the Monte Sano Tavern. It was located next to the park and picnic area on Monte Sano. Some referred to it as "the Lodge".

For years I thought I was looking at the burned-out ruins of the Monte Sano Hotel in the park, but now I realize those ruins were of the Tavern. The old hotel was located on a bluff overlooking the city on what is now Old Chimney Road. You can still see the old chimney of the destroyed hotel.

Everyone agreed the Tavern was a favorite place to eat, with large oak beams overhead and a huge stone fireplace at either end of the large dining room.

One gal told me that on her very first date she was taken to the old Post Office Cafe. She thought she'd be adventurous so she ordered fried oysters. Never having eaten any, she had to drown them in ketchup to get them down.

If a girl didn't have lots of dates back then (before the War) something was wrong. There were lots of fellas around town and most were military guys, all waiting to be called up for the War.

Those were very uncertain times. If you were dating a guy, you were never quite sure after a few dates if you'd ever see him again. He may be called up for the War and then never come back to Huntsville. He may move back to his hometown after the War and then you'd lose track of each other.

Even with all the uncertainty though, everyone managed to have a pretty good time in small town Huntsville. Picnics were often mentioned as a fun thing

to do, and also swimming. There were lots of drive in restaurants around during those days. The one mentioned by almost everyone as having the best barbeque in town was Bill's. It was located on Meridian Street near the old Lincoln School.

Everyone's favorite drug store was Tom Dark's on the square. It had little round ice cream tables where you could go with a date for ice cream and a good fountain coke. It was once on the east side of the square but then later moved to the north side. Mr. Dark's motto was "We've been on the square for years."

One gal said when her steady guy went off to the War, it had been decided that she would date others while he was gone. Some of her dates in his absence took her to her very favorite eating place, the Russel Erskine Hotel. She said they served wonderful homemade rolls, great watercress salad and the best homemade pies in town.

When her steady came back home and asked her to marry him, she said she'd have to think about it. She told him she wanted to get out of debt before marriage. She owed downtown Dunning's \$100, which was a lot of money back then. He promptly paid her Dunning's bill so she, running out of excuses and also being very much in love with him, married him immediately. She laughs and tells folks now that she married him because he paid off her Dunning's bill!

Back then, it

was a more casual time. There weren't as many planned activities as now. With so little going on in town in the way of entertainment, folks going on dates had to think up things to do on their own. It sounds like they did a pretty good job of it. And it sounds like those were some pretty good times and great memories for a lot of people in early Huntsville.

I kinda wish I'd been there, too!

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"It's tough to stay married. My wife kisses the dog on the lips, but she won't drink from my glass!"

Rodney Dangerfield

A Stroll Around the Courthouse Square

by Louise Manning

The other day as I was driving through downtown Huntsville, I thought of the changes that have taken place in the appearance of downtown since the 1940s, 1950s and early 1960s.

During this period of time, downtown was the place where everyone came to do their shopping and take care of other business. There were retail stores for most any business you can name. Most of the stores had large glass windows in which to display their wares. It was fun to just go window shopping. The city offices and county offices, as well as the fire department, Carnegie library, and the Post Office were also downtown.

I am 86 years old and worked downtown for many years. In my memory, these are the years of "my downtown"!

When I arrived home, I took a mental stroll around the Courthouse Square. In the days that I worked downtown, I often took a walk during my lunch hour or on my afternoon break.

The most obvious change is the Courthouse. In 1964, the Courthouse which was built in 1914 was demolished. This Courthouse was a two story gray brick building resembling a Greek temple with a tower on top containing a four-faced clock. There was a large lawn with grass and huge trees surrounding the building. With the building of a modern and larger building on the grounds, the look of the center of town was completely changed!

Plans were made to restore downtown to look as it did in the 1800s. Many of the stores removed their large glass windows used to display their wares and altered the buildings to represent early Huntsville. The concrete

sidewalks were torn up and replaced with bricks.

The parking garage on the corner of Madison Street and Fountain Row was built in the 1960s. At the time it was built, it also housed the city offices. The garage replaced the Carnegie Library, city hall, fire department and stores. In those years, downtown was surrounded by residential streets so some houses were also replaced by the garage.

On the west side of the Square, several very old buildings dating to the time when "cotton was king" were demolished. These buildings were known as "cotton row" because they housed, among other offices, the offices of cotton buyers. The entrance to Big Spring Park now occupies this space. Big Spring Park also had a make over and was enlarged. The building known as 200 West Side Square also replaced some older

buildings. The majestic building on the corner of West Side Square and Fountain Row which had been used as a bank until recently has managed to survive!

Several stores on the east side of the square, were demolished and replaced with the present buildings representing early Huntsville.

While I did not walk down Washington Street or Jefferson Street to Clinton Avenue, the garage on Clinton which covers the block between Washington and Jefferson is visible from the Square. Since this garage was one of the major changes to downtown, I decided to include it. The garage replaced a hotel and a number of offices and stores. Also, from the Square, you can see many boarded-up buildings. These buildings contained businesses.

Two other buildings which were demolished, while not on the Square, which I miss seeing are the Elks Building located on Eustis Street (behind the I. Schiff-

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"You can easily judge the character of a man by the way he treats others who can do nothing for him."

Frank Smith, Huntsville

man Building) and the old Post Office building on the corner lot next to the Elks Building. These two lots are now parking lots. The Elks Building was originally built as an opera house and theater and was later used as an annex for the Madison County Courthouse. The Post Office building served this area before the Post Office on Holmes Avenue (now the Federal Building) was built in the 1930s. As you can see, these buildings were quite old with a lot of history!

The "Great is the Power of Cash" sign which was in giant letters over T. T. Terry's Department Store on the south side of the square is gone!

A more recent change is the sidewalk dining associated with today's businesses.

There are many other changes that have been made within a few blocks of the Square, mainly the demolition of houses and stores/offices for parking lots. Anyone who remembers downtown during the above years will have their own list.

I understand that when most people think of downtown these days, they also include the Municipal Complex, Von Braun Center, Art Museum, EarlyWorks, Constitution Hall Village, etc., all of which have been built around or since the early 1960s. That is why I kept my comparison to the Courthouse Square. It becomes tricky to try to explain all that has taken place in order for those buildings to be placed where they are. Among the many changes that have been made are: streets have

been rerouted, renamed, or are no longer there. Big Spring park has been changed, and houses, offices, stores, churches and other buildings have been demolished. Among the buildings no longer on West Clinton Street (or Clinton Avenue) is the West Clinton Grammar School where I spent my first six years of school!

Well, I think I have "strolled" enough for one day. I am getting tired, and it is about time for me to decide whether to take a nap or watch television. Maybe, I will start watching television and that will put me to sleep as it sometimes does. And, I will not have to make a decision after all!



We Love Our Pets!

By Mississippi Xi, Jackson member Doris B. Campbell

🐾 Name: **Casey** 🐾 Species: **Feline**



Casey was found along with another kitten, Gidget, when they barely had their eyes open. They were together but from different litters. There were 9 kittens total that were thrown out at our dumpster. Casey and Gidget were the only two that survived. I first thought Casey & Gidget were dead – when I picked them up, their bodies were limp, lifeless, eyes closed, but I could feel a heart beat. I bottle fed them till they could eat on their own. I am proud of helping all our rescues, but Casey is one of the special ones (Doris and her husband Billy transformed their property into a safe haven for animals). Casey has birth defects – both front legs are extremely crooked like they were broken, but we believe he was born this way. His tail is also crooked like it got broken. His right eye pupil is very small, so when he looks at you and tries to focus, he looks like he is drunk!

He could not walk on his front feet – he just "scooted" where he wanted to go, using his back legs to push. His chest had sores on top of sores. It took a long, long time to heal – many penicillin shots, dressing changes, etc. As he began to rally and

get his strength, I took some sewing elastic from my Mom's sewing machine and made a makeshift harness that went around his chest and under his forearms, but not touching his "chest wounds". I held him up and let his front feet dangle to the floor (he could stand fine on his back legs). He felt something under his front feet for the first time and not on his chest. Wish you could have seen his face of astonishment – that it didn't hurt. So, every day, building from 2-4 times a day, for several weeks, we did exercises to strength the forelegs. One day I was in the kitchen and I turned to go get him for his exercise session. In he walked to meet me in the doorway! He looked so proud of himself.

We continued exercises for a couple of weeks, but it was apparent this was as good as it was going to get. Now, wherever I am sitting, he comes up in my lap, puts one front paw on each side of my neck/shoulder and butts his head up under my chin to push me backward. He sits there, not moving, just quietly I think saying "thank you". Anyway, he steals my heart now, for sure!

From my Dad, I learned the motto: "be grateful – not greedy" and take what God lets you have.

This article originally printed in the March-April 2013 issue of The Torch of Beta Sigma Phi.

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Top 10 Books of Local & Regional Interest

1. **Incidents of the War: Civil War Journal of Mary Jane Chadick** - by Nancy Rohr \$19.95
2. **Huntsville** by John Kvach, Charity Ethridge, Michelle Hopkins and Susanna Leberman \$19.99
3. **Historic Huntsville:** by Elise Hopkins Stephens \$18 (new price)
4. **Growing up in the Rocket City: A Baby Boomer's Guide** (over 200 Photos/illustrations) by Tommy Towery \$15
5. **1861 Civil War Map of Huntsville** (with historic points of interest) \$4.95
6. **The Wondrous McCrarys: 200 Years on a Madison County Farm** by Joseph Jones \$12.95
7. **Dear Sister - Civil War Letters to a Sister in Alabama** by Frank Anderson Chappell \$14.95
8. **Tornado Valley** by Shelly Miller \$14.95
9. **True Tales of Old Madison County - back in stock** - by Pat Jones \$7.95
10. **Huntsville Entertains** - by Historic Huntsville Foundation \$12