



No. 246
August 2013



Old Huntsville

HISTORY AND STORIES OF THE TENNESSEE VALLEY

A TIME OF ELEGANCE - THE MONTE SANO HOTEL



On summer days during the waning years of the 19th Century, some of the wealthiest and most influential people in the nation could be seen arriving via train at the Memphis & Charleston depot in Huntsville. People including the Vanderbilts, Astors, and Goulds made the trip to Huntsville. But they were not coming here on business; rather, they were on their way to one of the country's foremost upper-crust playgrounds - the Monte Sano Hotel.

Also in this issue: **Fifty Years Behind Bars**

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The Monte Sano Hotel

by Jack Harwell

On summer days during the waning years of the 19th Century, some of the wealthiest and most influential people in the nation could be seen getting off incoming trains at the Memphis & Charleston depot in Huntsville. These travelers had names like Vanderbilt, Astor, and Gould, and were highly placed in their respective fields in both the public and private sector. But they were not coming to Huntsville on business; rather, they were only passing through on their way to one of the country's foremost upper-crust playgrounds - the Monte Sano Hotel.

It was an imposing place, stretching more than 300 feet along the mountain's western rim. Its three stories contained over 200 rooms, each of which was furnished as luxuriously as the finest hostelrys of New York and Philadelphia. Perched only 100 yards from the bluff, it would have been visible from Huntsville, three miles away

and a thousand feet below. Pedestrians on the city's streets could look up and see it, though it was beyond the means of most of them. At times they could hear a train whistle as the Monte Sano Railway shuttled visitors up and down the mountain.

The attraction of the hotel, and the reason for its construction, was the presence of a number of mineral springs on the mountain. In the days before now-benign diseases were brought under control by antibiotics, the healing effects of mineral waters were seen as the means to a long healthy life. The springs on Monte Sano had long been known for their restorative powers. Dr. Thomas Fearn may have been the first to use water from the springs for the treatment of disease, and is believed to have given the mountain its name - Monte Sano, the mountain of health.

By 1833, Dr. Fearn had established a health colony on the mountain. Around this colony was organized the town of Viduta, which had an inn, a female seminary and a number of fine homes. But the mountain top's remoteness kept the area from developing any further. The seminary closed after only three years, and what little activity was left around Viduta was swept away by the Civil War. Little happened on the mountain during the Reconstruction years.

"Life is pleasant. Death is peaceful. It's the transition that's troublesome."

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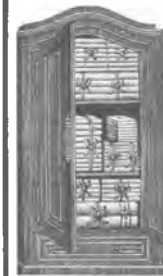
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The area's revival began in 1873 when Michael O'Shaughnessy came to town. O'Shaughnessy was one of a number of outsiders who came in the postwar years, to exploit the South's untapped industrial potential. A true entrepreneur rather than a carpetbagger, he had opened a cottonseed oil plant in Nashville soon after the war ended, and within a few years was so successful that he decided to expand into Huntsville. Michael was soon joined in north Alabama by his brother James and several investors from Nebraska. In order to pursue their goal of building up industry in Huntsville in an organized manner, they formed the North Alabama Improvement Company in 1886.

The Improvement Company also saw potential in the mountain to the east of the city. James had bought a home there, along with 362 acres of land, in 1885. Monte Sano, it was decided, would be the perfect place for a hotel, but not just any hotel. The Monte Sano Hotel would

be as grand and as lavish as the finest inns in the great cities of the northeast. It would be just the sort of place that would cater to the well-heeled people who would surely be coming to the area now that Huntsville was becoming a major industrial center.

The project began with the purchase of 3,000 acres on the western slopes, as well as the old turnpike that had been built up the side of the mountain in the 1850s. On February 16, 1886, a building site was selected adjacent to the old town of Viduta, one hundred yards from the edge of the mountain top. Within a week, sixteen teams of mule skinnners had been hired to begin carting building supplies up to the construction site. Some thought was given to erecting a saw mill to facilitate the work on the hotel, but this plan was ultimately abandoned because of the costs involved. Lumber was freighted in from Chattanooga and Montgomery, although James O'Shaughnessy saw to it that local companies got the first

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The North Alabama Improvement Company was determined that the Monte Sano Hotel would be the equal of the finest such establishments anywhere in the country. John Rea, the architect, had designed a structure in the popular Queen Anne style that was stately without being gaudy. When completed, the three-story structure would be 308 feet long and 200 feet wide. A wraparound porch would enclose the ground floor on three sides. Rising above the third floor would be a double-decked, bell-roofed observatory. Water would be piped up the mountain's side from Big Spring; drinking water would be piped from Cold Spring. The grounds would be illuminated by gaslight. Setting off the hotel grounds would be the magnificent landscaping work of Major Schrimshaw, one of the finest landscape artists in New York.

Architect Rea had predicted that the hotel would be opened by June, but various delays pushed the opening date back a full year. Nevertheless, the work continued, and by the spring of 1887 furniture was being carted up the mountain as the finishing touches were placed on the hotel.

The great day finally arrived as the Monte Sano Hotel welcomed its first guests on June 1, 1887. The following night, a grand ball was held to celebrate the hotel's opening. To say that this was the social event of the season would be an understatement. A crowd of 400, some from as far away as Pennsylvania and

New York, arrived for the festivities. Trains arriving at the depot in Huntsville were packed. The hotel's opening exceeded Michael O'Shaughnessy's wildest dreams. Entertainment for the grand opening ball was provided by a string band from Nashville. The 40 by 60 foot ballroom was filled with people dancing, laughing, and enjoying the music. Those who needed fresh air could go outside and walk around the gas-illuminated hotel grounds. Gas for the lights was generated by a plant that was part of the hotel complex. At midnight, refreshments were served and the party-goers moved into the large dining room. At the table, guests ate their food using china and flatware engraved with the words "Monte Sano." The motto of the hotel's manager, S. E. Bates, was, "The kitchen is the foundation of every good hotel." That night, Bates outdid himself.

A newspaper story a few weeks later would talk of Bates' "unsurpassed dining room laden with everything to tempt the appetite."

The success of opening night set the tone for the hotel's first season. Day after day, anxious visitors arrived in Huntsville from all over the country. Hotel guests arriving at the depot

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were shuttled to the top of the mountain in a carriage drawn by six horses. Along the way, the carriage would stop to allow passengers to view the valley below. Once the carriage had arrived in the hotel's circular driveway, visitors would stroll along walkways lined with shrubs and flowers to the main entrance, where the double doors were inlaid with colored glass.

Everything about the hotel was designed to provide the maximum comfort for its guests. The lobby featured a series of pigeonholes for mail, which was delivered and picked up twice daily. After registering, guests would be led by uniformed attendants down the long carpeted hallways to their rooms. There were no inside rooms at the Monte Sano; each of the hotel's 225 rooms opened to the outside. Plush furniture was everywhere, but no two rooms were furnished identically.

The hotel was built in the shape of a cross, with the top pointing north. The long south wing contained baths, a barber shop, a pool room, and a saloon. An adjacent building contained two bowling alleys. Nearby stood an 80 foot water tower which was filled by pumps bringing water up the mountain side from Big Spring. Drinking water was piped from Cold Spring, northeast of the hotel.

Other buildings held servants' quarters and a laundry.

Those who grew tired of the hotel's luxurious accommodations could go outside and stroll the boardwalk which overlooked the bluff. Bowling, croquet and tennis were offered for those who were interested in games. There were also more than twenty miles of hiking and bridle trails which led to such attractions as the natural well, then called the "bottomless well." The trails also led to the numerous springs which were the reason for the hotel's construction. The hotel manager conducted guided tours to the springs dally.

By the time the hotel's first season ended in August, over a thousand guests had registered and the hotel showed a profit. The North Alabama Improvement Company was delighted and began plans for the second phase of the mountain's development - a rail line linking the resort with the city. The members of the improvement company realized that the railroad was the logical next step if the hotel was to be successful. The four-hour carriage ride from the train station was an ordeal which was sure to dampen the enthusiasm of those who came to experience Monte Sano's luxurious accommodations. More people would be encouraged to come to the hotel if they

could get there in the comfort of a railroad coach.

Unfortunately, the success of the hotel did not translate into smooth sailing for the railroad. Ground was broken for the road on July 6, 1888, and no

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sooner had construction begun when it was halted by a strike, probably the first such action in Huntsville history. Management responded by bringing in 500 workers from Birmingham, effectively ending the strike after one week.

More bad luck dogged the railroad. Newspaper stories reported rather unwisely that the line would be completed by the middle of August. From the depot, it would run eastward up Clinton Street (now Clinton Avenue) and reach the foot of the mountain near Maple Hill Cemetery. The tracks had not yet reached Calhoun Street (now the site of East Clinton Elementary School) by August 4, by which time the railroad's Baldwin locomotive and three coaches had arrived.

By early September three miles of track had been laid - one third of the way to the hotel - and workmen and supplies were being carried to the construction site via rail in a boxcar. On September 6, a work crew boarded the car after a lunch break and began the trip up the mountain. One of the men, a 26 year old black worker from Eutaw named Frank Barker, was

riding on the brake wheel on top of the car. In the days before pneumatic brakes, brake-men would ride on top of the cars and set the brakes by turning large wheels by hand - a dangerous and exhausting job. As the train approached Lincoln Street, it passed beneath an overhead telephone line that had been placed by a private individual at less-than-regulation height. The wire caught Barker by the neck and toppled him to the ground. Before he could move to safety, he was run over by the boxcar's wheels. The other workers quickly ran to his aid, but it was too late. Barker died before he could receive medical attention.

The tragic death of Frank Barker was the worst incident associated with the railroad's construction, but it was by no means the only misfortune that affected the enterprise. It was becoming clear that the railroad would generate no revenue in 1888, and its creditors were becoming nervous. Some even went to court to try to get liens placed against the line. As the litigation went on, the railroad continued its glacial pace up the side of Monte Sano. The

last eight and one-half tortuous miles would require ten months to complete; the steel rails finally arrived on the mountain top on August 7, 1889. There, a station named Laura's View was constructed to receive passengers going to and from the hotel.



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Even after it began operation, the railroad was not an immediate success. It did reduce travel time to the hotel from four hours to thirty minutes, but the trip was not without its hazards. From the depot, the train traveled through the center of town on existing trolley tracks, and shopkeepers were not thrilled with the idea of a huge, smoking, clanking steam train coming down the street. A dummy trolley car shell had to be fitted over the locomotive to keep from frightening the horses, and the train was known thereafter as the "dummy" line.

Not long after it began, the train experienced its first operational accident. In those days locomotives were fitted with sand pipes, which were operated from the cab and dumped sand in front of the driving wheels for added traction when needed. But if the sand be-

came moist, which frequently happened, it would not flow through the pipes. Apparently the sand pipes on the Monte Sano locomotive clogged as it came down the mountain one day; the engineer was unable to reduce his speed and the train jumped the tracks. Fortunately, there were no injuries and the train was quickly put back into service. The nervous railroad manager took out a newspaper advertisement reassuring the public of the railroad's safety and reminding them that more injuries had come from mishaps involving horse-drawn wagons on the turnpike than on the train.

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with its construction, the railroad was successful in increasing the number of visitors to the hotel and the 1890 season was a good one. The hotel, now managed by Harvey S. Denison, began publishing its own newspaper, the Monte Sano Breeze. The Breeze contained informative articles about the mountain, testimonial letters extolling the hotel's delights, and a good number of advertisements. Also, in 1890, James O'Shaughnessy built a new home on the mountain top about a mile east of the hotel. The house was enormous - perhaps 200 feet long - and was built in the same Queen Anne style the hotel sported. Out back of the house was a lily pond and a gazebo. A footpath, known as "Flirtation Path," circled the pond. The pond was very popular with hotel visitors.

The first visitors to the hotel had carried home tales of its comforts and attractions, and the place now enjoyed a national reputation, attracting tourists from all over the country. They rarely left disappointed, and some of their words of praise were printed in the Breeze. One such letter, written by the editor of the New York Sun, described a typical reaction to the hotel's finery: "The hotel is elegantly furnished, kept in first-class style, and in all the appointments is a model of convenience, comfort, and luxury ... Neither money nor pains is spared in securing the best service, and in having [the hotel] kept in a style nowhere excelled in the United States."

The early 1890s were the Monte Sano Hotel's best years.



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Wealthy people continued to come to the hotel for the comforts it provided, touring the mountain's various attractions and strolling the path around O'Shaughnessy's lily pond. But the horizon which had seemed so bright in 1887 began to cloud just six years later. In June, 1893, it was announced that the Monte Sano Railroad would not operate that season. The stated reason was the expected drop in attendance at the hotel due to the Columbian Exposition in Chicago that year. In fact, the railroad was in serious financial trouble. Its construction and operation had overextended the North Alabama Improvement Company's assets, and various court actions had restricted the line's ability to operate. The hotel was also beginning to operate at a loss.

It was becoming obvious that the hotel and railroad would rise and fall together. Trains began to run again in 1894, but it would be for the last time. Mounting debts forced the closing of both the rail line and the hotel in 1895. The courts ordered the Monte Sano Railroad sold in 1896, and the rails which had been so laboriously laid just eight years earlier were lifted the following year for scrap.

But the Monte Sano Hotel was not finished yet. It reopened under new management in 1897, and for a while it appeared the hotel would weather its financial difficulties. The Spanish-American War provided a brief boost for the mountain top retreat. Military balls held there were quite popular with

the thousands of troops stationed at Huntsville for the war. A mountain resident, Sydney Mayhew, deeded property for a nondenominational church for hotel guests. Management felt confident enough in the future to have electric lights installed on the grounds.

It was no use. Within two years the hotel had fallen victim to a poor economy and a change in popular tastes. Medical science was beginning to find cures for yellow fever and other feared diseases, and people were no longer so willing to make long journeys by train and horse-drawn carriage to high-priced resorts so they could soak in mineral springs for their health. The hotel closed for good after the 1900 season.

By 1901, hogs and cattle were

grazing on the grounds so lovingly planned by Major Scrimshaw, where elegantly dressed ladies and bowler-hatted gentlemen had once strolled. The hotel stood empty and forlorn. It appeared its time had passed.

During the next few years, plans were put forth by different parties for reopening Monte Sano's resort hotel. In August 1904, the Huntsville Mercury

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announced an effort by some local residents to build an electric railway up the mountain. Plans for the rail line simmered for four years, until late 1908, when the newspaper announced an auction to raise funds for the line, at the same time encouraging readers to buy their tickets for the railroad right away.

In April 1909, word came that the line would be completed by July. Edward L. Pulley, general manager of the Huntsville Railway, Power and Light Company, which was charged with building the railway, then said that efforts were underway to convert the hotel into a tuberculosis sanitarium, which would circulate \$400,000 annually into the city's economy. But just as it appeared that the hotel might actually be reopened, the building and 27 acres of land were sold.

For a short while the old hotel bore the distinction of being one of the largest private residences in America when Lena Garth bought the hotel to use as a summer home for her ailing and elderly father, Horace. But Horace Garth died in 1911, and the structure was vacated once more.

In 1916, yet another attempt was made to reopen the hotel. Jemison Real Estate of Birmingham announced plans to convert the resort to an exclusive country club, with a golf course and tennis courts. The club's activities would also include bowling, billiards, fishing, horseback riding, and fox hunting. It was further suggested that the hotel might also be used as a convention center.

Opening was set for January 1, 1917, but when the date arrived, repairs were still being made on plumbing and electrical wiring. From then until May, newspaper advertisements declared that the facility would

be opening soon.

The country club did finally open, on a limited basis, on June 24, 1917. Facilities for the outdoor activities were still incomplete, but the club's manager, Harvey Hughes, promised music and dancing every afternoon and evening. But by this time, America was involved in the Great War, and light lunches and dancing at a made-over resort from the gilded age did not fit the national mood. Jemison was forced to sell the property back to the Garths. Thereafter, the hotel was opened once a year for a public ball; the rest of the time it sat empty.

The mountain around the abandoned hotel was changing, however. In 1926 a group of developers bought 200 acres on the top of the mountain with the idea of building a recreational community of summer homes. Those plans were soon done in by the onset of the Great Depression. Monte Sano Boulevard opened on Independence Day, 1927, and for the first time it was possible to drive up the mountain in an automobile. Attentive motorists on the mountain might catch a glimpse of the abandoned hotel through the windows of their Packards and Chevrolets.

In the summer of 1935, construction began on Monte Sano State Park. Much of this work was performed by the young

men of the Civilian Conservation Corps. In addition to building the cabins and other structures in the park, the CCCs made a number of improvements to the mountain's roads; these included the paving of Monte Sano Boulevard and

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the old road to Cold Spring, from whence drinking water had once been piped to Monte Sano Hotel. This latter road was renamed Fearn Street, in honor of the doctor who had been the first to realize the healthful benefits of mountain living.

By now the hotel had been empty for over 20 years. Through wars and depression, good times and bad, this old relic of a simpler time waited for a reawakening which would never come. The long carpeted hallways and lavishly furnished rooms remained silent.

On March 9, 1944, as war raged around the globe, the Huntsville Times placed a local interest story below the front page headlines: Monte Sano Hotel Sold; Buildings to Come Down. The hotel, as well as the remaining furnishings within, had been sold to the Mazer Lumber and Supply Company of Birmingham. The hotel would be dismantled and the furnishings sold. The razing of the building, the story said, would begin immediately.

There is no way of knowing the identity of the last person to walk the hotel's hallways on its last day. Whoever it was would have found the structure in a remarkable state of repair for all the neglect it had suffered. The newspaper article noted that "practically all lumber in the buildings is in remarkably good condition and the interior of the hotel, with the exception of cracked plastering, shows little effects of the passage of years." The interior of the building would have been recognizable

to the Astors, the Vanderbilts, and all the other captains of industry who had once walked its halls. If our unknown last visitor had a sense of history, he might have paused for a moment and listened for the sounds of music and of laughter of young men and women who had once passed that way.

Having ascertained that no vagrants had taken shelter in the old building, the person, most likely an employee of the lumber company, left the building, and the process of demolition began. Little by little the grand old structure was reduced until all that was left was one three-story chimney. Somehow, thankfully, this chimney survived.

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**"Adam blamed Eve,
Eve blamed the snake
and the snake didn't
have a leg to stand on."**

Church sign

Gradually, all the structures associated with the hotel fell victim to the passage of time. The O'Shaughnessy house was torn down in the 1920s, disappearing so completely that its exact location was unknown until discovered in the mid-1990s. The lily pond and remnants of "Flirtation Walk" survive, as do traces of the gazebo's foundation. After the railroad tracks were salvaged, the cross ties were left in stacks, which eventually vanished. The Monte Sano Union Chapel was demolished in 1968. The site of the long-disappeared Laura's View station is now private property on Shelby Avenue.

But the Monte Sano Hotel is not gone from us completely. The staircase and some of the doors and lanterns were purchased by Aaron Fleming, whose home on Whitesburg Pike had been damaged by fire about the time the hotel was being salvaged. These items were incorporated into the Fleming house and are there still. It is

likely that many of the hotel's fixtures were sold to builders by the Birmingham company and found their way into new homes all over Alabama where they may survive to this day.

Today, the old chimney, the railroad embankments, and some old grainy photographs are the only tangible evidence we have that the Monte Sano Hotel ever existed. Only in our imaginations can we stroll the artfully manicured grounds or ride the rails up the mountain. The hotel, like the era it symbolized, is gone forever, its loss made even more poignant by the brevity of its existence.

The unknown scribe for the Monte Sano Breeze was more prophetic than poetic when he wrote in 1890, "Many as there are here now, more come every day and it seems now as if those who tarry much longer might find it too late to gain entrance to what those who are now here deem an earthly paradise."



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The Cat - A Minor Miracle

by Ted Roberts



She had definitely lost her shape. Sagging, bulging, her career as a model was doomed to dreamland. So was her career as a tree climber. I made this observation as I noticed that her social life, which centered around a large sycamore, had kicked up a notch or two. Our formerly deserted backyard was now a playground for two black felines, a ragged black and white fellow who needed a trim, and another long-haired black playboy - the kind everybody names "Midnight". The poodle next door tried to be a voyeur, but they ran him off.

I refer to our cat - her social life. It was soon after those backyard romps that her tummy sagged and her saddlebag sides ballooned. Clearly, she was on the verge of increasing the world's cat population by one.

I locked the back door and grounded the cat. Seems like a

couple of months after - after the gradual ballooning - that I was sitting on the couch and there she was proudly staring at me, demanding my attention. She had deflated. With the help of my wife and my deep knowledge of mammalian sexual behavior, I solved the problem.

Somewhere in the disorderly,

3-bathroom shack in which we live was the litter of fetal felines that had puffed the cat's belly. But where? They definitely were not on tables, chairs, or mantelpiece. They weren't even hiding in the heaps of dirty clothes that quaintly decorated the den and each of the bedrooms. Without running amuck through the house, I put myself in the cat's brain. Hmmm, cats



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are not domesticated creatures. A streak of the wild still flows in their bloodstream. They worry about predators. For all they knew, our supper plates were loaded with kitten in Marengo Sauce. Words like hidden, dark and concealed leaped into my mind.

BAM - in the bedroom closet, buried among the castoffs on the floor (nah, a blue shirt won't work with red pants) was a living, breathing, lump of furry things. They evidently loved my wardrobe. As the eye analyzed the lump, it detected sixteen feet, four heads, and four tails totaling twenty-four kitten parts, which divided by the right numbers equals four kittens. Is there some mysterious kinship between cats and dirty clothes?

Then Mama, who was taking a break, strolled back into the nursery. She looked up at me as if to say, "How'd you find 'em?" She didn't seem to mind my presence as long as I kept my hands in my pockets and didn't have a Pit Bull at my side.

She lay down beside the four fur balls in such an exposed position such that each milkmaid or milkman (who could tell the difference) had access to a spigot. Now the fur ball was four separate creatures. They went for it like the guys at the corner bar went for draft beer. And I heard squeaky, little sounds like; "I saw it first" - "that one's mine" - "you're squashing my leg." Mama tried to help by nudging this one or that one with her head. For the first time in her life she had an assignment, responsibility, unrelated to her personal survival.

She must have wondered why none of her backyard pals mentioned this result of her backyard carousing. Some invisible switch called motherhood, deep within her, turned itself on. She seemed resigned to her maternal destiny though she'd sneak away, I noticed, every time they dozed off - usually to load up on water and cat food, which somehow was converted - we don't know the precise mechanics - into milk for her new dependents. Some for her, some for them. Oh, a scientist who studies feline physiology - even your neighborhood vet - can deliver a thirty minute speech on the transformation of cat food and water into milk for kittens and its partitioned allotment between mother and child, but words often mask our lack of understanding. And we can't do it in the lab any better than the chemical processes that function in the body of the cat. Just another one of nature's miracles.

Anyhow, I hear no complaints from the four boarders about meals, so they must be happy.

The miracle of replenishing the world of cats continues. Surely, there's room for four more.

Jokes about German sausage are the wurst.



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Heard On the Street

by *Cathey Carney*



We have a winner for the June Photo contest - it was **Kay Sewell** who was the first correct caller to identify that adorable little boy as **Curtis Parcus** who hasn't changed a bit! Everyone remembers how good the food was at Dallas Mill Deli when Curtis was there everyday to say hello to his customers - Kay was one of those. We miss you there, Curtis! Kay said she lived on Church Street in Huntsville back in 1959 and her dad **John Smith** worked for Southern Railroad. Congratulations Kay!

We were so sorry to hear of the death of **Mickey Moore**. He was only 72 when he died, and was a member of the class of '59 at Huntsville High School. He loved sports and had a 17-year career in athletics, winning many awards. He was a member of the Elks, the Eagles, Mayfair Church of Christ and Mt. Zion Church. He is survived by his son **Harris III**; daughter **Stephanie (Jeff)**; long-time sweetheart **Charlotte Strong Neal** and many other family and friends who will never forget him.

Michael Sylvester wants to wish the love of his life a happy birthday! His wife **Lindsay** has an August 14th birthday and on Au-

gust 30th they will have been married for 10 years. Happy Birthday Lindsay, you guys make a great couple! Happy Anniversary!

Margaret Wlordarski of Huntsville recently celebrated her 87th birthday and hopefully partied til dawn!

Happy Birthdays to 2 special folks in one family - **Hannah Troup** and her Dad **John Troup** are both celebrating August birthdays. Additionally, John and his beautiful wife **Steph** are celebrating their wedding anniversary in August too!

While in Belks recently I met a lady who looked really familiar. **Marie Whitfield** worked for Parisians for years and when Belk bought Parisians, Marie stayed on along with several other really good employees. Marie told me she will have 37 years there in September (combination Parisians & Belk) which is amazing! I can see why because she is great with customers. Also working at Belk are **Lily Smith**, who has 30 years, and

Dolly Smith, with 30 years. Until I talked with Marie I didn't realize that Belk originated in North Carolina 125 years ago! I love these businesses with staying power, through good and bad times.

Well, so many of you have told me how much you enjoy the memories of **Malcolm Miller**, who lives in Harvest with wife **Lois**. Believe it or not, Malcolm has a birthday on August 10th and he will be 86! I was so surprised when I heard that, he has one of those personalities of an eternal youngster! Just love his stories, along with many others. His writing is alot like **Tom's**. Happy Birthday to you Malcolm!

Mark your calendars for Sep. 7th, Saturday starting at 8am - for **TRADE DAY on the SQUARE!** There are tons of crafts, vendors, brooms, food, usually entertainment - all put on by the **Lions Club and Harrison Brothers**. It's fun just walking around the Square and seeing what all's there. Also if you're looking for the old back issues of "Old Huntsville", this is the one day of the year that the **Golden K Kiwanis** have them available on tables for you to look through and take for a donation!

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Photo of The Month

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

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Hint: This little girl has alot to do with Blues downtown.



We want to welcome some newcomers to town - **Pam and Skip Nichols** moved to a great home in southeast Huntsville just a few weeks ago and already love it here. They have children & nine grand kids who will keep them from ever getting bored! So glad you're here!

A really special hello to a lady I met at Old Heidelberg recently while having some scrumptious Chicken Schnitzel - **Mary Jones** has worked there for 22 years! That's alot of Schnitzel! She was so fun to talk with and told me that she loves living in Five Points near downtown Huntsville and calls it Five Points, Alabama!

A lady whom many people everywhere loved and admired passed away in late June. **Louise H. Sanford** was only 75 when she passed away in Huntsville. Louise was retired co-owner of Gibson's BBQ, and a smart, nurturing mom to her family. She leaves sons **Art Sanford (Jackie)**, **Terry Sanford (Timi)**, and **Paul Sanford (Danielle)**. Also surviving her are brother **John Paul Hampton (Charlotte)**, five grandchildren, two step-grandchildren and one great grandson. She was a giving, generous lady who put family first and was so proud of all of them.

The downtown scene has really livened up since the Entertainment Districts started featuring entertainment and fun events for the family. Recently the **Irish Society** was there and they showed Irish Dance, singing and arts and it was so good! They are always looking for new members so be

sure to check out their website at www.shamrockalabama.org to learn more.

Carnell Thorne of Athens had a birthday mid July - Happy Birthday to that beautiful lady on your 89th year!

My sis-in-law **Diane Owens** send me a really interesting idea for a quick dessert when you don't have anything handy. Get a box of Angel food mix and a box of yellow cake mix (or any other cake mix you like). Dump both in a big bowl and mix well. Pour this into an airtight container and put away. On one of those nights you're feeling like a small sweet snack just take 3 tablespoons of the dry mixture, put it in a big coffee mug, add 2 tablespoons milk or water and mix. Put in your microwave for 1 minute. Now depending on how creative you are, you can top your coffee cup cake with whipped cream, strawberries, almonds, nuts, coconut, blueberries - there's NO Limit! Or just eat it as is - delicious! (I think I might add a cup of finely ground pecans to the dry mixture, but that's just me.)

So proud that **Providence Classical School** will be taking over the East Clinton school building! They have so many good plans for the future and Old Town can't wait to welcome our new neighbors, excellent students & staff.

Another birthday we don't want to forget is **Felicia Sutherlin Meschke** of Woodstock, GA. She had a July 15th birthday and her Mom is **Cheryl Tribble**, our esteemed editor.

There are so many good people in Huntsville who are advocates of dogs & cats who can't speak for themselves. **Michelle Maroon** is Director of Forgotten Felines and she, along with others, are working hard to change our city animal shelter into a No Kill shelter. To see how you can help go to their website:

www.nokillhuntsville.com.

Have a good August and watch over your older neighbors who might be sweltering in this heat. Remember that a safe community is one where other residents look out for each other.

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Recipes from the Metro Davidson C.C.A.

Thanks to Thomas Hufford for providing these recipes!

Basic Chicken Salad

- 1/2 c. mayonnaise
- 1 T. lemon juice
- 1/2 t. ground black pepper
- 2 c. chopped, cooked chicken
- 1/2 c. slivered almonds
- 1 stalk celery, chopped

Toast almonds in dry frying pan, careful not to burn them. In a bowl mix the mayonnaise, lemon juice, & pepper and toss in the chicken, almonds & celery.

Tom's Glazed Salmon on Cedar Plank

- 1 T. honey
- 2 t. low sodium soy sauce
- 1/2 t. cornstarch
- 4 - 6 oz. salmon filets with skin

- 4 cedar cooking planks
(Day before soak cedar planks in water)
- 1 t. sesame oil

Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Mix honey, soy sauce and cornstarch in a small microwavable bowl - heat for 40 seconds or so and stir. Rub salmon filets with sesame oil and place them on the cedar planks. Salt & pepper to taste. Bake for 5 minutes, remove from oven and brush with the honey-soy mixture. Return to oven and cook for 7-9 minutes til done. This is good with rice and avocado salad.

Baked Gratin Potatoes

- 2 lbs. thinly sliced Russett potatoes
- 1/2 lb. smoked bacon, chopped
- 3 c. milk
- Salt and pepper to taste

- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1 T. butter

Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Layer sliced potatoes in oven-proof skillet, add bacon on top of the potatoes. Top with butter and garlic, add milk and bring to a boil then simmer for about 10 minutes. Place skillet in oven for 10 minutes, then reduce heat to 300 degrees and bake til the potatoes are tender, about another 10 minutes.

Avocado Salad

- 1/2 t. soy sauce
- 1/2 t. sesame oil
- 2 T. rice vinegar (unseasoned)
- 1 T. mayonnaise
- 1 med. cucumber, sliced and quartered
- 3 scallions, thinly sliced
- 1 avocado, halved & chopped

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Pickled ginger to serve alongside

Whisk the vinegar, mayonnaise, soy sauce and add the sesame oil in a large bowl. Add cucumber, scallions and avocado. Toss gently. With the pickled ginger, the taste is great.

Mr. Pete's Cabbage & Kohlrabi Cole Slaw

1 med. turnip or kohlrabi, cut into matchsticks

- 1/2 lemon, juiced
- 1/4 c. chopped fresh dill
- 1/2 clove garlic, minced
- 1 t. Dijon mustard
- Salt & pepper to taste
- 3 T. olive oil

1/4 head cabbage, shredded

Whisk the lemon juice, dill, garlic, mustard, salt and pepper in a large bowl. Add the kohlrabi and cabbage and toss well.

Paprika Butter

Great with corn on the cob. Mix 1/2 stick unsalted butter, 1 small clove grated garlic, 1/2 teaspoon smoked paprika, 1/4 teaspoon chopped Rosemary, sea salt and pepper. All you need is the corn!

Coconut Lover's Rice

- 1 c. long grain white rice
- 2 c. fresh coconut water
- 1 T. unsalted butter
- 1/4 t. salt & pepper

Combine all ingredients in a saucepan, bring to boil over me-

dium heat, reduce to low and stir. Cover pan and simmer for 20 minutes or so and rice has absorbed all the liquid. Remove from heat and set aside for 10 minutes, fluff with fork and serve. If you add a little tumeric it will have a bright yellow color.

Watermelon Salsa

- 4 c. diced seedless watermelon
- 1/2 small red onion, finely diced

1/2 c. fresh cilantro, roughly chopped

Juice of 2 limes

1 jalapeno pepper, seeds removed and diced

1 T. extra virgin olive oil

Combine the watermelon, onion, cilantro, lime juice, jalapeno and toss with olive oil and pinch of salt. Serve with chips; also good with tacos, chicken etc.

Sweet & Fire Ice Cream

- 2 c. whipping cream
- 2 c. half and half
- 1 c. sugar
- 1/4 t. Kosher salt
- 1-1/2 t. vanilla extract
- 1/2 t. cinnamon extract
- 2 peppermint sticks, crushed

Whisk the cream, half and half, sugar and salt in a bowl til sugar dissolves, stir in the vanilla and cinnamon extracts. Stir til blended well and pour into your ice cream maker. When almost finished add the peppermint, transfer to an airtight container and freeze til done.



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Local News - 1885

- Mr. & Mrs. De Young, formerly of Pulaski, Tn. and now living in Huntsville, had their little son Robbie bitten by a rattlesnake Sunday morning, while he was walking on the Chapman Place, near the Barracks. The snake hung its fangs in the boy's heel and as the boy ran he jerked the snake several feet.

An older brother witnessed the whole thing and killed the snake, which had only one button and no rattles, showing the snake to have been one year old. Dr. Ridley was summoned to the little sufferer. Arriving on the ground in an hour after the strike, he administered two ounces of whiskey with a teaspoonful of aromatic spirits of ammonia. Ten drops of spirits of ammonia was injected hypodermically and the bite saturated in spirits of ammonia. This treatment was repeated in half an hour and the little sufferer is convalescent.

It would be well for everyone to note well this remedy and especially those who are compelled to go into places which snakes are accustomed to inhabit.

- Yesterday Mr. Jere Murphy offered Mr. John Neely \$5 to walk to Whitesburg and back, allowing him from 4:30 p.m. yesterday until 1 a.m. this morning to accomplish the trip. At 11:15 last evening the tired form of Mr. Neely was seen to arrive at the Square, his garments covered with heavy dust, and a weary look upon his face. But he had made the trip honestly, for he brought certificates from Capt. Joe Brown, of Whitesburg and all of the toll keepers en route. On his way

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home he stopped to take a bath in the Tennessee River. After which he said he felt like a new man. He, of course, won.

This evening at 7 p.m. Mr. Kennard started out on the same trip. He was seen to go pacing down the road with a pistol in each hand and a defiant expression on his face. Up to the time of going to press, he had not been heard from.

- Jay Pollard has a horse and buggy for sale if it can be found. It was stolen yesterday from in front of the courthouse.

- A Maternal Gobbler

A very strange incident occurred in Arab a few days ago at John Jason's farm. The facts are attested to by the people who lived in the area.

A very pompous turkey gobbler a few days since indicated a desire to imitate a prolific and motherly hen. In order to test its patience, Mr. Jason placed a dozen eggs under this maternally inclined gobbler.

The gobbler set for the required period and at the proper time the little chicks pipped their way out of the shells and entered this world of sorrow and pain. The gobbler seemed to swell with pride as he gazed on his interesting brood and has been as thoughtful and attentive as the most considerate hen.

All the little chicks are thriving and seem deeply attached to the he-turkey mamma.

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Fifty Years Behind Bars

by "Jitter" Powers, as told to Tom Carney

I knew I was in trouble that first day, in 1948, when they put me in population. I had a new pair of shoes I had managed to hold on to all through my trial and the time at the county lock-up. Now, this big gorilla with tattoos all over his face was eyeing them. After a few minutes he strolled over next to the fence where I was standing.

"Give you a pack of cigarettes for those shoes." It was more of a statement than a question.

I mumbled something and started to walk away when suddenly I was hit on the back of the head with a rock. My next mistake was trying to fight back. Minutes later I was lying on the ground with a broken nose, a fractured arm and an ear hanging by a shred of skin.

As I lay on the ground bleeding, I looked around the prison yard to see if anyone was going to help me. The closest thing I got to sympathy was an old-timer who looked down at me and grinned, "You shoulda took the cigarettes."

I really missed my mother right then.

I didn't have much of a family growing up. I was only a couple years old when my father decided that family life wasn't for him and he just disappeared one day. My mother worked as a waitress in the honky-tonks around Huntsville but the little money she earned always seemed to go to one of her boyfriends. Mama

wasn't very lucky in love. Every time she thought she had a good man he would end up in jail, or with a wife and kids threatening him.

The longest we ever lived in one place was on Fifth Avenue. A widow man by the name of Pickens owned a house there with a two room apartment in back. I don't know how much the rent was but it couldn't have been much. Pickens was sweet on Mama and kept trying to get her to go out with him even though he was about forty years older.

Mama would humor him until she could save enough money to rent another place. After a few months in a new place we always seemed to get behind in rent again and would have to move in the middle of the night. Pickens didn't seem to care; he always let us move back.

With Mama working nights and sleeping all day, I had plenty of time to get in trouble. By the time I was ten or twelve years old I was already street smart. There were dozens of ways to make money for a kid if he didn't care what people thought.

Sometimes a friend and I would get up

early in the morning and follow the milkman as he made his rounds. As soon as he would leave we would steal the milk, and after getting a wagon full, would sell it to a Mom and Pop grocery near us who didn't mind making an extra buck. Other times we would hang out near the YMCA until we got a chance to steal a bike. We sold them, for a couple of bucks each, to a man in Dallas Village who swapped parts on the bikes before repainting them and selling them.

Huntsville didn't really have a way to deal with juveniles back then. If you got into trouble, most of the time they simply threatened you and let your parents take you home. If there were any damages your parents were expected to pay them. Mama got used to paying.

I was seventeen when Mama got married again. Her new husband and I didn't get along so I decided to leave. "Benny" Gregson, a friend, had a sister living in Chicago and we decided to go

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*Nikita Khrushchev,
Russian Soviet Politician*



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We made it to a small town near the Indiana border when the car broke down and we stole another one. We found a pistol in the glove compartment and Benny started talking about robbing a store. I could have said no, but I didn't.

The store we picked was a small country store with one gas pump out front. We went in and Benny pulled the gun on the woman running the store while I went for the cash box. Suddenly a man walked in and grabbed Benny from behind. The gun went off and the woman was killed.

We ran to the car and took off but only made it a few hundred yards before a cop pulled us over. The car we had stolen belonged to his sister. Seconds later other people arrived on the scene, identifying us as the people who had killed the woman.

I had turned eighteen the day before.

The trial wasn't much to talk about. They charged us with murder, armed robbery, auto theft and resisting arrest. I called Mama and she sent \$500 for a lawyer. The prosecution wanted the electric chair but my lawyer talked him into fifty years. He told me to not expect parole.

As soon as we got off the bus at the state prison we were lined up for orientation - there was about six of us. After the usual rules and regulations one of the guards walked up and down in front of us watching us carefully. Finally he stopped in front of a con and said "My shoes are dusty - what are you going to do about it?"

The con dropped to his knees and said, "I'm going to shine them, boss."

The guard did the same thing with several other prisoners, with the same result, until he came to me. That was when I made my first mistake - telling him to shine them himself. Immediately guards were all over me, beating me with their clubs. After a few minutes they paused to admire their handiwork and give me a lecture about "respect."

I didn't wait for the question. I dropped to my knees and

started shining shoes.

There is no way a person can really describe prison life. Noise, sirens, whistles and people banging on the bars night and day. You learn to talk without saying

anything and to look at people without seeing anyone. You share a cell with other cons but don't see anything they do. You see blood on the floor but don't wonder whose it is.

The first four or five years are the easiest. Then the reality

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sets in that you are going to be there until your sentence is up. Some of the newer cons couldn't take it and would try to commit suicide. A few would actually go crazy and be transferred to the mental prison.

Even though I had been sentenced to fifty years I kept hoping for a miracle. I stayed agitated all the time, looking for something that never happened. The older cons started calling me "Jitter Bug" because I was so nervous. Ever since then people have called me Jitter.

Several of the cons had pieces of cardboard on their walls with separate blocks for every month of their sentence. As each month would pass they would mark off the block. I tried it one time but couldn't find a piece of cardboard big enough. I knew I had to get out.

I was assigned to the loading docks at the sewing factory where all kinds of uniforms were made. I had been there for about three years when I began to notice a certain truck that would pick up uniforms every month. For some reason the guards never searched this truck. They just put a lock on the back door and sent it on its way.

The next month when the truck came I jumped in and hid in the back of it, I got some of the guys to stack boxes in front of me. It was bitterly cold outside - I learned later it was below zero. I finally felt the truck begin to move and could hear some of the guards as we slowed down at the gate. Hours passed and it got colder all the time. Later that evening the truck stopped but no one opened the door.

I didn't really have a plan except to get out of prison. I figured when they opened the door I would make a break.

More hours went by and I began to worry about freezing to death so I began banging on the side of the truck trying to get someone's attention. Finally I heard people talking and the door was unlocked. Almost immediately guards were all over me with their clubs.

I was inside another prison, Joliet Penitentiary in Illinois. The truck had been carrying a load of prison uniforms. I did hard time for the next year.

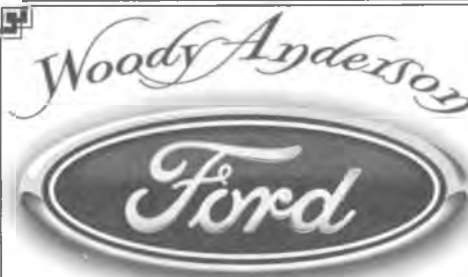
Cons are always looking for ways to shorten their sentence. Many get religion. One guy on my cell block got religion and actually became a prison preacher. When he went up for parole the board was so impressed they let

him out early.

Unfortunately, as soon as he got out he robbed a beer store and was back in prison within six months.

You never get used to prison. You just live one day at a time. The hardest thing is waking up every morning knowing that day will be just like thousands before, and thousands after. You don't have any friends because if they say or do the wrong thing it comes back on you.

Time passes slow. A week, a month or even years - they are meaningless for someone serving long time. Last year is remembered as "when they stabbed that guy in the yard." You never think about next year.



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Margaret Thatcher



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Mama and her husband visited me in 1953. Looking back I can see how hard it must have been for her but at the time I didn't care. Before she had even sat down I accused her of not caring because she wouldn't send me money. Every time she tried to say something I would cut her off until finally they got up and left. I remember she was crying when they left.

I didn't get any more letters after that. When I wrote, the letters were returned.

Everyone in prison had a hustle. We weren't allowed money so the currency was cigarettes. If you had cigarettes you could get a tailored uniform, a decent haircut or even a better job. I had a connection in the kitchen I got coffee from and I wired up a "hot coil" in my cell so I could brew it. I charged two cigarettes for a cup. After a couple months the guards found my coil and I was out of business.

A lot of prisoners were into making prison "hooch", a concoction made of almost anything that would ferment. It was always awful tasting but no one cared if it would get them high. Sugar was the most important ingredient. Someone almost started a riot once when they stole the sugar from the dining room and replaced it with salt.

Other prisoners made billfolds and belts if they had a connection on the outside to sell them. One of the best paying hustles, if you could draw, was doing tattoos.

Then there were always the people in the rackets - loan sharking, gambling and drugs. That was dangerous though. If you loaned to the wrong person or didn't pay your dope deal you could end up in the hospital - if you were lucky. I've seen cons get stabbed over a carton of cigarettes.

One of the fastest ways to get in trouble was to disrespect someone. It might be something as small as accidentally bumping into someone in line or giving someone a funny look. Most of the time you could settle it by sending them a couple packs of cigarettes. That way they saved face and you earned respect by doing the right thing. If it was something more serious - you just did what you had to do. I've known cons to break their own legs so they could get in the hospital where they thought they would be safe.

Every con is going to have trouble with someone sooner or later. It's the long timers you have to worry about the most. With twenty or thirty years left to serve, they don't worry about

"I have opinions of my own - strong opinions - but I don't always agree with them."

George H. W. Bush, former U.S. President

having more time tacked on to their sentences.


I got in so much trouble that when I went before the parole board for a hearing they laughed at me.

By the 1960s I was considered an old timer. I knew everyone and everyone knew me but I didn't have any friends. I learned to be a loner and no longer thought about getting out.

How do you describe the important things for fifty years? In the 1960s we got a television for the common room. In 1968 our cells were painted green instead of grey. In 1978, after having served 30 years, they let me have a radio in my cell. That same year I received word that my mother died.

In 1980 I became a "guard gopher," someone who takes care of the guards' room, fetches coffee, shines shoes or whatever. It was the best job I ever had. I had learned my lesson. If they said shine shoes, I said "Yes, Boss."

As the years went by the prison population changed. A lot of them served their time and were released, a few died, but there were always new ones to take their places. A lot of the new prisoners were the sons of cons I had known years earlier. I knew if I lived long enough I would





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probably see their children, too.

Prison was no longer frightening to me. It had become my home - the only home I knew. Sometimes I would lie in my bunk at night and try to remember what it was like to be in the outside world but those memories were no longer there. They had been erased by time.

I was 68 years old when my time was up. I had spent fifty years, seven months and three days in prison.

A few weeks before I was due for my papers the prison counselor called me to his office to ask what my plans were. I told him I didn't know. The only life I had ever known was behind bars and I didn't know if I could get by in the outside world.

He was probably used to hearing that. He told me if I got in trouble again they would make sure I was not sent back to the same prison. I would have to start all over again in a new place.

The day I got my papers was hard, in a way. They gave me a blue suit, a cardboard box to put my stuff in and \$349 from my account. When they walked me out the front gate I had an overpowering urge to turn and run back to my cell.

Suddenly, for the first time in fifty years, I was all alone with no one to tell me what to do. Everything was so unreal and frightening. When I got hungry there was no bell to tell me it was time to eat. There were no guards watching my every move. No one cared what I did

now.

As frightening as the real world was, I looked forward to returning to Huntsville where I hoped there would be familiar sights and people I knew.

I watched out the window as the bus pulled into Huntsville. There was nothing I could recognize. I walked downtown to the Square but everything I remembered was gone. Even the apartment where I had lived as a kid was now a doctor's office.

I searched the faces of everyone I passed on the sidewalk hoping to see someone I recognized. There was no one.

The world had passed me by while I was in prison.

I have a job in a restaurant now. I'm still a gopher. I mop up, wash dishes and sometimes even help cook. I get my meals there and most of the people are nice to me. They know I spent time in prison but don't care.

It's when I get off work that is the hardest for me. I'm all by myself. I

tried going to some of the stores but I felt uncomfortable. Once I bought a ticket for a movie but when I walked in there were so many people I got scared and left.

Perhaps the worst part is not having anyone to blame. I made the decision years ago when I was a punk kid and now I have to live with it.

So, I go back to my room every night and wait. For what, I don't know.

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- * **Cecil Ashburn** - was head of the C.I.A. in 1960. (Construction Industry Assoc.)
- * **Albert Lane** - made his operatic debut in Italy in 1955.
- * **C.A. Grant** - was National President of Horseshoe Pitchers Association in 1930.
- * **Malcolm Miller** - wrote the song "What Are You Going To Do Without Me?"
- * **Mrs. Ray Dotson** - was voted Miss Belgium in 1963.
- * **Harry Townes** - had a major acting role in the movie Tobacco Road.
- * **James Record** - co-wrote the book "Huntsville, Alabama: Rocket City U.S.A." of which 70,000 copies were sold.
- * **John Broadway** - elected President of the Alabama Soft Drink Association in 1968.
- * **Barbara Chisholm** - voted National Cherry Pie Champion in 1958.
- * **Evelyn Quick** - won the Alabama Hairdressers Grand Prize in 1941.
- * **Ron English** - performed with Jerry Lee Lewis and George Jones.
- * **Glenn Sherrill** - founder of Krystal Hamburgers in 1932.
- * **John Sparkman** - elected to House and Senate at the same time.
- * **Mickey Stell** - was a member of the Tommy Dorsey Band.
- * **Walt Wiesman** - elected President of the Huntsville Jaycees in 1953.
- * **Bud Anderson** - starred in the "High Chaparral" TV show in 1969.

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My Love of Monte Sano Mountain

by Mary Drake Sanders Hendricks,
written in 1992

My love affair with Monte Sano began early in my life. I was born in Big Cove, somewhere in the area of what is now called Hampton Cove. My grandfather Nunn farmed 2000 acres in that area and operated the cotton gin on the corner with his country store across the street.

When I was six years old my dad was the accountant for an automobile business in Huntsville, where we then resided. On hot summer evenings he would often come home in a cut-down open car and drive us up to the mountain to cool off. At that time it was a very fascinating place to me. There was an arch over the entry to Monte Sano Blvd. and a little house set there on the corner where an old man lived. I can still hear the varied mountain noises and smell the good mountain air that I remember as a child.

Imagine my delight when we moved up on the mountain. My daddy became ill in 1935 so the doctor advised him to move up to the mountain. We first lived in the screened-porch house which is located at Panorama Drive. There were only four houses on the street then, all occupied by year-round residents. Our nearest neighbor was Sam Thompson, who acted as a broker and sold most of the mountain lots. The Thompsons lived in the house where the Petroff house is located now. He and his wife, Miss Annie Thompson, had a small cottage on the grounds where his black housekeeper, Aunt Liza, lived. Aunt Liza would go blackberry picking with us in summer. There were lots of blackberry bushes beyond us and in the area which is now Panorama Drive near Monte Sano Blvd.

Dr. Burritt boarded with the Thompsons while he built his house on Round Top Mountain. We hiked up there sometimes to visit with him. I remember one time he told us to tell our mother to permit us to go barefoot as it was very healthy to do so.

My baby sister Pat, two years

old, quite often would stray or sneak off up the road to visit Aunt Liza. My mother would go after her and spank her little legs with a keen little switch all the way home.

We went to Huntsville City Schools but had to furnish our own transportation as the mountain was not in the city limits. I remember one time when it snowed and was icy. The conditions were too bad to drive so my brothers walked down the pipeline to school. Their hair froze but they kept on going. Stories that parents sometimes tell about walking miles to school in the snow are sometimes true!

There were not many children on the mountain at that time but we had good times playing in the woods and in each others' yards. Jimmy Hill and Frances Hill Zandler were mountain playmates and lived in the house that Jean Fair lives in now. The Ragland family came up in the summer and the boys played with my brothers. We played baseball, prisoner's base and spent many hours on the Hills' front porch playing Monopoly. Frances Hill, my sister Margie and I sometimes played paper dolls and my brother J.D. would come along

and be a big wind and blow our houses away. We had a big sandy side yard with very little grass. We dug random holes and shot marbles from one hole to the other. Jimmy Hill had a paper route and when he was unavailable Frances, Margie and I would deliver the papers. There were not a lot of customers, as most of the mountain was un-

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inhabited, but we rode bikes over the bumpy unpaved roads from one end of the mountain to the other. At one time we children published our own little mountain newspaper.

My brothers, who were fourteen and sixteen years old, worked sometime for Mr. Ed Brannum, who had a dairy and vegetable patches located where the Monte Sano Methodist Church presently is. How good were the fresh milk and vegetables he sent home to us as the Depression was still being felt by most people.

We left the mountain for a short time, moving downtown. We returned to the mountain, moving into the log house on Panorama where Jamie Butler now lives. That log house was the coldest place you could imagine. I remember it snowed one night and snow sifted through the cracks into the house. I was now a young teenager. There was an old pavilion, or dance-hall type building, out on the end of Inspiration Lane where the Boardmans live now. We skated in that building and had a good time hiking the bluffs in that area.

When our friends, the Earls, moved from what is now the Nate Showers home, we moved into that home. We moved ourselves and I remember Daddy and the boys pushing the piano on boards and then moving the boards to advance the piano further. We lived there during the time the CCC camp was on the mountain but we were forbidden to go there. My older brother drove us to school until

he graduated. Then my brother, two years older than me, took over the driving. J.D., my older brother, took Peyton out one afternoon and gave him lessons. From then on, Peyton did the driving. There was not a lot of traffic!

Jimmy and Frances Hill lived two doors down from us. His dad bought him a Model-A Ford which was stripped down and painted in big colorful checks. We would sometimes go over to the little white church on the other end of the mountain to ice cream suppers and so forth. I can remember Mr. Hill taking us over to the swampy area on Nolen (now the site of Robert Black's Japanese Garden) where the boys would gig for frogs. We had great times on those nice cool summer evenings.

We moved from the

mountain in 1939 and I lived downtown through school, World War II, marriage and birth of my son, Fred G. Sanders, III. When Fred was four years old, we bought a lot on the mountain, cleared it and planned to build a house at 3207 Wildwood Drive (then called Huntsville Avenue). We decided not to build, so we sold our lot to a friend who was a builder. We started visiting the construction and, wouldn't you know, bought it from him when it was completed in 1952. Our two daughters, Suzanne Pratt and Amy West, were born there and attended Monte Sano School. I lived there 28 years. After the death of my husband, Fred G. Sanders, Jr. in 1978, I married Evan Hendricks in 1980. Evan had moved to Monte Sano in 1956 with his family.

I have lived more than half my life on Monte Sano and consider it to be "the garden spot of the world."

Mary Hendricks had a 90th birthday this July and still lives on the mountain she loves. Thanks to her friend Pat Giesecke for sending in Mary's story.



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My Grandparents

by Malcolm W. Miller

My Daddy was thirty-five years old and my Mother twenty-one when they were married October 27, 1907. Following the marriage came seven sons. I am the youngest and many said that I was the last watermelon on their family vine.

I never really knew much about my grandparents on my Daddy's side, however I do know that my Grandfather Miller fought in the Civil War and was wounded. Both he and my Grandmother on my Daddy's side had long since passed on to their eternal reward before I was born in 1927.

I barely remember my Mother's father, Archie McKay; however I do remember some events surrounding his death. I was probably four years old when he died. Some of the events that took place during that time still stick in my mind and I can remember them to this day. I must have been a pretty ornery brat at that time, being the youngest of seven, because when he was dying I was pitching some sort of tantrum. I recollect too well that my Mama took me out and fastened me in the chicken house. I can still remember the odor and hazards that were involved as I made my way around through the poles that were there for the chickens to roost on. After my Grandfather had died, my Uncle Willie McKay came out and let me out of the chicken house, and believe me I was a much better boy the rest of that day.

I also remember Daddy arriving for the funeral and I noticed he had on my oldest Brother Robert's new shoes, some brown and white ones Robert had no doubt ordered from the Sears and Roebuck catalog. So what do I do before the entire crowd? I say "Daddy, why are you wearing Robert's new shoes?"

After the death of my Grandfather McKay I was left with only one grandparent, whom I called Mama Kate McKay, and I have many fond memories of her. She was a very strong and proud woman, a real pioneer type. After her husband passed on she lived alone and I always looked forward to the times when Mama would save up enough

egg money for her to board the train in Ryland and go stay a day or two with Mama Kate. Because I was the youngest, and usually a problem to the older boys, she normally always took me along.

I am quite certain I learned more history of the Civil War era from Mama Kate than I ever did in school. She would tell true stories about the bushwhackers, carpet-baggers and scalawags. These stories would both thrill and chill a little boy to the bone. In fact, when she got aggravated at me about something she would often call me a "little scalawag." When she did, I knew it was time for me to make myself scarce.

Even in her later years of life, when she was well into her eighties and her mind began to play tricks on her, her body was still strong and she stood as straight and tall as ever. In fact, I have watched her run up the hill to my parent's house on Toll Gate Road many a time with her long dress flapping around her feet. Incidentally, Mama Kate was from a generation that didn't believe a man should see a lady's ankles much less her knees.

I don't recollect Mama Kate as being a religious woman, though in her younger days she must have gone to church, as church was the social life for most folks in those days. Mama Kate passed on to me and many others many rich values and traditions that have always been there to help weather the storms of life.

I tried to catch some fog.
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Beauty and the Bald

Ageless Beauty Tips

- Don't like to use soap? Use milk or yogurt on your face instead.

- In the morning no one's face looks too good. To tighten up those pores take an ice cube and rub it all over your face - be sure and rinse the cube briefly with water so it doesn't stick to your skin.

- Instead of those heavy night creams, try this. For normal skin use sesame oil, warmed just a bit. For oily skin use safflower oil. For very dry skin use olive oil or peanut oil - I have even tried castor oil mixed with a teaspoon of almond extract for scent.

- Wrinkles on your top lip? Apply Vitamin E oil to it at night.

- If you just hate those dark circles under your eyes, consider using an extra pillow at night. Also, freeze a baby's teething ring, wrap it in soft cloth and place over your eyes for a few moments.

- Want long, luxurious lashes? Try a nightly brush of olive or castor oil, slow but sure results, or snip a capsule of vitamin D oil and put the contents over your lids and lashes. Fantastic results have been reported after just 3 months of this treatment.

- A French woman's secret for beautiful skin - mix a tablespoon of honey with a teaspoon of strained lemon juice - apply to a clean dry face and leave on for 10 minutes, rinse with tepid water.

- Face lifting exercises - Pretend you're biting an apple - tense up your neck and hold this for 5 seconds. Repeat. Do this every day for good results.

Or, push your tongue up to the roof of your mouth as hard as you can - hold for 6 seconds and repeat several times.

Push your tongue to either side of your cheeks and finally, lift your eyebrows one inch and hold them there.

Very Old Folk Remedies for Baldness

A simple method for hanging on to the hair you've got left is to wash your head regularly with water mixed with a little salt. Another, from Greece, tells us to massage a paste made of the leaves of the aloe vera plant. If you want new growth, wash your head with water containing the leaves and flowers of the sage plant. This originated in Europe and came to America with the early settlers. Long before the settlers arrived, however, the Montana Indians were using water infused with sagebrush or blue sage for their hair - they said it also made a good tonic.

Here are a couple of grosser methods. A good old Southern remedy calls for rubbing the head with pure manure - that's right - either cow or horse will do. Just rub it in really well and start the next day to look for fresh hair. Another recommends rubbing the head with mole blood - this is still being practiced in the mountains of North Carolina.

Try to invigorate your hair with Bay rum, two

pints; alcohol, one pint; castor oil, one ounce, ammonia, half an ounce; tincture of cantharides, one ounce, mixed well. This will promote the growth of hair and keep it from falling out. (Tincture of cantharides contains the notorious Spanish Fly in dried form).

A few more - try massaging garlic into your scalp. Or concoct a plaster of boiled quince mixed with wax and spread it over the bald spot. Quince has a fuzzy skin and it is thought that the scalp might follow suit. If all else fails, heed the European superstition that a thick mane will result if you allow a pregnant woman to give you a haircut.

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EFFECTIVE TREATMENT FOR VARICOSE VEINS

Varicose veins are a very common problem, affecting an estimated 40% of women and 25% of men. New minimally invasive techniques in vein management, along with insurance companies recognizing the need for treatment of varicose veins and their complications, allow patients who have not previously considered treatment a simple and relatively pain-free option.

Abnormal veins can appear as a bulging rope-like cord on the legs. Other symptoms of varicose veins include pain, aching, heaviness or tiredness, a burning or tingling sensation, swelling, pressure or throbbing, and spider veins. If you experience these symptoms and don't seek treatment varicose veins could lead to more serious complications, including phlebitis, blood clots, skin ulcers and bleeding.

Varicose veins occur when the valves in superficial leg veins malfunction. The superficial veins have one-way valves which allow the venous blood in the legs to return to the heart. When these valves become dysfunctional, typically caused by trauma, increasing age, pregnancy, and a family history of venous dysfunction, the valves may be unable to properly close. This allows blood that should be moving towards the heart to

flow backwards. This is called venous reflux and it allows the blood to collect in your lower veins causing them to enlarge and put the venous system under high pressure. Once a vein develops venous insufficiency it will always be abnormal and will only lead to the development of more abnormal veins and worsen.

In the past, venous insufficiency was typically treated with surgery using a procedure called vein stripping. This involved either multiple small incisions or a large incision leaving scars. Stripping can involve general anesthesia, treatment in a hospital, and multiple weeks of recovery. We now have minimally invasive treatments that are proven to be 98% effective in treating varicose veins.



JAMES C. NIX III, M.D.

A new procedure called EVLT (Endo-venous Laser Treatment) is now available and covered by most insurance companies. EVLT is a non-surgical, more effective treatment for varicose veins. The treatment is performed in the doctor's office under local anesthesia. The doctor uses ultrasound to map out the vein. He then applies a local anesthetic; patients feel very little pain. After administering anesthesia, a thin laser fiber is inserted through a tiny entry point, usually near the knee. The laser is activated as the vein is destroyed. The body will absorb the vein over the next 3 to 6 months.

Most patients feel an immediate relief of symptoms and can return to normal activity. There is no general anesthesia, hospitalization or scarring.

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Best Way to Clean a Toilet



1. Put both lids of the toilet up and add 1/8 cup of pet shampoo to the clean water in the bowl.

2. Pick up the cat and speak to him in a friendly and soothing manner while you carry him towards the bathroom.

3. In one smooth movement, put the cat in the toilet and close the lid. Don't give your cat a preview of where he's going. You may need to stand on the lid.

4. The cat will self-agitate and make more than ample suds. Never mind the noises that come from the toilet ~ your cat is actually enjoying

this and having fun.

5. Flush the toilet three or four times. This provides a 'power-wash and rinse' effect that is especially good for a thorough clean.

6. Have someone you know open the front door of your home. Be sure that there are no people between the bathroom and the front door.

7. Stand behind the toilet as far as you can, and quickly lift the lid.

8. The cat will rocket out of the toilet, streak through the bathroom and run outside, where he will dry himself off.

9. Both the commode and the cat will be sparkling clean, solving two cleaning problems at the same time.

Sincerely,
The Dog

(Note from the dog: This is for your enjoyment only - don't actually try this at home - I take no responsibility for what may happen to you.)

"I was such an ugly baby, when I was born the doctor slapped my mother."

Rodney Dangerfield

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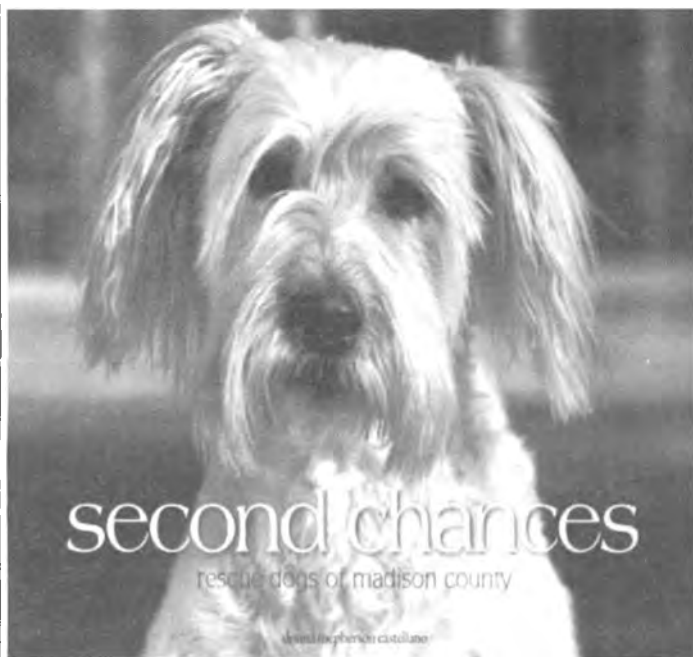


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36 dogs. 36 locations. 36 stories. Two years in the making. On Thursday, August 29 join the Greater Huntsville Humane Society as we debut our highly anticipated book, *Second Chances: Rescue Dogs of Madison County* at Baron Bluff at the Burritt Museum. *Second Chances* is a celebration of the rescue experience in all its varied forms.

Photographer Doug Brewster and author Donna Castellano introduce the reader to 36 rescue dogs and their adopted families through the pages of a full-color, coffee table style book designed by Leslie Franklin and Diane Strickland. While the dogs' individual rescue stories are as varied as their barks, all share the common thread that when a dog is placed with the right family, kindness overcomes cruelty, patience overcomes distrust, and love overcomes fear.

Greater Huntsville Humane Society Board Chairman Karen Corp states: "The generous donations of sponsors and supporters covered all expenses associated with the book's publication, and we are thrilled that all proceeds from the sale of *Second Chances* will directly benefit the Greater Huntsville Humane Society and our mission to provide for the humane care and treatment of animals. The generosity of our community is always humbling but never surprising."

The party will begin at 6:30 and a book signing is scheduled. Party guests will enjoy wonderful food, great music and a delightful setting while they help the Greater Huntsville Humane Society offer second chances to animals throughout our community.

Tweetie's Pet Tips

*Nothing like some good
Cat superstitions!*

Tweetie



* To keep a cat off your car, put a hat on your hood.

* In the early 16th century, a visitor to an English home would always kiss the family cat.

* A cat on top of a tombstone meant certainly that the soul of the departed buried was possessed by the devil.

* An American superstition: When moving to a new home, put the cat in through the window, not the door, so that it will not leave.

* According to legend, cats were created when Noah's ark became infested with rats. Noah commanded the lion to sneeze and out came a cat!

* In Egypt, it was once believed that the life-giving rays of the sun were kept in a cat's eyes at night for safekeeping.

* In the Netherlands, cats were not allowed in rooms where private family discussions were going on. The Dutch believed that cats would definitely spread gossip around the town.

* To reverse the bad luck curse of a black cat crossing your path, first walk in a circle, then go backward across the spot where it happened and count to 13.

Proverbs

* A cat bitten once by a snake dreads even rope - Arab proverb

* A cat goes to a monastery, but she still remains a cat. — Congolese proverb

* Nine lives has the cat. For three he plays, for three he strays, and for the last three he stays. - English proverb

* A cat will teach her young ones all the tricks, except how to jump backwards. — Netherlands Antillean proverb

* When rats infest the Palace, a lame cat is better than the swiftest horse. - Chinese proverb

* A house without either a cat or a dog is the house of a scoundrel. - Portuguese proverb

* After dark all cats are leopards. - Zuni proverb

* An old cat will not learn how to dance. — Moroccan proverb

* Beware of people who dislike cats. - Irish proverb

* Books and cats and fair-haired little girls make the best furnishings for a room. - French proverb

* Cats don't catch mice to please God. — Afghan proverb

* Cats, flies and women are forever at their toilets - French proverb

* Who cares well for cats will marry as happily as he or she could ever wish. - French proverb

* You will always be lucky if you know how to make friends with strange cats. - Colonial American proverb

* Handsome cats and fat dung heaps are the sign of a good farmer. - French proverb

* Happy is the home with at least one cat - Italian proverb

* Happy owner, happy cat. Indifferent owner, reclusive cat. -

Chinese proverb

* I gave an order to a cat, and the cat gave it to its tail. - Chinese proverb

* If stretching were wealth, the cat would be rich. - African proverb

* If you play with a cat, you must not mind her scratch. — Yiddish proverb

* In a cat's eyes, all things belong to cats. — English proverb

* One should not send a cat to deliver cream - Yiddish proverb

* The cat's a saint when there are no mice about. - Japanese proverb

* The cat who frightens the mice away is as good as the cat who eats them - German proverb

* The dog for the man, the cat for the woman - English proverb

* Those who dislike cats will be carried to the cemetery in the rain. — Dutch proverb

* To live long, eat like a cat, drink like a dog. - German proverb

* When the mouse laughs at the cat there's a hole nearby. - Nigerian proverb



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From the Desk of Tom Carney

Born into Slavery

by Tom Carney

The following interview with Tom Moore was conducted by Kenneth Marsh in 1948. Shortly afterwards, Tom Moore died at the age of 105. At that time he was the last surviving person in Madison County to have been born into slavery.

"If my body had to suffer all the misery that my eyes have seen, I would have been dead a long time ago. I don't remember too good the things that happened yesterday, but the old things, the things that happened when I was young, I remember good."

"I was born on April 28, 1843. Mr. Ben (Benjamin Tyson Moore, his master) wrote the date down in an old family Bible. My mama, she was bought in Mobile when she was a little girl and brought to Mr. Ben's place. Mama said they paid \$700 for her. I never knew my daddy, don't even know what happened to him."

"Mr. Ben, he was a cotton man. The first thing I remember is pulling bolls. After all the cotton was picked, we'd go through the fields again and pull all the cotton bolls that had opened late.

That winter, when it would get cold, we'd sit in front of a fire and pick the cotton out."

"I remember we had this boy on the place, his name was Buck, and he kept running off. The paddy-rollers caught him clear up next to Nashville one time. His mama did the cooking for the big house. When they caught this boy, they brought him back and tied him to a big tree out next to the cabins. When Mr. Ben started whipping this boy, they had to lock his mama in the smokehouse, she was carrying on so much."

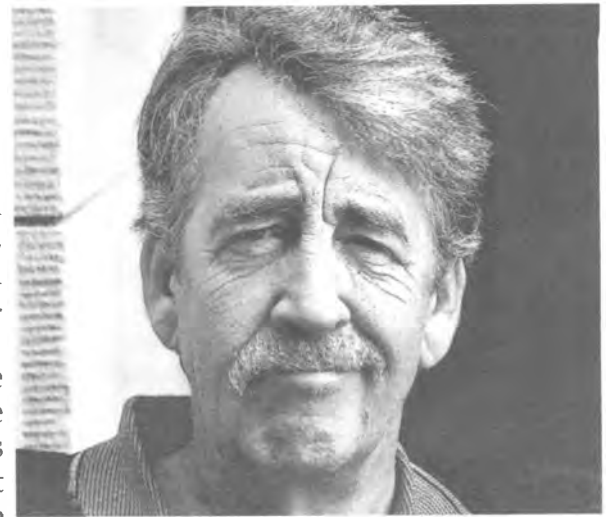
"Before then, sometimes if we went to the door of the kitchen, she would give us a bite of whatever she was cooking. After they whipped her boy and we saw the look in her eyes, we never asked for no food that she fixed for the white folks!"

"When the war (Civil War) came along, all the

men got ready to go off and fight. Mr. Ben, he sent me and my uncle to take care of his kin. It was just like we were in the Army. We took care of the horses, cooked for them, and fixed their clothes and stuff. 'Course, we didn't have to put up with all that marching back and forth and yelling."

"After 'bout a year, the war heated up real good and the Captain sent us back to Alabama. He had this big, red horse that he had took from a Yankee soldier and we rode that horse all the way back to Alabama, Yankee saddle and all!"

"We were working in the fields when we heard the war was over. Mr. Ben, he



"My son is under doctor's care and shouldn't take PE today. Please execute him."

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came out to where we were working and told us that he had orders to tell us all that we were free. He said that anyone that wanted to stay could, but everyone else had to be off the place by sundown. Most everyone, after Mr. Ben left, just threw down their hoes and started walking to town."

"They had this place in town where all the colored folks had to go to get registered. We got there, me and Sally, my wife, and they asked us my name."

"Tom," I said.

"What's your last name?"

"Don't have none," I said.

"Who was your master?" they asked me.

"Mr. Ben Moore."

"So they wrote me down as Tom Moore and I been a Moore every since then!"

"I took up with this Yankee soldier and started working for him. He was a good man and when he got out of the Army he carried me home with him to Indiana. I lived up there for about two years working in a stable, but I was miserable the whole time. You wouldn't think a man could miss cotton fields, but I sure did. Finally, I got Mr. Foster to write a letter asking (the Moore family) if I could come back home."

"I didn't wait for no answer; me and the family just started walking toward Alabama. When we got here, Mr. Ben, he told me that we could stay in the old quarters, but he couldn't feed us. We'd have to take care of ourselves."

"It was too late in the year for anything but turnip greens. We lived most that whole winter on turnips and

rabbits. Didn't have no gun, the Ku Kluxers wouldn't let us have none, we trapped the rabbits in boxes."

"Those were hard times and not just for the black folks. Every day you could see men and women and children, black and white, walking down the road with no place to go to. The war just tore this country up good."

"I seen a lot over the years,

but times haven't really changed all that much."

"People hate more now than what they used to."

"Trouble is, people ain't got nothing to be scared of no more."

Everybody has to be scared of something, even if it is his wife or God or whatever."

"A man that ain't never been scared, he ain't lived much of a life."

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Monte Sano Memories

by Jane Barr

There was a time when milk was delivered to our house. One year we had a major snow storm. The schools and businesses closed; yet our milkman, Leo Miller, delivered when the mailman could not. Leo followed the snow plow up Monte Sano and went behind the plow as it cleared Monte Sano Blvd. Leo left his truck on MS Blvd and with a sled, pulled his load down the connecting streets. He didn't miss a house.

One day one of his customers asked him why a certain item was on her bill, she had never noticed it before, Leo told her every day her son would stop him and get a carton of chocolate milk on his way to school. Leo assumed she knew it, but no, she did not. The boy grew up to be a lawyer.

Over the years we've had five (5) Great Danes, one at a time. Our first one used to go around the neighborhood and bring milk cartons home. I always kept an extra carton on hand because I knew a neighbor would call missing a carton, which I'd take right over. One day I found an orange juice carton on the back porch. It had teeth holes in it. Our dog never again brought a carton home!

When we moved to Monte Sano in the 1950s there was mostly woods. Across the road was an open field. I'd hear a squawk and up from the field would fly a chicken. Another squawk, another chicken. A neighbor kept chickens, they'd get out of the coop and wander around. One day I heard a squawk, a chicken flew, followed by our Great Dane. Soon our dog was at our door, with a live chicken in his mouth!

"Mrs. Barr, you need to come get your dog." "OK, I'll be right there." Mrs. Barr would go right over, around the back of the school was her Great Dane looking in the window of the first-grade. The children

"My house was clean last week - sorry you missed it."

Jane Smith, Huntsville

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thought it was great that dogs could follow them to school, that was before fences when dogs and kids could wander around the mountain.

Not only dogs but peacocks! Our neighbor had a pair of peacocks that would fly from their roost in their back yard and wander around. Many a time I'd awoken to find the pair outside our bedroom window.

For years we've had deer, rabbits, fox, turtles, butterflies, birds, lizards that had ancestors dating to dinosaur time and more coming through our yard. When I had a camera handy I'd photograph their poop and tracks. I'd put the left-over peanut butter sandwiches on the deck. A three-legged squirrel would come over, eat the peanut butter out of the bread, then come back and get the bread.

One year we had a drought. I had herbs and flowering plants on my deck. I'd water them every morning. It was a great year to photograph for there were critters that would not normally come up on our deck. We even had a woodchuck nibbling my herbs. Last year we had a mama fox (vixen) and her pups coming through our yard. The Red Fox alternated with the Gray Fox. As long as there is sufficient food, water and shelter they live in peace. We have a stream in our yard, next to Monte Sano State Park with over 2,000 acres of woods filled with food and shelter. Truly a wild life paradise!

As director of the Monte Sano Methodist Church week-day kindergarten - before kindergartens went into the city

school system - I had the children using easels to do art work. One little girl painted what looked like a big, gray mountain. It took up the entire paper. I never said "What a nice...." Because I really didn't know what the child was painting, instead I'd say "Tell me about your painting." The little girl replied, "I was going to paint an elephant, but the paper wasn't large enough so I just did his foot." Children are amazing!

When it was "Rest Time" I had the children on floor mats

while I played classic music. One favorite was "The Grand Canyon Suite" by Ferde Grofe. I told them the story of the man, his donkeys that they could hear braying, and going down the mountain. Of course, living on Monte Sano the children had no problem imagining the donkeys going down the mountain.

Years later one of the fathers asked "Jane, what was that record you used to play for the children, my daughter really liked it. She said it was about a sweet mountain."

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"Is it true my dad won't get into heaven if he uses his golf words in the house?"

Child's note to God

Dancing Reveals Your Real Character

From 1942 Magazine

Recently dancing masters and professional dancers have discovered that a person's character can be revealed by the way they dance. For the amusement of our readers, we list here a few of the things to watch for among dancers.

* It is said that the male partner who cups his hand on a woman's back when dancing can be considered primitive and very possessive.

* The man who crouches, gorilla-like, when making a turn on the dance floor is very apt to be narrow-minded, jealous and belligerent.

* The old fellow (usually found easy-going and beginning to show baldness) who puts in a few extra kicks and flourishes when dancing, is said to be a pretty good fellow, friend to both man and woman.

* Woman who are hard to lead and who do not respond to gentle steering by their partners are liable to be quite willful and stubborn. It is said that this type are not very fond of the opposite sex.

* The partner, man or woman, who constantly tries to out-dance the other partner is usually an egotist, a show off and can seldom be trusted.



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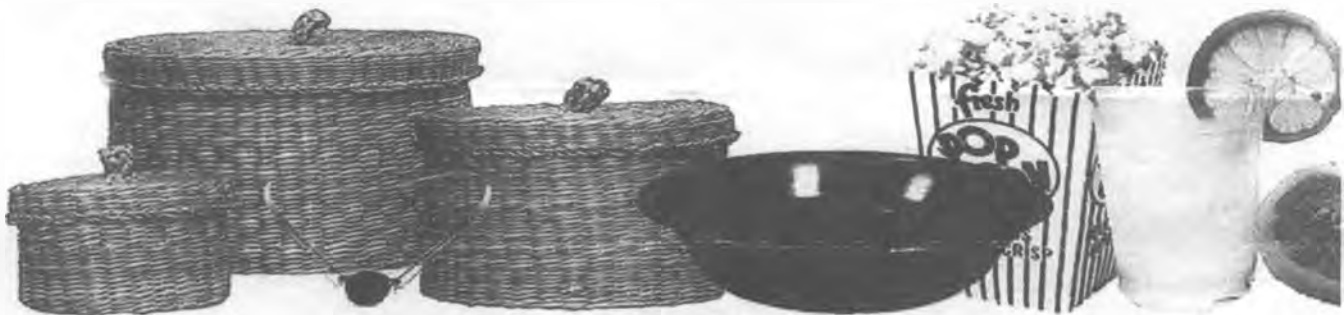
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Buried Treasure in Hazel Green

by Charles Rice

An oft told tale in northern Madison County concerns a buried treasure that supposedly was hidden 130 years ago near the town of Hazel Green. Now don't get excited and run off to look for it, because it is said to have been found long ago. Well, it just may have been - if in fact it ever existed.

The swashbuckling story concerns the quite respectable Townsend family, early settlers of our region and very wealthy cotton planters before the War Between the States. We leave it to you to decide how much truth there is in the tale.

The patriarch of this old Madison County family was one Parkes Townsend. Born in Lunenburg County, Virginia, in 1795, Townsend had left his home in 1827 to seek new lands in Alabama.

He grew rich here and fathered a large family before his untimely death in December 1849 at the age of only 54. Even after his property had been divided among his heirs, it remained quite impressive.

In fact, in 1860, just before the Civil War, Townsend's

widow, Mary, still held title to \$30,000 worth of land, while her personal property was listed at \$74,870. This was a virtual fortune in those long ago horse-and-buggy days. Townsend's son Daniel owned \$20,000 in land plus \$51,685 in personal property, while another son named Samuel claimed some \$18,120 in real estate and \$151,000 in personal wealth. Exaline Townsend, apparently a widowed daughter-in-law, owned land valued at \$36,000 as well as a personal estate of \$50,000. Clearly, the Townsend family was among the wealthiest in Madison County.

This much of the story is verifiable. However, what follows clearly falls into the realm of legend. According to old timers around Hazel

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Green, in 1862 some of the Townsend family became frightened at the approach of the invading Union Army. Realizing the "thieving Yankees" would take everything they owned, they loaded several barrels with gold and silver and drove off one evening after dark. Allegedly, a slave or two accompanied them.

Stopping at a large walnut tree somewhere near Charity Lane, the Townsends ordered the slaves to dig a deep hole and conceal the treasure. Then, imitating the bloodthirsty pirates of the Spanish Main, these respectable Alabamians supposedly murdered the inoffensive slaves and threw their bodies into the pit. Refilling the hole, the Townsend men returned to their homes to quietly await the return of peace.

So what do you think happened next? You guessed it. Somehow the walnut tree mysteriously disappeared during the course of the war, and the Townsends could never find their treasure again. Foolishly, it would seem, they rented the land to a stranger - a virtual sharecropper, more or less. After about two years, the stranger up and disappeared one day. No one around Hazel Green ever saw him again, but he reportedly bought himself a fine, farm in Tennessee and lived there happily ever after.

Quite a story. But realistically, could such an event actually have happened in Alabama? Slaves in the antebellum South had few legal rights, but one simply

could not go about murdering African-Americans with impunity. Word would have spread about that.

More than likely the Townsends' other slaves would have talked, and the Union Army would have taken action even if the Alabama authorities did not. Furthermore, were the Townsends really such a brutal lot? This prominent family remained in the area long after the war, and retained the respect of their neighbors - something that would not have been possible had they been viewed as murderers.


Perhaps something really did happen back in 1862. Maybe the Townsends hid

part of their wealth and hid it so well they could not find it again. And just possibly a tenant farmer did discover it, and took off for parts unknown.

But the rest of the tale has too much of the "Yo ho ho and a bottle of rum" in it to be believed. It sounds rather like some of the old boys at the Hazel Green town "liars' bench" had been reading about pirates, peg legs, and Long John Silver and simply decided to spice things up a bit. After all, the real spirit in any story is the telling of it, isn't it?



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