



No. 249
November 2013



Old Huntsville

HISTORY AND STORIES OF THE TENNESSEE VALLEY

COURAGE ON THE HOMEFRONT

THE BRAVE WOMEN OF HUNTSVILLE
DURING THE CIVIL WAR



Also in this issue: **The Buffalo Soldiers**

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Courage on the Homefront

The excitement in the city was very great, as telegram after telegram gave the reports of what was taking place on the bloody battlefields of Shiloh, for many of our Huntsville boys were there. While they were absorbed with the news coming from the telegraph office, the people were taken by surprise by a carrier riding in hot haste down the Meridianville Pike, shouting to everyone he saw, "The Yankees are coming! The Yankees are coming!"

It was that fateful cry, long and fearfully anticipated but now suddenly sprung upon them, that made livid the faces of women and children. The cooler heads among the men were trying to sift the truth from the excited horseman, when his report was verified by the coming of another galloping horseman.

Hardly had this validation of the truth settled upon the excited listeners when the long whistle of an incoming train from the west was heard. "What train is that, and who is aboard it?" was asked with blanched lips. A few of the

older men rushed to the depot, and before the train stopped, saw that it was a military train with Southern soldiers aboard, bound for the east. Realizing the danger of the situation, one man rushed forward to the engine and shouted to the engineer, "Go on, go on! Don't stay, the Yankees are right here and will catch you."

The engineer looked back to the conductor who had also heard the warning, but who for a moment hesitated, weighing the report in his mind. Then finally deciding from the earnestness and character of the man, he gave a quick motion for forward to the engineer who quickly pulled open the throttle - but it was too late. Before the steam pressed upon the piston, the train was surrounded by Yankee cavalry, who with leveled revolvers forced the engineer to close his throttle.

The train and all that it contained was now in the possession of the enemy. A company of Confederate soldiers were on board. These men had performed gallant service at Manassas and as a reward were given a furlough to their respective homes from which they were now returning. They were now few in number, without arms and surrounded.

The Yankees (Fourth Ohio Cavalry) took possession of them as prisoners and marched them into the depot - the same old freight depot that is

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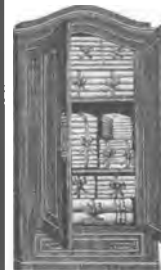
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there today.

This regiment of cavalry was soon followed by the rest of the command of Brig. Gen. O.M. Mitchel, who took possession of Huntsville with its old men, women and children. For some time after he ruled them with a rod of iron.

Before the war, Mitchel had been quite conspicuous as an astronomer and lecturer. When he swapped his science and literary career for a military one, he shook off the attractive qualities of mind and heart that belong to a scholar and assumed voluntarily the iron mantle of despotism. In his view, no man had a right to be a rebel, and, in addition, no wife or child had a right to be the wife or child of a rebel. If they dared to continue as such, they ought to receive the just punishment that he was sent to administer.

His boast was that he would soon scourge them into submission.

In the disposition of his forces he had made a quick movement, took Huntsville by surprise, and overwhelmed its citizens with pain and sorrow,

as he fed his troops from their scant stores. His provision train was too far away. Bridges had been burned and no one could tell when his wagons would arrive. In the meantime his soldiers must be fed. "They had fought bravely," he said, and were entitled to the best of rations and all the good things the country afforded. If they were given voluntarily, well and good! If not, they would be taken. The boys in blue knew where to find what they needed.

The women of Huntsville gathered together in solemn council, for upon them the grim reality fell most heavily. How could they meet Mitchel's demand of their scant stores of food? Even more desperate was the plight of their own kind. If Federal soldiers were this hungry, how was it with those poor boys in gray, cooped up within the old walls of the depot? They must be starving. It was unanimously resolved that this condition must be rectified.

A committee of two ladies was appointed to visit the Gen-

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eral and obtain his permission for them to feed the prisoners.

In answer to their appeal, he granted a very generous denunciation of all rebels, especially female rebels. "Yes," he replied, "you may feed the prisoners, but you must feed my soldiers, too."

"Very good, General, but may we begin at once with our poor boys in the depot? They are starving. They have had nothing to eat since you came here, two days ago!"

"Starving! They deserve to starve. They have been fighting the Union army in the east. They are a part of the same set," thundered the irate General.

The eyes of the sober matron twinkled a little and a smile played upon her lips as she replied, "Yes, General, we have heard that they were there."

The brows of the officer narrowed, remembering that these were the same brave Confederate troops that had carried the day at Manassas. Churlishly he muttered, "and for that you want me to feed them?"

"Yes, for that we want to feed them. But, General, all brave soldiers feed their prisoners."

The General's features smoothed a little as he caught the pleasant smile upon the lady's comely face.

"Well, take your order for permission to feed the prisoners. What else do you want of me?"

"A pass, please," she replied, "for messenger and provisions."

The General signed to an officer in the rear. "Adjutant, write a pass for female bearer to deliver provisions twice a day to prisoners."

He turned away to other business. The pass was written and received. The two ladies who had remained standing in that august presence bowed their thanks.

It was with a quick step and

a light heart that the two ladies left the headquarters of Gen. Mitchel and hurried down the street. Hardly had they left before they noticed a young negro clad in a Yankee's blue coat. After recognizing the figure as Joe, one of their house servants, the ladies burst out laughing, exclaiming, "Why, with that blue coat he looks just like any other Yankee."

The friends walked on thoughtfully for a few moments when the first speaker exclaimed as though talking to herself:

"Good, we'll do it sure." Then, "Joe, Joe," she called out to the servant. "We want to ask you something."

The boy stopped at once at the command of his mistress' voice. He turned back to her, a little scared at his being thus caught.

"Joe, where did you get that coat?"

The boy hesitated and with

an apologetic grin, replied:

"I got him from a Mr. Yank; he gave him to me."

"How came him to give it to you?" was the stern question.

"He gave him to me for cleaning up his horse and rubbing up his saddle, and shining up his boots and his spurs."

"Very well! You are sure that he gave it to you? Are you

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very sure?"

"Yes, I would be scared to wear it if he didn't."

"Very well, then. I don't want you to wear that coat on the street. I want you to take it right home and give it to Aunt Susan to take care of for you. Do it right away. Do you hear?"

"I'll take it home."

That evening before the sun went down an irregular procession of ladies, beginning at the eastern side of the town and adding to its number as it passed the different houses, proceeded to the depot. Some had with them servants carrying baskets and others carried their baskets themselves. All the baskets were loaded with provisions covered with napkins or papers to screen their contents.

There was some trepidation in their ranks caused by their unusual errand and the uncertainty of their reception by the soldiers of their avowed enemies, but all were brave at heart and willing to face all opposing obstacles to accomplish their purpose.

Reaching the platform of the depot, they found the first large enclosed door guarded by a squad of blue-coated soldiers. The other doors were tightly closed. The soldiers stood at attention. Two pair, a little distance apart, crossed bayonets, thus making two arches under which the procession was permitted to pass.

The leader of the ladies was a handsome woman -- large and imposing in appearance. She had laughing eyes and a smiling countenance. She was perfectly fearless of danger. She was one who had given her sons to the Army. Her large house (now unhappily one of the things of the past) was ever open to shelter a Confederate soldier. She was not afraid to express her wants to a Federal general as she had this day, nor to Federal soldiers with bayonets.

She stepped forward under the arched bayonets to the officer of the guard, and smilingly presented him with the General's order. He read it blushing and deferentially stood aside motioning her to enter, which she did with her servant. She turned and bade the others follow. This they were ready to do. Soon they all found themselves on the inside and were cheering the artillery boys with smiles as well as with sustenance.

The grey-coated boys appreciated both, and for a time, were happy. The officer of the imprisoned command held a little confidential conversation with the leading lady, and arrangements were soon made

that resulted in lessening, to a considerable extent, the number of Confederate prisoners in the old depot.

Among the prisoners was one who was a superb violinist. He was said to be unequalled in the Army of Virginia. His violin

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had gone home and back with the furloughed violinist. The chief diversion of the company was in his music and in the resulting dance of the lively lads when the spirit was on them.

The supply of food settled into a routine. The next evening, a little before the expected coming of the food supply, the spirit of music and dance was on the imprisoned soldiers.

An empty box near the center of the depot furnished a seat for the violinist. A rattling piece of music from his instrument drew the attention of everyone within a considerable distance. A large detachment of Federal soldiers were camped nearby to furnish guards for prisoners and stores. Quite a crowd of idle soldiers soon gathered upon the platform.

The Confederate boys drew near their musician. Soon, some dance music set their feet and bodies in motion, and then the dance was on. It was such a dance as the blue coats had never seen. As the music quickened and varied, so too did the dance. Soon the eager crowd outside the guard pressed near to see and hear. The guard itself with its good-natured Corporal became absorbed and interested in sound and motion and allowed the numbers outside to press within the doorway.

It was at this time that the deputation of food-bearers arrived. The officer at the door passed in one old colored woman with a large basket carelessly covered with a cloth. He lifted the corner a little and scanned the loaves of bread and buttered sandwiches, dropped the cover and motioned her to return and take in the other baskets and return them, as he now would permit but one person to enter.

A plank partition at that time separated a room at the northeast corner of the depot from the rest of the building. Inside of this the baskets were quickly carried and emptied by the eager hands of the prisoners.

Within the first basket, well wrapped in a newspaper, was a large blue overcoat and cap. A young artillery man, the first selected to run the blockade, was soon enveloped in this overcoat and surmounted with the cavalry cap. Watching his opportunity when the Federal soldiers about the door and who had gradually encroached within the building were absorbed with the dance and music, he quietly stepped out of the little room and, sauntering along the wall, joined the blue coats near the door. When all was ready the music and dancing ceased, and the gray-jacket-

ed boys were called to supper. All was then confusion, and the bayonets of the guard pushed out the rabble of blue coat on-lookers near the door, and with them the sheep in wolf's clothing.

Reaching the platform, the

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young man dropped out of the squad of blue coats and struck into the street heading to the courthouse. This he had hardly reached with he was met by a boy who, turning to the left, piloted him to a large house near the outside of the town.

Here he turned over his cap and coat and was given a good supper and portable lunch, furnished a place to sleep until nearly daylight. Then a guide passed him between the pickets and gave him directions how to safely reach the Confederate lines across the Tennessee River.

The next afternoon and for several succeeding afternoons as long as prudence permitted, that basket with its enclosures went to the Confederate prisoners, where the same scene was enacted and other prisoners were allowed to escape.

This practice was continued for several weeks until the remaining prisoners were

transferred to prison camps in Illinois where they waited out the rest of the war in captivity. According to legend, one of the escaped Confederate soldiers returned to Huntsville after the war and married the young lady responsible for his rescue.

Today, there are few signs left in Huntsville to remind one of the events of that day. The grounds which once held the tents of the Union soldiers guarding the depot were occupied by Dilworth Lumber Company, now the site of Lee-Ann's Bar & Grill and Bryant Bank. The old depot has been placed on the registry of Historical Buildings.

Perhaps the only clue that it was ever used as a prison are the interior walls, where, if you ask a guide to show you, you can still see the graffiti from a day over a hundred years ago when bored Confederate soldiers wrote their names on the walls.



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“My Ragtime Baby”

Born in 1873, as the son of a Methodist Preacher, Willie Handy decided at a young age he wanted to be a musician. His family, however, all stal-

wart hell-fire and brimstone God-fearing people, thought a musician was nothing but a blatant sinner in disguise.

In an effort to pacify his father, who wanted him to become a minister, Willie agreed to finish school and take the examination to become a school teacher. After graduation, and being unable to find a position as a teacher, he and a friend moved to Birmingham where he went to work at one of the iron mills as a laborer.

Willie had not lost his desire to be a musician, though. He

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quickly became friends with most of the black musicians in Birmingham and it was not long before he had formed his own group and was playing around town at night while still working in the mills during the day.

One of the first gigs he had in Birmingham, according to legend, was playing in a notorious dive. The owner, after listening to the audition, asked what the group's name was.

"Don't have one." Willie replied.

"Well, what's your name?"

"Willie."

"Sounds like a damn Uncle Tom name to me. What's your whole name?"

"William Christopher."

"Hell, that's even worse! We'll just call you by your initials."

W.C. Handy soon tired of Birmingham, though, and moved to Huntsville where he got a job teaching at Alabama A&M as a music instructor. Among his many duties as an instructor, Handy was also responsible for organizing recitals for his students.

Unfortunately, the headmaster at A&M believed that classical music was the only music that should be performed. He even insisted on personally approving the programs for every recital.

For his first recital Handy chose a piece written by an obscure song-writer, he said, entitled, "La' Overture Tous-saint." With a name like that,

there was no trouble getting the headmaster to approve it.

Handy diligently rehearsed the students, who were by this time enraptured with the new musical composition.

The day of the concert arrived and it was an instant success. Even the staid headmaster was seen sitting in the front row tapping his foot to the music.

W.C. Handy's career as an instructor did not last long. He was still determined to make his mark as a musician. After leaving Huntsville, he moved to Memphis where he wrote the all-time classic, "Memphis Blues," which he sold for \$100.

Still a poor man, he next ended up in St.

Louis, and after being forced to sleep in alleys and pool rooms, composed the song "Saint Louis Blues," a song that made him wealthy and famous and earned him the title of "Father of the Blues."

Ironically, he was to become best known for that piece he had composed while teaching at A&M - after he changed its name to "My Ragtime Baby."

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LIFE ON THE OLD PLANTATION

by Charles R. Wells

On Highway 72 west of Huntsville on the south side of the road just past where Rideout Road (now Research Park Blvd.) crosses the highway, there used to be a large farm called the Beasley Plantation. The area is now occupied by a shopping center, Research Park, several auto dealers and residential subdivisions. During the 1930s in the Great Depression, this was a fairly large, self-contained community working, living and surviving during some of this country's worst times.

Sometime prior to 1929, Mr. Clarence Beasley had owned a large farm somewhere in Mississippi. He purchased the farm on Highway 72 in early 1929 and brought several of his field hands from Mississippi with him. Some of the older ones had been born into slavery or were children of slaves. I remember sitting on their front porches with them while they rocked and smoked their corncob pipes and told stories of olden times when the Yankees came down and took over the country.

The farm was quite large.



It began about where Madison Square is now and ran west to a little beyond Indian Creek. It's northern boundary was Old Monrovia Road and ran south to Old Madison Pike. The farm contained several hundred acres. The main crops grown were cotton, corn, potatoes, peanuts and a little tobacco.

The farm had its own gin, grist mill, blacksmith shop and machinery repair shop. My uncle, Robert Anderson, was the farm mechanic. Most of the houses were heated by fireplaces, and wood for this purpose was cut from trees on the south side of the farm, hauled and stacked by each house. This chore was done

mostly in the late fall after all crops were harvested.

My father, William R. (Bill) Wells, was hired to oversee the farm for a fixed salary plus supplies to live on. He and my mother, Roberta A. (Birdie) Wells, and

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their children, moved into the large white house on the hill.

I don't remember much about the activities of my older brothers and sister, but a couple of things do come to mind about brother Joe. One of the older hands would come to the house each day, go into the kitchen, and pick up the container (slop bucket) of table scraps to feed to the hogs. If Mama had a pan of baked sweet potatoes cooling on the stove, he would stop and put a couple in his pocket. Joe developed a desire for the man's pipe, and one day after he laid the pipe on the porch railing outside the kitchen door, as he always did, Joe swiped it and took it under the house. He hid it under the steps leading to the kitchen porch and claims he never smoked it. He says it may still be there.

On another occasion when the older children had built themselves a playhouse under the floor by hanging up tow sacks as partitions, they would not let him play with them. So Joe got a box of matches and set their house on fire. Jim Buck and Alice Blackman, who lived directly behind the big house, saw the fire and rushed over and put it out. Joe got his britches fanned, too.

The big house was located about 1000 feet off the highway on a gravel drive running through a grove of large trees. The house sat on a small hill. Just behind the house

and running toward the east was a row of small cabins. These could have been slave quarters in times gone by.

Supplies were brought out once each month from Huntsville. These included foodstuffs, gas, oil and kerosene (coal oil). These were distributed to all families.

The Madison County Health Department came out to the farm each spring to give all of the children, black and white, and some adults too, their immunization shots. They would set up a row of tables and run each of us down the row for a shot at each table.

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dogs kiss you even after
you've left them alone all
day."**

Darryl Goldman, Huntsville

and highway was heavily wooded, and sometimes during the spring and summer months, travelers would stop and camp overnight in the woods. Gypsies would have their colorful wagons, build a large fire and sing and dance and make music. We were warned to stay away from them because they sometimes stole children.

In order for my dad to get around to all the areas on the farm he rode a large reddish-looking horse. He wore knee-high leather boots, riding breeches, a leather jacket and a Stetson hat. This was his working uniform.

There was a small wooded knoll on the west side of the farm near Indian Creek. It was rumored that just as the Yankees came into the country, someone buried a pot of money in a grave there. Sometimes as Daddy would make his rounds of the farm on horseback, he would go

by the grave and see a freshly dug hole. This continued for some time until finally, in the last hole, one could see the impression of what must have been an iron pot in the bottom. Who did the digging and what they found was never known.

Several times people would walk up the lane to the big house and ask for something to eat and a place to rest. Mama would feed them what she could and before they left give them two or three baked sweet potatoes. We ate a lot of pinto beans, corn bread, turnip greens and baked sweet potatoes in those days.

The farm being a self-contained community, there had to be some way of telling all the workers when to start their workday. To do this, there was a large bell mounted on a tall post behind the big house. It was rung in the morning to tell the workers to go to the fields or to their

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assigned workplaces. It was rung a little before noon for the noonday meal. It was rung again to signal the end of the meal and to return to the fields. It was rung again late in the afternoon as a signal that the workday was over and the workers could head for the barn and home. The bell was the timekeeper for the farm and could be heard anywhere on the farm. The job of keeping up with the right time and ringing the bell was my mother's. Although someone else could pull the rope and ring the bell, Mama said when.

The gin was located behind the big house in sort of a flat hollow area. It was a two-story structure about 80 feet by 80 feet with all the gin machinery on the bottom floor. There were stalls for cotton storage on the upper floor. The cotton was brought in from the fields in large split white oak baskets which were woven on the farm. These were about three feet

across and two and a half feet high. They were hoisted up to the upper floor and emptied into stalls that lined each side of a central passageway. There was a duct on the outside wall of each stall, and in the middle of this duct was a small door. This door would be opened and the cotton fed into the opening using

a pitchfork. Suction in this duct carried the cotton and dropped it into the ginning machinery.

One of the hardest jobs around the gin was starting the engine in the morning. It was a one-cylinder diesel that used a hot plug for starting. It stood about five feet tall and had on each side a six or



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seven-foot flywheel. To get the engine started, they had to take the plug out and heat it up and put it back in the engine. Then they would climb up on the flywheel to get it to turning slowly. Then they would stand on the floor and pull on the flywheel spokes.

All of the gin machinery was driven by a system of drive shafts, pulleys, and reduction gears. The main drive shaft ran almost the full length of the building. Each piece of equipment had its own drive belt. You could not run every piece of equipment at one time. The engine just would not pull it. After the cotton had been ginned, it was fed into a large press for baling. Most bales averaged weighing around 425 pounds. As each bale was finished, it was taken to a large pier on the south side of the gin. After a number of bales had been finished, they were hauled by flat-bed truck to Huntsville for sale or storage.

Hay to feed the livestock was cut and allowed to cure in the field. It was then raked and loaded on wagons with large hay-frames and hauled to barns to be put in the barn lofts. The loaded wagons would be pulled to one end of the barn and a large three-pronged hook would be lowered and the hook points shoved into the hay. To lower the hook, the mule hitched to this contraption had to back up about 50 feet. A specially trained mule was required for this job. After the hooks were in place, the mule was driven forward and the load of hay was raised to the top of the barn, then down the top to some point inside where someone pulled a trip rope and dumped the loose hay in the loft. The men would take turns working as the inside man stacking the hay because it was a hot, sweaty job.

During the summertime we would all go down to Indian Creek to swim and cool off and eat a big watermelon. Sometimes I would scare my Aunt Lucy by jumping in the creek, holding my breath and floating to the top face down, then waiting for Aunt Lucy to start yelling, "Somebody jump in and save him." I would then straighten up and swim out. Aunt Lucy was my mother's sister and lived with us from time to time when Mama was ill. We all owed her an immense debt of gratitude for helping to raise us and for just being there.

All of these things happened many years ago, but in my memory they are as vivid as if they happened five years ago, one year ago, or ... yesterday.

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Heard On the Street

by *Cathey Carney*



Janet Lyle was the Photo of the Month winner for October! The sweet little girl was Marie Hewett. Janet is the wife of that famous musician Charlie Lyle and knew Marie and Dr. Bill Hewett many years ago when both Charlie and Bill played in the Southern Comforts band along with Cotton Ray, Buzz Raynes, Danny Banks, etc. Congratulation to you Janet!

What a great night recently at Merrimack Hall when Claire Lynch performed, along with musicians Ricky J. Taylor and Phil Easterbrook. Claire started out performing in Huntsville years ago and she's now known nationally with several great albums out including her latest one, "Dear Sister." She sounds better than ever, and along with Ricky and Phil (who used to be part of her band) it was a night to remember. To make it even better was storyteller Bruce Walker, who acted as Emcee and told some really funny stories. The best thing about this night was that proceeds went to the Johnny Stallings Arts Program which pro-

vides opportunities for those with special needs through Merrimack Hall.

We were so sad to hear of the death of a very young hero, who was trying to save lives when he was involved in a fatal wreck. Jantzen Murrell Frazier, 28, was a volunteer firefighter who had seen a home on fire on Wilson Mountain road and was responding, when his fire truck flipped. Jantzen was killed instantly and leaves thousands in this area mourning the death of a man who would do anything to help anyone he could. We send our deepest condolences to his wife Leslie, children Arianna (6), Coral (4) and 2 year old twins Aubrey and Shelby. Even tho he was so young, Jantzen was a former U.S. Army Ranger and sniper, who had served two tours in Iraq. He was the recipient of five Purple Hearts for his heroism.

Madison County High School Class of 1963 cel-

ebrated its 50th Anniversary reunion in late September at Gibson's BBQ on South Parkway. 17 of the original '63 graduates were honored along with their spouses and guests. A great meal was provided by Gibson's and it was wonderful for the graduates to meet and catch up with each other.

Carolyn and Kerry Pinkerton are so proud of their new grandson, Charles Alexander Pinkerton (Charlie). He was born in mid March and the whole family is in love with the little guy!

This time of year is when everyone loves to get out and travel a bit to see the fall leaf color, especially in the higher elevations. One spot many people from here like to go is Mentone, Al on Lookout Mountain. Recently while there I met Ray Padgett who with his wife Sandra owns the store Kamama (Cherokee Indians word for "butterfly" was Kamama). Ray features beautiful furniture, paintings, pottery, glass, sculpture and jewelry along with some really good coffee

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 child was born in Huntsville on the courthouse square and went on to become the nation's darling



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and baked items. You can get a better idea of how it looks up there by going to www.kamaMentone.com.

Liz Waggett was much loved in this community and died at a young age of pancreatic cancer. To honor her the employees of Beason & Nalley, where she worked, sponsor the Liz Waggett Memorial 5K Fun Run/Walk each year. It will be held this year, Nov. 2 at 8 am in the 101 Monroe St. location of Beason & Nalley downtown. All proceeds go to benefit Huntsville Hosp. Foundation for pancreatic cancer.

Bill and Rosemary Leath-erwood's grandson **Billy IV** will celebrate his 9th birthday Nov. 4th with family. He had a great ball season and attended a 3 day baseball camp at UAT where he was awarded Best Pitcher and Best Batter. Congratulations to the young man!

Have you heard of **Steve Burcham** of Madison? In late September, in Daytona Beach, FL at the resort there Steve was given a very prestigious writer's award by the Florida Authors and Publishers Asso. Steve underwent a heart replacement a couple of years ago and wrote a book about what it was like and his feelings about it. His book, "**Prayer & Grace**" won the top Gold award (President's Awards). I have read his book and you can't put it down. Congratula-

tions to Steve! Wife **Cindy** and father-in-law **Ron Eyestone (Barb)** are also so inspired by him.

Happy birthday to my beautiful daughter **Stephanie Troup** who lives now in Nashville with husband **John** and my grand kids **Hannah** and **Evan Troup**.

Ann and **Ed Trentham** would have been married 50 years in October, but sadly Ed passed away Aug. 8, 2011. He was a sweet, kind man who had a smile for everyone. I know he is missed by his daughter **Susan**, son **Steve** and especially **Ann**.

I loved seeing **Freda Suttles** recently who was the nurse at Huntsville Hospital on the Oncology Floor who took such good care of Tom during his last days. Thank you, Freda.

I haven't mentioned it in this column before but I am so proud of my first cousin **Reinhard Mey**, a songwriter and well-known musician in Germany, who has just recorded his 28th album and when it came out a month ago it went to #1 on the German album charts. It is entitled "Dann Mach's Gut". He writes songs & ballads about family and love and the melodies are so pretty. He does concert tours every couple of years and they are sold out years in advance. Pretty good for a guy who'll be 71 in December! So proud of you, cuz!

On Nov. 11 at Bonefish Grill, the Pilot club is holding a fund raiser to benefit **Project Lifesaver**. This is maintained by the Madison Cty. Sheriff's Dept. and it helps locate clients when they wander from their caregivers, a real need nowadays. To see more go to www.projectlifesaverhuntsville.com.

Nov. 11 is **Veterans Day** and we are **SO Proud** of our **vets** who risked their lives for us. Please go out and support them at the **Veterans Day Parade** to be held in downtown Huntsville.

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Southern to the Core

Thickening Gravy

After frying a batch of chicken, pour off most of the grease. Brown a little flour in the bottom of the skillet, add salt and pepper.

Pour in the milk or water, boil and stir til it starts to get thick. Serve over biscuits or rice. You can also heat your leftover fried chicken in this gravy.

Fried Onion Rings

- 4 large onions
- 2/3 c. milk
- 1/2 c. flour
- 1/4 t. pepper & salt to taste
- Shortening for frying

Cut cleaned onions into 1/4 inch slices and separate into rings. Soak the rings in milk for 10 minutes. Dredge them in the flour mixture, then fry in deep fat heated to 365 degrees a few at a time, til

browned, about 3 minutes.

Drain on paper towels and immediately serve.

Jumblies

Cream together 2 cups of sugar and 1 of butter, add 3 well-beaten eggs and 6 tablespoons of sweet milk, 2 tablespoons of baking powder.

Add enough flour to make into a soft dough; don't roll it out. Break off pieces about the size of a walnut and form into a ring by rolling them in rolls about the size of your finger and pinch the ends together.

Put them in greased pans to bake - about an inch apart - at 325 degrees for about 15 minutes or til browned.

These will keep for a long time and can be frozen.

Cracklin Bread

- 2 c. yellow cornmeal mix
- 1 egg
- 1/2 t. garlic powder
- 1 c. cracklins
- 1/2 t. onion powder
- 1-1/2 c. milk or buttermilk
- 1/2 c. vegetable oil

Mix this together (find cracklins in store in sausage section). Heat about 2 tablespoons of oil in a large skillet, sprinkle some garlic powder, salt and onion powder on the grease. Pour in your batter and cook at 325 degrees for about 25 minutes.

Muscadine Wine

- 5 lbs. of muscadines
- 10 cups of water
- 5 lbs. of sugar

Take the muscadines and bust them up - put in a churn - add the

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 - One Quart Cole Slaw
 - Hot or Mild Sauce.
 - 24 buns.

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water; put 1 or 2 pounds of the sugar in to begin with. Let it work off til it quits working (fermenting). Strain, then add the remainder of sugar. Let stand for 14 days, or when it quits working. Put in bottles, leaving the cap loose. After it has completely quit working, seal. You will notice little bubbles around the top.

Coffee

Fill a wash pot full of water. Set it over a long fire and let it simmer a while. Put the coffee in cloth bags, tied, and throw them into the wash pot. Stir with a hickory stick. Boil and boil.

When you put your finger in your coffee and it makes a hole, it is strong enough.

Brown Betty

Grease a pudding dish and spread over the bottom a layer of fine bread crumbs and chopped apples. Sprinkle brown sugar, cinnamon and a bit of butter, repeat for each layer. Top off all with crumbs.

Pour half a cup of water over it and put in the oven. Bake for an hour at 325 degrees. Keep covered for the first half hour. Serve with hard sauce or cream.

Divinity

3 c. sugar
2/3 c. white corn syrup
Pinch of salt

Let all boil til a drop of the

mixture forms a hard ball in a glass of cold water. Pour slowly into thoroughly beaten whites of two or three eggs. Add one or two cups of nuts and beat til it thickens.

Take by spoonfuls or spread all in greased pan and cut when cool.

Miss Peso's Kisses

Whites of 2 eggs
1 c. pecan meats
Pinch of salt
1 c. sugar
1 c. dates, chopped
1/2 t. vanilla extract

Add the salt to the whites and beat til stiff, add the sugar and continue beating til sugar is dissolved and mixture is stiff. Add dates and flavoring. Add nuts.

Butter sheet of waxed paper well and put on a baking sheet. Drop from a spoon small portions not too close together. Bake at 300 degrees til brown. This makes about 30 medium kisses.

Fritters

1/2 c. milk
1 1/4 c. flour
1/2 t. salt
1 T. sugar
1 T. melted butter
1 egg
1 1/2 t. baking powder

Mix first 6 ingredients, beating very hard. Put in the baking powder after beating is done, mix well.

Drop small pieces into deep pre-heated oil and fry til well done (like doughnuts). Drain and serve with syrup or fruit sauce.



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Lou Ann Poole - Historic Cooking Society of Madison County

Sweet Potato Balls

Get fine large potatoes, boil them, peel and mash them fine. Add to the pulp a little butter, sugar, nutmeg and cinnamon. Work it well together.

Make it into small balls and lay them on buttered tin sheet. Bake them light brown in a brisk oven. Send them to the table very warm.

Forced Eggs

Boil the eggs hard and peel the shells off.

Wrap them up in force-meat (modern day bulk sausage) and fry them a fine brown.

Cut them lengthways with the yolks.

Put fine gravy into the dish thickened with a little flour.

Do not pour it over the eggs.

Corn Bread

1-1/2 cups sour milk or buttermilk

2 eggs and 1/2 teaspoon salt

1/2 teaspoon baking soda

1-1/2 cup corn meal

1/2 cup corn flour

1/2 cup melted butter, oil, lard or bacon fat

Preheat dutch oven with coals above and below.

Beat milk and eggs, stir into corn meal and flour.

Add the melted oil, mix just until moist through.

Pour batter into a greased pan, place this in the dutch oven, place coals under and over. It will be ready in about 20 minutes.

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Hardtack

- 5 cups flour (unbleached)
- 1 tablespoon baking powder
- 1 tablespoon salt
- 1-1/4 cups water
- Preheated oven to 450

In a bowl, combine the ingredients to form a stiff, but not dry dough. The dough should be pliable, but not stick a lot to your hands.

Take this mound of dough, and flatten it out onto a greased sheet, roll the dough into a flat sheet about 1/2 inch thick.

Using a bread knife, divide the dough into 3x3 inch squares, taking a 10-penny nail, put holes into the surface of the dough, all the way thru, at even intervals.

Bake in the oven for around 20 minutes till lightly browned. Take out and let cool.

Do this the day before you go ton the field and you will have enough tack to fill your haversack. It will be somewhat soft on Saturday morning, but by Sunday you should soak it in your coffee before eating, else you will have a hard time chewing.

Cement to Fix Broken Glass

Beat up the white of an egg, and stir hard into it enough unslaked lime to make it a thin paste, having first sifted it through a piece of muslin. Have the glass and china washed and clean and wiped dry; rub on each broken edge some of the paste, put the pieces smoothly together and set them by until they get thoroughly dry.

You must use lime paste perfectly fresh, or it will not do any good.

Thanks to Maggie Thigpen for providing these recipes





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Mother's Letter to a Soldier - 1855

"I was very sad the day you
left me.

I went into my room, shut the
door and there on my bended
knees,

gave you up to that God who
gave you to me and fervently
prayed he would guide you
right.

I felt my responsibility was at
an end, that you were now
responsible only to that God
to whom the secrets of all
hearts are known.

Be not ashamed my son, to
seek that guidance and that
knowledge of

Him without which none can
go right.

"Never write without sending
love to Grandma, aunt and
uncles; old folks like to be
remembered, the duty of the
young ones is to remember
them."

-Mittie Lewis Barrier



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Watching TV without a Station

by Telette Van Valkenburgh

In about 1949, Dad (Wilfred Van Valkenburgh) was running photostats and blueprints at his office on West Side Square ("Cotton Block"). On South Side Square, Willy Neal had an appliance store, and a TV set was in the window.

There was no picture because there was no station for miles around - only then in Birmingham, Nashville, or Atlanta. Undaunted, Dad ordered and built a TV set from a Hallicrafters kit. That included all of the parts to make the set, but there was no case or antenna. He made a couple of trips to Birmingham and one to Atlanta to check to see if it worked, and it did.

In the meantime, he put the TV set up in his office overlooking the courthouse, and we would spend many evenings up there looking at "snow" and lines on the screen. On one particularly hot summer evening, the family was seated in front of the TV and Dad was having a smoke down on the street. An airplane flew over and some video waves bounced into our TV set.

For an instant, in the haze, we could see the outline of a man on camera and we yelled down to Dad. There were about 35 steep steps from the street to the office and he turned a bright crimson trying to get up them but by then the TV was back to snow and lines again.

Whatever new invention it might be, though, Wilfred always wanted to "be the first kid on the block" to have it. While he appreciated the past, he was obsessed with the future and all of what he supposed that technology might be able to provide for us. As it turned out, he was not only in the right place but at the right time when so much scientific development was happening.



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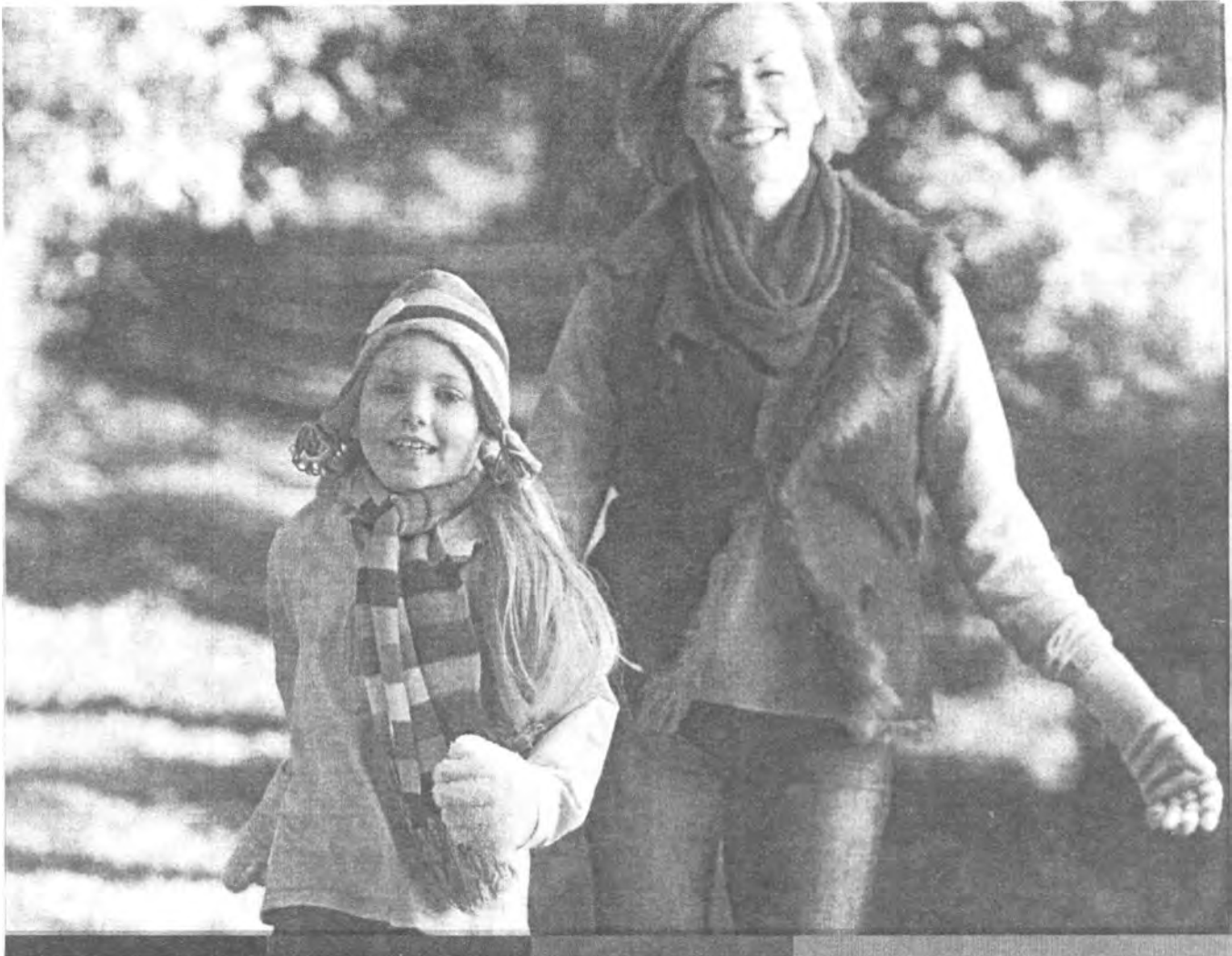
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As part of the nonprofit system of ACTS Retirement-Life Communities®, Magnolia Trace has a mission to provide security and peace of mind to seniors through a full complement of senior services. To put it simply, the community provides a rewarding and worry-free lifestyle, with countless amenities, conveniences and the protection of ACTS Life Care.

A Safety Net for a Long Life

All residents of Magnolia Trace are protected by the ACTS Samaritan Fund. This financial safety net guarantees that residents can remain at

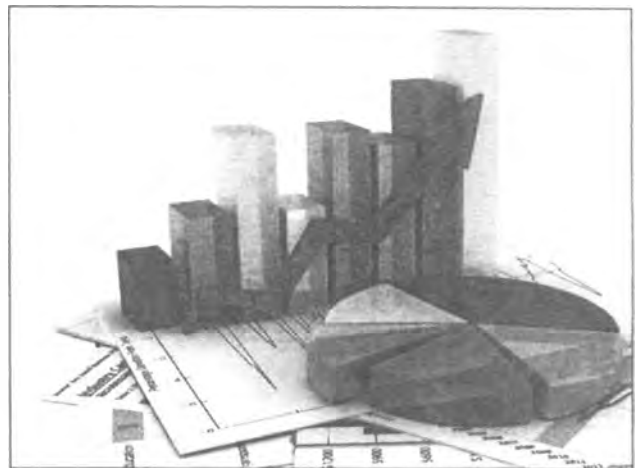
Magnolia Trace for the rest of their lives, even if they outlive their assets and financial resources.

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Magnolia Trace is a continuing care retirement community located in Huntsville, just off of Memorial Parkway SW.

To learn more about the tremendous financial benefits and peace of mind that Magnolia Trace provides, call 256.856.9839 or visit the community online at ACTSmagnoliatrace.org.



The Family Wagon

by Malcolm W. Miller



Driving out through the country some time back I happened to notice an old two horse wagon out in the field just sitting there rotting away. There were weeds and small bushes growing up all around and through it, and to me that old wagon represented the passing of an era. The family wagon was a way of life that is gone forever except perhaps for Amish, Mennonites, etc. that have not yet converted to engine run vehicles.

I remember the years gone by when the old two horse wagon that belonged to our family and many more like it played an extremely important role in so many of our lives. Whenever we took our occasional trip to purchase flour, sugar, etc. many horse drawn buggies were on the roads and parked at the store.

Now many years later, various machines and equipment perform those tasks that the wagon was used for. These new machines do these things so much more efficiently and rapidly. However, in the days when I was growing up the old horse drawn wagon was an essential part of life. My grandson and his bride were driven to their wedding ceremony in a beautiful horse and buggy and that brought back many memories of my childhood.

I will always remember the yearly trip into town for the whole family in the fall of the year after the cotton crop was sold. Everyone really looked forward to this trip because they were able to purchase the

new clothes for the coming winter. There were parking lots for wagons in town; however, these were not paved parking lots like they have for cars and trucks today.

The whole family would get up early on the special day because they were very excited. The bumpy ride into town would take two or more hours and once we arrived

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we wanted to stay in town as long as we possibly could. This journey was almost always made on Saturday and if we were lucky we might get to go to a good double-feature black and white picture show while our parents shopped. I can close my eyes today and still almost smell the aroma of hamburgers frying as we walked down the street. If our parents bought one for us we were well pleased as they certainly tasted good after that long ride into town.

Transportation was truly an important part of the wagon's usefulness but not the only part it played in our everyday lives. When Papa took the bed off it was immediately converted into a log wagon so essential for hauling in the wood supply to be used in the old wood cook stove, and to go in the fireplace to keep the family warm through the long winter months. It was also used for gathering corn, spreading manure, hauling fertilizer that we had purchased while in town, stoking and hauling cotton to the gin. With a special hay frame across the bed you could haul a mighty big load of loose hay from the hayfield to the barn. Speaking of hauling hay, the hay rides of today just aren't what they used to be when the ride was in a wagonload of loose hay pulled by two slow walking mules. That was certainly a whole lot more romantic than riding in a rubber-tired trailer loaded with bales of hay and pulled by a noisy tractor.

I remember the time when there were more mules and wagons around the church building during the big summer revivals than there were automobiles. There is a band that has a song out about all the wagon tracks around the church that are gone. It is one of my favorite bands and one of my favorite songs.

There were times when we had sick folks during bad weather and the road to our house

was so bad that the doctor couldn't get there in his car. The mules would be hitched up to the wagon and the family would pick the doctor up and bring him to the house.

The day of the horse and mule drawn wagon and its usefulness is a day of the past. It is an era of the past. I can assure you that the old wagon I saw rotting away out in that field that day was once some families' pride and joy. That wagon stands there now as a symbol of a slower, more peaceful way of life that is now gone.



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Notes on the "Blue Jay and Its Food" from the USDA 1896 yearbook

Submitted by William J. Wilson



Readers might find the following excerpt from the USDA Yearbook for 1896, by F.E.L. Beal, Assistant Biologist, amusing not only for its subject matter, but also for the world view and writing style of that era.

The author notes that the Blue Jays' "saucy, independent airs, sprightly manners, brilliant colors, and plumed caps have gained them many friends, in spite of the fact that their food habits are supposed to be detrimental to the

interests of the farmer."

Later, he opines, "The vocal powers of the Blue Jay, while by no means to be despised, are not as pleasing as its plumage, and most of its notes can be considered agreeable only by association. Jays are more or less garrulous all the year, but are particularly noisy at harvest time when laying up a supply of food for the winter.

They also exhibit considerable powers of mimicry and imitate the notes of many other birds with considerable success."

One which was kept in captivity by Mr. Sylvester learned to pronounce several English names with amazing distinction, as well as to give a schoolboy's yell and to whistle for a dog.

This Jay also showed a marked fondness for eating small mice, and would devour them apparently with "great relish."

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Sippin' and Dippin' on Tator Knob

by Billy Joe Cooley

It was the mid-1950s when Murphy and I went hill-climbing on Tator Knob, out in Hurricane Creek. Such treks often resulted in crossing paths with interesting characters like hill-dwellers whose cabins appeared as blessings from heaven, especially on hot days when we would run out of water.

Such was the situation one early September afternoon after Murphy and I had walked more than four hours. His jug was depleted first, then mine. It was one of those thirstier-than-usual days.

Spotting a small cabin in a clearing ahead, we decided to do the inevitable: ask for a water handout. We had done it often when coming upon a rural oasis.

A small woman walked from the cabin as we approached, looking us over pretty well as we walked up. Determining that we were just a pair of OK city boys on a country hike, she asked if we were "tard."

At least we weren't revenuers, she theorized. Revenuers were notorious for destroying perfectly good whiskey distilleries in those days just because the units were unlicensed by the federal government.

We told her that we were merely thirsty schoolboys. "Thirsty for water, that is," we clarified, in the event she had moonshine in the house.

The old woman grinned and walked toward her well. She pulled up a bucket of water and handed me the drinking gourd, which was the only sign of a dipper around. Unfortunately, before I had time to take a sip of the water, I noticed some serious snuff stains around her mouth.

Let it be known here and

now that next to pesky flies and mosquitoes, there's nothing more detestable to me than eating or drinking from an unwashed utensil that has been used by a snuff-dipper.

Anyway, I was determined that my lips were not about to touch any part of that gourd where that woman may have drank. My plan was to hold the gourd in my left hand and get a relatively clean side, assuming she was right-handed like most people.

The little woman grinned through her snuffy lips and encouraged me to hurry up so she could get a drink.

I hesitated a few minutes. Finally I asked, in a devious way, whether she was left or right-handed.

"Why, I'm neither," she replied. "I'm what they call ambidextrous. I use both hands equally as good." This created a major mental problem for me. Then I remembered that gourds have hollow handles, so I put my lips around the end of the gourd and let the water run through the handle, into my thirsty gullet. What a refreshing moment.

The old woman watched curiously, then blurted out "Well, if that don't beat all. You're the only person I ever saw who drinks water out of the gourd the same way I do."

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The Blacksmith

by Tom Carney

It was Oct. 11, 1864. The Civil War was still very evident in Madison county and the Tennessee valley. Ben Branum had enlisted on the Confederate side in the conflict, was wounded badly at Shiloh and paroled. He was working in his blacksmith shop at Paint Rock, Alabama on that cool fall day in October. His wife PJ had brought him his lunch. Ben loved his wife Pherbia Jane whom he and family members lovingly called PJ.

Not long after PJ left, a Yankee patrol out scrounging for whatever they could find reined up their horses and tied them to Ben's hitching post. Their blue uniforms were barely distinguishable under the heavy dust which covered them.

The captain of the patrol, after eyeing Ben for awhile, barked "Are you a Reb boy?" "I am," replied Ben. "Why aren't you out fighting with your Reb brothers?" the captain yelled back. "Leg shattered at Shiloh," Ben replied. "What's your name boy?" "Ben Branum," Ben replied as he moved toward his forge dragging his left leg. "Well, Mr. Ben Branum," the captain replied, "Here's what I want you to do for your Union. I'm commanding you to shoe all twenty of our horses by sundown, or we will burn this town down to the ground."

Ben readily saw that it would be fruitless and dangerous to object under the circumstances. Under guard, he set about shoeing the first horse as the group of dusty Yanks strolled toward the saloon

(Cont'd. on p. 36)

"We got married for better or worse. He couldn't do better, and I couldn't do worse."

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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.

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across the road.

After shoeing the last horse, it was almost sun-down. The Yanks returned, mounted and rode off without giving Ben even a Thank You for his labor.

As the dust from the patrol disappeared into the distance, an angry mob began to gather around the blacksmith shop. They began to curse Ben, calling him a traitor for shoeing the horses of the hated Yankees. Ben tried to explain, but to no avail.

Someone yelled from the crowd, "He needs to be strung up." Shouts of "Hang him, Hang him" echoed throughout the mob. Ben was about to walk away when he heard the hammer of a gun click behind him. He felt the barrel press against the back of his head. "Get in the wagon," a voice ordered.

Ben sat in the wagon with his hands and feet tied as it slowly made its way through town toward the countryside. This has got to be a joke, Ben thought. Surely they will not hang me. How could they? His thoughts turned to PJ and their five children. Who will watch after them if this drunken mob goes through with this? This can't be happening, it's has to be a nightmare. I'll awake soon and PJ will be

by my side, and all will be well.

It was dusky dark when the wagon came to a stop a mile or so from town. Ben looked up and saw the large branch of an oak tree looming above him. He heard the swish of a rope being thrown over the branch. Someone placed a noose around his neck. Oh my God! Ben thought, they are really going to do this.

"Any last words?" came a voice near him. "Tell my wife PJ and my kids I love them." Ben murmured. "Why are you people doing this?" No response from the mob. Somebody yelled "Get up, mule." The

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"The world is a dangerous place to live, not because of the people who are evil, but because of the people who don't do anything about it."

Albert Einstein

wagon lurched forward, leaving Ben swinging from the branch. The mob stood silently for a moment staring at the body and as if by an inner signal, all turned and began walking back toward town.

PJ, after being told by her neighbors what had happened, mounted the old plow mule and set out to find her husband. Coming upon the site, she could see from a distance in the pale moonlight an outline of a body hanging from a tree limb. Tears flowed down her cheeks as she cursed the people who had done this horrible act.

For a moment she thought to herself, maybe this isn't Ben. Maybe her neighbors got it wrong. But, as she drew closer, all her doubts were erased as the moonlight reflected off her beloved Ben's face. She started crying uncontrollably and at the same time shaking with anger.

Then she suddenly stopped crying, as a awful thought entered her head. What if they came back? Other killings in the valley over the years had resulted in the mutilation of the body. This was not going to happen to her Ben.

She fumbled in her apron pocket for her paring knife she kept there. Pulling it out, she reached up grabbed the branch and pulled herself to a standing position on the mule's back, grabbed the taut rope and cut it with one pass of the knife.

Ben's body fell to the ground with a sickening thud. Dismounting she tried to lift Ben across the mule's back, but he was just too heavy. Still fearing the return of the mob, she began to drag him into the wooded area behind the tree. In the faint light she dug out a shallow grave with a large stick. After rolling her husband into the shallow pit, she kissed him on the forehead, said a small prayer, then covered the body with dirt and leaves, making sure not to leave any evidence of a grave there. Ben would be given a proper burial after all this had passed.

On her trek back home, she thought, what will she tell the children when they ask where is daddy? So many deaths, so many heartaches. When will this awful war end?

PJ never remarried. She raised her five children with help from family and friends. Her children became fine citizens in the county. PJ died on the Fourth of July in 1906 at the age of 76. She was buried beside her Ben in the Moon cemetery at Owens Cross Roads, Alabama.

A broken tombstone marks her gravesite, somewhat symbolic of that October day in 1864 when local ignorance and hatred broke apart her life.

A very simple inscription reads, "PJ, Wife of Benjamin Branum".

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Seen in the Newspapers - 1812

Grand Jury Reports on Poor Conditions in Huntsville, Alabama

Bootlegging is alive and well in Madison County. It exists in every part of the county, especially in the city and outlying areas, with the only exception of Merrimack. Most of the county officers and city commissioners offices are bought and sold outrageously.

Night hacks and omnibus lines help supply the bootleggers. Two restaurants, one near Southern Railway Station and one near the N.C. St. Louis Train, are termed "dens of vice." Near one of these a Negro, carrying \$40 he had gotten from sale of his cotton, had been reported murdered during the past year. The city has been asked to revoke the licenses of the cafes, one of which was selling five barrels of illicit whisky a week.

The jail situation is a pitiful one. The old portion of the jail that is still in use is a "horrible reminder of the dreadful dungeons of the Dark Ages" and the removal needs to happen speedily.

The poor house is in condition of neglect and its 23 inmates, White and Negro, run out of food regularly at different intervals and are unable to obtain any doctors services when required.

The Courthouse is a positive disgrace, with the Grand Jury room a germ-laden hole. It is the recommendation of the Grand Jury that this courthouse be torn down. The only reason that the county commissioners have not been indicted was because of the strong pleas of the solicitor.



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Tweetie's Pet Tips

"I know, it goes against every feather I've got - but here are some interesting cat beliefs.."

Tweetie



Cats and Good Luck

- Dreaming of a cat is sometimes regarded as a sign of bad luck in the future. On the other hand, American folklore has it that dreaming of a white cat is good luck.
- In England, it was believed that if a black cat lived in the house, the young lass would have plenty of suitors.
- In France, it is believed that if you find one white hair on a black cat, Lady Luck will smile upon you.
- In Yorkshire, England, while it is lucky to own a black cat, it is extremely unlucky to come across one accidentally.
- In the early 16th century, a visitor to an English home would always kiss the family cat to bring good luck.
- In the Dark Ages, a cat was mortared, while still alive, into the foundation of a building to ensure good luck to the inhabitants.
- If a black cat crosses your path while you're driving, turn your hat around backwards and mark an X on your windshield to prevent bad luck.
- It is bad luck to cross a stream carrying a cat. - French superstition
- Fishermen's wives kept a black cat at home to prevent disaster at sea.
- It is bad luck to see a white cat at night.

Harming a cat

- If you kick a cat, you will develop rheumatism in that leg.
- If you are a farmer and kill a cat, you can expect your cattle to die mysteriously.
- If you drown a cat, you will fall victim to a drowning.
- If you kill a cat, you are sacrificing your soul to the Devil.
- Sailors believed that the worst possible cat-related act, guaranteed to raise a storm and bring bad luck of all sorts, was to throw the cat overboard.
- Some people who wanted to get rid of a cat but were afraid of the consequences went so far as to hire professional feline "hit men."
- To starve a cat or a kitten purposely will result in the owner and his entire family to experience a very bad ending in life.
- To put an ending to even one


of a cat's 9 lives was to risk being haunted by that particular cat for the rest of the murderer's life.

- To kill a cat brings seventeen years of bad luck - Irish superstition
- The French believed that if a girl tread on a cat's tail, she would not find a husband before a year is out.


The Cat as a Soothsayer

- Cats can forecast the weather: they predict the wind by clawing at carpets and curtains; rain is highly likely when a cat busily washes its ears.
- In mythology, the cat was believed to have great influence on the weather. Witches who rode on storms took the form of cats.
- The dog, an attendant of the storm king Odin, was a symbol of wind. Cats came to symbolize down-pouring rain, and dogs to symbolize strong gusts of wind.
- Some people believed that if a cat washes its face and paws in the parlor, company's coming.
- If a cat continually looks out a window on any day, rain is on the way.
- A stray tortoise shell cat foretells a bad omen.
- Some cats can predict earthquakes (actually, there is some truth in this "folklore").





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From the Desk of Tom Carney

The Last Soldier

by Tom Carney

"Hell, that's a great idea. Dress the old man up in his uniform and we can make him a grand marshal or something. We can play up the Old South, make the parade a success, and get all kinds of free publicity."

They picked him up in one of those fancy convertible cars. They told him all he had to do was sit back and wave at people. He wasn't much to look at. The old gray uniform was threadbare and soiled from years of neglect. The shoulders it rested on were hunched with age. Watching the old man, you had to wonder what was going through his mind. The once-proud soldier of a hundred battles, long ago, now sat perfectly still, silently watching the crowds.

The biggest crowd was around the reviewing stand. When the band saw the convertible approaching, they paused, and then began a loud stirring rendition of "Dixie." The old man removed the tattered campaign hat from his head and held it against his breast, while the crowd hooped and hollered.

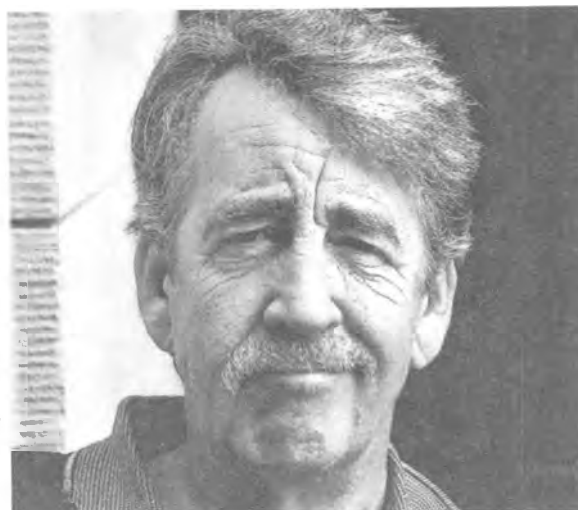
The car started mov-

ing again as the last strains of the Confederate battle song died away. After a brief pause to catch their breath, the band broke into a slow, sad rendition of the old Union standard, the "Battle Hymn of the Republic."

"Stop," yelled the old man to the driver of the car. People grew silent, every eye was on the old man as he struggled to pull himself erect. Holding onto the back of the seat to give himself support, he raised his other hand to his forehead in salute, and held it there, trembling, as he turned to face the American flag.

John A. Steger was born on December 7, 1845, the son of Kennon H. Steger. The elder Steger had moved from Virginia and settled in Ryland, a few miles north of Huntsville, where he became a prosperous farmer.

When Alabama seceded from the Union in 1861, John, like all young men everywhere, was anxious to enlist. He was attending school in



Ryland at the time and his father reminded him that 15 was too young to go off and be a soldier. The war became a reality early the next year when General Mitchel and his hated Yankee troops invaded Madison County, burning, looting, and terrorizing at will.

These were dangerous times. The Yankees automatically suspected any young man as being a rebel, while the Confederates assumed any young southern man not in uniform was a deserter, or even worse, a traitor.

On May 24, 1863 John Steger was sworn in as a private in the Confederate States of America Army. He had heard of Confederate forces camped at Brownsboro, and after receiving permission from his

"After a certain age, if you don't wake up aching in every joint, you're probably dead."

Charles Paul, Arab

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father quickly made his way to join them.

The group he joined was Company G of Colonel William A. Johnson's 4th Cavalry Regiment, which was then passing through Madison County after a raid into Tennessee. Johnson's regiment served in the brigade of General Philip Dale Roddy, the famous "Defender of North Alabama."

Steger's army life was filled with adventure, and the teenage soldier quickly rose through the ranks to sergeant. He served mainly in North Alabama and Mississippi, though he also saw combat in Tennessee and Georgia. His closest call came on June 10, 1864, at the battle of Brice's Crossroads, Mississippi. Roddy's men had ridden all day in the hot sun to reach the battlefield, but General Forrest ordered them into action almost immediately. When the cavalry dismounted, the soldiers counted off and every fourth man was assigned as a horse holder. Steger was fortunate enough to be so designated. However, he traded places with another and charged with his comrades. As the Alabamians were driving back the Yankees, a bullet struck Steger's cartridge box and cut the strap holding it to his side. A fraction of an inch closer and it would have seriously injured him.

Another of Steger's encounters took place quite close to home. In the fall of 1863, Roddy's horsemen had been sent to North Georgia. When they returned to Alabama, they found the Yankees in force at New Market. Steger and several others were sent to scout. Unfortunately, they were cut off by the enemy

for several days. Steger suggested the men head for his father's house near Ryland. They reached the house late in the afternoon. Steger was about to approach the house when he was stopped by one of the family's servants. The old black woman warned him that four Yankees were already there. Steger and his companions waited until early morning, then they surprised the sleeping Yankees and captured them, without firing a shot.

After General Lee surrendered at Appomattox, word was slow to reach the scattered remnants of the Confederate Army still struggling in North Alabama. It was more than a month later, May 17, 1865, when General Roddy finally surrendered at Pond Springs (now Wheeler, Alabama).

For John Steger, like hundreds of thousands of other men, there was nothing else left to do except begin the long walk back home. Returning to Huntsville, he found a land that was completely devastated, with people starving and no way to earn a living.

Luckily, parts of his father's farm was still intact and he was able to return to farm-

ing. On January 19, 1870, he married Mary Simpson and with both of them working in the fields, was able to rebuild the rest of the farm.

When the United States went to war with Spain in 1898, there were reservations in parts of the South about putting on a Yankee uniform and fighting a Yankee war. Most people were content to sit back and see what would happen, but when General Joe Wheeler and General Fitzhugh Lee (late of the Confederate Army) joined the hostilities, the mood changed in a hurry. Young men everywhere joined in droves.

When John tried to enlist, he was told that he was too old. There were no openings for 53 year old soldiers. Disappointed, he returned home and sent his two sons in his place.

Around the turn of the century, Steger became active in veteran's affairs. He served several times as Commander of the Egbert J. Jones Camp, United Confederate Veterans, in Huntsville. Later he was elected Commander of the Third Alabama Brigade, and was often called by his honorary title of General, which went with the position.



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Too old to serve in another war, John was forced to fight the war sitting on a bench outside the old courthouse, swapping old war-time stories with his comrades.

Time began to pass by quickly. When automobiles became popular on Huntsville's muddy streets, John Steger was already too old to obtain a driver's license. The first war came and went with its bloody trench warfare and deadly machine-gun nests. Every year would see fewer of John's comrades returning to share the bench and swap stories with him.

Prohibition was voted in, and then out. Our country was in the midst of the Depression when a group of men went to visit John and give him the news.

A friend of John's had died and now he was the only surviving Confederate soldier in Madison County.

It became harder for people to get him to talk about his service in the Confederacy. When war with Japan was declared in 1941, John Steger raised an American flag in his front yard. Every day, morning and night, it was raised and lowered for the duration of the war.

At the age of 99, no longer able to take care of himself, he was forced to move in with his daughter in Birmingham. Shortly before his 100th birthday, he returned to Huntsville one last time, by airplane. Years before he had walked much of the same route, as a defeated soldier.

On Saturday morning, February 28, 1948, John Alexander Steger died. While the rest of the world worried

about the Iron Curtain and atomic bombs, a few people gathered at Shiloh Church in Ryland to pay their respects. Among the people gathered that day were veterans from the Second War, the First War, and the Spanish-American War. There were none from the Civil War.

John Steger was the last soldier.

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"All men are animals - some just make better pets."

Jane Smith, Huntsville

Town News in 1888

- The quarries on Monte Sano are furnishing the finest gray limestone rock, not only in quality but size, that could be found anywhere in this country. The Monte Sano Railway has a large amount of stone on the grounds at the plant and are keeping plenty of material for the masons to pursue their work on the foundation. Laborers are employed under the superintendency of Mr. Henry P. Turner, in ditching work.

- Mr. E. B. Miller has sold his newspaper, The Independent, to Mr. Munger and will move out to Shelta Caverns, where he will engage in agricultural pursuits. Success to you, Bro. Miller, and we want you to send us in a bushel of your second crop of Irish potatoes.

- The colored citizens living on Howe Street, off Meridian Road, were made painfully aware that some more than usual elemental trouble was in progress, when the water entered their homes and the furniture began to float around the rooms. It was a terrible dilemma to be placed in, to face the blinding storm outside or remain indoors and perchance perish if the angry waters continued to rise. The cause of the high water was the narrow state of the bridge under Meridian Street, which could not accommodate the raging flood, but held it in check until a lake of backwater was formed, and

this found its way back into the houses.

The wooden bridge over Clinton Street was entirely swept away, and before daylight dawned we expect the timbers that formed the bridge were drifting down the Tennessee River near Triana or somewhere else. The foot-bridges on Henry Street near

the source of the Big Spring were lifted up by the roaring rush of the mighty waters. On Madison and Franklin streets the bridges were displaced, and will have to be repaired and strengthened before heavy travel is resumed.

This is a dangerous state of affairs and should be taken care of immediately.

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"I have the body of a god
- the Buddha."

Jeremy Suthers, Madison



The Forgotten Regiment

by Charles Rice

Of the many regiments from Alabama that served during the War Between the States, probably none is more unsung than the 106th U.S. Volunteer Infantry. The reason? Not only did this Southern regiment fight for the North, but its members (except for the officers) were all Alabamians

of African-American descent. Black Southern Yankees — not exactly the sort of heroes one would expect people to write songs about.

Yet fight for their own freedom these brave men did, and it is one of the tragedies of our history that they had to do so against their very own State.

While slavery was just one of many causes of America's

brutal four-year-long war with itself, it was obviously the issue which touched African-Americans most deeply. Whether free or slave, all black Americans longed for the day when their race could take its place as citizens with equal rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. To help speed that

day, they were willing to join forces with anyone, even the often brutal and racist soldiers from the North.

Ironically, the first black troops of the Civil War served the South. Best known are the men of the three regiments raised at New Orleans in 1861. These Louisiana Native Guards, all free African-Americans, volunteered to help defend their State, hoping their show of unity with white Southerners would further the

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cause of their race.

The North, however, flatly refused to accept African-American volunteers at this time, even Abraham Lincoln saying he did not want black men or Indians as soldiers. (The Confederacy, on the other hand, enlisted entire regiments of Native Americans, even commissioning one of them a brigadier general. Now which side, one might ask, was actually the more racist of the two?)

By 1863, hopes for a speedy end to the bloody conflict had vanished, and both North and South were running short of manpower. Unfortunately for the Confederacy, its leaders could not bring themselves to draw upon the most obvious source of able bodied recruits: the black men of the South.

The reason was clear. As Howell Cobb of Georgia put it, "If Negroes make good soldiers, then our whole theory of slavery is wrong." Rather than admit such a fact, the Confederate government delayed enlisting black volunteers until the final weeks of the war when it was too late to change the result. The North, having already abolished slavery in its own territory, had no such qualms.

The Federal government's decision to draft Southern black men had very little to do with idealism. Instead, it was simply the cold realization that a black man could shoot just as well as a white one. The average Union soldier was dead set against the idea at first, but the men in blue quickly came around when they learned the officers of African-American regiments would all be white.

Then there was a rush of volunteers, each seeking to receive a commission and earn higher pay. Wrote one of them, an Illinois soldier named Charles Wills, "I never thought I would, but I am getting strongly in favor of arming Negroes and am

becoming so blind that I can't see why they will not make soldiers." Added Wills. "The only objection I have to it is a matter of pride."

Undoubtedly, it was also pride that drove black Alabamians to enlist in the Union Army — that plus the promise of freedom to those who enlisted. However, many of the new soldiers in blue had little say in the matter. Yankee recruiting detachments simply rounded men up at gun point — often at church services, and forced them to enlist.

If a slave belonged to a master loyal to the Union, his master supposedly would receive up to \$300 in compensation. In practice, any compensation due to the master, along with the \$100 bounty for the soldier, usually went straight into the pockets of the men who had "encouraged" him to volunteer.

On February 25, 1864, the Adjutant General's Office in Washington, D. C. issued its General Order #5. One portion provided for the registration for the draft of "all male able-bodied colored persons between the ages of twenty and forty-five years." The Union conscript officers wasted little time in putting this into effect.

The Federal government

would enlist four black regiments which they initially called the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th Alabama Infantry (African Descent). However, only the last of these was really from Alabama, the others being organized in Tennessee and Mississippi. The 4th Alabama Infantry Regiment (African Descent) came into existence on March 11, 1864 at Decatur, Alabama. The brand new Yankees promptly received a scare when Forrest's Confederate cavalry passed nearby on a raid. The black soldiers had reason to be worried. They were still unarmed and completely defenseless.

By May of 1864, the regiment had been fully armed and partially trained. It was assigned to garrison Pulaski, Tennessee. On May 16th, the name was changed to the 106th U. S. Infantry Regiment (Colored). The men probably never received more than their basic training, since they were intended only to perform guard duty along the railroads carrying supplies to Sherman's Army in Georgia.

"I keep some people's numbers in my phone just so I know not to answer when they call."

Sally Thrailkill, Athens

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Their only fighting, if any, was meant to be done from behind the walls of strong blockhouses and fortifications.

There was considerable danger for them nonetheless, since the Confederate government was furious at the North for enlisting Southern slaves and refused to accept them as prisoners of war. Captured black troops were regarded as runaway slaves to be returned to their masters, if possible. On a number of occasions, however, black prisoners were simply shot.

The black Yankees also ran a risk of accidentally shooting a friend or relative, since many African-Americans were serving in noncombat capacities with the Confederate Army. As Somerville native Henry Humphrey, a former member of Company A of the 106th, which would enlist four black regiments the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th Alabama, noted in 1868, his "other brothers went into the Rebel army. Can't say where they are now." The War Between the States truly was a fraternal war.

The 106th Regiment seems to have been something of an "orphan" of the Union Army. The unit numbered just four companies and the roster of commissioned officers (all white) shows none above the rank of captain. Furthermore, one wonders just how carefully the officers had been picked, since two of the lieutenants would themselves desert! Nevertheless, the black soldiers must have taken pride in their new status as free men and warriors. Their uniforms and equipment were identical with those of other Union regi-

ments.

The 106th Regiment spent the remainder of the war guarding the strategic railway bridges between Decatur and Nashville. Most of the men probably never fired a weapon in anger. However, in the fall of 1864, many of them were unlucky enough to come face-to-face with Forrest's cavalry at Athens, Alabama.

Nathan Bedford Forrest was a man feared by most black Union troops. It was Forrest's cavalry that had attacked and captured Fort Pillow, Tennessee, in April of that year — no small feat for cavalry unsupported by infantry. However, some of Forrest's men got out of control and apparently

many of the black prisoners were killed before Forrest managed to restore order.

The North quickly played up the "Fort Pillow Massacre," exaggerating what happened and using the incident for propaganda purposes. To the men of the 106th, Bedford Forrest was probably the last man in the world they wanted to see.

A complex man, he served for a time as Grand Wizard of the Ku Klux Klan before renouncing that organization and becoming an advocate of racial equality. Forrest was an untrained military genius. In mid-September 1864, he was ordered to make the raid he long wanted on Sherman's railroad communications. Forrest

"Never buy a car you can't push."

Sam Keith, old car owner

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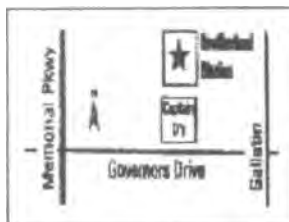


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led his horsemen from Northern Mississippi to Cherokee, Alabama.

After crossing the Tennessee River at Colbert's Shoals, he was joined by General Philip D. Roddey's Alabama cavalry brigade under Colonel William A. Johnson. On September 23, the Confederate "wizard of the saddle" arrived at Athens.

The Federal garrison at Athens was composed of soldiers from the 106th, 110th and 111th U. S. Colored Regiments. There was also a detachment of white troops from the 3rd Tennessee Union Cavalry, making a total Union strength of slightly over 600. Opposing them were about three times as many Confederates, mainly combat veterans and confident of victory. Skirmishing promptly began, with Forrest's men finally driving the Union men through the town and into the fort.

The fort at Athens, a strong earthworks and blockhouse, was formidable indeed. A Union inspector had described it as "one of the best works of the kind I ever saw." The defenders had plenty of ammunition for their rifles and their two 12-pounder howitzers. Nevertheless, the black defenders still worried because of Forrest's reputation.

Although more Union horsemen — 500 men from the 2nd Tennessee Union Cavalry — arrived on the scene, the cavalry commander refused an order from Colonel Wallace Campbell of the 110th to attack the Confederates. The Tennessee colonel said he did not want to "sacrifice his horses," but one suspects he was reluctant to take orders from a colonel of black troops. The Tennessee commander also pronounced the fort to be indefensible and retreated to Huntsville, carrying with him an appeal for help from Colonel Campbell.

General Forrest was not about to waste his men's lives

in a costly charge on the fort. Instead, he waited for his own artillery to come up. Early the next morning, the Confederate big guns began firing. Two hours later, Forrest halted the barrage and called for a truce. Forrest then staged one of his famous bluffs.

While meeting with two officers from the fort, Forrest had his men move repeatedly in and out of sight, at the same time telling the Yankees he had almost 10,000 men! Forrest also warned that his troopers might take no prisoners if they had to suffer heavy casualties charging the fort. Colonel Campbell stalled for several hours, desperately hoping for reinforcements. When none appeared, he finally gave in. Ironically a 300-man relief column from the 18th Michigan and 102nd Ohio now marched into view, just in time to be captured by Forrest as well.

When the soldiers of the black regiments learned of Campbell's capitulation, they reportedly were shocked beyond belief. "When told that the fort had been surrendered," wrote a Union officer, "they could scarcely believe themselves, but with tears demanded the fight should go on, preferring to die in the fort they had made, to being transferred to the tender mercies of Gen. Forrest and his men."

But Forrest had won the fight. Seven officers and 159 men of the 106th thus found themselves captives in the regiment's first and only battle. Despite their fears, none of the captives were harmed. Yet true to Confederate policy, the black soldiers were not quite regarded as prisoners of war.

Adjutant O. Poppleton of the 111th U. S. Regiment later forwarded to Washington a copy of the Mobile Advertiser and Register of October 1864. The Southern paper listed the "names of about 570 of our

colored soldiers who belong to the 106th, 110th and 111th U. S. Colored Infantry Regiments, to notify the former owners of such soldiers that they were at that time employed by the engineer department at Mobile, Ala. and for the owners to report and receive the pay due for the soldiers' services."

Six months later, however, the war was over and the soldiers of the 106th Infantry found themselves on the winning side. The prisoners at Mobile were freed and soon rejoined their comrades. Union regiments held victory celebrations, while the war-weary Confederates slowly made their way back to what remained of their homes. However, there would be no speedy return for the men of the 106th U. S. Infantry.

The Union Army's white regiments were quickly discharged and sent home to a hero's welcome, but the North's African-American regiments remained in uniform. After all, somebody had to occupy the defeated South and the task fell largely on the black men in blue. The 106th Regiment was kept on occupation duty until November 5, 1865. Then the four companies were consolidated with the 40th U. S. Colored Infantry. Not until April 25, 1866, more than a year after Lee's surrender at Appomattox Courthouse, would the black soldiers from Alabama finally receive their discharge.

The men of the 106th Regiment returned home to a different world than the one they had known. No longer could African-Americans ever again be considered property and be enumerated along with a farmer's pigs, chickens, and cattle.

America was still far from a perfect place. But it was — and is — easily the best country anyone could think of.



From Huntsville Newspapers of the Past

An Embarrassing Suicide *from 1912 Newspaper*

Harold Gentry, 32, yesterday phoned his mother to inform her that he had taken poison and would not be long of this world. A short while later he again phoned to say he was growing weaker.

Mrs. Gentry, apparently hard of hearing, understood her son to say that he was going to Illinois where he was going to meet a man by the name of Mr. Beaker. Mrs. Gentry congratulated her son, wishing him good luck on his upcoming trip.

Fortunately the incident had a happy though embarrassing ending when Gentry discovered he had taken a large dose of laxative, rather than poison.

Gentry will apparently not call his mother again in an emergency.

Real Estate from 1910

- \$4,400 will buy a well-improved farm just 7 miles from Huntsville. This farm is 150 acres, 100 in cultivation, 50 acres in woods and pastures. A good number of springs and a good well is on the land.

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A Faithless Spouse *from 1890 Newspaper*

George Mitchell came into the office of the Times yesterday and reported the disappearance of his wife, who was before he married her, Nancy Whitlock.

Mitchell and his wife were living happily and Mitchell's half brother, George Edmonds, boarded at his house.

Last Thursday a week ago Mitchell returned from work late in the evening and found his house closed, and upon inquiry

found that his five month old child had been taken to a neighbor's house with the request to take care of the child for an hour, when the mother would come for it.

Mitchell waited for his wife's return, but she never came back, and upon investigation it was found that Mitchell's half brother had eloped for parts unknown with Mrs. Mitchell.

Mitchell took his babe in his arms and walked through country roads to his friends in the neighborhood, three miles from town where he left the baby, swearing that he would search the earth over until he found the base wretch who has brought this sorrow to his home. He said that if the law set his brother free after he had found him and turned him over to its custody, he would shoot him down in the courtroom then and there.


Mitchell left in the rain, trying to find a trace of his faithless spouse.

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"Prayer and Grace" is available on Amazon, Barnes & Nobel and at The Dwelling Place bookstore on the campus of Asbury Methodist Church in Madison. Contact Steve via email at stephenburcham@bellsouth.net

Wortha Givens

by Austin Miller

Wortha Cerette Givens was born at Ryland in 1913. He was raised in the old Kelly plantation house located at 565 Ryland Pike. The house is pre Civil War and there is still evidence of the slave quarters that were once part of the plantation. In the thirties and forties Wortha's family owned the house and about 100 acres of land that stretched from Ryland Pike north to Wess Taylor Road. In those days owning that much land made you gentry and prominent in the community.

My mother and her family lived on the Givens place. The old rental house stood at the corner of Ryland Pike and Dug Hill Road next to the ancient brick walls that surround the Jordan part of Ryland Cemetery, locally known as the brick graveyard. This is where she lived when she and my father married in 1938. The plantation house and land is now owned by Betty Ford Meadows.

Wortha was of average height with a slender build and a full head of sandy blonde hair that he combed back over his head. He was easy going and treated everybody with courtesy and respect regardless of station in life or race. But despite his affable ways and good manners he could hold his own or better with the toughest boys in the community. Like many


other Ryland boys, he was not above taking a drink. Sometimes he would leave home on Friday to drink and gamble returning late Sunday afternoon or evening. He was known to sometimes come in drunk about the time Sunday evening services at Shiloh Church were in progress. He didn't come in to the service but would crank up his tractor and start plow-

ing cotton. With the windows open to let in a breeze the tractor engine could plainly be heard.

This raised the eyebrows of the good Methodists who thought both drinking and working on Sunday were sins that would send you to Hell. There was no doubt that many prayers were sent from Shiloh for the soul of Wortha Givens.

In the thirties one of the

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"Do you realize that in 40 years we'll have thousands of old ladies running around with tattoos?"

Steven Jacob, Athens

biggest events of the year was the fair in September. The fair grounds at that time were alongside Wheeler Avenue in the vicinity of the current Farmers Market. Typically on Saturday night a group of Ryland boys came to the fair after picking cotton all week. They usually ended up in a fight with the carnies.

One particular Saturday night there was an altercation and the carnies yelled, "Hey rube!" Fair workers came running from everywhere and the fight was on. The carnies were tough but so were the Ryland boys. I don't recall any names except two that were involved in the fight. They were Wortha Givens and Shorty Renfroe. Mr. Renfroe has gone down in local history as the toughest and strongest man that ever lived east of Huntsville. He still has descendants living in the Ryland/Maysville area.

As told to me by people that saw the fight, Shorty and Wortha did all the heavy lifting. Wortha was fighting them two at a time and throwing men over his head like in the old western movies. The story is that he had on a white suit that, along with his blonde hair, was black with dirt, smut, grease and grit when the fight was finished. But he and Shorty were still standing! The Ryland boys won the fight and the fair people retreated, took down the fair and left town on schedule. By all accounts the fighting skills of Wortha and Shorty is what made the difference.

Unfortunately not all of Wortha's escapades were harmless. One Sunday afternoon after several drinks at the Cedar Gap roadhouse, he headed out driving east on Highway 72. Somewhere between the roadhouse and Dug Hill Road he ran into Sam and Deanie Brannum. I don't recall whether Mr. Brannum was hurt but Dennie

suffered a broken leg. She recovered but walked with a limp the rest of her life.

Deanie was a beautiful woman and a story in herself. She was a Sunday School teacher and superintendent of Sunday School at Shiloh Church for years. Even though she had no children of her own, she taught at least two generations of Ryland children in Sunday School. She worked for years at the Arsenal but at about age fifty quit her job and enrolled in Athens College. She graduated with honors and won a full scholarship to get a master's degree at Vanderbilt University. She came back and taught at Athens College for a while and then transferred to Athens High School where she taught until she retired. She died in 2003 at the age of 90 and is buried by her husband and parents in Ryland Cemetery.

Wortha was in the Army during World War II but I don't know anything about his military record other than he served in Europe. I also know that he obtained the rank of RFC. After the war his family sold the Kelly place and Wortha bought a farm on Ryland Pike about half-way between Dug Hill Road and Moon Town Road. He started out farming but soon got a public job as a machinist.

In his thirties he had a cerebral hemor-

rhage and was not expected to live but miraculously made a full recovery. He considered it a miracle from God and it changed his life. He joined Shiloh Church and became a loyal member and church leader. In performing his church responsibilities he worked closely with Deanie Brannum, the lady he injured in the car wreck while driving drunk. Evidently she had no hard feelings toward him because they worked together as friends and made a good team.

Wortha lived out his adult years on his Ryland farm with his wife Pat and their daughter Westa. He died a well thought of and highly respected man in 1973 at the age of 60.

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one wife too many.
Monogamy is the
same."**

Oscar Wilde

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2. *Huntsville* by John Kvach, Charity Ethridge, Michelle Hopkins and Susanna Leberman \$19.99
3. *Historic Huntsville:* by Elise Hopkins Stephens \$18 (new price)
4. *Growing up in the Rocket City: A Baby Boomer's Guide* (over 200 Photos/illustrations) by Tommy Towery \$15
5. *Madison (Historic City Photos)* by John Rankin \$19.99
6. *Historic Photos of Huntsville* by Jacque Reeves \$35
7. *Dear Sister - Civil War Letters to a Sister in Alabama* by Frank Anderson Chappell \$14.95
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