



No. 250
December 2013



Old Huntsville

HISTORY AND STORIES OF THE TENNESSEE VALLEY



Eighty Christmases

My grandmother and I sat there silently. Then, I noticed her gaze turning to the living room picture window. At first, I thought she had seen something outside. Then I realized she was just looking, out into the night.

Nanny was smiling. I believe, with all my heart, that she was thinking...of a strand of string, leading to a slightly open door, with a lamp light shining away the darkness... of a place where my grandfather was waiting...

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Santa Forgot

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EIGHTY CHRISTMASSES

by David Chamberlain

"Born in 1900, you have lived every Christmas Day of the twentieth century. Nanny, what has your life been like, to have seen eighty Christmases?"

My grandmother gave me a puzzled look. Just we two were in our family living room. Christmas Eve festivities—supper, gathering around the tree, opening our presents—were past.

"You have always asked strange questions, David. As a little boy, you wanted to know everything." She paused, grinning. "Sometimes things you didn't need to know about just yet."

"You made things up, on the spot, right out of your head. I caught you telling stories many times, usually trying to get away with something. No wonder you like to write them."

Laughing, she paused, adjusting around her the woolen comforter she called an "afghan". Her own hand-knitted design, it had brilliant colors in a slightly Far Eastern pattern.

"There have been only two geniuses in the world: Willie Mays and Willie Shakespeare."

Tallulah Bankhead

Often I have wondered if that was the name's origin.

Most people knew my grandmother, Minnie Esther Gateley Taylor, as simply "Miss Minnie". After my grandfather, Cornelius Franklin Taylor, passed away, she lived with us in Huntsville, Alabama, helping to raise me.

Mr. Jim Smith, a manager at our local grocery, the M&J, nicknamed her "Tobbly". Because, whenever he asked how she was doing, she replied "To'bly", a contraction of the word "tolerably". "Miss Minnie" amiably wended her way into many people's everyday lives.

She was a seamstress, or tailor, by trade. I remember her shop, in our hometown of Milan, Tennessee, being fascinated by the whirring sound of sewing machines, her fluid synchronization of hand, eye and foot. Most of all—by the perilously close balancing act of passing fabric beneath, and past, a machine's plunging needle—one slip of the finger tip!

She once told me: "I am a tailor, and I married a Taylor. In name only, he couldn't sew a whit, but he had about him, a wit." Her eyes shone with wry humor, one legacy of our Scotch-Irish, Tennessee ancestry.

I never knew my grandfather personally; he died in 1954, three years before my birth. My mother revered him. Though he worked hard, he still had



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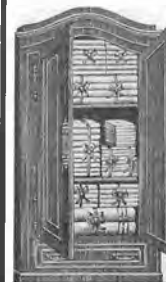
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time to spend with her, playing games, doing things together. A trait she later repeated, in times spent with me.

He had a way, when she got mad, of laughing at her. The more he laughed, the madder she got, and vice versa. Finally she figured out he was tricking her into forgetting her anger.

He was the love of my grandmother's life, and her his. Through hers, and my mother's memories, I feel I knew him, in a way. It is said I most resemble him.

"Miss Minnie" was my "Nanny". Extraordinary baker of chocolate cakes, puddings, pies...anything chocolate. My personal favorites, you think? Dispenser of hugs and kisses ("sugar"), good advice ("If it's worth doing, it's worth doing right!"). Even an evolving family recipe she started, which my Mother and I modified... "Three Generation Mashed Potatoes".

Why "Nanny"? My parents hoped I would call her "Granny". But the best I could manage was "Nanny". It proved good enough for the course.

Anyway, back to the story. It

made me smile, this Christmas Eve, to see Nanny laughing, in a good mood, feeling "tobbly" for a change...

You see, I must pause and tell you why this Christmas, for our family, was a season of joy, yet a season of sadness.

Although we were all gathered together (the best part of any Christmas time), we knew this reunion would not be possible next year. The previous summer, it was discovered Nanny had physical problems from which she would not recover.

My family set out to make this Christmas special, centering events around my grandmother's "good days". My personal goal, tonight, was to record her Christmas memories...

"Nanny, will you tell me some of your favorite reminiscences?"

"My what? My rheumatisms? If you're cussing me, you're the same thing!" replied my grandmother, with a mischievous grin. This retort was a running joke between us, her response when I tried out new-

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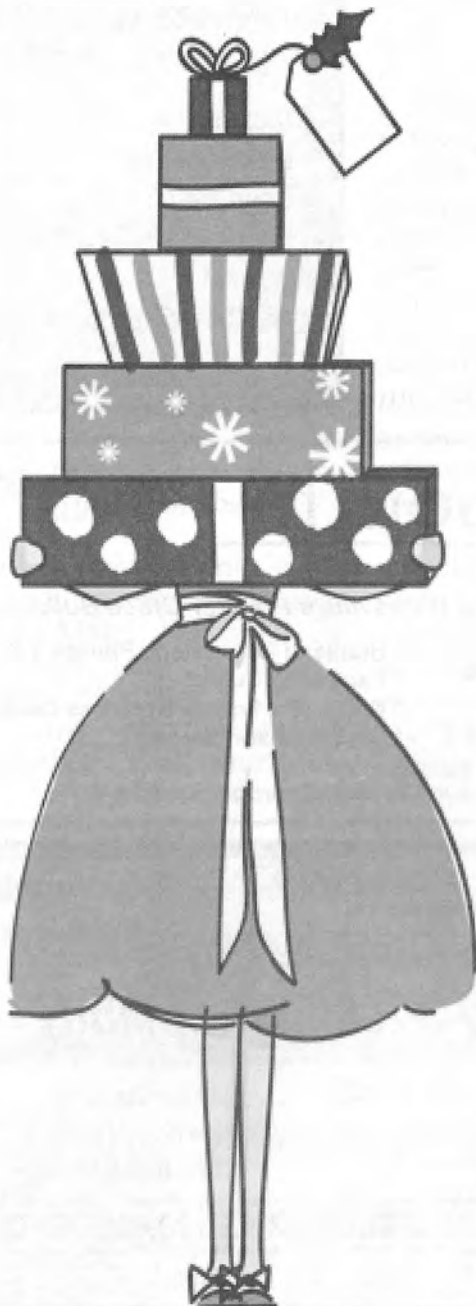
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found, multi-syllable, vocabulary words on her. Like many women of her generation, she had little formal education, yet a quality known as "common sense" more than closed the gap. Even at eighty, nothing was lost on Nanny.

Before that, I was not sure if she was physically up for a story session, but my grandmother seemed to warm to the task. As if in doing so, she could transcend the present with, as I would soon learn, a uniquely special present...

"Can we start with an early one you recall, when you were a little girl. How was it different back then?"

"Nothing like Christmases you knew as a child, David. We were a large farm family. Not much money, but it did not matter, either. We were blessed with what we needed. I can remember how happy I was to get a little corn shuck doll, candy, and some new shoes. Of course, being farmers we had plenty to eat; my mother, sisters and I had cooked everybody's favorite dishes. Though bitter cold, it was warm in our house. Our family gathered around the tree, on Jesus' special night. My parents stood and watched us. There were no gifts for them under the tree, but oh, how much they loved us, how happy our Christmas joy made them!"

"Then, my two oldest brothers slipped into the next room, and brought out the gifts we had made for our parents. Not much to look at, just homemade, homespun things. Regardless, you would have thought they were gifts of the Magi. My parents' looks of sur-

prise...the love in that room... what a Christmas time we had!"

"You are right, Nanny. My earliest memories are of plenty, of so many toys. Remember that toy drum set? Bet you remember the racket I made on it! Years later, Mom told me after about two weeks, it "mysteriously disappeared". A Lionel toy train that made real smoke, Army men, cowboy outfits, G.I. Joes... One of the best presents of all was my first dog, Bullet, when I was five; named him after Roy Rogers' dog."

Stopping to reflect, I looked at my grandmother. "I was lucky, fortunate by birth. I thought everyone had parents and grandparents, a home, Christmas memories like ours. Now that I am older, have been away from Huntsville, seen and read things, I know that is not the case." Leaning over, I gave her a big hug. "Thanks, Nanny, for helping make our

home a good one."

I prompted: "Maybe a story about Mother? Of when she was a child...?"

"Let me think. Christmas 1930, she turned ten on December 4th. Children born that month, their birthdays compete with the holidays. Willie Anna though, was always patient, a girl grateful for what came her

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way. Good thing, it was during the Depression times. That year, there was less of what little we had."

"Luckily, Frank's work with Shell Oil was steady. I took in extra sewing, in addition to my work at the clothing store downtown. So we were better off than many, thanks to the Lord."

"On Christmas morning, we saved your mother's special gifts for last. Beginning books for piano lessons were what she wanted most. She got those, with a Christmas card. It had an angel on the cover, one with long dark curly hair. Frank and I thought the angel resembled Willie Anna. In her stocking, at the bottom, was a surprise from her father and me, two silver half-dollars. How the child's eyes glowed when she found these, her "Santa Claus" presents."

"What I will never forget though, was when she took one of the coins, and handed it to me. "Please give this to the church fund, for the needy families."

"Frank looked at me, smiling, Irish blue eyes twinkling, and said: 'Match her gift?' Of course I did, and the church fund was \$1.50 richer."

"We sure were proud of your mother that morning. Even then, she always thought of others besides herself."

"She still does." I added. When I was born, she risked

her life for me, because of her physical condition. In our family she is our strength and a mediator. Mother has always been an example of compassion, of unselfish giving."

Nanny's eyes were bright with earnest pride: "That is one of your mother's gifts."

"What about Christmas during World War II? Such a difficult time, especially in the early years, when the outcome was uncertain."

"Yes, and in many different ways. Small towns like Milan; everyone either had family, or knew someone, in the service. So many loved ones, so many lost. There was danger right here on the home front. Do you know what your mother and grandfather did during the war?"

"Not really. I know they worked at the Milan, Tennessee U.S. Army Arsenal."

"Right, your grandfather was on the "A" line, producing artillery shells. It was located where they processed explosives to fill the shells.. .TNT."

"Your mother was a secretary; her office was on the "A" line. During the winter, because of fire danger, there was no heat. She had to type wear-

ing thin gloves, in a heavy coat to keep warm. Windows in the room were rimed with frost, inside as well as out."

"An afternoon in December, it was 1943; I was preparing to cook supper, when I heard the warning sirens on the arsenal

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go off. I ran into the yard, looking toward the east. A black smoke cloud appeared, over in the direction of the plant."

"I just stood there, rooted to the spot; even my heart felt like it had stopped. Frank and Willie Anna were working that day, and they were not home yet. I made myself look at my watch. Their shift ended at 3:00 p.m. It was half past three. I said a silent prayer they were not working overtime. With the war effort, that was often the case. I just kept standing, praying."

"The sound of the phone ringing finally broke through. I ran to answer it."

"It was your mother, telling me they were alright. They decided after work to go Christmas shopping downtown, where they heard the news. There was a fire at the plant, but no injuries. I sank into a chair with relief, and said a prayer of thanks."

"If that fire had reached the TNT smelter on "A" line. If they had been working overtime... It could only have been guardian angels at work."

My grandmother paused, looking at me, tears misty in her eyes: "David, that phone call was as good a present, Christmas or otherwise, I have

ever received."

"Nanny, these stories you are telling tonight, they are my best presents, too. More than material things, they represent the true value of Christmas, and our life as a family."

"Thank you David. I am more than glad we can share this time. One more story, then I need to call it a night. If you're sitting up with me, I'm feeling better."

I burst out laughing. This was an old family joke, when a member of our family was ready to "turn in", to "put it to bed".

"Okay Nanny, is it a surprise? You know I love surprises."

"Maybe. First, some more about World War II. Your mother was seeing a boy who went to the Army, to Europe. His name was Lee Shelton. They wrote to each other, had "an understanding" to get married when he came back from the war."

"Well, when he returned, they saw each other a few times, but it did not work out. The war had changed them both. They had grown, drifted apart. War is cruel to the heart..."

"Near the end of the war, she took a new job at the plant, in personnel. One day, she

processed a young Navy Seabee veteran looking for work. She said it was the Clark Gable-Rhett Butler wave in his dark curly hair, the sad, shy way he smiled, that she remembered."

"He remembered her, too. Later, this young man was vis-

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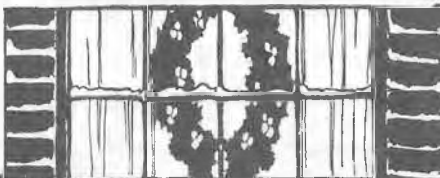
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iting relatives of ours, and saw your mother's picture. He said he would like to see her again. This led to that, which led to us being here tonight. He was your Dad."

"Frank took to him right off. They had a lot in common—fishing, hunting, working on cars. Christmas of 1953, he gave your dad his fifty-year-old 1903 Winchester .22 rifle. Your father was so proud. As you know, Jimmy never knew his own father. Frank was special to him."

"Christmas that year, your mother and father came over for supper. Afterwards we gathered in the living room, around the tree, to celebrate. Your mother was elected to hand out the gifts, to "play Santa Claus", as we called it."

"We took turns, each opening one present till we were done. Then, your mother looked up at the tree, noticing there was one more, a large

envelope. She went to get it, but when she pulled on it, she discovered it was attached to a piece of my knitting yarn. It was addressed to me, so I opened it. Inside was a note: Follow the string. That was all it said."

"So I did, with the rest of them behind me. Through the rooms of the house we went, finally to the kitchen. Out the back door, the yarn led into the yard."

"Into the night we followed the trail. We could now see it led to your grandfather's workshop, where a light was on, the door open. I turned to ask Frank what was going on,

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but he was not there. He had slipped away. None of us noticed, we were too busy following that string."

"Inside, I found my surprise. On the workbench was a beautiful new lamp, brightly alight. Standing beside it was Frank. He held out his arms, I went to him. He kissed me and said: "You have lit up rooms in my life for years. Tonight, I thought I might try to return the favor. I love you. Merry Christmas! I was overwhelmed with joy. I turned, your parents had their arms around each other too. I remember thinking our Christmas circle was complete."

"David, that turned out to be the last Christmas Frank was with us. He passed suddenly, that next June. I will always cherish his last gift, that beautiful Christmas memory."

My grandmother and I sat there silently. Then, I noticed her gaze turning to the living room picture window. At first,

I thought she had seen something outside. Then I realized she was just looking, out into the night.

Nanny was smiling. I believe, with all my heart, that she was thinking...of a strand of string leading to a slightly open door, with a lamp light shining away the darkness... of a place where my grandfather was waiting...

Forever, to my Nanny I am grateful for her final, most precious gifts of all... her everlasting love.. .this night of stories, and surprises...given on the eve of...*Eighty Christmases...*

David authored "Storied Ground", about Huntsville's Maple Hill Cemetery, and is still "telling stories", most notably with the late Kathryn Tucker Windham. "See, Nanny WAS right!"



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He lived all alone in his glory or misery, and cared for no one in particular but himself. He worshipped but one god and that was the golden calf in the shape of money.

There was but one familiar tune that he became infatuated with, that he loved above all others, and that was the jingling of the many different coins when he was counting his untold wealth.

He accumulated most of his fortune at middle age -- shoemaking when everything was high and he got a good price for his work. He was considered one of the best shoemakers in the South. He invested in Wall Street stocks and bonds and was very lucky, and this helped to increase his wealth.

He was very economical in his dress and also in eating. He bought what few clothes that he wore at secondhand prices. He would go to market and buy refused scraps of meat, commonly called dog meat by the butchers.

He would purchase stale bread from the bakers at reduced prices. He slept on a bunk or cot that a menial man would refuse to sleep because of the vermin and filth. He used to tell the boys that the best friend that he ever had was his mother, and that the next best friend he had was his money.

He took an annual trip to New York

every year. However bad that he wanted to go he would place himself in a great deal of inconvenience in waiting until he could get reduced rates. The ticket agent said that he would make a double daily trip to the union depot for a month inquiring for cheap tickets.

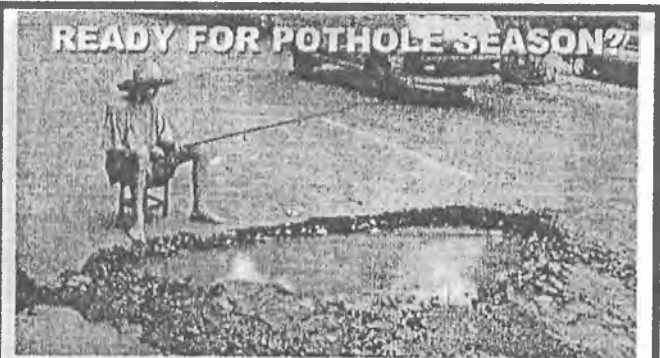
So finally the tickets came and he concluded to buy one. The ticket agent told him the price of same. It took him about fifteen minutes to count out

his dollars, halves, quarters, nickels and copper cents for the price of the ticket. He told the ticket agent when he put down the last copper cent with a trembling hand, and with a pitiful voice, "take it all, I believe you would take the last cent a poor man had." The agent said it was like taking his heart's blood for him to part with his money.

This was the last trip he made to New York. This was in the year 1897. He

was found insensible on the streets by the police shortly after. They took him around to the station house, and when he was searched they found over thirty thousand dollars stuffed down in his bootlegs.

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It was a freezing, cold morning on Christmas Day. I awoke crossing my fingers that it had snowed the night before; a peek out the window crushed that hope. Another Christmas with no snow. On the bright side, I was ecstatic because I actually slept for most of the night waiting for Santa to arrive and place my presents under the tree. At the age of seven, I had a vivid imagination and I could almost picture Santa's sleigh landing on my rooftop amidst the stars and chimney smoke.

Excitedly, my older brother and I raced down the stairs to find several presents waiting for us to rip the freshly wrapped paper around them. With wide eyes, I grabbed all the presents with my name on them, tore them open, and sat back feeling overwhelmed that almost everything I had asked Santa was scattered all around me. I looked over at my brother to see what all Santa had brought him. He was very excited and was holding an object in his hand that I couldn't seem to make out. When mother walked in with milk and cookies for us, my brother arose from his spot, holding his tape recorder that he had been requesting for the past year. I hid my jealousy but couldn't wait to get my hands on it.

A few weeks later, my brother and I were playing outside together. What started as a harmless game was turning into a quarrel, and, before we knew it, our mother was outside yelling at us to get inside the house that instant. She wasn't using foul language, but as she ranted that she had had a long day, she didn't feel well, and that she should not be having to break up our petty fights, her voice rose in pitch and her face turned a bright pink.

As I looked down at my feet, trying not to make eye contact with my mother. I noticed that my

brother was recording everything with the new tape recorder he had gotten for Christmas. Trying not to laugh, I presented my most serious face in front of Mother when she delivered my sentence for quarrel-ling: stand in the corner until told otherwise.

As she was about to declare my brother's punishment, she noticed that he was holding the tape recorder in his hand. In the blink of an eye, she jerked the tape recorder from his hand and pressed play. The tape recorder began to play back Mother's rant, and she showed no emotion until it stopped. My brother and I, on the other hand, were laughing hysterically and I applauded my brother for thinking of the idea. As my mother reached for my brother's arm so she could turn him around to whip him, he turned quickly and ran out the front door. With my mouth wide open in shock, I looked out the window to see my scrawny little mother chasing my rather large brother around the house.

My father pulled in the driveway right in the middle of the chase, clearly puzzled at the scene that greeted him. I ran to my father and began to tell him what had happened, trying hard not to laugh in the middle of my sentences. After I had finished and he looked back at the scene around us, he began laughing himself. Finally, after what seemed like forever, Mother caught my brother and dragged him inside by his ear.

He was sentenced to his room for several weeks and was only allowed out for school and meals.

Deep down, I think my mother thought the whole incident was funny but at the time it sure didn't seem that way. I will never forget that Christmas, especially my sore stomach from all the laughing I did the weeks after.

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DOLLAR

Dead from Morphine in Scottsboro

from 1900 Newspaper



The following is taken from a special news item dated at Scottsboro.

Whiskey and morphine seem to have done its fatal work.

Mr. Shelton had been drinking heavily for the past two or three days, neighbors had heard violent arguments between him and his wife. His death resulted from the drinking, together with an overdose of morphine administered by physicians.

The aunt of Mr. Shelton told the newspaper about financial problems suffered by Mr. Shelton along with some severe depression that he had had for many years.

Yesterday evening at 5 o'clock Dr. Hugh Boyd was summoned to attend Mrs. Shelton who was ill from nervous prostration, and after attending to her was called into an adjoining room by Mr. Shelton, who requested a hypodermic injection of morphine, insisting

that he was suffering intensely. The doctor gave him the dose.

About 10 o'clock last night Dr. W. C. Maples was called in to see Mrs. Shelton, and he, too, was called upon by Mr. Shelton for a hypodermic, which Dr. Maples administered, not knowing of the one given by Dr. Boyd.

At 1 o'clock Mr. Shelton was discovered to be dead by Dr. Hugh Boyd.

Mr. Shelton was a young man of fine business ability and had been associated with his father, H. H. Shelton in a prosperous mercantile business here for several years. He was 32 years of age and leaves a wife and 3 young children.

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“Can we all just agree to ignore whatever comes after Blu Ray? I don't want to have to restart my collection again.”

Steve Cappaert

LOCAL TOWN NEWS

Traffic Lights Downtown

from 1925 newspaper

In a highly controversial move, the city of Huntsville has installed traffic lights at the corners of Jefferson & Clinton, Holmes & Washington, Washington & Clinton and Randolph, Greene & Holmes Streets.

Merchants are outraged at the novel experiment and have vowed to form a coalition to remove them. Their anger comes from the fear that drivers will spend less time looking at the window displays of the stores.

"The streets will be filled with Zombies." Mr. L.D. Carruthers said, "waiting in lines and staring at the lights."

A citizens group has joined in the merchants protest claiming that red and green lights will be confusing to everyone.

Among the various proposals the city considered before deciding on the lights were whistles, electric gates and crossing police. The first accident occurred only minutes after the first light was installed.

Doctor Thrown in Jail for Threatening Dallas Residents

from 1907 newspaper

Dr. B. J. Duckett, a practicing physician of Dallas Village, was arrested today and lodged in jail on warrants charging him with threatening the lives of two residents of Dallas and resisting arrest. His trial will come up this afternoon.

Complaints against Dr. Duckett were made by John Taylor and Robert Nichols, who charge that he had threatened to kill them. Papers were made out and it was the intention of the court to have the doctor brought in on peace proceedings. The papers were placed in the hands of Deputy Sheriff Robinson. The Deputy saw the man he was seeking driving along Washington Street today and when he started toward him, Dr. Duckett whipped up his horse. There was a lively chase up the street and Deputy Miller joined in on the square. The prisoner offered resistance and the scene attracted a large crowd on the street.

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ANOTHER PAIR OF SOCKS

*by Kassi McCormick
Student at Hazel Green H.S.
An Interview with Violet
Shockley, church member
(1951)*

I sat by the window in the back seat of our brand new town car, impatiently watching the fields roll by. It was Christmas day of 1951-- the fifth one since I got married to Louis Shockley - and I rather enjoyed our family Christmases where everyone drew names for the one person they would get a present.

Louis was driving and his younger brother Jim was in the front seat. Jim was still in school and was notorious for his Christmas plea "Whoever gets me a present, please do not get me clothes" which he proceeded to rant about as we drove on towards their parents' house on Bobo Section Road. As we passed by Hazel Green High School, Jim turned around in his seat to tell me about the latest activities in his

senior class.

"Violet, we wrote the most amazing poems in English last week!" I did not have the privilege of taking a senior class, because I was married in the summer of 1947 after my junior year of schooling. I listened to his stories and briefly reminisced about my high school days as we approached our destination.

We arrived, brought in our

pumpkin pie, sat in the living room, and admired the Christmas tree. It was a cedar tree that Mr. Shockley, my father-in-law, had cut down from the woods behind their house. Times were hard, but we made the most out of our festive decorations: popcorn string, paper ring chains (made from the Sears catalog), pine cones, sweet gumballs (wrapped in aluminum foil), and cotton



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bolts (straight from the field).

As we sat pretending to be patient, awaiting our special Christmas dinner, we analyzed the piles of gifts for each person. We each had one wrapped present (for a little surprise), a small bag of nuts, an apple, an orange, and a bundle of candy. The younger children had an extra toy (a doll or a truck) by their pile. Giggles of sheer excitement escaped from the younger ones, and whispers popped up around the room: "Who do you think brought your present?" "What do you think this is?" And the expected, "I just hope I don't get any clothes" from Jim.

"Dinner's ready!"

You didn't have to tell us twice. We rushed to the dining table that was full of ham, turkey, dressing, gravy, macaroni and cheese, corn, green beans, rolls, and all types of desserts. The heavenly aromas mixed and filled the room. We joined hands as Louis's dad delivered the blessing over the nourishment of our souls along with our bodies. We all ended with an "Amen" in unison and headed for the table which held the plates, napkins and utensils. Louis jokingly grabbed two plates, but did not offer one to me; he kept it for himself. We all filled our plates with mounds of delicious food and had strong intentions of returning for seconds.

I sat, utterly stuffed, beside the children who never seemed to have a dull conversation, and I listened. Little Julie, who had been anxiously awaiting her presents since last year, just couldn't sit still. Tom, Julie's older brother, was narrating the 'Christmas story of all Christmas stories' to the other children who watched with bug eyes and listened intently. The adults muttered small talk about the farm, business, economy, and government as they let their food settle. Secretly, we were all anticipating Mr. Shockley's initiation of the gift opening, which he did shortly by standing up, putting his dishes in the sink, and walking to the living room.

We all followed suit and sat with our own piles of things, ready to tear into the wrapped presents but knowing we would have to take turns and watch everyone. Julie unraveled her doll from Louis and me, Tom got a new baseball from Jim, and I got a new cooking pot from Mrs. Shockley. Tom and Julie's dad got a handkerchief.

Finally, Louis and Jim were left. "As long as it's not....." Jim's voice faded as he held up his new socks with a disgusted look and finished "clothes." Louis held in his guffaw, opened his box, smirked, and joked, "Another year - another pair of socks."

"I've learned that we should be glad God doesn't give us everything we ask for."

Barb Saunders, Hampton Cove

Oscar and Maria Llerena



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Heard On the Street

by *Cathey Carney*



OF COURSE the photo from last month was that of beautiful **Tallulah Bankhead** who was born in Huntsville on the East Side Square. The first correct caller was **Kay Sewell**, whose Dad actually worked for Tallulah's father back in the 1920s and 30s. Congratulations to you Kay!

The **2013 Veterans Day Parade** downtown couldn't have been better. The weather, at 70 degrees and sunny, was perfect for the event. There were thousands of people who turned out to say "Thanks" to our Vets and to remember the ones that have gone. A man who was a Korean War vet was near us on Greene St. and even though in a wheel chair when he first got there, he stood for most of the parade and must have said "Thank you" and waved a little flag a hundred times to the Vets going by in the parade. It was very moving and he got a lot of waves back from the marchers.

We were so sorry to hear of the death of **Jimmy Hill, Jr.** of Huntsville. Jimmy owned **J.B. Hill & Son Jewelers** for many years and first moved to Monte Sano at the age of 5. We send our condolences to his wife **Marianne Car-**

lisle Hill, daughters **Nora Proni (Tullio)**, **Courtney Gulbro (Chip)** and **Ann Cohen (Dale)**; his stepchildren **Bert Moore** and wife **Elizabeth**, **Amy Christopher**, his grandchildren and many friends whom he loved dearly.

It was really good catching up with **Buster Hullett** recently - he's taking good care of his wife **Judy** and we send love to both of them.

The small businesses have a really hard time competing with the big box stores that have lots of finance to draw from, that's why it makes me feel better when I choose to spend my money at our **local businesses**. They really depend on us. Think about that the next time you're fighting the traffic in a huge parking lot. Is it really worth it?

In this Christmas issue of "Old Huntsville" you'll read 12 stories from **Hazel Green High School** and **Madison Academy 11th graders**. These students are really talented and took the time to interview their older relatives for stories about Christmas. There are two fine creative writing in-

structors who offered so much guidance & encouragement to their students - they are **Joanna Walker** at **Madison Academy** and **Freda Duggan** at **Hazel Green**. Both are excellent teachers who had winners in the High School Short Story competition last year, conducted by the Huntsville Literary Association.

Beulah Land at 707 Andrew Jackson is one of the newest farmer's markets and is sponsoring an outdoor Christmas play put on by **Kingdom Productions**. The dates are Dec. 18, 20 and 21 from 6:30pm to 8:30 pm. Mark your calendars!

It was so good talking with that handsome **Charlie Nolen** of Huntsville who's a proud 85 years old and got to Huntsville when he was 14. He's married to his sweetheart **Shirley** and loves son **Scott** and daughter **Suzie Nolen** of Huntsville - **John Bennett** is Suzie's sweet hubby.

Don't forget to mark your calendars for the annual **Christmas Luminaries in the Historic Districts** - homes will be open to tour and candles in bags will be lining each street - it is always beautiful and remember to drive with your lights on dim! December 14th.

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 young boy went on to become one of the most generous and active proponents for the underprivileged and homeless of our city.



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Bill and Rosemary Leatherwood want to wish their son **Billy** a happy 33rd birthday on Dec. 18. Their grandson **Austin Pinkerton** will be 15 on Dec. 28 and there will be celebrating in Hazel Green!

Everyone has to call about stopped up toilets occasionally, and it's always nice when it turns out to be a good experience. I called Mr. Rooter who sent out **Ty Glossup** of Madison who did a great job. In talking with him I found out he has 6 children! **Sydney** is 21, **Josh** is 16, **Isabella Soule** is 14, **Zach & Zoey** are 7 and fraternal twins, and **Garrin** is the baby at 4 months old. Whew, that's a houseful. Wishing them a wonderful Christmas.

Many have heard of the new book put out by the Greater Huntsville Humane Society and authored by **Donna Castellano** - it is called "**Second Chances: Rescue Dogs of Madison County**" and tells the stories about the pets who have been adopted by loving families. **John Shaver** has them for sale on the 3rd floor in Railroad Station Antiques, (as well as other locations to purchase), and this is one book you'll treasure.

Holmes Street United Methodist Church is hosting an open house on Dec. 14, same day as the downtown Luminaries. They are welcoming all, free of charge, and it starts at 5:30 pm going to 8:30. Some of the highlights are a live nativity scene, entertainment, delicious homemade refreshments and lots of family friendly events.

Mr. Howard Sandlin was 98 years old when he passed away

on Oct. 29th. He was a 1934 graduate of Huntsville High and worked at Huntsville Utilities for 40 years. He was a great dad to daughters **Sandy Wynn** of Huntsville and **Nancy Walthall**, Prattville. He loved his grandchildren dearly. We send our sympathy to his daughters, grandchildren and many friends.

Tom Lackey did a great job cleaning out my chimney in order to have some fires this year - his daughter **Rachel Lackey** is the talented lady who owns Green Pea Press. She works out of **Lowe Mill** and Tom is SO proud of her!

I joined up with the downtown YMCA about a year ago, and I have to say it's one of the best things I've done for myself. After getting to Medicare age (UGH) I noticed some aches and pains and can honestly say that since I started I felt stronger and better almost immediately. The 2nd shift folks who work at the Y are really helpful and can answer ANY question - **Derry Kearns, Josh Duncan, Penny Houston and Claire Autin** are the very knowledgeable people that I see 3-4 times a week when I go. You'll see people there of all ages. I highly recommend it, specially since you can't get out as much in this COLD weather and you will definitely feel better.

Jack Hagopian (Lt. Col. Ret) was always on the move and had so many projects going on. He was willing to help anyone who needed him. He passed away at the age of 89 in late October, and we will miss his positive nature and personality.

Our friend **Patsy Giesicke** lives in Alvin, Texas but her heart is in Huntsville! The sweet lady celebrated her 80th birthday in October. Her older sister, **Mary Drake Sanders Hendricks**, recently wrote a story for Old Huntsville that many readers enjoyed. We hope you had a great birthday, Patsy!

Ann Owens was 98 when she passed away in November. She was my aunt in New York and leaves a legacy of good, successful kids, grandkids and great-grand children. She will be so missed.

Have a warm, safe and happy Christmas with those you love.

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Family Treasures

Savory Roast Pork

- 1 3-5 lb. pork loin
- 2 T. garlic powder
- 4 T. black pepper
- 1 T. dill weed
- Salt to taste

Rinse pork loin, pat dry. Spray entire loin with garlic flavored vegetable oil. Roll in mixture of the spices, rub into the meat generously. Place pork in small pan that you've sprayed with oil, bake for 20 minutes per pound, uncovered. Remove and let rest for 5 minutes, make gravy with the drippings. Slice and enjoy. This is delicious with a sweetened, smoky apple barbecue sauce.

Poor Man's Boursin

- 2 sticks butter, softened
- 2 8-oz. pkgs. cream cheese
- 2 t. minced garlic

- 1/2 t. oregano
- 1/2 t. marjoram
- 1/2 t. thyme
- 1/4 t. basil
- 1/4 t. white pepper
- 1/2 t. dill weed

In electric mixer combine the butter with cheese, add spices. Mix til smooth, pack into container, place in fridge at least a day. This will keep for several weeks, can be served with crackers, vegetable crudites, or sliced fresh French bread.

Broccoli Casserole

- 2 heads fresh broccoli
- 1 onion, chopped and sauteed in butter
- 1 can Cream of Mushroom soup
- 2 eggs, beaten
- 1 c. mayonnaise
- 1 c. grated sharp Cheddar

- 3-1/2 c. cubed stuffing
- 4 T. butter

Combine all ingredients except stuffing and butter in baking dish, spread stuffing on top. Pour the 4 tablespoons melted butter over the top and bake for 60 minutes in 350 degree oven.

Cranberry Apple Cobbler

- 1-1/2 c. raw cranberries
- 5 c. tart apples; peeled, cored and sliced
- 1 t. cinnamon
- 1/4 c. butter, melted
- 1 t. nutmeg
- 1/2 c. brown sugar
- 1/2 c. flour
- 1/3 c. oats
- 1/4 c. pecans, chopped
- 1 T. lemon juice

Place cranberries and apples in large greased baking dish, sprinkle lemon juice on top. Mix flour, oats, brown sugar and

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nutmeg together, sprinkle over the fruit. Pour melted butter over mixture and sprinkle with cinnamon and pecans. Bake at 375 degrees for 45 minutes.

The Toasted Bishop

Stick 8 cloves into each of 2 small oranges and place in roasting pan, bake at 325 degrees for 45 minutes.

To 1-1/4 c. water add the following:

- 1 cinnamon stick
- 2 pieces blades of mace
- 8 allspice berries

1-inch piece of ginger, peeled
Boil all rapidly, til about a third reduced.

Put the roasted oranges, 4 pieces lump sugar and grated rind of one lemon (with juice) into the liquid in a large, warmed serving bowl.

Pour a bottle of port into a saucepan and heat gently, don't boil. Pour the port into the serving bowl and stir well. Sprinkle a little grated nutmeg over all.

This will make your kitchen smell heavenly!

Gluwein

2 liters red wine (Cabernet Sauvignon)

1 liter white wine (Chardonnay)

2 c. brown sugar

4 T. whole cloves

8 cinnamon sticks

1 frozen orange juice - 2 qt. size

2 cans water

1/2 c. lemon juice

Pour all in a large crock pot and heat to boiling. Turn down to about 300 degrees and let steep for 2 hours. Strain out the cloves and cinnamon sticks. Pour into mugs to serve, add a fresh cinnamon stick.

This will really warm you up on a cold winter night - they serve this on the ski slopes in Switzerland!

Crispy Chocolate Tortoni

1 8-oz. pkg. baking chocolate, semi-sweet

2/3 c. light corn syrup

2 c. heavy cream, divided

1-1/2 c. broken chocolate wafers

1 c. coarsely chopped walnuts or pecans

Line twelve 2-1/2" muffin cups with paper liners. Take a 3-quart saucepan and stir your chocolate and corn syrup over low heat just til the chocolate melts, remove from heat. Stir in 1/2 cup heavy cream til blended, refrigerate 15 minutes.

Beat the remaining cream til soft peaks form, gently stir into the chocolate mixture. Stir in the wafers and nuts. Spoon into muffin cups.

Freeze for 4 to 6 hours, garnish with tablespoons of whipped cream and chopped nuts, or chocolate and corn syrup topped with shaved chocolate. You can freeze these for a month.



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"I am Home Sick"

by M. D. Smith IV

Well, it has been a tough weekend at the Smith household....at least for me and several of my brood.

It started Saturday night with Bryan having a lot of congestion, coughing and a little fever. Sunday morning he was better so we didn't go to the doctor. By Sunday afternoon, he was feeling worse, more fever and I was having a bit of fever myself. I took the family out to dinner Christmas Eve and Bryan stayed home because he felt too bad. Dee stayed with him.

At 6:15 they beeped us at Quincy's saying Bryan was having an asthma attack. Bryan successfully treated himself before we could get home and he was OK from the asthma, but between the adrenalin shot and the fever, he was having uncontrollable shivering. We got him covered up, and warmed up to finally stop it. By now, my fever was up and I was not feeling good at all.

At about 9 pm, while I was busy in the storage room putting the Santa stuff together, Judy called me, his fever was up to nearly 103 degrees, and we had to give him a partial sponge bath to get it down. I finally got to bed about midnight. Judy stayed in the room with Bryan and said he got sick to his stomach about 3 am and 5 am and she was up with him a lot of the night.

By Christmas morning the 4, 6 and 8 year-olds were up at 6:30 am like live wires....and I got up with them, since Judy was upstairs with Bryan and we were going to let them sleep until 8 am. Still feeling groggy with fever, a beginning cough and sinus congestion, I took a shower, shaved and put on a fresh suit, feeling that if I looked





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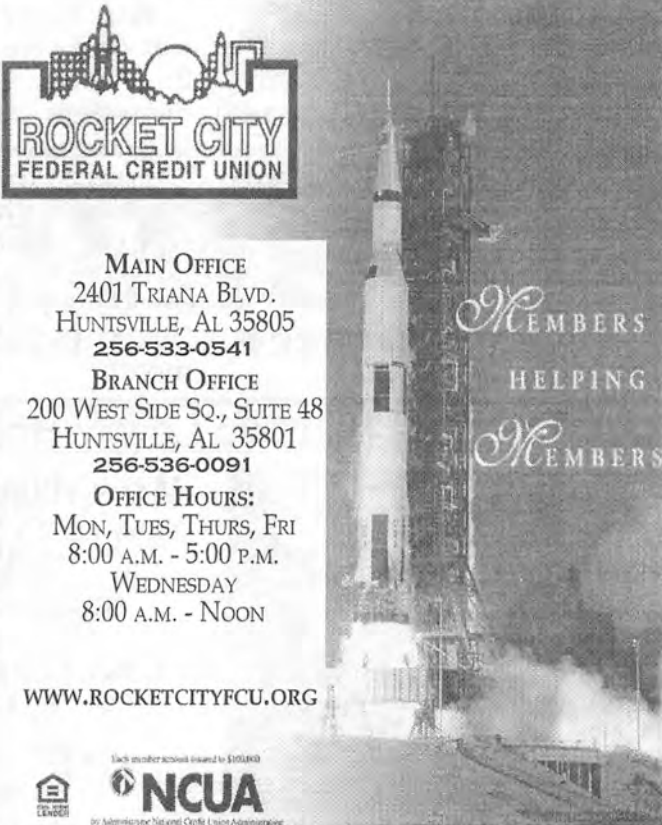
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better, I might feel better.

I went down to the garage to get an empty box to use for Christmas paper and found the garage flooded. We have a little wash sink in there, and it had frozen... then thawed and water was squirting everywhere. In our garage, that is level with the downstairs, when water gets in it, it seeps under the walls into a downstairs bedroom, storage room and hall. So I managed to get the water shut off to that sink (thank goodness I had installed separate cut-offs for it) and got out my water vac. In my nice suit, I started getting the water up out of the garage before it did any real damage to the bedroom.

Finally got it up about 8:30 am. So I am not feeling good at all right now, but everyone is ready for Christmas, and we start. The confusion and noise level at our house on Christmas Day is unbelievable, but no different than past years, so we just try to be a part of it as much as possible.

Bryan came down and lay on the couch in the living room during all the Christmas activities. He felt really bad, and I was not feeling any too good myself. By 3 pm, Bryan was doing a little better, but I was worse. Fever was higher and I was really getting congested and the cough was worse. I had a little bit of dinner and kept stuffing down all the Tylenol and other medications I could get. My fever never got over 101, but I felt my eyelids burning like it was higher.

By 7 pm, all the older boys had left

"If you want your wife to really listen and pay strict attention to every word you say, just talk in your sleep."

Sheridan Banks, Arab



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to go home and the house was relatively quiet. I had installed all the batteries in the toys that the kids insisted on, hooked up the little stereo for Martin and a host of other "help-me" projects that occur on Christmas day. I told Judy that I was feeling blown out and was going on to bed about 7:45 and just as I did, I got the shakes from being cooler and moving to the bedroom, I got under the electric blanket, on high, and waited them out.

I had finally quit shaking, and was about to relax in bed a little bit by 8:45, when Judy burst into the room, shouting that another pipe had busted and water was coming out of our new bathroom. I had to get out of bed, get on my insulated pants and coat and go outside under the porch of the addition.

The hot water pipe had been frozen for 4 days, and had finally thawed and was running out of the floor (ceiling) of the area. Also, fortunately, I had installed another set of cut-off valves in this addition, so by getting into the access door, which was dripping cold water all over me, I was able to get it shut off.

Back inside, with more chills from the fever and out of the wet clothes. I stayed in bed from 10 pm until this morning. Well, things could be worse, I could have had to shut all the water off to the house and we'd be camping out now. And my fever is almost gone this morning, but the cough and congestion is worse and I have a splitting headache this morning. Oh yes....

Dee called me at 7:10 am, woke me up to say he had

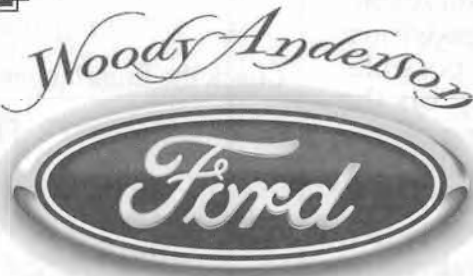
caught the same thing Bryan and I had and wanted to know what to take to make it better. I told him the sad news is that you take Tylenol, stay warm and drink liquids and wait it out.

Folks....I am taking a sick leave day today. If there is pressing business you can call me at home...or leave a note on the computer and I will try to log in again this afternoon to see what is going on. There is no need coming in with this hacking cough and giving the flu or whatever, to some of you. Although I got to say

that with the kids, still hyper from Christmas, I believe the quiet of my office would be nicer than the level of energy going on here and the....."Dad, come see about (whomever), he broke my toy!"

They don't care whether you are sick or not, to them that's the most important thing in the world....at the moment. So be assured, I will be in to work as soon as I am able to make it.

Well, sorry for such a long explanation, but just saying "I have been sick this weekend and won't be in to work today" did not seem like adequate information under the circumstances.



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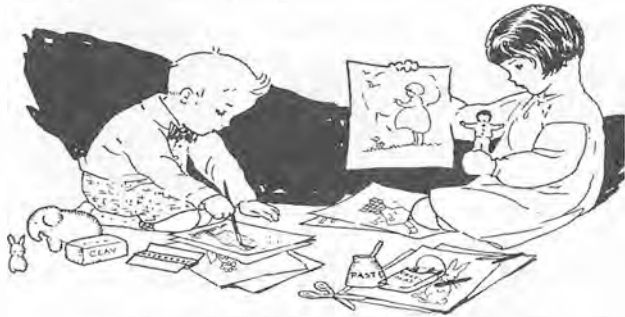
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Response when Edwin Drake tried to enlist men in his oil drilling project in 1859

Old Beliefs & Superstitions about Children



- In 1867 a noted journal said that when an infant was first dressed, his clothes should never be pulled on over his head (which would bring the child bad luck) but drawn on over his feet.

- In England, if several children from the same family were stricken with whooping cough a curious remedy was tried. A lock of hair from the eldest girl's head was cut off and put in milk, which the other children then drank, starting from the youngest and working upwards. It was believed that the whooping cough would then leave the household.

- In the seventeenth century, bachelor philosopher John Locke suggested that all children were molly-coddled and far too warmly dressed. He even told mothers to give their children leaky shoes on purpose in order to get them used to having cold feet.

- The interval between a baby's birth and its baptism was considered a dangerous period, during which the child was prey to all sorts of evil spirits. Protective objects - such as a pinch of salt, a clove of garlic, some iron nails or a knife - would be placed in the cradle. In Scotland the mother's petticoat was placed over the boy child, while the father's coat was placed over a girl.

- For the first year the baby was kept in a darkened room, since his eyes were believed to be sensitive to light and exposure to bright light was considered to cause squinting in later life. Most babies today are born under bright hospital lights - but a dark, cozy environment helps the mother relax and is now recommended by the some practitioners.

- In the fifteenth century mothers were confined to their bed for as long

as four weeks after the baby was born. For many weeks the threat of the mother dying from "child-birth fever" was very real, so she was kept warm and still. After a week or so, if she made good progress, she was allowed to sit up. This was often celebrated by a party known as "the lady's up sitting feast." The new mother's first outing would take place when she would go to church to give thanks for her child. Today it is common for mothers, even first-time mothers, to be asked to leave the hospital beds only a day after giving birth.



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Christmas in the 1950s

by *Hannah Berry*
Hazel Green HS

An interview with her grandmother, Janice Dubois, in the 1950s

In Hazel Green Alabama, I learned many things about Christmas in the 1950s. Most people were poor and they could not afford "flashy" things. Instead, among beloved Christmas presents were various candies, fruits and small trinkets. One particular memory Nanny recalled was when she was in the first grade. Her family was so poor that they could not afford Christmas presents.

However, on this particular Christmas, her daddy brought home two packages wrapped in brown paper bags with no names on them. Her dad told her to choose one, and he let her sister have the other one. Inside both of the bags was a set of dishes. Her sister got the metal ones and Nanny got the plastic ones. My grandmother said, "Mine were prettier because the plates were bigger." This would be a Christmas memory she would never forget.

Another memory my grandmother recalled about Christmas in her early years was the year she wanted a bicycle. Nanny had always wanted one, but her parents could never afford it. Ever since she learned to ride a neighbor's bicycle, she dreamed of having one of her own. A family her parents knew that lived nearby had two boys. This family had money, and they bought their

sons new bikes for Christmas. They gave their old bikes to my grandmother and her sister Deborah. Even though they were boy's bicycles, she loved hers so much! It was a nice green bike, and it made for a lot of fun time outside. Even when it was bitter cold in the winter time, she still rode her bike outside while the tears froze on her face. She recalled this Christmas as a magical one because she had received a precious memory that no one could ever take away from her.

Nanny informed me that after school, a lot of the kids went to the Huntsville square to further enjoy the Christmas atmosphere. During the 1950s no one had phones and children weren't as concerned with the "beef and ale" of things as they are now days. Children were more concerned with playing and having a good time during the holiday season. Upon returning home at night, smells of a real cedar Christmas tree filled the air and families sat down together to enjoy well-prepared meals on Christmas Eve.

Looking back now to the 'good ole days' one might agree that Christmas truly was a magical time for the families of the 1950s. Even hard times could not take away the joy of children see-

ing Santa Claus or receiving a new toy. Adults also had a wonderful time singing Christmas carols, cooking meals to share and enjoying quality time with their children. After Christmas dinner adults played board games such as Monopoly or cards which were considered too adult for children but satisfied the adults.

I am very close with my grandmother and talking with her about Christmas back when she was a child was really enjoyable. Christmas in the fifties was a time for family, friends and plain fun. No one was stressed over being able to get everything they needed done for the holidays in time, and people just enjoyed themselves.

"You don't need a parachute to skydive. You need a parachute to skydive twice."

Rodney Sellers, Arab



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Golden K Kiwanians meet on Thursdays at 8 AM at the Downtown Rescue Mission, 1400 Evangel Drive, for breakfast and programs of interest

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Golden K Kiwanis of Huntsville, Alabama

Dad's New Bike

*by Jessica Yates,
Hazel Green H.S.
An interview with her father, James Yates,
and his memories of 1958*

My dad and I are sitting outside in the garage like we always do on Sunday nights. He usually scrolls through Facebook while I sit on my phone, but today he decides to tell me a story about himself and his brother. He takes me back all the way to December 1958:

"It was Christmas morning in Huntsville, and when I woke up, there was two inches of fresh snow on the ground and the temperature was a cool 38 degrees. I had been hoping and praying for my new dream bike. The bike would be a Sears 24" tiger bike with high rise handlebars and a tiger banana seat and a three speed selector on the handle bars. This was a bike that most kids my age only dreamed of. When I woke up that chilly morning - low and behold - Santa had delivered the bike of my dreams! As soon as I saw my new bike I could not wait to take it out and ride it all around town. Our dad gave my brother and me 50 cents to go to the corner U-TOTE-M convenience store to pick up a half gallon of milk for eggnog.

We grew up on Fulton Drive in Shady Lane Acres Subdivision. Dad told my brother and me to take the back streets to get to the store. I was really looking forward to my first ride on my new tiger bike! We took the back streets, which is the long way, to the store. Dad made a point of telling us not to take Oakwood Avenue, which was a short cut to the store. We picked up the half gallon of milk, and my brother was begging me to let him ride my brand new bike home. Being the "wise" person he was, he swore that he would do nothing to damage it. Being the dumb little kid I was, not only did I let him ride my bike, I also let him talk me into taking Oakwood Avenue home.

About half way into our journey home, he went flying across the Brookline/Oakwood intersection. He ran my brand-spanking-

new bike straight into a man in a VW Beetle. There was a loud smash, the milk went flying and when I looked up, my new tiger bike was crushed under the man's car. I only got to ride my new bike for an hour before my brother wrecked and crushed it. I learned my lesson about letting my brother use my new toys.

My brother only had scraped up elbows and knees, but he was as scared as a gunslinger with no bullets! He screamed at me to run home and get dad. I took off, racing home on my brother's bike. I ran into the house. 'Dad! Dad! Steve's been hit by a car!' He frantically jumped out of bed and rushed to his car.

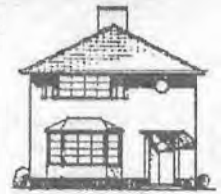
Once dad got to the scene of the crash and saw that my brother was okay - he just had skins and bruises - it dawned on him that we were on Oakwood Avenue. At this point my dad started to see red, realizing that we had broken his rule. Once we got my crushed bike home (it would be the one-and-only bike that I ever owned), he told me he would not replace it because we didn't listen to his rules.

The moral of this story is never let your brother ride your brand new bike."

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be a bad day when you
wake up and your braces
are locked together."**

Angie Tollen, 12

Everyday Life During the Great Depression

- "They called it Black Friday. A flash came over the news, lots of people lost their money, their homes, everything they had. People lost their fortunes and there were lots of suicides. There was one entertainer, his name was Eddie Cantor, he was one that lost his fortune. He said, 'I made it once, I can sure do it again.' And he did. He helped put the spirit back in the country." *Victor*

- "When the train crew would see us out there looking for coal, sometimes they'd throw off some chunks for us. Most people who had a job did something to help us out. Everybody was good neighbors back then." *Jody*

- "Dad worked for farmers. Instead of wages he would get a hog or a cow. We were lucky". *Don*

- "Ma would use flour sacks to make our clothes. Our best dresses would be from the flour sacks with the little flowers on the front." *Phyllis*

- "I remember waking up on a cold morning to the smell of breakfast cooking on the old wood burner. My favorite was squirrel gravy. Mom served it up over buckwheat cakes. It was pure ambrosia. What I would give to taste my mother's gravy and biscuits just one more time." *Rudy*

- "Quilts were the final resting place for our clothes. When no piece left was big enough to make a patch or cover even a small body they went into the quilt box." *Mary Jo*

- "Shoes cost 50 cents a pair even if they didn't fit. A good Sunday dress was \$1 and a plain dress was 50 cents. We didn't have the \$1. We were happy to get hand-me-downs. When our dresses were worn pretty good, Mom would make them into aprons and curtains for the window. She made our blanket out of pieces of old material." *Betty*

- "Everyone listened to the radio at night. I remember Deanna Durbin and Bobby Breen - 'Tomatoes are cheaper, potatoes are cheaper, now's the time to fall in love. The candlestick maker, the butcher and baker, now's the time to fall in love.'" *Anni*

"We ate alot of beans and mush." *Jeannie*

- "Wages were cut, then cut again. Makin' do became a way of life." *Geraldine*

- "A typical breakfast during the winter was coffee with alot of milk and sugar poured over bread and butter." *Caty*

- "We sold newspapers for 2 cents a paper. Lots of times the paper sold EXTRAS. When Rudolph Valentino died we made lots of money on extra papers." *Larry*

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Jimmy Don Luna - Memories

by Emily Dana
Hazel Green H. S.

An interview with Jimmy Don Luna,
a friend of her family

Family is what Christmas is about for seventy-four year old Jimmy Don Luna who was born and raised in Northeast Huntsville. After all, Jimmy was the ninth out of the ten children in his large family.

Living on East Clinton Avenue in Huntsville, Alabama, one of Jimmy's most cherished memories was when he was four or five years old. At this time seven of his brothers and sisters were still living at home.

Filled with excitement and joy, Jimmy woke in the quiet hours of the cold Christmas morning before anyone else and went into his living room to see what Santa had left for him. Underneath the soft glow of the bright lights strung in the family Christmas tree, Jimmy discovered a present that had his name on it. He ripped the colored paper off and smiled at the gift he had received. Sitting in front of him was a shiny, new wind-up boat that could be put into the water—a perfect gift for a young boy. He had intended to wrap the boat together again with paper and place it back underneath the tree as if he had never awakened early in the first place. Instead, he immediately jumped up and scurried into his bathroom with thoughts of playing with his new boat. He turned on the faucet of the large footed bathtub and became engrossed with the new toy that he had

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received from Santa.

Not very long afterwards, his mother woke to suspicious noises in the bathroom, and she plodded down the hall to find Jimmy very wet and happy playing with his new boat with a wide smile and mischievous look upon his face. Christmas happened earlier than expected that year.

Another Christmas memory Jimmy recalled was when he was eight years old and still living on East Clinton Street. He was with his four older brothers whom he always looked up to and whom he wanted to spend as much time with as they would allow. This Christmas one of his brothers had given him a four-ten shotgun. Jimmy was practically jumping up and down with joy because he could go hunting with his brothers with his own shotgun. He has since passed the gun on to his son who will continue to pass it on in the family.

A special tradition for Jimmy's family and the rest of the neighborhood involved the live cedar Christmas trees that were known to die fast and become dry easily. The day after

Christmas Jimmy and his brothers would go throughout the neighborhood and gather all the discarded trees and put them in a large ditch that ran along Wellman Avenue. When it got dark, everyone would gather, and the brothers would burn the trees in the ditch. It was something that the whole neighborhood looked forward to, and it was time spent talking about what had happened with their families that Christmas.

Since Jimmy had a large family, gifts were few, but all his brothers, sisters, nieces and nephews were at his house all day on Christmas. They were playing and having fun and laughing and eating food; making Christmas memories and cherishing time spent with the family, so that when they got older and had children of their own, they would tell them about joyous holidays spent with

their siblings and cousins.

At the end of the day, Christmas was not about how many gifts a certain family member had received, and it wasn't about who brought what dish to the get-together. Christmas was about spending time with the family and making memories that would last forever.

In ancient times people shook hands to show that they were unarmed.

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Childhood Memories *by Nolan Myrick*

All that I'm writing probably occurred in 1952 or 1953. I was either 8 or 9 years old. I'll tell it as best as I can.

My father, C.B. Myrick, was a welder and pipefitter. He had a lot of good friends who were also welders and they were good at what they did. One of those men, Pinky Pinkerton, had a welding shop with his partner in Huntsville. The welding shop was in an old, tin-sided building and was close to the Pullman Cafe which was on Church Street. The street in front of the welding shop wasn't paved. It had an old railroad track down the middle and there were a lot of old houses on the rest of the street. I don't remember the name of the street. There wasn't much gravel on the street, it was covered with cinders. Everyone burnt coal then and the cinders were thrown in the street. You could smell the sulfur from the burning coal. There was a big building close by called the Cal Alabama Chemical Company. It put off a bad smell when it was running.

At the welding shop, my father worked on Saturday and at night when they needed him. His job there was for extra money because his regular job was in a boiler house at the Arsenal. His boss at the Arsenal was Mr. Charlie Cornelison.

My job was on Saturday. I picked up all the welding rod tips in a bucket. I had to stack the scrap pieces of metal and then I could sweep the floor. While you were working you had to be careful not to look at the men welding so you wouldn't burn your eyes. I spent most of my time watching the clock.

About 11:00, Wayne Pinkerton and I would go to the Pullman Cafe and get dinner. I went to help Wayne carry it all back. I ate the same thing every Saturday: two hamburgers with onion and mustard and a Double Cola. I can still see the Pullman in my mind. It wasn't air conditioned and it had screen doors to keep the flies out. In the summer, even with the fans on, it was hot. I remember there were metal signs on the screen door to keep people from tearing the screens loose. These metal signs advertised things like bread, Double Cola, R.C. I always looked at those signs because I was short and they were eye level for me.

While I was waiting on the food to get ready, I liked to sit on the stools at the bar and spin round and round. Back then, a kid could do just about anything he wanted to because people didn't pay you any mind. It was sort of like you weren't even there. People would be talking to each other and hollering across tables to each other. There was a lot of cigarette smoke, too. It seemed everybody smoked when they got through eating. Sometimes you would see some sticky tape hanging from the light string with flies caught on it.

When we got back to the welding shop we ate in a small office. It had calendars on the wall. I looked at them while I ate. They weren't like the calendars we had at the house. To a 9 year old boy they were interesting. I ate my hamburgers slow and drank the Double Cola so it would last through both hamburgers. The evening went by sort of fast and we would go home.

Mr. Pinkerton also gave me my dollar bill and thanked me. I guess if we hadn't went to Pullman for dinner, I probably wouldn't have wanted to clean the shop. It was a good time in my life. People had a lot of fun.

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Schedule for Spring 2014

January 27, 2014	6:30 p.m.	Mayor Battle	The State of the City
January 27, 2014	7:40 p.m.	Judge Karen Hall	The Court System
February 3, 2014	6:30 p.m.	Josh Hayes	Tort Law
February 3, 2014	7:40 p.m.	Ed Gentle	Ingenious Remedies
February 10, 2014	6:30 p.m.	Matt Glover	Industrial Accidents
February 10, 2014	7:40 p.m.	Ron Sykstus	Bankruptcy
February 17, 2014	6:30 p.m.	George Flowers	D.U.I.
February 17, 2014	7:40 p.m.	Judge Alison Austin	Our System of Justice
February 24, 2014	6:30 p.m.	Lee Leggett	National Security Law
February 24, 2014	7:40 p.m.	Carolyn Johnson	Divorce Law
March 3, 2014	6:30 p.m.	Perry Shuttlesworth	Nursing Home Law
March 3, 2014	7:40 p.m.	John Brinkley/Jason Johnson	Criminal Law
March 10, 2014	6:30 p.m.	Connie Glass	Elder Law
March 10, 2014	7:40 p.m.	George Moore	Justice in America
March 17, 2014	6:30 p.m.	Jim Richardson	Insurance Law
March 17, 2014	7:40 p.m.	Jacob Maples	Workplace Injuries/Workman's Comp
March 31, 2014	6:30 p.m.	Allen Brinkley	Question & Answer
March 31, 2014	7:40 p.m.	Mike Wisner	Fighting the IRS
April 7, 2014	6:30 p.m.	Bob Prince	18-wheeler
April 7, 2014	7:40 p.m.	Kerri Riley	Sexual Harassment

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Christmas 1954

by Austin Miller

Nineteen fifty-four was a lean year for our family. It was one of the hottest and driest summers on record. When it did rain it was at the wrong time or too late for the cotton crop. With two mules and a two horse wagon, we were farming and trying to make a living on twenty acres of cotton. About twelve acres was our own and we rented another eight from Mr. Will Thomas. Mr. Will's property bordered what is now Norfolk Southern Railroad and Dug Hill Road.

That year, due to the drought, we made only six bales of cotton. This did not bring near enough money to pay what we owed the bank not to mention what we needed to live on for the next year. The cotton was so knotty and opened so slowly that it took Daddy, my brother Berns and I, all fall to get it picked. To his great credit, Berns who was only eight, worked like a grown person without complaining. Even though he was five years younger, he beat me at the scales every time. This brought me much grief from Daddy and considerable gloating from Berns.

About Thanksgiving, we finally got the very last of it gathered. That's when Mama told us, "there wasn't going to be much Christmas this year." An obvious conclusion but hearing it from her brought the stark reality of it home. Christmas was my favorite time of the year. I usually looked forward to it for weeks before, but in the late fall and early winter of 1954, I just wanted it to come and go.

In the last part of 1954 and most of 1955 we qualified for commodities. This was surplus food given to needy families by the government. Each eligible family came to a designated location and got a monthly ration of cheese, beans, rice and canned meat. Some said the meat

was horse meat but that was not the case. We enjoyed and needed the food but having to get it was a hard pill to swallow. What made it so bad was they gave it out at Central School and all the other kids and teachers knew that I was so poor that my family had to get commodities. It may not have been true but I felt everybody was looking down on us and I took it as a personal affront.

When Christmas came it was not as bad as I expected. Using money she had saved from selling butter and eggs Mama went to the store on Christmas Eve and bought some loaf bread, sandwich spread, apples, oranges and a little candy. This brightened all our spirits considerably. On Christmas day she killed a big fat rooster and made chicken sandwiches for lunch. We all ate until we were stuffed. Even now, I consider it one of the most delicious meals I ever ate. But the best part came when we finished eating. Daddy announced that he was selling the mules and buying a tractor. To me, getting rid of those cantankerous old mules was reason enough to celebrate. He told us he had rented more land and gotten a loan from the FHA. He said the loan would cover our debt to the bank and give us enough to live on until we raised a new crop. The Christmas that had seemed so bleak beforehand had taken a most pleasant turn. Things started getting better right away and when the 1955 crop came in, we quit getting commodities.

After that Christmas we were still poor but our family had turned a corner. There are two kinds of poverty; one is poverty of the spirit, the other is financial poverty. Poverty of the spirit is the worst. Christmas 1954 took away some of the poverty of my spirit.

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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.

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Santa Forgot



by Malcolm Miller

The year I believe was 1961. I was working at the Post Office and barbering part-time at Taylor's Barber Shop on Governors Drive. My oldest son Tommy, now known as T.A. by his music fans, was really wanting a new bicycle for Christmas. I mentioned this to Mr. Collier the Postmaster and he said that he had just what I needed.

It seems that his wife, a teacher at Lincoln School, had finally saved enough Blue Horse writing tablet covers to win a shiny new Schwinn bicycle and I could have it for forty dollars. So then I managed to get the bicycle moved from his home on East Holmes Street into the back room of the barber shop and keep it there til Christmas Eve night.

Finally Christmas Eve arrived and it was on a Saturday night. Since Christmas day would be on Sunday, both the Post Office and barber shop would be closed till Tuesday.

After we closed the shop I got James Taylor to take the bike to my house and we very quietly slipped it around behind my house and unloaded it in the dark.

Up to this point everything was going great; now all I had to do was wait until the kids were asleep then slip outside, get the bike and put it together. Simple, right? No, everything was about to change dramatically. When the kids finally did get to sleep near midnight I went out with a flash light to get the bike.

Guess what? No peddles and no handlebars, they had been

left in the station wagon and Taylor lived all the way across the river on Brindlee Mountain in the Union Hill community and I wouldn't see him again until Tuesday; furthermore I didn't know where his house was. So my brothers - Gib, Frank and I - went to try to locate where he lived.

To this day I still remember the problems we encountered on that trip. Remember we started out after midnight meaning it was already Christmas day and believe me there was nothing open back then on that day. When we finally crossed the river and reached the top of the mountain it got really hairy. The fog was so thick in places you could hardly see and I really didn't know where I was going, but I must have covered every road and pig trail on that mountain looking for Taylor's fifty-two Ford station wagon.

I ran upon three or four couples who weren't too happy to see me on those mountain back roads and I recall pulling into one driveway and breaking up a card game. You should have seen them running out back with their bottles of liquor. Morgan County was dry back then and I suppose they thought they were being raided.

So about three o'clock Christmas morning and my gas tank nearly empty, we finally gave up the search. I slowly drove back down the mountain all the while asking myself, what will I tell Tommy when he wakes up this morning?

Finally I decided to tell him that Santa was so busy with so many toys and so many kids that he simply forgot the peddles and handle bars but I was sure he would get them to him the next Tuesday, and sure enough he did.

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- First N.B. of Brundidge, Ala - an original issue of 1929, this \$5 note is one of only 2 known from a total of 14 notes listed of all denominations. Bank #7429, nice avg. circulated note. \$625
- Commercial N.B. of Demopolis, Series of 1902 issued in 1911 with dates of 1902-1908 printed on the back. A \$10 Note, one of only 2 known with the dated back out of 17 issues known. Minor damage to center but very rare. \$495
- Demopolis, as above except a 1929 original series and a \$5 Note, one of only 2 still known \$5's. From 26 total notes known. Bank #10035, avg. circ \$325
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- Decatur, City N.B. Series of 1902 issued in 1913 with dated 1902-1908 back. Only 4 such notes reported to have survived, Bank #10336, total of 32 known of this series and denominations. \$395
- Dothan National Bank, a \$5 bill from the 1902 Series, issued in 1921. This is the only \$5 bill known and only the 2nd note of any denomination known of this 1902 series, although there are 32 much older series notes known. Noticeably used. \$450
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- Opelika, Farmers N.B., Series 1929 2nd issue \$20 note with only 4 reported out of 58 total for the bank. Nicer than average condition. \$249
- Opelika, First N.B. Series of 1929, \$10 note, Bank #3452 original, only 6 reported out of 12 total notes reported surviving on this bank. Avg. circulated. \$325
- Selma N.B., Series of 1902 dated back, issued in 1903, Bank #7084, this \$20 note is one of only 2 known, and one of only 4 with the 1902-1908 dated back of all denominations, with a total of 30 of the pre-1929 issues reported. Heavily used. \$425
- Sheffield National Bank, Series of 1902 \$20 note. Only 11 notes known on this bank with only 3 of the \$20s reported. Heavily Used. \$600
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Married Christmas



It was December 24, 1962. The snow covered every inch like a soft cotton blanket. It was a Monday morning and there was a Christmas play at the local church. My grandmother, Wilma Matthews, played Mary in the play. It went flawlessly, and everyone was touched by the hand of God while watching it.

After the play was over my grandmother went to get ready for the biggest event of her life. It was her wedding day. She put on her light blue dress that

she bought at Hammers, a local store. That night as she finished getting ready, the small church, which would comfortably hold 60 people, began to fill with over 200 people. Family, friends, and loved ones came from all around the valley to see the happy couple begin their lives together.

Excitement, nervousness, and utter happiness filled her entire body. My grandfather stood at the end of the aisle, and, as my grandmother walked towards him, he realized this was the beginning of something wonderful and magical. His brow began to sweat and his hands began to shake. He was so happy to finally marry the woman of his dreams.

As her father led her down the aisle, she stared into his eyes and felt what true love really

by Ariel Anderson, in the 11th grade at Madison Academy.
The narrator is Ariel's grandmother, Willine Morrow Shell who married Grady Shell (Ariel's grandfather) in Albertville, AL in 1962

was. When she finally reached him, she took his hands into hers. She felt whole and safe, like she had nothing to worry about ever again. They said their vows to one another and felt the love pouring from their lips. In just a few seconds they were going to be bound for life. The clock struck midnight as the preacher said, "You may kiss your bride."

On that Christmas morning, their lives truly began.



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Tweetie's Pet Tips

"I'm not afraid of dogs, dogs are my friends."

Tweetie



Getting pets who dislike the cold to go outside in winter can be a challenge, but chilly weather or not, pets need fresh air and exercise. ASPCA experts assure us that while short-haired and smaller breeds may require cozy apparel to protect them from winter's bite, others simply need a little training to learn how to enjoy a cold-weather romp.

"With a few simple training tricks— and the right attire— pet parents can teach animal companions to be much more enthusiastic about playing outdoors in winter," says ASPCA Animal Trainer Kristen Collins.

1. Entice your pooch with off-leash exercise sessions; playing tug or fetch, or romping with canine buddies— the more aerobic the activity, the warmer the dog will be.

2. If your dog's playing off-leash, you can use treats to reward her for fetching toys— even if you usually don't have to. The extra incentive might further spark her interest in the great (and chilly!) outdoors.

3. Offer your pet special treats during outdoor excursions. While on a brisk walk, pop something delicious into her mouth every now and then— or feed her breakfast by hand while outdoors.

4. Winter is a great time to enroll in indoor training classes. Sports like agility and flyball are often taught in heated facilities and are excellent exercise for the canine body and mind— and you'll enjoy them, too!

5. Walk your pet in wooded areas during the winter months. The forest not only provides protection from wind, but the rich smells, sights and sounds can be infinitely interesting for dogs to investigate, distracting them from chilly temperatures.

6. Many dogs dislike going outside during winter because snow, salt and chemical de-icers hurt their paws. Canine booties can protect paws, while keeping them warm— and disposable latex boots are available for dogs who don't like the feel of thicker boots.

7. Musher's Secret, a waxy substance that you can apply to your dog's paws, can be an effective alternative to booties for protecting toes and paw pads in snow and ice.

8. Getting your dog to play outside may simply be a matter of keeping her warm:

- Dress puppies — who don't have as much body fat as adults— in a coat or sweater.

- Get waterproof gear for wet days.

- Invest in a well-fitting coat that covers your dog's back and underside. (Fleece is nice!)

- Staying warm during winter takes more energy, so increased food intake may be necessary. Good body condition means you can feel, but not see, your dog's bones. If you can see his spine, hips and ribs, then he's too thin and you should talk to your veterinarian about increasing his food intake.

9. If you've tried everything and your dog still seems miserable when you take her outside, provide extra exercise indoors by playing games that involve physical exertion, like tug-of-war.

10. Help your dog expend mental energy by feeding her meals in food-puzzle toys, giving her plenty of things to chew, teaching her new tricks and playing interactive games like hide-and-seek.

Make sure your dog has access to shelter and water at all times. And please remember, that if you're cold, your dog probably is, too, and it's time to go home.

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From the Desk of Tom Carney

The Man who Would be Sheriff

by Tom Carney

He was a tall, gangly man, the kind of man who always looked uncomfortable in new clothes. He drove a 1949 Ford and wore a pistol at his side.

He was Oliver McPeters, and in 1952, he was the "High Sheriff of Madison County."

Most folks knew Oliver McPeters as a sharecropper who lived out around New Hope in an old wood-frame house with no running water or electricity. Sharecropping was a hard life; you would work hard all year long and when the crops were done, if you were lucky, you might have enough money to live on during the winter. Unfortunately, most of the time, after the seeds and the fertilizer bills were paid and the owner of the land got his share, there wasn't anything left over. But still, for people like McPeters, it was the only way of life they had ever known.

His short political career began, as many others have, in a local barber shop. The barber shop was a popular place for the local prominents and the "good ol' boys" to congregate. Almost everything that wasn't worth talking about would become a topic of conversation there. On this day in particular about the only thing they could find to talk about was the fact that Jimmy Record, down at the courthouse, was thinking about buying a new car.

After exhausting that conversation, the crowd grew silent for a moment, until one person, searching for a new topic, mentioned the upcoming sheriff's election. Immediately, speculation began as to who would be running and who would be the winner. Again the conversation died down after a few moments.

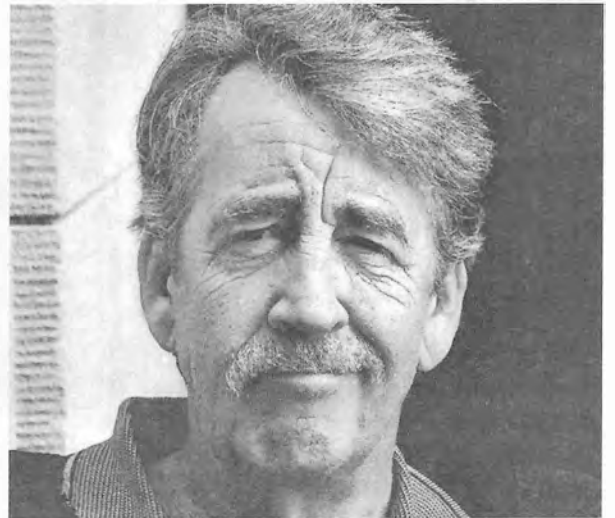
Oliver McPeters had been lounging against the front door frame and when he said that he was of a good mind to run for sheriff himself, all eyes were

upon him. "Yep," said McPeters. "If I had the money, I believe I'd run for the sheriff's office myself."

There was dead silence in the barber shop. Of all the men in Madison County, you could not have picked a more unlikely candidate. The man sitting in the barber chair, a local, prominent businessman (who shall remain nameless for obvious reasons), stood up and asked McPeters if he was serious. "McPeters," he said while reaching for his wallet, "if you want to run for sheriff, I'll pay the \$10 qualifying fee."


No one really thought McPeters was serious, but he was. He took the money, turned around, and walked out of the barber shop. As soon as he left, gales of laughter broke out from the "good ol' boys." This had to be, declared the men, "the best joke of the year."

No one had any idea how serious McPeters was. After leaving the barber shop, he quickly walked



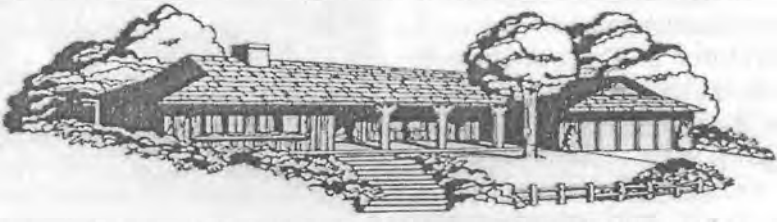
over to the old Elks building, where a kindly clerk showed him how to file the necessary papers. By the time the sun went down in Huntsville that evening, everybody in town knew that "sharecropper McPeters" was running for sheriff. Of course, most folks considered the whole thing a crazy joke by the boys down at the barber shop.

Oliver McPeters hit the campaign trail running. It was said later that he called on every home in Madison County, asking for folks to vote for him. He was a man of little education and was known for speaking his mind, so it was not surprising that he ran a colorful



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campaign. In Hazel Green, when asked about recent allegations of corruption in the sheriffs department, he replied that if folks would elect him, he would "promise not to hire anyone who has ever worn a badge or a gun."

While speaking in Gurley, he promised the people "you men folks won't have to worry any more; if your women folks get locked up in my jail, I promise you they ain't gonna get knocked up." He was speaking in reference to an alleged rape that had taken place in the jail the previous year.

Most old-timers in Huntsville today contend that people voted for him solely as a protest vote. People were turned off by the other candidates. But, whatever the reason, on election day when the votes were counted, Oliver McPeters was the new Sheriff of Madison County.

One of his first acts was to call on every bootlegger in the county and tell them they had to close up. Everybody who knows anything about our county's history will tell you that bootleggers were a part of our heritage, and to close down every one of them ... well, that was almost unpatriotic.

Needless to say, he made a lot of enemies, immediately.

Next he went after the juke joints. Everybody knows that "good ol' boys" had to have a place to blow off steam, and if you take that away from them, they're going to get mighty upset. Many of these boys had been going to the same joints for years, and it was real hard for them to break the habit.

One local fellow tells the story about the time Sheriff McPeters raided the White Castle, a honky-tonk out on Meridian Street, and closed it down. Several weeks later, J. Otis King, a local Baptist preacher, made arrangements with the owners to use the building for a revival. On the night of the revival, they turned on all the neon lights out front, and had all the lost sinners sitting around the tables with Preacher King up on the dance floor doing his preaching. Unfortunately, a lot of people did not know what was going on. Every few minutes the services would be interrupted because peo-

ple driving down Meridian would see the bright neon lights, stop their cars, go in, line up at the bar and loudly demand a "set-up."

Within days of being elected, the High Sheriff of Madison County was striking terror into the hearts of would be lawbreakers. He arrested the commanding officer of Redstone Arsenal for driving six miles over the speed limit. A local prominent automobile dealer was arrested for jaywalking—on a rural county road. A well-respected, churchgoing lady found the Sheriff knocking at her door after she had inadvertently given the Sheriff's office a bad check. Her account was overdrawn by 16 cents.

The boys down at the barber shop realized, by now, that their joke had backfired. Calling a meeting with the Sheriff, they tried to explain that he needed someone with experience to guide him, because his actions were causing a lot of ill feelings in the community.

Some people claimed that it came from walking behind a stubborn mule while sharecropping, but for whatever reason, he was one stubborn man. Looking at the assembled group, he told them that he was the "High Sheriff of Madison County" and he reckoned that he would just keep on enforcing the laws the way that he saw fit.

Next on his list were those vile dens of inequity, the private clubs. Everyone knew that these clubs were bending the law, and McPeters decided it was time to do something about them. Calling his trusty deputies together, he set out to enforce the law.

Before the night was over he had raided the Elks Club, the Eagles Club, the black V. F. W., the American Legion, the New Hope chapter of the American Legion, the Moose Lodge, the Disabled American Veterans Home on East Holmes, and last but not least, the Huntsville Country Club. Almost half the prominent people in Huntsville were arrested, all on the same night.

There was no joy for the "good ol' boys" down at the barber shop. They all agreed that something had to be done. The "joke" they had elected had turned into a "law-enforcing monster."

Several weeks later, allega-

tions begin to spread that Sheriff McPeters was taking payoffs to allow certain juke joints to operate. Complaints reached the Governor's office, and within weeks W. L. Allen, a veteran criminal investigator working for the state, arrived in Huntsville to investigate the charges. Allen had made his reputation while investigating the Ku Klux Klan in Jefferson County and was known to be a thorough investigator.

Normally in an investigation, it is difficult to find people willing to talk, but in this case it was different. Allen had people lined up at his door, all with complaints. Of course, a lot of these folks had newly acquired jail records.

On November 13, 1952, eleven months after taking office, the state supreme court voted to remove Oliver McPeters from office. The most damning evidence against him was a canceled check that he was supposed to have received as a bribe. McPeters claimed the check was given to him as a loan.

The check, supposedly, came from a local private club and was in the hands of the investigators within hours after McPeters cashed it.

After being impeached and removed from office by the state supreme court, McPeters took the train back home from Montgomery, a broken man. Witnesses say that when McPeters got off the train, he was immediately grabbed and thrown into the back seat of a car by three unidentified men. The same witnesses also claim that the only words spoken were, "McPeters, you ain't Sheriff no more."

Hours later his wife and children were awakened by the sound of a car door slamming shut. Rushing outside, they found the bruised, bloody form of the ex-Sheriff lying face down on the side of the road.

Oliver McPeters, the man who would be "High Sheriff of Madison County", was out of office.

After a slow, painful recovery, McPeters became a foreman for a construction company, pouring concrete. He never pressed charges against the men who brutally assaulted him that night.

No one was ever prosecuted for the alleged bribery.

Ray Tielking's Christmas

by *Tristen Mullins*
Student, Hazel Green HS
An interview with his grandparents
Ray & Fran Tielking (1950s)

Christmas for Ray Tielking was much different fifty years ago than it is today. He lived in the country with his mother, father and three brothers in a small house near the woods. The day before Christmas Eve, he and his brothers would go out and find a tree to set up in the house. They would choose a cedar or pine, then cut it down with an axe and carry it back. To set it up, they would cross two pieces of wood and nail the tree down, then lay an old quilt on the ground over it.

Because they lived in the country, Ray and his family did not have electricity until he was fourteen years old. There were no lights to put on the tree, so they would dry corn in the attic to make popcorn to wrap around it. Other decorations were berries, pinecones, and mistletoe that they collected from the yard. The tree would only live for about five days after they cut it down.

On Christmas day, life went on as usual. In the morning, they would wake up to snow on their beds from where it came in through the holes in the roof and walls. Ray, being the oldest of the four brothers, would go downstairs and start the fire again. Then he would have to go out and feed the cows, hogs, and chickens. He would also have to break a hole in the ice over the pond for the cows to drink. Once his chores were done, he would go inside for breakfast.

The typical Christmas breakfast for the family was eggs, homemade biscuits and gravy. Afterwards, they would

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go into the living room where four chairs were set up in a line. On each chair was one present, an apple and an orange, nuts, and a few pieces of candy. They did not get much during the year because the family did not have much money, so these treats were special. Ray remembers one Christmas in particular when he was ten and he received a set of cap guns, bullets, and a holster.

His mother made Christmas dinner of cornbread, mashed potatoes, and vegetables. She would also make cakes, and this was the only time of the year they would be able to have them. Before anyone was able to come inside to eat, they had to wash their hands and faces in a bucket of cold water on the back porch because their mother did not want them to be dirty on Christmas. The candy they bought for the children was put into the drawer of a large chifforobe which had to be unlocked. The children could get one piece of candy each day after Christmas until it was gone.

His wife Fran had a much different Christmas experience growing up. Her family moved around a lot, so much of what they received for Christmas was often lost or left behind. One year she and her sister received two dolls with long, curly, blonde hair and blue eyes. Their two younger brothers got toy helicopters. They lived in the city, so they had electricity and could decorate their tree with lights. They also used a white spray called angel hair to give it a frosted look, though it stung their hands.

Christmas dinner was always a large occasion, and the adults ate before the children. Fran remembers her mother

and aunt making pineapple upside down cake. Afterwards, it was the children's job to clean up and make sure the younger kids were in bed on time.

Today, Ray and Fran spend Christmas with their daughter and two grandchildren. While they are grateful that they can now enjoy luxuries they could not as children, they will always remember what Christmas was like growing up.

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Predictions from the Past

- "By the year 2000, we will undoubtedly have a sizeable operation on the moon; we will have achieved a manned Mars landing; and it's entirely possible we will have flown with men to the outer planets." - NASA scientist Wernher von Braun, 1969.

- "Sensible and responsible women do not want to vote." - President Grover Cleveland in 1905.

- "We just won't have arthritis in 2000." - Dr. William Clark, president of the Arthritis Foundation, 1966.

- In 1902, Life Magazine printed a cartoon with the caption "Sight-seeing in 1920." It showed a group of tourists floating in a balloon while a guide pointed downwards saying, "That depression down there is where New York City stood. But with all its skyscrapers and underground tunnels it suddenly sunk one day and they haven't been able to find it since."

- "God himself could not sink this ship." - Deckhand on the Titanic, April 10, 1912.

- The Associated Press' 1950 predictions on life in the year 2000 included a vision of Amazon women. The average woman, it forecasted, would be more than 6 feet tall, with muscles like a truck driver, and would consume food capsules instead of meat and potatoes.

- "I predict the Internet... will soon go spectacularly supernova and in 1996 catastrophically collapse." - Bob Metcalfe, Info World, 1995.

- "64K ought to be enough memory for anybody." - Bill Gates, 1981.

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A Family Tree

by Matthew Houts
11th Grader at Madison
Academy



The Wood family was an average, small town family who lived in Scottsboro, Alabama, in the 1930s. The father of this family owned the grocery store and sometimes worked 12 hours a day. He also was known for helping anyone in need.

One Christmas, the children of the Wood family wanted to get a Christmas tree for the house, but the father had no time to go in the forest with them and get one. The father wished he could go with his children and was searching for a way to get them a Christmas tree.

One day, Mr. Snodgrass, a poor, colored man walked into his store. He said that he did not have any money to buy food because the crops had not grown well that year and he could not find any work. Embarrassed, he asked Mr. Wood if he could do some work around the store in order to receive some food. Mr. Wood immediately thought of his children and told Mr. Snodgrass that if he helped his children get a Christmas tree, he would give him a week's worth of food. Mr. Snodgrass anxiously agreed.

When the children first met Mr. Snodgrass, they were slightly nervous because he was a large man and was different than most of the people in Scottsboro. But soon after, they realized how friendly of a man Mr. Snodgrass was and eagerly went with him to get their Christmas tree. After a long hike in the woods, they came to a cedar tree that was the perfect size for their home. Mr. Snodgrass cut it down and carried it on his shoulders back to the Woods' home. The children were thrilled to have this Christmas tree and Mr. Wood happily gave Mr. Snodgrass a week's worth of food to help him get his feet back on the ground.

But Mr. Wood's charitable deeds would not be finished for that Christmas. A couple of days later, a colored woman named Ms. Denida walked into Mr. Wood's store with two children. As Mr. Snodgrass had asked, she asked to do any work Mr. Wood needed in exchange for food for her children. Mr. Wood said that his wife needed help with his four children at home and that he would give Ms. Denida plenty of food if she went to help Mrs. Wood. Ms. Denida readily agreed and began working at the Woods' house.

At the Christmas service at the Woods' church, in came Mr. Snodgrass and Ms. Denida and her children. And when the service was over, they all went to the Woods'

house to eat dinner and open presents. Although the presents were not extravagant, the love that accompanied those presents made them very special. Even in the hard times of the 1930s, all that really mattered was that Christmas was the bond of family and friends.

One family who needed a Christmas tree and two families who needed food found each other that holiday season, finding in each other what they all truly needed - friendship.

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The Christmas Puppy



by Morgan Smallwood
Student, Hazel Green H.S.

Interview with her grandmother Charlotte McWhorter of New Market, AL (1953)

Christmas was usually the same each year for our family of thirteen. Looking back, it wasn't even great, but at the time, it was the happiest time of the year for us. We didn't have to pick cotton for once. Just the thought of Christmas was enough motivation for us to keep working our absolute hardest.

On Christmas morning every year, we would walk into the kitchen to find eleven chairs or however many children there were at the time. On each one was a single apple, orange, and peppermint candy. I was so happy that most of the time it took me weeks before I would ever even eat the candy. I had to eat the fruit, of course; otherwise, it would have gone bad quickly. It was a happy moment for all of us.

One Christmas, however, things went a little differently. I was somewhere between the ages of ten and thirteen. We all went into the kitchen as usual, collecting our fruits and candy. My father let the excitement in the room settle a little. Once we were calmer, he told us that there was more this year. We looked around at each other in confusion, wondering what

possibly could be more to it. We whispered about the possibilities, like new shoes or fabric for dresses.

He told us to cover up in some warm clothes because we were going outside. Once we were all dressed, he led us out to the barn. What could possibly be out here? An idea ran through my mind that made me want to cry. What if we have to work this year? I quickly dismissed the thought. I knew he would not have done that to us, get our hopes up like that.

What we saw when we entered the barn I'm sure none of us were expecting. It was a happy, yappy little brown puppy. It was so cute, that none of us knew how to react. I think we were all afraid to touch it, that we might hurt it or that it might not be real. My father just laughed and told us it didn't bite. It danced at our feet, licking any fingers that tried to pet it. It was a girl, and we decided on naming her Lucille.

We brought her inside with us because it was freezing outside. She explored every inch of the house, and we followed right behind her, laughing when she thought random objects were alive and barked at them. After a long

while of begging our mother, my sisters and I let her sleep with us in our bed that night. She wouldn't let us go to sleep at first, so we finally had to pretend to be asleep so that she would settle down. We had completely forgotten about our fruit and candy at this point. It was the best Christmas to us by far.

The puppy became everyone's best friend. We all argued over who got to sleep with her each night and hold and play with her. She grew quickly before our eyes into a big chocolate lab retriever. She was such a good dog and always stood by everyone's side. We took her with us into the cotton fields when we had to work, and she had a way of making it all bearable. I don't really know how long she lived because I left home at sixteen. I do know that it must have been unbearable for my younger siblings to have to witness her death of old age. She was the best Christmas that had ever happened.

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Hoover Days

by Ruby Crabbe

I fully agree with Jan Street when she brought forth the "Hoover Day Memories." Times were hard back in the Depression days of 1929. People were called "well-to-do" if they could have two bowls of Hoover Gravy for Sunday breakfast instead of one bowl. The kids called gravy "cob soo"; their parents called it "growing mash." Tasted pretty good if you had a nice slab of steak or lean to go with it.

Our mama, Josie Allen, had the prettiest, cleanest floors in Dallas Village. Or, at least, we kids thought she did. On floor scrubbing day, she would send us to the ball park where Rison School had ball games. A big ditch ran alongside of the ball field and in that ditch we would get a big sack of sand, carry it home, sprinkle it on the floor, and lightly scrub with clear water.

A lot of people wondered how Mama had such clean floors. And, I remember a lot of people bragging on Mama's silverware. Her little secret of having sparkling clean silverware was also unique. She would take the silverware, find a nice clean spot in our yard, and everyone of us would take



one piece of silverware at a time and stick it down in the ground and rub it up and down, up and down. Then Mama would take all the silverware back into the house, wash it with scalding water, rinse it real good and then dry it, piece by piece, with a dish towel.

That silverware, after all those many years ago, is still as bright and shiny as the first day it was bought.

Oh, yes, the Hoover Days during the Depression were hard on everyone, but that didn't dampen the spirit of us kids hatching up jokes to pull on people. Bill Jaco lived next door to us on Rison Avenue, and he could always come up with a good joke on someone or a good laugh for everyone. I re-

member the day he made the finest, "streetcar" dummy you've ever seen. That's the first dummy and the last dummy I've ever seen that looked so alive. On Stevens Avenue and 5th Street (renamed Andrew Jackson Way), a bench was placed next to a big tree so the street

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car would-be riders would have a place to sit while waiting for it.

When Bill caught that bench empty, he placed his dummy up right on the bench. There that look-alive dummy sat—legs crossed, work shoes on, hat pulled down over his eyes as if taking a nap, or resting his stomach from eating so much Hoover gravy. He looked more like a man resting from a hard day's work. I declare, he looked more alive than a lot of people who had occupied that bench.

Bill was in hiding behind that tree when the dummy's first victim ascended next to him. A little old lady, bless her heart—I never did find out who she was, but she spoke to that dummy, "Nice day, isn't it, sir." Not getting a response, she leaned over toward the dummy to speak again, but her movement shook the bench and off the dummy went right on top of her feet.

With a whoop and a holler, she came off that bench, and down the street she went like a whirlwind that knew no direction. She was yelling, "dead man, dead man," and gaining speed with every word. And, I'll never be able to describe the speed Bill made in gathering his dummy up and dragging it back down the street toward home. Let me tell you, it was fast!

Minutes later, an ambulance drove up, followed by the biggest crowd of people you've ever seen. People were coming up the street, down the street, across the street, and a few seemed to appear out of nowhere. After a lot of questioning, searching and hunting, the ambulance left and the crowd slowly disappeared.

A lot of people, after all those years, are still wondering about the "dead man's" disappearance. What I've wondered about after all these many years is where in the world did the little old lady go?

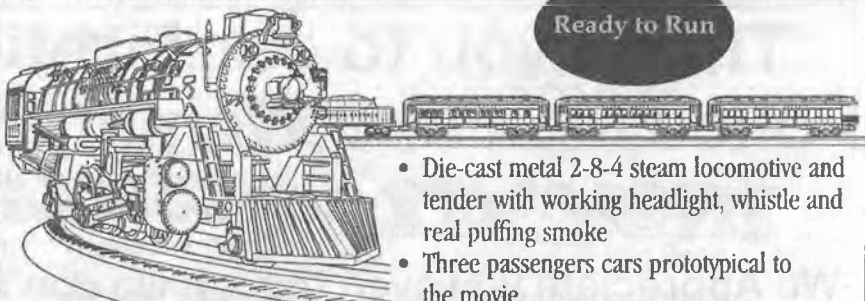
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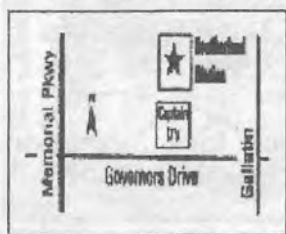
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* If you want to keep your wine cold but don't want to water it down with ice, just drop in a few frozen green grapes.

* A novel idea for storing boots is to attach each pair to clip hangers that you just put into your closet. One boot goes on each clip, toes facing out. Easy to see but out of the way!

* If one of your hubcaps fall off you only need to buy two for that side. They can be slightly different. Who looks at all 4 sides at once?

* Use one of those over the door shoe racks to store all your cleaning supplies. You can see

them at a glance and they're out of the way!

* An uncooked stick of spaghetti can be a great cake tester for doneness, while it's still in the oven. You can also use it for lighting hard-to-reach candles.

* Cut a toilet paper roll lengthwise, then use it to secure your wrapping paper rolls.

* Use toothpaste and some elbow grease to clear up those hazy car headlight plastic covers.

* Use a plastic bread tab to hold the place on a roll of Scotch tape.

* Make some strong coffee, then freeze it in your ice tray to use later with iced coffee drinks - they won't be watered down.

* If you wear an outfit that really looks good, write it down. That way you don't have to remember what pieces you used and have to search through your closet.

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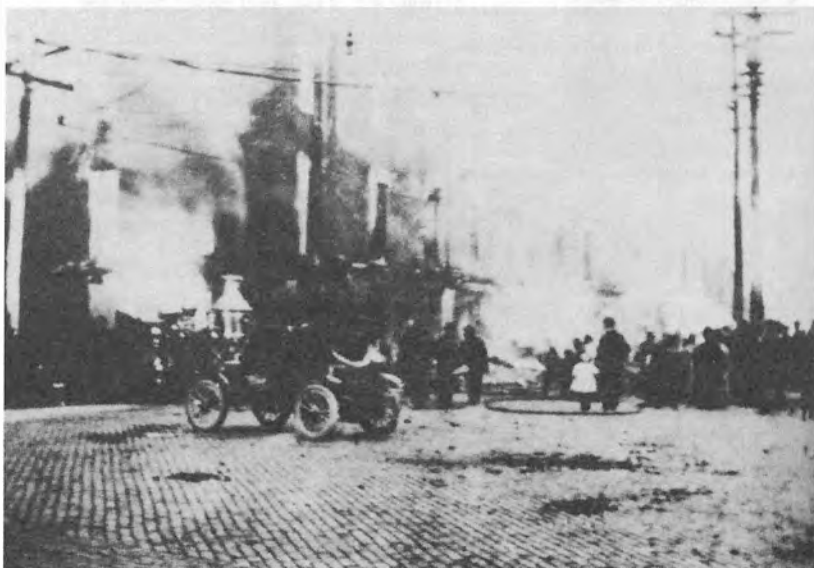
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A "Re-Pete"able Christmas

*By Emily Snell
11th. grader at Madison Academy*

The snowy mountains and the crisp air of Hohenwald, Tennessee greeted me when I woke up that Christmas morning of 1950. I was only five years old, but I still remember that Christmas because I received my very first baby dolls from Santa.

The twin baby dolls, named Pete and Re-Pete, resembled real babies; one baby had a blue blanket, the other had a pink one. The babies wore diapers, and each had a small bottle that I could feed them with. I never put the dolls down, even for my mother's biscuits for breakfast! In my stocking was some of my favorite candy along with some oranges and nuts that I ate in a matter of minutes. I wondered how Santa knows my desires, my dreams, and even my favorite food! How does he do that?

We always went to my grandmother's house for Christmas dinner and while we were waiting for the feast, a sweet, sugary aroma filled the house. The Christmas scent was created by my mother's recipe which called for water, orange peels, apple slices, and whole cinnamon sticks. I watched her put each ingredient into the saucepan and in a matter of seconds, everyone in the house could smell the wonderfully spiced scent. After a couple of games and songs, my family gathered around the table with a cake in the center. The cake

had been decorated with Christmas candies, but my cousins and I secretly ate them all before dinner. One special treat my cousins and I had was that my grandmother would let us be the first to get our meal. Usually, the adults would go first and then the children would get the leftovers, but tonight was special and all of us knew it.

The sound of small knocks on the door tore me away from playing with my dolls and watching the famous Christmas dinner being served. While I was waiting for somebody to answer the knock, I heard my mother call me to open the door. The sight made me freeze, and I screamed, ran away, and hid in the broom closet! The person at the door was none other than Santa Claus!

Mesmerized by the fact that Santa was sitting in my living room, I was about to walk out and thank him for my dolls, but then I got scared because I had been naughty to my sister just a couple days ago and thought that Santa might tell my parents about it. Just that morning, she took one of my toys to play with, so I yanked her hair and told her to stay away from my games. What if Santa did not give me gifts next year? After a

couple of long, scary minutes, I heard my uncle's voice and decided to come out to greet him only to find that he was the one in the Santa suit!

The last thing we did that night was sing Christmas carols. My grandmother always liked to hear us cousins sing while my aunt played the piano. When we started singing "Silent Night," the whole family joined in! We had a jolly time and never wanted to end the night. After we sang the last carol, we gave our hugs and kisses to relatives and went home.

While I was resting in my small bed, I began to thank the Lord for all the fond memories and good times I had that night. Even though I loved my Pete and Re-Pete dolls, the best present I received that Christmas was family.



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A Love-Filled Christmas

*by Trinnity Dalrymple
11th grader at Hazel Green H.S.
An Interview with her grandmother
Nadine Lybrand (1950s)*

As the youngest of eight in a poor family, Christmas for Nadine Chappell was a simple time. The Chappells lived on a small farm in Blount County, Alabama in a wooden house with dirt floors, their beds planks of wood hanging from nails on the wall. They waited until the day before Christmas to cut their tree and nailed a cross to the bottom to keep it standing before covering the base with a white cloth.

The next morning the children - Willamay, Lucille, Herman, Imogene, Vernon (Shorty), Marnice, Verner, and Nadine - would wake before their parents to start the fire and warm the potbelly stove. When their mother Ruby woke, she would make coffee and cornbread fritters (cornbread squashed flat like a pancake and fried) which they covered in homemade syrup. Sometimes she would make biscuits (which would be their bread for the rest of the day) while their father Albertus cooked fat back on the stove.

After the girls cleaned the kitchen, they all moved to the living room to pop popcorn over the fireplace in a screen-wire box. Their father had made the box with wood and stretched screen taken from a door over the top. Once the popcorn was popped, they would string it and put on the pine tree as garland. They also made gingerbread cookies and candlesticks to put on the tree as well as Christmas bells. They didn't use lights as they couldn't afford any.

After the tree was decorated, they opened presents. The girls received cloth dolls with button eyes and noses while the boys were given homemade trucks. They all got peppermint candy sticks which was a treat, as Christmas was the only day of the year they could have candy.

Over the course of the day, the girls would stay inside and help their mother make teacakes, which they smothered in homemade chocolate that their mother made with cocoa. For supper the boys would go out and kill a turkey, or failing that, Ruby would have them round up chickens that she would "wring their necks" before plucking and cleaning. While the turkey cooked, she would set out beet pickles, cucumber pickles, onions. She'd make pumpkin pie, cornbread, candied yams, green beans, potato salad, ham, chicken dressing, giblet gravy made with hog lard and flour, banana pudding, blackberry cobbler, and a yellow cake with chocolate icing. She cooked for at least fifteen other people (the older children's spouses and grandparents), all of whom would arrive over the course of the day.

After supper, the adults would go in the living room and play dominoes, rook, checkers or Chinese checkers. The younger children would go play in their rooms. Later, their father would sit them all around the fire and tell stories of his own childhood. After their guests had left, the children would go outside and feed the horses, milk the cows, and carry buckets of water back to the house for their coffee, breakfast, and baths the next morning. Even without much money, Christmas was a special time for enjoying family and counting blessings.



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**Dorothy Dix Says:
“Old Women Trying
to Be Young Seem
Grotesque”**

*First printed in the Nashville
Banner in 1937*

What is a woman to do when she is 75 and feels "like 17?" This is the bomb that a woman threw into a feminine party the other day. What indeed? It is a problem that makes unriddling the riddle of the Sphinx as easy as a child's guessing game, but no soothsayer has arisen to solve this modern mystery of how a woman should act her age when she is a flapper at heart and a great-grandmother in reality.

This was not one of the worries of the women of the good old times, when life was a simpler affair than it is now. Then a woman who was seventy-ish was seventy, and that was all there was about it.

But times have changed and women with them. While we still have many estimable ladies in our midst, who are content to wear flat-heeled shoes that are big enough for them and to knit baby socks and enjoy the placid pleasures and perquisites of age, there are thousands upon thousands of others who want to dress like debutantes and do debutantish things. The question is how to reconcile a spirit that is so young with a body that is so old?

Many try to find their lost girlhood in the beauty shops and the specialty stores, but alas, it is a vain quest. What they find is only a grotesque caricature of 17, but never 17 itself. They can dye gray hair golden, but they can't put the young face under it. They can paint roses on a faded cheek, but they are as artificial as a paper flower. They can lift old faces until all the sagging chins and telltale wrinkles are gone, but no surgeon can take out of old eyes the look of one who has gazed for a half-century and more on life.

And when the elderly woman decks herself out in flapper clothes she is old mutton masquerading as a spring lamb, and she fools nobody but herself.

It is a terrible thing to have feet that ache to dance and no man willing to offer himself up as a martyr by hauling you around on a ballroom floor because you are stiff and heavy and old. And it doesn't help the situation for a 75 year old to hire a gigolo to dance with her, or to kid herself that young men hang around her for anything except free drinks and dinners and automobiles and theater tickets. She only makes herself a laugh-stock.

But what, then, is 75 that feels like 17 to do?

I don't know except to take it, and try to like it. Keeping young is a fad of our day, and the propagandists of the Eternal Youth movement are always telling us that while we recognize that our bodies must grow old and infirm with age we can keep our hearts and minds young and still be mere girls and boys

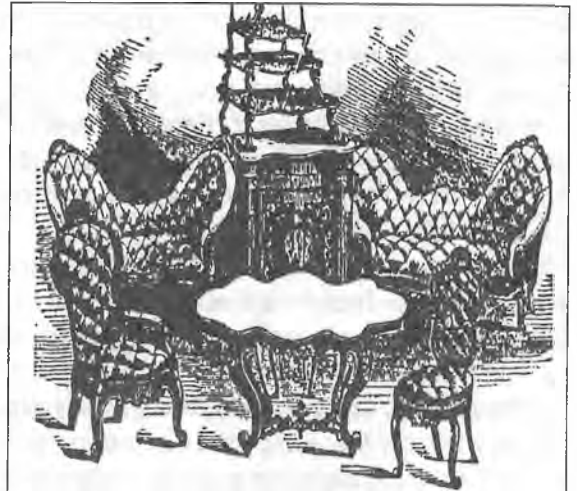
in spirit at 75 or 80.

I often doubt the desirability of this even if it could be accomplished for surely there can be no greater torture than the baffled desires of those who crave the pleasures of youth which their feeble old bodies prevent them from enjoying.

Far better, it seems to me, the spirit and the body grow old together.

(Source: Tennessee State Library and Archives)

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The Ring

by Avery Davis
 Student at Hazel Green HS
 An interview with her
 grandmother,
 Jane Davis (1962)



"I remember our first December in Huntsville vividly," recalls Jane Belyeu Davis. "It was 1962. Our temporary living area was a rented out basement apartment downtown. There was a window that looked out right above the sidewalk, so we would always peek outside at the pairs of feet shuffling by. But that winter, the snow came down so heavy our view was completely blocked. I woke up one morning to total darkness, and when I approached the window, charcoal-gray windows greeted me. For days I felt as if I were living in a cardboard box. Everything surrounding us was bathed with fifty shades of brown - the ceilings, the floor to wall carpeting, the furniture. I made my husband, Jerry, take a shovel out there to give me back my view. Of course, he didn't think it would take nearly an hour. I guess we were pretty lucky he wasn't fired after arriving late at his internship with that kind of excuse."

"Jerry and I had been married almost six months and had started entering what I call the 'dark days.' We were running through money like water. Jerry was just entering his internship at the airlines, and I was still taking classes at the nursing school, so we were lucky if we had a dollar to spare. If we bought a Christmas tree, we couldn't afford ornaments to decorate it with; if we bought ornaments, we couldn't afford a tree."

"A colleague of Jerry's was really the one who put us in the Christmas spirit. He and his family owned a patch of land outside the city, and the fields were crawling with oaks, maples, and pines. He was kind enough to become our personal lumberjack. He showed up at our doorstep one morning with this gorgeous pine tree strapped down in the back of his truck."

"As soon as the tree was mounted in the corner of our living room, the Christmas spirit was almost tangible. We bought a single strand of red, green, and white lights and intertwined them with the pine

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needles. Instead of dropping all our money for a box of reindeer ornaments and plastic candy canes, we got creative. Aluminum foil is really all you need. We molded leftover wrappers into stars, hearts, candy canes, and prisms. They were beautiful dangling from the limbs with the twinkling lights reflecting off them."

"Those are the lengths you have to go to when you're dirt poor. There's nothing like an empty wallet to bring two people together. If we didn't even have enough money to buy an ornament, there was no way we could afford gifts for each other. We turned to the old cliché saying, 'That's not what Christmas is about.' Instead of tearing into presents on Christmas morning, we huddled around the tree with mugs of hot chocolate and just enjoyed each other's company."

"But at about ten o'clock that morning, there was a knock on our door, and we found out someone sent up a twenty-five dollar Western Union Christmas gram. You would have thought gold was raining down. That twenty-five dollar Christmas gram brought the biggest smiles to our faces. I wanted to think practically, so I suggested we use the money for groceries or the fix the jiggling knob on the front door. There were so

many issues with our house that needed tending to."

"Later the next afternoon though, Jerry handed me this tiny box wrapped in newspaper of all things. Inside, there was the gorgeous, sparkling sapphire ring. The gem was nestled into the band in the shape of a heart, and there were tiny diamonds on either

side. The silver turned my finger green, and you needed a magnifying glass to see the diamonds, but I loved that ring. I wanted to be angry because that twenty-five dollars could have been put into our house instead of jewelry. Jerry really knew his audience though. I couldn't be upset over something so pretty."

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3. *Historic Huntsville:* by Elise Hopkins Stephens \$18 (new price)
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