



No. 255  
May 2014



# Old Huntsville

HISTORY AND STORIES OF THE TENNESSEE VALLEY



## Stories of Bravery & Beyond

### Honoring our Military Heroes

The Selective Service Act of Oct. 1940 was actually the nation's first peacetime draft, so in Feb. 1941, Dad got his "Greetings" notice and within days was aboard a troop train, off to basic training at Ft. Benning, GA.

Also in this issue: **The Whiskey War**

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*Domie Lewter*  
*Mae Lewter*

# A Quiet Hero

by Ken Owens

My Dad, I'm proud to say, was Lt. Col. Charles F. Owens, a decorated veteran and a career military man with the U.S. Army, whose career spanned two wars and three continents.

I'm betting he didn't initially plan it that way, though. In 1941, well before the U.S. became involved in World War II, Dad was a normal, 24-year-old fun loving guy, living at home with his mom in Brooklyn, NY, and holding down his job as bartender at the Hotel Taft in New York City. His dad died a few years earlier, widowing his mother, so the burden was on him and his 3 brothers to make ends meet for the family.

The Selective Service Act of Oct. 1940 was actually the nation's first peacetime draft, so in Feb. 1941, Dad got his "Greetings" notice and within days was aboard a troop train, off to basic training at Ft. Benning, GA.

After basic, Dad was assigned to the 4th Infantry Div., 29th Field Artillery, at Camp

Gordon, GA, for specialized training in artillery and transportation. Showing above average ability, he was quickly promoted to corporal, then "buck" sergeant, all within 6 months. To Dad, all this was a bit overwhelming, because he couldn't see why he was any different from the other soldiers and singled out for promotions. In fact, when he was promoted to sergeant, he avoided putting the stripes on his uniform until his CO finally told him, "Owens, either get those stripes sewn on your uniform, or lose them!" Needless to say, the stripes were on in record time.

In July 1942, Dad was recommended by his CO for Officer Candidate School, which he attended at Ft. Sill, OK. After graduation in Oct. 1942, he was commissioned as a 2nd Lt., and was now officially a "90 Day Wonder". His assignment was the 78th Infantry ("Lightning") Division, 903rd Field Artillery Btn., at Camp Butner, NC. His specialty was the 105 mm howitzer. In March 1944, Dad earned his promotion to 1st Lt.

The Division, and Dad's unit, continued their intensive training and maneuvers until early 1944, when the 78th was relocated to Camp Pickett, VA. Everyone knew this was the final step before deployment to Europe. And sure enough, in Oct. 1944, Dad was aboard ship in a convoy headed for France.

When Dad arrived at the European Theater, the situation

**"Pay attention to the car that is in front of the car that's behind you!"**

**Buddy Esslinger**



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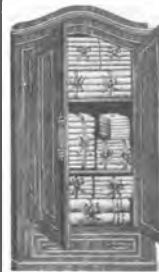
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there was convoluted. Much of the Third Reich was already crumbling, and Allied forces were pushing (or attempting to push) their way into Germany. But the Germans had plenty of fight and some major surprises left in them for the Allies.

The German offensives late in the war were more vicious because the Wehrmacht was desperately fighting to defend their homeland. Dad's outfit saw a number of these fights, including action in the Hurtgen Forest and the Ardennes, engagements near the Siegfried Line at the towns of Schmidt, Lammersdorf and Kesternich. His outfit was among the first of the artillery batteries at the Remagen Bridge, crossing the Rhine into Germany.

Dad was able to meet up with 2 of his 3 brothers during this time, all of who were also in the service. He saw Joe, an Army Engineer, at Remagen and Jim, an Army MP, at Honef. The meetings were brief, but welcomed. (Dad's third brother, Richard, was in the Navy and had recently been badly injured

in the Pacific theater, but later fully recovered.)

In 1945, Dad was awarded the Bronze Star medal.

Toward the end of the war, with all German towns surrendering, two major problems cropped up: Too much idle time for the troops and fraternization. At first, strict non-fraternization regulations were implemented, but were later relaxed. Increased drills and training partially helped the first problem.

In March 1946, Dad was assigned to the 778th Ordnance Company and stationed in Berlin. Aside from the strained relationship with the Russian troops, Dad said the biggest problem was the black market. So many people were involved, both civilian and military, that

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it was virtually out of control.

While a patient at a hospital in Berlin, Dad met Mom.... a young German doctor working for the Army. They hit it off, and in 1947 Mom came to the U.S.. They were married in Dad's neighborhood in Brooklyn, NY.

Dad had another big decision to make in 1947. He was honorably discharged from the Army, and had already secured a job working for the City of New York. The military had treated him well; he foresaw a good future for himself and his family with the Army. So, in July of 1948, he volunteered for recall to active duty with the rank of Captain, was accepted, and assigned to the 9th Infantry Training Division at Ft. Dix, NJ.

His job at Ft. Dix was training new recruits, but it wasn't long before another international conflict erupted: Korea. Dad's experience in artillery and munitions got him assigned, in 1950, as the CO at the U.S. Ammunition Depot at Sasebo, Japan. Although stationed in Japan, he made trips to "hot zones" in Korea to logistically plan and forecast ammunition and artillery needs for the U.N. forces.

The family joined Dad at his new assignment in Yokohama in 1952, when peace talks in Korea looked like they might pan out. His assignment in Japan ended in July 1953 and we returned to the US, this time to the Ordnance Ammunition Center in Joliet, IL. In September 1953, Dad was awarded the Oak Leaf Cluster for his Bronze Star Medal, due to his accomplish-

ments in Korea.

After Joliet and one more brief assignment at Aberdeen Proving Grounds, MD, Dad's orders came through in Nov. 1956 to report to Kaiserslautern, Germany, as the Supply Officer for the 57th Ordnance Group. Once again, the family was privileged to accompany him. I always felt this was the trip of a lifetime. In 1957, Dad was promoted to Major and his assignment ended in Oct. 1959. Next stop: Redstone Arsenal, AL!

Standard military ocean transportation for our return trip was not available, for some reason, so we left Bremerhaven, Germany, aboard one of the most luxurious ocean liners of the day: the SS United States. The week's journey across the Atlantic was nothing short of a fairy tale.

Dad's assignment at Redstone was with the U.S. Ordnance Missile Command, right

at the time when the area was heating up with missile defense and space exploration activities. These projects were all so important that they prompted 2 visits by President John F. Kennedy: one in 1960, and again in 1962. Dad was present for both visits.

The year 1962 also marked Dad's retirement, in August.

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We all attended the ceremony at the Redstone parade grounds, when Dad was promoted to Lt. Colonel and awarded the Army Commendation Medal before his departure.

Now was the time for a huge decision. Dad had to weigh out what to do next. Find a job, of course... but where? Serious geographic contenders included Arizona, Louisiana and even New York. Thankfully, though, after careful consideration, Dad and Mom decided to stay in Huntsville. And the rest, as they say, is history.

Dad secured a good position in the Quality Assurance Division of Thiokol Chemical Corp. at Redstone Arsenal. There he stayed for another 20 years, retiring in 1983.

At age 92, Dad died in Feb. of 2009. It was one of the saddest days of my life. Most of who I am, what I am, I owe to Dad. He never "pushed" the military on me, just because it was the best route for him. I recall how concerned he was for me during the sixties, when Viet Nam occupied most of the headlines.

Looking back on it, I see why he became upset when I got poor grades early on in college: He was looking out for me, because I was 18 and too stupid to look out for myself. Fortunately for me, though, the light finally came on, and I straightened up.

I've talked with a lot of veterans, many of them World War II veterans, and without exception, they share one amazing trait: They never brag. In fact, if heroics are ever the topic of conversation, they will never take the credit... it's always someone else who deserves it.

Dad never talked much about his war experiences, and when he did, it wasn't a long conversation. All I know is they don't hand out Bronze Star Medals (and in Dad's case, with Oak Leaf Cluster) for just showing up.

But that's a veteran for you. And that's why you'll always see a flag flying at my house, Veterans Day or any other day, for my Dad and all the other veterans, past and present, who did so very much for all the rest of us.

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# ANGELICA WILHELM

(Taken from "The Village Voice", a former magazine of Redstone Village Retirement Community in Huntsville, AL)

Angelica Wilhelm was born in New Jersey, but grew up in west Texas, just below Dallas. One event she remembers from her early days in San Angelo, TX was at the end of WWI. One evening in the downtown area it looked as if the entire small city was on fire - flames were shooting into the sky. It turned out that the city residents were celebrating the end of the war with a huge bonfire on Main Street and Angelica was ten years old.

Her parents married in 1904 in New York, her father was English Canadian and her mother was Danish. Angelica was the oldest of five children. Her father was an optometrist and had a business in San Angelo. Angelica was the designated babysitter as the oldest in her family. They lived 10 years in San Angelo, then moved to

New York in 1924.

She remembers at that time she would see women sitting on the sidewalk in front of Grand Central Station, with boxes on their feet to keep them warm. They were selling apples for a nickel each in order to make money for their families.

Angelica went to business school and began working for McFadden Publications in 1926. When she met her husband Frank, she was visiting a friend's home and Frank was immediately smitten with her.

They married in 1933, during the time the Conservation Corps were going strong. They didn't have children but always had lots of pets, and lived in Greenwich Village, NY for years.

While living there in a brownstone Angelica remembers several nights when she would hear fighting down below. One night she remembers a woman in a top floor flat throwing a bucket of water down on a couple of rowdy individuals below.

Frank got a job with Western Union and they moved to Westchester County in NY. In 1942 Frank was indoctrinated in the Navy and Angelica went to live with her mother. After the war

Frank took a job with Bendix and was relocated to Huntsville, they moved here in 1963. She remembers when she came ahead to find a place to live, she went into a store to get some boxes. The person behind the

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counter asked if she had heard that President Kennedy had been shot. She had not, but by the end of the day, he had died.

Angelica's mother and sister would visit Huntsville for the winter months. When she was in her nineties Angelica's mother would go to the local nursing homes in New York and take crochet and knitting needles with her. She would see ladies just sitting in their wheelchairs and ask them why they were just sitting there doing nothing? Why didn't they do something with their time and start knitting? She would teach these ladies how to knit.

In fact, Angelica's mother knitted up to the time her eyes gave out, but then she would take a ball of yarn and a wire hanger and just wrap each hanger with yarn to make padded hangers. She would put them together in packs of five

and give them away.

Frank died 10 years after their arrival here in Huntsville, in 1972, of cancer. Her mother died in 1989, at age 104. Angelica first heard about Redstone Village about 12 years ago and moved here in May of 2005. She said at that time she certainly had to get rid of a lot of items, but enjoys her life and friends very much.

On May 14 Angelica will reach 108 years old. A beautiful lady, inside and out, who still walks as much as she can for exercise and fresh air. She loves her friends at Redstone Village and looks forward to each and every day.

**"There's so much pollen in the air now that if it weren't for our lungs, there'd be no place to put it all."**

**Robert Roben**

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# Our Military Heroes

Editors Note: The veterans' stories that you will read in the rest of this issue have been written by writers of the Star Market Writers Group. They interviewed Vets at Tut Fann Veterans home, as well as their own relatives for these stories. We so appreciate the hard work that went into this.

\*\*\*\*\*

We writers are a bit off center. We sometimes take comfort in knowing we are not alone. So around 2007, a group of us met at The Coffee Tree across from Grissom High on Bailey Cove Road. We read our stories to each other, serving them up to be critiqued. We enjoyed every flavor of coffee known in the universe. There were other groups meeting there. We shared Thursdays with wood carvers. I'm sure they loved their solitude and didn't care for our boisterous readings that carried across the store. The banjo pickers, who were there for our Tuesday meetings, weren't so shy. Those Earl Scruggs wannabes plucked away while we struggled to be heard.

Kitty and Tom, before health issues sidelined him, were gracious hosts who always

treated us well. Sadly, The Coffee Tree closed in 2013. We moved a few blocks south to a fabulous new spot, the Star Market at Bailey Cove and Weatherly.

Every 2nd Tuesday and 4th Thursday, we read our pieces aloud. We correct each other; we suggest changes; we encourage. We have had members self-publish. Legacy publishers have put a couple of us on the market. One or two have found agents. Our members have been published in poetry journals, literary magazines and anthologies. We have all, published and unpublished, become friends.

The Star Market has welcomed us to their community room with open arms. The market has fabulous food in the deli and the dessert bar. If you have a story to tell, please join us. We appreciate our member Steve Gierhart's work on the projects you are about to read.

**James Frost, President,  
Star Market Writers Group**



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# Maynard Clifton Pless



by Leo Larkin

I first met Cliff when our musical group, the Classical-Country Connection, played at the First United Methodist Church. We were engaged to entertain at his 80th birthday party and later, for his lady friend's birthday. Cliff informed us that he had the friend's grandson, Danny, and his wife secretly flown in from Wisconsin. We were to play "Danny Boy" when they came through the door of the Hilton ballroom. It was then that I got a glimpse into Cliff's heart. We became friends with this special couple.

Cliff was born in Camp Hill, AL on October 4, 1922, the 4th of 11 children. His father was a United Methodist Minister serving the North Alabama Conference. In 1936 he pastored in the Meridianville, Hazel Green and State Line charge. For Cliff, "there were too many people in that house and I had to get out of there." He joined the Navy the day after he turned 18.

After boot camp in Norfolk, VA, he was assigned to the USS Mustin, a one-stack destroyer, as a machinist in the engine

room. His pay was \$21 a month. Although the Mustin was part of the Pacific Fleet, it was assigned to the Atlantic for two or three months to chase Hitler's submarines which were sinking many of our ships. Cliff thinks they managed to sink one of their subs. Cliff's greatest fear was to be captured. He knew that he would risk his life to prevent that from happening.

While on a tour of duty on the gunboat, USS Plymouth, a fellow sailor, assigned to go to submarine school, asked Cliff to swap with him. Cliff tried to talk him out of it, but his friend was involved with a woman. Cliff told me, "You

know how it is when a man gets a woman on his mind." So Cliff finally agreed. The USS Plymouth was later sunk and his friend perished. That could have been him in that watery grave and it haunted him.

Cliff served on landing crafts and gunboats at invasions of the Gilbert, Kwajalein and other Marshall Islands. Once his gun-

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boat developed a major leak around one of the propeller shafts. He made his way to the bearing assembly to tighten it up and stop the leak. He recollects that he had a fear of drowning and made his way back up a ladder and through the only opening to the engine room...fast!

The most heartrending part of his service was in Korean waters where he was a crew member of another gunboat. Their task was to recover the bodies of fellow sailors from the water among the islands. North Korean guns were picking them off, one or two a day. The ship was too small to hold all of the deceased, so Cliff's assignment was to weight the bodies down and sink them.

I asked if there was a ceremony for the burial at sea and he said no, that sometimes he said a few words and sometimes not. He was also on a minesweeper, going up the straits between the islands and clearing the mines for the larger cruisers to attack. The Koreans would go behind them and set up more mines which had to be swept on the way back. The suspense was frightful and torturous. The temperature was below zero with fierce winds. Cliff's last assignment was on a Navy aviation repair ship.

Cliff's enlistment wasn't all entirely grim. While in Norfolk, after being in sickbay for a few days, he had the afternoon off and was walking around sight-seeing. He saw two women sitting outside of a cafe. One was an old girlfriend. He stopped to talk and the girl introduced her mother to him. They talked him into going inside to eat and he knew he only had 35 cents in his pocket. They sat at a table and he excused himself to go to the restroom. He didn't know how he was going to get out of this jam! When he got inside the restroom, workmen there had taken down the outside wall. Cliff stepped outside and just kept walking.

Seven years later, he passed that same restaurant and was amused by the thought of them still in there, waiting for him.

Cliff had enlisted for 6 years. He "re-upped" for the bonus when that tour ended and continued to do this until he had accumulated 23 years of service. He was discharged in 1963 as a Chief Engine man. When he left the Navy, he worked for the Eugene, Oregon Water and Electric Board and was in charge of the reservoir as a hydroelectric engineer and surveyor.

Of the eleven children in his family, three brothers served in the Navy and one in the Marines. One sister was an Army nurse who served on the battlefields and ministered to Holocaust survivors. All made it home safely.

Cliff was married to his sweetheart, Lorraine, for 46 years. They did not have any children. Upon



her death, he brought her to Huntsville for burial in Maple Hill Cemetery and returned to Oregon to work. Upon retirement, he settled in Huntsville to be near family. Two sisters reside in Madison County; and brothers are in Michigan, Georgia and Florida.

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## JFK Remembers a Huntsville Soldier and His Family

### A Story from Bobby Hayden

by Steve Gierhart

Bill Cosby said "My children love my mother. I tell them that is not the same woman I grew up with. That's an old woman trying to get into heaven."

My mom, Fannie Battle Hayden, was a little like that, but also like that benevolent emperor, Augustus Caesar. She knew when to be kind but also when to cut a head off. Momma often said "This is not a democracy; this is a dictatorship."

I guess in the long run, she knew best. I've had a remarkable life. Luck certainly entered into it, but I know she helped me get there.

Back before many of my color were given the same opportunities as others, I was an angry young man, but Fannie helped guide that constructively. I was drafted into the United States Army on January 2, 1961. I was student teaching at the time and about to graduate from Alabama A&M. My mom worked in the cafeteria there, so I had to be on my best behavior. Couldn't get away from her, even by going to college, that being a rare feat for black men of my time.

I thought my future was in the

classroom, not in the White House with JFK where I ended up in June, 1962. I was one of the first group of black men in the Army's Old Guard, the 3rd Regiment out of Ft. Myers, Virginia.

That's a long story, too much for this little flashback, so I want to tell about an event that involved my momma, one after my assignment to the Honor Guard for President John F. Kennedy. It shows how that fine president watched over those who watched over him.

I had been with the Old Guard for a few months and knew the routine. I had gotten here by circuitous route and an impossible set of odds, but when my mom found out about my new assignment, she quickly told me "Do your job and keep your mouth shut!" That was good advice for someone like me. After all, it was my firecracker emotion that could have gotten me a lot worse and sometimes did. It was also the reason I was with the Old Guard, though not before a lot of pushups handed out by my superiors at Ft. Chaffee where I was assigned before the White House.

On May 17, 1963 I was shining my ten pairs of shoes that matched my ten uniforms, something that had to be done every day if I was to pass inspection. I was

actually much happier here than at Ft. Chaffee. I had taken momma's advice and worked hard to prove her right although I also admit to a desire to prove those wrong that thought I would never make it in Washington.

I was interrupted by Sgt. Eldridge Johnson, my white staff sergeant, who had a note from the president's office. I was to report the next morning to Andrews AFB for duty aboard Air Force One. Sgt. Johnson, who called me "Bama", did not know the reason, but I was excited regardless. I discovered that none of my African-American buddies in our Magnificent Seven, the seven first black initiates into the presidential honor guard, were assigned to the trip. So I did not find out until the morning that I was to go to Huntsville where the President was giving an Armed Forces Day speech at Redstone Arsenal. I thought to myself, "Wow, if I can only call momma while I'm there!"

It was peculiar, but I did not have to report in my dress blues,



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my normal uniform for White House duty, but I had brought them for a quick change as necessary. The informality of the assignment was also odd. I was not a friend of the president or anything. Wasn't my job. The flight was uneventful if not fulfilling. I arrived jittery with excitement. Of course, I did not disembark with the presidential party, but after the pomp and circumstance had fled the scene, I deplaned to find a staff car and driver had been assigned to me personally. And the driver was told to take me to Alabama A&M where I was to visit with momma!

I arrived at A&M and went directly to the cafeteria. I managed to sneak in and walked up behind Fannie without her noticing me. I put my hands around her eyes and asked her to "guess who." Of course, she knew, but her expression was one I will never forget. She brightened up like the sun shining off of a field of daisies, because she and I both knew her hard work and perseverance had paid off. She turned around and we hugged for what seemed like an eternity, but in a serene way, happiness that was to be savored for more than a moment. Then the

party started.

The word spread around campus. Even A&M Vice President Leander Patton heard about the commotion. He let out classes and before momma and I knew it, we were surrounded by friends and students. Mr. Patton, who headed up business and finance for the university and for whom I had worked as a student, came up to me and shook my hand, but with a huge smile asked "Why are you goofing off and are you AWOL?"

I took it all in stride, but I was very happy, especially for momma who, though well-respected in the university community, enjoyed the extra attention brought on by her son's assignment to such a prestigious position. It also demonstrated the kindness and attention to detail that the president had for the members of his honor guard.

I spent about four hours at A&M while the president gave his speech, but I knew that while John Fitzgerald Kennedy had already earned my respect, he now won my heart along with my allegiance. I had been made to feel special by a special president. It was a day neither my mom or I would ever forget.

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# SHOOTING MARBLES

by Malcolm Miller

When I was in grammar school many years ago, one of the favorite games for boys was marbles. We called it "shooting marbles." In order to shoot the marble you placed it on top of your thumb and thumped it over your index finger.

There were two main games we played. One was where we drew a large circle in the dirt and each player put an equal amount of marbles in the center of the circle. Then we drew a straight line off to the side, walked off so many paces and pitched a marble at the line. The boy coming closest to the line got to shoot first and the next closest shot next till every one got a shot. Naturally getting the first shot was a big advantage because a real good marble shooter could clean out all the marbles. If you knocked at least one marble out each time you could keep on shooting until you missed.

One important asset in shooting marbles was to have a good taw, that's what we called the marble used for shooting. If possible you wanted to use a large marble that was very hard, called a stoner. You got to keep all the marbles that you knocked out of the ring but you would give them back to the owners after the game; that is unless you were playing for keeps. The "for keeps" practice

was frowned on by the teachers and most parents. However rules are made to be broken and some of the bigger boys would win so many marbles that they would have their pockets bulging with large tobacco sacks full of marbles won off the lesser skilled shooters.

One other marble game that we played back then was called "Roley Holey." In this game three holes were dug in a straight line about two feet apart. The shooter had to shoot his marble into each hole without missing, then hit his opponent's marble on the far end. The loser in this game was very unfortunate as he was required to put his knuckles on the ground and let the winner shoot at them. This of course could be the cause of a lot of bruised knuckles.

I suppose one reason the marble games died out over the years was there was really no good place to play the game. Back then we primarily used the outdoor basketball courts and if we played at home we would simply scrape off all the grass on a spot in the yard. The main reason the sport died out I suppose is that there got to be more and more things for kids

to do with their time. With TV, video games, computers and iPods kids have today, I am sure they wouldn't be interested in shooting marbles.

Therefore, the game of marbles now only exists in the memories of those days long ago by those of us who wore the knees out of a many a pair of overalls shooting that favorite stoner and cleaning out the ring.

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"I'd consider hormone replacement therapy, but I've got a bunch of other things that need to be replaced first."

Maxine



# Eggplant, Anyone?

by Don Broome

Always an avid reader of Mother Earth News and other such magazines, my wife and I decided to have a big garden. With 5 kids to feed it would be nice to have fresh veggies and save money on the grocery bill. I had read an article in Southern Living about using raised beds for planting and how it saves on water and is easier to weed.

Getting 5 kids to help prepare the space was quite a challenge but we finally got it the way we wanted it. We raised the beds about a foot and packed the sides, put newspaper and grass clipping on the sides and in the isles to keep down weeding and were ready to plant. We had actually gotten the kids (well most anyway) to like the idea of growing our own food at home.

We bought tomato plants, we planted green beans, cucumbers, okra and several other selections and everyone was happy until my wife insisted on a six-pack of eggplant plants. Now I don't mind okra as long as it isn't boiled but with eggplant, I put my foot down. Gentleman's agreement between husband and wife meant that the kids may get eggplant but hubby will be at my bro's house that night.

The garden progressed and soon one daughter was going and picking her daily cuke for a salad and we had a steady stream of tomatoes and green beans. In fact, there was a surplus of everything; except the eggplant. It wasn't that they didn't produce any but they would disappear about the time that my wife was ready to pick it. We surmised that we had a problem with rabbits and we watched the garden often in hopes of seeing it, to no avail.

Late summer and the garden is slowing down, I put ammonium nitrate around all the plants and everything freshened and starting producing all over again. The kids asked me not to "freshen the eggplants" and I didn't.

When it came time to clean up the garden we had an abundance of veggies and my wife was visiting with the people who lived behind us. She offered to share some of our surplus with them. The lady thanked my wife and said that the kids had been generous all sum-

mer giving them tomatoes, okra and a whole bunch of eggplant. In fact they had been given so much eggplant that they had shared some of their bounty with friends.

That evening my wife went to the grocery store and bought eggplants. Guess what we had every night for a week. My wife said my brother was invited. The truth is I didn't know anything about what the kids were doing but it didn't help, my bro was still invited.

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# Heard On the Street

by *Cathey Carney*

We had a Photo of the Month winner for April - the pretty little girl who hasn't really changed a bit was **Eleanor Holmberg Keith**. The astute lady who recognized her and was the first caller was **Dr. Mary Jane Caylor**, who started teaching at East Clinton school in 1962. Mary Jane worked as Huntsville City Schools Superintendent from 1982-1991, then went to the Alabama State Board of Education and served for four terms (1995-2011). During recent years she was also with Big Spring Partners for 7 years and worked very hard to bring the Veterans Memorial to Huntsville. Congratulations!

There must have been hundreds of people who called telling me where the Easter egg was hidden in the April issue. So obviously I'm going to have to do a MUCH better job of hiding the **long-stemmed rose** that is hidden somewhere in the this issue that you're looking at, the May issue. If you think you have found it, call me at 256.534.0502 and you win a year of "Old Huntsville"!

Anyway, the first caller with the correct info was **Terry Webb**, a retired postal worker (31 years) who is married to his best friend **Rosemarie**. Terry lives in Toney and told me that he thinks he's a far



off cousin of **Louie Tippett**, who is at the bottom of the next page! Congratulations to Terry!

Last month I put the little egg on page 17, in Heart of Dixie Popcorn ad, because I know **Buddy Darwin** would have loved that.

A special hello to our friends **Kathy and Frank Ogle**. They are the sweetest couple, have been in love since the day they met, and we hope all is going well for them.

I was SO sorry to hear of the death of **Mrs. Minneola Dixon**. She was one of Tom's favorite research people who gave him so much information from the Oakwood University library. She was at Oakwood for nearly 40 years. A wonderful historian, a kind lady and she had so many friends who thought the world of her. She leaves her three siblings; **Bettie Marve, Ruth Jones (Melvin) and Alpha Dabney (Daisy)**. Her children are **Philip (Cheryl), Dwayne, Denise and Mark Williams (Leslie)** and her step-children **Donald Dixon (Lennie) and Gwendolyn Dixon** with grandchildren and

great grandchildren who will miss her every day.

**Rosemary Leatherwood**, who owns Ole Dad's BBQ in Hazel Green, wants to wish her sweet husband **Billy Leatherwood** a Happy Birthday on May 2nd. I hope it's a happy one and there is lots of partying going on!

**Robert Madison** is just a miracle to me - he was one of the last friends to see my sweetie **Tom** at home before he had to go to the hospital 3 years ago with lung cancer. Robert was fighting liver cancer back then. Robert is still doing well and the doctors and staff at Clearview Cancer Institute think the world of him!

**Brad Travis and Mark Thornhill**, both working for Channel 48 WAFF (Brad is weather and Mark is evening anchor) both had birthdays in late April and I watch them every night before I go to bed - Happy Birthdays to both of you!

Many have met **Doc (Darwin) Overholt** who oversees the Downtown Rescue Mission, but I'll bet not many know that he will be celebrating his 18th anniversary at the Mission. He has done amazing work there for people who really need his services and is one of the kindest people I know.

## Photo of The Month

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

Call (256) 534-0502

Hint: This little girl grew up to have 8 children, knows everyone in town and is a great bargain hunter.



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I heard recently that **Stella & Jimmie Musick** just celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary on April 9. Congratulations you lovebirds!

**Mike Kaylor's** sweet wife **Jennie** sure put a good hint out there recently. She said she had swapped out her winter clothes and woke up one morning to put on her summer robe. She got bit by a wasp that was in one of the sleeves! OUCH! She put that bug out of its misery but think about it - there could be spiders (brown recluse, black widows) who could have overwintered in some of your clothes and are still in there when you put them on! Probably a good idea to wash everything before you wear it, even tho it takes some time. I know I will!

It's always good to work with **Jermaine Fletcher**, Personal Banker at the So. Pkwy. branch of Wells Fargo. He is so professional and really knowledgeable and took care of what I needed in a very short time. He wanted to send love to his grandma who has been under the weather lately, **Myrtle Jacobs** (of Birmingham). Jermaine's sweet wife is **Ayrian Fletcher** and they have a beautiful 4 year old girl, **Caylin**, with their home in Toney, AL.

Loved meeting and getting to know the ladies behind the popular magazine "Life on the Water." **Christy Martin** is the Publisher/Editor, **Betty Boyd** is the Research & Staff Writer and **Melissa Blank** takes those gorgeous pictures. We in this area are just about surrounded by water everywhere so they have lots of good stories to draw from.

There is a good music event going on May 25 at the Monte Sano Pool that sounds like it'll be lots of fun. It goes from 2-5 in the afternoon of the 25th and for non-members of the pool the charge is only \$5. Keep tuned to the Go section of the Times, they'll tell us more about it.

A special Happy Birthday to **Lucy Gainer**, who turned 88 in early April! A lady whose friends just treasure her.

It was amazing to meet the 2013-14 President of the Kiwanis Clubs International - **Gunter Gasser of Austria** was in Huntsville for a meeting with special presentations of the Hixson Award. Two of the award winners were **Margaret Watson** of Five Points and **Ray Weinburg**, currently a member of the Golden K Kiwanis. Congratulations to all the winners. President Gasser was very impressed with Huntsville and thought it was a beautiful city.

At a Golden K meeting recently **Casey Wardynski** was the featured speaker and he came prepared with slides and information about the progress that has been made with our school system. It was just amazing. No wonder he is so respected across the country.

Everyone at some time or the other has taken their kids or grandkids to **Southerland Station** on Governors to play with the huge train set at the center of the store. It has flashing lights, multiple bridges, levels of tracks, several trains, horns - just a kids paradise. Kids could stand on a wooden platform and push buttons for bells, whistles, waving Santas, fog horns, and it was a standing

tradition. **Dick Metzger** and his daughter **Holly Butler** recently took it apart in preparation for Dick's retirement. After 20 years in the current location, the store has moved to the Whitesburg Drive location that was formerly the site of **Shaver's Books**. Dick's son-in-law **Lowell Skidmore** & family will now manage the new location. Congratulations Dick on many successful years and a great retirement to you!

Those of you who are still lucky enough to have your Mamas, give them a big hug this **Mothers Day** cause there are so many out there who wish they still could hug & kiss their moms.

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## Sweeten Up Your Mom

*Even you gents can try your hand at these easy sweets*

### Almond Toffee Triangles

- 1/2 c. packed brown sugar
- 2/3 c. butter, softened
- 1/2 c. light corn syrup
- 1 egg
- 1 t. vanilla extract
- 2 c. plain flour
- 1/4 t. salt

Heat oven to 300 degrees. Grease a 9x13 inch pan. Mix brown sugar, butter, corn syrup, egg and vanilla. Stir in the flour and salt. Spread dough in the pan, bake til light golden brown - about 16 minutes.

#### Topping:

- 1/3 c. packed brown sugar
- 1/3 c. light corn syrup
- 1/4 c. butter, softened
- 1/4 c. whipping cream
- 1 t. vanilla extract
- 1 c. sliced almonds, toasted

Prepare topping by mixing all together and pour over the baked layer, spread out evenly. Bake til light brown and set, maybe 18 minutes. Cool and cut into squares. Cut each square in half diagonally.

### Chocolate Nut Truffles

- 1 c. Eagle Brand condensed milk
- 4 oz. chocolate chips
- 2-1/2 c. powdered sugar
- 1 t. vanilla extract
- 1 c. chopped nuts

Melt chocolate on top of a double broiler or in the microwave. Add the milk, let it cook 2-3 minutes, stirring constantly. Remove from heat, add sugar and blend thoroughly. Add vanilla & nuts. Shape into balls.

### Hazelnut Butter Crunch

- 1/2 c. plain flour
- 1/3 c. chopped hazelnuts
- 1/4 c. packed brown sugar
- 1/4 c. butter

Mix all til crumbly, distribute evenly in ungreased 13 x 9" pan. Bake at 400 degrees til golden brown, 7 to 10 minutes. Stir and cool. Store in covered container.

### Melt-In-Your Mouth Nut Balls

- 2 sticks butter, softened
- 5 T. powdered sugar, plus extra for coating
- 2 c. plain flour
- 2 t. vanilla extract
- 1 c. chopped pecans.

Mix all ingredients in a

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bowl, in order listed. Roll into balls the size of large marbles, bake at 325 degrees for about 25 minutes. Check to make sure they don't burn. While still hot, roll balls in a dish of powdered sugar. YUMMM!

### Baked Pineapple Tapioca

- 2 c. canned crushed pineapple with 1/2 c. of the juice
- 2 T. quick cooking Tapioca
- 1/4 t. lemon extract
- 1/4 t. ground cinnamon
- 3/4 c. hot water
- 8 t. sugar

In a 1 quart casserole combine all ingredients. Mix well and let stand for 10 minutes. Bake at 325 degrees, uncovered, for 40 minutes and the tapioca granules are clear. This is good hot or cold.

### Chocolate Heaven Bars

- 1 c. graham cracker crumbs
- 1/2 c. butter, melted
- 12 oz. chocolate chips
- 1/2 c. chopped walnuts
- 1 can Eagle Brand sweetened condensed milk
- 12 oz. butterscotch chips
- 6 oz. flaked coconut

Spray a 13 x 9" pan with butter spray. Mix the graham cracker crumbs and butter, press into the bottom of the pan.

Layer the chocolate chips, sprinkle with 1/2 of the condensed milk, then a layer of

walnuts, a layer of butterscotch chips, the rest of the condensed milk and top with the coconut. Bake at 350 degrees for 30 minutes. This is really decadent.

### Cinnamon Apple Nut Cake

- 1-1/2 c. vegetable oil
- 2 c. sugar
- 2 eggs
- 3 c. finely chopped peeled apples
- 1/2 c. golden raisins
- 1/2 c. chopped walnuts
- 1 c. chopped pecans
- 1-1/2 t. ground cinnamon
- 2-3/4 c. self-rising flour

Combine oil, sugar and eggs, then add remaining ingredients. Pour into greased loaf pan. Cook one hour at 325 degrees. Try this hot with home-made vanilla ice cream or whipped topping.

### Sweet Chew Cakes

- 1 box brown sugar
- 1 stick butter
- 1 t. vanilla extract
- 3 eggs
- 2 c. self-rising flour
- 1-1/2 c. pecans, chopped

Melt sugar and butter together in a saucepan. Mix well and add the nuts. Batter will be stiff.

Pour into a greased oblong 9x13" pan. Bake at 325 degrees for 20-30 minutes. Cut into squares when ready to serve. These will disappear quickly!



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# The Grace Club

## Grace Walker's Zealous Work

by Linda Wright Riley

The Grace Club will celebrate its 100th birthday on May 8, 2014 at the Huntsville Art Museum. Members and their guests at the Centennial Tea will see displayed from the museum's collection a portrait of Miss Grace T. Walker (1866-1952) in tribute to her early sponsorship of the organization. Miss Walker's zealous work in our city during the early 1900s helped to spark the Grace Club into existence. This is how it happened.

Several years before the Grace Club was born, Miss Grace T. Walker came to Huntsville in 1899 with a tall mission. She was employed by the family of American inventor Cyrus McCormick to acquire a residence for his invalid 44-year old daughter, Mary Virginia McCormick. Miss Walker chose a Victorian mansion named "Kildare," located in northeast Huntsville on Oakwood Avenue, built in 1887 by Michael O'Shaughnessy. Once it was purchased, Miss Walker swiftly prepared the seasonal home to suit the new owner and began to oversee its resident staff of 24 who would serve the wealthy heiress.

Beyond administering a household, Miss Walker took an avid interest in the people of Huntsville. For over 3 decades, she performed countless small charities on behalf of Virginia. Living a mile outside of the town and near the mill districts, Miss Walker ensured that the McCormick doorstep never tired of the poor's requests for food, clothing, medicine, or transportation. She kept meticulous records of all such gifts, but her charitable gaze spanned far wider than this.

Endowed with the spirit of McCormick philanthropy, Miss Walker pursued the community's greater needs, always with the interest of Virginia who, though unable to manage her own business affairs, had a very compassionate personality and desire to help the needy. So Miss Walker investigated local problems, especially ones brought to Kildare by the people themselves: "Our teenage boys are ruining themselves with whiskey;" "Our colored people can't get hospital care;" "Our mill families lack running water."

When Miss Walker met with the area's civic, business and church leaders she gained from them agreement to participate in the solutions. This being done, she heartily detailed her recommendations to the trustees of Virginia's estate. Most of her recommendations were well taken. Virginia's mother, Nettie Fowler McCormick and sister, Anita McCormick Blaine, made occasional trips to the Tennessee Valley to see for themselves

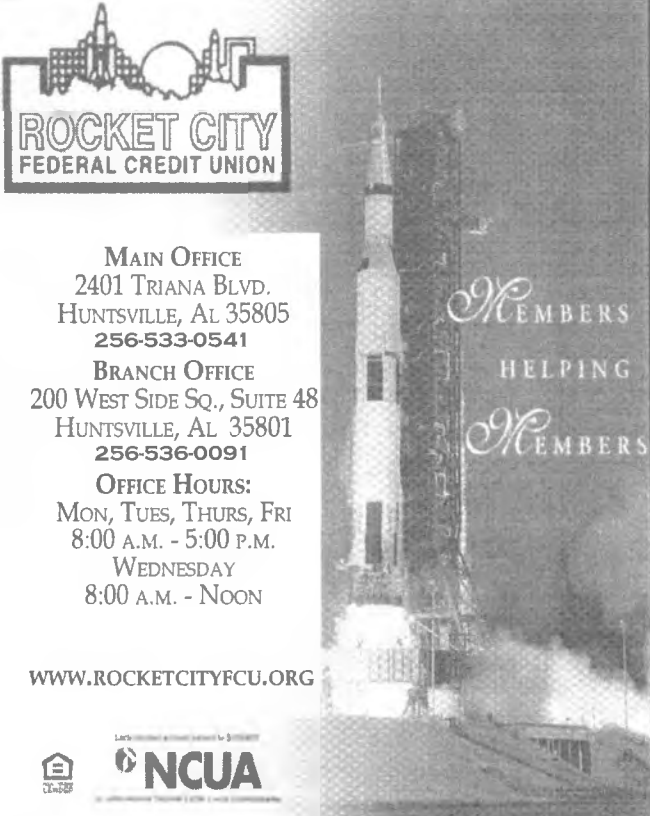


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**Miss Grace T. Walker**

and even received callers from Huntsville in Chicago. But the pioneer of the projects was Grace Walker. And for Huntsville she envisioned and realized:

- 3 new YMCAs (Central, West Huntsville, Abingdon) constructed in 1912, 1915 and 1916 to provide wholesome recreation to young men and opportunities for ladies' auxiliaries to serve.

- Improvements to the City Infirmary, followed by the construction of a new Huntsville City Hospital, and the Virginia McCormick Hospital in Normal, Alabama—all conditioned upon providing medical care to African Americans (1911-1926).

- "Virginia Hall" an educational building for the West Huntsville Christian Settlement, a work of the First Presbyterian

Church, to whom Miss McCormick belonged. The settlement benefited mill district families (1902-1921).

- West Huntsville Public School on Ninth Avenue to benefit workers of three nearby mills. In 1916, Miss Virginia McCormick donated \$29,500 to this \$33,000 effort.

Notably, in 1914, Misses McCormick and Walker hosted a stay at Kildare by Mr. Owen Lovejoy, the General Secretary to the National Child Labor Committee and his investigative photographer, Mr. Lewis Hine. Afterwards, Lovejoy wrote to his hostesses:

"Let me assure you both that we shall do our best this year to try to bring to all the little factory children in Alabama, through a good child labor law and

improvement of the educational law, some of the advantages which your interest and generosity are providing for the little children of Huntsville."

He had come to ask their help. Within a few weeks, his office received a \$1000 check (\$23,000 in today's dollars) with the request that Virginia be kept informed of his progress.

Though neither Virginia nor Grace ever married or raised their own families, they spoke to the future in another way. They embraced young people. They frequently invited children from the whole neighborhood—mill workers and owners alike—to Kildare for lavish celebrations. While the children danced around the maypole, or hunted for solid gold Easter eggs on the mansion's sprawling lawn, the amused company of adults watched. The two ladies became beloved "aunts" to many young people here and even provided some with a college education during the difficult war years.

Miss Walker also endeared herself to a group of socially





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prominent young ladies who in 1914 had formed the "Auxiliary of the YMCA #2" to assist in the activities of the local Y.M.C.A.

On May 20 of that year, the Huntsville Democrat reports that Miss Grace Walker invited these ladies to Kildare and entertained them with a "joyful springtime musical program." In their association with Miss Walker, the young women soon became acquainted with and responsive to the broader needs of their community and nation. They adopted a new name, "Grace Club," and sponsor, Miss Grace Walker. By 1917, the Grace Club actively supported World War I soldiers, Red Cross relief efforts, overseas orphans, anti-tuberculosis campaigns and numerous other local and global causes.

One of Grace Club's signature projects arose from this early period. In 1922 Miss Walker personally invested in a city-wide campaign by its church ministers to supply a "Vacation Bible School in every suburb of Huntsville so that every child might have an opportunity to attend." Mr. W. P. Dilworth offered space at his lumber yard for the North Church Street Bible School. When Miss Walker attended one of its morning exercises, she became intensely interested in the children and their welfare. As one Grace Club historian wrote:

"Before the close of the two weeks of the Bible School, the children had been given a quick check-over by Dr. Carl A. Grote, head of our health department; arrangements had been made with Mr. Dilworth to have a Sunday School at the lumber yard each Sunday afternoon; and the "dream of a community house for Church Street" had been born. There was no church or school in this locality, not even a room for a gathering place, and it was not uncommon to go into a home and find a little child of 5 or 6 years old feeding small brothers and sisters on cold bread dipped in water, all the older

members of the family having gone to work."

"With her usual enthusiasm, Miss Walker enlisted the support of the whole community for her project. A lot on North Church Street was leased from the Southern Railway, and plans were drawn for the 'community house.' It was to consist of 2 shower rooms, a kitchenette and a large assembly hall. The hall was to be equipped with chairs and a piano for Sunday and mid-week religious services, and on weekdays with small tables and chairs where the little children could come to a warmed room to be fed and cared for."

"But, as always, there was the question of finance. Many generous checks had been received, but not enough money was yet on hand. Miss Walker came to the Grace Club, laid her plans and dreams before us, and, thrilled by her faith in us, we voted to sponsor the financing of the building, and the drive for funds was on! Few in Huntsville escaped our calls, and none were neglected when it came to tickets or ads for our talent shows. But the building was finally completed, and Miss Jessie House became our first paid worker."

"In this, Miss Walker inspired the young club with a purpose. She shared her heart and own dollars to begin a good work and encouraged



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the ladies of the Grace Club to join in nurturing their hometown's forgotten children."

And so they did. The Grace Club and the Kiwanis Club built the Community Center on North Church Street which opened in 1923 and evolved over 20 years into the Grace Center (1943). It grew with the children: providing a kindergarten, a Sunday school, clubs for the boys, girls and women, and a place for neighborhood activities. In time, members of the Junior Grace Club (founded in 1934) and the Grace Club Auxiliary (1949) joined the efforts of their mothers in supplying whatever was needed at the Center: funding for its staff and facility, coal and kindling, homey furnishings, shoes, sweaters, medicine and eyeglasses for the children, Bible lessons, sewing and cooking classes, books and magazines, Christmas stockings, trips to Kildare parties and picnics, and weekly visits from interested club members. The Grace Center operated until the mid-50s when it was replaced by a day care center, the first public day care organization in Huntsville that lasted into the 1960s.

Grace Walker was pleased to see the long-term service to children rendered by the Grace Club. Her friendships with charter members of the club remained strong and her visits to Huntsville regular, even after she and Virginia sold Kildare in 1931 and moved to California. After one visit, she wrote to the club, "You are certainly raising the standard of living for these children and mothers and I congratulate you. You will probably never know how far your influence is felt. God bless you and give you power."

Blessed with many daughters, the Grace Club founded two organizations for them to become involved in civic and social activities. The Junior Grace Club for teenagers began in 1934 and is still active today. The Grace Club Auxiliary, for daughters ages 21-35, was founded in 1949. During the 1950s, the Grace Club Auxiliary built a new Rehabilitation Center for handicapped children, among many other projects. In the 1960s it joined the Grace Club in establishing a Volunteer Bureau that recruited thousands of volunteers to work for local civic and service organizations. On July 21, 1975, the Grace Club Auxiliary became a member of The Association of Junior Leagues, Inc.

Today the Grace Club is comprised of 55 members who continue to assist worthy civic or charitable enterprises. Since

1979, the club has also sponsored the "Grace Award" that every two years honors a Huntsville woman who has shown outstanding volunteerism over a lifetime. The 2013 Grace Award winner is Ms. Bobby Bradley who, with Ms. Gloria Batts, has co-founded the "Village of Promise," a nonprofit organization seeking to help children in northeast Huntsville gain academic and life skills necessary to break out of the cycle of generational poverty. Grace Walker would be very proud.





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# Almost Famous

by Tom Carney

It was an old dilapidated nightclub on Holmes Avenue in the 1940s. The air was thick with cigarette smoke and fumes of stale beer. There were only a few people sitting around the tables, bored to death, while on the small stage was an old gray-haired man, trying to coax one more song out of his memory, as his knurled fingers gently stroked the strings of a guitar.

The old man had been almost famous at one time. Years earlier he had been known as "Crying John," a name he had acquired because of his soulful renditions of the Blues. But with the new popularity of the radio, time had passed him by.

Now he was just another broken down old man, playing in clubs for whatever tips people might decide to give him.

No one really noticed the stranger when he slipped in the door and pulled up a chair at a table in the back shadows of the room. He sat there for almost an hour, listening to the old man and drinking, never saying a word.

Finally, when the old man was done playing, the stranger invited him to sit at his table and have a drink. They talked in voices so low that no one else in the room could hear them. Not that anyone cared, of course. The old man had long ago become the butt of all the jokes told in the bar.

When it was time for the old man to begin playing

again, the stranger joined him on stage. With the old man taking the lead, the stranger hesitantly began to follow.

Slowly and awkwardly at first, they began singing the songs of the cotton fields and of the poor people. Their songs told of empty whisky bottles, and heartbreak, and lost loves.

Two men; one, an old broken down shell of his former being, and the other, a tall, young gangly lad, together on the makeshift stage, staring into one another's eyes as they blended their voices while singing the songs that most people had forgotten.

When they finished the last song, the stranger told the old man it was time for him to leave. They stood there silently for a moment, and then the stranger reached out with his arms, embracing the old man.

After watching him leave, the old man paused, wiping a tear from his eye, and then slowly picked

up a handbill the stranger had given him. Carefully he smoothed the paper and with a piece of old scotch tape, taped it to the wall behind the stage.

Once more, he stood back and looked at the stranger's picture on the handbill.

He re-read the words, "Hank Williams - Appearing in Concert."

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# Cat Defends a Pet Dog

from 1890 Huntsville paper

The good residents on Randolph Street were amused to see a tortoise shell cat take the side of a black and tan dog the other day. The cat is small but in no way lacking in courage.

They are both pets in the same family, but the dog has never abandoned his curish ways, and indulges in snarling at man and beast alike as they pass his master's door.

Yesterday he ran out and snarled at a big black dog passing by and the animal resented it in a beastly manner. He picked "black and tan"



up and rolled him in the dust, throwing him into the air while he yelled with all his might. Neighbors from all over could hear the racket.

While this was going on the cat ran out and mounted the big black dog, much as a monkey gets upon a pony in a circus, and

clung on to him with all her might. She began to scratch and the terrified brute knew she meant business.

The big dog dropped his little victim to the earth, and with his tail between his legs started with a cry for other fields at a very high rate of speed. It was as if the very devil was on top of him.

She clung to him until he was well started and then jumped to the ground, while the big dog kept on out of sight, never deigning to look around or to elevate his caudal appendage to its natural position.

**"My idea of a Super Bowl is a toilet that cleans itself."**

**Maxine**

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# A "Gut-Wrenching" Experience



## Zane Geier

U.S. Navy 1944-1946  
Toney, Alabama

*Interview by Mark Hubbs*

Someone who does not know Zane Geier would have trouble realizing he is 88 years old and a veteran of World War II. He is easy to smile; an active man with an engaging sense of humor. He is as sharp now as he has ever been. I have known Zane for over ten years, but really only learned the story of his early life and war time experiences as a result of this interview.

Zane was born in May 1926 in the little village of Weaver, Alabama, just north of Anniston. His first up-close experience related to the war were the many soldiers from Fort McClellan who tramped by his community on road marches and field maneuvers when he was in high school. When soldiers stopped to draw water from his family well, he realized they represented an entrepreneurial opportunity. He followed the marching columns on his bicycle and cornered the market on Baby

Ruths and Milky Ways each time they stopped for a rest break.

Zane's father took a job with the Department of the Navy before the War began and the family moved several times from 1936 to 1944. Zane did very well in school despite the fact that he attended four different

high schools in Alabama, South Carolina, California and Florida. With his graduation in May 1944 from Pensacola High School, he followed the path of millions of young men and answered his country's call. The Navy was the obvious choice due to his father's career in Navy shipyards.

Boot camp was at Camp Perry, Virginia, near Williamsburg and then on to radar training at the Fleet Training School at Virginia Beach,

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Virginia. The training at the Fleet Training School was fast and intense as the Navy struggled to provide the new sailors and new ships needed for the final push in the Pacific theater.

The Navy wasted no time in getting Seaman Geier to sea. He was sent to the Brooklyn Navy Yard and assigned to a brand new destroyer escort, the USS Cross. Almost all of the sailors were newer than the ship. One hundred and ten men were assigned to the Cross. Ninety-five of them were brand new sailors just out of boot camp and "A" school. A cadre of only fifteen "old salts" had to train and blend this group of youngsters into an effective fighting crew. Zane was on board the ship when First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt broke a bottle of champagne on the bow of the USS Cross during its commissioning ceremony.

Although Zane was a radarman during normal operations of the ship, his battle station "was on a 4 barrel, 40 millimeter gun mount on the starboard side, forward. I sat on the right hand side and turned the crank that made the gun move laterally."

After a shakedown cruise to Bermuda and convoy duty in the Atlantic, the USS Cross was slated for duty with the Third Fleet in the Pacific. The Cross rendezvoused with the fleet at Eniwetok Atoll in the Marshall Island and from there island-hopped to Ulithi and the Northern Marianas. The Navy and Army were gearing up for what would become the largest, most in-

tense campaign of the Pacific War - the Battle of Okinawa.

As the battle raged on the island of Okinawa, the U.S. Navy protected the landing sites from the Japanese Navy and Air Forces. This is where the Japanese first used Kamikazes on a gigantic scale.

Over 1,600 allied ships ringed the island and each became targets for Japanese suicide flyers. Destroyers and destroyer escorts, such as the USS Cross, formed the outer ring of the fleet defenses. They provided early warning radar and fire support against Japanese planes that attempted to break this perimeter to get at the aircraft carriers, battleships and cruisers. As a result these smaller ships often became primary tar-

gets when the Japanese flyers realized they could not break through. Almost 5,000 American sailors were killed in Kamikaze attacks during the course of the Okinawa Campaign.

Zane recalls, "many occasions when the Cross and



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sister ships were engaged in pumping out a wall of bullets at incoming Kamikaze. It was a gut wrenching experience to see a plane coming towards us, low on the water, getting closer and closer... and a feeling of relief to see the plane explode ... sometimes only 100 yards or so away....and feel the shock and hear a sharp scraping sound as flying debris struck the ship."

As the Battle of Okinawa wound down in late June 1945, the US Third Fleet moved its area of operations off the island of Honshu in preparation of the invasion of the Japanese homeland. However, the destruction of the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki by American atomic bombs sealed the fate of Japan. They formally surrendered on August 25, 1945.

The USS Cross was damaged during a massive typhoon in October 1945. The ship was towed back to the US for repair, but not before its crew was scattered and reassigned to other ships. Zane found a new assignment aboard the USS Hornet, one

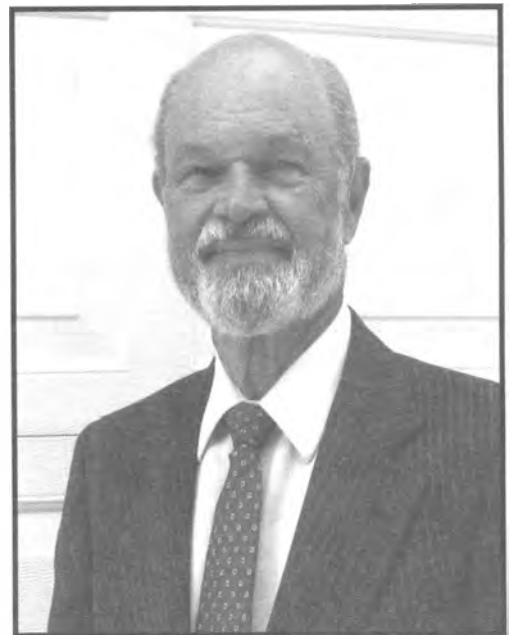
of the most famous aircraft carriers of World War II. The Hornet participated in Operation "Magic Carpet" when it ferried several thousand U.S. soldiers back to the United States. Zane was discharged from the Navy on June 4, 1946.

Zane became an auditor for the U.S. General Accounting Office after the war, and even continued his nautical career in the Navy Reserves in the late 1940s. He received a degree in accounting from the University of Alabama in 1949, and attended Harvard University, Graduate School of Business Administration, and completed the Program for Management Development in 1963.

Zane is proud of his service during World War II. He also celebrated the sacrifice and heroism of veterans of other wars by participating in Civil War and War of 1812 living history and reenactment programs for many years. However, he understands the futility of war and abhors it as a political means.

He says:

"I am opposed to war and favor peaceful coexistence instead. Although I fought in a big war, and have observed the United States' involvement in a long succession of others, I am convinced it is all for naught. In the long run, most wars, even the Crusades, have accomplished little. The pain and suffering and loss of life and property caused by war have been immense."



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# Good Tips from Liz

- A lump of sugar added to water when cooking greens helps vegetables to retain that pretty green color. Vinegar or lemon juice used sparingly will have the same effect.

- Never soak veggies after slicing - you will lose almost all of the nutritional value.

- Did you know that an average working American must work for nearly three hours per day, every day, to pay for federal, state and local taxes? After that, your money is your own. It wasn't always like this - in 1930 in the U.S. it only took 58 minutes of an 8-hour day to cover the taxes.

- To bake potatoes quickly, place them in boiling water for 10-15 minutes. Pierce skin with a fork and bake in preheated oven.

- To avoid tough corn on the

cob, add your salt when cooking is halfway done, or don't add it at all til you eat it.

- Lately several of our readers have reported that even though they are using the same detergent for their clothes washing, the scoop inside has gotten larger. It may be a way to make you use more soap than is really needed, without realizing it. You can get the same good results from your washing by using a bit less, actually, because too much soap will cause your clothes to turn dingy and gray.

- To sit straighter in your car while driving in traffic, just tilt your rearview mirror up an inch or so. It will cause you to sit higher in order to see out the back.

- Handle your mail once. Either throw it away, file it or pay it if it's a bill. Time is wasted by looking at mail multiple times.

The short fortune teller who escaped from prison was a small medium at large.

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## Charles Elkins

by Jean Wiggins

Charles Elkins is an interesting and humorous resident at Tut Fann Veterans Home on Meridian Street in Huntsville, AL. Though he has been diagnosed with MS and deals daily with pain, he remains active and interested in the activities at Tut Fann, and he has a good relationship with the staff who seem to be competent and caring. I asked one staff member if she liked working at Tut Fann, and she immediately said, "I love my job."

Mr. Elkins was born in central Missouri on May 7, 1950, and came to Huntsville with the group who transferred here from St. Louis. Before that, he was drafted and served in Vietnam for about two years. His work experience includes working in an auto parts company. Because of the gasoline crunch in the 70s, the company for which he worked filed for bankruptcy after which he worked for GE making light bulbs. He graduated from Lindenwood College in St. Charles, MO, with a B.S. degree after he left Vietnam. He then went to work for the Air Force in December 1978 at Scott Air Force Base.

In Vietnam he served with the 75th Infantry, Company K, 108th unit. His service consisted of serv-

ing on four-day missions with 4 to 6 persons on the team. Four-person teams were less obvious on the search-and-destroy missions in which he took part. In his words, Mr. Elkins said they

would "go out and stir up a whole bunch of hell and get out." When the 4th Division stood down, he transferred to the 101st Airborne. He completed a year with the 101st, making a total of two years of service in Vietnam. His self-deprecating sense of humor undoubtedly served him well in surviving the stress of war. He was awarded the Bronze Star and a CIB medal. I asked him if he still had those. He responded that he didn't keep any medals or his uniform. He was not captured by the enemy or serve time as a POW. He suffered no injuries during his service and was not involved in any accidents.

I asked Charles about the Vietnamese. He said that the Vietnamese were enjoying the

Time flies like an arrow;  
fruit flies like a banana.

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influx of American dollars and had no vested interest in the war being over. He told the story of a Vietnamese who had a large statue of Buddha who would fill it with explosives, blow the arm off of it, then charge the U.S. government to repair it. He did this repeatedly – with success.

I asked him about food and entertainment. He said that they had mess hall food and then later sea rations – dehydrated food. There were several clubs on base with Vietnamese and Australian entertainers who impersonated Elvis and other vocalists of the time. Bob Hope came to entertain. Mr. Elkins said they were very good at "self-induced" entertainment.

Charles went to Australia after Vietnam. In the 70s young men could get free housing for a year in Australia if they had a skill. He went to school and learned welding. After a year in Australia, young men could get full citizenship. He decided not to remain in Australia after his year there.

Mr. Elkins' wife lives in Toney, AL. He has two daughters: Valeria, who lives in Dallas and Heather, who lives in Atlanta. He received a lot of support from the Missouri Red Cross and receives considerable support here in Huntsville. He has one friend who visits weekly. They eat a lot of pizza together.

He has traveled extensively in Europe and in the South Pacific. Of the residents at Tut Fann, he says that each one has

his own niche – that they are very interesting people who have done many interesting things in the course of their lives before coming to Tut Fann.

He told me that he had gotten entangled with genealogy. He advised me not to get involved in it because he said, in his case, it got out of hand. In the context of this conversation, he commented that "some of us are not cognitive enough to remember."

He has Crohn's disease and MS and has lost use of his left arm and leg. He went to local doctors for a year to get a diagnosis. Then he went to Mayo Clinic. Within nine days of his arrival the doctors there diagnosed him as having MS.

Mr. Elkins de-

scribes himself in terms of his physical condition as "just lucky" and tells me a tale about a man who had both legs cut off and then became a boot salesman. It is evident that he has served his country well and that he is his own mental health expert.



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# Farmer Killed While Getting Water from a Well

from 1902 Huntsville Newspaper

News of the killing of John Byrd, a farmer, by Robert Johnson and Fred Stevens, reached the city from the Monrovia precinct Monday morning. The two men came to the city after the killing and surrendered to Sheriff Rodgers, who had no warrant for them at the time. The sheriff told them to appear for preliminary trial before Judge Stewart in the early afternoon, which they did.

It seems that Byrd has for sometime past been getting water from a well on Johnson's place and last Saturday afternoon when Byrd's boy went for the water, Johnson told him that he could get no more supply as the well was getting low and it was liable at any time to go dry.

The boy returned home and told his father what Johnson had said. Byrd then got a bucket and a double-barrel shotgun and said that he would go and get the water anyhow as he must have it. He was accompanied by his wife, son, father and two or three others.

Johnson and his brother-in-law, Stevens, saw the party coming and armed themselves. When Byrd came within hailing distance they told him he must not come to the well. Byrd came on anyway and leveled his gun at the two men who were standing

in the door of Johnson's home. Johnson opened fire with a pistol, none of the bullets taking effect. Stevens then fired the shotgun and Byrd fell immediately dead, his chest riddled with shot. Some of the shot struck Mrs. Byrd in the arm and badly wounded her. Byrd was shot twice.

Warrants for arrest of Johnson and Stevens were sworn out by the dead man's father and a preliminary trial was held before Squire David Phillips, who held the men for further investigation.

Their regular preliminary hearing was held by Probate Judge Stewart Monday afternoon and Judge Stewart bound the defendants over to await the action of the grand jury. Their bonds were fixed at \$1,000 and were made easily.

All of the parties to the tragedy are well known in the Monrovia neighborhood. They have many relatives in that locality and were all known as peaceable citizens.

## German Potato Salad

3 lbs. potatoes  
 1/4 lb. bacon  
 1 T. olive oil  
 3 onions, sliced thin  
 3 T. sugar  
 1 egg, beaten  
 1/2 to 3/4 c. vinegar  
 1/4 to 1/2 c. water  
 Salt & pepper to taste

Boil potatoes with jackets on. Remove from heat and allow to reach room temperature. Remove skin from potatoes and slice into a serving bowl.

Add bacon and onions to potatoes and turn carefully so that you will not break potatoes. Cut up bacon into small pieces and fry until light brown. When done remove to paper towel to drain.

Add olive oil to bacon grease in frying pan. Stir in vinegar, water, seasonings and sugar and bring mixture to low boil before incorporating the beaten egg. Stir vigorously.

Pour dressing over the salad and let stand for several hours before serving.



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# EFFECTIVE TREATMENT FOR VARICOSE VEINS

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

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

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

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

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

## **Do I have Varicose Veins?**

### **Do I have any of these symptoms?**

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Heaviness, Bulging Veins,  
Pressure, Burning, Tingling,  
Restless Legs

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

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

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# William Watson Guillebeau, Jr.



by Mike Guillebeau

As a boy in rural Georgia, William Watson Guillebeau, Junior (Bill) stole precious moments between plowing and school work to build small crystal radios that let him listen to far-away places. When he had the chance, he left his small Georgia hometown in the 1930s to work as a radio operator on banana boats and explore the Caribbean. After Pearl Harbor he tried to enlist in the Navy and was turned down for medical reasons. Because of that, he joined the Merchant Marines and served on Liberty ships in the North Atlantic, bringing supplies into Normandy and being sunk in the North Atlantic. Here's his story of the sinking:

"I was serving as the radio operator of the SS Delisle, a merchant steamer home ported out of Baltimore. On October 19, 1943, our small convoy of 6 ships formed up off the coast of Newfoundland and headed out. We hadn't gone far when, Boom! We hit a mine or a torpedo and the ship started going down fast. Someone yelled, 'Sparky, grab the portable radio.' While others got the boats loaded, I grabbed the radio and yelled, 'Where's the captain?' Someone hollered, 'Captain's dead.'

"We found the captain, blood-

ied and unconscious, with his wooden leg pinned under a mast, but still alive. We pulled his leg off, took him to a boat and got away. I remember huddling over the captain in the boat, covered in his blood and trying to keep him warm. After four hours in the water, we were picked up and taken ashore. The captain was taken to a hospital where his life was saved."

"Two days later, the captain's wooden leg washed up ashore and was reunited with its owner."

Was that the worst of the war?

"Heck, no," said Bill. "That damned 3.2 beer that was the only thing you could buy in the PX was the worst."

Following the war, he moved to Charleston and worked on radar systems at the Charleston

Naval Yard. In 1956, Bill Guillebeau moved his family to Huntsville to work with Wernher Von Braun and the Army on a new missile program to launch a satellite. Over the next fifteen years, he worked with the Army and NASA to launch men into space and finally, to the moon.

We thank Bill Guillebeau for his service, and his sacrifices, great and small.



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# THE CRESCENT DOUGH AUCTION

by Judith Creighton Smith

Here I go again. On this date some years ago I took my mother to Huntsville Hospital to have surgery for a fall she incurred while hurrying to get the Guest Conductor to the Huntsville Symphony (she fell breaking 3 of the 4 bones in her right leg in October, 1990).

Having been misdiagnosed, she was to have surgery on April 8, 1991. The next day she was selling Crescent Dough Auction tickets when suddenly she thought that she was having an asthma attack.

The next day, when I went to see her, she was asleep so I didn't wake her. While eating supper that night I received a call telling me to get to the hospital immediately. My best friend, Patty Smith, drove me.

I can clearly remember Dr. Mosley saying, "Judy I don't think we can fix it this time". He was right because the end came shortly thereafter.

We went to the Crescent Dough Auction last Friday night. The food was great and the Auction well-run.

Mother had been in the original Guild and worked so diligently to raise money for all causes.

I enjoyed the night and as we left I thought "Mother, you would be proud" and I said to myself "Mark my word, I'm not buying anything."

If you think that's a fact, I've got a London Bridge I want to sell you.



**"Some days the best thing about my job is that the chair spins."**  
*Janie Stein, Athens*

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**SATURDAY, MAY 17th @ 10:00 A.M. = HUGE TENT SALE!!** We will auction lots under the tent and in the parking lot outside. Wilson is clearing-out the "old" auction house and other local buildings to build this sale. There will be no-telling what you might discover & find in this unique-sale. Must come and see to believe!! Pictures, listings, and updates will be added to the web address below.

**\*For pictures, listings, details, and directions, log onto [www.auctionzlp.com](http://www.auctionzlp.com) ~ Auctioneer I.D. #5484. Call us for questions, inquiries, and seating at 256-837-1559!!**

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# Tweetie's Pet Tips

*"I don't ever like my tiny bird brothers to be hurt."*



## Hummingbird Dangers

*There are many dangers that hummingbirds will face. These dangers can occur either while migrating or even in their day-to-day lives. These include weather, predators and man-made obstacles.*

### Weather

\* Hummingbirds will face many weather related dangers. While there are some reports of hummingbirds over-wintering in mild snow areas, a heavy freeze can potentially kill them.

\* Extreme heat and drought can also kill a hummingbird from dehydration.

\* Heavy rains over the Gulf of Mexico have been known to push the hummingbirds into the water causing them to drown.

\* Wind has been known to blow a hummingbird into obstacles like thistles and thorns, causing a hummingbird great damage.

### Predators

\* Cats are a hummingbird's biggest danger. Because hummingbirds will dart and move quickly, cats love to chase them. Since hummingbirds are not much of a meal, a cat will usually just maul them to death.

\* Blue jays, crows, road-runners, chipmunks, and squirrels are notorious for eating hummingbird eggs

and baby hummingbirds as a nice little treat.

\* Hawks have been known to catch a hummingbird for a quick snack.

\* Fish, frogs, snakes, and lizards have been known to snatch up a low flying hummingbird for a nice meal.

\* Large insects like dragonflies, praying mantises, and large flies like a robber fly have been known to stalk and strike at hummingbirds.

\* Large spiders can catch a small hummingbird in its web for a meal.

\* Ants are also known for invading a hummingbird's nest and eating hummingbird eggs and even baby hummingbirds.

### Man-made Obstacles

*Most people think of hummingbirds as these graceful little creatures.*

*However, they fly into things more often than most realize.*

\*They can fly into windows, walls, trees, cars, you name it. Many times a hum-

mingbird will fly away with no problem. However, sometimes a hummingbird may be stunned and need first-aid or be killed outright.

\* A hummingbird once even died from flying into a backhoe when it was parked in a different location one day at a local farm. The little guy was not used to the backhoe being there and flew right into a side mirror, probably at his reflection. We found the dust spot on the mirror and the little hummer right below it. That was a very sad day.

\* Hummingbirds can also be attracted to the red and orange insulators on electric fences. If you have an electric fence, paint the insulators black to help prevent the hummingbirds from being fatally electrocuted.

\* They can be trapped inside a building and starve to death if they are not removed quickly.

\* Hummingbirds have such small beaks; they have been known to get stuck in window screens. Pay close attention to any hummingbird that may be stuck in a window screen or they may starve to death.

*Not all dangers can be prevented so be mindful of hummingbird dangers when setting up your hummingbird habitat.*

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# From the Desk of Tom Carney

## The Whiskey War

by Tom Carney

Everyone knew it was coming. The trouble had been brewing for years.

Frank Riddick, since his election as sheriff in 1927, had sworn to break the backs of the liquor rings that had been allowed to operate openly in Madison County.

Although the outfits operated openly, Riddick found that proving cases against them was almost impossible. Every time he made an arrest, evidence would disappear or witnesses would refuse to talk. Many times, he suspected his own deputies warned the bootleggers of impending raids.

The whiskey and bootlegging business in Madison County was controlled by three families; one in Owens Cross Roads, one in Gurley and the other near Hobbs Island. These families had settled in the county well over a hundred years earlier and each had many children and grandchildren. The families had intermarried so often that it was difficult to find someone who was not related to them in some way. While this was beneficial to the bootleggers, it was a major handicap to any sheriff trying to build a case against them. Fortunately, Sheriff Riddick had an ally in Deputy Hugh Craft who lived in Gurley and was intimately aware of the whiskey operations.

In the spring of 1929, Riddick established a small, unofficial fund with which to pay informers. Deputy Craft, who was well known as a man who kept his word, was the obvious conduit for these funds. Many of the same people who had before refused to betray "blood kin" now began

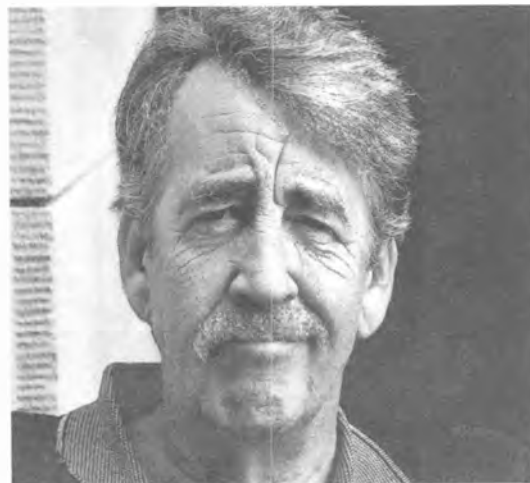
succumbing to the temptation of easy money.

Often Craft would be awakened in the middle of the night by someone softly knocking at his back door. After a brief whispered conversation, he would pass \$20 or \$30 through the door and the stranger would disappear into the night.

Most of the time however, the bootleggers would still be forewarned and Riddick would arrive to find the evidence and the culprits long gone.

Finally, after months of frustration, Riddick tried a new tactic. Without telling them why, he would order his deputies to meet at the jail at a certain time. Then, with the deputies still uninformed of their destinations, he would order them to follow him. Unfortunately, though raids such as these were fairly successful, the deputies managed to lose much of the evidence on the way back to jail and few people were actually prosecuted. Many times the deputies would either return, or sell the whiskey back to the very bootleggers from whom they had confiscated it.

Sheriff Riddick was furious. He had long known that some of his deputies were involved with the whiskey ring, but lacking proof, he was unable to do anything about it. Calling his deputies together, he




informed them that in the future any deputy even suspected of involvement would be fired on the spot. As if to emphasize his point, Riddick immediately fired three officers and had them arrested.

The bootleggers, keenly aware of the profits they began losing, decided to fight back.

Riddick soon started receiving letters in the mail, warning him that his life was in danger. At first he ignored them, but as they became more frequent he finally agreed to begin carrying a small pistol in his pants pocket.

On one occasion, while driving home in the evening, his car



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was shot at by someone lying in ambush. Though the assailant was never found, the only effect the threats had was to make Riddick increase his efforts to break up the whiskey ring.

Realizing their threats against Riddick were ineffectual, the bootleggers turned their attention to Craft. By this time the families were aware that Craft was the conduit for the informers. At first the threats took the form of subtle warnings, but as these were ignored, they took on a more serious nature. Shots were fired into his home at nighttime, shattering the windows. When this also failed, Craft awoke one night to find the back of his house burning - the result of an arsonist.

Craft responded by buying two large watchdogs, which were trained to bark at the approach of strangers.

The bootleggers, frustrated in their attempts to intimidate the law officers, decided it was time for more drastic action.

During the first week of May 1929, a meeting of all the major bootleggers and moonshiners in Madison County was held at a drugstore in Gurley. It was a foregone conclusion among the men present that Riddick and Craft were to be murdered. The only question was how and by whom.

Not wanting to face both the lawmen at once, the bootleggers decided to kill Craft first.

In a scene worthy of a B-grade movie, a bootlegger from Paint Rock Valley removed a handful of straws from an old broom. After making three of them shorter than the rest, he invited the assembled men to draw straws.

The three men picked for the gruesome task began to carefully make plans. They had received word from a "friendly" deputy that Riddick was going to pick up Craft at his home on the morning of June 12, where they would then drive to Owens Cross Roads to get a witness for a trial scheduled that day. Because of witnesses being so easily intimidated, the

two men had decided to personally escort this one.

The road leading across Eslinger Mountain to Owens Cross Roads was a perfect ambush site, so the assassins laid plans to make sure Sheriff Riddick would not be accompanying his deputy on this trip.

On the afternoon of June 11, a phone call was received at the jail. The caller claimed to have inside information on the whiskey ring and more importantly, was willing to testify. But first he wanted to meet with the Sheriff in person, at the jail, at 8 o'clock the next morning.

Regretfully, Riddick informed Craft that he could not accompany him in the morning. Both men were elated at the news of a possible witness and gave no thought to the last minute change in plans.

Hugh Craft left his home at about 6:30 on the morning of June 12 for the short drive to Owens Cross Roads. Although it was still early in the day, it was already hot and muggy. A black man working in a nearby field, watched lazily as Craft's car climbed the slight incline in his direction. Suddenly he saw three men armed with shotguns appear out of the bushes lining the road. With timed precision, the trio opened fire at the approach-

ing lawman. Seconds later the car carrying the dead body of Deputy Hugh Craft careened sharply to the right, ran off a small bluff and landed upright in a tree.


Just as suddenly as they had appeared, the bushwhackers ran to a white car and fled the scene. The field hand, unnerved by what he had just witnessed, ran away.

Minutes later, Craft's body was discovered by Marlon Beson, who immediately notified the sheriff's office. Riddick, who was waiting for the "informer," answered the call. As soon as he learned that his deputy had been murdered, Riddick knew he had been set up.

One old-timer later stated that he had never seen the Sheriff as angry as he was when he received the news. Within hours Riddick began questioning everyone even suspected of being associated with the whiskey ring.

To say that he was "rough" in his interrogations would probably be an understatement. All the speakeasies in town received personal visits from the Sheriff. In one case, where a speakeasy had already closed for the night, Riddick kicked the door down and after destroying all the liquor, told the owner he had 24 hours to come up with the names of the killers.


If there was anything the



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bootleggers had not considered, it was the publicity that the murder generated. It became frontpage news, not only here in Huntsville, but as far away as Chicago, Illinois. Although Riddick was slated to be assassinated next, the intense publicity caused the murderers to change their plans.

Within days practically everybody in the county, including the Sheriff, knew about the bootleggers drawing straws to see who would do the killing. Even the names of the assassins became widely known.

Getting someone to testify was a different matter. The black field hand who witnessed the killing was found dead in a neighboring county. Another man, reputed to have firsthand information, left for work one morning and was never seen again. Three other men, one who lived in Gurley and two in Owens Cross Roads, moved out of state suddenly.

The local Ku Klux Klan got involved by offering a reward for the killers. It was hastily withdrawn when it was pointed out that the main suspects were also members of the Gurley Klavern.

Finally, Sheriff Riddick found someone who would talk, but only on the condition of anonymity. This person had been at the drugstore when the straws were drawn and had heard the men discuss the murder moments after it occurred.

Knowing that he had to have a witness in order to make a case, Riddick used every power of persuasion he could muster to convince the witness to testify. Reportedly, after seeing how angry the Sheriff was, the witness probably figured the bootleggers were the lesser of two evils.

Within hours a warrant was sworn out for Ebb Renfro, a middle-aged farmer and resident of Gurley. The other two suspects had disappeared.

On June 27, 1929 a grand jury indicted Renfro for first degree murder.

What should have been a

speedy trial quickly turned into a nightmare for the Sheriff and prosecuting attorneys. Trials were twice scheduled and had to be postponed because of witnesses' reluctance to testify in open court. Making the situation worse were members of the whiskey ring, who showed up at every hearing and silently glared at anybody who looked like a potential witness. Many of the bootleggers who loitered around the courthouse openly brandished weapons.

The situation became so tense that Riddick had to detail four of his deputies to stand guard at the courthouse. Needless to say, once on the stand all the witnesses developed instant amnesia.

On December 5, 1929 the murder case against Ebb Renfro was dropped. No one ever stood trial for the murder of Deputy Hugh Craft.

Although Riddick never took credit for it, many sources claim he was the one responsible for finally breaking the back of the whiskey ring in Madison County.

A large packet of "confidential" files were reportedly mailed to members of the whisky ring. These files supposedly contained information that showed many of the bootleggers were informing on their competition in exchange for immunity.

Knowledge of these "confidential" files caused nine bootleggers to be either maimed or killed by one another in the following three years.

*Editor's note:*

*Probably the strangest fact about this case was that the conspirators talked about it so openly. Every minute detail of the plot became public gossip. Even today, many of their descendants take a morbid pride in telling the story of their fathers' involvement in the whiskey ring and the assassination of Deputy Hugh Craft.*



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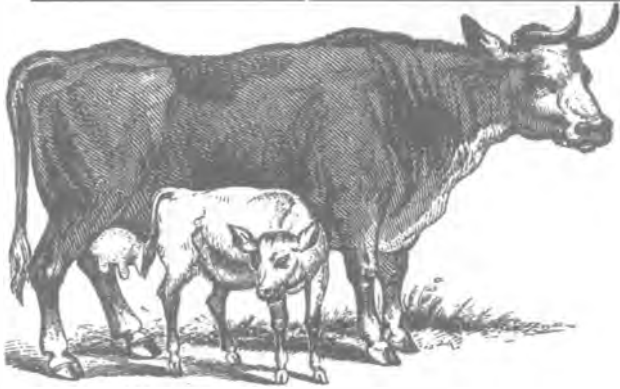
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## Finding a Calf

by Rodney Miller

I was six in 1930 and life was very simple. We had no electricity, we lived out in the country and therefore there was no refrigeration. Fresh milk was a staple of life and in order to always have good fresh milk, country folks had at least one milk cow.

Fern was a lumbering brown cow whom we thought of as a member of our family. She was extremely well fed, getting treats from our family like apple peelings or roasting ear shucks - her personal favorite.

While Fern would nibble on grass my sister and I would sit for hours, just watching her. She seemed to enjoy the company and never walked away from us. In the summer if you had no way to keep fresh milk cool, it would spoil in just a few hours. If my mother needed some milk to bake a cake or cookies, she would just walk on down to the pasture, find Fern and get a glass of milk.

Fern was always very accommodating.

To ensure the optimum health of a milk cow it was important that she didn't give milk at all during the month prior to giving birth to a calf. During that month, the expression was that the cow was "being dry."

So since we didn't have any fresh milk from Fern, we made an agreement with a neighbor to use milk from his milk cow until Fern had her calf.

Then, when the neighbor's cow was "dry," he would come

to our farm to share Fern's milk. Fern had been dry for about a month and we knew there would be a calf any day now.

Our parents were very modest in those days and they didn't say that Fern would "have" a calf. They said Fern would "find" a calf.

On this day my sister Gwen and I decided to watch Fern "find" her calf. Gwen was just four so I had to show her how to do everything. We walked down to the pasture and began to watch her.

Now, cows really like their privacy when "finding" their calves, and sometimes try to hide. She began walking towards the woods, which was unusual. We followed and when we caught up with her, she gave us a look that said, "Go back home."

After going through this a

few times we decided to leave her alone to find her calf. When we saw her for the last time she was slowly heading for the barn.

By then Gwen and I were tired, hungry and thirsty so we went home to find Mom. She told us not to bother Fern anymore, so we stayed home all day long.

When Dad came in from the field late that day, he told us that Fern had "found" a calf over by the end of the barn. We raced to see and sure enough, a beautiful brown calf that looked just like a miniature Fern was standing, pretty wobbly, in the hay.

Gwen and I discussed the whole situation the next day and came to the conclusion that since Fern never did find her calf, the calf must have come to the barn to find her.

*Shortly after writing this story for "Old Huntsville", in 1997, Rodney Miller passed away.*

*He is so missed by his many friends and relatives.*

# Each day is a gift.



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## Joseph Connaughton World War II Vet

(1st Lieutenant Bombardier/  
Navigator, 319th Bomb Group,  
438th Bomb Squadron)

*by Joe Connaughton*

I grew up during the Great Depression in the college town of Tuscaloosa, Alabama and planned to work my way through the University of Alabama doing a part time soda jerk job. I loved airplanes and made flying models. As I let them fly, I imagined myself as the fighter pilot within. Hence, my plan was to get just the required two years of college and then join the Army Air Corps. At that time I would also meet the minimum 21 years age requirement.

After the Pearl Harbor attack the requirements were lowered to a high school degree and minimum age of

18. Since I was in my first year at the University of Alabama I completed it and enlisted in the summer of 1942 at the age of 18. I was called to active duty January 8th, 1943 and reported to the Santa Ana Air Force Base, California for induction and classification as a pilot, bombardier or navigator trainee.

On arrival I soon learned about the Army ways

as our civilian assemblage stepped off the bus. The sergeant lined us up in rows and called for five volunteers - you, you, you, you and me. He marched us to the mess hall amid catcalls of "You'll be sorry!" from cadets hanging out barracks windows. Then, the others ate dinner while the five of us served them and remained on KP until late in the evening.

I spent most of 1943 in training and found that not everyone can be a fighter pilot. I finally ended up in Bombardier school at Roswell AFB, New Mexico and graduated in Class 43 J as a 2nd Lieutenant November 13, 1943. My orders sent me to Barksdale Field, Louisiana for medium bombardment

in the B-26 aircraft. There I met my crew, received navigation and operational training. We were shipped overseas in May 1944 to join the 319 Bomb Group on Sardinia.

Probably the most impressive mission I flew that had a major impact was the Invasion of Southern France. It was no small operation. Offshore would lay 450 British, U. S., and Italian warships including five battleships and nine aircraft carriers. Wow! I thought. This is really big and I'm going to be in on it. It was just 0500 hours when the 320th moved into takeoff position ahead of the 319th.

I was looking over our

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*Jen Darby, Athens*

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copilot's shoulder while I watched the first wave take off. Suddenly, after they lifted off, a huge fireball and explosion occurred in the darkness. I ducked down behind the pilot's armor thinking we were being attacked. A frown came over our pilot's face when he got the report one of the planes had crashed into a hill beyond the end of the runway.

The next wave fared no better when a second ship crashed and burned closer to the field. A few minutes later, a third ship failed to get off when it burned and exploded at the end of the runway.

The 320th had about had it by then. Their next flight taxied back in to regroup and let the 319th take off. Our flight was up next and the tension was terrific. Even so, our six-ship takeoff went smoothly followed by the rest of the 319th and 320th without further incident.

Shortly, I could see our target, Cavalaire Beach, in the distance. Uh-oh, there was broken cloud coverage at 3,000 feet. I could barely see our Sector No. 3 through the broken area. After a long anxious minute I called in, we lucked out. Our Sector 3 is dead ahead. There's a clear break in the clouds. I think we can get a good 20-second run on the beach edge. It was "bombs away" at 0725 hours, and as I looked over the bomb-sight I could see a good pattern of the 100-pound bombs walk up from the water's edge and across the beach.

We pulled away from the beaches and the ships started moving in towards shore to meet their 0800 landing. I looked back with a sense of pride at what we had done and what they were doing.

Mail call became our respite from the rigors of war. I don't know how we would have performed without the steady stream of mail and packages from family, friends and sweethearts. The personal touch state-side was also important. On a cross-country troop train that stopped in a small Midwest town, the ladies brought lunches on board for us all. Later several Indians let some of the men ride their ponies. And, at war's end the townspeople of Seattle came out to greet our ship in a houseboat with banners welcoming us home.

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## Elva Bevington WWII Navy Nurse

by Rob Williams

Elva Bevington's blue eyes narrowed as she spoke of the man whose hands had reached for her throat. Quick actions taken by attending Navy corpsmen rescued her from the paranoid schizophrenic veteran's attempt to choke her as she was about to administer his medication. Earlier, those same eyes twinkled as she showed photos taken of her modeling the new Navy gray uniform in 1944 and wearing a glamorous dress at a Citadel dance.

**"After 10 years of therapy my doctor said something that brought tears to my eyes. He said, 'No hablo ingles.'"**

**Ronnie Shakes**

Her photos ranged from patients and friends to the Duke of Windsor and Admiral Chester Nimitz.

Elva Jones was born on a farm in Putnam County, Ohio on December 21, 1921. After graduating from high school in 1939, she became a Registered Nurse. Elva joined the Navy Nurse Corps as a psychiatric nurse on January 21, 1943, and began her service at the Navy Hospital at the Naval Ship Yard in Charleston, South Carolina. She served with Chief Nurse Marion Olds. The Japanese took Olds prisoner on Guam, but because they didn't suspect a woman to be a Navy officer, they released her in 1942. This was not an unrealistic view, because prior to WWII Navy nurses were given no rank. Elva served as an officer, as well. Lieutenant Senior Grade Elva Jones received an honorable discharge in January 1947.

People speak of the horrors of war. Though Elva never served abroad, as she nursed patients in her locked down psychiatric ward, she witnessed the ravages of war in the lives of returning veterans. She told of witnessing the unloading of patients from a train arriving in the Charleston Naval Shipyard. Elva was stunned at

the sheer number of them.

Not all the wounds suffered by veterans were of a physical nature. Her first encounter of those suffering from "battle fatigue" (now termed "post traumatic stress syndrome") were British sailors from a crippled battleship that had been helped to the Charleston port. A bomb had gone down through the ship, and the explosion made its way up through the vessel. Debris and bodies were pulled from the wreckage

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for months. The emotional trauma experienced by those returning from Viet Nam and Afghanistan is well known, but WWII veterans suffered similar internal wounds. Elva found comfort when Chaplin Thompson and his wife took it on themselves to become her second pair of parents.

After the war, Elva was transferred to the Navy Department Dispensary in Washington, D.C. There, she encountered those who had been in the Bataan Death March and other horrifying events in the Pacific. Her area of work was directly below the office of Secretary of the Navy Forrestal.

She vividly remembers an occasion when a tall Admiral, who had been visiting Forrestal, came down to her floor wearing a shirt with no indication of rank. He asked a Navy corpsman in her office area where he could find Commodore Warner. Having no clue as to his rank, the corpsman addressed him as "Chief". The Admiral was not amused, and with great offense informed the corpsman that he was speaking to an Admiral. Though Elva could not dare express it, she was angered at the Admiral's arrogance and was disgusted at his treatment of the corpsman.

During the war, she treated patients from the Pacific to the Atlantic (including those from the D-Day Invasion). Elva had moved from life on the Ohio farm to coping daily



around as she shared her photo album. Though Elva began to walk with the use of a walker, she continued to sing in her church choir into her late eighties.

Some say that World War II veterans are members of "The Greatest American Generation" and Elva Bevington is truly an excellent representative of that era.

She has lived a life of service and she continues to be an inspiration for me.

with the demands of caring for Sailors and Marines torn emotionally and mentally by the brutality of war.

With the ending of the war, her life outside of nursing blossomed. Elva's photos from that time included actor Lewis Brooks. She and Brooks sang together in a Washington area choir, and they became friends. In 1949, Elva Jones married law student Joel Bevington. She continued serving in the Navy Reserves until 1953.

Elva moved to the Huntsville area to be near her daughter and family. In her early eighties, I invited her to speak to the Boy Scout Troop I served. The Scouts found her presentation to be captivating, and afterwards they crowded tightly

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# Death of an Urban Legend

by Ric Latarski, Riverdale, GA

*My mother is Betty Hill, we are both from Huntsville but living in Georgia currently. We miss Huntsville and can't wait to get back. This story is about my grandmother, Exie Teague.*

It is known as the Angel in the Graveyard and its home is Maple Hill Cemetery.

Enter the main gate of Maple Hill and drive down a narrow road leading to one of the oldest sections of the cemetery, and you will find yourself sitting directly in front of an impressive granite gray mausoleum.

You approach this edifice at night with your lights out and stop twenty yards in front of the building. When you turn your lights on you will see the outline of an angel in the doorway of the crypt.

As the story goes, the occupant was a good and decent man who made a considerable fortune in his day. Surrounded by uncaring and greedy relatives he made the decision to not reward them with an inheritance and did what people talk about doing but haven't figured out how: he decide to take it with him. When he died – under suspicious circumstances – he left instructions all his fortune be turned to gold coins and buried with him under his coffin. Being an honest and worthy man an angel was sent to guard the doorway of the crypt to prevent anyone from breaking in and stealing his gold.

Or so goes the urban legend of the Angel in the Graveyard.

The angel is really nothing more than a shadow thrown onto the glass door by the iron framework on the front of the crypt but high school students live in search of such legends and it was a balmy July night in 1971 when three of us decided to seek out this apparition.

My grandmother, Exie Teague, was a grandmother straight from Norman Rockwell. She was rooted in common sense, possessed a gentle humor, wise beyond her education and knew Huntsville from a time when even if you knew something untoward about someone you didn't talk about it while they were alive. To the family she was "Bigmother".

It was 11:00 pm and she was sitting in her bathrobe watching Johnny Carson when my friends and I made the decision to go and see the angel in the graveyard.

We told her the story, making it as eerie as

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possible, but she mumbled something about us not learning much in school.

Somehow, and to this day it remains a mystery, we managed to talk Bigmother into joining us on our nighttime trek to Maple Hill. She put on her shoes, and still in her bathrobe, we all piled into Mike Parkes' Simca.

The Simca was built by Chrysler's European Division and to call it a car is being generous. It is a squat and homely vehicle and so small it makes a Volkswagen Beetle look like a Winnebago. A Simca is crowded if you are in it by yourself but fill it with three teenage boys and a grandmother, you would find more room in a can of pressed meat.

We put Bigmother in the front seat so she could fully feel the shock value of seeing the angel and on the way to Maple Hill enhanced the story with tales of intrigue and murder on the part of the poor man's family.

Bigmother seemed dubious about the whole business and as we approached the entrance to Maple Hill her common sense took over.

"We're not supposed to be in the graveyard after dark," Bigmother said. "We could end up in jail."

Technically, she was correct. But being energetic and creative youth we all agreed if stopped by police the chances they would arrest us along with a 65-year-old grandmother in her bathrobe were slim. We would simply exaggerate our case and claim Bigmother was a little off and demanded we take her to visit the graveyard.

She was, of course, unaware of our emergency subterfuge and fortunately it was not needed.

Mike eased into the cemetery and turned the headlights off. We slowly approached the crypt and then he jerked on the lights and there was the angel guarding the door. Bigmother did not flinch.

"Is that it?" she asked.

"Yes," we all replied sheepishly.

"Doesn't look like much to me," she said squinting through the windshield. "Pull a little closer." With that Mike moved the Simca close enough for the headlights to reveal the writing on the crypt and the name over the door. Bigmother sat up straight in the front seat.

"Why, that's ol' Jimmy Ray Reynolds," she said. "He didn't have no money. He married into money but ended up being a woman chaser and drunk. And he wasn't murdered. He got run over by a bus and his wife was so happy to get rid of him she decided to put him in a first class grave. Now, take me home."

We were all numb and slightly disillusioned on the drive home. We arrived and Bigmother went to bed, grumbling the trip had caused her to miss Johnny Carson, and we sat around talking about what a letdown it was to know more of the truth than the legend. By the time school started in the fall everyone at Butler High School knew the true story.

Bigmother is gone now, resting in Maple Hill Cemetery a few pathways over from ol' Jimmy Ray, and if you venture a look you can still see the angel guarding the doorway.

But on that warm summer night my friends and I learned the truth and were present when my grandmother caused the death of an urban legend.

## A Loving Mother

Olga Llerena was the beautiful mother of Oscar Llerena. She passed away in February 2014 at age 93 with all her family around her.

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**Michael Jordan**



## My Dad, My Hero

by Shirley Garrett,  
Psy.d, LPC, DAC

Charles Edward Gunselman fought for his country and his life while enclosed in a cramped turret of a B-24 Liberator, as it droned over the landscape of a war-torn Europe.

My dad wasn't a giant among men, but he was a hero to me. I asked my dad why he volunteered for the Army Air

Corps, which later became the Air Force.

"My friends and I decided to enlist, so we could choose the branch of service we wanted to enter. I didn't join the Army, because I didn't want to tramp all over Europe. I didn't join the Navy because I might get seasick. Why walk or float if you can fly," said my dad.

After basic training, my father attended Aerial Gunnery School at Tyndall, Florida. Next he boarded a troop transport ship headed for Europe. He quickly discovered that he made a good decision to not join the Navy - he was seasick. The crew assembled in Italy, where they camped in tents in the middle of a muddy olive grove.

In one photo from that time dad had a mustache. I asked him why he shaved it. "I didn't shave, it was scorched off along with

my eyebrows, when the fifty gallon drum we were using to heat our tent exploded, and blew me out the door of the tent."

As a tail gunner, Charlie sat in a turret that barely held him, the gun and the ammo. He often said, "I spent my whole tour of duty flying backward over Europe. I never saw where I was going, but I saw where we had been."

Charlie Gunselman knew something about sheer, stark terror. The crew was flying a high altitude, daylight-bombing mission against strategic Nazi targets. My dad often said, "The scariest part was the anti-aircraft

  
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fire." The planes were forced to fly in formation and the shrapnel often peppered the planes.

My dad once told David Moore at the Arab Tribune, "I have seen planes explode completely. Wings go one way, engines another way. Nobody would get out."

On one occasion, my dad expressed the horror he felt, while watching planes catch on fire and spiral to the earth billowing smoke. Knowing that he would never share jokes or see those men again, left a knot in his stomach.

On one mission the crew of my dad's plane dropped their load and was heading back when they were attacked. The pilot, Bill Smith (Smitty), hit an air pocket and the plane drastically dropped altitude. My dad didn't know what happened; he thought they'd been hit.

"We dropped so low, I felt like I could reach out and scoop water out of the Adriatic Sea," he told me, shaking his head at the memory. After the plane safely landed, my dad tried to ask the pilot what happened. No sound came from his vocal cords. They rushed my father to the flight surgeon. The doctor told the crew that Charlie lost his voice due to fear. It took two days for my dad to regain his voice. After recounting this story, he often told people, "I got my voice back and I haven't shut up since."

While on a mission to Ploesti, Rumania, the 456th Bomb Group came under attack. Shrapnel cut Charlie Gunselman's oxygen line; he nearly died. The crew made constant radio checks on each member in the large plane. When Charlie didn't answer, they pulled him to the front of the plane where he shared oxygen with other members of the crew.

My father earned the rank of Staff Sergeant, an Air Medal and an EAMET Medal with five bronze stars. This crew of

unsung heroes completed their twenty-five missions. My father never flew in a plane again. The men on my father's flight crew bonded for life and had regular reunions.

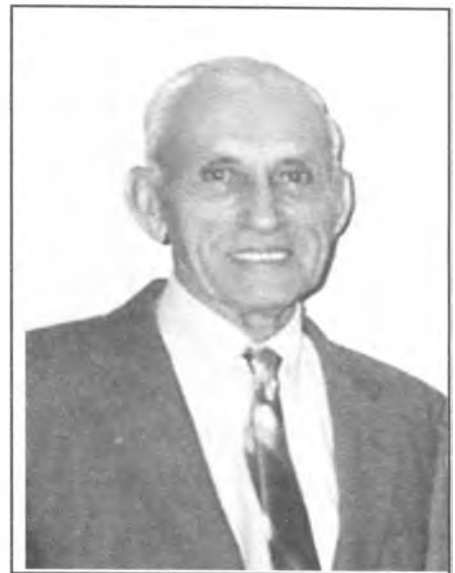
Charlie Gunselman, who was one of seven children, was a Christmas baby. On his first day back in his hometown, Birmingham, Alabama, my dad accompanied my grandfather to the U.S. Steel Commissary. There he met his future bride, Margaret O'Hare. He married, raised a son, Charles H. Gunselman and me.

Retired after 44 years as a conductor and remote-control train operator for United States Steel Corporation, my dad moved to Arab, Alabama. He liked the small friendly community and his close proximity to me in Huntsville. He worked at Outdoor Power and Key from 1986 to 2000. Charlie would tell people, "I work on lawn mowers, kerosene heaters, chain saws, weed-eaters and broken hearts. I don't always do so well on the broken hearts."

An everyday hero, Charlie Gunselman served his country, raised a family, made people

laugh with his quick wit, and did the next right thing. He didn't lose his battle against the Nazis. He did lose his battle against lung cancer at the age of seventy-seven.

*Dr. Shirley Garrett, Psy.D., LPC, DAC is a writer, professional speaker, and life coach. Her first book, "Stop the Crazy: Simple Solutions to Move in a Positive Direction" was released in March 2014. She lives in Huntsville with her husband Bob and her black cat, Pookie.*



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