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No. 262  
December 2014

# Old Huntsville

HISTORY AND STORIES OF THE TENNESSEE VALLEY

## A Christmas to Remember



Christmas was coming and I was on the island of Corsica in December of 1944 during World War II. It would be the first time I would spend Christmas away from home. I was only twenty years old at the time.

Needless to say, I wasn't looking forward to Christmas at all.

*Also in this issue:* **Remembering Pearl Harbor**

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## A Christmas to Remember

By Joseph Connaughton

Christmas was coming and I was on the island of Corsica in December of 1944 during World War II. It would be the first time I would spend Christmas away from home. I was only twenty years old at the time. Needless to say, I wasn't looking forward to Christmas at all. I got up Christmas morn-

ing and walked over to the mess tent to eat breakfast. My hope was to find some motivation to appreciate Christmas day.

Luckily, I sat by a copilot friend, Robert Jamison. I told Bob how I'd like to do something today that would make the day more like Christmas. We talked a lot about Christmas back home, but that was about all. When we got up to leave, Bob said, "I've got it! I know what we can do. Go back to your tent and get all of the candy rations you can find - even ask your buddies to give you what they can for a good cause. I'll see you in about thirty minutes in front of your tent."

I went back to my tent and scrounged all of the candy I had and what I could get from my buddies. Soon Bob drove up in a Jeep with two other buddies, John Morgan and Bill Etheridge, in the back seat. "Climb in," he said. "We are headed for the hills." It wasn't long before we drove into the quaint little town of Casadiana.

When we entered, we could see it was a square surrounded by rows of two-story masonry buildings with no porches. The walls came straight down to the walks with doorways spaced about every twenty or thirty feet. There was a fountain structure in the center

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*Art Billings, Arab*



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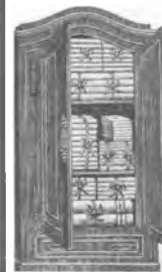
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but it was dry. Bill blurted, "OK Bob, where are the kids?" There were no kids. And for that matter, there really didn't seem to be anyone around. The weather was cold, but the sun was out, so that shouldn't have mattered.

Bob said, "Just wait a minute. It's mid-morning. The kids will be coming out pretty soon, especially if they see we have sacks of something. Come on, let's sit on the edge of the fountain and hold the bags on our laps so they are easily seen." We followed suit and it wasn't two minutes before a little boy reluctantly came walking up to us. He was about eight years old, dressed in play clothes, and appeared to be clean. Bob seemed to know what he was saying and answered in broken French as he offered him a bar of candy. The boy quickly took it and ran toward a corner of the square, disappearing through an archway between the houses.

"Well, how do you like

that," I said. "So much for our Santa Claus act." "That's what you think," Bill replied. "Look coming back through the arch." "You're right," John said. "It looks like Cox's army. Look at the kids. I'll bet there's at least couple of dozen of 'em."

The children came up to us yelling Americano and some other words in French. They were well-behaved children and weren't pushing and shoving to get to us. We had enough candy to pass out so each one got three or four pieces. In a wink, between the chewing, they began smiling and laughing. They were so happy, and looked as if it were the only candy they ever had. It was just a joy to look into their faces.

One child with a ball dropped it to the ground, and kicked it towards us as he rattled off some French words. Bob yelled, "Kick it back. The kids want us to play French football with them." I kicked it back to one of them and the game was on. We played their



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version of sandlot football for about thirty minutes. As we were about to wind up our game with them, an old man in his sixties wearing a red French beret approached us and said something in French.

I said, "Uh oh, here comes trouble. What do you think this fellow is up to, Bob?"

"He's telling us to follow him. And maybe we had better do that for now." The old man turned and pointed to one of the doors on the east side of the square. We trailed in behind him and followed him into the door and up a stairway to the second floor. He led us into a large room at the top of the stairs. The first thing I saw was an elderly woman in a rocking chair with her back to two curtained windows facing the square. Another gentleman, about the age of the old man, was sitting on a couch facing the windows.

The man in the red beret introduced the woman as his wife and the old man as his older brother. Then Bob proceeded to introduce Bill, John and me.

The man brought out two more chairs and motioned us to sit down on the couch and chairs. They spoke no English, but we understood them to say through Bob, they were grateful to us for bringing the children candy and making their Christmas a happy one. We learned they were Christians. The man in the red beret motioned us to bow our heads as he gave a prayer of thanks and prayed for our safety and

the war to end soon.

Then, as we stood up to leave, he motioned us to wait as he darted out of the room. When he returned he had a dusty old wine bottle in his hand and a tray of glasses. He then said, "I have been saving this bottle of wine for a long time just for a special occasion. I can think of no better occasion than to celebrate your generosity to the children at Christmas." He poured our glasses with wine then held his up for a toast, which I clearly understood, "Vive La France and America." We raised our glasses and said "Cheers" and thanked him as we left the room.

On the way back to the base we discussed the quality of the wine. We didn't notice the brand, but we all agreed it was the best wine we had ever tasted. I thought to myself, was

it really the wine that tasted so good, or was it the deed that we did for the children, and the Frenchman's grateful hospitality that made the wine seem so good?

Whatever it was, it will be a Christmas that I will always remember.



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## My Grandmother's Unforgettable Treasure Hunt

by Parker Daniel,  
Madison Academy

Christmas has always been my grandparent's favorite time of year. Before having my mom, they lived in a tiny house in downtown Huntsville on Parkway Drive. Several years later before my mom was born, they moved to a larger house on Cleermont Drive in the Blossomwood area.

My mother, Morgan Miller Daniel, was born and raised in Huntsville, AL, and grew up in the same house my grandparents live in today. My mom, dad and I only live a few blocks away. Shortly after my mom was born, my granddad, Bill Miller, was laid off from his job. Times were tough for a while until he found work, so the next few Christmases, money was tight. They wanted to spend their money on my mom, instead of themselves.

Because of their love for my mother, as well as their selflessness, they didn't buy each other much for Christmas. My Granddaddy told me about an idea he


came up with to surprise Ruth, my grandmother, which he knew would be fun and unforgettable.

In 1976, Granddaddy gave her a very small box wrapped in some Christmas paper and a bow. When she opened it, there was nothing but a note that read, "You should have looked under the pillow in the bedroom." She looked under the pillow and found a note directing her to the towels in the bathroom. From there, another note told her to go to the refrigerator.

Finally, the note in the refrigerator led her to the pillow on the living room chair where she found another package. It had a poem written for her by Granddaddy about what a good cook she is attached to a special cookbook. My grandmother was thrilled and still talks about that special Christmas. She was so excited about a cookbook, which was not expensive; however, she considered it a "treasure" because of the meaning behind the gift.

My grandparents and parents taught me that Christmas isn't about the biggest, most expensive presents and quantity of gifts, but Christmas is about quality time with family and friends and gearing our minds toward the Lord and our blessings as we should every day.

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# Just One Present

by Mary Kathryn Lawrence,  
Madison Academy

For many years, snow was a rarity in North Alabama. The meteorologists would often predict the snow storm that never happened. Fanatically, kids would wish snow would fall and leave a blanket over the roads. Occasionally, a few snowflakes would flutter down but then quickly melt on the warm ground. Each night, kids would go to bed and hope that it would snow and that school would be closed the next morning. Only one thing could be better than school closing due to snow and that was a White Christmas.

Growing up in the late 1960s, most kids had a basic "wish list". For most girls, it was the newest Barbie doll and some outfits such as an evening gown and a sporty, tennis outfit. Also topping their list might be a Chatty Cathy doll or an Easy Bake Oven. For many boys, it was a go-kart, a C.B. radio, a football,

or a color television. Topping everyone's list, however, was a sled and the ever elusive snow-storm.

When my Dad was five years old, he had only two things on his wish list - a sled and enough snow to go sledding. His older brother snickered at him. His parents tried to let him down gently so he would not be too disappointed on Christmas morning. While most boys his age might be wishing for a new western outfit or a B.B. gun, my Dad wanted a Red Flyer sled and the snow to glide it on. The combination of both things was unheard of in North Alabama!

His parents asked him to make a new list for Santa - one that included toys and obtainable gifts. To appease them, he made a new list. However, he secretly kept his old list and put it under his pillow. He was confident that Santa would find the real list and not let him down.

Waking up on Christmas morning, he ran to the window. It had really snowed! Santa had actually found the right list and

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**Jerry Baker, Scottsboro**

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brought him snow after all. Too bad he forgot the sled.

He grabbed his coat and mittens and bolted for the door. Never mind the lighted tree in the corner of the den with hanging icicles. Forget the presents that were mounded under the

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tree. The real present was outside!

The snow was magical. When the sun rays hit the snow, it truly glistened. Everything was eerily quiet. It was peaceful - until he took off and tromped through the snow. With each step, he would look back over his shoulder, fascinated with his footprints. Then he stopped and wondered where Santa's footprints were. Off he went in search of Santa's boots and the reindeer's hoof prints. He finally decided that the falling snow must have covered up the tracks.


Although he was without the sled, he was not disappointed. Instead, he grabbed the lid off the top of the metal garbage can and made his own sled. Running for the hill just down the street, he took off with his modified sled. Although his "sled" was not the swiftest, it was still magnificent. Soon the other kids in the neighborhood

were sledding on garbage can lids, old cookie sheets, and cardboard boxes. Within a few hours, most of the snow had melted. The thawing ground showed patches of dirt. The icicles had started to drip from the house. The dreamlike day was beginning to fade.

Recalling the "Big Snow back in 1969," the memory of that day still holds the dreamlike magic that it did when he was five years old. He will tell you that he got only one present - and that was all he wanted. If you ask him if he believes in Santa, the answer is always "of course". The snow may have melted but the magic of that day will last forever.

**"I've learned that you should never say No to a gift from a child."**


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# Local News in 1923

- A large barn belonging to W. M. Jordan at Jordan's Park was totally destroyed by fire yesterday together with a large amount of hay and other food stuff and two large fine hogs. The barn was a large and costly one and the loss is great. The fire occurred between 7 and 8 o'clock and the origin is not known.

- **For Rent** - eight-room house partly furnished, two bathrooms modern, Franklin Street. Apply to James Allen Fuller, 215 Jefferson St.

- The little four-year-old daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Ben Lamb died at the home of her parents in Big Cove yesterday. This was a result of burns she received one day last week when she was in the field with her brother, who was burning brush and grass. Mrs. Lamb was very seriously burned trying to save the little girl. Funeral services were held this morning at the residence in Big Cove.

- **City Court** - Several cases were up for disposal this morning, several of which drew fines. Charley Mills and Charley Cole were discharged on a charge of "Having a rooster fight" when it was shown that the boys put their roosters down to see if they would fight. Convinced that they were both tame, they picked them up and stopped the fight. Thomas Clark and Charley Tuminello were fined ten dollars each for gaming.

- Maple Maddox and Odis Patterson were up on a charge of assault with a pistol and knife respectively and each drew a fine of \$25 when they pled guilty to the charge. Bruce Killiam was discharged on a charge of unlawfully riding a streetcar.

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and furnished. Suitable for two gentlemen. Rent reasonable. Mrs. F. C. Gates, 207 Oak Avenue.

- **Man Run Over by Wagon**

An old gentleman by the name of Johnson was run over by his own wagon out on Meridian Pike Thursday afternoon. It seems from reports that Mr. Johnson was walking beside his wagon when an automobile passed and frightened the team of mules causing them to take a dash, knocking the old man down and the wagon ran over him. He was considerably bruised and was picked up by a passing automobile and brought to the city hospital where his wounds were dressed and he went on home.

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## Four Generations of Christmas

by Maggie Crabb,  
Madison Adademy

Many years ago, in the happiest time but also a sad period given the fact that it was also called "The Great Depression," money was tight. Christmas was a time that was more about family being together than about getting gifts. As a child, my great-grandmother Ruby Haygood would get an orange and some nuts every Christmas. One year she received a small doll for Christmas, and she was so excited—until the next year and the year after that when her mother wrapped and gave her the exact same doll.

Every year, Ruby would go outside with her father, find a cedar tree, cut it down and drag it inside the house. They did not use the fancy glass decorations that we use today. Instead, they would string popcorn and make long chains out of construction paper and wrap them around the newly cut tree. Often, gifts were homemade. Children only expected to receive one gift each Christmas. My great-grandmother's mother, Maw Behel, had thirty grandchildren. She did not have enough money to buy each grandchild a gift, so she gave each of them a silver dollar. That tradition still continues today. My grandfather gives all four of his grandchildren, including me, a silver dollar.

A few decades later, in 1957, my grandmother and her family had a tradition of going window shopping every Christmas. They would look in each window and dream of having the shiny new gifts. My grandmother looked in one window and saw two beautiful sister dolls. She wanted them desperately, but she knew that her family could not afford to buy them for her. When Christmas morning came, my grandmother woke up and looked under the Christmas tree to find the two beautiful dolls. She was exhilarated. Her sister,

Vicki, got a stuffed monkey, named George, for Christmas. Vicki was jealous of the new, beautiful baby dolls that my grandmother had.

Their school had a tradition that they participated in every year. After Christmas break all of the children would gather together in the gym and share, in front of everyone, what they got for Christmas. My grandmother was so excited to show the whole school what she got from Santa Claus. Vicki did not want to take George, the monkey, to school with her. She wanted to take my grandmother's baby dolls, so she cried and pitched a fit. Maw, my great-grandmother who had herself only gotten an orange and a bag of nuts for Christmas, felt bad for Vicki and let her take the dolls to school to show everyone.

My poor grandmother had to take the ugly stuffed monkey to school for show-and-tell. She was so furious that when it was her turn to walk up in front of the whole school, all she could mumble into the microphone was "I got a monk." Immediately, the whole school burst out in laughter, bringing my grandmother to tears.

My grandmother, Sheila Haygood Canerday, still cries when she tells this story, only now it is because of laughter.

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# A 1942 Christmas

by Talyn Walton  
Hazel Green HS

(This story is from Talyn's grandfather, Jimmy Brocato.)

It was an early December morning, December 24, 1942 to be exact. The snow was piled high in Huntsville, Alabama. Jimmy Brocato could not contain his excitement as he woke up and got ready. He jumped out of bed, threw on his long johns and then his favorite outfit. He knew his mom and dad wouldn't be ready for another 30 minutes, so he went into the living room to wait on them. Today was his favorite day of the Christmas season. Today, he and his parents were going to pick out their Christmas tree. As he was thinking of what size and shape he wanted, he heard his mom say, "Jimmy sweetie, are you ready?"

"Yes, m'am!" he replied. Jimmy's parents came into the room, his mom carrying Jimmy's coat. "I think you forgot something," she said with a smirk. Jimmy went over to his mom and she helped him put on his biggest winter coat. They joined his dad outside and got into the car. As they drove through downtown, Jimmy's face lit up. He loved seeing all the Christmas decorations on the street lights and in the shop windows. He would always tell his mom that one day, when he became a firefighter, he would get to hang the lights because only firefighters could reach them.

As they arrived at the Christmas tree farm, Jimmy's excitement began to show all over. With a smile on his face, he jumped out of the car and went racing to find the perfect tree. His mom and dad followed close behind and watched as he turned down tree after tree. He finally came to a screeching halt in front of a tree that he thought was perfect. As his parents caught up Jimmy screamed, "This is the one!"

His mother laughed and said, "Okay, let's wait here while your dad finds somebody to cut it for

us." As they walked to the car, Jimmy's mother told the worker about how Jimmy was going to be in the parade in the morning. He had already decorated his bike like a rocket ship. He couldn't wait. As they strapped the tree down to the car, Jimmy watched very carefully to make sure they didn't hurt it.

When they got back home, Jimmy ran to the door to unlock it and hold it open for his mom and dad. He couldn't wait to start decorating the tree. As soon as they made it in the door, he raced to the box of decorations and dragged it into the living room. He knew to be very careful with the lights because they could break easily and they got really hot when they were on. He let his mom string them. He then found all of his favorite ornaments and hung those. When they finished decorating the tree, he went to the kitchen and got a plate of carrots and cookies while his mom followed with a glass of milk. His parents reminded him that he had to go to sleep or Santa wouldn't come. Jimmy knew he was going to have trouble sleeping. As he crawled into bed, he imagined how the morning was going to be. He couldn't wait to open all his presents and then go to the parade. As he was imagining all of this, he slowly dozed off.

Early the next morning Jimmy jumped out of bed and ran to the living room. His parents were already up. He beamed from ear to ear with joy. He couldn't believe what he saw. He went for the biggest gift first and ripped through the paper. He continued ripping until the last one. When he was finished, his mom went to help him get dressed for the parade downtown. Jimmy loved waving to all

the people around him and feeling famous. He could tell everybody loved his rocket ship bike. When they finally got home, all Jimmy wanted to do was play with his toys. He was so happy and felt so loved. That night before he went to bed he gave his parents the biggest hugs and kisses and reminded them how much he loved them.

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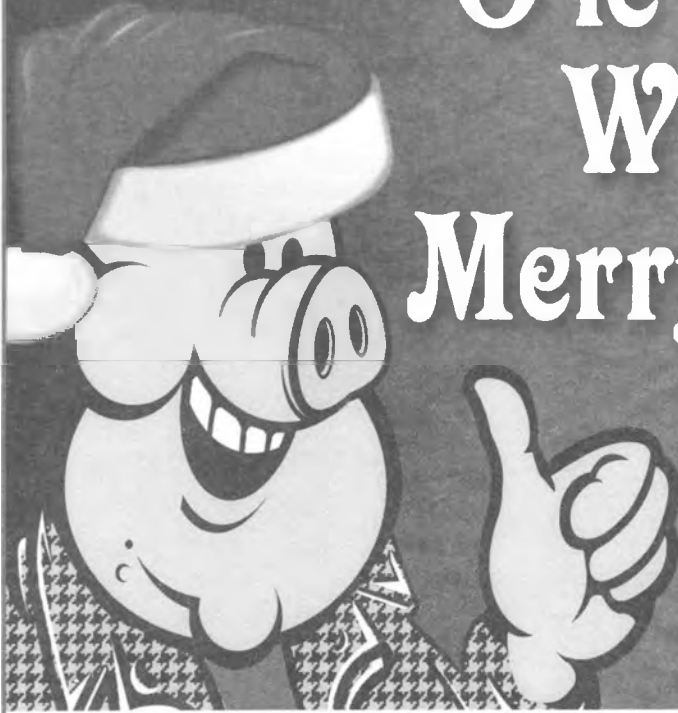
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# Preparing for Christmas Early

by Judy Chandler Smith

Oh my goodness, it's almost June 25th just six months until Christmas. I've already made reservations at one of the few places open on Christmas Eve for dinner for seventeen family members. One of the Huntsville churches has Christmas Eve services at 5:00 p.m. and that works perfectly to get out and head to dinner without anyone having to add cooking or cleaning up on Christmas Eve to the other regular tasks that we all have to do.

M.D. buys most of the gifts and also wraps most of them, because that's what he did when he was young helping his mother. I wrapped gifts at Rose Jewelry Company on the holidays when I was home from college until I was blue-in-the-face and vowed I'd never wrap again. M.D. keeps a computer list of everything that has been bought for each family member. He has kept these over the years and can tell you what was bought for what family member almost since some of the kids were born. Before computers, he typed the lists on 3 by 5 note cards and still has some of these. Oh to be so organized. It takes two months to finish the gifts.

We usually put up the Christmas tree and Owen's Merry Birthday tree on the day after Thanksgiving. It takes up half of the dining room.

M.D. is already working on his special Christmas music. He produced his first CD and cassette of Christmas music in 1994 and had done a number of them since then. This year, he is doing CD's only and there will be two of them, one for the kids and grand kids and the other for adults. I'll have to start thinking about the menu for Christmas.

The last Christmas that my mother was living was 1990. I

wanted that year to be a special one and I started cooking two weeks before Christmas and putting casseroles, dressings, cakes, rolls, frozen fruit salad and rice in the freezer.

A day before Christmas Eve, M.D. took care of the turkey by defrosting "ole Tom" in the downstairs bath tub as it floated in cool water for a day to thaw slowly and be moist as well.

Christmas morning there was a dusting of snow. Scott brought my mother over because she had had knee replacement surgery in the past and fallen in October and broken some of the bones in the same leg. She was on crutches and using a wheel chair. By the time I was dressed on Christmas day, M.D. had already put "Mr. Tom" in the oven at 7:00 a.m. and we knew it would take about four hours to be ready by 1:00 in the afternoon, but he didn't start it cooking yet, intending to start it at 9:00 a.m.

After seeing what Santa brought the kids by the fireplace and opening all the gifts, it had taken several hours and everyone was merry, happy and having a great time. When the opening of gifts excitement had died down and the kids were playing with

some of their toys, I started getting the dinner ready to eat with the help of several members in the family. I asked M.D. to go downstairs and get the turkey out of the oven. We use three ovens to cook and bake all the food that requires to be cooked for so many people at lunchtime.

He comes back upstairs and into the dining room to announce that Judy didn't turn the oven on, so dinner will be postponed for four hours. So much for organization. I'll be better prepared this year. Surely I can get this "show on the road" starting six months ahead of time, but PLEASE someone call and remind me to turn the oven on.

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# He Never Caught Santa

by Doris Barenchi

As children we grew up in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The area was called Germantown and we lived in a "row house" during the 1920s and 1930s.

Every family has Christmas traditions and my brother "Bud" invented a tradition of his own. At our house Santa would leave the gifts under the tree, but the filled stockings would be left at the end of our beds.

As I walked past my brother's bedroom I yelled "What are you doing with that string, Bud?" He replied "I am going to catch Santa! You wait and see." I said "In the morning, let me know how it went."

Bud had a ball of string. He attached it to everything in his room. He tied the string to the doorknob. He pulled it over to the bureau, then the chair, over to the radiator, to the closet, (back-and-forth). He was creating a trap to snag Santa when he

came on Christmas Eve. When he finished all of that, Bud finally tied it to his big toe as he got in bed. He had a plan, that's for sure. He claimed that "he would like to see Santa get the string off his toe, without being discovered, hah!"

However, his plan was in vain. Pop managed to get the stocking placed at the foot of the bed without Bud ever waking up. Pop was clever and was able to manipulate around all that crazy string. Pop was amazing!

Bud never gave up during his childhood years. Every Christmas Eve he would follow the same plan and make the string trap more complicated. Pop would always outsmart him. This went on until he found out the truth.

Bud's standard response was "Someday I'll catch him!" But... "He never caught Santa."

*Doris Barenchi is the 91 year-old cousin of Cheryl Tribble, the Editor of Old Huntsville Magazine. She currently lives in Lakewood, California and is a big fan of all the wonderful stories she reads every month. She can relate to the past with such enthusiasm and clarity.*

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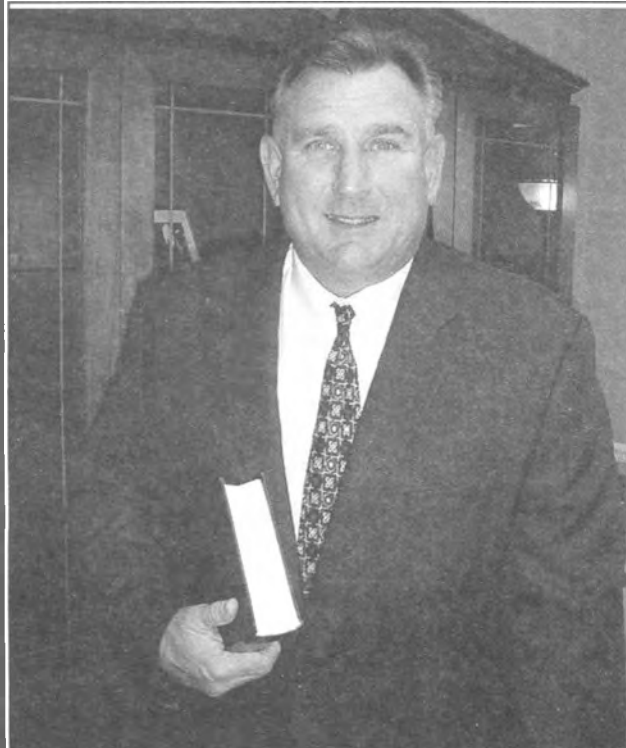
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# All It Cost was a Dollar

by Don Broome



In the year and a half before my Dad died, my Mother was busy working at Huntsville Hospital as an RN and floor supervisor and taking care of him. My Dad, who was a big man at 265 lbs. dwindled to 94 lbs. before he died April, 1964. Christmas 1963, I was a senior at Huntsville High School, left pretty much to myself. I had enormous freedom and came and went when I pleased.

I was working almost full time at the Wynn Dixie located at Haysland Square. I was the first hourly employee hired at that store. With no one at home in the evening, I often would go for long drives out in the country. The only radio station that had good reception was WEUP and I would listen to their talk programs and music and just kind of get away from the hell at home. This one night, the subject was the plight of the Harris Home. Mrs. Chessie Harris, an old woman at the time, had a heart that

couldn't say no. She had, I think, around 13 children that nobody wanted, giving them love and care. The program went on to say that Oakwood College had given her an old house to use but the college was too poor to offer anything else. There was to be no Christmas at the Harris household and no Christmas dinner.

I guess this story could have ended there or have been forgotten altogether. You see for grocery stores at the time, Christmas was gravy time. Bag boys got really big tips for carrying out the groceries. Half dollars, or even an occasional silver dollar were common. We all had our pockets

stuffed with all they could hold by the end of the day. It just so happened that this was a very cold Christmas and out front was this angel ringing her bell with the Salvation

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Army kettle. All of the bag boys wanted to see what she would look like without that great big bulky coat on. I suggested that if we all would empty one pocket into her kettle, she would come in to wait for a pick up and would take her coat off. The first part of our plan worked perfectly. We filled up her kettle and she came in to wait for a pick up, but she never took her coat off. What made me think about Harris Home was the frozen tear on that lovely angel. What we had done with one pocket apiece affected all of us that way.

Mr. Whitt, our store manager, was surprised when I asked him what he would charge me for a flat of day-old bread. Asked me what I wanted with it. I told him about the program and he told me a dollar. He was going to have to say that a lot in the next few days. I asked about that old candy leftover from Easter, Halloween etc. A DOLLAR. Hey, how much for a cart of bent cans. A DOLLAR. After five or six carts he stopped us. The Christmas tree in the lobby - all decorated - yep A DOLLAR. Two Turkeys TWO DOLLARS. There were five or six cars that left the store Christmas Eve, including a van with a Christmas tree all loaded with people and goods.

The house was out in the country back then and as we pulled in, it seemed like we were encircling the house. I looked in through the glass in the door and there was an old gentleman rocking by the cast iron stove. We knocked softly until he heard us, not wanted to wake the children. When he came to the door, there was fear in his eyes, not knowing what a bunch of white teenagers were doing out in the country on Christmas Eve. He asked me who we were and I told him "Santa Claus". As we brought in load after load of groceries,

he sat back in his rocker with tears running down his cheeks as I heard him saying over and over "Lauds a mercy, Lauds a mercy."

That Christmas that was going to be so sad, turned into one of my most cherished memories. And to think it only cost each of us a dollar.

A thought I've had many times since that night is that we gave and put out effort one time and have relived that wonderful moment of sharing over and over.

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**"The second commandment is 'Thou Shalt Not Admit Adultery.'"**

**Jacob, age 7, on  
Religion Test**

# Heard On the Street

by **Cathey Carney**



There is a tiny candle hidden within the pages of this magazine. Not a real one of course. But if you are the first one to call and ID it, you get a free subscription of OH going in to the New Year! It will be VERY TINY, I don't want a lot of phone calls. First one wins.

I wanted to congratulate the lady who was the first caller to identify the photo of the month for November - as many of you recognized, it was **Billy Joe Cooley** who wrote the Crime section of the Huntsville News for years. He has several books published and was so funny, but sadly is deceased. Our winner was a lady who used to love to read his columns and even met him a time or two, **Darla Easley** who now lives in Arab and recognized the face right away. Congratulations to you, Darla.

In this issue there are some delightful stories from students at Hazel Green High School as well as Madison Academy. I know you're going to like them, and a special thanks to **Steve Geirhart**, of the Star Market Writers Group, for getting them together.

Many people knew and loved **Nolan Bragg, Sr.** of Huntsville. He had contributed many stories of his memories to Old Huntsville, even after he felt too sick to write

but did it anyway. Nolan passed away Nov. 8 at the age of 81, he was living at Tut Fann Vets Home. He was surrounded by his loving family. Nolan was a proud policeman for 34 years. He is now with his wife of over 40 years - **Mamie Bragg**. He leaves 2 daughters, **Cynthia Adcock** and her husband **Greg**; **Rebecca Clark**; a son **Teddy Bragg** and wife **Kathi**; a brother **Thomas Bragg**; sisters **Margaret Gaither**, **Brenda Dickens** and **Judi Walters**, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. We will miss his gentle humor and love of family.

Have you heard of **Uber**? It's a personal transportation company that is like a cab company only the drivers use their personal cars and work for Uber. They get to you within 10 minutes and prices are generally lower than cab fairs - you use an app on your phone to order the ride and everything is billed automatically - no tips. I had the chance to use one in Nashville recently where parking anywhere at night is terrible, and it was so great to be dropped off right at the door of the restaurant! Sure hope it comes to Huntsville soon.

Many have been in **Mary's**

**Glass & Bead Shop** on Pratt Avenue just west of Old Town Coffee Shop in Five Points, but if you haven't been lately, she has a really good selection of stained glass panels that many are putting in their homes. I LOVE stained glass and have found several good pieces for myself there. And if you just look around, she has so much stuff packed in that store! A sweet lady.

**Jane Smith** of Huntsville is so proud of her grandson **Timothy Smith**. Timothy is a senior at Huntsville High and recently wrote a composition that was performed by the Twickenham Winds, under the direction of **Dr. Spencer**. It's called "The Exuberant March" and was performed in November at Huntsville High. He made the UAH honor band also. Timothy was a winner of the young composers forum which was recognized in the Tennessee Valley Music Festival this year. Tim's happy parents are **Steve and Phyllis Smith** and they all live in Five Points.

I had another outstanding idea I wanted to share with my readers. I know you're saying she's really full of it but I hope you mean that in a nice way. Anyway you know you can buy **diffusers which are the oily scents, small bottles & sticks** that go with it? Usually the bottles have thin necks and

## Photo of The Month

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

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Hint: This little boy grew into a lanky, handsome trial lawyer who knows a lot about the downtown YMCA



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the diffusers don't really put out much scent after a week or so. I found a small, decorative glass bowl, about the size of a medium candle (5" deep and 4-5" across) and poured the scented oil into that. I then bought some of those decorative glass pieces (think flat marbles) that you find at Hobby Lobby, etc. and filled the glass with those. Then put the sticks into the marbles. Since there is more surface for the scent to come from, my house smells heavenly! I'm going to do this all through the holidays and into next year!

**Doug Martinson** accomplished so much in his life. He was an active member of the legal and local community, founder of the Huntsville-Madison Cty. Law Foundation, a charter member and founder of Mothers Against Drunk Driving, loved the Land Trust and served on its board along with many other boards. He was very proud to practice law with his sons **Doug II and Mac**. He and **George Beason** helped grow Doug's father's law firm from 2 to 8 attorneys. We send our deepest condolences to his wife of 52 years, **Kathryn**; sons **Douglas C. Martinson II (Lauren)** and **Mac Martinson (Sarabeth)**; brother **Pat Martinson**; his aunt **Miriam Brennan** and his beloved grandchildren, nieces & nephews.

OK we have a question for our readers from **Lewis Rasmussen**. He is very interested in the old "Boogertown" section of Huntsville, Al. He would buy any real estate you have for sale in the area or would consider selling. Also he would like to know what was the oldest church that was known to be active in the earliest days of

Boogertown. To contact him directly, his email is duhvjob-4me@yahoo.com.

**LeeAnn's Restaurant** on Church St. tells me that they're delivering that delicious food and all you have to do is call! They will deliver it personally to your location and it'll be HOT!

**Rosemary and Bill Leatherwood** want to wish their son **Billy III** a happy 34th birthday on Dec. 18th. And on Dec. 28 their handsome grandson **Austin Pinkerton** will turn 16!

A way to make your car smell delicious is to get one of those **cinnamon brooms** that you find in the grocery stores and lay it over your dash or just a back seat. You can refresh the scent with some cinnamon oil later. Sweet!

**Jack and Earlene Moore** of the Shoals celebrated a very happy event in November - their 60th wedding anniversary! Some friends and family got together to plan the surprise and the event was fun and memorable with their sweet Shi-Tsu **Cocoa**. There were many friends in attendance and all there to wish this really sweet couple another 60!

**Bob Boyer** was 86 when he passed away in early November. Bob was a avid lover of music and could play several instruments, he loved nothing more than having family gathered around singing and playing guitar. He worked for Boeing for 39 years and after retirement he bicycled across the country at 65 years of age. Bob leaves daughters **Cathy Hignite (Gretchel)** and **Connie Boyer** of Madison; wife **Jane Boyer**; sisters **Dortha Fultz, Eva Beeks** and **Jes-**

**sie Stout** as well as step children, grandchildren and great grandchildren. He was a dear man and will be remembered always.

Special greetings to **Mr. A.J. Casey** who at 89 just underwent a total hip replacement in Florida - we're thinking about you Mr. Casey with lots of love!

Don't forget the **downtown Luminaries** on Dec. 13 - there are usually 5-6 houses to tour and the candles lining the street are so pretty. There's lots of activities going on downtown in addition to that too!

Have a wonderful Christmas and we'll see you next year!

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# RECIPES

## Just Sweet and Hot

### Cottage Cheese Pancakes

- 1 c. creamy cottage cheese, small curd
- 4 eggs, beaten lightly
- 1/2 c. sifted self-rising flour
- 6 T. butter, softened
- Pinch salt

Combine all ingredients well, and heat up your skillet with a bit of butter. Drop 1/4 cup dollops of the batter onto the skillet and brown on each side, flipping as each side gets done. Serve with butter and hot syrup.

### Cinnamon Rolls

- 1 package brown & serve rolls
- 3 T. butter, softened
- 1 t. cinnamon

- 5 T. pecans, finely chopped
- 3 T. all-purpose flour

Arrange your rolls on a baking pan that you've greased with butter. Just barely break apart the rolls, so they're still connected a bit. Mix all your remaining ingredients and spread mixture over the rolls. Bake in 400 degree oven for about 8 minutes. As the topping melts it should run in between the rolls.

### Christmas Raisin Rum Rolls

- 1 c. raisins
- 2/3 c. light rum
- Soak the raisins in the rum overnight. Next day make your dough as follows:
- 1 t. + 1/4 c. sugar
- 1/4 c. warm water

- 1 pkg. active dry yeast (1/4 oz.)

- 1 c. milk
- 1 egg
- 1/2 t. salt
- 4 T. butter, melted
- 4 c. all-purpose flour

Combine the 1 teaspoon sugar, warm water and yeast, stir to mix, set aside til bubbly. In a large bowl combine the 1/4 cup sugar, milk, egg, salt and butter and mix well. Add a cup of the flour and the yeast mixture, mix. Add enough of the remaining flour to make a firm dough.

On a lightly floured surface, knead the dough til it is smooth. (5 minutes). Shape dough into a ball, place into large oiled bowl, turn dough so that all sides are oiled. Cover and let rise in warm place for an hour, and dough is doubled.

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Punch down, divide in half, and cover each portion with a dry towel until it rests.

Punch down. Roll each portion to a rectangle about 9x12 inches. Brush with 4 tablespoons melted butter.

**In a small bowl, combine these ingredients:**

- 1/2 c. sugar
- 2 t. ground cinnamon
- 1/2 c. chopped pecans

Sprinkle mixture over buttered dough. Drain raisins and sprinkle over the sugar mix. Roll the dough jelly-roll fashion, starting with 12-inch side. Cut into slices that are 1 inch thick. Place the slices cut side down in the cake pan, cover and allow to rise in a warm place for about an hour.

Preheat your oven to 375 degrees and pour 2/3 cup heavy cream over the slices evenly. Bake for 20 minutes. Remove from the oven and turn the rolls out onto a plate. Quickly invert them onto another plate so that each roll is upright, cool a bit.

**Glaze with the following:**

- 2 -1/2 c. confectioners sugar
- 5 T. milk

Combine the above in small bowl, beat til smooth. Drizzle over your still-warm rolls and serve immediately.

### Heirloom Cookies

- 1/2 lb. butter
- 1 c. powdered sugar
- 2 c. plain flour
- 1 T. vanilla extract
- 1 T. water
- 1/4 t. salt
- 1 c. chopped pecans

Cream butter & sugar together, add flour, vanilla, water, salt and nuts. Roll in little balls and press with fingers. Bake on greased cookie sheet in 350 degree oven until slightly browned, about 12-15 minutes. While still hot and removed from oven, roll in powdered sugar.

### Nutty Chocolate Balls

- 2 pkg. semi-sweet chocolate
- 15 oz. Eagle Brand sweetened milk
- 1 t. almond extract
- 1 c. pecans chopped fine
- 1 T. cocoa powder

Melt your chocolate and milk in a double boiler or saucepan, stir til blended, melted and smooth. Remove from heat and add your extract and a pinch of salt. Place in a buttered dish, cover and set in fridge for an hour or so til it begins to get a little firm.

Shape into small balls and roll in the nuts til covered. Layer on plate single layer, dust lightly with the cocoa powder. These can be refrigerated or frozen for later.



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# Christmas Preparations in 1950

by M.D. Smith, IV


It's the Saturday after Thanksgiving and time to get out the Christmas decorations in 1950. It was a delight to help my father find the card boxes of Christmas tree lights for inside and outside the house and all the other decorations, including the boxes of fragile colored glass ornaments packed carefully from last year. The bare Christmas tree was already inside the house from a Friday afternoon purchase on his way home from work.

First thing is to test the lights from last year for the inside tree. All the multi-colored lights were of the 7 watt size we use for night lights in recent times. Unwinding the strings that always seemed to get tangled, took a while and after that was done and there were a number of very long strings of lights resting on the carpeting from one end of the living room all the way into the entrance hall to near the door.

My mother was busy in the kitchen and my father went downstairs to the basement for some more decorations. To be helpful, I plugged in several strings of lights to start identifying which ones were burned out from last year and replace them with a small box full my mother kept in a drawer in a chest of the entrance hall. So, as they were burning, I carefully would test to screw them in tight and some would come on, they were only loose. If that didn't work, I'd unscrew the bulb and put one of the new ones in, and almost always it would light.

After a while my father returned and I proudly showed him how I had already been replacing some of the bulbs. His expression changed and he asked me how long I had the lights on and I said since he left to go downstairs. He was already moving to the other side of the room to the wall plug as I was telling him and quickly unplugged the strings of lights.

Then I found out why he was alarmed.



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Some of the lights had already made brown spots on the carpeting. I guess I knew when they were on the tree, not to try to unscrew one when it was on because it was hot, but never thought about it burning the rug. My father said he only plugged them in briefly to identify the burned out ones, and then unplugged the string to replace the ones that didn't light. And only one string at a time.

We worked with some cleaner on the rug and some of it came out, but I think for the rest of the years that I lived in our old house, if you knew where to look, you'd see those little brown spots that tell you not to lay Christmas tree lights on the rug to test them, at least not very long.

The lights for the outdoor cedar trees growing with the shrubbery were even bigger, I think about 15 watts, and they were tested on the grass outside, which I don't guess it mattered if a few blades got singed in the wintertime.

The decorating continued all day, as I was used to doing. Lights all strung on the inside and outside trees and some fresh pine boughs brought in for a mantel decoration. In addition to the tree, it gave a great holiday smell to the air that we kids loved. It really smelled like Christmas was here and all the bright multi-colored lights proved it.

At night it was a joy. My father even built a giant candle out of several sections of stove pipe painted red, mounted in a 5 gallon bucket of sand for a base to hold it upright with a round kerosene burning lantern on top. They were used as night roadside warnings of open ditches in those days. He even dripped some white paraf-

fin wax down the side, and it really looked like a giant red candle with a real flame in the front yard, complete with pine boughs in front, hiding a metal cased reflecting spotlight at the base pointing up to illuminate the giant candle at night.

Ah, Christmas would be coming soon and all I wanted was a Daisy Pump BB Air rifle. I got my Red Ryder Lever BB gun the year before, and I heard tell these pumps were much more powerful and would kill a squirrel. I did get that Daisy Pump, "King of the Air Rifles" at \$9.95 for Christmas after writing my letter to Santa, and the stories after that are for another time.



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# The Story of Peaches

by Jessie Carlton



For the past three years I have worked in a veterinary clinic as a technician. Though three years is relatively a short period of time, I have seen many stray, injured, homeless and nameless cats come through the front door and sadly, not all leave through that door either. For the lucky few whose injuries can be mended along with their trust in humanity, they are sure to find a loving home where they are accepted as member of the family to be cherished and cared for. This story is about one such cat.

It was during the end of the summer and to be quite honest I can't tell you the exact date. There are always bound to be a few cats left behind to fend for themselves. I don't recall her admittance into the hospital because the summer was a busy one and with the amount of cases you see in one day they all start to blur together in the end.

I do remember seeing this average sized, muted calico huddled in the back of her cage, her hind end slumped unnaturally behind her. Her beautiful vibrant green eyes peered back at me, her pupils as big as saucers. She looked so meek and terrified, cramped in the corner of her small space, but she had a certain welcoming quality about her that you immediately knew she had a home at one time.

The doctor ordered a couple x-rays of her pelvis because he was quite sure it was broken. Surprisingly given her situation and the discomfort she was in she laid still

while her pictures were taken. Sure enough her pelvis was broken and quite badly at that. She was still considered a stray at this point, and with strays drastic measures normally are not taken unless necessary, so surgery was counted out as an option for the time being. It was assumed she had been hit by a car by the nature of her injury.

We had run an ad the paper advertising this found cat in hopes someone who was missing her would read the lost and found section. No such luck. As time went on she became the clinic's cat and once she had healed she would have the chance to charm someone into

bringing her into their life. She was quite the charmer once she started to feel better. She would rise up unsteadily on her feet and hobble over to you so she could rub her head on your hands.

Once the summer rush was over I had more time to spend with the cats on the top row. The top row consisted of cats recovering from surgery, up for adoption and the occasional boarder. I took an immediate liking to the calico because she was so eager for attention, desperate even. She'd squawk at you until you came over to her cage and petted her. Basking in the attention she'd roll over on her side and gaze up at you, giving a kitten sized 'mew' that was like her "thank you".



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A few months after her arrival, once appointments and surgery slowed I decided to let the calico into the cat room, an exam room for cats and small dogs, so she could work on building up muscle mass in her hind legs. Her muscles had atrophied in her hindquarters giving her front half a bulky football player look. I was committed to letting her out for short periods of time every day in hopes that once she built her strength back she'd be able to go up for adoption. Unfortunately since she was 'only' a stray, not much attention had been given to her and it wasn't taken note of that she could not use her right hind leg.

I had the doctor examine her leg and he determined she had deep feeling in her leg but not enough for her to use it. When she walked or ran the leg would flop around behind her. The doctor was not sure if she'd ever regain the use of the leg but only time would tell. This was a big disappointment to me since I felt no one would want to take a handicapped cat on - never mind the fact that if she was never able to use the leg and it dragged on the ground and began to ulcerate - then it would have to be amputated.

Those big green eyes began to lurk in my mind on my off days and that cry for attention began to hit a sensitive spot. I kept thinking that if I could take her for a little while to my house she would get more exercise there rather than the clinic and quite possibly start to use that leg again. I had a large enclosure that I used for my other cat, Fallen, and figured when I was not home the calico could stay in there which was much bigger than her current cage.

After a few days of tossing the idea around in my head I decided to propose the idea to my boss who didn't hesitate to say yes. That night I got the cage out and set everything up: a litter pan, food and water dish, a big comfy towel and of course some toys. She was ready to come home. Before I brought her home, she needed a name. For a long time I had been calling her 'the calico' but I felt she needed a name like she needed a

home. I tossed around a bunch of names and even called upon my friends at The Cat Arena for ideas. I eventually settled on Peach Nobbier or Peaches for short and the name met with great approval at the office, which is a rare thing since we always seem to disagree on what to name the cats.

Once the day came to bring the beauty home I was beyond excited because I knew she'd be a lot of fun to have around even if this was only a temporary situation. My plan was to keep her with me until she either built up enough strength or started using that leg again. Then I'd go on the hunt for the perfect home for her. Each day that passed when she was with me the list of criteria for her future home grew as I became more attached.

On her first day home I expected her to hunch in the back of her cat enclosure as she had done in her cage at the office in the beginning. To my amazement she cried and cried in that cage and she would not let up until I let her out. I kept the door of the computer room closed where the cage was kept figuring she'd be satisfied with this amount of space but she'd be safely confined from the other cats and the two dogs she had yet to meet.

Of course she was not happy in the computer room either and would not stop crying until I let her into the living room and this went on until she had the immediate run of the house. It was much easier to close everyone else up rather than her.

As the days passed she became more comfortable with Brian, my boyfriend, me, the dogs and the other four cats. She was still at my house with the understanding she would soon be leaving. One night Brian and I were sitting on the couch watch-

ing television. Peaches was sitting in between us as she had been for the few short weeks she was with us. As she squawked away and nudged the both of us for affection, Brian turned to me and said we'd be stupid to give up a cat this wonderful. Indeed he was right. With each of our cats having very different personalities, Peaches was definitely the most affectionate and sweet. We would have been crazy to give her up because there would never be another like her.

I knew in the back of my mind there was no home that would have been good enough for her even if they served her food on a gold platter every night.

Even though I would never in my right mind agree to five cats I had to make an exception for this one. Fours months after her accident she is doing very well. Her back end has filled out with muscle and she has started to use her right leg for balance. I have high hopes that she will recover the full or at least partial use of the leg. No matter the outcome, we love her just as much, but I learned a very important lesson through all of this. I should never try and foster unless I am looking for another furry family member. Period.

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# 1989 Christmas

by Doris Posey

Christmas 1989 marked our first full year in Huntsville Alabama, and frankly, after the November tornadoes of that year I wasn't sure I wanted to stay. But Huntsville has a way of growing on you; and as a family, it was a good year for us as we were blessed with new friends and good neighbors. So we planned to continue our Christmas Eve Open House tradition of past years to celebrate our favorite holiday. Our son invited his friends, and my husband and I invited co-workers, friends and neighbors.

For weeks we planned and baked, decorated the house, and trimmed the tree in anticipation of a festive evening of food and friendship. The plan was to attend early evening Mass and hurry home before the guests arrived to start the fireplace, light the candles and put on our favorite selections of Christmas music. We'd scurry around making fresh coffee and cocoa and spread the table with holiday goodies. It was our little way of sharing cheer with our friends and neighbors.

But that year our holiday tradition took a sudden turn. In the wee hours of the icy cold night before Christmas Eve we awoke to a loud burst and spewing water in our upstairs bathroom and north wall below it. It was obvious - a broken water pipe. Immediately, we jumped up, bundled up and ran outside to the street to turn off the main water valve. With a flashlight in hand and a wrench from the garage we were on the cold ground in a few frantic minutes. Once the water was turned off we knew there was nothing more we could do but assess the damage. It was a long night and a not so enjoyable Christmas Eve day as we spent it making phone calls to our insurance agent trying to track down a plumber who could help us that day. It was wishful thinking to find a plumber on Christmas Eve so we faced the only inevitable decision - cancelling our Christmas Eve Open House and going to a hotel.

Thankfully, we were invited to join some good neighbors for Christmas Eve dinner, but waking up on Christmas morning in a hotel was less than cheerful.

That year we learned important survival skills conducive to living in Huntsville. We learned to be weather watchers and heed the warnings of the local forecasters when inclement weather is impending. During the tornadoes they kept us informed and warned us of when and how to take cover. In the winter North Alabama can occasionally get unseasonable cold spells bringing temperatures well below freezing. During these cold nights they advise to let the water faucets drip to prevent freezing. Good advice back then and now. We're just thankful to have had many more Merry Christmases here in Huntsville where we still call home.

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## Schedule for Spring 2015

January 26, 2015	6:30 p.m.	Mayor Battle	The State of the City
January 26, 2015	7:40 p.m.	Judge Alan Mann	The Court System
February 2, 2015	6:30 p.m.	Phil Price	DUI Law
February 2, 2015	7:40 p.m.	Connie Glass	Elder Law
February 9, 2015	6:30 p.m.	Joan Marie Sullivan	Divorce Law
February 9, 2015	7:40 p.m.	Brian D. Clark	Criminal Law
February 16, 2015	6:30 p.m.	Perry Shuttlesworth	Nursing Home Law
February 16, 2015	7:40 p.m.	Jim Richardson	Insurance Law
February 23, 2015	6:30 p.m.	Richard Chesnut	Real Estate
February 23, 2015	7:40 p.m.	Ed Gentle	Mass Settlements
March 2, 2015	6:30 p.m.	Matt Glover	Product Liability Law
March 2, 2015	7:40 p.m.	Mike Wisner	Taxes and the IRS
March 9, 2015	6:30 p.m.	Josh Hayes	Roll On 18-Wheeler
March 9, 2015	7:40 p.m.	Doug Martinson, II	Wills, Trusts, Estates
March 16, 2015	6:30 p.m.	Bob Prince	How Insurance Companies Defend Claims
March 16, 2015	7:40 p.m.	Greg Reeves	Tort Law
March 30, 2015	6:30 p.m.	Allen Brinkley	Q&A
April 6, 2015	6:30 p.m.	Justice Bernard Harwood	The Alabama Court System
April 6, 2015	7:40 p.m.	Hank Sherrod	Civil Rights & the Police
April 6, 2015	8:40 p.m.	Allen Brinkley	Graduation

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# Weihnachten in Berlin



by Ken Owens

"Christmas in Berlin" has always been a magical time. The season is celebrated by a great majority of Berlin's population, and always has been eagerly anticipated. Children and adults

all seem to immerse themselves in the festivity, cookery and good will toward all during this special time of the year.

However, Christmas seasons during the World War II years (1940-1945) were different.

My mother, Dr. Annelie Owens, was 20 years old in 1940 and living with her family (her mother, father and 3 older brothers) in the heart of Berlin. She was in the middle of her studies at the Friedrich Wilhelms University of Berlin that would lead to her M. D. degree in 1945. Her father was a teacher of the deaf and mute, one of the very few such instructors, at that time, in the whole world. Each of her three brothers had, by now, been conscripted into the service of the Third Reich, two in the Wehrmacht (Army) and one in the Luftwaffe (Air Force). Her mother, a caring and energetic woman, was responsible for the household and all the chores it entailed.

Mom's early-war Christmas memories are not unpleasant at all.

In 1940 the war was young and the morale was high. Food, clothing and Christmas gifts were still plentiful, and the newly employed population was ready to celebrate.

Mom recalls that their Christmas dinners were mostly traditional. Her mother would begin preparations for the family feast midday on Christmas Eve, although dinner would not be served until Christmas Day. Mom wanted to help in the preparation, and did so, although it wasn't long before the "expert" took total control of the process. Soon, the house was enveloped in the aromas of a roast-

ing goose, boiling potatoes, vegetables and spices, and a host of other edibles.

And oh, the desserts.... Those buttery, baked, delicious homemade concoctions that only Germans seem to have perfected: torts, cookies, pfefferkuchen, fruit pies, crumble cake, short bread, marzipan candies and more.

Mom's brothers were able to save and share some military rations they would bring home on their Christmas furlough, but these were usually saved in the pantry for the leaner times that would certainly come later, including cigarettes, salt pork, cheese and breads.

All of this took place in an almost iconic setting. There was always the venerable Christmas tree, illuminated by live candles, and adorned with family-crafted decorations. Trays of baked delights were always close by, for this was the season for family and visits by close friends.

Mom remembers that Christmas Eve and Christmas were days of visits and entertaining. Close friends and other family members would come by, often bringing a small gift, some cookies and nuts, or the occasional wine. Some of her father's students would occasionally live with them for a time (particularly, one little Russian boy) and they were always treated as one of the family.

She recalls the Christmas snow and bitter cold that seemed to always accompany each year's yuletide. During these frigid days and nights, the home was kept warm and cozy from floor to ceiling. This was accomplished by a wood-burning (later, coal-burning, due to lack of wood)) stove, made of



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thick ceramic tile, that occupied an entire wall of the dining room.

Gift-giving (and receiving) was much different than we see today. Then, one wished for a single item that was dear and important to them. Mom recalls her earlier wishes included dolls, a special clothing item, and later, a new fountain pen to use at medical school. She recalls her brothers asked for items like a new suit, a small caliber hunting rifle, a pocket knife, or a train set. Compare these to what the typical parent hears today!

The Christmas of 1940 was the last Christmas Mom had with her entire family.

By Christmas of 1941, her brothers were scattered in all directions in their military service (one was in North Africa, another on the Eastern Front in the Russian Offensive, and another outside Berlin, but still in Germany). It became increasingly difficult, then impossible, to reunite for the holidays. The country was, after all, in total war.

In addition, in late 1942, Berlin became a more common target for bombing raids by the Allies, and soon, Berlin saw nearly continuous aerial bombing from the British by night, and the Americans by day.

Mom recalls how everything drastically changed, mostly in time for Christmas of 1943. Although German morale was still high, food supplies were becoming scarcer and portions of Berlin were already bombed out. This Christmas dinner was mostly comprised of cabbage, a few small potatoes and a scrawny chicken. Fewer family members, students, and friends came calling this year, and even this dinner was interrupted by air raid sirens, forcing everyone to the "Luftschutzkeller" (air raid shelter). Spending hours in the shelter became commonplace. Mom remembers often bringing her medical books with her into the shelter, in order to continue with her studying.

Christmas of 1944 was one of the darkest in Berlin for Mom's

family. Her home had been bombed (she was at the University at the time) and they were displaced in mid-year. (Availability for a new home in Berlin was almost nonexistent now. Mom and her mother moved in with friends, then moved again from time to time.) She recalls walking down the rubble-strewn city streets with her mother, with all their remaining belongings pulled behind them on a small wagon.

One of her brothers was MIA and never heard from since. Another lost his leg in North Africa, and her father died before Christmas. Christmas of 1945 was bitter-sweet.

Mom's family had lost nearly everything, including 2 family members and countless friends, but at least she and her mother were comparatively

safe, having survived the Soviet rampage through Berlin in April.

By then, she was working as a physician with the American occupation forces, and about to embark on new Christmas adventures in an entirely different part of the world: the USA.

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# Old Holiday Beliefs

## CHRISTMAS

\* Keep that Yule log blazing in your open fire, because it's considered bad luck to light a fresh fire during the twelve days of Christmas. Don't forget to keep the ashes to bury along with your plant seeds in the spring, and you'll be assured of a bumper crop.

\* Odd numbers at the Christmas dinner table is bad luck; so have an extra plate in readiness for an unexpected person.

\* The legs of the dining table are to be tied with string to protect the house from thieves and burglars in the coming year; and don't forget to place a bowl of garlic under the dining table and fish scales under the dinner plates for luck.

\* If you take a candle to church this Christmas, don't bring it home; blow it out and leave it for the vicar to bring him good luck. Oh and don't wear new shoes Christmas Day, bad luck for you.

\* The nearer the New Moon is to Christmas Day, the harder the winter.

\* A man may kiss a girl standing under the sprig of mistletoe, but only if he

plucks a berry from the plant and presents it to her with each kiss. Once the berries are gone, the kissing stops.

\* Those born on Christmas day will never encounter a ghost, nor will they have anything to fear from spirits. They're also protected from death by drowning or hanging.

\* Evergreens to bring into your home at Christmas are holly, the symbol of eternal life; ivy, rosemary, bay leaves and, of course, mistletoe to keep evil spirits away.

## WINTER

\* A snowy winter... a rich summer and fall; a foot of snow will make things grow.

\* If the first calf born in the winter is white, expect a real bad winter, but if the first butterfly you see

this year is white, you'll have good luck the rest of the year.

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**A lesson from the Dog**

\* In late winter, do not sit at your front door step to do your knitting, as that could lengthen the winter well into spring.

**NEW YEARS DAY**

\* Just as the clock strikes twelve the head of the house should open the door in order to allow the Old Year to pass out and the New Year to come in.

\* Make as much noise as possible on New Years Eve to keep the evil spirits away.

\* Do not forget the kissing at midnight to ensure that those affections and ties will continue throughout the next twelve months.

\* To dance in the open air, especially round a tree, on New Year's Day is declared to ensure luck in love and prosperity and freedom from ill health during the coming twelve months. (Here we go round the mulberry bush, on a cold and frosty morning).

\* Wear something new on January 1st to increase the likelihood of your receiving more new garments during the year to follow.

\* Make sure you do something related to your work on the first day of the year. Even if you don't go near your place of work that day, you must be successful at it, but to engage in a

serious work project on that day is very unlucky.

\* Do not pay back loans or lend money or other precious items on New Year's Day. To do so is to guarantee you'll be paying out all year.

\* Nothing is to leave the house on the first day of the year. If you have a present to deliver on New Year's Day, leave them in the car overnight. Don't even put rubbish or empties to the dust bin.

\* Stock up your food cupboards and fill your wallet; empty pockets or empty cupboards on New Years Eve foretells a year of poverty.

\* Don't use those scissors on New Years Day, you'll cut off your good fortune.





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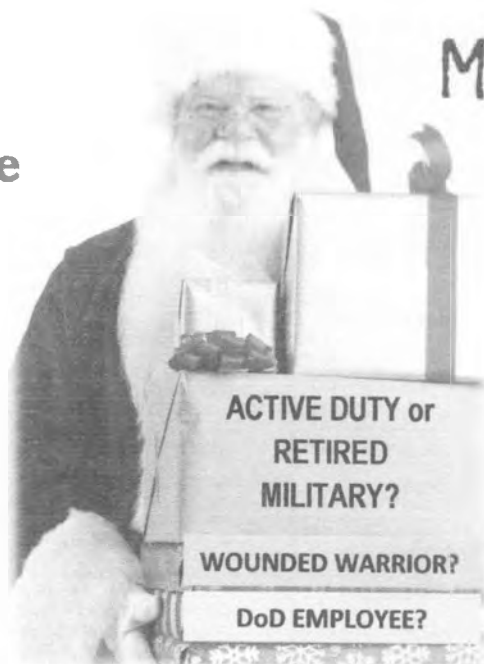


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Merry Christmas



# Almost Missed Christmas

by Reagan Waldron,  
Madison Academy

It was December 1951 in West Blocton, Alabama. Doris was about nine years old and lived with her mom, (Maggie Logan), dad, (Patrick) and three brothers in a two bedroom house in the country. Doris' older sister, Margaret, was living in Birmingham at the time but planned to come home for Christmas. Patrick, a coal miner in the small town, was a hard worker. He took care of the few animals they had on their land. Nana's dad was laid off from the coal mines a few months prior to Christmas and money was scarce. They had little money for necessities like food and clothes.

Doris felt sad because she knew it was unlikely they would have money leftover for a present or for a special Christmas dinner that year. Her dad had done the best he could to provide for his family by taking on various odd jobs. A lady in town asked him to dig a well for her and he accepted the job and worked diligently every day. Maggie Logan was a hard worker, too. She did her best to keep the few clothes they had mended and clean. She worked hard in their garden and helped with the animals and spent much of her day cooking for the family.

Her mom was the type of woman who never let you know if she was worried. She always had a kind word to say to everyone and was always ready to help others. She knew how to be content with what she had or in whatever circumstance she was in.

With Christmas Day approaching, the family went into the woods to search for their tree. She was so excited

when they found a cedar tree. In the past, they often had to settle for a pine tree because they couldn't find a cedar, but this year they found one. It wasn't very big or very full, but they were happy nonetheless. They did not have any decorations so they made their own paper garlands. Maggie Logan found lights to put on the tree. It did not look spectacular, but it was significant to them because they did all the work and it felt very satisfying.

By Christmas Eve, Doris could tell her mom seemed anxious, even a little sad. Being a third grader, she did not understand the entire meaning behind her mom's feelings, but she knew it prob-

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ably was centered around their lack of money. Patrick finally completed the well. He arrived home late in the afternoon on Christmas Eve carrying a turkey in one hand and his payment for digging the well in the other! Everyone was thrilled.

With about an hour before the stores would be closing for the holiday, her parents decided to go to town and try to get a few things for Christmas Day. They went to the Five and Dime store and picked up a gift for each child. Then they headed to the grocery store to get food for their Christmas dinner.

When they returned home, there was work to be done. Her mom and her sister, Margaret, stayed up late preparing food. Maggie Logan had to kill the turkey and get it ready to cook. They made fruit salad and Lane Cake. This cake was very special to them, it contained coconut and other ingredients that they weren't able to afford regularly. Doris loved this cake and went into the kitchen while they were baking and ate some the icing they had prepared.

There was so much joy and excitement in the house and no one seemed to mind all the work. She was able to stay up late that Christmas Eve. She had never done that before. When she finally made it to bed, she surely had a smile on her face.

Christmas morning came, and she had a gift under the tree, her favorite thing, paper dolls. They had a wonderful lunch with turkey, vegetables, fruit salad and Lane Cake.



## Amish Cures for Nerve & Sleep Disorders

Eat light meals in the evening.

Drink teas made from catnip, skullcap, peppermint, goldenseal, black cohosh or blue vervain before bedtime.

Before retiring, rub the feet well with vinegar water.

Replace fear with strength and confidence. Think no evil of your neighbor. Give love and love will be returned.

Do not exalt yourself, as pride goes before the fall.

Consider all the nice things that people do for you and what you can do for others. Think good thoughts that are pure, just, and honest.



*Tales of the 319th* by Joseph W. Connaughton

In his own words, a WWII Soldier's Story about the famous and not so famous men bonded by bravery and belief in each other.

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*Tales of the 319th* by Huntsville's Joe Connaughton, a member of this elite group of men, is a series of chronological stories that reveal their beginning as well as the sacrifices and trials that hardened these men of the air and brought about their ultimate success. What emerges is a ringing endorsement of the intelligence, perseverance, and, yes, courage of these men of what many view as the "finest generation."





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# An Unusual Christmas

by Haley Kozuch,  
Hazel Green High School

(This story is about Haley Kozuch's grandmother, Malinda McLeary)

It was Christmas Eve in 1957, and nine year old Malinda was at church packing Christmas baskets. Each year around this time, her Huntsville Adventist Church would collect food and pack it into baskets and give them to needy families in the area. Christmas was one of her favorite times of the year and she was so excited to be helping out. Tomorrow morning she would be on her way to those selected families, giving them these wonderful gifts. The church received many donations of canned food items as well as toys for the children. Tonight, many adults brought the more perishable items and packed them into the baskets as well. The packing did not take as long due to all the helpers, so they were able to go home and get some rest before their early morning the next day.

Malinda was so excited about the project, as well as Santa coming, that she could hardly sleep. She tossed and turned all night long. Around two in the morning, she rose from her bed to check on her favorite dog. Amber, a sweet tempered golden retriever, was pregnant, and Malinda always checked on her every night before she went to bed. With all the excitement about the Christmas baskets, the thought of checking on Amber had completely slipped Malinda's mind. Luckily, she remembered and quickly slipped into the kitchen to check on her beloved dog.

Malinda was quite surprised to see that Amber was in labor. Malinda dashed to her parents' room and quickly woke them up. They all came into the kitchen to make sure Amber was all right. Malinda, being the animal lover that she was, tried to make Am-

ber as comfortable as she could. She was very concerned and sat by Amber the entire time. They sat there for an hour or two, and finally Amber gave birth. She had two beautiful golden retriever puppies. One was a boy, and the other a girl. Malinda's mother named the girl Penelope and her father named the boy Pete. They dried the puppies and made them a warm bed with their mom. They made sure the dogs had everything they needed to stay warm and well-nourished. By the time everything was fixed for the puppies, it was almost time to go deliver Christmas baskets.

Excitedly, Malinda dressed in her warmest clothes as fast as she could. Her parents did the same; and once they ate a quick breakfast, they were on their way. They arrived at their church with a handful of other volunteers and began to put Christmas baskets in cars and figure out their destinations.

Malinda's family was assigned to two houses in the downtown area of Huntsville. They arrived in the neighborhood and found the houses. Not wanting to embarrass the families, they left the baskets on the doorstep along with a note telling how the Huntsville Adventist Church, as well as God, loved them. The basket also included an invitation to service. Malinda grew very tired by the time they were

done, but she knew that she would remember this eventful Christmas for many years to come.

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# EFFECTIVE TREATMENT FOR VARICOSE VEINS

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

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

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

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

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



**JAMES C. NIX III, M.D.**

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

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

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# Four Stages of Christmas

by Malcolm W. Miller

When you live as long as I have you realize that Christmas comes in stages. My first stage of Christmas ended on a cold Christmas Eve day as Papa and I walked out the gravel road toward Jesse Burchfield's store in Ryland. I can still remember the chilling words that Papa said to me like it was yesterday. He said "Son there won't be any Sandy Claus this year". This is what he called Santa. He said that I could get some fire crackers, but to me that was the end of Christmas as I had known it as a child.

After that time there was no more anticipation of getting up on Christmas morning and looking under the tree. We were poor sharecroppers so I never did get much of anything for Christmas, but there was still that anticipation to look forward too. The apples, oranges, candy, etc. were a real treat at Christmas. I must have been eight or nine years old and knew the facts of life but I was totally unprepared for this day. I am sure Papa didn't realize how his words hurt me but that day ended my first stage of Christmas.

My second stage of Christmas started when my baby girl Marie was born in nineteen forty-seven. Once again the thrill of Christmas morning was back, and a few years later my son Tommy was born, then later my son Doug was born. Happy days were here again. As I mentioned before we were very poor when I was a child and I got very little for Christmas so I spent way too much on my kids Christmas gifts from Santa and me. Those years of a young family were hard, but I am certain not as hard as my parents' years with their seven boys. Although times were hard there were happy and joyous times and many Christmas memories were made that I now think back on. I hate to admit it, but in fact there were times that I still owed some for the previous year's gifts when Christmas came again.

Much too soon my children grew up and had families of their own; thus begins the third stage of Christmas, grandchildren. Now in stage three I could enjoy Christmas with my grandchildren, and just like with my own children I always spent too much on my grandchildren but when you love kids the way I do, there is nothing like the thrill of watching their faces all aglow as they unwrap gifts. No matter what

is in the package the children's faces light up with anticipation and watching them is a very special pleasure.

As with my family the grandchildren grew up and started families of their own. This begins the fourth stage of Christmas, great grandkids, and they are truly a blessing because they are both great and grand. I feel certain that I have the sweetest great grandchildren. There are seven of them in the world now and I am so looking forward to this Christmas. Since I am eighty-seven years old I don't know how many Christmases I have left. But I know that I am in my last stage of Christmas, and I have been truly blessed by all the Christmases I have lived to experience.

Incidentally my wife Lois has already bought all the great grandchildren presents for this Christmas and I am eagerly awaiting the Christmas party at my granddaughter's where they open them. And, by the way, they are paid for when purchased, not charged as they were when I was raising my family.

I may not have as many future Christmases as past Christmases, but I surely plan to enjoy this one and future ones with the children, grandchildren and great grandchildren.

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# Remembering Pearl Harbor

Harold Pouyadou, a crewman in a Navy aircraft photographic reconnaissance unit on Ford Island, recalled being awakened by the sound of aircraft that Sunday morning in 1941.

"We were on the third floor of the barracks," he said. "I looked out the window and the planes were flying by so low they were below us."

As he watched, the Japanese planes destroyed the Navy seaplanes next to his unit's aircraft. The photo planes of his squadron, however, were untouched.

The attack on Pearl Harbor was a surprise military strike conducted by the Imperial Japanese Navy against the United States Naval Base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, on the morning of December 7, 1941. The attack led to the United States' entry into World War II.

The attack came as a profound shock to the American people and led directly to the American entry into World War II in both the Pacific and European theaters. The following day, December 8, the United States declared war on Japan.

The attack was intended as a preventive action in order to keep the U.S. Pacific Fleet from interfering with military actions the Empire of Japan was planning in Southeast Asia against overseas territories of the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, and the United States.

The base was attacked by 353 Japanese fighter planes, bombers and torpedo planes in two waves, launched from six aircraft carriers. All eight U.S. Navy battleships were damaged, with four being sunk. All but one (Arizona) were later raised, and six of the eight battleships were returned to service and went on to fight in the war. 2,403 Americans were killed and 1,178 others were wounded. Important base installations such as the power station, shipyard, maintenance, and fuel and torpedo storage facilities, as well as the submarine piers and headquarters building were not attacked.

The lack of any formal warning, particularly while negotiations were still apparently ongoing, led President Franklin D. Roosevelt to proclaim December 7, 1941, "A date which will live in infamy".

Because the attack happened without a declaration of war and without explicit warning, the attack on Pearl Harbor was judged by the Tokyo Trials to be a war crime.



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# The Santa Encounter

by Hannah Williams,  
Madison Academy

In the late 1960s in Rogersville, Alabama, the James children wanted to meet the real Santa, so they fabricated a plan to do just that. A few nights before Christmas, the kids were talking at dinner and they decided to have meetings after their parents went to bed.

The next night, the night before Christmas Eve, all the children got together and came up with a master plan of how they were going to meet Santa. There were six children in the James family, so shifts seemed to be a good idea. They came up with a schedule of who was going to stay up at which hour, and if someone saw Santa on their shift, they had to quietly

wake up all the other children so they could meet Santa, too.

This was a good idea, but it needed more. Once they met Santa, what were they going to do? They needed to know what to ask for. They each carefully untaped the presents so neatly wrapped that were already sitting under the tree. Once they saw what they were already going to get they decided what else they were going to ask for. They thought of everything. All they had to do was wait patiently until Christmas Eve to follow through with this plan.

Christmas Eve arrived and the children were so excited to carry out their so brilliantly thought-out plan. After their parents went to bed, the kids decided that it was "go time." The boys, Kenny and Tommy, had their shift. The two boys eagerly waited for a big man in a red suit to shimmy down the chimney, but nothing happened. But, during Belinda and

Trina's shift, they heard a noise, it was Santa! The girls turned in amazement and saw a oversized man with a beard smile back at them. Belinda and Trina went to wake up the other children, so excited that they were the ones to catch Santa. Things are going just as planned, right? Wrong. Belinda and Trina had only imagined Santa standing there. Belinda and Trina were so ashamed. The young girls were also terrified of this person that they just happened to imagine. So, they invited themselves in to their brother Kenny's room. Little Belinda was so scared, she couldn't bring herself to bring her head above the covers the entire night!

Christmas morning, the children's parents came to wake them all up. Sitting around the lit tree, the kids joyfully opened their presents from their parents, still thinking about Santa, and how close they had been to seeing him.



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# Tweetie's Pet Tips

## Odd Animal Superstitions

"Spooky!"

*Tweetie*



\* When you find a fuzzy caterpillar, throw it over your shoulder for good luck.

\* If you ever see a one-eyed cat, spit on your thumb, stamp it in the palm of your hand and make a wish.

\* If a woman sees a robin flying overhead on Valentine's Day, it means she will marry a sailor. If she sees a sparrow, she will marry a poor man and be very happy. If she sees a goldfinch, she will marry a millionaire.

\* If ants build their home near your front door, expect financial security.

\* Seeing ants carrying their eggs is an omen of very bad weather.

\* Meeting a black goat on a bridle path indicates treasure is nearby.

\* If the earthworms come out of the earth in the day, we know we can expect rain; but seeing earthworms after rain in the autumn, we expect a mild winter.

\* Seeing swans on a Friday morning is good luck, however if you see swans on a Friday evening it is bad luck. Swans taking to the air, expect strong winds, but if you see just three flying together it could mean a national disaster.

\* A strong smelling billy goat lessens the chances of your cattle and horses falling sick.

\* When the moon is waxing, it is said trees will grow straighter if you cut branches at this time, rats eat more poison set out for them, and moles make more molehills.

\* If a bee lands on your hand, expect wealth; if a bee lands on your head, you will rise to greatness; if a bee is flying round a sleeping child, the child will have a happy life; but if the bees are lethargic, this is an omen of misfortune or war and if they suddenly vacate their hive, this could be an omen of death.

\* If you mistakenly walk into a spiders web, you will soon meet a friend; if you spy a spider spinning a web you will get new clothes; but seeing a spider's web

in a kitchen says there is little love in that house.

\* Black rabbits are thought to host the souls of human beings. White rabbits are said to be really witches and

the saying "White Rabbit" on the first day of each month brings luck.

\* If a bat flies into your house there are ghosts about. Even worse, if a bat flies around a house 3 times this is an omen of death.

\* If bats come out early and fly around playfully good weather is ahead.

\* Brass horse ornaments are used to protect horses from witches.

\* Meeting a dalmatian dog is especially lucky & a greyhound with a white spot on its forehead is good fortune coming your way.

\* Never bet on a horse whose name has been changed. Bad luck to change the name of any horse and it's bad luck to wish a jockey good luck before his race.

\* Be kind to a bee entering your home, it's a sign that you will soon have a visitor.

If you kill the bee the visitor will be unpleasant and bring bad luck. Beware a swarm of bees settling on a roof is an omen that the house will burn down.

\* When playing cards and asked to deal from a choice of 2 packs, always choose the one farthest away from you. If a dog is in the room while a game is on, it is said to cause disputes.

### Christmas:

\* If you can find a kneeling donkey on Christmas Eve, and make the sign of the cross on its back, you will get your heart's desire.

\* The Irish believe that the gates of heaven open at midnight on Christmas Eve. Those who die at that time go straight through without having to wait in purgatory.

\* Hay carried around a church three times on Christmas Eve was said to ensure that cattle would fatten easier on less feed in the year to come.

\* The weather on each of the twelve days of Christmas signifies what the weather will be on the appropriate month of the coming year.

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One of Tom's favorite people in the world was Aunt Eunice, who wrote our "Huntsville Coffee Talk" column for years before her death. I think Tom would want to run this 2000 Christmas column that Aunt Eunice wrote, in honor of her.

Hi ya'll. It sure has been a short year and now it's time for Christmas! The year has been great, lots of happiness, joy, and sadness. But we must move on. Hope you'll stay with us and never miss an "Old Huntsville" issue. I enjoy them so much.

The picture of the month was our own pal Tom Kenner of Channel 48 TV. I forgot the young lady's name that guessed - but I owe her a big country breakfast!

Cynthia Parson had a wonderful art show, comprised of her beautiful paintings, at 801 Franklin Street. I saw lots of friends looking good - Mr. and Mrs. Frank Moring, also glad to see J.R. Brooks, and his lovely wife Kikki. Cynthia's mother and Dad (the Masseys) and her sister Caroline. Great crowd - met Joe, the owner of 801 Franklin Street and he's really a great guy!

There is a group of people called Members of Towery & Towery of America. And recently I fed a group of them here and Mrs. Jack Towery of Fayetteville, Tenn., George & Delia Guise, Vancouver, Wa., Leon Towery and Janie Mac Towery Huffman of Huntsville, Ala. They were really having a blast.

Robbie and Bill Halsey and Jessie and Dennis Camalli gave me the honor of feeding

# Huntsville Coffee Talk

by Aunt Eunice

*With pearls of wisdom  
contributed by the Liar's Table*



them as they were touring Huntsville. Our sympathy goes to the Buck Brody family in the death of Mr. Brody. Been friends a long time and I love you all. Also, our sympathy to the Milton Pills family. Laura, we love you. Also to

Lisa Fanning on the death of her daughter in law. I love you very much.

Byron and Tillie Laird brought their guests to breakfast which included Jim and Phyllis Blazer, (Ben Williams) Byron's sister, from Melbar,



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Florida and Gaylon and Dean Boyd. They enjoyed it so much. Lots of laughing going on.

The election is over so what next? A great big congratulation goes to our many elected friends; Bud Cramer, Tommy Ragland, Jane Smith, Lynn Sherrod and Jerry Craig.

Maybe some names I missed and if so, we love you too. I know you will all do us a great job!

We had a breakfast for Bud Cramer on Election Day and, boy did the people show up! The way he spends time talking to everyone shows why he's re-elected every time.

We are going to miss Harold Harbin, Mr. Billy Harbin and Mr. Frank Riddick around the courthouse. You have worked hard and I wish for you all the very best life has to offer.

I've been thinking about old friends who once ate with me like Mr. Cecil Ashburn and Bill King (our state Senator). Tom Carney told me that he had seen them both recently and I was so glad to hear about them. Come in to see me and have a good breakfast!

My son-in-law Wayne Elkins had a five bypass heart surgery. Been rough but he's doing well now. Thanks to you all for your love and concern.

We keep hearing gossip that a member of the City Council has decided not to run again in the next election. Wonder who it could be?

Byron Laird had a successful book signing here at the restaurant on November 14 and greeted lots of his friends. His just published book called "Thou Shalt Not Boil Eggs in a Microwave" is chock-full of amusing stories. They will

make real nice Christmas presents!

I well recall the incident Byron tells about the night he missed a turn and got us lost and out of gas between Birmingham and Cullman. My dear friend, Lloyd Tomlinson, of the Outback Restaurant tells me he's really selling lots of gift certificates. Another good idea for a Christmas present for those who have everything!

Please attend the Christmas Play at Twickenham Church of Christ Dec. 15 and 16th - it's the best yet.

Congratulations to our "Mayor of Five Points" for getting the new gum named after him - "The Floyd Hardin Gum." Floyd is my good friend!

As I'm writing this column I get word that my dear friend Jerry Tomlin just lost his Dad. I'm so sorry and our sympathy goes to the Tomlin family.

Do you guys remember several years back that "Old Huntsville" had a cookbook that sold out in 3 months? That was back in 95. Well, Vol. II is here just in time for Christmas - Cathey Carney tells me it has even more recipes and Tips/Remedies than the first one! Shavers and Books A Million will carry it, and I'll have some here at the restaurant.

Our friends Steve and Jean Brandau spent Thanksgiving with their 21 month old granddaughter in Iowa. Talk about proud grandparents!

Ken Follett's new mystery novel should be in the bookstores any day. The story takes place in the 1950s and much of the plot is based here in Huntsville. It's called

"Code to Zero."

Our dear friend Loretta Spencer sure has been a busy woman since she was elected Mayor. She is a good person and has a big heart. We are lucky to have her.

For all the people who have asked my advice about the perfect Christmas present, I recommend the gift of Love ... it doesn't cost anything, it will be cherished forever and it will make us all better people.

I wish you and yours a great and Merry Christmas and hope to see you during the holidays. That's all for now but just remember I love all of you!

*Aunt Eunice*

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# The Christmas Gift

by Joseph Connaughton

Joe Connaughton is the author of a new book, published by The Ardent Writer Press, available now on Amazon, called "Tales of the 319th". In his own words, a WWII Soldier's story about the famous and not so famous men bonded by bravery and belief in each other.

"Christmas Gift! Christmas Gift!" I barely heard that gravelly voice as I awoke from a deep sleep on that early December 25, 1931 morning. I rubbed my eyes and saw the blurring image of my Uncle Wy come into sharp focus. Oh, it is Christmas I knew for sure.

That's how my uncle started every Christmas morning. He had to be the first one to greet family members, as well as anyone who dropped by the house with that salutation before they could utter a word. It was a tradition.

My two sisters, Frances and Shirley, and I were raised by my Uncle Wynas and Aunt Elizabeth Adams in Tuscaloosa, Alabama along with their son and daughter, Clint and Carolyn. They took us in because my father, a World War I veteran, could not raise us after the tragic loss of our mother. Although their children were four to five years older than us, they always treated us as if we were their own, especially at Christmas. We weren't a poor family because Uncle Wy had a job as a salesman for a wholesale grocery distributor. We

always had food on the table. Nonetheless, by today's standards most everyone in those days would be called poor.

Christmas was a great time of the year for our family. It began in early December when Uncle Wy took us kids on a drive into the woods to find a Christmas tree. We loved that part, trailing behind him as he tried to make a decision on which tree to cut. He would ask our opinion, but I don't think it mattered. The tree had to be a tall tree to fit the living room. After cutting, it was tied to the top of the car with rope pulled through the car's lowered windows.

The next step was making a stand and setting up the tree in a corner of the living room. He and son Clint took over that job. The best part is that we all pitched in decorat-

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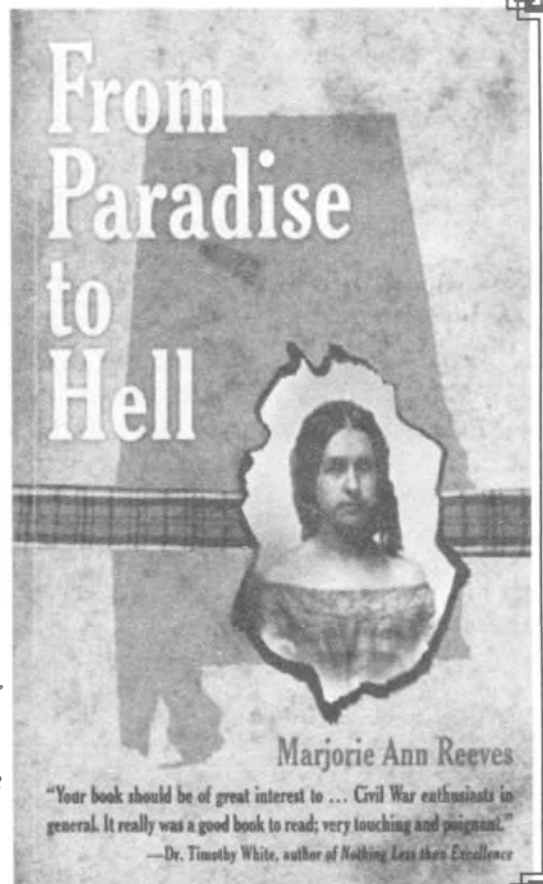
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ing the tree. There were no Christmas lights on our tree. We used colorful balls, a lot of tassel of different colors, and a wispy thing known as angel hair. After applying these, we loaded the tree with icicles and a final dusting with artificial snow. It really did look beautiful, even without lights. Leading up to Christmas, Aunt Elizabeth was busy planning and preparing for Christmas dinner at noon, which was a big deal. She, with the help of Uncle Wy, also prepared some of the Christmas goodies, in particular chocolate fudge and divinity candies. He would let me help him stir the divinity, and it had to be stiff before pouring. He would take over when my arm gave out and brag how an older man's arm was stronger than my eight-year old arm. Uncle also killed and dressed the bird – a scene I'd like to forget.

Excitement would build on Christmas morning, mainly because of Uncle Wy's rule that no one could go into the living room and see Santa's gifts until after breakfast. We did not exchange gifts. Everything was from Santa Claus. The gifts were not wrapped but were laid out in piles with a name by each. We could not run to the living room, but had to walk patiently behind Uncle Wy as he led us. That morning when we came into the living room, I knew what was mine.

I could see the bicycle from the hall door and ran over to it. It was my first bicycle. When I got to it, I recognized it as Clint's old bicycle that had been repainted and spruced up. That made no difference to me. It was great. Now I could ride to my Jr. High school and other places to play. I also

recognized the usual socks and underwear items with an added sweater. My sisters got roller skates and the usual gifts of clothes. We all delighted in the equally portioned goodies that included the candies, nuts (brazil nuts, pecans, etc.) and fruits (tangerines, grapes etc.) plus numerous firecrackers and sparklers.

This is an example of the highlights of my Great Depression Christmases. They may seem plain and drab compared to today's Christmas experiences of most

families, but they were the happiest times of my young life. I yearned for them nostalgically during Christmas on the Island of Corsica in WWII. Those memories helped us "keep on keeping on" flying missions over Southern France and Northern Italy.

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# Last Present Under the Tree

by Molly Kiel,  
Madison Academy

"Christmas." Memories of melodious traditional music, a red and green tinsel tree decorated, a pot of mouth watering apple cider served with snow flaked sprinkled sugar cookies fill my mind when I think of my past Christmases. The children of this generation often picture Christmas as being the best time of year to be rewarded for all the good they have done. They wake up to numerous presents under the tree, allowing the entire day to be devoted to opening presents.

What the children do not realize is that Christmas has not always been like this. The story of my daddy's Christmas Past in 1977 opened my eyes to the older, more genuine traditions of Christmas.

My dad's unforgettable Christmas memory began in the month of September. The Dallas Cowboys kicked off their first of many wins against the Minnesota Vikings. My dad, at the age of 9, prepared for what would be a dominating season by throwing the football in front of the barn in the backyard with his little brother. He would end up becoming a Dallas Cowboy fan that very day.

His love for the sport started with the Cowboys. For his 10th birthday, he asked for a Roger Staubach jersey. He wore the jersey every Sunday, and it was his prized possession. As the Cowboys dominated the early season, December came swiftly and so did the snow. The blustery Christmas jolted Russellville, Alabama with two inches of snow.

Two weeks before Christmas, my dad went into the white icy woods to play with his friends and his brother. As

they built snow forts, his friend Jeff asked all the boys what they were getting for Christmas. He had not even thought what to ask for. He knew Mamaw Kiel would let the grandkids pick out one gift.

That night after he took his bath and got ready for bed, he ran over to Mamaw Kiel's house to eat homemade cookies with milk. As they listened to Christmas music on the record player and ate their yummy bedtime snacks, Mamaw passed around the Sears catalog. She told each grandkid they could pick out one thing from that glorious book of wonders. "Oh the decision would be so hard," thought little Greg. Page by page numerous options appeared from Star Wars toys, to Atari, and "stylish" clothing; it was going to be a hard decision. There was no way to decide. The boys were ecstatic when they picked out their gift. Mamaw Kiel ordered the presents the next day in hopes that they would be delivered before Christmas.

Two weeks came and went and before the Kiel family knew it Christmas Eve arrived. The children who lived on the same street as my dad played in the snow all day. As the day ended, the excitement from my dad was unbearable; he could barely sleep.

On Christmas day, he was surprised by homemade biscuits and sizzling bacon. The boys opened their gifts from Santa, then from their mom and dad while they watched a Christmas parade amongst all the rattling. As they grinned until their cheeks hurt from their perfect presents it was time to

go to Mamaw Kiel's for Christmas dinner. My daddy can still remember to this day the smell of the roasting turkey and the butter melting on the homemade rolls.

After dinner was served and all was cleaned up, it was time. The younger grandkids always went first, but my dad didn't care. Last but not least my dad opened his one gift, the last one under the tree. He knew what he was getting and he still was psyched to see what it would really look like.

As the blue and silver sleeves came out of the box, he shrieked. It was just like he imagined. Exactly what he wanted. He would wear it everyday. To sleep. To eat. His brand new Dallas Cowboy's sweatshirt. The huge navy star on the front gave him chills. That was his favorite gift he had ever received. Even though he only had one box to open, he was happier with his new sweatshirt than kids are today with dozens of gifts to open.

My dad will always remember this simple joy of the perfect gift.

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# Christmas Drinks for Cold Nights

## Hot Spiced Cranberry Juice

4 c. cranberry juice  
1/4 c. orange juice  
3 whole cloves  
Honey to taste

Combine, heat and simmer for 10 minutes. Remove cloves and pour. Add cinnamon sticks to stir. 4 servings.

## Cinnamon and Nutmeg Coffee

Try a dash of cinnamon and nutmeg in your morning cup of coffee - wonderful!

## Hot Buttered Water

Take a pint of water, beat up the yolk of an egg with the water, put in a piece of butter as large as a walnut, two or three knobs of sugar, and keep stirring it all the time it is on the fire. When it begins to boil, keep pouring it between the saucepan and a mug til it is smooth and has a good froth; it is then fit to drink.

## Gluwein

2 liters red wine (Cabernet Sauvignon)  
1 liter white wine (Chardannay)  
2 c. brown sugar  
4 T. whole cloves  
8 cinnamon sticks  
1 frozen orange juice  
2 orange juice cans water  
1/2 c. lemon juice

Pour all in a large crock pot and heat to boiling. Turn down to about 300 degrees and let steep for 1-2 hours. Strain out the cloves but leave in the cinnamon sticks. Pour into mugs to serve, add a fresh cinnamon stick.

This is actually a good drink - they serve it on the ski slopes in Switzerland! You will not believe how it warms you up, body and soul, on a super cold day.

## Hot Mulled Apple Cider

1 quart unsweetened apple cider  
2 sticks cinnamon  
7 whole cloves

Put all in a saucepan and heat slowly. Simmer for 20 minutes. Strain and serve hot in mugs.

## Hot Tom and Jerry

3 egg whites - Beat to a stiff froth  
3 egg yolks Beat separately until light in color  
Beat into the yolks gradually:  
3 T. powdered sugar  
1/2 t. each ground allspice, cinnamon and cloves  
Fold the yolks into whites and pour 2 tablespoons of this mixture into each of four 8-oz. china mugs. Add to each mug: 1/2 jigger lukewarm brandy and 1 jigger lukewarm dark rum.

Fill mugs with very hot water, milk or coffee. Stir well and sprinkle the tops with grated nutmeg or cinnamon.

"Enjoy the little things in life. Someday you will look back and realize they were actually the big things."

John Richard

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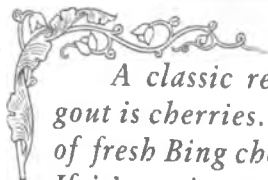
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*A classic remedy to relieve gout is cherries. Eat four ounces of fresh Bing cherries every day. If it's not in season, a good alternate is cherry juice or concentrate (at health food stores) - have one tablespoon 3 times a day. Frozen, canned or cherries in a jar is OK too. Or try strawberries - these and cherries have a good effect on gout as well as arthritis pain.*



# An Unforgettable Christmas

by Dan Shady



Christmas Eve 1957 left me with a memory that would last a lifetime. Home was Columbus, Ohio and my family consisted of younger brother Ronny (10), older brother Jerry (15), Mom, Dad (Dall Shady), and myself at age 14. A few months prior Dad had been working a temporary job in Detroit and while there, he was offered a job at Chrysler Corporation's newly formed missile support division in Huntsville. He would work in the Huntsville Industrial Center (HIC) building heading up Chrysler's new Design & Drafting Department, which provided contract support for the new space program in Huntsville. During that time, names that are household names today were uncommon to most; names like Werner Von Braun. Many families were relocating to Huntsville to support Dr. Von Braun and his team of German scientists who's efforts with the space program in Huntsville would have a lifelong impact on the future of many of these families, including ours.

Dad got his first exposure to airplanes at the ripe old age of 14 at Sullivan Avenue Airport, a small airport with a grass runway which was located on the west side of Columbus near our home. My Grandfather would allow Dad to use the family Model T on Sunday afternoons to drive to the airport and tow gliders up and down the runway. In return for providing the tow vehicle, and since he was too young to fly, his friends would tie the control stick of the glider forward to prevent it from becoming airborne and pull him up and

down the runway. It was at this same airport in 1939-1940 that Dad, as the leader of an Air Scout Troop, taught a teenage boy and several other young men how to fly. That teenage boy happened to be Donn Eisele, would later become a member of the Apollo 7 team; the same space program that brought Dad to Huntsville.

Dad's father passed away when he was 16 and his mother was not able to continue raising him and his younger brother Don, so it was at an early age that he learned the value of hard work in order to earn money for both the things he needed and wanted. In fact, he had an art of finding ways to afford things he couldn't really afford and as an adult; working 80 and 90 hours a week allowed him the extra income to purchase his own airplane. Unfortunately, working that many hours a week afforded little time to come home to Columbus, except on holidays. In 1957, with the only major interstate being the Kentucky Turnpike, travel time between Huntsville and Columbus was approximately 12 hours by car; by plane you could make it in 3.5 hours. The ability to make the trip home to Columbus more often and in a shorter amount of time were the reasons he used to convince Mother that he needed to purchase his own airplane. So in 1957 Dad purchased a 3 year old Cessna 195.

When Dad would fly home for a weekend, he usually wrote or called Mom beforehand so we

would know approximately when to expect him. When he arrived in Columbus he would buzz the house to let us know it was time to head toward the airport to pick him up. Buzzing the house consisted of flying low, maybe a little lower than what was legal, and changing the pitch of the propeller to make a very distinct sound. There was no doubt that Dad was home.

The morning of Christmas Eve 1957 Dad called home and told Mom that he would be getting off work early to fly home, and should arrive around mid-day. Mother always put a lot of effort in preparing for Christmas; numerous tins of special cookies and candies in the kitchen, a fully decorated house and tree and presents wrapped and waiting. Around mid-morning, Ronny and I were at home alone because Mom had gone to run some last minute Christmas errands and Jerry was playing basketball with his friends. Our phone rang and I was very surprised to hear Dad on the other end of the line. I thought it was strange for him to call since he was supposed to be on his way home for Christmas and his message is still vivid in my mind: "I've crashed my plane in Tennessee and I will be driving home". He reassured me that he was not injured and that he had been able to fly the plane back to Huntsville and would be driving home. This was a time when long distance phone calls were expensive and you didn't spend too long talking, so when Mother arrived home I relayed his message. That was a very long 12 hours waiting

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for Dad to arrive, all the while wondering how in the world he was able to survive a plane crash and drive home. Around 2:30 am Christmas morning he pulled into the driveway.

Dad took weather conditions and airplane safety very seriously so before leaving Huntsville, as any good pilot would, he checked the weather forecast. There were some problem areas between Huntsville and Columbus but it was Christmas, and he felt he could still make the trip safely. Leaving Huntsville under clear, sunny skies, he soon ran into cloud cover in Tennessee so rather than risk flying through the clouds and trusting his instruments, he decided to fly above the clouds. Being that he hadn't yet obtained his instrument rating he knew that he was flying illegally, and felt that he should work his way back down through the clouds at the earliest opportunity so he could fly visually, being able to see the ground. His reasoning was that, according to where he thought he was, he should have been flying over a large valley and breaking through the clouds would allow him to check the elevation of the bottom of the cloud cover. He started descending slowly but, about the time he thought he should be seeing the ground he said it sounded like machine guns hitting the bottom of the plane instead! Many hours of flying experience and lightning fast reflexes are most likely what saved his life because he immediately realized that what he was hearing was the propeller cutting off the tops of trees and throwing them back on the airplane. The split second decision to apply full throttle and pull the plane up, and the grace of God are what saved him. I remember him saying that at the very instant he pulled full throttle, he sensed that the right wing struck something and the plane momentarily hovered before bouncing back into the air. The damaged wing created so much drag that it required both feet on the left rudder pedal to prevent the plane from rolling to the right. As it turned out, instead of being over the middle of the valley as he thought, he had already passed that point and was closer to the hill on the far side.

Once he realized that he could

keep the plane flying, he made the decision that it would be best to turn back for Huntsville because it was closer and repairing whatever had been damaged would surely be easier in his own hangar. I can only imagine how tense that trip back to Huntsville must have been, but I'll never forget him telling how both ends of his cigar were beat to death by the time he got home. One end from being chewed to bits and the other from trying to hit the ash tray! Arriving back in Huntsville, he radioed the tower at the old Huntsville Airport on South Parkway and requested permission for an emergency landing and also for fly-by permission to inspect the landing gear.

The Cessna 195 was designed with wheels known as cross wind gear, which were designed with the axles on spring-loaded knuckles that allowed the airplane to take off and land in a fairly heavy cross wind. Taking off or landing with wind blowing on an angle across the runway instead of straight ahead, the airplane could travel down the runway with the fuselage facing the wind while the wheels tracked parallel with the runway. As it turned out, when the plane went through the treetops the right wheel had been kicked into a cross-wind position while the left one remained facing straight ahead.

After seeing the condition of the landing gear, tower workers John O'Brien and Harl Long suggested that Dad fly a pattern around the airport in order to burn up most of his fuel on board to avoid a possible fire during landing, just in case the right wheel decided not to straighten itself back out. The airport brought out an ambulance and a fire truck, put a couple of airliners on hold and then gave Dad the go-ahead to land. To everybody's surprise (including Dad, I'm sure!) the plane made a normal landing, the right wheel righted itself and he taxied around to his usual tie-down spot. After a quick inspection he realized the right wing had hit a tree and sustained some serious damage, so he transferred his belongings to

the car and headed to Columbus, home for Christmas.

Returning to Huntsville after the holidays and giving the plane a thorough inspection, he discovered that the fragments of treetops had not only peppered and dented the bottom of the plane but had also damaged the leading edge of the horizontal stabilizer and the bottom of the engine cowling. In fact, the engine cowling had chewed up twigs and branches that were packed all around the cylinders which could have easily caused a fire during the trip back to Huntsville,

Thankfully, insurance covered the damage and Dad completed the repair work quickly, including the installation of a new right wing. Before long the plane was back in the air and went on to provide many more years of dependable service, including the trip to relocate our family from Columbus to Huntsville a few years later in 1959. After Dad's passing in 1997 the plane was sold to a couple in Canton, Georgia who began a complete restoration. A few years later they sold the plane to Dan Schmiedt in Westminster, South Carolina, who is currently completing the restoration.

Incidentally, in January 1958, the same airplane transported a young reporter with LIFE magazine to Atlanta to catch a commercial flight to their home office for a story about the launch of America's first satellite, Explorer. I remember Dad saying the celebration in downtown Huntsville on that night was like New Year's Eve in New York City. Years later, this same plane served to conduct aerial photography of much of north Alabama and the surrounding area.



# Christmas is for Everyone

by Ben Johnston,  
Madison Academy

As I listen to my dad (Dean) tell of his childhood growing up in Huntsville, Alabama, I realize that he truly had a blessed life. I think some of the most enjoyable and intriguing stories are those around Christmas time. My father was an only child raised by his father, Garland, a rocket scientist, and his mother, Teddie, a homemaker. Although both of his parents had a hand in the Christmas season, his mother was the one who created the atmosphere that formed the memories for the family. Dad describes her as a warm-hearted, quiet lady that enjoyed Christmas as much as any child but always reminded everyone just whose birthday we were celebrating.

He begins his yuletide flashback going home from school starting Christmas break. Typically the first task was to decide what kind of treats would be baked during the season and of course he would put in his itemized request for the feast that would be enjoyed on Christmas Eve and New Year's Day. They would plan the coming days that include Christmas shopping, decorating; and enjoying the sounds and smells of Christmas.

Dad and his mom would start decorating the first day. Although, it can't really compare to today's decor, they made every detail count. Dad showed me the small ceramic candle holders that when lined up spelled N-O-E-L and

the Santa Claus adorned in a crimson coat that stood by his sleigh and reindeer. He also told me of his stocking made of white fabric with a Santa painted on it and worn almost in two from the use over the years.

The next item on tap was the tree. Dad said it was almost as much fun going to pick out the tree as it was decorating it. He said the night they set aside to go retrieve the right tree was a big deal. When his dad came home from work, they would eat a small dinner then head out to find just the right tree. Right around the corner from where dad lived was a vacant lot that during Christmas doubled as a tree lot. He described the clean, fresh smell of evergreens as you walked through the temporary forest. They would pick out just the right tree careful not to get one too big. "Don't want to trim any limbs off."

When they got the tree in the house, Dad and his mother would begin decorating the tree. Dad would sometimes lie on his back and look up through the branches and focus on each ornament they had placed on the tree. It was like another world in the tree.

Christmas shopping was

another exciting time. Dad and his mother would compile a list of all the gifts they were going to buy. Of course, they would drift off the list most of the time, but making a list was fun. Dad said the enjoyable part of the shopping trips was experiencing true Christmas spirit everywhere you went. People demonstrated warmth and kindness to their fellow shoppers more so than any other time during the year. Christmas music played everywhere you went as people seemed to shop while humming along.

The shopping trips Dad went on were, of course, for missions to obtain gifts for everyone else. The gifts he would receive were carried out in top

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secret. His mother was a master spy when it came to stealth shopping. He could never remember a Christmas where his mother did not surprise him on Christmas morning. Dad told me of the excitement on Christmas morning, and the thoughtfulness his mother demonstrated on every Christmas morning.

I ask Dad if there was one Christmas that stood out in his memory more than any others. Dad thought for a minute and said yes there was one Christmas in the 70s. This Christmas was very special, but not what you might think. It was a very special gift that made it so memorable. Dad had a friend that sat right behind him in school. His name was Danny, and he and Danny played on the same teams at recess, ate lunch together and laughed at the same jokes. When school was winding down for Christmas, Dad asked Danny what he was going to do for Christmas.

Danny looked somewhat puzzled at first, but then looked embarrassed. He said that he was not going to do much, maybe watch TV or play football with his brother. Dad said no, I mean what kind of presents do you think you will get? Danny dropped his head down and explained that they did not give or get gifts, there was just no money for such things. Dad said that right then he could feel his heart break. Christmas should be a time of joy and togetherness. Dad asked him if he thought he could come to his house for Christmas. Danny said, "Oh no, he could not leave his family, not during Christmas." It was a long walk home that day.

When he arrived home, he told his mother what had happened. His mom said, "We will just have to do something about that." She then picked up the phone and called her friend; they must have talked for an hour. She told Dad that they had everything worked out. He said, "You mean Danny is coming for Christmas?" She said, "No, we will take a little Christmas to Danny and his family. You see Danny's family may be poor, but they have pride so we must be careful to treat them with dignity. After all, Christmas really should be for everyone."

So that Christmas, Dad and his family took over a little Christmas to Danny and his family. Dad told me that was the warmest feeling

he ever had and that he hoped that one day I would have the opportunity to give Christmas to someone in need. After all Christmas should be for everyone.



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# Mama's Red Velvet Cake

by David Williams

It was the early 1970s and a slice of onion on a hamburger bun with mustard was supper and if that wasn't enough a bowl of cornflakes just before bed would do.

The hamburger buns were left over from the day before as Mama knew hamburgers were my favorite, she bought the small pack of meat and brought it home, cut it with flour and eggs so that there would be enough.

The day before was catfish but we didn't eat it, we sold it. She made Red Velvet Cakes and sold them.

Mama and me loved to go fishin', her in her lucky red britches and me in my cutoffs. We would go to one of those lakes where you had to pay for what you caught. When we got home Papa would clean the fish on the porch while Mama made some phone calls and the first person to show up with the money got the fish.

Mama would take the money out to put back in the coffee can for the electric bill and with what was left over we got to have hamburgers. Can't wait til Christmas when all them catfish lovers order their home-made Red Velvet cakes from Mama.

# Peppermint Pinwheels

- 1 cup powdered sugar
- 1 cup butter or margarine, softened
- 1 1/2 teaspoons almond extract
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1 egg
- 2 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon red food color
- Granulated sugar
- Glaze (below)
- 1/4 cup finely crushed peppermint candy

Mix powdered sugar, butter, almond extract, vanilla and egg in medium bowl. Stir in flour and salt. Divide dough in half. Stir food color into one half until evenly covered. Cover and refrigerate 1 hour or until firm.

Roll each half into 8-inch square on lightly floured cloth-covered surface. Place red square on plain square. Roll into 12-inch square. Roll up tightly. Wrap and refrigerate 2 hours or until firm.

Heat oven to 375°. Cut rolls into 1/4-inch slices. Place slices about 1 inch apart on ungreased cookie sheet. Sprinkle lightly with granulated sugar. Bake 7 to 9 minutes or until light brown. Spread warm cookies with thin layer of Glaze; immediately sprinkle with crushed peppermint candy. About 8 dozen cookies.

### Glaze

- 1 cup powdered sugar
- 1 tablespoon corn syrup
- 3 1/2 teaspoons warm water

Mix all ingredients until smooth.

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# Married Christmas

by Ariel Anderson, Madison Academy

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

After the play was over my grandmother went to get ready for the biggest event of her life. It was her wedding day. She put on her light blue dress that she bought at Hammers, a local store.

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

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

As her father led her down the aisle, she stared into his eyes and felt what true love really was. When she finally reached him, she took his hands into hers. She felt whole and safe, like she had nothing to worry about ever again.

They said their vows to one another and felt the love pouring from their lips. In just a few seconds they were going to be bound for life.

The clock struck midnight as the preacher said, "You may kiss your bride." On that Christmas morning, their lives truly began.

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*Bobbi Peterson, Madison*

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# New Year Beliefs & Superstitions

## MONEY:

- Do not pay back loans or other precious items on New Year's Day. To do so is to guarantee you'll be paying out all year.

- Keeping your purses and wallets full of money, and keeping cupboards stocked with food is said to bring prosperity and luck in the New Year.

- Pay away all your debts before New Year's Eve as the New Year should not begin with the household in debt. Clear away all your loans, bills and debts so that you do not have any debts left for New Year.

- Do not lend money or other precious items on this day as that would mean a year spent loaning out money.

## NOTHING GOES OUT:

- Nothing — absolutely nothing, not even garbage - - is to leave the house on the first day of the year. If you've presents to deliver on New Year's Day, leave them in the car overnight. Don't so much as shake out a rug or take the empties to the recycle bin.

Some people soften this rule by saying it's okay to remove things from the home on New Year's Day provided something else has been brought in first. This is similar to the caution regarding first footers; the year must begin with something's being added to the home before anything subtracts from it.

- One who lives alone might place a lucky item or two in a basket that has a string tied to it. Then place the basket just outside the front door before midnight. After midnight, the lone celebrant hauls in his catch, being careful to bring the item across the door jamb by pulling the string rather than by reaching out to retrieve it and thus breaking the plane of the threshold.

## DO:

- To assure good luck for the New Year, one should sleep with a horseshoe under his pillow on New Year's Eve.

- All doors and windows

must be opened at midnight to let out the old year. Keep doors and windows open at midnight to let the old year leave and usher in the fresh New Year.

- Make lots of noise to scare away the evil spirits lurking around. People celebrate by bursting loud crackers to scare away the devils. Evil spirits hate loud noise and hence people explode fireworks and cheer aloud to send the evil spirits away. This is also the reason that church bells are rung at midnight, to ring in the New Year free from evil spirits.

- It is believed that if you wear new clothes on the first day of the year, you will get many more new clothes during the year.

## DON'T:

- Do not break anything on this day as it sets the pattern for the entire year. Breaking things on this day is considered a bad omen as it signals destruction in the coming year. So be careful!

- Crying on the first day of the year must be avoided. One must always be happy and in good spirits on New Year's day. If you cry on New Year's Day for a sad reason you will have sadness all throughout the year.

- No negative thoughts no matter what!

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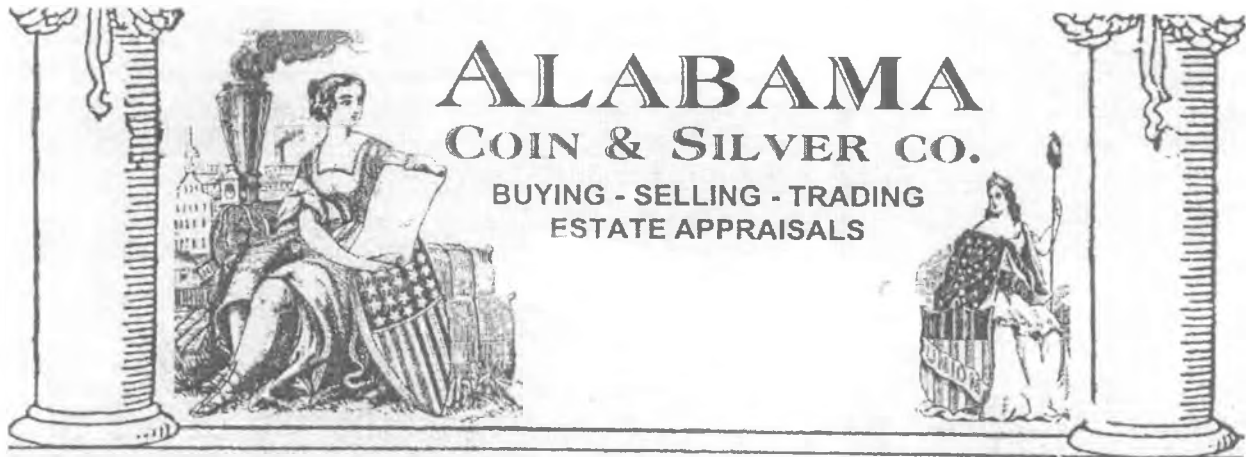
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# An Unorthodox Christmas Tree

by Abbey Gibboney,  
Madison Academy



The year 1962 was a busy one for Darla Blackburn. As an employee at Kay Bee Toy Store and a mother raising an 11 year-old son, she was not concerned with trivial affairs like buying a Christmas tree. Instead, she did what any resourceful young woman would have done – gone home and used an old one. Unfortunately, there were none to be found, so the Blackburn family of 3 celebrated Christmas with the not-so-traditional decoration of a potted hibiscus bush. Of course, they decorated it with the usual ornaments and, to top off the picture, set it in a little red wagon. When it came time, they placed their presents in the wagon.

This humble story of a family's unorthodox Christmas tree is the perfect representation of previous generations' ideals. Whether it is having a strong work ethic, making do with what you have, or appreciating sentiment, it all reflects back to the traditional standards in the mid-to-late 1900s.

I wish I could have been a part of that time – it seems as though back then, there were less stresses and worries. Instead, one got to enjoy spending time with friends and family, making fond memories and living a simple life.



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# Chanukah and Christmas; A Study in Ecumenicism

by Ted Roberts

Chanukah and Christmas have many similarities: they both fall in December; they both delight the merchant classes - They're both lighthearted holidays that don't sufficiently emphasize their religious/historical origins and both festivals love light. Jews light candles. Christians light up evergreen trees. And finally, they're both followed by a flood of bankruptcy filings by Christian and Jewish families who have blown the December budget on munificent gifts to kids who will forget their parents' names, address, and phone number by the time they're 21. ("CitiBank writes monthly about their new credit card, but not a word from Marvin," says one of my neglected friends.)

Chanukah used to be a skimpy little holiday - more patriotic than religious. Jewish families feasted on fried potato cakes - latkes - a delightful medley of potato, onion and matzoh meal. This is followed by long periods of togetherness as the family holds hands, suffers from heartburn, and chews Roloids together.

The Jewish family laps up potato cakes while their Christian neighbor dines on a great, golden goose surrounded by festive delicacies. This menu inequality, and perhaps a disagreement over the arrival date of the Messiah, is all that keeps Christians and Jews from some serious cost cutting with a cor-

porate merger.

In Jewish homes, after the prayers, candle lighting, latke feast and anti-acid therapy regimen, a long winded story teller, like the author, tells the tale of Chanukah: the campaign of liberation waged by the Jews of the 2nd century before Christ.

In the old days, kids enjoyed a frugal Chanukah. They usually received a coin each day of the 8-day celebration. But sometime around the middle of the 20th century, inflamed by their Christian neighbors and their frenzied December generosity, Jews turned Chanukah into an 8-day orgy of gifts. It was a giant step toward economic assimilation and bridge building between the two sister religions.

Jews were now ALSO broke in January. Their checks bounced as well as those of their Christian friends.

They could even tell better shopping stories due to the 8-day frenzy of exercising their credit cards.

I remember the scene when

I was a youthful Chanukah celebrant. My grandmother, enthroned in the softest chair in the living room, handed out holiday coins to a line of grandkids, nephews and nieces. There was a protocol - like when you were introduced to the Queen. You held out your hand as Grandmother reached into her purse and selected your coin. This was no egalitarian exercise. The coins ranged from quarters to silver dollars. Both behavior and kinship went on the scale. A courteous, well cleaned-up cousin with clean fingernails could cop a bigger prize than a grandkid who never called Grandmother. The ceremony ended with a long slow kiss to Grandmother's cheek. An obligation which smart kids realized affected next year's disbursement. My cousin, Arlene, as far sighted as the prophet Elijah, was even smart enough to help cut up the old ladies latkes (potato cakes).

And that was Chanukah in my day.



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# Christmas Gone Wrong

by Olivia Knott,  
Madison Academy

I had the opportunity to interview my grandmother. This is one of her favorite stories to tell about Christmas. I wrote this story as told by my grandmother, Katie Knott:

"Christmas is my favorite time of the year. One year my parents came over for Christmas Eve. I loved that they took time out of their busy schedule to come and be with my family and me. Even though Adam and Andy, my sons, were still young, I wanted them to get to spend every moment they had with them.

When they arrived, my mom and I started cooking a big, yummy dinner. Dinner was my favorite part of the evening; it was a time to fellowship and to catch up on what was going on in everyone's lives. But most importantly, it was a time to eat the delicious food that we had spent all day making—turkey, dressing, mashed potatoes, green beans, rolls, lima beans, chocolate pie... the list could go on forever. We sat down at the table to eat as a family, but never took a bite until the prayer was said. As soon as the word "Amen" was uttered out of my father's mouth, Andy reached for the closest spoon available and filled his plate with food. After dessert was finished, we washed the dishes. Sometimes it took a while, and the boys would get so impatient because they knew what was next, and that was to open gifts.

"Present opening" was the craziest part of Christmas Eve. There were gifts everywhere—under the tree, on the living room floor and on the couch. Adam and Andy were pretty

spoiled. Who knew? As soon as everyone got comfortable in their spots, my dad passed out all of the presents.

We always went in a certain order. The oldest opened a present, then the second oldest, all the way down to Adam, who was the youngest, and we repeated this cycle until the last present was opened. This particular year took forever because my parents had brought so many gifts for the boys, but I liked doing it this way so I could see what everyone got, and also take as many pictures as I needed.

I could not believe how impatient Andy was. He kept trying to open one of his presents when it wasn't his turn, or go over to my mom and try to open her gifts for her because she was taking so long. When the most chaotic part of the night was over, it was time to head to bed. Getting the boys in bed on Christmas Eve and keeping them there soundly until morning usually went smoothly; however, on this particular night, things went terribly wrong.

It was about one o'clock in the morning when the dreadful thing happened. The boys had been asleep for about 3 hours, so it was a good time for "Santa"

to come, or so I thought. Doug, my husband, was supposed to be watching the boys to make sure they didn't escape from the bedroom so I could run down to the basement and grab the toys to put under the tree.

I had just reached the top of the steps when I heard footsteps coming down the hall. I saw Andy approaching me and started to panic. I dropped the toys and walked toward him. Of course, he asked what any four year old would: "Why are all the toys by the door and not under the tree?" How was I going to explain to him without giving away the big secret? I told him the first thing that came to my mind: "Santa left me a note saying he was in such a hurry that he didn't have time to put the toys under the tree."

Luckily, he believed my fib. I was so glad he believed me because I can't imagine telling my four year old son that Santa wasn't real. After I put Andy back in bed, I found Doug. He could tell I was furious as soon as he saw me. I told him that he had one job and he did not do it.

Even though this happened over 30 years ago, I still tell this story with so much anger. I have one piece of advice for any male out there: if your wife tells you to do something, do it."



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# The Love of Giving

by Sarah Grace Thompson,  
Madison Academy

Cotton was what farmers grew in North Alabama in the 1940s. Huntsville, Alabama, was a very poor area in the late Depression. Cotton was the major source of crop during this time. There were four mills in the area: Dallas, Lincoln Village, Merimack and Lowe. Cotton was thriving and every family met their needs.

Milton Cummings, my great-grandfather, was the oldest of several children. He was a very generous man and was always thinking of the children and their needs. He was a successful man even though he was handicapped. His father worked as a manager at Lincoln Mill, which produced cotton and then made it into fabric. Milton started working there and ran errands for Shelton Fletcher, the owner of the mill who had offered to pay for Milton to go to college. He turned down Fletcher's offer

so that he could stay at home to help take care of his family.

When Fletcher passed away, he left \$5,000.00 in his will to Milton, which is when Milton became very successful in the cotton industry. He had an office on the west side of the Square in downtown Huntsville. He graded cotton and paid the farmers for the crops.

In 1949, the Boll Weevil had infested the crops in the United States. Farmers were suffering and couldn't make ends meet. Milton realized families didn't have clothes to wear for Easter and the holiday was approaching fast. So he went to all the local businesses and asked for donations for the children to have nice clothes to wear to church on Easter. Donations were made and the people who were in need had formal clothes to wear for Easter.

With Christmas coming soon, Milton realized families were low on money and couldn't provide presents for their children. So Christmas Charities was born. People donated old toys, clothes and bikes; others painted toys to look new again or fixed bicycles

to look like new.

After several years with many faithful employees, Christmas Charities became part of the United Way.

Many lives have been touched because of Milton Cummings' generosity. My great-grandfather has made Christmas special for so many families, and now it isn't just Christmas that is special to people in need, but also to people year round.

As I walked through church on Sunday, I saw Christmas Charities paper ornaments with children's names and ages on them and also a wish list of what each child wants for Christmas.

The little girl we chose to give a gift to wanted an alarm clock. I never would have thought that someone would be asking Santa to bring her an alarm clock. That shows me the things that I take for granted everyday. This made me think of how many people are going through hard times, and if my great-grandfather, Milton Cummings, would have never started Christmas Charities, these children would never get what they ask to get on Christmas morning.



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# Bad Luck on Christmas Day



**The following have been proven to be very unlucky if done on Christmas Day or the Christmas season:**

- Singing Christmas carols at any time other than during the festive season is unlucky.
- Wearing a new pair of shoes on Christmas day is said to bring unprecedented bad luck.
- Picking up nuts or fruit from the ground.
- Leaving the dinner table before everyone has finished
- Sending carolers away without giving them any money.
- Being the first one home from church.
- Carrying a spinning wheel from one side of the house to another.
- Stepping on cotton thread Christmas Day.
- Receiving a present of new shoes or tanned leather.
- If you eat nuts without honey on Christmas Day, you will lose all your teeth.
- On Christmas Eve it is unlucky to spin or sew, to

grind grain, or to leave the dishes unwashed.

- It is bad luck to let any fire go out in your house during the Christmas season. The fire in your fireplace must continue to burn for the twelve days of Christmas.

- If you do not eat plum pudding during the season, you will have bad luck for a year.

- If you refuse mince pie at Christmas dinner, you will have bad luck for a year.

## Weather Predictions

Snow on Christmas means Easter will be green and verdant.

Whatever you dream on any of the 12 nights between Christmas and Epiphany (Jan. 6) will come to pass within the next year.

The weather for the whole year is also determined during this time: as the weather is on each of these days, so will it be on the corresponding month of the following year.

If you really want to know the rainfall for the next year, you can hollow out 12 onions, putting salt into each. Each onion is named after a month of the year, and there will be rain in every month where the salt in that onion is wet.

If Christmas Day falls on a Thursday, the following year will be windy.

To predict the next year's harvest, count the stars on Christmas Eve, and there will be as much produce as you have counted stars.

If the sun shines through the limbs of the apple trees on Christmas Day, there will be a good crop of fruit next year.

But if there's a full moon on Christmas, the following harvest will be scanty.

## Love and Marriage

Young women who go out and hit pigs with a stick at Christmas can tell the age of their husbands-to-be: if the first pig that squeals is old, that means an old husband; a squealing young pig equals a young husband.

If there's a henhouse handy, a woman can knock on its door between 11 and 12 on Christmas night. If a rooster answers her knock, she will be married, but if her knocking is followed by silence, she will never marry.

Looking into a well on Christmas Eve will show the destined husband - the same can be determined by throwing a ball of yarn in the air at midnight on Christmas Eve; the arrangement of the yarn on the ground will look like the future husband's face, especially the shape of the nose.

If you're unmarried and no one kisses you under the mistletoe at Christmas, you won't marry during the following year.

## Housekeeping

These tasks are not to be done between Christmas and New Year's Day: knitting, sewing and family laundry. Also sweeping, painting or polishing. It will cause the worst luck for any woman brave enough to try it!

**Dear Paranoid People who check behind your shower curtains for murderers: If you do find one, what's your plan?**

# The Christmas of 1963

by Morgan Rozek, Madison Academy



1963 was the year of the record breaking snowfall, and boy was it a cold one! It got cold early that year, and, living in North Alabama, it wasn't something the residents were expecting. The days prior to Christmas had temperatures of below zero degrees. There were incessant strong winds and constant snow flurries. To say that it was freezing is a massive understatement.

In a little one story, brick house in what is now known as historic downtown Madison lived a family with three young children. The youngest child is my father and the oldest child is my aunt Debbie. My dad was only two years old at the time and my aunt Debbie was seven. While she loved the snow, she despised the arctic cold.

Their family only had one car, an old dark red 1960 Buick, so even getting a family Christmas tree was quite the ordeal. However, every year they managed to go out and find a tree together.

Since the weather was so abnormally cold that year they got all bundled up in big puffy coats and mismatched scarfs and hats collected

over the years and went out looking, promising that they wouldn't be out for long. They quickly found a scraggly little tree that imitated Charlie Brown's tree from the Peanuts Christmas special. While it wasn't a very impressive selection, they managed to find a tree they loved and keep the special family tradition alive.

The family had little money, so getting the latest, greatest Christmas presents was not much of an option. Little Debbie, as her family called her, was used to getting only the necessities for Christmas. However, there was one other thing that she always got. When she was younger, her grandmother had given her a doll, and year after year her parents would give her something new for that doll. Debbie loved her doll wholeheartedly; they were the best of friends.

That's why when she woke up on Christmas morning she was thrilled to find a beautiful new gown for her doll to wear. It was red and unlike any she had gotten before. Despite the excitement over the dress, the real excitement came from what the dress was

laying on top of. It was resting on top of a beautiful little couch. The couch was the perfect size for the children and was newly upholstered.

There was a little old woman at the church they went to who had recently reupholstered a lot of the church's furniture, so Mama and Daddy asked her if she would do a piece for the children. She enthusiastically agreed and covered the couch with a green and brown striped fabric. Mama crocheted a blanket and hung it over the back.

It took a lot of time and effort to make the blanket and to put together the Christmas surprise, but it was greatly appreciated. The kids were ecstatic when they saw the gifts by the little tree Christmas morning. It was a practical gift, and was one of their absolute favorites throughout their childhoods. It was freezing Christmas day so their family simply stayed inside sitting on their new couch, under the blanket, playing together all day.

Although Debbie was only seven years old at the time, the memory of that Christmas has stayed with her always. The memories of the bitter cold, the pitiful little Christmas tree, the beautiful red dress, the upholstered couch and the time they spent together as a family will remain special to her forever.

Despite the bleak, frigid weather conditions, it was a holiday filled with gratitude and love, just like every Christmas ought to be. They had their cedar tree with its homemade decorations. It was one of the best Christmases that Debbie ever had!

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