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Old Huntsville

HISTORY AND STORIES OF THE TENNESSEE VALLEY



'TILL DEATH DO WE PART

SOME PEOPLE SAY THE FATE OF 35 YEAR OLD BERNIE BURNETTE WAS SEALED ON A WARM SUMMER NIGHT IN HUNTSVILLE IN 1977 WHEN HE FIRST LAID EYES ON IRENE DOUGLAS.

BUT LOVE, LIKE SO MANY OTHER POWERFUL FORCES IN THIS UNIVERSE, CAN QUICKLY TURN FROM BEING A THING OF BEAUTY INTO A DARK AND DEADLY FORCE ABLE TO WREAK HAVOC AND DEATH AMONG THE SAME PEOPLE WHO ONCE SWORE TO LOVE ONE ANOTHER FOREVER.

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'TILL DEATH DO WE PART

by Tom Carney
(originally published in Old Huntsville magazine in 2004)

The love for a woman is one of the most awesome and beautiful emotions known to man. A simple smile from the woman he loves can make a man aspire to heights of greatness never before imagined. A kiss on the cheek can make the strongest man tremble and gentle words of endearment will linger in his mind forever.

But love, like so many other powerful forces in this universe, can quickly turn from being a thing of beauty into a dark and deadly force able to wreak havoc and death among the same people who once swore to love one another forever.

Some people say the fate of 35 year old Bernie Burnette was sealed on a warm summer night in Huntsville in 1977 when he first laid eyes on Irene Douglas.

"They were at this party," recalled Willy Stone. "Bernie was by himself and Irene had a date. You could tell she liked Bernie from the way she kept looking at him. Later on that night Bernie asked her if she wanted to go outside for a smoke. We didn't see either one of them again for days. They just took off and left her date sitting on the front porch waiting for her to come back. Next thing I heard, they were living together and fighting like cats and dogs."

Bernie Burnette was no stranger to the emotions of love. He had already cut a wide swath among the eligible ladies around town, loving them and discarding them each time he met a new challenge. He had two children with a woman he had briefly lived with and was rumored to have had several more with other ex-girlfriends. There was also a dark side to Bernie Burnette, a side of violence, alcohol and drugs that had frequently led to calls to the police.

At almost six foot tall, with a stocky muscular build and an engaging smile, Burnette was considered by many to be an ideal catch for any woman who could tame him. He had grown up in Huntsville in the midst of a large and caring family before entering the

"If a relationship has to be a secret, you shouldn't be in it."

Regina Brett, age 90



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Army and being sent to Viet Nam. While stationed there he began using drugs.

"When he got back," recalled a friend, "that's all he wanted to do. He just wanted to stay high all the time. He seemed to really be suffering about something, but he'd never talk about it."

Irene Douglas was a vivacious and attractive young lady who lived life to its fullest and saw nothing wrong with dating several men at the same time. She was fiercely independent and would often boot a boyfriend out of her apartment only minutes before another one would show up to escort her to a party.

From the very beginning there was an immense physical attraction between her and Burnette that neither had ever experienced with anyone else. A short time after moving in together they got married and for a while it seemed as if the two lovers were ready to settle down to a life of domestic

bliss.

But, like so many other couples who surrender solely to the pleasures of the flesh, their love was doomed from the start. Even with both of them working there was little money left to live the partying life-style they had known before. They began to fight and the arguments frequently became violent. Several times the police were called to break up the combatants and at least once Burnette was forced to seek medical attention after she clobbered him in the head with a golf club.

Burnette was still insanely jealous of Irene. The end came one night during a party when he accused her of flirting with another man. Grabbing her by the arm, he dragged her outside and began slapping

"I've learned that being kind is more important than being right."

Andy Rooney



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her. Other guests at the party broke them up and Irene went home alone.

When Burnette got home several hours later he found his clothes and belongings strewn across the front yard and driveway. In March of 1979 they were divorced.

The divorce hit Burnette hard. He said later that he knew nothing about it until after it was final. Unwilling to let her go, Burnette became a frequent visitor to Irene's apartment, alternately pleading and threatening in attempts to win her back. Although Irene refused to live with Burnette, she was still passionately attracted to him and would often allow him to spend the night with her.

Life for Irene and Burnette might have continued on its erratic path forever if, on July 1, 1979, she had not met Eddie Fletcher. Friends who knew Fletcher described him as a tall, well-built man, almost six foot four and weighing about two hundred and fifty pounds. He had grown up in Huntsville but had moved to Dayton, Ohio years earlier. He had come back to Huntsville for a family reunion and was staying with his grandmother when he met Irene.

Irene was captivated by the well dressed man and his stories of living up north. She had always dreamed of a life in a big city but somehow it just never worked out. After meeting Fletcher, however, a new life in Dayton, Ohio

seemed entirely possible. Within days Fletcher and Irene had moved in together and Burnette, to his extreme displeasure, took on the status of a "has been."

When Burnette learned of Irene's involvement with another man, he was completely devastated. The fact that Irene would reject him for another man was almost incomprehensible to his muddled thinking. He began to consume immense amounts of alcohol hoping to dull the ache. Somewhere between the cheap wine, gin and marijuana he began to reason, perhaps as an extension to his own fantasies, that Irene had become a prostitute and that Fletcher was her pimp.

The morning of July 3 found Burnette sitting in a room at the Barclay Motel

surrounded by empty liquor bottles. Sometime during the night he had decided that if he could not have Irene, then no one else would either. Fletcher, the cause of all the trouble, had to disappear.

Although alcohol can often make a man feel courageous, Burnette realized he would need more than a bottle of gin to confront someone of Fletcher's size. After getting dressed he drove to the home of his cousin and asked him to go with him to find Fletcher and have a talk with him. All he wanted, he explained, was for Irene to come back to him. The cousin begged off with the excuse that his wife had chores for him to do that day.

Burnette left and drove to the Birdnest Apartments on Sparkman Drive where Irene was living. For the past sev-

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Sam Keith, Huntsville

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eral days he had been following Fletcher and Irene around town, studying their habits and letting his anger build as he watched the couple laughing and joking with one another.

After confirming that Fletcher's white 1968 Cadillac was still parked in front of Irene's apartment, Burnette left and went to the home of his sixteen year-old brother, Barry Burnette. The younger Burnette readily agreed to help his older brother and, after obtaining a pistol and shotgun, they returned to the Birdnest Apartments at about 11:00 that evening. Irene worked second shift at Automatic Electric so Burnette was reasonably certain that Fletcher would be alone.

After parking the car and slipping quietly up the steps to the apartment, their attention was riveted by a set of keys that had been left in the door. Fletcher had apparently come in late and accidentally left the keys in the lock.

Burnette silently returned to the car where he retrieved a shotgun from the trunk. After motioning Barry to stand guard near the staircase, he used the keys to enter the apartment where he found Fletcher sprawled across the bed asleep.

The cold barrel of a shotgun jabbed roughly into his ribs caused Fletcher to waken with a start. After ordering him to lie on the floor, Burnette summoned his younger brother and told him to tape the victim's hands and feet together. While this was going on Burnette began making wild accusations, accusing Fletcher of being a pimp and demanding to know every detail of their relationship.

Suddenly Burnette's rage seemed to subside, and after untying Fletcher's hands and feet, ordered him to get dressed. Once Fletcher was dressed, his hands were once again tied behind his back.

With Barry holding the shotgun, and Burnette a pis-

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tol, the duo ordered Fletcher out into the parking lot and into the front seat of his white Cadillac. Burnette mumbled something about keeping Fletcher as a hostage for a few days until he agreed to leave town.

Burnette drove the Cadillac and Barry followed in the other car as they drove to his house on Mercedes Drive. After ordering Barry to watch Fletcher, Burnette retrieved a short piece of rubber hose and a plastic antifreeze container from the garage. Getting back into the Cadillac, Burnette motioned to Barry to again follow them as he drove slowly out of town to a secluded spot road near Homer Nance Road north of the Huntsville city limits. The hour was approaching midnight and there were few people out and about who could bear witness to the horrible scene that was about to unfold.

Burnette parked the Cadillac on a deserted dirt road and once again began to confront Fletcher with accusations. His rage had built to a fever pitch during the short drive from town. Barry parked the other

car and walked over to see what his brother was going to do next before being ordered to go back and wait in the car. An almost-full moon provided illumination as Barry watched his brother retrieve the hose and plastic jug and begin to siphon gas from the Cadillac. Once the container was full Burnette went to the front of the car, and after opening the door, began to berate Fletcher again.

No one will ever know exactly what transpired between Fletcher and Burnette in those last few moments. Perhaps Burnette was merely trying to scare him or possibly his rage had reached a point where there was no turning back. Whatever the reason, Burnette abruptly ended the conversation and, as Fletcher watched helplessly with his hands tied behind his back, began soaking the car's interior with almost a gallon of gasoline.

Barry Burnette, sitting in the other car, watched as his brother fished a cigarette lighter from his pocket. Seconds later an immense fireball illuminated the night,

with the explosion knocking Burnette to the ground. Burnette's shirt caught fire and he struggled frantically trying to extinguish the flames. His hair was singed and his arm suffered a large burn.

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Burnette got back in the car with his brother and ordered him to drive back to town. He was silent most of the way, only once breaking his silence to say he didn't mean to do it but "the dude made me mad."

The reality of the horrible crime had begun to sink in his alcohol-laden brain and he began worrying about covering his tracks. Directing Barry to drive to a car wash on the corner of Oakwood and Meridian Street, they scrubbed the car to remove any traces of the crime scene. The anti freeze container and the rubber hose, as well as Fletcher's shoes and car keys were tossed out along the road.


The two men then drove to a friend's house where they stayed just long enough to attempt to establish an alibi. At about 2:00 a.m they left and drove back to Irene's home at

the Birdnest Apartments. Burnette ordered Barry to stay in the car while he went to talk with Irene.

She had just gotten off from work at Automatic Electric and was expecting Fletcher to be at home waiting for her. When he was not there she was disappointed but not surprised. She had learned long ago how fickle men could be. When Burnette showed up at 2 in the morning, her first thought was that he had something to do with Fletcher's absence.

Burnette adamantly denied knowing anything about


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Fletcher's whereabouts. The only reason he stopped by, he explained, was because he missed her. Irene evidently believed him and they sat talking and drinking from a bottle of gin that Burnette had brought. Perhaps it was loneliness, or maybe the gin, but for whatever reason Irene was persuaded to sleep with him.

While Burnette spent the night with the girlfriend of the man he had just murdered, the Huntsville police were already investigating the flaming inferno that had once been a gleaming white Cadillac. Preliminary investigation revealed a body in the front seat, burnt beyond recognition, leading officers to suspect foul play. Although the fire department was on the scene within minutes, a decision was made to let the fire burn out on its own accord in order to preserve the crime scene. A trace of the license plates showed it was owned by Levon Fletcher who lived in the Greenbrier community. Lt. Joe Whisante and Sgt. Jim Tabor of the Madison County Sheriff's department were dispatched to question the owner.

Questioning by the investigators revealed that Levon Fletcher had loaned his car to his brother, Eddie Fletcher, to visit Irene Burnette, a woman he had been dating. Levon did not know of anyone who might be angry at his brother, except possibly Bernie Burnette, Irene's ex-husband. He

didn't know Irene's address but told the officers he could take them there.

While the investigators were questioning Levon Fletcher, Burnette had finished making love to Irene and was lying in bed watching as she prepared to get in the shower. Irene was still bothered by the fact that Fletcher had disappeared so suddenly, and began to question Burnette again.

Perhaps it was the wounded ego of a man lying in a woman's bed while being questioned about her boyfriend, but for whatever reason, the anger and jealousy inside Burnette once again reached a boiling point. He began slapping and hitting her and as



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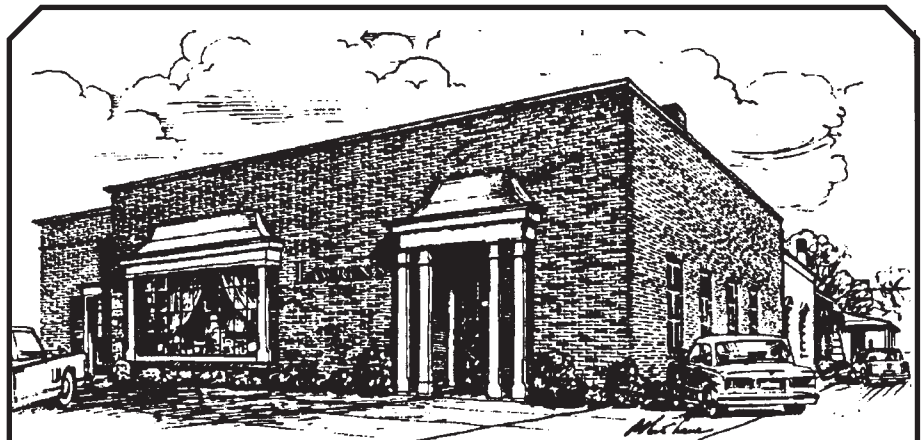
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Albert Einstein

she fought back he reached for a hair dryer and pulled the cord tightly around her neck. Seconds later her crumpled body lay in the bathtub as the last breaths escaped from her dying body.

Burnette, keenly aware of the murder he had just committed, wiped his bloody hands on the shower curtains and looked around the sparsely furnished apartment for any evidence that might tie him to the crime. Hoping to establish an alibi with anyone who might see him, he called out in a loud voice as he exited the apartment, "Don't forget our date tonight."

Barry, Burnette's brother, had fallen asleep in the car while waiting. When he woke up the sun was beginning to creep over the tops of the nearby hills. He had scheduled an interview for a job at Huntsville Manufacturing at 8:00 that morning and was worried about missing it.

When he returned to the car, however, all thoughts of the interview vanished when Burnette explained what had happened. Again trying to cover their tracks, the two brothers drove to an isolated spot on Carter's Gin Road near Toney, where they burned the hair dryer and Irene's purse which Burnette had taken from the apartment.

About twenty minutes after the brothers left the Bird-nest Apartments, Sgt. Tabor and Lt. Whisante pulled into the parking lot. Whisante knocked loudly on the door

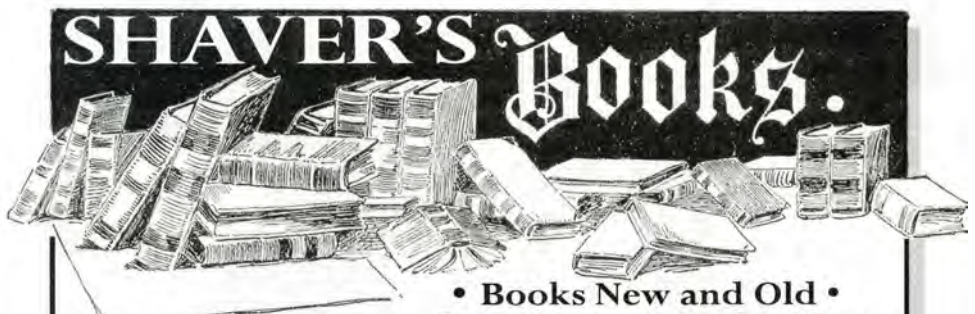
to Irene's apartment but there was no answer. Whisante questioned neighbors who told him they had heard noises from the apartment a short while earlier. Suspecting the worst, the investigators summoned the apartment manager who used his passkey to open the door. Irene's crumpled and battered body lying in the bathtub bore stark evidence of the brutal crime that had occurred just minutes earlier.

Still feverishly trying to

establish an alibi, Burnette changed and dumped the bloody clothes he had been wearing when he killed Irene into a dumpster. Burnette was worried about the burns on his arms that had occurred when he torched the Cadillac. He had to have an explanation for them.

They drove to his home on Mercedes Drive where he took a lawnmower and gas can from the garage. After splashing the lawnmower with the gas he struck a match

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and set it on fire. Seconds later he pulled his shirt off and used it to extinguish the fire. Satisfied with his handiwork, Burnette went to a neighbor's home and told them he had been attempting to start his lawnmower when it caught fire. He had burned his arms, he explained, while putting out the fire. The neighbor applied vaseline on the burns and wrapped them with gauze.

By this time, all the leads the police had pointed to Burnette as the chief suspect. An all points bulletin was issued by the police department describing the car Burnette was driving. Within minutes Burnette and his brother were spotted on Sparkman Drive. Both men surrendered meekly to the authorities and were separated at the police station for questioning.

Burnette was confident that his well laid plans would provide an alibi. Unfortunately for him, when Barry was confronted with the possibility of the electric chair, he had second thoughts about brotherly love and made a full confession.

When Burnette learned of his brother's confession he used the gauze bandages from his burns to attempt suicide in his cell. That too failed when an alert guard summoned help.

Barry Burnette and Bernie Burnette were both charged with two counts of murder. For cooperating with the au-

thorities Barry's lawyer was able to get the counts dismissed against him.

On January 7, 1980 Bernie Burnette stood trial and was found guilty of murder and sentenced to death.

In sentencing Bernie Burnette, Judge Page said, "The deaths were brought about by insidious acts on the part of the defendant, evidencing a depraved mind and showing a complete lack of humanity."

The sentence was later overturned by the Alabama Court of Criminal Appeals. At his second trial Burnette entered into a plea agreement and was sentenced to life in prison. He would have the rest of his life to think about a warm summer night in 1979 when an overwhelming love for a woman turned into something insidious and evil.

Barry Burnette, although he escaped the murder charges, was later convicted on an unrelated charge. He, too, is incarcerated in prison.

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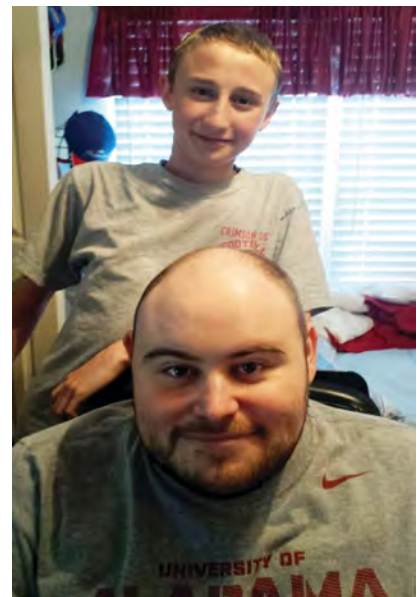
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A Sad Incident Near Maysville



On Saturday morning last, Miss Nancy Rogers, daughter of the late Benj. Rogers, residing two and one half miles north of Maysville in this county, left home on a mule to attend preaching at Maysville. Some hours after, the mule was seen grazing in Perry L. Harrison's cornfield which lies between two roads to Maysville, one a broad public road, the other a more private road. She probably took the latter because it was more shady, and so the riderless mule was not sooner seen.

Inquiry was made in Maysville whether she had been there and no one had seen her. Search for her was then begun by a hundred or more persons (it is said), through the field and elsewhere till a late hour at night and renewed Sunday morning.

About 12 a.m. she was found lying in the cornfield with her skull broken over

the left eye and unconscious. She was removed and doctors sent for. Dr. Fleming Jordan performed the operation of trephining and said she might recover if inflammation did not

set in.

Soon two men were arrested on suspicion of assault with intent to rob her, and one of them having told the searching party that there was no use in looking for her in the field strengthened the suspicion, as she was found there; and there was talk of hanging him.

But the doctors and others concluded from the nature of the wound and the vicious traits of the mule and its

tracks that Miss Rogers had dismounted and the mule got away and jumped over the fence into the field and when Miss Rogers walked behind it to catch it, kicked her. So, the men were discharged.

Yesterday, we learned that Miss Rogers was still unconscious and had only spoken once, exclaiming, "Oh, Lord!" She exhibited restlessness but hopes were still had for her recovery.

From 1897 Huntsville newspaper

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Local News from 1904

- Dr. John C. Stegar of Sharp's Mountain and Capt. John P. Harris and Mr. W. Young of Scottsboro, "Soldiers of the Lost Cause," were in the city yesterday to participate in the decoration of Confederate soldiers' graves at the cemetery.

- Dr. F. H. May of Birmingham is visiting the city. And Robert Chisolm of Birmingham is registered here at the Huntsville Hotel.

- The Huntsville City Hospital was formally opened yesterday with a lively public reception and about 200 people attended and were shown through the establishment. Sherbet and lemonade was served to the guests by Mrs. Bolling and Mrs. White.

The hospital is one of the best equipped institutions of its kind in the state and everybody who visited was so impressed. The operating room is complete in every way. Mrs. Brown is the nurse in charge and took great pleasure in explaining

things to the callers yesterday. The hospital has been receiving patients for the past several days and a new one was taken in yesterday. (July 16, 1904)

- Lost - gray linen coat on Monte Sano Pike Sunday. Had four Portuonda cigars in pocket. Finder will be rewarded for return to this office if he brings all four cigars unopened.

- For Sale - Monte Sano cottage known as the Bob Halsey cottage, is for sale for \$750. Apply to Thompson Land and Investment Co. or the First National Bank.

- Lee Hyatt, a young man of Dallas, claims that he was assaulted by five men while walking on the Southern Railroad yesterday morning at an early hour and that they beat him unmercifully.

He was attended by Dr. E. D. Burwell who found that his injuries consisted of a broken jaw bone, cuts on the head, crushed elbow and severe bruises on the side and back. Hyatt is expected to recover.

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My Mama, the Midwife

by Malcolm Miller



One of my earliest memories as a small child happened many times over. There would be some man standing outside our house usually in the wee hours calling to my Mama saying that his wife was sick. It wasn't until I grew older that I found out what was going on.

You see back in the nineteen twenties and thirties there was very little money and most babies were born at home with the help of a midwife. Even though Dr. Frank Jordan lived in the Ryland neighborhood and didn't charge very much for his services it was still more than most of the poor share-

croppers could afford.

Sometimes I wouldn't hear the men calling for Aunt Anner or Miss Anner saying "my wife is sick" because I was asleep but when I woke up hearing Papa

rattling pots and pans and fussing I knew what I was in for, Papa biscuits. You see my Mama rolled the dough out real thin and used a tin can to cut out perfect biscuits but not Papa, he would mix up the dough and just pour it out in piles resulting in biscuits usually larger than a saucer.

As far as I know my Mama never in all those years ever received pay for all the work she

had done delivering babies; however she was one of the most loved and respected members of the community. Dr. Jordan often said that he wished there was some way she could be his nurse and

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believe you me she was a good nurse.

With nothing to work with but things like coal oil, turpentine, castor oil and warm salty water she could do some amazing things and her loving hand placed on a small boys head really made them feel better when his head was burning with fever. I know because I was fortunate to be one of those boys.

At Mama's funeral many of the people there had been brought into this world by her.

My Mama was born Eunice Anna McKay, September 18th, 1886 and much of her childhood was spent living in a house by the side of the toll gate on the road up the mountain to the Monte Sano Hotel. In fact she and her younger sister, my Aunt Lucy, operated the toll gate while their father Archie McKay worked to keep the road in good enough shape for the many tourists to be able to travel back and forth to the hotel.

Later on as a young girl Mama went to work in Dallas Mill and after working twelve hour shifts would walk to the home her parents had bought on what is now Toll Gate Road. It was originally called Monte Sano Pike.

Finally at age twenty-one she met and married my Papa and together they raised seven sons of which I am the youngest. Their first child was a girl but only lived ten months.

Loretta Lynn recorded a hit song titled "They Don't Make Men Like My Daddy Anymore". I would like to say that they don't make women like my Mama anymore. She had a very hard life as a sharecropper's wife. I don't believe that in her whole married life she ever had a store-bought dress or under clothes, she would make her clothes out of flower sacks or on occasion she would sell enough eggs and chickens to the rolling store man and he would bring her material from

town for dress making.

My Mama never attended church real regular. She really didn't have nice clothes to wear or nice things for the house and she was busy taking care of seven strapping boys but I can assure you my Mama was a godly woman.

After spending a life of hardship and misery living in one sharecropper's shack after another, she must surely be residing in a mansion now and throughout eternity.

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Heard On the Street

by **Cathey Carney**



We have another sharp-eyed winner for the Photo of the Month for last month, **Linda Hall** of New Market was the winner. She identified the little girl as **Teresa Carlisle** who owns and operates the Neighborhood Card & Gift Shop (used to be 5 Points Hallmark). Linda has worked at Star Market in Five Points for the past 7 years and is so proud of her 4 kids - 3 boys and a girl!

The **Golden K Kiwanis Club** took a tour of the new Whitesburg Elementary School recently and it is really amazing. It consists of 140,000 square feet that will house 1100 P-8 students. Our hosts were **Jeffrey Gattis**, Construction and Renovation Coordinator and **Rena Anderson**, Director of Community Engagement. The school will be ready to start in August and is secured from outside entry by only one entrance with state of the art control system, cameras, etc. Good to know our students will be very safe.

Have you ever noticed when you use a hose to water your plants in this heat that you are surrounded by bugs? They like water too! And try to put out some water for your bird friends too.

SO Happy about our very own blues musician **Microwave Dave** who was recently honored by **Mayor Tommy Battle** and the City of Huntsville by getting his own day. A proclamation was signed by Mayor Battle declaring Sunday June 28 as "Microwave Dave Day" in the Rocket City. The Mayor also announced the creation of a new Microwave Dave Music Education Foundation to enhance Huntsville's quality of life through music.

Happy Birthday to **Doris Barenchi** who is one of our loyal readers in Lakewood, Ca. Doris will be 92 in July.

Joyce Russell of New York Life has a birthday in July - we love you Joyce!

Microwave Dave & the Nukes were formed in 1989 and have developed an international following among blues fans, and writer **Stephen King** is a fan of Dave's. He is a humble, sweet and talented man and we are SO proud of you, Dave.

I read a great tip lately that seems to be working. The tip said to take the cereal liner out of the box once you're done with

the cereal, and put your fresh veges in it for the fridge. Supposedly it will keep them fresher longer. Well I tried it will different types of lettuce and parsley and it worked great - I just washed the lettuce and put it loosely in the liner, then into the fridge. Still fresh and it's been a week and a half!

These days people rarely work for a company 30 years, let alone 50. **John Ballou, Jr.** served in the Armed Forces and fought in World War II but he is best known for his 52 years of loyal service to the customers of **Woody Anderson Ford** in Huntsville. He passed away in June. He is survived by his sister, **Elizabeth Ballou** and nieces and nephews who are so very proud of him.

It was really interesting while in Nashville recently to see homeless people selling a small newspaper called "**The Contributor**" on the street corners. They sell for \$2 each and can only be sold by the homeless vendors. They are assisted in this undertaking by people who buy ads, give them free printing and feature stories of the people selling the magazines, as well as po-

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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etry and other interesting articles. They are sponsored by the Downtown Mission in Nashville and they keep the money they make. The vendors are out on the streets in 90+ degree weather as well as all throughout the winter. It gives them a job to do and it gives readers something good to read.

Happy Birthday to handsome **Ken Owens** who will be 66 in July!

Ben Holt was a speaker recently at the Golden K Kiwanis meeting. He and his wife **Bernie** (married 59 years) have spent 32 years as missionaries in Brazil. The land area is as large as the U.S. and is the largest producer of oranges in the world. He was a great speaker and had so many facts regarding their time in Brazil. Ben passed away very recently and we send our deepest condolences to his wife **Bernie**, their son who lives in New Hope, AL and daughter who lives in Syracuse, NY.

The Hidden Garden Tour of Old Town took place on a hot breezy day and brought hundreds of visitors. The 9 gardens and 1 park were ready for those who came and cold water was available and definitely needed that day. The tour only occurs every 3 years in the historic area of Huntsville and Old Town wants to thank those who took the time to come see us!

Many of us attended the L.I.T. events in downtown Huntsville, where music plays and lights

play on the walls of the buildings around the Square. The genius behind that is **Aaron Sexton**, who among other jobs served as Director of Video Productions for UAH. He also put together a photographic documentary exposition of Huntsville's homeless entitled "The Truth Lies Beautifully" which generated over \$27,000 for the homeless community. Aaron's new venture is to create a multipurpose media services company called **Kaboom Crash Media**, located in an old building downtown. We wish him the best and look forward to seeing what he'll be producing!

Bobby Cochran was a friend to many in Huntsville and graduated from the first graduating class of Lee High School in 1964. He went to Auburn U. and worked with Hewlett-Packard Co. for many years. People remember his passion for collecting old paper money as well as his ever-present laugh and wonderful spirit. Bobby passed away at the young age of 68 in June, and is survived by his brother **Joseph Cochran**. We will miss him.

A special hello to **Lisa Sanders** who lives in New Market. She loves the history in our area and loves reading about it!

In this heat be really careful of kicking holes you see in the ground - a friend did that recently and a swarm of

hornets came out and she was stung - seems they like to stay cool as much as we do. Please remember to check on your older neighbors who may be suffering in this heat - just be observant about your neighborhood in general!

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Strawberry-Spinach Salad

1/3 c. light mayonnaise
 1/4 c. unsweetened orange juice
 1 t. sugar
 1 t. poppy seed
 1/2 lb. fresh baby spinach, washed, trimmed and torn into pieces
 2 c. fresh sliced strawberries
 Combine first 4 ingredients in a small bowl; stir well and set aside. Gently toss spinach and strawberries in a large bowl; arrange on 8 salad plates.
 Drizzle 1 tablespoon poppy seed mixture over each salad.

Warm Potato Salad

2 c. cubed red potatoes, uncooked (skin may be left or removed per your preference)
 2 T. finely chopped red onion

1 T. plus 1 t. white wine vinegar
 2 T. fresh chopped chives
 1 t. olive oil
 1/4 t. sugar
 1/2 t. salt
 1/2 t. black pepper
 1/2 c. bacon, cooked crisp and crumbled

Place potato in saucepan and add salted water to cover. Bring to boil, cover, reduce heat, and simmer 10 minutes or until potatoes are tender. Drain.

Place potato and onion in a bowl. Combine vinegar and remaining ingredients; stir well. Add to potato mixture and toss gently to coat. At serving sprinkle the bacon over all.

Two-Alarm Pepper Bread

4 slices French bread, 1" wide
 1 T. butter, melted
 1 t. dried parsley flakes

1/2 t. crushed red pepper flakes
 Dash of coarsely ground black pepper

Place bread slices on ungreased baking sheet. Combine remaining ingredients in a small bowl; brush top side of each bread slice with butter mixture. Bake at 350 degrees for 10 minutes and bread is thoroughly heated. Serve warm. The crushed red pepper flakes can be reduced or increased based on your tastes.

Spicy Bean Salad

2 c. vegetable broth or water
 1 c. rice
 1 T. white wine vinegar
 2 T. extra-virgin olive oil
 1/4 t. chili powder
 2 cloves garlic, minced
 1/2 t. thyme
 1/2 t. oregano

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- 1/2 t. Dijon mustard
- 1 c. black beans, cooked (canned OK)
- 1 red pepper, seeded and sliced
- 1 green pepper, seeded and sliced
- 1 jalapeno, seeded and minced
- 2 T. fresh cilantro, chopped
- 2 scallions, thinly sliced

Cook the rice in the broth or water til done. In the meantime, combine the next 7 ingredients in a bowl and whisk well. Toss the cooked rice with the black beans and peppers and then with the dressing. Chill for an hour or longer, then add the cilantro and scallions.

Cherries & Cream

- 1 egg white
- 2 T. sugar
- 1/4 c. cream cheese
- 1 T. sour cream
- 2 t. white creme de cacao
- 1 c. pitted fresh sweet cherries (1/2 pound)

Beat egg white (at room temperature) in a small glass or stainless steel bowl at medium speed of an electric mixer until foamy. Gradually add sugar, beating at high speed until stiff peaks form; set aside.

Place cream cheese in a microwavable cup and microwave, uncovered, on high for 45 seconds to 1 minute or until softened.

Combine cream cheese, sour cream and creme de cacao in

a medium bowl, stirring well. Gently fold beaten egg white into cheese mixture. Place 1/4 cup pitted cherries into individual dessert dishes; top each with 1/4 cup cheese mixture. Chill until serving time. Garnish with fresh cherry halves.

Crunchy Caramel Cheesecake

- 2 8-oz. pkgs. cream cheese, softened
- 1/2 c. sugar
- 1t. vanilla extract
- 2 eggs
- 20 caramels
- 4 T. milk
- 3/4 c. chopped pecans
- 1 graham cracker crust

Add the 20 caramels to a saucepan and over medium heat (with the milk) heat slowly til the caramels begin to melt. In a bowl, using an electric mixer, mix the cream cheese, sugar and extract. Mix well, add the eggs and mix again.

Add the pecans to the caramel mixture, pour evenly over the crust. Pour the cream cheese mixture on top of the caramel mixture. Bake at 350 degrees for about 40 minutes, middle can be slightly jiggly.

Cool and refrigerate for about 2 hours. Take a few extra caramels and milk and heat til melted, pour over the cooled pie in a drizzling effect. May top with a few pecans for garnish.



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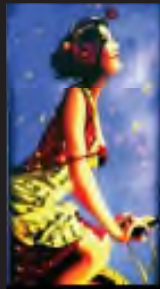
There is a man in this city who is so affectionately fond of his wife that he is jealous if a man looks within 45 degrees of the direction in which she may happen to be.

The other day a gentleman spoke to her, and the husband immediately threatened suicide. His wife was dispatched for a bottle of poison which she had put up at the druggist's consisting of a little water, colored with licorice and bottled, with a glaring poison label on the side. When he threatened to take some of it and actually poured it into a wine glass, she screamed for help and ran into another room, where she could watch him through the keyhole, and saw him coolly open the window and throw it out.

She then rushed back, apparently frantic with grief and implored him not to do the rash deed. He merely pointed at the glass and laying himself down on the floor began to kick out his legs like a jumping jack. She told him she was determined to share his fate and swallowed the rest of the licorice water, whereupon he became really frightened, called the neighbors, confessed that he only shammed and said that if she only survived he never would trouble her again.

When she "recovered" and explained the ruse, and he was so mortified he tried to buy up the silence of his neighbors, but the story was too good to keep quiet.

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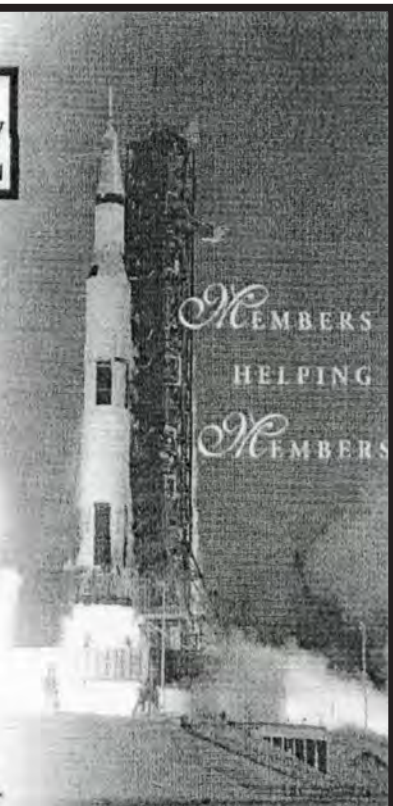


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Location, Location, Location - Moving, Moving, Moving

by Charlie Lyle

It was early thirties and the Depression was still going on. Up at Huntsville Hospital a baby was born. On October 24, 1930 midnight a baby boy, me, was born. Another baby, Betty Monroe was born and two years prior to this event, a baby named Buddy Miller came into this world (L. Miller the scrape dealer's son). Why important? Because he was the first baby to be born at Huntsville Hospital.

My father, bless his soul, didn't believe in owning any property. He said that there would be too much upkeep. Because of this philosophy, we moved approximately eighteen times in eighteen years. The first was an apartment house, a two story, on Williams Street that still stands sort of catty-cornered to Dr. Mini's old house on Franklin Street.

Next was a twin stucco house on Whitesburg Drive. They both still stand next to a white frame house that is located right where Whitesburg and California Streets meet. This house is currently for rent. One thing that stands out in my memory is lying on a pallet in the front yard and looking up at the stars and even at an early age being aware of a song that was at that time popular; "Stars Fell On Alabama".

From that small house we moved to a boarding house. Boarding houses were the way to live at that time, very economical. Meals were prepared at the house for all the boarders. All the boarders were on a schedule. This boarding house was Kildare, the old McCormick Mansion.

From there we moved to another boarding house on the corner of Madison and Williams Street. A drive-in bank stands there now. In the Williams boarding house a close knit family of boarders played cards and the new popular game was Monopoly. Often the game was rigged in favor of me. At that time I was only six years old.

One other vivid memory was riding my tricycle to another side of the block to Womack's Grocery store to buy a one cent candy called Enny-Memy's. The candy was a rolled piece of paper that contained two pieces of candy and a tiny surprise.

So much for my first six years.

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The Buyways of Alabama - Bargain City

by Ted Roberts

There's nothing more relaxing than a peaceful ride through the bosom of the Alabama countryside on a two-lane ribbon of concrete that winds through farms, villages, and micro-centers of verandah'd, wood framed homes, country stores, cafes, and fruit stands. "Let's take a ride over to Winchester," I suggest to the wife.

"Uh, will you stop on the way?"

"What d'ya mean? We gotta stop in the middle of a 40-mile ride? Just don't tank up before we go."

"No, no, not for that. Will you stop at the yard sales?"

She loves the yard sales. My regular rule of the road is a simple one. We stop for humans crossing the road. Because if we don't, it's messy and you gotta wait around for the ambulance, fill out a lot of forms and sit at the same table with lawyers. But I'm not a compulsive, telelogically-oriented nut. We also stop at any restaurant that serves Country Fried Steak with either light or dark gravy. And if they happen to have a bathroom, any of our crew can use those facilities as long as they're businesslike about it.

But the wife usually gets her way and we stop at every sign nailed to a tree announcing the

sale of anything. Yard sales are her specialty.

There's nothing like assessing the worldly goods of a total stranger and offering him fifty cents for Aunt Ethel's clock that stood beside her bed - the day she passed over Jordan. Or going through the family wardrobe hanging on a rack that's worth more than its load of rags and shreds.

"Why are we doing this?" I wail. "We've got a garage full of this junk. Let's stay home and play the Garage Sale Game. I'll be the young bachelor and you'll be the

lady who lusts for my dining room mirror, but left her purse at home, and will do ANYTHING for that lovely mirror."

"Just cool down and sip your Pepsi. And what's that sign nailed on the Oak tree?"

Lightning can strike at any minute. That's the enchantment of antiquing the buyways of Alabama. Could that be a Tiffany vase hiding among those old Jim Beam bottles? And that book, thrown in a cardboard box with its raggedy lowlife friends - a First Edition "Gone With The Wind", maybe? You'll never know if you don't stop.

Woody Anderson



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"I don't want to repeat my innocence. I want the pleasure of losing it again."

F. Scott Fitzgerald

I'll never forget one of our New Jersey estate sale escapades. (My employer imposed a 4 year sentence in Jersey if I wanted to get a paycheck.) But we were in high spirits. I had just bought (stolen? swiped? lifted?) three first editions - American authors - for small money. A few bucks each. My kids were in the back seat leafing through our spoils as I sped home - watching the rear view mirror anxiously for the estate sale proprietors in a police car waving 38 specials and demanding their books back - even though I had solemnly declared "Jack Jack No Trade Back" as I handed over the six bucks.

So all this is running through my mind when one of the kids shouts, "Hey, Pop, you won't believe this." And he hands me one of the first editions - a Hemingway. IT'S SIGNED BY ERNEST.

I'm staring at the signature so long and so hard that I almost hit an old lady who's stopped to make a silly, unessential and far

too cautious left hand turn.

WOW- a signed Hemingway. It's gotta be worth a couple hundred. "And look at this," pops up my younger son. And he holds open, in front of my eyes, one of the Fitzgeralds with a long handwritten paragraph. I can't read it all without smashing the rear end of the old lady's mother who has sought me out so she can block my progress home with the loot. It's a note to Zelda from Scott - and I see the words are highly indelicate. Something about her "strange and highly unorthodox bedroom habits." I don't believe it. A private glimpse into the love life of one of America's most celebrated literary couples. This is a FIND. I could sell it and buy a whole library of first editions. We're frantic.

Better yet, I could leave this frigid state and go back to the civilized Southland where you can drink iced tea and eat cold watermelon ten months out of the year. And even though my eyes scanned the road in front

of me, my fancy transported me home; cotton fields, magnolias, real fried chicken that never knew an oven, a house note less than a thousand a month, SEC football instead of Rutgers, friends that said "y'all" instead of "youse guys" . . .

But then my dream was interrupted by the kid's shout. "How 'bout this, Pop?" And they shove another book in front of my face. It's the second Hemingway, "Farewell to Arms". "Dear Ted," said the note on the first page. "I dedicate this book to you and Shirley due to your inspiration. . . blah, blah, blah." It's a hoax perpetrated by two kids with a cruel mind and a nimble pencil. I've still got the three books with their penciled inscription in my living room bookcase. They remind me that maybe the real thing is waiting for me somewhere along Alabama's Buyways.



Happy 4th of July!

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BASEBALL: IT WAS WOVEN INTO THE FABRIC

by Hartwell Lutz



As with many towns that were home to textile mills in the South, baseball thrived in Huntsville for many years. Of course, the mills are long gone and, with them, the baseball teams that they sponsored. Those teams were a great source of pride, and provided a sense of cohesion for the employees of the mills. Baseball games afforded opportunities for mill hands, who usually lived in villages near the mills, a chance to socialize. You might say that textile baseball was woven into the fabric of mill-village life, along with brass bands and YMCAs, which were also frequently provided by mill ownership.

Prior to World War II, cotton mill baseball was big in Huntsville, with fierce rivalries between teams representing three mills; Merrimack, Lincoln and Dallas. It has been said that mill managers sometimes hired men more for their batting averages than for their work records. There was, however, very little if any financial reward for playing on those teams. In September, as the 1941 season was drawing to a close a news article appeared in the Huntsville Times stating that in the upcoming three games between Lincoln and Dallas, "the players will share for the first time in the gate receipts." So, as far as the players were concerned, as corny as it may sound, it really was about the "love of the game."

In 1934 when textile mills around the country were closed by strikes, many mill-sponsored baseball teams went right on playing, as was the case with Huntsville's

Lincoln and Merrimack teams. The Dallas team cancelled its season in July. In the same newspaper article reporting that, it was also stated that the team's catcher, Ed Herrin, had been hospitalized for a skull fracture that occurred when he was hit in the head in a game in Gadsden. On July 17, the Huntsville Times headline was, "Shutdown Now Complete Here." That night the Lincoln team split a double header with Red Bay.

In the same season, Merrimack played and lost to a good Owens Cross Roads team by a score of 3-2. The Cross Roads team had five players whose last name was Tabor; F. Tabor at second, J. Tabor at short, C. Tabor at first, D. Tabor in center field, and another Tabor whose initial is not given at catcher. J. Tabor was the Jim Tabor, also known as "Rawhide," who broke into the Majors with the Boston Red Sox in 1938, and was very possibly the best baseball player to ever come out of Madison County.

For several years, Dallas Mill sponsored an entire four team league. Team membership depended on players' work station. Two teams represented Weavers, one Spinners, and the other General Help. Well into the 1940 season Jack Troupe, on one of the weaver teams, was reported by the Huntsville Times to be hitting .579. W. Collins of the same team appeared as the very last name on a long list of hitters with an average of .080. That was probably a good indication of the talent spread in the Dallas League. Before that 1940 season ended Jack Troupe was playing pro ball in Florida.

In the 1930s and 40s it was common for major league teams to hold try-out camps around the country. In 1946 the Boston Braves held a three day camp at Lincoln Park in Huntsville. All "young men, 16 years of age or over, from the city, county and surrounding territory" were invited. It was made known that anyone considered "hopeless" would be told why they were dismissed. It isn't known whether the Braves signed anyone in Huntsville that year, but there were very likely some who were hopeless. Every kid with a glove and spikes went to try out.

Unlike most team sports today, in the 1930s and 40s, at least with the Huntsville baseball teams, there were no complete season schedules made up in advance. Some seasons would see one or more local teams in leagues with other teams in the Tennessee Valley and Southern Tennessee, but generally teams more or less filled in their competition as the season went on.

In addition to playing each other, the local mill teams played teams from other communities, some of which were



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sponsored by companies that were also engaged in manufacturing products such as iron pipes and tires. League arrangements were very loose and varied from year to year.

Locally, the 1939 season was an outstanding one. Merrimack had an excellent team that year, and one of their best players was outfielder Taylor Meyers, whose name would be familiar to Huntsville baseball fans for many years. Early in the season, Meyers knocked in the winning run in a game against Scottsboro that the Macks won 2-1. The winning pitcher for the home team was "Goon" Elmore. Later in the season the same Goon Elmore would pitch two complete games in the same day, winning the first but losing the second after giving up nine runs on sixteen hits. Meyers, hit home runs in both games.

"Hub" Myhan was a Huntsville baseball fixture for many years, always affiliated with Dallas Mills teams. In 1941 he was the team's ace pitcher and its manager. In a game against a much weaker team from Cowan, TN, the game almost ended because the visiting team had no catcher. Sportsman that he was, Myhan, who was pitching, loaned the visitors one of his players to catch for them, and he is reported to have instructed his fielders to let the other team hit. Dallas won 14-5. Jim Talley, another great player in the cotton mill baseball era, hit a homer in the game.

Another good Dallas player was pitcher "Country" Bailey. In a 1940 game against Columbia, TN, he struck out 13 batters, and Dallas won 5-0, with Floyd Bryant driving in three of Dallas's runs. Bailey's name would appear on several rosters over a period of years.

On June 2, 1941 the Huntsville Times reported that our old friend "Goon" Elmore, who was still pitching for Merrimack, got the best of "Country" Bailey in a 2-1 pitchers' duel. There were two other Elmore's on the Mack's team, a second Bailey and two O'Reillys on the opposition team, known as the Cavaliers, and sponsored by the Knights of Columbus.

War clouds were gathering during the 1941 baseball season when the Huntsville Times headline said, "Huntsville Given \$41,293,000 New Chemical War Service Plant." Another "Announcement To Be Made on \$6,000,000 Ordnance Plant," both announcements attributed to Congressman, and later Senator, John Sparkman. Ted Williams was hitting .409 for the Red Sox and would finish the season at .406, something that will probably never be seen again.

Lincoln Mills fielded one of its best teams ever that season, largely behind the pitching of Robert "Iron Man" Cothren. In one of his games he yielded one hit, and Lincoln beat Merrimack 11-0. In a double header the next week he pitched three innings of the first game and then pitched a complete twelve inning game in the night cap.

Other top players on that team were Bill Daniel, Slick McGinness and Freck Payne. An outstanding pitcher by the name of Garcia is thought to have been the first Hispanic person to play for a Huntsville team. That season the U.S. Senate was reported to be considering increasing Social Security benefits to \$30 per month.

The Elmore's weren't the only family of baseball players at Merrimack. The Michael's were another one, beginning with "Jay Bird," who pitched in the 1930s, followed by his four sons; Edward, also naturally called "Jay Bird," then Calvin, next J.E., and lastly Bill. Edward, J.E. and Bill all spent time


playing professionally in major league organizations. All four of the first Jay Bird's sons spent time in the military service, and Bill was lucky enough and good enough to be able to spend part of his active duty time playing in highly competitive "service ball" as it was sometimes called.

In 1955 Lincoln and Dallas Mills closed, leaving only Merrimack, or Huntsville Manufacturing Company as it had become known, as Huntsville's only textile mill. That company continued to sponsor a baseball team known as the Huntsville Parkers.

The Parkers had a great season in 1955, winning the Alabama and the Alabama-Georgia semi-pro titles. The team went to the National Baseball Congress tournament in Wichita, Kansas, and finished fifth among thirty two-teams.

The youngest player on the team, sixteen year old Donnie Mincher, became well known to Huntsville baseball fans later in his career. The oldest Parker was Jim Talley, the same one who had played so well for Dallas in his younger days. Bill Michael, one of the brothers mentioned above, was center fielder. Some of the other players were Fred Hammons, W.C. Baker, Bill Gant and Cliff Coggins.

The team was managed by "Sonny Boy" Westbrooks, a veteran of many baseball wars in Huntsville, ably assisted by "Machine Gun" Kelly. Bill Michael, at 84, is a successful homebuilder in Huntsville.



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Letter to the Editor

Dear Cathey,

In your July 2012 issue, you published my story "Memories of a Teenager at Guntersville Dam, 1936-1939." Here is a shorter companion story that might interest you for a future issue.

A "Huntsville Times" Carrier in 1937

This story introduces and supports my claim as being the oldest living carrier of "The Huntsville Times."

My birthday was 10 August 1924, which makes me 90 years old. From 1934 through 1938 my father helped build three Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) dams. From June 1936 through 1938 we lived on the TVA reservation at Guntersville Dam, where Dad was the mosquito-control foreman.

Near the dam site, the TVA built a construction "village," which some local people called "Damtown." The village had 44 single-family houses and eight dormitories, usually called "bunkhouses," for over 400 workers. In addition there was a cafeteria, commissary, multi-purpose community building, gas station, outdoor recreation areas, etc.

In 1937, at 12 and 13 years old, I delivered "The Huntsville Times" at the construction village. The subscription rate was 15 cents per five-day week, with no weekend papers. I had about 25 subscribers on my route, cleared about \$1.80 per week and sent an equal amount to the "Times."

During my period as a "Times" carrier, I visited the impressive (to me) 12-story "Times" building on Holmes Avenue at least once to get a new subscription record book.

Having a "Huntsville Times" route was my entry into the working world and I learned much from it. Are there any other living 90+ year-old former "Times" carriers?

Sincerely,
Eugene M. Simonson
Colonel, US Army, Retired

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“Aim Below the Belt”

by M.D. Smith, IV

The other day, I heard a fellow ham radio buddy comment about my having several Daisy BB guns as I was growing up in the early 50s and how they would not kill a squirrel. But the Daisy did have enough velocity on the BB to kill a bird or raise a whelp on human skin without the cover of blue jeans. With blue jeans on, it was just a minor "sting" that went away quickly.

That's when he mentioned something that I thought was strictly my friend's creation in Mt. Brook and he lived then and still does in Tennessee. He mentioned the "BB Gun Wars" he and his young friends between 10 and 12 years old played in the early 50s as well. They'd choose up sides and everyone had one of the several models of Daisy Spring operated BB guns. No Pneumatic air rifles allowed.

Then the small group of boys would split and run off into tree filled yards in opposite directions and begin to sneak up, or run from tree to tree, as the other

"team" would take pot shots at the "enemy" until they were "hit". I think that's where the phrase, "The Sting Of Battle" comes from. Getting struck in the pants leg with a BB from the enemy meant you were out of the war. It was very much like the more modern paint ball battles kids play in recent times.

Yes, we were all warned by our parents to be careful because with no eye protection, we might "Shoot your eye out."

So for all the fun and exciting times we had you only had one rule and you were out of the game for that round if you violated it.

That rule was "Always aim Below the Belt." Like boxing in reverse.



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SOUTHERN SUMMERS

by Kelsey Jordan



Growing up in the suburbs of Huntsville in the mid-1990s were some of my fondest memories. In our subdivision there were at least 10 other kids in my age group and we'd wait all year for the neighborhood pool to open on Memorial Day, that's when we'd know it was officially summer. With summertime came endless adventures (we had superb imaginations), exploring opportunities, made-up games, weekend block parties, PLUS we got to stay outside longer!

During the weekdays we'd get one of the moms to take us down to the pool where we'd see who could swim the fastest, go the deepest, have underwater tea parties and who could do the best tricks. I'd love to say I won all of those categories but my memory isn't that sharp. Since we lived on what was the very edge of Huntsville and our neighborhood was safe, we could basically roam as we pleased; I think my generation was the last one that could wander carefree with no worries. During our adventures we'd go play near the lake but we were smart enough not to go in. Or we'd run through the cotton fields. We took special care to avoid the snakes.

Other times, when we knew we were in the clear, we'd go follow the gravel paths that ran through the wetlands.

When I was around 9 or 10 me and some of the other kids decided to build our very own tree house! First, we needed the tools and other supplies to build the tree house so, we snuck into our dads' garages and "borrowed" their tools. I'm sure if they would

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have found out, our hides would have been tanned! Especially me, my dad used to work as a carpenter so he was and still is very particular about his tools. In the end our tree house wasn't so much of a house as it was a platform in the tree, it was pretty ramshackle but we did it all on our own! I sometimes wonder if that old tree house is still there but, I doubt it. The wetlands are gone and replaced with new neighborhoods and the cotton fields are gone and our neighborhood was extended into where the fields used to be.

Can't forget the block parties! The dads would play basketball with the kids then they'd go man the grill while the moms sat and chatted. Meanwhile, us kids played amongst ourselves, usually we'd put our own twist on some of our favorite games. One I remember the most was called Freeze Tag, only when we tagged someone we did it with an ice cube. Ice cubes were great to improvise games in the summer; we'd draw on the sidewalks with our ice cubes and the girls would do pretend make-up with the cubes. Once the food was done we'd gather on one of the porches and finally relax from a long day of play.

The summers I had growing up in Huntsville are irreplaceable to me, I remember most of the kids' names, some of the activities and adventures but most of all I remember how happy and carefree those days were. Now, when I drive through my parent's neighborhood, the same one I grew up in, I see no kids outside playing. Sure, there may be one or two on a bike but there aren't kids running all over the place even though the neighborhood still has plenty of kids. Maybe it's because now we entertain our children with TV, video games, cell phones, or maybe it's how the world was 20 years ago. With social media and various news organizations it seems like we live in such a

dangerous world, but we don't, we just have more access to what is going on in the world around us. So, parents, do something amazing for your child this summer and kick them out of the house for a few hours, with no electronics! They may make some of their best memories.

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A Story about Love

by Ann & Meredith Luden

Someone in the Postal Service needs to be rewarded.

This is a beautiful story about pure love.

Our 14-year-old dog Abbey died last month. The day after she passed away my 4-year-old daughter Meredith was crying inconsolably and talking about how very much she missed Abbey.

She asked if we could write a letter to God so that when Abbey got to heaven, God would recognize her.

I told her that I thought that we could, so she dictated these words:

Dear God,

Will you please take care of my dog? Abbey died yesterday and is

“The smallest Feline is a masterpiece.”

Leonardo de Vinci

with you in heaven. I miss her very much. I’m happy that you let me have her as my dog even though she got sick.

I hope you will play with her. She likes to swim and play with balls. I am sending a picture of her so when you see her you will know that she is my dog. I really miss her.

Love, Meredith

We put the letter in an envelope with a picture of Abbey & Meredith, addressed it to God in care of Heaven. We put our return address on it.

Meredith pasted several stamps on the front of the envelope because she said it would take lots of stamps to get the letter all the way to heaven.

That afternoon she dropped it into the letter box at the post office.

A few days later, she asked if God had gotten the letter yet. I told her that I thought He had.



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Yesterday, there was a package wrapped in gold paper on our front porch addressed, "To Meredith" in an unfamiliar hand.

Meredith opened it. Inside was a book by Mr. Rogers called, "When a Pet Dies."

Taped to the inside front cover was the letter we had written to God in its opened envelope.

On the opposite page was the picture of Abbey & Meredith and this note:

Dear Meredith,

Abbey arrived safely in heaven. Having the picture was a big help and I recognized her right away.

Abbey isn't sick anymore. Her spirit is here with me just like it stays in your heart.

Abbey loved being your dog.

Since we don't need our bodies in heaven, I don't have any pockets to keep your picture in so I'm sending it back to you in this little book for you to keep and have something to remember Abbey by.

Thank you for the beautiful letter and thank your mother for helping you write it and sending it to me.

What a wonderful mother you have. I picked her especially for you.

I send my blessings every day and remember that I love you very much.

By the way, I'm easy to find. I am wherever there is love.

Love, God

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Street Hockey

by Walt Terry



One block of Green Street, between Williams and Gates, became known for a period in the 1930s a place for "Hell on Wheels." Kids with skate-enhanced feet played probably some of the wildest games of roller hockey in the country.

A hickory or hedge-apple stick, shaped approximately like a regulation hockey stick, a tin can, skates and a strong measure of audacity were all that was required for this game of only slightly controlled mayhem.

After not so many licks with what became more bludgeon than stick the can quickly evolved into a compressed many-edged projectile of lethal capabilities.

In the wild melees of concentrated group attack on this battered puck it was not at all uncommon for items such as shoe parts, splinters,

nuts and bolts, wheels and undisciplined language to erupt from these knots of frantic activity.

The object of the game was for a team to somehow work the puck to the enemy team's end of the block. In those days vehicular traffic was light, but we still had a sentry posted to warn of the approach of a car or truck.

One of our sentries was Maurice Duncan, known widely for his uncommonly precise (to us uncultured oafs) English. His vocabulary apparently disdained the vulgar term "car."

"Automobile!" he'd shout in his impeccable style. "Automobile!"

If he could be heard above the clamor, a time-out would be called and the pandemonium would come to a grudging halt until the "automobile" had gone its way.

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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.



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

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SHORT & SWEET

MEMORIES FROM OUR READERS

From Basil Anest Berchekas, Jr.,

This message is for the contributor Cathey Carney: in the May 2015 issue she had a request from a reader who wondered about the name of the club and motel that used to be located about where North K-Mart was...that motel and club was the Diplomat Inn, facing directly on North Memorial Parkway.

There was also a 24 hour cafe north of the Diplomat with a large hot dog on the roof that did much of their business after club closing hours; don't remember the name of the place next to the Diplomat. My late wife and I ate at the Diplomat's restaurant since they had excellent inexpensive food, since liquor laws at that time required food to be sold at clubs like the Diplomat. Hated to see the Diplomat burn down!

From Nolan Myrick

Was Huntsville, AL or Huntsville, TX here first? Kevin Brady, US representative of Conroe, Crockett and Huntsville, TX had a lady in his office look it up. Huntsville, TX was founded in 1836

by a man named Ephraim Gray who established a trading post. In 1837 he named the place after the town he had been to in Madison county, AL. after the place he had moved from. Leroy Friendly was the man who called me. They are straight due west of us. He knew that name was from here, but who was Ephraim Gray - good question.

From Lawrence Traglia Sr.

I grew up in Huntsville Park. We knew a family named the Yarbroughs who made home-made hot tamales. I have been trying to find this recipe for years. They were just the best.

I knew at one time there was a lady who had a food stand behind Floyd Hardin's barber shop on Andrew Jackson Way. She made hot tamales that were very similar to the Yarbrough's. I would love to find this recipe if any of your readers has it. When I was growing up in the Park, I had an uncle Bob Adcock who would buy these tamales and we would really look forward to that every Saturday evening.

From Janet Miller

Here are my two favorite "isms" from my parents. They are buried in Ryland at the Shiloh Methodist Church Cemetery.

While fishing one spring

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day I asked my father Alton Miller if he wanted a second rod and reel to fish with. After a thoughtful moment he responded "Baby, the way I have it figured is if the fish are biting, I can't handle but one and if they're not, I don't need it."

I found the statement both simply profound and hilarious at the same time.

After the birth of my first child my mother Dot Miller told me to remember one thing - "Other than the grandparents, no one will think your kids are as cute or smart as you do." In the 45 years since, I have found this statement to be mostly true.

Thank you for the opportunity to share this with you and the readers of Old Huntsville. I can barely wait each month til the new one comes out.

From Calvin L. Holder

My mother, Ruby Lee Richardson, died November 1942. I was born on the 6th of November. I was one of the first boys to be delivered at Huntsville Hospital when they first opened up the Delivery section.

I was raised by my Grandmother Flora R. Crownover, and my grandfather Holder Adcock and my step grandpa Horace H. Adcock. Horace was a tree surgeon from Deckard, TN in the 1930s. He worked for the Davis Tree men.

As I grew up I started school from the first grade at St. Mary's, Rison, East Clinton, West Clinton and finally Huntsville Junior High on Randolph for the 9th grade.

Can you imagine how I felt with my grandparents

walking with me to and from school each day to keep me from being picked on or mistreated by others older than me? Also to keep me from getting in trouble.


But as I look around me I can truly say I'm proud of every step they took to keep me safe and out of trouble. One would walk me to school, one would walk me home. Hall Bryant, Jr. can verify this.

When the County Fair came to town in September my step Grandpa would go down there and get a job putting up lights, tents, or whatever


was needed to get a pass, so my grandmother and I could get in free each night if we wanted to go.

I remember he would carry me to G. S. Martin Grocery Store on Wheeler Avenue and buy me a Grapette drink.

During this time my Dad, C. T. Holder, was in the U.S. Navy on the ship USS Nathan Hale.



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A Musical Sensation

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Grady was a storyteller. He could keep an audience

enthralled for hours, spinning yarns about people he had met and things that had happened to him. And like all good storytellers, he was not above poking a little fun at himself

In the mid-50s Grady was booking entertainment at the old Coliseum on University Drive. He was always being besieged by entertainers, all wanting a chance to perform.

One young man kept calling constantly, until finally Grady agreed to give him a chance.

On the night of the performance, the young man showed up with his band. The car had guitars tied on top, drums sticking out of the truck and most of their dirty laundry in the back seat. Grady wasn't too impressed with the boy. The young man had long, greasy, black hair, a pale complexion and wore clothes that even a blind man wouldn't buy.

But Grady, being the nice

guy that he was, told the boy to go ahead and get on stage. There were less than a hundred people in the audience that night and Grady carefully watched their reactions to this young unknown.

The audience was restless, not at all impressed by the new singing sensation.

Meeting the young man backstage, Grady, who was always known for his honesty, had a talk with the young performer. "Son," he said, "I been watching those people out there and your stuff ain't gonna work. You might ought to get that truck-driving job back."

The young man didn't take Grady's advice, though, and a few months later recorded his very first hit — and Elvis Presley never drove another truck again.



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Cats and Summer



by personal experience, hearsay, or through the media, including the Internet. On the other hand, there are

some safe compromises to offer your indoor cat the best of both worlds, without the potential hazards of free roaming outdoors.

Use Common Sense

Chances are, if the outdoor temperature is uncomfortable for you, it's also uncomfortable for your cat. A cat with moderate heat stroke (body temperature from 104 to 106F) can recover within an hour if given prompt first aid and veterinary care (normal body temperature is 99.5-102.5F). Severe heat stroke (body temperature over 106F) can be deadly and immediate veterinary assistance is needed.

If you believe that your cat is suffering from heat stroke, you

must first take immediate measures to cool him down. Move him to a cool area, apply wet cold towels or immerse in cool water.

Remove the cat from the hot area immediately. Prior to taking him to your veterinarian, lower his temperature by wetting him thoroughly with cool water, then increase air movement around him with a fan.

CAUTION: Using very cold water can actually be counterproductive. Cooling too quickly and especially allowing his body temperature to become too low can cause other life-threatening medical conditions. The rectal temperature should be checked every 5 minutes.

Once the body temperature is 103F, the cooling measures should be stopped and the cat should be dried thoroughly and covered so he does not continue to lose heat. Even if the cat appears to be recovering, take him to your veterinarian as soon as possible. He should still be examined since he may be dehydrated or have other complications.

Allow free access to water or a children's re-hydrating solution if the cat can drink on his own. Do not try to force-feed cold water; the cat may inhale it or choke.

Outdoor Eating

When grilling and entertaining outdoors, keep in mind that many of those foods are not appropriate for consumption by your cat. Provide a trash can nearby for guests to empty their leftover food so kitty can't gain access. And speaking of eating, if you feed your cat outdoors, keep in mind that food will spoil more rapidly in the heat. It's also more susceptible to contamination from insects.

If you enjoy gardening, plant a small garden just for your cat, with cat-safe herbs and flowers. Ideally, it will be inside an outdoor enclosure, but any corner of your yard will do, as long as your cat is carefully supervised while enjoying his own garden. You haven't lived until you have seen a cat roll around in a fresh bed of catnip!

Monitor the Cat's Indoor Environment

If you live in a home or apartment without air conditioning, your cat may be at risk of heatstroke if the temperature soars. Ensure proper air circulation by using fans that are placed safely out of the cat's reach. Ensure the water in the water bowl is kept filled and fresh. The occasional ice cube dropped in the water will not only help maintain a cooler temperature but it may encourage your cat to drink more water as she bats at the ice cube.

July 4th Safety

Fireworks are loud, dangerous and extremely stressful to most pets. Keep your cat indoors during this holiday to prevent injury and reduce her fear. For an outdoor cat, the sudden loud sounds of fireworks can be very startling and may cause her to bolt into oncoming traffic.

Cat lovers who want their cats to enjoy fresh air, sunshine and the ambience of trees, bushes and plants, often feel guilt by confining their cats to the indoors. Today, however, we understand the hazards of allowing cats to roam freely, either

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From the Desk of Tom Carney

THE REAL STORY OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN'S MARRIAGE

by Tom Carney (originally published in 1993)

Not many people would have known this, but when Abraham Lincoln and his wife Mary Todd were married, it proved to be one of the most unhappy unions in the history of marriage.

In the early nineteenth century, the two became engaged. Shortly afterwards, Lincoln realized that he and this woman were as opposite as any two people could be. For example, Mary Todd attended a snobbish finishing school in Kentucky; she spoke with a Parisian accent and was one of the best educated women in Illinois. Lincoln had attended school a total of less than twelve months in his entire life.

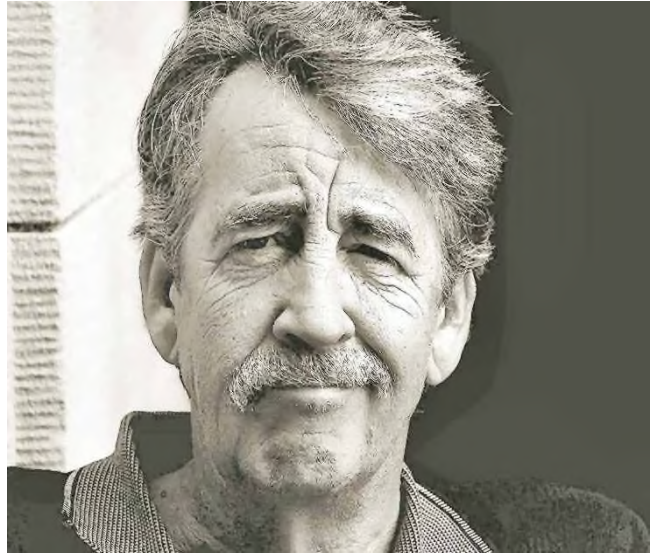
Her family was her great source of pride. Her grandfathers and great grandfathers had been generals and governors, and she reminded Lincoln of this weekly. He, on the other hand, had no pride whatsoever in his family. He said that only one of his relatives had ever visited him, and that man was soon accused of stealing a neighbor's jews-harp before he even got out of town.

Mary Todd was passionately interested in dress and show and ostentation. Lincoln took no interest whatsoever in his dress, and oftentimes walked down the street with one trouser leg tucked into his boot and one on the outside, which drove Mary crazy.

She had been brought up to believe that good table manners were expected, but Lincoln had been reared in a log cabin with a dirt floor. He stuck his own knife into the butter and did other things that shocked Mary and drove her wild.

She was proud and haughty - he was humble and democratic. She was wildly jeal-

ous - would create a scene if he merely looked at another woman. It was pretty much her idea to get married. But shortly after they were engaged, Lincoln wrote her a letter saying that he didn't love her sufficiently to marry her. Giving this letter to a friend, he asked the man to bring the letter to Mary Todd. The friend burned the letter in his fireplace and told Lincoln to go and see Mary Todd himself, like a man. When Lincoln confronted her with his uncertainty, she burst into tears, and



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this upset Lincoln so that he took her in his arms and said he was sorry.

Their wedding day was set for January 1, 1841. The cake was baked, the guests were invited and had arrived, the preacher and Mary Todd were there, but no Abe. He never showed up. His friends found him later that next day, mumbling incoherent sentences. He said he didn't want to live. He had become dangerously ill in body and mind, and had sunk into a spell of melancholy so deep and terrible that it almost unbalanced his reason. His friends took away his knife for fear he would use it on himself.

Lincoln then wrote the most pitiful letter of his life. It was written to his law partner who was at that time in Congress. This is the letter, word for word:

"I am now the most miserable man living. If what I feel were equally distributed to the whole human family, there would not be one cheerful face on earth. Whether I shall ever be any better, I cannot tell. I awfully forebode that I shall not. To remain as I am is impossible. I must die or be better it seems to me."

For two years after that, Lincoln had nothing to do with Mary Todd. Then a self-appointed matchmaker in Springfield brought them together again, behind closed doors, and Mary Todd told Lincoln it was his duty to marry her. So he did.

Things just got worse after that. One story of Mary's violence to Lincoln came from a boarding house where the Lincolns came to stay shortly after they were wed. It seems that one morn-

ing Mr. and Mrs. Lincoln were having breakfast with the rest of the boarders, and Lincoln said something that displeased Mary; she picked up a cup of just poured, hot coffee and threw it into his face. This was in the presence of the other boarders, who were shocked and silent. Lincoln didn't answer her, he didn't scold her, he said nothing while the landlady brought a cloth and wiped off his face and clothing. Similar incidents happened in the Lincoln household for years.

Mary Todd Lincoln finally went insane - perhaps this early behavior was an indication of what was to come later.

One of the most beautiful things remembered about Lincoln is the fact that he endured

his unhappy home for twenty-three years without bitterness, resentment and without saying a word to anyone about it. He was a patient and easy-going man, and forgave his wife for the pain it must have caused him.



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HOLLERS FROM THE HOLLOW

by Greg Starnes

History and haunts go hand in hand. The mountains and valleys of Northeastern Alabama, especially DeKalb County, are rich with both. Tragic events such as the Trail of Tears and the Civil War led to stunning loss, and consequently, restless spirits still inhabiting, and haunting, the places they loved. Other apparitions are waiting, longing for the return of lost loved ones. One such ghost is Antebellum Annie, doomed to reside in the old courthouse in the Lebanon community until her Johnny comes marching home.

By the mid-1800s Lebanon was the oldest and largest town in DeKalb County. A post office was established in 1838 and the town was chosen as the county seat in 1840. The courthouse and jail were erected in 1842 and by 1860 a land office, hotel and tavern were in operation, as well as several mills, shops, churches and mercantile businesses. A four-room schoolhouse featured a curriculum of trigonometry, zoology, Latin, Greek, English, history and penmanship.

The courthouse witnessed the vote concerning Alabama's secession from the Union. Though ultimately accepting the verdict to leave, once it was a foregone conclusion after the tally in Montgomery, DeKalb County delegates William Overton Winston and John Nichols Franklin had voted against separation from the United States.

The delegates may have hoped for cooperation, but most of the men of DeKalb County were itching for a brawl. Two units of Confederate cavalry,

under the commands of George Washington Malone and Dan Clayton, as well as a unit of infantry, were organized at the courthouse. A skirmish with Union troops took place on the grounds in September of 1863.


With the coming of the railroad to Fort Payne, the county seat was moved to that municipality in 1878. Lebanon had given way to progress, and the population steadily decreased.

Today, the old courthouse is preserved on the Alabama Historic Register and is used to host special events. In visiting the site, I experience the same sensation I have when traversing battlefields such as Franklin, Tennessee, and Vicksburg, Mississippi. The historian in me believes that historic places have a "feel" to them. When something monumental or tragic occurs, it leaves an indelible mark that cannot be erased.

Living souls are not the only ones visiting the

old courthouse. Several people claim to have seen the image of a young woman appear in an upstairs window. She looks out forlornly, searching for a movement, any sign that her missing loved one has returned. She stands for a short time, and then disappears.

I have had an encounter with Antebellum Annie. She manifested and waved to me as I snapped a picture of the house. She has dark hair and wears a full-length, print dress. A few seconds later she was gone. Just like that. To my knowledge, no one has seen her since that day,



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three years ago. Was she waiting for me? Very spooky.

Is she the wife or sweetheart of a soldier who marched away to battle and never returned? Perhaps she is the daughter of a dignitary and misses the parties and atmosphere of a popular antebellum town. No one knows for sure. She has never caused any harm or been up to any mischief, nor has she spoken or tried to communicate, save for the friendly wave to me with her left hand extended up to her shoulder. Her right arm dangled by her side. She seemed lonely, waiting, yearning for someone to return. Maybe I remind her of a long-lost beau or family member. Welcome home, Johnny.

I moved to Fort Payne in 2009. While conducting research for some Civil War articles, I realized no one had ever written a book exclusively about DeKalb County ghosts. As a storyteller, I am excited to meet people and talk about shared experiences. So, I began to ask around. Hesitant to trust a stranger at first, the locals fearful of being made fun of, I soon convinced people that I, myself, believe in ghosts and was simply trying to record their stories, to preserve them for future generations. Pretty soon, the stories started to flood in. That's the spirit!

The result is "Hollers from the Hollows, Ghost Stories and Spooky Tales from DeKalb County, Alabama", a collection of 17 (mostly) true accounts of sightings and encounters with ghosts, phantoms and UFOs. I have been able to factually corroborate 12 of the stories.

The other 5 may only be tall tales or legends. But maybe not. Who is to say those events really did not take place? Spirits are real. And they are everywhere. Be careful. Don't fall asleep while reading the book, lest nightmares, or daymares if you sleep during the day, fill your head with frightening images.

Happy haunting, and sweet screams! *Hollers from the Hollows* is published by the Ardent Writer Press in Huntsville.

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Jessie Sams, New Market

Area News from 1911

An Unusual Court Case

* A Huntsville woman accused her husband of trading off everything they owned for liquor, and asked for an injunction from the courts in order to halt this dastardly practice.

She claimed that over the years he had traded nearly all their furniture and several farm animals to fuel his habit.

Among the items she asked to be spared were: 5 cows, a team of mules, a team of oxen, 20 ducks, 100 chickens, 2 bulls, 11 hogs and a farm of 34 acres.

She failed to mention the windmill, however and it disappeared the following week.

The case is still before the court.

* A lightning bolt that in its freak peregrinations parted at an iron bed left unharmed a couple sleeping peacefully there, while it destroyed chairs and pictures and other furniture in the rooms, caused the destruction by fire of the two story frame home of David Folk of Athens. The electric flash shattered the roof of the house, set afire a vacant bed, darted into the lower room occupied by Mr. and Mrs. Folk, divided by their iron bedstead, wrought havoc on the room all about them, shot out into the kitchen, demolished a sideboard and left a trail of flame through the structure. Meanwhile the terrified couple escaped in their night clothes.

Maj. Thurston dies in Gotham

* News has reached Huntsville of the death of Maj. Thurston, who died Monday night in New York, where he fell from the third story of a building a few days ago and was seriously

injured. The remains will be shipped tonight for Huntsville for interment. The sympathy of the community is extended to the bereaved ones.

* Master William Pollard is feeling much better today.

* Jim Carmichael is ill at his home on Meridian street.

* Quincy James Price, infant son of Mr. and Mrs. W. Price on Walker Street, died this morning at 10:30 am at the home of his parents. The funeral will be held tomorrow afternoon at

8 o'clock at the home by Rev. Francis Tappy and Rev. R. S. Gavin.

Hanged at Sun Up for the Murder of His Wife

* Nashville Tenn Mar 15 - Nelson Byrom, a white man convicted of the murder of his wife, the mother of their twelve children, was hanged at the state prison here at sunrise this morning. He spent his last night in the death house just to the rear of the prison wall.


He had relatives here in Huntsville but no one traveled to see him on his last day.

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Happy 4th of July to all and especially the fabulous Huntsville High Class of 1966!

Oscar and Maria Llerena

Sold Out!

*Originally Published in
Old Huntsville in 1993*

My mother always told me that patience wasn't my greatest virtue, and mothers are usually right.

I recently subscribed to Old Huntsville Magazine. In the past I would pick one up at a store every month, but a subscription seemed much more convenient. Since this was the first month of my subscription I wasn't sure exactly when my magazine would arrive. I noticed the new magazines were out and watched my mailbox anxiously for my copy.

On Friday I still hadn't received my copy of the magazine. I drove to the Walmart on North Parkway and walked to the machine. I put my fifty cents in and tugged on the door and nothing happened. The door wouldn't open. Well

heck, I could afford to pay a dollar for the magazine. I inserted fifty more cents, the door still wouldn't budge. There I was fighting with this dumb machine when this man walked up. He gave me a strange look and told me that if I left my name at the front desk I could get my money back. Seething with frustration I snapped "I don't want the money, I want the damn book!" Embarrassed by my outburst, I returned home.

Saturday morning I went to the Farmers Market. As I was putting my purchases in the car I spotted an Old Huntsville stand. I hurried over eager to buy a copy. As I neared the machine I realized that the darn thing was empty. I kept my calm, after all my copy was sure to be in the mail today. Unfortunately it wasn't.

That night I decided to again try my luck at this wild goose chase. This time I went to the Kroger's on Oakwood. I had seen

copies there earlier. As I neared the stand a sense of horror overtook me. The machine was empty. In my anger I gave the machine one well placed kick. An elderly lady turned, looked me straight in the eye and said, "You're too old to be acting like that!" Ashamed, I retreated to my car to plot. I was now determined not to fail at my task. I told myself that I could not go home without a copy.

I headed for Bruno's. At last!! A machine complete with a dozen or so copies. With extreme care I put in my quarters and opened the door - Success! ! I finally had a copy of Old Huntsville! Glee-fully I rushed home and read the treasured literature from cover to cover.

Next day I received my copy of Old Huntsville in the mail.

Thank you.

I would sign this but I don't want my grandson to know that his grandmother kicks machines.

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Steve and Frank "Junior" Big Cove Immigrants

by William Sibley

When I was less than ten years old, a group of immigrants from Yugoslavia moved to Big Cove. At first there were six or more men who lived in a house on the north side of Highway 241 (presently 431). That house was previously occupied by my great aunt Mollie (Miller) Moore and her husband, Rev. John Garrett Moore and their children. The Moore family lived there in the 1800s.

There were two more immigrants who lived in a storage shed that was located behind a store that was leased to grocer John McBride but was owned by my father, Romie Sibley, and his sister, Stella Sibley. The storage shed was located behind the store and in front of the immigrants' home.

At the time that the six or more immigrants lived in the Moore home, it was owned by my great aunt Ida (Miller) Lyle, widow of Robert "Bob" Lyle. It is my supposition that Aunt Ida had the immigrants move because she needed to move a sharecropping family into the home. The two men in the storage shed continued to live there.

Recently, I called my friend Betty Sue (Miller) Lewis and asked her if she remembers those immigrants and she told me she does. Betty Sue lived on what is now Wimbledon Way, off Dug Hill Road, and she and her sister, Shirley, walked to the McBride's store many times when the immigrants at the Moore home would be sitting on the porch. As Betty Sue and Shirley passed by, all of the immigrants would holler, "Cotton there! Cotton there!" Betty Sue and Shirley never knew what the immigrants were trying to tell them.

After that group moved away, we never heard from them again, but we did learn from grocer John McBride that those immigrants never heard a word from their relatives who remained in Yugoslavia.

In the meantime, the two immigrants who lived in the storage shed continued to live there for a while. I can remember very well seeing one of them sitting on a bench on the front porch of McBride's Grocery Store in very cold weather, but the man was always dressed in winter clothes. I never saw the second man sitting on the store porch. Many times, my mother cooked hot meals and had me deliver them to those men, who obviously appreciated those favors.

After those two men had occupied the storage shed for a while, the small tenant house on our place was vacated and they moved into the house which had been the first home that my parents occupied after they married in 1927.

My siblings and I learned that one of the men was named Steve, but we did not know the name of the second man. Because he looked younger than Steve, my older brother Bob called him "Junior." Much to our surprise, we found evidence in that house after the men had moved that revealed that "Junior" was two years older than Steve, and Junior's name was Frank. We have wondered if their names in their native language translated into Steve and Frank in English.

Even though I was younger than 10 when Steve and Junior moved into the tenant house on our place, I was very inquisitive and set out to learn more about the two men. I learned that they had made their living in Yugoslavia by working in the lumbering business.

I looked up Yugoslavia in an encyclopedia and learned that the country is located in south-central Europe and its meaning is "Land of the South Slavs." There are two alphabets used in the country and three languages: Slovene, Macedo-

HALL BROTHERS MOVING

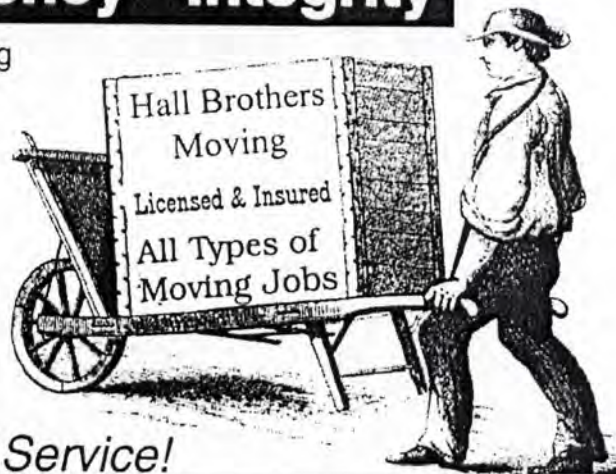
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nian and Serb-Croat. Among its chief products is lumber; more than one-third of the country is covered with forests. After Steve and Junior moved into our tenant house, my siblings and I would take fresh water to them every day. Also, my younger sister Sherry and I would go to McBride's store to buy their groceries. They ate lots of bread, cheese, and canned vegetables. When Sherry was writing their grocery list, they would show her labels on cans to let her know what they wanted. Sherry knew exactly what the bill would be, including sales tax. The men would spread their money on their L-shaped table and have Sherry pick out the amount needed. The two men would rotate giving Sherry six cents for doing their shopping. We always wondered if they had a six-cent coin in their native land.

On one very cold wintry day when darkness was falling, I went to the immigrants' home and found Steve lying on the floor, unable to get up. Junior was unable to lift him and told me they needed help. I went home and got Mama and my older brother, James "Sib", and we put Steve to bed.

After we returned home, Mama cooked a pot of soup for the two men and had me deliver it after dark. I'm sure Mama spent a sleepless night worrying about them.

My family contacted the county welfare agency the following morning and they immediately responded to the situation. A welfare worker stopped by our house and told us that he was on his way to visit Steve and Frank. We knew the worker, because he had been very good to visit those men quite often.

The welfare worker told us that there was a nice, warm, comfortable home waiting for those men. Although we were happy for them, there was a certain sadness involved because we had made friends with those kind men.

We never learned why the immigrants left Yugoslavia and made their way to Big Cove. Germany invaded Yugoslavia during World War II, which might explain why they left, but they might have left their native country before that time.

There were five boys and five girls in my family and without a doubt, Sherry was the immigrants' favorite. I was at their home when they were moving, and they sent me home to get Sherry. When Sherry and I returned, Steve and Junior told Sherry that they had her a present, which they pronounced "pree-zent." They gave Sherry a large pile of coal - almost

a ton. That was a very good gift because we burned coal in our stoves at home.

Two humorous things that we still recall occurred while the immigrants lived close to us. First, the immigrants had a mutt named Ben. They were very kind to Ben, and Mama would say that those old men had a very intelligent dog because Ben understood English and the native language of Steve and Frank.

Secondly, Junior was a humorous sight one morning when he walked by our house on his way to catch a bus into Huntsville. That was shortly after World War II when buses were running each hour. Junior had "white-washed" his dark shoes and had walked through the dew which had caused his shoes to become streaked. Also, his shoes were too large and the toes were pointed upward. Although the sight was extremely funny, there is no way that we ever would have made fun of the man.


We found evidence in the immigrants' home that Steve was 79 and Junior was 81 when they moved. We were glad to hear that good times were ahead for those men, but we never heard from them again.

It has been about 63 years since Steve and Junior moved away from Big Cove, but my siblings and I still talk about them quite often.

"We ought to be thankful that we live in a country where folks can say what they think without thinking."

Clyde Riley

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The Human Cucumber

From 1880 newspaper

It is well known that when cucumbers are first cut from the vine there is a piece which exudes or bleeds from the stem. One of our prominent Northern truck-growers, Jared Benson, cut his hand a year or two ago and this juice got into the cut and his hand commenced to inflame. An eruption similar to erysipelas made its appearance on his hand and extended up his arm, and finally spread over his whole body. Strange to say, there was no pain attending these eruptions of erysipelas, and he continued to gather and pack his cucumbers and prepare them for shipment.

To the great surprise of everybody these little erysipelas pimples assumed the appearance and form of small cucumbers and continued to grow. Although Benson kept well and hearty, he was compelled to strip himself and take to his bed.

Of course the news of this strange phenomenon spread far and wide, and the doctors and scientific minds visited him from various sections of the country. One prescribed one thing and

one another. One wished to bleed him; one wished to cut the cucumbers off; another said not to let him have any water and they would dry up; another said stick a hole in each cucumber and they would die and



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a new skin form; another wished to wrap him up in a mammoth poultice of barnyard manure and onions and draw them all to one head; another said they ought to be scattered.

Each had a different remedy, but all disagreed. So there was some hope that the patient would get well. But the small cucumbers grew into big ones and his whole body was completely covered with them from head to foot. They commenced to ripen and turn yellow and hang down, and the man assumed the appearance of a huge bunch of bananas. When they got ripe they began to shrivel and dry up, and so did the man. His sap was all gone and he died.

The doctors procured the consent of the family to permit an autopsy to be made for the benefit of science, and they cut into him with their knives. To their utter amazement found no flesh, no blood, no bones, no muscles, no sinews, no veins, no arteries - but only found one solid mass of cucumber seeds. It was so remarkable that it would be useless to have the remains interred and foolish to have them cremated and so the widow concluded that she would keep them in the house. She had the corpse hung up by the hair in the barn. The next spring some of the children picked up some of the seed which had dropped in the barn and planted them.

These seeds grew rapidly and matured, and instead of being like the parent stock of cucumbers, they were pure pickles, and needed no vinegar, no pepper, no salt, nothing but simply packing into barrels and shipping to market to sell. Of course, news of this discovery spread rapidly and multitudes of applications for seed flowed in like the incoming tide, and thus enabled the disconsolate widow and children to turn the cause of their bereavement into a means of maintenance and support.

The wind of affliction was thus tempered to these

shorn lambs. They sold small packets of seed for big prices and could not supply the demand. The vine grown from the new seed is a perennial evergreen, and can be propagated from cuttings, blooms in the spring and bears in the summer a bountiful crop of absolutely perfect pickles. The widow sells the seed at \$1 a paper.

"You know you're old when everyone goes to your birthday party and stands around the cake just to get warm."

John Howerton

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DEPRESSION SURVIVAL



I thought you would enjoy reading about family survival tactics used during the Depression years that our readers have sent in over the years.

* No one ever locked their doors. What for? How would the ice man get in? The square

Louis fights were the best. We all sat around the radio looking at the speaker, visualizing the action of the fights. We seemed to get a better picture of the action through our imagination than we do today with the finest TVs.

card in the window with a number on each side told him how much ice was wanted and everyone else that drove or walked by knew the door was open. Everyone knew what everyone else had and who wanted it?

* We listened to the radio, and the Joe

* Women made everything out of flour sacks, including skirts and dresses for girls.

* There was lots of sickness. We used to take 666 which was so bitter it only took one spoonful to cure you. We also used castor oil, Black Drought or kerosene and sugar.

* We always used our ground coffee 3 times.

* Mama stretched out our butter by softening it, then beating it with a can of evaporated milk.

* Road meat was Depression food. Fowl or wild game killed by cars was quickly retrieved and dressed out for the next meal.

* A favorite kid's game would be to curl up in an old tire and have someone push you down a hill!

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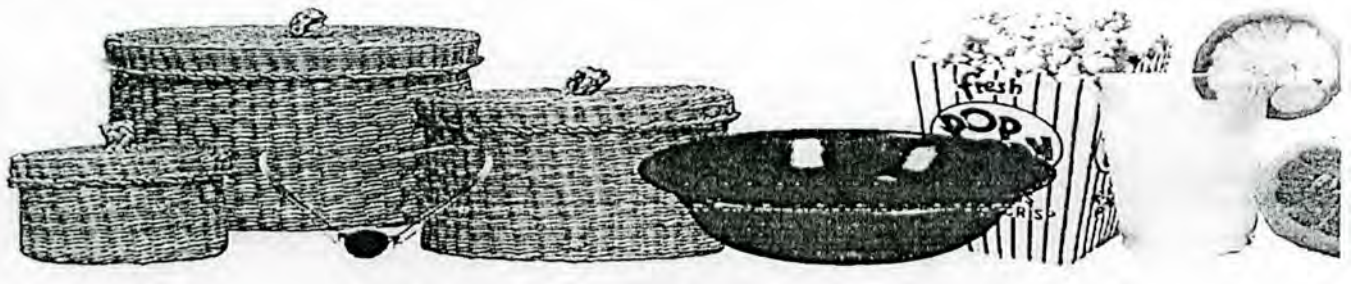
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* Leftover gift wrap and ribbons were always carefully removed, ironed and saved.

* My Dad would patch the tops and sides of our shoes with tire patches. We used hardened tallow to polish our shoes.

* Mom always watched the first 3 days of spring to see what the next three months would bring.

* Everyone had a cabbage patch. Cabbage was used in sauerkraut, as well as a hot vegetable.

* We used to try to beat the squirrels to all the wild nuts like hickory, pecans and hazelnuts.

* The weed, Queen Anne's Lace, was dipped in flour and fried. It kept the family from going to bed hungry many times.

* Bread was torn into pieces and added to fried potatoes, to make "Stretch Potatoes."

* Farmers planted only the potato eyes for the garden, then ate the rest of the potato.

* We used cardboard in our shoes to cover the holes. We washed our hair in Fels Naptha, and brushed our teeth with salt and soda.

* Mama wrapped my school sandwiches in the cornflake box liner. I used it day after day.

* To unshrink woolen sweaters Mama would boil them in a solution of 1 part white vinegar to 2 parts water, then stretch to original size and dry.

* Baths were on Saturday and the cleanest one bathed first, then the rest of the family used the same water in the old wash tub, the dirtiest person last.

* Everything was patched and darned. Orange crates were used for everything from furniture to storage containers.

* Weddings were simple and beautiful, with the average cost of everything - dress, veil, bridal and groom's cakes, reception, etc. being around \$50.

* When we heard the market for brass and copper was going up we knew this was an ominous sign of war in the near future. And that came to be.

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