



No. 274

DECEMBER 2015



# Old Huntsville

HISTORY AND STORIES OF THE TENNESSEE VALLEY

## A CIVIL WAR FRIENDSHIP AND A CHRISTMAS GOOSE



Photo courtesy of Huntsville Madison County Public Library

"My elder brother Clement was 15 and we were then little boys, ready for anything, and we soon formed the acquaintance of a merry Wisconsin boy about sixteen years old.

He had sandy hair, fair complexion, where the freckles allowed the skin to be seen and bright blue eyes. I never knew of his having any other name but 'Billy'.

Despite his blue clothes, we were soon good friends and companions."

*Also in this issue:* **Poor Folks Christmas**

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*Domie Lewter*  
*Mac Lewter*

## A Civil War Friendship and a Christmas Goose

Compiled & Written by  
 Susanna Leberman,  
 Archivist, Hsv Madison  
 County Public Library

*This is a recollection of Willie Clay, who was 11 years old when the Yankees invaded Huntsville on April 11, 1862 at midnight. He is the grandson of Susanna and Clement Comer Clay, eighth Governor of Alabama, and the son of John Withers (editor of the Huntsville Democrat) and Mary Lewis Clay.*

*As family legend has it, Willie's mother said that Yankee Billy, a soldier from a Wisconsin regiment who befriended Willie, "found" a Christmas goose. The value of food to a growing child of Willie's age in a time when food was scarce and life uncertain is illustrated in his mother's letter to his father. Withers had fled Huntsville to keep his newspaper and press out of federal hands. Willie's mother told his father about an incident that*

*culminated in Willie declaring, "Nobody loves me, nobody in this world but my Pa and he's gone!"*

*When questioned about why he would say such a thing, Willie said that his sister Mary had been given a biscuit and a cracker and he had received only a biscuit. Mother Clay quickly supplied Willie with a cracker bigger than the one his sister had, and all was made right with the world in Willie's eyes. If a cracker equaled love in Willie's eyes, imagine what it meant to have a Christmas goose to fill his belly and again make everything right in the world around a warm fire, shared with friends, family and Yankee Billy, even if only for a winter's night.*

*"It was in the winter of 1863, I believe, when large numbers of the Yankees went into winter quarters at Huntsville, Alabama. Most of these were soldiers from the west; Ohio, Wisconsin, Illinois and Indiana sending most of them. A number of them were farm boys showing yet the ruddy glow of outdoor life, and freedom from the wasting hours of city life. All of us boys hated the Yankees, because they were our enemies and had invaded our home; but every home had his pet Yankee and ours among the rest."*

*"My elder brother Clement was 15 and we were then little boys, ready for anything, and we soon formed the acquaint-*

**"Order a diet water when you go out to eat."**

**How to have fun after retirement**



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tance of a merry Wisconsin boy about sixteen years old. He had sandy hair, fair complexion, where the freckles allowed the skin to be seen and bright blue eyes. I never knew of his having any other name but 'Billy'. Despite his blue clothes, we were soon good friends and companions."

"When it got too cold for him to live in a tent, he, with the rest of the regiment, tore down the vacant houses nearby and used the lumber and bricks to build him a winter house, which the soldiers called a "shebang". It was about eight feet square, and just high enough to permit him and his messmates to stand upright inside. A rough chimney was built at one end from bricks and mud. Rude bunks were made from planks for sleeping purposes and straw was put on these, and the Army blankets made the remainder of the bedding."

"Brother and I" (*Don't you just love the usage of title for the older brother already so evident in the South*) "took as much interest in the architectural finish and construction of this house

as if we were going to live in it, instead of our friend, the enemy."

"Nails were scarce, so we searched under the eaves of houses and around ash piles, and picked up as many as we could and aided him in putting the uneven lumber together, until we had built a very comfortable shanty. Then we made a couple of benches and sat on them in front of a bright fire, chatting with as much satisfaction, as if we had completed a real substantial house."

"We spent many pleasant hours with him and gradually he found his way to our house and mother welcomed him, just as she would one of our home companions. One day he came to see us to tell the pleasant news that he had captured a fat goose. We had grave suspicions of his capture, but were loyal to our friend, and anticipated too much fun from that capture to suggest a doubt of his truth."

"We told mother that Billy had a fat goose and wished us to take dinner with him, but he did not have an oven to

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roast him in, nothing to cook with and didn't know how to cook it. Mother was very much amused at our dilemma, and immediately entered into the merits of that dinner with as much interest as we. We still used the large old-fashioned fire-places for cooking, so a Dutch oven was given us, lard, salt and pepper, and an onion with plenty of bread crumbs for stuffing; and we were duly instructed in our first lesson in cooking a fowl."

*It is useless for us to enter into the details of that cooking. It is sufficient to say that no goose was ever enjoyed as that one was with two little Confederates sandwiched between two Yankee soldiers.*

"The goose was an old edition, but our teeth were sound. Our appetites were able to digest anything in reason and the hard tack and weak coffee were a meal fit for a king. We prepared molasses and hard-tack made into one of the most delicious cracker puddings ever. We thought so then, and strange to say, have never changed our opinions."

"After our dinner, we cleared the oven mother lent us, and, then, drew our benches close to a warm wood fire, each pulled a splinter from the plank walls of the shanty to pick from our teeth the sinewy remains of that old goose. With our feet dangling down, we listened to the yarns told by the blue coats for our special entertainment."

"Billy would frequently come over to our house to spend an evening with us and play with our baby sister, which must have brought to

his boyish heart and mind the memory of a little sister in his far off northern home." (*The baby was Jennie Clay about a year old.*)

"His regiment lay encamped with a few hundred yards of our house and one morning we were awakened by a knock at our bedroom door. Mother was very much frightened and aroused me from a heavy sleep by calling out, 'Who is there?'"

"A voice replied, 'It's me, ma'am.' Mother said, 'Who are you? What do you want?'"

'It's Billy, ma'am,' was the reply."

"Mother answered, 'Why Bill, what do you mean by coming this time of the night and waking us all up, besides scaring us almost out of our wits?'"

"It was pitch dark," Bill said. 'We are under marching orders, the long roll has beat, and I have run up here to tell the baby good-bye.'"

"So mother got up in the

raw winter morning, took the baby from the crib, wrapped it up warmly and handed it outside the door to the little Yankee. He kissed it tenderly again and again, and returned it to mother, and with a choking voice bade us a long farewell."

"We never saw or heard of him afterwards. But the memory of this friend of my boyhood has always been a most pleasant reminiscence, and the touching farewell in an enemy's country at early morn was indelibly impressed on our minds. I often wonder if he sleeps far from home and friends under a southern sky, or if he returned home safely!"

"Wherever he may be our memories go out to him with gladness and a southern boy and girl now grown into woman and manhood, send him our warmest greetings of true friendship."

W. L. Clay

**"Please excuse Judd for being. It was his father's fault."**

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# 1875 City News

## A frightful mistake

An interesting case of death from careless use of poison lately occurred. A blacksmith named Wilder after a week of drinking went into a drug store and called for an ounce of hydrate chloral, which was properly labeled and given him. He went home, put the entire ounce into a glass of water and drank it down with a view to having a good sleep and to recover from the effects of his drinking.

Hardly had he touched the bed where his wife lay, she noticed a strange look upon his face and hastened to his side. He said, "Sally, it's no use, I've made a mistake and am a dead man."

In twenty minutes from the time he took the mixture he was a corpse. Five grains of hydrate chloral is a safe dose for a person wishing sleep, but this man took an ounce, four hundred and eighty grains at once and paid the sad penalty. His funeral will be held today.

## Missing

A local farmer, upon opening his chicken house today, missed

two of his birds; but then on the other side of the cage he found two fingers in the trap. They haven't been called for yet.

## Lost

Either at the Opera House or on the street between the Opera and Dr. Dement's residence, a Porte Monnaie containing a purse with thirty five and forty dollars - three ten dollar bills, the balance in small change. The finder will be rewarded by leaving it at the Independent office.

## Moved

Drs. Binford and Dement have moved to the office on Franklin Street, third door from the east corner of the Public Square in Huntsville.

## Strayed or Stolen

From J.A.B. Allison in New Hope, Ala. about six miles north-east of Vienna on the Paint Rock Road, one dark brown mare mule medium size about ten years old. Saddle marks on back, rather heavy set, a knot on each shoulder point. Any information in regard to the whereabouts of the mule will be rewarded.

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# Tips from Liz

I love these old-fashioned superstitions - here are a couple of my favorites!

\* Never comb your hair after the sun goes down, or you will become forgetful.

\* If you kiss your own elbow, you will turn into a member of the opposite sex.

\* Three bad habits - drinking the glass, smoking the pipe and scattering the dew late at night.

\* A good laugh and a long sleep are the best cures in any doctor's book.

\* If you whip a child with the branch of a green broom plant, the child will stop growing.

\* Always cover your mouth when you yawn. That way you will keep evil spirits from entering your body.

\* A hypochondriac is one who's afraid he's sick and scared to death that he's not.

\* If you want to have a keen memory, never read the epitaphs on headstones in a cemetery.

\* Never cut your bangs dur-

ing a full moon - very bad luck will ensue.

Here are a few of my favorite household tips!

\* To clean your silk flowers, put them in a bag with half a cup of salt, close bag and shake.

\* Put a fresh slice of bread in with your hardened brown sugar and it will be soft soon.

\* If you have too much sugar in a main dish, just add a teaspoon of cider vinegar.

\* A bit of ground cloves added to your beans will give them a spicy taste.

\* If you're congested on these cold nights, try propping your pillow up a bit. Also, invest in a cool mist humidifier.

\* Rub some sage into your next pork roast prior to baking.

\* To use those small leftover rolls, hollow out the inside, spread with butter and toast slowly in the oven. Then fill to overflowing with tasty meat stew.

\* Kerosene will soften boots and shoes that have been hardened by water and will render them as pliable as new.

\* Wash your hair, then follow up with a rinse of vinegar for shiny sparkly locks!

**"A gun is like a parachute. If you need one, and don't have one, you'll probably never need one again."**

*Brandon Owens*

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## Miracle Dog

Christy Trott was on duty answering the emergency phone line, when a call came through from a dog. Nobody would have blamed her for hanging up, but something about the urgency of the barking and the whimpering made Christy stay on the line. On checking the incoming phone number she realized that the line belonged to Joe Stalmaker, who is known to be susceptible to seizures.

The background to this phone rescue was that Joe had pre-

programmed the buttons on his phone to dial 911, so all his dog Buddy had to do was to pick up the phone in his mouth. One of his teeth was almost certain to hold down one of the keys for 3 seconds and thus trigger the dialling. (See mock-up of miracle dog with phone to the left).

The very same thing had happened twice before, unfortunately, Joe is prone to seizures as a result of suffering a brain injury while serving in the Army. Buddy arrived aged 8 weeks courtesy of "Paws With A Cause", which trains miracle dogs like Buddy to help people like Joe.

Surprisingly, there have been other similar cases of miracle dog rescues; for example, Leana Beasley's Rottweiler called Faith summoned help by pressing a speed-dial button with her nose. Then when the operator answered, Faith barked into the phone so that the emergency services operator realized Leana needed medical assistance.



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# The Weather Report

by *Susie Parton Bryant*

Winds howled, glass shattered, it came from out of nowhere. I don't know if any of you remember the tornado that came through Huntsville in 1972 and hit The Mall where Lovemans and J.C. Penney's used to be.

Well this is how it started for me. I was about 7 years old and every year moma and daddy would take my brother Steve and I to Lovemans to have our picture made with Santa. Once you had the picture made it would take about a month to get it back so I think this occurred around November.

I was waiting as patiently as possible and the TV was on Channel 19. H. D. Bagley was giving the weather report. He said that Madison County was under a tornado watch. Well not knowing the difference between a watch and a warning I knew it was my duty to report to daddy what I had just heard.

Daddy was taking a bath, so I went to the door and cupped my hands over my mouth like a megaphone and said thru the door, "Daddy, the weather man said we are going to have a tornado."

He yelled back, "Ok, go on in yonder, it will be alright," as if to dismiss my report. Job done! Daddy was in charge and if he

said it would be alright, then it would be.

When we got to The Mall, and if you remember it was right there on Memorial Parkway where the Home Depot and Costco is now. (The old fountain still remains on that site). Also they used to put up a big tall aluminum Christmas tree in the parking lot. It had big green circles that ascended what seemed to be 100 feet tall or more.

We had gone to J.C. Penney's and the toy department was in the rear of the store, we always went there first of course. As we walked through, the weather seemed to get worse. It was raining really hard. Walking on, I can still see the layout of the store so



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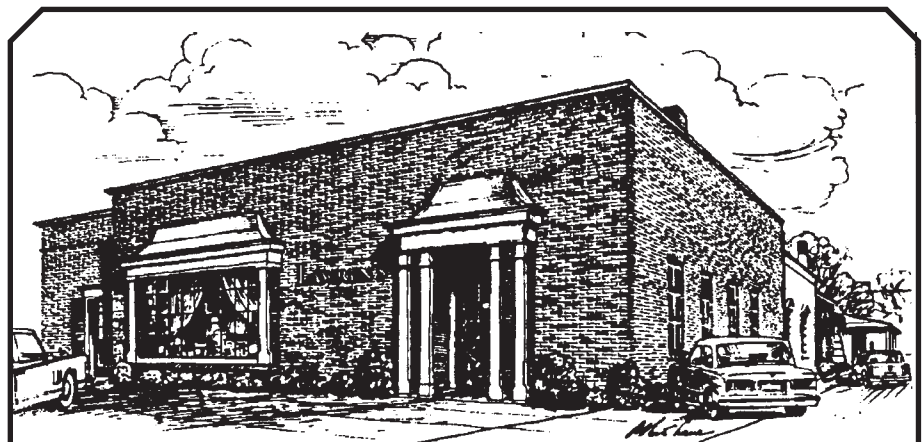
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**"Here lies an Atheist, all dressed up and no place to go."**

vividly in my mind. After you left the toy department was the men's section; the men's belts were hanging in the aisle and my daddy owned a really nice one of them. I only remember them because Steve was usually on the receiving end of one of them.

Then came the shoe department. Moma liked that section, and while she was looking at them daddy would head straight across from there to the perfume section. They had an assortment of different kinds on a tray for testing, not that my daddy wore perfume. They also had hand lotions and my daddy's favorite was Jergens and he would always get some on his hands then rub his hands on ours so we could have some too. I still think of him every time I smell it and I have a bottle on the table by my bed. It's my favorite too.

So, like I said it was Christmas time and decorations were everywhere. There at the perfume counter was suspended from the ceiling about a 4 or 5 foot Santa. Penney's opened into the rest of the mall. There was of course Lovemans at the far end, Woolworths; some kind of men's store called Britannica, The Lerner Shop, (another one of my moma's favorites), Picadilly Restaurant and a bookstore.

As we started into the mall someone yelled "Here it comes!" I could hear rattling, howling winds and glass breaking, but I had no fear because my daddy

was covering us with his body. I never felt safer in the whole world and I had no clue what was happening.


It only lasted what seemed to be a few minutes.

People were milling around. The windows in the toy department at Penney's had blown out and the Santa that hung over the perfume counter was now laying in it smelling to high heaven. I won't ever forget that smell and have never liked strong smelling perfumes since.

I have recently heard people say that my daddy was a bit of a joker personality. He looked over and saw that Santa laying there and said, "You reckon if I go over there and lay under that Santa Claus they will give me some free perfume?" I looked up at him and said, "I told you the weather man said we were going to have a tornado."

I don't remember if we had our picture made that night, but I do remember that big Christmas tree in the parking lot was broken in half.

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# ONE CHRISTMAS DURING WORLD WAR II

by Lois S. Miller

World War II, 1939 to 1945, was a tough one for many families. My Father was farming, although he did not own his own land, so he was one of the last men to be drafted. I was about seven when he was called just before Christmas 1944.

Because he was in the business of farming there was very little money in the family when he had to go away. Daddy moved us from the country to a little house in a very small town.

My Mother had a teacher's degree and found work as soon as she could, teaching at the nearby school. However it was quite sometime before her first check arrived and it was also quite sometime before she received an allotment from the Army.

When we moved into the little house there were old things left behind by the former residents. My sister, Lavon, (2-1/2 years older than me) and I began to investigate around the house and in adjacent lots. We found some old glass doll dishes and we gathered them up and washed them as best we could after we played with them for awhile.

We were afraid Mother would not like us bringing in dishes from the adjacent lot so we hid them under the front porch.

My Mother wanted Christmas to be special although it was our first Christmas to ever be apart from our Father. She cut a tree from the adjacent lot and we cut rings from paper, glued them in circles, joined them and made a beautiful string of paper rings for the Christmas tree. We also strung popcorn and made beautiful popcorn strands and our tree was so pretty to us. Lavon and I were really enjoying decorating the small but beautiful tree, and Mother seemed pleased.

Come Christmas morning there were very few presents under the tree. There were oranges, candy and believe it or not there were the dishes from under the porch. The present of dishes were from Santa to me and Lavon.

These were the very same dishes that Lavon and I had hidden under the front porch earlier. Apparently even Santa was having a tough year.

I didn't totally understand the significance of this until my sister explained things to me and suggested we should not mention the fact to Mother that we had put the dishes under the front porch earlier. We did not want to put a damper on Mother's Christmas joy.



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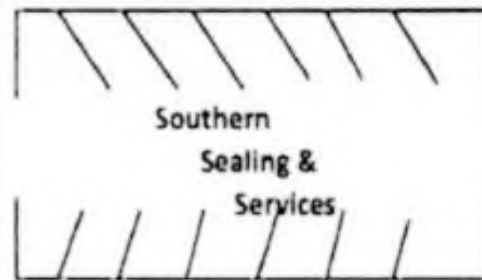
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# The Cab Ride

by Ben Lowe, Scottsboro

I once had my own passenger for my cab ride. After living in Scottsboro a few years, I was invited to address the Jackson County Chamber of Commerce Early Bird Breakfast on missile technology at Redstone Arsenal.

You should have seen the look on the face of Chamber President, Mike Ellenburg, when he read my bio which said I'd graduated from the University of Tennessee. He hung his head and said, "I didn't know you went to THAT school" which brought a chuckle from the attendees. It was a funny scene.

However, one elderly lady by the name of Sarah Betty Ingram came forth after the presentation and told me she was so glad to have a fellow alumni in the community. Sarah Betty went to my church, so when the UT Alumni announced their annual alumni dinner in Huntsville, she asked if she could ride over there with me since she didn't drive at night. Truth be known, she shouldn't have been driving in daylight either, but no one in Scottsboro had the gumption to tell her she couldn't.

So, it became an annual event for us to have our yearly date to go to the alumni banquet together, even if I did have to leave work in Huntsville, drive to Scottsboro to pick her up, drive back to Huntsville, and then take her back to Scottsboro before going home to Skyline. When she asked if it was out of my way, I told her "Not at all."

Once she asked me if I thought it would make my wife mad with us going out together alone and I told her it wasn't a problem. My wife eventually started going to Scottsboro to pick her up and bring her to Gurley where I'd meet them as I came from Huntsville, which relieved me from driving quite so far to pick her up.

Of course, once we'd get to the alumni dinner, I'd always get her a glass of wine which she made me promise not to tell anyone in Scottsboro, although she thoroughly enjoyed it.

A few years ago one of the church ladies phoned to say Sarah Betty was in the Scottsboro Hospital and would not last much longer. I went by to see her, and we talked about the good times we'd had.

Later that evening after I'd left, she told some of the church ladies that the reason she was in the hos-

pital was because Ben Lowe had kept her out too late the night before and she drank too much wine. All this, of course, was in her imagination since she'd been in the hospital for weeks.

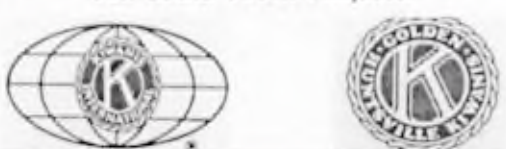
I was proud that she thought of me and the good times we'd had. Later that night, she slipped away into peace. She had requested that I be one of her pallbearers, along with an attorney in our church, Steve Kennamer. My friend Cactus knows all the folks. Steve told me to be sure to have my cell phone turned on as she was lowered into the grave as he knew it was programmed to play "Rocky Top" for the ring tone. For the funeral precession, the organist Grady Bennett had played the Tennessee Waltz.

Now, a block over from Cactus, there's a street name Sarah Betty Lane.

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# INFLUENZA PARALYZES HUNTSVILLE 1918

Huntsville - Quarantine notices are posted all over the city of Huntsville. A particularly virulent form of influenza, commonly known as the Spanish Flu, has paralyzed Huntsville. More than four hundred people have already died and thousands more are seriously ill.

The Mayor has ordered all places of business, with the exception of drugstores, be closed between 5 P.M. and 9 A.M. and all sporting events, theaters and similar gatherings be canceled until further notice. All city and county schools will also remain closed.

Citizens are warned against entering any premises displaying the quarantine notice. All

deaths are to be reported to the authorities as soon as possible and the clothes, bedding and personal effects of the victims are to be left where they are until such time as the authorities can burn them. Failure to do so can result in a fine and imprisonment.

City leaders are considering a proposal to post guards at the city limits in an effort to stop any more sickness being brought from other communities.

In a related incident, there was a shooting on Monte Sano when a family, fleeing the illness in the city, tried to set up a campsite on private property. Scores of families are reported to be camping on the mountain in the belief that it is a healthier site.

Some of the property owners, armed with guns, are said to be patrolling their property and a sign has been erected warning all people to stay away.

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# A Twisted Christmas Story

by Ted Roberts



A Letter from Bob Crachit  
110 Cheapside Lane  
London October 2, 1824

Dear Mum,

What a year we've had! With the fire's warmth working on the outside of me and a half pint of mulled wine doing the same inside, I'm as happy as the Lord Mayor of London. What more would a man want than a good wife and a bunch of kids with the glow of the fire on their pink cheeks. And that's exactly what I've got around me - my good wife and children. Tiny Tim, too. And when I call him over to sit next to me, he straight-away walks over. NO CRUTCH and NO LIMP. That's the grandest Christmas miracle of all.

And all of it due to my employer, a gent named Ebenezer Scrooge. This fellow Scrooge - my employer - was meaner than a green hickory switch. Three shillings a week he paid me. In at dawn, and out when the streets were dark as himself.

I tell you, Scrooge was a fire-breathing dragon 364 days a year, but on Christ-

mas he grew a second, scaly head. I don't know what it was about Christmas that made him so miserable. I tried to stay out of his way, but Christmas Eve I'd come softly into his room to plead for the holiday. He'd be wrapped in his great coat, huddled over a single desk candle. He wanted me to beg. And beg I did. As humbly as a street beggar. And when he yielded - as though it was his day to give - I thanked him properly. But my heart was full of hate - on Christmas Eve, can you imagine.

But then something happened; I never saw a man change direction overnight - like Mr. Scrooge. But

let me come to the point. The mystery began Christmas Day when the butcher boy knocks on our door carrying a great turkey. It's for us, he says. It's enough turkey for a week's meal supported by bread and pudding. But

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there's no note. Who could afford it and who would send it to us?

"Mr. Scrooge," says Tiny Tim. Sure, and Queen Victoria wants us all to join her for supper at Buckingham Castle.

Then the next morning at work - the first day after Christmas - I'm late. So I'm sneaking in and Mr. Scrooge, with a voice that would drown the chimes of Big Ben, shouts, "Front and center Cratchit". Oh boy. I tremble. That turkey, I'm thinking, is gonna have to last a long time - a lifetime - because in five minutes I'll be an ex-clerk.

But no, Mr. Scrooge ups my salary - tells me to throw some coal on the fire. And takes me across the street to Wilshires and buys me a mug of their best. Sits right down at the table drinking with me, his clerk. He's quite out of his mind talking like he's had a flagon instead of a cup. Says he's been a miserable old geezer, but that's over now. "I've been reborn," he says.

And it's been almost a year now and Mr. Scrooge, God bless his reborn heart, has been as good as his word. Last night after a festive meal at my place - with him in attendance - we threw Tim's crutch in the fire and watched it burn. Uncle Ebenezer's doctor made a miracle. In short, Mr. Scrooge has become our benefactor.

That fella Dickens - the one who writes the stories - sent me a note last week. Wants to do a Christmas tale about Mr. Scrooge. Everybody on the street has noticed his spiritual flip flop. "Angels," says Charley Dickens. "Celestial visitors," says Charley. He's nuts, you know, them writers.

So what happened to fix his ailing heart? I think it was a woman. He met some sweet patootie who warmed his heart and cracked that lock on his wallet. You don't think a

flight of angels flew down here and shook out the miser's soul like a wet sheet? That's silly.

Well, Mum, we'll see you in a couple of weeks. Get your old hound ready. Tim will be wanting to run the meadows with him.

Fondly,  
Your Son, Bob

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a rainy day, lost luggage and tangled Christmas tree lights."

*Karl Peterson, Madison*

# Heard On the Street

by *Cathey Carney*



Do you remember **Hilding Holmberg's**, the men's store in downtown Huntsville? It seems like ages ago. Well the little boy on the left in the Photo of the Month for November was **Hilding Holmberg**, and we had a winner for a free subscription. The first caller was **Mildred Whitlock**, who's 85 years old and remembers when her husband used to shop there for his clothes! They moved to Huntsville in 1962 and she has seen lots of changes since then. Congratulations Mildred!

Also, a Gurley man was the first to call and tell me where the cornstalk was that I had hidden on page 56, in the Lowe Mill ad on that page. So **Roy Hoover** wins a free year's subscription to Old Huntsville. Congratulations to you too!

**Rosemary Leatherwood** is having knee surgery and we wish her a speedy recovery. She and her husband **Bill** want to wish their son Billy a Happy 35th birthday on December 18th. Also, their grandson **Austin Pinkerton** will be 17 on Dec. 28. He is a valuable player on the Hazel Green High School's football team as well

as the boy's basketball team. Having Muscular Dystrophy has not slowed him down a bit from setting and reaching his goals. He is quite an inspiration to friends & family, he shows them that nothing is impossible if you want it badly enough!

When a young man of 39 passes away, it is heartbreaking. **Wyatt Keefer** loved his wife and his boys and didn't want to ever leave them. He passed away from Multiple Sclerosis in mid-November. He leaves wife **Wendy Dyer-Keefer**, sons **Nathan Dyer, Trenton Dyer and Hayden Keefer**; parents **Edward Keefer and wife, Doris**; sister **Beth Baldwin**; brother **Brian Hoffman**; sister-in-law **Megan Mack (Jason)**, their children **AJ and Robbie**; nieces **April Dyer and Erin Wiesinger** as well as nephews and many friends. Especially love goes to mother-in-law **Joyce Russell**. Our deepest sympathies go to the family and many friends whom Wyatt leaves behind.

Everyone knows **Jackie Reed** - she attends nearly every City Council meeting in Huntsville and has run 7 times for Mayor. She has run 7 times for City Council representative. Jackie is very interested in all things related to Huntsville and this area and is never afraid to get up and say what she feels. She is known as the watchdog for the common folk. She has now gotten the attention of **NBC's Today Show**, and will make an appearance in the future on that show! She has accomplished alot over the years, and isn't stopping yet. Keep watching to see when the segment will air.

Grandmother **Joyce (Mimi)** wanted to be sure and wish her beautiful granddaughter **Katie Hill** a Happy 17th Birthday on Dec. 9!

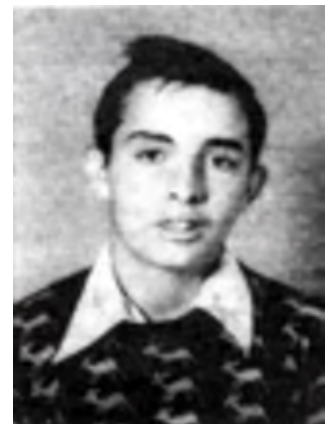
**Howard Camp** served 33 years, both active and reserve status, in the U.S. Army Air Corps and U.S. Air Force. He was in WWII and the Korean War as a fighter pilot. He served in Vietnam during the war there. Howard passed

## Photo of The Month

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away Nov. 7 and is survived by his wife **Jan Camp**; daughters **Susan (Bert) Burns**, **Trac-ey (Frank) Foster**, and four grandchildren. He loved flying and wrote a book that was very popular on his piloting years. His passing definitely will leave a void in the life of his many friends and family.

In 2010 **Eula Battle** noticed something that was critically necessary and cofounded Free 2 Teach, a non-profit agency that provides free classroom supplies and other resources to public school teachers. You have probably seen pictures of these teachers, who generally don't have high salaries, buying supplies for their classroom because they're not provided to them. Eula worked hard and this agency has given away more than \$1.1 million worth of classroom supplies to teachers in the Huntsville, Madison and Madison County school systems.

Recently the **Daughters of the American Revolution, Hunt's Spring Chapter**, honored Eula with its National Community Service Award for her continuous work (she still serves as Executive Director). So proud of **Eula Battle** for recognizing this need and working hard to help so many. Her husband, by the way, is **Mayor Tommy Battle** and what a great team they are for Huntsville!

**Mrs. Lori Anne (Garner)**

**McAulliffe** was only 51 when she passed away, after a hard battle with cancer. She had 25 years with Civil Service and was married to her love **Tommy McAulliffe**. She and Tommy gave care and love to many rescue kittens and just loved animals. She was a member of The Rock Church and was a great friend to many. She is survived by her husband Tommy, her parents, sister and brother-in-law, **Melissa and Chris Black**; brother **Robert Garner**, brother-in-law and sister-in-law **Charles and Mary McAulliffe**, sister-in-law and brother-in-law **Rosemary and Glen Hornbuckle**; uncle **David Finger**; aunt **Nancy Garner**, and nieces, nephews and so many friends who will never forget this kind lady.

The weather is getting cold and many women love wearing boots. I do too and I found the best socks that keep me warm and don't spring a hole at the toe in record time are men's Gold Toe socks. You can find them in most good men's stores and they last forever!

Another tip about storing boots - I use those skirt/pants hangers with the two clips and put one boot on each clip, toes pointing out. Hang them up in my closet and I can see at a glance

which boots I'm going to wear that day!

I hope you have warm wonderful Christmas and the New Year will be here before we know it! Be sure and check on your older neighbors this winter who may not have heat.

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# Christmas Favorites

## Godiva Fudge Cookies

6 oz. Godiva dark chocolate, melted  
 1/2 c. butter, softened  
 1 c. sugar  
 2 eggs  
 1-1/2 c. flour  
 1/2 t. salt  
 1-1/2 c. coarsely chopped pecans or walnuts

Melt chocolate in a pan over hot water. Cool slightly. Meanwhile cream butter, sugar and eggs until batter is smooth. Stir in cooled chocolate. Combine salt and flour; mix into batter. Add nuts and blend well. Chill for one hour until dough is firm. Drop rounded teaspoons 2 inches apart on buttered sheet.

Bake in a preheated oven at 375 degrees 10-12 minutes until slightly firm when touched

with finger. Cookies should be soft and chewy inside.

**Wenona Switzer**

## Chess Cakes

1 c. sugar  
 1/2 c. butter  
 3 eggs, well beaten  
 Pinch salt  
 2 c. dates  
 1/2 c. raisins  
 1/2 to 1 c. walnuts, chopped

In a bowl, cream the sugar and softened butter. Use a food processor to grind the dates, nuts and raisins. Mix butter mixture with date mixture.

Line muffin tins with good rich pie crust and fill 3/4 with the above mixture. Bake at 400 degrees about 25-30 minutes. Can be used with pre-made pie tart shells. If you want to make tiny ones bake at 350 degrees

for about 20 minutes.

**Jan Keith**

## Nut Pie

20 Ritz crackers, crushed  
 3 egg whites, stiffly beaten  
 1 c. sugar  
 1/2 t. baking powder  
 1/2 t. vanilla  
 1 c. chopped pecans

Beat egg whites, gradually add the sugar. Add other ingredients and bake in a greased 9 inch pie pan for 25 minutes at 325 degrees. Serve with ice cream or whipped cream. Cut into pie wedges.

**Phyllis Lively**

## Southern Pralines

1 c. dark brown sugar  
 1 c. regular sugar  
 1 t. vanilla extract

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5 T. boiling water  
 1/2 stick butter  
 2 c. pecan halves

Stir brown sugar, white sugar and butter into boiling water and boil for 1 minute. Remove from heat and add vanilla and nuts. Beat slowly until slightly sugary on bottom. Drop from tablespoon on waxed paper. Mixture will spread out. Allow to stand until completely cooled.

**Ruth Morrison**

### Mini Cheesecakes

3 8-oz. pkgs. cream cheese  
 1 c. sugar  
 5 eggs  
 1-1/2 t. vanilla extract

Cream sugar and cheese; add eggs. Add vanilla, pour into miniature cupcake liners 3/4 full. Bake 30 minutes at 300 degrees and cool slightly.

1 c. sour cream  
 1/4 c. sugar  
 1/4 t. vanilla extract

### Preserves

Mix the first 3 ingredients, spoon onto cupcakes. Top with dollops of any flavor jam. Bake 5 minutes at 300 degrees.

Refrigerate or freeze til needed. I like to use strawberry preserves. This makes 24 mini-cakes.

**Lynda Doud**

### Deena's Apple Cake

1 c. vegetable oil  
 2 c. sugar  
 3 eggs  
 2 c. flour  
 2 t. vanilla extract  
 1-1/2 t. ground cinnamon  
 1 t. baking soda  
 3 apples diced with skin on  
 1 c. chopped walnuts  
 3/4 c. gold raisins

Use cooking spray to heavily coat inside of a Bundt pan. Combine ingredients in the order listed. Spoon batter into the pan. Bake at 325 degrees for 1 hour 10 minutes and a toothpick comes out clean. Cool 45 minutes, remove to a platter.

### Topping

1/2 c. sugar  
 1/4 t. baking soda  
 1/4 c. buttermilk  
 1 stick butter  
 1/2 T. light corn syrup  
 1/2 t. vanilla extract

In a saucepan, combine all ingredients except the vanilla. Bring to boil and cook and stir for 5 minutes. Remove from heat and add the vanilla. Pour over cake. (Tip: put cake on cake rack, place in sink and then pour the glaze over. Carefully remove the cake back to the platter. Decorate if desired.

**Deena Shields**



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# Granddaughter of a Runaway Slave Boy

*Memoir by Anne Geneva Rutledge*

*Article by Steve Gierhart*

Children of today must be confused by the squabbling among adults over the impacts of a war that ended 150 years ago. Nevertheless, the Civil War remains a source of irritation even to this day. One thing is certain though, the perceptions of its results by whites and blacks may always be different. Our points of reference will dictate that Black Americans of African descent have the names of their slave masters, instead of their own, a fact which has greatly contributed to the loss of their own family history.

The impact of the sullied history of Jim Crow laws and practices has reached far beyond the days of blatant action. The rallying cry heard from African Americans, that "This is my country," exhibits a profound pride in what they have contributed to the building of this great nation. As can be imagined, a slow healing wound lingers until all affecting and infecting elements are exorcised. The election of an African American as President and now a second African American candidate vying for the office from, of all things, the Republican Party are comforting antidotes. No one would have predicted such at the turn of the 20th to the 21st Century.

For a moment, however, stand in the shoes of a woman who has lived almost one hundred years, an African American educated without the general support of a racist and male-dominated society, a woman who personally experienced atrocities and segregation at its hardest before its ending in the Civil Rights Era. Can you do that? Empathy requires that small step. Unity and

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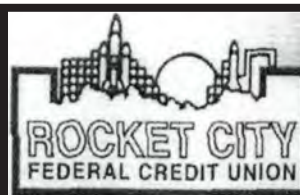
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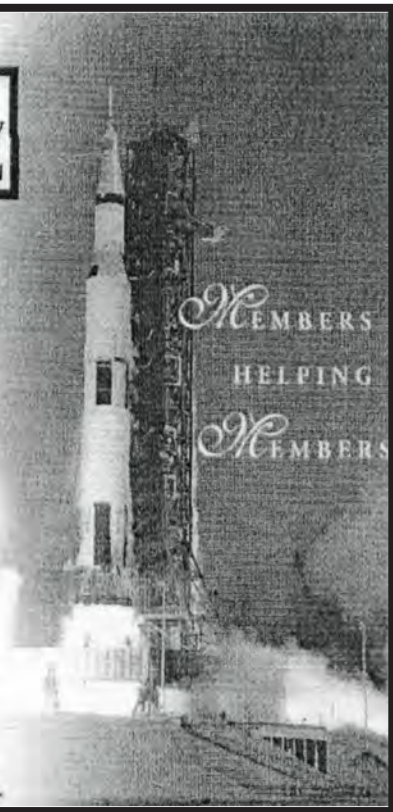


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healing comes through empathy.

Anne Geneva Rutledge, a former history professor at Alabama A&M University and long-time Huntsville resident, was born in 1921. Through a tenacious and driven personality, she has earned bachelor, master and postgraduate degrees in education. She accomplished this feat in spite of an American society's propensity for rewarding men of all persuasions, before women, especially African American women. This is especially true if the setting is the 1940s.

Now this 94 years young woman, with the help of Rutledge family members, has finished a memoir of her life, focusing her thoughts on the importance of family and the shaping of a just and humane society. Its completion is all the more remarkable in the face of the lost familial history of so many African Americans. Titled "Granddaughter of a Runaway Slave Boy", Anne's book chronicles the roots of her family starting with her grandfather, Jonas Rutledge, who ran away from his slave master in Perry County, Alabama, building a family of 22 children with his three wives, two of which he outlived. However, most of the book describes the barriers and perceptions for a woman of color in the years of segregated Alabama and the fight for civil rights.

Anne holds nothing back, whether it paints a sympathetic or unsympathetic portrait of herself, her family, or the country in which she was born. Regardless, her heartfelt passion for life crashes through these barriers that, for those who are able to place themselves in others' shoes, will be both exhilarating and thought-provoking.

Today's masses often receive a scanty education about the historical facts of segregation. Many prefer to remain blissfully unaware of how the nation's perspectives, created by color (race), have impacted the personal and world view of all races. It is probably hard for a white American to hear that many black Americans used to refer to the United States of America as the "United Snakes of America."

However, it becomes easier to understand

**GRANDDAUGHTER  
OF A  
RUNAWAY SLAVE BOY**

**A MEMOIR**

**by Anne G. Rutledge**

**amazon**

The Ardent Writer Press



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committing. Their punishment was exacted without the due process of law, all knowing they could do nothing to stop it without jeopardizing the lives of other family members. Nonetheless, black Americans began to fight this dehumanizing society through the efforts of individuals and groups who saw that injustice could be countered through non-violent and organized means. Anne describes one account of a white clerk in Hurtsboro, Alabama who demanded that Anne say "Yes, ma'am" to a question, when a simple "Yes" by Anne was sufficient.

In that case the disagreement accelerated into an argument with Anne eventually being hauled into the mayor's office and fined \$4.50 for "disorderly conduct" by the mayor who was judge and jury for the supposed "impudence" of this feisty black woman (who was called something much more nasty by both the white "alleged" victim and the mayor).

Anne also tells more humorous family stories, such as those provided by her cousin, A.L. Griffin, who relates "We wuzn't nuthin' but little toddlers when my mama (Laura) died. Gran'ma (Griffin) raised me, Herbert and Davy Lee 'til we could do for ourselves. All three of us slept together, ya know. Back in them times, ev-

erything was much different from now. Sometimes we peed in her bed. I slept on the front side - then one night I peed the bed - ain't nuttin' no better in the world than peeing in the bed - it be so warm. At first, Gran'ma would whip us about peeing in her bed."

"So, when I woke up and found I'd done the peeing, I thought God-da-mighty, uh, uh, uh! When all of 'em got up, I went back in the room, then turned that sheet around and put that pee on my brothers'

side. I got outta' that and Herbert and Davy Lee got the whipping."

Through it all, whether the background is shameful or laughable, through her life's many twists and turns, a triumph of spirit remains. Her story is one with which every American can respect, love, or perhaps, identify. As stated on the back cover of her memoir, "Life is a roller coaster and you can enjoy the ride or not. Anne Geneva Rutledge has spent 94 years enjoying her ride."

If you elect to read her memoir, you can enjoy it too!

*Woody Anderson*



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## A Dog Named Christmas

by Elizabeth McKinney

Many years ago, we went to my parents' house for Christmas Day. Dad told us he'd been to the lake just above their home and found that someone had abandoned a small puppy there.

Dad had taken the dog some food, but he worried that the puppy would die in the cold weather. He couldn't bring it home to his place; he was afraid it would grow into a big dog and chase the neighbors' cattle.

When we left that day, our daughter wanted to go see the puppy, so we drove to the lake. That pup was a sorry sight, so cold and alone. But my husband told our daughter we couldn't have a dog.

When we left, our daughter couldn't stop crying. My husband finally relented and told her we'd go back to get the dog, but it would be her responsibility.

She named the puppy Christmas, Chris for short. He grew into a large dog, as Dad had predicted, but he was a loving creature and the whole family adored him.

When we went to church near our home, Chris always followed us. He'd lie on the church porch during services, then go home with us.

When my father became ill, we couldn't always get to church. But our minister told us Chris never missed a service. He would lie on the porch, just as he always did; then Rev. Pope would come

out and tell him church was over, and Chris would come home. The minister began calling him the church dog. The name stuck and most of the people in our small community called him that.

Chris has been gone for many years now and our daughter is grown, with a daughter of her own. But she still keeps a picture of our beloved church dog on her dresser.

Lee



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# The Bird Pie - Eat What you Kill

by M.D. Smith, IV

I have not killed a song bird in over 50 years, but when I was 12 years old and it was Christmas of 1952, I got a great gift, the "Most Powerful BB Pump Gun" that Daisy Mfg. Co. made. Everything Daisy made was spring operated and not the high powered real Pneumatic air rifles made by Crosman and Benjamin (that came a year later). But it was the most powerful one Daisy made and my friends told me it would kill a squirrel. Well, it wouldn't as I found out Christmas afternoon, but it was deadly on birds.

I envisioned myself in the image of great explorers Lewis & Clark or Davy Crockett living off the land in the woods. My father who had taught me to shoot, the rules of gun safety and hunting, always said that hunters "ate what they killed." By golly, that's what I was going to do. The new Daisy Pump gun was quite accurate, and I earned NRA marksmanship bars shooting the "Official NRA 15 foot Target" with scores that put me in "Expert Marksman" and later "Sharpshooter" category. I often wore my NRA pin with bars hanging below it displaying my skills.

Time to be a "real" hunter and stop disposing of sparrows, larks and an occasional robin in the trash or leaving in the woods for predators. We had a cook named Polly and she told me if

I'd clean and collect the birds, she'd cook them for me when I got enough to make a good meal. I saw visions of our family of four (I had a younger sister) having a fine meal of game I had bagged in the woods near our house and me being singled out as the food provider for the whole family that evening. I was on a mission.

From that time in January on, I would come home from school every cold afternoon and put on

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**Jim Regan**

"hunting clothes," the old blue jeans and old scratched leather jacket. I'd crawl around in the woods under thick cover and under giant bushes which were almost clear inside and a perfect vantage of an unsuspecting bird that might fly to roost for the afternoon that would be my prey. I rarely came home near dark at 5 p.m. empty handed.

Then I had to clean my game tucked away in my jacket pockets in small paper sacks. It was cold squatting down on the concrete with ice cold water running from the hose as I picked the bird clean and basically did everything you would do to clean a chicken, but my game was MUCH smaller. Still, my small scout knife did the job and soon the bird or birds were ready to wrap in freezer paper and put in the deep freeze to wait until I had enough for a fine family meal. The sparrows were pitifully small, and all I saved was the breast meat out of them, as there would be no way to pick meat off a drumstick or wing. The occasional robin or blue jay was much better keeping the whole bird.

Finally the day arrives that Polly tells me I have more than enough for a meal from the birds. I'd had a fine hunting season by March ( I didn't hunt every day) and I was proud of the size of my game bag.

Unknown to me, when Polly had said it was time to cook my birds, my mother said there was no way the rest of the family was going to eat them, and Polly would cook a regular meal for the rest of the family.

Frying the small birds like fried chicken would have taken much too long and so Polly decided to make me a Bird Pie. She said she'd use all the birds like she would do if she were making "chicken and dumplings" and put a layered crust on the top and bake it That didn't sound

**"When you don't know that you don't know, it's a lot different than when you do know that you don't know. He knows now that he doesn't know. Last year, he didn't know that."**

**Bill Parcells, New England Patriots head coach, about quarterback Drew Bledsoe**



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quite like I'd imagined, but what the heck, my game was being used because a "Hunter always eats what he kills." (My sons know this today as together we have cleaned and eaten squirrels as they grew up with pellet guns).

Dinner is served in the dining room with white table cloth, china plates and the food is brought in. The family was served plates with meatloaf, mashed potatoes and green peas. I was served a casserole dish with a brown pie crust on top and inside were the dumplings made of flour and the birds, all baked and cooked together. The smile went off my face when I realized I was not providing for the entire family as I envisioned. But I had my hunter's game meal, so I was still happy somewhat... until I tasted it. I had a small plate on the side and got several large servings of birds & dumplings. I picked up one of the larger birds by a leg, blew it to cool a bit and took a bite from the largest part, the breast.

It did not taste good. It had a wild "gamey" taste and no other seasonings besides the taste of the not fully cooked dumplings. Ugh! As my parents ate their meal, they smiled as they asked me how my dinner tasted. I said it was not quite as good as I had imagined, but I still went on eating. I stopped long before I was full, but I certainly had eaten enough. I sat at the table until the family was finished as customary and asked to be excused.

Later in the kitchen I went to see if there was any more meatloaf, but it was all gone, and I did get some left over mashed potatoes. Polly asked me if I wanted the Bird Pie put in the fridge for the next night and I said no, and watched her rake the entire bowl full of dumplings and my small birds into the garbage can. I felt a sadness for all the time, work, wet cold hands and effort I had spent that was now being trashed in front of me.

I truly appreciate to this day that my father and family "humored" me to be the "Great White Hunter" of Canterbury Road. I never had a Bird Pie again. I have certainly eaten Dove and Quail, properly prepared, and I think are especially good marinated, wrapped in bacon and spices and roasted in the oven.

The Bird Pie is just a memory.



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# Our Christmas Traditions

by Cheryl Tribble



Back in the day, my family established some traditions that members of the family still follow decades later. It started when there was only one child, but in the end there were four of us kids. I thought I would share how my parents set a routine that would take place each year.

We would always have a "live" tree. Dad was in charge of the lights. He would string them out to double check that each light worked. It was really special when we acquired the "bubble lights" (with the long glass tube) later on. The tree was set-up with a two-tier stand that held the beautiful Nativity scene (we got to help with that). We were allowed to hang the ornaments appropriate to our height. Mom would hang the ornaments at the top of the tree and was also in charge of the tinsel. Had to be "just perfect".

Every Christmas Eve we would go out and drive around in Los Angeles - appreciating the Christmas lights and decorations of the season. The main purpose however, was to search the skies for Santa and his sleigh in the sky above. Sometimes, we thought we had seen him. Then when we would get home, we were allowed to open one present each before going to bed as we anticipated the next day. It was hard to sleep soundly that night.

We had rules (or guidelines) about how the next day would work out. We lived in a two-story home and of course the tree and gifts were downstairs. My maternal grandparents (Harold

and Grace) would spend the night with us each year. In total there were four adults and four kids.

Anyway, the first to wake up was responsible for alerting all of us that it was time to see what Santa brought. In doing so, the adults needed to get up first. The plan was that all the adults would go downstairs (all the while voicing their approval and excitement) about what was under the tree. Note: Santa never wrapped our gifts so

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there was clarity immediately. We usually could identify which one belonged to us based on our ages. My grandfather loved to record movies (silent) which ended up on 8MM reels. His job was to film us as we came down the stairs as a group, to capture our reactions to the gifts under the tree.

After the excitement subsided, we were allowed to "checkout" what Santa had left in our stockings. One thing you could count on was that each year there was an orange in each. That was good because it took up room. We got barrettes for our hair, new pencils/pens, socks, etc. While that was going on, one of the adults started sorting our presents, placing them in piles for each person.

To avoid total chaos, the rule was that we were to open our presents, one at a time, in order of our ages. The youngest one always went first and we took turns. After I opened mine (being the oldest child) we would then rotate to each adult. The point being that all of us needed to see each gift, respond with enthusiasm and thank the gift giver. If you can imagine, this could take hours because there were eight of us taking turns. After all of this we would have Christmas breakfast. Usually, by late afternoon we took naps because we were exhausted.

We were never very enthusiastic about receiving clothes however. Guess that is pretty normal for little kids. My most special Santa gift was a record player when I was eleven. I couldn't believe it! I also got two record albums (33 RPM); one was Nat King Cole and the best one was Ricky Nelson. I was crazy about him on the TV show; Ozzie and Harriet. Remember that? Our best present was for my Mom one year. We combined our money (mostly change) and purchased a record album (33 RPM) for my Mom. It was of Johnny Mathis with the song "Chances Are." We hid it in a huge box with lots of newspaper stuffing (also the box was light as a feather) so she could not guess what was in it. Mom was thrilled and even cried tears of joy.

Another special tradition that happened at home each year involved desserts. Our neighbor Jewel would bake each child (the four of us) our favorite dessert. Mine happened to be lemon meringue pie. So on Christmas Eve I would get the whole pie just for my enjoyment alone. I did not have to share. It wasn't often that anyone of us were in a position to avoid sharing something so delicious. I probably did, but at least it was optional.

When I was five and Lynne was three we received baby dolls from Santa. That day we played with them outside in the backyard and forgot to bring them back in with us. Well later we found out they were stolen. My Dad felt that was a "teachable moment". No replacements were forthcoming.

Some of the most memorable Christmas things I recall start with my Mom's side of the family. The weekend prior to Christmas or immediately following it, the entire family would get together at my Aunt Ruth's house. This included my great grandmother Anna, her children and spouses, her grandchildren (their spouses) and great-grandchildren. There would be a fabulous feast and then a gift exchange. The kids would have a "white elephant" exchange of sorts, that was always fun. But the most unique thing Anna initiated was that she would give a silver dollar (remember those?) to each adult male one year and then rotate the following year by giving the adult women one. Based on how many relatives there were, it cost her a fortune. This went on for the sixteen years I was lucky enough to have her in my life, before her passing at 86. When I was thirteen, I graduated to the adult female group - so I was then entitled to my own silver dollar. It was so special because I had "arrived".

As Christmas approaches each year, we follow the same protocol except now my granddaughter is in charge of distributing the gifts and we still take turns. Amazing how "old habits" never die.

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Vice President Al Gore**



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# A Miserly Man

*He Lived in Misery and Filth but Died with \$30,000 in his Boot*

from 1899 newspaper

A few years ago there lived a miser by the name of Thomas Hussey - his name almost indicated his character. He owned one of the most valuable lots on South Perry, in the heart of the city, and on this lot this curiosity of natural history dwelled in an old-fashioned, antiquated and dilapidated frame house. It was an eyesore to the rich inhabitants who resided in their palatial residences on this most prominent and fashionable street.

He lived all alone in his glory or misery, and cared for no one in particular but himself. He worshiped but one God and that was the golden calf in the shape of money. There was but one familiar tune that he became infatuated with, that he loved above all others, and that was the jingling of the many different coins when he was counting his untold wealth.

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

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

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

He took an annual trip to New York every year. However bad that he wanted to go he would place himself in a great deal of inconvenience in waiting until he

could get reduced rates. The ticket agent said that he would make a double daily trip to the union depot for a month inquiring for cheap tickets.

So finally the tickets came and he concluded to buy one. The ticket agent told him the price of same. It took him about fifteen minutes to count out his dollars, halves, quarters, nickels and copper cents for the price of the ticket. He told the ticket agent when he put down the last copper cent with a trembling hand, and with a pitiful voice, "Take it all, I believe you would take the last cent a poor man had." The agent said it was like taking his heart's blood for him to part with his money.

This was the last trip he made to New York. This was in the year 1897. He was found insensible on the streets by the police shortly after. They took him around to the station house, and when he was searched they found over thirty thousand dollars stuffed down in his bootlegs. When the fact of his arrest was published in the papers, two women claiming to be relatives and whom he recognized, called and had him moved to their house where he soon died.



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# A RESCUE DOG'S CHRISTMAS POEM



*Tis the night before Christmas and all through the town,  
 every shelter is full - we are lost but not found.  
 Our numbers are hung on our kennels so bare,  
 we hope every minute that someone will care.  
 They'll come to adopt us and give us the call,  
 "Come here. Max and Sparkle - come fetch your new ball!!"  
 But now we sit here and think of the days...  
 we were treated so fondly - we had cute, baby ways.  
 Once we were little, then we grew and we grew -  
 now we're no longer young and we're no longer new.  
 So out the back door we were thrown like the trash,  
 they reacted so quickly - why were they so rash?*

*We "jump on the children", "don't come when they  
 call",  
 we "bark when they leave us", "climb over the  
 wall".  
 We should have been neutered, we should have  
 been spayed,  
 now we suffer the consequence of the errors they  
 made.  
 If only they'd trained us, if only we knew...  
 we'd have done what they asked us and worshiped  
 them, too.  
 We were left in the backyard, or worse - let to  
 roam,  
 now we're tired and lonely and out of a home.  
 They dropped us off here and they kissed us good-  
 bye...  
 "Maybe someone else will give you a try."  
 So now here we are, all confused and alone...  
 in a shelter with others who long for a home.  
 The kind workers come through with a meal and a  
 pat,  
 with so many to care for, they can't stay to chat.  
 They move to the next kennel, giving each of us  
 cheer...  
 we know that they wonder how long we'll be here.  
 We lay down to sleep and sweet dreams fill our  
 heads...  
 of a home filled with love and our own cosy beds.  
 Then we wake to see sad eyes, brimming with  
 tears,  
 our friends filled with emptiness, worry, and fear.  
 If you can't adopt us and there's no room at the  
 Inn -  
 could you help with the bills and fill our food bin?  
 We count on your kindness each day of the year -  
 can you give more than hope to everyone here?  
 Please make a donation to pay for the heat...  
 and help get us something special to eat.  
 The shelter that cares for us wants us to live,  
 and more of us will, if more people will give.  
 Author unknown*

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# The Nick Name

by Doug Martinson

My grandfather, Claude E. Barnes, owned the Claude Barnes Grocery Store, that was located on Fifth Street (now Andrew Jackson Way). The store was in the middle of the block between the current location of Hill's Lawnmower Sales and Service, and Eunice's Country Kitchen.

The Fifth Street Baptist Church (now Andrew Jackson Way Baptist Church) had a Christmas program on Christmas Eve night around the year 1941.

At 2 A.M. on Christmas morning Willis Routt, the Constable of Dallas Village was making his security rounds in the Village when he heard someone holler "HELP".

When Willis walked in the alley between Carroll's Grocery and Barnes Grocery he discovered that a man had attempted to break in the Barnes store by climbing down the chimney. Of course, the burglar was stuck tight in the chimney.

Willis called the authorities and the Dallas Village Fire Department answered the call and pulled him out.

The Village people nicknamed the man and after that date his name was "Santa Claus".

The above facts were given to me by my mother, Annetta Barnes Martinson, who was the oldest daughter of Claude E. Barnes.

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# Huntsville Coffee Talk

by Aunt Eunice

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



*Don't worry about old age -  
it doesn't last.*

### *Aunt Eunice's Column in the Old Huntsville Magazine, Christmas 2000*

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

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

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

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

blast.

Robbie and Bill Halsey and Jessie and Dennis Camalli gave me the honor of feeding them as they were touring Huntsville. Our sympathy goes to the Buck Brody family in the death of Mr. Brody. Been friends a long time and I love you all. Also to Lisa Fanning on the death of her daughter in law. I love you very much.

Byron and Tillie Laird brought their guests to breakfast which included Jim and Phyllis Blazer, (Ben Williams) Byron's sister, from Melbar, Florida and Gaylon and Dean Boyd. They enjoyed it so much.

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

Maybe some names I missed

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**"Sometimes you will  
never know the value of a  
moment until it becomes  
a memory."**

**Dr. Seuss**

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

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

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

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

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

We keep hearing gossip that a member of the City Council has decided not to run again in the next

election. Wonder who it could be?

Byron Laird had a successful book signing here at the restaurant on November 14 and greeted lots of his friends. His just published book called "Thou Shalt Not Boil Eggs in a Microwave" is chock-full of amusing stories. I well recall the incident he tells about the night he missed a turn and got us lost and out of gas between Birmingham and Cullman. They will make real nice Christmas presents!

My dear friend, Lloyd Tomlinson of the Outback Restaurant tells me he's really selling lots of gift certificates. Another good idea for a Christmas present for those who have everything!

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

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

As I'm writing this column I get word that my dear friend Jerry

Tomlin just lost his Dad. I'm so sorry and our sympathy goes to the Tomlin family.

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

Ken Follett's new mystery novel should be in the bookstores any day. The story takes place in the 1950s and much of the plot is based here in Huntsville. Our dear friend Loretta Spencer sure has been a busy woman since she was elected Mayor. She is a good person and has a big heart. We are lucky to have her.

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

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



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# Po' Folks Christmas

by Malcolm W. Miller



A good many years ago singer, song writer Bill Anderson wrote a very popular country song entitled "Po Folks", then a few years later he came out with a different version entitled "Po Folks Christmas".

"Po Folks Christmas" is a song I could definitely relate to when I was growing up as the seventh son of a share cropper.

There is a line in the song that says "When the howling winds would get mighty rough and we didn't have food enough we'd stop up the cracks and set the table with love."

I cannot really say we didn't have food enough on our table because we always had something to eat, however it surely wasn't anything fancy. I remember well my parents stopping the cracks in the walls and doors with rags or papers or whatever we could

find to keep those howling winter winds out. Christmas when I was growing up was really the only time of the year that we had anything special and the things that were special to us back then are things we all have every day now and never give it a second thought. Christmas time was the only time all year that we had apples, oranges and raisins. It was the only time I remember Mama would bake a cake and make those wonderful tea cakes.

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One of the older boys would go out in the pasture and cut a small cedar tree and we would decorate it by stringing popcorn on strings, cutting out paper circles, coloring them with crayons and gluing the circles into chains using paste made out of flour and water for glue.

When Christmas Eve came we would all put our caps under the tree with our names in them so Santa Clause wouldn't get them mixed up. I don't recall ever getting any of the wonderful things I had been admiring in the Sears Roebuck catalogue, (it seems that most families years ago had Sears Roebuck catalogues.) However the anticipation was always there and when I ended up getting a ball, a knife, or maybe a ten cent harmonica I was happy. I always thought that Santa must have run out of the BB guns, bicycles, wagons and other things I had dreamed about Santa bringing.

Now that I have grown much older and raised a family of my own and have grandchildren and great-grandchildren I think back about how difficult it must have been for my Papa and Mama to hear us boys begging for all the wonderful things that they didn't have the money to provide for us. Thinking back, however, they provided the most important thing of all and that was love. My parents have been gone now for many years and all my brothers are gone also, so Christmas is a time for reflection back into the past and all the hard but happy times my family spent together throughout my childhood.


Not only did I have parents who sacrificed for all of us boys, my six older brothers who were my role models and they all took care of me. During the entire lives of my six older brothers, they never let me down in their role of my idols. They were all fine

**"To be without some of the things you want is an indispensable part of happiness."**


**Bertrand Russell**

men, all were soldiers except the oldest, Robert, who had to stay home and help Papa with the farming. Each of these older brothers left behind fine families to carry on their legacy and memories. The younger generations are now making memories in a much different way than we did, however their memories still include the love of family.

Memories are a wonderful thing and they get sweeter as the years go by. Since I have reached the sunset of my life, I am currently 88, when I leave this world I hope someone will have fond memories of me, not only Christmas memories, but life memories as well. I hope each and every one of you reading these Christmas stories will have a Christmas this year that leaves you with many great memories that you can think back on as you grow older.



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# Goldsmith Schiffman Field

by Johnny Johnston

It's on the way from Mullins where I meet some friends on Monday morning. I drive by on occasion to stir my memories. Memories, like paint and vegetable soup, have to be stirred sometimes, that keeps the best coming to the top.

My preacher told me once that I should think in the future, thinking of the past was a waste. Maybe so, but it's more fun to remember things that will never happen again; not in the future, not in the past, they are gone.

There was that day during WWII when I was 5 or 6 years old and Dad took us to see a demonstration of "War Battle" being displayed at Goldsmith Schiffman Field. There were several small buildings resembling a coal house, out-house or

chicken pen. A clown dressed in an Army uniform traveled from building to building and each time he left, that building exploded with dynamite. Other events of the day are dim but I do remember some tanks and other Army units on display and some folks marching on the field with musical instruments.

Then there were the other times at Goldsmith involving football games, concession stands where I volunteered while in high school. Football in the '50s involving Huntsville High and Butler High were held at Goldsmith. Butler was a fledgling school just a year old when it fielded a band to play at the games. A field marching band was not yet developed however they did play the two or three tunes they knew from the stands.

Grady Reeves called the games on WBHP or maybe WHBS. The first night, he made a statement that got him in hot water with Butler and especially

J. Homer Grim, the Principal. He said during half time "Huntsville has a good show on the field with their band, but I only hear a bunch of noise from the Butler Band." Monday morning found Grady Reeves at Butler High apologizing over the public address system.

Our football team was not weak with Glenn Nunley, Jimmie Butler and others playing. They were a powerhouse. On one occasion the game was tied 7 to 7 by Huntsville when they were the underdog. That Monday we arrived at Butler to see 7 to 7 written on the side of the building. I am told that the same week all the Huntsville trophies were painted green and gold. I was told that, I never saw it.

The last game I remember attending was the Butler Huntsville Football game of 1958. The stands were overflowing and people were standing several deep all around the fence.

My, have things changed.



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# Tweetie's Pet Trivia

## Holiday Safety for your Pets



The holiday season is upon us, and many pet parents plan to include their furry companions in the festivities. As you gear up for the holidays, it is important to try to keep your pet's eating and exercise habits as close to their normal routine as possible. Also, please be sure to steer pets clear of unhealthy treats, toxic plants and dangerous decorations.

### Be Careful with Seasonal Plants and Decorations

- **Oh, Christmas Tree:** Securely anchor your Christmas tree so it doesn't tip and fall, causing possible injury to your pet. This will also prevent the tree water – which may contain fertilizers that can cause stomach upset – from spilling. Stagnant tree water is a breeding ground for bacteria, and your pet could end up with nausea or diarrhea should he imbibe.

- **Avoid Mistletoe & Holly:** Holly, when ingested, can cause pets to suffer nausea, vomiting and diarrhea. Mistletoe can cause gastrointestinal upset and cardiovascular problems. And many varieties of lilies can cause kidney failure in cats if ingested. Opt for just-as-jolly artificial plants made from silk or plastic, or choose a pet-safe bouquet.

- **Tinsel-less Town:** Kitties love this sparkly, light-catching "toy" that's easy to bat around and carry in their mouths. But a nibble can lead to a swallow, which can lead to an obstructed digestive tract, severe vomiting, dehydration and possible surgery. It's best to brighten your boughs with something other than tinsel.

- **That Holiday Glow:** Don't leave lighted candles unattended. Pets may burn themselves or cause a fire if they knock candles over. Be sure to use appropriate candle holders, placed on a stable surface. And if you leave the room, put the candle out!

- **Wired Up:** Keep wires, batteries and glass or plastic ornaments out of paws' reach. A wire can deliver a potentially lethal electrical shock and a punctured battery can cause burns to the mouth and esophagus, while shards of breakable ornaments can damage your pet's mouth and digestive tract.

### Avoid Holiday Food Dangers

- **Skip the Sweets:** By now you know not to feed your pets chocolate and anything sweetened with xylitol, but do you know the lengths

to which an enterprising pet will go to chomp on something yummy? Make sure to keep your pets away from the table and unattended plates of food, and be sure to secure the lids on garbage cans.

- **Leave the Leftovers:** Fatty, spicy and sweet human foods, as well as bones, should not be fed to your furry friends. Pets can join the festivities in other fun ways that won't lead to costly medical bills.

- **Careful with Cocktails:** If your celebration includes adult holiday beverages, be sure to place your unattended alcoholic drinks where pets cannot get to them. If ingested, your pet could become weak, ill and may even go into a coma, possibly

resulting in death from respiratory failure.

- **Selecting Special Treats:** Looking to stuff your pet's stockings? Stick with chew toys that are basically indestructible, Kongs that can be stuffed with healthy foods or chew treats that are designed to be safely digestible. Long, stringy things are a feline's dream, but the most risky toys for cats involve ribbon, yarn and loose little parts that can get stuck in the intestines, often necessitating surgery. Surprise kitty with a new ball that's too big to swallow, a stuffed catnip toy or the interactive cat dancer.

### Plan a Pet-Safe Holiday Gathering

- **House Rules:** If your animal-loving guests would like to give your pets a little extra attention and exercise while you're busy tending to the party, ask them to feel free to start a nice play or petting session.

- **Put the Meds Away:** Make sure all of your medications are locked behind secure doors. Be sure to tell your guests to keep their meds zipped up and packed away, too.

- **A Room of Their Own:** Give your pet his own quiet space to retreat to – complete with fresh water and a place to snuggle. Shy pups and cats might want to hide out under a piece of furniture, in their carrying case or in a separate room away from the hubbub.

- **New Year's Noise:** As you count down to the new year, please keep in mind that strings of thrown confetti can get lodged in a cat's intestines, if ingested, perhaps necessitating surgery. Noisy poppers can terrify pets and cause possible damage to sensitive ears. And remember that many pets are also scared of fireworks, so be sure to secure them in a safe, escape-proof area as midnight approaches.

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# From the Desk of Tom Carney

## How a Northern Man Sees Huntsville

from 1875 Huntsville Newspaper

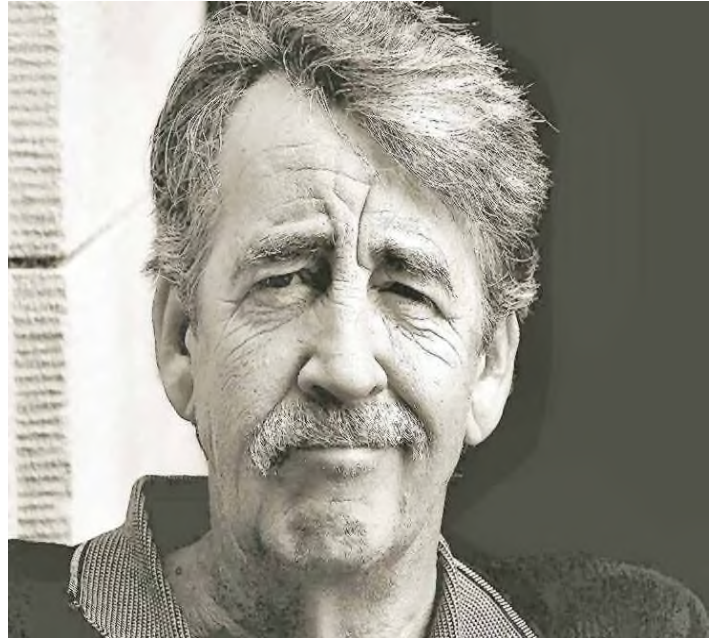
*This letter was written in 1875 by Mr. H. Mears, who had recently moved to Huntsville. He sent this letter to his friends in the frozen regions of Port Huron, in Michigan. It describes what he experienced in Huntsville, and wants his old friends to get a feeling of our city. His letter was published in both the Huntsville and the Port Huron newspapers.*

"We left Decatur Monday morning, and one hour's ride brought us to the beautiful city of Huntsville, called the Garden City of the South. A more beautiful spot I never have seen. Surrounded by high hills, it lies in a valley, one side is the Monte Sano. Upon the top of this mountain you can get one of the finest views in this country.

Here they have a very fine Court House with a city clock sounding the hours plain enough to be heard all around. The business houses are brick, similar to those in Port Huron and about as many. Around the immediate vicinity of Huntsville are several old Planters Homes.

Here within half a mile you can take your choice of as fine land as you ever saw cultivated for \$10-20 per acre. Just think of what your lots on the Reserve cost, and they are not to be compared to anything here.

A lot that would be considered cheap (100x75 feet) at \$100 in Port Huron here with the same money you could buy 40 acres of land right in sight of the city, where you could grow everything except tropical fruits. You could raise your corn and sell it quick for \$1.25 a bushel. The people here seem to be cotton-crazy. If they left cotton more alone and devoted their attention to raising



wheat, corn, potatoes and garden vegetables a man would be wealthy in just a few years.

Yesterday I rode and saw some farms owned by Northern men who have come to Huntsville and they look beautiful. The Southern man has no idea of farming. When you see the two farms as you do here, side by side, you can see at once what northern white labor can do.

The large landowners here are willing to do almost anything to get white people to come here from the North to work. Nowhere can you go and be met with such warm friendships as with the people of Huntsville. I was introduced to L. P. Walker, Jeff Davis' Secretary of War, a splendid man and a gentleman. He expressed himself warmly in regard to getting good working white men to come south and laughed at the idea of a northern man not being allowed to live here.



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**"If a blonde is having more fun, does she know it?"**

**Justin Broadway, Athens**



I have been introduced to all prominent people here and they are brim full of kindness and don't hesitate to do all they can to make you comfortable and happy. This is election day in Huntsville, and the law is that the day previous to the election, day of election and day after, no liquor is allowed to be sold anywhere.

There is a wonderful spring here. It rushes out from the side of a rock about 70 feet high. Here is beautiful air, pure water, fine land and the most beautiful scenery as to be seen anywhere North. There are the kindest and most wonderful people you'll ever meet. I am satisfied and pleased to squat here and try to make a home for myself and family.

The city is situated in the northern part of the state, on the Memphis & Charleston railroad. A railroad from St. Louis to the seaboard via Huntsville will soon be completed and several other roads are spoken of. It is the largest city of North Alabama and the business center of that part of the State.

Extreme cold is never known here, the summers are free from extreme heat and it is a great resort for invalids from the North. Come, all you coughing, weak-lunged people, here you will get a new lease on life and soon lose your old hacking coughs you all enjoy so freely up in Port Huran.

Huntsville has a female college, a female seminary, two high schools for boys, besides a free school; churches of all denominations, good hotels especially the Huntsville House - a large elegant building facing almost upon the public square and within a few steps of the great spring.

I hope someday to see all my old friends come down here to live and enjoy life. There is plenty of room, business is good and the people all will welcome you with warm hearts to your new homes."

Yours truly, H. Mears

*Here is the letter Mears received back from the Mayor of Port Huran:*

"Friend Mears. Your kind letter, informing us of the safe arrival of yourself and your family at Huntsville, Ala. has been received.

While we were loath to lose you in our town, we are happy to hear of the good fortune you find in Huntsville.

There is one thing, however, that I must find fault with, particularly as I am a resident here and at the head of the city government: the fact that you wrote to our newspaper in Port Huran and your

letter was published. I am unhappy about that because it has turned the heads of one half of our citizens southward. If you keep on writing I am fearful that you will draw away a large number of our people.

I cannot blame you however for being so delighted with the weather but for heavens sake don't depopulate our city."

N. S. Boynton, Mayor



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# The Big Snow

by Austin Miller



In the mid 1950s, the old folks around Ryland were always talking about the weather. They said it didn't get as cold as it used to or snow like it did in the past. We hadn't seen a good snow in years. I could remember snows when I first started to school but all we had seen in recent years were a few flurries that didn't stick.

There were conversations about how in earlier times it would stay cold for so long that the atmosphere took on a bluish tint and how you could ice skate on solidly frozen ponds all winter. This was long before anyone heard of global warming but there was common agreement that the weather had changed.

Our closest neighbor, Mrs. Cora Shepard, in the wisdom of her advanced years, didn't think the snows were over and predicted that we would one day have a whopper

to make up for all the years without snow.

One night in February of 1958, I returned home from a Gurley basketball game about ten o'clock in the evening. There wasn't a cloud in the sky when I walked up the drive to the house. I did notice that the wind was up but dismissed it as early March winds. When I got into bed, the wind was whistling around the house and roaring through the trees. It was a soothing peaceful sound and I was soon fast asleep.

About four o'clock in the morning, I awoke to strange flickers of light that illuminated the bedroom. We got the snow that Mrs. Shepard had predicted. It fell fast, wet and heavy bringing down trees,

limbs and power lines. Light blue bursts of fire erupted when the downed high voltage electric wires hit the wet snow. The flashes reflected off the snow and made the countryside look like it was lighted by a huge fluorescent lamp on the blink.

When Mrs. Maude Taylor saw the strange lights, she woke up her husband, Mr. Wes, and told him to, wake up and run like hell to the cellar; the Russians had dropped an Atomic Bomb on Huntsville! She was not the only one who thought that the nuclear war had started.

It snowed 18 inches in Ryland. This was more than anybody could ever remember. Daylight revealed a countryside covered in a deep



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blanket of white. Snow carpeted wash pots, tubs, buckets and other yard clutter took on an aura of magic. Before nightfall, the temperature dropped below zero and didn't get above freezing for days.

At New Market, the thermometer fell to 19 degrees below zero, one of the coldest temperatures ever recorded in the state of Alabama. The cold and snow lingered; Flint River froze over except in the swift places, schools were closed for over a week and we ran out of coal. After a few days neighbors, who couldn't make it to work, started to get cabin fever. We had visitors from the community that had never been in our house before.

The snow was slow to leave and Mrs. Shepard, drawing from old folklore, predicted it was lying around waiting for another one to come. The weather made the news all over the United States and in Europe. My Uncle Paul, who was stationed with the Army in France at the time, wrote a letter to the editor of the Huntsville Times about our cold weather making the news in France.

There was at least one weather related death. A gentleman named Alvie Potts froze to death on Keel Mountain. He was found along side the road not far from his house. Mr. Potts' death was part of the story covered by the French newspapers.

The snow finally melted and everybody was glad to see it go. That was not the first big snow in Madison County or the last. Published information about Huntsville's weather gives the annual snow fall as negligible. That is true most years and often it is true for many years in a row.

But it is not always true. We were all surprised Christmas morning of 2010 when we got about three inches, the first white Christmas many of us had ever seen. About two weeks later in January we got another snow that dropped five or six inches. I remember driving on Holmes Avenue thinking this looks like the

snow covered streets I have seen in northern cities.

Big snows will come to Huntsville again, it may be this year, next year or a few years in the future but one will come. And this is one of the many things that makes Huntsville a unique and special place.

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# A Christmas Bell

by *Hartwell Lutz*



Having grown up on a dairy farm, my mother always believed in having a cat or two around to keep the rodents under control, whether they were there or not. So she was delighted when an old stray mama cat took up in our garage and had a litter of four kittens a few days later. Three of the kittens were black, and the other was gray. For some reason my parents and I took a liking to the gray kitten, and we kept him after giving away the others along with their mother. We named the gray kitten Gray Bell, for some reason I have long since forgotten.

Not long after his litter mates and mother were gone. Gray Bell discovered my mother's canning jars in the garage. Being bored, I guess, not having anyone to play with all the time and having the natural curiosity of a cat, he managed to get his head in one of the jars, and that's how I found him one day when I came home from school. The best way to describe him at the time is to say, "He was going nuts trying to get the jar off his head," and I couldn't catch him, or maybe I was just afraid to mess with him.

When my father came home he managed to catch Gray Bell, but he couldn't get the jar off either. He even tried greasing it with lard, but nothing worked. Finally he came up with an idea. While holding the cat, with its neck against a block of wood, he hit the jar with a hammer and broke it. The only problem then was that the ring of the jar was still around Gray Bell's neck, and the cat and the glass ring had become a dangerous combination. Nevertheless, somehow my father caught him again and

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*Sally Franklin, Athens*



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broke the ring.

After all this Gray Bell became a family pet and stayed in the house as much as he stayed outside for several years, but that changed, at least temporarily during the Christmas season of about 1944.

The custom in our family was to decorate the tree on Christmas Eve. That year, my mother and I decided that we would surprise Daddy by having our tree up and decorated when he got home from work. After going out and buying a tree (and you could get a nice one then for a dollar), we spent several hours decorating it, and it was beautiful, with lots of lights, tinsel, bells, baubles and the

usual decorations. Neither of us gave any thought to Gray Bell until we left the living room and the tree and came back only to discover that Gray Bell had jumped up in the tree, knocking it over and scattering our decorations, and otherwise making a mess out of our hard work. So we straightened it up and rearranged the decorations, with my father due home shortly. This time, we tied it up to something with a strong cord. Daddy thought the tree looked wonderful, and he got a laugh out of Gray Bell's stunt.

What happened next, though, has got to make you wonder at the good judgment and basic intelligence of our

family. As we were sitting down to dinner, we heard a noise in the living room. Yep, Gray Bell had done it again. Of course, after dinner we put the tree back up and re-decorated it for the third time. But Gray Bell wasn't with us a little while later when we sat in the light of the tree and I read the Christmas story from the Gospel of Luke, as had been another family custom since I learned to read. In fact, Gray Bell stayed outside as long as the tree was there. But we took it down in just a few days because he loved to snooze in the warmth of the sun that came into in the corner of the room where the tree had been. Maybe he had been trying to tell us something.

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# CHRISTMAS MEMORIES

by Susie Parton Bryant

Only 10 days till Christmas! That was when I got really excited. I don't ever remember hearing "If you don't behave Santa won't bring you anything." Behaving was not an issue at our house, OK; well maybe it was for my brother. I don't remember ever being specific about what I wanted to

see under the tree.

So let's start with the tree. It was always real, not a fancy type of spruce or fir but a plain old cedar tree. Hopefully it would have some kind of pointed shape at the top but that was not always a given and I don't even think we noticed too much. Daddy always took us along on the hunt. We lived on a 175 acre farm so it was a pretty good trek.

My daddy was a bit of a joker at times and so he thought that if he made us think that Big Foot was

real we would stay close enough that he didn't have to call for us or keep up with us. Well, believe you me, this was never an issue. Steve and I would run back and forth to see which one of us could stay in the middle, and that middle person would be right in daddy's footsteps. Neither of us wanted to be the one bringing up the rear.

After daddy found what we thought to be the perfect tree he would drag it all the way back home, saw off the bottom so that it would be flat and then he would nail 2 planks that formed a big X to it as a stand. Then it was placed in the corner of the

living room to be decorated. Steve and I would put a big sack of cotton that we had picked, prior to harvesting, around the base to cover up those planks.

Decorating was about to commence. Daddy would get out a box of lights, which as usual, was always tangled. That must be a tradition in itself, some things never change. These were not those pretty little LED lights that we have now but rather these, what seemed to be, 2 inch glass in blue, green, orange, and red that if left on too long would get really hot. Moma would bring out the box of decorations. I can still remember that they would still have some of that spray snow stuff on them from the year before, but that was OK because we had a brand new can of that stuff and the tree would yet again get a good spraying.

After the decorations were hung and topper put on it was time for the really fun stuff. Oh yeah, 2 boxes of that silver stringy tinsel. It would be everywhere; on the tree, the floor and the furniture.

Now the countdown began, 10, 9, 8,7.....Christmas morning began around 3 or 4 am. I think my daddy got more excited that we did. We had no

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central heating or air conditioning so daddy would go into the living room and turn on one of those old-plug in the wall heaters that had 3 big ceramic cylinders with the wire coils from top to bottom that glowed fire red and it was encased in a mesh like front which also got flaming hot. I know this only because my backside came in contact with it once.

After it was warm enough, moma would take the shade off one of her lamps and daddy would plug it in giving the only light to the room. Funny, as I was talking with my brother about this story, he said out of all the things he remembered most of our Christmas' was daddy holding that lamp with no shade.

Moma would stay in the bedroom with us until daddy had everything ready and then he would come and get us; lead us down the hallway, which was still dark, in to what seemed like paradise. Let me pause and make note here. There was no Walmart at this time and only a couple a times a month did we go into to Huntsville to the mall. So this being said we did not get to run up and down each aisle and ask for or get everything in the store. Christmas was a big deal at our house, it was the only time that toys were purchased and what you got had to last all year.

Christmas was a very special and blessed time at our house. So not only was I super excited about my own treasures, but I also loved the things Steve got too. Over the years he had

amassed a collection of every piece of Tonka toys ever produced. Cranes, road graters, dump trucks, cement mixers and John Deer tractors, hay bailers and wagons. This made us look forward to springtime because as that country song goes, "We drove a hundred thousand miles on our knees." We made cities and roads out of our old river rock driveway, but that is another story.

Our stockings hung from an old wood mantle that my moma had refinished and daddy nailed to the wall because we didn't have a fireplace. They were not filled to the brim but held one apple or orange, a couple of Brazil or walnuts and one peppermint stick.

After the sun came up and treasures opened, the smell of a ham roasting in the oven filled the room. It was time to eat. I don't recall having a full sit-down dinner, but I do remember a hot piece of ham between two slices of bread with a touch of mayonnaise. To this day, Steve's favorite memory is my daddy with an old lamp with no shade, but every time I smell ham cooking I think of that Christmas ham sandwich.

HAPPY DAYS!


Many a Merry Christmas was spent in New Market, Alabama for the Parton Family.

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# LONG AGO MEMORIES

by Steve Gierhart

I'm 64, just like that Beatles song and close to Medicare. Fortunately, my wife, Bonny, still needs me and feeds me, but unfortunately, life's early memories are fuzzy. So when I talk of Christmas past, at least those of my childhood in Oklahoma, I'm talking with snippets, or with a little augmentation, maybe an old photo or 8MM film. Kodak was the big name for my dad, who took that film. Now, sadly, both he and Kodak are gone, one by cancer and the other by simple inability to keep up with change.

Christmas, on the other hand, has the charm of avoiding such a fate. Toys may be different from one year to the next, or the place you buy them (after all, change continues its charge so that even WalMart gives a bit to Amazon, and who knows what comes next). However, the key elements of Christmas remain steadfast friends - the wake up at Thanksgiving, the slow build of suspense in those last few weeks, the excitement of Christmas Eve night, and the certainty that at least one of your children will wake up at 5 a.m. to see what lays under the tree before anyone else does. For kids and parents, these certainties make Christ-

mas memorable and make life worthwhile.

My fondest memories of Christmas as a child were usually ones in which I felt a strong need for a particular item, never clothes, though that was a favorite of parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles, usually because they knew clothes were useful and kids, particularly boys, could make a game of anything with anything. To us kids, we felt the adults had lost the reason for Christmas, not realizing that an older generation went through the Depression and had very little in those rough times. How could they possibly understand the dogged need for what the advertisers were pitching on black and white television sets, especially during Saturday morning cartoons and before school when you watched "Captain Kangaroo?"

Nonetheless, when the

Fanner 50 by Mattel was introduced and big John Penney was the first to get one for his birthday in the second grade at Acme School in Shawnee, Oklahoma, the word of this fabulous cap gun spread like wildfire among those of us too young for a BB gun, much less the real thing. I really wanted that gun, but I didn't get one for awhile. I should have pitched it harder so I have no one to blame but myself.

However, a couple of years later, the Fanner 50 was even bigger. Mattel had taken the market by storm and had come out with what was advertised as "the most authentic cap pistol in the world." The Shootin' Shell Fanner 50. Wow, this one had it all. A rotating cylinder and more importantly, shells on which you stuck an individual cap and grey plastic bullets you inserted in real brass shells (with a spring inside) that actually shot out of the gun at the



## GiGi

Hello, the Ark named me GiGi. It was very dark at night and was raining really hard when I tried to cross a street. A very brave lady stopped her car and got out and picked me up. At first she thought I was an opossum. I am a southern girl and I call it a possum. I had a deformed back leg and I guess that was the way I walked. I am a Pomeranian mix and was in terrible shape

when the Ark took me in. I had flea dermatitis and hardly any hair from all the flea bites. I have a pretty coat now. Guess what? The Ark had surgery on my back leg and I can walk as good as any healthy dog! I had other health issues that you will need to discuss with the Ark. I am 8 years old. **Nina calls me one of her little senior citizens. What is a senior citizen?** It will take a loving and kind heart to take me and let me live out my life with lots of love and kindness. **Do you have a place for me in your heart?** When you come to the Ark, ask to see GiGi. That's me.

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bang of the cap. Of course, they were not very accurate, but for 1960 they were the "in" thing for a nine year old boy. That fall, a lull in an episode of "The Rifleman" brought my need to full throttle. A Mattel commercial showed a young "Mattie" stopping a train robbery with his magnificent "Cross Draw Holster with Bullet-Holding" Fanner 50. My eyes bulged in longing and I noticed neither Dad or Mom had gone to the kitchen or bathroom, the usual hideout for commercial breaks. Had they noticed the commercial? Could they feel the energy? Nope. Mom was working her crossword puzzle. Dad was reading the paper. Drat! It was Only \$4.50!

I quickly realized that to make it a "must have" for them, they needed the right reason. So my brother David, two years younger than me, could be helpful. I thought they couldn't turn down both of us. And if David wanted something else, I would simply have to change his mind. Dad had the money, but Mom made the decisions, so I turned to her first. "Mom, did you see that?"

"What, honey?"

"The Fanner 50! That commercial."

Mom did not even turn toward me as she pursed her lips, erased some word, only to quickly write down another. "Steve, it's two months to Christmas."

A commercial about butter was edging into my territory, so I had to whine. Louder. "But Mo-o-m-m-m-m..."

"I know about the Fanner 50. You said something before. Don't repeat yourself."

"David really wants one too. And I can help him with

his gun. You won't have too."

"Why does he need any help? It's a cap gun."

"M-o-o-o-m-m-m-m! It's a Fanner 50 that shoots bullets! The Shootin' Shell Fanner 50."

"What?!"

"No, I'm...I'm sorry. I meant plastic bullets. It's slow. Doesn't hurt if one hits you. Real slow. But fast enough. It has a target. It's the most authentic cap gun...in the world!"

Mom looked irritated. "We'll talk about it later, when Christmas is closer." I knew she'd forget I didn't get one last year or the year before.

That pushed Mom over the top because I indeed had gotten more than one cap gun last year though only one from Mom and Dad. Even got one the year before, but they were the inferior brand. The kind you would roll caps around a pin inside the fake revolver. The Mat-tel Shootin' Shell Fanner 50 was the

real thing!

"Dale!" Mom always handed off to Dad when I pushed her button. And of course I liked to do that.

"Son, getting a present, much less the one you want, is not a given, even at Christmas," Dad inferred. I could see through that little white lie. He must have sensed my disbelief

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and saw the opportunity to change the topic as Chuck Connors returned to the grainy screen, shooting his rapid fire modified Winchester at that week's bad guy. "Don't bother us right now."

"Well, when then?" I pressed.

Dad looked at his watch. "It's almost eight o'clock. Go brush your teeth and tell your brothers to do the same. You have school tomorrow."

I sighed, knowing I had crossed the line. He would have waited at least another 30 minutes if I had been less vocal. I shut up...for a week. It was time to be vigilant and tenacious. I repeated the scene, despite the possibility of disaster, at least once every couple of weeks, of course only when Mom was in a good mood. Dad would come around once she was okay with it. Besides, he needed to have the last say (wink, wink). They never said "yes," but they never said "no" either.

So on Christmas morning at 5 a.m., I opened my eyes and quietly rose from bed to tiptoe past Mom and Dad's room on cold wooden floors. Fortunately, they had left the Christmas tree lights on. In 1960 they had the big lights, not those twinkly little knockoffs that would quit working when only one light burned out. And they left enough light to check the presents. Sure enough. At the side was the treasure. Unwrapped. Another lay beside it for my brother. It had worked. They might tell David it was Santa. He was seven. But they would not fool me. They did care about us, even a little brat who did not know when to shut up.

And every now and then, I'll get out a grainy 8MM film, now turned into DVD, so I can watch Dad's Kodak moment from that Christmas of 1960, at my

glee in getting my Fanner 50, at a happiness that I'm sure was infectious, especially for parents who love to see their kid's joy, even when they know that \$4.50 holster and pistol will be broken or disregarded six months later for the next great thing. I watch that film with a twinkle myself, remembering how much I liked that cap gun, watching me wince when I shot the cap for the first time, startled that the little grey

bullet actually shot out and hit the wall across the room. And then I smiled...big. I repeat that smile today. Though wrinkly skin may change how it looks, it feels good still.

Not much has changed and probably won't for the future. The difference is X-Box or video games and what stays the same is the battle between child and parent for a certain amount of control.



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# The Drunk

by Ron Eyestone

In the early 1960s, police detective Glenn Brooks had been assigned to the northern section of downtown Huntsville known as the "Z" strip. This section of town included several pool halls, beer joints and a dance hall. Arresting drunks was an every night occurrence in that neighborhood.

Detective Brooks had been born and raised around Huntsville. After high school he had joined the Army and was trained as a member of the military police. It was perfectly natural when he returned to Huntsville and became a cop.

Detective Brooks had just parked his car on Jefferson Street to begin the evening shift when he saw a familiar face in the back seat of a passing patrol car. Brooks radioed the patrol unit and requested to talk to them before they booked their passenger. He followed the patrol car to the police station where, after a brief and animated discussion, the arresting officers agreed to allow detective Brooks to take charge of the prospective prisoner who they had picked up for public intoxication. Brooks put the offender in his car and drove him back to his home in the county, then returned to duty.

The next morning Glenn was called to his supervisor's office. One of the young arresting officers had complained about the interference with the officers' arrest. Glenn told the supervisor that the arrestee was Paul Bolden and while it wasn't the first time and probably would not be the last, he felt that the man needed a break. Glenn's supervisor was also an old Huntsville native and needed no further explanation.

Staff Sergeant Paul L. Bolden met the enemy a few days before Christmas, 1944 in the

Belgium countryside. Thirty-five German soldiers had decimated his small unit and had taken refuge in a nearby farmhouse. With little help, armed with grenades and an automatic weapon, Paul Bolden assaulted the farmhouse. Against all odds Paul Bolden emerged from that encounter wounded three times - but none of the Germans made it out at all. Heroes can be motivated into action by fear, courage, madness or a combination of all three. No one knows what sent Sergeant Paul Bolden into that farmhouse, but he came out with the Congressional Medal of Honor.

Paul Bolden has since passed on. Glenn Brooks went on to become a Federal U. S. Marshall, retired and currently operates Brooks and Associates Investigative Agency in Huntsville. He never talks about Paul Bolden much, except to say that heroes deserve a break.

*Update: Glenn Brooks passed away in February of this year of Parkinson's Disease. Glenn was a hero too.*

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### You will need:

- Oranges
- Lemons
- Limes
- Whole cloves
- Wooden cooking skewer or thin knitting needle

### Optional ingredients for longer lasting pomanders:

- 1/4 cup ground cinnamon
- 1/4 cup ground cloves
- 2 tablespoons ground nutmeg
- 2 tablespoons ground all spice
- 1/4 cup powdered orrisroot (this ingredient will help the pomanders last extra long - find it in stores like

**Instructions:** Take the wooden skewer or thin knitting needle and poke holes in the fruit where you want the cloves to go.

You can make patterns (like the swirled orange or other designs) or just randomly stud the fruit with holes. Insert a whole clove into each hole, firmly.

In a large bowl mix the optional spices (If you have more than 2 oranges increase the amounts).

Carefully place your pomanders into the dry spices and cover with the mixture. Leave for a week or so and you're ready to display or hang with ribbons or other decorations.

The good smells will put you in the Holiday Mood!



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**People's Law School Schedule for 2016**

January 25, 2016	6:30 p.m. Mayor Battle	The State of the City
January 25, 2016	7:40 p.m. Connie Glass	Elder Law
February 1, 2016	6:30 p.m. Phil Price	DUI Law
February 1, 2016	7:40 p.m. Ed Gentle	Mass Settlements
February 8, 2016	6:30 p.m. Josh Hayes	Industrial Accidents
February 8, 2016	7:40 p.m. Andy Segal	Criminal Law
February 15, 2016	6:30 p.m. Lee Nation	Social Security Law
February 15, 2016	7:40 p.m. Kerri Riley	Sex Discrimination
February 22, 2016	6:30 p.m. Matt Glover	Truck Wrecks
February 22, 2016	7:40 p.m. George Kobler	I.P. Law(patents-copyrights)
February 29, 2016	6:30 p.m. TBA	TBA
February 29, 2016	7:40 p.m. Coby Boswell	Divorce Law
March 7, 2016	6:30 p.m. Neil Lamb	Hudson Alpha - DNA, etc.
March 7, 2016	7:40 p.m. Greg Reeves	Tort Law
March 14, 2016	6:30 p.m. Ron Sykustus/Amy Tanner	Security Clearance, Bankruptcy
March 14, 2016	7:40 p.m. Mike Wisner	Tort Law
March 21, 2016	6:30 p.m. John Brinkley, Jr.	Criminal Law
March 21, 2016	7:40 p.m. Judge Linda Coats	The Court System
April 4, 2016	6:30 p.m. Allen Brinkley	Question & Answer Session
April 4, 2016	7:40 p.m. Bob Prince	Building a Winning Case
April 4, 2016	8:40 p.m. Allen Brinkley	Graduation

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# Christmas - Then and Now

by Jerry Keel

Christmas time is here again. It seems to start a little earlier each year. When I was a youngster Christmas was the December event. Very seldom was anything for Christmas put out for sale before Thanksgiving. As time went by the season began earlier and earlier. Now we begin seeing Christmas displays in some stores in late September. By the end of October almost everyone has gotten into the act.

Many other aspects of the Christmas season have changed as well. The reason for the season in the days of my youth was a time of recognizing the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. Way back then He was the primary reason for all the celebrating and happiness. The exchanging of gifts was not so much about the gift. We gave gifts in the

spirit of giving, not in receiving. The motto then was "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

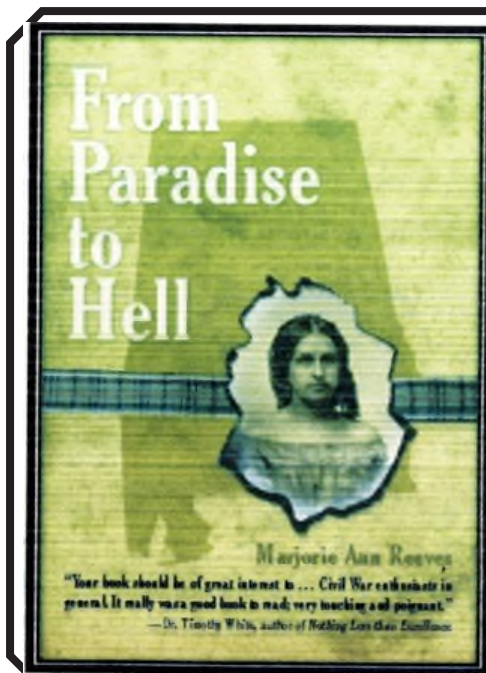
Somewhere along the line the whole process was changed. Today Christ has been completely taken out of the picture. The most prevalent question today is "What did you GET for Christmas?" The spirit of giving has been replaced by a spirit of receiving. The idea of giving gifts was started by the Wise Men who brought gifts to the Baby Jesus — the Messiah.

When I was a small child we were poor. As I have said before we were poor but we didn't know it because all the people who lived around us were poor also. Our Christmas gifts were very small. Today parents spend hundreds of dollars on lavish gifts such as new automobiles, expensive electronic games, fancy show-off clothes, jewelry and so many other things. Often the children are disappointed and ask "Is that all I am going to get?"

Our Christmas gifts usu-

ally consisted of a bag filled with a few oranges and apples, some nuts of various kinds, maybe a little candy or something along that line. The girls might have gotten an inexpensive doll, the boys a cap pistol with a holster and a few rolls of caps. If things were going well financially maybe the girls got a nice dress and the boys a cowboy hat to go along with the gun and holster. We could hardly wait for Christmas morning to see what "Santa Claus" brought us.

My childhood toys consisted of things we improvised to use. You could find an old broom that had been worn out and discarded from which you could make a horse. The broom became the horse's head and the handle became the body of the horse. Tie a string or small length of rope around the broom for reins and you had a beautiful mount which would last for days. When we tired of riding we cut the broom part off. The horse then became a sword, a spear, a bat which was used in



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hitting rocks into the neighbors' yards (which was not funny for the affected yard-owners who had to pick up the rocks), a microphone into which we could sing the popular songs of the day and many more things.

In those days the imagination ruled. Nowadays the electronic games are what they are and that's all they can ever be. The imagination of a child has been stifled. The young ones sit and stare at the tiny screens as they push the buttons on the games. This has added to the delinquency rate among children. The steady stream of violence has got to make an impression on the young minds who spend so much time engrossed in the games. They become oblivious to everyone and everything around them as they try to destroy or kill the subjects in the games. The blank looks on their faces tell how far removed from reality they have become.

Our once-proud nation has been swallowed up by the moral decay that is so prevalent now. These games of violence, along with the children (being spoiled by parents who are eager to provide the young ones with anything they want regardless of the cost) have changed the lives of the children. If the trend is not reversed it will just get worse and worse.

When Christ was taken out of Christmas the effect it had on our youth was similar to what happened in our schools. When the Bible was taken out of the schools it was replaced by guns and violence. I for one miss the innocence of the days when Christ, the Bible and prayer were such a staple in our education system. Let's hope the trend can be reversed before it is too late. If not it will only get worse.

What a shame!

**"There's a fine line between cuddling, and holding someone down so that they can't get away."**

**Winston Churchill**

Oscar and Maria Llerena



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