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Old Huntsville

HISTORY AND STORIES OF THE TENNESSEE VALLEY

Change Comes to Leighton, Alabama

While Leighton was definitely segregated in its neighborhoods and schools and churches at that time, we were all thrown in there together in the confines of a town of about a thousand people. The area of the town was about one square mile. We were all aware of the racial turmoil in the country, the protests against the Vietnam War, and the fact that maybe we should all be real upset about the way things were. But my memories are of a town that just hummed along.



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Change Comes to Leighton, Alabama

by Steve Johnson

When I was in the fourth grade at Leighton Elementary, we were given a small slip of paper one day to take home. The size of the paper did not belie its historic significance. The paper was to be given to our parents, and it had two blocks on it to check either yes or no. The question asked if they would be opposed to their children attending school with Negro children. It seems to be a simple question today, but this was 1968.

To be sure, change was coming for us all, white and black.

While Leighton was definitely segregated in its neighborhoods, schools and churches at that time, we were all thrown in there together in the confines of a town of about a thousand people. The

area of the town was about one square mile. We were all aware of the racial turmoil in the country, the protests against the Vietnam War, and the fact that maybe we should all be real upset about the way things were. But my memories are of a town that just hummed along.

There were two high schools in Leighton then; Colbert County High, mostly white; and Leighton Training School, which I assume was all black. If a black kid wanted to go to Colbert County, he did. Not many, but they could. I assume this was true of Leighton Training School. The two-tier school system was wrong, a throwback to Jim Crow, and about to be reversed. My dream of finally attending Colbert County High was going to be delayed a couple of years. My daddy and his sisters, my brother and sister, and my maternal cousins all went to Colbert County. Also, my Grandmother Johnson was the long-time chief of the lunchroom.

In many ways, Leighton was already integrated. We played together at the basketball courts and we had black kids on our peewee football teams. The high school football team and band had black kids. The basketball team's star player was Robert Bates, a

**“Opera Audience Member:
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singer’s execution?”
Calvin Coolidge: “I’m all
for it.”**



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black guy. I very well remember a game between Colbert County and Leighton Training the year before integration. The game was at the old Colbert County gym, and it was packed to the rafters.

Leighton Training School's star player was a guy by the name of Gary Ricks. He was tall and slim, and fast. He would get the ball in the backcourt, race up to the three-quarter stripe and fire away. When he missed, it was no big deal, as Leighton Training's sophomore center went by the name Leon Douglas. Leon was taller than Robert Bates, but not as big a guy. Robert tried to intimidate Leon early on, but Leon stood his ground. Leon took control of the paint, blocked a lot of Robert's shots, and put up a lot of shots and points himself. The Leighton Training fans were loud and raucous. They went crazy when the overmatched Colbert County team fell.

And who could blame

them? They lived and worked in a world that was supposedly "separate but equal," but that was a bit of a stretch. However, hardly anyone around Leighton really had any money. Also, a lot, if not most, of the white people in the Colbert County world were glad to see the schools combine. The combination of the schools set in motion halcyon days for the Colbert County football and basketball programs. The Colbert County fans were loud and proud of their teams, too. Most of the kids at both schools had family connections to the schools. Believe me; everybody went all in for Colbert County High.

1970 rolled around as I finished the sixth grade. I don't remember exactly when we got the news that the students at Leighton Elementary from the fifth and sixth grade would be going to Leighton Middle School at the old Leighton Training School. So would the kids in the sev-

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enth grade at Colbert County. The black kids at Leighton Training School from the first through fourth grade would go to Leighton Elementary. The fifth through eighth grade kids would remain at Leighton Middle, and grades nine through twelve would go to Colbert County.

Leighton Middle School was located in the black section of Leighton called the Grove. We would ride our bikes through the area and never had a problem. I knew a few of the kids in the Grove, and like Colbert County, they drew kids from all over the east end of the county to Leighton Training. I admit that the fear came over me, and I did not look forward to going to school there. I would see the guys hanging around on the corner and they looked a little rough to me. Over time, a lot of those same guys became good friends. My cousins Keith and Sheila Beene, my old friend Debra Looney and all the other kids (and I) from Leighton Elementary wrote our names in the history books by heading to Leighton Middle School.

My first day at Leighton Middle School was a lesson in culture shock. As I walked down the halls, I could hear records being played in some of the classrooms. I mean good old greasy and gritty R&B stuff. Johnny Taylor, Bobby Wommack, Millie Jackson, Candi Staton, Betty Wright, I could go on and on. You would not hear this stuff at

the white schools in Leighton. The great Percy Sledge and Jimmy Hughes, who cut the first record at FAME Studios, went to school there. We were all just checking each other out, but that stuff they were playing sat well with me.

I walked by one room where a black lady was playing the piano and just wailing to beat the band. Her name was Mrs. Fossett, and she had a bunch of kids in there singing and dancing. She grabbed me at the door and had me come inside. She asked if I could sing and I told her no. She goaded me to try, and I showed off my complete lack of musical or singing talent. She told, "Honey, you are so pretty of a boy, why can't you sing?"

What could I say? At least I got to hear this supremely talented woman sing and play

the piano like Aretha for two years.

Classes rarely started on a hard schedule like at our old school. There was a lot of standing around and talking, and, of course, listening to the music. Like Leighton Elementary, there were kids from all different social strata, and different degrees of interest in learning. Very well dressed kids, and not so well dressed kids. The black kids had more variety in skin tone than we did. Some talked much better than me, and some about as much as a hick as me. I think we all settled in pretty quick.

On that first day, lunch time finally rolled around. There was a long line. Something smelled good; really good. That stuff at Leighton Elementary and Colbert County never smelled that good. I was changing from boy to young

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man, and I could not wait to see and eat what smelled so good. Finally, I got almost to the serving line. The first thing I saw was a row of different hued black women in neatly starched white uniforms.

The ladies seemed to be all business and oblivious to all of us shiny white faces. Right as I picked up my tray, one of the ladies looked at me and smiled. A whisper went up and down the line. I was eyeing the hamburgers, fries and slaw. I got my lunch tray filled, and the tall black lady said, "Are you Mrs. Johnson's grandson?" Before I could speak, she grabbed my tray. I mean you're going through puberty, hungry, the food looks and smells wonderful, and this lady grabs your plate away.

She handed the plate to the other ladies and all I heard was whoomp, whoomp, whoomp. My tray was loaded to the max. All of the ladies said to tell Grandmother "hello." I ate all of the food and felt very

special. Over time, all of the ladies told me how Grandmother had touched their lives. Let me first say that my Grandmother was no race trailblazer. She was a true believer in hard work and having a job. She also believed and worked for fairness as to what food Leighton Training School got to serve. They did a masterful job with our lunches.

The Principal at Leighton Middle was Mr. Leroy Finch. He was a big man with a big smile and booming voice; but he knew when to be firm, and tough. Mr. Finch, in my opinion, treated all of the kids, black and white, the same. I saw a lot of guys who thought they were tough, melt to tears when Mr. Finch bore down on them. I guess it was hard to stand up to a man who stood about six foot five, and not flabby either.

Mr. Finch had two sons that played college football, Kelsey at Tennessee and Bernard at the University of North Alabama. Mr. Finch was as fine a

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man as I have ever met. Even if he did eventually put an end to my lunchroom gravy train. The lunchroom ladies didn't like it, and neither did I.

P.E. at Leighton Middle was the place where I really started to meet some of the black kids. We played basketball and did other things I really can't recall. Anyway, our P.E. teacher was a man by the name of Buphus Nails. Mr. Nails had coached the Leighton Training team that had beaten Colbert County the year before. He was coaching the seventh and eighth grade basketball team at Leighton Middle now. I am sure he saw it as a downgrade. One of my most important memories was how the black kids were going to change the dynamics of the sports programs at Colbert County. I also got to be in on watching the grass roots of some of the greatest athletes to ever put on the black and gold of the Colbert County Indians.

At that time in my life, I still was a big basketball fan and a pretty good player. A lot of the black kids started coming to the basketball goals behind the Colbert County gym and

playing pick-up games with us. They encouraged me to go out for the seventh grade team at Leighton Middle School. However, that would have required me to walk home from practice after dark through the Grove. I was just plain scared to. It is one of the great regrets of my life

The black guys used to call me Steve McQueen. I always wondered about that, since there is really no resemblance between us. Looking back on those pre-Shaft days, it becomes very clear. I was athletic, popular with the girls, a kind of movie star to them. I had a motorcycle. There weren't a lot of movies made specifically for blacks, and they mostly played secondary roles in white movies. They had their wonderful music and dances, but the movies were just catching up.

They damn sure didn't see any blacks to speak of on TV growing up. But this was changing in our youth, and fast. I remember well the buzz generated by Redd Foxx, Flip Wilson, Richard Pryor and others. My own family loved watching these shows.

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Most talk was about the movie Shaft. I went to Muscle Shoals to see it at the theater there. There was a smattering of whites there. But the main thing I remember in that packed house is that everybody there stood and cheered and hooted when Shaft smacked the snarky white guy.

In the classroom, as I remember, the black kids held their own, too. They had their real smart kids just like us. They also had the kids with no interest in learning, just like us. They became, over time, great additions to our high school band, also. If you wanted to learn at Leighton Middle, you could. It did not matter if the teacher was black or white. None of the teachers took a lot of stuff. Those were such different times. It never occurred to us that we were breaking

new ground and making history at the same time.

In fact, most of the black kids I got to know were at least as conservative as most of the white kids. I know that I was looked at by most of the black kids as a little too wild, which I was. They did not go out of their way to hide their disapproval. They have aged well with time as much as we have. My own perspective on black people has changed over time, and it started with integration. I cringe at the people of both races that fan the flames of division. We are all in this together, jammed up in this world, just like in Leighton when I was a kid.

I went to Leighton in the spring of 2015 to just look around and see what was going on. Leighton seems to be on its last legs. There is almost no business downtown,



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and no one moving around like the old days. On a lark, I drove down into the Grove to the old Leighton Training School building. It was mostly gone, except for the old facade with Leighton Training School etched in concrete above the main entrance. As an old time scrap metal buyer, it looked as if the older part of the school had been cherry-picked for its valuable scrap metal. The old football field had a horse grazing on it.

It was, for me, a sad day. However, as I drove away the sadness was replaced by a sense of pride. All of us country kids, our teachers and administrators accomplished a smooth mixing of the races in a public school in the heart of the old South. That cannot be said of a lot of the school systems across the country in those turbulent times. Maybe we just did not know we couldn't do it, so we did it anyway. It is certainly true that if you ain't from the South, you ain't gonna get it. I do not believe what we did could be done today. I hope, by the grace of God, that I am wrong.

I was in downtown Leighton one day when I was a teen with a couple of my black friends. They were talking about a local preacher they knew who was real big with the ladies. I said that would never fly at my church. Of course I was naive. One of my

buddies chuckled at my innocence. He said, and I quote, "You know what, honkey? The worst thing about black folks is that they are getting to be just like white folks." The wisdom of his words are not lost on me today.

The times are still turbulent, and my beloved Leighton is dying a slow death. I will, however, always remember a time when a bunch of people in my little town made a difference in a good way. I hope that memory never dies.

C 2016 by Stephen A. Johnson

"The Highway Twenty Chronicles"



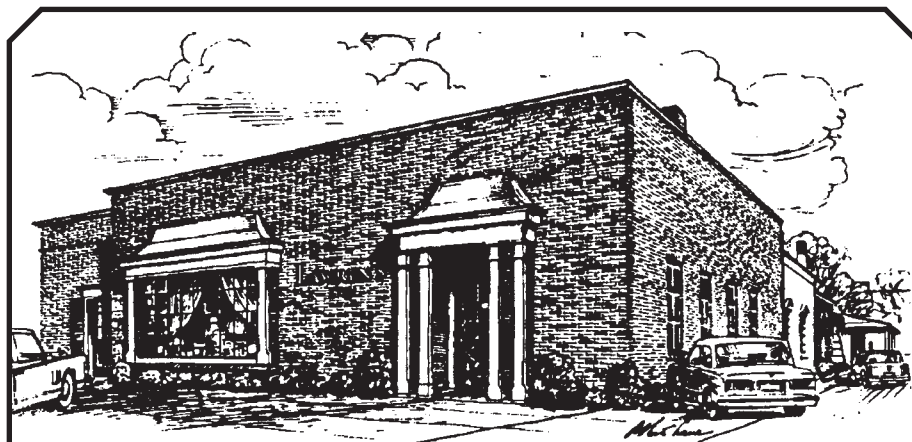
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Area News - 1916

Girls Bowlegged in Atlanta - Feb. 1916

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They say the short skirts particularly of the hooped kind should be worn by the bowlegged girls, while the longer straight variety are better suited to the knock-kneed ladies.

Another type of deviation from the straight line which they say is very frequent in Atlanta is the girl whose limbs are straight at the knee but whose ankles are slightly sprung outward giving the impression that when her dresses are at her toe tops that she is bowlegged, but in reality she is not.

The stylists go on to offer, however, that there is nothing peculiar to Atlanta about this state of affairs and that it is actually present in many cities. The ladies with perfectly formed limbs seems to be the exception, rather than the rule.

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See C.D. Lane, Room 7, Elks Building

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My Mama - the Midwife

by Malcolm Miller

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

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

Sometimes I wouldn't hear the men calling for Aunt Anner or Miss Anner saying my wife is sick because I was asleep but when I woke up hearing Papa rattling pots and pans and frying. I knew what I was in for, Papa biscuits. You see my Mama rolled the dough out real thin and used a tin can to cut out perfect biscuits but not Papa, he would mix up the dough and just pour it out in piles resulting in biscuits usually larger than a saucer.

As far as I know my Mama never in all those years ever received pay for all the work she had done delivering babies, however she was one of the most loved and respected members of the community. Dr. Jordan often said that he wished there was some way she could be his nurse and believe you me she was a good nurse. With nothing to work with but things like coal oil, turpentine, castor oil and warm salty water she could do some amazing things and her loving hand placed on a small boy's head really made them feel better when his head was burning with fever. I know because I was fortunate to be one of those boys.

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

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

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

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

Loretta Lynn recorded a hit song titled "They don't make men like my Daddy anymore". I would like to say that they don't make women like

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my Mama anymore. She had a very hard life as a share cropper's wife. I don't believe that in her whole married life she ever had a store-bought dress or underclothes, she would make her clothes out of flour sacks or on occasion she would sell enough eggs and chickens to the rolling store man and he would bring her material from town for dress making.

My Mama never attended church real regular. She really didn't have nice clothes to wear and she was busy taking care of seven strapping boys but I can assure you my Mama was a godly woman. After spending a life of hardship and misery living in one sharecropper's shack after another she must surely be residing in a mansion now and throughout eternity.

Current Situation

Although my Mother delivered hundreds of babies in the state of Alabama and particularly Madison County, midwives are now actually illegal here in Alabama. Anyone that practices as a midwife would be practicing medicine without a license. I am certain my Mother never had a license or even thought of one.

Advocates of having a home delivery by a midwife are hoping that the state legislature will change this practice and begin to license Certified Professional Midwives.

All of these babies my Mother delivered were born in their own homes. If there was ever a baby lost I never knew it. Some women drive from Alabama into Tennessee where they can

have options of a home setting for the delivery of their babies.

Certified Nurse Midwives are the only midwives that are legal here in Alabama. They are legal as they practice under the care of a doctor and always deliver in a hospital. There are very few of these in Alabama.

The Alabama Birth Coalition says they are close to having a

sponsor for supporting legislation to license Certified Professional Midwives.

Times have really changed over the years. My Mother would never have been able to deliver hundreds of babies if she had to be certified and licensed. Like I said earlier they don't make women like my Mama anymore.

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How to have more fun during retirement

Lion Tamer

by Houston Hodges

I've got proof of this one: a yellowed clipping, from page 1 of the Temple, Texas Daily Telegram, dated in 1960, with a photo of ME, holding the lion that was left on our front porch. The headline reads, "Come Back, Little Simba."

It's true that it was a baby lion, the size of a largish housecat, but decidedly leonine.

I'd gotten a phone call: "Reverend Hodges?"

"Yes."

"I know you're going to find this hard to believe, but we've left a lion in a box on your front porch."

I said, "We've had a kangaroo or two, but never a lion."

The voice said, "Will you go out and look?"

"Sure," I said, and I headed out in my bathrobe and slippers, to see what one of our friends had left on our porch ... an unwanted kitten, perhaps, or maybe a stuffed toy for one of the boys.

—Cardboard box? —Right. Open box? —Right. Baby lion in

box? Right.

I went back inside directly to the phone. I don't throw my title around needlessly, but this was the time: "Police? This is the Reverend Houston Hodges, and someone has left a baby lion in a box on our front porch."

The patrol car arrived expeditiously. The two officers did not have their guns drawn, but they were within easy reach.

Seems the lion had been cub-napped from a Dallas facility by a disgruntled employee; they'd mistakenly given it cow's milk to drink, which had upset its tummy, and they had a miserable, cranky and unhappy brat on their hands. They'd looked up clergy in the phone book and picked one close to the highway to unload. The lion spent the rest of the night in custody in the local police station.

Our three boys were asleep when this took place, but I told them the story the next morning in full detail. They listened attentively, and then Christopher, who was four, nodded sagely and said, "And what did YOU dream about, Mommy?"

True story. I've got the photo.

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Items of Interest - 1911



C. S. Griswell, a one-armed man of this city, this morning sent a load of bird shot into his left breast by pulling the trigger of a gun with his toe. Family troubles are said to have been the cause of his suicide.

Lost - one gold watch fob with name of Johnny Jemison on back. Finder please return to this office and receive reward.

Mr. J. M. Oldfield and his daughter Miss Ora were thrown from their buggy while enroute to the mill neighborhood yesterday afternoon. Mr. Oldfield was injured about the shoulders, while his daughter escaped being hurt. The animal was frightened at something in the road and ran up the side of the embankment.

The old Huntsville Hotel walls will be torn down.
The walls left standing as the result of the burning of the Huntsville Hotel recently will be torn down, and men were seen today putting up scaffolds to do the work.

For Rent - a new 4 room cottage at the corner of Pratt Avenue and 6th street for rent cheap - apply to J. E. Pierce

Miss Daisy Ducks is dead.
She was aged 17 years and died at the home of her uncle, Mr. J. N. Bogett, this morning at 2:15 at the Abingdon Mill Village. Funeral services will be conducted from the residence by Rev. M. Marlow with interment in Maple Hill cemetery.

Many friends of Lena Baites will learn with regret that she is sick at her home on Walker Street. She's had many visitors.

Rain Storm Does Much Damage
The continued rain from Saturday night through Sunday flooded the lowlands of the city and did considerable damage in the way of flooding the lawns and washing away foot bridges. In the Patton Grove neighborhood the waters were especially high. The spring branch was way out of its banks and so was Pinhook Creek. Likewise

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this was true in east Huntsville, where ditches and low places were completely underwater.

Lost - an amethyst ring, on Randolph Street, between Butler's School and Grahams Pharmacy. Finder return to this office and receive award.

Chimney at the Dement Residence Blown down Last Night

During the early hours of last night, while the rain and windstorm was at its worst, the north chimney of the residence of Mrs. C. C. Dement on West Holmes Street was blown down. The occupants of the house and nearby neighbors were greatly frightened at the noise, but no one was hurt.

Cave-In of Dirt at the Residence of Mr. Newt White Last Night

What was said to be one of the old time ice houses, which were usually built under ground, caved in last night at the residence of Mr. Newt White on Adams Avenue. The cave-in was on Locust Street and to a depth of about ten feet.

Family Loses Little Girl

The funeral of the little 5 year old daughter of Mr. and Mrs. W. H. Bell, of the Huntsville Wholesale Nurseries, was held yesterday and interment made in Maple Hill cemetery. Services were conducted by Rev. Carey Gamble of the Episcopal church. Death was the result of pneumonia and was the second death in the Bell family in the past few months.

For Rent - one 7-room house with all modern conveniences. Perfect for a working man and convenient to downtown business. Walker Street. Apply to J. N. Mazza

Burwell Buffaloe is Dead

Burwell Buffaloe, aged 78 years, an old Confederate veteran, died at 3 o'clock this morning at the city infirmary after a brief illness with pneumonia. He will be buried at Madison X Roads Thursday afternoon at 3 o'clock.

"It is not a lack of love, but a lack of friendship, that makes an unhappy marriage."

Friedrich Nietzsche

Woman Dies after Fainting Spell

Mrs. Omie Young suffered a fainting spell coming to Huntsville from McMinnville, Tenn. Saturday. She died that night at the home of her sister, Mrs. Carrie Jones at 402 McKinley Avenue.

Mrs. Young suffered several fainting spells after reaching her. She had traveled here for her sister's 50th birthday party and the family is in severe shock at this unexpected turn of events.

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Heard On the Street

by *Cathey Carney*

A very sharp-eyed lady called us - she found the little heart I had carefully hidden in the February issue - it was in the Oreck Vacuum Cleaner ad on page 41! **Eleanor Schmidt** was the first of many to call and she wins a free subscription to "Old Huntsville". She is retired from working on the Arsenal for years. Her Mom is 102 and is **Neida Lamb** - she was the "Hot Tamale Lady", making and selling wonderful Hot Tamales in Lincoln Village til it closed in 1955. Hello to Neida and I'll bet there will be lots of people who remember that delicious treat you made!

The Photo of the Month winner was **Ronnie White** of Huntsville. He worked for the Huntsville Times for 43 years in the Sports Department, retired in 2009. Ronnie recalled that his first boss was **Bill Easterling**, a beloved Huntsville Times writer. Ronnie is a member of the Metro Kiwanis Club. He recognized the photo of the little boy as **Mike Kaylor**, whom you will remember was the guy who wrote those great restaurant reviews for the Huntsville Times.



Ann Wiggins wrote us with a question that some of you may be able to answer. Does anyone remember the name of the alley that ran between White Street and Randolph Avenue, coming off California Street? There was road widening over the years and that alley somehow got lost and is not there anymore - who remembers it and what was the name and year?

Rosemary Leatherwood of Ole Dad's BBQ in Hazel Green told us she is remembering her sweet Dad **Billy Richardson** on March 10, which would have been his birthday. She misses his hugs so much. Also her husband Bill misses his Dad **Billy Leatherwood**; they both do. And it would have been his birthday on March 17. We wanted to send love out to all the folks who treasured their Dads and lost them, they will always be remembered.

Buck Watson was one of those "bigger than life" men who made a positive impact on so many lives. His accom-

plishments were way too many to put in this little column, but there will be a story about him in the near future in "Old Huntsville". Buck attended Vanderbilt University and played SEC football, played in the Canadian football league and won so many sports awards. He became a history teacher but then graduated from the University of Alabama Law School, moved to Huntsville and opened his law practice. He defended people in both civil and criminal cases and developed a national reputation as a tireless advocate for justice and the oppressed.

He decided to renovate the aging, damaged YMCA building downtown and made it one of the most beautiful historic places in town. He was a humble, funny, loving and very feisty man, a tall, handsome guy who would offer a quick handshake or a big hug. He loved people in general and people loved him back.

Buck passed away on Jan. 26 and leaves a hole in the lives of so many. The family he leaves

Photo of The Month

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

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are wife **Janet Mangham Watson**; children **Cornelia (Carey Roberts)**; **LeeAnna Yarbrough Keith (Brian Plane)**; **James Watson (Jane)**; **Rebekah Keith McKinney (Buck's law partner at Watson McKinney)**; **Elmer Watson (Mary Tally)** and **Jack Watson (Sheila)**. In addition he leaves special friends **Sam Keith, Marcia Perkins** and **Theresa Willits**. He leaves many grandchildren and dear friends whose lives were changed for the better by knowing Buck.

March 4 is **Amanda Ballinger's** birthday. She is the daughter of BBT's Branch Banker **Jane Eller** who is so knowledgeable and Jane is very proud of her daughter. Amanda works at Lowes and she said the most unusual item brought back was a fence - seems the neighbor was moving and didn't need the fence anymore!

Very happy to announce that **Buddy** and **Sandra Esslinger** will celebrate 56 years of wedded bliss on Mar. 5. Buddy tells me that a member of their family turns 6 on that same day - **Sir Bandit Romeo**, a brown/white Pomeranian who started out as a teacup breed but turned out to be a gallon (18 lbs). Happy Anniversary to you both!

Happy Birthday to **Collier Rawls** who will turn 80 on Mar. 22. **Pam** is his sweet wife and she will be doing something

special for him, for sure.

Linda Drake is also having a birthday on Mar. 22, she looks like she's barely 59 so I'm sure that's how old she is!

Neil Cocker is a handsome dude, member of the Golden K Kiwanis and claims he just turned 91 in late February. We don't believe it!

For years you remember seeing the **Boy Scout Troop 400** near the Von Braun Civic Center, collecting money for parking cars. That was one of many projects the troop had and the man who formed the troop and gave so much support was **Al Farrar, Sr.** Al passed away from cancer on Feb. 10, 2016, at 80 years old. He was an amazing man who had a special place in his heart for disadvantaged youth. He was Youth Services Chair of the Golden K Kiwanis Club, the Civitan Club, a church Deacon at First Missionary Baptist Church and the Bicentennial Chapel on Redstone Arsenal. He was most proud of leading several young men to the rank of Eagle Scout, and he continued to serve as Scoutmaster Emeritus even when he became sick.

Al leaves wife **Verline**; daughters **Verlinda Paul (Wayne)** and **Cordai Farrar**; son **Maj. (Ret) Albert F. Farrar, Jr. (Mi Sook)** along with grandson, sisters, broth-

ers and other family members who were blessed to have Al in their lives.

Have a good March and a Happy Easter - hopefully warm weather will be here soon and we can plant some flowers & vegetables.

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*From "Cook with Nancy,
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Cinnamon Biscuits

- 2 c. flour
- 4 t. baking powder
- 1/2 t. salt
- 4 T. shortening
- 3/4 c. milk
- 2 T. brown sugar
- 1/2 t. cinnamon
- Soft butter

Sift flour, salt and baking powder. Cut in shortening. Stir in milk and mix as if for pie crust. Knead lightly and roll into oblong. Butter the dough lightly, spread with brown sugar and cinnamon and roll like a jelly roll. Slice into 1 inch pieces and bake on a lightly greased pan for 12 to 15 minutes at 400 degrees.

Huevos Rancheros

- 6 eggs
- 1-1/2 c. chopped onions
- 1/4 c. bacon drippings
- 3/4 c. finely chopped hot peppers
- 6 corn tortillas
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- 4 tomatoes, peeled and chopped
- 1/2 t. salt

Saute onion and garlic in bacon fat for 5 minutes. Add tomatoes, hot pepper and salt. Cover and simmer for 10 minutes before removing vegetables. Set aside and keep warm. Saute tortillas in moderate amount of vegetable oil for 30 seconds on each side. Remove and keep hot. Fry eggs in fats remaining in skillet. Put one egg on each tortilla and spoon vegetable sauce over it.

Cucumbers with Thai Dressing

- 1 T. sugar
- 1/3 c. rice wine vinegar
- 1-1/2 T. soy sauce
- 2 T. toasted sesame seeds
- 1/2 c. chicken broth
- 2 T. finely grated gingerroot
- 1 cucumber, sliced paper thin

Slice cucumber and soak in lightly salted water for 15 minutes.

Melt sugar in vinegar. Remove from heat, stir in other ingredients and allow to cool. Sprinkle cucumbers with sesame seeds and pour on dressing.

To make a meal of this salad serve over prepared bean thread noodles and garnish with shrimp. This is both light AND delicious!

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Garlic Potato Salad

- 3 lbs. new potatoes, peeled
- 2 t. Dijon mustard
- 1-1/2 t. lemon juice
- 1 t. chopped garlic
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 1/2 c. sour cream
- 1/2 c. mayonnaise
- 1-1/2 t. dried dill weed
- 2 T. dill pickle cubes

Boil potatoes until tender, about 30 minutes. Remove from pan, rinse in cold water, cut into slices or cubes and put in bowl. Combine other ingredients, pour over potatoes and refrigerate overnight.

Sweet/Sour Red Cabbage

- 1/2 c. water
- 4 c. shredded red cabbage
- 1/4 c. red wine vinegar
- 4 T. light brown sugar
- 1 sm. onion, sliced
- 1 t. salt
- Black or white pepper
- 2 T. bacon drippings
- 2 T. flour
- 4 slices crisp bacon, crumbled

Cook bacon, crumble and set aside. In saucepan or Dutch oven, combine 1/4 cup water and next 7 ingredients, reserving bacon bits. Cook 20 minutes. Thicken remaining 1/4 cup water with flour, using

only enough to keep juice from running. Serve with bacon stirred through cabbage or just as a garnish on top.

Mildred Pizitz Orange Nut Cake

- 1 c. sugar
- 2 c. butter
- 3 eggs, separated
- 2 c. flour
- 1 t. baking powder
- 1 t. baking soda
- 1/2 t. salt
- 3/4 c. sour cream
- Rinds of 1 orange, 1 lemon
- 1 c. chopped pecans
- Juices of 1 orange, 1 lemon
- 1/2 c. sugar

Cream butter with 1 cup of sugar and egg yolks. Sift together flour, salt, baking powder and soda and add alternately with sour cream to creamed mixture. Grate rinds finely. Add grated rinds and nuts and fold in stiffly beaten egg whites. Bake in a tube pan at 325° for 1 hour.

Remove cake from oven and leave in pan. Pierce top of cake with a cooking fork. Mix 1/2 cup sugar, orange and lemon juices and pour over cake until liquid is absorbed and cake is cooled. Remove cake to rack and wrap with aluminum foil. Let sit for 24 hours, then cut.



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GROWING UP RURAL

by Chip Knight



I basically grew up in the city, but my uncle and aunt had a large cattle and cotton farm over in Limestone County, and a somewhat smaller one around Madison. So, I got to be both a city boy and a country boy. I learned to hunt on the Limestone County place, which was called the Fletcher Place because it had come to my uncle from his uncle, a man named Shelby Fletcher. I do come from a strange family.

There had been bad blood between my grandfather, John Knight of Decatur and Shelby Fletcher of Huntsville. So, of course, John Knight's daughter and Shelby Fletcher's nephew insisted on marrying. Shelby Fletcher was into land and was not badly hurt by the Depression, whereas John Knight was pretty well wiped out. So, I grew up with money all around me but with none of my own.

As a young boy, I remember that there were still several teams of mules on the place. One old man - General Washington, he was called - was known for his first attempt to drive a tractor. He got it started and then didn't know what to do. I was told that he was still yelling "WOAH" as it finally ran into a tree and stopped.

I also fondly remember Uncle Sonny,

"Start kissing good-bye early, so that the plane can leave on time."

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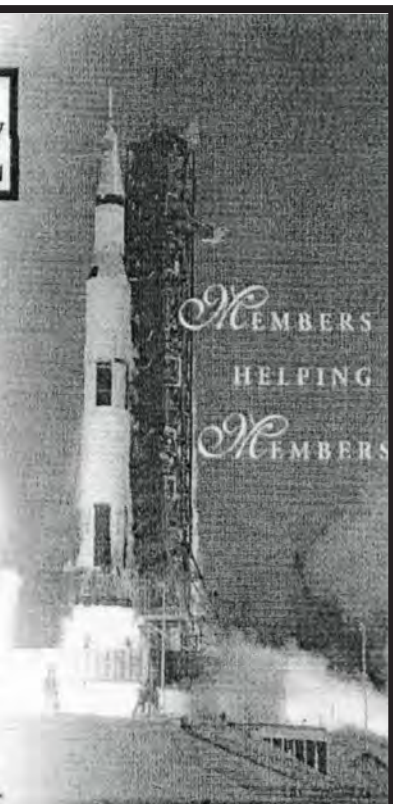
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who was an ancient black man when I was a child. I don't know that he had ever been a slave, but he probably had. I do remember, though, that I could hardly understand the language he spoke. It was English, but it was really different from the way I spoke.

My uncle liked to fox hunt (ride, camp, drink and chase but do not kill the fox) and had seeded the place with them. Not killing the fox finally caught up with them. I remember one night when I was camping down there, I was out trying to gig frogs and a fox, perhaps blinded by my lamp, came right up to me. And it is true, a fox den does always have two exits, at least the ones I've seen.

One day I was hunting on the place and was walking in the woods looking for squirrels and I came across an old graveyard, right there in the woods. There were just a few graves, and the most recent was from the 1880s. It was an eerie feeling, finding marked graves out in the woods.

The only duck I ever shot, I shot on the Fletcher Place in a woods we called the Chestnut Woods because it had been full of chestnut trees before the blight killed all of them.

It was a cold morning, well below freezing, and I slipped in next to the spring head of what becomes Beaver Dam Creek, and there were about ten ducks in the water. I was ill prepared for ducks, as I was squirrel hunting. But, game was game. I slipped in a little closer and the ducks flushed. I missed with the right barrel but downed one solidly with the left. Of course, he fell in the water. I had no dog; I had no boat; I had no proper clothes. So, I waded in and collected my duck and got soaking wet up to my waist in that cold air and then walked about a mile back to where I had left the car. But, it was worth it because I had my duck.

Interestingly, in later years, I lived on the river over by Guntersville and we had ducks who lived there year round and who would come up to the house for handouts. I fed them, and I have not shot another one since.

Being in the country has had some profound effects on my life. It has caused me to have a yearning for rural America that remains

with me although I now live in the city. I would like to "go rural" again. I yearn for space around me even as I dearly love my neighbors. I also remember gathering hay in near 100 degree weather and running the tractor with one implement or another and that tempers my yearning somewhat.

I suppose I would really like to have my cake and eat it too. I don't really know how to do that, but I'm working on it.



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Daniel Harrison at Home

by Ann Ayer Wiggins



Perhaps your readers would be interested in this description of Daniel Harrison at home. He was my great uncle. I am the granddaughter of Harry Joshua Coons, DOS and Sue Taylor Coons. My mother was Viola Coons Ayer.

Uncle Daniel was married to my grandfather's sister, Lucile Coons Harrison.

I enjoy your publication very much.

Ann Ayer Wiggins

My great-uncle, Daniel Fraser Harrison, was best known as a taciturn brother of Harrison Brothers Hardware Store or as a landlord for his many rental properties. However, at home he showed a different side of himself.

Uncle Daniel was married to the former Lucile Coons. Having lost their only child (a son) as an infant, they paid lots of attention to their great

nephews and nieces. A special treat was making the trek to Harrison Brothers Store to watch parades. We entered the elevator to the second floor with some fear - the elevator was not enclosed. Uncle Daniel made the elevator jerk to make the ride even more scary. When we finally arrived safely upstairs we scuttled to the front windows to a perfect and warm view of the parade around the Square. The annual Christmas parade was by far the favorite of us all, including Uncle Daniel.

A green wood-paneled truck belonged to the store. On special

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“No wonder nobody comes in this place - it’s too crowded!”

Yogi Berra

occasions we were invited to Uncle Daniel's house on White Street to take a ride in it. We all got in the back and stood up to see over the panels and to have a handhold. Off he would screech at top speed down Echols Hill towards East Clinton School. He took the corners on two wheels while we whooped with joy at the wild ride. Our parents knew nothing of his striving to drive like a race car driver and we never told them!

Behind his house was a barn - a relic from earlier days and accessible from the alley that then existed behind the house. On the bottom story Aunt Lucile raised chickens in the middle of town. A favorite thing for us to do was to gather the eggs. The hens pecked us and make a fuss but the egg basket was always full. Upstairs housed the homing pigeons of Uncle Daniel. Competing with other bird owners was his greatest passion. He spent countless happy hours with his birds and won many competitions.

Every Friday night his brother John (the other brother of Harrison Brothers Hardware Store) ate dinner with Aunt Lucile and Uncle Daniel. He lived next door. The main dish was always the same - frog legs. He tormented us with vivid descriptions of the frog legs jumping in the skillet as they cooked. While frog legs were their favorite dish, I never ate a frog leg and never will.

When he sat in his comfortable chair at home he looked very much the Scot. He was not far removed from his ancestral homeland and the family said his grandparents were the first of his line to come to America. His cheeks were ruddy like many of the Scots. He always wore a tweed jacket with leather patches on the elbows and smoked a pipe. Most people did not realize he had a sense of humor. He often made witty but subtle remarks and the corners of his mouth drew up into a droll smile. His pockets always held hard candy for us and he was generous with distribution. Knowing him greatly enriched the lives of all of his great nieces and great nephews.

Great Nieces and Nephews: Susan Ayer Hinesley, Ann Ayer Wiggins, Ric Ayer, Laura McDaniel Innes, Lucy McDaniel Carey, Harry Joshua Coons III (Josh), Louis Coons, John Coons



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THEY CALL ME "MISTER FRECKLES"

by John E. Carson

Life was not always this good. People tell me all the time that I am one lucky dog. It is hard to believe that I was once on Death Row. Yeah, that's right; I am an ex-con.

What was my crime? I am not really sure. Being homeless I guess. I don't remember how I got in that state but they tell me that I was picked up after wandering the streets for weeks. All I know is that I found myself behind bars; imprisoned with all manner of society's cast-offs.

Month after month I pled my case to anyone who would listen. The officers who brought my food could see it in my eyes. Some of them even pleaded my case and took their fight to the media.

As each day passed I became more depressed. Like the other prisoners here, hopelessness began to set in. I stopped pacing in my cell. My appetite was gone. I developed a condition and a cough. My health reflected my emotional state to the

**My mother taught me about Time Travel:
"If you don't straighten up, I'm going to knock you into the middle of next week!"**

point where I no longer cared what my fate might be. I gave up hope of ever being reprieved.

I heard the talk from the guards. The prisons were full. Soon there would be no choice but to eliminate some of the prisoners. Those who did not have a good mouthpiece would find themselves in line for execution.

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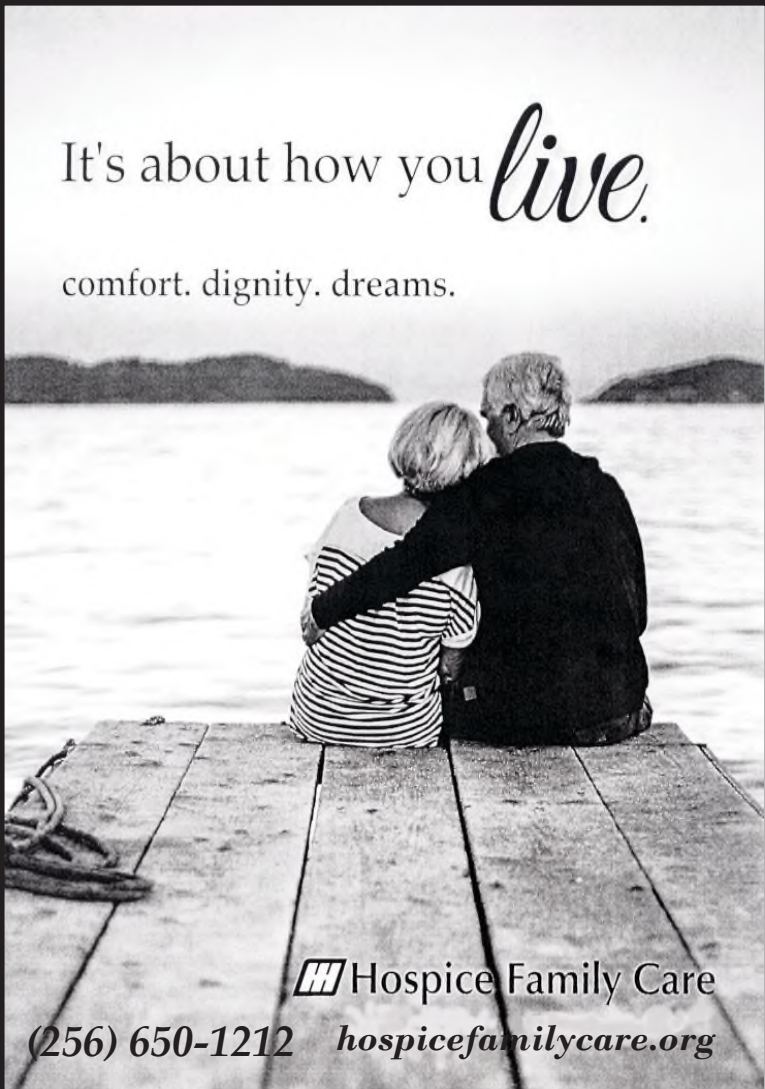
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How could this happen to me? I was set up. I knew it. My former associates had kicked me to the curb; literally! Out of a moving car!

My services were no longer required. I was too much trouble; too much expense; a liability instead of an asset. Out the door I went with no severance pay or any way to eat!

Yeah, I know; all inmates are innocent. They all have the same story. But in my case it was true! I had a good heart and did not want to hurt anyone. I just wanted to do my job for someone that would appreciate my efforts.

And one day I woke up to a different atmosphere in the prison yard. The media was interested in my case! They told my story and showed my picture on television! I had become the "poster child" for the movement to take some prisoners off of Death Row!

The day after my story aired I was transported with several other inmates to a public place - a shopping center in Huntsville where, even though we were restrained we could search for an advocate - someone who would be willing to give us a second chance at life!

I felt excitement again! I started the day with high hopes - I was sure I could win my freedom! After all, I had been on television the night before. I was the lucky dog the public saw.

But as the day wore on, my enthusiasm dwindled. I could sense that time was running out. And this was my last and only chance for the new life I had dreamed about.

Looking out from my bars, I noticed a man stopping at every prisoner's portable cell. He looked over every one, reading the information cards and shaking his head. The look of hopeful expectation I had noticed on his face faded as he interviewed each of the prospective candidates. No, not this one. No, not this guy either.

My heart began to quicken its pace. Maybe, just maybe I would be the one! Finally he approached me. I stood up and searched his eyes. I had butterflies in my stomach. He smiled at me!

Taking out his phone he kept one hand on the bars of my cell as he signaled the guards! I am not sure who he talked to but he must have had some influence with somebody important!

He talked to me as they unlocked the gate of my cage. The guards talked to him. Papers were signed and I was escorted to his car! Yes! I was free!

During the car ride, I sat still and quiet. I did not want to do anything to displease this person and possibly be sent back to jail. He made sure the garage door was closed before asking me to get out of the car.

I sensed that the person he had talked to on the phone was waiting inside. The Big Boss I was sure was the real power behind this mouthpiece I had found. So I made sure to cozy up to her as soon as we entered the house.

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Since I had worked for other people in the past, I knew how to present myself and respect the house rules. We hit it off!

I had not looked in the mirror for a long time but the night before they had groomed me for my appearance with a good bath and conditioner for my hair. And it is hard to get too dirty in a small cell. But my hair had grown so long that there seemed to be some confusion of my gender.

Sure, I was not a bad looking mug but my nickname and my long hair kept people thinking I was female. Now mind you, I am heterosexual and have nothing against the girls but while I was locked up I had been given the moniker, Freckles.

I could see this was going to be a problem with my new bosses. And since it was the only name I remembered I could not see how we would clear up the identity issue.

But Mrs. Boss had a great idea! A change of wardrobe was required and Mr. Boss ordered one up. Soon I had a tough looking, studded necklace to wear my "dog tags" on. This helped a little.

I took to my new duties like I was born to them. Being of Scottish ancestry and having some cowboy DNA, I stuck to my boss's side like Velcro. To earn my keep and repay the kindness of my new employers I made sure I followed all the rules to the letter. I never sat on the furniture, bothered anything that was not mine and made certain that my bathroom and grooming habits were impeccable.

It's been three years now in this new life. My boss tells me that I have helped pull him and his wife out of the depths of depression brought on by years of medical problems and financial hardships they were just beginning to overcome. I make sure they get needed exercise, are never lonely and I provide security for the house and watch their backs when we go out. They say they don't know what they would do without me and that I am family

Yes sir, I have a good life. I am one lucky dog. And the name thing? Yeah, I still get mistaken for the wrong gender. But just because I am a good looking cur, don't underestimate me. I would do anything for my family even if it meant being sent back.

These days I have to wonder who rescued who. First my people rescued me and now they say I rescued them. But hey, that's what families do, right?

Who am I? Well, the Mrs. solved the name thing and it helps. They now call me Mister Freckles!

Betsy Ross is the only real person to ever have been the head on a Pez Dispenser.

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The candidate must stand an approved examination on arithmetic, geography, the English, Latin and Greek grammars, Latin prosody, four books of Caesar's Gallic War, Sallust's, Cataline and Fugurtha, The Bucolics and six books of The Aeneid of Virgil, Anthon's Select Orations of Cicero; and the whole of Jacob's Greek Reader.

To enter upon advanced standing, an applicant will be examined on all the preceding studies of the class to which he aspires.

The grammars used in examinations of applicants are Murray's, or Kirkham's English, Andrew's & Stoddard's Latin, all of which examinations will be rigid. The faculty would state that applicants are found, almost universally, deficient in elementary branches; in arithmetic, the grammars and very frequently also in geography. It will not be inappropriate to urge upon parents and teachers, the importance of a thorough and faithful preparation according to the foregoing statement of requisitions.

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All persons coming to the University for the purpose of seeking admission, must report themselves to one of the officers as early as the next day after their arrival in Tuscaloosa: and are not at liberty to lodge in the dormitories, or to take their meals at the Hall,

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Howard Casey Camp

by Austin Miller

I first saw Howard at Holmes Street United Methodist Church. I took notice because despite his advanced years, he stood tall and erect without any shuffle in his gait. The way he carried himself made me think he was probably retired military. An assumption that proved to be right on target.

Howard was born in 1923 and grew up on a farm on the banks of the Warrior River in Cleburne County. His mother sent him to Boaz for high school where he boarded at what is now Boaz State Community College. He graduated at seventeen and tried to join the Army Air Corps but his mother wouldn't sign the papers. As soon as he turned eighteen he didn't have to have her signature and was able to enlist. It was his dream to fly so he applied to flight school and was accepted. He won his wings and a commission as a Second Lieutenant. This was no small feat because it was hard to

get accepted and many that were chosen washed out before they graduated.

He flew P-47's in Europe during World War II. His job was to strafe and bomb targets on the ground such as enemy troops, trucks, convoys, plants, trains, big guns or anything that posed a threat to soldiers on the ground. Some say this job was more dangerous than that of a fighter pilot.

As dangerous as it was Howard Casey Camp flew 89 combat missions and survived the war.

His luck almost ran out on one mission over Germany when his plane was hit and caught fire. He climbed to an altitude where the lack of oxygen snuffed out the fire. When his engine went out he was able to coast from Germany to occupied Luxemburg. He crash landed in a field and immediately saw a group of farmers running toward him. He trained his guns on the approaching farmers when a small boy yelled out, don't shoot mister we are not the enemy. He didn't shoot and the farmers hid him from

"If we don't succeed, we run the risk of failure."

Dan Quayle

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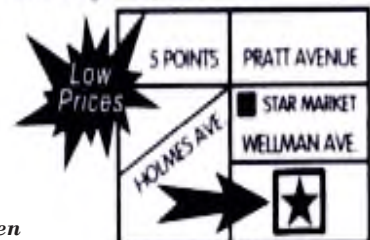
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the Germans and helped him get back to the American lines. Fortunately for Howard they were members of the resistance.

In the nineties he and his wife Jan went back to Luxenberg and visited the place where he was shot down. The residents remembered the incident and there was one lady who was twelve at the time who not only remembered Howard but recognized him on sight when she saw him.

After the war, in 1948, Howard participated in the famous Berlin Air Lift ferrying coal, food, clothing and medicine to the people of West Berlin. After that he flew P-51's and F-86 Sabre jets. He didn't fly these planes in combat but taught others as a flight instructor. American pilots flying these planes in Korea made waste of the Russian MIG 15's flown by the North Koreans and Chinese.

After 13 years Howard left active duty as a Major but stayed in the Reserves. His family persuaded him to leave the Air Force to save a family farm in Arkansas. Before he started farming he wanted a degree in agriculture so he searched the county over for the best school in the country and settled on Mississippi State University. He graduated with a degree in animal husbandry and grass land management but couldn't save the farm.

Out of a job, he came to Huntsville looking for work. He went to the personnel office at Redstone Arsenal and was hired on the spot as an administrative aide and personal pilot for Werner Von Braun. Howard said he once told Von Braun that, "A few years ago I was trying to kill you and now I'm working for you!"

He was called back to active duty during the Vietnam War. He told me that he was at work when he got the news and was so pleased that he let out a loud whoop heard all over the building. His job in Vietnam was to fly a C-141 jet transporting damaged helicopters to Charleston, South Carolina for repair and return after they were restored. He retired in 1974 as a full Colonel with 33 years of active and reserve service. He tried to serve in Desert Storm but was denied, probably

"If life was fair, Elvis would be alive and all the impersonators would be dead."

Johnny Carson

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because he was almost seventy years old.


His wife Jan is outstanding in her own right. She is also a pilot and owns her own plane. Everybody who knows them say there were never two people better matched than Howard and Jan Camp. She is a mover and shaker and moves comfortably in any circle. She doesn't look down on anybody, is a great speaker and makes whomever she is talking to feel like they are the most important person in the world. She told me that the first time she came to Huntsville was in 1961 on her way to St. Petersburg, Florida for a job. When she came over the hill on Highway 431 overlooking Huntsville to the south and saw the city in the distance, she knew she was home.

Jan stayed in Huntsville and went to work for an aviation company. The company needed someone who knew how to fly up-side down and she was given the task. She objected but was told it was a done deal and an appointment had been set up with the best acrobatic pilot in the southeast. Jan said she had an instant dislike for her new instructor because he was brash, cocky and arrogant. But when she got in the plane with him she said he was the best pilot she had ever seen.


His name was Howard Casey Camp. When he did the first rollover and loop she was hooked because in her words it was the most thrilling thing she had ever experienced. They soon started dating and were married in 1983. The marriage lasted 32 years until Howard's death in November of 2015 at the age of 92.

After marrying they agreed that they would go to church. Jan was Christian Science and Howard was the grandson of a Methodist minister. They tried both churches and settled on Holmes Street United Methodist Church. They were very active and jointly taught a youth Sunday School class for six years. One of the perks of the class was that Howard would take anybody that joined the class flying. Most took him up on the offer. I can only guess what it must have been like for a young person to attend a Sunday School class taught by the Camps.

They also sponsored a young couple's class at Holmes Street UMC. Jan told



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the story about one occasion when they invited the class to their home at Maysville for hot dogs and hamburgers. Howard was doing the cooking but got to telling war stories, forgot the food and burned the hot dogs and hamburgers to a crisp.

He had great stories to tell and I expect the class was more interested in his stories than the food. Luckily Jan had extra and ended up doing the cooking so that no one went away hungry.

My wife Gaylor and I joined Holmes Street UMC in 2006 and I saw Howard and Jan almost every Sunday but it was some time before we got to know them. One Friday morning we were having breakfast at Mullins Restaurant when Howard and Jan came in. We invited them to join us which they did. It was a most pleasant experience; the conversation came easy and relaxed. We stayed and talked for at least an hour after we finished eating. The best part was that we made two new friends that day.

Howard lived his life in the typical mold of an unabashed push-the-envelope military flyer accustomed to great danger and risk. This trait was one of the things that made him a great pilot. But there was another side to Howard that he didn't talk about. Over the years, I heard many stories from people about things he did to help others. Everything from handing somebody that he liked a \$100 bill for no apparent reason or taking a child that needed a boost for an airplane ride.

I truly believe the stories we heard about didn't even scratch the surface of all that he did for others. If I had to sum up Howard Casey Camp in a few words I would say that he was a true American war hero who did not think he was a hero. More than that, he was a man who served his country, his church and his fellow man for most of his long and productive life. He played a part in making our way of life what it is today.

Considering the many stories I have heard about Howard's flying, there is no doubt in my mind that he was one of the best pilots of all time.

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- Give your colicky infant mild ginger tea. It's wonderful for digestion and gas.

- For fever, eat grapes throughout the day. Also dilute pure grape juice and sip.

- For sinus headaches, sniff a little horseradish juice - the stronger the better. Remember to do it slowly.

- To ease the discomfort of a bad hangover, rub half a lemon under each armpit. This may ease the feeling somewhat.

- For asthma, eat 3-6 apricots a day. They help heal lung/bronchial conditions.

- For regularity, drink the juice of one lemon mixed in one cup of warm water, when you wake up every morning. A bit of honey may be added to sweeten. You'll be amazed at the good results.

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City News from 1916

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The residence was barely damaged and Bragg saved practically all of his household goods.

Mr. Bragg's store and contents are a total loss. He carried no insurance on his stock of goods but had something like \$1500 on his store building. He estimates his loss above the insurance at between \$2200 and \$2500.

The local fire department responded, but was handicapped in rendering service, the fire being so far beyond the city's fire limits.

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S. R. Butler for State Superintendent

The Daily Times recently has been pleased to refer to S. R. Butler in connection with the duties of State Superintendent of Education for Alabama. Today there is an insistent demand from one end of the state to the other that he become a candidate. There is another tentative candidate but Mr. Butler's nomination and election would be a mere matter

of form.

He is positively more closely identified with the educational needs of the state than any other man we know and should he make up his mind to become a candidate in the approaching Democratic Primary, Mr. Butler's victory would be assured. Fact is, the state should nominate and elect him by acclamation but even with opposition he would have no trouble winning.

As Superintendent of Education in Madison County, Mr. Butler has made an enviable record and success. He is known to the entire school forces of the state and the people would be glad to honor him.

Editors Note: Butler High School named after S. R. Butler

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Elias McKinney, My Great-Great Grandfather

by Kelsey Jordan

I come from a long line of Northern roots, but one of my ancestors came to North Alabama during the 1860s. My great-great grandfather Elias McKinney was born in 1842 in Ohio to Henry McKinney and Sarah Lewis. He enlisted in the Union Army at the age of 28 on October 14, 1861 for a period of 3 years. He was assigned to the Ohio Infantry, 46th Regiment Company B as Private.

During his service to the Union Army, Elias spent most of his time on the Franklin-Nashville Railroad Campaign. Elias fought and was wounded on April 6, 1862 at the Battle of Shiloh, he recovered and returned to duty in time to take part in the Siege of Corinth, Mississippi on April 30th of the same year.

From Mississippi his regiment traveled into North Alabama, they passed through Florence, spent some time in Decatur, and they traveled through Huntsville. They finally settled in Paint Rock, Alabama in October 1862. In Paint Rock a group of Confederate guerrilla fighters attacked the Union troops and ended with 9 of their own dead and others wounded.

From December 1862 until May 1863 it is believed he was stationed in Scottsboro, AL along a main railroad and trade route. Next, they headed up and through southern Tennessee.

May through July 1863 Elias was stationed in Knoxville, Tennessee. From Knoxville they traveled towards Georgia to seize Atlanta. On their way to capture Atlanta they passed through Mission Ridge, Dallas, Kennesaw Mountain, Noonday Creek and finally arrived in Atlanta in July 1864.

On May 29th, 1864 on their

way to Atlanta they fought in Dallas, GA where Elias was wounded in the back. The type of wound it was is unknown. Elias stayed in the Georgia/Tennessee area until his enlistment period was terminated in Chattanooga, Tennessee on October 26, 1864. During his service he was wounded twice, once at Shiloh and another time at an unknown battle in Georgia.

After he was mustered out of the Union Army he returned to Ohio, he married Miss Rachel McCandless in 1865 but by 1872 he was remarried. It is unknown what happened with his first marriage. On June 12th, 1872 Elias married Miss Matilda Ann Johnson. In October 1877 my great grandfather, Francis Marion McKinney was born. He was followed by siblings Minnie Ann (1878), Myrtle G. (1882) and Alice whose birth year is unknown.

Elias McKinney passed on April 28th, 1915 in Ohio.



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PET TIPS FROM ANGEL

Fostering a Pet

Next to owning a dog or cat, there is nothing more enjoyable or rewarding than fostering an animal from your local shelter or rescue group. Even if you have a pet at home, you might be able to fit in a temporary tenant — a dog or cat making the transition from shelter to a new adoptive family.

Unsure if you're the fostering kind? There is no perfect profile of a foster family, but there are some things you should know before volunteering at your local shelter or contacting a rescue group.

* **There's a time commitment.** You may be asked to foster a dog or cat from two weeks to two months, depending on circumstances. Foster parents don't need to be home 24 hours a day, but you might have to postpone that weekend getaway if you're asked to take care of an animal for a while.

* **There are different types of fostering.** Shelters need foster parents for puppies, for kittens or cats, for animals needing medical care, or for dogs with behavioral issues. You choose, and shelters typically offer orientation or instruction to help you deal with each type.

* **There's more than just feeding, exercise, and grooming involved with a foster dog.** Some might need to be house-trained. Others may have problems with chewing, or jumping on strangers. Foster parents may need to devote time to breaking bad habits so a dog can be socialized. If a dog has a chewing problem, make preparations in advance — don't leave shoes, clothes, or other important items around.

* **You might be asked to nurse a dog or cat back to health.** It could require giving them medication at certain times of the day or perhaps bathing them periodically. If you have pets at home, you may have to keep them separated if



the foster dog or cat is contagious. Before taking in an animal that's recovering from an illness or disease, check with your vet if you have concerns about your own pets.

* **Falling in love with the pet you're fostering.** If you adopt a pet that you're fostering, you might have reached your limit of household pets and not be able to accept any others. That's one less foster home for the shelter to rely on. You have to keep in mind how many dogs you can provide for on a daily basis. You have to keep in

mind, if I adopt this dog, can I keep on fostering?

* **A new life for a pet** - at foster homes, they get out of the shelter environment and have a chance to be treated, rehabbed and later adopted.

* **Getting a pet out of the shelter environment.** Even a little time with a family, away from the confined space of a kennel and the continual barking, can improve an animal's disposition. A shelter environment is stressful. These animals are at their most fragile. Just for their health, it's better for them to be raised in foster homes.

* **The financial commitment for a family.** In most cases, shelters will pay for vet visits and medications and can provide for other necessities if requested — dog dishes, bedding, collars, ID tags and crates. Before becoming a foster parent, make sure you know what your financial responsibilities will be.

There's no question that foster programs are important to the success of shelters and rescue groups. Because of overcrowding issues, many shelters are continually in need of room for incoming animals. Without foster programs, some dogs and cats might never find a home.

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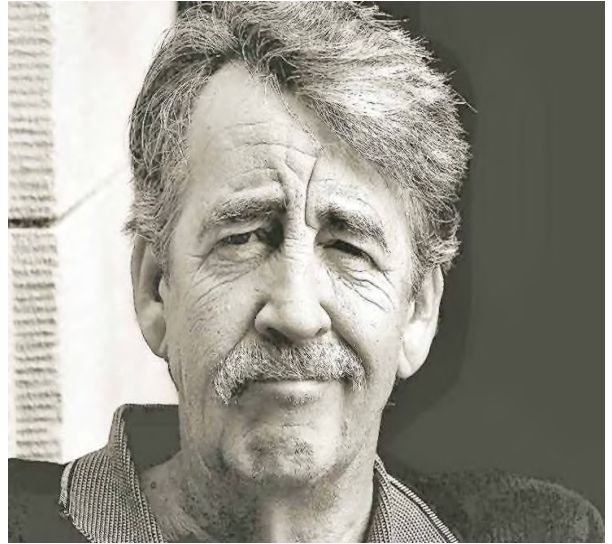
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Across from Books A Million

From the Desk of Tom Carney

James Bierny, Presidential Candidate

by Tom Carney



Probably one of the most colorful and eccentric characters to ever reside in Huntsville had to be James G. Bierny. Born in Danville, Kentucky in 1792, Bierny was the son of a wealthy, slave-holding family. After attending the College of New Jersey (now Princeton), he moved to Huntsville in 1817 to seek his fortune.

Bierny at first tried his hand at cotton farming but was a failure, as he had neither the experience nor inclination to learn the business. Fortunately he owned numerous slaves and was able to earn a comfortable living by renting them to other plantation owners.

His curious ways first came to the notice of Huntsvillians when he began to condemn others for the practice of slavery, oftentimes on the same auction block where he had purchased new slaves only minutes before.

James Bierny had become interested in the Abolitionist movement and was an avid spokesman for its ideas. Anti-slavery meetings were held regularly at his home on East Holmes Street, opposite its intersection with North Lincoln Street.

Again, in keeping with his contradictory ways, his servants provided refreshments and took care of all the chores while their master preached abolition.

When the first state legislature had convened, Bierny had been one of its members, and remembering this, the townspeople were at first tolerant

of his unorthodox ways. Within a few years his fame as an agitator had spread, which caused the "American Colonization Society" to offer him the position of "Agent for the states of Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Arkansas Territories."

James Bierny, upon receiving the offer, asked for time to think it over so he could "consult his conscience." In reality, he had asked for time so he could sell his slaves. Another factor influencing his decision was a series of articles he had published in local newspapers condemning slavery and dealing rudely with the South.

Where before, Bierny had been merely eccentric with the publishing of his articles, he became known as a rabid abolitionist. Meetings were held in Huntsville where speaker after speaker condemned Bierny.

As a result of these meetings, it was decided to "invite and persuade him" to leave town. A publication of the times states that "Wisely he sought some other shore, where those who knew him less might praise him more."

In 1835, Bierny moved to Cincinnati where he published the "Philanthropist," the cause of numerous riots and threats. In 1837, he was again invited to move. Next, he moved to New York, where, in 1840, the Liberty Party selected him as their presidential candidate.

He garnered 7,100 votes and in 1844, when he was again

persuaded to run, he attracted 15,812 votes.

Although he lost the presidential race, he had insured that slavery would be a major issue in any political race for many years to come.

James Bierny had two sons, both born in Huntsville. David Bell Bierny graduated from Andover and became a lawyer in Philadelphia. He served the North as a general in the Civil War and was twice faced with charges of dereliction of duty. The charges were finally dropped.

William Bierny, the other son, was educated in the north and abroad. During the war, he became commander of a regiment of black troops. He is probably best known for the book he wrote about his father, titled "The Life And Times Of James Bierny."

William explains that his father left Huntsville because "moral conditions were so depraved, and shooting and drinking brawls so frequent, that one's life was not safe there."

Editor's note:

Strange as it may seem, early Huntsville newspapers often carried articles condemning slavery, although most of their business depended on support and advertising from the slave owners.

Remembering "The Mall"

by Scott Nixon



One of Huntsville's earliest shopping indoor malls was on University and North Parkway, where Costco and Books A Million is now. The Mall and all its stores are no longer there, but many remember shopping there in the 60s and 70s.

It all started in 1978. I was 8 years old and my Maw-Maw lived at Presbyterian Apartments on Country Club Avenue across from Pin Palace Bowling Alley. Mom would take me with her to visit Maw-Maw and take our once-a-week trip to the Picadilly Restaurant. However, I only went when I pretended to be sick and just could not go to school. Man that was awful. Many times that didn't happen weekly and I would guilt Mom into letting me go. It was for sure every week in the summer.

Maw-Maw insisted that we get in line at the restaurant 30 minutes before it opened, and that was a long 30 minutes. I would finish my meal in 5 minutes and leave them there.

First stop for me would be "Bookland" because I loved reading and still do. Then I headed for "Woolworths". Loved the toy section.

However Woolworth's took a back seat to "Circus World" when they opened.

Why is it that at class reunions you feel so much younger than everyone else looks?

Sam Keith, Huntsville

My father patrolled the Mall. He was a Huntsville Police Officer, and I felt really important with him. If he didn't work so much, he probably would have put me in jail for missing so much school. I loved Christmas at The Mall. The life-sized animated Santa Claus, Mrs. Claus, reindeer and Elves. I loved it. I remember going to see him and he was the Real Santa. He had a real beard and he would mail me a postcard with his picture on it. The decorations throughout the Mall were amazing to me.

Dad would take me to "Warden's Barbershop" for a haircut. I will never forget my barber, his name was Bill Loggin. He would give me a candy sucker for good behavior. "London Transit" was a good clothing store. I would look in the windows, there were mirrors and spiral stairs, a beautiful store.

I also loved music and still do. "Newsom's" was a place I wandered around in looking through albums. I loved Elvis Presley and his music.

The other police officers through those years were Dowling Kritner, Nolan Sanders and a fellow named Willie Culver. Great guys. At the end of every trip to "The Mall" I was completely worn out. Mom and Maw-Maw would make their Walgreen's stop, the end of our shopping trip. With my legs hurting and feeling so tired, we would leave.

I wish I could say now that my legs are hurting and I am tired from hanging out at The Mall. To tell you the truth, only my heart hurts but I have some great memories. If only I could turn back time.

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Real Local News 2016

Alabama Artists Earn Honors in Ohio at Exhibition

Curtis Benzle (Huntsville, AL) and Taylor Robenalt (Auburn, AL) are exhibiting at the Franklin Park Conservatory and Botanical Gardens, Columbus, Ohio, in an exhibition titled "De La Naturaleza" (Jan. 9-March 6).

Benzle and Robenalt were honored, with two of the three exhibition awards—Benzle with "Best of Show" and Robenalt with "Honorable Mention". All of the artworks in "De La Naturaleza" reference the theme of human balance with nature. Our own Curtis Benzle lives in Old Town in Huntsville - So proud!

Remember "Earth, Wind and Fire" from back in the day?

Well they will be performing on May 12 at the Von Braun Civic Center at the 2016 Huntsville Classic Dinner hosted by Huntsville Hospital Foundation. It was sold out last year. There is a Golf Tournament on May 14 at Hampton Cove Golf Course. All proceeds from these events go to Huntsville Hospital Foundation. If you want to go this year the phone# to call is 256-265-8077.

Recent Scams Heard about in Huntsville

Many have received calls from people saying they're with the IRS, and that you owe money and if you don't give credit card info you will be facing jail time. Well, the IRS never contacts anyone via phone - if they contact you it'll be through the regular mail. Don't EVER give a stranger any of your financial information; credit cards, social security info or any personal information. Once they get your information it's too late. Best

bet is to use caller ID and just let the phone ring if you don't recognize the number. If it's important or an acquaintance, they'll leave you a message. Not answering will save you a lot of time.

Gary Huckaby of the Huckaby Consulting Group is a terrific speaker. He spoke at the Wine Cellar recently to a group who were trying to raise some money for the Lowry House painting project. He had everyone laughing and made some really good points - like "Get up every day and try to be the person your dog thinks you are."

Alabama Shakes from Athens Wins 3 out of 4 Grammys!

Congratulations to this tremendously talented blues band from Athens who recently were nominated for 4 Grammys and won 3! We're SO proud

of them and their latest CD "Sound & Color" continues to break sales records.

Learn to Swing Dance!

There's a theatre at Lowe Mill on Seminole Drive called

The Flying Monkey that's attracting the dancing crowd. Do you remember Swing Dancing? It is having a resurgence in popularity and on Thursday nights you can join them! The Huntsville Swing Dance Society is hosting on March 10 from 6:30pm - 10pm a fun dance training night. It's \$10 to get in, or \$5 if it's your first time. As they put it - "Because every geek could use a little swagger!"

The West Coast Swing Dance is another dance company that will train you on Mar. 1, 8, 15, 22 and 29 from 7-10pm, also in the theatre, with a \$10 admission.

Lowe Mill Grows Again

In March the entire first floor of the North Wing at Lowe Mill will have art studios & space to lease, and they are looking for the ideal tenants to take over the spaces available on the floor.

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expanded from a one floor public arts community to three thriving floors. In December 2014, a new wing was introduced with the opening of the North Floor. With this, Lowe Mill will officially take over the entire space of this historic building.

There will be 36,000 sq.ft. of space available for retail and manufacturing.

Ducks on Church Street

For those of you who don't live in Huntsville, Church Street is a very busy road that runs near downtown through our Big Spring Park, home to Canada Geese, ducks, fish, pigeons, etc. But traffic comes to a complete halt when a duck or two chooses to cross the road. In the warmer months you'll often see a mama duck leading a line of babies across the street, while cars patiently wait. Thank you Huntsville drivers for watching out for these ducks and geese!

Huntsville Hospital makes use of Volunteers to Cuddle Tiny Babies!

In the Neonatal Intensive Care unit at the hospital, the fragile, tiny babies are cared for around the clock. But lately there are volunteers who spend hours at the unit so that they can just sit and cuddle the babies. Touch is so important but even more so for these babies.

Oftentimes the parents have to work and the nurses there have many babies on their watch. So these volunteers provide such a valuable service. NICU Cuddler programs have begun springing up all over Alabama, and in Huntsville more and more Cuddlers are

being added weekly. Not everyone can be a Cuddler - only established hospital volunteers with many hours of experience are eligible and they received training on how to handle the very fragile patients.

Veterans getting Jobs

An organization called Warriors to the Workforce will be talking to prospective workers on March 16 at the Von Braun Civic Center. There are some great companies participating to let all the vets know what opportunities are out there. Ted Hacker is the contact at (615)330-9394.

Congratulations to Lynne Berry at HudsonAlpha Bio-Tech! She is the new Director for Advancement for the company and is the perfect spokesperson to spread the word about HudsonAlpha and the ground breaking work that is being done there.

Huntsville Named as one of Best 3 Places to Live in the U.S.

We're trying to keep this quiet cause we're like a treasure in the State of Alabama and if word gets out how much everyone enjoys living here other people may move here to check it out! Congratulations to our city for continually winning awards and also to our **Mayor Tommy Battle** who is the force behind so much of our progress.

Uber and Lyft available now in Huntsville

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"My pessimism has never failed me, but I'm positive one day it will."

Jeff Benson, Arab



World War II Men of Honor Receive Their Due from France in Ceremony

by Steve Gierhart

Men of Honor. We play with that term. It's been with us forever. Movies. Books. Legends. All apply, and we like to think it might brush up against each of us at least once in our lifetime. Help us feel like we made a difference, somehow hoping it might apply to us but realizing that fate, circumstance and choices have made it elusive, if not impossible.

That elusiveness cannot be said of the many men from World War II who made a difference in fighting that horrifying evil known as Nazism and Japanese Imperialism. Yes, circumstance gave them the choice to help. Many did just that. Volunteers, not draftees. Serving with honor though it had a terrible effect on their minds and sometimes bodies. And don't forget humility. The


men who fought in that war were often left with an immense sense of guilt. Why? Because they survived when so many of those around them did not. They constantly remind everyone that they are not the heroes, that those who died should be honored instead of them. But they are heroes. Surviving is a feat. Becoming role models, like so many did afterwards, must be remembered.

On Friday, January 29 in the Montgomery City Hall, nine of these men were honored by those who




Joseph Connaughton





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were directly impacted by their sacrifice, the French Government. Three of these men live in North Alabama; Joe Connaughton of Huntsville, Sherwin Callander of Madison and Joseph Ingram, Jr. of Sheffield. Each of these nine veterans received a letter informing them that they would receive the highest military honor that the government of France could give an American citizen, "The French Legion of Honor". Originally created by Napoleon Bonaparte, the medal reflected the great gratitude of the government and citizens of France for the American soldiers who helped liberate their country from the German war machine. It was bestowed on each by French President Francois Hollande. French Consul Denis Barbet, in an elegant ceremony hosted by Alabama's VA Director Cory Hawthorne, addressed the large audience of friends, family and admirers and gave the stirring accounts of each of the men. As Consul Barbet so eloquently said to the audience, "We have celebrated the peace restored to a democratic Europe, thanks to all of you who fought against tyranny and for a free world." Six of these men are from Alabama, two from Mississippi and one from Tennessee. They are:



ALABAMA

Joseph Connaughton - Huntsville (Bombardier, First Lieutenant, 319th Bomb Group, 438th Squadron, 12th Air Force: June 1942-March 1946)

Sherwin Callander - Madison (Fireman First Class, USS Lyon: 1939-1945)

Joseph Ingram, Jr. - Sheffield (Top Turret Gunner, Technical Sergeant, 96th Bomb Group, 337th Squadron, 8th Air Force: May 1942-September 1945)

William Massey - Homewood (Pilot, First Lieutenant, 401st Bomb Group, 8th Air Force; March 1942-November 1945)

Don Echols - Homewood (Nose Turret Gunner, Staff Sergeant, 458th Bomb Group, 8th Air Force: April 1943-November 1945)

Ellington (Buddy) Franklin - Hoover (Radio Man, Staff Sergeant, 81st Troop Carrier Squadron, 436th Carrier Group, 9th Air Force: Christmas 1943-September 1945)

MISSISSIPPI

David Smith - Madison (Infantry Rifleman, Private 1st Class, 179th Infantry, 45th Division: November 1943-September 1945)

J.T. Street (passed; accepted by son. Jay Street) - Ripley (Truck Driver, Private 1st Class, 3820th Quartermaster Gas Supply Company, 3rd Armored Division: April 1943-November 1945)

TENNESSEE

Vincent Rowell - Memphis (Artillery Gunner, Private 1st Class, 311th Field Artillery Battalion, 79th Infantry Division: April 1943-Christmas Eve, 1945)

For Huntsville resident Joseph Connaughton, this day was especially sweet. It gave him a chance to remember the camaraderie of that time, and the fellowship

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of aviators, something that will never leave him. It also gave him another chance to talk about those who died before him, many in the great war.

He was especially thankful to Suzanne Charle, a niece of Doolittle Raider Capt. Richard Miller, who died with Joe's unit in North Africa, the 319th Bomb Group, after surviving the Raid and escaping the Japanese in China in a thrilling story that may yet be told by Suzanne who is also a former journalist and editor with The New York Times and The Nation. Suzanne and this author co-sponsored Joe's nomination to the French government and brought Joe to the formal ceremony that was held at the Montgomery City Hall.

Joe is a writer himself whose chronicle of the exploits of his group and their memoirs is told in Tales of the 319th, published by The Ardent Writer Press in December 2014. Joe has also written several articles relating to his and others' service in the defense of our country, several of which were published in Old Huntsville Magazine. They have also made the rounds in nationally recognized military circles, such as Aviation History, World War II History and Friends (of the Air Force) Journal.

Friends and family of Sherwin Callander of Madison were also in full force, smiles and tears passing freely about the room as Sherwin's story was told. Our thanks, like those of the Government of France, are abundant as we recognize not only the service and patriotism of these special men, but also their standing as role models for

future generations of Americans who may be faced with the same difficult choices that make these nine men not only special, but true heroes.



Family of Sherwin Callander
Alabama Navy WWII Vet

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* For you cat owners, the lightweight cat litter really works better than the heavy stuff. also it seems to be softer to the pads of most cats and we have seen good results. Best part, you don't hurt your back lugging around 40 lbs of cat litter.

* Most people have phones now that take pretty good videos. This is a great time to video all of your home, appliances, computer devices, TVs etc. for insurance purposes. If you ever have damage from fire, tornado, water etc. you'll need it for your claim.

* If you're feeling down, try doing something nice for someone else. You'll find your mood generally gets better immediately.

* Another move that can make you feel better is vacuuming your house. You'll get exercise, do something worthwhile and your floors will look better.

* Bread does NOT do well in the fridge or freezer - leave it on your counter for best taste.

* You can make a really good cheese ball by mixing 2 packs of cream cheese, 1/2 cup chopped green onions, garlic & cayenne pepper and chipped beef cut fine. Form in a ball and

roll in chopped toasted pecans - SO good on crackers.

* When you're making a dessert or dish with canned fruit, not a good idea to get the cheapest - generally you'll be happier with the quality of the more expensive brands.

* Do you have a broken iPhone 5, 6 or 6Plus? Apple just started a program where they will pay you for the broken phone. It can range anywhere from \$50 to \$250 in your pocket! Just search for Apple Re-use and Recycle.

* Want clean cabinets? Mix together a cup of baking soda and 1/2 cup olive oil. This will do wonders for your cabinets.

* Hard water marks on you sink? White vinegar is best.

* I had heard that Lever 2000 soap (cake type) smelled really good, and I bought both the white and green variety. They are heavenly! And if you unwrap them, put them in your bathroom cabinet, they will last longer (they dry out) and your cabinet smells so fresh.

* I didn't think microfiber sheets would ever be anything I would like but I saw them at Costco and bought them. They are so soft, wash up really well, and are under \$25 (queen size.)

* Do everything you can to keep yourself healthy. Because once you hit that down hill slide it's too late. Be very careful about not falling especially.

* Your grandma was really right. If you eat a balanced diet, be moderate in everything you do and be kind to people, you'll have a better life.

* When you are frying anything in oil, stay in your kitchen and don't leave to just "check emails or Facebook". Chances are it will only take a little time before something could catch fire. Check that other stuff later.

* Who knew? Teabags can remove dark circles under your eyes, freshen up your refrigerator, remove tough baked on grease, and in your pantry will deter mice & bugs! Use your teabags for tea, then dry them out and re-use!



Clementine

Hello, the Ark named me Clementine. I was called a stray dog because I was wandering around all by myself. I did not have on a collar and that meant no identification. I did not have a microchip to track my family. Know what I do have? Puppies soon to be born! The Ark had an ultrasound done so they would know how many puppies I was going to have. The doggie doctor counted 5!

I am an American Fox Hound with soulful eyes, beautiful ears, and the sweetest dog you will ever meet. Why would my family give me up? Why did they not have me spayed? Where is my collar with my identification tags? Know what else I have? I have heartworm disease. The Ark will get me treated after I have my babies and they are ready for a home of their own. Why did my family not give me the heartworm preventive? I have a lot of questions but I do not have the answers. Please be a responsible pet owner and make your pet a family member. It is the right thing for you to do.

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Only Fifty-One Years

by Mark R. Magnant

In the mid-summer of sixty five, I was born in Huntsville Hospital. I have lived here all my life and true, I don't have the stories reaching back as far as most of Cathey's readers, but to me fifty-one years has merit. In my conversations of life stories, I hear people respond all the time and say "You were born here?" When I tell them I love it so, most can understand why.

We have a beautiful community. It is one that is enriched in a long history, steeped in natural beauty and at the same time it has propelled into the very heart of technology, be it rockets or medicine. The statistics of achievements for our beloved city are phenomenal and we owe that to wonderful city planning starting before my time. I am, and everybody I know that has lived here their whole life is very proud to call Huntsville home.

I missed out on some of the pinnacle old stories, and some of the slightly obscure ones like that of people having been on the elevator at the mall when hearing the news of President Kennedy's assassination. I wasn't born yet. I missed out on telling the stories of the new courthouse being built, too.

True, I missed out on a great many things that have happened in our city, I do, however, remember things like the ditches along University Drive being in the center of the road, as well as on Drake Avenue too. I do remember the church on the hill, nestled back in the woods at the very top of the hill next to Oster drive. I remember the

neighborhoods that got damaged in the tornado disaster. I do remember the bread factory on Jordan Lane and how wonderful it smelled when we passed it. All these things I am repeating to an audience that truly remembers many a day that floated past with the speed of a river's current.

It was a simpler time, yet it was difficult just the same. I watched the little things that I loved change into newfangled operations because of technology. Yes, I too traded my youth for a city that has progressed almost exponentially.

I'm certainly not painting it as sad and I am not painting it as sweet either, it was just the way a city grows. The morphing of the city is the gist of this magazine and in my eyes, Huntsville was fortunate.

It was from this same perspective, I never really knew a time where our city had a bad turn, not even in the 80s when inflation hit the country hard. I always felt the city growing. The Arsenal brought jobs and the schools were top in the nation. We (our family) had enough to

maintain a modest lifestyle and therefore we got to enjoy many of the things Huntsville had to offer. They were the things, in retrospect, I took for granted. Our parks were clean and our roads were kept in good standing. Life in Huntsville was good.

Now, the things are changing at a much faster rate and I notice the massive amounts of construction in places like South Parkway and Chapman Mountain. I notice all the other signs of progression too and know I will get to add that to my sayings like "I remember when it was practically open fields past old airport to the river" or "how the new airport wasn't wrapped with city life or businesses."

Sure, I have elders who tell me an original airport was located close to Parkway City Mall. Still, I will be able to tell



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stories of days gone by with older "life-longer's," not as competition, but as a reference to change. Not only do I share in this change, I have others close in my family that remind me.

My parents weren't born here; they came years prior to my birth. Yet still, they get to share in telling me of my life. They say things like "Don't you remember when we...?" and "You were very young when we went to..." When we share in this history, I become proud to say I have lived in only four houses in my entire life. Each situated in various parts of the city, two of which I have gotten to say were my own. The most significant one being a tiny little house in the medical district with a history spanning a life some fifty years prior to my residency. I was always curious about those five decades.

I never changed the footprint of the little old house. It remained a two bedroom, one bath the whole time I lived there. I even loved the glass doorknobs and antique charm that was indicative of its Mill days. Yes, it was very small but it was just right for me. The house was one of just a few that remained true to the neighborhood. Alas, now it has been renovated for the location. The change was inevitable and just as well.

So, I do remember and when I do, it is very fondly of a city that I love deeply. I always get a sigh of relief when I return from wherever I have traveled and it usually starts the moment I get very near the city, not just close to my house. Huntsville is home! I realized that this was by choice when I graduated from UAH and I realize it more as I get older. Every story read or heard, and every time I drive down the street the point is driven home.

When I do pull a memory or two out of my mind, there will never be a better memory for me than the big candy bins in Woolworth's, at the old Heart of Huntsville Mall. I was almost too young to remember. I used to take out large handfuls of what I wanted and wait for an eternity for them to weigh it on the giant scales. We would rush to the counter to pay for the items, all the while I waited eagerly for that first bite. Then mom would bend down and lovingly hand me a piece so I could have one before we even got in the car.

Memories like that never fade, I'm lucky that way. There are very few select times that I wonder what it would be like to have wandered in from other places, like the countless many who roll into our city from all walks of life. The diversity of our fair city is usually steeped in a technological tone and it adds to the charm of what has become a cosmopolitan gateway of new cultures.

As time goes by, I get to share in these stories too, but I never lose track of my piece of Hunts-

ville's history and as a matter of fact, I wouldn't trade it for the world.

So, without trumpeting on needlessly to people who have already figured out what Huntsville means to them, I will just stop here. I will let the city's long history speak for itself and I will go have some chocolate and relish it in my chair, in my home, in my city.

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Thank You!



A Treasure of Cats

by Ted Roberts

She had definitely lost her shape. Sagging, bulging, her career as a model was doomed to dreamland. So was her career as a tree climber. I made this observation as I noticed that her social life, which centered around a large Sycamore, had kicked up a notch or two. Our formally deserted backyard was now a green, musicless disco for two black felines, a ragged pink and white fellow who needed a trim, and another long-haired pink playboy. The poodle next door tried to be a voyeur, but they ran him off.

I refer to our cat - and her social life. It was soon after those backyard romps that her tummy sagged and her saddlebag sides ballooned.

I locked the back door and grounded the cat. Seems like a couple of months after - after the gradual ballooning - that I was sitting on the couch and there she was proudly staring at me, demanding my attention. She had de-

flated. With the help of my wife and my deep knowledge of mammalian sexual behavior, I solved the problem. Somewhere in the disorderly, 3-bathroom shack in which we live was the litter of fetal felines that had puffed the cat's belly. But where? They definitely were not on tables, chairs, or mantelpiece. They weren't even hiding in the heaps of dirty clothes that quaintly decorated the den and each of the bedrooms. Without running amuck through the house, I put myself in the cat's brain. Hmmm, cats are not domesticated creatures. A streak of the wild still flows in their bloodstream. They worry about predators. For all they knew, our supper plates were loaded with Kitten in Marengo Sauce. Words like hidden, dark and concealed leaped into my mind. Where could the kittens be?

"Your mind needs exercise just as much as your body does, that's why I think of jogging every day."
Neil Keith

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Bam - in the bedroom closet, buried among the cast-offs on the floor was a living, breathing, lump of furry things. They evidently loved my wardrobe. As the eye analyzed the lump, it detected sixteen feet, four heads, and four tails totaling twenty-four kitten parts, which divided by the right numbers equals four kittens. Is there some mysterious kinship between cats and dirty clothes?

Then Mama, who was taking a break, strolled back into the nursery. She looked up at me as if to say, "How'd you find 'em?" She didn't seem to mind my presence as long as I kept my hands in my pockets and didn't have a Pit Bull at my side.

She lay down beside the four fur balls in such an exposed position such that each milkmaid or milkman (who could tell the difference) had access to a spigot. Now the fur ball was four separate creatures. They went for it like the guys at the corner bar went for draught. And I heard squeaky, little sounds like; "I saw it first" - "that one's mine" - "you're squashing my leg". Mama tried to help by nudging this one or that one with her head. For the first time in her life she had an assignment, responsibility, unrelated to her personal survival.

Why hadn't any of her backyard pals mentioned this? Some invisible switch called motherhood, deep within her, turned itself on. She seemed resigned to her maternal destiny though she'd sneak away, I noticed, every time they dozed off - usually to load up on water and cat food, which somehow was converted - we don't know the precise mechanics - into milk for her biological dependents. Some for her, some for them. Oh, a scientist who studies feline physiology - even your neighborhood vet - can deliver a thirty minute speech on the transformation of cat food and water into milk for kittens and its partitioned allotment between mother and child, but mere words often mask our lack of understanding. And we can't do it in the lab better than the chemical processes that function in the body of the cat. Just another one of nature's miracles.

Anyhow, I hear no complaints from the four boarders about meals, so they must be happy.

The miracle of replenishing the world of cats continues. Surely, there's room for four more.

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