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Old Huntsville

HISTORY AND STORIES OF THE TENNESSEE VALLEY

Viet Nam - The War Not Discussed



Also in this issue: "My Ragtime Baby"

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Viet Nam - The War Not Discussed

by John E. Carson

Often referred to as the only war the U.S. has ever lost, no one really wants to talk about Vietnam. But the reasons for that reluctance go far deeper than anyone who was not there could understand. Indeed, my requests for interviews with Vietnam veterans were met with, "I'd rather not talk about it."

Their sentiments echo my own. But it is something we should talk about.

All around us today are veterans of the Vietnam war and the Vietnam era solemnly displaying their status on caps, vests and jackets. Many of these veterans are members of the American Legion, the Legion Riders, Patriot Guard or other veteran organizations. Rather than pride, the patches they wear show their solidar-

ity with the 58, 220 U.S. service members killed in action and the 1,626 missing in action in the Vietnam conflict. Moreover, they also stand with the thousands who were wounded and the untold number of Vietnam veterans suffering from PTSD, TBI and other issues including exposure to Agent Orange.

As if surviving the conflict itself were not enough, most returning Armed Forces personnel were welcomed with shouts of obscenities and accusations of atrocities and many, including myself, were spit on as we disembarked at the seaports and airports upon our return home.

Today we have some church groups, among others, still dishonoring our veterans. Thus the Patriot Riders, the Legion Honor Guard and many Vietnam veterans stand together in brotherhood with our fallen heroes when they are laid to rest, shielding the grieving families from the protesters' shouts of condemnation.

But the war that officially lasted 19 years, 5 months, 4 weeks and a day (1 November 1955 - 30 April 1975) It ended with the fall of Saigon to North Vietnamese forces and encompassed Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, was not the reason I joined the Navy while still in high school.

While many protestors were

"I went to the air and space museum but there was nothing there."

Sam Keith, Huntsville



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fleeing to Canada to avoid the draft and many signed up for the Navy or hoped to join the Air Force to avoid the Army and the deadly ground war, my reasons for choosing the Navy had nothing to do with avoiding anything. I had three reasons to join and two friends who helped me make up my mind.

To be honest, the biggest reason was the breakup with my long time fiancé; something she wanted and I did not. After 18 months together I was crushed and the Foreign Legion was not an option - though if the Navy had turned me down I might have considered it. Having two WWII heroes for uncles; one who died at sea on an LST in the Solomon Islands and another who retired as a Captain in the Army after WWII and Korea, was another reason why joining the hippie movement was not on my radar. And finally, I was no draft dodger.

Two of my friends had watched my emotional decline

and because they had no desire to be drafted, decided to shanghai me one day and drive to the recruiting office where all three of us signed up for the Navy on the Buddy Plan. Though we knew the odds of being sent to the war zone were high, we were brash enough to face that possibility as if it did not matter. The success of Staff Sergeant Barry Sadler's song, The Green Berets, had stood against the growing counter-culture and no doubt influenced a large number of young men, the three of us included. Army, Air Force, Marines or Navy, we were all on the same team.

Sent to San Diego for Boot Camp and "A" school, we immediately felt the climate shock of leaving behind the Thanks-

"Yes, I know where your socks are. And I believe you know where my treats are."


A Dachshund to his owner

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 **Joint Camp**

giving weather of Minnesota for the balmy Southern California coastal weather. We were excited to be away from home for the first time in our lives and happy to be out of school.

Or so we thought. We found ourselves in the longest, toughest school of our lives with 10-12 hour days and six days a week drilling, training and attending classes, marking half-time over the holidays and four extra weeks of Boot while Congress and the President debated our fate and the course of the war.

We were trained on weapons, marksmanship, seamanship, firefighting and basic survival as well as discipline, marching and other skills that would prove valuable to me not only during my enlistment but in my civilian life and job that followed. Finally, the three of us were split up and sent to separate schools. One became a Corpsman, one became a Radioman and left for Submarine Duty and I (and a new friend) went through Commissary School to become field cooks for the Marines.

Upon graduation my new friend and I were both assigned to a Light Guided Missile Cruiser bound for Cambodia. I will never forget the night before we shipped out. We had been given Liberty and in our Navy Blues we went for a self-guided tour of Old San Diego. Stopping to rest and talk under the arch of an old building after sunset, my friend turned to me

and said, "I have a bad feeling about this."

"About what?" I asked.

"I don't think I'll be going home," he said.

His words proved prophetic. He was killed by "friendly fire" while cooking for the Marines.

Though I don't remember much of what happened during that time, I was sent home with an Honorable Discharge-Medical, for a shoulder injury among other things. I was one of the lucky ones. I fought the discharge though, wanting to stay in and complete my enlistment. I lost that battle.

And I understand why, even among other Vietnam veterans at the American Legion Post, no one wants to talk about the war or the ingratitude of a civilian population that was deliberately misled about the facts of the war. Veterans of horrific jungle warfare who came home only

to begin a new fight with their own government - one that valued dollars over life and limb.

What we may have not known or understood when we left for the war, we understood all too well when we returned.

The real cost of the war in Vietnam will never be fully counted, though the number of human lives lost alone is staggering. In addition to the aforementioned American losses, an estimated 800,000 to 3.1 million Vietnamese soldiers and civilians, 200,000-300,000 Cambodians and 20,000-200,000 Laotians were also killed.

How anyone can say that we lost that war is a mystery to me as our losses, far too many as they are, were substantially less than the losses our Communist enemies faced. Retired U.S. Foreign Service officer, William Stearman, the author of "An American Adventure:

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From Early Aviation through Three Wars to the White House", gave his opinion. He served on the White House National Security Council staff under four presidents and in Vietnam from December of 1965 to September 1967, He wrote in the July issue of The American Legion Magazine, that viewing the war from a historical perspective what actually resulted from it was that we had accomplished what we had set out to do.

In 1954, President Dwight D. Eisenhower said in a press conference that the strategic importance of Indochina (Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos) for a free world was the "falling domino" principal - whereby the threat of Communism there would lead to the loss of Indochina, Burma, Thailand, the Malay Peninsula and Indonesia. He added that Japan, Formosa (Taiwan), the Philippines, Australia and New Zealand would also be threatened. Stearman goes on to say that by the end of the war, with over

2 million dead, the communists were too weakened to be a threat to anyone except Laos and Cambodia.

In that sense, we accomplished our mission and the dominos did not fall. But the cost of keeping those dominos standing is still being paid every day by far too many. Our allies took losses as well; 30,000 Canadians served in the U.S. Armed Forces and 110 died in Vietnam, many were wounded. Australian statistics show that 13,600 of the Royal Australian Navy, 41,720 members of the Australian Army and 4,900 members of the Royal Australian Air Force served from 1962-1975. 501 personnel were killed in action and 2,400 were wounded. New Zealand's total contribution numbered nearly 4,000 from 1964-1972. New Zealand and most of Australia's combat forces were withdrawn in 1971-1972.

Like the USA, Australian and New Zealand veterans returned home to disdain and rejection. Despite many deaths

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attributed to Agent Orange, the New Zealand Government has been accused of ignoring the issue. South Korea, Thailand and the Philippines all contributed forces and suffered losses as well.

And me? No, I did not get the girl back - but that proved to be a good thing, and even with eight diagnosed conditions, fifty years of chronic pain and six of the last eight years disabled, I maintained a job and raised a family with the real love of my life. I now have four grandchildren and a faithful ESA K9 that serves me and my wife, with her disabilities.

I found a place in the American Legion and serve on the Honor Guard along with writing for the Post and volunteering at the Senior Center.

I, like many others, have found a way to finish my service. Many veterans less fortunate than I serve their fellows from all conflicts every day in many ways and several organizations including the American Legion, the VFW, the DAV and many more; reaching out to those who may be homeless, suffering from chronic condi-

tions or in need of help. They are all around us every day tirelessly working to help others.

But hey, no one really wants to talk about Vietnam or the problems they face that stem from their service there. Certainly not the government.

We all wish *that* war, and every war, would never have happened; that Armed Forces would not be necessary in a civilized world - that people would learn to accept their differences and live in peace. It hasn't happened yet but many are out there working on it.

Should you see one of us and ask about our experience we will probably tell you, in a nice way, to read about it somewhere instead. If so, please don't take it personally; the reasons for that reluctance run deep.

"I was such an ugly baby that my parents sent my picture to Ripley's Believe It or Not. They sent it back and said, 'We don't believe it.'"

Joan Rivers

"If they can make penicillin out of moldy bread, then they can sure make something out of you."

Muhammad Ali

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Old Remedies

- If you're out of hand lotion, take a piece of cucumber and rub it on your chapped hands for soothing relief.

- A cure for a sore throat can sometimes be as simple as eating a slice of fresh pineapple.

- For a soothing fresh face - take an egg from your fridge and separate the yolk from the white. Beat the white slightly, and, using a pastry brush, paint it on your just-washed face. Once the egg dries, apply another coat of egg white. After 15 minutes, rinse your face with warm water. For a finishing touch, rub ripe, mashed avocado meat on your face. Refreshing!

- If you are cursed with cramps occasionally during the night, do this. Sleep with a piece of pure silverware - a spoon is the best - on your night table. As soon as you are wakened with the troublesome cramp, grab the spoon and

put it right on the spot. The cramp should disappear instantly.

- A spicy apple scent, like that of a just baked apple pie, has a calming effect on one's nerves. It may even help some people avoid panic attacks. Yale University experts have found that by simply imagining the look and smell of a freshly baked apple pie, people can immediately relax.

- To cure the chills, put two flat irons to your feet and cover up with a lot of covers and you will be cured.

- For snake or spider bites, take the yolk of an egg and stir with it as much salt as to make it thick enough not to run. Spread a plaster and apply it to the wound.

- To relieve an earache, wet a bit of cotton wool in corn oil with a pinch of black pepper and insert into the ear.

- Wear a spider on a necklace for protection against malaria.

- Mare's milk rubbed on the back of the neck will cure pleurisy.



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SCHOOL LUNCHES

by Malcolm W. Miller



A few weeks ago my twin grandsons Crayton and Phillip Miller spent the night with me and I am always thrilled when they come for a visit. They are seventeen year old juniors at Buckhorn High School and they were telling me the best thing about getting back to school is the great hot breakfasts and hot lunches they enjoy in the school lunchroom. They shared with me some of the menu items they particularly enjoy.

Things have definitely changed since I was in school. We never had a lunchroom the

whole time I was in school. I usually didn't have anything to take to school for lunch except when we were lucky enough to have flour, I would take biscuits and whatever meat we had on them. I started out with ham then later on ended up with sow belly in my biscuits. Then when we ran out of flour sometimes I would take cornbread sliced open with sorghum molasses poured in it.

The worst part of it was there was always two or three what I called rich kids in the class and they would always make fun of my biscuits or whatever I brought for lunch. I finally stopped taking anything to eat to school. I used to hear those rich kids talking about pimento cheese sandwiches and I prom-



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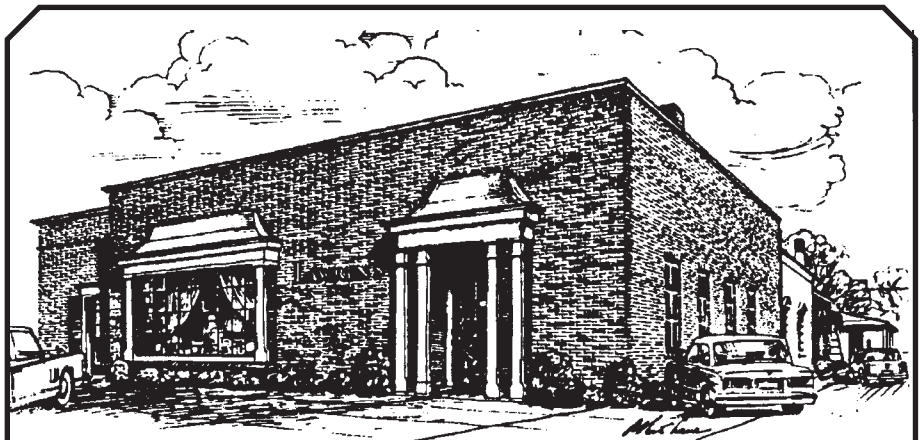
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Lubbock, TX is so flat that if you stand on a penny, you can see Dallas.

ised myself that when I got older I would buy all the pimento cheese I could find and see how it tasted. Till this day when I eat pimento cheese sandwiches I think back on those days when I was eating sow belly and watching those kids eat those delicious looking sandwiches.

I had a buddy who was in about the same fix I was in and on occasion he would bring biscuits with fried potatoes in them. His name was Malcolm "Craw Dad" Warren and he didn't care what anyone thought about what he brought for lunch. Some days he would give me one of those fried potato biscuits and they tasted mighty fine. When you are hungry you feel that fried potato biscuits are a feast indeed. I can't help but wonder if my grandsons would eat fried potato biscuits for lunch.

Since I refused to carry the lunch to school that my Mama fixed she did the next best thing. Every day when I came home from school there would be a big black pot full of pinto beans setting in the middle of the table along with a pone of cold corn bread and of course a big onion when available. My six brothers and I would all be so very hungry and this meal was a great relief as well as being a wonderful stomach filler for seven hungry boys.

Even after I was going to high school at Hazel Green and playing basketball I still didn't take a lunch to school, however on occasion I had enough money to go up to Atlas Carrigers'

store and buy myself a pint of milk and that would keep me going till I got home.

I can still recall the time when I was in the tenth grade. I went with the team to play in the district basketball tournament and I thought I had enough money to eat on but the last day in Cullman I ordered lunch and lacked a dollar having enough to pay for it. Vernon Scott was the team manager and he and I roomed together with some of Big Jim Folsom's relatives. Vernon was

eating with me that day and he loaned me a dollar and got me out of an embarrassing situation. I will never forget what Vernon did for me that day and believe you me since that day in Cullman I have always made sure that I had the money to pay before ordering food.

We all talk about the "good ole days"; however I believe my grandchildren have it quite a bit better now than many of us had it in the "good ole days."



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Seen in the Papers - 1812

Grand Jury Reports on Poor Conditions in Huntsville

* Bootlegging is alive and well in Madison County. It exists in every part of the county, especially in the city and outlying areas, with the only exception of Merrimack. Most of the county officers and city commissioners offices are bought and sold outrageously.

Night hacks and omnibus lines help supply the bootleggers. Two restaurants, one near Southern Railway Station and one near the N.C. St. Louis Train, are termed "dens of vice." Near one of these a man, carrying \$40 he had gotten from sale of his cotton, had been reported murdered during the past year. The city has been asked to revoke the licenses of the cafes, one of which was selling five barrels of illicit whisky a week.

* The jail situation is a pitiful one. The old portion of the jail that is still in use is a "horrible reminder of the dreadful dungeons of the Dark Ages" and the removal needs to happen speedily.

* The poor house is in condition of neglect and its 23 inmates, White and Negro, run out of food regularly at different intervals and are unable to obtain any doctor's services when required.

* The Courthouse is a positive disgrace, with the Grand Jury room a germ-laden hole. It is the recommendation of the Grand Jury that this Courthouse be torn down. The only reason that the County Commissioners have not been indicted was because of the strong pleas of the Solicitor.

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An Embarrassing Suicide from 1912 Newspaper

Harold Gentry, 32, yesterday phoned his mother to inform her that he had taken poison and would not be long of this world. A short while later he again phoned to say he was growing weaker.

Mrs. Gentry, apparently hard of hearing, understood her son to say that he was going to Illinois where he was going to meet a man by the name of Mr. Beaker. Mrs. Gentry congratulated her son, wishing him good luck on his upcoming trip.

Fortunately the incident had a happy though embarrassing ending when Gentry discovered he had taken a large dose of laxative, rather than poison.

Gentry will apparently not call his mother again in an emergency.

Real Estate from 1910

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A Faithless Spouse from 1890 Newspaper

George Mitchell came into the office of the Times yesterday and reported the disappearance of his wife, who was before he married her, Nancy Whitlock.

Mitchell and his wife were living happily and Mitchell's half brother, George Edmonds, boarded at his house.

Last Thursday a week ago Mitchell returned from work late in the evening and found his house closed, and upon inquiry found that his five month old child had been taken to a neighbor's house with the request to take care of the child for an hour, when the mother would come for it.

Mitchell waited for his wife's return, but she never came back, and upon investigation it was found that Mitchell's half brother had eloped for parts unknown with Mrs. Mitchell.

Mitchell took his babe in his arms and walked through country roads to his friends in the neighborhood, three miles from town where he left the baby, swearing that he would search the earth over until he found the base wretch who has brought this sorrow to his home. He said that if the law set his brother free after he had found him

and turned him over to its custody, he would instantly shoot him down in the courtroom then and there.

Mitchell left in the rain, trying to find the whereabouts of his faithless spouse and vowing revenge for a lifetime.

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The Girl Next Door

by Don Broome

I've been engaged to the girl next door since she was 8 years old (her older sister was holding out for the Back Street Boys). I've raced her to the corner in my car hundreds of times and always just losing.

Soon after our engagement, she became a regular visitor to my front porch. I was sitting there on a visit when she turned and looked at me sternly; scrunching up her face she said "You know the stars in the sky?" I said I did and she continued saying "They're holes." After a moment she explained "that light shining through was Heaven." I laughed showing my delight. She looked off kind

of dreamy like and sighed. She looked again at me and said "When you get old and you die, you go straight to Heaven." She looked me up and down and said "You're almost old enough." She told me bye and was gone. I called her mother; she had to know.

About two weeks later she caught me getting my mail and skipped around me saying "You know when we get married and you die?" I told her that I was trying to get used to the idea. She looked at me real sweetly and said "I'm not ever going to marry again."

Naturally, her mother and I have shared many conversations about her. She graduated a captain on the cheerleader squad and is now a Sophomore at UNA. When she graduated from high school I wrote her a poem.

"I've seen a little girl and watched her grow.

What she'll become only time will show.

My only hope to herself be true.

Look to the stars for a clue."

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Humming Bird

by Lee W. Burkett



When I was 12 in 1959 I rode the Humming Bird from Flomaton, AL to Decatur, AL. This was the Louisville and Nashville (L &

N) Train 6 Northbound, a Streamlined Coach Train. It was pretty, having a grey color with a yellow face. It looks like the Santa Fe train.

I always visited my relatives in North Alabama during the summer. I don't remember whose idea the train trip was. I kind of think it was my Father's. I talked my best friend Lefty Perete into going with me. He lived catty-cornered across Hampton Street. We drove up from Gulf Breeze, FL to the train station. I think the drive took about an hour and fifteen minutes. I want to say we got to Flomaton around noon but I saw a schedule that says it boarded about two in the afternoon. All I know is it was the longest time of my life up to then. We boarded the train, a short little thing with maybe ten cars and a little later the Porter/Conductor came by and checked our tickets. After that I think I threw mine away.

The passenger car was Spartan with just old, not so comfortable seats. I think it was supposed to have air conditioning but I don't believe it did. I want to say the windows worked and may have been cracked open. It was virtually empty so we could move around and sit where we wanted. There was one nice older black lady in the car that I remember. I think she said she was going to St. Louis, Missouri to visit family. I had a Shell Oil filling station road map and I tried to keep up with where we were and how far we had gone. A couple of times when it seemed we were making decent progress we would have to pull off on a siding to let the money-making freight train go by.

One time we got off the train and pulled a couple of ears of corn from a field nearby. The ears were big and filled out so it was probably July. The train workers were real nice and let us do what we wanted. I remember talking to them about the flares piled in a box on the floor of the last car. How to light them, etc. When we started getting hungry and thirsty, we decided

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to go to the dining car to eat. We were going to get hamburgers and drinks. Well when we got there, the waiter said the hamburgers were \$1.25 and the drinks about 25 cents. My father had a 5 cent Coke machine at his work. We didn't have that kind of money. I got a 7 UP for 25 cents. I don't think Lefty got anything.

When we got back to the passenger car, the lady asked what we ate. We said it was too high for us. She took pity on us and gave us a sandwich and chips which she had in a big grocery bag. We really appreciated that. Later when we got past Montgomery, AL here comes the Porter/Conductor checking tickets. I had none; that is till I found mine in the trash on the car floor. After that I kept up with it.

We would look out the window and try to determine where we were hoping to see names on buildings, signs or the train stations. We didn't have much luck. It was about this time we felt we would never get to North Alabama. The train actually averaged almost 50 miles per hour even with all the stops but it seemed really slow.

Finally we got to Birmingham and stopped at what I suspect was the old Terminal Downtown which regrettably has been torn down. I kind of remember it being down in a slight depression. Lefty said I'm going for candy. We left the train and walked up out of the terminal and went to an adjacent store. We bought Life-savers and chewing gum. When we got back to the train we couldn't find our car. We just about got in a panic. I don't remember if we started asking people or just found it ourselves but they had added cars to the rear of the train. Before we were in the second or third car and now we were in about the seventh or eighth car. We thought for a little while that the train had left without us.

After what seemed like a long time more we finally made it to Decatur. My Grandparents Wanda and A.W. Burkett picked us up. I think it was about 9 when we got to Decatur and we still had about 30 more minutes to

drive to Huntsville. I think we got to their house on the corner of Alabama Street and Dawn Avenue a little before 10. We were two tired little boys who had had a big adventure. We had travelled by train just over 300 miles in about six hours. The total distance was about 380 miles.

After all these years, I still think of how nice the lady on the train was and thank goodness we didn't get left in Birmingham.

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**"Life is easy. It's the
freakin' people who
make it difficult."**

Old Geezer in Arab

Heard On the Street

by **Cathey Carney**



Congratulations to our Photo of the Month winner for August. The youngster in last month's Photo was **Dawn Renae Carson**, who owns two local publications in Huntsville - "Just for Women" and "Inside Huntsville" and is CEO of Storage House Productions. The winner was **Mavis Sadler** from Scottsboro and happens to have a Sep. 16 birthday! So congratulations and Happy Birthday Mavis!

Now the tiny bumblebee that I thought NO ONE would find was found by nearly 200. The first local caller was **Sam Hunnicutt** who works at the Walmart on Sullivan Street in Madison and is semi-retired. My first out of town caller was **Ernest & Joann Goens** who live in Old Hickory, TN. Joann was telling me that Ernest went to Butler High and remembers living with his family in Lincoln Mill Village. Congrat-

ulations to all and there might be another hidden item in October.

I have been a fan of Oreck vacuum cleaners for many years but was just thinking the other day, if companies want our business (us baby boomers) and are smart, they're going to make lighter items. Cookware for instance - who wants a 7 lb frying pan? Or a 20 lb vacuum cleaner. I want something good quality but I want it LIGHT. I'm getting older and I don't need to lift anything super heavy. So I bought an 8 lb Oreck vacuum cleaner that does a fine job and my back doesn't hurt when I clean. So that is a win.

Happy Birthday to my sweet Mom, **Dr. Annelie Owens**, who will turn 96 on Sep. 11th. Can you imagine being 96? She has been a resident of Redstone Village Retirement Community for 12 years.

A beautiful, warm-hearted and opinionated lady lost her battle with cancer on July 25, at age 78. **Marie Hewett** was a nurse, a model, a business owner, a Mom and wife, and fiercely loyal to her friends. She let you know exactly how she felt and was loved and respected by so many. She lost her beloved husband of 43 years, **Dr. Bill Hewett**, their son **Brad** died in a plane crash as a young man, but through it all Marie kept her positive attitude. She leaves her cherished friends **Norma Lindsey** and **Lloyd Garrison**, nephew **Arthur Wigley** and nieces **Branda Flemming**, **Louis Childress**, **Barbara Gross** and **Evelyn & Deborah Wigley**, of Texas. Friends **Jean Pettitt**, **Louie and Jane Tippett**, **Tony Mason**, **Clyde Yarbrough**, **LeeRoy Cunningham**, and **Joe & Connie Lougheed** - many more. Marie will be very much missed.

I met a really nice guy in Home Depot on South Parkway recently. He was so helpful and I found everything I was looking for. He is **Steve Urban** and told me he and his wife love the stories of old history here in the north Alabama area.

Speaking of uber-talented people, **Billy Lenox** who owns Visual 3D LLC designed and takes care of the Old Huntsville website www.oldhuntsvillemag.com. Those who are interested in genealogy love being able to scroll thru all the names in Maple Hill when they look for a family member. Thank you Billy!

Last week I went by LeeAnns Restaurant on Church Street and had to have the Chicken Quasadilla - it is full of chicken & so good.

Two folks I spoke with earlier this week - **Tommy and Charlene Rutledge** - used to live in Huntsville, are now living in Fayetteville, TN but always know what's going on in Huntsville. Tommy was raised here and remembers working with **Malcolm Miller** years ago at the U.S. Post Office. Tommy wrote a story for "Old Huntsville" years ago about being a young boy and sitting on the little lion that was located in Big Spring Park. He remembers all those good old stories that Malcolm writes so many of. Tommy's wife Charlene had

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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a brother that most everyone in Huntsville knew and loved - **Floyd Hardin** owner of Jackson Way Styling Salon for so many years. People would come to visit him at the salon and just sit on the front porch and talk, like they did in the old days. His daughter **Kristi Brewer** has taken the salon over and keeps it going just like when Floyd was here.

A side note about Kristi - she and her husband **Jeff Brewer** and granddaughter **Mackenzie** just got baptized at Ditto Landing a week ago - on Floyd's birthday - Aug. 7. Floyd would be very proud.

And I hear around town that **John Bzdell** and his sweetheart **Margaret Watson** will be married this year! This is just a teaser of course, we'll have more info as it comes out but I know the date is Nov. 12, 2016. These two have known each other forever and are definitely made for each other!

Angelica Wilhelm was a feisty, funny lady whom we have written about several times, most recently during her birthday month this past May, when she turned 110. Angelica was a long-time resident of Redstone Village Retirement Community and passed away in August. Everyone who met Angelica felt touched by her positive and upbeat attitude. She will be missed by so many friends.

The **Manna House** is kind of hidden on Governors and Parkway near The Rock Church and they work very hard to collect shoes, clothing and supplies for women who are trying to get jobs and getting back on their feet again. The people who volunteer their time at Manna House do a tremendous job in helping families with clothing

and food that people are generous enough to donate. Thank you!

It's been reported that if you're interested in keeping your heart healthy, blueberries and strawberries can help. In recent studies it's been shown that just three half-cup servings of strawberries or blueberries per week can lower heart attack risk by a third, and a daily cup of blueberries improved cognitive performance.

Weddings are always fun events, especially if you're the visiting relative. **Jane Eller**, Customer Relations Representative at BB&T Bank on Church Street, will be traveling to Ohio to attend her nephew's wedding, **Alex Steusloff**. Congratulations to the new groom and his fiancée!

Happy 94th Birthday to **Virgil Junior "Bill" Thrower** who is written about in this issue. He worked for Texaco for years and was included in **Tillman Hill's** book "Anderson's Monument." Bill opened his first Texaco gas station on Meridian Street near Lincoln Village and was all about his customers - he put them first. He has a lifetime of good memories of life here in Huntsville and I can't wait to hear more of them!

A special hello to our friend **William Sibley** of Brownsboro. He wrote the book (over 600 pages) "Welcome to Big Cove" which is a comprehensive history of Big Cove from 1807-2000. So much information. Not only is he a prolific writer, he's just a really nice guy.

Not sure about the rest of you middle-agers like me but sometimes in a restaurant the backs of the booths are not that comfortable and your back can hurt. I have

found that if I just slide my purse behind my back it give it just that amount of support needed so I'm not hurting when I get up. Try it!

While I was attending a week-end Kiwanis state convention recently in Birmingham I met two of the most interesting ladies. They are both Kiwanians in Birmingham and they are **Kristie Herrin** and **Colean Black**. Kristie is married to **Dan** who is a private investigator and Kristie has been working with AT&T for 20 years. They love traveling and supporting animal rescue shelters. Colean is married to Shane Black and they have two kids - the oldest is **Charles** who is in Marine boot camp. Colean works for Algasco as Manager of gas supply.

Jill Wood was the creative and talented Publisher/Editor of Valley Planet for the past 11 years. She loved animals and gave much support and time to the SNAP organization. She passed away much too young at the age of 53 and is survived by living family and friends including **Lillian Wood, Robert V. Wood, Jr., Jennifer Taylor, Joani Williams, Sherri Carlee** and many others. Her beloved dog **Hero** is missing her every day.

Many of us love using candles in our homes. Sometimes we can forget that there is a lit candle, leave the home and that is a potential fire that could happen. What I started doing is just write on a post-it note CANDLE and stick it on the door I use when I leave the house. A good reminder to blow it out.

Remember to check on your older neighbors during this heat and humidity - you may save someone's life. This includes pets too. Have a safe and happy Labor Day!

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Sausage Corn Chowder

1/2 lb. pork sausage
 1/2 c. chopped onion
 1/4 c. flour
 3 c. milk
 1 (15 oz.) can cream corn
 1 (15 oz.) can whole kernel corn, drained
 1/4 c. diced pimento
 1/2 c. chopped green pepper
 2 cloves garlic, minced
 3/4 t. salt
 3/4 t. pepper
 1 T. chopped fresh parsley

Brown sausage, onion, green pepper, and garlic until sausage crumbles. Add flour and cook, stirring constantly for 1 minute. Gradually add milk and rest of ingredients. Cook over medium heat for 10 minutes, stirring occasionally.

GINNY GEEN

Ro-Tel Chicken and Rice

1 Tbsp. vegetable oil
 6 chicken pieces (about 2-1/2 lbs.)
 1 c. uncooked long grain rice
 2 cans Ro-Tel tomatoes and chilies
 3 green onions, chopped
 1/2 c. shredded Cheddar cheese
 1 c. water

Cook chicken in hot oil until skin is brown. Remove from pan. Stir in 1 cup water, rice, tomatoes, and onion. Bring to a boil.

Place chicken over rice. Cover and reduce heat to low. Cook for 20 minutes. Add cheese. Cover and cook 5 to 10 minutes. Serves 4 or 5.

PEGGY SIMPSON

Grits and Cheese Casserole

3 c. cooked grits
 1 lb. Velveeta cheese
 1 stick margarine
 Dash of red pepper
 6 eggs, beaten
 1/2 c. milk
 2 t. baking powder

Into hot grits, cut cheese and margarine. Add pepper. Beat eggs, adding milk and baking powder.

Stir into hot cheese mixture and pour into a buttered 8x11 inch baking dish.

Bake 45 to 60 minutes in 350° oven. Serves 8 or more. Great for brunch; also can be used as a side dish instead of potatoes or rice.

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Potato Soup

1 large bag frozen hash brown potatoes, diced (not stringy ones)

1 can cream of chicken soup
1 soup can of milk
1/2 c. sour cream
3/4 stick margarine
1 c. Velveeta or American cheese

Salt and pepper to taste

Put water just above potatoes and cook until tender, not mushy. Drain, leave a little of the water that the potatoes were cooked in and add 1 can cream of chicken soup plus 1 soup can of milk. Add sour cream, margarine, and cheese; simmer until all have melted. Add salt and pepper if desired.

Grated Cheddar may be sprinkled on top if desired. If soup seems too thick just add a little more milk.

Nannie Dellinger

Crock Pot Candy

1 (16 oz.) jar dry roasted peanuts

1 (16 oz.) jar salted peanuts
1 bar German chocolate
1 (24 oz.) pkg. chocolate morsels

1-1/2 pkg. almond bark

Layer starting with peanuts

in crock pot. Cook two hours on LOW. Stir well and drop by spoonfuls onto wax paper. Cool in refrigerator.

Nathalie Hurford

Crisp Oatmeal Bubble Cookies

1 c. white sugar
1 c. brown sugar
1 c. shortening
1 egg
1 t. vanilla
2 T. milk
1-1/2 c. all-purpose flour
1 t. salt
1 t. baking soda
3 c. old-fashioned oats
1 (6 oz.) pkg. semi-sweet chocolate chips

1/2 c. chopped nuts

Cream sugars and shortening by hand. Mix and add egg, vanilla, and milk. Sift together flour, salt, and soda. Add to egg mixture. Add oatmeal, chocolate chips and nuts.

Mix all well and drop by teaspoonfuls on a greased cookie sheet. Bake at 350° for approximately 10 to 15 minutes. Cool on pan. **Note:** You can roll cookie dough into granulated sugar before putting on cookie sheet.

Patricia Belts



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MINNIE CATHERINE (MOORE) SIMMONS, A SAINT REMEMBERED

by William Sibley

March 20, 1934, the first day of spring, was a historical day and a happy day for the Moore family of Big Cove. On that day, Minnie Catherine, the second child of Charles Grayson "Charlie" Moore and Nellie (Hill) Moore, was born. Also, a heavy snow fell on Big Cove that day. For years afterward, people of Big Cove would ask, "Do you remember the big snow we had on the day Minnie Catherine was born?"

Charlie Moore probably had already planted his potatoes and transplanted his cabbage and onions. It was very unusual to have a snow as late as March 20th.

Minnie Catherine's family has deep roots in Big Cove. Her great-grandparents were Andrew Jackson Moore, born in 1820, and Margaret Catherine (Hodges) Moore. Catherine and I have some great-great-great-grandparents in common. They are Robert Uel Childress, born in 1799, and Temperance (Connally) Childress, born in 1798. They were married in 1817 at Collier's Beat in Berkley on Big Cove's east side.

They were the parents of 17 children that included a set of twins who were killed in separate battles in the Civil War.

I cannot remember a time when I did not know Catherine. When I was a preschooler, she and her siblings would come to the store near my home, and at times they would stop at my house for a short visit. Her siblings called Catherine "Sis," so I thought that was her name.

When I was in first, second and third

"I have to exercise early in the morning before my brain can figure out exactly what I'm doing yet."

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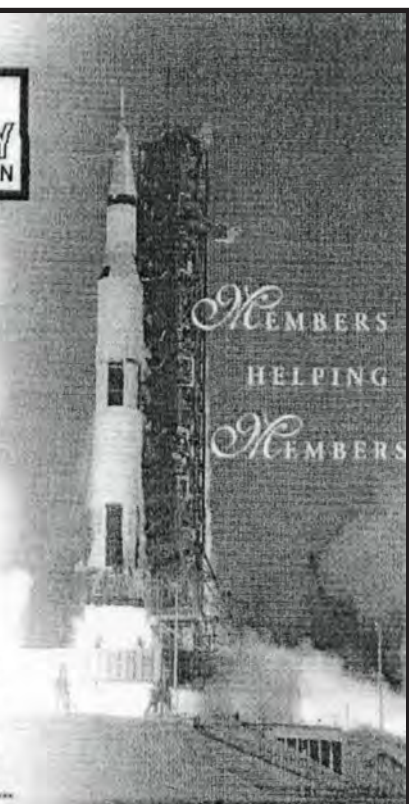


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grades at Big Cove School, Catherine was in seventh, eighth and ninth grades. She and her friends Dorothy Ann Cowley, Nellie Lang, Earline Hucks and others, did lots of singing during our 30-minute recess and our 60-minute lunch period, and they were good singers. Many times I have wondered if Catherine learned to sing before she learned to talk.

Those girls sang many songs, but without a doubt their favorite was "I'll Fly Away". They would sing that song until the cows came home, to borrow an old saying.

One particular day when those girls had sung their favorite song over and over, a chubby little sixth-grade boy yelled, "I wish y'all would!" Several of us pupils and our principal, Clyde Connally, were sitting on the school steps, and I remember how Mr. Connally laughed so much at the boy's remark.

While Catherine was at school and not studying or singing, she was usually jumping rope or practicing her parts in the many plays she was in. Our friend Betty Sue Miller was a very good playwright and Mr. Connally liked her plays, which were always clean and wholesome and full of comedy.

One unusual thing about Betty Sue's plays was that they featured only girls. Boys liked the plays, but they thought it would be sissy to have parts in the plays. Betty Sue was very clever to explain the "Girls Only" cast. To explain the absence of a father, she always displayed a sign in bold print that read, "OUR FATHER IS IN SERVICE".

Catherine had a close-knit family that included siblings Florence Dean (James R.V.), Charles Nelson (Carolyn), G.W. "Dub," and Fay Gibbs (Bobby). Fay is the only surviving sibling.

Mr. Moore was a farmer and timber dealer, and his children enjoyed

their work on the farm. I picked cotton many times with the Moore family, and my older brothers worked with them in timber. Catherine and her sisters always sang while they worked in the fields.

Mr. Moore bought a new tractor when Catherine was a teenager, and she drove that tractor to our house




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and picked up my sister Ann for a joyride. They drove several miles to the southern end of Big Cove and got drenched in a heavy summer rain.

When Catherine was a teenager, she got a Saturday job at a grocery store on the south side of the Madison County Courthouse Square. She became the envy of other girls her age.

After graduating from Madison County High School, Catherine worked at Sandlin Hardware Store in the book-keeping department until she married Paul Simmons. Their children are Harold (Libby); Steve (Beverly); Suzie Kelly (Rev. Jack); and Paul Grayson (Becky). Harold and Libby are both deceased. Paul and Catherine have 12 grandchildren.

In their early married life, Paul and Catherine lived in Huntsville but they returned to Big Cove, the place of their childhood and built a beautiful home. Paul and Catherine sang to my grandparents at their home and they also sang at their funerals. Catherine sang at the funeral of Mrs. Nin Hucks, the grandmother of playwright Betty Sue Miller and singer Earline Hucks.

Catherine's friends and family began to call her Goodie, which made me wonder how that came about. I learned that when the grandchildren were learning to say "Granny," it sounded like they were saying "Goodie," so the name stuck. Those grandchildren are carrying on the singing tradition of their grandparents.

Catherine was a good Big Cove historian and she and I traded much information. When Catherine's Uncle Leon Moore Sr. was in his senior years, he stopped by my house one day and naturally, we discussed Big Cove history. He said to me, "When you and Sis are gone, I'm afraid there won't be anyone left to record Big Cove's history." Those words were food for thought.

I always have good feelings when I think of the

lives of Paul and Catherine. They both were dedicated members of the Huntsville Holiness Church where Paul was song leader for 48 years.

What friends of Catherine and Paul remember most about them is their strong, spiritual, genuine faith.

"Thank God you're home. Someone broke in again and ate your rotisserie Chicken!"

Joey the Lab to his owners



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1911



A Kitten Named Marvel

by Mary Ann Justin, Decatur

My husband and I had just arrived at church one Sunday morning, and as I stepped out of the truck I heard a faint cry coming from the grass. I walked over to find a tiny grey tabby kitten covered in grass burrs. I took him in to the fellowship hall and tried to feed him. As I watched him move around, I noticed that he couldn't walk straight, and when he would try to play, his front leg flopped limply from side to side. I was helping with children's church that morning and due to the near perfect "M" on the kitty's forehead, the kids decided we should name him Marvel.

I took him to the vet as soon as I could, and the x-rays showed that his front leg was broken in three places, and the back leg, on the same side of his body, was broken once. The vet couldn't believe that he was in such good spirits, much less moving around. She told me that due to the severity of the front break, Marvel would probably always have a limp, and that the leg and foot would never be straight. The poor little guy was in splints for over a month, with instructions not to run, jump, or play. (FYI - It is hard to contain a 6 week old kitten.)

Over the next few weeks, we have watched

him grow into a high flying acrobat of a cat. Even with the splints, there has been no holding him back. Now with the splints off, the only time you notice a limp is if he walks, which he rarely does. His leg is almost perfectly straight, as is his foot, and he is perfectly healthy and happy.

He has truly been a little Marvel.



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“My Ragtime Baby”

Born in 1873 as the son of a Methodist Preacher, Willie Handy decided at a young age he wanted to be a musician. His family, however, all stalwart hell-fire and brimstone God-fearing people, thought a musician was nothing but a blatant sinner in disguise.

In an effort to pacify his father, who wanted him to become a minister, Willie agreed to finish school and take the examination to become a school teacher. After graduation, and being unable to find a position as a teacher, he and a friend moved to Birmingham where he went to work at one of the iron mills as a laborer.

Willie had not lost his desire to be a musician, though. He quickly became friends with most of the black musicians in Birmingham and it was not long before he had formed his own group and was playing around town at night while still working in the mills during the day.

One of the first gigs he had in Birmingham, according to legend, was playing in a notorious dive. The owner, after

listening to the audition, asked what the group’s name was.

“Don’t have one.” Willie replied.

“Well, what’s your name?”

“Willie.”

“Sounds like a damn Uncle Tom name to me. What’s your whole name?”

“William Christopher.”

“Hell, that’s even worse! We’ll just call you by



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your initials.”

W.C. Handy soon tired of Birmingham, though, and moved to Huntsville where he got a job teaching at Alabama A&M as a music instructor. Among his many duties as an instructor, Handy was also responsible for organizing recitals for his students.

Unfortunately, the headmaster at A&M believed that classical music was the only music that should be performed. He even insisted on personally approving the programs for every recital.

For his first recital Handy chose a piece written by an obscure songwriter, he said, entitled, “La Overture Toussaint.” With a name like that, there was no trouble getting the headmaster to approve it.

Handy diligently rehearsed all students, who were by this time enraptured with the new musical composition.

The day of the concert arrived and it was an instant success. Even the staid headmaster was seen sitting in the front row tapping his foot to the music.

W.C. Handy’s career as an instructor did not last long. He was still determined to make his mark as a musician. After leaving Huntsville, he moved to Memphis where he wrote the all-time classic, “Memphis Blues”, which he sold for \$100.

Still a poor man, he next ended up in St. Louis, and after being forced to sleep in alleys and pool rooms, composed the song “Saint Louis Blues”, a song that made him wealthy and famous and earned him the title of “Father of the Blues”.

Ironically, he was to become best known for that piece he had composed while teaching at Alabama A&M - after he changed its name to “My Ragtime Baby”.



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Catherine Spelce

by Mike Self

She was born Catherine Travis, December 24, 1923, at the home of her mother's parents, Papa (William) and Granny (Ella) Stone, in Hurricane Valley, Alabama. Her mother, Minnie (Nanny to everyone else) was one of six children. From eldest down, they were: Myrtle (Ray), John Stone, Neva (Sisco), Nanny, Winnie (Blair), and Sue (Batt). Nanny would have two children, Catherine (the oldest) and Marie. Marie would eventually follow her dad, a carpenter, to Texas and lived there for the rest of her life.

Catherine's dad was William David Travis, only child of John and Annie Travis. John (Grandpa Travis) was always a favorite, as he took her under his wing in later years, when her dad gave all his affection to Marie. Catherine's grandparents, John and Annie, are buried at Locust Grove Baptist Church in New Market.

When she was named, Catherine's mother Nanny called her Catherine Lucille Travis. Catherine did not like this name, so just took to calling herself Catherine Louise Travis. After Crawford's death she had to get her Social Security card changed, and only then found out there was no middle name on the original birth certificate, so she

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inserted Louise in for Lucille and that was that!

She was generally raised in Hurricane Valley, New Market, Deposit and Huntsville. She does have fond memories of growing up in the country and every Sunday after church everyone would gather at Grandpa Stone's house and she developed even closer bonds playing with her cousins June Ray, Evelyn Stone, Charles and T.L.Sisco and their sister, Ruth.

Earliest memories of her parents put her living on Pratt Avenue. While her parents were together they generally lived in Huntsville. She remembers living on Pratt Avenue, Holmes Avenue, White Street, Race Street (off Meridian), Clinton Avenue and on Meridian Street. She also remembers her dad took over one of the rooms at the house at White Street to store his moonshine, as he sold "shine" out the back door of the White Street house.

He must have been pretty good at selling "shine" as Catherine remembers a time the family went to a celebration for all the "shine" which was being sold. She relates they went to New Market where they picked up some pack horses to ride out to Paint Rock Valley. She was riding on the back of one horse with her dad, when as they were arriving at the celebration her and her dad's horse flopped over on the ground, momentarily trapping them both. The event scared her so that to this day she has never willingly gotten on another horse!

About the time Catherine entered high school her parents separated so she and her mother were forced to move back home, and eventually they remained in the county until Catherine graduated from Riverton High School. During this time they lived initially with relatives, then in a house across from Grandpa Travis, and eventually across from the old Riverton School. After graduation from high school she and her mom and sister moved back into Huntsville.

She attended West Clinton Elementary in the first grade, then East Clinton School and then back to the county to attend and finish at Riverton School (Class of 1942). She attended East Clinton around 1929 in the two story building which was replaced in 1938 by the current structure.

She really liked school, but had to work at it, and generally made pretty good grades.

The first house they lived in after her graduation from high school was behind the old C.T. Garvin Feed Store. After that the three of them moved to 505 Clinton Street next door to where her daughter Cathy currently lives, at 503 Clinton Avenue.

"I've been asked to say a few words about my husband, Fang. How about short and cheap?"

Phyllis Diller

Her earliest traumatic experience was remembering a local kid who tried to take her tricycle away from her. She remembers that while she cried, he did not get the trike from her! As a teenager she and Marie and Nanny lived with Uncle Allen Sisco and his family for a short time. She was expected to carry her own weight with Uncle Allen so she had to pick Uncle Allen's cotton along with his two boys. She recalls the boys were kind of lazy and only half picked their rows of cotton, while she picked hers clean the first time. Uncle Allen would then make everyone go back to the fields for the second picking and the boys would make her pick their rows while they picked hers which was essentially picked except for the second growth. She remembers she was not very good at milking cows (the milk stayed inside and would not hit the bucket) and she could not kill the chickens when it was time to kill one. Nanny did make most of Catherine's clothes.

After graduation from high school they moved back into Huntsville and Catherine went to work at Kresses, while her mother drove a taxi! When she went to see Crawford during his service training in Boise, Idaho, she also worked at a Kresses in Boise. When Crawford was shipped to England she returned to Kresses in Huntsville, but after working at Kresses a little longer she went to work at Monroe Printing Company where she worked when she met and mar-

ried Homer, and continued to work there until she became pregnant with her first child Randy.

Crawford graduated from Huntsville High. Went to work as a mechanic at the Pontiac Dealership, but was working at the CWS Depot, as a mechanic when he was drafted. She graduated Riverton in '42, married Crawford in July of '42, but not without a little excitement first. Crawford was initially dating Evelyn Stone, Catherine's longtime best friend (and relative). Catherine was dating Crawford's best friend. She broke up with Crawford's friend, and when Crawford broke up with Evelyn, she and Crawford got together.

He was drafted in January, 1943. He went into the Army, and was trained as a Bombar-dier. While he was in training, Catherine traveled on her own to see him, first to Biloxi and then on to Boise, Idaho. She stayed in Boise long enough to get a job at Kresses. She remembers, like most Southern woman, being stopped constantly by non-Southerners and asked to speak her 'Southern' because it was so sweet.

Crawford shipped out to

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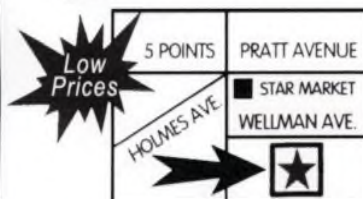
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England in early '44. He was an aerial engineer on a Liberator bomber, a Technical Sergeant, and had been awarded the Air Medal and two Oak Leaf Clusters. During the three months he was in England he had flown 18 missions. He was two missions short of earning his first R&R when he was shot down. Catherine was told he was shot down and missing but they heard nothing more until late 1945 when he was confirmed as KIA. It was many years later before his remains were finally found and sent home for burial.

She took Crawford's insurance money, (changed her middle name), and bought the house at 2403 Bonita Drive. At the time it was one mile outside the City Limits of Huntsville. The bus line stopped at the current Huntsville Hospital, she had to walk the mile to Bonita Drive. Nanny lived with her at Bonita (Marie was married and gone). Crawford's parents really took to Catherine and they remained close until their own passing, many years later.

Catherine was married to Crawford for 3 years.

Homer Ellis Giles

Homer was a ladies man. On his first date with Catherine he informed her he would never get married, because women could not be trusted. She showed him: they were married three months later, on July 24, 1946. Homer had served in the Army in the Eastern Theater, where he saw combat but was not in the front lines. When he returned to Huntsville after the war he worked at a tractor supply store on Whitesburg Drive. Eventually Doc Worsham got Homer on at Genesco Shoe Company, and he worked there the rest of his life. Homer's dad died before he and Comer (his twin) were born. Their mother remarried John (Big Daddy) Slayton, whom Homer considered his 'dad'.

Catherine managed the money in the family. She bought the Bonita Drive house with the proceeds from Crawford's insurance, she went to the bank for the loan to add on to the Bonita Drive house, and she went to the bank to borrow the money to buy the fishcamp in Rogersville. She bought the cars and managed acquiring the money for college for Randy and Steve.

As her children entered middle and high school Catherine returned to work. She went to work at Montgomery Wards,

where she worked until her retirement in 1986. Even then she still came home everyday on her lunch time to help Nanny fix lunch for themselves and Homer, who would come in during his lunch break and expected a full course, traditional Southern dinner. Catherine

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managed the family. Nanny had moved in permanently in the late '50's. Catherine often walked back and forth to work because there was only one car in the family, even as the kids entered high school; she had no clothes dryer or dishwasher. She canned foods during the season and even cut the grass on a regular basis, a job she continues at 89. When her children eventually (as adults) bought her a dishwasher, she used it to store her mason jars for use when she canned.

Her greatest memories and happier moments come from the River House. The Homer Giles' and Big Daddy bought the river house jointly. Comer did not go in with them, and Glen acquired his share with the passing of his mother. The Homer Giles went to the river almost every weekend, from Memorial Day through Labor Day, which periodically put a kink in the social lives of Catherine's children. From the mid-fifties to this very day the "River House" has been the welcoming spot on the river. Catherine and Homer's children spent summers there, as have their grandchildren and now even the great-grandchildren, and countless other friends and family!

Homer died of a heart attack, tending his garden at Big Mother's on May 24, 1974, leaving Catherine a widow for a second time, at the age of 51. He and Catherine had been married 28 years. His first grandchild, Todd (oldest child of Randy and Dianne) had just been born in January of that same year.

Thomas Edward (Ned) Spelce

Catherine married Ned Spelce in June of 1975. Ned was Homer's first cousin through their mothers' side as Derrie (Big Mother and Homer's mother) and Lily (Ned's mother) were sisters. Hence, after Catherine and Ned were married great fun was had by all at trying to keep straight who the relatives really were. For instance Big Mother became Catherine's Aunt and Lily became her mother-in-law, where during her marriage to Homer they had been the other way around.

They both retired in 1986, moved to the river permanently and continued to open their home and hospitality to everyone, something which continues to this day, even with the passing of Ned in the summer of 2003, after 28 years of marriage.

Catherine currently has nine grandchildren and ten great-grandchildren.

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Don't be sad if I'm frightened of your gentle hand, I haven't felt that in so long. Have patience with me, if I'm not yet part of your world. It may take some time, to trust again, to give you my greatest gift - my heart and my unconditional love.

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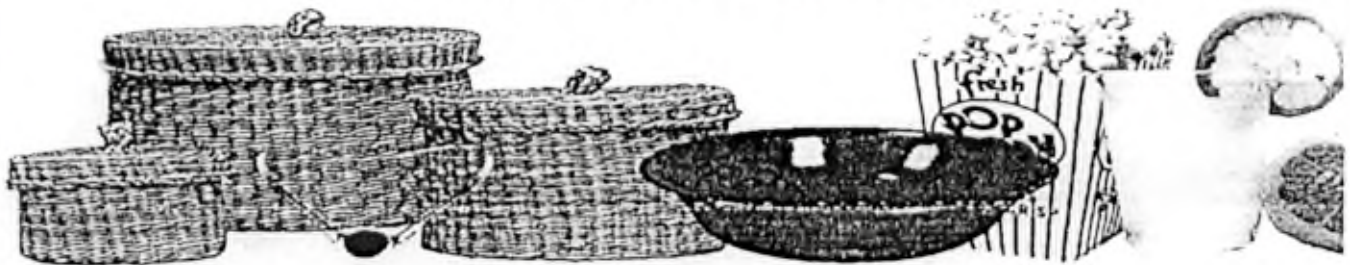
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Hill in 1996 mentions my Uncle Bill and how courteous he was to his customers.

Uncle Bill told me recently that he quit wearing the star when a company man came to his gas station one day and told him he had to start giving out Green Stamps and charge his customers more for gas to pay for the gifts his customers would get when they redeemed the stamps. Uncle Bill told the company representative that he would not charge his customers more for gas to cover the S&H Green Stamps. The man made some threat or made his request a demand and Uncle Bill told him he would no longer operate his Texaco station under the new circumstances.

Time to put up or shut up came and Uncle Bill stood his ground. The Texaco representative backed off when he saw Uncle Bill's resolve and then told my Uncle to forget about the S&H Green Stamps. But, Uncle Bill turned in his star anyway. He was not going to be intimidated or threatened when it came to caring for his customers.

Today, a lot of Bill Thrower's former customers and people who know him remember him as a man of honor and honesty. And today, those Green Stamps are a thing of the past; honesty and integrity like my Uncle Bill always lived by are not a thing of the past. If they are we all and the world is in serious trouble.

I'll always remember Uncle Bill as the man who wore the star with great dignity, pride and good old fashioned honesty! When he passes on to the next life, my prayers are that God will put His arm across my Uncle Bill's shoulders and say "Well done" and then give my Uncle Bill a new star - a bigger and brighter star.

My Uncle Bill will be 94 years old on September 27th and he's still going strong!

The Man Who Wore a Star

*by Pat McCown Throneberry
October 01, 2011*

Virgil Junior "Bill" Thrower, son of James Henry and Thelma Lucy Sanders Thrower is my Uncle and I'm proud to say it. He was born at Holly Tree in Jackson County, Alabama and he was one of those men who wore the star - the Texaco Star. He wore it proudly. He worked much more than 8 hours a day, more like 16 or even more than that I would venture to say. During WWII he always sent money home to his wife and she saved it. When he returned they opened his first gas station. First he opened one on Meridian Street near Lincoln Village and later a bigger station on the Parkway across the street from the Tasty Freeze.

He still works hard today at age 90+ in spite of the fact he is going blind. He's the sort of man they write books about. For example, "Mr. Anderson's Monument" written by Tillman

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Coach Wilson

by Austin Miller



Keith Bayless Wilson was born in Jefferson County in 1935 and lived the first twelve years of his life in Ishkoola, an iron ore mining camp on Red Mountain in Birmingham. In 1947, his family moved from Ishkooda to West End. This is where he found football that would set the course for the rest of his life. He played for West End High School and Kansas State University. After high school and college, he served his country in the U.S. Marine Corps and later as a paratrooper in a Special Forces Unit of the Alabama National Guard. In civilian life, Keith was a successful high school football coach, teacher, principal, real estate agent, Sunday schoolteacher and a leader at his church and in his community.


Keith's first trip to Huntsville was in 1951 and later in 1953 when West End came to Goldsmith Shiffman field to play Butler High School. Jerry Dugan, head basketball coach at Butler for over 30 years, saw both games and told me that Keith was the best high school football player that ever played

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Louise Avery, Huntsville

in Huntsville and the fastest runner he ever saw in any sport. He was good enough to get a full football scholarship to Western Kentucky University in Bowling Green. But Keith wanted to play for a major university and wrote Bill Meek, the head coach at Kansas State at the time and asked him about a scholarship. In the meantime, Coach Ward Proctor, his coach at West End also wrote Coach Meek. The letters paid off. Keith got a call from Kansas State and as they say the rest is history. He wanted to play for Alabama or Auburn but they ruled him out as too small. However, both schools did offer him a walk-on try out.

Kansas State is a land grant college and two years of ROTC was required of all students. He took his two years and then signed up for the Marine Corps Platoon Leader course and was commissioned a Second Lieutenant when he graduated from college. He served three years active duty and 9 years in the Active Reserve. After a total of 12 years he resigned as a Major because there were no billets available for that rank. He always wanted to be a paratrooper so he joined an Alabama National Guard Special Forces unit in Huntsville as a Buck Sergeant. Quite a come-



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down from Major to Buck Sergeant. But he was promoted to Warrant Officer after one year. He served at that rank for three years and then was promoted to Captain. He retired as a Major after twenty-seven years of active and reserve time. Major Wilson is one of a few in history that never served as a Private but served as a Buck Sergeant, a Warrant Officer and a field grade commissioned officer.

Keith started his career in education as assistant football coach and head track coach at Jones Valley High School in Birmingham. In 1964 the principal at Lee High School was Fulton Hamilton, a former coach at Keith's old high school in West End.

One day he got a call out of the clear blue from Mr. Hamilton offering him the job of head football coach job at Lee High School. Mr. Hamilton had previously been head football coach at Butler High School. As a side note, Mr. Fulton was brought to Butler High School by long time Butler principal, J. Homer Crim.

All his friends and peers advised him against making the move. No one thought he should take the job. They all told him there is nothing up there, why would anyone leave a city like Birmingham for a little cotton town like Huntsville? Besides they said there are no good sports writers there. Evi-

dently they didn't know about John Pruitt and Bill Easterling.

So in 1964, against the advice of everyone they knew, Keith and Doris Wilson moved to Huntsville. It is home now and both will tell you it was one of the best decisions they ever made. He was head coach at Lee High School from 1964 to 1974. Due to redistricting that caused him to lose some of his best players to other schools, he gave up coaching and went to Whitesburg Middle School as assistant principal. After two years he moved to Westlawn Middle where he was principal for eleven years.

He was then offered and took the head coaching job at Butler, a position he held until he retired. After retirement, he sold real estate for two years at Ben Porter Realty. One day he went to Huntland, Tennessee to talk to a fellow about listing some lake property. To make conversation, he asked about openings at the local high school. The man answered by saying "As a matter of fact there is an opening." The man took him right way to meet one of the board members; evidently he made a good impression because in a few days the school called and offered him the job. The position was teacher and head football coach. He took it and held the job for six years.

Keith and Doris have been

active members at Holmes Street United Methodist church since they moved here in 1964. That's where I met them about ten years ago. I can't say we became friends right away but the more I knew them the better I liked them and I now consider them two of my best friends.

Last week, Bucky Hoffmeyer and Greg Patterson, the former head football coach at Huntsville High, had breakfast with Keith at Rolo's. Both Bucky and Greg grew up in East Huntsville, went to Lee High School and played football for Keith at Lee. In the 1966 season, with Greg as Quarterback, Keith implemented a running shoot offense that enabled Lee to win an impressive nine out of ten games as well as the Tennessee Valley Conference championship.

There was a lot of talk that morning about games won and boys that played for Keith but the thing that impressed me most was the respect both Bucky and Greg have for him as a coach and man. One of the things I learned about Keith over the years is that he loves the game of football but loves the life lessons it teaches even more than the game itself. He stressed winning games but also used it as a tool to teach boys how to be good men and winners in life.

Bucky Hoffmeyer and Greg

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Patterson are two of an untold number of his players and students who turned out to be successful upstanding men. It would not be possible to measure the influence he has had on so many during his long productive life. In the end it would be hard to find a better legacy than that.

Doris and Keith met at West End when Doris was fourteen, this fall they will be married 60 years. Doris was a teacher in Huntsville for 25 years, most of that time at Chapman. She is retired from teaching but still works in Real Estate. They have three children, two boys who live in Huntsville and a daughter who lives in New Orleans. They have lived in the same house about two blocks from the old Lee High School ever since they moved here in 1964. Despite both working in real estate, Keith said they were happy there and never had any desire or need to move anywhere else.

I have served with Doris and Keith on our church council, been in Bible studies with them, worked on committees and many mission projects. Keith is an excellent Sunday schoolteacher and is very good at using humor to make his presentation interesting. I know this because he has taught Sunday school at Holmes Street for about fifty years and from direct observation. We are in the same Sunday school class and he is one of the teachers. In any group or setting you never have to wonder where Keith stands on any topic, he will say what he believes even if it is not a popular position.

Currently Keith is a member of the Metro Kiwanis club and on the board of the Madison County Sports Hall of Fame. He is not only on the board, he was inducted as a member in 1996. He and Doris recently traveled by train out of Birmingham to New York for a week stay in Manhattan. This is not unusual because they often make trips to places they want to visit or see.

They may not be as busy as they once were but they still live life to the fullest and don't let any moss grow under their feet. I have been blessed to know more than my share of good people in my life. Keith and Doris Wilson are two of

those and I am better because I know them. The thing that sets Keith apart is not necessarily his service to his country, his football prowess or the positions he has held but how he used his experiences and talents to be a positive influence to thousands of boys and girls that he coached and taught for 40 years as an educator. They are scattered all over the country but many of them are still right here in Huntsville.

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weighed 1 lb 9 oz. She was so tiny. She was 9 months old.

You could see every bone in her body. She was covered in fleas. So I took her to the vet and she was fine. She was healthy. She got her shots and came home with us.

She has been a member of our family ever since. She's 3 years old now and rules the house. She sleeps wherever she pleases including on pillows. Everyone is expected to sleep around her. She is the queen of her domain and she will not let you forget it.

She is quick to defend and quick to give you love but she doesn't like other people to come into her territory. She trusts few but when she trusts you, she trusts you.

She is still tiny weighing in at 7 pounds but don't let that

fool you; she takes down a 14 pound Pomeranian in a heart beat. Armalite is not afraid to take down a bug. She is not afraid to take down anything including toys or hands. She is playful and yet she is serious as well. She is a joyful cat to have around. She is a cat but still acts like a kitten too. She is a tortieshell and is a fantastic representative of her breed. She will let you know when there is something going on and will let you know when something is going to happen.

We love her and know we'll always have room for her in our home.

**In wine there is wisdom.
In beer there is freedom.
In water there is bacteria.**



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PET TIPS FROM ANGEL

Cat Care Tips

From Dr. Marty Becker's book, "Your Cat: The Owner's Manual."



Cats Love Running Water
A pet drinking fountain is one of the best investments you can make in your cat's health. Cats find cool, running water to be appealing - it's a natural behavior, because stream water is less likely to be contaminated than a stagnant pool. Cats tend to be chronically dehydrated, and feline fountains are proven to get cats to drink more water. Many feline health problems can be aided with proper hydration, and it's more efficient than leaving a faucet dripping to entice your cat to drink.

Pick a Pretty, Allergy-Easy Kitty
While no cat is guaranteed to not be an allergy trigger - and people with life-threatening reactions are better off without a cat - it's possible to pick a pet who might be less of a problem. Black, unneutered males are purported the worst choice for people with allergies, since they typically have higher levels in their saliva of FelD1, the protein that triggers sneezing and wheezing. If you're paying for a "hypo allergenic" cat, insist on saliva testing. If you're choosing a kitten, choose a light-colored female, and get her spayed.

Panting Is a Problem
Dogs pant up to 300 times a minute to cool themselves, but if you see your cat panting it may be a medical emergency. While sometimes it can just be from extreme anxiety, it can also be a sign of respiratory or cardiovascular problems, warranting an immediate call to the veterinarian.

Want a Cat to Love You? Look Away!
What can you do to get a cat to come to you? Avoid eye contact. Cats don't like eye contact with strangers, so will almost always go to the person who's not looking at them. This also is the answer to the age-old mystery of why cats always seem to go to the one person in the room who doesn't like cats. It's because she may be the only one not "rudely" - in the cat's view - staring.

Tale of the Tail
You can tell a cat's mood by watching his tail. Tail upright, happy; tail moving languidly, keep petting me; tail low, twitching erratically, I'm on the prowl; tail swishing rapidly, beware and leave me alone. If you've ever been surprised when a cat you're petting suddenly bites, you missed a tail tale.

Surprising Signs of a Cat in Pain
Chronic pain is not uncommon in cats, especially as they age. Cat-lovers miss the signs of a pet in pain because cats are good at hiding it. Any cat observed as being hesitant to jump up or climb, not using the litter box, not able to groom themselves as well, more aggressive or more withdrawn need to see the veterinarian. These are classic signs of discomfort and need to be addressed.

What Litter Do Cats Really Prefer?
Forget the people-pleasing scents or special formulas or alternative ingredients. Your cat is more likely to prefer unscented clumping litter. Keep it clean, place it in a quiet, cat-friendly place and don't use any liners in the box - cats don't like them. None of these changes will address a cat who has stopped using the box because of illness. Urinary tract infections and other health issues need to be addressed by your veterinarian before box retraining can commence.

How to Prevent a Finicky Cat
Feed your kitten a few different foods so he or she will experience different textures and flavors of food.

Don't Toss That Ratty Scratching Post
When a post starts looking worn is when a cat starts liking it best. Get a new one and your cat may switch to the arm of the couch. Instead, refresh your cat's post by adding some coils of fresh sisal rope - it's cheap, easy to add and cats love to dig their claws into it.

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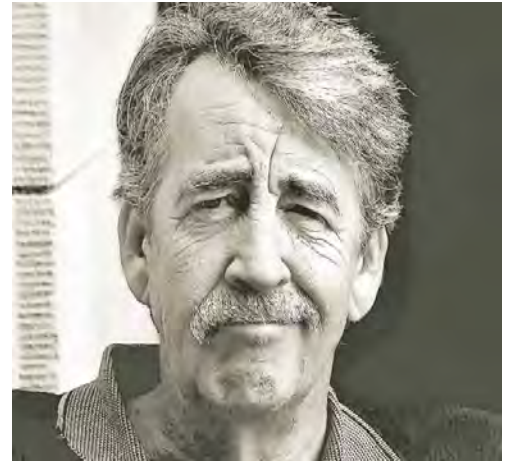
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From the Desk of Tom Carney

An Old Soldier



"Hell, that's a great idea. Dress the old man up in his uniform and we can make him a grand marshal or something. We can play up the Old South, make the parade a success, and get all kinds of free publicity."

They picked him up in one of those fancy convertible cars. They told him all he had to do was sit back and wave at people. He wasn't much to look at. The old gray uniform was threadbare and soiled from years of neglect. The shoulders it rested on were hunched with age. Watching the old man, you had to wonder what was going through his mind. The once-proud soldier of a hundred battles, long ago, now sat perfectly still, silently watching the crowds.

The biggest crowd was around the reviewing stand. When the band saw the convertible approaching, they paused, and then began a loud stirring rendition of "Dixie." The old man removed the tattered campaign hat from his head and held it against his breast, while the crowd hooped and hollered.

The car started moving again as the last strains of the Confederate battle song died away. After a brief pause to catch their breath, the band broke into a slow, sad rendition of the old Union standard, the "Battle Hymn of the Republic."

"Stop," yelled the old man to the driver of the car. People

grew silent, every eye was on the old man as he struggled to pull himself erect. Holding onto the back of the seat to give himself support, he raised his other hand to his forehead in salute, and held it there, trembling, as he turned to face the American flag.

John A. Steger was born on December 7, 1845, the son of Kennon H. Steger. The elder Steger had moved from Virginia and settled in Ryland, a few miles north of Huntsville, where he became a prosperous farmer.

When Alabama seceded from the Union in 1861, John, like all young men everywhere, was anxious to enlist. He was attending school in Ryland at the time and his father reminded him that 15 was too young to go off and be a soldier. The war became a reality early the next year when General Mitchel and his hated Yankee troops invaded Madison County, burning, looting and terrorizing at will.


These were dangerous times. The Yankees automatically suspected any young man as being

a rebel, while the Confederates assumed any young southern man not in uniform was a deserter, or even worse, a traitor.

On May 24, 1863 John Steger was sworn in as a private in the Confederate States of America Army. He had heard of Confederate forces camped at Brownsboro, and after receiving permission from his father quickly made his way to join them.

The group he joined was Company G of Colonel William A. Johnson's 4th Cavalry Regiment, which was then passing through Madison County after a raid into Tennessee. Johnson's regiment served in the brigade of General Philip Dale Roddy, the famous "Defender of North Alabama."

Steger's Army life was filled with adventure, and the teenage soldier quickly rose through the



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Jim Sanderson, Arab

ranks to Sergeant. He served mainly in North Alabama and Mississippi, though he also saw combat in Tennessee and Georgia. His closest call came on June 10, 1864, at the battle of Brice's Crossroads, Mississippi. Roddy's men had ridden all day in the hot sun to reach the battlefield, but General Forrest ordered them into action almost immediately.

When the cavalry dismounted, the soldiers counted off and every fourth man was assigned as a horse holder. Steger was fortunate enough to be so designated. However, he traded places with another and charged with his comrades.

As the Alabamians were driving back the Yankees, a bullet struck Steger's cartridge box and cut the strap holding it to his side. A fraction of an inch closer and it would have seriously injured him.

Another of Steger's encounters took place quite close to home. In the fall of 1863, Roddy's horsemen had been sent to North Georgia. When they returned to Alabama, they found the Yankees in force at New Market. Steger and several others were sent to scout. Unfortunately, they were cut off by the enemy for several days. Steger suggested the men head for his father's house near Ryland. They reached the house late in the afternoon.

Steger was about to approach the house when he was stopped by one of the family's servants. The old black woman warned him that four Yankees were already there. Steger and his companions waited until early morning, then they surprised the sleeping Yankees and captured them, without firing a shot.

After General Lee surrendered at Appomattox, word was slow to reach the scattered remnants of the Confederate

Army still struggling in North Alabama. It was more than a month later, May 17, 1865, when General Roddy finally surrendered at Pond Springs (now Wheeler, Alabama).

For John Steger, like hundreds of thousands of other men, there was nothing else left to do except begin the long walk back home. Returning to Huntsville, he found a land that was completely devastated, with people starving and no way to earn a living.

Luckily, parts of his father's farm was still intact and he was able to return to farming. On January 19, 1870, he married Mary Simpson and with both of them working in the fields, was able to rebuild the rest of the farm.

When the United States went to war with Spain in 1898, there were reservations in parts of the South about putting on a Yankee uniform and fighting a Yankee

war. Most people were content to sit back and see what would happen, but when General Joe Wheeler and General Fitzhugh Lee (late of the Confederate Army) joined the hostilities, the mood changed in a hurry. Young men everywhere joined in droves.

When John tried to enlist, he was told that he was too old. There were no openings for 53 year old soldiers. Disappointed, he returned home and sent his two sons in his place.

Around the turn of the century, Steger became active in veteran's affairs. He served several times as Commander of the Egbert J. Jones Camp, United Confederate Veterans, in Huntsville. Later he was elected Commander of the Third Alabama Brigade, and was often called by his honorary title of General, which went with the position.

John Steger was an old soldier, and he was a hero.

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More Pinhook Creek Adventures

by Jerry Keel

It's funny how one story told by someone can trigger memories of similar events in a person's mind. The story by Scott Nixon in the January 2016 issue of "Old Huntsville" was such a story. My adventures were also on Pinhook Creek but further north.

My paper route included North Grove Street in north Huntsville. At the end of Grove Street was Pegram Street by which ran Pinhook Creek. In the spring and summer there were always some of the neighborhood kids fishing there. They were kids out looking for something to do since none of them had any money or any means of going anywhere.

One day I stopped my bike and asked them if the fish were biting. The answer was a resounding NO! I talked one of them into letting me use his cane pole for a few minutes. He was willing because he said there weren't any fish in that part of the creek anyway.

Well, to his surprise, and mine also, I dropped the baited hook into the water and immediately caught a fish. The little bream was small but it was still a fish. All the other kids immediately converged on the spot where I was standing, hoping to catch a fish themselves. They thought I was some kind of expert fisherman because I had caught that one little fish.

I re-baited the hook and dropped it back into the water. All of us were astonished when the bobber went out of sight again and I caught another fish. That did it! All the other boys began to ask me to use their poles to fish with. I obliged a couple and did indeed catch 2 or 3 more fish on various poles.

A legend was born that day on the bank of the Pinhook Creek. Every day when I passed that part of the creek where the guys were fishing they pointed at me and said I was the guy who could really catch fish. Many of them invited me to use their cane

pole to fish with. A few times I did fish and even caught a few more fish. Man, I was really a hero! The kids all wanted me to show them how to catch fish. Of course I didn't know any more than them, I was just lucky.

As I said before I had a paper route which began to take second place to my fishing fun. After many of my customers began to complain about the lateness of their paper delivery I had to retire from the fun of fishing in order to properly see after my paper route. Many of the boys would beg me to fish when I went by the creek but I had to refuse.

I didn't want to pass up the fun of fishing but I also didn't want to lose any of my paper route customers. What a choice to have to make at such a young age!

Back in those "good old days" we had to improvise in order to find something to keep us out of trouble and still have fun. Most of us were not above pulling a prank on some unsuspecting adult. None of us were bad kids but since most of our parents worked we didn't have a lot of supervision. You can guess what a bunch of young, fertile minds could come up with. It's said that "an idle mind is the devil's workshop." That was certainly true in our case.

We were full of mischief but rarely did any of us do anything destructive. We always were respectful of other people's property and therefore would never intentionally

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damage anything (at least most of the time). If we did destroy anything and were caught our parents would require us to make restitution in whatever manner the victim prescribed. Most of the time we had to do odd jobs or chores around the person's house in order to make up for whatever we damaged.

A little of that went a long way toward creating respect for the property of others. We still liked to have fun but we all found other means of declaring our freedom. Most of us turned out to be pretty good adults, to the surprise of many of the grown-ups. I suppose every generation thinks the current crop of kids is the worst group ever. It's always been that way and will probably continue to be for generations to come.

We had several things to do to pay back the adults who did something we didn't like. One was to wait until it got dark outside, then sneak up on

someone's porch and ring the doorbell. After ringing the bell we would scamper off the porch and hide in the ever-present shrubbery around the house. The occupants would open the door and look around outside to see who rang the bell. When they failed to see anyone they would angrily slam the door and go back inside. The porch light was left on as a deterrent to any more pranks.

Another tempting thing was a little more offensive to the residents but at the time it seemed to be just what the doctor ordered for some mean old person. We were quick to find a reason for a person to be found guilty of some terrible crime. For instance, if we were picking up pecans in someone's yard and they told us not to take their pecans we immediately found them guilty. No matter that the pecans were theirs. We just wanted some to eat ourselves. The punishment meted out to

those folks was harsh. On the night before the garbage pickup a group of us would go to the offender's home and empty their garbage can on the porch then bang the empty garbage can to attract the attention of the homeowners. After that we would take to the bushes again and wait for the fun to begin. For those not old enough to remember those days it was before garbage was placed in plastic bags. Everything was dumped into the can - coffee grounds, egg shells, food scraps, etc. In other words a yucky mess.

As I said earlier we sometimes lacked parental supervision. If one of our children did some of the things we did back then they would be in a heap of trouble. As we grew older almost every one of us was ashamed of some of the things we did. I feel sorry that I participated in activities of that kind but it sure was funny at the time!

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THE LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT OF CHARLES LOUNSBURY

Shared by Dendy Rousseau, Huntsville



Most people at some point or other give careful thought to the disposition of their worldly goods after death. With lawyers, they struggle through interminable legal verbiage, distributing this thing to that one and that thing to this one.

A friend recently sent me a copy of his will which bequeathed something to us all. The late Charles Lounsbury died as an inmate of the Chicago poorhouse. His will was found in the pocket of his ragged coat. When it was read before the Chicago Bar, it made such an impression that the assembled lawyers had it probated, thus giving it legal authority.

Last Will and Testament of Charles Lounsbury

"I, Charles Lounsbury, being of sound and disposing mind and memory, do hereby make and publish this my last will and testament, in order, as justly as may be, to distribute my interest in the world among succeeding men. That part of my interest which is known in law and recognized in the sheep-bound volumes as my property, being inconsiderable and of none account, I make no disposition of in my will. My right to live, being but a life estate, is not at my disposal, but, these things excepted, all else in the world I now proceed to demise and bequeath.

I give good mothers and fathers, in trust for their children, all good little words of phrase and encouragement and all quaint pet names and endearments, and I charge said parents to use them justly but generously, as the needs of their children shall require.

I leave to children inclusively, but only for the term of their childhood, all and every,

the flowers of the fields and the blossoms of the woods, with the right to play among them freely according to the custom of children, warning them at the same time against thistles and thorns. And I demise to children the banks of the brooks, the golden sands beneath the waters thereof, and the odor of the willows that dip therein, and the white

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want to wish everyone a
safe and Happy Labor Day.
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country we live in.**

**Special greetings to the
Huntsville High Class
of 1966!**

clouds that float high over the giant trees. And I leave the children the long days to be merry in, in a thousand ways, and the night and the train of the Milky Way to wonder at, but subject, nevertheless, to the rights hereinafter given to lovers.

I demise to boys, jointly, all the useful, idle fields and commons where ball may be played, all pleasant waters where one may swim, all snow-clad hills where one may coast, and all streams and ponds where one may fish, or where, when grim winter comes, one may skate to hold the same for the period of their boyhood. And all meadows, with the clover blossoms and butterflies thereof, the woods with their appurtenances, the squirrels and the birds and echoes and strange noises, and all the distant places which may be visited, together with the adventures there found. And I give to said boys each his own place at the fire-side at night, with all pastures that may be seen in the burning wood, to enjoy without let or hindrance and without incumbrances or care.

To lovers I demise their imaginary world, with whatever they may need, as the stars of the sky, the red roses by the wall, the bloom of the hawthorn, the sweet strains of music, and aught else they may desire to figure to each other the lastingness and beauty of their love.

To young men jointly, I demise and bequeath all boisterous, inspiring sports of rivalry, and I give to them the disdain of weakness, and undaunted confidence in their own strength. Though they are rude, I leave to them the power to make lasting friendships and of possessing companions, and to them exclusively I give all merry songs and grave choruses to sing with lusty voices. And to those who are no longer children, or youths, or lovers, I leave memory, and bequeath to them the volumes of the poems of Burns and Shakespeare and other poets, if there by others, to the end that they may live the old days over again, freely and fully, without tithes or sadness.

To our loved ones with snowy crowns, I bequeath the happiness of old age, the love and gratitude of their children until they fall asleep.



“Relationship tip to men: When a woman says, ‘Correct me if I’m wrong, but....’ DON’T do it!! It’s a trap!”

Lenny Davis, divorced

The Best Hot Tamale Recipe, by Mary Esslinger Owen

My mother, Mary Esslinger Owen, grew up on Bradley Street in Merrimac Village, later known as Huntsville Park. When she was a child, a man who also lived in Merrimac would pull a wagon with hot tamales in large pots up and down the sidewalks selling them for a penny each.

She remembered they were so delicious. The man was Mr. Ortner. I don't know where the recipe was obtained by my family, but I believe it probably came from the Ortner family. My mother and Aunt Margaret got together and made hot tamales many times during WWII and after. In later years, Aunt Margaret and her children would make the tamales and would call my mother and tell her they had a pot of them on the stove, so come on over for dinner that night. Hers were so hot with pepper, I had to eat a slice of bread with them. But, they were still great! My family loved them so much, my mother started making them for us. She would pepper lightly and had the red pepper on the table to sprinkle on the tamales if one preferred them hotter.

Mr. Chitty Yarbrough did have a hot tamale stand at Huntsville Park when I was young. It was very similar to the food trucks you see downtown now. When my dad was hungry for hot tamales and didn't want to wait for mother to make them (it is an all-day affair), he would go by Mr. Yarbrough's stand and buy a couple dozen. They were all wrapped up in newspapers to keep them warm. I can still smell that aroma! Yum! Perhaps Mr. Yarbrough received the recipe from the Ortner family, also. After my retirement, I helped my mother prepare the hot tamales for our family, it gave us plenty of time to chat about family traditions. I learned a lot about my heritage from those discussions.

The following is my mother's recipe.

Hot Tamales Mary Esslinger Owen recipe

- 1 1/2 lb. pork roast
- 1 1/2 lb. beef roast
- 4 medium potatoes, peeled (more, if needed)
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 6 cloves garlic, chopped
- 1 T. sage
- 3 oz. chili powder
- 1/8 t. cayenne pepper (red pepper, ground)
- 1 t. salt
- 10 lb. white cornmeal (I use self-rising)
- Cooking oil
- Non-waxed deli paper

Cook meat together until slightly tender. Boil potatoes in separate pot until done. Save all water from meat and potatoes.

Grind meat, potatoes, onion and garlic and mix together. Add seasonings and mix. Taste and adjust seasonings. Remember that the pepper will be hotter when tamales are cooked.

Mix some of the cornmeal, cooking oil and the potato broth together in medium mixing bowl until mixture is very moist, almost runny (2 cups potato broth, 2 cups cornmeal, 3 T. oil). Put a dab (about serving spoon size) in the center of a deli paper and spread about 1-1/2 inches wide by 6 inches long. Spread about a tablespoon of meat mixture along the cornmeal mixture. Wrap, using drugstore wrap method. Mix more cornmeal mixture as needed.

Place wrapped tamales in layers in a large pot over an upturned steamer basket, loose ends under. Cover with meat broth and water. Bring to a boil, then turn burner to simmer. Place a weight on top of the tamales (saucer or breakfast plate) to keep the tamales submerged in the broth/water mixture. Add more water, as needed. Cook until done. The cooking time depends on the size of the pot and number of tamales in the pot. A large canning kettle full of tamales will take about five hours.

LEGEND OF THE HUNTSVILLE PARK STALKER

by Jerry Wilbanks

Huntsville Park kids, like kids everywhere, loved to get together and talk about spooky things. They loved to scare each other with tales that COULD be true, that could affect their everyday lives that could present a real threat to everyone in the village. Back around the summer of 1957, Huntsville Park was full of just such kids. We all lived in the village and we all attended Joe Bradley School. And one of our favorite pastimes was sitting around our houses, our hangouts, our schools and whispering about the Huntsville Park Stalker.

One of our favorite gathering places was the alley behind the line of stores directly opposite the school. We'd go there after classes (and sometimes before) and hash out all our cares and concerns about dangerous and/or supernatural happenings in the "Park", as it was best known then. Incidentally, the brickwork of the back of the store buildings was painted bright yellow and just begged for the decoration and defacement that flowed from creative adolescent and preteen genius. Some of the ditties and illustrations we scrawled on those bricks would be unprintable in this or any magazine, but most were nothing more than attempts at cleverness by Joe Bradley's less than stellar scholars.

A group of us were in the alley behind the stores one day, drawing questionable pictographs and writing the witticisms which we considered to be humor and satire of the highest order, when an older kid (we'll call him Buster) wandered by. I guess he just couldn't resist scaring the bejabbers out of us.

"The stalker came right up this alley last night!" he said. We began to look over our shoulders uncomfortably and exchange meaningful glances.

"The only reason they say 'Women and Children first' is to test the strength of the lifeboats."

Jean Kerr

"He was chasing two kids. They say it was the Schrack brothers," Here Buster paused for effect. "He grabbed one of them and was dragging him away when old Mrs. Cobbin's big dog Mangier broke his chain and jumped over the fence. He went after that psycho to make him drop Timmy Schrack."

Buster had our undivided attention now. We listened, slack-jawed and breathless, dreading and anticipating what would come next.

"Mangier tore into him like a mad dog, but the stalker guy fought him to a standstill. There was blood everywhere but the Schrack boys were OK. The cops got here really quick. They said most of the blood was probably the stalker's and they followed a blood trail for a block or two. If I were you boys, I wouldn't hang out around the village after dark. Get in your houses and lock the doors!"

This story and others like it were told and retold in various versions until everyone was thoroughly confused. Of course, almost no aspect of any of the stories was true but that didn't keep us kids from relishing the details and being terrified. Sometimes

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the story had the Schrack kids being kidnapped for a day, a week; sometimes the dog Mangier would have his neck broken by the stalker's superhuman strength; sometimes the stalker himself would have his hand ripped loose from his body by the big dog. And then there were stories about the hand: that it was three times normal size, that it had six fingers, that it continued to choke Mangier after it was torn from the stalker's arm.

This was all just grist for the terror mill, the loathsome products of which nourished our imaginations through that long mid-fifties summer in the Mill Village. Fear, as they say, can make man or boy believe the worst. New stories or even new details about old stories were great sources of excitement. We took each detail and each story, savored it and passed it along, with our own spin and embellishment firmly attached. Our greatest pleasure lay in finding some unknowing or skeptical kid and bombarding him with gory argument and logic until he was as scared and jumpy as the rest of us!

Willy Haines claimed he saw the stalker following two girls home from a baseball game and yelled for the girls to run, thereby narrowly avoiding tragedy. Willy described the stalker as tall and heavy, wearing a pullover cap and some kind of scarf wrapped around his face.

Al Moore, a big strapping teenager whom even the neighborhood bad guys considered to be a tough customer, supposedly recognized and tackled the stalker outside the ballpark late one evening, and even with the help of several buddies, could not overpower or control him. Or so the story went.

Gary Owens, whose uncle was on the police force, told us the cops had set a trap for the stalker using a couple of kids as bait (this part always sounded suspicious to me). They walked the kids up and down the main street by the school, stores, ballpark and boarding house, several nights in a row but nothing happened. The night after they called off the ambush, kids were chased by the stalker in that same area of the village!

The legend of the Huntsville Park stalker grew and grew that summer, but sightings and encounters were somehow removed and distant. All of the firsthand experiences always happened to a friend of a friend, or the cousin of a neighbor; never to YOUR acquaintances

and certainly never to YOU,

As Labor Day and the opening of the new school year approached, there was less and less talk about the stalker. Wild stories and sightings began to taper off. Soon, days and weeks would go by without one mention of the neighborhood menace. There was never satisfactory closure to this creepy episode from my Huntsville Park childhood; possibly because there was never a flesh and blood perpetrator brought to justice. As far as I know, there was never an actual crime committed. Did the stalker exist only in our excitable imaginations? There is little hard evidence to the contrary. Our parents might have pointed out that a good scare is worth more than advice (and provides better entertainment as well). We certainly experienced a good scare.

We were postwar children of the unthinkable, incomprehensible atomic age, just becoming aware of the global nuclear threat under which we writhed and squirmed. I think that deep down, we welcomed in some perverse way the legend of the Huntsville Park Stalker and missed it when it had fizzled out. It may have been our way of seeking out perils and horrors that to us were more simple and understandable than sudden, nuclear annihilation.

On some level, we knew that the stalker did not really exist. We knew there was nothing to be afraid of. And we also knew that he couldn't GET US if we stuck together and ran as fast as we could.



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Next door to Across the Pond



Scruffy, Part 6

by John E. Carson

As hungry as I was, anything would taste good right now and though the day was still early, the soup/stew in the bowl was welcomed by my grumbling stomach. I knew Scruffy was as hungry as I was and I dipped his piece of bread into the bowl and offered it to him. Like me, he was not fussy either.

But I felt a little guilty knowing that he could have eaten all of what we had and still not have enough.

Facing west, the old, weathered bus stop bench was the most comfortable seat I had been on in a while, though the sun stabbed my still bloodshot eyes. Scruffy sat on my left after eating the bread and I set the almost empty bowl on the sidewalk for him to lick clean. I had left some of the food in it for him and he gratefully emptied

it, licking the bowl almost as clean as the dish washer would have left it.

Facing the street we sat like a blind man with his guide dog not getting a second glance from the few cars that drove by in either direction. For a few moments I felt almost normal. Then I heard Scruffy growl.

It was a low growl, almost quiet; a guttural sound rising slowly from the depths of his throat mimicking the rising tide of uneasiness in my stomach that threatened to wash over me in a full wave of panic. I looked around;

nothing on my right but the tired blocks of the old sidewalk and the fronts of dilapidated stores. Looking to my left yielded the same result, I studied the dog. Continuing his growl, he stared straight ahead, sitting rigid and motion-

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“Instead of giving a politician a key to the city, it might be better just to change the locks.”

Doug Larson



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less in front of the bench. I knew something was not right. I too stared across the black divide but the glare of the sun kept me from seeing clearly. I resisted the urge to raise my hand and cover my eyes. If there was someone watching from the other side of the street I did not want him to know that the dog had tipped me off.

As if waiting for a bus, I looked to my left again and this time I saw someone turn the corner and begin walking in our direction. Scruffy turned his head and his growling increased. I was sure he would begin barking at any moment as he watched the figure approach, then straight ahead again and back to our left; his growling increasing in volume as the teen-aged male drew closer to our bench.

Knowing I should get up, I sat frozen on the bench, flashbacks of combat flooding my mind. I did not know if the gunshot I heard was live or part of my waking nightmare. I rolled to my right and over the open edge of the bench, scrambling behind it for cover as Scruffy bolted to the left just in time to dodge the bullet. It had whizzed through the slats of the bench and slammed into the plywood covered window of the soup kitchen, the shattering glass behind it falling to the floor in sharp, loud explosions that sent me back to the battle zone.

Though the sun was behind me, I stared into it in the desert of Iraq, squinting down the sight of my rifle at the enemy approaching, knife blade gleaming as I pulled the trigger again and again.

Shouts of pain told me I must have hit him and I heard the knife clatter on the concrete sand as he scuttled away in the roar of the K-9 soldiers in pursuit, their barks alerting the camp to the

sneak attack. Back to back with the bench, I sat motionless as the flashback played itself out, leaving me in a cold sweat and an urgent need of a drink.

But there was nothing to drink. My flask was as empty as my pockets. And that thought brought me back to reality.

A yellow-handled switchblade laid at my side its blade shining even in the shadow of the bench. I picked it up, carefully retracting the blade then slipped it into the deep pocket of the old gray topcoat.

Sensing movement I turned my head to the right as Scruffy trotted to my side. He had saved me a second time.

Afraid of the dog, the gang had left us alone during the night, watching and waiting



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for a chance to set up an ambush. Scruffy had spotted the shooter hidden somewhere across the street. At the same time he sensed the knife wielder walking up the block, moving just in time to avoid being hit by the bullet and stop the kid that would have slit my throat and left me sitting here just like old Louie in the alley.

Now that things were quiet, a few of the homeless bums carefully opened the door and stepped outside the soup kitchen.

"You okay Mac?" Someone asked as I stood up on two shaky legs with the help of the weathered boards of the back of the bench.

"Yeah, I'm okay," I answered, "Thanks to Scruffy."

"Ida's mad as a hornet 'bout the window. Called the cops too. Thanks you didn't like the food," one of the men said.

I laughed, relieving the tension inside of me and causing a chain reaction among the patrons of the fine establishment behind me.

"She thinks I did that?" I asked, nodding towards the plywood sheet and the small hole just above the lower sill.

"Well, you were the only one out here," the man answered.

"They tried to shoot my dog," I said angrily. "It was an ambush; one of them tried to slit my throat too. They missed the dog and the bullet is in the plywood or went through it. Scruffy chased the other punk - he might have gotten a few bites in too."

"Dog's a hero," another man said and the others nodded. "Come on in and tell Ida what happened; you shouldn't be out here anyway - they might try again."

"Is everyone okay inside?" I asked.

"Yeah; a little shook up though. That glass exploded all over the place."

"Well I don't feel like talking right now," I said, "especially to the cops."

"I heard that," one man said, shaking his head in agreement.

And just before the sirens came, a large van with the city logo on the side pulled up to the bus stop. The side window rolled down and a plump, middle-aged man behind the wheel called out to our little group, "Anyone here looking for work?"

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birthday. I don't know why my family gave me up. They told the Ark they just didn't have time for me. I had time for them! Please do not get a pet if you cannot commit to your new furry family member for its lifetime. It is very hard to loose the only home you ever had.

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Seen and Heard in Town - 1880

- Last Saturday night some malicious scoundrel killed a horse belonging to Mr. H.W. Helm, the well-known blacksmith. The horse, a very fine one, was in the pasture bordering the spring branch, and was killed by being struck just above the eye with a brickbat. We trust the perpetrator maybe discovered and appropriately punished. This should not be tolerated.

- Yesterday, in the Big Cove, a man named Stewart Wishard was shot and mortally wounded by a man named R.S. Buford, who was arrested. The trouble arose about a dispute in regard to crops. Wishard was cropping on Buford's place. It is thought Buford was justifiable.

- We understand it is reported through the country that yellow fever is in Huntsville. This is untrue. There has not been a single case of yellow fever in Huntsville up to this time.

- Mr. Timothy Murphy, of this city, received a dispatch last Friday from Canton, Miss., conveying the sad information that his wife, daughter and granddaughter were all down with yellow fever. Mr. Murphy left on the next train for Canton and it is reported he has been seized with the dread disease. Update: Since writing the above we have been informed that all of Mr. Murphy's grandchildren have the fever, and that one of them has died of the disease.

- Appeal to Mothers - Clothing partially worn or outgrown, sheets or bedding of any description, remnants of calico such as always accumulate in families. Any of all these articles are earnestly solicited for the Orphans of the plague-stricken city of Memphis, and will be thankfully received and immediately forwarded if sent to Mrs. S. R. Cruse, Adams Avenue.

- Miss Kate Erskine will

open a school at the residence of Mrs. S. C. Erskine, on Franklin Street, on Monday, the 2nd of September.

- Charles Rice, the one-eyed man from Mr. Frank McClung's place in Little Cove, was tried on a complaint before Justice Figg last Saturday. He is charged with an attempt to rape Linda Beasley, aged 10 years. Rice was arrested after an investigation of the facts committed. He came from Jackson County.

- Wanted - 10,000 pounds dried fruit, for which the highest price will be paid. T. J. Humphrey, Hotel Building.

- John Harris reports to the papers that the last time he saw his wife Sarah, she was leaving town in the company of one Chas. Robertson and he is offering a reward for her return. She leaves him with 4 children and a grandmother, and gave no warning of her intentions.

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Around 1910 some of the employees of Dallas Mill gathered for a photograph. Many of them were only children. During that same period Judge Betts and James Ballentine, who were both running for the same office, fought a duel on Huntsville's streets. Both were lousy shots and no one was injured.

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