



No. 296

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# Old Huntsville

HISTORY AND STORIES OF THE TENNESSEE VALLEY



## TRAPPED IN THE CROSSFIRE

*A Civil War Saga of the Endurance of Family*

Not everyone living in the South during the Civil War supported the Confederacy and slavery. Many were simply "Trapped in the Crossfire". Moreover, there's a tale behind every face and family that had to live through those terrible times. As a writer, my voyage back in time to know my ancestors became an obsession.

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*Domie Lewter*  
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# Digging for Truth: The Civil War Story of a Southern Family Trapped in the Crossfire

by Gladys Hodge Sherrer

Not everyone living in the South during the Civil War supported the Confederacy and slavery. Many were simply *Trapped in the Crossfire*. Moreover, there's a tale behind every face and family that had to live through these terrible times. As a writer, my voyage back in time to know my ancestors became an obsession. How did John Jakes research his amazing series, *The Kent Family Chronicles*, in one lifetime? An historical novelist must be part scientist, part detective, and one hundred percent courageous. Show me Truth would be this writer's mantra. I had no idea how far this journey would take me.

My eight years in research and writing my family's Civil War story, "Trapped in the

Crossfire", actually began almost twenty years ago when Cousin John Raymond Williams, a former Huntsville resident, inspired me with his unforgettable stories of our abolitionist forefathers and Union sympathizers, Sarah and Perry Williams. The Williams left South Carolina in 1857 during these tumultuous years just prior to the Civil War and moved to Alabama to escape the escalating tensions, only to discover how temporary their sanctuary was. In 2006, I retired as a Project Director for a corporate IT division and began writing newspaper columns. Fiction offered a new challenge and I self-published two novels, though those family stories shared by Cousin John caught my keenest interest.

On a whim, I wrote a Civil War short story from the viewpoint of a child, our Uncle Milton. My thoughts kept returning to the poor lad's plight, and soon I let go all other writing in order to focus on young Milton's war story. Bit by bit, I gleaned family legends, consulted historians, museum curators, and studied old maps. I hung out in history archives and libraries for days, and wrote on, adding chapters on either side of Milton's, allowing his parents, Sarah and Perry, to tell their Civil War tales. Today, Milton's view of war from

**"Solomon, one of David's sons, had 300 wives and 700 porcupines."**

*James, 7, on Bible test*



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a babe's eyes encompasses several chapters of his perspective in "Trapped in the Crossfire".

I also wondered how immigrants traveled to Alabama in the 1800's? One of my research jaunts took me almost four hundred miles east... alone. I detected a possible route for my ancestor's 1857 migration from upstate South Carolina, confirmed this possibility by historians in three states, and set out to retrace their steps. One major flaw in my theory was how wagons going from Clayton to Hiawassee, Georgia had crossed a very high mountain which stretches from Thimpson Creek on the east to Hightower Creek on the west. I was on a mission to find that ancient roadway, and to set foot on the old South Carolina homeland.

Interstate highways were nonexistent in 1857, so I avoided them and audiotaped what I saw, traces of antebellum remnants, old buildings, ancient roadbeds now grown up in

timber. I noted where the rivers and mountains lie. I pondered dangerous precipices, landslides, fighting off wild carnivores. I drove the migration route as long as possible, until the road disappeared into a national forest.

Arriving in South Carolina, I admired the towering Blue Ridge Escarpment, which was followed by immigrants moving west on a wagon road, an ancient Indian path. When my foot first stepped onto Spartanburg District soil – at the Cowpens Revolutionary War Battleground bordering my family's former plantation – my breath stopped. A sense of kinship, yet pain of loss, swept over me. This is the home my ancestors fled, leaving behind loved ones.

Back on the road to Alabama, I descended from South Carolina's Sumter National Forest at dawn amid a light drizzle and landed in Clayton, Georgia before its museum would open. The 1930's Clay-

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 Joint Camp

ton Cafe beckoned warmly. I went inside for hot coffee and blueberry pancakes. A hard rain hit, winds grew blustery. I snuggled down in my booth's vinyl seat and chatted with the waitress about my plans. "How did wagons get over that huge mountain west of Clayton?" I asked her.

The girl seated herself across from me. Her blue eyes sparked with interest, every freckle on cheeks aglow. "How did wagons get over the Rockies? They had to go, so they did."

The answer was so clear I hadn't seen it, but still. Could not travelers find a way around an obstacle as big as a mountain?

Suddenly wide-eyed with fear, she filled me in on the latest news, which I now noted had other customers glued to a television; the Boston Marathon attack by terrorists and a manhunt in progress. "Be careful out there," she said, as I departed.

Leaving Clayton in a veritable flood, I proceeded slowly over the mountain in question, marveling at 19th century pioneer grit. High winds whipped the treetops. Near the peak, at the Appalachian Trailhead, two bedraggled hikers bearing monstrous, dripping backpacks were hitching a ride. I glanced in my rearview mirror, and saw a white van pull up near them.

The lakeside village of Hiawassee had fog drifting along mountain peaks, when I ar-

rived and located its shoe-box size library behind two log cabins. The librarian led me to the resource books. I commenced reading.

In half an hour, more or less, those same hikers appeared. Eavesdropping on their conversation, I was able to confirm they were from out-of-state. He pecked at the computer keys, on his hiking blog. Today, courage could be hiking the Appalachian Trail, or running marathons.

Focus returning to my research, I picked up a journal written by local history students in 1946 and found a clue. A wagon road once existed in the Hightower Creek area, running northward of that high mountain and crossing the Appalachian Trail, connect-

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**"Give me six hours to chop down a tree and I will spend the first four sharpening the axe."**

**Abraham Lincoln**

ing with Persimmon Road and Thimpson Creek on Highway 76. I surged with excitement, and made copies.

On to Blairsville, Georgia, I located the circa 1890 courthouse, now a museum of history. The rain pelted the pavement, as I parked on a roundabout. I looked up to see an elderly Scottish Highlander in plaid kilts. I smiled. These folks preserve their history.

Inside, more people in plaid gathered, likely descendants from early immigrants. I signed the guest registry, and told the white-haired hostess my plan to confirm an antebellum migration route by artifacts or maps. "How did travelers get around that mountain due east... and does it have a name?" I asked.

She looked puzzled, called to a man in his fifties with a ponytail. He jumped to his feet like an arrow shot from a bow.

I asked him the same questions.

He shrugged, began pulling out books, and maps. Quickly,

it was evident that no one knew the name of that mountain, not even Google, and this man didn't know east from west, plus his accent betrayed him. Not even a Southerner, how much help could he be? What is he doing in remote north Georgia?

"Where's home," I asked him, softly.

"Nevada."

"How did you end up here?"

"I was looking for a cabin."

"Have you worked for other historical museums?"

He chuckled. "No ... casinos."

Is he fleeing the law, or is he an undercover agent? He pulled out more map books, and I studied his face. Something about him clashed, like Legos on a chessboard. I glanced over at the snowy-

**"The car; designed by computer, built by robot, driven by moron."**

*Sam Keith*

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haired lady, now seated under a window, intently watching us, listening. "That your car out there, Ma'am ... you traveling alone?" she asked me.

A fellow detective... I nodded.

She stared hard at the man. "You're gutsy, Ma'am, traveling alone."

Mr. Ponytail fled the room. She pointed her chin toward his departing figure, and hissed, "It's men I'm afraid of... men. And that one is way too fidgety."

"Where do the locals have lunch?" I asked, changing the subject.

The museum had no maps confirming the ancient mountain bypass, and I doubt Mr. Ponytail works for that museum today.

After ten hours on the road back to Alabama, my trusty steed's leather seats no longer felt luxurious. I neared Gadsden, Alabama, and raised my eyes. Afternoon sun lit up a rain-washed, green meadow. Beyond, Sand Mountain lay under a cloud which cast it cobalt blue. The scene was otherworldly, breathtaking. A re-

newed passion for home stirred within my breast, likely the way 19th Century immigrants felt on arrival in North Alabama, after a month or more trudging alongside a dusty wagon.

I found no artifact evidence of the mountain bypass in Georgia, but with help from Google Earth, soared like a hawk along that ancient wagon road now grown up in timber, but still faintly visible bypassing north of the tall mountain. Now, if I can get a four-wheeler, I'll confirm this fact.

What would the white-haired museum hostess in Blairsville say to that... or Author John Jakes for that matter?

"Trapped in the Crossfire" is not just this writer's family story, but rings truth for tens of thousands of Southerners whose ancestors shared similar migration and Civil War experience, especially in North Alabama.

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# A Cat Lover's Aerobics

by Brome'

At this writing Judy, my landlady, is 15 months old. A grey and white feline sweetheart who guards the house from several windows.

She has decided it's time I got into shape so we have devised an aerobics exercise routine. Listed below is the proper procedure:

First, get about a dozen sheets of typing paper, used is OK for this. Next, divide each sheet into 16 pieces. I find that by folding and tearing... Well you can figure it out, can't you? After you have torn it all up, you will have 192 pieces. Now wad each piece up and place in a box.

After you are done with that, get your cat's attention and flip a piece at her. She will chase and maybe chew a minute. When she tires of that one, flip another until all of the scraps are gone from your box.

Now here's where the real workout comes in. PICK UP THE PAPER! After a couple of weeks, your own landlady or lord may insist on more than one session at a time. I find that I am much more flexible and am a little more alert these days.

## UPDATE!

Well, I have to be honest here, what started out several weeks ago as a good idea for me to get in a little bit better shape has turned into the fact that I'm too clever to have to bend over that much and have found that I can get a yard stick and sitting on the floor can rake them all to me. Judy, on the other hand has insisted that I clear the table next to the window and I flip paper all day long with her jumping up and down all day long. She is buff, lean and slender while I'm....the same.

P.S. The blinds on the window where the table sits are getting a good workout too and a friend sitting with me commented that they wouldn't last long. I looked at him and said that Lowe's has them for \$6.99. It's worth it.



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# A Scary Story

by Jack Dyer's Son

I don't know why, but no one ever wanted to play any games at my house. As far as I can remember, I only had one neighborhood friend, Tony McCombs, whoever came to my home more than a single time during the seven years I lived there in the late sixties - and most never came at all. This fact registered as only a minor irritation and I didn't give it very much thought since I was the new kid on the block anyway.

I was still taking life as it came, accepting the good along with the bad. However, there was an associated predicament concerning my various playing locales: not being home when we called it quits for the day meant that no matter where we were playing, I had the better part of a mile-walk through dark, monster infested terrain every evening.

As the night closed in and I could no longer convince my playmates to delay the end of our game, I was reluctantly compelled to start my solitary hobble into the cold and foreboding gloom. To make matters worse, many nights my whole body ached and I felt about as stove-up as a kid could be and still be able to move - usually, the best

I could do was a shuffling trudge for most of the trip.

Those lonely treks were sometimes pretty scary to a weary ten-year-old boy. There were no street lights and there was only a single, backset house along the entire course, which by the way, I assumed was the residence of our neighborhood axe murderer. I walked on a narrow strip of asphalt surrounded on both sides by dense, primeval forest. If you have read any fairy tale or watched any Disney movie, you know exactly the kind of unsociable woods of which I am speaking.

In spite of my bravest efforts, it didn't take long before I started worrying about the hordes of monsters, wolves,



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**"Lot's wife was a pillar of salt by day, but a ball of fire at night."**

*Child's answer on a Bible quiz*

and other menacing creatures of the dark that were silently stalking their staggering dinner. They were all sneaky creatures and kept strictly out of sight, lurking just at the edge the tree line. Their numbers would steadily increase as time oozed by and I could sense each one intently tracking me with its fearsome bloodshot eye or eyes, as the case may be.

Traffic on the main (and only) paved road meandering through our area was almost nonexistent during the evening hours, so I recklessly marched smack dab in the middle of the road to put as much distance as I could between the monsters and me. I figured that I should force them to at least show themselves before they devoured me.

Truth be told, I was of two minds about their concealment. A part of me had to admit that I was somewhat relieved that they hid in such a cowardly manner, because the actual sight of such terrors would have certainly frozen me in mid-trudge, reducing me to a convenient, stationary, roadside snack. On the other hand, it is my experience that fear of the unknown can exponentially exceed (and usually does) fear of the known. Either way, it gave me dubious and unreliable relief that they hardly ever fully revealed themselves. I was pretty much caught between a rock and a hard place on this issue.


Unfortunately, in spite of their shyness, I couldn't miss the occasional moonlight glint on a razor sharp talon or drooling fang from time to time.

My hypersensitive ears registered every noise (both imagined and real) and in spite of my increasing frustration, each

was dutifully catalogued by my equally hypersensitive mind into its specific monster classification with an associated cumulative fright rating. My worst fears came from the horrific creations conjured into existence by my traitorous imagination. Some of these hybrids were truly chilling, although very few could top your everyday, average werewolf for generating sheer terror in my soul.

I have mentioned before that I never cared for genuinely scary movies, but that didn't stop me from watching one from time to time. The stupidity of such an action was not obvious in the light of day while I was ensconced safely in my own home, but it became perfectly evident during these solitary postgame strolls. Under such conditions, whatever frightening movie creature I had most recently watched would vividly

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come to life and was the top candidate paused to pounce on me if I should stumble or show any weakness such as screaming or galloping about while flailing my arms.

I was convinced that my entire entourage could sense that I had been tenderized and debilitated by my latest sports-related damage and intuitively knew I couldn't walk any faster than I was already moving. I did my best to maintain a steady pace in a show of false bravado because, as every ten-year-old knows, going too slow or suddenly bursting into a run were explicit triggers for unwanted monster action and both should be strictly avoided when making your way home in the dark.

Turning off the main drag and wobbling down the long dirt road leading to my house was the halfway point and also signaled the toughest part of my journey. Energy levels were plummeting and my pain meter was usually pegged out by this stage. To make matters much worse, my normally infallible and brilliant ten-year-old logic began failing and almost always abandoned me at this juncture.

I inevitably began reasoning that since I had not been slaughtered and divided into bite-size portions back on the main road, it was probably because my following had grown to an overwhelming (although remarkably quiet) multitude that was now quietly grunting and debating amongst themselves just who would get dinner that night - after all, I was already pretty scrawny and getting more

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*W. C. Fields*

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bony by the minute.

This part of my journey was pitch black, except for any intermittent and fickle moonlight, which pretty much only provided enough visibility to prevent the pack from tripping over any stray roots or limbs in their anxiety to seize and consume me.

The woods pinched tighter in on both sides the further I went (or at least that is how it felt) and right as I approached the big hill leading down into our valley, my fear inevitably escalated to fever pitch. Total desperation smothered me and it was instantly crystal clear I could no longer endure even one more second anticipating the inevitable feast.

I am sure you have heard of the "fight or flight" impulse. At this exact moment, the "flight" option would surge into my legs and in spite of my body's groaning protests, both appendages would start rapidly pumping up and down like pistons. Eventually, I would actually start moving forward and in an attempt to throw my predators off their game (who were probably somewhat startled by that bizarre pumping action), I would suddenly shoot off into the woods on the left side.

Now, this is an important fact if you don't already know it: for unknown reasons, monsters tend to prefer the right-side when skulking through unfriendly woods. My advice is to opt for a left-hand escape attempt when in doubt - at least I have remained (as yet) uneaten by employing this strategy. I launched my feet down the faint, snaky path that led in the general direction of my house and fortunately, my legs and body soon followed. Monsters may be dumb, but they are pretty much a voracious sort of dumb and of course, my unexpected gambit activated their chase-the-prey-instinct and the race was on.

It was at this critical instant that if I had any reserves at all or if I could spontaneously generate adequate adrenalin (which happened surprisingly often), I yanked out all the stops and went for broke. I took full advantage of the terrain, allowing the steep incline and gravity to pull me at an ever increasing velocity toward the faint glimmerings of my home.

Straining to keep one eye on the house lights winking in and out between the trees and the other eye on dodging those same trees, I rocketed down the zig-zagging path, touching the earth less and less as my predators closed the gap. Even though each jarring step sent ripples of misery through my body, I sometimes managed to somehow accelerate to such a degree that I may have actually achieved flight - at least over short distances. Of course, the flight-enabled critters on my tail were able to hang right with me and although this caused me intense concern, I trusted that a significant percentage were taken out by clocking into low hanging branches along

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**Johnny Johnston**

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the way.

About the time the hill finally pancaked into our yard, I began feeling the delicate caress of various claws, wings, fur, scales, talons, teeth and the occasional warm slobber on the back of my neck. It was a statistical certainty some of the more clumsy creatures must have been dusted by my turbocharged efforts.

I could tell the silent majority were mere inches from their juicy, although increasingly sweaty, evening meal. This final encroaching sensation was always just enough to propel me straight through our carport, yank open the back door and burst through the entrance at a dead sprint.

It needs to be pointed out that it is very, very fortunate that we never locked our doors - I'll let that horrific scenario play out in your own imagination.

As I exploded through the opening, almost faster than

the eye could see, I simultaneously slammed the door shut. Usually, I headed directly to the warmth and safety of our living room, but if I still had any courage remaining (rarely), I sometimes turned to stare out into the darkness through the six glass panes that now separated me from being served as a main course.

I wasn't positive, but there were times when I thought I could see no less than a dozen sets of glowing eyes attached to frustrated, foul-tempered denizens melting back in the shadows once again - and let me tell you, I hated cleaning up all the drool the following morning.

**"I can only please one person a day. Today is not your day. Tomorrow's not looking real good either."**

**Jayne Schmit, Arab**

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# The Family Wagon

by Malcolm W. Miller



Driving out through the country some time back I happened to notice an old two horse wagon out in the field just sitting there rotting away. There were weeds and small bushes growing up all around and through it, and to me that old wagon represented the passing of an era. The family wagon was a way of life that is gone forever except perhaps for Amish, Mennonites, etc. that have not yet converted to engine-run vehicles.

I remember the years gone by when the old two horse wagon that belonged to our family and many more like it played an extremely important role in so many of our lives. Whenever we took our occasional trip to purchase flour, sugar, etc. many horse drawn buggies were on the roads and parked at the store.

Now years later, many and various machines and equipment perform those tasks that the wagon was used for. These new machines do these things so much more efficiently and rapidly. However, in the days when I was growing up the old horse drawn wagon was an essential part of life. My grandson and his bride were driven to their wedding ceremony in a beautiful horse and buggy and that brought back many memories of my childhood.

I will always remember the yearly trip into town for the whole family in the fall of the year after the cotton crop was sold. Everyone really looked forward to this trip because they were able to purchase the new clothes for the coming winter. There were parking lots for wagons in town; however, these were not paved parking lots like they have for cars and trucks today.

The whole family would get up early on the special day because they were very excited. The bumpy ride into town would take two or more hours. Once we arrived we wanted to stay in

**"I've been in more laps than a napkin."**

**Mae West**

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town as long as we possibly could. This journey was almost always made on Saturday and if we were lucky we might get to go to a good double-feature black and white picture show while our parents shopped. I can close my eyes today and still almost smell the aroma of hamburgers frying as we walked down the street. If our parents bought one for us we were well pleased as they certainly tasted good after that long ride into town.

Transportation was truly an important part of the wagon's usefulness but not the only part it played in our everyday lives. When Papa took the bed off it was immediately converted into a log wagon so essential for hauling in the wood supply to be used in the old wood cook stove, and to go in the fireplace to keep the family warm through the long winter months. It was also used for gathering corn, spreading manure; hauling fertilizer that we had purchased while in town, stoking and hauling cotton to the gin, and with special hay frame across the bed you could haul a mighty big load of loose hay from the hayfield to the barn.

Speaking of hauling hay, the hay rides of today just aren't what they used to be when the ride was in a wagonload of loose hay pulled by two slow walking mules. That was certainly a whole lot more romantic than riding in a rubber-tired trailer loaded with bales of hay and pulled by a noisy tractor.

I remember the time when there were more mules and wagons around the church building during the big summer revivals than there were automobiles. There is a band that has a song about all the wagon tracks around the church being gone. It is one of my favorite bands and one of my favorite songs.

There were times when we had sick folks during bad weather and the road to our house was so bad that the doctor couldn't get there in his car and the mules would be hitched up to the wagon and the family would pick the doctor up and bring him to the house.

The day of the horse and mule drawn wagon and its usefulness is a day of the past. It is an era of the past. I can assure you that the old wagon I saw rotting away out in that field that day was once some families' pride and joy.

That wagon stands there now as a symbol of a slower, more peaceful way of life that is now gone.

**"Enjoy money while you have it.  
Shrouds don't have pockets."  
  
Virginia Clay Clopton's mother**

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# Heard On the Street

by *Cathey Carney*



Our beautiful boy from last month's Photo of the Month was **David Nuttall**, a very talented and unique artist working out of Lowe Mill who actually paints "plausible fictitious" maps on the skin of models and he's been getting lots of attention worldwide. So proud to have him in Huntsville and as a neighbor. David and his wife **Jodi** have a historic home here and love it. Our first caller to identify David was **Janice Shrader** who is a busy mom to 3 kids and has made many trips to Lowe Mill over the years. My tip gave it away!

The recent hurricanes were just devastating to Texas, Florida and Georgia and so many people are trying hard to rebuild their lives. I'm extremely proud to hear of the thousands of **Alabama volunteers - Utility workers, medical people, construction folks - just volunteers in general** who have traveled to the areas that need aid and want to do whatever they can to help. I don't care what is said about Alabama - we have some

of the most generous, caring and kind people in the U.S. And many of these volunteers had to take off from work several weeks at a time just to help others.

I had a few callers who found my hidden baby raccoon on p. 38 (September issue) but the very first to call was **Glenn Butler** of Meridianville. Glenn (a lady) will be 93 in January. You have some good eyes, sweetie! Glenn moved here in 1959 with her family and worked starting in 1960 at the PX and Food Exchange at Redstone Arsenal, and has 4 daughters. Congratulations to you!

First out-of-town caller was **Jimmy Hill** of Lexington, from Hurricane Valley. He worked for Martin Industries for 43 years when they were here on Governors Drive. Then Bob Freeman was a winner, from Owens Cross Roads. He worked on Redstone Arsenal for 35 years before he retired, but still likes to work a little part time. Congratulations!

Our dear friend and writer for "Old Huntsville" passed away on Aug. 26. **Malcolm Miller** had been living at Tut Fann Veterans Home for a year or so and had just had a huge 90th birthday party there. In addition to being a song writer, musician, postman, barber and Navy Vet, Malcolm possessed that special talent of being able to tell a good story that touched people's hearts, and write it like he told it. He has had a story in nearly every issue of Old Huntsville. I will continue with that tradition and as long as I have stories that Malcolm has given me over the years, each issue will have one of his tales. He leaves so many who will never forget him, but sur-

vivors include wife **Lois Miller**, daughter **Marie Bittle**; sons **Doug Miller (Susan)** and **Tommy Miller (Lisa)**; nephews **Austin Miller** and **Beirne Miller**; 6 grandchildren, 7 great grandchildren and many other family members.

**Harrison Brothers Hardware** is a destination for many locals as well as visitors to Huntsville, getting its start in 1897. Well, they are adding an interesting event to their schedule, it's called "Music in the Loft" and the first one will be held on Oct. 5 at 6pm. There is limited seating and they will be sold out. The very talented musicians **Ricky j. Taylor** and the **Live Roots Ensemble** will perform - a folk, country and bluegrass band. In addition, **Melissa Ford Thornton** will be the star of the Storytelling Segment. Very fun - for more information call (713) 927-1295.

I had some business to take care of recently at Redstone Federal Credit Union on So. Pkwy just north of Gibsons BBQ and met the nicest lady. Diana Perrin works as Member Services Assistant and she was knowledgeable, friendly and made me feel like I was her best customer. She is a great representative of RFCU!

We wish a Happy 90th Birthday to **Mr. Richard Campbell** of

## 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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This beautiful toddler was born in downtown Huntsville and grew up to be a very famous lady.



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McDavid, FL who will have a big party hosted by his family. He loves the North Alabama area and all of the rich history here.

Many remember the beautiful Police Department dispatcher from 1967-1992 here in Huntsville. When she retired she was Sgt. Supervisor. **Shirley Frazier** passed away at 82, on Aug 20. She was a feisty, strong and loving Mom to her kids; daughter **Ann Frazier Hill**, sons **Steven (Ginger) Frazier** and **John Frazier**; an aunt **Edna Smith**, two grandchildren and three great grandchildren. She was **Tom Carney's** favorite aunt and she will forever be missed.

Remember that wooden darning egg that we used to have in the old days and you could repair holes in socks? Well I had a sock that sprung a hole recently and rather than throw the pair away I used a light bulb. It worked perfectly, was the right size and shape and I saved a little bit of \$\$!

We had a request from a reader. A lady picked up a dictionary from a thrift shop and when she got home found it was a child's dictionary. It was dated 1942, and she noticed some writing from a **Robert Graham Jones** who lived in the 700 block of East Clinton Ave. in Huntsville and was a 7th grader in 1942. Kelly hates to throw the book away especially if it might mean something to Robert's family. Please contact me at 256.534.0502 if you know anything about the family and would maybe want this little dictionary.

For those who are telling us that this winter will be another warm one, here's what the 2018 Farmers Almanac has to say:

*"Looking ahead, just for fun, the Old Farmer Almanac predicts a cold and snowy winter for the northern half of Alabama. This is based on a 225-year-old formula used by the Almanac, which boasts an 80% accuracy rate.*

*According to the Almanac, the 2017-2018 winter will be much colder than last winter. Much of the Southern region can expect cold and wet conditions, which increases the possibility of some of the precipitation falling in the form of snow."*

The Historic Lowry House typically has many visitors to their Fright Nights in October but this year looks to be scarier than ever. I hear that release forms need to be signed for younger people and that it is SUPER scary. If you get really scared - don't go! Be sure and check their website for more information - [www.historiclowry-house.com](http://www.historiclowry-house.com)

I was so sorry to hear that **Art Crawford** of Huntsville had passed away on April 19th. He and wife **Fran** lived in one of the historic districts here and Fran still makes that her home. We send love to her and I know Art is safely tucked away in her heart.

Don't forget the very popular, annual **Maple Hill Cemetery Stroll** on Oct. 15, Sunday, from 2-4:30 with the Grand Stroll of characters starting at 1:45 pm. Characters stand over their graves and come to life, telling tales.

I think the most beautiful mums I ever got last year were from **Bennett's Nursery** on North Parkway - they are huge and come in the most delicious colors. They have them now and they add so much to a porch or outdoor garden.

**Jan Williams** has a knack for

telling funny stories about the early days of the Historic Districts, and if you have a chance to join one of his walking tours, you won't regret it. His next tour will be on Oct. 7 starting at 10am, in the 5 Points District. They're all free and very entertaining. For more information visit [Huntsville.org/walkingtours.com](http://Huntsville.org/walkingtours.com) to find out where to meet for the tour.

Do you remember **Kalea Park** in Meridianville? It's just east of the Huntsville/Madison County Executive Airport there. It had its beginnings in the 1930s and was known as the Kiwanis Park originally. Then it became the Boys and Girls Club and then named Kalea Park. Well the owner is putting together a history of the park and needs your memories of it! Did you go there years ago as a kid, or bring your family there? Did you take pictures? He'd sure love to hear from you and then share it with everyone. Please call the **Hill family (Tillman Hill's son)** at 256.990.6131.

There are so many scam calls coming through now. Remember NEVER give financial or personal information over the phone - people who call you will be very convincing and once you've given them control, or info about you, it can't be taken back. NEVER allow anyone to tell you they want to take control of your computer so they can "fix" it. They want to steal from you. It's a sad world now when you just can't trust anyone.

Have a safe October and remember to support our local shops & small businesses. They need us!

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## Hot Comfort Foods

### Fried Catfish

- 4 T. olive oil
- 1 c. cornmeal
- 1/2 c. plain flour
- 2 t. salt & pepper
- 1/2 t. garlic powder
- 1/2 t. onion powder
- 1 lb. boneless catfish filets
- Lemon wedges

Combine cornmeal, flour, salt, pepper, garlic and onion powders in a paper bag. Put 3 or 4 pieces of fish in the bag and shake well to coat. Heat olive oil in deep sauce pan til a piece of the fish sizzles when you put it in. Fry fish til coating is light brown and fish is tender. Garnish with lemon wedges and fresh parsley.

For a true Southern treat, try this with homemade hot hush-puppies and Vidalia onions.

### Potatoes in Wine Cream

- 4 red potatoes, sliced and cooked
- 2 T. melted butter
- 1 lrg. sliced sweet onion
- 2/3 c. milk
- 1 c. shredded mozzarella cheese
- 1 T. flour
- 1/2 t. sugar
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 1/4 c. dry white wine

Saute potatoes in butter for 10 minutes. Mix and add remaining ingredients except for the wine. Cook for 5 more minutes, then add the wine and stir well.

### Cabbage with Sausage

Boil quartered cabbage in salted water. Fry a pound of sausage, put it in a deep dish and

cover with the cabbage. Top with 4 teaspoons of butter, sprinkle with black pepper. Set in a warm oven (200 degrees) for 4 hours and season to taste.

### Spicy Chipped Beef Dip

- 1 c. chopped pecans
- 3 t. melted butter
- 1 8-oz. pkg. cream cheese, softened
- 1/4 c. milk
- 2-1/2 oz. dried beef, minced
- 1/2 t. garlic powder
- 1/2 t. cayenne pepper, ground
- 1 8-oz. carton sour cream
- 4 t. minced fresh onion

Saute pecans in butter til lightly browned, drain on paper towels and set aside. Combine the remaining ingredients, mix well. Spoon into greased 1-1/2 quart baking dish.

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- Hot or Mild Sauce.
- 8 buns.

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- Two Pounds of BBQ Pork,
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- Three Pounds of BBQ Pork
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Top with the pecans and bake at 350 degrees for 20 minutes. Serve hot with assorted crackers or Bugles. Keep warm in a chafing dish.

This also is really good with a sprinkle of ground cayenne pepper for bite!

### Hot Crunchy Chicken

- 1 carton sour cream
- 2 t. lemon juice
- 2 T. Worcestershire sauce
- 1 T. celery salt
- 1 T. paprika
- 8 chicken breasts
- 1-1/2 c. herb stuffing mix
- 1/4 c. butter, melted

Combine sour cream, lemon juice, Worcestershire sauce, celery salt and paprika. Dredge the chicken in the sour cream mix, then in the dry stuffing mixed with butter.

Place on a large greased cookie sheet and drizzle with remaining butter. Bake at 350 degrees for an hour.

### Bacon Stuffed Mushrooms

1 8-oz. pkg. cream cheese, softened

1 lb. Oscar Meyer bacon, cooked crisp and crumbled

1 lb. fresh whole mushrooms  
Remove stems from the mushrooms. Mix cream cheese and bacon crumbles and stuff the mushroom caps with the mixture, with caps open end up. Bake at 350 degrees for 15 minutes and mushrooms are tender.

### Granny's Fresh Apple Cake

- 2 eggs
- 2 c. sugar
- 2 sticks butter, softened
- 1/2 t. salt
- 1 t. baking soda
- 1 T. ground cinnamon
- 3 c. plain flour
- 3 c. apples; cored, peeled and chopped fine
- 1-1/2 c. chopped pecans

Mix the first 6 ingredients thoroughly, then mix in flour. Mix in apples and nuts. Butter a Bundt pan heavily. Spoon mixture evenly in pan and bake at 325 degrees for 1 hour.

Cake is very dense and moist. A broom straw should come out clean when pushed into center of cake.

If you want to drizzle with a lemony thin frosting, it goes well with the apples. (Lemon juice and powdered sugar to taste, mix thin and drizzle over cake).

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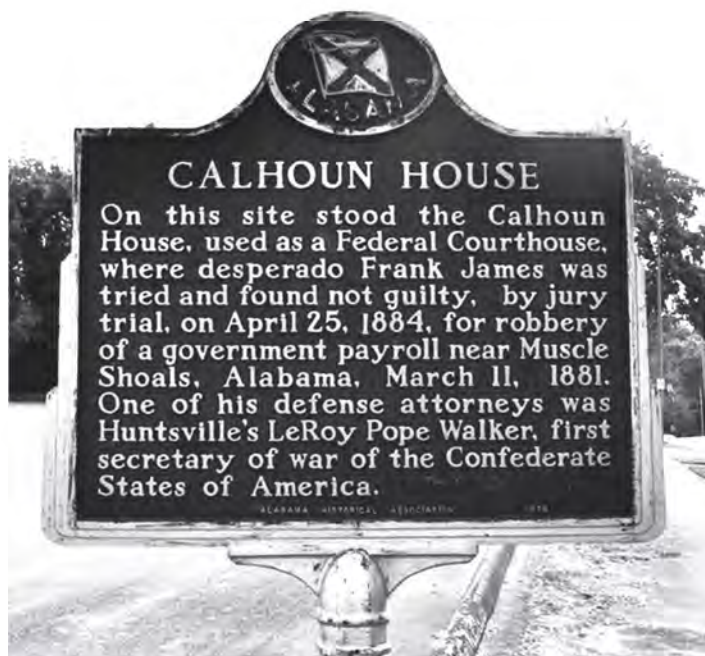
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## North Alabama Guerrillas and Good Guys

by Gladys Hodge Sherrer

My great-uncle Josiah "Bill" Williams shot the sheriff, thus saving his brother, my great-grandfather John's life. That news was shocking. In time, I discovered more. John, later known as "Tater John," and Josiah were true life "war babies" in my Civil War novel, "Trapped in the Crossfire". The book reveals a few family secrets – mine and yours, if your ancestors were Southern. Blending history with legend, I erred on the side of truth, swallowed my pride, and wrote.

After Josiah "Bill" was acquitted for shooting the jealous Cullman sheriff gunning for John, legend tells how the brothers joined Jesse James and the Gang, holing up in a hidden cove on the side of Sand Mountain. Could this be true?

19th century North Alabama was like the wild west, but the James Gang was on a decline in the late 1870's, these former Confederate guerrillas dead or arrested. Jesse struck Florence, Alabama, on March 11, 1881, robbing the U.S.

**"The world would be better off if people tried to become better. And people would become better if they stopped trying to become better off."**

**Peter Maurin**

Army Corps of Engineers of payroll for the Muscle Shoals canal project, according to Nashville Librarian Jim Siburt. Before Jesse could be tried for the robbery, a fellow gang member, Robert Ford, killed Jesse. Jesse's brother, Frank, was tried, however, but was acquitted for the payroll robbery in 1884 in Huntsville. If the Williams brothers were in the Gang, they used aliases.

What about the hideout? According to al.com reporter Kelly Kazek, "Some of the most rumored James Gang hideout locations were near Gadsden in Etowah County, near Guntersville in Marshall County, and Mentone in DeKalb County." Today, there's a cove called Penitentiary Hollow on the side of Sand Mountain near Gadsden, rumored to be the spot where the Gang hid.

If the Williams brothers were in the Gang, something happened, abruptly changing their lives. They, along with their brother Milton, became Seventh-Day Adventist preachers. I found more hints of their story a few years ago while researching.

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Union gunboats destroyed towns along the Tennessee River during the Civil War, but in the late 1800's, another craft plied Southern waters. The Morningstar, a Northern missionary launch with a printing press, sailed down river. Along its route, schools were founded. In Huntsville, these missionaries started today's Oakwood University. On a one hundred forty-acre farm on Sand Mountain at Eliza, Alabama, they started an intermediate school, and further upriver near Chattanooga, Tennessee, today's Southern Adventist University.

Family legend tells of a man on a white horse coming to John's farm, studying scripture, and departing. John, believing the Bible to be the words of God, shot all of his hogs. That day forward, he preached on Saturdays in the church his parents founded, and boarded a train for church conferences in Tennessee. "Tater John", known for his sweet potato farming, sold plants to neighbors, though never on Saturday. Rather, he gave double to his Friday customers. He

died in 1930, a prosperous man, yet in 1998 was still remembered as "Honest John", a Seventh-Day Adventist. Of Josiah "Bill", it's said he wore six-shooter pistols on both hips until the day he died. Maybe the rumor of him preaching is just that.

Writing family history can be a fright. Often, I ponder how Uncle Bill saved my greatgrandfather John's life by shooting the sheriff. If he hadn't, I wouldn't be here, and their heart-stirring story "Trapped in the Crossfire" would never have come to light.



**Trapped in the Crossfire Book Launch**

**The Public is invited**

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WHERE: Administration Building  
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Please join this casual mix-and-mingle, and the Author reading from *Trapped in the Crossfire*. First Edition signed copies will be sold and proceeds donated to Snead State Community College Foundation's Legacy Scholarship Fund in memory of Sarah and Oliver Perry Williams, whose true life Civil War story is the book *Trapped in the Crossfire*.

*Trapped in the Crossfire* by Gladys Hodge Sherrer is absolutely the best narrative of life on the home front in the hill country of North Alabama that has been published in the last 10 years! — Arley McCormick, Tennessee Valley Civil War Roundtable

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# UNSUNG HERO

by Noel D. Tallon

*Unsung hero: a person who makes a substantive yet unrecognized contribution.*

It's the Great Depression. A 17-year-old Oklahoma farm boy walks down the red clay road toward home. He carries a stick of baloney to his six siblings. Not much but something to eat at the end of a long day. His mother had passed just the year before. His father, an alcoholic, was never home.

The boy was tired from school, an afternoon working in town, and an evening job feeding the neighbors cows in exchange for hay to feed his cow. He gazed at the yellow ball in the sky. Clear and bright on this early evening. The craters on it almost forming the design of a man's face. Wouldn't it be interesting if someone could go there? No that's for comic books. No time for nonsense. Home and bed are calling.

The boy is called to the war in Europe. Later working as a soda jerk and taking college classes, he gets the chance of a lifetime (a job in Wichita some 400 miles away and from there to many other places in this great land including Huntsville). Little did he know.

It is the mid 60's. A

young mother rises early and gets her children ready for school and her husband off to work. She notices the late moon but no time for that. She boards a dilapidated city bus to Holiday Homes. Her job is to clean the home of a working husband and wife. She wonders who these people are that talk with a funny accent and drive new cars? Little does she know.

Another young man will hold to the back of a truck all day and collect waste. Most

often the ball is still in the sky when he goes to work. A hot, tiring and dirty job few want to do but honorable as any. Little does he know.

A ten-year-old boy rides his bike to the newspaper outlet on Drake Avenue. He delivers the news to Holiday Homes while the ball is still high in the sky. Little does he know.

Another young woman grew up in the city they call Huntsville. She finished high school and worked her way through college. She also gets her children and



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**Old Proverb**



husband off for the day. She notices the ball in the sky as do the others but her thoughts are the chaos of a day teaching an overfilled class of children (most not from here). Little does she know.

Back to the 30's. A young man looks at that same ball. He dreams that someday a man could walk there. Maybe he could make it happen. He becomes a scientist. But politics lead to a major war. He is not interested in politics. He just wants to live his dream. The war ends and he is brought to a sleepy town in North Alabama. A small city so insignificant that they build an Interstate highway closer to its neighbor.

But this young man, much older now, does know he cannot do it by himself.

It is July 20,1969 and all TVs are tuned to one thing. A different young man does something still not believed by many. He leaves his footprints on that big yellow ball in the sky. Of course, HE knows he did not do it by himself.

Kudos seldom go to the butcher, the baker, or the candlestick maker. But WE know even if they don't that thousands of

people figure into a dream come true. We know and our farm boy, maid, sanitation worker, paper boy, and teacher ALL should know that they had their part in putting foot prints where no one had ever gone before and few since.

"That's one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind." Neil Armstrong.




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# GOING BACK HOME

by Charita Smith Avery

I grew up in the 1940s and '50s in Lincoln Village, with both parents working in the cotton mill. There were 3 Lincoln villages --"above the mill" (where I was born on Davidson Street), "below the mill" and the "new village" off Abington Avenue.

One thing that made my growing up in the Village so special was that all the kids around went to Lincoln School and they went to one of the three churches (Baptist, Church of Christ, Methodist) in the neighborhood. We were all of the same economic status (mostly poor but didn't realize it), and we knew who lived in every house up and down the street. It was a wonderful time of running through the yards, going house to house to play, culminating in the evening gathered under the street light to play hide and seek.

A familiar sound was the train whistle when the train passed near by. I remember running to the edge of the embankment on the railroad tracks to signal the engineer to blow his whistle. We actually had "hobos" from the train come to the house looking for food and mother would feed them on the back doorsteps. Of course, there are too many memories to mention here, but it was a wonderful time and environment to grow up in.

Fast forward – after my marriage to James (Buddy) Avery, the birth of our son, Denis James (died in a car accident at 19 years in 1990), and then Buddy's death on 11/11/14 after 53 years of marriage, I found myself alone in a large house in the country. As providence would

have it, in looking for a place to move while downsizing, I found myself in the perfect house for me in a familiar location on Peck Road. I feel as if I've come back home after 55 years away.

In my "little house" I have found comfort, security, contentment and joy. I actually love the sounds and sights of the city and the close proximity of neighbors. I love having a special neighbor Lois Raney, with a "neighbors' gate" between our back yards for passing through with shared food or a cup of coffee on the back porch.

One familiar and comforting sound is to hear that train

whistle again after I lie down at night. It doesn't sound lonesome to me - it sounds as though it was welcoming me back home.

Much has changed about the Village over the years, but in my memory, I still see the hustle and bustle of all these good people, sitting on their porch, exchanging conversations across the yard. I've already discovered neighbors I attended Lincoln School with and had not seen since.

I hope through the N.E. Civic Association meetings, to rebuild some friendships from the old mill village days, as well as make some new ones.



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## Duck Springs Boys Survive Ill-Fated Regiment

by Gladys Hodge Sherrer

How thrilled, finding my great-great-grandfather listed in the roster of the Civil War's 27th Alabama Regiment, but few regiments in the Civil War Confederacy were as beset with trouble as the one known as "ill-fated" by its soldiers, whose comrades were buried in Chicago's Oakwoods Cemetery within weeks of enlistment. Who were those men of the 27th who forced my great-great-grandfather, Oliver Perry Williams, into battle? This writer was on a quest for answers.

According to Alabama Department of Archives and History, the 27th Alabama Regiment was organized when numerous North Alabama companies— including students of Florence's prestigious LaGrange Military Academy, the "West Point of the South"—flocked to St. Heenan, Tennessee in the winter of 1861. They were soon ordered to defend Fort Donelson, where those men, not dead from battle or in hospitals with disease, surrendered to the Federals before barely a month passed. The prisoners were taken to Camp Douglas in Chicago on frozen Lake Michigan. Survivors of the Camp were exchanged. Battle after battle wiped out the majority of the 27th, and numerous times they consolidated with other regiments, until a remnant of boney, ragged, barefoot men were paroled at Greensboro, North Carolina. My ancestor was among those few who walked home.

While writing my book I decided to use actual names, the men of the 27th who fought alongside my ancestor. Then, I noticed a trend. Every man who mustered in at Duck Springs, a village in Will's Valley near Gadsden, survived the War. How did they beat the awful odds, fighting

with inferior weaponry against superior numbers in the hottest battles, the Atlanta siege, the Battle of Franklin and Nashville? How did they survive the filth, no shelter, extreme weather and little nourishment? In my book, I call the Duck Springs boys "praying men." I have a hunch that a miracle or two happened.

Why a miracle? Hard times offer God opportunity to grab man's attention. The Great Awakening, a religious revival in Europe and America resulting in religious fervor, was ongoing. In every Confederate soldier diary, men tell of the preaching during lulls between battles. Missionary societies distributed Bibles. Chaplains were assigned and often led the men in prayer. One soldier noted that enemy shells never fell onto them when they were in worship.

Perhaps your ancestor battled alongside mine, and fought with the 27th Alabama Regiment or one of those regiments cobbled together from survivors.

I hope you will read "Trapped in the Crossfire". How thrilled you will be to discover your family's name therein, to hear "the voice" of your ancestors portrayed in this fictionalized historical account. Here are the names of the Duck Springs survivors noted in my book and who surely helped save my ancestor's life: Captain W. B. Beeson, Private B. Y. Burk, Private Jasper Waldrop, Corporal J. H. Thrasher, Private M. J. Thrasher, Sergeant J. A. D. Murdock, Private J. S. Keener, Sergeant E. H. Engle, G. W., Second Lieutenant G. W. Cunningham.



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# A Human Cucumber!

*From 1880 newspaper*

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

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

Of course the news of this strange phenomenon spread far and wide, and the doctors and scientific minds visited him at his home in Huntsville from various sections of the coun-

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*Eleanor Keith*

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try. One prescribed one thing and one something different. One wished to bleed him; one wished to cut the cucumbers off; another said not to let him have any water and they would just dry up. Another said to stick a hole in each cucumber and they would die and a new skin form; another wished to wrap him up in a mammoth poultice of barnyard manure and onions and draw them all to one head; another said they ought to be scattered.

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

The doctors procured the consent of the family to permit an autopsy to be made for the benefit of science, and they cut into him with their knives.

To their utter amazement they found no flesh, no blood, no bones, no muscles, no sinews, no veins, no arteries - but only found one solid mass of cucumber seeds. It was so remarkable that it would be useless to have the remains interred and foolish to have them cremated and so the widow concluded that she would keep them in the house.

She had the corpse hung up by the hair in the barn. The next spring some of the children picked up some of the seed which had dropped in the barn and planted them.

These seeds grew rapidly and matured, and instead of being like the par-

ent stock or cucumbers, they were pure pickles, and needed no vinegar, no pepper, no salt, nothing but simply packing into barrels and shipping to market to sell.

Of course, news of this discovery spread rapidly and multitudes of applications for seed flowed in like the incoming tide, and thus enabled the disconsolate widow and children to turn the cause of their bereavement into a means of maintenance and support.

The wind of affliction was thus tempered to these shorn lambs. They sold small packets of seed for big prices and could not supply the demand. The vine grown from the new seed is a glossy dark perennial evergreen, and can be propagated from cuttings, blooms in the spring and bears in the summer a bountiful crop of absolutely perfect pickles.

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# The Lakewood Boys and Their Legacy

by Bill Turney

I grew up in Huntsville when it was a lot like Mayberry and life was not only good but it was safe. In about 1955 my parents and I moved into a new house in Lakewood subdivision on North Memorial Parkway near Mastin Lake Road and I turned 10 years old. We had previously lived on Walker Street near the old National Guard armory and I was used to riding my bike all over Huntsville but the new house was pretty far out. I had to find something else to do closer to our new house and that is where the Lakewood Boys came into play and what I call the Lakewood Legacy was born.

There was a vacant red dirt field next to the new Lakewood Elementary School and a group of us boys gathered there to play baseball. I don't know whose idea it was or how it all started but perhaps it was just that we wanted to play baseball. I was 2-3 years younger than the other boys but was in the same grade in school and age was less important than what grade we were in.

The problem was that we didn't have a place to play so we decided to try the vacant lot next to the new school. It was on the corner and appeared to belong to no one, at least in the eyes of 10-12 young boys, so we decided to make it our field of dreams. However, playing baseball on an uneven, rocky

field with no backstop was less fun than we anticipated so we decided to do something about it.

Over a couple of summers with some building materials (piece of chain link fence, a few concrete blocks, some rope and some 2X4's) that were either "donated or "appropriated" we manage to create a "drag net" with the chain link fencing weighted down with a few concrete blocks and pulled on ropes by 3-4 of us at a time. We managed to somewhat level the field. A little work with a hoe and shovel managed to create a playable field where we could field ground balls without hurting ourselves.

Still no backstop but a little chicken wire and some poles gave us enough to keep every missed ball from going into the street. The outfield was manageable after a few run-throughs with our lawn mowers ( several of us cut grass for money so we had mowers).

All was fine but there were only 10-12 of us which meant at best 6 on 6 teams and we longed to be a real team. Our dreams were bigger than our assets or so it appeared. We had no coach, no equipment and no league.

**"Stress is when you wake up screaming and then you realize you haven't been to sleep yet."**

**Libby Gerald, Athens**

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Then one day someone told Buttermilk Johnson, the director of the West Huntsville YMCA, about our group so we rode our bikes across town to the Y and met with Buttermilk. He listened to us and offered us two things: first he would allow us to play in the West Huntsville YMCA league as a "real team" and he offered us a pile of mismatched uniforms. Some were grey with red stripes, some had blue stripes and some had no stripes but to us there were just like our favorite major league teams so we were officially "in heaven".

We still had no coach but Buttermilk took us under his wing and gave us a schedule and a little guidance and we began to play. Each of us had our hero and mine was Willie Mays and I tried to emulate his basket catch but honestly wasn't very good at it. Other heroes were Nellie Fox, Mickey Mantle, Pee Wee Reese and others.

We played our games at Optimist Park over near Rison and at Merrimack Field and later on as we got older, we got to play at the big field on the Arsenal which had major league dimensions. We were living the good life! We bummed rides, hitch hiked and rode our bikes to get to our games.

After a couple of years I think we got a coach and one of the dads started helping out. We never were really all that good but we did have a couple of good players so we could get a taste of success occasionally.

Since I was younger than the other guys I was always playing above my age group and one year Buttermilk asked me if I was really only 12. When I told him yes but I was playing with the 14 year old guys, he offered me a spot on the little league all star team even though I was playing on a Pony League team. I jumped at the chance and in our first game we played an out-of-state team at a field in Gurley. I was bigger than many of the other 11-12 year old kids and was used to playing against 13-14 year old boys so the pitching in Little League was much easier to hit and I hit a home run.

The funny part was the coach from the other team running the bases with me and screaming for my birth certificate. He apparently had been told I was a "ringer"! Clearly, I was not a ringer for my awesome talent but it was fun for a moment!

We played or practiced every day for 2-3 summers and drank Big Topp Colas

and ate chunks of bologna and cheese with crackers which we bought from the peddler truck which came by the field around lunch time. What a time for a group of boys who just wanted to have fun! Quite a difference between today's highly organized and equipped teams.

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I moved away from Huntsville in 1968 as I sought to make my way in life and it was several years later that I happened to be visiting my Mother in Huntsville when I drove by the old dirt field and was shocked to see a sports complex! There were concession stands, dug-outs, lights, real fields with fences and lines and bases and backstops and even stands for fans to sit and watch a game. There were several teams playing and they had professional looking uniforms and equipment.

I stopped and could not hold back the tears and when my son asked me why I was crying I began to tell him the story of the Lakewood Boys and the Lakewood Legacy we had left behind.


There are no markers or plaques marking our existence or acknowledging our contribution but I know that what we did led to something much bigger than we ever dreamed. Someone really did build it and then a lot of "someones" came and played the game. Hopefully they have enjoyed the Lakewood Legacy as much as we did. I don't think I can name everyone and for that I am truly sorry but here is at least a good start:

- Charles Collins
- Milton Davis
- Terry Robertson
- Doug Robinson
- Bill Cox
- Glenn Wallace
- Philip Bell


Billy Turney and 2-3 more whose names I have forgotten over time. I can still see some faces but no longer can recall the names so I ask your forgiveness.

The above recollection is mine and mine alone but I know that each of the Lakewood Boys have similar memories. We never became major league players or big stars but we enjoyed life, learned to play well with others and, I think, left a legacy for future generations.

I am now 72 years old but I still remember the thrill of "Play Ball!" I have been married to my wife for 48 years and we split our time between Houston, Texas and San Miguel de Allende, Guanajuato, Mexico but I still have an attachment for those summers when 10-12 of us lived the dream and left our mark, not in record books, but in the lives of young boys and girls who now play where we first lit the fire!



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# HALLOWEEN IN THE SOUTH

by Elizabeth Wharry



October and Halloween have always meant hot apple cider and cinnamon sugar donuts. A sweet treat on a chilly afternoon spent raking leaves or after an evening of trick or treating.

Moving here from Kansas in 2009 brought many changes, including the way we enjoy Halloween. When we moved here, our boys were in first and third grades. They had friends go trick or treating with...under adult supervision. Imagine the pleasant surprise we experienced of not having to wear heavy coats over costumes! Another pleasant surprise was the way folks decorated...much more extravagant here than in Kansas.

As the years have rolled on, the boys have grown. They are now in ninth and eleventh grades. The yard decorations have also grown.

Sadly, I see fewer kids roaming around collecting sweets and treats. I think this is from a combination of kids growing up, and area churches sponsoring trunk or treat night. Despite having less visitors on Halloween, I will continue to light up the night. The little ghosties, goblins, princesses and pirates will always find a welcome and a treat!

Happy Halloween!

## Crunchy Caramel Cheesecake

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

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

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

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

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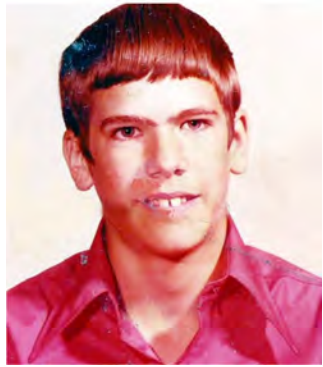


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# A Tribute to My Oldest Son, John Henry Dill

by Harry Dill



My oldest son John Henry Dill was born on June 8, 1959 at the Huntsville Hospital and delivered by Doctor Baker whose office was right across the street from the hospital. The maternity ward was very busy and they were doing a very good job for all patients. They were very efficient.

I had Blue Cross and Blue Shield Insurance at that time and it covered everything. Private room, doctors and medicines everything. I still remember that the premiums were only \$5.50 a month for Blue Cross and Blue Shield, a far cry from today's prices.

We were living in the house that I had built at 1705 Toll Gate Road (later changed to Monte Sano Drive). We wanted to name John the Bible name of John and my Aunt Dorothy wanted us to name him Henry after Henry Chase where she worked at Chase Nursery, so we named him John Henry. Baby John was a good baby and grew rapidly. When he was about one year old he could walk and talk a little. When John was two years old or a little older one day he was sitting on the concrete block steps in the back of our house and we all heard a loud noise and the ground shook for a little while. John was puzzled and couldn't understand what had happened. I explained to him over time that the German Scientists out at Redstone Arsenal were testing a powerful rocket engine. They were conducting these tests there for quite a while.

The lot that I had built our house on was rather small, only 50 x 75 feet. I had planted some fruit trees there and they were getting too big for that small lot so I decided to sell the house and buy a place in the country where I could have a large garden and plenty of room for fruit trees.

So I sold my house and lot to Mrs. Burgess. She made a down payment and gave me a black and white Ford Fairlane car and made monthly

payments to me of \$20.00 a month. My wife and I and John loaded in the car and drove down to Fayette County, Alabama. I had found a run-down country house on small farm of 9 acres which I bought. I had found it in the Alabama Farmer's Bulletin which was published monthly free of charge.

The farm was all grown up in trees and brush. I bought a large buck saw at a Winfield hardware



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store that had a good Swedish blade. I cut the trees, some of them big oak trees, with that buck saw and started clearing the land for a garden and space for fruit trees too. I cut up the trees into logs and burned them in the fireplace in winter for heat, also split some of the logs for stove wood for the kitchen as we had a wood cook stove back then.

The house was just a four-room building and electricity was only in the living room with only one plug in. I bought a book from Sears, Roebuck that showed how to wire a house and made four circuits and had electric lights in all four rooms and two plug-ins in each room also.

John was growing and getting bigger all the time. One day I took him with me to a neighbor's house and parked the car in front on a small hill and left John inside the car in the front seat. John was playing with the steering wheel and he accidentally knocked it out of gear and the car started rolling back down the little hill. John jumped out and tried to hold the car back, which of course he couldn't do. The car stopped by itself only a little way where the hill ended.

We had a black and white TV and got two or three stations on the antenna. There was a lot of things about David "Davy" Crockett on at the time and I got John a little coon skin cap which he liked a lot and wore it often. He looked good in it too!

One winter we had a big snow of about a foot deep. The road at this time was a dirt road and a road grader had just started up the hill by the side of our house when it started snowing. It snowed so fast that the grader only got halfway up the hill and couldn't go any further. The driver walked away from it and left. We were snowed in for a week! No cars went up or down the road for a week so the snow did not have any car tracks on it, just pure white snow. We were snowed in! We made some snow ice cream. Around the end of the week we were running out of logs for the fireplace so I had to go out and cut down some trees in the snow. They would fall in the snow, go out of sight and I had to lift them up on a saw horse and cut them up into logs for the fire place! I burned them with the dry wood that we had left because they were green and would not burn very good by themselves.

When John got old enough I bought him a little gas powered three wheeler to ride. At first he road it around in the yard and when he got used to it he took it out on the road and rode all around the area of Fayette County where we lived. He enjoyed riding that three wheeler a lot and rode it all the time.

I had a little electric welder. I had run a electric wire from the house to the barn on a separate

circuit. I was welding on a piece for my David Bradley Walking tractor and got lazy and didn't put on the welders glasses. John was with me and he was looking at what I was welding too. I finished up and we ate supper and later went to bed. We had bunk beds in the back room and John was in the top bunk and I was in the bottom bunk. Our eyes started hurting awful bad and we could not sleep any that night because our eyes hurt so bad. Then next day we got better and were able to sleep the next night all right. God took care of us as it seems that our eyes were not permanently damaged by using that welder without glasses! We sure learned a good lesson.

Well John Henry grew up and moved to the city of Fayette. He was living there alone for

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a time. He worked for the city of Fayette. He wasn't going to church there.

I was looking for a church that believed in the Seventh Day Sabbath, but couldn't find any in Fayette County. One day I was getting a haircut at Freeman's Barber Shop that was next to the Post Office in Fayette when a man told me there was a Seventh Day church north of Winfield in Marion County. So I started out looking for that church.

In the first few days I couldn't find it. But one day I was going up the highway asking people if they knew where a Saturday church was and no one seemed to know but then as I got near Brilliant someone told me to turn off on a certain road and I would see the sign on the left side of that road and a driveway leading up to the church. I had finally found the church I was looking for!

I started attending that Church regularly. The people there were friendly and the Preacher, H. B. Nelson was a fine preacher and they had great music that was played with great talent to the glory of Yahvah (God). Leland Snow lead the music and he wrote some of the songs from Proverbs himself!. It was just a small country church but was exactly what I had been looking for! God provided me that!

I tried to get John to go to

that church with me but he gave some excuses. I tried though for a long time until one Sabbath he decided to go with me It brought tears of joy to my eyes!. He liked the church really well and he has been going ever since! He has been running the sound board for the music there for a lot of years now..I wrote a short poem about this. Here it is:

MY ELDEST SON FOUND GOD!

*For a lot of years I asked my son to come to Church with me; I think he just wanted to tell me don't bother me and hush.*

*I gave him a Bible and some books to read;*

*And I prayed to God to Bless my seed.*

*Then on one fine Sabbath Day I was very pleased to hear;*

*That he would come to*

*Church with me so dear.*

*I was so proud and happy that I could cry;*

*And I thanked God he had found HIM before I died.*

*Now every Sabbath my son comes to our Church;*

*He Loves to sing praises to God, Glorify HIM, honor HIM First;*

*Seek HIM with all your heart and soul and God you will surely find;*

*And His Holy Spirit He will give to us,*

*He is so Loving and Kind.*

John and his wife Debra were married in that Church by our Preacher, H. B. Nelson right before his death. John and his wife live near the City of Fayette in Fayette County now and still attend that church regularly each Sabbath. Praise Yahvah! May God continue to Bless him.

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# I Love My Fig Tree

by *Ted Roberts*

He should have stopped on the third day of Creation after He had designed and then fabricated the first Fig tree. I'm talking about the Creator. As we say on Passover - Dayenu - It is sufficient. Well, maybe one more piece of work to please the world with the watermelon - another glorious creation. Beautiful, nutritional, symmetrical, voluptuous - a blessing for mankind. If only he had stopped there. No wolves, hyenas, diphtheria, sour apple trees, or man. Watermelon, the perfect edible creation. You could eat it, wash with it, drink it. No, you couldn't use it as a weapon - no limbs - no trunk - no handle. You couldn't even throw it. Yes, for sure He should have stopped with the watermelon.

But no, He was seething with ideas to decorate His brave, new world. So, He had to populate it with people. A mistake, as He discovered a few aeons later. But correctable, as He demonstrated with the flood - messy, however. Trees and plants strewn all over the earth's meadows and fields - not to mention corpses of man and animal. I'll say it again. He should have stopped with Fig trees (and OK, maybe a few watermelon vines).

Crumpled roofs and heart attacks due to raking would be unheard of since the Fig tree is really a modest bush, not a tree. Takes up very little space and in a gale, would never dent your car, mash your roof, or fall on you or a visiting friend.

I've always had a fondness for figs. Truly, an equal opportunity fruit. One of the few fruits you can't buy in the grocery; equally unavailable to rich and poor. Why? Because their fragility prohibits shipping. Beyond the reach of money. Besides, all the common fruits - papayas, mangoes, kiwis, a dozen exotic varieties of the Creator's imagination - can be yours if you've got a few bucks - but not figs. Grow your own or do without. Or you can cultivate a friend who'll grow them for you.

That's why my friends hate me in December but love me in mid July. "Gee, Teddy, we don't get to see enough of you - me and Helen will drop by Wednesday." Yeah, with a sack, I'm thinking, and your three kids who can empty a bush in five minutes. The secret to my seasonal popularity is my three Fig trees. My friends are from New York City. Never had a fig in their life - which is as painful as never having a barbecue or a fresh-baked biscuit - till they visited one summer. We were showing off the back yard and one of their undisciplined kids plucked a fig. "Wow, that's great. What is it?"

"Oh, just a wild fruit - probably poisonous," I replied. Mama gasped. But this larcenous kid grabbed another. And another. And another. After

we revived Mama, I told her they were harmless unless you ate six or seven. She had a few, too.

The goodness of this rare (and sometimes "poisonous" fruit was a known fact thousands of years ago - even in Bible days. And every man shall have his own Fig tree, says the book. I paraphrase, but that's the general idea. If you've been blistering your feet on sand dunes for forty years, guess what the Master of the Universe dangles as an incentive before your eyes? No, not a cup of hot tea, but grapes and figs - a) to quench your thirst, and b) to fill your shrunken stomach. The height of peace and prosperity. Your own Fig tree! And I've got three of them.

As I say, the hero of our story is the modest, little tree. No big Magnolia blossoms for her; attracting pollination with vulgar advertising. "Hey, look at me, smell my perfume. Come on over. Let's pollinate." The Fig blossom is so small, that we humans can't even see it. And she's choosy. She doesn't welcome common backyard insect visitors like honey bees. He or she needs a special kind of wasp to fertilize the flower and make a fig. There's nothing common about the Fig tree.

And if you ever lose all your clothes in a game of strip poker - run for a Fig tree. It worked for Adam and Eve. Remember? Considering modesty, the Master of all trees chose that bush with big leaves.

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# Sold Out!

*Name Withheld*

*Originally Published in "Old Huntsville" years ago*

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

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

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

open. I really pulled, jammed.

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

Embarrassed by my outburst, I returned home.

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

That night I decided to again try my luck at this wild goose chase. This time I went to the Mullins on Andrew Jackson. I

had seen copies there earlier. As I neared the stand a sense of horror overtook me. The machine was empty. In my anger I gave the machine one well placed kick. An elderly lady who was coming out turned, looked me straight in the eye and said, "You're much too old to be acting like that!"

Really ashamed, my face red, I retreated to my car to plot. I was now determined not to fail at my task. I told myself that I could not go home without a copy.

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

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

Thank you.

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



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# PET TIPS FROM ANGEL

## Letting You Know He's in Pain



Do you ever wonder if your dog is in pain and just can't tell you? Wild and domestic animals show pain in a variety of ways. Their inability to communicate by speaking does not in any way diminish their potential to experience hurtful and unpleasant stimuli, and to try to let us know.

Pain in dogs can be caused by a variety of conditions including; injury, trauma or an underlying issue, like canine arthritis.

Be watchful for subtle signs that your dog is feeling pain. The most obvious signs of pain in dogs include:

- Anxiety
- Agitation
- Vocalization
- Trembling, limping
- Restlessness
- Increased breathing rate

**More subtle signs include:**

- Increased heart rate
- Reduced appetite
- Depression and Lethargy
- Reluctance to move

- Signs of pain and distress can vary tremendously among individual dogs, depending on their experience, age and environment. Some dogs have an amazing pain threshold; others are much more sensitive. But make no mistake: dogs both experience pain and show the signs of pain.

- Sadly, veterinary patients are unable to directly convey their feelings of pain. Therefore, identifying pain in canine patients is an important and sometimes difficult diagnosis. Treatment and therapy must aim to relieve the pain or at least make it tolerable.

- If you think your dog is in pain,

you should consult your veterinarian. In an emergency, follow these steps for first-aid care:

- If you have an older dog, look for symptoms that could suggest pain. If you suspect arthritis, see your veterinarian and get the diagnosis confirmed. One in five adult dogs suffers from arthritis, researchers say. Yet there is no reason these dogs can't enjoy full lives. There are several ways to address this malady, including fortified diets, dog-specific painkillers, and a broad array of

complementary therapies.

- The first indication of a dog's arthritic soreness is a decreased enthusiasm for exercise. Other signs are hesitation when jumping into the car, or difficulty getting up or down stairs. Limping is an inconsistent indicator; if a dog is sore in one leg, he limps. But if he has pain in both legs, he cannot limp because he can't transfer all his weight to either leg. Instead, he just has trouble moving. Dogs with arthritis slow down and tend to gain weight.

- Your vet may prescribe a number of nutritional supplements such as Vitamins A, E & C, Omega-3 fatty acids (salmon oil), foods containing glucosamine or chondroitin, and anti-inflammatory drugs that may help your pup with his aching joints.

- Your dog may be trying to tell you something is wrong by howling or whimpering, check him for visible injuries, then take him to the vet if it continues. There are different types of barks, howls, bays that mean your dog is trying to communicate with you and many pet owners can tell the difference in sounds. If you're ever not sure that something may or may not be wrong, a visit to the vet is usually a good choice.

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*From the Desk of  
Tom Carney*

# SIMP MCGHEE

*by Tom Carney*



Capt. Simp McGhee was a fiery character whose nautical exploits were many and about which legends abounded. He was a large man and sported an impressive belly of ample proportions.

Just before reaching Chattanooga, there was a treacherous three-mile area of the Tennessee River called "The Chute," known nowadays as Hale Town. It was dangerously rocky, swift, and narrow. This was long before the TVA widened and deepened the river so as to aid in flood control and navigation.

Most boat captains dreaded "The Chute," but Simp McGhee saw it as a challenge. An adventure, so to speak. Unlike many boats, not once had his snagged a boulder, bumped the banks in the fog, or run aground in a storm. And he piloted the James Trigg with the grace and skill that only a veteran boatman could muster.

"Grab your shovels, hold onto to your britches, and kiss your girlfriend g'bye," he would yell. "We're gonna race the devil up the chute!"

On one such occasion he was navigating "the chute" while the passengers watched anxiously. The deckhands quickly manned their stations. Four of the men grabbed heavy shovels and began shoveling coal furiously into the vessel's furnace.

Others took up positions along the flanks of the ship, ready to call out if the treacherous rocks appeared too close.

The chute had, between the time of the Civil War and the turn of the Twentieth century, become a veritable junk-yard of wrecked ships as one captain after another misjudged the dangerous rapids and deep-sixed their ships, or at least sent them to dry-dock for major repairs.

It was almost impossible for a steamboat to navigate upstream through the chute. The current was almost as swift as the fastest ship and any captain foolhardy enough to try it would find his ship standing still in the current, bouncing from one rock to the next.

In the 1800s, the government installed a winch at the head of the rapids which was used to pull steamboats safely through the dangerous waters. Unfortunately, there was usually a long line of boats waiting to be pulled through and Capt.

McGhee was not a patient man. McGhee, however, could navigate the chute in 30 minutes.

"Hold on, men!" he belted as the gushing water began to pummel the front of the vessel. "We're going in!"

While other boats waited in line, McGhee opened the throttle full-blast and barreled his way through the churning waters. The boat trembled. Every timber in its frame groaned in protest as it furiously battled the oncoming rapids.

When the boat was almost at a standstill, McGhee gave the order to "Lay the fat on!"

Instantly, the deckhands began stoking the furnace with four sides of fat that had been reserved especially for this occasion.

With its boilers red hot and sweat pouring from the begrimed deck hands, the ship

**"Push. If that doesn't work,  
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***Sign on Gurley gas station***



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once again started making headway. The steamboat was quivering from the strain it was under, but not McGhee. He simply gritted his teeth and ordered more coal thrown in the furnace. Then, with one final shudder, the Trigg shot through the last of the treacherous waters to safety.

Simp McGhee swaggered up and down the deck, with his head thrown back, laughing at the cowardly riverboat captains still waiting in line. Once again, he had proved that he was king of the Tennessee riverboat captains!

No one knew much about Simp McGhee's early days. Some said he was born into a wealthy family who had lost everything during the Civil War, while others claimed that his family had kicked him out at a young age. Years later, when anyone questioned him about his youth, he would throw his head back and loudly proclaim, "My Daddy was a gambling man, my Mama was the Tennessee River. I'm too mean for dry land, too gentle for the river, but when I die, there's gonna be hell to pay ... cause hell ain't big enough for both the Devil and Simp McGhee!"

As a youth, Simp was a rambunctious devil-may-care lad who got his first job as a riverboat deckhand at the age of 13. He supplemented his income by playing poker or by selling a few pigs that he just happened to find "running loose."

After he became a captain, his boat became known for serving the finest meals on the Tennessee River. Passengers never questioned why the pigs and chickens were always delivered late at night by suspicious looking characters.

With such shrewd business practices, it was little wonder that Simp became a prosperous businessman. He spent much of his time, between river trips, in saloons around Huntsville and

Decatur.

He opened his own tavern, which quickly became a success, where he served such culinary delights as S.I.T. beef (stolen in Tennessee beef).

He even opened a bordello in Decatur, rather than see Decatur's dollars spent in places like Huntsville and Athens. "It's my duty as a citizen to keep those dollars in Decatur," he reasoned when accosted by church people.

By this time, Simp's reputation had grown and there were few people who had not heard of him or his legendary exploits. One of his most famous escapades concerned a duel in the middle of the Tennessee River.

Simp's riverboat was running a few minutes behind schedule. Heading into Decatur, he saw another riverboat in front of him headed for the same dock. Rather than wait his turn, Simp called for more steam. With black smoke billow-

ing from the smokestacks, he quickly gained on the boat and cut in front of it, reaching the dock first and almost swamping the other boat. The captain of the other boat was furious.

Later that night both of the captains ran into one another at Simp's favorite watering hole. Seeing Simp sitting there nonchalantly drinking his beer enraged the captain even more. He marched up to Simp and demanded satisfaction.

"Wait a minute. You're challenging me to a duel?" Simp asked.

"Call it what you like!" snarled the enraged captain.

"Well, if you're challenging me, I reckon I have the right to pick the time and place," said McGhee. "We're both river men, so get your boat and I'll get mine and we'll meet in the middle of the river and shoot it out at 25 paces."

The bar emptied as news of the impending duel spread.

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Simp's boat left first, journeyed a few hundred yards and dropped anchor.

The other boat left shortly, with the enraged and slightly inebriated Captain standing on the foredeck, a dueling pistol in his hand. As the two boats approached each other, the fog began to clear. What the Captain saw then was enough to cause him to change his mind about dueling and to leave Decatur forever.

Standing unruffled on the foredeck of his boat was Simp McGhee, a mug of beer in one hand and a cigar in the other, casually aiming an old Civil War cannon.

Like so many other legendary figures, it was only a matter of time until Simp McGhee would meet his match. In his case, it would be the Federal Government.

After the Civil War, the government passed several navigation laws to ensure safety on the waterways. For years these laws were ignored, with the government having no way to enforce them. Finally, around the turn of this century, after hearing numerous complaints, the government decided to take action against Simp.

McGhee had been warned that government men were after him so he was not surprised when a well-dressed "Yankee-sounding" gent boarded the boat and asked to be led to the Captain. Simp, chewing on a cigar, told the agent he was sorry, but that the Captain wasn't on board.

"Simp's at his summer home. But don't worry, we're going right by there and I will

be glad to give you a lift."

The Federal man sat back to enjoy his trip and in about an hour the boat pulled up to an island.

"Right over there," Simp said. "Just go through that brush and you'll be almost on his front porch. And he'll be glad to give you a lift back to town."

Witnesses said the Federal man stumbled around Hobbs Island for two days before he realized he had already met the legendary Captain. He also became the first Federal agent to swim from Hobbs Island.

McGhee died at age 58 on June 16, 1917, just a few weeks after his riverboat piloting license was pulled by the government, citing "passenger endangerment" while running "the chute."

He was buried in a grave a few feet from the Tennessee River's northern shore near Guntersville. Black deck hands were his pallbearers.



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**"Growing old is hard work. The mind says, 'Yes', but the body says, 'What the hell are you thinking?'"**

*Joe Taylor, Huntsville*

# A Mother's Message to Bootleggers

from 1923 Huntsville newspaper



"The wretched bootlegger who sold the whiskey which my boy drank ought to be found and punished.

My boy was drunk, all right. He had drunk enough to apparently kill him but he didn't rob anybody."

The mother was Mrs. Florence Pack of Holmes Street, speaking about her son of fourteen, Walter Pack, who appeared in court Monday on a charge of highway robbery and drunkenness. The boy appeared to be very frightened and remorseful.

"They should have gotten the 16 year old boy from Athens who bought the whiskey and made my boy drunk and then claimed he was held up and robbed. He is the one who bought the whiskey. I don't know how much of it Walter drank, but it was a great deal. He was terribly sick and like to have died."

"He's in jail now waiting for them to carry him away to Nashville to the reform

school. I'm willing to let him go through it pretty hard, it will take worry off me and he's content to go. I've tried as hard as anyone to teach my boy right, but of course he gets into bad company and gets into trouble."

"If the officers could only find out who the bootlegger is who would sell small boys like that whiskey. That is the thing which needs to be done. I've talked with other mothers who are just heart-broken that their sons have fallen into the same situation. It's just not right."

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*Heard at recent wedding ceremony*

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# Mr. Sibley

by Austin Miller



William David Sibley was born December 16, 1939 in Big Cove at the foot of Monte Sano Mountain on Old Big Cove Road just off of what is now Highway 431. He lived in the house where he was born for the first 76 years of his life.

In 2015 he built and moved in a new brick house in the same yard only a few feet from the old house that still stands. In 1939 and for much of his life the area around his home was in the country. Now his land joins a plethora of mostly retail business lined up along Highway 431.

Many refer to the area as Hampton Cove but it is in Big Cove. Hampton Cove is a subdivision that lies in the area known since the 1800s as Big Cove. The Cove runs from the foot of Monte Sano and Green Mountain east to Keel Mountain and south to Owens Cross Roads.

The world knows William as "Stink". The only person I ever heard call him William is my wife who refuses to call him Stink.

He was a teacher in the Madison County School system for 36 years where he taught fifth and sixth grade at Owens Cross Roads, Brownsboro and Gurley schools. His former students out of custom and respect call him Mr. Sibley. He told me more than once that he prefers to be called Stink. He got the name when he was little. His Aunt Stella was cleaning out a chicken pen and said to him you stink, he smiled when she said it and

the name stuck.

I got to know Stink when we commuted together to Athens College in the early sixties. But that was not the first time I saw him. When I was in the tenth grade at Madison County High School (Gurley) he was a senior. During that entire year we never spoke to each other or even exchanged a greeting. At that time I had no idea that we were related. He and I had the same great-great grandparents,



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**Remember when you could refer to your knees as right and left, instead of good and bad?**

Moses and Rebekah McGaha Miller. Moses owned a big chunk of Big Cove in the 1800s before the Civil War. Tax records at the Huntsville public library also show that he paid taxes on a number of slaves. Moses and Rebekah had many descendants and a number of them still live in Big Cove. A least three of them were in my high school class at Gurley, but I didn't know we were related at the time.

Stink is of the Presbyterian faith. He has taught Sunday school at Big Cove Cumberland Presbyterian Church since he was 23 years old for a total of 55 years. He was a born teacher and took great pride in his chosen profession. One of the things I admire about him is his philosophy of teaching. He believes that in most cases where a student fails it is a failure of the teacher and not the student. He has no respect for teachers or college professors that take pride in the number of students they fail. In his mind those teachers are clearly in the wrong profession.

I failed the eighth grade at Central and it didn't bother me much then but in later years I have thought about it a lot. That year every boy in the class failed but one and his father was a trustee. When I told Stink about this a few years ago, he said something that I hadn't thought about before and that was, "when every boy in the class fails but one, something is wrong with the teachers and not the students!"

He is the foremost expert on the history of schools in the area as well as the history of longtime residents and events of Big Cove, Ryland, Gurley, Maysville, New Hope and Owens Cross Roads. A few years ago he wrote a book about the history of Big Cove from 1807 to 2000. The book is an excellent chronicle of Big Cove and its people. Copies have been sold throughout the country and more than 1000 have sold to date.

His lineage in Big Cove goes back to the 1800s as does mine. Moses and Rebekah are buried at Holmes Cemetery in Big Cove. The cemetery is located off Dug Hill Road between Caldwell Lane and Highway

*Maria and I want to send love and prayers to those who were terribly affected by the recent hurricanes. What you're going through is unimaginable.*

*Thank You to all of the volunteers who are doing all they can for the victims of the hurricanes. You are our heroes.*

*Oscar & Maria Llerena,  
Miami, Florida*



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431. It is a very old cemetery and there are soldiers buried there that served in the revolutionary war, the War of 1812 and the Civil War. Every year on the first Saturday of May descendants gather there for a cemetery cleanup day. Food is served and it a great time of fellowship and connection to our past. The last person to be buried there was Kate McCay in 1950. Mama Kate as we called her was my great grandmother on my McCay side of the family. The roots of both my Miller and McCay ancestors go back to Big Cove and many are buried in that cemetery.

Stink has other talents besides teaching and his keen knowledge of local history. How I remember him from high school is his jet black hair and listening to him play the piano. I clearly recall him playing in the school auditorium during morning and afternoon recesses.

He is also a good writer as evidenced by his book on Big Cove and the articles that he writes for Old Huntsville. Stink is a champion horseshoe pitcher having won the State Double Horseshoe pitching championship twice and countless other less prestigious matches and tournaments.

When I knew him in his early twenties he was more mature and wiser than a lot of people I knew twice his age. Even as a young man, Stink had no vices; he did not drink, carouse, or use any type of inappropriate language. He was a perfect gentleman wherever he was or whomever he was with. But he was not to be trifled with, he would call down a student, another teacher, a college professor or anyone else he thought was out of line.

I believe the greatest measure of success in life is what you leave behind. His book on the History of Big Cove will be around long after he is gone. It is in the Huntsville Public Library and will always be a reference to the way it once was in Big Cove. Maybe even more important is that the people and events he wrote about will not be forgotten.

But what profession leaves behind and influences more lives long term than a good school teacher? I have never met a person that didn't have at least one teacher that influenced or inspired them to be all they could be. Stink took great pride and pleasure in teaching fifth and sixth graders in Madison County for 36 years.

There is no way to measure

the influence and impact this one intelligent, dedicated teacher of integrity and stellar character had on all those children.

What a great legacy!

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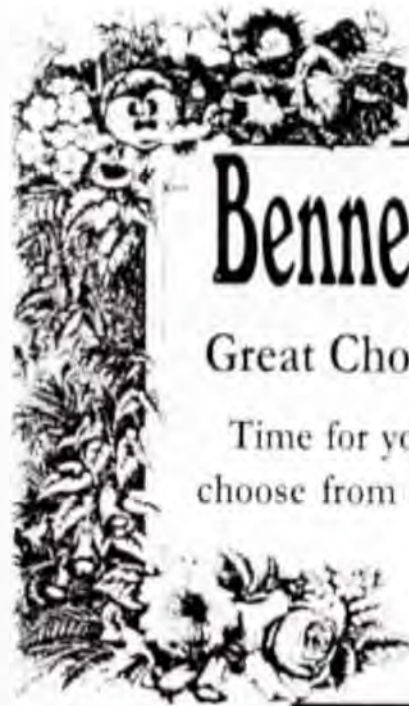
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## A GRANDMOTHER'S DISCOVERY OF HARRISON BROTHERS HARDWARE STORE - COMES FULL CIRCLE

by *Melissa Ford Thornton*

The year I graduated from high school, my grandmother boarded an airplane in Los Angeles and flew across the country to spend the summer with us in Huntsville. There was always been something a tad intimidating about my mom's mom - a tiny, smartly-dressed woman who stood all of 5'2", tipped the scales at 100 lbs. after a full meal and insisted everyone call her "Kay" - including her grandchildren.

My mom fretted about how she could possibly entertain this 82-year-old whirlwind. But, that problem dissipated like dew on a honeysuckle vine with a visit to Harrison Brother's Hardware Store.

The moment Kay stepped across the historic building's threshold, the floorboards sighed their welcome. Her face lit up with wonder and relaxed with familiarity. The very atmosphere seemed to embrace the octogenarian, warming her demeanor - as if she and the old building were two childhood friends reunited.

I loved seeing her paw through a bin of old-fashioned marbles, like the kid she must have been when Harrison Brother's began to thrive as a hardware supply in downtown. After all, it was established in 1897 and my grandmother was born one year later. They shared a history - held many of the same memories. Kay was delighted with the vintage toys and dolls, the iron cookware, crockery, handmade soaps and the occasional hardware - doorknobs, screws and tape measures - that filled the store's original display shelving.

She took in as much as she could that first day - and insisted we take her back so she could get a closer peek into the original safe that held the Harrison Brother's paperwork and ledgers. We did return many times that summer. Probably, we would've visited the old building on Southside Square daily if Kay had gotten her way. But, she never bought anything.

That is, until our final trip together to Harrison Brother's on the day before Kay was to fly back to California. It was hot, and the humidity made the air shimmer wave-like above the sidewalk. Those are special days - ones that don't come again once we graduate high school and summer loses its magical power to slow the passage of time. It remains my favorite memory of her visit.

Though she admired many things that day - funny-faced sock puppets, a glass juicer for making fresh-squeezed lemonade and an egg timer - Kay made only two purchases.

She bought a miniature bale of cotton as a souvenir for her bridge partner who would meet her plane in L.A. She also bought a box of stationary embossed with a cotton blossom - quite lovely and characteristically practical. Yet, watching her carefully fold the edges of the paper sack with those note cards tucked safely

inside like a treasure, I saw it was also a sentimental purchase. I felt my throat close and tears threaten to spill hot and unbidden.

My grandmother was never soft - but thin with hard angles and sharp edges and possessed a no-nonsense air. Even as a young child, I knew better than to refer to her as grandmother. It wasn't until we'd moved to Alabama where I met friends who had "Grannies" and "Meemas" and "Nanas" that I realized it was unusual to address a grandparent by their Christian name. She had a backbone of steel and the commensurate ramrod straight posture that gave her a somewhat regal appearance.

While trailing behind her at Harrison Brother's all summer long, I'd thought she'd become a professional window shopper. Now, I realize she shared part of her story while pointing out relics and knick-knacks from the past. I learned Kay had been an Olympics-bound tennis champion before romance and marriage distracted her. Twice widowed, she'd toughed out the Depression, and raised my mom single-handedly during an era when ladies, to hear her put it: "just didn't work outside the home."

And somewhere along the way I caught a glimpse of the woman hiding behind the proper table manners and regal tilt of her chin and met my grandmother for the first time.

I found a letter in my mailbox in the week following Kay's return to the West Coast. Her spidery writing scrawled across a thick page embossed with a cotton blossom. The paper still carried the pleasant scent of dust motes and sunshine from its place of purchase.

I know I'll breathe that unmistakable scent again when Harrison Brother's begins a new page in their history on Thursday, October 5, 2017. Toes will be tapping the old floorboards that evening as Ricky j Taylor & the Live Roots Ensemble kicks off the Inaugural "Music in the Loft" Concert Series at Harrison Brothers with original lyrics and their unique bluegrass-inspired folk music.

The band seems a fitting choice to usher in a new concert series in the stately historic building. There's something special about traditional music and Ricky's songs tell stories that bring things full circle for circle for me.

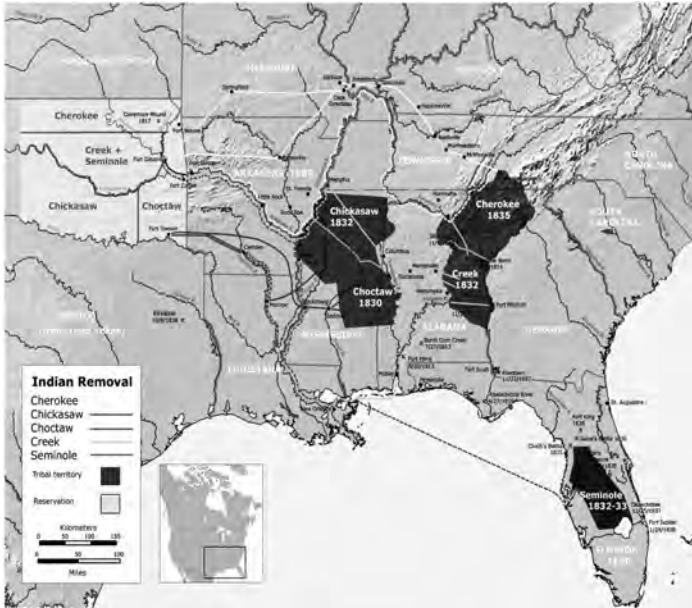
As the music comes to life, I believe our audience will be joined by one additional guest - a tiny whirlwind of a woman who loved old things and new. Yes, Kay will be there in spirit and in memory - in the dust motes and musical notes - everywhere around us.

And she'll dance.

*Melissa Ford Thornton is a professional storyteller, poet and publicist. She was born in Redondo Beach, California.*

*For more information on Harrison Brother's "Music in the Loft" Concert Series, contact: annie@harrisonbrothershardware.com or call:*

*(713) 927-1295.*



## DESPERATE TIMES, DESPERATE MEASURES

by Gladys Hodge Sherrer

History speaks of Native Americans slaughtering early North Alabama settlers, but legend has it that a Cherokee helped my family survive the Civil War. According to historians at Landmarks of DeKalb County, Inc., during the Revolutionary War, British Agent Alexander Campbell was sent to North Alabama for the purpose of arousing the Cherokees against the colonies. Campbell was successful in inciting a number of the Cherokees, promising goods and conquered lands in exchange for white settlers' scalps. After this ordeal came the Trail of Tears, but some Indians escaped removal by hiding in caves. Those were mostly the mixed breed, and soon they befriended those white faced newcomers, including my ancestors.

My grandfather – son of John Franklin Williams, a "Civil War baby" spoke of an Indian blindfolding and taking him to a cave, where his family's stored items were left behind. He told how his father was fed by the Indians during the War, how they taught of the natural herbal cures. In spite of many deaths by starvation by the War's end, all of my direct lineage ancestors in North Alabama survived.

Southerners suffered many ways during the War, including from the lack of medicine. Early on, Southern blockade running ships brought coastal cities medicine, but the interior wilder-

ness and cities like Huntsville had none. When researching for my book, I came upon an example of the desperate measures taken by one person to provide medicine, as noted in a paper presented at a pharmacists' convention in Baltimore, Maryland in 1898, by Joseph Jacobs, a pharmacist from Atlanta, Georgia. A merchant of middle Alabama, a Mr. Berg found himself with empty shelves, and started on a dangerous enterprise. He selected Memphis as the base of his drug running operations, and proceeded there with a wagon load of cotton pulled by four mules, reached within the Federal lines at Memphis, and disposed of his cotton for United States money. Then, he lost his nerve and considered abandoning his hazardous drug enterprise, when he accidentally discovered a two-horse vehicle bearing a small yellow hospital flag. Upon its sides were painted the words "SMALL-POX." Berg soon had a supply of quinine, morphine, ether and such other drugs stored in a box under the yellow flag, which may as well have cried, "Make way for the Leper." The enterprise might have been entirely successful, had not Berg determined to add to his stock an eight-gallon keg of good rye whiskey, and promptly fell off the wagon.

The Native American knowledge of herbs saved many settlers who'd reached a point of desperation. My ancestors had to trust the word of former scalping Injuns that certain weeds weren't poison. I'm thankful for that trust, and those numerous caves dotting the Tennessee Valley which became a safe harbor for Indians, for families fleeing the Union soldiers during the North Alabama occupation.

In "Trapped in the Crossfire" you'll meet one kind Indian, and learn of his herbal remedies.



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# A Sad Incident Near Maysville

*From 1897 Huntsville newspaper*



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

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

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

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

But the doctors and others concluded from the nature of the wound and the vicious traits of the mule that he had kicked her. She was removed and doctors sent for. Dr. Fleming Jordan performed the operation of tre-fluing and said she might recover if inflammation did not set in. It was determined that Miss Rogers had dismounted and the mule got away and jumped over the fence into the field and when Miss Rogers walked behind it to catch it, kicked her. So, the men were discharged.

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

**"Because if it didn't work out, I didn't want to blow the whole day."**

*Paul Horning, defensive back for the Green Bay Packers, on why his wedding ceremony was held before noon*

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# Aim Below the Belt

by M.D. Smith, IV



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

That's when he mentioned something that I thought was strictly my friend's creation in Mt. Brook and he lived then and still does in Tennessee.

He mentioned the "BB Gun Wars" he and his young friends between 10 and 12 years old played in the early 50s as well. They'd choose up sides and everyone had one of the several models of Daisy Spring operated BB guns. No Pneumatic air rifles allowed.


Then the small group of boys would split and run off into tree filled yards in opposite directions and begin to sneak up, or run from tree to tree, as the other "team" would take pot shots at the "enemy" until they were "hit". I think that's where the phrase, "The

Sting Of Battle" comes from. Getting struck in the pants leg with a BB from the enemy meant you were out of the war. It was very much like the more modern paint ball battles kids play in recent times.

Yes, we were all warned by our parents to be careful be-

cause with no eye protection, we might "Shoot your eye out." So for all the fun and exciting times we had, you only had one rule and you were out of the game for that round if you violated it.

That rule was "Always aim Below the Belt." Unlike boxing,



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**"Silence is golden unless you have kids. Then silence is just plain suspicious."**

**Peg Jones, Madison**

# Wild Russian Man Locked Up in Huntsville Jail

*from 1923 Huntsville Newspaper*



Many people living near the County Jail and those passing were at a loss Tuesday night to understand the loud noises and bloodcurdling yells coming from the second floor windows. Investigation by a news reporter revealed that William Curtis, apparently of foreign birth and believed to be a Russian, was "whooping it up" in his cell.

Curtis was arrested some time ago, charged with breaking into some stores at New Market and confined in the County Jail here. It is not known how he came to these parts.

Early Tuesday night he broke off a couple of pieces of steam pipe and proceeded to flatten out all that portion of the jail within his reach. Deputies went into the cell and relieved him of the pipe. After this he began stamping his feet against the steel floor with mighty noise and he was relieved of his shoes. He kept the neighborhood awake with yells and succeeded until, having tired, he stopped.

The prisoner has also gone on a hunger strike. He has refused to eat since nine-o'clock Tuesday morning and as his meals are carried to him he either refuses it or knocks it from the hands of the jail deputies.

When asked about his mental condition, deputies at the jail replied that "He's just mean. That's all."

He is to be tried next week and it is expected the judge will give him something else to be upset about.



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on really good food, preferable any type of fish. I like to play and I like attention. In fact there is not much I do not like. I am quiet and easy to get along with. How about it? Do I meet your requirements for a very beautiful feline companion? Please come to the Ark and ask to see Socks. That's me.

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GRAND STROLL - 1:45 PM

THIS IS A FREE EVENT BUT DONATIONS ARE ENTHUSIASTICALLY ACCEPTED - ALL MONIES RECEIVED ARE USED FOR REPAIRS & RESTORATIONS TO THE CEMETERY.

Maple Hill Cemetery, circa 1822, listed on the National Registry of Historic Places is the oldest continuously in use cemetery in the State of Alabama. As of 2014, there were 80,000 known graves in the cemetery. There are individuals representing all walks of life in this unique ledger of Huntsville with veterans of all wars buried in the cemetery. However, the greatest single number of interments occurred in 1918 as a result of the influenza epidemic.

Since the 1980's we have been celebrating our community's heritage and history in one of Huntsville's most beautiful autumn venues. The Maple Hill Cemetery Stroll is currently the largest character-driven cemetery stroll in the country. Over 75 costumed actors portray in first person historical characters important to this area. This "living history" part of the stroll makes it so much more entertaining. Additionally, traditional music, special exhibits, a student scavenger hunt, and an antique auto show augments this family friendly event.

Come Early to Watch the GRAND STROLL of characters as they promenade down the main avenue of the cemetery and move to their assigned grave sites where storytelling will begin at 2 pm. This is a wonderful way to view all the characters and start this year's Stroll!

The Stroll will conclude with the playing of "TAPS" at 4:30 on the main avenue.

Maple Hill Cemetery Stroll is free to the public but donations are enthusiastically accepted as this is the way we can continue making the repairs and restorations.

*Maple Hill Cemetery is located approximately 0.75 miles east of Huntsville's downtown square at 203 Maple Hill Drive off of California Street. Shuttles will run from the downtown Square from 1-5 p.m. ••• and local parking is also available.*

*Rain date for the Stroll will be Sunday, October 22 from 2:00 - 4:30p.m.*

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