



No. 300  
February 2018



# Old Huntsville

HISTORY AND STORIES OF THE TENNESSEE VALLEY

MONTE SANO - FINDING THE GLORY PATCH



*Also in this issue:* **Surviving the Depression**

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*Domie Lewter*  
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# Finding the Glory Patch

by Tom Carney  
Orig. publ. in 2006

From the time early settlers first moved into the Tennessee Valley, they had looked to the nearby mountains for a source of income. The mountains provided timber, wild game and even coal for the fireplaces, but the most coveted treasure were the roots of a small plant known as ginseng.

Ginseng had been used for energy & medical purposes in China for thousands of years but, due to over-harvesting, had almost become extinct. By the 1800s most of China's ginseng was imported from the United States, with over 200,000 tons being shipped in a single year. Even Daniel Boone was involved in the business; gathering and trading for over two tons in a single year before losing it when a flat boat overturned.

High quality wild ginseng sells today for almost five hundred dollars a pound, so one can easily see the attraction it had for early settlers.

Many families, after the crops were laid by, would camp in the mountains and spend weeks at a time searching the coves and ridges for the elusive plant. As each year passed it became more difficult to find. By the 1930s ginseng in Madison County was almost extinct. It could still be found, if a person had the patience, but now success was measured by fractions of ounces rather than pounds.

The lure of finding instant riches was still strong enough to cause many men to toss and turn in bed at night as they agonized over where to hunt the following day. Whenever ginseng was found, regardless of how little, it became an intriguing topic of conversation. It was like striking gold. Men would gingerly touch the roots, trying to guess the age and weight. The lucky finder would be carefully questioned about the locale in which the plant was found. Were there many hardwood trees? What kind of rocks were nearby? How thick were the leaves on the ground? What were some of the landmarks?

This would almost always start a debate about the best place to find ginseng. The lucky finder, if he were experienced, would be evasive about the location. Many a "sanger" could tell stories about finding a likely patch only to return the next day to find it had been completely dug out.

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Once the conversation about the new find had died out, some one would invariably mention a story he had once heard about a "glory patch." Men would grow silent as they remembered the legends they had heard all their lives about places hidden in some dark cove on the side of Monte Sano mountain where ginseng grew so thick you couldn't walk without stepping on the plants. It was rumored that some of the glory patches were so big that whoever found them would be set for life.

Whenever someone would express doubts about the existence of glory patches, they would quickly be put in their place by someone saying simply, "Mr. Taylor....."

Although Mr. Taylor was the kind of man whom legends were built around, no one really knew much about him. He was reported to have been somewhere around seventy or eighty years old at this time, always dressed in an old pair of overalls with an old Army jacket, with pure white hair that flowed down to his

shoulders. A birth defect had left him unable to speak but gestures and nods of his head allowed him to communicate during the rare times he chose to be around other people.

People were not even sure how they knew his name; he didn't offer this information and no one was sure where the name came from.

Nothing is known of his childhood or where he was born, except that at a young age, possibly because of his birth defect, he fled to the solitude of the mountains where he became a skilled trapper. Foxes, beaver and other fur bearing animals were plentiful if a person had the skill and could stand the loneliness and hardships of the life.

From all appearances Mr. Taylor had no home. At various times he would be seen as far south as the Tennessee River and north to the mountains of Jackson County. He never rode in a car or truck. Even when people would offer him a lift he would shake his head and continue walking. Most people assumed he lived

in caves or abandoned cabins when the weather was too bad to camp out.

At that time many country stores supplemented their regular income by buying and selling farm produce, eggs and fur pelts. Once or twice a year Mr. Taylor would appear at one of these stores loaded down with bundles of skins. The store owners were always glad to see him as his pelts were always of the finest quality that could be sold for top prices.

Mr. Taylor would always stand quietly as the owner examined each skin and added the figures in a note book. After being paid he would motion to the proprietor for a can of pork and beans and crackers which

**"I need not suffer in silence when I can still moan, whimper and complain."**

*Gertie Arthur, Decatur*



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he would take outside and eat before disappearing for another three or four months.

As far as is known, a can of pork and beans with crackers several times a year, along with an occasional box of shells for the old decrepit .22 rifle he carried, were the only items he ever purchased. No one knows what he did with the rest of his money.

Occasionally, if a farmer was plagued by foxes in his chicken pen or raccoons in the cornfield he would leave word, along with a few coins, for Taylor at the country store.

Many people still talk about seeing him sitting motionless near a cornfield for hours at a time without flinching a muscle. Eventually the farmer would hear the sharp crack of a rifle and minutes later Taylor would disappear back into the woods.

Taylor had always hunted for ginseng, but like most other people, he was probably lucky to find a few ounces a year. Once a year, in the late fall, he would bring the roots to Huntsville to sell.

It was probably 1928 or 1929 when Mr. Taylor first showed up at the Tennessee Poultry and Hides Company on Washington Street with a sack slung over his shoulder. The owner Louie Miller was a crusty old Russian Jew who would drive a hard bargain but was also honest.

After waiting patiently for Miller to conclude his business with another customer, Taylor handed the sack to them. Miller carefully began emptying the sack on a small wooden table.

Suddenly there were gasps of amazement as people gathered around the ginseng.

There were almost twelve pounds of high quality ginseng, with most of the roots being about nine to ten years old and a uniform size. It was obvious that Taylor had carefully selected only the best roots, leaving the rest to be harvested later.

The same thought went through everyone's mind. Mr. Taylor had found the Glory Patch.

Finally, when Miller had finished weighing the ginseng, he wrote a price on a piece of paper and showed it to Taylor.

Taylor nodded his head and minutes later, with a large roll of bills in his pocket, more than many people made in a year, he walked to a nearby grocery store where he purchased a can

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of pork and beans and crackers. An hour later he was back in the mountains.

Strange as it may seem, Mr. Taylor's good fortune brought a ray of hope to many people who were suffering through the Depression. People who could not buy shoes for their children now had a reason to dream - maybe they could find their own Glory Patch someday.

While many people re-doubled their efforts in hunting ginseng, others decided it would be easier to hunt Taylor in the hope they could follow him to wherever he had harvested the roots. He was seen many times, but it was impossible to follow him for any distance.

Two men, expert woodsmen, followed him from Monte Sano all the way to Gurley and then back to Monte Sano. When they realized that Taylor was taunting them, they gave up.

If people had any doubts about the Glory Patch, it was confirmed the following year when Taylor once again appeared at Miller's with another twelve pounds of quality ginseng. After purchasing his

ritual can of pork and beans, he retreated back to the mountains with another pocket full of cash. The same routine was repeated each year.

With each trip to town his reputation grew. People began to spin fantastic yarns, equating his skill as a woodsman with Davy Crockett and Daniel Boone.

Some claimed he could track a field mouse through the woods and shoot flying doves with a .22 rifle. Others said he visited the Glory Patch and harvested the ginseng only when the moon was dark so people could not follow him.

Everyone knew he was being paid large sums for the ginseng but never appeared to spend any money. This led to even more outlandish tales.

One of the most popular stories told of a cave somewhere in the mountains where Mr. Taylor supposedly lived. It was

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*Maxine*

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claimed that one room of the cave was packed full of wooden boxes, each containing thousands of silver dollars. According to the story, Taylor spent all his time carefully counting and recounting the money, much like the cartoon character of Uncle Scrooge.

Although it is doubtful that many people believed the stories, they did provide good entertainment whenever people gathered around a stove on cold wintry nights.

The stories would have probably died of their own accord had not Emmett Baker decided, in the fall of 1934, to take his family berry picking near Cold Springs on Monte Sano. Accompanying Baker were his two children, a girl eight years old and a boy who had just turned five.

The weather was beautiful and the huckleberries plentiful. Baker and his wife spent the morning filling buckets with the berries while the children played in the woods. By early afternoon Baker decided they had enough and began loading the buckets on the truck.

"Just in time," he thought as he watched dark, ominous clouds begin to roll in from the west. "We're going to have some bad weather." Almost before he finished the thought, a torrential downpour, driven by fierce winds, began to sweep over the mountains.

Yelling for his wife to get the children, Baker hurried to finish loading the truck. Seconds later his daughter came running for the safety of the truck, trying to shield herself from the pulverizing rain.

Baker sat in the truck waiting for his wife and son but when

several minutes had passed he began to suspect something was wrong.

Running to the edge of the clearing he began to call for his wife. When there was no answer he plunged further into the woods, yelling as loud as he could, trying to make his voice heard over the fury of the storm. After what seemed like an eternity he heard his wife shouting.

Minutes later he was at his wife's side. Her cotton dress was soaked to the skin and tears mixed with rain was pouring down her cheeks. "He's gone," she cried. "I can't find him anywhere!"

Baker ordered his wife back to the truck while he continued to search for his son. He instantly understood what had happened. His son had been playing and wandered off the trail. When he realized he was lost he tried to find his way back to the truck and had probably headed in the wrong direction. As he became frightened and the storm began the young boy had probably started walking faster, all the while going in the wrong direction.

Baker knew, deep in his heart, that his son could be almost anywhere, even miles away, and it would take a miracle to find him before nightfall.

An hour went by, and then another hour, with Baker frantically searching and yelling

but to no avail. Finally he made his way back to the truck and told his wife they needed help. He would stay on the mountain and continue searching while she took the truck and went to find others to help search.

At the bottom of the mountain was a small general store

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words were taken."**

**Jeb Willaby, Scottsboro**



where a group of men had gathered on the porch watching the storm. Mrs. Baker was almost hysterical but finally managed to explain what had happened. Without a word, in spite of the heavy rain, the men began piling into trucks and cars to go to her assistance.

All this time, sitting on the far end of the porch was Mr. Taylor, eating a can of pork and beans and watching the rain.

When Mrs. Baker stopped and looked at him intently for a moment, everyone knew what she was thinking. If only half the stories they had heard about the old man were true, he was still the man who could find her son.

Mr. Taylor had been listening to the conversation. Slowly, without being asked, he got up and walked to her truck. After seating himself on the truck's tail gate, he motioned for her to drive. Minutes later they were on the mountain where a

crowd had begun to gather.

Making motions for everyone to stay where they were he walked into the woods about a hundred yards and began to make a slow circle around the clearing, all the time searching for signs on the ground. When nothing was found he walked maybe another hundred feet into the forest and repeated the same process.

The storm had flattened the leaves on the ground and washed away any signs the young boy might have left.

Many of the men in the crowd had grown up in the woods and knew it was impossible to track someone in a pouring rain.

Still, Mr. Taylor persisted, sometimes walking at a rapid pace and other times almost crawling on his hands and knees.

After about a half hour, and a half mile from the clearing, he found what he was looking

for; some small fresh broken branches on a bush about two and a half feet from the ground. A five year old child running through the woods and pushing branches out of his way would break a limb at the same height.

The crowd knew Mr. Taylor was on a trail and followed behind him closely. Every few feet he would stop and angrily motion for the men to get back. For a few minutes the men would comply, before once again following him.

About a mile from the clearing the trail led to a small cove that seemed to be so overgrown with thick brush that a rabbit might have trouble finding its way through it. Taylor stopped and angrily made signs for the crowd to go back. When they retreated only a few feet, he again motioned them to go back, this time waving his arms in a belligerent manner.

The crowd stood motionless

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and so did Taylor. Finally, with a look of resignation on his face, he dropped to his knees and began crawling through a small opening in the brush. After about thirty feet the brush cleared, revealing a clearing maybe a quarter acre in size, dotted here and there with hardwoods.

It was so well hidden that it would have been impossible to find unless you knew exactly where it was.

Taylor's instincts had been right. The young boy was lying at the foot of a large tree, soaking wet, scared and sobbing.

Seconds later the crowd of men poured through the small opening in the brush. The first reaction was joy at finding the youngster safe and sound. Then, almost immediately, a hushed silence came over the men as they realized what they were seeing.

The clearing was full of ginseng, so thick you couldn't walk without stepping on a plant. It was obvious that someone had gone to great lengths to take care of the patch, and to keep it well hidden.

All the men had the same thought: they had found the Glory Patch.

Almost in a nonchalant manner, the men started drifting away, each pretending to go their separate ways. Mr. Taylor stood in the clearing for a long time with a sad look on his face. Perhaps he knew what would happen next.

Dozens of men, carrying lanterns and hoes, swarmed over the clearing that night. By the time the sun came up it had the appearances of a freshly plowed field.

No one ever saw Mr. Taylor again. He disappeared back into the mountains where he came from and soon became simply another legend that people loved to tell stories about.

Once the initial excitement had died down about the Glory Patch, people realized there had to be more than one. The amount of ginseng he sold every year was much too large to have come from that single location.

Perhaps there are still other Glory Patches, and a cave packed with silver dollars, hidden somewhere in the mountains above Huntsville.

Today the gathering, buying and selling of ginseng is strictly regulated by the state. Failure to comply can result in large fines as well as possible jail sentences.

It has been estimated that 3/4 of the ginseng gathered in North Alabama is smuggled to other states where the laws are not as strictly enforced.



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**Arrested** - Deputy Sheriff N. L. Pierce today arrested 2 men - Ceglie Conley was charged with burglary and grand larceny and Will Wise on a peace warrant and using obscene language and placed them both in jail.

**Public Sales** - S. L. Terry, who recently purchased the goods formerly belonging to Ezell Bros. and Terry Co., corner Washington and Clinton Streets announces that the new store will open on Jan. 8, 1916 with the largest bargain sharing ever to happen in Huntsville. Due to the critical illness of Mr. Terry's mother, the big public sales opening has been postponed for a few days, but notice will appear in the newspaper.

**Very Ill** - Mrs. W. J. Humphrey continues to be seriously ill at her home on East Holmes street and



little hope is reported as being held out for her recovery as we go to press.

## Brothers Collide in Auto Accident

Thos. N. McAllister, manager of the Huntsville Transfer Co. and his brother Alex McAllister, manager for the local plant of Armour and Co., collided with their cars at the Times corner on Holmes and Greene Streets this morning. Neither were badly injured but the

cars are very damaged. Thomas' son was slightly injured. Alex's car was turned over and he was pinned underneath it for a period of time.

The elder McAllister was traveling east on Holmes and the brother was driving north on Greene. The accident was quite exciting and those who saw it say it was a miracle that neither of the young men were seriously injured or probably killed, but cool heads averted all danger.

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## A Huntsville Mystery, Never Solved

*from 1906 Newspaper*

Huntsville was in the grips of one of the coldest winters on record when in February, 1906, a stranger appeared at the Huntsville Hotel and requested a room.

The stranger, a quiet elderly man, was dressed in summer clothing and carried no luggage. He asked for a room for two weeks and paid in advance with cash.

He also asked that no one, not even the maids, be permitted to enter his room.

The following morning he began a routine he would follow every day for the next two weeks. Eat breakfast at the hotel, walk three blocks to a barber shop where he would request a shave, sit on a bench in front of the Courthouse in the bitter cold for the rest of the day until finally returning to the hotel for dinner.

At the end of two weeks, the stranger disappeared. The manager of the hotel, worried about the man's strange behavior, finally entered the room. The room was exactly the way it was when the stranger had rented it. The bed had not been slept in and there was no sign anyone had been in the room since it was last cleaned, two weeks previously.

Adding to the mystery were six envelopes lying on the bed, addressed to different individuals around town. In each envelope were five one hundred dollar bills.

Later checking revealed that none of the individuals knew the stranger.

Another Huntsville story that has never been explained.

"Never go to a doctor whose office plants have died."

*Jill Maxwell, Athens*



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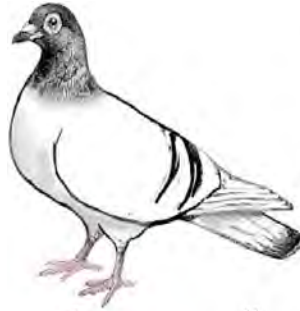


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# Pigeon Homecoming

by Billy Joe Cooley



A few weeks ago when the weather was really cold, Jerry Lee kept a dozen or so red birds and blue birds well fed in his huge back yard.

He would go down to the picture show late at night and get all the leftover popcorn, put it in a garbage bag and haul it home, sprinkling it across his yard so the birds would have special treats the next morning.

He did the same with leftover cornbread from cafes around the area, especially in deepest winter.

But, as one could expect, pesky blackbirds started recognizing Jerry Lee's backyard as a good thing for freebies and pushed their way in, thus pushing the pretty redbirds and bluebirds out.

Jerry Lee has always been a hard worker and didn't take kindly to the black demons flocking to his yard. He much preferred the beautiful colorful birds.

Somebody gave him the solution: bring a bunch of pigeons to the neighborhood.

He went to Chattanooga, rounded up a half dozen pigeons and brought them home. Behold! He was just in time. The yard was full of blackbirds. The pigeons flew in on the unwanted birds, pecked, flogged and generally made life miserable for them. The blackbirds took flight.

Then the pigeons became pesky.

The color birds wouldn't return to the yard. Jerry Lee, now confronted with a new problem, consulted his city cousins about how to get rid of the pigeons, which by this time were attracting other pigeons.

He decided against poisoned corn and other drastic measures. He thought about using roman candles to "fireball" them out of the area. He thought better of that, however, remembering how such a tactic against crows had caused a neighbor to lose a hay barn to flames a few years back.

Traps proved useless. The pigeons were wary of objects they didn't understand. Meanwhile, neighbors complained that the pigeons were "blessing" their car windshields and window awnings.

Something had to be done, so he took his .22 rifle and started shooting one afternoon, picking the pigeons off one at a time as they poked their strutting bodies into view.

That's when it happened. One of his bullets ricocheted, striking the car's gas tank

and setting off an explosion that could be heard all the way to town, more than a mile away. Unfortunately, the car was parked in the carport and there weren't enough unfrozen water pipes in the area to extinguish the blaze.

His family managed to escape the fire. So did the pigeons. And that's the truth.

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# The Cup of Life

by *George Wells*  
December 17, 2017

At birth we are all given a Cup of Life. From that moment on, all things good or bad are put in the Cup of Life. Memories of all sorts, all events in our life are all placed in the Cup of Life. Of course the Cup will someday fill up. For some people it will be soon, for some it will be much later. But the Cup of Life will hold your lifetime.

There will be things in your Cup of Life you are not so proud of. But that was your life, and into the Cup it goes. Hopefully, it was a lesson learned. And you find most of the things in your Cup of Life to be to your liking.

Year after year your Cup of Life starts to fill up. At some point in time you will ask what else is there for me in life. Hopefully, you are pleased with your Cup. You have shared many good events, happy days with your loved ones. Your children have grown up to be God-fearing citizens. The love

you and your wife shared resulted in so many years of happiness. And you thank God for the Angel He sent you to journey with you through your lifetime of moments. You are so satisfied that God traveled with you over your long journey.

Your Cup of Life becomes full. You ask what else can I hope for out of my life? Age can become a problem, and your health may make life a real struggle. Pain is your constant companion. The doctors take up most of your time as you try to improve your life.

There you are with a full Cup of Life and you start thinking about your final days. That is when you put your Cup of Life in God's hand. God has served you well over your lifetime so now is no time to let your faith falter.

Stay with God at the altar. God has your plan and He will get you through your final days. Live with this thought: There is no fear in faith. So, pray that God will take you home gently when He calls your name. And give Him thanks for that Cup of Life He has helped you fill. Your journey has been a good one. To God be the glory. Your cup runneth over.



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# The Depression Days

by Ruby Crabbe



Times were hard back in the Depression days of 1929. People were called "well-to-do" if they could have two bowls of Hoover Gravy for Sunday breakfast instead of one bowl. The kids called gravy "cob sop" - their parents called it "growing mash." Tasted pretty good if you had a nice slab of steak or lean to go with it.

A lot of the drippings from fatback were used in making lye soap - that is, if you didn't use it all in making gravy. That soap was used in washing clothes, cleaning, and washing all 2,000 parts of your body. The big iron wash pot the lye soap was made in also was used in making the finest hominy this side of the Mason-Dixon line.

Our mama, Josie Allen, had the prettiest, cleanest floors in Dallas Village. Or, at least, we kids thought she did. On floor scrubbing day, she would send us to the ballpark where Rison School had ball games. A big ditch ran alongside of the ball field and in that ditch we would get a big sack of sand, carry it home, sprinkle it on the floor, and lightly scrub with clear water. A lot of people wondered how

Mama had such clean floors. I also remember many people bragging on Mama's silverware. Her little secret of having sparkling clean silverware was also unique. She would take the silverware, find a nice clean spot in our yard and every one of us would take one piece of silverware at a time and stick it down in the ground and rub it up and down, up and

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down. Then Mama would take all the silverware back into the house, wash it with scalding water, rinse it real good and then dry it, piece by piece, with a dish towel. That silverware, after all those many years ago, is still as bright and shiny as the first day it was bought.

Oh, yes, the Hoover Days during the Depression were hard on everyone, but that didn't dampen the spirit of us kids hatching up jokes to pull on people.

Bill Jaco lived next door to us on Rison Avenue and he could always come up with a good joke on someone or a good laugh for everyone. I remember the day he made the finest "streetcar" dummy you've ever seen. That's the first and the last dummy I've ever seen that looked so alive. On Stevens Avenue and 5th Street (renamed Andrew Jackson Way), a bench was placed next to a big tree so the streetcar would-be riders would have a place to sit while waiting for the streetcar.

When Bill caught that bench empty he placed his dummy right on the bench. There that look-alive dummy sat—legs crossed, work shoes on, hat pulled down over his eyes as if taking a nap, or resting his stomach from eating so much Hoover gravy. He looked more like a man resting from a hard day's work. I declare, he looked more alive than a lot of people who occupied that bench.

Bill was hiding behind that tree when the dummy's first victim ascended next to him. A little old lady, bless her heart — I never did find out who she was, but she spoke to that dummy, "Nice day, isn't it, sir." Not getting a response, she leaned over toward the dummy to speak again, but her movement shook the bench and off the dummy went, right on top of her feet. With a whoop and a holler she came off that bench, and down the street she went like a whirlwind that knew no direction. She was yelling, "dead man, dead man," and gaining speed with every word.

Minutes later an ambulance drove up, followed by the biggest crowd of people you've ever seen. People were coming up the street, down the street, across the street and a few seemed to appear out of nowhere.

After a lot of questioning, searching and hunting, the ambulance left and the crowd slowly disappeared. A lot of people, after all those years, are still wondering about the "dead man's" disappearance.

What I've wondered about after all these many year is where in the world did the little old lady go.

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# Heard On the Street

by Cathey Carney



Congratulations to **David and Lora Everett** of Huntsville for being the first to identify that beautiful young lady whom you see everyday on Waay-TV Ch. 31, **Erin Dacy**. David is retired from Aflac Insurance and Lora is a Chrysler retiree. They just enjoy life!

Did you know that if you drink plenty of water and keep hydrated, one of the benefits is when you go to the doctor to have blood drawn for any reason, your veins are easier to find? If you are dehydrated and go to give blood, your veins can temporarily collapse and we've all seen the bruising that happens then. Just drink more water - it's good for you!

I don't need to remind you that while all the U.S. weather people were telling us what a warm winter we were going to have, Old Huntsville magazine and the Farmers Almanac both were telling you that the Eastern part of

the U.S. was going to experience a very hard icy winter, including Alabama and most Southern states. I used the number of acorns I saw on the sidewalks, and a few other secrets that I can't divulge.

I know many of you are like me - we can't wait to get our hands in the dirt and start gardening! This is the time the seed catalogs begin arriving and I am really looking forward to warm planting season.

**Buford Warren and Jerry McCutcheon** play music at Bethlehem Baptist Church in Hazel Green but in their spare time they deliver wood to many homes in and around Old Town and Twickenham in Huntsville. I am one of those who receive a stack of quality wood every year and what I like is the wood is cut the perfect size for my little wood-burning fireplace. Nothing like a hot fire when these cold days are with us.

Speaking of that, I want to say another thanks this year to our **Postal Carriers and UPS and FEDEX** delivery folks. It can't be easy for them on some of the really cold, icy days but we get our packages and mail delivered, to our doors, no matter what. Also a special thanks to the **Huntsville Utilities workers** who are out there at night if there's a power outage and we're in the dark. They are super hard workers and we surely APPRECIATE YOU!

Thinking about **Eleanor Keith** who really was walloped by the flu and we hope you are better really soon. Also hoping that **Gale Nichols** is on the mend, she de-

serves it! It just seems like when you're sick it feels so much worse in the bitter cold.

I spoke with the sweetest lady in December, and she told me she'd be 90 in January. She had the best memories of marrying the love of her life, **Mack McCulloch** in 1948 and raising her family. **Verna McCulloch's** daughter called me this week and told me her mom had passed away Christmas Eve. I wanted to send my deepest sympathy to **Carol Johnson** and her family, she was so lucky to have Verna as a mom and in her life for so many years. In addition to daughter Carol she leaves daughters **Gloria Morris** and **Amy Keel**, as well as son **Danny McCulloch**; 7 grandchildren, 7 great grandchildren and 2 great-great grandchildren. Quite a legacy for a beautiful lady.

I have saved so much time by not answering any calls from phone numbers I don't recognize. These telemarketers who sit in sweat shops and hope to trick you into giving them your financial information don't need to get any of your precious time. Remember - if you happen to answer and some slick salesman tries to get any 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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You still see this young man on Ch. 19 during the news!



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your personal or financial information, IT's NOT LEGIT. They are stealing from you. Outsmart them and just don't answer. The longer you let them talk the more convincing they'll become.

My daughter the nurse gives this advice - make sure you get your bone density tests and know the state of your bones. Many falls occur because the bone breaks first, then the fall happens. Make sure you get plenty of calcium and stay moving for strong bones. Thanks **Steph!**

A man so well known to the community passed away Jan. 5. **Samuel "Bill" Spry, Jr.** was 93 in March of this year. He graduated from the University of Virginia but his love was with the football team of University of Alabama. A long-time businessman with Spry Funeral Home, Mr. Spry received his 70 year pin as funeral director from the Alabama Funeral Directors Assoc. He was a long time member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. He is survived by his daughter **Susan Keli (Spry) Padot** and husband **David**; brother **James Spry** and wife **Robbie**; six grandchildren; nine great grandchildren; nieces and nephews; and **his loving staff at Spry Funeral Home.** "Papa" was a kind, funny and loving family man who will be forever missed.

Our Mayor **Tommy Battle** has filed papers to run for Alabama State Governor and we're so very proud of what he's done

for Huntsville. He would make an amazing Governor but I sure hate to lose him in Huntsville!

**Louise Newby** lived in Huntsville years ago and now lives in Raleigh, NC close to daughter **Sherry Stafford.** She called recently and I loved her memories of Huntsville back in the "good old days." She has promised to send some good stories so I'm going to look for those!

This is pretty amazing - **Mr. Ben Harris** of New Hope, AL is having a birthday, not just any birthday, he will be 105 on Feb. 8!! He was riding Harley motorcycles til he was 98 years old. Ben is a WWII vet and very proud of that. **Mary Harris** is his sweet wife of 33 years and she told me that they usually go to the **New Hope Hardees** every Saturday and meet up with friends. Well last February Hardees was ready for them and brought over a beautifully decorated cake with candles and 4 tiny motorcycles for Ben's 104th. Happy Happy Birthday to you Ben!

The **Maple Hill Cemetery Stroll** has gotten so popular over the years and alot of it was due to the hard work put in by **Margaret Belle Crow.** She was a member of the Junior League of Huntsville, Huntsville Garden Club and the Huntsville Pilgrimage Association. Margaret passed away on Jan. 3 at the age of 81. She was a local historian who loved telling stories to schools and visitors. She is survived by daughter **Cynthia**

**"Belle" Crow DuCray**; son **David "Drew" Crow, Jr.**; grandson **Dawson Crow**; brother **George Mahoney Jr. (Kathryn)** and a host of friends and family. Margaret lived life to the fullest and made a difference in many people's lives.

Since the heart is symbolic of Valentines Day, I have hidden a **super teeny tiny heart** somewhere within the pages of this issue. This is my best hiding job ever. And to make it fair for all our readers and subscribers, I will accept calls if you find the little heart, starting at 8am Feb. 15. No early calls please.

However if you can identify the little boy on this month's Photo of the Month you may call anytime during February.

**Phil Riddick** hosted the **Allen Watkins Band** in January at his Huntsville Strings location off Willowbrook Drive. The event was sold out and music was so good. Making up the band are **Allen Watkins**, wife **Connie (Carnes) Watkins** and bassist **Bob Hill.** A very enjoyable evening and I had no idea Phil Riddick was such a talented banjo picker! He joined in for a couple of songs and was super good.

Also at this event I met the most delightful lady. **Verna Gabel** is the 93 year-old Mom of **Connie Watkins** and was at the music event. She looked so much younger than 93 and was an elementary school teacher for 32 years. SO happy to have met her!

Have a warm February and stay safe!

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## Eating with the Amish

### Sweet Bundt Rolls

1/2 c. butter, melted  
 1/2 c. maple syrup  
 3/4 c. brown sugar  
 1/2 c. nuts, chopped  
 2 tubes buttermilk biscuits

Mix first 4 ingredients in a bowl. Grease a tube Bundt pan and place half of the syrup mixture in the bottom of the pan.

Place biscuits on end around the pan, and pour remaining syrup over the top of the biscuits. Bake at 350 degrees for 30 minutes and let stand for 5 minutes. Remove from pan.

### Breaded Pork Chops

1/2 c. milk  
 1 egg, lightly beaten  
 6 pork chops  
 1-1/2 c. crushed saltines

In a bowl combine milk

and egg. Dip pork chops into egg mixture, coat with cracker crumbs. Put 1/2 inch oil into skillet and heat. Fry pork chops til golden brown, about 6 minutes depending upon thickness. Season lightly and serve.

### One-Dish Oven Meal

Sliced raw potatoes  
 1 lb. hamburger, browned  
 Sliced raw carrots  
 Sliced fresh mushrooms  
 Sliced onions  
 Velveeta cheese

Place ingredients into casserole in order listed.

1 Cream of Mushroom soup  
 1/2 c. milk

Pour over 1 can Cream of Mushroom soup and 1/2 cup milk. Bake in covered dish at 350 degrees for 1-1/2 hours.

### Barbecued Green Beans

10 slices bacon  
 1/4 c. chopped onions  
 3/4 c. catsup  
 1/2 c. brown sugar  
 3 t. Worcestershire sauce  
 3/4 t. salt  
 4 c. green beans

Fry bacon, break into pieces. Saute onion in bacon drippings. Mix the catsup and brown sugar with the Worcestershire sauce and salt, add the onions and bacon pieces. Pour over the green beans and mix lightly.

Bake in a 1 quart covered casserole dish at 300 degrees for 40 minutes and heated through.

### Lemon Bars

**Crust:**  
 2 c. plain flour  
 1/4 c. powdered sugar

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1 c. butter

**Filling:**

2 c. sugar

4 T. flour

4 T. fresh lemon juice

4 eggs, beaten fluffy

For crust, mix and press into pan. Bake at 325 degrees for 20 minutes. For filling mix the sugar, flour and lemon juice. Add the beaten eggs, mix well. Pour over the hot crust and bake at 325 degrees for 25 minutes. Remove from oven and dust with powdered sugar while still hot.

**Coconut Cream Cake**

1 white cake mix with pudding

1 can Eagle Brand milk

1 8.5 oz. can Cream of Coconut

1 reg. carton Cool Whip

1 can flaked coconut

Bake cake as directed on box. While it is still hot, punch holes in it with small sharp knife. Pour Eagle Brand milk over cake, then pour over the cream of coconut. Cool and spread with Cool Whip. Top with flaked coconut. This is moist and delicious!

**Peanut Butter Popcorn**

12 c. warm, popped corn

1/4 c. butter, melted

3 T. sugar

2 T. peanut butter

1 T. light Karo syrup

Mix butter, sugar, Karo and peanut butter. Pour over the warm popcorn and mix well. Cool thoroughly and store in gallon Ziploc bags, if it lasts that long.

**Layered Dessert**

**Crust:**

1 c. plain flour

1/2 c. butter, softened

1 c. chopped nuts

**1st Layer:**

1 c. powdered sugar

8 oz. cream cheese

1 c. Cool Whip

**2nd Layer:**

1 pkg. vanilla instant pudding

2 c. whole milk

Mix crust and spread into a 9 x 13" pan. Bake at 350 degrees for 20 minutes. Cool. Mix powdered sugar, cream cheese and Cool Whip, spread on cooled crust. Mix pudding and milk, spread over first layer and top with more Cool Whip.

**Adult Cream Drink**

In your blender put a quart of softened vanilla ice cream, 1/2 cup Kahlua liquor and 1/4 cup Grand Marnier. Blend til it looks like a milk shake. Add milk for more liquid. Enjoy!

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# My Neighbor, the German Scientist

by Harry S. Dill

I returned from my first tour of duty in Japan in 1947 and started to night school to finish my education. Daddy gave me one of his lots that was on Toll Gate Road. I met a student at night school whose name was Nash. He lived in West Huntsville and was a fireman and a carpenter. He told me that if I would charge the material at a lumber yard in West Huntsville and help him that we could build a house on my lot. He would only charge me \$100.00 for his total labor to build the whole house.

So that is what I did, we built the small frame 4 room house on Toll Gate Road that I lived in for a good many years. I think it may still be there, it is across the road from the telephone tower. I would have to finish the house inside, put up the wallboard, paint it inside and out and put in the plumbing. He would tell me what to do on the outside including the foundation, frame, roof boards and roofing. I charged all the material at the lumber yard where he told me to get all the material.

We soon had the house "roughed-in" and I moved in and finished the rest of it. A man named Jimmy had built a four room block house just a little way down Dill Avenue. We (Daddy and I) had just cut a few trees out of the road at that time so Jimmy could get to his lot. My house was next to the corner lot on Toll Gate Road that was Dill Avenue.

Bruno Helm was one of the German scientists who came to Huntsville with Wernher von Braun when the government brought them over here from Germany. They worked on rockets out at the Redstone Arsenal. Bruno bought Jimmy's house and added on to it and even built a swimming pool later.

He also bought that corner lot from Daddy that was next to my house and put a deep well pump house on it. So Bruno became my friend.

I had a good chain saw and Bruno and I would cut trees out of Dill Avenue as far as Bruno's property line went down Dill Avenue. We would saw up the trees into firewood and use them for heating the following winter.

We also cleared out the underbrush in and around the road and took down a fence that

was near there.

Bruno had a Mynah talking bird that he would get to talk to us when I visited him and it was quite good at talking! I really enjoyed listening to the bird talk to us. He also had a Airedale Terrier dog that was nice and friendly. There was just Bruno and his wife and the bird and dog living there. As I said before he was one of the German scientists who worked at Redstone Arsenal which is now the Space Center.

Sometimes when I visited him he would check my blood pressure with his blood pressure monitor and would tell me that it was too high.

Bruno had a thyroid problem, I think it was cancer, and I think he had part of it removed. After a few years I moved out to the country and only heard from him around Christmas time when he would send me a large Christmas fruit package for a few years. I would send him and his wife one too every Christmas.

One year I got a letter from my mother say-

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ing that Bruno had died and that he had donated his body to science. He was a good friend and I will always remember him and his wife and his talking bird and his funny looking dog. He didn't have any children and I heard later that his wife had to have both of her legs amputated.

I tried to visit her once or twice but she kept the gate locked so no one could get in to see her. I never knew what happened to her.

Our lives are indeed short. We meet people and know them for a while and then they vanish away, so many of them, and we tend to forget a lot of them. Some we will always remember. Bruno and his wife were special and were ones I will always remember. We should make the best of our lives and theirs while we are still here.




James 4:14 "Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away".

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# My Ragtime Baby

by Tom Carney



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

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

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

One of the first gigs he had in Birmingham, according to legend, was playing in a notorious dive. The owner, after listening to the audition, asked what the group's name was.

"Don't have one." Willie replied.

"Well, what's your name?"

"Willie."

"Sounds like a damn Uncle Tom name to me.

What's your whole name?"

"William Christopher."

"Hell, that's even worse!

We'll just call you by your initials."

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

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

For his first recital Handy chose a piece, written by an obscure song-writer, he said, entitled, "La Overture Tous-saint." With a name like that,

it was no trouble getting the headmaster to approve it.

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

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

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

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

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

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# News Here - 1916

**Divorced** - Mrs. Esther Daniels, the pretty 18 year-old bride of Ashford Daniels of this city, is suing her new husband for divorce because he represented himself to be rich and turned out not to have anything. She says she is giving up on him not because he only makes \$30 a month, but because she has observed that he is not worth more than \$30 a month and if anything, is overpaid at that amount. During the courtship he entertained her with fabulous stories about the number of plantations and banks he owned.

**For Rent** - two rooms, only one block to town, electric lights, use of telephone. Telephone 158, party 1 or apply in person to home at 206 Green Street.

**Return** - John A. Royal is offering \$5 for information that may lead to the return of his wife. He is offering a reward of 2 1/2 cents per pound and says she weighs in at 200 pounds and is 38 years old. She is 5 feet 3 inches tall. She disappeared last Wednesday.

**J.D. Bragg Suffers \$1000 Fire at Dallas Today**

At about 2 in the afternoon fire of unknown origin starting in the soft drink stand of Ben Moring at Dallas Village destroyed the general mercantile store and its contents belonging to J. D. Bragg and also his residence adjoining. The residence was occupied by Mr. Walker, who saved practically all of his household goods. Mr. Bragg's store and contents are a total loss. He carried no insurance on his stock of goods but had something like \$1,500 on his store building. He estimates his loss above the insurance at between \$2,200 and \$2,500. The local fire department responded, but was handicapped in rendering service, the fire being so far beyond the city's fire limits.

**Collision** - Architect E. L. Love, with his automobile and the driver of John Scott's florist wagon this afternoon at 2:30 experienced a collision at the Holmes and Greene Streets crossing. No one was hurt. The other night when the heavy bolt of thunder and lightning came McFarland's dairy on Meridian Street north of town suffered the loss of five valuable cows. Other damage was done but fortunately Mr. McFarland and his family escaped serious injury.

**Want to buy** - second hand Ford car - Either two or five passenger; must be a bargain. State condition and price. Address: New Market, Ala P.O. Box 15

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*Jane Smith, Huntsville*



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# Lost Cause

by Mark Dyer

By the time I was a junior at Tuscaloosa County High School, I could not count the number of girlfriends I had on one hand, because there is no digit for zero and holding up a clinched fist is often misinterpreted as anything but zero. This "no girlfriend" condition was completely by choice, just not mine. I had bravely taken a couple of girls out on dates (and don't worry, I also brought them back home), but these naive forays in the world of social interactions bordered on pitiful. They are really better suited for the "Don't Do This, No Matter What" chapter in the self-help book "Dating for Sub-Idiots and the Aftershave Befogged" (available on 8-track).

It was early 1975. I was ten feet tall and bulletproof so long as I was not in the presence of the opposite sex. I have devoted considerable thought concerning an appropriate descriptive term for my condition whenever I found myself in proximity to a girl and I am most often drawn to the word "blithering." I was living in Northport, Alabama and bravely set up a Friday night date with a girl living in Birmingham, some sixty miles away. I invested several hours fumigating and cleaning my '64 Bel Air, the Blue Dragon. This was a tedious job and required great care because the car's paint came off considerably easier than dirt.

I spent another hour fumigating and cleaning myself, a task normally reserved for Tuesdays, but this was a special occasion. I had sloshed on the perfect fog of Brut cologne, just enough for serious mosquito repulsion, but not enough to endanger the Blue Dragon's delicate layer of paint. Obvi-

ously, I had not yet learned an important piece of dating etiquette, mistakenly thinking that if I could no longer smell my cologne, it was because I needed a quart more. Later, I learned that under a cologne onslaught, the olfactory sense often gives up in order to save itself, leaving the stinker completely nose deaf.

With both the Blue Dragon and me sparkly clean, I sat down behind the wheel, sporting a brand new dirt colored leisure suit, six-inch platform shoes, and a visually impairing mop of hair sprinkled with a handful of dead mosquitoes. It was exactly an hour and a half before

my scheduled rendezvous and I fired up that straight-six with its 120 Shetland ponies (the ones with the oversized nostrils). I commandingly bounced my forehead off my faux-leather wrapped steering wheel, as I asked myself, "Where does this girl live?"

I had neglected to get the girl's phone number and address and was way too embarrassed to call at this late date anyway. I had a nearby friend, who had once visited my prospective date's home, so I called her and she said she remembered her house was somewhere near Vestavia Hills. She



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added that the street may have been named "Sage" something. Loaded with those keenly detailed instructions, I pointed my chrome bumper northeast and took off.

About four hours later, I finally gave up my futile search and randomly picked a house at which to stop and ask for the use of a phone. I noticed it was a very nice home as I hiked up to the white columned porch and pushed a door bell button that cost more than my car. A pleasant older man answered the door and greeted me while heavily exhaling, "Howdy-whadkenidoyafer?" I staggered backwards, sensing my blood alcohol level increasing as the atmosphere between us filled with some flavor of hooch or paint thinner.

A marvelously cheery and chipmunk perky woman materialized next to the man. She gave me a brilliant smile sandwiched between the most puffy, rosy cheeks I have ever seen. Holding up one finger, she indicated for me to wait. Turning the man while holding his elbow, she assisted him as he wobbled to a distant recliner. Once he was situated, she patted his arm tenderly, and asked him to stay put. He slumped to one side and seemed perfectly content with this arrangement. The lady actually turned up the radiance of her smile and queried, "And just what can I do for you, young man?" I stammered out, "May I please use your phone? I have driven from Northport trying to find a girl's house and am now three hours late for my date."

The pitifulness of my story must have sunk right into her heart and she responded, "You poor thing. Over here's our phone. Please have a seat and perhaps I can get you a glass of tea or one of these tasty peanuts I have stuffed in my cheeks?" I gladly accepted the phone and seat, requested a phonebook, and politely declined the tea and peanut. I then made one of the more mortifying calls I have ever had

to make. Amazingly, I was only sixty-two miles away from my destination - just kidding, I was actually quite close, less than five minutes away.

Upon arrival, I apologized profusely for being almost three hours late and for wreaking of paint thinner mixed with Brut. My date and I prudently decided to skip dinner since all the restaurants were closed anyway and searched through the local newspaper, opting for a late night showing of the film "Murder on the Orient Express." With an hour or so to wait, I explained in painful detail my adventure as a way of introducing myself to her parents. When I got to the kind couple who had let me borrow their phone, the parents unexpectedly burst into laughter. This was disconcerting to say the least. I was relieved to find out that I was not the subject of their hilarity, at least not directly. During my explanation, I mentioned the name of the man and lady whose phone I had borrowed and between snorts and giggles, the mother asked, "Don't you know who that man is?" I looked blankly at all three in my audience as they bent double in another paroxysm of guffaws. After catching her breath, the mother gushed, "YOU BORROWED THE MAYOR'S PHONE!" Sadly, that may have been the high point of the evening.

We went to the movie and I thought it was a good show. My date didn't have much to say and as we drove back to her house, I am not sure I could have heard her over her growling stomach anyway. I didn't really get a chance to



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**"No matter what life brings you,  
kick some dirt over it and  
move on."**

***A Lesson from the Dog***

find out how she felt at the end of the date and only had time to wave goodbye while she bolted to safety. Her mother handed her a sandwich as she stepped inside.

I think even my date was surprised when my request for a second chance was answered affirmatively and, all things considered, date number two went pretty well - at least there were no casualties and she got to eat. On the way home, I decided to impress my companion with a neighborhood cruise, showing off my recently acquired 8-track tape of rhythmic chants and yodeling. As is the nature of 8-tracks, at some point along the drive the cartridge began to simultaneously regurgitate and consume yards of spooling magnetic tape into and out of the player. On the upside, the dragging and jerking may have improved the music.

Rather than foolishly stopping the car and then attempting to rescue the situation, I wisely chose to divide my attention between driving in crowded traffic and salvaging "Slim's Greatest Yodels and Chants" on the fly. Of course, I also knew this could be dangerous, so I made the intelligent choice of keeping the majority of my focus where it needed to be, saving the tape. If it hadn't been for my date's timely scream, I think things might have gone badly. While vigorously yanking on the cassette, my subconscious made the decision to drive on the sidewalk in a posh part of town called Five Points. I wondered about my subconscious sometimes.

Having been properly alerted to current conditions, I raised my head to survey options. Immediately, I could see a jumping telephone pole had inconsiderately positioned itself in our path. I had dealt with these troublemakers before and blindly swerved, miraculously shooting through a gap between cars, and headed directly into the on-coming traffic. With all the practiced skills of a sixteen-year-old, I yanked the wheel, over corrected, and jumped the curb back onto the sidewalk once more. "Ha Ha, you're missing the fun, and by the way,

your hair is on fire," I said to my date as she huddled down on the floorboard. At one point, the warbling and dragging yodels and/or chants harmonized with our screams (we made a heck of a trio). I managed to nudge the Blue Dragon back into the proper lane and we continued on our way, screaming and yodeling while the car filled with smoke.

I didn't know if chucking a flaming 8-track out the window constituted littering, but sometimes you just gotta' let your subconscious have its way.

After signing the tickets for littering and starting a brush fire within city limits, we decided to call an end to our fun. I noticed my date's blouse and hair were still smoldering. I carefully patted out her sparks and politely told her that she looked great with shorter hair on the one side. I drove her home and per our usual parting, I waved goodbye as she fled into the safety of her parent's arms and a sandwich. They were all waving vigorously, almost as though they were anxious for me to leave. They were such kidders.

I leaned back and chalked up another successful date in the record book. Hitting the gas, I jammed in a tape containing the Best of Disco Polka, looked up and promptly dodged a telephone pole.

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# AN ALASKAN ADVENTURE

by Bill Wright

"I knew I was going to die, but I just hoped it would not hurt." That is what Rob thought as he laid face-down on the wing of a C-47 U.S. Air Force Transport Plane, as the plane was minutes away from a crash-landing in the Alaskan Wilds; during sub-freezing temperatures.

It was July, 1995 when I mentioned to Rob that I had recently returned from attending the Dedication of the Korean War Memorial in Washington, D.C. Rob told me he served in the Air Force during the Korean War era, but mostly served in Alaska. He said he had one traumatic experience while serving with the Air Force in Alaska. I ask him to tell me about that experience.

Rob said it was the February, 1954 when he and fifteen other Air Force personnel were being flown from an Air Force Base in Anchorage, Alaska to another Air Force base, located in Fairbanks, Alaska, 280 hundred miles apart. Everyone on the C-47 aircraft were required to wear a parachute until the plane reached cruising altitude. When the pilot announced everyone could remove their parachute, Rob said he decided to leave his on because it made a comfortable cushion to sit on.

They were about one hour into the flight when the C-47 incurred a problem; suddenly

the plane dived, then corrected, followed by an explosion. Rob was thrown out of the aircraft onto a plane wing, laying face-down. The aircraft was now in a downward decline and headed for a crash landing in the Alaskan Wilds. He realized he had to get off the wing before the C-47 crashed. Rob wiggled to the backside of the wing and rolled off. He never had parachute jump training, but remembered from somewhere that you count to ten and pull the rip cord. His parachute opened and he floated toward the snow covered ground.

Rob said that as he was parachuting towards the ground, other Airmen, without parachutes, were dropping past him. He made a successful landing

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in the deep snow without any injuries. Initially, Rob thought he was the only survivor, but as he started walking he came upon two other Airmen that had successfully parachuted. By then, the C-47 had crash-landed a short distance away. The trio walked in deep snow to the crashed C-47 aircraft, hoping to find some survival equipment and food rations.

Later in the day a Bush Pilot, flying a small private plane, spotted the three survivors waving their arms. This pilot alerted the Air Force Rescue Unit of their location. However, weather was not suitable for a rescue for three days, so Rob and the other two Airmen spent three days in minus 36 degrees temperature in the Alaskan Wilds. They had no food during the three days.

The three survivors made a shelter from the parachutes and other items they found from the plane wreckage.

After three days the weather conditions improved and Rob and his two companions were rescued by an Air Force helicopter crew. Rob said he was afraid to sleep during the three days because he might freeze to death.

Three other surviving Airmen were located 15 miles away from the crash scene. These Airmen were rescued by the Bush Pilot who had spotted them earlier.

Seven Airmen and the three flight crew members did not

survive. All six survivors were taken to the nearest Air Force Hospital and treated for minor injuries, exposure and shock. The six survivors returned to duty in two weeks. The survivors were interviewed by a Crash Investigation Team, but there was not much they could tell them other than the aircraft took a sudden deep dive, followed by an explosion, and the C-47 disintegrated in mid-air.

In 1996 the six survivors met for their first reunion in Ohio. Only one of the six survivors chose to fly for the reunion. Most had a fear of flying from their Alaskan experience.

At the reunion the six survivors learned for the first time from a U.S. Air Force report the probably cause of the accident: "Ice had built up during the flight, the right engine stalled, the plane went into a steep dive, and gravity forces then pulled the C-47 aircraft apart."

Rob, when interviewed by a Reporter, stated: "It never leaves you. Every time I hear about a plane crash, I am reminded, why did I survive the crash and others did not survive?"

**"To help prevent colds, use an agonizer to spray into the nose until it drips into the throat."**

**Jeremy Jeffries, age 8**

How is it that "Fat Chance" and "Slim Chance" mean the same thing?

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## “We Met at WalMart”

by John Michael Hampton

The beautiful lady sitting at the table in the break room on that Sunday afternoon in March 2004 was crying in a way that told me she needed someone to help her. I knew that I wanted to let her know that everything was okay, and that I was there to help in any way I could.

Just three days earlier was March 24, 2004, which was the first payday at the new WalMart on Sparkman Drive. The super center had opened on March 17th, replacing a smaller store that had been on North Memorial Parkway between Sparkman Drive and Mastin Lake Road. On that Thursday, my good friend Candy Ellis Dean had introduced me to another of her good friends, Charlotte Gurley.

We barely had time to introduce ourselves before the line to receive paychecks began moving. I thought at the time that I would like to get to know her better, but was unable to talk at that time. Just three days later, on Sunday, March 27, I would get my chance to know more about the beautiful girl with the dark brown hair and the smiling face, though she would be anything but happy on that Sunday afternoon. I went to lunch early as the layaway department was not busy and they had even talked about me going home early when the evening shift person arrived.

Charlotte was already in the break room, crying, when I walked in there. As I stated earlier, I knew that I wanted to let her know that I was there and I would be glad to help her.

I walked up and sat down at the table, asking, “What’s wrong?” I know that was not a great way to introduce myself, but I was more interested in helping her immediately, then I could introduce myself later, if we ended up friends or possibly even as a couple.

She looked at me, eyes red from crying, and said, “He called me on my birthday to tell me what to include in the legal filing!”

I asked, “Who would do something like that?”

She answered, “My soon-to-be-ex husband!”

I replied, “I am sorry that someone would do something like that to a nice person like you! On your birthday, none-the-less! Some people just don’t know how good things are for them!” I stood, gave her a hug and said, “I am here for you! I will be your friend! You can rely on me!”

As I picked up my lunch, I went by the bakery and picked up a single piece of cake for Charlotte. When I got back to the break room, I handed her the cake and said, “Charlotte, don’t let him ruin your birthday! Let me give you this cake to celebrate your day!” As she ate the cake, she and I had some small talk about work and about the spring weather here in Alabama. I knew that I had found a good friend, but little did I know how that friendship would soon grow into something more, and would end up in her being the love of my life and the mother to our children. But, those are all stories that I will save for another time, because it would make this story very long.

Stay tuned for the second installment in this series of articles, “Fast Cars and Storm Damage”, for a story about the middle of April, when I knew that the friendship was growing into something more.



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# Golden K Spotlight Bob Overall



After each piece of cherry was meticulously selected, he began the immense task of hand-crafting these rough planks of wood into a beautiful piece of furniture fit for a precious newborn baby. Many months later after the first cradle was finally finished, our mother Jo Ann Overall hand made all the bedding for the cradle including a mattress cover, a pillow and bumper pads to complete the ensemble.

This first grandchild was due to be born in August, so on Mother's Day of that year Mom and Dad presented the cradle as a wonderful surprise to the soon-to-be parents - Lisa Overall Kimmons and her husband, Larry. Their son Tyler was born on August 9, 1984 and was the very first Overall descendent to sleep in the family heirloom. His sister Lauren was born on June 1, 1986 and became the second child to sleep in the cradle.

When Patti Overall Duke found out that she and her husband Don were expecting their first child she secretly hoped for the possibility of a second cradle, and so she was thrilled when, just before the baby arrived, Mom and Dad came for a visit and brought a second cradle that Dad

## A Story of Twin Cradles

*Written in Loving Gratitude  
to Our Parents  
by Pat Duke and Lisa Kimmons*

Early in 1984 our Dad, Bob Overall, began a labor of love in the garage of his home. Little did he know this project would ultimately lead to two cherished heirloom cradles and a much-valued tradition within our family.

With the birth of his first grandchild scheduled for later that year, Dad began to pour over dozens and dozens of cradle designs until he came up with one that, with some personalized touches, could be crafted into just what he had in mind. Next he set out to carefully choose the wood he would use; not a difficult choice for him as his favorite wood has always been cherry.



Cradle One



Cradle Two

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had made. Their daughter Amy was born on March 5, 1988 and became the first child to sleep in the second cradle. Her sister Emily was born on September 18, 1991 and was the second child to sleep in this second cradle.

Unfortunately by the time our youngest sibling, Rob Overall, was expecting his first child, Dad was out of the woodworking business so a third cradle was not an option. So the second cradle was loaded up in Dad's car and taken to Longwood, Florida just in time for the arrival of Rob's first son, Jordan, who was born on March 14, 1997.

The cradle was kept in Longwood and again used upon the arrival of Rob's second son, Matthew, on July 23, 2000.

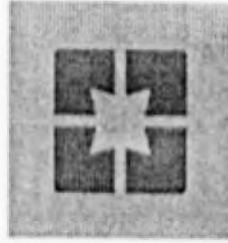
When our youngest sibling Bill Overall and his partner Mike were expecting their first child in February of 2015, Dad and Don loaded the second cradle into a rental car and hand delivered it to the expectant parents, this time all the way from Alabama to California, so that Nathan Michael Overall could also be included in the tradition of the Overall cradle.

In the spring of 2015, Tyler Kimmons, the very first baby to use one of these cradles and his wife Erin, carried the first cradle from Mandeville, Louisiana to Chicago, Illinois pending the birth of their first child. With the birth of their daughter Claire, on July 22, 2015, a second generation was born into the cradle tradition.

*To our future family members -* As you can see, these cradles are very special to our family and our desire is for each child born into the family to spend his or her first few months sleeping in one of the cradles. In passing this cradle on to you we have entrusted to you something we hold very dear in our hearts and we trust you to continue the tradition by making sure that every attempt be made within reason to get the cradle to the next new family arrival.



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# Piffle Lou Bird

(Pronounced "Fille")

by Margaret Anne Goldsmith

Years ago on the banks of the Paint Rock River near where it flows into the Tennessee river, there was fishing camp known as "Hollytree." As the story goes, one evening while playing poker, Harry Rhett's hand was called.

"I have a Piffle Lou," (pronounced Fille) he said, and from that time forth a "Full House" was known as a "Piffle Lou."

Then one fine day two imaginative gents stuck a pine cone on a pair of sticks, put it on a shelf in the dining hall and introduced it to all as "Mr. Piffle Lou Bird." The men said that the bird was modeled after the Piffle Lou birds that lived in the area millions of years ago, fed on red peppers, and flew backwards to keep their rear ends cool.

Now, according to legend, when the earth was young Piffle Lou Birds laid their eggs on the hill-sides near the Paint Rock River. That was before ice covered most of the earth, a time when the land was tropical and great colorful birds lived in the valley. The Piffle Lou was a spectacular bird, for it was as bright as new copper as a result of feeding on red peppers from the plants that grew along the river banks.

The birds were known to fly backwards with their heads turned around in the direction of their flights. Some say the backward flight kept their rear ends cool.

Years passed and the great Ice Age descended upon the earth and many Piffle Lou Birds migrated south where the red pepper plants continued to grow. In the Paint Rock River Valley the Piffle Lou Birds stopped flying backwards because there were no more peppers to feed upon. Old timers said that because of the cold many of their eggs failed to hatch.

**"And forgive us our trash baskets as we forgive those who put trash in our baskets."**

*8 year-old praying in church*



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*Oscar Llerena, Miami*



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As millions of years went by, the frozen eggs petrified and became what we now call Paint Rock River Agates. People today are known to search for the agates and when they find them they cut and polish them like fine gems for people to craft into jewelry or use for decoration.

Several weeks ago I was wandering through the hills of the Paint Rock River Valley near Huntsville and came upon an old man who showed me a beautiful Paint Rock River Agate he had found. The old man told me the legend I recounted above and what happened to their eggs that never hatched. Intrigued with the legend, I persuaded him to sell me the agate since I collect interesting rocks.

I have been told that since Global Warming began, several Piffle Lou Birds have migrated back to the Paint Rock River Valley.

On warm summer days just at dawn, when I look out my window to the east, often I have seen a Piffle Lou, the sun rays shining on its brilliant copper colored wings. Often it drops down for a drink of the cool clear waters in the Big Spring, then circles the Courthouse Square before heading out to Paint Rock where it spends the day looking for the peppers that have started growing again in the region.

At night when all is quiet and I listen to the wind rustle the leaves in the trees outside my window, sometimes I hear an unusual cooing. It comes from the rafters where I am sure a Piffle Lou is nesting.



**"If a man washes a dish and no woman is around to see it, did it happen?"**

*Neil Keith*

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# A Mississippi Mystery

by John E. Carson

On September 29, 1962, the Kennedy Administration ordered the nationalized Mississippi National Guard and federal troops to the campus of the state funded University of Mississippi to quell the violence touched off by the enrollment of James Meredith, the first African American to attend the all-white college.

John Lloyd "Buddy" Heflin was one of those National Guardsmen and he and his company occupied the campus for two solid weeks, ensuring the safety of Meredith, himself a nine-year veteran of the U.S. Air Force.

Throughout the 1960s, the eyes of the nation and the world were drawn to the Southern states; particularly Mississippi, during those tumultuous times and the battle for civil rights for all Americans.

But on a cold New Year's Day in 1969, nobody was paying any attention when Buddy Heflin vanished - never to be seen again, leaving behind his wife Alexis Heflin, two sons and a mystery that has persisted for 49 years as of January 1st, 2018.

At the time of his disappearance, Buddy and his family were separated; Alexis and the boys living in Chicago where Alexis found opportunity with a much higher paying job. But finances were not the only reason she would spend the next thirty-seven years living there before moving South once more.

Married in June of 1962, Alexis was pregnant with their first boy when

Buddy was sent to the University for duty. From the time of his return, he was a different man and his frequent, unexplained absences began to put a wedge between the young lovers.

Alexis' questions were met with only silence and distant stares by her husband. Rumors began to reach her ears; whispers of infidelity rejected by Alexis who chose to stand by her man, right or wrong and in September of 1964, a second son was born. Both boys were the spitting image of their father and had his dark hair and good looks.

In the years that followed, however, the strain on their marriage had caused many separations - painful to both her and Buddy and the two young boys. Finally, for the sake of her sons, Alexis knew she must become independent and in April of 1968, she parted with Buddy for good.

Not wanting a divorce or to take him out of their son's lives, she was shocked eight months later when she heard from family that Buddy Heflin had dis-

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Maxine

appeared. Moreover, the family had been told that Buddy had been murdered and his body thrown into the Mississippi river near Vicksburg.

Several months after this news, Buddy's father died of a heart attack. To these sad events was added the news that one of Buddy's longtime friends had called the family one year after Buddy's departure. He told them that Buddy had indeed been murdered and his body thrown in the river. Not long after making that call, Buddy's friend committed suicide.

Over the years, the lack of investigation and justice for Buddy and his boys, who were denied the Social Security they were entitled to, had forced Alexis to work two jobs to support the family.

Time after time, despite being told the case was "active", Alexis Heflin was met only with empty promises and no official reports or resolutions. This forced Buddy's family to live haunted by the whispers of the mystery that surrounds them and the death of John Lloyd Heflin.

A long time Huntsville resident, Alexis Heflin works at the Star Market in Five Points. Recently she has teamed with another local author and is scheduled to release a new version of her book, "Mississippi Whispers" - one that takes a "novel" approach, examining the mystery of Buddy's short life from a different perspective.

Due to be released in February, "Mississippi Whispers" by Alexis Heflin with John E. Carson will be available on Amazon. Local media coverage and book signings are being scheduled, including two television interviews.

It is the author's hope that this new release will reach a wider audience than her previous work and perhaps a solution to the Mississippi Mystery.



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# My Blessing

by Wanda Williams



My husband and I had just lost our two little dogs. They had gotten sick and we were just heartbroken.

I remember just a little while after this I was watching TV on a Saturday morning and the Huntsville Animal Shelter on Wall Triana Blvd. had several little dogs

for adoption. I told my husband that I would like to go out there before they closed at noon.

He said, "We are not getting another dog." I knew that but I told him I just wanted to go and look. When we left to go I had a little collar and leash in my pocket.

There was this little Min Pin Doberman dog who had been found on the side of the road. According to the volunteer, she had just been dumped and was trying to survive. She was very young. A kind man brought her in to the shelter. She was just standing in a pen, all by herself. The look in her eyes was just sadness.

I walked out to the office and my husband started talking to the manager about the little Min Pin. I waited

and waited in the office for him to come back. Finally I went into the room and there he was, holding the little dog and talking with one of the volunteers.

In a few minutes he turned to me and said, "Do you have your checkbook?" He said he thought we should have the little Min Pin and what did I think? I was thrilled.

We couldn't bring her home until our Veterinarian had checked her out and she was fine. We named her Ginger because of her brownish color.

She is now 11 years old and is loved every single day.

My husband passed away two years ago and now Ginger sleeps on his pillow every single night. She is a blessing to me.



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# PET TIPS FROM ANGEL

## Disaster Plan

Disasters happen to everyone. You have got to have a plan just in case it happens to you and your pets. This plan will be for your pets.

### Create an Emergency and Disaster Plan

If you need to evacuate your home, where would you go with your dog? Does the Red Cross Shelter accept pets? Who would you leave your dog with if you couldn't find a shelter for you both? Whether it is a hurricane, tornado, earthquake, flood, or fire, you will have little time to act once disaster strikes. Now is the time to start planning how you will take care of your dog during the next natural disaster, not a day or two before the next one is forecast.

Here are some steps you can take to make sure the four-legged members of your family are ready in the event of a natural disaster or other emergency.

### Create an Emergency and Disaster Folder for Paperwork

1. Make sure you have proper identification for all your pets, including tags, as well as a microchip. Keep copies of all paperwork in an Emergency and Disaster Kit, along with the phone number of the microchip company. If a dog goes missing, some microchip companies/plans will alert shelters in the area to look for your dog.

2. Check that your dog(s) are up to date on their shots/vaccinations. Keep copies of the paperwork in your Emergency and Disaster Kit. Many safe havens for you and your dog will only accept pets if they have been vaccinated, so this proof may be essential to keep your dog with you. Some will accept dogs if they are muzzled, so it may be prudent to invest in this crucial piece of equipment just in case. Be sure to practice using it with your dog before it is needed.

3. Keep current copies of the prescription medications your dog takes on a regular basis.

4. Make a list of your dog's health needs, any behavioral issues, and your veterinarian's phone number. Include a current photo of your pet.

5. Include a current photograph of your dog in the event he or she ends up in an animal shelter. The photograph might be the only way the shelter can authorize someone else to leave with a pet.

### Do Your Research and Find a Safe Haven

Due to state and local regulations, many Red Cross shelters cannot permit any animals, except for service animals.

1. Find out which animal shelters/kennels



provide emergency shelter in the event of a natural disaster. Ask your veterinarian for referrals.

2. If you don't want to leave your dog in a shelter or kennel, research hotels or motels along your evacuation route that accept pets.

3. Ask a family member or friend in advance if they will be your dog's emergency caregiver in the event of such a situation. It is important to choose someone who likes animals and has some experience taking care of them.

### Create Your Emergency and Disaster Kit

1. Choose a bag large enough to accommodate all the food, water, and essentials for your pets, but one that is easy enough to transport while you are traveling with them. A large backpack would be perfect for a single dog, or a duffel bag on wheels would be good for someone with multiple dogs.

2. Be sure to include at least seven days worth of bottled water and food for EACH pet, along with collapsible food dishes, paper towels, dish soap, and bags for trash. Particularly with a senior dog, it is important to get the same food he usually eats. Dogs are sensitive to food changes unless done very gradually. No need to add more stress to your dog in an already stressful situation. Remember to rotate food every six months so the food in your kit is always fresh.

3. Add a dog first-aid kit and a guide book for basic first-aid procedures.

4. Include two weeks worth of any medication/supplements your dog takes. Be sure to rotate medications every six months to one year to make sure medications don't go bad.

5. Include comfort items for your dog, such as treats, chew toys, a favorite blanket, stuffed animals or toys. If your senior dog has arthritis, etc., be sure to remember to take his bed and/or blankets to make him as comfortable as possible.

6. An extra collar or harness and leash.

7. Add your Emergency and Disaster Folder to the kit.

8. Store your kit in a convenient location that can be easily accessed in the event of an emergency. Show any emergency caregivers where you keep the kit.

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## From the Desk of Tom Carney

# Delivering the Mail

This may be hard for Huntsville residents to believe, but as German rocket scientists were preparing to move here to set up an arsenal that would change the world, our mail was still being delivered by horse and buggy!

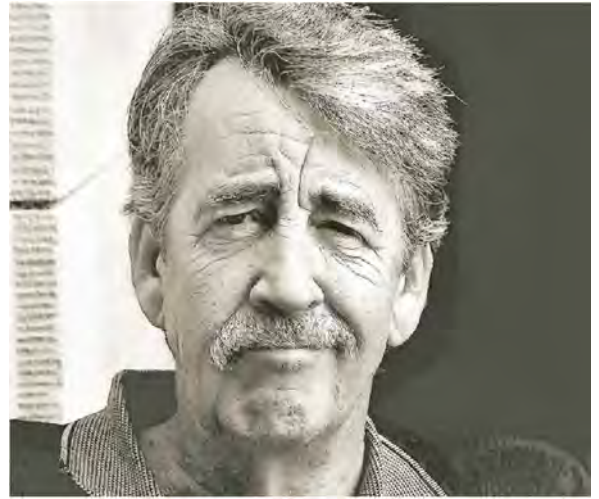
A mail carrier for the Huntsville Post Office for over 30 years, Clarence Celia Powers refused to change to the automobile and delivered mail to his customers by horse and buggy until he retired in 1948.

Clarence was a familiar sight to all on his route. He knew all his mail recipients by name and would often carry candy to the young children along his route. The children especially liked to run alongside his buggy until he would get out of their neighborhoods. On several occasions he had stopped to help people in distress, and was known to have a kind heart and a good sense of humor.

Clarence served several territories throughout Huntsville. His last route covered the area of Pulaski Pike and West Clinton Avenue. One of the few black men working for the Post Office at that time, Clarence was born in March of 1878 and was the youngest of five brothers. His father was a farmer and a Methodist minister, and Powers had always taken an interest in church work. When he wasn't delivering mail, he was usually found at the church. Powers' high school education was received at Central Alabama Academy, located on Franklin Street.

Clarence became a mail carrier on June 1, 1917 after working for Chattanooga, Memphis and other Huntsville employers. He especially liked carrying the mail, he said, because he liked seeing the same people every day. The fact that ladies along his route oftentimes would have pies and cakes waiting for him just provided an extra incentive. For all the eating he did Clarence was a tall, slim man.

The last day that he served, January 27, 1948 was one of the most difficult he had ever experienced, due to the severe icy conditions of the Huntsville streets. His horse had gotten quite old by this time and found it very hard to maneuver the



slick roads. There were very few days that Clarence was not able to deliver the mail to his customers. He had many friends, both black and white, among the people who knew him and respected him. Powers was recognized by the Post Office for all the years of dedication. He was given a dinner in his honor and the gift of a beautiful pocket watch.

The new man who was to take over Clarence's route, when asked if he was going to use a horse and buggy, replied he was going to use a "gas burner, not a hay burner!"

Clarence Powers was 70 when he retired. Upon his retirement, the horse and buggy were consigned to the county barn. Two months later, a group of people led by farmer Ben Lucas bought the buggy and horse and presented it to the retired mail carrier in appreciation of his years of dedicated service. For several years thereafter, Clarence and his horse remained a familiar sight to Huntsvillians.



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# A GOOD MAN

By Hugh Michaels

Many years ago my father was a deputy sheriff in a small town in Jackson County, Alabama called Langston. He was well known, especially by the trouble-makers. Bootlegging was his greatest problem.

He simply would not let the bootleggers do their "thing." If he heard of someone who was operating a bootleg still he would proceed to find the location. When he located the still he would hide near the operation and when the culprit arrived and began working, my dad would arrest him on the spot.

Dad had a gun but I don't think he had handcuffs. Usually he would have another man to be his helper. Transporting the person to jail in Scottsboro was a problem at the time. There were very few cars in Langston and it was quite a task to find someone who would drive a belligerent person to jail. Dad would be paid very little for taking the person to jail - any money received would be given mostly to the person who drove the car. Dad received little but the satisfaction of knowing he had gotten another bootlegger off the streets.

One time dad arrested a man and he locked him up at

our home. The man crawled out a window and was never seen again. Dad would be gone all night at times. My family would be worried that he might be killed or badly hurt. It was a very dangerous job, just like now.

He was a very highly respected man by the good people of Langston - they were fortunate to have someone who cared about the safety of their families. He wanted the town to be a good place to live.

The worst experience my dad had involved a man whose son had stolen his dad's car. The father requested dad to go with him to retrieve the car as he was very upset about the theft and his son was a trouble-maker. The two men hid beside the road where the son was supposed to be driving by. When the stolen car approached, the

boy's father suddenly pulled out a gun and shot at the driver, thinking it was his son.

The driver was actually an innocent man and not his son at all.

He had shot the wrong man, who turned out to be a good friend of the man's family. This incident was well publicized and was a big story at the time it happened. The shooter never went to jail, and he and my dad never spoke again.

If this were to happen in today's world, the killer would be in jail.

My dad was a good man, who loved the people of Langston. Not many men would put their lives on the line every day to make sure the town was safe.

He was a respected man who received very little in return, except the satisfaction he got from protecting his town.

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"Cyanide is so poisonous that just one drop of it on a dog's tongue will kill the strongest man."

Joey, 7, on science exam



# Harry Duncan Sisk

by Berns Miller

The story of Harry Duncan Sisk starts for me back in 1968 with Franklin Shepard. It was not unusual for Franklin to frequently visit his mother who was our neighbor. His mother was Cora Shepard who lived in the house next to us with her daughter Essie Shepard Phillips and her son Emmett.

Franklin Shepard was a compassionate youthful-acting man who had loyalty to his friends and family. There was never a dull moment when Franklin was around and he was always having fun. This particular 1968 visit was not fun for Franklin or his family. He was drinking heavily and focused on the news that Harry Duncan Sisk was missing in action (MIA) in Vietnam. Franklin made frequent telephone calls to Washington including the White House demanding that an effort be made to find Harry Sisk.

My interaction with Franklin at that time was limited for obvious reasons and the MIA topic was avoided. No reason was ever given for his concern for Harry but indications were the Sisk family lived in our area and Franklin knew them. Franklin was known for helping people. He was that kind of person.

Harry Duncan Sisk was in the 196th Light Infantry Brigade attached to the Americal Division in I Corp. His rank was sergeant as a combat medic. The US Special Forces base at Kham Duc near the border of Laos was being threatened by the Second (NVA) North Vietnamese Army Division and the 1st Viet Cong Regiment. The 196th Light Infantry Brigade was sent in to bolster the defenses of the threatened base.

Harry Sisk was sent to observation post one (OP 1) on the high ground above the base. A total of seven observation posts surrounded the valley below and made ready to protect the high ground. Control of the hills was essential for the survival of the base.

Early in the morning on May 12, 1968 the NVA attacked OP1 and overran Harry Sisk's position. The surviving defenders retreated back to the Kham Due base. All seven observa-

tion posts were quickly lost to the enemy. General Westmoreland gave the order to abandon Kham Duc for fear of another Dien Bien Phu type loss or another long deadly siege like Khe Sanh. The evacuation was a miracle credited to the bravery of those who flew in to the rescue. U.S. forces didn't return to Kham Duc until 1970.

One major objective of the NVA during the Tet Offensive of January 1968 was the Marine base at Khe Sanh. In May of 1968 during Mini-Tet, Kham Duc was a target. During Mini-Tet, the NVA and Viet Cong simultaneously struck 119 targets throughout Vietnam. The U.S. military didn't return to Kham Duc until July and August of 1970 during which the Search and Rescue unit identified the remains of Harry Sisk and Antonio Guzman-Rios.

Apparently their bodies were covered in debris as their position was pounded by the NVA and later by the U.S. in retreat. Harry's remains were returned to Alabama and buried at the Gurley City Cemetery in the family plot. The recovery of Harry's remains and the U.S. military temporarily going back into Kham Duc made news in the Huntsville Times.

Several things bothered me

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about the death of Harry Sisk other than the obvious loss. After failing to immediately ask Franklin Shepard about the Sisk family and his connection, time slipped away to the point of being too late upon his death. After that lost opportunity, I could not find anyone who knew Harry Sisk or his family. Harry paid the ultimate price, lived in our community and I didn't have his photograph or a family connection.

Seeing a name on a list or carved in a monument is much too distant and impersonal to fully understand or appreciate the impact his death had on the family and his friends. This is especially true of someone who died in an unpopular war like Vietnam in which many feel uncomfortable remembering due to a state of national amnesia.

Wallace Hudson's mother was a Sisk and I asked him if he was related to Harry Sisk. He didn't know but promised to

check. Wallace located Harry's nephew living in Mississippi. The nephew answered my inquiries and as a result several Sisk relatives were located in the area. Most were hiding in what could be called, "in plain sight". There are four sisters still living.

Harry attended Gurley School and once lived at Salty Bottom and Kelly Hill near Maysville. His parents lived on Old Gurley Road when he died. Also the family once lived at Ryland on Dug Hill Road. I finally figured out Harry's connection to Franklin Shepard. Harry was Franklin's second cousin. Franklin's Aunt Jesse Shepard married Mark O. Sisk and Harvey Sisk was Jesse Shepard's son.

The Sisks and their allied families have origins in Paint Rock Valley. Another surprise was finding that Wallace Hudson was Harry's second cousin. Harry's parents were Harvey G. Sisk Sr. and Jose Moon. All of Harry's brothers are deceased.

In 1968 Harry Sisk was on his second tour as a medic in Vietnam. He arrived in Vietnam during the early days of the Tet Offensive on February 7, 1968. Tet was the most dangerous time to be in Vietnam to date. During the attack at Kham Duc, he moved from his bunker to administer aid and to encourage the wounded. While exposing himself in this act of heroism Harry was mortally wounded by heavy rocket and mortar fire.

Members of his family begged Harry not to go back to Vietnam but he insisted on doing his part to stop Communism.

He was posthumously awarded the Bronze Star Medal with "V" for heroism in a special ceremony at Redstone Arsenal. Major General Charles Eifler of the U.S. Army Missile Command presented the medal to Harry's parents.

Harry Duncan Sisk will live on as long as he is remembered.

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## A Proud Day for the Grandparents

By Ernestine Moody

Tears of pride, trickled down our cheeks as we remembered the day of her birth. Both sets of grandparents had invaded the waiting room at Huntsville Hospital. Our first grandchild was making his or her appearance on that beautiful Valentine's day in the year 1992.

We had received "the call" and quickly gathered last minute essentials needed for the trip to Alabama. When my husband, a professor at Middle Tennessee State University, was informed that the event was near, he immediately dismissed his class. Excitement seem to be contagious. As the students were leaving that physics class they requested that Professor Moody please advise the university when the little one was born so that the news could be shared.

Traveling Highway 231 from Tennessee to Alabama we chatted nervously. It would be a race, we thought. Would the little one arrive in Huntsville before the grandparents? "Granddad to be" pushed a little harder on the accelerator. The usual two-hour trip seem to be taking an eternity. Finally, we arrived at our destination.

Weaving our way through the hospital corridors, we arrived at the busy waiting room. Our gaze focused on several fatigued figures seated and staring into space. Perhaps they were feeling concern for their wives, the arrival of their new child, or even worries of the responsibilities that they would soon encounter. We embraced the other "grandparents to be", Mamma and Papaw Conard. We discussed names that might be given to our new family member. Of course, each of us had our favorites, but fortunately our children were not leaving this decision to the old folks. Hands on the clock kept moving, we were tired but couldn't sleep.

Finally, we were told that the event was occurring! We rushed to the viewing area. Four rather large people struggled to position themselves to obtain at least a "one eye" view of the new arrival.

We could see a sea of green clothed professionals scurrying around in an inner room. The blinds were opened and one of the figures in green held up our beautiful baby. Our hearts were pounding with joy. Concentrating on the sweet little bundle,

none of us realized that it was our son holding up this "precious prop". With lungs bellowing, our granddaughter decided to announce her own arrival.

Now, twenty-five years later, we will be at the magnificently remodeled Huntsville Botanical Gardens. Both sets of grandparents will be radiantly smiling as they watch their beautiful granddaughter walk down the aisle.

All memories will flash through our minds. We have travelled with her through school plays, school honors, softball games, swimming events, and now, in these gorgeous surroundings we will witness Annie Moody's marriage to Chris Lee. The music will begin, escorted by her dad we will know that we are viewing the transition and establishment of a new extension to our family, and we know we are blessed!



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# A VALENTINE DATE

by Elizabeth Wharry

*Place...Mentor Ohio, 1986. A bedroom community east of Cleveland, Ohio.*

I met my husband Bob Wharry in late January of 1986. We belonged to a singles' group that met on Wednesday evenings to play volleyball. He asked me out for Valentine's. I turned him down as I already had another date.

How well I remember that evening! I think it qualifies as the worst date ever.

Alan and I had reservations for a popular restaurant. Unfortunately, we lost the reservation because he picked me up 20 minutes late. We ended up having to wait in line for a table. The wait was about 45 minutes to an hour.

The lobby was quite crowded and Alan started to complain. I tuned him out and was wondering what I saw in him to begin with. As Alan continued to fuss, I wondered what Bob was doing. I was lost in thought, and didn't notice the gentleman in front of me starting to step back... right on my foot!

I yelped as his full weight came down on it. He quickly lifted his foot and turned to apologize. The gentleman turned out to be one of the original Cleveland Browns, and a fellow church member.

Bob Golic and his wife Nancy asked if Alan and I would like to join them for dinner. I readily agreed, but Alan wasn't quite as gracious. Bob looked at Alan, and told him that he and Nancy would make sure I got home safely. Alan gave them a deer in the headlights look and left.

I felt odd, a third wheel, on Valentine's day. Both Bob and Nancy soon put me at ease, and we ended having a great time. I told Nancy quietly that I wasn't expecting to pay for my meal as I hadn't brought any money with me. She merely smiled, and told me that I was their guest.

What started out as the worst date ever, turned out to be quite memorable!

Happy Valentine's Day to all!

A reporter traveling in Afghanistan was surprised to see a woman still walking 5 paces behind her husband. She was asked why, after so many social changes, she was still doing this. The woman answered: "Land mines."

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**"Smile at someone who is hard to love. Say 'Hell' to someone who doesn't care much for you."**

***Seen in Athens church bulletin***

# Surviving the Depression

by *Cathey Carney*

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

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

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

\* We always used our ground coffee 3 times.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

potato.

\* We used cardboard in our shoes and washed our hair in Fels Naptha, we brushed our teeth with salt and soda.

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

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

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

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

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

\* An unopened box of baking soda will stay good up to 2 years; baking powder 18 months; cake mix good for a year; flavored gelatin, 18 months and unflavored gelatin, 3 years.

\* Baking bread will help improve your spirits when you're feeling low. Pound and knead the dough as if you were trying to beat away all your problems, then pull and push it into shape. Bake the bread, enjoy that wonderful smell in your kitchen, then eat a couple of slices with real butter, while it's still warm.

\* Tea bags are often good for two servings. We used it for the first cup, took it out and saved it, then put it back in the hot water later for a second cup.

**"My wife was at the beauty salon for two hours, and that was just for the estimate."**

**Anon.**



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# Me and My Bike

by Ted Roberts

A famous English poet decrying the brevity of life once stated, "But at my back I always hear time's winged chariot hurrying near" or something like that.

I know exactly what he means: because I'm a bike rider and how often have I mumbled; "But at my back I often hear a two-ton cement truck hurrying near." It's enough to wobble you into the curb and a fog of embarrassment in front of friends and neighbors (I ride in my neighborhood).

I can just imagine my public audience rushing to their doors and windows to see that "wobbly old guy" navigate the streets and sidewalks. There must be a well organized betting pool in place too: even money bets that he falls off. And more interesting to real gamblers - odds lovers - which block?

Real biking - far better and more natural than pedaling away in a gym with your only company your fellow creatures - much duller than the birds, the sun and the occasional squirrel and chipmunk that cross your sidewalk path. Of course, there is occasional danger. Once in a while, here comes the lady walking her two Pomeranian wolfhounds. With teeth like daggers and tempers like tigers: cursory critters that chase and devour anything that moves - like you. The only reaction is to veer into a neighboring tree or cut in front of the cement truck. Data gathered by bikers favor an immobile tree - not a truck moving towards you at 60 mph.

Riding around the neighborhood doesn't display many kids with helmets - though it would help when you avoid the Pomeranians and hit that tree. I think the bike riding world has figured out that if Junior needs to wear a helmet riding a bike, he needs full body armor in the back seat of a four wheeled vehicle going 60 mph in a 30 mile zone along with dozens of other maniacs. But I don't think an adventurous world has yet figured that out.

Junior isn't the problem. It's the wobbly old guy (me) whose balancing capabilities are under challenge: the senior citizen whose wife - upon his return -

greet him like a wing-walking acrobat. "Well, did you fall off today?"

Most of the time I smugly reply: "No way" unless crutches, arm in a sling, streaming blood or grass stains give me away.

Another hazard. You're wobbling down a street and you decide on a U-turn, which can be deadly if a garbage truck is behind you. Maybe you ought to take a look before you take a turn. Simple, you'll swivel your head and make sure that the garbage truck is in another state.

But alas, your neck no longer swivels like it did when you were sweet sixteen. So, you do a halfway swivel and listen for the roar of a ten-ton behemoth. This works most of the time.

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## Daisy

Hello, the Ark named me Daisy. I came in with my 3 siblings. Our owner let our mommy have pups but she did not want us. When we came to the Ark we were only 6 weeks old. We missed our mom and our family. There were so many puppies and kittens at the Ark during November and December. Would you believe 68 kittens and 49 dogs! Please have your pets spayed and neutered to help stop the birth of so many animals that become the responsibility of animal rescues that had nothing to do with their

birth. We are adorable and wish we could all find a loving home. We are terrier mixes waiting for you to come to the Ark and ask to see Daisy and her siblings.

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# Huntsville Coffee Talk

by Aunt Eunice

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



*This was from one of Aunt Eunice's columns, in spring of 1999. Aunt Eunice authored this column for many years in the Old Huntsville Magazine, and was a feisty and beloved restaurant owner and friend to many. She passed away in February of 2004.*

I want everyone to mark their calendars for Tuesday, March 9. I'm helping to give a breakfast to raise money for the Crime Prevention Academy for Seniors.

Others helping with the breakfast include Sheriff Joe Whisante, D.A. Tim Morgan, Police Chief Compton Owens and Madison Police Chief Cecil Moses. This is a worthwhile cause to help the Senior Citizens and I'm counting on all my friends to show up!

My sympathy to the family of Pam Mitchell. Pam was with the D.A.'s office for 17 years and her friends will miss her greatly.

I think it's great that Channel 31 is broadcasting their 6:00 news from different cities each week. A friend of mine said they were in Decatur and sure did enjoy it.

My friend Susan, from the Senior Citizens Center, is sure excited about the WalMart Senior Expo coming up May 26-27. She said that John Malone has agreed to be the M.C. for the event. John is as good a person as you could ever hope to know. I love you John and keep up the

**"We started to long for the pitter-patter of little feet. So we bought a dog. Well, it's cheaper and you get more feet."**

**Beth & Sam Jonas, Gurley**

good work.

Mike Glenn, one of our Huntsville boys who is Pastor of the Brentwood Baptist Church in Nashville, brought his staff to breakfast recently. It was good to see you Mike!

A special Congrats to one of my employees, Judy Rush, who just celebrated her big 40th. We wish you many more to come.

Remember Jimmy Taylor who had a restaurant on Whitesburg Drive? He and his lovely wife brought their friend, Rebecca Star-

ling from Atlanta, to breakfast this week. Great seeing them again!

Congrats to Linda Drace who just celebrated her birthday. Both of her children came home from college to celebrate Valentines day with her and she was one proud mother.

Rumor has it that Fred Simpson is almost ready to publish his book about lynchings in Madison County. It should be really interesting.

Two special people, Todd and Melody, came by to see me last week. They are the grandchildren of the late Grady Reeves, and boy was he ever proud of them! Their father, Robert, is with Channel 19 and also a great person.

Congressman Bud Cramer came by and spent his morn-

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ing pouring coffee. He is one politician who really cares about people!

Jim Kirkland has had knee surgery, and besides being an "ole crip," is doing fine.

A NASA man visiting here from Florida last week wanted to come into the kitchen to see how we made our biscuits, I just jotted down the recipe and he was happy with that.

Rumor is that Jenny Askins, daughter of R.J. and Sandra Rhodes, is due to go back on the Board of Registrars come October.

If you go to the Outback you'll get a great meal but good luck on seeing the owner! He taught his wife, Marci, to play golf and now that she's become an expert he has to spend all of his time on the golf course practicing to stay up with her! Stick to what you know Loyd and leave the golfing to Marci!

World famous author Ken Follet will be visiting us this spring, I hear that he'll be hosted by Tom and Cathey of Old Huntsville fame. He's working on a spy thriller based partly here in Huntsville in 1958. We'll feed him some ham and biscuits and he may never go back to London!

We hear that Ranee Pruitt and Margaret Ann Hanaw recently returned from some wild partying in New Orleans. We know they had a great time.

For all of you people who read Old Huntsville, you should thank the Golden K Kiwanis club. They distribute the magazines and all the money goes to help children here in Huntsville. They are a great bunch of retired guys who never get the recognition they deserve.

Congrats to June Cope and Edward Riddick who have announced plans for a May wedding. Her diamond would put Liz Taylor's to shame.

LeRoy and Nelda Johnson celebrated their 50th anniversary by eating breakfast with me and then I heard a few days later that

they lost her mother, who was 97. I'm so sorry for your loss.

Well, I sure hope that everyone got to see Willard Scott at the VBC but I sure was tickled to have him come back to my place for breakfast. I always enjoy his company.

It was a special party when we celebrated one of my sister's, Mrs. Ruth Moon, 90th birthday. She had a great time with lots of flowers and cake. Happy Birthday!

Our good friend Billy Lee (a legend in his own mind) made his solo debut at the Monte Sano home of J.J. and Claudia Shoefer. Billy's popular group, Pizzazz played a garden party celebrating the upcoming nuptials of Lawrence French and Christy Buhmann. During the day Billy is a master barber at his shop, Billy's Barber Shop.

My sympathy goes to the family of Delbert Williams on the death of his mother.

That's all for now but remember I love you.

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## DELIVERING THE MAIL IN BOOGER TOWN

*by Malcolm W. Miller*

After spending almost ten years of my young adult life working at the shoe factory in Huntsville my brother Frank and I were hired, in the Fall of nineteen fifty-five, as substitute letter carriers by then Postmaster Louie Collier. This brought about great changes in both of our lives because we had been struggling to pay our bills on low wages and doing sweat shop labor.

When you went to work at that time as a substitute carrier you filled in for the regular carriers when they were off. You did whatever was necessary to get work, like going all over what was then Huntsville, collecting mail out of all the collection boxes all over town. There was even a night collection run. Since I was in bad financial straits, I tried to get all the extra hours I possibly could, although there was no such thing as overtime pay for substitutes.

I had not been at the Post Office very long when I was assigned to a route out in West Huntsville that included the Booger Town community. I had only been to Booger Town twice in my life, both

times were when I was sixteen years old hanging out downtown with my good buddy James Erk Bolden.

Erk had relatives living in Booger Town and since it was late one night and we couldn't get home, he suggested we spend the night with his brother Eugene in Booger Town.

It was very dark when we arrived in Booger



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**"The best way to forget  
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*Inez Brooks, Arab*

Town and I couldn't tell anything about the place til morning. We were undressing for bed and in the dark I knocked over a big bird cage. You never heard such a racket with the bird squawking and Eugene's wife cursing.

Finally it all settled down and we went to sleep. The next morning when I awoke I was shocked when I went outside, I had never seen such a rundown, trashy place. Believe me, I had lived in some run-down houses growing up as the son of a share cropper, but this was much worse.

On the first day I delivered mail in Booger Town it was the day the welfare checks were delivered and I was doing pretty good until I got to the corner of Ninth Avenue and Eleventh Street. I looked down Eleventh Street and there in the middle of the road was a water faucet standing about four foot tall and gathered around it was most of the citizens of Booger Town. When they saw me turn the corner they charged! I didn't know what to do so I stood there in the middle of the street by the water faucet and called out names just like they do in the military and passed out all those checks. I found out later I could have lost my job for that, but at the time I didn't know what to do.

After that day I delivered the mail several times in Booger Town and it was always an adventure; for instance there was no order in the box numbers. One unit had a store-bought box and the price on the box was the house number. Some places I just threw the mail through a broken window; there were cigar boxes, tin cans, etc. and you really had to watch your step because there were loose and broken boards everywhere.

In all my thirty years delivering mail, my first day going into Booger Town on welfare check day will always stand out as the most memorable event of my career. I also became very proud of having worked with the United States Post Office and being able to better myself and my family for the first time.

**If the Cincinnati Reds were really the first major league ball team, who did they play?**

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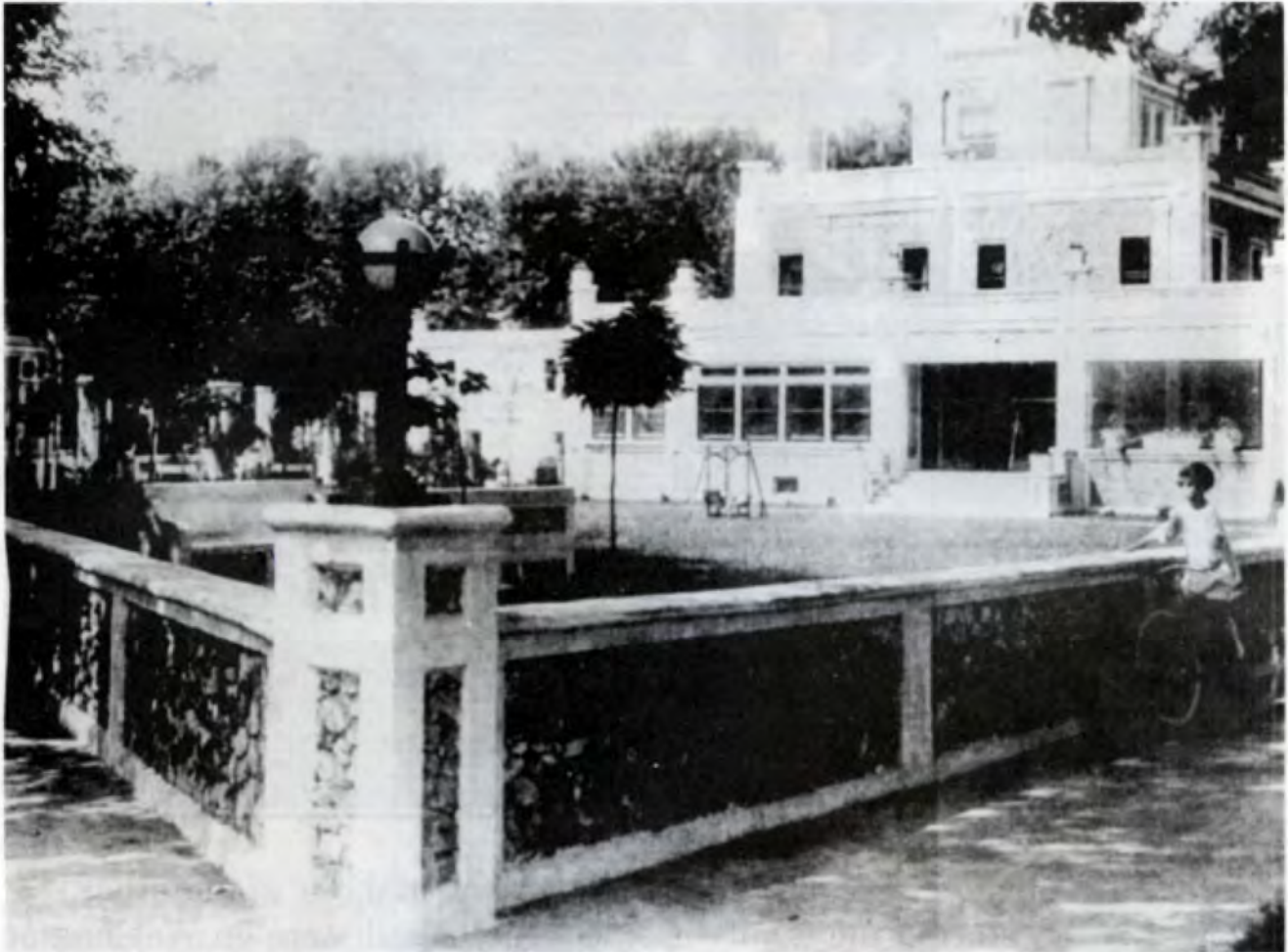
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