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Old Huntsville

HISTORY AND STORIES OF THE TENNESSEE VALLEY

The Life and Death of Mr. John

Louise Pulley was sitting on the porch stringing beans when she first noticed the old black man. He was sitting under a tree about halfway down the long driveway between the house and Meridian Street, not moving, just staring at the house and the lands around it.

He was dressed in an old threadbare black suit that somehow still retained a certain amount of elegance, and his hair was as white as snow.



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The Life and Death of Mr. John

by Tom Carney

Louise Pulley was sitting on the porch stringing beans when she first noticed the old black man. He was sitting under a tree about halfway down the long driveway between the house and Meridian Street, not moving, just staring at the house and the lands around it. He was dressed in an old threadbare black suit that somehow still retained a certain amount of elegance, and his hair was as white as snow.

At first Louise didn't think anything of it. This was the Great Depression and people of all sorts often wandered over from the nearby railroad in search of a handout.

Once she finished stringing the beans she turned her attention to preparing dinner. Occasionally she would glance out the window to see if the old man had moved, but he was always there, just staring at the house as if lost in thought.

At dinner that evening Louise told her husband Claude

about the strange old man. Claude nodded his head, saying that he had noticed the man when he had left for work that morning but had paid no attention to him. After talking for a few minutes, and looking out the window to see if he was still there, they decided to confront the stranger.

As they started out the door Louise suddenly darted to the kitchen where she filled a large fruit jar with lemonade. "He's been sitting there all day," she explained, "and I know he hasn't had anything to drink."

The couple waited patiently as the stranger took big gulps from the fruit jar. Finally, with his thirst quenched, the old man leaned back on the tree trunk and explained his purpose there. He didn't want to alarm no one, he said. "I just wanted to sit here and remember."

"You been here before?" asked Claude.

"Oh, yes," replied the stranger with a weak smile. "This place is my home. I was born right up there in the big house, in that room on the bottom right. I just wanted to come back and see it one more time 'fore I died."

Claude looked at the old man with disbelief. He knew the history of the house. It had belonged to John Tate Lowry during the Civil War and was passed down to his son, Sam Lowry, who married Claude's aunt, Lucy Pulley. Aunt Lucy had been a widow for years and

"I'm going to quit asking 'How dumb can you get?' People seem to take it as a challenge."

Bob Allen, Gurley



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lived in a small cottage in town. Rather than let the house stay empty, she had talked Claude and Louise into moving in and taking care of it. In all the stories associated with the house, he had never heard of any black person being born in it. Nevertheless, he let the old man continue his story.

"My Mama, she belonged to Mister John Lowry. She wasn't but about fifteen years old when she got big with me. When it got to be her time she had a terrible fit, screaming and hollering and hurting something awful. I recon Miss Lowry took pity on her 'cause she moved Mama into the big house where she could take care of her. That's where I was born. Miss Lowry, she said I was the 'stubbornness baby she ever seen so she started calling me Mister John, cause she said her husband was the same way. And I been Mister John ever since."

Mister John paused to take another drink from the fruit jar and to catch his breath before continuing.

"Mister Lowry, he was good to me. He never put me to work

in the fields, I just did chores around the house and ran errands. When I got to be bigger he taught me how to drive a horse and buggy and I drove him everywhere he went."

"When the War came along and Mister Lowry went off to fight, he wanted to take me with him but Miss Lowry, she threw a fit and said that she needed me to stay. The worst thing that ever happened to me was when I left."

Louise interrupted Mister John, "If you liked it so much here, why did you run away?"

A look of annoyance and anger flashed briefly across the old man's wrinkled face. "I didn't run away! I got captured!" He continued his story by telling how he had been sent to town one morning to fetch a load of fire wood when the Yankees stopped him and ordered him to a nearby warehouse where he was loaded with bales of cotton. He was then ordered to join a large wagon train hauling cotton to Nashville.

"When I got to Nashville they sent me to Kentucky and then they had me hauling sup-

plies for the Army. I recon I traveled about every road there was back then, going here and there with everyone always in a big hurry. After the fighting stopped, I ended up in Cleveland, Ohio where I met my wife. She already had Jesus and she helped me get Him too, so I done spent my whole life preaching the word. She died about ten years ago and I just been walking ever since, spreading the word. I came back here one time when I was a young man but the house was empty so I just kept on going."

For the first time Claude noticed an old worn Bible in Mister John's hand. "You know how to read that?"

Mister John looked solemn

"I don't trip - I do random gravity checks."

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as he answered, "No sir, I can't read but I done preached enough so I know every word in it by heart."

By the time he had finished his story, the sun was beginning to dip below the horizon. Louise asked Mister John where he was going to spend the night.

A gentle smile seemed to play on the old man's lips as he replied. "I'll just find me a tree and curl up underneath it."

Louise noticed how pale he was. Suddenly his body was convulsed by a violent bout of coughing. It was apparent he was seriously ill.

A few moments passed in silence with everyone left to their own thoughts. Almost hesitantly, as if he wasn't sure of his decision, Claude turned to Louise, "Make him a pallet on the back porch. I don't suppose it will hurt nothing for one night."

Early the next morning, almost at first light, Claude was awakened from sleep by the sound of someone chopping wood in the back yard. Going to the window he stood for a long time, transfixed by the scene in the back yard. Finally he called for Louise to come and look.

It was apparent that Mister John had been working for hours; there was already a sizable stack of wood piled neatly next to the porch. As Claude and Louise watched from the upstairs window, Mister John continued with his chore. It was easy to see that the mere weight of the ax was almost more than he could lift: he had to stop every couple of minutes to catch his breath. When he had several pieces of wood chopped he

would laboriously carry them to the stack, stopping and resting for a few moments, before he once again returned to the ax.

Claude hurried to get dressed, telling his wife, "I'm going down and make that old fool quit. I'm not going to have him dropping dead in our back yard."

Although Mister John quit chopping wood, he insisted on doing other chores like feeding the chickens or hoeing in the garden. "The Good Book," he said, "tells you that you reap what you sow."

Gradually over the next several weeks a routine developed. Mister John slept on the back porch and Louise would bring his breakfast and supper. In the early morning hours, while it was still cool, he would do

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chores around the house. Later in the day, after it got hot, he would go back to the tree where they had first seen him and sit there for the rest of the day - just staring at the house and the yard. Once, when Louise asked him what he was looking at, Mister John replied, "I'm just trying to remember, but it's been so long ago."

As more and more time passed, Claude began to get irritated. "It just ain't right to have some stranger living on your back porch. He is going to have to go!"

Louise agreed, but unfortunately there was no place in Huntsville where a feeble ninety-year-old black man, with no family, could go. Claude and Louise both knew, deep in their hearts, that they could not just tell Mister John to leave, with no place to go.

"We'll just take it day by day and hope there is an answer somewhere," Louise would say whenever the subject came up.

It was late fall and there was already a tinge of frost in the air when Mister John appeared at the back door with a shovel

in his hand. "Mister Claude, I need your help."

Curious, Claude took the shovel and followed Mister John to the spot under the tree where he had been sitting for months. Carefully lining the tree up to where it was in a straight line to the corner of the house, Mister John paced off fifteen steps. "Mister Claude, I want you to dig a hole here, about two foot deep."

By this time Louise had joined the men in the yard. Claude, feeling very irritated, explained to her what Mister John wanted and added, "I'm not going to spend my Saturday morning digging holes in the yard for some crazy old man."

Despite his misgivings, Claude finally agreed to humor Mister John and started digging. Suddenly, about two

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Al Hrabosky, Major League relief pitcher

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feet down, the shovel hit metal. Dropping to his knees, Claude used his hands to finish uncovering a small cast iron pot.

Inside was a small bundle of old fashioned bills, known as "Greenbacks," several gold coins and an assortment of jewelry.

"I knew it was there," said Mister John, "I just couldn't remember exactly where!"

Almost speechless, Louise and Claude listened while Mister John explained. "When the Yankees came to Huntsville they were stealing 'bout everything not nailed down. Miss Lowry, she called me, Aunt Missy and Miss Anne into the house late one evening. She had four of those old bean pots and she divided up all her valuables in them. Once it got dark she told me to go out and bury one of the pots and remember exactly where it was. She made me promise I would never tell anyone except a member of the family. When I got done and went back to the house, Aunt Missy took her pot and did the same, followed by Miss Lowry and Miss Anne. Miss Lowry, I recon she figured that by splitting it up the Yankees would never get it all. Even if they made one person talk, the rest would still be safe."

Still speechless by the discovery, Claude finally managed to ask what he and Louise were both thinking. "Why didn't you just come back and dig it up?"

Mister John's face took on a look of shock. "Mister Claude, I couldn't do that! That would have been going against the Good Book. I promised Miss Lowry that it was for the family and I recon you are family and

you've been good to me, so it's yours."

Once it was added up, it wasn't a lot of money; maybe three hundred dollars. But, for a young couple during the middle of the Great Depression, it was a fortune. Claude immediately began making plans to pay off debts and get the sorely-needed repairs for his car. If there was enough left over, he figured, Louise could get a new dress and he could get a suit. It had been years since they were able to splurge for new clothes.

His carefully laid plans came to naught, however. Louise refused to spend the money. "It was given to us for a purpose and we'll just wait to see what it is." Regardless of Claude's temper tantrums and arguments, Louise refused to give in. The arguments grew so heated, they didn't speak for over a week.

Despite their marital problems, there was a ray of hope in Mister John's living situation. Louise found a black woman, Miss Betty, who ran a boarding house in the neighborhood known as the Honey Hole, near the Huntsville Railroad Depot. For five dollars a week she agreed to board Mister John and provide his meals.

When Claude returned home from work that afternoon he literally blew his stack. "We can't afford it. It's a waste of money! We'd be better off paying off some bills."

What had once been a really happy marriage quickly turned sour, with both of them barely acknowledging the other's presence. Claude would go to work every morning, return in the evening, and after a silent dinner retire to the back porch where he would drink until

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"We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give."

Winston Churchill

time for bed. Louise, equally stubborn, refused to talk with him and barely acknowledged his existence.

Strangely, almost the only thing they had left in common was Mister John. Although Claude was violently opposed to paying for Mister John's board, he was still drawn to the old man and would often spend hours listening to his stories. Louise also visited Mister John, carrying him hot meals and paying his board every Friday.

Mister John had been living in the boarding house for maybe two or three months and Louise and Claude were having their usual icy, silent dinner when suddenly there was a loud knocking on the back door. It was the son of Miss Betty, who ran the boarding house. "Mama said come quick! There's something wrong with Mister John!"

Leaving their dinner on the table, they rushed to the board-

ing house. Mister John was curled up in a small ball in one corner of the bed. Claude asked Miss Betty, who had followed them into the room, "What's wrong with him?"

"He's old," Miss Betty replied simply. "He's dying."

Mister John's eyes were staring blankly at the wall. For a brief second they showed a look of recognition as Claude moved to his side. "What can I do for you, Mister John?" Claude asked.

In a barely audible whisper, Mister John grasped his hand and said, "Carry me home."

When they got home Claude picked him up in his arms and started to carry him inside the house. Mister John grew agitated, saying, "No, put me on the porch. I want to see the sun come up."

Claude and Louise spent the night on the porch with the old man, bathing his forehead with wet towels and giving him sips

of water. Sometime early that morning, before the sun came up, Mister John died. He had a gentle smile on his face, perhaps remembering a time almost a century earlier when he had been a small child playing on the same porch.

That afternoon Louise and Claude visited Brother Luke, a charismatic preacher who ministered to the black community in Honey Hole, to make funeral arrangements. Once Claude explained what he wanted, Brother Luke seemed to stall, saying he was so busy, and after all Mister John was not a member of his church.

Louise and Claude both started to storm out when suddenly Claude stopped, as if in

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thought. Grabbing Louise's pocketbook, he counted out the money that was left.

"Preacher, if I make a donation of, say, two hundred dollars, what kind of a funeral do you think we could get for Mister John?"

The sight of a roll of bills captured Brother Luke's total attention. With a broad smile on his face he said, "For two hundred dollars I think we could do him up fine that would make everyone proud."

Claude counted out the two hundred dollars. There was a single ten dollar bill left. Thinking only for a fraction of a second he shoved it into the preacher's hand. "Buy him a new white shirt and a nice tie, too."

The day they buried Mister John was a perfect day for a funeral, if there is such a thing. There was just enough chill in the air to make you thankful that the cold days of winter had passed. Light wispy clouds seemed to hover in the sky like angels waiting in heaven to greet their brethren.

Brother Luke preached a hell, fire and brimstone sermon about a "good God-loving man," with maybe thirty or forty members of his church gathered around the grave, saying "Amen" and "Hallelujah" at the appropriate times. The church choir, dressed in their finery, stood a short distance away and whenever the preacher would pause, they would break into a chorus of hymns. Several ladies, dressed all in black, would wail and cry every time Mister John's name was mentioned.

The minister closed the sermon with the simple words,

**How can something be
"New and Improved"?
If it's new, what's it
improving on?**

"Mister John has gone home."

After the funeral Claude and Louise were driving home when he asked, "Don't you think it was a fine funeral?"

Louise replied in a soft voice as she slid over to hold her husband's hand, tears in her eyes. "I think it was a real fine funeral. Mr. John is home."

This story is true, and the home that Mr. John came back to is the Historic Lowry House just west of Lincoln School and Meridian Street.

He spent his later years trying to come back to the home that he was born in, and that home and the room he was born in are still there.

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* Did you know that fidgety people lose more weight than people who sit around? You burn more calories by being more active and moving around more. Makes sense, doesn't it? Start fidgeting!

* If you don't sleep that well and notice dark circles under your eyes in the morning, why don't you try raising the front of your bed up by 1-2 inches? You can put a board under the two top legs (under your head) or get casters that fit under them. It makes a difference.

* When traveling, always put a towel in the tub before you take a shower. Oftentimes the tubs are very slick and the towels will prevent you from slipping.

* If you put all the stuff you want to take to work with you in the morning in one "to-go" spot, you will begin checking that spot every morning and not forget things.

* Spring is here, but if you still get chilled at night invest in a good goose down comforter - you wouldn't believe how warm and cozy you feel under one of those.

* If someone you don't know calls you to tell you to move your money to a bond fund in preparation for an emergency,



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* When you're shopping or in an area not familiar to you, make a habit of being very watchful of your surroundings and if someone follows you in a parking lot, go back inside.

* Put your bathroom light on

a dimmer - that way you don't blind yourself in the middle of the night when you use the bathroom.

* A very good marinade for steak is lemon juice, Dale's sauce and Worcestershire with a bit of garlic powder thrown in. Measure equal amounts in a ziploc bag, throw in your steak and let it marinade in your fridge overnight. Cook over hot coals on your grill and your friends will come over to see what you're cooking!

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A Wee Bit Irish

by Elizabeth Wharry

Corned beef and cabbage, green beer, shamrocks and shilleleighs, luck o' the Irish. On St. Paddy's day, we're all a wee bit Irish.

I grew up in the Cleveland area of Ohio. My parents were naturalized when their parents were. My father's parents legally immigrated from Quigley's Point, Co. Donegal. It's still a small town. Ireland, a century ago is quite different from Ireland today.

I'm going to take you back to 1915, or thereabouts. Padraic Pearse was leading yet another Irish rebellion. English law had forbidden the Irish to speak the Gaelic or get even a basic education.

While all this was going on, my father's granddad, a farmer, passed away. I'm not sure how old he was when he died. In those days, the deceased was waked at home by friends and family. This was usually done for a period of 3 days. This was done in the event that the deceased wasn't! Only the well-to-do could afford an undertaker.

My great grandmother was worn out with grief the day's busy-ness. Friends of my great granddad's took the night vigil—by candle light. Candles were far less costly than lamp oil. My great grandparents were not wealthy farmers.

My great grandmother took herself off to bed. Soon after falling asleep, she was awakened by a commotion downstairs. She crept down the stairs thinking the noise was from the local brigade of English soldiers. Imagine her shock and surprise at seeing her husband sitting in his favorite chair, his cap on his head, a glass of whisky in one hand and his pipe in the other!

Great granddad's friends had lifted him out of his coffin. They were having one last farewell drink with their friend. Slainte!

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Tails in the Wind

by Mr. Freckles

Hey folks, I'm back! My boss tells me that people really liked my first story and I have fans! Who would've thought an ex-con like me could actually start a new life and become a celebrity? Now, because they are big supporters of giving guys like me a second chance in life, and as long as I don't reveal any private information, he and the Missus have said it was okay to send out an update.

And because it has been awhile since my first story was published in the Old Huntsville magazine, I should give you a recap of how I got where I am today.

Like most of the other inmates in the City lockup, I was innocent-framed you know! My only "crime" was being unemployed; through no fault of my own I might add. Someone must have slipped me a Mickey because I woke up one day to find myself in the yard, the driveway empty and the doors all locked. Nobody home.

For the next two weeks I had to fend for myself, take handouts from the neighbor and hope my former employers would return. I was homeless and sleeping in the rain under any cover I could find.

I don't know if it was pity or if my circumstances had offended someone, but one day the City Police rolled up and threw me in their Paddy Wagon. Next thing I know, I'm behind bars with a bunch of cons barking about their innocence and howling about the living conditions in their cramped cells. They didn't much like the food either.

So, there I stayed until time was running out - they had scheduled me for execution! Overcrowding they said. Sorry, mate!

Well, I had made a few friends during my stay and having been a model prisoner and not a bad looking cuss either, they slipped me into a Second Chance program. If I could find a mouthpiece willing to take my case, I just might have a chance at a new life!

Now while I was in stir, I had picked up a moniker. The guards had taken to calling me Freckles; a fact that the other cons would howl about and tease me unmercifully, and since I had no other I.D. on me when I was picked up, that became my handle.

When the big day came, I and a few select others were brought to a public hearing - the courthouse must have been busy because we were taken off the Paddy Wagon in the park-

ing lot of a big mall in Huntsville. All the yapping ceased as we listened to the guards tell us what we needed to do - sit quietly in our cells and wait for the person who would become our advocate. As the day wore on, about half of us were left without a sponsor. Time was running out and so was our hope.

"Too big," someone said.

"He's too small," said another.

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"This one's not cute enough."
 "Too cute."

"Doesn't look like he could handle the job."

Each comment ate away at my dwindling hope and I thought Death Row would be my fate.

"What's the story on this one?" someone asked as he read the card that hung from the bars of my portable cell.

My spirits rose! Maybe, just maybe, I would get that Second Chance!

By now you've figured out the rest and I've gotta say I love my new job!

My new Boss must be important because we travel all over the City now talking to people. Most of the time I am there to watch his back; his bodyguard, you might say. And when I am at the house, I patrol the grounds, inspect packages that arrive and alert the Missus and him when we have unexpected company. And I keep the squirrel away from the feeder that attracts the birds they are so fond of.

They both confide in me and know I won't repeat what I hear; their secrets are safe with me!

And there are times I travel with the Boss and he talks about the program that rescued me and then I am the one on center

stage. Together we've created some momentum and the Second Chance program has helped a lot of people and ex-cons like myself get a new start in life.

So, back to where I started; I've picked up some fans! And I have to say that the Missus is a big part of the reason for the respect I get now. When people asked about my moniker, Freckles, and wondered at my gender identity, she thought of a way to turn all of that around; she said, "We'll call you Mister Freckles!"

I'll let you in on something; there is a reason I wrote this story. There are a lot of mugs like me, from all walks of life and all genders - the dogs and cats of society you might say, that get picked up and locked away with little hope for the future. Maybe you could help; be an advocate, a mouthpiece, someone who would give them a second chance!

And one day, maybe we'll all be free - our tails flying in the wind! (Now if I could just catch that darn squirrel...)

This story was written with the help of local author, John E. Carson, an advocate for the Pets for Vets program in Huntsville.



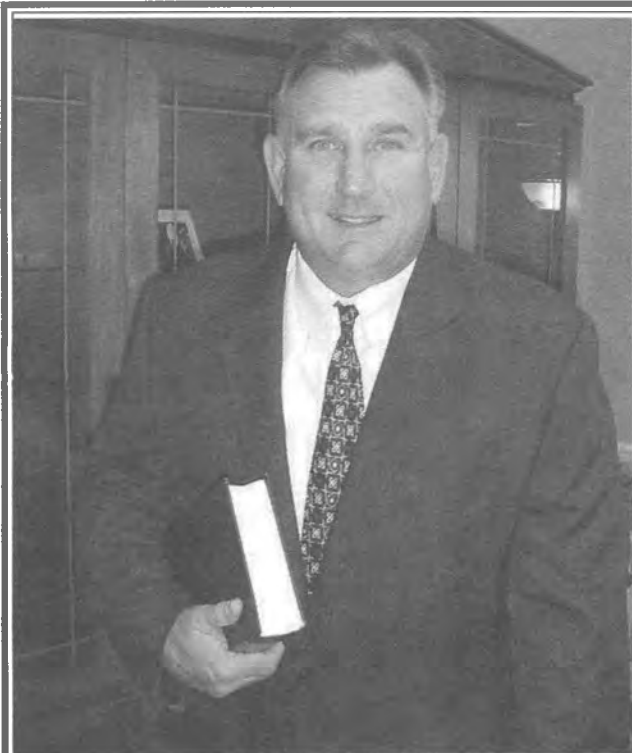
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MOONSHINERS AND BOOTLEGGERS



by Malcolm W. Miller

Back in the days the only place you could buy alcoholic drinks was at the Alabama State ABC store, on what is now Gallatin Street down near Big Spring Park. Since some folks just had to have a drink now and then, there was a big demand for whiskey and beer so some turned to bootleggers to satisfy their thirst. This is where the makers of illegal whiskey called "moonshiners" came into the picture. There have been many movies made about moonshiners throughout the years, some hilarious and some serious. Also there were those who made home-made beer that was known as home brew.

A lot of the illegal moonshine was hauled in from Jackson County, from mountain places it wasn't safe to venture into unless you knew some one there. I worked with a man who hauled moonshine out of Jackson County when he was a teenager years ago. He hauled moonshine for his uncle who was a successful farmer between Meridianville and Hazel Green and he was never once stopped by the law. The reason he was never stopped was his uncle paid the sheriff's deputies to leave his operation alone. This went on all over Madison County and had been practiced by every sheriff for many years past.

One sheriff that I knew well because we lived in the same community was a friend of mine. Everyone really liked him and they would turn their heads at the payoffs his deputies were collecting and when election time rolled around he would be re-elected over and over. I don't think the moonshiners in Clouds Cove paid off and like those in Jackson County

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they were pretty much left alone. There was only one road into Clouds Cove and most folks in those days didn't dare venture in there because they might not come back out and for a while that included the law.

One of the first drive-through businesses in Huntsville was a bootlegger on Arm Street in north Huntsville named J.B. Webb. The customers would pull up to his window and make their purchase and drive away. Once in a while they would arrest him and fine him a hundred dollars to satisfy some complaining citizen, however I heard J.B. say one time that these little arrests were the best advertisement he could get for his business.

A friend of mine told me recently that he used to occasionally ride with his uncle who was a deputy sheriff. He said his uncle would pull up to the bootlegger and the bootlegger would give him a double shot of whiskey and a bag full of money. He said he thought that was the best job in the world and that was what he wanted to do when he grew up.

There was one deputy who was close friends with J.B. and they often visited each other. J.B. got in a supply of expensive Scotch whiskey and he was afraid the state ABC men might catch him with it; so he went to his friend the deputy's house and stored the expensive whiskey in the deputy's shed. Sometime later J.B. visited the deputy and the deputy gave him a bottle of the expensive whiskey. J.B. asked him where he got such fine whiskey and the deputy told him someone had left it in his shed and he was giving it away for Christmas. This could have broken up their friendship but it didn't because they needed each other and it definitely gave them a lot to laugh about later.

There were small time bootleggers all over the county mostly selling home brew that they made and there were several people scattered over the County operating moonshine stills. Now and then they would be caught by the State ABC men and some of them had to spend time in the state pen. I guess they didn't pay off the local law enforcement.

Things really started to change here when the sheriff's department was put on the merit system. Before this went into affect a new sheriff would be elected who usually had no law enforcement training. He would fire all the deputies hired by the former sheriff and hire a whole new force. Usually none of them had ever been in law enforcement.

Now you can buy anything you want to drink legally. As far as I know bootleggers and moonshiners are about extinct, just another way of life that only remains in the memories of those of us who still remember such things.

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Heard On the Street

by **Cathey Carney**



Our Photo of the Month for March was none other than **Mitch Howie**, who is an attorney on the North Side of the Square. The first person to call and correctly guess that it was Mitch was **Nancy Grayson Van Valkenburgh** of Huntsville. Congratulations to Nancy! When you are the first caller, you win a free year of "Old Huntsville" delivered right to your door each month!

A special hello to my friend **Oscar Llerena** and his lovely wife **Maria**. They live in Miami now but he graduated from Huntsville High in 1966 and loves to come back here to visit and see his classmates!

So happy to have warmish weather again - Huntsville is just beautiful during the spring and more people are getting into gardening and digging in the dirt. It's good for you!

Two of our readers who live in Murfreesboro, TN contacted us recently. **Phyllis** and **Billy Lawrence** will be celebrating their 44th wedding anniversary on April 27. In addition to that, Phyllis has a birthday on April 19th (when the American Revolution started, she told me). Billy was a 1962 graduate of Butler High here in Huntsville, and he graduated from University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa. Congratulations to the lovebirds!

You know there's a pretty easy way to avoid getting sick - **keep your hands out of your mouth!** If you're an adult you have no need to put fingers in your mouth! Try it - it works.

We wanted to send a special hello to **James & Faye Bobo** of Athens. They are loving this warm weather we're finally getting and love coming to visit.

Marjorie Rickard lives in Lewisburg Tennessee but enjoys reading about the history of North Alabama. Her grandson **Ron Rickard** lives here in Huntsville so she visits as often as she can. Come see us, Marjorie!

There are so many activities in Huntsville and especially during the spring and summer months. I can't wait for **Lowe Mill's Concerts on the Dock** to start, and they will begin on Apr. 20 from 6-9pm. It's free and you bring blankets, chairs, pets and kids along with your drink of choice. There is a great place there to get food like sandwiches, wraps etc. called **Happy Tummy**.

Huntsville is full of music lovers and one of the most popular annual music events is the **Rock 'N Roll Reunion** which takes place at the Elks Lodge on April 14th from 5-11pm on Franklin Street just south of downtown. It goes on for hours and several bands play music from the 60s, 70s and 80s and it is a PARTY. Everyone gets up to dance and the music is so good. People who haven't seen each other for a year will see them again at this event. Cost to attend is \$10 and well worth it. Food and drinks are available at the Elks bar kitchen.

Ben Shapiro wrote a play that will be presented several times at the Historic Lowry House near Lincoln School. It's called "The Growing of Ivy" and performances begin in April. For more info call the Lowry House at (256) 489-9200.

Many go to **Concerts in the Park** at Big Spring every Monday and those start on June 4 from 6:30-8:30pm. There are good food trucks at these events and it's free of charge.

So many events - for those of you new to Huntsville the Botanical Gardens, Merrimack Hall,

Photo of The Month

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Space and Rocket Center, Early Works Museum, Panoply in Big Spring Park downtown April 27-29th, Historic Lowry House tours - it's just endless.

Also for those of you who love to stay active, there are areas to bike all over the downtown historic districts, downtown itself and Monte Sano.

Sending wishes to get well soon to **Doc Overholt**, who's been really under the weather lately.

Hazel Green owner of "Ole Dad's BBQ" **Rosemary Leatherwood** wants to wish her daughter **Jamie Woods** a wonderful birthday on April 14. Jamie is Mom to kids **Austin** and **Chase** and married to her sweetheart **Allen**. Hope it's a great birthday!

Barbara Johnston had a bad fall recently and we wanted her to know that we're thinking about you and get well! We know your sweet hubby **Johnny** is taking good care of you.

Triana is a small town near Huntsville. There isn't alot of history available, and a group of people are trying to put together some interesting stories/memories of Triana. Did you ever go to the Chicken Shack or River Club as a younger person? Very close to the Tennessee River, oftentimes people would pull up in their boats, dock and go in for eating and drinking. Some of these clubs opened later and stayed open til early in the morning. But there is more to

Triana than clubs and if anyone has stories they'd like to share, to become part of this project, send your information to this email: trianahistory@gmail.com.

Many of our residents have ordered packages to be delivered to their homes, only to find that someone has seen the package and stolen it from the porch. **Our police department has some tips they would like to share to help out with this:**

1. Know when your package is to be delivered, track it and be home if possible when it arrives. If you have to work or can't be there, have it delivered to a neighbor.

2. Require signature for delivery - it can't be left unless you sign for it.

3. Have the post office or UPS hold it.

4. Have it delivered to your workplace.

5. When you're away, require Vacation hold on packages and mail.

6. Insure the more valuable packages.

7. Use a large plant or other obstruction on your porch so that the package can be placed behind it.

It's sad we're having to resort to this but the world is a different place these days.

Do you remember the last time you put your bare feet on grass? I had read recently that since we wear shoes ALL the time we are never in direct contact with the

earth. I know this will sound crazy to some but I plan on standing on the grass with no shoes and smiling at the sun. This article said if we do that we will become centered with the earth! I tried it last year and got bit on my foot by a bee. I'll try it again and this time will look out for the bees.

Did you know that Fresh Market on Whitesburg Drive has their organic chicken breasts on sale for \$2.99 on Tuesdays? Normally they're five or six dollars a pound and the chicken is great. I think their ground beef goes on sale Tuesdays too. Good place to shop, for sure.

If you're not already a member of your neighborhood **Community Watch** you might consider joining. I've seen more cars driving around lately with Community Watch signs on them (magnetic) and it helps. As just a good neighbor, get to know the folks in your neighborhood and keep an eye out for each other!

Cathy Self had an amazing birthday gift from her sweet husband **Mike** - if you've ever watched Treehouse Masters on HGTV, Mike called and reserved a treehouse for 3 nights at their 10-treehouse B&B in Seattle, WA. What a guy!

Have a wonderful Easter with your family and remember to try to show some kindness to those who don't have a family to love.



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Whip your cream in a bowl with an electric mixer, when foamy add the extract and Splenda. Continue to beat on high until the cream is not hard, but creamy and has body. Taste to see if the sweetener is enough, add if more needed. To a fresh cup of coffee, I add a large table-spoon of the cream, sprinkle on a dash of cinnamon and it's heavenly.

You can experiment with extracts - I tried Black Walnut, Vanilla, Coconut and Maple on different occasions. All are equally good!

Cheesy Eggs with Chives

- 3 eggs
- 2 T. butter
- 1/3 c. half and half
- 1/2 t. garlic powder
- 1/4 c. cream cheese with chives

1 t. real bacon bits
In a pan, melt butter and garlic powder til it begins to foam. Mix up your eggs with the half and half, pour into pan. Cook eggs slowly, won't take long.

Before they're done add the cream cheese in small chunks to the eggs, add bacon bits. Stir once more and let the cream cheese melt. This will keep you going for a good part of the day!

Chicken Dijon

- 3 T. butter
- 4 chicken breasts, skinless and boneless
- 1/2 c. Chablis wine
- 1/4 t. tarragon
- Pinch of thyme
- 1 small bay leaf
- 1/2 t. each salt and pepper
- 2 egg yolks
- 2 t. sour cream
- 3 t. Dijon mustard
- 1/4 t. cayenne pepper

Melt your butter in a large frying pan, then add your chicken and cook, turning once, til browned on both sides.

Add the wine and spices. Bring to a boil and simmer, covered, for 45 minutes. Take

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out the bay leaf and remove the chicken to a platter, keep warm. With an egg beater, beat the eggs yolks into the liquid, then add sour cream, Dijon mustard and cayenne pepper. Heat and stir, but don't boil. Add chicken to the sauce and serve.

Creamy Spinach

2 pkg. frozen chopped spinach
4 T. butter
1 clove garlic, crushed
1 t. onion powder
1/2 c. sour cream
1/3 c. Parmesan cheese
2 T. minced fresh Parsley
1 T. toasted sesame seeds

Cook your spinach slightly, a bit less time than package instructs. Melt butter in a skillet and add spinach, garlic, onion powder and cook for 5 minutes. Add the sour cream, cheese, sesame seeds and parsley. Heat, stirring til well mixed and hot.

Shrimp Scampi

1 lb. shrimp, cleaned
1 t. white vinegar
1/2 c. melted butter
4 cloves garlic crushed
1/2 t. minced chives
2 T. grated Parmesan cheese

Lemon slices, cut up

Bring a large pot of water to a boil, with the vinegar added. Turn off heat, add the shrimp. Cover and put aside. Combine the butter, garlic and chives in a separate pan and cook til butter melts. Add the Parmesan to the butter sauce, heat til the cheese melts.

Drain the shrimp, put it in a baking dish and pour sauce over them. Bake at 300 degrees for 5 minutes or so, serve with lots of lemon.

Black Pepper Beef

1 eye of round beef
1/4 c. coarsely ground black pepper
1 t. cardamon spice
2/3 c. soy sauce
1/2 c. vinegar
1 T. ketchup
1 t. paprika
1 clove garlic

Roll the beef in the black pepper and cardamon mixed. Make a marinade of the remaining ingredients and allow the meat to marinate in the mixture overnight.

Next day remove meat from marinade and wrap in heavy foil. Bake at 300 degrees for 3 hours. The juices make a wonderful gravy.

Chocolate Balls

1 c. heavy cream
1 T. good cocoa
1 T. gelatin in 1 T. cold water
2 T. chunky peanut butter
1 T. creme de cocoa
2 t. Wagners chocolate extract
2 t. brown Sugar Twin
1/3 c. finely chopped walnuts

Combine the heavy cream and cocoa in the top of a double boiler. Heat til the cocoa melts. Add the gelatin that has been softened in the water, add peanut butter. Heat til it begins to boil and remove from the heat.

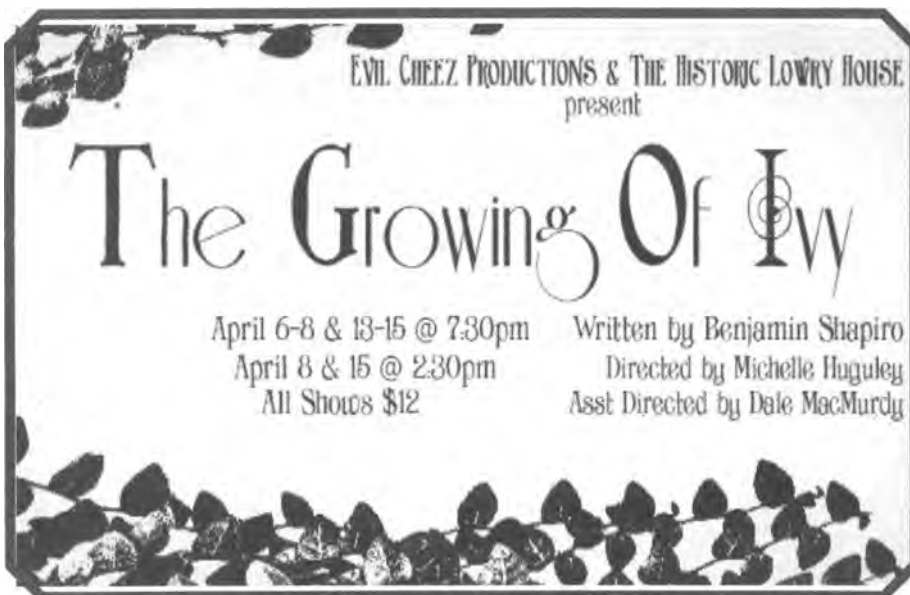
Add the cream de cocoa, extract and sugar twin. Blend well. Freeze til it can be handled, shape into balls, roll in walnuts. These will disappear in a hurry - so good.

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A Waif Becomes a World War II Veteran

by James F. Reeves and Marjorie Ann Reeves

During the Depression there were many homeless people in this country; our father, Henry Homer Reeves, was one in his youth. He was born in Waynesboro, TN, on his grandfather Hollis' farm on July 21, 1919. His father, James Henry Reeves, was a handyman and tenant farmer. One of his daughters said he moved around to keep people from finding out what he was really like. During their moves, Homer's mother, Delsie Paralee Hollis, had a son who did not make it through infancy. She had two daughters: Elizabeth and Willodyne, as well as son Homer. Homer and his sisters grew close in their adult years.

Homer was seven years old when his mother passed away from TB. Delsie's family took her three children into their homes in Moulton, AL. Homer stayed with his Uncle Emmett and Aunt Nellie until he was thirteen and strong enough to be hired out for work by his father. His father was always able to

find a woman to marry and have more children. While Homer was working with his father, his father would get his and Homer's pay, then find a place to drink it away. Homer went to the employer and told him to give him his pay because he was the one who bought the groceries for the family. When his father didn't get both payments, he confronted the man and the man's reply was "the boy does the work so he gets his pay." After Homer received his pay which was always first, he would run to the store before his father could catch him to take away the money.

When Homer was fifteen, he had three dollars to

his name. His father found out and took the money away by beating him. Homer walked the floor with a loaded gun ready to kill his father. Right before his father returned home drunk, Homer decided it wasn't worth his life to kill his father so he ran away from his father's home to a tenant farm in Huntsville.

Upon becoming a run away, he teamed up with a black runaway about the same age. Traveling around, they stopped in hobo camps along the rails. As a team they would hit a town together. The

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Erich Segal


black kid would go to the white section of town to ask for food and Homer would go to the black section of town. When they came back together, they would divide up the proceeds. One time Homer knocked on a black lady's back door asking for money or food. The lady agreed to give him some money and feed him in return for some chores. After he finished the chores, she fed him on the back porch of her home. The fare consisted of cornbread and buttermilk. When he finished, she shook her head and said, "for a skinny white boy, you shor can eat." He was 5' 7" tall and weighed about 100 pounds. On one trip while traveling on the rails through Alabama, another hobo warned them not to ride the train through Birmingham because if they got caught, they would be arrested and put in jail. The boys were told to jump off the train before the city and walk through Birmingham then get back on the train on the other side.

Homer joined the Civilian Conservation Corps and was assigned to the Oregon Coast to be a logger. While there, he earned the title of the "Best Light Weight Boxing Champion in the West." Again his pay was sent home to his father who drank it away. He came back to his father's house where he was a tenant farmer on the land where Redstone Arsenal is now. There he met the girl next door and married her. He was 22 years old and Marjorie Jordan was turning 18. They married in August of 1941 then he left four months later to become a soldier. The draft called him up and seven days later war was declared. He was stationed in Virginia for 14 months during training where his wife came up to stay with him. There she became pregnant with their first son who was three years old before he saw his father for the first time.

Homer started in Battery D 401st Antiaircraft Artillery assigned to motorpool as a heavy 931 truck driver He was shipped to North Africa in a 79- ship convoy and landed in St. Louis Beaches, Africa. After landing in Africa, his company was assigned to the 34th Division to liberate Italy. Since there were not enough ships for transport, Company D had to drive over 800 miles across North Africa. With an innate sense of

mechanics, Homer's officer was always amused that Homer could see a vehicle on the side of the road and before he got by the vehicle, he determined what was wrong with it, making him in high demand.

Once across Africa, they were put on a ship to Sicily where they joined up with the 7th Army in Naples being in combat for 27 months on the front. Often less than 5000 yards from the front, Homer and only one other soldier would drive at night with no lights to retrieve supplies through the mountainous Italian ter-



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rain. The ammunition supplies were usually 125 miles back and driving the loaded trucks to the front was precarious.

Like most savvy GIs and a once hungry child, Homer knew to make friends with the mess sergeants who were in charge of food supplies and they would send Homer to pick up supplies. Homer was assigned to a scavenging group when he wasn't on ammunition supply runs. One mission was to get a water tank for an officer. His group found a tank plus special food supplies they shared.

While in Rome, Homer noticed a nun walking on the side of the road. He stopped and offered her a lift. She had him drive her to a place where she and two other nuns were running an orphanage of 12 children. She asked him if he could get some food for the kids. He asked a couple of mess sergeants to provide food for the orphanage which they did. Two of the nuns were from Massachusetts. The nun he picked up gave him a St. Christopher's medal, which he believed helped save his life many times over.

At one point, he was in an area that was being bombed from 7am to 3pm. Sitting in a foxhole by his truck, Homer was reading the "Stars and Stripes" when something told him "to get out of the foxhole and get out in a hurry." As he scrambled into another foxhole, a shell landed between the foxhole he had been in and his truck. The explosion burst the truck's fuel tank. The escaping gasoline ran into the first foxhole becoming engulfed in flames. A burnt hull was all that was left of his truck.

In Florence, the company was set up near an olive orchard. There was a wall on each side of the street, the right-side wall was in a "L" shape where Homer parked his truck when he

wasn't on the road. There was a gate to the estate next to the area Homer was parking. He went on a run one day. When he came back in, he heard five engineers had driven through the gate to sweep for mines. On the way out of the gate, they hit a mine they had missed going in. Homer had been parking his truck in that area for weeks.

Then at another juncture, he and the other night driver drove through a town that was being shelled. Homer put the truck into 3rd gear running the engine wide open at 35 miles an hour. With their trucks loaded with ammunition, they dodged continuous bombardment to avoid getting hit. As Homer was driving by a rock wall, a shell exploded just on the opposite side blowing water and mud all over his truck. While driving, Homer stood on the running board wiping the mud off the windshield.

It took the Air Force three months to fly troops back to the US after the war was over. Homer was one of the last to get back to the US. He mustered out at Ft. McPherson, Georgia, on July 16, 1945. His return home produced a second son.

Homer signed up with the Army again in 1946 and was in a year when he was told he would be shipped overseas. He refused and was discharged. He joined the Army Reserves in 1947 then moved over to 279th Signal Battalion (C) National Guards in 1953. During that time, Homer and Marjorie had their only daughter. Homer moved back to the Army Reserves into the 543rd Signal Company in 1970 which turned into the 926th Engineer Battalion. He was known for his fairness but also for his anger. He was called "Pop Reeves" at work in the 926th.

Everybody knew Homer was an easy-going guy with a good sense of humor but had no patience for nonsense. Co-worker Don Webster shared an instance of Homer's quick temper. One of the young men working there enjoyed crossing the line and would sneak up behind Pop and bite his large ears. Pop warned the guy not to do it again but the young man made the mistake of repeating the act. Pop hit him with a wrench between his eyes, stopping the guy from ever doing it again - to anyone.

Homer retired after almost 40 years of service to our country. He passed away last year at the age of 98 years old.

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Practice What We Preach

from 1896 Huntsville newspaper

Strange, how death seems at times to cast a veritable shadow before; and how in the light of a tragedy, we are so often able to look backwards and find a host of incidents (instinct, as it were), with presence of the event itself.

A few days before Dr. Nat Harris was stricken down with the terrible malady that ended last Saturday with his death, he was chatting with several friends on the subject of appendicitis. The doctor showed the others exactly where the first pangs were felt.

"If I should have a violent pain right here," he said, indicating with his finger. "I would have an operation performed inside of an hour. The great trouble with most cases," he continued, "is that the surgeon is delayed until blood poisoning sets in. If there is no complication of that sort, and the patient is in good general health, his chances of recovery are ten to one."

"But you don't anticipate an attack, do you?" asked one of the group jestingly. "Not I," replied the doctor lightly. "Still, one can never tell."

This conversation occurred on the steps of the corner drugstore. Forty-eight hours later Dr. Harris was in the throes of a severe attack of appendicitis. Strange to say, he did the very thing which he had warned his listeners against - he delayed the operation until the sac of the appendix had burst and a hopeless case of peritonitis, or blood poisoning, set in.

This, by the way, was the first thing he inquired about when he emerged from the influence of the ether. When informed that a rupture had been found he knew, as a skilled physician, that he was doomed and no man ever went down into the Valley of the Shadow with a braver countenance or a stouter heart.

"Television makes it possible to be entertained in your home by people you wouldn't have in your home."

Jeb Anderson, Woodville



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Josephine - "Do You Remember When?"

by Barry Key

I started first grade at New Hope Elementary. The next summer we moved to Redstone Park at Farley, just south of Huntsville. Redstone Park was a government housing project and by far the best house that I could ever remember living in.

There was a creek that ran through the middle of the park. There were several boys my age living in the park. We built dams in the creek and caught minnows and crawfish. The park had a baseball field and basketball courts. It was heaven to a seven year old.

I started to second grade at Farley and went only six weeks when my parents bought a house back in New Hope at the corner of Highway 431 and Gurley Pike. I graduated from New Hope High School, and my parents lived there until their deaths many years later.

A person I remember well from Farley Elementary was Josephine. Jo, a blue eyed blond, was the prettiest girl I had ever seen (except for a brown eyed brunette I met on a blind date in November of 1958). I followed Jo around like a puppy (I guess that's why they call it puppy love).

"Mapquest really needs to start at #5. I'm pretty sure I know how to get out of my neighborhood."

Butch Adcock, Huntsville

I know the unwritten rule for 7 year old boys is to dislike and act hostile toward the female persuasion of the same age...pull their hair, put their pigtails in the ink well, hit them with spit balls, etc. But Jo, I couldn't wait for school to start each morning so I could see and talk to her.

We ate lunch together sometimes, and swung and seesawed together at recess. One time some of my friends (boys) caught us holding hands and shamed me by sliding one of their index fingers up and down the other index finger.

If I had only known about the other finger gesture at that age.

Jo didn't live in the park. She lived on a farm not too far from the park. She invited me to her birthday party at their house. My mother dropped me off and I walked to the front door. Both Jo and her mother came to the door. When I handed the birthday present to Jo she kissed me on the cheek... right in front of her mother. I know I turned all the known colors of red. You would think I would have been too young to be jealous, but every time I looked at one of the other boys



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at the party, my first thought.. ..did Jo kiss him too?

Farley School only went to the ninth grade. Tenth grade students either went to Huntsville High or New Hope. When we advanced to the tenth grade, I was anxious to see Jo, would Jo remember me after eight years?

When she didn't show up at New Hope I asked one of the other Farley students what had happened to Jo? He said she had transferred to Huntsville High. I never saw, or spoke to Jo again after I moved to New Hope.

I used to wonder (before I met the brown eyed brunette) what Jo's reaction would have been if she had received an unexpected call, "Jo, this is Barry Key, do you remember when....".

ANNOTATION:

While writing this story I had decided I would give Jo that call, and to get her OK. I talked to my friend, Robert, who grew up near Farley and knew Jo and her parents. I was hoping he could tell me how to get in touch with her.

It is with a saddened heart that I received news I wasn't expecting. My friend advised me that Jo had passed away in her mid-twenties. I shelved the story not wanting to bring up sad memories for Jo's family and friends.

Recently, I was reminiscing my childhood for another story that brought me back to Farley, and naturally thoughts of Jo. I re-read my story and decided it does not blur Jo's memory in any way. I can only hope that Jo's family and friends read it for the affection that was intended.

For those that knew and loved Jo, please forgive me if I have revived memories of the past that time had passionately preserved in the mind and heart.

My Husband Ran off

Due to my husband running off with that Davis woman and abandoning his wife and 4 children, I have no choice but to sell his farm equipment, buggy, horse and donkey. All items can be seen at my home in New Hope. Contact newspaper to get in touch with me. (from 1892 newspaper)



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The Typhoid Home in Huntsville

From 1892 Huntsville Newspaper

In the 1800s typhoid was one of the most deadly diseases in much of the South. No one knew what caused it or how to treat it but that did not stop many newspapers from printing what they believed to be sound medical advice. The following is from a 1892 Huntsville newspaper.

- Typhoid is a disease which runs a definite course. It cannot be stopped or cured by medicines.

- The chief thing to be done at the outset of an attack is to send the patient to bed, so as to have strength from the beginning.

- Cocaine can relax the patient and make him receptive to treatment.

- As the fever develops, and the strength grows less, light food should be taken at short intervals - water, toast water, barley water, milk and water, light broths not made too strong or too gelatinous.

- If the fever settles in the brain then it is helpful to have the patient repeat his name, and the names of his family, at regular intervals to prevent a complete loss of memory.

- The restlessness or wakefulness in fever is best remedied by the careful giving of wine or spirit with the food, or in water. No more than one quart a day is to be administered.

- The bed room is to be kept at a temperature of 62 degrees. (They did not explain how to accomplish this in the age before air conditioning.)

- Great care should be taken to keep the bed clean and sweet. This is most easily done by having a second bed in the room, to which the patient can be removed for two or three hours daily, while the other is thoroughly aired and the linen changed.

- All fatigue is to be sedulously avoided. No visitors are to be admitted and no other person but one nurse and one attendant to help her.

- Patient's room never to be left unattended for a moment, as in delirium of fever patient might jump from the bed and injure himself.

- All fireplaces should be carefully cleaned and floors scrubbed with lye ashes.

- All windows in the sick room should be kept closed and shuttered to prevent the night air from entering the patient's lungs.

The Cardiologist Diet:
"If it tastes good, spit it out."

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MEMORIES OF MY GRANDPA AND GRANDMA

by Harry Dill



Grandpa's name was Oscar Evans Dreger and Grandma's name was Edna Dreger. Grandpa was born on December 28, 1868 and died on November 6, 1950. Grandma was born on September 30, 1873 and died on January 3, 1940. They had five children; Oscar Evans, Dorothy, Edna, Shirley and Alvin. When I first remembered them they were living in their home at 610 East Holmes Street in Huntsville, Alabama, and they always did live there until they departed this world. Grandpa's father had severely beat him when he was a young boy and it made him stutter all his life. He was a very good tin smith and sheet metal worker, he worked in the basement of the Hutchens Hardware Store on the corner of Jefferson Street and Clinton Avenue in Huntsville. I visited him there once or twice. It was a big room and there were worktables with lots of tin and metal and lots of things made out of tin and copper and all kinds of metals. Later on Papa (as we called him) had his own sheet metal shop.


Before Papa came to Huntsville he lived in Mayville, Wisconsin and Chicago, Illinois. He was a Mason and I remember him going to meetings at their Masonic Lodge on Echols Hill in Huntsville. He worked on installation of the beautiful mosaics and the housing for the light hanging at the front door of the Old

Chicago Library which is very pretty art work that he did while living there. Chicago Library News wrote about what my Grandfather did. "The man seen photographing the mosaics at the south end of the Central Library on June 21 was Alvin Dreger of Huntsville, Alabama. Mr. Dreger is the son of the late Oscar Dreger, the contractor who supervised installation of the mosaics designed by the famous house of Tiffany."

"The elder Dreger was born in Mayville, Wisconsin. A skilled sheet metal worker, he found steady work in Chicago. His talents extended to all sorts of ornamental craft, and it was he who hired the men who painstakingly set each piece of stone and glass in place, in the south stairwell of the Humanities Department. The feat took a year and a half. In 1900, three years after the job was finished, Dreger moved to Huntsville, where his son Alvin was born."

Papa smoked a pipe and the name of his tobacco was Prince Albert. Daddy smoked Country Gentleman tobacco and rolled it in cigarettes.





Papa's room was the first bedroom in the house just off of the side porch and the first room you come to going down the hall if you come from the front door. He had a



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big beautifully carved wooden bed and dresser and a large Warm Morning heater in his bedroom. He also had a tool closet and cloth closet and his private bathroom was on the left side of his bedroom next to the outdoor windows.

The house was heated by a large coal furnace in the basement. The coal company would bring the coal to a small window next to the driveway and shovel the coal into the coal bin near the furnace. My Uncle Alvin would then start a fire in the furnace with newspaper and kindling wood and then shovel in the coal regularly during the day in cold weather. There also was a fireplace in the living room where Alvin would make a fire when he had guests coming. The house was big and in cold weather very hard to heat. My Aunt Dorothy had a kerosene heater in her bedroom that she used.

On the brick fireplace mantel were some little figures, including Papa's pipe holder.

Grandmother (we called her Mama) was a real good cook and she spent a lot of her time in the kitchen making tasty dishes for us. She had a gas cook stove with an oven on the left side where she baked all kinds of delicious food for us to eat. An ice box was on the back porch just off the kitchen.

This was a time before electric refrigerators, washing machines, dryers, dishwashers, etc. To get her ice delivery Mama had a large card with printed numbers of 25 pounds, 50 pounds, etc. She would turn the card to where the number of pounds that she wanted would be on top and put it on the front door and the ice man would bring her ice. He would chip it off of a 100 pound block with a ice pick, if you didn't need that much ice he'd chip it into 25, 50 or 75 pounds. He drove a horse and wagon and the ice was covered with a tarp to keep it from melting so quickly. I and other boys in the neighborhood would run behind the ice wagon as it went down the street and jump on the back and pick up ice

chips and suck on them in the hot summer time.

Mama made very good meals for us and if it wasn't a holiday we ate in the small dining room next to the kitchen. If it was a holiday we ate in the main dining room next to the living room that had sideboards. Sometimes Mama would let me turn the crank on the grinder when she would put steak in and grind it into hamburger for some of her delicious meals.

On Thanksgiving and Christmas she would make big fruitcakes from scratch and keep them locked up in the sideboard until the Holiday arrived. Then we all had turkey, dressing, mashed potatoes, pumpkin pie, mince meat pie eggnog and all the trimmings and of course, that good fruit cake which had a little brandy in it. There was plenty of food for the whole family and friends there too. She stayed busy cooking for all her children, washing all their clothes hanging them on the clothes line outside to dry and then ironing them. She even had time to make quilts and rugs too as I remember upstairs on the sleeping porch.

Mama died January 3, 1940. I remember there was a big snow on the ground of at least two feet.

It was real cold, the ground was frozen and I think they had a hard time digging her grave. They were still singing Christmas songs on the radio back then. They put Mama's casket in the dining room and I remember the strong smell of flowers. Whenever I am around a lot of flowers even now, it reminds me of that time.

After Mama died Papa went into his bedroom and never did come out of it again. They hired Bessie to cook and she brought his meals to him there, but for a while he would not eat anything. He was heartbroken, as were all of us. I tried several times to get him to come outside with me in good weather but he never would leave his room. At bedtime he would drink a little whisky. He stayed in his room until he died on November 6, 1950 which was over ten years later.

I miss Mama and Papa and I am thankful that God allowed me to know them and live close to them for a time. They have been gone a long time now. I think they would be very shocked to see how times have changed in this modern world we live in today.

We all need God as never before. God Bless you EVERYONE!!!!

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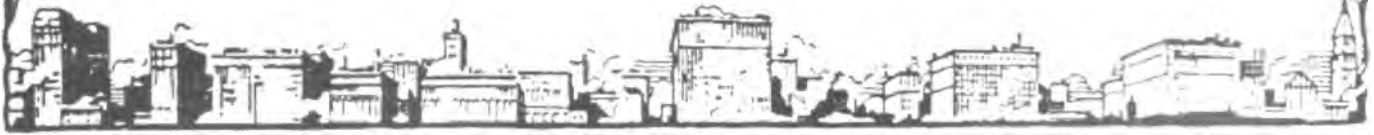
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In and Out of Town Gossip

from 1896



Huntsville: A handsome young woman from Birmingham recently came on a visit to a young matron whose husband is a prominent businessman in Huntsville. The fair guest was extensively entertained, remained several weeks and departed. A few days afterwards the husband left the city on a business trip. During his absence, his wife, in rummaging through the pockets of his coats, came across a letter written in a decidedly feminine hand. Her suspicions were instantly aroused and she read the contents.

What was her astonishment and anger to find that the letter was an endearing little note from her recent visitor, fixing a meeting with her husband in Birmingham. When the gentleman returned home from his business trip, he was confronted with the "billet doux." Those who are acquainted with the fact say that the tinder missive will probably be made public as an exhibit in the upcoming divorce proceedings.

Decatur: Here is as warm a story as had cropped up in Decatur for many years. For some time past a well known young lady of this city has been puzzled and frightened by the occasional appearance of a skulking figure at night in the yard of her home. These visitations usually occurred on Saturday, and a couple of weeks ago she requested a married friend to send her husband over to lay in wait for the intruder. The gentleman responded and about the time the young lady was retiring saw three men slip up to her bedroom window. He promptly raised the alarm and gave chase. They ran like scared rabbits, but the amateur detective hung to the trail of one of the trio and finally succeeded in overhauling him.

To his utter surprise, he found that his prisoner was a prominent young lawyer and worst of all, an ardent suitor of the very girl at whose casement he had been detected in the fact! The young attorney was badly rattled and eventually made a

clean chest of it. He admitted that he had been in the habit of spying at the window of his sweetheart for weeks past and that his companions were present at his visits. Both are well known about town, and one is a fledgling physician. Possibly he regarded it as a good opportunity to perfect his knowledge of anatomy.

The trio has since made a ghastly effort to pass the affair off as a joke, but this explanation is received with no smiles. The gentleman who solved the mystery has made no secret of the facts and wherever they have been heard, the comments are scathing. The affair is certain to result in the complete social ostracism of all three of the young men concerned.



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Henry "Hank" Miller

A Road to Huntsville, Alabama

Ninety-one years ago, April 9, 1927, I began my "Road to Huntsville" in Hermosa Beach, California. Oh, what a place for a kid to grow up! Our house was on the beach — walk out the front door to swim, surf or fish, or do whatever young boys do while growing up. Each spring of the year there was the usual sunburn which turned into a dark brown during the summer only to fade when in the fall of the year came school.

Finally, at age thirteen, I was shipped off to a "boy's school" in San Diego for the ninth and tenth grades. The beginning of WWII brought me back to the beach for the eleventh grade and on to Reno, Nevada, graduating from high school in January 1944.

My military life began in 1944 when I joined the Navy. After boot training and school I

served in the Pacific as a Fire Controlman third class aboard a destroyer as part of the Third and Fifth Fleets. Other than providing protection for the aircraft carriers, we often cruised out to pick up downed pilots returning from airstrikes on Japan. Life aboard the "tin can" was pretty good except we had no ice cream. Our Skipper always made sure that when a retrieved pilot was returned to his carrier, we received many gallons of ice cream as ransom payment!

After the war, we visited several ports in all the Japanese Islands, one of which was Nagasaki which suffered the second A-Bomb. Not like Hiroshima which is flat, Nagasaki is hilly. It was interesting to note that the damage on the lee side of the hills was minor compared to the side facing the explosion. It was an interesting experience.

Following service in 1946, I attended the University of Southern California where I became involved with some fraternity brothers in an Army Reserve unit. We met monthly and the pay helped with school expenses. All was well until Korea began which brought me to active duty at Fort Riley, Kansas, and OCS, and in 1952 on to Fort Knox, Kentucky.

A friend from Gallatin, Tennessee, took me home for a weekend where I met Judy Anthony. It was the last Sunday in February 1952. Our first date was on the second Saturday in March, and I asked her to marry me on the first Saturday in April, complete with a ring! I fell for her like a ton of bricks. She has been my wife and dearest companion now for 66 years.

An advertisement for ATEC Pest Control Supply Company. The ad is framed with a decorative border featuring various insects. On the left, the company name "ATEC PEST CONTROL SUPPLY COMPANY" is written in a stylized font. To the right, the text reads: "Pest Problems? Use what the Pros use to get rid of termites, roaches, ants, spiders, mice, snakes & fleas. (256) 533-6754 3804 Governors Dr. Mon - Fri 7am - 5pm Mention this ad and get 10% first treatment."

After marrying, we began twenty-eight years of Army service which took us to Germany, Korea and Saudi Arabia as well as California, Colorado, Massachusetts, Illinois, Kansas, Washington, DC and finally Huntsville, Alabama.

Every assignment had something to offer us. While in Germany we were able to travel to France and Spain. Three years in Korea not only allowed several visits to Japan, Taiwan and Okinawa - it brought us a new daughter Alice to keep older kids Mary and Mike company.

We enjoyed driving around Korea, the "Kimchi Capital of the World." Watching the making of Kimchi is something, particularly kids crushing the red peppers barefooted!

However, our best overseas assignment was Saudi Arabia. If you don't mind the heat, the climate is great—in two years there we never had an illness! Our experience in the Middle East took us to Jordan, Israel, Syria, Lebanon and Egypt where the great Christian religion and the Islamic movement began.

In 1957 we were stationed in Huntsville for a few months and saw it as a growing city with real potential and a possible place to retire. It was a city that was very welcoming to newcomers.

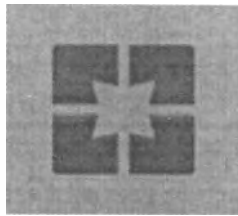
Thus, in 1976, we found ourselves at Redstone Arsenal, our final duty assignment. We chose Huntsville as a great place to retire.

The city had really grown over the past twenty years and we found a dynamic technical and business climate that we could enjoy in retirement. Most especially we found Huntsville to be a friendly city which had not lost its welcoming "Southern atmosphere."

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.... And The Beat Goes On (Heartbeat, that is)

by George Wells

(Written on February 25, 2018)

On February 22, 2018, my Oncologist gave me the news. My recent pet scan shows a growth in my stomach cancer. Wow, six months of treatments, including 18 drips of 3 kinds, many pills and medications. And of course there were some bad days compliments of the Chemo. Yet, the cancer defied all we could give and it grew in size. Time to call in the heavy prayer warriors, friends and fellow Christians. Time to reload for sure. Doctors and meds gave it their best shot but it is now up to God.

I was not surprised with the results. Not that my faith faltered but my stomach pain told me each day the cancer was alive and well. Oh yes, we will come up with a battle plan for the next round and start soon with some

different types of medication. Before the week is over I will meet with the doctor to learn where we go from here. Thank goodness my doctor is a man of faith. You can bet he is praying for me along with his planning.

I have a lot to be thankful for. In 2009 I learned I had two cancers. Treatments were effective and going into 2018, I am starting my ninth year with the two cancers. Think of how much extra time God has given me. Nine years of life is a wonderful gift. Think of all the good things that happened during those years. How many hours and days is that?

I met a lot of new friends, was blessed by the opening

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“The trouble with eating Italian food is five or six days later you’re hungry again.”

Maria Nepale, Scottsboro

of the Rooster's Crow Coffee Shop in south Huntsville, wrote and recorded new songs. What person would not like that extension of their life?

Yes, there was a time of grief for me. My wife of 58 years, Barbara, went home with the Lord to find peace from her long and hard battle with pain. True, the two of us prayed for relief, but the loss of such a woman, has been most difficult. All things I have done, and will do, with my remaining gift of life, I do in honor of her name.

To borrow from an old saying, life goes on. Indeed it does and God determines how long it goes on and where it goes. So, my prayer would be for additional and continuing strength to meet each day. Now is no time for my faith to falter. In 1999, I wrote the lyrics for a song entitled: "Go With Jesus". This is the line I now lean on: "Don't let your faith falter, meet him at the altar and go with Jesus the rest of the way." Of course, 19 years ago when I wrote those lyrics I had no idea how they would fit into my life at this point. But our strong and mighty God knew how much I would need those words as I journeyed through life. And right on time here are those words. Wow!

So, while I don't know what is ahead I can live each day fully and completely assured that the best is yet to come. What a ending it will be! I have more loved ones in Heaven than I do left on this earth. Those still here would not want me to wait one heart beat longer after God calls my name.

As you read this keep your faith up high. There is no mountain as high as the Mountain of Faith. Let God lead you each step, hold to his hand, and climb up that Mountain of Faith with Him. Remember, there is no fear in faith. Oh my, that is another song title of mine but that will be left for another time. God bless you. You know He will.



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Playing Chicken - One Summer Day in 1970 on Keel Mountain

by Doug Clark

This is a story about growing up on Keel Mountain in Gurley, Alabama as a boy in the late 1960s and early 1970s and the event that happened on our typically uneventful summer breaks. The event happened in front of our house and involved a 14 year old boy on a motorcycle playing chicken with a 13 year old boy on a bicycle. The first episode of "Chicken" I had witnessed and certainly a memorable one to me as a 12 year old boy.

In today's world, kids have shorter summer breaks than we did back then and they have a lot more available to them to keep them busy such as computers, video games and many more activities to get involved in. During the late 1960s, we basically started summer break around mid-May and did not start back to school until September. Therefore, we had lots of idle time on our hands with little to do. Sure, we had chores, and gardens to help with and possibly even a short vacation mixed in, but for the most part the kids on Keel Mountain were there all summer long with very little to do but visit each other. Several days each week our friends would come over to play, or we would go to their house.

We were all good kids, but out of boredom or just plain getting tired of each other, there would be occasional bickering, an occasional window broken by a baseball and that sort of thing. Long summers were nice, but having too much time with not much to do is sometimes not a good combination for young boys. So, I guess you could say we lived up to the old sayings, "boys will be boys", or "Idle hands are the devil's workshop".

There were three of us Clark boys between the ages of 10 and 15 and we were almost always out in the yard doing something. We were outside mainly because Mom would send us out while she cleaned and would not allow us back in "tracking dirt" until that evening. We thought it was torture, but being banned to the outside made us get creative in finding things to do. Some days we would decide to walk to the country store which was about 1/2 mile and up three hills. Our plan would be to look for Coke bottles on the side of the road that had been thrown out of car windows. Since they refilled the bottles back then, each bottle found would bring 2 cents at the country store. By the time we arrived at the store, we would usually have 3 or 4 bottles to sell to the store owner. This would allow us to purchase 6 to 8 cents worth of candy which we would enjoy

on our walk home. During those days one could buy several small pieces of candy for pennies.

Some days our home seemed to be the gathering place as several of our friends would show up at our house and we would play whiffle ball, basketball or football until someone got hurt

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"With much affection for what is on the inside of the cup!"

or got mad and went home. By the end of the day we were covered in dirt from being outside all day.

Our neighbors were the Holt's and Bruce's. Both families were in their 70s and 80s and would always report to our parents when they saw us do something they didn't think we should do, like run into their garden to fetch our ball which had bounced out of our yard. Sometimes it would result in a whipping, but, mostly just a scolding. Mr. Bruce had several apple trees which we were able to enjoy each summer. Most of the time we would ask if we could partake of his apple crop and he would usually instruct us to help ourselves to the apples on the ground but there were times we just helped ourselves (to those on the ground of course) without asking. We had a couple of apple trees in our yard, but, we preferred his because his trees produced sweeter apples. I recall some summer days sitting on a limb up in an apple tree with some of my friends eating apples until we got full, and then filling our pockets with 5 or 6 more to take with us in case we got hungry later. Being outside and active all day, a boy can really eat a lot of apples. Some days we would ride our bicycles a large part of the day. There wasn't much traffic on the road back then so it was pretty safe to ride your bike to your friend's house or just up and down the road going nowhere, just killing time.

So you can see, days could get pretty routine and provided plenty of opportunity for young boys to get in trouble or to get creative. One such day happened in the summer of 1970. There was a gathering of some of our friends at our house that day along with my brothers and me. I guess the day started like all the rest, not much to do and some of our friends stopping in. I can't remember everyone that was there that day, don't even remember what day it was, but I do remember that Bobby Dudley and Larry Holt were there.

Bobby Dudley was a few years older than me, probably 14 years old. He was a nice guy and was the cool kid on the mountain who always had a motorcycle and seemed to have been around the block a little more than most of us. Larry Holt was one of the funniest people I can remember and definitely the funniest boy on Keel Mountain. He was quick witted and always seem to have something funny to say.

Well, I don't recall exactly what led to the event that day,

but, there were 6 or 7 of us boys (age 15 and younger) gathered in our front yard. Larry Holt had ridden his bicycle to our house and along came Bobby Dudley on his Honda 65 motorcycle. As I said, I don't know what happened between Bobby Dudley and Larry Holt that day, what they might have said, or even if they were mad at each other, but somehow a challenge was made between the two. A challenge to play "Chicken". Yep, that's right...."Chicken".

A challenge to play "Chicken" between Bobby Dudley on his Honda 65 Motorcycle and Larry Holt on his bicycle. Maybe it was a case of both of them being a little bit of a daredevil or maybe there were too many witnesses for either of them to back down,




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but, I remember as a 12 year old boy thinking this is going to be "big". It was happening right in front of our house on the main road. We were all sort of laughing at the thought of this happening and telling them they were crazy. We knew Larry was a cut up and thought maybe he was kidding and would not go through with it, especially with him being on a bicycle versus Bobby on a motorcycle.

Somehow they decided on a distance to put between them on the road. Larry Holt on his bicycle to the left and Bobby on his Honda 65 motorcycle to the right. Neither had a helmet as back then nobody wore helmets when riding bicycles and if I remember correctly Bobby did not have a helmet on either.

There they were.....facing each other with approximately 50 to 60 feet between them. Each of us witnesses were thinking this

won't happen, that one of them will call it off but at the same time we had never seen anything like this before and were admiring their bravery. Just as quickly as it began, it was all over.

Somebody gave the signal to go and the sound of the motorcycle roared and Larry started peddling his bicycle as fast as he could. The next thing we knew there was a loud crash. When the motorcycle and bicycle came to a stop, up from the rubble came Bobby Dudley and Larry Holt. They were both OK, although Larry suffered several minor scratches while Bobby escaped without any injuries.

We were in disbelief at what we had just witnessed. It was entertainment to what was normally an uneventful summer day to us boys on Keel Mountain. Both Bobby and Larry rode their motorcycle and bicycle straight into each other, head on. Both

thinking the other would turn at the last second and avoid the crash, but neither did. Bobby and his motorcycle escaped damage and injury. Holt also escaped with some minor scratches but his bicycle was not so lucky. It was broken in two parts. He carried the front wheel in one hand and the rest of the bicycle in the other as he headed home.

Bobby and Larry started the day as friends and left as friends. There were no hard feelings, it was just an event that arose out of boredom one summer day in 1970.

In some ways, Bobby and Larry were providing entertainment to the rest of us in other ways and it shows how boys with time on their hands will be boys. Thanks Bobby and Larry for providing some excitement for our summer of 1970 and a memory that is etched in the minds of all who witnessed this event.



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Dog Myths



Dogs with warm, dry noses are sick - A dry nose has nothing to do with a dog's health. Normal canine body temperature ranges from 101 to 103 degrees. Veterinarians agree a dog may still have a cold, wet nose while running a temperature of 105 degrees.

Old dogs can't learn new tricks - Old dogs and old people continue to learn throughout their lives. Very old dogs may not learn well because they may be impaired by progressive blindness, deafness, or motivational problems.

A dog wagging his tail will not bite - The wag of a dog's tail tells nothing about his aggressiveness. It simply is a sign of excitement. Other aspects of his behavior can tell more about aggressiveness such as ear position, whether the dog is staring, growling, or barking.

If a dog scoots across the floor, he has worms - Although dogs with tapeworms will scoot due to the itchiness of the worm segments, not all scooting dogs have worms. Allergies, diarrhea or even anal glands can be reasons for this behavior.

If your dog eats his poop, he has worms - Many dogs will eat their own poop as well as another dog's poop. Although this is a disgusting behavior and pets can acquire parasites from the habit, it is not strictly a sign of intestinal parasites. Many mother dogs will do this to clean her newborn puppies and some pets will do it as an attention getting behavior. The problem may also be poor nutrition and a learned habit.

Female dogs should have at least 1 litter of puppies before spaying - There is no known benefit to allowing a pet to reproduce unnecessarily. In fact, there is evidence that spaying a female before her first heat may reduce her risk of developing breast cancer.

Some dogs have jaws that lock - All dogs have the same facial musculature and structure -- none has locking jaws. All dogs can be taught to be gentle -- to release everything from toys to trash on command.

Dogs eat grass because they know they are sick - Many dogs will eat grass and then vomit, but this does not mean that they are sick. Some dogs even eat grass simply because they like it. It is normal for dogs to eat grass in very small amounts -- their ancestors ate grass. It's roughage.

Dogs know when they've been bad - Dogs don't think in abstract terms and guilt is an abstraction. If your dog's ears are back, his tail is tucked and he has an overall low body posture, he may look guilty. Your dog assumes a submissive body posture as a direct reaction to your signs of anger.

Low-shed breeds of dogs are better for people with allergies - For most people, it's the dander and saliva, not the fur, that trigger an allergic response.

Dogs can be spiteful - Dogs can become stressed when left alone and may seek comfort by finding a scent of you in your favorite chair or shoes, and may express their stress by chewing or peeing. But that doesn't mean they did it because they are mean spirited. Same goes for cats.

Dogs require annual revaccinations - Although exact protocols are still debated, it is now known that certain vaccines, such as distemper and rabies, don't need to be given yearly after initial doses and boosters.

Neutering and spaying makes dogs fat and lazy - Eating too much and not getting enough exercise makes animals overweight. Same goes for cats. Help yourself and your pet by being more active!

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From the Desk of Tom Carney

An Old Man's Revenge

I, John Thomason, knowing that my remaining days are few, take pen in hand to render my last will and testament.

I ask that Horace Cauthron, my good friend of thirty-two years, be the executor of my wishes. He is to be paid the normal fees as is customary for such situations,

He is to pay all debts owed by me from funds on deposit with the Bank of Scottsboro.

To my wife, Mary, who has remained steadfast at my side for sixty-three years I leave a lifetime of memories and love along with my sorrow at the many times I have caused her anguish.

It is my hope that the good days will heavily outweigh the bad days.

In addition, I leave her our home and farm, with all its furnishings, implements and livestock that she might live her remaining days in a comfortable manner in which she deserves.

In addition, I leave her all my stocks and bonds currently on deposit with the Chattanooga Trust Bank, in addition to any other monies due my estate, that she may continue to derive income from such.

For my oldest son John, I leave the amount of ten thousand dollars to be paid up on the tenth anniversary of my death, or on the occasion of his mother's death, on the condition he visits her every week and continues to maintain the relationship of a loving son.

If he fails to do so, the money shall be given to a church of the executors



choosing.

For my son, Perry, who has caused his mother and I so much grief for so many years, I leave the amount of three thousand dollars which is in a metal box, buried on the farm in a location known only to me.

If he can find the money it is his to keep.

It is my hope that after weeks of grubbing in the dirt he will realize the folly of chasing dreams.

In addition, a sum of seven thousand dollars shall be paid to him only after the completion of ten years full-time employment, in a manner consistent with the morals of the community.

If he fails to do so, the money shall be given to a church of the executors choosing.

*John Thomason
July 4, 1923*

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MAMA'S HELPER

by Ted Roberts

The saddest words a man can hear from a Doctor is: "Your wife needs rest after her procedure, you'll have to assume most of her household duties." You never know how much they do until YOU have to do it. Washing, cooking, cleaning, etc. It's a heavy load, as we say every time we approach the washing machine.

And washing is one of the bittersweet curses. It's NOT automatic. Soggy, soaking wet sheet and shirts - like serpents have to be reluctantly yanked from the washing machine and thrown into the dryer. Some genius put them side-by-side but still there are complications. So many clothes - we must have an invisible roomer. And why are there basket loads of shirts weekly when I wear the same one weekly? Why not stretch a line across the yard and pin each soggy piece to it. Talk about solar power. Why not let the sun do the work and save electricity. I had so many creative thoughts like this, including: why not throw this slimy package in the trunk - and drive down to the river with a bar of soap?

Anyhow you get the idea. Washing with madam instructor standing over me was far from fun, even the cats sympathized. They knew something was amiss. The male two-foot who was usually sitting on the couch reading a book was crouched over those two white boxes, too busy to scratch their head.

And did I tell you they had a litter box, which I thought was automatically emptied and refilled every three or four days? With my wife's temporary retirement, I found that she did

it. As I assumed the job I calculated that efficiency demanded only a weekly change and that only a half bag of litter did the job. The cats proved me wrong when they mistook the bathtub for the litter box. Feeding them was another problem. Why not a bucket full of cat food once a week instead of the twice a day burden of filling up the bowl?

Meanwhile the house became a junk yard. Who knew that dirty dishes had to be walked from the dining room table to their home in the kitchen. Why not just leave them on the table for the next meal. I had many labor-saving inspirations like this. The wife was non-responsive. Why are bold, daring new ideas so hard to sell to practitioners of antique ideas?

Other household items never found their way to their allotted home. It became hard to move around without stumbling over a beer bottle or tripping over a

stack of mail. You couldn't recline in a chair without puncturing yourself with a fork left over from breakfast. The instructress, comfortably resting on the couch, shouted commands from her couch headquarters and I obeyed.

Soon she recovered and life returned to the "old normal". But just so we'd never forget my attempted assistance, I continued to fill the litter box, but only halfway. Who knows besides the cats and they can't tell on me.

I reflected: Look how domestic life has improved for homemakers. My grandmother had to go down to the river to wash her family's clothes; my mother had to walk out to the backyard in all kinds of weather to dry them.

And now my wife steps into the garage to both wash and dry the family's dirty laundry. So simple.

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Tales from Ridgetop, Tennessee in the 1930s

The Tunnel and Baker's Station

by Bill C. Mayes

Bill Mayes is a retired Naval Veteran who currently lives at Tut Fann Veterans Home. Ridgetop was his home and it is just a few miles from Nashville, TN.

At the old depot there was a round stone structure which had been used, I believe, to water the horses used for transportation between Ridgetop and the depot. During our childhood years this was still standing, but had been filled in and was ideal for building a fire on for our "wiener roasts." Often we would go beyond the old depot and walk all the way to Baker's Station. This was also an ideal place to go, a little farther than the tunnel, but there were two nice springs there.

One was "Aunt Betty's Spring," and had been surrounded with huge square stones, as though it had been landscaped at some time. I remember during World War II when housing was hard to find a family lived in a tent beside this spring for several years. The tent was about 8' X 10' and had a wooden floor. The other spring, where we usually built our fire, came out of a cave about 100 yards further South. It was a low cave, which seemingly went back under the railroad tracks, but we could crawl in. Later a concrete barrier was built to prevent people from going in.

It was located far below the railroad tracks, but I am sure it was on railroad property. It was usually still daylight when we went past the tunnel and down the trail on the way to Baker's Station. There was an old beech tree within 100 yards of the old depot site, on the West side of the trail. There is no telling how old the tree was, but many, many generations of lovers had stopped to carve their initials into the tree. Almost all the artwork on the tree amounted to carving a heart with an arrow through it, and his and her initials, or, for the less artistic, just initials.

Anyone who has lived around Ridgetop and has either gone on our wiener roasts or done much exploring will well remember the old beech tree. As far as I know, it still stands, and I hope it remains for a good many more years. I'm really not sure if I ever carved on that tree, but I probably did. No one could have had an affair of the heart without declaring it to the world, by way of the old beech tree.

Another pastime, at least for the boys, was to walk down to the tunnel at night and talk to

Mr. Nolan. He worked for the railroad on the 4pm -12am shift. His job was to walk through the tunnel from the South end to the North end, and return, three times each eight hour shift, to check on the tracks. It was possible for a rail to be left loose, broken, or in some condition which could cause a train wreck. Therefore the railroad had men walk the tracks nine times every 24 hours.

During the day shift, Mr. Sam Hooper, who lived just West of the school, did this job. I don't recall who walked the tunnel on the graveyard shift. There was a tiny shack one tenth of a mile South of the end of the tunnel, into which the guards used to get out of the weather between trips. It was fun to go down and squeeze into the little house and listen to Mr. Nolan tell stories.

Once Bobby Robb and I walked through the tunnel with him. It was fun, quite an experience, but I can't recom-

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mend it now. When we got to the North end, we got off to the side and waited for a Southbound train to pass through. It was best to walk through after a Southbound train, because they moved faster, and made less smoke, and pushed smoke from the last Northbound train out of the tunnel. Mr. Nolan knew the train schedules to the minute.

After the Southbound train passed through, we started our trip back through to the South end. As we were about half-way through, an unscheduled Northbound train entered the tunnel. Now when you consider that there is about six feet between the tracks and the solid rock walls of the tunnel, you can easily understand that it is very easy to panic! If it had been left up to me, I am sure that is what I would have done. But thank goodness we were with Mr. Nolan.

He took command quickly, gave us a crash course on survival, had us get down very low, hug the wall, and freeze! Now the "freeze" part was easy, I almost did that standing in the middle of the tracks! But we got in position, and although the urge to panic remained throughout the ordeal, we survived the experience. I think that train was 18 miles long and took three days to pass!

After we were clear of the train, then we had the problem of smoke hanging low in the tunnel. Mr. Nolan had spoken of times when he had to get down on all fours and breathe just above a small stream of water which flowed beside the tracks.

As I remember, we did O.K., but breathed easier bent over closer to the ground. I could not forget hearing about a lady who rode her horse into the tunnel a few years earlier, and a train

came along and she dismounted and left on foot. I remember that there was talk about supplying the glue factory with another dead horse. I don't think I ever used glue as a child without thinking about that horse left in the tunnel.

Earlier I mentioned the stone watering trough for horses at the old depot. I am told that the old Villa Crest Hotel, which had already burned before my day (which incidentally began midway through 1930, in mid-Depression) ran a horse drawn buggy, or stagecoach-like vehicle, to and from the station. In addition to this service and the mail service (Mr. West's pony), there also was an ambulance-like buggy which made runs between the old depot and the old Watauga Sanitarium.

We sure had some exciting times growing up in Ridgetop, TN.

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Shooting the Breeze

by Mark Dyer

Using any sort of traditional measuring stick, it is perfectly reasonable to assume I started out as a savage or at least an amateur heathen. No one could be blamed for making such a judgement, at least when examining the external evidence. As a five-year-old, I scrupulously avoided baths, carried garden-quality dirt behind my ears and spent inordinate amounts of time hiding among bushes and shrubbery.

Regardless of outward appearances and although I may have actually qualified as a savage, I was never a heathen. As long as I can remember, I have sincerely believed in a higher power, I just wasn't ever interested in any of the associated structure. In fact, it could be said without exaggeration, I opposed structure with every fiber of my being. The more free-wheeling and chaotic my religious experience, the better.

My core philosophy was simple, "Outside was always preferable to inside unless cartoons are on TV." It was clear to me that organized religion had been specifically designed to impede my uninhibited lifestyle and it was in 1963 when my family decided to be a church-going bunch without my approval.

The main problem with religious classes was not the curriculum, teachers, or even my fellow students - I just hated walls. The curriculum was actually fascinating. What little kid doesn't love the story of some old codger constructing a boat and filling it with a load of critters? This was a concept that sailed right down my alley. I enjoyed learning about David and his stoned giant and the strongman, Samson, swinging a donkey's jawbone to dispatch an unruly bunch. I really had no reservations with scriptural scholarship at all. I even liked praying and didn't mind tailoring a supplication to suit my curiosity, "Our Father, who art in heaven, how'd ya' know my name?"

Under the direction of an ex-Marine, our family was inclined to arrive at meetings well before the scheduled commencement time and you might think I would view this as a detriment. Not at all. Arriving early was a golden opportunity to explore my surroundings completely unchaperoned. I seized these precious minutes as gifts from above, wandering far and wide around our church, which was located on an abandoned WWII military complex in the center of Tuscaloosa, Alabama. There were hundreds of empty buildings to investigate and catalogue. I discovered an exterior entrance to a dark, cavernous basement under our church that was filled with interesting castoffs and mys-

terious junk. If it hadn't also been filled with unseen, but easily sensed monsters, I would have thoroughly investigated the catacombs. Even an intrepid explorer such as myself had his limits.

There was a marvelous ditch across the road and during the summer it was crammed with thumb-sized blackberries and similar-sized mosquitoes. A large culvert ran under the road and I calculated it would serve as a perfect hideaway, but this proved to be a very disappointing assumption. One morning, right as the prelude music started, I fled to the concrete pipe, believing no one would ever think to look for me there and I would then be free for an hour or two of sightseeing. I hadn't been hiding three minutes before my teacher stuck her head in the opening as though she fully expected to find me lurking in the shadows.

Once dragged inside the building, I routinely managed to stir up trouble in unexpected locations. Who could have guessed that melting a beautiful rainbow of crayon streams down the front of two steam radiators would cause such a fuss? In spite of my obvious decorating skills, I was forbidden to festoon the remaining six.

Speaking of radiators, I was mesmerized by the clanging and banging that filled the building during winter months when the boilers were first fired up. I was certain that Thor himself was down there pounding away on the pipes with Mjolnir. Dad, in a rare attempt to mislead me, explained that the noise actually came from cold pipes expanding as hot steam passed through them - he could be so naive. I was still incubating a minor engineering infection and normally his farfetched explanation would have struck a chord, but nothing could trump the idea of a Norse god sporting a helmet sprouting seagull wings while thumping out a Beach Boys tune with a magic hammer.

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My greatest religious triumph never fully materialized, but it was a wonderfully close call. One Sunday, just after our meetings had ended, I scrambled up into the belfry of the old building and got hold of a recently discovered mystery rope just begging to be tugged. I managed to accomplish two solid yanks before my teacher, who had followed me (wisely suspecting some sort of malfeasance), gave me a yank or two herself. The huge bell on the other end of the rope sounded off and the ringing deafened both of us. This was probably fortuitous because I believe that poor Sister may have been using words not meant for my little ears.

As triumphant (or naughty, depending on your point of view) as this adventure might seem, it wasn't until a few years later, when the decrepit belfry structure was being demolished to make way for a shopping mall, that I learned how close I had come to joining the Quasimodo Hall of Fame, Posthumous Chapter. During the process of removing the belfry tower, it was discovered that the support structure for the two hundred pound bell had utterly vanished years earlier and been replaced by dust and cobwebs. Apparently, termites had consumed every scintilla of wood and the bell was left resting pretty much on air, completely ignoring gravity. I still can't believe my two tugs hadn't been enough to bring the house down, so to speak, but I guess that would have made me a dead ringer... .pause for effect.

This was 1964 when air-conditioning was still considered a luxury in central Alabama. Our old church had been constructed as an Army chapel and as such, had been filled almost exclusively by men during its decades of active duty. In order to keep the soldiers a little more comfortable in the summer humidity and heat of Alabama, two massive, eight-foot diameter fans had been installed in the rafters, pointing straight down on the congregation. It was rare that we switched on our fans because the wind of these turbines could destroy the careful crafting of a beauty salon before you could say "beehive or bouffant?"

I didn't appreciate it at the time, but this was an age when women only wore dresses to church and I watched these overhead blowers, more than once, convert a skirt into a headscarf before you could blink. There were times when the person in charge of fan operation got distracted

and left them running until just minutes before the meeting started. I lived for those moments and the possibilities they occasioned. The church building had a foyer and a large open area leading into the chapel proper.

It all looked wonderfully innocent. Excitement would build as each high-heeled clack brought an unwary victim nearer to our invisible hurricanes and no one could miss the instant the air-wall was breached. Hands immediately shot up to the head to protect the hair. Elbows flailed about while the waist bent to approximately forty-five degrees. Knees locked tightly together and toes clocked inward while an amazing melody of high pitched squeals filled the room. The best thing about all of this initial blast was that this was only the first of two fans and there was still a second typhoon lying in wait.

Disappointingly, some women had the presence of mind to reverse their course, but heaven help the poor lady who thought she could flee to hairdo salvation by running forward, only to be greeted with another swirly.

Truth be told, there were some pretty good moments regarding my religious education despite the fact it occurred mostly inside a building. It did seem a little odd that an inordinate amount of time had been devoted to individually instructing me in detail about commandments and the consequences of sin.

Oh yeah, I almost forgot. Apparently, when it comes to sin, one of the biggies is to never, ever, no matter what, laugh out loud as you watch a wig sailing across the floor (heathens excepted, of course).

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For 46 years, the Huntsville Historical Review has chronicled the origins and history of Huntsville and Madison County. Now, as Alabama celebrates its bicentennial, the Huntsville-Madison County Historical Society has assembled a collection of articles from past issues of the Review, spanning Huntsville's history during Alabama's 200 years. This first volume covers the first years of those two centuries as Alabama transitions from territory to Statehood, with Huntsville serving as home to the drafting of the state constitution and as Alabama's first capital.

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Coal Oil Discovered in Madison County

Taken from the Weekly Democrat, 1880

Huntsville has a new sensation in the discovery of coal oil on the farm of W. T. Crawford, who resides on a part of the old Mack Jones plantation, 34 miles in a north-western course from Huntsville. We learn that Mr. Crawford commenced digging a well near his ginhouse last October and after reaching a depth of about 40 feet stopped digging on getting to a seam of limestone rock. Subsequently, he began to blast the rock, and reaching a depth of 12 or 15 feet, encountered a strong smell of coal oil.

Having had some experience in supplying pumps for the oil wells in Pennsylvania, his attention was arrested, as he believed, by the discovery of an abundant source of oil. A piece of the excavated rock retained a strong oil smell some time after it was brought to the surface of the ground, and the surface of the water in the well is covered with oil.

These indications of a coal oil bonanza have so impressed Mr. Crawford and some of his friends that they set about getting up a company to establish a coal oil factory. The following persons have united to form a coal oil company: T.B. Crawford, J.M. Moss, L.W. Day, Henry McGee, A.W. McCullough, J.D. Vandeventer. This is not one of the "we four and no more" enterprises of which we have heard, but the books are open for more subscribers.

The Company, under the name of T.B. Crawford & Co., believes that like indications of coal oil exist in this section, propose to procure from land lease owners of large tracts - say 10,000 acres - with a view of sinking wells for oil. We have seen one of their printed blank leases. We trust that the enterprise will prove successful, and that there may be "millions in it." Huntsville - indeed, all North Alabama - needs something to stimulate the dormant enterprise and energies of our people, and we trust that propitious Nature, in the plenitude of her mercy and

beneficence, has opened the way, in this instance, to test the wisdom and capacity of our people to avail themselves of her bounty, and they will respond with alacrity, and reap rich profits from their investment.

EDITOR'S NOTE:

After a brief flurry of activity, Madison County's interest in oil speculation quickly died down when it was discovered there was not enough oil to make the drilling profitable. Over the years other wild-cat drilling rigs attempted their luck but all would prove unsuccessful. The last well was drilled in 1937 near Madison, wherefore many years afterwards it was used as a deer stand.

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He found me in his yard and kept me for two days trying to find my home. He brought me to the Ark where I would be safe and taken care of. The Ark sent me to school for a Manners 101 Class. HOTC was the school and I learned a lot. I am seeking a sweet family that will share love, companionship, care, lots of petting, good food and everything it takes to make a dog happy. When you come to the Ark, ask to see Sherman. That's me.

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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, Jan. 2004. She authored this column for many years in the Old Huntsville Magazine. At the time of this column she was sick and living in Big Springs rehab. She passed away the next month, in February of 2004.

This past month has been busy and I have had so many friends stop by here at Big Spring Care to visit me.

Greg Anderson stopped by. He's the new pastor at Twickenham Church of Christ and what a wonderful young man he is! He has only been in Huntsville for 6 months - he came here with his family from Nashville. His wife Dalene and twin boys are happy to make Huntsville their new home. Welcome, Greg.

Billy Bell says to say hello to everyone. He's delighted that his mother is doing so much better. He's going soon to Gulf Shores for an awards ceremony.

Isn't Huntsville a beautiful city? Look at how clean it is, how little traffic we have and what great people we have living here. People who live in Huntsville are truly blessed.

Jane Smith came to visit and brought me a beautiful little Christmas tree with lights. It sure did cheer me up. Robert Madison came to see me with his nephew Wesley Madison, who's here for a week and is soon going back to Iraq. I'm so proud of our military and guardsmen who are working over there. Wesley was sure a handsome, and sweet, young man.

We ran into our councilman Glenn Watson the other day at Little Farm Grill having breakfast. He looked great but said he was getting over a bad cold - and

sounds like half the people we know nowadays. Get well Glenn!

I hope all of you are staying warm and cozy this winter. I don't mind the sunny cold days - it's the drizzly gray days that I don't like.

Chuck and Annelie Owens are getting ready to head off for Tampa on their annual 2-month trek to the warmer climes. They sure do look forward to that every year.

I want to send a big hello out to Jean Reid, wife of Joe. She hasn't been feeling well lately and I sure do love that lady.

Our good friend Jim Vaughn continues to recuperate after a bad accident the early part of the year. We're thinking about you, Jim.

Liz Waggett visited her parents, Anne and John Casey, in Satellite Beach, Florida for the Thanksgiving holidays. Joe, Liz's husband, got to ride his motorcycle here in Huntsville while Liz was gone. Joe has been on jury duty and said he really enjoyed it.

Barney Gamble, a member of the Golden K Kiwanis, was in the hospital recently. We sure hope you're feeling better, Barney!

We were sure happy to hear that the Hudson's and their company, Cityscapes, will be developing 3 restaurants in the old Zesto's location in 5 Points. If Paul Thornton (of Pauli's and Washington Square) is taking care of it, we know it'll be a great addition to that area.



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We were so very sorry to hear about Lisa Johnson, who died very unexpectedly. There were so many people at her memorial service that it was hard even to get in. We know her family and friends are devastated and I send my love out to you.

Loretta (our Mayor) has been by to see me several times. Regardless of how busy she is, she always makes time to make sure folks are feeling OK.

Our good friends Barb and Ron Eyestone just came back after spending their holidays with their parents in Florida. Even though the weather was better, they sure missed Huntsville!

Joe Whisenant is still having fun cooking - I'm looking forward to our 2nd annual cookout we'll have next year!

A huge congratulations to some newlyweds we saw the other day - Rosa and Andy Karabinos were married September 13 and sure look like a couple of lovebirds!

Saranel Davis is sure proud of her son "Rip" Detamore, who is serving as a General in Iraq.

Everyone was so sorry to hear about the death of John Kinzer. He has many relatives and friends in Huntsville who remember him and will miss him so much. He will never be forgotten here in Huntsville.

Congratulations to Sam Keith as well as Buck and Janet Watson on the birth of their grandchild. Marshall Keith Plane was born on November 13. The proud parents, who currently live in New York, are LeeAnna and Brian Plane. We hear that they came for a visit over Christmas.

Rebekah McKinney and her husband John are expecting a baby in spring. It is their first and we know they are excited!

Mary Grimes is just about

fully recovered from her foot surgery. She's the wife of Vic Grimes who is the Club Historian for the Golden K Kiwanis.

Jimmy Tolen sends a big hello to all his friends. He says he thinks he has a couple of them here in Huntsville!

Lawanda Allison really had a great time visiting all the beautiful homes on the Twickenham Home Tour. She said it was cold and windy, but worth it. There's nothing prettier than all those candles lining the streets in Old Town and Twickenham on that one night.

We heard that Louie Tippett and his wife Jane had a real nice Christmas party. They are always so sweet and it is a pleasure to know them.

That's all for now, but remember I sure do love all of you and please come see me!

Aunt Eunice

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A LIVING LEGEND

by Hugh Michaels

Huntsville is made up of people who have shown great qualities of leadership. These people continue to work in places with high expectations. They have followed in the footsteps of those who have laid the ground work. These people were helped by a supporting cast. The supporting cast are people who work at physical labor and desk jobs. People who do tasks necessary for the city to function properly. We have an individual who for years has spent his life helping others. People love and respect him. His life is one that others follow. His name is Billy Frank Shields.

Bill was born and raised in Webb, MS. He graduated from Swan Lake High School in Webb, MS in 1943. Shortly after graduating he joined the Army. He took basic training at Fort McClellan, AL. Upon completing basic training, he was transferred to Fort Maxi, TX. Bill was a soldier in World War II.

He served as a Drill Sgt. Bill received a commendation medal with Three Oak Leaf Clusters. He is a proud vet-

eran. When a patriotic program is held at his church (Hillwood Baptist Church) he wears his old uniform.

His name is etched in the Veteran's Memorial located in downtown Huntsville, AL. After he was discharged he attended Jacksonville State College in Alabama. He had visions of becoming a school teacher, but after attending college he realized that teaching school was not his "calling".

He volunteered as a member of the Liberty Learn-



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ing Foundation here in Huntsville, AL. He is a civic minded person.

Bill is a devout Christian and a leader in his church. He is a Deacon Emeritus and has served in almost all of the committees at Hillwood. He is very proud of having been the Chairman of the pastoral search committee, who recommended Dr. Charles Freeman as the Pastor. Dr. Freeman has served well as the pastor.

Bill is 92 years old and his health is not good at this writing. He has many friends praying for him. He has had disappointments and heartaches in his lifetime. However, he withstood all of them because he is man of God. His strength is being a believer.

He lost his wife several years ago. He and Maxine were together 62 years. Maxine was a fine lady. She was supportive of him in all of his transactions. She shared in all of his troubles and rejoiced with him during all of his happy times. They were a beautiful couple.

He is the proud father of five children, Kenneth (deceased), Ronald, Pam Van Nostrand, Randall and Barbara Hayes.

When asked to describe what type of father he was, Ron presented a beautiful description of his dad. Some of his wording is as follows: "How very blessed I and my siblings have been to have experienced the joy and stability to be raised by godly parents. I have never heard my father curse or tell a lie. He was raised by dear and precious parents. You can say with confidence that my dad is a man seeking the will of God and he will not be swayed by that. He doesn't "cut and run" when adversity strikes. His faith rests on the rock and is unshakable. He has reached out to me when I was drowning in despair he pulled me to safety. He is not ashamed of the gospel. We are both headed in the same direction and when we are reunited in heaven the words out of our mouths will be I love you for all eternity."

BILL SHIEDS IS CERTAINLY A LIVING LEGEND. Thank God for people like him.

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If you cannot afford the seventy-five cents for a magazine, contact one of our members and we will give you one. But please - don't take money from a child.

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