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Old Huntsville

HISTORY AND STORIES OF THE TENNESSEE VALLEY



THE LEGACY OF MAYOR JOE DAVIS

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If a nephew needed a job, a phone call was all it took, whether he was qualified or not.

Also in this issue: **The Buffalo Soldiers**

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The Legacy of Mayor Joe Davis

by Tom Carney

Huntsville has seen its fair share of mayors in the last two hundred years; some good, some bad, some famous and some infamous. Each one of them, in their own way, contributed to Huntsville's rich history.

Ask around town, however, and the name you will hear most often is that of Joe Davis, a man who spent his life believing Huntsville could be more than just cotton fields and rockets. He served as Huntsville's mayor for twenty years and forever changed its future.

The Davis family is one of the oldest in Madison County. According to tradition, when John Hunt arrived at the Big Spring in 1804 he found a cabin under construction by Samuel Davis. Unfortunately, Davis had paused in his work to go back to Georgia for his family. When he returned Hunt had already taken possession of the cabin and moved in. Ironically,

if Hunt had moved on to a different location, there is a good possibility we would be living in Davisville today.

Rather than pursuing his claim to the cabin, Davis moved his family to the area of New Market where, over the next hundred years, they became typical, hard-working families of the rural south.

By the time Joe William Davis was born in 1918, the Davis family had spread across Madison County with cousins, in-laws, and probably a few outlaws, too numerous to count. Joe grew up chopping and picking cotton and carrying water from the well. When the picking was finished his father would often "loan" him to kin who needed extra help with their daily work.

Although Davis had a lifelong love for the country, he never missed the farm chores. When asked about his favorite memories of living on a farm, he laughed and said, "Leaving."

After graduating from New Market High School he entered East Tennessee State College. "Every one was into sports," he later recalled, "so I decided to try out for the boxing team. In my first fight I got knocked out by the first punch. After that I decided to just spend my time studying." He graduated with a B.S. in Political Science and a Masters in Education Administration.

For his graduation present,

Life is like a roll of toilet paper - hopefully long and useful - but always ending at the wrong moment.



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(in memory)

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Davis received a draft notice. After training, he was sent to the Pacific where he participated in the battles for the Philippines and Okinawa. He served as a NCO on a LCT (Landing Craft Tank), transporting soldiers from the ships to the beach heads.

Mike Rodgers, who also served on an LCT, described it as "knowing you are going to die every minute. We would load the LCTs with soldiers from the ships and by the time we got a few hundred yards off shore, every gun on the beach was firing at us. The soldiers were hunkered down behind the metal plates but we had to guide it in."

Davis, like most veterans, never talked much about his military service.

After being discharged in 1946 Davis returned to Huntsville and got a job teaching with the Huntsville school system. Over the next decade he taught at Huntsville High, Huntsville Junior High and 5th. Avenue Elementary.

Congress had passed the G.I. Bill which allowed veterans to

attend college at the government's expense. Unfortunately for many ex-soldiers, college was an impossible dream. They had been drafted out of the cotton fields, with many having dropped out of school after the third or fourth grade. Now they were returning home with a burning desire to better themselves, but there was no program to teach a grown man the basic skills of how to read and write.

Davis began tutoring many of these veterans in the evenings. As word spread, more and veterans began attending the impromptu classes until it reached the point where there were too many for Davis to teach. He solved the problem by having some of his junior high students stay after school. It was common, according to one source, to see twelve-year-old children teaching grown men how to write their names.

Years later Davis was presenting some sort of an award to an elderly gentleman when the man leaned over and asked, "Mr. Davis, do you remember when I first met you?"

When Joe looked puzzled the old man went on to say, "You taught me how to read and write!"

Like many other young veterans, Davis was unsure about what he wanted to do with his life. In 1955 he quit the school system and took a job with US Industrial Corp. and was eventually transferred to their office in Tuscola, Illinois. The money was good, but he missed Huntsville. Within a few years he quit and moved back home where he tried his hand at selling real estate, automobiles and even had a brief partnership in a dry cleaning business.

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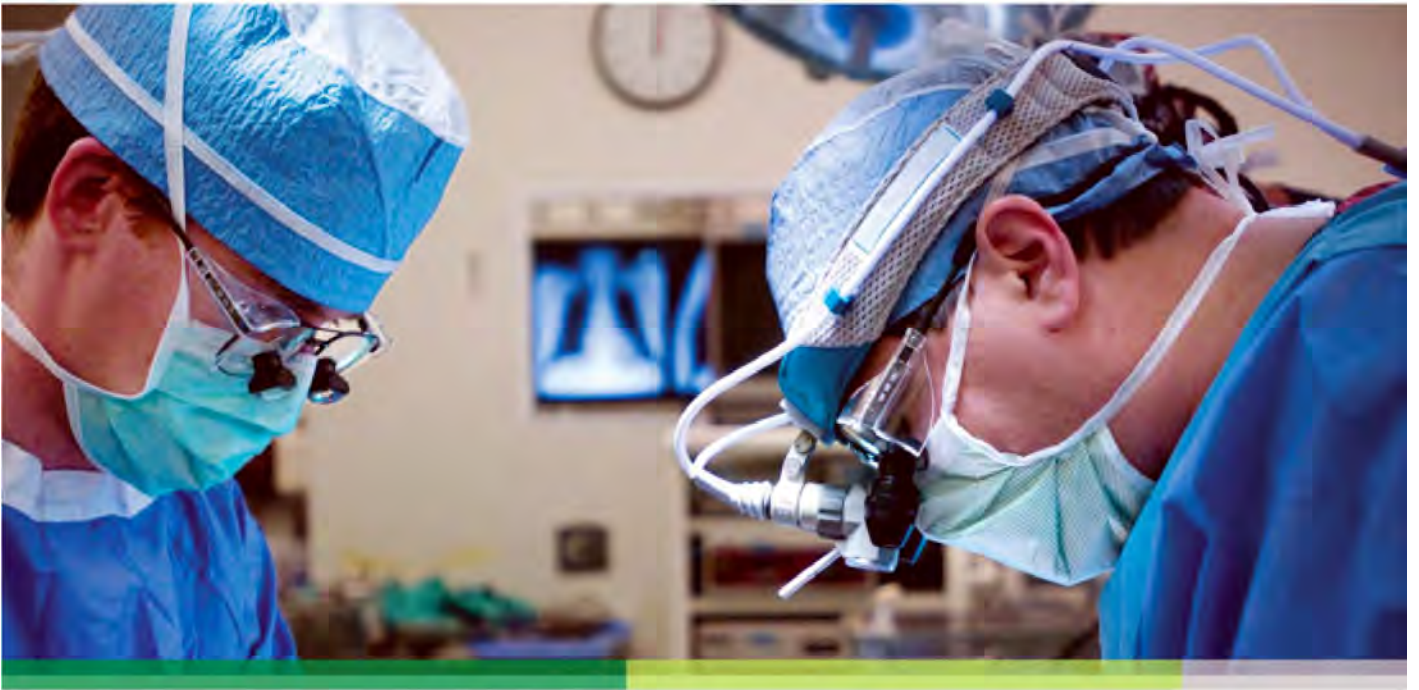
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And if you're counting stars, Healthgrades also gave a Five-Star distinction (its highest rating) to Huntsville Hospital's Total Knee Replacement program.

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His break came in 1964 when Glenn Hearn was elected Mayor of Huntsville. Hearn was a retired FBI agent who had originally been transferred to Huntsville to take over the "Von Braun File." To many people, though, he was still an outsider. Hearn realized he had to have an Administrative Assistant who knew the "ins and outs" of local politics and community relations. Everyone he asked for advice gave the same name - Joe Davis.

Davis quickly proved to be a capable administrator, winning the respect of everyone he dealt with. He had a folksy manner that endeared him to the public, but could be hard as nails when conducting city business. Although most people never knew it, Davis and Hearn had problems from the very beginning.

Davis, having grown up here when Huntsville's main base of employment was cotton mills, had seen how easily the city's economy could be affected by a drop in the cotton prices. Now, he argued, Huntsville was in the same situation with the

rocket program. One out of every twelve people in Huntsville worked for NASA or the Marshall Space Flight Center and Congress had already hinted that money for research and development would be cut back as the Apollo Program neared completion. Huntsville's biggest priority, he said, should be recruiting more diversified industry that was not dependent upon the space program.

Hearn disagreed, pointing out that Huntsville's economy was the strongest in history. He, along with many business leaders, believed the rocket program would continue indefinitely.

Davis' worst fears were confirmed in 1966 when almost two thousand people were laid off as development for the Apollo Program ended. The following years brought even more job losses and there was hardly a street in Huntsville that did not boast at least several "Home For Sale" signs as people prepared to move away.

In 1968 Joe Davis was persuaded to run for the office of Mayor. "It wasn't even a fair



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fight," recalled Charles Murphy. "Davis was kin to half the people in Huntsville and he had taught the rest of them in school. Glenn Hearn didn't have a chance of winning."

Davis' main priority continued to be attracting new businesses. Civic leaders, for the most part, agreed in principle but did not want the city to incur any cost in attracting the businesses. When the chairman of the Planning Commission, Loretta Spencer, proposed a deal for the city to buy land for the expansion of Cummings Research Park, it was roundly condemned by many people who loudly argued "the city cannot afford it."

Davis' sharp reply was "The city can't afford NOT to do it!" Dollar for dollar, the land deal proved to be one of the best bargains the city ever made.

One of the biggest problems Davis faced was what many people called "The good old boy system." Although Huntsville was rapidly growing into a major city, in many ways it still resembled a small town. Every one, it seemed, had an uncle, cousin or friend who worked for the city and whom they could call for a favor. If a nephew needed a job, a phone call was all it took, whether he was qualified or not.

As late as 1972 there were still members of the Huntsville police force who had not even finished elementary school. In another case a job was arranged with the city school system for a man who had served time in prison, and was on probation, for manslaughter. Davis was determined to put an end to the practice. Oftentimes, when he heard of a department that was in the process of hiring new personnel, he would stop by and casually ask to look at the applications. After throwing half of them on the

floor he would place the rest on the desk and ask, "Which one are you going to hire?"

Most people took the hint, although there were a few people who resented the mayor's interference.

One story is told about the time Davis asked a city employee for certain information. When weeks went by without it being supplied, Davis called the person on the carpet. The employee got angry and loudly proceeded to tell the mayor that he worked for a particular department head and did not have to take orders from anyone else.

The next morning the employee arrived at work to find two men moving his desk into the hallway. One of the men paused and said, "Mr. Davis said to tell you that you might work for someone else but this is still his building!"

Whether the story is true or not is debatable, but everyone agreed that Joe Davis was not the type of person you simply ignored.

Personnel problems continued to plague Davis and the city of Huntsville for years. In 1971 the newly formed Union of Sanitation Workers met with Davis and demanded a raise. The mayor patiently listened to the demands before explaining that there were no funds at the time. If they would work with

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Bob Hope

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him, he would try to put it in the next budget.

The union leaders rejected the offer and issued an ultimatum: Pay now or we will go on strike.

This placed Davis in a painful situation. He actually sympathized with the workers and agreed they were underpaid. But, as he explained later, if the city caved in to the union's demands it would place public services in jeopardy every time city employees wanted a raise.

On April 9, 1971 the sanitation workers walked off their jobs and declared a strike. Davis desperately wanted to work out a solution that was favorable to everyone but the union leaders refused to negotiate. Finally, Mayor Davis issued his own ultimatum: Return to work immediately or consider yourself "resigned."

When there was no answer from the union, Davis ordered 105 striking workers fired.

The fired workers responded with violent rage. Molotov cocktails and firebombs were hurled at the few garbage trucks still operating. Drivers were pulled from the trucks and beaten. More than three dozen strikers were arrested and arson damage exceeded \$500,000.

Davis refused to back down. Police squads, carrying riot guns and wearing gas masks, were called out to keep the peace. With the heavy police presence the strike fizzled out after several weeks. When the strikers finally decided to return to work they were rebuffed and told that since they had "resigned" they would

have to re-apply for their jobs. Fifty employees were not re-hired as the city had already hired replacements.

True to his word, Davis made sure there was money in the next budget for a raise for city employees.

In 1978 the scene was repeated when the police, firemen and utility employees called a strike. Davis called on the National Guard, State Troopers and county deputies to patrol the streets and announced "City employees who fail to return to work will be fired."

Three days later the strike was over.

Despite being the mayor of a growing city, Davis was still a country boy at heart. Sometimes he would sneak out of his

office and call his good friend Cecil Ashburn.

"Joe loved the country," remembered Ashburn. "We would drive around for hours exploring back roads and talking about when we were kids. He had a thing for country stores; every time we saw one he would want to stop. Most people didn't know who he was and that was fine with Joe. He just liked to sit on a bench out front, talk to people and eat lunch. His favorite lunch was bologna, crackers and hot sauce."

Although Davis had a good sense of humor, he hated practical jokes. "There was a certain prominent business leader," said Frank Jeffries, "that was all the time trying to pull jokes on



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

6 year old overheard praying in church

the mayor. Things like whoopi cushions, exploding cigarettes; really juvenile and embarrassing stuff. He would later try to justify it by saying "Come on, it's just a joke."

One day after a particularly embarrassing episode, Davis decided it was time to teach him a lesson. He called Gene Sweeton, the Chief of Police, and after explaining the situation, told him to send some officers out and arrest the man; take him to the station, make a mug shot and put him in a cell. After about an hour the officer was to tell the man, "The Mayor said to tell you it's just a joke."

"On what charges?" Sweeton asked.

"I don't know." Davis replied. "Just make up something like parking tickets."

A few hours later the chief called back and explained that he had done as the mayor requested and arrested the man

for parking tickets. "But we have a problem. After we got him down here we found out he has a whole stack of parking tickets outstanding."

For the first time that day Davis broke into a wide grin. "Well hell, just make him pay them before you tell him it's a joke."

There were no more practical jokes.

Joe Davis was re-elected in 1972, 1976, 1980 and 1984. During his terms in office, Huntsville grew from being

dependent on cotton mills and rockets to being one of the leading high tech research centers in the world. A small city that many people had written off with the end of the Apollo Program was now one of the most desirable places in the country to live and work.

He created a modern police department and insisted that only the best applicants be hired. City employees now realized their jobs depended on performance rather than knowing someone. He guided

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the city in its recovery efforts from floods and tornados and was instrumental in creating the historic districts.

Today it is virtually impossible to go anywhere in Huntsville without seeing Davis' legacy. Museums, schools, roads, businesses, libraries, the airport; they were all a part of Davis' dream to make Huntsville the city he knew it could become.

In recognition of his leadership, the City Council voted unanimously in 1985 to name the new sports stadium the "Joe Davis Stadium."

In 1988 he ran for office for the last time. "He didn't really want to run," recalls a friend. "He was in bad health and his heart just wasn't in it. The only reason he ran was because people kept pushing him."

After losing to Steve Hettinger, Joe Davis retired from the public eye. "I've served my time," he said, "and now it's time to rest."

Regardless of what he said, people who knew Davis well knew how much he missed the excitement of running the city. After he had been out of office for about a year an old friend, Johnny Johnston, called to see how he was doing.

"I'm not doing anything any more," Davis said with a touch of sadness in his voice. "When I was in office people called me every day wanting me to do something or go somewhere. Now the only time the phone rings, it's a wrong number."

Johnston paused for a brief second before saying, "Mayor, that's the reason I called. I'm

going to come pick you up and we're going out to dinner."

"Joe had a great time that night," remembers Johnston. "People came up to talk with him, shake hands and tell stories. For a couple of hours he was once again the Mayor."

Joe William Davis died on November 14, 1992. At his funeral he was eulogized as the man who had done more for Huntsville than anyone in its history.

Few people would disagree.

"Basically my wife was very immature. I'd be at home in the bath and she'd come in and sink my boats."

Woody Allen



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Jan Dorning, Huntsville

March Memories

by Elizabeth Wharry

My parents were naturalized when their parents became citizens. Dad's family was from Co. Donegal Ireland, and mom's family was from a town near the Austro-Hungarian border.

St. Patrick's Day was, and still is, a big deal in Cleveland, Ohio. The parade is huge! Everyone is a wee bit Irish that day, too. Certain years stand out in my memory.

In my senior year in high school, I was in the newly formed flag corps. I usually carried the American flag when we performed. The band teacher, Mr. Orsino, was in charge of us as well as the marching band. When he announced that we were going to march in the St. Patrick's Day parade, well, we were all pretty excited. As the flag bearer, I knew I was going to lead our high school.

When we got to the parade grounds, Mr. Orsino pulled me aside. He just said to walk with him. As I did, I noticed that we were walking towards the Grand Marshall. That's when he told me that I was going to step off the parade, bearing the big flag! I was stunned, but I carried my country's flag with pride and dignity.

Fast forward a few years. My mother was a wonderful cook and baker. One year, she decided to combine Hungarian and Irish cooking. In Hungary, sour cream is jokingly referred to as the national beverage. It, and smoky paprika, are used in just about every main dish.

For some reason, she decided to make corned beef paprikash. All I will say is that even

the dog turned his nose up at it!

Fast forward a few more years. I was in the process of getting a divorce and I had moved back home with my daughter. She was a toddler then. After I put her to bed, I asked my dad about his side of the family. I was hoping to hear about my grandparents. Instead, he told me about his grandparents. More specifically, about his granddad's funeral. Funeral parlors and electric lights were still in the future for small rural towns in Ireland. My granddad was waked at home.

My great-gran had gone to bed, worn out from the day's events.

His friends would keep vigil during the night. My great-gran was awakened by a ruckus downstairs. She came down the stairs by candlelight. Imagine her shock and horror at seeing her dead husband sitting up! His friends had followed Irish tradition. They got him out of his coffin, propped him up in his favorite chair, put his pipe in one hand, and a wee drop in the other!

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With summer just around the corner, I urge all parents to enroll their children in swim classes at the Natatorium (Aquatics Center).

Having taught swimming for twenty-three years, I can't think of any other thing that a parent can provide for their children to help them the rest of their lives than swim lessons. Every year in May I hear on the news of young children drowning because they were on an outing with friends and they got into a situation and weren't able to save themselves.

I required the students I taught to take swim lessons for three weeks, five days a week for an hour each day. When the classes were finished, they could jump off the diving board and swim the length of the pool. It has been said that a child under the age of twelve doesn't have the stamina and knowledge to save themselves.

Even though all of my children were excellent swimmers, they were required to wear a life jacket when swimming in water other than a swimming pool. It is just good practice to practice the routine of "no jacket, no water activities". Accidents happen when people are in a hurry and are negligent.

Ironically, this is how I almost drowned in our pool. It was a beautiful day in early fall and we were readying our pool for the winter. My husband had unbolted the screws on the diving board and told the two oldest boys to take it to the pool house for winter storage. However, they got busy and left the board sitting on the stand.

The next day I was all dressed to go shopping when I looked out the upstairs window and

noticed the automatic vacuum hung on the pool ladder in the deep end of the pool. I was in a hurry to untangle the vacuum and stepped on the end of the diving board. In an instant I was in the water, unconscious. The board had hit me on the back of the neck and knocked me out. Fortunately, we had roofers working that day and they saw what had happened. They came to my rescue and pulled me out of the water along with the board.

Boy, did I have one more of a headache the next few days.

So, I can't impress upon parents enough - GET SWIM LESSONS FOR YOUR CHILDREN before something terrible happens. You will be giving them skills that could save their lives.

A black and white photograph of an elderly couple sitting on a wooden dock, looking out at a body of water. The man is on the right, wearing a dark jacket, and the woman is on the left, wearing a striped shirt. The background shows a calm sea and distant hills under a clear sky.

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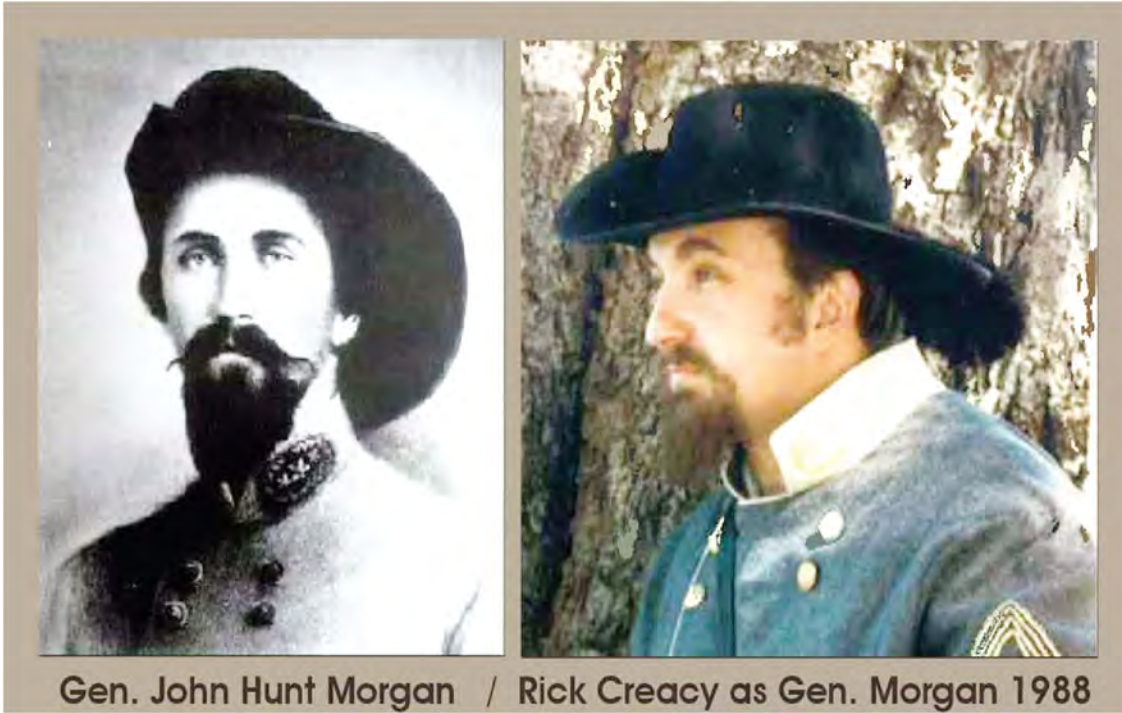
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Gen. John Hunt Morgan / Rick Creacy as Gen. Morgan 1988

General Hunt Morgan

by Buddy Moon

From April of 1985 through April of 1990, Americans commemorated the 125th anniversary of the Civil War, honoring the dead and those who died. Books were published, ceremonies held, re-enacted battles fought, speeches orated and living histories lived, as people honored the memory of the men who fought in blue and gray. Re-enactors portrayed the common soldier, as well as the men who led them.

A Huntsville-born Confederate general, John Hunt Morgan, was brought to life by a local re-enactor, Rick Creacy. Rick worked hard to understand the life and death of General Morgan. He read biographies, studied Civil War period documents, traveled to Morgan's battle sites and even to Greenville, Tennessee,

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where Morgan had been killed.

Giving lectures and portraying General Morgan across the South kept Rick on a busy schedule. He was often away from home in the evenings.

On one night while he was away, his wife and two children were at home alone. The evening was a typical one until Michael, his three-year old son, came running from the back of the house into the kitchen looking for his mother. Mary was cleaning the dishes from dinner. He looked frightened and in a scared voice said, "Daddy's in the back, and he scared me!"

Mary, knowing that no one else was in the house, picked up a butcher knife and told the children to stay in the kitchen.

She headed down the hallway, knife in hand, searching for someone in the bedrooms. Finding the

bedrooms and back rooms empty, she returned to the kitchen. She told them that everything was fine. After calming down Michael and his now excited and frightened sister, Melinda, the home returned to its normal, happy atmosphere.

By the time Rick arrived at home, the children were asleep in their beds. Mary explained the bizarre evening to him as they headed off to bed.

For the next few days, the family did not experience anything unusual. However, on the third night after the strange incident with Michael, Rick was reading a biography of General Morgan in his study. Michael came in to tell him dinner was ready.

Michael saw the book Rick was reading, most especially the portrait of Morgan on the cover of the book. Instantly, Michael pointed at the portrait and said, "That's you, Daddy, and you scared me!"

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Lankford's Legacy: A Special Kind of Service

by John E. Carson

On Wednesday, January 16, 2019, Huntsville lost one of its longest, active public servants. Jerry Glenn Lankford succumbed to a long and valiant battle against cancer and left behind his wife Joan; daughters Deborah and Jeanie, 5 grandchildren and 2 great-grandchildren and one more on the way.

That itself is a great legacy - but Jerry left another one as well; a lifetime of service to his country and community.

Born in Gadsden, Alabama in 1945, Jerry joined the Air Force in 1964 and served until 1972. Though he loved the service, Jerry put family concerns first and rejoined the civilian population.

Still, service to his fellow countrymen called him and he became a member of the Honor Guard of American Legion Post 176 in Huntsville. Once again in uniform, Jerry developed a passion for honoring veterans and their families and eventually became the Honor Guard Commander of the largest American Legion post in the state, now known as the Clayton E. Mon-eymaker, American Legion Post 237, where he served in that role for the next thirty years before his encounter with cancer ended his career.

Serving on an Honor Guard is a special kind

of duty that not everyone is called upon to do. Spending Saturdays, Sundays, weekdays and evenings attending funerals is not most people's chosen activity and many members serve for a short time before deciding it is not for them. The Honor Guard roster changes frequently and over the years has fluctuated from 4 members to 14. And of those, when the call comes in, not everyone is available or able to answer. But Jerry always strived to gather as many as possible for every service - and there were few that he would turn down. At one point, the Honor Guard had been called upon 300 times in one year alone.

Funeral services and memorials were not the only duties the Honor Guard performed. Often, they would make appearances at schools and at Scout meetings, teaching Flag Etiquette and assisting Color Guards. Other bright spots for Jerry and his team were flag raisings, parades and flag retirements - all important events that furthered the mission of the

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American Legion to serve their community and like other great service organizations, usually unnoticed by the media and the public at large.

Unlike the Police and Fire Departments and other emergency services, the Honor Guard members are not First Responders in general - although some of its members are former policemen and other special services - rather, one might call them Last Responders to the families of the fallen, no less important. Through the changing times Jerry stayed constant, serving veterans and the community not only on the Honor Guard but on the Executive Committee of the Post as well; and he was a charter member of the American Legion Riders of Post 237.

One of the hardest duties an Honor Guard performs is to bury one of its own and Jerry and his team have been burdened with that task many times over the years. On Sunday, January 20th, the Honor Guard that Jerry had recruited and built reported to the post to do just that and attended his memorial service at Berryhill Mortuary to present the flag and the three shells signifying Honor, Duty and Country to Jerry Lankford's wife and family; play taps and fire the gun salute to the longest serving Honor Guard member and Commander in the history of the whole American Legion.

Late in the spring of 2018, while Jerry was deep in his battle for life, Huntsville's Mayor Tommy Battle issued an official Proclamation honoring Jerry Lankford for his service to the veterans and families of the City of Huntsville and Madison County; a first in the Legion history in the state.

One does not join an Honor Guard for personal recognition; they join for personal reasons to honor comrades lost in battle and all their brothers and sisters in arms. Jerry served for all the right reasons and the recognition he received from the Mayor that day was well deserved.

When Jerry Lankford left us, he not only left his blood family, but his Honor Guard family and many friends as well. He left behind something else too - a legacy of service and a spirit that will live on in all the Honor Guard members today and all the ones to follow.



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Heard On the Street

by *Cathey Carney*



The first caller for the February photo of the month was **Joyce Carter**, of Huntsville. The little girl was **Liz Hurley** who has worked at Channel 48 for many years and heads up the Liz Hurley Ribbon Run for over 15 years, making \$3.1 million to date for breast cancer research and awareness. She has loved animals and pets since birth and has done much for them as well. **Joyce** and her husband **Billy** are retired and she said they enjoy getting up each day and finding new adventures. Congratulations to you Joyce.

Now, not patting myself on the back excessively but I have to say, the **tiny toothpick** in the February issue was the best hiding job I have ever done. For those of you still looking, it was

on p. 6 of the Berryhill ad. Pull out your February issue and see if you can find it. Normally about 250 people call for the object but this time I received 7 calls. The first correct caller was **Kathy O’Gorman** of Decatur who just got a year added to her subscription. Great eyes Kathy!

Those who travel on Clinton Avenue have been experiencing a rather rough ride for the past many years. Not the city’s fault, but when we get freezing weather and then rain and re-freezing, potholes just develop. People seeing us swerve to avoid the potholes probably thought we were impaired but we were just trying to save our tires. Well here’s the best news - the road crew will start re-paving Clinton Avenue very soon from Triana Blvd. all the way to Andrew Jackson Way and the residents are looking forward to that.

Happy Birthday to **Homer Hickam**, very well known author, cat lover and rocket boy. He had a Feb. 19th birthday. His father-in-law **Walt Terry** was in the Golden K Kiwanis for many years and we want to send love to Walt!

Jerry Lankford was a beloved American Legion member and Honor Guard Commander who passed away on Jan. 16. He received a commendation from **Mayor Tommy Battle** and the City Council for his many years of service to the city, and will be so missed. He leaves wife **Joan**

Lankford, daughters **Deborah Edokpayi** and **Jeanie Weaver**, 5 grandchildren and 2 great grandchildren with one on the way. His great sense of humor and kindness will be missed by his many friends & family.

Ann Collins is a dear friend and enjoys living at Redstone Village. She is a champion bridge player and loves it when she can travel to Italy to visit family. She recently celebrated her Feb. 10 birthday so we want to say Happy Birthday to a beautiful lady.

Mark your calendars for the **Old Town Hidden Garden Tour** on Sunday, June 2. There is a rain date in case of rain, the following weekend. There will be 12-14 gardens to tour and get some great ideas from! Tickets are only \$10 and many people are coming from out of town, to help Huntsville celebrate our 200th anniversary!

Happy Birthday to **Cathy Self**, on March 18th. We know you and hubby **Mike** will be celebrating with your sweet family.

Sandra and Buddy Esslinger are just lovebirds and they will be celebrating their 59th wedding anniversary on Mar. 5th.

Photo of The Month

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

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The little guy on the right was the best Food Editor the Times ever had.



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Congratulations to you two!

Billy Broach wrote several good stories for "Old Huntsville" and it was with sadness that we learned he had passed away Jan. 30. He was born March 24, 1939 to **Willie and Emma Jean Kilgore Broach** in Valley, AL. He graduated from Auburn with an engineering degree. Billy is survived by his wife of 43 years, **Lynda Broach**; sons: **Jeff Broach (wife, Tina)**, **Tim Broach (wife, Lisa)** and **Michael Broach (Colleen)**; and grandchildren: **Jessica, Anna, William and Matthew**. We will miss Billy.

Big Ed's Pizza is open in their new location - on Pratt Avenue across from the Children's Advocacy Center and Waffle House. They have been PACKED since opening!! 58 years in business.

It was so good to hear from **Dama Gerald**, who lives in South Carolina. She visits Huntsville when she can and said recently she had a great dinner at Lucia's - so happy you visit us!

A good tip I heard a while back, when you're changing the plastic bag in your trash can, put a new folded one in the bottom of the trash can, then your new plastic bag - you'll always have one to use when your current one gets full!

NEACA sponsors 3 craft

shows each year and they get bigger every year. The Spring Show dates are Mar. 15, 16 and 17 and you can find all sorts of unusual craft and food items. For those who haven't been to one of these NEACA events - you'll be happy you discovered it if you're looking for unique gift ideas for yourself or a friend.

The **Historic Lowry House** will be presenting the play "How Not To Commit Murder - 2: Stupidity Strikes Again". For just \$12 you can enjoy a really good play and lots of entertainment. There are performances every weekend in March and 2 matinees - check the website at www.historiclowryhouse.com or call 256.489.9200 for times.

Rosemary Leatherwood has been recuperating from some surgery recently and I know she's still misses her sweet Daddy so much. He had a March 10th birthday and each year he loved celebrating with his family. Wish we didn't have to lose the people we love so much.

Don't forget **Roosters Coffee Shop** - they're across the street from Goodwill on south Whitesburg Drive and have a perfect quiet place for meetings, get-togethers, etc. with comfy couches and seating areas. I must mention too that their Hazelnut

Lattes are the best in town. The first Tuesday evening of every month they host a Christian songwriters night with lots of great music and musicians.

Diane Owens gave me a tip that her mama **Lola** said really worked. If you have leg cramps at night buy a bar of Ivory soap, unwrap it and put it under the sheet at your feet. Not sure why it works but many people in the old days swore by this remedy. Doesn't hurt to try it.

This month there's nothing hidden but I'll start it up again in the April issue. I've gotten so good at it now chances are I'll never be giving away another free subscription.

You know those hickory chips that you buy when you get ready to grill out in the summer? Well supposedly there's nothing better for that smoky taste than pecan twigs. The suggestion was that you find a pecan tree and cut some branches off and let it dry a few months, then chip it up, soak it in a little water and use it. It has a nutty, smoky taste that is the best, allegedly much better than the hickory. I have a friend who has pecan trees and he doesn't mind at all if I clean up a few limbs!

Have a fun St. Pat's Day and stay safe.



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Huntsville Heritage (Silver Anniversary Edition)

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Cherry Salad

1 8 oz. can crushed pineapple

- 1 jar maraschino cherries
- 2 pkgs. cherry gelatin
- 2 c. Coca Cola
- 3 oz. cream cheese, cubed
- 1 c. chopped nuts

Drain fruits, reserve 1 cup juice. Bring juice to a boil and mix with the gelatin til dissolved. Cool. Add remaining ingredients, mix well and congeal.

Mrs. Vernon Hutchens, Jr.

Sweet Potato Nut Balls

1-1/2 c. mashed, cooked sweet potatoes

- 1/4 c. orange juice
- 2 T. sugar

Chopped pecans

Combine potatoes, juice and sugar, blend well. Shape into 12 balls, using 2 tablespoons for each ball. Roll balls in the chopped nuts and arrange them on a greased cookie sheet. Bake at 350 degrees for 15-20 minutes.

Mrs.C. Tom Phillips

Sweet & Sour Green Beans

- 1 No. 303 can French-cut green beans, drained
- 4 strips bacon
- 1/3 c. sugar
- 1/2 c. vinegar
- 1 medium onion, diced

Rinse beans in cold water twice and drain. Fry bacon until crisp; drain and crumble. Stir sugar and vinegar into drippings. Add beans, onion, salt and pepper. Cover and simmer 20-30 minutes until little liquid is left. Serve topped with bacon.

Mrs. Harry J. Coons, Jr.

Candlis' Shrimp

- 1/8 c. olive oil
- 2 lbs. raw shelled shrimp
- 1/8 c. butter
- 1/4 t. salt
- 1 garlic clove, crushed
- 1/4 t. fresh black pepper
- Juice of 2 lemons
- 1/4 c. dry vermouth

Simmer olive oil in large skillet. Add shrimp and cook

until golden brown. Reduce heat; add butter and seasonings. Blend well and raise heat to hot. Add lemon juice and vermouth. Cook for 1 minute, stirring constantly.

Mrs. Peter L. Lowe

Old Fashioned Chicken Pot Pie

- 1 box pie crust mix
- 3 whole chicken breasts
- 4 hard-boiled eggs, sliced
- 1 stick butter
- 8 t. flour
- 1 t. salt
- 1/8 t. pepper
- 4 cups stock

Make up pie crust and chill. Cook breasts until tender, then cut chicken in large pieces. Cover bottom of casserole dish with chicken and top with egg slices. To make sauce, melt butter; stir in flour, salt and pepper. Add stock; cook until thickened. Pour over casserole; top with rolled out pie crust. Dot with butter; bake 1/2 hour at 350°. Serves 4-6.

Mrs. John L. Purdy

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Orange Biscuit

- 3-4 eggs, separated
- 1-1/2 c. sugar
- 1-1/2 c. cake flour
- 1-1/2 t. baking powder
- 1/2 c. orange juice
- 1 t. rum

Beat egg yolks well, add sugar and stir until blended. Add sifted flour and baking powder. Heat orange juice to boiling and add to mixture. Add rum and fold in stiffly beaten egg whites. Pour into greased, floured round cake pan or large ring mold. Bake 40 minutes at 350°.

Mrs. Wernher von Braun

Dutch Crumb Cake

- 1/2 c. butter
- 1 c. dark brown sugar
- 2 c. flour
- 1 t. baking soda
- 1 t. ea. cinnamon
- 1/2 t. nutmeg
- 1 c. buttermilk

Cream butter and sugar. Add sifted dry ingredients. Remove 1/2 cup of the mixture and set aside. Add buttermilk to remaining mixture, beat well and put in 2 well-greased 9 inch pie pans. Sprinkle reserved mixture over top of cakes. Bake 20-25 minutes at 350°. Good breakfast cake.

Mrs. Z. M. Shafer

Chocolate Almond Charlotte

- 2 pkgs. lady fingers
- 2 boxes chocolate Whip n Chill
- Few drops almond extract
- 1 c. heavy cream
- 1 c. slivered almonds

Toast the almonds. Line buttered spring mold with lady fingers. Prepare Whip 'n Chill as directed; add extract. Whip 1/2 cup cream; fold into mixture, add 3/4 cup almonds. Pour into mold; chill 3 hours. Unmold. Top with remaining whipped cream and almonds.

Mrs. Vance J. Thornton

Lemon Bars

- 1 c. flour
- 1/2 c. butter
- 1/4 c. sugar
- 2 eggs
- 2 T. lemon juice
- 1 c. sugar
- 2 T. flour
- 1/2 t. baking powder
- Confectioners sugar

Mix flour, margarine and sugar; press firmly in greased 9x9 inch pan. Bake 15 minutes at 350°. Beat eggs with fork, mix in remaining ingredients and pour over first mixture. Bake 25 minutes at 350°.

When cool, sprinkle with confectioners sugar.

Mrs. L. A. Davis

Grandma's Tea Cakes

- 1 c. butter
- 1 c. sugar
- 3 eggs
- 3-1/2 c. flour
- 1 t. vanilla

Cream butter and sugar, add eggs. Add vanilla and flour. Roll thin on floured board; cut with biscuit cutter. Bake 10 minutes at 350 degrees. Dust with sugar while warm.

Mrs. John E. Vaughn

Wedding Punch

1/2 gal. pineapple sherbet
2 lrg. bottles cranberry juice
Place sherbet in bowl and pour juice over sherbet. Serves about 30-40.

Mrs. Webster K. Mayfield



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The Swing

by Barry Key



Growing up, my favorite wintertime sports were dove hunting and floating the Paint Rock and Flint rivers for squirrels. Dove hunting is wing shooting that really tests a sportsman's shooting skills. There were several farms around New Hope, Alabama, that allowed dove hunting. The best one was the New Hope Lions Club hunts on Mr. Herford's and Mr. Butler's farms. The Lions Club charged a small fee to hunt, but the proceeds went to a worthy cause. A lot of people didn't like doves because it is a dark meat. My mother would fry up a batch of doves, or squirrel, for breakfast with fried eggs, country gravy and homemade biscuits... I can still taste them now.

A little "side bar" story about Judy and I; during our first 20 years of marriage our family had fish and/or wild game for dinner at least once a week. About the time our two boys left the nest, the company I was working for put me in the field doing construction accounting. After my first field assignment my wife, Judy, would still cook fish, quail and dove but refused to cook squirrel or rabbit. When I retired we moved back to our roots, Huntsville, Alabama.

Judy and I were having lunch with some of my high school friends, and a former

classmate, Jerry, invited me to go squirrel hunting. I accepted the invitation but told Jerry my wife would no longer cook squirrel. Jerry, whose hobby is cooking fish, chicken and Bar-B-Q for large groups said he would cook some squirrel for me. Our hunt was successful and a few nights later "Judy" cooked fried squirrel with eggs, gravy and biscuits, for the first time in 25 years.

Floating the rivers for squirrel was more than just a hunt for squirrels. Floating quietly along you would see all kinds of wild life including squirrel, rabbit, dove, quail, ducks, muskrat and on occasion, but very rare, a deer.

The main thing I enjoyed about hunting from a boat, there was always one or two other guys in the boat with you. The best hunting was the first three or four hours after daylight. By then you were cold and hungry. We would find a sandbar to land on, build a nice camp fire and cook breakfast. A lot of camaraderie and tall tales were shared while sitting around the fire.

Falling back to the mid-1950s, Jerry, my cousin (not to be confused with Jerry my classmate), and I were hunting rabbits



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in the Paint Rock River bottoms. There was a swimming hole (Hamilton Wash Hole) with a cable swing that we swam at in the summer. It was winter now with a slight dusting of snow.

As we hunted by the swimming hole, one of us dared the other to swing out and drop in the river. We both ignored each other's dare until we got to the dreaded "triple dog dare". Anyone growing up in the 1940s and 50s knows there is no way to turn down a "triple dog". You either accepted the dare or lost total face with your peers.

Thank goodness it was a clear sunny day. We both shed our clothes down to our birthday suits and made ready to swing. It was very cold, especially on our feet. Each one of us was afraid to go first because we were afraid the other would back out. Picture two boys standing stark naked on a river bank, in the middle of winter, discussing which one was going to be the first to swing out and drop into a frigid river.

We had ridden out to the river bottoms on Jerry's motor-cycle. He made the decision to go first and told me if I didn't go after he did, that I would be walking home. Jerry swung out with a perfect Tarzan yell... which wasn't near as shrill as the scream he made when he came to the surface.

Already shivering and shaking, I honored my commitment but the first swing out I came back to the bank. I just couldn't turn that handle loose. When Jerry saw me swing back, he pulled his keys out of his pocket and, with his arm extended in the air, waved them back and forth. I got the message and the next swing out I hit the river. I have only been that cold one other time in my life, a sail boat incident at Christmas in 1962.

We put our clothes on and preceded to build a fire, mutually agreeing that..."WE SHOULD HAVE BUILT THE FIRE BEFORE WE WENT IN THE RIVER."

"I know I'm fat. When I go into a restaurant they don't give me a menu - they give me an estimate."

Roseanne Barr

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The Smith Menagerie - Spiders

by M.D. Smith, IV

Having raised seven sons and a daughter, we have likely had every pet you can imagine at one time or another over the fifty-seven year course of our marriage.

This may be a series, that includes one or more; ferrets, hamsters, mice, snakes, frogs, turtles, ducks, geese, chickens, quail, goats and many dogs and cats.

This is the tale of spiders, not just any kind, but giant brown furry leg Tarantula breeds. One of my sons

wanted one, and after checking into the breeds in a pet store, we got our first sizeable hairy leg Texas Tarantula. Typical of this arachnid spider breed, they are very docile and hardy, eat many things and are easily tamed to crawl into your open hand from the cage. They are slow moving and don't jump. We used a small fish aquarium

that we had several sizes from previous goldfish or tropical fish.

A Tarantula's favorite food is live crickets or mealworms. I got my first supply of crickets from a local bait shop and would only put one or two in the case for spider food as they got devoured about one every two days.

My son and I amazed many of their kid and our adult friends, showing our handling of the Tarantula, letting it crawl up our arms and slowly putting a palm by our shoulders when that was high enough. Then, gently lifting it to another location. Some of the other brothers would handle it, but Judy, Allison and smaller ones wanted no part of this giant spider.

They are not anything like as poisonous as a brown recluse, and they could be gently picked up by the thorax or body area between the bulbous body and leg area. They do not bite unless threatened and then, generally not harmful to humans. Actually, a great pet.

The first one met its demise, when, out of crickets on a sum-

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"I've been close to Bette Davis for 38 years - and I have the cigarette burns to prove it."

Henry Fonda

mer day, we saw a couple swimming in our pool, and scooped them up and used them for spider food. The next day, our spider was dead. The Chlorine water in and on the crickets killed him.

A while longer, and we got another one. This time a more expensive Mexican Red Knee Tarantula. Gorgeous red legs at the knee. That one lasted many months until one day, I had a friend, Mardis, visiting from Birmingham for a single night, and Brent and I took him down to show him the spider in the basement workshop room.

Mardis was astounded at the size of the spider and had never seen anything like it up close. I gently took off the top of the glass cage, let the spider climb on my hand, and lifted him out of the pen.

Mardis was full of "ooohhs" and "ahhhh's" while he smiled and looked closely at our pet. Then I told him about them being basically harmless, no matter how fierce and creepy they look. I asked him did he want it on the top of his hand.

He said, "Yes, but he's not going to bite me or anything is he M.D.?"

I assured him, "Of course not."

Brent was amused at Mardis' antics as I put my hand holding the spider, cupped up next to his hand that was backside up. The spider slowly and gently crawled over on top of his outstretched hand.

Brent and I were in the process of saying, "See, they are harmless and friendly," when Mardis screamed.

He yelled loudly, "He bit me!" and with that, slung his

backhand as hard as he could outward, casting our tarantula against the wall hard, killing him.

I knew instantly it was not true, because just under the head, these spiders have small teeth and have to squat down on all eight legs to have their mouth come in contact with the skin to bite a flat hand.

No matter, Mardis swore it did, but we could not even find a red mark. I think it was just unnerving and a reflex action as the spider moved. Their legs do have tiny claws to grip food and trees for climbing.

I had spent enough money on Tarantulas for a while, and it didn't take Brent long to get fascinated with the next pet. That will be the next story.



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Blackjack Pershing and the Buffalo Soldiers

by Tom Carney

In the late summer of 1898 Huntsville had literally become a vast military encampment with over twenty thousand soldiers camped around town. The Spanish American War was over and Huntsville had been chosen as the winter camp for the returning soldiers.

Teddy Roosevelt and the Rough Riders had become national heroes for their gallant charge up San Juan Hill. Roosevelt was the first military hero since the Civil War and newspapers everywhere lauded his military exploits. There was already talk of running him for President in the next election.

Adding to his popularity was the fact that General Joe Wheeler had proposed Roosevelt for the Medal of Honor for his heroic exploits in Cuba.

In Washington, D.C., however, a controversy was brewing. There were whispers in the corridors of the Senate that Roosevelt was not the leader he claimed to be, that he had not led the charge up San Juan Hill. Even worse, there were rumors that the actual heroes were a unit of black soldiers.

The Tenth Cavalry, known as the Buffalo Soldiers, were an all-black unit that had already carved a distinguished military history before being sent to Cuba. They had spent over thirty years on the Western frontier where the Indians had given them the name "Buffalo Soldiers". During

this time, the men of the Tenth Cavalry were awarded eight Medals of Honor for bravery.

In the fall of 1898 they had returned from Cuba and were in winter quarters at Camp Forse, once located where Five Points is today. The camp had originally been named Camp Wheeler but Joe Wheeler, perhaps out of modesty, quickly changed the name when he arrived in Huntsville to take up command.

Trouble could have been expected when the authorities placed 1200 professional black soldiers in the midst of thousands of ill-trained white volunteers. For most of the volunteers, their only dealings with blacks had been minimal. Adding insult to injury was the fact that when the Tenth Cavalry left Cuba they had been stripped of their supplies and issued cast off uniforms and Civil War era arms. Some of the men were virtually barefoot and dressed in garments that bore little resemblance to a uniform. By the time they arrived in Huntsville they didn't look like a brave military unit with a proud history.

Their officers, who were all

white, were of little help. The Spanish-American War had been a media event and almost every regiment had reporters assigned to them. The officers, most of whom knew they would be getting out of the Army in a few months, spent their time trying to get their name in the papers and attending the many social events held in Huntsville for the soldiers.

The last thing they wanted was for their names to be associated with a group of black soldiers which back in 1898 could spell the end to a career. Most of them preferred to let the soldiers fend for themselves. Very few knew the true story of the Buffalo Soldiers.

The soldiers, deprived of the normal supply chain, followed an Army tradition that has existed since the beginning of the military ... they began to "scrounge." Soldiers returning from drill would find their tents stripped of belongings. New repeating rifles disappeared and in many cases were replaced by rusty Civil War muskets. In one case, the First Florida Volunteers returned to camp one day and found almost their entire bivouac area

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picked clean. Their tents, along with the mess hall and blacksmith shop had simply disappeared. Even the wooden sidewalks had vanished.

Events began to come to a head when the 69th New York Infantry let it be known that their band would be holding a concert to entertain the town's citizens. On the day of the concert the band discovered their instruments had mysteriously vanished.

Across town, several miles away, the Buffalo Soldiers were holding their own concert, with newly acquired instruments, much to the delight of Huntsville's black citizens.

Tempers reached a fevered pitch while officers reluctantly tried to control the situation. Armed guards were placed around the camp to prevent the Buffalo Soldiers from entering. The Tenth Cavalry, in turn, stationed their own guards around their camp site, refusing entry to any white soldiers searching for their belongings.

Many of the Buffalo Soldiers had begun to openly taunt the other soldiers, some of whom had never been to Cuba, by calling them "paper soldiers." They also flaunted their dislike for Teddy Roosevelt, whom they claimed was a fraud. For the white soldiers, who considered Roosevelt a hero, this was blasphemy.

The town was sitting on a powder keg waiting to explode.

In Washington, D.C., Roosevelt was still lobbying for the Medal of Honor. His request had been turned down originally for "not meeting the proper criteria." Angered by the rejection, he wrote the Secretary of War stating, "I am entitled to the Medal of Honor and I want it." To bolster his claim he submitted letters from other officers who

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Totie Fields**



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"I don't like to think of laws as rules you have to follow, but more as suggestions."

George Carlin

had been in Cuba at the time.

Sensing a political nightmare in refusing the medal to a popular hero, the Secretary of War created a special board to deal with the matter. To determine the eligibility for the Medal of Honor the board had to follow paragraph 177 of the Army regulations, which stated that "in order to receive the medal, service must have been performed in action ... to clearly distinguish the man for gallantry ... above his comrades."

With so much confusion about the claims, it was decided to send a Board of officers to Huntsville to take written statements and investigate the allegations.

Accompanying the board was John J. Pershing, a 37 year old Regular Army major. Pershing was not a popular officer. He was considered a strict disciplinarian and had a long association with the Tenth Cavalry. He had previously served with the unit in the Southwest and in Cuba where he had earned the reputation of a fearless leader. When the controversy about Roosevelt and the Medal of Honor erupted, Pershing was ordered to Huntsville, partly to help and restore order to the Buffalo Soldiers and partly to take part in the investigation. Tremendous pressure was put on him to corroborate Roosevelt's story.

When Pershing arrived in Huntsville, he found a city on the brink of a catastrophe. Order in many regiments had completely broken down and many people feared racial violence would follow. Most of the soldiers were waiting to be discharged and literally ignored military discipline.

The bright spot, however, was the regiment of Buffalo Soldiers, most of whom were career soldiers. When their officers proved ineffectual, the units' First Sergeants had taken control and were continuing their military duties as usual.

Pershing immediately ordered that the Tenth Cavalry be moved from their location near Five Points to another site near present day University Drive. As soon as the new camp was settled, he began to order regular inspections, something that had not been done since they returned from Cuba. Anything not issued by the Army was confiscated and disposed of. Any small infraction would find the culprits pulling extra guard duty. When the men needed supplies and they were not forthcoming, Pershing personally led his men on an expedition to the Quartermaster where they "liberated" what they needed.

The men knew Pershing was serious about discipline. Many of them remembered an incident several years earlier when Pershing had slapped a trooper off his horse for refusing to obey an order.

Although Pershing ruled with an iron fist, his soldiers seemed to thrive on the harsh discipline. Most of the men had served with Pershing for years and although they knew he was harsh and demanding, they also knew he was fair and respected them. His troopers often boasted that he was "the meanest S.O.B. in the Army and he's ours."

Huntsville was not exactly intrigued by the officer who spent so much time with the black soldiers. He was shunned by many of his fellow officers as well as the town's citizens. Instead of being insulted, Pershing considered his troop a point of pride and even introduced himself as Blackjack Pershing.

While Pershing was getting his troops moved and settled, the Military Board began meeting to investigate Roosevelt's request for the Medal of Honor. First on the agenda were the letters from Generals Wood, Wheeler and Shafer who had all

recommended him for the award. Although all the Generals spoke in glowing terms of Roosevelt's bravery, a careful reading revealed that none of them had personal knowledge. They had all been miles away when the assault on San Juan Hill occurred.

Other statements provided on Roosevelt's behalf were of little help because they provided conflicting and vague accounts of his bravery.

1st Lt. Robert Howe of the Sixth Cavalry recalled that the "Col. Roosevelt's life was placed in extreme jeopardy, owing to the conspicuous posi-

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tion he took in leading the line, and being the first to reach the crest of that hill."

Gen. Samuel S. Sumner, as though he felt an obligation to support Roosevelt's Medal of Honor case, simply says that "Col. Roosevelt by his example and fearlessness inspired his men at both Kettle Hill and the ridge known as San Juan, he led his command in person."

Adding to the confusion, and quickly discovered, was the fact that the "Battle of San Juan Hill" had never occurred! The assault had actually taken place on Kettle Hill and when it was secured, another advance was ordered against San Juan Hill, located several hundred yards away. Despite the facts, Roosevelt continued to insist he had charged San Juan Hill and had been the first to reach the crest.

Pressure was building for Pershing to corroborate Roosevelt's story. This placed him in a moral dilemma. If he supported Roosevelt, and the Regular Army, he would be taking all credit away from his Buffalo Soldiers. On the other hand, if he supported his troops, his career in the military would be virtually ended. A Regular Army officer who sided with black troops could never expect a promotion.


Of particular interest to the Military Board was deciding who actually arrived on the hill first. According to Roosevelt's account, he and his Rough Riders had charged well in advance of any other troops and had secured the area before anyone arrived. Capt. C. J. Stevens of the Ninth Cavalry stated that "Col. Roosevelt was among the very first to reach the crest of the hill."

General Sumner, whose testimony had great merit, provided no comments on whether Roosevelt was the first or among the first on the hill.

As the Military Board began to take dispositions, another story began to emerge. Several who were eyewitnesses placed Private William Bunn, of the Tenth Cavalry, as





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Sharon Benson, Athens



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being first on the hill. When the attack had began to falter, he had seized the regiment's flag, yelling "Rally 'round the flag," as he led the charge for the last few yards. Roosevelt and the Rough Riders were lagging far behind him.

Painful and politically incorrect as it was, the Board began to get a clear picture of what had really happened. According to an overwhelming number of witnesses and depositions, the Rough Riders had began an assault on Kettle Hill when they were pinned down by a withering fire. The Buffalo Soldiers rushed to their aid, and in the heat of the moment continued on up the hill. Within minutes, after the Buffalo Soldiers reached the crest, the hill was covered by soldiers from many different units, all claiming to have been the first.

When Roosevelt arrived at the scene he immediately ordered another attack on the real San Juan Hill several hundred yards away. By the time the Rough Riders arrived at that objective, most of the enemy soldiers had fled and the trenches were virtually deserted.

Much of the confusion about the whole episode can be traced back to William Randolph Hearst who was a personal friend of Roosevelt. Hearst owned the largest chain of newspapers in the United States and he had seized on the Spanish American War to further his friend's political career. When the discrepancy between Kettle Hill and San Juan Hill was pointed out to Hearst, he was reported to have replied, "It makes no difference, they will believe what I print."

Blackjack Pershing delayed as long as he could before writing his statement. He knew it would spell an end to his career and had already began exploring other options. An insurance company, owned by a group of black businessmen, had approached him about being their representative in Mississippi, Alabama and Georgia.

Quite possibly, he was influenced by his infatuation with a young 18 year old Huntsville lass. The lady, known to history only by the name of "Millie," evidently came from a well respected, and probably wealthy, local family. By the few accounts of her she was beautiful and flirtatious.

When Pershing met her, although twenty years her senior, he was immediately captivated. He had never been involved in a romance before and was probably extremely naive in thinking that a flirtatious smile was equivalent to a deeper meaning.

For Millie's part, there is no evidence that she shared Pershing's feelings. She, like many other young girls throughout the ages, probably simply enjoyed flaunting tradition. In her case, it meant being seen with Blackjack Pershing, the leader of the black troops. When she accompanied Pershing as he reviewed the troops, it created a minor scandal among his fellow officers.

In the end, Millie's father put an end to dreams of a romance when he showed up at Pershing's boarding house and ordered the Major to stay away from his daughter.

Rejected in love, Pershing took the course of many other young men in the same situation. He decided to stay in the military, regardless of the future.

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The final report of the Military Board served to put an end to Roosevelt's dreams of the Medal of Honor. Instead, the board recommended three members of the Buffalo Soldiers for the medal.

Although the men were awarded the medals, the whole affair was quietly hushed up and the public never knew of the Board's decision.

Regardless of the Board's decision, the Hearst newspaper chain continued to push Roosevelt as a national hero, eventually helping him to get elected as President. Even today, most people still believe the legend that he single-handedly led the charge up San Juan Hill.

Blackjack Pershing remained on active duty. In 1903 he met Helen Warren, the daughter of a Senator from Wyoming. Despite a twenty year difference in age, he professed his love for her after knowing her for only a week. Shortly afterwards they were married.

Although Roosevelt's bid for the Medal of Honor was blocked partly by Pershing, he never held it against him. In 1903 he raised Pershing to the rank of Brigadier General, promoting him over hundreds of more senior officers. Critics later claimed the promotion was a "payoff for Pershing not going public during the Presidential election.

The Buffalo Soldiers marched proudly out of Huntsville in the early spring of 1899, knowing that their claims of heroism in Cuba had been vindicated. In 1916 they once again served under Pershing when they put down the border insurrection led by Pancho Villa.

Two years later, when war was declared on Germany, Pershing was selected to command the American Force in Europe. Once again, the Buffalo Soldiers answered the call of their old commander and served with distinction throughout the war.

The horse cavalry soldiers were disbanded in 1944, and so ended the long and proud tradition of the Buffalo Soldiers.

General Pershing became one of our country's greatest military leaders and was awarded the rank of General of the Army. For the rest of his life he would be known as Blackjack; a name given to him in derision, but a name he wore with great pride.

City News from 1916

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

About 2 o'clock this morning fire of unknown origin starting in the soft drink stand of Ben Moring at Dallas Village destroyed the general mercantile store and its contents belonging to J. D. Bragg and also his residence adjoining.

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

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

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School Days Long Ago

by Earlene Swaim Storey

I have fond memories of my high school years. It was a growing up time for me from child to adult. I will soon be 100 years old and I still remember most of the time spent at Jackson County High School. I graduated from JCHS in May of 1938, 80 years ago. To my knowledge there was not any reunion for our graduating class. I have attended several gatherings of JCHS classmates in the past. I always enjoy seeing school friends from the old days, hearing their stories and travels.

The 1930s were an eventful era in our country and Jackson County, so much has changed. It is strange how time brings some people who were not that close years before together. The last reunion I attended was for our 55th in 1993. We all met at the Western Sizzlin Restaurant and shared old memories again talking about our friends, those alive and gone. We had lost so many class members by that time. Everyone had a wonderful evening and took pictures of each other.

Reflecting on 1938 Jackson County High School located on Scott Street served not only Scottsboro at that time but also the surrounding communities of Hollywood, Langston, Sand Mountain and the area I lived, Temperance Hill. Like other kids from outside the city many of us traveled to school every day by bus. That was an experience in itself. I spent six years at that high school building. From seventh grade to twelfth was considered high school. I remembered how huge that building appeared compared

to our three-room Temperance Hill school house.

The school looked modern but at first a little intimidating. It was nice to have running water and indoor plumbing. We had lockers and had to change rooms and teachers throughout the day. That was very different though and I soon adjusted and learned the routine. As a shy girl from the country most of the kids I knew were those who had been with me at the Temperance Hill. I did know Kathryn Thomas who lived down the street from my Grandmother Carter.

My sister and I made new friends like the Patrick Girls, Libby, Patty, Sue and Frances. We enjoyed spending time at their house in the Five Points area. They had a swimming pool which made an impression on me. I remember we all went to the circus together once and I won a little tea set playing bingo. The Patrick girls also really seemed to enjoy coming to our home in the country riding horses and bikes over the hills and the dirt paths.

I liked the new classmates but always remained close to the Temperance Hill friends through the years.

Riding the school bus, I missed out on many after school activities. 1938 turned out to be a good year for the Wildcats basketball team who were the state champions. Coach W.G. "Mickey" O'Brien was the basketball coach at that

time. I remember the tournament was held at our gym. D.I. Durham, Glen Phillips, Walter Web, Owen Selby, Fate McClendon, Blane Thomas and Jim Thomas were classmates on that special team. Several of the best players were from the Sand Mountain.

School wasn't free back then and many children weren't able to go. I think it cost \$10 a year per child and extra if you took courses like typing. I remember my father brought gravel from his pit to the school to help with my tuition. I'm sure other families made similar trades to offset the cost.

They had built a large auditorium and the gymnasium while I was a student. Back in those days there was no real school cafeteria that served lunch. Many kids brought their lunch and would stay around campus during the hour break. My brother Hugh Swaim owned a cafe on the square that some of the others would walk to and get a sandwich or a bowl of chili and a coke. I would usually go over to my Grandmothers on Thomas Street about a mile away.

Back then I was anxious to get through with school, graduate and find a job. Teachers I had in my senior year included Jane Hodges - P.E Class, Coburn Thomas - History, Frances Blair - English. Even though it was such a long time ago some memories of high school are vivid. I do remember during



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a field trip to a nearby mountain in Mr. Couch's biology class we all got spooked by a lot of whoops and screams that caused the whole group of us to run back towards town. Talking about it later we think we might have gotten too close to somebody's still. It's funny the things that stick out in your memory after such a long time. I even played hooky once. One afternoon several other girls and I decided to skip class and see a movie at the Bocanita. Someone actually saw us slip back to school but didn't turn us in.

I. J. Browder was the principal at JCHS when I started there. By twelfth grade C. P. Nelson had assumed that role. Fortunately, I was never sent to the principal's office for misbehaving. Mr. Nelson seemed like a nice man. I remember him commenting on the day I received my diploma about

my being small and skinny during graduation exercises saying, "we're going to have to put something else in there with you to fill up that cap and gown".

The Jackson County High School Class of 1938 had 96 members I believe. I was told it was the largest class of graduates to date from Jackson County High. A boy named John Will Matthews was our senior class president. Everybody liked John Will. Our graduating class for some reason did not have a school yearbook as the class of 1939 and even years earlier.

Before graduating many of us bought personalized engraved cards to exchange with other members of our senior class. I had mine in a book and unfortunately, they got misplaced through the years. Some of the names of my senior class include: Lloyd Money, Do-

ris and Katherine Rice, Alice Thomas, Louise Bryant, Virginia Jane Stockton, Floye Gant, Bobby Womack, Opal Benson, Edith McKelvey, Katherine Carter, Sue Downey, Elliotte Payne, Mary Johnson, Leona Clemens, Mary Gay, Mary Evelyn Campbell, Mary Virginia Freeman, and Marjorie Proctor.

Four of our class lost their lives in World War II, Marvin Petty, Billy Parks, Dick Hunter and Cecil Floyd. So many fine people got their start at Jackson County High School during that era. Let me know if anyone from the JCHS Class of 1938 are out there.

"If I understood Morse Code, I imagine going to a tap dancing performance would drive me nuts."

Tom Simpson, Old Town

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Rescue Me - Officers from left to right: John Carson, President; Terese Le Francois, Secretary/Treasurer; Mike Vaccaro, Vice President
Mr. Freckles (lower center) Honorary Chairman of the Board

Raising the Woof

By Mr. Freckles and John E Carson

Hey, I finally made it to the big time! After facing Death Row at the shelter for something I didn't do, and five years of service to the guy that sprung me, I was finally recognized for my service as a VID (Very Important Dog)!

What? You thought I was a butler or something? It's the moniker, Mr. Freckles isn't it? Laugh if you want but it really works for me; people love it and even though I provide security for my people and help them with their talks and causes, I am always in public view.

My person calls me his "Secret Weapon" whenever we are

out on a mission.

Keeping my person covered has been a full-time job - but, like the other canines and working dogs, it has become my mission in life. My adopted family treats me well and means everything to me.

Over the last 4 years, my person and I have wagged our tails all over Huntsville, talking to groups. We have raised over \$5,000.00 for Pets for Vets and even though I am no glory hound, it would not have happened without my good looks. That's a lot of dog biscuits! Now I hear we are finally ready and have started our own non-profit (which means I don't get to keep any of the biscuits) called the Rescue Me Volunteer Group and we launched it on February 9th at 10 o'clock in the morning in Hampton Cove.

That's another story though. Anyway, retracing my paw prints, I was telling you about the amazing

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event last Saturday put on by the Greater Huntsville Humane Society. After attending a luncheon and rehearsal, we had to go home and get spiffed up and dressed up for the evening, to get ready for the Dog Ball.

And then there I was, up on the stage - the Runway - just like the Westminster Dog Show! I was on the big screen with my story and a mug shot; and my people said I was even in the Official Program, the first of the Service Dogs featured!

Everybody seemed to know me, and people came up to the runway to see me even when we were rehearsing, all calling me by name! I felt like a star and even though I am a humble guy by nature, I did not mind the attention.

I gotta tell you folks, I had a ball at Raising The Woof, the 30th annual Dog Ball put on by the Greater Huntsville Humane Society at the Von Braun Center on Saturday, February 2nd. And I have to thank the folks there for getting me in, especially my sponsor, Paula Cushman.

The place was packed with over 750 guests, 58 of my four-legged, canine friends and all the volunteers - over 100 of them that it took to put on the biggest event I have ever been to. We sat at a table with our two friends from Rescue Me; Secretary/Treasurer Terese Le Francois and Vice President, Mike Vaccaro - members of the Board of Directors. (VIP's my person calls them, kind of like a VID, I guess.)

The chicken dinner was great, and I will have to admit that I enjoyed it and the special treats at the table! But I just had to duck out a few times to sniff around and check the perimeter of the building; if you know what I mean.

When my turn came to strut my stuff, the two M.C.s put my picture on the big screen and told my story as I walked my person down the runway to the Path of Paws that wound through the many tables. They hardly talked about the guy I was with. Everyone wanted to meet me as we went. Now, I might be a one-person dog, but I am no dummy - if the ladies want to run their fingers through my fur, who am I to say no?

When the long day was over and we were finally back home, all I wanted to do was sleep and dream about the whole thing. I laid down in a new spot in the living room and did just that.

Yeah, we've come a long way, baby!

"The chances of a piece of toast with grape jelly falling jelly side down is directly proportional to the cost of your carpeting."

Janet Brinkerhoff, Huntsville

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LEMONS AND LEMMINGS

by Al Dean

Our great granddaughter recently began her formal education. Her mother was in denial. She isn't ready! She's so small! She's so innocent! She'll be so afraid! The world is not a safe place! Well, the child is small and innocent and the world is not a safe place, but she wasn't afraid and she was ready.

I was reminded of the trauma we faced when our first-born started to school so many years ago. I was naive enough to believe that it would have little impact on our relationship; daddy's little girl would always be daddy's little girl. When our son started four years later, I was better prepared for how dramatically things would change.

My wife wept softly as the door of the cavernous yellow bus thumped shut, swallowing her helpless daughter. She watched the top of her head bobbing down the aisle toward the back of the bus, looking right, then left to find an open seat and her weeping turned to sobs.

Fully expecting to get a phone call telling her that her child was experiencing an acute case of separation anxiety and her presence was urgently required to restore calm, she wrung her hands until the noon hour. When the call didn't come she spent the afternoon peering uneasily from the window, dabbing her red eyes with tissue after tissue, as if when her child finally returned she would be riding on the back of Geryon, Dante's monster with human faces.

I, on the other hand, knew that this normal event, this rite of passage wouldn't change things; that daddy's place in her world would always be a position of prominence - and it was, until about six weeks into her indoctrination.

"Daddy, do you know about lemmings?" She asked.

"Lemmings?" I questioned.

"Uh huh."

"Do you mean those little yellow fruit that grow on trees in Florida? They're lemons."

"No, daddy; lemmings!"

"Daddy's just kidding, honey. Sure, I know about lemmings. They're little fat mousey animals that live in cold parts of the world. Every few years

they go down to the sea, jump off a cliff, and drown themselves."

"Huh-uh."

"Yeah, they do," I assured her.

"That's not what Miss Snyder said. She said it was just a legend - like the Legend of Sleepy Hollow."

"Really?"

"Yeah. Miss Snyder says they don't jump in the ocean. It was in the book she read to us."

"Do you believe her?"

"Uh-huh. She's smart."

"Is she, an older lady?"

"Yeah."

"How old is she?"

"About twenty-three."

And there it was, a stranger inserting herself between me and my little girl, dimming the brilliance of the light twinkling in my daughter's eyes that was only for me.

Before I could mention that Miss Snyder's brain had not yet fully developed, she dashed off to play pretend school with her friends. She would be Miss Snyder.

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Where He Leads, I'll Follow

by Kate Watts



No amusement park rivaled the hollow below the Morgan County neighborhood of my childhood. We kids passed hours crawling over the limestone bluffs, digging for arrowheads, and looking for turtle shells in the shallow creek. But we were not reckless, and so we never crossed the creek to explore the forest beyond.

That pine forest was our terra incognita. If sailors feared monsters in the unexplored deeps, we feared coyotes in the unexplored hollow. We were right to be cautious, as the animals' telltale tracks crisscrossed even the valley's well-known areas.

But coyotes weren't the only danger. Those sunless pines stretched for acres, unbroken by any trails. And though I was headstrong, I, too, avoided the backwoods. Usually.

Then, one grey autumn day, disappointed with my search for turtle shells, I lingered by the creek while my dog, Bono, sniffed cattails. Unwilling to leave empty-handed, I cast about for a new diversion. And I spotted the forbidden forest beyond the creek.

Coyotes or not, I thought, why not explore that undiscovered country? Maybe there weren't any trails, but pioneers did without trails, and so could I—I was sure of that.

So off I went into the sea of pines, Bono following. I passed the afternoon poking sticks into holes and tripping over creepers; Bono sniffed puffballs and sweet gum fruit. I can't say I ever considered how I'd retrace my steps.

At last, enthusiasm waning, I decided to turn back. "Back," however, was a relative term. Like a character in a horror movie, I wandered in circles as the day wore on and the temperature dropped. Sunset was coming, and those endless pines were indeed unbroken by trails. Or at least, not by any trails made by human feet. Coyotes, it seemed, knew the forest well. Eventually, I slumped against a tree and put my arm around Bono. He leaned against me, sniffing the dirt on my jeans. Then the solution struck me.

I hopped up and led Bono a little farther. Then I fell back, allowing him to trot ahead. Two or three times I tried this tactic, but each time, he halted so I could resume the lead. Finally, he tilted his head and raised his eyebrows, regarding me expectantly. Did I want him to figure this out?

I told him I absolutely did. Bono ducked his head at once, sniffed this way and that, and tail erect, set off. Wherever he led, I intended to follow, and so I followed him all the way through the sunless hollow. In twenty minutes, the forest was behind us—and my pride was checked.

Experience is a good teacher. That headstrong girl of thirty years ago obeyed a reckless impulse, but like Balaam's donkey, Bono obeyed his God-given sense. If not for that, this story would be a dark one. Some question whether animals find their way to an eternal home, but if experience does teach anything, then it's this: God gave Bono the sense to find his way home, and surely, God gave him the sense to find his way to an eternal home, too.

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Leaving Home

by Hugh Michaels

It was a beautiful day.

I was about to leave home. My mom, uncle, grandma and neighbors were all gathered in my parents' yard. They were all there to say goodbye. I was about to lose all of the fond memories of my childhood. I had completed high school. Uncle Sam was about to get me. I had to make a decision. My decision was to join the Air Force.

I will never forget that day. I had to leave my folks. Tears rolled down my mother's chin. She kissed me goodbye. I assured her that I would be OK. She was about to lose her baby. My dad was choking words as he was about to lose his little boy.

My brother and dad drove me to the bus station. My dad entered the bus before me. He did that to

assure himself that those people on the bus were OK. My brother was smiling and shaking his head. I somehow managed to say goodbye.

Little did I know what was about to happen to me when I had traveled a short distance. A man sat down beside me as the bus filled with passengers. He seemed to be a nice man. We talked about the war (Korean War - 1948) and other things. After a while, he began to fall over on me. He appeared to be falling asleep.

I would push him back. I asked him if he was tired and why was he leaning on me. He said that he was sorry - he was very tired.

Well, my leaving home was bad but what was about to happen to me was worse.

The culprit arrived at his destination and quickly departed. Something told me to check for my billfold. I did and it was missing - that A-- had gotten my billfold. What a mess I was in now - no identification, no money!

Soon I changed from a bus to a train. This was my first time to be on a train. Somehow, I had placed my orders in my jacket pocket. Thank God!

I will never forget the feeling I had at the sound of the train's engine and tracks kept rolling farther away from home. I had never been away from home, and I was scared. This good old country boy was about to enter a new world.

Finally, I arrived at my destination, Lackland Air Force Base, San Antonio, Texas. I had difficulty convincing the soldiers that I was Hugh Michaels. They wanted more identification. After I told them what had happened to me, they accepted my word and my order.

Well, I managed to become a good airman.

I spent four years in the Air Force. When I returned home, things had changed.

Yes, things had changed, and so had I. I began a whole new life after leaving home.



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PET TIPS FROM ANGEL

Saying Goodbye for Now



It is with much sadness I have to tell you that Angel passed away on Jan. 30. She died of kidney failure and would have been 12 in April. Her family is heartbroken and misses her so much. Many of you, our readers, have had to say goodbye to your beloved pets and it's never easy.

Angel will still have her picture on this column in future issues, in memory of a sweet spirit.

My friend Gale Nichols wrote this article in 2016 and we published it in the October 2016 issue, after I lost Smoke, my little kitty. She wrote this about her pet, her beloved poodle.

Our Pets DO Have Souls

by Gale Nichols

I remember bringing you home. You were so small and cuddly with your tiny paws and soft fur.

You bounced around the room with eyes flashing and ears flopping. Once in a while you'd let out a little noise just to let me know, this was YOUR territory.

Making a mess of the house and chewing on everything in sight became a passion and when I scolded you, you just put your head down and looked up at me as if to say: "I'm sorry, but I'll do it again as soon as you're not watching!"

As you got older, you protected me by looking out of the front window, just to say "I'm right here." When I had a tough day at work, you would be waiting for me with your tail wagging as if to say, "Welcome back, I missed you."

You never had a bad day and I could always count on you to be there for me.

When I sat down to read the paper or watch TV, you would hop into my lap, looking for attention. You never asked for any more than to have me rub your head, so you could go to sleep with your head on my leg.

As you got older, you moved around more slowly. Then one day, old age finally took its toll and you couldn't stand on those wobbly legs anymore. I knelt down and patted you as you lay there, trying to make you young again. You just looked up at me as if to say, "I'm old and tired and after all these years of not asking for anything, I'm asking you to do one last favor for me."

With tears in my eyes, I drove you to the vet. One last time you were lying in my lap.

For some strange reason, you were able to stand up really straight in the animal hospital, perhaps it was your sense of pride.

As the vet prepared you, you stopped for an instant, looked up at me as if to say, "Thank you for taking care of me."

And I thought, "No, thank YOU for taking care of me."



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From the Desk of Tom Carney

THE FRENCH SETTLERS

Huntsville woke up one morning in the late fall of 1818 to see one of the strangest processions in its short history pass through town. Hundreds of French citizens dressed in ceremonial uniforms with sabers and colored sashes, heavily jeweled ladies clothed in the latest fashions, all headed toward southern Alabama to try and recreate the glory of France in the Alabama wilderness.

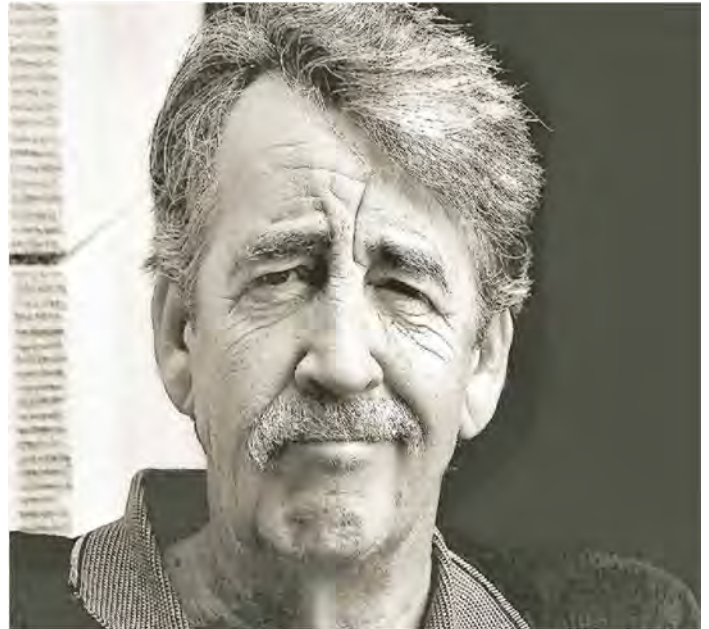
It was an odd fate that brought these people to Alabama. When Napoleon was defeated at Waterloo, the elite of French society was forced into exile. The European countries refused their request of asylum, for fear of antagonizing the new French government. America was their last remaining hope.

Supporters of the defeated General had already been welcomed in Philadelphia, but the city was not large enough to absorb the many hundreds of exiles now making their way across the ocean. After meetings called by the leaders, it was agreed that they should send out emissaries in search of a new home.

Many months later, the scouts reported back. They had found a land where all the immigrants could settle. It was a fertile land where vines and olives would flourish.

The group split into two parts. The first group followed the coastline down to Mobile and the second group went overland, passing through Huntsville on the way. Months later, after a hard and dangerous journey, the two groups met again at the Tombigbee River. Here the French aristocrats found only a few huts built of logs and clay.

They named the settlement Eaglesville in honor of Napoleon, but soon, envisioning a new world of friendliness among the peoples, they rechristened it Demopolis. The small towns around it began



to take names such Arcola, Linden, and Moscow, all symbols of the past glory of the French empire under Napoleon.

Representatives obtained a land grant from the United States government signed by President Monroe. The grant was for four townships, each six miles square, at a price of two dollars an acre, made payable 14 years after the signing of the contract. The grant stated that this land was set aside for the cultivation of the vine and olive.

Then came the period of hope and enthusiastic labor. Veterans of many victorious campaigns began a new battle— against nature and the elements. Dressed in their rich uniforms, they cleared the land, ditched it, and plowed it under. Their wives, delicate ladies still clothed in Parisian gowns, milked the cows, carried water to the men in the fields, and cooked the meals over an open fire in the fireplace.

From old letters and stories of elderly people who knew the settlers emerges a picture of their



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existence in this harsh wilderness. The whole community began to take on the appearance of a French hamlet. Life was easy in some ways as there was plenty of wild game and vegetables from the gardens.

Often, at the end of a hard day, the settlers would gather in a clearing with their musical instruments and sing the songs of their faraway homeland, while Indians and traders looked on with bewilderment. Aristocrats and their ladies, who had last danced at the Imperial Court in Versailles, now performed the same delicate steps by the light of a bonfire in a forest clearing.

General Desnouettes, richest of the exiles and the acknowledged leader, spent his entire fortune in clearing and cultivating the land. In the middle of his estate, and near his home, he built a log cabin. In this cabin he placed a bronze statue of Napoleon. Heaped at the statue's feet were swords and guns that he had captured in battle. On the walls were the captured banners and colors of the regiments that he had commanded.

This cabin soon became a shrine to the settlers. Men would sit outside its door and smoke their pipes while talking of their former service under Napoleon. The ladies would bring the children to the cabin and tell stories of the homeland as the children gazed wide-eyed at the guns and swords.

Colonel Raoul, another exile, who was not so fortunate in material wealth and who found agriculture to be entirely distasteful, soon lost his land and became a ferry man, transporting passengers across the waters of French Creek. His wife, the former Marchioness

of Sinibaldi and once lady-in-waiting to Queen Caroline of Italy, cooked flapjacks for the hungry passengers.

No people would have been more unfit for the job of bringing the forest under cultivation. Not only were they inexperienced in farming, but the weather was against them. Each winter the frost would destroy what they had so painstakingly labored over all summer. The colony might have survived, however, had it not been for a stunning misfortune.

They had settled on the wrong land!

It was discovered that the land they held title to was located miles away, in the midst of swamp and canebrake.

Almost immediately, aggressive American squatters began filing land claims to the land that the French had cleared. Sadly, the French

people moved deeper into the forest. The hope that had once fueled their ambitions was gone. Slowly the colony gave up its existence, until the only reminder of them were the French names they had given to surrounding landmarks.

As the colony died, the French settlers became scattered across the southern part of the United States. A large number of them moved to New Orleans, while General Desnouettes settled in Belgium. He drowned off the coast of Ireland when the ship he was traveling on struck a reef.

Colonel Raoul went to Mexico, where he became a soldier of fortune.

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Monster Trucks in Athens, Alabama

by John Michael Hampton

The monster truck made loud noises as it revved its engine. I was enjoying the free show with my family, who were standing less than 100 yards from the monster trucks.

In the summer of 1988, our family went to Athens on vacation like we had done for several years to visit family members living there. The trip down from Nashville was uneventful, and I had even dozed off to sleep for a while in the back seat of my grandparents' 1968 Bonneville Pontiac, while my grandfather drove and my grandmother sat in the front seat.

Once we arrived at Aunt Sue's home in the Dogwood Subdivision on the banks of the Tennessee River, she advised us that the next day, there was going to be a free monster truck show in Athens to celebrate the grand opening of the OK Tires store on U.S. Highway 72. It didn't take long for the family to decide to go to the show.

The next morning dawned bright and sunny. It was perfect weather for an outdoor monster truck show. So, we all loaded into two vehicles to head into Athens for the show. I was riding in the back of Uncle Doug's pickup truck, along with my cousins.

There was already a crowd beginning to gather by the time we pulled up to the location of the show. They had spectators standing at the edge of the concrete driveway for the tire store, with a rope separating them from the vacant lot next door. On that lot, ten junk cars had been assembled, sitting next to each other. The monster truck that was at the show was Thumper II, and it was huge!

WAAY TOO EARLY anchors Gary Dobbs and Toni Lowery were there covering the

event, and as the camera panned the audience, my cousin and I remembered to put up a three and a one for the camera. The video featuring us was aired on the following Monday's WAAY TOO EARLY program on WAAY-TV 31.

The monster truck show started at exactly ten o'clock. The driver started the truck and sat there letting it run for about five minutes before even revving the engine. After that, he revved the engine for about a minute or so, while sitting in the same spot. He then put the truck in drive, and made a couple loops around the vacant lot, waving to the crowd.

He then backed up, lining the truck up so it would be in line with the row of junk cars that were on the lot. He revved the engine, put the truck in drive, and accelerated, driving over all the cars. He then looped back around, lining up with the cars from the opposite end of the lot and drove over them again.

He made one more pass of driving over the cars before the show finale. As a finale, he popped a wheelie, looped around, and then stopped the truck alongside the fans. A loud cheer rose from the crowd as a show of appreciation for the show they had just witnessed.

After the show, the driver went inside the tire store and sat down at a table. He signed autographed pictures for everyone who stood in line to get one, at no cost. He was very happy to be in Athens, and was very nice to everyone in line.

Many years have passed since this monster truck show in Athens. Monster truck shows are now in arenas, where multiple trucks compete and people buy tickets to see the show. WAAY TOO EARLY no longer is on television, and Gary Dobbs and Toni Lowery no longer work at WAAY TV 31. However, I still have those memories. Every time I pass that vacant field east of Athens on U.S. Highway 72, I still can see the monster truck show in my mind. I can hear the far distant sounds of engines revving and a crowd cheering.

And, just for a moment, I am a kid again, enjoying the show.

The advantage of exercising every day is when you die, they'll say, "Well she looks real good, doesn't she?"



Visit from a Congressman

from 1889 Huntsville newspaper

A very ludicrous scene occurred in our city last week which more than repaid the witnesses for the money spent to view it.

At a popular variety theatre among the list of attractions was a series of tableaux statuesques, furnished by the young ladies of the ballet, attired principally in nothing. These charming ladies did not appear on the stage, but were reflected as lifelike as if real by the plan well known in optics as mirrors properly arranged, and by the means of proper lights and shades.

To those familiar with the "ghost show," the system is understood. The statues are posed beneath the stage, and the glasses reflect to the audience facsimiles of the subjects as real as if the genuine flesh, bloods, tights and padding were before them.

Now it happened that a well known Congressman from an Eastern State strutted into the theatre one night last week, feeling just drunk enough to be open to the pleasures of the chase of the variety ladies.

He found his way into a box, and ultimately behind the scenes. It was dark there, and he groped around and struck the steps leading lower. Getting beneath the stage, he saw the array of posed beauties before him. He gazed

in awestruck wonder and great delight for a moment. One tableaux passed, another was arranged, it looked like three or four Hebes surrounding a half-reclining Venus of Canova.

With a shout the Old Congressional sardine of political proclivities dashed into the group, sat solidly on the knee of the Venus, and entwining his arm about her neck, he cried out, "Send us a quart bottle of wine and some good cigars!"

At this moment the change of scene was made, the lights turned on and the vast audience

was startled at the spectacle represented on the stage above. For a moment all was suspense and astonishment. Then there came such a thunder of applause and howling laughter that the roof quaked and could be heard for blocks around.

The Venus was also a kicker, and the audience next saw the benighted legislator lifted five feet in the air and dropped out of a window. When he picked himself up, he crawled away, muttering, "Well, if this is Southern hospitality, damn the South!"



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I Remember Elvis Presley

by Charles Hughes

I was born in Lexington, Mississippi, but later moved to Tupelo—Elvis' hometown.

We pretty much grew up together, even though Elvis was three years older than me. Elvis was a twin, but his brother Jessie was stillborn, I always thought he looked upon me as his younger brother.

Elvis came from humble beginnings, and was always trying to earn a dollar wherever he could. So Dad gave Elvis a job as a water boy at his construction company.

Elvis always envied my blond curly hair. He'd often get me in a headlock and yank on my curls, as if he could pull out a handful.

It broke my heart when Elvis moved to Memphis in 1948. But occasionally he would scribble a short note to me. And then it got silent. Years passed and Elvis was on his way to stardom.

Last time I had a sit-down with Elvis was when he performed at the Bell Auditorium. I was stationed at Ft. Gordon.

He was 21 and I was 18—and yes, he got me in a headlock only to find my blond curls were gone.....military haircut!

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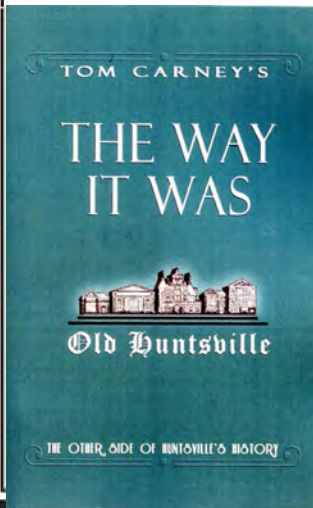
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The World from My Cat's Point of View

by Ted Roberts

What do they expect from me? I caught three mice last week. Of course, since Mama died two weeks after I was born, I didn't know what to do with them, but I had an irresistible urge to chase them. (The two-foots call it instinct, but that's only a word.) I did and out the open screen door they went. I was proud. But gee, I wish Mama had been around for another two weeks or so to show me what to do with them once I nabbed them!

I didn't tell our two-footed master that I also swatted down five flies for the week. I don't think they even saw me in my role of defender of the territory.

And guess what? They've gone back to that bargain cat food. It's horrible - tastes like the cornflakes I used to lick off the counter. All grain - no meat. I bet they're saving the fifty cents a bowl: and me, a carnivore, is eating cornflakes.

Both my sister and I live with the two-footed family. We don't ask for much and it's clear the only way they can communicate with us is to scratch our heads. Oh boy, do I like that.

They're nice people and aside from the cornflakes, they treat us well. But I do wish

they would keep themselves a little bit cleaner. They never lick their skin and I've never seen one lick his hand, get it all wet, then use it to wash his face. How do they keep free from fleas? And you should hear them shout at each other - so LOUD. We gently meow, they holler, most raucously. Worst than that, they don't use a litter box, Mine's the only one in the house.

But they're totally free of the fear of dogs. You gotta hand it to them. I never saw a two-foot hugging a tree limb with both hands while an angry flea-infested, dumb dog snapped at his hindquarters.

But I have seen dogs with a rope around their necks being dragged along by two-footers. Can you imagine! Being forced to walk in the path of their masters? And I've seen the master call their names and they come running. Humiliating.

Thanks to whoever made me; (the 2 foots?) I'm a cat. You wanta talk to me - here I am, come on over.

As a species I don't know

how the two-footed clan makes it. I predict an early extinction, mainly because they don't sleep enough. They're rushing back and forth like their fur was on fire - never napping, even the small ones.

That's the one thing Mama showed us before she left us. She taught by example, of course. Mama would nap anytime the two-foots weren't rushing around threatening to stomp on her. They're incredibly clumsy, sure to step on your tail.

Well, as long as they fill up my bowl and scratch my head, I guess I'll put up with them.



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"My doctor told me he'd have me on my feet in no time, and it worked. To pay his bill I had to sell my car."

Buddy Jenson, Decatur

A MAN OF HONOR



The Huntsville Cotton Mill was created by the efforts of D.L. Love, a businessman from Mississippi. Traveling throughout the Southeast, Love aroused interest in Huntsville, found subscribers for common stock, and persuaded the city to pass a ten year exemption on taxes.

As the cotton mill began to prosper, such was not the case for its organizing genius. Apparently Love fell in love with the young and beautiful Ada Johnson of Huntsville. But, following the demands of a busy travel schedule, Love found it difficult to devote his full attention to the courtship.

Miss Johnson, perhaps tiring of waiting, began to see other suitors.

The newspaper on September 21, 1881 announced the marriage of Ada Johnson to Mr. John E. Lanier of Madison County. The paper further commented: "The Huntsville public was greatly surprised that Miss Ada, whose hand had been sought by so many suitors, had at last succumbed to Mr. Lanier's offer of marriage."

None was more surprised than Mr. Love, who, when learning of the betrothal, lost his temper and sought to avenge his loss by besmirching her character.

So foul were his accusations that the young husband did what honorable young men of breeding were expected to do in such cases. He went to Greenville, Mississippi and killed Mr. Love.

Defended by Huntsville attorney Capt. Milton Humes, young Lanier was completely exonerated. The judge announced from the bench, "It is my opinion that he did just what I or any other man of honor would do, and I therefore discharge the prisoner, and bid him go hence without delay."

Are You Afraid?

A State Trooper pulled an 87 year-old woman over for speeding.

As he looked at her driver's license he was surprised to notice that attached to it was a conceal weapon permit.

Taken aback, he couldn't help but ask, "Do you have a gun in your possession?"

She replied in her crackly voice, "Indeed, I do. I have a 45 automatic in the glove box."

The trooper then asked if she had any other weapons.

She replied, "I have a 9 mm Glock in the center console."

The shocked trooper asked, "Is that all the weapons you are transporting?"

The little old lady held up her purse and replied, "Well, I do keep a .38 Special in my purse."

Finally, the astonished trooper asked, "What are you so afraid of?"

And the little old lady smiled and replied:

"Not a damn thing."

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Man Lives in Hollow Log on Monte Sano

from 1927 Newspaper

Mr. Frank Coe, inventor of the Coe's tractor wheel, is at present using a hollow log on the side of Monte Sano mountain as his living quarters pending completion of the first of a series of cabins for which he has plans.

The log is located several hundred feet from the new Monte Sano road which will be formally opened tomorrow on the old stage coach road which runs off the east side of the mountain.

Although the log was originally hollow, Mr. Coe has improved upon it until it is more comfortable than a Pullman berth. With the use of fire he has enlarged his quarters, improvised a small screen door and a wooden door over the two and a half foot entrance. Near the entrance he has two small holes on each side which enables him to look out in both directions.

By closing the screen door he is protected from insects while at the same time a lantern hung at the entrance furnishes sufficient light for reading or writing which he has a great deal of.

A.E. Sampson, an architect, is Mr. Coe's only companion. He is cooperating with Mr. Coe in an architectural way and expects to open an office in Huntsville soon.

The first of a series of cabins which will be known as "Coe's Roost," is under construction a short distance from the log. When completed Mr. Coe says

"the latch string will always be open to right thinking people."

As Mr. Coe traveled east 36 years ago, he has decided to face all the cabins in that direction.

Mr. Coe is noted as the inventor of the tractor wheel bearing his name. More than a year ago he left his home in New York for Miami, Florida. His wife and two children were called from this earth a short time before. After engaging in the building game in Miami for one year he arrived in Huntsville.

Mr. Coe states he will spend the remainder of his days on this spot on Monte Sano.

Ed. note.- Shortly after this story appeared in the newspaper, the weather turned cold and Mr. Coe, with no explanation, disappeared from Huntsville forever.



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I was really trying to survive when a kind lady found me and brought me to the Ark. I am sweet and very clean with my personal habits. I am self-sufficient as long as you feed me. I would love to have happiness for the rest of my life. Can you provide that for me? When you come to the Ark, please ask to see the Cisco Kid. That's me.

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"When I bore people at a party, they always think it's their fault."

Henry Kissinger

Early Marriage Memories

by Judy C. Smith

Upon going back to Tuscaloosa as a newly married couple and living in the student furnished apartments, I had a rude awakening. First there was the Army wooden bunk beds. I can remember crying when M.D.'s mother called to see how we were getting along. Thank heavens for her, she quickly sent us a double bed as a gift and I still have it.

About a week later, I wondered how the clothes were going to get washed. M.D. and I grew up in a household with a full-time maid.

So, on a Saturday morning, I headed off for a laundromat. We had so many clothes to wash that it took all day to wash and dry everything. I really did not think I wanted to spend one whole day a week, particularly not on a Saturday because at the time we were both attending the University full time.

The very next day I picked up a Sunday paper and low and behold, I found a washer for \$25.00. We headed out that day and by late afternoon, I had a working washer. We used it for two years while we were there in Tuscaloosa and never had any problem with it. We sold it just after graduation for guess how much? Yes, sold it for \$25.00, the best investment I ever made.

Now that I had the washing machine, the only way to dry the clothes was a problem. It seems that each apartment had come with a clothes line in the small back yard. It con-

sisted of two pipes about thirty feet apart made into a "T" and three wires strung between the upper part of the "T", for those of you who may not know what a clothes line was in those days.

Of course, you had to have a small basket with a hook on top full of clothes pins. Once you draped the sheet or held the clothing next to the wire, you'd pull it a bit over the line and put the clothes pin on either side to keep it there and from blowing off into the dirt below. This only works on sunny days, or at least with no rain. Sometimes I would not be home, and a short rain storm would come up and soak them all over again. I learned to be a good forecaster and take them down if rain was on the way, even if still damp, and wait for rain to pass. I sure could use a clothes dryer even though it would cost \$2.00 a month more for electricity.

M.D. did sympathize with me and being a new ham radio operator and wanting me to become a ham radio operator as well, came up with a plan. If I would learn Morse Code, just the slow five words per minute speed (like he had recently

done a few months before and got my ham radio call sign), he would buy me a dryer. I found out later that he really didn't want to spend the money at all and felt the clothes line was adequate for drying clothes. AND he never really thought I could learn the code, thus he knew he

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wouldn't have to spend the money for the dryer.

So as far as I was concerned, he came to my rescue with the offer. I took it as a challenge and he provided me with the same tapes to listen to that he had learned with. It was two 7" reels of tape and he had this portable reel-to-reel tape recorder he had used during our dating years that he recorded and played back music on. He had gotten a copy of those tapes from another ham radio friend he had met in our apartment complex.

So, I started immediately and the first night, by the end of the hour session, had learned five of the letters of the alphabet by sound only. I could hear just the sound and know what it was of the five. I think the first letters were "A, E, S, W, Y" and when I had learned them all mixed up, he would send to me with a little key and practice tone maker, the letters in words that could be formed by just those five letters. It was words like "saw, was, see, easy, yes" and more.

Yea, in one night I was receiving Morse code. Sending the same thing back on the key was not that hard either. The next night we reviewed the previous five letters, then learned five more letters of the alphabet and by the end of the session, I could send and receive TEN letters of the alphabet and the words they could form. I knew a whole lot more words now. M.D. wanted to wait and practice what I had covered before learning more.

No, I was MOTIVATED and I wanted that dryer as soon as I could get it, so on we went with a fresh group of five letters day after day until I had learned the alphabet, numbers and some punctuation marks like period and question mark. After just one extra day of practice I told him I was ready and while surprised, he agreed, and we called our ham buddy Don to come over and administer the test (a husband could not give it to his wife).

Yea, I passed the Morse code send and receive test and only missed a few but there was some you could miss and still pass the test. A quick written test that was easy being just some rules and regulations to memorize and I was a new ham. Sent paperwork off to the FCC and

in about two weeks I was newly licensed WA4KUO.

M.D. could hardly believe I accomplished that, but he sure seemed happy about it and gladly held up his end of the bargain. I had my Brand-New Sears dryer that cost about \$110. I was very happy with it and I told him when motivated I could do surprising things. He agreed.

Stay tuned and I'll tell you how, some years later and several children later, I ran and finished the 10K Cotton Row Run on a Memorial Day and what motivated me that time.

It just takes the proper motivation.

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THE MISSING RELATIVE

by Bill Wright



It was Spring of 1946 when my Uncle Jim returned home from work. Uncle Jim was married to Lou, my father's sister. Uncle Jim could not find Aunt Lou at home, so he contacted several neighbors, but none of them had seen Aunt Lou that day. Uncle Jim then contacted the police and reported a missing person. The police efforts then and in the future were unsuccessful in locating Aunt Lou.

Aunt Lou had a large family of brothers and sisters. As time went by all efforts to find her were unsuccessful, which caused some relatives to believe Uncle Jim had murdered her and buried the body in the woods. They stopped all association with Uncle Jim. Uncle Jim would eventually get a divorce from Aunt Lou as an absentee spouse. He would remarry and move on with his life.

Eventually, most of Aunt Lou's relatives now believed she was deceased, but my father never gave up hope that she was still alive. Both parents had died believing Uncle Jim had murdered their daughter. My father saved enough money to hire a Private Investigator to search for his missing sister. The efforts of the Private Investigator would be futile in locating Aunt Lou.

After the unsuccessful efforts of the Private Investigator, someone suggested that my father contact an attorney for advice on how to locate Aunt Lou if she was still alive. So once again he saved his money until he could afford a consultation session with an attorney.

The attorney recommended that he write a letter to Aunt Lou and ask that she telephone or write to him. My father would then write

"Always do sober what you said you'd do drunk. That will teach you to keep your mouth shut."

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another letter to the Social Security Administration providing Aunt Lou's S.S. number and full name and details of his missing sister. He would ask the Social Security Admin. to forward his letter to Aunt Lou to any current address Social Security would have in their records for his missing sister.

About two months later my father received a collect telephone call from someone in New Hampshire - it was Aunt Lou and she was alive and well! She told my father she had married a soldier and was living in New Hampshire. My father convinced her to make a visit back to the hometown. During Aunt Lou's visit, my father and other relatives persuaded Aunt Lou and her new family to move back to the hometown in Alabama.

Soon after Aunt Lou moved back to the hometown she came by our house to visit. My mother had adequately prepared my brother and I for her visit; reminding us that Aunt Lou was once a very attractive woman, but she had been gone for nine years and no doubt had a rough life during those years.

My brother and I were prepared for the worse. When Aunt Lou walked through the front door she looked like she had just stepped out of Mademoiselle Magazine - the years had been kind to her. The story about her disappearance should end here, but it does not.

When family members asked Aunt Lou how she could have been gone for nine years and never let her family know where she was, she was surprised by the question. Aunt Lou said she had been in frequent contact by letters with Mary, her youngest sister, during the nine years and Mary knew exactly where she was living. Furthermore, Aunt Lou said that when she decided to leave and join the soldier boyfriend in New Hampshire, Mary had driven her to the bus station.

When Mary was asked by her brothers and sister why she had remained silent for nine years about Aunt Lou's disappearance and putting the family thru a horrible ordeal, Mary would once again remain silent.

There is a saying that "Silence is Golden". Sometimes silence is not golden.

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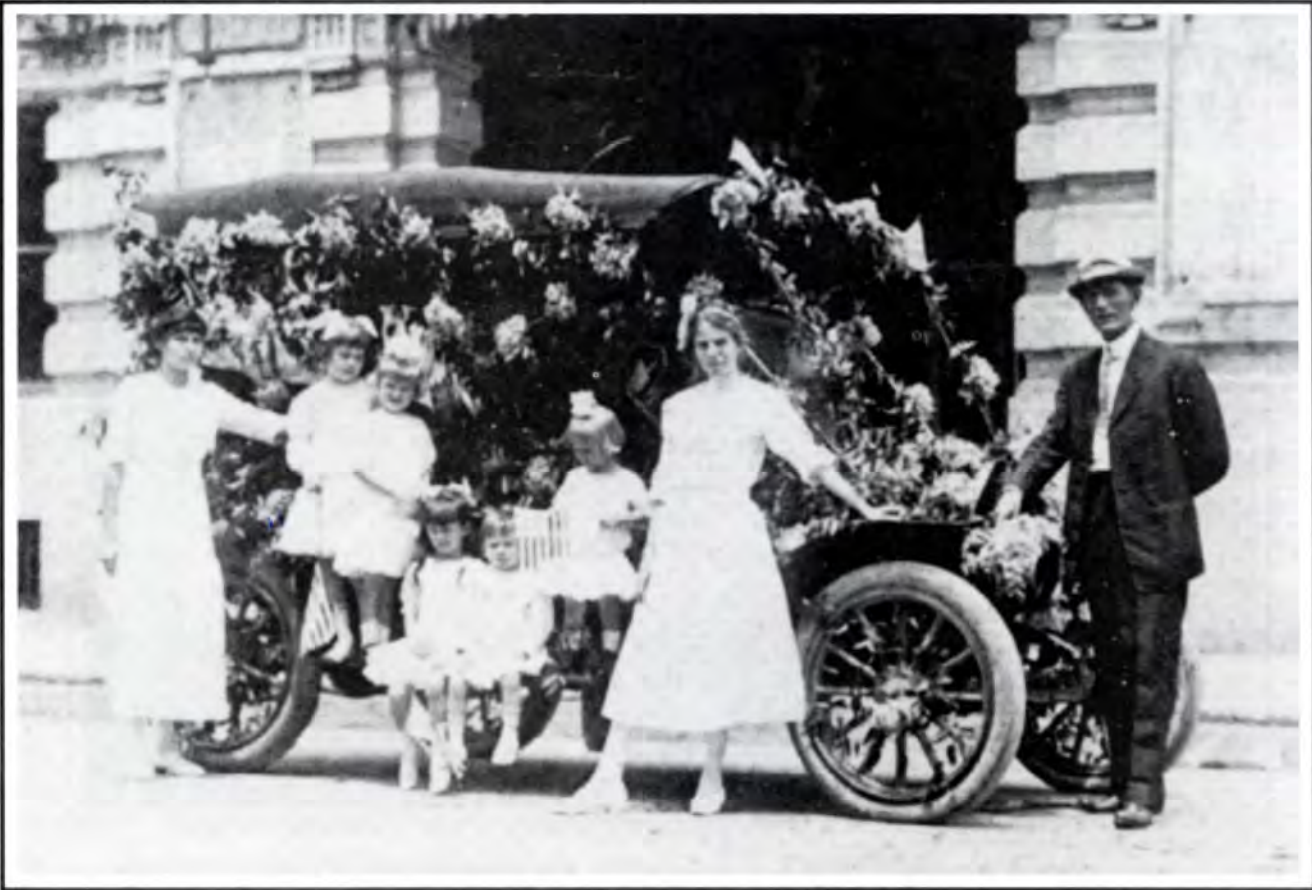
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