



No. 342

August 2021



# Old Huntsville

HISTORY AND STORIES OF THE TENNESSEE VALLEY

## SNAKE HANDLING IN MADISON COUNTY



*Also in this issue:* Football and Trees; Moving day in Ryland; Monte Sano Railroad; My Mom, the Kroger Lady; Cat Tail Tale; Low Carb Recipes; Fun with Your Dog and Much More!

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*Domie Lewter*  
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# Snake Handling in Madison County

by Tom Carney

The first thing that most people noticed when they pulled into the crushed gravel parking lot of the church was the variety of car tags. One car was from Georgia, another from Tennessee and two from Madison County. The car from Georgia boasted a bumper sticker that read "My Child is an Honor Student."

The building had not originally been built as a church. A faded metal RC Cola sign near the door gave the impression it had been a country store years earlier. Nearby, a 1974 Chevrolet, minus its motor and left front fender, was perched precariously on concrete blocks. Kudzu vines, the scourge of the rural south, had almost completely covered a large mound of unidentifiable trash near the back fence row.

Inside the building one had the eerie feeling of being transported into a time warp where different cultures had collided

and created a new one, where neither the past nor the present was reality. The women, all of whom wore their hair in tightly wrapped buns and were dressed in long dresses extending almost to their ankles, sat in a small group clapping their hands in time with music coming from an electric guitar in front of the pulpit. One woman was furiously shaking a tambourine in an effort to keep up with an electronic version of "I'll Fly Away." The guitar player's belt buckle was an advertisement for John Deere tractors.

The men, all dressed in long-sleeve shirts despite the heat, stood in a tight bunch off to the side of the pulpit, some of them tapping a foot to the music and occasionally raising their arms as if beseeching an unknown power to acknowledge their presence. Even before the last chords of the guitar had faded away one man, the preacher, stepped forward and began his testimony.

He told of a life caught up in sin, racked by drugs and alcohol, that finally led him to jail where he met his Lord. He told of how he wasn't long for this earthly world and how he was going to a better place. He said sinners who did not repent would burn in an everlasting hell. The congregation was standing now, swaying back and forth as the preach-

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er continued his message in a singsong cadence. Every few seconds he would be interrupted by someone shouting an "Amen," or "Praise Jesus." One woman constantly repeated the refrain "Sweet Jesus."

A woman moved into the middle of the aisle. Her body was stiff, yet shaking all over; her eyes glazed as if in a hypnotic trance. She seemed to be talking, yet the sounds coming from her lips were unidentifiable, an unknown tongue that others in the congregation found familiar. Another woman, the "Sweet Jesus" woman, joined her in the aisle and a few moments later also began shaking and twitching and speaking in the unknown tongue.

The preacher was really sweating now. He had moved near the pulpit and every few seconds, as if to emphasize his message, would slap it loudly before hopping across the room on one foot while waving his arms wildly in the air. The guitar player tried to keep up, trying to hit a chord every time the preacher slapped the

pulpit, but finally gave up and contented himself by attempting to adjust the various knobs on his amplifier,

Another man, dressed in blue polyester slacks and a cowboy shirt with a buffalo head above the left pocket, joined the preacher and began shouting his testimony as he stomped loudly from one side of the building to the other while holding a Bible in the air. An envelope bearing a State Farm Insurance return address stuck out of his back pocket. The building reverberated with Amens, Sweet Jesus's and stories of sin. All the other people, except for two small girls sitting in the back playing with a game, added to the frenzy. Some were clapping, some were shouting and some were doing both.

The man who had joined the preacher near the pulpit suddenly reached down into a wooden box that had been placed there earlier. Without missing a beat in his praise for the Holy Ghost he raised his arms, revealing a four foot long

timberback rattlesnake coiled around his right arm, its head darting back and forth as if trying to find the source of its anger. A strange dance began as the man moved the snake from arm to arm, placing it around his neck and draping it over his shoulder, all the while keeping a running commentary on his faith in his religion. Another man took the snake from him and the same strange ritual was performed again as the congregation urged them on with more cries of Amen. The Sweet Jesus woman joined the men, passing the serpent back and forth and letting its body slither across her chest and around her shoulders. The next snake, another diamondback



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rattler, was taken from the box and passed from hand to hand, often with one person handling both snakes at the same time.

The guitar player had left his amplifier and stood near the side of the room watching. Nearby a woman was rolling on the floor as she talked in the unknown tongue.

Almost as suddenly as it had begun, it was over. The snakes were back in their box. The woman who had been shaking uncontrollably minutes before was now complaining about the food in a restaurant where she and her husband had eaten earlier that day. The men were talking about the war. "God's Will will be done," noted the preacher in a somber tone. The other men nodded their heads in an understanding way. Someone, a newcomer, asked him if he had ever been bitten by a snake. "Everyone's faith," he said, "will be tested someday."

He later admitted to having been bitten nineteen times.

There is no written history of the "Snake Handlers" in Madison County but by most accounts the first local "handling" took place near Maysville, around 1917, when George Went Hensley, a traveling evangelist, held a brush arbor revival. Local youths who had heard of the new religion caught three large and vicious rattlesnakes, placed them in a box and carried them to the service. Undoubtedly they thought Hensley's snakes were "fixed" in some way and want-

ed him to try his faith on the real thing.

Hensley was reported to have ignored the youth's taunts at first. Halfway through the service, however, Hensley who was already holding a snake he had brought with him, reached down and took up the other ones, holding them high in the air, caressing them and at times even seeming to talk to them. People in the congregation, who had never witnessed anything like it, were deeply divided in their beliefs. Was it a miracle? Was it the Devil's work? Or was there another explanation?

George Went Hensley was a bootlegger and moonshiner turned preacher who, in 1909, was sitting on the side of a mountain in Grasshopper Valley, Tennessee meditating about a passage from the Bible. The passage was Mark XVI: 17-8.

"And these signs will accompany those who believe; by using my name they will cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt

them. They shall lay hands on the sick, and they will recover."

According to one story, Hensley then saw a rattlesnake lying on a nearby rock and picked it up. When he was not bitten, this served as a sign to him that he was anointed by God. At his next church service he preached about the Bible passage, explaining it was God's will and the true believers would not be bitten. Toward the end of the sermon he opened a wooden box and pulled out a large snake, holding it in the air and letting it curl around his arms while daring the congregation to come forward and take the snake as a sign of their own faith. "Non-believers," he warned, "would burn in an eternal Hell!"

Members of the congrega-

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*Rodney Dangerfield*

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tion joined him at the front of the church, and when they were not bitten, a new religious movement was born.

Hensley traveled throughout the Southeast with his message, winning many converts among the hill people who desperately wanted to believe they were the chosen ones. His personal life, however, continued to be a problem. At one point he returned from a preaching tour and caught his wife having an affair with a neighbor. Infuriated, Hensley attacked the man with a knife and was sentenced to a term on the road gang.

He returned to making whiskey but after several years trying to eke out a living decided to repent and become an evangelist again. Strangely, although he was a leader of a religion that believed a divorced person could never enter Heaven, he had married and divorced four times. He died in 1955 after being bitten by a Diamondback rattlesnake during a church service. In the preceding forty-six years Hensley had been bitten over four hundred times.

As the movement began spreading, its beliefs began to change. At first it was believed that if a person was "anointed" he would not be bitten. After many people began suffering snake bites it was decided the bite was merely a test of faith, that their belief would make them immune to the poison. Then when people began dropping dead, it was taken as a sign that God was calling the "true believers home to a better place." This actually served as an impetus for more people to handle snakes.

Other members of the group began the practice of drinking poison as a test of their faith. In many of the churches the preacher would dissolve powdered strychnine into a jug of water and invite the believers to join them in a poisonous communion. Producers of the television show "Dateline" tested the poison used in a service in Jackson County and found it was diluted to a point where it was not harmful. Another test, however, at another church, showed the members drinking one hundred per cent pure strychnine, potent enough to kill anyone.

Many of the members also believed in handling fire; a practice which is believed to have begun on Sand Mountain in the 1920s. A preacher at a revival, perhaps sensing that the congregation was getting tired of the same old snake handling, thrust his hand into a pot bellied coal stove and grabbed a

handful of red hot coals, declaring that his faith in God would protect him. When the members saw that his hands were not burned, they too went forward for a handful of hot coals, proving, at least to themselves, that they were the chosen ones.

As coal stoves became obsolete the practice has largely died out, although members still occasionally use kerosene heaters or candles; holding their hands, or bare arms, over the open flames for long periods of time.

In Madison County the sect saw its heyday between 1920 and 1950. A church was started near Gurley and drew a fair number of members until its minister picked up the wrong snake during a meeting and was killed. Other churches were started near Woodville and New Market and although they initially drew large crowds they too died out, mostly as a result of local prejudice. When Lewis Ford died from snake handling in 1945, in Grasshopper Valley, it led to the official banning of snake handling in Tennessee. In the next few years, after a spate of deaths by snakebite and strychnine poi-



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soning, Alabama and Georgia followed by passing their own laws.

In 1951 Ruth Craig, of New Hope, took up serpents during a service that was being held at her home with the warning, "I'm going to handle this snake and anyone who doesn't believe had better leave." She was bitten four times and died shortly afterwards. A few years later a sawmill worker, Jim Thomas, died during services in Fort Payne. When Lloyd Hill, of Birmingham, was killed by a twenty-four pound rattlesnake at his church, over a thousand people filed by his open casket to pay respects.


With all the resulting publicity the religion went underground, confining its presence mostly to small rural churches in the mountains of Tennessee, Kentucky and Alabama where the authorities would turn a blind eye. Occasionally, as late as the 1980s, one could hear advertisements on the radio on Sand Mountain inviting people to a revival and telling them to "bring their boxes."

Locally, members met in private homes or garages, often

with dire consequences. One member who lived on 9th Avenue got in his car to go to work one morning and discovered a large and very angry copperhead snake coiled on the floor. On the steering wheel was a note: "If you want to handle snakes ... handle this one."

With its members scattered far and wide, and with few churches to attend, the movement took on a nomadic nature. Members would drive hundreds of miles to attend services and handle snakes in some hidden cove in the mountains, and then drive back home the same night. Oddly, the geographical distance between them served to draw the members into an even tighter knit group where the men would greet one another with a kiss on the lips and everyone was known as Brother and Sister.


Snake handling in North Alabama began a resurgence in the early 1990s when Glenn Summerford rented a converted service station near Scottsboro and started his own church, "The Church with Signs Following." Summerford, a small time hood who



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had been convicted of grand larceny and burglary, proved to be a highly charismatic and flamboyant leader who drank poison, handled snakes and red hot coals and often, if the spirit moved him, would stick his fingers into live electrical sockets.

Hundreds of people flocked to the church three times a week to listen to Brother Glenn and other traveling snake-handling evangelists. John Wayne Brown, who had began handling serpents at the age of seventeen, and his wife Melinda, were regular attendees. Dewey Chafin, who had been bitten over one hundred times, brought snakes from Tennessee and took his turn at the pulpit. When his sister Columbia suffered a fatal bite, Chafin had the snake stuffed and kept it as an eerie souvenir.

Unfortunately, while the church itself was moving forward, Glenn Summerford's life was beginning a downward spiral of backsliding fueled by prodigious amounts of vodka and orange juice. When his wife began to suspect he was having an affair with another women in the church she had good reason to fear him; he had already broken her mother's jaw in a fit of anger during a family dinner.

It was later alleged that he had promised to marry his mistress on a certain date, which was probably the reason he decided his wife had to go. He attempted to accomplish this by grabbing her by the hair and forcing her to stick her hand in one of the cages holding his seventeen snakes. When she survived the first bite he repeated the same procedure the next day.

That evening after Summerford had passed out in an alcoholic stupor, his wife made her escape. A few days later the errant preacher was arrested and charged with attempted murder.

Summerford was convicted and sentenced to ninety-nine years in the penitentiary. Several weeks later Clyde Crossfield was bitten at the church and had to be flown by helicopter to Chattanooga. He survived the bite but many of the members believed he would not have been bitten at all if Summerford had been

there to pray over the snake.

With Summerford in prison, attendance at the "Church with Signs Following" began to die out. John Wayne Brown died in a nearby church while handling a four-foot timber rattlesnake. His wife had died three years earlier after being bitten. Dewey Chafin, who had stuffed the snake that killed his sister, also handled the wrong serpent and met his maker.

Today it is estimated that there are approximately 1500 people in tis country who practice snake handling as part of their religion. Many of them live only a short drive from Huntsville.

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**"I bet living in a nudist camp takes all the fun out of Halloween."**

**Jack, age 13**



# Living Through the Depression

*These are some family survival practices used during the Great Depression that our readers have sent in over the years.*

- \* Women made everything out of flour sacks, including skirts and dresses for girls.
- \* There was lots of sickness, we used to take 666 which was so bitter, it only took one spoonful to cure you. We also used castor oil, Black Drought or kerosene and sugar.
- \* We always used our ground coffee 3 times.
- \* Mama stretched out our butter by softening it, then beating it with a can of evaporated milk.
- \* Road meat was Depression food. Fowl or wild game killed by cars was quickly retrieved and dressed out for the next meal.
- \* A favorite kid's game would be to curl up in an old tire and have someone push you down a hill.
- \* Leftover gift wrap and ribbons were always carefully removed, ironed and saved.
- \* My Dad would patch the tops and sides of our shoes with tire patches. We used hardened tallow to polish our shoes.
- \* Mom always watched the first 3 days of spring to see what the next three months would bring.
- \* Everyone had a cabbage patch. Cabbage was used in sauerkraut, as well as a hot vegetable.
- \* We used to try to beat the squirrels to all the wild nuts like hickory and hazelnuts.
- \* The weed, Queen Anne's Lace, was dipped in flour and fried. It kept the family from going to bed hungry many times.
- \* Bread was torn into pieces and added to fried potatoes, to make "Stretch Potatoes."
- \* Farmers planted only the potato eyes for the garden, then ate the rest of the potato.
- \* We used cardboard in our shoes and washed our hair in Fels Naptha, we brushed our teeth with salt and soda.
- \* Mama wrapped my school sandwiches in the corn flake box liner. I used it day after day til it was worn out.
- \* To unshrink woolen sweaters Mama would boil then in a solution of 1 part white vinegar to 2 parts water, then stretch to original size and dry.
- \* Baths were on Saturday and the cleanest one bathed first, then the rest of the family used the same water in the old wash tub, the dirtiest person last.
- \* Everything was patched and darned, and orange crates were used for everything from furniture to storage containers.
- \* Weddings were simple and beautiful, with the cost of everything - dress, veil, bridal and groom's cakes, reception, etc. being around \$50.

**King Solomon to his thousand wives:  
"Who doesn't have a headache tonight?"**



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# Medical Emergency

*by John Michael Hampton*

"Charlotte T, dial 181! Charlotte T, dial 181!" I exclaimed as I spoke into the phone that was connected to the store intercom. This was an emergency, and I wanted to make sure my girlfriend knew why I left work in such a hurry, without even coming by her register to tell her bye for the day.

As my previous story "Birthdays and Burning Ovens" ended, we had covered my first two dates with the beautiful Charlotte Gurley. The first date was at an Italian restaurant, where we got back home only to discover the oven on fire. The second date was the day before my 30th birthday, where we had a picnic at Madison County Lake and went to my birthday party.

The next day was my 30th birthday, Saturday, May 22, 2004. Charlotte and I both worked at Walmart that day. Since we were both working and had already been to my

party the night before, we really didn't do anything special on my birthday.

Sunday, May 23rd, 2004 I woke up around 7:00 a.m. I noticed that my grandfather, Robert, was not in the living room. Usually, he would be up by 5:00 a.m., fixing a pot of coffee and turning on The Westerns Channel on TV. But, on that morning, he was still in bed. When I went in to check on him, he said that he felt sick and was going to rest.

Now, I knew that my grandfather was sick more in the few weeks preceding that day than at any other point in his life. He had been on dialysis for a year due to kidneys that were gradually getting worse. In addition, he had a kidney infection that had got so bad that he was bleeding from it, but had refused to go to the doctor, instead choosing to treat it with over-the-counter medicines.

So, I got ready for church, and left around 8:30 a.m. The service at the church in Madison lasted about two hours, and I was back home around 11:45 a.m. As I changed into the clothes that I was wearing to where I worked at Walmart, I checked in on my grandfather, who was still in bed, sleeping

soundly.

My mom drove me to work. I said hello to Charlotte, who was on the express lane on the grocery side of the store and opened my assigned register on the general merchandise side of the store.

Around 2:00 p.m., my mom and my uncle showed up at my register with the front-end manager, who turned off my light and diverted all my customers to other registers. As soon as I had served the customer I was working with when the light was turned out, the front-end manager told me that my grandfather needed to go to the hospital, and that she wanted me to clock out so that I could go to the emergency room with him.

On my way to the back of the store, my mom told me what was happening with my grandfather, and how that she felt that he may have waited too late for treatment. I quickly clocked out and then paged Charlotte to call me at the breakroom phone extension.

Charlotte quickly called me, and I told her what was happening with my grandfather. She said, "I am in my father's car today, because I was getting the oil changed while I



# THE INCONTINENTALS

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worked. When I get off work at 6:00 p.m., I will call my dad and see what he wants me to do! I will be praying for you while you go to the hospital with your grandfather."

We quickly got back to the house after leaving work. My uncle ran into the house on Padgett Drive and helped my grandfather to the car. My uncle stayed at the house while my mom and I quickly drove my grandfather to Huntsville Hospital.

I helped my grandfather walk into the hospital while my mom went to park the car. By the time she got to the ER, my grandfather had already signed in and was sitting in a chair, waiting to be called back. He was very quiet, which was unusual since he always talked all the time, just like I still do today. (What can I say? I am just like my grandfather!!)

The nurse quickly called my grandfather back to triage. She saw how severe his condition was and sent him straight back to an ER bed. She had another nurse hook an IV up and take both blood and urine samples. The nurse had just called us back to grandfather's room when I was paged back to the front desk.

Charlotte was standing there, waiting for me to walk her back to the room. She explained, "As soon as the CSM released you, she came over and told me to go clock out so that I could be with you during this difficult time! Plus, my dad and mom know — dad told me to stay at the hospital until around 9 p.m. My parents are also praying for your grandfather!"

I gave her a hug and thanked her for coming. She was issued a visitor badge, and then she and I relieved my mom and uncle in the room. We kept alternating all afternoon and evening, so that we all had time

back there with my grandfather, who was drifting in and out of a sleepy state.

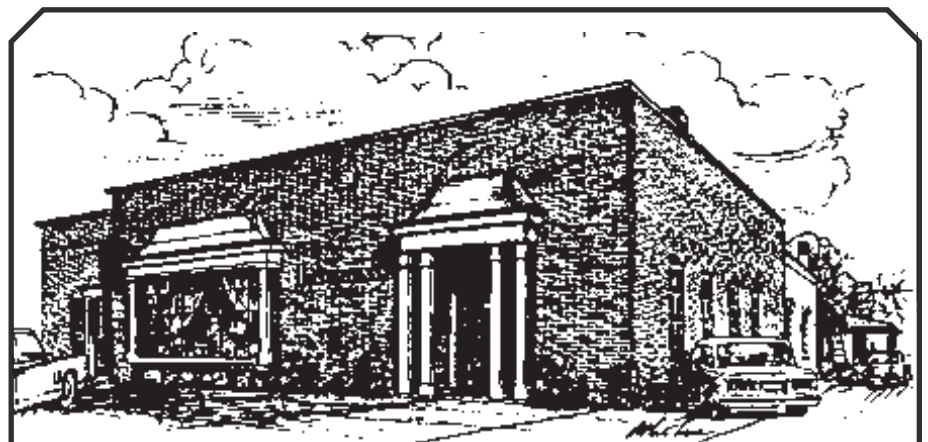
The ER physician gathered all of us (except my grandfather) in a conference room around 8 p.m. on that muggy May evening. He sat us down and lowered his glasses. "I want to give you realistic expectations," he said. "Robert has a very severe infection, which started in the kidney area several months ago, based on what he has told us, along with blood and urine testing. However, as it was not treated in time, it has spread to other areas of his body. We have started him on a high-powered antibiotic and steroid mixture, but we are not sure to what point, if any, that he will recover."

The doctor then answered any questions that we had, and

we got ready to go home for the night.

Meanwhile, my Grandfather Robert was being admitted to a room on the fifth floor upstairs. It was sad to know that grandfather would probably be sick the rest of the time that he lived on the earth, but I knew that he would still fight to stay as healthy as he could.

I knew that with Charlotte by my side, I would be able to face anything that would come my way. We would be there for grandfather also, even if his future was less than certain. Little did we know we were only days from being engaged, and that the situation with my grandfather would change around the same time.



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Where has the summer gone? It just seems like yesterday, and I was admiring the daffodils just starting to bloom. Now, school supplies are out in stores and parents are urged to get their child's school supply list filled early.

This brings me back to the days in the forties when we asked our friends who were a year ahead of us to please sell us their books for half price. We always made back covers out of brown grocery bags. We were only allowed to write on the paper covers, so when they were taken off for the next student to use them, they looked good as new, most of the time.

T.T. Terry's department store was on the south side of the Square to the right of Harrison Brothers. Mr. Terry had all of the books in the store that the new city and country schools used in Huntsville and Madison County. I can remember standing in a long line with my mother, that wrapped around the block, to get my books for the coming year.

Oh, those were the days. Now the state furnishes books for all children. They don't really seem to appreciate what a saving it is to their parents to have books given to them and not have to spend so much money on. Of course, if you are in college, that is a different story.

We girls really liked shopping at Dunnavant's for our back-to-school clothes. There was a lady that ran the elevator. While my mother was shopping, she would ride us up and down. We never seemed to tire of this excitement. One time she even let me help

her stop and start the elevator. I was content to ride as long as Mother wanted to shop. We had a charge account there, and one could take items out on approval and try clothes on at home. Then, the next day, return the ones you didn't care to keep. The clerk would charge only for the ones you kept and take the others back for stock. Then you could pay on the charge bill until it was paid off, with no interest. Or, the lay-away plan was where several expensive items could be bought and kept at the store until the balance was off. Again, with no interest.


The schools were not air-conditioned and there were no fans in the rooms, so it could get sweltering hot inside in September. I often wondered why each teacher didn't bring her own fan to her classroom. That's what I would have done. Unfortunately, windows didn't open up, they pushed out, so air circulation was minimal.

Recess was the highlight of our day. Some swings went really high, and a small and large slide and most fun of all was the merry-go-round. When I go to schools these days, all that fine equipment has been taken away. They are afraid of injuries and lawsuits. I don't ever remember anyone ever getting hurt at recess, unless you got a skinned knee.

Kids probably don't appreciate the school bus, but there was no bus I could ride, and my mother didn't drive, so I walked the mile plus or rode my bike when I got one. We thought we were "grown-up" and I left thirty minutes early to make sure to get there on time. Our bikes parked neatly in racks and they were never locked or stolen. It was unheard of back then.


I warmly remember my school days at East Clinton Street School, as it was called back then. I made my best friend in the first grade and she still reminds me that I am her oldest friend. Happy Birthday, Anna, who also now writes for Old Huntsville Magazine from Seattle, Washington.

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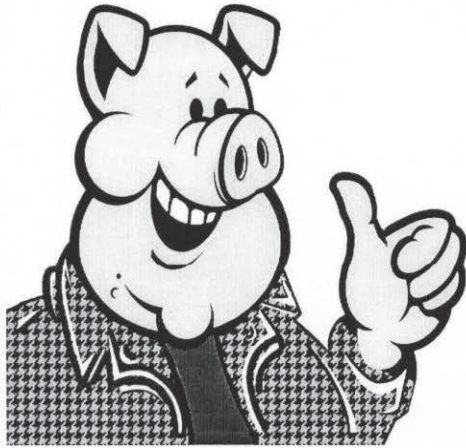
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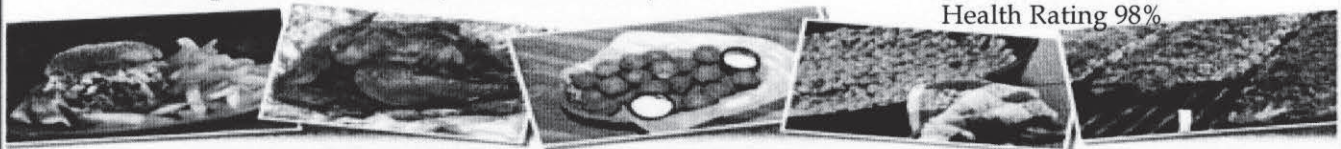
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# Football and Trees

by Jerry Berg



This is about football ... and trees. I say that because I'd like to get a lot of people's attention, and I'll explain the connection shortly. But first I need to touch on the subject of trees.

As many Huntsville residents know, we live in a "Tree City USA." Such a designation is made annually by the National Arbor Day Foundation and Huntsville has received it 29 times. This is gratifying to those of us who love and value trees, who realize that trees are a huge contributor to a high quality of urban life.

What's not so well known is that the Tree City USA designation is based on meeting four standards: (1) having a municipal Tree Commission; (2) having a tree-related ordinance in the municipal code; (3) holding an annual Arbor Day observance; and (4) funding urban forestry work at a level of \$2 per capita per year, which in the case of Huntsville means spending at least \$400,000 a year on it. There's no question Huntsville meets the first three standards, and we have assurances from officials that the city definitely spends well over \$400K a year on

trees, so apparently we meet all four standards.

Nevertheless, there's a problem about this and the best way to explain it is to bring in the subject of football. It's a safe bet that most people in Alabama are familiar with the term "process," thanks to Alabama Head Football Coach Nick Saban. "The Process" is what he refers to when explaining why the UA team has been so consistently successful. Most people though, don't really care about details of Saban's "process." What they care about is the results, the most important of which is the team's season ending win-loss record.

The connection to trees and our urban forest is that all four of the Arbor Day Foundation's standards are about process, not results. Why point that out? Because, with trees in an urban setting, it's not easy to measure results. Probably the best indicator would be to know, at different points in time, how many trees the city has per square mile. Urban forestry experts refer to this as canopy coverage or density. Some big cities such as Washington D.C. and New York do periodically determine their canopy coverage, which is stated as a percentage of urban area. The reason for determining and tracking coverage is that it's the factor that actually determines whether city streets and residential areas are more shady and comfortable in the summer.

**"If a man has recently married, he must not be sent to war or have any other duty laid on him. For one year he is to be free to stay at home and bring happiness to the wife he has married."**

*Deuteronomy 24:5 - the Bible*

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It also determines whether city residents are receiving a number of other well documented tree benefits. As the Arbor Day Foundation states, "Trees provide the very necessities of life itself. They clean our air, protect our drinking water, create healthy communities and feed the human soul."

The main point I want to make is that the Foundation is definitely serving a commendable overall function. Their mission and efforts in pursuit of it are highly laudable. But, they're missing the boat in one critical way when they judge cities by process rather than results. One might also point out that even with process, there should be more detailed questions such as how strong the tree ordinance is, and how effective the tree commission is in influencing policies and operations.

I'm fairly certain the Foundation would like to base their Tree City designations on data such as percentage of tree canopy coverage. The problem is, it's just not available in most cases. That kind of measurement is labor intensive and expensive to obtain.

Without such data, one can try to make a judgement about whether tree coverage is being gained or lost by simply looking for certain indicators, and I've been doing so. For instance, in my neighborhood I've been noticing numerous trees having been cut down and removed because of factors like old age, disease, storm damage and sometimes residents' fear that a tree appears to threaten property damage.

In some cases, young trees are planted as replacements, but unfortunately, not often enough to compensate for the losses. The result is gradual attrition in the overall tree population. Admittedly though, such a determination is unscientific and subject to challenge.

All of which leads me to say that our city officials should make an effort to come up with measured results, similar to the way a company prepares an annual balance sheet to show how it performed over the year.

For instance, if they say that X number of trees were planted in the city during a given year, they should also be able to say how many trees were lost for various reasons.

What makes this so important is that trees can't be regrown in a year. A mature tree can be cut down in a day but it takes decades to replace that loss, especially of the most beneficial varieties -- for in-

stance the large oaks that contribute so much to an overall canopy.

Which leads me to say this: I have a sign in my front yard, by the street. It reads "Slow down. Drive like your child's life depends on it."


I think something similar could be said about our urban forest: "Take care of our trees. Plant them. Your child's future depends on it."

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# Winn-Dixie - I Vowed Never Again

by John H. Tate

There were many memorable moments at Winn-Dixie, and I look back in fondness at the three years that I worked there. I met and worked with a lot of wonderful people. One summer, I worked with a young teacher named Waymon Burke; he had just started his teaching career and worked at Winn-Dixie for a short time one summer bagging groceries. I think the teaching thing paid off; you may know him as Dr. Waymon E. Burke. History and Political Science Instructor at Calhoun Community College. He is also a board member of the Alabama Space Science Exhibit Commission. Well, I can say I knew him when.

With all of the great times and people at Winn-Dixie, my most memorable night was the last shift I worked. Thanks to the encouragement of my good friend, Mark Newton, I accepted a Manager Trainee position with Pic-N-Pay Shoes. On my last night as a Meat cutter Trainee for Winn-Dixie, I was assigned to the North Parkway Winn-Dixie, corner of North Parkway and Sparkman Drive to assist the Meat Manager. The Meat Manager was James Robinson; in the three years I was at Winn-Dixie, he progressed from Meat Department worker to Meat Department Assistant Manager, to Meat Department Manager.

It was my last night and I had to close the Meat Department that night. I was unsure of my emotions because I spent my high school years working at Winn-Dixie and now it was coming to an end. There was no symbolic marking of time, and the world did not stop to take notice. The only thing special that happened that night was I was as-

signed to do something I had never seen or done before. Part of my closing instructions was to clean out the grease trap for the meat department. The Winn-Dixie at North Parkway had a grease trap; I had never seen one before.

After completing my stocking of the meat and dairy coolers, cleaning and sanitizing the meat department, I started on the grease trap. No one prepared me for what came next. When I used the tool to pull the cover off the grease trap, a wave of bad smell hit me in the face; the smell wrapped around me like a wet soggy blanket. I had never smelled anything so bad; it was like the combination of an outhouse, rotten garbage, sour milk and a rotten egg all rolled up in one.

I had to fight with everything I had to keep my gag reflex in check; otherwise, I would have added to the mess. After about five minutes the store manager on duty came to the meat department to see what was going on. He said all of the customers and employees were complaining.

Immediately he overrode my previous instructions and said for me to seal up the grease trap. He told me I should re-mop the meat department and sanitize everything again. Later, when I looked out the meat department door into the store, I saw employees walking around spraying some sort of air freshener.

After re-mopping the floor and re-sanitizing the meat department, I clocked out for the last time. I recall thinking, "This is my last night, and no one seemed to care." I was glad to step out into the night air because the grease trap smell was still lingering inside. Taking a deep breath, I walked to my car; once I reached my car, I took one last look at the store wishing for someone to say goodbye.

Something James Robinson told me once came to mind. When I assisted at another meat department to help while someone was on vacation, the Meat Manager was mean. At the time, I was about eighteen years old and feeling myself. James was his assistant, and he could see I was upset. In my mind, I was there doing them a favor and they should appreciate me. James took me to the side and he got a bucket of water; he asked me to stick my arm in the water up to the elbow. Once I had done so, he said to pull it out as fast as I can. When I did, he said, "Can you show me the hole your arm made?"

Of course, I said no; he just smiled and took the bucket away.

Over the years, that little lesson has kept me out of trouble. I have seen other people and even family members who never learned that lesson. Yes, as stated in a previous story, "... the three years I spent at WD were the foundation for my work ethic and my ability to deal with customers."

As I left the parking lot, I vowed never to clean a grease trap again.

**"The patient lives at home with mother, father and pet turtle, who is presently enrolled in day care three days a week."**

***Seen on local hospital chart***



# NO JAIL COULD HOLD HER

by Tom Carney

The courtrooms in early Alabama history normally dealt with horse thieves, murderers and bushwhackers, but in the late fall of 1822 our courts of law were forced to deal with something totally different. The courts had to render a decision about a woman accused of witchcraft.

History has forgotten the old woman's name. All we know about her is that she lived on the banks of the Flint River. A friendless old crone who had strange ways and was rather aloof, the woman was the talk of the local area. At first, she was spoken of only in whispers, then more boldly until she was publicly accused of being a witch. It culminated in a Warrant for her arrest signed by one of the landed gentry of the community.

The day of the trial was fixed. Excitement ran high and people came from far and near to witness the unusual event. The trial proceeded on time and a great number of witnesses were called to testify, but nothing positive resulted from any of their testimony.

Then a young woman was called to the stand. Her testimony went as follows: One day she was washing down at the creek and became extremely tired. She sat down at the foot of a beech tree to rest. Soon, the old accused woman came down the tree in the form of a squirrel, with its tail curled over its back, snarled at her and put a spell on her.

The sickly girl testified that she had been ill ever since and couldn't sleep due to pain in her stomach that started the day she saw the old woman in the form of the squirrel.

The presiding judge, who seemed to have been in deep study, now seemed quite relieved upon hearing the young lady's testimony. He straightened in his chair and announced that the young woman's testimony was proof positive of the old woman's guilt. His opinion was that she should immediately be locked up in jail.

A controversy arose, however, when one of the spectators in-

quired as to how they intended to confine a witch. If she had the power to transform herself, then surely no jail could hold her.

The judge as well as the whole courtroom seemed perplexed at the unusual turn of events. Finally, unable to reach a decision, the judge adjourned the court while "taking the issue under advice."

As far as is known the issue never came before the court again.



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# Heard On the Street

by *Cathey Carney*



Did you find the tiny hidden tree on page 23 of the July issue? It's on the right side in the ad - see it now? **Joyce Bender** did, she lives in Athens and takes care of 3 grand kids every day. Congratulations to you Joyce!

And that sweet boy in the Photo of the Month was none other than **Bill Kling**, who has been Huntsville City Councilman for many years. He was first elected in 1988 and has been continuously re-elected since then. He has served as City Council President 2 times. We're very proud of Bill. The first caller to identify him was **Alene Jackson** of Huntsville. She said that my hint really gave it away.

I found out something interesting about microwave heating recently. If you place your food/

drink in the middle of the microwave glass dish (the one that turns) it will not get nearly as hot as if you offset it. In other words, place your cup or dish towards the side of the plate rather than the center, and it will heat faster. This works, I've tried it!

**Kenneth Pike** lives in the Clift Cove Community and was born and raised here. Just last month he celebrated his 94th birthday, on July 19. Happy Birthday to you! He loves to read about Huntsville history and is a long-time reader of Old Huntsville magazine! His daughter **Deb Ackert** gave us the information on her Dad, and she loves spending time with him.

A friend told me recently she tried to go on a fat free diet and it backfired. Fat actually helps with digestion, slows it down, so if you eliminate it entirely from your diet you'll feel hungrier much sooner. It'll end up with you eating lots more in the long run and consuming more calories. In fact if you are a Greek yogurt fan, get the full fat rather than no fat - it will keep you full for longer.

**Jean Miller** of Meridianville always loved children and knew she would be a teacher. She graduated from Middle Tennessee State College in 1956 and began teaching in the Huntsville City School system, retiring after teaching 3rd grade children for 24 years. She was a charter member of the First Baptist Church of Meridianville and a loving mom and grandmother. Jean passed away June 18 and leaves daughters **Candace Childress** and **Christie Walker** (husband **Doug**) of New Market

and one grandson, **Reid Walker** of New Market. She will be loved always.

**Phyllis Lawrence** called to let us know that her sweet husband **Billy** has an August 26 birthday and will be 77. Many remember him as he was a starring football player at Butler High School and graduated from there in 1962. He's had some medical issues but we're sending love and best wishes to **Billy Lawrence**!

Having just gone through this, I highly recommend buying Road Hazard Protection on your tires wherever you get new ones. I chose not to do it the last time, and have picked up 3 nails in the past year, with one new tire needing to be replaced. I found that if a screw or nail gets in the side of the tire it cannot be fixed. With all the construction going on in our city new, this is a wise decision. Thank you to **Allen** at Firestone on Weatherly for taking such good care of my tire problem!

Please be extra careful while driving for bicycle riders. I've seen some near accidents lately when car drivers didn't see the bike riders and nearly hit them. Just be really watchful.

Happy Birthday on Aug. 24th to my grandson **Hayden Troup**

## Photo of The Month

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

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This little guy owned a very popular Five Points hair salon that is still going strong.



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who attends college in Ann Arbor, MI - I can't wait to see you again. Also his dad **John Troup** has an Aug. 15 birthday!

**Joy McKee** is retiring from the City of Huntsville after 22 years of service - she was head of the Green Team, Director of Maple Hill Cemetery as well as the other 8 cemeteries in Huntsville, and Director of Landscape Management. The city is so clean and beautiful but she takes no credit for it - she is very proud of her co-workers and says it is all due to them. We miss you already, Joy!

**Susan Coulter** is Senior Relationship Banker at BB&T Bank on Church Street and is having a birthday on August 21st. I hope you do something wild and crazy to celebrate! She also wanted to wish her little grandson **Beau Clark** a happy 2nd birthday on August 8th. Susan's daughter, mom of Beau, is **Brie Clark**.

**Ianthia Bridges**, who also works at the Church Street location of BB&T with Susan, wants to send birthday love to her husband **Frazer** on August 26th and her brother **Carl Ramsey** on August 4th!

Watch the weight of your children's backpack. Kids who carry more than 10-15% of their weight may strain their shoulders, upper backs and neck.

At **Lowe Mill** on Seminole

Drive every Saturday from 11am to 4pm you've got to go by if you like flea markets, craft tables and farmers markets. It is actually a combination of all 3 and wraps around the mill buildings so put on comfortable shoes and bring the pets. Pets are allowed inside the building as well as long as they're on leash. Try it - you'll be exercising in the fresh air and helping small local businesses - a win-win for sure.

Many have gone to **Oakwood University** for the Friday Farmers market - they have fresh fruits and veges, juices, ready made dinners and sandwiches, lots of vegan stuff. Address is 5001 Adventist Blvd., and takes place Fridays through October from 12-4. If you want to visit their store the hours are Sun-Thur 10-7, and Friday 9-4. Their phone for more info is 256.726.7121.


I know school is starting back for the kids here very soon, and I know they are looking forward to actually being back with their teachers and friends. In honor of all school kids and teachers I have hidden a tiny pencil in this magazine - if you find it and are first to call you win a year's subscription to Old Huntsville!

I know there are alot of **Huntsville High School graduates** out there. Well I just found out there will be a reunion being held here

for 3 graduating classes - 1965, 1966 and 1967. The committee organizing this needs to hear from you so that you can be put on their mailing list for updates and classmate information. Even if you don't want to actually attend the reunion, you could get updates. The date of the reunion is September 25, 2021 and the location will be announced in a later issue. Here's how to get in touch with the committee - email hhs1966@gmail.com.

If you haven't been to **Burritt Museum on Monte Sano**, to one of the Wednesday night Cocktails at the View, you got to try it. One thing visitors tell us when they come to Huntsville for the first time is how beautiful the landscape is, how lush the greenery and beautiful flowers, how clean the city is. (Thanks to the **Green Team** who works super hard). When you're up on Monte Sano overlooking the valley and hills, you can imagine how it was when early visitors came to our city and saw that view for the first time. You'll be happy you gave it a try.

Remember how good it feels to get outside with fresh air and sunshine on your face - put on some good sneakers and come to the historic districts to walk - they have good sidewalks and you'll see some beautiful homes and gardens.



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# Living Low Carb

## Cheesy Eggs with Chives

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

1 t. real bacon bits

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

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

## Chicken Dijon

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

- 2 egg yolks
- 2 t. sour cream
- 3 t. Dijon mustard
- Dash cayenne pepper

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

Add the wine and spices. Bring to a boil and simmer, covered, for 45 minutes. Take out the bay leaf and remove the chicken to a platter, keep warm. With an egg beater, beat the eggs yolks into the liquid, then add sour cream, Dijon mustard and cayenne pepper. Heat and stir, but don't boil. Add chicken to the sauce and serve.

## Creamy Spinach

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

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

## Shrimp Scampi

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

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

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

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### Black Pepper Beef

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

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

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

### Riesling Chicken

- 4 chicken breasts, uncooked
- 2 T. butter
- 1/2 lb. small white onions, peeled
- 1 bay leaf
- 1/2 pound fresh mushrooms, sliced (2 c.)
- 3/4 c. dry white wine, preferably Riesling
- 1/2 c. whipping cream
- 1/2 t. garlic powder

Heat butter in a heavy skillet, sprinkle chicken with salt and freshly ground garlic pepper. Add the chicken, skin side down, to the skillet. Scatter on-

ions around the chicken and add the bay leaf. Cook over medium heat til chicken skin is browned, about 5 minutes.

Turn chicken, add mushrooms. Continue to cook, mix onions and mushrooms around the chicken. Add wine, bring to boil. Cover tightly and continue to cook 20 minutes.

Remove chicken to hot platter, use slotted spoon to take out vegetables. Throw away bay leaf. Scatter them around the chicken. Take fat from saucepan, add cream and garlic powder and cook over high heat for 2 minutes. Strain sauce, taste and adjust for seasoning. Pour over the chicken.

### Creamy Coffee Topping

- 1 pint whipping cream
- 1 capful almond extract
- 5 packets Splenda

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

You can experiment with extracts -1 tried Black Walnut, Vanilla, Coconut and Maple

on different occasions. All are equally good!

### Chocolate Balls

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

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

Add the cream de cocoa, extract and sugar twin. Blend well. Freeze til it can be handled, shape into balls, roll in walnuts. These will disappear fast! If there are any left store them in covered container.



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# My First Cruise

by Eugene M. "Gene" Simonson

*My father worked for the Tennessee Valley Authority during the period 1933-1938. He helped build Norris, Pickwick and Guntersville dams. He was a labor foreman, directing the work of about 12 men. At Guntersville he was the mosquito/malaria control foreman. (See "Memories of a Teenager at Guntersville Dam," in "Old Huntsville," No. 233, July 2012.)*

*Now fast forward about 36 years. I retired from the Army, after 24+ years, in 1975, at Redstone Arsenal and have lived in Huntsville ever since.*

I graduated from high school in 1942 in Arkadelphia, AR. The U.S. had been at war (World War II) for about six months - since the Pearl Harbor attack on December 7, 1941. In November of 1942 I was rejected for flight training in the U.S. Army Air Corps because of poor eyesight - a huge disappointment at the time. In mid-1943, in Phoenix, AZ, I was again rejected for military service because of suspected tuberculosis (TB) and given a draft status of IV-F--"Not qualified for military service."

For most of the period 1942-1944 I drifted as an unfocused, immature teenager. I held defense jobs for short periods making 20-mm ammunition, on construction, and making B-24 "Liberator" bombers and P-51 "Mustang" fighters. During parts of this period also, I took night and weekend machine shop training, provided by the U.S. Employment Service.

By chance, at the U.S. Employment Service office in

Dallas, TX, I saw a wall poster offering jobs in Hawaii. It was a stylized scene of Waikiki Beach with palm trees and Diamond Head at sunset. It had the intended effect and quickly got my interest.

The poster was recruiting for a wide variety of workers for the Army Air Corps' Hawaiian Air Depot at Hickam Field, Territory of Hawaii, one of the targets on December 7, 1941. The only obstacle to my employment was the suspected TB found at my physical exam in Phoenix in 1943. However, the regulations did not specifically bar me from employment, so I was hired.

Due to my earlier machine shop training, I was sent to Patterson Field, OH (near Dayton) for more training before going to Hickam. I was given train tickets, with sleeper car reservations, to Patterson Field and was "good to go". At Patterson (now part of Wright-Patterson Air Force Base), I was assigned an Army bunk, one of about 40, on the top floor of a wooden barracks building, in an area called "Wood City."

Patterson Field was a major Army Air Corps training center for civilian employees. In addition to machine shop training, there was welding, aircraft instrument repair and others. The machine shop there had the latest in machine tools, e.g., lathes, milling machines, drill presses, surface grinders and others. There were three instructors. The course consisted of a series of increasingly difficult projects, requiring different machines; each project had to be graded and passed by an instructor before moving to the next one. In addition, special projects came from the working shops at Patterson.

The length of the course depended, to a great extent, on the availability of transportation from the west coast to Hawaii. (Some trainees got lucky and traveled by the luxury Pacific cruise ships of the day, the "Lurline" and the "Matsonia" of the Matson Navigation Company. Others, as we shall see, were not so lucky and went by troopship. I spent about five months at Patterson-October 1944 - February 1945.

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When the order came, 35 to 40 of us (all men of various ages and trades) boarded a railroad sleeper car at Patterson for the trip to Seattle, WA to board a ship to Hawaii. We stayed in the same car, with meals in the dining car, for the whole trip to Seattle, which took several days. In Seattle, we were taken to a high-rise, red brick hotel near the waterfront to await (about two days) boarding the ship. Late one afternoon, about March 19, we were taken to the ship.

The ship turned out to be the "John W Weeks," a Liberty ship fitted as a troopship with NO amenities - only canvas bunks, stacked five high, for sleeping and a mess hall, with tables but no chairs, and only two meals per day. My bunk was next to the top. Our area on the ship was strictly GI, except that we were civilians. There were also Army troops on the ship - I think an Engineer battalion of several hundred men going to the Philippines.

Liberty ships, later superseded by Victory ships, were multipurpose ships, hurriedly built to a standard design, during WW II. They could be fitted, or refitted, as troop ships or cargo ships. The U.S. built 2,170 of them at 18 shipyards during WW II. Two hundred of them were lost to enemy action, weather or accidents during the war. A few of the early ones actually broke apart in heavy weather.

We had supper on the ship. Sometime in the night, we moved out into Puget Sound. We had oatmeal for breakfast; I remember it well, as it came back up in a solid, warm stream about mid-morning as we got out of Puget Sound into rougher water. (I had never been on a ship before.) We had a blimp escort watching for submarines for the first day.

That breakfast was my last meal for five days. I, along with many others, was seasick and miserable. A more-or-less humorous scene was that of several men "barfing" over the rail with their dentures in their hands. (NOTE: The cardinal rule of seasickness is never to barf into the wind - always with the wind.) I stayed in my bunk for that five days, except to go to the latrine. The ship pitched and rolled so much that the pro-

PELLER would break the surface; this caused the ship to shake much worse than when the propeller was entirely under water. Somewhere along the line, someone gave me an apple from the mess hall; that apple was the best thing that I ever ate and was the turning point in my seasickness.

The ship zig-zagged every two to three minutes; that was to avoid torpedoes, as it took two to three minutes to line up and fire a torpedo accurately. The rumor was that we went north, almost to Alaska, before turning south to Hawaii - again to avoid submarines.

About the seventh day, the weather began to be more pleasant, and the water more calm, so that we could spend more time on deck. We played much poker and blackjack, at which I did well - no huge winnings, but I came out well ahead.

The soldiers on the "Weeks" hated us, I'm sure. They cleaned the ship, even our hold, stood guard and had physical training. We, the civilians, had absolutely nothing to do, except eat (but only twice a day), amuse ourselves and kill time.

On Easter Sunday, April 1, 1945, after 12 days afloat,



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we sighted Hawaii early in the morning. We docked about mid-afternoon in Honolulu. We were met by "cattle-car" buses for the trip through Honolulu to Hickam Field. The buses had open-air bodies, with roofs, built on flat-bed trailers; they were often called "Buna" buses or cattle cars. We arrived "at home" about 30 minutes after leaving the ship and were issued dormitory rooms and bedding.

(Other facts about the day: 1. It was, of course, April Fools' Day, and 2. It was D-Day on Okinawa, the last major land battle of WW II.)

I had three assignments during my two years at Hickam - Tool Manufacture and Repair, the Flight Line Unit (a mobile machine shop that supported the Hickam flight line and other fields on Oahu), and Vehicle and Ground-Powered Equipment Repair (an automotive machine shop).

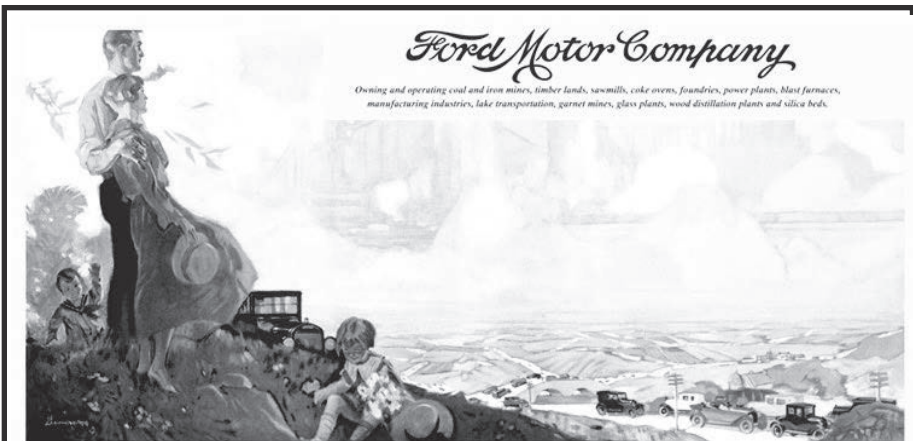
By early 1947 my three brothers had all been discharged from the Army and were attending college. For several reasons, I resigned from my job at Hickam; the official reason that I gave was "To attend college on the mainland," not fully sure that that was what I really wanted to do.

In early April of 1947 I boarded the US Army Transport "Admiral W S Sims" to return to San Francisco. The trip was a luxury cruise compared to the trip in 1945 on the "Weeks." It took five days, compared to 12; the "Sims"

was a much larger, faster ship and made a direct crossing with no zig-zagging. I was not even sick on the way back. I shared a stateroom with four other men, none of whom I remember,

On September 8, 1947 I registered as a 23-year-old freshman at Henderson State Teachers College (HSTC) in Arkadelphia, AR. For the next four years I studied chemistry, math, physics, and military science, among other things. I graduated on May 28, 1951 with a BS degree in chemistry and a commission as an Army second lieutenant and went into the Army Chemical Corps, with my first two years in the Field Artillery. On November 15, 1952 I married my HSTC sweetheart who, apparently, got me focused on a career. What developed into an Army career of 24 years, two months, and three days started counting on May 29, 1951. I retired from the Army on July 31, 1975 at Redstone Arsenal, Huntsville, AL, as a colonel, and have lived in Huntsville ever since.

Since that first "cruise" on the "John W Weeks" in 1945, I have been on many others, some as official Army travel and some as private travel. (My HSTC wife, Bobbie, loved cruises.) My first "cruise"--Seattle to Honolulu, on the "John W Weeks," in 1945 - still stands out as one-of-a-kind. I'm glad to have done it, but never want to do it again.



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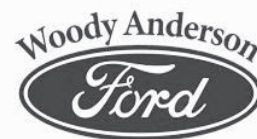
The Ford Motor Company views its situation today less with pride in great achievement than with sincere and sober realization of new and larger opportunities for service to mankind.

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# Huntsville News in 1916

## Tragic Fire Ravages Ringling Brothers Circus - Horses Killed

Huntsville - What started as a day of merriment for people attending the Ringling Brothers Circus here quickly turned into tragedy as flames swept the compound.

Over 600 people were on the circus grounds when a fire, apparently caused by a carelessly discarded cigarette, and fueled by high winds, swept through the grounds. The main damage was concentrated near the stock pens where immense quantities of fodder had been stowed for the livestock.

The stock handlers, who had been prepared for such an emergency, immediately began blindfolding the horses and leading them to safety.

Though there is no report of human casualties, 37 horses burned to death in the conflagration. Scores more were severely injured.

Several of Huntsville's doctors were pressed into service in an attempt to save the injured animals but in many cases it was too late. Shots rang out through the day as more of the animals were put out of their misery.

A spokesman from Ringling Brothers Circus stated the show will continue its run here in Huntsville with no interruption of scheduled shows. Agents for the circus are already in negotiations with local livestock dealers to replace the horses.

The fiery blaze, and the smoke, was seen all across the county.

Citizens in New Hope, upon seeing the smoke, immediately raised a contingent of volunteers and dispatched them to Huntsville.

**Dogs always come when they are called; cats take a message and might get back to you.**

## Polio Discovered in Maysville

Dr. L. W. Howard has confirmed that a new and dreadful disease has been identified in Maysville.

Nettie Preston, the two year old daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Will Preston, was diagnosed yesterday as having polio. Many city parents are terrified that their children could be similarly afflicted with this killer disease.

Though two other cases have been reported in other parts of the state, this is the first confirmed case in North Alabama.



## HHS Reunion - 3 Graduating Classes of Huntsville High School and We Need You!

**Saturday, September 25, 2021**

*Oscar Llerena from Miami is excited about his upcoming Huntsville High School Reunion. The Huntsville High classes of 1965, 1966 and 1967 are having a joint reunion on Saturday September 25, 2021.*

*If you are in these classes, please share your contact information to the appropriate email below.*

*Even if you cannot make the reunion, we still would like your contact information. You never know who might want to reach out to you and make your day!*

*Class of 1965 [paperdol@bellsouth.net](mailto:paperdol@bellsouth.net)*

*Class of 1966 [hhs1966@gmail.com](mailto:hhs1966@gmail.com)*

*Class of 1967 [hhs1967panthers@gmail.com](mailto:hhs1967panthers@gmail.com)*

# Crossing the Atlantic Ocean

by Bill Wright

I met Larry when I started playing golf. Both of us were retired and we just happened to arrive at the golf course same time of morning three times a week, so we became golfing partners. Initially I did not know much about Larry other than he was an Engineer and had moved from New York City to Huntsville when his job was transferred to Huntsville. One day we had a long wait to "tee off," so Larry told me more about himself. It was the most interesting life story I ever heard.

Larry told me he was born in Finland, but at a young age he and his Mother left Finland, crossed the Atlantic Ocean by ship for a new life in America. While living in America his Mother had become a naturalized citizen of the United States, which made Larry as a minor age child automatically an American citizen.

Larry said that when he graduated from high school in New York City his Mother wanted him to attend college in Finland, so he boarded a ship and crossed the Atlantic Ocean for a return to Finland. While attending college in Finland a war started between Finland and Russia. Finland became an ally of Germany in the war against Russia. Later, Russia would become an ally of the United States in the war against Germany. The Finnish Government attempted to draft Larry into the Finnish Army to fight Russia.

Larry had an aunt living in Finland and she protested the attempt to draft Larry into the Finnish Army, contending he

was an American Citizen. Her protest was successful and Finland initially stopped efforts to draft Larry. However, as Finland began losing the war to Russia and needed more men in their Army, the aunt became concerned a second attempt by Finland could be made to draft Larry.

Larry's aunt decided he should return to America to avoid further efforts by Finland to draft him into the Finnish Army. Meanwhile, Russia had blocked Finland's ports with war ships and submarines. So, Larry had to make a long Journey through Finland and into Sweden where he was able to board a ship and once again make the long trip across the Atlantic Ocean for a safe return to America. This would be Larry's third time to cross the Atlantic Ocean by a ship.

Larry had been back in America a short time when America entered the war against Germany. Larry was drafted by the United States Army; trained, then sent to Europe, crossing the Atlantic Ocean for the fourth time. He was assigned to General George Pattern's Third Army which raced across Europe routing the German Army, particularly in Bastogne, Belgium where the famed "Battle of the Bulge" occurred. The defeat of Germany in this battle was claimed by many as the major turning point in Germany's eventual loss of the war. After the surrender of Germany, Larry, along with thousands of other American troops, were put on a ship and once again sailed across the Atlantic Ocean for a safe return to America. This was Larry's fifth and final time to cross the Atlantic Ocean by a ship. Larry was soon released from the U.S. Army.

After being released from the Army he resumed living in New York City. Later, Larry met a young German lady living in New York City who had lived in Germany during the war. They married and continued living in New York City until he was transferred to Huntsville with his job.

Larry concluded his story by saying, "Sometimes during the war, I was not sure whose side I was supposed to be on."

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# MY LIFE

by Rolland Thomas

I was born and raised on the farm in western Iowa, next to the Missouri River, on July 30, 1933. This was during the Great Depression. Corn was less than 5 cents a bushel. Some farmers burned it in the winter for heat. Corn burns a blue flame which is hotter than wood burns.

We had a drought about this time for several years. So hot it was said if you broke an egg on the sidewalk it would fry.


When I was about 4 years old we moved to town (Mondamin, IA), population 500. My dad got a job as janitor at the school house at \$100 per month. Before this he worked for \$1/day. Later on when I was 5 years old he started selling ice. Not many people in town had electricity. No one had it in the country so he had a pretty long ice route. He had built an ice house. He would drive 15 miles to Mo Valley where they make the ice. It came in 300 pound cakes, rectangular shape. He hauled it in an International pickup. A year or so later dad got a chance to rent a 140 acre farm. He got a \$2000 loan to buy 4 head of horses, some milk cows, some hogs and chickens and horse drawn machinery.

I was in the third grade at this time. I had 2 brothers younger than me and they had died. Dad rented the farm for 5 years. During this time I was cutting weeds out of the corn and soybeans. I also cultivated corn with a team of horses and other work with horses. The cultivator was just a one row. Also at 10 years old I was driving an old Farmall Tractor working in the field.

In the winter at this

time I trapped muskrats and mink in a drainage ditch that was near our farm. I would sell the pelt of the muskrat for \$1 - \$1.50 each and \$18 for the mink. I would catch maybe 20 muskrats and one or two mink. After catching them I would skin them and stretch the hide over a boat shaped board and hang them up until they dried, about 30 days. There were four buyers I would send them to and they would send me the money. At this point of my life I was in the 7th grade and the 5 year lease on the farm was up and dad got a loan to buy a 160 acre farm and rent another 160 acres.

Another year and I was a freshman in high school. During my 4 years I worked at scooping stoker coal out of railroad cars into a truck - hauling it to the school house and scooping it into their bin for heat. The school used steam



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heat from a boiler in the boiler room. I also helped farmers put up bailed hay and loose hay. During all this I also helped dad farm - disking, planting, harvesting, milking 8 cows every day and fixing fences. The lumber yard in town bought lumber that came in by rail. They would hire me and another person to load it onto a truck, haul it to the lumberyard and unload it.

Also I played 1st team for 3 years in high school baseball and basketball every Tuesday and Friday nights. We lived 2 miles from town, I had no way to get there so I ran this distance every night to play or practice. This was always a non-stop run, no walking. Needless to say, I was in top physical shape.

I graduated from school at 17, then worked at a factory in Omaha, NE that manufactured power steering pumps for auto companies like Ford, Chevy, Dodge and so on. From there I worked for Kelly Ryan manufacturing farm machinery. By this time the Korean War had started and I worked on the railroad putting railroad ties under the track. After a summer of this I was drafted into the U.S. Army. I went to Ft. Sill, OK and was in the artillery.

After 16 weeks of basic training I came home on a 20 day leave. During this time I married a young girl that was a year younger than me. I had known her all my life but didn't date her til my senior year in school. At that time I had only been on dates with 2 other girls. At this time of my life I was very timid and was scared to death to ask anyone out because I thought they would turn me down and if that happened it would be worse than death itself.

After 15 months in Korea I got to come home in 1954. By this time I was a Staff Sgt. I got home in December 1954 and started farming with my dad using his machinery. In a couple of years I rented a farm on my own for a year at another town. I then rented a larger one of 380 acres.

We had some bad years with drought. In the winters during these times I would go to Omaha and work in the stockyards

in the packing houses. Sometimes welding at others companies. I drove 100 miles back and forth. While doing this I also was farrowing hogs. I had to take care of them every morning before going to work and then again at night when I got home. All this went on til the spring came and I could go back to farming again. This routine went on for more years than I care to think of.

During this time we had 2 children - a girl and a boy. I finally was able to buy a farm from a very kind and generous lady landowner. After that I was offered a dealership selling DeKalb Seed corn. During this time I was involved in a couple of bad accidents. The doctor said my very good physical strength was the only reason I survived. My wife was had a medical problem and spent alot of time in the clinic in Minnesota.

My farming career was about 50 years and 53 years total in the seed business. I won several awards with corn yield numbers statewide.

I retired in 2013. My wife and I had built a new home. All the previous years my wife had nothing but old homes to live in. Kitchens were very small with



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**“Any kind of frosting or sweets licked off knives, spatulas and spoons have NO calories if you’re in the process of preparing something.”**

***Louise Avery, Huntsville***

only a few cupboards for her pans and dishes. I told her I would build her dream kitchen just the way she wanted it with all new appliances, whatever she wanted with lots of counter space. She designed her kitchen and did a great job. After all the years she had done without I felt it was my job to see she had a nice place to live out our retirement years. She loved it so much, she never wanted to go anywhere.

Earlier in 1994 I found out I had cancer. They gave me 10 years so I decided to take care of things like selling the farm along with all the tractors, combine, truck and machinery. If I waited and left all this for my wife to do it would have been very difficult for her. Turns out after 20 years of serious operations, chemo and treatment I am cancer free. But in 2019 my wife was diagnosed with bone cancer and passed away 8 days later. I couldn't have had a better partner in life who took such good care of me and our children. I am so glad we are strong believers in our heavenly Father in heaven. I know where she is now, in a very wonderful place just waiting for me to join her. We were so fortunate to have been long-time believers.

I am now nearly 88 years old and still in very good health. I live in an assisted living place in Council Bluffs, IA. I am hoping to be able to go back to my own home for whatever my last years might be. I stay busy here and love to paint landscapes, birds and butterflies. Many of these are painted on rocks! Also I carve caricatures as well as true to life carvings.

I enjoy reading a lot and help some of the other folks in the dining room get around. The Lord has truly blessed me so much time and time again. It's my thought that I should try

and return that as much as possible. We have been allowed to live in probably the best country in the world - plenty to eat, nice places to live in, freedom to come and go most anywhere we want. Freedom to worship our Father in heaven. I ask those who do not believe to find a good Bible based church and start trying to get to know the Lord before it is too late.

I love the South and her Southern people. I may be from Iowa but I feel more as one from the south (at least I am from south west Iowa.) While I served in Korea the men I really enjoyed being around were the Southerners. They were very proud of where they were from, were strong willed and just great guys to be around. I had the greatest respect for them.

I would love to correspond with any Old Huntsville readers, just get my address from the magazine office!

## Court Orders Wife To Stay Home

from 1909 newspaper

Decatur, Ala. - Thirty times Mrs. Aaron Ridenour left her husband; twenty nine times he induced her to return; nine times she had him arrested.

This was the family record disclosed when the wife filed a desertion and nonsupport suit against her husband.

Just how the judge felt about it was indicated when he ordered Mrs. Ridenour to pay all the costs of the suit and to go home, stay there, and to take care of her husband.

There is sure to be more to this story later.

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# My Mom, the Nice Kroger Lady

by Cathy B. Bridges



For over 30 years, my mom Lorene Bowen worked at Kroger, a well-known grocery store. She worked at just about every Kroger store in Madison County. Mama was humble, friendly and a hard worker. She was also a Christian and was not ashamed to tell people about the Lord. Before retirement, mama was one of the most loved cashiers at the last store where she worked on Oakwood Avenue. People would stand in her line instead of others because they knew she was not only a super-fast cashier but a friendly one to boot.

I remember seeing her picture up on the wall at the Oakwood store and I was so proud of her. I believe she was the head cashier at the time. When we were kids, mama worked in the office at one of the other Kroger stores. I think it was the one at Haysland Square at the time. Mama would come home late on Saturday night after counting the money and finishing up.

Working late with two small kids took a toll on her, so she eventually returned to cashier work.

She always loved talking to her customers and meeting new people. I can recall when she met Dr. Wernher von Braun, the German-born American Aerospace engineer and she came home telling us what a nice man he was. He came through her line a lot and she enjoyed talking to him. She met a lot of different people and always enjoyed talking to most of them. She made friends with some of them and enjoyed seeing them again when they returned.

Through the years, she had a variety of uniforms in different colors and styles. But, one thing that was not different about her was her hair. She always wore it the same

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Tony Guthrie, Owner

way. Mama enjoyed working and would get up each morning, and after her coffee and breakfast, she would head out.

Never complaining, she always had a smile on her face. I have seen her get up and go to work even on days when she felt terrible. Mama was a go-getter. She was also frugal, but we ate well. We never knew what surprise she might bring home from the grocery store. Mama loved to buy bargains, such as bent cans, beat-up packages and such. She knew how to stretch her money.

One of her best friends was a Kroger employee named Frances. They worked together for a long time and shared their feelings about family, God and whatever was on their minds. They laughed together and cried together. They even went to the Smoky Mountains together and mama came home telling us what a wonderful time she had. I was so glad she went and enjoyed herself.

I know there are folks out

there that will remember her when they see her picture. She worked at Kroger for a long time and made friends with many people. I loved to go by and see her when she was working, and I could see the love on her face when she talked to her customers. That was my mama and I was very proud of her in so many ways. She knew how to treat people right.

After mama retired, she had a short time to enjoy life before she had a heart attack at home one night. She recovered from that and started walking more, and she did an excellent job of changing her diet. She would sneak a piece of bacon off daddy's plate sometimes, though. But, bless her heart, she couldn't help herself.

When you grow up on southern cooking, it is hard to eat bland and saltless food. What a great cook she was! Oh, how I miss it! Mama could even make liver taste good! At Thanksgiving, her southern

cornbread dressing with cranberry sauce was always my favorite.

Approximately a year after her heart attack, she started feeling light-headed while walking around her big backyard. It was the Friday before Mother's Day 1995. My dad, who, thank goodness, was pulling weeds nearby, got her to come and sit down. She said, "I feel faint." Daddy pulled her to him, and she died right there in his arms in her backyard with her beautiful flowers and garden nearby.

I believe she would have wanted it that way.



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# Little Eva

by Robert B. French, Jr.

There was a Sunday that is indelible in my mind. A child was born to my grandmother when I was a little past four years old. The child lived about three months and died. The girl baby had been named Eva, after her mother, my Great-grandmother, Eva Chandler, who had married John Preston Maples. When the child died, my grandmother grieved terribly. This was her 10th child, yet she was inconsolable.

On Sundays, the entire clan ate dinner (lunch) in the big house. The table would seat the fifteen of us. Sometimes my Uncle Eugene and Aunt Nita would drive out from Huntsville and eat with us. When that happened, the kids ate at a side table in the kitchen.

Wherever I was seated, I would always say the blessing that usually consisted of, "Christ, save us. Amen." This earned me the nickname of "Preacher." Nicknames were a big thing back then. My Uncle Ira was called Peck's Bad Boy, after a movie character, earning him the nickname of Uncle "Peck."

My Uncle Arnold would squint an eye and wink, earning him the nickname of Uncle "Popeye," after the cartoon character. I was unable to say grandmother so I tried to call her mother. It came out "Wauva," and that nickname stuck. My Aunt Mildred was a tomboy, so we called her "Bill." My Aunt Pauline Baker was Aunt "Poppy."

On this particular Sunday, the entire family had gathered after dinner, and were sitting around in the front yard under a very large oak tree.

My grandmother was saying, "Oh, if I

only knew that she was all right. If the Lord would just give me a sign, I could stop hurting so badly. I know she is in heaven, but I need a sign that she is happy."

Right then, she stopped, and looking into the summer sky said, "Oh, there she is, I can see her in the sky! She's smiling, she's happy! Oh, thank you Lord! Thank you! Thank you! Now I can quit worrying."

Everybody was looking up in the sky trying to see Little Eva. I saw her! I saw the baby face in the sky! She was beautiful and smiling. All the family was trying to see what Wauva saw. I didn't say anything. Some of the family was shouting, praising the Lord, and then we had prayer, a prayer of thanksgiving by my grandfather.

When we got home, I told my mother, "Mother, I saw Little Eva and she was laughing. I just saw her head and curly hair."



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My mother said, "Son, that was just your imagination."

"No, Mother, I really saw her. I really did."

"If you really saw her, then you should remember it the rest of your life because you are a mystic. And I don't doubt you because mysticism runs in the family."

I still see the child in my mind's eye. This experience put me on notice to look for the strange, mystical events which have taken place in my life. When I became a serious Biblical student and lecturer, I realized that I had been given the gifts of the spirit discussed in the New Testament, I have found them to be a great adventure as I have traveled the road of life. I'll probably talk about some of these mystical experiences as I write this book.

My mother told me that my sign that I was a mystic was that I have a perfect triangle of the lines in my right hand and a double crown on my head. I don't know whether there is anything to that or not. I did go to a palm reader once, at the Ringling Brothers Barnum and Bailey Circus, when I was a boy. She looked in my hand and refused to tell my fortune, "You tell mine," she said.

I had paid a quarter and I insisted. She said that two women would figure prominently in my life; I might marry them both. I would make a great success in the newspaper or writing business. I must say she was right on. Writing for the Goodrich Industrial Newspaper did change my life and two women have figured prominently in my existence. I married only one of them.

I have had a lot of fun with mysticism on the path. I've enjoyed teaching people to witch for water. They are always amazed when they feel the invisible energy. When I was so inclined, I enjoyed telling fortunes. I'd just look in the person's palm and say the first thing that came into my mind. I couldn't read palms nor anything else - just whatever came to me. I did not do it often. Unbelievably, the fortunes came true! Oh, if I could tell what was going to happen to others, why could I not predict my future? I could, and did. The hard thing about it is, whatever is going to happen - good or bad - I can't do anything about it. It's going to happen and does.

My fortune telling dreams always include water. Mother said that water was my sign. I guess it is. If the water is dirty, the future is bad. If it is

clear, things are going to be great. After the dream, I just look for the future. After thousands of dreams, it never fails.

I'll share one in a little more detail. After my darling wife Celeste died, I wanted the diamond gold encrusted cross that I had given her. I was going to wear it in her memory. Unfortunately, it was nowhere to be found.

Neither of the children had seen it since their mother had passed away. No one knew where it was. I took the house apart looking for it.

Then, I had a dream. A man standing by a clear water stream said, "You are looking for Celeste's cross. The wolf got it." As usual, I immediately woke up wondering, what in the heck did that mean? "The wolf got it." This is one time my mysticism has failed. I discarded the dream believing that the dream had failed because I was growing old.

Several weeks later, a Saturday, I was cleaning house. I noticed some National Geographic magazines laying in a stack of magazines on a small stand in our bedroom. As part of my cleaning ritual, I was going to take the magazines and put them in the collection going back to 1957.

I saw that the top magazine had the picture of a wolf making up the entire cover. There was an article about wolves in that issue. I picked it up to see the article and there lay the cross!

Not only thankful, I was amazed. I was so happy I had not lost the gift. Plus, I had the cross and still wear it. "The Wolf got it." Okay. I got it back.

*Robert's books are available on Amazon and there will be a Christmas book coming out for the holidays.*

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# CAT-TAIL TALE

by M.D. Smith, IV

If you've ever owned a cat, this won't sound so strange to you. It started when my wife got a rescue cat from a shelter. I'll spare you that long story. Here we are with a third cat. I was happy with only two.

On top of that, the paper with him said "elderly heavyweight." The shelter guessed he was about eight years old and fat. Weighed twenty pounds—a real amiable old "house" cat. My wife, Judy, got suckered. Attempts to find another home for him fizzled.

He smelled terrible, seemed to have something on his back that looked a tad like mange. Since mange comes from mites and out of concern for our other animals, I sent him to our vet for a full checkout and wash job. He also had what appeared caked, you-know-what, under his tail. "Clean that sucker up," I told the vet. My helper would pick him up later.

He didn't have mange, mites, or fleas. They gave him some shots, shaved his back, said it just looked like scratches and it should clear up. When I got home, he did smell a whole lot better. But I looked and there was still stuff under his tail.

"Judy, it looks like he did get a bath and smells better, but they didn't detail under his tail. I've got to give this monster another bath."

You cat owners know what's coming next, don't you? Well, not exactly. I suggested we dump him inside our enclosed steam shower stall and I'd get in, warm the water on the detachable spray hose, and just spray him on the floor. When wet, perhaps I could spray enough under his tail to finally get him clean. "But he just had a full bath," Judy said. "He just needs that part cleaned. Think how much trouble he'll be to wash all over and dry, even though you cut his claws short."

That seemed to make sense when she suggested she could just use some of the 'Wet Wipes' in the bathroom if I'd hold him down on the granite bathroom counter top.

"Just let me get this straight," I said. "You want me to hold this twenty-pound monster while you wipe his ass? While you wipe the cat's ass?"

She laughed at the way I phrased it.

"This will make a hell of a tale to tell." We thought we knew what we were in for as we headed to get ready in our bathroom before snagging "Big Boy Casper" for his tail cleaning job.

Hemmed up in the bathroom so he couldn't run away, I tried to pick him up two times, but the massive round squiggly size prevented me from getting a full grip. I called for help. Judy came and supported the rear end as we took him to the counter top. He wasn't too scared at this point. Then I got a beach towel and threw it over him, covering his head and most of his body. I lay on top of him, holding his front legs and leaning on him to pin his body.

"Now, start working under his tail with the wipes." Reaction was immediate. I didn't know there could be such muscles under all that flab. I held him tight as he squirmed, jerked, tried to claw anything close by and bite me, but I had his head between my arms. Such sounds. Moaning, hissing, yowling and growling. He did not like the treatment. "Hurry up. I'm not sure how long I can hold him." Casper struggled like a gorilla.

"I'm almost finished."

"Is he clean?" "Good as I can get."

"OK, stand back because when I let this sucker go, he's going to be a wildcat."

She stood back as I stretched my arms out, then like you'd snatch a magician's black cape revealing what's beneath, I whipped the beach towel off. He took off like a rocket. Never saw a fat cat run that fast. Didn't know they could leave claw marks in granite either. As for me, nothing a few band-aids couldn't fix.

Shortly after that, we went to bed. The white cat came back in the bedroom. I was reading and he jumped up on the foot of the bed and came up near my head. I gave him a couple of easy pats and a chin scratch. "Well, he's not too angry. I guess this cat doesn't hold a grudge."

Then he turned around with tail elevated, and I saw the rear for the first time since the ordeal. He was only half as clean as before we started.

"Honey, look quick," as I pointed under his tail. "We got to work on him some more. You said you finished, but you only did a half-assed job."



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# My Most Embarrassing Moment

by Don Broome

When I was around 8 years old and my brother a year older we would go to church every Sunday. The way the church was laid out was the choir room was behind the dais where the preacher gave his sermon. Joe and I would sometimes misbehave and were therefore placed in the front row so my mother could keep an eye on us from her seat in the choir. The choir sat on folded chairs next to the dais. The choir room was behind them.

Well that Sunday was communion and my brother and I were acting up pretending the wafer was a full meal and trying to burp patting our stomachs as if we were full. We kept getting the hard stare from my mother but ignored her. By the time the wine (or grape juice) was given Joe and I clinked glasses and pretended to be drunk.

Obviously everyone around us was watching and during a lull in the service my mother got up from her seat and took my brother and I {by the ears} into the choir room and the congregation could hear the "whack, whack, whack" of our punishment.

As we reentered and took our seats (red-faced) the pastor announced a change in the song we were to sing. He asked us to sing "Hallelujah to Thine The Glory". It took a long time before people stopped patting us on the back and laughing about it.

Looking back we certainly deserved what we got and my mother who was shy at the time must have been pretty angry to do that in public instead of waiting until we got home. We never acted up in church again.

**"Any ship can be a minesweeper. Once."**

*From Military Manual*

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# Memories by Tillman Hill

*Originally published in Old Huntsville magazine in 1995*

The old two-story house that was built in the late 1800s at the corner of Oak and Half Street (later re-named St. Clair and Gallatin Street) was to serve a lot of people in many different ways. It brought a lot of happiness, sorrow, joy, fun, health, comfort and death.

In 1904 the City of Huntsville found themselves in possession of this house, whose late owner Mollie Teal was alleged to have been a well-known Madam of a Sporting House. Despite her purported reputation, she was obviously public-spirited and generous so she was specific in her will that the house was to be used for a public school or a hospital. In 1904, the City of Huntsville, with a lot of help from some ladies in town, opened a hospital and it stayed a hospital until 1926. The hospital on Whitesburg Drive was built and then the old hospital was turned into an apartment house. It was used as an apartment house and rooming house until sometime during World War II.

During the war it became the Harlem Club. Jesse Smith, who had a bootleg cafe on Meridian Street, opened it up as a black nightclub. I have already said that the old house had brought a lot of different things to a lot of people. Well it brought death to Jesse Smith on the morning of September 5, 1945.

Henry White, a 29 year old former employee of Smith's, was said to have ended the cafe and road-house operator's colorful career with two blasts from a double barrel shot gun fired as Smith was entering the

Harlem Club at about 7:00 in the morning, of which he was now the late owner.

This also brought the end to the old house. After the killing, the law came down on the club and after having been raided many times, it closed. About that time, Community Development came in and rebuilt that part of town.

As the war raged in the South Pacific, there was another war raging in Madison County. Just as President Truman's order to drop the A bomb on Japan had ended the War, Henry White, according to the newspaper, with a 12 gauge double barrel shotgun, ended the Roadhouse War in Madison County, when he allegedly shot Jesse Smith on the morning of September 5, 1945.

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*Old ad run in Old Huntsville in 2003*

There had been several shootings and killings between roadhouse operators in the last years. J.C. Bounds, who ran White Castle, a roadhouse on Meridianville Pike, was killed and nobody was ever convicted of his killing. There were two or three other people who were shot and to my knowledge, nobody was ever convicted.

In the last eight months before Henry White allegedly killed Jesse Smith, Jesse was tried three times for murder and all three times there was a hung jury. The last trial that ended in a hung jury was on August 27, 1945. Henry was tried in February of 1946. He was brought into the courtroom on a stretcher. He was reported to have had tuberculosis.

Henry White was brought to court again in May of 1946. The first trial was a mistrial. In May he appeared in court looking healthier and sat at the table during the trial. He was found not guilty. After all the killings and trials were over, the District Attorney came down on all the roadhouses. The Sheriff was raiding them very often and they began to close down and the war in Madison County was over.

I used to shine shoes in Jesse Smith's cafe inside and outside of the cafe. He always treated me good. I know his wife and her Mother and Daddy. Her Daddy ran a kindling and wood yard on Dallas Avenue and I worked for him, splitting kindling at the wood yard. So I kept up with the killings and trials very close. It seemed like I knew everybody that was involved in this, but I was too young to really know what was going on. The last time I saw Jesse, to my remembrance, Grady Baswell from Lincoln and one of my cousins and myself went into Broadway's Place, a restaurant. Grady and my cousin were both a few years older than me. Broadway's had marble-top tables.

We came into the cafe and Jesse was standing at the cash register talking to Mr. Broadway. By this time, Jesse had a real bad reputation and people did not want to make him mad. Grady was mean and would fight with a circle saw and caused trouble about everywhere he went. Jesse had a felt hat on and wore it pulled down over one eye, as was the fashion at this time.

The three of us walked to the back of the dining room and started to sit down, when Grady hollered, "Hell Fire, there is Jesse Smith," and then turned over one of the marble topped tables. You can imagine how loud it was when it hit the tile floor. My cousin and myself hit the floor. I would have run if I had not been too frightened to. Grady jumped down behind the table and started to act like he was shooting a gun at Jesse. He did not have a gun and was pointing his finger at Jesse and saying "BANG, BANG." We laid there a few minutes, then looked up and Jesse was smiling.

I have never in my life, before or after that, been as happy to see a man smile!

## Nightmares

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# City News in 1913

- Mayor R. Earle Smith stated today that no whiskey shall be sold in Huntsville while he is Mayor. He stated that a few bottles may occasionally change hands but that there will be no general or even restricted sale, and that the law shall be enforced as it appears on the statute books.

- The prettiest gasoline table lamp in the world is sold here by Harrison Bros., 214 Washington Street. You can carry it from room to room with you, it is absolutely safe.

- The West Holmes Street concrete bridge is nearing completion. Its opening to public travel has already relieved the West Clinton Street congestion.

- Deputy Sheriff Pierce late yesterday arrested Ike Lee of Dallas Village on a charge of an

assault with a knife.

- The Jabber-Jabber Club meets on Tuesday evening with Miss Lula Lockard on Meridian Street.

- Mr. Theo. Hereford, Deputy Sheriff, had a very exciting race last night after a man who stole a cow in Madison some time ago. He had the good luck to capture his man about 4 o'clock in the morning after running him all night.

- It is remarkable how some people can wear good clothes, sport around and enjoy life and not work. We were never able to work that combination. If our city fathers would take action against the gambling that is running rampant here, we feel sure that many of these young men would seek respectable employment.

- The Delp property, corner of Washington and Clinton Streets and one of the most valuable building sites in the city, has been purchased from Delp-Ware heirs by the Struve Brothers and will be improved at once.

The frame buildings standing on the lot will be sold and taken away and the brick store will be torn down.

The deal that has just been closed has been under negotiations for several years and it has finally been carried through successfully.

One of the handsomest business blocks in town will be erected there.

Mr. W. F Struve informed a reporter that he has already rented the proposed building and it will be constructed according to the lessee's plans. It will be two stories high and the ground floor will be a store 50 by 100 feet.

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# PET TIPS FROM ANGEL

## Fun Activities with Your Dog



\* An obstacle course is great for people who have limited space but who want to thoroughly exercise their dogs. Use pillows, furniture, a staircase in your home (if you have one), laundry hampers, boxes with both ends open and blankets to create jumps, tunnels and small forts for your dog to explore. You'll have to train them with treats or other positive reinforcement so they know how to use it, which will be fun for both them and you.

\* If you have a treadmill, swap out your daily walk around the block with a 20-30 minute walk with your dog on the treadmill. You might have to coax him with treats at first and keep him on a leash. If you're feeling really ambitious you can teach him to use the treadmill without you — but always with supervision.

\* If you are home a lot, or if you have kids, your dog might want some me time. Gather blankets or your dog's bed and some of their toys to put in a section of the house where they can still see you but where they can have some time to themselves if they want. Pretend they're invisible when they're in that space.

\* Play the shell game - take out three cups and a small ball or a treat. Let your dog watch you hide the treat or ball under one of the cups and then shuffle them. The game helps them work on their problem-solving skills, according to Puppy Leaks.

\* Play "hide the treat," or another scenting game, with small and medium dogs who don't need as much space to roam. Start out by letting them see where you hide the treat. After that, hide the treat in another room and then let them search for it. Make sure you use very scented treats.

### On the beach:

- \* Go for a jog along the shore.
- \* Learn how to stand up on a paddleboard together. It's quite ambitious, but if you know how to do it and your pet is athletic, agile and obedient (and you have a doggy life vest), this will be so much fun.
- \* Take a boat ride together.
- \* Find a nice spot to sit and watch the

sunset once you're both tired out.

\* Let them dig in the sand while you build a sand castle next to them.

### In the house:

\* Play dress up and then do a photo shoot to create your very own puppy calendar.

\* Create a social media fan page for your furry friend.

\* A personal favorite of ours: Show your dog some pet videos of dogs of the same breed barking and whining. Their reaction will be priceless.

\* Fire up the grill and enjoy a steak

dinner together.

\* Take a nap and cuddle together on a lazy rainy day.

\* Plant a garden in your yard or look into getting a plot at a pet-friendly community garden in your area.

### Have a Doggy Birthday Party

You should be able to lookup your pooch's birthday on his pedigree. But, if your dog is a rescue or doesn't have an exact birth date, you can pick a date that's convenient to you, so he can check off this activity on his dog bucket list. It would be wise to send out your invitations and make the cake early so you won't end up going crazy over last-minute arrangements.

### Go Shopping Together at a Dog-friendly Store

Shopping no longer has to be an activity that you love to do but need to leave your furry bestie home for! Although certain stores, such as supermarkets, continue to be quite inaccessible to dogs, a wider range of stores accepting dogs, outside of pet shops, are beginning to arise all over. Just check online before you get going on your epic shopping trip!

### Have Breakfast in Bed

Is it your pup's birthday? Or perhaps just a rainy and gloomy morning where you could both use a little pick me up? Having breakfast in bed together, all the while cuddling and maybe catching something comforting on the TV, sounds like a great way to treat yourself - and your pupper!

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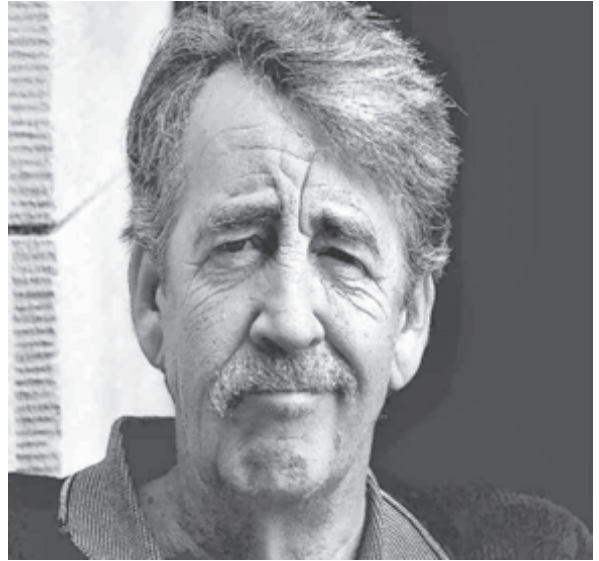
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# La' Overture Toussaint

by Tom Carney



Teaching school was just about the worst job he could imagine. Confined in a classroom for eight hours a day, it seemed to spell the end to his musical aspirations

But for Willie Handy, it was a job. At least it put food on the table.

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

In an effort to pacify his father, who wanted him to become a minister, Willie agreed to finish school and take the examination to become a schoolteacher. After graduation, however, he found job opportunities in Birmingham to be much more profitable. He soon landed a job at one of the iron mills working as a laborer, making more money than he could ever expect to make as a teacher.

Willie had not lost his desire to be a musician, though. He quickly became friends with most of the musicians in Birmingham and it was not long before he had formed his own group and was playing around town at night while still working in the mills during the day. One of the first gigs he had in Birmingham, according to legend, was playing in a notorious dive. The owner, after listening to the audition, asked what the group's name was.

"Don't have one." Willie replied.

"Well, what's your name?"

"Willie."

"Sounds like a damn Uncle Tom name to me. What's your whole name?"

"William Christopher."

"Hell, that's even worse! We'll just call you by your initials."

W.C. Handy soon tired of Bir-

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

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

For his first recital Handy chose a piece, written by an obscure songwriter, he said, entitled, "La' Overture Toussaint." With a name like that, it was no trouble getting the headmaster to approve it. Handy diligently rehearsed the students, who were by this time enraptured with the new musical composition.

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

W.C. Handy's career as an instructor did not last long. He was still determined to make his mark as a musician. After leaving Huntsville, he moved to Memphis where he wrote the all-time classic, "Memphis Blues," which he sold for \$100. Still a poor man, he next ended up in St. Louis and after being forced to sleep in alleys and pool rooms, composed the song "Saint Louis Blues," a song that made him wealthy and famous and earned him the title of "Father of the Blues."

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

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# Monte Sano Railroad

Near the intersection of Tollgate Road and Bankhead Parkway in northeast Huntsville are several entrances into the western slope of Monte Sano mountain. Take any one of these trails and you will find yourself going back into another time, a time of long ago, a time when Huntsville was much simpler and life was not the complicated reality that it is today.

Yet, people then, as today, had dreams and ambitions. The dream that once existed on these now quiet trails on the western slope of Monte Sano Mountain took the form of a railway ... the Monte Sano Railway.

The year was 1888 and with the ever-growing popularity of the grand hotel on top of the mountain it became clear that better transportation up the mountain was needed.

The Huntsville Belt Line and Monte Sano Railway Co. employed engineer Arthur Owen Wilson to construct the railroad to the hotel. The line started from the union depot and ran south along Jefferson Street. At Clinton, it turned east towards the mountain and eventually down into Fagans Hollow, where it began a circuitous route, gaining altitude all the time. Winding and circling to the rim of the mountain, the route rose so steeply that the grade seemed impossible for an engine to ascend.

The remainder of the way lay directly across the top of the plateau to the back yard of the hotel. Half an hour was required for the entire journey when the line was finished.

In the construction of the Monte Sano Railway, more than 300 persons were employed on a regular basis. Mr. Wilson, himself, designed the three coaches that comprised the train and the St. Charles Car Co. that manufactured them.

The engine was of standard gauge, although smaller than those used on the trunk line. The compact size of the engine was the reason the line was called the "dummy line," as the undersized locomotive resembled a trolley car. Of course, some Huntsville wags called it the dummy line because, "only a dummy would ride that steep and perilous route to or from the mountain!"

Sure enough, not long after the railway opened, there occurred an incident that seriously damaged the popularity of the railway. Returning from the hotel, the train's sand-pipes clogged as the engineer tried to check the speed of the locomotive down a steep incline. The train went out of control

and left the tracks. Happily, no one was injured, but people then became somewhat nervous about taking this precarious path to and from the mountain.

Luckily, this accident had no lasting effect on consumer confidence and the Monte Sano Railway was successful in bringing visitors to the mountain and business at the hotel continued to flourish.

Unfortunately by 1895 the hotel was suffering financial problems and the railroad had to be shut down. Tracks were torn up and sold as scrap to pay off debts.

Now, with the passage of time, the old railroad bed and stone foundations of the trestles are all that remain. They say that as late as the 1950s there were still railroad ties stacked up near the area known as the "button hole." But they're gone now.

So, take a walk on the old railroad bed trail. Knowing what was once there makes the trek all the more worthwhile.

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# The Ram (1954)

by Bill Alkire



It was August 14, 1954. It was the year I crossed into my teen years - 13. A lot had happened by this date in the country. The words "under God" was added to the "Pledge" on June 14, 1954; mass vaccination against Polio, which had taken or crippled some of my classmates; the first nuclear powered submarine the "Nautilus" was launched and the movie "20,000 Leagues Under the Sea" opened in theaters across the nation; color television was introduced to the American public; and the Rose Bowl Parade was shown in color by NBC on American Television for the first time.

Additionally, Elvis Presley began his musical career by recording "Blue Suede Shoes" at Muscle Shoals, Alabama; Marilyn Monroe married baseball legend Joe DiMaggio; Ellis Island was closed to immigration processing; and Boeing's newest airplane, the "707" took flight. Let us not forget the merger of Nash and Hudson into American Motors under George Mason who was CEO of Nash Kelvinator.

**"By the time I could afford one of those fancy little sports cars, I was too fat to get into it."**

**Joey Sparks, Athens**

To celebrate Floyd's wife's birthday, their daughter's birthday and my birthday, everyone gathered at the 200+ acre Golden Farm. Floyd was a close friend of my Grandfather and our family. I had hunted squirrels on the wooded back 40 acres of the Golden farm and fished in the pond, many times.

Floyd raised cattle stock and sheep for commercial sale. He held an important managerial position with the coal company and was a Civil Engineering graduate. He was proud of the lambs born in March and was preparing for a large sale of sheep stock. The number of ewes had outnumbered the rams from the fall 1953 breeding.

We had a great day. I received a hunting knife set as a gift from the Golden's. Mrs. Golden not only had birthday cake

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for all of us after dinner, but she served her signature apple pie that she made from dried apples, raisins and pineapple with a top crust and icing. To top off the warm pie, she served homemade freshly churned vanilla ice cream.

Everyone played softball and had a terrific time. Also, Floyd took us all a ride in his 1953 Buick Roadmaster Skylark convertible with the top down. Floyd always had a convertible. The Buick was yellow with red leather interior and the ride was like floating on air.

The men were sitting around drinking coffee, talking about hunting, fishing and cattle/sheep breeding and raising animals in general and the upcoming stock sales. It was decided everyone there should go and see the calves with their curly heads and the lambs before they were sold at the end of the month.

We all proceeded to the area fenced off for those lambs being sold. I followed Floyd into the sheep corral. Some of the ram lambs were developing nicely formed horns. I was standing near the entrance to the shelter, when all sudden Floyd yelled for all of us to watch out as a large ram had moved out of the shelter. Floyd began to remove those of us that were inside the fenced corral.

Like a white flash of lightning the ram raced toward me. I had no time to react! The ram hit me full width smashing me against the fence boards. My whole body went limp. The impact brought me to my knees, with terrific pain. The ram outweighed me by over

60 pounds. The ram circled to the right, preparing for another attack. Floyd grabbed a board close by and challenged the ram. The ram snorted and dug the ground with his hoofs. Several individuals pulled me out of the fenced in corral.

The bruises covered my body from my lower rib cage, waist, hip, thigh and all the way to my ankle. I felt immediate pain. With every breath I hurt and deep breaths felt like a knife cutting deep in my chest. The pain and bruising lasted several weeks. I had no broken bones however - just a busted pride.

The fact that at 13 I felt no fear of animals played havoc with my cockiness. It may have been funny to everyone but me - however, pride took over. I could not hide the pain - just the tears. It was painful; however, it seems funny looking back on how stupid I was. Laughing about it now certainly does not hurt like it did then.



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**Rambo**

Hello, the Ark named me Rambo. I am a very tiny kitten. I had quite an adventure but thankfully I survived it and ended up at the Ark shelter. Someone put me in the bed of a pickup truck. The man driving was very nice but he did not know I was there. When he stopped, I let out a loud kitten scream that even scared me! This kind man brought me here. I am only about four months old and could not go in the kitten rooms. The Ark has this really neat cage that is tall and on wheels in the Ark lobby. Soon I will go see the kitten doctor. Why do you think someone would put a little kitten like me in the bed of a truck? There are lots of rescue groups in our area that could have helped care for me. I think some people are cruel and do not respect the little creatures that share the earth with them. If you do not want little baby animals, please have your dogs and cats spayed and neutered. This is so important. The Ark is really full of critters. Please adopt a sweetie like me. Come to the Ark and ask to see the brown tabby named Rambo. That's me!

**"Why do we believe there are 4,000 stars, but have to touch the hot plate at a Mexican restaurant?"**  
*Cathy Self, Huntsville*

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# Joey Oomps and the Mayfair Gang

by Gary Gee, Sr.

Something was always happening in Mayfair in the summertime, maybe because it was too darn hot to stay inside. Also, there were few inside magnets such as computers and TV's to draw kids indoors. Instead, they whooped it up outside using all the imagination they could muster. And Ollie was always right in the middle of this activity. At times, the noise in the neighborhood was deafening. But however noisy it got, everything and everyone stopped in his or her tracks - and was instantly petrified and silent - when Mrs. Oomps stepped out onto her porch and called her son - Joey. God, that woman could bellow. I can hear it now: "Joeyeee, oh Joeyeee Ooomps! Come home! Come hooommmme!"

Just saying it is not quite like it really was. That cry deafened and stunned everyone within range - which was far to say the least.

Flossie Oomps had unkempt hair that never seemed arranged in the least for any occasion. She was about five feet tall - and maybe six feet wide - and waddled slowly on great pillars. And she always seemed clad in dresses which - according to all the kids - must have been dyed bed sheets made into dresses, because the stores didn't carry clothes that big. We only saw her when she waddled to her front door, sucked up her gut and forced herself through the door onto her porch. This porch was a stage (she occupied half of it) on which she performed this ritual at dusk every evening to bring Joey running.

Joey stayed away from home as late as he could, and you would have too if you had been Joey. Mrs. Oomps cupped her hands around her cave of a mouth and let out the God-awfulest sounds that man or beast ever uttered. The ground shook and leaves and nuts fell from the trees as though a tornado had suddenly strolled down Magnolia Street. Folks said she could have won a hollering contest. No doubt about it said the gang, "She should have been an opera singer!"

Every kid, man, woman, dog and cat were instantly stunned and immediately snapped their heads in the direction of the thunder which sprang from that woman's powerful lungs. Folks said they must have been made of cow hide or cast iron. "Joeyeee, Joeyeee Ooomps! Come home!" she yelled again and again, and each time louder than before. The neighborhood kids knew that Joey was probably hiding. It happened all the time. He was scared of his mother when he had done something wrong, which was pretty near all of the time.

He was also scared of his dad, Jack Oomps. We sometimes called him "Hatchet Jack" or just "old man Oomps." In all honesty, the Mayfair gang of kids played with Joey

out of necessity - because he was there - and because he was a bully. If you didn't play with Joey, well you could get beat up, and beat up bad.

He was a dark complexioned, solidly built kid who loved to torment everyone. He liked to wrestle and always won even if he had to resort to ear and back biting, hair pulling and the old favorites of choking and Indian burns.

There were not two ways about it - in our way of thinking - Joey was mean and so was his mother. And so was his father. But if either of his parents found out that Joey had hurt someone in the neighborhood, they would deal harshly with him. Now we found this to be just a little confusing. Rather than punishing him, we would have expected his parents to have given him a medal for tormenting us.

Later we found out that we did not have the whole story on Joey.

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# No Expectations

by Elizabeth Wharry

When my husband landed a job in the area, I wasn't sure what to expect. I knew it wasn't all hoop skirts and parasol!

The differences were not as pronounced as I would have thought. A few words here or there, especially the word pecan. I had always heard it pronounced pea-can. Here, its p-cahn. A shopping cart or trolley as I call it is a buggy here. Where I grew up, a buggy was what a baby was pushed in.

I had heard of fried green tomatoes from the movie. I had never experienced one before moving here. They quickly became a favorite. We have tried any number of traditional Southern dishes, most of which have become family favorites!

My methods of cooking have changed over the years. I used to discard bacon grease because that's what I was taught. I also grew up using margarine. When I saw a recipe for collard greens, it called for bacon grease. From that day on, I have saved it, and used it. A little bit goes a long way!

As a nursing student some 30 plus years ago, our class did an experiment with margarine. We put it on a low heat for several hours. It started to turn to plastic. We all just looked at each other, and shook our heads. I was surprised to learn less is more. I use less butter, and get more flavor.

What I really enjoy about living here is that one doesn't need to bundle up for 5 or 6 months out of the year. The warm weather and long growing season are a gardener's dream. Here are just so many interesting places within a 4 or 5 hour drive. Over the years, we have gone on many day trips. It would be difficult at best to pick my top 1 or 2 favorites. Taking a stroll around downtown and seeing the changes is in the top 5 of my favorites. For an old city, it sure keeps itself young!

Every girl should use what Mother Nature gave her before Father Time takes it away.



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# MOVING DAY

by Malcolm Miller

Being the son of a sharecropper growing up I never knew from one year to the next where we would be living. Fortunately the first fifteen years of my life, my family of Mama, Papa and six older boys moved around several times but stayed mostly in the Ryland area. I was born on the Carl Moring, Sr. farm and lived there just off of what is now Wall Road. Then we moved to the Ben Lawler farm when I was six years old. After two years there we moved to a farm bordering the Flint River.

In fact we moved so often that there was a joke about moving the chickens. You see the night before we were to move the chickens we would go to the hen house after dark, pull the chickens off their roosts and tie their legs together with strips of cloth. The joke was that we moved so much people would say that when we went to the hen house at night with a lantern the chickens would lay down and cross their legs waiting to be tied.

Of all the places we lived when I was growing up my happiest days were spent on the farm along the Flint River. For an eight year-old boy who loved to fish and swim I felt like I was as close to heaven as I ever wanted to be. We had a great swimming hole that all the boys in the community loved. We fished with poles and trot lines and made wire baskets out of chicken wire and put them in the river. This gave us a good supply of fish the year round. Believe me this was a welcome change from the rabbits, possums and squirrels we were able to kill or trap.

The fish were especially welcomed in the late winter months when the old milk cow went dry, the hens quit laying and the meat we had preserved in the fall was down to some sow belly and fat back.

Living in the Ryland area the first fifteen years of my life I was fortunate to be able to go to Central School from first grade to half way through the ninth grade. So naturally I had the same buddies through all those years. There was my best buddy Charlie Gossett, also Muley Taylor, Elroy Phillips, Craw Dad Warren, Claxton Warren, Dewey Webster, Emmett McKinney, just to name a few, but sad to say some of those are no longer living.

Dewey Webster, Craw Dad Warren, Claxton Warren are still around and I did see my old buddy Ed Bailey recently and it is very good to know several of them are still around.

My life totally changed when I was fifteen years old. Papa rented a farm on Bob Wade Lane near Meridianville and I was heart broken. I was leaving my beloved Flint River where I had spent those happy seven years and for the first time having to leave all my schoolmates and to make matters worse my dog, Old Shep, whom I, with affection, called Old fuzzy, died. Someone had given him to me when I was a baby and we were practically inseparable for nearly fifteen years.

One other thing that made the move from the river more painful was the fact that they offered to sell the farm on the river to Papa for four hundred dollars a year, about the same amount that he was paying for rent, but Papa had this worry about not wanting to go into debt so we had to move again and they sold the farm to someone else. So you see moving day from the farm on the river was one of the saddest days of my young life. Sometimes when I look back on those days we must have looked like the Beverly Hillbillies, with a wagon load of furniture, chickens, farm tools and a couple of milk cows tied to the back of the wagon.

But as the saying goes all's well that ends well. I soon made friends at my new school at Meridianville and am still close to some of them till this day. But the fact remains that the seven years I spent on the banks of the Flint River will always remain in my mind and moving away from there was not a happy day for a young boy.

As I grow older those days seem dearer to me as each day passes.



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# Teenagers

by Clarence Potter



Most teenagers in Scottsboro in my day had to work for any and all spending money. Our dads were busy putting groceries on the table. If you wanted to date, you worked for the money to get a hamburger; gas to get there, even in most cases the auto or Jalopy you drove.

If you were a big spender you carried her to the Tawasentha (a local drive-in theater). Back-in-my-day kids didn't drive a Buick or Chevy not even a Ford. We drove "The White Cloud", "Little Egypt", "Little Red" cars.

I drove "Rama-Lama-ding-dong" because it was a Rambler. I drove the only 6 cylinder car in the group! We all had names for our cars, the owner had worked for the privilege of driving them. We named them or someone else would call it something and the names would stick.

They were as much a part of our gang as the owners. This story is not about the cars we drove, it is about the lessons we learned while growing up in the 50s and 60s.

I, like most of my friends, worked in the grocery business. No fast food places in Scottsboro except for The Pig House, Chucks Drive Inn or Dairy Queen. Sometimes Mr. Haas would keep the concession stand at the county park open. He had a boy and a pretty daughter in amongst us.

No Hardy's, no McDonalds and no Chick-fil-A. We worked in grocery stores or maybe Lay's or VJ Elmore's 5 & 10 cent store, anywhere around town like all my friends. If we found work we just did it.

I learned that by paying attention you could learn a lot. That became kinda like a hobby for me. I've learned alot in my 77 plus years. A lot about people and their character. I learned if a woman came into the store asking for cigarettes that mostly

young women bought "Salem" older women bought "Kools". Older men bought either "Country Gentleman" or "Pall Mall" while young men bought "Winston's" or "Marlboro."

Anyway some of the older men would come in and ask for ready rolls, "the fixins" or "the makins". One had to learn quickly the difference. The Fixin" was "1 can of Blue Ribbon Malt, 5 pounds of sugar and 3 yeast cakes."

I knew right off that he was gonna make Home brew.

If he asked for "the makins" he wanted to roll a cigarette. Sometimes they would ask if "you got a ready roll" then ask for the makins, he wanted a cigarette right then and the makins for later.

He had probably been out of smokes for a day or so. So many memories of things. So many memories of people, they keep me company (as I lay awake at night trying to sleep).

Where did the 928 months I've lived go? They are gone but they definitely will never be forgotten!

**"You sound reasonable.  
Time to up my meds."**

**J.W. - Woodville**

## Old Huntsville Magazine Locations

*This is a partial list of locations - all magazines sell for \$1 at honor boxes & machines.*

*They go through checkout at Walmart, Mapco, Dollar General, Walgreens.*

**Cities Serviced:** Huntsville, Gurley, New Market, New Hope, Hazel Green, Harvest, Madison, Hampton Cove, Ryland, Meridianville,

**All Mapco's, all Walgreens, most Dollar Generals. Walmarts:** Drake & Parkway, So. Hobbs & Parkway So., Bailey Cove, University & Explorer, Hazel Green, Winchester Rd.

**Restaurants:** Rolo's, Old Heidelberg, Po Boys, Stanlieos - (Gov. Drive, Jordan Lane), Big Springs Cafe, Blue Plate/Gov Dr., Atlanta Bread, City Cafe on Drake, Mexican Takeout, Ole Dad's - Hazel Green, Honey's - Fayetteville, Mandarin/Hampton Cove; \$ Gen/Hampton Cove, Redstone Arsenal - Commissary, CVS Drugs/Cecil Ashburn, Hsv Courthouse-inside, Texaco at Hwy 72 & Nance,

**5 Points & downtown -** Star Market, Propst Drugs, Sunoco Gas, Harrison Brothers, Lewters, CT Garvins, Texaco, Hsv Library, \$Gen on Andrew Jackson, Medical Mall/Pkwy side, Ayers Fmr's Mrkt

**Misc. -** Huntsville Public Library, Packard's Antiques - So Pkwy, Pharmacy First/Madison St., Waters Sunoco, Charity Lane Quick Stop, Redstone Fed Credit Union - 231/431 No., Star Market/Meridianville, Dot's in New Hope, Texaco Gas/Bob Wallace, Exxon/Hampton Cove

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