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# Old Huntsville

HISTORY AND STORIES OF THE TENNESSEE VALLEY



## Five Months at the Kildare Hotel

It was eighty-four years ago, and I was only seven years old, so you may wonder about the clarity and depth of memories of that sojourn, that five months stay, memories that originated in a child that young and lasted this long.

**Also in this issue:** Yellow Fever Threatens Huntsville; Friday Night Lights; Curly Putman, Master Songwriter; The Murfreesboro Story; Meeting Brad Paisley; Benefits of Having a Pet; Fiddling Around; Sweet Desserts and much more!

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# Five Months at the Kildare Hotel

by Giles Hollingsworth

Except for newcomers, probably every adult and half of the children living in Madison County have seen and/or know of the storied Kildare Mansion, in the Lincoln section of town. But I'm quite sure this is a story that has never been told in print: the story of ten or twelve families spending the first five months of 1939 in that beautiful mansion. I was a child in one of those families.

It was eighty-four years ago, and I was only seven years old, so you may wonder about the clarity and depth of memories of that sojourn, that five months stay, memories that originated in a child that young and lasted this long. Or you might say, "Of course you would remember such a delightful experience". Well, I'll tell you up front that it was a "blessed" experience, but not a "delightful" one in the usual sense. And the memories associated with it are vivid primarily because they are a continuation of a package

of memories that began a few months earlier, leading us into the Kildare.

In the fall of 1938 a bitter fight arose between rival labor unions, the American Federation of Labor (AFOFL) and the Committee of Industrial Organization (CIO), over which would represent the workers at Merrimac Mill. I was too young to know the details, so I have to surmise that the AFOFL was the entrenched union there, and that the newly formed CIO (formed in 1935) was trying to replace it. I don't know how the issue was to be settled, but it was probably by worker voting. One thing for sure, it was a winner take-all situation and the "all" was the jobs and rental rights to the mill houses. Losers would purely and simply be "out"! Out of jobs and out of homes! That pitted friend against friend and relative against relative.

I don't know what prompted my father to choose the CIO, or my uncle to choose the AFOFL, because I doubt if there was a hair's difference in their promised benefits. Campaign management likely played a major role in persuading voters, and leaders on both sides obviously knew the importance of gaining the momentum and publicizing it, creating the "bandwagon syndrome". Nobody wants to lose, so when you see enough signs of sure victory you jump on the bandwagon.

So both sides worked fever-

**"Many people wonder if their lives made any difference. Marines don't have that problem."**

**Ronald Reagan**



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(in memory)

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ishly at building a bandwagon, and I'm being only partly facetious when I say they must have thought that, since the word "bandwagon, connotes music, songs would help. So they sang as they congregated near the mill and as they marched up and down Pike Street in the mill area. The AFofL people sang a very old, traditional song, "We Shall Not Be Moved":

"We are united, we shall not be moved

We are united,  
We shall not be moved  
Just like a tree that's planted  
by the water

We shall not be moved"  
(And tailoring the verses to show their support of their leaders:) "We love McKelvey, we shall not be moved

We love McKelvey,  
We shall not be moved", etc.

The CIO people chose the framework of a Gus Kahn song that had been popular a few years before:

"Who's that coming down the street AFofL, heading for defeat

Who's their leader, Edward Jones, Not enough members to sing a song Tah-de-ah,

The CIO's gonna win Tah-de-ah, the AFofL's gonna lose" (Then repeat the tah-de-ah part).

For clarification let me say that I didn't hear that singing in person. But my 13 year old sister, Norma and her friends, like every other teenager in the village, found it either amusing or interesting, so they sang the ditties there in our home, at 309 A Street, the very last house on the north end of the street. And, as teens do, quite possibly they changed a few words, including names, but as far as I know, Edward Jones and a Mr. McKelvey were AFofL leaders.

I'm pretty sure the girls changed one line of the CIO ditty, to make it come out: "Who's that coming down the street,

AFofL, I smell their feet".

As the words of the songs indicate, there was ill-will, which became animosity, which expanded and deepened. Even at my age I could sense it, so how intense and nerve-wracking it must have been for adults, especially the mill workers. I knew there were neighbors who had come to shun my dad, just because he was a CIO advocate, even though he was not one of the leaders. There was now enmity toward one of the kindest, most gentle men ever born. The hostility continued day after day. And I remember it well.

Then came D-day, with jubilation for the AFofL voters. I'm sure it was just that. Jubilation! Happiness! Joy! Why wouldn't it be? They had won a bitter struggle!. Their jobs were safe, and they would not be looking for a place to live. No more tension. No more worries. A tremendous load off their shoulders.

But I like to think that most, or at least some of them found it to be not a hollow victory, but one of mixed emotions and

regrets that the stakes had been that high. Because what ensued was extremely painful and humiliating, and placed a lot of people in agonizing poverty for a long, long time. Remember, the Great Depression was still going strong.

If anyone had doubted that the losers would be ousted, that doubt was soon erased, because right after the pink slips, came the eviction crews. They came to our block late one day in early December, and as I walked down the sidewalk, on my way to school the next day, I saw a pathetic, traumatizing sight: all the belongings of two families setting out in their front yards. If anyone ever doubted that a seven year old could be deeply saddened by someone else's misfortune, that doubt should also be erased.

This is probably the most indelible memory of my lifetime. I can, even now, plainly see the beds the families set up and slept in during that cool night and watch them packing clothes into cardboard boxes. When I, now and then, give that memory the okay to fully



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burst through again, I find my heart still breaking for those families.

I wish I knew the number of families that had to leave, but I don't, and I have never been able to find anything written about this ordeal. My estimating may be way off but I'll give it a shot: Our block consisted of seven or eight duplex houses, homes for 14 to 16 families, of which at least three, or roughly 20 percent, were ousted. There were 279 houses in the Village, and assuming they were all duplexes, that means about 558 families and 20% of that number is 111.

We were the third family in our block destined for eviction, but fortunately we were in the moving process, loading a rented truck with our belongings, when the eviction crew arrived. The CIO had rented an empty office building downtown on Green Street as a temporary storage place for household belongings of the evictees. It had been vacant for a while and the utilities except the water had been cut off... no heat, no electricity. But when that moving truck left 309 A Street we were homeless, so we had no choice but to move into the Reeves Building with our furniture, all of us except Mama and my 16 month-old baby brother, Glen. They moved into Grandma Carter's apartment with her on West Clinton Street, very near downtown.

The Reeves building was a torture chamber. Daddy somehow, somewhere found a small kerosene heater, but the weather had turned cold, so here developed probably my second most vivid memory. The memory of Bobby (my 4 year

old brother) and I, shivering, lying on the floor, under a bed. We were at that spot because it best enabled us to get near that little heater, which sat about three feet from the bed. Daddy, Norma and Richard (my 10 year old brother) were seated, huddled around it too. I think the misery of our stay in that icebox was so deep that it wiped out all other memories of it except that horrible one, and one other, a good one, the memory of a one day hiatus from there to have Christmas dinner with Mama and Granny at Granny's apartment. It was the bleakest Christmas ever, with no gifts exchanged, but I won't dwell on that. It was gift enough to be together, in a warm house.

Then (and I have to make some more presumptions here) the CIO came through! They rented the Kildare Hotel, and moved us, along with several other homeless families, into it. And yes, it was indeed a blessing! Maybe even a life-saver, because it brought us in from the cold. A few more days in the Reeves Building would have surely meant pneumonia for some of us. We definitely had

no money for doctor bills or hospitals.

A brief history lesson here for Huntsville newcomers: The Kildare was built in 1887 as the residence of industrialist Michael O'Shaugnessey, then sold to the daughter of Cyrus McCormick in 1900. In 1932 George W. Lehman bought it at auction and turned it into a hotel, which obviously failed, as it was vacant in 1938. But the "hotel" designation stuck, and we knew it as the Kildare Hotel. (For more details please use Wikipedia for the history, and if you look hard enough you'll find photos of the interior).

So suddenly, here we were in a magnificent mansion! A modern descriptive word would be, "AWSOME"! So there was much oohing and aahing from mine and the other families at the spacious, colorful, elegantly trimmed rooms. I can't begin to describe it, but the floors, stained glass windows, mirrors and fireplaces were unforgettable memory makers. But honestly, the Kildare's aesthetic beauty was second-

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fractions."**

**Bob Pierce, Madison**

ary to its intrinsic beauty. If ever a building had a personality this one did. It was warm and safe. It was welcoming and comforting. It was truly a blessing, an even greater one than we realized.

But as I said earlier, living there was not a “delightful” experience. I don’t want to sound the least bit ungrateful, but the facts were, reality was still there for us to face. Reality meant no job, no money, inadequate clothing, no health care provisions. We knew that our stay there in that beautiful building was temporary. Elaborate living quarters could not block those facts, and the depression they caused, from the minds of the parents of five children. Those children knew the facts, the reality.

Years later, after it was too late to ask Daddy, I wondered who furnished the food for that group of families. I think it was the CIO, but perhaps Madison County Welfare was involved. If any reader of this piece knows, please tell me. Like manna from Heaven, it was there. It was nicely prepared daily by the new resident ladies, each taking their turn at cooking and serving. As I recall, the dining room was not large enough for that many people, so we took food to our rooms and enjoyed meals as individual families. It was plain food and the most common items were beans, potatoes, turnip greens, cornbread, biscuits, eggs, meat and rice pudding. There was also cheese, peanut butter and crackers.

Speaking of peanut butter and crackers, that is all I can remember ever being available for my school lunch, which is one of the reasons I didn’t like having to attend. That, and having to wear the same clothes day after day. Even seven year old’s get embarrassed. So I feigned bad colds a lot, coughing enough to convince mama to let me stay home, and to write my absence excuse the next day. Also, I played hookey several days during the spring, mainly by just walking around the neighborhood. I now realize how dangerous that was. And furthermore it meant repeating the second grade because of too many days absent from class.

But there was one thing I did like about Lincoln School: their daily student assemblies in the auditorium. The principal would make announcements, then young teachers (all females) would teach us songs, almost always the liveliest new pop hits, like: A Tisket a Tasket, An Apple For The Teacher, Jeepers Creepers, and Little Sir Echo. There I also learned: Maybe, Wishing

(Will Make It So), and a new one that became the number one song of 1939, God Bless America. Those young teachers never knew how much those songs sessions meant to me, and surely to others. In my opinion music played a major role in helping America get through the Depression.

The novelty songs that I mentioned didn’t become all time favorites, but it is amazing how many songs of 1938-39 did, including: Alexander’s Ragtime Band, Thanks For The Memory, When The Saints Go Marchin’ In, Heart and Soul, Beer Barrel Polka, Tommy Dorsey’s Boogie Woogie, and Harbor Lights.

We didn’t own a radio, but some others at the Kildare did, and one on each floor had the unspoken approval of everyone to play it loud enough for neighbors to hear. WBHP’s Sterchi’s Jamboree, a daily half hour of country music (then called “hillbilly” music) was the hands down favorite program. We enjoyed songs by Bob Wills, Gene Autry, Sons of the Pioneers, Delmore Brothers, etc, and two by a newcomer who was burning up the airways, Roy Acuff, singing Wabash Cannon Ball, and Great Speckled Bird.



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Strangely there weren't many young school age kids there at the Kildare. My most constant playmates were George, Lola and Marie Davis, ages about nine, seven, and six, respectively. Other family names there that I recall are Jones and Flatt. I hope some readers will contact me with the names of others. I really would like to know.

The winter was not severe, and all in all, health-wise, we fared pretty well except for one scary incident. Glen contracted a cold and his temperature shot up, causing a convulsion. Mama probably saved his life by quickly running water into the bath tub and placing him in it, reducing the fever.

I think it was in March when daddy found a way to make a little money, as a door-to-door salesman of Bibles and blankets for the L.B. Price Mercantile Co.

Apparently the CIO's Kildare lease ended with the end of the school year. Daddy found an affordable place to rent on First Street, in Lowe Mill. So with a mixture of reluctance and optimism we moved out about the first of June, 1939. We weren't the first or the last to leave, but all the other families were out by the required time, closing the book and ending the story of the Kildare Hotel as a home for the homeless

I have already mentioned my wishes about unknown things, and now I'll end this story with a wish list, with some retrospect wishes and some present ones:

I wish we could have stayed longer at the Kildare.

I wish we could have recovered more, financially, to better prepare us for what was ahead. I wish I could tell you that we were able to cope well enough during the ensuing months, but I can't. In fact, Daddy had to find an even lower rent house,

so in November we moved from First Street to Boogertown, Huntsville's worst ever slum. We remained in abstract poverty four more years.

I wish, with this story, to create a deeper insight into the Great Depression, to furnish a bit of overlooked history. Especially to tell of the grand and noble purpose the Kildare Mansion once served, and served so well, as a place of refuge for several homeless families.



Giles Hollingsworth is an author with 39 years experience mostly in used and rare book sales as well as vintage magazines. He lives in Roswell, GA but lived in Huntsville in his early years. He can be reached by email at [holbooks@bellsouth.net](mailto:holbooks@bellsouth.net)

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# Local News Through the Years

## Local Boy Gets Third Leg (from 1918 newspaper)

Private John Kellogg of Madison County received a telegram last week informing him that he had been wounded, degree undetermined, while serving with the Army in France last month.

When he contacted the authorities to tell them he was home on leave and was perfectly well, he was ordered to report to the military hospital in Augusta, Georgia to be fitted with an artificial leg.

If the authorities have their way, Mr. Kellogg will be the only man in Alabama with three legs.

## Lacey's Spring Woman Starves to Death While Sleeping (from 1904 paper)

Mrs. Sallie Rutherford of Lacey's Spring was stricken with what was labeled "inflammation." She fell into a coma and her jaws were so tightly locked that no food, liquid, or solid could be administered to her. Known as "The Sleeping Woman," her case attracted national attention and physicians from all over visited her.

After 57 days without food or water, Mrs. Rutherford awoke and quietly asked for

**"I wish I could lose weight as easily as I lose my phone, keys, temper and even my mind."**

**Annie Jackson, Woodville**

something to eat. Alas, she was unable to digest any food that she ate, and after lingering a few more days, she died of starvation.

## An Unfortunate Situation (from 1901 newspaper)

After January 1, 1902 I will begin to close out my entire stock of old whiskeys and brandies for cash only. Persons wishing to purchase a gallon or more of these fine goods should avail themselves of this opportunity. Will positively allow credit to no one in the future. To the creditors who have placed me in this unfortunate situation, I say good riddance and may you reap what you deserve. W. E. Everett, Propr. Huntsville Hotel Bar

## Innocent Amusement Turns Into Melee On The Square (from 1871 newspaper)

About 3 o'clock yesterday an event happened near the Square which has led to much amusement for the local wags.

A very small Indian woman, returning from a shopping tour, was carrying a large old stove that must have weighed

at least 200 pounds, on top of her head. It balanced there as nicely as if it had been on its legs.

A gang of astonished vagabonds loitering in front of the Courthouse gazed upon the walking human freight car in bewildered simplicity, when a big burly man, carrying only the four stove legs and a section of pipe, came up behind her. The man was evidently the husband of the little woman carrying the big stove, and he saw the group of men staring at the woman.

When one of the vagabonds offered to help the lady with her burden the husband threw down his load, rushed into the crowd and began to beat on two of the men, thinking that they were "flirting" with his wife. The two men were shaken up a bit, but hastily beat a retreat, a little wiser for the experience.

## His Ankle Amputated

A week ago Wiley Aklin had the misfortune to have his ankle dislocated and it was found necessary to have the limb amputated. The operation was done successfully and at last reports the man is feeling comfortable enough to recover.



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# Fiddling Around

by Bill Goodson



*There was an article in the Old Huntsville December issue by Austin Miller about squirrel hunting on Monte Sano. That story put me in mind of another kind of hunting, on the same mountain, that I had experienced as a youngster.*

My father, Houston Goodson, was about to take his teenage son on a bass-fishing trip to Lake Kissimmee, Florida. This was quite a privilege, as he had been making that trip with friends every year, but never with my generation invited. I could tell many stories about that adventure, but I'll spare the reader. Instead, I want you to become intimately acquainted with the lowly earthworm.

When my dad first told me about the practice of fiddling for worms, I was skeptical. It sounded to me like a sort of snipe-hunting yarn intended to trap the uninitiated into believing a tall tale. I knew him well enough to know he loved to kid around.

**"If you happen to walk by my house today and see all the kids locked outside, mind your own business. We're having a fire drill."**

**Homeschooling Mom**

Nevertheless, I suspended disbelief as we piled into the car and headed for Monte Sano, just a few blocks from where we lived on East Clinton. All the way up Bankhead, turning on Fearn Street and parking on the shoulder.

He grabbed an old, rusty handsaw and a bucket from the back seat and guided me into the woods. I watched him expectantly as he found a proper sapling and wielded the saw.

"Now son," he said, "you just stand over there," pointing to a spot a few feet away. "I'm going to saw on this tree, not to cut through it, but just to vibrate the soil. Take that bucket and just watch. When you see worms, grab 'em."

Still doubtful, but unaccustomed to disputing my father, I watched and waited.

I heard the grating sound of the saw and looked down. Soon I spied some motion in the leaves that covered the ground. Not in just one spot, either. It could have been a tribal leaf-dance to the tune of the vibrating sapling. I stood breathless and wide-eyed.

Then the worms appeared amongst the dead foliage. So many of them, that I was like a one-armed paper hanger trying to grab them and throw them into the bucket. These weren't of the reddish color I had seen in gardens, but a whitish hue,

and much larger - five or six inches long.

I could see that, if I were a large-mouth bass, they would look yummy. Not so to me. "Yowee!" I shouted.

Dad was laughing at the sight of me filling the bucket. "How many you got there?"

"I don't know....maybe fifteen or twenty. I haven't counted."

"Okay, we can stop now." He pulled up from his crouched position and wiped his brow. "We need to get home and put a little ice on 'em. Throw some leaves and dirt in the bucket. We'll get more dirt from the garden."

Long story short, the worms made the trip down U.S. Highway 27 to the Grape Hammock Fishing Camp near Lake Wales, Florida and performed as expected. The bucket came back full of bass.

Moral # 1: Never doubt your father.

Note: Wikipedia tells me that "In 2008, researchers from Vanderbilt University claimed that the worms scurry to the surface because the vibrations are similar to those produced by digging moles, which prey on earthworms."

So... those worms didn't surface because they were dying (!! ) to meet a bass.

Moral # 2: Never question the motive of a fiddleworm.

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# From Old to New

by Kathy Dupree Engel



I was born in 1955 in the Old Fifth Avenue Hospital, July 4. When my daddy took my mom and me home, it was to my granddaddy's cotton farm he worked where Intergraph is now parallel to 1-565. He worked for the Madison Police Department when the cotton was planted and then come cotton picking time, he and some fellows that lived along the same road helped him pack it in a cotton picker, dump it into a cotton wagon and haul it off to the cotton gin in Madison.

The house was 2 stories, second floor having a living room, bedroom and kitchen. The first floor had a living room, kitchen,

pantry and 3 bedrooms. I can still remember the gopher rats that used to come into the house at night. My parents and I lived on the top floor.

When I was born, my dad would bring me down to the kitchen and put me in the bassinet next to the pot-bellied stove for my grandma to watch until my mom got up.

I'll never forget the fun times on that old farm. We didn't have a bathroom, only outhouses and in the wintertime we had slop jars kept in the pantry. We took baths in an old galvanized tub we set up on the back porch. The lucky kid was the one who got to take a bath first, because the last one got the dirtiest water. My granddaddy use to slaughter a pig for the 4th of July and bury it in the ground and cover it up over coals and cook it all day. My daddy used to keep bees back away from the house and would go out and bring in a big tub of honey and honeycomb for us. We thought we were living rich then. There were buttercups and daffodils growing all over the place.

In the fall, my granddaddy would kill a pig, cut it up, put it on the floor in the kitchen and salt it down. Then he would hang the meat up in the smoke house and smoke it so we had ham, bacon, whatever kind of pork you wanted.

Grandma took care of her

chickens and got eggs from them, but every once in a while she'd let the eggs go and we'd have a bunch of baby chicks to look at. Of course, mama hen didn't like us "looking" so she'd take off after us and we'd have to run fast to get away from her.

I remember the pot-bellied stoves keeping us warm. I also remember looking down at the floor and seeing through the cracks the chickens walking around under the house. The house was built on piers and there was no foundation to keep out critters or cold air.

I bet if you went down that road that is parallel to 1-565 now, where Intergraph is, and go back into where that thicket of trees is, you'd find a lot of wild buttercups there. Folks, those were my grandma's flowers. She was partial to them and I never remember not seeing them.

When granddaddy had a stroke, he had to quit the Police Department and move off the cotton farm because he couldn't work it anymore. He moved out to Monrovia and lived out there about 10 years before he died.

**"Life insurance keeps me broke, but there's a silver lining to that cloud. When I die I'll be really rich!"**

*Everly Green, Woodville*



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# Huntsville News in 1911



\* **Edward E. Ezell, aged 28 years, is dead.** He died this morning at 5 o'clock at his home on McClung Street, where he had suffered typhoid fever for several weeks. Mr. Ezell was thought to be better until yesterday when he suffered two hemorrhages and another late in the evening, which hastened his death.

A heart-broken young widow and two little children survive, besides the father and the mother, and one sister.

The remains will be shipped to Mr. Ezell's old home at Elkton, TN tonight on the 1:35 train, going via Pulaski, and from there by private conveyance to his home out at Elkton, where the funeral will be held tomorrow at noon.

The news of the death will be read as a shock to all of his friends and the business world. Mr. Ezell was vice president and general manager of the Ezell Bros. & Terry Co. department store in this city. He was recognized as one of our shrewdest business men and was always found in the lead with any movement looking to the development and building of Huntsville. The town is in gloom over the death of young Mr. Ezell, who, although he had not been a resident of our city but a few months, had won his way into the hearts and affections of our people.

\* Miss Willie Harris is reported to be seriously ill at her home on Adams Avenue.

\* Found - a buggy lap robe on Franklin Street. Owner return to this office and recover by describing the robe and paying for this ad.

\* For rent - three nice upstairs rooms furnished or unfurnished for gentlemen, preferably. Location, central and on the car line. Apply to "W" in care of the Daily Times.

\* Wanted - a good nurse who can do general housework and care for two small children. Can get good position and good salary by applying to this office.

\* Going out of Business - we have 10 tall business show-cases for sale, also one small cash register, two horses and two delivery wagons. If you are looking for a good bargain, see me at the Old Lilly Bakery Stand or call me at phone 408.

\* "Picto", Huntsville's popular playhouse, offers the amusement-loving people this week, a series of choice entertainments that will please. Spend your evenings with us in enjoyment. Admission is 5 cents.

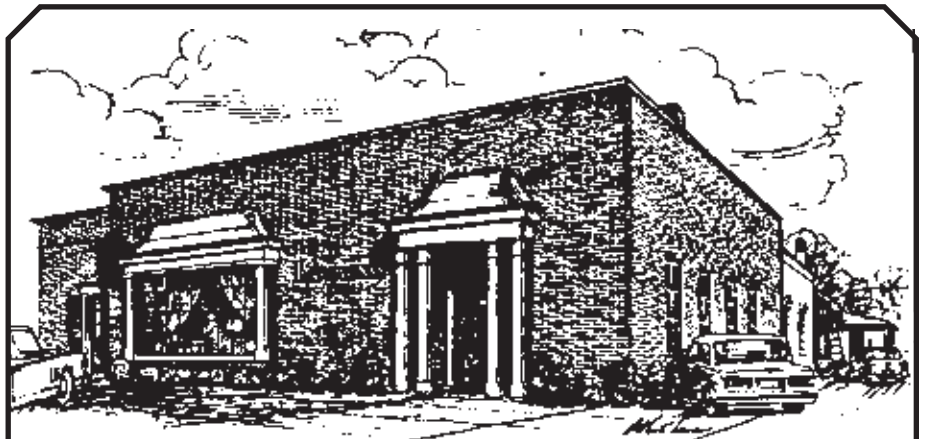
\* **Dr. Lockwood of Huntsville** passed through here to Fayetteville last week. Upon his return he did some veterinary work for Mr. Fred Baeder and also removed a large piece of cob from the mouth of one of Mr. Hense Lowe's horses that had been unable to eat for

five days because of it, causing said horse and the owner to feel much better. Dr. Lockwood certainly understands his business. He spent Sunday night with Dr. McCowan.

## The Wedding Went On

A wagon crash on Holmes Street in which the bridegroom, his parents and his best man were riding and were more or less seriously injured was not enough to cancel the wedding of Philip Schaeffer to Miss Beatrice Weil. Mr. Schaeffer, his wedding suit torn and dirty and with several bruises on his neck and face, took the hand of his bride and quietly answered questions put to him by the minister. The best man limped and was considerably shaken up, but did his duty effectively as if he had not been hurt.

The parents of Mr. Schaeffer had to be propped up in chairs, but they gave their blessings to the bride and groom.



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Covid and tooth loss are now a problem. Some people who have had the virus are now having their teeth break off—then having to have the remaining tooth pulled. Also, breathing and heart problems are showing up on many Covid patients. Get all of your shots as soon as possible; they are free at Walmart and many drug stores.

Has the pandemic taught you how to appreciate the small things like being grateful for what you have, more urgent things, and how lucky we are to have food and shelter as so many people face job loss and inadequate housing?

Why should you get vaccinated:

1. It is safe.
2. It is simple.
3. It is free of charge. It protects you and your loved ones.

An excellent book to read that is not out now but available on March 7th is "Run Rose Rose" by James Patterson. Dolly Parton wrote the song. Look for the movie soon.

Remember, if you don't like the road you are walking on, start paving another one.

**"It is one of the tragic ironies of the theater that only one man in it can count on steady work - the night watchman."**

**Tallulah Bankhead**

Spring is just around the corner, starting on March 20th. I don't know about you, but it is my favorite time. It is so lovely to see the daffodils and pick them for a breath of Spring in the house.

I think we are all weary of the Covid reports, but we still must be vigilant about washing our hands and staying six feet from others when we are in public and wearing masks. Forty-nine countries, including the United States, now have the BA2 virus. That is no laughing matter. A friend of mine is in the hospital with Covid for the third time. He needs our prayers. It is a new Covid subvariant. Two thousand people are still dying per day.

It has been nice to finally have the Broadway plays coming back to town. "Cats" was delightful. If you don't have tickets for the rest of the season, I urge you to get yours now. You will have a treat.

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# Sugarfoot (2011)

by Bill Alkire



On one of my road trips to Louisiana, I encountered a heartwarming incident I must tell you about. Having boarded dogs, cats, turtles, lizards, squirrels, birds, Guinea pigs and spiders, I've noticed that animals often are smarter than we give them credit; the jury is still out on cats.

Hurricane Katrina in 2005 had stranded a puppy of Great Pyrenees origin at my friend's home near Baton Rouge. The puppy was traumatized and nearly starved from going through the hurricane. She was sweet and gentle. With no owner located, my friend decided to raise her. The concern was with the animal's eventual size. My friend's brother agreed to help with food, medicine, whatever was needed. The dog had found a forever home. She had woven herself into everyone's heart.

The puppy was a beautiful furry white ball and it was decided she should be named "Sugarfoot." Now for the event that gave evidence of how special this dog was. It was 2011, I had traveled down to Louisiana to take part in Mardi Gras. Each time I visited; Sugarfoot would get her leash for me to take her for a walk, or was she taking me for a walk? My friend lived in a rural area. One could walk a good distance on a firm surface without concern

for traffic.

This time I was walking Sugarfoot, we were about 1/2 mile from the house. She abruptly stopped. Her ears went back, showing great concern for an open ditch area. She pulled her leash strongly and at one point tried to drag me into the ditch.



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**"My new computer came with a font called 'Dingbats' - perfect for writing the relatives."**

**Jerry Wilder, Arab**

Weighing over seventy-five pounds, there was little a person could do if she did not want to obey commands.

I approached the ditch cautiously and proceeded to investigate with her to ascertain what she found so intriguing. A light "meow" could be heard. Sugarfoot became excited, her tail was straight-out and about to wag off. She reached her snout into the end of a drainage pipe while standing in two inches of water. She pulled out a small kitten by the scruff of its neck and set it down in front of me. Sugarfoot began to lick the small creature from head to tail. The kitten looked like a drowned rat. Attempts by me to pull her away was futile. The small creature clung to Sugarfoot's long hair on her hip and would not let go.

Sugarfoot would not budge without the kitten. She proudly walked home with the kitten clinging to her long hip hair. The kitten could be heard purring while clutching onto Sugarfoot. My friend provided food and water for the kitten. The kitten, however, preferred to drink from Sugarfoot's water dish. Sugarfoot was very protective of her food area and had been known to get aggressive.

The kitten was taken to the local Veterinary Clinic to be checked in. Sugarfoot insisted on going with the kitten to the clinic. She observed the kitten closely, to assure treatment met her approval. The kitten feared humans and found Sugarfoot someone she could trust. After the kitten was checked, Sugarfoot had to be forced into the car. She did not want to leave her new friend.

Sugarfoot grieved for the kitten for many days. The kitten found a new home with a Clinic staffer.

Sugarfoot came to Huntsville to live with her co-owner for a time. Being such a large dog, along with her fear of storms, the small facility hindered her spirit. She tore the place up and disrupted the complex. She traveled back to Louisiana where she lived out her good life bringing joy to all who knew her.

We humans can learn a lot about compassion and how to treat those different from us.

**"Let's stop sending money to other countries and let them hate us for free."**

**Theodore Nix, Scottsboro**

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# THE 100TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE JAMES KING DRAKE HOME

*by William Sibley*

The Drake history of Madison County began in 1807 when Drake brothers James, 27, and William, 18, and their brother-in-law, James Neely, arrived at Ditto Landing after traveling down the Tennessee River in a flat-bottomed boat. That area was a part of the Mississippi Territory, but it would be 1808 before the creation of Madison County.

Those early Drake relatives settled in nearby Little Cove, later renamed Drakes' Cove and still later, Jones Valley. James and William were the sons of American Revolutionary War officer, Captain John Drake and Jean Neely Drake, the great-grandparents of James King Drake. Captain Drake was a proud, distinguished gentleman who was easily recognized. He was a religious man, a Quaker Baptist who wore knee breeches and high-buckled shoes and spoke Old English.

In 1810 and 1811, more Drake relatives, including Captain Drake, arrived in Drakes' Cove and became large landowners. Captain Drake's son, Elijah, married Elizabeth Wills Buford of Big Cove and they became the parents of fourteen children, all Big Cove residents. Rev. John Henry Drake, son of Elijah, was a circuit-riding preacher who died of pneumonia, brought on by riding his beloved horse, Postboy, home from a church service on a very cold day in March of 1888. Rev. John Henry Drake was the father of James King Drake (1870-1957). In 1896, James King Drake married Annie Eliza Miller, first cousin of my grandmother, Anna Milligan (Miller) Sibley. Children of John Henry and Annie Eliza were Herman (married Jessie); Marvin (Grace); Annie Lee (Thomas Elbert Brooks, Sr.); Grace (Ed Ikard); and Roberta (J.E. Nunn, Jr.). There were seventeen grandchildren.

After the 1938 death of Annie Drake, daughters Grace, Annie Lee and Roberta (in turn and in that order) moved with their families into the Drake home to care for their father.

Mr. Drake's grandchildren were very successful. Included were a physician, a musician, a pharmacist, a military airplane pilot, businessmen and other successes.

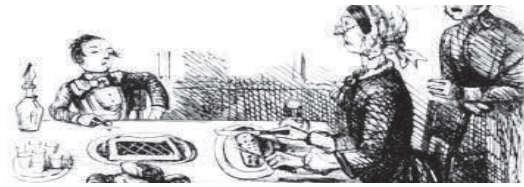
Granddaughters Mary Ann (Ikard) Blakemore and Marguerite (Nunn) Koontz

supplied most of the information of the two-story King Drake home.

King Drake was a highly religious man and an educated farmer who never let a meal pass with offering a blessing. He was an elder in the Big Cove USA Presbyterian Church and served as president of the Sixth District Sunday School Association and as a member of the Madison County Board of Education 1918-1933. He most likely received his earliest education at Big Cove's Drake School and later was schooled in Huntsville and Winchester.

In 1922, King Drake built a beautiful home on

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King Drake Road and that home, no doubt, was the envy of his neighbors. Daughter Roberta celebrated her eighth birthday with a party there in 1923. She had a beautiful playhouse upstairs.

Drake School, founded in the 1840s by King Drake's father, stood on the opposite side of King Drake Road, just north of the house. After school ceased holding classes, the building was disassembled and the lumber was used to construct a small house behind the Drake home. Grandson Bill Nunn, pharmacist and amateur artist, hung his art work in the small home that earlier had served as sleeping quarters for Herman and Marvin.

Mr. Drake was a sheep farmer who owned a large peach orchard. Mary Ann and Marguerite recall their grandfather's green 1939 Chevrolet which he usually drove in second gear. Mr. Drake would remove the back seat and pack the empty space with sheep's wool, which he would take to market in Fayetteville, accompanied by Ikard grandchildren Betty Jane, Mary Ann and James, and grandson Billy Brooks. Mary Ann and Marguerite recall that long lines of cars would be backed up at the peach orchard where customers could buy ready-picked peaches, or pick their own.

According to Marguerite, the Drakes' earliest electricity came from Little Cove on Big Cove's east side. A phone was installed in the 1950s. A buggy house sat across the road from the Drake home, and on the front porch were a swing and a bench. On the back porch the Drakes kept a dinner bell, a water bucket and dipper, and a wash pan where farm workers could clean up before lunch.

A happy occasion in the Drake home was when daughter Annie Lee and Thomas Elbert Brooks Sr. were married there, but a sad occasion occurred when preschool-aged granddaughter Sylvia Nunn died in the home.

The grandchildren like to recall "Memory Lane," a name they gave to the trail they followed when walking to church. They spent countless hours gathering, cracking and eating hickory nuts behind the house.

King Drake's son Herman served in World War I and Marvin served in World War II. At the end of each war, King Drake blew loud blasts on his bugle announcing the war's end and letting Big Cove citizens know their sons would be coming home. My father served in World War I and my mother recalled hearing the chilling, happy bugle sounds at the end of both wars.

Today, Chris and Anita Upp and their three children live in the historic King Drake home. Anita, daughter of Marguerite and Jackie Koontz, is the great-granddaughter of King

Drake, and the Upp's children are his great-great-grandchildren.

The Drake home still holds the charm it had when it was built a century ago, and nobody but Drake descendants has ever lived in the historic home.

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# Heard On the Street

by *Cathey Carney*



Have you noticed that the months seem to roll by more quickly? I think that happens for sure when you get older.

Were you able to find my tiny tree I hid in the last issue? It was on p. 29 in the **John Richard** ad, and we had many who found it but only the first one wins. The lady who called was **Patricia Wells** of Lacys Spring. Patricia worked 32 years for the Project Office CCWS on Redstone Arsenal, and retired 11 years ago. She lives with her sweet daughter now and loves it. Congratulations Patricia!

Then our Photo of the Month for February was that of a young **Mike Kaylor** who worked for many years at the Huntsville Times and wrote the best restaurant reviews. The first caller to ID Mike was **Jerry Crigger** whom we used to see every year at the Trade

Day on the Square in September. Jerry worked for AT&T for 31 years when it was Bellsouth, South Central Bell, etc. He says he buys his Old Huntsville copies at Rolo's on Airport Road but now he will have them delivered right to his mailbox! Congratulations to you Jerry.

Speaking of **Rolo's** - They're Open for Breakfast now!

**Mary Harris** had an 89th birthday on Jan. 30 and we know there was lots of partying going on - Happy Birthday to YOU.

Another recent birthday was that of **William R. Lucas** of Huntsville, who is a Marshall Space Flight Center retiree. He will be 100 years old on March 1!! He is getting tons of birthday cards from the MSFC Retirees Association who are so proud of him. Happy Birthday to you Sir!

I'm sure you all have noticed that eating has become more expensive. It is time to tighten our belts for all of us and one way you can do that is buy less meat when you grocery shop. Start eating more fresh/frozen veges, beans, rice, pasta, bread etc. and you will save money. It might even help your good health, buy the meat but just use less of it.

We wanted to send a special hello to **Rolland Thomas**, who is one of our Iowa subscribers! Rolland has friends in the south and really would love to live right here in Huntsville but his home is in Iowa. We love you no matter where you live and keep

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## Photo of The Month

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We are now the largest city in Alabama and along with that come alot more drivers. Newcomers are not familiar with our one way streets and it's more important than ever to be defensive when you are driving. Two tips that might save your life: DON'T run any red lights, and when you are at a light and it changes to green, wait a second and look both ways before you go. Lately we have noticed that many are not paying attention, and are running red lights.

There are several birthday ladies who are members of the Preceptor Alpha chapter of Beta Sigma Phi in Huntsville. **Pat Riley** has a March 2 birthday, **Sherry Taylor** is on March 6, **Vivian Kruse** celebrates on March 20 and **Linda Drake** has one on March 22. That's a lot of celebrating going on! Happy Birthday to all the ladies.

**Buddy Lewis** called to tell us his dear friend just celebrated her 99th birthday Jan. 22. She loves reading history and stays up to date on what's happening in the world. **Kitty (Trump) Willis** is the lady and we want to add our Happy Birthday wishes to Buddy's!

Because we are so looking forward to warmth and spring to arrive I have hidden a tiny tiny daffodil within the pages of this magazine. Be the first to call when you find it and if you have NOT won before you get a free subscription to Old Huntsville! I don't expect any calls though. It will be SOO teeny.

Elizabeth Wharry let us know that she had talked with Sister Anne Cecile recently. She is 95 and very active. She is an Ursuline nun at the Mother House in Cleveland, OH. She is celebrating 75 years as a nun. Anyone taught by Catholic nuns will never forget it and they don't put up with anything in the classroom. Special greetings to Sr. Anne Cecile.

Here's a good tip - do you have shirts/sweaters that have scratchy labels? Rather than cutting them off, just stick a banda-aid on top of it and no more itching!

Congratulations to writer and frequent contributor to Old Huntsville Magazine - **M.D. Smith**. He just won a writer's competition as favorite tale in the forthcoming print anthology of The Best of Frontier Tales. The name of his short story was "Gus and Bess."

Also regarding M.D. - he had done quite a bit of research on the feature story he wrote in the Jan. 2022 issue (#347) about the 1918 Pandemic that hit Huntsville and resulted in many deaths. We were contacted by a Huntsville middle school teacher who wanted to use the article in the **STEM program** at her school. She wanted to distribute nearly 200 copies to all of her students. As you know STEM stands for Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics. We're really proud of this!

Whenever you find things that give you **comfort**, do it whether it's taking a walk, calling a friend or just being quiet. We all need a little comfort right now.

Have a good month.

## Ron Eyestone

1938 - 2022



We lost a dear friend on Jan. 31, 2022. Ron lived in the Huntsville/ Madison area for over 60 years and worked in engineering for the Department of Defense for many years. He was a Consultant to Old Huntsville magazine since we began in 1989. Ron had the best sense of humor and was a loyal friend. He was a master at grilling and his grilled chicken and white sauce was legend. He never complained ever when he was feeling badly.

Ron is survived by his wife of 42 years, Barb. He also leaves daughter Cindy Burcham (Steve), son Bill Eyestone (Heather), and daughter Sandra Brooks (Stephen). He was grandpa to 7 grandchildren and 2 great-granddaughters.

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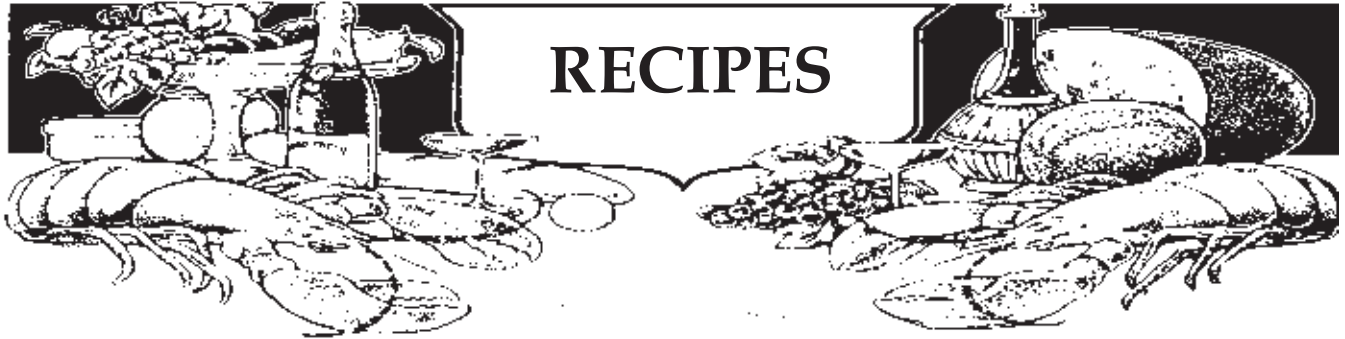


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# RECIPES

## Sweet and Fruity

### Blueberry Pie

- 1/4 c. white sugar
- 3 T. cornstarch
- 1/4 t. salt
- 1/2 t. ground cinnamon
- 4 c. fresh blueberries
- 2 frozen pastries for a 9" double-crust pie
- 1 T. butter

Preheat oven to 425° degrees. Mix sugar, cornstarch, salt and cinnamon, sprinkle over blueberries. Line pie dish with one pie crust. Pour berry mixture into the crust and dot with butter. Cut remaining pastry into 1/2" wide strips, and make lattice top. Crimp and flute edges.

Bake pie on lower shelf of oven for about 50 minutes, or until crust is golden brown.

### Juicy Peach Crisp

- 6 fresh peaches - peeled, pitted and sliced
- 1 t. almond extract
- 1 c. all-purpose flour

- 1 c. white sugar
- 1/4 c. brown sugar
- 1/2 t. ground cinnamon
- 1/4 t. salt
- 1/2 c. butter

Preheat oven to 375° and grease an 8" square baking dish. Place the peaches in the bottom of the baking dish and mix in the almond extract.

In another bowl, combine the flour, sugar, brown sugar, cinnamon and salt. Cut the butter into the flour mixture with a pastry cutter until the mixture resembles crumbs. Sprinkle the flour mixture in an even layer over the top of the peaches, and bake in the preheated oven for about 45 minutes, until the peaches are bubbling and the topping is browned.

### Lemon Cream Cheese Bars

- Cooking spray
- 2 pkgs. (8 oz. ea.) refrigerated crescent roll dough, divided

- 2 lemons, zested and juiced, divided
- 2 pkgs. (8 oz.) cream cheese, softened

- 1/2 c. white sugar
- 2 T. butter, melted
- 3 T. white sugar

Preheat oven to 350°. Line the bottom of a 9x13" baking dish with aluminum foil and spray with cooking spray. Press 1 can crescent roll dough into the bottom of the prepared baking dish, stretching to the edges.

Mix the zest of 1-1/2 lemons and juice from 2 lemons together in a bowl. Beat cream cheese and 1/2 cup sugar into lemon zest mixture using an electric mixer until smooth and creamy; spread over crescent roll dough layer.

Unroll the second can of crescent roll dough and layer over cream cheese mixture, gently stretching dough to the edges. Brush melted butter over crescent roll dough layer.

Mix remaining lemon zest

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and 3 tablespoons sugar together in a bowl; sprinkle over butter. Bake in the preheated oven until top is golden brown, about 30 minutes. Allow to cool for about 20 minutes.

Lift dessert from baking dish using foil; transfer to a cutting board. Cut into squares, leaving on foil. Return dessert to the baking dish and refrigerate until chilled, at least 1 hour.

### Banana Cream Pie

- 1/4 c. white sugar
- 1/3 c. all-purpose flour
- 1/4 t. salt
- 2 c. milk
- 3 egg yolks, beaten
- 2 T. butter
- 1.5 t. vanilla extract
- 1 (9") pie crust, baked
- 4 bananas, sliced

In a saucepan, combine the sugar, flour and salt. Add milk in gradually while stirring gently. Cook over medium heat, stirring constantly, until the mixture is bubbly. Keep stirring and cook for about 2 more minutes and then remove from the burner.

Stir a small quantity of the hot mixture into the beaten egg yolks and immediately add egg yolk mixture to the rest of the hot mixture. Cook for 2 more minutes; remember to keep stirring.

Remove the mixture from the stove, and add butter and vanilla. Stir until the whole thing has a smooth consistency. Slice bananas into the cooled baked pastry shell. Top with pudding mixture. Bake at 350° for 12 to 15 minutes. Chill for an hour.

### Strawberry Pretzel Salad

- 1-1/2 c. crushed pretzels
- 4-1/2 T. white sugar
- 3/4 c. butter, melted
- 1 c. white sugar
- 2 pkgs. (8 oz. ea.) cream cheese
- 1 tub (8 oz.) Cool Whip, thawed
- 1 pkg. (6 oz.) strawberry Jell-O
- 2 c. boiling water
- 1 pkg. (16 oz.) frozen strawberries

Preheat oven to 350°. Mix together the pretzels, 4-1/2 tablespoons sugar and melted butter. Press into the bottom of a 9x13" pan. Bake for 10 minutes, or until lightly toasted.

Set aside to cool completely. In a medium bowl, beat the sugar and cream cheese until smooth. Fold in whipped topping. Spread evenly over the cooled crust. Refrigerate until set, about 30 minutes.

In a medium bowl, stir together the Jello mix

and boiling water. Mix in frozen strawberries, and stir until thawed. Pour over cream cheese mixture in pan. Refrigerate until completely chilled, at least 1 hour.

### Maple Apple Crisp

- 5 apples - peeled, cored and sliced
- 3/4 c. maple syrup
- 1/2 c. all-purpose flour
- 1/2 c. rolled oats
- 1/2 c. brown sugar
- 1 pinch salt
- 1/2 c. butter, softened

Preheat oven to 375°. Place apples in an 8x8-inch baking dish. Toss apples with syrup. In a separate bowl, mix together flour, oats, sugar, and salt. Cut in butter until mixture is crumbly.

Sprinkle mixture evenly over apples. Bake in the preheated oven for 35 minutes, until topping is golden brown. Serve warm or at room temperature. Great with home-made vanilla ice cream!



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# Hi-Fi and the Infinite Speaker Baffle (or "What the hell is that giant hole doing there?")

by M. D. Smith, IV



In 1953, I was thirteen with a father in radio broadcasting. Since I could remember, radio and music played a central part in our family lives. I had favorite 78 RPM records the family played on the console radio/record player that sat in the rounded upstairs hall with the three bedroom doors opening directly to that area.

Of course, I had a bedroom table radio in my room. My first experiment was when I found a non-working old radio. My father told me that the speaker in it was still good, and I could hook it up to my speaker terminals of the working radio and hear it both places. I had twin beds separated by a tiny table and large nightstands on either side. I placed the broken radio on the spare nightstand and ran a bit of lamp cord from one set of speaker terminals inside the good radio to the speaker of the other. It worked. Now with the volume up, it better filled the room with sound when music played.

But I wanted more. I wanted bass like the big console in the hall with a 12" full-range speaker. I bought an issue of High Fidelity Magazine and read it cover to cover. I was thrilled to hear about wall-thumping bass

notes and quickly discovered I needed a separate "integrated" amplifier. That meant an amp with a preamp and individual bass and treble controls.

I drooled over the ads for big tube amplifiers like I had done over my Daisy Red Ryder BB gun when I was seven. Looking through the ads, I found that I could afford to buy and build a 12-Watt, Knight-Kit integrated amplified from Allied Radio. That was the same time Heath-Kits were coming into popularity.

I mail-ordered the amp, it arrived, I spent every waking hour for a week (I was out of school for the summer), but it didn't work when I finished. My father helped me trace every step in the wiring and I had put one single wire on the wrong tube pin terminal. With that step corrected, it worked beautifully. While waiting for the kit to come, I got a larger eight-inch speaker out of a console TV set at a local repair shop for fifty cents. Put it in a small wooden box I made in my father's shop and hooked it to my new amp. I was thrilled with the new sound combined with the cheapest used turntable I could buy at a local Hi-Fi shop. (There was no stereo in those days, only mono, merely called "High Fidelity" music from the new LP vinyl platters that were now made.



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I later got tired of playing just one 45 RPM song at a time. I found that the little RCA 45 phonograph changer that played up to twelve records could be hooked up from a wire on the terminals of the crystal cartridge before it went to the internal amp, to the phono input of my hi-fi amp. It worked as well as a turntable, plus it would play the last record repeatedly. So I'd sometimes wake up in the night where I'd gone to bed with the same record playing and have to shut it off.

Two more years passed and I now had a Heath-Kit thirty-five-watt amplifier with control knobs. The shop in Five Points was a short bus ride from my house, and I'd visit Lawrence's Hi-Fi Center and drool at the massive power amplifiers running 60 watts with a big pair of output tubes. The heavy transformers caused these things to weigh in the forty-pound range. They were called "basic" amplifiers. You also had to add a pre-amplifier with switchable inputs, bass and treble controls, and other switches like "loudness" that increased the bass at lower levels because it was harder to hear down low. That was a dream for the future.

Back at home, I knew a larger speaker would produce more bass, which I loved. So I'd crank the bass control wide open and sometimes overload my smaller wattage speakers into distortion, which sounded horrible. "More bass," I'd chant. Unfortunately, these cheaper amplifiers would produce a 60-cycle hum with the bass wide open. I was a "Hum-hater" then and I still am.

I found a great deal on a mail-order fifteen-inch woofer. That was as big (though not as expensive) as you could purchase other than the giant commercial eighteen-inch woofers used in movie theaters. It arrived, I hooked it up right out of the carton and it had almost NO bass. Again, I learned the importance of

a speaker baffle. Without a large box of plywood with a hole for the speaker, the bass sound waves from the rear canceled out the bass from the front. An enclosure prevented that. I couldn't build a box big enough to fit in my bedroom. But then I learned about the "infinite" baffle. A flat mounting surface would be infinitely large, like putting the speaker in one wall of your home and preventing the rear waves from coming to the front. They just harmlessly went away in the airspace and whatever furniture and drapes that would absorb the sound.

One article mentioned that a closet full of sound-absorbing clothes was ideal for a large home bass speaker. Wow! An idea hit me for my new bass speaker. It was a Saturday, and my parents were out of town at a new station my father had bought in Tullahoma, Tennessee. My closet door was one of the types that had light center upper and lower panels inside the strong oak frame of the door. It was perfect. I knew my parents would not be happy, but I cut out a 15-inch circle and drilled four mounting holes in my closet door. I did have some grill cloth to cover what would have been just the bare speaker cone showing, so it looked more like the grille of our



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**Dan McKitrick, Huntsville**

console radio that covered the speaker in the bottom. Of course, it didn't match the light cream door, but I thought it looked professional anyhow.

It made magnificent bass. It was like I was in a concert hall or movie theatre. I adored the bass notes that actually shook my body as I stood in front and let the sound waves bathe me in high-fidelity thumping.

The inevitable happened Sunday night. My parents returned, and that's when it really hit the fan. I was prepared. Dad's shouting, ranting, and raving were deserved. My mother looked like she might cry and shook her head but didn't say anything. My father had stopped belt whippings when I got into a fraternity and developed a tough hide, so corporal punishment didn't work anymore.

Finally, he said, "Well, I have a spare door in the basement, so if we ever sell this house (the family moved to Huntsville in 1958), I can put that door back there."

I continued to enjoy my high-fidelity music and before we moved, Stereo came on the scene, causing me to have to buy another amplifier and a dual-stereo pre-amplifier, but I used a much smaller speaker for the other channel. My one big bass sweetie in the closet door was enough bass for both channels.

*Footnote: Twenty years after the family moved to Huntsville, I visited my old home with my wife, Judy, and I was amazed to see in a back corner of the basement, my old closet door with the hole in it. When I told the owners the speaker story, the lady said, "I've wondered all these years what that cutout in the door was for."*

**"If I won the award for laziness, I would have to send someone to pick it up for me."**

***Pumpkin the cat***



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# Larry

## A Tribute to a Friend

by Barry Key,  
written in May 2019

I lost one of my best friends today. "He's gone to a better place," I heard the preacher say, but that doesn't fill the void I feel, I'll miss him every day.

As kids we would romp and play, our wonder years, too soon went away. We were outside every day, there was baseball, basketball and other games to play. But hunting and fishing, we loved best, they were our favorite, above all the rest.

As we grew older, life was cars and girls, in lieu of bicycles, pigtails and cute little curls. In our old jalopies with our favorite girl, cruising through our hangouts, we were on top of the world.

We each had our high school steady, someone we loved to please, a girl we were crazy about, one that put us at ease. A true friend on whom we could depend, in a high school relationship, we thought would never end.

In high school Larry was always smiling, never a frown, always fun to be around. If you were down and out, on your problems you could never dwell, listening to the humorous stories, with gestures he could tell. As a prankster, he was the very best, the capers he could pull, you would never second guess.

After high school, Larry and I went our separate ways, but as retired old men, we "reunited" another day. As senior citizens our pastime was hiking and fishing.....now my days I'll spend reminiscing.

Judy and I received the greatest of all dividends, when Larry and Brenda became our good friends. We spent many a day riding, dining and socializing, never thinking about, "WHAT WE'RE NOW REALIZING".

Larry was blessed with a loving wife, a companion that enhanced his very life, but for reasons we don't know, life dealt a deadly blow. Larry fought his enemy, down to the bitter end, Brenda joined the fight, her hus-

band she did defend. Judy and I watched from the sideline, wanting to get in the battle too, knowing that moral support, was all that we could do.

Brenda lost her soul mate, Judy and I lost a very good friend....Larry is now travelling through a "beautiful place" we four had never been.

Brenda, Judy and I still continue our friendship, hopefully for many, many years, but when we are together, (visualizing my memories), I have to hold back the tears.

I lost one of my best friends today, "he's gone to a better place" I heard the preacher say, but in my heart I know, we'll "reunite again" another day.

EULOGY: I have never known anyone that loved life any more than Larry, particularly nature and the outdoors. He and Brenda traveled extensively, taking advantage of what our State Parks, National Parks and the back roads of America had to offer.

Give Larry and our friend Art a metal detector, an old civil war encampment, and hours of searching and digging would pass in what seemed like seconds to them. One could find an old musket bullet, or the rusty button from a soldier's uniform, and it was if they had just discovered King Solomon's lost mine.

Larry and I could sit in a boat for hours without catching a fish or getting bored. From time to time he would get this little smile on his face, and I knew what was coming, "have you heard the one about....". I think he had more stories than Jeff Foxworthy and Ron White combined. I was with him just a few hours before he passed away. We talked and laughed about hunting, fishing, travel and high school days. His attitude was so positive I couldn't believe the news when Brenda called.

One of the best laughs we had was a prank in junior high that got us both sent home from school. He had read some of the stories that I had written for OLD HUNTSVILLE magazine and asked me to write about the prank. I promised I would. I wrote the story and it was published in the April 2019 issue of OLD HUNTSVILLE.

Ole Buddy, kept my word.. ..just wish you were here to share our story.

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# Meeting Brad Paisley

by Gwendolyn Joop

One of the last few out of town Conferences. Happened to be in Nashville, Tennessee at The Gaylord Opryland Hotel.

Arrived a couple days early. One of my first duties was to greet customers and colleagues around the World at the Nashville International Airport.

My Table with Prepaid Customers and Colleagues Name-tags and small notebooks with the agenda etc. Greet and distribute.

Awaiting the last flight arriving at 11:00 PM. There walked up a very handsome young man with black hair. His attire consisted of a Cowboy Hat, Western Shirt, Straight Jeans and Cowboy Boots.

Attempted to enunciate my four acronyms for the Conference. Totally, botched that. Laughed and corrected.

There was an empty chair beside me. He inquired is anyone sitting there. No. May I sit. Sure. Hi my name is Brad. Nice to meet you. My name is Gwendolyn.

Gwendolyn, who is your favorite Country Music Singer. "Do not have one." You like them all? Nope. Do not care for Country Music.

Gwendolyn, something is wrong with you. Laughed. Did not take a bull rider to inform me. Been told all my life. I'm different.

He took his Cowboy Hat off and placed it on my head. I'm going to make a Cowgirl out of you. Where are you staying and I informed him. What size shoe you wear. A 5-1/2. Becoming a bit agitated. Do you want my damn bra size?? Laughed until tears came out of his eyes. NO. Sending you the best western boots money can buy. No. Save your money. I have chicken legs and

duck feet. Would look a hot mess dressed as a Bull-rider.

Brad inquired, what music do you like? Personally, love Classical, Jazz, Motown, Maroon 5 and most favorite is Rod Stewart. Gwendolyn, so do I, but he is old. Brad, he's like an expensive vintage bottle of red wine. Only looks better with time with his Rhapsody Voice.

Then Brad and I just shot the breeze. Looked up arriving was my gang. Brad, you may sit. About to put you to work. He gave me a big hug. Enjoyed our conversation. Love you are a straight shooter.

Noticed through my own storm of people. Only thing I could see was Brad's Cowboy Hat. He was swarmed by an entourage of People. Our lines thinned out close to the same time. We made eye contact. Summoned him back to my ta-

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ble. Clueless who you are. You must be famous.

I'm Brad Paisley. May I have your autograph? He wrote a very special note. Unfortunately, lost before leaving the hotel to home. As he walked away. Turned around and said, "Gwendolyn, stay true to yourself. Hard to find these days". You did not know me, but knew I loved Country Music.

Every time I watch a Payton Manning and Brad Paisley, Insurance Commercial. Always think about that night.

Few weeks back. Never sharing the above story. My Dearest and most intelligent friend in the world. Listened, as I baffled about my three grandkids. Even SHRIMPY they call little Gwen. Only listens to Country Music!! He informed me. How do you appreciate your own soul healing music. Without comparing to Country Music. He is so dang factual. Guess that is why I love and trust him. He and his gorgeous wife has always had my back. Will go down protecting both.

Hold on - just remembered. I Love Lady A's - It's A Quarter After One. Clueless it was a Country Song. Until one night flipping to ESPN. She and her band was inducted into The Country Music Hall-Of-Fame. Then Tennessee Whiskey. That is a wrap.

Be respectful and kind to each other. Agree to disagree. GET YOUR COVID SHOTS or wear a mask. Wash your hands and stay Six Feet back. My daughter fighting Stage 3 Inoperable Cancer at the age of 38. Has had her COVID SHOTS. Does not protect her the same as me. She has an Auto Immune System. Maybe your First Amendment Right. Not to wear a mask or get vaccinated It's my First Amendment Right to live and my 34 year old dia-

betic son and daughter!!

Hopefully, Mayor Battle and Mayor Findley will work together and if you have been vaccinated and have an horrific automobile accident, heart attack or stroke and vaccinated you are treated first. Last year Doctors and nurses worked tirelessly and putting their lives on the front line to keep us going. Now there is an option.

Personally, once again. Fully vaccinated and wagging my tail like a starved animal for a booster. Thank God, our parents were not as Stupid. There would not be a pandemic. Most of Baby Boomers would have been dead. If not for Polio, Measles, Whooping Cough etc.

use your brains.

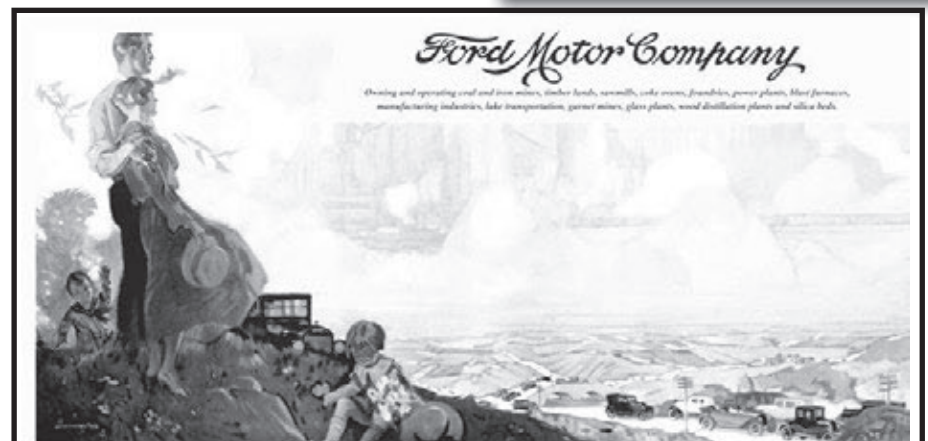
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GOD BLESS AMERICA AND GOD BLESS THE WORLD.

**"Some days I wish I was an octopus, so I could slap eight people at once."**

**Bitsy Pierce, Arab**



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# CURLY PUTMAN, MASTER SONGWRITER

by Malcolm Miller



Some time back I gave Jerry Brazier, owner of Jerry and Bill's Barber shop where I worked for many years, a box of barber tools and parts that I had accumulated over the years since I was no longer able to cut hair. A few weeks later when I went to his shop he said that I had given him something I might want to keep.

When I saw it I did indeed want it. It was a very old letter in pretty bad condition but when I saw Tree Publishing Company letterhead I knew it was from my good friend Curly Putman, ironically the date on the letter was June 2, 1964. In the letter Curly said he couldn't use the songs I had sent but to send him some more, but most importantly he said that he was still trying to write that big hit.

You see up till this time Curly had been struggling, however lo and behold a few months later he wrote "Green Green Grass of Home" and the rest as they say is history. It was first recorded by Johnny Darryl then Porter Wagner, Jerry Lee Lewis and finally the biggest hit by Tom Jones.

On January 8th I had a long talk with Curly and he said this particular song had been recorded five hundred times and in every known language.

This was only the beginning for this tall somewhat shy man from Paint Rock Valley. His songs were recorded by many many of the legends of country music. He wrote Dolly Parton's first hit "Dumb Blond", Tammy Wynette's "Divorce", T.G. Shepperd's "Do you Want to go to Heaven", David Houston and Tammy Wynette's "My Elusive Dream".

The list goes on and on, however the greatest of all was a song by George Jones that was named the number two country song of all time "He Stopped Loving Her Today" co-written with Bobby Bradock.

Life wasn't always easy for Curly, when he got out of high school at Princeton he joined the Navy, and after his hitch in the Navy he met and fell in love with a pretty lass Miss Bernice Wilson, and like many couples back then they went to Iuka, Mississippi and got married. Another musician buddy of mine, Lammarr Cox, and his wife Laneva drove them there.

The first time I ever saw Curly he was traveling



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**"if you don't have all the things you want, be grateful for the things you don't have that you probably wouldn't want in the first place."**

**Joe Franklin, Arab**

with a member of the Grand Ole Opry, I believe it was Bradley Kincaid. Later on he joined Slim Lay and Hap Wilson's band along with the late and great guitar picker Maurice Ramsey and Lammarr "Bug Fuzz" Cox. Carolyn Gossett was the girl singer for the band.

Curly really worked hard trying to support his family, by now they had two sons. He had several jobs; shoe salesman, storm door and fence salesman and a stint working in Slim Lays record shop. I even tried to get him a job with the Huntsville Fire Department by talking to a city councilman I knew, all to no avail.

As I look back over the many years I have known Curly I truly believe that all these jobs and hard times only proves that Curly Putman was a man destined for greatness. Now Curly can look out over his sprawling twenty-five acre estate near Lebanon, Tennessee with pride because he overcame many obstacles and finally reached the top rung of the ladder of success. And friends the best could be yet to come for he told me that at age seventy-seven he has started writing again.

With him writing again we may hear some real country music over the airways once more, I for one am certainly ready for it.

*This was written by Malcolm in 2008, he passed away Aug. 26, 2017 and Curly Putman died in 2016.*

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 ½ tsp. salt

Mayor Loretta Spencer

½ c. vegetable oil  
 2 c. sugar  
 4 eggs  
 2 tsp. vanilla extract  
 1 c. confectioners sugar

Melt chocolate. Sift together flour, baking powder, and salt. Combine oil, chocolate, and sugar. Add eggs, one at a time, beating well. Add vanilla. Add sifted dry ingredients to chocolate mixture and blend. Chill overnight. Heat oven to 350°. Lightly grease cookie sheet. Spread confectioners sugar in a small flat pan. Drop dough by rounded teaspoons into confectioners sugar; coat and roll into balls. Place 2 inches apart on cookie sheet. Bake 10 to 12 minutes. Can keep frozen for a month. Yield: 6 dozen.

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# INTO A LIMESTONE COUNTY VORTEX

by John Michael Hampton

Chris exclaimed, "Hold on, everyone! This is going to get a little intense!" I made sure that my seat belt was a little tight as I saw rain waves coming off the fields where cotton and soybeans had recently been harvested.

Chris Lisauckis had promised to take me and a friend of mine storm chasing. We had been meeting with him each week so that he could teach us how to forecast weather. He told us in order to properly forecast storms, we needed to experience severe weather, so that we could forecast severe weather.

So, on the afternoon of November 18, 2003, we were watching the weather using the friend's house in western Madison County as our base of operations. Chris was watching

a severe thunderstorm that had developed on radar that was heading toward East Limestone High School.

He told us to get in the vehicle and we drove out to intercept the thunderstorm. At first, it was calm as we drove down Love Branch Road. But suddenly, as we turned onto Nick Davis Road, the wind picked up. We were then hit with a little rain, as Chris took a county road and drove south, hoping to connect to Capshaw Road.

The thunder and lightning intensified. The clouds, which had been light gray and quiet when we left my friend David Hall's house, were now black, swirling masses of jelly. Chris told us to hold on and moments later extreme winds hit the jeep, which made it hard for Chris to keep it in the road.

For well over a minute, the car felt like it was on a roller coaster ride, jerking right and left. Suddenly, everything went quiet for about two minutes. Then, the storm continued to

shake our vehicle, just not as bad as it had previously done.

Chris parked in a church lot on Capshaw Road, after the storm had passed. He stated, "Gentlemen, I purposely put you in the bear's claw. This storm was not tornadic, but had high straight line winds in it. The lesson here is to know which way you are heading and to always leave yourself a way of escape."

"Knowing which way you are heading means to map out a path that will keep you away from the dangerous part of the storm, like we just experienced. Leave yourself a path to escape in case a storm that you are chasing decides to shift its track, as they so often do. You passed this test, because you did not get afraid, you did not panic, and you remained on task observing the weather around you."

We started to make our way back to the house as we knew there were more storms coming our way. However, a siren and a radio broadcast would change our plans.

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# The Murfreesboro Story

by Gene Primm

In 1955 I worked for Monroe Calculating Machine Company. I was sent to St. Louis, Missouri to a service school. I left Huntsville from the old bus station on Clinton Street.

After leaving Huntsville we stopped at what seemed to be every cross roads and country store we came to. It took me eighteen and a half hours to get to St. Louis.

While in school I met another employee who was from Nashville, TN. He had come to St. Louis by automobile. I told him about my trip by bus and suggested to him that I would pay his gas expenses if he would let me ride back to Nashville with him then I could get a bus on in to Huntsville, saving me many hours of travel time. He agreed to this and after the school was over we left on our trip to Nashville.

We arrived in Nashville some time after 12:00 midnight. I asked him to take me to the bus station so I could catch a bus to Huntsville. When we got to the bus station I found out the next bus to Huntsville did not leave until 7:00 that morning. I decided that was too long to wait so I asked my friend if he would take me to the Huntsville Highway so I could hitchhike on in to Huntsville. Hopefully, I thought, I would be in Huntsville long before the bus ever left from Nashville.

The first car that came by stopped and said he

was going as far as Murfreesboro. He was a bus driver just getting off from work. I really appreciated him stopping and thought this hitchhiking was going to be easy, it was a piece of cake.

After he let me out in Murfreesboro I stood there for hours without getting another ride. As it started to get daylight I began to get worried. Then finally as the traffic started to pick up a man stopped and ask me where I was headed. After I told him I was going to Huntsville, Ala., he told me to hop in and that he would take me as far as Tullahoma, TN. I thought for a minute and asked him how far Huntsville was from Tullahoma and he told me about seventy miles. I asked him how far it was from Murfreesboro to Huntsville and he said about seventy miles, but he said it was a beautiful drive to Tullahoma. After spending the night standing on the side of the road I really was not interested in the countryside between Murfreesboro and Tullahoma. Despairing of any more hitchhiking I asked him if there was a bus station in Murfreesboro, and after he replied "Yes," I got in the car for the seventy-mile drive to Murfreesboro.

The stranger dropped me off at the bus station a few hours later. Hurriedly, I approached the ticket agent and asked if there was a bus leaving for Huntsville, AL, anytime soon. He told me I was in luck that there was a bus just getting ready to leave that was going to Huntsville. Without even a pause I said: "Give me a ticket."

The agent gave me my ticket and pointed the bus out to me and I was on my merry way. As I approached the bus I saw on the front that it was going to Nashville, TN. Puzzled, I ran back in inside the bus station and told the ticket agent that the bus he had pointed out was going to Nashville not Huntsville.

He then informed me you could not get to Huntsville from Murfreesboro without going to Nashville first!

I took the bus back to Nashville and caught the same bus to Huntsville that I would have caught anyway if I had not spent the night hitchhiking through the back roads of Tennessee.

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# A New Way to Look at the Calendar

by Jean Brewer McCrady



*This 1954 picture shows Jean on the right, and her sister Net on the left. "We were an average age of 22, which means we would have been entering May on the 12 month calendar."*

If you've read my stories in Old Huntsville over the last couple of years, you have seen many references to my sister Net. Slightly older than I, Net had her 90th birthday on December 30 and lived 23 days into her 91st year. Her death has inspired me to finish this story idea that I've been thinking about and dabbing at for several months.

The idea has to do with a new way of thinking about the 12-month calendar that frames, and often directs, our annual activities, month by month, week by week, and day by day. I invite you to join me in looking at the calendar in a different way, allowing us to assess just where we are on its pages.

The calendar I envision still has 12 months, but those months represent a 90-year life span, having a beginning date of January 1. Under this calculation, each year of our life would span 4 days on that calendar. That means most of us Old Huntsville readers would have started school about January 24, in first grade at age 6, before there was pre-school and kindergarten; we would have finished high school about mid-March of that year. And the men among us would be completing a first tour of military duty around April Fools Day.

For a sharper focus on this view, at a current age 45 you are about to celebrate Independence Day; if you are 60, you are approaching Labor Day on that calendar. The 75-year-olds are getting ready for the Trick or Treaters 'cause it's Halloween time; those in the early 80s are preparing for Thanksgiving. Then, we in the late years of the 80s decade are about to see our first and last Christmas, as our life's calendar comes to a close with New Year's Eve.

So what is the point of this exercise? It is this: we tend to forget we are not going to be here forever, thinking we still have time to do the things we've promised ourselves, or others, but kept putting off year after year, month after month, or until tomorrow. Locating ourselves on this make-believe calendar should shock us into realizing just how little time we have left to fulfill those promises.

Those of us in the Fall or early Winter months can find in our memories things like the heavy chain around the old courthouse where before our time farmers tied their mules and horse-drawn wagons while shopping or conducting business; saving our dimes for the Gene Autry and Roy Rogers Saturday matinees at the Elks Theater; when there was

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no Memorial Parkway, and Research Park and the UAH campus were nothing but cotton fields, and there was no Saturn Rocket pointing into space.

A typical teenage date was going to the Whitesburg Drive-in movie and stopping by Clark Steadman's at Holmes & Jordan Lane for a barbecue sandwich on the way home. The only places to shop for hardware were Harrison Brothers and Lewter's (still there, in the same place, defying history); and the only "super market" in sight was the A&P store on Green Street behind the Elks building. If you remember these things as I do, then you are with me way down into December on life's 90-year calendar. That means whatever we have on our list-of-things-to-do in this life need to become priorities, now!

It means it's time to ACT on the list of things we've been pushing forward. So before you continue reading, grab pencil and paper and start committing your list to writing. To get you started, here are some things that may be on it when you finish: looking up that long-ago friend you've lost touch with, to rekindle that friendship; calling someone you want to make amends with over a past dispute or misunderstanding; driving to another town, state, or across country to visit an old "stomping ground" or just to see what's out there; writing a book or your memoirs for those you'll leave behind when your life's calendar has run its course; de-cluttering your living space to make for a more enjoyable daily environment; learning a craft or rekindling an old one to make special gifts for those you love; purging your closet of clothes you don't wear and donating them to a charitable thrift store; spending one-on-one time with your grandchildren and telling them stories of your growing-up years; developing new ways to spread acts of kindness wherever you go; spending time with someone who is lonely and would experience time with you as golden minutes or hours; complete your estate planning documents, for your own peace of mind and as a gift to those in charge when you are gone.

If any of these things have been on your put-off-till-later list, write them on your to-do-now list, along with others that are on your mind now, and get started! It is my wish that you find some benefit in being with me through this reflective exercise, and I again give credit to Net, who is gone from my sight but not from my life, for the motivation to put on paper what had long been swirling in my head.

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# Memories from a Former Life

by Ernestine Moody

A puzzling title? The years of my married life and the time we spent raising our kids seem to fit in to the category of an era existing prior to my current status. This was the time in which today's beautiful memories were born.

When Tom, my husband, passed away in September 2021, I found it so difficult to drop the word "we" from my everyday conversation. To suddenly speak in terms of "I" challenged my thinking process. However, as the days rolled by, my living arrangements changed, and with the gracious help of my family, I moved into the beautiful Fleming Farm Apartments.

It is in this establishment that I have heard numerous memories from my constituents. With their consent, I am sharing a few of their thoughts of the past with you.

One Monday morning while ingesting a hot plate of eggs and biscuits, my meal partner, at that particular breakfast, and I were discussing a popular topic, our grandkids. Smiling as she replayed the long ago memory to my attentive ears, this is what I learned. (As a source of reference, I will call her Agatha).

Agatha's husband was developing, as is very common in our aging male population, a receding hairline. A grandchild, after noticing Grandpa's appearance was beginning to change, offered him some information he had heard on TV. "Grandpa, there is a special cream you can order on TV, rub it in your head, and it will cause your hair to grow back." Grandpa sat silently as he listened to his suggestion.

Later that day, Grandpa asked Agatha if he could borrow her "unruly" wig, that had

sat on a closet shelf for quite some time. On his next visit, the grandson, while running into house to greet his grandparents, came to an abrupt stop. There was Grandpa. He had surely ordered this young boy's suggested cream, and he now had enough hair to not only cover his receding hairline but those of his many balding friends too.

On another occasion, a gentleman (to whom I'll impose the name Sully) listened to a small group of my female friends discussing trips to the old drive-in movies, and the vehicles that carried them there. Some confessed that they had hidden in the trunk of a car, with many of their peers to, "sneak in for free." With a devilish glee in his eyes Sully informed us that he always preferred a vehicle, like his old truck, which had the regular seats; no bucket seats for him. He enjoyed cuddling with the girls in his young days!

We occasionally had celebrations during which the songs of former talents like Frank Sinatra, Tony Bennett, etc. were sung. It was on these days that as I gazed around the room I could see eyes filling with tears. Perhaps it was the memory of

the day they met their spouse, a first dance, or even "their song". By the way, being so young, our song was, "Be Sociable With Pepsi"!

On the quiet days we rely on special memories and it is so good to know that we can share them with our family and our friends.

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# MARCH HERE AND THERE

by Elizabeth Wharry



March can be a fickle month, especially in Ohio. One day, it's warm enough for shorts, the next day, one needs to dress warmly.

Growing up against Lake Erie's south shore, in the heart of the snow belt, we knew that March would come in like a lion and reluctantly depart. It reminded me of a house guest who stayed too long. The winter grey skies would grudgingly give way to blue skies. The snow would slowly melt into an ugly dirty slush.

Somewhere around St. Patrick's Day, Mother Nature would change and arctic air would once again be blasting us with either snow or sleet. All that on top of frozen slush. The havoc these unpredictable storms would wreak was short lived, but created a nightmare for road crews and drivers alike.

We moved here in August of 2009 from Kansas. We moved here just in time for the boys to start school. We weren't sure what to expect from Mother Nature. We were surprised to see a brief snow storm in January. February was mild and on St. Patrick's Day of 2010, I was gob smacked! The temperature was warm enough to wear shorts and elbow length sleeves.

I was delightfully surprised to see dog tooth violets, spring beauties and daffodils blooming, or ready to bloom. Capshaw Mountain was awash in a beautiful shade of green. I'm not sure what the crayon companies would call it, I call it spring green. It's that lovely pale shade of newly awakened green growing things.

Keep a song in your heart and a smile on your face. Happy Spring!

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# AN OLD HOUSEKEEPER'S SECRETS



*From 1900 Newspaper*

\* There is a greenness in onions and potatoes that renders them hard to digest. For health's sake put them in warm water for an hour before cooking.

\* The only kind of stove with which you can preserve a uniform heat is a gas stove; with it you can simmer a pot for an hour, or boil it at the same rate for twenty minutes.

\* Good flour is not tested by its color. White flour may not be the best. The test of good flour is by the amount of water it absorbs.

\* In cooking a fowl, to ascertain when it is done, put a skewer into the breast, and if the breast is tender the fowl is done.

\* A few dried cherries with stones out are the very best thing for garnishing sweet dishes.

\* Single cream is cream that has stood on the milk twelve hours. It is best for tea and coffee. Double cream stands on its milk twenty-four hours, and cream for butter frequently stands forty-eight hours. Cream that is to be whipped should not be butter cream, lest in whipping it changes to butter.

\* To beat the whites of eggs quickly, put in a pinch of salt. The cooler the eggs the quicker they will froth. Salt cools and also freshens them.

\* In boiling eggs hard, put them in boiling water instead of cold water. It will prevent the yolk from coloring black.

\* You must never attempt to boil the dressing of a clear soup in the stock, for it will always discolor the soup.

\* In making any sauce, put the butter and flour in together, and your sauce will never be lumpy. Whenever you see your sauce boil from the sides of the pan you may know your flour or corn starch is done.

\* Boiled fowl with sauce, over which grate the yolk of eggs, is a magnificent dish for luncheon.

\* Tepid water is produced by combining two-thirds cold and one-third boiling water.

\* To make macaroni tender, put it in cold water and bring it to a boil. It will then be much more tender than if put into hot water or stewed in milk.

\* The yolk of eggs binds the crust much better than the whites. Apply it to the edges with a brush.

\* To avoid toughness in beans or corn, add salt halfway through cooking rather than at the beginning.

\* Keep apples in the winter by storing them in cotton seed.

\* Baptize a new frying pan by boiling vinegar in it, rinse thoroughly and put into service.

\* To peel tomatoes quickly, place them into a frying basket and plunge them into hot water for 3 minutes. Drain and peel. Another way is to set them in a hot oven for about 5 minutes.

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# REMEMBERING LITTLE LEAGUE BASEBALL

by *Mason B. Daniel, Sr.*

I grew up on Beirne Avenue in Huntsville. In the neighborhood there were some vacant lots where we kids would congregate for a game of baseball. One day in the early '50s, my best friend told me about a new organized kid's baseball league, called Little League.

Pete Moon and I went over to Optimist Park, where the Rison team was practicing. We met the coach, Ray Strickland. He gave us a tryout and we both made the team. Our uniforms were not the same color as the other team members. We didn't care; we were playing Little League baseball.

There were four teams in the league: Rison, Lincoln, Joe Bradley and Big Spring. We played our games on Wednesday and Saturday at Big Spring Park by the canal and tennis courts. There was no fence on our field.

The next year when baseball rolled around we headed to Optimist Park to play for Rison. When we arrived we were saddened to learn that we could not play for Rison. The Huntsville Parks and Playground Director, Mr. McBride, said we did not live in the Rison district, we lived in the Big Spring district.

We headed to Big Spring Park where we met our new coach, Salty Rousseau. Our team won the league championship. The district tournament was played at Big Spring Park, and I remember the park put up a temporary fence complete with a flag pole outside the center field fence.

Pete and I made the all-star team

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and I recall chills running down my body when I saw the American Flag waving in the wind. I thought I was playing in Yankee Stadium. Our team was eliminated after the first game.

John Childress was the coach in my final year. That year gave me one of my biggest thrills in baseball. I rank it with the no hitter I threw in the Tennessee Valley Conference tournament against Russellville my sophomore year at Huntsville High.

The district tournament was played in Florence, AL. Billy Starr, our all-star team coach, gave me the starting nod. I pitched well and after six innings the score was 0-0. I expected Coach Starr to relieve me. In those days you could pitch six innings per game and no more than nine innings a week. I didn't know you could pitch nine in a tournament game.

When the seventh inning started, Coach gave me the ball and I continued to pitch three additional innings.

We could not score and neither could the other team. It was 0-0 after nine. I was not, by rule, allowed to pitch more than nine innings.

The Florence team scored a run in the tenth and we lost 1-0. I think I cried all the way to Huntsville. I still think about those days, especially when I watch my grandkids and great grandkids play baseball.



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Cher Ami was a military messenger pigeon during World War I. He delivered twelve messages from the Verdun front to his loft at Rampont during the war, but the flight following was almost hard to believe.

In October of 1918, a number of U.S. troops were cut off from support and were surrounded by Germans. Suddenly, a barrage of fire from French and American artillery began to fall on the soldiers. One after another, the messenger pigeons were released with messages calling for help, but they were all shot down. The last carrier was Cher Ami and the message attached to his leg said, "For God's sake, lift the fire".

Cher Ami was dispatched with a note, written on onion paper, in a canister on his right leg, When Cher Ami took off, he was almost immediately downed by fire, but managed to stay in flight. His breast was pierced by a bullet, but he managed to fly on. A third shot tore off his right leg, but the message was still attached to his left leg. The little creature flew on, until he arrived at Rampont and collapsed. He arrived back at his loft at division headquarters 25 miles (40 km) to the rear in just 25 minutes, helping to save the lives of the 194 survivors. He had been shot through the breast, blinded in one eye, and had a leg hanging only by a tendon.

The message was relayed, the shooting stopped, and the Lost Battalion was relieved. A wooden leg was carved by one of the bird's admirers and Cher Ami became a feathered celebrity.

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# PET TIPS FROM ANGEL

## *The Benefits of Pets*



Most pet owners are clear about the immediate joys that come with sharing their lives with companion animals. However, many of us remain unaware of the physical and mental health benefits that can also accompany the pleasure of snuggling up to a furry friend. It's only recently that studies have begun to scientifically explore the benefits of the human-animal bond.

Pets have evolved to become acutely attuned to humans and our behavior and emotions. Dogs, for example, are able to understand many of the words we use, but they're even better at interpreting our tone of voice, body language and gestures. And like any good human friend, a loyal dog will look into your eyes to gauge your emotional state and try to understand what you're thinking and feeling (and to work out when the next walk or treat might be coming, of course).

Pets, especially dogs and cats, can reduce stress, anxiety and depression, ease loneliness, encourage exercise and playfulness, and even improve your cardiovascular health. Caring for an animal can help children grow up more secure and active. Pets also provide valuable companionship for older adults. Perhaps most importantly, though, a pet can add real joy and unconditional love to your life.

Any pet can improve your health.

While it's true that people with pets often experience greater health benefits than those without, a pet doesn't necessarily have to be a dog or a cat. A rabbit could be ideal if you're allergic to other animals or have limited space but still want a furry friend to snuggle with. Birds can encourage social interaction and help keep your mind sharp if you're an older adult. Snakes, lizards and other reptiles can make for exotic companions. Even

watching fish in an aquarium can help reduce muscle tension and lower your pulse rate.

Studies have shown that:

- Pet owners are less likely to suffer from depression than those without pets.

- People with pets have lower blood pressure in stressful situations than those without pets. One study even found that when people with borderline hypertension adopted dogs from a

shelter, their blood pressure declined significantly within five months.

- Playing with a dog, cat, or other pet can elevate levels of serotonin and dopamine, which calm and relax.

- Pet owners have lower triglyceride and cholesterol levels (indicators of heart disease) than those without pets.

- Heart attack patients with pets survive longer than those without.

- Pet owners over age 65 make 30 percent fewer visits to their doctors than those without pets.

One of the reasons for these therapeutic effects is that pets fulfill the basic human need for touch. Even hardened criminals in prison show long-term changes in their behavior after interacting with pets, many of them experiencing mutual affection for the first time. Stroking, hugging, or otherwise touching a loving animal can rapidly calm and soothe you when you're stressed or anxious.

The companionship of a pet can also ease loneliness, and most dogs are a great stimulus for healthy exercise, which can substantially boost your mood and go far towards easing your depression.

Finally, caring for something other than yourself can get your mind off your troubles and give you joy when you least expect it.

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# Yellow Fever Threatens Huntsville City under Quarantine - Bawdy Houses Closed

*Edited by Tom Carney, from 1879 Newspaper*

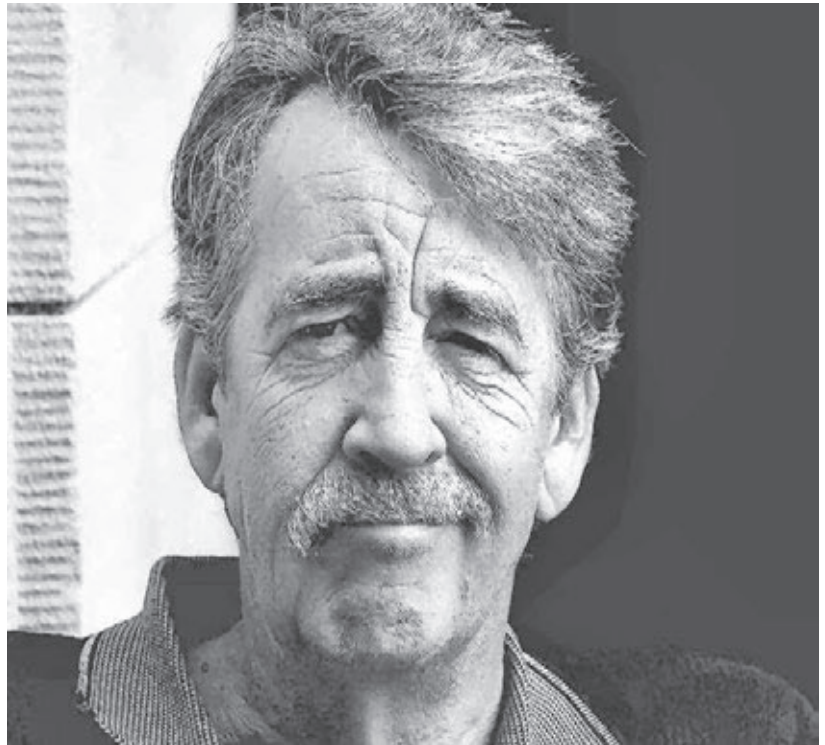
There is great excitement in Huntsville and all over the country (judging from telegraphic reports) about the Yellow Fever, and most of the principal cities and towns. Many small towns and villages in the southwestern states and as far north as Louisville and Cincinnati have quarantined against Memphis.

A lewd woman from Memphis reached Huntsville last night, went to a bawdy house in Pin Hook, took sick and the case is pronounced Yellow Fever. Our city officials have fenced in the bawdy house and forbid all communication.

On Saturday morning last the excitement was so great in Huntsville that a large meeting of citizens was held in the courthouse to consider the question called to the Chair and Frank Coleman was appointed Secretary.

After a few minutes retirement, Gen. Walker, for the Committee, reported resolutions in favor of instantaneous quarantine, with a quarantine station three miles west from town, on the Memphis M.C. Railroad.

They called on County Judge Richardson to convene the Commissioners' Court to establish quarantine at the county line. The Governor of Alabama was told to proclaim a quarantine on the Eastern Mississippi line.



The committee was unanimous, except ex-Mayor Murphy, who opposed instantaneous quarantine. J.W. Clay and Milton Humes opposed action of the meeting, without first consulting the local Board of Health – Drs. Dement, Baldrige and Bassett. Capt. Humes' motion to adjourn till 5 p.m., to hear from the Board, prevailed. At 5 p.m., the courtroom was densely crowded. Gen. Walker read the Committee's resolutions, and he and Col. Rhett advocated them.

The Board, sustained by Capt. Humes, opposed quarantine until the disease at Memphis should be declared epidemic and due notice given to enable citizens of Memphis, who might desire to leave that city, to do so; then the Board recommended rigid quarantine to be estab-

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lished, amounting to absolute non-intercourse with the Yellow Fever region.

Capt. Humes moved the adoption of the Board's views as a substitute for the committee's resolutions. A vote was taken by tellers and the substitute adopted by about 5 to 1. Saturday night, the Mayor and Aldermen met and resolved to exclude all freight, except ice, sent from Memphis, fixing the penalty for violation of this resolution at \$50 for each package landed here.

On Monday night, a telegram from Supt. Grant, M.C. R.R. at Memphis, stated that 35 new cases for the day were reported. It was read and the Board passed a resolution by advice of the Board of Health of Huntsville, that a quarantine be established against all persons, freight and baggage of every description from Memphis. Also that R.R. trains from Memphis be stopped at a station one mile east and one mile west of Huntsville, and that the health officer shall board and rigidly inspect every train. No person from Memphis or any other infected town to be allowed to get off here. That no train shall run less than six miles an hour though Huntsville or stop within the city limits.

It was stated that the M.C. R.R. authorities shall be immediately notified of this resolution; that one health officer and one policeman be appointed to enforce this quarantine. Any violator of these regulations shall be fined and punished to the full extent of the law.

Dr. H.W. Bassett was ap-

pointed Inspecting Health Officer and W.J. Franks special policeman. From Saturday to Tuesday, one or two hundred people from Memphis came to Huntsville. On Tuesday, a number were required to pass on and some of them, we understand, returned on the western bound train and stopped here.

Absolute non-intercourse is, probably, impossible by any municipal regulations, but should now be enforced as far as possible.

Our Board of Health pronounces Huntsville in a better sanitary condition than ever before. We believe it and shall hope and believe that the yellow scourge will not prevail here as it has in so many other areas.



## Rosemary Potatoes

4 lbs. small new potatoes, sliced  
 1/4 c. fresh rosemary, chopped  
 2 t. minced garlic  
 1/4 c. olive oil  
 2 T. lemon juice  
 Salt  
 1/4 t. fresh ground black pepper

Heat olive oil in a skillet and saute the garlic, rosemary and lemon juice for 3 minutes.

Remove from heat and put your potatoes in a greased baking dish.

Pour the oil mixture over the potatoes, sprinkle with salt and pepper. Bake at 350 degrees for 40 minutes and potatoes are tender.

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**"I just did a week's worth of cardio by walking into a large spider web."**

**Jewel Mayfield, Gurley**

# FRIDAY NIGHT LIGHTS

by Lawrence Hillis



There was a TV show on a few years ago called Friday Night Lights which was about a high school football team and their coach. There was also a book and a movie Friday Night Lights. Now we have an article in Old Huntsville Magazine entitled Friday Night Lights.

When I was a kid, I didn't have far to go to watch exciting football games. I grew up one block from Goldsmith Schiffman Field in the 1950s and 1960s and looked forward to the high school Friday night football games. When I was home and I did not go to the games, I could hear the fans cheering and knew someone had made a big play. If I was curious to know the score, I could walk north on Dement Street one block uphill from the Field and look down the back alley and I could see the score board. What is so cool about being at a ball game is the bleaches are so close to the field that you can hear the helmets banging and the pads popping when the players hit each other.

Goldsmith Schiffman Field has two gates on Ward Avenue and two gates on Beirne Avenue and during the heyday of high school games in the 50s and 60's all four gates were needed to enter and exit the game. The streets were lined with parked cars all the way from Andrew Jackson Way to Dallas Street. The home owners could not charge people to park in front of their houses because it was a city street. To stimulate the neighborhood economy,

some kids would let air out of the car tires leaving the drivers to change tires before traveling home. Of course, the enterprising boys would be around to offer their services to change the tires for a small fee.

The junior high schools played on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday nights. The cost to get in was 50 cents and since it was the fall time and I had been cutting yards for the neighbors all summer, I had the money to buy a ticket. When the semipro Huntsville Rockets played there in the 1960s the tickets were a little higher and sometimes there were sellouts. I remember the Wilson kids living at 501 Ward Avenue across the street from the field would climb on top of their house and look over the wall to view the games. Even though the field was always locked when not in use, we would climb the walls on Sunday afternoons and play football. The playing field was in a lot better shape for playing tackle than the Beirne Avenue playground across the street.

The land where the Goldsmith Schiffman Field was owned by Oscar Goldsmith who was a developer of the Dallas Mill textile factory. He acquired the two-acre tract back in the 1880s. The property was given to the city for \$1 on Jan 24, 1934 by Oscar Goldsmith, Lawrence and Annie Goldsmith, and Robert and Elsie Schiffman. The gift was a memorial to Bettie Goldsmith and Bettie Schiffman and had the stipulation that it revert back to the family if it ever ceased to be used for recreation. The Civil Works Administration provided \$6,500 in materials and labor to construct the field, the first in Huntsville to accommodate

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night athletic games. The distinctive rock walls were built by the Civilian Conservation Corps. The Acme Club raised funds for lighting poles. The field was dedicated during the first night game in Huntsville on October 4, 1934, when 1,000 fans saw Coach Milton Frank's Huntsville High team defeat Gadsden High. There was originally a roof over the bleachers that lasted into the mid 1950s before being removed.

Friday night high school football games were very exciting when we knew some of the players. I attended many games even after graduating from high school. Now it seems there are mostly only parents of the players at the high school games. Back in the 50s and 60s the whole community was interested in the games. The outcome of the ball game was a topic of conversations at the Saturday barber shop and at church on Sunday. Then by Monday, everyone talked about the next game on the upcoming Friday night.

The big game of the year would be between the Huntsville Panthers and the Butler Rebels no matter what their record was. Other exciting games would be with nearby teams Decatur Red Raiders, Coffee Yellow Jackets, Athens Golden Eagles, Hartselle Tigers, Fort Payne Wildcats, Scottsboro Wildcats, Cullman Bear Cats and Anniston Bulldogs.

Huntsville and Butler began playing at Milton Frank Stadium when it was finished in 1962 and the attendance was at capacity of 12,000 many times. Lee Junior High became a high school in 1964 and Grissom High in 1969 and Johnson High in 1972. That made five city schools and intercity games were scheduled at Milton Frank Stadium. When city teams were playing visiting teams from outside Huntsville, their games would be played on Thursday nights at Milton Frank

or back at Goldsmith Schiffman on Friday nights and sometimes at Joe Davis Baseball Stadium.

There have been several newspaper articles concerning the status of Goldsmith Schiffman Field. One article stated that in 2012, the city moved games from Goldsmith Schiffman field (due to its disuse) to Louis Crews Stadium at Alabama A&M University. The article also stated that the city and the school board agreed to split the cost of installing artificial turf at the A&M stadium. The school board and the city agreed to pay up to \$289,000 apiece so the university stadium could be used by the city's public-school students.

Due to the Goldsmith Schiffman Field abandonment, Oscar Goldsmith's heirs reclaimed title to the land. On September 5, 2014, after consulting with heirs "as far away as Scotland," Margaret Ann Goldsmith deeded the property to the city again, this time without restrictions.

The donation would legally permit the city to sell the property in the future. If that happens, the Goldsmith family required that the sale proceeds go to the Goldsmith-Schiffman Wildlife Sanctuary near Hampton Cove.

Currently the Field hosts soccer and flag football games. Future use of the field is uncertain. Even though the playing field and bleachers are in good shape. Some say it would take a million dollars to update the facilities to be as good as other athletic facilities throughout the city. City planners are in discussion about the Field in relationship with the future developmental plans for the vacant lots across the street on Ward Avenue. Hopefully it will remain some type of a sports field.

I still live on Ward Avenue. Sometimes even when the Field is empty, and the wind is blowing loudly through the trees or a storm is approaching, I think I can mysteriously hear the cheering of football fans.



# Molly

Hello, my name is Molly. I came to the Ark Animal Shelter just in time! That is because I had 11 puppies on the 2nd of February 2022. A kind lady noticed me

on the side of the road on a very cold day in January. She brought me to the Ark Shelter and asked if they would take me in especially since I was soon to be a Mama. The Vet thinks I am about 2 years old and am a Beagle Hound mix. I am a very good mother to my babies and they are well taken care of. I'm friendly and sweet and everyone here has been very kind to me. Will you come to the Ark and ask to see me and my babies? You cannot come in the room but can watch us through the window in the door. Please come and ask to see Molly.

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# Crispy Critters

by Al Dean



I had spent the morning on the Tennessee River catching a mess of shellcrackers. When I got home, I unloaded my fishing tackle and put it in the cubbyhole in the garage I used for reloading shot shells to defray the cost of what the Secretary of Homeland Harmony called my chronic disease of brain reward: trap shooting. After cleaning the fish and sealing them in plastic bags I went into the kitchen and placed them on the second shelf of the refrigerator. I put the two square Styrofoam cartons of night crawlers I didn't use in the crisper.

Seeking refuge in the recesses of my study to avoid being presented the list of Things My Husband Promised to Do for Me Some Weekend, I turned on my computer. I had just googled an Internet site to check out the cost of a guided hunt for Blue Sheep in the Himalayas of Nepal, when the Secretary handed me a document itemizing tasks sufficient to transform our dandelion infested yard into an English garden. My enthusiasm for stalking Blue Sheep waned on the trek to the tool shed.

By late afternoon I had amassed a mountain of cuttings, clippings, branches and limbs higher than Mount Everest. I cut the limbs into fireplace lengths and stacked them on the woodpile, hauled the brush to our disposal site, cleaned my tools and headed for the shower. The only hunting I wanted to do was for my recliner I heard calling my name from the comfort of our air conditioned living room.

Always attuned to health and wholeness, the Secretary, now wearing her Paula Deen hat and a warm smile, greeted me at the door. "Dear," she said. "How would you like a nice chef salad for dinner? You must be starved. I've got some ham and chicken breast that you like, sliced really thin, and I made some bleu cheese dressing and baked a few rolls of French bread."

"That's nice," I grimaced, and stooped in what I hoped was a convincing display of intense pain. "Think I overdid it," I added, rubbing my back where I thought my kidneys were.

"You go shower," she cooed, patting my cheek. "I've turned on the water and laid out a change of clothes. Dinner will be on the table by the time you're through."

"Hmm," I said. I knew I'd better hurry.

"What?"

"Nothing."

Paula Deen does not like food sitting on a table and me sitting someplace else.

The shower head was in mist mode and the gentle spray lulled me back into the Himalayas. The instant I recognized that the Blue Sheep poised majestically on the mountain bluff was a trophy specimen, I heard the Secretary's wail for my immediate presence. I stumbled out of the shower, wrapped a towel around me and careened down the hallway toward

the high pitched shrieks, knocking a Larry Chandler hunting dog print off the wall scattering broken glass in my path.

My bleeding foot left red splotches on the floor of the dining room and kitchen where the Secretary stood, clutching her golden tresses in both hands. She pointed toward the open refrigerator and the crisper lying on the floor. Beside it was a head of lettuce and two empty worm cartons.

"Worm!" she yelled. "Big worms. In the lettuce!"

A night crawler when it stretches out can double in length. Serpent-size worms were writhing in the lettuce leaves like snakes on Medusa's head. I led her to a chair, eased her down and scooped up the head of lettuce and the empty cartons. Leaving a trail of blood on my way to the garage, I shook the worms out of the lettuce into a Hosta bed, tossed the lettuce and the cartons

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into the trash bin, raised the garage door, rolled the bin outside and shoved it behind the blue ribbon topiary I had just created. When I returned, some semblance of calm restored, the Secretary was wiping blood off the tile floors. A bottle of iodine and a roll of gauze were on the table. She pointed to a chair. "Sit down," she said. "Let me look at that foot."

I started to object, but she had morphed into her Florence Nightingale role. I was relieved it wasn't Lizzie Borden.

"Did we learn something today?" She asked.

The use of the plural pronoun "we" demanded that I not respond. We didn't leave the shower running or knock a picture off the wall.

"You know I was frightened," she smiled.

"Uh huh."

"Night crawlers are slimy."

"Uh huh."

"We don't put worms in the refrigerator."

I could have mentioned that bait shops kept them in refrigerators, but I didn't.

"Worms don't go in my refrigerator," she said, reading my mind. "Do they?"

"Huh uh."

"What are we going to do about it?"

I knew this was not a rhetorical question.

Putting on my best meditative face, I considered her dilemma. "Well," I ventured. "One solution would be for me to quit fishing, but I know you wouldn't want that."

She stopped swabbing my foot with iodine and smirked.

"Or," I continued undaunted. "I could stop using worms and buy lures attractive to blue gills and shellcrackers. Maybe invest in a fly rod. With your eye for detail and your fine motor skills you could tie some gorgeous professional looking flies."

She wrapped the ends of the length of gauze she had snipped off the roll around both hands and stretched it like a garrote. Lizzie Borden crossed my mind. With raised eyebrows, outstretched arms, palms upward, I offered, "How about I find a dorm size fridge and put it in the garage? Ta dah?"

In response to my Solomon-like wisdom, she breathed a long sigh, "I'll order a pizza," she said. "You can go get it."

When we finished our pizza I limped to my recliner and was soon sleeping, fitfully dreaming of a herd of Blue Sheep in the Himalayas hurtling through fissures and fractures to escape an avalanche of giant night crawlers embedded in heads of lettuce.

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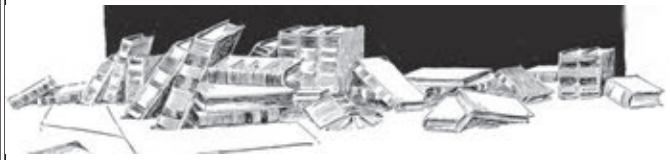
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**"The indirect cause of this accident was a little guy in a small car with a big mouth."**

**Seen on local accident report**

# The Television Picture

by Harold Fanning



Growing up in Hazel Green, Alabama during the 1960s was, for the most part, a simple life. Most kids of that era spent their days outdoors playing hide-and-seeK, cowboys and Indians, or riding their bikes. There wasn't much television watched in those days, but when we did, about the only television set within a twenty-five mile radius of our house belonged to my grandparents, Percy and Gladys Sharp.

Percy purchased that old black and white Philco at the Montgomery Ward Department Store in Huntsville and any attempt to watch it was more like looking at hazy fig-

ures though a winter snow-storm. After awhile the straining, squinting and attempting to distinguish who from what just wasn't worth the effort and we'd eventually give up and go outside to do something else. I reckon the concept of "reception" for television manufacturers back then was pretty much left to the innovative discretion of the purchaser.

For example, everyone who had televisions in the late 1950s and 60s had a forty-foot antenna rising above their roof line. Usually any attempt

to adjust the picture clarity required someone standing outside next to the antenna pole with everybody inside yelling through an open window their contrasting instructions on which way to turn the thing.

Sometimes this effort worked, but, more often than not, it didn't. At one point someone heard that if you wrapped the pole in aluminum foil this would somehow increase reception. Word spread fast on that novel idea and in no time at all there were antenna poles throughout the community wrapped tightly with aluminum foil secured with baling twine or duct tape.

Sometimes the best reception was gained when someone simply laid their hand on the antenna pole itself. For my family we always hated that - especially if my grandfather

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Percy happened to be watching professional wrestling hosted by Grady Reeves on WHNT Channel 19. That meant the entire family would have to take turns standing next to the pole holding onto it so Percy could see the screen more clearly. He would get so wrapped up in watching the Masked Marauder, Nut House Fargo, Dusty Rhodes and To Jo Yamamoto that he would literally fight, flop and flip the chair he happened to be sitting in. He would yell, scream, and occasionally use "not-so-nice" adjectives if his favorite wrestler happened to be losing the round. To be honest, my dad used to say that the best entertainment was watching my grandfather Percy watch wrestling.

On one occasion Percy got the notion that birds sitting or roosting on the antenna interfered with reception. I think he got the idea from one of those infamous discussions held at the local barbershop. Al Davis' barbershop stood behind Mr. Tom Harbin's store in Walnut Grove and was usually the gathering place of all the men in the community.

There was always a card game, checkers, or some activity going on whether you needed a haircut or not. It was also the place where all the world's problems were solved - including bad television reception. Of course, once Percy Sharp was convinced of the "bird theory" no amount of persuasion to the contrary would change his mind. No sir, Percy Sharp had a mind like a steel trap and

once it was slammed shut, the matter was a settled issue. Any attempt to convince him otherwise was like arguing with a stop sign.

From then on the only possible recourse was for one of us to shoo the birds away by pounding on the antenna with a stick.

Well, those simpler times are long past now. Today we don't have to wrap our television antennas with aluminum foil or bang on the pole with sticks. No, today we just call the local cable company and they come out and make the necessary adjustments for us! Excuse me, but did I say at the beginning of this article that times back in the 1950s and 60s were a lot simpler? Hummm.



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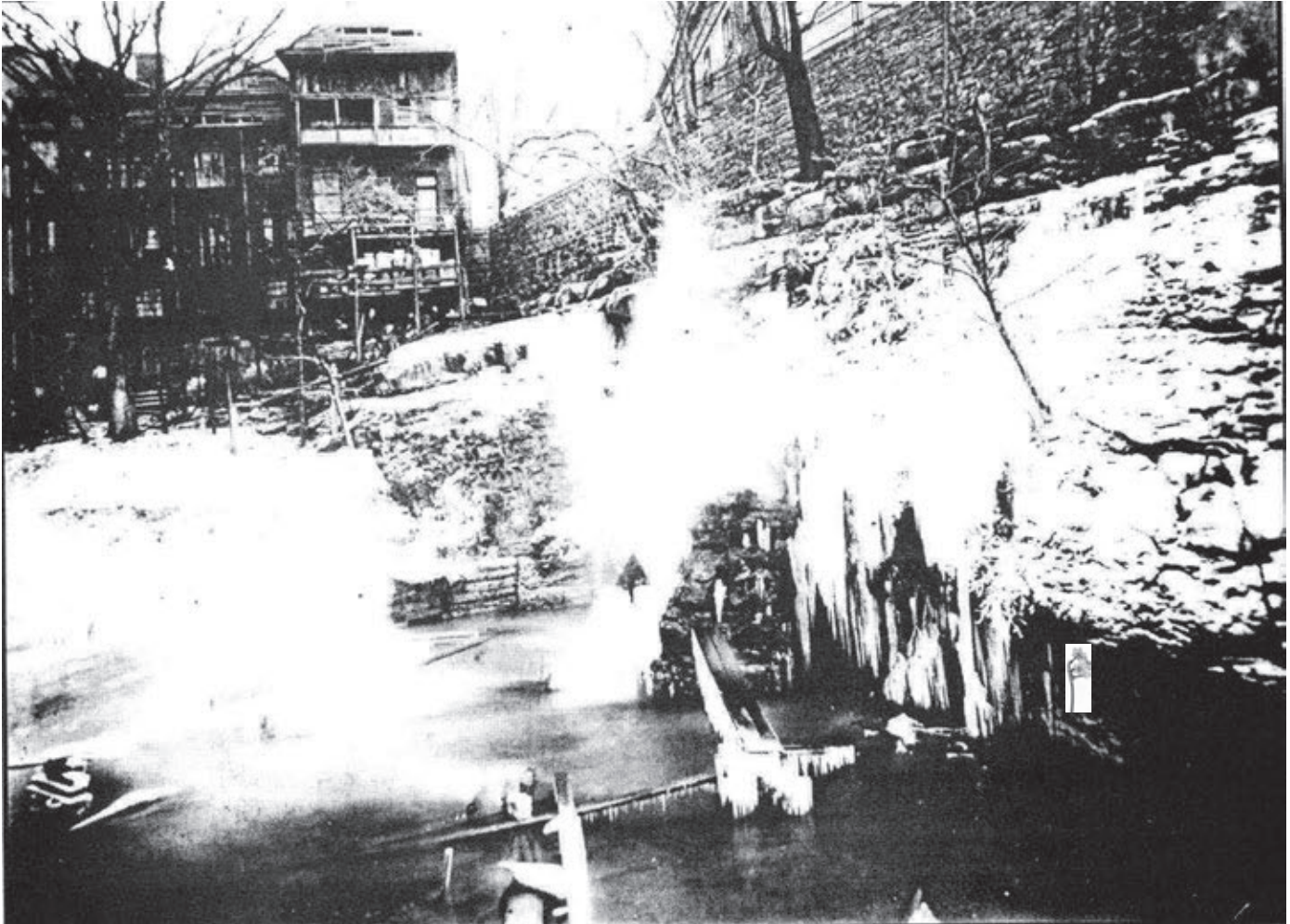
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