



No. 362

April 2023



Old Huntsville

HISTORY AND STORIES OF THE TENNESSEE VALLEY

Top Secret Operation: Huntsville in the 1960s



The night jailer at the Madison County lockup eyed his prisoners carefully. They carried no identification and refused to give their names.

For Huntsville in 1960 - where everybody knew everybody - this was in itself an oddity.

A few days earlier, an employee at Redstone Arsenal reported that he had been approached by strangers who asked him to work with them on a project that was "Vital to national security."

They, too, had stubbornly refused to identify themselves.

Were these events related? What in the world was going on?

Also in this issue: Ladies of the Night; Unusual Superstitions; City Hall; Spud Blue; Making Lye Soap; Stink's Story; Remembering Doyle Brady; Stuffed Sentinels; Pet Tips; Recipes and much more!

LOOKING BACK THROUGH HUNTSVILLE HISTORY



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Top Secret Operation

by Tom Carney 1999

O.T. Frazier, the night jailor at the Madison County jail, cautiously eyed the three prisoners standing before his desk. They had been picked up earlier in the evening for disturbing the peace at a local nightspot. When arrested, the prisoners refused to give their names or any other information that might help Frazier identify them.

For Huntsville, in 1960 where everybody knew everybody, this in itself was a real oddity.

Frazier gave the order for the deputy, Ed Norton, to search them. A careful examination of their pockets revealed nothing about who they were or where they were from. Their billfolds were empty except for a small amount of currency. Reluctantly, Frazier picked up the phone and dialed the home phone number of L.D. Wall, the Sheriff of Madison County.

Wall, mildly annoyed at being disturbed so late at night,

listened as Frazier told of the arrest of the three strangers. At the end of the summation, Wall said, "Book them under John Doe's. Is there anything else?"

Frazier, choosing his words carefully, replied, "Sheriff, I think these are the men we were talking about yesterday."

Without waiting to hear anything else, Wall told Frazier to put them in the drunk tank, he'd be there in a few minutes. As Wall quickly got dressed he pondered the curious events of the last several weeks. For some time he had been hearing rumors of the strangers approaching people and offering them jobs for some type of military operation.

A few days earlier while eating breakfast at a local greasy spoon, Leon Franks, an employee at Redstone Arsenal, approached him and told of being propositioned by the same men. One evening after work, he had walked to his car and found the strangers waiting for him. They appeared to know all about him and asked if he would be interested in working on a project vital to national security.

At first Franks was intrigued but when the men refused to give any details, or even their names, he sensed something was wrong and cut the conversation short.

As Franks told the story, the Sheriff had watched him carefully trying to gauge his credibility. Franks was a twenty-

"Just because you're paranoid doesn't mean you're not being followed."

Ron Craft, Athens



L. Thomas Ryan, Jr. Attorney At Law

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(in memory)

"Old Huntsville" magazine is a monthly publication. Annual subscriptions are \$50 per year for print copy and \$25 per year for digital. Copies can be found in boxes and machines throughout North Alabama.

For subscription change of address, mail new information to the above address.

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year veteran of the Armed Forces, having seen action in WWII and the Korean War. He was highly decorated and well-known for his expertise as a small arms specialist.

Wall pondered the possibilities of the prisoners' identities. Even though the Civil Rights movement was beginning to take hold in the South, so far Huntsville had been quiet. While it was possible they could be Ku Kluxers, he didn't think so; he had too many informers in the Klan. Another possibility were the Northern agitators who were making a nuisance of themselves throughout the South but that didn't sound right either; so far they had all been peaceful, "Whatever it is," Wall decided, "I will soon get to the bottom of it."

The prisoners were still standing in front of the desk when Wall entered the office. They had been joined by another stranger who appeared to be the spokesman for the group. Almost immediately the stranger, without identifying himself, ordered Wall to send his deputy out of the room so they could talk in private.

Infuriated that a stranger would have the audacity to order him around in his own jail, Wall motioned for Frazier to remain seated. Turning to the stranger he then demanded to know "What in the hell is going on!"


Instead of answering, the stranger picked up the telephone and dialed a number. Mumbling a few words into the phone he handed it to the Sheriff. The conversation was brief, lasting less than a minute with Wall saying nothing, just listening. After hanging the phone up he looked at the strangers for a long time as if he was having trouble deciding what to do. Finally he told the strangers they were free to go.

After the strangers had left, Frazier and Norton both asked what was going on. "I'm not sure," replied the Sheriff. "Some kind of official government business."

Almost as an afterthought he added, "But I'm going to find out."

A short time later at CIA headquarters in Langley, Virginia, a top-secret discussion was held. Though much of the minutes are still classified, one can be assured that much of it had to do with "those damn redneck officials in Alabama who are screwing up the Cuban operation."


When Castro first came to power it had been hoped he would steer Cuba toward democracy. Instead he openly embraced Russia and the Communist Party which put him on a collision course with the powers in Washington who were terrified of having a Communist country only ninety miles from Florida. At high level meetings between the CIA, the Pentagon and President Eisenhower, it was decided to overthrow Castro under the auspices of a Cuban revolu-



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tion, supposedly engineered by right wing Cuban exiles.

At first it was decided that the CIA would recruit retired military personnel who would then train small groups of Cuban exiles. After the initial training the recruits would come together at some predetermined point where the CIA would supply them with weapons and guidance for an invasion of Cuba.

Alabama was a prime recruiting area for the CIA. Not only did the state have a large number of retired military personnel, but its citizens were known to be fiercely patriotic.

Unfortunately, things went wrong almost from the beginning. Instead of using CIA personnel to enlist people, the agency, in an attempt to maintain "deniability," used contract agents, many of whom were not qualified and had little experience.

Many recruiting sessions consisted of telling the potential recruit, "we can't tell you what it is about, or what you will be doing, or who you will be working for or even where you are going but we need you and, no, the United States government is not involved!"

In one fiasco, agents rented two rooms at a hotel in Decatur, complete with a stash of firearms and military training manuals, to interview potential recruits and judge their experience. Local law enforcement officials, after hearing of the guns, decided a gang was about to pull an armed robbery and planned a raid. Only quick intervention by top government officials prevented what could have been a public rela-

tions nightmare.

Needless to say, under these conditions, the agency was not very successful at building their "private army." Even worse, the whole affair had become almost common knowledge. Law enforcement officials from Decatur, Anniston and Birmingham were all demanding answers.

In Huntsville, Sheriff L.D. Wall was also trying to find answers. He called the State Attorney General's office and they told him to call the United States Attorney General's office. They, in reply, suggested he contact the State Department who in turn referred him back to the State Attorney General's office. Most people would have given up at that point but Wall was not a man to be pushed aside easily. Each reply only made him more determined to find out the truth.

The CIA knew it had a real problem on its hands. After much consultation it was decided to change direction and approach Governor Albert Patterson about using the Alabama National Guard to train the Cubans and provide support. There

was already a precedent for it - in the late 50s select members of the Alabama National Guard had been used for clandestine missions in South Vietnam, when officially there was no U.S. military presence in the country.

From all appearances this seemed to be the perfect solution. Gov. Patterson had served as a young Lieutenant on Eisenhower's staff during WWII and had acquired a reputation as a crime buster when he broke up the racketeers in Phoenix City, AL. In addition, the Alabama Air National Guard was the only unit in the country still flying the B-26 bombers - the same type used by the Cuban Air Force. These bombers were important if the world was to believe it was a Cuban uprising.

In the late fall of 1960, Gov. Patterson met with Brig. General Doster who asked to "borrow" the Alabama National Guard for an undisclosed purpose in the national interest. Patterson was well aware of

"Did you ever get up in the morning, look in the mirror and think, 'Well that can't be accurate.'"

Missy Herman, Madison



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the "Need to know policy" of the CIA and asked but one question.

"Does the President (Eisenhower) know?"

After being assured of the President's knowledge and approval, Patterson gave his consent.

Almost overnight, once the Alabama National Guard became involved, the whole project took on a professional tone. Selected guardsmen were released from duty, given new identities and sent to a top-secret base in Florida. From there many of them were transported, with false passports, to a secret base in Nicaragua that would serve as the staging area for the invasion. Other members of the guard traveled to Washington where they worked with the CIA in the planning.

Wives were given a post office number in New York where they could write to their husbands. Guardsmen were instructed with cover stories to explain their being away from their jobs and families. "We weren't supposed to know anything about it," said one wife, "but of course we all did."

"In a way it was almost like being back home," recalled one of the recruits. "Almost all of the men there were from Alabama. The others were mostly CIA and we didn't have much to do with them. I think all of us felt uncomfortable with all the cloak and dagger stuff, but \$750.00 a month was a lot of money in 1960."

In the late fall of 1960, General Doster, who was acting as a liaison between the men in Nicaragua and the CIA, stopped by to pay a courtesy call on Gov. Patterson. As he started to leave he made the cryptic remark that "in a few months you will read all about what we are doing and the overthrow of Cuba."

Although Patterson had never been formally briefed, he had apparently heard rumors that gave him a good idea of the invasion plans. This placed Patterson in an awkward position. Though he was extremely loyal to President Eisenhower, he was supporting J. F. Kennedy in the upcoming elections. He realized that if the in-

vasion occurred before the election, the Republican nominee, Richard Nixon, would probably be swept into office as a result.

After much soul searching Patterson contacted Stephen Smith, Kennedy's brother-in-law, and told him he had to meet with Kennedy on important business. A short while later Patterson received a phone call and was told to fly to New York and check into the Barclay Hotel. Late that evening Kennedy showed up, and after being sworn to secrecy, was briefed by Patterson. By all accounts this was the first time Kennedy had heard of the proposed invasion.

Before Kennedy left, Patterson gave him a bag with ten thousand dollars cash as contributions. "That was the way things were done then," said Patterson later.

Though most historians have given Kennedy's stellar performance in the debates as the reason for his victory over Nixon, few of them realized that Kennedy possessed knowledge that gave him a secret advantage. By the third debate Kennedy and Nixon were tied, with many observers giving Nixon a slight edge.

Suddenly during the next debate, in response to



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"Children seldom misquote you. In fact, they usually repeat word for word what you shouldn't have said in the first place."

Mandy Roberts, a mom

an innocuous question, Kennedy dropped a bombshell by stating he supported armed intervention in Cuba. Nixon, in his capacity as Vice President, was well aware of the invasion plans, but because of the secrecy, was forced to act as if he opposed any armed intervention. To have done otherwise might have jeopardized the whole operation. Ironically, Nixon's position that night caused him to be labeled as being soft on Communism, a view that most Americans despised.

The information received from Patterson proved pivotal in swinging the presidential election to Kennedy.

While the country celebrated the election of a new president, Sheriff L. D. Wall was still trying to get an answer to his questions about the strangers. Phone calls were not returned and letters were seemingly ignored. Still, he persisted in his quest - after all, he was the Sheriff of Madison County and if something was going on here he wanted to know about it.

In the early spring of 1961, Kennedy gave the green light for the Bay of Pigs invasion.

"We spent most of the night before carrying the Cubans to the waiting ships and getting the aircraft readied," remembered one man. "Some of the boys had made plans to sneak aboard the ships with the Cubans but when the CIA heard about it they posted guards around the piers and searched the ships."

"All the Cubans were excited about going home. We had told them that when they landed on the beaches we would be supporting them with air

strikes. One of the Cubans I got to know told me his wife was expecting a baby soon and if it was a boy he was going to name it John Fitzgerald, in honor of the President who was going to liberate their country. I learned later that he was one of the first to die."

The Alabama guardsmen in Nicaragua were supposed to only provide training and support but as the operation began to falter, it was evident to everyone that something else had to be done.

"We heard everything on our radios," recalled one guardsman. "They were being massacred on the beaches and kept calling, begging for air support." The Cuban pilots who were supposed to fly the B-26s refused to take off. It was a suicidal mission, they claimed.

Frantically, the guardsmen radioed Washington begging to be allowed to fly missions and provide support. Washington refused, giving orders that no airplanes were to be allowed to take off. Finally, four members of the Alabama Air National Guard, unable to stand by helplessly while people were being slaughtered, ordered their planes made ready and took off for the short flight

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to Cuba. Three of the pilots were shot down and the fourth, pursued by Russian-made Cuban fighters, barely managed to make it to Miami. The government issued a statement saying the pilots lost were all Cuban nationals.

Without the promised air support from the United States government, the Bay of Pigs invasion failed miserably. Now began the process of denial.

"We were still listening to the battle on our radios," recalled one Guardsman from Cullman, "when we got orders to leave. They didn't even give us time to pack. We left our clothes, equipment and everything else. We just stopped what we were doing at the time and boarded an airplane."

"All types of military hardware was left there - crates of Army 45s with no serial numbers, aircraft parked on the runway, radios - you name it - we just walked away from it."

After landing in Florida the guardsmen were searched for anything that might prove where they had been. The false identity papers and passports were confiscated.

"We were told to go home - this never happened. If anyone asked any questions we were to deny everything. I still remember the last thing they told me - the United States Government had nothing to do with this operation."

"The next morning I was back at my job in Cullman selling insurance. The whole thing seemed like a long nightmare, except I couldn't tell anybody about it."

The same day a spokesman for President Kennedy went on national television and declared that, "No American military personnel were involved in the ill-fated invasion."

A week later Sheriff L.D. Wall finally received a reply to his questions about the mysterious strangers, "...the men in question were employees of the Wildlife Protection and Research Control Board but have since been termi-

nated... We have no knowledge of their present whereabouts."

There is not, and never has been, a Wildlife Protection Research Control Board.



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SKYGACK

by Iolanda Hicks

If you walk down the main aisle of the Huntsville Veterans Memorial Museum and cross the long hallway at the back, lined with glass displays, you will come to a small room, as you turn slightly to the right and then left. Here, in this small room, all sorts of models can be found. There are replicas, in different sizes (or scales), of WWI and WWII airplanes, tanks, ships. Other models depict past eras in history like the Civil War.

In one of the longer glass cases, you will see a 53 inch replica of a Gato submarine that was prevalent in WWII. That one was built by Skygack. You wonder who Skygack could be? We will get to that a little later. Right now let's take a look at what is in front of this Gato model. Here are miniature replicas of the well-known Civil War ships: The Hunley and the Merrimack.

The Hunley was the first submarine to sink a warship. It was built in Mobile, Alabama and launched in 1863. There is some really interesting history behind the Hunley, some sad, but interesting. The USS Merrimack was "the hull upon which the Ironclad warship CSS Virginia was constructed" during the Civil War. Much history can be found about the Merrimack and her repurposed hull, especially her battle with the ironclad warship, the Monitor.

Across the room from this display are several glass sections with model planes, tanks and various other military vehicles. Skygack stays busy making these displays interesting and is presently trying to do some more identifying.

You see, many of these models have been donated by families of our long gone war heroes. Can't



you just imagine, a long-time retired bomber pilot, working on a scaled down model of the plane he flew during the war? Then perhaps there was an M1 Armor Crewman, now in his golden years, remembering his part on a team, prepared to "operate the tanks, assault weapons and then fire weapons to destroy ene-

my positions". We can only imagine the many memories in those displays cases. Skygack takes care of those memories by maintaining and preserving, not only the models, but the other dozens of glass displays.

So who is Skygack?

Skygack was a Martian from a 1907 comic.

While a young boy, he and his Dad were pulling up a floor in a 1909 home in Ohio. They discovered an old 1912 paper, used as part of the floor insulation. It happened to be a copy of the Skygack comic from that time period.

From that day on, our Veterans Museum volunteer of 8 years, Ray Bushnell, was called Skygack, by his Dad. Ray served in the Army and Air Force and has had stints in Vietnam, Korea, Honduras, Europe and the Middle East. He retired in 2005. Ray got his love of building models from his Dad, who enjoyed working with model trains. He is presently the Secretary of the Huntsville Plastic Modeling Organization.

You can't miss Ray when you visit the museum. He walks the aisles, in between his volunteer work, on many of the days the museum is open. He might ask you if you have any questions or need help. If you say yes, be prepared for a history lesson, because Skygack is well informed!


Another of his volunteer jobs is archiving Military technical manuals and publications, but that is, again, another story.

So many of the volunteers at the Huntsville Veterans Memorial Museum are gifted with many talents and they have shared those talents with this writer. It is such a privilege to realize how those gifts, those talents were used to give us a "fine tuned picture" of our history, in all those museum pieces and displays.

Check out the website info@memorialmuseum.org, especially the section on models.

Better yet - go visit them and see for yourself!





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Step Back in Time

by Jerry Keel

Today's children miss out on so many fun things. Recently I found my mind had carried me back to my young days. This was in the late 1940s and early 1950s when things moved at a much slower pace. It is amazing to witness the changes that have taken place since those long-ago days. It's funny how my memory works. I can remember things that happened in those days but I can't remember where I left my eyeglasses or what I had for breakfast now. Ahh, the joys of old age! (But at least I am still here.)

When darkness approached, a group of young folks would gather around a street light in front of my home on Beirne Avenue near the Goldsmith Schiffman Field. When the light came on swarms of insects of all kinds were drawn to the bright light. Any time you had insects flying around there would be night creatures present to take advantage of the feast provided by the bugs. Bats and various birds would soon arrive for a snack.

It was frightening when one or more of the bats would drop down very fast for a tender morsel and would seem to be on a collision course with one of us. However, Nature provided the bats with some kind of ultrasound which made it possible for the bats to catch a flying insect and avoid us humans.

In the daylight hours we would sometimes catch a June bug and use it for a toy. We would tie a string to one of its back legs then let it fly around like a kite. This was just one of the simple things we did to entertain ourselves. We used our imaginations to devise simple toys made from ordinary objects we could find lying around.

My parents worked in the Lincoln Mill where cotton was spun into thread which was then woven into cloth. The work they did was very labor-intensive and the pay was small but with limited educations that's about all they could do. But at least we always had food and a warm place to live so we did alright. Our neighbors were quick to help when someone had a need.

The neighborhood playground was a gathering spot for all the kids who lived nearby. The city paid for a lady to supervise the playground and offer help and advice to the kids who gathered there. Many of the supervisors helped us young ones by providing guidance to us when a problem arose.

Many times the ladies were able to help when the kids' problems could not be discussed with

their parents. The money the city paid them was well spent because it prevented some of us from getting into trouble with the law.

Some of the more affluent businessmen would sponsor activities for the playground kids. Trips to Birmingham and Nashville were arranged so we could see minor league baseball games in the spring and summer. Refreshments were provided both on the bus and at the ball park. Chaperones, who were usually volunteers, were provided for the safety of the kids and to maintain order. Without the chaperones a busload of kids would probably have become quite rowdy (no probably about it, that would have been a certainty).

Also movie nights at the playgrounds provided a chance to see a movie with all the trimmings like hot dogs, popcorn and soft drinks. These activities were wonderful for us all. Children were usually accompanied by their parents, who also enjoyed the outings.

My shrink told me I was crazy and I told him I wanted a second opinion. "Okay," he said, "You're ugly, too."

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Tips from Earlene

* Get some of that large elephant garlic, peel and cut into pieces and place in vegetable oil for use later.

* The fastest way to crush fresh berries for a crisp or pie is with a potato masher.

* Broccoli is very good for you - steam it briefly, then put in a bowl with a bit of margarine, lemon juice and chopped, raw Vidalia onions. Delicious!

* A small bag of sulphur kept in a drawer or cupboard will drive away red ants. Black ants hate borax powder - just place some at the point where they come into your home.

* The secret of good health is to eat lots of onions. The trouble is, keeping that secret a secret.

* Hosta plants are great for shady areas of your garden, and will come up multi-fold year after year. Plant them towards the back of the house, with smaller bushes and flowers in front.

* Branches of elderbush hung in the dining room will clear the house of flies. There is an odor

* If rats enter your cellar, a little powdered potash thrown in their holes or mixed with meal and scattered in their runways will drive them away for good.

* There is not a prettier walk than through downtown Huntsville - including Old Town and Twickenham - during any season of the year.

There are plenty of sidewalks, huge trees and beautiful old homes. Get yourself some good walking shoes and come on downtown!

* Cayenne pepper will keep the pantry and storeroom free from ants and cockroaches. If a mouse makes an entrance into any part of your dwelling, saturate a rag with cayenne, in solution, and stuff it into the hole, which can then be repaired with either wood or mortar. No mouse or rat will cut that rag for the purpose of opening communication with a depot of supplies.

* To marinate your meat get some Ziploc storage bags. Clean your meat and place it inside the bag with your marinade - toss in fridge and change its position several times to get a good soak.

* Eggs for boiling should be as fresh as possible. A newly laid egg will generally recommend itself by the delicate transparency of its shell.

* To keep your breath smelling fresh when you can't brush your teeth, carry some mint tea bags with you. Chew on one after a lunch or dinner and your breath will be very fresh.

* To clean brass, rub the tarnished brass by means of a cloth or sponge with diluted acid, such as the sulfuric, or even with strong vinegar. Afterwards, wash with hot water, to remove the acid and finish with a dry cloth.

* Keep 4 or 5 different types of nuts in your freezer for drop-in guests. "Jump-fry" them in a hissing-hot skillet with a touch of butter, sea salt and ground hot red pepper.



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"You know you're getting older when you sink your teeth into a delicious steak and they stay there."

Bob Jacobs, Scottsboto



Easter is just around the corner, so I've decided to make out my April 9th Easter Brunch menu. It always helps to make foods ahead that can be frozen. Ham and broccoli quiche is my standby with assorted fruit, cinnamon rolls and tea. That's the best I can come up with this year.

Last month was the three-year anniversary of the Covid shutdown. Over six million people worldwide have died from Covid. It is said that it was leaked from a lab in China. I have had two friends recently come down with the virus and managed to have a relapse all in the same month. Which brings to mind, I better get my six-month booster. How about you? Have you gotten yours? Better safe than sorry. I don't have time to be sick. Spring is my favorite time of the year. Who wants to feel bad with the beautiful flowers blooming?

I still wait until after April 15th (Income Tax Day) to put out tomatoes. This is because they are especially sensitive to cold weather. Whatever I plant earlier, I cover them every night to keep them from being hit with a late freeze.

Children love getting dressed up and going to Easter Egg Hunts. Check with the area

churches to see what time they will have theirs. Also, dyeing eggs with grandkids is so much fun. I have even found eggs that look like ones that the kids can dye and decorate. These won't break and can be used again next year. Finally, sunrise services are always inspiring when the weather permits.

If you are as old as Grandma, you will remember the tornado of April 4, 1974, that tore up Parkway City and went up the side on Monte Sano Mountain and cut power to all the TV stations. If you can't remember that one, how about the ones of Wednesday, April 27, 2011? One hit just before noon as part of many tornadoes of the day. Several TVA high-power transmission line towers were toppled. Those downed towers cut power for the City of Huntsville and much of Madison County.

Downtown Huntsville didn't get electricity back for five days. It came back on Monday morning, May 2, 2011.

I'm reminding everyone to watch for weather alerts and take heed when there is a tornado warning. The one of 1974 left Parkway City and cut trees in half two houses up from me (on the way up the mountain), and it sounded just like a train was going to hit us. So make sure you have a weather radio and batteries and know where your safe place is in the house.

Well, until next time, enjoy each day!

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The Times Remembered

by M. D. Smith, IV

The printed Huntsville Times no longer exists.

Do you remember the headline of The Huntsville Times on Friday, March 16, 1973? Let me refresh your memory. It read, "Flash Floods Hit City After 6-Inch Rain."

Do you recall that day? The Parkway starting at Governors Drive going south was underwater. So was the road over the bridge at Big Springs, or the "Duck Pond" as our family calls it. About fifty feet of the road was underwater.

But wait, there was something else about that edition of the daily newspaper selling for just 5 cents (35 cents per week). It was printed entirely in blue ink. That's right, the basement containing all the black newsprint ink was underwater, but they had enough blue ink upstairs to get the paper out that day. I still have that faded edition of the newspaper. Two regular writers, Don Chapin and Peter Cobun, got front page stories that day about the flooding. Also, long-time photographer, Dudley Campbell went up in a helicopter or airplane and got terrific aerial shots of the Times Building and the Parkway underwater to Drake avenue. The Heart of Huntsville Mall (now the Medical Mall) was underwater. It's nice to have a printed record of that day and the event.

No more printed daily newspapers in our area or other major Alabama cities, as the Alabama Media Group closed print operations in Huntsville, Birmingham,

and Mobile.

Sunday, February 26, 2023 - the final print edition.

The Huntsville Daily Times (the word Daily dropped in later years) printed war stories in 1918. On January 21, the headline proclaimed, "Ex-President Roosevelt Classed As the Kaiser's Potent Agent." The cost of the newspaper then was 15 cents per week (7 editions).

In the old days, it took a newspaper a long time to set the lead type for the presses for all the pages that were to be printed, particularly the Sunday edition. Some sections had deadlines as early as Friday when work began on the giant Sunday edition. As a result, the edition for Sunday morning had to be "put to bed" shortly after midnight so that the thousands of copies could be printed, cut, folded and ready to be delivered to the route carriers before daylight for home delivery.

So you can understand why on Sunday morning, December 7, 1941, the day the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor, the headline in the Times read, "Roosevelt Writing Jap Emperor; Moscow Peril Called



Gravest Yet" because the bombing happened way after printing time for the newspaper. The cost of the daily newspaper had risen to 20 cents per week. The attack occurred just before 8 A.M. Hawaii time, which was noon Huntsville time. It was immediately on radio stations worldwide shortly after. The next edition on Monday afternoon said, "Congress Votes On War Quickly; FDR Gives Reports On Losses." Big time gap.

Breaking news and newspaper deadlines were always a problem. However, radio, and soon TV, were much more immediate for the significant news stories locally and worldwide. Here's an interesting sidebar to this. Smith Broadcasting bought WHBS from the Huntsville Times Corporation in 1958 and promptly changed the call letters to WAAY Radio and the format from Classical Music to Rock and Roll. I suppose the



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newspaper got all the complaints about lovers of that type of music. The Times published several negative articles about previous listeners not liking the new sound from 1550 Radio.

My father, M.D. Smith, III, didn't take kindly to those articles and began the radio newscasts with a recorded opening that said something like, "WAAY Radio – Breaking news as it happens, and not yesterday's old news you wrap your cleaned fish guts in or line the bottom of the birdcage with."

After that, I think the battle was on. Anything WAAY-Radio did that had a negative aspect, like the "Dollar Drop" promotion where we dropped one-dollar bills off the Russel Erskine Hotel, got a harsh story. It caused gridlock around the city, and the Police Chief said he would ban WAAY's remote broadcasts if anything like that happened again. Well, you can imagine what the Times reporters did with that story. But my father's reaction was that of his mentor, P. T. Barnum, "Just spell my name correctly." Free press coverage was always good coverage as far as he was concerned, but he still liked to jab barbs at the Times when their stories ran about the station.

The Times was not in competition with WAAY Radio and TV (Channel 31) for news as much as advertisers. The print media in the old days got 95% of the ad budget for department stores, car dealers and most businesses that could afford it. Broadcast media had to fight each other for the scraps left over.

And it was advertisers leaving the print media that caused the shrinkage of the Huntsville Times, both in the physical size of the paper, and the number of pages, then going to only three days a week of print, and finally out of the print business altogether.

The younger generation had gone elsewhere for their news, aided by the internet growth of the past twenty years.

That issue of young readers is not so much of a problem for Old Huntsville Magazine because of the median age of its readers. They will be around enjoying this magazine's print edition for many years. But, publisher Cathey Carney is not ignoring the digital age. You can have a digital .pdf version of the entire magazine subscription for even less than the print copy.

Another benefit is that many photos are in full color and so sharp and clear on your computer or tablet.

Thus, the local daily newspaper for our city, and many more now and in the future, will not have a physically printed paper in which to read news stories of the day.

Yeah, I sure will miss the printed Huntsville Times. What am I going to line the bottom of my birdcage with or wrap fish guts in?



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Turn to the experts

Stuffed Sentinels

by Gerald Alvis



I first started to pay attention to it about four years ago. I was at a business office in Hino, Japan. I noticed that at various times during the day, people would be asleep at their desks. A definite no-no in the business culture of the states, I saw it with enough frequency I finally inquired about the practice. The broken English reply was when they are tired, they rest.

It was once a borderline guilty pleasure. Something allowed maybe once a week because, well, life is busy. I be-

gan to understand how to use it to recharge, reset if you will, and then be and feel better. My nap lasts about an hour and six minutes; the interesting thing is it's almost exact each time. No alarm, just an internal clock; it may seem a novel concept, but rest when you're tired.

I've learned there is a reason it is a part of other cultures.

Acting on this knowledge and experience (it's easier when you're retired), I do just that and life is better for me. I enjoy feeling rested. But it also yields some other unexpected benefits.

Recently I was at my son's home on a Sunday afternoon. Now part of my routine, I just let everyone know and slip away.

My eldest had me lie down in my youngest granddaughter's bedroom. I use a fan for background noise, and I like the way it feels, but just about the time I was drifting off, I felt something being placed beside me. I opened my eyes and was staring point-blank at a stuffed fox and bear. My granddaughter had shared her favorite "stuffedies" to comfort me while I rested.

I grabbed one of them and held it close, and listened to the stifled giggles.

It may be approaching the metaphysical, but some of you out there will get it. Even with your eyes closed, you can tell when someone comes in and checks on you. Perhaps it was a dream or wishful thinking, but she came back more than once.

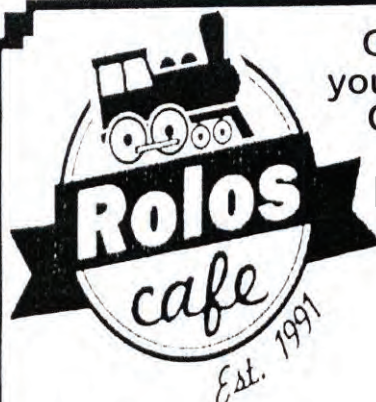
Later I thought of the stark contrast, the image in my family's minds that walked by, but I didn't care.

I had my two stuffed sentinels and an 8-year-old little girl watching over me, and I rested well!

Listen without hearing! People say I love you all the time, and it's often without words.

"I don't ever make snowmen in the winter. If I wanted a cold man with slush for brains, I'd still be married."

Maxine



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Mary McLeod Bethune was born in Mayesville, South Carolina on July 10, 1875. Her parents were former slaves, and she was the fifteenth of seventeen children. She became a schoolteacher and taught for six years before she founded Bethune-Cookman College and became its first President. She was a consultant to the U.S. Secretary of War in the selection of the first female officer candidates for the Armed Services. She was appointed consultant on interracial affairs and understanding at the charter conference of the United Nations.

She held many more posts of prestige, too. She was one of the most significant forces of her era in the emerging struggle for civil rights.

One day when Mrs. Bethune was traveling on a train during the early days of segregation, she was seated in what was called the "Lower 13," where any Black traveler with a first class ticket was placed. It was also a time when there were those who would not call a Black woman "Miss" or "Mrs." or address her with respect.

The conductor came up to her and asked, "Auntie, can you make good biscuits?"

Mrs. Bethune later said that she looked up and replied, "I am an advisor to President Roosevelt. I am the founder of a four-year accredited college. I am the organizer and founder of the National Council of Negro Women. I am considered a leader among women. And yes, I do make good biscuits."

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Heard On the Street

by **Cathey Carney**



We had a winner for the Photo of the Month for March - **Becky Hicks** was the first caller to tell me the photo was that of **Mary Cantrell** who is long time owner of Mary's Antiques and Beads (45 years in business) on Pratt Avenue across from Waffle House. Who has not been in there over the years looking for glass beads for craft projects? Mary's has TONS of them and a trip to her store is an experience in itself. Becky was a CNA at Brookshire Nursing Rehab for years and now is retired and it's harder for her to get out, so a free subscription was perfect.

Then, I have to brag on myself a bit. **NO ONE** found the little hidden fern leaf that I put on page 47 in the top left picture. See the man in the white shirt far left?

Look down from his hand and you'll see two fern branches. I had lots of calls finding it in different places but no winner. I promise the next item will be easier to find but I saved \$50!

I will be hiding just a **plain egg** for April. Somewhere in these pages find a tiny white egg and you will be the winner, if you're the first to call!

Jane Eller is the long time customer care rep at Truist Bank on Church Street in Huntsville. She wants to congratulate her grandson, **Sean Barringer**, on his graduation from Hazel Green High School. His walk will be on May 23rd and his family is celebrating with a huge party on May 27. Sean played football for Hazel Green and turned 18 on Feb. 11th. His football nickname was BEAR!

Another customer rep for Truist Bank whom we see alot is **Susan Coulter** and she told us about several events that happened in March. Her grandson **Judson Clark** turned 8 on March 11 and is the son of Susan's daughter **Brie Coulter Clark**. Another grandson turned 8 on March 19 - **Jack Santos** who is the son of **Ashley R. Santos**, Susan's daughter. Ashley had a birthday too - on March 13th. Lots of happy celebrating in that family!

Elizabeth Wharry is one of our popular writers and she is so proud of son **Jacob Wharry**, who was promoted from Army PFC to Specialist. He also popped the question to his now fiancée, **Christine Smith** and she said Yes! Wedding bells will happen in late

May/early June.

Cheryl Tribble is that lady with the sharp eye who catches all of my typos and grammatical errors - she makes us look professional! Happy Happy Birthday to Cheryl on April 27th! These years sure roll around in a hurry right?

Thinking today of **Maria Bello Llerena** of Miami, who passed away April 1st 2 years ago. We send love to her husband **Oscar Llerena**, who loved Maria and their beautiful life together.

Libba Whitton turned 99 on Feb. 25 and according to **M.D. Smith and Judy**, the cake was monstrous, 100% edible including all the floral decorations. The celebration was held in one of the rooms of the Mayfair Church, and there was a crowd. Amazing fact - Libba still enjoys driving! Happy Birthday to a beautiful lady.

A tip from one of our readers **Becky Richardson**: When you get a new insurance or health card take a picture front and back and store in an album on your cell phone. Should you forget it or lose it, you can show the number to the person who needs it. Recently she had lost her medical

Photo of The Month

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This handsome boy became an advocate for the poor and took over an agency that had "Mission" in it.



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insurance card and didn't know it until she was at the doctors office out of town. They wanted full payment up front without proof of insurance. She was able to show the card on her phone. She puts credit card copies on her phone too but I understand why some would be hesitant (Ed. Note, if you lose your phone, etc.)

Rosemary Leatherwood, owner of Old Dad's BBQ in Hazel Green, wants to shout out a big Happy Birthday on April 14th to her beautiful daughter **Jamie**. Jamie loves volunteering her time and talents to so many and has a heart of gold. We can see why Rosemary is so proud of her.

Well we thought spring was here then it went to 26 overnight. What's going on? So many are asking **Jeff at Bennett's Nursery** what to do about all their bushes and perennials that froze when we had close to 0 degrees in the winter. They all look like gonnors but Jeff said to be patient - wait til after Easter and see if you find green popping out. Then you'll see what's truly dead and do your trimming at that time.

Preceptor Alpha Gamma Chapter of Beta Sigma Phi celebrated several big birthdays in March. **Linda Drake** was March 22, **Vivian Kruse** was March 20, **Pat Riley** was March 2 and **Sherry Taylor** was March 6. These spring babies represent about a third of the club who help out organizations such as Downtown Rescue Mission, Salvation Army, Food Bank, Heals and SNAP. Really proud of all these ladies.

John John McKinney of Huntsville High School is the Alabama State Wrestling Champion for 7A schools, in the 160 pound class. He won this at the recent state meet held at the VBCC in Huntsville. His family and friends are SOO proud of him - Mom **Rebekah McKinney**, Dad **John McKinney**, grandma **Janet Watson** and grandfather **Sam Keith** along with twin brother **Griffin McKinney** and older brother **Sam McKinney**.

Phyllis and Billy Lawrence will have been married 49 years on their anniversary April 27th. They have been in love from the very beginning. They married at the campus of the University of Tennessee in Chattanooga. Billy has had some medical issues going on and we send love to both him and Phyllis. Phyllis wanted to send love to her sis-in-law **Linda Worley** who had a really bad fall recently and is recuperating. We look forward to hearing from Phyllis, who makes her home in Tennessee.

The **Historic Lowry House** is a place you won't forget. Very few people know about this hidden jewel in Huntsville, Al. Recently it was the location for a paranormal investigation to which the public was invited. The extremely haunted and mysterious Lowry House in Huntsville hosted TV Personality, Paranormal Investigator & Psychic **Medium Lesley Ann Hyde** as she led her Team the Southern Ghost Girls Tours & Paranormal Investigations on a Historic Interactive Paranormal Investigation of the house and grounds where guests joined the investigation. This occurs several times a year and you will be provided equipment and led by the Team! This is one of the most significant homes in Alabama to have a Civil War History. The home holds a sad love story that ended in tragedy for the occupants in the home that has led to the Lady in White apparition being seen many times in the front bedroom window.

The Home was also part of the Underground Railroad. There have been many sightings and noises in the house that could be the spirits of those desperate souls. A full-bodied apparition was seen in the Kitchen. You can join the interactive Investigation using state-of-the-art Paranormal Investigation Equipment and even the exclusive tipping table! You can check upcoming schedules at their website www.historiclowryhouse.com or Google it.

Well, hopefully this time next month we'll have some beautiful warm Huntsville weather and get our hands in the dirt. Remember to check on neighbors and friends! And do things for yourself that make you happy.

Chocolate Sponge Candy

1 cup sugar
1 cup dark corn syrup
1 Tbsp. white vinegar
1 Tbsp. baking soda
1/2 cup semi-sweet chocolate chips, melted

Combine sugar, corn syrup and vinegar and cook over medium heat, stirring until sugar melts. Cook, without stirring, to 300 degrees. Remove from heat and add soda.

Pour into a well greased jellyroll or 9x13 inch pan. Sprinkle chocolate chips on top of candy and spread when melted.

When hard, break into pieces. Very good coated with the chocolate.

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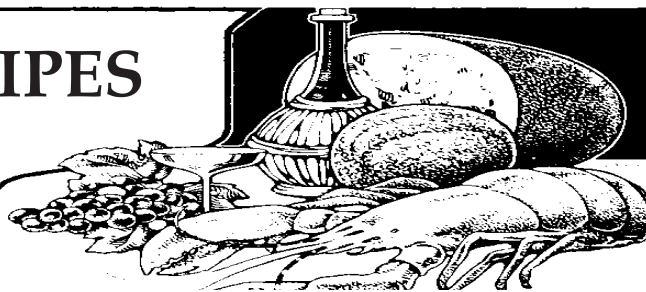
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RECIPES



Charleston Favorites

Hot Mushroom Dip

1 c. mayonnaise
1 c. grated Parmesan cheese
1/2 t. garlic powder
1 4-oz. can mushrooms, chopped and well drained

Mix well and bake at 325 degrees for 30 minutes. Serve with any good multi-grain crackers.

Copper Pennies

1 stick butter
1/2 lb. sharp Cheddar cheese, grated
1 c. flour
1/2 pkg. dry onion soup mix
1/2 t. cayenne pepper, optional
1/2 t. salt

Let butter and cheese come to room temp and mix thoroughly. Add remaining ingredients and blend.

Shape into three rolls about one inch in diameter. Wrap in wax paper and chill.

Slice rolls into 1/4" thick slices. Place on ungreased cookie sheet and bake at 375 degrees for 10-12 minutes and brown around the edges. Keep in tight container.

Chicken in Sour Cream

4 chicken breasts, boneless and salted

Sauce:

1/2 pint sour cream
3 T. flour
1 can mushroom soup
1/2 c. white wine

Add flour to sour cream, then soup and wine. Mix well and pour over chicken. Bake at 300 degrees for 2 hours.

Chicken Indigo

6 chicken breasts
1-1/2 c. poultry stuffing mix
2 T. Romano cheese, grated
1 clove garlic, crushed
1/2 stick butter, melted

Crumble stuffing mix in blender, stir in cheese. Add garlic to butter. Dip chicken in butter, then in crumbs. Place on buttered cookie sheet and bake at 350 degrees for an hour.

Hot Spinach

4 -10-oz. pkg. chopped spinach
1 4-oz. can sliced mushrooms

1-1/2 c. sour cream
1 pkg. dry blue cheese salad dressing mix

Cook spinach and drain really well. Drain mushrooms and reserve 2 tablespoons mushroom liquid. Mix sour cream, salad dressing mix, mushrooms and reserved mushroom liquid. Add the spinach and pour into greased casserole. Bake at 350 degrees for 50 minutes.

Red Cabbage

1 medium head red cabbage, cut fine
1 lrg. apple, peeled and sliced
3/4 c. vinegar
1/2 c. water
1 T. sugar
Salt and pepper

Cook all ingredients together in covered pan til cabbage is tender, about 30 minutes.

Olive Cheese Puffs

2 c. sharp Cheddar cheese, grated
1/2 c. butter
2 c. flour
1 t. paprika

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Cream cheese with butter, blend with flour and paprika. Mix well. Wrap about 1 teaspoon of mixture around each olive. Place on cookie sheet. Bake at 400 degrees for 12-15 minutes. These can be frozen before baking.

Sea Foam

2 c. sugar
1/2 c. water
1/2 c. corn syrup
1 c. nuts, chopped
2 egg whites, beaten

Cook sugar, water and corn syrup til it will harden in cold water or reaches 250 degrees on candy thermometer.

Remove from heat. Stir in the nuts and add gradually, stirring constantly, to beaten egg whites. Beat til it gets to a creamy consistency. Pour onto buttered plate. Cool and cut into squares.

Charleston Butter Taffy

2 c. brown sugar
1/2 t. salt
3/4 c. butter
1 c. water

Add sugar, salt and water. Bring to boil and continue, without stirring, til mixture becomes a bit brittle when a drop is placed in cold water or it reaches 290 degrees on a candy thermometer. Pour onto buttered pan. Cool slightly and mark into squares.

Coconut Meringues

4 egg whites
1-1/4 c. sugar
2-1/2 c. coconut
1/2 t. vanilla
1/4 t. salt

Preheat oven to 325 degrees. Lightly grease a cookie sheet. Beat your egg whites in a deep glass bowl until foamy, beat in sugar, continue beating until stiff and glossy. Do not under beat.

Fold in the remaining ingredients, drop mixture by heaping teaspoonfuls about 2 inches apart onto your cookie sheet.

Bake for 20 minutes and light brown. Immediately remove from the cookie sheet and cool. Store in a tightly covered container.

Chess Pie

Pastry for a 9-inch crust pie
4 eggs
1-1/2 c. sugar
1/2 c. butter, softened
2 T. yellow cornmeal
2 T. half and half
2 T. lemon juice
2 t. vanilla
Dash salt

Preheat oven to 325 degrees. Prepare your pastry, or thaw one out. Beat the eggs, sugar and butter for 3 minutes in a medium bowl on high speed. Beat in the remaining ingredients, your mixture will look curdled. Pour into pie plate, lined

with the pastry. Bake for one hour or til set, cool for 15 minutes. Refrigerate til chilled.

Good if served with a favorite liquor, such as Kalhua or Amaretto.

Melt in Your Mouth Treats

2 sticks butter, softened
5 T. powdered sugar
2 c. plain flour
2 t. vanilla extract
1 c. chopped pecans

Mix all ingredients together in order listed. Roll into balls about the size of large marbles, bake at 325 degrees for 25 minutes. Check to make sure they don't burn on the bottom. While still hot, roll the balls in about a cup of powdered sugar you have put into a bowl. The heat will make the sugar stick to the balls which tastes amazing.

Sweet Dixie Cake

4 eggs
1/2 pint heavy cream
1-1/2 c. sugar
1-1/2 c. self-rising flour
1 t. almond extract (or vanilla if you prefer)

Beat eggs til light and foamy - at least five minutes. Add the cream, beat another 5 minutes. Add sugar, beat well. Blend in the flour and extract. Pour in a greased tubular pan and bake at 350 degrees for 50 minutes, or in two 8-inch cake pans for 30 minutes. Dust with confectioner's sugar.

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Easter Memories

by Elizabeth Wharry



As most of you know, I grew up as a Roman Catholic and first generation American. Easter was always a big deal in our home and the parish I grew up in.

The weeks preceding Easter were a whirlwind of activity. Before I started school, I remember going with my mother to help clean the church. The Women's Guild would wash windows and make sure the pews, kneelers and floor glowed from their attention.

The nuns who weren't busy teaching would make sure the altar boys' cassocks and surplices were washed, lightly starched and ironed smooth. They also made sure the altar and everything on it gleamed in the light.

Good Friday brought Stations of the Cross. There are 14 of them. It was a very somber review of Jesus's condemnation and walk to Golgotha. It lasted between an hour to an hour and a half. One was expected to dress in one's church clothes.

Holy Saturday morning brought its own beautiful ritual. Women would bring their baskets with part of their Easter dinner. The priest would bless each basket and sprinkle holy water on them. The baskets usually contained bread, salt, a small bottle of wine, an egg and meat. Each item had its own special meaning. Holy Saturday afternoon would see long lines for the confessional. Confession started around 3, and would last until the last person finished their post confession prayers. That could be anywhere from 5 to 7 PM, depending on how many people showed up and how long each one took.

Easter Sunday would dawn and find us in a flurry of activity. I would carefully put on my new outfit and mom would style my hair. It was usually wash and set either in

pin curls or on rags the night before. The final touch was a spring hat. Somewhere between home and the opening prayers, the elastic strap would cut in like an assassin's garrote. The boys would show up sporting fresh hair cuts, new white shirts and either dark blue or black pants, and new shoes.

Every service was filled to capacity. The Mass seemed endless, especially Communion. At last! The final hymn was sung and the blessing given. Time to go home and take off that hat! Although, to this day, I still wear hats to church.. .minus the chin strap.

Wishing all of you a peace filled and happy Easter.

**"It's been a strange day today.
First I found an old hat full of
money, then I was chased by an
angry bearded guy with a guitar."**

Phil Jessop, Huntsville

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Me and My Mule

by G. W. Robinson



I first plowed with a mule when I was a small-for-my-age 11 years old. We made a good team, though, because even though I had to raise my arms to reach the plow handles, which came up to my chin, the mule was old and slow, so he wasn't likely to run away with me. My Daddy rented two acres of land from our neighbor and I raised corn on it with my mule. Now, this mule was one Daddy bought for \$2.00. It had strayed up to a man's place and he had run an ad in the paper to find the owner. Nobody claimed him, so he sold him to Daddy for the cost of the ad. After paying 1/3 of the corn for rent and the mule eating the rest of it, I didn't see much profit in that! I guess the profit was that I enjoyed the work and it taught me a lot about hard work at a young age.

When I was about 12 or 13 years old, I heard that Mr Lewis was hiring men

with mules or horses to drag cedar out of the mountains. I thought, "I can do that. I know how to chain a log and hitch it to a mule," because I had already done a lot of that, logging firewood for our fireplaces. So I asked him if I could log for him. He said "Yes." So me and my mule went to work at my first job except at home. Mr. Lewis was paying \$10.00 per thousand board feet.

As we drug the cedar out of the mountain, everybody kept separate, so as not to get mixed up as to what belonged to who. He had a man to measure it at the end of the day and he would pay us for what we did that day. I could get a thousand feet by 2:00 p.m. (\$10.00 worth) and I would quit and go home. \$10.00 for about six hours - four times what I could make chopping cotton - and the mule did most of the work! I never told my mule that I kept all the money, but he seemed very content just getting a few ears of corn every day. Me and that mule worked good together for several years, until one day he just died of old age.

I am 88 years old as I write this and that is how it was when I was young.

"I picked up a hitchhiker - he seemed like a nice guy. After a few miles he asked me if I wasn't afraid that he might be a serial killer. I told him that the odds of two serial killers being in the same car were highly unlikely."



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Stink's Story

*As Told by his Brother, Bob Sibley
and his Sister,
Charlotte Sibley Fulton*



Many readers of Old Huntsville will know by now of the death in January of William David Sibley, a regular contributor to this magazine. As his only two surviving siblings in a family of ten, we'd like to tell you a bit about our brother, who as a toddler was nicknamed Stink, a name that remained with him throughout a lifetime that was devoted to education and to preserving and publishing the history of the Big Cove community.

It was obvious from an early age that Stink had the determination to meet his goals. One winter when our sister Raye brought home a player piano, Stink spent hours and hours in an unheated room, beads of sweat rolling off his forehead, teaching himself to play without the benefit of musical instruction. He would become practiced enough to entertain us at home and he became a great pianist.

In many respects, Stink's childhood was typical of most Big Cove boys of a similar age. He enjoyed shooting marbles and playing ball. He did his share of household chores - drawing water, bringing in kindling and coal, planting and

watering tomatoes. He picked and chopped cotton. He learned his assigned Bible verses and earned pins for perfect attendance in Sunday school at Big Cove Cumberland Presbyterian Church.

But from early childhood, Stink exhibited two characteristics that made him stand out from most of his contemporaries: (1) He listened raptly to the conversations of his elders, remembering every detail. (2) Even as a little boy, he seemed to know what his life's work would be. Both of those characteristics would have a profound effect on his life and, eventually, on the lives of others.

On languid Sunday afternoons our Aunt Stella Sibley and her cousins and friends from church sat rocking and fanning on the front porch, chatting about their days as students at Campground School in the 1920s. They would recount various marriages, births, deaths and burials of their generation and previous ones. Stink sat quietly at their feet, making mental notes of names, dates, family relationships and burying grounds.

Throughout his life, Stink continued to add to that mental database, using every social contact as an opportunity to learn more, questioning every person until he found a common denominator: Aunt Stella had taught the doctor's father in second grade at Lincoln School; the lab technician's great-grandmother and our great-grandmother had been second cousins...

It wasn't until retirement that Stink would turn that mental database into a written one, in 2003 publishing "Welcome to Big Cove: The History of Big Cove 1807-2000". It was an extensive compilation of photographs, newspaper articles, genealogies, stories and remembrances that draw a vivid portrait of life in Big Cove.

It was Stink's vast knowledge of his community - its families, its schools, its churches and its cemeteries - that prompt-

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ed letters, telephone calls and visits from researchers all over the U.S., seeking information about their forbears.

Stink's passion for local history was surpassed by just one thing: teaching. He loved everything about the classroom experience, and was broken-hearted when his attempt to start first grade at the age of 5 was not successful. He loved his teachers - well, most of them.

During his final hospitalization, even intubated and able to communicate only with his eyes and his hands, we reminisced about his early teachers, with him giving a response with a nod or a shake of his head.

Names like Tressye Maples, Reba Neaves, John Walsh, college English professor Dr. Eleanor Hutchens and college history professor Dr. Lorraine Pabst earned a vigorous nod of the head. A few others, not to be named here, earned a vigorous shake.

Stink graduated from Gurley High School in 1958, intending to go to Berea College, but money was tight, so he went to work at night attending the fledgling University Center (later the University of Alabama in Huntsville) which was holding classes in the old Butler High School. He soon transferred to Athens College (now Athens State University), where he would eventually earn bachelor's and master's degrees. Long before his graduation, though, he would have an opportunity to fulfill his life's ambition. He'd get a classroom of his very own.

Teachers were in short supply in the early 1960s so it was possible to teach with an emergency certificate while continuing one's education. Stink was hired by W.R. Foutch, Sr. to teach at Owens Cross Roads. For years afterward, he would teach all day, then drive or carpool to Athens at night to continue working toward his degree.

He found it amusing that when it came time to do his practice teaching, his supervising teacher had fewer years' experience in the classroom than he did. Later on, Stink taught at Brownsboro and Gurley, retiring after 36 years in the classroom.

After Stink's death, a mutual friend told us about a private Facebook group strictly for Gurley alumni, saying she'd seen some really nice posts about our brother. It was such an uplifting experience to see that dozens and dozens of his former students had called him their favorite teacher of all time, or remembered the books he'd read to them, or the skits they had performed, or

something he'd said or done to make an impression that lasted a lifetime.

Right up until the days before Stink's death, he was still fielding calls and answering letters. Among his greatest joys were the days when fat envelopes would arrive in the mail from Pat (Cobb) Armstrong, former fellow teacher and distant relative who would send items she had run across while researching her own people. Those days would be just like Christmas for him.

In June, while hospitalized and being prepped to go on kidney dialysis, Stink passed the time by writing two articles for Old Huntsville. In late January, two days before his final hospitalization, he was contemplating a subject for his next article: games we played as a child (Red Rover, Annie Over, May I, Redlight, Crack the Whip...).

Writing for Old Huntsville was his therapy, but it was also his mission. Through his writings he reminded his contemporaries of things they'd experienced but perhaps had forgotten, and he taught a younger generation about the Big Cove of the past and the characters who peopled it.



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My Life and Times in and Around Huntsville, Alabama

by Dickie Hale



The earliest times I can remember is when I was 5 years old. I was born in 1947 on the very top of Monte Sano Mountain and lived there for 6 years. I lived with my grandpa (Doc Esslinger), Grandma, (Lillian Esslinger), at different times aunts, uncles and my mom, (Joyce Hale), 2 sisters, (Shirley and Phyllis Hale) and 1 brother, (Tim Hale). So many things happened while I lived there that I can't cover them all, so I'll only share the ones that were big to me.

I remember seeing my first TV show. It was superman with Chief, Lois Lane, Jimmy and of course Clark Kent. On Friday nights we would pile into an old 46 Ford and go to Woodies, Whitesburg or Hwy 72 drive-in. First movie I remember was "The Robe" with Victor Mature. Second movie was "Duel at Silver Creek"

with Audie Murphy.

My Grandpa drove a Texaco truck delivering to farmers different products. They would be out in the field plowing so he would fill up barrels and the money would be under a can. He would leave change and never see them. You could that in those days.

Things I'll never forget about the mountain. 1) My Grandpa would come home at 5 and I can still hear that old Texaco truck churning around that last curve and my sisters and brother and I would meet in front and he would take us up the hill, around back of the house and reach in his pocket and give us all a treat. 2) This same Grandpa was the first and only man to ever whoop my fanny. Hit him with a rock, off comes the belt and he told me why before he did it.

Made my two first and good friends on the mountain. Stevie Spier, a neighbor and Wesley Perkins who later married my 1st cousin Janice Anders. While on the mountain I learned to

ride a bicycle. Started the first grade and had to get a polio and diphtheria shot first. Went to Rison School and Mrs. Esslinger was my teacher. I can still hear her singing as she walked down the hall.

Sadly, on the mountain is where I lost my grandpa to lung cancer. He was 53 and smoked a pipe and Lucky Strikes unfiltered.

Things that were very small but too funny to forget. My sister Phyllis picked up a snake thinking it was a rope. My uncles put me in a large swing in the back yard and would swing me so high it would take my breath away. My uncles would jack up the rear of the car just barely off the ground and watch as my grandpa would try to take my grandma to church on Sundays.

When I was 5 I would only wear shorts and nothing else. On the weekends when everyone was home I would run across the living room and my Uncle Tom Esslinger would reach out and pull my shorts

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down. Never will I forget that.

I will never forget the wonderful times on Monte Sano Mountain but every good thing has to end. When Grandpa died in 1953, we could no longer afford to live on the mountain, so we rented a house in Huntsville on Stevens Avenue. It was 4 blocks from Rison School. We lived there for only 8 months and I finished the 1st grade at Rison.

Two things I remember about living on Stevens Avenue. My sister Shirley had to walk me to school because she too went Rison but she was in the 4th grade. Mrs. Esslinger was her 1st grade teacher also, as well as my dad, Ira Hale, Uncle Allen and me. I got out school earlier and had to walk home alone which brings me to the second thing I remember.

To get home from school I had to walk across a bridge. A second grader would not let me pass unless I gave him my left-over lunch. He was a bully and always pushed me around. I built up all the courage one day and hit him in the jaw. That was the end of that.

Oops, one more thing. Down at the corner of Stevens Avenue and Andrew Jackson Way was the old Mullins Cafe. I still can smell the hamburgers with grilled onions. This was my grandmothers favorite place to eat and the place I would always take her when I came home on military leave. From Stevens Avenue we moved to Alpine Avenue in West Huntsville in front of Joe Bradley School and behind the variety stores and below the gym that was upstairs above the stores. First house we ever lived in with indoor plumbing. Shirley was in the 5th grade; I was in the 2nd and Phyllis was just starting in the 1st. We walked a half a block to school.

Before I go much further I need to point out that all 4 of my brothers and sisters had

nick names that I will refer to from this point forward. My big sister Shirley Hale was known as Shirley Jo since Joanna was her middle name. My name is Richard Hale but was known as Dickie-Boy. Phyllis, my little sister was known as Phe Phe. And my little brother Tim was Tee-Bow. The way it was in the South.

On Alpine we got our 1st TV. I remember the first thing I watched was the Roy Rogers show. I still win a lot of Trivia contest identifying that Roy Rogers' horse was Trigger. Dale Evans was his wife, and her horse was Buttermilk. Gabby Hayes was the ranch hand and he drove a jeep name Nellie Bell.

As a kid growing up in make believe I always wore two guns, rode a white horse and spurs that jingled. The Lone Ranger with Tonto riding Scout, Gene Autry and horse Champion, Lash Larue riding Midnight, Sky King on Songbird were my heroes. I could go on forever with kids' TV shows like Benny Carl and Circle 6 Ranch, Howdy Doodie Show and the Musketeers Show.

More memories soon!

"A cold seat in a public rest room is unpleasant. A warm seat in a public rest room is far worse."

Buddy Fritz, Athens



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GOLDSMITH SCHIFFMAN FIELD

**The 2014 Deed for the
Goldsmith Schiffman
Field Removing all
Restrictions from the
Original 1934 Deed of
Donation**

*by Margaret Anne
Goldsmith*



The original 1934 deed stated, "We hereby give, grant, bargain, sell and convey to the City of Huntsville, a municipal corporation as aforesaid, in trust, for the use and enjoyment of the white students of the public schools of said city, and the said athletic field or playground and all the improvements to be erected thereon shall be kept in good condition and repair, neat and clean; and should said property or the improvements thereon, be permitted and not kept neat, to fall into disrepair and not kept neat and clean for any reason whatsoever or should not be used for the purpose prescribed herein or used for any other purpose, then the grantors herein or their authorized representatives or heirs shall have the right, after giving sixty days written

to the grantee of the violation of this covenant, to annul this conveyance.....In the event of the annulment of this conveyance, in accordance with the provisions therein, the title of said property shall immediately reinvest in said grantor or their heirs at law, and they shall thereon be entitled to immediate possession of said property....."

The language stating that the Field be used by "white students" was not enforceable after the 1954 ruling of Brown vs. The Board of Education. At that time, my grandfather, Lawrence B. Goldsmith Sr., one of the few remaining donors, said that the original language should be ignored and that he along with other family members were in favor of integration.

Since the 1864 Emancipation Proclamation my ancestors were supportive of the African American community. My grandfather's grandfather Morris Bernstein built the first commercial rental buildings in town for Black merchants in the block bounded by Jefferson Avenue, Holmes, and Church Streets. As a German Jewish immigrant, Morris identified with the newly freed slaves, realizing that in their attempt to integrate into the fabric of the larger society and proceed from slavery to property ownership, there needed to be interim steps whereby they would first need to rent property and establish businesses.

During the Civil Rights Era my grandfather continued our family's support of integration when he collaborated with Dr. Joseph Fanning Drake, past president of A&M University, to integrate the Russel Erskine Hotel. My grandfather had been instrumental in developing the Hotel and was treasurer of the board of directors at the time. He often reminisced how he and Dr. Drake made sure that the hotel employees provided respect and acceptance when African Americans checked into the Hotel and ate in the dining room. By example, their actions helped influence other businesses in Huntsville to peacefully transition from segregation to integration.

It was in 2012 and the Field was no longer being used for school football games. I noticed the 1934 deed had a restriction regarding use of the Field, that if it was not used for its original purpose for city school children, it could revert to the heirs. I was concerned the restriction could limit future use of the Field and approached Mayor Tommy Battle and the city legal department regarding a new deed

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that would remove all restrictions. During my efforts to provide a new deed, our local newspaper published a misleading article titled, "Huntsville schools quit playing football at Goldsmith - Schiffman, learn field deeded for whites only."

The discriminatory language in the original deed was not researched. Nothing was mentioned regarding the historical context of the Jim Crow Laws existing in 1934 that began in the 1880s in various states requiring the segregation of races in such common areas as restaurants and theaters.

The "Separate but equal" standard established by the Supreme Court in Plessy vs. Ferguson (1896) supported racial segregation for public facilities across the nation including parks and athletic fields. It was standard practice for donations of park properties to cities to contain such discriminatory language.

If the newspaper had researched the history of the language used in the deed, they may have realized that the phrase "for the enjoyment of the white students of the public schools," was included in the deed in order to follow the laws of local and state governments. They also failed to mention the effort I was making to remove all restrictions from the deed so there would be no title issues in the future.

It was two years later September 5th, 2014, along with the other heirs, I signed a new deed annulling the original covenants and conveyed all rights, title and claim to the property to the city.

Again, there were newspaper articles, a press conference and appreciative remarks from the city and members of the Huntsville community.

Today 2023, the city plans to make extensive renovations to the Field to ensure the continuation of its useful life for the benefit of Huntsville.

As I look back over the years and envision the future, it is my hope that the Goldsmith Schiffman Field will include not only sports for all ages but also serve as a venue for special events.

Most important my hope is that the Field will continue providing Huntsville with special memories like those provided since 1934 and give the citizens of tomorrow A SENSE OF PLACE.

**"I asked my grandpa - 'After 65 years you still call grandma 'Darlin', Beautiful and Honey.' What's your secret?'
He replied, 'I forgot her name five years ago and I'm scared to ask her.'"**

Joe Smithers, Arab



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SPUD BLUE - A ROAD TRIP TO REMEMBER

by John H. Tate

"Spud red, spud yellow, spud ...," we were not on the road for five minutes and the spud road game had already started. It was in the late eighties; Lisa, my eldest, was eight years old and her younger brother Phillip was two. The kids, my first wife Pam and I were in an 80s model Ford Taurus. We were headed to Chatsworth, Ga.

Pam's family lived in Georgia and their family's favorite road game was "Spud." A VW Bug was considered a spud, and the first person to spot one would call "spud," and the color of the car. It was supposed to be a road game, but their family played it every time they got in a car. While Pam and I were dating I got so tired of hearing "Spud!" To me it was incorrect to call it a road game, instead, it should have been a car game.

After we made it to Pam's mother's home I decided to take the kids down to Atlanta to visit my cousin Jeannette. After a couple of hours at Jeannette's it started to rain, so we headed back to Chatsworth. The longer we were on the road, the faster and harder the rain came down; at times it was hard seeing the highway. Of course, in Atlanta, everyone drove as if it were 90 degrees and clear.

Have you ever made a decision and later asked yourself, "What in the hell was I thinking?" I made such a decision, I took an exit off the interstate to the side roads. My thinking, at the time, I would be away from the high-speed traffic and would be able to drive slower with the kids in the car.

I thought of the words to Ray Charles' song, "A rainy

night in Georgia, It seems like it's raining all over the world." It best describes how we felt once we left the interstate. Yes, the back roads had less traffic, but they were also darker because of the trees, and the narrow roads had more standing water, making it more difficult to maneuver.

By the time it was obvious that the detour was a mistake, we had traveled too far to turn back. The best choice was to continue to move forward.

Lisa, in the front passenger seat with her seat belt on, and Phillip in his car seat mounted in the center of the back seat, were both quiet. I had turned the radio off to improve my concentration. Although I was driving at a slower speed, being in my thirties, I probably had an exaggerated opinion of my abilities.

I am not sure how it happened, I thought the road had my full attention. For some reason, the front right tire ran off of the pavement, and upon cor-

recting it, I felt the car starting to hydroplane into a 90-degree left-hand-slide. At the same time, I could feel the right rear tire trying to catch on the outside edge.

If we continued in the current slide, and the back tire edge caught, we would more than likely start a barrel-roll flip down the road. To straighten the car out meant we would drive off of the road into the darkness of water of unknown depth, and no telling how far down from the road. One would have thought the calculations and decisions took moments or at least a few seconds; but no, all were made within a fraction of a second. Once the decision was made, I yelled, "Hold on!"

With a glance in the rear-view mirror, I saw Phillip with both hands holding firm on his car seat, his arms locked, and a determined look on his face. I did not have time to look at Lisa, however, out of the corner of my eye, I saw her pop the shoulder belt, locking it in place. I had a strange thought, "How did she know how to do that?" Upon seeing her do that, my internal prayer was, "Lord please don't let me kill my daughter this night."

Sabrina, a cousin the same

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age as Lisa, was killed in a car accident on a Georgia side road within the last couple of years. Lisa and Sabrina were very close and because of where Lisa was currently sitting, she was in more danger of being killed than Phillip.

With a quick turn of the steering wheel, we left the sound of the tires sliding on the wet pavement and the single tire scraping gravel, trying to catch. For a very brief surreal moment, the only sound we heard was the raindrops on the top of the car, and the tires rotating freely. While we were in mid-air I did apply the brakes, because once we hit down, we needed to stop as quickly as possible. Applying the breaks while we were hydroplaning, would have taken all control from me.

The silence was broken as the car started to impact tree limbs. The sound of tree limbs slamming against the front of the car, with limbs popping and cracking was replaced by the crushing of underbrush. The sound of breaking limbs, and the crushing of underbrush

was both frightening, and reassuring at the same time. Frightening because as things are breaking, could not tell how much of the breakage was the car; thus not sure of our safety. Reassuring because, as long as we were making an impact, we were being stopped and not plunging headlong into the water of unknown depth.

Finally, all was still and quiet, except for the raindrops hitting the car, and as best as I could tell, we were stationary. After a moment of sitting and listening, waiting for the next thing to happen, I checked with the kids, and they were OK. I had no idea where we were, or how far down from the road we were.

I had a new spotlight, and plugged it into the cigarette lighter. I started moving the beam back and forth overhead, like a Bat-signal.

In a short amount of time, we saw lights above and people yelling for us. As the lights started to beam down on us, it was at that point that I saw we were in a twenty-foot-plus ravine, and the car was posi-

tioned on some thick branches, keeping it from falling further into cascading water.

Several people created a chain and helped pull the kids and me out of the car. One older gentleman offered to take us somewhere, to get the kids out of the rain. Lisa surprised me yet again, although she did not know her grandmother's address, she gave directions to the man and he got us there.

I called the Sheriff's department, explained about the accident and told them where I was. The night almost got even more interesting, the Sheriff's department was going to charge me with leaving the scene of an accident. I don't remember the details, but I think everyone in the house was pleading my case. No charges were filed.

The next day I was taken to where the car had been towed, it was ugly but drivable. Cutting the visit short, we drove it back to Huntsville. On the way back home, I heard my daughter yell the two most beautiful words in the world, "Spud Blue!"

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HARD-WORKING YEARS

by Catherine Clemons Cameron



My first job was as a book-keeper and pharmacist's helper for 26 years. I did not work out of the home until my youngest started school. Then I worked for 5 years as a pharmacy technician. I paid \$20 a year for my license. I retired early (in 2001) due to family illnesses.

I started writing a column in the bi-weekly local newspaper, The Advertiser Gleam, in October, 2013 at the age of 79, titled The Claysville News. Another lady had written it before me until she became ill. I write about happenings of the small community in which I live. Six of my true stories have been printed in The Advertiser Gleam and the Old Huntsville Magazine in the last year. I am now 89 years and still gathering, typing and faxing to the newspaper weekly. My doctor encourages me to continue, as he says it will keep me healthy.

I was born on 11-22-33 to my sharecropper parents. They raised cotton and corn. Every 4th bale of cotton and every 3rd wagon-load of corn went to the land-lady who owned the land.

We were just coming out of the Depression Era. I asked my mom (when I was older) how the Depression hurt them. She said they didn't realize that there was a Depression, because they had plenty of food but hardly ever had any money.

I have never been hungry in my life because my folks had a big garden with a potato patch, a sweet-potato patch, several rows of peanuts and 1 row of popcorn. They planted watermelons in the skips of the cotton rows. There were always 2 cows and 2 mules, so milk was always plentiful. In the late summer, my dad bought 2 pigs to fatten for our winter meat. My mother would can everything that she could. They always had chickens, so we had eggs and fried chicken, chicken and dumplings and chicken and dressing occasionally. She sold butter to the local grocery store and excess vegetables to the town folks who had no garden. We also had peach trees which produced a lot.

We had a house which only had outside walls, with cracks in the floors. Our only heat was a wooden fireplace and the kitchen stove. Our electricity came in 1947 through REA (Rural Electric Association). The first thing Mother bought was an electric churn. I surely did like that because I hated to churn. We had to carry every drop of water that we consumed. They had rain-barrels in the eaves of the house for water for the animals to drink and to do the washing. Mother made lye-soap to wash our clothes. With the house came a barn, a hog-pen (with a small house), a chicken house and a smoke house (for pork meat in the winter).

There was no outside toilet at any of the 4 rental houses I lived in for 17 years. The other 7 houses on the Maxie Farms were the same. All of my neighbors were as poor as we were, so we didn't notice any difference until we saw others that were dressed better than we were at school. My mom sewed most of the girl's clothes.

My folks had an account at the local grocery store where they bought the staples such as flour, sugar and my Dad's coffee. That was paid off in the fall when the cotton was sold. They kept the corn for the animals. We also used corn for our corn meal. We had to shuck it and grind it through an old corn-sheller (which I still have) and then take it to a mill to grind into our corn meal.

In those hard-working years, I never dreamed that I would have the many modern conveniences that I now take for granted. It was a hard life, but it makes me appreciate my upbringing and the sacrifices that my folks made for their children to get an education.



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A Solution to the Garbage Problem



by Ray A. McCrary

Back years ago in our little cotton mill community in Huntsville, life was simple and seemed to have less problems than today's complex society. Our father worked at a regular job, we went to school through the week and did our chores around the house as expected, whether we wanted to or not. Our mothers, grandmothers and grandfathers were at home working in the garden, which consisted back then of almost the whole yard except for a small portion in front of the house which was left to use for playing marbles, mumbly peg, stretch and various other games we played as children.

Canning food, gathering eggs and milking cows were just a normal every day part of life. I remember our canned food was put up in Mason jars that were cleaned and saved for later use. I guess that eliminated a lot of tin cans. Our milk was also put in washable glass and can containers. That probably eliminated a lot of milk cartons. Eggs came directly from the chickens so I imagine that did away with egg cartons. The chickens also loved to eat bugs in the yard so I think that's why we didn't need any pesticides. Our table scraps were taken up to the hog pens and they took care of that. Diapers back then were cloth so they were washed and reused over and over.

So there weren't any diapers to be put in the garbage. There weren't any cola cans and containers back then, either, because they were all in reusable glass bottles. The milk we had to buy was also in reusable containers. The glass containers which mayonnaise and other condiments came in were saved and used for drinking glasses. I mean, back then a good cold glass of tea was still tea no matter what it was in. The prettiest glasses I remember were the glasses that

my grandmother and great grandfather saved from their purchases of Sweet Garrett Snuff.

Back then we just didn't have much garbage. There was one thing we had though that took care of the garbage we did have and that was "Ole Billy." Yes, some of us were fortunate enough to have a billy goat. There was nothing he wouldn't eat. Paper, cans and anything in the yard left unattended he'd eat or chew into nonexistence.

We didn't have to cut the yard either. I think each residence should be allowed one billy goat per family. A family with six or more members should be allowed an extra billy goat, as needed to correct the garbage problem. We could then look forward to a once-a-month garbage pickup at a considerable less rate than now.

It took me and my wife a week to decide what to do with our Christmas trees. We heard that the steam plant wouldn't accept them. One was completely dead by the time Christmas was over but we noticed the other one was still green so we elected to plant it and hope it grows roots. As the last shovelful was scooped around it my wife said, "What if it dies and turns yellow?" Well, then, we'll just spray-paint it green.

As of now it's still alive and growing so maybe next year we can recut it and use it again.

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Ladies of the Night

by Judy Wills

The theme of the wicked lady with the heart of gold runs through our literature from the Biblical Rahab, the Harlot, an ancestor of Jesus, to that friend of Rhett Butler's, Belle Watley, in "Gone With The Wind".

Huntsville has its own version, but it was fact, not fiction. Huntsville Hospital owes its existence to the generosity of the town's most colorful madam, Mollie Teal.

She bequeathed her house, the most popular bordello in town, first to a friend, and then upon the friend's death to the city of Huntsville. It became the City Infirmary and operated until 1926 as a hospital. It was one of the most modern hospitals in North Alabama, even having its own School of Nursing. It remained in operation until Huntsville Hospital opened.

Mollie became quite well off financially as a result of her "business." She bought the house at the corner of St. Clair and Gallatin for a mere \$300 and a few years later was able to mortgage it for \$1,900, a debt she soon repaid. It was an extravagant, well run house where a shot of whiskey could be had for 25 cents and the favors of an attentive lass would cost you \$5 for the night.

Part of the public's confidence in Mollie's probably was the fact that her girls had regular health inspections.

Miss Bessie Russell, for whom the branch library is named, was the widow of the physician who was charged with health inspections at Mollie's place.

Mrs. Russell remembered her mother talking about Mollie, saying "she was the most attractive person you ever saw." She always carried a parasol and when she took her afternoon ride in her long black carriage with the two black horses, she was considered by most people to be an extremely glamorous lady.

Mollie was an acute business woman who knew the value of publicity. One year, during the 4th of July parade, she dressed her ladies in their finest garb and joined the parade, to the delight of many onlookers. She was not on the official parade schedule, but as an observer later commented, "She did add interest."

Mollie's ghost was said by many to have haunted the hospital for years after her death. There was a screen door that had a habit of slamming and hooking itself shut. The long time employees joked

"Don't make old people mad.
The older we get, the less
"Life in prison" is a deterrent."

Jess Oakley, age 89



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that it was Mollie checking on the customers.

Another legend concerns her grave in Maple Hill Cemetery. Ever since her death almost a century ago, fresh flowers have been periodically placed on her grave. No one knows who is doing it.

While Mollie Teal is the most colorful and best known of Huntsville's "Fancy Ladies," she was certainly not the only one. Minnie Maples' establishment, though smaller than Mollie's, was equally well known around the turn of the century. She and her employees advertised their wares by dressing up and promenading on the city's sidewalks. Heavily made up, wearing big flowery hats and exquisite clothing, they attracted much attention on their daily excursions.

May Wells, June Martin, Jewel Earl and "Gashouse Carrie" were other prominent Huntsville madams, but in the 1920s and 30s the best known was Hazel Battle. Her house was located near the present day site of the Von Braun Civic Center, and though illegal, had the reputation of being a well-regulated house. The only disturbances were an occasional police raid when some of the girls would be jailed long enough to get their health checkups.

Many of Huntsville's outstanding citizens were regular patrons of the houses, as evidenced by an incident that happened in the late 1800s. One of the bordellos caught fire and the fire department quickly showed up and extinguished the blaze, which proved to be minor.

Needless to say, the girls were so impressed by the brave, courageous firemen that they invited them to stay for a while and "relax."

**"I went line dancing last night.
Well it was actually a road
sobriety test - same thing."**

Paul Rankin, Athens

And needless to say, when word spread among the volunteer fire department of the madam's offer, other firemen, even from out in the county, begin showing up, "to make sure the fire is out."

Unfortunately, the Huntsville Police Department chose this exact time to stage one of their raids. The firemen were promptly arrested and thrown in the calaboose. Furious, the volunteer firemen resigned, leaving Huntsville without fire protection until the matter was straightened out.

Some of the prostitutes married well. Miss Bessie Russell remembered that her husband was astonished at the number of young men who married women right out of the houses.

Though "polite society" never mentions the fact, there are still several elderly matriarchs in Huntsville today who got their start in a much more colorful place than the Huntsville Country Club.



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Huntsville Potpourri

Mr. Hall Remembers

by Edith Moon Sherentz

Mr. Hall is ninety-one years of age, and lives on Nolen Avenue, on Monte Sano. The following are his memories of living in Huntsville back in the "good old days."

"To most folks in the early 1900s, 'Downtown Huntsville' really suggested the Courthouse Square, for this was the gathering spot to meet friends for a chat."

"Telephones and cars were not available in order to run over or to call. Farmers needed to share information about their crops, wives needed to share a recipe or a helpful hint, and the girls and boys needed to socialize."

"Washing clothes and planning what to wear on Saturday, the special day, occupied an important part of the work-a-day week. This outing might have then or even now been labeled gossiping. Men chewed and spat tobacco while talking politics - some might have shared a drink or two. As I once read in a country newspaper, "A good time was had by all."

"On weekdays people gathered in smaller groups. One old character went to Ragland Brothers Wholesale Grocery and purchased a box of candy with twenty-four pieces for seventy-five cents. By selling this treat for five cents each he cleared 45 cents! This was good sense because he had no overhead and the customers were everywhere."

"I was a young father then and a good provider, and told the "candyman", "If my son Buddy wants candy, let him have it and I will pay." I am quite sure no books were kept and no money was lost. What fun for Buddy, who was nine at the time!"

"A man who was 'well-connected' usually became a merchant. A peddler would make his cart, using two large wagon wheels and he had a variety of goods on it. As late as the 60s one saw carts of this type on the streets of Huntsville. Trading and selling from vehicles and from a sack on the peddler's back was a part of sales history."

"Mr. Dunnivant started out as a

peddler and he later became our favorite merchant with the best quality and the most stylish clothing in town. His pleasant manner and his easy credit plan made it the place to shop! Every one of us oldtimers miss Dunnivant's."

"You'll hit every cone on the highway before I let you merge in front of me because you saw that sign 2 miles ago just like I did."

Ruth Franklin, Huntsville



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The Old City Hall

by Jimmy Wall, Jr.

The City Hall in Huntsville, Alabama, in the 1940s and 1950s has not changed much in light of the functions which remain in the responsibility of city government.

At that time, City Hall housed the offices of the Mayor, the Clerk-Treasurer, the jail, the police and fire departments, the public works department (Street Department) and the Water Department.

Since my father's office was located in this early building (he served as Superintendent of the water department for 40 years), I have many rich memories of visiting City Hall. I took advantage of golden opportunities to become personally acquainted with many of the police officers, firemen, Mayor A.W. McAllister, Clerk-Treasurer Norris Payne as well as a myriad of others.

With such an extended family of city employees all over town, guess who knew of your activities before you got home? At that time, Huntsville had a population of approximately 12,000.

The bell situated atop the City Hall of that day was located between the ramp of the fire hall and the sidewalk next to the City Council. The City Clerk-Treasurer would pull the long rope which sounded the bell to alert the citizens that the City Council had been called into session. This bell was also used as a fire alarm for the downtown area.

When this former City Hall building was demolished, the City Council voted to preserve the bell and granted special permission to relocate the bell for use at the Jones Valley United Methodist Church on Drake Avenue in the Jones Valley area where it is located today.

Although it was indeed sad to see this building, as well as many other historical structures, torn down over the years in Huntsville, the memories associated with them still warm the hearts of many people today.

"As I watch this generation try to rewrite history, one thing I'm sure of. It will be misspelled, and have no punctuation."

Tom Everly, New Market

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MAN HIDES IN WELL FOR NINE YEARS, MEALS LOWERED TO HIM WITH A ROPE

From 1893 Newspaper

After living most of the last nine years in the bottom of a deep well, J. W. Owens is back behind the bars at Huntsville to complete a term which would have been served out had he remained there when first taken to the penitentiary.

As it is he begins his ten-year sentence over again.

He escaped from jail after he was sent there on a murder charge 10 years ago.

Owens lived at the bottom of a deep dry well on his farm all the time the law was searching for him. He fixed the well into comfortable living quarters and was never in danger. He remained there daytimes and came out at night to be with his wife and children.

Scores of times his property has been searched by officials, but they never once thought of taking a trip into that 70-foot well.

Owens was at the bottom comfortably reclining on his bunk and smoking his pipe in an underground room he had tunneled out from the well.

Unfortunately, for Owens, he became careless and officers came upon him so suddenly that he was caught in the act of getting into his home away from home.

He was hauled back to prison to start over his ten year sentence. It was 11 years ago that Owens was charged with murder and given his sentence.

He had been a prosperous farmer.

He was discovered miss-

ing only one day after arriving to pay his debt. He had simply walked away in broad daylight.

Owens talked freely of his hiding place, which he had taken up immediately upon returning home.

His food was lowered to him in a bucket at night.

For the last three years he has spent much time on the surface, even to the extent of helping with the work around the place.

It appeared the law had given up the hunt and believed him gone, but he became careless and it was reported that "he was at home again."

Owens says he will not try to escape this time. He says his family is in good shape and can get along without him, so he will stick it out.

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* Give your birds a variety of toys. Something they can chew on, something they can swing on and maybe even something they can cuddle with. Rotate toys often so your bird doesn't get bored.

* When you're not home, leave the TV or radio on for your birds to keep them entertained. They love music!

* Birds need at least one new toy a month. Toys are a necessity, not a luxury, for birds.

* When giving your bird fresh fruits or veggies, try an interesting presentation. If it's just sitting in the food bowl, it may not be too appetizing.

* Spend quality time every day with your bird. Read a book or newspaper to him, or just chat and feed treats.

* Make sure your bird gets adequate rest every day. 10 to 12 hours of sleep in spring and summer, and 12 to 14 hours in fall and winter is a good amount. Make sure your bird sleeps in a quiet, dark room.

* Watch your bird carefully for signs of illness (sitting on the bottom of the cage puffed up, not eating). They usually don't show they're sick until it's really serious.

* Avoid those net seed catchers that go around the bottom of the cage. There have been many parakeets who while getting seeds from the bottom have gotten their claws tangled up in the net and in a panic, can break legs and die.

* Talk to your parakeet a lot. Every time you pass by, stop a minute and talk to him; it doesn't matter what you tell him - he'll just like hearing your voice and the attention. You can also whistle and make clicking noises. Soon enough, you'll hear whistles and maybe even words.

* Be sure his basic needs are fulfilled. Give him fresh food and water every day, keep a slightly cool temperature in the room and let him fly freely through the room for at least an hour or two a day. When you are feeding him/her, try to make sure you are feeding so your bird will look forward to each feeding with a variety of seeds.

* Don't expect him to be a bird genius instantly. It's true parakeets' intelligence rivals that of some primates, but don't expect your bird to be having conversations with the whole family and using a

toilet tray as soon as you get him. Be realistic.

* Don't actually pet him unless he's a real baby. Most birds detest being stroked. If you are disappointed in this, you can try training the bird cool tricks, and maybe even teach him to perch on your arm or shoulder.

* Remember to always handle your parakeet carefully. They are small and delicate. You don't need to act like you're walking on eggshells with him, but always remember that he is a small bird, not a stress ball.

* Never hit or do anything rough with your bird. This will only frighten him.

* Line your bird's cage with newspaper sheets. It fits perfectly, it's cheap, safe and the ink actually helps slow the growth of micro-organisms.

* Birds need to bathe to keep their feathers clean. Bird "bathtubs" can be a shallow bowl or pie plate filled with water, or you can fill a sink with a couple inches of water for them to take a bath in. Some birds enjoy being misted with a spray bottle too, specially when it gets hot.

* Make friends with your bird, also, make sure to spend time with him, speak to him, and to keep him comfy and safe in your home. He/she is a part of your family, too.

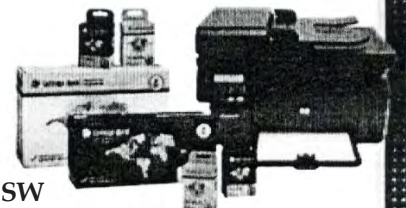
* Fresh greens are good for your parakeet - try raw celery leaves and many love cilantro hanging in their cages to nibble on.

* If you're not going to give alot of time to your feathered friend, be sure and get him a companion.

* If you don't want another bird, then put mirrors in the cage. They are attracted to shiny things.

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Little Known Facts about People of Madison County

by Tom Carney

- R.B. "Spec" Searcy - was selected as Employee of the Year while driving a bread truck.

- Cecil Ashburn - was head of the C.I.A. in 1960. (Construction Industry Assoc.)

- Albert Lane - made his operatic debut in Italy in 1955.

- C. A. Grant - was National President of Horseshoe Pitchers Association in 1930.

- Malcolm Miller - wrote the song "What Are You Going To Do Without Me?"

- Mrs. Ray Dotson - was voted Miss Belgium in 1963.

- Harry Townes - had a major acting role in the movie Tobacco Road.

- James Record - co-wrote the book "Huntsville, Alabama: Rocket City U.S.A." of which 70,000 copies were sold.

- John Broadway - elected President of the Alabama Soft Drink Association in 1968.

- Barbara Chisholm - voted National Cherry Pie Champion in 1958.

- Evelyn Quick - won the Alabama Hairdressers Grand Prize in 1941.

- Ron English - performed with Jerry Lee Lewis and George Jones.

- Glenn Sherrill - founder of Krystal Hamburgers in 1932.

- John Sparkman - elected to House and Senate at the same time.

- Mickey Stell - was a member of the Tommy Dorsey Band.

- Walt Wiesman - elected president of the Huntsville Jaycees in 1953 even though he was not a U.S.A. citizen.

- Bud Anderson - starred in the "High Chaparral" TV show in 1969.

- Mrs. Josiah Hereford - voted Mother of the Year in 1945.

- Mrs. Charles Jaco - former National Maid of Cotton.

- Tom Sharp - voted president of Alabama Tire Dealers in 1969.

- Mary Webster - won first place for hair modeling in 1959.



- Elizabeth Riddick - model who appeared in the Saturday Evening Post in 1938.

- Mrs. Lawrence Brock - appeared on the TV show "I've Got A Secret."

- Henry Holiday - won national hot dog eating contest in 1959.

- R.A. Moore - elected vice president of the Telephone Pioneers of America in 1925.

- Ginger Poitevint - elected National Miss Sun in 1968.

- Charles Stone - won National Outstanding Farmers Award in 1967.

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Doyle Brady, the Passing of a Huntsville Legend

*Published in old Huntsville
magazine in 1994*

by Billy Joe Cooley

"There are two things I've never had time to mess with," said Doyle Brady one night as he sipped coffee at The Kettle: "Drinking alcohol or learning to play the guitar."

Country singer Doyle Brady lived a lot in his 57 years and, as Will Rogers once said, he never met anyone he didn't like. Everyone liked him. When he died of cancer last month he left, aside from his family, a world of friends. I am proud to have been among them.

We traveled together a lot in recent years; he with his band, and me with my comedy routines. There were such towns as Branson, Mo., Greenville, S.C., Muscle Shoals, Nashville's Captain's Table and elsewhere.

He was always invited back to those places and microphones were always open for him.

He even brought many name stars to Huntsville. It was Doyle who booked Billy Joe Royal, The Drifters, Percy Sledge, Pam Tillis, The Platters, Marty Haggard, Merle Kilgore and dozens of other entertainers into local bistros. In addition, his weekly television hour on WAFF (Comcast 11) and CHRM-17 introduced still more legends to the Tennessee Valley.

He was the last singing partner of Grand Ole Opry's Dottie

West. Their last album was selling well at the time of her death in a limousine wreck in Nashville. Until then it appeared that the two of them were headed for national stardom as a team.

Doyle was born and raised in the northern part of Madison County, along the Tennessee border. With his clear, melodious singing he would probably have been a national favorite many years ago had he started earlier.

He was 30 years old before he got around to taking music seriously, he often said. Before that he sang mostly religious music with his brother Carlton, who for many years has been to Southern gospel quartet music what Doyle was to country.

I could take this eulogy on for many pages and delight in reliving the memories. Suffice it to say that Doyle Brady will be missed greatly by those of us who knew him, both in person and in the TV audience.

A Story about Brooks and Collier

*by Jim Latham
in 1999*



A woman came into Brooks and Collier garden shop and told Mr. Brooks that she wanted 2 pounds of chicken laying mash. He started weighing it up in a bag, when she said, "Are you going to charge me for the bag?" He said, "No, just hold out your hand."

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"It might be true that dogs are very loyal. But we cats don't tell the police where you hide your drugs."

The Cat

Old Town Historic District

by Frances Rice



This is a copy of a letter Frances Rice wrote to Lucy Brown describing how she established the Old Town Historic District in 1972.

"Dearest Lucy,

Thank you for thinking of me. Didn't realize I had procrastinated so long. Please forgive me. Our family originally came here from California and knew no one. My next door neighbor and I became friends immediately, but we knew no one else. We had purchased an older, historic house on Calhoun Street and Holmes Avenue and proceeded to spend our "medium sized" fortune in the restoration of same.

H. C. Blake plumbing helped us a good deal and Mr. Buddy would spend much of the day telling me all about Huntsville. Of course I was all ears. The house was lovely when we finished, but not too many people know what or how to do it —so we four learned a great deal by just working on it.

Plumbing, wiring, heating, cooling, plastering (Chas got good at that). All needed to be done.

Hall Bryant thought we were a real friendly bunch and we were. We were not quite done with remodeling the house when one Sunday he called and said "Fran, I was at a party last night and was talking to Harvie Jones who said we want another Historic District over here and I think you're just the one to do it. I'm calling him now."

He just hung up! Jingle jingle, it was promptly Harvie who asked me if I would do it. I said "Yes" and forever after that he sang my

praises as did Hall. Little did they know how I have spent my life since I got my two children in school. First thing I had already done was the kick-off of the Food Stamp program when we first got here and Pink Lady at Huntsville Hospital. I was a Pink Lady in California so of course went right to that. I was very busy!

Incidentally, I still teach painting at the Senior Center — close to 30 years now. Funny the way I started Old Town District. No one here knew me, but everyone knew Mr. Will Cummings and where he lived so I would call neighbors and say (after 3 years having lived here), "You do not know me, my name is Frances Rice and my family has purchased the Will Cummings home on 118 Calhoun Street and I have been asked to form a historic district and I need your help." Then I'd ask them to sign a petition to do so.

Some would agree to do this and many would not. Many were the times I kept my cool and said "I thank you," then hang up and sob at their rudeness to me.

Once, I called Harvie and said "Harvie, they are so nasty to me, I'm going to throw this all in the fire place." He'd calm me down and I'd persevere - for 3 years, as I said I kept my promises. I was trying to help my fellow-man as I had done my whole life. My son Charles came home each day and stood in the wide door way grinning "Where do we take pictures today, Mommy?" And off we'd go.

As it turned out I got 80 percent approval from the neighbors and we only needed 70 percent. Edith, my next door neighbor, always said "Frances did it!"

I remember years ago, Mrs. Stella who lived on White Street always played piano for me at our open-to-the-residents Old Town meetings. My husband Charles (Chas) said "Let's give her a lifetime membership" so we did.

Incidentally, THE BOOK about this area, written in 1994 ("Hard Times; The Civil War in Huntsville and North Alabama") was written by our son Charles S. Rice. It sold out almost immediately.

My maiden name was Seaman - it's English and I gave it to my son as his middle name. Charles was called back to teach at an Ivy League school and said when he got back he would have the book reprinted. He traveled to Thailand and liked it so much he stayed. He made \$100 per month teaching. Like his mom, he was not in it for the money.

Thanks again—it was fun reminiscing. Come see me Love, Fran

The Old Town Historic District was the second historic district in Huntsville, Alabama. It was added to the National Register of Historic Places on July 18, 1978. Roughly bounded by Dement and Lincoln Streets and Randolph and Walker Avenues, it features homes in a variety of styles including Victorian, Federal, Greek Revival, Queen Anne, American Craftsman, and even Prairie School with homes dating from the late 1820s through the early 20th century.

The Old Town Historic District had its beginnings in 1973, when local architect Harvie Jones suggested to home owners Charles E. and Frances J. Rice that they create another district to include the 19th century homes that remained outside of the Twickenham Historic District. The Rices accordingly began obtaining the necessary petitions and documents to gain first local, then state and finally national recognition for the Old Town Historic District. They were supported in their efforts by then Huntsville Mayor Joe W. Davis, Madison County Commissioner Tillman Hill and Alabama U. S. Senator John Sparkman. The Rices were later honored by the Alabama Historical Commission for their contributions to historic preservation, and in 2009 a small park in Old Town was named after the Rice's.

One recent collaboration with the Green Team is that of Old Town Historic District and the little park on Pratt/Walker and White streets. This former eyesore was totally transformed by the OTHD board and residents along with much help from Joy McKee and the staff of the Green Team. The new Rice Park was named after Charles and Frances Rice, of Old Town, who worked very hard to establish the historic district back in the early 70's.

HOUSEHOLD HINTS FROM 1892

- A local doctor says that linen should never be worn near the skin.

- To remove finger marks from a hard wood door, use borax.

- Lard applied at once will remove the discoloration after a bruise.

- Whites of eggs may be beaten to a stiff froth by an open window when it would be impossible in a steamy kitchen.

- Clear boiling water will remove tea stains; pour the water through the stain and thus prevent its spreading.

- All sorts of vessels and utensils may be purified from long retained smells of any kind by rinsing them out well with charcoal powder after they have been scoured with sand soap.

- A disinfectant which combines cheapness with general worth is found in permanganate of potash. One ounce will make a bucketful of disinfectant. It is a crystal, and can be kept in this state until ready for use.

- Steaming the face at night over a bowl of very hot water, and then bathing it with very cold water, is the simple method of giving the face a Russian bath, and will tend to make the skin whiter and smoother and the flesh firmer.

- When you put lotion on your face at night don't forget your ears - they need love too!

- To remove a grease stain from colored material, lay upon it a piece of butcher's paper and press with a warm iron. In a moment a grease spot will appear on the paper. Put a clean piece over the grease spot and proceed as before until no more grease is

brought out on the paper.

- Lemon juice will whiten frosting, cranberry or strawberry juice will color it pink and the grated rind of an orange strained through a cloth will color it yellow.

- Place jars of sticky food (honey, molasses) on plastic lids in your pantry to avoid sticky messes.

- To get odors out of plastic containers, just crumple up some newspaper and put it inside the container, add top and let stay that way overnight,

- A paint scraper works well in removing baked on or cemented goo from countertops, stovetops, floors, etc.

- Keep a pair of scissors in your gadget drawer along with a box cutter for quick opening of packages, boxes, etc.



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MADISON

Hello, my name is Madison. I am a beautiful black and white female cat. I am at the Ark Animal Shelter because my family couldn't take care of me anymore. I came in with a buddy cat that has

already been adopted. I am 7 years old and would like to again have a home of my own where I could look out the windows at the birds. I get along well with other cats and have a super friendly disposition. I greet all the people who come in my room here at the shelter to let them know I am friendly. I love to eat treats and I like a lot of attention. If you are looking for a friendly cat that likes people and gets along well with other cats will you think about coming to the Ark Shelter and asking to see Madison? That's me.

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Getting older is just one body part after another saying,
"HA - you think that was bad? Watch this!"

She Brought Him Home in a Salt Coffin

by *Bryon Miller* (originally published in
Old Huntsville magazine in 1994)

It often seems that the wife is left home to take care of everything while the husband is gone off to serve the country. Sometimes the wife left behind must do things that far surpass what might normally be expected. Such is the case of Mrs. Joseph Albert, a member of one of the founding families of Albertville.

It was in 1861 that Joseph T. Albert and his twin sons were called to fight in the Civil War. Enlisting in the Henry County Volunteers, they were immediately sent to fight in Virginia. One can imagine the apprehensive thoughts going through the mind of the wife and mother with three of her own gone to battle.

In September 1862, one of the many wounded soldiers returning from battle came to visit her with a blood curdling description of the war. He described the Second Battle of Manassas in great detail explaining how a decisive victory against the Yankees at Manassas, Virginia (29-30 August 1862) had driven them all the way back to Washington, D.C.

What she heard was that over 7,000 of our Southern boys lay wounded and more than a thousand had lost their lives fighting for their Southern right.

Her husband had been seen falling from a Yankee mini-ball and was believed to be recovering in a makeshift Confederate field hospital. Like wives of today, she prepared to see about him. Without a moment's hesitation, she started loading the family wagon with cornmeal, beans and any other food she could find as well as the necessary cooking pots and water jugs.

Albert's wife hitched up her horse wagon and began the long journey to Virginia. Averaging 25 miles a day, her journey took about three weeks each way. As a woman, alone on a long journey by horse and wagon with not even a good road to travel during wartime, she was naturally scared the entire trip. She slept underneath the wagon at night and crouched there for cover when it rained. Occasionally, she stayed at the home of a person along the way. To have a stranger stay over for the night was fairly common in those days.

The thoughts of her husband lying wounded in a hospital inspired her to keep moving regardless of how tired she might be. Arriving at Manassas, she spent a great deal of time searching for her

husband's company, the Henry County Volunteers.

Finally, she found an acquaintance from back home who told of how he stayed with Joseph til the end and that his last thoughts were of love for his wife.

Mrs. Albert knew that he would have wanted to return home no matter what it took. So she set about buying up all the salt she could find. She had Joseph's friends gently lay him in a hastily prepared coffin and packed the salt all around the body. The salt coffin was placed in the wagon, tied down and prepared for the journey. Everybody crowded around to wish their fallen comrade a farewell and Mrs. Albert was off.

During the entire return journey she worried about whether she would have to repeat the experience for the two sons left to do battle. Finally after arriving back home in November of 1862, she had the body of her husband buried outside their home near the chimney. Several years later she was buried alongside him.

After many years the house had fallen into disrepair and the graves grown over with brush. In 1962 workmen building a house on the property found the poorly marked graves.

After a thorough investigation of the facts, the United Children of the Confederacy commemorated the bravery of Mr. and Mrs. Joseph T. Albert by placing a marker at the site.

Sadly, little information is available about Mrs. Albert's full name or the fate of their two remaining sons.

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Unusual Old Superstitions

- Don't throw your hair clippings out of an open window - that signifies bad luck to the thrower.
- If you kill frogs, your cows will "go dry".
- Tickling a baby will cause it to stutter.
- To thank a person for combing your hair is bad luck.
- To allow a child to look into a mirror before it is a month old will cause it trouble in teething.
- A child will have the nature and disposition similar to that of the person who first takes it out-of-doors.
- If a cat jumps in your lap who normally doesn't, expect a long time friend to show up after many years.
- If a person comes into your presence while you are saying bad things about him, and he puts his hands anywhere on you, you will die.
- When a strange dog enters your home, a new unexpected friendship with a long lost person will happen.
- Plant all seeds, make soap and kill meat on the increase of the moon. If done on the decrease, the seeds will not grow, the soap will not lather and the meat will shrink.
- Misfortune will come to you if you sell or pawn a wedding gift. Above all, never hock your wedding ring. Not only will your past loves be irretrievable, so will your future ones.
- If you work on the day of your wedding, you will have to work always.
- It is very bad luck to sweep your house on Friday night.
- If rats cut your clothes, do not allow your kinfolks to mend them.
- When you hear the first dove of the spring, take off your right shoe and you will find a strand of the man's hair you are to marry.
- If you put your purse on the ground you will soon lose a large amount of money.
- A strange dog walking between two engaged people will cause a quarrel that may end the relationship.
- If a dog hides under a table, a storm is coming.

"I told my wife I wanted to be cremated. She made an appointment for me next Tuesday."

Mike Johnston, Madison



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BY TOM CARNEY



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THE ART OF MAKING LYE SOAP, MANY YEARS AGO

orig. printed in Old Huntsville Magazine in 2004

by Juanita Reid



My 71 year old memory contains the experience of watching my mother (who died when I was 9) and my grandmother making soap the old fashioned way.

They made their lye by leaching water through hardwood ashes. They used the stump from an old tree that had broken off in a wind storm. The tree was hollow and had a hole near the bottom — evidently had been an animal den at one time or perhaps where a limb had rotted off. The hole was about four inches round.

They took a hollowed out limb, cut it in half, inserted it into the hole and used that as a drain spout for the leaching of the lye water.

Back in those days, we had wooden buckets and if memory serves me right, that was what they used to collect the leached lye water from ashes. I do not recall if they put straw in the hollowed out tree to keep the ashes from washing through but they must have. They poured the water through the ashes and would put more ashes into the tree stump and pour the lye water back through until it would float an egg -- strong enough for soap making.

The soap was made in the iron wash pot used for boiling the clothes. A fire was built under the wash pot, the rendered fat saved from cooking meats was added to the pot and the

lye water from the wood ashes added and boiled until it became soap.

The soap was poured into a wooden box lined with an old pillow case that had been dipped in grease. The soap was left to go solid and then cut into bars. The soap was certainly not pretty — I remember it was grey and contained some grit from the ashes.

The fat must have been rancid because my memory can still smell that "grandma's lye soap." It got clothes clean but required a lot of rinsing to get rid of the ash or the clothes would be dingy. It certainly stopped children from repeating curse words after once having their mouths washed out with that soap.

This soap was used for everything. It would be what we today call hot processed because it was boiled for hours if necessary to reach trace. It was a softer soap than we are used to but it was definitely a bar soap because it rested on the lip of the rub-board and was kept in a soap dish for washing dishes.

Other uses for that same lye water was to wash wooden floors in the house. All animals and children were forbidden access to the house until the floor dried completely. Lye water was placed in the iron pot along with some of the cut up soap before adding the clothes that were boiled. Homemade Lye water was used to soak field corn to make hominy and after much rinsing, the hominy was either used as a vegetable or could be dried and ground into grits.

The excess lye water was stored for later use but I do not remember where (probably because it was hidden from children and animals).

I have just dredged up some very old memories.



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An Old Man's Revenge

from 1923 Newspaper



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“A bargain is something you don’t need at all, at half the price.”

Pat Riley, Huntsville

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

John Thomason

July 4, 1923

No. 292
June 2017

The Tragic End of the Huntsville Beauty Queen

"Please don't stay out too late, honey," the mother asked, and
 Phyllis kissed her mother on the cheek lightly and passing only long enough to tell her not to wait up, dashed for the door.
 Mrs. Phyllis watched her beautiful daughter disappear. Her whole life was wrapped up in Phyllis, an only child and her sole support. Mother and daughter lived in a modest house on O'Donoghuey Avenue in the village of Glenties, a cottage with garden at the northwest edge of Huntsville.

Also in this issue: The Power of Music to Reach Within

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The Madison County Courthouse was a scene of great excitement in 1910 when Oscar Greene attempted to file suit against his wife for not living up to the marriage contract; namely not cooking. Not everyone was amused and authorities declined to hear the case. That same year Miss Grace Walker convinced the city fathers to change the name of the Huntsville Spring to Big Spring. Our fair city had grown to the almost unbelievable population of 7,611.

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