



No. 364  
June 2023



# Old Huntsville

## HISTORY AND STORIES OF THE TENNESSEE VALLEY



## A Life Saved

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***Also in this issue:* West Huntsville Witch House; Ashes Over Lake Guntersville; Living on Rison Avenue; Boots; Kindness of Strangers; Tinche's Mugging; Growing Up Poor in Huntsville; Cape Marshall; Best Loved Recipes and More!**

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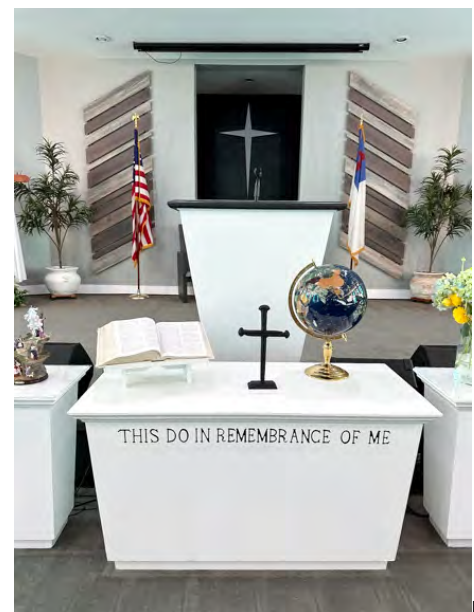
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# A Life Saved

*by John Gamble*

Elizabeth Hill was born, barely, in a farmhouse in Lincoln County, TN on a cold day in March of 1921. She was premature and only weighed 4 pounds and was not expected to live. Her mother, Loyd Hall Hill, had already lost twins in childbirth. Her aunt, Kate Hall from Huntsville, AL came and spent days helping keep Elizabeth alive, while her sister-in-law, Loyd, recovered from the birth experience and Uremic poisoning. Elizabeth was sickly, having had the whooping cough, living in an often cold farmhouse next to Kelly Creek. Her father Monroe was a farmer who had returned from World War I in France, where he served as a medic.

The Hills and the Halls had adjoining farms dating back to the early 1800s. They farmed corn, cattle, cotton and other crops. Monroe had also worked at a store in Elkton, a nearby town, to help make ends meet. When Elizabeth reached six

years old in March of 1927, Loyd and Monroe realized their little frail girl, Elizabeth, would have to ride in a cold unheated school bus for an hour or more to reach school in Blanche. The roads from their farm were dirt and gravel roads with ruts and washouts prevalent.

Since Elizabeth was so sickly, they realized they would have to find an alternative school for her to attend. Monroe had connections with his brother-in-law, Sam Hall, owning a small department store in Huntsville and another close friend from the Kelly Creek area, owning a grocery store in Huntsville. They were able to help Monroe get a job as County Wholesale Manager with Halsey Grocery Supplies in Huntsville.

While both Loyd and Monroe had lived all their lives on the Creek, Monroe found someone to run his farm and they loaded up their furniture and household goods to move to Huntsville. This was a great sacrifice, but they knew they had to do it, if their little frail girl was going to survive and be able to go to school. They almost didn't make it to Huntsville, since Kelly Creek and the Elk River were flooded. But eventually by taking the high back roads, they got their little girl to Huntsville.

They were able to rent a house on East Clinton Avenue near the Five Points area, from E. L. Terry. This house was the former residence of the Ter-

**"Be kind to your daughter - one day she will be in charge of your wheelchair!"**

**Jenni Barker, Gurley**



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rys, before they built a house on Locust Avenue. The house was just a few houses away from Sam and Kate Hall. This was great for Elizabeth, since her first cousin Louise, only one year difference in age, was close by and available to be a playmate and best friend. Also the house was within walking distance from the East Clinton Elementary School.

Elizabeth was smart and was entered into the high level of the first grade. In Huntsville, Elizabeth's health improved rapidly. As a result she was able to skate in the street and play skate hockey. East Clinton at that time was a dead end street.

On May Day at East Clinton School there would be special events. Elizabeth once said, "I remember once we had a May Pole and we would weave in and out around the Maypole. One year we did a Scottish dance and mother made me a plaid kilt skirt, velvet vest and tarn to wear."

Once the Chattauqua came to town and was set up on the school grounds in a huge tent. Our family and the Halls would go see the shows. Elizabeth went to Huntsville Jr. High School in old Wilks-Taylor School on the hill. Again the school was next to the old Huntsville High School and within easy walking distance for Elizabeth, a healthy and now beautiful young lady.


In the early 30s Elizabeth remembers, "Joe" the iceman delivered a 50 pound block of ice at the back door of the house and put it in the ice box. Joe drove a horse-drawn ice wagon. We also had milk delivered in glass bottles to our front porch by the "Monte Sa-Mo Dairy".

The Great Depression hit in 1929 and lasted ten years, basically for the rest of the time Elizabeth would live in Hunts-

ville. Huntsville, like the rest of the world, had high unemployment and lots of suffering from the unemployed families. Fortunately, Elizabeth and her family didn't have to suffer during the Great Depression. Her dad Monroe had his job with Halsey and they got their groceries wholesale. Unfortunately, Sam Hall and his family had to take a tenant farmer job at the Matthews farm outside Huntsville, since Sam lost his store due to the Depression.

Monroe provided goods to Sam from his job with Halsey's and Sam provided fresh vegetables to Monroe from the farm garden. Loyd's sister and her husband lost their jobs in Florida and had to move to the Hall farm on Kelly Creek to live with Loyd's mother.


As Elizabeth thrived, she enjoyed the Huntsville area. She said, "The stores in Huntsville closed on Thursday afternoon. Dad would take Mother, Louise and me on outings. We would go swimming at the Branham pool near the Big Springs. We would go to Hobbs Island and swim over to the island or do a hike in the spring or fall to Fagan Springs. To get to the



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Fagan Springs we would go up by the Maple Hill Cemetery, to the old toll house and duck under the tollgate, and then cross a pig sty, then go down to the springs."

It was during these outdoor adventures that Elizabeth gained strength and also became interested in the science of the outdoors. She could name all the plants, trees, birds and insects. Later on in life, Elizabeth would become a science teacher.

"On Saturday nights Dad would drive us downtown to the Lyric Theatre, where we could see if Tarzan survived diving off a cliff. While Louise, her brother Bob and I were at the movies, Dad would visit with Mr. Pierre Dunnivant, who owned the big department store. Mr. Dunnivant grew up near our farm in Tennessee."

Elizabeth attended Huntsville High and was an honor student. She was an editor for the Red and Blue school newspaper. The frail and sickly little girl grew into a stunning teenager who was a favorite at dances and all high school events.

She even went to Tuscaloosa and visited her Uncle Walton Hill, a pharmacist. She wore a green dress and coat to an Alabama football game, and later said she was the "greenest" high school girl at the game.

"While I was at Huntsville High, the football games were played at Goldsmith Schiffman field. In the 30s Dad liked to see the games, so he took several others and me to the games. Once I remember it was so cold, the key broke off in the

car door. We had to walk home, about a mile or a little more. Dad got another key and walked back for the car."

It was during one of the really cold spells, that the Tennessee River completely froze over. Milton Frank was the Huntsville High Coach. Elizabeth was at school one day, serving as the front office monitor. "A student came and said there was a phone call for Coach Frank, so I went to his class room and got him to come for the call. He was a little hesitant, but came anyway. It turned out to be a prank, but he was good natured and did not get mad. Because he was such a successful coach, the new football stadium was named after him."

In 1938 Elizabeth left Huntsville to attend college at Middle Tennessee State College. Monroe and Loyd, who had made the great sacrifice for their little frail girl, returned to the farm in Tennessee.

Little did Monroe and Loyd realize that when they moved to Huntsville to save their little sickly girl, that not only would

she improve, but they would weather the Great Depression and be able to help their family members survive and thrive.

Sam Hall and his family, including Louise, were able to return to Huntsville and Sam was gainfully employed at Dunnavants Department Store as Manager of Menswear. But even greater things were to happen in the future. Elizabeth and her husband Barnett Gamble eventually returned to Huntsville, she as a science teacher at Mountain Gap Middle School and he as Principal of Huntsville High School.

Today Elizabeth, having been a science teacher both in Tennessee and Huntsville, is no longer with us, but her husband, Barnett Gamble, age 96, still lives in Huntsville, as well as their children Jim, John and Mary, all of who have had successful careers and great marriages and families.

*Ed. Note: Barney Gamble passed away in April of 2017. He was 96 years old.*

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# The Day I Drowned My Sister (Almost)

by G. W. Robinson

As I look back over the years to my childhood, I can hardly believe some of the things I did. There were many, but I will only mention one at this time.

First, let me lead you up to this event by telling you that I was born on August 25, 1934 in the north end of Big Cove. This event happened only 4 years later, when I was 4 years old.

I was born not very far from where Dug Hill Road intersects with Highway 431 (Governor's Drive) at the end of what is now Robinson Drive, on the back side of my uncle's farm, in an old farmhouse that had cracks in it that you could "throw a cat through," as we used to say. Now, Robinson Drive at that time was only a dirt road; no gravel or anything - dirt when it was dry - mud when it rained. It is now a very nice paved road.

Now to the point of my story. There was a creek that ran right beside the house, only about 20 feet from it. The creek at this point was about 15 feet wide, and the water was about 2 to 3 feet deep. The bank near the house was about 4 feet high from the water.

There was a "foot log" across it right beside the house. Now, a foot log was simply a tree with all the branches trimmed off that was long enough to span the creek for people to walk across on.

Now, remember, I am 4 years old, and my sister is 2 years old. She was a "tagalong." She wanted to go everywhere I went. Well, I went out on that foot log to about the middle of the creek and sat down. Here comes my sister, Betty Sue. She followed me out there and sat down beside me. I was tossing

pebbles into the creek, just to see the water splash. Well, I looked over at her and thought "wouldn't she make a big splash if she fell in!" So without thinking about the consequence, I just reached over and shoved her into the water! (She DID make a big splash!).

Now, Mother saw me the instant I pushed her in. I can still see her running and jumping off that bank into the water and getting my sister out. Luckily, she got her out in time and she was okay. Had my mother not acted so quickly, my sister would surely have drowned and I would have had to live with that the rest of my life.

So this is one of the things I can hardly believe I did. But I know I did, because I remember it so clearly. I still visit that site quite often. I only live three miles or so from there. The old house is gone and there is no "foot log" any more. But the creek is still there. That is the one thing that will always be there, along with my many memories.



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**"I don't want to try and learn anything new because I can't remember half of what I already know!"**

***Faye Jemison, age 86***



# Old Household Tips



- Mice abhor camphor, and will not visit drawers or closets in which it is kept.

- Sprinkling salt on the top and at the bottom of garden walls is said to keep snails from climbing up or down.

- Two parts of crude oil and one part of turpentine will remove white spots from furniture, and make as good a polish as one can desire to have.

- A little ammonia and borax in the water when washing blankets keeps them soft and prevents shrinkage.

- A little kerosene put on the dust cloth will brighten furniture wonderfully and prevent the dust flying from one to the other.

- Equal parts of milk and water applied to a small sponge will make the leaves of the palm or rubber plant look like wax and prevent them from turning brown.

- When you give your cellar its spring cleaning, add a little copperas water and salt to the whitewash.

- All fruit looks nicer on delicate, light china. A few leaves in the fruit dish add wonderfully to the effect upon the eyes, and the eyes coax the appetite when nothing else will.

- A small dish of fine charcoal kept up on a shelf of a dark

closet or in the refrigerator, and renewed every week, absorb all odors and help to keep things fresh and sweet.

- One of the most useful articles for cleaning cooking pots and pans is a wire-chain dish cloth. It is now made fastened to a long, smooth wooden hammer, which allows one to use it without cutting the hands into the water.

- Chemists say that it takes more than twice as much sugar to sweeten preserves, sauce, etc., if put in when they begin to cook as it does to sweeten after the fruit is cooked.

- For hoarseness, beat a fresh egg and thicken it with fine white sugar. Eat of it freely and the hoarseness will soon be relieved.

- If quilts are folded or rolled tightly after washing, then beaten with a rolling pin or potato masher, it lightens up the cotton and makes them seem soft and new.

- Tar may be removed from the hands by rubbing with the outside of fresh orange or lemon peel and drying immediately. The volatile oils dissolve the tar so that it can be rubbed off.

- It is believed by many that if a child cries at its birth and lifts up only one hand, it is born to command.

Whose idea was it to put an "S" in the word "lisp"?

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## ARCHIVES: THE THREE MUSKETEERS, THE LIBRARIAN AND THE HISTORY TEACHER

*by Iolanda Hicks*



Behind closed doors and down a few short hallways, you can find several unique minds working individually and sometimes simultaneously at the Huntsville Veterans Memorial Museum in what is called the Archives. These minds spend volunteered hours, with a main purpose of maintaining and updating a multi-purposed database. They spend numerous hours logging in and arranging thousands of books for the Military Library and labeling the Military uniforms/hats according to the appropriate Armed Force.

These volunteers are constantly finding ways to improve information found at the museum's website while also adding new information. Descriptions of most everything in the museum can be found by the touch of a keyboard. All of this, including a monthly newsletter, can be found on the museum's website at [memorialmuseum.org](http://memorialmuseum.org). For a very interesting preview of Huntsville's Veterans Museum and its contents, it's a must read!

First, let's describe each of

our Archives' "Three Musketeers". The first is Rob Robley, the Director of the Archives and maybe another "Athos", as described by French author Alexandre Dumas. Rob has had a very full and active life which includes raising a family with two grandchildren. As a native-born Hawaiian, Rob, at three years old, experienced the bombing of Pearl Harbor on December 7th 1941. He can still remember the noise and the flashes of light to this day.

He served thirty-three years in the Army, starting out as an enlisted young man and retired as a CW4, specializing in ammunition, explosive, and bomb disposal. He served three combat tours in Vietnam and was awarded the Bronze Star Medal during one of those tours. Rob also served tours in Bosnia, Iraq, Japan, Korea, Italy, Germany and Okinawa. He enjoys his volunteer work and has been a volunteer since the opening of the Museum on Veteran's Day, 2001.

The second Musketeer could almost be aligned with Aramis, another one of Monsieur Du-

mas's swashbuckling characters. This would be Ken Mag-nant, a volunteer since 2010. During his earlier years, Ken was a member of the ROTC (Air Force) at the University of Florida. While working with the Strategic Defense Command, his career allowed him to travel throughout the world. He retired with thirty-three years of service and has had time to spend practicing engineering. As the Museum's IT Manager, Ken is continually correcting problems with the server and upgrading computers at the Huntsville's Veterans Museum. He holds the patent to the M 200 -AI Rocket Launcher which is the predecessor to the Hydra used on the AH-1G COBRA Helicopter and other aircraft. The Ribbon copy of that patent is displayed with the AH-1G COBRA that is located on the main floor of the museum.

The third and last of the Archives' Three Musketeers has to be Porthos (even though the museum's Porthos is a much slimmer version than the Porthos Dumas had envisioned!). Harlan Hurley is the Editor Manager (which includes managing the museum's data base of the Archives and has the responsibility of making sure the data on all the physical, military-related properties of the museum is correct on the website. It has taken a very long time to build each section of information but Harlan has painstakingly enjoyed the time it has taken to get the job done and continues to endeavor to help maintain the site with accuracy.

There are other volunteers that help and have helped with this tremendous effort so Harlan is not alone. In Harlan's earlier years, he was experienced in the United States Air Force (USAF) as an Instrument Repairman for the F4 Phantom II airplane which was consid-



ered the “workhorse” of the Vietnam era. It was first flown in May of 1958, entered service in 1961 with the Navy and then the USAF in 1963. Harlan used his GI Bill and graduated from the Florida Institute of Technology with a Bachelors of Science and Electrical Engineering Degree. Soon after, he started working for Chrysler Corporation as a Radio Design Engineer, which required him to travel a great deal. After retiring in 2007, Harlan began volunteering at the museum for several hours a week and continues to make a difference, as do all of the volunteers.

Claire Wood is the Museum’s Library Manager, the Librarian. Since volunteering at the museum several years ago, she, along with a few other volunteers, have had the fun and sometimes frustration of filtering through, separating, logging data, for over thirteen thousand books! The Museum’s Military Library is an ongoing project and hopefully will soon be available to the public for in-house reading and research. During the week, our Librarian is a nurse, travel planner and French language teacher for seniors and still finds time for family and volunteering. You can tell that she has a great love of books when you are talking with her. From some of the knowledge she has gained of the material in those military books, she appears to have soaked up a great deal of military history. She actually lights up when she talks about a certain book that she might be holding in her hand. Claire and her volunteers have done an extraordinary job in the library section and it is noticeable. The Museum Library will truly become a useful tool for military history buffs and scholars once it is completed.

We now come to the History Teacher. David Jaekel is the museum’s Newsletter Editor and provides a monthly newsletter found again on the website [memorialmuseum.org](http://memorialmuseum.org). He has been a museum volunteer for the last seven years and dedicates time each week to work on his researched articles. These articles cover all sorts of military, past and present, information. His normal daily work schedule is filled with teaching history through Stride K-12. Even though David lives in Boaz, AL he travels each week to Huntsville to volunteer at the museum. That is some dedication but it is no surprise. David served in the Air Force and comes from a military oriented family. Counting himself, his brother and father, the three men have an accumulation of sixty years of military service!

These handful of interesting volunteers are by no means the only volunteers that contribute to the inner workings of the server, data input and website of the Veterans Museum. They are, though, part of an important team that are at the helm, guiding others along the way. All provide an online presence of the museum’s worth and furnish a good roadmap of the museum. Take time to study the wealth of Military History at the website, accessed by the touch of your fingers and then come see the real proof of our military history at Huntsville’s U.S. Veteran’s Memorial Museum.



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**Beth Frederick, Gurley**

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# Growing Up Poor in Huntsville

by Jerry Keel

I grew up in Huntsville when the town was just a sleepy little cotton mill village of 15,000 to 20,000 residents. With the exception of two or three cotton mills on the outskirts of town all the businesses were located in a few blocks around the courthouse. Doctors, dentists, lawyers, five and dime stores, movie houses and restaurants all were crowded in a few-block huddle around the old Courthouse. A person could walk to just about any business you needed to visit.

I lived on Beirne Avenue in the northeast part of town. Goldsmith-Schiffman Field was located a half-block from my house. Across the street was the Beirne Avenue Playground. Several playgrounds were located in different areas of town. These playgrounds furnished a place for all the neighborhood kids to play tennis, softball and football. Each playground had a supervisor who was paid by the city. These kind ladies organized games, nursed minor injuries and served as surrogate parents for all the kids.

My dad worked in the Lincoln Mill, a textile mill where raw cotton was cleaned and spun into a heavy thread which was woven into a denim-type cloth. My dad was paid \$12.00 a week, which was about the average pay for an unskilled laborer-type job. We were poor but didn't really know it because everybody around where we lived was poor also. We had a place to sleep and adequate food and clothing to get by. I walked to East Clinton Elementary School and every other place I went.

I would ride a bus to downtown Huntsville where the YMCA was located. Church league basketball was played there in the winter. The playgrounds provided a place to play softball and other games in the summer months.

When I was 8 or 10 years old I got a paper route and had to get a bicycle so I could have a means to deliver the papers. I still remember Route 8 with 108 subscribers. All of us paper carriers had to go downtown to The Times Building to pick up our papers. We would roll the papers inside the paper storage room where the large rolls of newsprint were stored. When the papers were all rolled we would head out on our individual routes. My first stop was Hill Chevrolet on Greene Street, then on down to a service station on the corner of Greene and

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Meridian Streets. In those days Automobile Row was located on Meridian Street. Several auto dealerships were located along Meridian Street along with several other businesses. My route continued on down to North Grove Street.

Bill Thrower's Texaco service station, BonAir Restaurant and Motel, Geron Lumber Company, Grady Nichols Barber Shop and Harold's Market were located at the intersection of Meridian and North Grove Streets. My route went the length of North Grove Street down to Pegram Street then back to Race Street. I went east on Race Street to Beirne Avenue.

On Beirne Avenue I went over the railroad tracks and on down Beirne to my home. Ahh, another day completed. Home was a welcome sight to a young lad who had delivered all his customers' papers. I tried to put the papers on the porch but sometimes the paper would end up on the roof, in the shrubbery or some place where it was not supposed to be. I would stop and retrieve the paper which went astray and place it on the porch. I was a pretty good paper carrier if I do say so myself.

My parents were not well educated and didn't really know the importance of having a good education. Therefore they did not stress high school and college to me and my siblings. I had a knack for school work and always made good grades, always A or B on every subject. I never carried books home to study and now wonder what I could have done if I

had put as much time in studying as I did playing.

I often think about what I could have accomplished if I had applied more of my time to study rather than having fun. Too late now to change any of that. At the time I always had a little money from my paper route and could buy whatever I wanted as long as it didn't cost too much. I have always heard hindsight was 20-20 and it was true in my life. If I had gone to college I am sure my life would have been much better. But again it is too late for that now.

I got a job at The Times working after school and on the weekends. That part-time job ended up as a full-time job which lasted 44-1/2 years. I developed some serious heart problems which led to my retirement at 59 years old.

My age finally caught up with me. Now I am only a shadow of my former self. There are so many things I can no longer do but at least I am still here. So many of my friends and classmates have passed away. I am fortunate to have lived this long. I am thankful to God that overall I have had a pretty good life. Several children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren have made it all worthwhile. I have been truly blessed. Thank you to my Heavenly Father and the Lord Jesus.

**"There are two means of refuge from the miseries of life: Music and Cats."**

**Albert Schweitzer**



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**"The sermon this morning is 'Jesus Walks on Water'. The sermon for tonight is 'Searching for Jesus'."**

**Seen in church bulletin**



## Ask Grandma

by Mimi

Summer has finally arrived. Schools are out and children are playing, riding their bikes, scooters and just having fun. That is just what they need to relax and enjoy their childhood. The real world will be theirs soon enough. If your child or grandchild already has a cell phone, try to encourage other activities by taking them places, but leave the phone at home. At the very least, in the car.

I would like to be in a time bottle and go back seventy-plus years when we could ride our bikes all over town, carry a sack lunch and spend the whole day at the Big Spring City pool. It had the coldest water in the world, but when you're six, nothing bothers you. You just knew that when it was suppertime, you better be washed up and at the table on time. Mother had a bell and when she rang it, you knew you had about five minutes to be seated in the dining room for supper.

It's nice to have the pre-pandemic regulations lifted. However, Covid is still knocking on our doors. At my exercise class, it was announced that two members were out with Covid for the second time, so be mindful and use health precautions, washing hands and using hand sanitizer — still recommended.

Also, secure your pools, have a pool monitor, learn CPR, and fence and lock that pool. Leave no toys in the pool to attract small children. My heart cried today upon hearing a set of four-year-old twins were found in their family's pool, one dead and the other in serious condition in ICU.

Check your YMCA and the Natatorium to see who offers CPR. It could save a life. Also, remember to use sunscreen when outside, not just going to a pool or beach. Skin cancer is on the rise, and using sunblock is the best way to protect yourself and your children. Children seem to burn more quickly and need to have it applied more often.

I want to congratulate all high school seniors who will graduate this month. Your hard work for the past thirteen years paid off. The 13 years seems like a long time when you are a teen. Indeed, it's a large part of your entire life. The following 13 years will go more quickly. When you are 70, it's the blink of an eye.

College-bound or job market ready, may you go out into the world and make it a better place. The future is yours for the making!

**"When I want your opinion, I'll give it to you."**

**Movie mogul Samuel Goldwyn, to a young writer**

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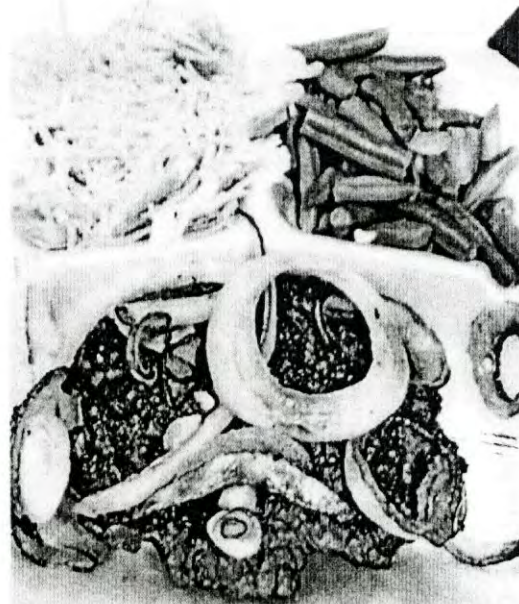
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## April 29, 2000 - The Brightest Day

*by John Tate*

David hung his garment bag on the closet rod in the room. He was feeling very proud of the fact that he and his party made it to Huntsville, AL from Birmingham, AL on time. He opened the bag and yelled, "Oh no!" People came running in to see what was wrong. David stood there with a horrified look on his face. He slowly turned to face the well-dressed crowd.

The day was April 29, 2000, on that day the Tate family was to become a blended family, somewhat like the Partridge Family, plus one. John Tate, with two kids, and Bertha Acklin, with five kids, were getting married. That day was to be even more special because of a double wedding. Bertha's youngest son David and his bride-to-be Sharon were getting married at the same time.

All of the kids, from the adults down to the youngest, had a role to play in the wedding. All except one, he was out of town and could not make it to the wedding. Anthony, Bertha's oldest son, was the Wedding and Music Director. Barbara, Bertha's only daughter, was the Decorator.

David and Sharon, and their entire wedding party, were traveling to Huntsville from Birmingham. There were stories of David's relentless preparation of a checklist for every member of his party, and he was constantly following up to make sure everyone had everything and was ready to go on the day of the wedding.

John Tate was Mr. Cool all day, he wore his sunglasses inside the church and walked around greeting people with a big smile on his face. He was bound and determined that he was going to enjoy the day. After all, he had no control whatsoever over any aspects of the wedding. He just went with the flow, if someone came to ask him a question, he would simply say, "We pay somebody to handle that, find them."

Twenty minutes before the wedding was to start, someone said to John, "David and his party aren't here." John simply said, "My bride and I are here, so there will be a wedding." John did not show any signs of being concerned, and when someone said that David and his party had arrived, John said, "See, it is all under control."

However, when John saw David running out of the church he became very concerned. John learned that David had left the pants to his suit in Birmingham. "Is he going back to Birmingham to get them?" he asked. Someone said David was running to the local Walmart to get some black dress pants.

Thank God, David had something like a thirty-eight-inch waist, and it was easy for him to find a pair of black dress pants. As the story goes, David grabbed the pants, ran through the cashier's line, and threw money at the cashier; while yelling, "I am late for my wedding." As he ran back into the church, he yelled, "I still had five minutes."

Finally, John and David were standing at the altar with their respective best men. It was at that point that John started to feel the exhaustion from the last month of wedding preparation, and the tiring events of the day. The main doors to the sanctuary were closed, to prepare for the revealed entrance of the first bride-to-be. That is when John thought to himself, "All of this trouble is just for the woman, it is so much work, why do we have to go through all of this?"

Just at that very moment, the doors to the sanctuary opened, "But look what she did for you." Were the words John heard in his spirit. He heard them as clearly as if God had whispered them in his ear. Bertha stood there at the door, revealing her wedding gown for the first time, and everything and everyone else disappeared except her. For the first time, John understood why.

As John, Bertha, David and Sharon prepared to celebrate their twenty-third wedding anniversary in 2023, looking back; April 29, 2000, was the brightest day for John.

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# Challenged in Church!

*by Gerald Alvis, The Poet of Greenlawn*

It's not often that this has happened, at least in recent years...but it did! It was just before the Church service began, and I had taken my usual seat. I heard a voice from behind challenging me; I turned, sporting my most serious look, and replied, "accepted." Was it a doctrinal debate, politics, or about parking spaces?? No, it was arm wrestling. I propped up my elbow on my seat back, and so did he, and soon we were locked in mortal combat. I was holding my own until this seven-year-old pulled the "look over there" trick. Basking in his glory, I quickly readjusted my grip and went for round two, only once again to meet my demise. I would fare no better switching to thumb wrestling. He strolled away victorious. But it wasn't over yet!

The service had ended, and we were getting up and preparing to leave when a young lady broad-sided me. It was an awesome bear hug, and I wasn't going anywhere. She announced they were having tacos today, like they had shared with us a few weeks ago in our home. Once again, I had been immobilized. These young ones had put the elder in his place.

So I'm sitting outside this evening, enjoying a cup of coffee and collecting my thoughts. I looked down at the chalk artwork on the sidewalk leading up to the steps. I realized that this weekend had been a clean sweep. Yesterday I was also challenged by my 9-year-old Granddaughter. She said she could draw any animal I could name, and well, she did! The pathway to my home hosted a whole menagerie of critters.

If you've ever wondered why old people repeat themselves, well, sometimes it is memory. But mostly, we are trying to ensure we have downloaded everything we can to help you succeed; what we've learned, so perhaps your struggle won't be as great.

Pondering this, an amazing feeling has come over me. I'm overwhelmed knowing it's going to be okay!! These kids will solve problems that haven't even been invented yet. They are going where we cannot, but I can see it in their eyes. The uncertainty that we are sending

them out to.... well, I know they will overcome.

They are strong and will be ready, armed with courage, imagination, curiosity and love. I find peace and comfort in this.

**Sorrow looks back, worry looks around,  
and faith looks up.**

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Turn to the experts

# Ashes Over Lake Guntersville

by Don Broome, Sr.

An old friend of mine was married for many years to a very sweet and timid girl and they had a daughter. I can't tell any names in this story or I won't be welcome at his home anymore.

His Father-in-law was really nice and my friend enjoyed fishing and working on cars with him. The other side of the coin was the Mother-in-law. If you took her out to eat, she'd take everything off the table. Take her to a garden center and she loaded the trunk with pottery. She delighted in causing trouble and meddling was her middle name. Her husband of 39 years had had enough. He'd been to a lawyer and was preparing to leave her. Apparently she found out and emptied all of the joint investments and put everything in her name. Legally, she could do it and do it she did. If he had left, he would have had a small pension and would have had to split it with her. He was stuck. She made his life even more miserable after that.

Three years later, he developed lung cancer. He said it was his way out. His will left his Granddaughter all of his estate. There wasn't much to it, considering. He made his Granddaughter promise that his wife wouldn't get his ashes. He was horrified that she would put him on the mantle and when people would come over she would gain sympathy by crying over him. 'She would too!'

He wanted his ashes to be taken out in the woods near a lake and let the wind carry him away.

After the brief service, Granddaughter and her husband departed with Granddad under her arm. Not long after the service, Grandmother realize that the ashes were gone and was told that, as arranged, her Granddaughter had taken possession of them. That's when all hell broke loose. Starting with daily phone calls escalating to hourly phone calls. Finally, Granddaughter agreed to return the ashes. A nice covered dish was taken from the cabinet and she went over to the fireplace. Carefully sifting the ashes from the fireplace, she filled the dish. Tape was put around the rim to seal it.

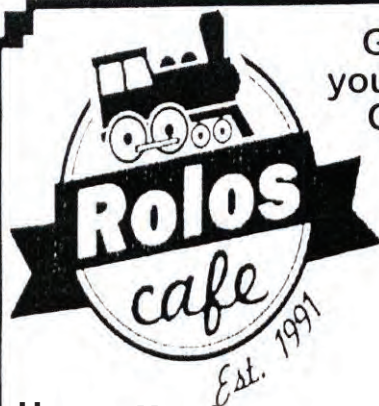
When they arrived back in Huntsville to deliver "Grandfather's Ashes", Grandmother informed them that she wanted to be taken to Guntersville, have a pilot fly everyone over lake Guntersville; where he loved to fish. Nothing would do but for this to happen and happen now. So after many

phone calls, arrangements were made and they drove to a little airfield off Highway 431. Grandmother took over as she always did and seated everyone where she wanted them to be. The plane took off and was flying over the lake, Grandmother opened a window and ripped off the tape sealing "Grandfather". The wind was blowing into the cabin pretty hard and as she unsealed the covered dish "his ashes" filled the plane. Hysteria reigned as Grandmother screamed in horror. Granddaughter and her husband were also hysterical but hiding their laughter under their hands. The pilot was trying to find a place to land and worried that he would never get anyone else to come up in his plane again, where human ashes might be left behind.

After a few minutes, they landed the plane and the pilot, who was really mad by this time, was taken aside and let in on what was really going on. Cleaning "Grandfather" from the plane was arranged and finally they were able to take Grandmother home.

**"Have you noticed that a turtle only makes progress when he sticks his head out?"**

**Jim Lanier, Athens**



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# Huntsville Classified Ads in 1911

- Wanted - to exchange some valuable city property for farmland near Huntsville.

- Money Found - Friday Feb. 3, someone left an envelope containing \$4 in paper in the office of the Ideal Laundry Co. Owner pay for this advertisement and recover same.

- For Rent - elegant rooms furnished or unfurnished. All modern conveniences. Phone 518-J. Residence Oak Avenue, Miss Mary Hutchens.

- Wanted - gentlemen boarders at 326 Randolph St., Phone 169-1

- Lost - a tie clasp with the initials G. W. Y. Finder please return to Yarbrough Bros. and receive reward.

- For Rent - 7 room modern cottage on Walker Street. Apply to J. N. Mazza

- For rent - nice four room cottage, furnished - \$10 per month - Rent must be paid in advance. Apply to Mrs. N. I. Pierce, 611 Meridian Street.

- For sale - a buggy horse for sale. Can be seen at Rev. Carey Gamble's residence on Franklin Street.

- For sale - one Maxwell motor car slightly used. \$400 will get this \$600 machine if prompt purchase is made. Call on M.C. Swaim, 365 Meridian Street.

- Handsome 2 story, 7-room residence with all modern conveniences within 5 blocks of public square. Price \$2500, part cash and balance in 1, 2, and 3 years or terms to suit the purchaser.

- A fine business lot within 3 blocks of public square. Pays interest on \$3,000. Will sell at a sacrifice.

- 11 choice residential lots close in; will sell at a bargain as a whole or will sell as many lots as you want on your own terms.

- A brand new cottage and 2 lots worth \$1,500. Will sell all for \$1,250. Will take \$500 cash and balance on as long time as you want.

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# Heard On the Street

by **Cathey Carney**



Our winner for the little hidden butterfly on p. 34, (bottom of the picture - see it now?) for May was **Susan Pugh** of New Market. She told us she is retired now but was secretary at Hazel Green United Methodist church for 26 years! She loves living here and reading about all the rich history of our area.

And everyone knows **Louie Tippet** who was our little boy for May - our first caller (and we had lots) to identify him was **Jane Barr**, the Historian of Monte Sano, who has known Louie for years. Fact - Louie's dad helped build Jane and Tom's home on Monte Sano, many years ago! Louie and his wife Jane purchased and

restored the Historic Lowry House just off Meridian St., where lots of people have wedding receptions and reunions. Congratulations to Jane Barr and Susan Pugh!

**Jason and Megan Mack** are SO proud of their handsome son **A.J. Mack** who graduated from Grissom High School this May. He is signed to play football at Alabama A&M this fall and is on a full academic scholarship. His grandma who loves him immensely is **Joyce Russell**, whom many know from when she worked at New York Life. Congratulations, A.J., you've got a bright future ahead of you!

**Becky Richardson** let us know a good tip recently. If you need to buy a rolling walker and need to get a wider seat, look for "bariatric rollators" because their seats are 4-6 inches wider than standard. She said "A person doesn't need to weigh 500 pounds to have a wide butt!"

**Gale Nichols** called to let us know her friend and neighbor has a really big birthday in July. On July 18th **Carnelle Thorne** turns 100 years old. She still lives alone and is an amazing lady. Her nickname is "**Thorny**" so we say Happy Birthday in advance to you!

For those of you who still have cable and haven't gone to streaming yet, I finally did

it. I went from WOW/Knology to Google Fiber and have been very happy with it. The installers are efficient and helpful. I thought learning it all at 73 would be difficult but it's not at all - just different. And cheaper with lots more selections. Wish I'd done it sooner.

I have to make a correction to the column from last month. **Phyllis and Billy Lawrence** are our subscribers from Edgefield, SC. Well Billy recently wished **Larry Worley** a very happy birthday and we wrote that Larry's wife is Sandra. That is NOT right and last time we looked Larry was married to **Linda Worley** (Billy's sister). We want to set the record straight after they let us know!

We know that there is an important wedding anniversary coming up soon. **Bill and Tanjia Kling** will celebrate 30 years on July 31st this year. That seems impossible to believe because Tanjia doesn't look to be any older than 40! Bill is certainly a lucky man.

## Photo of The Month

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

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This boy became known as the man who built most of the bridges in Madison County.



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**Dot Parton** was a beloved lady in the Ryland community. Dot passed away on April 7 this year. Over the years she helped to help raise so many children whose families needed her loving assistance. She was affectionately known as the "Mayor of Ryland" because she always had a hand in everything that took place and was the person that would get stuff done. As friends and family have remembered her, many have said that their community won't be the same without Dot in it. She is survived by her daughters, **Donna Hale** and **Cathy (Scott) Landers**; brother, **Terry (Linda) Martin**; and a host of grandchildren, great-grandchildren, other family members and friends whom she loved dearly.

**Gladys Chunn Bryant** lives in Pearland, TX and is one of our favorite people to talk with. She told us she recently turned 89 years old on May 23rd so Happy Birthday to you beautiful lady. We hope you partied up in style!

Thank you to the **city of Huntsville** and our **HPD** for continuing to escort funerals through the city. As large as we are, it's heartwarming to just stop for a minute and show respect to the people in the funeral procession.

Special hello to **June and Ernest Young, Jr.** who moved here in 1955. I bet they've got some good memories that we need to publish in Old Huntsville!

You have got to mark your calendars for this show. If you love **Elvis Presley** or just remember his music, on Sunday August 20 at 6:30pm will be the show you don't want to miss. It is a sellout performance every year it's been here. **Bennie Jacks** and promoters have worked hard along with MSFC Retirees Asso. to bring back the "Ultimate Tribute" Artists **Cody Ray Slaughter, Ryan Pelton and Shawn Klush** back to Huntsville for the Ultimate Elvis Experience. Tickets go on sale June 1 and it will be held at the Von Braun Civic Center. For pricing and availability you'll want to call the VBCC ticket office but before June 1 call Bennie at 256.603.0894. All proceeds benefit the USSRC NASA Space Exploration Memorial Space Explorers Honor Roll.

Ole Dad's BBQ in Hazel Green has been in business for 28 years, as of June 10 this year. **Rosemary Leatherwood** is the owner and says, "We want to thank each and every one of you for being so supportive to our small family-owned restaurant. Our community has shown so much love to me and my family. Let's start on our 29th year with a bang." Another anniversary she has, is what would be her 45th wedding anniversary to her sweetheart **Bill Leatherwood**. They married June 1st 45 years ago. She lost her sweet husband in June of 2016. He is her angel now!

**Mildred Whitlock** called the other day to tell us she has a new great great granddaughter. **Dakota Kate** is the name of the baby and there is no doubt

she will get lots of love from the whole family.

If you're a **pecan pie lover**, try making it with less sugar and more pecans. You won't notice that there's less sugar, and the nuts you add should be chopped (not whole) and toasted. Try it and let us know!

Several have asked us to add a couple pages of current events happening in Huntsville. Since the demise of the newspaper and Valley Planet it's just difficult to find out what's happening. So We're thinking about this and you'll be the first to know. It's an intriguing idea.

I have hidden a **super tiny Diamond wedding ring** in the pages of this issue. In addition I have hidden a **plain wedding band** in this issue. You have 2 items to find in order to win. You won't find them so don't even look. But if you happen to find both of them and call me after 8am June 5th, if you're the first you win, you get a \$50 free subscription to Old Huntsville magazine.

**Happy Father's Day** to all the great dads out there, and the ones looking over us.

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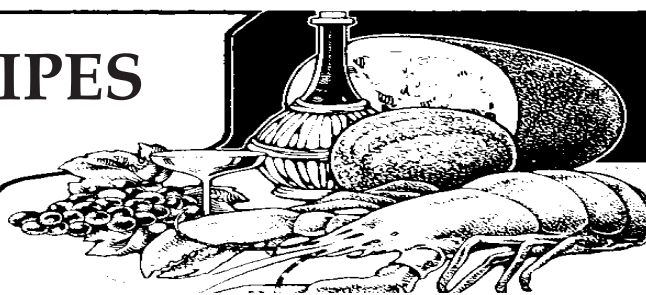
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## RECIPES



# Lawyers CAN Cook!

*These recipes taken from the cookbook "May it Please the Palate - Volunteer Lawyers Programs"*

### Quick Cheese Drops

1 c. flour  
4 T. butter  
2 t. baking powder  
1 c. sharp Cheddar cheese, shredded

Cut butter into flour as in making pastry. Mix in cheese, stir in 1/2 cup ice water til all is moistened. Drop by teaspoonfuls on greased baking sheet. Bake at 450 degrees for 8-10 minutes and lightly browned. Serve very hot, recipe can be doubled.

Anne Mitchell,  
Esq. Birmingham, Al.

### Maggie's Monkey Biscuits

2 T. butter  
1/2 c. molasses  
Day old biscuits

Put butter and molasses into skillet. Heat slightly and drop in biscuits. Fry both sides and serve hot.

Jeff Utsey, Esq., Butler, Al.

### Beef Chowder

1-1/2 lb. ground beef  
1/2 c. onions chopped  
1/2 c. celery chopped  
1/3 c. green bell peppers chopped

2 - 10.5 oz. cream of celery soup  
2 - 14.5 oz. Hunt's whole tomatoes

1 - 17 oz. can whole kernel corn  
1/4 c. parsley snipped

Cook beef, celery, onion and pepper til meat is browned. Drain, then add remaining ingredients and 1/2 teaspoon salt. Simmer covered for 30 minutes. Pour into containers or Ziploc bags and freeze.

Before serving, heat soup, covered, about 30 minutes, stirring often.

Robert E. Willisson, Esq.  
Huntsville, Al.

### Quick Clam Chowder

1 can cream of celery soup  
1 can cream of potato soup

1 pt. half and half cream  
1 can minced clams  
Salt/pepper to taste  
Mix all ingredients well and heat to serve.  
Sherry Collum-Butler, Esq.  
Florence, Al.

### Judge Bell's Pickled Eggs

#### Pickling juice:

1-3/4 c. white vinegar  
3/4 c. water  
1/2 t. salt  
1/4 t. garlic salt  
5 peppercorns - whole  
Few dill seeds  
Few coriander seeds  
Few mustard seeds  
Sprinkle of red pepper  
Sprinkle of celery salt  
18 hard-boiled eggs

Put pickling juice over eggs in appropriate jar or container. Let pickle for at least 7 days in the refrigerator. Eat with salt, pepper and Louisiana hot sauce.

Note - these were Aunt Eunice's favorites.

Judge William Bell, Huntsville, Al.

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## Brown Almond Rice

1 can Campbell's beef consomme soup  
 1 can Campbell's French onion soup  
 1/2 stick butter  
 1 sml. pkg. slivered almonds (about 2 oz.)  
 1 c. white rice  
 Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Put all ingredients in a 1- 1/2 quart casserole dish. Bake at 350 degrees for an hour. Stir once in about 30 minutes.

Bob Robertson, Esq.  
 Huntsville, AL

## The Judge's Fried Shrimp

3 c. milk  
 1 c. white wine or vinegar  
 1/4 t. bitters  
 3 t. garlic powder  
 3 t. onion powder  
 1 t. Louisiana hot sauce  
 Large fresh shrimp, peeled  
 In a bowl mix together all ingredients except shrimp. Marinate the shrimp in the milk mixture for 3-4 hours. Bread shrimp in pancake flour and deep fry at 365 degrees for about 8 minutes.

Judge William Bell,  
 Huntsville, AL.

## Bourbon Roast

1 rump or sirloin tip roast  
 5 oz. soy sauce  
 1/4 c. bourbon  
 1/4 c. water  
 3 T. lemon juice  
 3 T. Worcestershire sauce  
 3 T. cooking oil  
 Place roast in a deep glass bowl.

Mix the remaining ingredients together and pour over roast and let marinate for 2 hours.

Place roast and sauce in oven in a pot and cook covered for 2-3 hours at 350 degrees.

Jack Livingston, Esq.  
 Scottsboro, AL

## Starving Law Student's Casserole

1 lb. ground beef  
 1 can red beans  
 1 onion - chopped  
 1 bell pepper - sliced  
 1 can sliced mushrooms  
 1 box Jiffy corn bread mix

Brown beef in skillet, drain. Mix in red beans, onion, bell pepper and mushrooms. Simmer for 2-3 minutes. Prepare Jiffy corn bread mix according to package directions. Put beef mixture in 8x8-inch casserole dish and top with corn bread mix. Place in 350 degree oven til corn bread is done - about 25 minutes.

Robert H. McCaleb, Esq.  
 Huntsville, AL.

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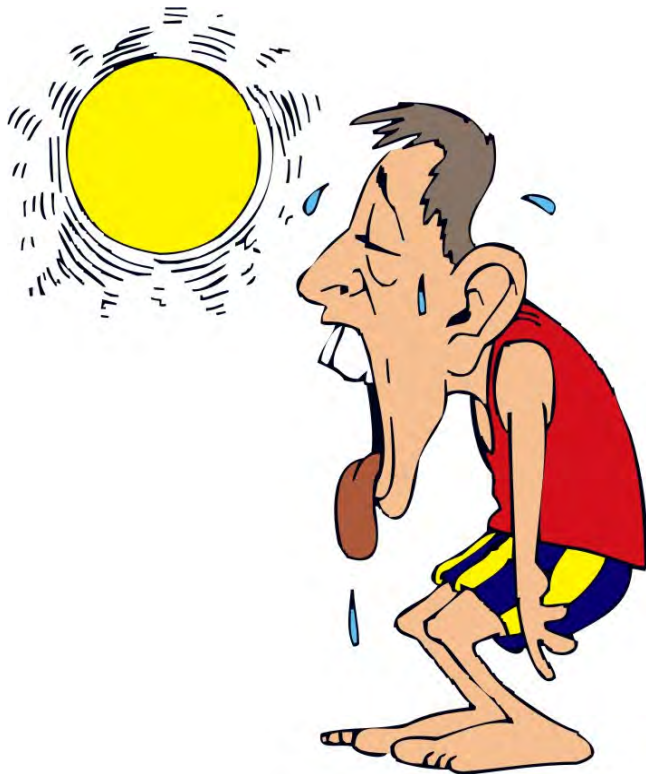
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# How Hot Was It?

by M. D. Smith, IV



"How hot was it?" Johnny Carson popularized that phrase, getting his audience to ask the question, then he'd fill in the answer with some funny comparison. Here are a couple.

*It's so hot, I saw a bird pull a worm out of the ground with an oven mitt.*

*It's so hot, chickens are laying hard-boiled eggs.*

*It's so hot, when the temperature drops below 95, I start to feel chilly.*

*It's so hot, pigeons are wearing flip-flops to avoid their feet touching the near-liquid asphalt.*

June is typically the actual start of summer, with peak temperatures in July or August. Many people feel we've had hotter summers for the past ten to twenty years because of global warming.

But I checked the Huntsville Weather service and found we may not know what "hot in June" truly means.

Average high temperatures in Huntsville for June are 85 at the first of the month and 90 at the end. But looking at the record books, going back as far as 1914, we've had almost every day in June hit 100 degrees or more in one year or another.

Want to guess the highest temperature we've ever had in Huntsville since they started keeping records for June? Come on, take a guess. Well, it was one hundred and eight (108) degrees. That's pretty dog-gone hot, isn't it? What will also surprise you is that we set that all-time record high temperature on June 29, 1931. The day before that, we reached a record for the 28th of 107 degrees.

It seems it was a hot season in a large part of the country. The Huntsville Daily Times, in the edition of June 30, 1931, had a headline on the front page that read, "RECORD HEAT IS UNABATED OVER MOST OF THE NATION — Little Chance Of Relief Before Tomorrow - Death Toll Now Over 500 — Nearly Half Of The Deaths Have Occurred In The Last 24 Hours."

That was one heck of a multiple headline. The story further said that of the 500 deaths nationwide, 50 were in Chicago. It also noted that a record number of animals had died during the eight-day heat wave.

There was no air-conditioning in the 30s, and people cooled their homes with central attic fans. But with the added heat from the sun at the day's peak, the houses were usually hotter than outside temperatures. People who didn't have developed perspiration systems from working outside quickly got overheated, and even those used to working in hot weather sometimes couldn't get enough liquids to keep up with the fluid loss. I doubt anyone will remember that hot day in Huntsville unless you are almost 100 years old



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One last thing, those record-high temperatures were readings in the shade. Any sunny spot where the ground was heated and re-radiating into the air could easily be twenty or more degrees hotter. It could genuinely melt some asphalt roads and make them sticky. That's why shade and a big shade tree were so important. If you worked in a store in downtown Huntsville, bless you. Lawyers and bankers usually wore a three-piece suit with the vest buttoned up. How could they stand it?

I would venture a guess that no matter how improper it might have been, businessmen removed their jackets... and, horrors... rolled their long-sleeve white shirts up on their arms. Imagine a homemaker cooking dinner over a hot stove in that kind of heat. Salt tablets sold well back then.

One last fact—the highest temperature EVER recorded in Huntsville was July 29, 1930 and it was 111 degrees.

Enjoy the average mid-eighties temperatures this month. Of course, it's likely to get hotter, it always does. But on the hottest of days, someone might ask you, "How hot was it today?" Reply with one of these snappy one-liners.

*It's so hot, the frozen pizza you get at the grocery store is ready to eat when you get home. It's so hot, potatoes cook underground, so just pull one out and add butter, salt and pepper. It's so hot, I saw a chicken lay an omelet!*

*It's so hot, I saw a squirrel picking up nuts with pot holders!*

*It's so hot, you can wash and dry your clothes at the same time!*

*It's so hot, I saw two trees fighting over a dog!*

*It's so hot, I saw a cop chasing a thief, and they were both walking!*

*It's so hot, cows give powdered milk!*

*It's so hot, I bought a loaf of bread, and before I got home, it was toast!*

Let's hope this June of 2023 does not break any new heat records.

**"My weight is perfect for my height, which varies."**

**Lori Jacobs, Gurley**

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## **RECORD HEAT IS UNABATED OVER MOST OF NATION**

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**Nearly Half of Deaths  
Have Occurred In the  
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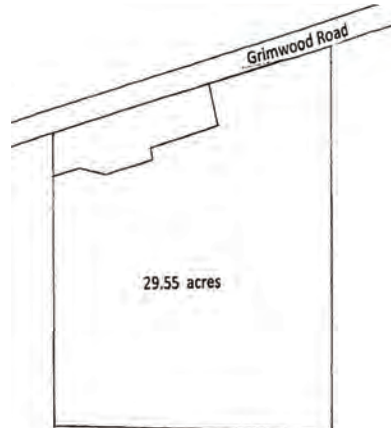
**By The Associated Press**  
With little chance for relief before tomorrow, June's record heat wave stalked for the eighth day through the nation. While the central states were most affected, some sections in the east and southwest

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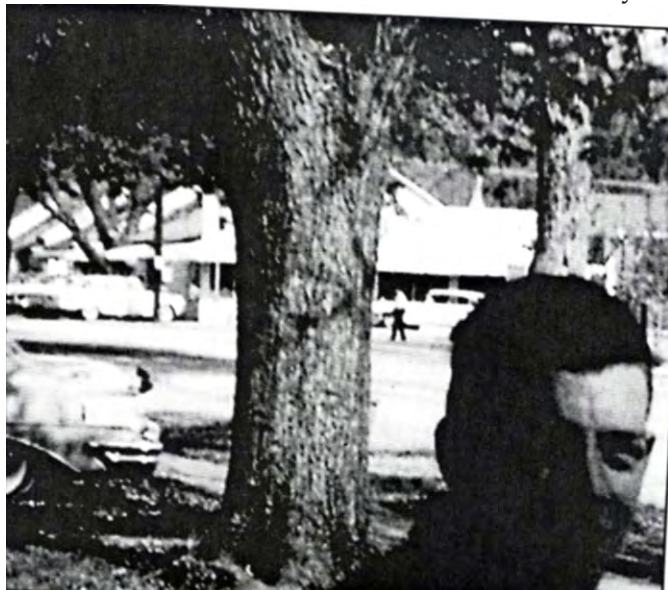
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# LIVING ON RISON AVENUE

by Cathy Bowen Bridges



Picture of Mullins Drive-In, 1962, from book by Tommy Towery "The Baby Boomer's Guide to Growing Up in 'The Rocket City'"

In 1961, I started first grade at Chapman Elementary School in Huntsville, Alabama. Established around 1958, it still had construction work in the school. I believe they were adding the lunchroom at that time. So, as construction continued, I had to go to Rison School for a short while. It was spooky at Rison school as it was old and had giant trees everywhere that were older than the school. But we were able to go back to Chapman School soon after.

Rison School opened in 1921 and closed in 1964. The city demolished it in the early 90s to allow for the new 1-565.

A little boy down the road a few years older than me would ensure I got to school and was in the correct room. His first name was Ricky, I believe. The last name was Hatfield. My mom knew his mom, and she trusted him to help me. I hope

he reads this if he is still in the area. At the time, kindergarten was not required. Still somewhat of a big baby, going to school initially overwhelmed me.

My first-grade teacher's name was Miss Esslinger. She was an older teacher and had been teaching for a long time. It was fun learning to read, and of course, I loved the Dick, Jane, Sally and Spot books. But it is hard to remember things from so long ago.

The day I stuck another girl in the arm with a pencil has always been in my memory and I will never forget it. She had used her pencil to mark on my white shirt. Unfortunately for her, she also had on a white shirt. Thinking about paying her back, I tried to write on her shirt, but she moved, and I accidentally poked her in the arm hard enough to make her cry. Although she started it, I was the one that got in trouble and received the paddling. In first grade! Boy! Wasn't I starting school out in a good way? Of course, payback is not usually the best choice, but at barely six years old, I was not thinking of that.

We lived in a little white house on the corner of Rison and Windham, across from a church. Sometimes we would sit on the porch and listen to them singing. I loved to play outside. We had a big side yard and playing there was fun, although I got in trouble for climbing on a big stack of concrete blocks piled in the yard. I got in trouble a lot! Climbing trees was one of my favorite things to do also,

A lot of times, I would walk to Chapman School with other kids. I am surprised my mom let me do that. Sometimes we would walk up the dry creek bed nearby. It came out at the store near the corner of Rison and Maysville Road. I got in trouble one day because I did not come straight home. My mom had sent my little umbrella with me, thinking it might rain. She found me later, just strolling with my umbrella held over my head, although it was not raining.

I loved being outside. I had a little brother about four or five

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John Purdy  
Loretta Spencer  
Sarah Chappell



years younger than me. He loved to be a cowboy and sometimes we would play cowboys and Indians. I wonder if he remembers that. One day, I was playing and started to pick a flower with a mean bumblebee on the other side. I did not see it, and he got me right on the tender meaty part of my right hand under my thumb. Boy, did that hurt!

An old shed was right out from the back door where my dad kept his tools. One day I was pushing my doll in the baby buggy behind the shed, not knowing there was a large wasp nest nearby. They saw me, though, stinging me behind both of my ears! Weird, right? That did not feel good at all! I ran into the house crying! One wasp was bad enough but two?

It seemed like I was always getting into something all the time. I still do! Of course, I got a few whippings with a belt, also! Before doing it, my dad always ensured we knew why he was whipping us. He hated doing it, but we must have deserved it, and then one day, our dad did something that upset my brother and me. We had a dog named Blackie, and he had a long tail. My dad thought it was too long, so he cut it off, leaving a short tail with a curl on the end of it. We cried and cried because we thought he was killing our dog. He gave us a bag of Fritos, thinking that would shut us up, but that did not help much.

When living on Rison, we would eat at Mullins on Andrew Jackson when it was a smaller place on the other side of the road. My dad loved their chili. It was good and I loved the round chili crackers. We did not eat out much, but if we did, that is where we would usually go. My mom was a great cook and so was my dad. One Halloween, he made some excellent popcorn balls. Funny how you remember some things and not others. I remember those popcorn balls because they were so good.

We had a black and white TV that we all loved to watch. Sometimes my mom would bake a cake and we would eat a nice warm piece while watching a movie. A Marilyn Monroe movie comes to my mind. We did not get many channels with an old antenna, but we watched TV a lot. (No cell phones back then). Watching TV was something we enjoyed – especially cartoons.

When John F. Kennedy was assassinated in 1963, we watched the news about it. That same year my brother turned three years old while we were in Tallahassee, Florida. When my dad worked there, my mom loaded us on a Greyhound bus to Florida. My dad lived in a trailer park in a tiny trailer. His friend Buster whom he worked with lived close by

with his family. While there, we visited a place where we rode a glass-bottom boat. I saw a lighthouse, and the ocean seemed so incredible. It was scary in a way. I had never seen it before. And the palm trees! Wow! We did not have those kinds of trees where we lived.

I believe I went to Chapman School through the 5th grade, and then we moved. When living on Rison, I loved walking up the dry creek bed to the store on Maysville Road. I believe it was called East Branch Creek. I loved to buy candy. Red Hots, chocolate covered raisins and peanuts, Laffy Taffy, and all the cavity-causing candy I could get. I had quite a few friends that lived on Rison, and they would walk with me sometimes; I would visit them when my mom and dad allowed it. We played with paper dolls, which I loved to do. Also, we would play games or play outside. I am unsure about the spelling, but there was a family with the last name of Bonney. I played with their kids sometimes.

Well. That is my story and I could add much more to it, but I will stop for now. I still drive by sometimes. The little white house is still there, and I have my memories.



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# Boots

by Malcolm W. Miller

Six of the seven brothers in our family were all standing out in the yard at the wood pile. Some of the older boys were splitting and cutting up the wood for the fire place and Mama's cook stove. Papa would buy so many standing cords of wood usually from Bob Gibson, then it would be cut and dragged off the mountain down to a bench road where it could be loaded on the wagon and hauled home and either cut into wood for the fire place or stove wood.

Suddenly one of the boys looked down the gravel country road and the excitement began. There coming down the road was our oldest brother Robert with his new bride Beulah Isabel (Boots) Campbell Miller. I had never before in my short life experienced such carrying on. I said short life because it was nineteen thirty five and I was only seven years old.

Suddenly all five of the older boys took off running down toward the creek and I just stood there alone looking at what to me was a real spectacle. Some woman besides Mama was going to be living in our house. Little did I know then this was one of the best things that could happen for all of us especially my Mama. She had been doing all the cooking, cleaning, washing clothes and everything else that had to be done around the house because she only had sons and no daughters to help her.

Boots had to have a lot of nerve and a lot of love for Robert to move into a house full of men and boys that was already so crowded that there were two or three beds in every room with from two to three people sleeping in each bed. The legendary country singer Little Jimmy Dickens had a classic song out called "Sleeping at the foot of the bed". One line in the song says "with the cold toe nails scratching your back and the foot board scrubbing your head I tell the world you ain't lost a thing never sleeping at the foot of the bed". Well friends I know

well what he was talking about in that song because after Boots came to live with us that's where I wound up for about a year until Papa rented the farm bordering the Flint River.

After that things changed for the better for all of us. Robert and Boots got their own house to live in, my brother Gib joined the Army and the house we lived in was larger.

From day one Boots was a welcome addition to our family, she seemed to love everybody and every thing. It seems she had been treated badly back at home and she was so proud to be where she was appreciated and loved.

Boots and I would do things together like picking black berries and bringing them home for Mama. We also sold some for twenty cents a gallon and took the money to the country store to buy candy.

Something tragic happened that almost destroyed Boots early on. She and Robert had a beautiful baby girl named Barbara Jean that was every one's pride and joy. At three months of age Barbara Jean came down with a terrible sickness and died of dehydration in probably twenty-four hours or less. Boots went to work at P. R. Mallory and saved up enough money to buy three acres of land in Ryland, built a Jim Walters type home and paid for it. Robert lived in it until he died at age 93. The property is still in the family today.

Boots was always real religious and after the death of her baby she seemed to turn to God more than ever. She and Robert later had two fine children, Faye and David, and she made sure that they went to church. They did not have a car to go in but she would drag those kids to any church that was having services and she loved to go to gospel singings. I believe she would walk five miles to go to a singing.

Robert didn't attend church regularly but he had joined the Shiloh Methodist Church as a youngster. In nineteen eighty five Boots came down with incurable cancer, Robert began attending church with her and later became a pillar in the Fellowship Baptist church, the last church that Boots attended.

Boots passed away on June sixth, nineteen eighty-six at age sixty eight. She and Robert had been married forty eight years. This could have been written as a love story because they just about had to tie Robert to keep him from taking a sleeping bag and sleeping next to his beloved Boots' grave.

To some folks this may not seem to be much of a story, she wasn't a famous person, she never won any awards that I know of but she left a legacy for her children and grandchildren and family and friends that will last through the ages. I for one believe Boots, whom I loved dearly, is reaping her rewards and awards now and throughout eternity.

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# Superstitions about Babies

*from 1922 Newspaper*



**To determine gender of a baby:**

\* Slip off the wedding ring of the mother-to-be. Have her lay down, tie the ring to a piece of thread. A friend suspends the ring over the mother's stomach, if the ring moves in a clockwise direction it's a boy - counterclockwise - a girl.

\* If a baby kicks the right side of a mother, it's a boy. If it kicks the left, it's a girl. Also, if the mother always leads with her right foot, it's a boy.

\* Drop a coin between the mother's breasts. If it falls to the left, it's a girl - to the right, a boy.

\* If a mother wants a boy she should wear blue clothes and sprinkle poppy seeds on her windowsill. If she wants a girl, she should wear pink and sprinkle sugar on her windowsill.

\* It is said that wearing gold jewelry will prolong childbirth. Women who wear gold are advised to take it off until the baby is born.

\* When the baby is born, place a knife under the door sill of your home to protect it from the evil eye.

\* If the child is born with its hands open, it will be generous. If it is born bald, it will grow up to be a brilliant scholar. If it is born with thick unruly hair, it will be a

passionate person who loves to live life to the utmost.

\* A baby's nails should not be cut off before the age of 1, because it will become a thief. It's alright for the mother to bite the nails off, however, because this brings good luck.

\* When brought home from the hospital, the baby should be carried through the downstairs to the top of the house before it is brought downstairs for the first time.

\* If a mother gives away all her baby's clothes, she will soon find that she needs them for a new child.

\* The first time you take the baby out for a walk, you need to give food to the first person you see on the street - this brings good luck to the baby.

\* A child weaned in the early spring will become prematurely grey-haired.

\* If you see a smile on the baby's face while sleeping it is very lucky, It may indicate the angels are playing with the baby.

\* Coral was considered a protective amulet for a baby. A necklace made from coral could protect the infant from the evil eye.

\* In old Jewish folklore there was a practice of putting candy under the bed of a new mother. If evil spirits should wander into the room they would be attracted to the sweets under the bed and the baby would be safe.

\* Take a close look at the second and third toe of your baby. If these toes are close together it is a sure sign the baby will grow up wealthy.



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In accomplishing its aims the Ford institute has never been daunted by the size or difficulty of any task. It has spared no toil in finding the way of doing each task best. It has dared to try out the untried with conspicuous success.

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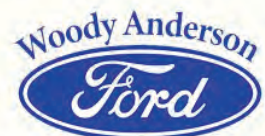
The Ford Motor Company views its situation today less with pride in great achievement than with sincere and sober realization of new and larger opportunities for service to mankind.

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**"If I had a dollar for every woman that found me unattractive, they would eventually find me attractive."**

**Billy Roberts, Madison**



# HUNTSVILLE NEWS FROM 1910



- Miss Lena Vann, a popular young lady of New Hope, committed suicide by swallowing some poisonous drug yesterday. News of the affair reached our city by a telephone message from Mr. G. M. Haden who phoned Probate Judge W. T. Lawler. Mr. Haden asked that the coroner be instructed to hold an inquest but was told that this was not necessary. Miss Vann was at the home of her aunt, Mrs. Mary Vann, who had retired for the evening, when she heard a strange noise in the girl's room that sounded curious and upon investigation found that the young lady was in an unconscious state and apparently was dying.

Medical aid was summoned and everything was done that was possible to save her but to no avail. The young lady was popular and her character was considered most estimable. The cause of her death is not known to any of her relatives or friends, who are all in shock after the news.

- Helen Evans, a woman who keeps a quiet place in the city, was placed under arrest yesterday afternoon by policeman Pamplin on a charge of operating a blind tiger. Several bottles of beer were found in the cooler and the woman protested that she kept them there for her own medicinal use. She made bond in the sum of ten dollars and appeared in the police court for trial this morning. Dr. Lacy Mastin, city physician, testified that he had prescribed for the woman and directed her to drink beer. The case was dismissed.

- Mayor Smith has given the police department instructions to arrest all parties caught in the act of riding bicycles on the

sidewalks. Two arrests for this offense have been made and the mayor has assessed the fines of a dollar each against the defendants.

- Spitting on the sidewalks is also a practice that must be stopped and a fine awaits all parties who thoughtlessly commit this offense again in the future.

- A responsible business man of Huntsville has said that for \$200 he will find the main stream of the Big Spring on the Little Mountain and provide water enough to supply the city. The gentleman wants the money for his trouble and it will not have to be paid him if he fails to find the stream. The matter will probably be taken up at the next city council meeting and there may be something doing in regards to this.

- That puddle in front of the Post Office Cafe is still there. It has been there ever since the Square was paved. A load of gravel would save the skirts of many of the ladies and prevent some hard words from being spoken by the gentlemen who must pass there after heavy rains. People walk through the Courthouse yard to keep from passing the unsightly place and this will finally hurt the business on that side of the Square, for when the number of passersby is cut down, the rents go down also.

- That deer in the court yard is going to cripple someone yet and who is going to pay the damage? Is the county responsible? Put the buck in a fenced-in corner of the yard or else have him removed entirely from the Court yard. What's the purpose of keeping a vicious animal in the way of travel?

- The policemen on day duty presented an imposing sight when they began their rounds on horseback. From now on every section of the city will be covered during the day by the mounted men. This has been the law for years but it has been neglected and many of the policemen found it more comfortable to walk than to ride horseback.

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# Cape Marshall

by George Harsh

In the early 1970s, the Marshall Space Flight Center's Test Laboratory conducted static firing tests on a model of the Space Shuttle.

One of the early tests was to be viewed by the Deputy Director of the Kennedy Space Center and 2 of his Engineers.

Our older Technicians have always said: If "Company" is coming, get ready, as something "interesting" will happen!!

And, Yes Indeed, upon ignition of the 2 solid rocket motors, one motor's head end blew out and destroyed its connection to the Test Stand. This resulted in the first and last "Launch" from Marshall's Test Area. (My Claim to Fame!!)

It was a Beautiful "Launch" as the motor left the Test Stand, rose majestically into the late afternoon sky, and HEADED TOWARDS HUNTSVILLE!!

I knew that it would not go far as it was burning from both ends and doing loops, and it fell harmlessly in some pine trees near the Test Area. The other motor broke up in the Test Stand and started several fires.

Of course, an Investigation Board was formed and they discovered a defect during manufacturing that caused the motor to fail.

The day after our "Launch", the Test Laboratory Director and I were being interviewed at the Test Stand by a local TV reporter. His First Question was a "What if". What if that failure had resulted in the release from the Test Stand of a Large Cloud of highly TOXIC vapors?

I quickly thought what I would say if my Director turned to me for the answer. "The wind was blowing to the Southwest, away from any personnel and buildings, and the cloud would break up before harmlessly exiting Redstone Arsenal across the Tennessee River."

The Lab Director never hesitated and spoke for 3-4 minutes. When he was through, I had no idea what he said, but it was Beautiful. The TV Reporter said Thank You and moved on!

That question had to be a Call-in to the station by someone with inside knowledge of the Test Stand.

(1) Tracing the "insider" was not pursued.

[2] A new Solid Rocket Motor Test Stand Connection was installed and the Test Program successfully completed.

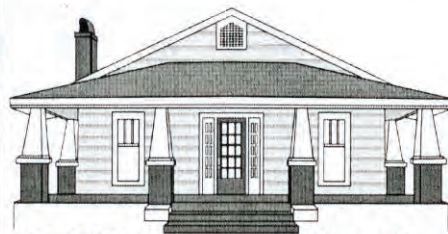
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*Love to the Huntsville High Class of 1966  
From Oscar Llerena, HHS class of 1966*

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*Maxine*

# Childhood Memories

*by Jim Rosenblum  
May 2011*

I loved the old house at 122 Depot Street, Huntsville, Alabama, and the painting of it now hangs in the hall of my current residence. As I pass it I have mini-flashbacks of living there, in the 1930s with Grandmother, and how we survived the Alabama winters.

There was no central heat, only a "pot bellied" stove in Grandmother's bedroom, a wood burning cook stove in the kitchen, and a fireplace in the living room. The two unoccupied upstairs bedrooms were boarded off to prevent cold air from escaping into the downstairs living area. And, to further prevent cold air from invading the house Grandmother made paste of old news papers and stuffed it into cracks around the windows and in other areas. I'm not sure if this method of blocking invading cold air did much to warm the house, but Grandmother thought it did and that was all that mattered.

In the spring it was my job to remove the wads of paper making cool outside air more accessible to our living spaces. My room, on the north side of the house was without heat and crawling into bed, on winter nights, was indeed a real challenge.

Grandmother had no education - just barely able to read and write. This fact notwithstanding she read her Bible every day. She was a staunch Southern Baptist and never missed Sunday School and church services each Sunday morning and church services on Sunday evening at the First Baptist Church on East Clinton Street.

She made sure that I was in attendance also and before leaving home would adjust my tie and re-

comb my hair. During my pre-teen years I wanted to part my hair in the middle because many of the older boys at school wore this hair style, and of course, I wanted to emulate the upper class.

During the rest of the week she assigned me various "chores". I was charged with chopping kindling and keeping the kitchen's coal and kindling bin filled, removing ashes from the kitchen stove, living room fireplace and Grandmother's pot-bellied stove. And, every Saturday before trooping off to see cowboy movies at the Lyric and Grand Theater I thoroughly scrubbed the front porch. We lived on an unpaved street so after a week of exposure to the dust of unpaved Depot Street the porch was very dirty. She hated the dust and dirt of our neighborhood and often talked about moving to a nice place in the country. This dream never materialized and she lived at 122 Depot Street until her dying day.

On school days she helped me as much as she could with my school home work. She drilled me on my spelling and read the questions found at the end of each chapter in my history and geography books. If I was hesitant with the answer she would tell me to read the chapter again. Each Sunday evening she placed a pad before me saying, "It's time to write your Mother a letter", who lived and worked in Chattanooga, Tennessee. I always complained that I didn't know what to say. "Just sit there long enough and the thoughts will come to you. Tell her about the movies you saw this week," she said. With a great deal of effort and prompting from Grandmother I was able to fill up a single page. I'm sure Mother was delighted to hear of Flash Gordon's adventures on the planet Mongo, and his bouts with the merciless Emperor Ming.

Meals were simple consisting of one pot affairs - - turnip greens, Navy beans, butter beans, green beans and occasion-

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ally vegetable-beef soup with plenty of pasta. Corn meal bread and butter milk was served at each meal. For breakfast Grandmother prepared "ho-cakes" which was fried corn bread served with butter and maple syrup.

Eating out was unheard of. However, when I became a Bell Boy at the Russell Erskine Hotel and had money of my own, I enjoyed having a hamburger and a bottle of chocolate milk at Steadman's six stool Hamburger Stand on Meridian Street. Mr. Steadman was a jolly fat middle-aged man. He always treated each customer visiting his tiny hamburger stand as the only customer of the day. Each time I ordered a hamburger and chocolate milk he sang a little song as he shook up the bottle -- "It will pearl your teeth - curl your hair, and make you feel like a millionaire".

On one occasion the U.S. Army was moving a battalion of soldiers from Ft. Benning, Georgia to a newly established post in Camp Forest, Tennessee. Trucks loaded with Army personnel began traversing our little town early and continued through out the day. I happened to be near Steadman's when a Southern Railway freight train blocked Meridian Street and brought the troop movement caravan to a halt. The soldiers in the truck nearest me shouted out, "Hey fellow can you purchase ten hamburgers

and ten Cokes for us while we wait for this train to pass? Here's five dollars."

I took the money and darted into Steadman's. Mr. Steadman quickly gathered the Cokes, which I delivered to the soldiers. The ten hamburgers really was a challenge for Mr. Steadman was not accustomed to an order that large. In the mean time the soldiers were yelling and waving their arms encouraging me to hurry with the food. As things sometimes happens - - the train passed before the hamburger order was finished, so that night Grandmother and I ate hamburgers for supper. Another windfall of this experience was the leftover change from the purchase -- \$3.50. Like a good grandson I gave the money to Grandmother.

One of our sources of home entertainment was the "soaps" that blasted the airways each day. When I arrived from school I usually found Grandmother sitting



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very close to our Philco counter top radio listening to "One Man's Family". She continued listening during supper and on well into the evening. After my school homework was completed I joined her at the side of the Philco and listened to such programs as: "Amos and Andy", "Fibber McGee and Mollie", "Lum and Abner", "Stella Dallas" (Grandmother's favorite), and "Death Valley Days". Once a week - on Saturday night - we heard: "Lux Radio Theater", "Gang Busters", "The Shadow", and "The Green Hornet".

Our little Philco radio could reach three stations clearly: WSM - Nashville, Tennessee, WCKY - Cincinnati, Ohio and occasionally WHVN - Charlotte, North Carolina. Huntsville had no radio station until the late 30s - WBHP. This little "zero" watt station did not broadcast "soaps" and really had to scratch to find material worthy of broadcasting.

Each day at noon there was a "man on the street program" conducted in front of the Double Cola Bottling Company on Jefferson Street. The host of the program asked simple questions of those assembled. If a correct answer was given the contestant was awarded a six pack of Double Cola. Also at one o'clock each day the daily obituaries were read - citing the name of the deceased, the funeral director's name, the location of the funeral services, the place of internment, and a brief summary of the poor departed's life. The "soaps" started broadcasting at three PM so Grandmother always listened to the "Man on the Street" and the "Obits".

One summer day my friend Robert Luther Tucker and I were in front of the bottling plant when the "Man on the Street" program was starting. For some reason there was no gathered crowd, only Luke and I. In desperation the host of the program turned to us and began treating us like bona fide contestants. I stepped up - gave my name and received my question: "If a hog and a half is worth a dollar and a half - how much are three hogs worth?" I answered, "Why that's three dollars." "Correct and you have just won a six pack of Double Cola", said the radio host.

I was thrilled and couldn't wait to go home and get Grandmother's reaction - for I knew she was listening. The minute I opened the door she met me with a big smile. "I heard you on the 'Man on the Street' program. You sounded just like yourself," she said.

My friend Luther Tucker had a much more "difficult" question: "Think hard" the host said. "Now - - who's buried in Grant's tomb?" Luke won his six pack.

At today's vantage point it is hard to believe the times of my youth ever existed. I had a nice bed to sleep in, plenty of food, and an allowance of

twenty-five cents a week - which paid my admission to two Saturday movies with five cents left over for a hot dog at the Twickenham Drug Store Fountain. I didn't have a care in the world, but in Chattanooga, Tennessee my father worked for twenty dollars a week and was glad to be employed.

I know it would be hard for my great grandson Allen to visualize life during the 1930s. It was indeed a different world.



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# Very Old Recipes



## English Cookies

One cup of brown sugar; half cup of butter; one egg, two tablespoonfuls sour cream; a little soda; cloves; cinnamon; nutmeg. Make hard enough with flour to roll out; cut in thin cakes.

## Cream fritters

Slice thin a half dozen large, tart apples, and prepare as many thin slices of cheese. Beat up one or two eggs, according to the quantity required, and season high with salt, mustard and a little pepper. Lay the slices of cheese to soak for a few moments in the mixture, then put each slice between two slices of apple, sandwich style, and dip the whole into beaten eggs, then fry in hot butter, like oysters, and serve very hot. These fritters are a very good addition to any breakfast table.

## Old Maid's Pie

Fill the pudding dish two-thirds full of apples sliced, and then make a biscuit crust and lay over the top, or use light bread dough with a little shortening in it. Set on the top of the stove and let it steam until you think the apples are done. Then put it in the oven only to remain until you think the crust is done. Flip it so crust is on top and eat with milk and sugar or a sauce. The crust should be about one-half an inch thick when rolled out. Cut the crust as you would a pie.

## Washing Powders

The basis of all washing powders is the soda ash of commerce, blended with common Scotch soda in variable proportions. The alkaline matter is reduced to coarse powder, and stirred up with liquid size

or with a decoction of linseed, Irish moss, or British gum. It is then dried, and again crushed and powdered, and at once put into packages, into which it is rammed tight and covered up immediately. Really good soda can be bought at a penny a pound and this is only required to be rendered partly caustic with a little quick-lime in order to make an excellent washing powder.

## Lady Fingers

Four ounces of sugar, yolks of four eggs, mix well four ounces of flour, mix again; if too thick add another whole egg, a half teaspoon of flavoring. Beat whites to a froth and stir in. Squeeze through a funnel made of writing paper. These are used for Charlotte Russe.

## Lemon Pie

Two eggs, juice and grated outside of one lemon, one cup sugar, one cup boiling water. Save the white of one egg for frosting. Beat eggs, lemon, sugar, and a teaspoonful of flour together, turn on this mixture the hot water, boil in dish of water, bake crust separate.

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# How Not to Catch a Cat



*by Judy C. Smith*

This story began a couple of nights ago when my husband and I devised a plan to catch my elusive Rag-Doll cat so I could take her to the vet. She hates to be cornered, captured, and put in the cat carrier box. She will come to us often during the day and evening to be stroked, but if you try to grab her, she's off like a flash and extremely hard to capture afterward. I am the most likely to get close to her, but the sixteen-pound feline is strong and agile.

Since her appointment was at 8 AM the next day, we came up with a plan since she likes to join us in our spacious bathroom in the mornings with a wall heater going. We put the empty cat carrier in the steam shower and closed the door so she wouldn't fear it the following day. There are no places to hide in the bathroom, and we felt the two of us could easily capture her the next morning.

What could go wrong?

## Next Day - The Circus Act - Plan A

My husband, M.D., was up earlier and had shut both bedroom and hall doors with Gypsy inside, awaiting my entrance as I was later awaking that day. M.D. was shaving when I opened the sliding pocket door from the bedroom. Immediately, Gypsy made a dash for the door, and with his screaming, "Don't let the cat out," she bolted past my legs into the bedroom. He dashed out the other door and closed the bedroom door so at least she couldn't leave the area.

**Plan B:** He left the side bathroom door (next to the now closed) main bedroom door and took his walking cane through the pocket door, intending to herd her into the now open side door and thus hem her up again for catching.

I remained in the bathroom after closing the pocket door for him to chase her in again. It worked. She dashed into the bathroom, and he quickly closed the standard door behind her. Then he went around the other entrance with the sliding pocket door to crack it slightly and squeeze in to help me catch and cage her.

I was not near either door so that she wouldn't follow me close to one. M.D. slid open the pocket door only twelve inches, stuck his head in, and started to squeeze his body through when Gypsy made another mad dash toward his legs. He opened it further to block her escape and kicked his good foot (the other leg had recent surgery, and foot was swollen) to block her path. She'd already made it through, and he kicked the door frame where she'd been. He only had socks on his feet. The cat was back in the bedroom, and he was screaming words I can't repeat in this story and

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holding his foot in the air, and limping towards a chair.

"\$#&\*A\* that cat," he yelled. "I missed her and kicked the molding. My big toe is killing me. And now we'll never catch the cat. No way she'll come in here again."

Time was getting short to leave for the vet. I went into the bedroom, assuming she'd be cowering underneath the queen-size bed in an unreachable spot and never to be coaxed out. Instead, she was cowering in the little bed under the foot of ours that I keep for my little dog. I merely reached, picked her up (ugh, sixteen pounds strains my back), and placed her in the carrier, where we quickly locked the cage door.

My husband, already limping with a cane from his left foot surgery, now limping on his right foot, couldn't help me get her in the car. I managed to lug cat and carrier to my car and headed to the vet.

M.D. had a family doctor checkup scheduled from the hospital release, so he went later that morning. He said when he subsequently removed his sock, the toe turning blue at home was

completely black and blue from tip to way behind the last big toe joint. His doctor couldn't help but chuckle at the story of his unfortunate chain of events the past month, ending with the morning cat tale, and ordered an X-ray across the street.

The results were phoned in today at noon. Unfortunately, his toe IS broken between the tip and the first joint. "Just tape it to the next toe," the nurse told him. "That's all you can do, but don't bump it again." He's in his recliner chair as I write these words, keeping both feet in the air to reduce pain and swelling.

But here's the kicker to the story. Tomorrow I have to return my cat, Gypsy, to the vet for a checkup from her minor surgery she had the first day. So we'll have to catch her again for a ride to the vet.

I think we need a better plan.

**"Now that I have lived through a plague, I totally understand why Italian renaissance paintings are full of fat people lying on couches."**

*Everly Jackson, Huntsville*

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*Brenn Faulkner, Arab*

# The Kindness of Strangers

by Elizabeth Wharry

When we bought our first home in Madison, Ohio we didn't expect any problems. It was a new build and the systems were all built with the latest materials. What could possibly go wrong? It was on a slab foundation with floor radiant heat. It was a new innovation and quite efficient.

About 10 years after moving in, on a Sunday morning, my husband woke me up. He was quite upset. My first thought was that the carpet was cold and wet. My second thought was that the bathroom floor never looked so shiny. Turns out, the innovative tubing the plumber used had let go under the slab near the water heater! Bob quickly shut the water off and called the insurance company.

While the house was torn up, we spent a few weeks in a local motel. After all the repairs were made and the county inspector gave his approval, we set to work repainting and re-papering the house. Since we both worked, weekends were the only time we could do anything.

One Sunday evening, we were painting the living room. Bob was painting the ceiling and I was trimming. It was getting dark, and we were both hungry and tired. We were kicking around the idea of calling it a day.

There was a knock at the door. It was a group of young people from a local church. A young lady saw the disarray and apologized for the interruption. They quickly left and I went back to painting.

About 45 minutes later, there was a knock at the door. It was the same group of young folks. They had gone home, and prepared a meal for us. They also brought cold beverages!

We managed to stammer a quick thank you before they rapidly retreated. We never did know their names, or the church they were associated with. To this day, they are remembered in my good thoughts and prayers.

Acts of kindness, no matter the size, are a blessing to the giver and recipient. Be a blessing to a stranger with a kind word.





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# Just a Tad (1952)

by Bill Alkire



Remembering is all some us can do as we grow older; our memories fade just as the color fades from our hair and our eyes grow weaker. That is not necessarily an appalling thing. Those memories or reflections could be based on something bad or disappointing, as well as good or happy.

My childhood friends and I would wander endlessly through the mountains where I grew up. We would oftentimes not even take time to eat. We were always exploring new places and things, which became our lifelong goal. We learned so much about nature. We always carried a field guide (from the scouts), a compass and a knife with us. When we discovered some unknown phenomena, we would look it up in the field guide. Nature was our classroom, and the field guide was our teacher.

Once we found something unusual while hiking that sparked our curiosity. One of the trunks had broken off a River Birch tree. The stump-end had a crevice that had rotted and created a hole approximately twelve inches in diameter and eight inches deep. Rain

had collected in the rotted hole. We discovered tadpoles swimming in the dark murky liquid. At once we searched the field guide to learn what kind of frog could be responsible for these creatures, initially we found nothing. Drawing a blank we were more determined than ever to discover the origination of these tadpoles.

One of the nomads suggested this could be different from the tadpoles we had seen in the past. Further investigation provided truthful answers. What we had discovered were tadpoles from a tree frog; the little green tree frogs we see and hear at night. We discovered the frog lays its eggs on the bottom of a leaf. The eggs fall into water, and they become tadpoles. I had never seen anything like that before and have not since. Nature can be a wonderful classroom. Our senses can be ignited by a short hike in a forest. The smells, the tastes, the feeling, the touching, the hearing, and seeing; all our senses are stimulated by nature.

The flashback mental image of the tadpoles that day still brings a smile to my lips, of the unusual creatures swimming in that small dark hole in that Birch tree trunk. Do not hesitate to explore new things, things you may never had seen before. You never grow too old to discover something new.

Try to learn something new every day. Those of us who call North Alabama home are blessed with abundant lush forests and lakes for hiking, boating, biking and exploration. Adjacent states extend the area that surrounds our home state. In addition to the forest-laden with wildlife we are afforded dazzling sunsets that will make you lament with their magical colors.

**Most people would enjoy life more if, once they got what they wanted, they could remember how much they wanted it in the first place.**



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**References Available**

# MY FAVORITE RADIO SHOW

by Ernestine Moody

As a little girl I can remember sitting in our den (which in those days was usually just an unused bedroom) on our under-sized sofa. My Dad would be in his big overstuffed man chair with ears close to that magnificent discovery that brought entertainment to our era, the radio! Mom would be nearby, sometimes with a steaming fresh cup of coffee in hand.

You could almost feel the excitement as we anxiously awaited an upcoming program.

## We loved:

Bob Hope, Father Knows Best, Jack Benny, Red Skelton

Fibber McGee and Molly, Judy Cavona Show

The Baby Snooks Show, and The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet.

Now, I still want to thank my parents today for patiently turning on the Band Stand Show and making guesses with me on which tune would be Number One. This was truly not their type music. Dad loved Opera and Mom liked Operettas such as Die Fledermaus.

They probably felt as I do about today's music, that the current music of that period of time was not true music. However to make it part of family fun, they would pick the name of the number one song which would win our game. I really believe they had never even heard of the selections. It was



just a random choice, but they made me feel as if was an important decision! Of course, I wanted to be the one with the right guess!

Little did we know or even imagine what future technology would bring to our world. How impressed we were with what we could hear, but what a miracle it was to later be able to see what we were hearing!

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# PET TIPS FROM ANGEL

## *Caring for Your Parakeet*



\* Give your birds a variety of toys. Something they can chew, 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.

\* 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 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 that 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.

\* Be extra careful 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 and he will remember that.

\* Line your bird's cage with newspaper sheets. (Red-stone Rocket). 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 in your home. He/she is a part of your family, too.

\* If you don't want another bird, then put mirrors in the cage. They are attracted to shiny things and love looking at themselves.

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# GROWING UP HERE

by Tom Carney

When I was a young boy, I grew up here in the Hurricane Creek area of Huntsville surrounded by more kinfolk than you could shake a stick at.

My Daddy used to say that if they weren't kin to us now, they would be if they stayed in one spot long enough. One of my uncles was Earl Frazier, a Madison County deputy sheriff at the time. He was really well known among the law enforcement people.

Our family had been in Huntsville for so long, the rumor was that we helped John Hunt unload his wagon when he moved here.

Being like most other kids, we had a tendency to get into trouble now and then. Among other things, we figured if we were old enough to almost shave, we must be old enough to drink a little liquor. I was the tallest, so I was nominated to do the buying.

At that time there was a bootlegger in town by the name of J. B. Webb. On occasion, we kids would pool our money and I would go visit J. B. for a 6-pack of beer. The nine of us would go park on some dark road, share the six beers and wonder if we were getting drunk yet.

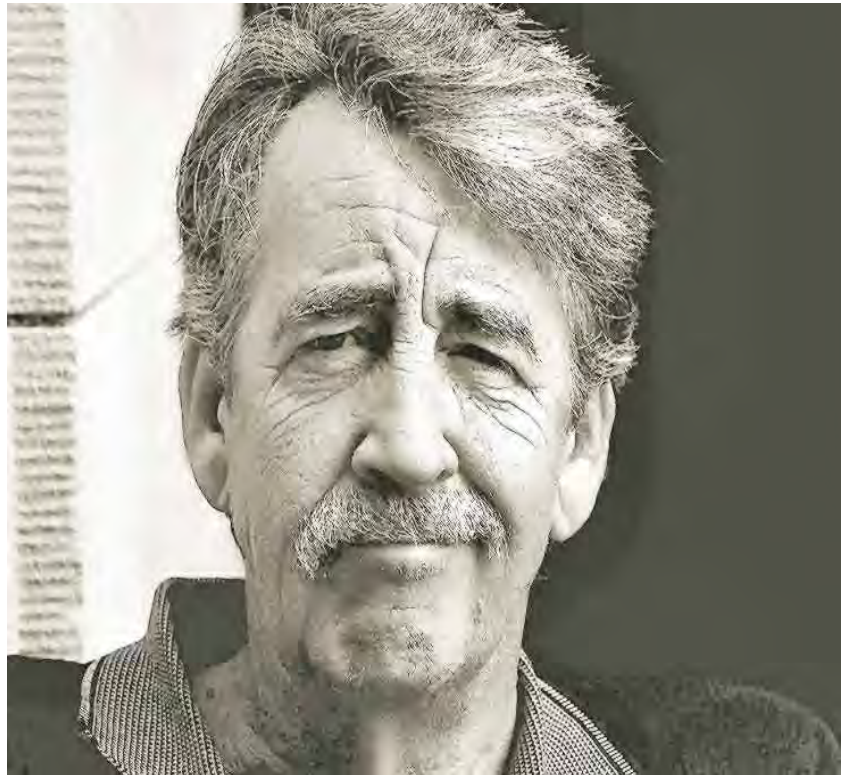
Course, we would all smoke cigars and sprinkle perfume on one another so our kinfolks wouldn't catch on.

This went on for a good while and being worldly men like we were, one night we decided to try some whiskey. Having already done our research, we knew exactly how much a half pint cost. So I go strolling into J.B.'s on my tiptoes, chest poked out and carrying exactly \$1.49.

J.B. looks up from his chair and says, "What will it be, Tommy, a six-pack?"

In my most manly voice I reply, "Oh no, sir, I'll need a half pint of Sunny Corn Whiskey tonight"

Without even looking up, J.B. responds, "Can't do it, son. Your Uncle Earl said don't sell you nothing but beer."



## Pan-Fried Cauliflower

1 head fresh cauliflower  
4 T. Olive Oil  
1 t. salt  
1 t. black pepper

Heat oil in frying pan and add cauliflower pieces flat side down. Cook in oil over medium-high heat til pieces are browned on one side, then turn to brown other side. Sprinkle with salt & pepper and serve hot.

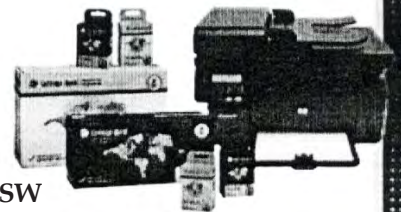
Wash cauliflower and cut each floweret into 1/4" pieces.

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# My Personal Trainer Wife

by Ted Roberts

She's the love of my life. She's my personal trainer wife.

Don't go to the gym today, instead go grocery shopping with your wife. You'll get more exercise. Students of wife-directed grocery tours say you are sure to burn at least a thousand calories. Maybe more if the wife is hunting the exotic ingredients for a festive meal.

My fat friend Rob lost 10 pounds in a single month, with only 3 grocery tours. They call him Skinny Rob now; in fact some health organization has forsaken their facilities full of equipment and sponsored multiple grocery store tours.

I know it has helped me, like we're on aisle 2 and she sends me to fetch garlic powder - she thinks maybe on aisle 12. But she has no idea where it is. So you have to prowl the aisles 2 through 12: the distance of 10 or so football fields. You're lucky she didn't need a 50 pound sack of potatoes only 500 yards away on 7. Or maybe you are not so lucky since 1000 yards with a 50-pound sack of taters equals 2 hours on a stationary bike or 20 reps with an 80-pound bar bell.

There are many forms of healthy exercise. Why not a 5-pound sack of sugar on the next aisle. Or an 8-ounce box of cereal from the aisle we are on. No, she needs that 50-pound sack of potatoes that's a half-mile away: she's my personal trainer wife you know.

**"Previous experience:  
Self-employed - a real  
fiasco."**

**Seen on local job resume**

But that's not the end of your workout. The potatoes or other exercise equipment (groceries) have to be stowed in the car and eventually brought into the house (you can postpone it until tomorrow and stretch your workout to a 2-day muscle maker. That doesn't hurt a bit). Once in a while she pressures me to accompany her to Marshall's or Target. But I, the wily workout devotee know such a workout is not near as healthy as my grocery program. What kind of exercise is it to lug a half-pound sweater from the store to car and then to car to house. Big Deal!

My lovely wife never ignores me when its time for a grocery marathon. But sometimes she "forgets" to mention the purpose of the trip: "Come on hon, take a ride with me." I jump in the passenger seat and soon realize, by the route, that we're headed to that gym where they sell sacks of potatoes as well as 2 ounce bottles of garlic powder. Too late (and I went to a real gym yesterday) what am I going to do? Bail out?

Sometimes I develop a headache (that usual ally of unresponsive wives) and must be taken home immediately. Of course, my personal trainer, when she gets home won't excuse me from the car to kitchen segment of the workout. But I do ask her: "Why do we need 50 pounds of taters? Why not a couple bags of chips?" I get a stare in return and a speech on the benefits of weight lifting.

Once I jumped in the car around lunch time for a "juicy hamburger smothered in lettuce, tomato and mayo" and ended up wrestling a 100 pound coffee table into the trunk - then dragging it into the living room. Better than a destination-free ride on a stationary bike says my personal trainer wife. She knows what is best for me. That's why she takes me grocery shopping. I'm a lucky man.

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# How to Unfurnish Your Home

*Anon, in 1999*



We're all going to go. Our kids want none of our stuff. What else can you do to avoid finding yourself forlorn in your late parents' home, broken up about the old piano that's being given away for nothing? Here are some ideas:

1. Start mobilizing while your parents are around. "Every single person, if their parents are still alive, needs to go back and collect the stories of their stuff," says Kay Kylen. "That will help sell it." Or it might help you decide to hold onto it. One of Kylen's clients inherited a set of beautiful gold-trimmed teacups, saucers and plates. Her mother had told her she'd received them as a gift from the DuPonts because she had nursed for the legendary wealthy family. Turns out, the plates were made for the DuPonts. The client decided to keep them due to the fantastic story.

2. Give yourself plenty of time to find takers, if you can.

"We tell people: The longer you have to sell something, the more money you're going to make," says Fultz. (Sadly this does not include homes). Of course, this could mean cluttering up your basement, attic or living room with tables, lamps etc. until you finally locate interested parties.

3. Do an online search to see whether there's a market for your parents' art, furniture, china or crystal. If there is, see if an auction house might be interested in trying to sell things for you on consignment. You might get lucky. I did. My sister and I were pleasantly surprised — no, flabbergasted — when the auctioneer we hired sold our parents' enormous, turn-of-the-20th-century portrait of an unknown woman by an obscure painter to a Florida art dealer for a tidy sum. (We expected to get a dim sum, if anything.) Apparently, the Newcomb-Macklin frame was part of the attraction. Go figure. Our parents' tabletop marble bust went bust at the auction, however, and now sits in my den, owing to the kindness of my wife.

4. Get the jewelry appraised. It's possible that a necklace, ring or brooch has value and could be sold.

5. Look for a nearby consignment shop that might take some items. Or, perhaps, a liquidation firm.

6. See if someone locally could use what you inherited. "My dad had some tools that looked interesting. I live in Amish country and a farmer gave me \$25 for them," says Kylen. She also picked out five shelters and gave them a list of all the kitchen items she wound up with. "By the fifth one, everything was gone. That kind of thing makes your heart feel

good," Kylen says.

7. But perhaps the best advice is: Prepare for disappointment. "For the first time in history of the world, two generations are downsizing simultaneously," says Buyse, talking about the boomers' parents (sometimes, the final downsizing) and the boomers themselves. "I have a 90-year-old parent who wants to give me stuff or, if she passes away, my siblings and I will have to clean up the house. And my siblings and I are 60 to 70 and we're downsizing. We don't want our kids to go thru this."

This, it seems, is the 21st century new normal. "I don't think there is a future" for the possessions of our parents' generation, says Eppel. "It's a different world that we're seeing now."

## The 4 Boxes Inventory System

Here's how the "four boxes" organizing approach works:

Put four boxes in each room of your parent's house:

- Box 1 - "Keep Until I Die" for items with sentimental value, such as family heirlooms, personal letters, wedding china and photo albums.

- Box 2 - "Appraise and Sell" For unwanted items of value.

- Box 3 - "Keep with Me" For unsentimental items, such as furniture and art.

- Box 4 - "Garage Sale/Donate" For unwanted items that are in fairly good shape.

Then, go room by room with your parents, sorting their possessions. Trash unwanted items. For bigger items that won't fit in boxes — like furniture, pianos and workout equipment — consider putting pictures of them on index cards and then dropping the cards in the appropriate boxes.

This really works!



# TINCHE'S MUGGING

by Jim Harris

We lived on the Houk farm in Harrison Cove which is located between Gurley and Maysville. There was another family - a young man, Tinche, and his wife - who were also tenant farmers, or sharecroppers as we referred to ourselves back before we became sophisticated.

Tinche was a real comic. He could tell some good stories of things he and others did while under the influence of the spir-its. However, I never saw him drunk or even take a drink. He was fun to be around and loved to mimic people. His favorite targets were Mr. Kenneth Houk, the son (not the father who was a Primitive Baptist preacher, but that is part of another story) and another man who loved his liquor but unlike Tinche, he "Drank, it seemed, all the time.

It may be that he worked more, but not necessarily better, when he was under the influence. For example, one day we saw him plowing in a rainstorm. The following story is one of Tinche's best.

He went partying one cold night wearing his new overcoat. After the party and feeling no pain, he started for home taking a shortcut across a field. Somewhere between the road and the house was a fence, and when he got to it he was attacked. Somebody hit him but held on to his coat. Tinche would strike back or try to grab him and every time would get hit again. He tried to get away, but the man just wouldn't let go of his coat.

He didn't remember how long the attack lasted, but he

eventually fought free, got over the fence, and made his way home.

When he got inside the house and turned on the lights, his new overcoat was in shreds and he had a few bloody cuts on himself. The next day he retraced his steps to the fence and found shreds of his coat hanging from a strand of barbed wire.

In the dark, he had walked

into that barbed wire fence. He thought he was being hit and his attacker just wouldn't let go of his coat. The truth is, he fell across the fence and his coat became entangled in the barbed wire. The more he fought the more entangled it became. He was fighting the fence, which just happened to be a single strand of electrified barbed wire, and it was alive.



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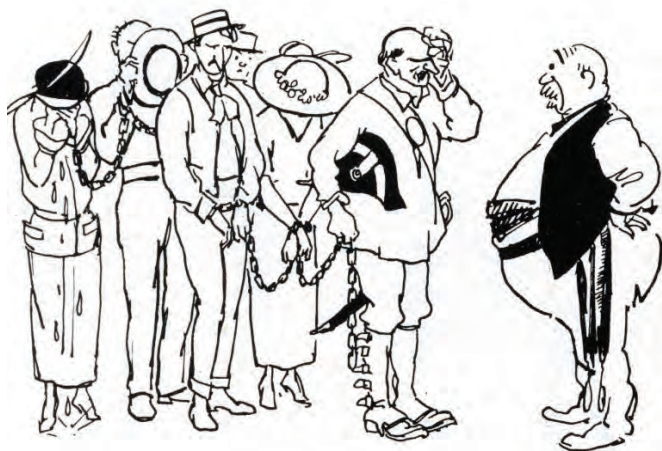
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# If You Don't Say What You Mean Anything Can Happen and Usually Does

*Sent in by Faye Johnson, an Old Huntsville  
subscriber from Annandale, VA  
Thank you Faye!*



Let me tell you a story.....

There was once a nice lady who was a little old-fashioned. She was planning a vacation at a popular campground. But first she wanted to make sure of the accommodations. Uppermost in her mind were the toilet facilities. She couldn't bring herself to write the word "toilet" in a letter, so she settled on "bathroom commode."

But when she wrote that down it still sounded too forward, so she rewrote her letter to the campground director and referred to the bathroom commode as the "BC".

"Does the campground have its own BC?" she finally wrote.

The campground director was baffled by this euphemism. He showed the letter to several people and they couldn't decipher it either. Finally he decided she must be asking about the location of

the nearest Baptist church. So he sat down and carefully penned this reply:

"Dear Madam:

"I regret very much the delay in answering your letter. But I now take pleasure in informing you that a BC is located about nine miles north of the campground and is capable of seating 250 people at a time. I admit this is quite a distance away if you are in the habit of going regularly. However, you will be pleased to know that a great many people take their lunch along and make a day of it. They usually arrive early and often stay late."

"The last time my wife and I went was about six years ago and it was so crowded we had to stand up the whole time. It may interest you to know that there is a supper planned to help raise money to buy more seats. This will be held in the basement of the BC."

"I would like to say that it pains me very much not to be able to go more often, but it is surely no lack of desire on my part. As we grow older, it seems to be more of an effort, particularly in cold weather."

"If you decide to visit our campground, perhaps I could go with you the first time, sit with you and introduce you around to all the other folks. Remember, this is a really friendly community."

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**"If you are surrounded by sea you are an  
island. If you don't have sea around you, you  
are incontinent."**

***From 7 year old Jessica, on her essay about  
"The Sea"***



# A Detective's Story

*from 1899 Newspaper*

There is a story told of a lady and gentleman traveling together on a Tennessee railroad. They were strangers to each other.

Suddenly the gentleman said, "Madam, I will trouble you to look out of the window for a few minutes; I am going to make some changes in my wearing apparel."

"Certainly, Sir," she said with great politeness, rising and turning her back full upon him. In a short time he said, "Now, Madam, my change is complete and you may resume your seat."

When the lady turned she beheld her traveling companion transformed into a young lady with a heavy veil over her face.

"Now sir, or madam, whichever you are," said the lady, "I must trouble you to look out of the window, for I also have some changes to make in my apparel."

"Certainly, Madam," said the gentleman in lady's attire and he immediately complied.

"Now, sir. you may resume your seat."

To his great surprise, on resuming his seat, the gentleman in female attire found his lady companion transformed into a man. He laughed and said, "It appears that we are both anxious to escape recognition. What have you done? I have robbed a bank!"

"And I," said the "lady", as he dexterously fettered his companion's wrists with a pair of handcuffs, "I am Detective James, of Knoxville, and in female apparel have shadowed you for two weeks."

"Now, " he said, drawing a revolver, "Keep still. You are finally captured."

**"When someone hurts us, forgiveness is cheaper than a lawsuit. But not nearly as gratifying."**

**Jack Spartan, Arab**



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BY TOM CARNEY



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# The West Huntsville Witch House

by Jerry Wilbanks

Was she really a witch? Most everyone in my immediate family would have said yes. She was strange, old and frightening, especially to me and my sisters, all of us under the age of ten. For a year back in the early fifties, she was our neighbor in a duplex that my Father had rented in West Huntsville on Sixth Street. In the southern vernacular, we lived in adjoining rooms; or as my Mother would have put it, "joining rooms." It was the only time before the age of fourteen that I lived anywhere besides Huntsville Park. This period occupies a dark fearful part of my childhood memory, a strange interlude steeped in superstition and dread.

There was a fireplace inside and a well outside. The driveway and most of the lot was dirt. A few drooping trees and scrub bushes completed the landscaping. A dilapidated picket fence wrapped the whole property in a scene of ruin and disrepair. We could walk a couple of blocks to a general store, a couple of blocks to a drugstore and the Center Theater, and a block or so more to the YMCA. That was just about the extent of our movement around the West Huntsville neighborhood.

The old woman, Miz McAbee as we called her, always presented the appearance of a witch or wild woman. She had long, ratty dark hair, piercing black eyes and always wore an oversized robe or gown that made her look like a Halloween witch. There was a door between our two apartments that was always kept locked. From her side. At any time of the day or evening, she would silently open it and stand framed in the doorway to the great fear and apprehension of us kids. How long she might have been standing there, no one could say. She would address my Mother and the two would talk briefly. My Mom was always greatly relieved when the old lady faded back into her half of the house and locked the door securely.

Needless to say, we all had nightmares about the old woman creeping into our rooms late at night and getting up to who knew what kind of dark, secret, witchy

activities! We all felt like we'd had a curse put on us and we were bravely waiting for the terrifying outcome; would it be snakes, spiders, accidents, or visitation by other-worldly beings? Perhaps disease and long weeks of suffering and then horrible, agonizing death! Our imaginations covered all the bases. We tried to prepare ourselves for any curse, hex, plague or otherwise unchristian and un-American eventuality.

These few things we knew for sure: (ONE) The old lady's black cat Rufus was pulled drowned from the well in a bucket on Monday morning. Miz McAbee seemed unconcerned.


By the following morning, Rufus, or his exact double, was to be seen strutting around the property, big as life and twice as ugly. His "drowning" had not slowed him down in any way that we could determine.

(TWO) Items seemed to travel in our half of the house. Things that disappeared from the kitchen would turn up in the bedrooms, in the bathroom, and vice versa. Some things would mysteriously appear in the fireplace, burned almost beyond recognition. Nothing seemed to stay put for long.

(THREE) There were sounds at night. Creepy, moaning, clumping sounds; crying, groaning, altogether disconcerting sounds. Sounds that could never be tracked down or fully understood. Sometimes it was mumbling voices and low grieving, for all the world like a funeral or wake; sometimes sharp cries and pleading intonations. Getting a full night's sleep became more and more difficult.

(FOUR) There were the mysterious appearances and disappearances of old Granny McAbee herself. As already described, she would materialize at the doorway between our apartments, no one having seen or heard her arrival. The old woman's lips were always moving; reciting the Lord's Prayer backward, we guessed, or calling down curses on our innocent heads.

(FIVE) Then there was the Big John and Sparky episode. Big John and Sparky was a radio show which aired on Saturday morning and I never missed it. Big John was an adult and Sparky was his kid sidekick. It was regular children's programming with jokes and stories and special features. One part of the show that I was especially fascinated with was the "magic spyglass." Big John claimed that he could look through this glass



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Keep sending in your family memories - we need them! We Appreciate You more than you know.



and actually SEE the listeners. He would supposedly inspect the kids in his listening audience for clean faces and fingernails, combed hair and brushed teeth. Occasionally he would say something like, "Well, Tony (or Mary,) it looks like you didn't comb your hair this morning!" I always felt supremely confident, because I was always prepared for the closest inspection.

Imagine my surprise and consternation one Saturday morning when Big John leered into his magic spyglass and said, "Well, it looks like Butch didn't wash behind his ears this morning!" Why would he lie like that? And how did he find out my family nickname? I was devastated and never listened to the program again. It was the worst humiliation I had ever suffered up to that point in my five year old life!

However, the spookiest aspect of this whole affair was yet to come. That afternoon while I was sitting out on the old wooden porch alone, the old woman came out of her front door. She stooped and leaned close to my ear. "Well, Butchie," she crowed softly "I guess you'll keep your ears clean from now on!"

I was petrified with fear, unable to move or speak. This is what convinced me that the cackling old hag was truly a witch. She might well have picked up my nickname innocently enough, but there is no way she could have known about Big John and his magic glass. The old crone didn't even own a radio!

(SIX) As hard as this may be to believe, there were rumors on good authority that she threw live ammunition into her fireplace in a kind of twisted game of Russian Roulette. We sometimes heard cracks and pops like rifle shots and obscene cackling and chortling coming from the old lady's side of the house. When this would happen late in the evening, we threw ourselves to the floor in our bedrooms. We could only guess at when the game might be over.

One more incident occurred while we lived in that witch house which has haunted my memory for fifty years. My Mother's good friend lived a few blocks away. She was not really related to our family but everyone called her Aunt Lydia, in the Southern tradition. She was old and in poor health. When she became so ill that the doctors gave her no chance to live, friends and family

began "sitting up" with her through the night.

This death watch had gone on for the better part of a week when my Mother's turn came to sit by Aunt Lydia through the night. She brought me along and I was instructed to keep very still and quiet. Around ten or eleven PM., when it became apparent that my Mom's presence would be required through the night, she decided to take me home and return alone.

It was a cloudy and moonless evening, altogether dark and foreboding. It was late winter and a cold wind cut through our thin coats as we turned the corner and started up the walkway toward the witch house. A large bush stood at the corner of the lot and as we walked past it a shimmering, filmy sheet of some transparent substance began to rise up from behind it. My Mom and I were both stunned into immobility as the gauzy thing spread out in front of us. In a moment it was blown away by the wind.

"It's a sign!", My Mom whispered, "it's a sign that Aunt Lydia is gone!"

She grabbed me up in her arms and ran back to Aunt Lydia's house. Sure enough, the saintly old woman had expired in the few minutes that we had been gone. Later that night when we were back in our house, the old witch next door could be heard chuckling and chattering to herself.

Shortly after this incident, our family moved back into the Merrimack Mill Village and tried to put all the creepiness behind us. We heard that within a month of our moving out, the Sixth Street duplex caught fire in the night and burned to the ground. They say that rocks fell from the sky on that unhappy house, that wild dogs circled the property, that smoke and fog erupted from the well, and dust devils kicked up clouds of dirt which made visibility almost impossible.

The neighbors and firemen were helpless to attempt any kind of rescue. There were shrieks and screams coming from the house and the old witch was presumed dead. However, not one trace of remains was ever recovered from the scene.

I felt that a place of evil had been purged and that it was fortunate for my family that we had gotten out of there when we did. Was she really a witch? I'll let the readers decide that for themselves. As for my family, we just don't talk about it that much anymore.



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