



No. 366  
August 2023



# Old Huntsville

HISTORY AND STORIES OF THE TENNESSEE VALLEY

"God, Crack the Door Open,  
and I Will Kick It In."



**Also in this issue:** Bomber Crashes Near Monrovia; Life is like Vacuum Tubes;  
Remembering East Clinton School; The Little Lion of Big Spring Park;  
Cruising in 1959; Pets' Separation Anxiety is Real; Meridian Street Memories;  
Burning the Square, Local Recipes and much much more!

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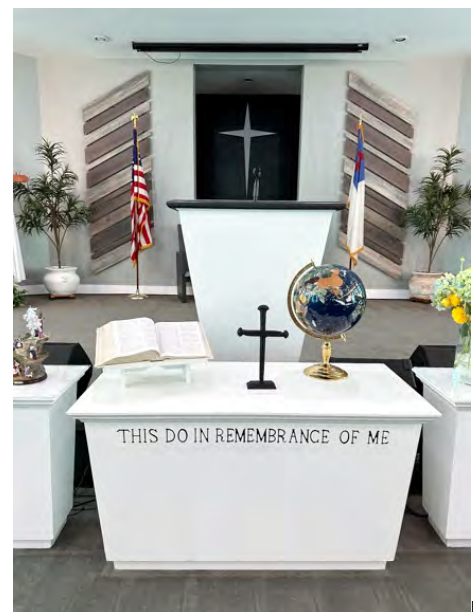
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# "God, Crack the Door Open, and I Will Kick It In." The Story of Jeremy Foulks and Habitat for Humanity

by John H. Tate



Do you know the name of the non-profit organization that has assisted over 39,000,000 families into homes since 1976? That the local affiliate in Huntsville has helped over 300 Huntsvillians into homes since 1987, and over

**"I have very bad reflexes. I was run over once by a car being pushed by two guys."**

**Arthur Day, Woodville**

100 of those Huntsvillians have paid off their mortgages.

Recently Nick Saban, Head Football Coach for the University of Alabama, and his wife, "Miss Terry," helped shine a light on Habitat for Humanity in Tuscaloosa. The Sabans were present for the dedication of the twentieth home built by that affiliate. The Nick's Kids Foundation, Saban's charitable foundation, was a sponsor of that home. The Habitat For Humanity story is well documented in the book "If I Were a Carpenter: Twenty Years of Habitat For Humanity" by Galliard, Frye, available on Amazon.

Based on information provided on the Nicks Kids Foundation website, which is known as:

nickskidsfoundation.org, the Nick's Kids Foundation was established in 1998. The foundation was formed in honor of the late Nick Saban Sr. According to the impact statement on the website, "The Nick's Kids Foundation has distributed over \$11 million to hundreds of organizations and causes. Including 19 (20 counting the most recent) Habitat For Humanity homes."

Thousands of Habitat volunteers and staff worldwide work to accomplish their mission, which is to help people into affordable homes. Today Jeremy Foulks, the Executive Director of the local affiliate, Habitat For Humanity of the River Valley,



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will help to put a face on this worldwide organization.

Jeremy graduated from the University of Alabama, Birmingham in 1999 with a degree in Political Science, focused on International Relations and Comparative Policy. He also minored in History, focusing on Medieval Military History. Currently married and the father of two, his wisdom and growth are evident as he opens his heart.

"I attended UAB because I was planning to get a degree in psychology; they have a great master's program there. But I never took a psychology class. I was in the ROTC in college and in the National Guard. I planned to go into the Army. However, because of a serious knee injury, I was precluded from entering the Army."

At UAB, Jeremy explored a new direction in serving others. In his own words, "At UAB, I was very involved in student programs. I chaired the Spring Fest Committee and I chaired the Comedy Series. I worked on bringing in comedians and acts to the campus. I also chaired a couple of other committees. I like volunteering and being involved. I miss not going into the Army; that is something I wanted to do because I like the idea of service."

After graduating from UAB and working for three years for a major freight carrier, he came to Huntsville for a visit. While in Huntsville, he applied for and eventually obtained a job at a non-profit organization.

Jeremy liked the work at the non-profit and was pleased with most things, but he believed there was more for him to do. The non-profit did give him a very valuable gift. His eyes sparkle, and his face lights up as he tells the story.

"About a month and a half after taking the job, a cute brunette social worker shows up to the Friday meeting and a few months later, we're dating. Ashley and I will be married twenty years in September."

That was phase one of his journey to Habitat. He explains, "We got married in September 2003. In October 2003, just a month after we got married, we had a cold snap up here. One of my jobs at the non-profit was to manage a transportation program. We had transportation lined up to take a fourteen-year-old girl rape victim, who became pregnant, from Limestone County to Birmingham. At that time, all babies went to the Children's Hospital in Birmingham. It was the fourteen-year-old, the baby, her mother and the grandmother."

"My driver called out sick, so I decided

to make the run in my two-door Jeep Cherokee. They all spoke Spanish and lived in a trailer park in Limestone County."

"When I pulled into the trailer park, I saw the sides of trailers and their roofs covered with tarps. There were what looked like garbage bags split down the middle and stapled to the walls to cover holes. I stepped into this family's trailer to help them with a stroller or something; it was freezing inside."

"I don't remember the drive to Birmingham or driving back. I only remember dropping them off, pulling out of that trailer park and looking back through the rearview mirror. I said, 'God, if there is ever anything I can do for someone in this situation, just crack the door open, and I will kick it in.'"

About a week later, Jeremy learned of an opening for an Operations Manager at Habitat For Humanity in Huntsville, Alabama. It turned out that the Operations Manager's position was being eliminated; however, they were interviewing for a new Family Service Coordinator.

God held Jeremy to his words, "... crack the door open, and I will kick it in." He put in his resume. He



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started calling a couple of times a week until he finally got his first interview. The interview went well, and he was able to secure a second interview. This time a committee of three key people interviewed him. Although he received two other job offers, he accepted the Habitat position, even before telling Ashley.

As with all of America, Habitat For Humanity went through some tough times because of the housing/financial crises from 2007 to 2010. As the nation emerged out of the crises, Jeremy, taking a sigh of relief, evaluated his family's wellbeing. The economics of working for a nonprofit doesn't always match the personal gratification, especially with a growing family.

Jeremy explains, "At this time, our family was growing, we had Mackenzie in 2007 and Grayson in 2011. I realized we needed to make some changes, kids were growing and things were getting more expensive. I applied for several jobs as a mortgage loan originator and I got three offers."

The most attractive to Jeremy was with a major bank in town, with an almost guaranteed six-figure income. Myra Sanderson, the Executive Director for Habitat, asked to have an opportunity to counter the offer.

Jeremy relays his conversation with Myra, "I said, you can't match this, you can't even come close to matching this. Myra said, 'I know, but I would like to hire you as the new Director of Operations. Take the weekend and think about it.'"

**"Why do croutons come in airtight boxes? Aren't they just stale bread to start with?"**


**Sherry Taylor, Hampton Cove**

"Ashley and I talked about it all weekend. Habitat has become part of my family, we truly believe in the mission, and I love the staff dearly." But it's the families that yank at his heart.

He recalled helping a family and holding the four or five year-old daughter in his arms at the home dedication. Thirteen years later he received her graduation announcement on his desk. Habitat provided a foundation and a safe place for that family to grow.

The decision to stay with Habitat and take the promotion to the Director of Operations had the full approval of Ashley. She said, "That is a good place for you. You come home happy and you go to work happy." That was the final word, and he became the Director of Operations for the local Habitat affiliate.


Jeremy reminds us that Habitat is all about people. One person that came to mind was one of his first homeowners. She never thought she and her family would ever own a home. She was turned down by



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**Mary Jim Ailor**  
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Habitat for Humanity a couple of times before. She was sure it was a waste of time to even apply again.

Jeremy convinced her to apply one more time. She made it through the application process, the Family Selection Committee approval and the Board of Directors approval. Jeremy had to hold her hand and reassure her the whole way.

After approval, she completed her required training, devoted personal hours, paid her closing costs and her home was built. However, on the day of her home's dedication, she was not on-site at the designated time.

When it looked as if she was not coming, there were sounds of sliding tires and a roaring engine. Her car, full of family members, came to an abrupt halt in front of the new home. The yard was full of volunteers, sponsors and Habitat personnel.

After some intense conversation with Jeremy, the reason for her being late became clear. The same day her family was moving into their new home, she learned that she had been accepted into nursing school. Today she is not only a homeowner but also now a nurse.

Then there is the Ward family, who lived in public housing for several decades. Mr. Ward was a veteran and his wife was on hospice. They were approved and after meeting all the requirements, they were able to move into their own home.

One year after moving into their home, Mr. Ward passed away. His wife was the one who was sick, yet he died

first. However, he experienced home ownership before he died. When it became necessary for the family to bring Mrs. Ward home from hospice, the family had a conversation with Jeremy. Instead of selling the home, they said they were giving the home back to Habitat so they could put another family in it. Jeremy said that this gift back had happened several times.

Some people believe that the Habitat homes are free, which is not true. There are three requirements a family must meet to qualify to be entered into the application process. 1) Need for safe, affordable housing, 2) Can make the mortgage payments. 3) Show a willingness to partner.

Once a family has been accepted into the program, they must complete 300 sweat equity hours, participate in homeowner's classes and various workshops, and pay closing costs before they close on their new home.

If you listen quietly, you can hear Jeremy's prayer repeated by many Habitat For Humanity applicants, "God, crack the door open, and I will kick it in."

## Oatmeal Cake

- 1 c. oats
- 1-1/2 c. boiling water
- 1 stick butter
- 1 c. brown sugar
- 1 c. white sugar
- 1-1/3 c. flour
- 1 tsp. vanilla
- 2 eggs
- 1 tsp. baking powder
- 1 tsp. soda
- 1 tsp. cinnamon
- 1/2 tsp. salt

Pour boiling water on oats. Let stand 20 minutes. Cream butter and sugars, add other ingredients. Mix well. Pour into greased oblong loaf pan. Bake at 350° for 30 to 35 minutes. Cake is done when straw inserted comes out clean.

## Topping

Boil together for one minute:

- 2/3 c. brown sugar
- 1/2 stick butter
- 1/3 c. milk
- 1 c. coconut
- 1 c. walnuts

Pour on hot cake and let cool in pan.

*Eunice Hislop / Latham UMC cookbook*

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**Beth James, Scottsboro**



# Hound Dogs and Home Brew

by G. W. Robinson

When I was 9 or 10 years old, my Daddy would usually make a "batch" of home brew every week. "Home brew" was a crude form of beer, inexpensive to make and a good substitute for real beer.

All it took to make it was 5 gallons of water, 1 quart of malt, 5 pounds of sugar, 2 cakes of yeast and a 5-gallon container. Daddy usually used two 2-1/2 gallon milk churns. He would put half in each churn.

It would take about 4 or 5 days to ferment, so he would put it up on Monday, and it would be ready to drink by the weekend.

Now, you could not put a tight lid on it, because the fermentation gas would cause it to explode, so you would cover it with cloth and tie it down good to keep out insects and such. It was illegal to make it, so he would take it quite a way back in the woods, so if the Law found it, they couldn't identify who it belonged to.

Now, we always had a couple of skinny hound dogs laying around the yard, and

one morning about 9 o'clock, I noticed they were nowhere around, so I started searching for them. I could not find them anywhere, so I went up into the woods in the direction where the home brew was.

As I got near I began to hear some strange noises, very faintly at first, but as I got closer I could tell it was groaning and moaning and faint barking noises. When I reached the home brew, I saw a very strange sight. Those two dogs had found that home brew, had somehow gotten the cloth covering off and drank every drop of it. (They probably spilled some too!). They were just stretched out on the ground, howling and moaning and groaning. They would try to stand up, but they were so drunk they couldn't do it.

Now, I wasn't strong enough to carry them dogs back to the house, so I just had to leave them there and go on home. Several hours later they finally sobered up enough to get up, and they came staggering to the house. They must have had some kind of a hangover!

Needless to say, my Daddy and his friends had no home brew that weekend!

Sorry, but my karma just ran over your dogma.

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"Three weeks ago my wife  
learned how to drive.  
This week, she learned how  
to aim it."

**Frank Sanders, Huntsville**

# Remembering John H. Williams

by Don Broome, Sr.

For many years John H. Williams was the manufacturing manager for Avco Electronics. After several years of struggling with lung cancer, which he beat while still smoking 3 packs a day, they put him in charge of product returns that needed to be reworked and other projects that no one else wanted to do.

A little man with silver grey hair and a calm, steady demeanor, I first met him when I took a Quality Circle class he taught. I would complete the leadership class he taught as well.

I was assigned to bring him out of the "dark ages" and put his records kept on a legal pad onto a computer. I could tell many stories about this man with his quiet demeanor.

After a few weeks working for him, I was assigned another project but we remained close, and when I heard he had colon cancer, I wasn't too surprised. He still smoked the whole time I knew him.

As his time on earth grew shorter, his youngest daughter, a nurse, had a friend who was helping take care of him and as it happened she was sitting with him the night he died.

I came over the morning after his passing and we sat drinking coffee. The girl told me of a dream she had just before waking to see him pass. She said that this little guy with coal black hair and a cocky gait walked through the house checking on everyone while whistling this annoying tune. She said in her dream, he walked to the front door and kicked the screen open, looking out, leaning against the door frame.

She said she asked him where he was going and he said "out." She asked "when are you going to be back" and he said "I'm not."

He kicked the screen open again and walked out with a Popeye walk while whistling that tune.

The family was shocked because only they would remember that years ago, he had coal black hair and for as long as anyone could remember he had whistled that tune. I didn't know and I don't think anyone at Avco would have known his original hair color or the fact that he used to walk with that cocky walk.

The song he was whistling was the one that his family put up with for years but I had never heard him whistle it.

## Coconut Cream Cake

1 white cake mix with pudding  
1 can Eagle Brand milk  
1 8.5 oz. can Cream of Coconut  
1 reg. carton Cool Whip  
1 can flaked coconut

Bake cake as directed on box. While it is still hot, punch holes in it with small sharp knife.

Pour Eagle Brand milk over cake, then pour over the cream of coconut.

Cool and spread with Cool Whip or whipped cream of your choice.

Top with flaked coconut. This is moist and delicious!



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## Seen in the Papers - Huntsville 1916

\* **Divorced** - Mrs. Esther Daniels, the pretty 18 year-old bride of Ashford Daniels of this city, is suing her new husband for divorce because he represented himself to be rich and turned out not to have anything. She says she is giving up on him not because he only makes \$30 a month, but because she has observed that he is not worth more than \$30 a month and if anything, is overpaid at that amount. During the courtship he entertained her with fabulous stories about the number of plantations and banks he owned.

\* **For Rent** - two rooms, only one block to town, electric lights, use of telephone. Telephone 158, party 1 or apply in person to home at 206 Green Street.

\* **Return of his wife** - John A. Royal is offering \$5 for information that may lead to the return of his wife. He is offering a reward of 2 and 1/2 cents per pound and says she weighs in at 200 pounds and is 38 years old. She is 5 feet 3 inches tall. She disappeared last Wednesday.

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

At about 2 in the afternoon fire of unknown origin starting in the soft drink stand of Ben Morring at Dallas Village. It destroyed the general mercantile store and its contents belonging to J. D. Bragg as well as his residence adjoining. The residence was occupied by Mr. Walker, who saved practically all of his household goods. Mr. Bragg's store and contents are a total loss. He carried no insurance on his stock of goods but had something like \$1,500 on his store building.

**"Secret to enjoying a good wine: Open the bottle to let it breathe. If it's not breathing, give it mouth-to-mouth."**

**Shirl Jacobs, Huntsville**

He estimates his loss above the insurance at between \$2,200 and \$2,500. The local fire department responded, but was handicapped in rendering service, the fire being so far beyond the city's fire limits.

\* **Collision** - Architect E. L. Love, with his automobile and the driver of John Scott's florist wagon this afternoon at 2:30 experienced a collision at the Holmes and Greene Streets crossing. No one was hurt. The other night when the heavy bolt of thunder and lightning came, McFarland's dairy on Meridian Street north of town suffered the loss of five valuable cows. Other damage was done but fortunately Mr. McFarland and his family escaped serious injury.

\* **Want to buy** - second hand Ford car - Either two or five passenger; must be a bargain. State condition and price. Address: New Market, Ala P.O. Box 15

\* **For Rent** - 7 room house on Walker Street - Apply to J. N. Mazza

\* **Lost** - a lady's bracelet, lost on the public Square, finder return for large reward at the First National Bank. The bracelet has sentimental value to the owner as it was a gift from her recently departed father.

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# MORE ABOUT CECIL ASHBURN

by Bill Goodson, June 30, 2023

I loved reading the recent article about Cecil Ashburn. Truly a Horatio Alger story.

Cecil was my cousin-by-marriage. (He married Margaret Goodson, my cousin.) I'd like to add another anecdote to the article, one that foretells his success as a builder.

When I was writing a novel that involved a plot to breach Guntersville Dam, I wanted to harvest his thoughts and predictions about the extent of the flooding that would ensue after such a disaster.

Not only was he able to help me, pulling out topographical maps and books from his library, but he had a personal tale about the dam.

"I was there for the official opening of the dam," he said.

"Really?" I said.

He nodded. "January of 1939. I remember it well. I was sixteen years old. There was quite a crowd there in Marshall County, including the Governor and senators. Even Senator Norris from Nebraska, who had pushed the TVA legislation through Congress. Signed by FDR."

He paused, then added, "That always impressed me, that a senator from Nebraska would be so determined to help the poor people of Appalachia with flood control and rural electrification."

"Well," he continued, "I looked at that dam and thought to myself that I could build something like that someday."

At that point, I think my jaw flew open, amazed that a youngster could have entertained such dreams.

Well... Cecil never built a TVA dam, but he sure as heck built a bunch of bridges over smaller rivers and creeks, at the same time that he and Pat Gray were busy crisscrossing North Alabama with roads.

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*from 1904 newspaper*

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# Bomber Crashes Near Monrovia

*by Charles Wells*



On an early summer morning in June of 1944, I decided to go fishing. With Mama and Daddy's permission, I found my fishing pole, dug a can of worms, got my new (to me) bicycle and got ready to leave. I had celebrated my fourteenth birthday about three weeks earlier (June 2nd), and Daddy had scrounged together enough money (\$6.00) to buy me a Heinz 57 used bicycle. By this, I mean it had oversize handlebars, no chain guard, a 26-inch wheel in the back and a 24-inch in the front. I was always going downhill. I rolled up my right overall leg to keep it from being caught in the sprocket and headed over to one of my favorite fishing holes on Indian Creek.

After traveling about three or four miles, I had gotten to the hill on the west side of the creek and the north side of Highway 72. I was pushing my bicycle along a cow path that ran about halfway up the side of the hill. As I was nearing the highway, I heard a huge explosion to the south and looked that way. It appeared that the whole end of Rainbow Mountain was gone. There was fire and a lot of smoke, and I could see trees falling from the sky.

I looked up and saw a plane (B-26 Marauder) coming towards me. It was on fire and smoke was coming out of the cockpit and the bomb bay doors. It was losing altitude rapidly as it passed over me and headed toward a cultivated field at the top of the hill. Its

nose was down at a very steep angle and did not flare out before impact. Upon impact, the nosewheel collapsed, the nose of the plane dug into the ground, the tail went up into the air and a matter of seconds later, it blew up. The pilot had apparently dropped part of his bomb load on Rainbow Mountain.

I made my way closer to the crash site. The pilot must have radioed the base that he was in trouble because only minutes after the crash, the area was crawling with MPs, police cars and ambulances. Within minutes, they had formed a circle of guards around the site. There were several planes flying around the area. Curiosity seekers began to gather on the highway but were not allowed to approach the crash site.

No one questioned me as to what I may have seen. I was told to leave the area immediately. I guess a freckled face, barefoot boy dressed in overalls, carrying a fishing pole in one hand and a can of worms in the other and holding on to a weird-looking bicycle could not tell them anything they wanted to know.

I was not questioned then or later. An article in the Huntsville Times stated that the only witness to the crash was a woman who could not tell them very much.

Besides myself, the McMurtrie family, working in their field across the highway, were also witnesses to the crash. For whatever reason, none of us were ever questioned about the crash.

I had seen the plane many times before. Almost daily, depending on the weather, it would come over the farm several times — always approaching from a southeasterly direction, pass over and then go on to the southwest. A few minutes later, we would hear the report of exploding bombs dropping on a mock village on the Arsenal. Sometimes it would be flying low enough that we could clearly see the pilots. We would wave and sometimes they would wave back or dip their wings to let us know that they had seen us.

The crash site is now occupied by Huntsville Memory Gardens. Perhaps a fitting tribute to the three men who perished there.

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Summer is quickly flying by. It seems like school just got out, yet Walmart was putting out all of their back-to-school supplies in July. The TV has been having Christmas in July specials on. Guess I had better start making out my Christmas list. To me, the weather is just too hot for football games and other activities in August.

Many stores have great sales on with over fifty percent off summer items. It might be a good time to purchase a few things where they are on sale.

This is a wonderful month for fun in the water because it has had all summer to warm up. Local pools are often around 85 degrees, and even the Gulf of Mexico in the Florida panhandle is in the eighties. That holds true for September as well, though most local pools close after Labor Day weekend.

I will stress again to swim with a buddy and look out for each other. A teenager drowned in a private pool a few weekends ago, which just shows even older people need to be mindful around water.

The 90 plus weather that we have been having can really be hard on the elderly as well as pets. Both should walk early in the morning and drink plenty of fluids. Heat stroke can come on rather quickly in this extreme heat.

Over 700,000 people die each year for mos-

quito-borne diseases, so if you plan to be outdoors, be sure to take along some OFF or other kinds of bug repellent — better safe than sorry.

CDC just announced that over one million people have died in the U.S. from Covid since the outbreak started in 2020. It is not over yet, and this fall, they are saying you might consider the “big-3” vaccinations for Covid, flu and RSV. All are types of viruses and can be quite severe or fatal for senior citizens.

But on the lighter side, here's a great recipe to try soon. It is a dip and goes great on big taco chips or Frito Scoops.

#### COWBOY CAVIAR DIP

1/2 cup olive oil  
 2 TBS lime juice  
 2 TBS red wine vinegar  
 1 tsp. sugar  
 1/2 tsp. pepper  
 1/4 tsp. garlic powder  
 1/3 cup cilantro, diced  
 1 red and 1 green bell peppers, diced  
 3 Roma tomatoes, diced  
 2 ripe avocados, diced  
 1/2 cup red onion, diced  
 15 oz. can black beans, drained and rinsed  
 15 oz. can of black-eyed peas, drained and rinsed  
 1-1/2 cup sweet corn  
 Mix all in large bowl and enjoy!

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# Uncle Jim

*by Fran Miller*

The house where I grew up was on 9th Avenue in West Huntsville. It was built by my Granddaddy shortly after he and my Granny were married in 1908. If I remember correctly, they both worked in one of the cotton mills until ten years later when my mother, their only child, was born.

I never got to know Granddaddy, as he had passed away long before I was born. His dying left Mama and Granny with no income, leaving no other option than for my Mama to quit school and find a job.

Granddaddy's brother, Uncle Jim, a widower with a good paying job, decided to move in with Mama and Granny to help out. Unfortunately, not long after he began to live with them, he was severely injured on his job, causing him to lose a leg. That along with other injuries from the accident left him bedfast, ending his life as he knew it, and making him completely unable to care for himself. Mama and Granny became responsible for his care and tending to his needs.

My earliest recollection of Uncle Jim was him reading to me from his bed, a good size davenport that was in our front room.

Knowing the county had small, one room buildings they provided to families when it was suspected a family member had T.B., Mama convinced the visiting nurse that was just what Uncle Jim needed.

Miraculously, one was delivered to our house and planted by our back door.

This small building had no electricity or other amenities. It had only enough room for a half size bed, and a small table.

I loved spending time with Uncle Jim in his tiny house. I would hurry home from school, grab a snack for both of us, and head straight out to see him, where I would spend a large part of my afternoon. I delighted in having such a willing, if confined, playmate to join me in all kinds of make believe games.

Some days I would pretend I was a doctor and Uncle Jim was my patient. This would usually result in him being covered in bandages of one kind or another.

Other days, I'd play like I was a preacher, and would hammer him with threats of hellfire and damnation.

I guess my favorite pretend game was when I would be the teacher and Uncle Jim would be my pupil. I could really boss him around with my loud teacher voice. I would give him arithmetic problems, and even though he was good at math, most of the time he would come back with the wrong answer,

just to get a rise out of me. That would earn him a harsh scolding or worse yet, a few swats from my ruler (Yes, teachers were allowed to spank their students back then.) When he was being punished, he'd play along, screaming for help and pretend crying.

One bright sunshiny day, becoming bored with our usual games, I asked Uncle Jim if it wouldn't be more fun if he could go outside and play with me, instead of being stuck in that old bed.

He said he thought it would.

I had heard or read somewhere of folks that had wooden legs. I figured if Uncle Jim had his own wooden leg, he'd be able to go outside with me and we could do all kind of fun things.

I decided right then and there, that's just what he needed. His own wooden leg.

"I'll be right back," I told him, hurrying off to rummage in my father's tool box. It didn't take long till I returned, all excited, with a hand saw, a hammer, and a handful of nails. I had even found a deserted plank propped against our back fence.

I told Uncle Jim not to worry as I lifted the bottom half of his sheet, exposing his stump, and attempted to nail that plank into what was left of his leg.

His worse than usual shrill cries for help brought my Granny and Mama running before any blood could be spilled. Needless to say, my thought of having a career as a surgeon was over.

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# Meridian Street Memories

by Donald Gipson



Meridian Street, before the Parkway changed Huntsville's face forever, was the main road leading into our small, cotton mill-filled Southern town. It stretched from Highway 231 North down past Alabama A&M University, through the once bustling Mill District of East Huntsville, ending finally as it connected with Jefferson Street in downtown Huntsville.

But, for a small boy growing up during the Post-World War II days, it was much, much more. It was his entire world.

It had everything a young, impressionable boy could want. An ice cream store (two, if you count Roger Williams' drug store), a baseball field (Lincoln Park), for as many games as one would ever want to play, a creek (Pinhook) for a boy and his friends to fish and wade in, and a hamburger stand that only Big Spring Cafe could compare to today. Yes, Meridian Street had everything.

Most of all, it had style. You could walk down the street and everyone you passed would smile and say "hello". You could ride your bicycle on the wide sidewalks and each store you passed had a certain style and atmosphere of its own.

The atmosphere, or should I say aroma, I remember most was the one that surrounded Keel's Cafe.

That wonderful smell of onions, hamburger meat and mustard cooking would

literally reach out through the screen door and pull you in to the small, box-car like structure that sat just across the railroad tracks from Ward's Store.

Once inside you could sit at one of the eight or ten round top stools lining the long, narrow counter. Ketchup and mustard bottles, napkin holders, salt and pepper shakers and a special "red-hot pepper" concoction were always spaced evenly along the counter top.

Mr. Keel in his white shirt, white slacks and white apron and Mrs. Keel, dressed in white also with her hair in a tight bun on the back of her head, hurried up and down behind the counter, waiting on what was usually a standing-room only crowd.

Daddy always seemed to be a special customer of Mr. Keel's, or maybe he just made everyone feel special.

As you sat down on one of the round stools that always seemed to lean to one side and ordered a burger and a Dr. Pepper, your mouth would begin watering in anticipation.

Those hamburgers, oh, those hamburgers! I never expected to find any burger as good as those. The meat (real beef) covered in fresh onions, cut by hand, splashed with mustard and the bun, toasted lightly in the grease on the grill was washed down with the ice-cold Dr. Pepper from the box-like freezer underneath the counter.

If my memory serves me correctly, the drink and the hamburger were only 25 cents. There was no charge for the atmosphere which was always warm, friendly and appetizing.

The last time I saw the building that housed the cafe and this was years ago, it was weatherworn, boarded up and leaning toward the track side of the street. Standing there, I thought how lucky I was to have experienced the life that was once inside and how I will never forget those hamburgers.

**"I love California, I practically grew up in Phoenix."**

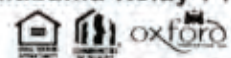
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# The Picture

by Austin Miller



In the latter part of 1941, when I was about nine months old, Mama and Daddy got my great Aunt Lucy McCay Currier to drive us to town to make my first baby picture. It was black and white, as most photographs were in those days. In the picture, I am barefooted, sitting up with my arms to my side and wearing a white one-piece dress with a belt that fastened in the front with a button.

I don't know how many pictures were made but a number were given to my grandparents, uncles, aunts and friends of the family. One was an eight by ten that has survived to this day.

Mama and Daddy gave one of the wallet size pictures to my uncle James Curtis Miller, Sr. (Gib). They may have given it to him when he came home to Ryland for Christmas from the Army in 1941 or they may have mailed it to him at Fort Benning. In any event, he had it before he and Aunt Bertha married in the summer of 1942. More than fifty years later she remembered him showing it to her when they were dating.

One time when I was visiting, Uncle Gib mentioned that he had one of my baby pictures with him in combat. This intrigued me but I didn't pursue it further at the time. Later, I asked about it and told him I would like to see it. Both he and Aunt Bertha said they didn't know where it was. A few months after that, I asked Aunt Bertha again and she said she would look for it. I was afraid she wouldn't be able to find it because Uncle Gib had shown me his old war time wallet and some of the things it contained but there was no baby picture.

I was intrigued because if that picture could talk, what a story it could tell. The saga began in Army training camps in Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, Louisiana and finally a voyage on a troop ship across the Atlantic. The English spring and winter of 1944 is on record as one of the wettest and coldest in history. The living conditions and tent cities scattered all over England have been shown many times in countless war movies and documentaries about World War II. Uncle Gib was in one of those camps.

The 4th Division, however, was not sitting around in tents all the time. They were training for the invasion of France. This included mock landings on the English side of the channel. These were child's play compared to what was to come but it was still a cold, wet and dangerous exercise; many were killed. Uncle Gib and my picture survived England and the practice landings. This was not a journey that improved as it progressed. Conversely, conditions got worse with each step in the progression. Life on the transports ferrying troops across the channel to France is also well documented. Packed in like sardines, they suffered through gale speed winds and high seas for days. The rolling swells made most of them deathly ill, a condition exacerbated by a strong stench of vomit and diesel fuel.

Based on historical accounts of the crossing, many veter-

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ans said they were so sick and miserable that they would not have lifted a finger to save the ship from sinking; others said whatever horrors awaited them on the beach would be better than life on the transports.

Uncle Gib didn't talk much about the war but I know that he was on one of those transports. I also know that he was in the first wave that hit Utah Beach on June 6, 1944. At daylight, he exited the transport by jumping into cold breast deep water. He told me that everything on him was thoroughly soaked with seawater including my baby picture. Some drowned immediately but many more were killed by hostile fire. They were like sitting ducks. By the time he waded ashore the waves hitting the beach were tinged red with blood. They were being pounded with heavy artillery and raked with rifle and machine gun fire. Some veterans gave accounts of bullets falling around them like rain.

To my surprise he watched the movie "Saving Private Ryan". I asked him how the movie compared to his experience. He said the real thing was much worse and all the actors were way too old. Somehow, Uncle Gib made it across the wide expanse of sand and went inland without a scratch. After clearing the beach, he went from Normandy to Cherbourg and back again. This foray was in the infamous hedgerows where some of the fiercest fighting of the war occurred. After that, he patrolled up and down the beach and back inland.

On July 20th, in the vicinity of St. Lo, shrapnel from a German 88 gravely wounded him. After being hit, he was taken to an aid station; from there he was moved to a tent that served as a field hospital. Finally, he was evacuated to a hospital in England. After England, he was sent to a hospital in New York, from there to Atlanta and finally, after about a year, to a convalescent center at Daytona Beach, Florida.

My baby picture, worse for the wear but still intact, made the entire trip.

In the spring of 2004, he asked me if I would cut up a tree with my chain saw that had fallen in his garden. I jumped at the chance, because it is not often that he gives me an opportunity to help him. As soon as I could, I went to the house on Wellman Avenue and cut up the tree as promised. When I finished, Aunt Bertha gave me a red envelope with my name on it. Inside were high school graduation pictures

of my cousins as well as some old family snapshots. Also, in the envelope was my baby picture. The picture is cracked and has some torn places around the edges but considering what it has been through, it is in remarkable condition. It now resides in a gallery of baby pictures on a wall in my house.

Knowing the history of where the picture has been makes it a cherished possession but the real prize to me is not altogether where it has been, but with whom it went.

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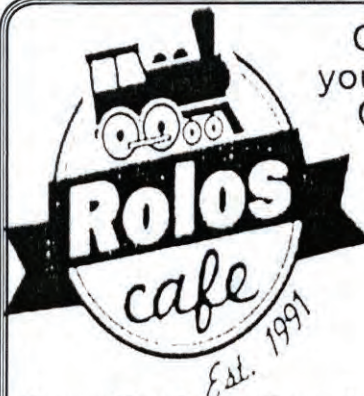
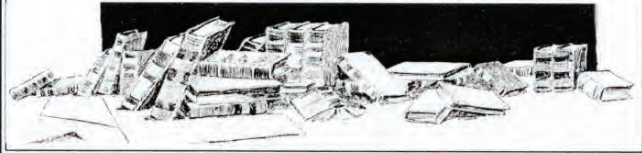
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# Heard On the Street

by Cathey Carney



Our July winner for the tiny face of pup **Katie** that I had hidden was **Debbie Grabner**, of Madison. She said she found it right away. I thought it might be difficult but it was on page 27 of the July issue, in the Woody Anderson ad, top left. Do you see her little face? And the Photo of the Month for July was that of **Jane Tippett**, who with husband **Louie** owns the Historic Lowry House. We had lots of correct calls on Jane but the very first caller was **Sara Johnson** who had toured the home years ago. Jane was a gorgeous little girl and is still a beautiful lady! Congratulations to our winners.

**Billy Lawrence** will be celebrating his 79th birthday on

Aug. 26th with sweet wife **Phyllis**, so we want to be sure and wish Billy a happy birthday! **Randy Raney**, another Butler HS '62 graduate, passed away recently and will be missed.

August is a big month for the **Troup** family in Nashville, TN. **Steph** and **John Troup** celebrating their 25th anniversary on Aug. 15th, same day as John's birthday. Then **Hayden Troup** will be turning 23 years old on Aug. 24th. My daughter, son-in-law and sweet grandson - celebrate in style!

It's hard to believe **Jackie Reed** passed away a year ago. She had been attending City Council meetings, Planning/Zoning meetings, school board meetings - she kept herself informed and didn't hold back when holding city agencies responsible for projects that affected us. Jackie told it like it was. Many miss her and her relentless advocacy for Huntsville residents. She never missed a meeting.

There are a few things you can do if you suffer from arthritis or gout. Both are caused by a buildup of uric acid in your blood and it accumulates in your joints, causing the pain. It's important to drink water and keep yourself hydrated - most people drink small amounts of water and don't even think of it. Keep a glass of water nearby and sip on it throughout the day. Also Tart

Cherry juice is known to fight the uric acid, as well as grape juice. I have been putting sprinkles of cinnamon and ground Tumeric in my coffee and it has made a real difference. Of course if you have severe pain of any kind contact your doctor!

**Ianthia Bridges** of Truist Bank on Church Street told us about some important dates in August. Her sister-in-law **Missy Bridges** of Camden, Al has an Aug. 25th birthday. Her sweet husband **Frazer Bridges** celebrates his birthday on Aug. 26th. Her brother **Carl Ramsey** has an Aug. 4th birthday. And Ianthia celebrates 26 years with Truist Bank (formerly Colonial Bank, then BB&T). I see lots of food and parties coming up!

Also at Truist is **Susan Coulter**. Her birthday is Aug. 21st and her grandson **Beau** celebrates his on Aug. 8th. Her granddaughter **Vivian Clair Santos** turns 10 in August! And **Coulter T. Clark** had a birthday bash on the 24th, he turned 10. Party time for all!

**Billie Grosser** was a beloved member of the Huntsville com-

## 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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munity, and passed away on June 26th. Billie married the love of her life, **Jack Grosser** and began a lifelong partnership. Billie worked as Customer Rep at Huntsville Utilities until her retirement in 1989, and was an active committed member of Trinity United Methodist Church. She was a member of DuMidi Women's Club, the Botanical Garden Guild and the Huntsville Museum of Art Guild. She loved the history of our city and was a active supporter of the Historic Huntsville Foundation. Her tireless work earned her many awards and accolades including the lifetime Achievement Award for Girl Scouts Women of Distinction. Billie's husband Jack was a long-time member of the Golden K Kiwanis so giving back was just a daily part of their lives.

Billie was a loving mother, grandmother and great grandmother. She is survived by her two daughters, **Cathy Grosser McBride (Vernon)** and **Beth Grosser Poundstone (Haygood)**, who will forever carry her love and guidance in their hearts. Her three grandchildren, **Jack Paterson Poundstone (Abigail)**, **Elizabeth Poundstone Akins (Will)**, and **Elizabeth Cambrian McBride**, were the source of endless pride and joy for Billie. In addition, she was blessed with one great-grandchild, **Rives Paterson Poundstone**. She will be remembered always.

**Iolanda Hicks** is one of our newest regular writers and she spends a good bit of time at the Veterans Museum researching her stories. She recently had a June 17th birthday and says now she is in her fourth quarter! Happy belated birthday to Iolanda!

Sure do miss **Lewters Hardware store**. I needed an odd-sized home air return filter recently and realized I couldn't just jump in my truck and head to Lewter's to pick it up. They were truly a landmark in Huntsville.

In honor of Lewters I have hidden a **tiny pair of pliers** in this issue. It could be anywhere and will be super tiny - so you'll need your best glasses to find it. Be the first, and if you HAVEN'T won in the past you'll be our winner.

**"Old Huntsville" Magazine  
has a new email address: It is  
oldhuntsville@gmail.com**

I love gardening in the summer and have window boxes. This year I discovered Container soil that is specially formulated for pots, window boxes etc. It seems to be richer, moister and my plants have thrived in it. I will be getting that every year instead of just potting soil. It's available at all the garden shops.

**Rolland Thomas** was a farm boy from Iowa but made friends with people in North Alabama and visited. He loved the south immediately and said he always felt like he was a true southerner even though he lived in Iowa. He was a military vet and wrote several articles for Old Huntsville about his growing up farm days and would have turned 90 July 30th. Sadly Rolland passed away Feb. 1st of this year. One thing he did that was unique was to find flat smooth stones which he would paint, then draw flowers or trees on them and give them away to people who liked them. I've got one he created for me and I'll always treasure it. He was a dear, spiritual, compassionate man who left an impression on everyone he met. Survivors include his daughter, **Laurie** and her husband **Ron Bell** of Council Bluffs, Iowa; son, **Barry Thomas** and **Lorraine** of Modale, Iowa; grandsons, **Dustin Bell** of Mondamin and **Cole Bell** of Council Bluffs; step granddaughter, **Paige Johnsen**; grandsons, **Parker** and **Lane**; brother, **Jerry Thomas** of Mondamin; sister, **Peggy McColley** of Mondamin and many friends who will always think of this sweet man.

Keep an eye on your older neighbors in this heat!

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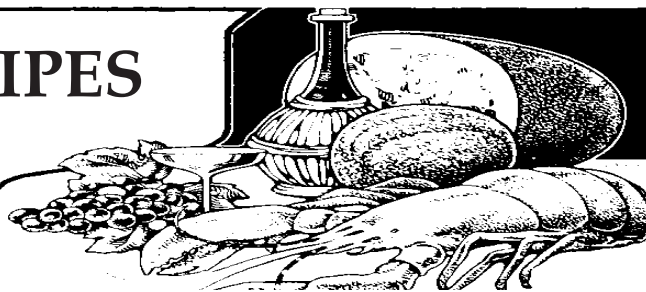
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## RECIPES



### Local Favorites

#### Chocolate Gravy

- 1-1/2 c. sugar
- 1/4 c. + 1 T. cocoa
- Pinch salt
- 3 T. cornstarch
- 3 c. milk
- 1 t. vanilla extract

Mix dry ingredients together, then add milk. Cook in top of double boiler, stirring constantly, until desired thickness is achieved, then add vanilla. Pour over hot buttered biscuits.

Nell's mother's recipe

#### Southern Fried Okra

- 4 c. sliced okra, fresh or frozen
- 1 c. yellow corn meal
- 1/2 c. plain flour
- 2 t. garlic pepper
- 1 t. salt
- 1/2 t. cayenne
- 5 T. olive oil

Pour okra into large mixing bowl. In a separate bowl mix the corn meal, flour and spices. Pour flour mixture into the okra slices and mix well.

Heat olive oil in a large fry pan, pour in the coated okra as one layer. Fry at medium high, flipping frequently to brown on all sides. Serve hot.

Cathey Carney

#### Easy Pineapple Sherbet

- Juice of 3 lemons
- 2 c. sugar
- 1 qt. whole milk
- 1 small can evaporated milk
- 1 large can crushed pineapple, drained

Add lemon juice to sugar, Stir in milks, add pineapple. Pour in refrigerator tray, stir occasionally as it freezes.

Mrs. W. C. Smith

#### Egg Custard Pie

- 1 c. milk
- 2 T. butter
- 1 t. vanilla extract
- 1-1/2 c. sugar
- 2 T. flour
- 4 eggs, slightly beaten
- Nutmeg
- 1 unbaked pie shell

Pour milk in saucepan and allow to warm over very low heat; add butter and vanilla. Mix sugar and flour and add to slightly beaten eggs; mix well. Add milk mixture to this and mix well. Pour in pie shell and sprinkle with nutmeg. Bake at 375 degrees for 40 minutes.

Nell's mother's recipe

#### Deep-Fried Tuna Balls

- 1 small can tuna
- 1 egg
- 1/2 c. chopped onion
- 1 t. each salt & pepper
- 3/4 c. plain flour

Mix all together and form balls. Drop into hot grease and fry til golden brown.

Stephanie Troup

#### Fried Cucumbers

Peel cucumbers, then cut in strips lengthwise very thin. Coat strips in cornmeal and salt. Fry until tender, sprinkle with melted butter and black pepper, serve very hot.

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## Bourbon Franks

1 14-oz. bottle catsup  
3 c. bourbon  
1 c. dark brown sugar  
4 8-oz. pkgs. small cocktail franks

In a large saucepan mix all ingredients except franks. Cover and simmer for 2 hours. Add franks and simmer 5 minutes. Serve in a chafing dish. Made in advance, this is even better! Ron Eyestone

## Banana Salad

1 egg, slightly beaten  
1/2 c. sugar  
Juice of one lemon  
2 T. sweet cream  
1 c. roasted peanuts, chopped  
8 bananas

On top of double boiler place first three ingredients, cook over boiling water, stirring constantly. Remove from heat and add cream.

Cool totally, slice bananas crosswise into a bowl. Add peanuts, add sauce to the bananas and toss. Sauce can be made earlier in the day.

Mix together just before serving.

Peggy Hawkins

## Brandy Ice

1 qt. vanilla bean ice cream  
4 oz. brandy

Using your blender, blend the ice cream and brandy, and freeze. Blend again just before you serve, and dip it into elegant glass as slush.

Diane Owens

## Parmesan Pasta

1 pkg. spaghetti  
1 stick butter  
1/2 c. grated Parmesan cheese

Chopped fresh chives  
Pine nuts (optional)

Boil spaghetti in salted water for 8 minutes. Drain, wash with cold water. In small pot, melt butter and cook over medium heat til it browns.

Add spaghetti and stir til thoroughly drenched with butter. Remove from heat, stir in cheese, sprinkle with parsley and serve.

John Troup

## Apple Crisp

4 medium Granny Smith apples, peeled and sliced  
1 c. dried apricots, chopped  
3/4 c. plain flour

3/4 c. brown sugar, packed  
1/2 c. chopped pecans  
3 T. butter, softened  
Fresh whipped cream

Place apple slices in a buttered square pan, 8x8x2. Mix remaining ingredients, except for the whipping cream.

Sprinkle the mixture over the apples and apricots.

Bake at 350 degrees for 35 to 40 minutes til crisp, serve warm with whipping cream.

Peggy Johnson

## Buttermilk Pie

1-1/2 c. sugar  
1 c. buttermilk  
1/3 c. Bisquick  
6 T. butter, melted  
1 t. vanilla extract  
3 eggs

Blend all ingredients in a bowl with electric mixer. Pour mixture into buttered 9" pie pan and bake for 50 minutes at 350 degrees.

A toothpick inserted in pie should come out clean. Cool for 5 minutes. This is good served with a liquor like Grand Marnier.

Cathey Carney



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# The Little Lion of Big Spring Park

by Margaret Anne Goldsmith



Margaret Anne 1995

The Little Lion of Big Spring Park had been in the park for as long as I could remember when I rode him as a child during the 1940s. I lived with my father and grandparents at the Russel Erskine Hotel. The Big Spring Park was my back yard. The Little Lion was really a Big Lion then because for me it was an arduous climb to mount and ride on his back which I did for hours. I don't remember where my rides took me, likely to the edge of my two-to-four year old world.

The Little Lion lived in the Park just off Spragins Street next to the old spring pump house. During those days the whole town got their water from the Big Spring. That was before Huntsville started growing and needing a larger water source, the Tennessee River. Across Spragins Street was the Ice House where people bought large blocks of ice. While I was riding the Little Lion I would watch the Ice Man hitch up his mule next to the Ice House and fill his wagon with blocks of ice. He would then travel around town and deliver ice to those folks who had real ice boxes cooled with ice. We had an electric refrigerator, but I wished we had had a real Ice Box, the kind made of wood that stood on legs like our footed bathtub.

If I looked down Canal Street I could see the spring branch. It would eventually

make its way to Pinhook Creek and the river. Spragins Street extended south, up Big Spring Hill to become Oak Avenue where I would often walk with my nurse, Cora Barley. Sometimes we would walk past Saint Bartley's Baptist Church and Womack's Grocery and on down the street to visit with Mrs. Copper, the lady Cora lived with when she wasn't taking care of me.

On Saturday afternoons we would walk down Oak Avenue and turn left at Saint Bartley's to go to the old Carnegie Library for Story Hour which took place in the basement where the children's books were kept and Miss Frances was the librarian. Spragins Street stretched north to Clinton Street where the First Baptist Church stood diagonally across the street from the Russel Erskine Hotel. Clinton Street going west was a narrow shaded street with lovely Victorian houses on either side. Clinton going east was our downtown commercial district.

So that was the Little Lion's neighborhood, and mine. My father, who had been born in 1909, told me that he could remember the Little Lion when he was a boy. He used to ride him also. In fact, all the children around town had been riding him for almost a half century before I was born.

As a child I remember that on Sunday afternoons after church, parents would bring their children to the Big Spring to feed the gold fish and ducks, ride the Little Lion, climb on the rock bluff. We would slide on pieces of cardboard down the hill behind Cotton Row where a number of cotton brokers had their offices. Cotton Row faced the Courthouse on the west side of the Square.

As the years went by, I grew up, married and moved

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to New Orleans and lost track of what happened to the Little Lion. I was later told that during the 1960s when the Park was "modernized," that the Little Lion was taken off his stand and moved to another location in the Park.

During the early 1990s I began to return to Huntsville more often to assist my father in our family business, I. Schiffman & Co. I wondered what had become of the Little Lion. During one of my visits I met Dick Curtis who was working for Channel 19.

Among his duties at Channel 19 was to make short features on interesting sights around town that would be aired in the early evening. I suggested he make one about my old friend, the Little Lion of Big Spring Park.

Dick and I agreed to meet at the Big Spring Park. When we did, the Little Lion was nowhere to be found. I told Dick that I would try and find out what had happened to him. The following day I began calling around town.

I was in luck when I called the City Planning Department and found someone who remembered that the Little Lion had been moved to the City Greenhouse. He had been abused by skateboarders, torn from his moorings and thrown into the water under the bluff. The city gardeners had rescued him and taken him to the Greenhouse where he had remained.

I phoned Dick and we met shortly thereafter at the Greenhouse where we found the Little Lion resting peacefully under some green plants. Upon seeing him, I was shocked that he had grown so much smaller - or maybe it was because I had grown bigger. Dick asked me to get on the Little Lion's back and I did; however, I had to get on my knees to do so. I began to pat the Little Lion just like old times. It was then that Dick asked me what I used to say to the Little Lion. I closed my eyes and responded, "Giddy Up." I think the Little Lion heard me because with my eyes closed it really felt like he was galloping around just like he used to do.

Around the time I found the Little Lion, the City was planning a renovation of the east end of Big Spring Park. When I learned that was about to happen, I went to the City Planning Department to check if the Little Lion was included in the renovation plan. To my disappointment, he wasn't in the plan because there were no funds to restore him.

When I returned to New Orleans I took the bull by the horns and wrote the Mayor, the President of the Historic Huntsville Foundation, the director of Constitution Hall Village and various other organization directors who I thought would be interested in bringing the Little Lion back to the park. I mentioned a date that I would be returning to Huntsville and suggested we all meet then at Mayor Steve Hettinger's office. Subsequently the

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it's the side effects.**

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Mayor planned a meeting for everyone to whom I had written. Several months later when I returned to Huntsville and went to the meeting I was surprised and delighted to see everyone I had invited sitting around the Mayor's round table along with representatives from the City Planning Department.

I then learned that after my invitation had arrived, the Historic Huntsville Foundation Board met and approved a contribution of two thousand dollars to have the Little Lion sand blasted, repainted and reinstalled in the park. Everyone quickly approved the restoration and the Planning Department added the Little Lion's return to their plan for the park renovation. I was thrilled, my dream was about to come true.

Next was to find out the history of the Little Lion. The Huntsville Times wrote several articles asking if anyone knew anything about how he came to live in the park. Huntsvillians were invited to send in pictures of their photographs when they were children riding the Little Lion. Shortly thereafter two full pages in the Times were devoted to photographs of the Little Lion and the children who rode him.

Strange as it may seem, I had never had my picture taken on the Little Lion as a child. Since I rode him almost every day, unlike the other children who only rode him occasionally, the adults around me didn't think it was anything special to photograph.

Sometime after the articles and photographs were printed in the paper, an elderly lady came forward to say that it was her father, Mr. J. E. Hummel who had a cast iron factory and had given the Little Lion to the park. She provided the time frame that it had happened and work began. The City records were researched and it was revealed that indeed Mr. Hummel had given the Little Lion to the park and was quoted to have said at the time that the Little Lion was "A gift to the park as long as children play in the park."

Fast forward, the Little Lion was refurbished. On the appointed day Dick Curtis with his camera, and I met a group from the City Greenhouse and the Little Lion at the park. The Little Lion was unloaded from the city truck and placed on a pallet. He was then lifted above the heads of the Greenhouse folks

like the king of the park that he is and carried to a spot just under the bluff overlooking the spring. There he was royally installed with a great deal of fanfare.

A plaque was later placed just beneath his head with the inscription that he was given to the park for "As long as children play in the park." Also noted on the plaque is that the Historic Huntsville Foundation had restored and refurbished him.

The date on the plaque also notes that this historic event occurred on August 7, 1995, ninety-five years after the Little Lion had first come to live in the park. The Historic Huntsville Foundation honored the Little Lion's return to the park by having tee shirts made with a picture of him on the front that they sold at Harrison Brothers, their store on the Square.

My daughter Bobbie Hanaw (now Wyso) was with me that day and we both got on the Little Lion and had our picture taken together. It was very special indeed to share that experience with my daughter, an experience I will never forget.

Since that momentous occasion, Bobbie and my other two children, John Hanaw and Laurie Lev have married and had children of their own, my ten grandchildren. Of course my children and my grandchildren have heard my story of the Little Lion and have had their pictures taken riding on his back. I might add that the Little Lion knows they are my children and grandchildren because when any one of them rides he looks at me, winks and smiles.

Some years ago I asked my partner Mike Maples, whose hobby is photography, to take a portrait picture for me of the Little Lion to hang in the I. Schiffman Building. Mike made a special effort to find the best time of the day to do so, the early morning when the sun is just coming up and for a brief moment shines a golden light on the Little Lion.

Today the Little Lion of Big Spring Park continues to charm children of all ages as he lies on his royal throne overlooking the Spring, providing rides for all the children who come to see him. This year, 2023, marks the 25th anniversary of his 1995 restoration and return to the Big Spring Park after decades of having been forgotten in the city greenhouse.

I suggest our readers visit the Big Spring next summer on a Sunday afternoon around four and bring your children or grandchildren and your friends. The drummers might be gathered at the drumming circle, there are families picnicking and children playing. It pleases the Little Lion, the King of the Park, as he watches children of every race and culture playing together.

This is exactly what Mr. Hummel had wanted and will continue to be so for the years to come, that is, "As long as children play in the park."

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***M. Facklen***



# An Interesting Interview

*by Elizabeth Wharry*

Right after I passed my state boards for cosmetology, I had a very interesting interview. (I later became a nurse.)

The ad in the newspaper read, "Desairolologist wanted. No experience required, will train. Call xxx-xxxx and ask for Mr. Smith". That sounded ideal! I called the number in question, and was a bit surprised to find out it was actually a funeral home!

The initial interview went very well. He outlined the job duties and expectations. He went on to explain that he would train me. I was in my mid 20s, which also helped.

We agreed that the next time he had a client, he would call me. In the meantime, I kept looking for work. One afternoon, Mr. Smith called. How soon could I come in? I arrived about an hour later.

His assistant reminded me of Lurch from the Addams family. He escorted me to where Mr. Smith was waiting. As we put on gloves, he told me that the family wanted Mrs. X to look much like she did in life. He carefully applied the makeup to her one hand, and guided me on her other hand. We then applied a quick dry polish to her nails.

He tucked paper towels around the neckline of her garment. We applied makeup to her neck and face. I could sense the assistant behind me.

When we got to her eyes, one of the lids popped open! I squeaked and stepped back. Mr. Smith quickly reglued the lid closed. He suggested that while we wait for the glue to set, we look at a picture of how she wore her hair. As he lifted her head, air escaped. For all the world, it sounded like she sighed!

The next thing I knew, I was waking up on an embalming table. I had passed out. No, I didn't get the job.

Here's to the Dog Daze of August!

**"My boss calls me 'The Computer'.  
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15 minutes."**

**Thom Kregg, Athens**

## The Moonshiner

A revenue agent was sneaking through the woods of a cove in south Madison County, following the smell of a still cooking off a new batch of homemade whiskey. He pushed through the brush as he neared the still and felt a shotgun punch him in the back.

The moon shiner ordered him into the opening where the still was cooking the shine. The moon shiner told the revenuer to pick up a pint fruit jar of the brew and take a drink.

The revenuer followed the order and took a healthy swig. He swallowed, then almost choked and tears rolled down his cheeks as he wheezed, "That is the worst stuff I ever tasted in my life."

The moon shiner handed the shotgun to the revenuer and said, "Now, hold the gun on me while I take a drink."



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## AROUND THE WORLD WITH BOBBIE

by Karl Peterson



After high school in Georgia, Bobbie went to work at Robins Air Force Base in Warner Robins, Ga. There she joined an administrative organization of ladies supporting the leaders of the Air Force Base. During her four years she started college in the evening, was elected Miss Robins Air Force Base and with some other ladies joined Beta Sigma Phi - a world wide social sorority supporting various chanties, especially the fight against Cystic fibrosis.

This is the story of Bobbie's sixty years with the sorority and her membership in each new city as her career progressed. With a promotion and a transfer to the Pentagon in Washington, DC where a new sorority chapter provided new friendships and social activities including meeting her husband to be.

The friendships made in the new chapter have lasted a lifetime including the courtship and marriage to Karl in 1968. Shortly after a new job opportunity for Karl required a move to Los Angeles, Ca. to work on the Space Shuttle Program and a new Beta Sigma Phi chapter for Bobbie.

A new career for Bobbie (Property Management) and increased charity and social activities allowed a smooth transition

to California life. Her chapter over the next dozen years went on ten cruises up and down the east and west coasts, the Caribbean and to Mexico. The friendships have lasted a lifetime and Bobbie still travels with them. More later - let's move on to the next chapter and her travels.

A new career opportunity required a move to Denver, CO and a new sorority chapter. A new career for Bobbie as a travel manager/ticket agent for Continental Airlines City Ticket office in downtown Denver. The new sorority chapter was very active and during her four years there the chapter socials included two trips by train to Keystone Ski Resort for ice skating and dinners, no skiing (not enough time), but great sightseeing on the trains. In addition attended several Denver Broncos football games. Bobbie's City Ticket Office allowed her to travel free of charge anywhere Continental went.

A new career move required moving back to Los Angeles, Bakersfield and another new sorority chapter in Bakersfield and new adventures. Bobbie continued to work for Continental and more free travel. Meeting new friends in the chapter and sorority socials including travels in the San Joaquin Valley the Bread Basket of the U.S. After two years Karl's company transferred us to Huntsville, Al and the start of our of world wide travels and our for-ever-home here in Huntsville.

The next ten years were spent

in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia and a new Sorority Chapter and new friends including lawyers, doctors, engineers and other professionals supporting the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The chapter was important as it provided a social exchange outside the work place in the Kingdom's closed community, there were a lot restrictions. But no restrictions on travel outside the Kingdom which happened twice a year, an R&R and home leave.

Because we were half way around the world, we could fly around the world on leaves by continuing to fly east on home leaves. Bobbie connected with sorority sisters in different cities including a social meeting in Vancouver, BC (a sister lived there) with several sisters from Bakersfield, CA. The Riyadh chapter made several trips together: to Hong Kong where she bought fake Rolex's; to Bangkok for a couple ladies to get face lifts (was a thing at the time); to Singapore for shopping.

As a couple we made several around the world trips and visited the above mentioned places plus all European countries several times plus Egypt and South Africa including Cape Town. Also a couple trips to Australia and several stops in Hawaii. In the around the world trips you could make seven stops as long as you continue in the same direction.

Bobbie and Karl are retired in Huntsville for the last twenty years and don't ever want to get on an airplane again.



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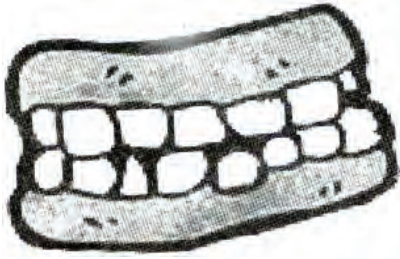
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# He Lost His Teeth



*from 1875 Newspaper*

A Huntsville man, M. S. Thompson, ten years ago got a set of false teeth mounted on a golden base. A short time afterwards he lost his teeth and he supposed they had been stolen by a bag boy in his employ. Thompson was in the habit of taking them from his mouth at night and placing them on a table in a glass of water.

The boy strenuously denied the theft, but this did not in the least remove the suspicion. The boy was immediately fired.

After a time all thought of the false teeth passed away, with Thompson having secured another set.

About three years ago Thompson caught a very severe cold and from that time forward he was troubled with incessant pain in his right breast, in the region of the lungs. This was attended with a severe cough and frequent hemorrhages of the lungs occurred.

He thought he had consumption and for years had been under medical treatment, without relief.

During the early part of last fall he was seized with a violent fit of coughing and during its progress coughed up several pieces of a hard substance which appeared like bone on first examination. He experienced some relief at this time, and during the next day he coughed up more of the same species of material.

Being very curious, he examined this closely and in doing so discovered pieces of metal attached to the bony matter, which, though worn and discolored, looked very much like teeth.

The truth suddenly dawned upon him. He had gone to sleep those many years ago with the false teeth in his mouth, and in the night he swallowed them, and they had passed into his lungs and had lain there these many years.

In the course of a week he coughed up the gold plate in pieces, along with the rest of his teeth. He rapidly regained his health and strength and is now as hearty and robust as he ever was.

**"I got gas today for \$2.99.  
Unfortunately it was at a  
Taco Bell."**

**Ross Jones, Madison**



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# LIFE IS LIKE A VACUUM TUBE

by M. D. Smith, IV



There was a time when everything that electronically entertained you was powered by vacuum tubes. You can still buy them today to keep antique radio and TV sets working, but most are made in Russia or China. I was thinking of when I was married and in college, studying electronics and building my hi-fi and ham radio equipment from scratch or kits — all tubes.

As I reach my twilight years, I compared my life to a vacuum tube. Man, I was hot stuff in 1959, entering college. If you ever put your fingers on a tube while the set was on, you know what hot is all about. The tube envelope is glass, like a light bulb, and has a glowing white hot filament that emits electrons to a plate wrapped around the filament. A grid between them modulates the input signal as well as amplifies it. In a nutshell, that's how a tube operates.

**I called my acupuncturist last night and told him I was in pain. He told me to take two safety pins and call him in the morning.**

As the tubes in a TV set, for example, aged, they'd collect dust on the glass envelope. I've gathered my share of dust over the years. The dust made the tube even hotter and subject to premature failure. A very few tubes had a microscopic air leak near a pin located on the bottom which would cause the filament to burn out like a light bulb goes out. If that happened to your set, and you looked behind it, often you could see the tube that was not glowing and cold, and you bought a new one.

Many people's lives end prematurely for reasons of disease and nature. If your TV just started acting funny and/or lost the picture, there was a good chance a tube was going bad, same as when a human gets sick, they need a doctor.

The tube doctor was at all electronic stores. It was the tube checker where you took a sack full of the tubes you removed to test each one and replace the



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weak or faulty ones. You only had to forget one time, where each tube went, before you marked the chassis with a pen or pencil for the next time. A few costly sets had the tube number stamped next to their socket. What a blessing.

As the tube aged, its electron emission often decreased, weakening the output. Yep, that fits me. Most times, tubes would have a really long lifespan. However, some tubes put in radio sets in the forties, particularly the ones resting quietly in an old storage room somewhere, will still perform when turned on again, and the jolt of electricity surges through it. Me too.

Vacuum tubes are a bit like a cat as well. The more they rest over the years, only occasionally coming to full output, the more they increase their life. Now, all humans need regular moderate exercise, and using a retired tube for a few hours helps keep any tiny amount of oxygen that may have seeped in during a long sleep, burned up, keeping the tube fit.

Compared to a TV set, many of our long lives have needed replacement parts over the years, whether it be new joints,



like a replacement tube, or maybe removing a gallbladder, similar to a TV needing a new capacitor or resistor that occasionally go bad.

A positive mental attitude and never holding a grudge will keep the dust off your soul like keeping dust off the tube glass — makes it work better and longer.

Seeing a few glowing tubes looking in the back of an “All American Five” radio that contained exactly five tubes and was made by the hundreds of thousands, reminds me of myself. I’m happy to see my filaments glowing brightly, even if my chassis has had a lot of replacement parts over the years.

So may the years play soothing music through my speaker, and may my volume and tone controls not get scratchy.



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John Purdy  
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# The Emerald Gems of Fussy Hill

by Kate Hopkins



According to the 1951 Riverton High School yearbook there were 26 students in the senior class and the book is dedicated to Mr. and Mrs. J.D. Wigley. They were the respected Vocational Agriculture and Home Economic teachers.

Another gem in that class is Bobby Green! He was the star point guard for the basketball team and was named All County his Junior and Senior years. He was also on the baseball team, President of the Future Farmers of America and on the yearbook staff. Under his photo is the quote "Being industrious we can't deny, he'll reach the top by and by."

Bobby was born in 1932, which was in the middle of the Great Depression. To make a little money for the family his dad would shoot rabbits and then sell them to Alabama A & M for ten cents each.

**"Last night as I lay in bed looking up at the beautiful stars, I thought, 'What happened to my ceiling?'"**

*Jeb Frederick, Woodville*

During a recent interview Bobby told several amusing stories. His first official date was with Betty Richardson. They went to a drive-in movie and when asked what type of car he had he replied that he didn't remember the car BUT he did remember how he was able to purchase the vehicle. His father, Clarence (nicknamed "Beaver") Green, gave him a small plot of land, and suggested that he could plant, grow and harvest enough cotton to make some spending money. His Dad's final words were "Don't ask for another penny!" That was an example of tough love, but it worked to mold a strong, independent and self-sufficient man.

Bobby did well enough in school to win academic scholarship offers from Auburn and Georgia Tech. He went to look over both campuses but decided on another path. He knew that his family could not afford to send him to college. The Korean War (1950-1953) was going on at that time, so Bobby came up with a new plan and decided to enlist in the Air Force, serve his nation, then use the G.I. Bill for college when he got back home.

Once back at the old home place in New Market Bobby took courses at Calhoun College and married his high school sweetheart, Nancy and started a family. Life was busy with three children and developing a successful, respected real estate/construction business. Beaver went to work for Bobby building homes and out of safety concerns for his aging Dad, Bobby told him never to go up on a roof or tall ladder.

One day when Bobby returned to a job site and found

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his dad at the tallest point on the roof of a two-story house. He was very upset and yelled at Beaver "Get down, go home, you are fired!"

Many of you will remember the great hamburgers at Cafe 302 on Winchester Road, that was near Riverton school. The owner/operator, Cindy, is Bobby's daughter. When her granddad walked in, he told her that his son had just fired him and asked her for a job at the cafe. Beaver asked what type of jobs did she have open? Cindy told him that a dishwasher was needed, and that the kitchen help hated chopping onions so he could also take over that task.

He would tell the story that his son fired him and his granddaughter hired him on the same day. Cindy would tell her granddad not to come to work until 7:00 a.m. but Beaver always reported for work at 5:00 a.m. He was so well liked that people often would drop by the cafe to have a few words with him and jokingly he would ask "Do they have any money?"

Cindy says that he was the very best man she ever knew, and he always said, "If you don't have something nice to say about a person Do Not say anything at all."

That cafe sold after thirty years in business.

Beaver Green and his wife Hester lived a few yards away from Bobby on Fussy Hill Road. I asked about how that name came about and was told that there is a rather steep hill at the corner of Fussy Hill and Hurricane Road. Back in the day, of wagons, the mules would have a difficult time pulling the wagons up that hill. The farmers and drivers would get irritated at each other because of the slow progress and would swear and "fuss" at each other. Fussy Hill Road sounds much better than Swearing Hill Road!

The Greens' Church life revolved around Locust Grove Baptist where the traditional values of kindness and manners are very important. Beaver lived a long, happy, productive life (1911-2004) and is buried next to beloved Hester (1910-1987) in the church cemetery. Bobby, at age 90, built a beautiful log home and still lives on Fussy Hill.

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# It's Lifting Off!

by Bill Wilson

In the early sixties, a disarmed and motorless V1 Rocket stood like a sentinel on a concrete pad in front of the former Army Auditorium on Redstone Arsenal. During this exciting and hectic decade, NASA was established and staffed with core personnel from the Army Ballistic Missile Agency.

However, for a certain anonymous someone in the contractor group, the lone V1 shell stationed in front of the auditorium posed an irresistible temptation for a practical joke. Of course, in today's hyper-secure military environments, such an escapade as the V1 caper described below would simply not be possible at all.

"Anonymous" and two of his cohorts decided to "arm" the missile with several railroad flares and a home-made timer set to go off at 7:30 just after dark. To any casual observer, it would look like the missile was in the first stage of liftoff. What would happen after that was anybody's guess.

On the appointed evening, after setting the crude timer switch constructed from batteries and an old watch, the trio set out cross country to a nearby hill to watch the unfolding drama with binoculars.

Around 7:30 as expected, the V1 exhaust suddenly lit up with a fiery red glow sending brilliant cascades of sparks onto the concrete pad below. The result was instant chaos.

In the ensuing response, fire trucks and every available MP vehicle on the Arsenal was assembled and converged on the Auditorium.

The Arsenal switchboard lit up like a Christmas tree. Urgent calls were placed to Dr. Von Braun and members of his staff - all of which elicited the same general response.

The following dialogue is a representative recreation of several of the ensuing conversations:

"Hello, this the Duty Officer at Redstone Arsenal. I have an urgent problem with the V1 missile in front of the Auditorium. It has ignited and is lifting off. Is it armed?"

"Armed? Nein... it has no motor either... it can't lift off... it is just the shell of a missile for display only. There must be a mistake."

"Shell, Hell! ..It's fixing to lift off! I'm hanging out the window right now with the phone in my hand and I'm looking straight at it. It's shooting fire in all directions. It's gonna go up any minute!!"

"Mein Gott, zat is impossible!"

"Then, Sir, I am a first-hand witness to the impossible!"

Meanwhile, in spite of its ominous startup, the rogue missile stayed firmly rooted to terra firma. The firemen gradually edged closer and closer to the flaming rocket and announced that there was some kind of red fire in the exhaust. Then, after an even better look, they said the fire looked and smelled like railroad flares.

As the anxious crowd watched, the flares burned out one by one and the missile never budged. The crisis was over.

The MP's were ordered to fan out and look for the culprits. But it was already too late. The trio had slipped away cross-country to an awaiting vehicle parked just outside the Arsenal.

In an ironic touch, the MP's picked up and later released a hapless railroad worker walking down the Arsenal railroad tracks with guess what - an arm load of railroad flares.

I have never learned who the two other members of the trio were. I suspect that Anon, who was indeed my co-worker friend as well as a very able mathematician from Texas nicknamed Cactus Jack who has long since departed this world. He simply knew too many of the details of the V1 caper, but he never admitted that he was party to that episode nor would he identify the other two. However, because there are so many other outrageous legends surrounding the life of the late Cactus Jack, I remain thoroughly convinced that he was, at a minimum, part of the V1 caper and may have very well been the ringleader himself.

**"Never make a woman mad.  
They can remember stuff  
that hasn't even  
happened yet."**

**Joe Roberts, Married**

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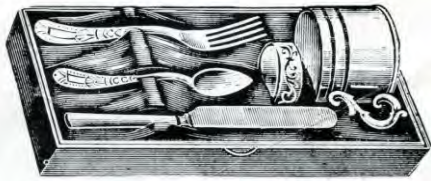
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# KITCHEN PHYSICS

*by Gerald Alvis,  
the Poet of Greenlawn*



I make most of the messes at home, so it's only fair I help with the cleaning. I load the dishwasher and will do a load of towels, but I am generally disallowed from washing any other thing that has fabric. I will sneak in a load of jeans every now and then, but I know my limitations, and we agree to pick our battles on that one.

I get clothes and stuff to the utility room (however, not sorted in one of the four hampers.) Kind of like leaving dishes around the kitchen near the sink and dishwasher. Being in the zone isn't what Ann has in mind. I thought close (on the floor) or on the counter was enough.

Evidently, with Dishwashers, there are things that go on the top shelf and the same for the bottom and even how they are spaced. So what I thought was a simple job has a rhyme and reason, so I try to be a good student.

There is one thing that is a mystery, the need to wash the dish before it goes in the dishwasher. And there is a thing called

"soaking the dishes" in the sink. I just feel like I'm drowning bread crumbs.

I do have my suspicions that she waits and then rearranges my disorder in this mandatory kitchen appliance. When I open it to put the dishes up, they are in different locations and all orderly. Or could it be something else?

What was first a possible accusation got me thinking, and what was born was a new theory in Physics based on deterministic chaos and Schrodinger's Cat!

Test it yourself! First, scan the entire kitchen and scout out the rest of the house for stray dishes and utensils, but as soon as the door is closed on the dishwasher and the start button is pressed, that's when the magic happens. Look up, and there on the counter, an unwashed glass will appear!! Will you stop the dishwasher and add the glass or not? It boggles the mind!

Next week's topic will be "The lost sock in the dryer hypothesis." Maybe one was added instead. See neutrinos or ghost particles for more information (though I have not ruled out a time portal.)



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# Tips from Earlene

\* If you have a hard time finding your home door key on a key chain full of other keys, just use some bright red nail polish and paint each side of the key (not on the part that goes into the lock) and you'll save time!

\* Tiredness collects on the insides of one's elbows and the backs of one's knees. Wake up your body by slapping both those areas.

\* If you feel sluggish in the morning it may be your gallbladder. Try drinking 3 tablespoons of fresh lemon juice in half a glass of warm water, a half hour before breakfast - do this for a week and see if you feel better.

\* Add radiance to your red hair right after you shampoo by pouring a cup of strong Red Zinger tea through your hair, leave it on for 5 minutes & rinse.

\* It has been proven that people who eat 2 apples a day have fewer headaches than those who don't eat the fruit.

\* White grape juice is said to absorb the body's acid, which adds to arthritis & gout. Drink 1 glassful in the morning and one before dinner.

\* Instant reviver for hot flashes - rush to the fridge and open both the freezer and fridge side. Stand as close to it as possible til you feel normal again.

\* If you suffer a bruise, peel a banana, discard the fruit and place the inside of the peel against the bruise and tape it down for the night. This really will help.

\* Positive energy is inhaled through the right nostril. Put a piece of cotton in your left nostril and breathe through your right nostril for an hour. You will be revitalized!

\* During a sinus attack, chew a one-inch square of hon-

eycomb. After you swallow the honey, continue to chew the honeycomb for 10 minutes. It can help clear up the congestion and give you a burst of energy, too which we all need.

\* If you burn candles that smell like cinnamon or vanilla chances are you eat more sweets than you realize. Change them to non-food smelling candles and start losing weight.

\* If you have cramps or restless legs at night in bed, one grandmother swears by Ivory soap. She unwraps it, puts it at her feet under the sheets, and has a good night's sleep.

Live your life so that you like what you see in the mirror every day.



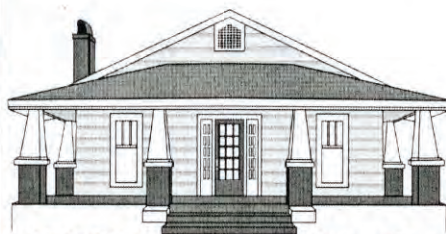
*Love to the Huntsville High Class of 1966  
From Oscar Llerena, HHS class of 1966*

**"To all parents -  
Never let your daughter  
take a purse to church large  
enough to hold a kitten."**

*Jan Bart, Arab*

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# Cruisin' in 1959

by Bill Alkire



Jimmy played the saxophone in our little band, the Crystals (if one could call it a band). We were not very good - but we enjoyed performing together. Jimmy's dad was wheelchair bound from a war injury; his mom was timekeeper for Norfolk Southern Railway.

Jimmy's mom had recently purchased a 1958 Mercury Turnpike Cruiser, a massive two door hardtop, white with gold trim and tan interior, windshield mounted air ducts, Air Conditioning, power windows, power brakes, power and adjustable steering wheel. Cruiser fender skirts, Continental Tire Kit, a powerful 430 cid 350 hp V-8 engine, a power rear window, dual mirrors, and Wonder Bar radio. "Wow! What a ride!"

We were cruising with all the windows down, the radio blasting out as loud as it would go, and all of us singing along to Chuck Berry's "Maybellene". We decided to drive to Altop's Grocery on the west side of Belington, just across the railroad tracks, and buy RC Colas and bags of peanuts.

As we drove, the conversation was about Mercury's awesome features. Of note was the transmission gear shift selector mounted in the center of the steering

wheel (that was the only and last year). Jimmy began demonstrating the various shift buttons. As we crossed the railroad tracks into west Belington, he pushed the "R" button - throwing the car immediately in reverse. Mercury's front end nosed down slamming us forward - then the momentum shifted - we were slammed rearward just as quickly, Mercury had stopped! CLUNK! CLANK! Then nothing, the silence was deafening, the Mercury was dead. The Mercury and its inhabitants set straddling the two sets of railroad tracks.

All-out effort to restart the Mercury's powerful 430 cid engine failed. Red fluid emptied onto the tracks as the Mercury's transmission began to bleed to death. We attempted to push the Mercury from off the tracks - it was locked-up tighter than a closed-up coke oven. Then the night became quite dark as a cloud passed overhead blocking out the

moon. This was not going to be a good night!

Jimmy called his mom from the nearby Gaston's Rexall Drugstore. Craig Ford-Lincoln-Mercury's wrecker came and hauled the Mercury to their garage. It was like watching a hearse pull away headed for the graveyard for burial. We all felt remorseful and sorry for Jimmy. His mom, all 250 pounds of her, could be hard to deal with.

We never cruised Mercury again. Jimmy was permanently grounded from driving without his mom in the car. The dealer was able to repair the transmission on the Mercury. The warranty covered the damage, there was a recall to prevent this from occurring.

We had to use my 1953 Studebaker for transportation after that. BUMMER! Jimmy entered the U.S. Navy in September and went on to play with the Navy Band in different venues. I joined the U.S. Army a year later.

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# Depression Days



by Ruby Crabbe

Times were hard back in the Depression days of 1929. People were called "well-to-do" if they could have two bowls of Hoover Gravy for Sunday breakfast instead of one bowl. The kids called gravy "cob sop" - their parents called it "growing mash." Tasted pretty good if you had a nice slab of steak or lean to go with it.

A lot of the drippings from fatback were used in making lye soap - that is, if you didn't use it all in making gravy. That soap was used in washing clothes, cleaning, and washing all 2,000 parts of your body. The big iron wash pot the lye soap was made in also was used in making the finest hominy this side of the Mason-Dixon line.

Our mama, Josie Allen, had the prettiest, cleanest floors in Dallas Village. Or, at least, we kids thought she did. On floor scrubbing day, she would send us to the ballpark where Rison School had ball games. A big ditch ran alongside of the ball field and in that ditch we would get a big sack of sand, carry it home, sprinkle it on the floor, and lightly scrub with clear water. A lot of people wondered how Mama had such clean floors.

I also remember many people bragging on Mama's silverware. Her little secret of having sparkling clean silverware was also unique. She would take the silverware, find a nice clean spot in our yard and every one of us would take one piece of silverware at a time and stick it down in the ground and rub it up and down, up and down. Then Mama would take all the silverware back into the house, wash it with scalding water,

rinse it real good and then dry it, piece by piece, with a dish towel. That silverware, after all those many years ago, is still as bright and shiny as the first day it was bought.

Oh, yes, the Hoover Days during the Depression were hard on everyone, but that didn't dampen the spirit of us kids hatching up jokes to pull on people.

Bill Jaco lived next door to us on Rison Avenue and he could always come up with a good joke on someone or a good laugh for everyone. I remember the day he made the finest "streetcar" dummy you've ever seen. That's the first and the last dummy I've ever seen that looked so alive. On Stevens Avenue and 5th Street (renamed Andrew Jackson Way), a bench was placed next to a big tree so the streetcar would-be riders would have a place to sit while waiting for the streetcar.

When Bill caught that bench empty he placed his dummy right on the bench. There that look-alive dummy sat— legs crossed, work shoes on, hat pulled down over his eyes as if taking a nap, or resting his stomach from eating so much Hoover gravy. He looked more like a man resting from a hard day's work. I declare, he looked more alive than a lot of people who occupied that bench.

Bill was hiding behind that tree when the dummy's first victim ascended next to him. A little old lady, bless her heart — I never did find out who she was, but she spoke to that dummy, "Nice day, isn't it, sir." Not getting a response, she leaned over toward the dummy to speak again, but her movement shook the bench and off the dummy went, right on top of her feet. With a whoop and a holler she came off that bench, and down the street she went like a whirlwind that knew no direction. She was yelling, "dead man, dead man," and gaining speed with every word.

Minutes later an ambulance drove up, followed by the biggest crowd of people you've ever seen. People were coming up the street, down the street, across the street and a few seemed to appear out of nowhere.

After a lot of questioning, searching and hunting, the ambulance left and the crowd slowly disappeared. A lot of people, after all those years, are still wondering about the "dead man's" disappearance.

What I've wondered about after all these many years is where in the world did the little old lady go.

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## REMEMBERING EAST CLINTON SCHOOL

*by Nolan Myrick (written  
in 2012)*

The other night I saw on television that the city of Huntsville plans to sell East Clinton School. I want to tell some of what I remember about the school and what it means to me.

In 1950 I was 6 years old and had all my shots and was ready for first grade. I was a short, fat scared boy who wasn't ashamed that his mother was taking him to his first day at school. They knew I was coming and were ready for me. Mrs. Baxter was going to be my teacher. I have remembered her for about 61 years. She taught me to respect other people and how to count to 100.

My next teacher I remember was Mrs. George, my third grade teacher. She lived

**"When people see my litter box they always say, 'Oh, do you have a cat?' Just once I want to say, 'No, it's for company.'"**

*Jean McIntosh, Huntsville*

on Pratt Avenue and had 2 boys: Rusty and Julian. I remember Rusty because he won a Donald Duck bicycle at the Lyric theatre uptown. Mrs. George lived across the street from the Strong family, as best as I can remember.

We all walked to school each day. Mason Daniels, my next door neighbor, was older than me and it was his job each day to make sure I made it to school.

The next grade I remember was the fifth grade and Mrs. Henshaw was my teacher. They had some kind of dance at school that year. I told Mrs. Henshaw I was a Baptist and I wasn't going to dance. Somehow our preacher, M.G. Wilson, got a hold of it. The next thing I remember I was on the Slim Lay program on the radio. He asked me some questions and I answered them. The end was I didn't dance.

My next year was one of the best. It was the sixth grade and I got in Mrs. Howard's room. She lived up on Randolph somewhere. Every year she took her class to the Smoky Mountains, on a Trailways bus. I remember the bus broke down in Copper Hill, Tn. We sat beside the road a long time until we got another bus. We spent the first night in Bryson City and went on to Cherokee the next day. Going to the Smokies changed my life. I still read about the Smokies, especially Cades Cove.

Mrs. Woods was our principal and I spent a lot of time with her. I would go in the rest room and wet paper towels and wad them up and throw them up until they stuck to the ceiling. I also got bit by a squirrel on Holmes Avenue one day while on school patrol. I caught the squirrel and Mr. Garrison at the health dept. sent it to Montgomery to see if it had rabies. It came back negative and I was all right.

I also learned to play the coronet at East Clinton. The band director was Mr. Page and we met every Tuesday and Thursday in the new lunchroom.

From where I sit up here in Tennessee, East Clinton seems a long way off. I took some of my grandchildren down to East Clinton to play on the swings. Time goes on and some of the best people I know in Huntsville went to East Clinton .....my friends.



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**References Available**

# MADE IN CHINA

by Judy Chandler Smith



I've got a real problem, and I am hoping one of our readers can come to my rescue. Several years ago, I had a knee replacement, and my lifesaver was an electric scooter that I ordered from one of the shopping channels. It was perfect, ready to use just out of the box, with free shipping, mash a button and it unfolds, mash another button, and it would rise up ready to use. Easy to put in the car for trips as it weighed less than a baby stroller. I thought I had found gold. I couldn't have been more pleased. So easy to move around the house since using crutches was out of the question because of hand surgery. I became very attached to my blue scooter. I could even take my dog for a walk around the block. We were both happy.

Just the other day, I found out there is no putting off having the other knee replaced. I knew my scooter would be my constant companion when I got home, or would it?

I charged the scooter for eight hours and got ready to use it, and to my surprise, the battery would not charge, so I tried again and again nothing happened. I started to CRY. What am I going to do? We called the company and were told it's difficult to find this lithium battery that costs around \$800 and comes from China. It is a 25.2 Volt Lithium Battery for the EV Rider Transport AF (S19AF). There is a back order of three months or more, if they can even get one by then.



What am I going to do? I have a fancy \$2200 plus scooter, just what I need, and nowhere to get a battery to make it work. No dog walks or knee surgery for me until China sends a new battery my way, even on a special order. I was told sorry. Well, sorry isn't going to work. If anyone out there can help me, I would greatly appreciate it. Until then, Grandma will be sitting at home. HELP!!!

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# PET TIPS FROM ANGEL

## *Separation Anxiety is Real*

by Dr. Bob Gutierrez and  
Dr. Karen Overall



Many pets go through much anxiety with any type of separation from their family. Here are a few ideas about how to help decrease a little of that feeling.

**Separate slowly.** To help your pet get used to your absences, you'll have to begin gradually. Try to give your dog a treat and leave the room for a minute, shutting the door behind you. When you come back, your dog will act like you're just back from a long European vacation, but at least she'll know she can survive one minute without you. Gradually work your way up to the point where your dog can spend an hour or two in a separate part of the house without being concerned.

**Step out for a moment.** After your dog gets used to being in another part of the house without you, try leaving the house for very short periods.

"One Saturday I practiced leaving 20 times for just a few minutes at a time. For 15 homecomings, my dog acted like God had returned. Then something clicked and he barely even noticed when I was coming and going," Dr. Bob Gutierrez says. "He was pretty much fine after that."

**Don't coddle her.** When you leave the house, don't make a big fuss. Say, "See you later" and leave. Be equally nonchalant when you come home. "This way you're telling your dog it's no big deal when you come or go — that it's okay to be alone," Bob says.

But leave her a special treat. When you leave the house, give your dog something special to chew — something she never gets when you're together. That way the dog may come to look forward to the treat more than she worries about you saying good-bye.

Try stuffing a hollow shank bone or rubber chew toy with goodies like peanut butter or cream cheese. Dogs can spend hours at a time working on these and forget that you're gone.

### **Some good tips:**

\* Work out her worries. Before leaving your dog alone, take her out for a romp. If you get her thoroughly tired, there's a decent chance she'll sleep the entire time you're gone.

\* Practice her lessons. To make the most of outdoor jaunts, vets recommend using them for extra

training time. "When a dog knows what you want and what's expected, she's likely to be more confident. And a confident dog is less anxious," Dr. Gutierrez says.

\* Find her a friend. "Since dogs are pack animals by nature, the company of another pet might make her feel completely different about your departures," says Carol Lea Benjamin, a New York City dog trainer and author. "Getting another dog might be great, but even having a cat around can decrease your dog's anxiety and make her feel comfortable," she says.

\* Tune in to tune out. Turn on the radio so your dog can't hear little noises nearby. Just set it to a station you normally listen to, at the usual volume. Or try putting on "white noise" from a fan or special noise machine.

\* Prescription Relief - When nothing you do seems to calm your panicky pooch, your vet may recommend mild medications that can help take the fear away and make panicked dogs sleepy, drugs such as amitriptyline (Elavil) and buspirone (BuSpar) can actually help them feel normal. "To some people, these are miracle drugs," says Dr. Overall. "They give them back the pet they thought they'd lost forever."

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# A GOOD LIFE

*by Tom Carney, originally written in 2016*

Mrs. Ruth Jenkins was 98 years old when we recorded her memories. She had lived in Huntsville most of her life and had no desire to be anywhere else. This is her story:

"When Mama and Daddy moved to town (1902) I never had any idea there were so many houses and people. We lived in this little three room house."

"Mostly what I remember about it is the mud. Whenever it rained the road in front of the house would be so muddy, the buggies would get stuck. My brother and I were playing in the road one day right after it rained and my feet got stuck in the mud. That mud just sucked my shoes right off my feet. Mama really got mad at me because that was the only pair of shoes I had."

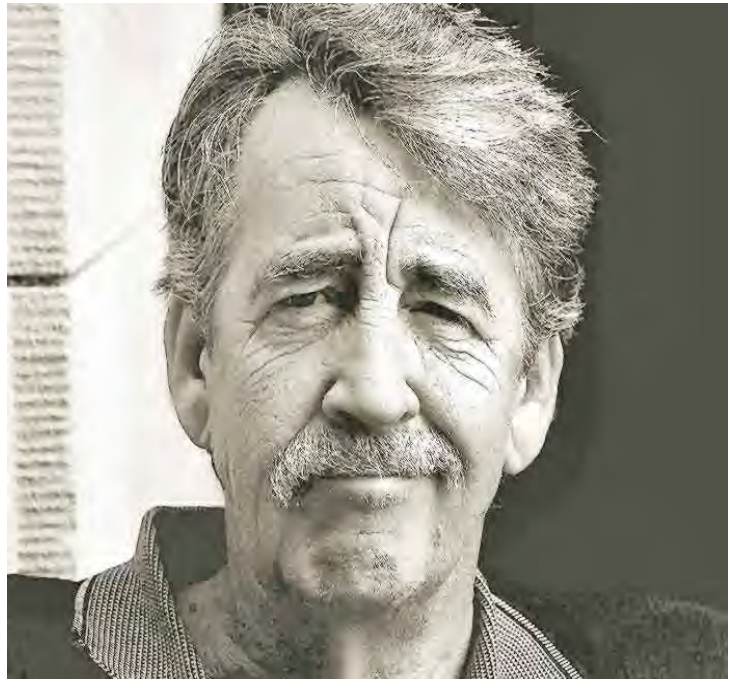
"When they declared war back in 1917 or 18, I was working at the telephone office. Mr. Hughes, my manager, would listen on the phone for a minute and then rush outside to tell the crowds what was happening. That night we stayed open all night and there was a crowd in front of the office the whole time, waiting for the news."

"Cecil was courting me at the time and he couldn't hardly wait to enlist. He was young and wanted adventure and wanted to defend his country. The day that him and all of his friends signed up, they were so happy. They were scared the War would be over before they got a chance to do any fighting."

"I remember Uncle Cabe sitting on the front porch of the house that afternoon watching the young men and looking real sad. Uncle Cabe had fought in the Civil War and had lost one of his legs in a brutal attack."

"When Cecil came back from France we got married. He had gotten gassed during the war and had a lot of trouble breathing for the rest of his life. He never talked about the war or the fighting to anyone as far as I know. I remember he had terrible nightmares and would sometimes wake up in the middle of the night in a terrible fit."

"He got a job in a garage and I kept working until I had our little girl Martha. We had a good life together. We bought a house and Cecil spent all of his spare time fixing it up. During the summer we had a large garden plot behind the house that Cecil had plowed up for me. I grew all kinds



of vegetables and we had several apple trees. I made yellow curtains for the kitchen. I still have them somewhere. We gave \$700 for that house."

"When the banks crashed Cecil lost his job. He wasn't by himself, cause most of the people we knew were unemployed. He got a part-time job cleaning a bar after it closed at night and sometimes he could pick up a little day job,"

"We kept using that plot of ground in the back of the house and that summer I planted it all in green beans. We had stewed green beans, green bean casserole and every other kind I could think of. We just about lived off those beans. I can't hardly eat green beans today without thinking of Cecil. He hated them awful, but he acted like he liked them. In those days our gardens kept us alive."

"When Roosevelt got elected, times got a little better. Cecil got this job working in a CCC camp

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and he was able to send home a little money. He was a foreman or something, teaching other people how to work on cars."

"The very last thing I expected to hear was when I got a visit from the preacher at our church. He brought word of Cecil being killed. It was an accident that nobody could help. He died instantly and wasn't in pain. He was a good man and a good husband. I still miss him so bad sometimes and still don't really believe that happened. I wonder how things could have been different if we had grown old together. We always talked about how many grandkids we'd be playing with,"

"When the Second War started, Martha and I got a job in a defense plant helping pack ammunition. We were making good money, but there wasn't anything to spend it on. Just about everything was rationed. Martha met a young man with the blackest hair and the bluest eyes and got married about then. He was a pretty boy, didn't want to get his hands dirty but loved to paint. He was very artistic. He was shipped out right after they got married and was killed on some island in the Pacific."

"It looked like things were changing so fast after the War was over. Everybody had money and jobs, I think that the 1950s were the best time to be alive. Everybody was happy then."

"Martha bought a television about that time. It was one of those real big box things and it had a little bitty picture screen on it. We didn't have an antennae so we took some clothes wire and ran it to a tree in the

back yard. For the sake of me, I never could figure out how they could send those pictures through the air."

"Back when I was a little girl, riding in a horse and buggy, if someone had told me that I would see men walk on the moon, and that I would be looking at little moving pictures on a small box, why I would have said they were crazy."

"When Martha got married again it was about the happiest day of my life. John is a good man and has taken good care of her. They've had their ups and downs but gave me five dear grandchildren that Cecil and I always talked about playing with when we got old."

"Do I have any regrets? No ... I've had a good life. A lot of things could have been different, but the Good Lord has blessed me."

"I hope my grandchildren can have as good a life as I have had."

## The Funeral

While walking along the sidewalk in front of his church our minister heard the intoning of a prayer that nearly made his starched collar wilt.

Apparently, his 5-year-old son and his playmates had found a dead robin. Feeling that proper burial should be performed, they had secured a small box and white cotton batting, then dug a hole and made ready for the disposal of the deceased.

The minister's son was the one chosen to say the appropriate prayers and with sonorous dignity, intoned his version of what he thought his father always said:

"Glory be unto the Faaather, and unto the Sonnn, and into the hole he goooses,."

(I want this line used at my funeral!)

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**Somewhere in between."**

*Seen in dictionary*

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# Old Home Place

by James Thomas Vann

Two of my uncles farmed land within a half mile of the "old home place". Uncle Olan Wilbourn owned about 100 acres on the north side of Wall Road just east of the Wall Road and Highway 72 intersection. In my eyes, he was always a funny character. He was always making jokes and trying to be funny. His wife's name was Gladys. She had been married previously and had a son from that marriage.

Olan and Gladys had a son named M.J. (Macon Jamison) Wilbourn. He graduated from the University of Alabama after serving a term in the U.S. Navy. He ended up being a college professor and taught at Jeff State in Birmingham and later at an extension of Auburn University. M.J. passed away in 2021. Whoever ended up being the owner of that farm sold the property recently and there is a really nice neighborhood being built on that property.

Uncle Olan was a rather small man and I'll never forget the time he had borrowed a huge bull to service a cow that he had. This little man fearlessly led that huge bull onto a trailer and returned him to his owner. I'll never forget that scene. M.J. and I shared some great times together.

My uncle Otis had his farm a little farther east. The railroad track that crosses Moontown Road north of Highway 72 was on the south side of his property. Going north on Moontown Road, just after crossing the railroad track there's a dirt road that turns east and runs along beside the railroad track. After a couple of hundred yards that road turns left and goes up to the house where Uncle Otis and Aunt Lily lived.

It was a stone building that he built himself. I asked him about building the house one time and he said he had hauled the stones from the Moontown area. I asked if that was hard work and he replied, "No, it only took about 35 loads in a mule drawn wagon."

I remember many stories about Otis and Lily. Mike and I would go visit them occasionally,

usually on Sunday afternoon. When Beth was a little girl, she was with us one Sunday. They always had a dog around and Beth had been playing with the dog. Aunt Lily always made me a batch of teacakes that I loved very much. She asked Beth if she would like a teacake and she said yes but she would have to wash her hands because of handling the dog. Beth proceeded into the kitchen and returned shortly saying that she couldn't find the sink. That was because there was no sink. Aunt Lily went with her into the kitchen and with the dipper, dipped up a dishpan full of well water for her to use. They did not have running water for years.

Uncle Otis was a real hunter. He had what we called a "brace of Beagle dogs" that he used to hunt rabbits. He kept them in the barn. When he was ready to go rabbit hunting, he would blow on a hollowed-out cow horn and those dogs would nearly tear

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the barn down because they knew they were going hunting. Uncle Otis knew each dog by their bark and I remember while hunting, he could be heard to say, "There's old Dixie, she's got one on the run."

Those dogs would run the rabbits around to where Uncle Otis was and we could always have rabbit for a meal. When we were ready to quit hunting and go home, Uncle Otis would blow the cow horn again and within minutes all the dogs would be back at the truck.

Uncle Otis and Aunt Lily had 3 sons. The oldest was E.J., next was Billy Ray and the third was Dennis Wilbourn. They all had homes there on Moontown Road.

I think Otis's farm was about 100 acres. It was bound on the east side by the Flint River, which is where I learned to swim. My Aunt Maxie was my teacher. Uncle Otis and Aunt Lily were generally considered poor. I remember one of their boys told me that during that year their income was \$600.00. They earned that by pulling corn off the stalks and throwing it into a mule drawn wagon. They sold the corn for the \$600.00.

If you ever wanted a good meal, they could provide one. They grew a large garden and would can or preserve vegetables in two large freezers that were in their kitchen. Uncle Otis could provide the meat for the meal with his hunting skills or from the slaughter of an animal raised on their place.

While plowing the area for their garden they would occasionally find a minnie ball which was the slug from a black powder rifle. The minnie balls could have been from a Civil War battle that occurred on that property. At least that's what we kids imagined.

My uncle Horton "Buddy" Wilbourn served in the Army and after being discharged graduated from the University of Alabama, probably on the GI Bill. He became a school teacher and later served as the principal of several schools. We visited him and his wife Laura

May Herford Wilbourn when he was the Principal of the Opp, (Alabama) High School.

There was a city swimming pool within walking distance of their home. The kids that worked at the pool were students at Opp High School. I got pretty good treatment when they found out who my uncle was.

Uncle Buddy served as the principal at the New Hope High School and the Riverton High School as well. When he retired from teaching school, he became a rural route mail carrier. Uncle Buddy and his family lived on the Bone plantation on Hurricane Creek Road. The Bone Plantation had been part of an Indian reservation. The arrowheads were plentiful and my cousin Jimmy had an incredible collection of Indian artifacts.

My uncle Roy Wall who was my mom's sister Clara's husband was quite a character also. He was the Postmaster at the Brownsboro Post Office for many years. He also ran a little general store that was part of the Post Office. I would

usually spend a week with Uncle Roy and Aunt Clara each summer.

I had some real experiences with Uncle Roy at the Post Office and store. I learned how to make things by putting materials on the railroad track and when the train ran over them you could have some interesting objects. I remember crossing two nails on the track and after the train ran over them you would have what looked like a perfect pair of scissors. Coke caps at that time had a piece of cork in the cap. When I put one of those on the track and the train ran over it, there was no sign of the cork. I never figured out what happened to the cork.

Many other playthings were made with the help of the train. Uncle Roy had diabetes and it used to amaze me to watch him give himself his insulin shots in his legs. Wall Road was named after Uncle Roy. His brother L.D. Wall was the Sheriff of Madison County from 1955 to 1967.

These are just a few of the memories I recall from the old home place.



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I have a very sweet disposition and used to be someone's kitty. I don't understand how I lost my home but I am ready to love a new family. I greet everyone who comes into my room and try to get them to pet me. Won't you please come to see me? I would be so glad to see you. When you come, ask to see Beauty, that's me.

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# The Boxcar & the Forty and Eight

by Iolanda Hicks



In life, as time passes, events happen, people come in and out of our lives. We sometimes find that those events, relationships, seem odd at the time but later, as years pass, you say to yourself "Ah ha! That's why it happened or that was why I met them!"

When I was working, a very kind and quiet lady joined our office one day, Betty Reisenweber. She was always busy and rarely got excited unless she was talking about her children or going with her husband. Ken, (shown in picture, as a young soldier) to the yearly Forty and Eight meeting. These were usually held in a different US city each year. Her husband, a 3 tour Vietnam Vet, had held several offices during the years and she, as a member in the Le Societe de Femmes, did the same. They, presently, are members of Huntsville American Legion Post 237 and the Forty and Eight.

I remembered this connection recently and contacted Betty, asking her about the Forty and Eight organization. It was connected to the French Boxcar (part of the Merci Train)

sitting on rails, inside the Huntsville Veterans Memorial Museum. In our "catch up" conversation, Betty offered to get me some information on The Forty and Eight. This she did, and because of this information and some research, I have been able to write this very interesting article on another piece of history at the museum. Thank you, Betty and Ken! This story is a true account of why there is a Boxcar in a Veterans Museum, sitting among all those vehicles of War. Hopefully, this story will also help our readers understand the meaning behind the Forty and Eight as it is associated with the Merci Boxcar and the Gratitude Train of 1949.

The 1879 Boxcar, as the subject of this article, was a special train car given to the Huntsville American Legion and 40 & 8. This boxcar, located in the Huntsville Veterans Memorial Museum, was part of the Gratitude Train that transported troops to the front lines and back, during WWI. It is smaller from our American boxcars because of it's narrower gauged track. During World War I, our soldiers (referred to as Dough-boys) were packed in these cars, traveling through Europe, to the frontlines. Those young men became very familiar with what was written on the inside walls of those cars: 40 Hommes 8 Chevaux or in English: 40 Men 8 Horses. Our young men remembered those words on the inside walls of those French boxcars and would refer to those boxcars as the Forty and Eight.

In 1920, fifteen men met in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania creating an organization called the Forty and Eight. The Forty and Eight and the American Legion would become one. Its members would be Veterans and active military with the main purpose of helping, by charitable means, veterans, their families, orphaned children and special causes. The organization would designate French terms to their officers, members and the structure of The Forty and Eight because France was where the name originated.

The Forty and Eight still stands today, even though the

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original members are long gone. The American Legion posts are not as many as they once were but they still exist throughout cities in the US and continue their charitable work.

When World War II was over, France and much of Europe were in dire need of help. America came to their aid. In 1947, a columnist by the name of Drew Pearson began a campaign asking Americans to donate food and clothing to help the people of France and Italy. A total of 700 train cars, filled with forty million dollars' worth of food and clothing, were soon sent to France, delivered on December 14, 1947. This train was called The American Friendship Train.

That grateful country reciprocated and to show their gratitude, in 1949, the French people filled 49 boxcars to be sent to the United States. These cars were the same cars that had transported our young men to the front lines during WWI. Each car was filled with a total of more than 50,000 gifts. These gifts were from the provinces of France and some from Italy, to thank the Americans for their help after the second World War. It is interesting to know, that more gifts were given but had to be turned back, because there was no more room in those cars for those gifts.

There was one car per state, with the 49th car to be shared between the District of Columbia and Hawaii. This Gratitude Train sailed aboard the ore carrier, the Magellan and arrived in New York City among fanfare and a salute from the air, by the United States Air Force.

The American Legion posts took responsibility of getting each state's boxcar to their locations which was usually the capital of each state. Montgomery, Alabama received their boxcar at Union Station on February 11, 1949 where it was loaded aboard a huge truck, soon parading down Dexter Avenue towards the capital.

Accompanying the boxcar in the parade, down the main street to the capital, were World War

II Veterans, high school bands, college students and an Air Force salute overhead. The boxcar was presented to Governor James "Big Jim" Folsom at that time and after the ceremony, taken to the Alabama Department of Archives and History to be opened.

A list of what gifts were in that car has not been located. Today, the Alabama Department of History has a few of the remaining gifts from that Boxcar which includes a wedding dress, vase, letters and drawings from the grateful children of World War II France. Now that some of the history behind the journey of the museum's boxcar has been explained, its story can be told. The Huntsville Times issue of February 11, 1949, told about the 40 & 8 boxcar being received in Alabama as part of the "Thank You" train from France, being loaded with gifts from the people of France and relics of that nation's history. The Boxcar was given to Post 2 of the American Legion in Montgomery, Alabama in 1949.

There it remained until 1959. Governor Folsom

had eventually given the Boxcar to the Huntsville American Legion and Voiture 1012. This probably took place around the time that the property of Post 2 was leased.

Joe Foster of Huntsville and at that time, a state official, also asked the post what was going to happen to the Boxcar. He too reiterated that Huntsville would like to take it and could display it. This was probably in and around the early 1960s. The boxcar traveled to Huntsville, Alabama soon after and was given into the care of the American Legion Post 37 (which later became the present Legion Post 237), and then to the Forty and Eight under Voiture 1012, the only Voiture in the Huntsville area at that time.

The Boxcar went "from pillar to post", and at one period of time shows it parked on an unused



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area of American Legion property behind a local club on South Memorial Parkway. When the property was sold, belonging to Voiture 1012 to an individual, the Boxcar remained on that property and was the subject of a Madison County Sheriff's raid in 1968, of 12 slot machines, that were being stored in the Boxcar.

The American Legion had originally given the city of Huntsville the Boxcar in 1965 but city officials were unaware of that ownership, so they had never removed the car from the lot that was sold.

Around 1970, it was moved to land at a nearby nursery school and in 1974 ended up at Cathedral Caverns. As the story goes, the Boxcar now in the area of Cathedral Caverns was serving as a quasi-billboard advertising the Caverns. It was rumored that in earlier years, Voiture 1012 evidently had no room for the boxcar when that post took over the boxcar's care. It had signed a 10 year lease with Cathedral Caverns to maintain and care for the Boxcar and moved there in April of 1974.

Unfortunately, since the Boxcar was out in the environment, it suffered tremendously and needed restoration. If it were to remain intact, the boxcar needed to come back to Huntsville.

James Record, member and Historian of Voiture 1012, took it

upon himself and with the help of the 515 US Army Ordnance Company from Redstone Arsenal, to transport the Boxcar back to Huntsville where it was placed at the Transportation Museum. This was on October 28, 1985. Funds were raised and volunteer labor from the Forty and Eight was provided and soon that little boxcar was brought back to its original condition.

Rededication of the Merci Boxcar was made almost 3 years later, on May 28, 1988, at the Huntsville Depot Transportation Museum, chaired by the now late James Record. This dedication was attended by the wife of the columnist Drew Pearson (the man who started the American food relief drive for the French after WWII) and the son of the late Governor of Alabama Jim Folsom (who had originally received the boxcar for Alabama).

There on Depot grounds, the car was displayed outdoors (for approx. 10 years) and it started to depreciate once again. In 1999, the Boxcar was given to the Veterans Memorial Museum. It was transported there by an Army Reserve here in Huntsville and The North Alabama Railroad Museum built the rails that the car now sits on.

Inside the boxcar now, instead of any of the gifts that were originally there in 1949, are four walls filled with memorabilia from World War I. This Merci boxcar is

finally "Home" where it is safe, dry and protected!!

This piece of history is one of many that you can see at the Veterans Memorial Museum. Come for a visit, from Wednesday through Saturday, 10:00 AM until 4:00 PM. You will be so amazed!



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# Burned to Death in Home in Meridianville where they were Locked In

*From 1923 Huntsville newspaper*



Three small children met a horrible death Monday afternoon about four miles from Meridianville, when their home was burned and they were trapped and burned to death without a chance to escape. They were the children of Mr. & Mrs. Hubert Whitworth.

The Whitworth home is located on an out-of-the-way road near Meridianville. It was necessary to leave the Pike Road at Meridianville and go more than four miles over a small narrow road. This finally turns off into a smaller trail and it was only after following this trail about a mile that the scene of the tragedy was reached. There is no means of communication except by automobile or other vehicle. The News has learned the following:

Late Monday afternoon Mrs. Whitworth was alone with the 3 small children - a boy of five years old, a girl four years old and a boy fourteen months old - when she decided to lock them in the home so that she could go about two hundred yards away to give a cow some water. Neighbors living about a quarter of a mile away saw smoke rising from the house and ran there as rapidly as possible. Mrs. Whitworth, attracted by the yells of the neighbors, also hurried back.

A brother of Mrs. Whitworth was the first

to arrive at the burning home and kicked the front door in. He attempted to force his way into the little children, who could be heard behind the flames screaming.

The fire was rapidly eating up the front part of the home and it was impossible to get the rear door open as it was heavily bolted. There were no windows in the rear through which they could be reached. The neighbors assembled in the front yard while the three little ones were screaming frantically as the flames closed in upon them. Mrs. Whitworth's brother reported that although he could get occasional glimpses of the children, who had crawled beneath a bed, he was badly burned about the hands, arms and face and couldn't get in to help them.

The mother of the children had hysterics as the burning walls fell in and the last cries of the little ones were heard. She tells us that those last sounds will replay in her head forever.

Just how the fire started is unknown. Mrs. Whitworth says there was no fire in the house when she left. The theory was advanced that the little ones had played with some matches and set the house on fire. However, when the flames were discovered all the front portion on the inside was burning and all efforts to force entrance were unavailing.

Those who witnessed the terrible tragedy could only stand helplessly by with tears streaming down their faces. It will never be forgotten.

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# When life was simple...



For the kids of West Huntsville, in 1959, the Center Theater was a popular place. Admission was 25 cents and a dime could buy you a bag of popcorn. However, not all movies met with everyone's approval. Local ministers condemned movies starring Ingrid Bergman, saying they were a glorification of adultery.

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