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Old Huntsville

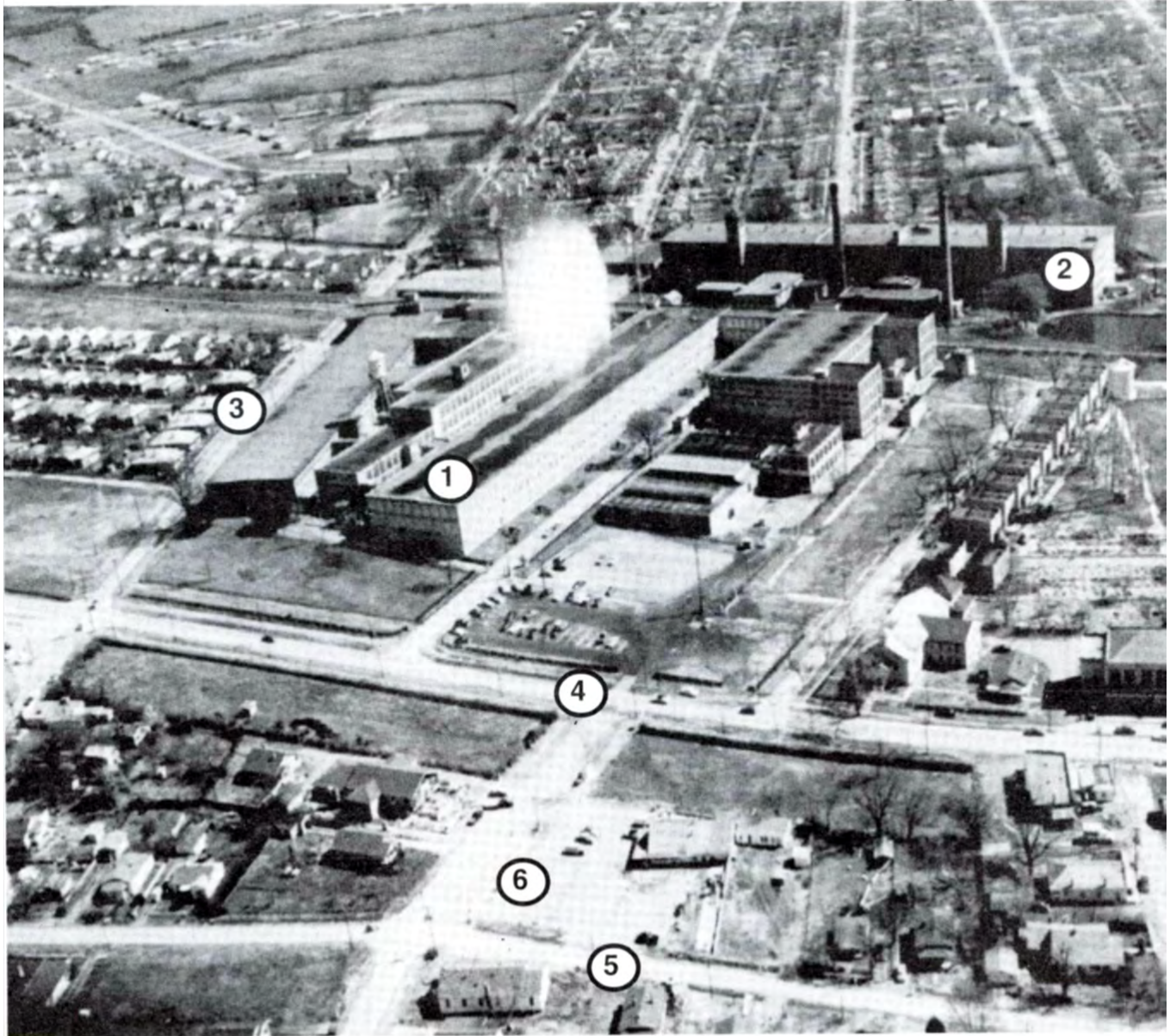
HISTORY AND STORIES OF THE TENNESSEE VALLEY

M. D. Smith, IV - The Interview



Also in this issue: Huntsville Park; Black Widow of Hazel Green;
My Vampire Cat; Moving to Huntsville in 1948; Decatur High Class of '52;
1911 News; Memories of an Army Brat; The McAnally Family; Our Trip to the Farm;
Pet Tips, Recipes and Remedies, Much More!

A LOOK BACK AT HUNTSVILLE HISTORY



Lincoln & Dallas Mills - circa 1950s

1 - Lincoln Mill
2 - Dallas Mill

3 - Oakwood Ave.
4 - Meridian Str.

5 - Kildare Str.
6 - Bill's drive-in

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M. D. Smith, IV - The Interview



by John H. Tate

Most Huntsvillians know the name M.D. Smith IV, of Smith Broadcasting, the owners of WAAY-Radio and WAAY-TV. For generations, Smith Broadcasting was as synonymous with Huntsville as Redstone Arsenal and the Space Program. M.D. Smith IV agreed to share some of his time with the Readers of Old Huntsville Magazine.

The most agonizing challenge of doing this story was where to start. William Francis Cumming Smith will be our starting point, the father of Marcellus Davidson, Senior.

Overheard, one gossip to another:

"I won't bore you with all the details. In fact, I've already told you more than I heard myself!"

The naming of his son Marcellus Davidson spawned six generations of firstborn sons, all going by M.D. Smith.

M.D. Sr. became a minister who made his own tents. The Lord blessed Marcellus Davidson, Sr. to be such a good tent maker that others asked him to make their tents also. Tent making became so profitable that he formed the Smith Mfg. Co., thus starting the Smith Legacy.

M.D. Smith, Sr. not only started the Smith legacy of entrepreneurship, but he also laid the foundation for the pursuit of excellence. This pursuit led to the purchase of the family's first 50-watt AM radio station, call letters WBRC, the second radio station on the air in Alabama on May 27, 1925.

In support of the World War II efforts, Smith Mfg. entered into contracts with the U.S. Army to make everything from parachutes to underwear, including tents. They later sold the tent making company, then known as Birmingham Awning and Tent and Venetian Blinds. They extended their foray into mass communications by buying more radio stations.

There is no way to do justice to the true history of the Smith family, so we have to be very selective. As part of that selectivity, we find ourselves in 1958. M.D. Smith III has purchased WHBS 1550-AM radio station from the Huntsville Times. He changed the call signs to WAAY.



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M.D. III changed the radio format from Adult Listening music to Rock and Roll Top 40. At the time, this was such a radical move that some employees quit, and there was a petition circulated to boycott the radio station. M.D. IV became a Disc Jockey for WAAY Radio in the summer of 1958. Some would say, "The rest is history."

1963 turns out to be a very significant year in the communication industry for Huntsville, Alabama. Smith Broadcasting bought its first TV station, WAFG-TV, Channel 31, the call sign later changed to WAAY 31. Channel 19 TV was built next to WAFG, and Channel 25 was awarded to the Alabama Educational Television Authority.

Over the next several decades M.D. Smith IV led the radio station and the television station to leadership positions, in their respective areas. However, M.D. Smith IV is more than just a radio and television man, he is also a husband and father.

To explore M.D. Smith IV as a man, and more importantly, as a family man, we need a definitive point and object in time. For our purpose, the individual was Judy Chandler, and the definitive object was a Black Strapless dress, in 1960.

Let's hear about this pivotal moment in time from Judy Chandler Smith herself. "My cousin lived in Birmingham, and his father was the editor of the Birmingham News, and he was about a couple of years younger than me. I was home for Christmas Break, from the University of Alabama, when I was a freshman."

"He asked me to come down to a fraternity party. I said, 'Micky, I'm working at Rose Jewelry company, and I have a really good job over Christmas Break making 50 cents an hour. I don't want to lose my Christmas spending money. Well, he said that if I'd go, he would come get me and bring me back. He did, and I was back on December 23rd, and I went straight to the jewelry store and was working. But to go to the dance, I wanted a new dress, there was the Town and Country Shop downtown. I found this black dress, it was strapless, but it had little pieces that came up around your neck. I still have it, but I can't get in it."

"I had shoes and a black headband. I was dancing on the floor when this guy cut in, it happened to be M.D., and the first thing he said was, 'Where did you get that good-looking dress?' We danced but I didn't pay that much attention to him, I guess he paid more attention to me."

"Where did you get that good-looking dress?" These are the words that started a

sixty-four-year love affair. According to Judy Smith, M.D. came to Huntsville to visit her the next day after the dance, while she was working. On her break, they went next door to the drugstore and had some peanut butter crackers and cokes.

When she learned that M.D. worked as a disc jockey, she thought, You're pretty poor. Judy paid the bill. But she added once she learned that his family owned the company, "I haven't paid for it since then."

Judy recalls another pivotal moment, as their relationship blossomed. In January of her sophomore year at Alabama, her grandmother passed, and M.D. took her to Troy Alabama to the funeral. In her own words, "On the way back, he proposed by saying, 'Can you think of any reason why we shouldn't get married?' I said, 'No I guess that sounds like a good idea to me.'"

Spending time with Judy Smith was pure joy, and it would have been very easy to elevate her to the subject of this story. However, we must get back on our train (train of thought) as we pull away from the Judy Chandler Smith depot with full steam to the M.D. Smith station.

As the train coasts to a stop, we find ourselves learning an interesting fact about M.D. If not for the



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lack of grades at his first college, he might have had a second MD added to his name.

M.D. tells the story the best. Speaking about his father, he said, "Dad said that he wanted to be a doctor. When we got injured, he would take us to Dr. Lester's home. Dr. Lester would stitch us up, and my dad would say, 'I can do that.' My father told me, 'I've always wanted to be M.D. Smith, MD.' I thought to myself, that would be neat"

M.D. explains why the doctor's route didn't pan out. "Up until past my freshman year at college (University of Virginia) I was going to be a doctor. I was not going to be in the radio business. I spent my summers as a disc jockey, from midnight to dawn for several summers."

"That's what I did, I loved doing it, it was like a hobby to me, I never dreamed I would get into the business. My father always told me I was welcome to be in the business, but he was all for me being a doctor if that was what I wanted to do. It was in the middle of my sophomore year, that I realized that I wasn't going to pass pre-med. That is when I decided to change to broadcasting. There were no broadcasting classes at U.V., so I transferred to the University of Alabama and majored in radio and television."

M.D. reminisced about asking Judy to marry him. With the warmth and familiarity of a lifelong relationship, he starts. "I asked her (Judy Chandler) to marry me in March of 1961, and in June we were married. We lived in the married student apartments at the University of Alabama."


"My father said I wasn't getting any more money just because I was married. I said OK, I didn't need anymore, I got several part-time jobs with radio stations using the license I got in the summer of 1960." M.D. shared that he and Judy had the first of their eight kids in 1963, seven boys and one girl.

Many entrepreneurs, in pursuit of excellence, and financial gain are lacking in the area of family connection. This is not the case with M.D. Smith IV, it might be argued that he devoted as much energy to his family as he did to his media empire. With the warmth of a father, M.D. introduces his kids to the Old Huntsville Magazine readers.

"Judy and I have had eight children over 3 decades, the last being born on Christmas Day, 1985. What a nerve-racking Christmas Eve. I was doing Santa for the 4 youngest children with Judy saying she needed to go to the hospital."

"We rushed to the hospital and got there at 10 pm, but Owen was not born until 7:15 am on Christmas morning. I had to hurry home, Judy's mother was keeping our kids, but I had to set up the movie camera as the kids came to see what Santa left for them, and to open their presents that were under the tree."


"Our eight kids are Marcus (Dee) Davidson, 1963, Barry Scott, 1964, Brent Kirby, 1968,



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Bryan Creighton, 1974. Bryan passed 10/8/2011, from complications from Sleep Apnea, while on vacation at our house in Mary Esther, FL, with me and other family members. Judy was not on that trip."

"His older brothers and I called him Bryan, but Judy decided she would call him Creighton at age 2, so she called him Creighton, as did his younger brothers."

"Elizabeth Allison, our only girl, 1977, Martin Douglas, 1981, Warren Chandler, 1983, Owen Kirven 1985. Yep, Owen was the one born at 7:30 am Christmas morning."

With the media empire and eight kids, how did M.D. relax? He explains that he has acquired a lot of hobbies over the years, most were surrounding family members. "In the last semester of my senior year of college, since all of my required courses were completed, I took Oil Painting and Ceramics & Wheel Throwing. Both hobbies stuck with me all my life."

"After having so much fun with my father in the summer of 1962, with a CB radio, I got my Amateur Radio (HAM) license, call sign WA4DXP, and began talking all over the world. My father got his license, WA4EZW, shortly after me. My son, Dee, got his just a few years ago."

With all the sons, I've had every father-son hobby you can imagine including scouts, RC boats and airplanes, hunting & target shooting and reloading ammo. All the kids (Including Allison) did Little League things when they were young, too."

"Another fun hobby I took up was SCUBA diving, later all of the kids got their SCUBA cards, and we enjoyed many dives together."

"Alison's passion was painting, she loved it so much. I have painted with her in recent years. She held her own "Spirited Art" class at the Elks Lodge. This is where you complete a copy of another artist in a single night."

"One of the big activities of my life came in 1980. I lost 105

pounds the previous year and started exercising by running. My first big challenge was a 10-K run, later I did my first Marathon in 1981, and finally the Iron Man Triathlon in Kona, Hawaii in February of 1982."

"I had to quit running after my first hip replacement in 1986. I miss running, I suffered withdrawals from the endorphins, "runner's high," that came with my morning run."

Judy Smith adds to the story. "When we were expecting the third child, (1968) M.D. had a Cessna airplane, and we would go flying together. We would go up in the plane and I would think, this doesn't make good sense, I don't know how to get down. So I got my student pilot's license."

M.D. adds, "She quit after she learned to land, mainly because of being pregnant, and her belly was too big to pull the control horn back for landing." Over the years, Judy has helped out at the radio station, and TV station, which means she and M.D. have jointly shared all aspects of their lives. Both Judy and M.D. are published authors, with their books listed on Amazon.

M.D. currently has eight books published, including "Behind The Screens," the story of their media empire. Judy has two books she has co-written with M.D., and she is in the process of completing a third.

They both acknowledge that it was Judy who got M.D. into writing. When Owen, their youngest, headed off to the University of Alabama, Judy started writing for Old Huntsville Magazine. Which started her writing career.

M.D. always committed himself fully to whatever projects or hobbies that interested him. His writing is no exception. At an age where many are looking for quiet space, M.D. continues to seek opportunities for personal growth.

He states, "In the Summer of 2022, I earned my master's degree in Popular Fiction Writing from Seton Hill University. Also, I've been writing stories for Old Huntsville Magazine, and I have had a story published every month, in recent months."

Along with the books, there are several internet posts that M.D. has contributed to or written himself. One of note is WAAY-TV-History of Smith Broadcasting. (31alumni.com).



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This site contains a complete history from 1928 to 1999, offering an excellent timeline for all of the major public, and private events within Smith Broadcasting. For a true enthusiast, this website will partner well with M.D.'s book, **BEHIND THE SCREENS**.

As we bring our conversation with M.D. Smith IV to an end, I ask him to share any special moment that stands out from his WAAY-TV days. With a thoughtful, and humble expression on his face, he responds.

"WAAY-TV was the only station with weather radar during the very destructive tornadoes of April 1974. Many lives were saved because of it. We got hundreds of letters thanking us for saving lives, and even Governor George Wallace wrote a personal letter to us for '...a job well done.' I still have the letter, and a copy is on the Smith Broadcasting History website."

As we gather our belongings to disembark from the train, we ask M.D. to provide a summary of the life lessons he learned over the decades of running a media empire and raising a family of eight children, with a wife of sixty-four years.

After taking a moment to think, he said, "Be agreeable." He left the response to hang in the air for a long time, and then he added, "The world has changed and is changing, and be it in politics, or just everyday living, people don't allow for other people's opinions."

"We all don't have to agree on everything, but life would be so much more pleasant if we could all be agreeable to each other's right to disagree. Without dehumanizing the person we disagree with."

Wrapping up with family, and finances, M.D. reflects on a life lesson from his parents. "Money was available, but they were very frugal. They taught me to be frugal also. Judy and I are the same way to this day,


we are both very frugal, so we have money to spend on stuff we want."

"Growing up I had to earn my money, and earned it by cutting grass, they taught me entrepreneurship from the first time I had a lemonade stand in our front yard. Then I had a shaved ice stand. They set me up at first, then they said I had to buy my supplies. I came to understand profit and loss, and the expenses of running a business."

Among the books M.D. mentioned that aided him in business, and his personal life, he rated Dale Carnegie's book, **HOW TO WIN FRIENDS AND INFLUENCE PEOPLE**, as a very important source for his growth over the years.

Thank you M.D. Smith IV for your contributions to not only the city of Huntsville, but also the North Alabama and Southern Tennessee area.

Let's end this story with a former WAAY-TV News Anchor having the final word. Cliff Hill, as quoted from **BEHIND THE SCREENS**, "... As a family, we sometimes got into arguments, we shared each other's ups and downs and through it all did some really good work."

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Training My People



by Buddy, the ShihTzu

My Dear Readers and Admirers,

You may remember me; my name is Buddy, and I am a Shih Tzu who wrote an article that was published in Old Huntsville Magazine in August 2022 titled "Training My People "By Buddy. My story began when I was a baby and MS Janie adopted me from Mr. Horace who owned my mom and dad. She named me "Prince" and taught me good manners.

We were both upset when her apartment owners ruled that pets were no longer allowed. We both cried when she took me back to Mr. Horace and I became an orphan again.

I was fortunate when Maggie and Mike adopted me a few months later and I went to live with them. When they adopted me, I decided that I would train them instead of having them continue my training. I was so proud of myself when I taught them to give me table food by staring at them with my big brown eyes. You might be interested to know that my training was so good that Mike and I were expelled from Training School because he could not make me mind. That gives you an idea as to my excellent training techniques.

Once I snuck away and ran down the mountain, then returned and hid under the kitchen steps to listen to them talk about how worried they were. Later I wandered back into the house, and they were so happy that they did not punish me.

Sometimes Mike liked to let me have my way

by letting me sit on the couch just to aggravate Maggie, which was lots of fun.

Nevertheless, in spite of developing good techniques to train Maggie and Mike, I sometimes felt scared and lonely because it is hard to be in charge. It is easier to have your people in charge and train you. I learned that there can be consequences to taking all the responsibility in the family. I lived with Mike and Maggie from the time I was about two years old until just past my seventh birthday.

Mike was not well during this last winter, and I stayed next to him all the time so that I could run to Maggie if he needed her help. When the ambulance came to take Mike to the hospital, I knew it was the last time I would see him. Maggie did not know because people do not have the insight that we dogs have. I did not wait at the door for Mike to return as I always did in the past and Maggie did not understand. I began following her around like I always followed Mike because I knew that now I had to take care of her, and she would need my help.

A week after Mike passed away, Maggie moved to live with her daughter until her new house could be built. She was not able to take me with her because the building where her daughter lives does not have an elevator. I have a lot of stamina, but I was unable to climb up and down the three flights of stairs in the tall building where Maggie's daughter lives.

Maggie called Mr. Horace because she was worried about what to do with me. She knew Mike would want the best for me as she did. When she called Mr. Horace, he said I could live with him until a new home could be found for me. Mr. Horace also recommended that I have a procedure that would be beneficial for my health, and he said that it would help make me more desirable for adoption. He took me to his veterinarian who did my surgery. I did not know what was going to happen when they gave me a shot and I felt drowsy and went to sleep. When I woke up, I did not feel very good. The medicine Mr. Horace gave me helped and he let me sleep with him until I had my stitches taken out.

Now I am wondering what will happen to me, whether I will continue to live with Mr. Horace or if someone will adopt me. I am anxious even though I am having a good time with Mr. Horace's other dogs. I really want to live with a nice family that includes a mom and dad like I have been used to for over five years. It's so hard to be an orphan. I have been the center of Mike and Maggie's attention and I need the same situation to be happy.

I am a devoted lovable companion for the right family. As you can see from my picture, I am quite handsome, good natured and smart. If you have any ideas that would be helpful, please write me at Maggie Goldsmith - Attn: Buddy, 207 Eustis Ave. SE, Huntsville, AL 35801.

Anxiously awaiting your replies, Buddy.

City News - 1911

Fight is said to be Caused by Insult

J. S. Clay, a well known merchant, and Frank Randall, a clerk in a clothing store engaged in a sensational duel with pistols at the front door of Clay's residence on Adams Street, Randall is being seen by his doctor and probably fatally wounded - a pistol ball having passed through his head and tearing away a large portion of his right cheek. Clay received two wounds, one in the shoulder and the other bullet striking him in the mouth, shattering his teeth and almost cutting his tongue in two. He will recover.

Randall went to Clay's residence and demanded an explanation of an alleged insult to Miss Maude Ledford, the fiancée of Randall. Clay was arrested and held in bail of \$2,000 awaiting the outcome of Randall's injuries.

The Death of Col. Cyrus F. Sugg

This community was shocked when it read in Sunday's issue of the Daily Times that Col. Cyrus Sugg had dropped dead at his home on west Clinton Street. In the death of this splendid man Huntsville, in fact the whole state, has lost one of its foremost citizens and a business man and financier of recognized ability. Sugg was an honest man, a good man, and was known for his square dealings with his fellow man and a business sagacity that was appreciated by all.

His death is a distinct blow to our beautiful city but lessons we learned from his progressive efforts will aid in future growth. To the good wife, who is bowed in sorrow, we extend heartfelt sympathy.

Family loses Little Girl

The funeral of little 5 year old daughter of Mr. and Mrs. W. H. Bell, of the Huntsville Wholesale Nurseries, was held yesterday and interment made in Maple Hill cemetery. Services were conducted by Rev. Carey Gamble of the Episcopal church. Death was the result of pneumonia and was the second death in the Bell family in the past few months.

Says His Friends Drugged his Liquor

W. F. Canterbury who claims to be here from Memphis, and who came here yesterday and registered at the men's boarding house on East Clinton Street, complained to the police that he had been robbed of \$200. He claimed that he went out early in the evening with a party of friends and alleges knockout drops were administered to him. When he awoke, he found himself in his room at the boarding house and his roll of money missing.

Bloodhounds trailed the supposed robbers from the boarding house to the railroad yards and it is thought the thieves have gone to Atlanta. The police here think that they are part of a larger ring in the Georgia area and will be nearly impossible to find.

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**MONROVIA SCHOOL
1965-1972
TURNIP GREENS, PINTO
BEANS AND CORNBREAD**

by Jeff Rhodes

The Lunchroom at Monrovia School was a welcoming place. Every day was like going into your grandma's house for Thanksgiving. When it was cold outside, the Lunchroom greeted you with the warm smell of home cooking. The Lunchroom was not air-conditioned but somehow never seemed hot or uncomfortable during summer.

Your teacher at Monrovia School ate with her class and provided etiquette instruction for students who needed it. Some learned polite table manners or how to finish on time then clean up after themselves. All part of the Monrovia School educational experience.

Mrs. Brockway ran the Lunchroom and was the wife of Mr. Bill Brockway, a large row crop farmer with a big place on Old Monrovia Road. All the "Lunchroom Ladies" as they were known were middle-aged women cooking in the back, preparing, serving, and cleaning up. I heard that one lady, known as "Mama Zuba", was the grandmother of one of the students.

Monrovia School Lunchroom meals were simple and delicious. Green beans or English peas were often served as the vegetable. No doubt the green beans had been cooked with a little bacon grease or pork fat. Creamed corn sometimes, coleslaw, but I don't recall potatoes being served

much. The meat dish might be a hamburger patty on a bun. One odd but tasty entree was elbow macaroni in a thin tomato sauce with ground beef. A rectangular breaded fish stick was often served but not my favorite. Fresh baked rolls or cornbread was the usual starch.

Monrovia School cornbread was baked in big rectangular pans and cut into squares. That is the way cornbread is supposed to be: not too sweet or salty, a little dry and crumbly, not too much shortening. I think the price for lunch was 25 cents.

The only beverage was a pint of whole milk in a cardboard carton, price five cents. Most would tear open half of the top, forming a spout and drink from the spout. Many kids would tear open the whole top, forming a tall open container, then crumble their cornbread into the milk and eat it with a spoon.

But the best combination of all was turnip greens, pinto beans and cornbread. On turnip greens days, the tables were set with squeeze bottles of vinegar to be used on the

greens. Not for me, I prefer them to have no vinegar. The pinto beans were the protein and meat substitute.

So, there you have it, your leafy green vegetable, your nonmeat protein, and that famous cornbread; Health Food before it became fashionable. Still my favorite winter meal nearly 60 years later.

Nothing went to waste at the lunchroom, not even the table scraps. On the west side of the dining area a wide window opened into the back behind two gray barrels.

Students were instructed to scrape off uneaten food from plates before placing tableware and plates in the window for dishwashing.

Occasionally I would see a fork or spoon among the food scraps in the barrels. Somebody dropped it and was too lazy to retrieve it or intended to throw it away. Who knows?

I didn't make the connection until many years later. A neighbor across the road ran a small hog operation. Mr. S would make an irregular circuit to the country stores in Monrovia gathering the expired bread that didn't sell.

Old Ad Run in Old Huntsville Magazine in 2009

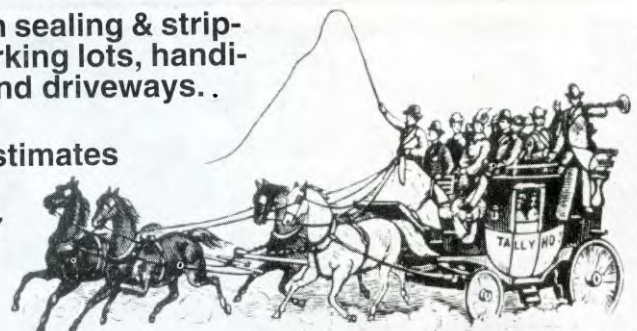
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This expired bread he would unwrap and feed to his hogs.

But the neighbor's wife, Mrs. S, got first pick and would grab any day-old cupcakes or other baked sweets. There was nothing wrong with those expired baked goods except they were beyond their intended sale dates and could not be sold as fresh. Then Mrs. S would treat the neighborhood kids to those free and tasty goodies.

My parents didn't buy food like that, so it was a rare and special occasion to receive one of those two-packs of expired cupcakes. My favorites were the chocolate ones with a squiggle of white icing. Brand did not matter.

Mr. S drove a beaten-up short bed Ford pickup, the distinctive 1957-60 body style painted the equally rare pale green color. For many years I watched that old green Ford turn in their driveway and bounce down the dirt path to the hog pen.

One day I noticed two gray barrels in the back and recognized the similarity.

Decades later the neighbors invited me over after the passing of Mr. S and then Mrs. S and showed me around the farm and long-empty hog lot. Inside the barn I noticed a familiar sight from long before. A box or maybe it was a bucket was filled with old stainless-steel flatware, the same pattern tableware used in Monrovia School Lunchroom in the 1960s.

Nothing had gone to waste.



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Turn to the experts



Nice weather makes us all feel better and want to enjoy the sunshine outside. A visit to the Botanical Gardens seems like a good idea. Why not ask a friend to go to lunch and take in the beautiful plants? They have a gift shop that is a lot to enjoy. You might find the perfect gift for someone.

The gardens cover 118 acres and are open all year round. Times are usually 9:00 am to 5:00 pm. Sundays from 11 am to 5 pm. It would be best if you allowed at least several hours to enjoy much of what is there. In season, the butterfly house, where you can walk inside with hundreds of butterflies, is great fun. It's not for everyone if you are skittish.

Advance admission tickets are not required but are available if you wish.

Children under 2 are free, ages 3-15 are \$12.00, students are \$15.00, adults are \$19.00, seniors and military are \$17.00.

Dogs are permitted on Thursdays, but there is a \$5.00 charge for each one,

Monte Sano State Park is a great place to take grandchildren on a picnic -- lots of playground equipment to keep them busy. Be sure to take pictures of all of those memories.

Lowe Mill Arts and Entertainment is an old mill that has become one of the most extensive privately owned arts centers. Other than special events, the regular public hours are Wednesday -- Saturday: 11 am - 7 pm, 2211 Seminole DR SW. Let me warn you,

wear comfortable walking shoes. Between the various floors and extended paths, you'll cover a lot of ground if you are trying to see it all. What should you do to keep children entertained during the summer days and nights? Camps are always good to enrich a child's life and give them a fun learning experience. For K-5th grade, check into the Burritt on Monte Sano for their day camps. They start in the first week of June and run through the last week of July. There are themes set for each week's experience.

Don't forget those swim lessons. Each year, 350 children under the age of 5 drown in pools. Huntsville Aquatics Center on Drake Avenue features several pools. One is heated to 80 degrees for most lap swimmers and kids during set hours, and the other pool is set at 90 degrees for folks like me. I love the warm waters, and water aerobics exercises (lessons given at certain hours) are great for those of us with fragile joints. In the water, everything is low impact on our bones; just exercises the muscles.

For thirty years past, I taught hundreds of children to swim. Some were as young as two years. When my lessons were over, every child could go off the low board in the deep end and make it to the side on their own. They wouldn't be among the unfortunate who drown because they don't know how to even dog-paddle and panic when they accidentally fall into the water.

Enjoy the warming summer waters to come. I know I will.



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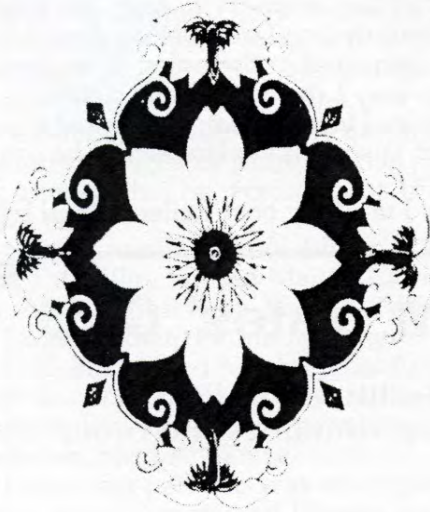
 

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A LITTLE HUMOR

by Jim Vann

The Bible says that God laughs. I don't teach my Sunday morning Bible Class but I start each Sunday class off with a joke.

I learned while in the Army that a smart instructor would start his class with a joke.

That would get every ones attention and then he would proceed with his lesson to an attentive audience.

I was raised in a very strict disciplinarian family. My dad worked at Stockton Buick GMC car/truck Company. Stockton's gave out a 15 inch wooden ruler as an advertisement (I still have ours). My dad never spanked me because he could just raise his voice and you had better behave. However, my mother just about wore that 15 inch ruler out on my bottom.

Seems like I remember coming home from church on Sunday, going straight to our bathroom and there she was, right behind me with that ruler. There was a fellow at church that liked to "rooster fight". He and I would go at it after church. When we got home she would make me pull down my pants and she would execute my punishment with that ruler. I think I was about 14 years old the last time she tried to execute that spanking. I gritted my teeth and never cried or even whimpered. I remember her saying "well I guess you are getting too big to spank". I am very thankful for that day.

Like mother, like son, I raised my children with very strict discipline. When my oldest child was about 4 years old, we had a routine at mealtimes where we take turns as to who would say the blessing at the meal. On this one particular day, I asked that daughter to say the blessing because it was her turn.

She did something that I have never allowed and don't appreciate when other parents allow their

children to very nastily say "NO".

Well, I got up from the table, picked her up and headed down the hall to the bathroom where I usually executed her punishment. On the way down the hall, she prayed every prayer that she knew.

"God is great, God is good, etc., and then went into "now I lay me down to sleep".

Needless to say, by the time I got to the bathroom, I was laughing so hard that I couldn't spank her. She accomplished what she intended.

Along this same line, I have a story that I tell about my birth. In 1938 for 23 days the weather never got above freezing in Madison County. The Tennessee River actually froze over. I have a picture of a car that was driven out onto the river. Well, my family was pretty well balanced because my 3 older sisters were born 3 years apart. Then I came along 6 years later in 1939. Well, my folks had to do something to stay warm. Actually, the story is mostly true except the year of the cold weather happened in 1939, the winter after I was born.

One of my favorite jokes is about when the Boeing Company received a contract to build a new fighter plane that was to outdo any other plane in existence.

They built the prototype plane and got a test pilot to take it on its first flight. Well, the plane performed exactly as the specifications required, but when the wheels touched down while landing, both wings fell off. The engineers decided to "beef up" the wing struts and build another plane. They did that and got the test pilot to take that version for a trial flight.

As before, the plane performed exactly as expected but again when landing and the wheels touched down, both wings fell off. The engineers were baffled but an old man was there, leaning on his broom handle and had observed all of this said, "I'll tell you how you can fix that." The engineers said we've tried everything, what do you suggest? The old man said "Well, build another plane just like that last one but then take a quarter inch drill and drill holes in the wings right where they connect to the body of the plane. The engineers said structurally that makes no sense but we will try anything at this point.

So, they built another plane and drilled the holes like the old man had recommended. The test pilot took the plane up and it performed exactly as required and when it came in to land and the wheels touched down, both wings stayed on.

The engineers said we have to get that old man in our engineering group. He must be a genius. They found the old man, leaning on his broom and asked him how he knew to do such a thing. He said, "Well I've been in this janitorial business for about 40 years and I've noticed that toilet paper tissue never does tear where those holes are".

As everyone groans, I think that's about enough of my humor.

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Letter to the Editor,

I recently received my latest Old Huntsville magazine and enjoyed reading the stories and quotes from the past.

As a tribute to my father, I would like to bring to memory our mode of travel in the 1920s - the street car. My father, Richard Grady Cobb, was a streetcar motorman in West Huntsville at the time, and I, at age 91 have fond memories of them. I am enclosing copies of 2 pictures made at that time, which I treasure. My father is standing next to the streetcar he conducted in one picture, and is seated left in the other picture. I do not know the other men but I hope some of your readers will recognize them.

Thank you! I live in Chattanooga, TN but still have lots of relatives in Alabama.

Irene Cobb Fogo



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OLD SHINER

*by Austin Miller, submitted to
OHM in 2008*



I got Old Shiner from Jack West. In 1947, Jack was just out of the Navy and lived across the field from us on Wess Taylor Road. We farmed the land in front of his house and sometime when we were working in the field, Daddy would let me visit Jack and his wife. Jack was from Huntsville but his wife whom he met in the Navy was from Minnesota. I loved to visit because they made over me and gave me treats. One day Jack told me that they had a new litter of puppies and I could choose the one I wanted when they got a little older.

Late in the afternoon on my first day of school, Daddy and I went to get my dog. I remember Jack asking me how I liked school. I told him I didn't like it and school was not for me.

The dogs came out from under the floor and I looked at them for a long time but couldn't make up my mind. Suddenly another one came running out. He was friendly, black mixed in with mostly white around his head, feet and at the end of his tail. The indecision was over, I had found my dog. There was a black splotch over his right eye surrounded by white; thus the name Old Shiner.

Old Shiner was just dog; he had no special talents. All he could do was bark and eat. I doubt if he had average dog intelligence. But he was good-natured, wagged his tail all time, caused no trouble and was totally loyal. Most of the time we didn't realize he was around but he was part of the aura of our family.

One cool rainy Saturday morning in September of 1953, when I was twelve, we had visited one of our neighbors, the Sharps, and

were walking back home. When we got a little piece up our drive past the mailbox a car came speeding by and hit Old Shiner. I heard the bump and saw him flying through the air. I pointed and cried out "Mama, Old Shiner!"

The car didn't stop or even slow down. It was a 1951 green Ford. I was devastated.

The next day Uncle Paul came home from Korea after his release as a prisoner of war and we went to the old airport to meet him. He had been held by the Chinese for almost three years and thousands turned out to welcome him home. All the family got to ride with him in a parade through Huntsville. We rode in a specially made open top vehicle that looked like a train engine. I am not sure if it belonged to the city or the American Legion. It was before the Parkway and I don't remember the route but we came downtown and circled the Square.

All along the way there were people lined up on both sides of the street. Occasionally, I would see someone I knew and wave to them as we passed. All the excitement made me feel better but I was still a sad little boy over the loss of my dog. The next day Daddy, my brother Berns and I were in the field picking cotton. It was tough to be back in the field after so much excitement the day before. I remember thinking if it hadn't rained, it wouldn't have been too wet to pick cotton on Saturday, and Old Shiner would still be alive. I also remember thinking that being in the Army and returning a hero was a lot better than picking cotton.

Shortly after Jack gave me Old Shiner, he and his wife moved to Los Angeles and opened a pawnshop. Sometime later, they sent us a picture of a baby son named Rodney. We got Christmas cards from them until I was grown. I think Daddy may have seen Jack a few times when they returned to Huntsville to visit family but after they moved, I never saw them again.

The day I got Old Shiner, Jack asked me if I knew what garlic was. I didn't. He showed me a patch he had growing and said, "Why don't you take some home and set it out?" I planted it at the east end of the house where it grew until April 3, 1974.

The big Ryland tornado blew the bulbs out of the ground and scattered them among the debris in the yard. I found a few that weren't mashed and replanted them close to the old spot. Miraculously, they survived.

Like they have every spring since 1947, the bulbs sprout new growth that flourishes until the stalks go to seed in the summer. We still own the property and everybody in the family knows to leave my garlic alone. It is important to me because it has been in our yard since my first day of school.

Also, it reminds me of the only dog I ever owned and the nice couple that gave him to me.

Memories of an Army Brat A Tribute to my Friend Gary McDonald

by Major (Ret.) Corey Hopkins



The Army decided to send my dad to Korea when I was about nine years old in 1985.

On the home front, Locust Grove Church was hosting a Pine Wood Derby race complete with prizes! I'm not sure how it came to pass but I have a clear memory of being at Mr. Gary McDonald's work bench and working on making a race car for the event.

The process started with a 12-inch rectangular and elongated block of wood that was shaped into a sleek wedged looking rocket. The corners were rounded, and the edges trimmed and in typical Mr. Gary fashion the finer points of Derby racing were implemented.

For example, a circular divot was carved on the bottom front portion of the racer in order to make a spot to glue a circular lead weight to the car. The weight's purpose was to maximize gravity and helped to pull the Derby car forward as the "gate" was being let down at the beginning of the race. This shop lesson also included the use of powdered graphite on the wheels to decrease the friction between wood and metal as the wheels rolled.

Mr. Gary made sure this wooden rocket was complete with a fancy shiny, cherry red paint job including a black racing stripe. I really don't recall if I won the race or even who did win the "race of the century", but I vividly remember beaming with pride when I strutted into church and to the race with the best looking and the most sleek, red Pine Wood Derby car in all of New Market, Alabama!

There is no doubt I played with that car until the wheels came off and it was retired to the top shelf of my bookcase with my other prized possessions.

I want to thank you, Mr. Gary, as I am now at the age that you were when help-

ing me with that little red car so I can appreciate the adult side of this story. It's a story that holds deep layers of Army life, service, pride, sacrifice, friends, neighbors and community.

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Heard On the Street

by Cathey Carney



My hidden rosebud for last month's contest was on p. 38, in the bottom right of the B&W ad, just under the gavel. See it now? Many called but the very first caller was **Pauline Neely** of Huntsville. She told me her dad was **Paul Means** and in 1945 was the first manager of the Montgomery Ward store here in Huntsville. He went on to manage the Sno-White that lots of oldtimers remember. Pauline is in the Huntsville High class of 1950 and loves her classmates who are still with us. Congratulations to you Pauline!

We were sad to hear of the passing of **Anita Smith Johnson** on April 6. Born in Birmingham to **Kirby and M.D. Smith III**, she moved to Huntsville in 1965 when her father acquired WAAY Radio and TV to start the family's broadcasting career. A lifelong resident of Huntsville, Anita worked in the family business. Volunteerism being one of her passions, she was active in the Church of the Nativity, Huntsville Museum of Art Women's Guild, and Crisis Services.

She was preceded in death by her parents, and nephew **Bryan Creighton Smith**. Survivors in-

clude her daughter, **Kimberly Walker (Bob)**; grandchildren, **Katherine Walker Anderson (Jack)**, and **Robert Harland Walker II**; brother, **M.D. Smith IV (Judy)**; and numerous nieces and nephews.

For the May issue I have hidden 2 tiny items. One is a heart (for our Moms). The other is a leaf for all the trees that are now getting so green. In order to win a free year's subscription to Old Huntsville magazine you have to find BOTH and be the first caller. You'll need your magnifying glasses for these because they will be super tiny. Good luck!!

There is a squirrel family in my back yard whose babies are going to have the softest nest. The parents are busy tearing up my fluffy rocking chair pillow that is pretty large, and they figured out a way to get through the fabric and into the super soft white fluffy stuffing and take it to their nest. The chair/pillow is on a small porch that is attached to my office, and I can see her/him when they are working very hard to get every bit of fluff. All that's left now is the fabric and those babies are going to be in the softest bed ever.

Rolo's is not only a great place to eat, it's a real family affair. We discovered this recently when we met the most beautiful baby boy, one month old, who's the newest addition to the Thompson family. Mama of **Kolton Thompson** is **Brandy Thompson**, who works

at Rolo's. Her sister is **Alexis Paul** and works there as well. **Joyce Mefford** is Kolton's maternal grandma and goes by Maw-Maw, works at Rolo's. Paternal grandma of Kolton is **Melissa McCullough**, known as MeMaw. She works at Rolo's too. So we know that in about 16 years, Kolton will be bussing tables at Rolo's!

Have you eaten at Old Heidelberg recently? They have been in business in Huntsville for 53 years non-stop and were recently recognized (again) as Best German Restaurant in Huntsville, through the "Best of Huntsville" votes from residents of our city. When I go there I get the same thing which is fabulous - Chicken Schnitzel with warm German potato salad, sweet/sour red cabbage and sliced cold cucumber salad with sour cream/dill dressing. Add some warm brown German bread, fresh made desserts, and you'll be in heaven!

There are lots of fun activities beginning to happen now that the weather is warmer, some of them are:

Lowe Mill ARTS & Entertainment - Every Saturday, 11AM - 4PM, from May 4 until October 26, check out the Outdoor Market. Vendors from all over the area will present their finest products, whether made-by-hand, second-hand or made by the earth. Lowe Mill ARTS & Entertainment will host this event throughout the grounds providing patrons, pick-

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ers and art lovers with an open air shopping experience (weather permitting). This event is free and open to the public.

Location

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The Huntsville Botanical Garden is a 118 acres botanical garden located at 4747 Bob Wallace Avenue, Huntsville, Alabama, near the U.S. Space & Rocket Center. It is open year-round for a fee. The garden is ranked third on the list of Alabama's top paid tourist attractions, receiving 400,000 visitors a year.

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Greene Street Market is open now!

Corner of Eustis and Greene Street, find fresh farm produce, vegetables, meats, fruit, plants, crafts, soap, tea - lots!

The Greene Street Market at Nativity is open every Thursday afternoon 4-8pm from the first Thursday in May to the last Thursday in October.

Phone (256) 682-4429

Ianthia Bridges has many family celebrations in May. Her Uncle **Mark** will celebrate his birthday on May 4th; Uncle **Melvin** has a May 8th birthday; her late Aunt **Emily's** birthday is May 12th; that is also the day that her Uncle **Curtis** passed away.

On May 15th Ianthia and her sweet husband **Frazer** will celebrate their 31st wedding anniversary; on May 28th her mom **Joyce Ramsey** has a birthday; her cousin **LaTisha (Taye)** has a birthday on May 29th and her cousin **Brian** celebrates his birthday on May 30th. Ianthia's great niece **Raegan** has her birthday on May 12th. That covers the whole month! There will be some partying going on! Happy celebrating to a loving and large family. We send love and hugs to Ianthia.

Bill Kling, Jr., was recently honored by the Mayor and City Council for the years he has and continues to serve Huntsville. Bill is City Councilman for District 4. Did you

know Bill has been the district councilman for 36 years?? He is the longest serving city councilman in the history of Huntsville. He has set all kinds of records and walks miles every week in his district neighborhoods to check and make sure everything is being worked on.

Bill received a B.S. degree in Mass Media Communications and Public Administration from the University of Alabama and a M.S. degree in Urban studies from Alabama A&M University.

He has held numerous positions in the broadcast and public relations fields but says his biggest accomplishment is convincing **Tanjie Kling** to become his wife (31 years in July). Congratulations to you Bill!

Get out in this beautiful weather and walk. My Mom would walk even when she hurt with arthritis, she said no activity made the pain worse. Breathe in good fresh air and stand barefoot in the grass. **Happy Mother's day to the beautiful Moms** out there, and the ones that are looking over you from above.

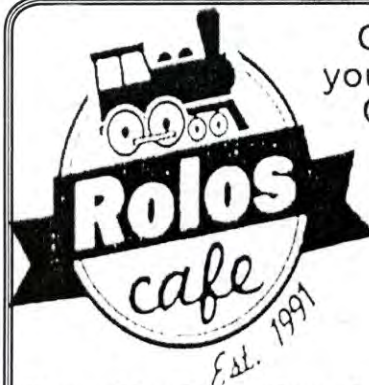


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Bourbon Sweet Potatoes

6 med. sweet potatoes
1/2 c. sugar
1 t. salt
3/4 stick butter, softened
Dash nutmeg
1 egg, beaten
1/2 c. Bourbon whiskey
Marshmallows for topping

Wash, peel and boil potatoes til fork tender. Add sugar, salt, butter and nutmeg. Beat the egg into the whiskey and mix in the potato mixture. Place all in a greased pyrex baking dish and top with halved marshmallows. Bake at 350 degrees for 45 minutes and marshmallows are golden brown.

Cheesy Grits

3/4 c. grits
3 c. water
1/2 lb. sharp Cheddar cheese, grated
2 t. seasoned salt

3/4 stick butter
Tabasco sauce, dash

Cook grits in boiling water 20 minutes and they have absorbed nearly all the water and have the consistency of mashed potatoes. Add the cheese, salt, butter and Tabasco, stir well. Pour in baking dish, cover and bake at 250 degrees for an hour.

Tanjie's French Onion Soup

5 large white onions, sliced
4 T. butter
1-1/2 qts. beef broth
1/4 c. of sugar
Garlic salt to taste
Ground pepper to taste
1 c. of Gruyere cheese, grated

4 pieces of toasted French bread, large enough to cover the top of a soup bowl

Saute sliced white onions in butter. Cook for 20 minutes. Add sugar to onions and let caramelize, for 10 minutes. Add beef broth and some ground

pepper, and bring to a simmer for about 25 to 30 minutes. Pre-heat oven to 350 degrees. Ladle the soup into ovenproof bowls. Place toasted French bread on top and sprinkle cheese on top of bread. Put the soup in the 350 degree oven until the cheese melts.

Eye of Round Roast

Eye of Round roast, 3-4 lbs.
Seasoned pepper
Seasoned salt
Garlic powder
Worcestershire sauce

Defrost roast completely. Sprinkle generously with: seasoned pepper, seasoned salt, garlic powder, Worcestershire sauce. Bake at 275 degrees for an hour and 20 minutes.

Perfect White Sauce for Chicken

1 c. sour cream
3/4 c. apple cider vinegar
1/2 c. mayonnaise
1/2 t. garlic powder
2 t. ground pepper

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In a bowl whisk together all ingredients. Store in an airtight container in the fridge. Great on grilled chicken!

Cheese 'n Herb Onions

3 lb. onions, quartered
5 T. butter
1/2 c. whole milk
3 -1/2 T. all-purpose flour
1/2 t. salt
1/4 t. pepper
1 t. dried marjoram
1-1/2 c. cottage cheese
4 T. dry bread crumbs

In a saucepan cook the onions in water til just tender, about 15 minutes. Drain and place in a 6 x 10-inch baking dish that has been sprayed with Pam.

Preheat your oven to 375 degrees. Melt butter in a medium saucepan over medium heat and add the flour. Stir.

Add the milk and cook, continually stirring, for a minute. Remove from the heat and stir in the salt, pepper, marjoram and cottage cheese.

Spread this mixture evenly over the onions. Sprinkle with crumbs and a little cayenne pepper. Bake uncovered for about 25 minutes. This is best served hot out of the oven!

Hot Buttery Corn

4 cans whole kernel corn, drained
1/2 stick butter
1 8-oz. pkg. cream cheese
1 t. garlic pepper
1 t. salt

Pour the corn into a large saucepan and heat over medium. Add the butter, cream cheese, salt and pepper and slowly heat til the butter and cream cheese is melted. Stir well and serve. This recipe can be halved but you won't want to!

Worcestershire Chicken Crunch

1 reg. carton sour cream
2 t. lemon juice
2 T. Worcestershire sauce
1 T. celery salt
1 T. paprika
8 chicken breasts
1-1/2 c. herb stuffing mix
1/4 c. butter, melted
1/8 c. butter, melted

Combine the sour cream, lemon, Worcestershire sauce, celery salt and paprika. Dredge the chicken in the sour cream mix, then in the dry stuffing mixed with 1/4 cup butter. Drizzle with 1/8 cup butter and bake at 350 degrees for 1 hour.

Mexican Pralines

2 sticks butter
1 c. brown sugar
1 c. chopped pecans
Graham cracker crust

Combine the butter and sugar in a saucepan, bring to boil and boil for 2 minutes. Remove from heat and add the pecans. Spread over the graham cracker crust and bake at 350 degrees for 8-10 minutes. When cool, break into pieces and serve.

Aunt Matt's Favorite Peanut Butter Cookies

1 c. butter
3/4 c. sugar
3/4 c. brown sugar
1 t. vanilla
1 c. chunky peanut butter
2 beaten eggs
1-1/4 c. all-purpose flour
3/4 c. rolled oats
2 t. baking soda

Melt the butter in a pan, beat together with sugars, vanilla, peanut butter and eggs. In a separate bowl combine flour, oats and baking soda. Stir the dry mixture into the butter mixture.

Drop by teaspoonfuls onto ungreased cookie sheet. Bake at 350 degrees for 15 to 18 minutes. Cool on wire rack.

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The Hatter

by Iolanda Hicks



The Hatter, if we all can remember from our childhood fairy tale, referred to the nutty little fellow, orchestrating a lopsided tea party in Lewis Carroll's Alice in Wonderland. This tea party has the Hatter, the March Hare and the Dormouse as guests when Alice comes across them, while looking for the white rabbit.

They were celebrating an un-birthday. A person only has one birthday a year. The remaining three hundred and sixty plus days are un-birthdays, as noted by the Hatter, who truly seemed quite Mad!!

A year ago, my hubby surprised me with a short trip, for one of my un-birthdays, to the Hatter Cafe and Country Inn in Mentone, AL. Lunch there was special, where you could choose from a special selection of yummy food while surrounded by Hatter tea party decor and reminders of Wonderland.

Hats are all over the place, including on the lights overhead, with reminders of fairy tale characters everywhere. Even the curtains have tea cups and saucers to hold them apart. It is indeed a magical place.

I decided that on my sister's birthday, instead of an un-birthday, I would introduce her to this Wonderland of hats, tea cups and the Eat Me/Drink Me magic. This little cafe is a little over an hour driving time from Huntsville and the ride is pleasant. Hubby did the honor of driving us.

During our lunch, a retired radio announcer dropped in with some of his family and happened to sit nearby. Pamela, the owner and dreamer of this special place, came over to say hello to us again (she had earlier taken pictures of the three of us wearing our own Hatter Hats as we came in to the Cafe).

She then turned to the newly arrived gentleman with his family. Evidently, she knew they were coming because she sat down and started answering some questions on how her dream of the Hatter Cafe became a reality. This must have been an interview but I couldn't quite understand if it was for a local magazine, radio or

some other type of media. I wasn't really eavesdropping (really) just overheard bits and pieces of the conversation.

It seems that Pamela had this dream of the Hatter Cafe all her life and wanted to have it located somewhere in the area where she and her husband often traveled. She and husband Roger would come thru the area in Mentone off and on thru the years and then one day, there was this house and land for sale, right on AL-117. Her dream was suddenly being visualized.

It took work, time and thoughtful hunting for all the magical, whimsical pieces that make up a little bit of Wonderland. Then, around two years ago, it was done! Looking at Pamela that day, I saw Alice all grown up, with that sparkle of magical anticipation, of things to come! Their two daughters work alongside Mom and Dad. Roger is the Chef and one daughter helps him in the kitchen. The other daughter helps Mom with greeting customers and serving those wonderful meals.

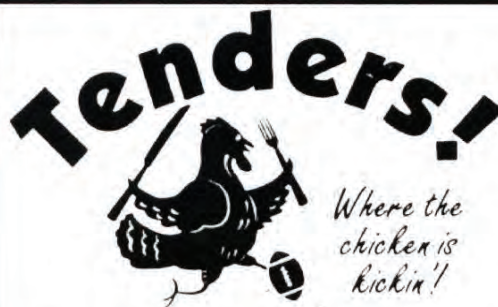
It was a really good day and such a happy time! My sister had such fun and so did my hubby and I, wearing our Hatter Hats. We imagined sitting at the Hatter's table (which we were) having tea and yummy treats!!

It's okay to be a kid every once in a while no matter how old we are. Pamela has given us that opportunity by sharing her dream and maybe allowing us to just catch a glimpse of that white rabbit, passing by the Hatter's Cafe!



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"Hit on the Head"

by John Michael Hampton



The bottle came flying through the air. The sound of the bottle hitting the head of Annie May Jackson rang throughout the countryside.

The year was 1926. Annie May Jackson, my grandmother, lived with her mom and stepfather on a farm in the Sand Mountain community of Sims. Her stepfather was a sharecropper and he worked hard in the fields six days a week. One of Annie's chores was to carry water to the field for her stepfather, Van Buren Jackson.

The summer in question a new girl, age eight, had moved to the farm with her parents, who were also sharecroppers. Annie didn't know it at the time, but the new girl liked to cause trouble. And, she had her sights set on causing trouble for Annie.

The new girl quickly noticed what time each day that Annie carried water to the field to her stepfather. The new girl would hide behind a small hill that Annie had to go by to get home. When Annie

would get to the exact spot, the girl would jump out from behind the small hill, hit Annie on the top of her head with a glass bottle, and run away, laughing.

This went on for two weeks solid. Annie got to the point where she did not want to go to the fields to carry water to her stepfather. At first, with her family not knowing what was going on, she got spankings and time outs the first few days of the second week. She finally told them what was going on and how being hit in the head day after day was causing headaches, but they did not believe her at first.

Then came the fateful day that Annie was coming back from carrying water to her stepfather. On this particular day, a Saturday, the girl hit Annie in the head so strongly that she passed out, blood flowing from a gash on her head. Fearful of what she had done, she ran to the field and confessed all to Annie's stepfather.

The stepfather pulled his mules to the end of the field, tied them to a hitching post, and ran across the farm to where Annie lay, injured. He picked her up, and ran to the farm owner's house, who quickly loaded Annie into his Model T Ford and headed for the town of Gunterville.

Four hours and a few stitches later, Annie was awake and on her way back home to the farm. It would take about two weeks for her gash to completely heal, but she would continue to have headaches for months to come.

The girl with the glass bottle, meanwhile, was given a switching and was told that if she hit Annie or anyone else on the farm, she would not be allowed to stay on the farm any longer and would be turned over to the Sheriff.

Annie and her family moved away from the farm in 1929, so that they could find work in Huntsville after the big stock market crash. But, as long as they were still on the farm, she and the other girl actually became good friends and was saddened when Annie and her family moved away.

In 1908 most women washed their hair once a month, and used Borax or egg yolks for shampoo.

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My Vampire Cat

by M. D. Smith, IV



Okay, so maybe my 7.7-pound Siamese cat is not a vampire, but after this true story, I have to tell you, you may think so.

First, let me set the stage. My wife and I have an old cat, Higgins, a long-haired, laid-back 15-pound cat that gets along with every animal we have ever had. After my monster white cat died, I got Sci-Fi, the Siamese, four years ago. She gets along fine with Higgins.

But a year ago, my wife got a grown 13-pound Rag Doll cat who feared every animal in our house. As her timidity lessened, the new cat, Gypsy, didn't see eye-to-eye with Sci-Fi without my cat hissing at her. After a few weeks, hissing at each other resulted in an enormous cat fight with biting (since all our cats have been de-clawed). The big cat, Gypsy, the victor by weight alone.

The results these days are that Sci-Fi stays on our glass-enclosed covered brick patio with a gate at the double doors, and Gypsy stays in the other part of the house with Higgins and our new tiny dog.


I know my cat gets lonely by herself on the porch, so some days, I take her to work with me in a cat carrier, and other days, when I get home, I carry her downstairs to my computer and hobby room. She loves that. Weekends, she's downstairs most of the day with me.

And so it was last Sunday I was finishing up for the day, and I don't use the carrier for indoor trips. I'd gathered her up in one arm (she's small, remember?) and went up the stairs.


As sometimes happens, my wife Judy opens the gate to the porch so the other two cats can visit and look out the glass doors. I spotted the gate open, and knew to check for Gypsy before putting my cat down, or else Gypsy would attack her. After looking around, I was just about to put my cat down when I spied the other cat pop up her head from atop the cat tree. "Shoo!" I shouted. Gypsy stood up but didn't move. I eased over to the cat tree to shake it and scare her down and off the porch. She just wiggled at the top, holding on. That was the exact moment my cat hissed at Gypsy, with my right arm holding Sci-Fi.

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Old Huntsville
— PUBLISHED WEEKLY —

Gypsy lunged forward to within a foot of Sci-Fi, and they both jolted into a simulated cat fight, though not touching each other. I backed up, looking for the carrier on the table behind me to put my cat in and stop the fight. But I couldn't get away fast enough, and Sci-Fi was screeching and squirming out of my arm. In a motion to get the carrier, I moved my left hand to get a double grip on my cat to insert her into the opening, and that's when I felt two teeth sink into my left hand. Still holding her body with my right arm, I jerked my left hand away in reaction to the pain, which resulted in a pair of fang marks deep and about three inches long on my hand. Sci-Fi likely didn't know who she was biting, but at that moment, those fangs wanted blood.

In mere seconds, I got my cat in the carrier, Gypsy dashed out of the porch room, and I screamed for Judy in the next room to "put up the gate — quick," which she hurriedly did.

"This is deep," I said, looking at my hand and blood starting to flow. "And here I am on blood thinners. Get me some paper towels quick."

I was right about that. I soaked up several paper towels, trying first to get peroxide on the wounds, then applying some fast-drying "Liquid Bandage" to control the bleeding, which didn't work. I eventually just kept compresses on it and later was able to tape some gauze squares on my hand.

The next day, I soaked the pads for a half-hour, eased off the bandage to take a picture of my hand, put some anti-biotic salve on, and re-banded it. It bled some more. The following day, at the advice of my wife and friends, I visited my doctor, got a tetanus booster and script for anti-biotic capsules. I guess it's gonna heal okay and probably has by the time you read this. I should have known better than to be holding either cat next to the

other. I'd never put a hand into an active dog or cat fight, but it just sorta eased into the situation. I won't do that again, believe me. I learned my lesson.

I know my cat wasn't trying to attack me with her "vampire" teeth, but tell my hand that.




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Maxine

Decatur High School Class of '52 - Greatest Ever!

by Robert French



The 1952 Senior Class of Decatur High School held reunions every five years and in later years, met once a year. The class gathered together for 69 years after graduation.

The advent of this account is in celebration of the work of Max B. Patterson, Class President for Life, as well as other deceased class members.

This class was born in the Depression, grew up in WWII and suffered through the Korean Conflict.

Coming from Lafayette, Gordon Bibb, Fairview, Sommerville Road, and other grammar schools, they joined each other at Decatur Junior High in the 7th Grade. The postwar era had begun.

They were the first class to leave old Riverside High School and enter their final year at the new Decatur High School on Somerville Road.

106 class members distinguished themselves in sports - football, basketball, even golf. You name it and '52 excelled.

During their senior year, they often produced entertainment for the student assembly each week. Tap dancers, musicians, singers joined the actors entertaining the student body. They produced plays: Make Room for Rodney, Lunatics at Large, and created a fund raising tradition that still carries on, The Senior Scrambles.

Graduating, most of '52 went to college. They went to Samford, Athens, North Alabama, Huntingdon, Jacksonville, Montevallo, Birmingham Southern, Georgia Tech, Auburn, Alabama and numerous other colleges and junior colleges. More than three-fourths of the '52 student body went on to higher education. Those that didn't were usually faithful wives and mothers of wonderful children.

They are the only class to supplement their edition of their high school annual, Golden Memories. Much of their higher education took place after men served in the armed forces.

The class produced a First Lady of Alabama, a politician who changed state history, a major league baseball player, many local civic and religious leaders, teachers, nurses, a dentist, a Naval Captain, a Chief Pilot of a major airline, and several engineers. Also a lawyer, a writer, artists, many managers, administrators, several independent business owners, a #1 automobile dealer, a country music star, a couple of ministers, minister's wives, and several leaders in the Aero-Space Industry.

Some class members traveled the world, lived abroad and married mates from a different country. Many spread throughout the United States while a number of classmates stayed home and brightened the corner in Decatur.

In their 68th year, they still had the same class officers leading the reunions and other class business. Class members called Max Patterson President for Life; Paddy

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Seen in local classified ads

Loosier, VP; Lorene Pickens Treasurer; and Betty Jo Wear, Secretary. Sadly, like other class members, most of the officers have now passed on.

Class members distinguished themselves in civic, religious and political work. Several of the men have been named as an Outstanding Young Men of Alabama while some have been named as an Outstanding Young Men of America. Several ladies have been named Teacher of the Year, outstanding Teacher, and so on.

Now the class members are mostly gone or approaching 90. Out of the 106 members joining in 1946, there are only a few remaining.

In closing here is a poem written for the 45th Class Reunion that class members say it says all that needs to be said.

**45th Class Reunion
June 7, 1997
by Robert French**

When the dimples have turned to wrinkles, And the chestnut hair has turned to gray. When grin lines have turned to creases. And when balding has had its way. It's time for the 45th. class reunion, A renewing of old friendly ties. To remind each other individually, That it's true, time swiftly flies.

We gather from all parts of the country, Some have been places in between. We come as a gathering of buddies. Who shared life's youthful scene. We gather to see each other together, We knew the promise held by each member. We compare success to that standard, It was spring then, now it's September.

There's the good-looking girl from Biology, Who turned many a head in her day. She's a grand-

mother of five grand kids, And her husband's retiring next May. There's the football player from high school, He ran and passed so great. We cheered him as our hero. He's self-conscious because of his weight.

It's funny how we tell the same old stories. They become bigger and better each year. We call each other high school nicknames. They're louder and funnier with beer. In all, we've remained about same. We've aged, matured and grown. Still, we see ourselves as Seniors, Wanderers, 45 years from home.

Though some class members stay away.

And others say, "I'll never go."

Those of us who reunite together.

Remember them even so.

It's the 45th. Class Reunion,

Reunions happen every five years.

I went to the last one. I'll be at the next one.

And, sometimes I fight back the tears.

It's a joking good time in the fall of life, It's not so far from spring with friends.

Winter lies just over the horizon. Life's journey moves on toward its end. So, go to your Class Reunion, You may never have another chance. You pass this way only once in life. Never turn down an offer to dance.

"Be sure and pour the cream off the top of the milk when you open the new bottle."

What you don't hear anymore



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Such effort has been amply rewarded. For through this organization, the motor car which is contributing in so large a measure toward making life easier, pleasanter and more worthwhile has been made available to millions.

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

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Push Start!

by Gerald Alvis,
The Poet of Greenlawn

I was flattered that he would ask my opinion. I should be asking him questions. He was working on his PhD in Kinesiology, and I had only had one class on the subject a long time ago. But what I could offer was first-hand experience. His questions were unique, as I had experience in Ironman Training and Coaching. The topic was the hybrid discussion of training for both strength and speed. The guy was sharp, a retiring Army officer and he took copious notes, but, in my view, I was only confirming what he already knew. While both are desired, one will always take precedence, and in endurance racing, mass can work against you. The running gag is when I race; it's like a rhinoceros chasing a bunch of gazelles! Our talk was winding down about 45 minutes in, and I paused. Perhaps it was presumptuous, but I said now let me tell you what's really important in Coaching.

A coach's belief in the athlete is the most powerful tool in the arsenal of progress, as much or more than saluting a new PR (personal record), being there when they fail or plateau, and admonishing them when they steer away from the goal. Most that came to me over the years usually had a reason: a bad doctor's report, a breakup or divorce, a milestone birthday, a midlife crisis, or they got fed up being sick and tired and were ready for a change.

They were prepared to alter course; they just needed direction, advice, steering and to hear the voice of belief. It is a mental and emotional game that's far more important than a myriad of statistics that also must be tracked. The trainer must check in with the athlete and the person.

"If you see a bomb technician running, follow him."

USAF Ammo Guidelines

It got quiet. He processed it a little and then thanked me. He now had his source, a little real-life experience to add to the paper, and hopefully, his new career.

Please, I'm just passing this along. I didn't discover this philosophy; others can see your potential. For me, it was two men who said only a few handfuls of words, one a champion who trained with me at Golds Gym, the other a three-time Ironman. One said don't quit; the other, when I asked if I could be an Ironman too, said you already are one. That assurance was enough!

There are people who look up to you. It's a powerful thing to understand that a life can be changed, shaped, and molded by a reaffirming look and a few heartfelt, kind words from someone who believes in them. It's a compliment, really, this emulation thing. It reflects the respect they have for your discipline; they want what you have in their life.

You may be that flicker of light that keeps them moving. The star guides their course or the person that gets behind them for a "push start."

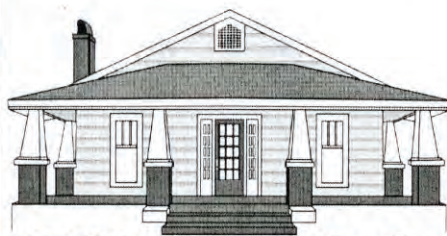
Give someone your smile, be the catalyst of their intensity, and affirm their courage.

It's an amazing thing when you lift up others; it has the same effect on us! My "Ironkid" Granddaughter!



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Here's the Cure for Husband Tired of Married Life

*From the April 1, 1941,
Nashville Banner
By Dorothy Dix*



DEAR MISS DIX: My husband and I have been married for four years. Now he tells me that his heart doesn't seem to say: "Yes, I love you." I don't reproach him, for who can control their affections, but it is like a knife cutting into my heart. He tells me that he has the greatest respect for me and that I have been a true and devoted wife, but he has just grown tired of married life and wants to be free.

There is no woman in the case. We have a nice little home and a car, both of which we are very proud. We have discussed the problem of breaking up our home, but we feel that we couldn't face our friends and fellow employees if we did, as we are considered a very happy congenial couple. How can this problem be solved? I am willing to do anything that will be for my husband's happiness. We have no children.

R. B.

ANSWER: I think you will find the solution of your problem in a temporary separation. Your husband is going through an experience that is very common among married men, especially in families where there are no children. The glamour has worn off of romantic love. The honeymoon has set and the husband and wife have settled down to the prosaic routine of everyday life. They no longer thrill at each other's touch. The novelty has worn off of having their own home and they have ceased marveling at their new furniture. They haven't even much to talk about now that they no longer ask each other: "Do you love me?"

It is then that the husband feels that he is fed up on marriage and begins to long for freedom and to doubt whether he loves his wife. It is the dangerous period that children bridge over, because the young parents are so absorbed in the baby that they forget to analyze their own emotions and count their own heart beats. They have something more important, more interesting than themselves to think about and talk about.

If your husband thinks he is tired of being married, the one and only cure for him is to let him try being a bachelor again. It will not take him long to find out that even if marriage did not come up to all his great expectations, it is still better than being single.

He will find that he misses the routine of domesticity, and that going home at night after his day's work was over, was peaceful and restful, even if it wasn't exciting. He will find that he misses home comforts, home cooking, the good meals of the things he likes, prepared the way he likes them. He will miss being catered to and having all of his little whims regarded. He will miss the love that comforted him without his knowing it, and the freedom that he craved will be dust and ashes in his teeth when he has nothing else but freedom.

Believe me, blessings brighten as they fade, and home never looks so good to anyone as the homeless, nor love so precious as to those who have thrown it away.

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John Purdy
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The Best of Times



by Sue (Hammett) Aldrich

The best of times to grow up must have been the 1950s and 60s and maybe one of the best places would be Huntsville Alabama in Huntsville Park (Merrimac). We knew our neighbors, we went to church and listened to really beautiful music. The Platters, Pat Boone, McQuire Sisters and Elvis still sing in our memories. Our houses shook when the test rockets were fired. History was being made.

When most of us wanted to go anywhere in town we rode the city bus and it only cost a dime. If you were looking for a prom dress you went to the Mary Shop, if you wanted good blue jeans you went to Dunnnavants. If you had a date you went to Woody's, or Whitesburg Drive-In. Although some people that I know went to The Pines.

Kids started first grade at Joe Bradley School, which was a beautiful historical building that should not have been torn down. Mr. Dubose, the principal, ran a tight ship and his wife taught English to the middle school. Mrs. Dubose had us memorize scripture. I still remember: "It is better to have a good name rather than silver or gold". She diagrammed the sentences in the 23 Psalm.

Mr. Wright taught math; everyone sat up straight in his classes. When the World Series came in the spring Mr. Wright turned the radio on and we all had a lesson about America's favorite pastime. The boys took shop (I think I know how Nub got his nickname),

the girls took home economics.

During this time the "city" school students had to buy their textbooks but Joe Bradley student's books were paid for by the Huntsville Manufacturing Cotton Mill.

Mr. Dubose had movies in the school auditorium, and they only cost a dime. These were clean family movies with a good story and no profanity. I heard that the movies caused some consternation between Mr. Dubose and the Baptist preacher. The movies continued.

There was a strip of shops on Triana Boulevard with the Joe Bradley gym on the upper level. Local sports were attended by parents and neighbors. When Butler played Huntsville High in football there was standing room only at the Goldsmith Schiffman field. What sweet memories!

Also, on Triana Boulevard across from the gym was a small parking lot better known as the Rock. And upon this rock a group of young men grew up. Many of them had nick names, to list a few: Wormy, LilRed, Nub, Fish, Chigger, Bird Dog. Even some of the girls had nick names: Mustard, Horse, Cup Cake, Snort.

I would love to know the back story on these. If the Rock Boys ever caused any trouble, I never heard about it. The Rock Boys knew who came and went into the Village. Nothing got past the Rock

Boys.

My sister and I loved to walk to Mr. Owens Grocery which was across from The Rock. We wanted to get checked out and to check who was on the Rock. There was a Rock Boy who had the bluest eyes, Paul Newman would have been jealous. He also rode a motorcycle. I had a terrible crush on him and so did a good friend. But what girl could resist blue eyes and a motorcycle?

Much later and after my girlfriend and I were both widowed we shared some good memories and laughs. We never decided who got the most motorcycle rides.

Over the years I would cross paths with Blue Eyes. We would smile and wave. I was back on that motorcycle with my ponytail in the wind.

My friend and I took short trips and one day she said she knew that Blue Eyes was in a nursing home. Should we go for a visit? Of course! When we got there, I believe he was glad to see us, but I am not sure he recognized us. Time has a way of changing cute chicks into old biddies! The eyes were just as blue and the smile just as handsome.

We made small talk. Before we left, I asked him if he had made peace with God. He gave the greatest smile and said, "Absolutely!" So, Rock Boys DO go to Heaven!

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EMILIO AND THE POTATOES



by Willie Weaver

In 1965 Emilio Uvalle did the block and brick work on Living Hope Church on Pulaski Pike, just north of Oakwood Avenue. Emilio, his son, and a nephew would arrive on the scene soon after dawn and immediately get to work mixing mortar and moving blocks and brick into place. When the first batch of mud was ready, Emilio began laying blocks and bricks while son and nephew kept him supplied such that he never had to reach more than a couple of feet for either mud or brick.

Through the long summer days they took very few breaks, mainly for water and to relieve themselves. After 6 hours, they would take a 2-hour break for lunch and siesta and then back to 5 or 6 more hours of building walls. I never saw such a work ethic again until 1988, when on vacation in Mexico, we watched the building of an addition to the hotel where we stayed.

We were pleased with their work and how it was progressing well ahead of schedule. So, you can imagine our surprise when Emilio told us that they were taking off for two weeks for him and his entire family to go to Sand Mountain and help with the potato harvest. We knew the pay for field work was much lower than the wages of bricklayers and were quite puzzled why he would make such a move.

On Sunday, two

weeks after they had "walked off of the job," they showed up at our temporary meeting place with the backs of their pickup trucks loaded to overflowing with "crippled" sweet potatoes. They asked members of our congregation to take as many as we wanted. It seems that the harvesting left potatoes that were not commercially viable laying in the fields to be plowed under. The workers were allowed to take away all they wanted. Emilio told us that they took home enough to provide a substantial part of his family's diet for the coming year. They were ready to get back to work on the church.

The work was finished on schedule. We all enjoyed free sweet potatoes for a while. Emilio had come here from Texas to help build our church in Huntsville. When he saw all the construction going on here, he decided to stay. Years later he and his family attended the 25th Year Celebration of our Church.

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THE McANALLY FAMILY



by Billy Lee McAnally and Donald Marcus McAnally

Andrew Jackson (Jack) McAnally was born March 12, 1848. This is his story; because family history was very important to him and his greatest legacy was his descendants.

In 1693 Jack's great great grandfather, Charles, was kidnapped from the shores of Scotland and transported to America in the hull of a ship with soldiers.

Jack's great grandfather, John, was a veteran of both the French and Indian War and the American Revolutionary War. John's eldest son, Ensign David McAnally, served in the campaign defeating Cornwallis. John's brother, Captain Charles McAnally, commanded American forces based in North Carolina.

Jack's grandfather, Elijah, was a land speculator by trade in Virginia and Tennessee. Elijah was a rough frontiersman with buckskin as his dress and sharp shooting as his specialty. In October 1813, he traveled south from his home near Bristol, Tennessee with three of his sons; James, Elijah Jr., and Edmond. Their destination was the Big Spring, then Ditto Landing, in the Mississippi Territory. There, they joined the forces of General Andrew Jackson.

Being born in western Virginia, Elijah was one of America's first true westerners. After the War, he moved his family to Blount County, in what was to become the Great State of Alabama. Their names were among the first marriages recorded in 1819.

To demonstrate Elijah's admiration, re-

spect, and love for Andrew Jackson who died in 1845, he ask his sons to name the first born son Andrew Jackson McAnally. In 1848, Edmond granted his father's request, and the boy grew up answering to General Jackson McAnally, which is the name officially recorded on his November 18, 1930, death certificate. He signed J.J. for a signature, and we knew him as Grandpa Jack.

After the Civil War, Jack followed his brothers, John C. and James, north to settle around Valhermosa Springs in Morgan County. December 16, 1867, he married the former Mary Lucinda Rutledge, the great great granddaughter of John Rutledge, a signer the U. S. Constitution. Their first home was Oleander in Marshall County.

During the 1880s, Jack moved his family to New Hope in Madison County. During heavy rains, Jack waded in water up to his shoulders to pick the corn. His sons would stack the ears on a raft they rode.

Jack was a sharecropper until Mary Lucinda died on September 6, 1898. At that time, most of the family moved to Huntsville, AL. Jack owned a store at the corner of Holmes Avenue and Pulaski Pike. In 1927, the Madison County Clerk recorded a \$150 inventory.

Jack and Mary Lucinda are buried together in the Cedar Grove Cemetery near New Hope. Jack's son, Alfred Edward (Edd), was married to the former Fanny Britton (J.R. Britton's daughter) July 14, 1892 in Marshall County. Edd followed his sons, Houston Farley, who married Darlie Ferguson, and James (Jim) Albert, who married Martha Dudley, to Huntsville, after they purchased property from the West Huntsville Land Company. Consequently, a community was born. We called it, "McAnally Hill," and it was located up the hill on Ninth Street from Governors Drive and consumed First and Second Avenues.

Jack's sons, Albert and Ernest, moved to Bridgeport to work aboard one of Dr. Johnson's steamboat barges. Ernest was a mechanic and he taught some of his nephews that trade. One nephew was Jim (Edd's son), who moved to Maysville, Oklahoma during the 1920s where his Grandpa Britton lived. There, he was the mechanic on the airplane of the great Wiley Post. He moved back to McAnally Hill in 1930.

One story about this steamboat experience as told by Clarence (Albert's son) is: "I was boarding one of the



boats via a railroad tie. When all of a sudden, a wave shifted the boat. I mean, the very second my foot touched the deck the timber slid off the side. I looked down just as it crushed between the boat and the shore. One second sooner, I would have been a goner," he said.

Houston and Jim shoveled gravel off the bed of a truck to gravel the streets of West Huntsville. It was from McAnally Hill. The boys, James Garland, Carl, Frank, Houston Jr. (Houston's sons), Gardner Aimer, Bobby Lynn, and James Richard (Jim's sons), went off to World War II. When the boys left, the McAnally girls took over the "manly" chores.

The most memorable story states, "Carl's Huntsville Times paper route started in 1934. When he went to war, it passed to Lula Jean and Mary (Houston's daughters). After they married, it passed to the twins - Jack Ray and Jane (Houston's twins). Then, to Jake (Carl's son) and Ronnie (Frank's son)." This Huntsville paper route was a family business between the years 1934 and 1956.

Edd was a master carpenter, and he built ten houses in his lifetime. He used wood from his cousins' farms in Morgan County. He hauled his first loads by horse and wagon. Five of his houses were destroyed by construction projects.

McAnallys have been, for the most part, laborers. They worked on Guntersville Dam, and the levies that prevented flooding; paved half the County's roads; built bridges; and constructed East Clinton School and today's Madison County Court House.

There were some firsts:

M&M Trucking Company was Huntsville's first full service company where trucking was the only business. M&M's initial investors were Carl, Frank, Dewey, James Garland, Houston Jr. and Jack Ray (Houston's sons), and it sustained 40 jobs during the late 1960s.

Today, M&M operates in Auburn, Alabama by Jack Ray (Houston's son). J&L Construction Company brought Asphalt Seal Coating to Huntsville during the 1960s. Their first job was the Green Stamp Store on S. Parkway. J&L transported DMI, a petroleum by-product from Birmingham. They mixed

their own material.

J&L was owned and operated by Bobby Lynn and James Richard (Jim's sons).

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THE BLACK WIDOW OF HAZEL GREEN

by Tom Carney



The mysterious deaths that took place in a home near Hazel Green may have been accidental, or may have been violently purposeful. The only sign left of Elizabeth's six husbands was an old hat rack upon which hung six hats - one for each. For some curious reason known only to her, she kept the hat rack in the foyer of her home, in plain view, perhaps as a morbid reminder, or maybe as a warning to the next unfortunate lover.

The antebellum home, recently burned to the ground, was built on the site of an In-

dian mound about a mile east of Hazel Green. The original log cabin was erected in 1817 in the heart of a 500-acre plantation by Alexander Jeffries, an early Madison County settler. He was an older man, who met and immediately became infatuated with the young widow.

They married in 1837, and unfortunately for him, Mr. Jeffries died the same year. By this time Elizabeth had had experience in burying husbands. As a young girl she had met and married twice in short succession.

Her first husband was Mr. Gibbons. They were married for only a couple of months when he died suddenly, and mysteriously.

Shortly afterwards, she set her sights on Mr. Flannigan, whom she also married. Mr. Flannigan lasted only three months before he, too, died of unexplained circumstances. He was in his grave before the neighbors were even informed of the "tragedy".

By this time the young widow was well on her way to becoming a wealthy landowner in Madison County. Not wishing to marry beneath her newfound status in life, she decid-

ed to try her hand at politics.

Her next husband was Robert A. High, from Limestone County, who was a State Legislator for the state of Alabama. He probably spent much time away from home, as it was almost two years before he, too, expired suddenly and mysteriously at their home.

Having tried politics and plantation life, Elizabeth decided to next marry a merchant.

Absalom Brown was a wealthy merchant from New Market. After spending most of his fortune on his new wife, he died as well. This came as a shock to everyone, as Mr. Brown was a very healthy and virile man. The unknown malady that he was stricken with caused his body to swell so much that it was necessary to bury him immediately after his death.

None of the neighbors ever saw the body.

Not believing in long spells of mourning, Miss Elizabeth Flannigan Gibbons Jeffries High Brown roused herself out of her depression long enough to marry Willis Routt, her sixth husband. He died amazingly just like the others in a short

"The ladies of the church have cast off clothing of every kind. They may be seen in the basement on Friday afternoon."

Seen in local church bulletin

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time.

At about this same time Elizabeth, or Mrs. Routt, became involved in a controversy with a neighbor, Abner Tate, over loose livestock and other matters. Tate was completely blind to her beauty, which infuriated her, and had been observing the home and its occupants for many years. He openly charged her with murder. He backed up his suspicions with the hat rack in the parlor that was in open sight, on which hung 6 old hats - the blatant proof of Tate's accusations.

Maybe Abner Tate should have been forewarned of crossing the notorious widow, for shortly afterwards he was wounded by a shotgun blast. Though proof was lacking, gossip had it that Mrs. Routt had hired one of Tate's slaves to do him in. The slave, not having the courage to do the dirty deed himself, in turn hired another man, who allegedly pulled the trigger.

By this time Tate was furious with his neighbor and determined to see justice done. When he went to the authorities he was informed that "nothing could be done unless you can find some evidence." Maybe all of her husbands did die natural deaths. Maybe it's just all coincidence. There's nothing we can do."

Beside himself with rage, Tate was determined that his neighbor would not get away with her dastardly deeds. He began writing a book in which he described the mysterious happenings at the antebellum home. He wrote about how the succession of husbands made her prosperous and wealthy. He wrote about how she would treat them all with disdain, once she had captured them. He noted how the intervals between weddings and deaths became shorter and shorter, as she acquired "more experience and practice."

When the book was published, it created a scandalous sensation in Madison County. Half of the county believed she was guilty, while the other half swore to her innocence. Regardless of opinion, the book was the major topic of discussion any place that people gathered.

Needless to say, the merry widow was not a pleasant lady to be around when she heard news of the book. She immediately drove her buggy into Huntsville where she

consulted an attorney and brought charges against Abner Tate for defamation of character.

When the case finally came to trial late that fall, the courtroom was packed. The courtroom became a battleground, with plaintiff and defendant hurling insult after insult at each other. Accusations followed from each of the attorneys, while the judge rapped repeatedly for order.

The judge, after listening to as much as he could stand, continued the case, hoping both parties would calm down enough to be rational.

After a short while Mrs. Routt dropped the charges. Even today, the debate goes on in Madison County. Why did she drop the charges? Was it because she was tired of constantly being the topic of gossip, or was she worried about some new information that Tate's attorney had recently uncovered?



Shortly afterwards Mrs. Routt and her son moved to Mississippi. She never again returned to Madison County. No one knows why she moved, but the day of her departure, witnesses swear that they saw her in a carpenter's shop, getting a seventh peg added to her hat rack.

Guilty or innocent, she has entered our history as the Black Widow of Hazel Green.

A Loving Mother

Olga Llerena was the loving mother of Oscar Llerena. She passed away in February 2014 at the age of 93 with all her family with her.

Oscar wants to wish all the Moms out there a wonderful and warm Mother's Day with the family and friends you treasure.

With special greetings to
the Huntsville High School
Class of 1966



The Pulley Bone

by Wanda Sneed Nelson



The present generation has no concept of what was entailed in having a feast on a simple drum stick or pulley bone of a yard grown chicken. Today they merely go to the grocery store and select only the portion of a chicken they want to cook, such as: breasts, wings, thighs and drumsticks.

Plus, you will not find a pulley bone portion of the chicken labeled there. It would require a special request to the butcher for that specific cut. Except for the purchase of a rotisserie chicken, no one probably buys an entire chicken anymore. It was not so many years ago, that chicken on the table meant my Mama was going to take one of the chickens or a rooster to fix for our dinner that night. It was usually a chicken as roosters tended to be more tough than the younger hens.

To have chicken on the table was a special occasion, most chickens were raised for their eggs. My Mama tended her chickens from chicks (biddies) from a hatched egg, usually with the help of the mother hen.

In the spring because of nature and instinct, hens had the urge to incubate a group of eggs for a period of time. The hen kept the eggs at a constant temperature by setting on them, turning them periodically in order to equalize the heat. She protected her hatch of eggs with constant vigilance from dogs, snakes, possums, fox and all arrays of varmints. If the biddies did not fall prey to varmint, disease, or some accident, they grew into a fryer.

I remember times when my mother had to place a few of the eggs that didn't hatch into the oven that was set at a low temperature in order to

encourage them to hatch. We were constantly trying to open the oven door and see if any had hatched.

The little biddies were so soft and cute to cuddle, but before long they were in the yard with all the other chickens. As



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needed and at the appropriate time, a young chicken would be selected to go into the frying pan, or a pot with dumplings.

The chickens were not taken easily as they were more important as a producer of eggs. Which was more essential to cooking than the chicken itself was.

Oh, how I remember being scared when I was tall enough or picked up to reach the nests in the chicken coop to gather eggs. I was so afraid they would bite me. Chickens and especially roosters could be mean. I remember my sister getting chased by a rooster and it pecked her on the leg. She was scared of roosters her whole life, but loved chickens and amassed an array of collectible chickens.

When the chicken was selected, Mama would warn us that she was fixing chicken for dinner. We all knew what that meant. We would usually make ourselves scarce, because she was going to catch one of the hens and wring its neck. When this happened, the chicken would run wild around the back yard until it finally died. Then she would dip it into boiling water so that she could pluck the feathers, and using a butcher knife would cut it up into enough parts to provide a portion for each of us.

She would always make a pulley bone for me. The pulley bone piece is made by slicing the bottom part of the breasts off, leaving the top part and the wishbone connected. Being the youngest and littlest, I usually got the pulley bone, which is the best part of the chicken because it is white meat, moist like dark meat, and had the wishbone.

My sister and I usually fought over which side won when pulling the wishbone. The larger side or the smaller side. It didn't really matter. It was fun just fussing over it. Whatever the outcome of the wishbone part was that Mama's fried chicken was the best eatin' ever.

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GRADY REEVES, JOHNNY CASH, ELVIS AND ME

by Billy Joe Cooley

I was on my way home from the Korean War, my soldiering days far behind, when I stopped off in Huntsville to visit my old radio pal Grady Reeves. It was the summer of 1954 and I was anxious to get back to familiar ground.

Grady had always called me "Boondocks," a reflection on my rural raising, so I called him the Cincinnati Flash, a throwback to his hometown. I stopped by WBHP where he was a record spinner and a parttime show promoter. They told me that he had gone out to the Madison County coliseum on Holmes Avenue. I went out there.

"Come on, Billy Joe, you can help me with the show I've booked in here," he greeted. The coliseum in those days had no end walls, since it was primarily used for cattle shows and such.

"What kind of show have you got promoted here?" I asked.

Grady explained that a Nashville agent had called and said he had a large bunch of traveling musicians who needed a night's work while passing through here on their way to Tuscaloosa.

"The whole bunch will perform and it's only costing me \$600," he said. "I ought to make a good profit." I helped unfold and set up chairs.

At about 5 p.m. a long Cadillac limousine pulled up and about a dozen people got out. A rack on top of the car contained suitcases, guitars and amplifiers. It looked like a band of gypsies. The car was old, half covered with mud and resembled something that had traveled across a lot of plowed fields in recent days.

The musicians and singers were about my age, so we sat around and gossiped for a couple of hours. They were fascinated with Grady's tales about his days as a sportscaster.

About an hour before show time the audience started trickling in. Most were older people. They paid \$2 a person, which was the going rate for a concert in those days.

A few people showed up. Very few.

Grady lost about \$200 on the show. It was the first the I had seen a grown man whimper.

The show was excellent and it was a shame that so few people saw it.

When the show was over I helped the gang get the stuff repacked atop that old limousine and bade farewell to Johnny Cash, Jerry Lee Lewis, Carl Perkins and Elvis Presley.

Little did we know that each was to become a super star.

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What you Need for your new Puppy

Food & Water Bowls

Start with smaller bowls and get bigger ones as your puppy grows. Look for sturdy bowls that won't tip over easily if your puppy runs into them (he probably will). Also make sure they're easy to clean.

Have plenty of fresh water available throughout the day. From day one, it's a good idea to always take him out right after eating and drinking to lessen the chance of accidents in the house.

Complete & Balanced Puppy Food

Puppy food is specifically formulated with the right proportions of nutrients to foster healthy growth and development throughout the first year of life.

There are plenty of options to choose from: dry food, wet food, small breed formulas and large breed formulas. Consult with your veterinarian to see what recommendations they have based on your puppy's specific nutritional needs.

Once you've selected a puppy food, make sure you know how much to feed your puppy and how often. Monitor how much your puppy eats and how often he needs to go potty after meals to make sure the food is right for his unique system.

Toys

Toys are a puppy essential. Puppy-safe chew toys are great for teething puppies and help them learn what is appropriate for them to chew on and what's not (like your favorite pair of shoes or the legs on your dining room table).

Avoid toys with small parts or those that are soft enough for your puppy to break apart. Also avoid



any sharp objects or balls of yarn, twist ties or other small objects that could cause him to choke. Plastic bags, including pet food and treat bags, chip and cereal bags, etc., are a suffocation risk.

Socks, t-shirts, old shoes or other articles of clothing will only confuse your puppy, as he won't understand what is and isn't a toy.

Always supervise your puppy with any toys and take them away if he starts to break off pieces or gets to the squeaker inside.

Treats

Treats are a great way to reward your puppy for good behavior. Using treats for positive reinforcement can help him learn to go potty outside, to walk on a leash, to go into his crate and more.

Training treats should be small enough to eat in one or two bites, so it doesn't derail your progress. Don't go overboard with them, your puppy needs to get most of his calories and nutrition from good food.

Grooming Supplies

The type of grooming supplies you'll need depends on the breed. Short-haired breeds may only need a brush, shampoo for the occasional bath and a nail trimmer. Long-haired breeds may need various brushes and combs to maintain their coat throughout the year.

It helps to start a grooming routine early so your puppy gets used to being brushed and having his paws and ears handled by you, a groomer or a veterinarian.

Crate

Crates are another important training tool. They also can provide your puppy with a place to sleep and with a safe space to go if he's feeling anxious. It's tempting to get a large crate from the start, especially if you know your puppy will grow into a large dog. For training purposes, however, it's better to start small.

You want your puppy to have just enough room to stand up and turn around.

Leash

Leashes are an important training tool, and they're also required in most cities. As with collars, leashes come in various materials, styles and lengths. A sturdy six-foot leash is great to start training.

Harnesses are another option to help when walking with your puppy. There are several varieties and styles based on your puppy's specific body type.

Traditional six-foot leads are a good choice over retractable leashes because they're not easy for the puppy to get tangled in while supervised. The shorter lead is a more effective training tool, and it provides consistency, which is important when working with young puppies and dogs who are new to training, loose leash walking and more.

Collar & ID Tags

A collar and ID tags are essential. In many municipalities, they're required, but even if they aren't a requirement, they're helpful in the event your puppy gets lost. This is especially important if your puppy is too young to be spayed/neutered and micro chipped. At a minimum, the ID tag should include his name and your phone number. If he escapes this makes it easy to get in touch with you immediately.

There are a variety of styles and materials available for collars. You'll want something sturdy, but also adjustable to expand with your growing puppy. Otherwise, plan to replace the collar as he grows.

"HE'S GOING TO JUMP!"

by Tom Carney

"A man is on top of the Russel Erskine Hotel and he's going to jump off the roof!" Within minutes all the citizens of downtown had heard the news. Eagerly, almost morbidly, they rushed to the scene of the impending tragedy. The street in front of the hotel became a mass of swirling humanity as crowds jostled for a better look. The year was 1942.

"Someone said he works at the Huntsville Arsenal and he just got a letter from his wife saying that she was leaving him."

This news, by some unidentified source, was quickly consumed and spread to the four winds by the crowds who were now grasping at every morsel of new information.

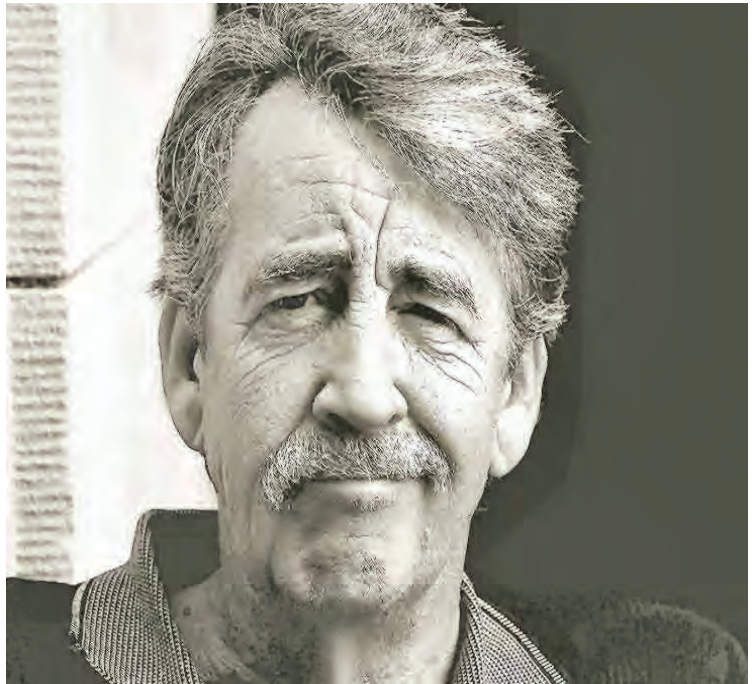
Suddenly the still night air was rent by the screeching sounds of police cars arriving on the scene. Emerging from their cars the policemen began pushing the crowds back with night sticks, trying to establish some sense of order.

"Be careful. He's got a gun," yelled some voice from out of the darkness.

The crowd ran scurrying for cover as the policemen quickly ducked behind the safety of their automobiles.

When a few minutes had passed with no shots being fired, the crowd, now emboldened by the latest developments, began surging forward. The crowd now numbered in the hundreds and was growing larger by the minute. While the police were frantically working to regain control, the sounds of a woman screaming emerged above the noise of the mob. The crowd had inadvertently pushed her into a store front window, breaking the glass, and now she was running hysterically down the street with blood streaming down her face and arms.

Before the police could reach her, another woman began screaming. This woman had been knocked down by the crowd jost-



ling for a better look.

Sensing that something had to be done, and quickly, the brave men of the Huntsville Police Department drew their pistols and resolutely began making their way to the front entrance of the hotel where the unseen deranged man lay in wait.

There was no hesitation in the purposeful stride of our brave policemen on that cold day back in 1942. This was their town and this was their job. Someone had to take charge and they were the ones to do it.

Cautiously, with their guns drawn, they took the elevator to the top floor. The men were silent, probably thinking of their loved ones, and of the danger that lay ahead.

History does not record the name of the first brave soul to exit onto the roof, ready to do battle with the fiend lurking in the shadows.

History does not even record the name of the man, who after receiving the dear John letter, tried to commit suicide.

For, you see ... it never happened.

Some person, who understandably later chose to remain silent, started the rumor and within minutes the whole town was caught up in a frenzied state of anticipation. Every rumor became fact and every fantasy became reality.

And the good people of Huntsville became the victims.

"My idea of a balanced diet is a sausage and biscuit in each hand."

Jenni Kraus, Tuscaloosa

We Shall Not Be Moved

by Ruby Crabbe

When I was a youngster growing up in Dallas Village, in the early 1930's, so many things happened it would be hard for me to remember them all. But some events I'll never forget, like the "Famous Strike" at Dallas Textile Mills.

The picket line in front of the mill was long and the strikers were tired. Some of them carried large banners proclaiming the strike and warning people not to cross the picket line. I can't remember who all took part in cooking food for the strikers but I do know that my mother, Josie Allen, did. My stepdad, Mr. Lonnie Allen, took part in the cooking also.

Every day at noon he and Mama would fix hamburgers and coffee for the strikers. Now when I say hamburgers - I mean it would be such a large sack full it would be hard for us kids to even carry. Plus, we carried a pot that held three or four gallons of hot steaming coffee.

I remember one night several of the union members had a meeting at this certain house. During the meeting someone spoke up and said, "Boy, what would I give right now if I had all the good fried chicken I could eat!"

At that remark the lady of the house got up and excused herself from the meeting.

It wasn't long before the odor of good fried chicken just filled the house. It appeared that three good-sized fryers had been roosting on a water pipe right outside the back door. Don't know whose chickens

they were but they were never seen again on the roost.

I remember the union members and the nonunion members having a little get-to-together on 5th Street, now known as Andrew Jackson Way. The union members were on one side of the street, the nonunion members on the other. On the union side a large platform had been erected, and on top of it was what appeared to be a machine gun. Don't know if it was the real thing or not, but a lot of the people didn't hang around long enough to find out.

And on top of that platform stood Bill Jaco. He was singing loud and clear "We shall not be moved."

That song generated a lot of angry offensive yells, but did that bother Brother Bill? No, it only made him sing louder and louder, "We Shall Not Be Moved!"

Kentucky Pound Cake

2 c. sugar
1-1/4 c. cooking oil
4 eggs, separated
2 tsp. cinnamon
2 T. hot water
2-1/2 c. self-rising flour
1 c. chopped pecans
1 can crushed pineapple drained (reserve liquid)
1 c. powdered sugar
Reserved pineapple juice
Mix sugar and cooking oil. Add egg yolks, cinnamon and water. Then add flour, pecans and pineapple. Beat egg whites and fold in last.

Bake at 325° for about 1 hour and 10 minutes. Cool 10 minutes. Flip onto serving plate. Then, mix 1 cup powdered sugar and juice from pineapple and pour on top while warm.

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Our Trip to the Farm

by Claudia Gates Hill



A few years ago, Don and I took our young grandsons, Jacob, Luke and Joshua, to Mr. Charlie Cornelison's farm, located in the northeast corner of Madison County. Charlie was one of my dad's best friends and we all attended the same church. He previously lived a few blocks from us in the city until he bought and moved to the farm. One Sunday at church, he invited us to take our grandsons out to the farm during the following week. We were so excited and anxiously awaited that day to arrive.

Our trip to the farm began on a beautiful fall day, yet the sun beamed down its summer-like warmth. As we arrived, we parked under the shade of the big oak tree. A cool breeze stirred as we unloaded the boys from the car. Mr. Charlie welcomed us with handshakes and hugs. Mrs. Virginia made us feel welcome with her sweet smile and friendly voice. Tractors were busy in nearby fields loading and transferring bales of hay to the barn, working steadily back and forth as we began our walk around the farm. The cows were lazily walking around grazing and swinging their tails as though they were trying to cool themselves or each other.

Mr. Charlie was an Alabama Bee Farmer and proud of his honeybees and the honey he processed for the market. Since honey season is during the spring and summer months, we were not able to see the actual process of preparing honey for the market, but occasionally, we sensed a little whiff of its aroma in the air.

Mr. Charlie began telling us a little about bees. Their houses are made up of layers of boxes. The lower box is where the queen bee lays and hatches her eggs. Worker bees make and store honey in the upper boxes. They also feed off the honey in these boxes. Excess honey is stored in the top box. Mr. Charlie processes only the honey from the top box. He never robs

them of their food supply. During the winter months, the bees gather in a cluster in their box and their body heat maintains the temperature inside that cluster around eighty degrees. It sustains them during the coldest of days.

Inside one of the buildings, he explained some of the steps taken to process the honey and demonstrated how the tools and other equipment aided in that process.

After learning about the bees and how honey is processed for the market, the boys were delighted to run and play in the big open fields that seemed layered one on the other flowing toward the mountains rising in all directions reaching toward the sky. Country roads drifted off into the distance disappearing into the fields, hills and valleys.

Tired and thirsty, we relaxed in the swing under the big oak tree. As we chatted and drank homemade lemonade, compliments of Mrs. Virginia, Mr. Charlie told us a little about the land. He bought the land in 1963 from the Berry family. They had owned and farmed the land for many years. That's why the area is known as Berry Hollow. He said he was told that the old oak tree providing our shade had been planted in 1870. Jacob, Luke and Joshua had so much fun trying to climb that big old tree. We grown-ups had fun watching them try.

We all had a fun and informative day at the Cornelison farm. Now it was time to go home.

The tractors, now silent, had completed their work for the day. The cows, mooing every now and then, were gathered under a shade tree, still swinging their tails trying to stay cool. We gathered our belongings and thanked Mr. Charlie and Mrs. Virginia for inviting us to such an enjoyable and memorable adventure. As we loaded the boys into the car, a cool breeze stirred, and the smell of honey lingered in the air.



"The latest tranquilizer works so well that people don't care whether they pay their doctor or not."

Dr. Jack Frederick, Scottsboro

Joseph and the Owls

by Elizabeth Wharry



You met my son SPC Jacob Wharry in the September 2023 issue.

This story is about my older son, Joseph Wharry. It occurred when he was in second grade, and we were living in Wichita, KS. His teacher, Miss C, was newly licensed and in her mid 20s. Joseph is now 24, a husband and father.

This particular day, Miss C was teaching her class about the natural world around us. She was talking about the birds of the night. She focused on the various types of owls. As she was teaching, she showed pictures of them and their habitats.

She then asked the class questions about what she had covered. Joseph raised his hand and quite sincerely, piped up with "Don't pi\$\$ off the owls".

Sometime before he got home, I got a call from Miss C. The poor dear was on the verge of tears! I thanked her and hung up, laughing hysterically. I called my husband at work... it took me three tries before he was able to understand what I was saying. He exploded in laughter! Of course, everyone within earshot had to know what was so funny. The office came to a standstill for a few minutes.

Ever since then, if I run across an owl figurine, I will make sure I gift it to Joseph. He always chuckles.

Remember to be kind to the bats, and please don't pi\$\$ off the owls!

"My mind is just like an internet browser. At least nineteen tabs are open, three of them are frozen and I have no idea where the music is coming from."

Paul Stevens, Scottsboro



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Black Salve

by Bill Alkire



My Grandfather, a pudgy, short Irishman, was a headstrong individual. He had been a coal miner, as was many of the various ethnic men in the community. He also liked to gamble and "drinks ah little" as he would say. His gambling was limited to "Penny Annie" as those men who participated called it. In the summer, the men would play at the local jail - my grandfather was the town's constable. In the winter, the men would meet in a disabled "coke oven." The games in the "ovens" sometimes went on all night and sometimes for days.

One morning after playing cards all night, Grandfather was at the kitchen table drinking coffee. My Aunt Lucille (Grandfather's youngest daughter) was refreshing Grandfather's coffee and noticed an apparent open sore on his right ear. Being asked about the sore, Grandfather replied to her that "it had been like that" for months. "Tater, (Grandfather's nickname) you need to have it looked at," was Lou's response.

The next week Grandfather went to the dermatologist, who confirmed it was cancer. The doctor explained that a series of radiation treatments would be required and made an appointment at the University Medical Center. Grandfather got an appointment that afternoon. I accompanied him and Aunt Lou to the appointment.

Grandfather was upset because of the apparent rush to judgement being

made. The idea that the treatment was to be over twelve weeks, require four radiation treatments, could result in possible loss of hearing in his right ear, and loss of the remaining hair on his right side of his head was frightening to him. This treatment was not going to happen. Being in his seventies, Grandfather was quite clear in his response, "No!"

Driving home was dismal, with a cloud of uncertainty and despair during the period on the road, arriving home, however, changed everything. Grandfather appeared in a pleasant, happy mood. Aunt Lou spoke to Grandfather about his mood change, he announced he was going to treat the sore with "Black Salve." His reasoning was that it works on horses for their foot sores and that was what he planned to use. Aunt Lou tried to explain that cancer was different. Did I mention he was a headstrong Irishman?

"Black Salve" is known as "Cansema," and is a controversial cancer treatment today, and was not known for such treatment back then. The product is commonly classified as an escharotic. Escharotics were widely used to treat skin lesions in the early 1900s. It is a topical paste which destroys errant skin tissue and leaves behind a scar called "eschar." Bloodroot, zinc chloride and other herbs are common ingredients.

Grandfather had used this product to treat sores on animals around the farm. He used the salve - it did what he expected. It killed the cancer cells and it worked in a week. However, as with any non-approved medical treatment - there were consequences. The sore was no longer there — the location of the sore was gone also, leaving a noticeable chunk out of Grandfather's right ear.

When asked about his ear - Grandfather claimed one of the "Vest" boys cut it off after he got mad in a card game.

No one questioned that answer - "After all, the Vest boys, were known to be capable of such a thing."

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Heard on the News in 1885

- Mr. & Mrs. De Young, formerly of Pulaski, TN and now living in Huntsville, had their little son Robbie bitten by a rattlesnake Sunday morning while he was walking on the Chapman Place, near the Barracks. The snake hung its fangs in the boy's heel and as the boy ran he jerked the snake several feet. An older brother witnessed the whole thing and killed the snake, which had only one button and no rattles, showing the snake to have been one year old. Dr. Ridley was summoned to the little sufferer. Arriving on the ground in an hour after the strike, he administered two ounces of whiskey with a teaspoonful of aromatic spirits of ammonia. Ten drops of spirits of ammonia was injected hypodermically and the bite saturated in spirits of ammonia. This treatment was repeated in half an hour and the little sufferer is convalescent.

It would be good for everyone to note well this remedy and especially those who are compelled to go into places which snakes are accustomed to inhabit.

- Yesterday Mr. Jere Murphy offered Mr. John Neely \$5 to walk to Whitesburg and back, allowing him from 4:30 p.m. yesterday until 1 a.m. this morning to accomplish the trip. At 11:15 last evening the tired form of Mr. Neely was seen to arrive at the Square, his garments covered with heavy dust, and a weary look upon his face. But he had made the trip honestly for he brought certificates from Capt. Joe Brown, of Whitesburg and all of the toll keepers enroute. On his way home he stopped to take a bath in the Tennessee River. After which he said he felt like a new man. He, of course, won.

- Stolen last Thursday night from Thomas Gore near New Market a black horse mule. A reward of ten dollars will be paid for the return of the mule, and ten dollars for the apprehension of the thief as long as he is delivered to me. The lucky man can reach me at the Mercury.

- Jay Pollard has a horse and buggy for sale if it can be found. It was stolen yesterday from in front of the Court-house.

- John Rosemeyer, well-known farmer in the Scottsboro area, while bordering on delirium yesterday, piled his bedding on the floor in his room and set fire to it, then mounting a chair on the table in the middle of the room and arming himself with a gun, bade defiance to his imaginary tormentors. Some neighbors heard the noise and rescued him.

His eyes were burned and he was otherwise so badly burned that he cannot live. The house and its contents, worth \$3,000, were destroyed. He is presently lodged in the jail.

"If you can read this, I can slam on my brakes and sue you."

Seen on Madison bumper sticker

Description of a 40 year class reunion:
"Same old faces, many new teeth."

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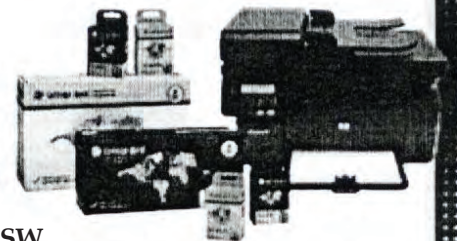
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MOVING TO HUNTSVILLE IN 1948



*by Bill Miller, Published in
Jan 2008 in OHM*

In 1948 I was working for Butler & Cobb Contractors from Montgomery on a job in Gadsden, AL, one of the many places that my family and I had lived while working for them. In May they mailed me Drawings, Specifications and all the beginning paperwork I needed and instructed me to move to Huntsville to construct a U.S. Naval Reserve Center.

After briefing the Superintendent that relieved me, I checked a road map and decided to travel Highway 431 through Gurley and across Monte Sano Mountain. The old road, now known as Old Big Cove Road, was very narrow with sharp curves and narrow bridges and has changed little over the years.

I was towing a 35 ft. house trailer and there were times I had to pull over as far as possible to the edge of the road to meet on-coming traffic. My wife became upset and remarked that it looked like the road was ending and the jumping off place would be around the next curve, and maybe we should turn back before we get to the top of the mountain.

When we got down the mountain where California and Old Big Cove intersected we saw the Roper home with a large flower garden and wind mill in front of the house (the present site of Huntsville

Hospital East). Next, was Huntsville Hospital and the city limit sign. We turned right and were soon at the Court House Square.

I parked (plenty of space, very few cars in sight) on the Square and walked to the Police station which was located where the parking deck on Madison and Fountain Street is at present. I introduced myself, told the man why I was in town and asked for house trailer accommodations. He directed me to the intersection of Green Street and Holmes Avenue to a trailer park there next to the Catholic School and service station.

The next day I opened a post office box to establish an address, next I opened a bank account and began to inquire about an engineering firm. I was directed to the office of G.W. Jones and Sons. Their Chief Engineer was Mr. Bill Blevins.

After studying the drawings and specifications and determining the site location, he quoted me a price of \$100 for stake-out and bench marks. We then went to the site and he told me that it had once been a garbage and trash area. I asked Mr. Blevins about build-



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**"Solomon, one of David's sons, had 300 wives
and 700 porcupines."**

9 year old's answer to a Bible test

ing materials, concrete, hardware and an earth moving contractor. He took me to Huntsville Building Materials which was located on Wheeler Avenue and introduced me to Dick and Joe Van Valkenburg.

Within the next few days Mr. Cecil Ashburn of Ashburn & Gray Construction Company came by the job and traded to do the earth work.

Joe, Dick, and Cecil soon became my good friends. I kept close contact with each one of these men. We have since lost our friends Joe and Dick, however, Cecil and I are still close and get together often. We have worked together on many projects since then in and around Huntsville until Cecil sold Ashburn & Gray and semi-retired.

The Naval Reserve building was located on Monroe Street near the new Embassy Hotel until it was torn down during part of the Civic Center expansion. In 1948 there was a street that crossed beside the railroad trestle, then turned east back to the old Council School. This was a dirt road used to get to the fill site.

A Sunday outing in 1948 was a trip to the park on Monte Sano or to the Big Springs Park. The trip to the park at times was entertaining if the families that lived in the apartments behind cotton row had hung their laundry over the balcony to dry. Saturday was a day to shop, or visit downtown. Almost everything you needed was within walking distance of the Square. You could hear a sermon on many street corners, smell fresh popped corn, parched peanuts, and cooking smells coming from the restaurants.

Huntsville soon became home. It was then and still is the best place I have ever lived.

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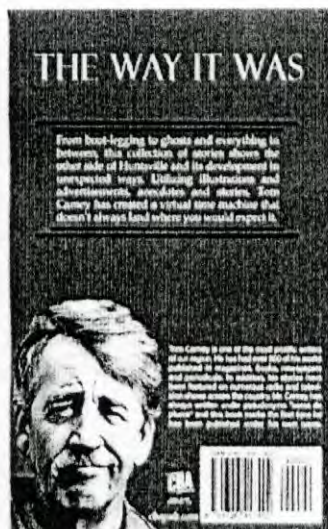
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HUNTSVILLE HISTORY THROUGHOUT THE YEARS



Downtown, in 1955, was still the center of Huntsville's business and social life. On Saturdays the sidewalks would often be so crowded with shoppers that people were forced to walk in the streets. The city was enjoying the prosperity that came with the rocket program even though a mule and wagon could occasionally still be seen on the streets.

That same year Dr. Wernher von Braun and 108 other German scientists became American citizens at a special ceremony conducted at Huntsville High School....



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