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Old Huntsville

HISTORY AND STORIES OF THE TENNESSEE VALLEY

Secrets of a Family in Crisis

They bought a home in Blossomwood, had two cars, a perfect yard and from all outward appearances seemed to be the typical middle class couple.

Walls can hide secrets, though, and the brick walls of our home held many.



Also in this issue: Old Matchbook Memories; Royalty in North Alabama; A Love of Bicycling; Junior High School Stupidity; Jupiter C1 Rocket; Shifty; Code Talkers; Tent Revivals; Another Gray Hair; Sweet Snacks, Cat Care and much much more!

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Author, John H. Tate

Secrets of a Family in Crisis

by Janie Martin, as told to Tom Carney, 2004

If Dad had lived in a different era, or another time, he might have been a sea captain or maybe an explorer. He may have never found what he was searching for, but I think he would have been happy.

Dad was twenty-four years old the day he met my Mother. He was going to school under the G.I. bill studying to be an electrician. Mother was a secretary at the school and a mutual friend introduced her to Dad. Six months later they were married and when Dad got out of school they moved to Huntsville.

Huntsville was booming in the 1950s and jobs were plentiful. Both Dad and Mother went to work on the Arsenal, him as a maintenance electrician and she as a bookkeeper. Life was good for them. They bought a home in Blossomwood, had two cars, a perfect yard and from all outward appearances seemed to be the typical middle class couple. Walls can hide secrets, though, and the brick walls of our home held many.

"I was thrown from my car as it left the road. I was later found in a ditch by some stray cows."

Seen on recent accident report

Mother had always been a little different than my friends' mothers. She was more demanding and erratic in her behavior. She might spend days planning a Sunday dinner and then when she had it on the stove cooking, would forget all about it and go shopping. Other times we would plan a trip to the movies and at the last minute she would announce that she thought the movie "gave her bad feelings" and refuse to go.

I was nine years old the first time I realized there was something wrong with Mother. Her parents came to visit us for Christmas and while we were eating dinner Grandpa made a joke about the turkey. Mother seemed to get a glazed look on her face, like the calm before the storm. Suddenly she got up from the table and went into the kitchen where we heard the sound of breaking glass. She was emptying all the cabinets and throwing everything on the floor and out the back door.

When Dad tried to calm her down she began cursing him, telling him that he had planned the whole thing, that he had made her life Hell and he would pay. Dad finally talked her into going to bed and my Grandparents left, very upset. Dad spent the rest of the evening cleaning up the kitchen and the back yard.

Later that night Dad came into my bedroom and sat on the edge of the bed. I could tell he was worried but he tried his best to make me feel better. "Mother's just having one of her spells," he explained.



L. Thomas Ryan, Jr. Attorney At Law

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Old Huntsville, Inc. (USPS #8510)

P.O. Box 4648

Huntsville, AL 35815

(256) 656-5321

Email - oldhuntsville@gmail.com

(Website) www.oldhuntsville.com

Publisher - Cathey Carney

**Advertising - (256) 656-5321
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At about this time Dad brought a boat home. He was always doing work for other people on the weekends and someone had traded him a boat for his labor. Even as a child, the boat looked pretty sorry to me. It was about thirty feet long and looked as if it had been through a tornado. Much of the decking was missing and the rest was so warped you couldn't tell what it was supposed to be. The motor actually had green moss growing on it.

I suppose everyone thought Dad was crazy but it made him happy. It was the only thing I ever remember that he did for himself. He would spend hours sawing a piece of wood and fitting it into place. It was obvious the project would take years but he didn't seem to mind. For his birthday that year I bought him a Captain's hat. It became a private joke between us; I would call him Captain and he would call me First Mate.

Mother's "spells" started becoming more frequent. She developed a fixation that people that she worked with were conspiring against her and that the books she worked on contained hidden messages. She could never quite explain what the messages were, except that we "would know when the time was right."

Finally Mother's employer let her go, citing "disruption of the workplace" as the reason. Losing her job seemed to push her further over the edge. In her mind she was convinced that her employer and Dad had conspired to make her lose her job. She had a fantasy that they were part of a "good old boy" network and, after she was destroyed, the "good old boys" would take care of Dad forever.

Dad and I both realized she had serious problems. He tried to talk her into seeing a doctor but she refused, saying he was the sick one. In our own bizarre way we learned to cope with her spells. When she thought the Huntsville Times crossword puzzle was sending her coded messages, Dad simply canceled the paper. If she complained about the light bulbs sending out "strange rays" we would replace them.

Looking back, the only time I remember Dad being happy was when he was working on his boat. He had worked on it for several years at this time and it was still no closer to completion, but Dad didn't care. Sometimes, late at night after Mother had gone to bed, he would string an extension cord with a light out to the boat and work on it till the early hours of the morning.

With Mother no longer working it gave her more time to shop. Before long Dad started getting bills in the mail for thousands of dollars that Mother had charged. When Dad confronted her with the bills she began accusing him of

having girlfriends, saying it was all his fault. The more she screamed, the more violent she became. She began hitting Dad with her fists and when he tried to restrain her, she butted him with her head, bloodying her nose.

Almost immediately she smeared the blood all over her face and hair and then ran screaming to the neighbors next door. The neighbors, not knowing what was happening, called the police. Dad spent the night in jail and had to attend domestic violence classes while I had to go to counseling. No one offered to do anything to help Mother.

With all the new bills Mother had charged, Dad could no longer make the payments. Sadly he put our house on the market and we moved into a rental house on Risson Avenue. Regardless of how he tried there was not enough money to pay everything. In the end, Dad filed for bankruptcy. The only fight my father and I ever had happened at that time. Dad had called several people trying to sell his boat. One person came out and looked at it but only laughed when he saw its condition. Still, Dad was willing to sell it for scrap if he had to. To me, that was heartbreaking. Dad had scrimped and saved and worked countless hours on it, and even though it wasn't much to look at, it was still his dream. I told him



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if he sold it I was going to sell everything I owned too.

He finally relented and agreed to keep it, most likely because no one would buy it.

That same summer Dad lost his job. Mother had decided, in her mind, that Dad was no longer working and the "good old boys" were supplying him with phony pay stubs, money and girlfriends. She would call him at work sometimes fifteen or twenty times a day. If he could not come to the phone she took it as proof he was not working. If a clerk answered the phone Mother would accuse her of being one of Dad's girlfriends. A short while later the company had a "cutback" and Dad was laid off.

Dad got another job with another company but Mother soon found the phone number and Dad lost that job too. In the next couple of years the same thing would happen over and over again. One employer actually called Dad into the office and before laying him off, gave him a lecture about "controlling your wife."

We begged Mother to get help. The preacher from our church talked to her as did her parents. Mother ignored the pleas, blaming her situation on some vast unknown conspiracy that was trying to silence her. Dad and I both knew Mother had to get professional help. Unfortunately, if you are broke, with no insurance, your options are limited. Our preacher recommended a place in Georgia that treated people like Mother - for \$1,200.00 a week. Dad was struggling to pay \$300.00 a month rent.

One afternoon I came home from school and saw a crowd of people in front of our house. Mother had thrown all of our belongings into the front yard and told people to take what ever they wanted. Neighbors were carrying off furniture and strange people were picking through my clothes like buzzards picking a carcass clean. The police took Mother to

the hospital where she was admitted for psychiatric evaluation. A few days later a judge ordered her committed to the mental hospital in Decatur.

As sad as it may sound, those three months when Mother was in the hospital were some of the happiest in my life. Dad and I would take long walks in the evenings, and for the first time, really talked to one another. Dad began to smile again and even started working on the boat. When he didn't have the money to purchase a new piece of wood, he would simply sand the same piece all over again. It was about this time that I realized Dad would never complete the boat. Working on it was therapy for him, allowing him to forget his problems and escape into a simpler world for a few hours at a time.

I asked Dad why he didn't get a divorce. He thought about it a long time before answering. "If it was me who was sick," he finally replied, "and your mother was normal, I hope she would take care of me."

When Mother was discharged, the doctors told us that she could



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live a productive life if she would take her medicine and continue to see a psychiatrist. They told us it was up to us to make sure she took the medicine.

No one ever explained how we were supposed to do it.

When Mother came home she was a different person. It was as if a dark evil force was lurking in her body trying to escape. Dad and I both tried to make her take the medicine but it was useless. She would lie about it, hide the pills and make excuses. If we confronted her and made her take the medicine in front of us, she would go to the bathroom and throw them up. Dad was spending almost three hundred dollars a month on medicine that Mother would throw away.

We kept trying but within a couple of months she was back in her own private world.

Despite Dad's problems and the lack of money, he always tried to be a good father. He always attended the different school events I was involved in and encouraged me to have friends. Most of my friends realized there was something different about Mother and accepted the fact that I never invited anyone home.

Mother had been a pretty woman at one time but as her condition worsened she rarely ever took time to brush her hair or take a bath. Sometimes she would wear the same clothes for a week before Dad could coax her into changing. Anytime she left the house, even in the hottest parts of the summer, she wore a long coat that she had gotten out of someone's trash.

One day after school some friends of mine asked me to go to the Parkway City Mall. While we were parking one of my friends noticed an "old bag lady" sifting through a trash bin. Immediately, as most kids would, they began making jokes about her and the family she must have.

They never knew it was my Mother.

Dad tried to get Mother committed again but was told that as long as she was not a danger, there was nothing the authorities could do. Of course we heard the famous words again, "Just get her to take her medicine."

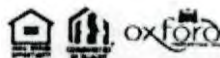
Mother started disappearing;

at first for a few hours, and then days at a time. Dad and I would ride up and down the streets trying to find her and coax her into the car. Several times business owners called to tell us that Mother was harassing their customers. Finally it got to the point where Mother would only show up at the house every couple of weeks for a few days and then disappear again. When she did come home she always smelled of alcohol and often had ugly bruises on her arms. Dad would always try to clean her up and make her a bed on the couch but in a day or two she would be gone again.

Finally one time Mother was gone for about six months. Ev-

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ery few days Dad would call the police department and the hospital but no one had any knowledge of her. Suddenly late one evening Mother showed up at the house with a man whom she introduced to me as "your Uncle Charlie."

"Uncle Charlie" and she were going to get married, she explained, just as soon as Dad signed the divorce papers. Almost on cue, Charlie handed the divorce papers to Dad.

Dad took the papers into the kitchen where he read them carefully before finally signing them. Giving the documents back to Mother he wished her good luck. After they left Dad turned to me and said, "It's over."

Neither one of us ever talked about Mother again. It was a subject too close and too painful for both of us. Occasionally I would receive a package in the mail but they would usually be filled with bizarre newspaper clippings or perhaps several pages of stock quotes from the "Wall Street Journal".

Several years later, while I was in college, Dad received a phone call from her. She had been picked up for shoplifting in Valdosta, Georgia and wanted Dad to send her money to pay the fine. Dad agreed to send the money but when she wanted to come home he said no. "It would only have made matters worse," he later told me.

Dad died that same year. A few months after that phone call he had gotten rid of the boat he had spent twenty years working on. Perhaps he didn't need it any more.

Years passed and I married a wonderful man. When he asked about my Mother I always lied, saying she had died when I was small and I didn't really know her.

"My luck is being a bald guy who just won a comb."

Rodney Dangerfield

One day I returned from shopping and my husband met me at the door with a strange look on his face. "Your Mother is dead. I just got a call from the Knoxville Police and they said she was a homeless person. She was a victim of a hit and run accident."

Suddenly all the bitterness, shame, frustration and sadness from a whole life time swept over me. I ran to my bedroom, locked the door, and spent the rest of the day and night crying. My husband was wonderful. He didn't know what was going on but knew I needed the space and time to sort it out.

Late that night the tears stopped. I went into the guest bedroom where my husband was sleeping and woke him up. I don't remember how I started but I told him about my childhood; about my Father and about my Mother and about the shame I felt.

I told him that I believed my Mother was a good woman and she couldn't help the sickness that had ravaged her mind. I talked about how Dad had stood beside her and tried to get help from a system that was uncaring.

We didn't turn the lights on. It seemed easier without them.

When I finally finished talking, my husband didn't say anything. He just took me in his arms and held me for the rest of the night.

Two days later we drove to Knoxville where we made the funeral arrangements. My husband helped pick out a dress for her and we found a burial plot that overlooked a peaceful wooded valley.

For the first time in my life Dad, Mother and I were all finally at peace.



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- Instead of those heavy night creams, try these. For normal skin use sesame oil, warmed just a bit. For oily skin use safflower oil. For very dry skin use olive oil or peanut oil.

- I have even tried castor oil mixed with a teaspoon of almond extract for scent.

- Wrinkles on your top lip? Apply Vitamin E oil to it at night.

- If you just hate those dark circles under your eyes, consider using an extra pillow at night. Also, freeze a baby's teething ring, wrap it in soft cloth and place over your eyes for a few moments.

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spoon of honey with a teaspoon of strained lemon juice - apply to a clean dry face and leave on for 10 minutes, rinse with tepid water.

- Face lifting exercises - Pretend you're biting an apple - tense up your neck and hold this for 5 seconds. Repeat.

Or, push your tongue up to the roof of your mouth as hard as you can - hold for 6 seconds and repeat several times. Push your tongue to either side of your cheeks and finally, lift your eyebrows one inch and hold them there.

- For Baldness - try massaging garlic into your scalp. Or concoct a plaster of boiled quince mixed with wax and spread it over the bald spot. Quince has a fuzzy skin and it

is thought that the scalp might follow suit. If all else fails, heed the European superstition that a thick mane will result if you allow a pregnant woman to give you a haircut.

- To soften coarse hair - shampoo and towel dry your hair. Take a pint of plain yogurt and glob it on your hair, making sure it gets evenly distributed. Stay that way for 15 minutes, then rinse all out with tepid water.

- For overall health and beauty, drink plenty of water and get out to walk preferably in sunshine. Take deep breaths and lift your feet - don't shuffle and fall. Find a way to reward yourself with small attaboys when you have gotten out to exercise.

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Dirt Roads

By Jean Brewer McCrady

Those of us who were raised in the country know dirt roads as the super highways of our nostalgic memories. Life was lived on dirt roads. They took us, often on foot, to all the places that mattered, like to church, to school, the Post Office and country store and the cotton patch. The ultimate dirt road was the one that ran between the ends of the cotton rows and the fencerow that separated one field from the next, or that paralleled the ditch of the public dirt road or gravel road bordering the field. This ultimate dirt road is where the farm truck or wagon was parked for cotton sacks to be weighed and emptied, in anticipation of that next trip to the gin.

This was the road where pre-teens learned to drive. It was a privilege to be the one chosen to drive the truck or the tractor along this road as the pickin' progressed across the field. This road is where the pickers sat in the shade of the bushes or trees to enjoy their baloney sandwich lunches, or R.C. Cola and Moon Pie snacks. Work life was lived on this cotton patch road.

Play time was also spent on dirt roads. That's where wild blackberry bushes grew and produced thumb-sized berries waiting to be picked and eaten on the spot or taken home for our Mamas to make jam. And 'possum grape vines grew in trees along dirt roads. That's where kids learned to be climbers. The more "sophisticated" dirt roads were topped with gravel, and this is where bicycle riding skills were developed, by learning not to be deterred by skinned elbows and battered knees.

Dirt roads were where tender feet got toughened up for the barefoot summer. Decision-making was simplified in those days by letting the calendar determine when certain things would happen. Like, November 15th was always hog

killing day. And May 1st was the day we could shed our shoes and go barefooted. If May 1st happened to be a school day, we walked the quarter mile of dirt road from school to the house carrying our shoes along with our books, because the calendar said we could go barefooted, and no further permission was needed.

A special pastime for kids was standing in the yard watching the road grader clean the ditches and smooth out the potholes before the roadbeds became impassable for wheeled traffic. I know of one little 4-year-old boy who chose his life's work while standing in the yard watching every turn of the wheel and pull of the levers as the operator graded Wall Highway (now Wall-Triana) in Harvest, AL. That Madison County employee operator was a neighbor and friend of the family, and this child was allowed to ride with him in the dump truck when he hauled gravel to resurface the roads.

So the boy observed road building and maintenance projects from beginning to end, and he never forgot the "thrills" he experienced while doing so. As evidence of the impact that living on a dirt road could have, he went on to live out his life-long dream as a heavy equipment operator, spending his adult life in Alaska dredging lakes and building roads on rocky mountain sides and performing every other kind of seemingly impossible task that can be done with earth-moving equipment.

And it all started on the dirt road where his childhood was spent. This child was Ray Brewer (now known as Tom) and he is my brother. Still living in Alaska, among the mountains he moved and the roadbeds he carved upon them.

No story about dirt roads would be complete without acknowledging Paul Harvey's essay on the subject. If you've read it, you know his contention that "What's mainly wrong with society today is that too many dirt roads have been paved. There's not a problem in America today; crime, drugs, education, divorce, delinquency, that wouldn't be remedied if we just had more dirt roads," he claimed and went on to explain why. He continued, "Our values were better when our roads were worse." He based the claim on such evidence as "People did not worship their cars more than their children," and "Criminals didn't walk two dusty miles to rob or rape, when they knew they'd be welcomed by five barking dogs and a double barrel shotgun" at the end of that dirt road.

But all is not lost. According to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), in 2012 there were 1,357,430 miles of unpaved road in the United States, accounting for almost 35 percent of the more than 4 million miles of roadway in the Nation. A twist to my story is, with a million plus miles of dirt road left, we could spend the rest of our days exploring these superhighways of yesteryear and never run out of dirt roads to enjoy, for whatever reason they have meaning to us. For anyone inclined to such exploration, "Dirt-Road America" by M.R. O'Connor is a must-read.

In the meantime, for "The Rest of the Story", you can google Dirt Roads by Paul Harvey, and even listen to the video version read by Oscar Poole.



Ryan, My Rescue

by Jen Adams

After having to put down my beloved cat after 16 years, I was devastated. My daughter insisted I go through photos of animals in need of rescue at my local shelter, but at first I declined as I knew my beautiful tabby Daisy could never be replaced.

About a month or so later, I did browse through the site my daughter had recommended and stopped when I saw small dog sitting on a chair with a look on her face that said, "Please come get me."

When I first got to the shelter and saw her, I thought the dog was white but it was hard to tell because she was so filthy. Her hair was wild but her eyes very gentle. And it was love at first sight.

Ryan has been with me for four years. She hasn't replaced Daisy, as she will always occupy a special place in my heart. However, she has brought me more happiness than I can ever express in a short story. This 8 pound former shelter dog owns my heart.

When anyone asks if she is a rescue, I tell them she is but not the way they think. My now beautifully groomed Maltese rescued me.

I heartily recommend that anyone reading this adopts a shelter pet. I promise your life will be changed for the better.

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Policeman to Arab speeder

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Tent Revivals (1949)

by Bill Alkire



When I moved here it was traumatic for a seven-year-old. This place was a clannish place and quite frightening. People shunned me as if I had a disease and was contagious. Their demeanor was hurtful. The Nuns at the Catholic Church had taught us to look for the good in everyone and it was disrespectful to ignore or belittle people. We are all children of God.

I worked successfully to distance myself from those who were intentionally callous to a young boy.

I found solstice in the outdoors. The town was surrounded by forest laden hills that had abundant wildlife and a river running through the town. The town was nestled in a valley of the National Forest part of the Appalachian Mountains.

My number one influence was attending church. There were people there who looked down on you but were more discreet about it.

I was drawn to the rhythm of music and found freedom in the singing of hymns. I especially enjoyed gospel music and became excited hearing Bluegrass Gospel. The blending of guitars, fiddles, banjos, dobro's, mandolins, spoons, bass, old washboards and

juice harps excited me. The instruments had found their way from Europe as immigrants to the United States brought them and their music with them.

Ireland was the largest ethnic group. The Bluegrass sound came out of the struggles the people had in settling in the Mountains of Appalachia. The music seemed to thrive in this area of the mountains and had made its way into the churches and Tent Revivals.

I was a young man lusting for learning and became influenced by the music and the Gospel Bluegrass sound. Tent Revivals pulled me into the magical excitement. I looked forward to the music and the preaching of the WORD.

I already knew the WORD being versed via my early Catholic Church indoctrination; the Nuns made sure of that. The evangelists on the revival circuits were gifted orators and drew large crowds. People were brought to Christ through the WORD, the music and were baptized every night.

Being well versed on the WORD, I understood what those testifiers spoke about. I could relate to their issues of rich vs. poor, going to bed hungry, doing without, being persecuted, shunned and rejected by fellow human beings.

Children are not born to reject others based on ethnic differences, skin color, religion, or even the way a person dresses or talks. They are taught that by adults.

I found an abundance of peace and freedom at the revivals. My faith, feelings and knowledge that I was a child of God, coupled with that belief I would and could survive and withstand most challenges. When God is with you, who can stand against you? The challenges I face daily or would face in an unknown future can be daunting.

The world may look bleak and dark today - but the sun will rise tomorrow. The darkness does not like the light. The light will always prevail.

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Turn to the experts



The first Labor Day holiday was celebrated on Tuesday, September 5, 1882 in New York City. Other states celebrated Labor Day in different months of the year.

Two years later, on June 28, 1894, President Grover Cleveland signed the law that Congress designate the first Monday in September a National Holiday for all states, so families have enjoyed the holiday since 1894.

With kids back in school, us older folks can get a break if we travel on off "peak days". Late September and early October are great times to travel, since the weather is still mild in the southeast and tourist season is over. Delta and United Airlines in certain markets give discounts too.

Were you aware that the price of first class "forever" stamps increased from 68 cents to 73 cents as of July 14th? You can still use your book of forever stamps if you were fortunate to have bought a book of stamps. I must admit I forgot to buy another book.

I can't believe the summer months are over and fall starts on September 22nd. I have enjoyed the fresh home-grown vegetables from the garden. I just wish they could last all year. As I age, the months go by in a blink. My years are like a roll of bathroom tissue. The less there is left on the roll, the faster it goes.

Halloween is on Thursday this year. Check with your churches to see the date and time they are having "Trunk or Treat" with car trunks lined up bearing treats. Keeps the kids from the dangers of wandering the neighborhood streets at night.

Make note of your calendar for the North Alabama Region of the Antique Automobile Club of America Car Show to be held at the Orion Amphitheater, 701 Amphitheater Road, Huntsville, AL 35806 on October 26. It is so much fun to stroll past the 250 factory-correct vehicles from all over the nation - cars, trucks and motorcycles will be there. Cars arrive starting at 8:30am and awards begin shortly after 12:00. Free to the public.

Saturdays are football games with laughter, friends and family. A good snack to have on hand is mild sausage, Rotel and cream cheese. Brown the sausage, drain, mix with cream cheese and Rotel and have with your favorite chips and drinks.



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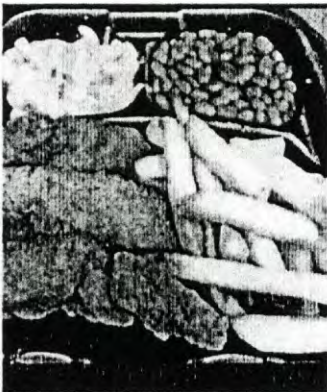
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ANOTHER GRAY HAIR

by Lawrence Hillis

This summer, Karen and I went to the Concerts in the Park with Larry and Royce Layne to see the group Juice. They play Motown and Soul music. Karen and Larry went to school at East Clinton and were in the same classroom for several years. The school offered square dancing and Karen and Larry would often pick each other as dance partners. Larry and I grew up attending Jackson Way Baptist Church and his dad Billy Layne was a close neighbor and a very close friend. I called him "Uncle Billy". One time while sitting at a church dinner with him, and I called him "Uncle Billy" and one of the ladies said I didn't know you two were related. I replied that I wish we were, but that was an old southern term given in honor to the oldest man in the neighborhood.

There is a laid-back atmosphere at Concerts in the Park and you are welcomed to talk and carry on conversations while the groups play. If you know Larry, then you know he will take all opportunities to converse with anyone around. We talked about the old days at Jackson Way and about many of the members such as Jeff and "Mouse" Campbell, Stan Connally, John Blue, Dehan Gates, Claudia Gates Hill and the ministers such as John Lindsey, Dan Ireland and Bob Waldrup.

Later that night I woke up thinking about Bob Waldrup. He was the Minister of Music and Youth Director and Larry said he passed away a few years ago. He was tall and had blonde hair, very friendly, fun to be with and was like a big teddy bear. We called him "Brother Bob." It was easy to joke around with him. One time, he was planning a week-long youth trip to Cook Springs Camp south of Birmingham and found out to be able to use the swimming pool each church had to bring their own certified life guard and the person had to be over 21. He asked church members if there were any certified life guards and could not find one. The camp had a fishing pond, softball field, volley ball and badminton, but the swimming pool time was going to be important to the campers.

"Brother Bob" found out that Huntsville YMCA offered a course to accredit life

guards for the various swimming pools around town, and he asked me to take the course and also be a counselor on the trip. I was about 21 years old and was working and attending night classes and just completed another season of rowing at UAH. The courses were in May and I was having trouble fitting the course into my schedule until I found they would have one make-up class in early June which would be one week before the trip. So, I signed up.

I was teaching a boys' Sunday School class and the Sunday before the trip I was heading to my class when I saw "Brother Bob" in the hallway. He stopped me and asked about the class and I said I was running late and would talk to him after church. I was attempting a prank on him and thought I would let him ponder the outcome during church. I realize now that was a little too cruel but again couldn't resist stirring up the "Teddy Bear".

Right after church, Bob hurriedly came up the aisle to speak to me and asked, "You passed the course, correct?" I said I passed the rescue procedure but we had to make at least 90 on the written exam and I am not good at taking tests and only made 80." He said, "Oh no, you did not get certified?" I could not hold back any longer and said, "I am just joking, I really made 100." He said, "Be sure to bring your certificate tomorrow."

I said, "Now that's a problem, they ran out of certificates and I didn't get mine."



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Again, he was getting frustrated with me and said, "The rules strictly state that certificates had to be turned in".

I said, "Then you will need to leave tomorrow and I will stay in Huntsville and go to the YMCA until I can get mine."

His face was turning red and I thought the gig was up so I told him that I really had the certificate. Bob said that his wife told him that he was getting a lot of gray hairs for all of the hard and stressful work he was doing.

All went well at the camp that week with the exception of a few behavior problems. One of them had to do with a kid named Ricky who was one of the youngest of the campers. I had Ricky in my Sunday School class and he was always very disruptive. One time he kept getting up out of his seat and pestering the other class members, then I made him sit

down and I sat on his lap and finished the lesson. Later when Ricky grew up, he became a fine man and had two sons. He called me one day and said he was so sorry he had been so mischievous in his youth. He said he could now understand how young boys could act up and that he was having trouble with his two sons.

Ricky died a few months later, and I heard that he had talked to other men of the church and apologized to them also.

Back at camp. It was about mid-week when we were returning from the pool to our dorms when Bob asked me how things were at the pool. Bob and some of the other counselors stayed at the dorm during swim time to prepare for the nighttime Bible study session. I said pretty good except for the episode with Ricky. He said, "What happened?"

I said, "Ricky was pester-

ing some of the other kids and John Thomason had enough and drug Ricky to the deep end of the pool and held him under water. Ricky could not swim very well and he took in too much water and passed out. I said that I pulled him out of the pool and gave him mouth to mouth resuscitation."

Brother Bob said, "I am glad he is OK, but now I have to fill out an accident report with the camp supervisor. Another episode like that and we will lose our privileges to use the pool". I again confessed that I was only kidding.

Bob said, "Another gray hair for me."

"When you do squats, are your knees supposed to sound like a goat chewing on an aluminum can stuffed with celery?"

Karl Peterson, Huntsville

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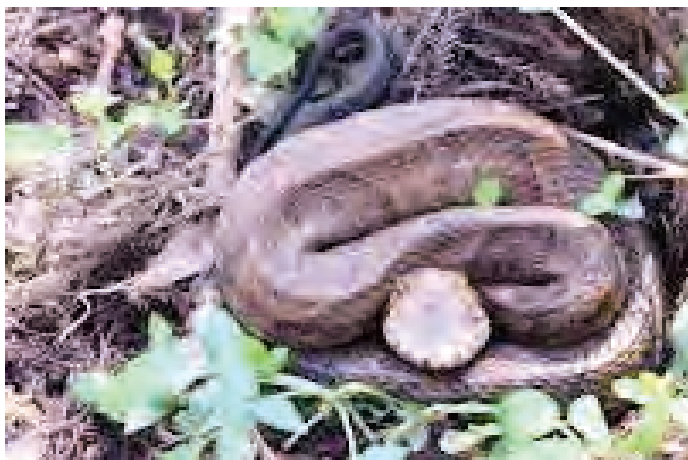
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SNAKES!

by Robert French



Shortly after WW II, I became the Senior Patrol Leader of my Boy Scout Troop. I still have the booklet with all my notes.

We decided to camp a couple of nights in the Bankhead National Forrest. That meant hiking into the camping area mid-morning Friday, then hiking to our allotted camp site. It was about a total of 2 miles through thick woods.

As Senior Patrol Leader, I went into the Ranger Headquarters and registered us in. When I came back out for the hike through the forest, I noticed my ruck sack was a little heavier than when I went in. I thought it was just my imagination. Everything looked the way I had left it. Anyhow, away we went - 10 of us and our Scoutmaster, Ed Brazelton.

There were designated rest areas along the trail that had been built by the CCC Boys during the Depression. At the second rest area, a scout named Julian Jervis made a bee line for the only nice resting place in the small clearing - a large old stump about three feet tall. Jervis sat on the stump. The rest of us scattered around trying to find the best place to sit down.

As we were dropping our gear, all at once, we heard a rattle snake. "Don't anybody move!" Shouted Ed Brazelton. We froze, moving only our eyes searching for the snake.

The snake rattled again. We couldn't spot him. However, we knew he was nearby in the resting area and angry. One of us was about to be bitten.

Mr. Brazelton said, "I got him! Don't move!"

He was a former Mississippi football player who was a Materials Expediter at Huntsville Arsenal. He rushed Jervis with a full body slam and knocked both of them sprawling away from the stump.

The huge timber rattler's head came up out of the hole in the center of the stump striking in thin air with huge fangs bearing and 14 rattles singing; indicating it was probably 14 years old.

Although a safe place, the huge snake didn't know he was trapped in the hole and the Scouts made quick work of him. He was a little over 8 feet long.

As he skinned the snake to make a belt out of his hide, Mr. Brazelton said, "Boys, say your prayers tonight. If that snake had bitten one of us we would have had a hard time getting that person back to safety."

He laughed and held up a snake bite kit "However, living by our motto, be prepared, I did come prepared." We cheered.

I didn't say anything but I had brought my snake bite kit to so many places the logo was worn off making it look like a funny shaped silver can. I felt of it in my pocket. On down

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"My kids say they want a cat for Christmas. I normally serve turkey, but, hey, if it will make them happy!"

Lisa, a Mom in New Hope

the trail, we came to a swimming hole complete with a long rope swing to carry one out over the water about 20 feet below. We asked Mr. Brazelton to let us go skinny dipping. He looked at his watch and said, "Okay. Lunch will just have to wait."

For an hour we swung on the rope and splashed around in the swimming hole - ten boys naked as jay birds.

We reached our camping area and dropped our packs. When I opened mine, I discovered two 10-pound stones. Everyone laughed because the troop had seen Mr. Brazelton put the stones in my sack while I was registering the troop for the camp. I tried to set an example by smiling, but I was inwardly aggravated that I had been such a sucker.

Brazelton spoke up. "Boys, let what has happened to Robert be a lesson to you. Always check your gear. Check it over and over again any time you lose sight of it. I thought sure our Senior Patrol Leader would check his gear before he left the ranger station, but he didn't and paid a price. Be prepared."

The rest of the camp was uneventful. We didn't have any gigs so we went bull frog hunting on a small nearby pond with sticks we made with a knob cut in the end. Using a carbide light, we would blind the croaker, hit him in the head with the knob end of the stick, fish him out of the water and into our tow sack. We trapped 17 frogs and one water moccasin, which we dispatched on the spot. I cooked frog legs for the troop for breakfast on Sunday morning. Not bad; eggs, grits and frog legs.

On Monday at school, we heard about a boy from another school, who went swimming in the same swimming hole that we had skinny dipped in. He yelled to his friends not to come in. He was being stung all over.

Turned out he had been bitten many times by water moccasins that had gathered there between the time from when we went swimming on Friday until he was killed on Sunday.

Since it was on the Sipsey River, a wild glorified creek, TVA workers drained the swimming hole and discovered hundreds of snakes.

Three of us hiked over to the swimming

hole later that summer. No one was there. There were "No Swimming" signs in 4 different places and the rope had been cut down.

Snakes.

Don't Take Your Gun to Town

from 1891 newspaper

Two men, John Battles and James Davis, are residing in the Huntsville jail after a failed burglary of Masters Store.

The men attempted to gain entrance by breaking a window. As Battles climbed through the opening, a pistol fell from his pocket and discharged, wounding Davis in the leg.

Davis then pulled his own pistol and shot Battles, also in the leg.

The gun shots quickly attracted a crowd and the bandits were apprehended. They are currently sharing the same cell.

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"After 10 years of therapy, my doctor said something that brought tears to my eyes. He said, 'No hablo Ingles'."

Robbie Theron, Athens

Heard On the Street

by Cathey Carney



Did you find the teeny hidden pencil on p. 43 in William Yates ad? I made it really easy this time and had tons of calls. But the first one only wins and it was **Mary Harris** of New Hope. She is 91 now and was married to **Ben Harris** for 32 years when he passed away in 2018 at the ripe age of 105. Mary worked for years at Avex Electronics and retired from there. Congratulations to Mary!

We have got to have the best Public Works department in the

state. **Chris McNeese, Patrick Gamble, Jay Wagoner** are just a few of the hard working people in the department who take care of our city. They take care of our roads. They keep our city beautiful and clean. We can't say enough about Public works and just how much we appreciate what they do especially in this heat.

Sam Keith's birthday was always the same weekend as the Big Spring Jam so it was easy to remember. Sep. 28 is Sam's day and he really needs to do some serious celebrating!

Barb Eyestone has a Sep. 17 birthday and no matter how old she gets she always looks beautiful. Happy Birthday Barb.

Sherri Williams lived in Huntsville years ago, the owner of Pleasures, and still likes to come back for visits. She and her sweetheart Steve share a September 18th birthday so the celebrating is always doubled. Sending love and wishes for a day that is full of surprises!

On the morning of July 19, 2024, **Dr. Jimmy E. Jackson**, 84 of Huntsville, AL passed away. Dr. Jackson was born in Greenwood, MS on November 8th, 1939. He graduated from Mississippi College in 1961, from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary with a Bachelor of Divinity degree in 1964 and Doctor of Theology degree in 1970. He pastored numerous churches during his days in

New Orleans. He served as Senior Pastor of Whitesburg Baptist Church, Huntsville, AL from June 4, 1978 until June 3, 2018.

Dr. Jackson served as President of the Alabama Baptist Convention from 2009-2010 and on the Executive Committee; as Parliamentarian of the Southern Baptist Convention for 20 years and as First Vice President in 2006-2007; as a trustee of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary; and on the Board of Regents of the University of Mobile.

He is survived by his wife of 64 years, **Bobbi Reaves Jackson**; daughter, **Rhonda (Erick) Jackson-Hendey**; son, **Russell Jackson**; grandchildren, **Rachel Jackson Gordon, Johnathan Hendey, Joshua Hendey, James Jackson, Phoebe Butler, Brooke Tillman, and Breanna Tillman**; great grandchildren, **Ella and Emory Gordon and Ethan and Ryleigh Osterc**.

He was a loving husband, father, grandfather and pastor. He helped many people along the way and was definitely a shining light in this world. He will be missed and remembered always.

Happy Birthday and much love to our long-time subscriber **Juanita Adcock** of Huntsville. She is a die-hard War Eagle fan and has been reading Old Huntsville stories for so many years. Juanita will be 82 on Sep. 4th! Celebrate in style! We love hearing from you.

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Greene Street Market downtown is still going strong, through Oct. 31st, and if you like picking up fresh local produce these markets are the places to go. Plus you might find some crafts or homemade lotions and soaps, jewelry, etc. as well as the fresh produce. There are many good farmers markets in the Huntsville/Madison area and here are a few:

Huntsville:

Ayers Farmers Market and Madison Cty. Farmers Mkt - (256) 533-5667
Oakwood Farmers Mkt - (256) 726-7121
Ryland Pike FM - (256) 851-1400
Lowe Mill Open Air Mkt - (256) 533-0399
Providence Market - (256) 469-3066

Meridianville:

Reeds Market - (256) 693-1023

Madison:

S&J Produce - (256) 890-5999
Sprouts Farmers Market - (256) 203-8334

Bertin O. Lawson, 92, of South Point, Ohio passed away July 11, 2024, in Sanctuary of the Ohio Valley. He retired from the U.S. Army after 25 years of service where he also received the Bronze Star. Bertin is survived by two daughters, **Lois Ann Riggs** and **Judy Watson**; 13 grandchildren; numerous great and great great grandchildren; one brother, **Benny Lawson**; one sister, **Ruby James**; and many nieces and nephews. **Billy Lenox** is one of his grandsons and will never forget the impact Bertin made on his life.

Many are finding now that **going out to eat is just too expensive**. Many restaurants don't seem as crowded as they used to be. It's still a lot easier to go somewhere, order and have your food brought to you, but consider this. If you're a fairly good cook, you can make your own meals for a lot less than eating out, your family will be together in a place where you can actually talk to and hear each other. Also if you cook something in quantity like chili, spaghetti etc. you can freeze it. If you're younger and have never considered actually cooking for yourself - try it - it's actually fun putting ingredients together and seeing how it turns out. Some will be a lot better than others but that's how you learn. There are millions of recipes online and if you prefer to buy a cookbook, there are many of those out there too.

You know those plastic grocery bags you get make good trashliners for the little garbage cans you have. I found a good way to store them by twisting them into little balls and stuffing them into the empty Kleenex boxes that are square, not the long ones. You'd be amazed at how many bags one Kleenex box

can hold and this way you have them right at your fingertips.

Our city is growing and Huntsville is hosting more and more conventions here. One thing you always hear from visitors is how clean and beautiful our city is. **The City of Huntsville Green Team** is responsible for this and they work everyday to keep it that way. If you see a problem such as lights out, potholes, fire hydrants leaking, etc. go to your computer and look for SeeClickFix. It gets reported this way to the city and you will be kept apprised of the progress and time when it's fixed. Thank you Green Team!

So I have hidden a tiny teeny shovel in honor of the Green team somewhere in these pages - find it, call me and you win an entire year's subscription!

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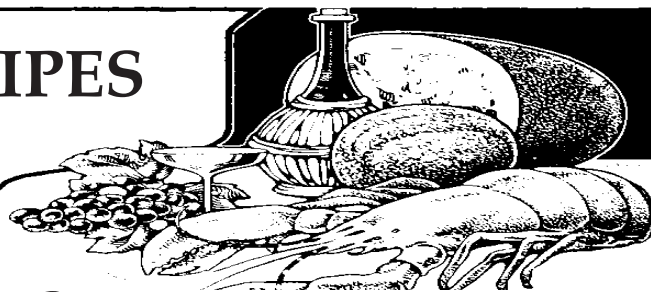
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RECIPES



Mostly Sweets

Lentil Salad

- 1-1/2 c. lentils sorted, rinsed
- 1/2 t. each salt and pepper
- 1/2 c. fresh chopped cilantro
- 6 green onions, chopped
- 1/2 c. olive oil
- Juice of one lemon
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1/2 t. ground coriander
- 1/2 t. ground cumin

Soak lentils in water to cover in saucepan for 2-3 hours. Bring to a boil and simmer until tender, then drain.

Combine lentils, salt, cilantro and green onions in bowl; mix well. Pour mixture of remaining ingredients over lentils; toss to coat. Serve chilled.

This salad is even better the next day when all the spices combine!

Pure Heaven Bars

- 1 c. graham cracker crumbs
- 1/2 c. butter melted
- 12 oz. chocolate chips
- 1/2 c. chopped walnuts

- 1 can Eagle Brand Condensed Milk
- 12 oz. butterscotch chips
- 6 oz. flaked coconut, toasted

Spray a 13 x 9" pan with butter spray. Mix graham cracker crumbs and butter, press into the bottom of the pan.

Layer chocolate chips, sprinkle with half of the condensed milk, then a layer of walnuts, a layer of butterscotch chips, the remaining condensed milk and top with coconut. Bake at 350 degrees for 30 minutes and top is light brown. Your family will love this!

Cinnamon Apple Nut Cake

- 1-1/2 c. vegetable oil
- 2 c. sugar
- 2 eggs
- 3 c. finely chopped, peeled apples
- 1/2 c. golden raisins
- 1/2 c. chopped walnuts
- 1 c. chopped pecans

- 1-1/2 t. ground cinnamon
- 2-3/4 c. self-rising flour

Combine oil, sugar and eggs, then add remaining ingredients. Pour into greased loaf pan. Cook one hour at 325 degrees. Try this hot with home-made vanilla ice cream or a good homemade whipped cream topping.

Strawberries & Cream

- 1 qt. fresh strawberries, washed (not hulled)
- 1 c. sour cream
- 1 c. brown sugar

Put the strawberries, cream and brown sugar in 3 separate serving bowls. To eat, dip each strawberry into the sour cream, then into the sugar. So Good!

Pineapple Muffins

- 2 c. plain flour
- 1/2 c. sugar
- 1 t. salt
- 1 t. baking powder
- 1 c. raisins (optional)

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1 egg, beaten
1 t. vanilla extract
2 T. vegetable oil
1 t. baking soda
1 -16 oz. can crushed pineapple with juice

Sift flour, sugar, salt and baking powder into a bowl. Stir in raisins. Add egg, vanilla and oil; mix well. Dissolve baking soda in crushed pineapple in bowl. Add pineapple mixture to flour mixture, stir just until moistened. Fill paper-lined muffin cups 2/3 full. Bake at 325 for 20-25 minutes and toothpick comes out clean.

Sweet Chew Cakes

1 box brown sugar
1 stick butter
1 t. vanilla extract
3 eggs
2 c. self-rising flour
1-1/2 c. pecans, chopped

Melt sugar and butter together in a saucepan. Mix well and add nuts. Batter will be stiff. Pour into a greased 9 x 13" pan and bake at 325 degrees for 20-30 minutes. Cool and cut into squares when ready to

serve. Can be stored in containers when cool.

Hazelnut Butter Crunch

1/2 c. plain flour
1/3 c. chopped hazelnuts
1/4 c. packed brown sugar
1/4 c. butter

Mix all til crumbly, distribute evenly in an ungreased 9 x 9" pan. Bake at 400 degrees til golden brown, 7 to 10 minutes. Stir and cool. Store in covered container.

Sweet Noodle Pudding

1/2 lb. egg noodles
3 eggs
1-1/2 c. whole milk
1 c. sour cream
1 lb. cottage cheese
1/2 c. sugar
1/2 c. raisins (optional)
Cinnamon & sugar

Cook noodles for 7-8 minutes in boiling water. Add next 6 ingredients.

Pour into a greased casserole and sprinkle with cinnamon and sugar to taste. Bake at 350 degrees for 45 minutes. This is

fairly low in sugar but has that good comfort food feel. There won't be many leftovers!

Eggnog Pie

Graham cracker pie shell
1 envelope unflavored gelatin

1/3 c. sugar
1 -1/3 c. milk
3 egg yolks, lightly beaten
3 egg whites
1/4 c. sugar
2 T. dark rum
1/2 c. heavy cream

Combine the gelatin, sugar, milk and egg yolks in a saucepan. Over medium heat, cook til the mixture comes to a boil and remove it from the heat. Chill for 20 minutes, stirring a few times. Beat the egg whites into soft peaks and gradually add 1/4 cup sugar.

Beat til thick. Add rum to the chilled egg yolk mixture, Whip the cream and fold it along with the egg whites into the egg mixture. Pour into the graham cracker pie shell and don't serve til you've chilled it for at least 4 hours.

"THE WAY IT WAS,"
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BY TOM CARNEY



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PLACES AND FRIENDS

by Jim Vann

After high school I started college at David Lipscomb College in Nashville. While I was there I made many new friends.

Will T. Vance was one of the closest. He was a guitar player, a good singer, basketball player and grew up in Madison, Tennessee. He went to the Madison COC where a lot of the Grand Old Opry performers attended. He knew on one weekend that Kitty Wells was out of town.

I went with him to the back door of the Ryman Theater where the Opry was held. He told the guard on the back door that he had talked to Kitty Wells at church last Sunday and told her that he had a friend visiting from Alabama who loved country music. She told Will T. to ask the guard if we could come in the back way and sit back stage.

He let us in and it was an amazing evening. We rubbed elbows with a lot of different stars and had a great time. I remember that the 9pm show was sponsored by Coca Cola

and they had a big Coke cooler on rollers. Before the 9pm show, several of the performers would help themselves to a Coke from the cooler, pop the cap, drink a few swallows from the Coke bottle then replace the missing cola with a beverage of their choice.

I attended the Opry a lot because it cost 50 cents to get in and that fit my college budget very well. I was sitting on the back row in the balcony one Saturday evening. A couple with children of stair-stepped ages was covering the entire bench in front of me. About 7:30, the lady pulled a cardboard box from under the seat and started passing fried chicken down the pew for each child. It smelled so good, I thought about stealing a piece of chicken from one of the kids, but I didn't.

Jim Camp (who was my roommate my sophomore year) was and still is a very good friend. We call each other occasionally and he sends me articles about the Tokens Show for which his son Lee is the Producer. Jim loves hard core country music and every time we are together with instruments, he insists that I sing Knoxville Girl which is about as hard core country as you can get.

After two years at DLC, I transferred to the University of Tennessee. I joined the Lambda Chi social Fraternity because they had less people that drank and I was one of those. Of course I made a lot of friends there at UT, a lot of them Frat Brothers,

Seven of us formed a "Rock and Roll" band that played together for 2 years. We were the "Bonnevilles" like the Pontiac car and one of the most popular bands at UT. Our band was booked almost every night on week-ends for 2 years. Of course we all became close friends.

Our drummer was from Memphis and he got us "Gigs" in Memphis on several occasions. We played at the Peabody, Chisca, King Cotton and other famous Hotels there in Memphis. It seems a little unusual to me that after all these years, I still have friends from DLC and have no idea where any of the Brothers or band members are now.

After UT, I came back to Huntsville and started working. At every place I ever worked I developed friendships with many and varied peo-

"Don't bother walking a mile in my shoes. That would be boring. Spend 30 minutes in my head - that'll freak you right out."

Seth Bart, Woodville

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ple. One of my best and favorite "Friendships" happens to be with my wife of now 60 years. We have developed many friendships in these 60 years and even went to dinner tonight with Carl and Brenda Barton, a couple of our best friends. Many of our friends are from the church we attend. Those are too numerous to list but we are really blessed to have so many good friends.

We have lived in the same house here in Huntsville for 56 years. We have developed many good friendships with our neighbors over those years. One friendship that I will list here involves Brad and Holly Hall. They have moved out of our neighborhood but are still what I would call good friends.

I will never forget when their two girls were young. I came home from work one day and noticed that they had a canopy set up beside their house. I walked over and the girls were having a "Tea Party". I asked if I could participate and they invited me to sit down in one of those little chairs. I did exactly that and they offered me a cup of tea.

Those girls are both grown now but every time I see one of them they bring up our "Tea Party".

Another couple of special neighbor friends would have to be Jeff and Elizabeth Weitenbeck. They visited us just a couple of evenings ago. When Jeff was going to attend his Senior Prom, he had never worn a tie before. His mom brought him and his tie to our house and I tied his tie for him. I couldn't tie it on him but rather tied it on myself then took it off and put it on Jeff. They are super neighbors. As I've gotten older, Jeff brings my garbage can around back every time the garbage truck runs. I really appreciate that.

We have new neighbors next door now. They moved here from Colorado. They are Mark and Marie McDonald. I think they are the nicest neighbors we have ever had. They help this old couple out a lot. Mark is a bike rider and on the weekend rides for 30 to 40 miles. Marie is a super nice, sweet lady that really runs the show. She was born and lived on a farm in Canada.

They have three beautiful, very independent girls that visit occasionally.

We have been very blessed over the years with our neighbors and this neighborhood.

Moonshine

"Take a couple hundred pounds of ground corn, another couple hundred pounds of sugar and dump it in a large mash tub. Add your spring water and let it sit there and work off.

You can tell when it is done working off by throwing a big fiddle worm into the mash. If it sinks to the bottom, it's time to cook it off, if it swims let it work off a little longer.

Pour the likker in the still and try not to stir up the mash. If you stir the mash it will give it a yeasty bite. Pack the joints of the still with wet flour dough to keep the steam from leaking out and start your fire.

When your worm (copper coil) gets too hot to touch the likker should be coming up fast.

If you want whiskey to drink by yourself, empty out your still, wash it, and run your liquor through again. When you get done, pour it into an old charred keg, put it up, and forget about it for a couple years.

If you want to make money, just put it in an old fruit jar. People will buy it. I could sell a thousand gallons next week, if I could make that much."

From Conversation with old Madison County
Moonshiner

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HUNTSVILLE NEEDS MORE TREES!

*by Jerry Berg,
Five Points*

Trees, trees, trees! Huntsville is abundantly blessed with them, right? Just look around, it's obvious. So, you'd probably be skeptical if I said, "Yes, our urban forest is extensive and beautiful, but we need more trees!" How can that be? Well, it all depends on where you look and how closely you look.

I started to be more observant, instead of taking trees for granted, about five years ago and I became concerned. My neighborhood - Five Points - isn't as densely populated with trees as it was 50-some years ago when I made it my adopted home. I've been noticing a similar change in other parts of town too. It's a process of gradual attrition.

The clearest indicator of tree canopy thinning and loss is that it's harder to find enough shady stretches of sidewalk on which to comfortably walk and enjoy the fresh air in the heat of summer. Tree-shaded areas are becoming more like islands here and there.

At first I was tempted to blame City Hall for neglect. I spoke up at City Council meetings and tried going the petition route. It gradually dawned on me though - that kind of activity wasn't going to help.

I became more aware that city officials, at least those responsible for the landscape and environmental situation, aren't at fault. They've got a difficult job

and are trying to do what they can with available resources - their budget constraints being a major limitation.

About three years ago I decided that trying to get more "people power" might be a more effective way to go. I started a social media group called Friends of Trees Huntsville. It has grown rapidly with over 900 joining. It's an informal group though and membership doesn't come with any obligations. So the next step was to try to get members to DO something for the trees - be willing to "put their money where their mouth is."

So, last year we started a fundraiser. It turned out to be productive. We raised about \$5,000 and got additional help from two City Council members - Bill Kling and David Little - plus County Commissioner Phil Riddick. At its conclusion the total raised was \$17,500. That sum went to the city's Operation Green Team Foundation which used it to plant more trees - well over a hundred more - than would've been possible without the supplement to their regular budget. Success!

A sequel fund drive is currently underway. You can read about it on Facebook and contribute to the cause if you'd like. We have a Trees GoFundMe set up.

But WHY should we be concerned about trees and the urban forest anyway? It's simple:

Benefits!. You might even say, there's a great return on investment.

Trees produce oxygen, purify the air, form fertile soil, avoid erosion, keep rivers clean, capture water for aquifers, serve as havens for wildlife, reduce soil temperature, favor the establishment of other species, regenerate soil nutrients and improve the landscape.

"Planting a tree is cultivating hope for a better life."



Do you remember the huge tree that was allowed to grow in the middle of Adams Street in Twickenham many years ago? Also Five Points "old timers" can recall when Clinton Street and some of the other neighborhood streets were tree lined such that it was almost like an overhead canopy.



Lawrence and the Shark

by Elizabeth Wharry



My parents moved to St. Augustine, FL in 1988. Dad was a WWII vet. He worked as a machinist from the time he mustered out til he retired. As a result, he was almost deaf.

My daughter Miriam and I visited them in 1990. Mom was still recovering from a heart attack.

One evening after dinner, we all went down to the beach. Shore patrol was flying low and slowly. Yellow flags were flying. Those meant there were sharks in the area. Mom opted to sit on the beach, dad waded out into hip deep water, and Miriam and I were close to shore. Dad wasn't much of a swimmer, so I was keeping an eye on him and my daughter.

Suddenly, mom and I saw a dorsal fin near my dad! I told Miriam to stay with my mother. Mom screamed at dad, but he didn't hear her. I didn't hesitate. I calmly waded out and turned him around. He scowled as I said...shark! He tried to run, but I held firm. Stop or you WILL get us bit!

I was acting on a wing and a prayer (I was too scared to panic). I knew sharks were attracted to splashing. I told him to widen his stance and follow my instructions. I slid around him while I kept an iron grip on him. I matched my stance to his. We slid our feet gently in tandem, stopping when we saw the shark. It would circle and swim off. Just to keep things interesting, it swam between our legs a couple of times.

Once we hit knee deep water, it finally gave up. I saw it was a nurse shark. They get to be about 6 feet long. While it was circling, I could have sworn it was the size of a great white!

While I was focused on getting us to shore, someone called EMS. When we finally got on solid ground, the medics asked if we were injured. We both said no. One of the medics said something about me being a hero.

I looked at him and said...I'm no hero. I did what I needed to do.

"When my grandma got arthritis, she couldn't bend over anymore and paint her toenails. So my grandpa does it for her all the time, even though his hands hurt with arthritis too. That's love."

Kesia Long, age 12, Scottsboro


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Old Matchbook Memories

by M. D. Smith, IV



One of the last times I visited my grandmother's house with my two young sons before she died, she got out her matchbook collection to show my kids. I'd seen them several times before when I was young, in the early fifties.

This time in the mid-seventies, just a few years before she died in 1979, she was enjoying telling the history of most of them she'd collected years ago when she and my grandfather traveled, went to lunches and dinners at hotels, and other places where the free matchbooks were available, often with photos of the establishment as a way of advertising.

In the forties and fifties, it seemed everyone smoked, and they always needed a book of matches. Although some men carried Zippos or other lighters in their pockets, matchbooks were still collected as souvenirs and sometimes put out for guests at home. And, as you see in the K.H. Jones matchbook, many people, including my grandfather Kirby H. Jones, had them printed in boxes of 100 to have at home and to carry and hand out.

I can recall that even jewelry and clothing stores often offered them for inexpensive advertising. How many places can you think of today that provide free books of matches? I can't think of any, not even a bar, because smoking is not allowed.

As I look at her collection today while I am writing this story, there are some of note in my memories of their trips and of Birmingham, where I lived

for the first eighteen years of my life before coming to Huntsville.

Looking at the others in that same picture, WBRC-FM went on the air in 1948, and few people had FM radios, so WBRC printed the new FM on the cover and had the AM station at 960 kc on the dial, on the back.

Holiday Inns were everywhere in the country in the 50s, and they offered matches everywhere in the hotel and, of course, in all the rooms (along with ashtrays) for their smoking guests or simply as souvenirs.

The most elegant private club available by membership only opened on Red Mountain, next to WBRC's tower, simply called, "The Club." This was the original 1951 matchbook offered to guests, showing the smaller and stunning entrance when it was new.

Over the years, Channel 31 WAAY-TV offered several different styles. This blue & white one was to encourage viewing of our "Eye-witness News."

Illustrated was an annual Civitan Club Convention held in St. Louis in June 1953, attended by my grandfather Jones.

Some of the oldest covers had a 4-digit telephone number, but most of the later ones had five digits and a prefix. The two numbers for Ft. Walton Beach motels were CHerry-3-3157. As you would expect, because train travel was the primary mode of transportation, next to the automobile, even the A. & W. P. R.R. (Atlanta & West Point Railroad) out of Montgomery heading west had custom matches in their trains.

In the days before television, a matchbook collection was an excellent conversation starter when you had guests over to your home. Each book held a story of a trip or visit to other places, and the further elaboration of the journey, the sights seen, and highlights could be pretty extensive, depending on how good a storyteller you were, so as not to bore your guests. If only my grandmother or grandfather were here today to elaborate on each one, what wondrous stories I could enjoy. But at least I have tokens of those tales.

One of the costliest to the merchant was a late 50s Christmas season offering of a pack of six matchbooks, each with a different color holiday image on them. On the back was the message from the "Friendly Exchange Bank of Birmingham."



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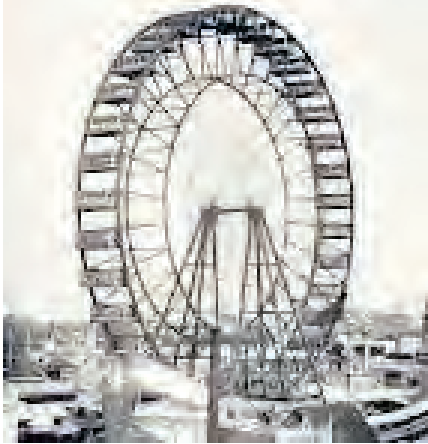
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A Sweet Discovery for Geneva Bullock

by Kim Hasty, submitted
by Patsy Ladner



The Ferris wheel seemed enormously high, the cotton candy pleasantly sweet. All the sights and smells at this month's Cumberland County Fair simply amazed Geneva Bullock.

After all, at 89 years old, she was seeing and smelling and hearing those things for the first time.

"I was asking her when was the last time she'd been to the fair," said Sheila Tew, Bullock's granddaughter, not thinking she'd never been.

Tew and her husband Graham were the ones who remedied the situation, along with their 3-year-old daughter Victoria. They loaded up the wheelchair Bullock uses for outings and took her to the fairgrounds at the Crown Center.

The first stop was the petting zoo, where Bullock visited with the animals and had her picture taken next to it to watch Victoria ride the rides.

"I used to look at my dog and think, if you were a little smarter you could tell me what you were thinking. And he'd look at me like he was saying, and if you were a little smarter, I wouldn't have to."

Fred Jungclaus

And, of course, there was the cotton candy.

"She couldn't wait to get her bag of cotton candy," Tew said. They stayed five hours.

"I know she was the one who was tired because she pushed me all over the place," Bullock said.

But theirs is a special bond, one fostered by the fact that Sheila Tew's best childhood memories are those of her grandmother's house.

Geneva Bullock and her husband Thomas were married 62 years before he died in 1999. They had 14 children and lived in an unpretentious house in Haymount that had a big front porch and a lot of love.

"Every holiday, Granny cooked two turkeys and two hams," Tew said. Before starting her own family, Bullock was the baby of 11 children born into a farming family in Laurinburg, NC.

"We had a farm, but Daddy never worked on it," she said. "We children did all the work. I'm glad, though, it made us the people we are today."

It was during that time that she developed a fear of fairs.

"Well, my daddy told me when I was a little girl that if I go to the fair, the Gypsies would get me," she said.

But now that fear is behind her. The Tews are even planning to take her to the State Fair, which starts in October.

Naturally, cotton candy will be at the top of the list of attractions.

"I enjoyed that," Bullock said. "I still got me some cotton candy hid."



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

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THEN THERE WAS JACK

by L. D. Rogers



My grandparents owned a farm three miles outside of South Fulton, TN on Highway 45. Granddaddy was a carpenter for the railroad. He would help build and repair railroad stations. When he wasn't doing that, he was a truck farmer. Now a truck farmer was a person that raised a big garden with all kinds of vegetables. He would load the crops onto his truck to sell in town and in different neighborhoods.

He had a hand bell that he carried with him and when he would go down a neighborhood street, he would ring that bell to let people know he was there. Of course, back then people didn't have air conditioning so they would have their doors and windows open and could easily hear the bell. They would come out and pick produce off the truck and pay him for it.

When I was big enough, Mother would let me go with him to town to sell vegetables and he would let me ring the bell. You talk about a little boy in heaven, that was me. I couldn't wait until we got to town, and he would tell me to start ringing the bell.

My Uncle Robert owned and operated a grocery in South Fulton so we would go to his store after we ran our route. If we had anything left on the truck Uncle Robert would take it and trade Granddaddy for some groceries.

While we were there, he would buy me a

carton of ice cream. I guess that was my pay for helping. It sure was fun.

Back on the farm Granddaddy had cows, horses and a couple of mules and my grandmother raised chickens. He got milk, cream and butter from the cows, and she got eggs from the chickens. He also had a few hogs.

And then there was Jack. Jack was a big black dog with a terrible personality. I don't know how old he was, but he was not a young dog. He was Granddaddy's dog and he went with him everywhere.

When Granddaddy would go to the field to plow, Jack would be right there by his side. When he was plowing Jack would lay down at the edge of the field and wait for him to finish. One day I went with him, and I was sitting at the edge of the field with Jack. Suddenly Jack got up and headed back to the house. I saw Granddaddy look at him and he waved for me to come to where he was plowing. He said to me, "You notice that Jack went back to the house?" I said, "I didn't know what he was doing." Granddaddy told me that meant there was a storm coming.

What I didn't know is that one time Jack had almost been struck by lightning and when he heard thunder he would go to the house. When he got to the house, he would scratch on the screen door and Granny would let him in. He would go get under their bed and stay there until the storm was over.

Granddaddy unhooked the mules from the plow and went back to the barn. By the time we had taken the harness off the mules and turned them out in the barn lot we could hear thunder.

It did storm that day and Jack stayed under the bed until it was over. I guess there is nothing like having a weather dog.

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Kitty and Kate, a Minor Betrayal

by Anna Lee

When my mother and father moved me and my three younger sisters from a modest house in the valley to a larger one on top of the mountain, we found a nicer community with walking access to a neighborhood pool, stores, school and church. We were in a better place.

On one side of our house was a couple with a boy and girl our own age. On the other side was a state trooper, his home-maker wife and their two boys, also our own age. When my mother, whose name was Kitty, met her new neighbor, whose name was Kate, they laughed at their similar names and quickly became close friends.

Across the backyard fence, Kate would give Kitty vegetables from her garden. Kitty would pick grapes from her arbor and pass them across the fence to Kate. They met almost daily for tea and gossip in their kitchens.

No matter what the women were doing, they always had time to chat across the fence.

Then, some years later on a summer day, Kitty walked over to Kate's house. Not to the front door; that was for strangers. Kitty walked to the side porch instead. Through the screen door she saw Kate sitting at the kitchen table. She knocked and said, "I just made two raisin pies; this one's for you."

"No," Kate said. "I don't want it. I heard what you said about me."

Kitty was so shocked that she couldn't say anything for a moment. Then she said, "I haven't said anything about you. I would never say anything about you!"

Kate barely looked at Kitty. "I heard it, I believe it." She turned away. Kitty left and went home, heartbroken, with the re-

jected pie. The women never spoke again.

No more tea in the kitchen. No more talking in the back yard over the fence. No more friendly exchanges.

It was five years later, when my father died, that my mother decided to move close to her daughters, now all living in nearby states.

On moving day, she looked to Kate's house for the last time. There was no car and no sign that anyone was home. Later a neighbor wrote a good-bye letter to my mother. She said Kate told her she was so sad to see Kitty leave for good that she asked her husband to drive somewhere so she would not have to witness it.

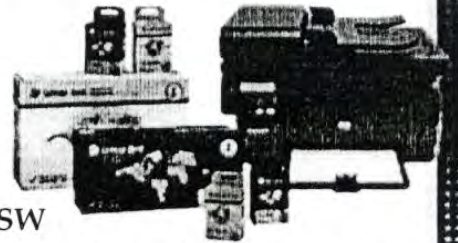
They have never spoken again.

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The One and Only

by Kate Hopkins



The first of the Darwin settlers moved to north Alabama several years before statehood was granted in 1819. Originally called the Mississippi Territory, Alabama became the nation's 22nd state. Samuel J. (Buddy) Darwin was very proud of the fact that six generations of his family had carved out a new life from farming the fertile soil in Madison County.

Buddy graduated from Riverton High School in 1956 and his self-confidence had been developed through years of competing in FFA, 4-H and sports. Reported in the Huntsville Times on Oct. 15, 1957- "The HIGHEST award was received by Samuel J. (Buddy) Darwin at the FFA National Convention. He is a member of the Riverton Future Farmers of America along with Bobby Fears who also attended the convention in Kansas City, Missouri".

Buddy served for two years as President of the Riverton Chapter, and then completed his first year at Auburn University. The FFA award is given after High School graduation for leadership, scholarship, and community plus school activities.

After the death of his beloved father, Buddy dropped out of college and moved back to the family farm. He was a young go-getter who was looking for new ways

to be successful. The fact that he was an energetic capitalist and a wheeler dealer led to expanding the traditional family farming business. At the Pine Lawn Farm, located north of Huntsville, crop rotations of cotton, wheat, soybeans and corn were planted and harvested.

Buddy felt that farmers needed additional sources of income, that were not so controlled by the government, to survive. The idea of expanding to include popcorn as a cash crop happened after a vacation to Europe. Buddy saw the need and that led to a new avenue for the farm. The Heart of Dixie company was founded in the mid-1980s, and 70 acres were planted as a test crop.

There are several types of classifications of corn mainly based on the texture of the kernels: dent corn, flint corn, flour corn, sweet corn and popcorn. Popcorn was traditionally grown in the "corn belt" states of Missouri, Indiana, Kentucky, Indiana, Iowa and Nebraska and it is moisture within the kernel that causes the kernel to pop when heated. Buddy's test crop was successful, and his popcorn business became the one and only popcorn farm in the state of Alabama. At one point three million pounds of popcorn kernels were sent throughout America and worldwide each year.

The product was a hit in the export markets before the domestic markets and Buddy is quoted as saying that "he gets depressed if he goes one day without selling something". The company expanded to include other "county fair" type items and it flourished for over 25 years.

Pine Lawn Farm is still a very large agricultural operation and Buddy's son, Bart, has developed his own, successful, construction business. Buddy was the founder and guiding light for the Heart of Dixie popcorn company branch of the farm.

A difficult decision was made after Buddy's death in 2014. The operation had grown to become more than the Darwin family wanted to manage so the unique business is no longer in operation today.

OUR WRITERS

"Old Huntsville" Magazine wants to say Thank You to our writers and contributors for the stories and articles you send to us. Our readers tell us how much they enjoy them. We couldn't do it without you!



A Story about a Sparrow

From 1911 Newspaper



News from 1911 - Ardmore, TN

Mrs. Josie Leman relates a very unusual experience she has had recently with a bird - a common English Sparrow.

Mrs. Leman has been troubled for several months with falling hair and had begun to feel that she was going to be completely bald. She is very fond of birds, and regularly feeds several English sparrows near her front steps.

She had taken special interest in one which had a deformed wing, showing that it had been badly crippled at one time. This bird reciprocated the interest shown in it and would often sit for several minutes while Mrs. Leman would talk to it, and she among many other things often told it about her falling hair, not for a moment thinking the bird could understand her.

Now, Mrs. Leman does not claim that the bird understood the trouble she was having with her hair, but she does state and can prove that this bird is daily bringing her

hair to her, such as it finds in its flights, and is leaving it on her porch.

"It makes eight or ten trips a day," said Mrs. Leman, "and seems to be especially happy after bringing a real long hair, and I always let the bird see me take the hair, and I pretend that I am very much pleased, for I wouldn't hurt the little thing's feeling for anything on earth."

"What one person receives without working, another must work for without receiving."

Bud Jenkins, Arab



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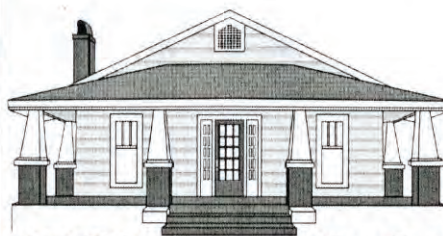
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The Jupiter-C Rocket and Explorer-1 Satellite

by Willie Weaver



I think my story of involvement in the preparation of the Explorer I Rocket would be a good follow up to Tom Carney's article in the June 2024 issue.

I was a Co-Op Student alternating semesters of work between the University of Alabama and The Army Ballistic Missile (ABMA). When I arrived at Redstone Arsenal in the spring of 1958, a new series of Redstone Rockets, called Jupiter-C, were being tested. For this new series, the fuel tanks had been lengthened, the instrument compartment made smaller and lighter, and second and third stages had been added to the basic Redstone configuration. The second stage was an outer ring of eleven scaled-down Sergeant rockets;

the third stage was a cluster of three scaled-down Sergeant rockets grouped within the outer circle formed by the second stage rockets. The second and third stages were contained in a "tub" atop the vehicle.

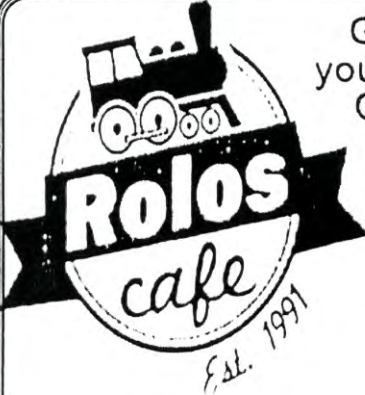
The official purpose of the Jupiter-C class of Redstone rockets was to perfect the ability to carry a warhead above the atmosphere and have it survive the fiery reentry on its way to the target area. Dummy warheads were coated with special materials designed to melt and carry heat away from the warhead itself. These tests provided the basic research for warhead protection and for the heat shields used later in the Apollo and Shuttle programs.

Tucked away inside the Jupiter-C program was a not so well kept secret agenda to assemble one of these vehicles with a 4th stage that could place a small object into orbit about the earth. One of the Jupiter-Cs received special handling and security. When we conducted the Simulated Flight Test (SFT), which included testing all the electronics necessary to activate the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th stages, the Commanding General and Dr. von Braun were on hand to observe the test. When that test was completed, the whole assembly was wrapped and carried to a sealed hanger to await the possible permission to orbit a satellite.

At the end of that semester of work, I returned to studies at the University of Alabama. Upon returning to Redstone Arsenal in mid-September 1957, I was again assigned to the Instrumentation Test Group. The Test Organization was still processing Jupiter-C Redstones for warhead re-entry tests and were making preparation for the testing of a new series of missiles called JUPITER. The Jupiter missiles were based on Redstone technology but had larger diameter tanks and ungraded guidance, control and instrumentation systems which gave them an extended range.

THE SPACE AGE BEGINS

On October 4, 1957 I was inside the instrument section of a



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Jupiter rocket heating temperature sensors with a hand-held hair dryer. This process was to verify the proper installation and operation of the many temperature sensors that were flown on the military rockets. We used various other methods to check the operation of the other sensors, such as pressure, vibration and position. These tests were required to track the performance of the



rockets as they were flown for further testing. I was getting into position to heat another sensor when I heard a commotion outside the rocket and was instructed to come out and listen to an important announcement.

Everyone knew that the Russians had a fledgling missile program and had announced that they planned to participate in the International Geophysical Year (IGY) with a satellite of their own. But it had been assumed by all that the USA would be the first nation to successfully place an artificial satellite into Earth orbit. That assumption had just been shattered. The announcement was that the Russians had placed the world's first artificial satellite into orbit. Now every 90 minutes, as we listened in our telemetry ground station to the beeping Sputnik-1, we were reminded that the USA had lost the Race to Space.

On December 6, 1957 many rocket workers were seated at the dining table in Ma Miller's Boarding House situated on West Clinton Avenue, Huntsville, Alabama, on the current site of the von Braun Civic Center. Mealtime was usually a rather noisy time with many different conversations among the 20-odd men seated at the large table, but that day everyone's attention was on the scene being played out on the small black-

and-white television set in the corner of the room.

The Navy was making its attempt to launch a VANGUARD rocket with the USA's IGY satellite. It would not be the first into space but at least the USA could join the Russians in space exploration. The final countdown continued and at "Zero" we saw the smoke and flame and then the liftoff.

Suddenly the screen was filled with the bright flash of a violent explosion and what was left of VANGUARD fell back to the launch pad. Surprisingly, instead of sighs and moans of despair, a spontaneous cheer of elation arose in the room. Most everyone there realized that the Navy's failure meant that the local missile team might now get a chance to redeem the honor of the USA.

Back in the Spring of 1957 we had finished our tests on a Jupiter-C Redstone Rocket specifically outfitted to deliver a satellite into earth orbit for the "International Geophysical Year Program" (IGY). That rocket and its cargo were then placed into storage because "Washington" had made the decision that the Navy and its VANGUARD missile program would have the privilege of being the first to place a USA satellite into orbit.

After the launch of Sputnik-1 and the failure of the Navy's VANGUARD rocket, Dr. von Braun assured President Eisenhower that our team had the hardware available and could put up a satellite in short order. The Army's Wernher von Braun Team was given the go-ahead. The satellite-capable Jupiter-C Redstone was taken out of storage, unwrapped, and we immediately began to get it ready to go to the launch site. We had worked many long shifts helping to prepare the rocket for an attempt to bring the U.S. space program even with the Russians.

Finally, on January 31, 1958 the Redstone Rocket launch was successful and the Explorer-1 satellite was in orbit and sending back data. The U. S. Army's rocket team had entered the Space Age!

The Love of Bicycling

by Bill Goodson



In the spring a young man's fancy lightly turns to thoughts of... bicycling?

With apologies to Tennyson, I make that case for, if not a young man, a sexagenarian such as I. The birds and bees join with hues of yellow and green and with the warmish air to summon me to the roads of Madison County—roads that, in case you haven't noticed, are superior to those in most other jurisdictions. I am told we owe that to the precedents set by James Record and his cohorts. I can often tell when I have crossed into another county by the jolt on my wheels and seat.

There's no better way to judge your County Commissioner's performance than a bike ride in his district, says my proctologist.

This all started some twenty years ago when my lumbar spine announced loud and clear that tennis and basketball were history for me. A long-term college friend from Indiana challenged me to ride in an annual bicycling event called the Hilly Hundred in his hometown, Bloomington.

"Hal," said I, "Of course I can do that! Hills? In Indiana? Cornfields? We have some hills in North Alabama, so your so-called Hilly Hundred will be a snap!"

If you have never visited Brown County, Indiana, you don't have a clue how stupid I was. I nearly croaked finishing that ride.

Chastened but undaunted, and joined by a handful of like-minded enthusiasts, I took up road bicycling seriously as an aerobic practice. We crisscrossed the county, eschewing high-traffic zones. We learned where to expect canine canibals and stopped at isolated country stores for a rest and to refill our water bottles.

We found Reynolds General Store in Madison Cross Roads, where Ollie Reynolds, rest his soul, was keeping it open against the odds wrought by WalMart and Lowe's. Ollie told us proudly of his status as the first North Alabamian to have an artificial knee, of how Dr. Niemann (his real name) at UAB loved to show him off to the medical students. We found the Cherry Tree Grocery, where we were regaled with tales of mayhem and woe by Nell, the manager. She was a Cloud by birth, she said, and grew up in Cloud's Cove, the area made infamous in the early 1900s by feuding families. Her mention of the name sent shivers up my spine, recalling stories heard at my father's knee.

"Yep," she said with a twinkle, "the further you went back in the Cove, the meaner they got...and we lived in the last house!" She slapped her knee, threw her head back and cackled.

I've cycled past my grandparents' dilapidated farmhouse on Old Gurley Pike between Maysville and Gurley and seen it consumed by brush and litter, until finally one day it was gone. Bulldozed and replaced by a trailer park. It's a stretch now picturing myself there for our Sunday family dinners, cranking up a pail of water from the well out front, or recalling how my sister and I made faces deciding

whether we'd use the outhouse or try to hold it, how we itched after clambering through the barn's haystacks.

Idyllic? What about the flats and blowouts, the road rashes? What about the time a lightning storm drove us to the covered entrance of a country church that happened to have the word "Sanctuary" inscribed on its wall? Or when we were run off the road by a crackhead in a pickup truck who screamed at us that we had insulted his blue tick hound? Okay, okay, even the Garden of Eden had its moments.

The moments that mean the most, though, are those marked by the laughing and bantering (and panting) that accompany the camaraderie of friends - some older, some younger, some fit and some not so - who don't mind slowing their pace so I could keep up.

So I guess my fancy actually does "lightly turn to thoughts of love." Love of exercise, of home country, of friends. I could do worse.



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* When rolling cookie dough, sprinkle board with powdered sugar instead of flour. Too much flour makes for a heavy dough.

* Slip your hand inside a waxed sandwich bag and you have a perfect mitt for greasing your baking pans and casserole dishes.

* You can cut a meringue pie cleanly by coating both sides of the knife lightly with butter.

* To keep icings moist and prevent cracking, add a pinch of baking soda to the icing.

* Anything that grows under the ground, start off in cold water - potatoes, beets, carrots, etc. Anything that grows above ground starts off in boiling water - English peas, greens, beans, etc.

* To clean aluminum pots when they are stained dark, merely boil with a little cream of tartar, vinegar or acid foods.

* Pour water into your mold and drain before pouring in mixture to be chilled, it will come out of the mold much easier.

* For extra juicy, nutritious hamburgers & meat loaf, add 1/4 cup evaporated milk per pound of meat before shaping.

* Baking powder will remove tea or coffee stains from china pots or cups.

* Washing silverware in which you have boiled potatoes will remove the stains.

* Lettuce can be made very crisp by placing it in ice water for a short time and covering it with a damp paper towel in the fridge.

* The best soup bones should be 2/3 meat and 1/3 bone and fat.

* A strong thread is good for cutting a cake instead of using a knife.

* Eggs keep in the fridge for about 5 weeks. Store them in the original carton, points down.

* Take some bacon grease, pour a can of green beans, juice and all in it, cook for about 15 minutes. Just like you cooked it all day from fresh!

* Finally, and this is NOT a cooking tip but I think it is important:

* As soon as you feel you are getting that scratchy throat and sniffles from a cold, take an Airborne tablet. They sizzle in water like an Alka Seltzer but are great for stopping colds. You can find them in any drug store like CVS or Walgreen's.

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JUNIOR HIGH STUPIDITY

by Carolyn Cloud Gallardo

I'll have to tell you a funny story about myself. I don't know where I got the nerve to tell anyone, but here goes.

I never was very bright. I worried when it was time for the last report card of each year (especially in junior high), because my grades were so bad. If I were to pass to the next grade it would be a miracle. I was actually terrified to look over my own report card. It never occurred to me that there was a way to stop this year-end cycle.

One quarter in junior high, I received an F in math, and I didn't want to go home. It never dawned on me that I could study and perhaps curb this dreaded trip home and the scene that promised to follow. It was always the same old story. With this failing grade in math, I was really in a state. I had to do something.

Our report cards were about the size of a postcard. The type was small and the card was light yellow in color.

Somewhere I got a bottle of ink eradicator. I was certain my troubles were over. I knew I couldn't change that F into an A, but I would be pleased with a C.

I used just a tiny drop on that math F located in a tiny grid on that report card. In less than seconds, not only did the formula erase the F, but the grid, and the color yellow of the report card as well. I couldn't believe it! I was so mad at myself for not considering this possibility beforehand.

There it was! The "tell tale" sign of supreme stupidity and I knew it. I embarrassed myself!

"At the evening service tonight, the sermon topic will be 'What is Hell?' Come early and listen to our choir practice."

Seen in local church bulletin

What was I to do now? Not only did I have an F in math, but I was caught red-handed trying to change it. I saw no way out of that!

I just confessed up front to my mom. I don't know if my dad ever knew about it, but after more than half a century, it's crystal clear to me.

Another time that stands out, was the day I cut school. I was probably in the eighth grade. I had taken the school bus ride to school. While on the bus, three of my girlfriends and I decided to cut school.

We got off the school bus on our arrival to school, but we didn't enter the building.

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Looking straight ahead, we walked the couple of blocks to downtown. From there we took the city bus to my house.

We decided to spend the day at my house, since my mother worked. We would stay at my house all the school day and play records and hang out. Then everyone would go home at the usual hour and all would be cool.

Everything was cool until dinner time. My mother came to ask me if I knew what had happened to the ham that was in the refrigerator. I acted like I didn't know what she was talking about, but I knew that my friends and I had made great sandwiches with that ham for our lunch. In fact we feasted!

Now, what is amazing is that I had never thought anyone would miss anything from the fridge. I continued to claim that I had no idea what had happened.

My mother went on and on over the missing ham. It was to be our dinner, and it was gone! If I didn't know what had happened to the ham, she was going to cross the street and ask a neighbor if she had seen anybody enter our house.

This was big trouble for me! When my friends and I stepped off the bus that morning, "Nan Naw" Record, an older neighbor, had seen us. To make everything seem natural, I had yelled "hello" to her, thinking that would appear ordinary.

When my mother left the house to inquire about her ham, she headed straight to Nan Naw's house. I couldn't let this continue. I called her back. There was nothing for me to do but confess. Again - stupid!

My mother made me confess to our Principal that I had cut school. I stayed after school an hour for a week.

My worst punishment was realizing my own stupidity.



Health of Your Nerves - from 1890 Newspaper

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MY ALL-TIME FAVORITE COACH

by Jerry Keel

Everyone is proud of their children and grandchildren. That is just a fact of life. I have quite a list of children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren and I am so proud of every single one of them. When grands and great-grands come along, most older people have reached the age where they can relax and really enjoy the youngsters. When your working days are over and you don't have to worry about holding down a job and the stress of raising your children, it's so much easier to just sit back and enjoy the little ones.

I have one great-granddaughter, Annalise Bacon, who is a treat to be around. She is 8 years old and has already acquired the characteristics and demeanor of an adult woman. She is quick to tell one and all just where they stand in her little world. I will share just one encounter where she told me

just what was what.

She lives in Killen, Alabama but comes to see her grandmother (my daughter) as often as she can. One day she was at my house for a visit. She was about 6 years old at the time. We went into the backyard to play toss-the-ball. She would throw the ball to me (or at least attempt to throw the ball to me) and I was supposed to catch it and throw it back to her.

Her throws were not accurate and I had to run the ball down. When I threw it back to her she always missed it and she had to chase the ball. She could tell I was getting tired so she walked up to me with her hands on her hips like a teacher at school.

She said "Paw-Paw, Paw-Paw, listen to me."

I said, "Yes baby, what is it?"

She stood there with her little hands on her hips and looking for

all the world like a Marine Corps drill instructor.

She said, as she tapped herself on the chest, "I am the coach and I want you to stand right here and do not move until I tell you to move."

Of course I said I would do that very thing and she then proceeded to throw the ball, then run after it and bring it back and place it into my hands. Then I would throw it to her and she would run after it and throw it back towards me.

This went on for several minutes until she got tired, then we retired to my picnic table where she sat down, exhausted.

My heart just melted when all that transpired.

I thought to myself just how bossy she would be when she reached adulthood. Some poor man will be in for a tough time!

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* Cat Allergies

While no cat is guaranteed to not be an allergy trigger — and people with life-threatening reactions are better off without a cat — it's possible to pick a pet who might be less of a problem. Black, un-neutered males are purported the worst choice for people with allergies, since they typically have higher levels in their saliva of a protein that triggers sneezing and wheezing.

Some breeds of cat, most notably the Siberian, have a high number of individual animals with low levels of the protein. If you're paying for a "hypo-allergenic" cat, insist on saliva testing. If you're choosing a kitten, choose a light-colored female and get her spayed.

* Cat Food

Veterinarians will recommend feeding canned cat food over dry. Canned foods have a higher percentage of protein and fat than dry foods and are significantly higher in water content than kibble (70 percent vs. 10 percent). Also, canned foods tend to be more palatable to cats that are finicky, elderly or have dental problems. Better health for your cat can start by feeding measured amounts of a good canned food. Talk to your veterinarian.

* Want a Cat to Love You? Look Away

What can you do to get a cat to come to you? Avoid eye contact. Cats don't like eye contact, so will almost always go to the person who's not looking at them. This also is the answer to the age-old mystery of why cats always seem to go to the one person in the room who doesn't like cats. It's because she may be the only one not staring.

* Cats in Pain

Chronic pain is not uncommon in cats, especially as they age. Cat lovers miss the signs of a pet in pain because cats are good at hiding it. Any cat observed as being hesitant to jump up or climb, not using the litter box, not able to groom themselves as well, more aggressive or more withdrawn needs to see the veterinarian. Biting or scratching at a certain spot, or developing a limp needs a vet's opinion.



* Cats Favorite Litter

Forget the people-pleasing scents. Forget special formulas or alternative ingredients. Your cat is more likely to prefer unscented clumping litter, according to preference tests. And if you want to keep your cat using the bathroom be sure to keep it clean, place it in a quiet, cat-friendly place and don't use any liners in the box - cats don't like them. None of these changes will address a cat who has stopped using the box because of illness.

Urinary tract infections and other health issues need to be addressed by your veterinarian before box re-training can commence.

* Your Cat's Scratching Post

When a post starts looking worn is when a cat starts liking it best. Get a new one and your cat may switch to the arm of the couch. Instead, refresh your cat's post by adding some coils of fresh sisal rope - it's cheap, easy to add and cats love to dig their claws into it.

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ROYALTY IN NORTH ALABAMA

by Tom Carney

Royalty in North Alabama? Many people don't know it, but an Alabama native was both a countess and a marchioness. Her name was Grace Hinds Curzon, and she had a fascinating, almost rags-to-riches background.

Grace Hinds was born in the Hinds-McEntire home, located near the downtown area of Decatur on Sycamore Street in 1878. The home was built by John Burleson about 1835 and overlooked the Tennessee River.

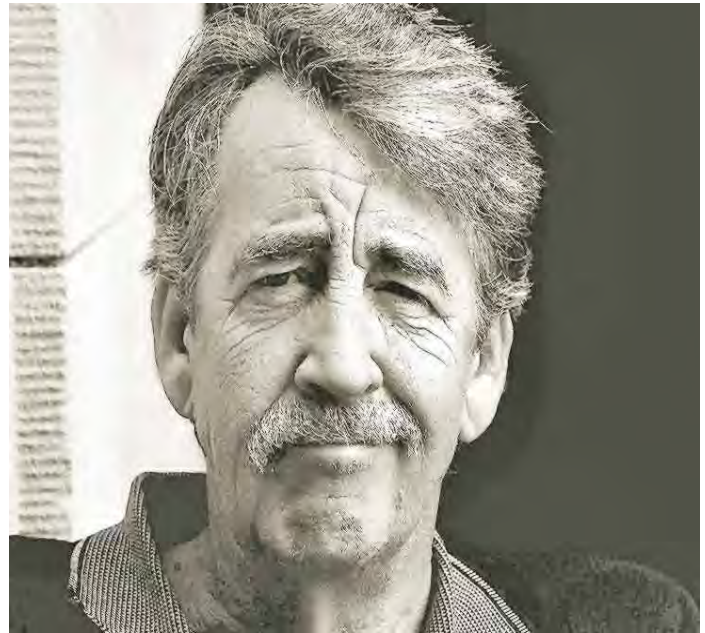
The story goes that both Yankee and Confederate Army chiefs used the house as headquarters during the Civil War. In fact, it was at the Hinds' home that the battle of Shiloh was planned by General Albert Johnston. The home was spared the flames of the Civil War fires, but several large, decorative balls which were atop the iron fence around the house were shot off during numerous battles.

After the war, Col. Jerome J. Hinds of Illinois and his brother were so taken with the house that they made it their home. Col. Hinds and his brother Monroe were both soldiers in the Union Army. The two Hinds brothers made large purchases of property in a stricken but potentially rich valley and soon owned larger land areas on both sides of the Tennessee River near Decatur. Later, when Monroe Hinds married, he and his wife raised their children in the home, including their daughter, Grace.

Grace Elvina Hinds was born in 1872 in the upstairs room of the house in Decatur and was the third offspring of a family of seven. Her father was a U.S. Marshal during Chester Arthur's administration and also served as a United States Minister to Brazil.

It was later said that when she became famous she forgot her old friends, but she never forgot the old Decatur home. In her book, "Reminiscences," she wrote: "Decatur, Alabama, as I remember it, was a quiet, sleepy town, although my older friends used to tell me, with great pride, of the wealth and dignity, of the vast entertaining and hospitality before the Civil War."

The Hinds moved to Huntsville when Grace was still a young girl, since her father was U.S. Marshal of the Northern District of Alabama. They lived modestly in Huntsville, during his four-year term of office, in a house on Grove Street, almost opposite the Paul Davis home. While in Huntsville, the family attended the Episcopal Church and young Grace played in the area around Big Spring. Old-timers remember her as a bright child who appeared on



the streets with long curls that her mother tediously wrapped.

While living in Huntsville, however, the family encountered some misfortunes. In April, 1882, Grace's mother died and was buried in Maple Hill Cemetery. In February of the following year, her father died and later in November, 1888, Lucia, Grace's sister, died also. Another unfortunate incident that befell the family was when the home on Grove Street burned and the family had to move to a smaller house on the corner of Madison and Gates.

In 1890, Grace and the remaining family moved back to Decatur. From then on the story of this modest North Alabama resident reads almost like a fairy tale.

Five years after the family had moved from Huntsville to Decatur, Mrs. Hinds' brother, John Trillia, came to Decatur from South America to visit the family.



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He was fascinated by his young relative and offered to take her on a three-month journey with him. Grace jumped at the chance.

While visiting there, Grace met and married an Argentinian millionaire and meat packer from London, Alfred Duggan, who kept herds in South America and was a native of Tennessee. Although she was never really happy with him, Grace gained experience, poise, and education in London and before long had captured the hearts of European society. They had three children—two boys and a girl.

After the death of Duggan, Grace was left with some \$25 million. On January 2, 1917, she married George Nathaniel Curzon, a widower, in a private chapel of Lambeth Palace, outside of London. This was the second American heiress whom Curzon had married. The ceremony was attended only by eight or nine guests, including children, and Grace had only one attendant.

Following the wedding, the couple moved to London, where they bought the historic Bodiam Castle in Sussex. Built in 1386, this structure is considered the finest English example of medieval castles. There she lived with the splendor and pageantry of medieval royalty and became a world famous hostess.

Among her friends were King George V., Queen Mary, the Prince of Wales, the Churchills, the Queen of Portugal, Mrs. Cornelius Vanderbilt and others.

Grace was an extremely beautiful woman. Sir John Lavey, the most famous artist of the time, painted her portrait. She was exceptionally youthful for her age, which was probably one reason she captured so many European hearts.

Curzon had a brilliant career behind him and was the idol of many women.

One of the ladies he eluded was Elinor Glyn, who later wrote

a novel about a noble young aristocrat who was ruined and deserted by a scheming American heiress.

Lord Curzon became Viceroy of India, as well as Lord Viscount, Earl, Foreign Secretary, and Leader of the House of Lords. The King of England conferred Curzon with the title of Marchioness and Grace received that of Dame of the Order of the Grand Cross of the Order of the British Empire.

All was not story-book perfect, however. Grace was extremely independent and as early as the first year of her marriage to Curzon, had a habit of living apart.

Curzon had a great dream of becoming the Prime Minister of England. He failed, but did fill many important government posts. He was a controversial figure, attacked by some as a tyrant and a political turncoat and praised by others as a beneficent ruler of India and skilled negotiator and shaper of England's postwar policy.

He kept five or six mansions, country manors, and town houses and that included two or three castles. He was a collector of castles and was said to have artistic taste and a reverence for antiquities.

He died in 1925, literally in a harness, which he wore for 48 years because of the constant pain he suffered from a back injury. He was still making plans for his future on his deathbed.

Lady Curzon, Marchioness of Kedleston, a woman who won approval wherever she went, wrote her memoirs in 1955, something she had wanted to do for a long time. King George V. knew that she wanted to do this, but persuaded her to wait for a least 25 years after Lord Curzon had died. She wrote the book 30 years after his death.

Grace Hinds, the little girl who grew up on Grove Street in Huntsville, lived the rest of her life with the opulence and pageantry of medieval royalty.

It was a long way from the cotton fields of her North Alabama home.

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**"If there are no dogs in
heaven, then when I die,
I would rather go where
they went."**

Will Rogers

Kitchen Endeavors!

by Gerald Alvis

I cook occasionally, just simple things, but I enjoy it. I've tried more advanced stuff like cornbread. I mean, it looks simple, but when it came out, I felt sorry for it and wanted to go bury it in the yard. Ann says it is romantic when we cook together, but I'm often shooed out of the kitchen, especially if two or more ladies are preparing meals. She still wears an apron, and our granddaughters also have theirs.

I came in from mowing moments ago. Some kind of stir fry was being made, but I noticed a cake being assembled on the island counter. The icing was carelessly left on the other cabinet. Chocolate fudge or something was written on the side, but better marketing would have Evil Chocolate decadence...but that's probably too wordy.

Not sure about the expiration date, I decided to take one for the team and tested this confection topping! I guess reading the numbers on the container is more effective but not even half as fun. With my worries about the freshness subsiding, I moved on to the cake batter and got ready to make my move!

For you younger lady readers out there, allow me to share. There is a 15-year-old boy constantly trying to escape from your husband. This lasts until about 65 when it slowly goes back in the other direction. We become responsible, but girls, I'm sorry, we never really grow up!

She was visually guarding the cake batter; after almost 50 years, she knew what to expect! The tried and true method of distraction affection wasn't working; it was something about hot skillet and 3rd-degree burns. Then, she made the first move. Ladies to guys, it's all a game, but she broke the routine with a counter offer. Would you like to pour the batter into a pan she inquired. Well, yeah, I said in my best hushed excited tone! I've gained proximity and the high ground (yes, we think this way).

I wasn't thorough (of course), leaving plenty of gooey mixture in the glass bowl she has used to prepare meals for more than 40 years. I summoned two of my grandchildren, and we made quick work of it.

Sometimes, it's like a sixth sense: I know something is wrong, but I don't know what. At other times, even though turned away, it's like I can feel her smiling.

She fed her family even if we were potentially mischievous, we were happy and laughing, and that happens when a woman runs her household well!

I provide the structure, but she makes it my home! It's our house but her nest!

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an old injury but that doesn't stop me from getting around just like the other dogs. I love people and look forward to going on walks with the volunteers at the shelter. One of the volunteers even took me home for a visit and I showed them I could use a doggy door and was very well behaved in their home. Are you looking for a new friend that would be loyal, loving and grateful for a forever home? If so, please come to the Ark Animal Shelter and ask to see Bunny. I promise I will be so happy to see you and your family.

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You Gotta Laugh!

by Sue (Hammett) Aldrich

My friend Marie should have been a stand-up comic. When she tells her troubles, it comes out funny.

When she was young Marie spent the night with a good friend. It was the two girls and the girl's mother. The next morning the friend came in the bedroom and told Marie, "My mother is dead". Marie is afraid of her shadow! She nearly screamed at her friend not to say things like that. "Come see", she came back, when the girls went into the mother's room. She was very dead!

Not funny but these years later we laughed because Marie was so scared.

She married when she was a kid, and she married a kid. They moved in with his parents who did not have indoor plumbing. Marie was a city girl, husband a country boy. Early in the marriage, one dark and stormy night, Marie needed to go to the bathroom. She pleaded for husband to go with her but that did not happen. But when you-gotta-go, you-gotta-go. So Marie wet her dearly beloved's bed. You have to laugh!

Marie had two beautiful daughters. Husband quit a good job and moved his family to Texas. Things did not go well. While hubby was out of sight, Marie put every thing she could in a brown paper bag and walked with her girls to a Greyhound bus route. The bus driver picked them up and at the same time hubby drove up and demanded that Marie get off that bus. In tears she told the driver if I get off this bus, he will kill me. The driver closed the door. Marie and the girls rode from Texas to Huntsville with no money and no food.

Sometimes you got to cry.

Marie remarried the love of her life (I'll call him Joe) and they had a fine son. She said the secret to their happiness was that they laughed together. Marie was funny and Joe was funny.

Once they were in line to check groceries out. Marie was getting sick to her stomach; her gut was just rolling. She felt it coming! She turned around and said, "Joe I have just Sh__my pants" That's bad but it was not Joe, Joe had stepped away.

You have to laugh!

Joe was younger than Marie and they never expected her to live longer than him but cancer is not choosy, When Joe was in Hospice he called his son in to tell him of his love and that

the best thing he ever did was to marry his mother.

Sometimes you have to cry.

Our children are grown now and even our grandchildren are grown. We still get on the phone and no matter how long it has been since we have talked, we still find much to laugh about. Some of it we can't tell anyone else, so we laugh, and we laugh.

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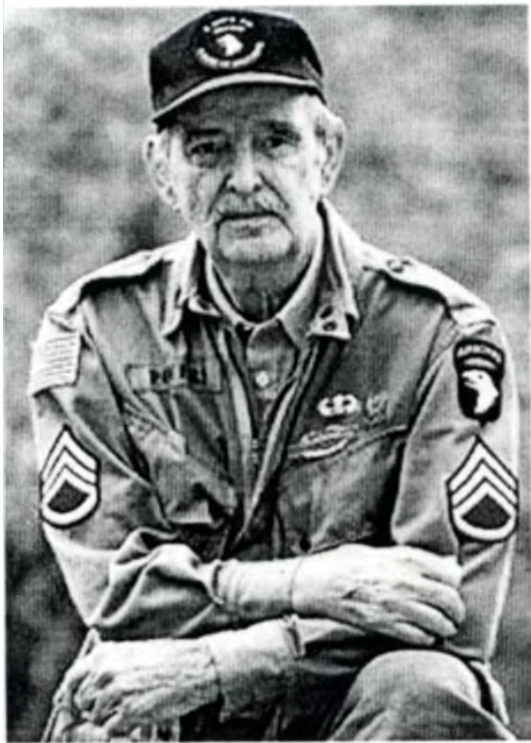
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**Love is a merry little elf who dances
a jig, then turns on you with a
machine gun.**



SHIFTY

by Chuck Yeager, Maj. Gen. Ret.

This hero died with barely anyone's notice. Shifty volunteered for the Airborne in WWII and served with Easy Company of the 506th Parachute Infantry Regiment, part of the 101st Airborne Infantry. If you've seen "Band of Brothers" on HBO or the History Channel, you know Shifty. His character appears in all 10 episodes, and Shifty himself is interviewed in several of them.

I met Shifty in the Philadelphia airport several years ago. I didn't know who he was at the time. I just saw an elderly gentleman having trouble reading his ticket. I offered to help, assured him that he was at the right gate, and noticed the "Screaming Eagle," the symbol of the 101st Airborne, on his hat.

Making conversation, I asked him if he'd been in the 101st Airborne or if his son was serving. He said quietly that he had been in the 101st. I thanked him for his service, then asked him when he served, and how many jumps he made. Quietly and humbly, he said "Well, I guess I signed up in 1941 or so, and was in until sometime in 1945..." at which point my heart skipped.

At that point, again, very humbly, he said "I made the 5 training jumps at Toccoa, and then jumped into Normandy ... do you

know where Normandy is?" At this point my heart stopped.

I told him "Yes, I know exactly where Normandy is, and I know what D-Day was." At that point he said "I also made a second jump into Holland, into Arnhem."

I was standing with a genuine war hero ... and then I realized that it was June, just after the anniversary of D-Day.

I asked Shifty if he was on his way back from France, and he said "Yes... And it's real sad because, these days, so few of the guys are left, and those that are, lots of them can't make the trip." My heart was in my throat and I didn't know what to say.

I helped Shifty get onto the plane and then realized he was back in coach while I was in First Class. I sent the flight attendant back to get him and said that I wanted to switch seats. When Shifty came forward, I got up out of the seat and told him I wanted him to have it, that I'd take his in coach.

He said "No, son, you enjoy that seat. Just knowing that there are still some who remember what we did and who still care is enough to make an old man very happy." His eyes were filling up as he said it. And mine are brimming up now as I write this.

Shifty died on Jan. 17, 2012 after fighting cancer.

There was no parade.

No big event in Staples Center..

No wall-to-wall, back-to-back 24x7 news coverage.

No weeping fans on television.

And that's not right!

Let's give Shifty his own memorial service, in our own quiet way.

Rest in peace, Shifty.



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A Letter to Buddy

Dear Buddy, Hi! Tag!

Do you speak German? Don't worry, I don't either, but because I am of German descent, my owners sometimes think I do. It is a difficult language. Since you are of Chinese descent and I am German, we may make a powerful match because both our countries of origin were once great empires.

However, at present, let us put the past and politics aside and discover more important things about one another. I have heard a lot about you, but you know very little of me.

I am Pudding, a 5-year-old chocolate and tan dachshund. I have short hair, very soft ears, a long nose and HUGE paws. Also, I hate to bring up a sensitive topic, but I must tell you what I weigh. This is of great importance for my breed, you see. My doggy doctor says I should stay at a healthy weight to keep my back in good shape.

Incidentally, I read that you dislike your doggy doctor, may I recommend mine to you? Perhaps sharing this is too personal, but I do so adore my vet. He lets me call him by his first name and when I am in his office, he sits on the floor and tells me how cute I am. Before I know it, I am in his arms and he cuddles me and I just melt....ahem, pardon me, I shall continue.

Fifteen. That is the number of pounds I weigh and my back stays in very good shape because of it. I get lots of exercise and small amounts of food. I used to get lots of treats too but they were making me fat AND (this is slightly embarrassing, but we ARE trying to get to know one another) the treats made my breath stink. But it is better now, I assure you. Oh yes, I smell very good all over. I get regular

baths and last year, I got my teeth cleaned! I think I might get them cleaned next year, too.

I see that you are a very clever pup as you use the same tricks as I do on occasion. I also "fall over like jello" when I do not prefer to go on a walk. I also enjoy training my siblings - yes, they are human, but I treat them like litter-mates because I can. They actually do what I say! For instance, sometimes I stand at my bowl in the early afternoon (much too early to have supper) and say "MEAT" loudly. Sure enough, I only have to say it three or four times and they come to feed me. They always say "Quit barking Pudding" but I haven't been barking! I simply called for my meat.

I read that you are working in the greenhouse at a university here in Huntsville. That sounds very exciting, Buddy! I think I would like to go to University as well. Learning and study are in my heritage, after all. My favorite pastime is hunting. Do you know if they teach hunting? It is the thing I am the best at and I would like to help others attain this important life skill. Rabbits, chipmunks, moles, squirrels, lizards and birds - these are the critters for which I have a special affinity. They taste so good! My family does not appreciate this special skill, however.

If I am in the mood to hunt, I have to linger at the door and wait until one of them leaves it cracked for too long, and whoosh, I rush past them and run for the woods! The thrill I get racing through the yard and into the great wide open is unmatched! The woods are where the tastiest critters live, you know. My nose tells me the way and my big paws help me dig into their hiding spots.

Oh, Buddy, I do hope you like hunting too, just talking about it makes my mouth water and my tail twitch with excitement.

Changing gears, I am curious, what is VEGAN? You mentioned that your new family eats VEGAN. I have never heard that word. Let's discuss.

Lastly, on a serious note, I would like to offer my condolences on the loss of your friend and companion. I know you miss him. Grief is a hard thing to go through but I would like to tell you that when we miss someone, it is a sign of how much we loved them and love is the very best thing in the world.

I hope you reply and we can become friends,

Cordially Yours,
Pudding, the Chocolate Doxie

"I really hate it when a couple is arguing in public, and I missed the beginning and don't know whose side I'm on."

Mary Henegar, Madison

CODE TALKERS

by Iolanda Hicks

The history of the world encompasses so much information that our individual brains could not possibly absorb it all. We can, though, pull from that infinite vault of information, when needed, using that old-fashion research.

That is what I did after watching a 2002 movie starring Nicolas Cage in "Windtalkers". I want to share some interesting information about the American Indians. Our forefathers were introduced to some of the first Native Americans living in what we now call the United States as early as the 15th century. They were living on this land a long time before our ancestors arrival.

Our Native Americans in these United States have contributed to the freedom we enjoy. Most of us, especially of the Baby Boomer generation, have different memories of Indians relating to all the cowboy movies. During WWI and WWII, the American Indians became soldiers and later veterans of the U.S. Armed Forces. Their efforts and sacrifices were not known to the majority of our population.

Let's 'talk' about these special Americans that were known as the Code Talkers or Windtalkers. The name Code Talker referred to American Indians who used their native language to send military communications, on the battlefield, during WWI and WWII. A somewhat definition of the Code Talkers or Windtalkers could be a type of intelligence agent or officer, operative or secret agent.

In WWI, the Choctaw Telephone Squad was created with the recruitment of 19 soldiers from the 141st, 142nd and 143rd Infantry Regiments. They were very instrumental during the war in France and offered a solution to a very big problem. They became the original Code Talkers with the Comanche joining them a short time later.

In the fall of 1918, during the Meuse-Argonne Offensive on the Western Front, the Germans had successfully compromised the telephone lines, enabling the enemy to translate messages and capturing messengers

trying to deliver them. It was a "stumbled on chance" that a solution to this problem materialized. An overheard conversation by an Army Captain between two Choctaw soldiers of the 142nd Infantry Regiment, speaking in their native language, started the ball rolling. After sending a message in their language as a test to be translated into English, eight Choctaw speakers, within hours, began dispatching strategic messages. These messages were instrumental in helping the U.S. troops win several key battles. All together, there were 9 different tribal languages used by Code Talkers during WWI including the Cheyenne, Cherokee, Comanche, Ho-chunk, Osage and the Yankton Sioux.

By WWII, the policy to recruit and train American Indians to become Code Talkers, had been developed.

More than 12,000 American Indians fought in WWI and had volunteered to defend their land and people. This was part of their tradition and culture which represented what it meant to be a man, a leader, a warrior. The utmost respect was given to a warrior and is the same today, with our modern day warriors: active military, veterans and our fallen .

After the end of WWI, by 1924, American Indians became U. S. Citizens. It is sad to realize that a generation prior to WWI, Indian tribes including the Choctaw, were removed from their ancestral land under the 1830 Indian Removal Act. The Trail of Tears is referred to as the march of these tribes, including the Five Civilized Tribes, from 9 states to what is present day Oklahoma. The Choctaw Nation, alone, lost an estimated 2500 souls of approximately 12,000 during this march. Despite their hardships, over the many years, the American Indians stepped forward in the fight for freedom.

By the time WWII began, the U.S. military had established policies to recruit and train American Indians to become Code Talkers, with the U.S. Army being the first to recruit. They recruited from several states including Oklahoma starting in 1940. The U.S. Marines and Navy followed. By 1942, the Marines graduated the first 29 Navajo Code Talkers who used their unwritten language to develop a unique military code.

The Code Talkers were soon present at the many battles during World War II. The Marine Code Talkers were said to have participated in every Marine assault in the Pacific.

The following quote from Major Howard Conner, a signal officer in the 5th Marine Divi-

sion said " Had it not been for the Navajo Code Talkers, the Marines would never have taken Iwo Jima". In the European Theater, they were also present during the D-Day invasion at Utah Beach, France. The secret code remained unbroken during the war. Neither the Japanese nor the Germans ever broke the code.

There were two types of code that were created. Type one consisted of 26 Navajo terms that relayed back to English letters. Those letters could spell out a word. For example, 'ant' in Navajo represented the letter 'a' in English. Type 2 were words that could be translated from English into Navajo. Of course there were many words and names that did not exist in Navajo so other words were used to stand for those.

An example for one such word, "submarine", was not found in Navajo. The Code Talkers came up with the Navajo word 'besh-lo' which translated back to 'Iron- fish'.

The soldiers from different tribes, who became Code Talkers, had their own interpretations of the different military terms. Confusing, yes, but the system worked! For instance, the Choctaw Code Talkers referred to the machine gun as "little gun shoot fast".

The language of the Code Talkers had the Germans so confused during WWII, that they honestly thought that the United States had some sort of machine that could speak underwater!

Most of the Code Talkers were assigned in pairs in a military unit so that one could operate the portable radio and the other could send and relay messages in their language, translating them into English.

The hundreds of Code Talkers and their work during World War II was essential in helping to secure the Allied Victory while their participation was kept very secretive. It was not until 1968, that the WWII Code Talker program was declassified. National recognition for the Code Talkers came slow.

In 2001, the Congressional Gold Medal was awarded to the Navajo and other Code Talkers, finally recognizing these soldiers, for their highly valued service so many years ago. As of this writer's latest information, there are three Navajo Code Talkers still living: John Kinsel Sr., Thomas H. Begay and Peter MacDonald. Amazing!

I do tend to write more about history, the past, and not the present, but I feel history is important.

In closing, I have borrowed an answer to the question "How important is history to human kind?" I Googled it and a December 16th, 2021 answer to this question, author unknown, is this: "Studying history helps us understand how events in the past made things the way they are today. With lessons from the past, we not only learn about ourselves and how we came to be, but also develop the ability to avoid mistakes and create better paths for our societies."

The U.S. Veterans Memorial Museum located at 3650 Alex McAllister Drive in Huntsville, is filled to the brim with history. The hours are 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM, Wed-Sat. Give some history a visit!



Remembering Jackie Reed, the City of Huntsville watchdog. Jackie was the voice of Huntsville residents when she spoke at so many City Council meetings. This old ad taken from a 2016 Old Huntsville Magazine



Jackie Reed

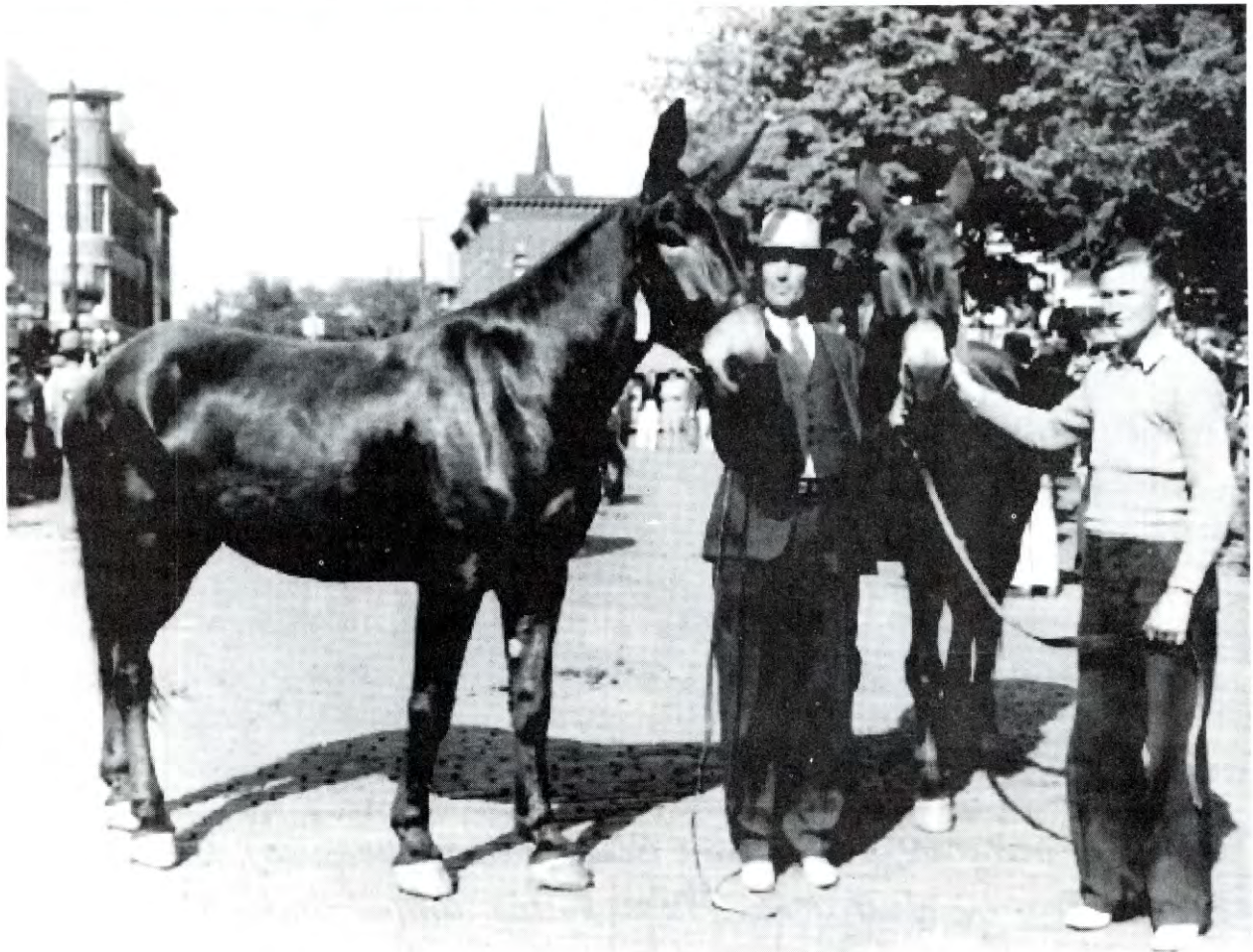
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Mary Jane Miller, Texas

When life was simple...



Even though Huntsville was entering the space age in 1955, mules were still a common sight downtown. That same year Wernher von Braun took the oath to become an American citizen, Memorial Parkway was opened to traffic and Huntsville boasted nine public schools with an enrollment of 4,300 students.

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