



No. 380

October 2024



# Old Huntsville

## HISTORY AND STORIES OF THE TENNESSEE VALLEY

### Halloween in Boogertown



Then came the night. THE night! By six o'clock, thanks to large moon-hiding clouds that filled most of the sky, there was an on and off deep-darkness. It was Halloween dark when a cloud hid the moon, then fairly normal dark when the moon fought loose for a while. Boogertown had no street-lights, the houses had no porch lights.

**Also in this issue:** At the SnuffDippers Ball; Scuba Diving Panic; It's Football, Ya'll; Dollar Girl; My Father the Boxer; A Strange Family; Letters from London; Being Really Scared; Sweet Fall Recipes, Pet Superstitions and much much more!

# Coming Soon!!



# Halloween in Boogertown

by Giles Hollingsworth

With me and other Huntsville kids, the guy who would "get you if you don't watch out," was the "boogerman," not the "bogeyman" that scared children elsewhere. I read on the internet that Joel Chandler Harris, who authored the Uncle Remus Tales, dialected the term into "boogerman," blending the words, "bogeyman" and "booger" (dried nasal mucus). So "boogerman" was a Southern dialect word.

Now, the boogerman was mystical to me. My parents had never mentioned him. They had taught me about the devil (Satan), that he was always lurking about and would try to get me to do bad things, but somehow I knew he was invisible and could not physically attack me. However, some older kids got a kick out of scaring younger kids, and they convinced me that the booger-

man was absolutely real and that he was ugly as sin.....really hideous, and would surely get you if he ever had a chance. It had nothing to do with your behavior. He was just mean as a rattle-snake. Nobody ever said what he would do with you after he "got" you. I never gave that a lot of thought, just figured I'd be scared to death, literally, so he would just have a dead kid on his hands to do something with.

That was me in the middle of October of 1939. We lived in Lowe Mill village. Like most other eight year old's, I was naively open to any suggestion of slimy, dark, mysterious baddies. Then my eleven year old brother, Richard, got on my case. He told me I'd better harden up or other kids would start calling me a scaredy cat and making fun of me. That did it! I swore to myself that I would quit believing all that stuff. I would have too, except for one thing... a few days later Daddy told us that we were going to have to move to Boogertown!

With Daddy's announcement I almost said "damn" out loud. Yeah, I cussed a little. I learned it from other kids, not from my dad. He didn't cuss. But it was enough to make anybody cuss! We all knew Boogertown was the pits. I won't try to describe it here;

**"The best medicine for arthritis is being thankful it isn't gout."**

**Janet Gurley, Madison**



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it has been pretty well described in previous issues of Old Huntsville Magazine, but it was a hell-hole and one of the worst slums the South has ever known. A lot of good people lived there, people who were down on their luck like us, but also a lot of misfits lived there, people that were seedy, sorry and/or shady.

But it was that Boogerman thing that made me feel snake-bit! Hexed! Like fate had it in for me! Here I was trying to forget about him and now I had to go live in the slum where he lived and that was named after him. That had to be so. Why else would they call it Boogertown?

So, we moved to Boogertown in late October, in time for me to suffer a few days of anguish, apprehension and dread, knowing that Halloween was coming up and it was going to be an acid test for me. Fate just didn't let up on me! I liked Halloween. It was a fun night for kids, and incidentally, pretty much JUST for kids.

Remember the movie, "Meet Me in St. Louis," the Halloween scene? Recall that no parents were out spooking with the kids. Also nobody did any trick or treating, remember? Well, the movie was set in the late 1890s, before trick or treating was introduced to America, although it was a centuries old thing in Scotland and Ireland. But by 1939 some Southern kids had discovered the candy extortion racket.

A few of us had done it the year before in Lowe Mill, including me, Ocie Hill, Rufus Nunnally, Richard and Bugs Bradford. There were no parents even though Richard, the oldest one of us, was just ten. Sounds strange, huh? But it's true! And by the way, we did get a few treats. Not a lot of candy, because, as I said, this was a new thing. A few first-time "victims" fetched out some apples, pecans and cookies, and one lady gave us some marbles.

So I didn't want to miss it and neither did Richard. We talked about it, how Boogertown was different from Lowe Mill, and maybe a little too dark and scary for trick or treating. But Richard said, "We're gonna give it a try."

We planned it out and decided we'd start out at about six o'clock. No costume. Back then, even for spooking, no Mill Village kids had store-bought costumes,

except maybe a Lone Ranger type mask. A few of them would drape themselves with maybe a sheet or wear some ragged, sloppy clothes, etc. But Richard and I just wanted to see if we could get a few pieces of penny candy, so no costume, just a half gallon Karo syrup bucket and the family flashlight (which was already low on battery power).

Right on schedule the day arrived. Like all late October days it was short, with dusk creeping in at about five o'clock. Richard and I figured that if any other Boogertown kids were going to be out trick or treating they would be by at any minute, just before it got dark. But none showed up, so that answered our question...it wasn't a Boogertown thing. We decided that even so we would follow our plan and at least give it a try.

Then came the night. THE night! By six o'clock, thanks to large moon-hiding clouds that filled most of the sky, there was an on and off deep-darkness. It was Halloween dark when a cloud hid the moon, then fairly normal dark when the moon fought loose



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for a while. Boogertown had no street-lights, the houses had no porch lights. For common sense reasons, all the houses had window shades which they kept closed at night.

We began our quest during one of the dark intervals, walking eastward on our street, 12th Avenue, which was a dirt road that served as Boogertown's southern border, the outermost street on that side of the village. So the row of houses was on our left, set about thirty feet back from the road. There was a large open field off to the right, a wilderness-like field, overgrown with tall grass and bushes.

We stopped in front of the first house and took two or three steps toward it, then both froze in our tracks! There was an eerie, bone-chilling sound coming from something, or someone, up next to the house, near the ground, by the porch! I can't really describe it and you'll have to decide for yourself what it was after you finish this read. Then the moon broke through and we saw two fluorescent green eyes staring at us!

When our hearts started beating again we could tell the stare belonged to a large, coal-black dog. Then more heart stoppage when some large something he was holding tightly in his mouth started flopping furiously! We didn't know what it was or which one of them was making the eerie sound, or whether the sound was glee or agony, but we left, thankful that the unfortunate quarry had got there first.

Once we got back to the street we headed toward the next house, when from off to our right, we heard another unsettling noise. It wasn't like

the first one. This time it was just a rustling of the tall grass. But hell's bells, it was corning toward us! And it kept coming. We froze again! The rustling stopped, then started again. At last, crawling out of the grass, into the street, came the biggest, ugliest possum I have ever seen. He calmly, and slowly walked across the street toward the houses. We figured that black monstrous dog would probably get him too.

We finally made it to a house, knocked on the door. A lady answered our knock, asked who was there. We said we were neighbor kids out trick or treating. She said she had never heard of trick or treating, so run along, and we went away empty handed.

As we started toward the next house the moon emerged again, and we saw, about fifty feet ahead, slowly walking toward us, a dark figure of a man. We stopped and stood there! My thoughts were, "He's



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walking too slow to be somebody coming home from work and he's not carrying anything, so he ain't been to the grocery store."

Richard said, "I guess he's harmless. Walking that slow...he's gotta be pretty old."

As he neared us we could see that, yes, he was old, really old. His body was bent with age. I didn't want to be disrespectful to my elders but I had to say to Richard, "He's really scary looking!" We both wanted to run, or at least turn and walk away pretty fast, but we didn't. We kept standing there until he finally made it to within about eight feet of us and stopped and looked us over. It was too dark to see his eyes well but we could tell they were piercing. In fact we could almost feel the piercing.

He didn't ask what we were doing out after dark. But in a scratchy, creaky, low (and scary) voice he said, "Boys your age shouldn't be out after dark. Maybe some places it's okay, but not here. I've been around here for a long time and I know this place. In fact it was named.... Oh, never mind that. I know a lot of things, things that would curdle your blood. It may seem to you like it's early, but it's late... it's always late here in Boogertown. And if you don't watch out...."

He stopped there, then continued, "Now shine that flashlight on me. I want you to get a good look at me." Richard clicked it on and aimed it at him. His face was wrinkled and his beard stubbled. His white hair was long enough to cover his ears. He was thin and gaunt. He was shabbily dressed, mostly in black, except for the red shirt he was wearing. I wondered if he wore it to match his eyes.

With the flashlight we could see that they were totally blood-shot red. He said, "Turn

it off!" Richard did. The old man said, "Remember me!" He then turned and left, heading back in the direction that he came from, just as the moon went behind the darkest cloud of the night. I know the darkness hid him but it sure looked like he just vanished. That's Halloween for you.

I knew Richard had to be shaking just as much as I was but he tried to show his big brother bravado by saying, "That was one strange old man, talking in riddles like that. But that's it! We're going home! This place is too weird for us to be out here trying to trick or treat. Boogertown ain't ready for it and I don't know if it ever will be. But one good thing about tonight, we both can brag about being out on Halloween night in Boogertown, and there ain't too many kids our age that can do that."

We got home and sat down to eat a late supper. Richard said, "What did YOU think about that old man?" I said, "I'm not gonna say, but one thing for sure, he don't have to worry... I'll remember him,"

Fortunately that was our one and only Halloween in Boogertown. We moved back to Lowe Mill a few months later. But I still think I know how Boogertown got its name.

*(Author's note: This story is essentially factual, I think factual enough to qualify for publishing in Old Huntsville, but to make it scary-funny I did have to embellish it a bit. After all it took place 85 years ago, and I can't remember all the details about that spooky night. So I hope you will accept it in the spirit in which it was written, the spooky spirit of Halloween.)*

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### \* Injured in Runaway

As the result of a runaway accident near the Wade Mattress Factory yesterday afternoon, Mrs. R. B. Searcy was badly injured and Mrs. Frank J. Thompson was painfully bruised..

The ladies were driving in front of the factory when the horse got his tail over one of the reins and began to run. Mrs. Searcy attempted to jump out of the buggy and was thrown with great force against the ground, the back of her head striking against the stone curbing and cutting the scalp very badly. Mrs. Thompson did not jump but was thrown from the buggy a little further down the street. She was painfully bruised but was not cut.

Mrs. Searcy's wound is believed to be serious. The ladies were attended to by Dr. Brooks and last night both

were resting quietly.

\* **Joe Mason Arrested** - The Egg King taken up for Retailing Liquor

He claims that he did not sell whiskey but only bought it for his friends. Joseph Mason, the well known egg and produce dealer, was tried before Commissioner Greenleaf yesterday on a charge of retailing whiskey, and was placed under bond for appearance before the next Grand Jury of the U.S. Court. The revenue men claim that Mason has been violating the revenue laws with impunity for several years and has kept a wide section of Paint Rock Valley supplied with whiskey.

Mason, on the other hand, claims that he was not selling

whiskey but that he merely took orders for it and delivered it to his friends and customers whom he desired to accommodate and, furthermore, that he made no profit whatsoever by delivering the liquor.

The case is unique and will be an interesting one for the next grand jury to pass upon.

\* **The Funeral for Mrs. J. E. Pierce** was conducted yesterday afternoon at 4 o'clock from the residence on Meridian Street. Revs. W. M. Murray and H. E. Rice officiated. The floral offerings were numerous and beautiful.

Dr. O. J. Brooks, Dr. I. B. Wyatt, Will Dilworth, J. O. Jones, Prof. S. R. Butler, Jno. T. Jones, R. E. Pettus and Walter Miller served as pallbearers.



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**Missy Jergen, Gurley**

# The Likelihood of Being

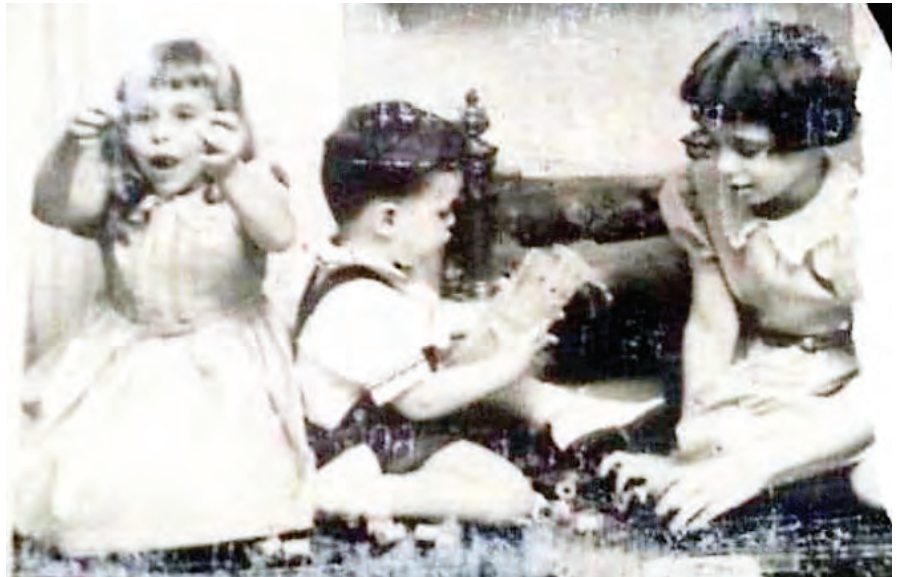
By Tanjie Kling

Why am I here? What is my purpose? Many of us have asked these philosophical questions of our parents, family, friends, spiritual leaders, teachers, and even ourselves; but have you ever wondered what the possibility may be of any of us being born in the first place?

Statisticians have attempted to quantify this. Some conclude that the odds of being born are 4 trillion to 1. Some experts believe that this number is terribly inaccurate, and explain the probability of being born as follows: The odds that your parents met each other is about 1 in 20,000. The odds that they stayed together long enough for you to be born is 1 in 2,000. That puts the combined odds of anyone being part of their generation at 1 in 40 million. Once your parents did meet and stay together, and you specifically were birthed, the odds of your being born as you are 400 quadrillion to 1.

However, when all of the generations that came before you in your family lineage are considered, the generational probability of you being born becomes 1 in 10<sup>2,685,000</sup>, an unfathomable number. That is the number 10 multiplied over and over again, two million, six hundred and eighty-five thousand times, or 10 followed by 2,685,000 zeros.

All of your grandparents from the beginning of time had to meet the right person at the right time, and live long enough to have chil-



The Kling children, all raised in Huntsville. From Left to Right: Nancy Kling Shinbaum; Bill Kling, Jr.; Emily Kling

dren, leading eventually to you. They had to survive wars, illnesses, pandemics, epidemics, accidents and incidents. Their ability to beat the odds gave you the opportunity of being here today.

As a writer of family histories, I think of these odds quite often. During my research, I have come across many families who have had grandfathers, great-grandfathers, great-great grandfathers, etc. who fought in various wars. Several of them became sick and were in the hospital during the time of a major battle or skirmish. Often, it was discovered that the specific battles they missed may have saved their lives, as some battles resulted in mass casualties or either totally decimated their military unit. There have been soldiers who were taken prisoner of war, who made it out alive to tell of their horrifying stories of survival. I have researched families who have had incredible misfortune in one town and moved to another to improve their chance of survival or to improve their health, and a family with a father who survived the attack at Pearl Harbor only to return home, get married and have a baby, then die shortly after his discharge.

My own father-in-law miraculously survived World War II while soldiers standing beside him and around him were mortally wound-

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ed. I have told friends that I am happy their ancestors survived the very difficult challenges they did, because that means they are here today. We all have incredible stories like this in our families, and some of us may never find out what those stories are.

Some of us have events that happened in our families that have changed the trajectory of our existence. Those stories actually leave me shaking my head in disbelief and leave me speechless.

When researching my husband, Bill's, family history, I came across such a discovery. His great-grandmother, Emilie, emigrated to America alone in 1861 as a very young lady. She arrived in New Orleans where she was greeted by her aunt and uncle who lived in that city. She resided with them, and married in 1869 to a nice young man named Benjamin.

She tragically became a widow in 1871 at the age of 27 years. Her husband was only 29 when he died. They had a one year-old son. As I was researching the circumstances surrounding his death, I learned that Benjamin had died in a freak accident that was reported in several newspapers around the nation as such.

On a winter weekday in February, Benjamin was walking down Canal Street in the Central Business District of New Orleans. Some workers were replacing a new storefront window on an upper floor at the now historic Touro Building. As they were making the repair, a large piece of the broken glass fell from above and impaled Benjamin's neck, killing him almost instantly.

He was at the wrong place at the wrong time, and mere seconds could have made a difference between life and death.

About seven years later, Emilie did remarry a man who would become Bill's great grandfather.

As a result of their marriage, Bill's grandfather and father were born, and eventually so was Bill.

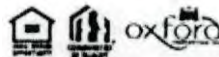
Learning of this traumatic accident that claimed the life of Emilie's first husband has left our family stunned and shocked at the odds of existing.

The likelihood of us being born is so improbable, our lives can only be explained as miraculous.

Millions of decisions were made by those who came before us, who not only genetically influenced who we are today, but who actually gave us a chance to be born. They may have decided which path to take or not take, which flight to take or not take, where to live or not live, who to marry or not marry, and the examples could go on and on.

So, if you have days when you doubt your place in this world, just remember that a path was forged generations upon generations ago for you to be here. You are fantastically rare - a remarkable probability with infinite possibilities, and never forget that you are an extraordinary miracle.

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# Spook-Tacular Memories

*by Elizabeth Wharry*

Some of my best memories of Halloween were the original costumes my mother pulled together. Rarely did I have store bought costumes. I wasn't too crazy about them, and they weren't very original.

Once my children were old enough to go trick or treating, they knew I would come up with something original and fun. My children are now adults, and have children of their own. Miriam is in her 40s, and Joseph and Jacob are in their 20s. (That's another story)

Miriam was the model for a lot of these costumes. One year, I put her hair in curlers and a robe, gave her a plastic coffee cup to carry, and smeared a little bit of Crisco on her cheeks. Some years later, I put dark makeup where a beard would be, put each of the boys in a bathrobe, and gave them each a plastic coffee cup.

Another costume they all wore was dressing up like a gumball machine. I blew up a bunch of small round balloons, bought a clear plastic drop cloth, and some tape. A white t-shirt and black pants completed the costume. It would take me about a week to blow up all the balloons.

All three were also dressed like playing cards. Once again, Miriam was the model. She went as the ace of hearts. Under the poster board, she wore a white t-shirt and red pants. A red heart was on each cheek. Years later, the boys went as the ace of clubs and the ace of diamonds. Each costume consisted of a piece of poster board cut in half, some string, Sharpie markers and some Halloween makeup.

The last year my boys went trick or treating, they dressed like robots. Some flexible dryer vent piping, a cardboard box and some foil completed their costumes. They decided it would be fun to say "trick or treat" in robotic voices.

When Joseph got older, he thought it would be fun to dress like a clown and pop out like a Jack in the box. We put some boxes together, and when he would hear the kids say trick or treat, he would pop up and hand out the treat. That got some really good reactions! Some kids laughed, some screeched. When the littles were around, he would ease out so they wouldn't be scared. Did I say Jack in the box?! Hmmm...maybe (should have said Joseph in the box!

Either way, Happy Halloween!

**Bumper sticker seen on car traveling through New Hope, AL:**

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# Being Really Scared

by Jim Vann

For years now my wife and I have been having a talking pumpkin on our front porch on Halloween.

I have a wooden stand that I made and I drape an old orange shop coat over that stand with a small speaker under the shop coat. I use a guitar amplifier and microphone to transmit the sound of my voice to the speaker under the coat. I used to use a real pumpkin but have replaced that with a ceramic one. We put a lighted candle inside the pumpkin.

I sit in the bedroom overlooking this scene with the lights off and the window raised. I can see and hear the kids but they usually don't see me.

We never try to scare anyone but it is very interesting to watch the kid's expressions and reactions to a talking pumpkin. We have done this for so long that now the kids-of-the-kids that originally came are coming now.

I would like to share with you now three times that I got really scared when I was younger.

The first time occurred when I was about 7 years old. I remember there were two Funeral Homes in the 5 Points area. Spry's Funeral Home was on the corner of Pratt Avenue and what's now Andrew Jackson where the Regions bank is now located.

Hinshaw Funeral Home was on Holmes Avenue just toward town from Tenders Restaurant. They both moved away from that area in about 1945.

As my classmate (Bill Brown) and I were walking home from East Clinton School, we passed the location of the home on Holmes Avenue. They were in the process of moving from that location and the door of the house that served as the Funeral home was standing wide open. My classmate said let's go in and look around, so we did.

We walked thru the entire house and came to the very back room. The room was empty except for a low table that had a casket lying on top of it. My friend Bill maneuvered me around until I was right beside the casket. The lid of the casket flew open and up and a friend of Bill's screamed from the casket and scared the stew out of me.

The second episode occurred while I was on a hunting trip with my Dad and a group of hunters. We were walking along trying to scare up a rabbit. We came to a fence that we wanted to cross to go into another field to continue our hunt. Being safe, I handed my shotgun to my dad and climbed the fence. When I jumped off of the fence on the other side, I landed evidentially in the middle of a covey of quail. They all took off at one time and the term used for that action is called 'thundering'. They made a terrible noise and it scared me so bad I fell to the ground because I had no idea what was happening.

The third occasion when I was scared pretty bad occurred at the Lyric Theater in downtown Huntsville. I was among the group known as "Patrol Boys" or crossing guards at East Clinton School. We had to wear a thick canvas belt that showed that we were "Patrol Boys." For our working at the school helping the kids cross the streets around the school, if we wore our belt on Friday the owner of the Lyric theater would let us in the movie for free.

On this particular occasion, the movie was entitled "The Thing". The movie was about an expedition in the Arctic and supposedly their activity had aroused a creature that had been buried in the ice for a long while. There was this one scene where they are searching for "The Thing" in a warehouse-like structure. They are looking everywhere. They come to a cabinet that had a door that opened from the top down and when they opened the door, a dead dog rolls down out of the cabinet.

With the sound effects and all, that was pretty scary but the fellow sitting beside me (Wayne Poole) cleared the chair arm that separated his chair from mine and grabbed me around the neck because he was very scared. Needless to say he scared me much more than the rest of the entire movie.

Thank goodness I hardly ever get scared anymore.

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Turn to the experts



As you are reading this, the updated Covid KP.2 vaccines should be widely available. I urge you to get your booster and the regular flu shots. Don't forget any others you may be eligible for. I haven't had Covid yet, and I don't want it. I believe 'prevention is worth a pound of cure,' as my momma used to tell me.

Now that you've had your prevention shots, you may want to get out and enjoy some of the annual events Huntsville has to offer.

The Botanical Garden has Festifall running now until just before Halloween. Festifall is packed with activities that bring the spirit of the season to life. Explore their creative pumpkin displays and the Scarecrow Trail, each one a unique work of art.

If you have grandchildren, they deserve the live production of Fantasy Playhouse's October 2024 production of "The Wonderful Wizard of Oz." Call for dates and ticket information.

I hope you won't miss the annual Maple Hill Cemetery Stroll on Sunday, October 15, from 1:30 pm to 4:30 pm at 203 Maple Hill Drive (at California Street and McClung Avenue). You'll see many of the historical figures of many years ago live in costume, detailing their life history

and contributions to our heritage at no charge. It is literally "living history"!

Another event is the Antique Car Show at the Orion Amphitheater, but this year it's a three-day national event October 24-26. It's the largest show ever, with the main showing on Saturday morning until early afternoon.

See schedule of events for each day at <https://nar-aaca.org/> the local club's website.

October 21 is the date for Liz Hurley Ribbon Run for breast cancer. You may not want to run the 5K (3.1 miles), but last year, thousands of walkers traversed the course in support of fighting to eliminate breast cancer. If you can't participate, come and watch. It's quite an event.

The last item of this month is Halloween on Thursday, the thirty-first of the month. Stock up on spook treats and keep the outside lights on, and decoration on the porch encourages the darling devils to come and 'trick or treat.' I love to see the enthusiasm on their faces each year or hear it in their voices if a mask covers the cheerful cherub.

Another event that may interest you the weekend before Halloween is HBC UN-PLUGGED, October 25, 26, 27, 2024. Dream Theater, Huntsville Ballet Company introduces the 61st season on an electrifying note, featuring Vivaldi's "The Four Seasons", choreographed by Phillip Otto.

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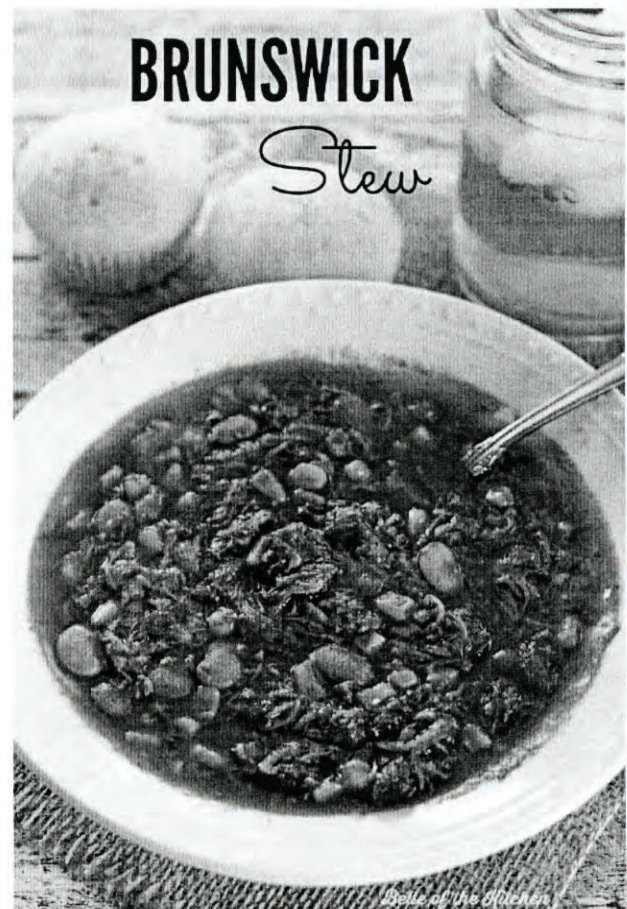
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# Getting Old

by Sue Edmondson



I was sitting on my porch late in the afternoon watching the kids on their skate boards and thought about my childhood with just skates. I wondered if I could still skate. I can still ride a bicycle, and I can spin forever on the dance floor. I bet I could skate.

Then I thought about the first time I saw a wrinkle. Now I search for a smooth bit of skin. There was the first time I found a gray hair and now I can only find white hair.

My mind kept on wandering back to the first times. I wake up glad I have a walk-in shower because the last time I got in the tub my foot kept slipping on the tub and I had to sit down on the edge and then swing my legs around. I almost fell back into the tub.

Everyday things get worse. The day I stepped into my underwear with my right leg and the left leg wouldn't raise. I drug my underwear to the bed and sat down to pull it up over my left leg. Now, I just sit down to put on underwear, socks, shoes, pants, everything. Pulling on my socks one day, I noticed they were wrinkled. Then I saw my socks still on the bed.

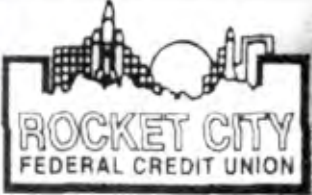
Then there was the day when I turned on my oven and it was still on the next morning when I went into the kitchen. I also left the water running outside—for \$150 worth. Thank goodness when I vacuum, the hair I get up is the color of my dog's and not mine. My dyed color is not fox colored.

I walked by an old man in the grocery store, and he whistled at me. Then I realized he was only wheezing. I don't listen well anymore because I am usually daydreaming. Even then, I hear better than a hearing aid. My sister-in-law told me she heard a man in the grocery tell another man she was "Sexy". I told her, he probably said she was sixty and that was a better compliment than sexy.

I can still beat my boys at Spades. They haven't learned to count cards. Playing bridge for 60 years has taught me arithmetic I didn't learn in school.

During these awesome days of old age and pandemic, my clothes are lasting because I am mostly just wearing my pj's as I am not going out except to get my allergy shots every other week. My Sunday clothes and shoes are screaming from the closet, "Wear Me."

Never thought I would look forward to a shot. On those Wednesdays, I stop by the library to get a new group of books. I have so much time on my hands; I average reading three books in a week. Sometime I pick up the wrong one and confuse myself until I finally pick up the right one. Now I stack the ones I have read in my car, so I won't forget to return them and I don't pick up the wrong book to



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read. Most Wednesdays, I stop at Arby's to get the dollar chocolate shake. You need a reward after two shots and a jaunt through the Library.

I remember being told to act my age many years ago. I didn't know how I was supposed to act then, and today is worse—I don't know many people my age so I don't have a model to show me what to do. My Dad retired at 65. I retired at 76. Did you ever look at Whistler's mom? She was 65. I never looked that bad at 65.

Tina Turner was still shaking all over the stage to "Rolling on the River" well past 65. So, I continue to shake it to that old song.

George Bernard Shaw said, "You don't stop laughing when you grow old; you grow old when you stop laughing." Guess he knew how often you made yourself laugh at the stupid things you do.

I have scars, white hair, wrinkles and other signs I have lived. I have laughed, loved and enjoyed "the best of times and the worst of times". Still here and thriving as long as I can laugh at myself.

*(Two years later, Sue was diagnosed with advanced cancer and died two months later, October 27, 2023. She was 81)*

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# HALLOWEEN

by Robert French



The year was 1945, Farmer Matthews had a very large stump in his cotton patch adjoining our house in the country outside Decatur. He was tired of plowing and otherwise working around the huge stump. He wanted it removed and would pay \$25.00 to have it done. My dad took the job.

October 31st, morning, I went out with Daddy. We dug around the huge stump about two feet deep. He then hooked our mule, Old Het, to the stump, and told her to get up. The mule pulled, hunkered down, and pulled and pulled again. Daddy started unhooking the single-tree.

I said, "Daddy, beat that mule. Make her pull up that stump."

Daddy replied with a lesson. He said, "Son, when a mule has done all it can do, that's all it can do. We have to do more digging."

I have reflected on that experience all my life. When a person has done all that he or she can do, that's all that can be done. In other words, try something else.

So, we dug, and we dug and we dug. All day, in the hot sun, we dug. Almost dark, we had loosened the stump to where Old Het could pull it out of the ground. I noticed as the stump came out, with our pilings, it left a huge hole, about 6X8 feet around, and 6 feet deep with fairly smooth sides and high pilings.

"We'll have to fill that hole tomorrow," Daddy said, as we left.

That night, Halloween, it was dark - a moonless overcast night - pitch black, just right for goblins.

Ki Roper, who lived across the freshly plowed cotton field from us, came toward our house to

borrow a cup of sugar. Ki was a welder at Decatur Iron and Steel. He lived in a little brown, pine clap-board, two room house. He worked hard all week, but come Friday night, Ki Roper got drunk. He got drunk, and stayed drunk the entire weekend. He wasn't much trouble. We could hear him across the cotton field cursing imaginary demons, or singing at the top of his lungs. All that was his business.

Ki, like everybody else, walked everywhere he went. So, he never knew about mine and Daddy's work with the stump. Instead, in his drunken stupor, on the dark moonless night, he headed across the cotton patch to our house to borrow a cup of sugar. Ki Roper fell headlong into the hole. He tried to climb out, he tried to jump out, and he tried everything he knew to get out, including yelling, "Get me outta here!" at the top of his lungs. Finally, he gave up and said, "To hell with it!"

He squatted down in one corner of the hole, fished a pint out of his overalls top bib pocket, and made the most of a bad situation.

At about 1:30 a.m., Marlon Hamilton was coming home from Engle's Ship Yard. Instead of walking down Spring Street to the field road that went to his house nearly a half mile away, he decided to cut across the cotton patch.

Remember, it is pitch black, Halloween, and Marlon did not have any light. As fate would have it, he tripped on the pilings and stumbled into the hole. He immediately began to jump up and down, trying to get out. He tried to dig his feet into the wall and get out. He tried everything.

While he was huffing and puffing, Ki Roper thought he might help him get them both out of the hole. In his most near sober voice, he slurred, "You can't get out of here."

He did, and ran all the way home.

A little after daylight, I heard Ki yelling for help. I knew he was in the stump hole. I went out and gave him a hand, and he climbed out. We found Marlon's old crushed lunch bucket. Apparently, he stood on it to get out of the hole. Ki had to go to the house, and tell everyone what had happened. He thought it was the funniest thing that he ever knew. He told it far and wide, and Marlon never denied it.

Happy Halloween.

**"You can say any foolish thing to a dog, and he will give you a look that says, 'Wow, you're right! I would never have thought of that!'"**

**Dave Barry**

# SNAIL ON THE WALL BOOKSTORE

by M. D. Smith



Lady Vowell Smith began SOTW (The Snail on the Wall) bookstore as a website in 2017. She lives in Huntsville and is the daughter of Yogi Vowell, who once owned a car dealership in Huntsville. She is married to Scott Smith, coincidentally the name of one of my sons.

The name of the store originated from a story by Virginia Woolf, who envisioned a snail on the wall in her 1917 story, "The Mark on the Wall."

As of 2023, Lady Smith and Christina Tabereaux are co-owners of the recently opened physical book store at 816 Wellman Avenue, in the first block east of California street in Five Points. It's in the middle of a string of buildings on the South side of Wellman. The grand opening weekend was September 20th and 21st and they are now open Tuesday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

SOTW began as a website in 2017 in Huntsville, for purpose of helping local authors. Lady started the site alone after being a college English teacher with a PHD for a few years. Later she worked as editor of magazines and books, then lastly into the online bookstore. She felt that local North Alabama area writers lacked the opportunity to showcase their work and have book launch parties. That spurred her desire to at last have a physical location for her store.

She felt local authors missed out on book tours, needing to go to other cities to showcase their books. Huntsville was missing out, and always looking out for local authors, but go through regular channels buying books like Amazon.

The new co-owner in the business, Christina Tabereaux has a library background with law degree and worked as a law librarian, and for a time as the director of Huntsville Library foundation.

Because SOTW is part of American Booksellers Association of America, she can order just about any book you could buy on Amazon and have it in her store in just a few days.

Photo of co-owners, Lady Smith (left) and Christina Tabereaux (right)



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# Heard On the Street

by Cathey Carney



Penny Sumners was our first correct caller for the little shovel that I hid on page 18, in the Bennetts's Nursery ad. I made this one pretty easy right? It still took readers glasses and magnifying glasses to find it, and we had quite a few calls after Penny but she was on it! Penny is a very proud member of the DAR/Twickenham Chapter and is past winner of the NSDAR Historic Preservation Medal.

Jane and Louie Tippet recently celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary. It seems impossible because Jane looks like she's barely over 60 so how can that happen? Guests arrived at their home to eat, drink and party all because of the preparation done by daughters Angela Tippet Malone and Pam Tippet Henderson, and their sweet family included some brand new great grandchildren. There were lots of hugs all around and love for Louie and Jane.

If you're getting a bit older and finding it harder to bend, find lost items etc. there are two items you have to get for your home. It's a garden kneeler and a reacher. The reacher of course for picking up items that are under chairs or corners where you can't get to them, but the kneeler is key. You generally find these at Home Depot in the garden section because people use them to plant, dig in the dirt, etc.

But I use mine anytime I have to get down on the floor to clean out a closet, get something from under the sink, etc. It is harder to get down and up again after you get older and this garden kneeler helps more than you know! The handles on both sides make it so easy to push yourself back up.

There are many good farmers markets between the Huntsville and Madison area and fresh food is so good for you. It's nearly apple season right? Get out your favorite recipes (Like Cinnamon Apple Crisp topped with Pecans) and start baking! Cool weather sure puts us in the mood for that. Greene Street Market will operate through the end of October and there are several more that you can find by just doing a Google search.

Want to lose weight? All you have to do is nibble on good food when you're not really hungry, you stay full but comfortably, not stuffed. You're less likely to really pig out because being semi-full makes you less likely to eat everything in sight!

John H. Tate has just published his first book and the reviews are really amazing, including buzz about a future movie. It is called "Echoes of Betrayal: Protocol Clean Slate" and it is now available to buy on Amazon. It is a thriller/mystery that is based on events in Huntsville and his experiences as a Huntsville Private Investigator. Once you start reading you can't put it down!

John is in the midst of book signing and Saturday, October 19th is the day he will be at Habitat for Humanity on 400 Pratt Avenue. Starts at 10am and you've got to get your signed copy. Call for more information at (256) 533-2282.

So many October events happening. The annual Maple Hill Cemetery Stroll draws hundreds and we have many new people in Huntsville now that need to go. It takes place on Sunday, October 15, from 1:30 pm to 4:30 pm at 203 Maple Hill Drive (at California Street and McClung Avenue). People in costume portray the people that are buried beneath them! It's a family event but NO pets for this one!

Make note of your calendar for the North Alabama Region of the Antique Automobile Club of

## Photo of The Month

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This sweet boy grew up to be a fine musician and a well-known Judge in Madison County. Who is he? If you're the first to guess correctly you're the winner!



# Thank you!

Old Huntsville Magazine keeps on going thanks to our Readers, Writers and Advertisers. Have we said Thank You lately? We appreciate you more than you know.

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.

**Rick Lewis** of Cleveland, OH wants to wish his sweet Huntsville sister **Joan Johnson** a fun and wonderful birthday on October 10th. In addition to her family, she has four cats that will be singing to her on her special day! That would be a great video. Happy Birthday!

Many are downsizing these days and we've had calls from long-time readers about what to do with their old copies of Old Huntsville magazine. What we tell most people is that retirement homes are a great idea, but call them first and make sure they have a place for them. Another idea is Friends of the Library, but their space is limited. People just don't throw away their magazines!

**Pace Walker** was a friend to many and loved everything about old cars. Pace was only 60 years old when he lost his fight to brain cancer. The majority of his life was spent in Huntsville where he was well known in the hot rod community. Pace was strong willed and set in his ways at times, but he also had an enormous heart and wonderful sense of humor. He was generous, loyal and very brave. He was very clever and artistic with knowledge

he gained through all of his life experiences: drag racing, building parts and cars as he could fix or build anything. He was very proud to be associated with R&R Speed and Machine Shop (Huntsville's #1!).

Pace was exceptionally proud to be employed as a Thermal Protection Systems Subject Matter Expert for Leidos, his contribution to keeping America safe. He will be remembered for all the heart he shared with his family and friends. He truly loved each of them - and if you knew him, you knew it. When it came time for Pace to leave, he carried himself with dignity, strength and full of love for those he was leaving behind. He will be missed dearly.

Pace is survived by his wife: **Gwendolyn Luckhart Walker**; his children: **Emery Hyre** and **Ora Hyre** of Huntsville; his two younger brothers: **Jae Walker** of Hazel Green and **Miles (Anna) Walker** of Peachtree City, GA; his sister: **Kim (Kyle) Long** of Huntsville; his two aunts: **Brenda Walker** of Centre and **Sandy Moneymaker** of Honolulu, Hawaii; his chosen son **Brandon Lawler** of Huntsville as well as several nieces and nephews. He is also survived by a host of friends many he proudly called his brothers. Pace left much too early and won't ever be forgotten.

**Dona Perkins** loves history and good stories. She lives in Huntsville and has seen a lot of changes. Dona recently had a birthday on Aug. 29 and we hope she really celebrated,

as she deserved!

Did you know that **apple cider vinegar** can be good for easing pain from gout? There have been good results from people who use the following combination: In a 8-10 oz. cup mix a tablespoon of fresh lemon juice, 2 teaspoons of apple cider vinegar and 2 teaspoons of dried turmeric (spice section of grocery store). Stir water in to fill the cup and drink it during the day.

You know that many swear by a cake of Ivory soap (unwrapped) in bed by their feet to stop leg cramps. And now **Mary Jane Miller** tells us of another remedy that she says works every time. When she has leg or toe cramps at night they can be SO painful and your toes actually turn inward and talk about pain! But she has started drinking Dill pickle juice and it stops the cramp within minutes.

I've heard of the pickle juice used for gut health but never heard of this. You don't need much, maybe an ounce or she says an inch or two measured in your glass. I'm trying it! In Texas where she lives you can find the gallon bottles of dill pickle juice, but so far I've had to buy pickles to just get the juice. Let us know if you find the dill juice only anywhere locally!

For October we are hiding a **teeny broom**. Might be impossible to find. Get out your specs and be the first one to call - you're the winner!

Have a great cool month and watch out for your older neighbors. Holiday seasons get much more active in many ways.

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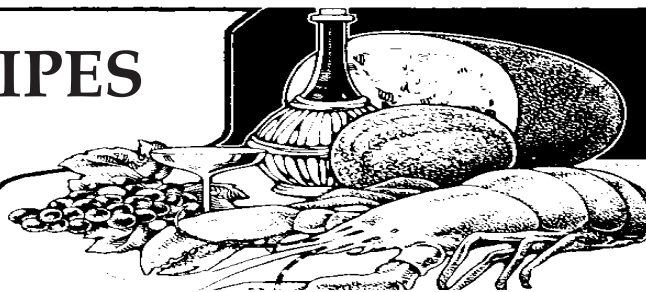
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## RECIPES



### Fall Comfort Sweets

#### Comforting Rice Pudding

- 1 c. uncooked rice
- 1/2 t. salt
- Peel of an orange or lemon
- 3 c. low-fat milk
- 1 large cinnamon stick
- 3/4 c. sugar
- 1/4 c. seedless raisins
- 2 T. dark rum

Mix the rice with 2 cups of water and 1/2 teaspoon salt in a 3-quart saucepan. Bring to a boil, stir once. Place orange or lemon peel on top of the rice, reduce heat, cover and simmer 15 minutes and liquid is absorbed.

Remember to discard the peel. Heat the milk and cinnamon in a small saucepan til milk is infused with the flavor of cinnamon. Strain milk and stir into cooked rice. Add the sugar and simmer for 20 minutes, or until thick, stirring often. Add the raisins and rum, simmer for 10 minutes. Serve hot.

When you reheat your rice, add just a little milk to restore its creamy consistency.

#### Chuck Owens' Sweet Potato Pie

- 4 medium sweet potatoes, cooked and mashed
- 2 eggs
- 1/2 c. brown sugar
- Small can evaporated milk
- 1/2 c. butter
- 1-1/2 t. cinnamon
- 1/2 t. each of ground nutmeg and ground ginger
- Pinch ground cloves
- Dash salt
- 2 9-inch pie shells

Mix all ingredients, preheat your oven to 400 degrees. Pour the sweet potato mixture into the pie shells, place in oven. Bake for about 45 minutes and pie is set in middle (it doesn't shake).

Great with whipped cream or just by itself.

#### Candied Pecans

- 1 c. brown sugar
- 1/2 c. sugar
- 1/2 c. sour cream
- 1 t. vanilla extract
- 1/2 t. cinnamon

- 2-1/2 c. pecans

In a heavy saucepan combine the sugars and sour cream. Cook to soft ball stage, or your candy thermometer registers 234 degrees. Remove from heat and add your vanilla, beat well til mixture starts to get thick.

Add pecans and stir very quickly. Spread on shallow pan that you've covered with waxed paper.

Cool and eat, or store in covered container for later.

#### Annie Weber's Nut Cake

- 1 box yellow cake mix
- 1 pkg. vanilla pudding mix
- 4 eggs
- 1/2 c. vegetable oil
- 1 c. dark rum
- 1 c. ground pecans

Mix all well and pour batter into a greased, decorative Bundt pan. Bake in 325-degree oven for an hour.

Remove from oven and while still warm, sprinkle with powdered sugar. Serve with whipped cream.

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## Hot Kettle Corn

Heat 3 tablespoons oil in a saucepan, add 1/2 cup popcorn kernels and 3 tablespoons sugar. Cover and shake til popped. Sprinkle with cinnamon.

## Cinnamon Cookies

- 1 c. butter
- 1 c. sugar
- 2 eggs, separated
- 1 t. vanilla extract
- 2 c. all purpose flour
- 2 t. cinnamon
- 1 c. chopped nuts

Cream your butter and sugar, add the egg yolks and vanilla. Fold in the flour and cinnamon, press dough onto a large cookie sheet, press nuts on top and press in.

Beat the egg whites til frothy and brush top of dough.

Bake at 350 degrees for 30 minutes, cut into strips while still hot and remove from cookie sheet at once.

## Old Southern Orange Balls

- 1 6-oz. can orange juice, undiluted
- 1 stick butter, room temps
- 1 box powdered sugar
- 1 can coconut
- 1 c. chopped nuts
- 1 box vanilla wafers, crushed

Mix the juice, butter and sugar in an electric mixer, refrigerate for an hour. Add nuts and wafers, roll into balls the size of a small walnut and then roll in coconut. Makes 16 dozen balls.

## English Toffee Cake

- 1/4 c. cocoa
- 1 lb. box angel food cake mix
- 1 to 1-1/2 t. instant coffee powder (not freeze-dried)
- 3 - 5/8 oz. pkg. chocolate pudding (not instant)
- 1-1/3 c. milk
- 1 c. heavy cream, whipped
- 5 English toffee bars (3/4 oz. each)

Add cocoa to dry cake mix, and bake according to package instructions. Cool. Mix instant coffee and pudding in a saucepan.

Cook pudding, using only 1-1/3 cup milk. Cool and beat until smooth. Whip cream and fold into pudding.

Divide cake into 3 layers. Spread half of the pudding mixture between the layers. With remaining

half of pudding mixture, frost top and sides of cake. Crush candy bars (easier if frozen) and sprinkle over cake. Chill.

## Brown Lace Cookies

- 1/4 c. butter
- 2 c. brown sugar, packed
- 2 eggs, beaten
- 1 t. vanilla extract
- 1/2 c. all purpose flour
- 1 t. baking powder
- 2 c. pecans, chopped

Cream butter and sugar. Add eggs and vanilla, beating well. Sift flour and baking powder together and add to creamed mixture with nuts. Chill 1 hour. Spray cookie sheet with spray oil.

Drop by half-teaspoonsful 3" apart. (They will spread while baking.)

Bake 6 minutes at 400°. Cool before removing from foil. Makes 6 to 7 dozen cookies.

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magazine!*



## The CAT Scan By LD Rogers

Last week I was in the hospital. A nurse came in my room to tell me they were going to do a CAT scan. I said okay, just like I knew what it was. They got me ready and put me in a machine that had a lot of switches and rolled me in and out. Finally, the nurse rolled me out and told me I was done. I asked her if I could have the cat since they were done.

She looked at me kind of funny then smiled and said, "You ain't gettin' my cat!"

Oh well, I tried.

# SCUBA DIVING PANIC

*by M. D. Smith, IV*

My teenage son, Bryan, and I planned a scenic dive in Destin, Florida, in late October, before Halloween, because the tourists are gone, but the Gulf waters are still warm as a bath.

We took my father's 22-foot twin outboard boat, all our dive gear, and my younger 12-year-old son tagging along for the ride. Several miles from the coast, the Loran (old-style GPS) showed us over the spot of destroyed bridge rubble, dumped for fish habitat. I tossed the anchor, felt it catch, and tied it to the cleat.

My son and I were ready to go in minutes while Junior listened to the pop radio station for our maximum 40-minute dive in eighty feet of water. As usual, we pulled down the anchor line and soon arrived at the bottom, but there was no bridge rubble. Instead, there was a path where the anchor had pulled along in the sand. Each wave above hobbled the boat and line, and the anchor moved.

I securely pushed in the 'ears' of the sand anchor and motioned forward to follow the trail. After twenty feet, I decided we had missed the rubble and signaled to go back, climb the rope to the boat, and



find it again. When we returned, there were only puffs and a longer trail in the sand. The anchor was being pulled along by wind and waves above and disappeared.

Panic set in both of us as I signaled an emergency to my son and pointed in the direction the anchor had gone. We swam as fast as we could, hands by our sides and using maximum flipper kicks, trying to catch the drifting anchor. After going another fifty feet or so, the fear and dread from not seeing the anchor and line, tightened my heart. My son's eyes were wide inside his glass mask faceplate.

I stopped, grabbed his inflatable vest, and when he looked at me, I made the slicing finger move across my throat, which was the sign to cut the dive. I pointed up, and he understood immedi-

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ately. Thank God we hadn't been at 80 feet long enough to need a decompression stop. But we couldn't just inflate our BC vests and pop to the surface like a cork. We had to make an emergency-controlled ascent to the surface. Up we went.

When we surfaced, pushed our masks to our forehead, and looked around, all we saw was water. By kicking up higher in the rolling waves, we saw the boat off in the distance. We could barely see the younger son sitting in the captain's seat, assuming he was listening to the radio.

I screamed at the extreme top of my lungs, but he didn't hear. There was that moment of total dread where I pictured us totally alone, several miles from shore, and drifting further out. When my boy finally figured it was too long for us to be down, he wouldn't think of pulling up the drifting anchor, much less know how to use the Loran to head in the direction we'd first been. I wasn't even sure he could use the radio to call for help to anyone on a marine frequency — or if they'd answer.

I think that was as terrified as I have ever been of impending doom. "Oh, my God, he'll never be able to find us," I said.

Bryan's eyes were as wide as I'm sure mine were. Then he put two fingers in his mouth and gave out one of those ear-shattering wolf whistles that I still can't do. He whistled again, and we saw the younger boy look up. Then we both waved, making X's with our arms, the distress signal. I'm sure he saw how far we were from the boat.

We were so relieved when we saw the puff of smoke from one, then the other engine starting, and, thank heaven, the boat started toward us. He didn't bother with the anchor; he simply dragged it along until he arrived. We were saved.

In hindsight, I should have let out 160 feet of anchor rope to have the 'ears' dig into the sand as designed. But with the rope not much over 80 feet out, it was tied at such a steep angle that the anchor might only have held in a calm sea. Furthermore, when we got to the bottom, and saw the

'trail' in the sand and no bridge rubble, I should never have assumed my re-setting the anchor would hold, nor should we have left it. The one thing I did right was not to delay trying to get back to the anchor, realizing it had drifted out of sight, and come to the surface ASAP. Any more delays down there, and I shudder to think what could have happened.

When Halloween came later that month, no spook or scare at the JC's Haunted House bothered me. I'd already had one that would last for many seasons to come.

The last photo is Bryan at a dive three years later on that same 'bridge rubble' where we did everything right.



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# ASHES TO ASHES

by Jim Harris



Growing up in the late thirties and forties meant growing up without air conditioning. I'm really not even sure it had been invented. For most people, it was as if they hadn't been. No one that I knew had one. But then, television, cars, hot running water, warm toilet seats and a hundred other conveniences that I take for granted now were not available for most of us.

That was when arid was what the West was, what the South got when

it didn't rain for a month, and what the armpits never were in the summer. It was also a time when it was not offensive to have body odor because everyone had it. No, we weren't dirty, not by choice anyway, but when you can't escape the heat you're bound to sweat and sweat produces body odor.

I think it is one of the laws of thermodynamics. There was no relief from the heat. The feet took a beating. We went barefoot all summer so our feet were tough, but the streets and back alleys got hot enough to fry eggs which made it tough even on tough feet. I was only about four years old when I discovered that a pile of ashes was considerably cooler than the ground. After that, every time I found a pile, I would stand with both feet in it.

All cooking was done on cast iron cook stoves. "Stove wood," as it was called, produced light gray, almost white ashes. The stove's fire box was small so the ashes were usually emptied into a bucket several times before they were dumped at the back alley, usually in a neat pile. Stepping into that pile was like stepping into a cool cloud. No, I've never stepped into a cloud. If they got wet, though, they lost their appeal. It was like stepping in a pan of fudge brownies. No, I've never had my feet in a pan of fudge brownies either.

I don't remember how long I enjoyed cooling my feet in ashes, but it came to a sudden end. One hot day I spotted a pile, ran to it and jumped in - on hot coals. Burned one foot badly - I never did enjoy ashes after that. I think it scarred me emotionally and stunted my physical growth.

Before that incident, I was on my way to being 6 feet 4 inches tall. I stopped growing at 5 feet 7.925 inches.

"Never raise your hand to your kids. It leaves your mid-section unprotected."

Bo Schmidt, Athens

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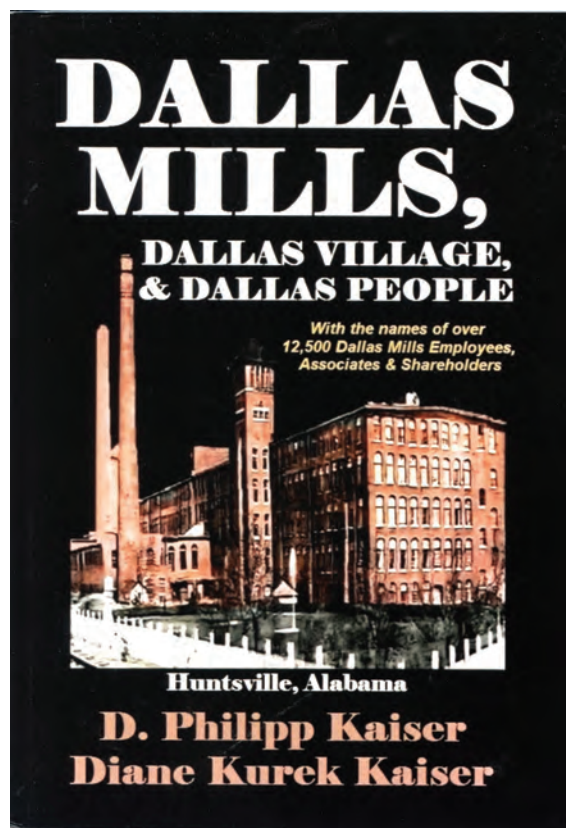
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# My Father, the Boxer Remembering William Dillard Turner

by Rejeana Turner Broderick



Hello, I am Rejeana Turner Broderick and I live in Davenport, IA, but I grew up in Huntsville, AL

This letter is about my father, William Dillard Turner (also known as Dillard Turner). My father was born in 1905 in Smithsville, TN where he resided until moving to Huntsville, AL in 1920 at the age of 15 years old. They moved to west Huntsville so my grandfather could start working in the cotton mills.

He started going to the local YMCA located on 8th Avenue, where I am sure he got into boxing. He started boxing under the name Gene Turner in the mid 1920s. He had 55 bouts in Birmingham, AL under Dave Evans, out of those 55 fights he was only KO'd one time. In Huntsville he boxed on the same card as brothers Sergeant Sammy Baker and Tommy Baker at the Madison County Fairgrounds. Afterwards my father named my youngest brother after Sergeant Sammy.

A Freudian slip is when you say one thing but mean your mother.

Three brothers and I grew up in the Westlawn area of Huntsville and all of the kids that would come around and lived in Westlawn called my father Dill Pickle.

Around 1993, my family received a letter from T. A.G. (Tennessee - Alabama - Georgia Amateur Boxing Hall of Fame) congratulating us on my father's selection to be inducted. His name Gene Turner is on a plaque that is hanging in the Huntsville Court House.

My father, unfortunately did not live to see this as he passed away on July of 1980 at the age of 75 years old.

His final boxing record was 66-17, and only 2 of his losses came by way of knockout.



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# Falling Leaves

by Bill Alkire, 1958



It was a cool October 1958 morning in the Eastern Appalachian Mountains. Here at Audra State Park in Barbour, County, West Virginia the air was crisp, and the azure sky contained only a small white puffy cloud. The sunshine warmed our souls as it heated the earth. If any place on earth proved there was a God, it had to be here.

The leaves were at their very peak color: God's magnificent palette. This was indubitably the best of nature.

"Life is great" Myla panted next to me as we lumbered down the narrow path I had walked as a young boy. I love being here in the post-dawn hours, as the birds begin to awaken. We used this time to talk, laugh, share dreams, and make plans. Myla was my first real love.

We talked little as we walked briskly, mostly I panted from the effort to hasten the pace we had chosen. There were leaves on the ground. Leo would have been pleased. All at once we ran through what seemed a blizzard of falling leaves. The slightest wind creating swirls of leaves lifting them side to side, back and forth as they made their journey to the earth. Leaves fall randomly even when there is no wind as though they are waving goodbye to summer.

During my sojourns as a younger man, I had often tried to catch a falling leaf before it reached the earth, but my efforts

had always been futile.

I breathlessly wheezed out my tale to Myla. Always ready to accept a challenge, Myla ran ahead effortlessly and comically snatched a fluttering leaf from the air, using both hands. Grinning in triumph she looked over her shoulder at me and held her trophy high for me and the world to see.

Myla waited for me to catch up, then honored me by presenting me with her hard-won prize, proclaiming; *"You cannot wait for it to come to you. You must pick one out and go after it."*

I was struck by the profoundness of her words, realizing that her acclamation for success applied to life's challenges as well. We already knew there would be challenges ahead, we were not kidding each other. When you are young as we were then, the world turns slow and the obstacles we face sometimes fade from view like the transition from summer to fall. If only we could glimpse into the future, planning would be much easier and more successful.

I am generally an organizer and planner. I have always had dreams and ideas, which could possibly be fruitful, but the fear of failure always kept me from proceeding. Myla's words made me realize that conquering fear by grabbing opportunities within my reach could change that. *By breaking free of inertia, focusing on preconceived goals, and putting that extra effort one could realize success.*

Life is full of falling leaves that are ours for the taking, but we must exert a little effort to capture them; they do not come to us. They may come close, but you must use your abilities and talents to achieve your dreams.

This morning, I was walking alone over a similar narrow path and awed at nature's magnificent beauty. Leaves once again showered about me, and I thought back to Myla's "leaf wisdom." I selected a fluttering candidate, focused, and after a couple of failures, managed to clumsily catch a vivid red maple leaf to my chest with both hands.

*The leaf's journey had led me away from my original path, just as in life, but only a short distance.* I held that leaf tenderly all the way home, cherishing my prize possession and success. God had provided me the opportunity to gain experience and develop in a setting that was as close to him as one could be.



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## Tips from Earlene

\* For those of you who suffer from leg cramps at night, do we have the remedy for you! Those who have tried this, swear it works. Just buy a bar of soap like Zest, Dial, Tone, etc. (with no added softeners in it, like Dove has) and take it to bed with you. Place it under the bottom sheet of your bed, close to your legs. That's it. There's no medical reason we know of, as to why it works, but it does. (Thanks to Diane Owens for this gem).

\* We all need to drink more liquid. I just take a huge insulated glass, fill with ice, then pour in a mixture of tea, unsweetened juice, cranberry juice, Crystal lite lemonade, etc. - whatever I have handy. Whenever I walk by the glass I take a huge sip. It stays cold all day and tastes great!

\* A scratch on a watch crystal can be removed by gently rubbing it with a dab of toothpaste.

\* When using several card tables for a party, bind the adjoining legs tightly together with heavy rubber bands.

\* If you are camping out and your tent springs a leak, just put a glop of petroleum jelly over it and no more water!

\* Ask your favorite ABC liquor store for their empty liquor boxes - they are sturdy with cardboard inserts and are perfect for storing vases, Christmas ornaments or packing shoes.

\* Soak your fingers for a couple of minutes in cold soapy water to remove rings from swollen fingers.

\* Add a teaspoon of water when frying ground beef - it will help pull the grease away from the meat while cooking.

\* Grab your hairspray when trying to get rid of flies, wasps, spiders, etc. It makes them stiff and they can't move. So they're not technically dead, they're frozen.

\* Colgate toothpaste makes an excellent salve for burns.

\* When your dog gets wet and has that "dog smell" just rub him with a sheet of Bounce - he'll smell great!

\* Remove a splinter by applying Elmer's glue, let dry & pull.

\* A few drops of Listerine will help disinfect a broken blister.

## Nail Health

**Your fingernails can indicate bad health problems! White lines in a crescent moon shape indicate arsenic poisoning; White spots indicate you need more zinc; a nail tip discolored with a dark pink to brown band could be an indication of cirrhosis, cancer, congestive heart failure or adult diabetes; brownish discoloration arcing across the nail can indicate severe kidney problems.**



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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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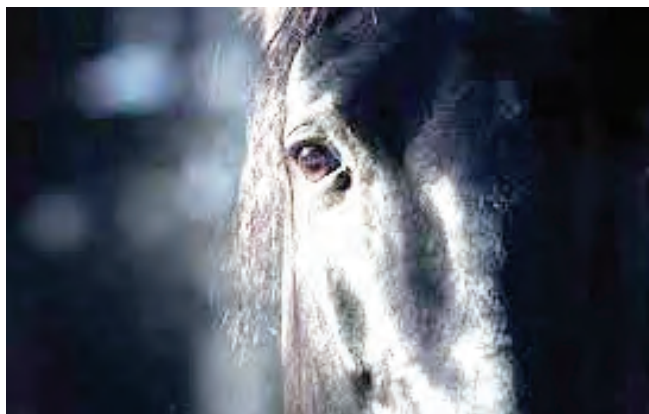
**"The only time you have too much fuel is when you're on fire."**

**Military Aircraft Manual**

**THIOKOL CHEMICAL CORP.  
HUNTSVILLE DIVISION: THE PEOPLE**

***The Halloween Night He  
Punched Out But Never  
Made it Home***

*by Odysseus*



For those so unfortunate to be assigned to Midnight Shift, the Thiokol workweek began Sunday night with punch in no later than 11:45pm. Your eight-hour shift ran for 8 hours which included the unpaid 30-minute lunch break from 3:45am to 4:15am. At 8:15am Monday you punched out and went home. Day Shift punched in at 7:45am Monday morning, creating a 30-minute overlap with the departing Midnight Shift. Second Shift was the last to punch in at 3:45pm Monday afternoon. That 24-hour sequence repeated until Friday morning at 8:15am when Midnight Shift punched out for the last time on the last day of the week, followed by Day Shift punching out at 4:15pm, and finally Second Shift at 12:15am Saturday morning. Except for Overtime work, round-the-clock Facilities personnel, and Security, the plant would be idle until Sunday night.

"Punch in" and "punch out" were

**"I'm watching a 4 year old install  
apps on a cell phone.  
Me - I just figured out how to turn  
mine off without removing the  
batteries."**

***Bert Humphrey, Meridianville***

more than metaphors; computer processing was done on a mainframe and data entry with those ubiquitous but now quaint "IBM punch cards". Employees were issued one card per day, pre-printed and pre-punched with name, badge number, section number and date.

Your responsibility upon arrival was to locate your card in the rack then insert it into a Simplex Time Clock, which whirled, clattered then imprinted the official time. If your watch was slow or you were so careless as to punch in one second past 11:45:00pm, your pay would be "docked" or reduced by 1/10 of an hour or six minutes. If you punched in more than 6 minutes late, but less than 12 minutes late, your pay would be docked 2/10 of an hour and so forth. You would not be allowed to 'stay late and make it up'. It didn't work that way. Punching out early resulted in similar consequences.

This sad Halloween Thiokol legend was clear on some details but devoid of others. His name and the year have been lost over time. It is known that he was a resident of Limestone County and lived north of Highway 72 about two miles east of Highway 31, possibly in the Oakdale community. The decade was said to be the 1950s, he worked on the Line on Second Shift and punched out one Halloween Night.

To narrow down the possibilities, Halloween nights that fell on a Saturday or Sunday can be disregarded, eliminating October 31, 1953, 1954, and 1959.

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From about 1927 until 1957, Athens Pike/Highway 72 west from Huntsville was Holmes Avenue and its two-lane continuation beyond the old Madison County Coliseum (site of Sam's Club now). Present-day University Drive between Pratt Avenue and Old Monrovia Road did not exist; that area was still open farmland. Rideout Road north of Redstone Arsenal was constructed later, in the mid-1960s. In the 1950s it would take at least 45 minutes, possibly an hour to drive from Thiokol on Redstone Road northward off the Arsenal, west on Holmes Avenue/Athens Pike/Highway 72, then north, on Line Road just east of Athens. He never made it home that Halloween Night. He was found after sunup November 1, dead behind the wheel. The wrecked car had collided with a large jet-black horse, which was also deceased. Punching out at fifteen minutes after midnight on Halloween Night, his rendezvous with Fate must have been around one o'clock in the morning.

There was no question that the crash and impact had killed the man. But rumor or speculation became part of the legend: perhaps that collision had not killed the horse. Was the black horse already dead when hit by the car? Had someone dragged a dead horse into the road and left it, as a senseless Halloween Night prank? Or was someone riding that horse on the road earlier, then it fell dead and couldn't be moved? Rumor, speculation, and questions without answers added to the macabre superstitions that accompany any death on Halloween Night. For the victim this probably made no difference: on a dark road at night a black horse is impossible to see, the horse weighed the same either dead or alive, and cars in the 1950s had no seat belts.

In one final odd coincidence: the main road into Thiokol had been named Line Road by the Army during WWII, as it led north from Redstone Road to the original Line 1 munitions plant. The Thiokol Line 1 Smoker and time clocks were located on the corner of Line Road. The dead man, wrecked

car, and dead horse were found on a different Line Road in Limestone County. So, on that Halloween Night, the man had punched out from Thiokol on that Line Road, driven 30 miles, then metaphorically "punched out" from life on another Line Road.

From the Author: If any of our readers know the "Rest of this Story" please contact Old Huntsville at the info on page 3.

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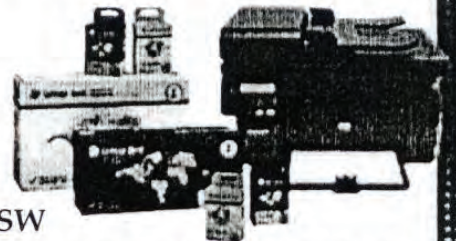
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*Fran Jessup, Huntsville*

# Moon Pie John's in Hump, Alabama

by Kate Hopkins

Jeff and Cori Taylor call Moon Pie John's Mercantile in Hump, Alabama their happy place and there is a charming family backstory that inspired the store's name. Born in 1918, Jeff's Grandfather John Houston Taylor II became an orphan at the age of 5. With the love and care of his brothers and sisters he grew up to be a kind, considerate and gentle man. He was raised in a cotton farming community near the Flint River in New Market (called "Hump" by the locals).

Later he moved to Huntsville with his siblings, and he began delivering groceries on his bicycle. He recalled that those groceries occasionally included a sweet treat called the Moon Pie. John made a career in the grocery business as a food broker which led him back to Hump where he met the love of his life and future wife, Ruth Jacks, who worked at a local mercantile.

He developed a habit of carrying mints and other candies in his pocket to give to both children and adults that he would meet on his store-to-store travels. Bringing a sense of happiness to the people really became his personal ministry.

Later he began visiting sick neighbors, local hospitals, the elderly and others that he felt needed an emotional lift. That's when he rediscovered the Moon Pies. The "minis" were just the right size for him to hand out in exchange for a smile and he became known as "Moon Pie John".

He was so well known for his acts of kindness that the Chattanooga based company that makes Moon Pies, The Chattanooga Bakery, offered to supply him, but he respectfully declined stating that it was his mission, and



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he wanted to do it on his own.

When Moon Pie John passed away in 2014, the Chattanooga Bakery sent dozens of their products to the Taylor family, some of which were placed in his coffin and buried with him.

Over time, the properties adjacent to Moon Pie John's home had become overgrown. The old cotton gin/seed house, and the mercantile building (built around 1899) had fallen into major disrepair. Jeff and Cori lived just across the Flint River Bridge (also named after his grandfather) and drove past it daily. Finally, they decided that they had to do something to save the historic structures. They were able to acquire several adjoining tracts including an old farmhouse on the property and began their journey of lovingly restoring them.

Opening the old mercantile he had visited as a young boy was Jeff's retirement dream. The couple started mapping out how to revive it and the old gin (where his Grandfather, and Great Grandfather from his mother's side had worked). They contacted the Moon Pie company to request approval to carry their products and even more importantly to approve the name that they had selected for the store in honor of Jeff's Grandfather - Moon Pie John's Mercantile. The company quickly gave two thumbs up and their full support. After years of hard work, the store is now open on the weekends and is a favorite "off the beaten path" place to buy gifts, enjoy food from the Full of Baloney Cafe and, of course, try an RC Cola and a Moon Pie.

**Fun Facts:** the former cotton gin and seed house that is adjacent to the Mercantile has been restored and converted into an event venue. If you like rustic/industrial/country atmosphere, then check out the website for the 1910 Gin ([www.1910Gin.com](http://www.1910Gin.com)).

Hump, Alabama got its name because of two pronounced humps in the road that are split down the middle of the Flint River. This area is shown on a map as Sulphur Springs, but technically it is part of the New Market community.

There is a historical marker across the street from the mercantile where Alabama's first airplane was built. Designed in the late 1890s, the Will Quick Monoplane was on track to beat the Wright Brothers, but it was still an engineering marvel for its' time. The plane flew a short distance in 1908 and was restored in the 1960s. It is now on display in the Huntsville U.S. Space and Rocket Center.

Joe Quick Road is named in honor of one of the sons of Will Quick and he was also a Huntsville County Commissioner from 1936 to 1960.



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# It's Football, Ya'll!

by Robert French



Greetings Football Fans:

For me, it all started in 1945. Frank Thomas was coach and 'Bama won the Rose Bowl. Being from the South, we were still only #2. I was a 13-year-old Decatur Daily paper boy committed to Alabama. So, we begin another season more than 75 years later. I don't know about you, but I'm the same - ready!

We have a new coach, a new team and a new season. It looks like a National Championship to me. Admittedly, every year begins with National Championship dreams and ill for those despicable pretenders, Auburn and Tennessee. I don't know about you, but it is so easy for me to dislike UT and AU. I went to the first game we played at Jordan-Hare and they won 20-10. I kept the ticket and look at it now and then to rekindle my animosity for that bunch.

**"For this Halloween, I'm going as an emotionally stable individual. No one is going to know it's me."**

**Rich Derrick, Woodville**

I'll tell you how rotten Auburn Fans are: Over the years, my Darling Wife Celeste bought each Daniel Moore mug as he brought out the original color paintings of a Bama heroic. For example, "The Goal Line Stand," or "Liberty," (Bear's last fame.) You get the picture. I have all of the original collection.

Last week, my grandson Treavor asked me for some Bama memorabilia to redecorate his room. I have 38 Bama pieces in my office. My life-sized bust of the Bear says I'm not crazy, just a little warped. Hey! Doesn't everyone have a Namath bobble head? I guess you had to have been there in the 50s to really understand it.

Picture it: 1955, we were sitting on the planks that passed for seats in the wide-open sun-drenched Denny Stadium student section. It was 100+ degrees and we were being baked while being stomped by Vanderbilt. The only happiness we had was that some of the Spanish students had brought their guitars and were playing flamenco as the Tide went out losing every game. Although the conditions were terrible, the music wasn't all that bad. Roll Tide!

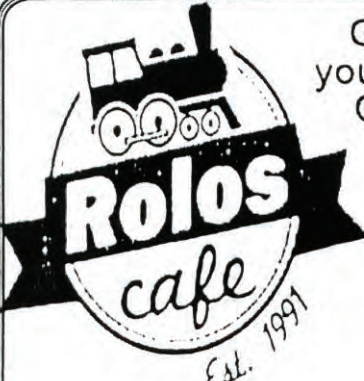
I considered giving him my Daniel Moore collection. The four mugs were expensive when each issued. Not that it mattered, but Miss Tennessee wanted to know what they are worth today.

Since they are numbered, autographed originals, I thought they would be worth at least \$150 each. Wrong! Auburn got me again. Some of those ads had the original numbered mugs for sale for \$10.00, just to insult Bama Fans. In other words, our precious memories are near worthless. Rotten Earners. Celeste and I were there in New Orleans in 1979 when our hearts were about to be broken by Paterno's Penn State. Bear asked our guys to stand up for a "gut check." Stopped 'em 4 times on the one-yard line. Moore painted the goal line stand. UT and Auburn just ruined a good grandfather-grandson moment. Think they care?

More pleasant, Texas A & M and LSU are trying to break into my football hatred sphere, but they haven't made it quite yet. Don't let me get started on those two.

Quickly looking at the season, Bama needs to be concerned about Georgia, Texas, LSU, and the hated duo.

Anyway! Hang on tight! Here we go again! Watch Florida vs. Miami and Notre Dame vs. Texas A & M. Both should be interesting.



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## News from 1907

- I wish to learn of the whereabouts of my folks. My father was named Dickson; brother name Edmond Anderson; sisters named Polly, Dinah and Rachel Anderson. Sister Polly married a man by the name of John Anderson.

I came from South Carolina when I was 19 years of age and stayed 2 or 3 years in Green County, Alabama, then went to Lee County Mississippi, near Carona. I left there the 2nd year of the war and went to Corinth, from there to Cleveland, Tennessee, where I joined the Federal Army and served three years and have been in Huntsville since I was mustered out. Write Milton Anderson at Huntsville, care of the Journal.

- On Saturday last, at New Market in this county, a young man, George Norris raised a difficulty with another young man, Bud Powers, and the town marshal, William Mullins tried to arrest him. Norris drew his knife and resisted arrest. Mullins struck Norris with his stick; and a young man, William Fuqua, threw a stone at Mullins, striking him on the head and knocking him senseless.

Attempts were made by other citizens to arrest Norris and Fuqua, but they drew their guns and the citizens being unarmed, they made their escape. Parties have been out hunting them, but to no avail, and it is supposed they have left the country. Our informant says that new brandy made at stills near New Market is the cause of the trouble and is causing a good deal more of trouble in the neighborhood.

- Near Huntsville on Sunday last, a boy killed his father. The facts, as told to us, are that the boy left the house of his father, Hawk Houston, and went to the farm of Mr. Wm. R. Day, and Hawk went after him, and told him he intended to whip him when he got him home. The boy got home first, and seizing a shotgun, fired the load into his father's heart. It is stated, almost incredibly, that the father, although shot and badly bleeding, drew a revolver and fired twice at his son as he ran off. The boy escaped and at last accounts had not been seen in the neighborhood,

and no one has pursued him.

- Once upon a time someone said, "When you do a thing do it well." Evidently burglars who last night ransacked John Cicero's store on the corner of Washington and Holmes Street believed in this teaching. They entered through the rear door, but were not satisfied with merely breaking the lock. They took the entire door off and set it neatly to one side. Mr. Cicero early this morning reported the loss of more than 1,000 cigarettes, a batch of cigars, some boxes of candy and various other small items as well as \$6.00 which was in the cash drawer.

- Edward T. Sweeney, employee of a carriage factory here, is in jail on a charge of wife beating and public drunkenness. The prosecution claims that on last Saturday night, Sweeney went home in a beastly state of drunkenness. He committed an assault upon and choked his wife, Mrs. Maud Sweeney and she was compelled to flee, attired in insufficient clothing, from her home on Jefferson Street, to the home of J. H. Bryant in the southern part of the city. A warrant was sworn out against Sweeney in justice Vaughn's court and Sweeney is now in jail in default of bail in the sum of \$700.00.

- Frank Pickard, one of the ad writers on the Mercury, and R.D. Carlisle figured in a dangerous runaway at the Southern Depot Sunday afternoon. Their horse became frightened at the approaching train and overturned the buggy, but neither of the occupants were hurt.

- Looking for information on Mrs. Frances W. Gerkin, a music teacher, nearly blind, who left Norfolk, Virginia some years ago and is reported to have been drowned while crossing the Tennessee River, near Ditto, four or five years ago.

## Release Your Inner Child! Holidays will be Here Soon.



With Love to the  
Huntsville High Class of 1966

Oscar Llerena, HHS Class of 1966

# Unexplainable

by Iolanda Hicks



Unexplainable, unsolved and weird! We have all experienced something that could be described with those three words and maybe a fourth: scary.

There are such great Unexplainable or unsolved mysteries in history. The following are just a handful: Where is Cleopatra's tomb? What happened to the ten souls on the ship the Mary Celeste? Did King Arthur really exist? Where did the settlers of the Roanoke Colony go? Why does a thundercloud, named Hector, appear almost everyday, from September to March, on the Australian islands of Tiwi? Why was a Traub motorcycle (over 100 years old) found bricked up in a wall, for approximately 40 years? We could go on and on. This Halloween is upon us folks, and who out there can really say nothing has happened to 'ME' that can't be explained, especially during Halloween?

I had a memory that has been part of me since 7th grade - a memory of a Halloween Party on October 31st, 1960. I had been invited by a classmate along with other girls from our class to a Halloween party at her house. I remember being so excited! She lived in an older house, which always radiated mystery and ghosts to me! This was the perfect place for a Halloween party! I remembered her Dad reading scary stories while he sat in a comfortable chair by the fire place. Shadows seem to dance on the walls around us and we girls seemed to huddle closer together as the stories were read. To my disappointment this party never happened according to the classmate that was supposed to have hosted the party.

I had recently called her to see if she could add anything else to my recollection of the special Halloween. Was this a dream I hung on to for over 60 years? Was it more important to me than it was to my classmates? Could that be why I remembered and they did not? Or is this memory just one of those Unexplainable events? Who knows? To me it happened, and it was real, even though no one I spoke with remembered it happening.

Another weird, Unexplainable event happened to me several years ago, probably around Halloween, in the early evening. I had just left my son's house, traveling north on Whitesburg Drive, just going past the old Fleming's house. I saw some movement towards the right (I was in the left lane). Slowly turning my head to the right,

thinking a car was passing me, my personal fear level shot up to 200 percent or more! There was an approximate 2 foot little man, dressed as an Elf with a pointed hat, pointed chin, a long pointed nose and pointed boots standing in my passenger seat. His eyes were looking straight ahead with a very determined look on his face. My, my! I slowly turned back looking straight ahead knowing my turn was coming up. I remember thinking I was going a little mad and tried to mentally compute what I had just seen! I definitely had not been on any medication or had anything in my body; food, drink or otherwise, that could have caused a hallucination of any kind. As far as I knew, I had no brain tumor.

Within a minute or two I slowly turned my head to the right again, to see if this creature was still there, but 'he' was gone. Most everyone I have shared this 'vision' with over the years, have of course looked at me strangely, rolled their eyes and



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took a few steps back, except for my younger sister. She has studied mysticism, psychic phenomenon and the spiritual world. She never laughed at me or rolled her eyes and very calmly told me that evidently, my third eye was trying to open. Third eye? Her explanation was that what I had seen was an Elfkin, that happened to catch a ride with me.

Lordy, lordy! Maybe it was my imagination, a trick of the bright headlights of passing traffic or maybe it was real. I will never know but just remembering those moments still brings to mind that scary feeling, those rumbles in the pit of my stomach that came over me, that one night, years ago.

The Unexplainable, weird happenings and scary moments: we have all experienced one or all of these! This brings me to the part of this little story that opens up the door to an explanation of Halloween. So what is Halloween and where did this unusual day come from?

Halloween or All Hallows Eve has its origins dating back to a festival called Samhain from the ancient Celts. This was a time when the harvest at the end of summer was celebrated and marked the beginning of winter. It was believed that during the festival, spirits walked the earth. Bonfires would be lit, costumes were worn to confuse the spirits and to ward them off!

Playing pranks became a part of these traditions and when the Scottish and Irish immigrants came to America, Mischief Night became part of Halloween. In the 8th century, Christian missionaries created an All Souls Day falling on November 2nd while Pope Gregory 111 declared November 1 as All Saints Day.

This created the idea that around this time of the year, the Living would come in contact with the dead. The tradition of carving pumpkins came from Ireland and started with carving turnips. This is said to have been based on a man called Stingy Jack who was forced to wander the earth as a ghost for eternity, after trying really hard to get to Heaven.

Trick-or-Treating is another story. In fact, there are several suggestions on how that Halloween tradition got started. One, is that the Celtic people would leave food out to 'appease' the spirits that were traveling at night. Another theory came from the Middle ages when children and poor adults would go out and collect food and money to go towards prayers for the dead on All Souls Day. A third theory is from a German-American tradition where children would dress in cos-

tume, call on their neighbors, challenging them to guess who they were. If these disguises hid their identities, then the children would be rewarded with food and treats. Of course, we can't forget the spooky black cats, bats, skeletons, witches and magic! These all became part of the Halloween tradition.

In today's world, Halloween has changed much from what it was in the earlier 20th century to the 21st century. There is not as much house to house Trick-or-Treating by children and there are more school/church sponsored Halloween or Fall Festivals being the main go-to activity. Halloween parties are still popular and of course the pumpkin patches remain plentiful!

It's not the same, though, as it was years ago in my time as a child. I remember a much different Halloween than what it has become today.

Things change and change sometimes can be really hard to accept. My memory of Halloweens of the past as a child, have always brought memories of fun, crazy costumes and seeing how much candy, especially the chocolate bars, I could collect! It was a challenge, that I accepted among my friends, on how much of that sweet stuff I could actually get.

My personal opinion about Halloween is that I liked it better back in my time and I wish that my grandchildren could have experienced Halloween 'then' and that kind of fun, but life changes as time moves on.

"The only way to make sense out of change is to plunge into it, move with it, and join the dance." (Alan Watts).

Then as Helen Keller once said "Life is either a daring adventure or nothing. To keep our faces toward change and behave like free spirits in the presence of fate is strength undefeatable."

"Change is the law of life. And those who look only to the past and present are certain to miss the future (John F. Kennedy)."

So, we adapt and go with the flow. Have a safe and fun Halloween and try not to overload on all those sweet treats!

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# SATURDAY NIGHT AT THE SNUFFDIPPER'S BALL

by George Dickerson



During the 1930s, 40s and 50s, Saturday's were busy days for the business district - or the Center City of Huntsville... Jefferson Street from Holmes Avenue to West Clinton was bustling with activity during the day, but Saturday night.... at times were almost deserted. About all that was open then was the Grand Theater - with the last Western feature, along with a few restaurants and cafes.

However, there was one place on the east side of Jefferson Street that was the focal point for fun and frolic on Saturday evening. It was a building known as The Labor Temple, and the second floor was where people gathered on Saturday nights to dance and to listen to country music. This was the place that was called, "The SnuffDippers' Ball". Folks came to the ball from around town, Mill Village, Redstone Arsenal and surrounding counties.

This hall was sometimes used for Union Meetings and other events. Saturday nights the large room became a place to forget about the day-to-day drudgery of working on the farms or the cotton mills, to unwind and have fun.

There were cane bottom chairs lined up along the walls, and at one end - the musicians had microphones and a sound system to amplify their music, so there was no difficulty in hearing the sounds of the instruments.

As the dancers moved about the floor, the music almost bounced off the walls. Many of the folks at the Ball would participate in the dancing, but some were there just to sit and listen to the good ole country music. Folks on the floor enjoyed both round and square dancing. The musicians on the small stage put on quite a show. Usually, there were two fiddles, a banjo, a bass fiddle, a guitar and a mandolin or two. There were also one or two members of the band who would draft the Ball attendees for some of their sounds.

The Saturday night ball was a real social event. Many of the folks just sat and talked with their friends. It was a good opportunity to catch up on all the latest news from the farm and Mill Villages.

There were no alcoholic beverages sold at the Saturday dance. But people could bring their own bottles and purchase soft drinks to use as mixers. The proprietor and manager of the dance hall was a fellow named Monte Sano Crowder. Monte served as greeter at the door and since he was a renowned fiddler, would sometimes take the stage and play a mean fiddle. Monte also acted as the Emcee during most of the Saturday dances. Monte stood more than six foot six and weighed in at two hundred and fifty pounds. Monte would also act as the official bouncer when the need arose. However, one look at Monte, and very few would give him any trouble.

In addition to being a talented fiddler, Monte was also a professional wrestler. So Monte was able to keep order without resorting to physical force. There were only a few instances of anyone getting belligerent or hostile. There might have been

Me: "I am surprised by how winded I am by this exercise."

Trainer: "This was just your tour of the gym."

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a few heated discussions, but almost no fights or confrontations. If there were cases that came close to fisticuffs - Monte would politely escort the gentlemen down the steps - and the disagreement could be settled on the outside of the dance hall.

The Ball had gained a reputation of being a "den of iniquity" - and some of the Huntsville town folk spread the rumor that the ball was a haven for prostitutes, men on the prowl and those few looking for a fight. There were few news reports or police reports where they were dispatched to the Ball to restore order. One of the town's flamboyant preachers would stand by the door at the floor below and admonish the people entering the hall.

As the Ball got underway, the music was electrifying. The fiddler could be heard above everything else. The two Albino gentlemen that were playing made their instruments sing! The guitar and mandolin added a colorful dimension to the sounds of the hall. But it was the rhythmic percussion sound of the bass fiddle that really stood out. On some (when they finally got air conditioning) evenings the air conditioning would go on the blink - they would then open the windows for fresh air and improve the ventilation. With the windows opened - the sounds of the band wafted from the hall to the sidewalks below. Passers-by would often stop and just listen to the sounds of the country music.

The Ball was always well attended, and packed with people and, yes they did dip snuff. In fact, two brands of snuff, Garrett and Brewton, could be purchased in small cans at the concession stand. One look at the floor and you knew this to be true.

During the Saturday Night Dance - you would see various modes of transportation all up and down Jefferson - mules to jalopies - to the latest in automobiles. They would also come on buses from Redstone Arsenal and other military installation located in close proximity to Huntsville.

As the evening wore on - the dancers and band would finally become weary. The SnuffDippers' Ball would come to a close for another week - with all the attendees finding their way home. It would not be long before Jefferson Street was deserted.

The dancers would work for another week - waiting for the next Saturday Night at the SnuffDippers' Ball.

The Ball would last for several years into the 1950s and 1960s. Monte Crowder would go on to become famous as a fiddler. He would play for events throughout the southeast and was also selected to play on the WSM Grand Ole Opry in Nashville and for the WLS Barn Dance in Chicago.

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# VAN GOGH

*by Gerald Alvis*

We recently went to the Van Gogh experience here in Huntsville. I know little about art, and when invited, I thought it might be a good time to embrace some culture. I saw two or three paintings I had heard of before, but the coolest part for me was learning about the artist, the man himself. If we were to choose the word eccentric, well, Van Gogh would, in my view, be an example. I see a similar eccentricity in Tesla, whose painting hangs over my desk as I write.

When people have greater depth in a subject or situation than I do, I want to say something thought-provoking that may show a certain awareness. We each want to fit in, even if we are newbies. I made the comment while standing there about his aberrant methods. I was met with two responses: a friend said when you are poor, it's called crazy; when you are rich, it's called eccentric. My wife add-

ed that though institutionalized at one point, it was his mental illness that freed him; he didn't care what people thought! Their comments enhanced my view and understanding, already broadened by the videos and posters about this man and his expression via art.

Being around those who are more experienced or what we consider off-center can be refreshing. It's similar to the feeling of traveling. We are no longer in the norm of our language or culture, so a lot feels shifted as we adapt to this new environment. But in this route, we can find a new way to view the world from our adjusted perspective. I don't admire being different for attention's sake, but I applaud being true to yourself, which takes courage.

It doesn't end with artists from long ago. As I write, new authors, artists, and scientists are testing the boundaries of the norm. These unique expressions in life will remain not only in what has been created but also in the projects and visions of those who dare further explore. They will look and find where others have looked before and

have not. This persistence and vigilance will allow them to see and explore places and opportunities we didn't even know existed. They will solve problems that have yet to be created and bring more profound questions to the meaning they have discovered and expressed.

Apply what is known but think with an insatiable curiosity, then share your gift with the world.



Van Gogh self portrait

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# PET TIPS FROM ANGEL

## *Halloween Pet Superstitions and Other*



Black cats bring good luck. In Britain, a bride and groom who encounter a black cat on their wedding day are ensured a happy marriage. Sailors, a notoriously superstitious lot, avoid saying the word "cat," but having a black cat aboard ship is believed to bring good fortune. In fact, the wives of sailors used to keep black cats to ensure their husbands' safe return.

A cat in the cradle protects babies. A well-known (and need I say unfounded) myth is that cats will jump into a crib and suck a sleeping baby's breath. In Russia, however, new parents used to put a cat into a cradle to drive off evil spirits that might harm the baby. Who better than a loving and protective cat with super night vision and an alert nature to ward off any natural — or supernatural — enemies? (Of course, folklore notwithstanding, you never want to leave any pet with a baby unsupervised.)

Meeting a dog is good luck. I always think I'm fortunate whenever I meet a dog, and plenty of superstitions support that belief. According to folklore in various parts of the world, it's good luck to meet a Greyhound with a white spot or a Dalmatian (spotted dogs must really be something special). If a strange black dog follows you home, you'll have good luck. Seems to me that it would be even better luck for both of you if you decide to adopt him.

Dogs and cats can predict the weather. For instance, if a dog retreats underneath your dining room table or curls up in a corner, cold weather is coming. The same is said of a cat sitting with his back

to the fire: It's a sure sign that frost is on the way.

Here are a few more we came across!

- A bat flying into your home on Halloween is a sign that your house is haunted. Bells: It is said that you can chase evil spirits away on Halloween by ringing bells.

- Black Cats: It is thought that harming a black cat on Halloween brings seven years of bad luck. If a cat meows on your front porch or near a window then a death will soon occur in the family.

- Bobbing for Apples: Apples were once thought to predict the future. In apple bobbing, the first person to get an apple would be the first to marry and anyone who got an apple on the first try would experience true love. Many girls placed a bobbed apple underneath their pillow on Halloween night because it was said she would dream about her future husband.

- Cemeteries: Hold your breath while driving by a cemetery to prevent evil spirits from entering your body. When passing a graveyard or a house where a death has occurred, turn your pockets inside out to make sure you don't bring home a ghost.

- Costumes: A Celtic myth says that dressing as a ghoul will fool evil spirits into thinking you are one of them, ensuring they won't try to take your soul.

- Footsteps: If you hear footsteps behind you on Halloween night, don't look back. It is thought to be a spirit following

you, and turning back could mean that you will soon become one.

- Ghosts: If you ever see a ghost, walk around it nine times and it will disappear.

- Halloween Birthdays: Children born on Halloween are said to have the gift of second sight, including the power to ward off evil spirits.

- Halloween Colors: The typical U.S. Halloween colors come from the pagan celebration of autumn. Orange symbolizes the color of the crops and turning leaves while black marks the death of summer and the changing season.

- Jack-O'Lanterns: A burning candle inside the frightening faces of a Halloween pumpkin keeps evil spirits and demons away.

- Spiders: If you see a spider on Halloween night, it means the spirit of a dead loved one is watching over you.

- Warding off Spirits: Walk around your home three times backwards and counterclockwise before sunset on Halloween to ward off evil spirits.

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# THE RUSSEL ERSKINE HOTEL

*by Tom Carney*

More than nostalgia, the Russel Erskine Hotel still stands as a monument to a bygone era, a time when Huntsville was young and growing. Now that there are other and newer monuments and skyscrapers, the Russel Erskine Hotel has taken a lesser, but still significant, role.

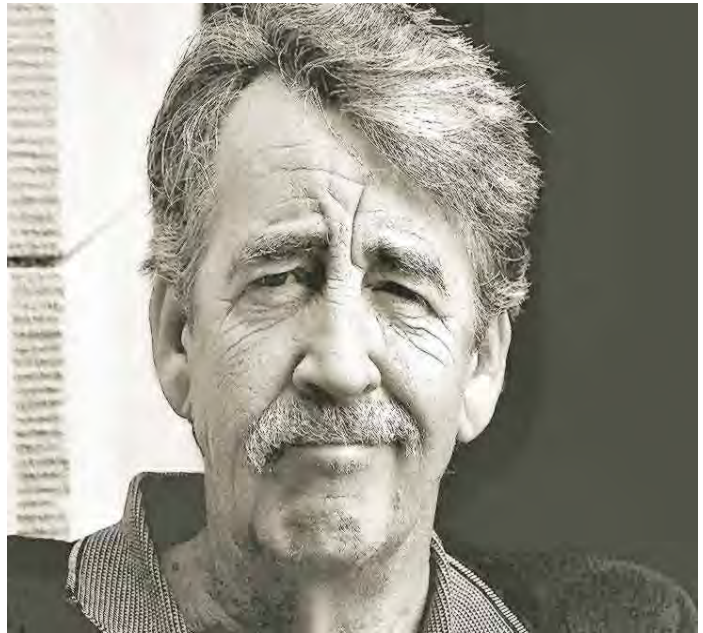
Albert Russel Erskine was the onetime president of the Studebaker Corporation. Although he did not have an important financial interest in the hotel, it was named for this local person of national prominence.

According to local folklore, the hotel ran into financial trouble before it was ever completed. In an attempt to raise more money, the owners came up with a plan to name it after Erskine, a local hometown boy made good, hoping to interest him in investing in the venture. When the hotel was dedicated, Erskine came to Huntsville, listened to the speeches honoring him, ate the free food, drank the free liquor, stayed in the free suite and then went back to Detroit without spending any money!

As each city has its prominent hotel, the Russel Erskine was "the place to go" in Huntsville, Alabama. Officially opened on January 3, 1930, in the midst of the Great Depression at a cost of 1.5 million dollars, it was and still is a splendid building—12 stories high and 132 rooms. It became one of Huntsville's leading attractions and immediately became a popular spot for conventions and travelers.

Besides the convenience and availability of a large hotel in Huntsville, visitors noted the "completeness" and "exquisiteness" of the furnishings in 1930. It was also noted that such modern conveniences of the day as an electric fan and an RCA radio were in each room. One satisfied guest, Dr. George Alden of Massachusetts, wrote the hotel saying that the Russel Erskine was the best appointed and gave the best service of any hotel during his trip. The Russel Erskine became the shining jewel of Huntsville.

It was Huntsville's best advertisement and many balls and gatherings were held in its



splendid ballroom and banquet rooms.

In the decade of the 1940s, the Russel Erskine grew and prospered with the development of the Army's newly founded chemical warfare arsenal. Rooms during the war years were easily filled and the guests were more than adequately served by a staff of over 100 persons. High ceilings, chandeliers, an inviting comfortable lobby with scurrying bell men, entertainment, fine dining on tables with white linen tablecloths, and a barber shop on the premises seem uncommon to the average traveler today, but the Russel Erskine was the premier hotel in North Alabama. It was before the widespread use of motels, "no frills," and budget accommodations.

After the War, as the Nation's economy sputtered,



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appreciate all  
you do to keep us  
Safe Every Day.

the Russel Erskine was merely changing gears. In 1949, with the advent of the Rocket Center, the hotel again had no problem filling rooms. The hotel continued its success throughout the 1950s, and in 1955 the Russel Erskine commemorated its 25th anniversary with a week-long celebration. From 1937 until its closing, the hotel turned a profit each year.

But as motels began to be built on the perimeter of the city, the hotel not only had to deal with competition, but also a change of taste and choice of potential guests. In the 1960s, the movement of commercial activity away from downtown areas in many American cities hastened the demise of many hotels and businesses. The stately Russel Erskine Hotel, so proudly rooted on Clinton Avenue, could not move with the new development and economic opportunities outside its downtown site. Measures to revive the hotel were short-lived. In March of 1971, the Russel Erskine Hotel closed its doors to transient guests. It's only business thereafter was to cater to conventions, civic clubs and special accommodations.

Many well-intentioned plans of a succession of owners to revive the hotel were unsuccessful. Consequently, the hotel was auctioned off to the First Alabama Bank in 1975 for \$300,000, which included the furnishings. Interestingly, this was far less than the construction cost of \$1,500,000 in 1929.

If this was not indignity enough to the landmark hotel, in May, 1979 its contents went on sale. For thirty days the hotel was opened to the public to buy whatever they wanted.

The First Freewill Baptist Church bought the ballroom's main chandelier and the lobby's four metal chandeliers within the first half-hour of the sale. Visitors and buyers rummaged through the halls of the once-proud hotel, looking at price tags on the furnishings, and eventually removing the trappings of the hotel. Perhaps they bought for their own use, to resell, or to obtain a precious keepsake of the place that held for them a fond memory of a "Cotton Ball," an unforgettable evening for a debutante, or honeymoon. By any account, it was the wake of the hotel.

Ironically, in 1978, the Russel Erskine Hotel was considered as a county-state work-release center for the Department of Corrections. Reportedly, a proponent of the idea said that, "It looks like the building was just built for this purpose."

Finally and happily on September 15, 1983, the Russel Erskine reopened its doors as a high-rise complex for the elderly and disabled. Renovated for \$3.6 million by local business people working with the Huntsville Preservation Authority the memory, the brilliance, and the hotel building itself had been revived. Huntsville's premier landmark of the 30s and 40s remains, except now it serves to house its residents permanently – not as temporary guests. While the new tenants still share much of the same ambiance of this venerable building as the former occupants, still there is a distinction between a hotel and a high-rise apartment house.

But two facts are indisputable: the new residents still have magnificent views from their windows, and residents of any time have lived in a part of Huntsville's history.



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**There are three essentials in  
life:**

**Something to do,  
someone to love,  
and something to hope for.**

# The Ride

by Melissa Green

It was the first day of summer vacation around the late 1960s. My Dad had promised me a treat: to go horse back riding with me if I passed 3rd grade! I had taken riding lessons for the past 2 years at the horse stables, around Dug Hill Road located on the other side of Monte Sano. The stables had 23 horses and was located on 200 acres of beautiful fields, ponds and woods. I loved the place even though it was a long drive from the house.

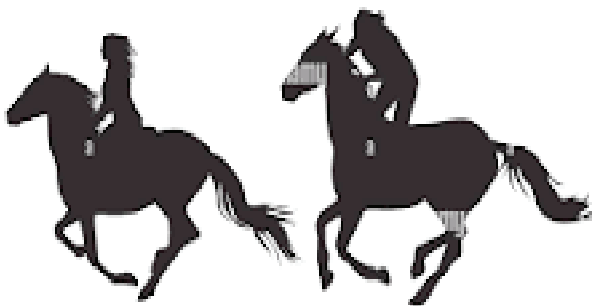
My Dad had never been horse-back riding but he drove me to my lessons and watched. The road to the stables was a winding mountain road. Once my Dad topped the last hill that day, I started bouncing in my seat.

"Dad! We're here!" I said.

"I know. Remember, I drive you here all the time." Dad replied.

I jumped out of the car and went to the stable office while Dad parked the car. The attendant looked at me and said, "There will be a thirty-minute wait since the stables just opened." Dad came into the office about that time and said, "That's fine. We'll get a drink and wait outside on the bench.

Jerry, the stable-hand, finally brought two horses, saddled and ready to go. I looked at both horses: Twiggy was thirteen hands high and skinny, while Strawberry was sixteen hands high. Twiggy would be my horse and Dad would ride Strawberry. Dad's head came up to Strawberry's stomach but he was determined to ride. I showed



him how to climb onto the saddle, place his feet into the stirrups, and throw his leg over the horse's back. Unfortunately, he was having trouble throwing his leg over the horse because he was so short. When Dad finally got seated, his legs would not reach the stirrups. The look Dad gave me was not a happy look! Jerry noticed what was happening and came over.

"Sir, let me shorten those straps for you."

Finally, we were off. I told Dad I would lead, after instructing him

on how to hold the reins. Looking back now, those many years ago, I felt like a teacher at nine years old and I am amazed that my Dad trusted my instructions!! I trotted Twiggy slowly to the field and Dad followed on Strawberry. As soon as both horses spotted the field, they took off galloping. My Dad was yelling for dear life and I couldn't stop from laughing.

Seeing Dad bouncing so hard on that horse was so funny but he finally managed to slow the horse down. With a painful look at me, he yelled for me to go back to the stables and said, "I have split my pants!"

Oh, how I laughed at what a sight my Dad gave that day but felt bad later. It took Dad a good quarter of an hour to get off that horse. He was bow-legged, stiff and said he would wait in the car while I finished my ride. When I got back to the car, Dad was hurting. The ride home was quiet.

For two days, Dad had to lay in bed with ice packs on his body. It is safe to say, that was the last time Dad went riding with me or anyone else!



## YETI

Hello, my name is Yeti. I am already spayed and am about 5 years old. I am a sweet and good-natured kitty who will give you a lot of attention. I'm gentle and curious and love to be around people. I used to belong to a lady who passed away and then no one in the family could take me to live with them so I was brought to the Ark Animal Shelter. The volunteers here took me to the vet who updated all my shots and gave me a microchip. I am hoping to find a nice home with kind and loving people who love cats. If you are looking for a new family member like me, please come to the Ark Animal Shelter. Please ask to see Yeti, that's me.

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What is big, green, furry, has four legs and would kill you if it fell from a tree?

*A pool table*

# Letters from London

by Mrs. Margaret Reece, in 1991

My daughter Jane sent me a copy of "Old Huntsville" and how nice to read the articles in it, especially the recipe of the violets (candied). I tried it and it's lovely - in England we can buy small boxes of oval chocolates with these violets in them and they are delicious - these can also be done with rose leaves - which in the days gone by - the cakes and table "sweets" were decorated with them. I thought that some of your readers may be interested to hear a little of London.

Jane was a nurse in Texas, but she was born and bred in London, England. She now lives in Guntersville with her husband Ronnie Hulsey and two beautiful children. My husband and I live in the suburbs of London, about 5 miles from Heathrow Airport - and about twelve miles from the center of London.

Fairly close to where we live is the Hampton's Court Palace, built by Cardinal Wolsey. When Henry VIII wanted to dissolve his marriage with Catherine of Aragon, to marry Anne Boleyn, he fell out of fortune with the Church and to placate Henry he was given the Palace.

Henry VIII did marry Anne Boleyn and their initials are entwined on beautiful wrought iron gate and arches. Inside the palace, which is freely open to the public, are many old world weapons, very grandly displayed. The rooms are wood clad and the panelling is wonderful. There is one room done out in what is called "Linen Fold", which has the wood carved into a pattern to depict folded non-ironed linen - scroll-like.

Our traffic in London is diabolical - there are jams miles long each morning, especially when there is an accident, or a water main bursts. Our television is not bad at all - we have 4 channels, unless you pay for cable - two of the channels do not have any advertisements at all, which is good. Our weather is rainy, misty and damp, and some 2 or 3 weeks of hot weather (75/80 degrees) which is very welcome.

I'll finish now and if any readers are interested I will write more about London and share a few regional recipes with you. I have been to visit my daughter and her family in Guntersville and love the grand scenery, the beautiful lakes and trees - the sweetness of the people like Ron's mother and dad who have made Jane feel so very welcome in your lovely city. She doesn't feel homesick at all, and those people are really the salt of the earth.

Sincerely, Mrs. Margaret Reece

**"People who complain about their taxes  
can be divided roughly into two categories:  
Men and women."**

*Sherry Young, Scottsboro*

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# A STRANGE FAMILY

from 1874 Newspaper



One of the most sensational cases ever to appear before the court system is due to go to trial next week in Judge Ramsay's court.

Mr. Allan Dement, a 72 year old resident of Jackson County, is charged with the crime of marrying his granddaughter. According to reports, Mr. Dement returned from the war to find his home burned and family scattered to the four winds. Finally after much difficulty he was able to locate his granddaughter, who was at the time living all alone, but for her four children. She too had become separated from her family.

The couple soon set up house together and began living a life as man and wife along with her children who were his great grandchildren but were now his stepchildren, making them their mother's uncles by marriage. After the granddaughter/wife sensed signs of approaching motherhood, a quick visit before a justice of the peace was arranged.

**"The Senior Choir invites any member of the church who enjoys sinning to join the choir."**

*Typo in local church bulletin*

When the child was born it became the mother's son/ great uncle, the father's son/ great grandson and the half brother and great-great uncle of the other children.

Soon, however, her eldest son (the great grandson of its stepfather and the great nephew of his half brother) began a correspondence with his aunt who was also Dement's granddaughter. The aunt/granddaughter, upon hearing the news immediately notified her great uncle who was also Dement's brother who paid a personal visit to his great nephew who was his brother's stepson.

The great nephew/stepson and brother/great uncle then notified the judge (no kin) who issued a writ for the arrest of the grandfather/husband and granddaughter/wife. The child has been placed in care of its half brother who is also his nephew and his mother's uncle by marriage.

The trial is sure to attract a lot of relatives.

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\* If you are claiming electronic copies, go to line 16 on page 3. If you are not claiming electronic copies, skip to line 17 on page 3.

# Huntsville Coffee Talk

by Aunt Eunice

*With pearls of wisdom  
contributed by the Liar's Table*



*Published in OHM,  
Issue 108, November 2001*

Hello! Again where has this year gone? Can you believe that Thanksgiving and Christmas are just around the corner?

I'm sure that all of us have been shocked and grieved over the recent events of our nation. The loss, vulnerability and uncertainty are difficult for all of us to comprehend. My prayer is for all who have been affected by this tragedy. Let's all keep praying for our nation, our leaders, and let's don't forget the little children.

Tommy Ragland guessed the Picture of the Month. It was our dear friend Louie Tippet. Tommy and his beautiful wife, Clarise, visit with me regularly and really enjoy the ham breakfast.

My sympathy to Mrs. Dot Ramsey on the death of her brother. Love you Dot.

So good to see my pal Floyd Hardin looking better and he's excited about the Five Points project that's making us look better.

Our mayor, Loretta Spencer, has to be the busiest person I have ever known. Every time I see her she is either coming or going to some event but she always has time for her friends. Her smile is worth a million dollars!

Kathy Isabell brought her dear friend Jo Anne Schneider to breakfast to celebrate her birth-

day. They had a great time. I love having these first timers eat with me. Kathy brought Regina Case from Birmingham to breakfast, her first visit here.

My friends Mr. and Mrs. James F. Dark celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary. Congratulations and love you. Also, Doyle and Ruby Hyatt celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary. They are a lovely couple that have been here in Huntsville in business as long as I have, I guess.

Several have asked me about Christy Rhoades. She is living in Nashville and is doing well. She's a fund-raiser for the Governor. You know she wants to get away from politics. Love you Christy.

Glen Watson is doing a great job as City Council President. Keep it up!

Margaret Tucker and her daughter, Sandy, came and had breakfast with me recently. It was so good to see them. I told her to let J.B., her husband, know that I thought he was doing an excellent job as mayor of Hurricane Creek!

My friend Joe Akin brings his pretty daughters Shelby and Anna Akin to breakfast almost every Sunday.

Have you taken time to stop, look and see how lovely our Tennessee Valley is? One of the most beautiful roads in Huntsville is the Cecil Ashburn Drive (formerly Four Mile Post Extension.) The view of our valley is unbelievable.

Where's Jackie Reed been lately? When she's been quiet for this long I start to worry.

Well, they're getting out early, wanting to get elected next year. Mr. Charles Bishop and his crew were here along with several others already.

I'm so glad that Bud Cramer, our Congressman, is safe. He was one of the first I thought of when I saw all the horrible things happening in D.C.

So good to see Lyn and Andy Lowery this month. Love you.

Charlotte and Mike Winsett and Pat Davis from Hazel Green were here this week and enjoyed their breakfast.

Isn't it great to see all the flags and the patriotic feelings? It makes us all proud to be Americans.

I heard that Ron and Barb Eyestone were singing Karaoki. Is it too early for them to start thinking of a tour bus?

Dr. Charles (Chuck) Newton and his lovely wife Ann recently moved to Huntsville and came to visit us. Ann's parents, Mr. and Mrs. Ray and Lucy Trifilo from Massachusetts stopped by with them and we enjoyed their company. Dr. Newton's neighbors, Dr. and Mrs. Donald Jones are the ones that introduced us all and I'm so happy to have some new ham eaters. They're great people. Welcome to Huntsville.

Thanks to Southern Living Magazine and Annette Thompson for the beautiful story they did about me in the November issue. Annette, you did a great job.

It was so good to see my very dear friend, Mr. Cecil Ashburn. Cecil had a little surgery and he looks good.

Let's continue to pray for our nation and our leaders.

That's all for now. Have a great month. Come to see me, and remember that I love all of you.

*Aunt Eunice*

# DOLLAR GIRL

by Dianne Helgeson

My story starts out at a very young age, probably around six. I was always trying to find ways to either make money, accumulate it (legally) like gifts received for birthdays and special occasions, or just because "I was a cute kid". Within a short period of time, during this phase of my young life, I had built a money empire of three large piggy banks.

I would occasionally 'draw' money from my banks and would invest it in a large assortment in candy which I would sell to my family and friends at an elevated price. The profit and what I had invested went right back into my savings. This endeavor did not last long, once my customers realized that my prices were just a little bit too high for a similar piece of candy bought from a local retail store.

I was never a champion of sports but I could jump rope, hula hoop, hop scotch, play ping pong and volley ball with the best of them! To be honest, my favorite place was inside my house, watching TV and enjoying the air conditioner instead of being outside, getting all hot playing sports. Besides, I saw no way of me making money in sports. Of course, little did I know that there was a way to make money playing sports but it would take some effort on my part.

Every summer, one of my favorite uncles, from up north, would come to visit. He and his wife would stay either with us, for a few days, or longer, if they had gotten a motel room. I would always look forward to those visits. I understood my uncle. He and I understood the value of money. He disliked parting with it, spending it and even took offense when he saw others around him spending theirs! (Guess he resented the fact that their money wasn't his own).

I can remember how he would go through a long, drawn out explanation to discourage me, whenever I wanted to spend a little money. He would explain how I needed to wait and save that money for a rainy day. He had accumulated a small fortune by denying himself many things as he had grown older.

My uncle became a challenge to me. The more he wanted to hold on to his money the more I wanted to rid him of it. I came up with a simple plan that involved a game we played and when I presented this plan to my uncle, he was more than willing to agree. He would throw balls to me, I would catch them and with each good catch, he would give me a dollar. He would call this game 'Dollar Ball'. I thought this was going to be an easy way of getting my uncle to part with his money but boy was I mistaken!. He was no dummy!

Stretch man couldn't have caught some of those balls. They were thrown so high in the sky that birds had to dodge them! Some of them were so fast, that one time I thought I had lost some hair, as the ball whizzed by my face. The harder the challenge, the

more I could make. Regular balls, if I caught them, were worth a dollar but the really hard ones to catch, could bring in five to ten dollars.

I took this game seriously, but my uncle must have had a sadistic streak because every once in a while, after throwing one of his wild balls, I could see that half smile, half smirk on his face. He did not realize how serious I was about this game. I prepared myself for the challenges in front of me. It was probably like the relationship of a pitcher and batter in a baseball game. I would size him up and he would size me up, with each pitch. I felt like I was in the World Series each time I played the game.

After almost breaking all the bones in my body by stretching, jumping and falling, I managed to accumulate twenty dollars that summer by playing Dollar Ball. I could tell, when it was time for my uncle to pay up, that he was not a happy camper, but he was a good sport. I remember him looking at me as he turned over my winnings and said, "You broke the bank Kiddo!"

I remember that first summer when we began playing the game and how happy I was every time I caught one of those balls. It was then that I was dubbed Dollar Girl by my uncle. As I grew older, my uncle did not visit as much and I missed the challenge of catching those crazy pitches. As the years passed, we continued to play the game, every once in a while, but it was never the same as it was that first summer.

During those later years, I realized that it was my uncle's company that I truly enjoyed, during those summer visits and not those Dollar Balls that I caught as "Dollar Girl".

*Ad from early 1900 magazine*

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# TWO SHINY WALNUTS

by Austin Miller - Oct. 2008

Lucy McCay Currier was my paternal grandmother's sister and my great aunt. They were less than two years apart in age and very close all their lives. As young women they helped their parents run the Toll Gate up to Monte Sano. There is an old photograph of the gate keeper's house that I have seen in several books about Old Huntsville. The photo shows a young lady standing on the porch. Although we can't be certain, it is very likely that the girl in the picture is either Aunt Lucy or my Grandmother. I was told that Aunt Lucy gave me my middle name.

As the story goes, there was a boy in the neighborhood named Leroy who routinely wouldn't come home when his Mama called. After several failed calls she would get exasperated and yell out loudly; "Leroy if you don't come home right now, I am going to box your jaws!" That's where Aunt Lucy got my middle name. I have never known for sure if she liked the name Leroy or came up with it as a joke. I fully suspect that the latter was true.

Aunt Lucy was married twice. She was divorced from her first husband whom she married when she was about fifteen. There was a daughter born from the marriage and one of her granddaughters as well as several great grandchildren still live in the Huntsville area. Her second husband died in 1935 from blood poisoning after sustaining an injury while working on the construction of Guntersville Dam.

Aunt Lucy was not one to stay home and grieve the rest of her life. She became very active in the community and was well known all over town. She was one of the first people in the city to have a car and possibly the first woman driver in Huntsville. She drove the streets of Huntsville for about fifty years.

After her husband died she had many suitors but was not interested in any kind of permanent arrangement. One of her often-repeated statements was that she had never seen a man that she would trade her pistol and pension for!

She clearly marched to her own drummer. In addition to possibly being the first woman driver in town, she may have also been the first woman in Huntsville to get a tattoo. We don't know what it meant, but she had a star tattooed on her ankle. Tattoos may be common on women now, but in her day they were unheard of, especially in Huntsville, Alabama.

**Daisy the cow says to her friend Dolly:**  
**"I was artificially inseminated today."**  
**"I don't believe you," says Dolly.**  
**"It's true," says Daisy. "No bull."**

When I was a child I had several black walnuts that I had played with until they were worn thin and shiny. One day she was visiting with us and made a big deal about how pretty and shiny they were. When she got ready to leave, I insisted that she take some home and plant them in her yard. With great fanfare about what fine trees they would grow into one day, she took two home.

Her house was a small green bungalow at the corner of Wells Avenue and Goldsmith Street. I don't know how long she lived there, but it was many, many years. Even though there was no thought in her mind that those two old shiny walnuts would ever come up, she dug two little holes next to the property line on the north side of her house and planted them as promised.

In the summer of 1969, I went to see her at Huntsville Hospital. Her room was full of visitors and she told them about planting those two shiny walnuts, a story I had heard her tell all my life. It was the last time I would hear it, because she died two days later.

I drove by the old place a few days ago to see if anything looked familiar, it didn't. Her old house was torn down years ago and in its place stands a spacious modern brick house. But on the north side of the building next to the property line stands two large walnut trees that tower above the house on Aunt Lucy's old lot and another brick house on the adjacent lot.

Aunt Lucy always said it was a miracle that the walnuts came up and grew. It is also a miracle that they survived all these years sandwiched in a space about ten or fifteen feet wide between two large brick houses. To me, they are more than two huge walnut trees that came up and survived more than 60 years against all odds. They are a living monument to a true daughter of Huntsville, a fine Aunt and a lady who was way ahead of her time.



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# HUNTSVILLE HISTORY THROUGHOUT THE YEARS



During the early 1960's Huntsville experienced an unprecedented growth as thousands of people moved here, but the Courthouse Square still retained the charm of a small town where people shopped and met friends for dinner or a movie. Wagons pulled by mules were still a common sight on many of Huntsville's streets, while just a few miles away teams of scientists and engineers were working on highly classified projects that would ultimately send men to the moon.

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