



No. 382

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Old Huntsville

HISTORY AND STORIES OF THE TENNESSEE VALLEY

Little Girl Lost



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Also in this issue: World War II and Me; Underground Dance Hall; Christmas 1946; Sippin and Dippin on Tator Knobb; Christmas Surprise that Backfired; All About Cats; Holiday Traditions; Advice from the Old Days; Sweet Holiday Recipes and much much more!

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A Heartwarming Tale of Enduring Love and Second Chances



Little Girl Lost

by Tom Carney

Emma Hopper sighed as she looked out her window in the summer of 1946. "It's going to be a beautiful day," she thought. "This is the kind of weather that Dave loved."

Dave was Emma's husband who had been killed in a car wreck in Huntsville the year before. They had been married for twenty four years and after his death Emma seemed to have lost all interest in life. She would get up in the morning, make a bowl of oatmeal and then sit in the living room listening to the radio with her knitting basket next to her side. She was not really interested in knitting - she had already knitted bags of scarves, mufflers and gloves that were stowed in the closet - it was just something to do. Her friends had tried to get her out of the house but she always refused - she just had no desire.

Every day was exactly like the one before. Sometimes, she thought bitterly, it would be better to just go to bed one night and not wake up in the

morning.

Her thoughts were suddenly interrupted by the shrill ringing of the telephone. Picking up the phone, a faint whisper of a smile crossed her face as she recognized the voice on the other end. It was Sheriff Henry Blakemore. They had been friends for most of their lives and he had been a favorite fishing buddy of her husband.

After exchanging a few pleasantries, Blakemore got to the point. "Emma, I need you to come down to the jail. There's something I need to talk to you about." Emma started to protest, but something in Blakemore's voice stopped her.

Emma made a face as she entered the jail. Although the building was not very old, the smells of cheap disinfectant, human sweat and stale cigarette smoke had already seeped in to every crevice.

The first thing she noticed as she walked into Blakemore's office was a tiny waif of a girl, maybe six or seven years old, sitting silently in the corner. The girl's dress was more of a sack than a piece of clothing and her long dark hair was dirty and knotted. Emma looked at him with a questioning look on her face. The sheriff ignored the gesture, simply telling her to sit down as he shook another cigarette from a pack on his desk.

"Emma, you know a woman named Sally Little, don't you?"

"A rocket will never be able to leave the earth's atmosphere."

NY Times, 1936



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It was more of a statement than a question.

Emma nodded her head slowly. Sally was a second or third cousin of her husband. She had been in and out of trouble all of her life and the family had lost contact with her years earlier.

"Well, I've got her in jail," the sheriff continued. "She's serving ninety days for disorderly conduct, but I have a problem and I need your help. That's her daughter sitting over there in the corner and I have no place to send her."

Rushing his words so Emma could not interrupt him, he went on to explain that the girl had no family or friends that would take care of her. An older woman had been checking on her, off and on, but when she was not paid, she had dropped the child off at the jail. He had been on the phone all morning trying to find a place to send her, but in 1946, there were simply not many social services available for homeless children.

The only hint of hope had been the state orphanage but they were full at the time and it would probably be several months before they could take her. Emma suddenly realized what Blakemore wanted. Rising from her chair she started to say no, no way, when the sheriff ordered her to sit down again.

"Emma, it will only be for a couple months until her mother gets out of jail. And - she is your husband's blood kin!"

There was silence for long moments before Emma finally looked at the girl and then back to the sheriff. "All right, I'll do it. But just until you find another place for her. What is her name?"

"Lucy, I think," the sheriff replied. "At least that's what the old woman called her. I can't get the girl to talk to me."

Emma quickly understood what the sheriff meant. She had already decided to take the girl to Woolworth's and buy her a couple dresses and underclothes. On the way there, she tried to draw Lucy into a conversation but the girl refused to talk. The only response Lucy would give was a slight nod of her head, indicating yes or no. There was no eye contact at all.

Returning home, Emma filled the bathtub with water and helped Lucy undress. Suddenly she drew back in horror as she saw the bruises and welts that covered the little girl's back. "Who did this to you?" Emma demanded.

A look of fright came across Lucy's face

as she spoke for the first time. "No one. Nobody. It was all my fault."

Seeing how frightened the girl was, Emma did not ask any more questions. After the bath, hair-washing and a change of clothes, Lucy asked where she was supposed to sit. When Emma told her she could sit anywhere she wanted, she went to a chair in the corner of the living room and sat there motionless.

A pattern seemed to develop. If Emma told Lucy to do something, she would do it and then return to the chair where she would sit quietly, as if afraid to move or say anything. Every morning when Emma woke up Lucy would already be in the chair, just quietly sitting there.

Emma tried talking with her, taking her shopping, even buying games they could play together. It was to no avail; there seemed to be an invisible wall surrounding her, not letting her out or letting anyone in.

The break came one day when Emma happened to see Lucy standing in front of a mirror trying on one of her hats. It was an ugly floppy hat, one she had reserved for yard work, but for some reason Lucy seemed fascinated by it as she placed it in various po-



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sitions on her head while making faces in the mirror. It was the first time Emma had seen her smile. Suddenly Emma remembered her own childhood when she used to love dressing up in her mother's clothes.

That afternoon Emma asked Lucy to help her go through some old clothes. She began with her hats, trying on each one in front of the mirror and then insisting Lucy do the same. Within a few minutes a hint of a smile began to appear the little girl's face. Minutes later they were both laughing hysterically as Lucy pranced in front of the mirror wearing a fur around her shoulders, a large feathered hat on her head and adorned with countless pieces of costume jewelry.

Emma had never had any children of her own, and wasn't sure if she even wanted any, but as the days turned into weeks she found herself being drawn to the small child. After Lucy's initial fright she seemed to thrive in her new environment. Whenever there were chores to do around the house Lucy insisted on helping. Sweeping floors was her favorite chore. Oftentimes, Emma would have to turn her head to keep from laughing as the little girl struggled with a broom almost twice her size. Emma solved this problem by buying another broom and having the handle sawed off to the appropriate size.

In the evenings, after dinner, it was "school time." Sitting at the kitchen table while Emma taught her the alphabet and helped practice writing her name was Lucy's favorite time of the day. She seemed to have a voracious appetite for learning and Emma was constantly amazed at how quickly she learned.

Good times cannot last forever, and so it came about that

one evening as they were listening to the radio, they heard a car door slam, followed by a loud knocking on the front door. After opening the door, Emma did not need any introductions to the woman standing there. It was Sally Little, Lucy's mother.

Emma invited her in the house. Slurring her words and smelling of alcohol, the woman said, "I hear you got my girl."

Before Emma could reply, the woman noticed Lucy standing across the room almost petrified with fear.

"Come here, girl," Sally said, "and give your Mama a big kiss."

Lucy bolted from the room. It didn't seem to bother her mother. "She gets that way sometimes. I'll have to straighten her out when I get her home." Suddenly she changed the subject. "I'm in between places to stay right now and I was wondering if you would keep the girl a few more days. Just until I get on my feet again."



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Emma nodded her head and Sally started to leave before turning to Emma again.

"I'm a little short of money right now and I was wondering if you would loan me five dollars until I get straightened out. It will just be for a few days." Reluctantly, Emma got her purse and gave Sally the money.

After locking the front door, Emma went to find Lucy. She looked in every room but Lucy was nowhere. She began searching the closets and then went through the rooms again but she was nowhere to be found.

Emma became frightened, trying to decide what to do, when suddenly she heard a sound from under her bed. Quickly getting down on her hands and knees, she saw Lucy curled up in a corner, her little body trembling as tears rolled down her face.

The next few days were difficult. Lucy seemed to revert to the little girl that Emma had first met; not talking, unsure of herself and jumping at every small noise. Patiently, Emma struggled to get her out of the shell she had withdrawn into.

A few weeks later the scene was repeated. A knock on the door, Sally standing there intoxicated, explaining that she was going to leave Lucy there for a little while longer "just until she got straightened out." This time she asked for ten dollars, supposedly for some medicine. Emma reluctantly gave her the money although she suspected the medicine was the same type sold by the local bootleggers.

And again, it took days to get Lucy out of her shell.

Emma and Lucy worked out a routine. Whenever there was a knock on the door at night, Lucy would run and hide in the closet until Emma gave the "all

clear" sign. Emma hated doing this but did not know what else to do. When she talked to an attorney she was told, "It's Sally's girl and if she wants her, that's her right."

The visits by Sally became almost a routine. Every couple of weeks she would show up, needing money for something. Sometimes it was for five dollars, and then twenty and several time even fifty. When Emma tried to protest, Sally replied, "I'm her mother and I'm entitled to something."

Emma was not poor, but neither was she well off. She began by cashing in Government bonds her husband had purchased years earlier. When they were gone, she started withdrawing money from her savings account.

Suddenly it was December, and almost like an early Christmas present, Sally stopped coming around. Emma and Lucy decided this was going to be the best Christmas ever. They spent hours picking out the perfect tree and decorating

it. Garlands were hung over the doorways and candles were placed in the windows.

Together they made a large wreath which they hung on the front door.

And every day another present appeared under the tree with Lucy's name on it.

They were sitting on the couch late one evening, reading Christmas stories, when there was a loud knocking on the front door. Lucy sprang from the couch to hide in another room as Emma, hoping against hope that it was a neighbor, went to open the door.

Sally staggered into the house accompanied by a strange man who appeared to be equally drunk. Looking around at the Christmas tree and decorations, she said in a sarcastic voice, "It looks like you have already made plans for my girl. Don't you think you should have asked me first?"

Abruptly she changed the subject. "Me and Jim," she said while motioning to the man

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with her, "are going to get out of this town and start over in Chicago. You want to keep my girl, you can have her for five hundred dollars. After all, I am entitled to something!"

Emma protested, saying she did not have that much money.

"Well, find it!" Sally said. Til be back tomorrow night and if you don't have the money I'm going to take my girl with me."

Late that night, after calming Lucy down, Emma laid in bed trying to decide what to do. She didn't have the money but she could not bear to imagine Lucy having to live with a drunken mother who cared nothing about her. Her last thought before finally drifting off to sleep was, "I need advice."

The next morning, after leaving Lucy with a neighbor, Emma walked the ten or twelve blocks to the county jail where she asked to see the sheriff. Blakemore immediately realized something was wrong and began questioning her. Slowly Emma began telling about Lucy being terrified, about the bruises on her body, and about Sally's constant demands for money and her ultimatum of five hundred dollars.

"Sheriff, I just don't know what to do."

Blakemore had not said much before now but finally he broke his silence by asking, "You really want to keep that girl, don't you?"

Emma was taken by surprise. She had always thought about what was best for Lucy and had never really thought about her own feelings. After a long pause she replied, "Yes. Yes, I do."

The meeting ended with Blakemore telling Emma to go home and let him think about it.

Later that afternoon, Blake-more called one of his deputies into his office. After giving him

"Please excuse Mary for being absent from school yesterday. She was in bed with gramps."

A Parent's written excuse for student's absence



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a little background, the sheriff explained what he wanted done.

It wasn't hard to find Sally. She was sitting in the second bar the deputy walked into, along with a male companion. The deputy walked over to where she was sitting and grabbed her by the back of the neck.

"We're going outside!" Sally's companion started to get up but a pointed finger and a sharp look from the deputy convinced him to sit back down.

Once outside, the deputy explained. "There's a warrant about to be sworn out for your arrest. Human trafficking - trying to sell your own daughter. I'm supposed to tell you that you have twenty-four hours to get out of town. After that you will be facing twenty years in prison. If you try to go back around your daughter, I will have you in jail within thirty minutes. Do you understand?"

Sally nodded her head, already wondering how fast she could leave Huntsville.

That same night Sheriff Blakemore stopped by Emma's home. After talking with Emma in private for a few minutes then turned his attention to Lucy. "How would you like to stay with Emma forever and not have anyone try to take you away from her?"

Lucy seemed puzzled. "But how"

Blakemore grinned and knelt down next to the little girl. "See this badge? That means I'm the High Sheriff of Madison County and what I say is the law!"

Lucy turned to Emma with a questioning look on her face.

"He's right," Emma said with a big smile, "He's the Sheriff."

"When your mother is really mad and asks you, 'Do I look stupid?' it's best not to answer her."

Jimmy Reed, Age 14

Two days later on Christmas morning, Emma awoke to find Lucy standing next to her bed.

Slowly, as if unsure, Lucy handed her a piece of paper that had been folded like a card. On the front was a crude drawing of a Christmas tree and inside, written in a small child's hand writing, were the words,

*To Mama, Mrry Krismus
Love Lucy*

The following year Emma adopted Lucy. Sally was never heard from again.

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JUST A FEW MEMORIES

By G. W. Robinson

When I was growing up, it was not uncommon for young boys (and some girls too) to learn to shoot at a very early age. When I was 6 years old, I could hit most anything I aimed at with a .22 caliber rifle. There was one young lady in the neighborhood, of whom it was said could take a .22 rifle into the woods and bring back more squirrels than any of the men around.

My favorite pastime in the summer was going up and down the creek looking for snakes and bullfrogs to shoot. If I bagged a bullfrog, mother would always fry the legs for me. No, they didn't taste like chicken - they tasted just like frog legs!

A very interesting thing happened one day when I was about 7 years old. I spotted this water snake on the opposite side of the creek. It was only about 8 or 10 feet away and the creek was not very wide here, so I thought it would be a very easy shot. Or so I thought. I took dead aim at the snake's head and pulled the trigger. The snake did not seem to move, but there was a hole in the mud directly behind his head where my bullet went. It was as if my bullet went right through his head without leaving a scratch! I could not believe I missed at that range!

I thought: "I will try again." Same thing! So I decided he was jerking his head back just as I shot, then putting it back so fast that I couldn't see it move.

So I said: "Okay, ole boy, I know how to solve this!" Next time I aimed about 1-1/2 inches right behind his head. Sure enough, he jerked his head back, right into the bullet! How did he know when that bullet was coming? I don't know! I still don't believe anything can move that fast!

Okay, let us fast forward 10 years. I am 17 years old, preparing to graduate from high school at M.C.H.S. in Gurley. Two of my buddies and I decided to join the National Guard. The Korean War was going strong then and some of the boys about our age and a little older were getting drafted into the Army. We didn't want that. The National Guard had a program that if you joined up and kept a clean record with them, you would get a 1-D Draft Card, therefore you would be exempt from the draft. So that is what we did. Jimmy Mills, James Harris and I all went down and joined the same day. It was Thursday, 9 Mar 52. They gave us a uniform and a pair of boots and told us to be back on the following Sunday.

We were going to have an all-day drill on Sunday. Well, Sunday came and we showed up on time for our first day as "week-end warriors". We were very excited, as we had no idea what to expect.

I don't remember exactly what that first day consisted of, but as best as I can remember, it was classes on military courtesy - how to salute, who to salute and when to salute - and probably some close order drill, as these were some of the first things that new recruits were taught. But I do remember very well what we did later in the day. We had some Rifle Range Practice. Some of you will remember the old Armory on Patton Street there in Huntsville. Well, it had a basement in it with a firing range down there. We were assigned .30 caliber carbines, but we could not fire them there. (We later went to the Redstone Arsenal range and fired them). The range in the basement of the Armory was a thousand-inch range. We had .22 caliber rifles to fire there. Everything was scaled down to correspond with a normal Army Firing Range.

I don't remember how many people were there that day - I would guess about 75 or so. Everybody took their turn at firing. I guess there were maybe 5 or 10 firing at a time. After everybody got their turn, the scores were all added up and the 3 of us new recruits made the three highest scores out of the whole group there.

Jimmy Mills made the highest; I made second highest; James Harris made third highest. I guess we got the attention of some of the officers, because 4 months later, when we went to Fort Stewart, Georgia for our 2 weeks summer training, of the three of us, there were two corporals and one PFC. I won't name the PFC, but I was one of the Corporals.

Not bad for 3 country boys who spent their summers shooting snakes and bullfrogs.

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The Perfect Christmas Gift

by John Carriker

Several years ago I shared a story honoring the memory of my mother who had passed suffering from Alzheimer's. My two younger sisters, Barbara and Butch (nee Doris), joined together as younger children to purchase a "perfect gift" for her several years before her death.

There are so many memories that keep flooding back when we face the death of people in our past. These are times that examine not only the loss but (prayerfully) the legacy of that person and all the love that was found. This is one of those stories.

It had been so many years ago and the world was very different, but so were we. "We" at that time were three children — a brother and two younger sisters — all between the ages of 7 to 11, and it was our first "major shopping excursion" for the upcoming final holiday of the year. We had pooled our savings (also known as "allowances") and amassed the astronomical sum of about five dollars and decided, after consulting with dad, to spend it all on our mother.

We weren't sure what the special gift would be, but trusted that when we saw it, we would know. For the reader, you must remember that we were children who believed (and still do) that God would answer our prayers. There was no doubt.

The year was 1951, and America was at its finest... World War II was won, housing was booming and jobs, abundant. It was no wonder that the majority of Americans felt secure and safe.

Our father listened to our plan and agreed to take us downtown the forthcoming Saturday and accompany us (from a distance) as we shopped. But — and we insisted upon this condition — he would not have anything to do with our decision. Like I said, we were

children.

The day came, and none of us could eat our breakfast. The excitement was centered on what was about to happen. (If we had not been so absorbed, we probably would have seen mother and dad exchanging glances as she smiled at him, and he grinned).

We went to various sections of the city's largest department store, found our price range of items, looked, and then, after realizing it wasn't "the gift" we were seeking, ventured to another set of clothes, jewelry and what-nots. We soon discovered that our budget was limited, and frustration was evident since we were unable to make a unanimous decision.

But, finally, after what seemed to have been hours (although in reality it was probably less than 60 minutes) the three of us wandered into an area of the department filled with all that glitters, shine and speaks of feminism. "This is beautiful," my youngest sister drooled. My oldest sister was already busy looking over everything and trying to draw our attention to something she had discovered.

"I think I found it!" she exclaimed. We scrambled over to where she was and gazed in wonderment, silent for a few seconds. It was in our price range, and we agreed that it was the most beautiful gift we had ever seen. Dad agreed. Mom would love it! And we went away as three children, proud of

"Real love is when your dog kisses you even though you've been away from her for the whole day."

Tessa Jacobs, Age 9

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selecting the most perfect gift in the world!

Christmas morning arrived. We could barely contain ourselves as we forced down our traditional breakfast prior to going to the present-laden foot of the tree. Following our annual protocol, we "ooh...ed and ahh...ed" at the exposed, larger gifts and then proceeded to unwrap — each individually -- the presents until only one remained: mother's. The most perfect gift in the world!

Still seems as if it were yesterday rather than a half-century ago. She was seated in her chair as dad reached down and handed the package to her. Her three children held their collective breaths, anticipating the reaction.

Mother smiled, looked at us, and then began removing the covering until it was revealed, as the room filled with joyful laughter. My two sisters and I were confident the right choice had been made. She had in her possession "the most perfect gift in the world!"

What happened to effect mother's reaction when she unveiled the contents of her three children's "most perfect gift" to her on that Christmas morning? What did she see? What mesmerized her son and two daughters to unanimously select this present?

Surprise! A purple, velvet purse with a golden clasp! Inside was a nickel and four pennies, the change we received after purchasing the gift.

What we didn't realize on that day from the past was that we were attempting to emulate in our infantile stage of life what God had already done: giving what we believed was the perfect gift for someone we loved dearly. But He was giving His only Son to us: Jesus Christ, the most perfect Gift!

MY FIRST CHRISTMAS IN HEAVEN

Anon

I see the countless Christmas trees around the world below
With tiny lights, like Heaven's stars, reflecting on the snow.

The sight is so spectacular, please wipe away the tear
For I am spending Christmas with Jesus Christ this year.

I hear the many Christmas songs that people hold so dear
But the sounds of music can't compare with the Christmas choir up here.

I have no words to tell you, the joy their voices bring,
For it is beyond description, to hear the angels sing.

I know how much you miss me, I see the pain inside your heart.
But I am not so far away, we really aren't apart.

So be happy for me, dear ones, you know I hold you dear
And be glad I'm spending Christmas with Jesus Christ this year.

I sent you each a special gift, from my heavenly home above.
I sent you each a memory of my undying love.

After all, love is a gift more precious than pure gold.
It was always most important in the stories Jesus told.

Please love and keep each other, as my Father said to do.
For I can't count the blessings or love he has for each of you.

So have a Merry Christmas and wipe away that tear
Remember I am spending Christmas with Jesus this year.

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Turn to the experts



As we've reached the last month of the year, Grandma wants to cover some of her favorite holiday things to do and close the column with one of her vivid childhood Christmas memories.

The Galaxy of Lights continues all this month at the Botanical Gardens, and every year it gets bigger. Kids will have multi-colored sparkles in their eyes during the slow drive through the winding, seemingly endless trails, with surprises around each turn. Cars aren't allowed every night, so call before you drive out there.

I hope you didn't miss the annual Huntsville Christmas Parade on Tuesday, December 3rd at 6:00 p.m. This year's theme: "Toyland."

The annual "Tinsel Trail" in the Big Spring Park features 300 decorated trees, and the free walk around the park always delights everyone. Go after dark for the full effect.

For those younger than Grandma, there's ice skating in the area behind the Huntsville Museum of Art, now through January 5th. You can rent whatever you need, including a gliding

prop similar to a walker for those who don't want to risk a fall.

Another event happening early this month is the NEACA's 2024 Christmas Craft Show, Friday through Sunday, December 6-8, in the South Hall of VBC. You can fill many places on your Christmas list with various crafts for sale there.

The Twickenham Luminary tour in the old Huntsville historic district will be on December 14 from 5 to 9 p.m. Everyone decorates their homes for the candlelights in sacks' driving tour — parking lights only. It's magical.

Here's one of Grandma's holiday memories from childhood in the fifties. I'd hover around my mother whenever she would do any baking from mid-November to the first of January. On this particular December day, she made a large batch of fudge to give to some of her friends and neighbors. I always wanted to lick the spoon when she finished pouring the mix into several pans to cool.

On this day, she stopped with plenty on the sides of the bowl and with the spoon inside. She handed it all to me to stop my insistent begging. Let me tell you, I scraped and licked for the longest time, determined there wouldn't be anything left. There wasn't.

I don't think more than a few minutes had passed when I didn't feel so good. I'll spare you the ugly details of what happened over the bathroom sink. I sure got more than my fill of dark chocolate fudge that season, and to this very day, over seventy years later, I don't care for dark chocolate at all.

Have a beautiful Christmas and a happy and healthy New Year!





Health Rating 99%



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Mountain Gorillas

by Bill Alkire, 2002



The road across central Huntsville Mountain had been overdue. The new highway would save commuters as much as forty-five minutes for people using the highway. It was also a very scenic drive, like driving through a virgin mountain forest with rock formations.

This mountain supplied habitat for a variety of wild animals. Driving could be especially hazardous during rutting season for deer. There could be frightening obstacles like small animals and falling rocks that could also pose a danger, especially after or during rain.

The surrounding area along the roadway was picturesque all year round. At the top of the mountain the local land trust group had built extensive hiking and mountain biking trails. A parking area was provided for those who wanted to use the trails or see the brilliant sunsets.

On the first Christmas the roadway was open, inhabitants of the area decorated live trees along the road for the season. The second year my wife, a retired minister friend, a family friend and I decided to decorate a tree

as well. We gathered up garland, ornate balls, and made garland of popcorn, cranberries, and dates for the birds to eat. Our tree was very colorful and visible from the highway.

The day we decorated our tree a local Huntsville Times newspaper reporter drove by. He was writing a piece on the colorful trees that had been decorated. He took photographs and ran a front-page story with pictures of the beautiful, decorated trees. The decorated trees and the newspaper story caused problems for non-believers and others, for reasons only they knew.

The city was inundated with calls about the cost of cleanup (?) and religious themes. Letters were sent to the editor of the Huntsville Times newspaper. Harsh words were spoken and written. "Letters To the Editor" referred to those of us who had put up decorations as "Mountain Gorillas." The cascade began.

Decorators removed their decoration materials after Christmas. This was not good enough for those few who opposed the decorated trees. The city formally announced the passing of an ordinance shutting down the celebrated activities and preventing future decorating.

The "Mountain Gorillas" posed a hazard to the public with their Christmas Spirit and as such had to be stopped. Someone could possibly be offended.

Score one for the Grinch, zero for the people.

"Duct tape is like the Force. It has a light side & a dark side and it holds the universe together."

Manuel Diaz, Guntersville



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Hints from 1898

* You can drive nails into a board easier and without bending them if you first dip the nails into lard.

* A half and half solution of mild shampoo mixed with warm water is a safe way to clean eyelids that are itchy, red or crusty.

* A lump of camphor in your clothes press will keep steel ornaments from tarnishing.

* Coffee burned in an open fire or a few grains on a stove is the best deodorizer.

* The pulp of a lemon, rubbed on the roots of your hair, will stop ordinary cases of hair falling out.

* In laying away of fine white gowns for any length of time, they should first be wrapped in blue paper, then in a sheet or in muslin wrap of some kind.

* Witch hazel is a great way to tighten skin of the face, just moisten a clean pad with it and wipe your face.

* Cornmeal and salt, mixed well, make one of the best brighteners for carpets during sweeping.

* Stale bread will clean kid gloves.

* Vick's VapoRub has been shown to be very affective for toenail fungus. Wipe the nail first with white vinegar, then with the Vick's.

* Gloves can be cleaned at home by rubbing them with gasoline.

* A lump of soda laid on the drain pipe will prevent the pipes from becoming clogged with grease; also, flood the pipes once a week with boiling water to which you've added a little soda.

* White marble can be cleaned up with water and soda.

* A little Vaseline, rubbed in once a day, will keep the hands from chapping.

* Drinking half a cup of tart cherry juice each day will significantly lessen the pain of gout and arthritis.

* Gargle daily with plain water to cut the number of colds and respiratory infections you get.

Fast Fudge Sauce

In the top of a double-boiler heat one can of Eagle Brand condensed milk, three tablespoons of water and three squares of bittersweet chocolate.

Keep a jar in the fridge and serve over vanilla ice cream or any dessert you prefer.

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CHRISTMAS STORIES

by Jim Vann



When I was young we weren't poor but we weren't rich either. All four of us children had a Christmas stocking. Remember that this was during WW II. We would all get pecans, English walnuts, oranges, tangerines and sometimes an apple in our stockings.

Story 1.

I think I was about 6 years old and one Christmas morning I was sent on a "Scavenger Hunt". I feel sure my sisters had a lot to do with the planning of this event because "Scavenger Hunts" were popular at the time. For those that don't know or remember, on a "Scavenger Hunt" you were given a clue as to where something was located and when you found that item, there would be another clue as to where to look next.

On this particular Christmas morning, one of my clues had me look in the oven for a gift. In the oven was a new shoe. The clue there sent me to the refrigerator where I found the mate to my new pair of shoes.

I don't remember if or what else I got that year but I do remember those strange locations to find my shoes.

Story 2.

When our daughter Beth was about 5 years old, she wanted a tape recorder for a Christmas gift. We bought the recorder and a few days prior to Christmas, I carried the recorder to work and had one of my workmates record a personal message from Santa to her.

There's no telling how many times that recording was played since she was on the verge of getting older and had some questions.

Story 3.

I don't remember the exact age of our daughter Beth at this Christmas time but I think she was about 4 years old.

We had purchased most all of the gifts that she had requested and were ready to put them under the tree.

Somewhere, somehow, we came into possession of a large cardboard box. I'm pretty sure a refrigerator had been shipped in the box. We laid it on the side and I cut a door and a couple of windows into the box. I probably don't have to tell you that she spent most of the next several days playing inside that box. Her other gifts took second place to that box.

Story 4.

My wife was probably about eight or nine years old when she woke up on that Christmas morning before all the rest of the entire family. She had specifically asked for Santa to bring her a watch. Mom and Dad told her that would probably be the only gift she would get because watches were expensive. Each child in the family had a specific area in the room where the Christmas tree was located where their gifts were to be placed. Getting up early and going into that room by herself, my wife totally rearranged all the children's gifts to her liking and sure enough, most of them were in her assigned area. When everyone arrived to open gifts, her mother had to explain how Santa had made some mistakes putting the gifts in the proper places and so she rearranged things as they were supposed to be.

My wife is still that shrewd to this day and I have to continually be on the alert.

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John Purdy
Loretta Spencer
Sarah Chappell

OLD HOLIDAY TRADITIONS

by L D Rogers



When I was a child, we would go to my grandparents' farm for Thanksgiving. While mother and my grandmother were preparing the Thanksgiving dinner my father, grandfather, brother and I would go hunting. But what we were hunting for was a Christmas tree. Granddaddy had a pretty good size farm with lots of fields and woods. Back then what we were looking for was a cedar tree and there were plenty of them on the farm. We had to find just the right one - not too big, not too small and shaped just right.

When we finally found the one we wanted my daddy and grandfather would cut it down and we would take it back to the house. The next day, we got ready to go back home and Daddy would put it on the front fender of our Model A Ford and tie it down. When we got home, we would put it in the garage in a small tub of water. It would stay there until Mother got ready to put it in the house and decorate it.

We would go back to school after Thanksgiving and find Christmas programs from Concordia Publishing waiting for us. We went to a Lutheran school and every year on Christmas Eve we put on a Christmas program. We used the programs to get ready and they were about 10 or 12 pages long. They contained Christmas carols and verses from the Christmas story from Luke chapter two.

Also, after Thanksgiving, the Sears-Roebuck would open their toy department in the basement of the store. There were so many toys and they even hired a live Santa. We thought that was awesome!

Time went slowly and it was finally Christmas Eve! We would get ready to go to church for our Christmas program. We would all be in the car except for Daddy. He was always late but would finally come out and drive us to church.

After our program, we were always ready to go home to see if Santa had been there. Mother would be busy talking to people and I would go up to her and say, "Come on, Mother. Let's go home." She would say, "Just a minute, son." It always seemed like a lot longer than a minute.

Finally, with everyone in the car we would head home. It seemed like it took forever but we finally got there. We would enter the house and there our presents were around the decorated tree.

One year I walked in and found the most beautiful sled you have ever seen!

As the years went by, I wondered why Daddy was always late getting in the car. Turned out my dad was a great Santa Claus.

Op' Heidelberg

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**"Never buy an older car you
can't push."**

Sam Keith, Huntsville

Heard On the Street

by Cathey Carney



Judy Smith was hiding the teeny magnifying glass that we hid for last month's issue. It is on page 12 right by her left foot. Do you see it now? I had lots of people who found one on the old Lewter's ad but this is the one that I hid and we had a winner! Our first caller was **Sherrie Riddle** of Huntsville whom many people know. Sherrie worked for years at Home Depot and Costco and graduated from Butler High School in 1982. She left, then returned after 30 years to take care of her mom and grandma. She lives with her mom Brenda Blankenship and is a really interesting lady to speak with. Congratulations to you Sherrie!

Most will have to agree that this is some of the most beautiful weather we've had in a long time. No mosquitos but warm sunny days. Now it's starting to cool off so get your sweats out again. My summer flowers are still blooming and look good.

This is a great time to get out and walk through the historic districts and see the work that's being done on many homes.

In Twickenham and Old Town Historic Districts there is one night when candles are lit and placed by the side of the roads - luminaries. This year it's Saturday Dec. 14th and starts at dusk. For the last several years we have been rained out so the odds are in our favor that this one will be dry. You just drive slowly with no/dim lights through the districts and see the homes that are lit and decorated. It is really a magical feeling and brings you back to the old days.

Speaking of beautiful old homes, Old Town has created a really nice calendar that has photos of 13 homes and tells you what style they are. The calendar was created as a fund raiser to help make money to buy trees to put in and around Old Town. The District took a big hit from our May tornado (as did Blossomwood and Maple Hill Cemetery) and this money will be used to buy and plant young trees throughout Old Town. Star Market in Five Points has them and has sold over 60 in just a couple weeks. They are also at Harrison Brothers and Railroad Antiques and Sam & Gregs as well as a num-

ber of other places. They're just \$10 each and they will put trees in the ground! Get yours before they're gone and remember they make great gifts.

It was so good to talk with **Bill Nunn** of Big Cove recently. He celebrated his 90th birthday on Thanksgiving day, Nov. 28th, and partied with about 60 friends and family for the annual Nunn reunion held in his grandfather's 101 year old home in Big Cove. He told me the weekend after his birthday he spent in Auburn, Al where he graduated in 1957 and then became a pharmacist here in Huntsville.

He told me of all the places he could live, he only wants to be in **Big Cove or Huntsville, or Auburn!** He celebrated his 87th birthday in Auburn and was there for his 90th too. He's busier than ever with projects and has promised to write some good stories for Old Huntsville Magazine. Happy 90th to you Bill!

Lately we've heard more and more **small critters** getting in to basements and garages to get out of the cold (when it starts) and getting stuck in ductwork. It never ends well for critters or

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Sam Michael sent us a message and this is part of it.

"Hello, Ms. Cathey. I really appreciate Old Huntsville magazine and know it takes effort to put it together each month. It brings back a lot of memories for me: People, Places, events and Huntsville's incredible growth.

I have lived here for 84 years - well that's all my life! Born and grew up in Huntsville and the last several years in Gurley area.

Blessings to you and keep it up!"

Thanks Sam, we appreciate your kind words and the plan is definitely to keep this going as long as we can! We might have to hit you up for some good stories tho!

Cathey

homeowners. Here's what happened to us years ago. We have a garage apartment with 2 stories. Duct work for heat/air is on first level where cars are parked. Well we noticed a weird smell in the top story of the garage apartment and it turned out that a possum had gotten in to the ducts (that looks like silver tunnels) and gotten stuck. We didn't know he was in there and he died.

It took days and United Fire (with **Louie Tippet**) to remove all the pieces of the poor critter when he was finally discovered. You never think that will happen but they make a tiny hole through the metal tape and get in. So my advice, keep an eye on all your duct work and make sure there is no loose tape or holes in your ducts. It will save you money, I promise!

Elizabeth Wharry is one of our regular writers who gets a lot of comments from our readers. She is just so funny and the situations she's been in and writes about are just so relatable. Anyway she turns 67 on Dec. 14th and we want to wish her a happy happy birthday with her sweet husband and hope she celebrates for days!

Another birthday is that of our dear friend **Oscar Llerena** who lives in Miami but graduated in the 1966 class of Huntsville High School. He has a December 24th birthday so he is a Christmas Eve baby and the best present his parents ever got! Oscar visits Huntsville and stays in close touch with his graduating class - we LOVE you Oscar!

Getting older is like walking through a mine field - you never know what's going to hit next. All you can do is try to stay as healthy as possible and keep your immune system up to par. And eat good fresh food whenever you can, instead of fast food. Did you know that your gut health is directly related to depression and affects your whole body?

A hint I heard the other day for those who try to take walks and get exercise, instead of looking down when you walk, aim your gaze about 15 feet ahead. This automatically raises your head and keeps you from bending over. You can still make sure nothing trips you up like an uneven curb but this keeps your back straight. Try it - this works.

"For sale by Owner: Complete set of Encyclopedia Britannica, 45 volumes. Excellent Condition, \$100 or best offer. No longer needed - newly married - wife knows everything."

Classified Ad

There are so many events in Huntsville and Madison during this season, for the newer people here we recommend Googling:

Lowe Mill

Burritt Museum

Twickenham home show and lumenary

Tinsel Trail

Ice Skating at Big Spring Park

Walking around the Square downtown

Driving through the historic districts to look at the decorations and get ideas for your own

OK if you've read this far you know how I do this. There is a **tiny holly leaf** hidden somewhere in the 48 pages of this magazine. IF you find it, which is doubtful, and call me with the location, you win a \$50 annual gift subscription to Old Huntsville magazine. Gets delivered right to your door. I expect NO calls but get out your magnifying glass and start looking!

Have a good Christmas with your family and friends and Happy New Year to all of you!

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A Sweet Christmas

Brazil Nut Chews

2 eggs
2 c. firmly packed brown sugar
1 t. vanilla extract
1-3/4 c. all-purpose flour
1/2 t. baking powder
1/2 t. salt
1 lb. ground Brazil nuts
Sifted powdered sugar

Beat the eggs well in a large bowl til thick and lemon-colored. Gradually add your sugar and vanilla. Sift together the flour, baking powder and salt, add slowly to the egg mixture. Stir in the Brazil nuts. Cover your bowl and chill for several hours.

Shape the dough by using a teaspoonful for each cookie, and shape the dough into 2-inch rolls. Place the rolls 2 inches apart on your greased cookie sheet. Bake at 350 degrees for about 12 minutes, then roll in powdered sugar while still warm. For a festive look dip the ends of the rolls in melted semisweet chocolate, then in ground nuts.

Light Eggnog

2 T. sugar
1/2 c. fat-free egg substitute
4 c. scalded 2% milk
1 t. vanilla extract
1 t. sugar
1/2 c. light whipped topping
Cocoa powder for garnish

Beat the sugar into the egg substitute, then slowly stir in the milk. In a double boiler, cook the mixture over hot but not boiling water. Stir constantly til the mixture coats the back of a spoon, about 5 minutes. Remove from heat, add the vanilla and cool. Chill for 4 hours.

Pour the mixture into a punch bowl. Fold 1 teaspoon sugar into the whipped topping, top each mug of eggnog with a dollop of the whipped cream and sprinkle with cocoa powder.

Christmas Coconut Cake

1 (2 layer) pkg. white cake mix
2 c. sugar

2 c. sour cream
3 (6 oz) pkgs. frozen coconut, thawed

12 oz. whipped topping

Bake cake using package directions for 2 round cake pans. Cool, split each layer into halves horizontally with a string. Mix sugar, sour cream and coconut in a bowl; mix well. Chill in fridge. Reserve 1 cup sour cream mixture for the frosting.

Spread remaining sour cream mixture between cake layers. Combine reserved sour cream mixture with the whipped topping and mix well. Spread on top and side of cake. Store in airtight container in fridge for 3 days.

Royal Ambrosia Cookies

1 c. butter (2 sticks)
1 c. sugar
1 c. brown sugar, packed
2 eggs, beaten
1 t. vanilla extract
2 c. all-purpose flour

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- 1 t. baking powder
- 1/2 t. baking soda
- 1/2 t. salt
- 1 c. flaked coconut
- 1-1/2 c. regular oats, uncooked
- 1 c. chopped pecans
- 2 c. chopped dates
- 1 T. grated lemon rind
- 1 t. grated orange rind

Cream your butter in a large mixing bowl and gradually add your sugars, eggs, vanilla - beating well after each addition. In another bowl combine the flour, baking powder, soda, salt, coconut, oats, pecans, dates, and rind - mix well and add it slowly to the butter mixture. Drop the dough by teaspoonfuls two inches apart on a greased cookie sheet and bake at 375 degrees for 10 minutes. Cool on wire racks.

Chunky Peanut Butter Cookies

- 1/2 c. butter (1 stick)
- 1/2 c. chunky peanut butter
- 1 c. brown sugar
- 1 egg, beaten
- 1-1/2 c. all-purpose flour
- 1/2 t. baking powder
- 3/4 t. baking soda
- 1/4 t. salt

Cream your butter with the peanut butter, add the sugar and beat til light and fluffy. Add the egg, beat well. Sift together the flour, baking powder, soda and salt in another smaller bowl, add it gradually to the butter mixture and mix well.

Shape dough into 3/4 inch balls and place them 2 inches apart on your greased cookie sheet. Bake at 375 degrees for about 10 minutes, cool for a few minutes then remove to wire racks to completely cool.

Almond Crunch Crusted Pound Cake

Almond Butter Crust:

- 3/4 stick butter
- 1/2 c. light brown sugar
- 1/4 c. all-purpose flour
- 1 c. sliced almonds

Make the crust by combining the butter and sugar in a mixing bowl, mix well, add the flour and blend til mixture is crumbly. Add the almonds,

stir lightly. Butter the pan, then pat mixture over the bottom and halfway up the sides of a regular loaf pan (8-1/2" x 4-1/2" x 2-1/2"). Spread evenly and don't get it too thick in the corners. Set aside, make batter below.

Pound Cake Batter:

- 2 eggs, room temp
- 3/4 stick butter, softened
- 3 oz. cream cheese, room temp
- 1/2 c. sugar
- 1 c. all-purpose flour
- 1/4 t. salt
- 1/2 t. baking powder
- 2 t. almond extract

Preheat your oven to 350 degrees. Mix the butter, cream cheese and sugar in a bowl, beat til smooth and blended. Add the eggs, beat well.

Combine the flour, salt and baking powder, stir them together. Add to the first mixture and beat well, add the extract. Continue beating til the mixture is smooth, like a soft frosting.

Spoon batter into the crust-lined pan, about halfway up the sides. Bake for 50-60 minutes, check doneness by inserting broom straw in center of cake - it should come out clean.

Remove from oven, set on a rack to cool. When completely cool, run a knife between the crust and the sides of the pan and flip the cake out onto a serving board or platter. Serve in thin slices.



Built circa 1850, the Historic Lowry House is open and available to the public and can be rented for private functions. The manicured grounds have been awarded the city's Beautification Award for five consecutive years.

This historic home is filled with artifacts and information related to Huntsville's history.

Visit us at www.historiclowryhouse.com for all upcoming events!

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Open M-F 12-4pm**

HUNTING WAY BACK YONDER

by Clarence Potter

Yonder in my dusty old memory bank. When imagination was real in a 12 year olds mind. No, this was a real life booger!

It was Fall, 1955 nearing my 12th birthday. Momma had gotten me a single shot Sears Robuck model 17, .22 rifle. Living at the foot of a ridge in Larkinsville, AL I loved to hunt but mostly, I loved to shoot. I became pretty good with that rifle. The rifle shot .22 caliber short and long rifle shells. Never bought longs, they were twice the cost of shorts. Long rifle shells cost about \$.75 a box. Shorts cost me 35 cents for 50 shells. This was when I was 12 years old.

Later, when I entered service I qualified as expert with several different types of firearms. From the M1A1 30/06 rifle, to the 1911 caliber 45 pistol, even the bazooka. I found shooting one was as easy as shooting the other. The training sergeants were impressed especially with bazooka. I had never seen such a contraptions but it seemed to hit the target just as easy as a .22 rifle. A great big bullet would come out and explode when it hit the target. Bazookas are no longer used in today's Army.

Let's go back to Larkinsville now, 1955. It was September. We were out of school for our cotton picking break. Country schools had vacation six weeks each fall to (hope) help, (old folks said "hope") gather crops. Especially cotton. Our 1st week out of school saw rain. It had rained hard almost every day and especially the night before. Today it was so foggy you couldn't see your hand in front of your face. I was awake early and waiting for dawn.

I put on my britches and shoes. Got my shirt, rifle and shells, then slipped out our back door. Even at that age I was pretty

much free to do what ever entered my mind. Putting on my shirt, I counted my shells as I went into the woods by our hog pen, soon disappearing into the thicket behind our house. Usually, a friend from down the road, Bradley, would be with me. We hunted almost every day when we could.

Climbing the ridge, trying to get a little deeper into the woods where the squirrels had not been hunted out. I could already tell this was going to be a great day. Even by myself! The rain had wet down the leaves, making it easy to walk without making a lot of noise.

Walking pretty fast, I made no sound except when stepping on an occasional twig or moving a rock with my feet. So, so foggy, by now my britches legs were wet and cold way up past my knees. Leaves and twigs clinging to my clothes made me blend into my surroundings. I almost blended into my surroundings too well. I knew I would be hard to see. It's gonna be a great day, I was thinking to myself. Wind was only slightly blowing but not making any noise.

I could hear the wet weather streams trickling down the mountain, as I climbed higher and deeper up the rocky ridges. Those hills were full of wet weather streams. They came and disappeared as quickly as the rain. After heavy rains like we had been having that week. Streams were everywhere, filled with cold clear water trying to wash small pebbles ahead of each ripple.

We had not been able to get into the cotton fields all week because of the mud and water. So, I had been hunting every day. One of the country

"I have kleptomania, but every time it gets really bad I take something for it."

Robert Benchley

Some Required Items for the Kitchen - 1890



- 2 large earthen bowls
- 2 sweeping brooms
- 1 bread box
- 2 cake boxes
- 1 candlestick
- 1 ash bucket
- 1 gridiron
- 1 wire toaster
- 1 large flour box
- 1 clothes wringer
- 8 dozen clothes pins
- 1 flour sifter
- 1 tea kettle
- 1 step ladder
- 1 meat saw
- 4 stone jars
- 1 stove, 1 coal shovel
- 2 granite-ware stewpans
- 2 wooden chopping bowls, 2 sizes
- 1 large tin pail and 1 large wooden pail
- 4 milk pans, 1 milk strainer
- 2 scoops - 1 for flour, 1 for sugar
- 2 sugar boxes, 1 for fine and 1 for coarse sugars
- 1 wash boiler, 1 wash board

perks, when you didn't have anyway to ride and go to town, you hunted. By now I had climbed over halfway up the ridge. I was out of sight of most of the known world, when suddenly something caught my eye. Slight, very slight movement, just off to my right and just below me on the ridge. Just a very slight movement. So slight most people would not notice.

Slowly turning my head as to not make any sound, I kept my feet firmly planted in the wet leaves. Only sound was the rippling water in a nearby stream. Listening, in the distance, I could hear rainwater dripping from the trees. A soft wind blowing on my face from the direction of the movement. Blowing so soft it hardly moved any leaves that were still hanging on the trees around me. Blowing from that direction I knew my smell would not alert any animal below. A squirrel went through my mind. Just an old grey squirrel. I put my left hand on the front of the rifle stock, gripping so I could move my right hand and arm against the butt of the stock and to the trigger so I could quickly take off the safety and shoot if indeed it was a squirrel.

I had never and still have never shot at anything I could not identify. Never, that has always been my personal rule. Never blind shoot.

Slowly turning my body toward the movement. Standing frozen in my tracks. Nothing. Still frozen and seeing nothing, I stood completely still and silent minutes passed. A twelve year old playing the part of a seasoned pro, still concentrating on the spot where I first saw movement. A second or two longer and nothing.

Then I heard a limb bending and snapped. A short distance to the left of the last small bush suddenly snapped. I still saw nothing except the limb bend and break, leaning toward the right. About eye level for an adult, 30 or 40 yards below me on the ridge. Nothing. Silence again. Then 5 or 6 seconds and a small twig breaks again about eye level to the left of the others. Even though it was to the left of the other broken twig, this

one also was broken and leaning to the right. Still I saw nothing except that limb bend and break.

I was starting to get a little concerned (afraid). Twelve years old alone in the woods. My rifle was loaded, off safety. One shell, rifle being a single shot. Seeing nothing a couple of seconds and another limb snapped directly below me on the ridge. The wind had stilled and the streams seemed to be making no sound. Silence. Have you ever seen nothing and heard silence? Well that day on that ridge in Larkinsville, Alabama, I did. I could hear my heart beating. I was holding my breath trying to be totally silent. I was seeing absolutely nothing except an occasional twig on a bush snap, remain attached and point to the right. Moving to the left. Another twig breaking and pointing right.

Didn't make sense. If a squirrel or bird or any small animal was jumping from bush to bush like I had been thinking, the limbs would break and lean opposite the direction of their jump. I thought the bush should move with the weight of even a squirrel landing. Scared, yes, now I am a 12 year old about to, well, I didn't have any clean pants so I held it in.

Moving so slow, a sloth would have been proud. I reached into my pocket. Gathered a few shells in my hand. I put them into my mouth. Using my tongue to twist and turn them in the same direction. I wanted to be able to fire as rapid as an automatic rifle if it came to some big "booger" jumping at me.

I'll never know what was on that ridge with me that day, I do know it meant me harm. As quietly and quickly as I could, I made my way home. It was weeks before I could force myself to again hunt alone.

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CHRISTMAS HISTORY AND TRADITIONS

by Iolanda Hicks



The main meaning of Christmas is to celebrate the birth of Christ, the Son of God. In the gospels of Luke and Matthew, Joseph and Mary traveled to Bethlehem to be counted in a census. There was not a room to be had for the couple but a stable where Jesus was born in a manger. It has been thought by some scholars, that the birth of Jesus was between 6 BC and 4 BC, based on the biblical story of King Herod the Great.

When Emperor Constantine reigned, the Church in Rome celebrated Christmas on December 25th beginning in the year 336 CE. There was some in that time period that thought that December 25th had been chosen to "outshine" the Sol Invictus which was a Roman holiday celebrating the birthday of the sun god. There was more doubt than agreement, in that time period, that this was the reason for the December date.

During Medieval times, some 500 plus years ago, the season of Christmas was celebrated 12 full days with feasting and fun, ending with the crowning of a 'King of Misrule' on the 12th night. During this time, the first Christmas in England was celebrated.

Through the centuries, changes were made concerning Christmas. Several times, Christmas and the celebrations were banned! Yes, Christmas was banned. The first of these official bans was in 1644 by the English Parliament. The Puritans, at that time, saw Christmas as encouraging idolatry. This ban in England did not last too long and was lifted by 1660.

Would you believe that Alabama was the first state to make Christmas a public holiday in 1836? By 1870, President Ulysses S. Grant made it a federal holiday. Other Christmas traditions began during the 19th century including the commercialized Christmas that began with buying gifts for young children. In today's world, even though children are still the number one receiver of Santa's gifts on his Christmas Eve Run, gifts are given to all ages during this season, keeping kindness and charity alive.

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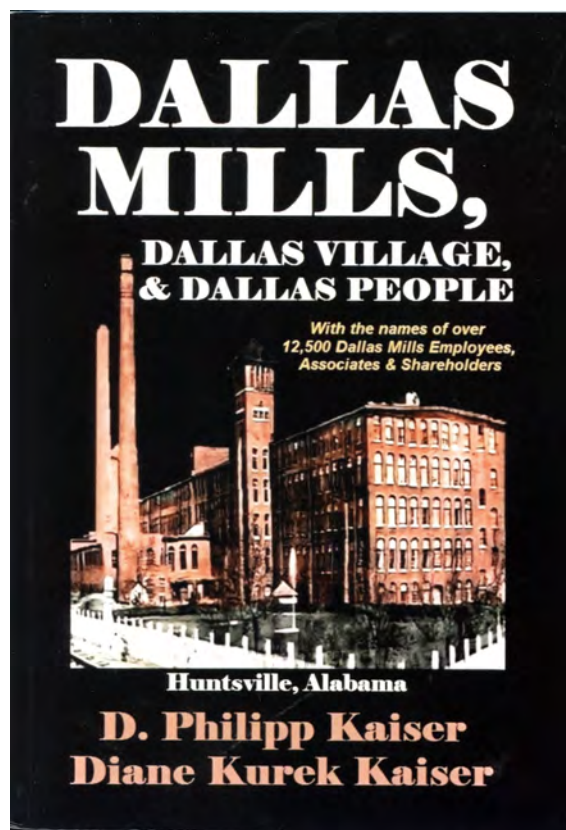
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Santa Claus's original name is St. Nicholas which can be traced back to the 3rd century. At that time he was a monk and was considered the patron Saint of children. Santa Claus, Kris Kringle, or St. Nick, is known by many other names throughout the modern world. In Brazil, he is known as Papai Noel; Julenisse in Norway; Shengdan Laoren in China; Kanakalokain Hawaii; in Germany, Der-Weihnachtsmann, Santa Nikolaus or Christkindl; Father Christmas in England; in the Netherlands, Sinterklaas; in Greece, Agios Vassilis; and in Italy, Babbo Natale or La Befana.

Of course, it wouldn't be Christmas without a Christmas tree. This tradition originated in Central Europe, with Germany being credited with starting the tradition. In the beginning, lighted candles were added to the tree until colorful bulbs and electricity came about.

It is noted that the tradition of the Christmas Tree was first introduced in America, by the Pennsylvania German Community in the 1820s even though some say it could have been as early as the 1700s. The history of the Christmas Tree has 'many roots' and it is a subject that is well-worth a reader's research, when time permits. Add the story of the origination of the Christmas stocking to that research. Such wonderful traditions and history, for a season that is my favorite one of all!

As a little girl, in the 1950s, I always anticipated Christmas with excitement. Downtown Huntsville had this wonderful Christmas parade every year with beautiful floats and school bands, marching as they played Christmas tunes. There was always a crowd for the yearly Christmas parade. The majority of the children and their parents would line the 2 major streets down-town on both sides, with many of the smaller children capturing the ultimate seat on the steady shoulders of their dads.

I loved those parades and at end of each one, Santa Claus, his sleigh and reindeer were always there!! About 15 years ago, I took 2 of my, then, younger grandsons to the city's Christmas parade. They had never been to a Huntsville parade and I wanted them to experience the magic I felt as a little girl. Well, that didn't happen, but it's okay. I realized

that we were in the 21st century now and not the 20th!

The parade was not the same. From my memories of those 1950s' parades, they were all about Christmas from the floats with Nativity scenes, to colorful Christmas magic and scenes of family gatherings. When Santa's float appeared, I wanted more. The parade of 15 years ago focused on the "Rocket City" with very little Christmas and it was so long! The magic wasn't there.

In closing, I am quoting a prayer or maybe a wish for this Christmas season for all of us in this unpredictable world that we live in: "I would (if I could) have for you the gift of courage, the strength to face gauntlets only you can name, and the firmness in your heart to know that you can be a bearer of the quiet dignity that is the human glorified."

In this Christmas season, share with one another a joyful heart and smile. Make memories that will warm your hearts for years to come by showing your love through kindness and selflessness.

My wish for you this year is to have a very Merry Christmas, filled with peace and much love!


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Huntsville News Throughout the Years



Huntsville in 1919 - Grand Jury Reports on Conditions in Huntsville

Bootlegging is alive and well in Madison County. It exists in every part of the county, especially in the city and outlying areas, with the exception of Merrimack. Most of the county officers and city commissioners offices are bought and sold outrageously.

Night hacks and omnibus lines help supply the bootleggers. Two restaurants, one near Southern Railway Station and one near the N.C. St. L., are termed "dens of vice." Near one of these a man, carrying \$40 he had gotten from sale of his cotton, had been reported murdered during the past year. The city has been asked to revoke the licenses of the cafes, one of which was selling five barrels of illicit whisky a week.

A New Jail is Needed

The jail situation is a pitiful one. The old portion of the jail that is still in use is a "horrible reminder of the dreadful dungeons of the Dark Ages" and the removal needs to happen speedily.

The poor house is in condition of neglect and its 23 inmates run out of food regularly

at different intervals and are unable to obtain any doctors services when required.

The Courthouse is a positive disgrace, with the Grand Jury room a germ-laden hole. It is the recommendation of the Grand Jury that this courthouse be torn down. The only reason that the county commissioners have not been indicted was because of the pleas of the solicitor.

County Packs the Square as End of the War Announced - 1918

News of the end of World War I was loudly celebrated around the public square of Huntsville recently. Such a crowd of people from every portion of the county never assembled so quickly as did the one that gathered around the Public Square on Monday morning last, when the glorious news of peace was received. By nine o'clock the streets were so crowded that one could scarcely walk along the street without pushing through. All were in a joyous good humor.

Prisoner eats \$442 worth of food - 1841

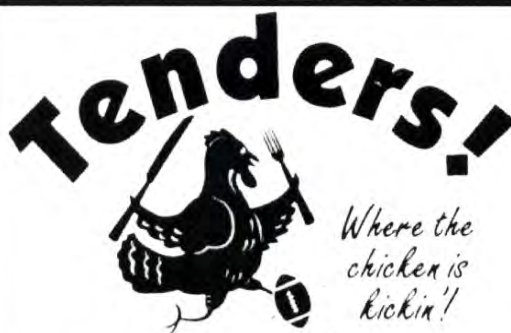
In spite of the allowance for food being limited to 40 cents per day, William R. Hunt, jailer, was refunded \$442 for feeding prisoner Jefferson Dance, a rather large man and a voracious eater, who was housed in the jail for 1,105 days. It took a legislative act to obtain the refund, this being a very unusual circumstance. In spite of his many days in jail, the prisoner is still waiting to be fined and the food bill of the state will eventually be lessened by the amount of the fine, if any.

New Hope Man Killed Going for a Coffin

W. B. Cobb, of New Hope, was killed at Paint Rock by the Memphis and Charleston train No. 4, east bound, the night of 21 Nov. 1896 when he attempted to cross in front of the train. He was knocked down, his head crushed and one leg cut off.

He had gone to Paint Rock to meet the train and get a coffin he expected to be brought in for his father.

Cobb lived near New Hope and leaves a wife and four children.



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Huh?

by Elizabeth Wharry



Simba was a small orange male tabby with green eyes. He showed up on our doorstep in December of 1994. He had been abandoned at 5 weeks old. Somehow he navigated several busy streets without being injured.

On my next day off, I took him to the vet. Aside from being under nourished, he seemed fine...physically. Arrangements were made to have him neutered. At his follow up, I told the vet Simba didn't seem quite right. That Simba always seemed to have a puzzled look about him. The vet performed a few basic behavioral tests. Simba failed every one of them. The vet said that due to the abandonment and early malnutrition, Simba wasn't firing on all cylinders. I was advised to keep him as an indoor cat.

He had some bizarre behaviors. One of which involved running into walls or doors, full speed. He would get up, shake his head and saunter away. The first few times that happened, I checked him over

for concussions and neck injuries.

One December, we bought an artificial 10 foot Christmas tree. I worked on it for a day, assembling and decorating it. The tree looked amazing.

The next day, I ran some errands and did the grocery shopping. I was probably gone 2 or 3 hours. When I walked in the house, the tree was laying on the floor! I lifted the tree up, and 7 pound Simba darted out. He was more scared than anything. Fortunately, nothing was damaged.

Simba moved with us several times. I woke up Thanksgiving morning of 2016, only to find that he passed at the ripe old age of 22.

Italian Lentils

2 c. dry lentils, soaked overnight

Water to cover

2 c. stewed tomatoes

1 chopped onion

2 garlic cloves, minced

3/4 t. salt

1/2 t. oregano

1/2 t. cumin

1/4 t. cayenne pepper

Place lentils in saucepan and add water to cover. Add remaining ingredients and simmer til done.

Add 2 teaspoons olive oil and serve over rice.



OPENING THE HIGHWAYS TO ALL MANKIND

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

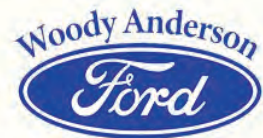
The Ford Motor Company views its situation today less with pride in great achievement than with sincere and sober realization of new and larger opportunities for service to mankind.

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"There are many intelligent species in the universe. They are all owned by cats."

Anonymous

The Christmas Surprise That Backfired



by M. D. Smith IV

Have you ever received a gift in a box large enough to hold a basketball, only to open it and find a smaller box inside? Maybe even another inside that box?

I have. My father liked to surprise my sister and me in similar ways, and I had a hard time guessing what was in the gifts. I loved the surprises, and as I grew older, I'd do the same things for our family members. When I got married, I continued to keep Judy, and later, when the kids came along, surprised by their particular Christmas gifts.

But there was this one Christmas in 1967 when we lived on Monte Sano, married for about six years with two small children, when we began thinking about holiday gifts just after Thanksgiving.

"I've never owned any real pearls," she said. "Just a cheap imitation string that looks fake. I'd sure like a single strand around my neck for my Christmas present."

I answered, "Maybe. I'll see what I can do," not want-

ing to make it a promise but a surprise when she got them. I'd likely put them in a larger box, too, so when she got the pearls, it'd still surprise her until she opened the last wrapped item.

They were at the top end of my budget. It would be my only meaningful gift to her besides some kitchen trinkets wrapped up from the two boys to Mom.

In early November, I went shopping at a jewelry store and found a string of genuine pearls that cost the same as a new set of tires I'd had to buy recently. It drained most of my savings, but I envisioned the smile on her face and the joy in her voice on Christmas morning, getting what she wanted most of all that year. I took the little flat square box with me. Wrapping was extra and I could do that myself.

Later, I had to pick up my oldest son at day care and put the box of pearls on the rear car window shelf next to recently installed rear speakers. I didn't want my son in the backseat fooling with the box.

When Judy helped me out at home with Dee, she glanced at that shelf and said, "Oh, is that something someone has asked for come Christmas?"

Damn. Since she'd asked for pearls, I knew she knew that was the exact size box they'd come in. There went my big surprise for Christmas — or maybe not. "No, that's some art supplies I bought to make decorations. Leave it. I'll get it later."

Pondering what I might do to keep it from being a ho-

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hum' opening, the Grinch in my soul had a perfectly wonderful, horrible idea. I went inside, wrapped the box, and hid it on the top shelf of my workshop closet.

Typically, I always wrapped gifts as I bought them near Christmas and put them around the tree so they'd grow and there would be lots of surprises awaited by Christmas Eve.

So, I wrapped and put everyone's presents under the tree and saw a couple in different colored wrapping with my name on it also appeared there.

The big day arrived. The two boys were excited to see what Santa brought them on either side of the fireplace, and that he ate the cookies left for him. As soon as the attraction of those toys wore off, they knew under the tree would be the next things to open.

Most of the wrapped presents were for the kids, so we handed them most of theirs first because they were so excited. Judy opened a few for her from the kids. I opened several nice ones from her, primarily clothes, because she knew what I liked and what size I was.

I'd been thinking about the pearls in my closet, but I wanted her to think for a moment that she would not get the one thing she asked for and her snooping early was wrong, even though not really her fault. Then, she'd be so surprised that I actually got them. She'd whoop and holler, and we'd end the morning joyfully.

Was I ever wrong.

About the moment it was clear there was nothing else to open, Judy sat in one of the living room chairs, lowered her head, and cried.

"What's wrong?" I said, figuring I knew.

"I just believed you thought more of me than this," she said.

My charade had worked too well. I dashed out to my workshop, got the gift and hurried back into the living room.

"Look, I have them for you," I said, handing her the box. She just set it in her lap, sniffing and wiping her cheek. "They would have been under the tree," I said. "But you know how much I want every gift to be a surprise, and when you saw the box that day in the car and knew what I got, I was trying to delay it to be a genuine surprise."

"It just made me feel so bad...that you didn't care, and I can't get over that feeling."

"But I do care," I assured her.

Still, the rest of Christmas day did not shine like the others before and since. My warped idea of making her gift a big surprise completely back-

fired on me.

I have never done anything like that again in all these years. Even a gift too big to wrap, like a bicycle or later lawn mower for grown kids, kept in our basement or garage, I put a small box under the tree with a note that says to see me for something too large to wrap. I learned my lesson well.

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World War II and Me

by Suzanne Bell Bolton - 2014

World War II officially began on September 1, 1939 with Germany's surprise attack on Poland. Diplomatic efforts by Great Britain had failed and the world was plunged into war for the second time in 25 years. As a little child, these world affairs made little impact on me; however, as the war went on, I began to notice the changes taking place around me.

I have no recollection of December 7, 1941, but after Pearl Harbor people living on the west coast were very afraid of a Japanese attack on U.S. soil. In fact, the people who owned the house my parents were renting in Santa Barbara were told to leave California as soon as possible. Because they moved so quickly, my parents were able to buy that house and its adjoining vacant lot for only \$2,000. Blackouts were enforced and Daddy lowered the window shades at sunset each night. We lived on the steepest hill in town and I could stand on our front porch and look out over the darkened city with nary a light showing. How eerie!

At school we practiced air raid drills by getting under our desks. Small children would hardly have had much chance of survival from a bomb attack, but at least they could be protected from flying debris in case one really did explode nearby.

After I attended Jefferson Elementary for only one year, the authorities closed it, moved the students to other elementary schools and con-

verted the school to a hospital for injured vets returning from the Pacific Theater.

The Bombardment of Ellwood on February 23, 1942 was a naval attack by a Japanese submarine against coastal targets near Santa Barbara. Though damage was minimal, the event triggered the West Coast invasion scare and influenced the decision to intern Japanese Americans. I was at the movies with my parents that night and when we exited the theater, the whole city was dark. Unable to use the car because of the blackout, we walked home. Mother cautioned me not to turn on a light anywhere in the house, even inside my closet. I obeyed, but groped my way to the coat hangers and hung my dress up like a good girl. The next morning I discovered I'd hung it up inside out.

After Pearl Harbor the U.S. government set up internment camps for Japanese Americans all over the western United States. Families who had lived in America for years, started businesses, farmed the land, and settled in as good citizens were forced to leave their homes and many of their belongings. They boarded buses and trains and were sent to the various camps for the duration of the war. I have recently learned that all my Japanese classmates in junior high and high school were interned in those camps. Now I feel terrible that I didn't know that at the time!

In school we pasted stamps into little books which would someday turn into war bonds. I didn't understand how that happened, but I thought it was fun pasting the stamps into the books. When one of the books was filled with stamps you turned it in to somebody or took it to a bank and they gave you a war bond. I must have done pretty well on the stamp pasting because after I graduated from college I cashed in my war bonds and took myself to Hawaii.

Gas was rationed. That meant we couldn't hop in the car and take a Sunday afternoon drive anytime we felt like it. It also put a crimp in our annual trips to Lake Tahoe where my aunt and uncle had a lovely summer home. Daddy put a black "A" sticker on the corner of the windshield on our car. That sticker apparently told the gas station attendant how much gas he could put in our car. I'm really not sure about that. Remember, I was a little kid. Mainly, I understood only the things which directly affected ME.

Mother saved bacon fat in a can and took it to the butcher who

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did something with it that helped the "war effort". We kids carefully separated the tin foil from the gum wrappers and collected bits of foil which we made into giant tin foil balls and triumphantly turned them in to our teachers who, in turn, did something with it for the "war effort". As I said, I'm really hazy on how these projects helped with the war.

The newspaper was filled with anti-Japanese sentiments. After all, we Californians were on the edge of the country and who knew when the Japanese would attack!

One of my favorite games was a small toy with several Japanese ships. You looked through a "bomb site" (really a mirror), pushed some sort of button or something and bombed the ships. I don't remember how many I sank.

Life magazine played a big part in what I knew about the war. I looked forward to its arrival each week with great anticipation. The pictures of the Allies' progress across Europe and the Pacific fascinated me.

But in May of 1945, as the Allies liberated the concentration camps in Germany, Austria and Poland, the pictures Life published were beyond my comprehension. Why were those children so thin? Why were they sleeping in layers on those wooden bunks? Why were they wearing that striped clothing? What had been happening in those places and why didn't we know about it before now???

I have never forgotten those images! Another news source was the Movie Tone Newsreels. Since we lived only 90 miles from Hollywood, and admission to the movies was only fifty cents, we went to

the movies a lot - often every week. In those days there were no ratings; all the movies were family friendly and I got to go to the show a lot.

I was transported by the movies and could easily pretend to be part of the drama myself. I'd come home, strut back and forth in front of my bedroom mirror and pretend to be the movie star I'd just seen at the theater.

The newsreels with their graphic images of bombings in London and hand-to-hand combat in Europe intrigued but didn't frighten me. The scenes showed far-off places, and what was happening there had no impact on me. That chaos was someplace else. I lived in America and everything around me was safe.

Another impression made by the newsreels was that of the German soldiers riding around in motorcycles with sidecars. I never saw any of those in my hometown so I knew only Germans had them. I wondered what it would be like to ride in the sidecar.

I also was intrigued with the rumble seats on the back of cars driven in some of the movies, and I just KNEW it would be fun to ride in one of those. But the sidecars on the motorcycles?

They were German and I knew I didn't want to ride in one of those!

V-E Day came on May 8, 1945 when Germany finally surrendered to the Allies. Hitler had committed suicide on April 30 and his evil Third Reich collapsed. But the war in the Pacific raged on. The atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August put an end to the resistance being offered by the Japanese as the Allies leapfrogged across the Pacific islands. My Marine Corps brother was en route to Japan when, on September 2, 1945 (his 22nd birthday), Japan signed the unconditional surrender aboard the U.S.S. Missouri.

My mother and I were at a movie that day when it was interrupted by the theater owner who announced that the war was over. Great celebrations went on all over the world. In Santa Barbara that night we three piled into the car and Daddy drove up and down State Street honking the horn along with all the other celebrants. My brother was spared the fighting in the Pacific, spent a year with the occupation forces in Japan and came home to marry his high school sweetheart.

The war was finally over and we could get on with our lives.



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Christmas Caroling

by Bill Goodson



"Oh goodness!" I say to myself, "It's almost December 21st, time to get started on the chili preparation. It always tastes better if it's been in the fridge a few days."

For several years - twenty-four to be exact - in the 1960s to 1990s, our family joined with others to go Christmas caroling. The total number of singers varied from year to year, depending on ages, etc. The Goodsons, Crowsons, Walkers and Mosleys were regular participants, usually numbering around 15 to 20. Our children - Dorothy, Cindy and Willa - were so enthusiastic about it that they carried it on into the next generation; some of our grandchildren eventually sang with us.

The agenda varied little from season to season. We gathered first at the Crowsons' home for dinner. I provided the main course, chili, following my Dad's recipe he used at Zesto Drive-in. Houston Goodson had been serving chili to customers for years that he prepared in a huge cast-iron pot that I eventually inherited. It was amply sized to feed our carolers. Leslie Crowson provided drinks and dessert, as well as cornbread using Lawrence's grandmother's recipe. Dev Mosley and Mary Lou Walker brought salad.

With full stomachs, we outlined our plans for the night. We had to choose the homes we would visit and plot a course to be followed by our caravan of cars.

Each family was allowed to choose three places to carol - mostly family and close friends.

The weather never stopped us. On one occasion there was a light snow on us so that we resembled a Christmas card.

I was the designated song leader, as well as the tenor section. Lawrence Crowson and Herb Walker handled the bass, Mary Lou Walker (my sister) alto, Elise Goodson and Pat Goodson (another sister) soprano, and all the rest the melody. Some kids had sleigh bells to jingle.

Our repertoire was rather limited, sticking to favorites so the words would be easy. You know - Silent Night, O Come All Ye Faithful, Joy to the World. And we often threw in Jingle Bells just for levity. We actually sounded pretty good, especially as the young ones' voices matured.

We capped each session with "We wish you a merry Christmas..." And a special role was assigned the youngest singer, to end it with the solo phrase "...and a Happy New Year." The year that Allison Crowson, age 3, was to fill that role, she protested shyness, but summoned her courage and did it with the accompaniment of her sister Beth and Willa. Sometimes it takes a village.

There were many memorable events. A few of them: Inez Parker always prepared home-made donuts and hot cider for us, so she and Bob remained on our list. They lived on Owens Drive, very near the Goldens, Sitarz's and Neighbors, so we often added them.

Buddy Kinzer thought we were the Oakwood Singers and tried to ignore us. When we persisted, though, he came to the door and offered a donation.

Grandmother Englebert, a ninety-year-old, lived on McCullough Avenue with Granddaddy. She was in the living room and heard us singing but thought it was the TV. So I had to bang on the door to get her attention. Then we did a rerun of "Silent Night" for her. She loved it. Granddaddy was already in bed. I guess you could say our ensemble became famous. At least, enough so that the Huntsville Times sent a reporter and camera one year to spread the word.

Eventually time took its toll. Children became college students, schedules became more complicated, and it was more challenging to assemble the chorus.

But...

Memories linger and friendships enrich our lives, Maybe the Spirit of Christmas has been enlivened a bit. I hope so.

I think so.

Certainly it has for us.

There was so much excitement when Elise told the carolers I was writing this article.



Christmas Tips from Earlene

- Fill your dining room with candles at different heights - try going with one color, like burgundy or dark green.

- For an eye-catching centerpiece for your dining room table, loop a wide taffeta ribbon around a wreath of greens and place on table. Intertwine with small white lights and in the middle put candles of varying heights.

- Make your own stairway greenery - just cut a large spray of greens, such as boxwood or magnolia - add a bow and wire it to the banister. Add a few Christmas balls to the greens and it will look great!

- Head off stress by sticking to your normal eating, sleeping and exercising routines as much as possible.

- Go to only those parties and events that you really want to attend - don't feel obligated and go.

- Shop early for those presents that need to be mailed away. Order your greeting cards and begin addressing envelopes.

- Plan your shopping in the daytime hours if possible. Dark parking lots have proven to be unsafe for many people. If you have to go in the evenings, take a friend or family member.

- To keep warmer inside - vacuum radiator surfaces frequently, open your shades and draperies on sunny days and close them at night, and wear warmer clothing, layered, indoors.

- Think about what you want to prepare for the week and bring your meat, like chicken, out of the freezer a day or two early to thaw in the refrigerator.

- If you have a room where clutter seems to multiply, just get a couple of large, attractive wicker baskets and toss the clutter into the baskets for a quick and easy pick-up.

- Want your kitchen trash can to smell fresh? Just toss a handful of good-smelling potpourri into the bottom of the can, then put in your plastic liner.

- You'll never serve lumpy gravy again if you blend a little salt into your water-and-cornstarch, or water-and-flour thickener before adding it to the pan juices.

- Make sure your Christmas tree is

fresh by doing the following: Use a knife to cut into the bark above the base. The exposed area should be green and begin to show moisture. Once you get home, cut about 1-2 inches off the base, strip away the bark an inch above the cut and immerse in water. If you've done it right, you'll notice that your tree is drinking a lot of water immediately.

- When gift-shopping, have a list of what you're getting for each person. Then you won't find yourself hopelessly frustrated.

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Huntsville High Class of 1966

Oscar Llerena

Dessert

by Gerald Alvis, *The Poet of Greenlawn*



I mispronounce words on occasion, especially when they are French or Italian-based. It's okay; someone gets a good chuckle out of it, and I can't help but snicker at myself. Yeah, it's embarrassing; it did come out different than what I had in my head; moreover, my southern accent only adds to the flair and emphasis of my verbal mishaps.

I took Ann out on a mid-week date. My new favorite restaurant is Connors, and we stopped by after viewing a movie called "Here" at the Bridge Street Theater. I love the atmosphere at this eatery, and the food and lunch menu are quite affordable. After the entrees were served, I decided to look at the dessert menu. Cheesecake is always a favorite, but I scanned this directory of delicacies till my eyes paused at the bottom Creme Brulee, hmmm. I think that's the one they set on fire, as I've seen on TV; I thought it would be a double delight, but how do I say it?

Like a secret agent, I typed in the name and how to pronounce it. I turned down the volume and listened

to how I might tell the server my wishes. I tried to keep it low so people wouldn't think I was having an event, leaning over my table with my head turned and slurring my words. As if vowels and consonants weren't tricky enough, these had those funny symbols on top; this would be auditory humor for any listeners. I conceded that it might sound funny, but I refused to point, so I did my best vocalization of this verbal challenge and asked if that was correct; I got the order right.

With my linguistic fears subsiding, I soon had this new treat that Ann and I shared. It was delicious, this unique flavor and texture I almost passed by.

We are creatures of habits, where we sit in church, the places we go on vacation, and even the type of movies we watch. But there is so much more to discover, from new lands, different customs, and even these after-dinner snacks. I looked over at my wife (though she was getting dangerously near the midline of our shared dietary delight), seeing her as if it was for the first time, and after 47 years, the spark was still there. I even caught a hint of blush when she captured my gaze.

Gentlemen, woo your wife and pursue her; life, like adventures and desserts, is best shared! Don't worry about your wording; she gets it before you say it; they are amazing that way. Both newness and the familiar are to be cherished; they are part of an ongoing journey of shared life and this ritual of love.

"You know it's going to be a bad day when your car horn goes off accidentally and remains stuck as you follow a group of Hell's Angels down the highway."

Bob Davis, Guntersville

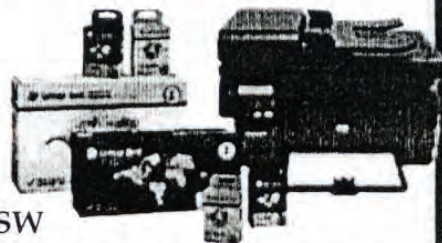
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Local Experts

Sippin' and Dippin' on Tator Knobb

by Billy Joe Cooley

It was the mid-1950s when Murphy and I went hill-climbing on Tator Knob, out in Hurricane Creek. Such treks often resulted in crossing paths with interesting characters like hill-dwellers whose cabins appeared as blessings from heaven, especially on hot days when we would run out of water.

Such was the situation one early September afternoon after Murphy and I had walked more than four hours. His jug was depleted first, then mine. It was one of those thirstier-than-usual days.

Spotting a small cabin in a clearing ahead, we decided to do the inevitable: ask for a water handout. We had done it often when coming upon a rural oasis.

A small woman walked from the cabin as we approached, looking us over pretty well as we walked up. Determining that we were just a pair of OK city boys on a country hike, she asked if we were "tard."

At least we weren't revenueers, she theorized. Revenueers were notorious for destroying perfectly good whiskey distilleries in those days just because the units were unlicensed by the federal government.

We told her that we were merely thirsty schoolboys. "Thirsty for water, that is," we clarified, in the event she had moonshine in the house.

The old woman grinned and walked toward her well. She pulled up a bucket of water and handed me the drinking gourd, which was the only sign of a dipper around. Unfortunately, before I had time to take a sip of the water, I no-

ticed some serious snuff stains around her mouth.

Let it be known here and now that next to pesky flies and mosquitoes, there's nothing more detestable to me than eating or drinking from an unwashed utensil that has been used by a snuff-dipper.

Anyway, I was determined that my lips were not about to touch any part of that gourd where that woman may have drank. My plan was to hold the gourd in my left hand and get a relatively clean side, assuming she was right-handed like most people.

The little woman grinned through her snuffy lips and encouraged me to hurry up so she could get a drink.

I hesitated a few minutes. Finally I asked, in a devious way, whether she was left or right-handed.

"Why, I'm neither," she replied. "I'm what they call ambidextrous. I use both hands equally as good."

This created a major mental problem for me.

Then I remembered that gourds have hollow handles, so I put my lips around the end of the gourd and let the water run through the handle, into my thirsty gullet. What a refreshing moment.

The old woman watched curiously, then blurted out "Well, if that don't beat all. You're the only person I ever saw who drinks water out of the gourd the same way I do."



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SOME DAYS ARE BETTER THAN OTHERS

*by Alabama Governor
Fob James (1979-1983),
as interviewed by Tom
Carney*



Several years ago during my first term as Governor, I had occasion to spend several days in Huntsville attending a series of meetings. The second day I was there I awoke early with a ravishing hunger. As I lay there thinking about it, I remembered Eunice's Restaurant, a place I had visited several times before, and which was well known for its ham and biscuits.

I got dressed quietly, so as not to awaken anyone. I slipped out of the hotel room and, after sneaking by the guards stationed in the hall, caught a ride with a taxi that was waiting out front.

Eunice's had not changed very much. The autographed pictures of many famous people were still on the walls, and the coffee pot was still brewing.

Trying to be as incognito as I could, I slipped into a back booth and ordered breakfast. I was halfway through my second biscuit when I noticed this elderly gentleman staring at me. Every few minutes he would turn excitedly to his companions and, after pointing at me, would engage them in a spirited conversation.

"Oh well," I thought. "I should have known I would be recognized."

Deciding to make the best of it, I hurriedly finished my breakfast and walked over to shake hands and introduce myself.

"I'm....." I began.

"I know who you are!" The old gentleman exclaimed, with a grin stretching from ear to ear.

"You're that TV fellow who announces the wrestling program on TV every Saturday! Can I get your autograph?"

Suffice to say that the gentleman got an autograph.

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

Mack Judd, Gurley

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**"I'm so old they have
discontinued my blood type."**

Bill Moyers, Huntsville

There is Still Hope

by Jerry Keel

I recently observed my 87th birthday and this is possibly the last article I will be able to write for Old Huntsville magazine. Not that I want it to be but when a person gets 87 anything can happen. That's just a fact of life.

I have certainly enjoyed writing about our great city and some of the things that have happened to me and around me but nothing can last forever. My thanks to Cathy Carney for the opportunity afforded people who wish to share some of their experiences growing up in Huntsville.

As you know there have been some great changes in the war against discrimination. More changes need to be made but we can't rush them. Time will continue to solve some of the old habits embraced by both the white race and the black race.

Now to the reason for this article.

One of my granddaughters (Kristen Bacon, who lives in Killen, AL near Florence) has four children. I don't get to see them as much as I would like but that is another story. My daughter, Angi Keel, makes the trip at every opportunity. On one occasion she bought a cap for them to sign and give to me. You can guess how thrilled I was to receive such a gift.

When Angi wrote in large letters "PAW-PAW" on the front of the cap, all four of the kids wanted to write something also. Angi said each one could sign their name on the cap and solved that problem.

One day I stopped for a meal at the Cracker Barrel restaurant in Huntsville. As I approached the entrance two elderly white ladies were headed for the door also. Being the nice guy I am I naturally held the door open for them. As they entered they both nodded and said "thank you" to me.

As the two ladies went in a very pretty young black lady walked up to the doorway so I naturally held the door for her and told her to come on in.

As she approached the door she smiled and looked me straight in the eyes and said "THANK YOU, PAW-PAW."

I was startled for a moment before realizing she had noticed my cap the kids had made for me. That young lady reaffirmed my faith in human nature and I was blessed from head to toe by the simple act of appreciation she displayed that day.

Huntsville will continue to grow. So many new businesses, governmental agencies and the people who will be needed to support this growth will assure a continuous increase in the population of Huntsville. It is inevitable that the roads will continue to become more congested.

The playgrounds and open fields where we once played football and softball will soon be filled with more and more houses and huge apartment complexes which will be necessary to house all the new workers and their families.

As Huntsville continues to grow larger our respect for one another probably will become less and less. We will become like the large cities where hordes of people walk around never acknowledging or speaking to each other. Gone forever are the days of the sleepy little cotton town where we all knew one another.

This is sad but it is what goes along with progress. The prices of everything have gone up and up, often to the point that some of the things we took for granted are now priced so high many folks cannot afford them.

Maybe becoming 87 years old is not such a bad thing after all. This probably means my days here are limited. Soon the things that once seemed so important to me will not matter so much. Most of our little ones have all grown up and are able to take care of themselves. The old folks who once were the care-givers now require someone to care for them.

This is the natural way things go as we grow older. We might as well accept it because that is the way things will be until we are all gone. Move over old people, make room for the youngsters.

We all, black and white alike, could make this a better place to live by showing more courtesy and respect to each other. Maybe some day??

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CHRISTMAS REMEMBERED

by Johnny Johnston, 2009

Perhaps the level of anticipation exceeds the event itself. This was life in Mill Town Alabama. Tillman Hill in his book "Mr. Anderson's Monument" gave a very good assessment of life during the 40s when everything was valuable and little was financially attainable.

Tillman talked about life during Christmas when he so desperately wanted to give his parents a little something for Christmas. He snatched a box of cigars from his father's bedroom and three pairs of hose from his mother's clothing and wrapped them separately. These were his gifts to them for Christmas.

His mother later, very quietly, thanked him for the gift

knowing he had no way of delivering any other thing to them as gifts.

My late brother Fred had a job carrying in Mrs. Webb's coal on a daily basis which paid him 10 or 15 cents per week.

My sister was working at Wilson's Laundry at age 14 and used 20 cents of her salary to buy two gifts for two brothers for Christmas.

Do I sound sad? Don't mean to. We were very happy at Christmas time. It was a time for family, for bright lights, for visits from other family members and especially time to visit Aunt Annie White's house in Morgan City. Aunt Annie always baked a cake for the holidays.

Other fun things were the Huntsville Christmas parade around the Square, up Jefferson and down Washington. I don't remember any Santa Claus interviews in Dunavants. Dunavants was about the only department store downtown and there wasn't anything outside

of downtown.

If you lived in Lincoln you usually got a gift at a church party. At the Baptist Church where I went we were usually given a bag with an apple or orange and maybe one piece of hard candy.

I especially remember Barbara's Grandmother Brown who lived on a farm in Baker's Cross Roads, Tennessee. She couldn't wait to open her gifts no matter how meager they were. She then couldn't wait to carefully place them in drawers or closets where we found them unused after she passed away.

At my age, I happily look back at those days living on Maple Street but I also look at Christmas for our children, grandchildren and great grandchildren and try my best to help them have a Christmas of fun, presents and gifts from Santa. Barbara sees to it that they have memories from our holidays that they will always remember.

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PET TIPS FROM ANGEL

All About Cats

Cats and Good Luck

- Dreaming of a cat is sometimes regarded as a sign of bad luck in the future. On the other hand, American folklore has it that dreaming of a white cat is good luck.

- In England, it was believed that if a black cat lived in the house, the young lass would have plenty of suitors.

- In France, it is believed that if you find one white hair on a black cat, Lady Luck will smile upon you.

- In Yorkshire, England, while it is lucky to own a black cat, it is extremely unlucky to come across one accidentally.

- In the early 16th century, a visitor to an English home would always kiss the family cat to bring good luck.

- In the Dark Ages, a cat was mortared, while still alive, into the foundation of a building to ensure good luck to the inhabitants.

- If a black cat crosses your path while you're driving, turn your hat around backwards and mark an X on your windshield to prevent bad luck.

- It is bad luck to cross a stream carrying a cat. - French superstition

- Fishermen's wives kept a black cat at home to prevent disaster at sea.

- It is bad luck to see a white cat at night. Harming any cat will bring bad luck to your whole family.

- If you kick a cat, you will develop rheumatism in that leg.

- To put an ending to even one of a cat's 9 lives was to risk



being haunted by that particular cat for the rest of the murderer's life.

- To kill a cat brings seventeen years of bad luck - Irish superstition

- The French believed that if a girl tread on a cat's tail, she would not find a husband before a year is out.

The Cat as a Soothsayer

- Cats can forecast the weather: they predict the wind by clawing at carpets and curtains; rain is highly likely when a cat busily washes its ears.

- In mythology, the cat was believed to have great influence on the weather. Witches who rode on storms took the form of cats.

- The dog, an attendant of the storm king Odin, was a symbol of wind. Cats came to symbolize down-pouring rain, and dogs to symbolize strong gusts of wind.

- Some people believed that if a cat washes its face and paws in the parlor, company's coming.

- If a cat continually looks out a window on any day, rain is on the way.

- A stray tortoise shell cat foretells a bad omen.

- Some cats can predict earthquakes (actually, there is some truth in this "folklore").

- Cats have a heightened

sensitivity to changes in atmospheric pressure, which can help them anticipate weather changes, including storms. Here are a few ways in which cats may exhibit signs of knowing when storms are coming:

- Sensing changes in air pressure: Cats have a keen ability to detect subtle changes in air pressure. As a storm approaches, atmospheric pressure drops, and cats may be able to perceive this change, which can make them restless or anxious.

- Heightened hearing: Cats have excellent hearing capabilities, and they can detect low-frequency sounds and vibrations that humans may not perceive. Storms often produce low rumbling sounds and changes in wind patterns, which cats may pick up on, making them more alert or nervous.

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From the Desk of Tom Carney

The Underground Dance Hall

Just a few miles up Pulaski Pike, well within the city limits, is a cave that was once heralded as the most popular nightclub in this area.

The early history of Shelta Cave is lost in the shroud of history, but some of the earliest stories tell of Confederate soldiers hiding in the cave to escape searching Union soldiers. One rumor that persists to this day concerns a bloody hand-to-hand battle supposedly fought in the depths of the cavern on the shores of a vast underground lake.

Like any other large cave, it has legends woven around it concerning buried treasure, ghosts and eerie noises. These remained just legends with no basis in fact until 1888 when Mr. Bolen James sold the land to a Mr. Henry Fuller.

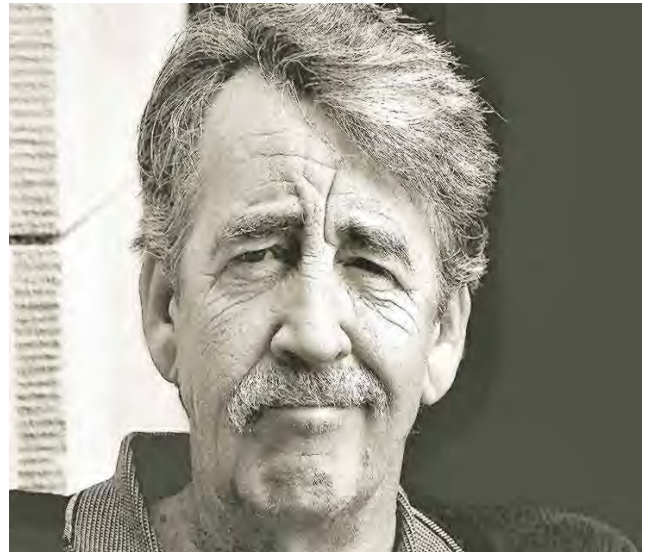
Not much is known about the early life of Mr. Fuller, but judging from his actions he must have been a born entrepreneur.

Immediately after taking possession of the cave he hired a team of carpenters to install steps down into the main chamber. Next he assembled a crew of craftsmen to install a dance floor in one of the great rooms with large stand-up bars at each end. He made no secret of the fact that he intended to open the grandest, fanciest and most unusual dance hall in Alabama.

Huntsville had seen its large share of weird, wacky ideas, but a dance hall in a cave? Even for Huntsville's standards that was too much. Townspeople began to call the yet uncompleted dance hall "Fuller's Folly".

As is true in many a new business, Fuller soon found himself facing a slight problem — too many ideas and not enough money. Reluctantly he let himself be talked into forming a corporation called, appropriately enough, Shelta Cave Corporation. With a new influx of money from investors came new opportunities and it wasn't long before Fuller heard of a new attraction in Nashville that he thought would be perfect for the business.

There had been much talk in Huntsville about a new invention called "electric lights." But while most people dismissed it as just another crazy idea, Fuller was determined to light his dance floor with the "marvel of modern technology." Within



days of Fuller's visit to Nashville, workmen arrived to begin stringing wire throughout the cave.

Although few people realize it today, when Fuller pulled the switch on his new lighting system, he earned himself (and the dance hall) a place in Huntsville's history as having the first electric light bulbs in Madison County. Even this was not enough for Fuller, for as he cast his eyes upon the vast underground lake he began to see another possibility for potential profits. Within the week neighbors watched in amazement as workmen unloaded three large boats from a wagon and awkwardly maneuvered them down the steps.

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The citizens of Huntsville must have had a good chuckle when he announced his intentions of providing "Underground Boat Rides". And, as if that was not enough, he purchased hundreds of Japanese lanterns to hang overhead!

Finally the day of the "Grand Opening" arrived, and true to Fuller's predictions, crowds thronged the cave to see the marvel of electric lighting, ride the boats and dance to the sound of a newly hired band. With the admission price of one dollar, Fuller should have been able to make a profit, but unfortunately, he was too deeply in debt. Also, the townspeople, after making one or two visits to the entertainment mecca, quickly lost interest.

Desperate for money, Fuller began to travel throughout the South promoting Huntsville and Shelta Cave as a convention center. Evidently he had some success, as the Huntsville Mercury in 1889 ran an article about a gathering of the Press Association:

"The entertainment of the Press Association by the citizens of Huntsville closed today with a grand barbecue in Shelta Cave and nearly one hundred delegates and their ladies were in attendance. The affair was gotten up in a delightful manner and the beauties of the place were fully investigated by the astonished guests.

According to rumor, Fuller, or one of his cohorts, in another effort to stimulate business, (and keep down overhead) actually operated a moonshine still in one of the dark corners of the cave. Years later when it

was discovered that Shelta Cave was the home of a rare species of blind shrimp, one local wag laughed and said, "Hell, that lickker made a lot of people almost blind, I reckon some of it could have spilled into the lake!"

Another story of the day concerns a duel fought over a lady's honor at the edge of the dance floor. The gentlemen, each slightly intoxicated, were pursuing the same girl at the same time when they happened to accidentally meet at the dance. Harsh words were exchanged and to everyone's horror, they pulled pistols from underneath their coats. Both fired, and both missed. Fortunately they let themselves be led away before real harm could be done.

The only casualty of the duel was a member of the band who was slightly injured by a falling stalactite.

As almost any nightclub

owner can tell you, crowds are fickle, and within a few years the dance hall was again facing financial ruin. This time, even Fuller's salesmanship could not save it. On June 28, 1897, the cave was sold at a Sheriff's sale on the steps of the Courthouse to settle a judgement.

Although there is no documentation to support it, natives of Huntsville, who remember the 1920s and 1930s, swear that there was once a speakeasy located in the cave. Other sources claim that moonshine was produced in the cave at intervals all the way up to World War II. Another persistent rumor claims the cave was used as a liquor and beer warehouse during prohibition.

In 1968, after being neglected for years, the cave was purchased by the National Speleological Society. An iron gate has been placed over the entrance to prevent accidents.

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Heard in the Papers



From Huntsville Newspapers of the Past

An Embarrassing Suicide from 1912 Newspaper

Harold Gentry, 32, yesterday phoned his mother to inform her that he had taken poison and would not be long of this world. A short while later he again phoned to say he was growing weaker.

Mrs. Gentry, apparently hard of hearing, understood her son to say that he was going to Illinois where he was going to meet a man by the name of Mr. Beaker. Mrs. Gentry congratulated her son, wishing him good luck on his upcoming trip.

Fortunately the incident had a happy though embarrassing ending when Gentry discovered he had taken a large dose of laxative, rather than poison.

Gentry will apparently not call his mother again in an emergency.

Real Estate from 1910

- \$4,400 will buy a well-improved farm just 7 miles from Huntsville. This farm is 150 acres, 100 in cultivation, 50 acres in woods and pastures. A good number of springs and a good well is on the land.

There is a barn for horses and one for hay, several other outbuildings and a nice orchard. If you want a good improved farm look this one over.

- 7 room house for rent on Randolph Street. Will make improvements if rented for a year to suit the tenant. \$25 per month.

- 4 room house in good condition on Pratt Avenue. Will rent for \$10 per month.
- 5 room house on Pratt Avenue near the car line. Good condition. \$12.50 per month.

A Faithless Spouse

from 1890 Newspaper

George Mitchell came into the office of the Times yesterday and reported the disappearance of his wife, who was before he married her, Nancy Whitlock.

Mitchell and his wife were living happily and Mitchell's half brother, George Edmonds, boarded at his house.

Last Thursday a week ago Mitchell returned from work late in the evening and found his house closed, and upon inquiry found that his five month old child had been taken to a neighbor's house with the request to take care of the child for an hour, when the mother would come for it.

Mitchell waited for his wife's return, but she never came back, and upon investigation it was found that Mitchell's half brother had eloped for parts unknown with Mrs. Mitchell.

Mitchell took his babe in his arms and walked through country roads to his friends in the neighborhood, three miles from town where he left the baby, swearing that he would search the earth over until he found the base wretch who has brought this sorrow to his home. He said that if the law set his brother free after he had found him and turned him over to its custody, he would shoot him down in the courtroom then and there.

Mitchell left in the rain, trying to find a trace of his faithless spouse.



NALA

Hello, my name is Nala. I am a four-year-old brown tabby cat with a touch of orange in my fur that makes me unique and very pretty. I was surrendered to the Ark Animal Shelter along with my sibling because someone became allergic to us in the home where we lived. Since coming to the Ark my shots have all been brought up to date. I am also micro chipped,

spayed and declawed. I live in a room here at the shelter with a lot of other cats but I would much prefer to be the only cat in the home so that I can receive all the attention from my new family. I love people and love to play and in particular I love cat treats! If you are looking for a people-friendly kitty as a new family member please come to see me here at the shelter. Spend some time with me and I promise I will be a great new family member.

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A 1937 Christmas

by Chuck Bobo



I awakened early on the morning of December 25 in 1937 and went scampering to the Christmas tree in the living room. Dad had a roaring fire going in the fireplace and he was waiting to see my reaction.

Santa's gifts were unwrapped under the tree and I shouted with glee. There was more than I ever dreamed of.

A Roy Rogers cowboy hat! A set of Buck Jones cowboy chaps! Real raised heeled cowboy boots! A real rope lariat!

And, what's this a small bridle and a real leather western saddle with the rope lariat?

I screamed at the top of my lungs and made a break for the door, but Dad grabbed me and said, "Put some warm clothes on before you go to the barn."

You've never seen a kid jump into a pair of jeans and flannel shirt quicker. He took me by the hand as we headed to the barn, but I broke

away and rushed to the stable. There on a warm bed of straw was the prettiest Shetland pony I had ever seen.

I was so nervous, I approached the pony with hesitation. He rose to his feet and backed away slowly, but stretched his neck and head as if to get a smell of me. I was frozen in my tracks, not knowing to move forward or what. Dad reached in his jacket pocket and pulled out a sugar cube.

He said, "Hold out this flat in your hand and see what he does."

I nervously extended my right hand with the sugar cube and the pony nuzzled it and his lips went around the sugar and it was gone. Slowly I reached out and touched his head.

I remembered that my Dad had told me that a horse or mule can't scratch between his ears and that was one way to get their trust. I gently extended my hand and rubbed the pony on the top of his head between his ears. He moved forward and nuzzled his head against my side.

Dad said, "See, you have earned some of his trust. It will build as he becomes accustomed to you. Treat him gently."

I yelled, "Where is the saddle and bridle? I want to ride him. What's his name?" as my thoughts rolled out. "Where did you get him? Is he really mine?" I was so happy that tears were rolling down my cheeks. I was laughing and crying at the same time.

Dad handed me a brush and instructed, "Brush him gently. Gain his trust before you even think of riding him."

I brushed him and used a curry comb which Dad handed me to get the tangles from his mane and tail.

Dad cautioned, "Be careful if you get behind him. I don't know if he kicks or not. He hasn't been ridden or handled much before, so you be really careful until he gets used to you. We'll get him accustomed to a bridle and saddle before you attempt to ride him."

"I'll just call him Pony," I exclaimed. "That is what he is!"

"Let's think on that awhile," Dad said, and he walked outside the barn and returned with a pail of water from the rain barrel. "He may be thirsty and ready for a drink."

I was so excited that I hardly noticed. I would brush and then run my bare hand over his skin. Apparently he enjoyed it for he pushed closer against me as if to say, "Do it some more."

Dad helped me saddle up. After I had finished the brushing, he said, "You had better go back to the house and put on your riding clothes and I'll have him saddled when you get back."

I ran to the house and jumped into my new western clothes and was back at the barn in minutes. Pony was saddled and I was ready to ride, cowboy ride.

It was the greatest Christmas of my life.

"THE WAY IT WAS," THE OTHER SIDE OF HUNTSVILLE'S HISTORY

BY TOM CARNEY



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Christmas 1946

by Giles Hollingsworth



I can think of nothing more mood-motivating than Christmas carols and other Christmas songs. And Christmas is not just a day, it's a season, a season that begins at least two months before the 25th of December. Yes, I know commercializing it is largely responsible for that time length, but even so, the ads would get nowhere without the songs. For example, radio station WSM in Nashville easily reached Huntsville in 1946, and I heard this song, to the tune of Jingle Bells, over and over:

"Harvey's has it, Harvey's has it, Christmas gifts galore, Oh what fun it is to shop at Nashville's largest store, Escalators up and down, gifts on every floor, Oh what fun it is to shop at Nashville's largest store".

Pretty clever, huh, blending the store motto (Harvey's has it), the old (Jingle Bells), and the new, which was the

message that "We are one of the very first stores to install escalators". No store in Huntsville, or Florence, or Fayetteville, etc. had escalators, so lots of shoppers would drive to Nashville to see and ride Harvey's marvelous new moving stairways.

That's a nice memory for me, but by far my best and most precious musical Christmas memories are the wonderful old carols, not just those being sung by a choir, as the "Chestnuts roasting on an open fire" song mentions, but also being sung by me, my school-mates, my family, and others, at home, in school and in church.

There is something compelling, satisfying, and actually sacred, about songs like "Silent Night", "Joy To the World", and "Hark the Herald Angels Sing", songs that I learned at about the age of six or seven. We could follow suit to a present-day practice of likening things to "the perfect storm", but in this case calling either of these songs, "the perfect song".

I had a lot of blessings to count that 1946 Christmas season, more that I can mention here. But just to reminisce about, and share with you the musical ones, brings the greatest of pleasure to me. First of all, at last we were able to buy a radio! Radios had been absolutely and totally unavailable during the war. RCA, Crosley, Silvertone and all other radio manufacturers had produced them only for our planes, ships, tanks, walkie-talkies, etc. But now they were available, and as soon as the crop was in and sold, about the first of November, we bought one, and we let the Christmas music start pouring in! Dinah Shore, Red Foley, and Gene Autry all had weekly programs, which of course featured



Thank you!

**Thank you to our
Police Officers,
Fire-fighters,
Paramedics,
EMTs - We
appreciate all
you do to keep us
Safe Every Day.**

Christmas music.

And to add to our radio Christmas boon, two new Huntsville radio stations, went on the air in 1946, WHBS on November 10, and WFUN on November 26. Both were just in time to fill Huntsville's air with enough, or at least almost enough, Christmas music. (Incidentally WHBS was Huntsville's first FM station, and WFUN brought more country music to us).

But wait, there's more! And this requires me to back up a little and tell you about a wonderful lady. I'm pretty sure her name was Miss Jackson, and my apologies for not being absolute sure, because if ever anyone deserved to be remembered it was her.

Miss Jackson was what I would call a "circuit rider" music teacher for Madison County, going from school to school, facilitating student singing. Either she or one of the Farley Junior High School teachers established a glee club there, a club that any student could join, but quite naturally the joiners were those who enjoyed singing, which likely eliminated auditioning. In other words we "singers" had a bit of ego and/or pride which spurred us on. Yes, I eagerly joined! So did my younger brother, Bobby. He was twelve; I was fifteen. And there were a couple more boys, but girls out-numbered us about two to one.

Miss Jackson was young, probably in her mid-twenties. She had red hair, was of average size, and was moderately attractive. Her disposition was one of patience and pleasantness. She knew her job well and thoroughly enjoyed it. In my scores of classes through the years I never experienced another teacher with that much student rapport, and such mutual admiration and appreciation between teacher and pupils. It was amazing! Furthermore, she instilled within us pride beyond our imagination, group and individual pride in our talent and the accomplished showing and blending of it.

"If you want a true friend in Washington, D.C. - get a dog."

President Harry Truman

Here we were, the twelve of us, making beautiful music, music that was enjoyable to the listener and was wondrously, inwardly beautifying to each singer, each young teenager who so needed to feel important, talented, and even needed by the world around us.

Then — and this is what made that Christmas season so special...Miss Jackson did something that may sound routine to some, but it was so fantastic to us! She made arrangements for us to sing Christmas carols on WHBS on the night of December 15! Can you imagine the elation, the excitement! We would be actually performing on the air!

She made a couple of extra trips to Farley and rehearsed us well. Our school principal Mr. Morris furnished a school bus for us. We arrived at WHBS, each of us feeling a little nervous but Miss Jackson calmed us with just the right words. We sang our hearts out that night and it was the most beautiful music of the entire Christmas season of 1946.

(A special thanks to Kate at the Huntsville Library, Research Department, for honoring my request to pinpoint the dates of WHBS and WFUN going on the air).

The ability to speak several different languages is an asset, but the ability to keep your mouth shut in any language is priceless.

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CHRISTMAS WITH CAROL

By Shirley Nolen



One night in December, 1971, our doorbell rang. It was Carol Bankston, delivering a basket filled with all the makings of an English Christmas dinner. The basket contained HP sauce (Carol said "no self-respecting British family would sit down to dinner without it"), Bisto gravy (this still appears on our own Christmas table), plum pudding, mince meat, English tea and other goodies.

My girls were fascinated by the Christmas Crackers, little gift-wrapped tubes that "cracked" when you pulled them apart to find the little surprises inside.

Carol and I had talked a few times before about our Christmas memories.

My memories were mostly of my Mother, the meals she served, and our stocking treats. However, Carol's stories were so exciting to me because her family was steeped in traditions of England and an exotic-sounding land called "Rhodesia."

Carol and I sat at my little kitchen table that night and talked for hours about Christmas memories, me in my night robe, hair in curlers, very pregnant with my youngest child, Scott.

Once, Carol tried to help me make an authentic English "Christmas Cake" and Yorkshire Pudding. I gave up trying after Carol's Mum, Winifred, came to live in America, or as she put it "the God-forsaken colonies," and showed us how it was really done.

Our families celebrated Christmas together for more than 20 years. And always, when the little ones' eyelids were so heavy, in that magical moment, Santa arrived with a bag of special goodies. Then all of the girls would sit down to the piano with the Reader's Digest Songbook for a hearty singalong. "It's a long way to Tipperary" was a favorite. Harrison would regale us with "Why don't you haul off and love me" among others.

Carol was always the epitome of a perfect English lady, a treasured Southern neighbor, and an incredibly loving and fun friend. She is no longer with us, but her memory is with our family every year during the holidays.

Let's have a cup of Was-sail in her honor!

Wassail

2 quarts sweet apple cider
2 cups orange juice
1 cup lemon juice
2- #2 cans pineapple juice
1 stick cinnamon
1 tablespoon whole cloves

Bring to a simmer. Strain. Sweeten to taste. Serve hot.



Pumpkin-Ice Cream Pie

1 pt. vanilla ice cream, softened
1 baked 10" pastry shell
1 - 16 oz. can pumpkin
1-1/2 c. sugar
Dash salt
1 t. ground ginger
1 t. ground cinnamon
1 t. vanilla extract
1-1/2 c. whipping cream, divided
Caramelized almonds

Spread ice cream in bottom of pastry shell; freeze til firm. Combine pumpkin, sugar, salt, spices & vanilla, stir.

Beat 1 cup whipping cream til light and fluffy; fold into pumpkin mixture. Spread over ice cream layer; freeze til firm.

Beat remaining whipping cream til light, use to garnish frozen pie just before serving. Sprinkle with Caramelized Almonds.

Caramelized Almonds

1/4 c. sugar
1 c. slivered almonds

Combine sugar and almonds; cook over low heat til sugar and almonds have browned. Stir constantly.

Spread mixture in a thin layer on a buttered cookie sheet; cool. Break into small pieces.

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Good Advice from the Old Days



- When your child is crying and angry, just whisper to her. She will have to stop crying in order to hear what you're saying.

- Loosen glue with a cloth soaked in vinegar.

- If you have toilet rings that can't be removed, try using a mixture of borax and lemon juice. Make a paste, wet the rings

and apply the mixture. Wait for 2 hours and scrub off - try a fine grade of sandpaper if cloth doesn't work.

- Place a fabric softener sheet in your bathroom wastepaper basket for a pleasant aroma.

- Keep your clear plastic wrap in the refrigerator to prevent it from ever sticking together again.

- Store your favorite negatives behind the picture it pertains to in your photo album.

- Put a piece of chalk in your jewelry box to keep your costume jewelry from tarnishing.

- To wash your delicate things, drop them into a pillowcase and fasten the loose end with a plastic garbage bag tie. Wash on gentle cycle.

- You can eliminate a lint problem in clothes washing by adding a cup of white vinegar to the final rinse cycle.

- If metal screws keep working loose on your home appli-

ances, try putting just a dab of fingernail polish under the heads before tightening them, hold in place for a minute and let dry.

- Toothpaste will remove small scratches on glass.

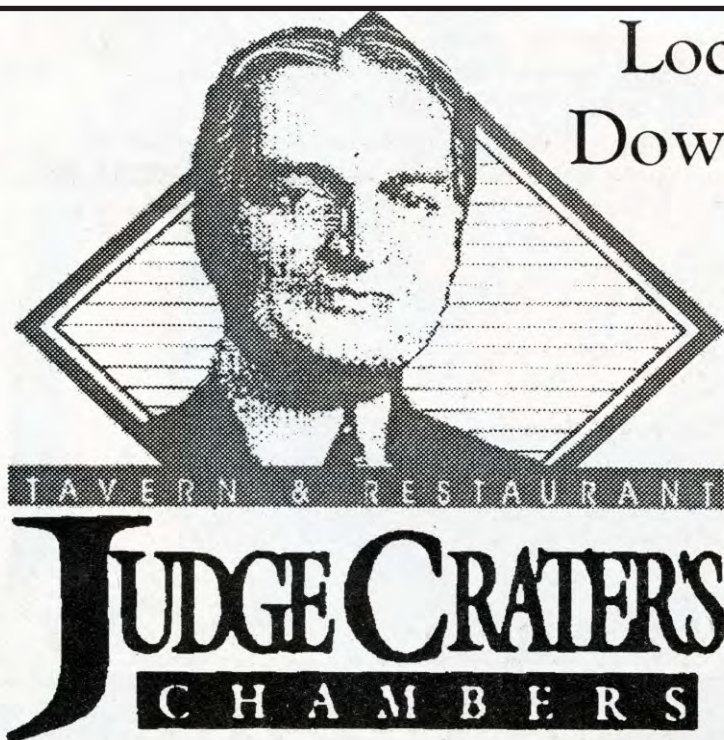
- To keep your wicker furniture from turning yellow, wash with a solution of warm saltwater.

- If you get a grease stain on fabric, sprinkle cornstarch or talcum on the spill immediately. Rub in well, and let stand til the stain is absorbed. Brush off and wipe with a damp cloth.

- If you have a damp closet, fill a large coffee can with charcoal briquettes. Punch holes in the cover and put the container on the floor of the closet. For large closets use 2 or 3 of the containers.

- Store those winter garments in a large plastic trash can with lid. It will stay dry as well as moth-proof.

Old Ad Run in Old Huntsville Magazine in 1995



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HUNTSVILLE HISTORY THROUGHOUT THE YEARS



Corner of Clinton Avenue & Jefferson Street, was the McGee Hotel, built in 1877 and burned on Dec. 25, 1924. It is where the Kaffeeklatsch is now located (building with balcony.) The building directly across the street was the City Hall/Opera House. The rumor of the day was there was a ghost often seen on the balcony of the McGee Hotel.

(From "A Walk Through Downtown Huntsville, Then and Now", by Fred B. Simpson.)

**MERRY CHRISTMAS TO OUR READERS,
WRITERS AND ADVERTISERS FROM ALL OF US AT
OLD HUNTSVILLE MAGAZINE!**