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Old Huntsville

HISTORY AND STORIES OF THE TENNESSEE VALLEY

The Legend of Conductor John at Milepost 316



Also in this issue: Cambron's Night Club; The Lyric Theater;
My Only Child; Winds of War; Growing Up on Green Mountain;
Meeting Audrey Williams; Superstitions about Babies;
Huntsville in the '40s; Pets; Recipes and much much more!

Much Respect to the Officers of Huntsville Police Department

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1995



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property of the citizens
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The Legend of Conductor John at Milepost 316



by Robert E. Baudendistel

Leading across Northern Alabama, the Memphis & Charleston Railroad was completed in 1857. Over to the east of Huntsville, this early transportation corridor entered the more mountainous terrain near Gurley before heading into Paint Rock Valley where the topography kept train crews on the edge of their seat due to the number of grades and highly angled curves. Prior to the institution of air brake systems,

The quickest way to have your family tree traced is to run for public office.

both brakemen and conductors would have to manually set the hand brakes to either slow or stop a given train. Climbing up a platform ladder from the caboose, they proceeded out over a catwalk atop each car while working the brakes even as the trains were moving! The engineer and fireman were only able to control the locomotive stoppage while using it's independent brakes.

Brakemen and conductors faced many of the worst dangers in railroading, so their rate of fatalities and work-related injuries was quite high despite the average length of trains at the time being much shorter as compared to today.

Back in 1878, a late night train was reportedly running east through Gurley heading into Jackson County where the brakeman soon had his work cut out for him with the setting and releasing of the train's brakes. Passing through a curve at the base of Keel Mountain, he managed to get the train effectively slowed before receiving a hand signal from the fireman to go ahead and release the brakes ahead of a moderate up-hill grade tucked against this same mountain.

Further on down the line heading into an elevated curve near mile marker 316, the train started gaining momentum ap-



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proaching the Paint Rock River. The fireman repeatedly waved his lantern signaling to reduce the speed, but nothing seemed to happen. Soon, the train's conductor named John had no choice but to climb up from the caboose and apply the brakes himself when suddenly, the cars started bunching up due to slack in the couplers. Eventually, the train did get slowed after passing through a series of rock cuts just east of the river.

Stopped at a station in the nearby town of Woodville, both the brakeman and fireman walked the length of the train in search of Conductor John. With no signs of him, they continued out past the rear of the train for over a mile searching for the missing crew member, only he was nowhere to be seen. Early the next morning, ground crews were dispersed along five miles of track looking for John, but still to no avail.

The mystery of his disappearance plagued the railroad and its staff for many years and was never really made public. From then on, train crews referred to this same precarious stretch of track as "John's 316" out of faith and respect for his disappearance supposedly near the given milepost. Passing between the two mountains, this stretch of track was also noted as being only one of a few segments throughout the entire railroad found running in a north and south direction.

Like many legends, stories surrounding the loss of Conductor John started to fade with time. Every so often, however, evidence of his fate would come to light as was the case some 30 years later for the crew aboard a midnight train approaching John's 316. Westward leading and proceeding across the Paint Rock bridge, a low hanging fog bank was found drifting out over the river and its winding channel. Lined with sycamore trees and their iridescent silvery white bark, the fog-laden riverbank produced what the crew depicted as a "highly vivid and ghostly reflectivity of light beneath the stars and a full rising moon."

As the train continued tracking due north through the town of Paint Rock in the shadow of darkness beneath the mountain, valley-wide fog was drifting afar as the crew looked up to see the Great Star. Mak-

ing the exit through "brakemen's" curve, the train soon made a scheduled stop just a couple more miles up ahead at Gurley's Tank. After the train was tied down and its locomotive tender topped with water, the crew members all gathered back at the caboose. Looking out and to the east, a full harvest moon had risen over the mountains as each removed his hat. Following a moment of silence over the faint background noise of whispering steam coming from the engine, the conductor prayed: "May the Lord Bless His Soul!"

Those who came to know and worship The Legend of Conductor John at Milepost 316 on any given night were guided to "thy perfect light; for the Star of Wonder in his dear memory was always shining bright".

For What It's Worth: Members of the Gurley Cumberland Presbyterian Church were gathered recently for a Wednesday evening dinner followed by Faith and Fellowship. Being just a block from the railroad, fellow church member (and railroader) Bob was al-



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ways on high alert keeping track of any train movements while two other members, Bill and Linda, had plans to do some star watching later that evening after sunset.

Following their tasty meal with plenty of dessert, everyone gathered in the main chapel where Bill led their singing. Following a brief message and closing prayer, Bill directed the congregation to stand, suggesting, "If you'll turn your blue hymn books to page 218, we'll close tonight with 'Go Tell It On The Mountain'.....we'll be singing all THREE verses!"

Right after the conclusion of the service, Bob met with Bill and Linda outside of the church asking, "Speaking of 'the mountain,' how would y'all like to get a look up at the stars from a picture-perfect spot?"

Bill and Linda seemed a little hesitant at first, but after much persuasion and his knowing that Keel Mountain was the perfect place to be, Bob insisted, "Gather your stuff, I'll drive!"

As Bill and Linda were getting their gear ready, Bob got on his radio in the cab of the truck calling up his colleague, Conductor Dave, whose train was waiting on a meet at a siding just outside of Gurley near Salty Bottom. Whispering to Dave over the radio while trying not to be caught by Bill and Linda, Bob requested: "Say, whenever y'all head east through Paint Rock, give us an extra shout at the 316...if ya' catch my drift, over---"

Being a faithful believer himself and knowing about the legend of the area, Dave quickly offers in, "We'll do it!---" After which he asks, "Anything special happening tonight?"

Trying to conceal his laugh, Bob whispers to him, "Taking some friends from church to 'Go see (and tell it) on the mountain beneath the stars!'---" before adding, "And let's just say, we want them to feel blessed in knowing that someone high above is watching over us."

Dave happily agrees.

With everything packed and ready, the team of stargazers was soon heading up the mountain from the church there in Gurley when Bob cautions Bill and Linda, "Now just so y'all know, this mountain is a bit different compared to what you're used to with Monte Sano back in Huntsville!"

Bill and Linda looked a little curious as to what he meant, and so Bob tries to suppress any fear by adding, "But there's nothing to be afraid of, for this here mountain is a highly unique place!"

Driving a short distance atop the mountain, they turn into a remote wooded area



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where several deer, raccoon, and other wildlife are seen curiously looking on. After pulling over in a deep dark field of open sage grass, Linda gets out looking up at the breathtaking view of the stars like never before seen. While preparing her telescope, Bob invites Bill over to a nearby bluff.

Hearing some railroad chatter from the cab of the truck, Bob also takes his hand-held radio, sets it out over the tailgate, and turns the volume up just so everyone can hear.

After westbound train No. 101 clears its last block ahead of a meet just west of Gurley, Dave's train, No. 462, soon gets a clear (green) signal to proceed east at the Asa Siding. Back atop the mountain deep beneath the stars, Linda continues to work her magic with the telescope while both men sit and admire the view overlooking Paint Rock. Soon, train No. 462 comes rolling east through Gurley where its whistle can be heard 'over the hills and everywhere' with a full moon coming into the picture.

As Conductor Dave calls out his track signals over the radio, Bill asks, "Know him?" when Bob replies, "Sure do, that's Brother Dave, remember? He's the fellow conductor who previously 'Saw the Light' through the Legend of the Dogwood Tree back at Chase!"

With the rumble of the train becoming more pronounced throughout the valley below, the headlight of its lead engine quickly comes into view passing through the town of Paint Rock where a glittering of early Christmas lights adds extra sparkle into the mix.

With cool mountain air beginning to settle in beneath the warmer humidity of the lower

valley, a blanket of fog starts to form out over the river just as the train thunders its way through at the base of the mountain.

Within mere moments, speaking very clear and definitively over his radio from the cab of the lead engine (NS/SOU #8099), Dave makes his call: "NS 462....gotta' Clear.... at John's Three Sixteen! Out--"

After hearing Dave come through over the truck radio, both Bill and Linda appear shocked asking, "Wait a second! Did he just call out a scripture?"

Trying to hide his guilty smile, Bob assures them, "Oh, it's just a long running tradition we have while working on the railroad!"

In a haste at redirecting everyone's attention, Bob points back over to the telescope asking, "Say, did we catch the North Star yet, Linda???"

Ernest Hemingway once said: "In our darkest moments, we don't need solutions or advice. What we yearn for is simply human connection—a quiet presence, a gentle touch. These small gestures are the anchors that hold us steady when life feels like too much.

Please don't try to fix me. Don't take on my pain or push away my shadows. Just sit beside me as I work through my own inner storms. Be the steady hand I can reach for as I find my way.

My pain is mine to carry, my battles mine to face. But your presence reminds me I'm not alone in this vast, sometimes frightening world. It's a quiet reminder that I am worthy of love, even when I feel broken.

So, in those dark hours when I lose my way, will you just be here? Not as a rescuer, but as a companion. Hold my hand until the dawn arrives, helping me remember my strength.

Your silent support is the most precious gift you can give. It's a love that helps me remember who I am, even when I forget."

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A WILD RUSSIAN IN OUR JAIL

from 1923 newspaper

Many people living near the county jail and those passing were at a loss Tuesday night to understand the loud noises and bloodcurdling yells coming from the second floor windows.

Investigation by a Huntsville News reporter revealed that William Curtis, apparently of foreign birth and believed to be a Russian, was "whooping it up" in his cell.

Curtis was arrested some time ago, charged with breaking into some stores at New Market and confined in the County jail here. It is not known how he came to these parts.

Early Tuesday night he broke off a couple of pieces of steam pipe and proceeded to flatten out all that portion of the jail within his reach.

Deputies went into the cell and relieved him of the pipe. After this he began stamping his feet against the steel floor with mighty noise and he was relieved of his shoes. He kept the neighborhood awake with yells and succeeded until, having tired, he stopped.

The prisoner has also gone on a hunger strike. He has refused to eat since nine-o'clock Tuesday morning and as his meals are carried to him he either refuses it or knocks it from the hands of the jail deputies.

When asked about his mental condition deputies at the jail replied that "He's just mean. That's all."

He is to be tried next week and it is expected the judge will give him something else to be upset about.

**"We have been good friends for a very long time.
Let's say we stop."**

What you WON'T see on a greeting card

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"It may be a good idea," said the loan officer, "but we don't loan money for ideas."

Disappointed, Sam Sherrill returned to work where he donned his apron and began flipping hamburgers the same way he had been doing everyday for years.

His business, the Nu Way Restaurant, was renowned for the small, square, five-cent hamburgers it served. It had become a virtual fixture on the North Side Square in Huntsville, with people waiting in line everyday.

Though Sam put aside any ideas of expanding his restaurant, his son Glenn did not give up as easily. In 1932 Glenn moved to Chattanooga and opened a small restaurant with a partner, serving the same hamburgers his father had served.

Within a few years the restaurant had become so successful that the partners began opening up others across the country.

Neither man had any idea at the time that they were founding a business that would eventually become one of the largest fast food businesses in the South- the Krystal Restaurants.



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A Lady with the Gift of Love

By Ernestine Moody (2020)

It was just recently while discussing the pandemic, which seems to be devouring our wonderful country, that a surprising fact was revealed to me.

I had always, as a child, been told that my Grandmother died at a young age from pneumonia. In those days it was felt that kids did not need to know exact details of any event. Just a general bit of information was sufficient. Therefore, I accepted this as factual.

Three weeks ago, I learned the truth when my cousin sent me a picture of Grandmother's tombstone with the inscription, the cause of her death in 1918 was the Spanish Flu pandemic.

She died at 33 years of age. My Mom, her only daughter, was 13. Grandmother had two older boys and her fourth child was a 2 year old little boy. One can only imagine the worry and concern she felt when thinking of her baby perhaps being raised without a mom.

After days of suffering, Grandmother asked her husband to please bring her pen and paper. As she began to write she informed my grandfather. "If I get well, we will open this letter, and laugh at its contents, however, if I don't recover, please give it to your sister-in-law," who likewise had lost her husband in that pandemic.

Grandmother was with us for just a few more days. Upon her death my grandfather gave the letter to his dead brother's widow. We were so fortunate that in her unselfish manner she agreed to take care of the children my grandmother had left behind.

She gave them so much love. My mother always realized Zizi, aunt in Italian, had sacrificed her needs and wants to fulfill her sister-in-law's wishes. Of course, Zizi was the only grandmother I ever knew. She was small in stature and wore only black all her life as a sign of mourning for the husband she lost to the pandemic.

I remember as a little girl walk-

ing with my Mom to visit Zizi and my grandfather. She would take me by the hand, and we would go collect eggs from the hen's house. Afterwards, if they were on the vines, she would let me pick blackberries. She would sprinkle sugar all over them, and I would delight in their flavor.

I cannot help but think of the many lives and sacrifices being made in today's world. Parents leaving their small children. Children being raised without the love and guidance of their Moms and Dads.

My family was so blessed. My Mom often remarked that she never heard Zizi make any remarks complaining that life was unfair, and how hard it was having had the responsibility of raising her sister-in-law's children. She just kept pouring out her abundant love.

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that you've heard this
bull before."**

LOCAL NEWS FROM 1894

- Patrons of the public market are warned that shoes must be worn at all times. Failure to do so can result in a fine.

- John L. Rison, Druggist, handles mail orders promptly. We carry drugs pure and fresh, toilet articles, flavoring extracts of all kinds, Syringes, Face powders, Patent Medicines, Difficult prescriptions carefully compounded. Located on Bank Row

- One of the most entertaining of the "oldest inhabitants" of Decatur, Ala. is Capt. J. M. Todd, now 88 years of age, who steam boated on the Tennessee river from 1832 to 1875.

- Mr. W.W. Wilson brought a 15-month old pig and a bale of cotton to Huntsville to the market today. Each weighed in at 450 pounds. The cotton brought \$19.05 and the pig, \$22.50. Mr. Wilson says the cotton cost him twice as much to raise and market as did the pig.

- Capt. Jos. Glover closed a trade Tuesday with Mrs. J. R. Williams, of Scottsboro, by which he becomes the purchaser of the Boyd place next door to Capt. Rieves in Guntersville. The dwelling and a large yard and garden were sold at nine hundred dollars.

- An Athens boy who experienced great difficulty in swallowing, had an operation performed on his throat which brought to light a large pearl. It is thought he swallowed it in an oyster.

- Do not pay \$1 when you can buy our J & C Corset for 50 cents. Modeled after the best French strip corsets, in white, drab and ecru with silk flossing. A. R. Campbell & Sons, Huntsville, Ala.

- "I take pleasure in stating in the public that Sam M. York of Union Grove, Ala. has cured a cancer of twenty years standing for me. I have never known him to fail curing cancers."

Jesse. F. Miller, Marshall, Ala.

- An item appeared in the Democrat recently which should have read as follows: Mrs. Haskins has the largest and nicest plants in town." In making up the form the "I" dropped out in the word plants, and the mistake was not noticed until the paper was printed. The whole town was in an uproar and when the lady's husband read the item he armed himself with a shotgun and started for the printing office but the editor saw him coming and escaped through a back window.

- For Sale - Nice rubber-tired buggy, harness and driving mare, perfectly gentle. For information, address 512, in the city.

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

- **Detective Agency will Locate Here from Nashville**

A Banner reporter was informed Monday that a detective agency will permanently locate in the city within the next few days.



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The Winds of War Event, 1983

by M. D. Smith, IV



M.D. Smith & Bettie Higgins

It was forty-two years ago that the largest event in TV Network history was about to air over seven nights in a row in prime time. The event was based on Herman Wouk's book, *The Winds of War*. Think of it as an 18-hour mini-series starring Robert Mitchum, Ali MacGraw, Jan-Michael Vincent, John Houseman, and Ralph Bellamy who played the part of President FDR and was our special guest live via speaker phone and available for the local press to interview at the gigantic press party at the Space and Rocket Museum, rented for the night by WAAY-31-TV.

Because this was such a monumental event, we wanted to go all out to attract the press for the evening. The live interview with Bellamy was a good draw, but we also enticed them with lavish hors d'oeuvres and choice of cocktails. The reception was in the main exhibit room, and later the gathering for interview with FDR took place in the small theater.

For authenticity, my Administration Assistant, Bettie Higgins (also serving as Promotion Manager) arranged for the bulk of our female staff to wear various rented WAC uniforms from the Army Women's Museum in Fort McClellan, AL. The men's uniforms came from Redstone Arsenal and were pri-

marily navy uniforms. As the General Manager of the TV station, I got to wear a naval commander's uniform for the evening.

In small groups, various staff members (and a few wives of staff) posed for the press in the typical style of the 1939 years. As you can see from the photo, all the ladies spent hours at the hairdresser that day having their hair also done in period styles. They looked authentic in every way, including bright red lipstick.

We wanted to generate the feeling for the press that they were back in the pre-war year of 1939



This pose includes the tall Bob Baron (weathercaster) with Heather Burns (l), Helen Howard and Debi Benson (r).

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where Germany was already on the march with Hitler gobbling up small neighboring countries and telling the world each time, that was all the aggression Germany would do.

Then one more would come. The United States was already helping Britain in the war against Germany until we got in both the European and Pacific wars when Japan bombed Pearl Harbor.

For added publicity for the Winds of War (abbreviated WOW) event, we had signs made for the roof of our news vehicles promoting the series seen all over the valley whenever our news cars were about. Also shared at the event was a giant cake with the WOW logo faithfully duplicated in icing. We cut and served it at the reception before the presentation in the theater, that included video clips from the coming series.

Our 1983 anchor personalities were featured in uniform in some photos, which include Jim Marsh, Heather Burns, and Bob Baron weather. Other reporters and staff personnel from around the station added to the total of twenty people we had in uniform that evening.

At the reception, members of the staff lined up to be introduced by General Manager Commander M.D. Smith. All women's uniforms were authentic. The uniforms came from the nation's only Army Corps Museum at Ft. McClellan. Note the period hair styles.



M.D. Smith IV

This was a major event and promotion of it. The ABC Network gave us special credit for our local efforts in a future Affiliate Meeting the next June.

M.D. Smith, III the CEO of Smith Broadcasting was particularly proud of this event since he loved promotion in Radio and TV stations.



A Huntsville Times photographer admiring Heather Burns (anchor) and Helen Howard (reporter).

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Turn to the experts



Ask Grandma

by Mimi

Happy New Year. It is hard to believe another year has started. So many fun and enjoyable things have happened this past year. Now is the time to start all over.

Have you made New Year's Resolutions? Ones that you absolutely plan to keep? Make a list of all the things you are thankful for and what you want to accomplish during this year.

I've had 'losing a few pounds' on my list too long and then fail, so I don't do that anymore. But I think I can keep the one to live and appreciate each day at a time. As you age, and your clock keeps picking up speed, you realize there aren't

that many blinks left, so living each day to the fullest is my resolve.

The other is the appreciate the other friends and family in your life — and tell them so. Then, tell them why they are such a special and loved person. Don't wait until tomorrow because it could be too late. I've lost some special friends over the past year that I wish I could have talked to one more time.

Now, back to some other things going on in our neck of the woods. Start-ups are Madison County Nature Trail, Lowe Mill, US Space and Rocket Center, Alabama Constitution Hall Park, Burritt Museum, Huntsville Botanical Gardens, Maple Hill Cemetery, Kids Space Park and Walk Around Ditto Landing, then to check out Unclaimed Baggage in Scottsboro and then Cathedral Caverns.

It's a good time to clean out the closets and make donations to the many charitable organizations and thrift stores in the area. I hope you made some before the first, because donations can count against income taxes for 2024. Also, don't forget the garage. There are things in there you'll never use. Give them to an organization who can make use of them.

Stores are having sales some and even half off trying to sell the winter items and getting ready for spring. Yes, with a lot of cold weather left for us, unfortunately, you'd be surprised how early they press the coming season.

Now that Christmas has passed, take care of packing away the decorations so that next season they are easy to find and those lights aren't so hard to string on the tree.

Now is a good time to plant spring bulbs like crocus, tulips and daffodils. Some of mine start coming up in February. I know it is hard to think of spring when it is freezing outside today, but it will be here before we know it.



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How I Met Audrey Williams

by L D Rogers



My daughter Carrie and her husband, Tommy went on vacation and ran across the childhood home of Hank Williams. She sent me some pictures and asked me if I had been a fan of Hank Williams' music. I am a big fan of Hank and I have a great story about Hank's first wife, Audrey.

My granny played the guitar, and I always wanted to learn. She started to teach me chords on her guitar when I was around the age of 12. That Christmas I got a new Harmony Monterrey guitar. I thought it was the most beautiful guitar in the world.

Granny lived in South Fulton, TN and we lived in Paducah, KY. That is about a fifty-mile trip, but we went to visit her about every other weekend. I would take my new guitar, and she would teach me how to play it.

News from New Hope

from 1901 newspaper

- * Kenneth Davis was badly burned when his home caught fire.
 - * John Younger broke his foot while plowing.
 - * A body was discovered near the river by children attending a picnic.
- Otherwise we are all doing pretty well.

Granny didn't have electricity in her house but then TVA came along and installed electricity in rural farmhouses. The first thing my granny bought was a record player and some records by Hank Williams, Hank Snow, The Carter Family, other country artists and several gospel records.

As I got older, I kept playing and finally joined a band called The Rockets with Joe Rafferty, Johnny Rafferty, Randall Perdue and Kirky Tate. Joe was a square dance caller and manager of our little band. We played a few places like Teen Town and then Joe got us a job playing every Saturday night at Smithland, KY at an old skating rink. We played all kinds of music, but we really favored rock and roll. This was just about the time that Elvis and Jerry Lee Lewis were on top.

During this time, around 1957, we learned about a talent show at Paducah Tilghman High School. We didn't know who was putting on the show since Joe handled all of our engagements but before the big night, we found out that one of the sponsors was a lady named Audrey Williams. Now that was a shock. Hank had passed away several years before and we learned she was doing this as a memorial to him.

The big night came and we were all very nervous. All the bands and performers were backstage. Audrey came backstage to visit and shake hands with all of us. That was a big thrill. She was a wonderful person and very friendly.



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SLEEPING AND SNORING

A friend told us he starts to snore the minute he falls asleep. We asked him if it bothers his wife. He said, "It not only bothers my wife, it bothers the whole congregation!" To try to help with snoring problems, here are a few ideas:

- * Sew a tennis ball on the back of the snorer's pajama top. This prevents him from sleeping on his back, which prevents snoring for the most part.

- * Don't drink before bedtime. Alcohol relaxes the respiratory system muscles and makes it harder to breathe, which in turn causes the snoring.

- * Try using a humidifier - dry air can sometimes make the problem worse.

According to Franklin Adams, "Insomniacs don't sleep because they worry about it

and they worry about it because they can't sleep!"

- * Clear your head of all thoughts completely. When a thought of any type emerges, mentally make it just go away. Just purposely put that thought in a visual container and set it aside.

- * Get into bed. Before you lie down, breathe deeply 6 times. Count to 100, then breathe deeply another 6 times. Good night!

- * A very old remedy is to put your feet in the refrigerator for 10 minutes before turning in (hey wait a minute, just how old ARE refrigerators?)

- * An old Chinese acupressure trick - press the center of the bottoms of your heels with your thumbs. Keep pressing as long as you can, for at least 3 minutes.

- * Don't eat 2-3 hours before bedtime, and try to eat as little salt as possible.

- * Rub the nape of your neck with a clove of garlic.

- * Take your mind off having to fall asleep. Give yourself an interesting but unimportant fantasy-type problem to solve. For instance: If you were to write your autobiography, what would be the title?

- * Steep 1 teaspoonful of chamomile in a cup of boiling water for 10 minutes and drink it right before bedtime.

- * Do not go to bed until you're really sleepy, even if it means going to bed very late when you have to get up early the next morning. Nothing will happen to you if you get less than 8, 7, 6 or even 5 hours' sleep.

- * Try using an extra pillow or finding a thicker one. Or go from a thick pillow to thin - might work!

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Third Time's the Charm?

by Elizabeth Wharry

Folklore claims that lightning doesn't strike twice in the same place. Balderdash! Experts say that once one is skimmed by lightening, it can happen again. No kidding! The odds of getting skimmed (close but not direct contact) are 1 in 9 million. Lightening can travel up to 25 miles!

The first time I was skimmed was September 18, 2014. I was outside watching the sky. I was standing between my husband's truck and the garage door. Although the sky was moody, there wasn't any indication of a storm brew-

ing. Suddenly, I felt a very strong tingle from my feet to the top of my head. (Think multiple 9 volt batteries on your tongue all over). I walked into the house and told Bob that I had been skimmed by lightening. He just laughed and said that I sounded like Mickey Mouse.

The next 6 months were unsettling. My immediate short term memory was affected. I would be in the middle of something, or going somewhere and I could not remember what I was supposed to do. Finally, somewhere around early to mid April of 2015, the brain blanks stopped.

Advance the calendar to May 12, 2024. There was a huge thunderstorm that evening. The transformer across the street got hit. The lightening traveled across the power lines, down the pole on the edge of my property and into the house. It traveled through the house and hit the transformer on my neighbor's property. We were sitting in the parlor watching TV. Our light, TV and modem were fried. He was reclined, and I was sitting with my feet on the floor.

I felt a strong tingle go through my bare feet to the top of my head. Bob asked if I was OK. I stuttered, "I think so". We called the after hours utilities number, and by noon the next day, the crews had both transformers replaced.

This strike left me with a stutter, which cleared up by July. It also left me with a permanent case of car sickness. Thank heavens for Scopalamine patches!

I asked my family doctor about the consequences of getting skimmed. He said that there is little research done because most people die from a direct strike. A skim is an indirect encounter. He also said that my chances of getting skimmed again have increased dramatically. Can it be said that I have an electric personality?

Happy New Year dear readers!

"Sharks are ugly and mean. They have big teeth, just like Emily Sanders. She is not my friend anymore."

Kiley, age 6, writing a school paper about the sea

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A Touch from God

*by Gerald Alvis, the
Poet of Greenlawn*



For a guaranteed giggle and a repressed snicker, try this: the one thing a man should never do is get between a new baby in the family and a Grandma! Yea, not wise! But yesterday, I accomplished a first. I was sitting down when his Mom brought out this little one.

I cradled him in my arms, a little one just shy of 7 pounds. It's awkward for guys, so I looked more like a full-back guarding a ball. And the chuckle I mentioned, hang back and listen to a 65-year-old man making coo noises and faces to entrain the new baby. The stark contrast of the size and age spoke to the span of lifetimes and experience. Babies have two fears of falling and loud noises, but there are further instincts.

Ann taught me even a newborn will turn toward your finger if you gently touch its cheek.

"The older you get, the harder your mom tries to keep you little."

Jed Sams, Age 9

I'm in awe and am sure this releases some endorphins. Still, even as a male, I begin to understand at least a little about the bonding and the reciprocal feelings, even if both of us have trouble articulating them.

Life, new life and I'm sure as everyone has, I put my pinky finger in his little grip. His tiniest of hands encircles a fourth of my finger, but he holds on, and so do I. I speak to him of strength and that he is loved and then make a bunch of nonsensical noises again! Somehow, with more than sounds, we are communicating beyond the breath and heartbeat he hears as I cradle him.

A blank slate, this one that will live into a century that is two away from the one I was born.

Though I will leave these and other stories behind, he will never see what I have seen and where he goes, I will not. 'Tis the way of things and I savor the moment. What greater thing to love and be loved?

I wonder if this is the way it is with God. When we pray, does he grasp our tiny hand for a moment for comfort, and does he feel that reciprocal love? Peace and contentment are found here in moments like this; they are to be cherished, for they are fleeting. But are they? I believe they are present as long as we hold on.

Of' Heidelberg

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Heard On the Street

by Cathey Carney



Our sharp-eyed winner for the hidden holly leaf was an older gentleman who wanted to pass it on to the next caller. He said he just did it for fun and didn't need a free subscription so the next person to call and ID it was **Sue Cross** of Philippi, WV. She found it on the Woody Anderson ad on page 27 - see it now left bottom? She's been trying before and got it this time! Her very dear friend is one of our regular writers - **Bill Alkire** of Huntsville. Sue and Bill grew up together in the tiny town of Junior, WV, going to school and church together. He moved to Huntsville and she stayed in West Virginia but they've remained great friends. Congratulations to Sue for spotting our holly leaf!

OK I usually don't talk about **doctors or dentists** but this is an exception. I recently changed to a new dentist and had some work done that involved a numbing shot in the gums. You all know how awful that is. Well I was prepared for a 9 out of 10 pain level and being numb all day dribbling coffee.

First thing they asked me when I was in the chair was what kind of music I liked. So I told them Bluegrass. Well during the whole procedure bluegrass was playing, loud. I loved it. The most amazing thing was the pain level from the numbing shot was right around a 2. It's just a few hours after and my numbness is gone. He is **Dr. Jake Noel** and is in a small brick office building off Balmoral/Airport Rd. with just one more dentist - **Dr. Karter Smith**. It's so important to have a dentist you're not dreading, and I am so grateful I found this one!

Who knew that a Kuerig coffee maker could develop mold? I have one of the 10 cup models with the clear plastic water container on the left side. I was filling it up the other day and noticed green mold on the inside of that! I hate to say how long I've had it and never thought to clean out that water container. My family can't believe I missed that and I've been drinking green mold now for years. I think that's what turned my hair white.

Bud and Jan Jolly, owners of Russell Welding on Washington Street, recently celebrated their 62nd wedding anniversary. December 16 was their big day. I can't really believe it because Jan looks like she's about 65 to me and is a beautiful lady. Congratulations to you both!

M. D. Smith IV celebrated his birthday with family in early December. He, as you know, has feature and inside stories in every issue of Old Huntsville magazine and is a great writer. We get lots of comments on his stories, because they are so varied. Happy Birthday M.D. and we hope you did lots of celebrating!

This is not a new scam but it happening more often. You're in

Many of us who used to regularly shop at Lewter's Hardware downtown remember the sweet shop cats who were there all the time and loved customers. Lew was the one below and you could pick him up and he would crawl up to your shoulders and just sit there. Sweetest cat ever.



line at the grocery store and someone behind you has a scanning device that can take a picture of your credit card while you don't even notice. They are then able to use your card for purchases, as if it were theirs. You or your bank would probably catch it in a week or so or whenever you get your statement, but the damage is already done and you have to go through the hassle of replacing a credit card. Best to just be super careful when you're out anywhere and have to use your card to pay. Be aware of who's around you and protect your cards. It can happen to anyone.

We recently lost one of the most beautiful ladies, inside and out. **Ianthia Bridges** was from Camden, AL and worked at the Truist Bank on Church Street in Huntsville. She had been in banking over 30 years and those who remember her will be heartbroken. She had the most beautiful smile for everyone and if you came into the bank in a bad mood, she would immediately make you feel better. She had a special love for her family and would often put their birthdays, anniversaries etc. in this column.

(From her obit) "It is with deep sorrow that we announce the death of Ianthia Ramsey Bridges (Camden, Alabama), who passed away on November 16, 2024, leaving to mourn family and friends."

"In the echoes of fond remembrance, may a sense of peace be found, knowing that the memories held dear will continue to shape and inspire their loved ones, keeping Ianthia Ramsey's spirit alive in the hearts and actions of family and friends alike. While their presence may be gone, their impact lives on in the kindness shown to others and the joy found in the ordinary moments of life."

Remembering her husband **Frazier, Carl, Tammy, Aunt Marie, uncle Mark, cousin Cedric**, so many more - such a large family and many mentioned over the years. Ianthia made such an impact on all who knew her as well as her banking family: **Susan, Jane, Michelle, Vivian and Joe**. We know you're watching over us from above.

All of us have cell phones by now, even those of us who hung on to our flip phones for years. I found out a good tip the other day from reading **Judy Smith's** Grandma Mimi column - if you have lost your cell phone (always leave it on) you can holler "**Siri, where are you?**" and Siri will say, "Here I am!" Yep almost like another human. You keep asking him (mine's an Australian gent) where he is til you locate it. It freaked my cat out a bit when he thought there was an additional person in the house whom he hadn't met yet.

Happy January birthday to **Laura Griffin** who is one of the most positive people you'll meet. She recently adopted a rescue year old Tuxedo kitty and he is getting along great with Laura's sweetie **Brandon Owens** and his Golden Retriever **Tricky!**

Another important birthday is that of our friend and writer **Willie Weaver** who turns 88 on Jan. 4th. Happy Birthday to you Willie!

You know there is always something hidden in each magazine - you find what I hide and you win a year's subscription to the magazine, worth \$50. Well in January I have decided to make it more difficult for you. **I am hiding 2 items** - one will be a tiny icicle and the other will be a little bird. If you find one you DON'T win. If you find both and are the first to call, you are the winner. But I'm letting you know in advance - they will be SO SMALL. I expect no calls.

If you haven't been to **Lowe Mill Arts and Entertainment** lately, you've got to go. Be prepared for walking and wear comfy shoes. Parking is all around the building and inside you'll find art galleries with many of the artists actually working while you're there, whisky distillery, ice cream shop, great pizza shop called Veloce, a theater, super old elevator and many other interesting items. Their address is 2211 Seminole Drive, right off Governors Drive, and it's a perfect place to bring your out-of-town visitors too. They're open Wed-Sat from 11am - 7pm and you can get more information online by searching for Lowe Mill.

Have a safe New Year's Eve and we're looking forward to what our new year will bring.

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- * Contact Us area where you can send in your family's treasured memories for us publish.

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Staying Warm with Food

Cheddar Curry Spread

3 oz. shredded Cheddar cheese
3 T. chopped black olives
1/2 c. finely chopped green onion
1/2 c. mayonnaise
1/2 t. curry powder
Party rye bread

Mix all except for the bread and put in fridge overnight.

Next morning spread on party rye bread, bake in 400 degree oven for 5 minutes and garnish with parsley or sliced black olives.

Chipped Beef Dip

1 c. chopped pecans
4 t. melted butter
8-oz. pkg. cream cheese, softened
1/4 c. milk
2-1/2 oz. dried beef, minced
1/2 t. garlic powder
1 8-oz. carton sour cream
4 t. minced onion

Saute pecans in butter til lightly browned, drain on paper towels and set aside. Combine remaining ingredients, mix well. Spoon into greased 1-1/2 quart baking dish. Top with the pecans and bake at 35 degrees for 20 minutes. Serve hot with assorted crackers or Bugles.

Lemon-Spiked Broccoli

1 lb. fresh broccoli
1/2 c. chopped green onions
1 T. plus 1 t. fresh lemon juice
1/4 c. butter
1/4 c. chopped celery
1/4 t. grated lemon rind

Cut tough ends off the broccoli, wash well and steam for about 7 minutes. Melt butter in a small saucepan, add the onions and celery. Cook til tender and stir in the lemon juice.

Place broccoli in a butter-greased serving dish. Pour the onion mixture over the broccoli and sprinkle with lemon rind.

Hot Cabbage & Potatoes

1 large slice cooked ham
4 medium potatoes
1/2 head cabbage, chopped
Salt and pepper to taste

Cut ham into large pieces and boil in water til it appears to have oil on it. Peel potatoes, quarter them and add this to the ham/water mixture.

When the potatoes are almost cooked, add in the chopped cabbage. Do not overcook the cabbage. Add salt and pepper to taste.

Cajun Catfish

Mix equal amounts of hot sauce and mustard. Dip catfish filets in the mixture, then dredge in yellow cornmeal. Fry in hot oil til brown.

Potatoes in Cream Wine

4 red potatoes, sliced and cooked
2 T. melted butter

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1 large sliced onion
 2/3 c. milk
 1 c. shredded mozzarella cheese
 1/2 cup white wine
 Saute sliced potatoes in butter for 10 minutes. Add remaining ingredients except for the wine. Cook for 5 more minutes, add the wine, heat and serve.

Grandma's Sunday Casserole

Boil 4 potatoes and whip them with butter. Chop a couple of green onions and mix in. Add 3 tablespoons sour cream. Whip 2 eggs with fork and add. Add two cups grated Cheddar cheese.

Put in buttered casserole, sprinkle garlic and black pepper on top, bake at 350 for 45 minutes. Can be frozen.

White Chicken Chili

4 chicken breasts, cooked & cubed
 2 cans great northern beans, drained
 1 can Rotel sauce
 1 can chicken broth
 1 medium onion, chopped & sauteed in butter
 2 t. minced garlic
 1/2 t. thyme
 Mozzarella cheese, shredded

In a saucepan, mix all ingredients except cheese. Heat to boiling, reduce and simmer for 20 minutes. Top with mozzarella cheese and sour cream dollop.

On the first day of school, a first grader handed his teacher a note from his mother. The note read: "The opinions expressed by this child are not necessarily those of his parents."

Brown Bread Pudding

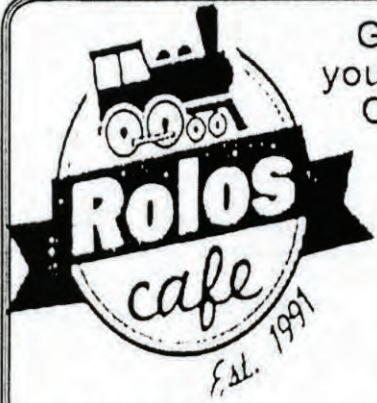
1 c. brown bread pieces
 2 c. milk
 3 eggs
 2 T. real maple sugar
 2 egg whites
 1 T. sugar
 2 T. whipping cream

Soak bread pieces in half a cup of the milk for about half an hour. Make a custard of the rest of the milk, eggs, and maple sugar by just cooking them together over medium heat til thickened.

Pour it hot over the bread. Beat egg whites with a tablespoon of the sugar and the cream. Fold into the custard, then bake at 350 degrees for 30 minutes.

Vanilla Cafe

Prepare pot of hot coffee. Drop in 1 teaspoon of real vanilla extract, stir well. For each cup pour the coffee, add 1 jigger of Bailey's Irish Cream Liqueur to each, top with whipped cream and serve. Repeat!



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THE SLEEPING PREACHER

by Tom Carney

His head split open from just above his eyes in the center of his forehead to the top, and from the top down near each ear. His head drew up until the features of his face seemed to be reversed. His hands drew into an immovable position against his chest and throat. His feet and legs twisted into a position almost opposite their normal position. His eyes bled and the blood ran down his cheeks. These grotesque symptoms were accompanied by an almost unbearable headache which caused him to cry out in pain.

The grim depiction above is a description of the Reverend Constantine Blackmon Sanders while under the influence of his secondary personality, which oddly called itself, $X + Y = Z$

Mr. Sanders was born on July 2, 1831 in northern Madison County about sixteen miles north of Huntsville. He became intensely interested in religion after attending a revival meeting at a country church about twelve miles north of Huntsville on September 5, 1851. The next day he joined the Cumberland Presbyterian Church at Concord.

He had never received the benefit of formal education, but he wanted to become a preacher, so in 1854 he enrolled in a school in Elkton, Tennessee. Three months following his enrollment, the young Mr. Sanders became ill of a flux (diarrhea or dysentery), followed by an attack of typhoid fever. This condition lasted for several weeks. It was during this illness in the home of Mr. and Mrs. M. A. Harlow, with whom he boarded, that Mr. Sanders received his first visit from $X + Y = Z$, and that he first showed the psychic powers for which he would become well-known in the area.

Mrs. Harlow reported: "He remarked to me, 'There will be a burying here tomorrow evening, but it will not be any of your family.'"

"About one hour after this, a gentleman (Mr. McNeely) rode up and requested the privilege of burying a corpse in our private cemetery on the next day, which was granted. This death occurred some three miles distant, and we had not even heard, and

I am confident Mr. Sanders had not, of the sickness, nor the death of the individual."

Mrs. Harlow also stated that on this occasion the separation of the skull was large enough to lay her little finger in near the top.

Years earlier, in 1855, Mr. Sanders had married Miss Duanna A. White of Madison County. After receiving his ordination in the Cumberland Presbyterian ministry in 1862, the Reverend and Mrs. Sanders made their home in the county and he served several churches including Maysville, Meridianville and Mooresville. The visitations from the secondary personality continued.

When he received a visit from $X + Y = Z$, he would fall into a semiconscious state and would not remember what had occurred upon awaking. Since he gave the appearance of sleep, he became known as "The Sleeping Preacher."

Often while in this state, Sanders would write, not knowing what he had written until he reviewed his notes later. His writings were discourses from the secondary personality. In the beginning, the writings were mainly religious in nature, but later covered diagnoses of illnesses

Charlie Chaplin lived 88 years. He left us 4 statements:

(1) Nothing is forever in this world, not even our problems.

(2) I love walking in the rain because no one can see my tears.

(3) The most lost day in life is the day we don't laugh.

(4) Six best doctors in the world...

1. The sun,

2. Rest,

3. Exercise,

4. Diet,

5. Self-respect

6. Friends.

Stick to them at all stages of your life and enjoy a healthy life...

If you see the moon, you will see the beauty of God...

If you see the sun, you will see the power of God...

If you see a mirror, you will see God's best creation. So believe it.

We are all tourists, God is our travel agent who has already identified our routes, bookings and destinations... trust him and enjoy life.

Life is just a journey! Therefore, live today!

Tomorrow may not be.

-Charlie Chaplin

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Anon

for patients he had never seen as well as prescriptions for their illnesses. He also translated from Latin without error, even though he had never studied the language. He was able to locate lost articles and often knew of distant deaths as soon as they occurred. The convulsions had stopped by 1859, but the headaches were almost continuous for more than twenty years beginning in 1854.

While experiencing one of his "sleeps," Mr. Sanders exhibited amazing psychic powers before scores of witnesses. The Reverend M. B. DeWitt, a Cumberland Presbyterian minister of Huntsville, asked Reverend G. W. Mitchell of Athens to assist him in a series of meetings he had planned for his church in November, 1867. Reverend DeWitt sent a letter to Reverend Mitchell confirming the dates.

Mr. Mitchell never received the letter but was met by Mr. Sanders in Mooresville, where Sanders was visiting for a few days, and Sanders told him about the letter and related the contents to him. Reverend Mitchell met his appointment in Huntsville, thanks to the information given him by Mr. Sanders. When asked about the letter by Mr. DeWitt, although he had never received it, Mr. Mitchell was able to correctly quote its contents from what Mr. Sanders had told him.

As you might expect, not everyone in the community believed Reverend Sanders had the ability to perform the psychic feats for which he had become known. While many believed the power was the work of God, others credited it to the devil, and still others thought that the accounts of his prowess were a complete hoax.

The debate became so heated in the church as well as in the community that measures had to be taken to keep him from being dismissed from the ministry. His detractors called him "Reverend Mountebank," "a vile pretender," and a "specious hypocrite," among other things. This unschooled, backwoods, itinerant preacher was causing quite a stir in North Alabama.

One evening in 1874 Mr. Sanders, who lived in Meridianville, desired to go to Huntsville, twelve miles away, to hear a sermon by a Dr. Ross, but was un-

able to attend. That night, under the influence of the $X + Y = Z$ personality, Sanders called for a pen, ink, and paper. In his "sleep" state he wrote for more than an hour.

The following morning he was told by his wife about the writing. Upon reading what he had written, he found an outline of the sermon delivered by Dr. Ross the previous evening in Huntsville. Mr. Sanders took the train to Huntsville that morning and went directly to the home of Reverend H. R. Smith. Mr. Smith expressed his regrets that Mr. Sanders had not been able to hear the previous night's sermon. Mr. Sanders informed him that he had heard the sermon and enjoyed it all very much. He then preceded to give a detailed exposition of the sermon including text, major divisions, and leading thoughts from beginning to end.

Mr. Smith stated that it was impossible for Mr. Sanders to have been informed of the sermon in such detail, since it had been preached the night before while Sanders slept and he had come directly from his home in Meridianville to Smith's home in Huntsville early the next morning.

In February, 1866, Mr. Sanders was confined to his bed with a dislocated thigh and was being visited by his friend, J. W. Pruitt. Mr. Pruitt reported that during the visit, Sanders began to laugh. When Mr. Pruitt asked him why he was laughing, Mr. Sanders said he was laughing at DeWitt who was "having a hard scuffle to keep from falling off the fence, for the top rail was turning with him and he was trying to keep from falling over it."

Mr. Pruitt stated that about ten or fifteen minutes later, Mr. DeWitt arrived carrying a bowl of custard and a bag of peas his wife had sent to Mr. Sanders. DeWitt related his difficulty in negotiating the rail fence with his hands full.

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He stated that the fence shook and twisted and he nearly fell off. To Mr. Pruitt, it sounded curiously like what Mr. Sanders had laughed about fifteen minutes before.

Reverend G. W. Mitchell and Dr. J. S. Blair of Athens reported that on either October 31 or November 1, 1866, Mr. Sanders was sitting in front of a window when he began to say "poor fellow" and "what a pity." Sanders began to exhibit signs of sadness and distress and said, "He's gone! Gone! Gone!"

When questioned about his actions, Sanders told the men that Lieutenant McClure had just died from an internal hemorrhage near Clarksville, Tennessee.

Early the next morning, Lieutenant McClure's wife in Athens received a telegram informing her of her husband's death some one hundred and fifty miles away near Clarksville, Tennessee, of an internal hemorrhage.

In February, 1867, Mr. Sanders encountered Mrs. Mary A. Brown in Meridianville. Mrs. Brown expressed concern for her relatives in Salisbury, North Carolina, whom she had not heard from in a long time. Mr. Sanders informed Mrs. Brown that he had gone to see them the night before and they were well as usual. Mr. Sanders also told Mrs. Brown that there had been a fire in Salisbury the night before. He told her the fire had started in a tin shop and burned to the corner of the Wheeler block. He assured the woman that all her relatives were safe.

Mrs. Brown wrote a letter to her sister living in the Salisbury area and inquired about the fire. In time she received a reply which confirmed all Mr. Sanders had said, including the time it occurred, the tin shop where it started and the extent of the damage.

In the summer of 1867, Mr. Sanders told Miss Sallie Humphey that Miss Mattie Banks in Decatur had just been struck by lightning and described her injuries. Miss Humphey told her sisters what Mr. Sanders had said and the three decided to check the next newspaper to see if any account was given of the incident.

When the paper arrived, it contained the story of Miss Banks' accident, confirming what Mr. Sanders had said down to the time and specific injuries he had mentioned.

On several occasions Mr. Sanders directed people to items they had lost and

had previously been unable to find. Once when an insane woman wandered off and could not be located, Mr. Sanders gave directions that allowed searchers to go directly to where she was and bring her back.

The Reverend Sanders suffered under the possession of $X + Y = Z$ for twenty-two years. On many occasions over the years, he had begged the secondary personality to leave him.

On February 2, 1876, $X + Y = Z$, calling Sanders "My Casket" as he always did in written communications to him, consented to leave him for an indefinite time. In this communication, $X + Y = Z$ also promised (or perhaps threatened) to return at a later date. There is no documentation as to whether the secondary personality actually kept its promise to return.

Constantine Blackmon Sanders. Was he psychic or charlatan? He was investigated by the Boston Society for Psychic Research, and more than sixty people including physicians, ministers, civic leaders, judges, and people from all walks of life and of high moral character gave written testimony as to his psychic powers.

Apparently those who saw him perform these feats believed.

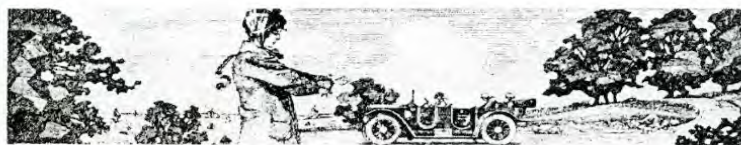
The believers saw the exit of the secondary personality as an act of God for the relief of His dedicated servant. Detractors thought otherwise. Some believed that the visitor left, not because of a pact with God, but with the devil from whom it had come.

Over a century and a half later it is impossible to determine the source of Reverend Sanders' power.

Whatever your opinion may be, he will always be remembered in memorable legends of Madison County as "The Sleeping Preacher."

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Timeless Tips to Live by In the Year 1940



Health:

1. Drink plenty of water.
2. Eat breakfast like a king, lunch like a prince and dinner like a beggar.
3. Eat more foods that grow on trees and plants and eat less food that is manufactured.
4. Live with the 3 E's - Energy, Enthusiasm and Empathy.
5. Make time to pray.
6. Play more games.
7. Read more books than you did last year.
8. Sit in silence for at least 10 minutes each day.
9. Sleep for 7 hours a night.
10. Take a 10-30 minute walk daily. And while you walk, smile.

Personality:

11. Don't compare your life to others. You have no idea what their journey is all about.
12. Don't have negative thoughts of things you cannot control. Instead invest your energy in the positive present moment.
13. Don't overdo. Keep your limits.
14. Don't take yourself so seriously. No one else does.
15. Don't waste your precious energy on gossip.
16. Dream more while you are awake.
17. Envy is a waste of time. You already have all you need.
18. Forget issues of the past. Don't re-

mind your partner with mistakes of the past. That will ruin your present happiness.

19. Life is too short to waste time hating anyone. Don't hate others.

20. Make peace with your past so it won't spoil the present.

21. No one is in charge of your happiness except you.

22. Realize that life is a school and you are here to learn. Problems are simply part of the curriculum that appear and fade away like algebra class but the lessons you learn will last a lifetime.

23. Smile and laugh more.

24. You don't have to win every argument. Agree to disagree....

Society:

25. Call your family often.

26. Each day give something good to others.

27. Forgive everyone for everything.

28. Spend more time with people over the age of 70 & under the age of 6.


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Teachers

by David M. Stephens

Nothing is more life-changing or empowering than a teacher who cares about you just a little extra.

In 1964, when I was six, my parents built a house on Rosalie Ridge Drive in the Chapman Heights subdivision, and that's when I began my first year at Chapman Elementary School. I was introverted and timid as a child, and school caused me a lot of anxiety.

It didn't help that I also suffered from an articulation disorder. I struggled pronouncing several alphabet letters, especially the "L" sound. My "L's" came out as "R's". Instead of saying lock the door, mine came out as "rock the door." Or "rock the car."

Most people I was around knew what I meant when I slaughtered a word, so it didn't bother me too much until lead pencils, now called mechanical pencils, became the next hottest item. This was in the late sixties when I was in the fourth or fifth grade. All the kids were bringing their fancy lead pencils to school, and I wanted one too. When I asked my parents if I could have a lead pencil, they told me to buy it myself at the supply store at school.

The next day, I grabbed a few dollars and left early for school to have time to stop at the supply store. When the young lady working the window asked me what I wanted, I said, "A lead pencil, please." But it came out as, "A red pencil, prease." I could not say that stupid L.

So, what did she do? She handed me a red pencil. I shook my head and said, "No. A red pencil!" She shook it at me and said, "It is a red pencil!"

I was too embarrassed to ask again, so I paid for the red pencil and walked away. A few days later, I mustered up the courage to try again. This time, I was told, "We don't have a red one. Just yellow."

I shook my head no and walked away in defeat again. Now, when I look back, I think, why didn't I write it on paper and hand it to the sales girl? I guess thinking wasn't my forte then, either.

I finally got my mechanical pencil. I don't remember how, but I did. My parents probably bought it for me.

In 1969, I was promoted to the sixth grade and I remember my teacher was Mrs. Sutherland. One day, a few weeks into the school year, Mrs. Sutherland called me up to her desk and told me to follow her. She led me through the classroom door and down the hallway. I remember the panic rising in my throat, and I kept wondering what I had done wrong.

She led me through the school's back door into a portable building. Inside was a teacher I didn't know, and half a dozen students were sitting at desks scattered around the room. Mrs. Sutherland introduced me to the new teacher and said she was a speech

therapist and I would be attending her class for a couple of hours each week. I spent the next month or so learning and practicing how to pronounce the letters in the alphabet, which I struggled with the most.

It was a tremendous help and a confidence booster to finally pronounce words and letters that had always terrified me. I still struggle to pronounce some words. I can say them in my mind so easily, but what comes out of my mouth is not the same. I spent 65 years of my life listening to my father massacre many words, so I guess I come by it honestly. For some reason, there are many words, and even when someone pronounces them for me, I struggle to repeat them correctly. This means that learning a foreign language is not in my wheelhouse.

While attending UAH, I suffered through two weeks of a Spanish class before I called it quits and headed for the hills. I will stick to English as best I can. I tell people that English is my second language. I don't have a first one!

A few weeks later, Mrs. Sutherland called me to her desk and told me to come with her. Once again, I found myself trembling and wondering what I had done. I was certain she was



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taking me to the office for punishment. Instead, she took me to the clinic. When I entered the door, she pointed at a phone on the nurse's desk and told me to call my mother and ask her if she would permit me to be a Safety Patrol Boy.

The panic hit me hard. I had never done or joined anything like that. I was too timid and insecure to join anything. I didn't know how to be a patrol boy. I didn't know what I would have to do. When I opened my mouth to protest, Mrs. Sutherland again pointed at the phone and said, "Pick up the phone and call your mother." I realized she was not asking. Of course, my mother didn't care and was probably glad I was joining something.

This began my seven or eight-month tenure as a Safety Patrol Boy and I flourished. I loved every minute of it. We were allowed to be late to class in the mornings, and we left class half an hour early in the afternoon to give us time to put on our uniform and get into position before school was released.

The uniform consisted of a white belt with a strap that ran over the shoulder to the back side of the belt. A silver badge was pinned onto the shoulder strap. We also had plastic helmets to wear. We took the belt home every Friday to wash it and polish our badges. That was the only thing I have ever kept polished in my life. I was so proud of my uniform.

There were lots of positions around the school that had to be patrolled. The main position was called "The Poles". In front of the school was a circular drive that led up to a canopy-covered sidewalk. This was where the

parents dropped off and picked up their kids each day. The canopy was supported with metal poles every twenty feet or so, and our job was to have a man at each pole and to open the car doors for students to either get out of or into the car depending on if it was morning or afternoon.

Also, several crosswalks around the school had to be manned. We had long poles with yellow flags on the end that said stop. When kids needed to cross the street, whoever was in charge of the position would yell, "Flags out!" We would walk into the street holding those flags and hoping the drivers would see us and stop. One crosswalk was in front of the school at the corner of Reuben Dr. and Chapman

Ave. Also, one behind the school on Birchwood or Giles, and to get to it, we had to cross a narrow bridge across the ditch that surrounded the school. There was also one quite a distance down Wakefield, south of the school. This was my favorite position because it was the furthest from the school and always made us the latest to class. Poles was my least favorite duty.

Chapman Elementary was connected to Chapman Junior High, and those big, mean ninth graders loved to torture us scrawny sixth-grade patrol boys. Some ninth graders already had driver's licenses, and their favorite cars seemed to be jacked-up, hopped-up muscle cars. "65" Mustangs and "68" Camaros.

"I might not be a 10 on the beach, but I'm a solid 8 at Walmart."

Jack Henry, Hazel Green



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They had wide back tires and glass-packed, ear-splitting mufflers. They would leave the parking lot in the afternoon and turn south toward the crosswalk at Reuben and Chapman. Their back tires would be pouring smoke and squealing like crazy. Their rear end was fishtailing, and they were gaining speed at an alarming rate but it never failed for the patrol boy in charge to yell "flags out" at that very moment.

I would stand there debating if losing my life to a speeding car was worth doing my job correctly. I finally learned to stand on the curb and poke my flag out into the street as far as I could without endangering the rest of my body. After the car came to a screeching halt, at least four guys inside would always laugh hysterically.

Another place the ninth graders loved to humiliate us was at the narrow pedestrian bridge behind the school. One day, a fellow patrol boy named Glen, if I remember correctly, and I were headed to the crosswalk behind the school. When we arrived at the bridge, two big ninth graders who looked as if they had failed a few grades and had just been released from the juvenile detention center, blocked our way. We asked them to move, and they gave us an evil grin. We then begged them to let us pass, and they just laughed.

I told Glen I would return to school and get a teacher to help us. Glen gave me a fierce look and said, "I'll take care of this!" He then spun that flag around, gripped it by the flag end, and started swinging it back and forth while screaming at the top of his lungs and charging across that bridge at a full run. He would have looked like Don Quixote charging into the windmill if he had a horse under him.

I was behind him all the way, ready at a moment's notice to race back to the school for help. Let me tell you, those ninth graders scattered to the wind! That's when I learned you don't have to be brave; you must have brave friends!

At one of our patrol boy meetings, Mrs. Sutherland announced there would be

elections for different positions. One position, I believe, was called Sergeant at Arms. She asked for us to nominate guys to be voted on. Someone nominated me! Those nominated were sent into the hall while the other guys voted. To my astonishment, I was elected. My duty as Sergeant at Arms was to police the pole position. I didn't have to open doors or work the poles in any way. It was my job to ensure everything ran smoothly and, most importantly, to keep any kids from being run over by a car.

That sidewalk under the canopy was ten feet wide, with a line about five feet from the curb. It was my job to keep all the kids behind that line and to keep order. I even got a whistle! Well, let me tell you, I took my job seriously. I marched up and down the sidewalk, telling those little first, second, and third graders to stay behind that line! I loved blowing that whistle when there was a violator of the rules. I looked just like Barney Fife from the Andy Griffith Show.

One day, a little boy tested me in every way he could. He would cross the line and dance around, but by the time I got to him, he would be back behind the line, standing like a little angel. Once, as I passed by the little angel, he jumped across the line and made faces behind me. I spun around, grabbed him by the arm, and began marching him down the sidewalk and to the office. When I told the ladies in the office that the boy would not stay behind the line, they walked us to the principal's office. They knocked on Mr.

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**"Here lies John Yeast.
Pardon me for not
rising."**

***Seen on headstone in
Mobile cemetery***

Grinstead's door and led us inside.

Mr. Grinstead was a huge silver-haired guy who always seemed to have a scowl. This was the first time I had ever been close to him, much less in his office. I was extremely intimidated by the people in charge.

From behind his desk, Mr. Grinstead looked at me and asked, "What's going on?" I explained what the boy was doing, and Mr. Grinstead stared at him across his desk. When I finished talking, the office was silent for a few seconds when, suddenly, Mr. Grinstead jumped straight up out of his chair and kicked a metal garbage can across the room, where it slammed into the wall, spilling its contents. He then reached down, jerked open a desk drawer, grabbed a huge wooden paddle, and slammed it down on his desk with a loud bang!

That boy and I jumped about a foot in the air. Mr. Grinstead then proceeded to scream and rail at this boy for five minutes about the danger of not following the rules near all of the cars, and from now on, he better listen to everything the patrol boys told him.

He then screamed, "Do you understand me?" I think we both nodded yes. He then yelled for us to get out of his office.

As we turned and went through the door, we were walking a little bow-legged because I think we both dribbled a little during that tirade. You can be certain that young man never crossed the line again, and this Sergeant at Arms never took anyone to the office again! Scared me as much as the little boy!

I was voted out of the position in the next election cycle. I guess I took my job a little too seriously.

Reflecting on my many years of schooling, the sixth grade was my favorite year. I won't say that my confidence soared. However, I did have a tremendous boost in self-confidence and self-esteem because of Mrs. Sutherland. She gave me the firm nudge that I needed to try something new, and I will forever be grateful. It is truly wonderful to have a teacher who cares a little more.

I am sixty-six years old now, and I still think of Mrs. Sutherland with fond memories and gratitude. If it weren't for her, all my pencils would still be red!

Thank you, Mrs. Sutherland!

"Getting married is trading the adoration of many for the sarcasm of one."

Mae West

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Sledding



by Bill Alkire (1957)

The weather was perfect for sledding. There was a decent snow last night, and there was a full moon. We had talked about getting a group together for a night sledding party. The sled trail was in great shape, and fast.

The Herman (Frosty) Jones family had an extremely cute 12-year-old daughter, who I knew would like to go sledding with. I had gained their confidence and trust, and they knew I would take care of her.

I asked Mrs. Jean Jones if Sue could take part if I promised not to let her get hurt. Mrs. Jones said it was okay but be sure to bring Sue home if she got too cold.

Last night's snow made the trail fast. The trail was normally a path that ran parallel with the rocky road - however in winter no one used the road because it became treacherously slick and being steep making it even more dangerous. There was a good path to walk along the sledding trail.

The kids had planned to meet at dark that evening for sledding. The town streetlights lined the sled trail making for great night sledding. After all the activity the trail began to get fast.

Everyone made their runs; it was exciting! I told Sue that we could make one last run - I had promised her mom that I would get her home if it got colder, and frigid air was blowing. We started our run; Sue's sled was in front of mine. She, as well as I and others were sitting on our sleds, in lieu of being in the prone position; the trail had gotten too slick to lie down.

Once the sled riders in front of us had gotten a lead, we were off - the trail was fast. Sue's sled hit a rock - she skewed left, losing control because of the fast track she and her sled headed toward a drop-off. She disappeared! I rolled off my sled and began sliding toward the wall, stopping short.

I jumped to my feet to check out the situation and jumped off the wall. Oh No! Sue had landed headfirst on the ground and was bleeding from her mouth and nose. She was crying and screaming. She was scared and hurting. I had failed to take care of her!

I ran to help her - someone had tissues. I tried to stop the bleeding - I felt so helpless. I gathered Sue and her sled. We started home. A thousand excuses ran rapidly through my brain...it was useless...! had failed the Jones'...big time.

Frosty, Sue's dad, met us at the door. I tried to make excuses and that I was sorry. Frosty stopped me....he was okay with everything, "It was an accident, relax, she will be okay."

"Did you have a good time?" Frosty asked Sue. Sue had quit crying as her mom was checking out the damage. Jean and Frosty made light of the situation. Sue's lip was swollen but was better in just a couple of days. I kissed her on the cheek...to make it better. I felt responsible for Sue and did not want to see her hurt. Sue healed quickly, and the Jones' did not blame me like I feared they would.

We did not sled ride at night anymore that winter. The sled trail got too slick and more dangerous as the nights got colder. We had sledding activities every weekend that winter.

This happened a long time ago - however this situation was traumatic to me at the time. There are events that stick with you forever.



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Dastardly Attempt to Burn the Business Block on the North Side of the Square

From 1891 newspaper

Monday morning about 1:30 o'clock, as one of the Mercury's compositors was going home after his night's work, and as he passed the storeroom recently vacated by Mr. J. B. Bradford, and since then has been unoccupied, he saw a small light through the front door, way back in the rear. He also could detect a volume of smoke rising. He called a gentleman or two who were standing on the Huntsville Hotel corner, and after a slight examination the cry of fire was given.

It did not take many minutes for the fire department to appear, and headed by Fire Chief Baker, the front door was burst open, lanterns were brought into requisition and in the hands of two or three men. The rear end of the store was visited, and just as the corner of the stair was reached from which a door opens into a place reserved for a private office, a fire made of paper and kindling was on the inside, built right on top of the floor.

As soon as it was discovered, the men in the front hollowed for the hose, but at that time a member of the department, William Hayden, caught a man's form in a crouching position up in a dark corner of this little space. He immediately laid his iron grasp upon him, drawing him from his hiding. Officers Ward and Fulgham were on hand and the man was turned over to them. They got him into the calaboose, while he was kicking, jerking and making strenuous efforts to free himself. Finding the man created a great deal of excitement, but the small gathering set to work and in a few minutes had the fire put out.

If the fire had gained any headway no telling what damage it would have done, for the entire block would certainly have been in danger. The villainous fellow arrested would not disclose his name, nor residence, neither could anything be learned of him from those present. But it is safe to say that when he is arraigned for an investigation of his extreme criminal act he will be fully known and dealt with accordingly.

Does Anyone remember the Gold Rush Lounge that used to be located in Parkway City Mall (now Parkway Place Mall)? It was hugely popular back in the day.
This taken from ad in Old Huntsville Magazine, May 1994)

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Stories You Tell Over and Over

by Jim Vann

We tell a lot of Stories.

1. Mike and Pop while I'm in the Army:

As most of you know, my wife Michaela (Mike) (Mom) worked at the Redstone Federal Credit Union for my dad while I was away in the Army.

She says that he kept saying "Now when Son gets home, I want you to meet him."

She would go home and say, "Mama, What am I going to do? This short fat bald-headed man that I work for wants me to meet his son when he gets home from the Army."

Well as most fellows do when they get out of the Army; they make arrangements to buy themselves a new car. Well, I walked into the Credit Union and I think she was pleased to see a fellow that was six feet two inches tall and a trim 200 pounds. The rest is history.

2. Mema at Beth's birth:

Beth, our oldest child, was born at 6:50 pm on August 31st, ten minutes before visiting time opened for the nursery. Mike's Mom and Dad were at the hospital with me and after birthing Beth, we got Mike settled in her room. We went back to the Nursery to see Miss Beth.

Back in those days, you held up a card at the Nursery window with the name of the baby you wanted them to bring to the front of the Nursery. They brought Beth over in front of us.

Probably new grandparents walked up about that time, not knowing the baby at which we were looking. The man pointed at Beth and said "Hon, look how purple that baby's hands are". Well, Mema, who I had never heard say a curse word in my life replied, "Well you damn fool; she's not ten minutes old."

You don't criticize Mema's first grandchild. I'm sure if the fellow could have found a crack in the floor, he would have crawled in.

3. Ten Acres:

I'm pretty sure I have told this story before but we tell this a lot.

After we lost three babies, we decided that we would try to adopt a child.

We went through all the requirements to get approved to adopt. We went through the Catholic Family Services because at that time the State of Alabama would not

let you adopt one of their children if you already had a natural child. Catholic Family Services required that you pay a fee to help offset the birth mother's hospital bill. We set up a savings account and started putting every spare dollar we could find to help pay the fee.

I would add here that this was a period in time where it got more acceptable for single moms to keep their baby. We had been approved to adopt for 4 years and had heard nothing from the adoption agency.

I was thinking that we need to find some way to put that savings account money to work and try to earn more money.

On a Wednesday night, I spoke to a Real Estate broker friend at church about possibly buying a small tract of land to speculate on. He said that a new Multi-list brochure was coming out the next day. He called me at work the next day and said there was a 10 acre tract on the edge of Jackson County that he knew and thought it was a good buy and had possibilities as a speculation property. That was on Thursday. I came home from work and told Mike what the realtor had said. She said that sounds good but how will we pay for it. I said "well it looks like we will never get a baby so let's use the Fee money to help buy the property".

I came home the next day and we received a call from the Adoption Agency telling us that they had a little girl that was a good match for us and if we wanted her, we had to come to the Agency the next day and pick her up.

As you might have guessed by now that's how she gets the nickname of being our "10 acres".

4. Jack Bowen's grill:

We have a dear friend named Jack Bowen who has such weird bad luck that his wife nicknamed him "BooBoo".

Shortly after James and Glenda Foster came to Huntsville, Jack and Ann Bowen had several couples to their house to enjoy a meal of Jack's famous grilled ribs.

During the meal, Ann spoke up and said "Y'all eat up, there are plenty more ribs."

Jack got this little boy look on his face and said, "No Ann there are not any more ribs".

Jack had left the grill on too high and the ribs had caught fire and the grill got so hot it burned the ribs to ashes and blew out the glass pane in the front of the grill.

Of course we have never let him live that episode down.

That's all of the stories for now.

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Growing Up on Green Mountain

by Joe (Boots) White



We moved to Green Mountain in the mid-forties. The only road that a motor vehicle could travel was the Farley Side West. We had all the hills and flats named on the side of the mountain. I remember when we moved up there it had been raining and we got stuck twice on McCarvy Hill which was halfway up the mountain. It took us all evening to get to the place that we had bought.

At the time, there were only dirt roads and no electricity. The people that I remember who lived on the mountain when we first moved there were the Bells, Cowans, Castells, Bakers, Ike White, Emmett White and the Fears.

Shortly thereafter the Stevens, Owens, Sloans and others moved there. (Forgive me if I missed anyone.)

We went to the Nature Trail on the mountain this past May for the White family reunion, and I tried to let my mind wander back to sixty-three years ago when we first moved there. It was hard with all the beautiful houses and paved roads. At the head of the lake

on the nature trail was a spring of water where our family and Uncle Emmett got our drinking water. We washed our clothes there in spring and summer. We went to Farley School and we paid my uncle Duke Cowan ten cents a day to ride in an old truck with a canvas over the back which was dry in the rain but cold in the winter.

Later on, my brother John and the Fears boys, Wayne and Jim, walked off the mountain on the Owens Cross Roads side. We would catch the bus at the mountain. In the evenings, we would stop to eat muscadines, black berries, wild apricots, hickory nuts. Then, we would go home around dark.

I wonder if the people that live on Green Mountain know where all the caves are located. Do they know where Alum Cave and Alum Cave Bluff are located? The boy who was accused of killing the Fleming lady used a small cave just to the right of Alum Cave Bluff to stay while the police were searching for him.

The only doctor that I ever saw on Green Mountain was Doc Carpenter. He was a wonderful man. He was the one who got the road built up there.

Most of my memories come back to me when I turn the thermostat up or down, put clothes in the washer or dryer, turn the water on, or when it rains and I see there are no leaks in the ceiling, when I get a cut and there is no kerosene, or when I get cold, there is no hot mustard roll.

I collected rattlesnake rattlers when I was growing up on that mountain; I had a whole soapbox full of them. Getting them, we had many close calls but no bites.

The thing that I really miss the most is the love our family had for each other. I can say a lot more about Green Mountain, but I don't want to bore you. How did we survive? I just guess that God took care of us.



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man has ever made."**

Doris Day

Superstitions About Babies

To Determine Gender of a Baby:

Slip off the wedding ring of the mother to be. Have her lay down, tie the ring to a piece of thread. A friend suspends the ring over the mother's stomach, if the ring moves in a clockwise direction it's a boy - counter clockwise - a girl.

If a baby kicks the right side of a mother, it's a boy. If it kicks the left, it's a girl. Also, if the mother always leads with her right foot, it's a boy.

Drop a coin between the mother's breasts. If it falls to the left, it's a girl - to the right, a boy.

If a mother wants a boy she should wear blue clothes and sprinkle poppy seeds on her windowsill. If she wants a girl, she should wear pink and sprinkle sugar on her windowsill.

When the baby is born, place a knife under the door sill of your home to protect it from the evil eye.

If the child is born with it hands open, it will be generous. If it is born bald, it will grow up to be a brilliant scholar.

A baby's nails should not be cut off before the age of 1, because it will become a thief. It's alright for the mother to bite the nails off, however, because this brings good luck.

When brought home from the hospital, the baby should be carried through the downstairs to the top of the house before it is brought downstairs for the first time.

If a mother gives away all her baby's clothes, she will soon find that she needs them for a new child.

The first time you take the baby out for a walk, you need to give food to the first person you see on the street - this brings good luck to the baby.

A child weaned in the early spring will become prematurely grey haired.

In Aztec culture, it was believed that looking at the moon while pregnant would cause the child to be born with a cleft palate.

In China, it was believed that a pregnant woman and a new bride in the same room would cause a clash of "qi energy" that would bring bad luck to the unborn child.

In some cultures, it was believed that opening gifts for a baby before birth would bring misfortune or attract evil spirits.

Some people believe that babies are born more frequently during a full moon, but there is no scientific evidence to support this.

Some cultures believe that if a pregnant woman looks at an ugly animal, her baby will resemble it, but there is no evidence to support this.

Some people believe that a baby's heart rate can predict its gender, with a faster rate indicating a girl and a slower rate indicating a boy.

Some people believe that a woman's weight distribution can predict the baby's gender, with weight around the hips and bottom indicating a boy and extra weight in the front indicating a girl.



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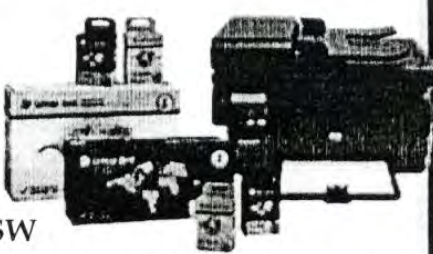
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The Lyric

by Bill Goodson



When I drive downtown these days on Washington Street between Clinton and Randolph, I am always surprised at what I see. There it is, on the east side of the street, a vacant parking lot where the Lyric theater used to be. The peculiar thing about it is...it's so small! I recall going to movies there as a kid.

There were four movie theaters in Huntsville - the Lyric on Washington St., the Grand - B movies - on Jefferson, the Center on Triana, and the Princess - for the Black folk - on Church St.

We bought our tickets (ten cents) at the window on the right and then walked to the entrance with a ticket-taker standing guard. Once I crossed that portal, I was in Wonderland. I had passed through the Looking Glass into another realm, and it seemed a vast space to me; dark enough, I guess, so that the true dimensions were a mystery. Just as the movies themselves transported me to another world, so did the space. I recall exiting in tears after seeing Bambi for the first time.

By the time I reached Junior High age, Saturday movies became a part of my life ... timed perfectly with the arrival of male hormones surging through my veins. At school on Fridays, I would summon the courage to ask one of my favorites - Jeanne or Anne or Nancy or Linda - if she were going

to the Lyric and if I could sit with her. I rarely was turned down.

So I'd take my obligatory Saturday bath, slick my hair with Bryl-cream and ride the bike downtown, only twelve blocks away. After parking at the bike rack, I'd wait for the object of my affections to purchase her ticket and we'd stroll in together, sitting on the left side down front where our crowd tended to gather.

Anyone in for some serious smooching would sit in the balcony. I think I peeked at it once. The rest of us did some serious hand-holding. The anticipated consummation began with her hand resting on the seat's arm between us, followed by my sweaty one creeping along the arm until it reached its destination, hoping against hope that she would turn hers palm-up to welcome the climax of the drama.

Be still, my heart! There we sat through the unchanging series that consisted of previews; Movietone News, cartoon, serial (Captain Marvel was my favorite) and finally, the Western (Roy Rogers was the best, though Gene Autry wasn't bad.) Hands were clenched throughout. We kept the bag of popcorn (my treat) between us so we could reach with the other hand and not break the spell.

Right here is the place for my confessional. Every Saturday during those blissful hours I wondered if the girl would tickle the palm of my hand. Everyone knew what that meant. It never happened, and thank God for that. I would not have had the faintest idea what to do next. I would be too embarrassed to ask for instructions, so my life of romance would have ended abruptly and I would have taken myself to a monastery.

So much for that.

The other feature of the Saturday Lyric experience was the Kiddie Club, a monthly talent show for little kids. The host was a local radio personality, Grady Reeves, and he would welcome six or seven kids, one at a time, to the stage to perform. America's Got Talent, Lyric Theater style. After all had finished singing, dancing, baton-twirling, playing an instrument, or reciting, he would call them all back up and have the audience applaud for each in turn. He would judge the favorite (no applause meter then) and award the prize. Five dollars, I think.

When my baby sister was five, I taught her to play the ukulele and sing "Ain't She Sweet", "Five Foot Two", "Hey, Good Lookin'", and "Slow Poke." Pat readily agreed to take the stage, and won every time she performed....EXCEPT when her neighbor/boyfriend Little Joe Walker performed against her. Joe was crippled with a shortened leg from polio at an early age, and all he had to do was limp up to the microphone and he would win.

Cute as a button - both of them. That ghost-space on Washington Street harbors a wealth of memories.

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Local Classifieds

PAPERBOY

by Stan Bacak

There was a big man in our living room. A very big man. He was talking to my dad. Opening the screen door, both men looked at me. "This is Mr. Morgan from the Huntsville Times and he has a newspaper route for you" said dad. "Gee, thanks for the warning," I thought. "Pleased to meet you, Stan." We shook hands.

He had a pleasant voice and neighborly disposition. "There's a paper route opening in Mill Village (Merrimack). If you're interested you can follow along for a week, learn the route and then it's yours." "Ok", I haphazardly nodded. Internal confusion escalated. I don't own a bike!

I called a friend. "Red, my dad got me a paper route and I need a bike." Red was a smooth mule-trader always buying and selling stuff. He showed up at my house with his dad and a bicycle in the trunk of the car. For five dollars, I was the disconcerted owner of a ragged red bike with a flat front tire. Desperate and short of time the repairs were expedited. Nothing clarifies the mind quicker than lack of options. The tire was patched, nuts and bolts tightened, and she was ready to ride.

The paper shack was an insignificant white washed concrete block hut in Merrimack Village on Drake Avenue. (The original paper shack is still there on Drake Avenue between Bradley and Clopton Street). What purpose it served in earlier decades is still a mystery to me. It was a component of the Mill Village housing system. Some old timer knows.

Stepping inside, a propagation of cigarette smoke, profanities and crude catcalls proliferated my senses. I was all in. Roy Case was rolling newspapers on one of the wall counter tops. At fifteen years of age he was a well-developed teen and had typical attributes of young Mill Village men. Most of the carriers from the surrounding neighborhoods had similar characteristics.

More mature than age would define they were jovial, courteous, sincere, rowdy and vulgar; all in the same package. One never knew which trait would dominate the immediate situation. I helped Roy roll a few papers. A shrill "See y'all later" pierced my ears. The farewell from Charles Shelton was annotated with more than several blasphemes. He had a cat-like response for anybody that entered his terse world.

Tagging along for a week, I learned the route. Come Friday evening we went door to door collecting the payment in cash. I'm

Husband: a person who knows he is right in an argument, but humbly accepts that his wife is correct and moves on.

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having fun with some rowdy guys, providing customers with the news and getting paid for it. For several hours every day mom cannot account for her son's whereabouts. A pattern or regularity developed. Show up on time, deliver the newspaper, and get paid. I endeavored to do this routine for two years. Rain, sunshine, sleet or snow never stopped my commitment.

No help was asked of from either parent during inclement weather. None was ever offered. All the guys were like that. Never saw an adult in or near the paper shack during my tenure, except for Terry Morgan, the branch manager.

Like any job, seniority on a paper route had its privileges. The old timers had first choice when a carrier left the Times. The best areas were neighborhoods that were easy to deliver and paid monthly instead of weekly. Mr. Morgan gave me the opportunity to deliver the newspaper in my family home residential area. Mom would have been aware of her son's time frame and I preferred to remain elusive. That offer was declined and opted for another newly opened route that was more afar.

"The papers are here," somebody would yell. It was time to go to work. The Huntsville Times truck would back up to the paper shack and several men would briskly and systematically unload the truck. That became part of the routine. Mr. Morgan then parceled out your quota. Next, long shelves were abruptly engulfed with newspaper carriers rolling and rubber banding the newspapers. Rain days were dreadful because the papers also had to be wet wrapped with thin cellophane sheathing. Chatter was minimal.

One by one the paperboys walked out of the shack with a large heavy-duty canvas sack around their neck. The paperboys with larger routes also had saddlebags that hung on a rack over the rear wheels.

Most of the major roads encompassing our paper route territory were two lanes at that time. (Drake, Triana, Bob Wallace and

Patton Road up to Redstone Arsenal). The Apollo program was ratcheting up and soldiers were training at Redstone Arsenal enroute to Vietnam. The Huntsville Times was printed seven days a week. Weekends were fairly subdued but Monday through Friday the delivery was around 4:00 PM. Redstone Arsenal was unleashing its work force and cars packed the exit routes within our district.

Traffic was difficult during this time period and dangerous. Ten to twelve motorcycles or bicycles left the paper shack daily on schedule, three hundred and sixty five days a year, I am amazed to this day not one paperboy from our branch was injured or killed.

A cast of characters delivering the Huntsville Times, seven days a week would have made Mark Twain proud. More than half a century later I remember them as young men, not boys. Some would become lawyers, businessmen, a local Judge, and technicians more than several would go to an unknown country called Vietnam and fight a war. A few would die there. Marine Cpl. Charles Howard Shelton died in a place called the NAM.

Paperboy was a disciplined adventure paving the way for other pursuits. Some stayed on for a few months, others for several years. Unwittingly we learned self-reliance, discipline, business management, logistics and customer service. Maturing from young boys to men, we were Town Criers spreading the news on bicycles and motorcycles.



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Sam Walton, Walmart CEO

MY ONLY CHILD

by Clarence Potter



This is a tribute to my daughter, Carmen Denise Potter, who was only 51 years old when she passed away. She was born on 6/25/1967 and passed 11/27/2018. The notion anyone could love someone more than I loved her is an impossibility.

She was the Manager of a Department Store in Savannah, Georgia. Carmen had bought herself a condo not far from her office. The condo was two stories with a set of stairs leading to the bedroom. Because she lived by herself she adopted a rescue dog for companionship.

Gypsum was not a big dog. Just a dog, she thought. She named him that because he was a gypsum color and a very quiet dog inside. It was a whole different story on the outside. He ran almost every step he took, was always moving.

Back to the condo. One summer evening Carmen came home to find exactly half of her shoes piled in the middle of her den. You may ask how did she knew it was exactly half her shoes. Well, Carmen loved shoes. She had so many pairs and since she lived alone, she used her stairway as one would a shoe rack. She placed her left and right shoes next to each other on each step.

When she came home that evening all her left shoes had been meticulously moved to the center of the den floor in front of her couch. She called her daddy (me) and said it was spooky. To find only left shoes and no right ones. We told her to forget it, but if it happens again take Gypsum to a vet.

A couple of weeks rocked on with no shoes being moved, but then almost a month later it happened again. All left shoes were carefully moved to the den by her mysterious dog. Carmen called daddy and told us Gypsum has moved half the shoes again!

We told her to take the dog to a vet. A new town, a new vet and a lot of new tests. After wasting a half day's work and spending \$500 on tests, she and Gyp and the vet were ready to discuss her problems. Carmen explained to the vet, as she had told us. Explaining it was always the left and not the right.

The vet said "We can do more testing if you want or I can simply tell you what is going on."

He explained there was a fungus on Carmen's left foot that the dog liked. Or there may be a fungus on her right foot the dog didn't like. He said either way that was the problem.

It may have happened one or two more times then the problem went away for good. Gypsum finally went totally blind and went across that Rainbow Bridge. He was missed for a long time.

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PET TIPS FROM ANGEL

New Year's Eve and Your Pets

Here are some tips for keeping your pet safe and happy during New Year's Eve:

- Exercise: Tire your pet out before the festivities with a walk. The morning before the fireworks, make sure to get in an extra long walk or tire out your dog or cat with some vigorous playtime. Why? Simple. Because a tired pet is more likely to chill out on New Year's Eve. (And less likely to run away.) Regular exercise helps pets maintain a healthy weight and exposes them to new sights, smells, and sounds.
- Keep them inside: Keep your pets inside as much as possible to prevent them from getting out and lost. Close windows and watch the door closely. If you do take your pet outside, keep them on a tight leash.
- Microchip your pet: Microchips are often the only way to reunite lost pets with their owners. Make sure your pet's microchip and vaccination tags are up-to-date.
- Try those Thunder vests that fit your pet snugly and seem to be comforting to dogs especially smaller ones.
- Medication: your vet may prescribe for your pet to keep them calm with the strange and unsettling noises they're hearing.
- Seek vet advice: If your pet is having trouble adjusting to the celebrations, you can reach out to a vet for advice about medications or calming aids.
- Designating a pet-safe space for your animals is the first step to decreasing their anxiety on the holiday. If your pets are crate-trained, set them up in there for the night and cover the top with a towel or blanket. A crate is a place that makes them feel safe and comfortable, so this will help quell anxiety. If they are not crate-trained, however, putting them in one could make them more upset. Instead, set them up in a room with a door that closes where they cannot damage anything or hurt themselves and make sure they have food, water, and some comforts like their favorite toy or blanket.
- Anything you can do to safely distract your pets from the hustle and bustle of the holiday will help keep them calm. Turning on the television or some music can cover up the noise of a loud party or post-



midnight fireworks. If they have any interactive toys that require their attention, this is the perfect time to use them. If you have young children who cannot stay awake until midnight, keeping your pets with the kids can help keep everyone calm and happy as you enjoy welcoming the new year.

And on a night like New Year's Eve, you might find your pet missing because:

- They were frightened by loud noises, like parties, Fireworks, music, strange visitors, etc.
- Visitors to your home going in and out, leaving doors open, leaving gates open, etc.
- They were overwhelmed by large crowds of people they don't know (like your guests).
- They got spooked from unfamiliar surroundings and scents (which can overwhelm them and cause them to run away in a panic).
- They were stressed from a change to their normal routine.
- Under these unusual circumstances, your pets may run away or hide at the first opportunity they get. Which is why it's a good idea to prevent them from getting scared in the first place...but also planning ahead for what to do if they do escape.

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From the Desk of Tom Carney

Cambron's Night Club

One of the stories of Old Huntsville that has almost been forgotten is the one about Faith Presbyterian and Cambron's nightclub.

As Huntsville began to grow in the late 1950s, so did the need for more church space. A recently formed congregation of the Presbyterian church had been meeting in members' homes and anywhere else they could find space to worship. As the membership grew, so did the need for a permanent meeting place.

The answer to their dilemma came one Sunday evening when Charley Motley, a member of the congregation, was driving down Whitesburg Drive. Noticing a nightclub by the name of Cambron's, Charley paused and took a long look at it.

Due to the Sunday Blue Laws of that time, nightclubs were not permitted to open on Sunday.

"What a waste," Charley thought. "All that space not being used on the one day of the week when we could really use it."

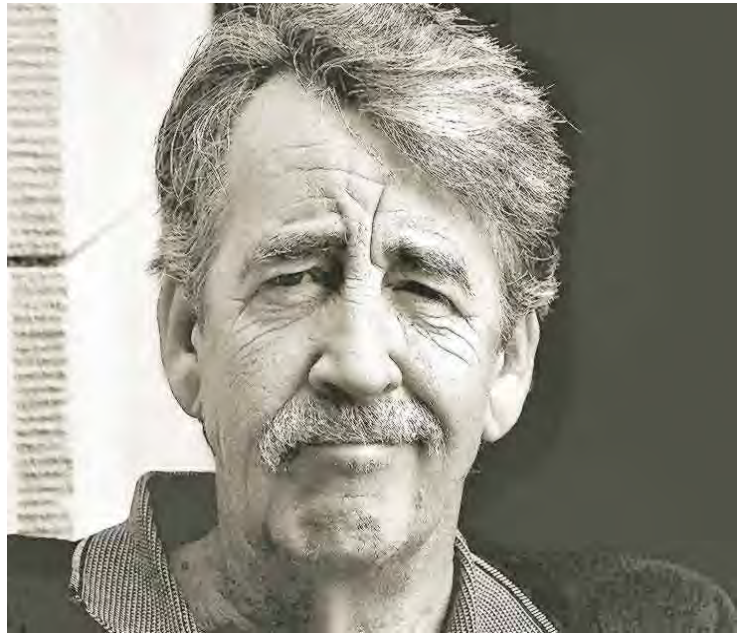
Due to the nature of their business, it's hard to shock most nightclub operators but when Mr. and Mrs. Motley walked into the darkened club and asked permission to use it for a church gathering, Cambron was flabbergasted.

"Ruby, come here," he said to his wife. "You gotta hear this."

As Mr. Motley explained their needs, Cambron shook his head and decided, "Why not? If you are willing to help clean the place up on Sunday mornings, it will help me out, too."

Over the next several months, a routine was established by the Faith Presbyterian Church that had to be unique in the annals of church history. Church members would arrive early on Sunday morning and begin sweeping the floors. One person was assigned to empty ash trays, while others would clean tabletops and carry out trash. One member was even assigned the task of unplugging the juke box and turning off the neon sign that proclaimed Budweiser as the "King of Beers."

The membership continued to grow with Cambron's being the only nightclub in Huntsville with Bibles and textbooks stored in the back room. One old-timer tells a story about a



man who was in the habit of drinking too much on Saturday nights. After much persuasion, his neighbor finally talked him into going to church.

One Sunday morning, as he got out of the car in front of Cambron's, the man paused as if in reflection and said, "I've heard that guilty people always return to the scene of the crime, but isn't this just a little ridiculous?"

When Mr. Cambron offered to sell the property, (for one million dollars with no money down) the church quickly accepted the offer, becoming the only Presbyterian church to ever purchase a nightclub.

The nightclub has long since been replaced by modern facilities and the church continues to flourish, only now without the neon Budweiser sign.

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The Zebra Hunt

by Cecil Ashburn (2006)

My friend Red Sharp from Scottsboro had a gift for training animals. His matched team of mules took first prize at mule day in Columbia, Tennessee. These mules could understand the spoken word from Red and they seemed to delight in performing for him.

Somewhere Red had acquired a zebra. They told Red that a zebra couldn't be tamed, much less broken to ride or to harness. Well I think Red had a little talk with his zebra and pretty soon he had a saddle on him. Then he paired him up with one of his best behaved mules and had them hooked to a wagon or a plow. That's not to say that the zebra liked it much, because if you got too close to the sucker he would bite you.

So one day Red called me and said that he wanted me to go to Africa with him, because he wanted another zebra.

We found out that Delta had a flight from New York to Nairobi, Kenya, with stops in Liberia and Nigeria. So we took off.

Monrovia, the Capital of Liberia, was our first stop. The first thing I noticed that all of the cars were Toyotas so I asked a native about that. "Oh," he said, "That's simple. The President is the Toyota dealer here. All the cars are Toyotas except the President's, he drives a Cadillac."

We found a lot of zebras but nobody would sell us one. So we flew on to Nigeria and they stopped the plane. Immediately a squad of Castro types came on board with machine guns, bayonets, and pistols. So I said to Red, "Let's don't stop here."

So we stayed on the plane and flew on to Kenya. If you think it is a long flight to California, it's nothing compared to flying across the fat part of Africa. It is over twice the distance from Huntsville to Los Angeles. We finally reached Nairobi, the capital of Kenya, where we contacted some officials and

they almost laughed us out of the country. "You can't tame a zebra," they told us.

Red showed them some pictures and they laughed even harder. "You have painted stripes on one of your mules," they said.

As you might guess from his nickname, redheaded Red had a short temper. He was about ready to declare war or at least a fist fight with the prime minister or whoever or whatever he was.

So we decided to take some tours, and we had the satisfaction of seeing large herds of zebras running wild, along with elephants, tigers, lions, giraffes, hippos and you name it. So we decided to shoot some of them and we unholstered our 35 mm camera and fired away.

There on the Savannah at the foot of the beautiful Kilimanjaro we agreed that the zebra would rather run free here than to go to work in Jackson County, Alabama. I think we were getting fed up with Africa, so we headed for the airport.

Now the Nairobi airport terminal is a very beautiful building,

but I noticed something strange. Almost every flight was either arriving or departing for Moscow. So I asked about this. The answer was it was cheaper to fly from here to anywhere in the world as long as you booked it through Moscow.

I got acquainted with a young lady on the return flight to New York. There were only a few paying passengers on board. She said "I have a deal with Delta to fly roses from Kenya to New York not by weight but by available space."

Can you imagine a 747 full of roses? It sure smelled good. I expect the money she was making smelled good too.

We finally got back to New York and it felt like we were back home. Knowing such a good man and having such a good friend as Red Sharp was indeed a privilege for me..

Red died a few years later and his body was hauled in a wagon through the town of Scottsboro, pulled by a beautiful team of matched mules.

But no zebras.

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A Resolution and the New Year

by *Iolanda Hicks*



Day 1: Boy am I ready to make changes!! I am getting this body in shape, going to lose that weight and start that exercise program.

Day 2: I got the refrigerator all cleaned out and packed it with healthy foods like carrots, celery, spinach, romaine, tufu and fruits. I actually threw out all candy, sweets and unhealthy snacks. Even my chocolates are gone!! I am really doing well and on the right track!

Day 3: I started my walking. I did a half a mile yesterday and three quarters of a mile today. I have done well on changing my eating habits. I can do this! I have to admit, I am a little hungry.

Day 4: I am up walking a mile now and have renewed my water aerobics membership at the Wellness Center. Walking everyday and doing the water aerobics, along with eating healthy, is going to renew my energy levels.

Day 5: The water aerobics is helping a few of my sore leg muscles ease up. I added a half a mile to my walking. I will probably keep that distance for now.

Day 6: I found a great recipe for cabbage soup that is supposed to help me with weight loss. I think I will put a pot on and have that for lunch for a few days. I am doing so good!

Day 7: I have decided to add a few exercises using some light weights to maybe tone my muscles.

Day 8: I am really a little sore today. I really needed to go to water aerobics but my body has been reacting to that delicious cabbage soup. I have been eating it for two of my meals each day. I am a little leery about being in the water for very long at this time.

Day 9: The exercising has been a little slow today. Walking was almost excruciating.

Days 10, 11,12,13,14: I can't move much. My legs and arms have been cramping and the cabbage soup has done a number on me. I have stayed home with lots of bed rest, mostly not moving, alternating ice packs and the heating pad. I feel like I have the flu. I have gnawed on carrots, celery and had a few liters of water each day. I don't know if I will make it.

Day 15: Okay. I made it. I have re-evaluated my getting healthy and the exercise program.

Day 16: ???

Day 17: I have decided I am too old to deny myself the comfort of nourishment. A buffet is calling me: The Golden Corral has plenty of nourishment choices. I am definitely going to visit their Greenhouse Food Bar, the Grill House and the Comfort Food Corner. That Brass Bell Bakery section will be a sure thing. Okay then. Happy New Year to me!!!

Heading to Edgar's to pick up about a dozen of their buttery, syrupy pecan rolls.

"I wasn't going to do anything today and so far, I'm right on schedule."

Joe Taylor, Huntsville

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The above was just a fun way to introduce an imaginary journal of an attempt to carry out a New Year's resolution that so many of us do yearly! Yes, here we are, at the start of a New Year. My day-by-day account that you just read is from my imagination of what could happen at the beginning of a brand new year. We are so Gung Ho in the beginning of each New Year with so many goals. Our enthusiasm has no bounds! Then what happens? We usually fall back into our normal habits and ways of living.

We are human but then again, there are exceptions to every rule. Some of us do achieve those goals, making positive, life changing habits, which in turn makes us better for it.

New Year celebrations date back for thousands of years, with different dates along the way. The Romans, Babylonians and Mesopotamians all celebrated on a day in March, after the vernal equinox. Rome later moved the holiday to January 1 in 46 B.C. Then, in 1582, Pope Gregory XIII established January 1 as New Year's Day by the Gregorian Calendar.

The New Year has traditions like exchanging gifts, making resolutions, decorating with laurel branches and here, in the U.S., the Times Square Ball drop. The drop began in 1907.

This tradition, on New Years Eve, came about through the efforts of Adolph Ochs, who in the early 1900's, was the owner of the New York Times. New York City, at that time, had a ban on fireworks. Mr. Ochs wanted a way to celebrate New Years at the Times Building, so he hired a Jacob Starr to create the ball, which was illuminated, to mark the beginning of the New Year.

The first ball was made of iron and wood, decorated with electric lights.

Today that ball has developed into a much larger ball, with a total of 2,688 Waterford Crystal triangles and 672 LED modules attached to an aluminum frame. That ball weighs 11,875 pounds!

As I end this short article, I am sharing two short quotes that I thought were good to welcome in this New Year:

"Every year you make a resolution to change yourself. This year, make a resolution to be yourself." Author unknown.

"Here's to a bright New Year and a fond farewell to the old; here's to the things that are yet to come, and to the memories that we hold." Author unknown.

Seat Belts

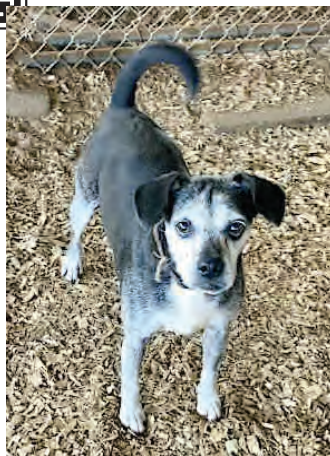
"I was driving with my kids on a nice fall afternoon when a woman in the convertible ahead of us stood up and waved. She was stark naked!

As I was reeling from the shock, I heard my 5 year old son shout from the back seat, "Mom, that lady isn't wearing her seat belt!"



Thank you!

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PEPPER

Hello, my name is Pepper. I love people and greet everyone I meet with a happy hello! I am considered a senior dog because my age is estimated at 9 years old. A kind citizen found me in October 2024 and brought me to the Ark Animal Shelter. People here think I may be a Parson Russell Terrier but that is just a guess. For sure I am a purebred mixed breed. When I came to the shelter I had to have some dental work done and the vet brought me up to date on all my shots. I am spayed and have been micro-chipped. Even though I'm a senior dog I'm active and just want to be with people. I'm hoping for a forever home with a comfy warm bed and where I can live the rest of my life in a safe and loving environment. If you are looking for a new friend and companion won't you consider coming to see me? I will be so glad to see you and your family! Ask to see Pepper, that's me!

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Photo by Hubert Williams of Art Studio.

REDSTONETTE SOFTBALL TEAM—Thirteen members of the Redstonettes, Huntsville girls' softball team, are shown above with chaperone, mascot and coach.

From left to right, standing, are: Juanita Pitts, Marguerite Lockmiller, who is making a one-way trip, for she will go from Detroit to Cleveland to begin work in an aircraft factory; Doris Smith, unable to make the national trip; Alma Trapp Edgemon, Lena Yarbrough, Allene McGinness Moore, Betty Jones, Cecil Fain, coach of the Birmingham and New Orleans trips.

Lucy Short Sandberg, who began nursing training in Birmingham, Monday, and standing in front is the little mascot, Don Smith, son of Doris Smith, who made the first two trips; Nannie Denton, Carolyn Tanner, Kathleen Majors, catcher, and Pansy Legg, pitcher, Grace Tolen Horton.

Not shown are: Jo Ellett, Louise Harbin, Alice Smith, Anice Dunham, who sustained a broken finger in Birmingham, and Altha Tabor, unable to go to Detroit, due to illness.

The Redstonettes

by Larry D. Lane

The Redstonettes were a young women's all-star softball team who played in late summer, early fall of 1943. They were largely a culmination of a team that began in the late 1930's named the Dr. Peppers "Pepperettes".

Many of the players were recruited from the Mill Villages of Dallas and Lincoln Mills and surrounding rural com-

munities Monrovia, Capshaw and greater Madison County. The Redstonettes were able to retain their sponsorship and support of Dr Pepper and Coca-Cola even after they changed their name to the Redstonettes.

The Redstonettes won the state tournament in Birmingham on September 2, 1943. Then they won the Southeast Regional tournament in New Orleans, September 6, 1943.

The team traveled by train from Huntsville to Detroit,

MI for the 1943 Girls fast pitch softball National Championship. Unfortunately, they were defeated in a single elimination game September 19, 1943.

The above picture was taken by Hubert Williams, who was a popular sports and wedding photographer from Huntsville.

The photo appeared in the Huntsville Times September 19, 1943 pg. 10, Sports.

Unfortunately, this photo was taken at night with mini-

mal light. Several members of the team were not present for this photo.

I would be very interested in communicating with any relatives, friends or acquaintances connected to this team. My purpose is gathering any photos of this team or any more information that might be available.

Also, if there any photos by Hubert Williams of this team would be very valuable.

The roster of the team is to the right with team members names and their position on the team.

In the early spring of 2025, I plan on writing an exhaustive article on this team and its place in Huntsville sports and community history. I would really appreciate any and all information Old Huntsville readers may be able to provide on the team and its members and coaching staff.

Contact information

Larry D. Layne. Email larry.d.layne@gmail.com. Cell (334) 312-9188.

Members of the team in alphabetical order:

1. Nannie Denton, second base
2. Anice Dunham, center field
3. Alma Trapp Edgemon, second base
4. Jo Ellett, right field
5. Louise Harbin, catcher
6. Grace Tolen Horton, center field
7. Betty Jones, pitcher
8. Penny Legg, pitcher
9. Marguerite Lockmiller, center field
10. Kathleen Majors, catcher
11. Aline McGinness Moore, short stop
12. Juanita Pitts, right field
13. Lucy Short Sandburg, first base
14. Alice Smith, left field
15. Doris Smith, short stop
16. Altha Tabor, pitcher
17. Carolyn Tanner, third base
18. Lena Yarbrough, right field

Coach Cecil V. Fain, Coach Ferrell Tabor

"When I was young I was called a rugged individualist. When I was in my fifties I was considered eccentric. Now I'm doing and saying the same things I did then, and I'm labeled senile."

George Burns, Comedian

"THE WAY IT WAS,"

THE OTHER SIDE OF HUNTSVILLE'S HISTORY

BY TOM CARNEY



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HUNTSVILLE BACK IN THE FORTIES

By Dean G. Ratliff

When I was 3 years old, my family moved to Huntsville from Birmingham. The year was 1938. Our first residence was on Calhoun Street in downtown Huntsville, between Clinton and Randolph Avenues (both named streets back then). Our next home was on East Clinton Street, four and a half blocks east of East Clinton School, on the north side of the the street. I still love this house with its small front porch and bay window.

It was while we lived on Calhoun that I met someone who turned out to be a lifelong friend. His name was W. F. Sanders, Jr.. My folks bought eggs and butter from his grandparents and I met him on one of our shopping excursions. We hit it off right away and continued to be friends though grammar school, high school, college and after.

There are a lot of things that I remember that don't really make a story but I will mention them anyway because it was a sign of the times. I remember Mom buying hot tamales from a lady who made them at her store around the corner from us. They were wrapped in real corn husks and I loved them. They are still about the only Mexican food I care for.

All the kids were able to roller skate but me, as I was the youngest, they used to laugh at me because I couldn't do it. I never did learn how. I guess I lost a lot of confidence because of all the kidding I took. But I always remembered that when I tried to teach my kids anything, I tried to first of all instill confidence in them. Like the little ole train, I think I can, I think I can.

I guess I have saved the best Calhoun Street story for last. It involves the second time I ran away from home. But this time I took a girl with me. There was a big home on the corner of Randolph and Calhoun that's still there, that was next door to our house on Calhoun. One summer, I think I was 4 or 5 at the time, our neighbors in the big house had kinfolk visiting from Atlanta. Among the visitors were several kids including a cute little girl my age. We were the youngest in the whole group and were somewhat ignored by the older kids. One of the ladies at the big house had sympathy for us and brought us lemonade and cookies while we were sitting in the Gazebo.

Being totally unattended the girl and I began a conversation about where we were from. She was from Atlanta and was bragging about it and how grand and glorious a city it was. I responded that I was from Birmingham and that it was the Magic City, that Atlanta could never even hold a candle to it. After several minutes of spirited arguing about our respective cities, she said that if she knew the way she would go to Atlanta right then because she missed it so much. I told her I felt the same way about Birmingham and furthermore I knew the way to the railroad station where we could each catch a train to our beloved cities.

Well, she wasn't about to back down and said Let's do it. I was scared to death but I wasn't going to back down either. I knew where downtown Huntsville was and had a vague idea where the Train Depot was. You went downtown, turned right and walked a long way straight. So we lit out down Randolph toward town.

The first major obstacle we encountered came about a block down the street when we encountered a curb. You see, neither one of us was allowed to cross a street by ourselves. This really wasn't even a street, but was a back alley (Figures Alley). But it still had a curb and might be classified as a street by our parents. You see, we were running away from home but we didn't want to get in trouble because we crossed a street. We sat on the curb for awhile pondering what to do. After a while the absurdity of our concern must have registered so we held hands, looked both ways and tore out.

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After several more exciting street crossings, we made it to Washington Street. In those days, downtown Huntsville was a very busy and vibrant place and Washington Street was the main drag. The sidewalks were full of people going about their business and not noticing two little kids. I guess they assumed our Mothers were near by. Well, I turned right and headed towards the Depot but a couple of doors down I got distracted by the odor of chocolate coming from the Dime Store. I think it was a Kress dime store. There were three of these stores on Washington Street at that time, Kress, Grants and McClellans. The front doors were open since this was before air conditioning.

They always put the candy counter in front so you would have to pass it on the way in and on the way out. It was nearly impossible just to pass up. Well, the candy looked and smelled so good through the glass case that I couldn't resist. I also knew that we were going to need some food for our trek. At the time I guess I pretended that I was doing nothing wrong. I just wouldn't let myself think about it.

In all the hustle and bustle going on about me, I just stood on my tip toes, reached on top of the counter and picked up two Hershey bars, one for me and one for my girl. We then stood out in front of the store and proceeded to eat the evidence. Keep in mind this was summer so you can imagine what we looked like when we were done. Our faces and hands were covered with chocolate and the only place to wipe was on our clothes.

By this time we were getting a little thirsty. I remembered that there were some public fountains on the grounds of the Courthouse. These were provided by the Womens Christian Temperance union WCTU. I held my friend's hand and retreated back up Washington to Randolph. Here we had to cross two streets to get over to the Courthouse, but we made it.

Well, just as we got across I heard the squealing of brakes. I looked out on the street and saw a Police car with two policemen both pointing at us. I was petrified. They had found out about the Hershey bars. I grabbed my friend's hand and ran toward the Courthouse. This was the building before the one we have now, but it was similar in that it had four entrances, one on each side. We ran inside with the police in hot pursuit. They came in two different doors so I headed out another, but too late - they were just too fast and much bigger. They carried us both to the car and put us in the back seat, chocolate and all.

Their first question was where did we get the candy. I told my first conscious lie and said a man gave us some money to buy it. They looked at each other and I'm not sure if they knew I was lying or they were wondering about a man who would buy

candy for a couple of kids.

I couldn't tell where they were taking us. All I could see out of the car were the tops of trees. I guessed we were going to jail. They asked where we were going to and I told them she was headed to Atlanta and I was going to Birmingham.

Shortly we arrived in front of my house in the midst of a whole bunch of hysterical women. Some were crying, some were mad, and a whole lot of shouting and hugging was going on. The next thing I knew, Mom had snatched me up and carried me into the house. I guess the other women were planning a 'whopping party'. I couldn't understand that. The little girl was really the one who started it all, bragging about Atlanta the way she did.

Well, punishment time came shortly. I guess my mother was a little crazy by then because all she could think to do with me was tie me to the foot of the bed, sitting on the floor. Dad came home for lunch and there I was, just tied to the bed. I was sure he would kill me but he just looked at me with that strange look as if he were asking where in the world had he gotten me in the first place.

I received that look a number of times during my youth.

The worst part of my punishment came from within. For a number of years afterwards I was overcome with guilt for stealing the candy and then lying about it. I would wake up at night and cry to myself because I was sure I was going to Hell or at least jail. Every sermon or Sunday school lesson I was sure they were talking about me.

One thing for sure, I tried not to lie or steal any more. I distinctly remember a mother asking me if I had seen her son. I told her I wasn't sure even though I had passed him on the sidewalk not more than a minute earlier. It was about that time that I felt that I was taking this truthfulness thing a bit too far. But I continued to suffer with guilt for several more years until one day I finally confessed to Mom. She told me not to worry, we would just pay Kress's back for the candy the next time we went to town.

That was the biggest relief of my life.

"I'm wrinkled, saggy and lumpy - and that's just my left leg!"

Marie Jefferson, Taft, TN

HUNTSVILLE HISTORY THROUGHOUT THE YEARS



Thousands of people turned out downtown in 1961 to celebrate Alan Shepard's space flight aboard the Redstone rocket. That same year Olin King founded SCI and construction was started on a 70-foot tall illuminated cross on Monte Sano. Also in the news was the firing of Police Chief Chris Spurlock by the City Council.

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