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Old Huntsville

HISTORY AND STORIES OF THE TENNESSEE VALLEY

Polio



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Polio



by Nell Rutledge Porter

It was in late summer of 1941 and the nights were hot and dry. Our fifteen-month-old daughter was keeping us awake with something a local doctor said was Impetigo—large blisters on the outside of her body, with yellow pus in them.

Because I was having trouble with my thyroid gland, the loss of sleep seemed to hurt me very much, but I did all I could to allay the pain. Then the doctor ordered me to bed for two weeks. He then seemed to concentrate on my trouble and not pay very much attention to

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Jerry Springer

my sick baby. Kind neighbors came and carried her to their home to be cared for. I became so ill that I do not remember how long it was before the impetigo healed.

Then one Thursday morning, our doctor came by on a routine visit, and our neighbors brought our little daughter by for me to see her, as she had become ill again. My husband cautioned the doctor to examine our baby carefully, because we had heard that people were dying everywhere with polio. The doctor looked her over and said that she was probably beginning to cut teeth. She was now beginning to walk.

We did not let our friends carry the baby to their home that night, and when I put my arms around her, in the night, her back felt like a doll stuffed with sawdust. No resistance or pliability at all.

A great fear enveloped me, but I tried not to worry my husband, who was under such a strain of taking care of me and the baby, besides his regular job at a large wholesale house. Our two older children were still with friends and needed attention to their clothing and other essentials.

The next morning, my husband asked me if I could get a neighbor to carry the baby and me to a specialist. I felt compelled to make an effort to do this without revealing the awful fear that gripped my heart. My next-door neighbor was



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planning a trip into town, so she carried us and let us out at the office, and then began the wait.

We soon found ourselves in the doctor's inner room, where he conducted various tests. One of these involved taking something like a pin and sticking it into her arm, but she made no response. Then he stuck it into her leg, on the same side, but she still made no response.

The doctor looked at me and said, "Your baby has Bulbar Polio." I remained speechless and horrified for several minutes, because that was the very thing that I had feared for the whole night long. My legs gave out, and I fell over into a nearby chair. I tried to cry out, but I was too weak. This specialist had no way of knowing how very weak my condition was. I cannot remember how we got to the car. I do not remember. I do know that we went by the place of business where my husband was working and told him the bad news. He, like me, did not know the real danger that polio posed in those days, when no one knew very much about the disease.

In about an hour, my husband came home, and he had been laid off for at least two weeks and with full pay. His boss told him that if he kept working that every man would leave, so great was the fear of the dread disease. He was a real help to me as I could relax and get the rest that I needed. I kept my baby at my side, and we both looked for the specialist to come that evening, and he did.

Following his advice, we placed the baby in her little bed and she remained silent. She would follow us with beautiful brown eyes, as we went to and fro in the work that we must keep up. Spasms of pain would cross her face from time to time, and she could only take liquids.

On the evening of the first day, we heard the school children coming down the street, and they were shouting, "Don't walk on that side of the street, they've got polio." Others took up the chorus "polio, polio, polio," on and on until we could not hear them. At the time, it hurt us very

much, but now I know fear was the cause.

We were quarantined. No one could come in, and we had no one to relieve us, as we took turns caring for and sat through the long nights by our baby's bedside. This was on Friday, and all through Friday night, we watched those big brown eyes following us.

On Saturday morning, since she hadn't had a bowel movement, I decided to give her an enema. I didn't realize then how paralyzed she was. I will never forget the utter look of pain when the water came out as clearly as it went in. I did not do anything for her again without first asking the specialist. We had no idea other than that she would recover. Later, the specialist arrived and instructed the people to put up the quarantine sign, but they failed to do so. He became very angry and shed his white coat, hanging it on the front porch. "Now," he said, "No one had better not pass by that". He could have saved his breath, as no one had tried to come into our house at all. Fear was too rampant in homes on our street, especially in the homes where our children had been taken care of during my sickness.



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"I knew I was getting older when I couldn't remember the last time I laid on the floor to watch TV."

Jim Vann, Huntsville

The medicine that our baby was taking was blood red and there was no way of removing it from her little gowns. She was so stiff from the paralysis that we just had to tear them off her. During my nights of sitting with her, I sewed something like the hospital gowns of today: fronts to spread over, but no backs.

Saturday night was the night of the Madison County Fair, and we couldn't see a light in any house around our home. Everyone was gone, and how lonesome we were, and sorrow was our companion through the night. My husband and I would take turns sitting up with her, to retain our strength, not knowing how long it would be like that. He would sit with her for three hours and call me to take his place.

Sometime on Sunday morning, he was calling me, and I was trying to wake up. It seemed that I was coming up from layers of sleep. When I finally did awake, I saw that the sun was shining under the window shade. I took my seat by the bed and somehow my baby looked pinched and so different. I cried out, "Oh, Daddy, our baby isn't breathing!" He was at my side in an instant and said, "She was breathing a minute ago."

I walked over to a mirror on the wall and placed it so our baby could breathe on it, but our hearts were broken, as no trace of moisture appeared on the mirror. Finally, my husband gently took the mirror from my hands and helped me to lie down. He placed a clean sheet over our darling, saying that he would have to try and reach the doctor and undertaker.

Suddenly, I remembered that there was some of that red medicine on our baby's mouth, and I asked my husband to bring some warm water and

soap. While he went to make the telephone call, I washed my darling baby as if she could jump from my arms in play. I took a new white gown that I had made a few days before she was ill. I had made it before her sickness and put it on her very emancipated body. The gown swallowed her up, almost, and I hugged her to my bosom for what was my last time. I knew that she was already being cradled on the breast of her Father in Heaven, and though she had been unable to walk or talk as babies of her age could, she was having a blessed release of all her pain and suffering forever there.

I heard footsteps and through eyes blinded by tears, I gave her body to the doctor, and he said one short word, "Dead". He laid her down in the little bed. A few minutes later, a young man came from the funeral home and inquired how she had died. When we said polio, he looked like a ghost, and grabbing up our precious one, he stuffed her body into a black bag, racing to the car, he tossed the bag in the back seat, and raced from our home. That was the last time we saw our precious baby. We were still quarantined.

Our funeral director, who lived in an adjoining state, came and asked about the clothing for the burial, but since we had been informed that she would not be opened at the graveside, we asked that she wear the white gown that I had dressed her in that morning. We were also informed that, since we were still under quarantine, the burial would be that same afternoon at 2 p.m. Again, how crushed our hearts were. No one could come into the cemetery either. My daddy went to the back door after they had carried the body away. He couldn't come in, it was terrible.

Someone left a black dress by our door, somehow it wasn't too large, but I was on nerves at the time. I believed that if we had someone to talk to at this time, it would have helped. At about one-fifteen in the afternoon, a car drew up at our door and we got into the back seat. A little blue casket was placed upon our knees and with tears blinding our eyes, we counted each minute



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precious, as we held what we hoped was our darling baby, for the last time.

Too soon, the trip was over, and they lifted the casket, and we all left the car. It was a windswept day in September, the 21st. The casket had been nailed down and we could never see our baby again. It was such a heartbreaking thing for us. Immediately, I wondered if our baby was in that casket, but we had no way of knowing. Now I know that we have to have bodies to experiment on, but then it was such a shattering thought.

The undertaker said a short prayer, and it was soon over. We wound our way to the car, and none of our many relatives could come near us.

Cars lined the road on both sides as we were at our old family cemetery right over the Alabama Tennessee State Line. That's why we were still quarantined.

The next day a nurse came and they burned all of my dear baby's clothing that would come through a soak in a tub of water, plus a full bottle of Clorox also, they had to remain in the tub all night. A few gingham dresses stood the test. Her little silk dress that she had worn at the Colt Show Baby Show was almost obliterated. They burned her baby bed.

I almost lost my mind, as I had to go by that heap of ashes every time I went to get a load of wood or kindling.

My husband still had several days before going back to his job. People avoided us as if we had the plague, and in their minds, I guess, they were in their right to feel so. No church folk came, no pastor came either, in spite of the fact that there was all of this publicity. We were very vulnerable to spiritual help, if only someone would come. After the cleansing, we were not under quarantine.

During these days, we drove to the cemetery very often, and we decided that we would make her a little tombstone before we got busy with other things. My husband pur-

chased white cement mix, and we made the rock. I printed her name in the rock before it fully set, and I can see it as I write just now, Dorothy Jean, daughter of Joseph T. and Nell R. Porter. Then, we placed a ring of colored marbles around the names.

About a week later, my husband said we must start to church, and we visited every church in our vicinity. None seemed to satisfy him. Finally, I said, "Now I have gone to all these churches and none satisfy you. There is a revival meeting at The Church of The Nazarene, let's attend tonight."

Well, we did, and a Methodist evangelist was doing the preaching. He told of being caught in the rocks in a landslide in the mines, and telling God that he would preach if He would let him be rescued. After what we had been through, we felt akin to him. After the service was over, we started home with a child in each of our arms, and that wise old Preacher drove by and stopped and took us home, talking about how God loved us and wanted us to have a Christian home.

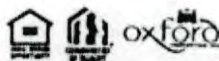
My husband said, "I did not go to the altar tonight, but if God will let me come back tomorrow night, I will."

The next day was the happiest day we had lived for so long a time. We were both saved that night and later sanctified for His service. My husband answered the call to preach the gospel and served in various churches for thirty years.

God knew best when he, in his mercy, took our child. but I couldn't see it then.

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Local News in 1923

- Mrs. Dillard is doing nicely. Reports from her bedside say that the lady, who is ill at the City Hospital, are most encouraging. She passed a good night and is resting well.

- Mr. and Mrs. Wallace Rice have taken an apartment with Mr. and Mrs. J. D. Rice on White Street.

- The girl scouts and boy scouts of Merrimack greatly enjoyed the hike to Monte Sano Sunday afternoon. Forty-three girls and boys met at the school building at noon and were carried to the foot of the mountain in the large truck of the Merrimack Company. The hike to the top of the mountain and back was full of interest, due in part to the spotting of one of the coal mines.

- Lost - one man's kid glove. Finder please return to News office and receive two bits reward.

- Mrs. Shelby White will be hostess to the Thursday afternoon Bridge Club at her home on McClung Street at 2:30 p.m.

- Lost - Between Mims apartment and Clinton, book with initials W.L.K. on cover, containing minutes of First Methodist Missionary society. Return to News office.

- For Sale - the beautiful new Nash Four Touring auto, direct from the factory. Prices range

from \$915 to \$2190. Five Disc Wheels and Nash Self-mounting carrier, \$25 additional.

- For Rent - one front room, furnished, convenient to bath. Young men or a couple apply 416 East Holmes St. or phone 427-J.

- Three pretty cottages are under course of construction on the street just beyond Calhoun Street, all of stucco work. One owned by George A. Culps, another by C. W. Robinson and a third by the owner of the Central restaurant.

- The Echols home was built, it is said, before the war between the states. It is of brick and two stories in height and well preserved.

- John Brown, a department superintendent at the Lowe Mill, has purchased the old Echols property on West Clin-

ton Street and will remodel it for the use of himself and family.

- Wanted - good cook, phone 639 or see Mrs. June Martin, Lowe Avenue

- Found - light bay mare, age 6 years, small, hair worn off hind leg, sore back, skinned place on side. Pea Ridge, southeast of Merrimack. W. W. Mitchell. Owner can have same by paying upkeep and this advertisement.

- Lost - gold breast pin. Finder please return to bungalow, corner White and Randolph Streets.

- For rent - furnished room in private home - apply at 302 West Holmes Street.

- For sale - Oakland six touring car, newly painted, good tires, run less than 600 miles, price \$500. Baxter Brothers



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**Things I won't do now;
Things I won't do later;
Things I'll never do."**

Maxine

Mistaken Identity



by Charles Flanders

Back in the 50s when I was about 16, I was infatuated with Brenda Lee. I would run an extension cord out into the back yard and lie under our shady magnolia tree on my lounge, drink my bottle Coke with 2 holes punched in the metal top and turn on my 45 RPM record player and play one Brenda Lee song after another..Brenda Lee was and is the best country singer of all time..I don't believe there is a person on earth that hasn't listened to her rendition of "Rocking around the Christmas Tree". But my favorite song of hers was "Sweet Nothings"; Or was it "Johnny One Time", or maybe was it "Jambalaya"..or was it one of her other many great songs? I loved them all.

Now let's fast forward to 1972. Brenda Lee was appearing at a local upscale night club on South Parkway called the Plush Horse. Of course I was one of the first people to buy tickets, and I got our tickets on the front and center stage.

On the night of the show we were running a few minutes late, so I pulled right up to the main entrance to let Sue out, so that she could get in real fast and claim our seats while I parked the car. I noticed there were about 20 steps up to the grand entrance, when all of a sudden these two well dressed gentlemen came running down the steps, and around the front of the car. Then they jerked Sue's car door open and reached in and grabbed her while repeatedly and loudly saying , hurry your late.

I thought wow, what great service as they were running her up the stairs, one under one arm and the other under her other arm. Then I hurriedly took the car to the parking lot and rushed back to the club house. There I found Sue already seated, and several people talk-

ing to her and having a good laugh. It turned out that Sue had been mistaken for Brenda Lee. They were telling her that Ms. Lee was running late and had just bought a new Cadillac exactly the same color as ours, so when they saw us coming up the driveway. At that time Sue was wearing her hair styled and colored just like Ms. Lee's, totally by coincidence, and both of them were the same height and weight, so they had mistakenly assumed she was Brenda Lee. It was only when they got her to the top of the stairs , that one of the guys looked at Sue and said, "Wait a minute, you are not Ms. Lee."

Then just before intermission, a well dressed gentleman came to our table and told Sue that they had told Ms. Lee what happened, and Brenda Lee said she would like to meet the lady that looked like her. We were then invited to her dressing room at intermission. When we entered the room Ms. Lee was in a bathrobe sitting in an oversized chair with her feet pulled up under her. She then said to Sue "You don't look like me, you're much prettier."

We just sat and carried on a normal conversation, as if we had known each other all our lives. Brenda Lee is one of the most gracious, humble ladies I have ever met, and the greatest singer I have ever known. I still enjoy her songs, and still listen to her recordings, as I am sure everyone does.

And lucky me, to be married to the "twin" of the girl I used to dream of.

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Horrible Discovery at Bird's Spring

**Human Skeleton Found
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Arousing Much Interest in the
Late War**

from 1888 Huntsville Newspaper

On Monday evening last, Mr. G.A. Lippincott, of this city, accompanied by his brother-in-law Mr. Hicks, started to explore a cave at Bird's Spring on the property of S.W. Harris and their exploring tour satisfied them enough to warrant another, and a more searching one to take place at an early date.

One of the curiosities of the cave trip was the discovery of a skeleton near the main entrance of the cave; the skull and several bones of which are now on display at the office of Mr. Harris on Eustis Street.

A Mercury reporter saw the skull last evening which was that of a full grown person, but how the owner of that "dead head" came to inhabit the cave is a matter in which the field of conjecture is wide.

During the late great unpleasantness, both armies alternately camped on the Harris property and the bones now exposed to view may be those of some stalwart soldier of one of those armies. Which army he belonged to will now never be revealed.

How he came to be buried in a cave will probably never be revealed in this world, but the ghastly, grinning skull reveals the fact that the Bird's Spring cave has been trod by mortal feet before Mr. Lippincott and his kin explored it.

"The best babysitters of course are the grandparents. You entrust your babies with them often, which is why many grandparents move to Florida."

Dave Barry



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Turn to the experts

Love in Huntsville



by Pauline Neely (Means)

My name is Mrs. Pauline Neely (Means), and I have been a resident of Huntsville, AL for 80 years. My family moved to Huntsville in October 1945 at the end of the second world war.

My father, Paul Means, was the manager of Montgomery Wards on the north side of the Square. There were no houses to rent or buy in Huntsville at the time, so we lived in the Russel Erskine Hotel for a month. Eventually my father found a house on Meridian Street to rent.

After a short stay there, my father purchased a house on McCullough Avenue. It was known as a Sears Roebuck House, ordered from their catalog and assembled on the corner of McCullough Avenue and Windham Street, where the house still stands today.

In 1947, I started attending High School on Randolph Street. This is where I met my future husband, Robert Earl Neely.

One day in study hall I walked into the classroom and noticed a cute red head with his leg in a cast propped up on a chair. He had broken his leg playing football. We talked every day and this was the beginning of our lifelong friendship. We were sweethearts throughout High School and graduated in the class of 1950 from Huntsville High.

Because of the Korean War outbreak, Robert Earl enlisted in the Air Force. He was stationed in Smyrna, TN and I attended college at Montevallo. Eventually, we got engaged and married Sep. 7th, 1952. Robert Earl & I were stationed in Greenville, SC and from there he had to leave for Fuerstenfeldbruck, Germany for 3 years.

I returned home to Huntsville and went to work at First National Bank on the west side of the Square, and worked for Henry Canterbury.

Robert Earl was an Airman First Class; therefore, I had to save my money for six months to be able to go join him in Munich, Germany as a tourist. Before I left, I was asked to be a "Good Will Ambassador" for "Huntsville, Alabama; Rocket City USA".

"The Rocket City, USA" was the title of an official booster booklet written by John McCormick, researched by Huntsville's James Record and illustrated by Richard Brough. It was made famous in recent years by the proximity of Redstone Arsenal, "The world's largest rocket and guided missile research center".

I was seen off at the airport on Johnson Road by my family, Mayor R.B. Searcy, John McCormick, James Record and the girls I worked with at the bank. I was dressed in my high heels, purse, hat, gloves and corsage, oh my! Certainly not how we travel today. I delivered copies of the booklet and a letter from Huntsville Mayor R. B. Searcy to city officials in Chattanooga, Knoxville, Charlotte and Ashville enroute to Germany.

I sent a copy to the U.S. High Commissioner of Germany, Dr. James Conant, and gave others to military authorities for use in overseas service centers. I lived in Germany for six months, on the economy, while we saved our money for me to be able to return to the states.

When Robert Earl left Germany, he was discharged and we returned to Huntsville where he continued his education at UAH and became the Chief of the Land Combat Division, U.S. Army Missile Command and we raised four beautiful children together.

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Touch the Sky

*by Willie (Bill) Weaver,
Ret. NASA Test Engineer*

This is an adaptation of the FOREWORD I wrote for the book "TOUCH THE SKY".

A book of short stories by local authors, inspired by the Saturn V Rocket that dominates the Huntsville, Alabama skyline.

Editors: Jennifer Busick and Catherine Jaime. A project of "...And We Write Group", Huntsville, Alabama

Fifty-six years ago, SATURN-V Rockets first carried men off our world into the heavens where they became the first of our species to set foot on another world. However, mankind, in our imagination, has been making that journey for decades. As soon as our early scientists firmly established that the Moon and the Planets were, in fact, separate worlds and not just mysterious lights in the sky, we began to imagine exploring them. Tales by authors like Verne, Wells, Bradbury, von Braun, to name a few, have carried us on that journey many times. Versions of those tales have also been retold in our verbal and visual forms of modern entertainment.

My imagination along that line was turned on at about the age of 5. My mother spent part of an afternoon showing my sister and me how to find images in the clouds. We then watched the rising of the full moon and she told us there was an image of a man in the moon. There is an old tale about a man who raked and kindled a forbidden fire of leaves. As punishment, he was exiled to the moon where he must, with rake in hand, keep the fire perpetually burning. I must admit, I had trouble seeing that image, but the discussion did establish in my young mind that the moon was a separate world that men might occupy.

By age 10, I was an avid fan of science fiction in every medium. But I did not just consume the works of others, I imagined stories of my own and even committed some of them to paper.

Down through the years I have met many people along the way who also had an active imagination about men exploring other worlds. Many of us have been blessed by the opportunity to participate in our country's

programs of space exploration. Some of us spend part of our retirement time as volunteers at the U. S. Space and Rocket Center where we love to show visitors the suspended

SATURN-5 inside Davidson Center and the full-size model outside overlooking Interstate-565 as we regale them about our time as Rocket Men.

My experience there assures me that the imaginations of both the old and the young are still active and will continue to drive our further explorations. The volume described above gives a few illustrations of what could or might be.

Here is just one of my many experiences from volunteering at the Space and Rocket Center:

THAT'S NO SILO

I first saw him just inside the entrance to the SATURN-5 Hall, looking up, mouth agape, at the large engines of the first stage. I greeted him. and without diverting his gaze, he said "What is this place?"

I explained that he was at the U.S. SPACE AND ROCKET CENTER, a museum of the United States Space Program and offered to show him around. We looked at the scale model under the first stage and then walked the length of the hall and back as he explained how he got here.

This was his first trip to Huntsville, in fact, his first trip to Alabama. He was a sales representative for a farm implement company. Leaving the airport and driving east along I-565, he noticed the large spire and watched as it came fully into view. He had to get a closer look so he took the next exit and followed his gaze until he came to a parking spot close to the object that had gotten his attention from the interstate.

As he got out to get a better look, a bus pulled up and divulged a large group, who proceeded through an open gate. Wanting to get an even closer look, he went with the crowd and soon found himself in the SATURN-V hall, which is where we met. He explained that he had appointments that afternoon so he was on a tight schedule, but would like to come back the next day and see everything.

I told him I would love to be the one to show him around but I had a conflict, therefore, he should look for one of the other guys in white smocks. After giving him instructions on how he should enter officially, I helped him exit back to the parking lot.

"For NASA, space is still a high priority."

John F. Kerry



Ask Grandma

by Mimi

Happy New Year! Just saying it feels like a fresh breath of air, doesn't it? I hope each and every one of you enjoyed a warm, joyful holiday season filled with laughter, good food and moments worth remembering. As we step into a brand-new year, there's something comforting about the sense of possibility it brings—an open calendar, a clean slate, and plenty of opportunities to make small changes that add up to a better year ahead.

Of course, January also means one beloved tradition: after-Christmas sales. With the cost of living continuing to rise, finding a good bargain feels less like a luxury and more like a necessity. So lace up your most comfortable shoes, grab a shopping list, and enjoy the hunt. There's something satisfying about stretching a dollar just a little further.

That brings us to New Year's resolutions. How many of you made them this year? And, if we're being honest, how many kept the ones you made last year?

Most of us fall somewhere between good intentions and good excuses. The most common goals seem to be eating better, moving more, and hoping the rest somehow falls into place. Even small steps count, and consistency matters far more than perfection.

If cold weather has you looking for indoor activities, Lowe Mill Arts & Entertainment is a wonderful option. Staying warm while enjoying indoor shopping, art galleries and creative spaces makes for a great day out—especially when hosting out-of-town friends or family. When shopping fatigue sets in, take a break at one of the on-site eateries for a snack or a relaxed lunch.

Speaking of whiter, colder temperatures mean more reliance on space heaters. Please remember to keep them away from curtains, furniture, and anything flammable. Make sure your smoke detectors are working properly. Smoke can overcome a person far faster than many realize.

Having experienced a house fire ourselves, I can say without hesitation that simply trying to get family members and pets safely outside is far more challenging than one would ever expect.



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Gingerbread Cookies

by Bill Alkire

Let's talk about something I enjoy. Eating. Looking at me, you would assume I like to eat...you would of course be right. I am talking about a special treat. I like Key Lime Pie and anything Lemon, and I never met an oatmeal raisin or fruitcake cookie I did not like.

I want to tell you about something incredibly special. My Aunt Lucille's Coconut cake with seven-minute frosting and bananas in the middle...that was something never to be duplicated, it was a classic! Let me tell you about another classic.

I have always been in awe of Williamsburg, Virginia. I attended The College of William & Mary in my first two years of college, before completing my coursework at Christopher Newport College. In the restored area of Williamsburg there is the Raleigh Tavern and I highly recommend their menu.

"The greatest love is a mother's, then a dog's, then a sweetheart's."

Polish Proverb

Behind the Tavern is a small building where the servants did the cooking during the colonial period. This building is where the baking takes place. This building is small and always quite warm, the wood-burning ovens are always burning. When not baking, the heat helps the dough rise for bread, rolls, and pastries. This is where the Raleigh Tavern's famous gingerbread cookies are created.

I will admit that these cookies may not be famous to anyone but me. They should be, they are that good. They use sifted graham flour, fresh grated ginger, molasses, nutmeg, allspice, with a touch of cinnamon. I have watched the sweet Black lady put the ingredients together and I have tasted the results. Amazing! Freda got to know me and when I came, she would save the broken cookies just for me. I accused her of breaking whole cookies just to save them for me. She would just smile a big grin and say "no Sirh" The twinkle in her eye gave her away and she always had a big hug for me.

I loved that lady and not just for her cookies. We could talk freely about our God and how we both had received more blessings than we deserved.

I left Virginia in 1977 and moved to Tennessee. I went by to say goodbye and to get one last hug. I returned hi 1988 with a tour group. I went to the little building behind the Raleigh Tavern hoping to see Freda. She was standing with her back to the patrons mixing ingredients. I called out her name she turned and shouted "Hi Billy!"

With flour all over her she ran to me; we hugged with tears in our eyes. We had a great reunion. People stared. We did not care. We were Brothers and Sisters, children of the same God. Our reunion was short.... I held up the tour group. We ended our reunion with a prayer for each other. Blessings are everywhere, we must accept them. I am a better man for knowing and loving Freda.

You can find the recipe for Raleigh Tavern Gingerbread Cookies in this month's Recipes!



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School Days with Miss Mary

by L D Rogers

In 1952, when I was in the ninth grade, I had histoplasmosis of the lungs. For a while my parents couldn't figure out what was wrong with me. I was short of breath, coughing and just felt rotten. Finally, my mother took me to a new doctor in town and just as soon as he saw me, he knew what it was. He asked my mother if I had been around any birds. She couldn't think of any, but I said there were pigeons at my school, St. Paul Lutheran in Paducah, KY. Our church was attached to the school room and there was a bell tower full of pigeons roosting in it. The doctor said that's where I had been infected with it. He said it was a very serious disease and a lot of people died from it. But I was lucky that he had caught it just in time.

My doctor had been in the Army and served in the Korean War. He said there was a lot of that sickness in Korea. It took me two years to get over it. During that time, I had to be homeschooled because I wasn't well enough to go to school.

After I got better and could go back to school, I would have been in the eleventh grade, but the school didn't see it that way. I sure wasn't going back into ninth grade. We found a private school in town founded by Miss Mary Dorian, and I could start in the eleventh grade.

It was an unusual school because of the classes. She taught accounting, bookkeeping, typing, spelling and math. For fun she liked to say she believed in the three R's - Reading, Riting and, Rithmetic. We went to school half days so I worked part-time in the afternoons putting toys together at S. S. Kresge, which later became Kmart. I walked a few blocks from school to work then took the bus home.

"I get no respect. I went to my dentist the other day and asked him to add a tooth that matched all my others. He put in a tooth with four cavities."

Rodney Dangerfield

Miss Mary was a very unique teacher. She ordered multiple subscriptions to Reader's Digest and would have them sent to the school to use in our English class. Reader's Digest came out with their first issue on February 5, 1922.

The first time the magazines came we all went wild over them. Each student would be required to read something from the Digest every morning. It didn't matter if it was one of the articles or one of the jokes. We each had to contribute something to the class. Miss Mary would handle the section on Word Power. She would read the questions and multiple answers for us to choose from. She would ask us beforehand not to read that section.

Having histoplasmosis was the worst but ending up at Miss Mary's school was the best!

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FOR THE LOVE OF PEAS

by Tanjie Kling

When I was growing up, I never heard of the tradition of eating greens, peas, and hog jowl on New Year's Day. We pretty much had those foods every day of my life. My mother would often work diligently in her kitchen, making us field peas or crowder peas, turnip greens, green beans, corn, squash, fried okra, cornbread, macaroni and cheese, macaroni with tomatoes, potatoes, lima beans, and pinto beans all of the time. She would occasionally cook beef stew and meatloaf. All of the food was from our family garden, with the exception of the meat, macaroni, cheese, lima beans and pinto beans. We had all these foods on rotation, and sometimes all at the same meal.

I told my mother that when I got married, I was not going to cook a single turnip green or pinto bean. I was not going to cook like she did. I had grown tired of eating those foods most every day. I wanted something different. My husband-to-be loved my mother's cooking, and relished in her "fresh from the garden" meals. He grew up on canned vegetables, so my mother's cooking was indeed a treat for him.

Once my husband Bill and I were married, we lived close enough to my parents in Huntsville, that they frequently invited us to eat with them; usually once a week.

When I got married, I didn't cook typical southern country food. I poured over cookbooks (this was before you could Google recipes) of anything that looked good and did not require turnip greens, crowder peas, or anything with bacon grease. I focused my meals on more gourmet chicken dishes, fresh salmon, fresh seafood and vegetables prepared according to my selected cookbooks.

I remember one December day, after Bill and I had been married over a year and a half, visiting with our older friends Bob and Liz Parcus. As Liz and I were talking in the kitchen, she asked me if I was going to cook greens, blackeye peas, and have hog jowl for New Years Day. I asked her why, and Bob interjected from their living room that it was a tradition to do that for good luck during the coming year. Armed with this information, I thought I would give it a try. I mean, it couldn't hurt, right? I'm sure I had been doing that anyway every New Year's Day since I cut my first tooth.

New Years' Day 1995 rolled around, and I realized I needed to go to the grocery store. Very early that morning, I went to Kroger's. At the time, one was located at the corner of Drake Avenue and Memorial Parkway. Fixated with the idea of wanting a year of good luck, I picked up a block of frozen spinach. There was a large display of dried blackeye peas at the entrance with a large sign advertising 5 bags for a dollar. I thought it sounded like a great deal so I bought 5 bags. I had no experience in cooking dried peas. My mother only cooked fresh crowder peas. I had watched my mother make pinto beans and I knew they she soaked them.

Nothing in my life prepared me for the adventure of cooking dried blackeye peas. I began to soak the peas. All 5 bags! As I put the peas in water, I soon realized that they swell. I frantically called out for help. Bill came into the kitchen aghast at what he saw. Peas were swelling out of the water in their containers. They were outgrowing their containers by the minute, and literally popping out of the bowls.

He helped me get more containers out to move the peas into them. Pretty soon we had every pot, bowl, baking dish, and plastic leftover



takeout container that we owned full of peas. Every inch of counter space in the kitchen was overtaken with the soaking blackeye peas. Bill was patient, I was panicked, and we were hysterically laughing. It is something I will remember the rest of my life - and sometimes wish I could forget.

After the appropriate time of soaking them, I began the long process of cooking them. I placed the largest pots I could find on every stove eye, and had them simmering. When done, I had made enough blackeye peas to feed about 45 people! We called everyone we knew to arrange a time for a late evening delivery of a bowl of blackeye peas. I have not made them again since that day.

I finally did learn to cook vegetables like my mother. As my parents and my aunts got older and needed more assistance with their daily activities, I had the opportunity to cook all of their meals.

My parents and my aunts did not particularly enjoy my own personal style of cooking, and they politely let me know. My sister came to my rescue and bought me an Instant Pot pressure cooker, and I learned to cook the southern vegetables they loved so well. I also finally learned how to make cornbread...but I still to this day only buy canned blackeye peas.

A SPECIAL BIRTHDAY

by Elizabeth Wharry



My cousin Bud was almost old enough to be my father. He and his wife Annie didn't have any children. They recognized, that as the youngest of 5 siblings, I was often excluded from my older siblings' activities.

Bud had a beautiful red Camero convertible. Every so often, he and Annie would stop by and visit with my parents before going to visit his parents. My mother and Bud's dad were siblings. Annie's parents lived in California.

Occasionally, Bud would show up without Annie. He would visit with my parents, and take my mother and me for a ride. I was thrilled to be included! I was about 9 years old, and had a case of "hero worship". I thought Bud and Annie were the coolest people ever!

Eventually, my mom let me go with them. We went on some amazing drives. To my 9 year old mind, going an hour away was an adventure!

Bud and Annie came over the Saturday before my birthday. They told my mother that we were going to do something special for my 10th birthday. Bud dropped Annie off at the mall, then looked at me and grinned. Keep in mind, my birthday is in mid December. I grew up on the south shore of Lake Erie. Bud said that we were going for a drive along Lake Shore Blvd. He blasted the heater, and down went the top!

It was a beautiful day, the sun was shining on the snow, and the air was crisp. We drove from Mentor to Cleveland. On the way home, Bud put the top up, and took the freeway back.

We stopped at the mall, and picked up Annie. While we were gone, Annie had gotten me a beautiful ID bracelet with my name engraved on it.

What a memorable day that was!

"I wish I could just drop my body off at the gym and pick it up when it's ready."

Joseph Balch, Jr.

Sweet Chew Cakes Old Southern Recipe

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

Melt the sugar and butter together. Add eggs, vanilla and flour. Mix well and add the nuts. Batter will be very stiff.

Pour into a greased oblong 9 x 12" pan. Bake at 325 degrees for 25 to 30 minutes. Cut into squares when ready to serve.

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Heard On the Street



by **Cathey Carney**

Were you able to find the two things I hid in the December issue? The tiny dump truck was in the U.S. Veterans Museum ad on page 2, at the bottom middle. Then the teddy bear was hidden on page 43 - to the right of the birds. Can you see it? I'm having a hard time finding them myself - I have to go back and look at my notes. But our first caller and winner is **Ray Coffey** of Round Rock, TX. Subscriptions generally go out before distribution to our local boxes and he spotted both of the items. Ray has sister **Linda** who is a property owner in Hazel Green, and he just turned 88 on Oct. 8! So Happy Birthday to you Ray! And congratulations on your win.

Bill Kling is our City Councilman for District 4, President Pro Tem and in my opinion one of the most responsive City Councilmen we've had in this city. You'll often see Bill walking in his district, sometimes with his wife Tanjia, as they meet neighbors and find out what problems he can fix in the area. He works very closely with City Department heads and since he's at "ground level", he can really see what's happening. He then communicates to the residents exactly what will be happening to take care of the problems.

He was born and raised in Huntsville. He was elected to the Huntsville Board of Education in 1984, elected to the city council in 1988, and re-elected ever since. Mr. Kling was twice elected city council president.

Bill received a B.S. degree in Mass Media

Communications and Public Administration from the University of Alabama and a M.S. degree in Urban studies from Alabama A&M University.

He has held numerous positions in the broadcast and public relations fields including public relations director, radio announcer and newscaster for a public radio station, and broadcast instructor and public relations specialist for John C. Calhoun Junior College. We are very lucky to have someone like Bill representing the residents in our district.

As you've no doubt seen in the news, Huntsville is now permanent home to **U.S. Space Command** which will be locating on Redstone Arsenal from Colorado.

In a major decision, it was announced in late 2025 by **President Trump** to move it from Colorado. This move, involving about 1,400 jobs and leveraging Huntsville's "Rocket City" heritage, defense infrastructure, and skilled workforce, is seen as a major boost for national security and regional growth.

Our **Mayor Tommy Battle** as well as City leaders in Huntsville have signaled that preparations have long been underway to establish Space Command operations over the next five years. In a press release after Trump's announcement, Huntsville officials said 60 acres of land near the center of Redstone Arsenal have been selected for the new headquarters.

Huntsville has also invested more than \$1 billion already to improve transportation, education, health care

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and infrastructure to accommodate the anticipated influx of workers and their families, according to officials. "These investments reflect years of long-range planning to prepare our city for future growth," Mayor Tommy Battle said in a statement. "They demonstrate Huntsville's commitment to being mission-ready from day one."

In another huge announcement, the City of Huntsville is proud to welcome **Eli Lilly and Company** to North Alabama. The global pharmaceutical leader announced plans to invest more than \$6 billion in a next-generation manufacturing facility in Huntsville - the largest industrial private investment ever made in the State of Alabama. The advanced facility will be constructed on a 260-acre site at the northeast corner of 1-565 and Greenbrier Parkway in Huntsville-Limestone County.

Special greetings to a lady who has been reading OHM since the beginning! **Gerri De Sanctis** of Huntsville who says it's the highlight of her month when her magazine arrives. Happy New Year to you and we love and appreciate you!

In this issue I have hidden a tiny rocket, in honor of Space Command. IF you find it, and you won't because it's tiny, and are the first to call, you win a year of Old Huntsville magazine, a \$50 value. Remember if you've recently won don't call, we're trying to make it available for new winners!

One of our readers had a question that perhaps someone might know. "I live off Riverton Rd. and Winchester Rd. There is a bridge support made of rock on the right side of the new bridge and an old water wheel on the left side of the bridge, made of rock. What is the history of these? They look to be quite old." Any of our readers can help with this? If so email me at oldhuntsville@gmail.com or call at (256) 534-0502.

For those who are looking to enjoy the arts and love theater, **The Broadway Theater League** still has tickets available for upcoming productions. If evening performances are difficult for you to get to consider a matinee. Afternoon shows are often more convenient and more comfortable - for many of us, especially seniors.

There are so many musical concerts and events happening here on a regular basis - way too many to list here but just Google "Things to do in Huntsville, AL" and you will be amazed.

In the December issue **Jim Vann** (one of our regular writers) submitted a story and we ran it, but put the wrong author

name on it! So I wanted to let everyone know that the story entitled "Being Really Scared" on p. 14 of December issue was written by Jim Vann. Go back and read that story - it was SO funny. I put a different author name on it and send apologies to both gentlemen for the error.

The Christmas Luminaries in the Historic Twickenham and Old Town Districts was rain-free this year and just beautiful. Something so peaceful about driving in a historic neighborhood at night, with candles in bags just lining every street. Many homes were decorated as well and Twickenham had homes that you could tour. It usually takes place the 2nd Saturday evening of December so be sure and mark your calendar now so that you don't miss it in 2026.

Another big event for next year is the **Old Town Hidden Gardens Tour**. It happens on the first Sunday in June and thousands attend from out of town and out of state. It takes place in the Old Town Historic District and there will be art displays, music, food trucks, cold water and the beautiful gardens to give you ideas for your own garden. More information to come as we get closer to it.

We live in a beautiful area of Alabama but the city is only as good as the people who live there, and the city officials who are in charge of our growth. There are many old timers who miss the small town feeling of Huntsville, and a larger Big Spring Park - but there are benefits that come with growing.



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

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

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Not for Wimps

Spinach and Jalapeño Cheese

1 pkg. frozen spinach, chopped, cooked and drained - 20 oz.
1/2 c. reserved spinach juice
4 T. butter
2 T. flour
2 T. onion, chopped
1/4 c. evaporated milk
1/2 t. black pepper
1 t. celery salt
1 t. garlic powder
1 t. Worcestershire sauce
Hot pepper flakes to taste
6 oz. jalapeno cheese

Thaw spinach and set aside. When you drain it, make sure to keep out 1/2 cup liquid. Melt butter, add flour, stir, blend til smooth. Add onions, cook til soft but not brown. Add spinach juice and milk, stirring constantly.

Add seasonings and cut-up cheese. Stir til cheese is melted. Mix in the spinach and serve hot with chips.

Slow Burn Sausage Balls

1 lb. hot sausage
2 c. grated sharp Cheddar cheese
2 c. Bisquick mix
1 t. cayenne pepper

Remove all your jewelry, like your rings. In a large bowl add the sausage, cheddar, Bisquick and pepper. Mix well with your hands, til all is well blended. Form into balls size of large marbles.

Bake in pre-heated oven at 325 degrees for 25 minutes or so - check to make sure the cheese is lightly browned.

Hot Pepper Fried Onion Rings

4 large onions
2/3 c. milk
1/2 c. plain flour
Salt & pepper to taste
1 t. dried red pepper flakes

Oil for frying

Cut cleaned onions into 1/4" slices and separate into rings. In a large bowl, soak the rings in milk for 15 minutes.

Mix the flour, salt, pepper and dried red pepper. Dredge rings in flour mixture, then fry in oil heated to 350 degrees a few at a time, til well-browned, 2 or 3 minutes.

Drain on paper toweling and season, serve.

Spicy Meatballs

1 lb. ground beef
1/2 lb. ground pork
1/3 c. grated Parmesan cheese
1/2 - 1 t. cayenne pepper
4 slices bread, soaked in water and squeezed
2 eggs
5 cloves fresh garlic, minced
1 medium onion, chopped fine
1 T. chopped parsley
2 t. salt
2 t. oregano

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1/2 t. black pepper

Combine all ingredients and mix well. Shape into balls, size of golf balls. Cook at 375 for 20 minutes and meatballs are crisp on the outside.

Favorite Garlic Dip

1 8-oz. package cream cheese
3 T. milk
5 large cloves garlic
Salt
Parsley
Paprika

1/2 t. cayenne or to taste

Mix the cream cheese and milk in small bowl, press the garlic and add it to the cheese. Salt to taste and mix thoroughly.

Sprinkle with parsley, cayenne and paprika. Refrigerate til used later.

Spicy Lentil Soup with Smoked Ham

1/2 lb. dry lentils
4 c. water
1 smoked ham hock
1/2 lb. chopped smoked ham
1 bay leaf
1/2 c. onion, chopped
1/3 c. carrots, chopped
1/2 c. celery, chopped

1/2 t. seasoned salt

1 t. garlic powder

1/2 t. cayenne pepper

Wash, sort and pick over lentils. Combine all ingredients in a large pot with lid. Bring to a boil, reduce heat, cover and simmer til done, about 45 minutes or so. Really good when served with a dollop of sour cream on top.

Hot Congo Squares

2 sticks butter, melted
2-3/4 c. self-rising flour
3 eggs
1 box brown sugar
1 c. pecans, chopped
1 12-oz. bag semi-sweet chocolate chips

1/2 t. cayenne pepper

Mix butter with brown sugar; add flour, then the eggs and mix well. Stir in the nuts, chocolate chips and cayenne pepper, pour into 9x13 inch greased baking pan. Bake at 300 degrees for 35-45 minutes.

Raleigh Tavern Gingerbread Cookies

1 c. granulated sugar
2 t. ground ginger
1 t. ground cinnamon
1 t. nutmeg

1 -1/2 t. baking soda

1 c. salted butter, melted

1/2 c. evaporated milk

1 c. molasses

1/4 t. vanilla extract

5 c. all purpose flour

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Line a cookie sheet with parchment or lightly grease with cooking spray.

In a large mixing bowl, mix the sugar, ginger, cinnamon, nutmeg and baking soda. Then add the melted butter, evaporated milk and molasses and beat well.

Add flour, one cup at a time (you may need to stir in the last cup by hand if your mixer cannot handle the thickness of the dough).

Using a cookie scoop or tablespoon, measure out a heaping scoop, form into ball and place on the cookie sheet.

Keep some space between the cookies (bake only 12 at a time). Bake for 10 -12 minutes, cookies may seem soft but will be browned on the bottom.

Transfer to wire rack for cooling. Continue baking with the rest of the dough.



The Silent Sermon

by Gerald Alvis, The Poet of Greenlawn

We search for a lot of things as we count the times, we go around the sun. The basic stuff, you know, food, water, shelter, work, but also meaning in day-to-day life, including figuring out our own beliefs.

What can provide meaning, happiness, and a sense of completion can come in the most subtle ways. It was cold this morning, and as you may know, we have snow predicted over the next couple of days along with single-digit temperatures. We had arrived at church a little early, and I was already seated.

When my 9-year-old granddaughter arrived, she hurried over to hug Grandma and then me; oh, how it warms the soul! She then plopped down beside me and got under the arm I had extended over the chair where she was seated. She then nuzzled in, getting just as close as she could. I asked if she was cold, and she nodded yes! I grabbed my leather coat and draped it over her. She did some more of that burrowing thing beside me, and I asked if she was getting warm. But her nod revealed more than her answer; there was this coy grin from ear to ear, and for me, in that moment, I will always remember, everything was right with the world.

In all my travels with all my questions, it was not far away but close to home, not on a mountaintop or deep in the ocean. It was the house of God where a little girl affirmed what gives meaning to life, all without saying a word; it was a silent sermon of love.

I promise to update you here if I ever have a better feeling than this...but check back; it will be a while... oh the anticipated joys of doing this again as a Great-Grandpa!!

On Hurricane Creek

by Billy Joe Cooley, 1990



Her name was Mary Riddick and she was one of the area's most beloved educators during the years she taught at the Hurricane Creek and Riverton schools.

She started teaching as a substitute teacher shortly after the second war, never having attended college. Almost a quarter of a century later, when the education powers-to-be mandated that a college degree was a necessity, the furor in the community was such that she was given special dispensation to continue teaching. Her students were special people to her. No child would ever enter her classroom with a dirty face, or perhaps with a tear in his or her eye, without Mrs. Riddick immediately taking notice and providing the comfort that a small child needed so bad. People in the community later said that she could have bought a new house with the money she spent over the years buying food and shoes for the children. She taught three generations, and they were all her children.

She never asked anything in return.

Outside the classroom she set an example in compassion and caring. She was always ready to help the community's ailing, the poor, or just anyone that needed advice or a shoulder to cry on. For newcomers to the area, she would invariably bake a loaf of her

mouth watering homemade bread.

"You could tell when Mrs. Riddick was coming up the path by the smell of that delicious bread," recalls Margaret Frazier Tucker, who along with her husband J.B., are natives of the valley.

Time has a way of standing still, but only in our minds. This was my thought the other afternoon as some of us drove up along Hurricane Creek, listening as we went, to Tom Carney relate tales of his young years, many of which were spent in that scenic community. Before the day was over we had visited with several old-timers, and a few new residents of the area.

While several prominent people have their roots, or graves, in this beautiful valley, few, if any, reside there today. Yet, there are still some characters living in this refuge of days gone by, and the memories of the community's mile markers are as vivid as the day they were made.

Mrs. Riddick's son, Frank Jr., followed his mother's inclination and became a public servant; Probate Judge of the county, to be exact. Buck Watson became a noted Huntsville lawyer. Alvin Blackwell attained several high chairmanships, including the county Democratic Party helmsman for many years. Herbert Ray went on to head one of the state's leading Ford dealerships.

There were others who made their mark, of course, and to continue listing names would take more space than we have room for in this story. Such a list would certainly have to include the unsung heroes who have contributed much to the area while avoiding the illumination that often comes with good citizenship.

Gus Peavy, known to all the children as Uncle Gus, always had a smile on his face and a place in his heart for the youngsters living on the creek. Tom told me that uncle Gus never forgot the names of any children, and sure enough, while sitting in the front yard of some local citizens, he drove up in his old pickup truck.

He immediately recognized Tom and called him by his name (which was Tommy in those long ago days on Hurricane Creek).

I later asked Tom how long it had been since he had last seen Gus.

"Oh, about thirty or thirty-five years."

These were also the days when politicians would hold rallies and provide watermelon cuttings, barbecue cookouts and fish fries. They don't do that much anymore.

Hurricane Creek had other interesting happenings, like the time Elvis Presley's father, Vernon, brought his new bride to the Ray's ranch house for their honeymoon. Vernon wanted a place where he could get away from the press to relax and the valley was a perfect haven for the lovebirds.

During the heyday of moonshine, some mighty fine brew was produced in the area, but the Tuckers don't remember anything about it, they being from proper Christian homes and all. "Some of the men-folks would go up to Jones Hollow in Lick Skillet to get liquor. They never caused no trouble, they'd just get together down on the creek, play cards and tell lies," said Tucker, who was born in 1922.

If Hurricane Creek ever had such a thing as a "town hall," it was Bobby Bragg's Grocery Store. Someone sitting on the old wooden bench in front of the store, maybe whittling on a piece of wood, would sooner or later hear of everything that happened in the community.

One memory that likely would be better forgotten was the time Laura Jo Wilbourn, who is now circuit judge Laura Hamilton, participated in a pajama party with Linda and Sandy Tucker at the Tucker home during their pre-high school years. The future jurist and her confederates loaded a pan with marshmallows

and put them in the electric oven for toasting.

The young ladies immediately launched into a session of girl talk, forgetting the marshmallows until smoke, fire and screams permeated the atmosphere. Fortunately, it was springtime and the windows could be left open while fans blew the odor into the atmosphere, which, said Mrs. Tucker, could partially explain the ozone problem we're having today;

The store first opened in 1903 as the J.H. St. Clair Grocery. Mr. St. Clair also owned the local sawmill, cotton gin and coal mine. St. Clair was loved in the community, and often spearheaded movements to help widows and orphans, providing food and coal to them. His grocery, if hard times necessitated it, would operate on the barter system when people had no money, or it would operate on the generous credit system when people had nothing.

There have been some anxious moments on Hurricane Creek, too. Like the time a shotgun was fired through the store's front door. It was the result of a dispute between two feuding families, one member of which was inside the store buying groceries and the other outside waiting to waylay him. Patience wore thin for the ambusher, however, so he fired into the store, hitting nobody.

That was the most serious violence that ever occurred at the store, although Bob Blackwell, who was a deputy, once arrested a drunk who took the whole matter personally. The drunk returned that night and burned the Blackwell barn.

The store was also a voting place, which attracted more than usual interest. A common practice in those days was for unscrupulous candidates to pay for votes among the rougher elements. One voter, known for his close kinship with John Barleycorn, boasted that he

sold his vote three times to various candidates. It was noted, however, that he got so plastered on "candidate whiskey" that he passed out before he got around to casting his vote for anybody.

Other remembrances among the residents reflect lives of good morality and of helping fellow citizens. Take Milam McGee, for example. He would stop his school bus every day at the store and let the children buy candy. Of course, he always used the excuse that he needed some tobacco. He must have had the biggest stock of tobacco in the county.

Hurricane Creek has changed a lot over the years. The old dilapidated homes, with privies out behind the woodsheds, are now being replaced with modern brick homes. The fields where whole families toiled in the hot sun, picking cotton, are now home to expensive hybrid cattle.

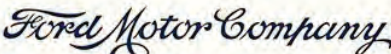
The old wood stove is gone from the store, as are the kerosene lamps, overalls and candy counters. The school bus doesn't stop there anymore and men will never again gather at the store to swap hunting and fishing tales with Bobby.

We all grow up and most of us move away to pursue different careers. We spend our lives chasing a dream called wealth and recognition.

It's only when we begin to get old that we realize that the true dreams are about places like Hurricane Creek.

"If you think your dog can't count, try putting 3 treats in your pocket then giving him only 2 of them."

Ken Owens, Huntsville



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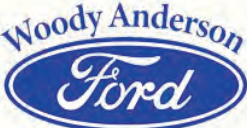
It is this thought that has been the stimulus and inspiration to the Ford organization's growth, that has been incentive in developing inexhaustible resources, boundless facilities and an industrial organization which is the greatest the world has ever known.

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

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Fundraising in the Early Days of Huntsville

by Ron Eyestone



I guess that we should put this short tale under the heading of rumor, but it was told to me as an actual event that happened back in the formative years of our fair city.

It seems that one of our local civic organizations was just getting organized here back in the early 1900s, when they decided that they needed to raise some funds in order to continue doing great and wonderful things for our community.

Now, because of the rumor nature of this report, I will not identify the organization, but it was associated with all sorts of people.

Anyway, in order to rectify this lack of funds our local club decided to hold a raffle. Huntsville was largely a farming community in this day and age and one of the club members had a prize mule that he was willing to donate for this worthy cause. The club members worked hard on this raffle.

They displayed the mule at the courthouse. They fed him grain and brushed him until he shone. Most of all, they sold raffle tickets far and wide.

Boy, did they work at selling tickets. A full week before the drawing was to take place they felt they were well over the top of what they had hoped to accomplish. Donations were pouring in, according to the Treasurer of the club. This was shaping up to be the best turnout - much more than even expected.

Then, three days before the drawing, the mule died. Needless to say, the club members were in an absolute frenzy. They held emergency meetings. They tried to find a substitute mule. They gnashed teeth and argued and pointed fingers.

Finally, one of the more forward thinking members came up with the perfect plan. The next day they held the drawing as scheduled.

Some time after the drawing, a member from a different civic organization asked the forward thinking club member how in the world did they get away with raffling off a dead mule!

The club member replied, "Well, the losers were all so relieved at not winning that dead mule that they didn't complain, so we apologized to the winner and gave him triple his money back."

Thus began the tradition of fundraising in Huntsville. I understand that there are descendants of the forward-thinking club members who are alive and well in Huntsville today, so we won't be mentioning any names.

"Why does Sea World have a seafood restaurant? I'm half way through my fishburger when I suddenly think, What if I'm eating a slow learner?"

Lynda Montgomery



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Huntsville Happenings in 1905

* In the recorder's court this morning Peter Stevens, arrested for disorderly conduct, was fined \$5 and costs.

* John Williams, an old man who was arrested a few days ago for drunkenness, was ordered released and directed to leave Huntsville at once. Williams is quite an old man being 72 years of age and Mayor Smith took pity on him.

* By reason of an open switch on the Southern railway freight train No. 306 - J. Edward, engineer and switch train No 431 with Conductor Miller in charge - collided on the side track on Meridian Street late yesterday afternoon, wrecking and derailing two cars of the regular train, demolishing the pilots of both engines, smashing the front of a car and the trucks of the end of the switch train. No one was hurt.

* Hon. W. T. Lawler, Probate Judge of Madison County, entered upon his 4th year of office on Monday morning with every deed mortgage left on the books from the past year.

* Mrs. Elma Wesley died of apoplexy in Merrimack. A long time resident of Merrimack Village, she died last night after a few days illness with the disease. She left three daughters.

* R.C. Smallwood, sixty years, died last night at his residence in the Lowe Mill Village of pneumonia.

* The bursting of a water main leading from the city pumping station to the stand-pipe caused no end of trouble Saturday and Sunday. A leak was found in front of the Schiffman Building on the southeast corner of the Square early Saturday morning and a force of men set to work to dig down and make the necessary repair. The job was bigger than they thought it to be. When the hard crust of the macadamized street was removed, the escaping water burst forth and flooded the street. The flood washed out a bed down

the gutter and being unable to get in the storm sewer at Randolph Street, passed on down to Clinton and flooded that corner. No damage whatever was done by the flood.

* The daily newspapers of the city are the chief users of water power to run the presses. The Evening Banner was caught half through with its editions and city subscribers were furnished with the paper in an unusual form. The Evening Tribune, which had gotten into trouble at its own plant and was depending on the Mercury plant for publication, was unable to get out any papers at all for the deadline.

* The Huntsville Chamber of Commerce, headed by J.P. Cooney, announced today that it is raising membership dues to \$1 per month.

* Horace Deavers reported shooting a hog thief yesterday near New Market. All persons are warned to be on the look out for a tall light-haired, thin white man dressed in overalls and carrying a healthy load of buck shot in certain parts of his body.


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Precious Memories: Tractors, Moon Pies and More

by Giles Hollingsworth

Last night I asked Amazon's marvelous little jukebox, Alexa, to play Jim Reeves songs. She obliged, and Reeves' first song was "Precious Memories", a favorite old religious song. I have heard that song literally hundreds of times during my lifetime, always listening with a reverent mindset, enjoying the calm, soul-soothing, feeling such songs can give you. But this time my thoughts happened to become centered upon these lyrics: "And old home scenes of my childhood in fond memory appear." That got me to thinking, what are some of my favorite childhood memories, some that I could even call precious; not as precious as the religious memories that flood one's soul, but precious in their own nostalgic way.

In a way your past is one long, continuous memory, but it's easy enough to break it down into time and place frames and settings, into thousands of memories. That's what I did, in order to ferret out favorite ones, some of which I'd like to tell about. Here's the first one.

In the fall of 1941 my dad decided it was time for us to move to the country and become farm hands, living in a very, very humble farm-hand house about seven miles out Pulaski Pike, and back then seven miles was way out in the country. I was just ten years old, so the why of that move never entered my mind as a question, and I'm sure it was the same with my two older siblings - Richard, who was thirteen and Norma, who was fifteen.

In fact we were right happy with the move, because it gave all three of us something that to a lot of kids was a dreaded chore, but to us was a boon... the chance to make some money by picking cotton for a few weeks. Sounds crazy, I know, but the facts were, the Great Depression had kept us in poverty for about ten years, and cotton-mill-village kids had virtually no way to earn any money.

Lest I paint the picture too rosy, I'll admit that we had to spend most of that hard earned money on buying our own clothes, but somehow that didn't matter with us; making the money was rewarding and satisfying. It gave us a real sense of pride and

accomplishment, something that poor people always badly need.

And there were other things there that might seem insignificant but in fact were wonderful memory makers. The country song, "Ya'll Come" has this line; "When you live in the country everybody is your neighbor". We learned that to be so true. We had some good mill-village neighbors, but country folks are a brotherhood. They look out for one another and dearly love to share. For example we had no car but if Richard and I started out walking, let's say, to the grocery store about half a mile away, the first driver who came along would stop and offer us a ride. You didn't have to put your thumb out, their stopping was a given.

Also, speaking of that grocery store, Richard, Daddy, and I would sometimes take a lunch break (from picking cotton) at that store, and choose from a cotton-picker's dream menu of five cent items. My favorites were: small can of Vienna sausage, small can of Campbell's pork and beans, small package of Nabisco saltines, a Moon Pie, and either a Pepsi, a Nehi, or a Double Cola. A lunch there was not only delicious and filling, it was to me a cuisine adventure and a terrific ego builder.

Here I was, a ten year old, sitting on the porch of an old country store, eating with farm workers, thinking to myself, "I'm almost a grown-up". So now, years later, I find that Moon Pies are part of my favorite memories.

Fast forwarding, by 1945 we were able to offer a farm owner a better, more mature, labor package, consisting of Daddy and three strapping boys, ages twelve, fourteen, and seventeen; Bobby, me and Richard. That was good enough



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to get us promoted from farmhands to sharecroppers with Mr. James Hayes who owned a nice farm in Farley, right next to Redstone Park. He furnished the cotton and corn seed, fertilizer, farming equipment, two mules and a modest house for us while we furnished the labor. The crop proceeds were to be shared equally.

Daddy took on a new aura of pride, gratitude, and determination to succeed, and it was contagious. He was now technically our boss, but instead, he was our leader and we followed him faithfully, never complaining. It was not because he demanded that, because he didn't, but because he was our inspiration. In other words, he taught us work ethics that made life so much better for us the rest of our lives. That is a precious memory.

The war had just ended, which made for an abundance of new blessings for everyone, like no more food rationing, and finally cars, household appliances, etc. were again being manufactured. So after our first bale of cotton was sold in October, we were at last able to buy a radio, having been without one for four years.

That \$24 investment immediately paid us dividends...intangible dividends, yes, but it was worth hundreds of dollars to at last be a part of the world that was privileged to listen, in their homes, to music, news and programs. That's a favorite memory, one that I think I could call "precious".

As a sharecropper Daddy was prudent enough to re-locate with opportunity, so in late 1947 we moved to Harvest to sharecrop with Mr. A.S. Chambers. It was a good upgrade, more acres for crops, a much larger house, two mules, a farm wagon, AND a tractor, a very old John Deere. And that prompts another favorite memory, this story that I love to tell my grandchildren.

Harvest was a tiny country town, with two grocery, or general stores, a cotton gin, three churches, and maybe twenty houses, so to me it was very inviting. It was only about a mile and a half from our new home. I couldn't stop thinking what fun it would be to hitch up those two mules to the wagon and "drive" to Harvest on Wall Triana Rd., which was then still unpaved. Wagons were still permitted on that road and some others, because several farmers still used wagons to haul their cotton to the gin. So the first time I heard Daddy say we needed a few things from the

grocery store I volunteered. I hitched up the team and headed to Harvest, hoping to learn if small country towns are really as depicted in the movies.

At Cobb's store, sure enough I found some of the local gentry sitting around, three of them in wooden straight chairs, and two, I think, on wooden kegs, talking about the weather, crops and tractors. Times were prosperous, so most of them had bought either a John Deere, a Farmall, or an Alias-Chalmers tractor by now, and the big question was which brand was the best one.

Naturally each one felt, and I mean strongly felt, that his tractor filled that bill and he wasn't timid about declaring it. There were no winners or losers to the argument. It was just good old country bragging, which was an acceptable ego exercise and to me it was intriguing.

I thought about saying a word or two about our ancient John Deere, but I was too young and too new to the community to do that. (I think I was wise beyond my sixteen years to keep quiet.) But what a wonderful memory that is. We were now living that close to the ideal small country town.

Precious memories... how they linger.



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CHANGES

by Merry Barfield
October 2024

As I barrel toward my 82nd birthday, I often take stock of all the changes in my life. For instance, bedtime. It used to be that I got a quick shower, a dash of eye cream, a dash of face cream and voila, I was ready for bed. All that has changed...a lot. First I need a 15 minute soak in a bubble filled tub with something that is supposed to make me sleep better and/or ease my aching back and legs. That is followed by lotions for drying skin, face creams to help prevent more wrinkles and that is just the beginning.

I have to remember to remove my hearing aids, put in my mouth piece to prevent shifting teeth, apply a scalp treatment, spray my nostrils with an allergy medication, administer drops to help my dry eye problem, place a glass of water and my thyroid tablet by the bedside to take on an empty stomach in the morning. After I complete all that, I usually remember that I haven't set the alarm 3 days a week for my back-to-back exercise classes.

I used to walk and even raced in a few 5 K races but never figured on exercising just to keep myself moving. Not my favorite thing to do but it seems necessary along with pool exercises.

Now to sleep after one last thing - put prescribed ointment in my bad eye. I turn over, all is dark which reminds me to get up, turn on the night light per doctor's orders for my husband and to make sure that I have placed the sign by the coffeepot. That is the sign that tells me to punch the check in button in the hallway lest I receive a call from our facility to make sure we are okay.

That wouldn't be so bad if those were the only big changes. Driving. How my routes have changed!! There was a time when I took the quickest way to get from point A to point B. Now I have to figure out what time of day I feel safest to get out, which streets will have the least traffic and oftentimes I find

myself going out of the way to avoid certain intersections. Recently, I had to go out University past the old mall. Do you think I took the Parkway to University? No, I avoided the Parkway altogether by going on the back roads. Is that a sign that I am in my "old age"?

Shoes. I used to love to go shoe shopping. Just to look at the array of shoes on display makes my toes curl and my feet start to run the other way. Once I find something that is half-way comfortable, it is no longer available in my size because all of the other little old ladies have beat me to the punch.

I have a closet full of what I have dubbed "one hour shoes" - only good for 60 minutes and that is if I can be sitting for most of that. Church shoes, in other words.

Nylons, stocking, pantyhose, whatever you want to call them. In my day, one was not properly dressed unless one's legs were covered. I see ladies with their bare feet stuffed into heels and wonder how they can even stand up. The pain on their faces sometimes gives them away or you see them slipping out of their shoes once they are seated.

One of my friends told me that her daughter said, "Mama, if you wear nylons, you give yourself away as being over 70!" What is wrong with being over 70? What makes us think that we have to do what the TV personalities and fashion magazines dictate? And don't get me started on the fashion of making sure your bra straps are showing!! Oh, and tights without a long blouse for a dress-up occasion! Who thinks that is cute?

I am not complaining about changes so much as recognizing them. The lives of most of my closest girlfriends have changed drastically as their spouses have passed away. But that is another change that has affected me. It is strange that we no longer hang out together. One moved away to be near her children, one had a medical issue and now almost won't leave the house except to go the doctor, and the other has such bad knee issues that she can hardly walk, much less go out for a day of shopping and fun. It is rare that all four of us can get together.

I check on them on a regular basis but I cannot change the direction that our lives have taken. The only constant in our lives is change.



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Toilet Repairs for the Hard-Headed

by Kimberly Cook



I should start my own home repair series, though I am successful because I am hard-headed, not because I am talented. My husband says, "Call the man." I say, "I can fix it." This works great for most repairs, but plumbing is dangerous. One false move and you have an insurance estimator coming out to assess your hardwood floors.

The saga begins when my toilet starts making a strange noise when filling- a cross between a water-pick and pressure washer. It takes about an hour to fill, and that is not good when you are in a double-flush situation.

•I take off the tank top (the toilet's, not mine) and see water bubbling over the top of the fill valve. I order the part, and Amazon delivers it two days later. I leave the box on the kitchen bar for a week, daring my husband to say something.

It's Saturday, and Greg is watching Arkansas whup up on Kansas. I swap out the fill valve, using my wrench to really crank those plastic fittings. Then, I

read the directions. "Finger-tighten only." Drat. I loosen them a little and wonder if they were really serious about that last part. I turn on the valve, and water drips down the pipe onto the towel underneath. Finger tightening is for sissies.

I crank the plastic tank fittings, and turn the valve back on. This time, a stream runs onto the towel. Now, I am nervous. Cheers roar from the TV set. Visions of water running under garage doors flood my brain.

I text my neighbor, the plumber: "Tim, my toilet supply line is leaking." My husband is still glued to the TV set, and so is Tim, I think, after I have pressed, "Send." (Who am I kidding? I would have sent it anyway.)

"In Florida helping mom install a water heater." Plumbers never get a break, even during March Madness. "Will send my helper over there in the AM." I make a mental note to write Tim into my will.

Greg yells he is hungry, and I yell, from the bathroom floor, that I will make him spaghetti. He puts noodles on to boil, hopeful I can resolve the situation before he has to do any real cooking. I stick my head out of the powder room: "I texted Tim."

The corners of my husband's mouth turn up — I can tell this just from looking at the back of his head.

"I'm proud of you," he says, as I walk towards the stove. I know he is proud because I have texted the man, so I take a turn and Google videos on how to stop a supply line leak. My left-handed, right-dominant brain, cannot figure out which way to turn the fittings. "Lefty-loosey, righty-tighty." Is that left from the pipe's perspective, or crouched on the floor and looking up a side of the toilet no regular person should ever have to see? I find a video, crank one of the fittings, and the leak moves to the next one. I crank again, and no more drips. I text Tim: "NVM. I fixed it," strong-arm emoji.

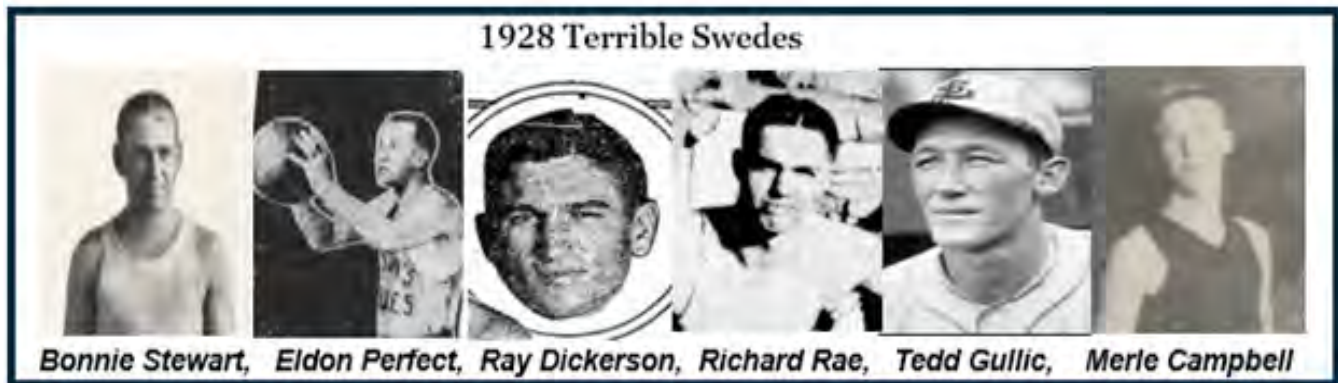
It's YouTube for the win, baby.

For the Croup

Wring out a linen cloth - cotton will do, but linen is preferable - in warm water, place it upon the child's throat and chest, and then fold a dry flannel wrap carefully over. Warm the child's feet with hot stones if necessary, and cover it with plenty of bedclothes, and let it go to sleep. When it wakes, you will not even perceive that it has a cold. It acts like a little angel.

THE TERRIBLE SWEDES INVADED HUNTSVILLE – DECEMBER 1928

by David C. Glover



On Wednesday, December 19, 1928, six professional athletes of the Olson's Terrible Swedes arrived in the Dallas Mill community for an exhibition basketball game against Coach Hebert Eugene "Hub" Myhand's Blue Clad Warriors at the Dallas Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) gymnasium. By 7:30 pm a large crowd of over five hundred spectators had paid their fifty cents each to watch the match.

The Terrible Swedes were a barnstorming professional basketball team and clowned around during the game to entertain the crowd. They were founded in 1920 by Chester Melbourne "Ole" Olson of Coffeyville, Kansas; a player, manager and promotor who scouted the college ranks in the Midwest and Southwest to recruit players. When Olson found a gifted basketball player, he would sign them to his team, develop them, and afterwards sell the player for a good profit to a big-league team. The Swedes played about a hundred games a year and were a dominant force winning approximately ninety percent of their games. Coming into the Dallas community, the Terrible Swedes had not lost a game to a Southern team in two years.

The Terrible Swedes arrived in Huntsville from Jonesboro, Arkansas where they had just defeated the Agricultural and Mechanical College Gorillas in a final score of 41 to 27 on December 15, 1928. The Swedes roster included: Bonnie Bishop "B.B." Stewart, 30 years old, five-foot nine-inches tall, from Alva, Oklahoma; Eldon Marvin "Perky" Perfect, 22 years old, six feet tall, from Enid, Oklahoma; Ray "Dick" Dickerson, 20 years old, six-feet one-inch tall, from Springfield, Missouri; Richard Joseph Rae, 21 years old, five-foot eleven-inches tall, from Tonkawa, Oklahoma; Tedd Jasper Gullic, 21 years old, six-foot two-inches tall; and Merle George "Chink" Campbell, 23 years old, six-feet seven and one half-inches tall.

The 1928-1929 Dallas Team was a strong basketball team who had just won a pair of games on the road at Bethel College of Russellville, Kentucky. On December 14, 1928, Dallas beat Bethel College 37

to 31 and on December 15, 1928, defeated Bethel College 22 to 18. The Dallas Team, as well as the local community, were not expecting a win against the Terrible Swedes but were hoping to keep the game close and interesting. Most of the Dallas Team members had grown up in the Dallas Mill area and participated in local sports (baseball, bowling, and basketball).

Members of the Dallas Team were: Alfred Trent "Cowboy" Fitch, 20 years old, six foot tall; Newton H. "Long Shot" McGinnis, 25 years old, five-foot eleven-inches tall; Walter Benjamin Fiske, 22 years old, five-foot ten-inches tall; William Melvin Potts, 30 years old, five-foot eight-inches tall; and Jodie Dolfes "Joda" Pettie, 26 years old, five-foot ten-inches tall.

On offense, the Swedes took an early lead with little effort against Dallas, and on defense Chink Campbell stood under the Dallas basket blocking shots at will. The Swedes proved they could make a basket from any distance, any position or angle, providing laughs as well as exciting moments during the game. The Swedes would pass the ball to Campbell as he stood underneath the goal, and he would rise-up on his tip toes and place the ball in the goal. He was unstoppable, although "Cowboy" Fitch, Dallas center, tried mightily.

The Swedes played a slow-paced game and controlled the ball, keeping control as much as possible. When Dallas got the ball they would press the attack, but whenever they missed a shot, the Swedes immediately grabbed the rebound. Every time Dallas cut the lead to ten points or so, the professionals would stop clowning around and add baskets.

Dallas played a great game. Fitch, Fiske, McGinnis, Potts, and Petty played better than they had against teams equal to them, but were unable to defeat the professionals, eventually losing by 20 points in a final score the Terrible Swedes 45 and Dallas 25. High scorers for the game were Campbell with 14 points and Fiske with 13 points.

The Swedes left Huntsville to play the Lanett Athletic Club at Lanett, Alabama on December 20, 1928, and on December 21 and 22, 1908 engaged in a pair of games against the Fort Benning Musketeers at Fort Benning, Columbus, Georgia. The Swedes would return to Huntsville on January 6, 1933, and on December 15, 1937, to play Dallas again. In 1933, the Terrible Swedes won again, however Dallas won in 1937.

The Dallas Team defeated West Huntsville 47 to 27 in the next scheduled game, on December 21, 1928. However, Dallas would lose the County Champion for the 1928-1929 season to the West Huntsville Team on February 15, 1929, in a final score of 28 to 17.

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 - Information about notable people and families of Huntsville plus the work of local historians and artists.
 - Huntsville's historic buildings, districts, markers and cemeteries with pictures, maps, and links to digital walking tours.
 - The Huntsville Historical Review, the Historic Huntsville Quarterly, Valley Leaves and the Madison County Bicentennial Bookshelf.
 - Audio and other stories by some of Huntsville's best storytellers.
- Historical Probate, court, deed, tax, and mill records.

BITS AND PIECES OF THEN AND NOW

by Iolanda Hicks



A New Year to me means refreshing everything around me as much as I can; making resolutions for change; working on my health both physically and mentally. I tried last January in the 2024 issue, to approach the New Year with an 'imagined' weight loss program starting out strong, but with efforts soon fading into oblivion. The outcome of my gung-ho attitude did not last long! I thought this year, I would try to consolidate some history of Huntsville, as a refresher of our city's history of 'then', and where Huntsville is 'now'. I know the history of Huntsville has been written and rewritten but with each account that I have read or researched, there is always something new. So, here goes.

The very space we occupy, from 200 years ago, was the home of the Cherokee, Chickasaw or the Choctaw tribes. This was their ancestral territory, with fertile ground and the Big Spring. The spring was a vital resource for those tribes who considered this area as a joint hunting ground. The water from the spring originated from an underground Karst spring system located in a large cave network.

Check out the definition of a Karst. I had never heard the word! In 1805, a man, by the name of John Hunt, one of the first white settlers here, made what was to become Huntsville, home. He had built a cabin on the bluff overlooking the now Big Spring Park, about where the courthouse stands today. His wife and a few of his children joined him.

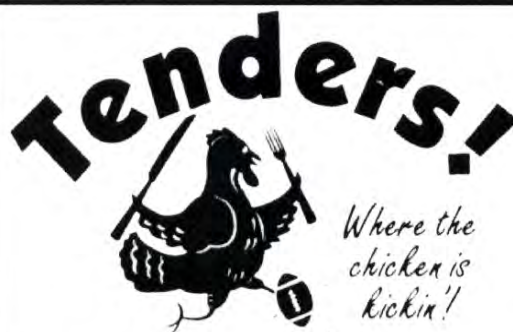
This area, for a short time, was called Hunt's Spring. Hunt, a veteran of the Revolutionary War, was born in Virginia. For a time, he lived in North Carolina, where he worked as a printer for the legislature. Later he became a delegate to the North Carolina convention at the time of the ratification of the U.S. Constitution.

From North Carolina the family moved to Tennessee, then to Huntsville. Our city, at the time, was known as Twickenham (name chosen by Leroy Pope in 1809) but by 1811, it was renamed Huntsville, in honor of John Hunt. If you are interested in more information about John Hunt and that time period here in and around Huntsville, for a start, look up the article in issue 34 (in 1993) of the Old Huntsville Magazine on this very subject.

As settlers moved to this area, the Native Indians were being pushed out of their homes and hunting grounds. There were often skirmishes between the settlers and the natives and legends grew over time. One was about our valley being called or referred to as the Valley of Sickness or Death. I imagine someone thought it was because of all the allergens in the air. I believe we all know how allergies can get bad at times and how miserable we feel. Someone started that rumor, whether it be a Native American Indian or some settler who was miserable coughing and sneezing! I don't think we will ever know.

Another legend, most of us have heard, is how one of our mountains, Monte Sano, got its name. It referred to a love triangle of sorts with an Indian maiden, her Indian brave and a white settler. I always thought it was true. I don't think so! Monte Sano translates from Spanish to the Mountain of Health (again another story). Over time, it was also nicknamed Mountain of Wind and Windy Mountain. In 1888, the Monte Sano Railway was created to carry passengers to the Monte Sano Hotel, built in 1887 primarily as a health resort. After a derailment, scaring passengers, it was abandoned in 1896. There is a wonderful, informative article about Monte Sano, found in the Historic Huntsville Quarterly, Volume 6, Number 4 (<https://louis.uah.edu/historic-huntsville-quarterly>). Check it out!

The architecture of this small town began with a courthouse, businesses strategically placed around the Courthouse Square, and a center known as Cotton Row. This area flourished with lawyers, merchants and bankers. The land around Huntsville was fertile



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with cotton fields. "King Cotton" gave fuel to the town's growth. When Alabama became a state in 1819, the constitutional convention met in Huntsville which at the time was the temporary capital of the state. The next year, the capital moved to Cahaba then finally to Montgomery, which became the permanent capital (1946).

Researching history is very interesting. You never know what you can unearth. There was an extraordinary event over the skies of Huntsville, Alabama in 1833. It was the Leonid meteor storm. This shower was named after the Constellation Leo because the meteors seem to have originated from that part of the sky.

The town's newspaper at the time, Huntsville Democrat, reported that it appeared the skies involved "thousands and even millions" of meteors. Citizens thought it was the end of time! Stories were written over the years of those nights of November 12th and 13th. One mentioned the cows coming out thinking it was daylight! The event even inspired the song and book "Stars Fell over Alabama".

Before the Civil War, the Huntsville area was basically agricultural with slave labor. When the war reached the South, Huntsville was heavily affected. The Union Army captured Huntsville in April of 1862 mainly to control the Memphis and Charleston Railroad which was one of the main or key Confederate supply lines.

Our Huntsville Depot train station had been built in 1860. The first occupation of the Union wasn't too traumatic but the second occupation around 1863 was pretty rough for the settlers in and around Huntsville. Union soldiers used Huntsville as a base of operations until 1864.

The war really had an effect on the area and caused economic poverty throughout Alabama. As time passed, the South began to rebuild and by the late 1800s, "urban" growth with industrial influence took over. Slowly, along with other parts of the South, Huntsville began to change, even though cotton was still, primarily, the economic product of the area.

This history summary is becoming a dissertation! I believe I will close with this being Part 1 at this point. There will be more to come next month, so stay TUNED!

I am sharing, in closing, a quote for this New Year by Henry David Thoreau: "Go confidently in the direction of your dreams." Happy New Year!!!

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A HISTORY OF THE WEST HUNTSVILLE BAPTIST CHURCH

by Micah St. John



In the 1890s, as Huntsville residents began to look forward to the new century, there was much time to reflect on the past and develop building plans for the future. The Civil War was a distant memory, and the Spanish-American War of 1898 had begun. Soldiers from the Southern and Northern United States bonded together to fight side by side.

As the Spanish-American War ended, veterans came to Huntsville to rest and recover. Their impact on our small town was huge.

About two miles outside Huntsville, along a winding dirt road that led west by the only bridge that crossed Pinhook Creek, lay the small suburban community of West Huntsville. Triana Pike (now called Triana Boulevard) passed to the south through this community and headed towards the town of Triana that was about ten miles away.

On the west side of Triana Pike, within the community of West

Huntsville, a small brick building operated occasionally as a furniture factory. In 1892, about one block behind the furniture factory at the intersection of 9th Avenue and 8th Street, construction began for West Huntsville Cotton Mills and Warehouses. Completed in late 1892 or early 1893, this was one of the few new industries in Huntsville.

Tracy W. Pratt was the company president, and he hired Joshua Coons as superintendent, which often led to the company being called "Coons and Pratt Mills." Only a small office building from the original Cotton Mill still remains today.



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Local Experts

In 1899, a textbook for textile entrepreneurs called 1899 Commercial Features gave advice on how to design a mill village with a church and school that would improve the lives of mill workers. "It was widely believed that if the workers were redeemed, they would work harder and thus produce more goods."

The West Huntsville Baptist Church was officially organized on October 29, 1899, serving the West Huntsville Cotton Mills Village. The original building still stands on the corner of 7th Avenue and 9th Street.

A few years later land was purchased to make room for more people. The first church building at the present church location was built in 1907. The wooden structure sadly burned down in 1936 and was replaced with a stone building.

The current church, finished in 1961, was designed with a central arch and stained-glass windows that resembled Renaissance Revival style and was different from anything else in Huntsville at that time. From this location, many pastors and faithful people have and will continue to take care of the community, the state, and the whole world.

In fact, the impact from efforts of West Huntsville Baptist Church can be found in six continents. We want to make disciples in every country and share the Gospel with everyone!

West Huntsville Baptist Church is investing in our community with the new "Legacy Center" that will open soon. It will have plenty of space for teaching, events, exercising, fellowship and disciplining as we continue "Building Eternal Relationships!"

If you lined up all the cars in the world, end to end, someone would still try to pass them.



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PLEASE LITTLE GIRL

by M. D. Smith, IV



It was thirty years ago, in the days when airline travel still carried a faint perfume of formality—before sweats and sneakers filled every row. My colleague and I were headed to New York in business suits to meet with ABC executives to ask for a raise, the kind of meeting that kept your pulse quickened days in advance. We boarded a smaller jet, the kind with narrow aisles and seats that seemed measured for smaller bodies than our own—three seats on the right, two on the left. We were on the left. I pressed against the window, already imagining Manhattan's skyline when we landed. My colleague followed and took the aisle.

The air was heavy with the smell of reheated coffee and something warming from the galley. Flight attendants in crisp uniforms glided up and down, their smiles practiced but

not unkind. The engines hummed, a low and steady throb that promised a smooth ascent.

Shortly after takeoff, I felt a tap against my seatback. Once, twice, then silence. I thought nothing of it. But moments later, it came again—steady, rhythmic, as if a small drummer had set up camp directly behind me. I turned slightly, peering through the narrow gap between seats, and there she was, a child no more than four, dressed like a porcelain doll in a lacy off-white frock, white socks, and shiny black shoes. The shoes were the problem. They tapped, pressed, and pummeled against my seat with an enthusiasm that bordered on malice.

Beside her sat her mother, a figure of precision and posture, in a navy dress tailored to her frame, hair drawn tightly into a bun, matching blue heels clicking against the floor when she crossed her legs. She radiated the kind of authority that brooked no questioning.

I leaned back over the seat, lowered my voice, and said, "Little girl, please don't kick my seat anymore—it's very disturbing." I had barely finished the sentence before the mother erupted.

Her eyebrows knit like thunderclouds. She shot to her feet with startling speed, her heels clapping the floor as she came even with our seats. She leveled a manicured finger at me, her voice slicing through the recycled air with the sharp edge of a Manhattan cabdriver.

"Don't you dare address my little girl. No one speaks to her but me. Do you understand?"

For a moment, I was stunned—speechless at the sheer volume of her indignation. Passengers nearby shifted in their seats, pretending not to listen, though every ear was trained on us. My friend got smaller in his seat. I steadied myself, met her glare, and said evenly, "Then tell her to stop kicking my seat, or I'll be calling the stewardess."

Her nostrils flared. "You just remember—do not address my daughter."

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"The ocean is made up of fish and water. Why fish don't drown, I don't know."

Bobby, age 7, on science exam

It was a duel of wills at thirty thousand feet, and the aisle between us was no wider than a blade. She let the words hang in the air like smoke before finally dropping back into her seat.

The little girl, oblivious, still had her feet pressed firmly against my backrest, though the pounding had ceased. Without a word of correction, the mother reached into her handbag and retrieved a toy—a plastic sketch pad with tiny knobs. She set it on her daughter's lap, and the child, at last, dropped her legs and began twisting the dials.

For twenty minutes, peace returned. I let myself sink back, trying to fix my mind on the meeting ahead, on the glinting towers of New York, but the peace was uneasy. Sure enough, the drumming returned. Softer this time, but relentless.

I didn't bother with words. Instead, I slid my hand between the seats and waved it back and forth, palm open in silent protest. She saw it. Our eyes met again. Without speaking, she reached into her bag and produced another distraction—a doll, this time—which she pressed into her daughter's hands.

Not once—not once in the span of the entire flight—did she correct her child, or acknowledge that anyone else in the world might be owed even the smallest courtesy.

The rest of the flight passed in tense silence, punctuated by the faint scrape of plastic cutlery on tin trays and the sigh of attendants wheeling carts down the aisle. My colleague next to me, said nothing—only offered a faint, bemused smile.

Later, in the quiet of our hotel room, he finally asked, "How on earth did you keep your temper?"

"Barely," I said. "But we're from Alabama, and she was from 'Noo Yawk.' I half-expected it."

The truth was, my wife and I had raised eight children, and not once would we have allowed them to behave that way in public—or in private. Respect wasn't optional; it was expected. In the South, we make our children behave because we know the world isn't theirs alone.

That day at 30,000 feet, I learned something I hadn't expected. The sky may be infinite, but the cabin of a plane is not. And in that cramped aluminum tube hurtling through the clouds, civility—or the lack of it—becomes magnified. A child's shoes can feel like sledgehammers. A mother's pride can weigh like iron.

And yet, perhaps the strangest truth of all: the memory of those little black shoes pushing against my seat has lasted longer than the memory of anything that was said in that New York boardroom.



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WHAT GIVES YOU PEACE OF MIND?

by Jim Vann



There are several things that bring me peace of mind.

The greatest peace of mind for me comes from the fact that I am a child of God.

Because of what His Son did, I have been adopted into His Family.

This has special meaning for me because I have children of my own and in fact one was legally adopted.

There is nothing I would not do to keep my children safe and happy.

I feel sure God feels the same way about me.

Because I am a child of God, I look forward to going to heaven to be in the presence of God the Father, Jesus His Son, and the Holy Spirit. The Trinity. I sometime think of questions that I would like to ask them but I think just being in their presence will be sufficient.

I get great peace of mind from making my wife happy. With the pain she is dealing with now days that is hard to do. I do the best that I know how.

I get great peace of mind when my children are healthy and happy.

I get peace of mind by grow-

ing things. I think it is inherent that a man wants to grow a garden. That may come from Eden.

I get peace of mind when I'm on the lake fishing. I jokingly used to tell my wife that they say the earth is covered by 3/4 water and that the human body is made of 3/4 water; I figure a man should fish about three fourths of the time. She didn't buy that.

I get great peace of mind from the work that I do.

I sometime take something that is totally useless and make something beautiful and useful out of it.

I enjoy working with my hands and am very thankful that I can do so many of the things I can still do at this age.

As you can see, I have many things that give me peace of mind and I find that most all the time I am at peace with everything and everybody.

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Adopting A New Pet



Congratulations! You've adopted a dog who needs a home. That's the easy part, but building a bond with your newly adopted dog may take more effort. Here's where time and patience come in handy.

Keep Life Low-Key

For the first few weeks, limit the number of experiences you expose your dog to, and resist the urge to lavish too much attention all at once. Keep things low-key to prevent him from becoming overstimulated. This will also give him time to learn about you at his own pace.

Get Comfortable

During the first days when many newly adopted dogs are settling into their permanent homes, it's common for them to feel stressed and anxious. This may cause separation anxiety in the form of destructive behavior, crying at night and emotional and digestive issues, such as diarrhea, vomiting, and loss of appetite.

For serious health conditions, visit a veterinarian right away. With behavior or training issues, give your pup time to adjust before seeking professional advice. (If your dog exhibits aggressive behavior, however, seek help immediately.)

Don't skimp on providing positive reinforcement for desired behaviors, which will motivate your dog to please you.

Consider Activity Level

This may be the number-one question to ask yourself. If you are looking for a mellow fellow, avoid sporting, herding and terrier-type dogs. If you're hoping for a jogging partner, stay away from short-nosed dogs or toy dogs — they won't be able to keep up.

Consider Your Schedule

Do you have a long commute to work? No dog wants to be left home alone all day. If you are considering adopting a puppy, you will need to provide him with extra time and attention. Even an older dog who is thoroughly house trained shouldn't go for hours on end alone. You may need to plan for a pet sitter, dog walker, trusted neighbor, or doggy day care to help you out.

Stock Up

Get your supplies before he arrives. Here are a few must-haves:

- **Collar:** Choose a well-fitting buckle or snap design. You should be able to fit two fingers between the collar and your dog's neck.
- **Dog crate and bed:** Your dog needs a place of his own to feel secure, and a comfy bed provides him with a welcoming den. Many dogs feel safe in a bed inside a crate. There are many good choices at our local pet shops and even online.
- **Food and water bowls:** Choose stainless steel bowls to hold your dog's food and water.
- **Grooming supplies:** brushes and combs, shampoos and conditioners, nail clippers, and ear and eye cleaning supplies will keep your dog looking handsome and healthy.
- **Identification tag and microchip:** Include your current contact information on your dog's ID tag and make sure that it's securely attached to his collar. If he doesn't already have one, schedule a trip to the veterinarian to have a microchip implanted, which is a painless, permanent way to identify your dog should he become lost.
- **Leash and harness:** When exercising around other dogs and people who share common walkways, choose a short, strong leash to prevent tangling.
- **Toys:** Chew toys help keep a dog busy and out of mischief.

Welcoming your adopted dog into your home with his own supplies will help him realize that he's found his forever home. It won't take long for him to bond with you and form a lasting friendship.

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*From the Desk of
Tom Carney*

The Liar

by Tom Carney

William Little was a liar. Everyone on the rough frontier of Texas in the mid 1830s had their own story to tell, but few were as outlandish as Little's.

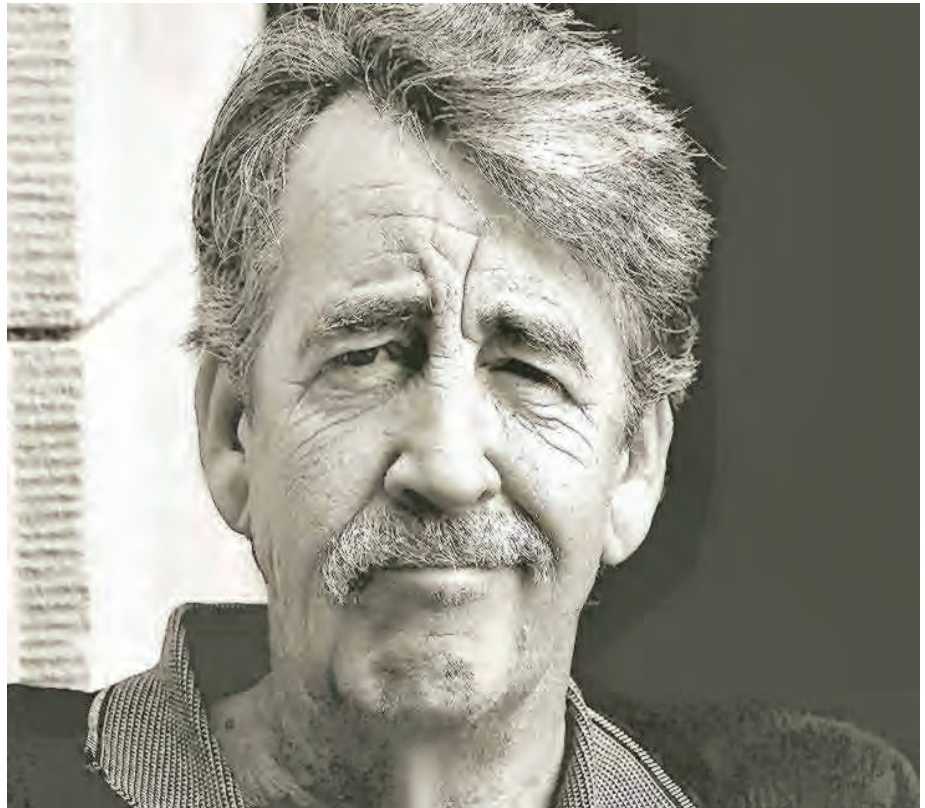
Little, when drinking with his rough-hewed friends, would tell of his home in Alabama, where he had been a successful attorney and had owned vast plantation holdings with many slaves.

The frontiersmen would merely chuckle under their breaths and change the subject. They all had a past they were running from and that is what drew many of them to Texas; a chance to start over again.

There was a small grain of truth in Little's stories however. He had been a lawyer, though one Alabama paper labeled him as "the worst barrister in the state."

Little's legal career came to an abrupt end when he murdered a man for making advances toward his wife. Shortly afterwards he abandoned his pregnant wife and fled to Texas.

Once in Texas, Little got caught up in the war fever that was sweeping the territory and offered his services to the small Texas army. Probably realizing he faced



possible death in combat, William Little resumed using his real name.

Every man dreams of winning immortal fame and William achieved it at the Alamo. Near the old walls of the ruined mission stands a simple granite monument. The inscription reads. "Defender of the Alamo ... William Travis."

"If I want to hear the pitter-patter of little feet, I'll put shoes on my cats."

Sara Jacobs, Woodville

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A Ball of Fire



Feb. 1895 Newspaper

A vivid ball of fire, three times as large as the sun and equally as brilliant, shot through the heavens last night, at 11:05 o'clock.

The brilliant ball turned the city as bright as noonday and made many declare that its passage was attended by a rumbling noise and a slight shock, as of an earthquake.

Everyone who was awake at that hour saw the swift-moving meteor. It was of marvelous brilliance and passed close to the earth seeming to almost touch the housetops. It was seen by every policeman on duty in the city and, in a few minutes after its flight, they were making sensational reports of it to the police station.

At the office it was seen by every one in the building. There was a vivid flash as of a powerful stroke of lightning. The whole earth was brilliantly lighted and the heavens were ablaze with splendor.

"Nothing is more annoying than to have someone report word for word what you shouldn't have said in the first place."

Rodney Evans, Athens

The meteor came out of the northwest and travelled toward the southeast. It shed a swath of light that extended in every direction as far as the eye could see and for several seconds the city was lighted as brightly as at the hour of noon.

The first impression was that it was a vivid flash of lightning, but a glance into the heavens dispelled that idea.

The light was caused by a huge ball that seemed to have stolen the blinding light of the sun. The ball had disappeared before anyone could get an idea of its size or nature.

It was at first thought to be a local brilliant, but this was disproved before five minutes had passed. At the train dispatcher's office, three minutes

after the meteor passed, the telegraph operators all along the line of the East Tennessee and Georgia Pacific began to send in reports of the night light.

The night watchmen claimed the ball of fire was so near the earth that it melted the snow on the roofs of store buildings; that the water poured off the roof of the Post Office block in streams into the alley.

Jack Creecy, the night operator at the depot, it is said, was so terrified that he hastily extinguished the lights, seized his revolver, and jumping into the middle of the room, made ready to defend himself against what he supposed must be a gang of robbers with ball and shot before he realized his mistake.

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THE AMERICAN SIGNATURE QUILT



L to R: Rebecca Heaton, Dale Rhoades, Lara Keigan, Ann Oaks, Donna Castellano, & Liz Hurley

by Bill Alkire

The Historic Huntsville Foundation (HHF) invited the public to "A Homecoming: The American Signature Quilt".

The free exhibition was presented at: Harrison Brothers Hardware, 124 Southside Square, Huntsville, Alabama

The exhibit opened Thursday, October 9, 2025 at 5:00 p.m. and ran through Saturday, October 25. This marks the quilt's first display at Harrison Brothers Hardware. The exhibit will return in 2026 around Memorial Day.

The American Signature Quilt has the original autographs of 170 noted Americans stitched into its red, white, and blue Ohio-Star pattern. It is copied from an antique signature quilt from 1880 & 1881.

The project began in 1989 when Lynn Jones and Dale Rhoades initiated a fundraising campaign to preserve Huntsville's historic Harrison Brothers Hardware. Jones and Rhoades sent over 200 celebrities requests for signatures, and 170 replied. Recognizing the quilt's cultural importance, Jones and Rhoades produced two quilts: one raffled to raise funds for the store and a second kept as a community heirloom. The fundraising effort raised more than \$20,000 to retire the store's debt.

About HHF: The Historic Huntsville Foundation is a nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving and sharing the region's history through public programs, markers, and exhibitions that celebrate local memory and national heritage.

Notable signers include Americans whose accomplishments made a lasting impact on our nation.

The Roster includes:

Astronauts: Alan Shepard, John Glenn, Scott Carpenter and Neil Armstrong

Presidents: Ronald Reagan, Jimmy Carter and George H. W. Bush

Authors: Harper Lee and Alex Haley

Humanitarians: Rosa Parks and Coretta Scott King

Scientists: Jonas Salk and Carl Sagan

Actors: Elizabeth Taylor, Paul Newman and Katharine Hepburn.

Donna Castellano, HHF Executive Director, says "Volunteerism is the thread that connects the squares of the quilt," praising Jones and Rhoades for leading the project and rallying an American community to preserve Harrison Brothers.

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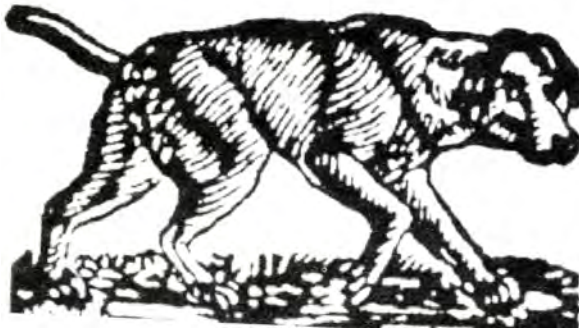
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A Penitent Dog

from 1913 Huntsville Newspaper



Dog stories have become so common that they bear as much credibility as "fish stories," but the following is so well vouched for as to leave no possible doubt of its truth.

A lady in Huntsville owns a very intelligent dog named Jeb, of whom she desired to have a picture. She accordingly took him to a photographic gallery, and with the assistance of the artist, endeavored to make her pet take and keep a suitable position before the camera. The jittery dog however was not in an accommodating mood that morning, and, after repeated trials, the attempt to conquer him was abandoned in despair.

"Go home!" the lady said, at last, pointing to the door. "You are a bad, naughty, naughty dog!" The culprit changed instantly his saucy manner and, dropping his tail between his legs, slunk away in confusion. All the rest of the day he seemed to realize that he was in disgrace, crouching in corners and wearing a shamefaced air. The next morning he was missing, not having come home at all the night before. All search failed to discover him.

About noon he reappeared at his mistress' doorstep, much elated, and fastened to his collar was a very handsome photograph of himself. Upon investigation, this is what was discovered. When the photographer had gone to his gallery to open up that morning, there at the door was the same pooch who had refused to pose for any picture. It appeared that it had been waiting patiently for quite some time. As soon as the door to the gallery was opened, Jeb dashed upstairs to the same room they had been in the day before. He immediately leapt upon the chair on which he was supposed to pose, and did so now.

Seizing the opportunity, the artist made his preparations with all possible speed, and the result was the delightful picture which the four-footed penitent had taken home, a peace offering to his mistress.

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BAILEY

Hello, my name is Bailey. I am a beautiful orange and white male tabby kitty. I am about 10 years old and have been through a lot in the last few months. I came to the Ark Animal Shelter when my long time owner passed away. I lived with other cats and got along with everyone. A friend of my owner brought me to the shelter where I now live with a lot of other cats. I get along with everyone but it's not like having a home of my own. I'm neutered and am up to date on all my shots and I'm also micro-chipped. I'm quite shy

until you get to know me and then you will find out that I am friendly and very loving to everyone. I am looking for a forever home where I can spend the rest of my life and relax and feel safe and loved. Won't you come and get to know me? If you will come to the Ark and spend some time with me you will find out what a good and gentle boy I am. Won't you think about coming to see me? Ask to see Bailey, that's me.

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A Blessing in Our Home



in the end, a 17 year old lab can be pretty big. (130 lbs.). Buddy was one of those good ole dogs who lay on the porch, followed you around and generally just stayed close.

He was hard to get trained, to the indoor/outdoor type stuff. We even considered adopting him out to another family, because we weren't sure we could help him like he needed.

After an extremely difficult day at home, we put "Buddy" on the carport, and decided that the next day, we were going to find him a home that would be better suited.

I put out 2 bowls of food, I put out 3 bowls of water. I left on every outside light I had on the outside of the house.

From around 9:30pm that night, setting my clock for about every 30 minutes, to be sure I was up to check on him. This went on until 7:00am.

At that point, I brought him in the house, fixed him the most spectacular plate of food I could muster out of our fridge. He was now part of the family.

Buddy was scared of loud thunder, he was scared of the vacuum cleaner. He was scared of gunshots. But, through it all, he would hang out beside you, all the while, knowing that you were going to protect him.

As he got older, Buddy was the "The big eared fat dog".

He was a blessing in our home, from that first night on the carport, until now.

It's been a lot of years since I have had to face the loss of a pet. A friend that was OK with just hanging out and loving us. We lost Buddy on March 2nd, 2021.

I have not had to experience this kind of loss of an animal in over 30 years. It's still hard.

"I Miss my Friend"

by Monte Singleton

In 2009, my wife Angle and I went to the local Humane society with the idea of adopting a dog. Two hours later, we came home with a chocolate lab named Rusty.

He was a rescue from a bad home that had mistreated him.

Then in 2010, we had entertained (me more than my wife) the idea of having a second dog as a brother to Rusty.

This is where "Buddy" the big yellow lab came in.

At the time, he wasn't so big, but

Bertha: "My memory is getting so bad."

Mary: "How bad is it?"

Bertha: "How bad is what?"



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MY NEW NAME BECAME JOB

by Jack Burwell

In third grade, either God or Nature made me perfect. What Freud and Erickson call the latency stage had set in. All my lechery towards little girls my age had gone away. My visions of Pat and Sharon as being little goddesses had left my thoughts. No longer were those thoughts of holding a hand of one of them or stealing a kiss on the cheek running through my mind. Being thirty pounds overweight made such thoughts an impossibility, but even fat little boys have a right to have impossible dreams.

Upon entering third grade while neither one was in my class, if I passed them in the halls, I didn't notice them. I probably remembered their names but that was all. Nature had neutered me. Holding a pretty girl's hand held no special charms or at least not like it used to.

It was about that time that I would pray to God to thank Him for being alive. After all, my family did go to church some. I wasn't totally biblically illiterate. Since I barely could throw a football or a baseball because I never practiced, I couldn't think of anything else to thank Him for, but apparently that was good enough for God to think well of me.

I hadn't stolen anything since I was four. I respected and even loved my mother and father, and I definitely didn't commit adultery because I didn't know what it was. As for idols, I didn't have any as far as I knew.

I didn't envy anybody for anything, I suppose because of a lack of imagination. I was perfectly content to be at the bottom of the social hierarchy since my lechery towards girls my size had gone away.

I had reached the point of being God's perfect servant. But apparently that's what drew me to Satan's attention. One day I woke up and the left side of my face was covered

with blisters. My mother told me they were fever blisters, also called herpes simplex, type 1. She said Dr. Bibb told her that one-half the people in the world carry the virus that causes herpes simplex type 1. Lucky me. I'm in the winning half.

She put some alcohol on them and told me they would heal and completely go away. There was a mild pain but not much. It was the humiliation that bothered me the most. When I was with other people, I would avoid eye contact and try to put my elbow on the table and cover the scabs with my hand.

Usually, the scabs were healed in ten days to two weeks and often I would forget about them, but sometimes not. As I said, my family didn't go to church much but apparently enough for me to hear about the Book of Job. It quickly became my favorite book in the Bible.

This man that God liked a lot, who is God's faithful servant, all of a sudden gets turned over to Satan to inflict terrible things onto him. Job has friends who aren't very helpful. They think Job must have done something awful for God to allow all these terrible things to happen to him.

That was about as far as my understanding of the Book of Job went. Since my ability to read was still very limited, I just listened to the preacher when he told the story. Still, it was comforting to hear that other people sometimes get sores for no good reason.

The sores would only come about once a year as long as I didn't eat too much pecan pie.

Now I had a biblical personage to identify with. I was Job before his redemption. What else was new? Some people are lucky and some people like Job and me get turned over to Satan for character building. Job and I appeared to have drawn the short straws.

The great lesson of Job went right over my head. God doesn't intend for us fully to understand Him. God won't let us pigeonhole Him. It would be a long time before I would absorb that message.

In the meantime, the herpes simplex would come and go, and when they came, I would go and hide.



Old ad run in Old Huntsville Magazine in 1998



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BRUCE CANON – BOUNTY HUNTER BY ACCIDENT

by John H. Tate

Many times our pastors say, from the pulpits, that they had a different life before they were saved. Such is the case with Bruce Canon. Bruce is a pastor of a local church in Huntsville. However, in his past life he was a bounty hunter. Bruce is up in age, and most of the bounties and civic officials he dealt with are old or dead.

Bruce Canon is not his real name. He felt a responsibility to protect both old colleagues and his congregation, so we've changed some names for this story.

Bruce, why use a false name in writing your story for Old Huntsville Magazine, and possibly your forthcoming book?

"Some of the information I provide, and some of the things I talk about may be detrimental to people's careers or lives. So, we're going to change some names to protect the guilty."

What did you do before bounty hunting?

"After graduating from college, I worked at a reform school as a counselor in Birmingham. A very influential person at A&M University submitted my name for consideration as a police officer. I didn't think anything would come of it, because at that time, of the 400 police officers in Huntsville, only eight were black - but I was accepted."

"I joined the force during a time of transition. HPD had been under some sort of investigation and Salvatore Vizzini was brought in as the new police chief. Everyone called him Sal, and he had an assistant named Rojas."

"I spent a year with the department. While I was still on probation, I also worked undercover in Mason Court housing. My primary patrol area was in South Huntsville, on third shift. I was told to keep my head down and not give them a reason to fire me.

One night I arrested a go-go dancer during a traffic stop for not having her driver's license. She was able to make bail before I left the station to go back on patrol. Seeing me, she asked if I would be kind enough to give her a ride back to her car. I obliged since it was in my patrol area."

"Later that night, at Sambo's restaurant at Golf Road and the Parkway, she came in with some of her friends. When she saw me, she came over to thank me while I ate breakfast. She never sat down, just said she was grateful."

"Unfortunately, one of my lieutenants had seen her in my patrol car and later saw her talking to me at the restaurant. Word got back to Chief Vizzini that I was fraternizing, possibly arranging a rendezvous. Two weeks later I was fired for 'Inability to maintain satisfactory behavior while on probation.'"

So how did that lead you to bounty hunting?

"Well, I had a house, a wife and bills to pay. With my police background, I became an undercover security officer at Kroger's, then later at Kmart on North Parkway."

One night I stopped a shoplifter in the parking lot and had a real tussle with him. Some guy came up to me and said he needed to talk to me. I looked at him and said I was a little busy."

"He came the next day and explained that the shoplifter I had the previous night was a bail-jumper. Meaning he was out on bond but never showed up for court. When he went to the jail to get him, they had let him out without checking for warrants. He said he was a bounty hunter and offered me \$50 to help catch the guy. We met after my shift, and we found the man at his mother's house."

"After that, the bounty hunter kept coming back. I asked him why, and he told me, 'Since you're an ex-police officer and you know Huntsville, you've got the best information on finding people.'"

"Then he said the magic words: 'You can make money picking people up.' That's how I got into bounty hunting – quite by accident."

"He hired me because he owned a bounty hunting company, in those days there was only one bail bonding company in town anyway, that was AAA. Ms. Loretta Howard was the owner. Although he was not the only bounty hunter in town, and I use that term very loosely, he was the only one Ms. Howard would call to work for her."

"He was a white guy out of Lincoln Projects; his name was Roger Dale Tubberville. I can tell you his name because he is dead now. Between Roger and myself, we knew many of the criminal elements in the area, so we made a good team."

"It was more about the excitement at first – Lord

knows the money wasn't that good. We did what I called nickel-dime-bond. We made \$50 on some and \$100 on others because bonds weren't that high then."

So you had to do a lot of bonds to make any money?

"Yeah, you had to snatch a lot of folks up at that time, until I guess I'd been doing it for three or four years. Other bonding companies moved into town, and Ms. Howard also opened up her second bonding company."

What was your first exciting or interesting capture?

"We got a call one night, this boy was out on a \$1,000 bond. His folks were in Huntsville, but he had skipped and gone to Whitehall, Tennessee, hiding out with some of his kinfolk. We found the boy hiding under a bed in a shack in the middle of nowhere. To say it got interesting would be an understatement. We were in a town of moonshine-drinking, coverall-wearing country folks."

"We snatched the boy up, but as we were trying to get out of there, his girlfriend tried to stop us. After a moment of her

tugging at us, she landed on the ground. Then all hell broke out, and as we got into the car and sped off, shots were fired at us. We made it out safe, with only bullet holes in the car doors, and the passenger window shattered."

"Yes, we had a running gun battle, I had only seen them on TV. The excitement, and adrenaline, I had never experienced before - I was hooked."

What a story! Bruce what final words would you like to leave with the readers?

"Back then bounty hunting was very exciting, few things surpassed it for me. However, as a pastor now, I equate what I do as a continuation of my bounty hunting career. Because I'm still chasing souls. Instead of bringing them to jail, I bring them to The Lord."

"There are some people out there who drive like complete idiots. I call these people 'Everybody but me.'"

Carl Estill, Trinity

Best Black Bean Chili

1 package low fat sausage
2 T. whole fennel seed
1 pkg. chili seasoning
1 large can Hunt's whole tomatoes

1 reg. can Rotel tomatoes with chilis

2-3 cans black beans, rinsed and drained

1 t. garlic powder

1 medium onion, chopped

In a pan cook the sausage, crumbling to pieces. Add the fennel and cook til done. Add the chili seasoning, stir til the meat is coated.

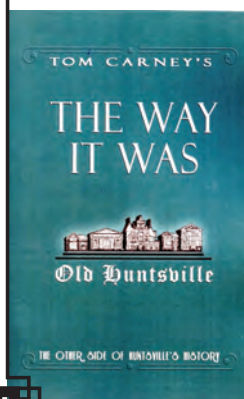
Add large can of Hunt's tomatoes, 1 can Rotel plus 1 cup of water. Add the beans and garlic powder. Cook for about an hour on low, after bringing to a boil. Add chopped onions at the last minute, so they stay crisp. Top with grated Cheddar cheese and more onions.

(You might want to try this with a few drops of Jalapeno sauce by Tabasco - really adds bite! Just use a few drops per bowl.)

Also good with a little sour cream or shredded Cheddar cheese on top.

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

BY TOM CARNEY



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HUNTSVILLE HISTORY THROUGHOUT THE YEARS



Huntsville celebrated its 150th birthday in 1955. Most of the men grew beards but for the unlucky few who didn't there were kangaroo courts that would often sentence people to be placed in the stocks on the Courthouse Square for all to see.

That same year the Parkway opened, the Dwarf Restaurant began business and the Arsenal had 6,500 civilian employees.

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