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February 2023

Old Huntsville

HISTORY AND STORIES OF THE TENNESSEE VALLEY

Love and a Clock

If this clock could talk, what a story it could tell. It was in my grandparent's house for most of their married life and remained with my grandmother after my grandfather died to the end of her life.

In a period of 60 years, there were only a very few days that she did not hear the clock strike. She sometimes heard it all night during World War II and Korea when her sons were at places like Normandy, St. Lo, the Ardennes, Inchon and Kunri.

All seven of her boys learned how to tell time on the clock, and I heard them all say that they were given medicine by the clock's chiming.

Also in this issue: Bon Air Restaurant; What Children Love; Wooden Valentine; Remembering Ma Maw Hillis; Names from the Past at the Huntsville Times; On Being a Good Dog; Valentine Love for Pets, Recipes and much much more!

Snapshots in Time -
Menu from Zesto's in Five Points, 1964

Submitted by John Richard. "When I started going to Zesto's in the early fifties, items were a little cheaper. I remember milk shakes were 15 cents. Houston Goodson was the proprietor (now it is the 1892 Restaurant)"

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TUNA FISH — Lettuce, Tomato	30¢
PIMENTO CHEESE — 4 For $1.00	30¢
GRILLED CHEESE	25¢
EGG SANDWICH	25¢
ZESTOBURGER (ON STICK)	15¢
FISH SANDWICHES	29¢

BREAKFAST

ONE EGG — Toast, Jelly	30¢
ONE EGG — with Bacon, Ham or Sausage	45¢
TWO EGGS — with Bacon, Ham or Sausage	55¢
ONE HALF GRAPEFRUIT	20¢
ORANGE JUICE	20¢
TOMATO JUICE	20¢

SIDE ORDERS AND TO GO ITEMS

FRENCH FRIES	15—25¢
ONION RINGS	20—35¢
LETTUCE, TOMATO SALAD	20¢
COLE SLAW — ½ PINT	25¢
POTATO SALAD — ½ PINT	25¢

Love and a Clock

by Austin Miller,
originally published in OHM Mar 2012

Around 1900, my grandmother paid $2 for a second-hand New Salem eight-day clock as a gift for her mother. For a number of years the clock resided at my great grandparent's house at 1602 Toll Gate Road. The house is no longer in the family but it still stands.

For more than a century the clock has faithfully struck once for each hour on the hour and once on the half hour. The base is about eighteen inches across; above the base, a glass door about a foot tall and six inches wide covers the mechanical works. Above the door it has a white round face about six inches in diameter. The face and hands sit under a carved wood crown that circularly flares out seven or eight inches above the face like an old-fashioned bonnet top.

The base, the glass door, face and crown all give the clock a height of about two and a half feet. The wood on both sides of the glass door has hand carved flowers; a long stem of roses is carved on each side of the crown. The glass door is covered by a design made of gold showing a picket fence at the bottom and two large vases, to scale, on each side of the fence.

The vases contain flowers that obstruct a view of the clock's works but not the swing of the pendulum. It has three keys; one for the clock, one for the strike and one for the alarm. I have never heard the alarm.

On a cold, clear January day in 1910, my grandparent's house burned to the ground. According to the stories handed down, my grandfather (Papa) got up early that morning and walked to town. Huntsville was less than two miles away. To make the trip from where they lived, you took McClung, past Maple Hill Cemetery, across California Street, up Echols for about a quarter of a mile and then down the hill to the Square.

It was said that my Great Uncle Curt Miller might have accidentally started the fire because he liked to smoke a pipe in bed; this was never confirmed and they really never knew for sure what started it. In those days a lot of old houses burned during cold weather because people heating with wood or coal had to stoke much hotter fires to keep warm. This was true even in the fifties; on cold winter days it was not uncommon to see, from our yard at Ryland, a high column of black smoke

"If you think your boss is stupid, remember that you wouldn't have a job if he was any smarter."

John Gotti

Old Huntsville
History And Stories of the Tennessee Valley

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in the distance.

The smoke cloud from an old frame house burning was distinctive and you knew it was a house even if it was several miles away. My grandmother noticed the smoke when she was outside doing morning chores; when she saw the fire it was already well under way and she had to run in quickly to rescue Uncle Robert who was three months old. There was no time to save any of their belongings.

She was burned in the rescue and told me when she was in her seventies that she still had burn scars on her body. She also told me that there was an old black woman in the yard praying that the barn and livestock would be spared.

Papa said he was walking back from town when he met a man who told him his house had burned to the ground. I asked him how he felt when he heard the news and he said, "Not good, because everything I ever owned was gone."

My grandmother lost all the furnishings she had bought with money earned as a teenage girl and a young woman working at Dallas Mill. One of the things lost in the fire was a much nicer and more expensive clock than the one she had given her mother. What appeared to be the best clock was not destined to become the family heirloom.

I was amazed when my brother Berns found a 1910 newspaper story about the fire in the Huntsville Mercury, the name of the town paper at that time. The article described the location as a house "on the little mountain east of town." Our family always referred to it as the Spragins' place, Mr. R. L. Spragins, the landowner and President of the First National Bank in Huntsville, built them a new house at the same spot.

The bank was in the old bank building located on the southwest side of the Square above the Big Spring. Until recently it housed Regions Bank and is one of the oldest, if not the oldest, building in Huntsville.

Mr. Spragins' home was on Echols Hill where the city's wealthiest people lived. My Uncle Gib talked about going to the house (still a residence) with my grandmother to work in the garden. Evidently, he made quite an impression because a rich lady without children who lived near Mr. Spragins seriously tried to buy him. I asked him once if he ever wondered what it would have been like to grow up in a family of wealth and privilege. He said there was no amount of wealth or privilege that he would prefer over the family he was born into.

The new house was a very nice, spacious frame house that stood for many years. When my grandmother took me there in my early teens, the house was vacant but in good repair, a long concrete vat that Papa used to dip cattle was also still standing.

The house was also where my father and several of my

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uncles were born. Uncle Robert and his older sister Lucy, who died as a child, were born in the old house that burned.

Where the house once stood is now the site of the Mountain View Baptist Church.

In the year 1907, when Teddy Roosevelt was President, my grandparents started their married life at this location. They farmed the land that is now Fagan Springs subdivision. My grandfather raised cotton and corn along Fagan creek; hay in the higher elevations and tended a sizeable herd of Black Angus cattle. The farm had two large barns for storing corn and hay, stalls for the mules and horses as well as space to park farm equipment. One of the barns was close to the house and the other was some distance away.

I remember when I went to Mountain View Church in 2008 to put out campaign signs for my friend Fran Hamilton. While I was on the church grounds, I couldn't help but think about what it must have been like at that location almost a hundred years ago when my grandparents were young and my father and uncles as children ran and played freely in the yard. In the still of the early November evening it was almost like I could feel their presence. The feeling was so strong that I lingered for a while after my work was finished.

Fagan Creek, then, as now, runs out of the mountains through the hollow. When the family lived there, an eerie phenomenon was often seen from the house. During big rains, water converging from the slopes turned the creek into a raging torrent making it impossible to cross until the water subsided. On rainy nights, when the creek was up, a strange light that looked like someone walking side by side with two lanterns would come through the hollow, cross the raging creek, move up the creek and disappear into the mountain.

Despite numerous attempts to investigate, the source of the light was never determined and remains a family mystery until this day. When I think about the clock, my grandmother always comes to mind. She bought it with hard-earned money and it was part of her daily life for more than sixty years.

One day I was complaining to her about how hard my life was as I was going to school full time and having to work almost forty hours a week at the old downtown A & P store. She told me that I didn't know what hard times were; at that time I didn't appreciate what she was saying but as I grew older I realized that she was right.

Anna McCay Miller was born September 18, 1886. She had eight children. The first, a girl named Lucy, died as a baby and is buried in Maple Hill cemetery. Before her burial they bought six lots situated in a prime location in the oldest part of the cemetery. Considering that one lot in Maple Hill, if available, now sells for over $1800, I have often wondered what they paid for the six in 1909. For sure it was far less than $1800 per plot.

After Lucy and Uncle Robert, she had six more children, all boys. The second son was my father, Joseph Houston Miller.

Anna didn't go to school because she had to help take care of her younger brothers. In 1900 at age 14 (before child labor laws) she went to work at Dallas Mill. Her work hours were from 6 A.M. to 6 P.M. six days a week. In addition to the hard work, she had to walk about two miles both ways to the Mill from her home at 1602 Toll Gate Road. The walk, added to her shift, totaled a fourteen-hour day.

Imagine a teenage girl

"Real frustration is trying to find your glasses without your glasses."

Sam Keith, Huntsville

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making this walk in the winter six days a week. In winter it was dark for her morning and night walks and sometimes it would be snowing, raining or freezing cold.

Before her family moved to Toll Gate Road, they lived on Monte Sano Mountain at what is now Monte Sano State Park. They got water out of a spring that still falls down the cliff next to the overlook on the south end of the park.

She told about sitting on a quilt while they lived there tending her younger siblings when a big rattlesnake appeared. Although she was little more than school age, she killed the big rattler with rocks and a stick. Her Daddy (Archie McCay) worked for the Monte Sano Hotel, a resort for the wealthy.

After they moved off the mountain they ran the Toll Gate on what is now Toll Gate Road. The Toll Gate was located a short distance to the east of where Wells Avenue intersects Toll Gate Road. There is a picture of the Toll Gate house in a book titled, "Historic Photo's of Huntsville." There is a photo of a young woman on the porch of the house, it is almost certain that the lady is either my grandmother or my great aunt Lucy.

She worked at the Mill for seven years until she married at the age of 21 in 1907. All the prime years of her youth were taken in exchange for long hard days and very low wages. When she married my grandfather, who was fourteen years older, she could not read or write. She taught herself using the books her children used as they moved through the grades at school.

She was eventually able to read and write at a college level and assist high school students with their homework. From self-taught experience gained from doctoring her own family, she became the community nurse and was often called on day and night, often in the middle of the night, to help neighbors who were sick.

She must have been good because a prominent Huntsville doctor from Ryland, Dr. Frank Jordan, asked her to work for him as his nurse despite the fact she had no formal training or classroom education. I believe that if she had grown up two generations later, she would have become a doctor.

One of the furnishings for the new house was the second-hand $2 New Salem eight-day clock. Her mother gave it back after the fire. If this clock could talk, what a story it could tell. It was in my grandparent's house for the rest of their married life and remained with my grandmother after my grandfather died to the end of her life.

In a period of 60 years, there were only a very few days that she did not hear the clock strike. She sometimes heard it all night during World War II and Korea when her sons were at places like Normandy, St. Lo, the Ardennes, Inchon and Kunri. All seven of her boys learned how to tell time on the clock, and I heard them all say that they were given medicine by the clock's chiming. I too am connected to the clock; we lived with my grandparents the first two years of my life. I don't remember hearing the clock strike during my early years but there is no doubt that it is embedded in my subconscious. Even now, when I hear it strike, it stirs my soul.

"One way to find out if you are old is to fall down in a group of people. If they laugh, you're still young. If they panic and start running to you, you're old."

Jed Davis, Madison

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The family lived at the Spragins' place for about thirteen years. Mr. Spragins was a fair, generous and honest man as well as a mover and shaker in the city. There is a Spragins Street in downtown Huntsville.

The years in Fagan Hollow were the most prosperous time of my grandparent's life. But the work got to be too much and they had to move, this was circa 1920. I think this move was hardest on my grandmother. She had to leave one of the best houses in the county and move to a dilapidated shack in Ryland.

During the remainder of their lives they moved six or seven times to tenant houses that weren't fit to live in and suffer landlords, many of whom were not as kind, fair and generous as Mr. Spragins. But wherever they lived, the clock was always there. It was a part of the aura of their lives and, like them, it was as reliable as the rising and setting of the sun.

Today the clock still keeps good time and strikes with unerring precision. The works of the clock are tarnished to the color of rust but they are strong and sturdy. When you look inside, you believe it will run faithfully for another century.

This clock is much more than an heirloom; it is a symbol of the Miller family. It has all the traits attributable to Mose and Anna Miller and their descendants.

Like the clock, we are sturdy and reliable. We can be counted on to live up to our responsibilities and do what is right. We are an unassuming, humble people but there is no other family who has served their country with more bravery or honor. We may be quiet and easygoing in our daily lives, but we have deep loyalties and are quick to take issue on important things.

We are not prominent in business or government and we are not leaders in our communities, but we are the salt of the earth. I think we are God's people.

The clock is about all of material value that Mose and Anna Miller left their seven sons. I expect even it has very little intrinsic value. The real value is in the symbol and what it represents.

It intrigues me to know that Daddy and my uncles routinely heard this clock strike as babies and children. You can't look at the clock or hear it strike without feeling a connection to the family and the past. This to me makes it a great treasure far beyond material value.

A few years ago my then three surviving Miller uncles agreed to pass the clock down to my nephew, Nathan Lee Miller. Nathan is now keeper of the clock and in my opinion, a very good choice.

If Barbie were life-size, her measurements would be 39-23-33. She would stand seven feet, two inches tall. Her full name is Barbara Millicent Roberts.

I'm knitting you a muffler - what size is your mouth?

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Childhood Memories

by Sonya Teague

Growing up, I lived next door to my paternal grandparents. There are a lot of pros and cons living next door to your relatives. Well, one con would be the fact that you could never have a party or get together without inviting them. A pro would be you would always have a baby sitter, unless of course, they had gone out themselves. Then you were out of luck. I can remember my (next door neighbor) Grandmother crashing many a party or get together.

My (next door neighbor) Grandmother once told me when I was born, my Grandparents looked so young, the doctors thought they were the parents instead of the Grandparents. My parents were young, when they started a family. My other out of town Grandparents were older. I can remember my Mother telling me her two older sisters were married by the time she was born.

My youngest sister was basically an only child. My oldest sister and I were 12 and 14 when she was born. We were already performing housekeeping duties, now we could add baby sitting duties to that list. My Father wouldn't allow us to mow the lawn, he said it was too dangerous as we had a very large front and back lawn.

At one childhood home, we could walk to church, the neighborhood store and a cafe. At my other childhood home, this one also had a large front and back lawn, we could walk to a neighborhood store and the school. We always had friends we could go and visit within walking or a short driving distance.

On the weekends, I would spend the night at my cousin's house, hang out at the skating rink, or baby sit my little sister. Guess which was my least favorite thing to do? Usually, we would go to Hatfield Roller Rink in Athens, or the Rainbow or the Carousel in Huntsville. Sometimes, we'd go to the Mall. J. C. Penney was the anchor store. My cousin and I would spend our Christmas, birthday, or chore money. There was a beautiful water fountain with red tiles all around the edge, Madison Square had one at that time also.

Some of the stores at The Mall were a Hornbuckle Record Store, a Hickory Farm Store, and a men's store called Bill's, I think. There were others, a Thom McAnn shoe store, a Walgreen's, a lounge was also located there. Calhoun had an extension office there, a nightclub was in one of the rental spaces. My favorite place was the Chick Fil-A, It was a sad day for me when they moved to Madison Square Mall.

I can remember my parents taking my oldest sister and me to Pizitz to see Santa. They had a Montgomery Ward's store and a movie theater located here, too. My favorite thing was a huge slide beside the mall. We would slide down on burlap sacks. It was worth climbing all those steps to get to slide down. This mall was located where Parkway Place is now located.

Years ago, there was a Woolco, and later on a Hill's Store - where Hibbett's is located at Hwy. 72 and Sparkman Drive. These were pre-Walmart days, there were five and dime stores everywhere then. It wasn't a one-stop shopping trip like it is now. You actually had to drive and get out of your vehicle, to shop, at different stores. I can remember Warehouse Grocery where you had to package your own groceries. We're accustomed to curb service and drive thrus. Oh, the good old days - where did they go?

I can remember my Grandparents taking me to Zesto's in Five Points. The dip dogs and hamburgers were legendary.

Who can forget Big Springs Cafe, sitting on a stool, ordering a hamburger and drinking a Coke out of a bottle? I can remember going to Bandito Burrito, sliding in a booth, and ordering a burrito. My Grandfather loved the old Taco Bell. He liked the tacos and whole jalapenos. We parked under the trees and ate our food.

Before there were Sonic's, we had a drive-in with skating waitresses at Shoney's. We could drive up and order our Big Boy and sit in our car. I also miss Terry's Pizza and sitting in the dark, smoky room, listening to the TV, or the music coming from the old jukebox. The pizza was always thin and greasy, just the way I liked it. The same waitress waited on us, every-time we'd stop in. She was so friendly, you really felt as if family were waiting on you. I remember Big Ed's pizza, it was

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around forever, loved their pizzas with that delicious ham.

I can remember going to Eunice's for breakfast and just feeling like I had stepped into someone 's kitchen at home. You could smell the coffee, the eggs, ham and of course the gravy and biscuits.

There were pictures of famous people adorning the walls. Older ladies rushing around to fill your coffee cup. Where are we suppose to go for breakfast now?

Oh, the good old days, where did they go?

Here are a couple of my favorite recipes, I hope you like them!

Upside Down Apple Cake

21 oz. can apple pie filling
1 stick butter, melted
1 box white or yellow cake mix
1 cup chopped pecans

Pre-heat oven to 375 degrees. Spread apple pie filling in bottom of 8 inch square baking pan sprayed with non-stick cooking spray. Sprinkle dry cake mix over filling. Pour melted butter over cake mix.

Sprinkle nuts over butter. Bake for 45 minutes until golden brown. Easy and so good!

Cheesecake Fruit Crescents

2 cans crescent rolls dough
2 8 oz. pkg. cream cheese
3/4 cup sugar
1 egg yolk
1 tsp. vanilla
2 cans of peaches (15.25oz.)

Spray 9x13 pan with non-stick cooking spray. Pre-heat oven to 350 degrees. Spread 1 can of crescent roll dough in bottom of pan. Mix cream cheese and sugar, add egg yolk and vanilla, mix well.

Spread this cream cheese mixture over dough in bottom of pan. Open cans of peaches, pour onto mixture. Layer remaining can of crescent roll dough on top of peaches. Bake at 350 for 30 minutes.

Good-Bye, Claudia

by Cathey Carney

Claudia was a little ray of sunshine whom Old Town neighbors and school kids would see on a daily basis. She was a very small adult cat. She was outside most of the time and had a home she would go to for food.

She loved making the trip from her home across the street to Providence Classical School to greet the students and teachers there. She would lay on her back and get belly rubs from the youngest students.

Today someone driving on Clinton Avenue, at the intersection of White Street, hit her and chose not to stop. People drove by for some time before her family was notified and came to get her. She didn't make it.

She was just a little cat, and some would say, who cares? But a lot of us who saw her on a daily basis care, and we are heartbroken. We will miss that little personality, and we know the kids at Providence will too.

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Middle-Age is Unhappiest Time of Marriage

by Dorothy Dix

from July 19, 1937 Nashville Banner

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www.nashvilleretrospect.com

Speaking by and large, and of humanity in general, middle age is not only the most dangerous, but the most unhappy period of life. It is the age of indiscretion for men and of phobias and neurosis for women.

We all know more than one man who after being a devoted husband and father without rhyme or reason kicks over the traces and runs wild among women until he lands in the divorce court. And as for the women who are hale and hearty and cheerful until they are middle-aged and then develop mysterious complaints that turn them into melancholy wrecks, their name is legion. They crowd doctors' offices and fill sanatoriums and enrich high-priced specialists.

Of course, many explanations can be offered for this curious metamorphosis in their personalities that takes place at middle age in so many people. One is that it is the last flare-up of youth. Something happens that jars them into the realization that they are no longer young, that they are middle-aged. It throws them into a panic. It makes them feel that they must have a last fling.

Up to the time they are middle-aged the average married couple have been too busy trying to make a fortune and rear a family to think about anything but the store and the house. Then suddenly it is all over. The children are married and gone about the business of life for themselves. The husband and wife are alone together as they were when they started out. Only there is this difference—that then they were lovers and now, in the great majority of cases, they are strangers.

The man has been too much absorbed in his business to keep in touch with his wife. The woman has been too much absorbed in her children to keep step with her husband. That is why so many men at middle age become philanderers and why so many women at middle age are peevish, fretful, morbid and make a cult of semi-invalidism.

The moral of all this is: In youth prepare for middle age. Cultivate some hobby. And keep friends with your husbands and wives. They are the ones on whom you will have to depend on for companionship when your children are gone.

(Tennessee State Library and Archives)

A man in Scottsboro has been married so many times, his last marriage license was made out:

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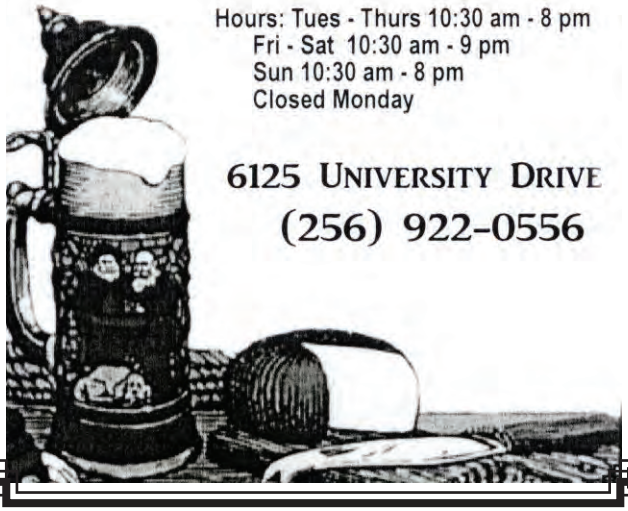

My Valentine

by Bill Wright

It was the 1950s and I was in my early twenties. I was single with a nice job and owned a new automobile. Also, I had recently completed my obligation to the U.S. Army. I had dated several nice young ladies, but there never was any marital interest with any of them.

Then it happened! I attended a party where I noticed across the room a very pretty young lady. She appeared to be in her early twenties. I had never seen her before, therefore I knew nothing about her.

As I watched her, suddenly I had a premonition I was looking at my future wife. I never met her that night, but I kept thinking about her.

Two months later we would meet. Both of us would serve in a wedding for mutual friends. She was a bridesmaid, and I was a groomsman. I had the honor of escorting her down the aisle during the wedding. I became impressed with her pleasant personality. I already was impressed with her good looks.

We began dating after the wedding and attended movies, athletic events, beach outings and dances. We dated for one and a half years. On September 14, 1957, in the presence of family members and friends, we exchanged marital vows. The premonition was correct, she would be my wife.

After we married, she would work for two years as a secretary to help with expenses as I completed college. In later years we would have one daughter, two sons, nine grandchildren and three great-grandchildren. We have lived in five cities since we married: finally settling in Huntsville in 1966.

Today, she resides in an Assisted Living Facility. I visit with her almost every afternoon. I take her to the lunchroom where we have coffee and later ice cream. She enjoys the updates about family members, particularly the grandchildren who have varied interests and jobs; from college students, nurses, teacher/coach, and pitcher for the Atlanta Braves.

Each time I visit her I still see the same charm and beauty I first saw so many years ago. She is my Valentine!

"Friendships must be built on a solid foundation of alcohol, sarcasm, inappropriateness and shenanigans."

Billy Gray, Woodville

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Well, I'm sure everyone except me has taken their Christmas decorations down and carefully put them away. It seems like I just got them out. Now it's time to put the magical soldier nutcrackers away. They seem to smile down from the mantel, ready to get a special place in the packing box until next year. I'm glad they can't talk, or I might cry at what they would say, like, "I remember when your daughter gave you to me for Christmas one year." Another might say, "I remember when your son had an asthma attack on Christmas Eve," or one might say, "How could you forget to put the turkey in the oven with twenty-plus people coming to dinner?" Well, I'm smiling as I pack all twelve once more and pray for the chance to put them all on the mantel again in December 2023.

Everyone knows what February 14 is, and it started as a religious celebration. Valentine comes from the Latin meaning "strong, vigorous, and powerful."

Every year during February, centered on the fourteenth, people exchange cards, candy, jewelry and other sentiments of love. The Bible says that "God is love." Valentine's Day has a promise of affection. Greeting card manufacturers sell approximately one billion cards annually and 3.5 billion tons of candy. Americans spend $18 billion on other gifts and celebrate love and friendship with the exchanges.

At the end of the 5th century, Pope Gelasius declared February 14 St. Valentine's Day, and since then, it's been a day of celebration, more religious in meaning.

The English poet Geoffrey Chaucer was the first to record St. Valentine's Day as a romantic celebration in his 1375 poem, “Parliament of Foules” (Assembly of fowls).

In the U.S., exchanging Valentines is thought to have started in the 1700s, but in 1840 the tradition really took off with Massachusetts-based artist Esther Howard.

After reading all the reasons to celebrate Valentine's Day, my advice to my grown sons is, "You better get those flowers, cards and candy bought and plan to take your sweetheart out to dinner, or you might find yourself in the doghouse."

When I had a home day care business, my helper and I used to assist our children to make Valentines for their parents. I took a photo of the child and let them glue it into a red heart they'd colored and cut out—such a lovely keepsake for everyone.

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The Monkey

by Iolanda Hicks

About sixteen or seventeen years ago, I was living with my son and family. At that time I had two young grandsons, a third not yet born. I had reason to run to the Tractor Supply one afternoon, to purchase something that we needed at the house. Most likely it was some type of grain that fed some of the critters my son raised at the house. Anyway, my first born grandson, who was around five or so at the time, wanted to go with me. I said okay and off we went.

I can remember waiting in line after shopping and watching my grandson fiddle with those little animal figures, so strategically displayed by the registers. They were not sold at Dollar Tree prices by any means and I think, made by a company by the name of Schleich. My grandson turns to me, just as I get to the register and holds up this little monkey.

"Grandmom can you buy me this monkey?" I looked at him, knowing what money I had brought with me and said "No sweetie not today."

I felt bad to say "no" but I had brought only cash to get the grain. By the time we got back to the house, it was getting dark. I had gone to my room to straighten up and I heard some loud voices coming from another room. I walked towards the voices and it was my grandson's mom, in a raised voice, giving her son a sound questioning! All I heard was "And you are telling me that Grandmom bought this for you?" Uh oh..I was then spotted by "Mom".

"Grandmaw, (as she always called me) did you buy this for him?" I looked at what she was holding up and there it was, The Monkey. I could have lied and said yes, to save my grandson but I couldn't do that to him. It would have been so wrong. I looked at her and my little grandson (scared as he was) and said "No, he wanted me to buy it but I told him no, not today." She looked at me and said that he was to take it back to the store today. "He is to hand it back to whoever is in charge and tell what he has done. Then he is to apologize for stealing that monkey!" I told her I would take him back and that's what I did.

Oh, the look on my grandson's face as he handed that Monkey back to the store manager, telling him what he had done and saying he was sorry. It made me proud but broke my heart! Hopefully he learned a valuable lesson that day. A few days later, after some thought, I went back to Tractor Supply and bought that little monkey. I went home and found my grandson and called him to my side.

"Sweetie, I bought you that Monkey that you took the other day and had to give back. It is not a present, but it is yours to put out on your dresser or somewhere in your bedroom where you can see it everyday. It is a reminder, to never steal or take something that is not yours. I love you so much and want you to grow up to be a good and honest young man. I hope this little monkey will help you remember that."

The Monkey remained on my grandson's dresser in broad daylight for years until it was lost, but the time it rested on that dresser, I feel, was well-spent.

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The Bon Air Restaurant

by Libby Sanders

On Meridian Street sat an old cafe, The Bon Air. At one time it was a motel and was a convenient stopover for travelers on their way to Florida, In the early seventies it was a favorite place for my former husband and I and our two sons to have breakfast on Saturday mornings. This was a beloved ritual rivaled only by doughnuts on Sunday, at Mr. Donut, before church. We were later blessed with a daughter who missed all the good stuff, or so she says.

The waitresses were like family and everyone knew everyone else. You had a preferred seat, a special waitress and she knew to bring two coffees and two chocolate milks. The food was good, especially the gravy and biscuits, and the company was nearly always the same.

One lovely lady was still waiting tables at 80 years of age, and loved everything about Princess Diana. When it was announced that a royal baby was on the way, she crocheted an entire sweater set; a cap, sweater, and booties, and mailed them to the soon-to-be mother, She was delighted when she received a signed thank you note. I, for one, will never forget it. She whipped that letter out every time she saw you and you had to read it again. It was finally framed to protect it, mostly from her loving hands.

Another waitress lived near Butler High School, and she walked to work. It was not a short stroll. Anyone who knew her made sure to pick her up when they saw her but most times she had to walk, winter and summer alike. Then she walked home again after her shift. I never once heard her complain about being tired. She had a family to provide for.

I have heard a story, and I don't know if it's true or not. Wernher von Braun and some of his rocket team were eating in the Bon Air and speaking with, of course, a German accent. An elderly couple sitting at the next booth, on their way to Florida, overheard their conversation. The lady said to her husband, "I just love that southern accent!"

That's our town and that was the Bon Air, you never knew who might come in. Lunch and supper were good home cooking and my favorite part was the yeast rolls. Light fluffy and melt in your mouth. A couple of days a week the left over rolls were used as a basis for the most delicious desert ever. Chocolate bread pudding, the meal was great, but the whole point was the desert. You came on the right day, no matter what was on the menu, for the Bread PUDDING. I would love to have a bowl right now. It would bring back memories, sure. But the taste! That's the thing, it was like no other and I've never had anything like it since.

From the huge old painting on the wall, to the cracked and comfortable old booths - it was homey and warm and friendly and irreplaceable.

If anyone knows how to make their bread pudding, I would love the recipe.

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A Short History of Old Huntsville Magazine

by Cathey Carney

When I first met Tom Carney at the Kaffeeklatsch bar in Huntsville, AL it never occurred to me that we would be getting married and starting a magazine together. When he first came in to the crowded bar on a Friday evening with lots of people talking and laughing, I was there with friends and thought, "Who is that tall lanky guy who is entertaining everyone?" He was the life of the party for sure.

I was not really smitten right away. Tom came up to our table and it was very obvious he wanted to talk with me. Since there were so many people there I was talking with others and drinking and not paying a lot of attention to him. Every time I looked at him he was staring at me. So he pulls a pack of playing cards out of his pocket and starts doing these amazing card tricks, with me as the one choosing cards. He was incredible and that led to him sitting with us and telling us such funny stories about his life in general. He was just smart and funny and the more I ignored him, the more he tried to get my attention.

The 3rd time I saw him at the Klatsch he asked me to walk down to the Big Spring Park with him, and I did. As we were sitting on the bench looking at the geese & ducks, he said "In a year we'll be married." At this time I had been single for years and had no desire at all to be married, so I was amused but told him that wouldn't be happening.

In one year to the date we traveled to Edinburgh, Scotland with my 20 year old daughter Steph, and were married by a young female judge in the oldest library in the city. We were staying in an old Bed and Breakfast and in the afternoon they held "High Tea" for us with all the staff of the B&B. That night we went to a large Casino where Steph had arranged for a huge cake for us and a celebration.

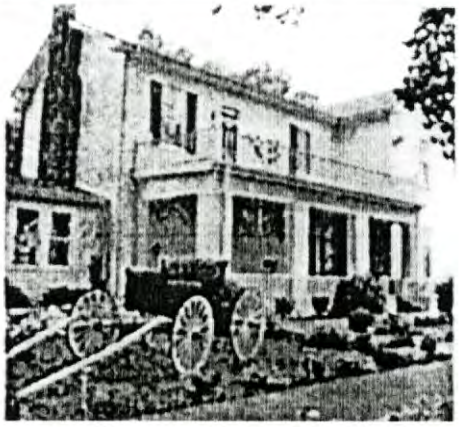
When we returned to Huntsville and started our married life in Old Town, we talked about starting a little neighborhood newsletter. Tom had always wanted to write but never thought he could. We talked about what would be in the little magazine - ghost stories, local historic events here, old buildings, recipes. What? Recipes? Tom said "NO WAY - RECIPES will NOT be in our little newsletter." Well, I stuck to my guns and recipes have been in each and every issue. The first issue was published in 1989 as a little 12 page magazine. Black and white ink on plain newsprint, to keep costs down.

The paper grew, in 1992 as retired members of the Golden K Kiwanis Huntsville club reached out to us and offered to do the distribution as their fundraiser and keep all the money collected from the honor boxes and machines. They needed a fundraiser and we needed the help. The partnership lasted from 1992 to 2020 and the Golden K collected over $700,000 - all to be donated to local children's charities and agencies such as the Downtown Rescue Mission. During this time Tom wrote story after story, and hoped that readers would like them. He had never learned to type, so all stories were typed with 2 index fingers.

In April 2011 Tom was diagnosed with lung cancer, the kind that couldn't be operated on. 2 months after that diagnosis, he passed away at the age of 65. I never thought I'd lose him after just 23 years of marriage, but was so lucky to have been his wife. I have kept the magazine going, still using all of Tom's stories, because in the end, he never thought he was a good writer. He would work every day to try to get better and better, and his stories are the best. He always said that if you write a story and the reader feels an emotion, you've done your job.

So that's a short history of the magazine. There are just a few of us who keep it going now, and we feel that most people would rather read uplifting news and interesting stories than the sad events we see today. We are so lucky to have everyday people who send in their memories (one page max) for us to publish and keep the content fresh. Thank you!

And we need more memories from you our readers - because once our older families are gone, so are their stories. While you have your older relatives with you, get their stories - one day you will be happy you did!



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Timeless Kitchen Tips

- When planning your meal, presentation is very important. Visualize how the food will look on the plate - try for contrasting colors and textures. Certain edible flowers can enhance any meal.

- Save all kinds of leftover bread - bagels, rolls, biscuits, crackers - and grind them to very fine crumbs in your processor or blender. Freeze in freezer bags and use for stuffings and toppings. Add a touch of garlic powder or onion powder to spice it up.

- Stop a runny nose by adding 3-4 drops of Tabasco sauce to a glass of water and drinking it all down.

- Want to control that sweet tooth? Dissolve 1 teaspoon of baking soda in a glass of warm water and rinse out your mouth. Spit out the water, don't swallow. The explanation of this has to do with the stimulation of the hypothalamus, arousing the papillae, releasing saliva and along with it, the sweets craving. In minutes, you will be able to control that craving.

- If you are wearing your favorite perfume and want to smell it all day, put just a dab under your nose before you leave for work.

- Peeled garlic cloves submerged in olive oil can be safely stored in the fridge and used for quite some time.

- If you change the water every three to four days, asparagus will keep fresh for as long as two weeks.

- Keep four or five different kinds of nuts in your freezer for drop-in guests. "Jump-fry" them in a hissing-hot nonstick skillet with a touch of butter, sea, salt and ground hot red pepper.

- The fastest way to crush berries for a crisp or pie is with a potato masher.

- Out of eggs? In most recipes you can substitute a quarter cup of mayonnaise for each egg.

- For the best tasting oatmeal cookies, toast your oats first.

- Try doubling the vanilla extract in your next recipe - watch the compliments pour in for your favorite desserts.

- A filling snack is made by cutting up a banana, adding a couple tablespoons of honey with a sprinkling of salted roasted peanuts. We think Elvis would approve!

- If you like scrambled eggs, try adding some chopped carmelized onions, a bit of garlic powder and a sprinkling of shredded sharp Cheddar cheese.

- When you wash a load of dishes in your dishwasher, throw in your dish pads/rags to get them super clean.

- Is your kitchen drain starting to smell like old food? Pour in half a cup of baking soda and pour in a little white vinegar, smells are gone.

- Practice doing everyday tasks with your left hand, if you're right-handed. That way if one day you hurt your dominant hand and can't use it, you'll be ready to use the other hand.

It seldom occurs to teenagers that they will grow up and know as little as their parents one day.

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Heard On the Street

by ***Cathey Carney***

Joseph Bramlett of Somerville, Al was our first correct caller to identify the location of the tiny hidden heart locket. I put it on p. 28, in the Gibson's ad, lower left. Very difficult to find - see it now? Joseph told me he was the first baby born in Decatur Hospital in 1982 at 12:02am! And he just had a birthday so Happy Birthday and congratulations!

Then **Mary Beth Johnsen** of Huntsville was the first to call and identify the baby of the month - it was a little **Charlie Lyle** who headed up Charlie Lyle band many years ago and performed during the Big Band era. Mary Beth remembered Charlie at New Hope High School when he was their band leader. He was loved by all the students and teachers alike. Congratulations to you Mary Beth!

Liz Hall Zeman asked a good question recently. She said, "If you had to pick 10 items that you wanted to take to a tornado shelter, items you didn't want to lose in a storm, what would they be?" Pets and children of course would be first on the list but after that, what would you treasure? It's a good question and makes you discover what you really don't want to lose! Try it.

Many newcomers to Huntsville have discovered how interesting it is to put on some good walking shoes and take walks around Twickenham, Old Town, Five Points and some of the other historic districts of our city. With the older tree roots many of the sidewalks had buckled and cracked, making walking a bit difficult and traveling in a wheelchair impossible. Recently the Public Works Dept. of Huntsville has worked very hard to fix and level those sidewalks, using the same old brick that was there originally. The finished sidewalks are excellent and makes walking now so much easier. Thank you to all the hard workers in the City of Huntsville and our City Councilman **Bill Kling** and City Administrator **John Hamilton** - we sure appreciate you and the work you all do.

Woody Anderson Ford is celebrating their 60th Anniversary! So proud of them and their high rating in customer satisfaction. We're very proud of you!

Ianthia Bridges of Truist Bank on Church Street had her 53rd birthday on Jan. 10th. Happy Birthday to you! Her cousin **Mario**, who lives in Mobile, AL will celebrate his special day on February 23rd and her sweet cousin in Orlando, FL, **Rosalind Ramsey**, will be partying on her birthday, Jan. 31st!

One item I have discovered is so useful is a head lamp. They're just small super bright flashlights that strap around your forehead and leaves your hands free to do whatever it is you're trying to find or fix. I have one stored with my battery-operated radio and other items needed in case of power outs or storms.

Austin Miller, of Ryland, was a beloved family man and a hugely talented writer who wrote many stories for Old Huntsville magazine. His story is the feature for this issue about an old clock that's been in his family for years. Austin passed away on Jan. 3. He was born on February 27, 1941 in

Photo of The Month

The first person to correctly identify the youngster below wins a one-year subscription to "Old Huntsville"

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Ryland, Alabama. After graduating from Athens State College, he volunteered for the draft and served honorably in the United States Army in Vietnam, continuing a long and proud family tradition of military service. After completing his service, he had an accomplished 30-year professional career with the United States Department of Labor in Atlanta, Georgia.

Austin was an amateur gardener — growing beautiful flowers and trees. He enjoyed working in his yard, loved military history, old westerns, and writing stories about family history. He enjoyed taking daily walks and being outside in nature. Austin was a lifelong Methodist and an active member of the Holmes Street United Methodist Church where he served in various leadership positions.

He is survived by his wife, **Gaylor Bald Miller** and his children — **Anna Miller Henson (Gary)** and **Commander Christopher Miller, Ret. USN (Alexis)**. He was known as papa to his eight grandchildren. He was preceded in death by his parents **Joe** and **Elsie,** and his **Uncle Malcolm Miller.** He is survived by brothers **Berns Miller (Brenda)** and **Gregory Miller (Ruth)** and several nieces and nephews. He definitely left his mark on this world and his stories will last always. He will be so missed.

In honor of Austin we have hidden a **tiny antique wall clock**, first to find it call me and you win a free subscription to the magazine for year! You know the drill - get out the flashlight and magnifying glass cause it will be TINY.

Lately we've heard that many **telephone scams** are on the rise and these people are pretty shrewd. They know what to say to convince you to send them money. Once they get you to answer the phone, the fast talkers make you think they are legitimate computer repair people with Microsoft, Utility people saying they'll turn off your power, Credit Union reps saying your account has been compromised. Don't believe any of it! Better yet, if it's a phone # you don't recognize, just don't answer. If it's someone important to you, they'll leave you a message. Many of us are very trusting and believe these crooks when they call, but they can be very harmful for you. Outsmart them by just not answering. And never give your financial info to anyone on the phone.

Did you know gluten-free small pretzel sticks are crisper and tastier than regular? I put a bag in a bowl, add a handful of salted peanuts and drizzle with a bit of melted white chocolate - a delicious snack that you will love. And not super sweet.

Helen Coppedge Middleton, 90, of Huntsville, passed away Jan. 11th. She was a graduate of Alabama Polytechnic Institute (now Auburn University) where she was a member of Zeta Tau Alpha and Mortar Board. In 1955, she married **Robert L. (Bob) Middleton** (who was a member of the **Golden K Kiwanis of Huntsville**). They lived in Huntsville since 1962 when Bob accepted an engineering position at NASA. Helen was active in several organizations including the Huntsville Symphony Orchestra Guild, the Huntsville Museum of Art, serving as a docent for several years, the Huntsville Pilgrimage Board, the Cosmopolitan Club, the Twickenham chapter of the DAR and her special group of friends, the Needlepoint Club. She was a member of First United Methodist Church. She was the owner of Helen Middleton Interiors and in a professional capacity was a member of the American Society of Interior Designers. Survivors include her son, **Michael R. Middleton** of Huntsville and two granddaughters, **Amanda N. Middleton** of Durham NC and **Kara S. Middleton** of Alpharetta, GA. Helen loved her family and friends completely and will not be forgotten.

Jeff Bennett of Bennett's Nursery on North Parkway tells us not to give up on some of our perennials that look dead after the very cold weather we had recently. He said to give them a chance and once early spring gets here, we'll probably see green shoots and buds. I know my Lenten roses looked really bad but now I have some green growth and they're trying to bloom!

Happy Valentine to all! Remember to check on your older neighbors especially if you don't see them out and about in a while.

"A large groundhog bit my tire as I was coming to work, causing it to go flat."

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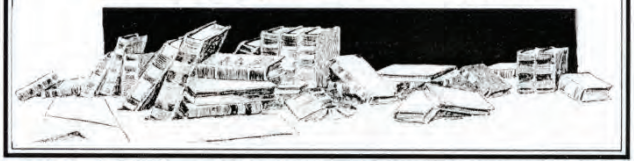

Eating Low Carb

Chicken Parisian

6 chicken breasts, boneless and skinless
3 t. paprika
Salt and Pepper
1 t. garlic powder
1/2 c. dry white wine
1 cream of mushroom soup
1 4-oz. jar mushrooms
1 c. sour cream
1/4 c. flour

Coat the chicken breasts heavily with a mixture of the paprika, garlic & salt/pepper. Place in crock pot.

Mix remaining ingredients and pour over the chicken. Sprinkle paprika on top. Cook on medium crock pot heat for about 6 hours. This is good with a big salad and leftovers are good too.

Oriental Green Beans

1 lb. fresh green beans
2 T. butter
1/2 c. soy sauce
1 t. fresh ginger, grated
1 T. sesame seeds, toasted
Salt and pepper to taste

Steam green beans til crisp tender. When cooked, place them hot in a bowl and add the remaining ingredients. Stir til all beans are coated, serve hot.

ChuckOwens' Baked Chicken

6 chicken breasts, bone in
1/2 c. melted butter
2 t. onion powder
2 t. garlic powder
Salt and pepper to taste

Wash chicken well, dry with paper towels. Mix spices in with the melted butter and coat the chicken using a basting brush. Bake in pre-heated oven at 325 degrees for an hour and skin is browned.

Zesty Cole Slaw

1 c. vegetable oil
1 T. chopped fresh cilantro
2 T. roasted sesame oil
2 T. chopped garlic
1/2 t. crushed red pepper
1 bag shredded cole slaw
Chopped cucumber
Grated carrots
Chopped red pepper

Mix first 5 ingredients well in a covered bowl - give it a few hard shakes to make sure it's mixed well. In a large bowl pour the cole slaw, then add carrots, cucumber and red pepper chopped to taste. Mix dressing into the cole slaw mix, refrigerate for an hour before serving.

Low-Carb Fudge

2 -8oz. pkg. cream cheese
2 oz. unsweetened chocolate, melted and cooled
1/2 c. Splenda sweetener
1 t. vanilla
1 t. instant coffee
1/2 c. chopped pecans or walnuts

Line an 8-inch square baking pan with waxed or parchment paper. In a small mixing bowl, beat the cream cheese, he melted and cooled chocolate, sweetener and vanilla til smooth. Stir in the nuts and pour into pan. Cover and refrigerate overnight.

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Strawberry Delight

Washed fresh strawberries
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Splenda sugar substitute
Toasted, slivered almonds

Slice strawberries into a small serving bowl. Pour in heavy cream to taste. Top with sprinkling of Splenda and toasted almonds. Blueberries are good too but the strawberries are best.

No Sugar Lemonade

Crystal Light lemonade mix
1/2 c. real lemon juice

In a 2-quart container mix the water, Crystal Light and lemon juice. Serve cold with lemon or lime slices. It's also good with some fresh mint sprigs added.

Baked Almond Custard

1/2 c. heavy cream
2 eggs
1 T. Splenda sweetener
1/2 t. almond extract
Pinch nutmeg

In a small bowl beat the eggs til light yellow in color, pour in the Splenda, extract and cream. Mix well. Sprinkle on nutmeg and place in microwave.

Cook on 50% power for about 6-7 minutes. A knife should come out clean when inserted near center of custard.

Serve chilled with sliced strawberries or cantaloupe on the side if desired.

Jello-Nut Bon-Bons

2 c. heavy cream
2 small pkg. sugar-free Jello powder, any flavor
Chopped toasted almonds

Combine all ingredients with electric mixer on low speed til blended. Beat til stiff.

Drop in tablespoon-sized mounds on wax paper covered cookie sheet.

Freeze til firm. Store lightly covered in the freezer.

Mashed Cauliflower

1 head cauliflower, cooked
1/2 stick butter
4 oz. cream cheese
Garlic powder
Salt & pepper

Mix hot cauliflower with the butter, cream cheese & spices, til of a mashed consistency. This has a really good taste and you can use it in place of carb-filled mashed potatoes. A healthy choice with more fiber!

Oriental Chicken Crunch

1/2 c. chicken broth
2 cans cream of mushroom soup
3 c. cooked chicken, chopped
1/2 c. onion, chopped
1 c. celery, chopped
1 c. water chestnuts, sliced
1 c. Chinese noodles
1/2 c. slivered almonds, toasted

Combine all ingredients except almonds and pour into large baking dish. Bake in oven preheated to 350 degrees for 40 minutes, remove from oven and sprinkle top with almonds.

Hungarian Goulash

2 lbs. stew meat, lean
1 c. chopped onion
2 cloves garlic, minced
2 T. flour
Salt & pepper to taste
1 T. paprika
1 t. dried thyme
1 large can tomatoes
1 bay leaf
1 c. sour cream

This is a good crock pot meal, or you can place all ingredients in a large stew pot. Add all ingredients in this order: Meat, onions and garlic. Stir in flour and mix to coat the meat cubes.

Add the spices and tomatoes, cover tightly and cook very slowly for 6-8 hours, (this is why a crock pot works so well).

Mix in the sour cream 30 minutes before serving. Try this over wide noodles for a real treat.

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Wooden Heart Valentine

by M. D. Smith, IV

It was January 1976 and I spent a lot of time in my new basement woodworking shop at our house on Fairmont Road. We'd moved there in 1971 and I built a proper shop in part of the storage room. My four sons were 13, 11, 8 and 2 years old, and I'd previously made some toy wooden cars and trains for them over the years. So I let the younger ones 'help" by gluing some popsicle sticks together on a spare chunk of wood to make a creation of their own. With Valentine's Day coming up, I had in mind a joint wood project to surprise my wife, Judy, from the kids and me. The idea delighted my boys.

Here's how we did it. First, I cut a bit of six-inch-wide, 3/4 inch thick shelf board into a square. Then I folded a six-inch piece of paper in half and cut out half a heart that, when unfolded, had a concentric heart shape. It took several times to perfect. Then, traced onto the square of wood, I cut out the wooden heart with my jig-saw. I planned to make the two arrow shafts from 1/4 inch wood dowels, so I needed to drill a hole that size in the top rounded part of one side and another on the lower opposite side of the heart.

I had a line drawn on the wood back, so I knew where the holes would be and the approximate angle to keep the arrow straight as it appeared to go through the sides. But it's hard to hold a heart-shaped piece of wood precisely straight while using a hand drill, so when I tested the dowels, there was a slight mismatch, but the holes were made and I couldn't change it.

The arrow had a wooden triangle on the lower pointed end painted silver like a metal arrow-point. The rear had a set of wooden feathers glued to the other end dowel and painted them yellow, like feathers. (Sadly, over the years and house moves, the feathers and arrowhead have broken off and vanished). The kids helped with the painting using model airplane Dope with brushes. It was quick drying and you could almost get high on the fumes.

I'd already drilled a hole in the bottom point of the heart, so with a white-painted piece of dowel mounted into a small white round base, it held the entire creation that stood about a foot tall.

Since it was from the boys and me, I planned to paint "I WUV YOU" on the face. I knew

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it'd need outlining, but these were the days before Sharpies and I couldn't paint a black outline that small. Then, coming back from a lunch break, I saw my son Scott, age 11, and the artist in our family, using a wood-burning kit he got for Christmas. It had all sorts of little flat pieces of wood with scenes printed, and you just traced it with the hot wood-burning tool, and it burned the image in place. Then I got another idea.

"Scott, do you think you can burn your name free hand on a piece of scrap wood?"

"Sure," was his answer, and he proceeded to show me. Perfect.

First, I outlined the three big words with a pencil, then traced them with the burner tool, and lastly, carefully painted blue inside the letters. The hard grain in the pine wood made it hard to draw a straight line across it, thus a slight ripple effect on the large letters, most noticeable on the "V."

It took several coats of blue to cover the red of the heart. Then it was time for the three older boys to pencil their name on the face of the heart, then carefully burn it into the wood, and the black would contrast with the red heart. At only eight years old, Brent chose a block print for his name. The older boys used script.

I put the baby's name, Bryan Creighton, on the top since he was only two years old. As an infant, we called him by his first name, Bryan. But after a year, Judy decided he should be called by his middle and her family name, Creighton. But I, and his older brothers, called him Bryan for the rest of his life. His mother and younger siblings called him Creighton.

Thus the two names on this valentine. I put my initials at the bottom point.

When Valentine's Day came that year, the kids and I were up early, and it was waiting for mama when she came into the kitchen. She was duly and suitably surprised and pleased with our creation.

Yep, the arrow might not have been entirely straight, but it was colorful and carefully hand-crafted by her sweetheart and her little boys. It's the one Valentine she has kept over these forty-seven years and knows where to find it every year to remember and display in our home.

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The Un-Valentine Day Party

by Elizabeth Wharry

It was our senior year in high school. A group of us didn't have anyone to celebrate Valentine's day with. We were a mixed bag of friends... about 10 of us or so.

We decided to have an un-Valentine's day party. We had three rules...no booze, no boy or girlfriends, and if you smoke, go outside. The party was chaperoned by John R's parents. They set an 11pm curfew. Each of us brought something to share with the group. John's parents had invited another set of parents to chaperone. They surprised us by bringing several pizzas.

Word got out among our senior class. Pretty soon, a small group of 10 became a group of 30. Despite this, a couple of other parents decided to help chaperone. One set of parents got into the spirit and brought an un-Valentine's cake that read "HERE'S TO BEING FOOTLOOSE AND FANCY FREE!"

Mr. and Mrs. R had a big enough house to hold 30 kids and 8 adult chaperones, and then some.

Even with the parents there and mingling, everyone had a great time. Some of the parents taught us to jitterbug, in 1976! We kids were shown how to do the twist, the waltz and Watusi. One couple had us clear the floor, and demonstrated the Argentinian tango. They were amateur ballroom dancers.

Some of us kids asked if we could stay and help clean up after ourselves. We had to call home, and either Mr. R or Mrs. R would talk to the parent. After we had the house tidy, they told those of us who stayed to call and let them know we got home safely. This was in the days before caller ID.

This was the best un-Valentine's day party ever!

"Don't let a flattering woman coax and wheedle you and deceive you; she is only after your barn."

Hesiod

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How I Met My Wife

by Walter Thames

In your mid-seventies when you have been married some 54 years, the first meeting of you and your wife-to-be is a distant memory. And, I'm ashamed to admit, my recollectiqn of the encounter is fuzzy at best. The impression this most impressive woman made on me, was, at the time, slight. In fact, I might not remember it at all had I not been helped along by the more reliable memories of friends who were there. We met by chance, thrown together by happenstance. She was back in her home town after a time in Concepcion, Chili. I was in my home after a brief time in Paris, Tennessee.

Except for the persistence of another important woman in my life (my mother) who wanted me in that particular place, we may not have met at all, at least not at that time. But we were young, foolish, silly people. We had no idea that we would be sitting across the fireplace on chilly evenings years and years in the future sharing a glass of wine and talking about our lives, our children, and their children. Was there even a slight premonition of what was to be?

No.

Not surprising. We met when we were six.

In first grade. In Miss Caroll's class, at Vance Elementary School in Bessemer, Alabama. We met. I suppose we must have encountered one another, though as I said the memory is fuzzy, and then she was gone.

She moved away in the summer to Baltimore and then on to Ohio. Her father, who was a manager of iron furnaces and steel-making plants, was a man who liked new jobs in new places. But he always came back to Bessemer where his wife had deep roots. So, seven years later she came back.

Then she was thirteen and the wonderful magic that happens to girls at that time had happened and she was very memorable. And even then, we didn't really meet. She was just there, like all your friends are just there when you're growing up with them.

We had our first date when we were seniors in high school. If I remember correctly, I had my father's car, a five dollar bill, a good looking girl sitting next to me and a full night ahead. We went to the Aabama State Fair in Birmingham, enjoyed State Fair things: the tilt-a-whirl, bump cars, ferris wheel, barkers for freak shows, cotton candy and candied apples. A good time.

We went back to her house and talked until four in the morning. I was in love. We were in love. Four years later, we were married.

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Names from the Past

by Jerry Keel

I am sure by now almost everyone has heard the news about The Huntsville Times' plans to cease the printed version of the newspaper. It came as quite a shock to many, me included. As I have said before my entire working career was spent at The Times. Many happy memories (and some not so happy) have come to me since hearing this news.

Having spent so many years there brought me in contact with many, many people in all departments of the newspaper from the top to the bottom. I will start at the top with the various publishers I can remember.

This is quite an undertaking for me because of my advanced age. I first began my employment 70 years ago - started at 15 and am now 85 - so I beg your indulgence as I try to remember some of the people I worked with over those years.

One I will never forget was Mr. Jack (Jack Langhorne), a big bear of a man who was as gentle as a kitten (most of the time) but who could become frustrated when someone did not perform up to their potential and do something that would reflect on the paper.

After Mr. Jack a few more came along and I will try to remember them in order but if I leave someone out remember my memory is not as good as it once was. Please forgive me if this happens.

Mr. Leroy A. Simms was another who filled the office of publisher. Mr. Simms always had a big cigar either in his hand or in his mouth. He was slow to speak and to move but when he did talk it was worth listening to.

Later came Mr. W. C. (Bill) Green, a down-to-earth gentleman who was a pleasure to be around. I never saw him lose his cool or raise his voice at anyone. He would come back into the Composing Room where I worked just to visit and talk to us about whatever subject came up. This was unusual because many times a person in an important position felt they were above the rank and file. Mr. Green was an exception to that rule.

After Mr. Green retired another publisher was brought in to oversee The Times. Mr. Bob Ludwig came to The Times from Grand Rapids, Michigan. This was ironic to me in that my youngest son, who was an aspiring professional baseball player in the Oakland A's organization, was playing in Grand Rapids at the time with the Class A West Michigan Whitecaps. Mr. Ludwig was very popular with everyone. When he had his first meeting with us he let us know his name was "Bob," not Mr. Ludwig.

I had an immediate problem with that because my dad always insisted that when I addressed anyone older than I was or who held a job of some prominence then I was to call them "Mister." Mr. Ludwig told us to relax that rule where he was concerned but I just could not seem to call him "Bob" so he was always Mr. Ludwig to me (still is).

Others in the newsroom who were a pleasure to be associated with were the editors. Reese T. Amis was an old-time newspaper man who was very knowledgeable. After he left Pat MacCauley became editor followed by Joe Distelheim, who came to The Times from Detroit. Joe became just "Joe" to me because as I explained to him I had a problem with saying "Mister Distelheim several times a day (too many syllables).

R. J. "Bob" Ward came to The Times as Space and Rocket editor and later became the Managing Editor. Bob was a true friend who was respected by everyone. Bob's favorite greeting to me was "hey sport model". Bob wrote a book about space travel and asked me to make the book up in page form to be printed. I felt that was a great honor and privilege.

John Ehinger was the Editorial Page editor. His main duty was

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to write the editorials expressing The Times' stance on various topics such as politicians who were running for office or other civic matters. John always referred to himself as "Salsa Man" because he really enjoyed eating, especially spicy dishes.

Joel "Joe" Duncan was the News Editor. His job was to read through all the Associated Press news stories each morning and pick the most important stories for Page One. The stories of less importance were designated for the inside pages. Joe was a quiet unassuming guy who was very good at his job.

The Sports pages were covered by John Pruett for many years. John was followed by Bill Easterling, who started out as a copy boy and later became a sports writer. When John Pruett retired Bill was named as Sports Editor. He had several capable sportswriters. Ronnie White covered the NASCAR racing scene as well as the local races. Al Burleson was a general assignment sportswriter. Bill's son Mike also became a sportswriter.

The Society news was in the capable hands of Sarah Baker who kept up with the social events, weddings, proms, etc. Ray Garner was a reporter who later left The Times to become the news person at University of Alabama/Huntsville.

All these were top-notch newspaper people who won many awards for The Times throughout the years. One of the reporters demonstrated the pride that all the reporters felt in their work. A school teacher at Huntsville High School was arrested for DUI (driving under the influence). Jim Shaw had the police beat at the time and when the teacher asked him to leave her name out he politely refused. She made the boast that her name would never be printed in the newspaper.

She then called the editor at the time and asked him to do that, which he did. When Jim saw the newspaper and realized the teacher's name had indeed been left out he looked up the copy he had turned in. When he saw the editor had marked her name out he became infuriated. He circled the marked-out portion and wrote in large letters at the top of the copy sheet "I QUIT!"- Jim Shaw. He did quit and became a reporter for the Pacific Stars and Stripes, a military newspaper.

I am sure I left out some who were also instrumental in The Times becoming one of the best newspapers in Alabama. For those overlooked I am truly sorry and beg your forgiveness.

"A virgin forest is a forest where the hand of man has never set foot."

Answer on 5th grade geography quiz

Creamy Garlic Dip

1 pkg. cream cheese, 8 oz.
3 T. whole milk
1 t. garlic, minced
Salt to taste
1 t. chopped parsley
1/2 t. paprika

Mix cream cheese with the milk, add garlic, salt to taste and mix thoroughly. Add parsley and paprika and mix. Garnish with a stem of parsley and serve with good crackers.

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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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Tires and Going Steady

by Gerald Alvis

I somehow damaged my right rear tire and needed to get it replaced earlier this week. I drove to a local shop, got a quote for 2 tires and waited for the numbers. I believe there is another category for sports cars and even another if it's an import!

The manager gave me the figures. I tried to not flinch; I knew it would be pricey, but I smiled and okayed the repair.

I grin because a long time ago, in a galaxy far, far away known as the 70s, I once worked in a similar establishment.

10 hours a day, 5 days a week in the summer of my fifteenth year, was the "tiredest" (pun intended) I had ever been. So... what motivates a teenage boy to work so hard? If you don't know the answer, ask your husband. If you're a guy you already know!

I had been dating this beautiful brunette, and I wanted to continue wooing her. I proudly handed over most of my 1st week's check to the jeweler for a freshly sized "going steady ring".

The smartest thing on the planet is not a teenage boy growing into his new role as a man. But this decision I got right!

That was almost half a century ago, she still has the ring, and I still have her. It was the best investment I ever made.

Tires and even rings can be replaced, but that shared history is priceless!

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- You turn on the evening news and they're showing emergency routes out of the city.
- It costs more to fill up the car than it did to buy it.
- Your income tax refund check bounces.
- Your blind date turns out to be your ex.

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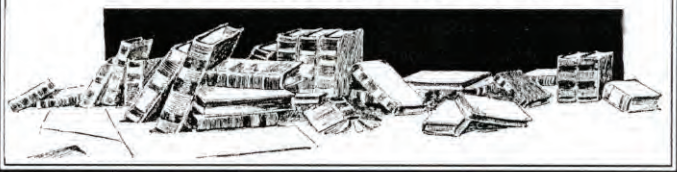

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WHITE KITTY

> **"The biggest lie I tell myself - 'I don't need to write it down, I'll remember it.'"**
>
> ***Marie Garcia - Grant, Al***

by J. Neil Sanders

The polite little cat next door enjoys sitting on my front porch each and every morning. Why does he choose my front porch? His reasons for this morning ritual remain unknown. I do not know his name...but his fur is white, so I simply call him "White Kitty."

I do not mind his morning visits, not at all. He is always polite and respectful. He has never once turned over one of my potted plants. When I open the door he is there, so I speak to him, naturally, as any cat-admirer would. Of course he replies pleasantly by squinting. I wonder if he knows that the clean bowl placed outside and filled with fresh water is especially for him. I believe he knows...because cats are aware of such things.

I make sure the old screen door is secured and fastened with an old latch so my cat (named Kitty) can look outside, so I can hear the morning rain, the morning birds, so the breeze can invite itself inside to refresh the entire house as I prepare pecan-walnut coffee, and so my writing for the day can begin.

White Kitty never asks to come inside. Perhaps he is aware that Kitty lives here and he doesn't wish to intrude. Kitty looks at White Kitty seriously through the screen door and doesn't move at all. Although sometimes he shakes his tail aggressively...as if speaking to White Kitty in a secret language, with a gesture, that only he can understand. He must be making something unquestionably known to his fellow cat.

I wonder what Kitty thinks of White Kitty. Perhaps Kitty thought he was the only cat and is quite alarmed that what he thought isn't true! I'm always happy to see our friendly neighbor on the porch. Kitty is always curious and interested to see him. He appears on time, every morning, just like the sun.

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Former Hospital's Peculiar History

by Kim Henry, Redstone Rocket

A shroud of mystery surrounds vacant building 112. People who've worked there over the decades have similar accounts of the activity they've witnessed.

The building has quite a history of tenants. It still bears traces of its original purpose which include two vaults and an old morgue.

The building was built as a hospital in the early 1940s, during World War II. It serviced Huntsville Arsenal and Redstone Arsenal as well as German prisoners of war placed here. (At the time the installation was divided into two arsenals. Huntsville Arsenal was everything west of Patton Road and was used as a chemical manufacturing and storage facility. Redstone was essentially the area where the new FBI building, Rocket Auditorium and the old Thiokol facilities are located. It was used as an ordnance shell loading/assembly plant.)

In 1950 Huntsville Arsenal was deactivated and was consolidated with Redstone Arsenal. Since there wasn't as much of a need for the large facility, the hospital was moved to an infirmary at building 7110 on the southeast end of post.

According to a Rocket article from 1978, after the hospital was relocated, "Building 112 was then converted for use as laboratory space for the Ordnance Guided Missile Group which moved to Redstone from Fort Bliss (Texas) in 1950." Dr. Wernher von Braun's office was in building 111, which sits in front of 112.

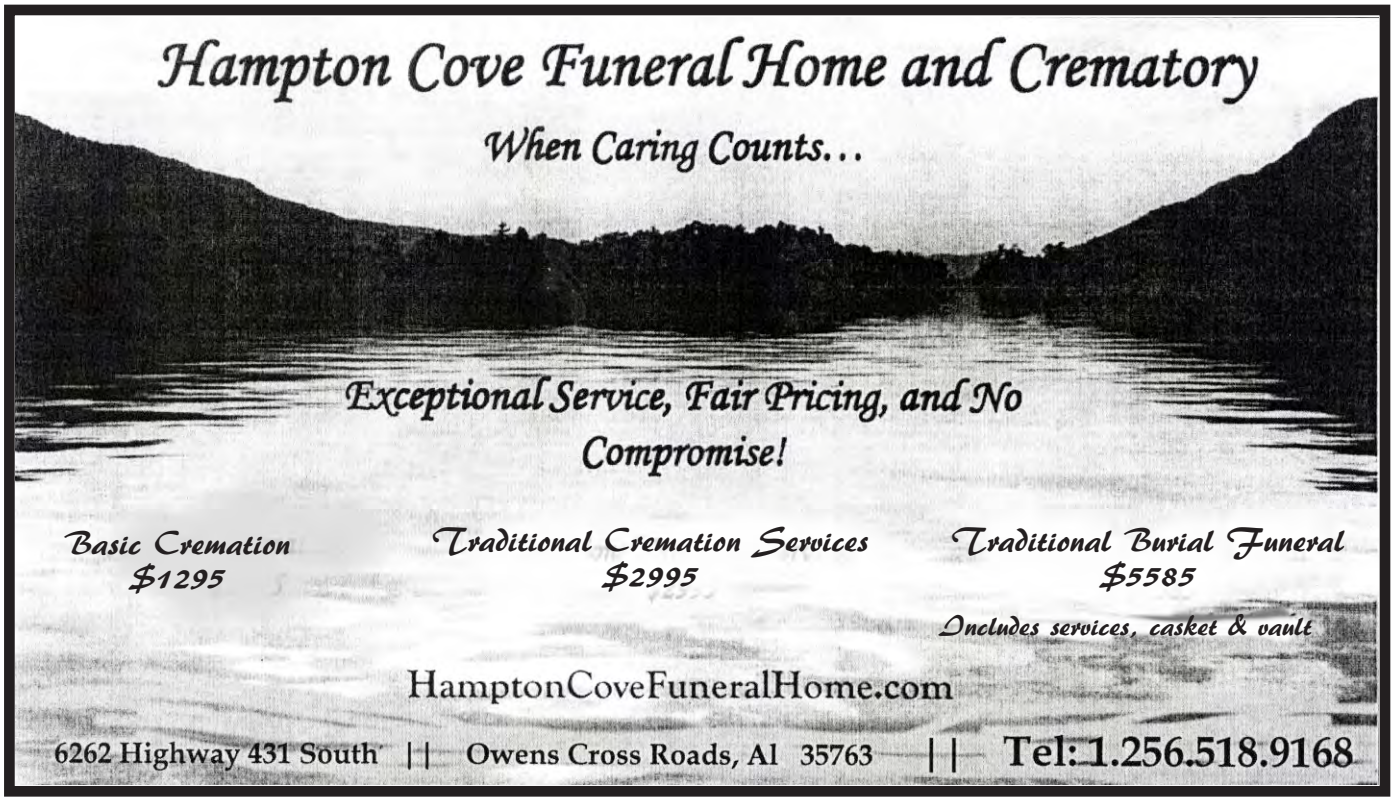
In the same article from 1978, William Pittman, who worked for the space program in building 112, said "Some of our earliest Army missile design and development work was done in building 112, and you might say the space age was born there too."

By the early 1960s there was a lack of space in 7110, so building 112 was refurbished and rededicated as a hospital in August 1961. It served as a hospital until 1978 when Fox Army Hospital was built. Since then it has housed several agencies but most recently it was recognized as Redstone Arsenal Support Activity headquarters.

Bill Schroder, of the Engineering, Environment and Logistics Oversight Office, remembers building 112 from when he first started at Redstone in 1959. At the time he worked for Chrysler in the Astrionics Lab.

He said that while he was working in the building, there were reports of strange activities late at night.

"There was a room downstairs that was used for drafting blueprints. Those who worked there would often work late at night," Schroder said. "The drafters started telling people that they could



swear they heard people walking up and down the halls and the elevator going up and down and when the doors would open and close nobody would be there. Bothered by the unexplained disturbances, the drafters quit working nights. "During the day, when people were there the elevator didn't hardly operate," Schroder said. "So for it to operate on its own was strange."

People who worked for RASA recall similar incidents like the drafters.

"I worked from 6:30 a.m. to 3 p.m., but came in early to walk my two miles each morning before starting work," Susan Gustafson said. "As I recall, being in that building really early in the morning, the first floor elevator would open and close and would go up and down to the second and third floors but no one was there. No one came out and no one went into it."

Gustafson remembers one morning when she didn't feel alone. "I was at the copy machine and lo and behold the doors opened up, waited and then closed. It went to the second floor and then came back down," she said. "I was shaking. The door opened up when it reached the first floor again, but no one came out. It waited and then the door closed again."

She said the elevator movement happened so much that the longer she worked there the more she got used to it. "I even called him Casper, I thought that was a catchy name," Gustafson said.

Another former RASA employee described similar incidents. "I worked in building 112 for many years and had always heard the ghost stories," Karen Bender, support agreement manager, said. She explained that she first worked on the second floor, but it wasn't until her office was moved to the third floor that she wondered if some of the "tall tales" had some truth.

"My last office on the third floor was very near the elevator. Sometimes I would work on weekends and would hear the elevator moving up and down the floors, opening and closing, but no one would be there," Bender said. "This was kind of eerie when you are working alone. It got to the point where I would lock myself in my office because I was not sure I was up to a meeting with 'George,' our pet name for the ghost."

Officers and military police who delivered the blotter to the RASA commander late at night agree about the building's strange activities. Several confirmed they would get off on the third floor to put the blotter on the commander's desk and when they returned, the elevator wouldn't be there waiting. It would be on another floor. Others heard voices down the hall, but never saw anything. "After a while people just refused to go there after dark," a Department of Army police officer said.

Another officer recalled an incident when he was a patrol supervisor and delivered the blotter. The officer said the elevator wasn't working so he took the steps. Thinking that the stairwell ended at the third floor, he kept climbing until he reached a small door that went to the attic.

"I realized I must've missed my floor," he said. "At that point I heard laughing and it sounded like ladies. I thought it was late for people to be there." The officer said when he went down to the third floor he saw a light down the hall and still heard the laughing.

"I walked down to the room. No one was there and the laughing stopped," he said. The officer said he thought the room was a break room and described it as open space with nowhere for anyone to go but out the door. The officer walked back down the hall to drop the blotter off in the commander's office.

As he returned to the stairwell, he saw something unusual coming from the same room. "I was looking down the hall and saw a shadow come across the door." He said he thought this time for sure someone was down there, but when he got to the room no one was there. He turned off the light.

No one knows why the elevator traveled up and down the floors or the origin of the voices down the hall. The vacant building's future is uncertain.

Editor's note: While reporting this story, Kim Henry said she went inside building 112 and found it to be extremely warm. But upon going down to the first floor, which housed the morgue, it was noticeably cooler. The first floor is not underground.

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What a Child Loves

by William Sibley

A former teacher of mine, trying to illustrate the difference between the verbs "like" and "love," told us that we could not love inanimate things since they could not love us back. It would be incorrect to say, for instance, that we loved green beans, or a favorite hobby, or social studies class. To express appreciation for those things, it would be appropriate to use "like." But according to her instruction, it would be entirely appropriate to say that we loved an older brother, or a favorite aunt, or a puppy, since they could reciprocate that love.

I never forgot that lesson, and I reasoned that according to her definition, I had a childhood full of love: for family, for friends at school and church and in my Sunday School class. Also for the neighborhood kids who gathered regularly for foot races, tire rolling, softball, cops and robbers, or other forms of recreation that didn't require expensive equipment.

A major object of my love in childhood, and a source of much enjoyment and entertainment, were the pets I grew up around. Some were domesticated, some were less so. Some were chosen, others adopted us. But all were loved without reservation.

Among my favorites were the chickens that ran freely in our yard. I knew each by her breed and by her personality. There were the White Rocks, the Barred Rocks, the Rhode Island Reds, the Bantams and various other breeds. I even assigned names to our chickens. One of my favorites was a fat White Rock that I named Itty Ba Itty. My family agrees that I was the champion nest finder of those chickens that chose to make their nests in the wild. After close observation of our chickens' behavior, my brother Bob and I came to an understanding of the term "pecking order" long before either of us cracked open a psychology textbook. We discovered that one chicken bossed all others in the chicken yard and at the bottom was a chicken that bossed none.

My family and I have always loved dogs. Because of our home's location (It was one of the first houses one reached when leaving Huntsville and driving across Monte Sano Mountain on U.S. 431 South), our house would usually be the final destination for unwanted dogs that had been driven across the mountain and forced out of the car by irresponsible pet owners. Those once-unfortunate dogs could always find a few table scraps and a child or two to play with at our house.

To this day, I still remember the name and distinctive personality of each member of our canine family. Some were very friendly. Others were a bit aggressive, though never toward us. The first dog I remember was a large black dog named Caesar. I recall petting him when I was about 3 or 4 years old. Dogs that were given to us were rambunctious; playful Buster; Crystal, our first and only lap dog; Weezer, who greeted us with a broad smile and always accompanied me to the tomato field, moving with me as I progressed down the row, and lying in the cool spots I created as my hoe broke up the earth. There were Bo and Spot, who were litter mates, and after Bo was struck and killed by a car while crossing Highway 431, Spot always thereafter ran under the highway and through the culvert rather than crossing the road.

Our most legendary dog, and possibly the best loved by all our family, was Maxie, a Chow mix whose reputation as a snake killer was known throughout the community. The very sight of a snake seemed to make him angry. He would grab it and sling it from side to side, never letting go until that snake was dead. On one occasion, he found a nest of copperheads, killing several of them and laying them out side by side. Ironically, Maxie died after being bitten by a giant rattlesnake. My father shot the snake and hung it up for the neighbors to see, but Maxie was beyond saving. We always remembered him as a playmate and a protector, and the object of our affection.

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One Left, One Came

by Lillian Mount

We had our lovely little girl Foxie for 14 years. She came to live with us strictly by accident. I came home from doing some chores one afternoon to discover a cardboard box. It was closed up, with the end flaps wedged shut. My old dog Regal was barking at it and I went to see what it was. Well, inside was a wet, woebegone, bedraggled little black and brown puppy. That puppy soon became our Foxie lady. Every day of her life, after she was ours, was filled with love for her. She was in our hearts to stay forever.

However, there came the time when we finally had to say our sad goodbyes to her happy (but graying) face. Her health had deteriorated and the vet sadly said it was time. And so we said goodbye.

But to my way of thinking, a home is not a home without a dog in it. So two days after our farewell, I was at the local Humane Society talking to the animals there who needed to be loved as badly as I needed to give love. One little guy in the corner kennel caught my eye. He was in there alone, and very depressed acting. He obviously wasn't happy with his surroundings. Stooping down to talk to him I thought to myself - this little guy doesn't meet your criteria, Lillian Ann. I'd set out to find a short hair dog, a female, a small dog and an older dog. This fellow was none of that.

The card his previous owner had filled out stated he was untrainable, not house broken, aggressive, a nipper and biter, and had been kept in the bathroom all day while owners worked, walked twice a day and lived in an apartment. After reading all this negativity, I thought to myself, there's nothing here that time and training won't cure. We discovered he was a border collie mix, 4 months old. He came home with us.

He was already named Gary, so we just kept his name, thinking he had enough adjustment to make without worrying about a new name. As soon as he learned that the door in the kitchen led to the garage which led outside, he was housebroken - about 60 minutes time. He ran and played in the backyard until I thought he was going to faint. He chased balls, toys, lizards and squirrels along the top of the fence. He was enrolled in puppy kindergarten, and socialized, socialized, socialized. He was taught that good puppies don't bite and nip hands, feet and ankles when they play. Chew toys, Kongs, and stuffed puppy toys are great fun to chew and when you play and chew them, you get clicks and treats.

One year later, my little mischievous puppy has turned into a marvelously well behaved dog. He's a real eager beaver when it come to learning new things. We go to the dog park and he runs and plays with his friends for two hours every evening.

He's a very special boy, and he has a very special place in his Mom and Dad's heart. We still miss our Foxie girl, we still love our Foxie girl, just as we still miss and love all our other dogs before her. Gary has not filled the empty spot she left. He's done something, better, more important. He's created his own spot in our hearts. He's accepted the love we have to offer and gives us more love and pleasure every day we have him with us. He is truly love in a big golden, fur wrapped, red tongue, brown eyed package.

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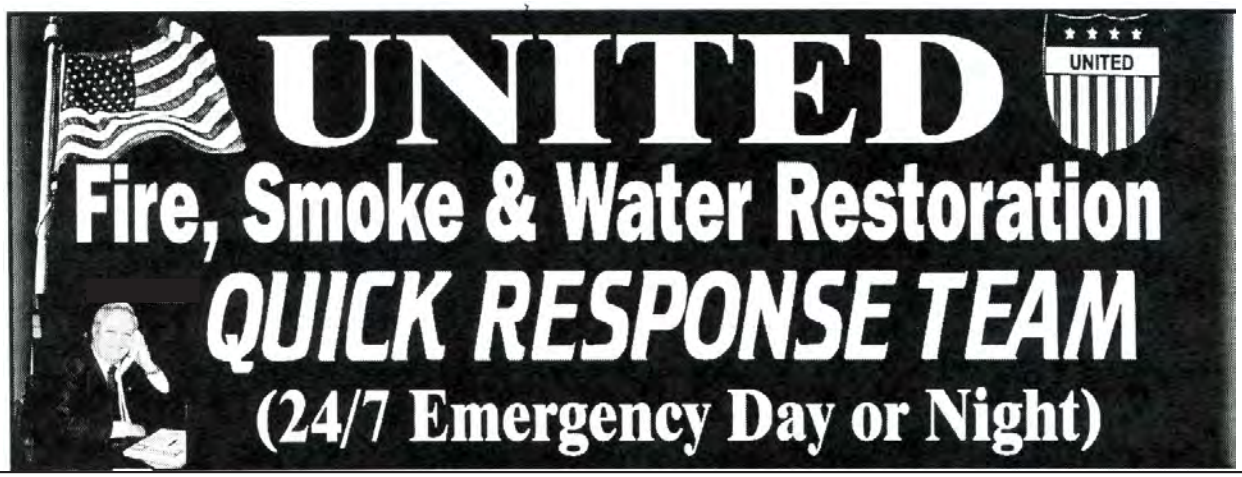

Retiring the Red Monogrammed Nightgown

Judy Chandler Smith,
originally published in OHM in April 2017

My son Owen's car was broken into a few weeks ago. He was visiting his brother, Brent. Brent lives on Chambers Street. He was parked in the carport and Owen parked right behind Brent's car. Owen ran into the house for a few minutes with car unlocked. To Owen's amazement when he returned to his vehicle, he found that his car had been robbed.

His console was up and his North Face book bag was missing as was his wallet. The book bag had his Biology work notes, books and binders for classes for University of Alabama/Huntsville. One of the books cost over $300.00. Also, important to him were the contents in his wallet. Nothing would be of any use to anyone but him, however losing his class notes and books were of a terrible loss. How could he ever catch up in class? He was just praying his teachers would be understanding and I was praying some kind person might find the books and return them.

On a Monday night as I crawled into bed wearing my red monogrammed nightgown and almost asleep, I made myself get up to check the answering machine. I couldn't believe my ears. I had to play the message three times to get the name and phone number correctly. It was a Bill Robinson and he said that he had been walking his dog and saw several books, papers and binder on the side of the road as well as contents from a wallet. It appeared to belong to Owen and if I would contact him, I could get Owen's much needed books back. I was so excited, I returned his call and said I would be right over.

When I was driving out my driveway at 11:00 p.m. I realized that I had on the red monogrammed nightgown, robe and fuzzy slippers.

Quickly getting my thoughts together, I called Brent telling him to get dressed as he would have to ride with me to retrieve Owen's books. I wasn't dressed to go meet anyone.

Bill Robinson told Brent that he remembers Owen from being a Spanish teacher at HHS. He also knew the books were expensive and if they were truly Owen's he would be needing them.

We thanked him profusely and I took Brent home and them left the books on Owen's porch so he could find them when he got ready for class. As I pulled into my carport I thought to myself - yes Virginia there are still some caring and considerate people in the world and Bill Robinson is certainly one of them. Now I think I will retire the red monogrammed nightgown. I've had enough outings in it.

Well, on second thought, I might just wear it one more time - next Valentine's Day.

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My First Telephone Conversation

by Giles Hollingsworth

In June of 1939, when I had just turned eight years old, we moved into a house on the corner of First Street and Ninth Avenue in Lowe Mill Village. Behind our house on Seminole Drive, within shouting distance, sat the once humming but now silent, Lowe Textile Mill. It had shut down in 1937 and now was just a big old Cotton Mill building sitting there on a big plot of land, and for an eight year old it was intriguing. Actually I thought it was empty, and that the property was more or less deserted, because I had seen no coming and going of trucks or cars. Later I learned that it was a cotton warehouse.

I should have known better, but I was curious about the Mill property. I would have never tried to enter the building but I thought that if the gate wasn't locked, I might look though one of the windows to see just what had been left there. Maybe a loom. Daddy had talked about looms but I had never seen one.

So, one day I walked back there and saw that, yes, the gate was locked. But then, about a hundred feet off to my left, behind the chain link fence, I saw a couple of white ducks waddling around. I figured they were squatters, ducks that had found vacant property and decided to call it their home. I sure didn't figure them to be Mill property. Why would a defunct Mill have ducks?

I walked to where the ducks were, then I spotted, real close to the fence, their nest, with two eggs in it. Next, (and this had to be fate), I saw, about ten feet away, a gap under the fence, big enough for me to easily crawl through. Now, in view of all I have written so far, would it be okay if I got those eggs? They weren't being sat on for hatching. I figured they were pretty much the same as chicken eggs for eating, just bigger.

My answer to my question was "Yes". So under the fence I went!

But unbeknownst to me there were two men guarding the property, and they were darn good at their job. They must have stayed in the Mill office most of the time, but obviously they could see well from there, because as soon as I reached the nest one of them appeared. Scared me to death! And that was just the beginning of my scare. He wasn't ugly or mean to me but he didn't buy my rationale as to why I thought the eggs were there for the taking.

He said there were several ducks on the property, mostly on the back side, and that he and his co-worker gathered eggs daily.

He took me into the Mill office where he and his partner proceeded to what I now know was phase two of "The Big Scare". They questioned me some more and one of their questions was, "Don't you know that this kind of thing could put you in reform school?"

I had never stolen anything in my short life, but I, like every other Mill Village kid, knew what reform school was. Back then there weren't a lot of bleeding heart judges. I was petrified!

Then, phase three. One of the men said, "Let's see what the boss says we should do", as he picked up the phone. He got the boss on the phone, gave him the details, then said to me, "The boss wants to talk to you". Well I had never talked on the phone before! Never! And I didn't know any kid that had. I had never even been around any family that had a phone. Phones were that rare and the people I knew were that poor. So I'm sure "the boss" had no idea how traumatized I was as he quizzed me a little more. But then again, maybe he did know, because he got my tearful promise to stay away from the duck eggs and the Mill, then had the guards send me on my way. I was never so relieved and so thankful!

There are easy-to-see morals to this story, but here is an irony: I couldn't even brag to my buddies that I was probably the first one of the bunch to talk on the telephone, because I sure didn't want them to know about me getting into that much trouble.

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Pigeon Homecoming

by Billy Joe Cooley

A few weeks ago, when the weather was cold, Jerry Lee kept a dozen or so red birds and blue birds well fed in his huge back yard.

He would go down to the picture show late at night and get all the leftover popcorn, put it in a garbage bag and haul it home, sprinkling it across his yard so the birds would have special treats next morning.

He did the same with leftover corn bread from cafes around the area, especially in deepest winter.

But, as one could expect, pesky blackbirds started recognizing Jerry Lee's backyard as a good thing for freebies and pushed their way in, thus pushing the pretty redbirds and bluebirds out.

Jerry Lee has always been a hard worker and didn't take kindly to the black demons flocking to his yard. He much preferred the beautiful colorful birds.

Somebody gave him the solution: bring a bunch of pigeons to the neighborhood.

He went to Chattanooga, rounded up a half dozen pigeons and brought them home. Behold! He was just in time. The yard was full of blackbirds. The pigeons flew in on the unwanted birds, pecked, flogged and generally made life miserable for them. The blackbirds took flight.

Then the pigeons became pesky.

The color birds wouldn't return to the yard. Jerry Lee, now confronted with a new problem, consulted his city cousins about how to get rid of the pigeons, which by this time were attracting other pigeons.

He decided against poisoned corn and other drastic measures. He thought about using roman candles to "fireball" them out of the area. He thought better of that, however, remembering how such a tactic against crows had caused a neighbor to lose a hay barn to flames a few years back.

Traps proved useless. The pigeons were wary of objects they didn't understand. Meanwhile, neighbors complained that the pigeons were "blessing" their car windshields and window awnings. Something had to be done, so he took his .22 rifle and started shooting one afternoon, picking the pigeons off one at a time as they poked their strutting bodies into view.

That's when it happened. One of his bullets ricocheted, striking his car's gas tank and setting off an explosion that could be heard all the way to town, more than a mile away.

Unfortunately, the car was parked in the carport and there weren't enough unfrozen water pipes in the area to extinguish the blaze. His family managed to escape the fire. So did the pigeons. And that's the truth.

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On Being a Good Dog

by the dog

Dear God: Here is a list of just some of the things I must remember to do to be a Good Dog:

- I will not eat the cat's food before he eats it or after he throws it up.

- I will always remember the power I have when I make my eyes really big and sad.

- I will not roll on dead squirrels, mice, snakes, etc., just because I like the way they smell.

- Those are not treats in the litter box.

- The sofa is not for me to use as a "face towel".

- The UPS man and mail delivery lady are harmless and are not stealing our stuff. They might be bringing me a Chewy box.

- I will not play tug-of-war with Dad's underwear when he's on the toilet.

- Sticking my nose into someone's crotch is an unacceptable way of saying "hello".

- I don't need to suddenly stand straight up when I'm under the coffee table.

- I must shake the rainwater out of my fur before entering the house - not after.

- I will not come in from outside and immediately drag my butt across the carpet.

- I will not sit in the middle of the living room, and lick my belly.

- The cat is not a "squeaky toy", so when I play with him and he makes that noise, it's usually not a good thing.

- I will not stop and stand my ground when coming across an interesting spot of Monkey Grass.

- I will lick my owner's face when she bends down for a kiss, even though I don't feel like it just then.

- I will make my family think they are really teaching me tricks even though the most important thing is the treat I get for it.

- When presented with plain dog food, I'll act like I'm not hungry and always hold out for some good table scraps.

- I will be forever grateful to my new family for rescuing me from the shelter. I was so scared and thought I'd spend the rest of my life there.

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Pet Tips from Angel

Valentine Love for your Dog

Nothing says "I Love You" to your dog like a Kong toy filled with peanut butter. Along with an afternoon on your lap while you watch TV. Do things to show them you value them as part of your family. So read on for some fun and thoughtful ways to celebrate your love for your canine companion this Valentine's Day.

1. What dog doesn't love a treat? Fabulous treats are available to order online, from cakes and cookies to "doggie wine" (broth in a bottle). Or find some recipes and bake treats right in your kitchen (your dog will most likely be right there with you, waiting). Make sure these items are made in the U.S.A.

2. Surprise him with an extra walk, or a trip to his favorite dog park or trail — especially if you haven't been there for a while.

3. Read any good dog books lately? Curl up together on the couch with a book or a great dog movie. Together time is precious, and often hard to find with our busy schedules. He'll love the attention.

4. Does he need a new coat to keep warm this winter, or a nice new collar or bandana? Add a pretty charm to his collar, and while you're at it, check his tags to make sure they are still readable and reflect your current contact info.

5. Healthy teeth and gums help keep your whole dog healthy. Consider a dental check-up with your vet, and have her show you how to brush your dog's teeth. Be sure to get the special paste made for dogs (human toothpaste is toxic to pets). February is National Pet Dental Health Month, after all.

6. How about a day at the spa to make him feel special? Many options are available, like do-it-yourself facilities in pet stores, specialty salons and even mobile grooming vans that come right to your house.

7. Get him a new toy, make a big deal of opening it and then play with him. Lots of Valentine-themed toys are available, or buy a new Kong, fill it with peanut butter, and watch the happiness unfold. By the way, when you buy Kong, get the special cleaning brush that goes with it; otherwise you'll never get that peanut butter residue out.

8. Many pet owners forget to check their pet's beds when doing laundry. He might need his bed washed before putting that new toy or treat on it and he'll love it if the washing and drying fluffs it up a bit.

9. If you have a disaster preparedness kit for your family make sure you have one for your pets.

10. Make sure your pet is micro-chipped - this is one of the best ways to ensure you will be reunited if you and your pet become separated or he gets lost.

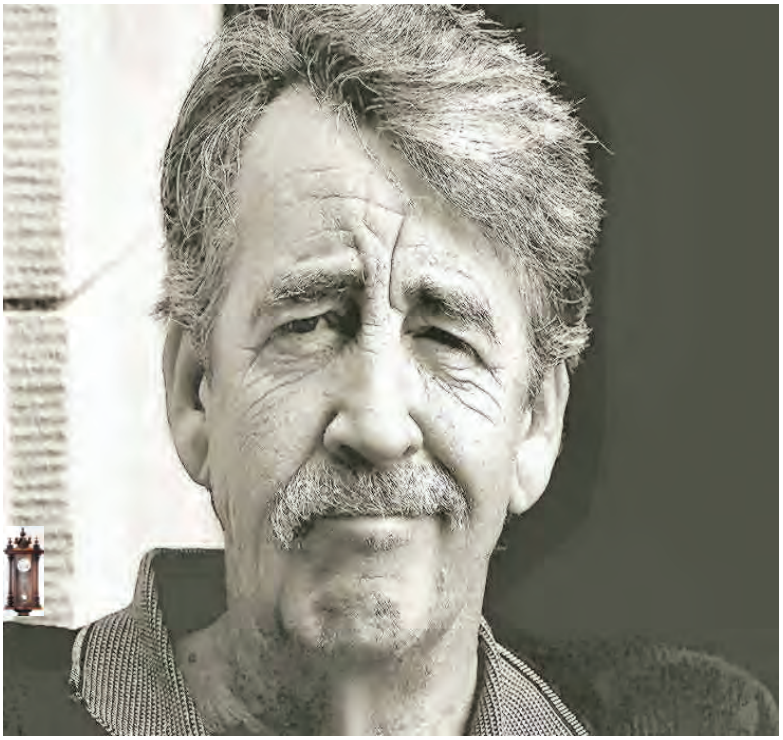
11. Take your pet with you when you go to the bank, drive-in restaurants etc. - many banks have dog biscuits for their canine customers and your friend will start to look forward to these trips.

12. Leave a legacy by making a donation in his name to an animal rescue group or shelter. Check around and find the organization that feels right to the two of you.

13. Many pet-oriented websites have opportunities for you to post a photo or story about your pet. Consider posting something to share the love you have for your special friend with all the world. Happy Valentines Day!

The Fiction of History

by Tom Carney



The Pilgrims did not land at Plymouth Rock and July 4th is not Independence Day.

Sounds preposterous?

The belief that the Pilgrims landed on Plymouth rock rests solely on the recollection of a ninety-five year old man, 120 years after the event. Thomas Faunce told a crowd that his father, who arrived in America three years after the Mayflower, had once pointed out to him the rock as the place where the Pilgrims had landed.

There is no other evidence for the tradition.

As the Coast Guard has pointed out numerous times since, the current would have made it impossible for a small boat to land at that spot. Ironically, Plymouth Rock never entered our history books until the 1800s when it was used to advertise soap.

Another great deception that has been foisted upon the American people is the celebration of the 4th of July as our nation's Independence Day.

Independence from England had been declared two days earlier on July 2, 1776.

Our second President of the United States of America, John Adams, in a letter to his wife, predicted that "the Second day of July, 1776 will be the most memorable Epoch in the History of America. I am apt to believe that it will be celebrated, by succeeding generations, as the great anniversary Festival."

To further undermine the real date, a nineteenth century editor, in publishing Adam's original letter, changed the date and had Adams informing his wife that "the Fourth of July, 1776," would be the great date in history.

Even the story of Bunker Hill is a myth. The famous battle actually took place on Breeds Hill, some two thousand feet away. By 1893 so many people believed the story that the authorities changed the name of Breed Hill to Bunker Hill, in an attempt to correct history.

Probably the biggest hoax handed down in our history books is the tale about the Liberty Bell. It did hang in the statehouse but it was not rung upon the signing of the Declaration of Independence. The name "Liberty Bell" was given it in 1839, symbolizing the hope for

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freedom of black slaves, not the independence of white Americans from Britain.

Another story that does not withstand the scrutiny of history is the battle of the Alamo. Contrary to popular belief, the defenders were not all heroes. Colonel Travis, the commander, had abandoned his pregnant wife and two year old child in Alabama, before ending up in Texas. In the oath he took, he lied, claiming to be a widower.

Jim Bowie was running from the law and Davy Crockett had left his home in Tennessee, where he had become a figure of ridicule.

There is absolutely no proof that the defenders of the Alamo fought to the last man. On the contrary, overwhelming contemporary evidence indicates that Davy Crockett and his Tennesseans surrendered, rather than fight it out hand-to-hand. Incidentally independence was not the only thing they were fighting for; they had also been promised large grants of land in return for their efforts.

Few people today remember that the song "Yellow Rose of Texas" was a song about Santa Anna's mistress.

In 1903, the Texas Historical Society decided to sanitize their history and rewrote the words accordingly.

Teddy Roosevelt never charged up San Juan Hill. The hill they captured was Kettle Hill and when they finally got around to San Juan Hill, the Spaniards had already fled.

William Randolph Hearst, a publishing magnate and close personal friend who was aware of Roosevelt's political aspirations, ordered the name change in his newspapers. The reason he gave was, "San Juan sounds more heroic than Kettle."

Here in Huntsville, when they finally got around to writing a State Constitution (1819), it seems as if one of their biggest problems was keeping the delegates sober. They actually had to call the sheriff to remove some of the offending delegates.

No history book of Huntsville prints the fact that our Huntsville Hospital got its start from a bordello or that Brahan Spring Park is named after a swindler. Also, that the first voting rights demonstration in Huntsville occurred shortly after the Civil War when a group of ex-Confederate soldiers held a protest demanding their voting rights be restored.

"When your mom is really mad at your dad, don't let her brush your hair."

Evie, age 7

Jitney Drivers Dangerous

From 1919 Huntsville newspaper

The authorities should take some steps to stop the reckless driving of automobiles. No regard is paid to the crowd crossing the streets by the reckless drivers of the smoke belching machines.
At dusk this practice is indeed a most dangerous degree when numbers of jitneys and others who know better, run their cars without lights.
The police, no doubt, will cause somebody a great deal of trouble when some hapless soul is run down.

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Remembering Ma Maw Hillis

by Cathy Bowen Bridges
published in OHM in November 2011

My maternal grandmother, Theodora (Theo) Cantrell Hillis was one of the biggest influences in my life. She was a humble, southern, God-fearing lady that could make the best homemade chocolate pie with the egg-white meringue piled high on top. Her chocolate fudge wasn't too bad either.

Ma Maw always wore her long hair up in a bun. When I was a little girl, I would call it a donut. She would brush her long hair out, and then twist it and twist it until she had it all up in what looked like a donut.

I'll never forget just how she looked, with her apron tied around her waist at all times, unless she was going to church or somewhere else.

I can recall seeing Ma Maw praising God at Mt. Fork Baptist Church in New Market, as she walked around the sanctuary all caught up in His spirit, patting her Bible with no care in the world as to what anyone else thought about her. She had tuned out everyone but God. If you paid close attention, you might even feel just the slightest bit sorry for her. You see, Ma Maw had a crippled leg that was shorter than the other, from having polio as a child, and she also had a crippled arm that she always held a certain way.

She would not ever desire anyone's sympathy though, because she had all she would ever need in this life, the love of God and love of her family.

Ma Maw had a rough life growing up with all her other brothers and sisters in New Market. They were pretty much raised by a single parent, my great-grandmother Sarah Cantrell. Her husband Frank was the forgotten hero of Madison County that one of my relatives wrote about in the July 2009 issue of Old Huntsville magazine. He died in a well in New Market trying to save someone else. He was only 37 years old.

The year was 1925. In 1926 my great-grandmother was awarded a bronze medal on behalf of her husband's heroic act. Both of my grandparents are buried at Rice Cemetery in New Market. My brother Jeff and I spent most of our summers with Ma Maw and Papaw Hillis on the farm in Meridianville.

"Insanity is hereditary - you get it from your kids."

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Papaw and my uncle Junior leased land from the Lewter family that included a wonderful house with a wrap-around screened porch that had lots of white rocking chairs that looked out onto the front yard with all of its beautiful peonies in bloom in the late spring. There was a long gravel driveway that took you out to Highway 231/431 north or south. The large kitchen was painted red, with a black and white tile floor.

I always thought I was really doing something when my grandparents would let me drink coffee for breakfast. Breakfast was always special anyway, because Ma Maw could make some fantastic biscuits and gravy.

There was not anything that Ma Maw could not do on the farm. If there was, I don't recall. She always had a large garden, including growing her own potatoes, which we ate a lot of. She could wring a chicken's neck, pluck the feathers, and fry it up in a pan. We always had lots of eggs for breakfast, or fried chicken, pinto beans, corn bread and fried potatoes for lunch. Supper usually consisted of left-overs or corn bread and "sweet" milk.

The farm also had a ''hog lot" with big trees and big hogs! Our twin uncles Larry and Garry were still at home, plus some of our cousins would stay the weekend from time to time. We would climb the trees and pretend like the hogs were bears.

There was a barn also, and a pond. My grandfather had black cows and we would feed them hay right out of our hands. It was also fun playing up in the loft. We never got bored, that's for sure!

Ma Maw has been gone for a long time, but I think about her often. She wound up with breast cancer and died in the car with my aunt, uncle and grandfather. They were bringing her back from a radiation treatment, and her tired old heart just stopped.

Med Flight was summoned and they tried to revive her after they got her home, but it was no use. She had gone on to be with her Lord. I miss her, and love to remember the good times I had with her.

She and Papaw are buried at Cochran Cemetery in New Market, not far from where I live.

If I was to say that anyone who has walked this earth was a saint, it would have to be Ma Maw Hillis. She is gone but will never, ever be forgotten.

"Don't let worry kill you. Let the church help."

Seen in local church newsletter

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My Class Ring

by Catherine Clemons Cameron

It was November of 1950 and there was excitement in the air at Woodville High School, Jackson County, Alabama. The 11th graders had just been informed they could order their class rings early. The ring salesman would be there a certain day for us to select our rings. I wanted a ring but I wondered how my Mom and Dad would get the money. My two best friends for 11 years were Betty Gattis (Walker) and Martha Hinshaw (Walker). We were the only 3 who picked ones with a blue set. Others picked red sets or plain ones.

My folks were share-croppers whose main income was the cotton crop that came in the fall, when the cotton was ginned and sold at Gurley. During the year, my Mom would supplement their income by selling butter and eggs.

I went to my Mom with my problem and I told her I needed $22, which at that time was a lot of money for poor folks. Looking back, I didn't realize how poor we were, because most folks that I knew were just like us. I once asked Mom about the "Depression era". She said they didn't know there was a Depression. Life was the same out in the country. She did say there were folks coming by asking for food and they were always fed.

We never went hungry, because we grew a large vegetable garden and canned all summer. Dad would buy 2 pigs in the summer and fatten them until it was cold enough for hog-killing. All the men in the neighborhood seemed to be there to help and they would get paid with some fresh pork. We didn't get electricity until I was 13 years old, when Roosevelt's REA program from TVA came into effect. Our first electric bills were about $2 monthly.

Now back to my needing $22, Mom said she would see what she could do, but I would have to help. She contracted with Rousseau's Grocery Store in Paint Rock to buy 11 fat hens to sell to the town folks for Thanksgiving. I really, really earned my ring. I was embarrassed by how I got it, so for years, I didn't tell anyone how I "paid" for my ring.

When the day came to "dress" the hens, it was cold outside. Mom brought a No. 2 wash-tub in our living-room by the fireplace, then went outside and chopped off the heads of 11 hens. She brought them in and poured boiling water in another large wash-tub and soused in one at a time, and I started plucking feathers. She had put them up for a few days to fatten them, as they were free-range chickens.

These days, most folks don't how to cut up a frying-size chicken, so you could have a pulley-bone. Now when you buy a cut-up chicken at the store, there is no pulley-bone, it's included in the 2 breast parts.

I had to learn to do that when I was 11 years old. Mom would wring the fryer's neck and I would skin it and cut it up and we would have fried chicken, usually for Sunday morning breakfast. With the older hens, you wouldn't skin them. They had to be put in boiling water and taken out immediately and pluck the feathers. By the time I was finished with the hens, my hands and wrists were aching badly.

I still have my ring, although I don't wear it any more. The "WHS" is worn and the date, 1952 is almost gone. When I look at, I am reminded how hard I had to work to pay for it.

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Horrible Accident on the Huntsville Beltline and Monte Sano Railroad

from the Huntsville Daily Mercury
September 1888

Yesterday at one o'clock, a squad of workmen employed on the Dummy line boarded the Dummy at McGee's Hotel in a light hearted and merry mood, to resume the labors of the day. In front of the Dummy engine was a box car, belonging to the E.T.V. & Ga. railway, loaded with cross ties, to be used in the construction of the track on the mountain. They little thought that in a few more minutes one of their number would be grasped in the icy embrace of death.

But it was even so. One of the squad, a man named Frank Barker, who was seated on the brake on top of the box car, was caught by the neck with a telephone wire, stretched diagonally across Clinton Street where it crossed Lincoln and knocked to the track beneath. The wheels of the Dummy dragged the body of the unfortunate man about 60 yards before the engine could be stopped.

When his comrades reached him, the bruised, mangled and dismembered body was reduced to an unrecognizable mass of bleeding pulp. He lived about ten minutes.

Esquire Figg was sent for, and he, acting as ex-officio capacity of coroner, commenced inquiries on the spot with regards to the death of the unfortunate man. A.A. Odom being duly sworn, said that the deceased met his death by his head coming in contact with the telephone wire across Clinton Street. Jeff Anderson, D. Kinston, John Coles and Chas. Robinson gave testimony corroborative of the above, and on viewing the remains, the "Squire decided there was no necessity in holding a regular coroners inquest, and gave instructions that the remains be delivered to the friends of the deceased."

Mr. Arthur Owen Wilson, President of the road shortly appeared on the scene, and a messenger was sent to the undertaking establishment of E.B. Carter & Co. where an elegant burial casket was procured. In the meantime the body was removed to the house of a family near by and washed and shrouded for the grave. The remains were forwarded to the relatives of the dead man, who resided near Eutaw, on the 10:40 express last night.

Deceased was a young man about 26 years old, and came here from Birmingham about 6 weeks ago. He was married and his wife lives somewhere in the vicinity of Eutaw.

The telephone wire which caused his death was a private wire from the residence of Mr. Mayhew on Maiden Lane to the planing mill at the front of Washington Street. The wire was not stretched on poles of regulation height which accounts for the disastrous and fatal accident. The hands employed on the dummy line severed the wire at this point a few hours after the catastrophe.

The Dummy Line Again

from the Huntsville Gazette, Dec. 8, 1888

The Mayor was instructed to confer with the City Attorney in regard to "taking steps to condemning the rails on Clinton street". The Mayor stated that he had seen Mr. Wilson, the President of the Dummy Line, and that Mr. Wilson had promised much and performed nothing. The Mayor called the attention of the Board to the wretched state of Clinton Street and said that, in his opinion, the only thing left to give relief to the citizens of said street would be for the Board to condemn the line as a nuisance and have the rails torn up and removed.

Municipal Matters

from the Huntsville Gazette, Apr. 20, 1889

The Mayor stated that it had been requested that the city pass a law prohibiting boys from playing on the Dummy track and swinging on the cars. On motion the ordinance committee was directed to frame and ordinance to that effect and also to regulate the speed of the Dummy through the streets.

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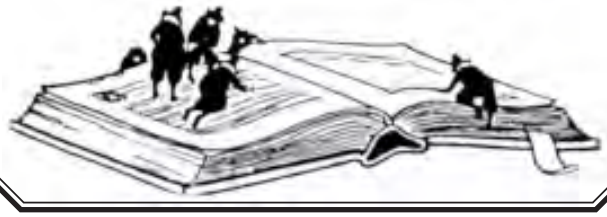

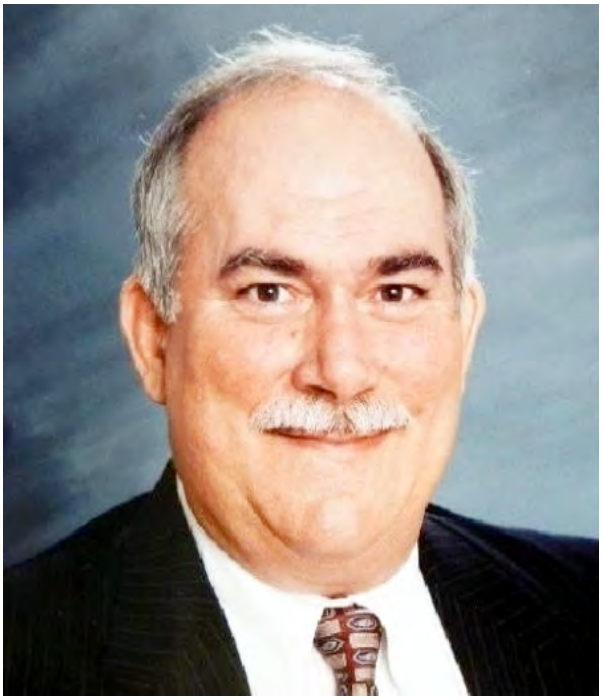

Remembering Bobby Johnson

Bobby Dale Johnson 79, of Huntsville passed away December 27, 2022. Born in Albertville, AL, he graduated from Huntsville High School in 1961 and the University of Montevallo in 1976. He was a Navy Veteran and served in Da Nang, Vietnam with the U. S. Navy "SeaBees" while stationed out of Gulfport, MS.

Survivors include his wife of 41 years, Dianne Anderson Johnson; son, Robert Nunnally Johnson; brother, Ronny Johnson and several nieces and nephews.

He was preceded in death by father, Orvis D. Johnson; mother, Amie Lee (Daniel) Johnson; daughter, Meredith Brooke Johnson and sister, Pam Shipman.

An avid outdoors man, he enjoyed all the beauty that God has provided. Retirement objective was to fabricate a geodesic dome cabin on top of the mountain out in Grant, AL to spend his final days. This dream did not get completed before his death.

Early in his career he worked at Cape Kennedy during the Apollo Moon program, contributed to first electron-beam welding in space experiment "M-512" of Skylab program, was involved in developing robotic "TIG-welding" equipment used for repairing steam generators for the Westinghouse Corporation out of Nashville, TN.

The bulk of his forty year engineering career was spent with SCI Systems of Huntsville, AL designing electro-mechanical hardware in support of "electronic black boxes" used on military and commercial programs.

His last job was with Minerva Engineering, a small company out of Phoenix, AZ. He was involved with assembling office desk/chairs, reading specifications then responding with conceptual design instructions, fabrication sources, physical assembling, packaging, shipping and even janitorial services. He also modified Up-Armored HMMWV vehicle to be a mobile helicopter landing radio center and developed training devices used in spherical training center.

Bobby was a humble, brilliant, kind man who cherished his friends and family. If you were Bobby's friend, he was loyal to you til the end.

He will be missed always.

Godfrey

Hello, my name is Godfrey. I am a medium haired gray and white declawed cat and about 5 years old. I am friendly and sweet to people and greet everyone who comes into my room at the Ark Animal Shelter. I love to talk to people and am very chatty. Other cats hang back and are very shy but not me!

I am very curious and interested in what my people are doing every minute. Here at the Ark I love to go on the catio and watch the birds and dogs. I would love a home with big sunny windows and a cat tree or a sunroom so I can watch what's going on in the outside world.

Because I am declawed I can never go outside. If you come to the Ark, will you ask to see Godfrey? That's me.

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The Power of Music to Reach Within

by Jennifer Jonas, Accredited Music Therapist

Written June 2017 in OHM

Johanna has advanced Alzheimer's and has lost the ability to care for herself. She lives in a nursing home where someone else bathes, feeds and clothes her. She no longer walks or talks but spends her days in her reclining chair. Her daughters wanted to offer her something special but struggled to find the right thing. Johanna's caregiver, Janet, heard one of my presentations on the power of music therapy and knew she'd found the right gift for Johanna.

She spoke to the daughters and they agreed to try this therapy; after all, their mother loved to sing and was in the Good Shepherd Church choir for years.

Janet joined me on that first offering of my music. I came prepared with the songs Johanna daughters said were her favorites. When I began to sing the first song on my list, "Be Not Afraid" Johanna turned her head to the music coming from my guitar; and when the lyrics reached her, she began to smile. She recognized the words she'd sung in choir years ago. By the time I got to the chorus, she was tapping her foot on her chair and laughing.

It was almost miraculous the change that occurred in her. She had gone from being totally unresponsive to being completely engaged in the music, her music. Janet looked to me with a great big smile. She had found what her daughters were looking for; a therapy to touch the heart of their mother, a therapy to reach into her world and make contact with the part of her that was still alive.

I sing to Johanna every week now, bringing my guitar and all her favorite songs'. Sometimes I bring a drum or a bell for her to play. She needs my hands to guide and help her play the instruments.

On a few occasions, Johanna has reached out as if in search of my own hand. I respond each time by putting my hand in hers. Then she will squeeze it or tap the rhythm of the song I'm singing. I feel a wonderful connection to her when this happens.

It is my goal, each time I visit, to reach Johanna wherever she is inside her mind. Some days it takes two or three songs, and other days it takes just one verse to bring out that genuine smile and that heartfelt laugh. Then I know I've reached her.

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www.huntsvillehistorycollection.org

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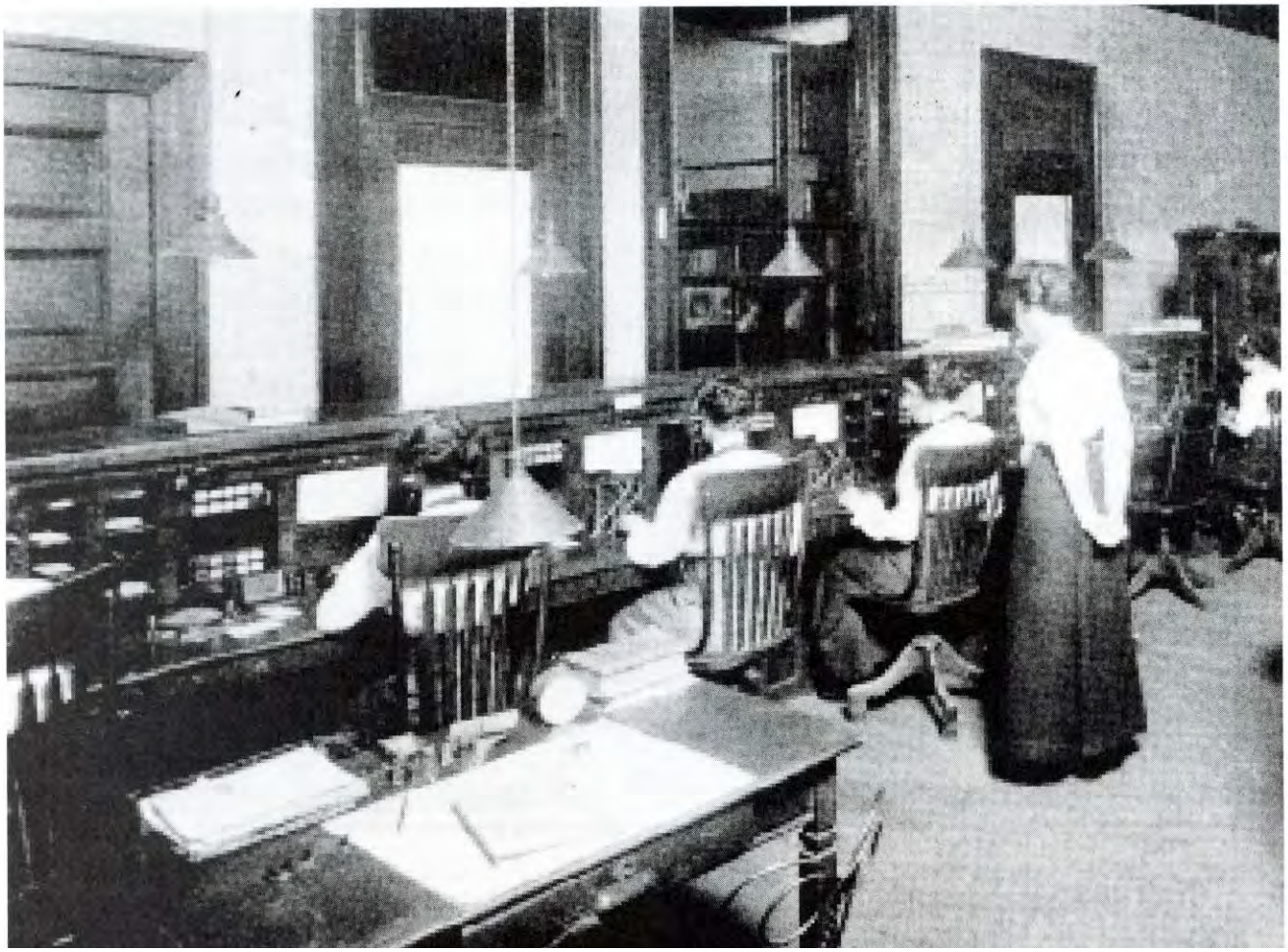

In 1915 you could still call a telephone operator to get the time of day. That same year, school lunches were introduced in Huntsville public schools. The lunch cost five cents and consisted of a slice of bread with butter, a meat sandwich and a glass of milk.
Those days are long gone, but the folks at Loose Ends still believe in offering the same dedicated, personal service that makes our city a special place to live.

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