

Issue Number Thirteen

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Southern Reader

AN MAGAZINE ABOUT LIFE IN THE SOUTH



Grin & Bury It

Humor to sink your canines into

Lead Me Home

An excerpt from the novel

The Goat Man

*Memories of
a Southern legend*

Dancing in the Rain

*A Granddaughter's
Memoir*

The Summer of Love

A short story set in the Summer of 1967

Take One-Six!

A flying lesson to remember

The Battle of Hoover's Gap

An important, yet obscure, battle of the Civil War

David Skinner

Don't Touch That Dial (or click that mouse).



As long as I can remember (and I've been accused of being able to remember the overhead lights in the delivery room), there's always been music playing in the background of my life.

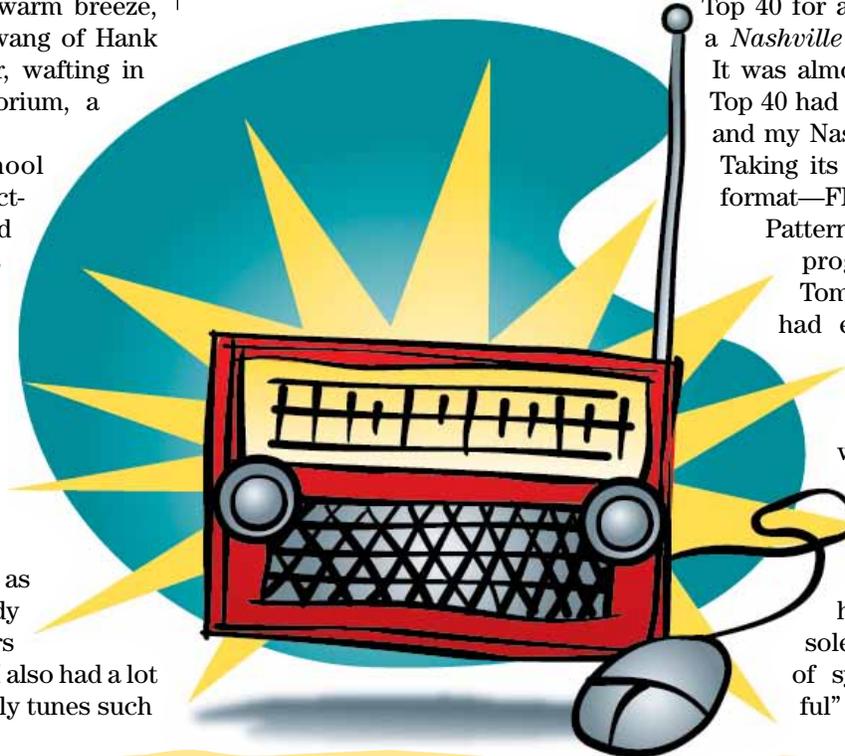
I was born in downtown Nashville—*Music City*—on a hot summer night in the early 1950's, and I'm guessing it was before the advent of air conditioning, because somewhere in my memory, I can feel that hot summer night blowing in through the hospital window. And with that warm breeze, I can almost hear the twang of Hank Williams's hillbilly guitar, wafting in from the Ryman Auditorium, a few blocks away.

While my pre-school friends were busy collecting the little yellow and red 78 RPM records about Smoky the Bear and riding on merry-go-rounds, I held out for Buddy Holly discs and some of the rockabilly 45s coming out of my hometown, as well as from our Tennessee sister city, Memphis. I had early Elvis records as well as records by Buddy Holly, The Everly Brothers and The Big Bopper, but I also had a lot of undiscovered rockabilly tunes such as "Little Cheerleader."

Here's how that song went: *"There's nothing sweeter than my little cheerleader, doing the high school yell—Hey! With her tight-fitting sweater and my high school letter, man, she really looks swell!"* I wish I could tell you that I found these lyrics off the internet, so I could reference the writer, artist and copyright info, but actually, I found them by trolling my memory banks and pulling a file from over a half century ago. My point is—there was always music drilling

into my memory.

I grew up doing my homework to the music of the Beatles, Stones and Motown playing in the background. In my late- and post-elementary school years, the transistor radio was king and the AM Top 40 DJ was the court jester.



I grew up doing my homework to the music of the Beatles, Stones and Motown playing in the background.

My particular favorite was (Nashville radio station) WKDA's "Wild Child" Bill Berlin, and later, when I was able to stay up all night listening to the radio, "Captain Midnight"—Roger Schutt. The later it got, the crazier Captain Midnight became; between songs by

Bob Dylan and the Dave Clark Five, he would challenge wrestler Tojo Yamamoto to come down to the station and wrestle him in the middle of the night. As far as I know, Tojo never took him up on his invitation, but the picture it painted in my imagination was dramatically hysterical.

Then, as the sixties ended and a new decade came along, the music changed. A few months before I graduated from high school, the Beatles called it quits and WKDA abandoned Top 40 for a country format—it was a *Nashville* radio station, after all. It was almost as if the Beatles and Top 40 had graduated along with me and my Nashville high school class. Taking its place was a new music format—FM "Underground Rock."

Patterned after the "free form" progressive radio that DJ Tom "Big Daddy" Donahue had engineered and encouraged in San Francisco in 1967, it only took a few years for the idea to waft eastward across the country to *Music City*. Plus, the time was right...the creaky old FM band, that had previously been used solely for the broadcasting of symphonies and "beautiful" music was ideal for the stereo rock that had been ushered in by the Beatles' "Sgt. Pepper," and the Beachboys' "Pet Sounds."

Suddenly, the soundtrack of my life was a lot richer, and not so constrained—the three-and-a-half minute pop classics were replaced by album tracks, some of them lasting the entire side of an album. By then, I was in college, and the music piped into my dorm room was straight out of Woodstock.

By then, the late night FM DJs

E-Publisher's Corner

were as *unique* as Captain Midnight, only a lot more *cosmic*. My personal favorite was a DJ on a station out of East Tennessee's "Tri-City" area, and his show was called "The Kramer Outrage." He would play a block of deep album cuts by Traffic or The Allman Brothers, or Dr. John, and then say something like, "Look...there's something crawling on the wall..." This would be followed by another half hour of deep cuts and then he'd say, "Wow, man...now it's over my head..." Finally, toward the end of the evening, he'd say, "It's getting real close, man. It's...it's... it's..." and that's the last we'd hear from him until the following evening. After the rigid programming of the sixties, Underground Rock was musical anarchy at its best. But, alas, it was not to last. The radio consultants soon appeared on the scene to storm the castle with their pitchforks and torches in the form of programmed playlists and free form radio seemed forever doomed.

So, my college friends and I abandoned radio. We picked up our guitars and banjos and dulcimers and started creating our own music—songs not confined to three-and-a-half minutes. One of the tunes that my friends and I would play—usually in a ten-minute

jam session—was a song that I had written in '73 or '74 called "Robin." I had been inspired by Robin Lee Graham, who sailed alone around the world in 1965 at the age of 16. His journey was chronicled in the pages of National Geographic and I eagerly followed his exploits, impressed by his skill and tenacity, and felt that his story was a metaphor for our generation and its search for meaning.

The song "Robin" became the soundtrack for my friends and me and our times together. Throughout

...I'm transported back to that night in the mid-'80s, singing a song written in the mid-'70s about the quest of an adventurous teenager from the mid-'60s.

the years, we sang it in concerts and around campfires, in churches and in bars, in shacks and in mansions. And as for free form radio, it wasn't dead, after all; it was only dormant, just waiting for a medium—like, say, the internet—to reignite it.

I was delighted to discover the hundreds (if not thousands) of free form radio stations available on the internet. It was a throwback to the days of Captain Midnight and the Kramer Outrage, only the possibilities had expanded exponentially. Now, there's something for everyone.

I even discovered a station under the "Eclectic list" on iTunes called "Campfire Radio" that reminded me of the times my friends and I sat around the campfire singing "Robin." So, I sent them an MP3 of a recording of us from many years ago, gathered around singing on a warm summer evening, accompanied by guitars, fiddles, pots and pans, and crickets. Now, when I want to remember those times I can go to their website (www.campfireradio.net) and type in a request for "Robin" and, in a few minutes, I'm transported back to that night in the mid-'80s, singing a song written in the mid-'70s about the quest of an adventurous teenager from the mid-'60s.

And, I still do my homework with the radio blasting in the background, only now, instead of equations or essays, I work on logos, ads, brochures, and SouthernReader. Every once in awhile, when I least expect it, I hear the opening strains of "Robin," and for a brief moment, we're all still young and healthy and the '90s are still on the distant horizon. And, in that flicker of a moment, our only concern is where we're going to park our sleeping bags to dream about that next port of call and what tomorrow will bring.

David Shimmer



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Grin and Bury It

by Lisa Love

A tale of a dog—where only the names have been changed to protect the humiliated.

Dear Sandra,

You know how I'm always telling ya that you just shoulda been here? Well, I really mean it this time—*YOU SHOULD HAVE BEEN HERE* this weekend. It was more entertaining than cable TV (and as always, half the price)! I will try in vain to do this story justice; Buddy and my Aunt Myrtie both survived, so that in itself is no small feat! I, however, am seriously considering taking up drinking!

Where do I start? I think I told you that my great aunt from Memphis

was coming to stay with us to celebrate her 85th birthday. Lord, she is a formidable woman (think: *Bea Arthur as Maude and then make her a smidge more strapping*). Aunt Myrtie is a hard, somber woman, enjoying neither humor nor kindness; I swear she makes Osama Bin Laden look warm and fuzzy. Why she wanted to make the trip to Atlanta to celebrate her birthday is beyond me—possibly the rest of her family escaped by way of the Witness Relocation program or something. (Note to self: *remember that option for future reference.*)

You think I am being too harsh?

Perhaps. I do credit her with my *FIRST* baptism. Yes, Sandra, I said *my first*. When I was six years old, Aunt Myrtie came for her annual pilgrimage to Atlanta. Like clockwork, come Sunday morning, my granddaddy (her brother) invited her to go to church with us. *Oh goody!* Anyway, I *ADORED* church, but being young, I tended to get restless, sitting on the hard wooden pews for over an hour. I would crawl back and forth between my mama, my granddaddy and my brother and sister—sitting or lying on each one of them in turn for 15 minutes or so. Honestly, I just thought

I was giving the whole family a chance to enjoy my company, so that no one would feel left out during the service. However, Aunt Myrtie wasn't quite so enamored with me. During the altar call at the end of the sermon, as I headed toward my granddaddy at the end of the pew—climbing over my Mom for the umpteenth time—I heard my aunt whisper loudly, “If that girl moves one more time, I am going to take her out back behind this church and whip her myself.”

My first instinct was to turn and see who she was talking 'bout. My second instinct was to get away from her as far and as fast as possible. My second instinct prevailed. Without missing a beat, I sailed right past my granddaddy, walked straight out of that pew, and with head held high, marched my little six-year-old self down that aisle and asked the preacher if he would please save me!!! I was baptized a week later. I guess you could say Aunt Myrtie scared the hell out of me.

It's forty-some-odd years later, and I am still a quivering pillar of Jello where this lady is concerned; when she called to set this birthday visit up with two days notice, I just froze and kept mumbling, “Of course, of course” over and over again. She informed me of her flight arrival time, her breakfast preferences, her need for scheduled naps, and most importantly—she was not to see any evidence of any animals ANYWHERE!!! She claims that she is allergic to pets, and that they make her utterly miserable (in that case, she is also allergic to human beings, small children, babies and all festive occasions)!

Now, Sandra, I love my little Scottish Terrier as if he's my own baby. Heck, I can quick draw my picture-laden cell phone out as fast as any proud parent and force unsuspecting strangers to view photos of Buddy! He is such a sweet, if not always bright, little spirit. No one was going to banish him from his own home. While my aunt continued to issue demands over the phone,

I decided to crate Buddy the weekend of her visit. How hard could that be? After all, he is 13 years old now and not as spry as he used to be. *Hold that thought.*

Immediately upon hanging up the phone, I began making the phone calls that would set this “*Operation Birthday Fiasco*” into motion. Aunt Myrtie wanted to go to Longhorn's for her birthday, so I called ahead and made sure they could accommodate a party of 17 or so on Saturday night. *No problem!* Then I called all of MY family to try to cobble together this party of about 17 or so. Sandra, you will never know the favors I called in for this birthday gathering. *Honey, Jimmy Hoffa negotiating with Teamsters had nothing on me that night.* I cajoled,

Ah...sweet guilt--the Southern girl's other white meat, served fresh on a daily basis...

I threatened, I bribed and I cried. However, I did it—I guilted everyone into meeting at my house on Saturday afternoon around 5:00. Ah, sweet guilt—the Southern girl's other white meat; we serve it fresh on a daily basis with a side order of emotional blackmail at Lisa's International House of Manipulation (gratuities not expected but always appreciated).

Aunt Myrtie's flight arrived Sturday morning, and I was positively determined to make the best of it—you know me—*always the glass half -full kinda gal!* The ride home was an absolute delight (*yeah, I giggled as I typed that*). Turns out that ALL of her grandchildren are ungrateful and lazy, Atlanta is filthy and crime-ridden, and what in the world was I thinking when I had my hair done? *Oh yeah, were we having fun yet?* I made a game of trying to decide which one of her eyes to look into while she harangued me (did I mention her lazy eye? No? Well, sometimes I gaze into her left eye and then later I follow the right eye to see where it leads me. I developed this

little “eye game” when I was just a kid in a vain attempt to calm my nerves whenever she looked at me—with her left eye, no, her right eye, no, her left eye...*well you get the picture*).

Ah, sweet relief as we pulled into my driveway. I got her squared away in the guest room (which was too hot by the way—but you could have seen that one coming couldn't ya?). Aunt Myrtie, worn out from the flight (and from complaining about said flight), decided to take her scheduled nap a little earlier than usual. *Thank you, Lord.* I got her settled into bed and tiptoed out, leaving her door cracked open just a smidge. I then quietly gave Buddy a drink of water, patting his sad little head before quickly re-crating him in my master bedroom closet.

Poor boy! While my aunt napped, I went back downstairs to unload the car.

Sandra, Honey, the back of my SUV was packed tighter than the Joad family's truck heading to California in the “Grapes of Wrath”;

if I hadn't known her return flight was scheduled for Monday morning, I would have sworn she was moving in. *Shivers!* I kept marching in and out the front door—over and over again dropping her suitcases, one after the other, onto the foyer floor. As I made my way out the front door for what I hoped would be the last load, I was almost knocked off my feet by a furry four-legged beast going a mile a minute down my foyer staircase! *What in the world???* Frozen for half a second, I felt like one of the characters in the Lone Ranger asking, “Who was that masked man?” *BUT I KNEW who this was—it was a crazed crate escapee—BUDDY!!!* Out the front door, the little demon dog sped past me.

He made a beeline across the street to my neighbor's front yard. Buddy stopped his mad dash only long enough to start pawing at the ground. I thought surely I could catch him then, but as I neared him, he took off again. At this point, I could see that he had a death grip on something in his mouth. *What in the world was it?* I didn't

have time to speculate, 'cause off he ran again. This went on for about 15 minutes—the more I chased, the more he seemed to enjoy this game of *Cat and Mouse*. Sandra, I kid you not; he actually looked over his shoulder at me in mid-run and smiled! *I will not be mocked, devil dog!*

Neighbors then joined me at this point in an attempt to help me capture the fugitive dog. I kept thinking to myself, “Just wait till I get you home”—‘cause I certainly wasn’t going to strangle him in front of all these witnesses.

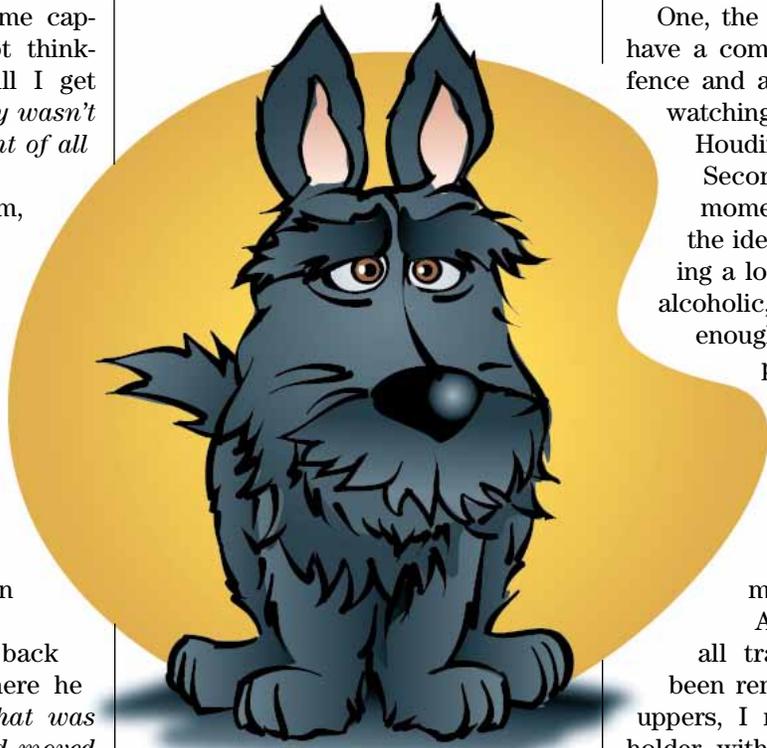
As we inched up on him, circling from all sides, he dropped to the ground and started furiously digging—trying to hide his precious booty. Distracted for a second, he let his guard down and I leaped in for the kill—oops, *I mean the capture*. GOT HIM! I thanked everyone profusely for their help as I tightened my hold on the squirming ball of fur in my arms.

Before I turned to head back home, I looked down to where he was burying his treasure. *What was so important that Buddy had moved with more speed and agility in the past few minutes than he had in the past 10 years combined?* I bent down and shoveled at the dirt with my fingers. *YOU. HAVE. GOT. TO. BE. KIDDING. ME!!!*

As Katherine Turner so eloquently put it in “War of the Roses,” *“What fresh hell is this?”* I am aghast. Peeking through the dirt, some *THING* was smiling back up at me! *TEETH? Yes, TEETH!* Uppers, if I was not mistaken. *Uppers covered in mud and dog slobber.* Horrified, I used my thumb and index finger to scoop the teeth up; appalled, I carried them, along with the denture bandit, back home. Yuck, Yuck, Yuck! My mind was numb with yuckiness.

I couldn’t quite wrap my addled brain around what had just happened; a little detective work was in order. Doing my best *Peter Falk as Columbo* imitation, I headed up the stairs and observed that the guest room door was

wide open and a tell-tale trail of water led me to the bed where Aunt Myrtie still slept. An overturned denture container and a mate-less lower denture mocked me from the side table—that’s all the evidence I needed to prove that the slobber ridden denture in my hand that Buddy had been virtually wearing for the past half hour was indeed Aunt Myrtie’s teeth. Swell.



What was I to do? I am scared to death of this woman on my best day! How was I to broach my aunt with Buddy’s doggy tale involving this little denture adventure? After mulling it over, I hit upon a sound plan. *DON’T TELL HER A THING!* Sandra, am I bad? Don’t answer that—it was a rhetorical question. Going with the Southern Theory of “what ya don’t know can’t hurt ya,” I took her dentures into my bathroom and examined them more closely; they weren’t broken or damaged as far as I could tell—just nasty. Let the disinfecting process begin.

First, I did an initial rinse off of mud and doggie slobber; I then proceeded to pour an entire bottle of Listerine over the teeth. Still not certain that they were sufficiently doggie germ free, I pondered the contents of the cabinet under my sink. Uhhmmm. Comet? Well, it does clean and disinfect porcelain sinks, and dentures are

made of porcelain, right? I sprinkled those babies till they were saturated in a green powder coating, then scrubbed them and rinsed them till they sparkled like Grandma’s finest china.

Sandra, when I saw my pitiful reflection in the bathroom mirror, haggard and sweaty, brushing my aunt’s teeth (so to speak), two thoughts occurred simultaneously.

One, the next dog crate I buy will have a combination lock, an electric fence and a guard in a sniper tower watching over it. Let Buddy try to Houdini himself out of that cage!

Secondly, this was the exact moment I started flirting with the idea of drinking—and drinking a lot! Not becoming a raging alcoholic, mind you, just drinking enough to qualify it as hobby—perhaps, like needlepoint.

I decided to Google some sweet-sounding drink names—like Mississippi Mudslide—the second I was finished with my denture ministrations!

After I was positive that all traces of Buddy spit had been removed from Aunt Myrtie’s uppers, I refilled her little denture holder with water and replaced the dentures, ever so gingerly tip toeing into her room to return the container to her bedside table. Whew, now all I had to decide was where exactly to bury Buddy—oops, he wasn’t dead... yet. I decided to put off strangling him, since I needed to get ready for the events of the evening and maybe even brush my own teeth for Heaven’s sake.

Five o’clock finally arrived (it’s always five o’clock somewhere, right? Where is my drink?). My family did me proud by actually showing up. As I welcomed them with a smile solidly frozen into place, my insides churned with fear. Would Aunt Myrtie know something had happened to her teeth?

Sure, I had placed them back exactly as they had been before her nap, but it just seems that a person should possess some kind of sixth sense alerting them to the fact that their teeth might have been in a dog’s mouth. Just sayin’...

An hour after everyone arrived,

Aunt Myrtie descended the stairs like a Queen greeting her subjects—with indifference and a touch of disdain. She muttered a curt “We’re going to be late,” and sailed right past us as she headed out the door. It would appear that everything was completely back to normal and a crisis had been averted. Now to get this dinner over with.

First of all there was 17 of us, and although Longhorn’s was very gracious and accommodating, that still meant that we would need to take several cars to get to the restaurant. That’s right, we would be moving in a convoy! As you can imagine, we all fought over who got to ride with Aunt Myrtie—right.

Everyone piled into cars left and right, and finally our little Birthday Parade made its way into town to Longhorn’s. I really don’t remember much about the actual dinner—selective amnesia probably—but I believe it was pleasant enough. After the events of the day, I made a conscious effort to take a back seat and give the rest of my family the opportunity to “enjoy” Aunt Myrtie’s company.

As they say, “Misery loves company.” Honey, in our family, misery

doesn’t just love company; heck no, we embrace Misery with open arms and ensconce it in our guest room!

During dinner, I do faintly recall Aunt Myrtie mentioning that her steak tasted like soap. Thinking fast, I piped in that my Salmon tasted a tad soapy as well. Sorry to throw you under the bus, Longhorn’s, but it was either you or me. As we finished our meal, Aunt Myrtie grew uncharacteristically sentimental and thanked us for helping her celebrate her birthday. She almost cracked a smile—and all I could think was that her teeth had never been so bright and shiny! Kudos to Comet and dinner is done!

On the drive back home, I could almost smell the finish line. Getting through the rest of this night was gonna be a piece of cake, I smiled to myself. Granted, this morning had started badly at the airport with my aunt’s crabbiness, and thanks to Buddy, the day had escalated into an exercise in supreme torture, but now it was coming to a close with birthday cake and ice cream; a rather sweet way to end a rather bittersweet day.

Since I was driving the first car in our return convoy from the restaurant, I quickly pulled into the driveway rush-

ing into the house ahead of everyone to set out the cake and light the candles. I went back to the front door to let the other 15 file in while I handed out the birthday horns and balloons. Uh, yeah, you read that right—the other 15.

So, my dear Sandra, it was at that moment as I stood there in the foyer, when I did my mental accounting:

- Birthday cake and ice cream: \$32.00
- Dinner for 17 at Longhorn’s: \$425.17
- Leaving your aunt alone in the lobby at Longhorn’s on her 85th birthday ‘cause everyone of us thought she was riding with one of the other relatives in their car: *PRICELESS!*

And though, at that point, it was sheer bedlam in our house as to who was at fault and how it could be fixed, I stole a quick glimpse at Buddy in his armored crate in the corner. Through the bars, he winked and shot me a sly little grin.

Love,
Lisa

LisaCLove@bellsouth.net

Lisa Love, a talented and insightful writer with a skewed sense of humor, looks for, and often finds the absurd masquerading as the mundane.

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Lead Me Home

by Niles Reddick

HeartLand/RoseHeart Publishing

A Colorful Tale of Peacocks

Max Peacock is in a conundrum; he's soundly stuck in Nashville, caught somewhere between his Southern past and his hazy future. But, in Niles Reddick's new novel, "Lead Me Home," Max's quandary is the reader's delight.

The story, as told by Max, begins with the funeral of his great aunt, Ophelia, who he secretly calls "Aunt Catfish." The ninety-something-year-old Ophelia is killed in an automobile accident with a logging truck, and Reddick (along with Max) manages to take the reader on the same twisting southern backroads that stretch from the funeral and Max's south Georgia past to his present career as the general manager of a downtown Nashville hotel.

Although Reddick gives a pleasing shoutout to Music City, the most amusing guts of the novel dwell on Max's childhood among the Spanish moss, pecan orchards and family Peacocks in the small south Georgia town of Pavo.

After a new vice president is hired at the hotel where Max works, he and his schoolteacher wife Jaden begin to ponder, and then plan, their escape from Nashville, hopefully back to the welcoming arms of their hometown where they can spend the rest of their lives and raise their family.

Along the way, we're introduced to a colorful line-up of relatives and characters ranging from

the legacy of Aunt Helen, an unofficial fortune teller, who is committed to

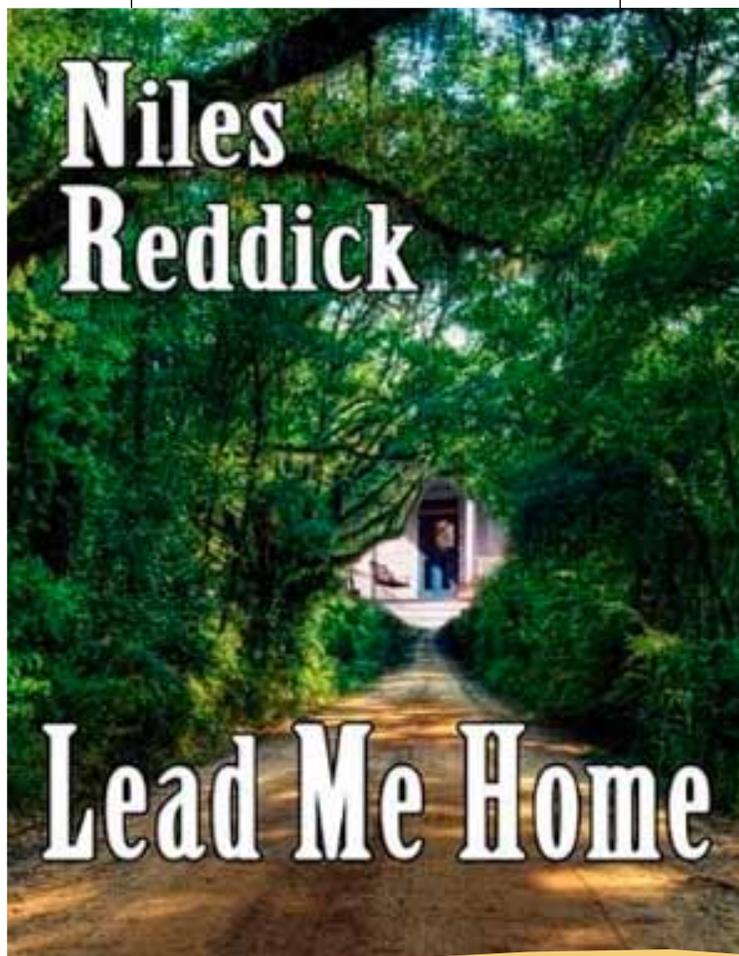
taking, alcoholic-turned-religious convert (after shooting up his mama's house trying to kill an invisible little man), to the husband-killing Mrs. Yates, who has her romantic sights set on the new preacher at the Baptist church. There are some dark moments in the book, ranging from murder to

grim family secrets, but Reddick skillfully blends them with the lighter "Southernness," so that the darkness doesn't cloud the story over and bog it down.

He also throws in real-life references and settings. For example, on their drive back to Nashville from South Georgia, Max and Jaden stop in and have a sandwich at the Calhoun, Georgia Cracker Barrel, just off the Interstate 75 exit in North Georgia. In real life, that particular Cracker Barrel serves some of the best catfish in Georgia every Friday night.

The novel is a romp through the backwoods of the South's past and the promise of its future, and it reads like a weekend visit with your favorite kinfolks, during which you and your cousin drive around stirring up the mud from the past and dishing the dirt on the present town and its inhabitants. It's familiar Southern territory, and you'll find yourself laughing at, and root-

ing for, Max Peacock, his wife, their family and their friends.



"Lead Me Home" is a romp through the backwoods of the South's past and the promise of its future...

the mental hospital in Milledgeville, and Max's cousin Doug, a drug-



Nashville in the Rearview

by Niles Reddick

The following is an excerpt from Niles Reddick's new novel, "Lead Me Home."

The days following the going-away gathering seemed to go by in slow motion. To save a few dollars, I had decided to attempt packing most of the boxes. I drove over to the liquor store in Green Hills and got boxes out of their dumpster along with a few others from the neighborhood Kroger.

Jaden would wrap breakables, I would pack. Jaden would label and tape, and I would move boxes to the garage. Our little system worked nicely.

Moving, it occurred to me, was a two-sided coin. On the one side, there's

always the thrill of what awaits the new life, but there's usually a touch of sadness at leaving behind the old life. Jaden and I had been in Nashville for several years, and while we had been in Nashville, we had changed, aged,

and so had all the folks back home. In fact, we had traveled home many times for funerals, and it was depressing to me. I remembered one of the last things my grandmother Peacock had said to me. "Max, I wish you lived closer. I just don't get to see y'all enough."

And, she was right. We didn't get to see each other enough. I had seen her for years growing up, day in and out, and then once I had moved, I was sad that I just couldn't stop by and see her. It made the times we traveled home

even more meaningful. Stopping by her house, we'd sit on the porch, drinking chicory coffee and eating a piece of pie she always made when we'd visit. One day I had a strange thought. If I only went home once a year for Christmas, I would probably only see her five or ten more times and that was if she lived another five to ten years. It was an odd sensation, and I think that thought planted a seed deep in my soul. I will go home and if I happen to die in this strange place, I will still be sent home to where my people are. God, please lead me home.

A month later, we were making the trek home to Granny Peacock's funeral and though I did not cry, the lump in my throat could not be swallowed. Jaden knew how hard it was for me and I think it was hard for her, too, because it simply reminded her of her distance from her people, too. And now, packing pictures of family in a box, I am telling them quietly—since Jaden might question my sanity—I don't know if you helped arrange for us to come home, but if you did, thank you. I hate to leave friends and this beautiful land in Tennessee, but thank God, I'm going home again. And I wondered if Granny Peacock had something to do with it.

Though I was a Christian, I don't think I was the Biblethumping Christian that many professed to be, but I did believe in a spiritual place, where things could line up, and like the magic of Disney, paths could be altered.

I glanced out the window and imagined my grandmother sitting, poised like Mary Poppins, on a cloud and waving at me, and I waved.

"Max, what are you waving at?"

"Shooing a fly."

"This box is ready. You look zoned out. Are you okay?"

"Just realizing how close we are to being back home."

"I'm very happy about this, Max, especially since we are going to have a little one."

"Me, too."

Later in the afternoon, Jaden went over to one of her school teacher friend's house for a going-away gathering. The teacher, a dainty, delicate woman named Mame was sweet as could be, and seemed doll-like, but was rather odd. She was several years older than us and had remarried, but hadn't told her own grown children she had remarried. She hadn't even told her mother, according to Jaden, who said it would simply kill her mother to know she'd married again. I thought it strange, but Jaden said when her grown children would come, her new husband would leave the house for a few days until Mame's children had gone. I told Jaden I thought that was *beyond* strange, but what had been hilarious was when her ex-husband found out she was married.

I glanced out the window and imagined my grandmother sitting, poised like Mary Poppins, on a cloud and waving at me, and I waved.

The Orkin man was spraying her ex-husband's house and asked if he was kin to the couple with the same name as his on a certain road. Knowing the road and name—since she had kept her ex-husband's name—he was aware it was his ex-wife's house, but didn't know she had remarried. He was certain she might be living with someone and had called to bless her out and tell her she wasn't living right and she should set a better example for her own children and her students. I thought there was something wrong with the whole story, and it just didn't seem normal, but I saw the humor in it. As soon as I had said it, I could hear Aunt Ophelia, "Don't judge a book by its cover, praise God."

Though Jaden wasn't opposed to my going to the party, no one else had been invited outside the circle of school teachers, and I told Jaden I would prefer to simply rest.

Once Jaden was gone, I laid down in our bedroom and promptly fell asleep. When I awoke, I was thirsty, having apparently slept with my mouth open

and it being really dry because of the ceiling fan. I had been asleep for two hours. I turned on the news, looked outside as the sun was setting, and watched the traffic on I-65, and the barges on the Cumberland. Nashville was beautiful, and though I would miss it, I could always come back and visit.

Jaden finally got home shortly after eight o'clock. I was beginning to get concerned, but figured they just couldn't stop talking.

"Sorry, I'm getting in later than I thought. We just talked and had the best time, and guess what they all went in and gave us?"

"What?"

"A \$250 gift card to Target."

"That's nice."

"Sure was. We can use it for whatever we want, either for the baby, the move, whatever."

"Well, I think I finished packing everything, and I have my clothes loaded in my Jeep."

"What time are you leaving?"

"Mid-morning some time. I'm in

no rush, but I do want to get to Aunt Ophelia's house before dark."

"I'm going to go on to bed."

The next morning, Jaden and I had our last cup of coffee together on the balcony, and I watched the traffic on the Interstate, the barges and tugboats on the Cumberland, and the Nashville skyline, trying to absorb the picture one last time. Nashville, a metropolitan city, was the home of country music, but it would be a bustling place even if not associated with its label of "country music."

I packed some of Jaden's belongings that she would need to prevent her from lifting anything to her car when she arrived in a couple of days, and we kissed and hugged goodbye.

I was on the Interstate by eleven and drove without stopping until I was past Atlanta, and even then, I pulled off the road long enough to fill up with gas, get a diet Coke and a pack of cashews. Jaden and I talked briefly by cell phone. She mainly wanted to see if I was making good time or not.

I listened to *The Traveling Wilburys*

at least twice. I also listened to some older CD's I owned. Tom T. Hall, Joe South, and Emmylou Harris—who I jokingly told Jaden I would run away with if she ever invited me. I loved her voice and her natural look. Jaden told me to go ahead, that I might get a BMW after all.

I finally pulled in to Aunt Ophelia's about dusk. The peacocks were down in the woods, screaming, and I called Mama and Daddy to let them know I was there in case any locals decided to call them and tell them a strange vehicle was at Aunt Ophelia's. I unpacked, got organized, and decided to get a good night's sleep before I started to work the next morning at the Apalachee. I also decided I would clean and rearrange Ophelia's furniture around, so we'd have room for some of our things, even though most of it would end up in a secured storage facility in Tallahassee, but that work could wait a day or two.

The next day, the drive to Tallahassee wasn't bad at all. It took about forty-five minutes, and the more I thought about it, the more it occurred to me that Jaden often had a forty-five minute commute with traffic in Nashville. I met the doorman, Jack, who was Effie's cousin. He was kind, and I could tell by their eyes they were related. It's funny how you can tell these little things, and of course, I don't know if I would have made the connection

if I hadn't known. I filled out human resources paperwork related to social security, health care, and so forth, and Ms. Lola came and welcomed me officially to the Apalachee. We toured the facility again, but this time I was introduced to every employee on the property who was at work. Given there were three shifts, some employees I would have to meet later.

Finally, Lola looked at her watch.

"...but I do recall that my uncle bought a lot of oil stock from her prediction and hit the jackpot..."

"Max, I can't believe it's lunch already. We should grab a bite. I'll bet you're starving."

"No, not really," I responded. "I didn't even realize the time."

We walked to the café, took seats, and ordered salads. Lola explained that I could charge breakfast, lunch and dinner anytime I wanted and they would either deduct it from my paycheck, or I could simply pay it. She said she'd only been stiffed once in all the years she had owned the place. Lola talked a little about her family, and particularly her husband's decline, and I was surprised when she shifted the conversation to my family.

"Max, I knew some of your family."

"What do you mean?"

"First, my uncle was engaged to your Aunt Ophelia. They met in the restaurant here at the Apalachee. She

was a beautiful woman, very regal. I remember imitating her as a child. I knew your grandparents, too, but not well, and I remember your Great Aunt Helen."

"That's amazing," I said. "I wondered why you asked me if I would commute or live here when you hired me."

"Yes, I think we went to your family farm once. I remember a pond, the old bungalow, the peacocks."

"What happened to your uncle?"

"He was killed in a car accident."

"So, then, that means he was Ophelia's first fiancé. She was engaged to two other men, both of whom died. One

with the flu in the epidemic and one in the Korean War."

"That sounds right. They loved to go for rides in his convertible Thunderbird, and I remember him telling her they would always be together."

Part of me wondered about the mysterious rider, the logger who hit Aunt Ophelia claimed he saw the day she was killed. It's easier to imagine it to be true than try to investigate it, but part of me felt like calling him over in Waycross, where he lived, to ask him what the fellow looked like, but I figured it would make a better story to tell. "And you knew my great Aunt Helen?"

"Vaguely. There was something wrong with her. It seemed to get worse from what I recall, but you know adults didn't talk about things like that much back then and certainly not around

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children.”

“What were her symptoms?”

“She was brilliant, very quiet, but she could make predictions. I remember her telling me I would one day own and run this hotel, and I was fascinated by that thought. Of course, I was just a child and it didn’t take much to fascinate me then. But I do recall that my uncle bought a lot of oil stock from her prediction and hit the jackpot. I also think your grandparents did, too. In fact, there were some men from Washington who came here to talk with her and your grandparents shortly after they did that. I think they suspected something fishy. She began to suspect everyone. I don’t think she was outright paranoid, but she was walking a thin line. She was truly a mystery, but she did begin to tell people things that upset them, and once in a while, there was a scene at the hotel. I think

your grandparents finally decided to send her for some rest and relaxation at a new facility. I don’t really know what happened to her after that, and of course, Max, this is all from a child’s perspective many years ago.”

“Apparently, I read in an old letter in a trunk that she was given a prefrontal lobotomy and died a year later at the state hospital in Milledgeville.”

“That’s sad. I don’t know that she ever told anything that wasn’t true. Looking back, it was as if she had a sixth sense, an intuition, and she could read people very well. If she told people the truth, even at the hospital, then people wouldn’t have liked that.”

“True. I guess it’s too long ago to check it all out now, and I’m sure there would be no records. Plus, most of the people who would have known something about it would probably be deceased. Anyway, that is amazing. You have helped me more today than

you’ll ever know. Thanks.”

“Well, what are you and Jaden going to name this little girl?”

“Ophelia, but maybe we’ll give her the middle name of Helen.”

“I think that would be splendid.”

Our conversation was interrupted by her cell phone ringing. Her caller was the hospice nurse telling her that Mr. Smith’s breathing had become somewhat labored, and she should come home. I asked if she was okay, and she replied, “You’re never really ready to let go, but you have to.”

Niles Reddick lives in Tifton, Georgia with his wife and two children. Author of the short story collection, “Road Kill Art and Other Oddities,” he was a finalist for an Eppie Award in fiction. For more information on the author, visit his website at www.nilesreddick.com.

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Dancing in the Rain

A granddaughter's memoir by Rachel Anne Skinner

Everyone should have a Nana. My Nana, my grandmother, taught me to enjoy the simple things. She taught me how to find artistry in the ordinary. She did this by teaching me how to see the beauty in a common wildflower and how to find joy by simply dancing in the rain.

Nana always told me that I would be the writer in the family, and when I look at old photographs of us, it makes me want to write about our times

together and somehow make a permanent record of those memories. Those pictures capture those simple moments in time when we did everything together, and those times with her were always special. We ran, we sang and we played. She let me ride in the front seat of her truck—something my parents never would have allowed—on the way to feed the ducks at the park. “Rachel, that little one needs some bread,” she’d say. Because she and my grandfather lived across from a railroad crossing, fast freights would regularly scream by as we worked together in her flower garden or as I rode my bike on the dead end street that ran beside their little brick house.

Sometimes she would take me back to a tire swing that hung from a sturdy limb of a century-old oak back in what used to be a thick forest behind her house. Her two stray dogs that she had taken in, Red and Bubba—not so cleverly named by my no-frills grandfather—would follow close on

our heels, always hoping that a piece of my banana popsicle would break off and fall to the ground.

To get our chores done, Nana had a

her neighbor’s pool and spend the rest of the morning swimming. Once we returned home in the afternoon, she would bring out my plastic, dollar store microphone and her exercise step, which served as a perfect stage where I would perform the children’s songs that she had taught me early on. After dinner, which usually included “beanie weenies” and her famous

mashed potatoes, we would play card games like “Canasta,” “Old Maid” and “Go Fish” until late in the evening, long past my bedtime.

When I look at those old photographs, it brings a flood of those simple, bittersweet memories. Each picture captures a precious snapshot in time that will always live in my heart. We’re both older now; my grandmother has some serious medical concerns, and as a high school student, I have a busy schedule that doesn’t allow for as much free time as I would like, which makes my time with my grandmother much more precious. I saw her a few weeks ago, and as we were leaving, she reached up to hug me, a simple

gesture and the opposite of the way it used to be. Walking out to the car it started to rain; all of a sudden, I felt like dancing.

This past May, Rachel’s grandmother, Patricia Knox, lost her battle with cancer a few weeks after this was written. She will be missed by everyone who knew her.



When I look at those old photographs, it brings a flood of those simple, bittersweet memories.

special way of making anything fun. I didn’t realize that yard work and washing dishes were chores, because she made everything a game.

On summer mornings we’d have breakfast, which consisted of eggs—not something I would normally enjoy, but Nana made “the good ones.” Then we would walk a few doors down to



Napoleon is gone now, but that day he wasn't gone

by Charlton Walters Hillis

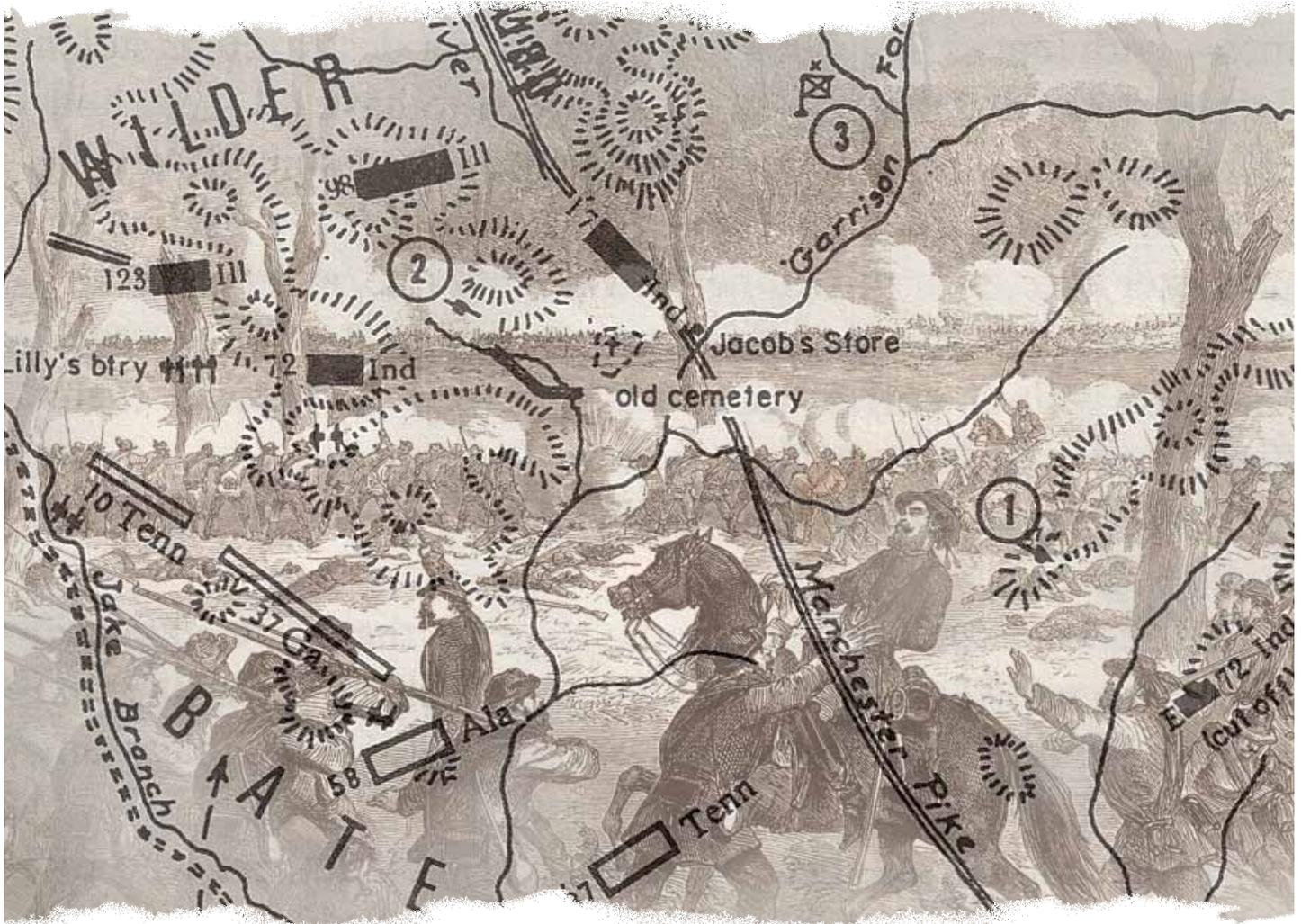
Napoleon is gone now, but that day he wasn't gone.
So wrote Dan, on the back of a little black and white shot
of Connie, curly headed and small, riding bareback
upon an oddly disreputable looking beast.

Napoleon is gone now, but that day he wasn't gone.
A profound statement (written in pencil,
on the back of a small, slightly bent,
black and white snapshot with wavy edges)
which spreads like pond ripples through my imagination,
making my eyes water,
giving phrase to all which once was
and now is no more on this earth,
including my brother, who wrote it.

More than the life of a horse summed up in one brief line,
It conjures up visions of my past,
and of a past I never knew,
and fills my head with delicious nostalgia
and with dreaded apparitions.
It is a brief and fiercely direct route
back into another time:
Now he isn't; now he is.

It speaks volumes of life and death,
of the passing of time, of the undulations
of plowed black dirt on an East Texas farm.
It holds promise to me of a story, of stories,
which I long with all my heart to hear
and yet which are just out of earshot — forever.

I grab at it, gasping, about to understand, to remember,
and then it dips back into wherever it came from.
I grab at the thought in the same manner
I try to grab at the concept of Dan now gone.
Napoleon is gone now, but that day he wasn't gone.



The Battle at Hoover's Gap

by Shirley Farris Jones

Following the Battle of Stones River on December 31, 1862 through January 2, 1863, the Army of Tennessee, under the command of General Braxton Bragg, retreated some twenty miles south of Murfreesboro and constructed extensive fortifications along the Duck River at Shelbyville and Wartrace.

Entrenched behind both natural and man-made barriers, Bragg and his 47,000 Confederates hoped to prevent the Federal army from controlling Middle Tennessee and reaching their ultimate objective, Chattanooga—one of the South's most important railroad centers and the gateway into East Tennessee and Alabama.

During the six-month period from January until June 1863, there was

virtually no military activity between the two opposing forces. The fighting that had occurred was by Confederate cavalry under Forrest, Morgan, and Wheeler. The Confederate cavalry outnumbered Union cavalry by more than 7,000 men and was at that time the toughest, most effective, and most ably led body of troops on either side. Union General William S. Rosecrans concerned himself with the construc-

tion of a huge earthen fort and supply depot on the outskirts of Murfreesboro, which he then named in honor of himself, "Fortress Rosecrans." Despite urging from Washington and his superiors, he was in no hurry to attack Confederate strong positions, using the excuses of inadequate cavalry and the need for reinforcements. Even General Grant's insistence of some military effort in middle Tennessee was ignored, with Rosecrans stating the possibility of Grant losing at Vicksburg. Obviously, Rosecrans was not eager to face the immense tactical and strategic problems which awaited the Army of the Cumberland along the Confederate defensive line,

running from Shelbyville to Wartrace to Tullahoma to McMinnville. Bragg had placed one corps at Shelbyville under the command of General Leonidas Polk on his left, and the other corps at Wartrace on his right was under the command of General William J. Hardee. General Joseph Wheeler's cavalry guarded the extreme right flank at McMinnville, while General Nathan Bedford Forrest covered the extreme left at Columbia. The ridge north of the Confederate position on the Duck River presented a very serious barrier to any southward advance on Tullahoma by the Federals and could only be penetrated through a series of four passes, west to east, Guy's Gap, Bell Buckle Gap, Liberty Gap, and Hoover's Gap. Polk posted a strong advance force to hold Guy's Gap, with the rest of his corps within supporting distance at Shelbyville, thought to be the likely target. Hardee's were assigned to hold the other three gaps, Hoover's Gap being the most important with the Murfreesboro-Manchester turnpike passing through it.

In early May, Rosecrans knew that Bragg's army had been weakened by detachments having been sent to aid the Vicksburg Campaign—11,300 men in all (9,300 infantry and 2,000 cavalry). And, then on June 13, General John Hunt Morgan and his 2,500 cavalymen rode out on what was to be the "Great Ohio Raid." The time was now right for Union forces to move so on June 24, Rosecrans' army of 50,000 men began its advance on Tullahoma. Rosecrans very cleverly attempted to deceive Bragg from seeing the drive on Manchester as the main Union objective and sent troops to Shelbyville as a devisive maneuver. The goal was the capture of Hoover's Gap, then Manchester Pike and Bradyville, ultimately moving onto Manchester, thus

forcing Bragg to recall his forces to Tullahoma. If Union forces could capture Manchester and force Bragg to abandon the Shelbyville-Wartrace line, they could also make his Tullahoma base untenable with another flanking

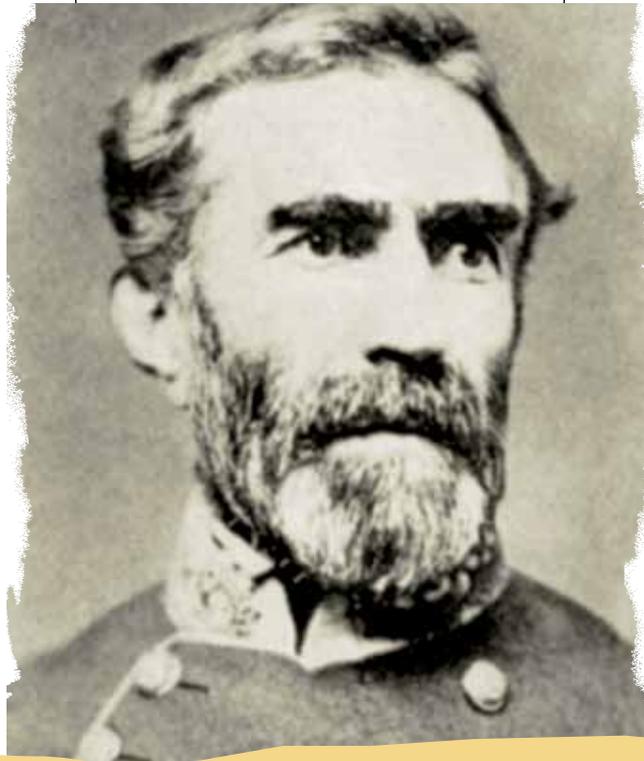
on eagerly, anxious to try their new Spencer repeating rifles, in what they knew would be a major encounter with the enemy. Wilder himself had arranged for the financing of these new weapons with his hometown bank in Greensburg, Indiana when the Army brass in Washington had refused to purchase them. At 10:00 a.m. Colonel Wilder and his Brigade, almost nine miles ahead of the rest of their division, reached the entrance to Hoover's Gap.

The 1st Kentucky Cavalry was on duty when Wilder's sudden and unexpected advance took them completely by surprise. Confederate forces retreated after a valiant fight through the seven-mile length of the gap and Wilder pushed on through, seizing the hills at the south end of Hoover's Gap, which he was determined to hold until reinforcements arrived.

This was the very position that Confederate forces had planned to use for their own defense. Brigadier General William B. Bate rushed his Confederates to the front and for over an hour they gallantly attacked Wilder's entrenched, but badly outnumbered, brigade.

Company E, of the 72nd Indiana overran its position and while returning to the battle line, and being fired upon by Confederates, came across three small children, two girls and a boy, trying to find their way out of the woods amid the shower of bullets. The firing suddenly stopped. Sgt. Wilhite of the 72nd dismounted, helped the children over a fence and headed them toward a house out of range of the battle. The fighting then resumed and Company E went about its business of fighting its way back to the brigade.

The battle continued throughout the day, with charge after charge of brave Southern men being repulsed by a storm of Yankee bullets from their new



Bragg and his 47,000 Confederates hoped to prevent the Federal army from controlling Middle Tennessee and reaching their ultimate objective, Chattanooga...

move, thereby cutting Bragg off from his main supply base at Chattanooga. Hoover's Gap was critical for the success of this plan

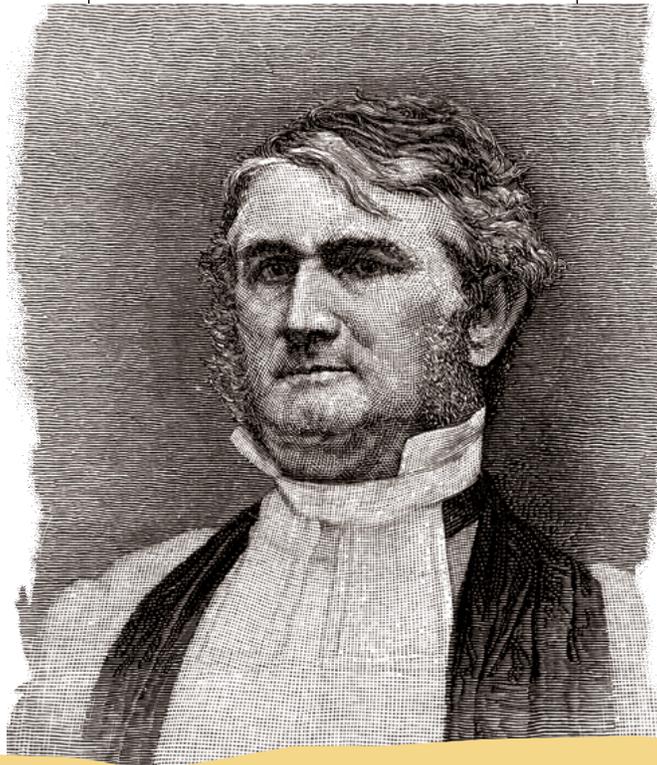
The task of capturing Manchester was assigned to Corps commanders George H. Thomas and Alexander M. McCook, both seasoned veterans of war. Before dawn on the 24th, Colonel John T. Wilder's Brigade moved out in advance of Thomas' corps. A slow drizzling rain turned the roads into quagmires. This rain continued for the next eleven days, and was described by Rosecrans as "one of the most extraordinary rains ever known in Tennessee." Despite the discomfort, however, Wilder's men marched

“seven-shooters.” Bate’s Tennesseans staggered but filled their ranks and came on time and time again only to fall back in a hail of bullets. General Bate reorganized his men, brought up his reserves, and together with Bushrod Johnson’s newly arrived brigade, began preparations for a new attack on Wilder’s position. In the meantime, Wilder was ordered to withdraw immediately, but refused and steadfastly maintained that he could hold his position and would take responsibility for the consequences, even under the threat of arrest. He was accurate in this assessment and the last attack of the day was easily repulsed. By 7:00 p.m., Union reinforcements had arrived and on June 26th Confederate forces withdrew toward Tullahoma.

The 1,500 Spencer repeating rifles were capable of firing 14 rounds per minute and proved to be the difference between Union forces and the numerically superior Confederates. General Thomas declared following the day’s battle that he had not expected to capture the gap for three days and that henceforth Wilder’s men would be known as the “Lightning Brigade.” Over two hundred, or nearly one fourth of the Confederate forces, were killed or wounded at Hoover’s Gap while Wilder’s Brigade suffered only fifty-one casualties. General Bate later commented that judging from the fire power of the Union force, he thought he was outnumbered five to one. It may very well be that this first encounter with repeating rifles at Hoover’s Gap was the beginning of the expression which traveled around the Confederate army for the remainder of the war, that the “Yankees could load on Sunday and shoot all the rest of the week.”

The Battle at Hoover’s Gap was the beginning of what was to be known

as the ill-fated Tullahoma campaign. It was the first battle to see the use of repeater rifles. The loss of Hoover’s Gap resulted in the loss of Middle Tennessee, a blow from which the South would never recover, and ultimately set the stage for the Atlanta Campaign and Sherman’s March to the Sea one year later. It was also



General Leonidas Polk posted a strong advance force to hold Guy’s Gap, with the rest of his corps.

the beginning of the end of two military careers—Bragg and Rosecrans. Although overshadowed by the battles of Vicksburg and Gettysburg, the importance and impact of those eleven rainy days in Tennessee cannot be denied.

The key players

General Braxton Bragg—Although there was much discontent among Confederate army leaders and Bragg having lost much of the respect of his men, he never-the-less had the support of President Jefferson Davis and remained in charge of the Army of

Tennessee for another year.

After victory at Chickamauga in September, the loss in November at Chattanooga/Lookout Mountain resulted in the loss of Tennessee and retreat to Georgia, where he was finally replaced by General Joseph E. Johnston.

Gen. William Starke Rosecrans—Rosecrans’ embarrassing defeat at Chickamauga in September and the demoralizing retreat to Chattanooga resulted in his being replaced by George H. Thomas, the “Rock of Chickamauga,” thus ending his military career.

Lt. Col. John T. Wilder—After the war, Wilder returned home to Greensburg, Indiana. In 1866, he relocated his family to Chattanooga, where several members of the “Lightning Brigade” followed. He founded the Roane Iron Company and was a very successful businessman. He worked hard at healing the war wounds of the city and was elected mayor in 1871. An ex-Confederate soldier wrote of him: “It was deemed appropriate that Wilder should be elected mayor of the free choice of the people of Chattanooga to show that no bitterness engendered by war remains in our hearts.” In 1876, running as a Republican, he lost

a bid to Congress, but was appointed Post Master the next year by incoming President Rutherford B. Hayes.

It was said of Wilder: “He has lived many years among a people whom he once fought with all his dash and vim, and has not yet received one unkind or unkind word from any man in the South, and what is more, he has a host of friends among them.”

Wilder was appointed Chairman of the Chickamauga National Park Commission and an 85-foot tower in his honor was dedicated on the 40th anniversary of the battle in 1903. Wilder died in 1917.

The Beech Grove Confederate Cemetery

High atop a hill, with the Confederate battle flag flying proudly in the breeze, nestled between the hustle and bustle of busy Interstate 24 and U.S. 41 just about halfway between Murfreesboro and Manchester, is the first Confederate cemetery to be established after the War Between the States. It also holds the distinction of being the final resting place for 50 unknown Confederate soldiers who were killed at the Battle of Hoover's Gap, where Spencer Repeating Rifles were first used by Union troops. Despite the changing character of surrounding lands evolving into twenty-first century icons, the integrity of this small cemetery, and the tranquility of that place in time, still exists today.

The following is a letter published in the *Manchester Times* newspaper in 1904 by Civil War veteran and former resident of Beech Grove, William Hume, which tells the story of how the cemetery came into being. He wrote:

Dear Friend and Comrade, As you are aware, nearly every man able to bear arms in the First, Second, and Third Districts of Coffee County, and in the adjoining districts of Rutherford and Bedford Counties, was in the Confederate Army, and made the best of soldiers.

In the spring of 1866, quite a number assembled at Beech Grove, and reports were made that many Confederate soldiers had been hastily buried in the fields and pastures nearby, and in some instances the graves were so shallow that portions of the remains were showing. These men all having lately returned to their homes—with fences and stock to a great extent destroyed or stolen and the country devastated—at once agreed to have all these bodies of Confederate soldiers taken up and given a suitable resting place. They selected the top of the hill in the old graveyard on the Manchester Pike, near the Rutherford County line, and in full view of the Manchester Pike, on the land owned by David Lawrence. They then had a nice walnut coffin made for each and re-interred there,

putting head-boards on each grave, but being unable to put any name, as all were unknown. They also put a nice paling fence around the graves.

This was done by the people there at their own expense, never having called on any other section for help, and was the first Confederate Soldiers' graveyard in the South that I have any knowledge of.

The majority of these veterans and their fathers who did this work are dead. Possibly Stokley Jacobs, Bud Jacobs, and Henry Bivins could give you some information in regard to this.

I think it is due your country to have this honor, as it was done at a time when the Confederate soldier did not occupy the position in the State of Tennessee and the United States that he does today, and was entirely the work of love for fallen comrades.

*Yours,
Wm Hume*

Manchester Times, March 25, 1904

At the time this cemetery was chosen as the final resting place for these fifty unknown Confederate soldiers, there were a few family graves, including one Revolutionary War Soldier, on the site. In 1942, one other Confederate veteran was buried there. For many years it was cared for by local residents and former veterans. Despite their efforts, it fell into a state of disrepair and vandalism became a serious problem. Then in the early 1950's, \$5,000 in state money was appropriated to replace the deteriorating and missing original grave markers. Through the efforts of the late David Jacobs, a retired educator and historian, and with the help of the Sons of Confederate Veterans, an additional \$5,000 was raised. The land was purchased and the cemetery dedicated in 1955. Mr. Jacobs was its caretaker until his death in 1993. The SCV continues to care for the cemetery at present.

How strategic was the battle that left more than 200 Southern men either dead or wounded on top of the blood-soaked farmland in and near Hoover's Gap that sits at the meeting points of Coffee, Rutherford, and Bedford counties near the unincorporated rural community of Beech Grove?

Historically, the Battle of Hoover's

Gap (or Beech Grove), was a significant engagement in the Tullahoma Campaign, following on the heels of the major Battle of Stones River six months prior. Overall, Confederate forces were out-numbered, ten to one. And if there were not enough odds against them when they came into battle armed with slow-firing musket rifles, they also held the unfortunate distinction of being the first soldiers in warfare history to be fired upon by the Spencer repeating rifles. Nearly one fourth of the brave Confederate forces defending Hoover's Gap were either killed or wounded, as compared to only fifty-one Union casualties. Time stopped in 1863 for these fifty unknown Confederate soldiers resting atop this little hill and fate determined their destiny. Yet, "they shall remain nameless, and they shall remain faceless, but they will not be forgotten."

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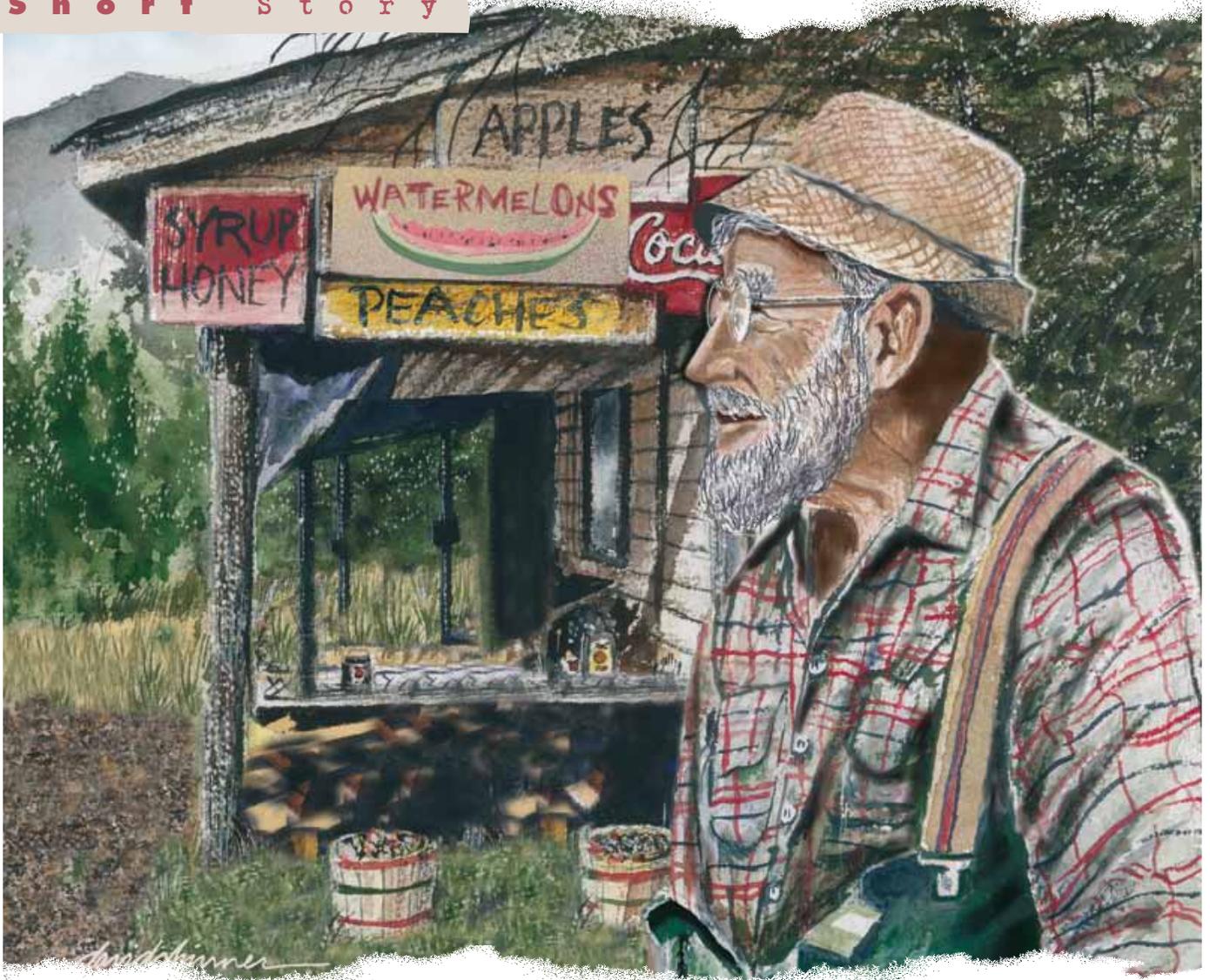
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Shirley Farris Jones is a Civil War historian and community activist and is a direct descendant of two Confederate great-great-grandfathers. She is a life-long resident of Murfreesboro, Tennessee and currently writes a monthly column for "The Murfreesboro Post."



The Summer of Love

A short story by David Ray Skinner

Jonah Kinsey's gas station/grocery store rested at the foot of the mountain in the "crook of the elbow" of the old road that snaked its way out of the National Park and into the valley.

The road had only been paved for less than ten years, and, out of respect to its previous condition, it still managed to cough up clouds of red dust whenever the occasional tourist or bored valley local managed to pull up under its rusty-red "WATERMELONS" sign or up to its solitary antique Sinclair gas pump. The small island around the gas pump was cracked asphalt, but the

rest of the store's "parking area" was still dirt and gravel. The round globe on top of the pump had the Sinclair logo with Dino, the green dinosaur, but several years before, some of the valley boys had thought that it would be amusing to scratch Dino's legs off. Consequently, Dino looked more like the Loch Ness monster, but that had certainly not been the intent of the

valley boys, who were on a moonshine binge and were easily amused by the thought of a legless dinosaur.

It was a hot afternoon in August of 1967, the middle of tourist season, and the old man had been driven out of the hot store onto the rickety front porch. He poured tobacco from a little cotton pouch into a thin piece of paper in his lap and rolled a cigarette, which he lit with a wooden match from a box in his pocket. He pulled his seasoned straw hat over his sweat-drenched forehead, tugged at his suspenders and leaned back in his chair as he gazed out toward the road, scanning for prospective customers. They would either be

tourists looking for gas, or locals dropping by for a game of checkers on the front porch or to pick up one of his county-famous, delicious watermelons that he and his wife, Bertie grew in their own garden.

Across the road from the store, at the top of a large whiteoak tree, a flash of black feathers and a “*caw, caw, caw!*” briefly distracted Jonah and he squinted up in the direction of the sound. Behind him, inside the store, among the cans of soup and dogfood and boxes of soap, above the noise of the frantic (yet unsuccessful) efforts of a valiant ceiling fan, his old vacuum-tube radio crackled with local farm news and reports from the Vietnam war on the other side of the world.

Ah yes, the war.

For a moment Jonah reflected on his experiences in the trenches of France in the first war. Like always, these memories segued into the foggy scenes of the frustration of he and Bertie anxiously waiting to hear from their son, Roy Lee chasing after Hitler in Germany. Both he and Roy Lee had survived their respective wars and had returned home intact to the mountain. This time, though, it was his grandson Dale’s turn, and the old man couldn’t help feeling little twinges of doubt as to how it would turn out for him. In the ’40s, he had still been relatively young and strong, and he had always felt that if Roy Lee had gotten into a jam, he would have somehow managed to get over there and bring him home. After all, he had survived the ordeal once before, jammed into uncomfortable conditions and French villages with hundreds and maybe thousands of other men, and he had lived to tell about it. However, he’d left a first cousin and one of his childhood friends over there. His cousin had taken a German bullet through the heart; his friend had been struck down by that mysterious flu, and it killed him just as dead, though not as quickly.

Dale’s war was different. Jonah and Roy Lee had had distinct objectives;

win the war or die trying. In both cases, the enemy was obvious and defeat would have been a disaster. With Vietnam, however, Jonah felt like the goals were hazy, and though he had enthusiastically supported Dale’s decision to enlist, he couldn’t quite figure out the objective for this new kind of war. He also knew that if Dale got into trouble, he’d have to get himself out of it; Jonah was too old to travel to the other side of the world, and Roy Lee had lately been having some medical problems. This fear for Dale’s safety was not unwarranted; initially, the family had gotten several letters a week from him, but the letters had stopped abruptly the month before. Dale had warned that there may be a break in the correspondence—they were on

shirt. Together with his deputy badge, it gave the appearance of a huge traveling map, with a shiny star in the middle.

“Afternoon, Mr. Kinsey,” Blevinger said, pausing on the steps and wiping his sweaty brow with a nasty handkerchief, “Hot enough for y’all?”

Jonah’s first thought was to say, “*No, Blevinger, come on inside and we’ll fire up the cookstove so maybe it can melt the rest of that pea-sized brain you got rolling around behind that ugly mug,*” but he managed a weak smile instead and said, “I do believe it is, Deputy. Would you like a Co-Cola to cool you off?”

“Yessir, thank ya,” Blevinger said, smiling a gap-toothed grin, “That sure would hit the spot.”

“Plus, it’s free,”

Jonah thought to himself. He went inside the hot store and reappeared with a frosty bottle of coke; it had already begun to sweat as he handed it to the deputy.

Blevinger threw

his head back and let the cold liquid drain down his throat. “Thanky,” he said, wiping his mouth with his hammy paw, “Ain’t nothin’ like a Co-Cola on a summer day.”

“So they say,” Jonah said, once again scanning the dusty road and tugging at his grizzled gray beard. “Well, Deputy...what brings you out to the valley this fine day?” he casually asked.

“Hippies,” Blevinger replied, “We got a call that there was a busload of ’em headed out this way.”

“What’d they do?” Jonah asked.

“Nothin’ yet, as far as we can tell,” Blevinger said, “But we gonna keep it that way. Ain’t no reason for ’em to be here. So’s I mean to find ’em and escort them out of the county. That is, unless I find somethin’ on ’em that shouldn’t be. All we need is marijuana or heroin spillin’ over into this county,” he winked, “We’ll leave that kind of foolishness to Knoxville and Nashville and Merry Christmas to ’em.” As if he were awakened by his own speech, Blevinger suddenly seemed to have a new sense of urgency, and he stood

“Hippies,” Blevinger replied, “We got a call that there was a busload of ’em headed out this way.”

the verge of some sort of special mission deep into the jungle—but he had promised an update as soon as he was “in the clear.” He had hinted that there may be a promotion for him on the other end of the mission.

Jonah’s war-torn reverie was abruptly broken by the unmistakable pop-pop-popping sound of car wheels on the gravel in front of the store, and he looked up to see a county squad car crunching in fast from the opposite direction. The deputy, J.D. Blevinger, was a big man. He slowly pushed open the squad car’s door, as his rear-panel antennae whipped back and forth like an old gradeschool teacher’s chastising index finger. He flipped the stub of a brown-stained Winston, burned down to the filter, into the gravel as he huffed and puffed his way up to the store’s wooden steps. There were beads of sweat on his forehead, framed by strands of short, greasy black hair around a receding hairline. The sweat had also created large, dark floral patterns under his arms and down the front of his pressed khaki uniform

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up, finished off his drink, rubbed his big hands together and waddled down to the squadcar. "If you do happen to see 'em, Mr. Kinsey," he called up, sticking his head out the squad car's window, "Call the headquarters, and they'll radio me."

To Jonah it sounded more like a command than a request, and he felt the stirrings of anger beginning to move like bile up his gut, but before the impulse could reach his tongue, the calm of the afternoon was interrupted by a convertible with an elderly couple tearing down the valley road past the store. "Whee-e-e-e!" Jonah thought. Blevinger quickly screwed on his Smoky Bear deputy hat, flipped on the red light and siren and took off in the direction of the speeding tourists, throwing dust and gravel in the direction of Jonah and the store.

"Dadblamed mo-ron," Jonah said disgustedly under his breath, shaking his head, but before the dust could settle, the old phone inside the store began to ring. "What now?" he said. He made his way inside the sweltering store and switched off the radio before ambling back to the ancient black phone on the wall behind the counter. "Hold your water, I'm coming," he said to the ringing phone. "Store!" he said into the receiver after yanking it off the hook.

There was initially silence on the line, but finally the voice said, "Jonah?" It was Bertie. "Jonah, has Roy Lee been down at the store?"

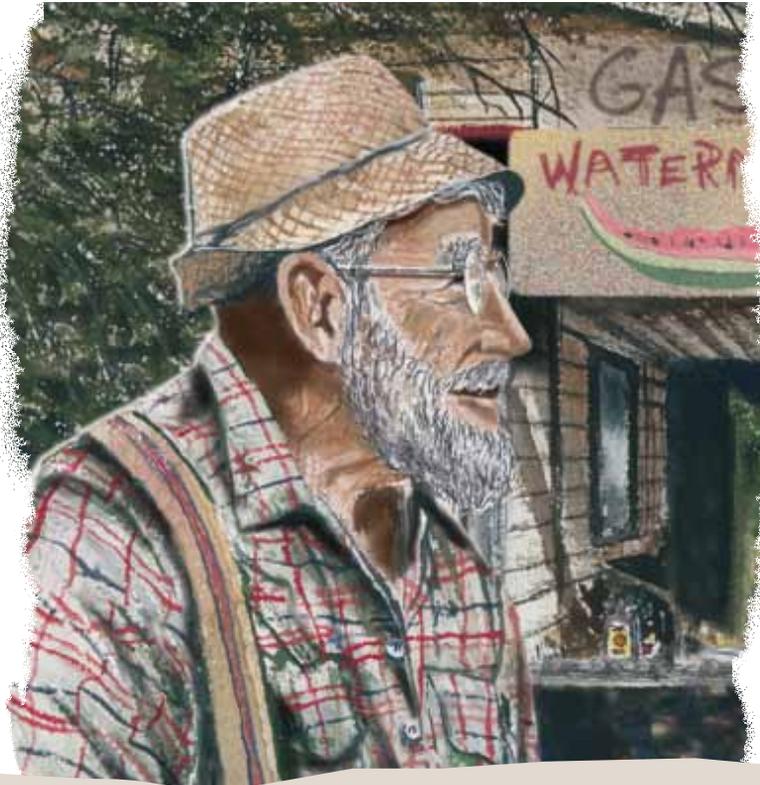
Jonah's voice softened. "Not today. Somebody looking for him?"

"No. He and Bettye just got back from Nashville and they stopped by here, but I was out in the garden, so

I missed them, and I thought maybe they'd stopped by the store."

"No. Hadn't seen 'em," Jonah said, but he was thinking, "*What's wrong? What's going on...?*"

"Their neighbor across the road, Miz Bell, said Western Union was there this morning right before they got home from Nashville, and now they're worried that it's some news about Dale," Bertie said, worriedly. "Western Union didn't leave any kind of note or noth-



Instinctively, he felt along the shelf under the cash register for his hidden blue-steel .38 as he turned to address the stranger.

ing. Why would they do that? So now Roy Lee is nervous as a cat. This is the last thing he needs. 'Course, Bettye's crying and crying. You know how she carries on." Bertie sighed, "If they didn't stop by the store, maybe they just went on into town to Western Union."

"*I hate telegrams,*" Jonah thought, "*It's never good news. I hate Western Union.*" But finally he said, "Did they call down to Western Union?"

"I don't know, I didn't talk to 'em," she said. The phone line was popping and crackling. "I was out in the garden and I heard them drivin' off, but I couldn't catch 'em. They's already on the main road when I got up to the house. So I called Miz Bell to see if she knew what was goin' on and she told me about the Western Union man. Wonder why he didn't leave a note?"

"*Because I hate Western Union,*" Jonah thought, but he said, "It's probably nothing. Don't worry until you have to. Just let me know if you hear something, and if I need to, I'll close up and head home or over to Roy Lee's."

As Jonah hung up, he was vaguely aware of someone standing behind him in the store. He must have quietly come into the store while he was on the phone with Bertie. Jonah was not a timid man, but he was carefully cautious; his experiences during wartime had permanently ingrained that into his various routines. He had always felt that that caution had not only kept him alive during the war, it had continued to keep him alive. He had had some minor shoplifting in the store through the years, but as long as he had owned the store, he had never been robbed, and he meant to keep it that way.

Instinctively, he felt along the shelf under the cash register for his hidden blue-steel .38 as he turned to address the stranger. He was startled to see a young man, in his early 20s, with long, curly hair and a full beard staring back at him with a quizzical gaze. "*It's just a kid,*" Jonah thought. He relaxed his grip on the hidden gun and folded his arms as he surveyed the young man. "Can I help you?" he asked.

The boy wore dirty bell-bottom blue jeans, frayed at the bottom with quilted

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patches on both knees. His outfit was magnified with dusty Mexican sandals and a worn, yellow t-shirt with splotches of aqua and purple and "LOVE NOT WAR" printed across the chest. "Does your gas pump work?" the boy finally said.

"More than you," Jonah thought of saying, but instead he replied, "Should be working." He looked past the boy, through the screen door and studied the vehicle outside, idling in front of the store. It was a Volkswagen van, and a young blonde woman wearing a full dress was climbing out of the passenger side and stretching. "Well, Deputy, I found your hippies," Jonah thought to himself.

"So you sell watermelons." "Say what?" Jonah returned his gaze to the boy.

"Watermelons. You're the watermelon man. S'posed to be good watermelons. Is that true? Or is it some

wrong old man..."

"Listen, son..." Jonah began, leaning across the counter toward the young man, but he was interrupted by the screen door flying open and a young blonde woman sailing into the dark store.

"Did you ask him about the watermelons? Those special, magic watermelons?" she demanded.

Jonah turned abruptly to address the woman, "Alright, listen, you two..." he said, trying to control his rising anger, but the girl's appearance stopped him in mid-sentence. She was pretty, that was clear enough, but she seemed to try and hide it under a floppy hat, a long flour-

**"Is this kid messing with me?"
Jonah thought. "If he is, he picked
the wrong day, the wrong store,
and the wrong old man..."**

overblown hype. Let's see one of these magic watermelons, man. Show us what you got."

"Is this kid messing with me?" Jonah thought. "If he is, he picked the wrong day, the wrong store, and the



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sack cotton dress and wild flowers and sparkly beads from the brim of her hat to the hem of her long dress. Her outfit was rounded out by bright red and black cowboy boots. She was smiling, and her beautiful blue eyes were twinkling. *What?!!! Not only had she already chosen one of his melons, she had already sliced it and was sucking on a big piece, the juice dripping off her chin.* An image flashed in Jonah's head of a toddler, holding a raggedy baby doll, climbing up onto his lap and smiling with those same eyes and straggly blonde hair, holding a big slice of watermelon in her hand.

Wait a minute!!! "Frances?" he said, somewhat confused. "Fran? Frannie? Is that you?"

"Papa Joe," the girl said, "You still have the bestest watermelons in the world!" She was handing a slice to the boy.

Jonah came out from behind the counter and brushed by the boy, who was also smiling, to hug the girl. "Frannie! What are you doin' here? We all thought you were in California. San Francisco?"

"Yeah, *Frannie*," the boy said, "what are we doing here?"

"Sit down. Sit down. Sit down," Jonah said, pulling up a couple of old wooden folding chairs.

"This is Steed," she said, blushing and nodding at the boy, "Steed, this is my grandfather. And Papa Joe, I go by 'Fern', now."

"Oh that's great," Jonah said, "A horse and a plant, all the way from California."

"That's my granddad!" the girl laughed.

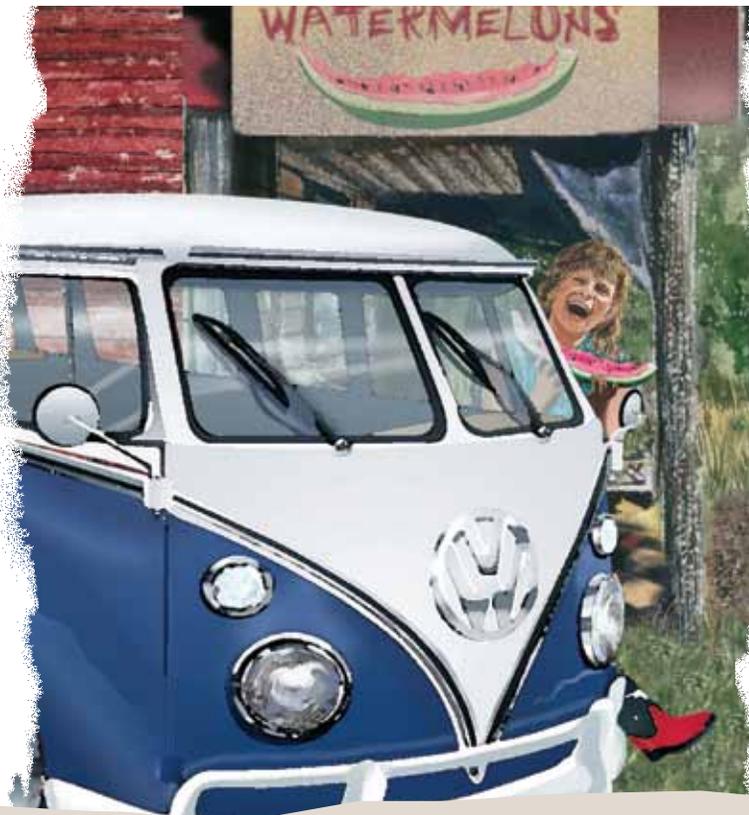
"That's my 'Frannie!'" the boy said.

"Ha ha," she said, shooting the boy a

pretend look of anger.

"You've been gone for two years," Jonah said, "I didn't hardly recognize you. What have you been up to?"

"San Francisco is...incredible. We have thousands of friends and thousands of friends we haven't met yet. There's music and art and love every-



**"Oh that's great," Jonah said,
"A horse and a plant, all the
way from California."**

where. In June, we were at a concert with 60,000 other beautiful people and it was just...groovy."

"It was what?" Jonah asked. It didn't sound beautiful to him. There weren't 60,000 people in their county. He couldn't imagine that many people in one place at one time. It sounded worse than a college football game, which he'd rather listen to on the radio.

"Don't mind her, Papa Joe," the boy said, "She's just talking hippie." Jonah wasn't sure he liked this kid calling him Papa Joe. The boy continued,

"What Fern is trying to say is that it's just a peaceful place. Everyone helps their neighbors. If someone's hungry, we find food for them. If someone's broke, we find some money for them. It's like Utopia, man. It's peace, and love and music, everywhere, all the time."

"Okay," said Jonah, already weary of the discussion, "So what brings you back to the valley?"

"That old microbus," the boy laughed, pointing to the van outside. "But... yeah, that's a good question. Fern...what brought us back to the valley?"

"I missed you, Papa Joe!" she said, seriously. "And Mama Bert, and Dad and Mom. And this store. And the valley. And the mountains. And your delicious magic watermelons!"

"Yeah," the boy added, "and we weren't really doing anything in San Francisco. Nothing important, really...just trying to make music, live in peace and end the war!"

The war! Suddenly Jonah remembered the situation that had hung in the air before he was interrupted by the arrival of the two young people. Jonah shot a long, stern look at the

smiling boy and then he turned to the girl. "Frannie. We think something may be up with your brother."

"What's going on with Dale?" she said, suddenly serious.

"We haven't heard from him in awhile. The last letter he sent us from..." Jonah shot a glance at the boy, "VIET-NAM...he was going on some sort of special mission. It may be nothing, but your folks had a visit from the Western Union man this morning. They missed him, actually, so they may be on their way downtown to the telegraph office."

"Oh, Papa Joe, you know Dale," she said, "He's always gotten into scrapes and he's always gotten out of them. Remember when those Cosby boys ran him off the road and cornered him down by the stone bridge? Over some Cosby girl. There was four of them and one of him..."

"Hope you're right. But we're not talking about the stone bridge and a few Cosby boys. We're talking about a big ol' dark jungle and a few million Commies in...VIET-NAM," Jonah said, looking over at the boy and daring him to comment.

The boy opened his mouth, but the loud ring of the ancient phone stopped his response. Jonah shuffled back behind the counter and lifted the receiver off the hook. "Store," he said, much more quietly than the way he previously answered it.

It was Bertie on the line. "Jonah," her voice quivered, "I think you'd better close up and come home. I just got a call from Roy Lee. They're coming over to the house."

"What's going on?" Jonah asked.

The two young people watched in silence.

"Roy Lee and Bettye found out something, but they didn't want to tell me over the phone," she said. "Can you close up and come home?"

"I'll be right there," he said, before hanging up. Then, to the two sitting in the store, "That was your grandma. I think we got some news about your brother. I don't know what's going on, but I...we...need to get to the house." Jonah jerked his head and cursed under his breath. "I didn't even tell your grandma you're home. Boy, this is some kinda day."

As the three walked out onto the rickety porch, the deputy's squad car roared into the gravel, kicking up dust and blocking the VW van. As he jumped out of the car with his hand on his holster, his hat went sailing over the car's roof and into the road. "Hold it, you two," he said, "Don't move."

The boy suddenly went pale, but

Jonah just rolled his eyes. "It's okay, Deputy," he said, "They're harmless."

"Thank you, Mr. Kinsey," Blevinger said, "But I've got some questions for these two." The deputy started up the old steps, staring at the two young people, his hammy paw still on his holster.

"Actually," Jonah said, "I need a word with you." He grabbed the deputy by his gun arm, gently at first, but squeezed until the large man looked at him with surprise. "Let's walk down to your car." The deputy hesitated at first, but with a parting glance at the two on the porch, followed the old man down to the car.

"I would offer you a Co-Cola, but I've done shut down my store," Jonah said in a friendly voice, loud enough for the two on the porch to hear. Once they got down to the squad car, he leaned in close to the deputy and said in a quiet, but forceful voice,

"...Remember when those Cosby boys ran him off the road and cornered him down by the stone bridge? Over some Cosby girl..."

"Listen, Blevinger, one of the 'hippies' that you've cornered at my store, *on my property*, is my granddaughter, Frances. She and her friend are here from California to visit the family. You have questions for them? Well, join the dadblamed club...don't you think we got questions for her?"

Blevinger moved back against his squad car. His hand was still on his holster and his eyes darted from Jonah to the two on the porch, like a big, trapped animal. "Mr. Kinsey, I got a job to do," he said, "I don't want no trouble from you, but I got responsibilities."

"Okay, we got a few choices here," Jonah said decidedly, "You can get back in your car and find yourself some more speeding tourists down the valley road, or we can call your boss—the sheriff—a man I've known since you were still making a mess in your diapers, and we can have a quick discussion with him, or...you can take

off that fancy gunbelt and we can settle it right here in front of my store. I will tell you this, though. Questioning my granddaughter and her friend from Cal-i-for-ni-a is an option that is not on the table for you. So...Deputy...what's it gonna be?"

Blevinger open his mouth to speak, but before he could say anything, an RV whisked by the store, crushing the deputy's hat in the middle of the valley road. Blevinger suddenly looked relieved at the distraction and jumped behind the wheel and tore off after them. "They weren't even speeding," Jonah said to himself.

When Jonah and the two young people pulled up Roy Lee's long, dirt driveway, he was surprised to see that the farmhouse was empty. "We must have beat your folks home," he said to his granddaughter. The three got out of the old man's pickup and climbed the steps to the front porch.

"Steed," the girl said, "This is where I grew up."

"Cool," the boy said, pushing the porch swing, "I

wish we had a porch swing like this back in the city."

"I wish we had a porch," she replied.

"Steed," Jonah said to himself, sighing and shaking his head. "Good grief. I'm guessing his real name is Stanley."

Beyond the farmhouse's front pasture, a mourning dove's call drifted across the field. As the old man looked in the direction of the bird's call, he saw an approaching vehicle coming down the narrow asphalt road that ran by Roy Lee's driveway before connecting to the valley road into the National Park. It was a late-model Chevy, painted in a light military green. Waves of late afternoon heat shimmered up from the pavement and added an eerie effect to the scene. A short distance behind the Chevy was Roy Lee's pickup truck. Finally, a squad car followed the other two from a respectful distance. Jonah couldn't tell if it was Blevinger, but, at any rate, at least the cruiser's

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redlights weren't flashing.

The three stood on the porch as the processional turned up Roy Lee's long dirt driveway—Roy Lee's house was at least a quarter of a mile from the paved road. All that was visible from their vantage point on the porch was the front end of the Chevy...everything else was covered in an orange-brown cloud of driveway dust kicked up by the arrival of the vehicles. The cattle in the two fields on each side of the driveway cautiously backed slowly away from their fences. A few bolted, but most just silently watched as the three vehicles made their way up the driveway's eroded hill. The cloud of dust slowly followed them up the driveway, like a huge orange blousy curtain.

The three on the porch slowly stepped down onto the steps and silently watched as a solitary soldier got out of the Chevy, still shrouded in the cloud of dust. The only sound was the creaking doors of Roy Lee's pickup being slowly opened. But the pickup was lost somewhere in the dust cloud, along with the squad car.

It looked to Jonah like she was running in slow motion, like time had somehow slowed down and that moment was being captured frame by frame.

Suddenly, the girl bolted from the porch steps, covering the distance in the courtyard between the cars and farmhouse in a matter of seconds. It looked to Jonah like she was running in slow motion, like time had some-

how slowed down and that moment was being captured frame by frame. Her path was littered with beads, wildflowers, and her floppy hat, all bouncing off of her as she ran, her cowboy boots kicking up the dust behind her. Her long cotton dress flowed behind her like a regal robe as she threw her arms around her brother in his dusty uniform. Across the pasture, the neighbor's collie, Ranger, barked at a big black crow, which flew in lazy circles over the dog, taunting him from the air. A sudden breeze from over the mountain picked up the big bird, and he sailed with the strong current until he was on the far side of the valley, a black dot lost in the low afternoon sun.

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The Chicken Coops

by Danny P. Barbare

Blue medicine bottles. Brown
chemical. Mold. A rabbit trap,
rust, antique. A creek, Poke
Salad. A pond. Tadpoles in
summer. Ice in winter. Trash
dump between cinder blocks.
Milk jugs, aerosol cans. White
house. Brass padlock on old
wooden chest outside. Pine trees.
A wood now gone.

Danny P. Barbare resides in Greenville SC.



The Goat Man

by Tom Poland

Wherever he went, he caused a stir, and he caused a commotion in Lincoln County as well. He looked like an Old Testament prophet with his long grey beard and tattered clothes. I doubt a more colorful character ever blessed the county with his presence.

His old iron-wheeled wagon hauled a teetering pile of garbage, lanterns, bedding, hay bales, clothes, potbelly stove, and scrap metal. The big

handmade wagon, which clanked and rattled along with car tags from various states adorning its sides, looked like something the Darling family of

“The Andy Griffith Show” might commandeer.

He traveled through the county in that rickety old wagon led by goats. An itinerant preacher, he was the legendary Goat Man. He rarely bathed, and you could smell him long before you got close to him. “The goats have taught me a lot in the past 30 years,” someone heard Charles “Ches” McCartney say, “They don’t, for example, care how I

smell or how I look.” Goats were his passion. Sick and injured goats got to ride in his wagon. He was fond of saying “Everybody’s a goat; they just don’t know it.”

It was in the early '60s, Spring I believe, when he came through Lincoln County. We all piled into the car and headed out to Highway 378 where he had camped out. I remember being a bit uneasy around this bizarre character, his goats, and outlandish wagon. He was gathering wild onions and greens for a salad. He explained to my mom how he knew which plants to eat, and then milked a goat. That was my one *Goat Man* sighting.

“Ches” McCartney, the Goat Man, wandered the South for four decades.

No writer could conjure up such a character. (As Dave Barry says, *I am not making any of this up.*) It’s not surprising that this eccentric vagabond inspired writ-

ers Flannery O’Connor and Cormac McCarthy to base characters on him. Darryl Patton wrote a book about him, *America’s Goat Man* and Duane Branam wrote a song about him, “The Legend.”

McCartney’s legend began July 6, 1901, in Sigourney, Iowa, though some disagreement attends 1901 as his birth year. At the age of 14, he ran away from his family’s farm. He married a Spanish knife thrower ten years his senior in New York and joined her act, serving as her nervous, quaking target. When she became pregnant they decided to farm for a living, but the Great Depression wiped them out. One day just before dawn, his knife-throwing, farming wife vamoosed. McCartney would marry at least two more times.

In 1935, an unbelievable experience changed McCartney’s life. He was working for the WPA cutting timber when a tree fell across his body. Several hours elapsed before he was found. Pronounced dead, he was taken to a morgue. Only when the mortician

inserted an embalming needle in his arm did he awake. Of the experience McCartney said, “the undertaker was slow and by the time he got around to working on me, the life came back into my body and I regained consciousness. It was as if I had been raised from the dead.”

This startling escape from death infused him with religion and his spiritual awakening inspired him to hitch up the goats and spread the gospel. His wife made goatskin clothes for him to wear but quickly tired of her husband’s crusade and left him. (One account claims McCartney sold his wife to another farmer for \$1,000.)

McCartney traveled the land with just two books: *Robinson Crusoe*, which inspired his wanderlust, and

“The undertaker was slow and by the time he got around to working on me, the life came back into my body and I regained consciousness...”

the Bible. While spreading the Word, he lived off the land, handouts, and his goats. He sold postcards with his image on them for spending money.

This nomad roamed the South for four decades, making his way into Lincoln County at least once. Children of the '60s far and wide remember this folk legend who provoked fear and awe and sadly invited violence. He was mugged more than once and in one instance the muggers killed two of his beloved goats.

For reasons unknown, this wayfaring minister settled in Twiggs County where he established the Free Thinking Christian Mission. From his mission base, he journeyed out with his goat-drawn wagon to preach his message of eternal damnation for sinners.

You could trace his route through the countryside by the wooden signs he nailed to trees—“Prepare to Meet Thy God,” beneath which the fires of Hell burned.

A man of the cloth (he claimed to be ordained), he nonetheless had his

foibles. In 1985, McCartney set out for California, hoping to meet the actress Morgan Fairchild whom he intended to woo and marry. Soon after he arrived in Los Angeles, muggers got him yet again and he had to be hospitalized.

He returned to Georgia and left the road for good in 1987, leaving a legend behind him.

After retiring from the road, McCartney and his son, Albert Gene, lived in a wooden shack without running water or electricity. When it burned, he and his son moved into a rusted old school bus.

In 1987, he entered a nursing home in Macon where he lived out his final years as a local celebrity, often wearing a Georgia Bulldog cap. In June 1998, someone shot his son to death

in Twiggs County, a murder that remains unsolved. Less than six months after his son’s death, the Goat Man died in the Eastview Nursing Home on November 15, 1998. He

claimed to be 106. While that may not be true, he led a life the likes of which we’ll never see again. There’s no disputing that.

The Goat Man was something to behold. Seeing him rattling down the road was as iconic as seeing “See Rock City” atop a barn’s roof. He was a roadside attraction like no other, compelling people to get out of their cars and gawk.

Old timers say it was way too easy spotting experienced Goat Man observers in a big crowd. They were the ones standing upwind.

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Take One-Six!

A Flying Lesson to Remember by Ron Burch



When it comes to taking risks, whether buying cars, houses, insurance or making investments, I've always tried to err on the side of caution. So not surprisingly, when I earned my private pilot's license in 1972, the next step was for my spouse to earn hers.

Or at least to become proficient enough to get us back on the ground safely should something happen to me. But as I listen to her now, despite my wanting her to succeed, I didn't make it easy.

She began her lessons on July 15, 1972 at the DeKalb-Peachtree Airport near Atlanta in a rented blue and white 1967 Cessna 150; tail number N7289S—a 100-HP two-place trainer. Her second lesson came in a slightly newer but similar model Cessna with the tail number N51347.

By lesson number three, I began trying to convince her that we should purchase our own airplane to eliminate the scheduling hassles and so we could more easily visit her parents in Florida. That argument struck a nerve, and a month or so later we bought a 1962 Cessna Skyhawk, tail

number N1644Y, from a friend who was moving up to a larger aircraft.

Compared to the trainers, the Skyhawk was huge and powerful—a roomy four-place aircraft that sported a 145-hp. six-cylinder Continental engine.

Now a 50% owner in the world's ugliest faded green airplane, my wife had her first lesson in the Skyhawk on September 11, 1972.

Since she stands about 5' feet tall in her stocking feet, she found that to fly the Skyhawk she had to sit on a telephone book in order to reach the rudder pedals. And since the Skyhawk had manually-operated flaps, instead of the electrically-powered ones she'd grown accustomed to in the trainers, she also found she lacked the strength or the leverage to yank in more than the first notch. Once airborne, get-

ting the flaps retracted was an even bigger problem, so as she practiced touch 'n' go landings, she had to fly the entire pattern with ten degrees of flaps hanging out!

Now folks, I'm a good listener. I heard what her instructor said about how dangerous it was for her to have to sit on a telephone book, not to mention her being unable to properly use the flaps. So being a kind and considerate husband, as well as a generous soul, a few months later I traded the faded old Skyhawk for a shiny, nearly-new Cessna Cardinal—a sleek and beautiful machine with electric flaps, an adjustable left seat and an even more powerful 180-HP engine.

My wife's first lesson in the Cardinal was on May 9, 1973. Although she still needed a pillow to see over the instrument panel, it was love at first sight. Best of all, she let me back in the master bedroom!

Flying provided us a common interest we could share—and that was great—at least most of the time. However, as she progressed with her lessons, out of the corner of my eye I could often see her nodding approval

as I adjusted the power, made a clearing turn or performed any of a dozen maneuvers or check list items taught us by our flight instructor.

One afternoon, I became so provoked at her nodding and patronizing, I reminded her that I was the one with the license—the “pilot in command”—and that I didn’t need her approval for how I flew the airplane. She replied, “Fine then,” a wifely response that means “stick it in your ear.”

A couple of weeks later we were awaiting take off clearance from Lovell Field in Chattanooga en route back to Atlanta. The controller said, “November-three-zero-four-one-five, cleared for immediate take off—caution: wake turbulence from departing DC9.” I looked, and sure ‘nuff, the windshield in front of us was full of DC9. I looked back and there were a couple more pieces of big iron waiting impatiently for me to get out of their way. I swallowed hard, acknowledged our take-off clearance and pushed the throttle forward.

Now avoiding wake turbulence is tricky. Large aircraft with their mighty jet engines produce powerful wingtip vortices—mini-tornadoes that depending on the prevailing winds can travel hundreds of feet back down the runway. During flight training, I’d been told they were strong enough to flip a light aircraft on its back. So wanting to avoid such a calamity, I made sure that we lifted off well in advance of where the DC9 went airborne and that we flew well above the flight path of the larger airplane.

A little distracted and a bit rattled, as quickly as I could, I turned out of the flight path of the DC9 and headed to the Rome VOR, a navigational aid located—*surprisingly enough*—at Rome, Georgia. We climbed to 4500 feet and then leveled out. That was when a lower-than-normal reading on the airspeed indicator caught my eye.

I checked the power settings. I

re-checked the airspeed indicator. I turned on the courtesy lights beneath the wings and checked for ice. I looked at the power setting again. Out of the corner of my eye I saw that my wife was leaning over, following my every move. Stumped, I turned to her and said, “I can’t figure out why we’re going so slow.” She pointed to the flap indicator and whispered in my ear. “Sweetheart, it might help if



She replied, “Fine then,” a wifely-response that means “stick it in your ear.”

you retracted the flaps.”

It did. That little airplane flew a lot faster without fifteen degrees of take-off flaps hanging down! Later that evening, I admitted to her that I had been wrong to admonish her wise counsel, even if she was a lowly student pilot. Besides, what’s the point in having a crew of two if you don’t help each other?

A few months later, the wisdom of that night’s epiphany became even more apparent.

We had flown from Atlanta to Sedalia, Missouri—picked up some friends—and then over the next week with them in tow, it was on to Kansas City, later to St. Louis, and then back to Sedalia. In Kansas City, we visited the Playboy Club and clowning around at Twelfth Street and Vine. We ate

strawberry waffles at midnight, then flew to St. Louis and spent most of the day at the St. Louis zoo before taking our friends back home to Sedalia. A little exhausted, on the way back, we decided to spend the night in Jefferson City before continuing on to Atlanta.

We got a late start out of Jefferson City, due mainly to some early morning ground fog, and later made a fuel stop at McKeller Field in Jackson, Tennessee—halfway between Memphis and Nashville. Then, since the weather south and east of Muscle Shoals was looking a bit “iffy,” due to afternoon thunderstorms, we decided to do another overnighter at the Hertz Sky Center at the Madison County Airport in Huntsville.

The next day after a leisurely brunch, a little before noon, central time, we were finally on our way. On the ground, the air was already stifling hot, so much so that after loading our bags and pre-flighting the airplane, everything I had

on was wringing wet. Once we were off the ground, I climbed to 8500 feet where the air was some 25 degrees cooler. It felt great but it didn’t last long. Soon the afternoon build-ups

were towering high above us while a lower deck of stratus clouds closed in below. With an inverted thumb, I motioned to my wife that we should head down and she nodded her approval.

Spiraling down through smaller and smaller holes in the broken layer, at 2500 feet we were beneath the clouds. I pushed the power back to cruise. Then it happened: the engine coughed and sputtered. Instead of showing a steady 2650 rpm, the tachometer swung wildly between 1400 and 1800 rpm. The instrument panel shook. I went through the checklist and applied carburetor heat in case the humid air and the long descent had produced a chunk of fuel-blocking carburetor ice. I tried to convince myself that carb heat had helped—it hadn’t. I checked the magnetos and leaned the mixture

in an attempt to clean what may have been a fouled spark plug. I turned on the fuel boost pump. I switched fuel tanks. Finally, the engine seemed to smooth out, albeit at a much reduced power setting.

I handed the chart to my wife and said, "Give me a heading to the Rome airport and don't mess up." She called out 120 degrees and in a matter of minutes, our wheels touched down on the 6000-foot runway at Rome's Richard B. Russell Memorial Airport.

We taxied to the maintenance hangar hoping to find a mechanic who could troubleshoot the problem. But it was Saturday and no one was available. I looked at my wife and she looked at me. We climbed back into the airplane, started the engine and did a full power run up. Smooth as silk. We taxied back out to runway 19. We did a full power static run down the runway without lifting off. Twice, three times. I shook my head in disbelief—whatever it was—whatever had caused the engine to run so rough earlier seemed now to be gone.

We faced what could be a life or death conundrum: stay in Rome until the engine could be thoroughly checked on Monday; or take a chance and head for home. We decided to head for home. We took off using most of the 6000-foot runway and circled the airport for fifteen minutes. I did some serious knob knocking and tried various power settings. No problem. Convinced the engine was now running okay, we turned southeast and returned to Atlanta without further incident. The following Monday, I had our local mechanic take a look at the problem. He checked all the systems and found nothing wrong.

A couple of days later, my wife, the student-pilot, was about to have another flying lesson. I took off work early and drove to the airport to see her off. I milled about as she and our instructor did their preflight, saying things like "It sure is a pretty day...I sure wish I could go flying. They say

it's going to start raining tomorrow and may rain the rest of the week. At least you guys are getting some good weather."

Finally I made my point and they felt sorry for me. They agreed that if I would sit in the back seat, and keep quiet, I could ride along.

"YES!" I exclaimed and climbed in.

We taxied into position on runway 2-left at the DeKalb-Peachtree Airport. The tower gave us our clearance and by extending a flat palm, her instructor motioned "let's go." My

From my vantage point, it looked as though every screw in the top of the cowling was about to shake itself loose!

wife opened the throttle and the little Cessna began its take-off roll.

A few hundred feet down the runway and at 70 knots indicated, my wife eased back on the yoke and the wheels left the tarmac. We began to climb. That's when it happened—again—a lot like before, but worse. The engine backfired, coughed and sputtered; the instrument panel shook and the tachometer swung wildly between idle and about 1400 rpm. From my vantage point, it looked as though every screw in the top of the cowling was about to shake itself loose!

My wife turned to her instructor and said, "Your airplane; my radio." He began going through the same checklist of items I'd run through a few days earlier. Nothing helped. Since I'd "been there, done that," I began yelling "take one six—TAKE ONE SIX" (meaning turn left 220 degrees and land on runway 16, the closest safe haven).

After what seemed like an endless round of chatter between my wife and her instructor, she pressed the mike button on "her radio" and called the tower. With a voice that got higher in pitch with every syllable, she told them we'd lost power and were requesting runway 16. They cleared us to land any runway and began

diverting other traffic away from our flight path.

We were at 200 feet, still inside the airport fence. Our instructor put in fifteen degrees of flap and lowered the nose below the horizon to avoid a stall. Then making the shallowest of turns, he gently turned the airplane around. Once landing was assured, he added more flap and touched down gently as you please on runway 16—safe and sound and in one piece.

My wife clapped. Her instructor folded his arms and sat there motionless. The tower said, "Cessna three-zero-four-one-five are you able to taxi?" The instructor turned to my wife and said, "I've just saved your butt, if the engine will start, you can taxi this thing to the ramp yourself."

Back at the parking area, another Sunday pilot had been listening to the events on his aircraft radio. He climbed down and said, "Wow, Ron, I envy your invaluable experience." I tossed him my keys and said "Jim, here ya go—have at it."

Removal and teardown of the carburetor revealed that the bowl was full of silt and other nasty stuff from contaminated fuel, most likely from our refueling stop in Tennessee. There was also over an inch of crud in the bottom of the wing tanks. They had to be drained and the carburetor had to be rebuilt. Fortunately, a bore scope inspection revealed no internal damage to the engine.

All this took place during the summer of 1973, in the middle of a spotty nationwide fuel shortage when many airport operators were pumping fuel from near the bottom of their storage tanks. As a result of this incident and others like it, the FAA soon mandated there be filters on fuel trucks and on fuel-farms that pump from in-ground storage.

Me? After refueling, I became much more generous with the amount of fuel I checked for contamination before taking off.

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