

My Hometown



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Small town news, back in the day

It was late one night in north-west Georgia, more years ago than I care to remember, that I watched through my camera lens as the florist's shop owned by my next-door neighbor burned to the ground.

As small towns go, it was big news.

Bigger news happened the following night, when the feed and seed store two blocks down (the one Mr. Hogg, my elementary school principal, bought when he retired from education) was also consumed by fire.



Buddy Roberts

There was as much speculation in the air that second night as there was smoke. What caused the fires? Were they accidents or not? Was there an arsonist on the loose? Were both fires the work of the same person, or did he have an accomplice? Where would they strike next?

After exposing a couple of rolls of film for the next week's edition, ducking under the yellow crime scene tape, and coughing smoke out of my lungs, I jumped behind the wheel of my car (a grey 1976 Ford Grenada with the front tag screaming PRESS in bright red letters) as J.R. Espy eased into the passenger seat, his camera in tow, and we headed back to the newspaper office.

J.R.'s dad is the publisher of The Summerville News, an award-winning Espy-owned publication since as long as anyone can remember. I went to work there before I was old enough to drive, and J.R. and I became a news team while we were both still in high school. Together, we covered Friday night football games, school board meetings, elections, a deadly flood that almost displaced an entire town, the state Legislature, municipal politics, worse crimes than arson, and just about everything else that happens in and to a community.

We had some fun. Life in a small town continued as only it can. The florist hired my dad to rebuild his shop, Mr. Hogg retired again, and somewhere along the way, J.R. and I grew up. As I was specializing in political and education reporting, he was making a name for himself as an investigative reporter. He's still at it there in our old hometown, and I count it a privilege that I got to learn how to be a reporter at the Espys' newspaper.

I remember visiting with David Espy (J.R.'s uncle, who was then co-owner and general manager of The News), on the day I left. "Appreciate it, boy," he said, summing up the previous 10 years as he shook my hand. That was almost two decades ago, and I still can't recall that moment without getting misty-eyed. Especially now that David's gone. His son, Tracy, (whom I've known since we were second graders) has taken his place, and that's as it should be. As long as there are newspapers, I hope there are Espys back home to publish The News in

Summerville.

If you've never heard of Summerville, I won't hold it against you. Situated in the northwest corner of Georgia, it's as far west as you can go without being in Alabama and almost as far north without being in Tennessee. Here's how it was described last year when travel website Thrillist.com named it one of the 11 best road trips from Atlanta:

"You'll feel like you stepped back in time when you visit this tiny, sleepy mountain town. Surrounded by scenic trees and hills, it's jam-packed with friendly locals, festivals and park attractions and activities for the nature lover. Don't miss Howard Finster's Paradise Garden, a maze of buildings, sculptures, paintings and displays which has an international pop icon status that draws visitors from across the globe."

The description of my hometown is accurate, even if I can't in good conscience recommend a visit to the late folk artist's perception of paradise. Should you decide to invest the three hours of travel time getting there, though, you will see things the like of which you'll see nowhere else on Earth. I would suggest instead a visit to the James H. "Sloppy" Floyd State Park. Even if you're not an outdoors enthusiast, you'll enjoy a drive through the park or a stroll across the boardwalk on the lake.

"Sloppy" Floyd, incidentally, used to be the chairman of the House Appropriations Committee in the Georgia Legislature. Besides the state park (which is a lot closer to paradise than the folk art mecca), he also has a 20-story government office building named after him in downtown Atlanta. Places with his name on them tend to be well-cared for.

For me, memories of my hometown are inseparably connected with my hometown newspaper. The latest issue of The News is still one of the first things I want to see when I go back home to visit my mom and sister.

The emotional connection between community newspapers and the residents of the towns and cities they cover tends to be strong and deeply rooted. That's why The Daily Home is very happy and proud to present to you My Hometown 2016, a celebration of Talladega and St. Clair counties, their communities and their people.

As you read the features in this special issue – which take us from the Blue Bell Ice Cream Parlor in Sylacauga to the International Motorsports Museum near Lincoln to a habitat for exotic animals in Munford to a hometown winery in Talladega and introduce us to such locals as two SEC football officials, some talented creatives and a 91-year-old veteran who was at Normandy on D-Day – we hope you'll be



Ancient photo by Julie Griffiths

At a meeting of the Summerville-Trion Optimist Club, when fellow reporter J.R. Espy and I presented a symposium about exotic pets. He's holding a ball python, and that's Harry the tarantula crawling up my tie. At center is Stan Burrage, who was the club's president at the time. He refused to hold either creature.

reminded of why you enjoy calling this area home. And we hope that the results of our visits to a memorial for a part of history most Americans have heard of but know little about and the ghost town that was almost the Talladega County seat may serve to highlight the area's rich heritage.

As always, we encourage you to support the many advertisers who have enabled us to prepare this special issue for your enjoyment. They appreciate and understand the value of community, and it is our privilege to join them in presenting My Hometown – a collection of stories sure to entertain, inform, uplift and even inspire. It is our hope that you will have as much fun reading them as we have had telling them.



Detail of a collage by folk artist Howard Finster, founder of Paradise Garden in Summerville, Ga.

My Hometown 2016

This edition is the result of the cooperative and combined efforts of The Daily Home staff.

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My name is **Jason Mitcham**, and I have lived in Pell City nearly all of my life. My parents are Tom and Martha Mitcham, and I am a graduate of Pell City High School. After graduation, I moved away for a few years, but I always wanted to move back to my hometown. I work at the Anniston Army Depot, where I will celebrate my 12th year in November. I am married to Charity Mitcham, and we have three children; Jace (16), Piper (5) and Cooper (15 months). I am very proud and passionate about Pell City and I want to help make Pell City a place where my children will be as proud and passionate about when they grow up. Some things I would like to see if elected are: re-energized investment of our schools and education programs, maximize the use of our beautiful park and recreation facilities to the benefit of our children and the city, progress being made at Avondale Mills property and progress and development in the Eden area, especially around the interstate. I humbly ask for your support and your vote for City Council District 4. **Let's bring the pride and passion back to Pell City.**

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A visit to the farm, a reminder of simpler times

By **KELLI TIPTON**
Home staff writer

CHILDERSBURG — A visit to Four Mile Farms Produce is a reminder of a simpler time, a time when folks worked the land and grew their own food. It was a time when fresh vegetables had a place at the family dinner table, and when the peaches in the pie were picked from a tree in the back yard.

For farmer Pete Baker, farming is still a way of life. He grows a wide variety of fresh produce on 15 acres of the family's 45 acre farm. He sells his crops at local farmers markets and directly to individuals who stop by the farm on Brannen Road. He also gives tours of the farm in cooperation with the Alabama Cooperative Extension System.

He started farming at the age of 14 in his hometown of Goodwater. "I cut hay, and ran cows, and we grew corn for feed," he said. He went into the home building business after high school but returned to farming the land about five years ago.

The farm is a family affair. His wife, Lavonda, helps him when she is not working her regular job. "She's my partner. She helps me in the field when she gets off work. She picks most of the blueberries and does whatever I need. She stays busy, that's for sure," he said. "She's going to start making jellies for sale. We are just getting to the point where we have enough apples and blackberries. That's what the plans are. We can sell them at the market and take them to the farmers market eventually," he said. His son, Zac, also helps with picking the ripe produce.

"We have grapes, apples, peaches, plums, pears, blackberries and blueberries. The produce is squash, zucchini, green beans, pole beans, okra, and different varieties of tomatoes," he said.

The orchard trees are kind of experimental for him. He is still learning what grows best in the farm's soil, and he'll plant more of what thrives in the future. He said Wanda Jurriaan with the Alabama Cooperative Extension System has helped him with the orchard trees. "She has the answer if I can't find it. She uses her contacts at Auburn, and they are good about helping me with the information I need."

Orchard tours are one way he gives back to the community. "We have one in the spring, and I try to do one in the fall. It gives Auburn a chance to see what I'm doing with the grants. That's how the trees came about." He has received several small grants to purchase the trees, an irrigation system and supplies. He said Jurriaan also keeps him informed about available grants.

He welcomes schools and other groups who want to tour the farm. "Anytime anybody calls, especially with kids, I'll

do a tour for them or work with them. They can come when we are planting or starting to pick or prune. If they want to come and be involved, or just watch, that's the main thing," he said, adding that "hands-on learning" is the best type of learning.

A typical day for him begins at daylight and ends at dark. He starts the day by riding through the farm and checking everything and starting the irrigation. He feeds the pigs. "Most of the time, we are picking. Right now, we are really picking a lot. Then, we take everything and wash it and put it in the cooling building to get the field heat off. Then we get back at it, around two or so, and pick some more and feed some more. It's from can to can't," he said.

In the fall, he will start trimming the trees and cleaning up. He will plant greens and cauliflower and harvest pumpkins. "We're planting pumpkins this month to have ready by October," he said.

He plans to put an outdoor market on site. "We are just really starting. I'm 47, and the main objective is to have this in full operation by the time I'm 50. It's a retirement project," he said. He employs one full time worker, a student who attends Southeastern Bible College. "We aren't that big of an operation, but it's bigger than I can keep up with by myself," he said.

He takes steps to keep his produce as natural as possible. He doesn't use hard pesticides, and his irrigation system uses well water. "Sometimes you're gonna find a worm in my corn or a bite mark on my beans, but the people who want organic produce would rather have the worm than the pesticides," he said. "I don't really want to eat the hard pesticides either."

He finds satisfaction in providing healthy fruits and vegetables to people in the area. "It feels good when people tell me their beans had a good flavor and that it was the best meal, and it's because it is fresh. I get a lot of gratification out of that. It is work though. If you don't enjoy it, you aren't going to do it. I guess that's why we are able to



Tucker Webb/The Daily Home

Pete Baker grows hundreds of tomato plants in the greenhouse at Four Mile Farm. The orchard there produces peaches, as well as apples, plums and pears.



sell our stuff. It makes me happy to see people enjoy the stuff we grow," he said.

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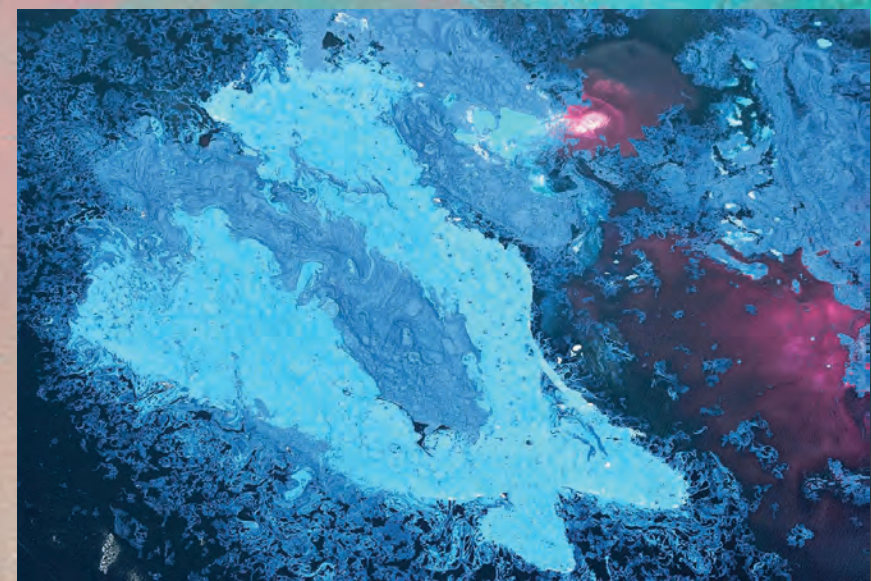
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Photos by Buddy Roberts/The Daily Home

Colorful creations

Barefoot in black ripped jeans and holding a bottle of red paint in one hand and a partially completed canvas in the other, Briana Burgess stood on a green lawn at the shore of Logan Martin Lake, where she'd spent part of a recent afternoon working on an abstract.

"I like to move around and have my feet on the ground while I'm working," she said. "Without shoes, it's just a little easier and freer. And the lake is so inspiring because of the movement of the water, how the sun shines on the lake, how the clouds in the trees look and just the colors in general."

Burgess often works by the lake, as her family has owned a lake house on Logan Martin's Talladega shores for a number of years. On this afternoon, though, she was working at the Cropwell home of Don and Vicki Hogue, who played host to her through an arrangement with Keller Williams Realtors Andrew Hancock and Karen Bain.

Burgess' work is noted for its bold colors. "Color brings energy and emotion and life. Absence of color is a huge deal. The presence of color means everything, especially in abstract art. It can be interpreted in endless ways by anyone and everyone. What's so fun about abstract art is that you see what you want to see in the painting. It tells you a story without being so defined, and I love that."

She indicated two untitled paintings on canvas in her current "Summer" series: a bright red abstract and another study in light blues and greens.

"What do you see when you look at them? Do they make you feel happy? Reflective? Adventurous? Or maybe you don't feel any of those things, but something else totally different. That's the point. You connect with the painting on your own terms. I don't want you to see one certain thing when you look at them. I want you to see colors that can make you feel different emotions or see different things at different times. I'm very excited about these new paintings."

To see more of Burgess' work, visit her website, www.briburgessdesigns.com.



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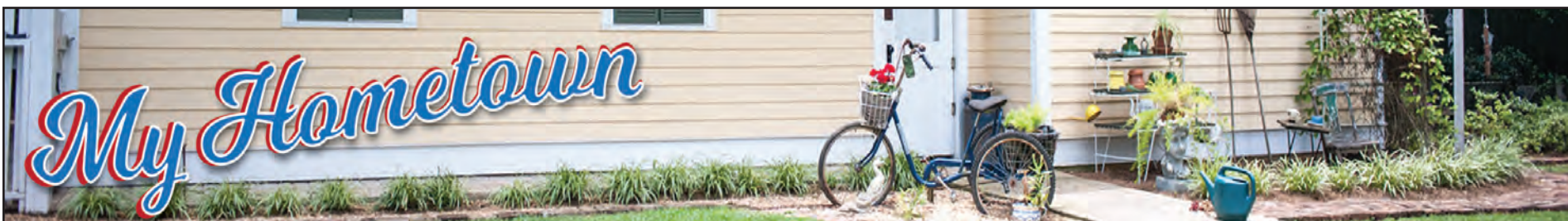
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There's something strange

By ELAYNE SMITH
Home staff writer

TALLADEGA Co. — Like a lot of ghost stories, Kim Johnston's started out normal, unassuming and with the rosy joy of moving into a new house.

The software programmer moved into her new home with her husband and then 5-year-old son. Johnston was 30 years old and pregnant with her daughter. This was going to be their family home.

Things changed when Johnston started hearing voices even though no one was around, or hearing children laughing and playing in the attic when hers were asleep in bed. One night she felt her children were crawling in bed with her only to find there was no one there.

"I thought I was going crazy," she said.

Another night, when her daughter was around 3 years old, her child came to her bedroom at 3 a.m.

"Mama, there's a man in my room and he won't be quiet. He keeps talking to me," Johnston remembers her daughter telling her. "I need you to tell him to be quiet."

She froze, not wanting to go to her daughter's room, not knowing what to do. She went into the room and couldn't see anything although her daughter could.

Then she followed her daughter's instructions. She called out and told what she now calls a spirit to be quiet so her daughter could sleep. Soon Johnston was laying out ground rules for the ghosts.

"I'd just talk to the spirits as if they were tenants of the house," she said. "I'd just tell them, these are our rules: 'You can't wake me at night, can't wake my kids, you've got to behave.' For the most part that worked very well."

This was Johnston's first experience with the paranormal and the reason she went from a total skeptic to a paranormal investigator. For five years, Johnston lived in a house she called haunted.

"I've always liked a good ghost story," she said. "But I was skeptical and I didn't really believe the things in my house."

She has since created her own paranormal investigation team and co-written two books, including "Haunted Talladega County." The book goes into the ghost stories and folklore that surround the county. She conducted a few investigations into

properties in the book, but mainly dug up history and conducted interviews with people who experienced the unexplainable.

"Almost everybody has a story of something strange that's happened to them," Johnston said.

The book covers 25 places around the county from Sylacauga to Childersburg to Talladega. Some of the stories are well-known legends, such as Gravity Hill. Some are bizarre phenomena, such as William Cospers' multiple lightning strikes, and others are tales of personal experiences with ghosts.

The inspiration for the book came from Johnston's co-writer, Shane Busby. Raised in Alpine, Busby knew a lot of the stories growing up. He said even if people aren't paranormal believers, the book offers historical backgrounds to well-known places, new insights into what happened around the county and possible explanations to those who believe in ghosts.

"I have a whole new respect for the places," Busby said. "I don't think the average person, who doesn't go on some endeavor or like this, would ever know unless it was written down."

For about a year, Johnston and Busby conducted interviews and researched public records to compile the stories in the book. Busby said the book has been well-received.

"Talladega County is not a place that would typically be in your history books, so it needs to be written down so people have it," he said. "The kind of a great thing about a ghost story is that it kind of keeps the legend alive a little more than some of your more typical, boring, history. The problem with it is it gets diluted over time and changed."

In 2012, Busby helped Johnston found her paranormal investigations team, Spirit Communications and Research (SCARE). She has eight people with her to perform paranormal investigations.

Johnston and Busby were originally with another paranormal investigations team and after learning the ropes, they both said they decided they could do better.

"We bring a more professional mindset to it," Busby said. "We are not there just to have fun; we are there to help families who are genuinely scared of what's going on in their



Elayne Smith/The Daily Home

Buttermilk Hill Restaurant

The cheery atmosphere of the restaurant featured in the book, "Haunted Talladega County," is not unlike the feeling of visiting a grandmother's house. The white painted house is cute with rocking chairs on the porch. Inside, the rooms are snug with white table cloths and white napkins perched in cone-shapes on plates. Jazz filled the air. Unlike the Comer museum, nothing gave me chills except the stories I was told.

"Two Wednesday nights ago, a worker saw a woman walk across the room, as if she was going to the bathroom, before disappearing," said Algalene McClendon, mother of the restaurant's owner.

Her daughter lives above the restaurant. McClendon talked about ghost sightings like she would talk about the weather.

She said they've blessed the house several times and painted the porch roof's underside blue because it supposedly helps keeps evil spirits away.

She said one time, when she was putting up Christmas decorations at 2 or 3 p.m., she heard someone yell, "Help me! I've got to get out!" She looked outside and around the house, convinced someone was there. She heard it a second time. No one could be found.

One of her patrons told her one day he thought he'd seen a ghost. It was late, and he said he saw a man in overalls, hands in his pockets, walk through the bar, across the room and into the wall.

Another one of the employees saw a man dressed in black run from the bar to the side door of the house before disappearing.

"They're just normal," McClendon said. "They're not bad or evil or out to get us or anything."

She said the apparitions happened randomly. They didn't know the history of the house until Johnston and Busby wrote the book, but it helped explain some of their experiences.

"There may be more of them here, but we're so busy we don't see them," McClendon said.

houses."

Most of their calls are for homeowners who have experienced events they can't explain, such as what Johnston went through in her house. Busby said they get about one investigation a month.

When they get a call from homeowners or business owners worried about paranormal activity in the building, they take several nights to investigate.

Each investigation starts with interviewing the family to understand what

they've heard and what they've experienced. While SCARE may not be able to clear out spirits every time, Johnston said the main goal is to help calm the fear people have in their homes.

"People work themselves up to be very frightened that spirits are going to harm them, but that's not really going to happen," Johnston said. "We try to empower them. We tell them: 'This is your house. You have to lay the ground rules and let them know what is and isn't acceptable,

and you know, just take the ownership back. Don't let them have that control over you. This is your home."

Johnston said the first part of the investigation is trying to find a logical solution. She said even though she believes in spirits, her first reaction is always skepticism.

"I have doubts all the time," Johnston said. "My first instinct is to find a logical answer."

She said she often asks about the medical histo-

ry of the witnesses and looks into the structure of the house. Once they've exhausted any explainable answer, she said they'll look into the paranormal.

Busby is in charge of the equipment. They use an AM/FM radio, called a Spirit Box, that's altered to constantly sweep radio waves to create a white noise he said spirits can try to communicate through.

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The team uses the equipment to help determine what's in the house. Busby will place voice recorders and cameras around rooms then control them remotely, hoping to pick something up.

Busby said they spend four to five hours at a location in one night or all night if the place is really active. Then they spend hours going over the footage looking for evidence, sharing any sign of paranormal activity with the homeowners.

He said about 75 to 80 percent of the time nothing happens.

Some of the team members are mediums and try to communicate with the spirits to find out what they want. Johnston said they try to help homeowners lay down ground rules for the spirits and find ways to be comfortable with what they experience.

"In all honesty, people's fear is the worst part about a haunting," she said.

Finding the history of the property, collecting film and audio evidence and attempting to communicate with the spirits are the main parts of the investigation. Then, they offer various rituals to help clear out the spirits.

"We don't just use one set of beliefs or tools," Johnston said.

Depending on the owner's faith, Johnston said they may bless the house with a priest and use holy water in a Christian household. They also incorporate Native American beliefs such as saging, also called smudging, the house to clean it of evil spirits.

She said 99 percent of cases are positive and the spirits mean no harm to the owners. If they wanted to harm anyone, she said, they would have done it before the team arrived on the scene.

While the team rarely deals with negative cases, she said demonic cases do come up. In the four years that they've been investigating, SCARE has had five negative cases and one of them truly demonic.

Johnston said usually these cases stem from a horrible event in the past, and it can even depend on the people living in the house. If they have a negative energy, she said, it can help trigger negative activity.

Dealing with these more angry spirits, she said she goes on the site armed with an ordained Catholic priest and special medium to try to appease the spirit and remove negative items. She said people are hardly ever harmed physically.

"You really have to understand it really isn't as frightening as Hollywood makes it seem," Johnston said. "Ghostbusters is just straight-up Hollywood."

SCARE is a side job for the team, most of them working day jobs. There is no charge for SCARE's paranormal investigations; they accept donations of any amount residents feel willing to pay. They conduct investigation events as fundraisers for different venues, such as the Comer Museum in Sylacauga, where the venue gets half the proceeds and people are walked through a para-



Kylmuga Grist Mill

The 152-year-old mill featured in "Haunted Talladega County" is set on a picturesque spot by the Talladega Creek in Childersburg. Inside the shop, peeling remnants of circus posters add faded colors and shapes to the walls.

Inside the mill, bulky machinery stand as reminders of the work that once took place in the mill. A long wooden table shows the workmanship of days long gone.

Perhaps it was the sun filtering in the open windows or touring with someone who didn't buy into the paranormal, but the mill oozed with history and lacked anything spooky.

The mill was open from 1864 until February 2013. Through its years it made flour, corn meal, animal feed, grits and even moonshine. Now the only workers in the mill are honeybees. There are seven active hives in the walls of the mill. I was more likely to hear from the bees than any spirit during my visit on the sunny day.

The covered bridge neighboring the mill had more of a creepy feel. The wooden bridge creaked ominously and shadows danced along the path.

The ghost stories in the book talk about chains heard at night in the mill, apparitions walking across the bridge and odd sightings around the area.

I wouldn't want to be in either location in the moonlight, but that may be more based on my jumpy nature than any lurking spirits.

Elayne Smith/The Daily Home

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Strange

From Page 7A

normal tour and investigation.

Busby works as a computer programmer and used to work with Johnston. She introduced him to paranormal investigations and opened his mind to spirits. Yet, even though Busby is an integral part of SCARE, he still isn't completely convinced.

"I'm still somewhat skeptical," Busby said. "I don't know if my mind has really changed. I'm open to accept it, but I need proof of it."

Busby started doing paranormal investigations the same time Johnston did. He said she told him about a group she found on Craigslist she was going to meet. As her friend, he said he wasn't about to let her meet strangers in an abandoned house in the middle of the night alone.

"I kind of felt like she was hanging out with crazy people," he said.

Soon his curiosity got him interested and he said he goes on investigations hoping for something to sway his mind. He wants to find the Holy Grail of the paranormal world, he said, and experience a full apparition and obtain proof. Alas, he has not yet gotten any "undeniable proof" he said.

"A lot of times I'm not sure what to think," he said. "I haven't really come to terms with it yet. Maybe one day I'll come to terms with it."

Some of the things Busby has experienced during investigations include hearing voices, seeing flashlights light up by themselves, seeing locked door knobs in empty areas jiggle like someone was trying to open it and seeing a shadow move from one end of an empty room to the other.

Possible explanations for him include quantum mechanics or time loops: stuff science hasn't been able to explain yet. He said he feels like he grounds the group, questioning the immediate conclusion that something is paranormal.

Overall though, he said people need to have an open mind.

"The paranormal could exist, but also, I mean, don't accept everything you hear," Busby said. "Go experience it for yourself and see what you think about it."

Johnston said she's also still skeptical even though she's more of a believer than Busby. She's seen apparitions, such as a shadowy figure of a man in a top hat that appeared in her bedroom doorway every night at 10 p.m. for a period. Yet even with what she's seen and experienced, she still has doubts.

"After four years, I still have more questions than I do answers," Johnston said.

For Johnston, her beliefs in the paranormal align with her faith in God. She said she believes in spirits and that the energy put into the universe has an effect.

"I think when things very bad happen or very traumatic happen or evil happen, I don't think that just goes away," she said. "I think it leaves a mark in the environment somehow, and it can still be felt and it can still be experienced, manifesting in different ways."

She said she doesn't have a lot of explanations, but she currently believes in a theory called the "soul fragmenting" theory. She thinks a person's soul gets broken during traumatic events so that a little fragment of it gets detached, leaving a piece of the person behind.



Elayne Smith/The Daily Home

The Comer Museum and Harriet the doll

A secret hides among the museum collections in Sylacauga; a secret whose truth lies with a doll named Harriett.

While the Isabel Anderson Comer Museum and Arts Center is not in the book, "Haunted Talladega County," SCARE conducted an investigation fundraiser event last October and revealed spirits exist in the museum. During the event, the team led a haunted tour through the floors and exhibits of the museum to pick up paranormal activity.

"You had to be here to believe it," said Donna Rentfrow, museum executive director.

Walking through the basement exhibit with scuffed and chipping floors, with the eerie atmosphere cellars tend to have, it wasn't too far fetched to believe negative spirits haunt the space.

Rentfrow said the tour picked up a lot of activity in the basement and communicated with the spirit of a 1920s boudoir doll named Harriett.

Whether or not Harriett is possessed, her chipped and cracked face gives chills. Her sideways glance gives her a look of disdain and the cigarette sticking out of her mouth adds to the general creepiness of the doll.

After the tour, Rentfrow brought Harriett upstairs to the office because the tour revealed she'd be happier away from the negative energy in the basement.

Walking across the creaking floors of the Native American exhibit, a dozen different representations of faces eye any visitors who walk the floors. Spirits or no spirits, I'd be spooked roaming the space in the dark.

During the tour, Rentfrow said they communicated with a Creek Indian spirit whose voice loudly played over the spirit box.

"I don't know how to explain it," Rentfrow said. "It just makes you really wonder about the things out there."

Whether or not Harriett will reveal the truth of the museum's spirit activity, Rentfrow said she believes there's something there and has plenty of stories of strange happenings in the museum along with historical facts about the artifacts.

"We're making new ghosts everyday around the world," Johnston said. "If you experienced something traumatic at your childhood home, people living there today could be experiencing the ghost of you, even though you haven't passed on yet, because of that little bit of you left there."

Living in the Bible Belt, she said she sometimes feels shunned for her beliefs. While most of her family and her husband support her, she still faces some antagonism.

"People are still pretty uncomfortable to talk about it," she said. "There's a certain stigma about experiencing the paranormal."

Growing up in the South with people pushing their beliefs in her face, she said she shies away from forcing her beliefs and wants people to be curious and open-minded about the paranormal.

"You can believe what you want to believe," Johnston said. "If you're curious, then come along and experience it with me."



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What was once Jumper's Spring

MARDISVILLE – There's not much left to remind passersby of the once bustling town of Mardisville.

A weathered headstone, a cockeyed historical marker placed on the shoulder of Highway 21, south of Talladega, by the Alabama Historical Commission and an overgrown cemetery are about all that remain of a community that almost became the Talladega County seat.

Originally called Jumper's Spring, a United States General Land Office opened there in the early 1830s. After Talladega County was designated, the community was named Mardisville, after Tennessee native Samuel W. Mardis, who settled there and served as land agent.

In the years that followed, Mardisville came to boast a 16-room tavern, a wood shop, a general store, a tailor's shop, a bakery and several churches. Mardisville resident Joab Lawler served in the U.S. House of Representatives from 1835-1838. A post office was established in the town in 1833 and remained open for almost 50 years.

As the decades passed, though, and with Talladega becoming the county seat, Mardisville gradually declined, eventually becoming one of the many ghost towns lonely remnants of which still populate the Alabama landscape.



Buddy Roberts/The Daily Home





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Local veteran helped lead first

By Gary Hanner
Home staff writer

PELL CITY – Retired Navy veteran Robert Curl celebrated his 91st birthday on June 28 at home. Today, home is the Col. Robert L. Howard State Veterans Home.

The night of his birthday, his son and family were coming over.

“I stopped smoking a pipe 43 years ago,” he said, “but I wanted my son to get me some cigars for my birthday. I want to go down to Lakeside Park, enjoy the beautiful scenery and puff on my cigar. Years ago, I would always smoke a cigar one day a year, and it was always after the Thanksgiving dinner.”

Curl deserves to do just that at 91, because as an 18-year-old teenager, he helped lead the first wave into the Battle of Normandy.

On June 6, 1944, more than 160,000 Allied troops landed along a 50-mile stretch of heavily-fortified French coastline, to fight Nazi Germany on the beaches of Normandy.

Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower called the operation a crusade in which, “we will accept nothing less than full victory.” More than 5,000 ships and 13,000 aircraft supported the D-Day invasion, and by day’s end, the Allies gained a foot-hold in continental Europe. The cost in lives on D-Day was high. More than 9,000 Allied soldiers were killed or wounded, but their sacrifice allowed more than 100,000 soldiers to begin the slow, hard slog across Europe, to defeat Adolf Hitler’s crack troops.

Second-class Petty Officer Curl was born June 28, 1925 in Warrior. At the age of 17, he graduated from Minor High School on June 3, 1943,

and joined the Navy the next morning.

It was almost a year to the day he joined that he led that first wave into battle.

“We had a new secret radar, and with it, I could see two images,” Curl said. “I had a map of Omaha Beach and with the radar image, I superimposed it on top of it and led the first wave in.”

Curl said the Invasion of Normandy was supposed to take place June 5, but due to heavy seas, they were told to turn around.

“We left again on June 6, and were followed by thousands of ships all carrying barrage balloons attached to the ships with steel cables,” he said.

Curl said the ships rendezvoused several miles offshore and began the bombardment from battleships, cruisers and destroyers.

“The soldiers were to climb down large cargo nets from the deck of the troopships to the landing crafts below,” he said. “Ten or 15 men could descend at the same time, but the maneuver was almost impossible due to the huge waves and swells. The landing craft would rise almost to the deck of the ship, riding the crest of a wave, so any men on the nets at the time would have been crushed against the side of the ship. The men began to wait until the landing craft rose and then jump from the ship to the landing craft.”

Curl said many of the men ended up with broken bones and other injuries since the timing of the jump was so crucial. As the sea calmed, they resumed the transfer by climbing down the cargo nets.

“We began leading the first wave into the beach as the bombardment began,” Curl said.



Gary Hanner/The Daily Home

Robert Curl recently celebrated his 91st birthday with family. He lives at the Col. Robert L. Howard State Veterans Home in Pell City.

“The large projectiles flying overhead looked like footballs. We recovered the bodies of numerous soldiers who drowned because the sea-swells

sank their DD tanks.”

As Curl recalls, things did not go well early that morning.

“Many of the LCPs and LCMs were hung

on the hedgehogs the Germans had installed on the beach,” he said. “We were being fired on from the pillboxes. I saw an American destroyer turn

and proceed backwards to the beach and come in as close as we were. It knocked out a German pillbox that had been causing havoc.”



Gary Hanner/The Daily Home

This is a photo of Robert Curl while he was in the Navy in 1944.



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Residents and City Officials, including Mayor Joe Lee, Mayor Pro Tem, Linda Crowe and Council Members, Phillip Deason, Lynn Taylor, Ricky Parker & Jeff Green will gather together to celebrate the Grand Opening of the Moody Civic Center in mid to late August.

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large projectiles flying overhead looked like footballs. We recovered the bodies of numerous soldiers who drowned because the sea-swells sank their DD tanks.”

As Curl recalls, things did not go well early that morning.

“Many of the LCPs and LCMs were hung on the hedgehogs the Germans had installed on the beach,” he said. “We were being fired on from the pillboxes. I saw an American destroyer turn and proceed backwards to the beach and come in as close as we were. It knocked out a German pillbox that had been causing havoc.”

Curl said it was around sundown that first day that two German planes came in strafing Omaha Beach, and amazingly did not strike a single steel cable that was attached to the many barrage balloons.

“A few days later, we were directed to do hydrographic work for the sinking of several old Liberty ships and one French battleship in order to form a breakwater harbor for the landing supplies,” he said.

Curl said after three weeks at Normady, they were dispatched to Corsica and Sardinia to

prepare to lead the first wave in the invasion of Southern France. Three months after the successful invasion, they were sent home to the United States on a 30-day leave.

“I was very thankful and lucky to be alive during those three weeks in Normady,” Curl said.

After the 30-day leave, Curl was assigned to a new rocket ship, LMS@ 408, which was equipped with gyro-stabilized rocket launchers. They went through the Panama Canal headed for the West Coast.

“There, we practiced shelling San Clemente Island in preparation for the invasion of Japan.”

he said. “We had almost reached Eniwetok when the atomic bomb was dropped, which ended the war. We were sent stateside, and I was honorably discharged in March 1946.”

Curl was a Birmingham firefighter until he retired in 1973.

“I had a real bad heart attack just before, and I already had my time in,” he said. “I told the chief I was going to retire, and he told me I couldn’t because I had a lifetime job here. I told him I might not live another five years. That was 43



Gary Hanner/The Daily Home

Robert Curl holds a picture he took 70 years ago and the camera he took the picture with as he and other Navy personnel head to Normady.

years ago, and I’m still here.”

Curl has lived at the veteran’s home the past two years.

“I love it here and it is the perfect place for me,” he said. “They do everything for me except shave me.”

Curl was married to his wife Nell for 69 years. She died in September, 2015. He has two sons, three grandchildren and

one great grandchild.

Contact Gary Hanner at ghanner@thetstclair-times.com

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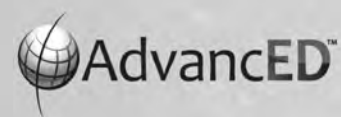
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Hometown Titleholders

Miss Childersburg Julianna Moreno

Julianna Moreno describes herself as “a bubbly person who loves meeting new people.”

It’s a characteristic that has served her well as a preliminary titleholder in the Miss Alabama Pageant. Moreno has served as Miss Childersburg 2016 until this weekend, when the new titleholder was crowned, having previously been named Miss Jefferson State Community College 2015.

Although it’s not her hometown, she said she has enjoyed representing Childersburg. “It’s a cute little town that has a lot to offer. I got to be part of the Christmas parade there and be involved with several other events to help benefit the community. I’ve loved being a part of Childersburg.”

Her platform: The Breast Cancer Research Foundation of Alabama. “It isn’t really well known, which is why I chose it. When I was 7, my mom was diagnosed with breast cancer. I was young, so I didn’t really understand what that meant. I just knew she was sick for a while. My mom is now an 11-year survivor, and that’s really fantastic.

“What I really love about the Breast Cancer Research Foundation is that every dollar given to it goes to UAB’s comprehensive cancer center. It stays here in Alabama to help find a cure. With this organization, though, the biggest obstacle is publicity. The foundation isn’t as well-known as, say, Susan G. Komen.



That’s why I want to tell people how vital it is and what it has to offer toward finding a cure. Everyone knows someone who has been diagnosed. It’s a matter that concerns all of us.”

A commonly held misconception about participants in scholarship pageants: “That we’re all catty and mean. That’s definitely not right at all. Everyone has been so nice to me in the Miss Alabama organization. It’s like a sisterhood. I have so many girls on speed dial right now that I can call at any time to talk to if I need something. The entire experience has been a joy for me.”

Starting out as Miss Jeff State: “That was me getting my toes wet. I had done a lot of preliminaries, and by the seventh one, it was getting a lit-

tle bit intimidating. But it motivated me to work that much harder in my grades, lifestyle, talent, everything. Once you get involved, you can’t stop. And I’m glad I didn’t. I’d never have had the wonderful opportunities of being able to represent Jeff State or Childersburg. The scholarship money is great, too. My entire two years as a student at Jeff State have been paid for, and I already have scholarship money for when I start at UAB in the fall.”

The best advice she ever received: “It came from my dad. He’s always told me not to worry about competing against other people. The person you should compete against is yourself. Get better at what you’re doing rather than worrying about what other people are doing.”

Miss Sylacauga Laura Machen

Laura Machen loves representing her hometown as Miss Sylacauga.

“I appreciate the privilege,” she said. “It sounds cliché, but whenever I’m off on vacation, I’m ready to get back home. There is no place else that has such a sense of hometown pride as I find in Sylacauga.”

An accounting student at Troy University, Machen said she has enjoyed being a first-time titleholder in the Miss Alabama Organization. “It’s a great program for any girl to be a part of. It’s done so much for me. I am so thankful for all the scholarship money I’ve been able to obtain and for the opportunity to show off all the great things Sylacauga has to offer.”

On a recent afternoon at the B.B. Comer Memorial Library, she discussed some of those things and explained what being the 79th Miss Sylacauga has meant to her.

About her hometown: “Sylacauga has so much to offer. I wish more people saw that. It’s a town of friendly, supportive, genuine people who are working hard on a daily basis to make Sylacauga a great place to live.”

At school: Machen attended B.B. Comer High School, where she was the Class of 2014’s valedictorian. She’s now an upcoming junior at Troy University, majoring in accounting.

How she describes herself: “One of the most easy-going people there is. I’m



easy to talk to and get along with. One of my favorite things to do is make people laugh, although I have a very lame sense of humor. I can be an overachiever at times. In school, I never let myself make a B. I did one time, and it broke my heart. I’ve always pushed myself, not in a bad way, of course, but I’ve always tried to be the best I can be.”

Her platform: Prevent Child Abuse, an initiative that takes her to elementary schools where she teaches youngsters how to protect themselves from sexual abuse. “It’s usually second-and third-graders I’m talking to, and for many of them, it may be the first time they’re hearing about the difference between a good touch and a bad touch and what to do when they’re faced with such situations. It’s such a serious

topic, they’re usually quiet when we start talking about it, but that’s good because it means they’re listening. Hopefully they take it in and will know what to do if they ever need help.

“When children – especially little girls – see me wearing the crown, their attention goes to what’s on top of my head. It makes them listen. If I weren’t wearing the crown, I’d still talk about it, and maybe they’d still listen, but I’m glad the crown has given me this platform to be an example and role model for others. It’s a privilege I wouldn’t trade for anything.”

Does she get to keep her crown? “I do, and even if I didn’t, they’d have a hard time taking it away from me.”

Barber crowned Miss Alabama

Hayley Barber, the former Miss Talladega County and current Miss Shelby County, was crowned Miss Alabama 2016 last month.

As Miss Talladega County 2015, Barber held a fundraiser at the Ritz Theatre, with all proceeds going to Children’s of Alabama.

“I host many fundraisers for Children’s Miracle Network, the funding arm for children’s hospitals,” she said before that event. “The money raised goes to the nearest children’s hospital, in this case, the one in Birmingham.”

During her tenure as Miss Talladega County, Barber’s platform was



Sight for Small Eyes, a program that encouraged eye exams for children at early ages and raised money for children with low vision.

“It’s fun to be in Talladega County,” she said while holding the local title. “I’ve been amazed at how much it has to offer. I enjoyed being able to work with AIDB, and the marble quarry was awesome. I had no idea Sylacauga marble is used in so many different areas. I was able to speak about my platform at Talladega First Baptist Church and Marble City Baptist Church in Sylacauga, and it was great to get to know those two communities.”

Currently, there is no longer a Miss Talladega County preliminary pageant in the Miss Alabama organization

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Turning on the lights at Pell City's CEPA

Fall performing arts season will bring ASO to local community

By **BUDDY ROBERTS**
Special Projects Editor

PELL CITY – It was 7:55 a.m., and Jeff Thompson – two days into his new job as executive director of the Center for Education and Performing Arts (CEPA) – stood in the “pitch-black darkness” of the center’s 400-seat theater, looking down at the control board that he hoped contained a light switch.

“In 10 minutes, a group of dance students would be coming in for a dress rehearsal, and I was trying to turn on the lights so I could direct them to the stage,” he said. “I flipped every switch and pushed every power key and button on the things, trying to get the lights on.”

Eventually he got them on, and the young dancers found their stage. Now two months into his tenure at CEPA, Thompson looks back on the then-harrowing experience as a metaphor for what he and the center’s board of directors hope to accomplish.

“There is an attitude toward this center that the board is looking to change,” he said. “It’s time to turn on some lights. We’re going to start doing that, and we’re going to start big.”

Big, as in bringing the Alabama Symphony Orchestra to Pell City in September for a performance that will kick off CEPA’s fall season.

“We are building a fall season that’s going to be fantastic,” Thompson said. He announced the ASO appearance during a presentation to the Pell City Rotary Club – an announcement that was met with applause from Rotarians – which was appropriate, since the civic group played a part in making it happen.

“A representative of the ASO spoke at one of the Rotary meetings, and someone asked ‘What would it take to get you here?’ I don’t know who it was, but I commend them for asking. Turns out, all it took to get them here was a phone call. They came down, walked the stage and said they wanted to perform on it. They’re excited, we’re thrilled to death about having them here and we’re going to follow it up with things that will make you proud of Pell City.”

He believes Pell City should be proud of the center.

“This is a multimillion-dollar building with a 400-seat theater and a 2,000-seat theater. This is what you deserve – a real spotlight. We have a place here that is worth putting people on a stage, and you need to put something on that stage, something that stops your heart and makes you feel something. You need someone to turn on that light, and that’s exactly what we’re going to do here.”

Thompson, who previously served as editor and general manager of the St. Clair News-Aegis, said he recognized the center’s potential during his first visit there.

“The first time I walked in the building was during my first week on the job at the newspaper. I’d gotten a press release about an



Jeff Thompson

upcoming performance by the Pell City Players. I didn’t even know Pell City had a community theater. Besides seeing the cast members there, the number of people there supporting them was amazing. For a town this size to have so many people invested in the production was incredible. They were all just so into it and passionate about it. I remember thinking that having access to this center, being on this stage and under those lights had to be a big part of what drove them to come out and be a part of great performances.”

Much of the CEPA’s potential, though, remains untapped, he believes.

“Part of it may be that it’s just for school functions and the only reason you’d go there is to see a basketball game or play. I think enough of the population knows that’s not the case, but we still have a tremendous asset that, for whatever reason, is not being utilized. We want to change people’s definition of what the center is. When you look at it, don’t just see the gym or the performance hall or the lobby. See the potential that that Pell City, the county commission, the city of Riverside and a lot of other people from

across St. Clair County saw when they put money into this center more than a decade ago. See it as the showpiece they envisioned not just for Pell City but for the entire area.”

Thompson said he shares the CEPA board’s goal of maximizing the center’s potential and getting people through its doors.

“As executive director, the board has given me a pretty clear charge to have constant communication with the community about what’s going on in this building and to schedule things that will bring people from all areas of the county and beyond. We have a 2015 agreement with the city and the school board that charges our board with drafting forward-thinking policies and procedures that will accomplish our goals and be as useful to the community as humanly possible, and we’re taking that on right now in full force. We will be using creative and diverse marketing campaigns to tell the narrative of what’s going on here so that the story of CEPA becomes connected to the story of Pell City and St. Clair County.”

Individuals or organizations interested in CEPA memberships or supporting any of its efforts may call Thompson at 205-338-1974 or 256-466-0715 or email pellcitycepa@gmail.com or jthompson@pellcitycepa.com.

“Whatever I can do to share our vision for this center or talk with anyone who desires to support it as we build it, I will be happy to do so day or night. Let’s turn on some lights.”




Bob Crisp/The Daily Home


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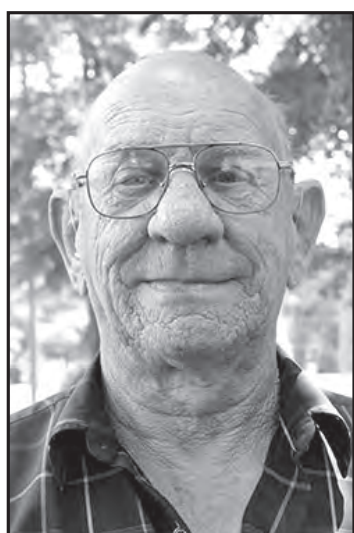
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Savannah Clark
Riverside



"I like living in Pell City because it is small-town living right by the big city. We live on the water, so we definitely love the lake."

Scott Barnett
Pell City



"I moved from Talladega to Coal City about 14 years ago. I love Coal City and St. Clair County. I would not move back to Talladega for no man's money. It is so quiet and peaceful. When the Lord calls me home, then I'll go back to Talladega County."

James Fowler
Coal City

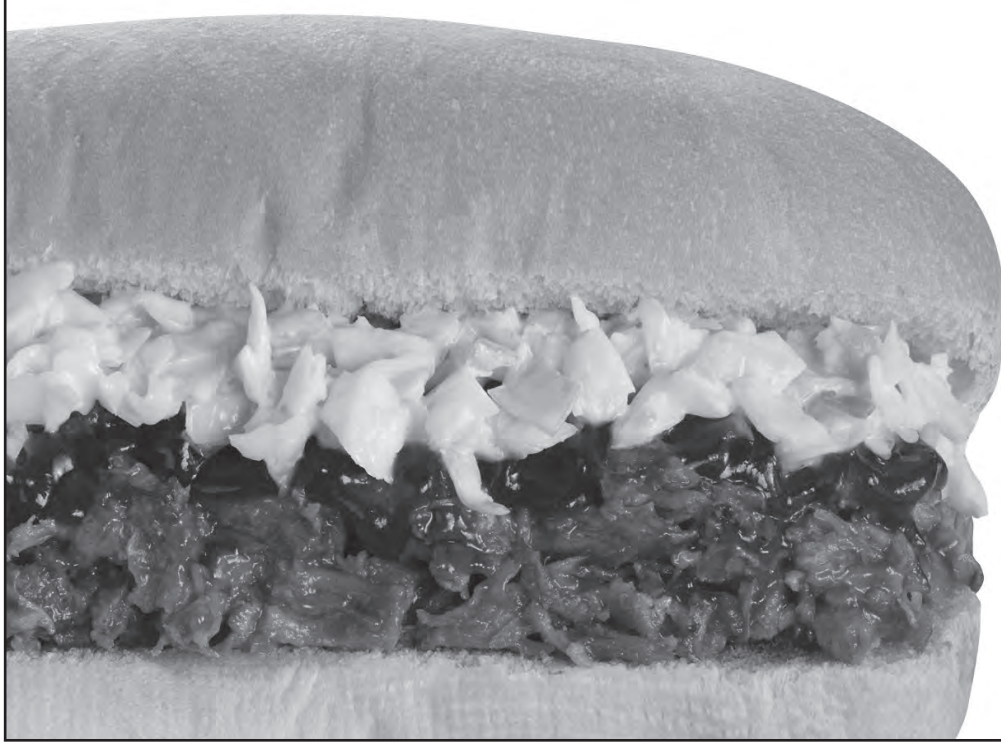


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Clear Creek Cove: “It’s like stepping back in time”

Resort regulars have built a community, one RV at a time

By KELLI TIPTON
Home staff writer

TALLADEGA – Clear Creek Cove RV Resort is a tightly-woven community of people who love living life on lake time. They come to the resort on Willingham Road from all over the nation, driving pickups and pulling RVs with names like Grey Wolf, Montana, Sandpiper and Challenger. They unpack, plug in, settle down, and fall in love with Logan Martin Lake. They are building their community one camper at a time.

James and Sandy Greer arrived from Tucson, Arizona, but they call Memphis, Tennessee home. “We just retired, and we are full time RVers,” Sandy said. “We’ve been here for three months, and we are going to be here for a year. Last year was just full of being on the road and seeing the sights, and we decided to stay still for a while. It is just beautiful here. We have a perfect view up on the mountain, and you can look out over the water and see the sailboats.”

The Greers live on the upper level of the resort, or “uptown,” as the locals call it. Cooled by a continual breeze, it offers a spectacular view of Logan Martin Lake and colorful foliage. “I sit out there and have coffee, and there is just no better place to be,” she said. “It’s classy. It’s nice and very affordable. I would recommend it to anybody. We have stayed in San Francisco, and we were packed in like sardines. We had to ask for a different spot because we couldn’t get our 40-footer in there. We’ve been all around California and to a lot of places in Florida.



Bob Crisp/The Daily Home

Clear Creek Cove Resort in Talladega draws recreational vehicle owners from all over the country to the shores of Logan Martin Lake.

We’ve been to Jacksonville and the Keys. We’ve been to Minnesota, North Dakota, and Wyoming. We have stayed in a lot of places, and this is definitely in the top five,” she said.

David Foss is the “unofficial mayor” of the resort community. He set up his RV in the resort three years ago after retiring and leaving Portland, Oregon. As a professional truck driver, his many trips through Alabama made him want to relocate here. “I told my wife, ‘I’m moving to Alabama with or without you,’” he said. “When she saw me packing, and she said she’d try it for a year. I told her if she didn’t like Alabama, I would move her anywhere she wanted to go. We are still here.”

Foss is a fixture in the Clear Creek community. He and his wife recently started a movie night at the resort’s pavilion on Saturday nights. They show family friendly movies on a screen he purchased to stretch across

the side of the pavilion. He plans to put a community billboard at the entrance to the park to announce upcoming movies and other events, but he says he knows most of the residents well enough to contact them by phone or knock on their door.

“What I love about movie night is that you can put your lawn chairs out and bring blankets when it’s chilly at night and you snuggle down into your blanket. It’s so relaxing,” said resort manager Beth Hitesman. She recently moved into the community from Pennsylvania and has managed the resort for two months. She resides on the lake level of the resort among the other travel trailers and fifth wheels.

“Even though I am the manager, people have welcomed me as a friend,” she said. “What I really appreciate is that even though the community is small, it is a big support system, and every-

one keeps an eye out for one another. Neighbors swap keys. It reminds me of the communities that used to exist back in the 1950s, where you knew your neighbors. Somehow this is like stepping back to a time when the people knew each other and really cared about each other.” Many lake level residents have built wrap around decks and other more permanent structures around their RVs. Most have been here for a while, and most of them plan to stay a long time.

Hitesman said there are more than 150 lots in the resort. There is a waiting list for a lake level lot, which rents for \$200 a month. Upper level lots are \$300 a month. The middle level is reserved for the resort’s two yurts, which are available to rent for \$99 a night.

All residents have access to the playground, pavilion and picnic table areas. The private white sand beach is the perfect

place to access the water to swim, and boat slips and communal boat docks accommodate boaters and fishermen. Other amenities include free water, sewer and waste management. The resort is open

year round. For more information about Clear Creek Cove RV Resort, call Hitesman at 256-589-5377, or visit its website at www.cccrvresort.com.



Bob Crisp/The Daily Home

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What's a yurt?

I love communing with nature, but setting up and maintaining a campsite is more work than I care to do on my downtime. I recently discovered that a yurt offers a chance to be closely connected to nature without giving up creature comforts.

A yurt is a circular tent with a cone-shaped roof. The structure is unusual, and so is the word, originally derived from a Turkic term referring to an imprint left in the ground by a movable dwelling. In Russian, such a structure is called yurta, from which the English word came. In other languages, it can mean "home" or "felt house."

Yurts have been used for shelter in Mongolia and other parts of Asia (including areas of the former Soviet republic that are now the countries of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan) for more than three thousand years. Defining characteristics of

a yurt are that it is portable, circular, has an accordion lattice wall, a tension band or cable, radial rafters leading up to a central compression ring and is covered in felt or fabric.

The yurt has been called an "architectural wonder" by Architectural Digest. Its natural strength comes from its rafters pushing inward on the compression ring and outward on the tension cable, which prevents the rafters from moving or spreading outward. Modern yurts are used as art studios, home offices, home gyms, spas and the like. They are also part of a trend called "glamping," which is glamorous camping.

Clear Creek Cove RV Resort offers two rental yurts on its middle level. They are available for \$99 a night. While they are quite an unusual sight from the road, they fit in well with the natural surroundings. They are built on platforms



Kelli Tipton



Bob Crisp, The Daily Home

Yurts offer spectacular views of Logan Martin Lake from their porches, not to mention ultimate comfort while "glamping" at Clear Creek Cove in Talladega.

and set on pilings to make them level on the uneven terrain. Mike Horton, owner of the resort, recently invited me to camp for a weekend in his yurt, and I eagerly accepted.

His yurt is 24 feet in diameter and 15 feet high. It is covered in terra cotta colored vinyl laminate with kaki colored trimming. A spacious deck is outfitted with patio furniture and a small charcoal barbecue grill. It is partially shaded by trees, and it provides a beautiful view Logan Martin Lake's sparkling surface. A salamander scurried across the railing as I



See Yurt, Page 6B

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SOUTHERN ROCKER HAPPY TO

By **BUDDY ROBERTS**
Special Projects Editor

FAYETTEVILLE – When Susannah Seales describes herself as a Southern rocker, it’s easy to take her at her word.

Especially when she’s perched on the edge of boat dock on the banks of the Coosa River and strumming her guitar as occasional raindrops create concentric ripples in the water below.

“You know, the band that made me want to pick up a guitar was Journey,” she said. “Their Escape album. Not that my sound is anything like Journey at all, but the way the guitar and the harmonies all flowed together, it made me want to move around.”

The band’s 1981 album, which produced four Billboard Hot 100 singles, made more than a few music fans want to move around, and Seales said she felt the same way the first time she heard newer rock group Shinedown.

“I grew up listening only to classic rock and old country. The only new music I listened to was pop, but when I heard (Shinedown’s) rock sound coming out of the radio, I fell in love with it.”

Seales frequently brings her rock-influenced Southern sound to local stages. A native of Sterrett who now resides on Lay Lake in Fayetteville, she said she’s happy to call Talladega County home. “I love the slower pace of everything. I love being out in the country where the people are so real and ready to have a good time.”

She finds lake living especially enjoyable.

“Fishing, swimming, relaxing, making new friends and being around old ones – I love just about every aspect of lake life. My favorite part is probably being able to wake up in the morning and drink my coffee while looking over the lake. Very peaceful. Being on the water kind of brings a closeness to you and those around you, because, after all, who doesn’t love a day on the lake? Pretty, sunny weather, hanging out with friends and family, just down on the pier soaking up some sun and forgetting about everything – that’s an ideal day on the lake.”

Seales began performing three years ago, after receiving her first guitar as a gift from her grandfather two years earlier. “He bought it at a pawn

shop in Birmingham. He was big into music. He didn’t play anything, but he had a passion for it.”

Seales felt an immediate connection to the instrument. “I took lessons at Rick’s Guitars in Childersburg, where Jack Rowe taught me how to play. After that, it was I

all I did. I drove my family insane. They had to listen to me learn. I was amazed at you deep you can get into it and never stop learning.”

Several months after getting her guitar, “my uncle talked me into singing. And less than a year after I started singing, I

was booking five shows a week.”

Her schedule typically includes more than 100 shows a year, and she’s played such local venues as Caribe Adventure Resort and Montana’s Saloon in Lincoln, Chilly Willy’s and Docks Bar & Grill in Pell City, Blue Bar

in Moody, Big Diddy’s BBQ in Munford and Red Shamrock in Mt. Laurel. She played the first CoosaPalooza festival at Caribe last summer, and this year made her first appearance at the annual Logan Martin LakeFest and Boat Show, where she treated audi-

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ences to covers and original material during her two-hour set.

“Nobody wants to hear all originals, unfortunately,” she said. “I usually play some Fleetwood Mac and Pat Benatar, and I’m sure I’ll throw in some Lynyrd Skynyrd for LakeFest.”

Seales hesitated to identify her favorite cover song or a favorite from her own material. “The cover song I like best depends on what mood I’m in, and of my own songs, whichever is newest is usually my favorite. That’s probably because I’m not tired of playing it yet and haven’t spent as much time critiquing it.”

Her songwriting is showcased in *Susannah*, a five-song EP she released last July. Available via iTunes and her website, www.susannahseales.com, it’s an “acoustic full band” collection of songs she recorded with Lenny Roth at his studio. Roth played lead guitar, bass and percussion, with Seales on lead vocals, rhythm and slide guitar and piano.

“Guitar is the only instrument I really know how to play,” she said. “I play a little bit of drum, and I can fake it enough to get by on piano.” She

hopes to issue a second release by late summer, “hopefully a full-length album. I’ve got enough material. I just need to get it recorded.”

While her songs are deeply rooted in Southern rock, “I’ve never tried to write lyrics to party to, and my lyrics are not all about me or necessarily something I can relate to. I try to relate to other people. Like with one of my songs, ‘Living for the End.’ It tells a story from my perspective of walking down the side of the road and getting a ride from someone who said things that were inspirational to me. As the character in the song, I had hit rock bottom, but when I wrote it, my life was on track. I had seen someone who had hit rock bottom, imagined I was in their place and tried to write it from that perspective.”

For Seales, songwriting is rarely as easy as it sounds.

“If I sit down and want to write a song, it won’t happen. The words often come at weird times. There’s a single on my EP, ‘Raining on Me.’ I was driving down the road, and the lyrics for the chorus just popped into my head. The last thing on

my mind was writing a song, but that’s how it happens. And sometimes I’ll feel the need to go back to a song I wrote three years ago and add a new line or a new bridge, because what I felt when I wrote it isn’t necessarily what I feel now.

“Sometimes I’ll write two songs in a day, and sometimes it’s two months before I can write down one line. I’m at that point right now, and I’m about to go crazy. One time like this, I ended up writing a song about how I couldn’t write a song.”

Seales has several shows scheduled for the remainder of the month, including sets at Coyote Drive-In in Leeds on Friday, July 22; Blue Bar in Moody on Saturday, July 23; and Courtyard Oyster Bar in Trussville on Thursday, July 28. For more information about upcoming shows or about booking Seals for events, parties or clubs, visit www.susannahseales.com.

“I wouldn’t trade what I do for anything,” she said. “I’ve been everywhere in the South, and I’ve never met more genuine people than here. I get to play music and meet the coolest people every night. What’s not to love?”



Buddy Roberts/The Daily Home

Local musician Susannah Seales released her first five-track EP last July. It's available on iTunes and at www.susannahseales.com.



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Yurt

From Page 3B

unlocked the wooden door and walked into my first yurt experience.

I was met with an air conditioned, light-filled interior and the smell of new hardwood. The circular wall and floor are made of durable Douglas fir. The light colored wood gives the yurt a seamless natural look and feel. Three windows across from the entrance and an acrylic skylight on top of the yurt provide enough sunlight to light the entire structure. The windows are outfitted with adjustable wooden blinds. A wide-screen TV is mounted on the tongue and groove wall.

A small, partially enclosed room on the left has two built-in bunk beds. On the right, the private bathroom is impressive with its walk-in tiled shower, toilet, sink and vanity. Towels and wash cloths are stored in the vanity. Hooks along the wall provide a place to hang them after use. The bathroom has an outlet for a blow dryer or other hair tools, and a large mirror over the sink allows plenty of space for primping.

In the center of the yurt, a futon couch folds out into a bed. Three upholstered chairs provide comfortable seating for watching TV or reading. A black granite bar top with four wooden stools provides plenty of space to eat.

The kitchen is equipped with a full-size stainless steel refrigerator, stove and sink. Gray painted cabinets are filled with ceramic dishes, pots, pans and silverware, and almost everything needed for preparing and eating a meal.

The loft begs to be

slept in. I climbed a wooden ladder and found a queen size mattress and pillows. The domed skylight opens with a few turns of a handle, allowing you to sleep under the stars at night. A bug screen keeps mosquitoes out while letting fresh air in.

I thoroughly enjoyed my stay in the yurt. I was comfortable the entire time, as were all my friends who came to visit. From grilling and chilling on the deck to relaxing on the white sand beach, we all had a memorable time. One of my friends described it as the "coolest clubhouse ever," and it made him feel like a kid again. They were impressed enough to ask about the other yurt, and we plan to rent them both at the same time to double our fun.

The other yurt belongs to Mike's sister, DJ Horton. It is as spacious as his is, but the floor plan is different. It has an air conditioned master bedroom with two twin beds that can be pushed together. The kitchen also has granite counter tops, and the white appliances are scaled down in size to allow room for a dishwasher. The bathroom is fitted with a white fiberglass shower, ceramic sink and toilet. The main living area offers more seating, and there are a set of stairs instead of a ladder leading to the loft. It has a country cottage feel, down to the porch swing and rocking chairs on the wrap around deck.

Both yurts are impeccably clean and offer ultimate comfort while camping. The circular shape and open layout truly bring new meaning to being with the ones you love, and I am certainly looking forward to making more memories in a yurt.



Bob Crisp/The Daily Home

Clear Creek Cove's yurts have a homey feel, well-lit interiors and loft bedrooms that beg to be slept in.





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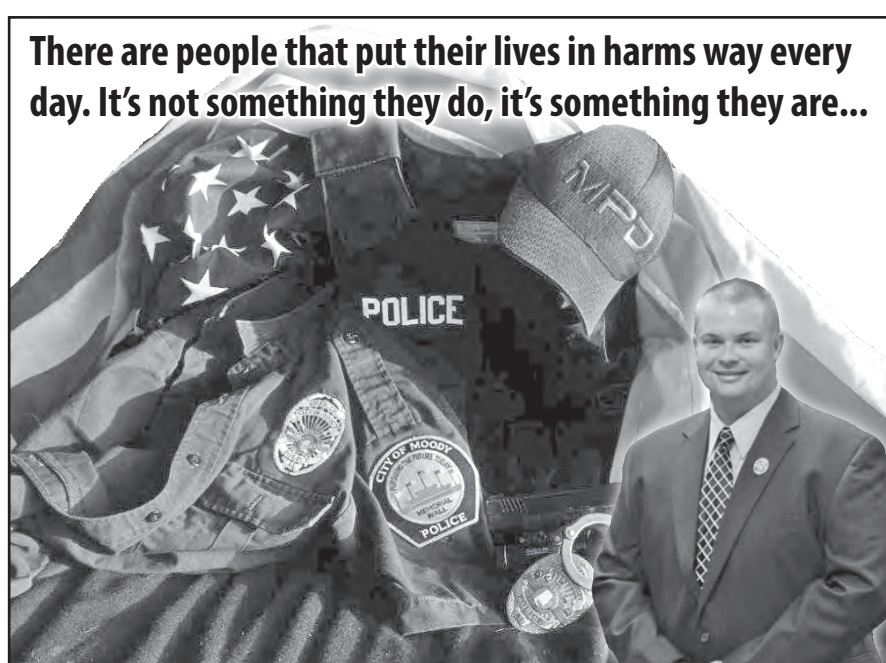
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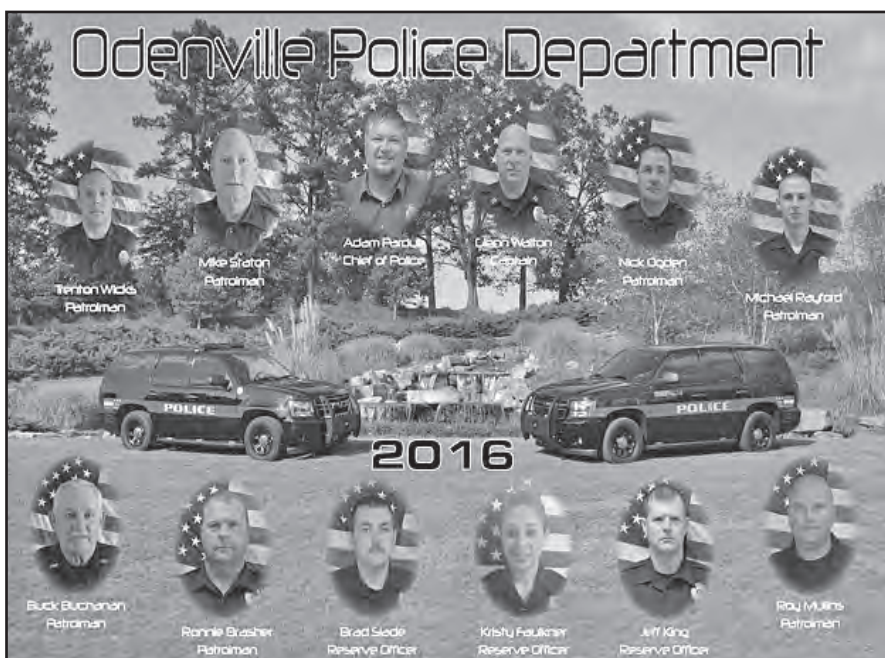
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of nature and playing with glass

by 6 inch piece of glass. After he has this flattened rectangle of glass, he can cut it into smaller pieces. These pieces could be used to create pendants or parts to his mosaics or even parts of windchimes.

Another method Steve uses to cut the bottle is by slicing it diagonally. He will make seven or eight diagonal cuts throughout the bottle, creating a circle about an inch or half an inch tall and ¼ inch thick.

“Like slicing a pizza,” he said.

These circular pieces are used in his mosaics or in his wind chimes. He creates wavy shaped glass for his wind chimes by “slumping.” Putting a cut strip of glass on a type of mold so when the glass melts down, it slumps onto the given shape.

“I need a big inventory of parts,” Steve said. “I’m not generally making parts knowing where they’re going.”

He said it takes him a month or two to make enough parts to spend two to three days laying out a mosaic.

“Laying out a mosaic is probably not unlike laying out a quilt,” Steve said. “It’s a little like putting a puzzle together but backward.”

Mosaics represent the smallest part of his business, but he said he enjoys making them. He uses mirrors or a cement board for the base and they range in size. The smaller mosaics he makes can go for around \$200 while ones at five or six feet go for around \$2,500. His largest mosaic was seven or eight feet, which he said is about as heavy as he could pick up and move around.

While he makes few mosaics, he makes a large variety of pendants. He said making pendants is his favorite because they’re

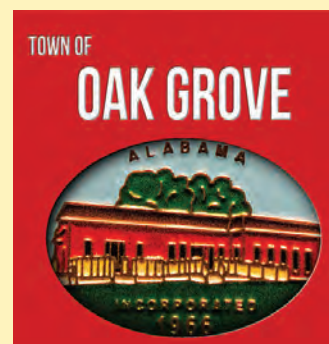


Submitted photo

An example of Sally Smith’s nature photography.

See Artistic, Page 10A

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Artisite

From Page 9B

quick, easy and fun.

He will take the cut tiles of glass and sprinkle special colored powdered glass onto the surface. Then he will trace designs and images into the powder to reveal the original glass.

“It’s like sprinkling baby powder on furniture and writing a message on it,” Steve said.

The effect creates designs of trees, birds, flowers and other images on pendants with a colorful cloudy look.

His pendants sell for around \$19 he said and his wind chimes go for around \$40. Unlike with pendants, Steve keeps the glass for the windchimes natural. Since amber and green colored glass is the most common, he often

searches for blue glass since it’s rarer.

“I’m having a fun time doing it,” Steve said.

In order to work, Steve has layers of protective gear that prevent him from doing a lot of work during the summers and Alabama heat. As he works in the barn near their house, there’s no air conditioning or heat, so he also doesn’t usually do a lot of work in the middle of the winter.

“I always liked working with my hands,” Steve said. “I was much better at doodling in class than taking notes.”

Sally said he’s always been very creative. Often, Steve will ask Sally for her opinion and discuss his art. A lot of times they have these discussions during their sunset ritual.

“Steve is the creative fun one,” Sally said. “I’m the one that sort of takes care of the little details.”

While Sally organizes the dozen of galleries, festivals and art shop they display their work each year, she also works creative magic of her own.

Her love for photography started during a trip to Colorado she took in college. She said she figured she’d want to capture the sights and it turned into a love for nature photography she’s kept up since.

Most days she would take pictures in their acres around the house to see what was new. She may come across a spider web glistening with dew, flowers blooming or a dragonfly perched on a branch. She said she’s often bent over to take a picture of a flower and noticed a bug on the petals and exclaimed how amazing and intricate it is.

“Photography is what feeds my soul,” Sally said. “It helps me realize my place in the world and that there’s a lot of creation and if we just slow down and take the time to look at, is really beautiful.”

She said she doesn’t like taking portrait shots because people can be picky about their photos. She said it’s a different art to create a set with the right lighting, and she prefers to just go outside and see what’s there and capture it as it is.

“People are beautiful,” she said. “But animals and nature don’t complain about being fat. I do better with them.”

Her attention to detail can be seen in how she takes pictures. She said she likes getting close into things and looking at the details presented in front of her.

“[Photography] helps me stop and slow down to look at the little things,” she said. “Our place looks a lot prettier if you look at the tiny bits of it rather than the



Submitted photo

Steve Smith uses glass to make whimsical and decorative wind chimes.

bigger picture sometimes. You don’t see the grass that hasn’t been cut, you see wildflowers.”

After doing photography for so long, she was encouraged to do something with her pictures. She said she loves to write and receive real letters, so she created notecards with her photos. Not only can people send messages in the mail, but the person will also receive a removable 5 by 7 inch matte photograph

of a blooming flower or other natural beauty.

Sally’s notecards and Steve’s artwork can be found in LMO’s Gallery on the square in Talladega and at Artscape art gallery in Pell City.

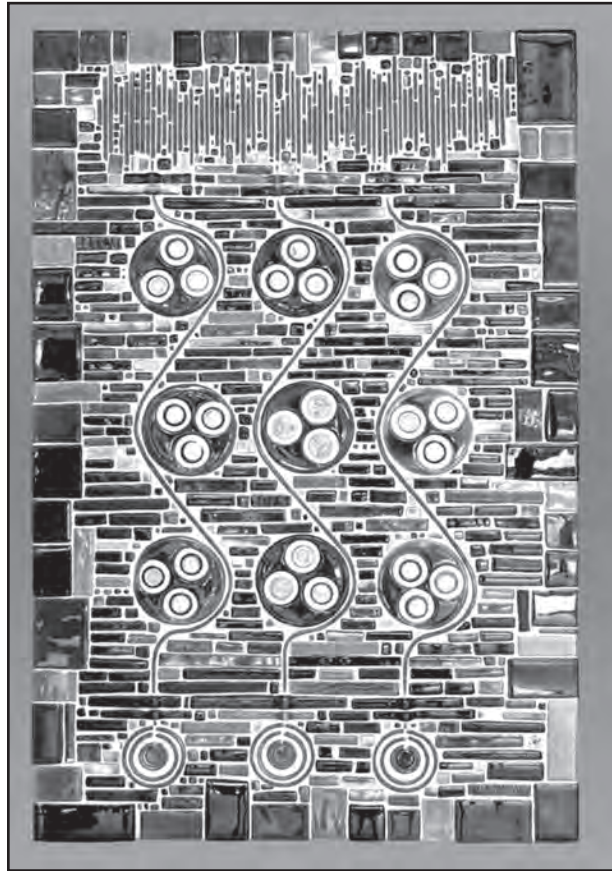
Steve and Sally each create their own artwork and often spend moments such as their sunset ritual enjoying nature together. They have a daughter together and enjoy gardening.

The couple met

through mutual friends and ended up each invited to the same camping trip. They started dating after that and their early dates included plant digs in the landfills, always keeping nature close to their hearts.

Sally said it is wonderful to be an artistic duo who help support each other.

“It’s terrific almost all the time,” Sally said. “It makes life work very well together.”



Submitted photo

One of Steve Smith’s mosaics.



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Hometown Titleholders

St. Clair County Distinguished Young Woman Amanda Carpenter

For Amanda Carpenter, serving as St. Clair County's Distinguished Young Woman (DYW) involves more than just holding a title. It's a responsibility she takes seriously.

The flute-playing, baton-twirling daughter of Marcus and Lisa Carpenter recently explained why she views it that way, why she detests bullying and why she encourages younger girls to get involved with the Distinguished Young Woman program.

On being a DYW: "The organization's motto is 'Be Your Best Self,' and I want to encourage all girls to do that. It's good to be distinguished. It's good to be your best self. It's too easy to get on the wrong path, and I want to set an example for girls of all ages."

An example of a wrong path: "Bullying. At school, you see people being picked on for just being themselves. That's wrong. It's OK to speak out and be ourselves. We are all created in God's image, and no one should

be put down for that."

Her school: Moody High, where she is an upcoming senior and serves as president of the National Spanish Honor Society, vice president of the Senior Beta Club, captain of the majorettes, a member of the National English Honor Society, Mu Alpha Theta, Sigma Delta Phi and the yearbook staff and served as junior class vice president. She holds a 4.357 GPA.

Her hometown: "I like it that everybody knows everybody here. It's not like in a big city. That's one thing I also love about the Class of 2017. We're a very close-knit group, and we stick together through everything. I really like that."

Coming up: Carpenter will represent St. Clair County as she seeks the title of Alabama's Distinguished Young Woman at the state competition in Montgomery in January.

About DYW: It's a national scholarship program that inspires high school girls to "develop their full, individual potential through a fun, transformative experience that culminates in a celebratory showcase of their accomplish-



ments. Distinguished Young Women strives to give every young woman the opportunity to further her education and prepare for a successful future."

Does the DYW title come with a degree of pressure? "In a way, but I think it's a good thing. Through DYW, you are expected to be healthy, responsible, involved, studious and ambitious. Those are all good things. I would definitely encourage girls to get involved with it. You learn skills, you make friends, you earn scholarships - this program has it all."

Miss Motorsports Baylee Smith

Baylee Smith's tenure as Miss Motorsports will conclude when a new titleholder is named later this month, but the Tuscaloosa resident and Troy University student said she has enjoyed the time her crown has allowed her to spend getting to know local communities.

"I would like to thank the Pilot Club of Talladega and the International Motorsports Hall of Fame for the amazing opportunity of serving as Miss Motorsports 2015-2016," she said, explaining why the title is important to her, some of the responsibilities that come with it and why she has come to love Talladega County.

What the title has meant to her: "Being crowned Miss Motorsports has been a lot more than just a crown and sash to me. After my sister, Kelsey Smith, was crowned Miss Motorsports 2012 and had such an amazing year, I could not wait until I turned 18 to compete in the Miss Division."

What being Miss Motorsports involves: "My main responsibility was to represent the Pilot Club, International Motorsports

Hall of Fame and Talladega Superspeedway in a positive manner. I had a few appearances that were required, but I attended more than was required because I enjoyed the interaction with the fans of NASCAR and the people of this community treated me with such respect."

Some of her appearances: The Mardi Gras Parade and Gala, Talladega Christmas Parade, Coosa Valley Day, Ritz Theatre Low Country Shrimp Boil and Draw Down, and A Night at the Museum. "My favorite, of course, was Race Day. I had the pleasure of attending both races, and the experience was something I will never forget. Mr. and Mrs. Moss so graciously opened their suite up to me and made sure I was enjoying the day."

Even though her hometown is Tuscaloosa: "The town of Talladega has been so welcoming and supportive of me during my year. All the kind words and encouragement never went unnoticed. The people of Talladega and Lincoln communities exhibit the true meaning of Southern hospitality. I cannot say enough about how amazing the community has treated me. Every event I attended, the peo-



ple treated me so respectfully and made me feel so welcomed and special. Two people who always made sure I was taken care of and made me feel special were Bruce Ramey and Cookie Adair. Thank you all from the bottom of my heart for a year I will never forget."

Is she a NASCAR fan? "I actually am! My first race was in 2012, and ever since then I have been hooked. The rush I get when the cars come out of Turn 4 and fly by is something I cannot put into words! If I didn't get to attend the race in Talladega, I was watching it on TV. Some of my favorite drivers are Dale Earnhardt Jr, Chase Elliott and Brad Keselowski. This year I had the privilege of meeting Jr. and Chase in person."

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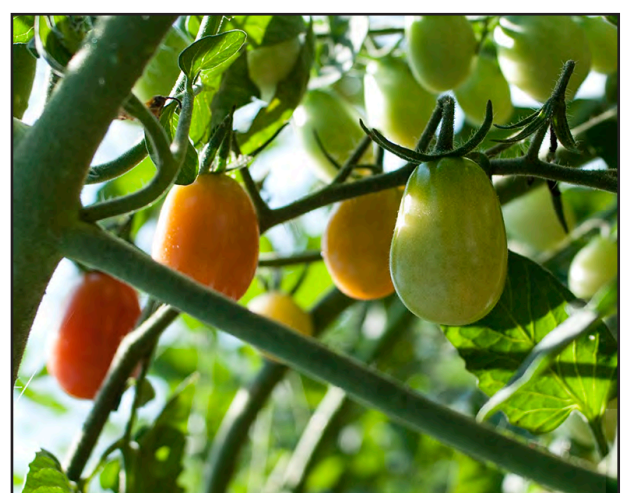
"These fields have been used to grow cotton, corn and soybeans, but my father planted the first vine here in 1965," he said. "He kept planting, and five acres later, we have a vineyard."

Dan and his wife Tonya have operated the winery since Kelly Bryant retired early last year. The septuagenarian, who originally made jams and jellies from his muscadine grapes, began experimenting

with fermentation and, in 1985, received the second winery license granted by the state. Bryant Vineyards is now the oldest continuously-operating winery in Alabama.

It produces five vintages: Festive Red, Peach and the award-winning Dixie Gold, Dixie Blush and Autumn Blush. The vineyards and winery are at 1454 Griffitt Bend Road. More information is available at www.bryantvineyards.com.

"We're a small, family-owned business that started off as a hobby that got way out of control," Dan Bryant said.



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My Hometown

Fun on the farm

Although I grew up in a few different cities, summers were spent on the farm. Yes, a real working farm.

My great-grandparents, the Tysons, had an old farmhouse in Farmville, NC. It's right off Ballards Crossroads. The joke was to find the Tysons, turn on Ballards Crossroads and smell for the goats.

My great-grandparents had six boys and one girl, my grandmother Olive. One of the younger second cousins couldn't remember her name so he called "Aunt Pickle." It was close and we all had a good laugh.

Several of my great-uncles kept working the farm after my great-grands had passed.

My grandma lived about 15 minutes away in Greenville. Usually we stayed with them--my mom, Nancy, brother, Robert and me. My dad, George, had to work. This one summer we had a huge reunion--I mean HUGE. Probably 100 people or more, compared to the 60-80 we usually had. Relatives were parked everywhere among the kinfolk still living in the area. This summer, however, a group of us cousins stayed in the old Tyson farmhouse. It was in the middle of where Uncle

Jack kept goats, chickens,
peacocks, cows and more.

The old house hadn't been lived in in quite a while--maybe decades. It had electricity in the kitchen, where we had a ceiling fan (no AC of course). We had running water in the kitchen, but not the rest of the house. There was a hand-pump for water near the porch area. To flush the toi-

let we went and pumped water in a bucket and presto. We bunked in the living room and I remember it being really really hot. There were also several rooms we couldn't go in because the floor was falling in.

I reached out to some of my cousins to see what they could remember and to try and find out which year it was. Melissa thinks she was about 16; Melanie was about 12; I would have been 10; Lindsay was 8 or 9 and Robert was 7. And those were just the first cousins. I can't even begin to keep up with all the other ones but this was our age group.

Melissa and Melanie remember the three of us swimming in the large pond on the property (there was also a small pond we fished in). There was a huge oak tree with a rope tied to it which we put to good use. And of course the cows came

down to drink or wade.

Melissa remembers getting the three of us (being the older crowd) into trouble by breaking eggs in a water trough. I have no idea why it seemed like a good idea, but I remember hauling a LOT of water to clean up the mess.

And yes, I did actually milk a cow. It really isn't as easy as it seems--there's a trick to it--but I sorta got the hang of it.

Melissa's dad, Uncle Bob, took the group of us fishing at the small pond. We had dug up worms from the chicken pens and found a few grubs in the rotten logs near the pond, but soon we ran out of bait. I was chewing blueberry bubblegum and offered that as bait. Wouldn't you know it, we caught the biggest fish of the day from my gum. Uncle Bob offered it back, which I declined.

One of my favorite memories was making plum jam with grandma. In a large pen behind the old farmhouse my Uncle Jack had plum trees and goats. These were the light golden plus that taste fantastic. Well grandma wanted to make jam so she and I went out to pick the plums. This involved me climbing partway up the skinny trees and shaking hard enough for the ripe plums to fall. Grandma would gather them up in a bucket and we would move on to the next tree.



My mother, Nancy Fulfer Merz, and my aunt, Ellen Fulfer Story, riding a cow on the old farmstead

goats are, one large ram discovered that where we went, fresh plums magically appeared. So now I was shaking trees and grandma was racing this goat to the good plums.

And he was fast—he got quite a few. After getting down from one tree I looked over at this very pleased goat, with orange plum smeared all over his large lips. I looked at grandma and said, “The goat has lipstick on.” We had such a good laugh. Plus the plum jam was

great

Although I'm not sure I would want to spend another hot summer in an old farmhouse with no AC, I will always remember the fun we had, running around with cousins and not much care in the world.



My uncle, Bob Tyson, showing his strength by balancing two chickens at the farm.

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My great-grandparents' home, the old Tyson farmhouse, in Farmville, N.C., is where my cousins and I spent a lot of time during the summers growing up.

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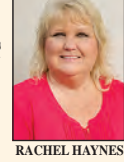
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Why is your hometown a great place to live?



"I was born and raised in Talladega and loved its small-town appeal. I enjoyed attending school in the city and felt I grew up with a great mix of people. I have lived in Lincoln for the past 14 years and love how much it has grown. I never thought I would be back to stay, but God has a good sense of humor."

Bill Goodwin
Talladega



"I love Alpine because it was where I was born and raised. It's quite, peaceful and I enjoy being away from the busy city life."

Tanisha Edwards
Alpine



"Although I live in Oxford, Talladega feels like home. I played sports with a lot of people from here and a lot of them turned out to be life-long friends."

Robert Herring
(Talladega head football coach)
Oxford



"I love Talladega because it is a nice place to stay. I feel safer here than in a bigger city such as Gadsden and Anniston. Plus, we have plenty of places to shop for things at reasonable prices."

Elaine Garrett
Talladega

What living in Talladega means to me

I have lived in Talladega practically all of my life. It was only while I was a college student attending Jacksonville State, for approximately five years, that I did not call Talladega "home."

As a kid and adolescent, all I could dream about was growing up and getting far away from here. Growing up, I always heard about the downsides to living here and quickly forgot about the good.

It was only after I moved back home after college that I truly began to appreciate where I come from.

Taking a job at the Daily Home has revealed to me on a daily basis what our city truly has to offer. I realized I have become numb to all of the uniqueness and histo-

ry that makes Talladega, "My Talladega."

I am proud to say my home is the city that houses the Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind, the HBCU of Talladega College and the nation's fastest NASCAR track. These three attractions alone bring people from all different walks of life to the city, and for that I am thankful.

Growing up, I didn't know much about AIDB other than that it was a school to help the disabled. I have found that it is so much more. AIDB is a loving family that works each day to change the lives of those it encounters.

As a kid, I heard stories about how my grandfather helped build the

Talladega Superspeedway. Usually those stories went in one ear and out the other, but while working on an article about the track, I truly realized how much hard work was put in -- and how fortunate we are to still claim it

as a huge part of sports history.

I took voice lessons at Talladega College as a kid and, looking back, I am so thankful to have been exposed to the historical institution.

By taking lessons at

such a young age, I was able to develop the proper techniques, which helped me immensely during my short time as a vocal major at Jacksonville State.

Talladega may not be perfect, but it is mine --

and I've gradually developed a sense of pride and now will defend my hometown to anyone who only chooses to see what's wrong, instead of what's going right.

I'm thankful to call Talladega home.



Laci Braswell



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District Three Commissioner Tommy Bowers and
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Get the scoop at Blue Bell

By BUDDY ROBERTS
Special Projects Editor

SYLACAUGA – July is National Ice Cream Month, and Blue Bell Creameries has invited local residents to celebrate the occasion with a free scoop of their favorite frozen treat.

“We want everyone to come out and get that free scoop of ice cream on Friday, July 29,” said

Aretha McKinney, tour guide and manager of the Old-Fashioned Ice Cream Parlor and Country Store at Blue Bell’s production facility at 423 North Norton Avenue. The complimentary frozen treats will be available between 9 a.m. and 4:30 p.m.

The parlor is already a popular destination, with its share of regular customers and others

who stop in for a cup of ice cream while visiting or passing through Sylacauga.

“We’ll have between 25,000 and 30,000 visitors each year,” McKinney said. “They come from all around – Georgia, Birmingham, Anniston, as far away as Texas. We had a family reunion from North Carolina here not long ago, and a missions group from Florida

stopped in here. They’ve been coming from everywhere. This parlor has really brought people to this town over the years.”

McKinney has worked at Blue Bell for 17 years, and she knows the regulars by name. “I love meeting the people who come in, and I enjoy seeing the smile on their faces when they see Blue Bell ice cream. They stand at the counter and

see all those flavors, and it usually takes them to some time to decide what they want.”

The parlor currently offers the following 19 flavors.

Butter Crunch: Tasty vanilla ice cream loaded with chunks of crunchy chocolate peanut butter candy.

Strawberry: Made with succulent strawberries.

Chocolate Chip

Cookie Dough: Vanilla ice cream with chocolate chip cookie dough and semi-bittersweet chocolate chips.

Cotton Candy: Pink and blue vanilla ice cream with the old-fashioned taste of cotton candy.

Cookies ‘n Cream: Vanilla ice cream with chunks of chocolate cream

See **Blue Bell**, Page C7



Buddy Roberts/The Daily Home

Rhett Aderholt gets a dish of chocolate chip cookie dough ice cream from Wanda Borden at Blue Bell Creameries’ Old-Fashioned Ice Cream Parlor. At right is parlor manager Aretha McKinney.

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Isabel Anderson Comer

By KELLI TIPTON
Home staff writer

SYLACAUGA — Isabel Anderson Comer Museum and Arts Center in Sylacauga is a trove of local history. From Sylacauga's first Indian settlers to its marble and textile industries, the history of the area is told through hundreds of artifacts and photographs that give visitors a glimpse of days gone by.

"I've been a director here for 16 years, and I'm still learning, and I'm amazed at what this city represents from the beginning to the present," said Donna Rentfrow, the museum's executive director. "I've lived in several different cities and states, and I can really appreciate the history and the art that is here."

"The history of Sylacauga is intriguing to me. All the old photographs of the stores fascinate me. When I first moved here, I was just enthralled with the place. I feel like I missed out by not living here then. When I have time, I walk through and look at the photographs of the old buildings, and I picture

myself in those days, and imagine what it would have been like."

The museum features permanent exhibits and a monthly rotating exhibit.

"Each month we have a different artist exhibition and a reception for the artist. This gives people a chance to come to the museum in the evenings because so many people are working during the day," she said. "We also have permanent exhibits here. We have Guiseppe Moretti. He, of course, ties in with the marble. He started some quarries in Talladega County. He is known as the Father of the Vulcan. We have some of his plaster pieces and some of his early marble pieces. We have archeology and geology. We have gems and rocks that were found in this area. A lot of people are surprised at the content we have in here."

Another permanent exhibit features Sylacauga's native sons, Jim Nabors and William "Bill" Nichols. Nabors is an actor and singer probably best known for playing the character Gomer Pyle on *The Andy Griffith Show* and later in the spinoff,



File photo

The marble-fronted Comer Museum is on Broadway Avenue in Sylacauga.

Gomer Pyle, U.S.M.C. Memorabilia from these shows is on display as well as Nabors' gold and platinum records.

William "Bill" Nichols served in the U.S. House of Representatives and the Senate, and his roles in U.S. government are

highlighted along with correspondence from President Ronald Reagan. Other permanent exhibits include Civil War and WWII munitions, Native American artifacts and a one-room, life-sized log cabin with a fireplace.

People have come

from miles away to explore these remnants of the past. Data collected from 2011 through 2015 show the museum's visitors have come from 11 countries, including France, Germany and Australia; 39 states, including Alabama; and

206 cities, including Sylacauga.

"We are visited by many schools in the central Alabama area. The teachers like to come here because this museum is small, and it's not intimidating like other museums," Rentfrow

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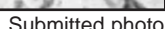


See **Museum** Page **6C**



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Jim Nabors, left, is a Sylacauga native who rose to fame playing the character, Gomer Pyle on *The Andy Griffith Show* in the 1960's. He hosted *The Jim Nabors Hour* from 1969 to 1971 and performed with such guests as Carol Burnett.

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Sylacauga through the years



Downtown 1900



Quarry 1941



Downtown 1934



Avondale 1950



BB Comer Band 1954



Broadway 1950s



WWII era Street dance

Photos provided by Libby Conway Barden

Museum

From Page 5C

gle with this. Hopefully, we can get some of the younger people more involved, because a lot of our older members are now seniors.”

One of the museum’s most recent fundraisers was in October 2015. A group of paranormal investigators with Spirit Communications

and Research (SCARE) brought night vision cameras, modified radios and other equipment to make contact with any spirits that were present among the relics. According to Rentfrow, guests of the event actually witnessed some unexplained phenomena.

“All of a sudden, things started happening. People’s phones started going out, and something real cold would go by,” she said. “Voices start-

ed coming through, and upstairs where the military exhibit is, a veteran came through. They asked him if he was killed in the war, and he wasn’t. But there was a good conversation with him.”

“In the archeology room, an Indian chief

came through. We had just done some renovations in there, and I asked him if he liked the way we restored it, and he said, ‘No.’ One of the investigators asked if he was Cherokee, and he said, ‘No, Creek!’”


And Harriett, a French

decorative doll, was in a showcase in the basement. Rentfrow said she decided to bring her up her to the office because there was a lot of negative activity down there. “I think she is happier up here in the office,” she said.

Rentfrow said the team

has expressed interest in coming back and doing another investigation because of all the activity it encountered while it was there.

“It’s amazing,” she said. “It’s something that can’t be explained, but it’s there.”



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Buddy Roberts/The Daily Home

"I enjoy seeing the smile of people's faces when they see Blue Bell ice cream," parlor manager Aretha McKinney said.



Buddy Roberts/The Daily Home

Enjoying some cherry vanilla, chocolate chip cookie dough and mocha almond fudge on a recent afternoon are, from left, Andrew Owings, Alexis Deale and T.J. Deale.



Buddy Roberts/The Daily Home

Blue Bell

From Page 3C

cookies – 'The Original' since 1979.

Blue Monster: A rock-in' blue vanilla ice cream mixed with chunks of chocolate chip cookies and chocolate chip cookie dough pieces.

Mint Chocolate Chip: Mint ice cream sprinkled with semi-sweet chocolate chips.

Cherry Vanilla: Vanilla ice cream with maraschino cherries.

Chocolate chip: Vanilla ice cream with semi-sweet chocolate chips.

Dutch Chocolate: Chocolate ice cream made with the finest imported chocolate.

Coffee: Made with natural coffee beans.

Pistachio Almond: Pistachio ice cream with pieces of chopped, roasted almonds.

Rocky Road: Chocolate ice cream with butter-roasted almonds and miniature marshmallows.

Krazy Kolors: Radical red, yummy yellows and blazin' blue vanilla ice cream with a flavor that will knock your socks off.

Homemade Vanilla: Homemade-tasting vanilla ice cream with a special hand-cranked flavor – 'The Original' since 1969.

Black Walnut: Made with fresh black walnuts.

Mocha Almond Fudge: Coffee ice cream with roasted almonds and a chocolate sundae sauce.

Buttered Pecan: Made with salted, roasted pecans.

Pecan Pralines 'n Cream: Vanilla ice cream with a praline sauce swirl and praline-coated pecans.

"Homemade vanilla continues to be our most popular flavor," McKinney said. "The kids love Krazy Kolors, and a lot of our senior customers enjoy black walnut. Myself, I like the pecan pralines 'n cream.

T-shirts, books and various kitchen and household items are available for sale at the Blue Bell country store in Sylacauga.

Buddy Roberts/
The Daily Home

We'll have a mystery flavor out for you to try on July 29. And before you ask, I'm not going to tell you what it will be. That's why it's a mystery."

It's no mystery, though, why customers keep returning to the ice cream parlor, according to Marilyn Kline, who brought her 7-year-old granddaughter, Josie Benson, there for a couple of scoops of chocolate chip cookie dough.

"Blue Bell is pretty special," Kline said over

her dish of butter pecan. "A lot of people were upset when it had to close for a while. It was really a big thing when our ice cream came back."

McKinney agrees, believing that Blue Bell's products are more than just ice cream. "Blue Bell is part of people's lives. It's a good dessert, yes, but it's a peace-of-mind-dessert. That's why people keep coming back to us. It's hard not to feel good when you're eating ice cream."

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Buddy Roberts/The Daily Home

Briant Smith's cracked headstone is more of more than 70 that currently stand near Lay Lake as a memorial to Tennessee militia members who fought in the War of 1812.

To the memory of Gen. Jackson

By **BUDDY ROBERTS**
Special Projects Editor

If you've never been there before, General Jackson Memorial Boulevard in southwest Talladega County isn't an easy place to find.

Once you have, it's impossible not to at least slow down and glance at the 75 headstones that stand a few feet off the asphalt, close enough to Lay Lake that you can see the water. In their midst is a monolith on which weathered words have been inscribed: "To the Memory of General Jackson and his Tennessee Volunteers. While camped here in 1814, he fought the Battle of Horseshoe Bend and discharged his volunteers."

The Battle of Horseshoe Bend was fought during the War of 1812 – described by one historian as a war every American has heard of but knows virtually nothing about – but it wasn't fought in Talladega County. How the memorial to veterans who died more than 200 years ago came to be near Fayetteville is part of a story that began when James Madison was pres-

ident.

Trade restrictions caused by the Napoleonic Wars, resentment over British support for Native American tribes that were resisting Manifest Destiny and American interest in annexing Canada brought the United States into another war with England in the summer of 1812.

During the following three years, large-scale battles were fought in the Atlantic Ocean, at U.S. and Canadian borders and in Southern states, including central Alabama, which was part of the Mississippi Territory in those days and wouldn't become its own state until a couple of years after the war.

In August of 1814, General Andrew Jackson's army of Tennessee militia members defeated a portion of the Creek nation in the five-hour Battle of Horseshoe Bend near Dadeville in Tallapoosa County, concluding a tragic military effort to clear territory of its Native American inhabitants. The victory earned Jackson a popularity that he rode to the White House and onto the \$20 bill.

As the years passed,

the cemetery containing the graves of the militiamen from east and west Tennessee who were killed while for Jackson in 1813 and 1814 was overtaken by the changing landscape, and their headstones were moved to a new resting place near Fayetteville.

As you read the following paragraphs containing the names of those who were involved in the 19th century conflict, remember that these were men who really lived – and died. True, the argument can be made that they do not deserve memorialization any more than their commander's face should be on currency, that their cause was unjust and resulted in the death and displacement of innocents on a scale it's difficult to fathom today.

Such is the harsh, unglamorous reality of war. It was, as Ecclesiastes 8:9 describes, "a time wherein one man hath power over another to his hurt."

But while America's view of itself may be different now than it once was, it cannot be denied that the following men were on hand for some of the most significant

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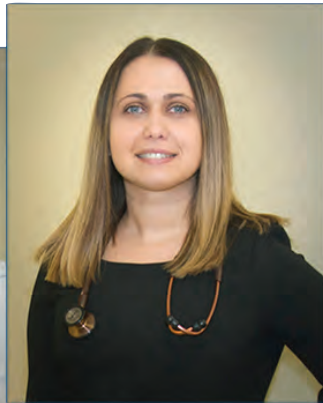
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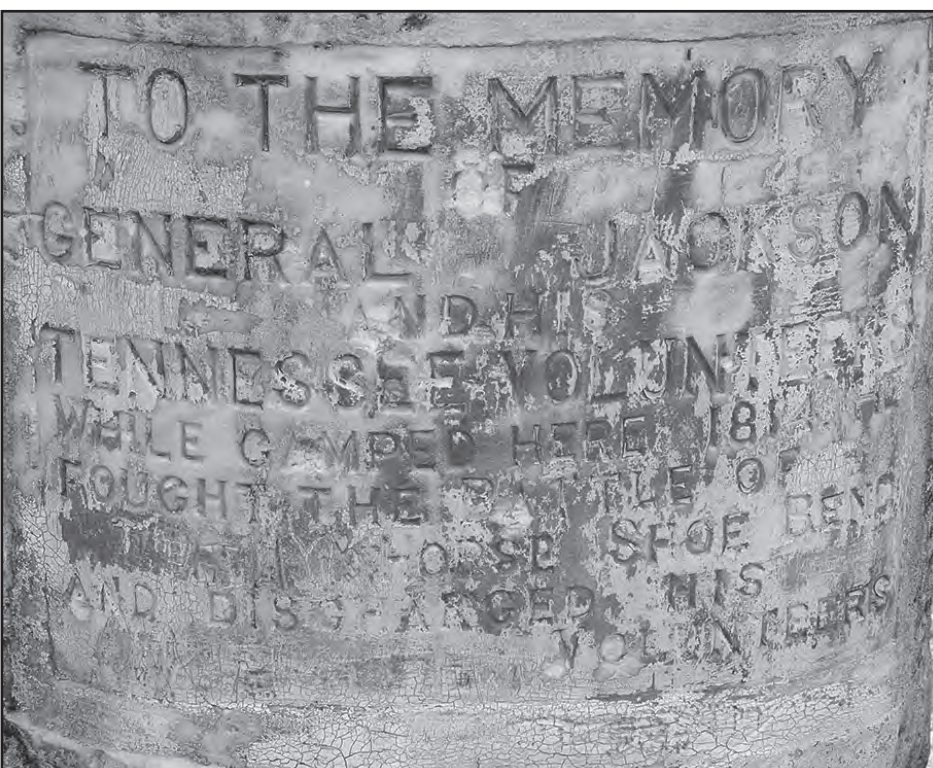
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and his Tennessee volunteers



Buddy Roberts/The Daily Home

During the War of 1812, central Alabama was still part of the Mississippi Territory. This memorial to those who fought in the conflict was established near Fayetteville in the 1930s.

events in the history of what was then a young nation, tragic and uneasy repercussions of which are still felt today.

James Boaz, Jacob Yount, George Hellums, Able Dockery, John Leeper, David Rankin, Moses Thompson, Andrew Calhoun, Gale Cox, Jacob Bruner, George Gross, Thomas J. Johnson, William Bunch, John Huffman, Spencer Hill, Rowling Rice, William Cloud, John Usher, Thomas Ritchey, Enoch Rector, Joseph Robertson, Sawyer Smiley, Reuben Hutchinson, Robert Glasco, Nicholas Gibbs, William Miltonberger.

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Archibald Nail, William P. Harden, Elias Waddle, Edward King, Briant Smith, Alfred Sims, Jeffrey Reffeus, Stephen Pankey, Thomas Ford, Robert Yates, Moses Freeman, William Payne, Solomon Bray, Phillips Bell, Thomas Hamblen, James Hamilton, James McCoy, Thomas Dawson, David Mcants, Allen Duncan, Paris Tracy, Henry Sawry, John Jones, James Ellis, Elijah Bright, William Pursell.

As I walked among the markers, reading each name carved into the small monuments, I asked some questions. What did John Leeper look like, or any of these men who died years before there was such a thing as photography? What might Archibald Nail have accomplished had he made it back home to Tennessee? What kind of home and how much family would William Mintonberger have returned to?

The answers are lost to history and speculation.

Having read the last name, I was reminded of John McRae's World War I-era poem, *In Flanders*

Fields.

In Flanders fields the poppies blow

Between the crosses,

row on row,

That mark our place;

and in the sky

The larks, still bravely

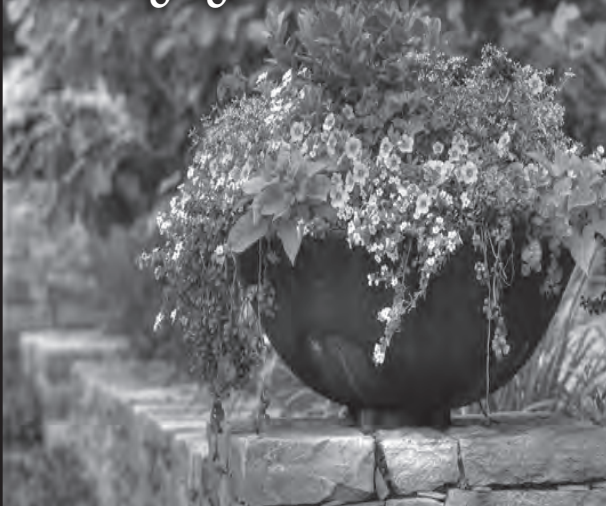
singing, fly

Scarce heard amid the

guns below.

There are no poppies in the small Fayetteville field, but on a hot afternoon, the songs of birds – maybe larks – can be heard quite clearly above the incessant hum from the utility station that sits about 25 feet behind the last row of headstones.

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JIM MANN AND HIS

By KELLI TIPTON
Home staff writer

MUNFORD — Jim Mann has a penchant for peculiar pets. He raises guineas, emus, donkeys, llamas and other exotic animals on his 80-acre farm on Twin Churches Road in Munford. Most people do a double take the first time they see his llamas grazing in the pasture. After all, this is cow country.

“I do it generally for the public. We have friends who come here and bring their children to see the animals and birds. Some people just ride by my place and view them from the road. It’s a local thing,” he said. “Most of the time, people don’t get to see these animals in a natural setting, just grazing and going about their business. I keep them for the oddity of it,” he said.

Mann’s menagerie has free run of the pasture, and the animals live as they would in the wild. He doesn’t raise them for commercial purposes at all. He raises them because they need a home, and he is able to provide one. “People had animals like emus, and the market for them disappeared. They had animals they wanted to get rid of. I had pasture, so I put them in my pasture. A lot of people get



Ernie the emu eats a snack provided by his owner Jim Mann. Ernie and other exotic animals have found a new home at Mann’s farm in Munford.

animals for pets, and then the new wears off. The little cute things grow up and become a problem. So I wind up with them. It’s kind of a repository for animals. My wife’s afraid I’m going to wind up with an elephant in the pas-

ture one day. If one came along, I’d probably have it out there,” he said with a laugh.

The animals are grazers, but Mann supplements their daily diet with corn and oats. “I buy corn and oats in bulk. In the

summer, I cut their feed down some, but I still feed them, just to keep them coming to eat. That keeps them somewhat tame,” he said.

Ernie, the emu, eats feed from a bucket, packing it in his beak before

throwing his head back to swallow it down his long, undulating neck. “I pet them when I feed them. That’s just to handle them. I don’t make real pets out of them. The emu is skittish and it jumps around a lot. It has

claws that could cut. Most of the time they are gentle, but they are skittish. When something bothers them they jump and start wind milling their feet,” he said.

A black miniature horse is named Stubby,

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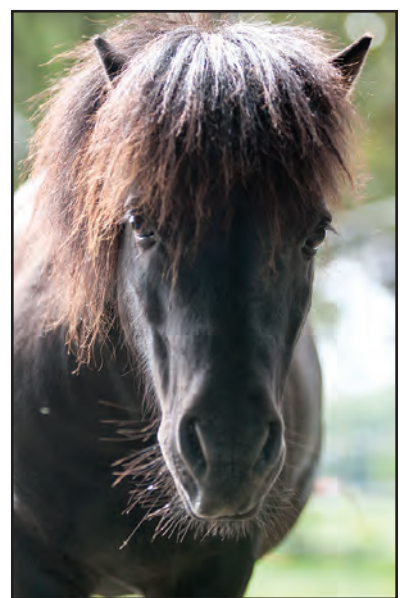


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He said he feeds them every morning. "I open the back door, and they're waiting. The cats are waiting, the dogs are waiting, the donkeys are braying, the llamas are waiting, but when they see that door open, they know it's time to eat. They know who feeds them."

The concrete driveway leading to Mann's house is the peacock's stage. He puts on a show in the morning in front of the garage, spreading his plumage and parading around. "It's his show place. He gets out there and struts around, and he'll strut for 30 minutes. He'll strut and squawk a little bit. He'll feather a bit. That's kind of

See **Pets.** Page 14C

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Mann has several donkeys at his Munford farm, along with more exotic creatures. “Most of the time, people don’t get to see these animals in a natural setting,” he said. “I keep them generally for the oddity of it.”

Pets

From Page 14C

in season right now,” Mann said. “This fall, all of his tail feathers will molt and fall out. I just collect them up and give

them away to friends and to children who stop by,” he said.

The animals are low maintenance. “They are pretty hearty animals. Some people shear llamas for their wool, but I don’t do that. Even in the hot weather, the wool is an

insulator,” he said.

And they are all one big happy family. “Most of mine get along. They are used to each other. They do a lot of jostling around to eat, but that’s normal. They want their part of the food. They are herd animals, and they

like to be around other animals. Even the emu likes to hang around the donkeys for company,” he said.

While he enjoys his critters, he has a few words of advice for anyone wanting to purchase an unusual pet.

“A lot of people make the mistake of keeping livestock, like a goat or a donkey, on a one acre lot. Before you know it, all the grass is gone, and all they have is a dirt floor, and that’s not good for the animal. They end up eating commercial

feed, and they don’t have a natural graze. They need plenty of room to roam,” he said. “We do this for our own enjoyment for other people’s enjoyment. We have the space, and grass for grazing, and they have plenty of room to roam,” he said.



Visitors to Mann’s menagerie often are surprised to see a colorful peacock strutting around or llamas grazing in a pasture.

Tucker Webb/The Daily Home

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Hometown Titleholders

Miss Alabama High School Margaret Seay

Take a quick glance at Margaret Seay's resume, and it's quite clear why she was named Miss Alabama High School 2016. She holds a 4.48 GPA, is ranked eighth in her class of 285 at Pell City High School, has been involved with at least 14 extracurricular organizations and activities, has served as a legislative page for the Alabama House of Representatives, qualified for the UAB Regional Science Fair and regional cross country competition, walked in the National Independence Day Parade, volunteered with more than 15 community service initiatives and served as Miss Alabama United States Junior Teen 2015. Seay is representing Alabama this weekend at the Miss America High School pageant in San Antonio, Texas, but whether she receives the national title or not, she believes community service is more important than the title.

"The most important thing is what you

do with the crown," she said, explaining how she enjoys using hers to help elementary school students cope with a growing problem. Anti-bullying: "I believe in being BRAVE – Building Respect and Values for Everyone. Bullying is a major issue, and I can relate to young children who are dealing with it because I was in their shoes just a few years ago. I let them know that middle school is tough and it's not going to get better, but it can get better if we embrace each other and love each other for who they are. Children love anybody who comes into the school with a shiny crown, and I see it as my responsibility to love on them and encourage them." Her parents: Phil and Michele Seay. "We have seen a very shy young lady become a very confident leader who actively engages in community and service projects to improve our area," her father said. Some of her volunteer work has included serving as a youth leader with Community Table, participating in the Renew Our Rivers clean-up



efforts on Logan Martin Lake, helping raise funds for the American Cancer Society through Relay For Live events, joining a two-week mission trip to serve homeless communities and serving as an environmental educator for the annual St. Clair County Water Day. Thanks to the community: "I would like to thank all the people in Pell City who have supported me. The community has really rallied around me, and I've appreciated and enjoyed all their support."

Miss Marble Valley Cora Lynn Griffen

Cora Lynn Griffen was crossing the street in downtown Sylacauga when she encountered a group of children who had just left the B.B. Comer Memorial Library at the corner. "Look, she's a princess," one of the young girls whispered to another. Griffen greeted them all with a smile and some kind words. It's something she's gotten used to since being named Miss Marble Valley 2016. "I have loved being part of the Miss Alabama organization, and I've enjoyed getting to part of the community in Sylacauga, even though it isn't my hometown," she said. "Everyone knows everyone here, and I really appreciate how welcoming and encouraging everyone has been." At the library, Griffen listed some of the events she's taken part in while representing the Sylacauga area and explained why community service is important to her. In the Marble Valley: "I've made some appearances at the community center, got to sing the national anthem for the

recreation league baseball teams' season opener and attended a chamber of commerce meeting about economic development. That was very interesting. I've been able to meet the mayor, Mr. Doug Murphree, and he came to my send-off party before the Miss Alabama Pageant. I was also able to attend a performance of Steel Magnolias produced by the high school drama department. I got teary-eyed, it was so good." Her platform: Lending a Helping Hand. "It started with just me doing different volunteer projects and developed into a way for me to show young people how they can get involved with projects in their communities. Most elementary schools don't have volunteer days like they do in high schools. I would have loved to volunteer when I was a kid, but the opportunities for younger children often aren't there. My parents taught me the importance of putting others ahead of myself, and I love teaching children the value of that." How the crown helps causes: "The crown attracts young children. They think you're a princess. What people don't recognize about this orga-



nization is that the crown is a voice. It allows you to promote your platform and speak about causes in ways you'd never have opportunity to on your own. The crown has meaning." How Miss Alabama is different from other pageant organizations: "A lot of people do have negative opinions about it because of how TV, like Toddlers and Tiaras, portrays pageant systems. But once they meet us and talk with us, they see very quickly that our organization is about scholarship and service. Those are actually two of the four points on our crowns, along with style and success."

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‘The more things change ...’

How Lincoln has become one of the top 100 most-populated cities in Alabama

By LACI BRASWELL
Home staff writer

LINCOLN -- The city now known as Lincoln was first inhabited by the Muskogee and The Creek Native American tribes and has since written its own unique narrative to the state history books.

The region has been called many names over time by early migrants, including Cheaha, Choccolocco and Coosa.

According to records, Lincoln's Blue Eye Creek, which is in the OldTown area, was named after Chief Conchardee, who had one blue eye and one brown.

In 1813, Gen. Andrew Jackson and more than 2,000 troops marched into Fort Strother, north of the city. Jackson was attracted to the region because of its natural resources, including wildlife and a plentiful water supply.

On his way to Talladega, Jackson made a trail through Lincoln, which is now known as Jackson Trace Road.

In the 1850s Lincoln was known by the name "Kingsville," after the King family that owned the area's first post office.

The name officially changed to Lincoln in 1856.

Despite rumors, Lincoln was not named after our 16th president, but instead in honor of a Revolutionary War general, named Benjamin Lincoln.

What's in a name?

Benjamin Lincoln was a native to Hingham, Mass., and born in 1733.

Lincoln was first a student and worked on the local farm before following in his father's footsteps and going into politics.

At the age of 21, Lincoln became Hingham's town constable and entered the 3rd Regiment of the Suffolk militia, serving in 1755.

Two years later, Lincoln was elected to the position of town clerk.

In the 1760s, he was elected to serve as the justice of peace.

Lincoln was later promoted to lieutenant colonel, and he eventually became the commander of all the state's troops around the Boston area.

Lincoln also was a major factor in the surrender of Yorktown in October 1781.

He was one of a few soldiers to be present



Bob Crisp/The Daily Home

During the early 19th century, Lincoln was know as Kingsville. Its current name was adopted in 1856.

at the three major surrenders of the American Revolution, including Saratoga, Charlestown and Yorktown.

After the war, Lincoln served as the nation's first Secretary of War

from 1781-1783. He was also a member of the Massachusetts State Convention, where the U.S. Constitution was ratified in 1787.

Additionally, Lincoln was one of only 10 men

to receive an electoral vote in the first presidential election.

Early beginnings

The city of Lincoln's rich history and humble beginnings are still present in the city's OldTown area, which is home to many historic buildings of old family businesses.

OldTown is home to the First National Bank building, which is now

vacant and dates back to the 1920s. The town's first post office still remains close by, but is also vacant.

The historic Georgia Pacific Railroad Depot was moved from its original property and now is in the OldTown area, on Railroad Avenue.

Another historic landmark home to the city of Lincoln is the Watson House. The home was



File photo

Rail traffic has always been of importance to the city of Lincoln, as this vintage photograph shows. The Talladega County town grew from humble beginnings and experienced a major population growth during the latter half of the past century.

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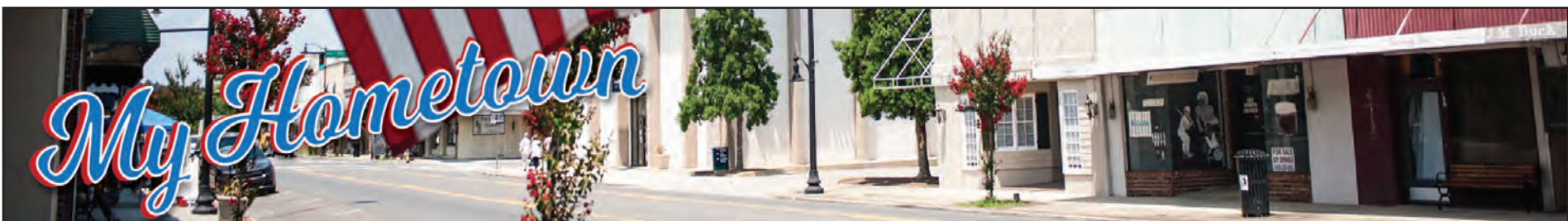
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built in 1847 and now serves as the site for the city's annual 5k run and can be rented for special events and weddings.

Looking to the future
According to local historians, the city's growth increased dramatically in the 1960s, with the expansion of the local water system.

During the decade spanning 1990-2000, Lincoln was named one of the fastest-growing cities in Alabama with a 50

percent growth rate.

Perhaps the main catalyst to the city's growth was the establishment of the Honda Manufacturing plant. Honda officially started making products at the Lincoln facility in the fall of 2001, and has since become one of the region's main reasons for economic growth.

Lincoln is also home to six public city parks: Lincoln Park, Moseley Park, Piney Grove Park,

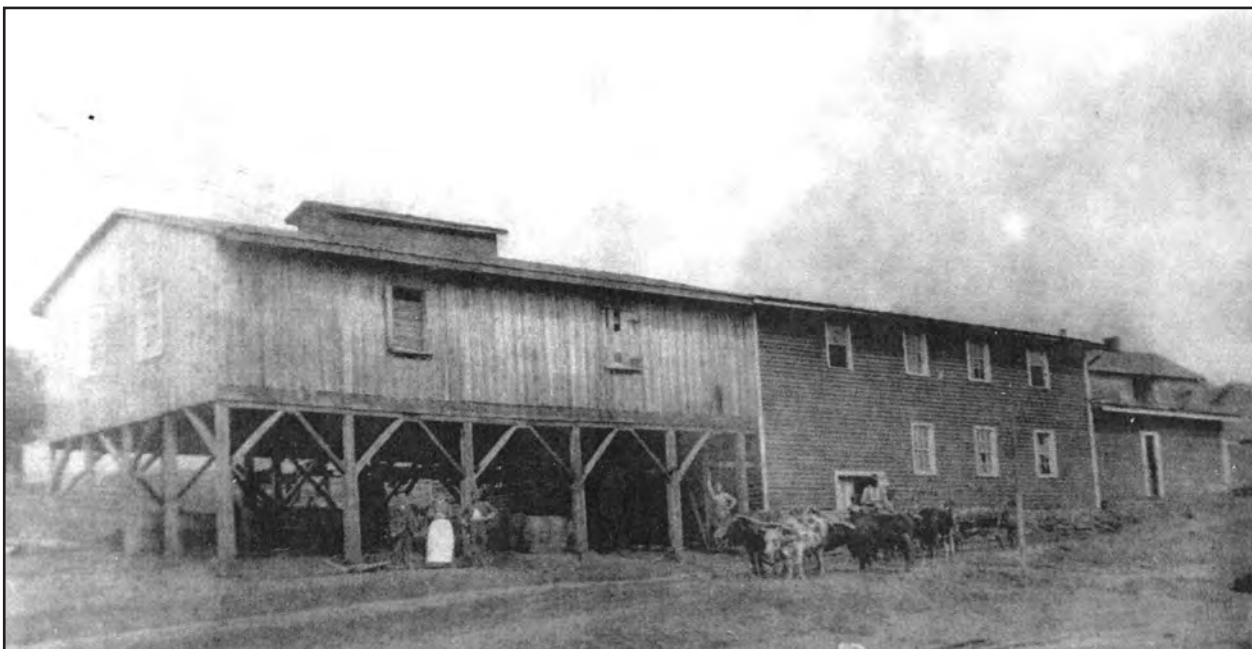
First Avenue Park, Randolph Park and the Blue Eye Creek Fishing Trail and Pavilion.

Renovations to Moseley Park are under way and will include fencing around the playground, a new fence around the tennis courts and will move the basketball court to the north side of the tennis courts and will give the park new train-style playground equipment.

The Blue Eye Creek

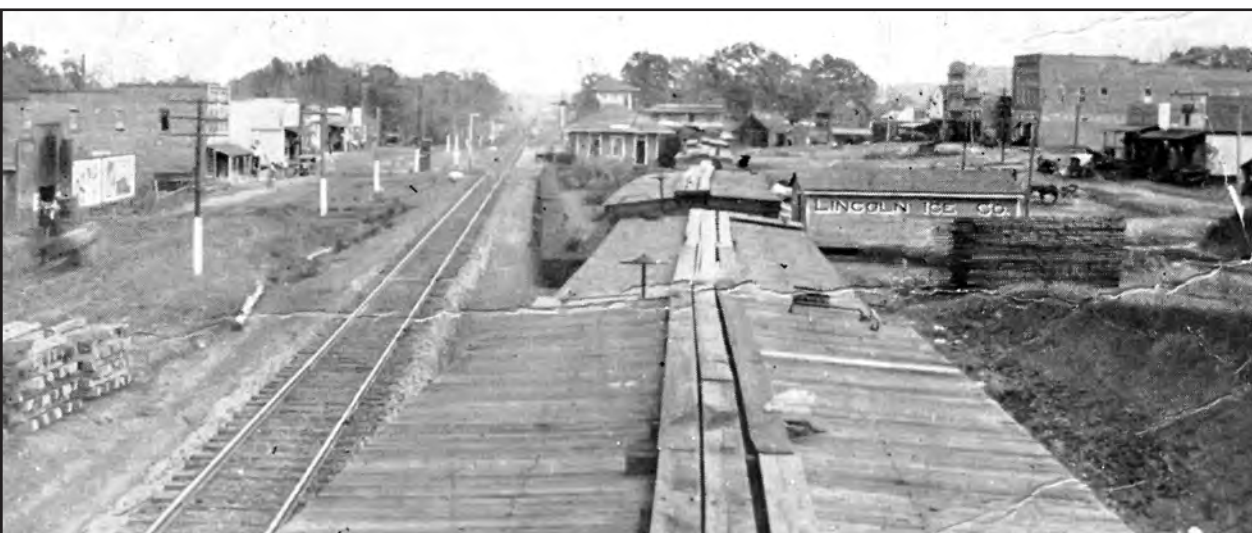
area plays host to the city's annual Blue Eye Creek Festival and has been in discussion to become Lincoln's entertainment district.

"We hope to build a stage similar to an outdoor amphitheatre to provide local entertainment," Mayor Bud Kitchin said, "and eventually become the central hub for a family-friendly downtown entertainment district."



File photo

Lincoln's rich history has been preserved in old photographs that show how the town has grown since becoming a settlement in the early 1800s.



File photo

The Old Town section of Lincoln is still home to many historic buildings that once housed family-owned businesses.

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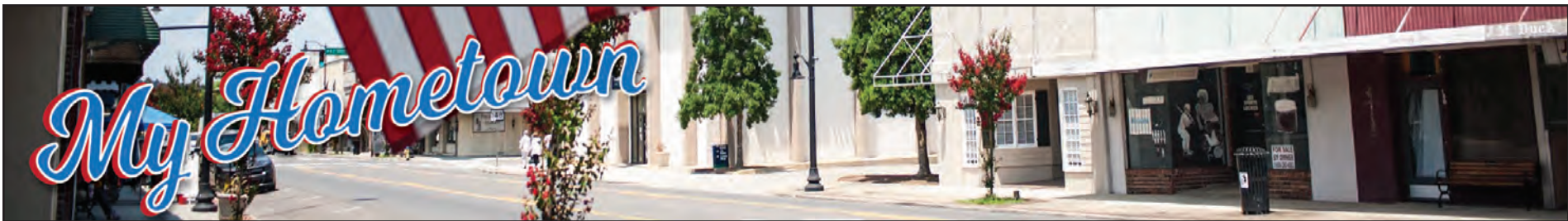
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Equestrian program gives back

By LACI BRASWELL
Home staff writer

The Marianna Greene Henry Special Equestrians Program was established in 1990 by Pat and Marilyn Greene of Talladega.

The idea for a special riders program came to fruition after their daughter, Marianna suddenly and unexpectedly passed at 31 years young.

"She suffered from complications from an enlarged heart," Marianna's father, Pat Greene said. "She passed suddenly waiting on a transplant, which never came."

According to the Greene family, Marianna always loved horses and felt a calling to help the disabled, especially children.

"She really loved horses and disabled children," said Marianna's mother Marilyn Greene. "She found out about a weekend riders club for children with special needs in Oak Mountain, and that's what gave her the idea about starting up something here."

It was only after Marianna died that the dream she often discussed with her family became a reality.

"We really did it out of selfishness at first to help cope with losing her," Marianna's brother Tim Greene said, "but it has become something bigger than ourselves."

MGHSE started out with only two horses and eight students from Helen Keller for therapeutic riding purposes. More than 25 years later, MGHSE has become so much more than a small farm with some horses, but has



Bob Crisp/The Daily Home

The Marianna Greene Henry Special Equestrian Center serves more than 400 students at Alabama School for the Deaf, Alabama School for the Blind, Helen Keller School and E.H. Gentry Technical Facility.

brought unbridled joy to those in the local community.

MGHSE now serves more than 400 students strictly at Alabama School for the Deaf, Alabama School for the Blind, Helen Keller and Gentry as part of the Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind.

The arena is now certified by the Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International (PATH) and is an accredited nonprofit organization.

"We are the largest equine facility for the disabled in the country and possibly one of the biggest in the world," Pat Greene

said.

MGHSE has gained national and global attention throughout the last 20-plus years.

"We have been featured in People Magazine, National Geographic and on the EWTN network," Pat Greene said.



Most recently, Jelva Oesterberg and Jytte

Ahrenkiel of Aalborg, Denmark, visited MGH to learn more about hippotherapy and riding techniques the program uses for its riders.


Ahrenkiel teaches at The Center for Doe, Blind, Og Hoeretab, or The Center for Deaf, Blind and Hearing Losses in Aalborg, Denmark. She

strictly works with six students who have hearing impairments and hearing loss.

"We've been searching for places to learn more about the subject of hippotherapy and what else we could do to help our students," Oesterberg said, "and we discovered the MGHSE arena."



Organized in January of 1984, Hawk Plastics started production in October of 1985 in the former Beaunit building on Plant Road. Now, 31 years later, by the grace of God, the Hawk is still flying. One of the oldest American owned PVC pipe producers in the USA, Hawk Plastics has operated with the same name for its total existence. Over the years, as many as 40 employees have manned the 3 shift operation. By the time this year is over, Hawk will have 5 employees that have been there for the whole 31 years. By the grace of God, Hawk has received an award from the State of Alabama for a record of consecutive days equal to 7 years and 2 months with no lost time accidents. Hawk manufactures PVC plastic sewer pipe with Integral Bell Gasketed joints and specializes in standard and custom PVC perforated pipe. Hawk produces other PVC extrusions, custom fabrications, core tubes and is the exclusive U.S. Manufacturer of patented molded plastic Ragglesticks. Marketed and sold by RAGGLESTICK Packaging, Ragglesticks are used to create compactness and stability in packaging and storing cylindrical objects such as pipe, tube, rolls, drums and barrels. Ragglesticks was the invention of the founders of Hawk Plastics.



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Growth, community outreach

To celebrate its 25th anniversary, MGHSE played host to a special equestrians play titled, "The Legend of Princess Talladega." According to MGHSE staff, the play took several years to complete.

"You have to take the long view with these things to adapt the play and make sure everything is safe and meets PATH's standards," said Kate Storjohann, lead instructor to MGHSE.

Storjohann noted that the original plotline to the legend of Princess Talladega was "a bit serious, so we made it something more appropriate for the kids."

The CharaACTers organization also provided assistance to the production.

In May, Eight AIDB students from the Alabama School for the Blind and Helen Keller School participated in three different equestrian-style events, including equitation, time trials and a ring grab/weave competition.

The Special Olympics provides year-round sports training and athletic competition in a variety of Olympic-themed sports for adults and children

with intellectual disabilities.

How you can help

MGH is constantly seeking volunteers to help keep the program going strong.

"We rely on our volunteers so much and really appreciate what they do," Tim Greene said.

More than 50 people volunteer at MGHSE each year.

"Volunteering brings opportunities to learn about those with disabilities," Marilyn Greene said.

There are many ways volunteers can help serve, including: groomings horses, tacking horses, cooling out horses, horse care, cleaning tack, public relations participation and helping with fundraising efforts.

MGHSE will accept interested volunteers who are at least 14 or older, but often considers younger volunteers if they have a background in horsemanship.

To find out more about MGHSE and how to give back, visit www.mgharena.com.

"We are unique in that all of our clients are in our own backyard," said Tim Greene, "and we can truly give back to the community."



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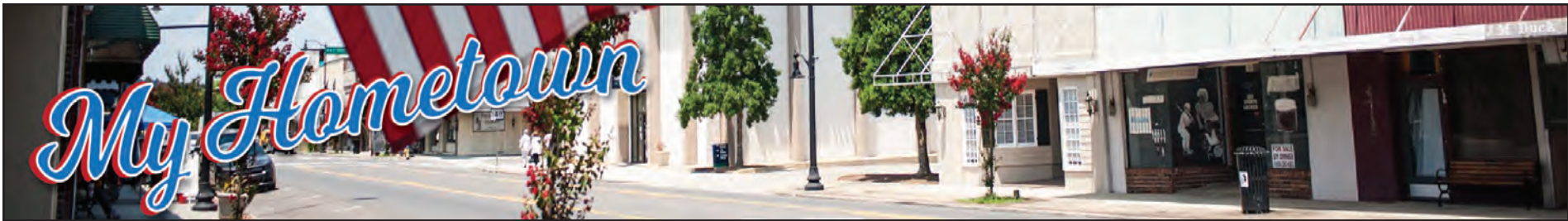
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Side judge Rob Skelton on the sidelines with Crimson Tide coach Nick Saban.

Talladega county represented twice on SEC officiating crew

By **BUDDY ROBERTS**
Special Projects Editor

Come early September, when local football fans tune in to watch their favorite SEC teams, they may see two Talladega County residents wearing black and white striped shirts on the field.

Rob Skelton, of Lincoln, will start his 10th season as side judge on an SEC officiating crew, and Steve Marlowe will begin his second as center judge on the same crew. “There are 72 of us – nine crews of eight officials – who work the SEC, and for two of us on the same crew to be from a small place like Talladega County, that’s quite unusual,” Marlowe said.

When not on the field, he serves as Alabama Power’s business office manager for Oak Grove and Goodwater and as a member of the Sylacauga Board of Education,

while Skelton is assistant vice president and branch manager for First Bank of Alabama in Munford.

Both recently recalled their beginnings as football officials and named an on-field moment that they’re not likely to forget any time soon.

How Skelton got his start as an official: “Just like everybody else does, at the bottom. For me, that was the East Alabama Football Officials Association. The first game I called was on a Saturday morning at the old Ezell Park in Anniston. It was a 10-year-olds game, and I don’t know who was more nervous that day, me or the 10-year-olds. From pee-wee games, I started running the clock for high school games on Friday nights, and then finally, I got on the field.”

That eventually led

See **SEC**, Page 7D



Submitted photo

Skelton and Marlowe before kickoff at the 44th Fiesta Bowl in Glendale, Az.

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Submitted photos

Above, Skelton calls a touchdown during an Auburn game. The upcoming season will be the Lincoln resident's 10th as an SEC official.

Below, Marlowe enjoyed having his children Tommy and Grier with him on the sidelines before kickoff at the Fiesta Bowl.



SEC

From Page 6D

to officiating work in the Gulf South Conference and Conference USA before he was accepted into the SEC in 2007. He also officiated in now-defunct NFL Europe and was interviewed for a position in the National Football League, but "very few NFL officials get hired each year, and my number never came up. I've aged out of consideration for it now, but I've still seen things and been places that I'd never have had if it weren't for that one day back in Ezell Park in Anniston."

Marlow's road to the SEC: "I started calling intramural flag football in college at Alabama and then started calling high school games in 1991. I broke into college officiating with the Ohio Valley Conference in 2007 and worked Division III games until I was accepted into the SEC."

Is there a significant difference between other college football divisions and the SEC? "Oh, yeah," Marlowe said. "The speed is a tad faster, the crowds are larger and the expectation is greater."

Skelton agreed about the differences in size, speed, crowds and facilities, adding that "in Conference USA, for



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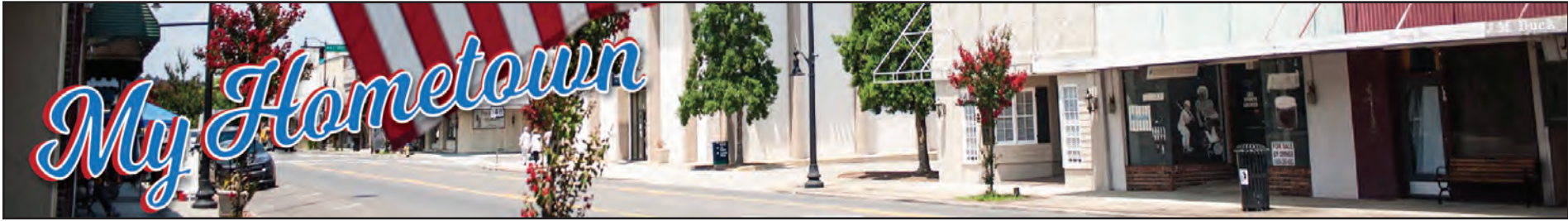
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International Motorsports Hall of Fame brings

By **BUDDY ROBERTS**
Special Projects Editor

For more than 30 years, the International Motorsports Hall of Fame has brought visitors from all over the world to Talladega County.

“We hear it almost daily: ‘I only live a mile from here, but I’ve never been here before,’” manager Bruce Ramey said. “When gas went sky high, people began to look at visiting places closer to home, and they’re coming to see us more. We’re also seeing a lot of people who come from out of state to visit relatives, and the whole family will come in here. We also get people passing through on their way to somewhere else but stop in because they see the billboard on I-20.”

According to Ramey, it’s well with the trip.

“Most people are surprised when they realize everything that we have on display here,” he said. “We have memorabilia from the Fifties, Sixties and Seventies, and even further back than that. We have boats, planes, motorcycles, even go-karts.”

It’s all on display in the hall of fame’s spacious galleries at the Talladega Superspeedway, which



Buddy Roberts/The Daily Home

Families often enjoy taking photographs with some of the interactive exhibits at the International Motorsports Hall of Fame near Lincoln.

has operated the facility for the state of Alabama since 2008. The hall of fame’s mission, Ramey said, is “the preservation of motorsports history and honoring those who have contributed the most to the sport of auto racing either as a driver, owner,

developer or engineer.”

While giving a visitor a tour of the museum, he points out some of the museum’s most popular exhibits.

“That’s Bobby Allison’s plane from back in the day. He was racing every night back then, and he’d

use the plane to travel from event to event so he could get more racing in.”

“Here’s the Earnhart Gallery. This used to be a screening room where we’d show films about the history of motorsports. All of the items in here now were donated to the

museum since his death. It’s still one of our most popular exhibits, but in the years right after he died, it was packed all the time.”

“And this is easily our most popular exhibit,” Ramey said of Dale Earnhart Sr.’s No. 3 car,

which is on display in one of the hall of fame’s vehicle galleries. “We’ve had people get engaged in front of it, and we’ve had people get married in front of it. This car is still as popular and means as much to people as when he was driving it.”

Trophies won by Bobby Allison, the McCaig-Wellborn Research Library’s extensive collection of books and magazines about auto racing, exhibits recognizing Alabama racing pioneers, the first Ford V-8 racing engine, old photos of the Anniston Auto Racing Club and tributes to NASCAR co-founder Bill French Sr. and vulcanized rubber developer Charles Goodyear – they’re all there among the tens of thousands of items that have been donated to the hall of fame since prior to and since its opening in the early 1980s.

The hall of fame was commissioned by the state almost 40 years ago, but Sen. Gerald Dial (R-Lineville), who serves as chairman of its governing board, remembers how it almost didn’t happen.

“All the way back in 1973, Mr. France had said, ‘What we need is a museum,’” Dial said.



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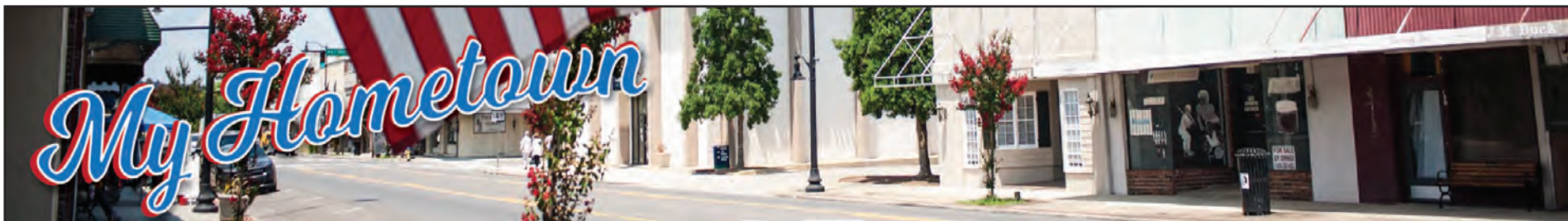
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He was elected the following year to the House of Representatives district that then included Talladega County, and “we got the legislation approved to create the board, but the \$1.2 million bond issue to build the hall of fame failed. The good thing is that we had a board that was serious in its mission to build this facility, however we had to get the funding, and we decided early on that it was not just to be for NASCAR. We wanted it to include Formula I, motorcycles and dragsters in addition to the NASCAR folks.”

Bill France Sr. donated the property, and through loans that have been paid off via sponsorship sales, the hall of fame project gradually came together, “and we got it built and dedicated at very little cost to the state,” Dial said. By then, he’d been elected to the state Senate, and he has served as chairman of the board since it was created by the legislature in the mid-1970s.

Current board members include Randy Jinks, Grant Lynch, Roy McKaig, Jim Prueitt, Jackie Swinford and Duane Stephens of



State Sen. Gerald Dial, who represented Talladega County while he served in the Alabama House during the 1970s, has been chairman of the hall of fame’s governing commission since it was authorized by the state legislature.

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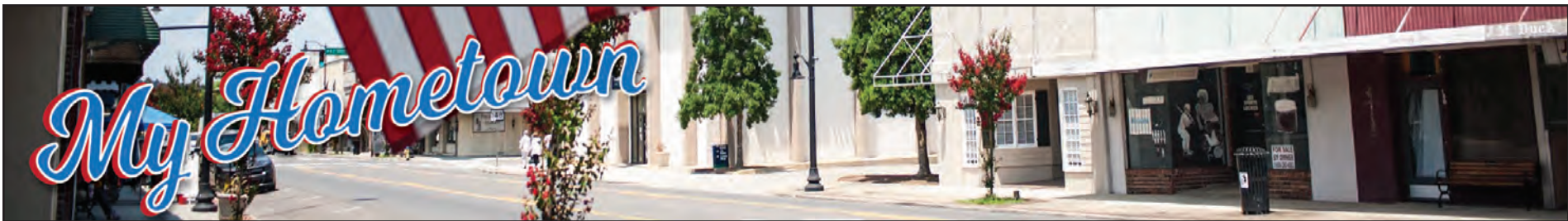
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Why is your hometown a great place to live?



"I like living in Talladega with my family and friends, and I've known most of my friends since I was a child. Another thing I really like about living in Talladega is that I don't spend so much of my life in a car, in rush hour traffic, travelling across a big city to get where I'm going."

Vern Viehe
Talladega



"Talladega is where my family is, not only my biological family, but I have a strong, large circle of friends that I consider a second family. I also like walking into a store or restaurant and the owner knows my face, and sometimes greets me by name. I feel like I belong here."

John Ray Hardy
Talladega



"I like the people in Talladega. My father was raised here, and I was raised here. I don't think there is anywhere prettier. When you come in on Lawson Mountain and you see the top of Cheaha, or you are driving and you can see Horn's mountain in the distance, it's just beautiful."

Terri Townsend Ferguson
Talladega



"I love my town because we have a great library where I can do art. I really love going to see plays at the Ritz."

Natalie Davis
Talladega

You're not from around here, are you?

Driving down West Battle Street for the first time, I was shocked to realize I felt as if I had returned to Morocco. For four months last fall, I studied abroad in Rabat, the capital of Morocco. I had an amazing experience eating couscous every Friday, haggling with shopkeepers in the markets, hearing the call to prayer five times a day and practicing my French and Arabic. I was amused at myself for making the parallel between a country I was actually foreign to and a piece of the country I was born in, where my hair color isn't special and there's no language barrier. I realized a part of me experienced culture shock and inside I felt just as foreign in the deep South as I did in Morocco. The chain names of

stores were familiar, but the layout was vastly different from the suburban outskirts of Atlanta where I went to high school, and the town square and historical buildings were far from my home in Tuscaloosa. Eavesdropping at restaurants and interviewing locals, I heard the Southern cadence of speech that seems to float through the air with a melody, with lags and rhythms unique to Alabama. This was my first sign I was in a different culture, and even the frequency and strength of the accents was more than what I had come across in Tuscaloosa. If I listened just so, it almost sounded like a different language. I remember talking



Elayne Smith

casually to some high school students in the pool of my hotel in Oxford. Their accents were thick. When I spoke, my words seemed to pierce the air with sour notes, giving myself away. "You're not from around here, are you?" They told me, more than asked. For the first time in awhile, I felt foreign. I have traveled the world since I was 7 years old. I have been to 24 different countries across five continents. You could say I'm a seasoned traveler. So I ask myself, why do I feel this way in little ole Talladega, Alabama? I've never had a hometown. I don't like answer-

ing the question, "Where are you from?" because I've moved around too much. I prefer it that way, yet being in Talladega around people whose families have lived and died in the town, I am faced with a culture I do not know. I think I take it for granted how vast the United States is culturally. I always talk about exploring different cultures, going to another country to experience the world. Visiting Talladega reminded me that you don't have to go across borders or oceans to experience new aspects of life and see new cultures. So instead of feeling like an American relocating for a job, I felt more like a traveler going on an adventure. No, I'm not from around here.

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Lincoln (205) 763-7351
www.lincolnbaptist.org

Concord United Methodist Church
85 Concord Church Rd.
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(256) 268-0633
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Tinney Street Church of Christ
324 Tinney Street
Talladega
(256) 761-1283

Marble City Baptist Church
1512 Quarry Rd.
Sylacauga (256) 245-6337
www.marblecitybaptist.com

RIDGEVIEW BAPTIST CHURCH
1711 Allison Mill Rd.
Talladega
(256) 362-3971
Sunday School 9:30 a.m.
Sunday Celebration
10:30 a.m.
Wednesday Celebration
6:00 p.m.
Pastor Tommy Strickland
www.ridgeviewbc.net

Eden Westside Baptist Church
223 Wolf Creek Rd. N., Pell City
(205) 338-7711
www.edenwestside.org
PASTOR: JACKY CONNELL
Sunday Services
8:10 am & 11:00 am
Life Discovery 9:35 am
Sun. Night Worship 6:00 pm
Wed. Night Bible Study 6:30 pm
"River Campus"
1441 W. Riverview Rd
Trussville, AL 35173
Sunday Worship 11:00 am
Life Discovery 9:35 am
Wed Bible Study 6:30 pm

Our Lady of the Lake Catholic Church
4609 Martin St. S.
Cropwell (205) 525-5161
Pastor: Rev. Michael Sexton, V.C.
Daily Mass: Mon., Tues., Thurs.
& Fri. at 9 a.m.
Wed. Evening Mass at 7 p.m.
Saturday Mass at 6 p.m.
Sunday Masses at 8:30 a.m.
& 11:15 a.m.

Grace Chapel of Eden
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Sunday School 9:15 am
Rev. Byron Vance
Rev. Angela Teel
www.pellcityfumc.org

Mt. Zion Freewill Baptist Church
Martin St. N., Pell City
(205) 338-3708
Sunday School 9:45 am
Sunday Worship 10:45 am
Wed. Service 7:00 pm
Gospel BlueGrass-
Every Sunday 5:00 pm
Sunday Night 6:00 pm
Pastor- Michael Barber
Associate Pastor-
Travis Webster

Harvest Center Church of God
3207 - 8th Ave. N.
Pell City
(205) 338-2853
Pastor, Paul Lett
Sunday Service
8:15 a.m. & 10:45 a.m.
Sunday School
9:45 a.m.
Sunday Service
6:00 p.m.
Celebrate Recovery
Tuesday 7 p.m.
Wednesday Youth
6:45 p.m.
Wednesday Service
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www.harvestcenterchurch.com

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www.leedsfirst.org

Central Baptist Church
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126 Spring St. N., Talladega
(256) 362-4836
Pastor: Marc Curlee
Sunday School - 9:45-10:45 a.m.
Morning Worship - 11:00 a.m.
Evening Worship - 5:00 p.m.
Prayer Meeting - 6:30 p.m.
Adult Choir Practice - 7:15 p.m.

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Boaters who develop a hankering for barbeque or catfish -- or steak, frog legs or shrimp -- while cruising on Logan Martin Lake can now dock to satisfy their cravings at The Ark in Riverside.

The restaurant, which has been a local favorite for more than 60 yeras, has now added a pier for customers who wish to arrive by water. According to The Ark's owners, the pier is for use by restaurant customers only.

At 13030 U.S. Highway 78 in Riverside, The Ark is open from 11 a.m.-8 p.m. For more information, call 205-338-7420.

Tucker Webb/The Daily Home



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33585 U.S. Hwy 280, Childersburg, AL 35044
Email: pstorey@rhcn.org Phone: (256) 346-3441
or Fax: (256) 346-3440



This project is supported by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) under grant number R01RH26278. The Rural Health Information Technology (HIT) Workforce Program in the amount of \$900,000 and 0% financed with nongovernmental sources. This information or content and conclusions are those of the author and should not be construed as the official position of, nor should any endorsements be inferred by HRSA, HHS or the U.S. Government.

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OUR DOCTORS



STEWART HILL, MD

Dr. Hill graduated with a bachelor's degree in chemical engineering from Auburn University before completing medical school at the University of Alabama School of Medicine. He completed his pediatric residency at Children's Hospital of New Orleans. In 2012, Hill was given the Outstanding Teaching Residency Award from Louisiana State University Medical School for his excellence in teaching. Hill is fluent in Spanish.



IRFAN RAHIM, MD

Dr. Rahim completed his pediatric residency training at Metropolitan Hospital Center, New York, NY and joined Pell City Pediatrics in November, 2000. He is a board certified pediatrician and a member of the American Academy of Pediatrics.



RUBINA SIDDIQUI, MD

Dr. Siddiqui completed her pediatric residency at St. Lukes/Roosevelt Hospital, New York and joined Pell City Pediatrics in November, 1995. She is a board certified pediatrician and a member of the American Academy of Pediatrics.

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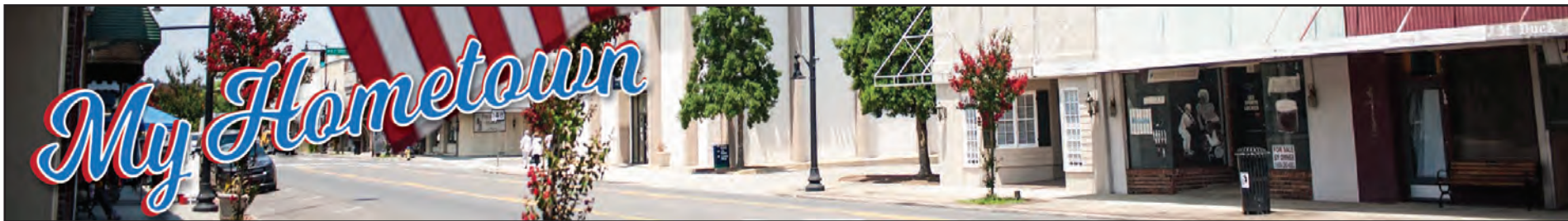
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Buddy Roberts/The Daily Home

Darrell Waltrip won 12 races while driving Bertha, the 1977 Monte Carlo now on display at the International Motorsports Hall of Fame. It was donated to the museum by Gatorade Products.



Buddy Roberts/The Daily Home

In front is Talladega, the 1969 Ford Torino driver Donnie Allison named after the local speedway, and in back is the 1939 Ford driven by "the First Lady of Racing," Louise Smith.



Buddy Roberts/The Daily Home

Years after his death, Dale Earnhardt Sr.'s #3 car is the most popular exhibit at the International Motorsports Hall of Fame.



Buddy Roberts/The Daily Home

On display in the museum is what remains of Michael Waltrip's Kool Aid car after "the worst crash in racing history" at Bristol on April 4, 1990. Waltrip walked away from the wreck with no serious injuries.

Motorsports

From Page 9D

Talladega County and Randy Royster of Pell City. Board members receive no compensation and are appointed by the governor.

"The board is very proud of this facility," Dial said. "It has not been a burden on taxpayers. It is unique. It adds another dimension to the track. The FOX Sports 1 Dome here is the largest single facility in the state outside of Birmingham, Mobile or Huntsville. It provides a place big enough to bring

1,000 people together for a dinner or conference. Honda and AIDB hold events there. This entire facility, while it may be better known outside the state, has been an asset to this area."

Admission to the International Motorsports Hall of Fame is \$12 for adults and \$5 for children ages 6-12. Museum-track tour combination tickets are \$16 and \$8 each. Children age 5 and younger are admitted free. Hours are 9 a.m.-4 p.m. daily, except New Year's Day, Christmas, Thanksgiving and Easter, with extended hours during race weeks.

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SEC

From Page 7D

example, you might have one player on a team that was a standout. In the SEC, there's a star at every position, in most cases, two or three players deep."

Their roles on the officiating crew: As side judge, Skelton said his responsibilities include watching receivers and defenders for pass interference. "Basically, I'm running backward and throwing flags forward. When your team gets called for interference, I'm the one you're mad at."

Marlowe's position as center judge was added to SEC crews last season. "I stand in the backfield with the referee, and the position involves spotting the ball and enforcement of penalties."

Marlowe's most memorable on-field experience: "It was at the Fiesta Bowl last year, when I got to have my family down on the sidelines before the game. To be able to see them there and have a brief moment with them before the kickoff was special. Our families pay a price for what we do. We leave on Friday, we're back on Sunday and we have clinics and meetings that take us away at other times. My family has been with me from the time I was calling high school games, and for them to be there with me at a college bowl game was a special moment."

A moment Skelton says he'll never forget: "It was back in 2001, and we all know happened on 9/11 of that year. We all remember where we were and how worried we were. We didn't know what the world was coming to, and many large events got canceled. The college football commissioners delayed all games a week, and the next game I called when the schedule resumed was U.S. Military Academy - Army - at UAB."

"If you've ever been to Legion Field, you know the flight path for landing at the Birmingham Airport is right over the stadium. There was a very good crowd for UAB there at the time, and every time a plane would come over, you would look up. The concern was really starting to show, but so was our patriotism, as I was about to find out."

"I went in to get the Army captains before the kickoff, and I found all the players over in a corner. I didn't know what they were doing. I didn't find out until I was back out on the field. They had found a piece of PVC pipe, and when I saw them all huddled up over the corner, they were attaching a flag to it. When the Army team ran out of the tunnel onto the field, up popped Old Glory."

"If there was a dry eye in the house, I don't know where it was. I know I was crying. Now, I couldn't tell you anything about that game. I couldn't tell you who won or who lost. But I can tell you I saw that flag come out of that tunnel."



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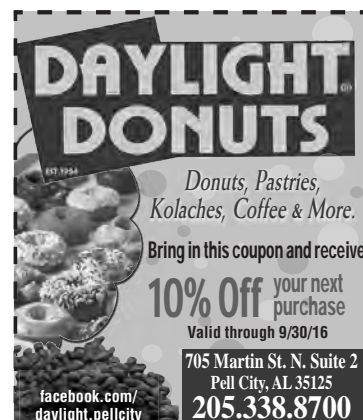
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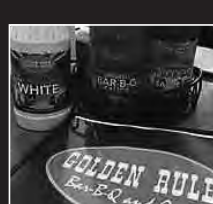


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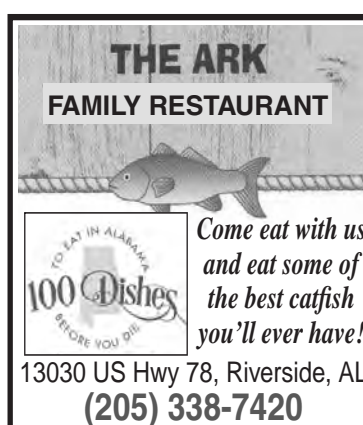


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