

Remembering Main Street in the 1950s

by Catherine Legg

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PHOTO COURTESY MARSHALL GOGGINS

Montevallo's Main Street of the 1950s.

As the year comes to a close, we tend to reflect on past years – a few years ago for some, many for the rest of us. Sitting in front of a blazing fire the other night, with a steaming cup of hot cocoa, my mind went back to the happy days of the 1950s and the businesses and interesting people who worked on the one block of Main Street between Shelby and Middle.

My mouth waters when I remember Julia Rotenberry's mile-high lemon pies at the popular Plaza Grill. Five different movies were shown at Eddie Watson's Strand Theatre. All of the children loved the hot popcorn and the Saturday westerns, and it was the coolest place in town.

It was always fun to stop in to chat with Sam and Rose Klotzman at Klotzman's Clothing Store. Friendly young boys on bicycles with huge baskets rode all over town delivering groceries from McCulley's, Holcombe's, or Jeter Mercantile. We always looked forward to the news in the Montevallo Times. It was published by Mayor Wyatt from an office in the old

Masonic Building.

For a child with a toothache, it was still a long dreaded climb upstairs to see the most-gentle-of-all dentists, Dr. Milton Orr, JR. Dr. Orr later served as the town's mayor. The wonderful aroma of roasted peanuts filled the air around Rogan Furniture Store, where Fred and his son, Paul, sold everything from dishes to baby beds and caskets.

Ladies could have their hair styled by Louise Young or Sadie Little at the Modern Beauty Shop, or by Ethel Mahan in her shop behind Red Mahan's barber shop. Men had the choice of Mahan's or across the street at Kendrick's. The beautifully dressed Laura Hicks at Hick's Ben Franklin usually could find anything you needed, and it was fun to choose candy from the bins in the front of the store.

And then there were always lively discussions with Jack Sims while enjoying a Coke at the soda fountain at Montevallo Drug. Oh well, I wish we could jump ahead to read about 2013 ... or do I?

Remembering Dogwood

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This early 1900s picture of Dogwood from the Aldrich Coal Mine Museum Collection shows a sign on left, store building, gas pump, car of that time and unidentified occupants.

To learn about community life in the coal mining town of Dogwood, I went to Mary Hall and Howard Lucas who both grew up there in the 1930s – 1940s. In those days the community was segregated: Black and white families lived in distinctly separate areas. Some of the areas were called Export, Number Two, Tater Patch, and Silk Stocking Row. Houses owned by Little Gem Coal Mining Company were allotted to workers and their families according to their jobs. For example, the superintendent lived in a better house than an ordinary miner. Fresh water was pumped to an outside faucet for most houses, and there was an “outhouse” in the backyard that was cleaned weekly by “Charlie,” a friendly man much loved by the children of the community.

Most of the families had chickens, pigs, a cow and garden in their back yards. Hog killing was a big event and drew many spectators. The boys begged for the hog bladder to be inflated to use as a football. For the white children, there was the small school building on Highway 22 built by the mining company for grades

one through six. The black children went to school in a local church and later to Columbiana. A vital part of the miners’ life was the company commissary,” said Howard. “There they sold groceries, hardware and clothing. Purchases could be charged against their wages. Also, the notorious “clacker” was available and could be traded for cash, but usually discounted from 10 to 30 percent.”

“Pinkie” Lawley, Mary’s dad, had a barber shop in Dogwood and there were three stores in the adjacent Underwood; two with gasoline service. Mrs. Kirkley’s store was the largest and the post office was there. Some of the churches were the Dogwood Grove Baptist, the Missionary Baptist, the Assembly of God, the United Methodist and the Underwood Baptist Church. Children enjoyed games at the mine team’s baseball field, and swimming in the creek. Both Mary and Howard remember the happy days of their childhood, and, with much affection, the strong kinship of the Dogwood families that has endured for generations.

Missing a Chance for a Blessing for Montevallo Man

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I know you've seen him. He is the very tall fellow – seven feet tall – who, almost every morning, walks at a fast clip around town and the park. He always wears a happy smile in spite of dripping with well-earned sweat. Behind that smile and the daily trek is an interesting story.

Lawrence “Butch” Lilly grew up in Brierfield, went to Seven Pines Elementary School and then to Prentice High. No surprise, but he earned a basketball scholarship to Grambling University in Louisiana. Later, he transferred to Alabama State on a four-year scholarship. Butch was then drafted by the New York Knicks, signed up, and attended summer camp. “I began having trouble with my knee,” he said, “and they offered surgery, but I refused. I blew my chance and came home. I didn’t realize it then, but that was really a blessing.” He explained that in other areas of his life, he was lost. “I needed a savior but didn’t know I needed a savior. I thought I could do it on my own. I was drinking heavily, but finally realized that I needed something better than alcohol.” He began reading the Bible, but when a friend asked if he was saved,

he answered, “I don’t know.” The friend recommended Romans 10. Butch credits that study with his belief that Jesus actually found and saved him.

During those years he had developed Myasthenia Gravis, and the medication had caused him to gain up to 450 pounds. “A nurse encouraged me to walk,” he said, “a short distance at first, then up to five miles a day. I did that for a long time, and now I still walk at least three miles three or four days a week. I find it’s a challenge and great therapy.” Butch advises today’s young people to take a second look when they start anything they want to do, and just be sure that is what God wants them to do. Though his life has had some unexpected twists and turns, Butch feels very blessed today to have his faith, his wife Catherine, their family and a healthier body.

The University of Montevallo's Trees Have a Rich History

by Catherine Legg

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Arborist Herschel Hale talks about this Live Oak, the offspring of the Treaty Oak in Selma.

Montevallo is proud of its trees. Evidence is the fact that the city was just awarded its 22nd annual Tree City designation by the National Arbor Day Foundation. Herschel Hale, arborist and chair of the Arbor Board, told us some interesting stories about his favorites. He explained the huge red oaks in front of Main Dorm on the UM campus are more than 100 years old. They were probably planted not long after that dorm was built. Oh, if they could only talk!

About 20 years ago the American Forestry Association began seeking out trees of historic value and harvesting their acorns, nuts, and cuttings to grow and sell. When they sell one of these seedlings, they send along a certificate and a history of the parent tree. The first of these to come to Montevallo was the gift of a George Washington Tulip Poplar seedling from a tree that Washington is said to have planted. That gift blooms beautifully in Hale's yard every spring.

Another is the Live Oak in the parking lot at City

Hall. That tree is a descendent of the Treaty Oak under which it is thought the city of Selma was surrendered to the Union forces in 1865. Montevallo's tree was planted 14 years ago, and is now a beautiful full tree that could grace that area 300-400 years.

Then, the George Washington Carver Honey Locust in Orr Park is the offspring of a tree planted by that famous man in Tuskegee. It's about 20 feet off of the pavement on the left, and across the trail from the gazebo. Seek out, while you are there, the 15 other trees that are marked and identified. UM's Red Oaks represent only one of a wide variety of trees there, and the brochure, Red Brick Walking Tour, available at the Chamber of Commerce, describes and gives the location of 32 of those. It is thought that at one time there was, on the campus, a tree of every variety native to the state of Alabama. Take a walk on a beautiful day this spring, find these trees, and enjoy remembering Hale's stories.

Visitors Tour Aldrich Coal Mine Museum

by Catherine Legg

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Visiting Chinese coal mine operators pose with “Sam,” who stands at the opening to the simulated coal mine at Aldrich Museum.

On March 6, Aldrich Coal Mine Museum in Montevallo had a visit from 16 representatives of the Chinese Coal and Chemical Industry and their two interpreters. Most of them were department heads, managers and engineers. The visitors explained the purpose of their trip was to learn about the history and the development of coal mining operations in the U.S. They wanted to gain knowledge in new ways to enhance the efficiency and safety of their own industry and to learn how the U.S. made progress in those areas.

“This was an exciting visit,” said Henry Emfinger, owner of the museum, “and the second visit from Chinese coal mining operators. We were surprised and pleased to know that they located our little museum and that they found it interesting enough to send another group.”

These people were extremely polite and friendly, and they even gave us a beautiful wall hanging before they left.” The itinerary for the travelers had provided stops in Los Angeles, San Francisco and Hollywood before coming to

Montevallo. On leaving the museum, they were to stop at the University of Alabama, then on to Washington and New York. Kang Wang, one of the interpreters, was excited about their visit to Hollywood, and even more at the prospect of New York. “The Big Apple,” she said. “Shopping, shopping, shopping!”

The Chinese visitors made lots of pictures and asked many questions through their interpreters. Kang Wang was an employee of the tour-planning company, Shaanxi International Sports Exchange Center. The other interpreter was connected to the University of Alabama. Sometimes we forget or do not fully appreciate the attractions and opportunities we have at home and the Aldrich Coal Mine Museum may be one of those.

If the museum is interesting enough for visitors from China, what’s a mile or two? Open hours are Thursday-Saturday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. and at other times by appointment. Henry Emfinger will be glad to see you! For more information, 665-2886.

Meet Montevallo's Elizabeth Studdard

by Catherine Legg

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Elizabeth Studdard works on a funeral arrangement in her shop on Island Street.

Recently I spent an enjoyable afternoon visiting with one of Montevallo's strong business women, Elizabeth Studdard, at The Flower Shop in Montevallo. She was working on arrangements for two funerals, so as she took a short break we talked about her life as a florist. As Elizabeth jokingly expressed it, "I didn't go far in life; grew up in the house here next door to the shop; and still live in my home right here in Montevallo." She was born the middle child of the eight Norris children. Her father was a well known and respected builder who built City Hall, the Alabama Coach bus station (recently demolished), and many, many of the other buildings and houses in Montevallo including Elizabeth's home. Her mother, for many years, operated the Coed Café in the bus station. Elizabeth attended the Montevallo schools and Alabama College. She remembers a happy childhood: elementary school in the Jeter Building, Principal, Charlotte Peterson, with all the wonderful stories she told. She remembers summers swimming in the creek

with Coach Theron Fisher watching over them, sliding down the spillway on a cafeteria tray at the college lake, and slipping in to slide down the fire escapes in Main Dorm. Shortly after high school, Elizabeth and Bob Studdard married in the Methodist Church. Bob worked for Alabama Power in Wilsonville. Their union was blessed with three sons: Scott, Keith, and Barry, who gave them four grandchildren to love and enjoy. All three sons and their families live in the Montevallo area. A life-long career as a florist began for Elizabeth shortly after high school as she worked in Neva Logan's Brierfield shop; and then for Beth Rockco here in town. Elizabeth built her own shop in 1991 and except for a period of time, when the business was operated by William Grady and then by Alisha Oswald Reedy, Elizabeth has been there creating the beautiful arrangements that she is known for. We talked about the changes in the business and the changes in Montevallo. She expressed a deep love for both, but with concern that there is still much to do.

A Walkabout Downtown Montevallo Always Brings Surprises

by Catherine Legg

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I am constantly surprised by the things I, and maybe you, Montevallo readers, do not know about our own downtown. I decided to take a walk and see what I might discover. Starting out on the beautiful new promenade, I immediately spied the exciting new banners depicting one of Tim Tingle's cedar carvings, and encouraging folks to shop Montevallo.

My first stop was at the nice new Barnes and Noble bookstore. Open weekdays from 8 a.m.-5 p.m. and Saturdays 10 a.m.-2 p.m., they feature lots of sports wear with the UM logo, textbooks, and a good assortment of bestsellers.

Across the street I noticed Subway is now open for breakfast. Next door, I visited with Don Leipert, the agent-owner of the new Allstate Insurance Agency. Agency producers are Daniel Hipps and Walter Gunn; and then there are four other employees doing telemarketing, making up to 2,000 calls a day. The office has its grand opening on Sept. 12. Peeping in the windows at J&D Furniture, I saw some really interesting and unusual furniture; no time to browse, but I'll be back.

Next door to El Agave, I stopped in to meet Erica Murphy at the Natural Beauty Studio. She stays extremely busy specializing in dreadlocks, sew-in braids, kids' braids and all natural styles. On over to check out Falcon Art Supply, where I chatted with Becky



Don Leipert is new to Main Street, Montevallo.

Cox-Rodgers, and discovered a surprising number of artistic gifts, in addition to the art supplies.

Stopped in for some delicious catfish at the Main Street Tavern, and then walked on down Middle to Video Underground, where I met owners Chris and Lisa White, and picked up "The Great Gatsby."

It's a small store, a small price (\$3.75/3 days) and the very latest videos. Then I ended my walk with a visit with the nice young man at Sweet Ink Tattoo. He said that their smaller tattoos (maybe, two inches), come in all colors, cost \$40, and take about 30 minutes. How about that? My "walkabout" was fun so I urge you to try it; the folks are friendly, the prices reasonable, and I just bet you discover something, or someone, you haven't known before.

Laurie Binion Makes “Orr Sauce”

by Catherine Legg

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Laurie Orr Binion is a Montevallo girl and most folks know that she is a wonderful artist; that she loves animals, especially horses; and that she is an avid gardener. But it may not be known that she is also a great cook, from a long line of great cooks.

Laurie spent a happy childhood in Montevallo where her father, Dr. M. L. Orr, Sr., was Dean of Alabama College (University of Montevallo). Her mother was Annie Laurie, and siblings were Marie, Milton, and John. Laurie and her husband, Charlie, have four daughters: Lee, Patricia, Amy, and Lolly, who have given them eight grandchildren. Laurie graduated from Montevallo High School, and gained her Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Alabama.

For the next several years she worked in the advertising field before becoming a full-time mom. As proof of the “great cook” reputation of her forebears, Laurie makes a batch of her “Orr Sauce”, and tells its interesting story.

“The recipe came from my father’s mother, and my mother, during the depression, thought she would make it to sell. She even had labels made, but never really got her project off the ground, so it’s just become a

family recipe. We eat it on everything: peas, beans; we are addicted to it! Charlie even eats it on hamburgers.”

Laurie always makes enough of the sauce for her extended family, and she loves to share this recipe with friends.

Orr Sauce

- 1 Gallon Ripe Tomatoes (fresh, frozen or even canned!)**
- 8 Bell Peppers – Some can be hot peppers**
- 4 large Onions**
- 1 Qt. White Vinegar**
- 4 Cups Sugar**
- 2 Tbs. Salt**
- ½ tsp. Red Pepper**
- 2 tsp. Ground Cloves**
- 4 tsp. Cinnamon**

Scald, peel, and chop the tomatoes, and chop the peppers & onions. Put in a big pot – Add all other ingredients and cook slowly all day until it seems done – Keep tasting. Do not let this burn ... Stir occasionally and enjoy having your house smell this good! Put in jars and seal in a water bath canner.

“We Were Tough”

by Catherine Legg

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Pictured on the front row: (L to R) Ned Carey, Ed Lucas, Black Galloway, Henry Winslett, Bill Southern, Sid Shaw, Glenn Bashore. Back row: Raymond Lovelady, Luther Reach, J. D. Allen, Clyde Winslett, Ed Davis, Mack Smith, Albert Baumgartner.

Pleasia Spears was excited when she was given a picture of Montevallo’s city baseball team dating back to 1946. She immediately began a search for the story of the team and the identities of the players. The picture traveled the town and was checked by several of the players who were pictured there, but there was no real agreement, so the identities may be “best guess.”

The story was easier; Clyde Winslett, said that he has good memories of playing on the team. He played for about seven years, which was most of the tenure of the team. Some players played for a year; some for several. “Most of us were just home from the service after World War II, and we needed something to do,” said Clyde. “All of us had played baseball in high school, and we loved the game.

“Some were on the 52/20 program where they could draw \$20 a week for 52 weeks from the government. Others were waiting to start college or looking for employment, and a few were attending Alabama College (UM) under a special provision for returning service men that allowed them to take classes at that

all-girls’ school.”

Clyde explained that they practiced and played their games on the field next to the high school. They actually raised the money and volunteer labor for the lights, which gave Montevallo the only lighted field between Montgomery and Birmingham. The team played against other town teams and some company teams.

Those companies were hard to beat because they sometimes hired professional players. Another player, Ed Davis, Jr., was proud of his team. He exclaimed, “I was a member in 1947. We played 50 games and won 36 of them. We were tough, and that made us a good team!” The Montevallo fellows played for several years under the direction of various coaches. Those mentioned were Bob Galloway, Theron Fisher, Ferman Moore, and Glen Bashore.

A few of the players not pictured were Dan Ruddy, Shino Nanini, Charles Gray, Cecil Dennis, George Howell, Coy Holsomback, James Earl White, John Phillips, Floyd Smitherman, Doug Sellers, and Murray Holsomback.