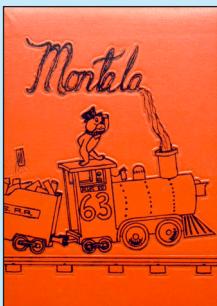
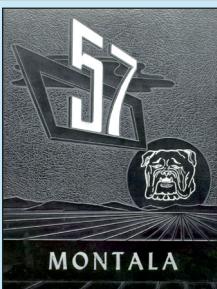


Vol. 5 No. 1

Newsletter of the Montevallo Historical Society

Spring 2021



MONTALA & SPOTLIGHT Now Available Online

by Debbie Pendleton



The first Montala staff at Montevallo High School in 1957. (L-R) Mavis Bridges, Carolyn Smitherman, Malcolm Byrd, Emily Pendleton (faculty advisor), William Holsomback, Sherry Salter, Merle Roach (faculty business advisor), Kitty Stansell, Mary Thornton, Elbert Mahaffey.

At the start of the 1956-57 school year, Montevallo High School principal Guy Milford asked first-year teacher, Emily Pendleton, to work with the newly created National Honor Society to produce a yearbook for the school.

No doubt, Milford recognized the advantage of a yearbook to provide a historical record of school events and achievements, but also to provide skills and leadership opportunities for the students.

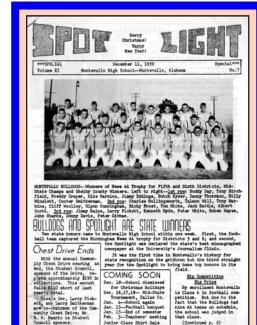
This first yearbook was a learning experience for Pendleton, as well as for the students involved. The students chose the name Montala, took photographs, created captions using typewriters, laid out pages with scissors and rubber

cement, and sold ads to local businesses to help fund the project.

From that first yearbook in 1957 until the present day, students and faculty have continued to create the Montala. Now those yearbooks have been preserved and are now available in digital form on the Internet thanks to a unique partnership between the Montevallo Historical Society, Montevallo High School, the University of Montevallo Carmichael Library, and Oklahoma Correctional Industries (OCI).

For nearly forty years, selected inmates in Oklahoma have participated in a job-training program involving records conversion for state

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President's Letter

Dear Friends,

It would be easy to assume that the usual activities of the Montevallo Historical Society have been essentially paralyzed for the past year since Covid-19 became such an influential factor in how we live our daily lives.

There is no doubt that the threat of contracting the virus has curtailed both our regular directors meetings as well as quarterly general meetings and programs. And we are all poorer for being deprived of the social aspects of these gatherings when we can be together, visit with old and new friends, and share our love and interest in the stories that tell the rich tale of historic Montevallo.

One important indicator that we haven't folded our tents for good is the publication you now hold in your hands as you read this note. In many ways, the *Montevallo Historical Times*, which is so capably edited and produced by our vice-president, Clay Nordan, has become the heart and soul of the Montevallo Historical Society.

Its online counterpart, www.historicmontevallo.org is another vital indicator that we remain alive and kicking. The society's website serves as a digital archive and online presence for the organization and provides expanded resources for members and visitors while not being restricted by limitations on space.

We also continue to make our presence known to the world-at-large with the monthly local history column in "Chamber Chatter" contributed by director Marty Everse, who gets occasional help from time to time by member, Marshel Roy Cunningham.

While all this is impressive and reassuring that our group remains vital and active in spite of the restrictions forced on us by the pandemic, I am happy to acknowl-

edge the accomplishment reported on by director Debbie Pendleton in the lead story of this newsletter that starts on the front page.

The idea of digitizing Montevallo High School's Montala yearbooks and making them available to anyone from a website was brought to our board of directors about a year ago by Debbie. As presented, the project was obviously in the "wheel-house" of our mission statement, and we are now gratified that we were able to take advantage of this opportunity and help make the archive a reality.

I would like to thank Debbie for all that she has done on the yearbook digitization project. I'm not sure it would have happened if she had not taken the lead and given her attention to all the necessary details.

I would also like to thank Clay Nordan for the work he has done to facilitate the inclusion of the Montevallo High School student newspaper, the SPOTLIGHT, into the same digital archive as the Montalas.

To conclude, I want to offer our sincere thanks to the good people at the Oliver Cromwell Carmichael Library at the University of Montevallo for their interest, assistance, and willingness to include our Montala and SPOTLIGHT archives into their larger digital archive system. We are especially grateful to Director, Charlotte Ford and University Archivist, Carey Heatherly for their help and partnership in the project.

I hope you all remain safe and that we will see each other again, in person, real soon.

Susan

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Dr. S.M. Mahan, Jr. (1934 – 2018)
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agencies. In more recent years they have expanded into microfilming yearbooks, newspapers, and other historical records. The Yearbook Project was initially born to preserve yearbooks from Oklahoma schools that were in danger of being lost in tornadoes.

That project was so successful that OCI began to offer their services free of charge to any school or library in the U. S. Montevallo Historical Society board member Debbie Pendleton heard about the project through her work at the Alabama Department of Archives and History and suggested that it might be a perfect preservation project for the local historical group.

The Montevallo High School Library has collected yearbooks for many years and school librarian Anita Glover was an enthusiastic supporter of the efforts to digitize the yearbooks.

Unfortunately, there were a few

years missing from the library's collection, but requests for missing volumes at society meetings and on social media revealed individuals who were happy to loan their copies to the project.

Once we identified a complete run of yearbooks they were boxed and mailed to OCI, where they were scanned as digital files and returned to the high school just in time to spend the spring and summer quarantined in the office amidst the pandemic lockdown.

Disk of the scans were returned to the Historical Society and Carey Heatherly, University of Montevallo archivist, readily agreed to add the scanned yearbooks to the already robust UM Digital Collections. When finished a complete run of Montala yearbooks, 1957-2019, will be available to anyone with internet access anywhere in the world.

While the continuous series of Montala yearbooks started in 1957, a few predecessors to the Montala

were produced before that time.

In the 1920's, when the high school operated from Alabama College for Women classrooms, a yearbook called the "Scroll" was produced for a few years.

After the "stand-alone" high school opened across the street in 1929, a yearbook, known as "Montan", was published in the 1940's.

Also in the mid-1940's the senior class produced a magazine of creative writing and original art entitled "We the Students." This publication transitioned into a yearbook format for the years 1947 and 1948. We hope all these earlier publications can be added to the digital archive at a later date.

While it appears that Prentice High School did not have the resources to produce a yearbook, the Montevallo Historical Society is also interested in locating and preserving material that documents the history of Prentice, as well as other schools in the area from any era.

University of Montevallo Digital Collections

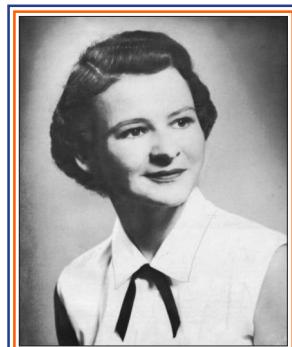
For more than a decade now, faculty, staff, and students at the University of Montevallo's Oliver Cromwell Carmichael Library have been quietly and steadily building an astoundingly rich online archive of valuable materials and publications related to the history of the institution as well as the city of Montevallo, Shelby and other central Alabama counties, and the State of Alabama at large.

It began with its own "ink on paper" holdings and can today boast of the fact that every single college catalog published since the opening of the school in 1896 has been digitized and is available to anyone via its website. Today, the digital archive contains college yearbooks dating back to 1907; the student newspaper, *The Alabamian*, starting with 1924; various published school histories; fascinating scrapbooks of newspaper clippings about the school extending from 1915 to 1938; and in recent years a collection of local newspapers beginning before the founding of The Girls Industrial Institute of Alabama in 1896.

In addition to the Montevallo High School yearbook, the *Montala*, that has recently been added to the UM collections, the award-winning MHS student newspaper, the *SPOTLIGHT*, is now also available. The first installment of these papers begins in 1939,

skips to 1950 and runs to 1967. The largest number of these papers are from the 1960's, a time when there was excellent participation by student writers and editors who published substantial and informative issues on a bi-weekly schedule. This publication period is important as a record of both school and local Montevallo news because the town lost its hometown newspaper, the *Shelby County Times-Herald* in 1959.

The web address shown at the bottom of this page will take you to the Carmichael Library website where links for access to the *Montala* and *SPOTLIGHT* archives can be found. In addition to these recent additions, we encourage anyone interested in local history to become familiar with how the UM digital archives are organized and function. It can provide hours and hours of interesting diversion and entertainment.



Miss Susie DeMent, devoted *SPOTLIGHT* advisor and sponsor for many years.

Find the MHS *Montala*, starting with 1957 and *SPOTLIGHT*, starting with 1939 at
LIBGUIDES.MONTEVALLO.EDU/ARCHIVES/MHSBULLDOGS



Harvey: “My Burden Gladly Bearing”

by Terry Barr

I’m standing in the showers of my freshman dorm on registration day. Naked, vulnerable, soapy, and alone. There are twenty spigots mounted in regular intervals along the tiled walls of the rectangular bath. Nowhere to hide. A radio perched on a nearby sink plays a forgotten song as I wash my hair and anticipate a long day of placing myself in the right lines, the correct buildings, the most suitable foreign language class. Latin or Spanish? Such dilemmas, but at least they’re normal, straightforward.

Unlike the sound I hear now.

“All right!” With finger-snapping. I open one eye. There’s a grown man standing in the shower doorway. I rinse quickly. “All right!!!” He’s louder this time, and now that I can look at him clearly, I see he’s middle-aged in that way eighteen year-olds have of perceiving anyone from thirty to sixty as middle-aged.

“All right!” His right finger is in the air, and he’s smiling broadly. I wish to God that I knew what to do, and I don’t want to think about what I might have to do. But then my survival instinct kicks in.

“All right?” My voice is hesitant and shy. And with that, he grins even more widely and exits the shower room, exposing me to my first taste of college life.

At lunch, I ask the guys at my table if I should report the pervert in my shower, and if so, to whom? The Dean of Men? Campus Police? The Bursar? “I mean, other than staring at me for a while, he didn’t really do anything,”

I say, my words belying all my shaken feelings. “Wait a minute,” a seasoned sophomore named Rick says. “Don’t you know about Harvey?”



Do all institutions have their Harveys? In my childhood, they were called “Buford” or “Elijah,” or maybe even “Harry Smith.” They cleaned up messes, were present from sunrise to sundown every day the doors of the school, church, or grocery store opened. In some cases, they wandered through nicer neighborhoods pushing popsicle or hot tamale carts.

In the worst cases, they just went walking. Holding a steering wheel taken from some rusted-out vehicle, they made puttering sounds and walked past your house on late July afternoons heading for distant highways that only they could see.

I never knew that particular “driver’s” name, where he stayed, who made him put down that steering wheel, or who calmed his motor at night.

“He’s just simple,” my grandmother would say. “But don’t go near him!”

So when I really saw Harvey – saw him for what he was – I began wondering at my own circles: how I moved in them, in what order, and according to what time. What are we supposed to do with life’s “simple” men? What will it take, Harvey, to really make things all right?



He wasn’t a large man, maybe 5’ 6” tall, 180 pounds. But he was solid, even chunky. Rectangular. That’s the word I think of most when I see Harvey. Rectangular, thick-lensed glasses that seemed to distort his eyes into long, slitted openings. But instead of madness, Harvey’s eyes showed an innocence that gave him, I believe, a completely undistorted view of his world. He cuffed his blue jeans in rectangles as neatly as I’ve ever seen. His pants size must have been 38” x 26”, for his legs, sturdy and thick, looked like dwarf-legs, with his feet splayed out against the ground so that when he walked, he kind of bounced or hopped in a steady, rectangular rhythm.

It’s as if his people danced polkas or Cossack high-steps somewhere in their glorious past. Or maybe they



Napier Hall, named for Dean T. H. Napier (1881 - 1961) , has housed male UM students since its construction in 1957.

were all simple Appalachian buck dancers. Harvey wore baggy flannel shirts in all seasons, well-tucked, and again, rectangularly folded at the elbows, showing off his massive forearms, though I'm sure Harvey never knew that showing off was an option.

Each shirt, too, was checked, but sometimes when it turned too warm, he'd hang that shirt on a doorknob and finish mopping in his clean and tidy T-shirt. Then you'd see his biceps, rectangular muscles that came not from dumbbells, but from Harvey's life. In fact, the only part of him not rectangular was Harvey's domed pate: a spectacularly bald top-head with gray-black stubbles around the lower sides.

As I see it now, his head wasn't so much shiny as it was glazed. But maybe it's only my memory that's glazed, searching for what it really shouldn't remember. Harvey wasn't shy, so you'd hear him coming. His baritone voice would echo through the halls, singing the church hymns he loved. His voice, as I hear it now, reminds me of Andy Griffith's – especially in that episode when Andy and Barney are sitting on the front porch in Mayberry early one Sunday evening, singing "The Church in the Wildwood": "O come, come, come, come, come to the church in the wildwood, O come to the church in the dale. No place is as dear to my childhood, as the little brown church in the vale."

For Harvey's voice, after you got used to it, was Mayberry-soothing. So soothing that you might go with him to his little brown church. If he ever asked.

He did his job well. Like the "white tornado," the halls, bathrooms, and foyers, would be "Spic n' Span" once Harvey finished. But even while he worked, he always made time to talk to the guys, his boys of Napier dorm. He never said "Hello," or "How's it goin'?" His greeting was the same, winter, spring, summer, or fall: "All Right!"

Never a question, and never a statement of his own well-being, though you might presume that he was claiming to be "all right." Not exactly a statement of environmental conditions either, because if it were going to rain or turn cold, Harvey would report on that after his greeting: "Rain coming later. Yep. Bring umbrella!"

I don't know if he kept up with the world via a Farmer's Almanac on his bedside table, or if he listened to the morning reports on a kitchen radio. Maybe he posted a school calendar near his front door, or maybe he could tell the days and conditions just by the look of the world when he'd exit whatever front or side door contained him during the hours when he simply didn't exist for the rest of us.

But whenever he was with us, Harvey was our internal register of all things external. On Wednesdays, ubiquitously and forever, after "All Right," came this: "Hump Day!" What did Hump Day mean to him? Did he long for Friday as we students did? How did he spend his off hours on those two weekend days, and were they as precious to him as they were to us? Also, any day of the term, you could approach Harvey and ask, "Hey Harv, how many more days to winter break?" Without pause, Harvey would turn to you and announce, "53 more days," or "22 more days," or "7 more days." And then he'd smile that rectangular grin as if he knew just what it was like for us to face research papers, 8 a.m. Algebra classes, or Thursday afternoon labs. Or final exams.

Sometimes I'd see him as I was carrying my suitcases out to whatever ride I was getting home. "All right," Harvey would shout, "Christmas is coming. Two more weeks!"

Editor's Note

Anyone who was a student at Montevallo Elementary or Montevallo High School in the 1950's and 1960's will remember Harvey Lee Riffe. Before becoming the Custodian for Napier dorm in the 1970's, he spent many years laboring in the cafeteria located in the basement of the Alice Boyd building. Harvey worked in support of the "lunch ladies", who prepared and served daily meals to students, faculty, and staff.

The Harvey that Terry Barr describes in this essay was the same unique individual who cheerfully accepted the mountain of dirty dishes, silverware, and drinking glasses that piled up for him to deal with at the conclusion of every lunch hour.

While he was a fixture at school every day, not that much was known about him and not much is known today. When asked what they remember about Harvey, Montevallo Historical Society director Bill Glosson and his friend, Bill Mack Lee, both immediately recall his index finger pointed toward the sky as his standard greeting for anyone he encountered.

They say that he was born and raised in Aldrich where his father worked for the railroad. They lived in the last house on the left as you approached the tracks from Montevallo, just across the street from the Post Office there.

After graduating from Montevallo High School (class of 1945), Harvey worked as "nightwatchman" for the three stores that were in downtown Aldrich at the time. When he became employed at the school cafeteria, he would usually ride the school bus to work. At the end of the day he could often be seen sitting on the brick steps leading up to Calkins Hall at what was known as "Thumb Corner". He and others from Aldrich, Pea Ridge, and the other Cahaba coal mining villages out that way waited there for motorists headed west to stop and give them a ride home. This was on Middle Street just opposite from Montevallo Methodist Church.

Harvey was a member of the Assembly of God Church in Aldrich and was known for his love of traditional Gospel music. Whenever a local church hosted a special musical event, they always asked Harvey to come and lead the singing. Bill Lee says "what he lacked in talent he made up for in enthusiasm." In addition, Harvey was an eager contributor to a weekly gospel singing program broadcast early each Sunday morning from local radio station WBYE.

It is believed that in his later years Harvey was stricken with cancer and spent his final days in a private home in Dogwood cared for by a lady who took in people with nowhere else to turn.

While the name of Riffe was not common in Montevallo in those days, in 2005 Harvey was buried in a plot with seven people named Riffe in the old cemetery at Shady Grove Baptist Church on highway 139 between Brierfield and Randolph. So, that is a strong indication that, although Harvey spent his adulthood in the Montevallo area, the roots of the Riffe family must have been in nearby Bibb County.

— Clay Nordan



Harvey Lee Riffe (left) with (L-R) Mrs. Alexander, Mrs. Allen, Mrs. Mitchell, and Mrs. Edwards, his co-workers at the Montevallo High School cafeteria in 1968.

And I'd shout back, "All right, Harv! Merry Christmas!" And that's the last I'd think of him until after I returned to the dorm, weeks later, to see him sweeping the halls as usual. Like he had never left.

In those Alabama winters, Harvey would don a tweed sports jacket, one he'd surely worn for decades, and a houndstooth hat with a feather sticking out of its right-side band. I'd see him occasionally on his way to the cafeteria for lunch. When my friends and I first spotted that hat, bouncing along with Harvey up the main cobblestone street leading to the cafeteria, my friend Dan pointed at it and laughed: "Look at that!"

We all laughed then, out of range of Harvey's hearing. Or so I like to believe. He'd make his way into the cafeteria and sit at one of the square tables in the center of us all. His tray would be full of chicken and mashed potatoes and Crowder peas and coleslaw and at least three rolls and four glasses of sweet milk. A piece of chocolate cake or cherry cobbler for dessert. He ate well for his \$1.50, but he always ate alone. I wonder now what Harvey thought about while he ate – what he observed about us, if he observed anything at all.

I know he didn't judge who we were, what we did, how much we left on our trays. I know he didn't have such powers of discernment. But at least he never needed a steering wheel or some other contrivance to get on with his life. Above everything else, he just seemed happy: happy to eat; happy to hear us; happy to get back to work when his half-hour break was up. In fact, I'm trying to remember now if I ever saw him unhappy. Did he grumble at the trash pile left for him at the end of hallways on Monday mornings? Did he groan at the state of the urinals, paper towels occasionally stuck in them? At the commodes which boys left slopped and stopped with their private business?

Did he mind that the garbage dispenser in the bathroom doorway might contain anything? And I mean ANYTHING. Lurking in the back of my mind is a scene in which Harvey is sweeping our hall. He's angry, not smiling at all. In fact, there's a sort of scowl on his face. What could be bothering him? Spoiled food containers? Puke in a urinal? Something scratched on the bathroom wall? Or maybe he's not feeling well. Maybe he has that horrible

stomach bug I caught in the winter of my sophomore year. Guys were always marching off to the infirmary, leaving Harvey to disinfect whatever bacteria remained in their wake.

He never wore a mask or gloves. And to my knowledge, he never missed a day of work. But that's the problem: my knowledge. So maybe I'm seeing an anger that wasn't really there, just as after I moved out of Napier Hall in the middle of my junior year, Harvey quit being "there" for me, too.

Oh, I'd see him in the cafeteria from time to time, especially when I made it for Sunday lunch. There he'd be in his Sunday coat and tie and matching slacks, houndstooth hat perched in its accustomed place. As usual, Harvey would be eating alone, and I could be wrong or wishful here, but his face seemed just a bit different on these Sundays. Just a bit beatific, which makes more sense now, given what I've learned about him.

But after lunch on those Sundays, practically right after I noticed him, my mind and body would move into a different rhythm, a higher circle, and one that never had space or calling for Harvey. I forgot him as quickly as I dumped my tray in its proper receptacle.

We assume so much about the people on the periphery of our lives. Or maybe it's worse than that. Maybe we don't assume anything at all. Did I really never wonder back then, back in my liberal college days, what his home life was like? If he lived alone or with his people? With any people? Was his place an old family home, an apartment in a duplex south of town? A room over a hardware store? Did he "go home" for Christmas like I did? Unlike that steering-wheel man from my hometown, Harvey didn't live entirely in his own fantasies.

He carried with him, was guided by, the weight of his responsibilities for cleaning our dorm. Of course, he could guide himself only so far. I wonder who got him the job at the college? Who paid his bills? Did he foresee the day when he'd have to retire? Did he daydream, and what were his night dreams like? Did he ever wake up in a panic? Did he know what to do for a fever? Did he think about sex? Did he even know what it was?

Who took care of him when everything wasn't all right?



Terry Barr grew up in Bessemer, AL and went to Jess Lanier High School before enrolling at the University of Montevallo in 1974. While at UM he was on the staff of the student newspaper, *The Alabamian*, and was its editor in 1976. He says that "Montevallo was likely the best four-to-five years of my life, or at least my formative life".

At Montevallo, he earned a B.A. in English and Political Science. He did graduate work at the University of Tennessee at Knoxville, earning both the M.A. and Ph.D. in English.

He has enjoyed a long and happy career as a college professor at Presbyterian College in Clinton, SC since 1987. His wife of 36 years, Nilly Barr, is a psychotherapist in Greenville, SC and they have raised two grown daughters.



The 1975 *Alabamian* staff at the University of Montevallo. Terry Barr is third from the left.

Not that these questions plagued me in the immediate years after I graduated. I'm sure I saw other "Harveys" roaming the streets of my grad school campus and in the towns I moved to after that. But I never lived in a dorm after college, and in my pursuit of a doctorate and then a teaching position, I was much too focused on Faulkner seminars and detailed resumés to worry about the hallways and bathrooms of my institutional life.

After all, I was a well-adjusted, normally self-absorbed young man. Sometimes on TV, a Harvey-figure would steer himself into my periphery. One of the best was "Benny," the mildly retarded errand clerk in the hospital of "St. Elsewhere," back in the 1990's. Benny's troubles sometimes seemed almost normal. And he was always endearing. But Benny couldn't do Harvey justice. Harvey wasn't an invention. Nor was he a stock character, a cliché.

For Harvey wouldn't have known what a cliché was, though in reality, he saw plenty of us walking, and showering, around him every weekday. Plenty of us who've forgotten, or maybe never even noticed this man and what he did for us every weekday. What he bore, and what we didn't.

Harvey died on January 31, 2005. I don't know if he died alone, in a hospital, or where, because the obituaries don't say. He was survived by his sister, his nephew, and by "a host of friends." That makes me feel a bit better, but I keep wondering: were they there when he died? Or before? Did anyone explain to him what was happening? Did he understand that his body was wearing out? Did he ever wake up in the morning or in the middle of the night wondering why he felt the way he did: not as strong, not as able?

Did he ever stop saying "All Right?" I hate to imagine his eyes roaming the walls of his room, unable to comprehend what he was seeing or wasn't seeing. I hate to think of him crying out in the night for comfort, for calming, for the pain to go away. For someone to hold him. I hate to imagine all of these scenes, but I do. I can't help it.

Because Harvey cleaned up after me for several years, and he never said an unkind word to me. And he saw me naked. There aren't many, or even any, others whom I can say this about. Sometimes what seems so simple is the most complex and troubling thing in the world. I don't pretend to have the answers, or the right questions regarding my own doubts about this world and what, if anything, comes after.

But it's a strange thing to me, and even more troubling, that none of us – believers, non-believers, doubters – took any time to see Harvey when we had the chance. To find out about his life. To help him if we could, or even to make life just a bit easier for him.

But here I am assuming again that somehow, his life wasn't all right. Just like I've always assumed that mine is. But here is something that gives me comfort on the nights when I lay in bed thinking about Harvey: in a 2009 article in the Shelby County Reporter – home county and paper of my college – a gathering of the Montevallo High School class of 1945 remembered their fallen friends. Friends like Harvey Lee Riffe, who "read the devotional

almost every morning" and whose strong voice captured the essence of that great hymn, "How Great Thou Art," for which he "sang his soul" on Sundays.

Harvey was born on January 5, 1923, and is buried in Shady Grove cemetery, in Bibb County, which, I assume, is his home county. That sounds like such a peaceful ending.

And one more thing. From what I've read and from what I remember, I am sure that whatever else Harvey did or did not understand about life or the intricacies of Scripture, he believed in God, in Jesus Christ.

While I myself understand so little.

"How Great Thou Art" was my grandmother's favorite hymn. She was a devoted Christian woman, too. But I didn't follow her religious path.

I attended her church for many years; however, I never accepted Jesus as my savior. And even today, if I believe in God, it's not the one that governs my Christian or my Jewish family.

Like my Christian grandmother, toward the end of her life my Jewish grandmother began praying to her God, and then urging my father to go back to synagogue, which he did. Now, I believe that when I envisioned Harvey lying alone in bed, sick, dying, and unable to comprehend himself and maybe not even his Maker, I was thinking of my Dad in the last year of his life, when he was becoming more and more incontinent, saying his nightly prayers; being helped into bed by my Mom and me, tremors in his arm and leg from Parkinson's palsy. I felt glad in those moments that he was safely in bed – that my mother could still tend to him. That maybe he could for-

get about, or relax from, his own dementia for that night at least.

Did God watch over him? Did God allow him to suffer? I don't know, but from down the hallway, I could hear his murmuring prayers. Did he believe in God despite what was happening to him – the God that had allowed or even caused it to happen to him? And if God was truly taking care of my father, I wonder where that leaves me? What will God do with me in the failing light of whatever last space I'm in?

I don't have the answers to these questions, and I still don't share my father's faith. Yet, I'm happy that he had it during his last days if it gave him comfort. I say "if" because I saw my father's eyes before he lost consciousness for good. They were restless and wild. Some might even have called them "mad." But then I can't really know what my father was seeing as he lay in his hospice bed.

When his eyes did close in his last hours, he looked at peace. When I whispered to him that he could go now, that everything would be all right, I believe that my words gave him comfort. And for that, I am deeply happy.

Just as I am deeply happy that throughout his life, including, I hope, his end, Harvey thought his God was great. That he believed in Jesus. And that his body and mind are at rest.

Finally.

All right Harvey, while I'll always remember you, I can set you down now, gladly, and leave both you, and me, in the quiet and peace of our fathers.





The Montevallo Presbyterian Church

Often Battered but Never Beaten

There seems to be a pattern here. The first recorded weather-related event to occur at the corner of Shelby and Alabama Streets occurred in 1874 when the two-story colonial home, built by one of Montevallo's first settlers, Edmund Powell, was destroyed by a "cyclone".

In 1902, the newly formed Montevallo Presbyterian Church, organized by a group of prominent citizens and leaders of the college, built a small brick-veneered house of worship on the Powell lot and proceeded to enjoy almost four decades of untroubled service to each other and to the Almighty.

But Mother Nature's fury revisited the site in 1939 when another strong cyclone (tornado) skipped up and across Shoal Creek and hit the church, along with several houses nearby. The Presbyterian church came through the storm damaged but relatively unscathed compared to the more vulnerable wood-frame St. Andrews Episcopal Church just across the street that was completely destroyed (there's a brick duplex there today).

The modest bell tower of the Presbyterian Church was blown off the structure and never replaced. While the building essentially remained intact, a concerning result of the encounter with the howling winds was the weakening of the long north wall of the sanctuary. To the credit of the church leadership, some scholar knew about the tradition of "buttresses" in church construction in Europe, and so a system of three concrete buttresses was contrived and installed that successfully supported the wall until disaster struck again in 2017.

This time, a large oak tree situated in the yard of the house next door was blown down in the middle of the night and right through the sanctuary roof, slicing the buttressed wall in half for good measure.

This bout with the forces of Alabama's volatile weather was the most serious challenge yet for the much loved 115 year-old holy building. When the dust settled, it was obvious that there was no other option but to demolish what remained of the church sanctuary and rebuild. A benevolent providence spared the attached education wing from the same fate.

A strong appreciation for the historic character of the old sanctuary guided the design and construction of the replacement and that sensitivity is more than apparent to anyone who remembers its predecessor.

The ordeal of resurrecting the church culminated in its rededication in the Fall of 2019 as a greatly updated and improved center for the congregation and it seems more than ready today for another 100 years of serving Presbyterians in the Montevallo community.



Montevallo Presbyterian prior to the 1939 cyclone.



The church had been regularly remodeled and well maintained prior to 2017.



The sanctuary was no match for 2017's oak tree assault.



Reconstruction in 2019 restored the familiar image of the Protestant icon that first graced Shelby Street in 1902.

The line-drawing you see on this page appeared on the front page of weekly Presbyterian church-service bulletins during the mid-twentieth century. A close look reveals the buttresses installed after 1939 to support the weakened north wall.

We were saddened to learn of the death at the end of 2020 of Montevallo native and internationally renowned German language and literature scholar, Theodore Ziolkowski. He was 88 and succumbed from the advanced stages of heart failure on December 5.

A prolific author, translator, and editor, Teddy "Z", as he had been known in his home town, settled with his wife, Yetta, in Princeton, NJ and made a career as a popular professor on the faculty of Princeton University. From 1979 to 1992 he attained his highest and most demanding service at Princeton as Dean of the Graduate School.

Not satisfied with his duties as a college professor, Theodore Ziolkowski was also the author of 35 books, written either in German or English during his lifetime. He also edited at least a dozen more.

As a teenager growing up in Montevallo with his parents and younger brother, Teddy became the subject of an unconfirmed legend that was perpetuated for years among succeeding generations of local high school marching band musicians. It was believed that as a star football player at Montevallo High, he would also march with the band at half-time while still clad in his football uniform.

The Montevallo Historical Society was fortunate enough to make contact with him just a few years ago and succeeded in getting confirmation from Ted that for one season he indeed played trumpet in the band wearing football shoulder pads and cleats.

The full story can be found in the Fall 2019 issue of the Montevallo Historical Times (available online at www.historicmontevallo.org).



Theodore Ziolkowski
1932 – 2020

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Montevallo Historical Society Financial Statement • March 2021	
Balance brought forward 11/01/2020	\$10,755.35
INCOME	
Dues	155.00
EXPENSES	
Fall Newsletter – Printing & Mailing	1,002.45
Balance as of 02/01/2021	\$9,907.90

Your
Help Is
Needed!

Two predecessors to the MHS Montala were published in the 1920's and 1940's. The earliest version was called the "Scroll" and the later version was called "Montan". If you have a copy of either yearbook and will be willing to loan it temporarily for scanning, contact Carey Heatherly at HeatherlyCW@montevallo.edu.

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My Hero

Dr. John W. Stewart

A Personal Remembrance

By Clay Nordan

While most people who knew or knew about Dr. John W. Stewart would remember him as the heroic and stabilizing president of the University of Montevallo during a turbulent time in the history of the institution (1988 – 1992), he attained hero status in my mind 25 years earlier in 1962 when I was in junior high school.

Dr. Stewart passed away at age 92 in November of 2020. His distinguished 31 year career at UM began in 1961 as an associate professor of music while the school was still known as Alabama College. Two years later he was named chairman of the Music Department and then was appointed Dean of the newly formed College of Fine Arts in 1972.

Something completely unexpected occurred in Montevallo in late 1962 that thrust John Stewart into a role as an educator that he was undoubtedly qualified for but he could not have begun to anticipate.

Our conscientious but eccentric director of the Montevallo High School band, Victor T. Young, had been in the job for 20 years. After training and rehearsing his students all that time in a dungeon-like basement under the stage of the school auditorium, he had finally been rewarded with a spacious new sun-lit band room next door.

This was my first year as a member of the "senior" band. One day not long after the final football game of the season, members of the band assembled for our usual 1:00 p.m. band class only to be told by school principal, Mr. Guy Milford, that Mr. Young had been diagnosed with Tuberculosis and was in indefinite quarantine at a TB sanitarium in Birmingham. Little did we know that we would never see Mr. Young again nor would he have a chance to ever spend another hour in his pristine new band room. After a time he did recover, but his illness forced him to retire from teaching.

Mr. Milford also informed us that we could not leave the band room until we had all been tested for TB by a nurse who had just arrived from the county health department.

The news about Mr. Young and the painful test we endured were highly traumatic for every band member and more so for our parents. To our relief, all the tests came back negative. So, despite concerns about the welfare of our stricken band director, the initial fears of all concerned became just a bad memory.

But now, in the middle of the year, MHS found itself with a band but no director. To the rescue, came Dr. John W. Stewart from just across the street at Alabama College. We nev-



John Stewart often played alto saxophone with the Kiwanians dance band from Columbiana. He is third from left in photo.



Dr. John Walter Stewart

1928 – 2020

er knew what forces acted to bring him to us, but before we knew it, we had before us an articulate, dignified, and highly competent musician who obviously knew how to lead a band.

Dr. Stewart became our "knight-in-shining-armor" for the remainder of the year and led us into a highly successful concert season in which we greatly improved both individually and as an ensemble.

So is it any wonder that to this day I still consider Dr. John W. Stewart to be my hero for the selfless act of kindness he gave to me and my musical compatriots in 1963.

Musician Gives Time and Talent

By Annette Burke

Standing in for Mr. Victor T. Young, Dr. John Walter Stewart has directed Montevallo High's 70-piece band since early November. Dr. Stewart has given generously of his time and talent and well deserves the praise and gratitude of MHS for he serves here in addition to discharging his duties as an associate professor of Music at Alabama College.

A native of Biloxi, Miss., Dr. Stewart is a graduate of Biloxi High School. The Biloxi High Band, in which he played sax and clarinet, was regional winner of a Look Magazine music contest during his senior year.

As a result, the group went to New York to appear at Carnegie Hall.

Dr. Stewart received his Masters degree at Louisiana State University and did graduate work at Florida State University. During a "two-year hitch" in the Army, he conducted a weekly program, "Concert in Khaki".

He gained experience working with teenagers as Director of Instrumental Music at Terrebonne High, Houma, La. Here he conducted a band and orchestra.

Dr. and Mrs. Stewart have three sons, John, 9; Glenn, 6; and Kevin, 2.

Reprinted from the February 8, 1963 issue of SPOTLIGHT, the student newspaper for Montevallo High School.

Montevallo Historical Society

Roster of Active Members – 2020 / 2021

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