

Montevallo *Historical* Times

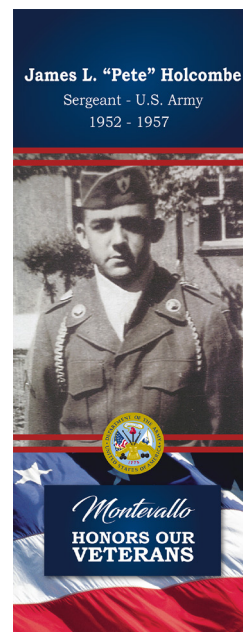
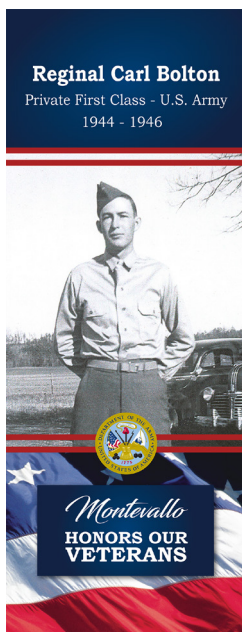
Vol. 4 No. 3

Newsletter of the Montevallo Historical Society

Summer 2020

77 Banners Now Honor Local Veterans

The Veterans Banner program launched by Montevallo Main Street in the Fall of 2019 has added 30 new banners in 2020 to the original 47 that were displayed for Veterans Day. By the 4th of July this year, all 77 banners had been completed and were on public display along the city's streets. The most recent banners are shown below as well as on page 4 and 5. All 77 can be seen at www.historicmontevallo.org



Special thanks to Courtney Bennett, Executive Director of Montevallo Main Street, for providing the images shown here.

VETERANS BANNERS CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

Please Note: Quarterly MHS Meetings & Programs are Suspended Due to the Pandemic

President's Letter

Dear Friends,

Since my last letter to you, COVID-19 has changed the thoughts and actions of the entire Montevallo community. It has changed our schools and events; changed our behaviors – from shopping, to eating, to social outings; and changed our work or eliminated it altogether. It has raised awareness of world problems with health care, politics, and poverty. In short, it has changed our world.

The virus has certainly made clear the inequalities that exist not only in Alabama and in the U.S. but globally. Whether it's the government distributing stimulus or unemployment checks, communities coalescing to help those in need, or the fact that most of the country is aware of the challenges that still divide us, there seems to be a growing awareness that we are responsible for one another. Addressing racial and political divides, a global search for a pandemic vaccine, taking care of ourselves and our loved ones, focusing on cleanliness, and diminishing worldwide pollution are hallmarks of today. We are in the midst of a changing world.

How fortunate we are that in our community we are armed with powerful positive thoughts and the will to act on them with the abilities needed "to overcome evil

by good, sorrow by joy, cruelty by kindness, ignorance by wisdom," and to confront each day with the courage and confidence of a conqueror.

As difficult circumstances put to the test what we have learned from the study of Montevallo's history and the hearty folks who settled this land, let everything we have absorbed be transmuted from learning into doing. In that process we will discover strength we may not know we had, and an expanding capacity to love. In situations that challenge our outer sources of stability in life, let us be an example of kind, cheerful, calm, and inwardly steady friends and neighbors. In such ways, challenges like those we are passing through benefit ourselves, those around us, and humanity as a whole.

As an outwardly distanced but inwardly united community, we will find our way through these dark and difficult times safely and victoriously, while doing our part to contribute to the ongoing evolution of the entire human family. Out of the fires of this pandemic a greater world will come for as Bob Dylan sang "the times they are a-changin'."

Susan

Thank You!

The officers and directors of the Montevallo Historical Society would like to express our thanks and gratitude to every renewing member who responded during our recent dues collection effort for the 2020/2021 membership year. As of mid-July, we are proud to list 141 individual members on our active roster (see page 8). We would especially like to express our appreciation for the generosity of those members who renewed at the premium membership levels or included extra donations with their dues. For members who were unable to respond to our renewal reminders, **IT'S NOT TOO LATE!** Dues and donations are our primary sources of income so we will be more than glad to hear from you and renew your membership in MHS for another year.

(A printable renewal form can be found at www.historicmontevallo.org under the "Application" tab)

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Montevallo Historical Society

Opening the Portals of Our Heritage

540 Shelby Street
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History of Montevallo Published

by Wayne Ruple of the Sun Staff

If you would like to know what it was like to live in Montevallo one hundred years ago then a recently published book "Montevallo – The First One Hundred Years" should give you a good description.

Written by Eloise Meroney, the book covers one hundred years of Montevallo's history.

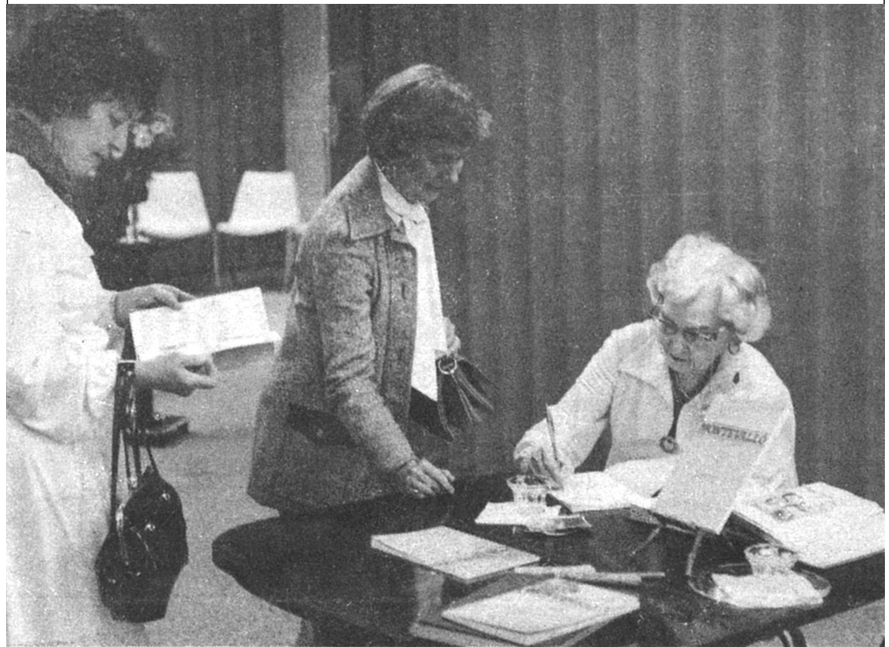
In her forward she says, "When the Shelby County Historical Society was organized in 1973, the newly elected president, Ken Penhale, called for volunteers to help in collecting information on the history of Shelby County. He suggested that research begin on the history of the various towns in the county. I volunteered to help with research on Montevallo, my home town."

Eloise has lived most of her life in Montevallo and feels she has a pretty good feel for the town. She continues to live in the very house where she was born.

Attending the UM campus, long before it was known as the University of Montevallo, she later received her A.B. from the University of Alabama and then her Masters from Columbia. She has taught at Duke and North Western.

This article appeared originally in the Shelby County Sun in 1977, the year Miss Meroney's book was published.

Author Autographs Books



Eloise Meroney autographs her book "Montevallo – The First One Hundred Years" at a recent book signing at University Baptist Church.

Sunfoto by Wayne Ruple.

Being a third generation descendant of pioneer settlers she feels she "knew a good deal of it's history" and with the help of Virginia Hendrick, Gladys Jones-Williams Roudebush and Lawrence Elliott she has produced an eighty-eight page history of the town.

The book discusses the first one hundred years of Montevallo, it's first postmasters, many of the famous and well-known people and houses, the King House, recreational sites, early churches and industries, railroads and the life styles of the people.

Fifty photos are included which will give the reader a glimpse at early homes, churches and industry.

Some of the more famous homes include the King House, Randall home, Moses Crowson home, Hendrick house, Kroell home, and the St. George Hotel.

The Montevallo Mines and

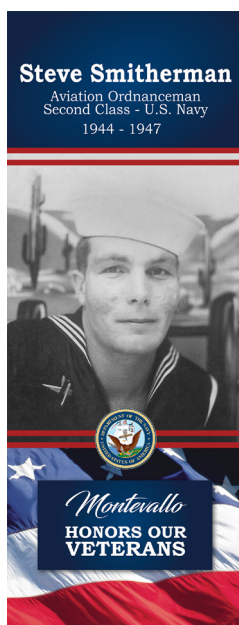
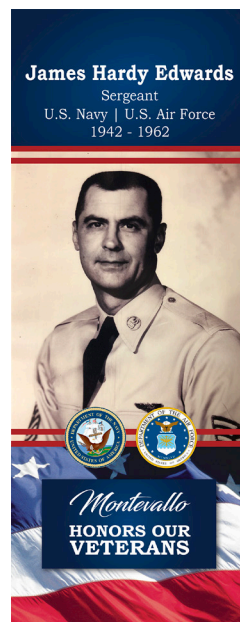
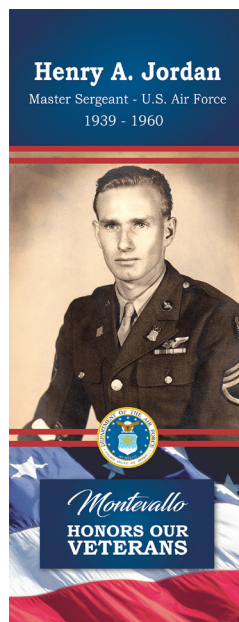
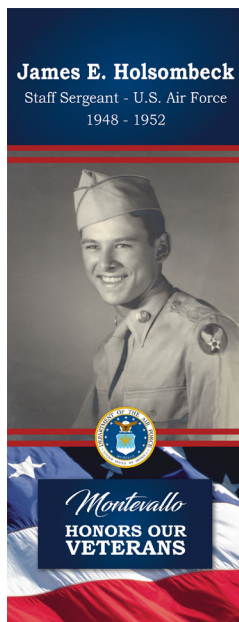
the McKibbin Cotton Gin were important to the town as far as industry was concerned. The gradual growth of what is now the University of Montevallo, is also discussed.

Eloise says she might be interested in a more complete history if her health continues. "I brought some of the things up to date", she said but would like to write more on the events which she herself remembers.

The Monitor began publishing her stories in serial form before printing a book was suggested.

She says proceeds from the sale of the book will be given to the Shelby County Historical Society for it's many projects.

Those wishing to secure a copy of the book should contact the Times Printing Company, P.O. Box 78, Montevallo, AL 35115. Cost of the book is \$2.63 plus 50¢ shipping.

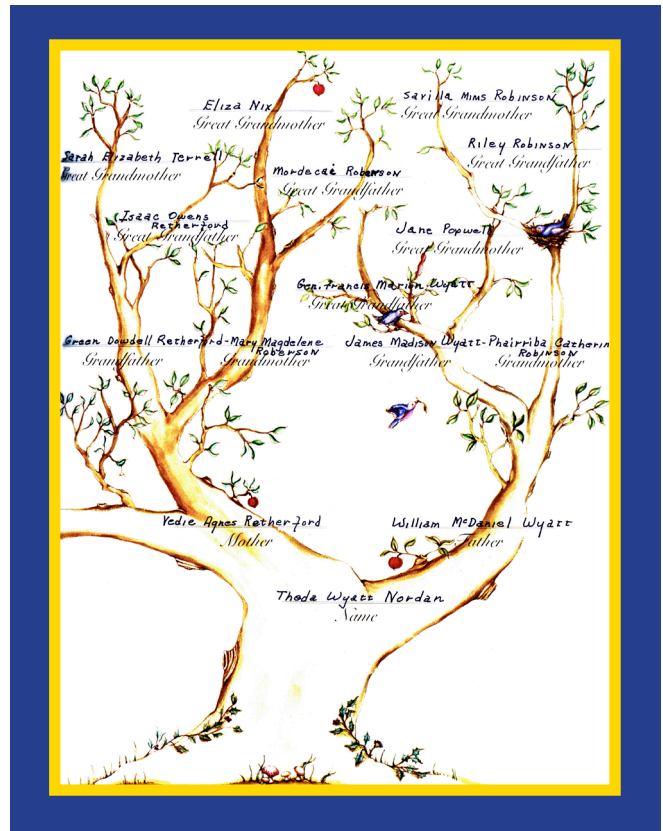


Historical Society Will Honor Your Family Connections to Montevallo

The Genealogy Committee of the Montevallo Historical Society has designed a program to honor members' connections to the Montevallo area. Members of the Society have many different connections to the Montevallo area. Some are descendants of the first families to have land grants in the southwestern corner of Shelby County. Others are descended from early settlers in the area who moved on to other places before they acquired land. Many of our members are associated with Montevallo through ancestors who came here to work at Alabama College (University of Montevallo) or to work in or own area businesses or schools. Some came to college and stayed to make a life here or returned after time away.

A number of our members belong to or are qualified to belong to national honor organizations such as Daughters/Sons of the American Revolution, Daughters of 1812, General Society of the War of 1812 or Colonial Dames. These organizations are models for how our program would be structured. Criteria for each type of honor award would be developed with clear definitions of how members could document their Montevallo connections.

Our Historical Society would like to create memorials to members' connections to the Montevallo area. The Board of Directors has reviewed several cat-



The Genealogy Committee can help MHS members develop a family tree showing descendants whose connections can be honored.

egories in which awards may be given. Also, the awards could hopefully be displayed locally where members and other citizens could see the pride our members have in their connection to Montevallo.

As we await the time we can meet together again, please think of how and why you are connected to Montevallo. Then let me or one of the MHS Directors know of the ties to Montevallo you would like to see honored.

Adelle Simpson – Genealogy Committee chair. 20100 Hwy 139, Brierfield, AL 35035 – adellesimpson@att.net – (205) 540-4265.



MOVING TO MONTEVALLO

By Way of

by Sally Sears

SIBERIA



***Editor's Note:** Regular readers of the Montevallo Historical Times will recall the in-depth story on the Ziolkowski family that we featured in our Fall 2019 issue. That story triggered for our author, Sally Sears, the memory of an additional story involving a relative of the "Z" family who came to live in Montevallo following a harrowing personal saga worthy of the creative output of the most imaginative Hollywood screenwriter. We offer Sally our thanks for sharing this tale with us.*

Did you take piano lessons from Celia Ziolkowski? I remember every week after school walking from the Alice Boyd building to her home on Nabors Street across from the Presbyterian Manse.

She would smile gently as my fourth grade fingers missed the notes on her grand piano. She'd correct me with long, elegant strokes of her hands. Sometimes she kept playing so I could hear what I could not yet play. It was magical, hearing the notes fall into place and linger in the living room.

She wore long, silk dresses and corrected my posture. Her head would lean in, hair in an elegant chignon, eyes closed. Once I heard the phrase Old World Manners, I recognized it described her.



The handsome old Presbyterian "Manse" or parsonage remains today on Nabors street across from the "Z" house.

Olga's Fantastic Life

She was a Chicago beauty, born in 1889 to play the violin. Sent to study with a world-famous violinist in Warsaw, she fell in love with her teacher. They married and had a son, who disappeared in the fog of World War Two. One summer night in 1940 Soviet agents rounded up ten thousand Poles. And Olga, whose American passport was lost in Warsaw.

They were shoved into a boxcar. Sixteen days later, the Soviets forced them into a prison of log huts hundreds of miles up the Sosva River in the middle of Siberia.

Olga was forced to hammer bent nails, dig potatoes, watch the Polish prisoners waste away from hunger. The prison ruined her fingers for violin playing. But the prison held no violins.

She appealed repeatedly to the U.S. State Department. Finally, in 1941 an American passport arrived. The camp commandant apologized for mistaking her for a Pole and put her on the trans-Siberian train east to Vladivostok, and via

*Tokyo back to America.**

She spent years searching for her war-lost son.

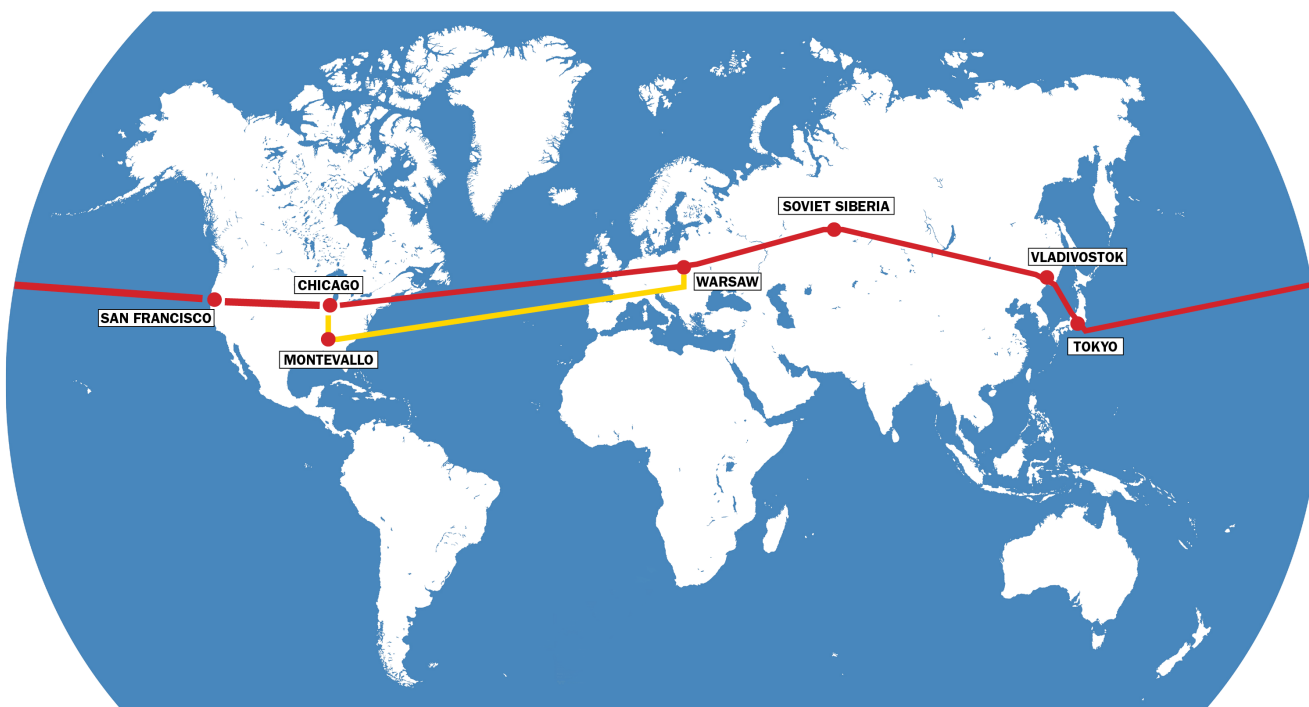
Then, in the 1960's a woman in Warsaw contacted her. She claimed to have known Olga's son as a partisan during the war. She announced that Olga had a grandson, Maciej Tadeusz Kochanski.

We know Olga believed her, because she sent money and traveled to Poland to visit with the family claiming her.

Finally the tug of blood relatives overcame her affection for Montevallo. She moved to Warsaw permanently, but made sure Steve Sears kept her address.

*** Arrest and Exile: The True Story of an American Woman in Poland and Siberia 1940-41**, written by Lilian T. Mowrer (1941) tells part of her story.

The Soviet "Gulag" forced labor camp system was the brainchild of the communist revolutionary Vladimir Lenin in 1918 and thrived under ruthless Soviet strongman, Joseph Stalin, until 1956. If you would like to learn more, see the three volume **The Gulag Archipelago**, (1974) by Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn.



The red line on this map shows the “around-the-world” path Olga Kochanska had to follow before finally settling in Montevallo in 1961. The route included two trips to Warsaw, one in the 1920’s as a violin student and another in the 1930’s to reunite with family, which led to her being mistakenly taken by the Russians as a prisoner of war and shipped to a Siberian prison camp. The gold colored line indicates her route to Montevallo following her fortunate release from the prison camp and subsequent return to Warsaw 20 years later where she lived comfortably among family members for the rest of her life.

The Ziolkowski family was a Montevallo treasure.

Her husband, Mister “Z”, was a famous musician teaching at the college. “He studied under Paderewski in Poland!” the adults said, with so much awe that Paderewski might have been Elvis.

A mysterious past clung to Mrs. Z’s cousin, Olga Kochanska.

I heard whispers about her as a child. She was said to be a beauty, a famous violinist. The stories said she’d suffered great personal tragedies, was held a prisoner of war by the Soviets in Siberia in World War II and never played the violin again. She lived a few houses away in a house she bought on Plowman Street from the McGehee family in 1961. During the coldest years of The Cold War, she lived quietly in Montevallo.

My brother Steve helped Olga Kochanska with legal work in 1980 to sell the house. She promptly bought a shiny Pontiac from Hanson Leach Motors on Main Street, moved to Poland and took that Pontiac with her.

In the fall of 1982 I took a sabbatical from

news reporting, and planned to cross Siberia to China. Steve encouraged me to stop in Warsaw, check on Olga and see how the Pontiac was holding up in the Cold War.

I loved the story of a sorrowful beauty searching for

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8



This is the house at the corner of Plowman and Nabors streets that Olga Kochanska purchased in 1961 and lived in until she returned to Warsaw for good in the early 1980’s. This house was purchased by M.S. McGehee in 1949 from the estate of Mae Lyman, a descendant of prominent Montevallo land owner, and philanthropist Edmund King. The current owner is Deborah Spitzer.

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her lost son. When she found her grandson did she pick up a violin and play with joy?

So, I hired a guide to help me find her. Vladimir did not believe my story of an American woman with a Pontiac. Still, he drove me east across the Vistula River, passing miles of Cold War pillbox apartments, redeemed from gray only by flower boxes on every balcony.



We found her street. Her house, Number 19. It was hidden by a big wall bearing a sign that I could clearly read, even in Polish. Beware of the dog.

Three silent boxers backed up the sign, fast and frightening.

Then a housekeeper emerged. When she heard the words "Chicago" and "Alabama" she nodded.

"Olga? She's 94 years old?" Yes indeed, she told Vladimir and me. This is the right house. But she is not here now. The

family took her on a vacation to the beach in Spain.

Now assured we were harmless, the woman asked us in. The walls were covered in paintings, etchings. Carpet. Olga's room was large, with its own bath and writing table.

I left her a note. We thanked the housekeeper profusely, drove away.

I felt joy, imagining her with a loving family, vacationing in Spain. Vladimir was overjoyed. "Never, magnificent, wonderful!" he said. "Imagine, all of that behind those walls." By that, he meant the carpet, the bathrooms, the etchings.

But best of all, I had asked him to ask the woman about Olga's violin. The question meant nothing to him. "Yes" he said simply. "She says Olga plays it all the time."

Sally Sears grew up in Montevallo and is the daughter of Ralph and Marcia Sears. Ralph was Montevallo mayor for 24 years and he and Marcia owned and operated the Shelby County Reporter as well as radio station WBYE. Sally also



had a media career after her graduation from Princeton in 1975. She worked as a reporter at Channel 13 in Birmingham for 3 years before moving to Atlanta in 1984. She's reported on local and regional stories there, currently working on special assignments for the CBS affiliate. She's an active volunteer for South Fork Conservancy. Her email address is: willsb@bellsouth.net

Montevallo Historical Society Roster of Active Members – 2020 / 2021

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Mary Arledge	Glenda Terrell-Cairns	Mae Glosson	Carol Lightfoot
Steve Arledge	Pam Campbell	William Glosson	Kirk Lightfoot
Phyllis Bailey	Linda Cicero	Susan Godwin	Bob Lightfoot
Veronica Bailey	Marshel Roy Cunningham	Catherine Griffin	Gene Lightfoot
Brenda Bates	Ed Czeskleba	Hershel Hale	Luci Lovelady
Rebecca Beaty	Karen Czeskleba	Anne Caley Hamilton	Elizabeth Chism Ludwig
Wayne Beaty	James Day	Margie Hardin	Peggy Whaley Marshall
Gary Bell	Rene Day	Jim Hermecz	Michael E. Malone
David Bennett	Paul Doran	Cecily Orr Hullett	Scott Martin
Patricia Bennett	Helon Everse	Margie Scott Jones	Bruce McClanahan
Charlie Binion	Marty Everse	Bill Keller	Jane McClanahan
Laurie Binion	Judy Robinson Feagin	Jeanetta Keller	John McCulley
Lee Binion	Bryan Fowler	Karen Kelly	James McDonald
Beth Jeter Bishop	Nancy Fowler	Billie Lacey	Jerry McGaughy
Cheryl McClure Blackmon	Bruce Fraser	Jimmy Lawley	Susie McGaughy
Becky Holcombe Bolton	John Galloway	Linda Lawley	Jan McKinnon
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JANICE SEAMAN
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Montevallo Historical Society Financial Statement December 31, 2019 – July 15, 2020

Balance brought forward 12/31/2019..... \$7352.60

INCOME

Membership dues & donations \$5280.00

EXPENSES

Quarterly Newsletters..... (Printing and mailing – January & April) \$1253.60

2019 Christmas Party (Food) 170.83

Total \$1,424.43

Balance as of 7/15/2020 \$11,208.17

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Alabama College Glee Club On Tour

PHOTO COURTESY OF JIMMY BROWN



During the 1930's and 1940's, Montevallo's home-grown bus company, Alabama Coaches Company (run by Wyman Brown, his father, and brother), operated a specially marked bus for Alabama College trips and excursions. The photo above shows the bus stopped near the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C. during the AC Glee Club's performance tour of the eastern U.S. in 1940.

Pictured at right are the members of the Alabama College Glee Club just before one of their concerts in the nation's capital. The young women from Montevallo, led by their director, H.D. LeBaron, head of the School of Music, also sang at the Temple of Religion of the New York World's Fair, and at other points along the way. On August 3, 1940 they sang from the New York studios of the Columbia Broadcasting System and were heard over 119 U.S. radio stations. Twenty-four students made the trip. The photo was first printed in the Washington Post and later re-produced by courtesy of the Post in the AC campus newspaper, the *Alabamian*.



AC Glee Club singers shown before a concert in Birmingham, AL, January 29, 1938. Director H.D. LeBaron at right.

With the Eyes of a Child

by Robert David Ward

Editor's Note: *The following story was originally a part of the collection of written memories about growing up in Montevallo entitled **Time Has Made a Change in Me**, (pub. 2000) edited by Robert David Ward. It is reprinted here with the permission of Dr. Ward's estate. David Ward was the son of Alabama College professors James Skillman Ward and Lillian Kiber Ward. He also followed an academic career, gaining tenure at Georgia Southern University in Statesboro, and became a noted Southern historian. Given the climate of racial tension currently afflicting the United States in 2020, Dr. Ward's personal face-off with racism as a teenager in idyllic 1948 Montevallo should be instructive for us all.*

I was eighteen years old that summer and very proud of my job. Every morning I would play baseball with interested little boys, and every afternoon I would be the lifeguard for swimming in the creek that conveniently flowed around Montevallo. The work seemed scarcely work at all and the pay of seventy-five dollars for the summer was on a lavish scale. It was Montevallo's first recreation program.

In retrospect it always seems that trouble suddenly intervenes to mar placidity, it always comes, we say "when we least expect it." It came to me that summer and it came on wings of innocence and good intentions but not, in truth, entirely unobserved and unexpected. Only some years later when an utter nitwit asked me to join the Ku Klux Klan did I again look so directly at the face of bigotry.

There was no trouble with the swimming. It was a hot summer and the cool water of the creek produced a large clientele. There was always tension in being a lifeguard, but I felt well rewarded by the status and authority that it conveyed. My favorite rescue involved a small child in its rubber tube, head down, feet up, sailing majestically off down the creek, legs waving, as its mother produced the loudest noises I had ever heard. No, the swimming was a great success. It was in baseball that I struck out.

It was a far cry from the regimented and organized Little League of today. In our time it was possible to play baseball with enormous pleasure without even having uniforms. We would choose up sides (we had barely enough players for two teams) and we would play with a great deal of laughter and banter and sometimes some instruction from me. They watched with awe and adoration as I explained how curve

balls were thrown, the proper way to bunt, and even the beautiful timing of the delayed steal. It was all the fun that I thought it would be, and I had to stop the games to get my reluctant players home for lunch. A time when life itself is all the wine we'll ever need.

One day, perhaps three weeks after we had begun to play, I noticed two little colored boys (I use the language of the day) sitting almost hidden at the very end of the wooden bleachers. They watched our game and I saw their smiles as our dramatic action produced its share of errors and heroic attempts. Yes, I thought then that those little boys had no "program" for their play, and I shook my head. It was the silly way things were.

The next day there were three little colored boys sitting in the bleachers. When a foul ball rolled their way one threw it back to our third baseman who waved his hand in thanks. And so it went. Their ranks grew to five or six. They chased down our errant balls and backed up our sieve-like catchers and yelled and cheered and they became a part of the fun of the mornings.

And then the day came when we were short one player and his team captain said "Mr. Ward, will it be all right if Roosevelt plays first base for us while Bobby's gone?"

And I said yes, Roosevelt could play first base.

With Roosevelt on first base and the other team needing a center fielder it seemed silly not to let Alfonso play center field.

Of course I knew what was happening. I knew this wasn't done. I could feel us stepping into something new, there was an edge of unease that moved into my thoughts and lived with me each day.

We had a week of great good fun before I learned that trouble had arrived.

When you choose sides in groups that know each other you participate in nature's sternest process of selection. There, in front of everybody, your talents and your prowess are on the line for judgement. All are ranked by their peers from first to last. And so it was that white Bobby often did not play first base, and colored Roosevelt, who everybody knew was better, often did.

And the morning came when Bobby came to me and told me that his parents didn't want him to play with colored boys, and I told him that he was always free to come or not. It was the same day I got the call from Coach Fisher, my nominal superior.

"David," he said, "some of the men in town got in touch with me and said that you had some colored boys playing baseball in the mornings. Is that true?"

"Yes, sir," I said, "that's true." What else

was there to say? It was certainly true.

"Well," he said, "I know there's no harm in it, and it's fine with me, and you haven't done anything wrong, but I guess it will have to stop. The people who don't like it are the ones who pay our salaries and who make the policies. You'll have to tell the colored boys they can't play anymore."

"Yes, sir," I said, and I thanked him for his understanding, and my heart froze and my stomach hurt. I did not want to tell them that they couldn't play. I would be the instrument of their denial. I would act out the stupid process and end that fun of boyhood innocence. I did not know what my priorities should be. Should I insist that they get to play and force the city fathers to fire me? Should I resign and show the stuff of martyrs?

I went to the field much earlier the next morning. I sat alone in the bleachers and I tried to think it through again. Should I call the colored boys together and tell them? But I would have to wait until everyone was there and by then the game would already have begun. Well, I would do it, somehow I would do it. I would see how things went and surely there would be a time.

Four of my little white boys arrived and stood and looked up at me in the bleachers. I tried to assume my command presence and I said, "Well, the colored boys aren't going to be able to play with us anymore."

"Oh, yes," they said, "we know that they can't."

We talked and I learned that they had known for days of angry parents and threats and pressures. It was I who had lived in innocence as they came and played each day and never troubled me with the problem.

"I'm going to have to tell them this morning that they can't play anymore," I said, and I guess I looked as miserable as I felt.

My eight and nine year olds looked at me and they looked at each other and they said, "It's all right, Mr. Ward, you don't have to tell them. When they get here just let us tell them. We can make it all right."

And when the colored boys arrived, laughing, in good spirits for the coming game, a white boy went to each one and there were conversations. And I sat in the bleachers and hung my head and I cried inside for my own cowardice and I cried out against a stupid system and I cried for my colored boys in their pain and dignity and for my white boys who showed a sensitivity far beyond their years.

We played a quiet game that day and the colored boys sat in the bleachers and watched.

The next day two colored boys came and watched us from the bleachers.

On the third day they didn't come at all.

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