

the clackety-clack rhythm of this engine running for miles around. On days when the wind was still, the exhaust pipe would blow a continuing series of perfectly formed smoke rings that floated softly across the yard. More importantly a circular saw blade that could easily generate a pile of firewood if the operators kept it busy. It was a miracle machine for that period of time.

Later on, Mr. Jim King rigged an A-model car with a cutoff saw on wheels that he would pull around to various homes with big wood piles. This ingenious contraption featured a pulley attached to one of the rear wheels. Mr. King would jack the back end of the A-model, position his cut-off saw, attach a big leather belt from pulley-wheel to saw pulley, crank the A-model, and a power system was in place ready for wood cutting production. Some used T-model engines in a similar manner. Keeping firewood for the fire was not always a "picnic."

No doubt, Otis Mason recalls other similar mechanized systems and probably had a great deal of experience operating them.

January 8, 1992

What About The Economy For '92

The events of 1991 left the economy of the U.S. in turmoil. Who would expect us to enter and win a war and see the Russian empire fall apart all within the period of one year?

This, however, presents a problem. We don't know how to deal with it, apparently. For example, we haven't won a decisive war since the "big one," WWII, though we've had some limited success in places. Now, we don't really know how to cope with the shambles of USSR.

One of the Russian dictators, Krushchev once said "We will bury you," as he admonished us and other adversaries.

Little did Krushchev know that his government would eventually fall apart...not from our military superiority, but from within. It came unglued from its own inefficiencies. A government that was supposed to be all for one and one for all was never quite that. No government ever really is what it says its going to be. Witness the

lies and promises by politicians during elections as opposed to what they really do. Our best hope is to remember to “watch as well as pray” as it was explained somewhere in the Bible.

While our President is gone off on a trip this week to plead with the Japanese to “please” level the playing field for fair trading, and to ask for more export business in the hopes of creating more jobs here at home, there are many mixed feelings.

For example, why is it the government is always the last to realize when something goes wrong with the economy? For about three months prior to coming to a moment of truth, the President and his advisors were explaining how we were now on “the road to recovery.” Any man on the streets of America who had been layed off the job, had his hours cut back or been furloughed could have given the President better advice.

This is not to put the President “down” for his efforts altogether. He did a magnificent job as Commander in Chief during the war in the Persian Gulf. However, he would have saved a lot of grief if he had let his military men get rid of Saddam while there. We may live to regret that miscalculation.

The immediate conclusion is that this President, Mr. Bush, is indeed a master at foreign policy but not so great at grasping with domestic needs. He may have too many economists or “bean counters” in his administration. Someone once said that if you had all the economists in the world placed end to end, they wouldn’t reach a conclusion. This may be true, for all they really have to help them reach a conclusion is what is already past. Harry Truman said, “The only thing new is the history that hasn’t been written yet.” Only those writing the history have the luxury of explaining what happened by looking backward...and sometimes with a “jaundice” eye, depending on the individual and his purpose.

Maybe this country needs two presidents -- one for foreign policy and another for domestic? Only joking, of course; its probably better to try to cope with one set of mistakes as opposed to two. Also, I believe in the cesspool theory of government...it’s kinda like bacteria in a septic tank...once there is enough in there, it tends to destroy itself. Just like the recent Russian experience.

Americans will eventually come to their senses in any situation. We must realize that if we don't individually and collectively keep our own best interest in the forefront of any kind of policy -- foreign or domestic -- there will be no need to expect outside forces to save us. It won't happen. It never has, and it is not about to begin now.

January 15, 1992

Law of Gravity Continues To Prevail

John Butler, who, for many years, operated a dry-cleaning establishment on Retreat Street, was something of a philosopher. Mrs. Butler continues to live on Retreat Street and is certainly a lady long admired by many citizens who are reassured by her enduring patience and understanding of humankind.

Mrs. Butler ably assisted John in the cleaning business as an expert seamstress and capable business manager. She has known both happiness and tragedy in rearing her family, but she continues to this day an active person with strong convictions and abiding faith.

As a youngster growing up in Westminster many of us were acquainted with the Butler family through school and community activities. John always kept horses and cattle around the pasture and barn near his home. Naturally, this was an attraction to the neighborhood, so many youngsters came to know and play in the area.

Later on, adults would often gather in back of the small dry-cleaning plant on Retreat Street where John kept the old boiler fired up as he chewed tobacco and reflected on a "topic of the day." Mrs. Butler usually quietly continued her tasks as she did most of the altering and a great deal of personal "hand-cleaning" required of many garments.

Mrs. Butler is an educated lady who never lost touch with reality. She often listened carefully to conversations that transpired in back of the cleaning plant, seldom interrupting except when she felt it necessary to make a "correction." With a strong and able mind, she dealt kindly with many situations that would have taxed the abilities of a lesser person.

John was a great conversationalist, loved to communicate with anyone who had a few moments to sit and talk. He was not at all bashful about expressing his beliefs. While his ideas and those of Mrs. Butler's were not always consistent, the two were quite compatible and more often than not, very entertaining to their friends and customers who came through the doors.

Often, I recall some comparison John would inject into conversation. For example, if he were discussing the relative material "success" of someone, he might add, "but remember, a bird can fly very high, however he must come back to earth to get a drink of water."

John would have made a great veterinarian, horse trainer or horse breeder. He loved horses more than most can imagine and had accurate information about many of the great competitors in the Tennessee Walking Horse competition. He could quote the bloodlines from memory of such favorites as "Midnight Sun" and give the history of all their "sons and daughters." While I never knew enough about them to understand all the terminology and its meaning, John spoke with authority to many who did understand what he was talking about. I've seen and heard him in lively conversation with many of the great showmen at the Walking Horse Convention in Shelbyville, TN.

While I don't know what John would have said about our present economic situation, he may have likened it to something close to Newton's Law of Gravity. "Whatever goes up will come down" is not exactly the way a physics professor would explain it, but the net result is the same and John wouldn't have worried too much about the proper way of expressing the thought.

January 22, 1992

W.C. Felder, Printer - A great Citizen!

W. C. (Bill) Felder was never a back-slapping, hand-shaking, political type. Rather, he was reserved, cautious, a near perfectionist who understood how to present the printed word in a manner

that few mastered. With his recent passing, this community and state lost a really great citizen.

At the age of about ten, I first came to know Mr. Felder when he agreed to let me “hang around” his print shop. The term then used was “printer’s devil” for young apprentices. No doubt, he realized quickly that my presence on the premises certainly earned the “devil” part of the job description. But, he has a patient man in many ways, and I somehow managed to “stay on” in his shop on a part-time basis while I went to school and later full time during the summer months. The ERA was in the late 1930’s and early ‘40’s.

Felder Printing Company has just moved into the building where it is presently located. This building housed the post office at one time. A new post office building was occupied; Mr. Felder had purchased the *Tugaloo Tribune* and its printing facilities from Mr. A.L. Gossett and moved into its present location. Mr. Felder continued to print the Tribune for several years, having become familiar with operation as Mr. Gossett’s printer and manager. Later he sold the newspaper operation to J.A. Gallimore of the *Seneca Journal* and retained a unique printing operation until his death on January 13, 1992.

Unless you’ve been there, no one can describe the challenges of printing a weekly newspaper with Linotype and hand-set type, a hand-fed cylinder press, and a sheet-fed folder. To the credit of Mr. Felder and his kind and patient wife, Janelle, and their daughter, Celeste, the *Tugaloo Tribune* and Felder Printing Company survived all kinds of trials and tribulations...including two explosions that I was primarily involved with during my three years or so tenure. Specifically, I accidentally “blew up” the old pot-bellied stove during one cold winter night, and later the “lead pot” where Linotype metal was melted and recycled exploded when I accidentally tossed excess water from a dipper into the pot of molten lead.

Looking back at this early experience under the patient, guiding hand of a real “Master Printer,” the “learning” probably helped me cope with life and earn a living more than all the academic exposure together. Mr. Felder was a printer who understood how the profession was supposed to be. He insisted on those around him

doing the job in a thorough manner. No compromises with quality. No excuses for not tackling a tough job. No "Can't do" attitude was permitted, and above all, a man of great integrity and moral character teaching by example.

The early exposure to ink, lead and paper came at a time when few youngsters had any job outside except for those who lived on a farm or normal chores around the home. I was, indeed, privileged, though, at the time, little did I understand.

The precision and unique tradition of letterpress printing is now a "lost art" for most all practical reasons. However, principles of learning and dedication to purpose have not changed. Mr. Felder had a good and great influence far beyond his excellent work. I shall forever feel indebtedness to him for his effort and understanding. His family can always be proud of the things he stood for in the community. He was never blown "off course" in the rough seas of life, and perhaps now is sailing on more tranquil waters. It was a rewarding experience to have known him.

January 29, 1992

Pajamas and Monkey Business

If you want a liberal education without a great deal of studying, just drop by most any neighborhood barbershop. (Probably, the same could be said for what was once called, "Beauty Shops.") Most of the time you don't have to make much effort to learn; rather, simply lean back and listen. The customers in an old fashioned (male oriented) barbershop will find some interesting conversation to keep your undivided attention while you wait or have services rendered.

A recent stop at a shop in the old Seneca downtown business section is a good example. "Old timers" of that area gather by random chance, hear of how "it use to be" and compare it with some of the strange things that society now embraces.

There is fact and there is fiction. There is exaggeration of both somewhere along the way, at times. Facts become "fuzzy" with age; events become more interesting and exciting as one "looks

back". Sometimes truth is a victim, but in most cases it doesn't really matter, for this is entertainment of a bigger calibre than you can find on your most sophisticated t.v. talk show.

A Mr. Ayers, I believe is one of the former owners of the old "People's Furniture" store in Seneca is now housing C&C Appliance center, operated by Kirk and Gurney Reid. F.H. Ayers, I think is his name, and for many years, he followed in the footsteps of his father who founded the people's furniture which lasted until the 1980's.

Like many, Mr. Ayers was caught up in the business of WWII, and served as aircraft pilot. He was a graduate of the Citadel and attended a 50th year class graduation reunion about three years ago. During the war years, he had the experience of serving with a rather famous General known as "Vinegar Joe" Stillwell. Stillwell served in the far east along with another famous General, Claire Chennault who was well known for his "flying tigers".

Ayers recalls flying as co-pilot carrying "Vinegar Joe" across the "hump" -- the Himalayas -- While "Joe" was in back of the craft trying to get some much-needed rest on an air mattress. As the plane reached for altitude to get "on top" of the clouds and clear the mountains, "Vinegar Joe" was sleeping peacefully. Everything was going pretty good except the plane kept climbing and climbing. This was not a pressurized aircraft as we know them today. Therefore the air in the mattress was continually expanding as the plane flew higher. "Joe" was enjoying the ride and slumber until the air mattress reached the limit of containment and exploded with "Vinegar Joe" being caught up in the result. Ayers recalls he came up to the cockpit and used some of his choice language on the crew, but later came back and apologized as he recognized the humor of the incident.

Mr. Ayers said at that time in China one could purchase silk items very reasonable. He got interested in the fact and went shopping for a pair of silk pajamas...something of high quality and a souvenir he planned to take home. However, he got "caught up" in an interesting trade with one of his fellow soldiers and wound up exchanging them, in the process, for a cute little monkey. However,

the monkey couldn't survive one of the trips with his owner as he tried to transport him "over the hump". While Ayers provided an oxygen hose in his box, the little fellow couldn't make it and passed away peacefully, high in the air.

Where else could you enjoy this kind of conversation?

February 5, 1992

Thoughts and Conversations

The ability to recall, remember and relish what has been, is one of life's pleasures that seems to be more meaningful as one matures.

The lives of those who have touched you or had impact on your environment are forever a part of you. Each day we become a bit more of all that we have met and of the things each represent.

Each time I pass the Blue Ridge Co-op building on highway 123 near Richland, I am reminded of what this structure and this institution represents. More often than not, I think of Mr. and Mrs. David Stribling who live almost within the shadow of the building and their efforts to make this life a bit more bearable for all of us.

Mr. Stribling spent much of his life in education as a teacher, administrator, school board member and promoter of training in our public school system. But much more than that, he was the primary moving force that helped to bring the REA to the part of the country. While he has been active in so many endeavors of public interest, this one project stands as a monument to how one man can make a difference. The lives of virtually every citizen of this county has been touched directly or indirectly by this project, and for the better, too, as the effort to alleviate the struggle to earn a living intensified.

At the same time, Mrs. Stribling has always been available to assist in many efforts that have truly been rewarding to associates. Having served as a teacher and active in church and civic affairs, she has steadily helped improve many generations with consistent effort in an upbuilding mode. One of the things that comes to mind regarding Mrs. Stribling, is her ability to continually express a pos-

itive attitude. Her comments have always been expressed in spoken or written words of encouragement to those who may be facing adversity. Mrs. Stribling has always found the time to be kind, courteous and expressive in many positive ways.

Both Mr. and Mrs. Stribling have experienced some of life's more pleasant moments and have shared in the trials and tribulations that health problems present as they have grown older together. Those who have known them as teachers, neighbors and friends have been privileged. It is these kinds of people who are truly the "salt of the earth".

Tim Kiser, the local Presbyterian Minister at the Westminster church, said he became associated with the Striblings when he first came to Westminster. On one of the first visits with Mr. Stribling, he was informed of his interests and activities. Long standing and active members of the Presbyterian church, their experience there was of course, a matter of record. However, Tim recalled, one thing Mr. Stribling mentioned stood out clearly. In the early days of teaching agriculture a great effort was being made among farmers to control soil erosion, Mr. Stribling mentioned that he had been instrumental in bringing kudzu to this part of the country.

With an understanding smile and knowing the intent at the time, probably back in the 1920's or maybe before, Tim knew the effort was made with good intentions-not only by Mr. Stribling, but many others throughout the southeast, who were seeing good farmland eroding away.

After all, the good sense of humor these fine people have exhibited down through the years...is also a great quality.

February 12, 1992

Looking Forward To Looking Back

The old man was sitting in his store with a huge stack of books in front of him. Apparently, he was surveying a recent purchase of the estate of one deceased in Sumter. Books, to him, were a business. But more than that, he relished handling each. There were, perhaps, "collector items" from which he could make sales and

pass along to customers a few moments of pleasure and enlightenment. This was a recent scene at a used book store in East Columbia.

Located in an area near where Dr. and Mrs. E. L. Shuler live during winter months, there is more interest than a little in looking through the libraries that come into the hands of book dealers. For whatever reason, most people collect many volumes of books during a lifetime. Some are read, even studied, but many are not. Especially during these times when we have so many distractions from reading, it is good to know of a new interest in preservation of things passed on to us.

“Horseshoe” Robinson, a revolutionary war hero or activist whose being has local interest, was represented on the shelf. His old home place was just out of Westminster on the road once known as Chauga Heights. Reputed to be a historical landmark, the place was occupied by a number of owners since his time there, but as far as I know, the old home place, or parts of it, still stands.

Dr. Shuler and wife, Patsy, seem to know where the most interesting places to visit are located. Both keep a keen interest in current affairs and have a sense of appreciation of our heritage. Having been raised in the Charleston area -- where history is very important -- both have lived in other places throughout the state...thus a knowledge of the entire state is theirs. While practicing medicine here at the Medical Clinic he founded, Dr. Shuler became widely known throughout the county. Having retired about ten years ago, he relinquished his part of the business to Dr. Henry Kuemmerer who continues. Moving to a more peaceful setting on Lake Choehee, the Shulers have made their home there except during the winter months when they are in Columbia. Living near Mr. and Mrs. Bill (Rhett) Barker and children, the Shulers have had some health problems but seemed to be getting along well last week.

It is hardly a secret that Dr. Kuemmerer loves food, and, like most of us, is inclined to overeat. Knowing this, Dr. Shuler has always encouraged him to exercise restraint. On occasion, Kuemmerer has been successful, but has a tendency to “yo-yo” in the weight department. He’s been more successful giving advice

than taking it in this area, but recently says he is religiously working toward weight reduction. Watching one's diet is hard to do when visiting the Shulers, but it should be reported that Kuemmerer did exercise reasonable restraint during this most recent visit. He vows to be on his way toward less-than-200 pounds. Those who know him really "well" and understand his problem may want to encourage him by "not supplying" him with any food that's fattening. That rules out most things that taste good, but after all this is a matter of life and death. Any doctor should be able to take a bit of advice as well as dish it out...especially when it comes from a valid source. A word to the wise should be sufficient, someone said. We'll watch as well as wait.

February 19, 1992

There Are A Few You Won't Forget

Thomas Morehead use to say, "You can probably count all your real friends on the fingers of one hand and you may have some left." He was probably more correct than otherwise. While most of us have so-called friends, the real truth is, most are more like acquaintances. There is value in both, but the main difference being those who are dependable in all circumstances...not just "fair weather."

Why this thought surfaced at this moment has to do with a fine lady who was truly a friend of the family -- particularly our children. Ida Craig, now deceased, was a friend to all who really knew her. She was a special person who influenced for good the lives of young and old. A black woman, Ida came up in the "old school." She worked hard most of her life, laboring long in the fields as she and her husband, George Washington Craig, farmed lands of the England family.

Later in life, Ida and George moved to the local housing project when their productive work years was more restricted. Their only son, James, was raised in this area and entered the Marine Corps about the time of WWII. He was later killed in an automobile accident in California.

We came to know and appreciate Ida when she helped us with

baby-sitting our three children. Joe, the oldest, Rachel next, and Jimmy, the younger were all exposed to Ida, and the kind but firm hand she offered. Ida didn't have the opportunity for a lot of academic training when she grew up...for it just wasn't available for a lot of people during the early part of this century -- both black and white. But she was, indeed, educated in many things that are important.

Ida had a strong religious affiliation as did her husband. Thus, it really came as no surprise one day when Aline walked in and found Joe, a little boy of about three years, and Ida watching one of the so-called "faith healers" on television. Joe apparently had answered the "call" of the minister and had moved forward to place his hands on the face of the t.v. screen as a "point of contact" which this particular "healer" had advised believers out there in "television land" to do. This was interesting, but Ida's faith had little to do with television but more to do with living her beliefs every day.

She loved children, all children, but she was aware of problems that might arise, and took every measure to protect those she cared for. Rachel Ann loved for Ida to babysit, for once we were out of sight, they could play some of the games they so much enjoyed. As Rachel today works with a rather large daycare center in Arizona, probably some of those early experiences with Ida surface as problems there need solving

Jimmy, our youngest son, was given special consideration by Ida. Maybe it was because he was born premature and only weighed slightly above five pounds when we brought him home. Or maybe it was because he had the same name as her only child. But for whatever reason, Ida would let no one "offend" Jimmy when he was a baby and even later as he grew up. She watched over him as a guardian angel.

Looking back, Ida was truly a friend of our family. She was always honest, trustworthy in any situation and dependable. Who could ask for more? She was truly a "gem" that continues to radiate influence on those she knew and cared for for so many years.

February 26, 1992

Was That Gabriel? Not Hardly!

My mother and dad wasted a lot of time and some resources trying to expose me to musical instruments. At the time, I'm sure they felt they were doing the right thing, but my talents in that area were almost nil. At an early age, I was directed to a music teacher, a "Miss Brown" who taught piano in one of the side rooms just to the right of the old Westminster High auditorium. Miss Brown was a fine lady and gave me her best efforts. However, to learn piano, or any other instrument, those without natural talent must do two things...study and practice. I did neither, thus the results were predictable. However, they tried to stir my interest. I'm not sure they were not relieved when I simply refused any more instruction. Later, just about time to enter the sixth or seventh grade, Mr. C. E. Butts began organizing a band for the high school and "junior high" students. This got my attention. For a short spell I was allowed to participate with the band...playing a trumpet and later a bass horn. That too, required more study and practice than I was willing to dedicate from my "busy" schedule. However, I did learn enough to sort of "get by" with the group.

Mr. Butts, while blind from an accident suffered as a youth, had attended the School for the Deaf and Blind, and other music conservatories. He was an excellent teacher, and we were great friends. The band classes were small, and some of the students he taught were excellent musicians. There were many over the years but a few of the early ones who excelled were James G. Brown who went on to play the trombone with the Clemson Tiger marching Band; Julian Grubbs who played trumpet with the Tiger Band and the "Jungaleers" dance band; Charlie Martin who was an excellent trumpet player; Beth Cobb on the bells; Virginia Ray, trombone; Milford Hull, clarinet; Bryan Whitmire, saxophone; Susy Haley, bass drum and bass horn; Roy Strickland, trumpet; Stella McGuire, alto horn, and there were many others who passed through the band room doors under the old WHS gym building. Some were outstanding students and proved themselves in a variety of professions...later in life.

This story concerns my experience with the trumpet. It was a fairly good horn, as name brands during that period are recalled, a C. G. Cohn, I believe. I liked the horn enough to practice some and eventually made a little progress. But my practice was not always consistent and the times I did were not always convenient to others who really didn't care to be disturbed with the racket.

At the time, we lived in a house just across the street from where Winn-Dixie stands now on East Main. A house now occupied by Clarence Satterfield. My father was a member of the Methodist church located just down the street. He was rather dedicated to the business of the church and hardly ever missed a service there, especially on Sunday. While I was, at the time, directed more toward the Baptist church up the street where my mother attended, I occasionally failed to stay after Sunday School for the preaching service. On this particular Sunday, I came home early.

Church services were continuing at most of them with the preaching beginning about 11 a.m. A Methodist Minister, a Mr. Whitten, was holding forth at the Methodist pulpit when at exactly the same time I elected to bring out my trumpet for some practice homework. It just so happened, according to my dad, that his subject concerned the archangel Gabriel. As time would have it...just about the moment Rev. Whitten was bearing down about the moment when "Gabriel would sound his trumpet" I also sounded a blast from the C. G. Cohn trumpet. The sound effects were terrific. I learned later, and maybe somewhat frightening to Rev. Whitten who wasn't expecting the accompaniment.

Later, my day laughed about the incident, but at the time it really wasn't very funny. My practice schedule was also changed from that time forward.

March 4, 1992

A Story From Nathan Nuckols

Nathan Nuckols, a retired Textile Executive, spent many of his early years growing up around Westminster. He now lives near Easley but visits friends and relatives here frequently.

He has a great memory and enjoys visiting the area where some characters still exist who, perhaps, played a part in sagas of his early youth.

During the early 1940's, it wasn't unusual for a load of bootleg liquor to pass through the area. It was the "middle men" who did the hauling. There were three distinct levels in the business -- those who manufactured; those who hauled and those who retailed. The hauling part is reported to be the beginning part of what we now know as stock car racing. The vehicle of choice at one point was a 1934 Ford or later, a 1940 Ford. These "souped up" cars were prized possessions, for upon them, and the skill of the drivers, was the responsibility to "deliver."

The "law" had their work cut out for them. To seek and destroy illegal distilleries, to catch haulers, if possible and stop illegal sales. Sometimes they had a bit of luck, but most of the catches were the result of "reports"...some from competing operators.

As Nathan recalls one instance, he and Clarence Freeman, a classmate of his in the class of '44, were "loafing" up town one night when a fellow came walking up the street about 10 p.m. They were sitting on the cement wall -- now torn down -- near the present Depot. The man approached and wanted to know where the nearest telephone could be located. They directed him toward the "central office" located on Retreat Street. A few minutes later, C. L. Smith, then serving as a rural police officer or deputy sheriff, approached Nathan and Clarence. He had observed the man talking with them and asked what the stranger wanted. They told C. L. that the fellow was looking for a phone.

C. L. immediately made his way to the "central office" and was able to "get in" on the conversation the stranger was having with someone in Anderson. It seems the stranger was having car trouble. He reported to his friend that he was "broke down" near the Chauga Heights road just above Westminster. Armed with this information C. L. came back to Nathan and Clarence and directed them to go with him to the location. There they found the green 1940 Ford, obviously a "liquor car," but with the load already dispensed. C. L., in effect had deputized Clarence and Nathan to assist in searching

the area to see if the load had been hidden in the woods. Nothing was found, so they returned to town.

Several years later after graduating from high school, serving in the army and graduating from Clemson, Nathan was a supervisor or plant manager at a textile plant in the Anderson area. It happened that he was in the "smoking break" area of the mill having conversation, the man asked Nathan if he was not originally from Westminster. Nathan replied affirmatively. The man said that in years past he had hauled liquor through the area. This, of course, struck a memory "nerve," and Nathan asked if he had ever broke down while driving a green 1940 Ford. The answer was yes and the man recalled all the details of asking two boys where to find a phone in Westminster. Strange as it may seem, the "stranger" no longer a "stranger" but a valued employee in the plant where Nathan worked. He said the business got too risky and he was able to find a job in the plant after WWII. It's a small world out there.

March 11, 1992

The Road More Travelled

Robert Frost, one of the great poets of this century wrote of a "road less travelled" in a moment of reflection.

While this has nothing to do with a road in Westminster being widened to accommodate "more travel," the thought did surface as to exactly why?

It is a done contract...this widening of highway 123, beginning on the east end of town and supposedly extending to the area near the post office. Work is well underway with intentions of completion.

The road, as it now stands, is three lanes. It was operated, for a spell, as a very narrow four-lane, in part. Later, the idea for a center turning lane, plus two outside traffic lanes emerged.

All the widening wisdom, we assume, is the result of negotiations of the South Carolina Highway Department, the local elected city officials at the time the project was initiated, plus input of citizens.

The result, it seems, will be a more expeditious flow of traffic -- for about one mile. This may be desirable, but one cannot help

questioning the logic of bringing more traffic to bear at one special point near the center of town.

Sidewalks are now being removed, houses and building in right-of-way path must give way as will property lines in front of long-existing businesses. All hopefully, in the name of progress...maybe.

If the idea of this project it to make travel this short distance a bit safer, it could be worth the reported million dollar cost. If the idea is to expedite traffic through town, the idea will likely miss the mark.

The expert engineers and those with influence and input into such projects, supposedly study traffic patterns and hopefully make decisions with our tax dollars that are designed to benefit the most people for the cost involved. Of course, this ideal, is somewhat imaginary. Humans err, misjudge, and are often "fooled."

Keeping the character of a small town such as ours alive and well is, in part, due to its physical attributes. But it is more than that. It is people and the way they are associated with physical buildings, roads and homes. It is the personality, the perception and the real character of each citizen that adds to the total of what we are, where we are, and what we propose to be.

The construction of this extra driving lane in Westminster will make some changes in what we are now, and perhaps what we may be in the future.

If the idea is to make this bit of road safer, we certainly hope it will be worth the effort, sacrifice and cost. If, however, the idea is to bring more people to a point in town, when their real need is to get through town on the way to another destination, the point may be missed.

Most congested towns have seen fit to build by-pass roads for transient traffic. Some of these towns have successfully seen economic and domestic growth and improvements as a result. What's happening to us now is a big question mark in those terms, but who knows what may happen down a road "more travelled?"

March 18, 1992

Looking Back With Ray

You may recall a fellow named Ray Suttles who lived here in the '30s and '40s. He still comes around to visit friends and relatives, and now makes "home" in Macon, Georgia.

Ray has an interesting profession. He collects and furnishes old vehicles for the movie and t.v. industry.

You've probably seen many of them on movie and t.v. screens not realizing that this Westminster native had any connection.

His sister, Mrs. Betty Vinson, who continues to live here says that the old model vehicles shown in the current movie. "Fried Green Tomatoes," are furnished to the "set" by Ray. He also makes a brief appearance in the movie at some point. He was also instrumental in furnishing the old Cadillac that appeared in the movie, "Driving Miss Daisy," which won several awards.

Just exactly how Ray got involved in this business must be an interesting story in itself, for his life's experience in this area would probably provide enough material for a full length novel and movie, too.

Ray had a lot of first hand knowledge of such characters in this area as Herman "Foggy" Dickson, Lee "Bozey" Lyles, Jack Dillard, Albert Cashin, Henry "Gooch" Cashin, Frank and Edward Cashin, also Hubert and Gordon. No doubt a lot of people remember Ray for different reasons.

Someone may recall the time as a young boy he caught a shoe box full of mice and carried them with him to the movie in Westminster. The movie house, the "Broxy Theatre" was owned and operated by Mr. M. V. Brockman. Mr. Brockman "ran a tight ship," to say the least. He tried his best to keep down problems that were sure to occur with a young audience who came to the movie house for fun...and maybe sometimes, mischief.

Ray was no stranger to the theatre. Mr. Brockman probably watched him with a "jaundice eye" while trying to keep down problems before they developed. However, on this particular night Ray smuggled in a shoe box full of small mice. The reason was to cause a bit of excitement while the lights were on just before the movie

began. One lady who lived in the South Union section of the county always made a visit to the show on Saturday. With her, she brought a crew of field and saw mill "hands" to see whatever Western was showing and certainly to keep up with the serial, "The Shadow."

This lady was far from frail, to say the least. While the average seat width was probably 18 or 20 inches, she would have easily measured one axe handle across the posterior...or certainly more than 30 inches. But she somehow managed to wiggle into the seat and seemed to enjoy whatever movie was showing.

On this special occasion Ray somehow let the box lid off the box full of mice. The results were predictable. When the "fat lady" realized what was "amongst" the audience, panic set in. While she did not normally fear man nor beast, with mice it was different. She reportedly "shot up" from the seat like a rocket on a launching pad. No time was really wasted with "wiggling" motions. She came straight up and reportedly brought the arm rest handles with her as she stood high on the seat screaming.

Some say Ray escaped the panic stricken theater by crawling out on his hands and knees. Another report is that he raised up from the floor near the back of the theatre, and Mr. Brockman was standing over him near the popcorn machine.

March 25, 1992

The "Forum" At Mitchell's

The column last week concerning Ray Suttles and the shoe box full of mice at the Broxy Theatre was noticed by several readers who contacted me. It was interesting to hear some of the comments...especially from those who believed they knew the identity of the "fat lady." I'm always amused and amazed at some comments these columns have aroused. I'm happy to report that most of them are taken as entertaining and maybe a bit humorous. Indeed, most are based on factual information.

The "Broxy" was located along Main Street in the building where a jewelry store was previously operated. Next door to that

establishment, in years past, was Mitchell's Drug Store. It was owned and operated by Frank Mitchell for many years.

Mitchell's Drug Store was more than a place where you got prescriptions filled. The store had a soda fountain and a couple of booths where the regular "customers" gathered for all kinds of reasons. Not the least of these was to discuss local sporting events that happened to be "in season." Sidney Harper was one of the regulars that visited the establishment to hear the latest. He was busy part of the time just up the street where he managed Harper's 5 & 10 store, but Sidney loved to visit the drug store...especially when the late A. T. Sublette had "the floor."

Mr. Sublette, it should be explained, was a graduate of Furman University, where he had played football with the then famous "Purple Hurricanes." This was a period when the Clemson-Furman game was perhaps the biggest game played in the state. There was great interest in both teams when they met, and Mr. Sublette, had indeed, been an outstanding player for the "Hurricanes." He was reported to be a member of the "All Southern" team at a period when membership would certainly be equal to today's All-American selections.

While I cannot personally recall any of the games he played in, since Mr. Sublette was about the age of my father, I do remember how enthused he would be to relate experiences to the "drug store crowd" at Mitchell's Drug Store.

Sidney Harper said at one time the discussion of uniforms came up, and Mr. Sublette allowed the old style uniforms were often "make-shift." He said the first pair of shoulder pads he ever wore were made from two halves of a deflated "pigskin" stuffed with cotton and placed under his jersey.

Another event he reported to the "crowd" at the drug store was the time Furman was playing Davidson College. Sublette told the team, of which he was captain, that he knew that Davidson had a better team, but could be defeated by outstanding "kicking."

As a prolific "punter" Sublette told them the strategy would be to defeat the Davidson "Wildcats" by "kicking them to death."

They would march down the field, according to A. T., and he

would admonish his line to hold them on about the 20 or so yard line until the "Hurricanes" could take over. At that point, Sublette said he would "toe the ball" some 70 yards to advance the ball once again.

In the final moments of the game, Furman came through one more time with a forty yard field goal from the toe of Sublette.

Ah, yes, those were some interesting forums at Mitchell's...much better than any network t.v. talk show you've seen lately.

April 1, 1992

Mail Delivery Problems

T.V. Derrick will more likely be remembered as a Superintendent of Education who operated the office with the efficient help of about six or eight ladies. He was elected to office and kept up with the daily requirements, and accumulated duties as well as anyone could expect. It was a far cry from the present bureaucratic collection of some 20-odd administrative people who maintain offices and office personnel to keep the paperwork shuffling for the state, federal government or whoever else thinks it necessary. However, the purpose of mentioning Mr. Derrick at this time is to recall a story the late J. Walter Duckworth related.

Mr. Derrick, at one point, had served as a local Postmaster in Walhalla. It was during a period when some patrons would have their mail sent "Gen. Del." This meant it was general delivery to the post office designated. At some point, a patron would drop by the office and ask for his mail. It was then simply handed across the counter.

On this day, according to Walter, a fellow stepped into the post office and asked Mr. Derrick, "Do I have any mail?"

Derrick replied, "What is your name?"

A quick answer came back, "It'll be on the letter."

Post office personnel have always had their own particular set of problems; only recently has it been called "stress." No doubt the way the system has virtually changed everyone's name and personality to a number and a zip code has some bearing on this affliction.

Nowadays everyone gets mail whether it's wanted or not. Your name is often on a mailing list that is sold or traded many times depending on your interests and particularly your pattern of purchasing.

You are a consumer, as such you are fair game for anyone with anything to sell -- through the mail, over the phone or someone knocking at your door.

"Junk Mail" is big business for business in this country and it is big business for the post office that delivers the mail. The lobbyists who represent the direct mailing industry have been very successful in having laws and rules of interpretation favorable to their cause.

This may not seem a "bad thing" to many consumers, but there are some adverse results. Advertising in newspapers, both daily and weekly, have been greatly affected by "marriage mail." In case you don't know, that term has been used for a "package" of third class mail - which may represent several different businesses - mailing under one address label on a mechanically addressed card.

Hometown papers and others that depend on advertising from local firms have been so dramatic that publishers and printers of local publications have been forced to "join the system" as a matter of survival.

A lot has changed since local city carriers were "Walking" mailmen or mailwomen who had time to take a few moments to console a crying child or help a patron with an immediate problem.

My father, the late C. R. Hunt, was one of the "old timer" walking mail carriers who averaged about 17 miles a day for about 35 years. Some of the stories I recall from him and his colleagues were unusual. Especially nowadays when the main concentration is essentially different.

April 8, 1992

Down Went Frank To The Bottom Of The Well

Frank Pepper lived above Walhalla, about four miles or so off Playground Road or maybe it's the old DuPre Dairy road, depending on which way the home was approached. His last place of residence was the former Kuemmerer home. It has since burned, but

one of Frank's grandsons now has a home on the same property.

Frank was a man of small stature, but a fellow with a friendly personality. Once you met him, you couldn't help liking him. He was always ready to make conversation, and usually had an interesting story to tell.

Besides doing tractor work on his own farm, he also provided garden plowing, etc., for neighbors or those unable to do their own. Another one of his talents was cleaning out wells.

Nearly everyone had a well -- usually a dug well or a nearby spring which provided water for rural America. These wells, during the early part of this century, were hand dug. Many are still in evidence and use, but most have given way to expanded water systems or drilled or bored wells.

However, the dug well, was a vital part of every home where no other water supply was available, and many will recall drawing water for livestock, household use, washing clothes, hog killing or perhaps for other reasons.

Frank was available for cleaning out wells. This was something that had to be done periodically, for heavy rains, decay and general use caused the (well) bottoms to fill with slush, mud, trash or whatever fell in.

We were sitting on bar stools at the Last Chance roadside tavern when Frank started talking about his well cleaning experience.

The process required big, heavy duty windless wide enough to reach across the top of the well and strong enough to carry a heavy bucket. The man who went down in the bucket was usually a smaller person who could be brought up and down by two men on the topside who used the windless with heavy duty rope and manpower to get the job done.

"I knew this old lady needed her well cleaned," he explained, "And I couldn't find my regular two helpers that day."

"Finally, I ran across these two fellows I knew, and I started not to engage them to help me, but no one else could be found, so I carried them with me to the house," Frank stated.

"I got in the bucket and they proceeded to let me down to the bottom of the well to begin the cleaning out process. After they

drew up a few buckets of trash, mud, etc., I yelled up to pull the bucket and no answer came," Frank explained.

He yelled and yelled again and again and finally, the old lady who owned the well came out, laid down at the top and answered him. She said there was no one topside to pull him or the bucket out. Frank urged her to go get someone who could rescue him from the bottom of the well. She did or he wouldn't have otherwise been telling the story.

But what happened to his two "helpers?" Frank said he finally learned that one of their friends came by in an old car with a jar of liquor, gave both of them a few drinks and they simply got in the car and left.

Whether or not he "looked them up" later, he didn't explain, but I've got an idea that he made some kind of adjustment for the predicament where they left him.

April 15, 1992

Strange Things Happened At Golf Course

Friend and neighbor, Bob Grogan, can tell many interesting stories about playing golf at the "old" Oconee County Country Club. The term "old" refers to when the course was first established in the 1940's and was a nine-hole course. Bob was at one time employed with Beacon Mfg. Co., and worked under then Plant Manager and Supt. T. Henry Wood. Mr. Wood was a great promoter of sport in the area and used his considerable influence to field many winning textile league baseball teams. He was extremely involved in the construction of Oconee's first golf course near Richland. While others assisted, T. Henry "got the job done" with the help of interested employees who were delegated to helping build the first fairways, clear the area and in general help with the endless work of building a golf course which is now certainly a widely used facility. Another Beacon Plant manager who followed T. Henry, George Taylor, was the driving force behind the club expansion to an 18-hole facility. George later retired from Beacon and has, with a part

ner, Bill Faust, operated Pine Lake Club, a fine golfing facility, between Anderson and Belton.

Bob Grogan recalls many interesting things that happened at the golf course associated with a host of local players. Some have passed on or moved up to that "Great Tournament" in the sky. Some are still with us and continue to be active in the sport. At least once or twice each week, a foursome composed of Glen Cox, Harold Hull, Dean Breazeale and Arthur King could be seen at the Oconee course. Glen and Harold, now deceased were regulars. Glen had, perhaps, the first golf cart used at the club. The cart was a great assist to him since he was slightly impaired with crippling polio from childhood, but his spirit, interest and ability was never in question. Glen did not hit the ball long, but he was deadly accurate. His drives were about 150-175 yard range, straight down the middle of the fairway; his putting accurate. He would "beat you" at golf with amazingly great effort.

Arthur King would sometimes place his golf bag on Glen's cart as would other players. Occasionally, he would ride along with Glen in the two-seated vehicle to the next tee box. According to one story, Glen and Arthur were going down the fairway when they spotted a big, long "coach whip" racer snake crossing. The plan was, according to a witness, for Arthur to get a club from his bag to "swat" the snake, so they "took out" after it. However, on their fast approach to the snake, a sudden change of events. Arthur, with club in hand, ready to swing, saw the "coach whip" literally, stop, stand up about four feet on his remaining tail and welcome the confrontation. This surprise came as the snake gave pursuit to Glen and Arthur in the golf cart. First they chased the snake and then the snake returned the favor. A few anxious moments but great fun for other observing golfers.

Since the Master's this week in Augusta, Ga., had the focus of the world on it, and its very popular winners, Fred Couples, it is remembered that at least one player -- now on the Senior Tour -- Tommy Aaron, formerly of Oconee, now a resident of Gainesville / Atlanta, frequently played the course here as a youngster. He also

won the Master's in 1973 and has won several prestigious tournaments as a touring professional.

April 22, 1992

“Cue-ball” Won The Bet!

One of the pool rooms in town during the '40s was located on Main Street on the corner near the Dickson tire building. Next door to the pool room on the corner was a restaurant operated by Ed and Lilly Melton. On the other side of the pool room was a barber shop in a small building.

King Dillard lived just across the street next to the Frank Childress home. Jack Dillard, when he wasn't working or in school, often spent a few hours in the pool room or restaurant. The pool room was operated by Boone C. Brock at that time by a previous operator had been there, too. Just above this building was the Breazeale warehouse.

Locals would visit the pool room, barber shop or restaurant and would sometimes relax in the door way openings along Main Street off the cotton and fertilizer warehouse.

Ed Melton helped his wife, Mrs. Lilly, with the restaurant business...at least part of the time. Some of the time he was “busy” at the next door pool room where friends and cronies gathered to discuss politics and any other matter of local interest. Jack Dillard delighted in coming across the street to join in or promoting discussions of leading controversy of the day.

The pool balls were constantly clicking away with skilled “bank” shots, surgeon-like “cutting” and a lot of just plain lucky hits. It was fun for most when entertainment was rather limited in Westminster. One of the “pros” who came to town generally on weekends was a fellow named Paul Vaughan. Paul often drove his one-horse wagon to town, would sometimes water and feed the animal and proceed to apply his skills at eight-ball or nine-ball or whatever was the “going” game of the day.

Paul was no slouch at pool. Any who remember him or bet against his can surely attest to that fact. He knew the game and his

ability was seldom challenged. There were a few who could hold their own with him for a while, but Paul usually won. Henry "Goat" Batson and his brother, "Shog" could shoot with great accuracy, but Paul was generally more consistent.

A lot of the old Mountaineer baseball players would visit the pool room for a "Cool one" or the restaurant for those great hot dogs that "Miz Lilly" prepared. "Foots" Gilden, the heavy-hitting first baseman, "Red" Simpson, the red-hot second baseman, and of course, all the Hawkins family baseball players -- Ed, Waymon, "Pokey," "Willie," Melvin, and "Grannie" visited occasionally. It was a sort of gathering place for food and entertainment.

The details of how the "cue-ball" event happened are not clear, but at some point, according to the story, Ed Melton slipped out of his usual job next door at the restaurant and became engaged in a heated conversation with customers in the pool room. Exactly how and why the subject came up is anyone's guess, but somehow the question of whether or not anyone could put a "Cue-ball" in his mouth. The discussion evoked great interest and finally concluded when a bet was placed that it couldn't be done. Of course, Ed eventually proved it could be done, according to witnesses, but the problem became critical when he couldn't dislodge the cue. From that day on Ed had the nickname "Cue-ball." He didn't especially like it, but the title stuck for many years. A report had it that Dr. T. G. Hall had to assist with the removal of the cue.

By the way, Ed did win the bet; According to reports.

April 29, 1992

Colorful Characters of Oconee

There may be as many colorful personalities in this area as there ever was...but I don't seem to come in contact with them as easily as in earlier years of experience.

One that comes to mind is R.C. "Russ" Carter, former businessman and Judge of Probate for three terms in Oconee.

"Russ" is now confined to the nursing facility at Pinnacle Care in Seneca. He has suffered from muscular and nerve disorder of

Parkinson's, but his mind is as clear as ever. He welcomes visitors with great enthusiasm. He is, indeed, amazing at his ability to recall many events with great clarity.

Some interesting stories have circulated about "Russ" in his hometown of Walhalla. Most are good-natured humor and based on flexible truth.

There was a time when "Helen's Barn" in Highlands, NC, was the "in place" for youngsters and adults who loved square dancing. Folks from all parts of the surrounding area generally found their way to "Helen's Barn" for weekend square dancing. Often it was the nearest place of any action. "Russ" was said to be among those who loved to visit the "Barn".

According to the story, there was an unusually big crowd on Saturday night at the dance. For some reason, not explained, a fight broke out on the dance floor. While this was usually a safe place for entertainment, difference of opinion did sometimes cause friction. One of the characters visiting on this night happened to be one of the Angels from Franklin. They were in the medical business there and founded a clinic and hospital. At this time, one of them happened to be on the floor at "Helen's Barn" when the fight broke out. "Russ", according to reports, also happened to be there. Not one given to violence, he decided to try to break up the disturbance so the dancing could go on.

According to the late Ray Alexander, who once operated the snack shop in the basement of the courthouse, "Russ" simply walked up behind one of the Dr. Angels, and gently tapped him on the shoulder. Angel, who was already engaged in the fight to some extent, was highly "keyed up". With the tap on the shoulder, he evidently thought someone want him to turn around so a good punch to the jaw could be administered.

While this apparently was not the motive of "Russ", the reaction was swift. Dr. Angel spun quickly and landed a devastating blow on "Russ". Explaining to someone at a later time exactly what happened, he simple stated, "I calmly walked to the door of the building and spat out two teeth."

Whether or not this is exactly the way it happened is anyone's

guess, but Ray Alexander delighted in hearing and telling the story as it was told to him.

There is no snack shop as such any longer in the courthouse where these interesting people gathered to swap yarns. The late Jule Thode was another who visited there often and related humorous stories.

By the way, "Russ" was very alert at a recent visit with him at Pinnacle Care. He apparently welcomes visitors anytime.

He certainly is one of the colorful personalities of Oconee County.

May 6, 1992

An Uncommon Man With Common Sense

Abraham Lincoln or someone of great stature supposedly remarked, "The Lord must have thought a lot of the common man...because he made so many of them." Regardless of who said that, there must be an element of truth in the statement.

The matter that brings this to mind is the upcoming election of a President. There are those among us who don't particularly care for the candidate of either major party that have been presented thus far. A fresh possibility is the ongoing campaign of a "People's candidate" in the person of H. Ross Perot. While his groundswell of support and his being placed on the ballot in November depends upon petitions from the people in all 50 states, there is a great movement and strong support.

While we've only seen this man on t.v. and heard his comments about our problems, especially economic, he makes more sense with his answers than the others combined.

Some resent the fact that this man has accumulated several billion dollars. Especially do some of the professional politicians resent this fact. This is easy understood. Many of the big boys of Political Action Committees. These are people with money who give it to those candidates most likely to support their personal or professional wants in congress. In effect, this means many politicians are "bought and paid for." This, in effect, means to hell with

the rest of us if we don't like what's happening.

H. Ross Perot, fortunately, has worked from the bottom up and has been successful. His wealth has not "ruined him" apparently. He knows how his money came to be and fully understands what happens with it when the federal and other governments get their nation to have an economy that will expand the tax base and not punish the entire middle working class with the heavy end of the tax load. He believes, according to statements on t.v., that ability to pay has a strong bearing on the tax structure.

The thing that really disturbs the really big professional politicians is the fact that H. Ross Perot said on t.v. he only wants a \$5 donation from anyone who wan to support his campaign. That, of course, means that he will not be bought and paid for by any political action group who has big bucks with strings attached.

Another thing, he has not promised that the medicine required to get this economy turned to ourselves, our children and future generations to begin to handle this national debt...deficit spending...and to build a strong economy for America so we can actually be a world leader. We, of course, cannot be everything to everyone forever, The time is here for a moment of truth, and H. Ross Perot may be the first politician nominated from a groundswell for the people to be President.

At least he is making sense thus far. He can afford to do what may be called for without being in the "hip pocket" of special interest groups should he make to Washington.

Wouldn't that be a refreshing turn of events? By the way, the H. in H. Ross Perot stands for Henry.

May 13, 1992

Homosexuality Has No Place In The Church

A Baptist church in Raleigh, NC has received national attention for approving and performing a "same gender union" of two homosexual men back in March. Their action was defended by Minister of Music Michael Hawn when he said, "Pullen (Memorial Baptist Church) is trying to say Jesus spoke to various persons that were dis-

enfranchised by society. He didn't condone their behavior but He loved them. He did more than say 'Hate the sin, love the sinner'. He embraced them publicly sometimes."

Raleigh pastor Jim Cogdill disagrees. He says, "Pullen has done the least loving thing a person can do, condone what God had already condemned."

The 110-congregation Raleigh Baptist Association also is challenging Pullen's decision to unite two homosexual men in a marriage-like ceremony. They will vote next week on withdrawing fellowship with Pullen for their actions. The association's executive committee said in a proposed resolution that Pullen "has acted contrary to the accepted biblical teaching regarding homosexual behavior."

The Raleigh Association's decision will not affect Olin T. Brinkley Memorial Baptist Church in nearby Chapel Hill which has voted to license a homosexual man to the gospel ministry. That vote was believed to be the first of its kind by a Southern Baptist Church.

The SBC Executive Committee began efforts in February to change the SBC constitution and bylaws to bar any church "affirming, approving or endorsing in any way the active practice of homosexuality" and to refuse such churches' funds. The constitution change is expected to be voted on in June at the annual meeting of the SBC in Indianapolis.

Having been a member of a Southern Baptist Church all my life, I fully understand the autonomy of member churches that has been a longstanding tradition. But I agree fully with Charles McMillan, Jr., the Raleigh Baptist Director Missions who said, "We have endeavored to state what we believe and to encourage member churches to participate on the basis of their willingness to be a part of that same belief system. We're a family of churches, but it's a family based on mutual belief and ministries."

I do feel we Southern Baptist should attempt to force our beliefs and views on other faiths; However, if a member church blatantly disregards these beliefs and teachings, then they should not be allowed to continue their membership as a Southern Baptist Church.

Homosexuality is explicitly condemned in the bible. Leviticus 20:13 says, "If there is a man who lies with a male as those who lie

with a woman, both of them have committed a detestable act; they shall surely be put to death. Their blood guiltiness is upon them.” And in ICorinthians 6:9, the bible says, “Or do you not know that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals.”

Tracy L. Binson, pastor of the First Baptist Church of Hinesville, put an excellent ending to this story when he wrote in part to the Christian Index and said, “Let it be clearly understood that there is forgiveness by God, and by His people, for this sexual sin, as well as others. We all must provide the gospel and love for the gay people, with the hope that they will turn to God and away from this sin. Homosexuality is not an alternate lifestyle. There is no room in our churches for ministers who are “gay,” nor can we bless the marriages of same gender people. This position may not be in step with the times and latest findings of psychology, but it is right in step with God’s word.”

May 27, 1992

Life’s Second Greatest Thrill

Among the signed shirrtails of first solo pilots at Toccoa’s Stephens County Airport there hangs a sign: “Flying the Second Greatest Thrill in Life ... Landing is First!”

Many from this section of Oconee have ties to the Toccoa airport. It was the nearest and first close-by field. It came into being when the late and great R.G. LeTourneau came to town and began building the first big earth-moving equipment. His efforts attracted many folk from Oconee joined the team at the “steel plant.” It was a new concept of industry in the 1930’s and 40’s.

While perfecting his heavy earth-moving equipment R.G. did his testing in the red, North Georgia mountain clay. With it, the first dirt airstrip was formed. The old hangar still stands like an old “home place” for the “birds” landing and taking off on runways 9 and 27.

The field now has another crossing runway — 2 and 20, all are paved with recent new lighting and taxi-way lights, too. A new hangar was built several years ago, but the older one is still in service and now features a modern avionics lab.

R.G. LeTourneau was a practical man as well as one of great vision. In teaching welding technique, he trained students as the old hangar was constructed. Also, many steel fabricated homes were built along with expanding plant facilities.

The Stephens County airport is appropriately named, “LeTourneau Field” for the man who first formed the original dirt runway and later gave the property to the county.

Many citizens from Oconee made the trip daily to the “steel plant.” A few of them readily recalled Herbert Brown, Henry Strickland, Dan Strickland, Max Glymph, Shelor Harbin, Bruce Hunt, Harry Strickland, Charlie Marcengill, Harry Jones, Dan Hull and many others. It was a great opportunity at that time for employment. I recall my brother, Bruce Hunt, rejoicing at getting a raise from 35 cents per hour to 45 cents. But, one must remember that the minimum wage at that time was 25 cents per hour. If you could find a job, you usually would take it and ask later how much the pay might be. Ensuing WWII changed this dramatically and converted part of the “steel plant” from making heavy earth-moving equipment into the production of shell casings for heavy artillery.

R.G. did his part to help win WWII. His innovative development of America’s first practical heavy earth-moving equipment truly changed the face of the earth. He was a deeply religious man who had a plant chapel and daily services that were attended by employees. He established the area’s first radio station, WLET, published a very popular newsletter, *NOW*, and was instrumental in building Toccoa Falls College into its present status.

Too, there was a “flying school” at the dirt strip airport. Ed Gilmer has first-hand knowledge of all the airport development since its inception. Ed, now semi-retired from his Tugalo Gas Co., has been a one-man chamber of commerce at Toccoa’s airport and has assisted in the orderly progress of the entire county. He has many friends in this area and continues to visit the airport daily. If

you ever have an interest in flying and want to know some history of the development in this area, a talk with Ed is a good place to start. His enthusiasm for airplanes and pilots has never diminished.

June 3, 1992

Chau-Ram Park Brings Back Memories

Nathan Nuckols, president of the old Westminster High Class of '44, declared earlier this year it would be a good time to have another class reunion. Instead of the traditional type, it was suggested by this committee, and he concurred, that a picnic venture may be in order. He reasoned, and rightly so, that this class may have some members departing if another reunion was not planned before five years from the past one in '89.

The efficient and dedicated class president that he is, Nathan had done some ground work on a location. After visiting the old Westminster "town park" he recognized this is an outstanding "jewel" developed by Mother Nature and enhanced by some man-made development.

Last week, he sent two scouts out to survey the park as he had already done. Richard Lay and I revisited the facility. It is truly amazing how well-developed and well-kept the county operated Chau-Ram park is maintained. Before it became a county facility, it was largely the property of the town and was referred to as the "town park." Most youngsters in this area have pleasant memories of visiting the park. Located just above Westminster, about 3 or 4 miles up Highway 76, it is about a mile from Highway 76 on the road that leads just past the Moore and Moore Fish House.

The park consists of adequate camping facilities complete with screened picnic sheds as well as one large building that could accommodate perhaps 150 people. There are paved parking areas and well-maintained trails for walking among the blooming mountain laurel. There are ageless rocks with water cascading over them in both Ramsay Creek and Chauga River.

Many youngsters have enjoyed the pleasures of this beautiful scene as they went swimming in these clear, cool waters. Walking