



THE GROUNDHOG

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Volume 41, No. 3

"Neighborly News from the Heart of Lookout Mountain"

March 2022

Romey Returns to Her Roots

by Kelly Leavitt



Romey Atchley at her lakeside home in Alaska

During the early, long, slow days of the Covid-19 pandemic, when so many were staying at home, isolated from their family, friends, classmates, churches, and social groups, I thought often of Romey Atchley, her husband David, and 18-year-old son Sky. Some of you might be acquainted with Romey as the daughter of Liz and Jerome Stephens of Mentone, or you might remember Romey from her talks in years past at Moon Lake School and at the Community Library. She has a unique story to share, having lived in the remote Alaskan wilderness for the past 22 years. I wondered what the pandemic experience was like for the Atchleys. Did it make a difference in their world, where the closest town is 100 miles away—by river?

As it turns out, it made a world of difference for the family. Last fall, they left their off-grid life of isolation and moved to Mentone.

Romey and I recently enjoyed a leisurely conversation about her life in Alaska and her family's new life in Mentone. The Atchley family lived in a log cabin on Alaska's Nowitna National Wildlife Reserve. Each summer, the family would travel by boat on the Nowitna and Yukon Rivers to Ruby—an isolated community of less than 200 people—and catch a plane to

Fairbanks for their annual shopping trip. Romey and Sky would then fly to Alabama to visit Liz and Jerome for a month, while David managed the logistics of returning home with a year's worth of supplies on a river barge. 2019 was the last year he had to make that trip.

What led you to settle down in Mentone?

The decision to move was really spur-of-the-moment. We hadn't planned on moving to Alabama. We were just going to come down here for the winter. But with the pandemic and not seeing my family for two years, it was kind of rough. We had planned to move to Fairbanks when it was time for Sky to go to college. And we'd planned to move to Mentone—eventually. But with the time we lost with my family because of the pandemic, we thought, let's skip Fairbanks and make the move to Alabama. It's been fun, getting to spend so much time with them after all these years.

How did the pandemic affect your life in Alaska?

We were literally stuck at our cabin. The village that we'd have to go through, Ruby, locked itself down. We could come in from the woods, but if we went to Fairbanks to get

(continued on page 23)

MAPA's Spring Charity Golf Tournament

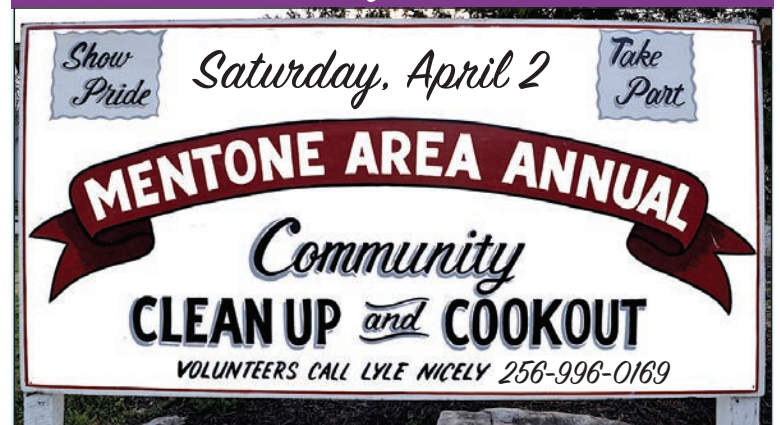
The Mentone Area Preservation Association (MAPA) is pleased to present its third charity golf tournament. Previous tournaments were held in October 2020 and April 2021, when players enjoyed competing for cash prizes in a relaxed and beautiful atmosphere. It's always a fun day.

This spring's tournament will once again be held at Lil Mole Run Golf Course in Mentone. Please see page 28 for details, or visit mapamentone.com/golf.

Call for Sponsors

If you or your company would like to support MAPA by becoming a Sponsor of our tournament, please visit mapamentone.com/sponsors to see packages and benefits. Your support makes a world of difference.

Community Clean-up



It's almost time for Mentone's Community Clean-up, an annual event organized by resident Lyle Nicely and supported by the community since 2002. On Saturday, April 2, at 9 a.m., everyone is encouraged to meet at the Town Square (next to the Mentone Inn) to pick up litter grabbers and bags. Lyle will match individuals and groups with locations he's identified that need to be cleaned up. Afterwards, everyone will meet at the Mentone Inn's pavilion for a barbecue lunch, provided at no cost to volunteers. Feel free to bring a covered dish to share. Mark your calendar now to be a part of this important tradition! If you have any questions, please contact Lyle Nicely at 256-996-0169.



THE GROUNDHOG

Published monthly by the
Mentone Area Preservation Association

MAPA was first conceived on Groundhog Day, 1982, and then organized on April 5, 1982. *The Groundhog* has been in publication for 39 years.

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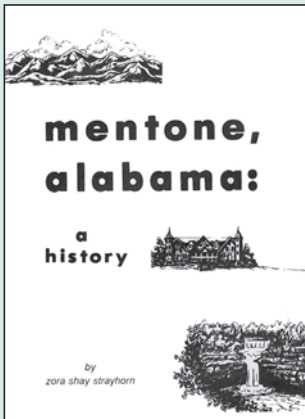
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The opinions, beliefs, and viewpoints expressed by the various authors in this publication do not necessarily reflect the opinions, beliefs, and viewpoints or policies of the Mentone Area Preservation Association.

Groundhog wood cut courtesy of Meg Justice

Do you have a story idea?
We welcome contributions!
Email groundhognews@yahoo.com



Learn about the
History of Mentone
Zora Strayhorn's book,
Mentone, Alabama: A History, is for sale
at Mentone Market
and DeSoto State Park.
\$15; proceeds
benefit MAPA.

Mentone Matters • by Mayor Rob Hammond

Despite the weather, Lambert is making good progress on the sidewalk. Hopefully by late spring we will be walking between the Little River Hardware and the Mentone Market!

Dr. Bill Berry has been actively researching ways to readapt the Moon Lake School campus for future use and has organized an advisory committee. Dr. Berry will take the findings of the committee and formulate a plan he will present to the town council. From the town's perspective we would like to see the Moon Lake School campus continue to serve the community and generate enough revenue to sustain the campus.

For those who are new to town and do not know Bill, he is a native of Mentone and a former student, teacher, and principal of Moon Lake School. When I was young and became a camp



director, Bill was our first office manager. We worked together seven and a half years. We had a great time working together. Bill always kept things organized and running smoothly in the middle of the chaos that is camp. We are excited that Bill agreed to help the town with this project. I am looking forward to working with him again.



Letter from the Editor

Spring is in the air! It's time to shake off that cabin fever and get outside to enjoy the warmer air (fingers crossed) and blossoming flowers. This month, ephemeral wildflowers begin to grace us with their short-lived displays of beauty. This is always a good time to visit the Shirley Miller Wildflower Trail at "The Pocket" on Pigeon Mountain in Georgia. If you've never visited, you might enjoy packing your lunch and having a picnic by the waterfall at the end of the trail. A trip to the Pocket always helps my body, mind, and soul.

L.C. Moon writes in this issue about wild edibles on page 15. If you've ever wanted to forage your land and make a salad, she tells us how. Her passion is inspiring.

Spring is also when Lyle Nicely leads the annual clean-up in Mentone. This year marks the 20th anniversary of this important project. Come out on April 2 and join your neighbors as the community comes together to maintain the beauty of Mentone as well as the health of Little River. This is a great opportunity to reduce the chances of roadside trash being washed into the

river. On March 19, Little River Waterkeeper is hosting a clean-up at the Alpine Bridge on CR 165. Look for details on page 22.

Some folks say spring is their favorite season to hike. If you'd like to know about some local spots to hike, walk, or run, see page 5 for recommendations from community members. We are fortunate to have 19 miles of hiking trails so easily accessible to us at DeSoto State Park. The rangers and staff at the park's information center and lodge are very helpful and will help you learn which hikes are best for you.

In this issue, we'll begin to re-print past *Groundhog* articles in celebration of MAPA's 40th anniversary. Almost every issue that's been printed over the decades is archived on MAPA's web site, thanks to the efforts of MAPA past-president Jerome Stephens, who scanned hundreds of issues. Jerome's daughter, Romey, is the subject of this month's feature article. She has lived a fascinating life and I hope you find her as interesting and inspiring as I do.

Be well, everyone. —Kelly



MAPA President’s Message by Mark Hoffman

Happy pre-Spring to everyone! I can feel it coming, with hopefully only one or two brief arctic blasts on the horizon until the bugs and blooms start popping out. Meanwhile, let’s get busy cleaning up the trash that has accumulated on the sides of Highway 117 over the fall and winter. It’s a laborious task, but someone (many ones!) must do it. Lyle Nicely, as usual, will be spearheading the effort, and will be looking for you to pitch in on Saturday, April 2. Please come to the town square by the Mentone Inn that morning, bring a friend or family member, and let’s get busy cleaning up our

beautiful town and the road leading through it. Also on the spring calendar is MAPA’s annual charity golf tournament, which will be held on Friday, April 29, at Lil Mole Run in Mentone. Put together a team and sign up for a fabulous day on the links (there will be many prizes to earn or win), or please consider being a sponsor. Additional information can be found on the MAPA website at mapamentone.com/golf. Thanks for your continued support, and we look forward to seeing you soon. *Mark Hoffman is the president of the Mentone Area Preservation Association.*

Moon Lake Adaptive Reuse Committee by Bill Berry

A treasured local landmark drew closer to its long-awaited rebirth during the initial meeting of the Moon Lake School Adaptive Reuse Committee on the evening of February 24. The term “adaptive reuse” describes the process of reusing an existing building for a purpose other than for which it was originally designed or built, a fitting definition for this committee charged with developing creative plans and constructive processes for the school’s campus and facilities. The group of 13 local citizens met to launch a deliberation of how best to continue the historic site’s 110-year legacy. Discussion built upon a set of defining statements, including respecting and preserving the school’s historical heritage, protecting and promoting its reputation as a beacon of learning, and nurturing and ensuring its future role as a vibrant part of the community. Each committee member was assigned to one of four advisory subcommittees established for a deep dive into specific aspects of determining future uses. The Community Involvement Advisory Committee—comprised of Kelly Leavitt, Kathryn Norris, and Ben Shurett—will focus on surveying the public for ideas and opinions. Everyone is encouraged to watch for further

information regarding the surveys, with the intention of gathering a large number of responses. Working closely with that group will be the Facility Use Advisory Committee, intended to develop policies, procedures, and plans for pursuing a variety of activities and outcomes. This group includes Ray Padgett, Craig Sheldon, Mellanie Tuttle, and Kayla Worthey. Rob Hammond, Ashley Harrison, and Sarah Wilcox will address financial management and accountability as members of the Finance Advisory Committee. As members of the Maintenance and Improvement Advisory Committee, Bill Berry, Sible Hopper, and Hobson Kirby will identify physical needs of the campus and its structures. During the session, the full committee also briefly considered a categorized list of possible future uses for Moon Lake, along with potential sources of revenue that will support such basic needs as utilities and maintenance. Several special guests made presentations to the committee, thereby stimulating new insights and questions among the group. Richard and Tracey Rybka shared their vision of renting a classroom for multiple uses related to quilting, sewing, and photography,

with a strong emphasis on teaching the three skills to people of all ages. Vicky Kirby introduced the Fort Payne–DeKalb County Entrepreneurial Center, suggesting that the non-profit organization’s three pillars of educate, equip, and empower could be implemented on Moon Lake’s campus. Each of the four advisory subcommittees will pursue its specific area of focus during the month of March, reconvening as the full Adaptive Reuse Committee in early April for compiling the proposals into one master plan. The plan will then be presented to the Mentone town council shortly thereafter. Once the plan is approved, Moon Lake will begin a new chapter of excellence as it serves to make Mentone and the surrounding area an ever-better place for residents, for visitors, and for business opportunities. A collective spirit of enthusiasm and excitement characterized the committee’s conversation, as they considered novel approaches toward ensuring that Moon Lake School’s motto “Firmly planted, forward moving” will continue to define a beloved campus.

Help us preserve Mentone’s history and impact its future.

Join MAPA Today

The Mentone Area Preservation Association (MAPA) is dedicated to preserving and protecting the heritage, natural environment and other unique qualities of life in the Mentone area.

Individuals
\$20/year

Couples
\$30/year

Your membership includes a complimentary subscription to *The Groundhog*.

JOIN AT mapamentone.com

Or mail your check to MAPA, P. O. Box 50, Mentone, AL 35984.
Be sure to include your name(s), address, phone, and email address.

MAPA Festivals Update

Over the years, the Mentone Area Preservation Association (MAPA) has become known for hosting spring and fall arts and crafts festivals at Brow Park. The festivals provide great fun for the community and our visitors. Even more importantly, they raise funds which MAPA distributes to non-profit and service agencies in the Mentone area. Over the past five years, almost \$50,000 has been granted. MAPA is fortunate to be able to have such an impact. Our funds are generated by the festivals, memberships, donations, Groundhog advertising

revenue, and, most recently, the charity golf tournament. The biggest challenge with any festival is having enough committed volunteers to make it all happen. As the saying goes, “Many hands make light work.” One of the impacts of these changing times is that people aren’t often freely available to volunteer their time. This puts the task onto a small group who expend a tremendous amount of effort. The board of directors has voted to hold only one festival this year—Colorfest, on October 15 and 16 (always the third weekend of

October). The decision to cancel May’s Rhododendron Festival was made with the acknowledgment that its proceeds are often lower than Colorfest’s and that not enough volunteers have been stepping forward. In 2020, MAPA held its first charity golf tournament. Through sponsorships and fees, a substantial amount of money was raised in one morning with a handful of dedicated volunteers. In contrast, a weekend festival requires many volunteer hours, beginning months in advance. MAPA very much appreciates the generous time volunteers have given in

years past, and we will optimistically count on an increased level of volunteer activity when we begin planning this year’s Colorfest. We also deeply appreciate our festival sponsors; your financial help makes a big, big difference. If you’d like to help with MAPA’s golf tournament in April or Colorfest in October, please visit mapamentone.com and complete the volunteer form to signify your interest. Keep an eye on future *Groundhogs*, our Facebook page, and website for news from MAPA, including our needs and our community impact.

This year, in celebration of the 40th anniversary of the founding of the Mentone Area Preservation Association (MAPA), THE GROUNDHOG will reprint a selection of articles from years past. (Archives of issues are available to read online at mapamentone.com/groundhog-past-issues.) This month, we feature an article written by Doreen Crow Waters about her parents, Homer and Bernise, almost 22 years ago, when the Crows celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary at Lil Mole Run's clubhouse. Homer and Bernise served as officers of MAPA and Bernise was a regular contributor to this paper with her "Country Journal" column. Homer was a stone and brick mason whose hands helped create many of the homes in the Mentone area. Doreen currently runs the "Mentone Area Visitors Guide" Facebook group. We hope you enjoy this look back in time.

A Look BACK...

The Groundhog | August 1996 | Page 13



Homer and Bernise Crow: A Tribute by Doreen Waters

On Saturday, August 24, 1996, Homer and Bernise Crow will celebrate 50 years of matrimony, accompanied by their children, grandchildren, great-grandchild, and many, many friends and relatives. Since Mom is currently serving as president of MAPA, I thought we should give some special recognition to her and Dad in *The Groundhog* this month, and I asked permission to publish this article.

I've always wanted to "toot the horn" for my parents, since I know they would never do it themselves. As the youngest of their four children, I took my parents for granted for many years. I thought all parents were as loving and generous as Mom and Dad. I now know that having parents like mine, willing to do whatever was necessary to provide for the needs and wants of their children, is a blessing many children miss. Mom told me once that every time she told Dad she was expecting another child, he would get a second job immediately! She laughed as she told it, but I realized the significance of that statement.

Dad was a brick mason and stonemason for approximately 30 years. He helped his father, Lee Crow, build many of the stone structures throughout DeKalb County. In the 1950s, the family moved to Chattanooga, where Dad worked for a large construction contractor. He was the overseer for many major construction projects throughout the Chattanooga area. In the 1970s, he retired from bricklaying and purchased a garage door operator business, which he ran very successfully. When he and Mom returned to Mentone in 1980, he opened a wiring harness company in Fort Payne that grew into a huge enterprise despite the fact that neither he nor his partner, Tom Anderson, ever advertised or solicited business! In 1993, he sold the company to three partners, one of whom is my husband, Jerry. He has finally "retired," although he stays busy working on furniture in his garage, helping my brother renovate the building he recently purchased, and traveling with Mom.

Mom has been steadily employed for the past 50 years feeding, clothing, and otherwise caring for four children and, later, a few grandchildren from time to time! The pay wasn't great but she's still reaping the benefits of all that loving care. She somehow always found time to stay involved in civic activities such as garden clubs, annual March of Dimes door-to-door collections, and PTA projects. One of her major accomplishments was helping to bring to fruition a scent garden for the blind at Orange Grove [a non-profit center founded in 1953 in Chattanooga, TN, that serves adults and children with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities]. All of her children were involved in music, and we kept her busy with our band concerts, band trips, choral competitions, and singing tours. When she and Dad moved back to Mentone, she opened Crow's Nest Antiques with her sister, Jean, in Mentone's Hitching Post. Eventually, they purchased the entire Hitching Post building. Mom is very proud of the Hitching Post, especially since she has recently seen a dream fulfilled with its latest addition. Mentone's first tea room, The Dish, opened its doors for business two weeks ago and the response has been tremendous.

In the 1970s, Mom and Dad were members of a gospel singing group, the Happyland Singers. An old airport limousine served as the group's tour bus. There were a lot of laughs in that old bus as the group traveled to sing in small churches in Tennessee, Alabama, and Georgia. Although they sought to minister to others through their music, I sometimes think the ones who were ministered to the most were themselves! The camaraderie that developed among the group's members is something Mom and Dad treasure to this day. Oh, and they eventually recorded an album which fell significantly short of the Top 40 in sales. In fact, we later developed an extensive and creative list of alternative uses for record albums.

Mom is a champion for the cause of Mentone's civic improvement, and she strongly supported development

of an organization devoted to that cause, which was the catalyst for MAPA. She and Dad have worked tirelessly for 15 years in MAPA projects, and have both served as officers several times over the years. She is also a member of the Lookout Mountain Parkway Association and the Mentone Heritage Foundation, as well as the Rhododendron Garden Club.

Their best years together may well be the most recent ones. Dad, who never ventured farther than Panama City, Florida, once a year for the family vacation, suddenly and without much warning decided he wanted to see the world. Faithful *Groundhog* readers will recall Mom's account of their trips in her column, the Country Journal. These trips are the fulfillment of a lifelong dream of Mom's. To date, they have visited England, Spain, Austria, Vienna, Canada, Jamaica, China, Mexico, Nova Scotia, Brazil, Germany, France, and much of the United States, including Alaska and Hawaii. (I probably left out several countries.) We're all pushing Dad to take Mom to Australia and New Zealand, where he was stationed during World War II. I even sacrificially offered to accompany them to assist them with their luggage, take videos, and snap photos. I haven't given up yet.

I think there are two types of people in the world—those whose problems cripple them throughout life, and those who rise above their problems, motivated by their suffering to become better human beings. Who is it that said, "That which does not kill us makes us stronger"? I will not embarrass my parents by publicizing the difficulties Mom had growing up. Suffice it to say, she did not have a good home life. Yet, she didn't repeat the pattern by allowing her own family to suffer. She and Dad worked all their lives to make our home secure, happy, and strong, founded on Christian principles.

Life has not been easy for Mom and Dad, but anyone who knows them knows that they do not complain about their lives. Whatever pain they have



Homer and Bernise Crow will celebrate 50 years of marriage at a drop-in reception held in their honor at the Lil Mole Run Golf Course clubhouse, Saturday, August 24, from 2:00 to 5:00 p.m. All their friends and relatives are cordially invited to attend. For directions or information, please contact Doreen Waters in Fort Payne, Alabama, at 845-5109.

HOMER AND BERNISE CROW
A Tribute
By Doreen Waters

endured, they have endured quietly. It's popular now to publicize your pain, but Mom and Dad were never ones to follow trends. I remember when we received the devastating news that my niece (their grandchild), Jennifer Crow Pullen, had been killed in an automobile accident. Jennifer and I were very close. She resembled me more than her own mother and father, both in appearance and temperament. Many people thought she was my daughter. When I was told she was dead, I became hysterical. Mom and Dad immediately ignored their own pain as they tried to help me cope with mine. Mom rushed to comfort me. Dad, who was sick in bed, jumped out of bed and held me as I crumbled to the floor in tears. While her world was crashing around her and her heart was breaking in two, Mom was on the phone calling my husband to come to my aid.

Homer and Bernise Crow have a legacy of giving—to their family, their community, or anywhere they see a need. Throughout the years, they have opened their homes to many people who needed shelter. Sometimes their generosity backfired on them, but it never stopped them from helping another one in need. In fact, I've never known either of them to hold a grudge against anyone who has done them harm.

I am very grateful to have been born into such a loving family. I am honored and proud to be called the daughter of Homer and Bernise Crow. I am especially pleased to be given the opportunity to honor them on their 50th wedding anniversary, and I encourage you to honor them with your presence at their reception.

The Groundhog asked on Facebook:

"What's Your Favorite Local Walking Trail or Path?"

The community responded with some of their favorites...

Karen Crawford Vest

I enjoy walking on Cutler Road and West River Road. If you park at Tip Top Bake Shop and walk all the way to Camp Laney, it's a 3-mile loop. It's a beautiful walk and not much traffic unless it's camp drop off or pick-up day!

Debra Fey

One of our favorite hikes at DeSoto State Park (and we have hiked all those trails) is the boardwalk to Azalea Cascade. When you get to the very end of the boardwalk, just step off to your left and go up the hill to pick up the Blue trail. Connect to the Orange trail, then connect to the Red trail (past Laurel Falls and Lost Falls) back to the boardwalk. It is about a 3-mile loop. But this hike has everything. Coming down on that Orange connection, the rocks and moss... Just wow. I love when you get to the Red trail and it opens up like a coliseum. Jerry and I just pause there and experience the stillness. That's just before you get back to the boardwalk.

David Cummings

Even our 6-year old twins think that trail's the coolest thing ever.

Kim Johnson

We have a lot of Mentonians come to Town of Hammondville walking track

Laura Windom

Hammondville!

Pat Parmelee

We love to hike the Scout trails that start at Comer and branch out from there.

Sharon Habin

Valley Head Park

Karen Vest

Valley Head Park will give you a great workout!

Val Groce

I love the Azalea trail at DeSoto Park.

Angie Winkler Shugart

My favorite is the Yellow Trail at DeSoto State Park. It follows the river and has incredible scenery. I jump back on the Gilliam Loop trail coming back.

Brent Haney

The trail opposite of the falls going to both the top and the bottom is a nice hike. [This trail is accessible on Road 970.]

Andrea Kirby

The hike into the basin of DeSoto Falls!

Clay Stiles

The backroad - Cutler Ave - West River Road between Mentone and Camp Laney. For a bit more of a challenge, try hiking up to the water tanks from Brow Park and then down to Camp Laney.

Mike O'Melia

The Gilliam Trail at DeSoto Park is a great trail for an easy run or hike.

Debra Fey

And don't let us forget the MERF walking path. It's only a quarter-mile, but it has an abacus to help you keep count of your laps. It is a beautiful walk. I use my walking sticks to get a better workout with my arms. It's a great place to take kids for sure. Run around and play musical instruments. Check out the pickets. It is lots of fun.



Information and free trail maps are available at DeSoto State Park's Country Store & Information Center.

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After Little River Escape Tiny Home Community was named one of the top six communities to downsize in by *U.S. News & World Report*, our community has become fully occupied and folks have come from 12 different states to live within our community.

With a successful year, Little River Escape has decided to embark on a new journey by creating River Ridge Escape Tiny Home Dealership. At the dealership, tiny homes are available to tour and purchase. RRE is now delivering across the nation and also developing other communities to bring more folks to Lookout Mountain.

River Ridge Escapes now has five tiny home communities and one down County Road 641 in Mentone, AL. There are several Airbnb Tiny Homes in our various locations to come experience a tiny home, downsizing, the community, and explore the surrounding areas.

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Miss Rhododendron 2022

(Virtual) Pageant

The Mentone Area Preservation Association (MAPA) is pleased to continue the tradition of the Miss Rhododendron Pageant. Due to current CDC guidelines which continue to recommend facial coverings indoors, the event will be limited to high school seniors and will be held online via Zoom, as it has been for the past two years.

The crowned Miss Rhododendron will be awarded a one-year scholarship to Northeast Alabama Community College. Alternates will receive a medallion.

The scholarship will cover full-time tuition and fees for the Fall 2022 and Spring 2023 semesters. To be crowned Miss Rhododendron, the contestant must be eligible in the following ways: The winner must have a minimum 2.5 GPA and must be a senior in high school to utilize the scholarship. The winner must enroll full-time (12 semester credit hours) in Fall 2022

and Spring 2023 to receive the scholarship. In-state contestants are eligible, as are residents of the Georgia counties of Bartow, Catoosa, Chattooga, Dade, Floyd, Gordon, Hardison, Polk, Walker, and Whitfield, and Tennessee counties of Franklin, Hamilton, Lincoln and Marion. The scholarship can only be awarded to the winner.

Entrants will be interviewed by three judges via Zoom on Friday, May 6. "The interview process should be treated as if it were an interview for education and employment opportunities, which is often done online these days," said Sharon Habin, who is organizing the event for MAPA.

This will be a gown-free pageant; however, entrants are expected to dress for the interview in a professional, appropriate manner.

Each entrant will be also required to submit a paper, short video, or some type of expression of

showing/telling, which addresses the following:

We are entering the third year of the Covid-19 pandemic. How has this worldwide event influenced your high school years, your family, and your community? What have you learned from the 'pandemic influences' over the past two years that will be useful in college, your family life, and your community?

MAPA is very grateful to Northeast Alabama Community College for offering this generous scholarship. More details and applications are available online at mapamentone.com. The application deadline is Thursday, April 28, at 5 p.m. The creative submission is due on Monday, May 2.

Please email rhodopageant@gmail.com with any questions. Be sure to tell your friends and family members about this wonderful opportunity.



Donna Arnett of Mentone recently hiked to the basin of DeSoto Falls and took this stunning photograph. Thanks, Donna!

Rhododendron Garden Club by Alyce Kenney

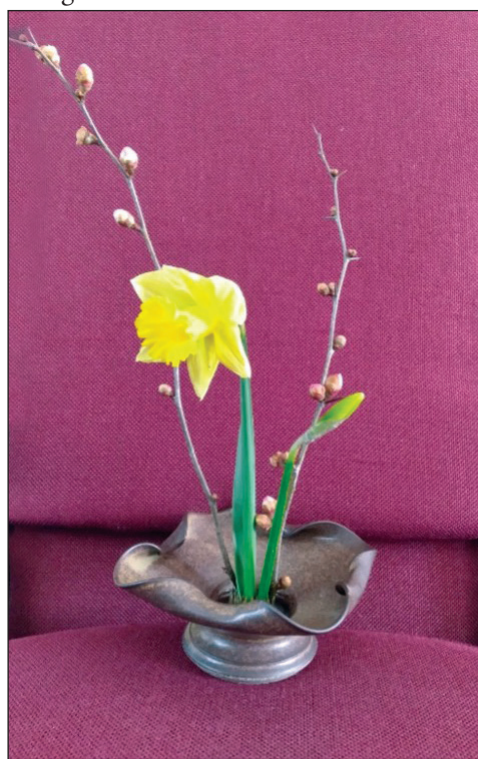
"Nature is always hinting at us. It hints over and over again. And suddenly we take the hint." —Robert Frost



Punxsutawney Phil (that other groundhog) declared six more weeks of winter, but the Rhododendron Garden Club members were thinking about anything but winter at their February 8th meeting. After not meeting in January due to pandemic concerns, there was much to catch up on with planning and discussion for the coming year. Mellanie Tuttle took the reins as president, a role she has

successfully and enthusiastically filled in prior years of the club. Getting right to the business at hand, the success of the Seed Swap held in the Moon Lake Library was a hint of what's to come (planting, sowing) and we gained a new member from it!

We will be preparing and serving the first MERF senior luncheon of the year on Wednesday, March 9. This event has proven to be an enjoyable time for all, with memories and stories to share over a tasty meal. April events in the works include participating in Mentone Clean-Up Day and attending the Alabama Garden Club Convention in Huntsville, where we are competing for awards with other clubs. One such award is for the creation of the Secret Garden on the Pathway to Community at the MERF house. We'll also be creating an environmental craft with school children at the Earth Day Celebration in Valley Head Park on the 21st. Also in April is our annual trip to the Shirley Miller Wildflower Trail (The Pocket). This is a nature preserve in Walker County, Georgia, where one can find many different types of wildflowers, trees, birds, and a beautiful waterfall. It's a terrific



Ikebana by Marsha Merrell

place to welcome spring, with an easy walk on the boardwalk and a picnic lunch. Don't forget your cameras and binoculars.

Finally, in our wish to stay connected to all and welcome new members, we are creating a brochure to highlight our projects in and around the area. We're also updating our social media presence, so we are more accessible to on-line followers. A really exciting future project will be working with community leaders to find a suitable place to plant a new evergreen tree for the traditional Christmas Tree lighting ceremony. More details on these items will be coming soon.



Timely Advice

and swap cuttings with others. Martha reminded us that there are many different educational offerings online through universities, garden club organizations, and extension offices. Two mentioned were Ohio State University and awaytogarden.com. Our club's mission is to promote the preservation and enhance the beauty of the Mentone area. Propagation checks all the boxes!

Our March Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday March 8, at 10 a.m. C.T. at the MERF House. The program, "Garden Techniques and Ideas," will be presented by Vice President Rhea Pirch. Mellanie Tuttle will teach us how to create a miniature flowered centerpiece using local flowers and greenery. These will decorate the senior luncheon tables and be awarded to lucky winners to take home.

The Rhododendron Garden Club welcomes everyone who has an interest in all things gardening. Come join us to learn, participate, and enjoy! Follow us on Facebook or send any questions to rhododendrongardenclub@gmail.com.

Alyce Kenney is the secretary for the Rhododendron Garden Club.

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SENIOR SERVICES by Lynn Hixon

Medicare’s Preventative Services

During the first 12 months that you have Part B, you can get a “Welcome to Medicare” preventive visit. The visit includes a review of your medical and social history related to your health. It also includes education and counseling about preventive services, including certain screenings, shots or vaccines (like flu, pneumococcal, and other recommended shots for vaccines), and referrals for other care, if needed. When you make your appointment, let your doctor’s office know that you’d like to schedule your “welcome to Medicare” preventive visit.

If you’ve had Part B for longer than 12 months, you can get a yearly “Wellness” visit to develop or update your personalized plan to prevent disease or disability based on your current health and risk factors. The yearly

“Wellness” visit isn’t a physical exam. Medicare covers this visit once every 12 months. Your provider will ask you to fill out a questionnaire called a “Health Risk Assessment” as part of this visit. Answering these questions can help you and your provider develop a personalized prevention plan to help you stay healthy and get the most out of your visit.

There are a few new services that have been added this year. Your provider will also perform a cognitive assessment and care plan service to look for signs of dementia, including Alzheimer’s disease. Signs of cognitive impairment include trouble remembering, learning new things, concentrating, managing finances, and making decisions about your everyday life. If you have a current prescription for opioids, your provider will review your potential

risk factors for opioid use disorder, evaluate your severity of pain and current treatment plan, provide information on non-opioid treatment options, and may refer you to a specialist, if appropriate.

If your doctor identifies a health issue during your preventive care visit and needs to provide care to address it, you may be responsible for certain costs, such as the Part B deductible and coinsurance. For more information on Medicare’s preventive care services, call the DeKalb County Council on Aging at 256-845-8590 and ask for Lynn Hixon in the State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP) to find out if Medicare covers your test, service, or item.

Lynn Hixon is the SHIP coordinator for the DeKalb County Council on Aging.

Free Tax Preparation by Emily McCamy

IRS Certified Volunteers will prepare simple tax forms at no charge to anyone who needs assistance on Thursday, March 31. Appointments and walk-ins will be welcome from 9 a.m. until 2 p.m. If you would like to book an appointment, call us at 256-845-8590. Walk-ins will be first come, first served. The location is the DeKalb County Council on Aging at 600 Tyler Ave. SE, Fort Payne, AL 35967.

This opportunity is brought to you by RSVP of Etowah County, the DeKalb County Council on Aging, and sponsored by the IRS.

Due to the high numbers of COVID cases in our area, please do not bring additional people with you. The only people that need to come are the participants who sign the tax return and their driver, if they need one. We encourage everyone to wear a mask. Masks will be available, if needed.

Please bring the following with you:

- Photo ID for you and your spouse
- Social Security cards for everyone being claimed
- Last year’s tax return
- All W-2s, 1099s, and any other tax documents

Ongoing Community Calendar

All times are Central unless otherwise noted. Calendar entries are subject to change.

Mentone Town Council meets the 2nd Tuesday every month at 5pm at Mentone Town Hall.

Valley Head Town Council meets monthly on the 1st Monday at 6pm at Valley Head Town Hall.

Hammondville Town Council meets monthly on the 1st Tuesday at 6pm at Hammondville Town Hall.

DeSoto Rescue Squad meets the 1st Saturday of the month at 9am at the MERF house in Mentone.

The North Lookout Mountain Fire Protection District Board meets the 3rd Monday of every month at 7pm.

Mentone Farmers Market is open year-round on Saturdays from 10am–1pm in the Town Square.

FREE FOOD for eligible persons and families. Wednesdays, 9–11am. New applicants are welcome. Joint effort between St. Joseph’s-on-the-Mountain Episcopal Church (Community Outreach Ministry) and the Food Bank of North AL.

The Lookout Mountain Knitters meet each Tuesday at 3pm at the MERF House. All are welcome.

Ryleigh’s Closet is a clothing closet that provides men’s, women’s, and children’s clothing to those in need on 2nd and 4th Mondays of each month from 4–6pm. Mentone Community Church, 90 Summerville Rd. 256-364-0150.

Moon Lake Community Library is open on Saturdays from 10am–1pm, and Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays from 12–4:30pm. Visit moonlakelibrary.org.

The Rhododendron Garden Club meets each month on the 2nd Tuesday at 10am. ‘Green thumbs’ and ‘brown thumbs’ are welcome! 256-634-4403.

Ukulele Sessions Continue. Bring your uke to the Moon Lake Community Library at 1 pm on March 5 and 19. Follow on Facebook (Mentone Ukes) or contact Debra Fey (debrafey@gmail.com) for more info. Beginners of all ages are invited to join in. Strum and be happy!

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MERF News

[Mentone Educational Resources Foundation]
by Sarah Wilcox



March Madness will be happening in Mentone, as the seniors gather back together with regular senior lunches! Beginning on Wednesday, March 2, senior lunches will be enjoyed in the fellowship hall at Moon Lake Baptist Church. As the weather gets nicer, we may dine outside on the MERF grounds, as we did in the fall. Senior lunch is served at 11:30 a.m., so arrive around 11 to get a good visit in with everyone before the eating begins. Lunches will be held every Wednesday until May 4. Thanks to local businesses and friends for providing the meals. And, of course, what would MERF do without the spectacular kitchen elves who volunteer every week to set up, serve, and clean up! Before the meal on March 9, we will have a roaring Bingo game or two starting at 10:30 a.m. It will be so nice to gather again. If interested in helping with lunches, contact me at 256-635-8193.



Look at these beautiful creations by Ms. Young's third grade class.

What has been happening down the mountain?! Valley Head K-6th students have been studying the elements of art, as many of the students are experiencing art class for the first time. Ms. Paula introduced them recently to artist Wassily Kandinsky and discussed how he often painted to music. So, of course, Paula had the students paint to music, too!

And thank goodness the Love Monster found someone to love him on Wednesday, February 2! Mr. Lasser's 4th grade class did a fun production of the Love Monster at the Valley Head PTO meeting. Ms. Paula worked with the students on costumes, lines, singing, and performing to do a love-filled production of Rachel Bright's book, *The Love Monster*. Thank you, Valley Head School, for allowing Paula to teach Arts Education to the K-6th graders.

In March, Paula and the K-2nd grade teachers will be preparing their students to be a good audience and teaching about the variety of trains so the students



Elvis, the band, and the Easter bunny helped the Love Monster find Love ♥ at Valley Head School.

can get the most out of "The Little Engine That Could" touring production by the Birmingham Children's Theatre being brought to Valley Head by MERF on March 15. The students will help Little Blue, the train, overcome his fears so he can take Jimbo the circus monkey and his friends to Capitol City. MERF is grateful to have discovered BCT's touring programs to bring to the school, especially during these times.

Want to help out our local students and teachers? Volunteers are needed at Valley Head School. Sixth grade teacher Tammy Cooper needs volunteers for Earth Day on Thursday, April 21. Note that, due to other school activities, it is being held the day before the actual Earth Day. And fourth grade teacher Michelle White would love local individuals to share their knowledge of Alabama history with her students. If interested in either opportunity, call the school or send your information to merf.mentone@gmail.com and I will pass it on.

Are you graduating from high school this spring and headed to college or a technical school? All Mentone and Valley Head students are eligible to apply for the Carter Holland Memorial Scholarship offered by MERF. Applications will be available by email (merf.mentone@gmail.com) or from your school counselor in mid-March. Applicants must be full-time students with a strong work ethic and a B average. Applications will be due on May 2, 2022.

Sarah Wilcox is the executive director of MERF, the Mentone Educational Resources Foundation, a non-profit organization whose mission is "To enrich the learning and living of the community by identifying needs and coordinating resources." If you would like to support MERF's programs, tax-deductible donations can be mailed to P.O. Box 107, Mentone, AL 35984 or contribute online at merfhouse.org. Contact Sarah at merf.mentone@gmail.com or 256-635-8193.



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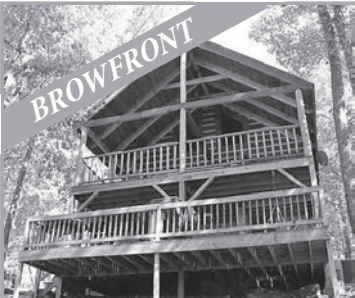
SOMETHING SPECIAL IN MENTONE! One-level home & approx 19 acres (some cleared, mostly wooded w/small stream); old barn; smokehouse; poultry barn; garden shed; 52'x52' fenced garden w/raised beds, water & power. Home features mtn stone fireplace w/Ashley insert in LR; 4 or 5 BR; 3BA; huge deck w/7-person hot tub; grilling deck off kitchen. Beautiful old shade trees; fruit trees; grape vines; figs; blueberries; chestnut trees. This property has been in the same family since the Crowes came to Mentone in the 1800s. AND, there is another old home, built circa 1915, up in the woods, surrounded by ancient trees & huge boulders. This unique property is less than a half mile from downtown. \$499,900 (1801038)



.....
LOTS and LAND

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ON THE BROW AT 77 COOL STREET NORTH. Sweet address, sweet location, sweet cabin! At first glance, one might think it is just a little log cabin. Step inside & you'll find surprising spaciousness! 3BR/2BA, approx 1400 sq ft; cute little front porch; large, covered back porch; plus a lower deck for enjoying the great Brow-front views. All-wood interior; granite kitchen w/hickory cabinetry; attractive stone fireplace w/ gas logs; vaulted living area; main-level MABR; 2BR upstairs w/jack-n-jill bath; loft sitting area for games & extra sleeping space. Immaculately-kept; mostly furnished; ready to enjoy from day one. Just a couple blocks from Brow Park; walk to downtown. Great rental potential! \$499,900 (1798199)

FAIR MARKET PRICE...OR IS IT?

Have you received a letter in recent months asking you if you'd like to sell your property? Perhaps it's a phone call you've gotten. We're hearing of folks getting multiple letters and calls from people claiming they're willing to pay them "FAIR MARKET VALUE" for their property, with quick closing (whatever that is supposed to mean). They'll even pay the closing costs (most of which are always paid by the buyer anyway), and you don't have to worry about those pesky, "high real estate fees." Really? How can you be sure?

There are technology tools available now where anyone can cruise a neighborhood, collect the data on who the owners are, get their mailing addresses, and often can get a phone number. They will then send out a mass-mailing of letters, "fishing" for property they can buy for cheap. Some property owners are taking the bait, too, and often losing a good bit of money in the process.

When there are very few properties for sale and prices are up, as they are right now, it makes it very attractive for these "fishermen" to purchase low, sell high. Or just keep it for themselves, knowing they got a "steal of a deal." There's nothing illegal about it. And, you can't blame someone for wanting to get a great deal. We all want to do the same. But are you actually getting a fair market price for your property in the process?

Recently, we've heard of some local transactions where the property was sold at less than half of what the current market value would have been. That's a LOT of money to lose! The idea you're getting more when you bypass the services of a real estate professional is just not correct. Statistics show you will generally get a minimum of 25% more for your property at closing when you sell with a licensed Realtor® as opposed to selling it yourself.

If you don't know what your property is worth, and you've been thinking of selling (or if you've been approached about selling), why not contact a real estate professional for a current market analysis. It's free. You aren't obligated to list your property. And, if you do decide to list your property, you do not pay anyone anything unless we sell it.

What have you got to lose? Well, it could be quite a bit of money if you choose to sell it yourself to a "fisherman."

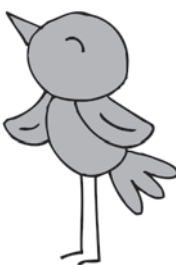


MEMORIES OF LAZY DAYS FULL OF FUN ON THE LAKE permeate this one-owner property located on the private side of Mentone's Lake Lahusage. Filled with one family's nostalgia, waiting for the next family to bring it back to life & fill it with their own memories of good times on the lake. One of those rare places with easy walk down to the water; swim & fish from your dock; put in a boat at the public ramp just a short distance away. 4BR/2BA; wood floors; wood beams; mtn stone fireplace; vaulted LR/KI/DR. Screened porch on back leading to huge deck overlooking the lake. Yes, it needs A LOT of work, but it is a rare gem awaiting the right person to make it shine! \$375,000 (1786628)

1.47 PARK-LIKE ACRES ON LIBBY LANE; inside Mentone Town Limits; on a quiet, dead-end paved road; with water, power, septic tank and circle drive already in place. Ready to build. Zoned R-1. \$64,900 (1795866)

52 ACRES, WITH LAND ON BOTH SIDES OF PAVED COUNTY ROAD. This old home place offers so many options & some of the best Sand Mtn sandy loam soil there is; Shankles Branch running through the property on one side of road, serving as property line on the other. Pad. Let. 22' x 22' x 22' x 22'. Blue hay. Woods. Old home site w/remains of the farm house that is falling in. Well house is still intact & the ancient pear tree still bears fruit. Public water meter in place; 3 wells are known to exist on property. Beautiful land with deer & turkey often seen enjoying fields & woodland. Agent owned. \$350,000 (1790110)

PENDING



HELLO SPRING!

March Birthdays

1 Virginia McDorman Will Langston Ally Smith Jonathan Cuzzort Roland Hendon Susanna Munoz Hayden Chambers	7 Paige Ware Kisha Moore Bella Stokes Gary McElhaney Easton Ferguson	13 Josh Pullen Kelsey Lewis Gracie Shank Julia Ross Adam Brown	20 Zach Jones Hobson Kirby Koley Thompson Greg Wheat Willa Ingram Joy Ana Conley Tom MacMichael Richard Linn	25 Vickie Blackburn Evelyn Graves Skylar Haney Robert Smith Maliyah Turner Zadie Vest Lane Clark
2 Dennis McDonald Dewayne Pierce Holley Midgley Marc Stewart	8 Whitney Smith Mayson Bailey Rhett Dean Melonee Green Elaine Wilbanks	14 Elizabeth Hodge Hunter Robertson Benton VanPelt Bonnie Ware Mike Neel	21 Mary J. Chambers Paul Peppers Reese McCurdy Sam McCurdy Aimee Grace Smith Wanda Black Ariel Bolton Glenda Williams	26 Anna Nelson Sandra Boehringer Beth Hawkins Samantha Blalock Ariah Bickerstaff Jordan Hulgan
3 Kama Jade Blalock Dawson Bone Charity Crowe Kaleb Cronnon Laura Hill Michael Smith Jason Smith Matt Sharp	9 Ellie Grace Cyrus Adalynn Phillips Randy Ballinger Jensen Glenn Delilah Johnson	15 Carter Wright Ronnie Hilliard	22 Kallie Ingram Lue Smith Jon Bain Steve Patton Robert Baker Ethan Blevins Kean Cowart	27 Abby Davis Jamie Darwin Dudley Easler Maggie Mae O'Daniel
4 Corey Ingram Lance Woods Clara Lee Becky Stott Durrell Owens Denise Brown Jennifer Linn	10 David Rape Autumn Hulgan Frances Day JD Clements Spencer Harris Tara Henderson	16 Avery Chadwick Raymond Coots Jesse Bone Van Battles Finley Darwin Debra Williamson	23 Wyatt McGee Lori Blackburn Cutter Battles Kathy Graham Taylor Roe Glen Whited Caitlyn Shugart Sandra Haney	28 Holly Owen Cindy Bethune Arden Shanklin Kathy Wheat Don Ingram Mamie Jo Miller Sonja Grider
5 Ashley Gifford Maci Hammon Eiko Key Beth McKinney Joey Glenn Jeanette Whited	11 Bo Hammond Jay Chadwick Lauren Everett Preston Ledford	17 Judson Bain Camden Bell Lily Smith Larry Wayne Smith April Howard Ally Davis Tommy Daspit	24 Eli Day Dylan Lee Jimmy Phillips Lydia Wright Bobbie Zakary Barry Blalock	29 Sara Lee Donna Hilliard Dru Hill Shannon Meadows Cooper Langston
6 Annabelle Grider Randy Hilliard Inez Guffey Josh Gregory Clint Phillips Sara Boatwright	12 Tonya Shanklin Jeremy Hope Krystal Johnson Tommy Hairel Emily Allen Jaydon Bain Julie Prestwood Ella Fowler	18 Sydney Williams Jeremy Henderson Kendall Israel Alexis Nance Sherryl Lewis Ruth Kean Kristy Shrader		30 Arnold Clinton Gena Fowler
		19 Dean Freeman Olivia Harrison Lane Stout		31 Lyli Wright Marlana Beasley Noah Blalock Lindsey Blalock Chad Wooten

Anniversaries

3 Darrin & Amanda Smith	11 Hobson & Martha Kirby	22 Brett & Brandi Justice	27 Shaunathan & Abby Bell
5 Michael & Donna Smith	16 Todd & Mary Beth Davis	23 Nick & Tina Langston	Robby & Cat Curtis-Grisham
7 Tommy & Ruth Battles	18 Rodney & Christine Ballenger	25 Tommy & Christie Langston	30 Brian & Melissa Carden
8 Blake & Brittany Villarreal	19 Tommy & Joan Harrison	Hayden & Allie Williams	
Garrett & Amanda Collins	20 Grant & Shelley Meadows	26 Marc & Michele Walsh	
10 Tom & Alice Shanklin	Chris & Allison Smith	Dudley & Becky Easler	

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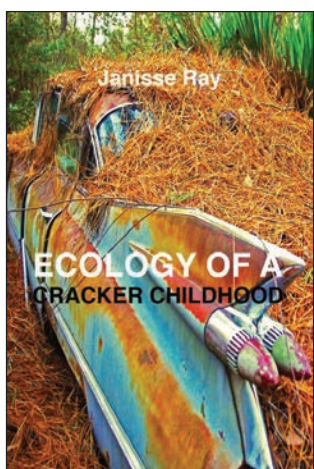


Moon Lake Library by Anne McLeod

Zoom with Author Janisse Ray

Stories of home are often complicated, and no one captures that bittersweet love of place and family better than Janisse Ray. Ray's lyrical memoir, *Ecology of a Cracker Childhood*, interweaves stories of growing up in a junkyard in south Georgia with the history of the longleaf pine, a beautiful and endangered conifer that is beginning to return to Southern forests.

The Moon Lake Community Library Book Club will discuss *Ecology of a Cracker Childhood* at its March meeting on Saturday morning, March 19, at 10:30 a.m. Then on March 29, Janisse Ray will discuss *Ecology* as well as her other works on Zoom at 6:30 p.m. We invite all who are interested in her work to attend both the book club meeting at the library and the Zoom session, but you do not have to be part of the book club to participate in the Zoom. The Zoom link will be posted on the library's website, moonlakelibrary.org, and on its Facebook page the week of the session.



Author Janisse Ray

Janisse Ray has received the American Book Award, Southern Environmental Law Center Award for Outstanding Writing, Southern Book Critics Circle Award, Nautilus Book Award, and the American Horticultural Society Book Award as well as many other honors for her work. Among her other works of nonfiction are *Wild Card Quilt*, *The Seed Underground: A Growing Revolution to Save Food*, and *Drifting into Darien: A Personal & Natural History of the Altamaha River*. She has also published works of poetry.

Her latest book is *Wild Spectacle: Seeking Wonders in a World Beyond Humans*, published in October 2021. In a series of essays, Ray shares stories of her travels into the wild, her explorations from Alaska to Central America and considers the relationship between humans and the other species with whom we share the earth.

For more information, please contact the library at 256-634-2127 or moonlakecommunitylibrary@yahoo.com.



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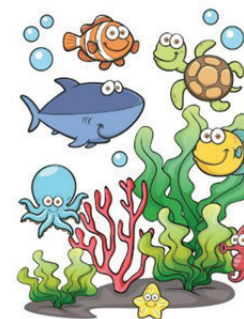
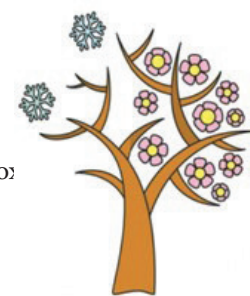
Check It Out!

by Lynn Vanderhoff

The Moon Lake Community Library has Little Library Learners programs for children ages 3–6 on the 2nd and 4th Saturdays of the month. Please note our new time of 10:30–11:30 a.m. Program topics range from science and nature, to history and fantasy, and more. We'll have stories and activities geared towards your child's age and skill level so they can comfortably participate. We look forward to learning with you!

Spring Into Spring! Saturday, March 12

Why do the seasons change? What are the signs of Spring? What is an Equinox? These and many other questions will be answered as we get ready for Spring to arrive.



Under the Sea Thursday, March 26

There's more than fish in the deep blue sea! We'll be exploring the wonderful creatures that live below the waves.

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Mentone Arts & Cultural Center Update by Randy Grider

March Features Guitarist Hiroya Tsukamoto Performance

Several events and workshops are on tap over the next couple of months, including a special performance by master guitarist Hiroya Tsukamoto and the return of our regular monthly songwriters.

We have partnered with RadioVisions LLC to bring Tsukamoto to the Chuck Sennett Center for the Arts on Friday, March 25. The performance begins at 7 p.m.

Tsukamoto is an innovative guitarist and composer who fuses folk, jazz, and world music. Born and raised in Japan, in 2000 he received a scholarship to Berklee College of Music and came to the United States.

Tsukamoto's instrumental abilities are indeed breathtaking and astounding, but his performances are so much more than that. He has the unique capability of engaging an audience through a personable and genuine approach that transfixes his audiences and almost transcends his capabilities as a guitarist. Tsukamoto plays with an effortless skill on the guitar and a repertoire that will have you traveling the world, not to mention experiencing new sounds with his own compositions.

Tsukamoto headlines concerts throughout the U.S. as well as internationally, including at the Blue Note in New York City, the United Nations, and Japanese National Television. He won second place in the Finger Style Guitar Championship in 2018.

Seating is limited and advance tickets can be purchased online at Eventbrite.com for \$20. Any available tickets on day of the show will be \$25 at the door. For additional information on tickets, call or text (preferred) Russell Gulley at 727-308-8156.

Also, this month, our regular songwriters' round will be Monday, March 14, at 7 p.m. The event features local and regional songwriters, as well as a featured guest performing their original works. Mentone singer-songwriter Craigs Hendricks serves as the host. The lineup was still being determined at press time. The round

MENTONE ARTS AND CULTURAL CENTER



Master guitarist Hiroya Tsukamoto

is both educational and entertaining and provides an opportunity for the audience to interact with the songwriters. The event is free to the public, but we welcome donations to cover the travel expenses of the songwriters who volunteer their time.

Other dates to keep in mind:

- Gwen and the Kats will perform Friday, April 15, at 7 p.m. at the Center. The talented Atlanta-based Gwen Hughes' show promises to be a memorable performance offering a mix of jazz, swing, and Motown sounds.
- Debbie Bond and Radiator Rick return to Mentone on Friday, May 13, for a 7 p.m. performance.

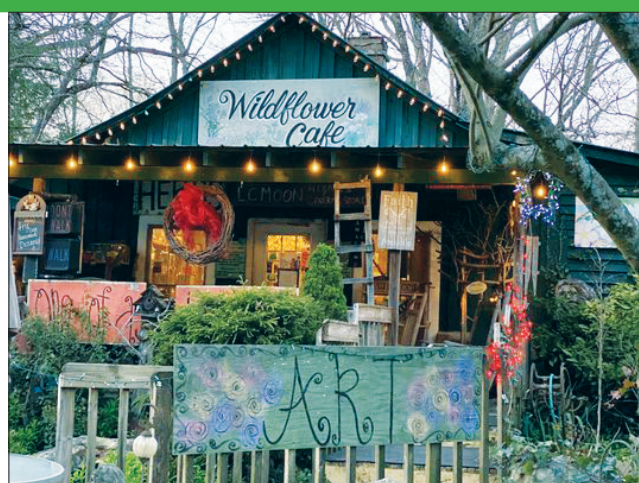
More details on both shows will be released soon.

We also have spots available for our Paint Like Bob Ross workshops on May 7 and June 4. The workshops are taught by Gary Grider, a certified Bob Ross Institute instructor and tuition is \$100 for the four-and-a-half-hour class. The workshop is limited to 12 students. To reserve a spot in the workshops, see contact information below.

Randy Grider is executive director of the Mentone Arts & Cultural Center, Inc. He can be reached at mentoneartscenter@gmail.com or 256-674-3366.

Time to Apply for College Scholarships! by Kat Griffith

For all of you high school seniors who are barreling down the home stretch of your final year, and all of you college students who are cramming at night and working hard during the day to fund your college experience... Now is the time to get excited and motivated to do what you can do to secure the education to fulfill your goals and dreams! St. Joseph's on-the-Mountain is grateful to continue its partnership with students in the Mentone area to offer college scholarships. We invite you to submit an application for our Vann-McCary Scholarship; the deadline is May 1. This opportunity is open to you as a high school senior or someone interested in embarking on the challenges of further education or even a career change. The Vann-McCary Scholarship is based on financial need and academic record. It is available to those who live in, or near Mentone, and is available to students for four years, providing each submits an application and adheres to the stated guidelines each year. Students at Valley Head High School can receive an application packet in the Counselor's office. Packets are also available at St. Joseph's on-the-Mountain Episcopal Church at the corner of Highway 117 and Scenic Highway in Mentone, and they are available to be completed online at stjom.church. If you have questions, or need more information, you can call the church at 256-634-4476, or Kat Griffith, Scholarship Chairperson, at 256-418-0092.



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May All Your Weeds Be Wildflowers

by L. C. Moon

Spring is upon us and the tiny wildflowers and foliage are beginning to fill the grassy areas. The plants I call wildflowers are often referred to as weeds. I hope to share with you the nourishing glory behind the “weeds”.

I developed a passion for learning about wild edible and medicinal plants when I got my very first book about the subject 25 plus years ago. Before I opened the book I assumed I would have to go on a long search to find beneficial plants, yet many of them were right there in front of me all of my life.

I never noticed the beauty behind the tiny wildflowers I walked upon and would weed out of the garden or flower beds. Their blooms are not showy, unless you look at them closely. Though their little blooms and foliage have a beauty all their own in perseverance and providing nourishment for the body and soul.

As March continues to bring warmer days, the yard weeds begin to become increasingly abundant. I will take many barefoot walks while admiring and grazing upon the wildflower weeds. My favorite early spring wild plants to eat raw are clovers and chickweed because the texture is pleasing, as well as the flavor. Later in the season, sassafras leaves are also top on



my list of a raw wild edible leaf.

It's therapeutic for me to get outside, feel the warm spring foliage beneath my bare feet, and harvest these little guys. It's also fun to create with nature. I love to make a wild spring sauté salad with the leaves and flowers of dandelion, clover, purple dead-nettle, ground ivy, wild violet, chickweed, cleavers (bedstraw), birdeye speedwell, and wild geranium (cranesbill), as well as plantain leaves and wild onion leaves and roots.

If you would like to play with making a wild spring sauté salad, there is no right or wrong way with these plants because they are safe to eat, though here

are some helpful hints. I prefer to sauté the leaves of plants such as ground ivy, speedwell, plantain, cleavers, violets, and dandelions. I use cleavers sparingly because of the texture and more often use it as a tea. I also use speedwell and mature wild geranium sparingly because I find them a bit bitter.

Before I sauté, I dice up the leaves and roots I plan to use and separate the flowers for a garnish.



Speedwell

I get my cast iron skillet hot with oil. I like to “cheat” and use homemade garlic oil, but if you harvest enough wild onion root and sauté it in the oil, then it would suffice as a garlic substitute to add flavor. Add your diced foliage and possibly a few dandelion and/or clover flowers to the oiled skillet and sauté to your preferred texture. I like to add a little bit of all the plants I harvested to the sauté, and then save some back to use as a base raw salad.

In a bowl, I add diced raw leaves of chickweed, purple dead-nettle and clover, then put the sauté on top of the salad. I garnish the sauté with more fine diced foliage of the salad, especially green onion, as well as finely diced violet and dandelion leaves. The final wild touch is the flower garnish of dandelion and clover petals and violet flowers. If I am eating the dish as a meal then I like to add seeds or nuts for extra protein and crunch, as well as a light dressing.

These plants are not just edible but packed with nutrients. When taken correctly, they also have medicinal benefits. Each one of the plants mentioned could have its own article or small book written about all its wonderful benefits and uses. Here are just a few details about some of the plants we have discussed. Plantain contains zinc, calcium and beta-carotene and the leaf is great to help rashes, itches, stings, and so much more internally and externally on the skin. Dandelion greens are a good source of vitamins A, C, and K and the roasted root is used as a liver toning/ blood cleansing coffee substitute. Chickweed contains A, D, B complex, C, and a long list of nutrients and medicinal benefits. Violets are rich in vitamins A and C, and are used as a blood cleanser. Ground ivy, also known as creeping robert, is rich in iron, potassium, and vitamin C, and is used in folk medicine for lung and bladder issues. Purple dead-nettle contains vitamins A, C, and K, as well as iron, calcium, magnesium, and fiber.

I hope you get to take some time to enjoy these small beauties. The most wonderful reflection I get when I think about the journey of learning about edible and medicinal plants is that it has helped me to really appreciate the small and seemingly insignificant things in life. It's the little things that can abundantly nourish us everyday if we allow them to. May you have a blessed spring and may all your weeds of life transform into wildflowers.



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JUST BETWEEN US

A Curious Q & A by Rebecca Henderson

A town clerk is a cornerstone of the community. A hub for so many matters of business. And Mentone Town Clerk Kristen Emory fills that bill. Her broad knowledge of the workings of the town and her history as a resident and business owner are invaluable.

Prior to her current job, she and her husband of 25 years, Tom Emory, owned the Mentone Market. “We bought the Market in 2001 and owned it for 17 years. It burned in 2016, and we rebuilt it in a year. We just could not leave an empty hole in Mentone,” she said. The Market had served as a second home for Tom, Kristen, and their children Byrum and Saddler,

now 23 and 22, respectively. After bringing the Market back to life, she and Tom sold it and moved on to pursue the next phases of their work lives. Tom is now in sales for Wood Fruitticher.

But these aren’t the only things Kristen is known for around here. She is a former columnist for this very newspaper. From 2011 to 2014, “The Chicken Lady” chronicled her rather humorous experience as a first-time poultry owner. “Dad and I bought our first chickens at Trade Day in Collinsville. We had no idea what we were getting into!”

Let’s find out a little more about Kristen:



Kristen Emory

Q Where did you grow up and what was the best thing about it?

A Selma, Alabama. History and diversity.

Q How did you hear about/ get to Mentone?

A My parents, Jim and Joan Byrum, bought a house here. Tom helped remodel it, and the kids and I would come up and stay at the Mentone Inn. We fell in love with Mentone and Moon Lake School. The Market was for sale, and we bought it. We signed the papers on a

Monday and were running it on Tuesday.

Q How did you meet Tom, and what was your first impression of him?

A We met in high school in the 11th grade. I thought he was spectacular!

Q How would Tom characterize your talent as a dancer?

A Not so good.

Q Most famous person you’ve ever met?

A My all-time favorite singer, Kris Kristofferson. If you

know me well, you know I love him.

Q Words of wisdom you would tell your 18-year-old self?

A Relax and enjoy life more.

Q Favorite way to spend a Saturday night?

A Doing anything with Tom.

Q If you could blink and revisit a single year in the past, what year would that be and why?

A The year we got married. It was a lot of fun.

Q What would you consider your most embarrassing hairstyle over the years?

A I had bangs and a perm in the 7th grade.

Q First historic event you were old enough to remember, and where were you at the time?

A I remember Jimmy Carter being President. But the most memorable historic event was when the Space Shuttle Challenger exploded in 1986. I was in math class in 7th grade.

Q What’s the toughest part of your current job?

A So far, getting ready for an election has been the hardest thing.

Q Best part of the job?

A Working with a great mayor, council, and police officers.

Q If you could explain what’s good about Mentone to a stranger, what would you say?

A Live and let live!

Thanks, Kristen!

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Mentone American Legion Hangs Old Glory at Moon Lake Library

by Barry Morton

In the first week of January 2022, Anne McLeod of the Moon Lake Library called Terry Hutcheson, our Commander, and asked that the MAL Post 215, hang an American flag at the library. This mission was undertaken by one of our newest members, Eric Dudash. He is pictured here with the MAL's mascot, Phantom.

The American Legion was chartered and incorporated by Congress in 1919 as a patriotic veterans' organization devoted to mutual helpfulness. It is the nation's largest wartime veterans' service organization, committed to mentoring youth and sponsorship of wholesome programs in our communities, advocating patriotism and honor, promoting strong national security, and continued devotion to our fellow service members and veterans. We are a 501(c)(3)-19 non-profit service organization of U.S. military veterans.

As reported in the February 1991 Groundhog, "In 1948, a group of World War II veterans in Mentone organized an American Legion for their community." One of its founders and first commander, Sammy Cash, stated, "The soldiers and veterans are the backbone of the community. Mentone had lost more



Eric Dudash and
MAL's mascot, Phantom

boys during the war than any town of its size in Alabama." Our Post 215 was built later that year and is located at 195 Cove Road. Our mailing address is P. O. Box 114, Mentone, AL 35984.

We are recruiting more members and want to restart our Auxiliary (an organization mostly made up of our spouses). If you serve one day of active duty, even as an Alabama National or Air Guard, you're eligible. Dues are \$45/year.

We've just started a new Facebook Group entitled "Mentone Veteran Memorial". On it you'll find work by William Kuner to honor those veterans who

have served from Mentone.

You can find more information at our Mentone American Legion Facebook Group. To contact us email Barrymorton74@gmail.com or text or call 334-202-8936.

Barry Morton serves as the ajutant for the Mentone American Legion (MAL) Post 215.

Mentone Ukes

by Debra Fey



“What is it about the ukulele that first grabbed your attention?” I love asking this question because the responses are as unique as the folks who play. Recently I asked Mentone Ukes member Don Highfield this question, and here's what he said:

“Peer pressure. Initially resisted as I was learning the guitar and didn't want to become confused and fall down. A new set of chords to learn. But I fell in with a bad crowd and here we are practicing the 12-Bar Blues!”

Want to give the ukulele a test drive? We have loaner ukes available, so plan to join us at the Moon Lake Community Library in Mentone on March 5 and 19 at 1 p.m. and see for yourself what this sweet-sounding four-string instrument is all about. There is no charge for these bi-monthly lessons. Beginners of all ages are always welcome. Follow us on Facebook at “MentoneUkes”.

“Strum and Be Happy!”



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- #1779301—Enjoy the natural beauty of Brush Creek from your building site on this wooded property. Located on a private road just minutes from downtown Mentone. \$19,900.
- #1781133—200 acres located near historic Mentone! Mature trees, creek, paved road frontage, minutes

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- #1788540—40 acres of prime Mentone land. Beautiful tract with about a 5-acre lake. Flat open land with an old well on the property. Mostly fenced all the way around. good road through it. Over a half of a mile of county road frontage with power and water available. \$400,000

- #1791030—13 acres on East Fork Little River in Mentone. Privacy awaits you on this heavily wooded lot. \$175,000
- #1792283—Beautiful brow property located in Lake of the Brow. Just minutes from Little River Canyon and the falls. Enjoy beautiful views of Shinbone Valley below. \$79,900
- #1776065—Lot 59 in Crestline Park Subdivision in Mentone. This location is just off of scenic County Road 89. Subdivision offers light restrictions including no mobile homes, no commercial buildings or temporary structures, insuring permanent or vacation living only for you and your neighboring properties. Property is owned by a licensed home builder offering “will build to suit”. \$39,900
- #1796363—Beautiful building site on Libby Lane in Mentone. Seller has all the groundwork ready, septic installed, water and power on the property! Bring your house plans to this level lot and let the dreams

- begin!! This 1.47 acre parcel is located near the end of a dead-end street inside Mentone city limits!! No mobile homes, no campers, and no tiny homes allowed. \$79,900.
- #1798542, #1798543, #1798555, #1798557—Build your new home with BREATHTAKING VIEWS year round! Brow property located in Lake on the Brow on Lookout Mountain near Little River Canyon and the falls. \$55,000.
- #1798938—10+ acre parcel of mostly wooded acreage! Great location just minutes from downtown, but with a country vibe. Owner has surveyed into 3 lots, but is selling as a whole. You can build and subdivide if you desire or simply hold onto this beautiful property as an investment. City water and electricity available on CR 106. \$91,500
- #1799385—1.07 acre lot is slightly sloped to provide a beautiful location to perch your new home/second home. Located on beautiful Lookout

- Mountain near Little River Falls, Mentone and Fort Payne, “Hidden Lake” offers a shared community gated entrance, underground power and access to the common areas such as lake, gazebo and picnic area. \$29,950
- #1800905—15 acres in Mentone. Close to the Golf Course and North Brow. This property is mostly flat with mature trees, and several buildable spot. Stream at property corner. \$75,000
- #1801221—This Mentone property offers road frontage on Hwy 117 in the business/alcohol district. One of very few available vacant lots in this area! \$75,000
- #1801378—Mentone property offers road frontage on Cove Road in the business/alcohol district. One of very few available vacant lots in this area! Adjoins a lot that fronts AL Hwy 117. \$75,000

March Community Calendar

3/4—Yoga on the Mountain: Fight Those Winter Blues. Join us for a fun yoga class in DeSoto State Park! This winter we wanted to offer some inside classes until it warms up, at a time that might help fight off those winter blues. We all know how these long winter nights can be! Instructor Destin Padgett will guide participants with relaxing, alignment-based poses. Perfect for those beginning their yoga practice or for those wanting to try something new! Classes are open to local residents and park visitors alike. No pre-registration required. 6pm. DeSoto State Park's Benefield Interpretive Center (Nature Center) next to the Country Store on Co. Rd. 89. \$5 per participant per class (cash or checks). Bring mat or towel. See alapark.com/DSP-Yoga for more class dates.

3/4 & 5—4th Annual DeKalb Shrine Rodeo. DeKalb Shrine Club presents its 4th Annual Shrine Rodeo at the Northeast Alabama Agri-Business Center in Rainsville. Event starts at 7:30 each night. Tickets will be sold at the door only: \$15/adults & \$10 for children 6–11. FREE for kids 5 and under. Heart-pounding thrills and a family fun experience that will become a great family memory! Call 256-717-6263 for more information. All proceeds benefit of Alhambra Shriners and are not tax-deductible.

3/5 & 19—Mentone Ukles. Free ongoing ukulele sessions. Beginners are always welcome! 1–2pm. Moon Lake Library, Mentone.

3/5—Song Writers' Contest at the Pickin Post. The Pickin Post will host a "SONG WRITING" contest so get those songs ready! Great prizes. 6pm. 893 Old Hwy. 35 E., Fort Payne. For more information, call 256-657-3817.

3/10—Jazz+Jazz=Jazz (With a Vengeance). Featuring the NACC Jazz Band with special guests the University of Alabama Jazz Ensemble. 6:30 pm to 8 pm 256-638-4418.

3/12—Little Library Learners. Children ages 3–7 are invited to join us Saturday morning when Ms. Lynn shares stories and activities about the seasons as we Spring into Spring! 10:30am. Moon Lake Library, Mentone. moonlakelibrary.org

3/12—Lost Falls 10K, Half Marathon & 50K. Welcome to the 2022 Lost Falls Trail Run! We are excited to bring the first ultra to DeSoto State Park! Desoto State Park is a magnificent 3,500+ acre park with over 30 miles of single track trails. The race is capped at 350 runners. All runners who sign up for the Lost Falls 10K, Half Marathon & 50K will receive a t-shirt, and finisher medal as well as a hot meal post-race! DeSoto State Park: 7104 Desoto Pkwy NE, Fort

Payne, AL 35967. Registration: ultrasignup.com/register.aspx?did=86724.

3/12–19—Finder Keepers Consignment Sale. You will find gently used, good quality name brand children and adult clothing and shoes, home furnishings, electronics, books, toys, furniture and more, all at great prices. Sign up NOW to become a consignor! Will be held at the VFW Fairgrounds. Special pre-sale hours for consignors. 256-632-2420 or 256-638-5998.

MARCH 13 Daylight Saving Time

3/14—Songwriters Showcase. Enjoy a night of various songwriters doing what they do best! Playing music, telling stories and entertaining! Featuring Stewart Douglas Mentone Arts Center. 7 pm.

3/16—An Evening for Art Discussion and Critique, sponsored by Little River Arts Council. Local photographer Mikel Yeakle will lead an informal discussion group at Moon Lake Library to discuss art, why we create it, and how it affects our lives. If you're an artist, bring a current piece you may be working on or have completed. We'd like to hear what inspired you to create your work of art and we will also critique and learn from each other. The session is free and open to the public. 6–8pm. Moon Lake Library, Mentone.

MARCH 17 St. Patrick's Day

3/19—Moon Lake Library Book Club meets for discussion of Janisse Ray's Ecology of a Cracker Childhood, a book that has been called a contemporary classic. Ray's memories of growing up in a junkyard in south Georgia are interwoven with the history of the longleaf pine, the endangered conifer that is the state tree of Alabama. 10:30am. Janisse Ray will do a Zoom author talk on March 29, which is open to the public. moonlakelibrary.org. 256-634-2127.

3/19—Alpine Bridge Cleanup. Little River Waterkeeper will provide volunteers with garbage bags, litter grabbers and safety vests. You can work at your own pace and as long as you wish. Dress in light layers that can be removed and according to the weather. Wear hiking boots or sturdy tennis shoes. Gloves and a toboggan may be needed. Bring your own water bottle and any snacks if needed. Meet at 1 p.m. at Howard's Chapel, CR 165, Mentone.

3/19—Trail Trekker Hike Series: DeSoto Scout Trail Section. Hike the designated 23 miles of trails in DeSoto (whether on your own or in a group, no time limit) and collect your prize, a Trail Trekkers Patch. Just log your hikes in the Trail Trekker log and

record the date for each trail listed. Sign completed form and turn in to DeSoto State Park Country Store or Lodge to receive your patch. This hike series is designed for those who prefer some company out on the trails with experienced park staff or volunteers. Each month there will be a different hike so you can start marking them off towards your patch! The DeSoto Scout Trail Section (from Lodge to DST exit 2, return via CCC road) is approximately 5 miles round trip, moderate to strenuous along rocky mountainous terrain. Some uphill. 10am–3pm. Meet at DeSoto Park Lodge. Free, pre-registration is required so to know how many to expect. Hike is open to ages 8 to adult. Email Brittney.Hughes@dcnr.alabama.gov for more info or to pre-register.

MARCH 20 Happy Spring!

3/22—World Water Day Environmental Film Festival. Hosted by Little River Waterkeeper at the Mentone Arts Center, 5671 AL Hwy. 117, Mentone. Doors open at 5:30 and film screening begins at 5:45. \$10 per person. Light refreshments will be served.

3/24—Diamond in a Rhinestone World: The Music of Dolly Parton. In celebration of Women's History Month, we present a concert of Dolly Parton's greatest hits! Featuring the NACC Chorus, Encore, and Mustang String Band. Part of NACC's Student Center Sessions Concert Series. 12pm. Northeast Alabama Community College Student Center, 138 AL Hwy 35, Rainsville. Free.

3/25—Yoga on the Mountain: Waterfall Trail Yoga Hike. Interested in ending your day in a positive way? Join instructor Destin Padgett for a great outdoor experience of strengthening yoga poses AND hiking along beautiful trails at DeSoto State Park. This hike will be a mix of trail hiking with an outdoor yoga session. The moderate hike is approximately 2½ miles round-trip. Trail weaves through mixed forest with sandstone outcroppings along Laurel Creek. Will stop at Lost Falls and Laurel Falls along the way. 4pm. Meet at DeSoto's Country Store on Co. Rd. 89. \$5 per person (cash or check). Pre-registration required. Ages 8 to adult. Email Brittney.Hughes@dcnr.alabama.gov for more info or to pre-register. If weather is questionable, check with DSP Lodge before coming: 256.845.5380.

3/26—Little Library Learners will go Under the Sea this Saturday! Children ages 3–7 are invited to join Ms. Lynn for stories and activities about creatures who live in the ocean. 10:30am. Moon Lake Library, Mentone. moonlakelibrary.org

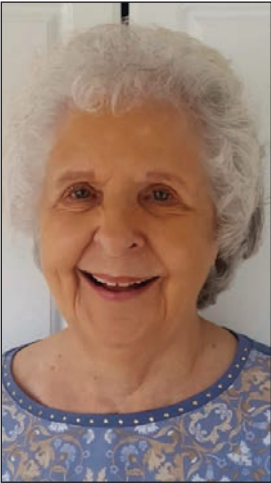
3/26—Serious Skills Series: Archery. Hosted by DeSoto State Park. The Serious Skills series is a variety of classes and workshops that provide opportunities to discover a hidden talent or learn a new skill for personal enrichment. Classes are open to local residents, overnight guests and park visitors. Ages 8 to adult. Archery is the art, practice, and skill of shooting arrows with the use of a bow. Historically it has been used for hunting and combat and has been around for many years. Archery is also a sport that is becoming increasingly popular as an outdoor recreation activity. DeSoto State Park Staff will teach archery safety and techniques. Activity is suitable for those who have never shot a bow, or for those with some previous experience. All equipment provided. Class times start at 10am, 11am, and 12pm. DeSoto State Park's Picnic Area (across the road from DSP's Country Store on County Road 89). Free and open to the public. Pre-registration is NOT required, the public is more than welcome to come at any of the posted times. Please note: archery may be postponed due to wet conditions. Email Brittney.Hughes@dcnr.alabama.gov for any details.

3/26—RONNIE MCDOWELL at the Pickin Post. The Pickin Post presents The legendary Ronnie McDowell. \$20. 6pm. 893 Old Hwy. 35 E., Fort Payne. For more information, call 256-657-3817.

3/29—Author Talk: Janisse Ray. A Zoom with award-winning author Janisse Ray, who will talk about Ecology of a Cracker Childhood and her latest book, Wild Spectacle. Open to the public. 6:30pm. Visit moonlakelibrary.org for the Zoom link. 256-634-2127.

3/31—Yoga on the Mountain: Restorative Yoga Walk. Experience yoga while enjoying the beauty of DeSoto State Park. Walk along the park's boardwalk trail, following Laurel Creek. Listen to the sounds of Azalea Cascade as instructor Destin Padgett guides you in restorative yoga poses. These poses are alignment-based, which makes them perfect for those beginning or continuing their yoga practice. Bring a yoga mat or towel, water, and snack. The boardwalk trail is an ADA-accessible 1,000-foot-long boardwalk with benches along the way. The walk is considered easy, ending at a large platform overlooking Azalea Cascade. Meet at 9am at DeSoto State Park's Talmadge Butler Boardwalk Trailhead on Co. Rd. 89. \$5 per person (cash or check). Pre-registration is required, so we know how many to expect. Hike is open to ages 8 to adult. Email Brittney.Hughes@dcnr.alabama.gov for more information or to pre-register. If weather is questionable, check with DSP Lodge before coming: 256-845-5380.

In Memoriam



CHRISTINE HALES BROOKS
December 1, 1928 – January 29, 2022

Christine Hales Brooks, age 93, of Valley Head, passed away on Saturday, January 29, 2022. Mrs. Brooks is survived by her husband Walter Brooks; daughters Jolene Gilbert (Dale), Norma Hulan (Danny), and Martha Browder (Bennett); grandsons Rick Gilbert, James Hulan, Matt Hulan (Traci), and Bennett Browder (Cyndle); granddaughters Rebecca Haney (Terry), Laura Gilbert, and Mandi Goza (Joseph); great-grandchildren Ashley Dunn, Sydney Hulan, Emily Hulan, Jordan Goza, Luke Hulan, Logan Goza, Ross Hulan, and Savanna Goza; sisters Pauline Hales Clements, Catrina Hales Shelton, Gena Hales Tate, Debra Hales Hill, and Diane Hales Waites; brothers Robert Hales and Rick Hales; and a host of nieces and nephews. She was preceded in death by her parents Robert Grady Hales and Laura Keith Hales; son Charles Robert Brooks; brothers Cecil Hales and Nelson Hales; sisters Willodean Hales Walker, Madeline Hales Chester, Jimmie Hales Clements, and Joyce Hales Kirby.



RONALD HALEY HILLIARD
March 15, 1947 – February 16, 2022

Ronald Haley Hilliard, age 74, of Mentone, passed away on Wednesday, February 16, 2022 at DeKalb Regional Medical Center. Mr. Hilliard is survived by his children: Connie Clark (Darrel), David Hilliard (Donna), Denise Carden (Dave), Adam Hilliard, and Matt Hilliard; seven grandchildren, 14 great-grandchildren; brother Randy Hilliard (Sarah); and sister, Gwen Ullery (Chuck). He was preceded in death by his parents, Haley O. Hilliard and Juanita Cupp Hilliard, and siblings: Jan Hadley, Carlyon Smith, John Hilliard, & Marshall Hilliard.





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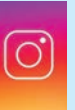
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Mentone Area Church Directory

Mentone, Alabama

Cove Road Baptist Church invites everyone in the Mentone and Cloudland Communities to services—Sunday School 10am (GA time) Morning Worship 11am (GA time), Wednesday Prayer Meeting & Bible Study 5:30pm (GA time). Bro. Brian Keith is the pastor. 2415 County Road 631.

Howard’s Chapel (Church in the Rock) has regular services at 10am each Sunday. You are invited to attend these services or visit the church at other times. Casual dress is always acceptable. County Road 617.

Mentone Church of God of Prophecy has Sunday School at 10am, with Worship at 11am. Evening services begin at 5:30pm on Sunday and 6pm on Wednesday. Bro. Whitney Smith invites everyone to attend. AL Hwy 117 (across from Mentone Post Office).

Mentone Community Church invites you to Crosswalk Sunday School (K through Adult) 9:15am, Adult Worship Service 10:30am, JC Kids Worship Service 10:30am. Pastor Heath Croft, 334-315-3459. Van Ministry for Children pick-up/take home, ages K–12, for all surrounding areas 8:15am. Wednesday small group study 6:30pm. 90 Summerville Rd. 256-634-4210.

Mentone United Methodist Church invites you to come and worship with us. Each Sunday our worship service is held at 11am and is led by Rev. Robert (Bob) Reynolds. Sunday School is at 10am. The service of Holy Communion is held the first Sunday of each month and fifth Sundays are a service of music. 415 Cutler Avenue. 256-634-8006.

Moon Lake Baptist Church is a growing community of believers from various walks of life who endeavor to share the light, life, and love of Jesus with all we meet. We gather together for practical Bible study at 10am on Sunday. You can count on an encouraging and life-engaging message at 11am each Sunday. At 6pm, on Sunday, we enjoy a time of praying together. On Wednesdays at 6pm, we have groups for our children, students, and adults. 4671 Al Hwy. 117. 256-634-4568. Connect with us on Facebook at “Moon Lake”.

Mt. Calvary Baptist Church offers Sunday School on Sunday mornings at 10am (EST) and Worship Service at 11am (EST). Pastor Jack Green. 10090 County Road 103. 706-862-6221.

St. Joseph’s on-the-Mountain Episcopal Church and Sacred Garden is open daily for prayer and thanksgiving. Everyone is welcome to join us, in person or online, for Holy Eucharist each Sunday at 10:30am, and for online only services each Tuesday at 12 noon for Noonday Prayers and each Thursday at 8pm for Compline. Please visit our website at stjom.dioala.org for more information. We continue to support our community with outreach, so please call our church office at 256-634-4476 if you need assistance. 21145 Scenic Hwy, PO Box 161, Mentone, AL 35984.

Summit Church of God in Mentone invites you to Sunday School 10am, Sunday Worship 11am. Pastor Brian Hughes. 1792 AL Hwy. 117. 256-706-5705.

Hammondville, Alabama

The **Church of God 7th Day** invites you to Sabbath School classes at 9:30am and Worship Service at 11am. Visitors are always welcome. Located just off Hwy. 11 N. at corner of Hwy. 117 and Palmer Road. 256-717-5040.

Greater Vision Ministries Church of God invites you to Sunday School 10 am, Sunday Worship *10:45 am, (*Nursery & Kid’s

Church). MidWEEK re-charge Wednesday 6:30pm. Pastor Tim Coppock. 38623 US Hwy 11. 256-601-0679.

Valley Head, Alabama

Lea’s Chapel Baptist Church welcomes you to worship with us. 10am Sunday Bible Study, 11am Morning Worship, 6pm Evening Worship. Wednesday 6–8pm Awana (ages 4–18); 6:30pm Praise and Prayer time. 4212 County Road 751. 256-635-1001.

Valley Head Baptist Church invites you to come and worship with us. On Sunday, Bible Study is at 10am & Morning Worship is at 11am; Kidz Connection is at 5pm, Evening Worship at 6pm. Kidz Connection & Youth meet on Wednesday from 5–6pm & a snack supper is provided. On the second Wednesday of the month, there is a church-wide covered dish Fellowship Meal at 6pm. 265 Church Street. 256-465-1242.

Visitors are always welcome at **Valley Head United Methodist Church**. Please join us each Sunday morning for a traditional worship service at 9:30am. Tony Gunter is the Pastor. All are welcome. 146 Church St.

Spring is God’s way of saying, “One more time!”
—Robert Oriben

Wildwood Seventh Day Adventist Church, Mentone Chapter, holds services in Moon Lake Baptist Church’s dining hall. All are invited to attend. Sabbath School and Song Service 9:30–10:45am, Worship Service 11am–12:15pm. Pastor - Wilbur Atwood; Lay Pastors - James Hartley and Ryan Bunnel.

Fort Payne, Alabama

Since 1889, worshippers have gathered at the **Historic First Presbyterian Church PC (USA)** at 300 Grand Avenue North. We invite you to join us for worship this Sunday at 10:55am. 256-845-2915.

The **Fort Payne Christian Center** and Pastors Ken and Elaine Hollman invite everyone to join in Worship on Sunday at 10am, Wednesday evening at 6pm. 3610 Grand Ave. SW. 256-997-0047.

First United Methodist Church offers a Contemporary Worship service at 8:30am and a traditional service at 11am on Sundays. 206 Grand Avenue North. 256-845-1141. fpfumc.org

Grace Presbyterian Church (PCA) invites you to Sunday School at 9:45am; Sunday Worship at 10:55am. 256-845-4756. 5760 Gault Ave. NE.

Gravel Hill Baptist Church welcomes you to Sunday School at 10am & Worship Service at 11am each Sunday. All are welcome. Wednesdays at 6pm, we have supper and a brief devotional time together. Pastor George Moses. 14701 Hwy 11 South.

Highland Baptist Church welcomes you to join us for Sunday Morning Worship Service and Youth Sunday School from 10am–11am. We are located at 2004 Clark Ave. Follow us on Facebook @highlandbaptistfp for updates and events!

New Oregon United Methodist Church is located just off DeSoto Parkway, 1/4 mile south of Fischer Crossroads. We invite you to worship with us on Sundays. Our worship services are at 11am and also on Sunday evenings in the Chapel 6pm. You can

also worship with us on-line @ facebook.com/neworegonumc. We have Wonderful Wednesdays during the school year with Bible studies for all ages meeting at 6pm in the Family Life Center. Pastor Ian Conerly. 1204 New Oregon Drive NE. 256-845-7446.

Our Lady of the Valley Catholic Church holds Sunday mass in English at 10am and 1pm in Spanish. Tuesday at 6pm in English, Wednesday at 5pm bilingual, Thursday at 6pm in English, Friday at 9am in English and Saturday at 6pm in bilingual. 2910 Gault Ave. N. 256-845-4774.

Prince of Peace Lutheran Church holds regular Worship Services at 10am Sunday. Clifford Herd, Pastor. Everyone is welcome. 1519 Smith Gap Road (County Road 85). 256-845-4842.

St. Stephen Anglican Church invites you to attend service on Sunday mornings at 1pm. Sunday School is at Noon. 1519 Smith Gap Road NW. Father Rodney Jackson, 205-405-0055; Deacon Jack Gilbreath, 256-845-2605.

Walnut Grove Baptist Church, on Highway 11 north of Fort Payne, welcomes everyone at Sunday School 10am, Worship Service at 11am, Wednesday night youth meeting at 6pm, and Wednesday night Prayer Meeting at 6:30pm. 3606 Greenhill Blvd NW. 256-996-0929.

Cloudland, Georgia

Cloudland Presbyterian Church welcomes everyone to come join us for services, with Pastor Jan Warren-Taylor. Bible Study Sunday at 9am (EST) and Worship at 10am (EST). 150 Partain Road.

Menlo, Georgia

Alpine Community Church Pastor Jeremy Stroop welcomes each and everyone to worship service Sunday mornings at 11am GA time; Sunday School 10am (EST); and Wednesday night Bible Study at 7pm (EST). 1104 Hwy. 337, Menlo GA. 706-862-6641.

Menlo Church of Christ invites you to attend 10am (EST) and 11am (EST) Sunday services and evening services at 5pm (EST) on Sundays and Wednesdays. Visitors are always welcome.

Menlo Presbyterian Church (ECO) invites everyone to attend services with us. Sunday School at 10am (EST) and Worship Service at 11:15am (EST). Rev. Jan Taylor is our pastor. We are located at 70 North 6th Ave., next to the park in Menlo.

Summerville, Georgia

Redemption Worship Center invites you to “Find Love, Encouragement, & Purpose!” Wednesdays: Hour of Power Bible Study 6:30pm (EST); Chosen Generation Youth 6:30pm (EST). Sundays: Sunday School 9:30am (EST); Morning Celebration 10:30am (EST). Pastors Dr. David & Penny Reeves. 174 West First Avenue. 706-808-0909.

Summerville Seventh Day Adventist Church invites you to worship with us. Saturday morning Sabbath School classes at 9:30am (EST) and Worship Service at 11am (EST). Everyone is welcome. Services are held at the First Presbyterian Church, 116 College Street. The Pastor is Dr. Edward Skoretz. summervillesda.com.

Please send any changes to
The Groundhog
at groundhognews@yahoo.com
or P.O. Box 387
Mentone, AL 35984



Linger Longer Pop-Up Artists

March 5

Brittany Owens
Ivy Nakhleh
Destin Padgett
Kori Lankster
Corri Akins

March 12

Lisa Sulkosky
Mikel Yeakle

March 19

Kelly Seahorn
Susie Lawson
Mariah

March 26

Rich Rybka
Tracey Rybka

The Little River Arts Council welcomes the new year with art, opportunity, music, and fun as we present our line-up of planned activities for the following months.

In March, we will start our Saturday morning pop-up events. Artists, usually two at a time, set up and sell their work adjacent to the Mentone Farmer's Market. The Farmer's Market is the local gathering spot on Saturday mornings in Mentone, so if you're an artist interested in this opportunity, send a text to our pop-up coordinator, Destin Padgett, at 256-926-8375. Our March line-up includes photographers, fiber artists, painters, a henna artist, and more.

On the evening of Friday, May 20, from 7 to 10 p.m., we will bring Will Dooley & Company to the Linger Longer Pavilion Stage to welcome the warmer weather and introduce the Big Art Pop-Up on Saturday, May 21. Up to 12 artists are invited to set up on the lawn of the Mentone Inn on that Saturday (traditionally, Rhododendron Festival weekend) free of charge. Members of LRAC will receive first consideration for a spot at this first-time opportunity. Sign-up information will be available soon on our website, social media, and monthly newsletter.

Our Music for the People Summer Concert Series will make a fun-filled return on June 19 with Parrot Tales, a Jimmy Buffett tribute cover band from Opelika, AL. Along with a wide selection

of Buffett tunes, they play other beach party favorites from Hank Williams, Jr., David Alan Coe, Kenny Chesney, and the world-famous Flora-Bama Lounge. Be ready to don your favorite beach-party wear, and hey, you may even want to prepare for a limbo contest!

The Black Sedan Band will make an encore performance on Saturday, July 9, followed by the return of the reggae band Natti Love Joys on August 20. On September 10, get ready to listen to the red-hot ragtime, blues, and swing tunes of Lon Eldridge from Chattanooga, TN.

Follow Your Art returns for its second year on Saturday, September 3. This year's event will include a juried art show, accompanied by music and a chalk-art contest along the walkway of MERF's Pathway to Community, adjacent to the Moon Lake Community Library, in Mentone.

The seventh annual Creative Spirit Market will be held on November 12 and 13 at the DeSoto State Park picnic area. An artist and community favorite, this event attracted 53 artists and a continual line-up of local musicians in 2021.

Other plans in the making include classes in various artistic genres and a discussion series on art appreciation. Watch for updates on these programs as they progress.

The Little River Arts Council relies on memberships, individual and corporate contributions, program revenues, fundraising, and grants to support our

programs throughout the year. We are extremely grateful to the donors, supporters, and volunteers who make our work possible. We offer special thanks to the Alabama State Council on the Arts and the National Endowment for the Arts for the grants which help us bring the Summer Music Series, Follow Your Art and Creative Spirit Market to Mentone and the Little River area.

Follow us on Facebook and Instagram and check out our website at littleriverartscouncil.org for more information on our activities.

Rhea Pirch serves as the treasurer of the Little River Arts Council.

**Time to Renew Your Membership
(or join for the first time)**
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www.facebook.com/MentoneFarmersMarket

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River Voice by Angie Shugart

"Thousands of tired, nerve-shaken, over-civilized people are beginning to find out that going to the mountains is going home; that wilderness is a necessity; and that mountain parks and reservations are useful not only as fountains of timber and irrigating rivers, but as fountains of life." —John Muir

Volunteer for Erase the Waste 2022

Going on now through April is our annual litter campaign Erase the Waste! This program organizes cleanups in the Little River Watershed before it gets into our local waterways. We provide volunteers with garbage bags, litter grabbers and safety vests. You can work at your own pace and as long as you wish. Dress in light layers that can be removed and according to the weather. Wear hiking boots or sturdy tennis shoes. Gloves and a toboggan may be needed. Bring your own water bottle and any snacks if needed.

Saturday, March 19
Alpine Bridge Clean-Up
 Meet at 1 p.m. at Howard's Chapel.

This month, we celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Clean Water Act. The groundbreaking law of 1972 set forth the basic structure to regulate pollution in U.S. waterways. Today, there is an array of protections that ensure Americans have access to clean, safe water. Little River holds a federal anti-degradation policy through the CWA special water quality designation of an Outstanding National Water Resource (ONRW). This means existing water quality shall be maintained and protected throughout the river corridor. Little River Waterkeeper celebrates the efforts made in the past by other river advocates with state and federal agencies who came together to protect Little River for future generations. Below is a timeline of the progress that ensured protections on Little River.

- 1930s—DeSoto State Park was developed and began the conservation of Little River
- 1980s–90s—Friends of Little River was established to spearhead ONRW designation
- 1992—Little River Canyon National Preserve was established to protect 14,000 acres
- 2006–2012—Lookout Mountain Heritage Alliance was formed by a group of concerned citizens to enforce the clean water act.
- 2012—Little River Waterkeeper was established to foster and protect the pristine resource through education, awareness, and monitoring.

Little River Waterkeeper (LRWK) plans to keep the momentum going by continuing to raise awareness about the special values our region holds and why ongoing conservation and preservation efforts are important. Through our Partnership Wild and Scenic Campaign, we will have an opportunity to create a Comprehensive River Management Plan (CRMP) that involves input from the river communities surrounding Little River, state and federal agencies, watershed groups such as LRWK and Alabama Rivers Alliance, and other river stakeholders. In order to create a study committee and a CRMP, we are seeking support for study legislation from our Congressional leaders. If passed, Little River will be studied over the following three years in order to be considered for inclusion into the National Wild and Scenic River system. Along with holding a prestigious national designation, the CRMP that was created during the 3-year study will be implemented. Designation will allow for beneficial projects such as protection and education around cultural heritage, creating access to outdoor recreational opportunities, and protection and restoration.

Angie Shugart is the executive director of Little River Waterkeeper, a 501(c)(3) water advocacy program and a member of the Waterkeeper Alliance, a global clean water movement. Learn more at littleriverwaterkeeper.org. Donations are tax-deductible. 215 Grand Ave. SW Fort Payne, AL 35967.

Become a new Member or Renew in 2022! Little River Waterkeeper spends time working on issues that matter to you and a community who rely on clean water in Little River for fishing, swimming and boating. Through media and events, our staff educate citizens about water pollution, conservation, and responsible water recreation, to ensure its clean water designation of an Outstanding National Resource Water. Individual: \$25; Business: \$50. Visit littleriverwaterkeeper.org to join.

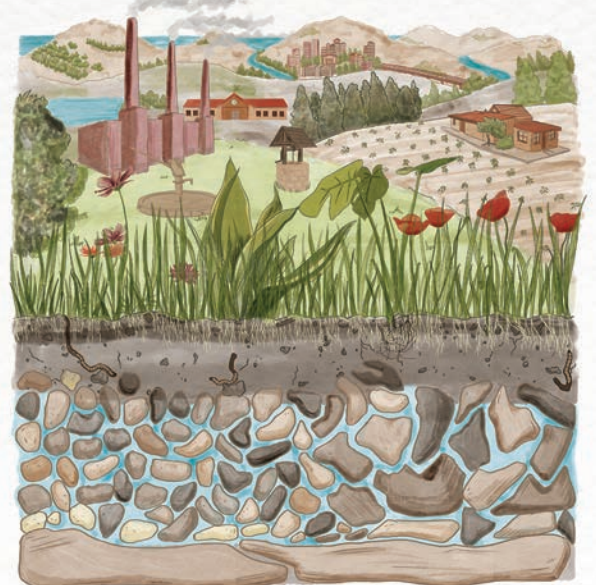
Celebrate World Water Day!

On Tuesday, March 22, we will host an environmental film festival at the Mentone Art Center. Films from our friends at Lookout Wild Film Festival will be featured. We will also show a couple of Southern Exposure Films, a film fellowship sponsored by our partners at Alabama Rivers Alliance. Doors open at 5:30 and film screening begins at 5:45. Admission is \$10 per person. Light refreshments will be served.

The 2022 theme for World Water Day is "Groundwater." Groundwater provides almost half of all drinking water worldwide, about 40% of water for irrigated agriculture, and about 1/3 of water supply required for industry. The headwaters of Little River are several springs bubbling up from the groundwater sources in Lookout Mountain. This water sustains ecosystems in the Little River Watershed and maintains the base flow of the river, year around. Protection of these headwaters are vital in the overall health and quality of Little River.

Groundwater: making the invisible visible

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Romey Returns (cont'd from page 1)

supplies, they wouldn't let us fly back in. We actually began ordering supplies from the grocery store through the internet, just like everyone else. Our son, Zach, was living in Fairbanks and he picked up our order and drove it to the barge. David was able to go to Ruby, meet the barge, and then bring our supplies home by boat.

During the isolation phase of the pandemic, I remember thinking, well, we're no longer special. Everybody else is staying home with their kids all day and doing home school. I liked seeing how people



L to R: Romey, David, and Sky Atchley and their dog, Ursa

were using that time to be more creative. I could relate to that in the sense that when we moved out to the cabin, I finally had that time. I was hoping that others got to experience that, too. I enjoyed the music that's come out of it, and seeing people doing silly things for fun.

How did you express your creativity in Alaska?

I wrote a lot. I didn't have a lot of people to talk to, and I had a lot to express that I could share through my writing. Also, I did crafts. We didn't have a store nearby, so if we needed anything new, we had to make it. I learned how to do all kinds of things from candle making to knitting and tanning hides, beading, making tie dye shirts. A lot of the things I made we could sell to people in town and make a little money on the side. I feel like everything I did was creative, like cooking and working on our cabin. We were always working and changing our cabin. It grew as we lived in it.

Do you write in journals?

I did, for years, starting before our time in Alaska. I really wanted to be a writer. I loved books as a kid. I always had a book with me. Growing up, I didn't feel like I lived the type of life where I had anything to write about. I felt like everybody was the same as me and that I had nothing to tell people that they didn't already know, since we were all living the same kind of life. I think that's what led me to Alaska, that desire to have something to write about. I had studied to be an environmental engineer, so I didn't have a lot of English classes. Keeping journals helped me learn how to write. Reading good books helped, too.

Did you ever feel bored?

No, I never felt bored. Sometimes I felt like I needed a little more mental stimulation, so I would

read books just to have new things to think about. Without having people coming in and out of my life, stimulating different thoughts, books were where I got food for thought—things to think about when I was walking around in the woods and working on the cabin and such.

Where did you get the books?

Every time we went into town, I always brought books back with me. Plus, I had an old collection of books that had belonged to my grandmother that had originally been here in Mentone. Actually, some of the books were her father's. My great-grandfather had a whole book collection in the cabin in Mentone. When my grandparents died, I boxed all those books up and brought them out with me. There's a lot of old classics and books from the early 1900s. A whole Jack London series.

When did your great-grandparents come to Mentone?

In the 1930s, they bought the land. They built a one-room stone cabin in the early 40s and they proceeded to add on to that over the years. The third addition was made of brick, which they sourced from a forge at the old Battelle property. When my grandparents died, that cabin needed a lot of work and wasn't really livable, so my parents built a house next to it. My dad spent a lot of time renovating the original cabin as a project. That gave him something to do during his retirement.

Where did you grow up?

When I was 2, my parents moved to Pennsylvania for my dad's work. His job moved a few times, and I spent my high school years in West Virginia. When I set out on my own, I went to college in Montana. I had always wanted to go west because the mountains seemed bigger. The east coast felt kind of crowded. The west was a new place.

I thought I'd be in Montana forever, but then I visited Alaska for a summer. Alaska had an appeal to me, but it was a huge scary thing. It was one thing to stay in Alaska in the summertime, but I knew how cold winters got and I didn't have any knowledge about how to deal with that, at all. It just seemed like an impossibility. But that summer I met David, so I ended up going back. He kind of guided me along. He had been there for six years and had figured out a lot of stuff. Moving in with him gave me the courage to start learning how to live in Alaska.

When you were living in your cabin, were there ever times you felt a sense of primal fear—that you might not survive?

There were times when that fear would come in and usually it was if someone got hurt, or if something broke that was vital to our life there. That's when I'd really feel how all alone we were. I had to come to grips with worry and the fear of what "could" happen. I had to very much live in the moment because sometimes I would go into this spiral in my head and think, what if somebody got appendicitis, how would I handle it, what would I do? The fear would creep in. One of the lessons I learned from living out there was to not worry about things that were not happening for real. Don't create ideas in your mind about what could go wrong, and then worry about them because ultimately it's just your imagination getting you. Better to deal with just the reality of what's going on. At times, that reality could get tough.

One time when I was out there by myself, I was tanning a moose hide and poked myself with a needle as I was sewing up the hole in the side. The hide had been soaking in rotting brain as part of the tanning

process. Overnight, my finger started puffing up. I'd had experience with this before and I knew the infection would start to spread quickly. Eventually my whole finger swelled up and it was really scary to not know what was going to happen in every second, wanting to get better. Luckily, I had some antibiotics that a doctor had given us for emergencies. Time seemed to move very slowly, but my finger healed.

Did you have a satellite phone or some other way to communicate?

At first, we had no way to contact anybody. We had a radio, so we could listen to the radio station in Galena, about 50 miles west of Ruby. The station had a message time, when they would read messages from families of people living remotely. My family would call sometimes, so we would listen religiously by the radio every day waiting to hear a message or some news. Meanwhile, though, my family couldn't hear any news from us.

Eventually a friend living in Colorado gave us a satellite phone. As technology had gotten better down here, people got cell phones and he didn't need it anymore. That was a great gift. But it was so expensive that I was limited to calling my parents for maybe a half an hour once a month.

What really revolutionized our life was when we were able to send emails through the satellite phone. We'd log on to the phone, which cost about \$1.50 per minute. We could send emails with that \$1.50 to a whole bunch of people. Suddenly, it was like I could talk to people again. I could send messages to friends I hadn't talked to in eight years. Having a young child out there, it made me feel better to have some kind of communication. For a while, I'd have to stand in the

(continued on page 24)



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Romey Returns (cont'd from page 23)
middle of our lake in the cold to try to get a signal on the phone and talk. Eventually, we put an antenna on our cabin so we could actually use the phone from inside and do emails that way. Later, we got a computer and we could use it to write emails. In our last couple of years there, we got the internet through a satellite dish.

How did you generate power?

We used a gas generator. We originally tried different things for light. We used oil lamps, but they were smelly and nasty. We used candles as well. We had some 12-volt lights that ran off a car battery. We would charge the battery up every once in a while and run those. Once we built on to the back of the cabin, we used Coleman lanterns that ran off gasoline. We used them every night, but we eventually realized that

with as much fuel as we were putting in there to run the lanterns, we could use a smaller, efficient generator and really light the cabin up. The minimum amount of gas we needed per year was four 55-gallon drums of gas to be able to run the generator for four hours every night and charge up the 12-volt battery bank. We could charge up anything we needed and then use the battery for the rest of the time.

How did you store your food?

We had a root cellar to keep things cold. The original cabin we bought was 13-1/2 feet by 10 feet—a very small space. We knew we needed to add on right away, so the first thing we did was dig a root cellar into the permafrost. We lined it with 4x6s. Every time I needed to go to the refrigerator, I had to lift the trap door and climb down the ladder to get things. A lot of the time, it was so cold out, I would just keep things on the floor, especially by the door, where air would leak in a little bit. I always had food there so I wouldn't have to keep running up and down the ladder when I needed something.

Did you have any dairy products you needed to keep cold?

We had a year's supply of butter and cheese, and 30 dozen eggs that we kept in the root cellar. Those would last us from September through March, and then in March David would take the snow mobile to town and usually stock up on fresh stuff or anything else that we were out of. He'd get more eggs and boxes of apples and bananas and onions, things like that.

That trip wasn't always easy. It was 100 miles on a frozen river. I was so worried about him when he had to go to town. That's actually one of the reasons why we decided to move, because as you get older stuff like that can get more difficult when you're not in your physical prime. He had quite a few trips that were kind of scary. Eventually, we knew that we'd gotten away with it for so long, we didn't want to chance it any further.

The trip on the boat in the summer could be rough, but in the wintertime there were ice conditions and overflow and deep snow. One time, David was coming home from town in a blizzard and he couldn't tell where he was. He missed the turn and kept on going up the river. He had to go into the mouth of our river a different way. The way he went, there was open water, and he was on a little ledge of ice between a cliff shelf of land and open water, ready to jump at any point if the snow mobile started going down. I would hate when he would come home with stories like that. Sometimes the machine would break down along the way. There were times he'd have to fly home. That spring trip was always a big thing.

How did the light change through the year?

In the summer, there was light all the time. There were some mountains to the north of us and the sun would go down around 1:30 in the morning but it was a very shallow angle, so it would dip down and then we'd start seeing it again around 3:30. I used to love that time because we'd get a very long sunset with really pretty colors. As the sun was behind the mountain, it would still paint the sky and the clouds. The sunset would fade right into sunrise, which gave us hours of beautiful light.

In the winter, the sun wouldn't actually come up. We'd have about three hours of light, but we wouldn't actually see the sun. A lot of Alaskans have wacky schedules because of all the light in the summertime and the darkness in winter. For me, it was hard to go to sleep when the sun was still up, so in the summer I didn't even think about going to sleep until 1:30 in



The Atchleys' off-grid cabin in Alaska

the morning. In the winter, I had trouble getting up while it was still dark, so I would sleep until about 12:30, which was when the sun would start coming up. Our sleep patterns naturally fell with the way the light worked through the seasons.

Has your body adjusted well to the difference of light in Mentone?

Well, sometimes I would forget that it was going to get dark. If you're going for a walk, you kind of have to plan for the darkness, and that caught me off guard a few times. Since it gets light so early in the morning here, I've tried to adjust my schedule to getting up early with the light. It's been nice having so much light during the day this winter. And you can feel the warmth of the sun when there's light. It makes a difference. It's been fun adjusting to it.

What are your plans in Mentone?

Right now, we're staying with my parents. My mom's dad is staying with us, too, so we have four generations together. Mom and Dad have a cabin rental business, so we're helping with that. One day, we'll probably take over the business.

We've bought a 13-acre property near town that has three ponds. We'd lived on a beautiful lake for so long, I knew losing it would be tough. So having any kind of water on our land here was important to me. But as we're getting to know the land, we realize how much work we need to do. There are some structures on the property that we need to take down. The previous owners had been burning trash for probably close to 100 years. It seems they never went to the garbage dump. There were piles of metal, glass, cans, and ash. Just garbage. So far, we've loaded 19 tons of trash into a dumpster.

I've been on my knees a lot, picking up little, tiny pieces of glass and having a lot of time to think. My desire to become an environmental engineer was influenced by the environmental movement that came up during the 80s and 90s. I wanted to do something to help out. When I was young, I dreamed of inventing something that would clean the air of pollution. I feel now like I've bought this little piece of the earth and I'm helping to rehabilitate it. It's become more personal. We want to plant fruit trees and berries and other things to eat, and restore it to some sort of lushness. It's become our new dream and project to work on.

Moving to the wilderness was a huge dream of mine. Everything has its life cycle. I found that when my dream matured, I was at the end of my dream but not the end of my life. I didn't know what the next dream would be. The pandemic helped me decide that family was my new dream. Helping my family is part of it, the property is part of it—restoring this little piece, leaving it in a better state than we found it.

I'm glad we're here. I've found that everybody I get to talk to in Mentone enriches my life.



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Ruby O'Rear's Days Come to Life

MARCH, 1937

March 1, Monday, 1937

Cloudy. Temp 29-34

Mother didn't rest well last nite. Back hurt all nite. We got her up this morn before Hazel left & she didn't [get] up again until after they came home from school. Have started unraveling white wool pocketbook & am starting a sweater. Also going to unravel hat. Wallace much better.

March 2, Tuesday, 1937

Clear. 17 to 40 or above. Mild.

Mother got up 3 or 4 times. She didn't rest well last nite tho. Turned over about every 2 hrs. Kept good fire all nite. I shelled over peck of corn. Eula came by. She helped me get Mother up. Cleaned out stove pipe. Certainly was clogged up. Knitted a little. Paul worked some on road & he went for mail.

March 3, Wednesday, 1937

Temp 24. Clear. Big frost. Went to nearly 60. Ice on n. side all day.

Mother took medicine last nite & I had to stay with her all day. W. Paul came over & he & A.J. worked on ridge road. Paul dug some post holes for pasture fence. Paul took Ed Culberson down to see Wallace & he stayed. Paul & Jack went to Katie & Thelma O'Rears. I stepped off pasture. Then went to Dan's for oil. Lilly called said boys are coming over. But we had started to bed. They are coming tomorrow nite.

March 4, Thursday, 1937

Temp 28. Pleasant then clouded up in P.M.

I stay with Mother most all day. Didn't boil anything for dinner. Ate bread & eggs. Jessie brot the Cooper children down to sing for Mother. Paul went to Wallace's & got Ed & took him home. Then he & Jack took Cooper children home. Then went to see Geneva. Then Hulgans & Bains. Dewey & Jeff Smith & John Lawrence came over for a little while. Rained some. I bathed in P.M.

March 5, Friday, 1937

Cloudy but cleared off a little later in morn. Cool.

Nellie Cash's birthday. Cut her 1st tooth. Hazel stayed home & washed. I got dinner. Then Hazel scrubbed & cleaned up living room. A.J. took Jessie to Valley Head to teachers' meeting. They didn't get back til after dark. Paul turned cow out in pasture & she went to Gus Cole place. We bathed Mother a little & I put clean clothes on her this morn. Mother better last nite.

March 6, Saturday, 1937

Frost. Warm, pleasant, mostly clear. Hazel's birthday

A.J. took Hazel to V.H. to bus. "Tip" took her to Gadsden. I went to V.H.



Got 1 sack guano & brot the remains of 2 of Hope's plows up. J.B. went to Billy's then they came back over here. I planted a bed of lettuce, radish, spinach & carrots & a few sweet peas. Set out 4 raspberries. Paul set some posts & started cleaning out grape vine rows. Telephone line broke. Me & boys fixed it. Mother better. Got up in nite last nite.

March 7, Sunday, 1937

Frost. Cloudy & rained in P.M.

Mother's back has about quit hurting & it's 3 weeks today since it started hurting. I walked to

S.S. then on to church at Mentone with Pullens. Back with them to Wallace's. Took dinner there. Wallace better but Lili not feeling well. On home by Emersons. It was beginning to rain when I got home.

March 8, Monday, 1937

Frost. Fair. Turning colder.

Paul burned off the sedge grass. Mother got up several times. I started sewing J.B. wedding ring quilt pieces together. Have had them cut for years. Knitted a little. Paul finished clearing out grape vine row & set out 100 onion plants. Hazel ironed.

March 9, Tuesday, 1937

Fair. Cold. Temp 30

I knitted a little & sewed some more quilt pieces together. Paul went for mail. Turned cow out in pasture for a little while. Alice Jane is down to the ribbing on her salmon sweater. Built a little fence this P.M. after they came home from school. Fencing off pasture west of hen house. Jewel came over.

March 10, Wednesday, 1937

Temp 21. Clear. Pleasant.

Calf arrived this morning. Heifer. I've knitted a good bit to-day. Paul came over & he & A.J. rambled around. Mr.

Editor's Note:

In our July 2021 issue, we introduced the diary entries of Miss Ruby O'Rear, granddaughter of John Mason, (the founder of Mentone) and daughter of Alice Mason (who named the town). You can read more about Ruby O'Rear at mapamentone.com/groundhog-archives (July 2021).

In 2015, the University of Alabama acquired her diaries from the years 1936 and 1937 from a bookseller in Brooklyn, NY. They are part of the University Libraries Special Collections (MSS4133). Many thanks to Chris Carmichael for sharing his copy of the diaries with *The Groundhog*.

We hope you will enjoy reading these entries of her daily diary for the month of March, 1937.

& Mrs. Humphreys came out. He paid me \$5 on rent & promised me the other 15. Eula came over. I went to store with W. Paul. When I got back Maybelle Cox & Emma Hardwick were here. Emma brot a potted hyacinth.

March 11, Thursday, 1937

Temp went to 66. Fair. Pleasant.

Calf & cow doing nicely. Paul fixed wire on posts for grape vines to run on. I didn't feel well. Had head ache a little. Knitted some. Planted a few sweet peas. Paul cleaned off garden & cleared out briar patch toward spring. I went

to Mrs. Emerson's for sassafras roots.

March 12, Friday, 1937

Clear, pleasant. Temp 66.

Margie Smith's birthday

Mr. Walker (Mr. Hulgans' father-in-law) plowed garden & potato patch. Planted 4 rows potatoes. Paul set out 1 gal. onion sets & planted some lettuce, radish, turnips, carrots, spinach & peas. Paul & J.B. went to S'ville this morn. Hazel washed. Mr. Kellett came & brot Mother check for \$239.10. She gave us each a check for \$59.77. Jessie ate dinner with Margie.

March 13, Saturday, 1937

Clear. Warm. Temp above 60.

I ironed some. Hazel raked in yard some, then ironed & starched clothes. A. J. made cake. Paul, Jack & J.B. went to F.P. teachers' meeting. I fixed rows for cabbage. Paul & J.B. set them out. I washed my hair. Hazel finished grey blouse she's been working on for so long. Janie finished salmon sweater.

March 14, Sunday, 1937

Cloudy, turning cold.

Didn't get to S.S. Hazel went to Wallace's in time for dinner. Saw Aileen. We had good dinner. Jessie had gotten some fresh vegetables in F.P. Mother

didn't seem so well. Hope, Faye & Vera Maye came by. Started using milk tonite. 9th milking. Hope took his ham. Guineas pulled up cabbage.

March 15, Monday, 1937

Temp 29. Ground covered with snow.

Cleared off about 9 or 10. Windy in P.M.

Stayed in most of day. Knitted quite a bit. Cut some quilt blocks. Hen stayed off of eggs & they chilled last nite. Killed a guinea this morn. Mother seemed to feel pretty good today.

March 16, Tuesday, 1937

Temp 21. Went above 40. Clear.

Mother didn't eat much to-day nor rest so well. Tho she rested well last nite. I finished knitting up thread I got from unraveling pocketbook & have now started to unravel hat. Hens have finally started to laying. Got 8 eggs.

March 17, Wednesday, 1937

Temp 19. Clear. Warming up.

Last day of school this week. Out for A.E.A. Knitted up thread I unraveled last nite. Dug 3 holes to set rhubarb in. Paul filled them with fertilizer. Guineas got in garden again so I cut their wings. Got some eggs from Myrtle Perkins. Unraveled hat. Georgia Wilson called from C'nooga, said Little Billy just alive.

March 18, Thursday, 1937

Foggy.

Texas school blew up.

Mother got up & signed a check. Paul & I took Hazel to the bus. She's went to Gadsden again to see about getting student's aid. I paid following bills. Telephone Bell's & V.H. Drug Store in Valley & Lee's and (Mentone's & Dan's to first of March) on mt. Wanted to go for rhubarb but didn't have time. Hazel bought a grey suit, grey hat & blue shoes. Eula came home last nite & Jodie went back. Next cow up.

March 19, Friday, 1937

Warmer, cleared up in morn but raining by 4:00

Jessie, Paul & J.B. went to Rome. W.Paul took A.J. to Trion to have teeth filled. Hazel washed & I had to stay with Mother all the time. Tho did manage to bake some egg bread. First we've had in long time. Turned cow out. She went to Dan's & Cashs & spent day out in rain. Mr. Yarborough plowed garden new ground to-day. Jodie came back. Little Billy still alive. I worked on skirt. J.B.'s tent and stools came to-day.

March 20, Saturday, 1937

Clear mostly. Temp went above 70. Air dusty from dust storm out west.

Hazel ironed. Jessie cleaned up & got dinner. Billy came over. He & J.B. put up tent just in yard so Mother could

(continued on page 27)

Ruby O’Rear (cont’d from page 27)

see it there in edge of woods. Paul & boys put up barbed wire enclosing pasture. Boys took corn to mill & Paul went after it & brot it back. I finished making over skirt, one Mrs. White gave Jessie. I knitted a little. Boys slept in tent.

March 21, Sunday, 1937

Temp 40. Cloudy but cleared up. Windy. Boys slept all nite in tent. Airplane went over at 11:00 last nite. Jack came over. Paul & kids went to Mentone. I got out at school house & started to walk on with Mr. Shigley & he said there no S.S. as everyone had gone to Adamsburg to YWMS meeting. Stopped at Myrtle Perkins for awhile then went on to Mrs. Nail’s. Mr. & Mrs. Dolph Young there. Mr. Billy Young died last nite. Paul came for me. Mrs. Nail gave me 10 clumps rhubarb. Billy’s “sister” & Scudder came over.

March 22, Monday, 1937

Fair, cool, windy. Paul set out rhubarb. Gordon Allison came by then Mr. Geo. Agnew & Mr. Fowler came to see about Mother giving right of way for highway to go by house in Menlo. She wouldn’t sign deed so they left it. Eula came by. Heard from Georgia. Billy still alive. My Paul Scarlet rose came & I set it out.

March 23, Tuesday, 1937

Fair. Temp 36 to 60. Pleasant. Knitted some. Ras Perkins & Clyde Rose came to see about renting Warren

new ground. A.J.’s mother is staying with Paul while Ethel Brown goes to Birmingham as Carrie Ruth is going to be operated on for goiter to-morrow. A.J. went over about 10:00 to help her mother. Paul rode with them to Dan’s. Georgia called. Said Bill died this morn. Paul went to Jodie’s to take them the word. J.B. stayed home.

March 24, Wednesday, 1937

Rainy. Warm. Clearing off in P.M. Paul took folks to school then later went in car for mail. Then went to school for Jack to take her to funeral but as supervisor was there she couldn’t go. Paul came home then back to funeral. School ran on short schedule & they got out in time for Jack to go to burial. Charlie Wyatt & wife & June & Edna Perry came out to see Mother about road going thru her land on north side. Paul came on home. I knitted some. Hazel finished her knit skirt.

March 25, Thursday, 1937

Clear but colder. Dust in air from another dust storm. Hazel stayed home to wash. I washed Mother off & put clean clothes on her. Got dinner. Mrs. Emerson came over. Paul went to Mentone. Brot Jessie home. Paul came for A.J. I knit a little on Fay’s sweater. Mr. Fowler & Mr. Agnew came back but Mother hasn’t signed deed yet. Jack, Paul & J.B. went to P.T.A.

March 26, Friday, 1937

Temp 32½. Cloudy but cleared off later. Hazel wore her white shoes, knitted blouse & A.J.’s crocheted skirt. Paul took folks to school then went on to S’ville. Mother & I had a tiff over the Menlo right of way. I got mad & raked some to let off the steam. Paul brot Ethel & Mason over & A.J. went back with her to spend nite. I rode to highway & went on to Aunt Mags to get the addresses of her children.

March 27, Saturday, 1937

Temp 32. Snowed this morn but cleared off later on. Mother had another catch in her back this morn & I put ½ of a plaster on it. Bill came over. Paul took Jack to P.T.A. meeting at V.H. & he went on to F.P. Hazel ironed. I cooked some corn bread & tapioca pudding. Sewed a little & knit a little. Hazel finished brown skirt & fixed her grey one.

March 28, Sunday, 1937

Easter Sunday Temp 26 to above 40. Cloudy in morn then cleared off. Mother’s back has gotten worse all day. I killed a guinea for her. John Lawrence came over. I hadn’t dressed as I was fixing to take a bath before dressing. Billy & Scudder came to see J.B. I meant to go to Easter program at church but Mother hurting so bad I didn’t go but Paul took Hazel & J.B. & they are going to walk back. Mother stayed in bed all day. Got up before bedtime.

March 29, Monday, 1937

Temp 29–54. Clear till this evening it clouded up. Mother hasn’t been up at all to-day & hasn’t turned over but a few times as it hurts her to be turned. A.J. still at Paul’s with her mother. Paul & I here by ourselves to-day. I knitted a little. Fixed 3 hens nests for setting hens. Put oil on roost poles. Heard that Clara was coming back to mt. & stay with Cassie.

March 30, Tuesday, 1937

Cool, cloudy. Alice J. came home last night. Paul went to S’ville. Charles Crowe came to see Mother. Read 13th chapter of 1st Cor. Prayed & then we sang some. Mother had not been up since Sun. nite & had worked down so far in bed she had to be got up. So I gave her 2 doses of painkiller medicine & we got her up. Hazel and J.B. went to V.H for play “Huckleberry Finn.”

March 31, Wednesday, 1937

Frost. Rained some. Mother got up again this morn before they went to school. Was restless all day tho. Had to stay right with her all morn lifting her feet up & down & turning her over. Gave her a dose of pain relief medicine & got her up again. I did manage to get in kitchen long enough to bake some cookies. Worked a little on blue dress.

How Old Is That Tree?
by Kelly Leavitt



Have you ever come upon a tree and thought, Wow! How old is that tree? There is a majestic pine tree in front of Ruby O’Rear’s home on East River Road that has always astounded me. I mentioned to Pat Parmelee and Chris Carmichael, the current owners of the property, that I knew about a fun and easy way to estimate the age of various species of trees. They brought out a measuring tape and measured the pine; its circumference is a whopping 142”.

The formula to calculate the tree’s age is to measure its diameter at a height of 45” and then multiply that by the species’ growth factor. (In case you need reminding, we find the diameter by dividing the circumference by 3.14.) The



Chris Carmichael and Pat Parmelee measure their white oak’s circumference.

growth factor for a field pine is 5, so:
142 (circumference) / 3.14 = 41.22 (diameter)
41.22 x 5 (growth factor) = 206 years

An equally impressive white oak is also growing on the property; it measures in at 255 years. (Please note: This is not a scientific method, only a simple way to estimate the age of living trees.)

Since so much of Lookout Mountain has been logged in the past, I’m always excited to see these giant specimens. If you know of a tree that’s extraordinarily old, we’d love to hear about it. Email groundhognews@yahoo.com (and send a photo if you can!).

Growth Factors of Some Local Tree Species

- Tulip Tree 3 • Sycamore 4 • Red Oak 4 • Sweet Gum 4
- Black Walnut 4.5 • Red Maple 4.5 • White Oak 5 • Red Pine 5.5
- Redbud 7 • Dogwood 7 • Shagbark Hickory 7.5

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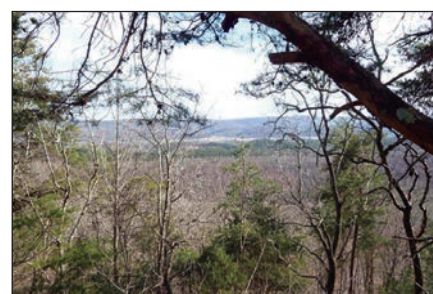
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