

the GROUNDHOG

VOL. 3 - NO. 12 - MARCH 1986

A Publication of the Mentone Area Preservation Association

Friendly Town, Friendly Person

It's such a friendly place.

This is what so many people reply when asked why they moved to Mentone or what they like most about our town. Chances are that one of the first persons they met was Ruby Stalvey.

For most of her life Ruby Bain Stalvey has greeted residents and tourists in her various businesses. Her friendliness and genuine love of people have helped to make Mentone and Valley Head the kind of places folks like to call home.

For fifteen years Ruby operated a grocery store where McGee's Texaco and Grocery is now located. A restaurant was part of Ruby's establishment for eleven years. Since October she has owned and managed Ruby's Variety in Valley Head.

Ruby's parents, Edd Lester and Lula Mae Bain, were well-known and loved. For years Daddy and Mama Bain sold vegetables and flowers from their farm just east of town. Attractive in appearance and old fashioned in their ways, both parents set high standards of morality and work.

Ruby is the seventh of their nine children. "We never had much money, but we had an abundance of love," she says. "Two fifty pound flour sacks just about made a dress, and we'd be just as proud of a new dress Mama made as the finest one we could buy today."

She remembers playing house, pushing "scrape irons" along the road, and swinging in old tires. The family's first automobile was "a big old Packard that Daddy paid \$75 for. It had three rows of seats. We used to love to drive to Cedar Bluff to see Daddy's people."

After graduating from Moon Lake School, Ruby went to Valley Head High School a year before her



Ruby Bain Stalvey

marriage to Roy Blalock. During her adolescence she worked at the Mentone Springs Hotel, the DeSoto Hotel, Riverside Hotel, and the old Cloudland Hotel. For seven or eight years after her marriage, she cleaned houses. She has a passion for cleanliness;

(Continued On Page 6)

Historic Rock Wall To Be Repaired Page 1

A Pig In A Poke Page 7

Cable TV Begins Within Two Months

Local cable TV service should begin in approximately two months, following approval at the March Town Council meeting of attorney Pat Tate's legal agreement, authorized at the February meeting of the council.

This action by the council allows Bill Kidder of Kidder Cable TV to proceed with his operation. Within a month he hopes to have completed the headquarters building at the water towers site. An answering service will be provided for the placing of orders.

Within sixty days of the March 3 council meeting the first installations should begin. "There will be no installation fee for charter members in sections of town where nineteen residences are situated within a square mile area," Mr. Kidder says.

The town of Mentone will receive 3 percent annually of the revenues from Mr. Kidder's sales. The contract is subject to review, but is to run for five years.

Mayor Rob Hammond opened the council meeting with a moment of silent prayer for deceased member Lee Davenport. He officially declared a vacancy for Mr. Davenport's spot; this is to be filled at the next meeting of the council, at 7 p.m. April 7.

Councilmen voted unanimously to purchase an ad in a special DeKalb County edition of *The Gadsden Times*, to be distributed March 31. They also voted to spend no more than \$3,500 on a bush hog attachment to trim overhanging growth from the sides of town roads. Councilmen will survey town roads most in need of paving at the request of the county engineer. Several businessmen are being sent second notices for tax monies due on their privilege licenses. Anyone engaged in any type of business within town limits is subject to and responsible for license payment. —J.D.M.

Comer Reservation Sells Choice Land

Sealed bids will be received and opened for approximately 112 acres of the Comer Scout Reservation on March 21 at 2 p.m. at the reservation. Properties involved are about 65 acres of mountaintop in two tracts with brow lots and hardwood timber. Also to be sold are some 47 acres of Little River frontage property.

The executive board of the Choccolocco Council No. 1, Boy Scouts of America, has determined that the best interest of the council will be served by selling this surplus land. Proceeds will be placed in trust to help defray the operating expenses of the reservation.

Bids may be mailed to Jimmy Peterson, Scout Executive, Boy Scouts of America, P. O. Box 2067, Anniston, Alabama 36202-2067. Additional information and a bidding packet may be obtained from Ladd Engineering Associates, Inc., 505 3rd Street Southeast, P. O. Box 29, Fort Payne, Alabama 35967, for \$10.00.

Details of the sale were advertised in *The Chattanooga News-Free Press*.

Attend Kansas Conference



Shown above are Susan Hooks, director of Camp Skyline; Rob Hammond, owner-director of Camp Laney (and Mentone mayor); and Marty Griffin, director of Camp Saddle Rock, who recently attended a national training meeting of Private Independent Camps for children (PIC) in Kansas City. The two-day meeting preceded the annual meeting of the American Camping Association. Two featured sessions reviewed recent research in measuring the value of a camp experience to the child and offered ideas of promoting ways to maintain camper and parent interest from one season to the next. Sessions were offered at the PIC meeting on camp marketing, staffing, insurance, camper fees, prevention of child abuse, and the use of facilities during the off season.

The Wall



Mentone, Malibu, Willie

Not many people anymore are expressing worry that Mentone might become another Gattlinburg.

A new opinion has arisen that Mentone is already "The Malibu" of Alabama. Reason? The purchase by Willie Nelson of land above Eagle's Nest near Mentone, the possibility that other musicians of his stature may do likewise, broadening the domain of the Alabama band in Fort Payne and on Lookout Mountain above that city.

Malibu is a beach resort, near Santa Monica, California, where musicians and actors either have resort homes or go for recreation.

In the February 12, 1986, edition of *The Rome News Tribune*, staff writer Jane B. Wyatt, writes the following:

If John Lloyd's predictions are correct, Willie Nelson may not be the only celebrity buying property in Mentone, Ala.

"Mentone is the Malibu of Alabama," said Lloyd, a Texas real estate developer who added he is Nelson's next door neighbor in Austin.

According to court documents filed last week in Fort Payne, Ala., Nelson bought one lot near Mentone from Rome businessman Edmond Cash. Sources say the lot, about seven acres, is on the brow of Lookout Mountain in an area called Eagle's Cliff.

In a telephone interview, Lloyd described Nelson's recent purchase as "no big deal, just a lot to sometime maybe build a vacation home."

But, he said, other country and western music stars will probably be attracted to Mentone for the same reasons Nelson is: its natural beauty and proximity to Nashville, less than 200 miles away.

He added that the area around the Northeast Alabama town of 500 is prime development property, perfect for a golf course, restaurants and other resort facilities.

And, if someone else doesn't do it, Lloyd, who said he owns 700 acres north of Mentone, may develop it himself, he said.

"I can't afford to put cattle on it," he said. "So I've got to do something with it."

For the second consecutive month *The Groundhog* editors called Willie Nelson's office for information concerning his plans and received a very positive "no comment."

Did You Know?

The worst ice storm in recent history in Mentone occurred twenty-six years ago last March 2. The town was without power for eighteen days, according to Max Cash, councilman and mail carrier.

APRIL MEETING Mentone Area Preservation Association

A Guest Speaker from Montgomery and

A Potluck Supper honoring the fourth birthday of our organization.

Bring Your Favorite Dish

Presiding, Amelia Kirk Brooks, Director

Everyone Welcome
The Parlor

St. Joseph's on-the-Mountain Church
Tuesday, April 8, 1986 6:00 p.m.
THIS IS A CHANGE IN DATE

Mentone Landmark To Be Repaired

MAPA Director Amelia Brooks announced at the March 4 meeting that Senator Lowell Barron has informed MAPA of a grant he has secured from the state historical commission for \$2,500. The money will be used to repair the rock wall built as part of a state road project in 1928 along highway 117 from Beauty Springs to Tutwiler Gap. Builder of the wall was Lee Crow, father of Homer Crow, immediate past director of MAPA. Homer will coordinate the restoration work, and the state will provide the cement, flagmen and signs. The April meeting of MAPA will be held at 6 p.m. on Tuesday, April 8. Members are requested to bring covered dishes to St. Joseph's-on-the-Mountain Church. Everyone is welcome to participate. There will be a speaker from Montgomery.

Rhododendron Festival Next Local Celebration

Members of the Rhododendron Festival for '86 (May 17-18) met Saturday, March 1, at Cragmere. Present were Donna Bukley, chairman; Bill Riedesel, assistant; Randy Still, Amelia Brooks, and Grace Howard. Several things were discussed and new ideas were presented. The festival is taking shape. Four craftspeople have already sent in their applications.

The meeting lasted approximately two hours. Refreshments were served by Randy Still. The committee will operate on a somewhat conservative but practical budget, one that we feel is necessary for a successful festival. Anyone with suggestions or comments will find that they are welcomed.

Other committee members include Jane Blansit, Homer Crow, Shurlee Froehler, Ray Froehler, Harrel Jenkins, Sandra Padgett, and Angelo Rosario. The next meeting will be March 22 at 10 a.m. at Cragmere Manna Restaurant. — Donna Bukley

Thunder From The Mountain



They call themselves the Thunder Mountain Expirations. Why such a name? Here's how it was recently explained to a Fort Payne Times-Journal reporter: "We sound like thunder, we're from the mountains, and we're all going to expire." This unusual band, with two Mentone members, Mack and Lula Blalock, has been busy lately, playing at such places as the Hope Nutrition Center and the March 1 Home and Garden Show at Rainsville Civic Center. All the members are active in RSVP, DeKalb County's Retired Senior Volunteers Program. Its members are Casey Jones, guitar-mandolin-banjo, a singer and writer of music; Mack Blalock, fiddler; E. L. Harris, banjo-guitar-French harp; (L to R above) Champ Windam, guitar-singer; Ruby Jones (Casey's wife), bass-guitar-singer; and Lula Blalock, singer.

True Appreciation

On the evening of February 22nd, appreciation night was held for Mentone's Ovie Blalock, president of the organization and coordinator for the funding and construction of the recently completed building at the foot of the mountain. Blalock was presented with a plaque of appreciation and recognition for his leadership in the project.

Name of the new building is Promenade Hall. A sign in front of the hall reads: "Home of the Valley Promenaders, Country Creek Cloggers, and Little River Cloggers." It is available to other groups upon request, especially to cloggers and retirees. A barbecue dinner kicked off the grand opening ceremonies on March 8.

Notice

Plans are underway for publication in book form of *Mentone, Alabama: A History* by Zora Shay Strayhorn. If you have noticed any errors in dates, names, etc., please send the corrections to MAPA, Box 50, Mentone, Alabama 35984.

MAPA Minutes

The MAPA meeting was held March 4 in the parlor of St. Joseph's-on-the-Mountain Church. The meeting was called to order at 7:07 by Amelia Brooks, director. Treasurer's report showed a balance of \$4,657.26; **Groundhog** balance was \$549.19.

The state has requested a supply of the Mentone brochures. We are to get a price quotation for 50,000 more copies. The grant to MAPA of \$2,500 for repair of the rock wall coming up the mountain was discussed. Donna Bukley reported on the Rhododendron Festival plans.

The next MAPA meeting is to be a covered dish dinner at 6 on April 8. Meeting was adjourned at 8:20. Condensed from the minutes of Bill Riedesel, Sec'y.

Groundhog Finance Report

FEBRUARY ISSUE

Income:

Balance on hand \$662.89
Ad Sales 395.00
\$1,057.89

Debits:

Donna Bukley, sales, delivery \$89.25
Greg Purvis 15.00
U. S. Post Office 94.95
McGehees, expenses, editing 100.00
The Summerville News 209.50
\$508.70

Balance on hand \$549.19

Alabama Commissioner Explains Utilities

James Sullivan, director of the Alabama Public Service Commission, was speaker at the March 4 meeting of the Mentone Area Preservation Association. Mr. Sullivan has held this position for three years. He is no stranger to Mentone; his daughter has been coming to Skyline Ranch Camp for two years. He played football at Ole Miss and earned his law degree from the University of Alabama.

His talk was divided into two parts: one explained the function of the commission and the other explained what citizens can do to aid the work of the utilities regulator.

The Alabama Public Service Commission regulates all major utilities in the state, including transportation companies such as 24 railroads, 41 bus lines, and 93 taxi and limousine companies. There are some 9,000 motor carriers operating within and coming into the state. The commission also regulates Alabama Power Company, Alabama Gas Company, South Central Bell, and 34 independent companies. There are some 175 employees of the commission.

Passing around samples of telephone cables, Mr. Sullivan gave a brief history of recent improvements in communications. One cable, heavy and two inches in diameter, was composed of 600 private lines. The second cable was developed in 1983 and was light in weight and only a half inch in diameter. This cable, of fiber optics, uses laser beams to transmit 40,000 phone calls simultaneously. The final cable, the smallest, goes under the Atlantic Ocean and uses every second of time and space, scrambling calls in transmission, and sorting them out upon arrival.

After describing the "most efficient nuclear power plant in the country," in Columbiana, Alabama, Mr. Sullivan began the second half of his talk. He told of some 20 cases of requests for rate increases by utility companies last year in the state.

The big companies spend millions of dollars, bringing in powerful teams of lawyers. The attorney general of Alabama with two assistants is the only consumer advocate in the state. Twice Mr. Sullivan has tried to set up a public staff to supervise consumer interests. Twice the courts have struck down the plans since the agency itself cannot be a consumer advocate. He urged those present, and all citizens, to write to their state senator and representative to urge the establishment of representation for the public in utility cases.

Lookout Mountain Parkway

The Lookout Mountain Parkway Commission met at St. Joseph's On-the-Mountain Church March 3. Billy McDow, president, led a discussion of the signs to mark the existing route from Rock City to Noccalula Falls. The signs are to be of aluminum. The group also planned a brochure to be released at the time the signs are in place. The next meeting will be April 7 at 6 p.m. at the church.

TO MENTONE AREA PRESERVATION ASSOCIATION, BOX 50 in support of the objectives of MAPA, desiring to join with others in preserving and protecting the heritage, natural environment and other unique qualities of life in the Mentone area, I enclose \$5 for voting membership for one through June 1986.

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

The Groundhog

Published monthly by the Mentone Area Preservation Association. First conceived on Groundhog Day, 1982, and organized April 6, 1982, for the purpose of preserving and protecting the heritage, natural environment, and other unique qualities of life in the Mentone Area. Chartered as a non-profit organization by the State of Alabama.

Charles White McGehee, Editor
Jean McGehee, Associate Editor
Donna Bukley, Advertising, 634-4678
Amelia Brooks, Director
Donna Bukley, Associate Director
Bill Riedesel, Secretary
Shurlee Froehler, Treasurer
Homer Crow, Past Director
Gregory Purvis, Student Reporter

DeKalb Tourist

The regular meeting of the DeKalb County Tourist Association Board of Directors was held at Western Sizzlin on February 19, with President David Marion officiating. From Mentone board member Donna Bukley was present, with Shurlee Froehler, member of MAPA, as a guest.

Crystal McDow, executive secretary, gave a report on the Birmingham Sport and Boat Show she recently attended. She reported favorably on the new brochures which are now being distributed. There was discussion of bus tours during the Alabama June Jam. Donna Bukley is coordinating a membership drive.

... From The Editors

Special thanks to Bill and Bobbie Riedesel for making the trip to Summerville to pick up the January **GROUNDHOG** and deliver it to the post office while we were in Florida. Likewise to Ray and Shurlee Froehler for the same duties on the February issue while we left in 5-degree weather to deliver a U-Haul-It of furniture to Stuart and Pam at Bluefield College, Virginia.

In each case we had prepared the copy, but the printing could not be completed for the deadline of the 15th before our departure. We were flattered by those of you who said you missed our columns for the past two months. Advertising drops off in January and February, along with various activities. The editorial judgments in what to delete are quite difficult; it actually is easier to publish the usual eight pages instead of the four pages.

News of Councilman Lee Davenport's death came at the last minute. Somewhere along the way, in the haste, the date of the funeral was misprinted. It was February 8, not January 8. Mistakes have a way of happening in clusters. Somewhere along the way, the February issue was listed as Vol. 3 — No. 12 — March 1986, which is actually this current issue you are reading. There was a February **Groundhog**.

Thanks to the following for graciously provided photos to brighten this issue: Patti Wheeler, Lula Blalock, Ann Q. Lohr, Jo Ann Bain, Angelo Rosario, Joyce Smith, Lori Honig and Rob Hammond.

Brow Briefs

Doyal Benefield, MAPA member and former director of DeSoto State Park, recently suffered a stroke and at this writing is in Room 1411 at UAB Hospital in Birmingham. His daughter, Mrs. Richard Griffin of Fort Payne, states that there are no major after effects and that he should be home soon. The stroke occurred when Mr. and Mrs. Benefield were walking in the woods near their home.

Harrell Jenkins, MAPA member of the Rhododendron Festival Committee, recently underwent quadruple by-pass heart surgery in Birmingham.

Mrs. Leland Cox was in an automobile accident March 5th, halfway down the mountain. She suffered a concussion and cracked ribs and is in the DeKalb Baptist Medical Center in Fort Payne.

Rescue Squad

The Desoto Rescue Squad hosted the quarterly meeting of the county Rescue Squads in Mentone on February 24. County Squad Captain Earl Brannon presided, and the topics discussed were hazardous waste spills and the advancement of legislation to promote and establish an Executive Director for Alabama. A seat belt safety film was shown by Bobby Brown during the last part of the meeting.

Mountain Watch

By Charles White McGehee

On a late winter evening, when the temperature was hovering around 10 degrees, I put on my Admiral Byrd ski jacket and went with our dog Caesar around the front walkways. It was about time for Halley's Comet, but I had no knowledge of how to sight it. There was, however, low across the brow, hovering just above Sand Mountain to the west, an enormous, deep-orange moon with the crescent on the underside. It was about half-way between the southern horizon and Pea Ridge. Once I thought there was no such thing as Pea Ridge, until on a drive from Scottsboro to Chattanooga, we drove through its outskirts — seeing a definite highway sign. Nadine Jennings, one of the first to build on our section of the brow, alerted me to the importance of Pea Ridge. Standing on her deck one afternoon at sunset, she said: "You just watch. When the sun gets to Pea Ridge (a tiny tuft on the Sand Mountain horizon), this means summer is over and it begins moving back toward the southern horizon. When it stops there and turns around — it's the top of winter." So, Pea Ridge is not a myth — it's an astral actuality.

How many times have we heard a Sand Mountain person say, "I wouldn't live on Lookout Mountain for anything." Or, "Lookout Mountain girls are prettier than Sand Mountain girls." On and on it goes, about farming or friendliness and other competitive categories. It occurred to me the other day that there is a major difference between the two mountains. Sand Mountain is dotted with towns: Henagar, Ider, Pisgah, Sylvania, Geraldine — on and on that could go. North of Fort Payne, upward to Rising Fawn, there's only one town on Lookout Mountain. Its name is Mentone. Of course, there are some crossroads places like Dog Trot and Lick Skillet, but Mentone is Alabama's real Lookout Mountain town.

There are new lights in the valley. One of the joys of living on the brow is watching the lights in the valley at night. Far to the left one sees the huge cluster of the lights of Fort Payne. Sweeping northward toward the right are the flickering lights of the various towns on Sand Mountain. Near, more immediate are the lights of Valley Head, our nearest neighbor. On especially clear nights one feels it is possible to reach out and touch them. Now there is a prominent, significant addition — rising upward to the left of highway 117. Near the railroad and situated on Jeff Cook Drive, are the brilliant red lights of RX 87, WQRX 870 on the AM dial. Co-owner with Jeff Cook of the group Alabama is manager Tom Crowe. Emphasis of the programming is news and music — and its sounds are smooth and competent.

Have you noticed that the same number should be dialed weekday mornings to reach both the Mentone Police and Fire Departments? 4-4444. That's such an easy number to remember in times of desperation. Wouldn't it bring peace of mind if 4-4444 could be dialed all 24 hours of the day and night for these often critical calls? Cities across the land are instituting at much expense 911 numbers for the reaching at all times of these and other emergency numbers. What a relief it would be if someone during 1986 could come up with an inexpensive approach to establishing 4-4444 as our emergency number. Would a party line involving a residence accomplish this end? The elderly, the infirm and the insurance companies would be grateful. 4-4444.

Cloudmont Ski Report

Despite the warming trend the Cloudmont Ski slopes had one of its best weekends on February 15-16. Although the season's total will exceed 3,500, it is not the best on record. The latest skiing has usually been in mid-March.

Gary Jones is already getting his golf course ready for the new season. Olive Jones says that on warm weekends the would-be skiers did not seem disappointed. "They went sightseeing, horseback riding, hiking and exploring rock formations. Mentone is beautiful in winter."

Letters To Editor

A former Mentone resident and cousin of mine, Bertha Ring, enjoys **The Groundhog**. I have sent her several, so I'm sending her membership dues so she can enjoy it every month. I am keeping a copy of each one so in future years my grandchildren can read about Mentone. — Grace Pullen

Volunteer Fire Department

The Mentone-area Volunteer Fire Department had nine of its members present on February 27 for a Hazardous Materials Seminar. The seminar was held in the DeKalb County Court House and featured such topics as emergency chemical spill cleanup, identification of various types of spills, and the types of transportation involved in moving dangerous materials. The meeting was partially in response to two chemical spills in DeKalb County last month, a problem which posed a serious threat to residential communities in the Collinsville area.

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Our Young People Make The News

Daisy Scout Troop



The Mentone Daisy Girl Scout Troop 698 is the first Daisy troop in the Fort Payne Service Unit area. Daisies are named for Juliette "Daisy" Low, founder of the Girl Scouts. All Daisy Scouts are five years old. Members of the troop are Sarah Whittle, Rene Brendle, Christy Wilcox, Starla Crowe, Mandi Browder, and Terri Campbell. The Rev. Ann Q. Lohr is troop leader and Charlotte Whittle is assistant leader. The troop meets at the Mentone United Methodist Church at 2:30 Thursday afternoons. Troop sponsor is Cook Communications. Daisies study various areas of their world: People, outdoors, today and tomorrow, arts and well-being. Other Girl Scout troops in Mentone are Brownies (grades 1-3) led by Linda Drake; Juniors (grades 4-6) led by Linda Biddle. Interested girls are urged to join scouting in Mentone by getting in touch with these leaders.

Valley Head Honor Roll

The Honor roll for the fourth six weeks grading period at Valley Head High School is:

12th Grade: Bonnie Blalock, Karen Prestwood (All A's), Shelly Blalock, Susanne Crabtree, Kim Langston, and Lisa Strickland (All A's and B's).

11th Grade: Joy Bain, Scott Tate (All A's and B's).

10th Grade: Karen Bain, Lea Smith, Brevin Brown (All A's), Leslie Smith, Frankie Hall (All A's and B's).

9th Grade: Laura Harrison, Jennifer Prestwood (All A's), Jennifer Sutton (All A's and B's).

8th Grade: Holly Brown (All A's), Georgette McGee, Shannon Hunt, Angie Bell, Carrie Wigley (All A's and B's).

7th Grade: Charles Pullen (All A's), Paul Blalock (All A's and B's).

Congratulations to these students.

Valley Head Girls Basketball

This year's Valley Head High School girls basketball team was second in the 1-A tournament. This led to the Sub-state playoffs and Randolph Academy in Huntsville. Even though they were beaten there, VH has never gone this far before. (However, the girls' volleyball team has been in the playoffs two years in a row).

Graduating seniors are Sissy Hatfield, Shaney McElhaney, Lorie Johnson, and Valerie Durham. Promising players for next year include Joy Bain, Karen Bain, Carla McElhaney, Cindy Phillips, Andrea Kirby, Lynn McElhaney, Laura Harrison, Melanie Martin, Alesia Hulet, and Shannon Hunt.

"I have enjoyed working with these girls," says Coach Becky Rogers. "I would like to say 'thank you' to Jimmy Phillips, my assistant coach."



Moon Lake Attendance

Principal Charles Bell of Moon Lake School announces perfect attendance records for the fifth month of school this year:

Kindergarten, Grace Godbois: Teri Campbell, Ryan Drake, Brad Hale, and Haley Hilliard.

Grades 1 and 2, Brenda Bobo: Amy Crane, Ginger Gray, Cassidy Hudgins, Heather Jackson, Renee Pruitt, Mikki Smith, Brandon Taylor, and Shaun Flannigan.

Grades 2 and 3, William Berry: Crystal Bettis, Nichole Cash, Holly Gardner, Jennifer Hall, Cheri Keith, Eric King, Flynt Purvis, Chris Smith, Cyle Springman.

Grades 4 and 5, Joyce Smith: Michael Flannigan, Bridgett Blalock, Duane Blalock, Sally Sharp, Junior Smith, Greg Wheat, Kip Taylor, Carla King, Whitney Smith, Kelly Johnson, and Stacie Worthey.

Grades 5 and 6, Charles Bell: Shannon Blalock, Sam Whitley, Clay Green, Ivy Godbois, Allison Kirby, Spring Wimberly, Tiffany Coots, Dewayne Cash, Clark Smith, and Chris Stallings.

Moon Lake students having perfect attendance for four months are Rene Brendle, Starla Crowe, Grant Meadows; Chad Smith, Nathan Keith, Brian Blalock, Kerry Blalock, Curt Miller; Cayla Bell, Josh Goss, Trevor Strickland, Terry Durham, Josh Godbois, Jason Goss; Melissa Worthey, April Langston, Shaun Wheat; Marian Crane, Laura Schoen, Jeff Crow, Jennifer Furgerson.

Three months perfect attendance: Mandi Browder, Scotty Langston; Anna Crow; Matthew Kilgore; John Chambers, Darrin Smith; Richard Harrison, Shane Ingram.

Two months perfect attendance: Angie Hunt, Corey Ingram; Leah Sharp; Kevin Worthey, Tamra Hall, Vanessa Helms.

One month perfect attendance: Jeremiah Whitfield, David Whitfield; Michael Shandruk.



4-H Club News



Lea Smith is one of three 4-H'ers from DeKalb County who will be going to Washington, D. C., June 1-7. '86 Citizenship-Washington Focus is a week of 4-H activities that give 4-H youth an excellent opportunity to see our nation's capitol and to gain first hand knowledge of how our government operates. Lea has been an active 4-H'er for seven years. She is the daughter of Hoyle and Joyce Smith of Mentone. Her grandparents are Mr. and Mrs. Howard Smith of Mentone and Mr. and Mrs. Clyde Hawkins of Valley Head.

Moon Lake 4-H Boys

The last meeting of the Moon Lake 4-H Boys Club was held on March 3. Officiating was President Clay Green. Devotional was by Jeff Crow, with the singing of "America the Beautiful" led by Dewayne Cash, Richard Harrison, and Toby Manifold. The pledge of allegiance and 4-H club pledge were led by vice-president Clark Smith. Minutes and roll call were by secretary Nathan Baggett.

The program was by Mr. Shackelford, titled "Amp Camp and Electricity." Two sets of slides were shown. Local leader Charles Bell coordinated the contests, with William Berry as judge. First prizes were Heath Blalock, pencil box; Michael Flannigan, hobby poster; Greg Wheat, model car. Contests for next month are woodworking, 4-H Record Book, and the cleanup project. — Charlton Bell, reporter

Our Stars



The Valley Head varsity basketball season has been one of tremendous success this year. Senior Jon Bain was named to the All-area and DeKalb County team. Senior Jeff Bain and junior Scott Tate excelled as well in the All-county, the All-area, and the All-DeKalb County tournament. The season record was 20 wins to only 3 losses, and Valley Head was named DeKalb County champion and Area 16 champion. The team went on to the sub-state level, but was defeated by Madison Academy 26-25 in the first round. Congratulations to these superb athletes. Above are shown (left to right, back to front) Scott Tate, Jeff Bain, Steve Pike, and Jon Bain. — Greg Purvis

Moon Lake 4-H Girls

The Moon Lake Girls 4-H club met on March 3 with President Michelle Hopper officiating. Sally Sharp, Jennifer Furgerson and Spring Wemberly led in singing "I Love the Mountains," followed by Carlotta McGee with the devotional. Vice-president Marion Crane led the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag and the 4-H Club pledge. Minutes and roll call were by club secretary April Langston.

"Dairy Foods" was the title of the program given by Mrs. Annette Waldrop. She demonstrated what was expected of 4-H'ers at the county foods program.

Leader Joyce Smith coordinated the contests for the month. Winners were 4th grade Craft: Melissa Worthey. Baked Food: Tamra Hall. Fifth and Sixth Grade — Baked Food: Vanessa Helms. Crafts — Wendy Manifold, first; Andrea Powell, second. Project photographs — April Langston, first; Wendy Manifold, second. 4-H'er photograph, Andrea Powell. Participation ribbons for shopping tips: Heather Blansit, Loretta McGee, Sally Sharp and April Langston. — April Langston, reporter

To Our Merchants

There are basic reasons why you should advertise regularly in this publication:

(1) Business volume is dependant on conveying your message to potential customers. Each month 3,000 copies of **The Groundhog** are printed. One is placed in the mailbox of every resident of the Mentone area. It is distributed at various outlets in the DeKalb area — often picked up by tourists. It is mailed to over a hundred persons outside the Mentone area.

(2) **The Groundhog** is not a profit-making operation. Any proceeds above expenses go to the activities of the Mentone Area Preservation Association, of which it is an arm. MAPA is dedicated to "preserving and protecting the heritage, natural environment, and other unique qualities of life in the Mentone area."

Donna Bukley is advertising coordinator of **The Groundhog**. Donna is associate director of MAPA, board member of the DeKalb County Tourist Association, coordinator of the Rhododendron Festival.

Call Donna for further information or to place an ad — 634-4678 or the editors at 634-3737.

A History of Mentone, Chapter 12 — Decade of

By Zora Shay Strayhorn

A spring, a river, a cave;
A mountain, a town, a hotel,
And most of all, the people.
They came, they configured to form a community.
Across Appalachia the people came, setting the drama
of many lives.
Here we are after a hundred years.
What will we do with it?

Charles White McGehee, Editor
The Groundhog, Centennial Edition
October 1984

Around 1975 there was the breathing of a new life in Mentone — a resurgence especially beginning with events around Old Hotel Square. The census of 1982 credited the town with 511 citizens; the quilling environs swelled the population especially in the summer with the camps in full operation.

In 1975 Fritz and Jo Ann Smith bought the dormant Hitching Post from Alexander Glover. This historic structure had been inherited by him from Eleanor Glover and John Glover. The Smiths made significant improvements, selling antiques and hand-dipped ice cream.

In 1977 Kyle and Durwood "Doc" Long bought and operated the Hitching Post for two years. In 1980 Bernise Crow and her sister Jean Elrod purchased the building, named their business "Crow's Nest" and began selling antiques.

Work on St. Joseph's-on-the-Mountain Episcopal Church began on the arrival of the Reverend Graham Glover, around 1971, continuing beyond 1975. It is somewhat of a memorial to Mr. Glover. The center of the church contains the Vernon log cabin built approximately in 1864, the oldest structure in Mentone.

In 1976 two lawyers from Birmingham, Frank Young and Jim Reich, purchased the Sunset Hotel, annex to the Montone Springs Hotel, and began operation of the White Elephant Galleries, managed by Susan Collins.

It was in 1976 that Amelia Kirk Brooks bought the Mentone Inn, formerly Hal's Hotel, which she extensively revitalized. The inn was sold, leased, and sold again. In 1982 Mrs. Brooks again became owner and began a Bed 'n' Breakfast Inn. It was placed on the Alabama Registry of Historic Buildings.

A most welcome addition to Old Hotel Square was the Yellow Deli, built by the young people of the Vine Street Christian Community Church. They constructed a rustic log and stone structure which was a most successful restaurant until the group transferred to Vermont. Virginia Harris and Barbara Boyd, sisters, became owners in 1979, changing the name to the Log Cabin Deli. In 1984 the Deli was purchased by Porter and Wilma Weaver.

In 1977 the first Mentone Crafts Festival was held. Jack and Olive Jones opened the Cloudmont Ski and Golf Resort. A pilgrimage of homes was held in May.

The purchase of the Montone Springs Hotel by Sandra and Ray Padgett in 1980 was a significant event for the town. The sights and sounds of the place were televised. When the Padgetts began extensive restoration of the structure, immediate results were obvious. It was eventually listed in the National Register of Historic Buildings. Many meetings and events were held in the lobby and dining room.

Much credit is due Sandra Padgett and Bruce Bon Fleur for organizing the Montone Area Preservation Association. Without MAPA there would indubitably have been no Groundhog publication, Rhododendron Festival, Groundhog Classic Run, widely distributed tourist brochure, and many other events. MAPA was organized for the purpose of "preserving and protecting the heritage, natural environment and other unique qualities of life in the Mentone area."

In 1981 Bruce Bon Fleur purchased Cragmere from the Joneses, establishing Cragmere Manna Restaurant and Gardens. This young man graduated from the University

of Florida with a degree in political science and history. At the Daytona Young Men's Christian Association he was in charge of youth programs and director of the Marco Island YMCA.

The original cabin of Cragmere is part of the building once owned by Ned Jackson, a former slave. It was here that the young people of the Vine Street Christian Community lived during construction and operation of the Yellow Deli.

Bruce and his staff operated Cragmere Restaurant as a quality eating establishment from Thanksgiving 1981 until May 1983, when it was reopened and purchased by Randy Still, known as the Country Gourmet.

Bon Fleur opened an office in the Hitching Post. He published two issues of Mountain View, a quality magazine, three issues of Visitors Guide, and two editions of Trader's Tab magazine. In 1984 he moved to Chattanooga, where he was an executive with the YMCA.

Initial organization meeting for the Mentone Area Preservation Association was at Cragmere on Groundhog Day, February 2, 1982. It was formally organized on April 6 of that year. The first newsletter of the organization was a typical mimeographed legal size mailing. Charles White McGehee, a former newspaper editor and retired Unitarian Universalist minister, along with Bruce Bon Fleur and others, conceived the idea of a printed publication, a monthly combination newspaper and magazine. First publication was in April 1983, with Mr. McGehee as editor and his wife Jean, associate editor.

(THE CENTENNIAL)

It was Mr. McGehee who in late 1983 proposed in a resolution to Mayor Rob Hammond that 1984 was the appropriate time for the centennial celebration. A year-long series of celebrations was approved by the town council and coordinated by a committee comprised of leaders of civic organizations. They were Linda Brown of the Crafts Festival, secretary; Helen Hill, Rhododendron Garden Club; Homer Crow, MAPA; Sammy Cash, North Lookout Mountain Fire District; Leonard Shigley, Rescue Squad and American Legion; Ray and Sandra Padgett, owners of the Montone Springs Hotel, which was also celebrating its 100th anniversary; Donna Bukley for the Spring Rhododendron Festival; Marty Griffin for the Groundhog Classic Run — from the Hitching Post to the DeSoto Falls turnoff and return; Bruce Bon Fleur, Centennial brochure; publicity; Mrs. Bukley and Mr. McGehee; events; Ray Padgett; secretary, Museum and Information Center; Bernise Crow; logo; Miss Griffin and Mayor Rob Hammond.

The year-round events were well-attended by both visitors and Mentone citizens. The four seasonal festivals became annual events — the Spring Rhododendron Festival, the Crafts Festival in July, the October Colorfest, and the Musical Mountain Christmas.

(THE POST OFFICE)

Another important event of the decade of the centennial was the move into a modern post office building on January 1, 1982, a 2320 square foot building. First postmaster was Ed Mason, who had constructed a small building in 1888 near the site of the present Mentone Inn and beside a two-story building built around 1873 by H. B. (Harry) Gillette. By 1899 the two buildings were owned by the James Huron family and known as the Huron Boarding House.

Around 1902 the post office was moved to "The Mentone Store," present site of the Hitching Post, built by Guy Burgess. In 1930 Sam Graham and his partner Fred Huron bought the building, adding a room for a post office. The 1985 site of Sharon Barron's Gourdie Shop. Around 1926 the post office was moved to a small building just east of the Hitching Post.

When the town built a structure across the highway to serve as Town Hall, the post office moved into half the building in 1957. Here it remained until the new building was completed in 1982.

At the time Ed Mason was postmaster, the mail was brought up the mountain by horseback. During the '50s Arthur "Lightning" Goss was a carrier for the mail from Valley Head. An inspector for the postal service asked how the air mail got to Mentone, and the answer was "by Lightning."

Following Ed Mason the following postmasters have served: 1891, Stewart H. Congam; 1891, Harry B. Gillette; 1899, Lovena A. Huron; 1900, Harry B. Gillette; 1901, Peter K. Smith; 1902, Guy A. Burgess; 1907, Fred Huron; 1909, James Huron; 1914, Grace V. Goss; 1918, Miss Jimmy M. Brown; 1920, Mary Maude Brown; 1926, Stella M. Shigley; 1934, Hal Howe; 1934, Evelyn Jones; 1946, Eva M. Jones; 1948, Leland M. Cox; 1976, John G. Stierling (officer in charge); 1978, Benny L. Goss.

(THE INCORPORATION)

Mentone was incorporated in 1936 with Arthur Hixson the first mayor. The first council members were Paul White, Lee Davenport, Hal Howe, Fred Huron, and G. H. Hall. The clerk was Frank L. Gillen. Arthur Hixson resigned as mayor in 1939. The term was completed by Fred Huron with Tom Huron as clerk. The following mayors served after Huron:

Paul White, 1944-48; C. E. Harvey, resigned in 1961 because of ill health; Bill Pullen, acting mayor, 1961; Sam Barrett, 1961-72; Robert Daniel, 1972-76; Ethel Manifold, 1976-80; Sam Barrett 1980 until resignation in 1983 because of ill health; Barrett's term was completed by Rob Hammond who was re-elected in 1984.

Bids were let on the town hall in March 1956. The first meeting was held there June 4, 1956.

(THE RESCUE SQUAD)

The communities of Valley Head, Mentone, and Hammondsville held a meeting of about 24 men in 1962 to organize a Rescue Squad. Sam Barrett was elected captain. Their missions have ranged from searching for an escaped prisoner to looking for lost persons and rescuing a dog that had fallen over DeSoto Falls.

In 1978 most of the Mentone squad's rescue equipment was stolen. All equipment was replaced, however,

with funds from private citizens and the Alabama Band. In 1985 Pless Cox was captain and the equipment included two boats with power motors, World War II weapons carrier (utility truck), GMC equipment van and First Aid vehicle, generator and light rig truck; radios, ropes, helmets, blankets, smoke masks and similar items.

(THE RHODODENDRON GARDEN CLUB)

An active and continuing organization is the Rhododendron Garden Club. Organized on May 1, 1966, the original officers were President, Mrs. James T. Jones; Vice-President, Mrs. Claude M. Howe; Recording Secretary and Treasurer, Mrs. Ovia Blalock; corresponding Secretary, Mrs. James A. Berry.

Their many projects have included planting flowers in the park adjoining the Town Hall, abundant planting of rhododendrons throughout the community and having the town council declare the community a bird sanctuary.

(THE WOMAN'S CLUB)

Many Mentone women have participated in the Valley Head Woman's Club, organized in 1930 and a member of the national Federated Women's Clubs. Thirteen charter members were Mrs. D. C. Alexander, Mrs. Bob Ault, Miss Liza Catlan, Mrs. Paul Davenport, Mrs. Seab Davenport, Mrs. J. W. Ellis, Mrs. J. B. Holt, Mrs. Nellie King, Mrs. Anderson Maxwell, Mrs. P. T. Orr, Mrs. Carl Sloan, Mrs. W. B. Thompson, and Miss Ida Moore, first president. Purpose of the club is "to study and discuss cultural subjects, to promote social and useful relations among women of thought and culture, and to render them helpful and useful to themselves and to the community."

(THE CRAFTS FESTIVAL)

The Mentone Crafts Festival began in 1977. It is held annually at Brow Park the weekend immediately following July 4th. The first year there were about 1,000 adult admissions paying \$1.00 fees. There were 26 exhibitors. The original officers were Stanley Brown, president; Becky Steele, secretary, succeeded by Linda Brown, treasurer; Christa Brown, vice-president; Bud Ellis.

Linda Brown has served as president since 1982. By the year of the Centennial there were 75 exhibitors and demonstrators. Registration was limited because of lack of space.

(FIRE PROTECTION)

The North Lookout Fire Protection District serves the DeKalb County area atop Lookout Mountain north of DeSoto Park Headquarters. It was incorporated November 14, 1979, representing a community spirit of cooperation. LeGrant Gable, chief of police at that time, coordinated mailings with the goal of buying a \$12,000 fire truck and meeting the need for volunteer firemen, equipment, housing, telephone service, and other needs.

The original board was The Reverend Jimmy Graves, chairman, Frank Biddle, vice chairman; Willo Blackburn; Stanley Brown, Sam Cash, Maxine Baly, secretary; Eleanor Tate, treasurer; Patrick Tate, attorney, and Sammy Cash, fire chief.

Under leadership of Chief Cash many other improvements were attained. An additional fire truck was bought for \$750. A block building, originally a gun shop, was bought in downtown Mentone from Mr. and Mrs. Jackie Smith. Frank Mason donated an insulated building to house the fire trucks. An unidentified citizen donated ten complete fire-fighting suits and 1,000 feet of hose. The town council helped with monthly payments.

Under leadership of chairperson Marty Griffin many fund-raising activities were held: fish fries, bake sales, rummage sales, turkey shoots and road blocks.

Several federal and state grants were arranged by Senator Lowell Barron, representatives Ralph Burke and David Stout, as well as Kenneth Brandon of the Board of Education. Contributions have also been received from the Alabama Band's June Jam, the town of Mentone, the camps and private citizens.

Chief Cash agreed to remain until all debts had been paid. When he resigned November 1, 1985, the mortgage on the buildings, on the trucks and equipment, as well as \$6,000 in repairs on the trucks had all been paid. Money was still on hand for construction of housing for additional vehicles and equipment.

(AMERICAN LEGION)

Veterans of World War I, World War II, the Korean War and the Vietnam War have been represented in the membership of Mentone's American Legion Post 215. After WW II some Mentone veterans attended the Valley Head Post. In 1948 the local chapter was formed. Two lots were donated for a Legion Hall by Mrs. Lila Van Zandt, whose son Wallace had been killed in the second World War. Labor and various materials were donated for construction of a building. The stone fireplace was made by Lee Crow. The building is on Little River Road behind Blackburn's Store.

Charter members were Oliver Coole, Dan Smith, Joe Jones, Paul Smith, Sam Cash, Max Cash, Norrace Baly, Rudolf Lane, Martin Blalock, Wallace Lowe, Luther King Jr., Leland Cox, Leonard Shigley, Emery Brown, Carl Weigand, Bill Smith and Jim Worthy.

An active Auxiliary was formed shortly after organization of the Post.

In 1984 there were 49 members.

(MOON LAKE SCHOOL)

There is continued pride in Moon Lake Elementary School. As its students move on to Valley Head High and various colleges, they represent high standards of learning. Moon Lake School was founded in 1911, near Moon Lake, on land donated by Ed Mason. A large two-story structure was built. First teacher was Miss Lizzie Mason. Other principals in that building were Chester Alton, Ernest Shigley, Pearl Young, a Mr. Davis, Maude Brown, a Mrs. Stewart, Foye Doherty, Ben Price, and W. B. Smith.

In November 1927 the building went up in flames. A new two-story building was erected. Miss Willie Mae Davis and Miss Louise McKowen were the first two teachers. Subsequent teachers were Mr. and Mrs. Charles Adams. By 1933 enrollment had increased and a bus was added.

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f the Centennial

with Roy Crow as driver.

In 1939-40 New Union School was consolidated with Moon Lake and another room added. A lunchroom was added in the late '40's. Of the many talented teachers, Kathryn Jones was prominent, retiring in 1978 as principal. She was succeeded by Elaine Keith. When Mrs. Keith went to Valley Head as principal, her successor was Charles Bell.

(FINALE)

Listing of the Mentone Springs Hotel on the National Register of Historic Places and the Mentone Inn, Windward Inn, and Howard's Chapel on the Alabama Registry of Landmarks and Heritage brought new tourist attention. Visitors came to DeSoto Falls, DeSoto Park, and the other points of interest, especially in summer when the town is alive with the activities of the youth camps. The four seasonal festivals especially bring visitors to the town.

By 1986 there were year-round activities — on the slopes of Cloudmont Ski Resort was artificial snow, said by its maker Gary Jones "to be better than real." The Gourdie's, Sharon Barron's creatures made from gourds, attracted nation-wide media attention and involved a cottage industry employing ten local persons. Sharon's "Gourdie Book" involving these lovable non-directive creatures who listen and keep secrets has a setting in the Mentone Springs Hotel and was receiving wide circulation.

There was a positive, forward-looking attitude in the town, which yet was striving to retain its heritage, natural environment, and unique qualities.

Truly there was music in the air. There was a fulfillment of one of the town's descriptions as a "musical mountain spring." One of its troubadours was guitarist-vocalist Tony Goggans of the Malibu Mountain Band. He sang at such places as Cragsmere Manna, St. Joseph's On-the-Mountain Church, and especially at the spring and fall festivals. During these times, to tourists and Mentone citizens, he sang praises of the attributes of the town, its mountain, river and people.

Mentone continues to attract talented and interesting artists: potters, craftspeople, woodworkers, writers, painters, photographers, quilters, musicians — individuals with creativity, vision, and a certain restlessness — looking for a place to rest. Some stay, some move on.

It all began on a Greyhound bus bound for a place I only knew as "Cloudland." Images hid behind the word. Images created by a twelve-year-old's mind. Summer camp was also foreign to me, but yet there I was, amongst fifty other girls, heading to summer camp in Cloudland, Georgia.



LORI HONIG AND FRIEND

The fifteen hour drive from Miami gave me ample time to become acquainted with several of my soon-to-be cabin mates. Together we shared the exhilaration and excitement of the long awaited stretch up Lookout Mountain, to our final destination — Valley View Ranch.

Valley View brought friendships, horses, and more memories than I can even begin to recount. Little did I know, camp was to be the greatest influence in my life. I spent four summers at Valley View as a camper, and three more summers as a counselor and riding instructor. Seven summers later, I was lost in the love and respect for the surroundings.

As a counselor, I ventured around the mountain — Desoto Falls, Cloudland and Little River Canyons, Pigeon Mountain, and Flat Ford Landing (I plopped my Floridian feet into every stream I could find). The more familiar I became with the area, the more my heart wanted to be a part of it. The hardest thing about every summer was saying goodbye to the mountains and the friendships that became so valuable to me.

After graduating from the University of Florida, I moved to Atlanta. Having an advertising degree, I knew there was a lot of opportunity there. But down deep, I also knew I would be a lot closer to my beloved mountains. I landed a good job in an advertising agency, but I still wasn't as content as I wanted to be. Every Friday after work I gave my head a chance to be where my heart was — out of the city and in to the country. I lived for the weekends, for a solid year, until I finally decided to stop fighting myself. I quit my job, packed my bags and moved to Mentone.

After doing computer work at Camp Saddle Rock and ski rental at Cloudmont, I decided to apply at Valley Head's new WQRX. I was hired the following week as copywriter and am very proud to be part of RX 87's excellent team.

Sure, every now and then, I miss the big city. But that's when I take the time to watch the same spectacular sunset that used to bring tears to my eyes when I was a camper.

— Lori Honig

The Cherokees And The Methodists In The Valley



Laura Margaret Allison and Alex Woodall



Alex Woodall, John A. Barnard, Addis Barnard, and Zack Barnard

In 1834 as the forced removal of the Cherokees began the "Trail of Tears," there were 1,028 Methodist Episcopal Cherokees who attended church services at one of several "preaching points" on the Willis Valley Circuit of the Lower Cherokee Mission of the Tennessee Conference. One of these places was lower Sulphur Springs near Merico Bakery between Valley Head and Fort Payne.

Also in 1834 the first white settlers' Methodist class meeting was organized at Nicholson cabin near Fort Payne. By 1838 only 500 Methodist Episcopal Cherokees remained. However, the white settlers' meetings grew in size, and in 1852 a group was organized in the Valley Head area. The present Valley Head United Methodist Church grew out of this group, and became a church in 1871. The Fort Payne United Methodist Church was organized as a mission of the Valley Head group in 1885.

Recently Alex Woodall of Birmingham, archivist for the North Alabama Methodist Conference, visited the Valley Head church and spent the afternoon looking over church records and visiting with members.

Woodall inspected the original 1852-75 class meeting book which lists family names such as Gardner, Hicks,

Welch, Biddle, Spring, Lumbertsin, Spergin, Davenport, Parsons, Ethruga, Hawk, Thornberry, Wright, Hall, Dean, Warren, Peacock, Wade, White, Long, Williams, and Morgan.

He also gathered information from an 1874 Methodist Episcopal Church South Discipline concerning the original North Alabama Conference boundaries. The church roll books he saw date back to 1871.

Laura Margaret Allison is church historian. She shared with Mr. Woodall her copy of an 1889 biography of John B. McFerrin, a circuit rider in this area. Mr. Woodall also talked with John and Addis Barnard and with Zack Barnard about their and Mrs. Allison's cousin, the Rev. Matt Davenport, a long-time preacher in this conference. John Barnard presented Mr. Woodall with some letters from the Rev. J. W. Norton to his grandfather, concerning affairs of the conference. — Ann Q. Lohr, pastor, Valley Head and Mentone United Methodist Churches

Mentone

Where Lookout Mountain narrowly misses the sky,
There remains an abundance of caring, of family pride,
And nature provides a lasting natural high:

Where tradition and progress are highly segregated,
Tomorrow mostly ignored and seldom debated,
Yesterday carefully nurtured, today merely tolerated.

Teeming with God's great and awesome beauty,
Here people feel a one-ness, a sense of duty
To preserve our dignity, our heritage most resolutely.

Alabama's "Best Kept Secret" is highly prone
To others seeking this haven as their home —
For no where else is quite comparable to Mentone.
— Jerry Abbott

Scout Troop 45

Boy Scout Troop 75 of Fischer, Alabama, took a three-day trip to Gatlinburg on February 21. The trip was originally intended as a snow camp, but temperatures did not reach freezing. Camping, hiking, and orienteering skills were worked on by some scouts. Dewayne Williams, Brian Crowe, Greg and Brad Purvis, Jason Smith and Camp Ranger Mickey Bobo attended from Mentone.

Another outing was held March 6-8 at Comer Scout Reservation in Mentone, where cooking and athletics were worked on for merit badges and skill awards.

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Friendly Town, Friendly People

(Continued From Page 1)

each of her businesses has been improved with scrubbing, painting, and carpeting, as well as with plumbing and wiring additions.

Ruby began working for the McNutts when they operated the store where William and Willo Blackburn's Superette is now. This was the year she was fifteen and first married. "I've been married and working for most of my life — and just about seven days a week, too!" Ruby says.

The first store of her own was called "Ruby's Grocery" and was on the old Manderson place, a short distance from the center of Mentone. She sold good used clothing, socks, bread, snacks, milk and candy. Then she moved to the heart of Mentone, across from the Hitching Post, for six years. She next went to Valley Head near Cooper's Appliance Company. After eight months, by request, she opened a store in Sulphur Springs. The following year she came back to Mentone to the present McGee's location. Cancer surgery made it necessary for her to sell this business and to help her parents for a year. She and Blalock were divorced. Then she purchased Bill Russell's Chevron station, later selling to the Fergusons.

Ruby is proud of having raised "three fine children." Phyllis Roberts lives in Rossville, Georgia, and is secretary for her husband's sheet metal and guttering business; Phyllis has three sons. James "Bud" Blalock and his wife live in Hilton Head, South Carolina. Bud is superintendent of Action Dry Wall and has traveled all over the south, working on construction of malls and large buildings. He has one son and three daughters. Steve Blalock lives in Gallatin, Tennessee, and has two sons. He is superintendent for Cardin Construction in Nashville.

Ruby has been married to Russell Stalvey for twenty-one years. Russell, from Henagar, is also one of nine

children. He shares Ruby's love for family and enjoyment of hard work.

During all of these years of working, usually arriving at her stores at 5 or 6 a.m., Ruby never thought of being frightened. However, this changed last January 10th. She vividly remembers each moment and circumstances of the armed robbery that occurred at Ruby's Variety in Valley Head.

"Naomi (her sister) was keeping me company, sitting on a stool behind the front counter. I was adding up checks to go to the bank. It was ten minutes past twelve. We didn't notice that a car had pulled up outside until someone yelled in a hateful way, 'Turn on the gas!'"

"The amount of gas pumped was \$15.03. A young man came in and walked right back to the drink boxes. While he was walking back, he said, 'I want a carton of cigarettes.'"

"He came back up front without a drink. I asked him what kind of cigarettes he wanted. 'Marlboros,' he said. I told him that my cigarette supplier hadn't come yet that day, but I could make up a carton, mixing in a few soft packs. He stood looking at the floor, and I thought, 'He's about to ask me for credit.'"

"All of a sudden, he took a pistol out of his pocket and set it on the edge of the counter. He looked down at the gun and said, 'Give me all of your money.'"

"I laughed. 'You're kidding,' I said. At that, he raised the gun up level with my heart and said, 'I said, give me all of your money — and hurry!'"

"Realizing that he meant business, I asked if he wanted the checks on the counter. 'No, the money — and hurry!'"

The Gourdie Report

Did you know that in addition to Willie Nelson, Willard Scott, weather man on the Today Show, Roy Acuff, Minnie Pearl, and Randy Owen of the group Alabama are all owners of Gourdie's, those inimitable creatures made in Mentone by Sharon Barron?

These are some of the interesting tid-bits included in Alan Patureau's article in the February 23 "Dixie-Living" of *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*. The Gourdie's were also featured on February 22 on Country 13 of Birmingham's Channel 13 (which opened with stunning aerial photos of Mentone), and on Channel 11's News Atlanta on February 27.

Patureau's article included several photographs of Sharon and the Gourdie's and a map giving directions from Atlanta to Mentone. He cited Sharon's statement to her then husband, Lowell Barron, "I'm going to make a million dollars out of these things."

Once again the story was told of the Gourdie's as Mentone's largest year-round industry, employing two full-time persons, Cindy Strickland and Christy Powell, and eight "cottage industry" workers who fashion parts at home, bringing them into the Gourdie Shop for the final process.

Mention was also made of "The Gourdie Book," written by Sharon, with locale in the Mentone Springs Hotel, and embodying a non-judgmental philosophy on the part of these creatures who listen lovingly and never reveal secrets.

The Mobile Worm Farm

When asked if he ever cleaned out the bed of his pickup, Phil Howard had this to say:

I was helping a neighbor right outside Mentone with shoveling out his barn last fall. And we just threw the manure in the back of my old pickup truck. Thought I might sell it for fertilizer, you know, but then I guess the maid never got to emptying it out again. Must have driven all winter with that stuff in the back there. It didn't smell too bad on cold days, but I do kind of avoid driving when it's warm and sunny. When the flies get too bad, I just drive real fast through the woods and try to lose 'em. The truck does, of course, totally nullify my social life.

Anyway, one day a few weeks ago, I happened to throw a shovel in the back and it kicked up a clod of that hooey, and, man! You should have seen the worms in there! Hundreds of 'em, big around as your finger.

Naturally I began to figure out how to make some money out of this. Remembered I couldn't sell them to a certain hamburger chain, then I thought of fishing. Sure! This summer I'll just drive down to Little River or maybe Lake Weiss and sell the worms for bait. And if nobody buys any, I'll still have a good excuse for loafing around the water all summer. Beats working.

So to answer the question, no, I'll probably never clean out the bed of my pickup. — Duncan Lill

"With that, I pushed the button that opened the cash register. I began grabbing maybe fifty ones, and some hung in the drawer. He grabbed for them. 'Oh, honey,' I said, 'Be careful with that gun!' I repeated this to him."

"I could see myself lying on the floor dead, the way you've seen on TV in similar circumstances. I thought of my son Steve — oh, if that were my child! Naomi crept directly behind me, and I could hear her praying."

"The young man began scooping wads of ones into his pocket and finally put the gun back into another pocket."

"Some people have joked about the robbery — but it wasn't funny to me. When you think you might die, you don't think such a thing is worth laughing about. For two weeks I almost had a nervous breakdown. I'm still leery of strangers."

Some of Ruby's friends have expressed the view that if she had pulled a pistol from underneath the counter and tried to shoot it out with the young man, she would not be alive today.

"I like people and like to be around them. I've made new friends since I've been back in Valley Head."

The Groundhog asked Ruby for her opinion about the future of Mentone.

"I'd like for Mentone to grow some more where people could make a better living there. Nothing too big or tacky, of course, just enough tax monies taken in to improve the roads and make it more beautiful."

"We need a bigger welcome sign. People need to take more pride in their homes and to keep their yards clean and neat. I wish we could get rid of the litter problem. Maybe if we keep at it, we can make Mentone cleaner and even better than it is."

Rhododendron Quilters



Shown above quilting the Rhododendron Quilt to be given to the lucky ticket holder during the Festival on May 18 are Maggie Cordell, chairman; Stella Crowe, and Bernise Crow.

A Sad Loss



Shown above during last year's Rhododendron Festival are Carolyn Brawner, Terry Hutcheson, and Ronald "Tubby" Brawner.

Ronald D. "Tubby" Brawner, 44, of Huntsville, died Saturday, February 22. "Tubby," a Nashville native, was a well known professional country music entertainer and a frequent visitor to Mentone. He was co-author of "The Lady of the Garden," the ballad of the ghost who haunts the Mentone Springs Hotel. He performed at the Rhododendron festivals and at numerous private parties in Mentone.

During the thirty years of his career, "Tubby" toured with top names in country music and performed across the country and in Vietnam with the USO.

There was no insurance, and large medical bills were incurred during "Tubby's" illness. Donations may be sent to his wife, Carolyn, and two sons to:

Ronald D. Brawner Memorial Fund
661 Samson Ave.
Lacey's Spring, AL 35754

— Terry G. Hutcheson

Business News

Because of her recent heart attack, Jean Seal has been forced to lease her Strawberry Patch restaurant, located at Furgerson's, to Virginia Elkins. The restaurant will be open from 10:30 till 9, six days a week; closing day is Tuesday. Short order plates and sandwiches are always available as well as slices or whole homemade pies.

Sheila Johnson Wells has opened Sheila's Style Salon, 634-4788, in Marie Shadgett's former Knotty Knots shop behind Whatley's Store and Service Station. Mrs. Wells moved to Mentone from Dayton, Ohio, last April.

Nightingale Artworks is located in the front of the Hitching Post. Ceramics are by Darlene Clifton Keith. Darlene's pottery has a unique blue color; she has exhibited at the Crafts Festival for the past two years. Other natural colors shown in her ceramics are a mauve and brown earth tones.

Ellis Clark, owner of the Mentone Hardware and Mountain Lighting companies, hopes to be in his new rustic building by the middle of April. Presently located in the Town Hall Building, the hardware store will move into some 2400 square feet a short distance down highway 117. Vicki Bunn is the new manager.

The Fort Payne depot restoration project moves along nicely, with Mentone contractor Sam Sutton. Contributions may be sent to Landmarks of DeKalb Museum, P. O. Box 659, Fort Payne, Alabama (35967). Mentone architect Guy Staub is handling the improvements on the DeKalb County jail.

My Favorite Things is a new gift shop next to the Log Cabin Deli. Judy Sims is the owner-operator. Featured items will be crafts and antiques.

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Leftovers

By Jean McGehee

Roger Maris's death over the holidays reminded me of an experience in 1960 when we first moved to Florida. We were in the Tampa-Clearwater area for a church conference. As we came off the elevator one morning, there was a rumble from the stairway coming up from the coffee shop on the ground level. Looking over the railing, I saw two of the most wonderful specimens of young manhood I'd ever seen. They were lean, tanned, blond, laughing with white teeth — Roger Maris and Mickey Mantle, open collared in sport coats. I suppose Maris was at his peak then, rather like Dale Murphy now or a couple of years ago. I like to remember Roger Maris not as a man in his 50's ravished by cancer, but as the young Greek god he was in the early '60's, worthy of adoration.

We had prolonged warm spells during November and January until the thermometer plunged back into the low figures. Now is the leisurely time for the arrival of garden catalogues, day-dreaming about spring gardens, and starting seedlings indoors. Every time I look into the freezer, I see the speckled butterbean seeds the Raymond Browns gave us. Lydia Speed gave us some seed garlic from a Colorado son-in-law. Doug Walters, a friend visiting us just before Christmas, said, "I love to see the garden resting beneath the light dusting of snow and wood ashes, sleeping before it awakens in the spring." So do I.

One of our Christmas gift books was *On the Road with Charles Kuralt* (G. P. Putnam's Sons/NY, 1985), pieces taken from his Sunday morning TV show. Three entries are worth sharing:

Douglas Duncan, newspaper editor in Shelton, Nebraska, on how to tell a small town from a city: "You know you're in a small town when you don't use turn signals because everybody knows where you're going . . . when you speak to each dog you pass, by name, and he wags at you . . . if you dial a wrong number and talk for fifteen minutes anyway . . . when Third (or First) Street is on the edge of town . . . when someone asks you how you feel and spends the time to listen to what you have to say."

Mentone, Texas, one of the other three Mentones we've discovered (the others are in Indiana and California), is in Loving County, which has one person for each seven square miles. They used to have oil, but now that is dwindling away. They have no "roads . . . radio . . . newspaper . . . McDonald's, Wendy's, schools, plumbers, undertakers." The problem is, there's no drinking water. "There's not much of anything to speak of, except wide-open spaces and fresh air, and the beauty of the west Texas sunset. It is the emptiest county in the country."

And finally, about covered bridges in Vermont: "They covered bridges to keep the roadway dry and to strengthen the structure and to make it easier to drive farm animals across the streams . . . And we are letting them fall down. By flood and by neglect, America has lost half her covered bridges in the past twenty years. There are fewer than a thousand left . . . Covered bridges still exist in New England because New Englanders cherish them so. Besides, they're attentive to what's written in the scriptures, and it's right there in Proverbs 22:28 — 'Remove not the ancient landmark, which thy fathers have set.' . . . There are always a saving few who make the link across the river of time — the connection between the way we are and the way we used to be."

Did You Know?

DeSoto State Park was built by the CCC in the '30s and covers some 6,000 acres and 40 miles of roads.

Pig In A Poke



You've heard the phrase "a pig in a poke?" Mentone newcomer Patti Wheeler found a pig in a paper bag in Hammondville on New Year's night. Driving a guest and her young son home after dinner, Patti noticed something beside highway 11. She thought it was a dog stuck in a sack and backed up to help the animal to escape. It wasn't a dog, but a young pig, promptly named Porky-Poo. "I had been missing my garbage disposal in Chattanooga," Patti says, "and now we have one." Husband Gil Wheeler built a pen, house, and trough for Porky. The Wheelers wanted to move to the country and chose Mentone. They had envisioned animals like horses to go with their chow dog, but had drawn the line on pigs and chickens. However, Porky has already won their hearts to a degree. She is ugly and smells bad, but she gets lonesome for company and follows Patti and Gil around her pen when they visit her. "She's not meant to be killed," says Patti. "I think she's meant to be a mother." Porky certainly had an auspicious arrival to the Wheeler farm, being an orphaned pig in a poke.

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