

It's not only acceptable, it's expected. And it's fun.

A tip to Doctor Henry K. for next year -- check with your neighbor, Claude K. before decorating next year...he can lend you some expert advice and save you a lot of frustration.

January 2, 1991

Every Time History Repeats Itself... The Cost Goes Up!

Whoever said that had it right! Not that we can do much about it, but it is an accurate observation.

Here we are at the beginning of a new year with prospects looking "dim" to "dull," at best, for the beginning of this last decade of the century. That is, if you're expecting "peace and prosperity."

The immense build-up of American Armed Forces in the Middle East certainly has the attention of the world. If our leader, our President and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, does what he says he is going to do, then we may, within less than one month, find ourselves at war in a place that is very foreign to most of us.

One cannot help asking oneself some soul-searching questions about this whole thing. Forget all that propaganda about this being a fight to stop "naked aggression." That is only a smoke screen. The public is not stupid. This bone of contention is about oil. It also translates into our economy... our very jobs, in some cases, and also a standard of living that we have insisted upon whether or not we had the money to pay the bills or not.

It's not that this isn't important to us. It is. But whether or not it is worth one ounce of American blood being spilled under the present circumstances is a question only you can answer for yourself. It keeps coming up in my efforts to sort out a few truths that if, for example, Canada sent troops into our state of Maine and occupied part of it, how many Saudi troops could we really bet on to come over here and help us take it back?

On the other hand, we do not like what this fellow Saddam Hussein has done to his neighbors. We don't know that much about

his neighbors, but apparently they were friendly enough to us in the big business of buying and furnishing oil as are the Saudis. However, according to our own Senator Hollings, their system of government is a lot different from ours and not very much different from the unfriendly neighbor that just took over their property. Hollings says, according to a media statement, that this country, Kuwait, is not worth the life of one American.

However, on the other side of the coin, one must consider the possibility, that if Saddam gets away with simply taking his neighbor's property, then who will be next?

It is not an easy question for us to answer. It's sort of a "damned if you do, and damned if you don't" arrangement. Our President is supposedly privy to much more information about this matter than we are. We hope he is, and we certainly endorse the statement a local lady expressed recently in a News story. The mother of Phillip Lear, said "I certainly hope President Bush knows what he is doing." She was referring to the Middle East situation. Who knows any better than Mrs. Lear what happens when the Commander-In-Chief issues an order. She and her family lost a valuable son in the invasion of Panama. The entire area continues to mourn this loss.

Whatever the decision on this matter, as history begins again to repeat itself, you can bet the cost will go up...lives will be lost, and blood that is priceless will be spilled. It's not likely we'll get much help from all those "friends and neighbors" at the U. N. when it comes to pitching in some money to help pay the bills. They are mostly "fair weather friends." You can bet on that for 1991.

January 9, 1991

"I've Fallen And I Can't Get Up..."

Television has a way of creating instant celebrities. Even with commercials. One of the most recent is the lady who stars in a commercial advertising a device to assist persons who have accidents and are unable to reach a phone. It's called "life-line" and no doubt, really has some value to older people or those forced to live isolated.

The interesting thing is the way the idea is presented. A little old

lady is shown lying on the floor using the device, she yells, "I've fallen and I can't get up." Nowadays you can hear the phrase repeated in different areas of the country, for the presentation evidently "rung a bell" in the minds of many viewers.

The commercials are sometimes more interesting than the programs where they appear, and probably cost more money to produce. We are oriented to t.v. nearly everywhere, and sooner or later you will come under its influence...either directly or indirectly.

The lady featured in the above commercial, a Mrs. Fletcher, from parts unknown, was reportedly hired by a bar or lounge in Atlanta to visit their premises, perhaps for a fee, but the whole idea was disrupted. It seems that Mrs. Fletcher had actually fallen somewhere, bruised or broke some ribs and was unable to fulfill the arrangement. I wonder if she actually did use the device for help in this instance. On the other hand, it may be a good idea for bars and lounges to issue these devices to customers as they enter the door. When, and if, they become overindulged and can't either crawl back to the bar or out the door, they could then, more efficiently, call for some help.

Children probably learn more from t.v. than any other single source of information. Some of it is worthwhile and good, but the argument goes on as to how to sort it out. The ultimate responsibility is with the adult in charge. Therein lies most of the problem, that are inherent, for too often there is no responsible person in charge. The youngsters can and do program their own likes.

What we think of it isn't likely to change matters suddenly. But we will live with the consequences...be they good or bad.

Some have admonished such programs as "The Simpsons." English teachers especially are touched when students emulate these characters and their language usage. Some parents believe if it is on television it must be true. No questions asked. Just as some believe if a matter is presented in the printed word, then it is true and can be absolutely relied upon. How easily we can be fooled is evident every day. We are influenced by the truth and the non-truth alike. It is part of us, and we somehow have to deal with it each day.

The lessons we learn will either be our salvation or our downfall as daily problems must be solved. There are ways and systems that can help. Any who have faced the ordeal of addiction...whether to food, alcohol, drugs or whatever, know the only way to find a helping hand is to look on the end of your arm. The individual must decide for himself what he is worth to himself and begin from there. Then, and only then, can real help be initiated. Most of the time that means you must mentally reduce your problems to doing everything positive about them just for this one day. Yesterday is history. It won't change. Tomorrow, you may never see, thus you only have just this one day to handle your problems. Anyone knows that you can be constructive in your life plan just for this one day. This is it. Let's be alert in 1991, and hope we don't have to yell, "I've fallen and I can't get up!"

January 16, 1991

Collards Were "The Order Of The Day"

C. R. Hunt, my father, and City Mail Carrier in Westminster for more than 35 years, also knew how to grow a garden. One of his specialties was growing collards. He took great pride in his ability to produce these big, green, leafy vegetables. In a area where he gardened, just to the rear of the home now occupied by Clarence Satterfield on Riley Avenue, he planted several rows of collards. He knew exactly how to care for them since gardening was a useful hobby for him back in the 1940s and in later years, too.

Now, I realize that not everyone is fond of collard greens, but a great many people do like them. It was a kind of tradition to cook and serve collards, black eye peas, or maybe turnips, turnip greens, and peas on New Year's Day each year. It was, according to superstition, supposed to bring you good luck for the remaining part of the year. The greens supposedly represented "money" for those who partook, or something like that.

I can recall very well the almost repulsive odor of smelling these big leafy green vegetables cooking on the stove but after they were cooked and served with the traditional peas, hot cornbread and

other flavoring such as hot peppered vinegar, they weren't too bad if you were hungry enough to eat. No doubt, the nutritional value was there. These things cooking smelled bad enough to let you know that probably the vitamin content was better than medicine than what the doctor ordered.

Eating collards was a tradition in the Hunt household. They were served whether you liked them or not, as was several other items that I later found out were actually good for you from a dieting standpoint.

Another thing I remember about these collards was the fact that they were not considered at their prime for cooking until a heavy frost fell on them. My dad knew how to grow these things and he gave a lot of them away to friends and others. He also sold enough of them to keep up the cost of some of his gardening supplies. Eating collards might be compared to sinning. Someone observed, "It ain't too bad once you get use to it."

This growing and eating of the collard greens was tradition as was several other items in the Hunt home during that period some 50 or so years ago.

I was believed by my mother that a certain amount of purging was needed by every human being periodically. It really didn't matter what your "main pain" happened to be when she decided her young'un needed a dose of medicine. Her favorite medicine was some kind of supposed "liver medicine." Actually, her prescription had very little, if anything, to do with the liver. It was far more active in the intestinal tract and the bowel area. About two or three times each year if a young'un looked a bit "peeked," she would proceed to dose out a big spoonful of that "god-awful" black medicine that came in a little square metal box and looked a lot like snuff. Now friends, this stuff was potent. It had the capacity to cause an internal explosion not unlike a volcanic action.

No doubt about it, if you could survive the collard season in dad's garden and mother's "cleaning out" period, you had to be tough and no doubt a survivor of many things unknown but would surely follow.

Collards are still good about this time of year, if you don't have to eat them everyday. But I never did like that "liver medicine" and don't until this very day.

January 23, 1991

Things And Rings May Come And Go

If you've ever lost anything -- and who hasn't and almost dismissed it from your thinking, the you'll understand what this is all about.

Perhaps it was at least 25 or more years past and I was already caught up in the printing and publishing business in Westminster. Things seemed a lot simpler back then, but also more difficult in some ways. The News was printed by the old "hot lead" system of setting type on the Linotype. Frank W. Hix was the chief operator in that area and I, and anyone else associated with the paper, did whatever was necessary to get 8 pages printed on the old hand fed Babcock No. 6 Optimus press each week. It was, indeed, a battle that few today can relate to. Among those associated with this task at this particular time was one R. L. (Bob) Grogan, friend and neighbor who continues to live on Doyle Street along with his wife, Evelyn. Both are widely known and are neighbors of unequalled value anywhere.

Back to the point. One Saturday night, Bob, Evelyn, Aline and I were cooking hamburgers or something when the phone rang. It was Mr. G. M. (Mish) Barnett, a well-known educator and farmer from Oak Grove, a community just up the road about four miles or so.

He reported that a swarm of locust had come on him and was actually "cleaning" the leaves from fruit trees. He wanted to know if I was interested in getting a picture of this event. Naturally, anything that "smacked" of local news was interesting to me, so off we went...Bob Grogan, who was also working at the News at that time, Evelyn, Aline and I to see this spectacle.

The camera we used was a 4x5" Speed Graphic. It was a trademark and standard for press photography. It used sheet-loaded slides and or film packs. The flash unit was a battery-powered sys-

tem that featured exploding tungsten bulbs. When ready and fired, these bulbs became very hot, thus there was a ejection button that was supposed to release them so another could be inserted.

I was the camera-man that night. On my left hand I had a prized college ring that I had acquired while attending the University of Georgia in Athens. It was more of a status-symbol at that time, and I was rather proud of it, since some of my people and teachers had some reservations about whether I could ever successfully complete high school. It was virtually an "impossibility" that any college or university would allow me to hang around very long. Time and military service changed my thinking and attitude about training. I was more than serious about going to school at the University of Georgia's famous Henry W. Grady School of Journalism. Nowadays, I think they call it some kind of Communication Institute which also includes radio and television along with print media.

Anyway, that Georgia ring was very important to me. I wore it religiously. Though on my small finger, it looked like I wore an oversized "brass knuckle."

I grabbed the camera and proceeded with the "shot." When the "red hot" flash bulb failed to eject, I simply reached into the reflector and grabbed the bulb to help it out of the way. The bulb was still hot! I knew it immediately and slung it into the darkness. Soon I discovered I also had slung my prized ring into the darkness, also.

OK, I said, I'll come back tomorrow and find it. A good idea, but it didn't work! Not only did I, and Grogan and a lot of other friends searched the area - but alas! - no ring.

This was well over 25 years ago. But miracles can happen. Last week - one evening Nick Williams and wife stood at the door. I've known Nick for several years since he attended high school and later became associated with Dunlop Sports. This is a valued, local golf ball manufacturing plant.

But, truthfully, I haven't seen much of him in recent years. Our paths didn't often cross, so it was a surprise when he and his wife, Glenda, stood at our door.

I could not imagine what his mission was - but just as we wel-

comed their company, Nick held out a closed hand and said, "You may want this!"

Indeed, I did! My old Georgia ring reappeared. It was like a miracle. Untold hours by friends and some armed with geiger counters had searched to no avail. But here it was - in great shape. No blemishes and intact - even with my name engraved inside - which also included a wrongly engraved middle initial "K" - which should have been an "L."

Nick had succeeded in finding the ring with a sophisticated metal detector. He said it was buried under four inches of dirt in the area left of the Barnett driveway.

The house has long since been gone, and I believe Nick heard of the missing ring through an associate of his wife, Carol Shook, who also had worked at the News office a few years past.

To all who looked for the ring and remembered this incident, I am eternally grateful. I am especially indebted to Nick Williams who, through his skill and modern technology, worked this bit of "magic."

Maybe I can somehow return the favor - "Thanks to all."

January 30, 1991

When Rationing Was Necessary...

The push-button, up-to-the-minute war we're in today, somehow makes one feel strange as it unfolds on a t.v. screen in the comfort of home.

It certainly isn't a "picnic" for our service personnel...and the threat of harm, injury or death is just as real as ever. Only the actors and methods have changed.

These United States have been preserved at a great price... a great sacrifice of human life so we can enjoy the benefits of freedom. The war in the gulf, for whatever reason we're involved, has brought the majority of the people of this country, and indeed, several other nations, to deal with a very sick dictator. Our service people and leaders need and deserve our full support to bring it to a successful end. Then, and only then should our differences at

home become more important.

Loud-mouth protesting and demonstrations public or private can only lend comfort to the enemy and undermine the total effort and sacrifice of our brave service personnel. We're in it, and I believe we will win it.

This strange but nevertheless serious conflict in the Persian Gulf brings to mind some of the things about other wars past. Particularly, the problems of WWII. While we were spared of bombing in this country, there were some constant reminders that we were engaged in war.

Rationing of many consumer items was necessary. Gasoline, for example, was rationed at 3 gallons per week for most folk who performed non-essential jobs. You were certainly aware of being "out" most of the time. Sugar was also rationed, as were tires, tubes and some items of clothing -- shoes, in particular. Very few people had to actually be denied necessities provided they were conservative, but the fact was many items were not available in big amounts.

Too, there were some items available on the "black market." Some dealers were able to get a more plentiful supply of items and sell at higher "black market" prices. For example, the cars back then were not nearly so fuel efficient. Twelve to 15 miles per gallon of gas was considered really good for most vehicles. Gas was selling for about 20 to 25 cents per gallon and kerosene could be bought for 5 to 10 cents per gallon. Kerosene was generally available, but gas was usually in short supply unless you knew a "black market" source where the stuff was available for about \$1 per gallon. This is not to suggest that all dealers had a "black market" supply, but there were some in nearly every community. Same thing for sugar, tires and tubes. This was against the law at the time, and a few were caught and prosecuted for rationing violations.

The business of acquiring gas was very important to any young person who was lucky enough to have access to a vehicle. In South Carolina at that time, if you qualified as a driver, the state highway department would issue a valid license at the age of 14 with parental consent. I was driving -- illegally -- at the age of 11 or 12, but not much. My father had a '31 model A Ford, and my brother

who was already overseas with the army had left a beautiful '40 Ford at home. It was tempting, and I learned driving in the back yard in a more-or-less do-it-yourself effort. Most of the time, however, I was grounded because of no fuel and / or parental consent. Rationing, in general, was a very small sacrifice that the majority of people endured cheerfully to aid in the effort to win the war. We could, once again, use some of those old timey values. And we should. This is not time for playing games.

February 6, 1991

To Recycle Is Not New Idea

The idea to re-use is not new. Many of us are familiar with it from past experience. Not because it was a popular thing to do, but often because it was necessary.

Otis Mason keeps alert to many ideas. He knows a great deal about how things are constructed from an engineering point as well as the history and evolution of ideas regarding our heritage. Otis is very knowledgeable of internal combustion engines as well as how many of our famous water-wheel driven corn and grist mills came into being.

This information has been accumulated over many years of reading and first hand experience. Therefore, he is constantly alert to those who know and write of these matters and especially those who have been making a concentrated effort to protect the few remaining "old mills" left in these United States.

Recently, he passed along a copy of a book entitled, "Textile Bags" by Anna Lue Cook. This illustrated edition is a guide to a collection of sacks. Especially, feed, flour, sugar, burlap, clothing, quilts and more!

I, and others who are at least 60 years old or more, well remember that feed, seed and flour sacks were never thrown away after the contents were used. My grandmothers -- both of them, made use of the textile bags. They were turned into clothing in many instances and also excellent household items such as sheets, counterpanes, quilts, etc.

It was not a practice of “good sense” to throw anything that could be re-used in any way. This idea is what we’re finally coming back to these days.

In the book, “Textile Bags” there is a bit of poetry that explains the whole idea:

Depression Flour-Sack Underwear

*When I was just a maiden fair,
Mama made our underwear
With many kids and Dad's poor pay,
We had no fancy lingerie.
Monograms and fancy stitches
Did not adorn our Sunday britches;
Pantywaists that stood the test
Had “Swans Down” on my breast.
No lace or ruffles to Enhance,
Just “Jockey Oats” on my pants.
One pair of Panties beat them all,
For it had a scene I still recall-
Chickens were eating wheat
Right Across my little seat.
Rougher than a grizzly bear
Was my flour-sack underwear,
Plain, not fancy and two feet wide
And tougher than a hippo's hide.
And through Depression each Jill and Jack
Wore the sturdy garb of sack.
Waste not, want not, we soon learned;
That a penny saved is a penny earned.
There were curtains and tea towels, too,
And that is just to name a few,
But the best beyond compare
Was my flour-sack underwear.*

February 13, 1991

Little Things Often Long Remembered

Sidney Ballenger, retired and beloved principal of Walhalla High School, has forever touched some lives. His kind disposition and genuine interest in people, as well as God’s natural beauty, has

established him among the “greats” who have inhabited Oconee County.

He recently celebrated a birthday... somewhere in the ‘70’s, I think, but that isn’t nearly so important as the man himself.

One of those he clearly impressed is Dr. Henry R. Kuemmerer, resident family physician for the past 25 years. Henry was once a science student of Sidney Ballenger at Walhalla High School. Undoubtedly, somewhere along the way, Sidney touched a “nerve” in the young man that sent him forward to aspire to greater learning.

Or, for whatever reason, he showed a keen interest in Henry, as he did all those students who were privileged to be a part of his teaching career.

To help Sid celebrate his birthday, Dr. Kuemmerer, decided to invite him to an evening of dining at the local Capri’s Italian restaurant in Seneca. It should be pointed out that Dr. Kuemmerer, while he strives to give good medical advice, sometimes has a problem with his own eating habits and discipline. But he does give a lot of “lip service” and, on occasion, actually exhibits limited restraint.

In the atmosphere of this eating establishment, Sidney found himself celebrating with friends, food and drink along with conversation. Attending along with Sidney and Henry were Jack and Aline Hunt, Buddy and Mabel Grant, ‘Chuck’ Mauldin and Sidney’s grandson, West McAdams, now a junior at Clemson in Engineering School. Another friend of Sid’s who was unable to attend because of a “bad cold” was Maxie Duke, also a retired teacher from Walhalla.

How and why people are remembered “cropped up” in the dinner table conversation. Sid pointed out several characters he has known down through the years and events that caused him to bring them forward in sudden recall. One mentioned was the late Sam Hunnicutt who served Oconee County for many years as Sheriff. It seems that Sam was always looking for his chief deputy around the courthouse and inquired, “Has anyone around here seed Seab?”

Later, the name of Estelle Cox Moore, better known as “the Goat Woman” came into conversation. Mabel Grant recalled experiences that involved Ms. Moore, since she had worked as secretary and

dispatcher in the Sheriff's office for several years.

Estelle loved goats, and that's an understatement, but Sidney pointed out, that she is, indeed, remembered with great interest. 'Chuck' Mauldin happily recalled some of his experiences when he and I both were employed by J.A. Gallimore at the Seneca Journal. 'Chuck' later worked for and retired from the telephone company. He recalled that he had been "fired" three times in his life -- two of them by the same man.

No doubt Sidney Ballenger could "toss out" names of those he knew and lives 'touched' along the way with great compassion and genuine care in the near endless stream. No greater tribute is needed.

Expressed in Benjamin Franklin's autobiography, "Men should be taught as if you taught them not, and things unknown propos'd as things forgot." Somehow Sidney Ballenger seems to encompass this and a whole lot more. A great citizen of Oconee County...as old timers point out, 'the Salt of the Earth.'

February 20, 1991

The "Goat Woman" Created Interest

Estelle Cox Moore, now deceased, was known throughout the county. She was, perhaps, better known as "the goat woman." The reason was she loved and possessed many goats. Of course, there is no law against loving goats, or even living with them...as many can attest...but it does sort of defy the norm in this particular area.

It was at least 30 years ago when Estelle and her goats became the center of controversy. At this time she lived in the Newry area below Seneca. The home she occupied was being reclaimed by the owner, and she was directed to move. This legal "push" became a "shove" at some point, and the sheriff at that time, Eddie Weathers, directed his deputies to assist Estelle in moving. They, in turn, enlisted the support of local game wardens. Included among them at that time were Levis Jaynes and Frank Cashin. Also involved somewhere in this process was Chief Deputy Sheriff C. L. Smith.

As directed by the court, Estelle was removed from the premises. Also, a rather large number of goats that lived with her and were

dearly loved, near to a point of worship. The game wardens loaded up a big truck of goats and brought them with Estelle's worldly goods to her new home in the Brasstown area. Silas Butts was going strong at that time. He often opened up his home and premises to any less fortunate human. Thus, Estelle, was moved in, perhaps in the little one-room school house that Silas had built with his own funds to help teach many of the orphan children in his care.

The goats, too, were unloaded, but it wasn't long before the Sheriff and Wildlife department got a 'hearing' from the US Forestry Department. The local Forest Ranger said that these newly installed goats were very active and were doing damage to US Forest property -- eating little trees, natural shrubbery and just about everything else they wanted. He suggested, in no uncertain terms, that they had to go. Thus, the game people were called in again. This time, they loaded nearly all of Estelle's goats on a big truck and deposited them elsewhere. Someone mentioned that they may have been transported across the Georgia line and may be yet with ensuing generations.

It was, at this point, that Estelle really "fell out" with the authorities. Her goats had been got, it seems, and to this was her main reason for love and living. She began to enlist the support of any and all who would listen to her problem in an effort to get some kind of "justice." While she continued to have a few goats living with her - perhaps eight or ten, the main thrust of her herd had been removed by authorities sworn to do their duty under the auspices of "law and order."

She would often catch a ride to town from the Brasstown section, about seven or eight mile above Westminster, and would usually come by the newspaper office, visit with Roscoe Wilson at the dry cleaners located on Windsor Street at that time, talk with Chief of Police Gary Brock, visit a while with W. J. and Molgro England and many others.

She endeavored, at all times, to enlist support in having her goats returned and really wanted some kind of restitution and prosecution of any and all who had been part of the program. Of course, there was no exacting justice to be had in this case, since the actions were

based on legal direction. But Estelle tried, and she tried very hard to find a way. She worked with great diligence and determination to the very end of her life. Perhaps somewhere in the Great Pasture in the Sky she may have found her long-lost herd. Estelle was a most interesting person.

February 27, 1991

'Minnie' Was Milked Over Atlanta

Interesting stories developed around airports and airplanes. At least, they once did. There is sufficient evidence to believe this practice of "bull-shooting" has not vanished.

"Red" Harwell was for many years the FBO of the facility in Winder, Georgia. Those who fly or play or pay from this area, and particularly from R. G. LeTourneau Field, at the Toccoa, GA airport, quickly learned where the good eating places were near neighboring airports. One of them was just off the runway 13 in Winder. It was frequent that those who love good bar-b-que found themselves in Winder visiting "Will's Barbeque."

One could hardly visit Winder without getting to know both the "Reds." One was "Red" Harwell, the FBO, and the other his chief Mechanic and Flight Instructor "Red" Parks. Both were skilled and related interested experiences.

"Red" Harwell had worked as a mechanic for Southern Airlines and later, Delta, before going into business for himself. He told of a fellow out there who operated a successful dairy business. It seems the company's cow whom they had named "Minnie Quarts." According to the story, the owner of the company would hardly draw the line at promoting his company for his share of business in the Atlanta area. He became zealous in the effort. It was in the days prior to the arrival of television "en masse." Radio was the prime audio system of communication.

"Minnie Quarts" became a real center of attention when the company promotion man rented an airplane to carry her high above Atlanta. She apparently was satisfied with the trip. According to "Red" she was actually milked at about 5000 feet above the city.

Without the visual aid, a radio man was aboard the craft and duly recorded the sounds of the milk as it was squeezed into that bucket. This may be the only cow that was ever milked at that altitude.

Also, according to "Red," this fellow became obsessed with the idea of flying and eventually bought himself a small plane. It was a two-passenger Ercoupe. While the owner didn't always have time to fly himself, he managed to hire a full-time pilot. This was a rather expensive arrangement, but apparently funds for the project was no problem.

At one point the full-time Ercoupe pilot made a trip down to South Georgia where he had to park the plane for repairs. The owner was very much concerned about the situation and set out by automobile to pick up his pilot and assist him with his problems.

This was at a time when Georgia had several counties -- especially in the lower part of the state -- that operated "speed traps." Some towns actually used this method of extracting money in a big way from those who just might barely exceed a posted speed limit. Common sense and reason had little to do with those who operated the "speed traps." You were caught, even if for only two miles over the limit, and you posted bond or went to jail. It was simple. As the owner found himself caught, he simply stepped forward to pay his fine -- maybe \$75 at that time. While getting his bond posted, he simply handed the officer of the court \$150.

"What's this extra \$75 for?" the officer inquired.

"Just keep it," the plane's owner replied, "I'm coming back through here in a little while, and don't have time to stop again."

March 6, 1991

Dr. E. L. Shuler - A Great Family Doctor

Dr. E. L. Shuler is remembered well by many of this area. For those history dates back 30 or 40 years or more, Dr. Shuler may have well served as a family doctor.

He came to Westminster in the late 1940's and was the founder of Westminster Medical Clinic. At the time, there were two other well-known M.D.s in Westminster, Dr. W. A. Strickland and Dr. T.

G. Hall, both somewhat older and beginning to limit their practice.

Dr. Shuler said he was first contacted by a long-time practicing pharmacist here better known as "Dr. Sam" Moon. His first office was in the building on the corner across the street from City Hall on Windsor Street. He practiced "solo" there for several years but later built the Westminster Medical Clinic on North Avenue and had a partner, Dr. D. O. Royals for about four years. Dr. Royals later left for further training and is now a Orthopedic Surgeon in Greenville.

Dr. Shuler's last partner before retiring was Dr. H. R. Kuemmerer, who came to the clinic in 1964 and presently continues family practice.

Dr. Shuler practiced his skill until about eight years ago when he experienced some health problems. A number of people in this area have wondered just where he now lives. Actually, he never left Oconee County. He continues to have a home on Lake Cheohee, in the famous Cheohee Valley above Salem. He lives near one of his sons, Ned Shuler, who is a teacher in the Oconee School system. However, he and his wife, Patsy, also lived part-time (mostly in winter months) in an apartment in Columbia, near his daughter, Rhett, the wife of Bill Barker, and residents there with their children - two sons.

Dr. Shuler and Patsy were originally from the Charleston area. Dr. Shuler is a Clemson graduate and also the Medical College of SC. Patsy graduated from Coker College in Hartsville. While both have lived here in the foot of the Piedmont mountains, they have never fully lost the unique twang of original Charlestonial speech. At times, it is almost musical, but also difficult, at times to comprehend...especially by an "outsider." The Shulers also have another son, Al, who now lives in Fredricksburg, VA, and is involved with the Department of Defense computer systems.

Enough background. What's Dr. Shuler doing now? Well, it's good to report that his health is somewhat improved in recent months, though he continues to limit walking due to a nerve problem. However, he can and does drive himself around and utilize a wheel chair to assist with navigation.

This past weekend, he accompanied some friends and former associate Dr. H. R. Kuemmerer, to a visit to the recently opened South Carolina Museum in Columbia. Additionally, he visited an unusual area known as the Congaree Swamp national park. Both he and Patsy continue to live at this time of year in an apartment complex but he has weekly contact with Oconee County through Cecil and Frances Sandifer who also have an apartment nearby in the same complex while Cecil continues to serve on the South Carolina Employment Security Commission as its senior member.

Dr. Kuemmerer concedes that he “learned a lot” from kind and gentle teacher Dr. Shuler, and continues to have high regard and respect for the man and his efforts to serve humankind in this area. A life-sized painting of Dr. Shuler hangs above the desk of Dr. Kuemmerer. He says that hardly a day passes without someone noticing the picture and commenting, “Now, that is a good man... and a good doctor!”

March 13, 1991

Be Careful -- There's “Snow-Snakes” Out There!

March is a tricky month. It may be 80 degrees one day and snowing the next. One year back in the late 60's it snowed three out of four Wednesdays in March -- the month when Spring is supposed to arrive.

Nearly every time we get a few snow flurries, Bill Burley of Bear Swamp Road, Walhalla, will inquire about the possibility of getting “struck” with a “snow snake.”

As best I recall, the first time I ever heard of this rare serpent, the story originated at “Foggy” Dickson's “Rinky-Dink” club. The weather was extremely bitter cold one night down on the branch where “Foggy” moved his business below Westminster. He had a big pot-bellied stove which he fired with regularity. His first assistant, “Bozey” Lee Lyles, often helped with this chore.

There were several customers in the club that night. A contingent from the neighboring state of Georgia, both men and women, were enjoying the refreshments, etc., and were dancing in an effort to try

to keep warm in the tin-sided building with a concrete floor. It was tough!

Finally, one of the ladies with the visitors from Georgia, asked “Foggy”...”Mr. Dickson, do you have a restroom?

“Yes, Ma’am.” he answered with authority, “We have the largest one in Oconee County...it’s 27 acres in size...and you can take any exit.”

Before she was able to leave, he cautiously warned her, “But please be careful tonight...as cold as it is there’s bound to be “snow snakes” out there.”

“I don’t understand,” the little lady replied. “I’ve never heard of them before; are they dangerous?”

Never at a loss for an answer, “Foggy” replied. “Yes, ma’am, they certainly are dangerous...perhaps more dangerous than a timber rattlesnake.”

And he went on to explain, “Now these rare snakes are hard to see in the snow...they are practically invisible...but they are out there in force...they can and will strike and hurt you...and the amazing thing about them is they don’t bite you!”

The woman’s curiosity was whetted to a high pitch.

“Did I understand you to say that these snakes are out there tonight, nearly invisible, very dangerous, they can strike, maybe hurt or kill you...and they don’t even bite you?” she asked.

This, of course, was playing right into the scheme of fun that “Foggy” enjoyed so much as he often joked with his friends and customers.

Finally, the woman grabbed the ‘bait’ - hook, line and sinker, “If they don’t bite you, then how can they harm you -- these “snow snakes?”

“Foggy” couldn’t wait to get to the punch line as he answered, “Why, they just crawl up your tail and freeze you to death,” he replied.

Very good naturedly, she took the joke, laughed with the crowd and took one of the doors to a nearby exit into the largest rest-room in Oconee County -- 27 acres, according to the owner.

March 20, 1991

What's New From The Academic Halls?

Those who refuse to look at mistakes recorded in history are doomed to repeat them. I really don't know who said that first, but it contains an element of truth. It may have been President Harry Truman who said the "only thing new is the history that hasn't been written yet." But now, we are getting the message that many of the less comfortable courses in our schools and colleges are being discontinued.. apparently in an effort to appease those who can't or won't apply themselves sufficiently to learn subjects that require a little digging and desire.

Personally, I have known what it is to be "weak" in many subjects offered in high school training. Later on when I was convinced that some further training in college would be helpful I gave some effort to recapture a bit of training before it was too late.

Sometimes, it is necessary to hit the hard facts of the real world square in the face before one realizes there's something to be said for difficult regimen in training. Nowhere is there any evidence that making the training simple and easy for one and all is a good answer to the needs you face later.

The amazing experience of low casualties and high technical success of our troops in the Desert Storm operation of the Middle East surely must reinforce our will to be strong nationally in both defense and academically. Those men and women who bravely demonstrated what being prepared and trained is really all about know what it's all about. We cannot afford to let our nation wander off in the direction of least resistance when there is a tough, competitive world out there in which we will either compete effectively or pay the price.

The same will and determination to bring our national economy in line with reality and get rid of the recessionary doldrums is not something that will automatically happen. It is for those who are trained, willing and determined to not let this great nation simply "slip and slide" at the least provocation.

It is also sickening, to say the least, to know that some of our higher institutions have failed in leadership. The present status

University of South Carolina is being layed open for public inspection and hopefully change in methods of leadership. It is unfortunate that we had to force the opening of public records through the efforts of a free press and the Freedom of Information act. But it did work, and we believe in the long run we will have a better institution of South Carolina for efforts of those willing to "open up" this festering sore and let the healing process begin.

Not only has this been a loss of confidence in our state government as a result of the "Lost Trust" sting operation that has exposed crooks in our system, but it is a depressing matter for all of us who make tax contributions to a system we hope is honest.

We cannot sit here and simply point our finger at the more remote seats of government and be comfortable with our local town and county systems in times when resources are being strained with bureaucratic mandates. Our elected officials from the smallest office to the highest need the "input" of responsible citizens to help keep down those things that tend to cause the people to lose faith in a system that can and will work if we want it to work.

From academics to political institutions, there must be the insistence from each citizen that we require honesty and integrity. Business must be required to be handled just that way. And we cannot, through our schools and colleges, "strengthen the weak by weakening the strong." The alternative price is too high to pay.

March 27, 1991

All The Fear Reduced To One

"Full-blown" drunks have only one fear -- and that is running out of liquor at a critical time. And any time is critical with one "hooked" on alcohol.

It is not a humorous thing -- alcoholism. It is dead serious business that causes a lot of grief, however there are some moments that are "funny" when viewed in retrospect.

Eli Carter, a black man who once worked for the late Mr. S. F. Reeder when Mr. "Sam" operated Reeder's Department/Grocery Store combination. Eli was rather tall and had a friendly disposition

most of the time. He helped around the store with whatever job had to be done. He swept out the building, filled orders that came in over the phone, delivered the groceries in a truck used primarily for that purpose.

Occasionally, Eli would find time to visit one of the nearby bootleggers and replenish his stock if he didn't want to be seen stopping at one of the local liquor stores.

As he told this story many years ago, Eli was making his way -- on foot -- to the home of a local bootlegger when he noticed police officer Perry Sanders and others were about to make a raid on the house. This was customary and almost predictable. There was no telling when the law would run in on an operation and "upset" the schedule of illegal liquor dispensation. It was one of the hazards of being in the business.

Only this time the operators were in the process of replenishing the house stock. When Eli saw the "law" in the vicinity, his first reaction was to run. This he did, and not only did he run for fear of being caught up in the net of the raid, but he also decided to climb a big tree to avoid activity below.

As it happened, someone from the bootlegging establishment was busy trying to hide some of the liquor from a "fresh" delivery. By some stroke of luck, they picked the foot of the tree where Eli was perched observing the action.

"They came out there and started digging and burying liquor in half-gallon fruit jars," Eli recalled, "And I just sat up there in that big tree, quiet as a church mouse, for fear of being seen."

After awhile everything began to quieten down and Eli decided to come down from his perch. Of course, after he hit the ground, his first reaction was to go to the spot where the liquor was buried.

He never did say just how much of the booze he kept for himself, but about two jars is all one man can efficiently carry if he has to suddenly start running for some reason.

While Eli was not a "full-blown" drunk, he may have bordered in the area on occasion. Economics probably kept him from being dedicated as some were, but he would work and make a real effort to support himself and whatever habits he had.

As Tom Morehead use to say, "He was so nervous he had to sit on his hands to keep people from thinking he was waving to them." Then he would proceed to procure some of the "hair" off the dog that "bit" him in an effort to calm his nerves. It really ain't easy being a full-time drunk. You have to work at it...much harder than an ordinary job. Sometimes you may have to climb a tree and run, if necessary, as Eli Carter did when he related this experience.

April 3, 1991

Grogan Getting Ready For Tomato Season

Bob Grogan of Doyle Street, Westminster, may be "king" of the tomato growers in this area. Each year he starts getting his garden ready early. Tomatoes are a specialty with him, and since his retirement from Dunlop Sports, he has devoted more than a little time to perfecting his crop each year. He usually grows enough tomatoes for about 10 average families and delights in giving them away to friends and neighbors.

He got interested in gardening several years ago when one of his friends -- the late Tom Morehead -- got in a sort of competitive situation as to who could grow the first tomatoes of the season. Both were very serious about this bit of competition and developed some "scientific" systems of gardening. At one point, Grogan said Tom was using some kind of exotic manure to enhance the growth of his crop.

They also began housing tender plants and getting a head-start on the planting by keeping them away from the frost and cold extremes of early season. By the time others were setting out new plants, both Grogan and Morehead would "slip in" their half-grown plants and would see who could produce the first vine-ripe tomato. At one point, one of them accused the other of buying a ripe tomato at the Winn-Dixie and somehow "trying it" onto the most advanced vine in order to be "first."

All the friends and neighbors of both these fellows were the actual winners, for they always grew garden crops so prolific there was plenty to pass around.

While some may recall, Bob Grogan worked for a while at The Westminster News where he did a number of jobs -- one of them was photographer.

One of the interesting stories he “covered” involved a man from the Westminster area who was “accident prone.” The man, now deceased, had been involved in a number of accidents -- some of which resulted in litigation.

On this particular day, -- a member of the man’s family -- rushed into the News office and asked for a photographer as an accident had occurred at the man’s farm. Grogan took the assignment and arrived on the scene about the same time Jimmy Elliott arrived with the Sandifer Funeral Home ambulance (hearse.) This was in the days before there was a county hospital ambulance service, thus the local funeral directors also served the public with their equipment.

As I recall, the victim, was reported lying down in a field near his home. It turned out that he wasn’t seriously injured, but reported that his tractor had become entangled in an electrical or telephone wire. Supposedly, the man had tried to jerk the wire loose and it had somehow wound around the gear shift of the tractor. In the process, the tractor was “jerked” into gear and had backed over the man.

Grogan was not only there to get a picture, but he also was asked to help Jimmy Elliott carry the fellow from the field on a stretcher to the ambulance. It developed the man was not seriously hurt and even advised those carrying him across the field on the stretcher that if they became tired to simply stop and rest. No “law suit” ever developed in this particular case, but Bob said he felt that he could have been called as a witness for several months after the incident. It turned out to be a really “funny” situation after it was determined that no actual harm had been done

April 10, 1991

Walking For Health Is Rediscovered!

Ever since man came down out of the trees or where ever, and stood upright on his "hind feet," walking has been a part of the human scheme of things. Only in recent years, however, has it been once again rediscovered as a really good way to keep healthy.

In a small town as ours is you get to know people a bit more personally, and you also observe their habits -- both good and otherwise. Increasingly, we've noticed citizens taking their walking exercises all during the early morning hours, up in the day, and sometimes later.

Early in the morning, Sidney Harper can be seen making his daily tour which must be about three or four miles. Also, Herbert Brown can be counted on to take a daily walk -- rain or sunshine -- into various parts of the area. Recently, we've noticed that both Dean and Katherine are taking daily strolls. Dean says he is up to about two miles each day while Katherine is going a full four miles each day. Amazingly, all have reported losing many excess pounds in the process and look exceedingly well. Down near Hartwell Lake, Duke Cleveland is getting started with a daily stroll as is his sister, Rolann Lee and her husband, Gerald.

Mrs. Sarah Johns was a very active walker for several years, but has recently slowed a bit. By the way, if you haven't noticed Mrs. Johns' beautiful front yard on Retreat Street, you've missed a spring welcome. It is gorgeous and somehow reflects the personality of this splendid lady who dedicated many years of patience as an outstanding teacher in the school system of Oconee county.

It has always been a recognized way to keep healthy, but in recent years the "walking" system of wellness has caught on as never before. Some prefer to use a bicycle for this exercise, and this seems to work well, too. I cannot help recalling what my grandfather, Jim Dunlap, observed as he watched someone ride a bicycle. In his words, "I've never understood the logic of working your legs to death while your rear end rides." But it does a good job of exercising systems that would otherwise be neglected.

Prior to being hospitalized recently, Roy Strickland, our area

member of County Council, could be seen walking each day. It is good to report that Roy is now recuperating very well from an operation at Emory University Hospital and may be able to return home within the next few days. Perhaps he will again join the local walkers who are doing their "thing" and enjoying good results.

Back in the days before mail (or female) carriers at the U. S. Post Office were allowed to use vehicles to deliver mail on town or city routes, C. R. Hunt, my father, was a local postman. He carried the mail in this town for about 37 years during a period when the mailman or mail-lady usually had a leather pouch over the shoulder. This walking delivery system demanded that he walk about 17 or 18 miles a day on his assigned route. During this time, he seemed to have good health most of the time, and even during the January season when Sears mailed out those heavy catalogs that were delivered to each home by a walking carrier.

Based on the years of service, his walking activity would have carried him around the earth (about 25,000 miles) about three times or maybe a bit more.

Certainly for those physically able and mentally willing, this "new" discovery of exercise can be the least costly and most rewarding of all. Who knows, I may just talk my wife into the program and observe her long enough to decide if it would be good for me?

April 17, 1991

Ruth Gaines Davis "Keeps On Going"

Mrs. Ruth Gaines Davis isn't one bit bashful about telling her age. She's 85 and very proud of it. Come to think about it, Ruth Gaines Davis isn't really bashful about telling anyone anything that's on her mind. She's been through many trials and tribulations through the years and has made worthwhile contributions to this community and area.

Ruth makes her home just off Bow Street in Westminster, just across the street from where her original home stands—the home of Mr. and Mrs. John Gaines. It is no longer there, having been

destroyed by fire several years past, but many memories exist.

Recently, Ruth invited and entertained four sisters from Greenville who were once residents of the home she now occupies. The Flack family lived in this home in the early '30's. If memory serves correctly, there were four girls and two sons in this family. One of the girls, Frances, was about the same age as I and we both started school together in Westminster. The others were a bit older, but I had a vague memory of them that sort of "flashed back" recently when I had a chance to meet them again. Frances, I recall very distinctly, since she had visited The News' office in recent years trying to track down some information regarding her father.

While the Flack family lived in Westminster, the father, Mr. George Flack, simply vanished from this area. He was working, at that time during the 1930's, with the renowned editor and publisher, Mr. A.L. Gossett, who printed the Tugalo Tribune in a building that once stood where the Westminster Medical Clinic now stands. To my knowledge, Mr. Flack was never seen again from the time of his disappearance, though there was some rumors that former citizens here had seen him in some remote cities. The thing about this recent gathering that Ruth initiated was the fact that these ladies were able to visit in the home where some, if not all, were born and see it in a beautifully restored state and occupied by a caring lady who readily recalls the entire family.

It was a kind of strange and beautiful moment to observe these ladies as they recalled childhood experiences associated with this home.

Ruth Gaines Davis is known throughout a wide area and certainly is a fine and respected citizen who may have been the first to exercise real "feminine authority" in this area. By desire and necessity, she was the owner and manager of the Gaines Lumber Company during the early part of the 1940's and later. This was a tremendously big lumber and building business in this area during the 1920's and 30's. Ruth's father, the late Mr. John Gaines, taught her the business early in life and she was very capable and able to carry on after two separate fires all but destroyed the entire operation. Courage, determination, the desire and the will to get the job

done has allowed her to overcome many obstacles.

It would take several chapters to cover civic business leadership Ruth has exerted. She was the driving force in seeing that Eastview Cemetery has a perpetual care plan. There are many other commendable contributions. In my thinking, she continues to be a beautiful woman...just as she was when I first recalled seeing her in the 1930's as she drove a "baby blue" Lincoln Zepher 12-cylinder car. A really "striking" combination!

April 24, 1991

Every Day Becomes Very Special

Nothing changes outlook like experience. We mostly get experience by simply living "one day at a time."

As life wears on, it is inevitable the younger generation replaces the older one and we are beset with problems never before considered or encountered.

Values change...sometimes suddenly...sometimes gradually, and things that were important aren't really so important in view of reality.

All of this is simply one way of bringing some good news concerning a friend and neighbor, County Councilman Roy B. Strickland.

Roy is now back home from his experience with surgery at Emory University Hospital in Atlanta.

It is pleasant, indeed, to report that this stay there has been successful... and to the point that he is now back in town, visiting with his friends, and is back on the lakes catching bass.

From early youth until the present, Roy and I have been friends. It has always been one of those friendships that lasted through some trying times and anxious moments.

Just after WWII ended and a young sailor aboard the battleship Wisconsin, it was my experience to be picked up with a "spot" on my lung through a routine ship X-ray. Eventually, I wound up in a Navy hospital in upper New York state. The "spot" was later determined to be tuberculosis. At that time in the 1940's, there was no medical cure for this "bug." People died from the infection. In fact,

fellow sailors in that hospital were dying from it. Prognosis was not good at that time, though the infection was said to be “minimal.”

The point that is important to me, here and now, is the fact that surviving became an imperative mission at an early age, and guess who walked through the door to my room in that desolate hospital to offer encouragement? None other than my lifetime friend Roy B. Strickland!

To me that was a very special moment in my life. It had been many months since I had been home or even seen anyone from home, nor did I expect anyone to make the 800 mile trip at that point. No one will ever realize how reassuring it was to know that at least one friend made a real effort to make that visit. How great it felt to know that your problems are somehow shared through caring friends as well as family. That single visit may well have been a “turning point” for my recovery, and I shall never forget this individual effort.

Roy has always been a great competitor whether participating in sports or whether coaching some of the championship teams that he helped produce while serving our school system as a public servant.

Roy began his work when a teacher and/or coaches’ pay was much less than the average shift-worker could make in a plant job. In fact, he sometimes held two jobs...one as a coach and the other in a plant to supplement his pay.

A host of friends and associates are happy to see Roy back in the community and competing with his fishing buddy, Dean Breazeale, as they go for the big ones. He continues to be a great competitor. With this positive attitude, we believe his recovery is assured.

We are all living “one day at a time.” Yesterday is history that can’t be changed; tomorrow is only a hope, but not assured...in fact, this may be the most important day of life. It is the only one we really have at this moment!

May 1, 1991

Tornado Season Is With Us

If you looked up at the sky in Westminster about 6:15 Sunday afternoon, more than likely you saw a huge funnel cloud pass over. It was, in fact, a tornado that had just earlier passed through and brushed Toccoa, GA.

Tornadoes are not exactly "fun things" when they "swoop" down and suddenly wreck homes and businesses as well as taking a human toll.

Few of us give thunderstorms and electric storms proper respect. However, there's at least one citizen on Doyle Street, who has always had a healthy respect for the elements. Mrs. R. L. (Amy) Grogan has had, for many years, a "storm pit" in her back yard.

In case you don't know what a "storm pit" is, perhaps an underground dug-out area, re-inforced with timbers or necessary masonry construction explains. The idea is to be "dug in" for the potential hazard of a wind or electric storm.

Mrs. Grogan has always had a healthy respect for the elements and she, often along with neighbors, Mrs. Johnny Duncan and Mrs. Knox Kelley, will seek cover in this underground "storm pit."

There are plenty of citizens of this area who well recall the big tornado that hit Gainesville, GA., in 1936. It happened about this time of year and nearly devastated the entire city. About 275 people were killed in that storm. There are many there who continue to maintain and use "storm pits" when the elements threaten.

The tornado that was sighted passing over the area Sunday had strong winds and some heavy lightning. One electrical strike hit an outbuilding on Doyle Street on the property of Ms. Nellie Adams. A fire resulted, but quick action from the local fire and police department quickly brought it under control.

Since there is no exact way of knowing when and how a storm will affect us, there is no guaranteed way of being safe. However, the weather reporters on t.v. and radio do give advance warning of approaching weather systems that may be dangerous. Most advise to get into a ditch or "low place" if caught outside. In the event you

don't have a basement in your home, advice is to get near the center of your house and try to stay away from any glass windows or doors.

About the only consolation we have regarding the weather is the fact that the Lord is in charge of it all. We can be thankful that our weather is not controlled by our government. It really would be a disaster to look to Washington for guidance, direction and help in extreme weather conditions.

Frank Hunt Visits

Frank Hunt, a former resident of Westminster was back in the area for a visit over the weekend. Frank has been living away from Westminster for several years and makes his home in Atlanta, GA., or Stockbridge to be more exact. Accompanied by a friend, and his son, Derrick, this was a special occasion for the visit Sunday. Derrick was in the territory to be married to a lady from Stockbridge. Up until last year, Frank said it had been about 15 or more years since he visited the area. He is now retired from his work as a heavy-equipment operator due to a medical disability. It was Frank's father, and my uncle, W. C. Hunt, who once helped me move a printing plant from LaGrange, Ky., in 1953, that was a rather educational and memorable affair. Perhaps, I can explain that unusual event in future columns.

May 8, 1991

Waymon Said He Could "Tell By The Smell"

For many years Waymon DeFoor operated and owned Westminster Hardware Store. This is the store that is now owned and operated by Russell Duvall. When Waymon was the store owner, it was also the location of Randolph Jaynes' gun shop. Located at the rear of the building, in a corner, Randy practiced his gunsmithing profession.

Those who know Randy have no question about his expertise and knowledge of guns and gun collections. His ability in this area is widely known. Though he doesn't practice the profession any

longer, due to his health, for many years he was widely accepted as an authority on guns.

Perhaps Waymon DeFoor also understood hardware as readily as Randy knew guns. If not, he certainly understood customers and many of their needs. He often threw in a bit of philosophical advice along with some homespun humor when he “waited on” a customer.

One day a customer approached Waymon and asked him about the qualifications of the gunsmith, Randy, and he quickly volunteered information.

It may have gone something like this:

“Why, that man back there in the corner is so skilled in gun repair, that he can tell what's wrong with a gun by smelling it,” Waymon explained.

Of course, Randy was near enough to the scene to overhear the conversation, and not one to let a customer become confused, he asked the fellow to bring his broken gun right on back to the corner shop.

The man was impressed. He quickly stepped to the back of the store and handed Randy the gun.

Surprisingly, Randy held the gun up to his nose, and ran the barrel along under the “sniffer.” With a little or no hesitation, he quickly diagnosed the problem.

“Why, you’ve got a broken firing pin,” Randy explained without even unbreaching the barrel for examination.

The customer had unbounding curiosity. He said he wanted to watch him examine the gun and he did.

Guess what? Sure enough when Randy got into the “guts” of the gun the firing pin was the true problem. He repaired it; the customer was happy, and convinced this gunsmith had super-natural ability.

There just ain’t many people left who can diagnose a mechanical problem by smell alone. But Waymon DeFoor and Randolph Jaynes certainly convinced one man that it could be done!

Other Phenomena

It just occurred to me this ability of “smell” a mechanical problem ranks right up there with some other abilities that have been

around a long time.

There are those who are said to be able to “talk out” fire; others have seemingly supernatural ability to “take off warts” with a few words and simple observation, and then there are those who claim they can “stop blood” but most use artificial methods as opposed to “mind over matter”...and it is questionable as to whether that actually “counts.” How about it, HRK, are you qualified?

May 15, 1991

Some Things You’ll Always Remember

At this time of year when graduating classes are busy with their “thing,” it brings to mind experiences of the past. I don’t know why, but it’s much easier now to remember things that happened 50 years ago than what happened 15 minutes past. The Lord must have worked it out that way to help the older generation exist with some measure of contentment.

Professor Tom Mabry was the school superintendent at the old Westminster High in 1944 when our class graduated. Fortunately, Mr. Mabry continues to live in the upstate -- Gramlin, to be exact, and last year visited our class reunion. Mr. Mabry was one among the many who endured the trials and tribulations of instructing at Westminster. And was one of the best in the business.

It isn’t the day that he handed out diplomas that comes to instant recall, however. Rather, it was an incident that happened early one morning. Kenneth Carter, (Kenny as he was better known,) was little different from others about the same age at the time. Most ranged from 15 to 17-years-old. There weren’t many things young boys a that age wouldn’t do for excitement. Somewhere, Kenny had acquired a large firecracker -- one of the giant 6-inch-bomb types. The boys’ basement/latrine was located on the east end of the old building located near the boiler room in the “old” part of the high school. Just as he entered the building early one morning on the way to class, in instinctively pulled out the big firecracker, lit it, and gently tossed it down the steps into the boys’ basement-boiler room. He continued to walk down the hall toward his classroom. Just

before he reached Mr. Mabry's office the explosion went off.

The sound was immense with resonating caused from the size of the firecracker plus the fact it featured the muffled affect from being tossed down into the basement. Mr. Mabry seemed to have a sixth sense about what was happening around him. Quickly, he dashed out the door as Kenny walked up the hallway. "Come on, Carter," he explained, "let's go right now...the boiler room has just blown up!" Mr. Mabry grabbed Kenny's arm, turned him around and the two sped down the hall to the boiler room.

It didn't take long for Mr. Mabry to figure out from the smell of burning powder that the "explosion" was merely a well-tossed firecracker. No doubt, he was greatly relieved to know that disaster had been a prank rather than reality, and unknowingly, he led the "guilty party" back down the hall to the scene of the "crime." Kenny Carter could very well have won an academy award for acting surprised when he had to make the return trip with Mr. Mabry. Of course, he was quite capable of doing whatever the occasion demanded.

This incident has little or nothing to do with graduating, but it does prove that you'll remember experiences more readily when you're older -- some important ones and others not so.

Few have the insight to "pick-up" on student potential as well as some of those grand teachers of that special era. I'm sure they were doing their very best to insure this class received a just measure of instruction. At the same time, I'm sure there were several of us where they simply mentally turned the case over to the Lord in hopes that Divine Providence would prevail as necessary.

It was a lot of fun at the time, but I'm still thankful and wondering how I happened to graduate from high school.

May 22, 1991

Memories Stirred By Main Street Fire

The devastating fire last week that all but destroyed two historic buildings in Westminster stirred old memories. The building occupied by Abbott Insurance and the adjoining Dads, Lads, & Lassies, department store, have been in place a long time. Probably more

than 100 years. This corner of Main and Retreat streets were, at one time, the busiest intersection of town. It was where Westminster's first traffic light was installed. On the corner across the street, Mr. Sam Reeder ran a combination grocery and department store for at least 50 or 60 years.

At one time, during the 1920's, perhaps, and the late 1930's for sure, the telephone exchange was located in the upstairs area of the Abbott building where the fire was believed to have started last week. The telephone system at that time was more simple and personal. The numbers themselves were likely to be something such as 24J...not all this mumbo-jumbo computerized stuff we have now. When you placed a call, you turned a crank on the side of the phone box and actually rang "central." A real person, an operator, a live and talking person answered. You simply requested the number with which you wanted a connection. If memory serves correctly, Mrs. Helen Hanks Garrett was perhaps the oldest operator of the system. I think, she, too, was later assisted by Ms. Mallie Whitmire who late operated a beauty shop on Main Street where Mrs. Edward Addis now continues to operate a beauty shop.

Telephone operators were on duty 24 hours a day all across the country. They operated switch boards similar to the one you may have seen on tv's "Hee-Haw" show. Often the operators themselves were called upon to assist with emergency problems. For example, if someone was trying to locate a doctor in the community, the operator may have been able to help find him via her knowledge of where he was last contacted. In extreme emergencies, many operators gave an extra effort to assist those in need. Telephone companies advertised with slogans such as "A Voice With A Smile." It was a "far cry" from the static you sometimes get now when you seek operator assistance and may actually be turned over to a computer.

Of course, this is only a small part of the history of these two buildings that were so tragically struck by fire. The building where Frank Barrett's store is located was occupied for many years by Mr. J. G. Breazeale. At one time, there was a gas pump in front of this building where some of the few cars in town were fueled. Mr. Breazeale furnished many farmers of the area with feed, seed and

fertilizers and was also a cotton buyer. He was assisted in this operation by Mr. Enoch Breazeale, the late father of Dean and Elizabeth. There was also another well-known assistant to "Mr. Jim" -- Mr. Jasper Fricks who was like a permanent fixture at the Breazeale store. It seems he had been there as long as the walls had stood, and he knew where any and everything in the store was located.

The devastation a fire causes is nearly like a death in the family. It isn't always the immediate tangible things that are so important, but the physical reminder of the past carries over from one generation to another. These things become more important to older people when it's a known fact there isn't as much future left as there is past experience.

No question about it, several chapters about these two historic structures could easily be written and remembered by some of the past-70-year-olds in town. This was once the main center of activity in Westminster.

May 28, 1991

Minnie Owen Says She Can Still Count

The recent "two bills" mailed to resident who pay city utility fees have upset some citizens. One of them is Minnie Owens. Minnie has always been able to speak her mind on just about anything. However, she has been "under-the-weather" healthwise in recent months and said she never got around to addressing the "two-bills-in-one-month" matter.

In fairness to all, there was a letter to city customers prior to the second monthly utility bill being issued. If memory serves correctly, and a weak one is about all I have left, the bills were issued in an effort to bring the actual bills more in line with the days the services were rendered. Your present bill should reflect more recent usage cost as opposed to being billed for about a month in arrears, if this interpretation is correct.

However Minnie had a point if the contention is correct that the "second" bill also contained fees for garbage collection and sewer

fees as well as water usage. If this is true, then it does appear that customers will be paying more than one time for the same services.

Minnie said she can still count and figure it, we're still paying 13 bills in a 12-month period.

While this may be sort of like closing the pasture gate after the horses have already escaped, it is nonetheless important to everyone who pays a utility bill each month. It is especially important to those on fixed incomes who must watch every penny every day.

Minnie, in the past, has been able to exercise her civic privileges and take such matters directly to the local council meetings and let it be known directly exactly her sentiments about our government.

Never one to be bashful about expressing a viewpoint, Minnie has provided a lot of good and interesting comments on community events. Especially, has she observed the way our tax dollars have been spent on a local as well as national level. Her letter-to-the-editors over this county for many years brought a chuckle as she administered terse comment, and often, a lot of down-to-earth common sense observation.

The city's "two-bills-in-one-month" issue seemed to "jump start" Minnie the other day, but there's other things on her mind, too. Not the least of these is the county school board asking for another two and on-half "million dollars" in their budget request. Minnie suggested, and perhaps rightly so, that that much could be saved by simply cutting the administration in half. "We'd probably never know the difference if the administration staff were reduced by 50 percent," and "by the way, what are all those people up there in our school administration building doing every day?" she inquired.

I told her that I didn't know the answer, and further, I didn't know where to find out for sure, either. It is said there are fewer students now than in previous years, but the cost for schools continue to rise, and the quality of the product being produced continues to slide downward. Somewhere, someone needs to find out if all this cost for administration is actually helping the real needs in the system...which is more likely the relationship with the teachers to the students. Also, equally important is parent involvement.

Too, another matter that surfaced that either indirectly involves the public and tax dollars is the proposed “new” 25 or 30 million dollar hospital at Oconee Memorial. The reason for the cost guessing is because it depends on who you are talking with...hospital administration or county council members.

The county council recently may have made the best move concerning this issue. They voted to have the public pass on the matter in a referendum vote. There ain't nothing like letting the people who will more than likely be paying the cost decide if this is really what they want and need right now. While a referendum is advisory only, it is likely to express to government how tax payers feel at this time of recessionary trends everywhere.

While some may not agree with Minnie Owens, no one can say she's dull and not forthcoming with her views that often concern matters that affect all of us. Keep on “keeping on” Minnie, and may your health improve

June 5, 1991

Exploring New Territory Can Be Important

In the middle 1940's a Biology professor at the University of Georgia knew how to get attention. His class at that time consisted of about 450 students and was taught over the public address system in Baldwin Hall. Dr. Schoenburn was “all business” in his lectures, except for one brief moment before each class. At that time he would proceed to tell a joke or an interesting anecdote. Amazingly, from that moment until class ended, he would hold complete attention of the class. The subject was difficult for many, and at the outset, he explained that at least 60 percent of the class would fail. He went on to explain how the percentages of passing grades would be established as he graded on the curve.

Another thing he emphasized was how important it is to take notes. “What I am telling you and draw on this board can be found somewhere in you text books, “ he said, “but if you want to pass this course, you had better get every word I write or speak during these lectures...and if you know the material, you can pass.”

