
Dedicated to
my wonderful
sister Rives

Hamburger²

Sunny Side of South Elm, Poole's Paradise, A Kid's First Bike, Fires That Left Deep Scars, On the Street Where We Lived, The Bewitchin' Pool appeared first in *O.Henry* magazine.

Saving Blandwood, Downtown Deadwood and *Art of Murphy Anderson* were written for *Yes! Weekly*.

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Fourth Edition

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Introduction

This is a book (mostly) about Greensboro, those subjects covered within these pages not specifically related to my hometown were significant somehow to growing up in the Gate City during the 1950s, '60s and '70s. You may find brighter, more comprehensive books on the subject but you won't find one more personal. What you hold in your hands was created entirely by myself... layout, design, typography, the modern photos. The cover shot taken when I threw myself out of bed one morning and ran two blocks to Hamburger Square to capture the sun's first rays painting Elm with a rich orange glow. I did everything but run the presses.

A history of the western side of the 300 block of South Elm was the first essay I wrote specifically for *O.Henry* magazine. History can be fascinating, whether it be buildings or people, but damn if a writer doesn't have to become an instant expert on whatever is being written about. Like architecture. That was also the case in my previous life as a movie poster artist where we were expected to mimic any artist's style without the aid of Photoshop. Fortunately I carry around a treasure trove of arcane knowledge.

At the beginning of 2014 I delved into a couple of mysteries that had me puzzled for some time, stories I was determined to write without any thought of them being published. The first was a joy, peeling back the layers of time in an effort to discover who WBIG radio's morning man Bob Poole was. I was astonished and gratified to learn he was someone who's contribution to pop culture was far greater than I could have imagined. Bob Poole had been a network star of the highest magnitude known for his droll wit, master of the understated insult delivered with a melodic twist, a peerless punster.

Friends since *Poole's Paradise*' earliest days in Greensboro, Bob and my father Bill Ingram were cut from the same cloth, small town country boys who loved to drink and the more they drank the funnier they got. Bob's gift was being very much in tune with whomever he was talking with, wide open for anything he could recycle into radio fodder. I became casually friendly with Bob in my teen years but knew nothing about his early career; because he left us thirty-five years ago even his family had limited knowledge of the entertainer who jump started our mornings for a quarter century. I realize now he likely harbored serious misgivings

about the shrinking world around him as his contemporaries were enjoying fame and fortune on television while AM radio withered.

Greeksboro came about purely out of happenstance. In researching the 300 Block of Elm I interviewed veteran downtown restaurateur Minas Dascalakis, owner of Matthew's Grill situated near the O.Henry Hotel, and did so knowing full well I had no way to use any of that information. Hours later Brian Clarey told me he needed a rush cover story for *Triad City Beat*, suddenly I had a way forward for this remarkable gentleman's recollections of a thriving downtown many times larger than what we know today. I felt privileged to tell a small portion of his amazing life story. This was the first thing I'd had published where people stopped me on the street to say how much they enjoyed it.

No doubt the shocking graphics in the *Amos 'n' Andy* section are bound to take some people aback, I'm hoping so. I spent the better part of a year researching this phenomenon, listened to almost every episode of the radio program reaching back into the 1920s and watched all the television shows. *Amos 'n' Andy* was a disturbing but fascinating four decades long societal conundrum but if we are ever to have frank discussions about race it's important to recognize the unfortunate media landscape that existed leading up to the Civil Rights era. We need to autopsy the injuries, pick at the sores, otherwise we're left with modern day assumptions based entirely on images. How much of a coincidence was it that the *Amos 'n' Andy* radio program finally ceased production mere months after the February First Woolworth's sit-ins?

Is there a TV star who looms larger in North Carolina, Greensboro in particular, than Andy Griffith? Made an honorary citizen in 1958, he got his start here as a stand-up comedian in the fifties, his eponymous sitcom has never left our airways since debuting on CBS in 1961. More forgettable was Andy's attempt to recapture his TV mojo in 1970 playing the mayor of a city the size of Greensboro when he was a youngster.

The lady who owns Francis Bavier's former home kicked up some dust when she read *Aunt Bee's Cat House*, a non sequitur from the novel *Reverend Buck Goes to College*. It was obvious to her I had no inkling about small town life, Siler City in particular. Perhaps not... I only spent countless holidays there, it's where my sister lives and, like Aunt Bee, she's a damn fine cook. The similarities end there, however.

The Old Rebel Show holds a special place in my heart, as did Martha

My parents aboard
Bob Poole's party bus.

and Timm Perry, George Perry's widow and son, who could be found hanging out all day at Barnes & Noble and Harris Teeter at Friendly Center in the 2000s. It was partly out of necessity. They had no heat nor air conditioning in their small home off Summit Avenue. Neither could work due to poor health but they were resolutely upbeat in public and, well, warm. They passed in 2010 and 2011.

This story of how Greensboro was almost Hollywood was one I hadn't read about anywhere but was told to me by my father, my grandparents would have been in a position to know. After I covered this briefly in *O.Henry* magazine a couple of long-time residents confirmed that yes, they'd heard the same growing up.

This book ends with the second tale I endeavored to tell in 2014, the unfortunate circumstances behind the murder of Ed LeBrun, about which everyone seemed to know a little but not a lot about—and most of that was incorrect. I'd met but didn't know Ed personally, almost all of my friends in Greensboro from the 1990s did. I was expecting a black and white narrative, three murderous teens terrorizing an influential rave promoter but there were no good guys here, only victims. Things rarely are as straight forward as we wish them to be. With so many misconceptions and blank spots in the memories of the (one time) rave kids I was aquainted with, I felt an urge to allow this disturbing event to unfurl in excruciating detail.

Reaction to that six month investigation took on some interesting twists after publication in revised form (about which I was not happy) over two issues of *Yes! Weekly*. A close friend (or so I thought) became maniacal with rage when he couldn't refute the facts of the case, even trying to convince me the crime took place in a different year. Another person quoted herein told me he came under intense pressure from his friends to denounce what he had said. To his credit he wouldn't. I wrote to Zac Grimes (serving time for participating in the deed) about what transpired and he replied simply, "Some people don't want to hear the truth." Seemed a bizarre thing to say, especially for someone in his position, until later that night when I was reading an old *Vanity Fair* magazine. In it, Dominique Dunne told of a similar unnecessarily angry reaction to one of his articles. He came away thinking, "Some people don't want to hear the truth." I've come to a further conclusion... a visceral emotional response means you've probably gotten it right.

The Sunny Side of the Street

During Downtown Greensboro's heyday, the 1940s and '50s, Packards and DeSotos jammed the streets jockeying for parking spaces, massive neon signs obliterated the night sky, dazzling shoppers with movement and color. Towering hotels, multi-layered department stores, elegant fashion boutiques, men's furnishings, car dealerships, four movie theaters, some seven hundred businesses generating hundreds of millions of dollars from early morning until 9:00pm when they rolled up the sidewalks.

In the early 1970s it all unravelled with alarming speed. In an attempt to create a mall-like experience the city covered over a majority of the parking spaces on Elm Street to widened the sidewalks. Within a couple of years downtown was two tumbleweeds short of a ghost town. Despite the recent boom in nightclubs and eateries a major portion of South Elm Street has remained in a state of neglect with magnificent architectural treasures languishing—but doing so in their original states. Monuments to the gods of retail on the western side of the 300 block of South Elm erected between 1886 and 1927 are just now being resurrected.

Constructed just prior to the turn of the last century 304 South Elm was named for contractor W.C. Bain, responsible for many of Greensboro's more elaborate center city retail hubs. The top two floors, accentuated by large arched windows and sculpted terra cotta overlays, was where dentist Dr. Walter Hartsell and barber George Sleight drilled and chilled throughout the 1930s & '40s. In the 1950s J Lee Stone photographed bridal and baby portraits in his spacious studio. The inviting storefront below features 3 dramatic glass

showcases and transoms, all framed with impressive cast iron columns. By far the Bain Building's most soulful resident was the Greensboro Record Center, from the go-go sixties into the eighties a musical epicenter with one of the largest selections of oldies 45s imaginable. City councilwoman Nancy Hoffman rescued this derelict in 2013, undertaking a complete overhaul, restoring the handsome Neo-Classical metalwork and simple wooden door frames. It is once again an entertainment destination, Scuppernong Books, a relaxing wine bar/bookstore. Owner Brian Lampkin explained why here and now, "Largely it was what was missing in our own lives. What do we want or expect from a city that wasn't here? Bookstores have been a center of information, of friendship, of great personal value. We knew we weren't alone. There's a guy who was eleven-years old sweeping floors here in the 1930s, now he comes in, he's in his late eighties and reminisces with us. I guess it was his grandfather's store."

The Grissom Building next door at 310 has also been reanimated with luxury accommodations upstairs. Designed by J. H. Hopkins it's a spectacular three-story example of the Italianate style predominant on this block, highlighted by cascading Romanesque brickwork surrounding palatial window arches augmented with stone half-columns and sills. Like its neighbor, the ground level is framed in decorative cast iron. Built in 1899 for Grissom's Drug Store this was Cecil-Russell Drugs in the 1930s and '40s, a Goodwill store and Coats Ltd. in the 1970s.

Rich in Beau-Arts inspired details, with windows crowned by stained glass semi-circles and fanciful concrete sills, 312 South Elm was restored to her former glory thanks to developers Dawn Chaney and Pam Frye. Dawn shared their plans, "The building was Burtner's Furniture, they were in there until about 1980, that's when The Book Trader moved in. We're going to put a restaurant on the first floor, that's about 3,500 square feet,

and then on the second and third floors will be loft apartments and we're going to call them Book Trader Lofts. We will have two 2 bedroom, 2 bath, and four 1 bedroom, all with windows to the exterior." Chaney owns dozens of historically significant commercial and residential units, she bought her first property downtown in 1979. "I can't tell you how many people came to me and said, 'You're making a mistake Dawn, something's going to happen to you over there, that area is not safe.' It was the low life that lived here. People renting rooms, do I need to say much more? Hell's Angels lived here and had motorcycles up in the middle of the front room. But look what a dream can do. I want to help make Greensboro the number one city in the state of North Carolina, it will take a team."

A galvanized cornice crowns 314-316, the largest and most formidable on the block, four stories fronted by rugged carved granite stones above two enormous retail spaces. It was built in 1904 for M. G. Newell, seller of buggies and bicycles, an early distributor for a new motorized bike called Harley-Davidson. S. H. Kress was located in 316 before expanding a block north in 1929. The top 3 floors have new windows installed but the interior hasn't yet been refurbished. The storefronts, both presently empty, were last remodeled in the 1930's when Miller Furniture opened their doors. Last of the 'Furniture Row' dinosaurs, Miller's only recently closed.

One of Greensboro's first department stores The New York Racket opened in 1892 at 318 South Elm. Clothing merchant A.V. Sapp ("Sells It Cheap") did business here for 25 years beginning in 1905; over a century later his bold painted mural on the front of the building still screams out across the boulevard. Boomers will fondly recall Tiny Town Toyland, owned and operated by a charming Cuban couple Harry & Faye Rimsky. Merchandise they didn't sell stayed on the shelves so metal cars and talking dolls dating back to the fifties were displayed alongside the latest offerings. After a run of twenty years this mom and pop shop closed in the mid-1970s.

It may be christened The Fortune Building but 320 was a revolving door for furnishings and fashion, the longest tenant she's ever had is the one that's there now. When everyone else was hightailing it, Bill Heroy bought this dusty jewel in 1977 for $30,000 then lovingly refurbished it for his Old Photo Specialist studio. "I've always loved downtown, my wife and I used to walk our kids around here when they were two and three. It was like being in the country, on a Sunday I'd look out my window and never see a car. I spent almost $2,000,000 rehabbing this building. We actually blew our roof out to put bedrooms on top of the building. We opened that in 1988 and I'll bet we've had less that a half of a percent vacancy since then."

342-344, currently hosting Design Archives, was constructed in 1890 then modernized in 1924 for the Gate City Hotel, that's when Fleisher Brothers Clothing and Coble Hardware (later Sporting Goods) moved into the retail units underneath. Congressman Howard Coble recalls, "Jack Coble, who was no relation but a very good friend, he used to come and watch our baseball games at Alamance High School. He had a horse and a carriage, a little buggy, he would ride right out into our ball field during the game. Very colorful guy Jack Coble was." You can still read the name of the store in the tile welcome mat outside the front door. Modern offices are above.

For generations the intersection of South Elm and McGee has been known as 'Hamburger Square' where Jim's Lunch, California Sandwich Shop, Princess Cafe, and the New York Cafe were situated for decades. On the northwest corner 346-348, the mother of all mixed use properties, was completed in 1927 with retail units below three floors of luxury apartments that have been repurposed today as bars and eateries: Longshanks, The Green Burro and McCoul's. It's the most modern structure on the block; Kozy Art Barber Shop operated out of 346 in the 1930s and '40s, it was Baker's Shoe Service in the 1950s and '60s.

Hungry downtowners were greeted by waiter Nick Alexiou when they entered the recessed doors of Jim's Lunch at 348. Nick started when the restaurant opened in 1934 then stayed on for the next three decades before moving across the street to the Princess Cafe. Jim's Lunch, plucked chickens

hanging in the window, was another casualty of the center city implosion, slinging their last hash in 1976. Within a year even the trains wouldn't stop downtown any longer. Long after Jim's vacated the premises John Hitchcock managed a comic book shop there in the 1980s, nearby were a few established businesses struggling to remain relevant. "Right next to us was Bob Hatter's, people went there to get a shoeshine, wonderful old guy, he had been there forever, always said hello to everyone and waved to you. Across the street was Wrangler, Blue Bell, that place was gorgeous. They had a giant hanging sign that read, 'If your receipt has these numbers on it you get a free pack of cigarettes' or something." Current occupant The Idiot Box utilizes the original counter, stools and delicate ceramic floor that were installed for Jim's Lunch.

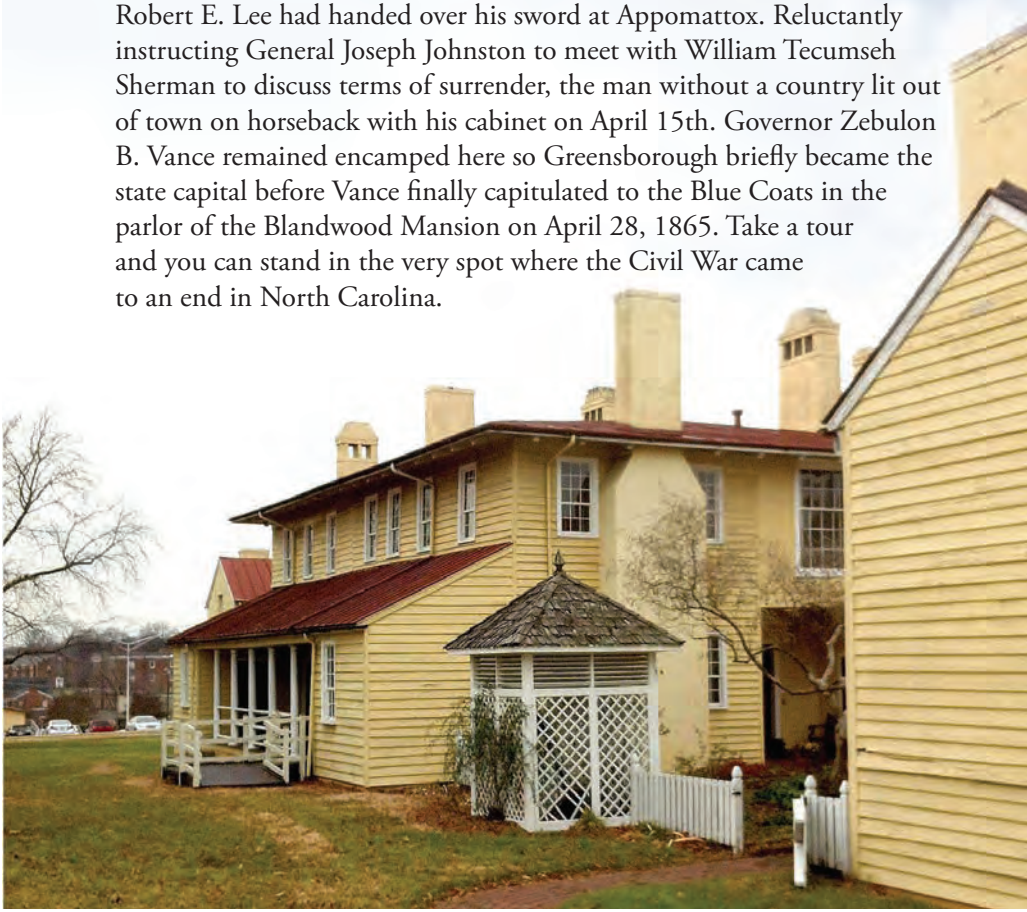
The trains are back, so are the crowds. The rich history and traditions of South Elm are on track to be preserved for future generations. And yes, you can get a hamburger again in Hamburger Square, darn good ones, at the Snack Bar near the former site of the New York Cafe and at Natty Greene's where the California Sandwich Shop first buttered their buns back in 1934.

According to Greensboro's very first property census in 1829 the shopping district consisted of: "5 stores, 3 retail liquor stores, and a stud horse."

Last Capital of the Confederacy

Awash with deserters and refugees fleeing the Union Army, stores and warehouses in Greensborough were being ransacked and looted just as President Jefferson Davis' train came puff, puff, puffing into the depot. No grand reception for the last remnants of the Confederacy, the beleaguered Chief Executive and his cabinet members were shunned for fear of reprisal, left to sleep in the rail yard. Guilford County didn't vote for secession or welcome the incursion but on April 11, 1865 Greensborough became the final capital city of the Confederate States of America.

On April 13th, the Secretary of War informed Davis that General Robert E. Lee had handed over his sword at Appomattox. Reluctantly instructing General Joseph Johnston to meet with William Tecumseh Sherman to discuss terms of surrender, the man without a country lit out of town on horseback with his cabinet on April 15th. Governor Zebulon B. Vance remained encamped here so Greensborough briefly became the state capital before Vance finally capitulated to the Blue Coats in the parlor of the Blandwood Mansion on April 28, 1865. Take a tour and you can stand in the very spot where the Civil War came to an end in North Carolina.



Poole's Paradise

Bob Poole & Willie

In 1946 Jesse Robert Poole, a Stoneville native with a midnight to 1:00 a.m. shift on a clear channel signal echoing off Lake Pontchartrain, unwittingly ignited a revolution when he seized upon a federal court order allowing phonograph records to be played over the airwaves. Radio up until that time had been all about live music, local stations employed their own orchestras and bands. Broadcasting from New Orleans Bob Poole's on-air combo The Salty Five included Pete Fountain, Al Hirt and other Preservation Hall jazzbos.

By blending recordings from across the musical spectrum with crazy sound effects like a street car roaring through the studio, a woman's scream or repetitious hyena shrieks after a corny joke — and all of Bob's jokes were straight off the husk — the modern disc jockey emerged from the primordial static.

One mid-1940s listener gushed, "Through Poole's anarchistic humor and juxtapositions of sound and anarchy he created an existential bond between me and the world." L. W. Milam of Ralph magazine was another early fan, "American radio was far more inspired in those days. Television had come along and everyone was concentrating on it. Network radio was dwindling; local live radio was blossoming. For a few years that meant a freedom on AM radio that allowed people to be loose, chatty and friendly; to be themselves. This was brought to high art by Bob Poole at WWL, Jean Shepherd in New York City and the young Arthur Godfrey in Washington, D.C."


MUTU

Bob met his wife Gloria a few years earlier. While serving in the Navy, he crashed a posh soirée the urban sophisticate was hosting for the New Orleans Symphony. They were married three months later. She recalls the ebullient post-war era when "Poole's Paradise" became for 1940s audiences what "Saturday Night Live" was to the 1970s: "Bob was heard all over the United States and Canada. He had a studio audience so many people wanted to see him." WWL was located in the elegant Roosevelt Hotel, Frank Sinatra and all the biggest stars performed in the showroom there. Gloria would ride the elevator to the top floor and wait for Bob's show to be over, "then we would go to a place across the street called the 1-2-3 Bar. Dick Clark was just a little sassy kid then but he took a liking to Bob, so he'd come too and pester us to death. Bob would have to tell him, 'Go home, Dick.' But he was a nice little fellow."

Of her first visit to Greensboro, Gloria says, "We came on the train; this was right after the war. We stayed at the O.Henry Hotel. There was a railroad car out in front that served as a diner. I thought this was a funny

little town. They didn't sell whiskey, which of course Bob loved greatly but the O.Henry had a bellboy named 'Snag.' So first thing he'd send that guy out to find wherever they were selling it."

Bob Poole and a small handful of others not only ushered in a new era of radio entertainment they sparked a genuine craze among the nation's hep cats and bobbysoxers — deejays were no longer staid announcers but the nation's hit makers and trend setters. The Mutual network took notice, luring "Poole's Paradise" from The Big Easy to The Big Apple in 1948 for an hour weekday afternoons at 3. The show was an immediate smash, so much so Mutual awarded Bob with a morning timeslot and a half-hour in primetime. He was voted Disc Jockey's Favorite Disc Jockey in 1949 and 1950 garnering more than four times as many votes as future "Tonight" show host Steve Allen. For three years running, he captured Billboard magazine's top DJ award.

After four successful seasons on Mutual Bob Poole found himself at the crossroads — move into television like his contemporaries or embrace the inevitability that all radio would eventually be local. 'The Duke of Stoneville' made the decision to return to his roots, Major Edney Ridge's 1470 AM WBIG. He'd gotten his start there while attending Guilford College back in 1934, hosting a country music show with the Southern Pioneers and providing color commentary for the very first Greater Greensboro Open in 1938.

"She said she felt like a young colt but she looked more like an old 45." — Bob Poole

"Poole's Paradise" debuted on WBIG (We Believe in Greensboro) in the fall of 1952, broadcast from a studio a floor below the lobby in the magnificently appointed O.Henry Hotel on the corner of Elm and Bellemeade. Bob, with his engineer and comic foil Willie (Dailey) served up a blend of news, weather, sports, novelty tunes like Ginny Simm's "If I Knew You Were Coming I'd've Baked a Cake," all peppered with a heapin' helpin' of Bob's bad puns. It was small town hokum simmered with big city heat and the public ate it up. 70 percent of Greensboro's morning radio audience tuned to "Poole's Paradise" from 6–9:30 a.m.

Gloria remembers, "Major Edney Ridge was a colorful character. He had a girlfriend — though he was married — and her name was Maggie. He and Bob would have knock-down, drag-out arguments where the Major would

say, 'You're fired, get out' and Bob would say, 'Fine' and walk out and the next day they'd start all over again. One time the Major said to him, 'You're fired, get out, take what you want with you.' And Bob told him, 'I'll take Maggie!'"

Bill Maudlin (not the cartoonist) was an intern for WBIG at the O.Henry in the '50s, "When you came through the big front doors, you took the steps down one level. Management offices were on the right as you entered, studios were next, behind that was the control room where Willie worked the board. Next in line was the large room where Bob would be. When I was there Dick McAdoo was on afternoons, Bill Neal was the staff announcer; Add Penfield did the evening news and sports at 6:00 p.m."

An inveterate partier Bob outfitted his own nightclub on wheels, one he shared with my parents and Alan Wannamaker, WBIG's station manager. Gloria recalls, "Bill [Ingram of Ingram Motors] got us an old school bus. We painted it turquoise and orange and I decorated it. We had all the seats taken out and banquet chairs and a bar put in. We'd go to football games or drive around to people's houses, park in their driveway and throw a little cocktail party. At that time you could do all sorts of things you wouldn't dare do today."

When I was a toddler my father brought me along to the WBIG studios; as Bob launched into his theme song I began whistling along with him causing him to burst out laughing. Not uncommon today but back when broadcasters took great pride in never losing their cool on the air, he never let me forget that.

"She was only an optician's daughter — but two glasses and she made a spectacle of herself."

In 1957 WBIG moved to an Edward Loewenstein designed modernist one story brick and glass structure erected on the outskirts of town. A miniature pool table was mounted on the outer door to the "Poole Roome," Bob's private studio. The program was so hot he could pick and choose advertisers. Even though the station's meager 5,000 watt signal wasn't heard much outside city limits, a 1962 Twist contest he hosted attracted nearly 3,000 participants. Thousands more turned out for "Bob Poole Day" that same year.

Greensboro radio personality Dusty Dunn was whirling stacks of wax in the afternoons at upstart WCOG in 1966. "For Greensboro and Guilford County, WBIG was everyone's main source of information. The whole thing was Bob Poole," Dunn recalls. "He was just as important in Greensboro as the mayor or anybody else. I mean he was the man." Dunn remembers running into Poole at the Carolina Theatre emceeing some sort of promotional event for kids. "He was really phenomenal. He really had a sharp wit about him. I realized then that [the reason] he was so good on the radio and popular for so many years was because he was so funny."

Changing musical styles and the emergence of FM radio began encroaching on AM's dominance in the early-1970s but the popularity of "Poole's Paradise" continued unabated. In 1970 a 45-rpm single was released of Bob cheerfully whistling his theme song with "White Azaleas" on the flip side. Asked about it Gloria laughs, "Would you believe I still get asked where to find a copy of White Azaleas? After all these years!"

"Nobody else had the power he had." Dusty Dunn says, "The guy who managed Sears when it was on Lawndale told me Bob Poole was there doing a remote and mentioned they had copies of 'White Azaleas' they were going to give away, first-come first-served. That store just erupted, everybody was running for the record display. People were knocking

over stuff. It was just pandemonium. It was as if Elvis had walked into the building."

WBIG had an exclusive lock on the GGO tournament, now known as the Wyndham Championship, until the late 1960s when the CBS network signed on with avid golfer Bob Poole providing the play-by-play. Andy Durham of GreensboroSports.com was a listener in the 1970s: "They were the flagship station for Carolina Cougars games with the 'Mouth of the South' Bill Curry and Bob Lamey, who now does the Indiana Pacers games on 1070 [AM] out of Indianapolis. WBIG had the first sports call-in show in the area. It started as a Carolina Cougars show with Bones McKinney. After the Cougars fired Bones as coach, he stayed around to do 'Let's Talk Sports' Monday nights at 7 p.m. They carried high school football and other games over the years with announcers like Henry Boggan, Jim Pritchett, Larry Dunlap and Bob Licht."

"He said slip on anything and come on down.
So she slipped on the top stair."

In fall of 1973 Bob Poole suffered a series of heart attacks at age 57, hovering between life and death for eight months with family at his bedside. When he returned to the microphone in the summer of '74 it was kept secret that, far too often, "Poole's Paradise" emanated from a room at Cone Hospital.

While in high school I occasionally provided Bob with trivia books and jokes to use on his show, which he greatly appreciated. When 'The Manhattan Transfer' LP was released in 1975 I brought him a copy, thinking their jazzy vocalese would be a great fit for his program. He loved the album but confessed he could no longer play the tunes he wanted. Management controlled the music. It obviously stung but I had no way of knowing how much a blow that must have been to the guy who could make or break a record on a national scale earlier in his career. When Manhattan

Transfer scored a Top 40 hit a few weeks later he called me on the phone crowing, "They're gonna let me play that record you gave me now!"

The creative visionary who's smoky baritone voice brightened Greensboro's early hours for a quarter century passed away at age 61 on January 24, 1978, a month after his last broadcast. It's not an exaggeration to say the city was in shock. It was front page news, the service carried live from First Presbyterian Church. Inscribed on his stone in Forest Lawn Cemetery are the words Bob Poole left listeners with each morning. "Take care of you, for me."

Another Dip into the Poole

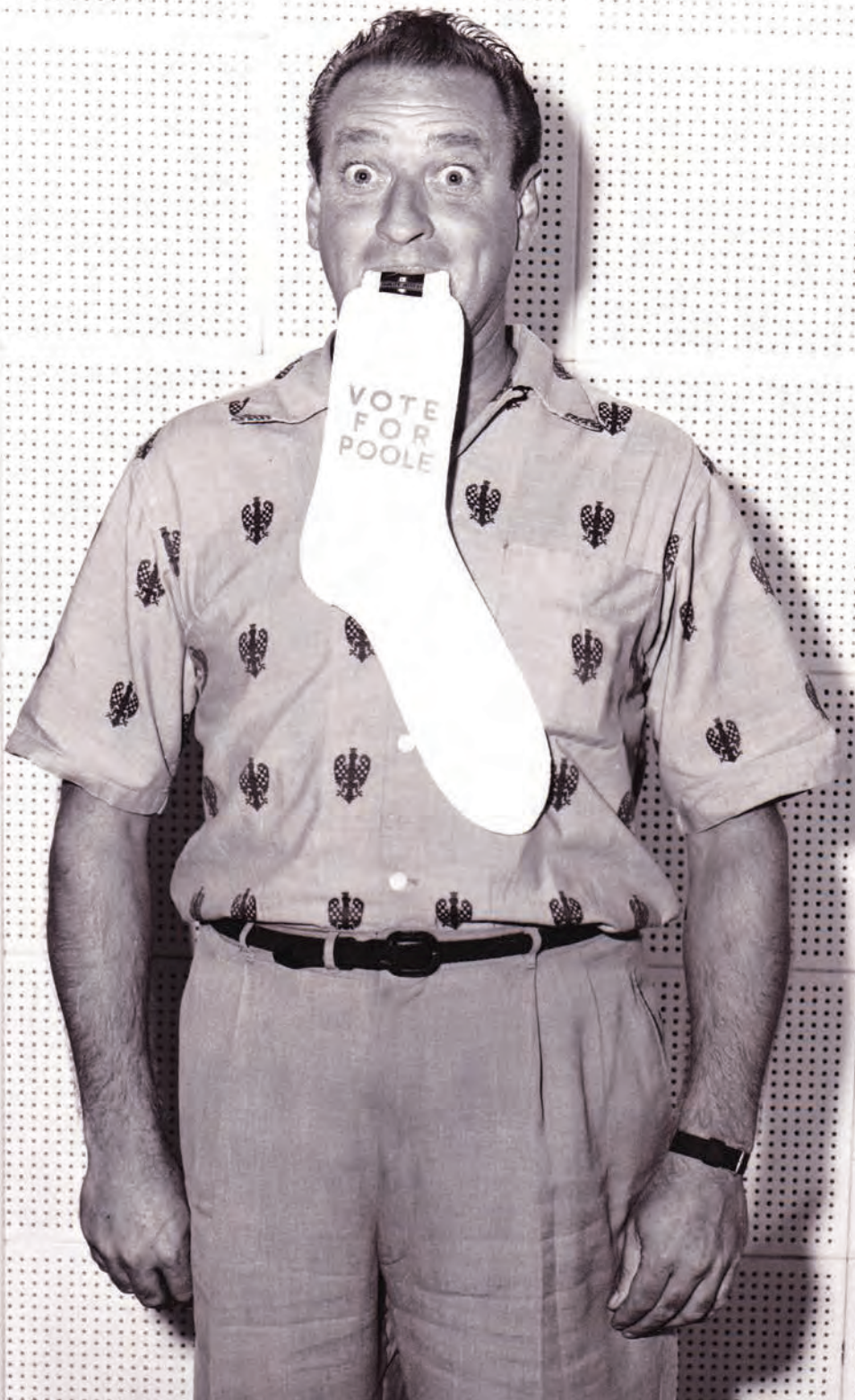
After two years at Guilford College Bob transferred to UNC in Chapel Hill, hitchhiking back to the Gate City for his radio shifts. After dropping out he went on full time at WBIG before landing his first network program. This was before the war. As Bob told it, "After I had been working for WBIG about a year I got to wondering what the the world was like outside of North Carolina. So I went to New York. My boss knew some fellows in the broadcasting business up there. I only wanted to visit... but both CBS and NBC shoved me into a studio with a stack of records in front of me and told me to do my stuff. There was nothing to do but take the audition as a good natured joke and go through with it. So for an hour and a half I made up spontaneous wisecracks, referring to programs on other stations and to the station manager as a flop-eared animal."

CBS liked what they heard, summoning Bob back to New York City to star in 'A Southern Boy and a Southern Girl,' a light comedy costarring a budding new musical talent, Dinah Shore. After 13 weeks they were dropped for being, "too Southern."

Then Uncle Sam beckoned. Stationed at the Naval Air Station in New Orleans during WWII Bob's baritone vocals gave weight to 'Sky Wave to Victory' and other patriotic broadcasts heard over 50,000 watt WWL, a free channel station with a nationwide reach. After his stint in the Navy Bob remained at WWL to launch the show in 1945 he would do for the rest of his life, 'Poole's Paradise.'

While Bob broadcast his Mutual program from the Big Apple starting in 1948 he was not heard in New York. By the time he left in 1952 the Mutual network was beginning to unravel. Imitators were flooding the airwaves all around the USA in favor of expensive network programs. That's when Bob Poole made the decision to return to his radio roots, WBIG.

"When I visited West India the natives had a saying... never call an alligator Big Mouth until you cross the river." — Bob Poole


VOTE
FOR
POOLE

One More Lap Around the Poole

Bob Poole was teamed with kiddie star George Perry for a live broadcast over WBIG on Saturday mornings from the Carolina Circle Mall in the summer of 1977. Bob was having serious health problems and The Old Rebel's TV show had just been cancelled. George Perry was doing occasional segments on the Channel 2 news (Charles Kuralt style) but neither of them looked terribly comfortable in this format. Bob Poole was a radio guy in ill-health suddenly working with an audience, The Old Rebel was a children's host with an audience full of old people.

Dusty Dunn recalls, "It was like something you would do on TV, they had a girl out there who held up cards telling people when to clap, it was a well produced show. It was a theatrical kind of a deal, they talked about what was going on, told jokes and gave away sausage and gravy biscuits. "I had been working afternoons at WCOG and I went to WRQK, the

morning guy left and they gave me the morning show. Bob found out about it somehow, he said to me in that gravelly voice, 'Dusty, this morning thing—the whole secret is, you gotta take a bath every day.' He was just as friendly as he could be." After Bob passed away Dusty Dunn stepped into the role of Greensboro's AM go-to guy. "When I was negotiating my contract at BIG the girl was going over what I was to get, what I needed, and she asked, 'Do you want batteries? Would that be included in your package?' I said, 'Batteries? Batteries for what?' She said, 'Well, we gave Bob Poole batteries for his flashlight when he wakes up in the morning so he didn't have to turn on the lights and wake his wife up.' I couldn't believe it."

"When you feel like you're at the end of your rope tie a knot and hang on." — Bob Poole

Where Business is Good

Turn west on Edney Ridge Road near the intersection of Battleground and Pisgah Church; at the crest of the hill, look to your right. That's where WBIG sat atop acres of sprawling green lawn peppered with lush dogwoods, apple trees and neatly trimmed azaleas—now Lowe's Home Improvement and the houses behind.

The property WBIG occupied above a rapidly expanding Battleground Avenue became infinitely more valuable to Jefferson Pilot than a radio signal that couldn't reach much past the city limits. On November 20, 1986, three months after the station's sixtieth anniversary, with only a few hours notice a distraught Dusty Dunn fielded calls over the air from disbelieving listeners before the station's signal reverted to static at 6:00pm.

Neighborhood Barnstormer Turned WWII Ace

A hero straight out of central casting, handsome with a Clark Gable smile, World War II fighter pilot George Preddy scored 26.83 air-to-air kills, America's greatest Mustang ace. With "Cripes A' Mighty!" emblazoned on the side of his P-51 Mustang he led The Blue-Nosed Bastards of Bodney to establish total domination over German skies. On a single sortie in August, 1944 he blew six Luftwaffe fighters out of the sky, after which he vowed never again to take flight with a hangover.

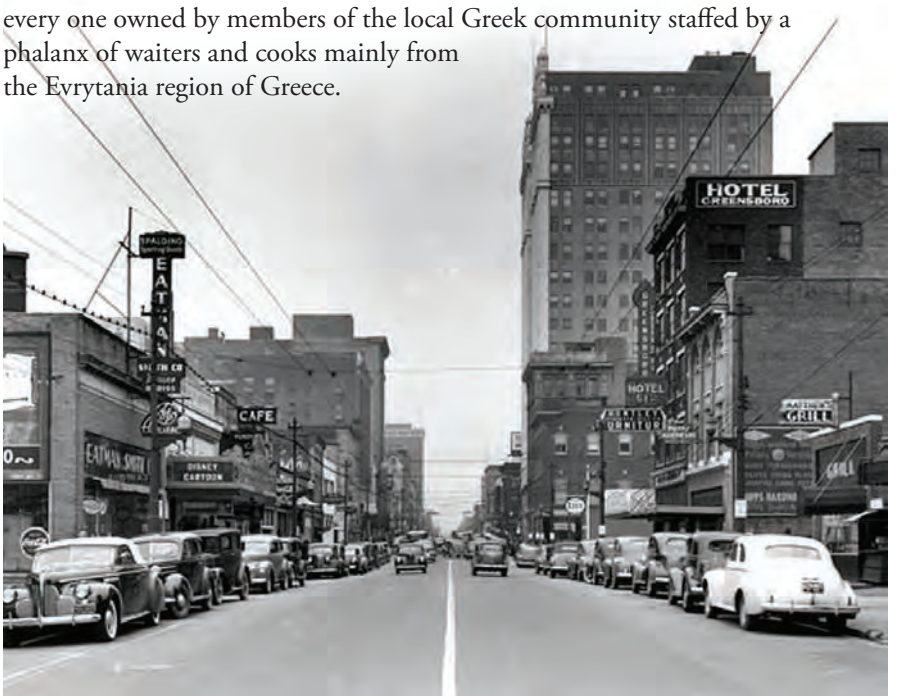
That Christmas morning the fearless twenty five-year old dogfighter had just obliterated two Me-109s when he engaged a lone FW-190 strafing Allied forces. Undetected, he attacked the bandit at treetop height just as American ack-ack opened fire. A .50-caliber shell tore through Preddy's aircraft, he was killed in the resulting crash.

Photo courtesy of Greensboro History Museum

Greeksboro

In 1934 Nicholas Kontoulas and his two brothers established California Sandwich Shop on the northeastern corner of South Elm and Edward's Place (now McGee) where Natty Greene's is today. At the same time James Kappas opened Jim's Lunch directly across the street. Before long a rivalry broke out between the two joints over who sold the tastiest hot dogs. So it's kind of ironic they were the inspiration for this intersection's nickname: 'Hamburger Square.'

Fifteen years later, bewildered and alone, teenager Minas Dascalakis landed on these shores from central Greece, a nation ravaged by back-to-back wars with both the Italians and Germans, followed closely by a brutal civil war. Dascalakis spoke to the News & Record about arriving in Greensboro in 1949, "I got a job washing dishes in my brother-in-law's cafe. I worked five years for him. He ran a restaurant on South Elm Street, the Princess Cafe. Why a restaurant? That's the only thing I knew then. Where else can a Greek get a job? Where you have a helping hand. When the first immigrants came over they got into the business and it kept perpetuating." Boy, did it—by the 1950s there were some 76 eateries in downtown Greensboro alone, almost every one owned by members of the local Greek community staffed by a phalanx of waiters and cooks mainly from the Evrytania region of Greece.



Photos courtesy of Greensboro History Museum

Greensboro was bursting at the seams in the nifty fifties, a ripple effect from hosting the Overseas Replacement Depot (ORD), an enormous Army Air Force base that processed tens of thousands of troops to fight the Nazis in Europe, then reintegrated them into civilian life once the war was won. A good number of soldiers had no reason to leave the area; as a result, downtown was home to more than a dozen hotels and rooming houses, both large and small. Thousands of businessmen in loose suits and fedoras shared the sidewalks with scores of ladies in pleated skirts descending on the many jewelry, clothing, and department stores; an attractive setting for coffee shops and luncheonettes.

After years scrimping and saving Minas Dascalakis purchased a short order diner at 223 North Elm from Matthew Pappas in 1953. The very next day it was Minas' behind the counter taking orders at Matthew's Grill ("The Right Place to Eat"); he and his wife Sortiria plated sausage, eggs, and steaks there for the next 34 years. The Sunday Special at Matthew's was braised rabbit with 2 vegetables, a homemade dessert, and coffee for $1.50. Every day country style steak was served with a couple of sides, a slice of pie and a cup of java for 95 cents. The produce couldn't have been fresher, local farmers pulled their pickup trucks right up to the back door in the mornings so Minas could select the very best for that day's offerings. Business was good, before long he bought the fabled California Sandwich Shop; the original owner and his son James Kontoulos stayed on to run things.

I spoke with veteran restauranteur Minas Dascalakis about Greensboro's gilded age and why Hamburger Square was such a prime location for food service. "The 300 block of South Elm was one of the most lively of the city. In that area there were several small hotels, no more than ten rooms, twelve rooms." Within a two block radius there was the MacArthur Hotel, the

Carolina and the Princess Hotel above California Sandwich. There were rooms for rent above Sam & Mack's Newsstand and other nearby storefronts. Up the block from California Sandwich, "The Princess Cafe in those days was the elite place to eat. The food was good, the location was right." The cuisine where Minas got his start washing dishes years earlier was traditional with thick gravy and sauces, known then as Plantation Style. Both Matthew's and the Princess butchered their own meats on the premises, pork fat sizzled in the fryers.

The streets may have been frenzied with shoppers but when people stopped by places like Matthew's Grill it was a relaxed atmosphere, patrons were free to use the restaurant's rear doors rather than hoofing it around to the front. Minas benefitted from being just two short blocks from Greensboro's premier hotel, the King Cotton. That venture had an inauspicious debut in 1926, "Where the Guilford Building is now (301 South Elm), the backside was stables for the horses and buggies, that's where everybody parked. They decided to build a hotel there because the O.Henry Hotel was getting a little age. So they built the building you see now for a hotel, a beautiful hotel from what they say... it didn't last but two weeks."

On a hill towering above the train depot vibrations, combined with the cacophony brought on by wheels on steel grinding to a halt, made sleeping impossible. "Those days the railroad was so active, maybe they have almost one hundred trains every day. They loaded the cotton in New Orleans, by the time they reached Greensboro, it's sometimes 2:00 or 3:00 in the morning. That's why they went bankrupt [in two weeks]. Then they went two blocks down and built the King Cotton hotel on Davie."

No Bunkie, Ikea wasn't the first to mix food and retail. 5 and 10 cent stores all had busy lunch counters in the 1950s, drug emporiums did as well. At Woolworths the most expensive item on the menu was a toasted, triple-decker Chicken Salad Sandwich for sixty-five cents; a De Luxe Tulip Sundae would set you back a quarter.

You could browse the aisles at Belks in Jefferson Square (the corner of Elm

and Market) then slide into a booth at the S&W Cafeteria located in the back. Well, you could if you were white. Jefferson Square was the site of mass protests in 1963 when some cafeterias stubbornly refused to integrate after Kress, Woolworths and other department stores gave in to reason a few years earlier. The S&W closed soon after.

There were also less conventional vendors to contend with operating across from the King Cotton in storefronts only ten or twelve feet wide. “You had all those tiny door-to-door situations.” Dascalakis recalls, “There was a restaurant in every door. One would have a stool, one would have no stool, the other one have three stools. One guy had chitlins, one guy pig’s feet. They specialized, that’s how they made a living. They go home and cook twenty pig’s feet, they come in to sell them, they go back home and cook again, then come back. There was nobody, [no health department]. On the other side, before you get down to Davie Street, there were a little bit bigger stores.You could sit down and have some barbeque, another had beef stew, or hot dogs, or chicken, whatever they could put together.”

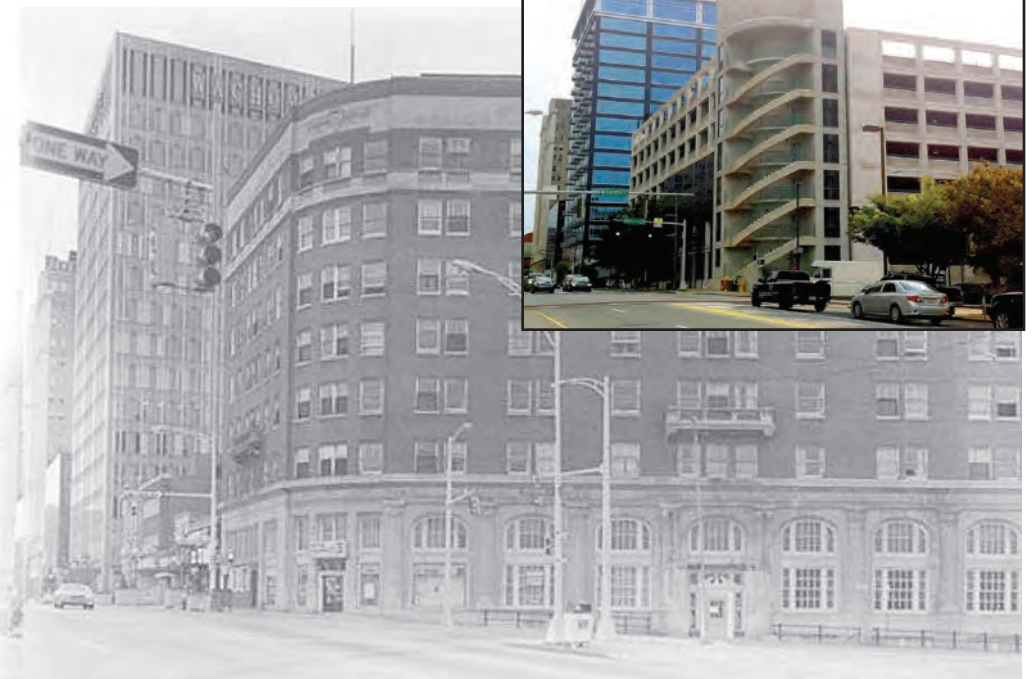
“You go down East Market Street there is a bridge, you know what they used to call it? The Bullpen. You're supposed to be like a bull to go through, that’s how rough it was. Always had two police officers. One very big guy was Lt. Mitchum, he could pick up a 200 pound man, lift him up and throw him on the ground. There were no questions, no questions. There was another officer, a black man about 350 in weight on the other side of the Bullpen.” Other than the pool halls on South Elm there wasn’t much in the way of nightlife—unless you count Mary’s Hotel and Restaurant where they didn’t just take your reservations they took your bets in the basement while call girls roamed the halls upstairs.

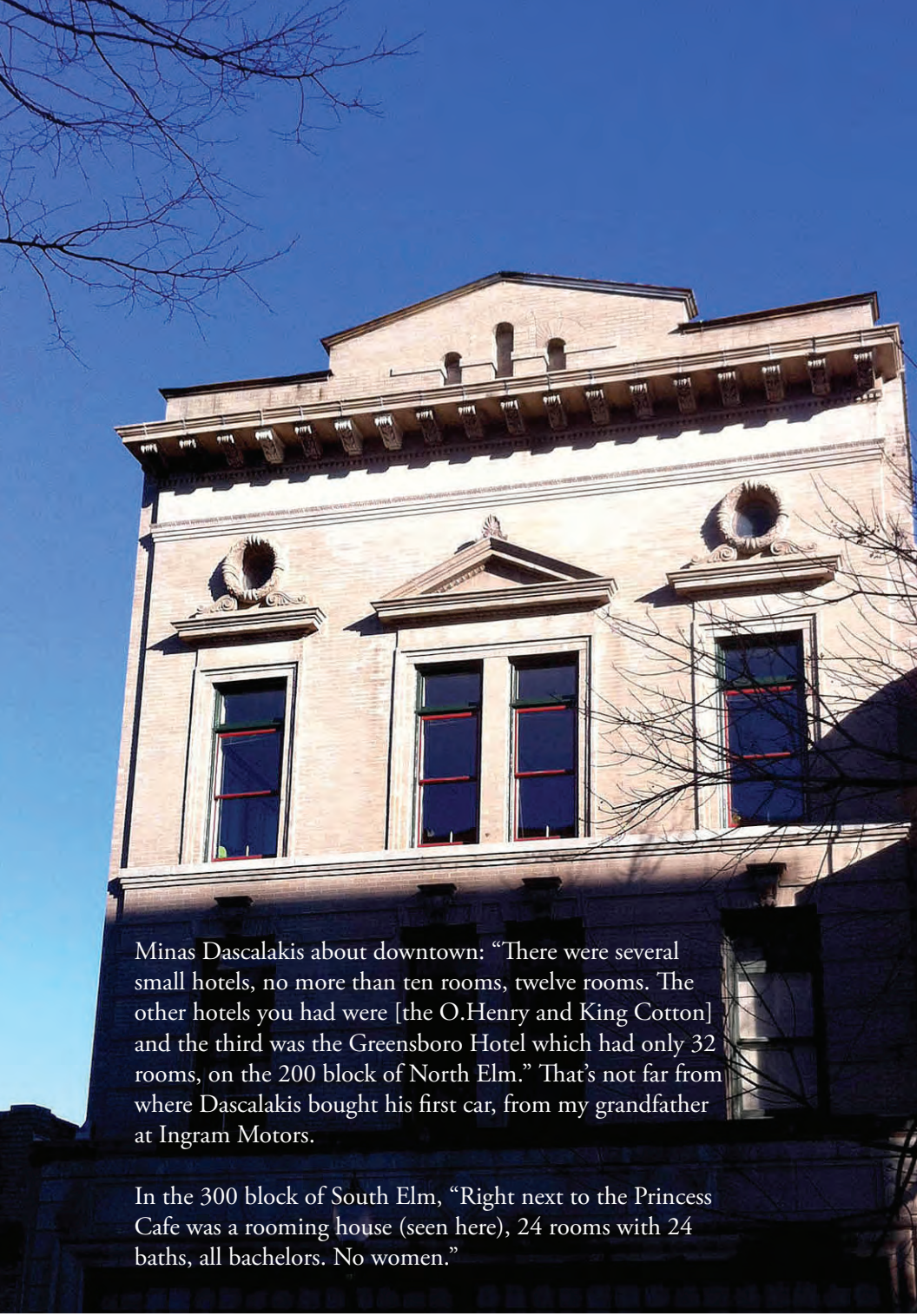
Alas, every boom has its bust. The Gate City’s contraction kicked into high gear in 1973 after the controlled demolition of the King Cotton who’s thirteen floors were, in an instant, reduced to a pile of rubble to make way for the News & Record’s current digs. Mary’s was flattened for a parking lot. Over at Elm and Bellemeade the O.Henry Hotel’s three hundred rooms and stunning art deco lobby had fallen into disrepair and ill repute. At one time

the cosmopolitan symbol of a small Southern town's determination to be taken seriously, this crumbling structure's few tenants in the seventies consisted mostly of vagrants and soon to be divorcees, a beacon of squalor in the heart of town. The plan to put the O.Henry out of its misery was first hatched around the block... at Matthew's Grill.

Minas Dascalakis explains, "A friend of mine was assistant manager to the city, he comes into the restaurant one night and he says, 'We got $300,000, community development money, and we don't know what to do with it.' I was talking to the officials just like I was with them. I said, 'Mike, why don't we do something here with that rathole [the O.Henry] up here?' He went back to Hugh Medford, the director of public works, he talked to him and he called General Townsend, he was the past city manager, they named the lake in his honor. He talked to him. The next morning he come in, I didn't even unlock the door yet, 'You know, you might have something there.' Okay. The city bought the hotel, city destroyed the hotel. Southern Life Insurance Company came in with the cooperation of the city, you know how that works, politics, they bought the property where the hotel was.

"I was on a committee at that time, we wanted to put three floors below Elm Street for a parking deck, one floor on Elm Street for retail, a mall type of space. [The new city manager] was very much against it. He didn't last I tell you that. He took his shoes and left. If he allowed that almost 200,000 square feet to become retail on that corner and have two floors on top of them for offices and three decks below for parking, downtown Greensboro would look different from today."





Minas Dascalakis about downtown: "There were several small hotels, no more than ten rooms, twelve rooms. The other hotels you had were [the O.Henry and King Cotton] and the third was the Greensboro Hotel which had only 32 rooms, on the 200 block of North Elm." That's not far from where Dascalakis bought his first car, from my grandfather at Ingram Motors.

In the 300 block of South Elm, "Right next to the Princess Cafe was a rooming house (seen here), 24 rooms with 24 baths, all bachelors. No women."

The Girls of El-Rees-So

Rows of "pretty girls" at El-Rees-So, and women on seven nearby assembly lines, were hand-rolling so many stogies by 1920, some thirty million a year, the Gate City was crowned cigar capital of the region, biggest exporter between Baltimore and Tampa.

Bunching and wrapping tobacco for 10 cent smokes was a profession dominated by females; most manufacturing downtown was, but in this case it would have been scandalous if a lady actually used the product she was making.

The James Dean generation, cigarettes dangling from pouty lips, considered stogies uncool, dadio. The change in attitudes was so profound and swift a thriving local industry was extinguished in 1955 when the last El Moro was boxed on the northeast corner of Greene and McGee; a year later a factory that once employed 300 was razed for the parking lot you'll see in front of McCoul's.

Not So Easy as ABC

In 1908 North Carolina became the first Southern state to prohibit the sale or consumption of "intoxicating spirits." In 1920 if you wanted to procure some booze you casually ambled behind where Elon University School of Law is now to purchase a bushel of apples with a Mason jar of white lightnin' concealed within. More upstanding citizens could score bottled and bonded liquor at the Old Express Office—wink wink, nudge nudge. Fordham's Drug Store also stocked illegal hootch but if the liquid in the two large glass globes in the front windows was colored red it meant the revenuer was around. Come back again when the water turns green.

Once considered Greensboro's unsavory outskirt, Hamburger Square is now the city's heartbeat, its pride and joy. Anchoring that corridor is an historic cornerstone erected when that area of town may as well have been...

DOWNTOWN DEADWOOD

151 Years Ago...

As General Joseph Johnston headed eastward on horseback from Greensborough on April 17, 1865 the fate of North Carolina, indeed the entire nation, rested on whether he was prepared to commit an act of treason so vast in its scope it would bring to an end to the cause he had been willing to sacrifice his life for, that millions had already bled out in pursuit of. With beleaguered soldiers decamped in a tattered tent city strung up along a tree line where UNCG is today, Johnston's commanding officer President of the Confederate States Jefferson Davis had ordered him to wage Total War against a vastly superior force certain to lay waste to this region in the same viscous manner our neighbors in Georgia and South Carolina had scarcely survived.

As luck had it, Union General William Tecumseh Sherman was in a conciliatory mood and accepted Johnston's complete surrender. A merciless tide of blood and destruction was stemmed before rail lines and manufacturing capabilities connecting Greensborough to the wider world could be plowed into the dirt its citizens would have been scratching at for sustenance. Instead of advancing with bayonets fixed, some 30,000 Blue Coats marched into town amid a herald of trumpets as the township was conscripted to serve as a processing center for Confederate troop repatriation, those young bucks that resettled in this roughneck hamlet of 2,000 became a ready source of labor for a muddy cowtown about to burst at the seams with commerce and commodity.

120 Years Ago...

It's late afternoon, mid-June 1896. Joe Houser and Bob Cline, two rootless rounders on a multi-county mission of mayhem, whoop it up as their stolen thoroughbreds gallop southeast down a red clay roadway past Guilford College into Pomona. They slow to a trot as the road we now know as Spring Garden comes to within calling distance of railroad lines spidering out across the state in all directions. It's the great getaway... the night before Cline was scooping up piles of cash while Houser pointed his hogleg at a clerk in the Forsyth

County Postmaster General's office, making off with nigh on $30.00 in quarters, nickels and dimes.

Dismounting on South Elm Street in front of Clegg's European and American House, adjacent to the tracks, the outlaws are surprised to see Greensborough experiencing a period of rapid growth. Thirty-one freight trains are gliding the High Iron into town daily, workers loading and unloading boxcars by the hundreds, a mighty means of distribution fueling a manufacturing boom led by the Cone brothers who are greatly expanding operations with their newly operational Proximity Cotton Mill while construction is well underway for the Revolution plant nearby.

The city is a major brokerage outlet for insurance and tobacco, largest manufacturer of cigars in the nation, there are flour and grain mills, buggy factories, brick yards and 3 iron foundries mass producing stoves, plows and turbines; rail spurs connect their warehouses to the mainlines. Every day 29 routes comprised of some 200 passenger coaches pull up to the wooden platforms near the corner of South Elm and Depot (now McGee). The aroma of fresh cut and drying tobacco leaf, pine, manure, urine and sweat likely confounded genteel country folk used to lilac and honeysuckle in the air while coal ash and silt generated by torqued-up steam engines thicken the summer breeze.

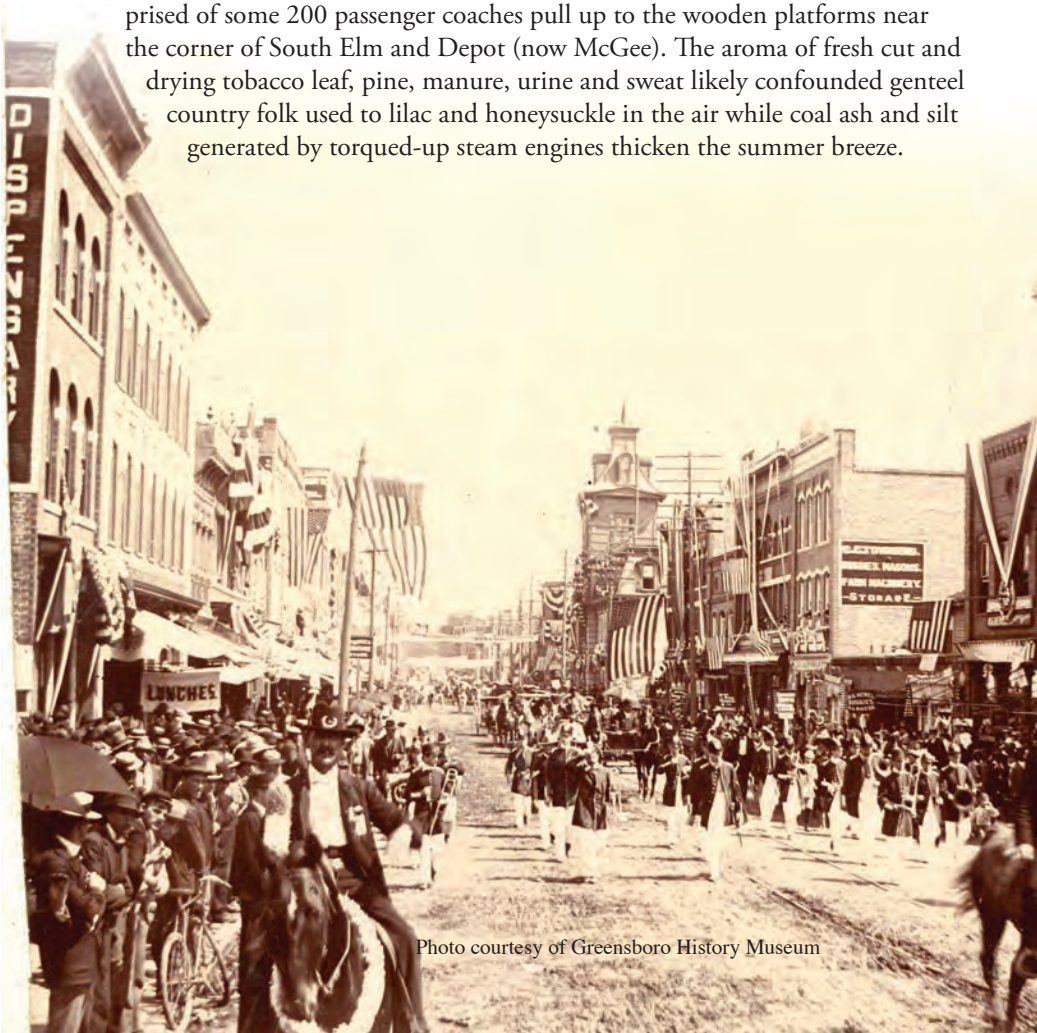


Photo courtesy of Greensboro History Museum

Bullwhackers seeking their fortunes at one of the many gold mines in the vicinity and dozens of Confederate veterans preparing for a reunion parade in Richmond in 2 weeks are converging this day on Greensboro's rail hub, causing quite a commotion. Despite this influx of strangers, Officer Scott of the Greensboro Police Department notices something not quite right about Houser and Cline in particular. Covered with dust as they were, he reasons they must have come a long way at a fast clip, then paid for passage on the Eight-O-Clock to Salisbury with small change from an official Post Office transfer envelope.

Officer Scott watches from afar as the two scallawags lead their horses from the ticket office down an incline into Tatum's Livery across Depot Street (the grassy knoll behind Natty Greene's today). Following an inebriated gang of Johnny Rebs, they walk half a block up to the corner at South Elm and into Gorrell's Saloon.

As the Sun Sets Slowly in the West...

South Elm has long been home to a robust service based economy but a sense of permanence is taking hold in anticipation of not just a new century but

Photo courtesy of Greensboro History Museum

a new millennium. Replacing the rambling, low-rise wooden structures that once defined the area, 2 & 3-story mixed-use structures enshrined in locally sourced brick are being erected on both sides of the tracks. Staircases are so unfamiliar to the masses the city's most popular weekly, The Greensboro Patriot, published an article on how to walk up them.

Despite Greensboro's reputation as being populated by "genial, industrious, sober and thrifty" souls, just a short downhill stroll from the train depot is what fly-by-nighters are calling 'Saloon Row.' First stop is Robert Gorrell's place on the corner at 341 South Elm; Collins & Cantieri and E.G. West are pouring shots just a few doors north at 329 and 327; two more bars beckon directly across the street at 334 and 344. Thirty-five year old Gorrell shares the ground floor with John Jones' grocery store, Gorrell's door looks to the corner, Jones faces South Elm proper. Upstairs is occupied by a hotel with an entrance facing Depot Street.

Recently completed, what's become known as the Jones Building (Natty Greene's today) reflects the architectural style prevalent across an aggressive expansion of South Elm taking place, a study in bold austerity with

whimsical upturned brick accent grooves, white Mt. Airy granite for top and bottom window sills. The sleek wood and glass first floor entryway sports a distinctly modern look with subconscious Italianate touches. A third floor will be added soon, crowned with an ornately carved Romanesque cornice.

Gorrell's Saloon is the fanciest Joe Houser and Bob Cline have ever seen, electrical fans descend from high wood-slatted ceilings, large picture windows look out over an unrelenting cacophony of clattering carts navigating the Belgian stone covered roadway, the hollow wail of arriving steam trains coupled with the huffing from coal fired boilers as fierce Iron Horses gallop from the gate, sending grey plumes towards the heavens, leaving a sooty discharge in their wake. There's the clamor of hammering and bricklayers at work, metal forging and horses being shoed, all of this occasionally drowned out by the teeth-rattling metal-on-metal grinding of a locomotive being rerouted on a turntable just up the hill.

Sauntering through swinging doors and across sawdust covered floor the desperados remove their hats, placing them on the freshly shellacked oak bar they order "Bourbon and Branch Water." Leaning on a corner of the bar to their left, Robert Gorrell's lips move only slightly as he reads a newspaper in front of him. Alongside recipes, comings and goings, and testimonials for William Jennings Bryant's presidential campaign are ads for Mrs. Winslow's Soothing Syrup for teething children that, "soothes the child, softens the gums, allays all pain." Yeah, morphine will have that effect. The American Medical Association will give that toddler roofie another name—"Baby Killer."

An announcement for a nearby photography studio catches Gorrell's eye, he remarks to no one in particular, "Somebody tell Sidney Alderman them cameras a' his are gonna be worthless once the novelty of havin' your portrait took wears off. Hear tell he's shootin' pictures of tables and chairs now."

Changing the subject, Fayette Watkins laughs remembering, "I hope those county temperance ladies don't make another appearance, what a ruckus they kicked up. The gall a' those gals preachin' the evils of alcohol in your place a' bid'ness. That old biddy yelled at you, 'I'd rather a son o' mine came home dead than drunk!' "

"And I told her, 'Your son left here last night dead drunk! He might still have an open tab, you wanna pay it for him?' He he he. Those ladies' heads must be as empty as their beds. Land 'a' Goshen! Imagine the election day chaos if they ever give the females the vote."

Jim Luquire, proprietor of the pool hall at the McAdoo Hotel on the other end

of the 300 block, saddles up to the bar. The nattily dressed newcomer to town kicks the muck off his boots then remarks with a sneer, “What’s the point of havin’ paved streets if they're caked in mud and horseshit all the time?”

“Well mister, count yer blessin's.” Pouring a mug of Christian Moerlein beer from a raised spigot Watkins points out, “It warn't that long ago the general cit'zenry was defecatin’ in these streets. Doubtful we’d have sewer pipes today if they weren't made right outsida town. You outta take a trip over to Winston, now that’s a shit hole.”

The bartender tends to others so Luquire directs his comments to Robert Gorrell who’s still immersed in his newspaper, “You actually readin’ The Greensboro Patriot? You don't believe that Democrat slanted yellow journalism do you? Look at that headline: ‘Villainous Scheme To Buy An Election: Republican leaders, in cold blood, plan the outright buying of six states.’ Hogwash! We have an $18 million debt and the Republicans have a plan to knock it right out. That scheme Democrats had lowering tariffs then taxing the top 10% earners was a bust alright.”

“Wait just a cottin’ pickin’ minute!” Gorrell puts down the weekly, “Republicans’ solution is to tax ever'one’s income and give a big chunk of it to the rich sugar producers! This notion that the government knows best what to do with folk’s money is prepost'rous. We been doin’ just fine runnin’ Washington on proceeds from liquor taxes and such.”

Luquire’s ears turn red, “Democrats have laid waste to the economy! We go from boom to bust every other month, it’s time we strictly adhere to the Gold Standard, vote McKinley and return this nation to greatness! If I’m not mistaken, Mr. Cone over at the finishing plant paid his employees in Mexican Silver Dollars last week to demonstrate the financial turmoil that would ensue if we don't pledge ourselves to the Gold Standard.”

“You say turmoil!" The bar owner interupts, "I took them silver coins from customers for the 54 cents they’s worth. Did a brisk bid'ness. The Gold Standard ain't nothin’ but a multi-million dollar giveaway to the big monied interests up north at the expense of Southerners like myself. The problem is in our do-nothin' Republican Congress and Senate. No way I’m votin’ for that yankee snake in the grass McKinley. I’ll be goin’ to hear William Jennings Bryan speak when he comes to town. Heck, it’s on the pathway I take to my home on Mendenhall anyways. And sure as shootin,’ if McKinley does win the election in November, the Republicans’ll drag us into some bloody conflict halfway ‘round the world, bet on that!”

A chorus of "Huzzahs!" rings out from the retired insurgent fighters, one of them buys a round for the house as Luquire turns his attention to the outlaws Houser and Cline on his right, "Three things I find just too dadgum mysterious, boys—Elec-tricity, the Holy Ghost and the Democrat Party." His remark is ignored by these scofflaws, they have a train to catch, only time for one last shot of Old Crow.

Exiting the bar at sundown, Houser and Cline laugh openly at slick-haired dudes in three-piece suits prowling the sidewalks, twirling gold watch chains, tipping their bowlers and boaters to every lady in sight, unescorted or otherwise, in hopes of catching a glimpse of ankle as she carefully pulls up her skirt and petticoat to step over high curbs. A momentary flash of skin provides all the incentive these "drummers" need to toss off a lascivious remark.

With nothing but a hunch to go on, Officer Scott allows the two suspicious characters to board a west bound train without incident. A loud expulsion of steam envelopes the locomotive, with its brass bell signaling departure, the American 4-4-0 chugs away from the Depot. Our purloining peckerwoods relax in their facing bench seats, landscape clacking past their windows, secure in the knowledge that, in the eyes of the law, they are long gone like a turkey in the straw.

And if this had been a few years earlier... perhaps so. But Houser and Cline hadn't reckoned on the mid-nineties being an era of enhanced communication, a first tentative footpath leading to our present day Information Superhighway. It took little more than 24 hours for wanted posters and details of the Forsyth heist to reach Postal Inspector Dexter in Guilford County who traced their route by rail to pinpoint exactly where the hooligans left the grid to commit a burglary in Cool Springs, then tracked those nefarious knuckleheads to Mocksville where they were apprehended after a scant few days on the lam. It's like folks around here are fond of saying—the world moves awfully fast these days.

And They Called THAT The Gay Nineties!

Gorrell closed his bar around 1905 after liquor laws were toughened, a direct result of the efforts of area women activists. North Carolina became the first to enact state-wide Prohibition in May of 1908, more than a decade before the rest of the country followed suit.

341 South Elm became home to a number of enterprises until the Kontoulos family relocated their California Fruit Store there in 1924,

a decade later becoming California Sandwich Shop, a full service diner. They also acquired the adjoining downstairs space to open Blue Bird Billiards while the Harris Hotel awaited travelers on the upper floors. That same year, Jim's Lunch opened across the street at 348 South Elm, these heavily trafficed spots for greasy eats earned the intersection a new nickname: Hamburger Square. The area still retained a somewhat seedy reputation, in the 1950s my mother was fired from her job as a kindergarten teacher after being seen walking into the Jones Building to buy a Coke.

By the 1970s pornographic peep shows, pool halls and aging flop houses where gambling and prostitution thrived reinforced the 300 block of South Elm's unseemly notoriety just as Friendly Shopping Center and Four Seasons Mall syphoned away downtown's many department stores, restaurants and foot traffic. The city did what it could—widening sidewalks to make downtown more pedestrian friendly and erecting a multi-story parking garage on Davie Street behind Ellis Stone (Elm Street Center now). Not long after it opened, Fisher Park housewife Amy Hitchcock was exiting that parking lot when she was confronted by a mugger and shot. The next day's newspaper account sealed downtown's fate. For decades after that, the grandest architectural treasures of South Elm served as little more than tinder for devastating fires and multi-story urinal cakes for the homeless.

Nightlife returned to South Elm in 1994 when visionaries Ed LeBrun and Ed Bronson demonstrated that a nightclub, Babylon, could draw hundreds of diverse partiers downtown after dark. A year later, twins John and Pete Mendenhall relocated the Paisley Pineapple into the Jones Building, rechristened 345 South Elm. By that point the downstairs had been combined into one 9,000 SF restaurant area. Critic John Batchellor raved about the food, something he rarely did. The Mendenhall's forward-thinking culinary efforts lured diners back to Hamburger Square for the first time since Jim's Lunch closed in the summer of '76.

Walls that segmented the hotel on the second floor were removed to create wide open spaces with exposed brick, a lounge made intimate with groupings of stuffed chairs, couches, coffee tables, hardwood floors, windows hung with heavy curtains alongside impressionistic paintings by Ron Curlee. It became known as the Sofa Bar. Truly transcendent, it was one of those rare places emerging out of a vacuum, the straightest gay bar or the gayest straight club Greensboro had ever known.

Revelers from every walk of life, disparate age groups, every socio-economic and educational background mingled freely there. The hottest spot in town as the 21st century dawned, where everyone wanted to end their night,

especially on weekends when the place was packed to capacity, appetizers from the kitchen lifted upward via dumbwaiter. Sunday afternoons dreamy-eyed ravers wound down their trips there, burning off bumps in the bathroom.

A victim of its own success, after 6 years crowds began to thin as other entrepreneurs recognized the potential in Downtown Greensboro, opening competing nightclubs and restaurants like M'Coul's Public House and Ritchie's on the opposite corner.

"Within 15 minutes, someone was hiding in there and did that."

It was a particularly busy Saturday night at the Sofa Bar on May 31, 2003, raucous even. In addition to the regulars, a young couple's wedding party migrated over from Kress rooftop, commandeering the east room on the second floor, just right of the staircase.

A well-past-drunken uninvited ex-girlfriend crashed that afterparty, determined to make a scene, threatening to bust things up, said she'd burn the place down if that's what it took to spoil the night. She was one of the last to leave as club goers were straggling out around 3:00am. Forty-five minutes later a 6 person crew was cleaning and breaking down the bar when manager Kenneth Leslie noticed flames racing up the east room curtains where an oil lamp had ignited a stack of newspapers. They'd cleared that room just 15 minutes earlier. The fire extinguisher wielded by a server had little effect, everyone fled through the front door in confused panic.

The Greensboro Fire Department was on the scene within minutes to quickly put out the blaze, fresh in their memory was a series of blazes that destroyed virtually all of Davie Street's business district in the 1980s and damn near laid waste to Hamburger Square as well. Three and a half hours later, while the perpetrator escaped under darkness of a new moon, firefighters were summoned back to the Jones Building for a bigger outbreak, again in the east room. Awakened with the stunning news that fire trucks had returned, employees watched from the corner of Elm and McGee as flames broke from the windows, their livelihoods going up in smoke. The first commercial arson case of 2003 year was opened June first, estimating $80,000 in interior damage. No arrests were ever made.

13 Years Later

The one time derelict structures from the 1890s that littered the downtown of old are now Greensboro's heart and soul. It took many leaps of faith. In 2003 Daniel Craft and John Lomax purchased the Jones Building, treating the grand dame to a million dollar face lift. Craft explains why they gambled on downtown's future, "It's a historically pretty famous area down there. I liked the corner location, by the railroad tracks, I felt like it was an underutilized property. I remember showing friends and people in the real estate business, they thought we were crazy. They just couldn't believe it.

"It just felt right, you know? We built a patio, opened up the center section so you could see upstairs. Greensboro needed a brewery, people were craving for that kind of thing but, of course, when we bought the building that wasn't on the radar at all. Timing ended up being pretty good."

In the interim, Natty Greene's brewery and restaurant has flourished there for a dozen years, a robust catalyst sparking the rejuvenation of South Elm Street, indeed all of downtown, that continues to this day.

Over a century ago, with the Jones Building leading the way, Greensborough shrugged off the 'ugh' to become a proper city. "I think the 300 block continues to evolve, get better." Daniel Craft says, "It's a pillar location. Kind of a little bit grungy, but in a good way."

I Was a Dancing Cigarette Pack in the 1950s

Cigarette makers sponsored some of the biggest shows on the (very) small screen in the early days of television, enjoying a close association with America's newest addictive pastime. Aside from whimsical animated 60-second spots often TV ads featured white-coated doctors declaring how healthy their cancer sticks were. A list of the craziest cigarette commercials of all time would surely include this iconic creation, P. Lorillard Company's dancing cigarette pack of the 1950s.

One of TV's first sensations, an oversized pack of Old Golds with lovely legs prancing aimlessly around in front of a curtain alongside a tiny pack of fast footed matches while the announcer promised a taste, "made by tobacco men, not medicine men." Because if you're going to ingest something into your lungs better it was sanctioned by a North Carolina dirt scratcher than some high falutin' doctor, right?

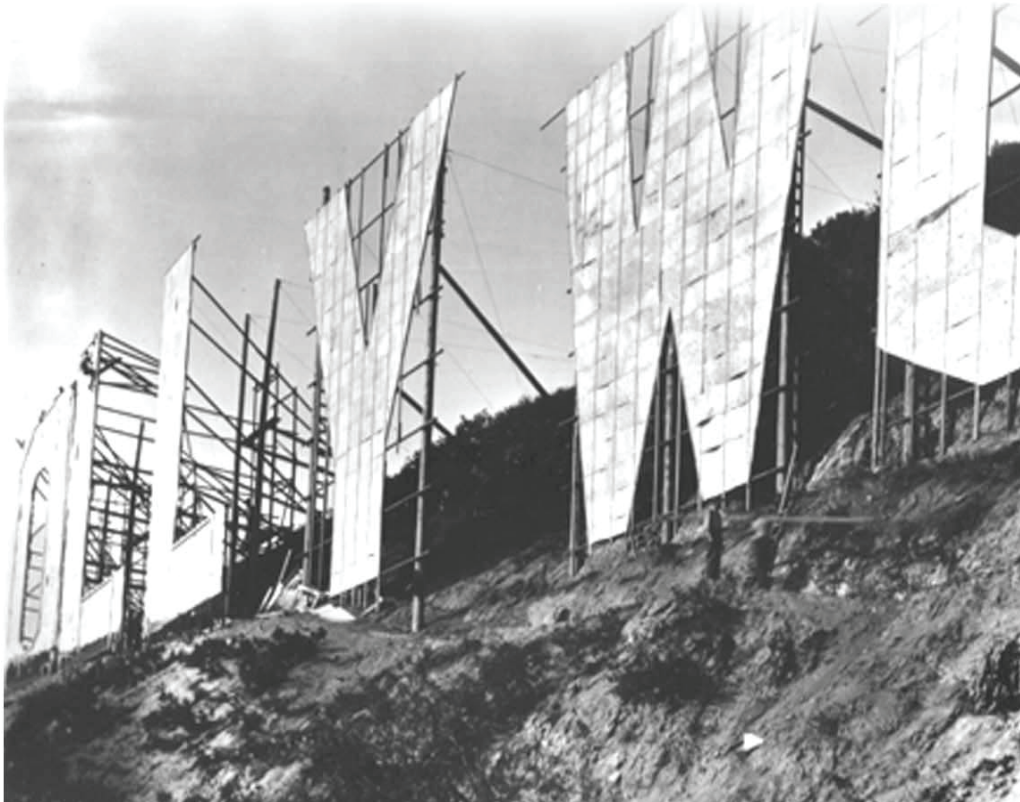
"My dancing career is so long behind me but the Old Gold commercial keeps coming up in current TV." Jeanne Snow was a hoofer for Lorillard, "I was one of the cigarette packs (with Gloria Vestoff who probably replaced Dixie Dunbar) on Stop the Music with Bert Parks in 1950 & 51—under my maiden name Jeanne Jones (sometimes Jeannie). Harry Salter was the conductor, Jimmy Nygren the choreographer. Other dancers were Louise Ferrand, Bruce Cartwright, and Tom Hansen. Incidentally, we were never called the Dancing Butts and, in my tenure, there was no longer a dancing match box."

Old Gold was the leader of the Lorillard brand, in 1956 the tobacco giant opened the world's most modern cigarette factory in Greensboro.

Greensboro Was Almost Hollywood

In the early 1910s, Thomas Edison held key patents for the filmmaking process, you couldn't make a movie without his approval. He was banking so much money providing content to nickelodeons and a growing number of movie theaters that he made it prohibitively expensive for anyone else to create a motion picture. He didn't want any competition for those nickels. Those few entrepreneurs Edison allowed to lease his patents were restricted to short one-reelers and could only work within a limited framework of storylines.

A small band of independents led by Jesse L. Lasky, Cecil B. DeMille, Adolph Zukor, and Sam Goldwyn decided they needed to get out of the New Jersey / New York area in order to attain the autonomy for their vision of what filmmaking could be. They needed someplace out of reach



from Edison's lawsuits, away from the thugs that would disrupt any unapproved projects by busting up the sets and beating up the actors.

Greensboro was an early contender, with the infrastructure, a manufacturing base, cheap labor and a relatively mild climate compared to New York. The best light to shoot motion pictures was sunlight, what soundstages (so to speak, there was no sound) that existed had no roofs. The public was fascinated by westerns and we had plenty of wide open spaces. Being midway up the east coast with easy railroad access filmmakers could travel easily to more exotic locales. Lasky and his compatriots were primarily Jewish and in Greensboro Jewish business owners were thriving, fully integrated into society. That was not true of most places in the South at that time or even much later. So there were a lot of pluses.

Ultimately it came down to Southern California. There were more days without rain ergo more shooting days. And California cared even less than Greensboro about how they did things in up north. When Edison's lawsuits reached San Francisco courts they died a slow death. In 1914 the Lasky company released *The Squaw Man*, their first feature shot in Los Angeles. It was a huge hit, people in theaters leapt to their feet after they saw it. Everyone was wowed with how it glistened with sunlight and how impressive the rocky terrain looked. With moviegoers clamoring for more of the same Louis B. Mayer and others made like Horace Greeley.

Still, it's no wonder that NC eventually did become a significant hub for filmmaking. Beginning in the 1980s some two thousand movies have been shot in the state, second only to California in terms of production, that is until 2014 when Republicans killed the state's successful movie/TV incentive program. Films lensed in whole or in part in our state include *The Color Purple, Hunt for Red October, Days of Thunder, The Fugitive, Forrest Gump, Green Mile, Iron Man III. Jackass Presents: Bad Grandpa* has a scene shot on the Greensboro Country Club golf course. One of the great cult horror films of all time *Evil Dead II*'s big climactic scene took place on South Elm Street just past the railroad tracks.

When the CBS and NBC networks presented their 75th Anniversary extravaganzas in the early 2000s there was an historically important milestone turned millstone that was ignored. In the thirties and forties life in America came to a virtual standstill when *Amos 'n' Andy* was on the air. Movie theaters would stop the feature so folks could listen to two white guys pretending to be three black guys.

THE BEGINNING

In 1917, Sidney Smith created the popular newspaper comic strip *The Gumps*, depicting lower middle class family life. Freeman Gosden and Charles Correll were slated to play *The Gumps* for a proposed radio program in 1926. Before the show made it on the air the

two actors decided instead to create their own variation on the theme, a radio series with comic strip style continuity. On January 12, 1926, *Sam 'n' Henry* became radio's first original serial and the first to feature continuing characters and storylines from week to week. Broadcast over WGN, *Sam 'n' Henry* was the story of two simple-minded rural guys trying to make it in the big city of Chicago. Although never specifically identified as black it was certainly understood, Correll and Gosden voiced the characters with the kind of exaggerated negro dialect familiar in minstrel shows of the day. Gosden confessed to a reporter in 1981, "We chose black characters because blackface comics could tell funnier stories than whiteface comics."

In their five day a week, fifteen-minute program, Gosden and Correll became the first entertainers to master the intimacy that radio promised and, in the process, invented the basic model for every radio and television program that followed. Sam and Henry were roughhewn caricatures, reflecting the prevailing racial prejudices of the era, frequently drunk and occasionally in trouble with the law (they were arrested for gambling in an early episode). The program was so popular Correll and Gosden performed regularly on stage in blackface for which they earned $2000 a week, a staggering amount in 1927. There were several brisk-selling Victor 78 RPM records from *Sam 'n' Henry*, routines recorded especially for vinyl.

However successful their outside ventures Correll and Gosden (writing all the scripts and playing all the major roles) were making only $100 a week for the radio broadcast itself. With Chicago ratings through the roof they reasoned *Sam 'n Henry* would go over just as big with a national audience. WGN disagreed. The production moved to WMAQ, another Chicago station that believed in its potential. *Amos 'n' Andy* (renamed because WGN owned the name *Sam 'n' Henry*) began in March, 1928 over WMAQ and thirty-eight affiliates stretching from the East Coast to San Francisco. By distributing the series in this fashion Correll and Gosden created the syndication marketplace. A year after its debut *Amos 'n' Andy* had become a nationwide phenomenon.

NETWORK

Amos 'n' Andy was broadcast nationally over the NBC radio network beginning in August of 1929, sponsored by Pepsodent. The laconic opening tune, *The Perfect Song*, was one of the classic themes of radio's golden age, a lilting ditty reminiscent of the (supposed) lazy days of the Old South. Successful from the start the show's popularity rested on the novelty of listening in on two "negroes" attempting to relate to the sophisticated world of tele-phones and motor cars. Still written entirely by the two white stars, *Amos 'n' Andy* was the top-rated program of all in 1930, with a 54.4 ratings share and 30 million listeners due to the wily, coniving George 'Kingfish' Stevens who supplanted sensible Amos as star of the show (Freeman Gosden gave voice to both Amos and Kingfish; Charles Correll played Andrew H. Brown).

Critic Arthur H. Samuels opined in the New Yorker, "With half a dozen plots running through their sketches, they hold the dramatic tension in a way to arouse the admiration of Professor Baker. For a week, the Kingfish's Great Home Bank tottered on the brink of ruin and thousands of families all over America never ate a dinner in peace. The night that the Great Home Bank toppled over, with Madam Queen's fifty dollars involved in the ruin, was the blackest since that night in October after the stock market dive." Listening with a modern ear it's hard to get through more than five minutes of early *Amos 'n' Andy*. Hardly anything ever happened, just mundane boring daily conversations. One episode opened with a three-minute, one-sided phone call consisting of Andy talking a female into keeping a date with the Kingfish.

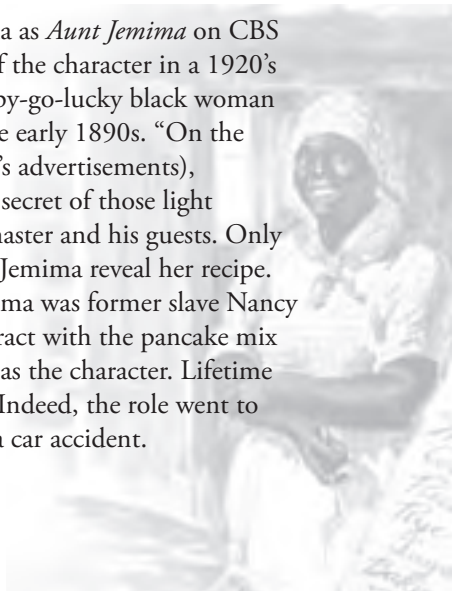
In 1930 a book was published, *All About Amos 'n' Andy and Their Creators Correll & Gosden*, and a major motion picture released entitled *Check and Double Check*. The film, with Correll and Gosden in blackface, was a dreadful abomination on several levels not the least of which—it was boring. Regardless, *Check and Double Check* was one of the highest grossing films of 1930 so Correll and Gosden once again corked their faces in Paramount's *The Big Broadcast of 1936*. There would be no more film roles for the duo but there was a series of *Amos 'n' Andy* cartoons from Van Buren studios with the original radio voices and insulting character designs that looked

like they were drawn by *MAD* comic artist Basil Wolverton. The apalling depiction of African-Americans in these shorts was one of bug-eyed, white-lipped darkies—hideous objects d'ridicule.

CONTROVERSY BEGINS

The Pittsburgh Courier, the second-largest black-owned newspaper in the country in the 1930s, fanned the flames of a growing grassroots controversy in order to get radio's most popular show thrown off the air. It was part community activism, part circulation ploy considering the prevailing culture. "Our protest has the sanction of all intelligent people, white and black," a Courier editorial read in 1931. "We do not expect ignorant Negroes and whites to be able to see the insult. We are not looking for the *Amos 'n' Andy* Negro to join our protest. We are happy to have the intelligence of both races endorsing our program. It has grown beyond the proportions of a joke; it has reached the serious stage. We are going on--with the help of all, if possible, but without the help of the ignorant, if we must."

By the mid-thirties, there were *Amos 'n' Andy* imitations like *Honeyboy and Sassafras* (recording artists George Fields and Johnnie Welsh) and *Molasses and January* starring Pick Malone and Pat Padgett heard on the *Maxwell House Show Boat* from 1932 through 1937; all played by whites. By contrast there were almost no real black voices on the radio. Among the few were Tess Gardella as *Aunt Jemima* airing 1931-33 and Ernest Whitman and Eddie Green (billed as "network radio's only colored comedians") in *The Gibson Family* from 1934-35. Eddie "Rochester" Anderson joined *The Jack Benny Show* in 1937 and *Paducah Plantation* starring Clarence Muse could be heard from 1936-37.



More enduring was blues singer Tess Gardella as *Aunt Jemima* on CBS beginning in 1931, based on her portrayal of the character in a 1920's stage review. That familiar painting of a happy-go-lucky black woman first appeared on boxes of pancake mix in the early 1890s. "On the old plantation," the legend went (well, 1920's advertisements), "Aunt Jemima refused to reveal to a soul the secret of those light fragrant pancakes which she baked for her master and his guests. Only once, long after her master's death did Aunt Jemima reveal her recipe. It's still a secret." The first real-life Aunt Jemima was former slave Nancy Green who signed an exclusive lifetime contract with the pancake mix makers in 1893 to make public appearances as the character. Lifetime contract? Isn't that the definition of slavery? Indeed, the role went to someone else only after Green was killed in a car accident.

Though they openly complained about pressure from civil rights groups, NBC banned the word 'nigger' from the airwaves in 1935. That ban held until *Sanford and Son* debuted in 1972.

For the first seven years of *Amos 'n' Andy*'s run there were no actresses, women were talked about by the guys. In 1939 the first regular African-American cast member was added, Ernestine Wade. Initially cast as Andy's date she inherited the role of Sapphire Stevens, the Kingfish's long-suffering wife—also known as 'the Battle-Ax.'

A Christmas tradition began in 1940 when Amos explained the meaning of *The Lord's Prayer* at his daughter Arbadella's bedside. This script was repeated every Christmas season through 1954, varying only slightly from year to year. Freeman F. Gosden, Jr., son of one of the creators, recalled those Christmas shows. "It is probably safe to conclude that more people heard Amos' description of *The Lord's Prayer* than that of anyone else in the world. There is no question that he felt this was his proudest lifetime achievement. We would go to the studio and watch the show from the client's booth. Then Dad would bring the recording home and after dinner play it over and over again until midnight, with tears in his eyes." An *Amos 'n' Andy* 78 RPM record with *The Lord's Prayer* on one side and *Little Bitty Baby* on the other was released, backed by the Jeff Alexander Choir in addition to an *Amos 'n' Andy* box set with four records of past radio shows.

Though still a top series ratings had been slowly declining for a decade; for the 1942-43 season *Amos 'n' Andy* scored a dismal 9.4. By 1943, partly due to wartime product shortages, sponsor Campbell's Soup announced they could no longer afford the budget so the series was being dropped. On February 19, 1943, Andrew H. Brown and the Kingfish uncharacteristically took full-time jobs in a defense plant. The *Amos 'n' Andy* saga had come to an end. For the time being.

REINVENTION

After 4,091 episodes as a fifteen-minute, daily comedy-drama, *Amos 'n' Andy* returned to the airwaves as a weekly 30-minute sitcom on Friday, October 8, 1943, sponsored by Rinso. What the 1943 version of the show had going for it was a thrilling opening that made listeners believe big-time entertainment was on its way. And, comparatively, it was. Correll and Gosden considered casting black actors in the lead roles for the new format and recorded several auditions before ultimately deciding to return to the roles they made famous, supported by an expanded African-American cast. Joining regulars Ernestine Wade and Elinor Harriot during the 1943-44 season were Ruby Dandridge, Ernest Whitman, Lillian Randolph, James Baskett, and Jester Hairston.

Over the years black actors Amanda Randolph (Lillian's sister), Roy Glenn, Johnny Lee (as lawyer Algonquin J. Calhoun), Milly Bruce, Amos Reese and others joined the cast. White voice artists like Jean Van Der Pyle (Wilma Flintstone) and Mel Blanc (who voiced hundreds of cartoon characters) could be heard in later years.

Special guest stars stepped up to the microphone every week including Ginger Rogers, Edward G. Robinson, Walter Huston, Peter Lorre, Lionel Barrymore and other major celebrities. That angle was dropped in February, 1944 but not before legendary actress / blues singer Ethel Waters did a turn playing herself as a glamorous celebrity. Scriptwriters were brought on board for the first time and the show was performed before a live audience. Ratings nearly doubled for the new half-hour series, garnering a respectable 17.1 for the 1943-44 season.

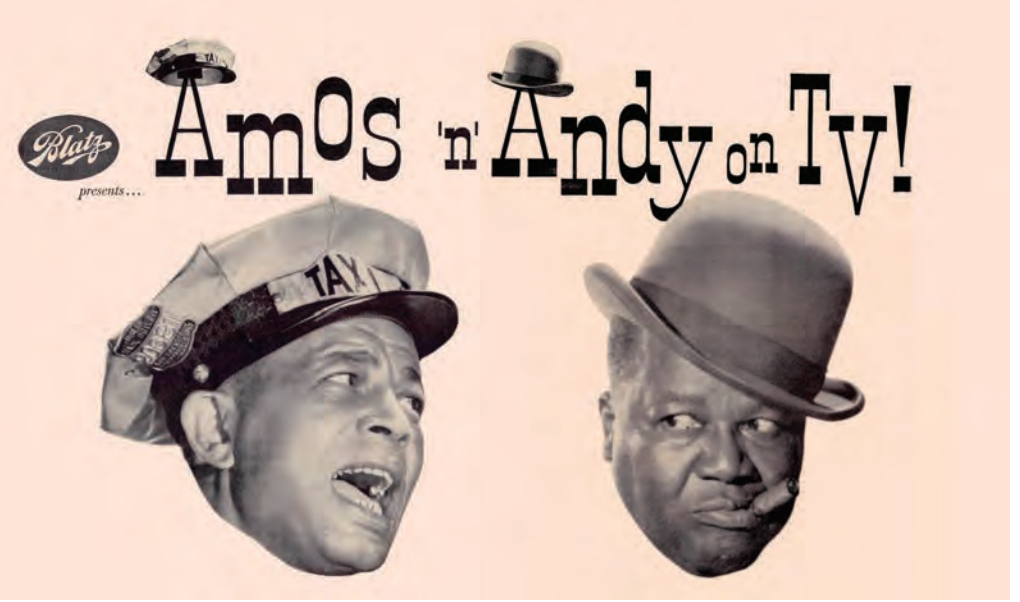
Gary Williams wrote to the *TVparty!* web site: "I am an African-American (35 years old) and a big fan of *Amos 'n' Andy*, especially the radio series. The TV series was also funny. When Gosden and Correll started the program in 1928, they based the show on people they knew. Both men were from the South and they were surrounded by black people. If you take an unbiased look at the characters, the majority of them held respectable jobs and owned their own businesses. The only exceptions were Andy and the Kingfish. Even Lightnin', as dense as he was, was a janitor and there is nothing wrong with that. But you had lawyer Calhoun, Shorty the barber and, of course, Amos, owner of the Fresh Air Taxicab Company.

"A lot of the shows today, and even in the '70s, made a big deal about people's color. If you take a look at the *Amos 'n' Andy* scripts from both

radio and television there are not too many instances where the characters mention they are black, nor do they complain that the 'white man has everything and we don't because we're black.' These were average people, who just happened to be black. I once attended a class on cultural diversity where I brought in a copy of an Amos 'n' Andy radio series and a *Lum and Abner* radio show (Lum and Abner were two backwoods hillbilly characters created by Chester Lauck and Norris Goff around the same time as *Amos 'n' Andy*.) I played them both and, although both shows have stereotypes that can be considered negative, no one wanted to talk about *Lum and Abner*, they just wanted to talk about *Amos 'n' Andy.* The plots of *Amos 'n' Andy* could fit into many other situation comedies. In fact, I read where a number of *Amos 'n' Andy* scripts were reused and turned up in... *Leave It To Beaver*! This was because Joe Connelly and Bob Mosher wrote both shows."

In 1946, *Amos 'n' Andy* joined NBC's 'Must Hear' Tuesday night lineup of F*ibber McGee and Molly, Bob Hope,* and *Red Skelton*. Ratings soared. Bright musical numbers performed by a full orchestra punctuated the scripts with tunes vocalized by The Jubilaires and, alternately in 1947, the Delta Rhythm Boys. Routines performed by the Rhythm Boys included swinging versions of popular songs like *Route 66*, a comical tune about Lightnin,' and a salute to the controversial Disney film S*ong of the South*. The Jubilaires were more spiritual in nature with *Joshua Fit The Battle of Jerico* and an ode to the Emancipation Proclamation that contained the lyrics, "You can take a boat or you can take a train. That's how it's always been and how it will remain. As long as all of us keep ridin,' keep ridin,' keep ridin' on the freedom train."

Too often these musical interludes veered too close to the lingering image of 'happy darkies singing by the riverside.' But then the network wasn't particularly worried about offending anyone—advertisers weren't anxious to reach a black audience during that period. Only about one in fifteen African-American homes had a radio in 1946. Outside of the larger cities, there was no measurable economic pull in the black community. With ratings continuing to rise over the decade, reaching a 23 share by 1948, it was time to expand the *Amos 'n' Andy* franchise.



The *Amos 'n' Andy* radio program switched nights—and network—on October 10, 1948 when Correll and Gosden sold all rights to the series to CBS for something close to $2.5 million. The Paley Raid as it was known (William Paley was the head of CBS), netted CBS many of NBC's highest rated stars including Jack Benny and Red Skelton. *Amos 'n' Andy* could now be heard on Sunday nights at 7:30pm still sponsored by Rinso, "with Solium, the sunlight ingredient." As a major component of the network family *Amos 'n' Andy* was instrumental in selling lots of CBS brand TVs and radio receivers in the early-fifties

In the toddler days of television, priority number one for the networks was transitioning their most recognized franchises from radio to the new medium. This was especially true of radio's biggest, longest-running hit *Amos 'n' Andy*. Correll and Gosden toyed with different concepts, including shooting the TV show with African-American actors and over-dubbing their voices. At CBS's request, Fred De Cordova (future *Tonight Show with Johnny Carson* producer) filmed the first TV pilot with Correll and Gosden playing themselves as white men in addition to their roles as Kingfish, Amos and Andy in blackface. "They were heavy stockholders in CBS and decided they were interested in appearing as themselves and as Amos and Andy in a television series," De Cordova stated years later. "I was selected to direct. it was stressed that the project was to be kept under wraps, no publicity at all."

After filming the half-hour pilot with guest stars James Mason, Geoffery

Holder and Diahann Carroll, everyone was pleased with the results but decided not to go forward. Fred De Cordova explained, "I was instructed to take the tape—the sole evidence of the project—proceed to the incinerator and make sure that every bit of it burned up." An extensive nationwide talent search was launched to cast the principal roles with black actors, a painstaking process that lasted nearly three years with hundreds of individual auditions.

Esteemed stage actor Alvin Childress was cast as sensible cab driver Amos (still relegated to minor character status despite first billing in the show's title), "race movie" director/star Spencer Williams Jr. as gullible Andy and retired vaudeville legend Tim Moore as the Kingfish. The familiar African-American performers already lending their voices to the radio series were brought over to the TV version—including Ernestine Wade, Amanda Randolph, Johnnie Lee, Jester Hairston, and Roy Glenn.

Horace Stewart was seen as Lightnin', a lazy, slow-talking Stephen Fetchit-type janitor—the most racially insensitive character. The vaudevillian (known alternately as Nick Stewart and Nick O'Demus) was originally offered the role of lawyer Algonquin J. Calhoun on the TV version but turned it down, unwilling to play a blatantly stereotypical role. When another call came to audition for the part of Lightnin' he reconsidered. The money would help him realize his lifelong dream of starting a theater where black actors could excel in parts other than maids and butlers.

Shot at the Hal Roach Studios in February of 1951, *Amos 'n' Andy* was the first CBS program to be filmed on the West Coast. Based on a 1949 radio script by Mosher and Connell, the pilot episode was directed by Abby Berlin (the *Blondie* movie series). Famed Universal comedy director Charles Barton (Abbott and Costello films) took over as director on the series after that.

TV's *Amos 'n' Andy* had all of the elements of an enduring classic—first-rate scripts that would rival the best episode of I Love Lucy or Seinfeld for hilarious plot weavings along with lovable characters played with aplomb by masterful actors clearly in their element. But there was an inescapable component to *Amos 'n' Andy* that overshadowed the superior accomplishments of the performers and production staff—the principals were black and the year was 1951. Like most fifties' sitcoms, *Amos 'n' Andy* contained broad, comic characterizations and outlandish plotlines. The stories had nothing to do with race, and on a positive note, introduced the concept

of dignified black doctors, business leaders, judges, cops and lawyers—a first for any mass medium.

Protests over the TV series began immediately. Times being what they were it was inappropriate, no matter how excellent the writing, to portray blacks as buffoons if there were no other programs on television featuring African-Americans in more serious roles. And there weren't. There was no balance. Civil rights leaders and the NAACP targeted *Amos 'n' Andy* as a twenty-five year ongoing insult that had to be stopped before it spread even further. Ratings were strong for the first season, the thirteenth most popular show of the season. But because of the growing controversy, and with ratings falling during year two, sponsor Blatz Beer dropped the production after season two. CBS filmed another thirteen episodes (that were never aired during primetime) to make a more attractive syndication package.

TV BLACKOUT

The network found itself in a bind, receiving hate mail from the South when blacks were shown interacting positively with whites, and weathering protests from blacks when they were depicted as ignorant and deferential. With racial tension growing around the nation skittish advertisers didn't want to appear pro-black by sponsoring a show starring African-Americans. To avoid future headaches, TV producers and the networks largely avoided casting persons of color altogether from 1953 until 1968. You could count on one hand the number of African-Americans that played significant continuing roles on a TV series during that fifteen year period. CBS president William Paley wrote in his book *As It Happened*, "Gosden and Correll had created a warm and funny fantasy world in the listener's imagination on radio. When that world became visual, it also became concrete and literal to the small-minded. *Amos 'n' Andy* remained on radio in some form until 1960. But the television series, under attack by black leaders for its entire life, left the network after two seasons."

TVparty-er Charles L. tells of us of his experience watching the show in the fifties, "I am an African-American. I loved the *Amos 'n' Andy* show and grieved when it was discontinued. I think people failed to realize that comedy has an element of ridicule - that is why it is funny. As a small child in the fifties I didn't care about stereotypes and the like. All I knew was there were blacks on television. I, and my parents, lived for the *Amos 'n' Andy* show. We would laugh and enjoy ourselves while it was on. It really hurt us when the show was taken off the air. What an injustice. There were no longer any blacks on television that we could take pride in, only the

occasional guest appearance of Mahalia Jackson or Pearl Bailey on *The Ed Sullivan Show*. If the show had been allowed to continue, I don't think we would have had to wait until the 1980's for a *Cosby Show*. How many black actors were denied a chance because black shows were seen as too risky or controversial? Sometimes, in our diligence to make things better, we actually shoot ourselves in the foot."

After the TV series was dropped from prime time in 1953 CBS began syndicating *Amos 'n' Andy* reruns to local stations where it attracted consistently strong numbers, especially in rural areas and down South—the first hit syndicated television show. Another viewer Chris Wood experienced it this way, "I am a child of the economically segregated suburbs of New York City. When I was growing up in the 1950s, I watched the reruns of *Amos 'n' Andy*. I thought nothing about these people being foolish black stereotypes. In fact, quite the contrary. Most of the news coming from New York City only showed blacks in the worst light—criminals or in dire poverty. It was not until I went to college that I realized there was a black middle class. I always thought they existed only in the South since the New York news showed only poverty.

"Anyway, if we put aside color and look at the characters, for every negative attribute there was a corresponding white male who was portrayed the same. Amos, owner of his own business—Herbert T. Gillis on *Dobie Gillis*. Andy, an unemployed male—Lou Costello on *Abbott and Costello* and Freddie on *My Little Margie*. Kingfish, the crafty con man—Ralph Kramden on *The Honeymooners* and Eddie Haskell on *Leave it to Beaver*.

"Lighting, the dumb/slow/fool—Lumpy on

Leave it to Beaver and Gilligan on *Gilligan's Island*. A.J. Calhoun, shyster lawyer—Angel (comic relief) on the *Rockford Files* (and a felon to boot!). And could you get much more foolish and condescending than the *Beverly Hillbillies* and their horrendous spin-offs? These characters were (are) funny because of characterizations, not white, black or otherwise. In fact, the comedy shows thereafter that tried to show 'race' in a positive light don't hold up over time (*Chico and the Man* even *Sanford and Son*).

"*Amos 'n' Andy* was a chance to see real middle class blacks in a cross section of a working class neighborhood. My parents were both born and raised in Manhattan, in fact my father was from what is now known as Spanish Harlem. He reminded us that, although we rarely came in contact with people of color in lily-white suburbia, his life in a working class section of Irish, Hispanic, Italian and African-Americans was lived pretty much in the same way as the Harlem of *Amos 'n' Andy*—because they were all in the same economic situation. Still, I can understand the feelings of blacks at the time. But what passes for comedy now makes one yearn for the scripts of *Amos 'n' Andy.*"

Bill Cosby expressed the opposite view in an interview with *Playboy* magazine in 1969, "That show still gets to me, man. Each time I name an *Amos 'n' Andy* character, try to imagine these guys as white, and you won't be able to: You had Lightnin', who was slow in every way; Calhoun, the lawyer who never got anyone out of trouble and never went into court prepared; Kingfish the conniver, who was always saying, 'Yeah, but Brother Andy...' and Andy himself, who wasn't too bright either. Like, nobody on that show was bright except Amos, the cabdriver, who we hardly ever heard from. And then there was the Kingfish's wife Saffire. Every time she came through that door she'd be chewing him out for something. Now, audiences weren't supposed to laugh with these people they were supposed to laugh at them because they were so dumb." Esteemed writer James Oliver Killens was more harsh in his assessment, "I accuse Hollywood of being the most anti-Negro influence in this nation... it created the lying, stealing, childish, eyeball-rolling, foot-shuffling, sex-obsessed, teeth-showing, dice-shooting black male, and told the world this was the real negro in the USA."

ANOTHER FORMAT CHANGE

Though they were never seen in the video version, Freeman F. Gosden and Charles J. Correll continued voicing Kingfish, *Amos 'n' Andy* on the radio program while sharing the same supporting cast as the TV produc-

tion.An intense controversy over the television program erupted in June, 1951 while the radio show was on hiatus. This resulted in an unexpected ratings upswing when the radio program returned in October, 1951. *Amos 'n' Andy* kicked off the fifties attracting an audience of more than 30 million listeners, #1 again. After nearly a decade of surging audience numbers there was an alarming drop of ten million listeners during the 1953-54 season (down a total of twenty million from their peak in 1948). But it was radio itself that was on the wane, television had become the chosen medium for home entertainment. Longtime radio sitcoms like *Fibber McGee and Molly* and *The Great Gildersleeve* were falling by the wayside at an rapid rate. Their stalwart hits almost all flopped on TV.

The CBS radio program *Amos 'n' Andy* was cancelled in 1954, replaced by *The Amos 'n' Andy Music Hall*, a half-hour, nightly recorded music show bracketed by comedy bits began in the fall of 1954, replacing the sonic sitcom. Apart from longtime announcer Harlow Wilcox there was only Gosden & Correll in front of the microphone playing their three familiar roles accompanied by canned laughter and applause. Early episodes featured guest stars like Jack Benny and Liberace. In this new format George 'Kingfish' Stevens was front and center as master of ceremonies of the Lodge Hall radio station, helped along by pals Amos and Andy. Sponsored by Kool cigarettes, this program most closely resembled the earliest *Amos 'n' Andy* broadcasts with Joe Connelly and Bob Mosher writing the comedy bits and no supporting players.

The Amos 'n' Andy Music Hall would open with a thin plotline meandering along four or five minutes at a time, wrapping around pop music hits by artists like Ella Fitzgerald, Ray Anthony, Perry Como, Bobby Darin, and Dean Martin. Only seven million listeners stuck around, without the high costs associated with a network series it was still a profitable venture for CBS. This program ran into protests as well. African-American soldiers

complained when this show was carried over the Armed Forces network and they were forced to listen to it. They demanded it's removal and previailed. *The Amos 'n' Andy Music Hall* aired until November 25, 1960. The curtain had finally rung for old-time radio programs, the type *Amos 'n' Andy* gave birth to. In 1966, a time when only 1% of African-American men were working in professional positions, civil rights leaders finally convinced CBS to withdraw the *Amos 'n' Andy* TV series from syndication. It's remained locked away since.

TVparty-er Deverett gets the last word, "I am a black female, born and still living in the South. I watched *Amos 'n' Andy* reruns and actually raced home to see them. Can you imagine, a young black girl in the south able to watch black people on TV? It was encouraging, not discouraging. I knew that blacks were not buffoons, shiftless and lazy. I lived in a house and a community where black people were hardworking, educated and law abiding. Even as a child, I knew the pranks on *Amos 'n' Andy* were just that, pranks on a TV show—for entertainment. I applaud the NAACP for their efforts in working to remove racial stigmas. However, I wish this generation could see some of those shows. I have some on video cassette and at first my children didn't want to watch. Not because of the content but because it wasn't in color! We would laugh at Calhoun, Andy, Kingfish, Sapphire and her mother. I know the actors received criticism for working on such a show, even then. But I found it, and still find it, entertaining. Looking at it from the standpoint of being degrading to blacks, I find it no more insulting than *Sanford and Son*—or as embarrassing as *All In The Family* should have been to whites."

'Twas the Night Before Christmas 1947

The Gate City's beloved Santa Claus to generations of youngsters beginning in the early 1930s, Calvin "Moon" Wyrick, was one of the most respected firefighters in the nation, his beaming face seen in 1950s magazine ads endorsing Akron Brass and Scott Air-Paks, the latest in firefighting technology. When the city hired their first professional smoke eaters in 1926 Moon Wyrick was with that freshman class. Elected president of the International Association of Firefighters he was, by all accounts, a brilliant but strict by-the-book tactician who served as Greensboro Fire Department Chief from 1946-1969. Unless they were taming flames, his highly disciplined troops wore long sleeve white shirts and black ties while on duty.

Moon Wyrick donned a more colorful uniform between Thanksgiving and Boxing Day, appearing as Saint Nick in the yearly Holiday Jubilee Parades. Visiting children's wards, retirement homes, orphanages,

Photo © Carol W. Martin/Greensboro History Museum Collection

private parties for Jefferson Standard and Southern Life, Jaycees events; arriving atop one of his trucks, by helicopter, airplane, scooter, the hockey team pulling him around the ice on a sled... every possible way it seemed except via chimney. A tireless ambassador of yuletide cheer for almost forty years, whenever Wyrick was asked to look back on those times he would inevitably flashback the startling events of Christmas Eve 1947.

Have Yourself a Scary Little Christmas

The city is adjusting to a new normal now that war is over. Prosperity reigns, 1947 holiday sales are breaking all records, shoppers filling their arms with stockings, shoes, bicycles, metal toy cars (and the real thing). Once precious rationed goods are now in plentiful supply for the first time in five years. With soldiers, sailors and Marines reuniting with their families, holiday parties are the grandest anyone can remember... and the sweetest. While shops traditionally call it quits at 5:30 on Christmas Eve a few department stores are experimenting with staying open until the unheard of hour of 9:00pm.

1947 marks Moon Wyrick's twenty-first Christmas season at Fire Station Engine Company No. 1 on Greene Street, his second as Chief. Thirty-five years earlier, as a young lad in short pants, Calvin was adopted as No. 1's mascot after jumping aboard the city's only horseless truck then hanging on for dear life as folks along the route cheered and laughed. He assisted on his first fire event at age six, around the time our all-volunteer GFD nicknamed him "Moon," derived from "Half-Moon," the shape of his mom's skillet apple pies he loved so much.

Wyrick's men are busy just before sunset on Christmas Eve 1947, making a joyful noise parcelling groceries bought with proceeds from the Empty Stocking Fund, cars speeding out with bundles to needy homes. Following Moon's first full year as Chief there have been major improvements system-wide, a result of his aggressive, you might say confrontational style. If something needs doing, by God, he can make it happen. Both an immovable object and an unstoppable force, it's what makes him such a damn fine firefighter... and what the Chief desires most this year is A-1 accreditation for the Greensboro Fire Department. A successful bond issue recently netted them two 1,000 and one 750 gallon per minute Pumpers along with a couple of Ladder Trucks, one an eighty-five foot, all-metal Arial. Construction has been completed on new quarters for Engines No. 3 and No. 6; two-way radios are being installed in all trucks, rescue and administration vehicles.

Moon Wyrick in 1951

Earlier in the week, despite repeated pleas not to go, Moon paid a visit as Santa to the makeshift polio triage unit operating out of ORD. “If God wanted me to have Polio then I was goin’ to get it whether I went in there or not,” was his attitude. Those one hundred twenty sick youngsters housed in abandoned wooden barracks left him deeply affected, it was more than he could stomach. On monday morning he’ll get the ball rolling on a permanent hospital, put together the right folks to get it done. He’ll enlist Rich Preyer to handle the money, Ed Loewenstein will agree to draw up the plans. If Wyrick has a weakness it’s children in despair, known to sob uncontrollably if a child suffered on his watch. At home, of course. Never so the men could see.

A six foot tall radio antennae mounted to the rear fender of his customized Pontiac Chieftain whips in the wind as Moon pulls out of the station to make the rounds, he'll be touching base with each and every firefighter on duty to thank them personally for their service on Christmas Eve. There are seven stations now, when there were just two companies competition could be fierce to be first on the scene. The boys coming in second would, on occasion, get pretty heated about it, turning their hoses on the guys trying to extinguish the fire. Good times. A lot to look back on and look forward to. But Moon Wyrick can’t possibly envision the headline in tomorrow’s newspaper—“Maniacal Killer Shoots Self After Slaying Three And Injuring Three”—that someone very familiar to him would be that maniac or that the unthinkable horror will culminate in gunfire on the very spot he was standing just moments ago.

7:00pm Wednesday, December 24, 1947

Alone in a house at the edge of town on Route 2 in the area of Battleground Road recently fired auto mechanic Joseph DeSantis is in the process of removing his belongings. Days ago Sheriff John Waters served the sixty-year old with eviction papers on behalf of his landlord David Martin, who happens to live next door. Cursing the Martin family for making his life miserable, DeSantis' rage is manifesting itself in an acute paranoia. In his mind it's the Martin's fault he doesn't have a home for Christmas... what more would they do to destroy him, are they plotting to kill him and his wife?

Spying David Martin's twenty-seven year old son Charles sauntering across his front lawn DeSantis confronts the young man, ordering him inside at gunpoint. As if no longer in control of his actions, perhaps hoping to circumvent the inevitable, he bargains with Charles, "I'll spare your life but you have to tie up my feet and hands." Martin refuses this bizarre request, instead lunging for the weapon. DeSantis, a bull of a man, short but stocky, pistol whips David Martin mercilessly about the head and upper body.

Breaking away, Martin hides in a back room as his assailant calls out, "I'm going to kill every member of your family!" Waiting for Joe DeSantis to leave the premises Charles Martin retreats to a gas station on the corner in search of a firearm, then to the Brookbank residence a few doors down. Meanwhile, shotgun in one hand and a .38 caliber automatic gripped in the other, Joe Desantis marches methodically to the Martin home next door.

Peering into the kitchen, the shadowy figure first notices Mrs. Ollie Martin, for whom this Christmastime is so very merry. With sugar and flour shortages a thing of the past, three multi-layer cakes sit cooling on the piano. After some last minute shopping for her two baby grandchildren Mrs. Martin is overall quite happy with the carefully wrapped packages she's placed under the tree. She's ironing her husband's Santa Claus suit for a big to-do in the morning when, from outside the window, DeSantis unloads his shotgun twice into David Martin who's relaxing nearby in his rocking chair. Two more rounds tear through Martin's daughter-in-law Madella as she tries to stand.

Attempting to make it out of the home, Ollie Martin cries out when the gunman appears in her path, pumping two buckshot charges through the glass front door. She falls backward into the gaily decorated entrance hall spattered now in blood and shards.

Upon hearing gun reports and a scream Charles Martin bolts into the back of his family home to find his father and wife dead, his mother very nearly so. In a state of panic on the phone to police he doesn't spot the killer fleeing to the other side of a wooded parkway across Route 2 where fifteen minutes later Desantis rings the doorbell of a newly built two-story brick dwelling at 2412 Lawndale Drive.

Determined to spend a quiet Christmas Eve at home David A. Williams opens his door to a man with a foreign accent brandishing a handgun with a rifle at the ready. The stranger demands, "I want you to take me to police headquarters." Williams tries to explain that he doesn't drive, that he has no license, but the armed man insists, "Yes. Yes, you can. I just killed two men and I don't want to have to kill you." DeSantis leads the homeowner into the den where his daughter-in-law Evelyn Williams frantically digs through her purse, unable locate the car keys. She suggests, "Let's go next door to the Seawell's and see if they can drive you." Rather than notify law enforcement about being accosted by an armed man who just confessed to double homicide, Mr. Williams goes back to reading the *Saturday Evening Post* while twenty-year old Evelyn and Joe DeSantis cut across a vacant lot to knock at the front door of 2408 Lawndale.

A traveling mechanic for Standard Oil, Burt Seawell is none too happy to see his neighbor Evelyn standing alongside a deeply disturbed two hundred pound bruiser pointing a handgun mere inches from his face. To keep the peace Burt agrees to drop DeSantis off at the police station if he first relinquishes the pistol. Responding to the commotion Pearl Seawell, two-year old daughter in tow, joins her husband on the front porch to demand Desantis stop swearing and put away his weapons before anybody does anything. Blithely unaware how tenuous her situation is, a shouting match breaks out between the two. DeSantis raises his handgun to Mrs. Seawell's head just as Burt tackles him to the ground. In the scuffle the shotgun discharges, scattershot pelts Evelyn Williams across her face. Gaining the upper hand, DeSantis empties his .38 into Burt Seawell, killing him with the fifth and last slug. Evelyn Williams, Pearl Seawell and the toddler take off to the back of the house to call an ambulance. Hearing gunshots, rushing towards the carnage, David Williams spies DeSantis further down Lawndale near Cornwallis, lumbering towards the brightly lit center of town.

Chief of Police L. L. Jarvis, that very evening celebrating his 28th anniversary with the department, runs from his house across the street to discover Mr. Seawell with multiple entrance wounds lying dead on top of

the shotgun. Appraised of two brutal, interconnected crime scenes in his own neighborhood Jarvis takes control of the investigation, dispatching every on and off-duty officer to the streets, enlisting the Highway Patrol to choke off roads leading out of town.

Word of the massacre and ensuing manhunt spreads by word of mouth long before radio stations begin preempting primetime network feeds and non-stop Christmas carols with breathless news bulletins alerting the citizenry that a murderous psychopath is on the loose, the perpetrator reportedly seen last in Sunset Hills. Authorities instruct folks to remain indoors and turn on all exterior lighting. The GPD is inundated with thousands of phone calls, so many it overwhelms the switchboard trunk lines, hindering communication with officers in the field. Prowl cars comb neighborhoods with mounted spotlights, directing beams into shadows and shrubs while police bloodhounds bay into the night. A terrified populace seized in fear await some sort of resolution, four hours after the Martin and Seawell attacks there was still no trace of Greensboro's most wanted. Who could sleep not knowing if the nocturnal visitor that night might be a homicidal lunatic in place of Jolly Old Santa?

'Round Midnight at Engine No. 1

When three overnighters congregating around a radio in the main area of the Central Fire Station at 318 N. Greene Street hear the suspect's name read by a newsman they're stunned, shocked into disbelief. Joseph DeSantis? Frequent hanger-on at their headquarters for years, Joe DeSantis? Each firefighter shares with the others some instance in the near past causing them to question DeSantis' volatility or general sanity — excited chatter that ends abruptly at 11:25 when who should walk into the firehouse but old Joe himself, greeting the assembled with a hearty, "Merry Christmas!" Everyone momentarily freezes, DeSantis has a pistol pointed at his forehead shouting, "I'm going to kill myself!" Pleading for their friend to reconsider, a worker steals away to alert police that the fugitive they're searching so desperately for is practically right under their noses.

With sirens wailing back towards downtown Trooper William Burch slips in through a side door, service revolver drawn. The patrolman finds DeSantis leaning on one of the rigs facing the entrance, a .38 resting at his side. As Burch approaches the gunman raises the firearm to his temple. They jostle as the madman's trigger finger tightens; the officer recoils, his face scorched by the muzzle flash. A bullet enters DeSantis' skull exiting through the top, brain matter mists across the pristine, glossy-coated concrete floor.

Chief Wyrick races to Company No. 1 to assess the situation just as DeSantis is wheeled into Wesley Long Emergency under heavy guard. Judged to be in serious but not fatal condition, investigators are present when he awakens to take down a detailed confession. The auto worker expresses regret over killing Burt Seawell before asking whether his former landlord David Martin is dead. When officers tell him yes, the killer raises his right hand to exclaim, "Thank God for that!" Initial diagnosis not withstanding, after a fitful eight hours DeSantis dies from his head wound early Christmas day. Charles Martin and his mother lay hospitalized at Piedmont Memorial, she in grave condition. Funeral arrangements are being made for the three lives taken, two young children will have to adjust to losing their mother and grandfather on what was anticipated to be the happiest day of all. It begins to rain.

Around 10:30 that morning the temperature drops nine degrees in just a few minutes, turning rain to sleet then sleet to snow. By 1:45, when the Carolina Theater opens its doors to patrons there to watch 'Good News,' a newsreel and a Mickey Mouse cartoon, everything is covered with a three inch white frosting. Sunset Hills' kids are juicing their new sleds by applying steel wool, olive oil and lard to the skids before maneuvering West End Street's winding path from Mayflower down to College Park. Snowflakes continue falling at a leisurely pace well into the night... with that the most terrifying Christmas on record would become, for most anyway, purely magical.

Moon Wyrick retired from the Greensboro Fire Department in 1969 and from his duties as Santa that same year after a teenager hurled a rock at him as he was waving from the parade float. He unleashed some decidedly unsaintly words on that punk and, by extension, all the little kids in the vicinity. Moon decided he'd had enough after that, never again appearing as his bearded alter ego. "He couldn't imagine Santy Claus deserving that treatment," daughter Anne Wyrick Olson told the *Greensboro Record.* "It hurt his feelings so bad, it just about killed him."

Photo courtesy of Greensboro History Museum

Kids, TV & Guns!

Some modern day experts contend that violent video games encourage savage behavior in our young people, while others say that's just another example of the latest entertainment medium becoming society's scapegoat d'jour. Keep in mind, the same breed of expert said the exact same thing about comic books in the '50s and look at how great the baby boomers turned out.

Long before technology gave us realistic video games that allowed kids to simulate predatory gun fighting electronically, America's children took to backyards and playgrounds with toy cap guns to battle it out in the neighborhood. Playing Army and Cowboys and Indians in the dirt was how many American kids spent much of their play time in decades past.

When did this behavior start? Perhaps at the beginning of recorded history, in the 1950s. Cowboys like Roy Rogers, Gene Autry, Hopalong

Cassidy, and The Lone Ranger ruled the daytime TV airwaves, attracting a legion of kids who wanted to play shoot-em-up at home. Not a problem, since all of the television cowboys and detectives had their own line of realistic-looking toy firearms for sale at your nearest dime store. And best of all—no background checks!

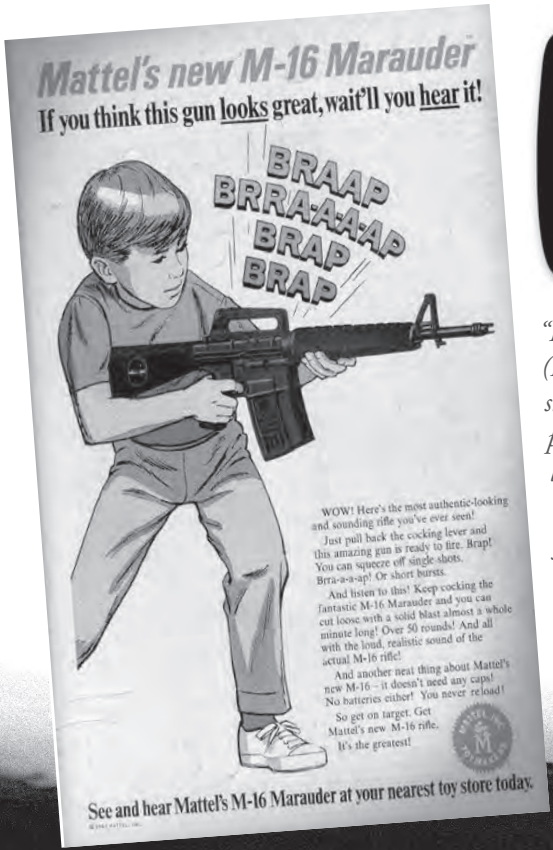
The most popular western cap gun sets of the '50s were Mattel's Fanner 50 realistic Winchester rifle, Buc'N Bronco, and the Hubley pistols.

When cowboys and pistol-waving detectives started to lose favor in the early-'60s, toy gun lines lost their key

salespersons and innovative products had to be created from scratch. Products with catchy names like the TommyBurst submachine gun, Remco's Monkey Division (for "jungle warfare" with two-way wrist radios), Secret Sam, and the Fan-O-matic (with Greenie Stick-M caps for ammo) burst on to the market.

Johnny Seven OMA (One Man Army) by Topper was the ultimate killing machine and much sought after—with seven actions, including a grenade launcher, anti-tank weapon, anti-bunker missile, armor piercing shell, and a detachable pistol with the rat-a-tat-tat sound.

"Just position yourself on the hill and attack!" invited the advertising for Johnny Eagle, another of Topper's most popular toy gun lines from the mid-'60s. The brand included the Red River, Mugambo and Lieutenant lines. The ad campaigns flashed iconographic images of kids with their



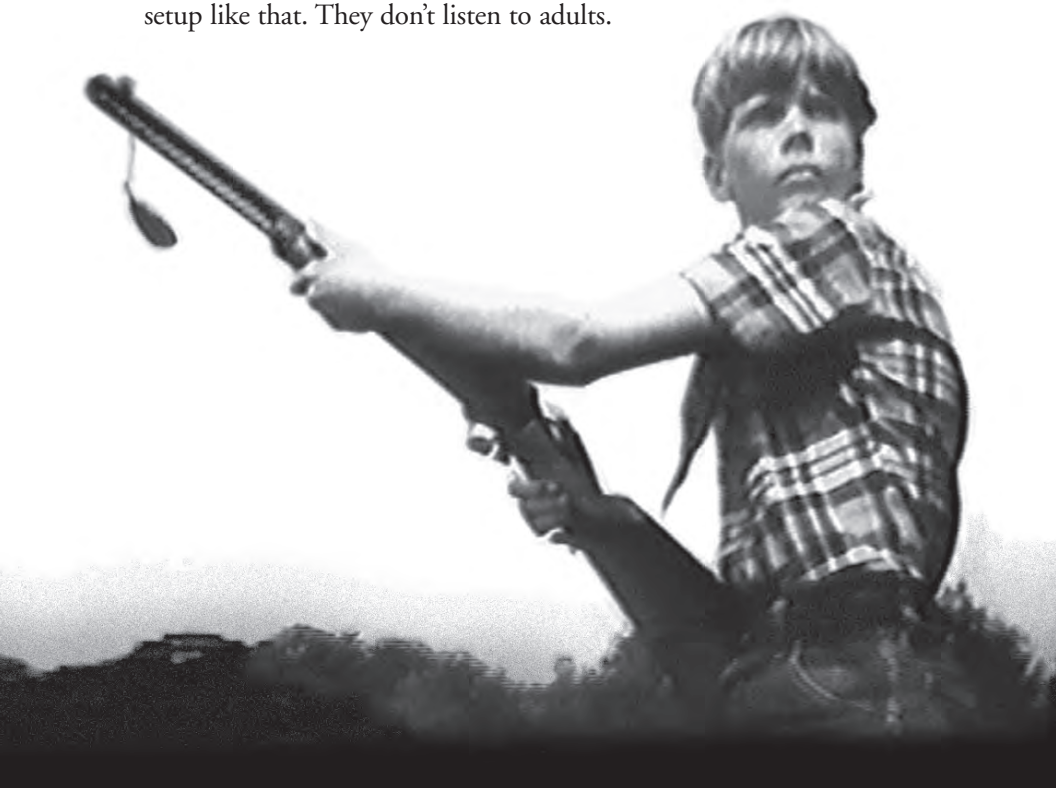
"I remember when Mattel (I think it was their master stroke) came out with an exact plastic duplicate of that ever-lovin' Vietnamster weapon... the M-16! You cocked it and it fired with a genuine staccato, make believe, 5.56 NATO Commie killing burst!!!!!"

—J. Michael Elliott

weapons drawn, firing down from the hill against a catchy jingle set to the tune of "When Johnny Comes Marching Home." These handsome rifle and pistol sets could be wall mounted on their own simulation wood-grained plaques.

Another highly effective toy campaign was for an all-purpose weapon called Zero-M from Mattel. Who wouldn't want a portable radio or camera that turns into a rapid firing weapon? Sure comes in handy in music class. Back then you didn't expect the electronics to actually work (and they didn't) as long as the gun fired.

In the Zero-M TV commercials a boy portrayed by a young Kurt Russell is summoned by a secret society hidden in his bedroom closet. The old guys in the closet, led by Alfred from the *Batman* series, instruct Kurt to go out into the community armed to the teeth to do their bidding (see also: *Escape From New York*). Needless to say, modern kids would never fall for a setup like that. They don't listen to adults.



Meeting Marion Mack from 'The General'

I met a movie star! Well, I've met lots of stars, this was a silent movie star.

In 1973 Buster Keaton's masterpiece 'The General' was re-released to art houses and was booked at the Janus Theaters a year later. As a teenager I had never seen a Keaton film. My dad talked about enjoying them when he was a kid which prompted me to buy some 8mm shorts; I had experienced those snippets but to see Keaton on the big screen was a surprise and thrill for both my father and myself. (We were back the next weekend when Janus screened W.C. Field's 'The Bank Dick.') For the 1970s screenings a new print of 'The General' had been struck by Raymond Rohauer who owned the original negative. In the early-1960s he brought Buster Keaton with him to some well-received revival screenings.

Keaton passed away in 1966, for the 1970s revival Rohauer toured with the film's love interest, Marion Mack. This screen gem had been out of the acting side of the business since shortly after Keaton's comedy feature debuted in 1926, pursuing instead a writing career with her husband, B-movie producer Lewis Lewyn. She retired in the 1960s. Not knowing her married name it took Rohauer years to track Marion Mack down.

At that sparsely attended Sunday screening Ms. Mack was as gracious and charming as can be. She seemed to truly relish the praise that came her way for what was a brilliant comedic performance on her part. She shared stories from the set, we were fascinated to hear what the genius Keaton was like in real life, on the biggest production of his career. Wish I could remember a word of it but she was clearly enamored of the man. 'The General' is for many film buffs the finest and funniest silent film ever made. If you haven't seen it you should, a remarkably accurate on-screen representation of the Civil War, near perfect in every sense. It had been a mere forty years since the actual event.

It may seem odd, given its revered status, but this project destroyed Buster Keaton's career when it flopped at the box office and critics savaged it. As a result, Keaton was never again free to make movies the way he wanted, the results were catastrophic for him and his fans.

Getting Paid to Watch Television in the 1960s

Back in the wild and wooly wilderness days of television, broadcasters were grasping for any gimmick to bring advertisers onboard. As a new, expensive medium they needed to demonstrate an intrinsic value newspapers and radio didn't possess, and those outlets had enjoyed a decades long hold on local businesses. The upstart TV station couldn't reach anyone they didn't already.

Network programs attracting the most viewers were concentrated during night-time hours, to earn a healthy profit margin stations were left with whatever day-time slots that weren't consumed by soap operas and game shows. That meant scheduling sitcom reruns or creating children's shows that offered advertisers a chance to connect with families in a way radio and print couldn't. Local chat shows were another cheap venue to lure viewers but they were weak tea; there was plenty of talk on the AM dial.

In the mid-sixties a syndicated phenomenon revolutionized the ad biz and proved, once and for all, that video killed the radio star. 'TV Super Bingo' and 'All Star Bingo' offered viewers the thrill of a live game coupled with the biggest stars on television—Agnes Morehead, Ruta Lee, Judy Carne, Stubby Kaye, William Shatner, and other tube faves vying for a national winner that would bag $1000 cash if they were clutching that coveted winning card.

It's where you got the cards that was transformative. By visiting an area grocery chain viewers at home not only had a shot at the big bucks but they could score other cash prizes, up to $100 for one local winner. This was back when $100 was one hundred dollars (around $700 in today's buying power). Shoppers collected as many cards as they could during the week, one at a time, no purchase necessary. Bingo cards by the thousands flew out of stores, grocers experiencing the power of interactive advertising first hand. Not that radio and print weren't doing basically the same thing, targeted promotions tied to original content, but TV broadcasters were combining must-see television with multi-media branding.

'Off to the Races,' 'Racing Spectacular,' and 'It's Racing Time!' combined the genuine excitement of thoroughbred competition with grocery shopping. If you visited the sponsor that week you had a monied stake in the winners. Didn't score in the first race? Those colorful scratch-off tickets offered three chances to prevail on every broadcast. Grand prize for 'It's Racing Time!' was 100,000 Green (or Gold) Stamps to the national weekly winner with a top local cash prize—that magical number, $100.

'Greyhound Derby' was a promotion in the same tradition with championship canines whizzing around a dirt track. Enterprising bargain hunters could, if there were enough participating stores where they lived, spend two hours on a Saturday evening playing Bingo and betting on the dogs and horses. So to speak.

A large tote board in the stores listed winners from the community, often with a polaroid photo next to the lucky person's name. Every once in a while you or someone you knew banked a buck or two. Of course, the actual races had been run long ago, promoters knew exactly how many winning tickets to distribute. Nothing was left to chance.

S&H Green Stamps, TV racing, and Bingo cards—anything to get 'em through the door and in front of the family's new color television set. Along with Roller Derby and Wrestling these half-hours generally aired Saturday evenings around 5:00-7:00pm, dinner hour when folks were most likely to be at home. These tie-ins were relatively short-lived, people soon tired of the novelty. The payout wasn't worth keeping up with it, regular viewers noticed the same races being run over and over again.

Dialing for Dollars

Many a housewife in the 1960s well into the mid-1970s could be sitting on a couch munching her Bon Bons when the phone would ring and a familiar voice was heard to say, "This is Jerry Merritt (or Jo Nelson) from Channel 8's 'Dialing for Dollars' calling. Can you tell me the count and the amount?" If fair maiden had been watching the morning or afternoon movie she would know that the "count" was the number spun on the wheel early in the program, and the "amount" (what she could potentially win) would be the money accumulated in the pot since the last winner.

'Dialing for Dollars' was based on a national concept, a weekday game played on the air live three or more times during a two-hour motion picture or a block of sitcom reruns. The host would start with an amount of money usually associated with the channel number (channel 8 started with $8.00), each time someone failed to provide the correct answer another $8.00 was added.

Chances of the station actually reaching anyone watching and paying attention was small enough that the jackpot often climbed into the hundreds. Family members would watch the movie just long enough to get the count and the amount (announced during the first commercial break) then post the numbers by the phone, just in case. We know this because it wasn't uncommon for a viewer to quote the numbers from the day before. Ouch. The morning you didn't watch was the day they called.

Spirit of '66

In 1966 bulldozers were poised to raze a bloated antediluvian structure leaking and collapsing on a prime block of downtown Greensboro real estate, perched on a hill in one of the last residential neighborhoods in the shadow of the Jefferson Building. For almost 70 years this compound served as a lonely outpost for The Keeley Institute, a live-in rehabilitation program promising drunks and drug addicts 'That New Freedom' after weeks of four times daily injections of bichloride of gold laced with alcohol, strychnine, apomorphine and willow bark.

The Keeley Institute's methodology had fallen into disrepute long before the local proprietors' death in a plane crash led to abandonment of this sanitarium delirium. Paint peeling, cracking plaster, sagging porch, shattered windows, a malingering Munster mansion entwined in knotted trees, runaway ivy and tangled weeds, a landscape nearly as terrifying as the Keeley Cure. They should have shot *Dark Shadows* there.

Two blocks away the glistening Carolina Theater was packing them in, which was great for Greensboro's first Krispy Kreme, a block away on Greene Street. Downtown Greensboro was much larger in '66, a great deal more vibrant. Two high-rise and 3 smaller hotels, 40 restaurants, 3 lavish movie palaces, multi-storied department and dime stores, a buzzing hub of finance, commerce and, most especially, shopping.

With downtown bursting at the seams an expansion of businesses to the west was a natural. Kroger had their eye on the lot the Keeley Institute was deteriorating on so a crew was dispatched to clear the land. And they would have, had Anita Schenck and her mother Mary Lyon Caine not stood between the heavy machinery and that sacred place steeped in ceremony, where the Civil War came to an end in North Carolina, a once stately manor they knew as Blandwood.

Man Built Machines to Move the Earth
But Women Changed the World, Bunky

Virginia Zenke had a nagging suspicion Blandwood Mansion's architect had to have been someone of prominence, as a trend-setting decorator of the sixties she had a eye for style. Perhaps if a pedigree could be proven there might be more of an interest in saving the estate. Peering from black-framed round glasses, pencil protruding from her thick dark hair, she poured through books and reference materials attempting to solve the mystery of who designed Blandwood.

That moment of Zen(ke) came in 1966, one Virginia described as akin to King Arthur pulling Excalibur from the stone—it was Alexander Jackson Davis. America's leading architect of country houses, known locally for our gentrified State Capitol and, at UNC, the playfully austere facades of Old East & Old West dormitories and the four columned roman splendor that is the Playmakers Theatre. All lavished in the Italianate and Greek Revival genres he was famous for. He also laid out Davidson College and built the first Chambers Hall. The architectural designs for Blandwood, Zenke discovered, are kept at The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Alexander Jackson Davis visited Raleigh in 1844 when met Governor John Motley Morehead. They bonded, both were former students of the David Caldwell School, known as 'Log College.' Morehead commissioned Davis to re-model his Greensboro home, a two-story, four-room Federal style farmhouse built in 1795 for the man it was named after, a horse thief named Bland.

Morehead and Davis made the overnight journey from the capital by horse-drawn carriage likely taking a new route dug from Pittsboro, in places not much more than a muddy rut until they reached the wood corduroy streets into town. As he was wont to do, A.J. Davis designed around the original structure of Morehead's home, fashioning a revolutionarily modern frontage veneered in stucco over brick with clean-lined casement windows shaded by sleek, overhanging eaves.

A home like no other in America, reminiscent of a Tuscan villa featuring two large parlors with garden view bay windows on either side of an imposing three-story tower made inviting by 3 enormous archways that circumambient the front porch. Completed in 1846 it's the oldest building on an original foundation in the city, one of the first towered Italianate villas in the nation and the earliest surviving example.

Quo Vadis?

With Blandwood's important historical lineage confirmed, the ladies who lunched became the ladies who launched. Bulldozer stoppin' grandma Mary Lyon Leak Caine called to order the first meeting of the Greensboro Preservation Society on Oct 31, 1966 to foster, "a respect and reverence for the past by preserving landmarks in Greensboro including streets, public buildings, churches, houses, parks, trees or any existing examples of culturally, historical and architectural value to the city, state and nation." No budget, only a zeal to identify cultural touchstones that needed safeguarding. They quickly came to the realization, however, if Blandwood was to be saved, they'd have to do it themselves.

First efforts were strictly DIY. Green Thumb Garden Club members came wielding pruning shears, taming scraggly boxwoods as Virginia Zenke made her case for restoration. Greensboro Jaycees and Thomas Tree service donated 800 manhours on Saturdays clearing the one block area where they unearthed varieties of Ginko, Japanese Varnish, Linden, box elder, white pines, oaks, maples and mulberry trees.

On March 13, 1967 the state's First Lady Mrs. Dan K. Moore was given a tour of dilapidated Blandwood before a luncheon was held at the home of Otto Zenke a block away.

When bulldozers rolled off of McGee Street onto the Blandwood property in October of 1967 it was a welcome sight indeed. In anticipation of a successful Preservation Society campaign, Guilford College allowed the Keeley added east and west wings to be junked. The Carriage House had been moved forward to become a dining hall. The idea was to return it to original position but the structure was deemed too compromised to survive another upheaval. The distinctive cupola was set aside to crown a reimagined Carriage House.

Modernist architect Edward Lowenstein, known for the Greensboro Public

Library (1964) and YMCA (1971) buildings as well as homes in Irving Park and Starmount, was enlisted to oversee one of the first modern-age adapted reuses of an historic property.

Progress was reported in a 'With the Women' section of the newspaper alongside Martha Long's society column and debutant ball photos. The ladies were smart enough to capitalize on that by hosting irresistible photo opportunities. A November 10th celebratory tea presided over by Mary Rucker, great-granddaughter of Morehead, was served in the West Room on the Governor's own silver service. Throw rugs from the Zenkes covered the cracked and broken tile floor. It was left to one's imagination to paper over the water damaged walls and boarded up staircase. The first Christmas decorations at Blandwood for almost a quarter century consisted of holly filled urns positioned on the mantle below two William Frerichs paintings that had hung in Morehead's home, a gift from Mrs. Rucker.

A Committee of 122 was established under the leadership of former newspaper writer Kay Stern (1966's Woman of the Year). A team led by Kathleen Bryan, Mrs. Wayne McGrew, and Mrs. James Whitton were given a scant few months to raise $400,000 (about a million today) to purchase and return Blandwood to something akin to former glory. Junior League president Mary Schenk presented the committee $50,000 from her organization and they were off and running. Or so they thought.

If not for Governor Morehead,
you'd be reading the Farm Report right now

Seemingly forgotten on the part of the public was any knowledge of the historical significance attached to the former residence of Governor John Motley Morehead. The only governor of the state to hail from Greensboro proper, Morehead was an early champion of the railroad when it wasn't an obvious gambit and a fierce proponent of public education, one that included the disabled, women and slaves, a concept many considered blasphemous. The Governor's response to his critics was masterful, "Why would you deny the right of any man, woman or child to read that book you claim will set them free?"

He was a true visionary and a man of action, a rare combination. In 1840 Morehead chartered the Edgeworth Female Seminary located where the YMCA is now, his 5 daughters were schooled there. During his 2 terms as Governor (1841-1845) he made major transportation and infrastructure improvements, implemented a progressive public school system and established the Governor Morehead School for the "deaf, dumb, and blind."

"The Father of Modern North Carolina" had one eye focused firmly on the future. In 1854, as first president of the North Carolina Railroad, he undertook an aggressive expansion of what he called "the tree of life" connecting every corner of the state to the wider world. As a result, a delicate 'City of Flowers' morphed into the 'Gate City,' defined by a robust rail system that, not coincidentally, utilized Greensboro as it's hub.

As talk of succession grew louder in 1861 Morehead was a Peace Convention delegate hoping to avoid war with the north. After hostilities broke out he served in the Confederate Congress and entertained officers as they marched headstrong to Richmond; then again when they returned in retreat. At war's end Greensboro served as a decommissioning depot with Union officials occupying all the nicest homes. Morehead's daughter Letitia Morehead Walker referred to Blandwood's 1865 houseguest Major General Jacob Dolson Cox as, "A most courteous and elegant man" that nonetheless forced her to witness what for her was a macabre sight, a triumphant parade of occupying forces. She wrote, "Sullen, vindictive, no eulogy was paid. This magnificent pageant, the gorgeous display of thousands of new uniforms, glittering sabers and bayonets, and all flushed with victory and marching to the music of splendid bands."

A teacher recalled, "Our wounded men, sadly depleted alas in numbers, were at once transferred to Edgeworth Seminary and our occupation was gone, but we were allowed to visit them there and the old historic mansion with its beautiful ground that witnessed many glad greetings and sorrowful partings. These were the times that tried the souls of men and women."

After John Motley Morehead passed away in 1866 his daughter Emma Victoria and husband General Julius A. Gray became lord and lady of the manor, he being the commander-in-chief of North Carolina's repelling forces during the War of 1812. When the British heard Gray's regiment was in their path they decided to come to terms rather than face this fearsome foe. Gray initiated the successful effort to preserve the site of the Battle of Guilford Court House, saved Greensboro College and founded the Greater Greensboro Chamber of Commerce. Gray died in 1891, his service was held at West Market Methodist Church. Five years later Blandwood was deeded to the Keeley Institute.

Knowing Your Place

John Motley Morehead III was one of the founders of Union Carbide so naturally Kay Stern and Mary Lyons Caine traveled to their headquarters in New York to solicit funds. They were rebuffed. At the conclusion of the fundraising period the committee had netted $259,598, about two-thirds of what was required. They had been hoping to secure a federal grant, knowing the budget for

restoration projects was miserly. Pressed on what would happen if that endowment didn't come through Mary Lyon Caine insisted, “We’re going to save Blandwood!”

The notion of rehabilitating some moldy old house in lieu of a grocery store in 1966 was as impractical as it was audacious. Enjoying a jet-fueled economy American society was go-go-go, color TV, space walks, Wham-O, high camp, Naked Time, LSD, Mothers of Invention, Black Panthers, Liquid Paper, Monkees, Falcons, Dolphins; the Pepsi Generation living out an Endless Summer of mini-skirts, muscle cars and Super Balls. Out with the old, in with the new. Disposable culture, obsolescence guaranteed.

Suitors had presented themselves to rescue Blandwood before. Guilford College bought the property in 1965 and, along with Arnold Schiffman, they put forth a proposal to save the estate, former mayor Robert Frazier had appealed to legislators for years, but this shady lady was not an obvious candidate for a long term relationship, her very uniqueness a turn-off. No white column décolletage or proper Southern brickwork. Besides, wasn't that the joint shooting up addicts with weird serums?

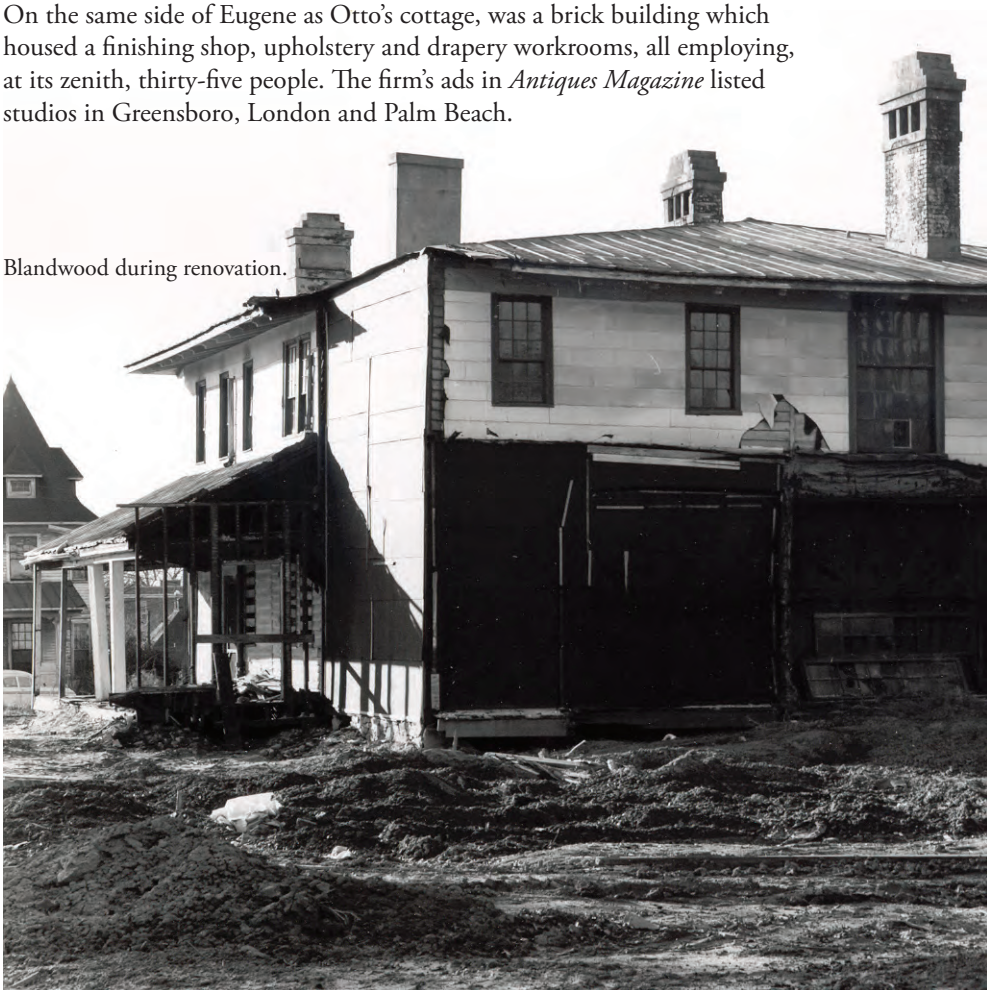
On April 17, 1968 HUD allocated over $100,000 to put the ladies within sight of the goal, the rest followed quickly. A week later, after Boy Scouts cleaned and pruned, the Greensboro Women’s Club hosted the first open house at Blandwood for the public.

Which made what happened next all the more heartbreaking...

A familiar adage in town goes, "There are interior decorators, and then there are the Zenkes." The firm's iconic Georgian antiques, impeccable taste, and full interior design services propelled Otto, his brother Henry, and sister-in-law Virginia, into projects great and small, private and public, for the burgeoning group of commercial and industrial leaders of the Southeast.

His office and residence, housed in his century-old antebellum estate, filled almost an entire downtown block with lush gardens cooling under old growth trees, a home built by a relative of Governor Morehead. A wide front lawn looked across Eugene Street towards a complex of older buildings which housed drafting, bookkeeping, and shipping facilities, and most notably, the still standing balconied stucco house with two large bay windows which provided a drive-by display of his stylish world.

On the same side of Eugene as Otto's cottage, was a brick building which housed a finishing shop, upholstery and drapery workrooms, all employing, at its zenith, thirty-five people. The firm's ads in *Antiques Magazine* listed studios in Greensboro, London and Palm Beach.



Blandwood during renovation.

Across from Otto Zenke's operation his brother Henry and wife Virginia lived at 224 Blandwood Avenue with their 2 children in a two-story restoration of a traditional Quaker frame house from 1830 with an 1840 front addition highlighted by an austere array of double vertical windows. It had been rescued from West Market Street in the 1920s.

The Zenke properties formed a breathtakingly beautiful 3 block shaded simulacra of distingué places further south, Charleston or New Orleans. Naturally the family was center stage for the Blandwood Mansion campaign, the second meeting of the Preservation Society was held in Virginia Zenke's home. Otto loaned them Victorian furnishings to spruce up the drawing rooms and was first to light the bricked up fireplaces.

At same time the Zenkes were fighting to save Blandwood, Otto's home was being seized by eminent domain. No amount of pleading could sway the city

council. First to go, for the widening of Eugene, were trees almost as old as the house. In May of 1968 the family and members of the Preservation Society watched aghast as a glorious residence reflecting gentility and grace on lush, green terrain was demolished for a governmental center and courthouse styled in late 1960s pebble-encrusted Greensboro Grotesque.

Otto Zenke died in 1984, the Sheriff's Department moved into his courtly showroom shortly thereafter and remains there, a minute portion of his gardens still evident in the trim boxwoods and flowering shrubs out front. There are those who swear Otto Zenke's restless spirit makes its presence known in curious ways.

In 2005, the County's announced plans for a new jail put Virginia Zenke's Charleston-esque home and three other business properties in the cross-hairs of their expansion. Rather than wait for the inevitable outcome of eminent domain, the family proposed swapping their properties with the County for it's parking lot across the street from Blandwood, and adjacent to the fifth lot they already owned. In doing so, they kept the ass end of a colossal jail complex from being built in front of Blandwood, which has National Landmark status. One of the four homes was moved to a lot in Westerwood where it fit in nicely. Virginia's home (featured in the September 1964 issue of House Beautiful) and a 1899 Queen Ann duplex were hauled around the corner, facing Moorehead's villa on Washington. The duplex was cruelly raised by the city but Zenke's home rests steadfastly alongside a mid-century brick apartment building with light Romanesque touches of its own.

Living History

Blandwood is the only structure in Guilford County designated as a National Historic Landmark. "Morehead was the first governor to advocate for educating women, then it was women who saved the house in 1966." John Graham is Development Director for Preservation Greensboro Incorporated, celebrating their 50th anniversary, "When you go to Blandwood today it's very much like it would have been. The three couches in the West Parlor were designed for Blandwood by A.J. Davis.

"In October of 2013 I had all of the living governors, with the exception of Easley, up in the West Parlor and I said, 'Let me tell you what all happened right where you're standing. Governor Vance came up to Morehead in 1865 and said, 'The troops are surrendering up in Durham, what am I to do?' He said, 'You're going to surrender the state to the Union. There's no choice, it's over." So Vance says, 'Can you make it happen?' Morehead summons the two Union generals who are in charge of the occupation and tells them, 'I've got

the Governor here and he's ready to surrender.' They come up here and Vance signs an agreement totally surrendering the state to the Union, they shake hands and depart. The two generals go back and cable Washington and they say, 'We have a surrender from the North Carolina Governor.' And they cabled back, 'You did arrest him didn't you?' So they get on horseback and catch up with him in Huntersville."

Morehead made his fortune in textiles. A slave owner, he and those in his sphere made a Hobson's choice. If they couldn't beat the system, they'd mitigate the harmful effects of slavery in what small ways they could. John Graham explains, "If you think about it, any slave is one too many. Morehead was the equivalent of what a billionaire is today, in 1860 he owned 17 slaves. You say, 'That's a lot.' Well, not compared to someone with his wealth. He also owned old slaves. These were not the ones that were going to be plowing or working in a factory. Why did he have such a low number? Quakers.

"Morehead's wife, all their friends were Quakers. The Quakers owned slaves but the reason given was, 'If I freed the slave and wasn't able to take him all the way up north he'd be caught in the next county and back in slavery.' Greensboro is the only county seat in North Carolina that does not have a Civil War monument on the courthouse grounds. That goes back to Morehead."

At the 50th anniversary celebration in 2016 the guest speaker was James Perry, husband of Melissa Harris-Perry, he was involved with the Preservation Resource Center in New Orleans. He's also a civil rights attorney. John Graham recalls what impressed him most, "One of the things James Perry said was, 'I learned more from the little old ladies of the preservation societies than I did from any civil rights leader because what they understood was, you had to see beauty where there wasn't any.' We probably had more volunteer offers after that meeting than they've ever had. It spoke to the heart of Sharon Hightower of the historic preservation movement in East Greensboro."

Visitors numbers and Carriage House revenue have doubled since PGI hired a Development Director, "We put the house front and center. When C-Span came to town the mayor wanted her interview to be in the West Parlor of Blandwood. Two years ago the legislative delegation of Guilford County had their annual meeting here. At the City Council chambers it's never well attended." It was packed that night by virtue of the location, "Lo and behold, that was when Trudy Waid leaked that she was going to try to redo the City Council in Greensboro. So history still happens at Blandwood."

Joyous sounds of celebration have been ringing from the south lawn since 1970 when Blandwood Carriage House became a location of distinction for weddings and receptions, a state of the art facility that has as its backdrop an ancient beauty where past and present coexist harmonically. Live music, dancing, children's laughter, business leaders congregating, a bride and groom's exhilarating first hours as a married couple. A living testament to those ladies in pearls who drew a line in the sands of time, to battles won against prevailing winds on a field of devastating losses.

It's astonishing to long-time collectors that comic books have taken on a whiff of respectability, frequent news stories of a single ten-cent issue selling at auction for multiple millions of dollars could be one reason. When a Minnesota contractor dug the first appearance of Superman out of the insulation of his home in 2013 he scored a $175,000 windfall, more than 15 times what that fixer-upper cost him. His copy of *Action Comics* #1 would have gone for a lot more if one of his grabby in-laws hadn't torn the back cover, downgrading the rarity from Fair to Poor condition.

The debut of Ant-Man from 1962 recently sold for $200,000. Ant-Man!

In 1965 I plucked my first comic book from a spinning rack in the curved corner window of Edmund's Drug Store in the Plaza Shopping Center (Pastabilities is there now). It was *80 Page Giant* #10, a collection of darkly disturbing stories with Superman as a youngster about my age being menaced by an evil doppleganger, emasculated by a criminal from the future, hunted like an animal, sadistically tortured by the Kryptonite Kid and his rabid green glowing mutt.

This eight-year old was hooked. I couldn't wait to mail a dollar off to DC for a year's subscription to *Superman*, even as my parents assured me I'd never see that money again or ever receive anything for it. An early indication they were as full-of-it as I suspected.

After a few weeks those four-color adventures began arriving monthly, folded in a brown paper sleeve. I read breathlessly as The Man of Steel was forced to reveal his secret identity to the world, robbed Fort Knox, was exorcised as a demon, then bested in combat by a female ("Great Krypton! I never dreamed it could happen!"). A predictably contrived twist ending assured readers the status quo had never seriously been threatened, nor would it ever be.

In the sixties and seventies collecting comics, mostly a guy thing, was just about the most deplorable activity a teenager could get involved with.

There were parents, no doubt, who would rather have discovered their son had joined a gang or was caught torturing disabled kids and small animals.

At best, comic books were regarded as an easy way to keep children quiet while they're down with the flu or on a road trip. In many homes they were expressly forbidden by parents who were unwitting victims of a political disinformation campaign in the 1950s that convinced a large swath of the public that those cheap pulp fantasies were depraved, mind-rotting filth responsible for a generation of juvenile delinquents, the kind you mostly only saw on TV. If comic books possesed the advertiser base television had in the fifties, they would have been required reading.

For whatever reason, in Greensboro comics were distributed a month later than they were anywhere else, and spottily so. Being a completist meant considerable legwork if you didn't want to miss an issue or needed to find copies that weren't bent at the spine after kids had flipped through a racked stack.

New releases hit 'the stands' on Tuesdays and Thursdays, after Irving Park Elementary let out I'd walk to Crutchfield-Browning Drug Store in the Lawndale Shopping Center. If I arrived before Doris Collins had time to do it I'd untwist the metal bands that bundled that day's periodicals — magazines, newspapers, comics — then check them off against a list of what the store was expecting that day. A few doors down Franklin Drugs had two spinner racks with rows of magazines and paperbacks buttressed along the stairway to their toy department downstairs.

On weekends my journey to find missing issues began at the Bishop Block drug store, continuing south on Elm to an alcove left of the O.Henry Hotel's front door, inside the furthest back window at Woolworths, then West Market Street Newsstand (next to Stumble Stiltskins) where you could find illustrated magazines like *Vampirella* and *Web of Horror.*

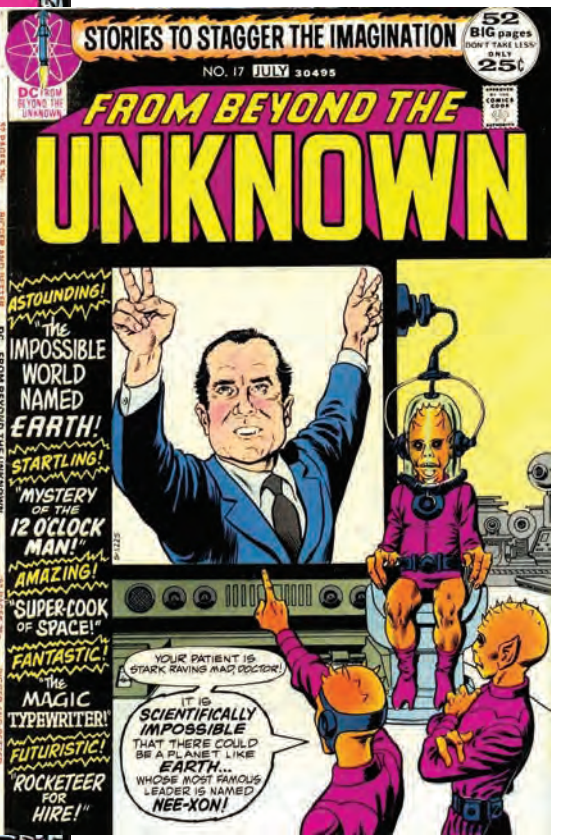
A breakthrough came in 8th grade when a classmate who worked Saturdays at Sam & Mack's Newsstand (319 South Elm) told us we could buy our comics there in spite of the strict 'No One Under 18' policy mandated by an enormous collection of porn magazines they traded in, waist high piles of the most explicit smut imaginable, to say nothing of the peep shows in the back. But Sam & Max's had all the comic titles without fail; getting away with selling all those dirty magazines, presumably, by stocking every single publication in the nation, from *Better Homes & Gardens* to *Popular Mechanics* to *Daddy Spanks His Bad Little Girl*.

As a pre-teen in the late-1960s, an age when one would be expected to put away the funny books and pick up some real ones, a flood of young writers and artists emerged, re-imagining the art form just as Stan Lee and Jack Kirby were parting ways at Marvel Comics. Newcomers and old pros alike went about reinventing (perhaps more accurately, inventing) the very notion of graphic storytelling. Comics were maturing in lockstep with baby boomers, providing the scaffolding for today's multi-billion dollar superhero movies built around characters, storylines, even specific images from that era.

That groundswell of creativity continued in the comics industry well into the late- seventies. The next decade brought forth another fresh crop of innovators, led by Frank Miller and Alan Moore, who lifted the medium to even greater heights. The excitement continues...

The cover wore off eons ago but I still have that first double-sized comic book I brought home in 1965, when Superman was a blue-haired guy in his forties with little appetite for settling down and a wandering X-ray eye, who's greatest flaw was an unhealthy desire to be the smartest, strongest guy in the room. If that's not a metaphor for the American experience, I don't know what is.


MURPHY ANDERSON



In the sixties and seventies Greensboro's own Murphy Anderson created or co-created hundreds of the most iconic comic book covers of all time featuring DC mainstays Superman, Hawkman, The Flash, and Justice League of America.

Arguably the greatest science fiction artist the comics world ever knew, certainly the most prolific, Murphy Anderson's career spanned the fabled Golden, Silver & Bronze ages… and beyond.

The Life and Art of Murphy Anderson

M.C. Anderson, Jr. recognized early on the transformative power words commingling with pictures could have on the imagination, spending hours as a youngster in the thirties lying on the living room floor of his North Spring Street home in Greensboro pouring over the comic pages of local papers and, on Sundays, the New York Journal-American which allowed him to follow the full color adventures of The Phantom, Mandrake the Magician, and his favorite strip the scientifically forward-looking Buck Rogers in the 25th Century.

He also dropped dimes on crudely drawn 64 page four-color pulp mini-magazines, a curious new addition to the newsstand at the Southern Fruit Store on Market and Elm, including the first appearance of Superman in Action Comics and Batman in Detective, two characters and titles he would one day become closely associated with. For fun he wrote and drew his own home-made comics,


HAWKMAN
12¢
THRILL TO THE MOST AMAZING BATTLES EVER FOUGHT ON THE WORLD WHERE EVOLUTION RAN WILD!


SUPERMAN DC NATIONAL COMICS
COME, FLASH-- YOUR TIME IS UP!
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
FEB.
NO. 176
12¢
The FLASH
Death STALKS THE FLASH!
I--I CAN'T RESIST!


SUPERMAN'S GIRL FRIEND
LOIS LANE
DC SUPERMAN'S GIRL FRIEND LOIS LANE
NOV.
NO. 106
15¢
ARE YOU SURE YOU WANT TO GO THROUGH WITH THIS, LOIS?
YES, SUPERMAN! CLOSE THE BODY MOLD AND SWITCH ON THE POWER!
IT'S IMPORTANT THAT I LIVE THE NEXT 24 HOURS AS A BLACK WOMAN!
"I AM CURIOUS (BLACK)!"
PLUS ANOTHER EXPLOSIVE ADVENTURE of Rose and the THORN!


The FASTEST MAN ALIVE!
The FLASH
DEC
NO. 195
15¢
THEY WOULDN'T LET ME SHOW WHAT I DID TO THE FLASH!
DO YOU HAVE READY THIS ISSUE AND FIND OUT FOR YOURSELF IT
CENSORED

winning an art contest sponsored by the Greensboro Daily Record when he was 14. Amy Hitchcock was a classmate, "At Central Junior High there were two boys that sat together all the time, sort of separate from everybody else, and they drew in their notebooks all the time. One of them always drew cars but Murphy, we called him M.C., he always drew figures. My impression of him was that he was withdrawn, quiet, and always did his own thing, but he was pleasant." Later, Murphy and Irwin Smallwood became co-editors of Greensboro (now Grimsley) Senior High School's newspaper.

A college dropout facing certain military service in 1944, Murphy borrowed $100 from his skeptical father to make the rounds of New York City's funny book publishers. Whether he knew it or not Murphy was marching into what has become known as the Golden Age of Comics, so christened because sales were so astronomical, upwards of 6 million copies per unit, that publishers were setting up shop in every corner of The City. Their biggest problem was securing enough newsprint to meet demand.

After content bundler Harry "A" Chesler rolled his grapes over Anderson's portfolio—heavily inflenced by Lou Fine and Will Eisner who were known for their realistic, anatomically correct figures, alluringly distressed damsels and spectacular space age machinery—he referred the teenager to Fiction House on the corner of 53rd Street and Fifth Avenue, home of Planet Comics who's main selling point seemed to be the undulating breasts belonging to whichever curvaceous blond was being snatched up by salivating BEMs that month. Mars needs women!

The Fiction House bullpen worked in what we now call Marvel-style, with artists blocking out the stories from a loose premise; dialogue was added afterward. As Murphy Anderson related to biographer R.C. Harvey about the artists he shared a room with, "Everyone was talking about Alex Raymond and Flash Gordon. Most of the work at Planet Comics was influenced or copied from Raymond, sometimes from Milton Caniff or [Hal] Foster."

Anderson continued slinging ink for Fiction House even while serving two years in the Navy as a radar repairman stationed in Chicago; that's where he met his soon to be wife Helen. In 1946, after his stint in the military was over, Murphy was scouring the hind pages of the Chicago Tribune when he happened upon a notice from the National Newspaper Service in search of an artist for an "adventure comic strip." That strip turned out to be Buck Rogers.

His enthusiasm for the character and interstellar efforts for Planet Comics helped seal the deal. After a nearly year-long tutorage under Buck Rogers' overseer John F. Dille, who admittedly "wanted the cheapest artist he could find," Murphy took over the daily art chores in December of 1947. "I grew up on Buck and it was a dream come true when I worked on the feature."

Not particularly happy in the long term, creatively or financially, Murphy left Buck Rogers in 1949. No going back to Fiction House in New York, Planet Comics was in a tailspin, so Murphy and his bride instead made their way to Greensboro where, during the day, he served as office manager for his father's fledgling business, the Blue Bird Cab Company ("Dial 5112: Then Count The Minutes"). At night he applied brush to paper for Ziff-Davis magazines before agreeing to join their ill-fated comic book line in New York under the direction of Jerry Siegel, one of the creators of Superman. Before long, Murphy found himself once again canvasing the concrete jungle, portfolio in hand.

Julius Schwartz, editor for National Periodical Publications' (as DC Comics was known in 1951) new line of science fiction comics, immediately recognized Anderson's work as compositionally superior to—and more finely rendered than—many of the company's artists, most of whom had little affinity for sci-fi. Murphy walked out after that meeting with a script to illustrate.

With the raising children to consider, Murphy wasn't ready to give up on his Carolina roots. Proving himself a reliable player over a two year period, Schwartz allowed Murphy to mail in his contributions from Greensboro, a most unusual arrangement. He'd discovered that respect for the field he'd chosen was non-existent in New York, comic book artists and writers routinely lied about what they did for a living. Better to be a trash collector, especially after comics were crucified in the press for being a pathogenic virus manifesting itself in a plague of juvenile delinquency, flames fanned by fraudulent research studies and oh-so-serious televised Senate Subcommittee Hearings. Few publishers survived the mid-fifties, DC being the healthiest.

Back home trafficking for Blue Bird Cab, Murphy spent nights illustrating the adventures of Captain Comet and dreaming up compelling covers populated with pointy-eared giants capturing fighter jets in butterfly nets, invading radioscopic weirdos from other dimensions terrifying the tourists, genetically superior gorillas confounding the laws of man and nature, scaly-skinned martians broadcasting the end of human civilization. Stories were then written around these phantasmagorical scenarios.

After the Soviet launch of Sputnik spread space fever across the USA, Murphy was summoned to again reinvigorate Buck Rogers in 1958. This time

he was enlisted for both the dailies and Sunday full page. Murphy's more modern, slick, detailed artwork was light years ahead of the antiquated approach that preceded him. Comic strip artists, as opposed to their comic book counterparts, were very well regarded in society as purveyors of wholesome family entertainment. When folks picked up their morning or afternoon newspaper most turned first to the comics page. As such, Murphy Anderson commanded more respect as Buck Rogers' delineator than he could ever hope to achieve laboring over DC's juvenilia. Still, Murphy chose pop culture's red-headed stepchild over Buck Rogers after just two turns around the sun.

He and Helen relocated to the New York metropolitan area in 1960 in order to work full-time for DC, a company undergoing an unexpected resurgence. Editor Julie Schwartz had, on a whim four years earlier, re-imagined one of their dead as a doornail superheroes from the 1940s, The Flash. With this act a grotesquely tarnished golden era gave way to the Silver Age of Comics; an explosion of furloughed warriors in baggy underpants worn outside their tights, like Green Lantern and The Atom, returning with new backstories.

Along with writer John Broome, Murphy originated The Atomic Knights in 1961. Although infinitely more fanciful (for instance, the Knights are waited on by anthropomorphic plants) this feature has a lot in common with a current best-seller, *The Walking Dead*. Both envision a post-apocalyptic world with pockets of survivors set upon by predatory sub-humans, there's even the tyrannical leader of a walled off community not unlike The Governor called Black Baron. Because of the architectural detail and research involved Anderson told an audience in San Diego, "[The Atomic Knights] is something I really enjoyed doing. Except it was a backbreaker and I was thankful it only appeared every three months."

He also created the sexy sorceress Zatanna and, with few exceptions, drew and/or inked the first 7 years of covers for *Justice League of*

America. It was he that Julie Schwartz turned to when reviving Golden Age back-of-the-book heroes like Dr. Fate, Hourman, and The Spectre. After Hawkman was given his own berth Murphy settled in for a three year run.

Anderson's meticulous, featherful flourishes defined the DC house style of the sixties and early seventies, that's why Schwartz preferred to have him inking other's pencils, most notably Carmine Infantino (Adam Strange, Batman) and Gil Kane (The Atom, Green Lantern). Infantino benefitted most notably, other inkers were too severely covering over his line work or exaggerating his worst traits. Anderson infused Infantino's fluid pencils with a majestic quality, a pitch-perfectness neither was able to fully achieve without the other. (Gil Kane was equally well-served by Anderson but Kane traveled to higher artistic planes with a number of other outstanding collaborators, among them Wally Wood, Nick Cardy and especially John Romita on *Spider-man* in the seventies.)

Infantino & Anderson

He rescued the superhero genre, could Schwartz do the same for Batman?

Years of poorly drawn short stories with Batman, Robin, Batwoman, and Ace the Bathound confronting bulbous-bodied aliens and overcoming silly transformations ("Batman Becomes Batbaby!") led to sales so dismal cancellation of the Batman titles was all but certain. Julie Schwartz was yanked off the sci-fi line in 1964 and given 6 months to save the bat-franchise. The result was a monthly onslaught of playfully gripping covers sketched out by Carmine Infantino, the best of which were inked by Murphy Anderson. Delectable distractions of youth introducing The Joker, Riddler, Catwoman and Batgirl to a new generation. The stories themselves scarcely delivered the excitement promised on the outsides but business was booming by 1966 when the Batman TV show sent DC's sales into hyperdrive.

From 1969-71 Murphy Anderson and Neal Adams were DC's de-facto cover artists. In a

rare pairing they created one of the most enduring comic book images of all time, with Superman soaring high above an arial photograph of the city. There was seemingly no storyline Murphy couldn't encapsulate with a compelling image: Captain Cold gloating over the death of The Flash, savages overwhelming America's Justice League, Superman witnessing his girlfriend's marriage to Satan, Lois Lane transforming herself into a black woman for the day.

Anderson was teamed with Curt Swan when Julie Schwartz rebooted Superman in 1970, their memorable stories together over a period of many years constituted a happy association. So meshed were their styles they took to crediting the art as 'Swanderson.' And then there was Murphy's stoic portrayal of Wonder Woman for the first issue of Ms. in 1972, one of the most striking and culturally significant magazine covers of the decade.

His was a career lacking only in controversy... unless you count that whole Jack Kirby, Jimmy Olsen, beheadings fiasco. Count you say? After luring Marvel's creative juggernaut Jack Kirby to DC in 1971 the aforementioned Carmine Infantino, now overseeing the entire operation, felt The King's version of Jimmy and his pal Superman were too far afield of the accepted look. He ordered their heads redrawn, then pasted over Kirby's artwork in every panel they appeared. It eventually fell to Murphy Anderson to do the defacings and the effect was jarring. Murphy wasn't pleased about the task but, as a professional, did what was required. Ironically, one of the reasons this 14-year old fan was so excited about Jack Kirby's defection was the possibility of the medium's most powerful penciller uniting with Anderson, the best inker in the business. Careful what you wish for. Outside of a cover and a half, that failed to appear.

In a twist not unlike those found in the comics, it was Anderson's one time schoolmate Amy Hitchcock's son John who organized Greensboro's first major comic convention in 1983 with Murphy Anderson as guest of honor. As John Hitchcock tells it, "It was a disaster. I don't think we had 100 people in two days, if that. When the show was over Murphy walks up to John Butts,

Tom Wimbish and I and he goes, 'If you could get anyone you wanted, who would you like as the guest of honor at your next convention?' We were real close to saying, 'Well, we tried and it didn't work.' But we all looked at each other and at the exact same time we all said, 'Will Eisner.' And Murphy goes, 'Well, that's no problem because I worked with Will Eisner on *PS* magazine.' Because of him getting Eisner for us Jack Kirby said, 'If it's good enough for Eisner it's good enough for me.'

"Murphy was here in 1985 when Jack Kirby was here. They were in the kitchen of my apartment and Murphy went up and apologized to Jack, he was always embarrassed that he had to change his Jimmy Olsen artwork because he had so much respect for Kirby. Jack went out of his way to thank him and say, 'Murphy, that's okay, that's the way business was back then, I have no ill will' and they shook hands. That shows you what a great guy Murphy was, it bothered him all those years."

Murphy Anderson, universally respected as both draftsman and gentleman, passed away on October 22, 2015 in Somerset, New Jersey. He was 89. He left behind his wife of 67 years Helen, two daughters, a son, grandkids, and an indelible impression on millions of thrill-seeking comic book lovers.

The Willie Wonka of Mucous Membrane

They didn't invent the cough drop, that was the Smith Brothers in 1852 who's suppression recipe originally involved morphine and heroin, but Vicks made it more candy-like.

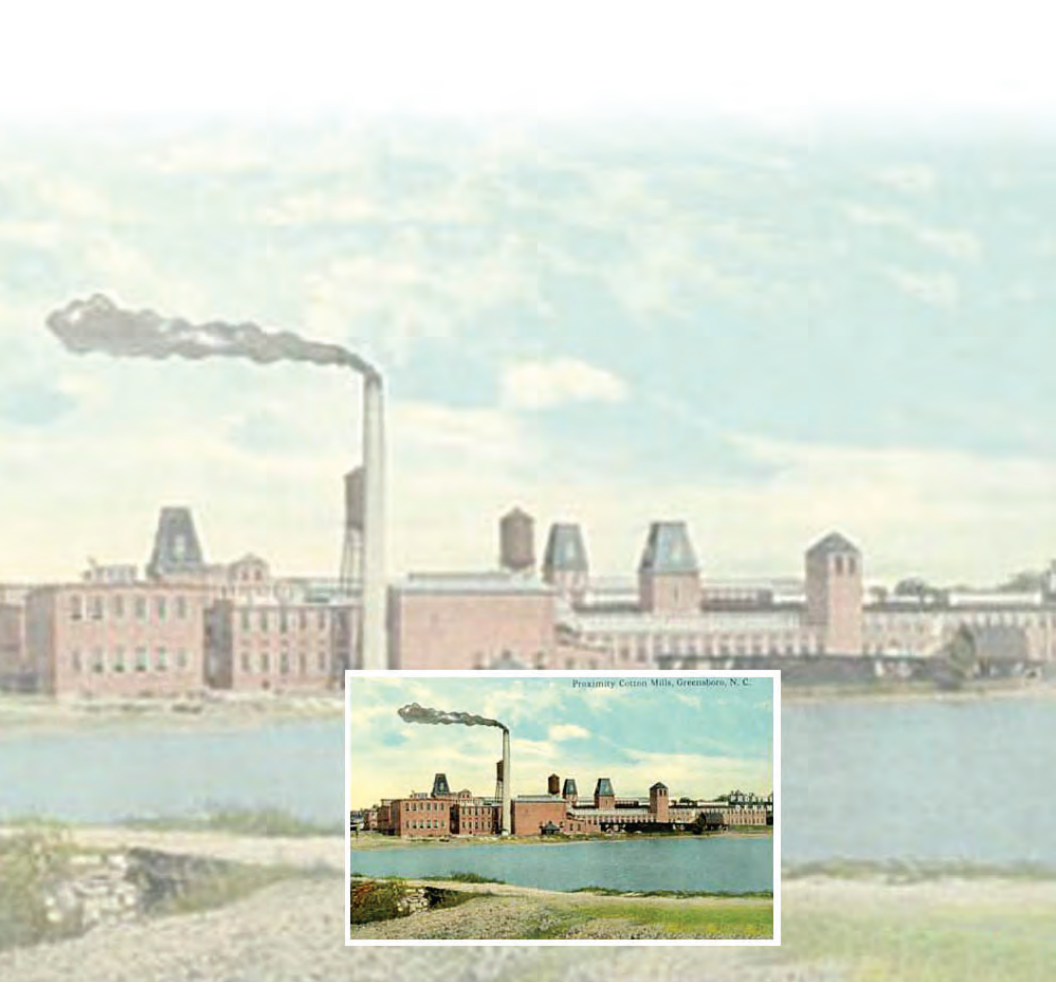
After decades of success with their croup-busting Vaporub salve, first compounded here in 1891, Vicks expanded into the cough drop market in the 1930s, before long tens of million boxes of Vicks Wild Cherry and Lemon flavored menthol lozenges were being spat out yearly from plants on Milton Street and on Wendover across from Latham Park. Proctor and Gamble owns the brand now, they still manufacture versions of Vicks NyQuil here.

Mommy, What Are Nylons?

Mock, Judson, Voehringer Hosiery began weaving sheer, sleek Mojud silk stockings—"Magic Motion" for a "New Hue New You"— with fourteen employees in 1926. Within three years 600 employees were producing upwards of four million pairs of elegant seam-up-the-back nylons at 2610 Oakland Avenue off Spring Garden, near the railroad tracks. The company kept expanding throughout the thirties. This was a time when the public display of a woman's bare ankle was considered, well, unseemly. So hosiery was de rigueur for ladies.

In 1947, MJV filed suit against Esquire magazine for trademark appropriation. The mill had, from the beginning, been using the Esquire name for scarves, neckties, and mufflers. The case was settled to the satisfaction of all in 1951.

They were the largest hosiery in the South during the fifties but Mojud's assets were sold to Kayser-Roth in 1961. The plant was shuttered in 1972 but the Rolane Factory Outlet Store continued to be run out of a corner of the mill for another three decades.



Kenneth, What's the Frequency?

When Pomona Cotton Mill closed in 1950 Western Electric bought the cavernous enclave for the production of hydrophones for underwater motion detection and top secret military electronics. Although few people knew that, by all appearances telephones were being assembled there.

Employees couldn't discuss the specifics about what was being developed off Merritt Drive even with their families, rumored to be advanced missile technology in the sixties. (If you just read that... this magazine will self-destruct in 5 seconds.) Because of this high-security facility and the tank farm by the airport, Greensboro was considered a secondary target if the Ruskies ever launched their nukes. After Western Electric vacated the property it became Cotton Mill Square mall.

The New Andy Griffith Show

How is it that *The Andy Griffith Show* has endured on television for more than a half-century? What is it about the notion of a community like Mayberry that continues to resonate with so many Americans? Perhaps it was the level of honesty underneath the necessary artifice. "Everything we said on the show we believed," Andy Griffith declared. "I suppose that's what made it work. We never went for something we didn't believe. It was a good eight years for me, I'll tell you that."

Amateur cartologists place the fictional town of Mayberry about halfway between Greensboro and Raleigh, off I-85 in the great state of North Carolina. But for many modern viewers, Mayberry is less about location and more about what the show represents to them—a way of life that has irrevocably slipped away. Certainly in the beginning *The Andy Griffith Show* was a genuinely well-written and superbly crafted show. That's the main reason the program has remained popular, it stands as an idealized snapshot of at least one vision of the American dream. The production of the series coincided with one of the most dramatic cultural upheavals in American history but storylines reflected instead a quaint community where the barber had as much influence as the mayor and the most shocking things that happened was Aunt Bee picketing a construction site or the 'Fun Girls' speeding through the center of town.

The Andy Griffith Show was a spin-off, of sorts. The pilot had been integrated into an episode of *The Danny Thomas Show*. The executive producer of the series was Richard O. Linke, Griffith's manager. It was producer Aaron Ruben (writer for *The Phil Silvers Show*), Sheldon Leonard (producer of *The Danny Thomas Show*) and Andy Griffith's attention to the scripts that made the situations as engaging as they were flat-out funny.

It's no exaggeration to say the nation instantly fell in love with Mayberry's quirky inhabitants, *The Andy Griffith Show* finished its first season as the number four show in the nation. The lives of Sheriff Andy Taylor (Griffith), his Aunt Bee (Frances Bavier), son Opie (Ron Howard), and deputy Barney Fife (Don Knotts) unfolded in a series of charming, laugh-out-loud episodes that were almost entirely character driven. Before long, other mildly or wildly eccentric Mayberrians turned up, like Howard McNear who first appeared in episode 13 as befuddled Floyd the barber. "He was just like that," George (Goober) Lindsey once commented about McNear. "I loved working with him. We would come to the studio to watch him work when we weren't working, and that was rare."

Midway through the third season, McNear suffered a massive stroke that paralyzed the left side of his body. He dropped out of the cast but everyone enjoyed working with him so much they arranged for his return in March of 1964. Because of his disability Floyd's scenes had to be shot with the actor sitting down, or leaning against an unseen support.

Jim Nabors joined the show as innocent, dim witted gas jockey Gomer Pyle in January, 1963. Nabor's character was based on his nightclub act where he played the country bumpkin for laughs then sang out in a sublime baritone voice. "I've always liked the character a lot," Nabors said about Gomer. "I've

been very blessed to have such a diverse career. I've never been without a job in 40 years." Gomer was a hit with the public right away, with three catchphrases that lit up the screen in his first year—"Gaaaw-leee," "Shazam," and "Citizen's arrest, citizen's arrest!" After his first few appearances Nabors was so popular he was offered several possible series to star in, including *No Time For Sergeants* which aired opposite *The Andy Griffith Show* in the fall of 1964. (Ironically, Griffith and Knotts had starred in the movie, TV special and stage versions of *No Time For Sergeants*. Only the weekly TV version didn't have their involvement and it bombed.) *Gomer Pyle, U.S.M.C.* was launched in the fall of 1964 and enjoyed a five-year run at the very top of the Neilsens. The pilot episode was produced, written and directed by the fellow who guided *The Andy Griffith Show* from the beginning, Aaron Ruben.

Beginning of the End

Two major defections meant big changes for year six of *The Andy Griffith Show.* Aaron Ruben left *TAGS* to concentrate on *Gomer Pyle, U.S.M.C.* but he continued to work with Andy and Don. When Griffith, Knotts and Jim Nabors united for a special together in 1965 it was Aaron Ruben they turned to. In 1965 co-star Don Knotts split from the cast, he was under the impression that Griffith was going to end the series after five seasons so he negotiated a deal with Universal Pictures to star in a series of movies for juvenile audiences. "When Don left after five years I was very nervous," Griffith admitted on reflection in 1968. "There was a lady from *TV Guide* came in there and she said, 'What are you going to do when Don leaves?' I told 'em not to send her over there. She came anyway. And I didn't feel good that day and I was reading a bad script. And I really didn't have anything to say to her. And she came anyhow, said, 'What are you going to do when Don leaves?' I said, 'I don't know what we're going to do when Don leaves!' And I got up and left and she wrote it just that way. Best article ever written about me. She said, 'he got up and left and didn't even say, 'I appreciate it.'"

Gone as well were the writers who guided the series for those stellar five seasons, guys like Jack Elinson, Harvey Bullock, John Whedon, Michael Morris, Everett Greenbaum and Jim Fritzell (Greenbaum and Fritzell left to write Don Knotts' hit movies *The Ghost and Mr. Chicken* and *The Reluctant Astronaut*). In the fall of 1965, Bob Ross, veteran writer/producer of *Amos 'n' Andy* and *Leave it to Beaver* took over as producer of *The Andy Griffith Show*, broadcast in color for the first time. In a disastrous casting choice (one of many to come), standup comic Jack Burns (of Burns and Schrieber) replaced Don Knotts as Andy's deputy. The fit was not good, resulting in Burn's abrupt departure mid-season.

By default, the focus of the show fell to the remaining supporting players, especially Goober Pyle (George Lindsay) who was introduced as a replacement for his cousin Gomer in 1964. Dour county clerk Howard Sprague (Jack Dodson) joined the regular cast in 1965. These changes seriously affected the quality of the series but there was no noticeable drop in ratings. *The Andy Griffith Show* was so popular, both as a program and as a notion, that superior scripts were no longer necessary to attract an audience to CBS Monday nights at 9:00. The show was consistently in the top 5—the characters just needed to show up each week and the nation tuned in. Emment Clark (Paul Hartman) was introduced during the seventh season to replace Floyd in some of the storylines. Too feeble to work any longer, Howard McNear retired at the end of the 1966-67 season. He died two years later. "We had a great time on the show," George Lindsey stated in 1998. "We respected each other's work so much because everybody was so good. Everybody had their own particular thing they did. Like Howard Morris and like Denver Pyle and then, of course, there's Howard McNear and Don and Andy and Frances and Anita and the boy, you know the one, the redheaded boy, and Betty Lynn, and all those people."

The show may have crossed over from salty to syrup but the eighth and last season of *The Andy Griffith Show* brought the highest ratings of the series' run. Both *TAGS* and *Gomer Pyle, U.S.M.C.* were riding the very top of the Nielsens for the 1967-68 season, finishing number one and three respectively. Don Knotts won a total of five Emmys for the run of *The Andy Griffith Show*, twice after he left as a regular. His eighth season guest shot ('Barney Hosts A Summit Meeting') attracted a 33.4 audience share, making it the most-watched episode of the series' run. That was the year Andy Griffith announced his retirement from weekly TV. Naturally the show's sponsor General Foods didn't want to lose their hold on the number one audience draw in the nation, nor did CBS. It was decided Mayberry would live on without Andy. To ease in the transition, in April of 1968 Ken Berry (F-Troop) was introduced as Sam Jones, a gentleman farmer that Andy and Emmett talk into running for the Town Council. Opie Taylor and Sam's son Mike (played by eleven-year old Buddy Foster, brother of actress Jodie Foster) were the focus of the next episode. Show 249, entitled 'Mayberry, R.F.D.,' established the format (more or less) for the new series and served as the last episode of *The Andy Griffith Show*.

"In Mayberry boys don't wear their hair long. Cut your hair. Period."
—producer Bob Ross to actor Buddy Foster when he asked if he could grow his hair out in 1970.

Mayberry R.F.D. (Rural Free Delivery, a postal term for people that lived out in the country) was originally intended to focus on Aunt Bee, the only

remaining original cast member to have a regular role on the new series. However, the 65-year old actress was eager to work less, not more. She only appeared in about two-thirds of the episodes during season eight of *The Andy Griffith Show* and was only pivotal in nine storylines.

If *Mayberry R.F.D*. was anything, it was evocative and insular. There was no whip behind the cream but before you realized it, you were soaking in it. That's why ratings were exceptional from the very start, there was no serious drop in audience numbers from the last season of *The Andy Griffith Show*. *Mayberry R.F.D.* was the second most popular sitcom in the nation in 1968 (*Gomer Pyle, U.S.M.C.* was first). As with the last three seasons of the *Griffith* show, former *Leave it to Beaver* scribe Bob Ross produced. Exteriors were still being lensed on the Forty Acres set, the backlot built in 1926 for the RKO Studio (later Desilu) where leftover Atlanta sets from *Gone With The Wind* (those that weren't burned to a cinder) stood-in for the town of Mayberry. In the first episode of *R.F.D.*, Andy Taylor and his girlfriend of four years Helen Crump (Aneta Corsaut) were married and the whole gang turned out for the celebration. This was the only episode of *R.F.D*. in which Opie Taylor and Barney Fife appeared. After the wedding, Aunt Bee decided to stay in Mayberry as the Jones' family housekeeper. Andy turned up briefly in three additional episodes of *R.F.D.* that first year, after which it was casually explained that he and Helen had moved to Charlotte. The next (and last) time Andy turned up was in an episode during the second season in which he and Helen visit Mayberry with their new baby.

Headmaster Disaster

Despite having left series life behind in 1968, Andy Griffith (a star so big the show he wasn't even on anymore was in the top five) still had a major business interest in television. He owned a significant portion of *Mayberry R.F.D.*, *Gomer Pyle, U.S.M.C.* and *The Andy Griffith Show*. (*Andy* and *Gomer* continued to be broadcast five times a week on the CBS daytime schedule until 1972.) Andy also had his own line of prepackaged foods being sold in Carolina area grocery stores that included center cut country ham, sausage, pinto beans and black-eyed peas ("with a little more pork and just a pinch of sugar"). He was also a very popular product pusher in television commercials for Jell-O, Kraft Natural Cheese, and Ritz crackers.

Griffith thought 1970 might be a good time to get back into weekly television after his motion picture *Angel in my Pocket* failed the year before. He enjoyed working with familiar faces so it was only natural that Aaron Ruben would be called in to develop Andy's new show—*Headmaster*. With CBS aggressively phasing out their down-home comedies, Andy Griffith understood the need to transition to a younger, hipper audience if he wanted to be a presence on



television during the seventies. Griffith's longtime executive producer and manager Richard O. Linke stated: "They signed us for a half-hour weekly series even though we had no script, not even a format in mind. They were willing to take Andy in anything. We could have given them a dirty picture if we wanted to." They should have done that... at least it would have been interesting.*Headmaster* debuted in September, 1970, centering around a California coed prep school for teenagers (Concord High School), its dean Andy Thompson (Griffith), his wife Margaret (Claudette Nevins) and the crusty caretaker Mr. Purdy (Parker Fennelly). In a role almost identical to the one he would play eighteen years later on *Coach*, Jerry Van Dyke (*My Mother The Car*) was featured as the academy's dorky gym teacher. Van Dyke had previously teamed with Griffith both for his Las Vegas appearances and in *Angel in my Pocket*.

Unlike *The Andy Griffith Show* stories on *Headmaster* were doggedly serious in nature. In the pilot episode, entitled 'May I Turn You On,' guest-star Butch Patrick (Eddie Munster) was forced to choose between doing drugs or facing the big freeze from all the loadies in his class. On another, Andy dealt with an impending campus riot. It may seem odd in retrospect but this format should have been a surefire recipe for success. 1970-71 was the season when the three networks rolled out show after show with 'Now' and 'Relevant' storylines—*The Interns, The Storefront Lawyers, The Young Lawyers, The Senator, The Psychiatrist*, and on and on. The theme song for *Headmaster* was a folksy tune vocalized by Linda Ronstadt while the overall mood of the production was low key and dull, with just a trace of the folksy sheriff the public had come to know and love. In fact, Andy seemed to have been added as an afterthought in many scripts, there merely to give his sermon on the hot topic of the week. Ron Howard (Opie Taylor) was a guest on one episode and *Headmaster* was one of Rob Reiner's first writing assignments.

Despite a strong first week sampling *Headmaster* attracted few viewers to its Friday night timeslot, quickly sinking to number 67 (out of 79 shows). CBS and the star realized the 'relevancy' concept was wrong for Andy Griffith, they were getting creamed by *The Partridge Family* on ABC. "The man I was playing was of the academic world," Andy said about this unexpected failure. "That is not my world. I was out of my bag. We offered to come up with a whole new show, and (CBS) told us to go ahead." In November, the network

announced the start of production on the program they probably should have put forward in the first place.

The New Andy Griffith Show

Debuting January. 8, 1971, *The New Andy Griffith Show* was long on Southern hokum but woefully short on laughs. Intentionally, there were few surprises and that was the show's undoing. If *Headmaster* strained to be relevant, the new *Andy* show was belligerently irrelevant. The series was written, created, and produced by Aaron Ruben who guided the first five seasons of *The Andy Griffith Show* and *Gomer Pyle, U.S.M.C.* and directed by Lee Phillips, who directed almost all of the last two seasons of *TAGS*. Earl Hagen crafted the theme song and incidental music to be nearly identical to his efforts for *TAGS* and *Mayberry R.F.D.* This time the setting was an imaginary mid-sized North Carolina town called Greenwood (pop. 12,785, ten times the number of people that lived in Mayberry) with Griffith portraying Andy Sawyer, a returning hometown boy instantly appointed the town's new Mayor Pro-tem. Andy Sawyer was the model family man, agreeable and understanding, spending lots of quality time with his young 'uns. The kind of dad who takes his eight-year old daughter on a three hour bus ride so he'll have someone to talk to. In other words, no father I ever encountered growing up in the South. In a humble yellow ochre vest, white shirt and gray slacks, Andy Sawyer was more simpleminded and deferential than Sheriff Taylor ever was. Some of his lines would have been more appropriate coming from Goober Pyle.

Lee Meriwether was perfectly cast but under-utilized as Andy's wife. Meriwether was already well-known to TV audiences as a former Miss America who went on to play Catwoman in the *Batman* movie and Dr. Ann MacGregor on *Time Tunnel* from 1966-67. More importantly for Griffith, she had been Andy's wife in the motion picture *Angel in My Pocket*. Marty McCall and Lori Rutherford were seen as the 2.5 kids. Of course, there had to be an older live-in relative—Andy's sister-in-law Nora played by Ann Morgan Guilbert (Millie Helper on *The Dick Van Dyke Show* and Yetta on *The Nanny*). Not at all matronly and supportive like Aunt Bee, Nora was constantly complaining, neurotic, meddling, superstitious. A real downer. For safe measure, *The New Andy Griffith Show* brought Don Knotts together with George

Lindsay as Goober Pyle and Paul Hartman as fix-it man Emmett Clark in a memorable (but confusing) reunion of the former costars, the first in two years. In that episode, Emmett and Goober travel from Mayberry to Greenwood to pressure their old pal Andy to use his influence with the city to rezone a plot of land each of them wants to start a new business. Strangely, the Mayberry residents don't recognize Don Knotts' unnamed character, even though he's wearing the same salt and pepper suit Barney Fife favored. He wore that very same outfit to Andy and Helen's wedding! Was Barney in the Witness Protection Program?

In the second outing, written by *TAGS* vets Jim Fritzell and Everett Greenbaum, Glen Campbell was the guest in that old TV chestnut of a plotline—Buff McKnight claims to be friends with Glen Campbell and can get him for the town's centennial show but he doesn't really know Glen so... bet you can guess the rest. The third episode concerned little old lady Miss Gossagg (played by regular Ruth McDivett) who wants a memorial fountain erected in the town square and insists Andy supervise the project. Besides McDivett, Burt Mustin, Forrest Lewis, Owen Bush, and writer Everett Greenbaum played various townsfolk on both the new and original series. It was painfully obvious from the start that this production was trying too hard to be The Andy Griffith Show in a larger setting. Scripts were flat and predictable; audiences weren't buying into the derivative premise. Besides, you don't parade around with two different wives in the same season, at least you didn't back then. "*Headmaster* was a very bad show," Griffith stated in 1971. "And because of *Headmaster*, *The New Andy Griffith Show* simply did not have an audience." Nielsen ratings for the first episode hit number 12 once again then quickly slid back down into the 60s. The series was cancelled on May 21, 1971. *Headmaster* reruns played out the summer until *The New Andy Griffith Show*(s) were removed from the schedule. As if that wasn't bad enough, CBS axed the entire town of Mayberry as well—despite *Mayberry R.F.D.* finishing a solid fifteenth for the final year.

Sheriff Taylor just wasn't needed anymore. Floyd passed away, Barney lived in Raleigh, Opie had grown up, and Aunt Bee moved to Siler City. After eleven years on Monday nights Mayberry itself receded into the past. In a surprise move, CBS cleared the schedule of all of their highly-rated down-home comedies (like *Gomer, Green Acres* and *Beverly Hillbillies*) in the fall of 1971 to make way for shows appealing to more urban viewers, programs like *All In The Family, Good Times, Mary Tyler Moore Show,* and *The New Dick Van Dyke Show*.

Aunt Bee's Siler City Cat House

Frances Bavier, Emmy-winning actress who gave life to Aunt Bee on *The Andy Griffith Show*, was by most accounts the polar opposite of her alter ego. Hardly the domesticated matriarch, Bavier was a sophisticated lady who resided in New York and Los Angeles her entire life, working alongside esteemed actors like Bette Davis and Henry Fonda. A Broadway and motion-picture performer turned small-screen superstar who, in 1970, abruptly decided to walk away from her Top 10 sitcom, *Mayberry RFD*.

After 15 years of the weekly television-series grind she'd had it with the Business of Show, one of the reasons why Bavier moved — alone at age 70 — all the way across the continent to Siler City, NC where her biggest fan operated a family furniture store. In this mythical shire mentioned so fondly in scripts produced for her by former writers from *Amos & Andy* and *Leave it To Beaver*, she hoped to discover the small-town goodness that she herself had come to represent in the minds of middle America.

Something she clearly had no concept of.

Naturally she was warmly received by Chatham County's 3,700 aw-shucks-just-plain-folks. Grand Marshall in the parades, an honored guest at civic functions, the very flower of verisimilitude as she maneuvered the narrow streets of Siler City in the same pea-green, two-door 1966 Studebaker Daytona she drove on *Mayberry RFD*— now seen five days a week in syndication.

What began as an immersion into Americana quickly disintegrated into what can best be described as an episode of *The Twilight Zone*. On Saturday mornings, school buses pulled up in front of her split-level brick home on West Elk Street to unleash the Cub Scouts with instructions to, "Go find your Aunt Bee!" There were neighbors peering through her windows at all hours of the day expecting her to be in character, a role she despised. The few townsfolk she grew close to insisted on calling her "Aunt Bee." Irritating, but she had to have some friends.

In small Southern towns, particularly in that era, if people knew your family you were accepted; newcomers were kept at arm's length. Sure, it's all kissy-kissy, "Can I get you some more sweet tea, Hon?" on the surface but in

most folk's minds Miss Bavier would always be that person who moved to town in 1972… from California, no less.

A visit to the town center meant all eyes casting judgment, the ladies at the beauty parlor never forgave her for not joining one of their churches. There were unceasing invitations to Sunday services wherever she went. "Don't forget, you went to church in Mayberry," passers-by would say with a sickly-sweet, curt grin. That was one of Bavier's signature moves on the show!

Week after week the same goobers would bump into her asking, "Was that Opie I saw mowin' yer grass on Sadiddy?" She'd want to scream, "Why are you fixated on my yard?!?" Young couples followed her down the aisles of Byrd's Lo Mark grocery store, "Yer not makin' pickles this summer are ya, Aint Bee?"

Small wonder that, by the 1980s, the former television star was living out of her back bedroom, curtains pulled tight, with 14 devoted kitties for company. She loved her feline companions so much she converted a 250-square-foot bathroom into a sprawling cat box with kitty litter inches deep. What few visitors she had in her final years, store clerks and deliverymen mostly, were overwhelmed by the peeling paint, filthy living conditions and an atmosphere steeped in soft-cream clouds of ammonia that hung over everything like a suffocating umbrella. Even her "Smart New Look" Studebaker fell prey to the furry Borg; its immaculate vinyl interior shredded, the Chevy 355 cubic inch V-8 engine impossibly clogged with animal dander.

In 1986, three years after she'd stopped venturing out in public, Andy Griffith and Ron Howard made a surprise visit to Siler City's reclusive cat lady. Bavier refused to allow her decade-long coworkers inside, speaking to them only momentarily through the closed front door. This was after declining repeatedly to be part of their Mayberry reunion movie. Why would she participate? She never liked Andy Griffith much from the very beginning.

When she died in 1989, Frances Bavier funneled most of her $700,000 estate into an annuity that, to this day, pays out a yearly Christmas bonus to every Siler City police officer. But her true legacy began gestating not long after she was laid to rest at Oakwood Cemetery. After her home was donated to a local hospital, Bavier's feral cats scampered for the countryside, causing one hell of a population explosion that is only now, a quarter century later, beginning to subside. Ask any Chatham County veterinarian. They are all too familiar with someone bringing in, "One of Aunt Bee's cats."

A First Bike: Like Your First Love but with More Rubber on the Road

The forty thousand sugar-caned parade goers jockeying for position as the Holiday Jubilee made its way down Elm Street in the 1960s squealed with delight when familiar faces from season's past came into view: Old Rebel & Pecos Pete riding in an old jalopy; Fire Chief 'Moon' Wyrick as Santa on his sleigh waving to toddlers, calico clad Little Miss Sunbeam tossing miniature loaves of bread into the crowd; and a top-hatted, cigar-chomping chap pedaling his High-Wheeler with an enormous four foot high front tire and no handlebars, just horns. Piloting that preposterous velocipede was Glendi Higgins, proprietor of the city's first gathering spot for cyclists. He began repairing and selling used two-wheelers back in 1959, "I couldn't understand why Greensboro didn't have a bike shop. I had been in towns much smaller than this and they had one."

Until automobiles became affordable in the 1920s the bicycle served as an essential mode of transportation for adults. Bike manufacturers were rescued during the big 'D' depression when mail-order giants Sears & Roebuck and Montgomery Ward fomented a demand for scaled-down models for children. An end to World War II shortages unleashed millions of pedal-powered metallic missiles hurtling across suburbia's freshly paved streets, baseball cards jutting into rear spokes fastened to the forks by clothespins, 1.75" Tornado tires parting puddles, bouncing over curbs, leaping across territorial boundaries, young people freed to discover the world around them with an unheard-of independence.

It may be difficult for some parents to imagine a time when helicoptering was strictly for search and rescue but in past generations youngsters were on their own when it came to getting around. The way Mary Higgins Lawling heard the story, "My father started out fixing neighborhood bicycles for kids. My mom got tired of seeing bikes all over the backyard and she said, 'You need to find a place to put this.'" He rented a small building on Fairground Road. "Eventually a sales rep contacted him and asked, 'Would you like to carry the Schwinn bike line?'"

Sugar plums? When Glendi Higgins began wheelin' and dealin' on Spring Garden in 1961 the Schwinn Mark IV Jaguar danced in little boys' heads. Something about that space age cantilever frame, hefty stainless steel fenders, adjustable headlamp, and twin carriers, perfect for an early morning paper route. Debutant was the young ladies' desire, queen of the Schwinn line with an articulated tank, dual headlights, racks front and back, all enshrined in glistening chrome with baked on rose colored accents.

Tom Sikes and his family were lunching at Yum Yum's when they were drawn in by Higgin's 1962 holiday window across the street, "I was in the 4th grade and my sister Gale was in the 6th. We had never seen so many bikes in one place, there were 4 long rows. Christmas was coming up and my parents were trying to get some ideas. There was a good variety of bicycles in the Sears catalog but it was nothing like seeing and test-riding one first-hand. The excitement of Christmas Eve was unforgettable. In the middle of the night I couldn't resist the temptation to sneak behind the closed doors of the living room to see that Santa had brought a red Spitfire for me and a Carolina blue one for Gale. The bikes we had seen at Higgins Cycle Shop! In 1986 my wife and I bought a bike there for our son Ian's 5th birthday. Over the years we have purchased several bikes for both of our sons from Higgins Cycle Shop."

Many of us fondly recall our favorite rides, not so Mary who steers the family business today. “It might have been a Hollywood with a pink stripe? I don’t really have many memories of bicycles. Somebody would come into the store and say, ‘I’m looking for a really great used bike,’ and my dad had a habit of coming to the house and taking my bike and selling it. He always gave me another one. It would get sold, I’d get another one, it would get sold. Same thing with the Tandem.”

In 1966 Schwinn rolled out a line of California Chopper-inspired Sting-Ray muscle bikes, that radical reimagining created a sensation. A couple of years later Santa brought Janet Webb the girl’s version, “A pink banana bike with a white seat. Santa must have struggled with that one coming down the chimney. Santa even brought a bell to put on the handlebars and some pink and white plastic streamers too. My second bike also came from Higgins — an Orange Schwinn 10-speed I bought with babysitting money.”

Bikes could define status. Before mounting his ‘68 Ram’s Horn Fastback with 20-inch wheels, chrome fenders, low-rider banana seat and ape-hanger handles, Bobby attaches a Vrroom Hot Rodder Engine on the bar below the 5-speed stick shift. With a turn of the key it emits a rattling 2-stroke incantation heard halfway ‘round the block. Pulling back the cocking lever on his Mattell M-16 Marauder with realistic braap-bra-a-a-ap-brap-brap action he ventures out into the neighborhood, firing at will.

Eight-year old Betty gingerly places her talkative best friend, Chatty Cathy, into the flower-trimmed wicker basket of her Radiant Coppertone Slik Chik, equipped with tufted Silver Glow saddle and brilliant whitewall tires. Shortcutting over park bridges, Betty glides across frozen grass, sliding to a stop in front of her aunt’s home. She’s eager to formally introduce Chatty to her new cousin, Suzy Homemaker, who’s baking cakes in her Super Oven.

In 1972 Higgins’ Spring Garden oasis was assimilated into UNCBORG or as Glendi put it, “It got too crowded over there.” He relocated to a rapidly expanding Battleground Avenue, opening one of the nation’s first state of the art Schwinn concept stores. Models were lined up outside the showroom, inside a dizzying array awaited with hundreds of Krates, Manta-Rays, Sting-Rays, Speedsters, Fair Ladys, chrome alloy Tourers, underneath dozens of lightweight 10-speeds and Track Bikes hung from the ceiling.

Mary Higgins Lawling has become immersed in bike nostalgia lately, "We have a lot of men who come in to talk about the Krates (1968-1972); the Apple, the Orange, the Lemon Peeler, Pea Picker, Cotton Picker, and the Grey Ghost. They wanted one of those when they were a little kid and either they didn't get one. So now they want one. Or they had one, it got sold and now they want to get it back again." The Higgins team was uniquely positioned to ride the wave of an emerging alt bike culture in the mid-seventies when cycling experienced a major resurgence. The juvenile market took a back seat after older brothers took up the sport; Motocross bruisers, BMX dirt turners, aerodynamic mountain bikes and skinny racing models with reflectorized rattrap pedals sprang out of a teenager's insatiable need for speed and distance.

Interest in biking today surpasses even the 1970s boom. With so many newer, more aggressive retailers dotting the landscape Higgins Cycle Shop focuses instead on refurbishing bicycles and being the last hometown place to get those hard-to-find keys made. But in some ways everything old is new again. "Right now we're more into the used bike business," says Lawling. "Especially younger people in college, they're into buying used bikes. And some of your high school kids are going for that retro look from the '70s, the lightweight 10-speeds with drop handlebars like the Schwinn Varsity or the Collegiates. We have some really nice mountain bikes that came out in the mid-'80s."

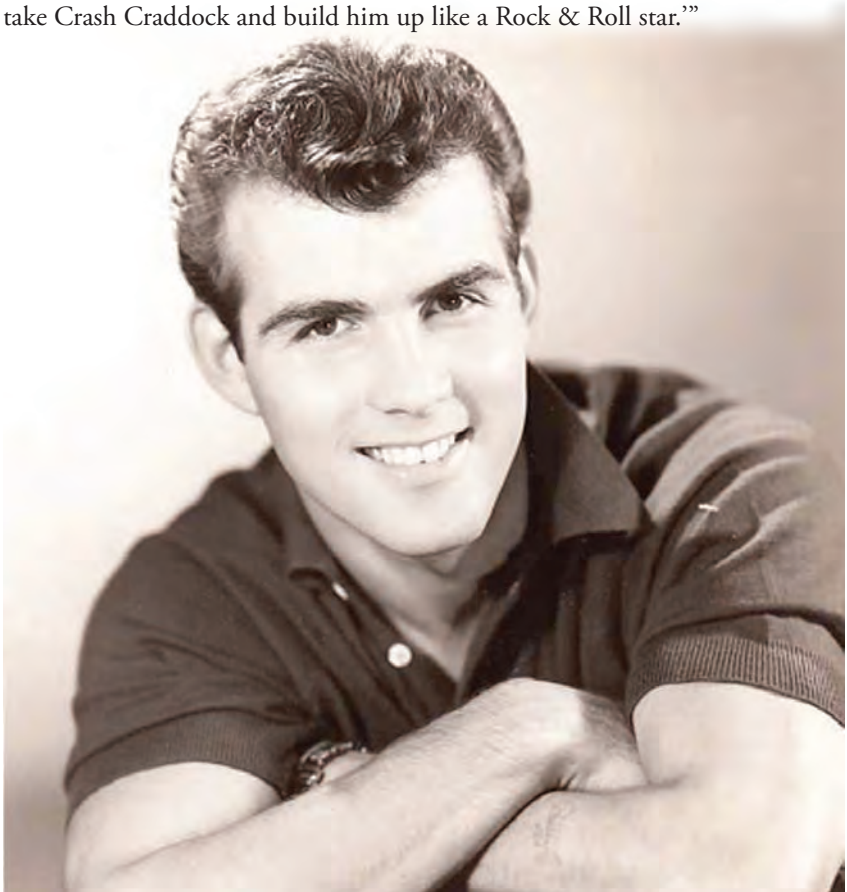
Glendi Higgins retired long ago but his gears are still turning, the spry 85-year old continues to drop by the operation daily. That High-Wheeler he commandeered in those long ago Christmas parades stands just outside the shop's front door, just don't ask him to ride the darn thing. He gave that up in his sixties.

Crash Into You

Photo © Carol W. Martin/Greensboro History Museum Collection

Elvis spent his last decade puffing, sweating, bursting at the seams in an effort to recapture what Billy 'Crash' Craddock never lost, the ability to put across a ballad without a forty-two piece orchestra behind him. A lifelong Greensboro-ian Crash is a legit OG rockabilly star although I'm not sure that had occurred to him before, "They called it Rock & Roll back in the fifties but it was actually rockabilly. First time I heard my voice on the radio was when I recorded for the Skycastle label and Al Troxler was playing it on his radio show."

In the late fifties, "You had your Frankie Avalons, Fabians, Ricky Nelson, Elvis, all of them were around back then but Columbia Records did not have a Rock & Roll artist at the time." Indeed, easy-listeners like Ray Conniff, Guy Mitchell and Doris Day made up Columbia's roster. "They said, 'We'll just take Crash Craddock and build him up like a Rock & Roll star.'"



Crash got the full-on teen idol treatment, right down to the tight-fitting alpaca sweaters, but failed to make much of a ripple. Backed by the heavy-handed heavenly choir that Columbia favored *Don't Destroy Me* only peaked at #94 in the USA in 1959. A year later *Boom Boom Baby (Please Don't Stop*) unexpectedly shot to #1 in Australia. Down Under youngsters went crackers for Craddock's guitar heavy paeans to atomic age teen angst. Songs about sweetie-pie baby dolls turning seventeen and yearning for one last kiss, discovering the joy of what the whole school knows after shaking all over, from the bottom to the top, dancing The Chicken on the living room floor. "Back then that's what everybody was doing, the teenage songs and like that. Some of 'em are real good songs, some were silly, you know, but that's what they were doing." With a run of top tens Craddock became to Australians what Elvis was to those of us stateside.

Rockabilly was an early casualty of the British Invasion. After years of nothin' shakin' but the leaves on the trees Crash hit #1 on the American Country charts in 1971 with *Knock Three Times*. "Wow, what a feeling riding around Greensboro and every station, seemed like every time I'd move the dial, it was playing. Every station I'd move it to, *Knock Three Times* was either playing or getting started or ending. 'I thought, Is this for real? Or are they just playing the record [locally], is it going to do anything?' I didn't know whether to accept it or not, I'd had so many letdowns before."

A string of hits followed including his biggest in 1974, a provocative grinder called *Rub It In*. Naturally the record company for Country Music's first male sex symbol requested there be some skin on the album cover, "We were out in California but it was cold as hell out there. We borrowed a house to change clothes in and everything. The house we borrowed was Cheech or Chongs, down by the beach. It was cold as hell out there. The wind was blowing, I couldn't wait to get that picture made." *Rub It In* was a crossover smash, "A disc jockey or somebody told me, 'Crash you know your record went to #19 on the pop charts.' I didn't even know it. I was traveling so much that I didn't have time to realize whether we hit top ten or number one or what. I just took it in stride. I probably didn't know how much a number one record meant to me. I just thought, Heck, if you're having a record being played you're gonna get bookings out there, which is true."

Last of the Drug Store Lunch Counters

In the 1940s-1970s virtually every drug and variety store had their own lunch counters. Woolworths downtown stopped serving food in 1993, then closed altogether a year later. Rumor has it 'The Black Widow' Blanche Taylor Moore toasted sandwiches at the Eckerds on Yanceyville Road. Considering she sprinkled arsenic like MSG at a fast food buffet... I'd avoid the chicken salad sandwich.

Kinard Drug on the corner of Battleground and Cone was popular with both Grimsley and Page students in the 1970s. During the next decade in-store lunch counters vanished leaving only one in Greensboro, located inside Brown-Gardiner on Elm Street. In fact, it's expanded its footprint over the years. My aunt Gertrude Tankersley worked the front register in the 1960s & 1970s.

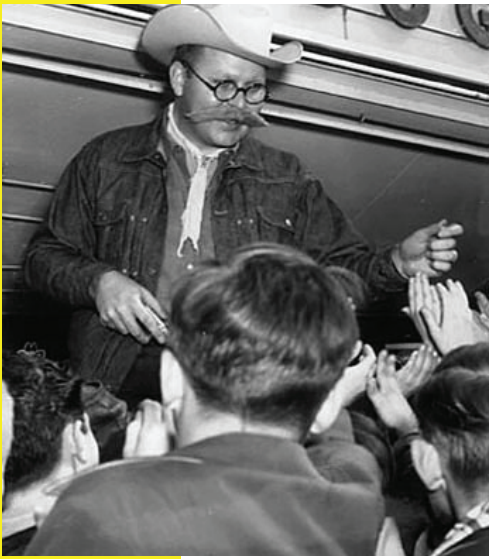
After You've Gone

When Judy Garland brought her bombastic musical review to War Memorial Auditorium on April 17, 1961 there was no way of knowing a week later she'd be making the biggest comeback ever by staging what would be dubbed, "the greatest night in show business history." Greensboro was her last stop before playing a sold-out Carnegie Hall on April 23rd to the grandest ovation and display of adulation a star has ever known. A year and a half earlier, with an inflamed liver, Garland was told by doctors she'd live the rest of her life as a semi-invalid and never work again. The thirty eight-year old was considered washed up by Hollywood and the music industry even before falling ill.

Some among the twenty four hundred Greensboro attendees were perturbed that the venue was switched last minute from the coliseum to the smaller auditorium but, because of the overflow, two hundred forty lucky concert goers got to watch from the orchestra pit (the musicians were on stage). Ticket prices ranged from $2.00 to a high of $4.50. The Gate City was the conclusion of a grueling tour. Miss Garland's throat was hoarse, she was a bit plump but accustomed to performing under harsh conditions, the reason Mel Tormé nicknamed her "The Concrete Canary."

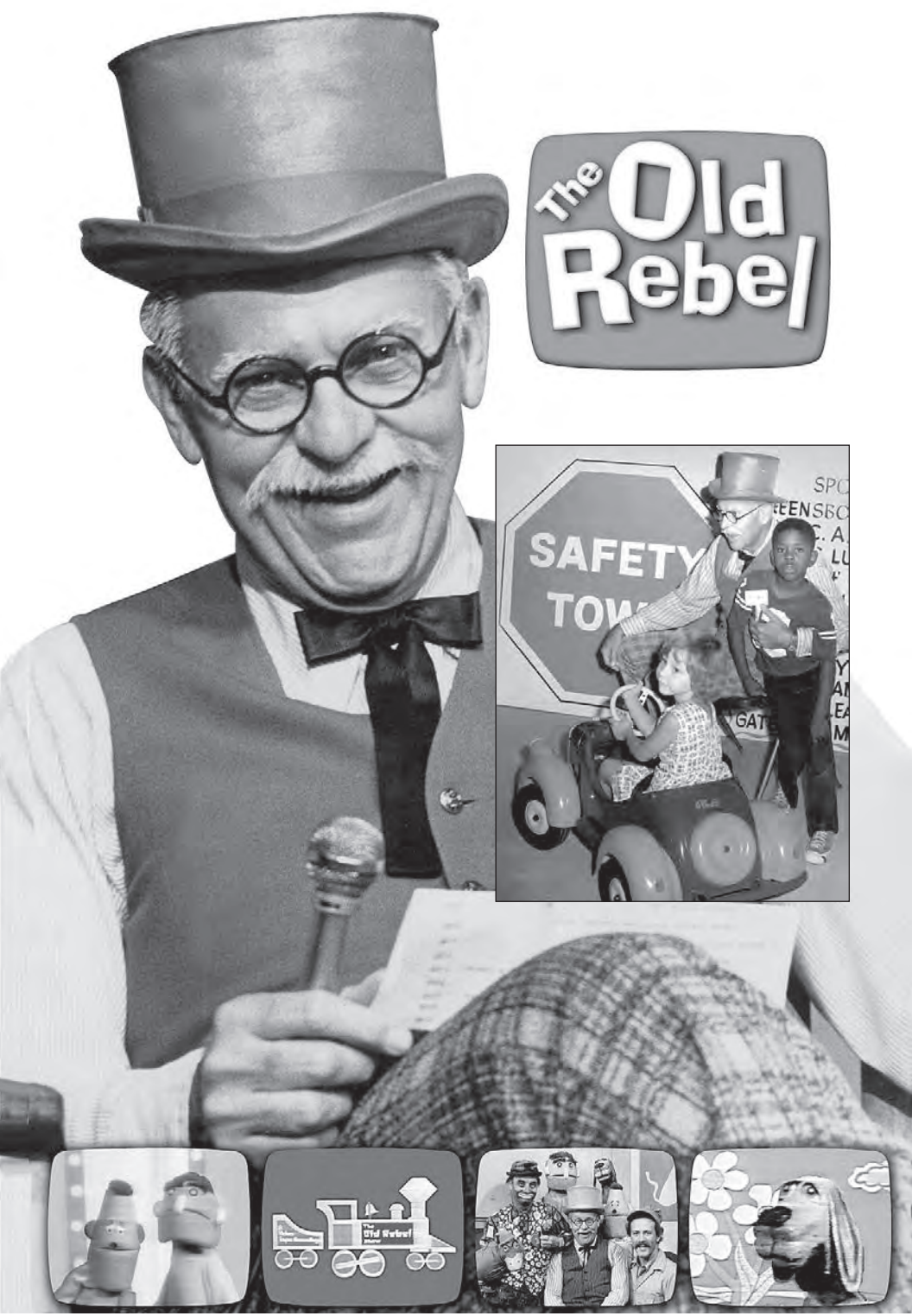
Her performance the next week in New York was so electrifying it became a bellwether against which every other entertainer is measured. The soundtrack album won four Grammy Awards, the first double LP to go Gold after thirteen weeks at number one.

Whatever Happened to the Old Rebel?



In 1950, a year after WFMY first took to the airwaves and five years before Captain Kangaroo unlocked the doors to his Treasure House, an unknown performer named George Perry debuted on "Six-Gun Playhouse," a live children's program featuring clown acts, western serials and black-and-white cartoons. After a short period, Perry dropped the cowboy persona to don a black top hat, frock coat and old-fashioned bow tie to become the Old Rebel, one of the most beloved characters ever to parade across our screens.

Local kid shows were all the rage on TV in the 1950s; just set the cameras up and let the talent fill time with whatever they came up with. This unexplored electronic environment was ideal for George Perry, with his limitless imagination and singular ability to make his young audience believe wholeheartedly in whatever whimsical notion he was trying to convey. "The Old Rebel Show was a work of love for my dad and plenty of fun


The Old Rebel
SAFETY

too." George's son Timm Perry told me, "The main philosophy was to 'entertain, enlighten and educate.' My father was a native of Statesville, survived bullets, bombs and fire during World War II's Battle of the Bulge and, after the war, toured Europe with an acting troupe. When he returned to North Carolina, he was an announcer in the Statesville and Asheboro radio markets before being hired by WFMY in 1950 where he was a commercial announcer, part-time weatherman, built sets, served as cameraman and film engineer among other duties until he took over as the Old Rebel.

"Hundreds of thousands of youngsters appeared on the 'magic moving playhouse' bleachers and scores celebrated their birthdays in the studios. Coca-Cola and Dr. Pepper were early sponsors so drinks were wheeled into the studio by the crateful atop shopping carts to give to the kids in the audience. My mother also joined in the festivities by cooking dozens of Curtis hot dogs and serving them on delicious Holsum bread rolls. Many people don't know that my father carved the show's puppets himself."

In the early fifties it was far from certain that television was going to catch on with the public. TV sets were massively expensive (more than $1,500 in today's money), screens were miniscule, reception was deplorable and precious little content was available to fill the hours. It wasn't until children's programs like 'Howdy Doody' nationally and The Old Rebel Show locally began attracting youngsters that the TV tide started to turn. It became a race to "keep up with the Joneses" once dad witnessed his offspring running over to the neighbor's house to watch television... and nothing sold television receivers like putting a family's precious tykes on the screen.

Triad viewer Marsha Peele remembers, "As a young girl growing up in Greensboro during the 1950s, I, like all the kids I knew, had our favorite heroes. The Old Rebel, Lone Ranger and Superman were our heroes. Unlike the other guys, Old Rebel was attainable. I never will forget one day I was waiting to visit my dentist, Dr. Kilkelly, and none too happy about the upcoming regular exam. It was a small office and the doctor had just let out his last patient and was leading me into the examination room. Suddenly, the hall door opened and in rushed the Old Rebel... in full costume! I was aghast! My mouth literally fell open. He apologized for the interruption and asked the doctor to see him immediately as it was something of an emergency and he was due for an appearance somewhere. I gladly gave my hero my dentists' chair... after all this

was little enough to do for one's hero. On his way out, he shook my hand and thanked me profusely. It was the best visit to a dentist I have ever had!"

In 1953 Jim Tucker joined the show as a friendly cowboy character; thereafter the broadcast became known as The Old Rebel and Pecos Pete Show. Joining them was a pug-nosed pooch appropriately named Troubles, and Cathy the Chimp. Having a chimpanzee as a regular was not that unusual in the fifties but Troubles was forced to drop out in the early sixties after biting down on one too many of the small hands he was supposed to lick.

Timm Perry got to know Jim Tucker, "Jim as Pecos Pete was a great cowboy, easygoing and kindly, a congenial co-host with a wide range of talents from the Wild West trail, including rope trick artistry, sharp-shooting and melodious guitar picking. Rebel and Pecos made countless appearances over

a three-state area; they interviewed big western stars like Gene Autry and Dennis Weaver and ventured backstage at Greensboro's National Theatre in the fifties to flirt with the pretty Carter Sisters [June later married Johnny Cash] where a bashful fellow introduced himself to them... it was Elvis Presley."

Lee Marshall began appearing regularly around 1962 as Lonesome Lee the Clown and remained with the program until the very last episode, bringing with him a bizarre cast of characters that included Chee-Chee, a talkative worm in an apple, and Johnny Lee, his whacked-out ventriloquist dummy. Mike Marshall recalls,"My father, Lee Marshall, did a lot of clowning including working with Ringling Brothers and was a fixture in Piedmont Christmas parades, company parties, children's parties and similar events. I sometimes accompanied him to WFMY where my dad would join George Perry and the others in the dressing room before the show to get ready. Most of the time there was no script... George, my dad, or one of the other characters would have some simple idea and they would kick it around as they put on their costumes and makeup and basically ad-lib on the air.

"When I went off to college in 1963 (UNC Chapel Hill), the show came on at five in the afternoon. I lived in a dorm and would sometime go down to the TV room to watch it, that is until another student would show up and ask, 'Are you really watching that kid show?' Of course, I'd yield the TV and walk away."

By 1964, the Triad's leading kids' show boasted an extraordinary 15,000 members of the Old Rebel and Pecos Pete Club - to whom the station mailed out packages stuffed with club pins, a song sheet, secret decoder and a photo album. Besides the Old Rebel, Pecos Pete, and Lonesome Lee other occasional cast members included Coocoo the Clown, ventriloquist Ted Moss and his pal Hal, Tiny the Clown and his trained K-9 Hot Dog, and "Uncle" Roy Griffin (executive director of the Greensboro Community Center) who popped in every few weeks to teach lessons in civic responsibility. There were also filmed cartoon features including characters like Popeye, Wally Gator, Touch Turtle, Lippy the Lion and Space Angel. John Hitchcock was on the show once, "I was at the top of the bleachers, we were jammed in like mackerels and after a six-ounce Coke I got sick and threw up. I'm sure that made a lasting impression at Channel 2."

At a time when racial tensions were high you would think a show with the word "Rebel" in the title might be problematic given the Old South implications. Instead, The Old Rebel Show was a place where kids of all

colors congregated and nobody thought that much about it. Early on George Perry saw the need to fill the studio bleachers with kids from across the spectrum and would often drive out himself to pick up youngsters at the Hayes-Taylor YMCA to make sure all local children were consistently represented.

Riding the Baby Boom shockwave with ratings at an all-time high, the show's stars were in high demand for personal appearances, parades, shopping center promotions, private birthday parties and charity benefits. John Hitchcock recalls a local holiday tradition, "The downtown Christmas Parade in Greensboro was the big-time. One year there was Uncle Roy in an antique car, Lonesome Lee walking his invisible dog on a leash, Bob Gordon from Channel 12's Sunday afternoon show, local news and weather folks (good 'ole Lee Kinard and Charley Harville), and the master of ceremonies - the Old Rebel - riding on a vintage fire truck along with his mute polar bear, Marco. From the front steps of Millie Hopkins' nursery school, that's as close to heaven as a kid gets. Well, I could have caught a miniature loaf of bread from Little Miss Sunbeam, but you can't have it all."

It was the top story on the playground in the summer of 1967, an event of seismic proportions... Pecos Pete was leaving The Old Rebel Show. After 14 years, the Old Rebel & Pecos Pete had become synonymous; the playful camaraderie they exhibited on camera was something that couldn't be recreated. Jim Tucker left to join the on-air staff at WSJS Channel 12 (now WXII) as co-host of their morning program Today at Home. The Old Rebel Show was moved to mornings eventually settling in at 9:00 a.m. which meant George Perry and the former Pecos Pete were directly competing with each other for viewers (up against WGHP's Dialing For Dollars). Today at Home ran for four years.

Jim Wiglesworth joined The Old Rebel Show in 1968 as Jungle Jim to replace George Leh, a remarkably talented puppeteer who, from the very beginning, provided the homespun personalities for Homer the Hound and Marvin the Mule. Wiglesworth brought with him a youthful exuberance and inventive wit; he also began utilizing blue screen and other cutting edge color videotape technology to give The Old Rebel Show a more modern feel. "I remember sitting down one day with George Perry and telling him I would love to fill in and try to develop these puppets. He quickly agreed, 'Why not give it a shot?' Marvin the Mule went into retirement and Homer the Hound forever after became known as Mr. Wiglesworth. I created several more puppet characters, there was Humphrey, a grumpy ole character who pretended to hate kids and love pickles; later came Charlie, a more mellow character who played well off of Humphrey.

"Every day we always had the kids in the audience walk through the door on the set and give us their names. If it was a smaller group, often the Old Rebel would ask questions like what school or what town were they from. We had kids from southern Virginia to just outside of Charlotte and everywhere in between. We also had a daily 'Birthday Spotlight.' Children from all over the state (as well as Virginia, it seemed) would send in their pictures. I can't even guess how many thousands of those we showed over the years. I did receive a little compensation for doing this show but I did The Old Rebel Show for all those years because l liked doing it. I liked the purpose, making kids happy (man, does this sound sappy... but it's true). I was a full-

time producer/director for the station and my responsibilities were to write and produce television commercials and direct the 11 O'Clock news. From the station's standpoint, my relationship with George and The Old Rebel Show was my own personal labor of love."

Melinda Wrenn Thomas was another avid watcher, "I remember a special day. A special day especially if you lived in or around Greensboro. It was my fifth birthday party. I was so excited because my friends and I were going to be on The Old Rebel Show. At first the butterflies were too intense because I was going to meet Old Rebel himself, walk through that familiar door and shake the hand of someone I watched with great anticipation. I remember sitting on those cold bleachers sipping on a Pepsi and watching Lonesome Lee entertain us with his worm sliding in and out of his big red apple. I felt so big and so loved at the same time. I knew I was with someone who cared for me and all my friends with me that day. After introductions our main role as audience members was to cheer for the skits and finally wave to the audience at home as the cameras panned across each kid's face on the bleachers. We were given Coca-Colas from small green glass bottles and those little orange peanut butter crackers — after that we went absolutely wild with sugar and caffeine!"

Several times WFMY dropped hints that it might cancel The Old Rebel Show but the outcry from the public was tremendous so in 1976 they

bumped the program to Saturday mornings at 7:00, now expanded to an hour.

During the summer of 1977, I was on a promotional tour for the Land of Oz theme park in Boone and one of our stops was The Old Rebel Show, which taped on a Friday afternoon. This was one of the last tapings, there was no longer a studio audience full of excitable kids and George Perry and Lonesome Lee seemed to know that the writing was on the wall. We clowned around with the Old Rebel, he developed a "crush" on Dorothy, the puppets came out from behind the curtains and a fine time was had by all. That summer we attended numerous charity events across the state and at every function there was the Old Rebel. He was tireless in his devotion to muscular dystrophy in particular (remember his MDA backyard carnival kits?) and worked so hard to entertain those severely disabled kids. And

Joan Crawford and The Old Rebel were both big supporters of the Muscular Dystrophy Association. Remember the backyard carnival kits?

they were a tough audience, let me tell you.

Jim Wiglesworth recalled how it ended, "I left The Old Rebel Show in March or April of 1977. I heard through the grapevine later that summer WFMY was thinking of canceling George's show come fall. I remember going over one day and sitting in the office of Chuck Whitehurst, the station's general manager at the time, and pleading with him not to cancel this show. His major reason for this decision was that, with all the federal regulations pertaining to advertising certain products targeted at children, he did not want to mess with it. I tried with all my powers to get him to see that it just didn't matter if this program generated a single penny in direct revenue, it was worth it (and then some) in public relations and good will. But he was the boss and I no longer worked there—so guess who won that debate.

After his show was cancelled, George Perry took up reporting occasional folksy, human-interest stories on the Channel 2 news and was pretty good at it but he was dropped unceremoniously after a few months, fired by what one WFMY employee referred to as, "a vengeful general manager." Jim Longworth, host of Triad Today, worked at WFMY, "Of course the sad thing about The Old Rebel Show was the way it was phased out. Management determined that the show needed to go

because it was not profitable. The truth is, it was never a profit center; it was an audience builder and image builder for WFMY. High above the studio was a huge observation room that could hold hundreds of moms, dads, grandparents and friends of the kids who came to tape the show each afternoon. We usually had about eighty to a hundred kids in the bleachers and a hundred or more spectators. Those folks went home all excited and told their friends and family about The Old Rebel Show, creating tremendous goodwill and word of mouth. It was, in a sense, that goodwill that built the station's ratings and enabled the sales department to sell spots at a premium rate for the 6 p.m. and 11 p.m. news. George Perry was a great broadcaster committed to providing quality local programs to his audience. Were he alive today, he would be hurt to know that none of our TV stations have continued with the work he started. Shame on us for abdicating our responsibility to children in favor of syndicated programming."

Out of a job, George Perry was spotted at the unemployment office in Greensboro. Taunted by teenagers who easily recognized the pipe-smoking TV star, he left without being able to transact his business. How humiliating that must have been for this 30-year veteran in broadcasting, arguably the most recognizable personality in the area, one of a handful of people (along with Charlie Harville and Lee Kinard) who transformed WFMY from an iffy proposition into a multi-million dollar business.

George Perry died of a heart attack in 1980 at age fifty-nine, just three years after losing his show. Doctors may have labeled it a cardiac arrest but there's no doubt that not being able to do what he loved most is what broke his heart. Timm Perry shares fond memories, "Throughout the years my dad led a creative, productive life. He married a beautiful redhead named Martha, painted outstanding artworks, carved figurines and puppets out of wood, wrote poetry, played banjo and tenor guitar, raised vegetables and flowers, read biographies and history voraciously, fished, golfed and hosted WFMY's RFD Piedmont. I loved the guy. Everybody loved the guy. You would have loved him too if you had known him!"

Old Rebel Show Reunion

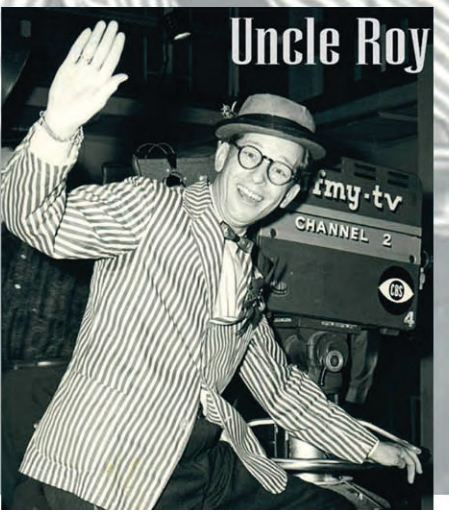
In 2000, I put on an Old Rebel Show reunion with the help of the Greensboro Public Library's children's curator James Young, who holds the distinction of being one of the kids bitten by Troubles, the show's canine mascot. Lonesome Lee Marshall and Jim Wiglesworth were there along

with George Perry's widow Martha Perry, Timm Perry and family members of Jim (Pecos Pete) Tucker. Tucker, who left WSJS in the mid-1970s to open a Baskin-Robbins in the new Hanes Mall, was ill at the time of the reunion and joined that great roundup in the sky soon after.

The program had been off the air for more than twenty years but the crowd, who came from as far as Raleigh, was wildly enthusiastic. Parents who grew up with the Old Rebel brought their youngsters who laughed uproariously at clips from the show. These modern preschoolers reacted just as we did at their age, loving every minute of it. There's something timeless in what George Perry and his co-stars brought to the small screen, an incandescent charm that transcended generations. Co-star Jim Wiglesworth believes we've lost something, "I do feel there is something very nice and friendly about a local show of this type. The nature of the beast, 'broadcasting,' has changed so much in recent years that local stations can easily and cheaply buy a packaged program from a syndicator rather than create one themselves. Unfortunately, they don't have a local flavor and children today don't seem to have any more loyalty to one station than to any other. Children can't go visit and they don't have any local heroes."

(Lonesome) Lee Marshall passed away July 3, 2004 at the age of eighty-nine. Today, "Jungle" Jim Wiglesworth is a successful real estate agent in Greensboro and the father of first season Survivor runner-up Kelly Wiglesworth. He was also the first to license Winston Cup Racing for TV broadcast, you know it now as NASCAR.

No question, television stations lost a key connection to the community they serve with the demise of locally produced children's shows. Oh sure, WFMY or WGHP will occasionally invite a group of youngsters into the studio to watch a news broadcast but somehow children sitting through stories of home invasions, murder and other assorted deviant activity doesn't exactly substitute for the character-building skits or lessons in manners that were offered up daily from those very same studios thirty or forty years ago. Like it or not, life in front of the tube will never be the way it was during television's messy adolescence. For my generation and the one that came before and after, George Perry remains nothing less than an icon, a remarkably positive influence on our psyches, a lasting spirit in the community and symbol of a way of life that we can romanticize now that it's rooted firmly in the past, never to return.


Uncle Roy
imy·tv
CHANNEL 2
CBS
4

May All Your Stoplights Be Green

Bob Gordon Popcorn Theater enjoyed a decade long run beginning in 1966 with Robert Van Horn (Bob's real name) VJ-ing for an entertainment starved audience. Earlier in the decade the easy-going emcee presented cartoons weekday afternoons then headed up *The Bob Gordon Show* outfitted in the manner of a gentleman cowboy, six shooters on each hip, to entertain youngsters in the mornings. Like other kiddie stars Bob had his own secret code and hosted animal acts but one feature wasn't at all typical, calling viewers on the air that sent in their crayoned drawings and phone numbers.

In 1966 Bob moved over to Saturday and/or Sunday afternoons for a video hodgepodge of reruns, movies, and 1940's serials. *Bob Gordon Theater* (the *Popcorn* came and went) varied in length and schedule, three or four hours (more or less) getting underway around 1:00 or 2:00,

Monkey likes cotton candy! David Dry took this early 60's photo at the Dixie Classic Fair.

a casual affair remembered mostly for the dollar bills Bob origamied into exotic shapes and amusing banter with his ventriloquist dummy The Great Scott, a holdover from the children's program when the puppet was known as Van.

Obviously a degree of consideration was given to the show's balanced menu, a video salad bar for TV junkies young and old. Well-written sitcoms, fanciful dramas, westerns, and kid's standards tossed into an unlikely mix—*The Many Loves of Dobie Gillis, Adventures of Superman, Bus Stop, McHale's Navy, Cheyenne,* and *Bachelor Father* were in rotation in the late 1960s alongside a chapter or two of *Buck Rogers* or *Zombies of the Stratosphere*. A common thread? All enjoyable entertainment even if you weren't into that genre.

Frustrated today with hundreds of channels yet nothing worth watching? Imagine a mere three TV outlets airing little more than church services, religious pseudo-dramas, country music jamborees, and staged nature programs on the weekends. Before WSJS (now WXII) beamed *Bob Gordon Theater* into our Philcos anything more exciting than *Davey & Goliath* was likely achieved by crimping tin foil to rabbit ears in an attempt to hone in on an affiliate in Raleigh or Charlotte where you might discover, at best, an episode of *I've Got A Secret* buried inside a blizzard of static.

Sandwiched between the reruns were live segments with Bob sharing behind-the-scenes stories about what was coming up next, showcasing area talent, or interacting with ordinary people with interesting hobbies. One guest made an impression on me, collector Clay Kimball who brought with him rare comic books that probably lost half their value after Bob flung them around like last week's *TV Guide.* That appearance was in conjunction with the Greensboro Public Library where a few dozen four-color rarities were enshrined under glass-and-key for us supergeeks to marvel over... and some unknown thief to make off with. Bob was very creative with his hands, every Christmas instructing viewers on how to construct a Moravian Star. Martin Kirby was a fan, "*Bob Gordon Theater* was a favorite of mine as a child. I loved the westerns but most of all it was fun to watch Bob try his paper folding skills. So many times they just didn't work but he had another one to the side that had worked earlier. It was great fun. They don't make'm like that anymore."

In 1969 Bob presided over the first *WSJS Halloween Spooktacular*, a block of four classic Universal horror films broadcast primetime into the late hours. *Bob Gordon Theater's* bounty of escapism in the early seventies leaned more towards action and sci-fi with *Rat Patrol, 77 Sunset Strip, Sugarfoot, Secret Agent, One Step Beyond, The Invaders,* and *Time Tunnel*.

As the decade progressed NBC Sports took on a more aggressive stance resulting in *Bob Gordon Theater* being sidelined for weeks at a time, sometimes only filling an hour or less, before disappearing altogether in 1977. By then Bob was hosting *Daybreak,* a half-hour talk show airing early weekday mornings. Long been retired living with his wife in Winaston-Salem Bob passed away in 2016.

Booked as a guest on the WXII Channel 12 morning show in 2003 I brought along my *Bob Gordon Show* Fan Club card. No one on set knew anything about it, I didn't expect them to but they displayed the card full screen to open the interview. I secretly hoped Robert Van Horn might see it, recognize a hat tip to the man who exemplified a generation of television broadcasters perfectly at ease lounging in front of a live camera with an unscripted five minutes to kill, personality filling the screen without ego or artifice.

Cordelia Kelly

What's Cooking Today debuted in 1953 hosted by charming Cordelia Kelly. For two decades every weekday morning at 9:30 on WFMY, following *The Old Rebel Show*, Miss Kelly demonstrated the ins and outs of Southern cuisine with recipes for Crabmeat ala Greensboro Country Club and all manner of pastries like Election Day Cake. When she began using a revolutionary non-stick cooking spray in the 1960s area housewives rushed out to the Big Bear to buy PAM.

Long Gone Fast Food Joints

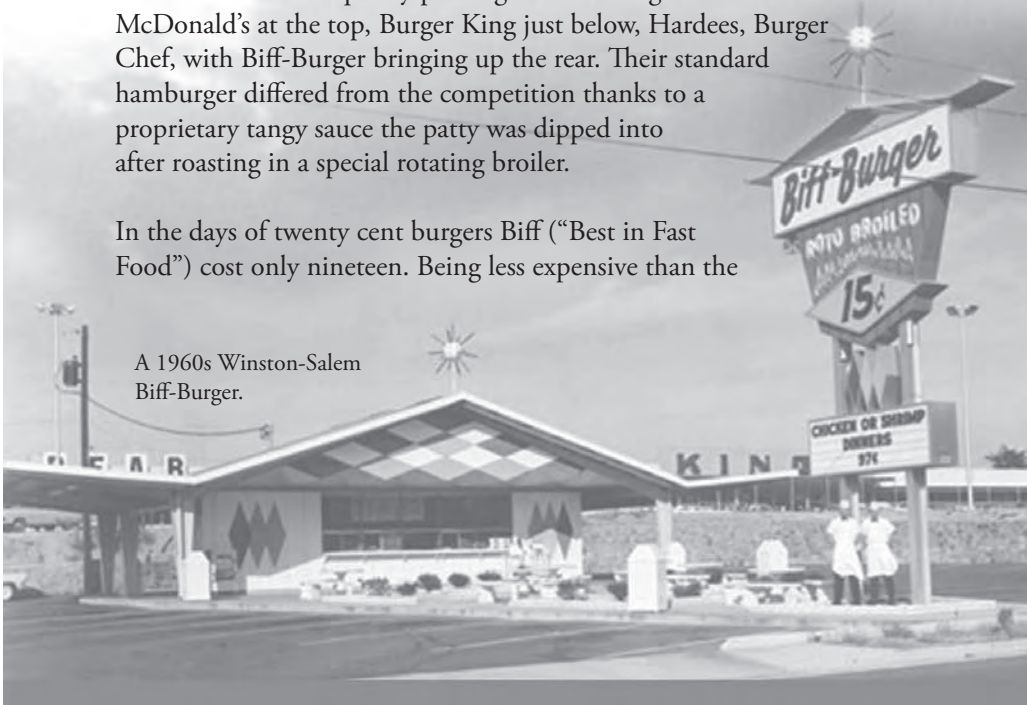
A flood of fast food chains in the late-fifties and early-sixties, many long forgotten, washed away virtually every ma and pa diner in their wake. Boomers, the first generation to find it perfectly acceptable that a clown would represent an eating establishment, can look back nostalgically on a time when fast food was of a much higher quality. I'm still miffed about McDonald's french fries being nothing like the limp, greasy ones of my youth, so irresistible because they were sizzled in beef fat. Modern day outlets like KFC serve a product nothing like what they offered a few decades ago, menus today are geared for even the dullest employee to execute.

Where can you get that retro 1970's taste experience today without programming the Time Tunnel? (A risky proposition considering the Tunnel exploded into a shower of sparks whenever someone moved a dial.) It is possible, depending on where you are, to travel back to the past—gastronomically speaking.

Biff-Burger

In the seventies there were several Biff-Burger restaurants around town, they were located all along the east coast with a few outposts not too much further west. In the quality pecking order of burger chains there was McDonald's at the top, Burger King just below, Hardees, Burger Chef, with Biff-Burger bringing up the rear. Their standard hamburger differed from the competition thanks to a proprietary tangy sauce the patty was dipped into after roasting in a special rotating broiler.

In the days of twenty cent burgers Biff ("Best in Fast Food") cost only nineteen. Being less expensive than the

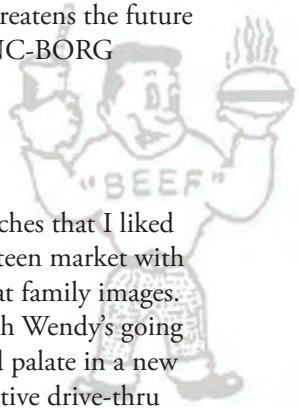


A 1960s Winston-Salem Biff-Burger.

other chains led to the impression, in my mind, that the burgers weren't as good—indeed, they had a slightly gamey taste. The chain was founded in the 1950s but went under in the mid-1970s with a number of profitable independents holding on. Biff-Burger disappeared almost entirely in the mid-1980s but two stores survive still using the original recipes and the same basic decor. One is in St. Petersburg, Florida. The other was rechristened Beef Burger, a fifty-plus year Greensboro institution with the 1970's chairs and tables (yellow and attached as one unit, naturally) along with a collection of 1980's arcade games.

Still utilizing the classic "Biff" character, one of the worst designed mascots in history, they churn milkshakes from a seventies era machine and the food is grease-liscious. I'm not crazy about the Biff-Burger itself but they have the best steak sandwich I've had for the price. UNC-G students have long flocked here to chow down on cheap but good quality eats that really soak up the alcohol—even though the front door sports a sign reading, "If you're drunk eat somewhere else." That's half your clientele! Sadly, Lee Street expansion plans by the college threatens the future of Beef Burger, hopefully it can be assimilated into UNC-BORG as Yum Yum and Old Town Draught House were.

Burger Chef



Another lost burger chain selling down-market sandwiches that I liked just fine. Their commercials attempted to tap into the teen market with groovy hippie music and tender but occasionally offbeat family images. "Incrediburgable!" Burger Chef's demise coincided with Wendy's going nationwide in the early-seventies, pushing the fast food palate in a new direction with their salad bar, fresher meat, and innovative drive-thru window. The operation began to vanish in the mid-eighties after Hardees bought them out, the last Burger Chef was shuttered in 1996. The big two—McDonald's and Burger King—had pretty much locked up the nationwide fast food hamburger market by then while regionals like Jack In The Box, Carl's Jr, and Hardees continued to thrive. At one time Burger Chef was second only to McDonald's in number of locations. They had a fantastic dry but tasty Roast Beef sandwich that Hardees continued to sell for years alongside a most excellent fried chicken which was dropped because it couldn't be prepared properly by a minimum wage worker. Schroeder's Drive-In in Danville, Illinois was last to serve the original Burger Chef menu items, they closed in 2015. Fans in Jacksonville, Illinois can hop over to CR's Drive-In where they still make Burger Chef french fries.

Krystal

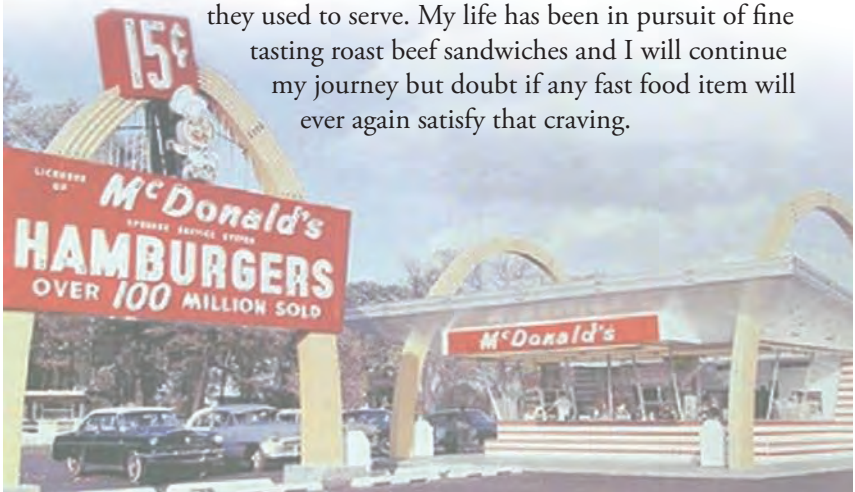
Krystal was the first fast food chain in the South whereas White Castle (the oldest hamburger franchise in the United States) was more of a northern, midwest, and west coast thing. The Krystal burger was a straight up ripoff of White Castle's, if you liked one you'd probably enjoy the other. More than a decade ago Krystal stores were upgraded, reviving a slumbering giant that first awoke back in 1932.

Celebrity Fried Chicken

What will you say when the grandkids ask, "Where were you during the Fried Chicken Wars of the1970s?" After Kentucky Fried Chicken's incredible success Roy Rogers, Mahalia Jackson, Minnie Pearl, Tex Ritter, Tennessee Ernie Ford, and even Popeye began slinging drumsticks and thighs. They (mostly) quietly faded away, not lasting long enough to spread too far from their point of origin. Popeye's continues to flourish on a worldwide scale, what the heck did Popeye ever have to do with chicken, battered or otherwise? I'm dying to know how Mahalia Jackson's "Glori-fried" chicken tasted but the last outlet in Nashville closed a few years ago.

Roy Rogers Family Restaurant

I miss Roy Rogers' fare, very popular in the 1970s. The secret to their sandwich was *it was made with actual roast beef* that they cooked in-store, served on a lightly toasted sesame seed bun. Today's roast beef standard, Arby's, slices off of a molded gelatinous meat concoction that doesn't fit my definition of real beef. In 2005, I was traveling to New York City quite a bit to do TV and discovered the New Jersey landscape dotted with Roy Rogers restaurants beckoning from rest stops along the highways. I couldn't resist sampling their roast beef again, a faint echo of the terrific sandwich they used to serve. My life has been in pursuit of fine tasting roast beef sandwiches and I will continue my journey but doubt if any fast food item will ever again satisfy that craving.




Girl Can't Help It!

From the forties through the sixties Fred Koury's Plantation Supper Club was the premier elegant night spot between New York and Miami. Andy Griffith launched his career there, Duke Ellington, Nat King Cole, Andy Williams, Brenda Lee, The Platters, and Miyoshi Umeki headlined the thousand seater. In 1963 the most magnetic motion picture superstar of the decade, lusty busty Jayne Mansfield, brought her salacious va-va-voom to the Plantation for two sizzling shows nightly. The "Working Man's Monroe" painted our town a lighter shade of red, smashing all national box office records, sending menfolk into a tailspin and their wives hightailing it to the beauty parlor. Last highlight of a tumultuous career Mansfield's week in Greensboro lit the match to a fuse leading to her notoriously gruesome death by near-beheading just four years later at age 43.

Bubbly and bouncy in all the right places it was Jayne Mansfield who invented the 'wardrobe malfunction' to garner attention, a poolside slip of her bikini top paved the way to Hollywood. The very definition of the Platinum Blonde Bombshell she graced the cover of over five hundred magazines, starred in a seminal Broadway hit and strutted her stuff in a handful of iconic films. Her Holmby Hills home on Sunset Boulevard was an enormous palace where nearly everything was imbued in Jayne's own specially blended hue, right down to the living room's Passion Pink shag carpeting, the terry cloth walls and floor of her master bath, even the elaborate stonework surrounding a heart-shaped swimming pool. Filmmaker John Waters dubbed her "the ultimate movie star," the embodiment of Tinseltown's vanishing love affair with

glamour and glitz, when opulence and ostentatiousness were de rigueur.

Jayne Mansfield was a woman of impossible proportions, both physically and in her worldly construct, with a dingbat persona just as pronounced off-screen as on. She was having a laugh... her IQ was as outsized as her 40" bust. Dick Cavett famously wrote an introduction for talk show host Jack Paar to deliver: "Ladies and gentlemen, what can I say about my next guest, except... here they are, Jayne Mansfield." The Golden Globe winner's most famous scene in a motion picture came in 1956's *The Girl Can't Help It*. As the camera follows Jayne sashaying down the avenue the iceman's glacier liquefies, the milkman's bottle spontaneously lactates, an apartment dweller's eyeglasses shatter attempting to get a peek underneath as the lady is climbing the stairs. That minute long scene made her a major star.

Evidence suggests Mansfield had a Mae West complex, a good portion of her Las Vegas act mirrored Mae's extravaganzas on The Strip. She even appropriated one of the film legend's on-stage muscle men, former Mr. America Mickey Hartigay, for husband and co-star. Billed as 'The Bust and The Biceps' Jayne joked, "Between Mickey's chest and my chest — well, let's just say it makes dancing close somewhat difficult." Mae West sued for Alienation of Affection despite being no more romantically attached to the Hungarian bodybuilder than any of her other beaus.

In on the joke like no celebrity before Jayne Mansfield harnessed the power of the press, stuffing its insatiable maw with the unhealthy diet it thrived on, gleefully trading her headlamps for headlines. She planted stories in obscure newspapers then indignantly denied such outrageous accusations when wire services picked up on it and reporters came jockeying. The Pink Palace was equipped with a fully stocked bar open eight hours a day for any member of the fourth estate, don't think that didn't grease the wheels.

By the sixties the optical illusion that was her existence had become a protracted delusion. Despite winning the Italian equivalent of an Oscar in 1962 the actress was dropped by 20th Century Fox, Vegas hadn't been an option for years. Marilyn Monroe's death that year sent Mansfield's personal life into free-fall — booze and pills dictated the scripts, random hookups her co-stars. An affair with John Kennedy ended after she screamed into the telephone, "Look, you'll only be President for eight years at the most. I'll be a movie star forever!" Brother Bobby, true to his nature, dove in for sloppy seconds. There were other trysts, much to the dismay of Mickey Hartigay, father to three of her four children who more than once tussled with Jayne's latest conquest in front of jotting reporters. Although increasing in frequency

those nocturnal emissions were mostly whispers around town and movie magazine chatter.

Orbiting planet Has-Been, Jayne Mansfield accepted an engagement to perform at the newly renovated Plantation Supper Club, in 1963 celebrating their twenty-first anniversary attracting big name entertainment to High Point Road and Holden. In the early-sixties institutions like Hollywood and Broadway still had an invincibility about them and Mansfield was by far the biggest star the nightclub had hosted.

After an exhausting nine hour flight from Los Angeles Jayne and Mickey arrived at Greensboro - High Point Airport on West Market Street early Thursday evening February 28th with four-year old Mickey Jr. waving a Confederate flag. Her first show was a bit more that twenty-four hours away. After greeting an ebullient crowd the family headed over to the Plantation Motel to freshen up before a press conference where scribes expressed curiosity as to what the sexy chanteuse had in store for her audience. She coyly confessed this was her first live engagement in a long while, "Well, I'd sort of like to keep it a secret until the show." When prompted about *Promises! Promises!,* her first starring role in an American motion picture in two years, she described her part as "quite domesticated," a departure from her "sex symbol stigma." Oh boy, was it not that at all. More about that later.

On a spur of the moment invitation, Jayne ventured out to the Greensboro Country Club in a scandalously low-cut skin-tight black gown with elbow length leather gloves to flirt with Governor Terry Sanford as he gathered with neighborhood developers, Jayne's décolletage was tastefully swathed in mink when photographed for Friday morning's edition of the Greensboro Daily News. That's when the couple discovered forty-five pieces of luggage wasn't the only baggage they'd arrived with. Questions were fielded as to whether Mickey "maliciously and wrongfully" assaulted Jayne's hairdresser a week earlier as was asserted in a newly filed lawsuit. Eventually a story was stuck to, "My husband is a gentle, sweet person and wouldn't hurt anyone." The allegations were likely true but no Southerner of that era would condemn a guy for pummeling another man who kept his wife out until 3:00 in the morning then brought her home drunk. Whatever the circumstances Jayne's White Minx by Roux (with a drop of black) hairdo was colored and teased for the duration by Greensboro's own world-renowned hairdresser André of Leon's.

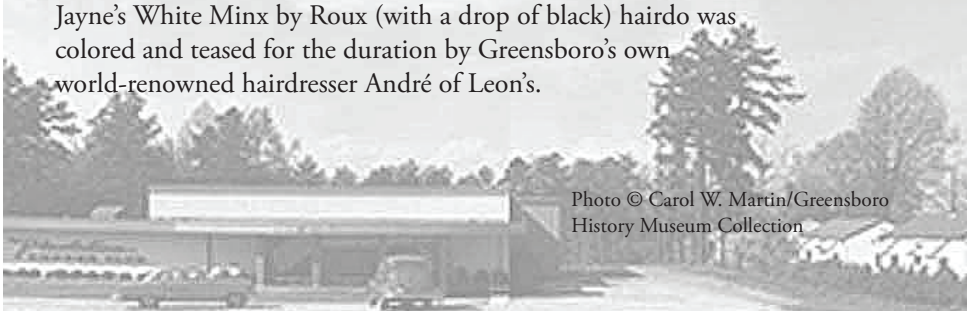


Photo © Carol W. Martin/Greensboro History Museum Collection

If Ms. Mansfield had any reservations about bringing her risqué revue to our smallish, oh so proper town it didn't show. Less than two hours before taking the stage at the Plantation Jayne helicoptered on to the front lawn of the Greensboro Coliseum and hopped aboard a pink elephant to close the first half of the Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey Circus, then joined her husband and son in the stands to take in the second act. Jayne's publicist Raymond Strait wrote in *The Tragic Secret Life of Jayne Mansfield*, "In spite of her frantic social life, Jayne protected her image as a mother. The first thing she wanted once she was awake in the morning and had taken her 'upper' was to see her children."

At 9:30 the proverbial curtain rose on Jayne Mansfield's whirlwind tour through her *House of Love*. The demure first number, *Just Plain Jayne*, poked fun at her lavish lifestyle and consumptive ways; moments later

she was spirited around the stage by a gaggle of muscular chorus boys exalting her rapscallion nature in song: "The lady's a dish... too hot to handle. Her every wish... must be obeyed. You'll have to learn how to live in the sun with no sign of shade. Because the lady's much too, much too hot... to handle." Jayne shimmied, shook, and was lifted aloft for aerial calisthenics in her leopard print two-piece by Mickey dressed in Tarzan-esque trunks. She displayed her virtuosity on the violin and piano then ventured into the audience to sit in the lap of a distinguished gentleman and sing sultrily with as much air in her voice as she supposedly had in her head.

"Fred Koury probably did have the best looking club on the whole East Coast." Billy 'Crash' Craddock opened for Jayne and recalls an opening night faux pas, "Mickey Hartigay her husband lifted her up with one hand and when he put her down her zipper came all the way open, from the top to her rear end. Fred thought she planned that. She'd go around the stage, flirt with the men, rub their bald head or wink at them. She was a sex symbol, she didn't have to do a whole lot more." Multiple costume changes for musical ditties like *Little Things Mean a Lot* and *Diamonds Are a Girl's Best Friend* led up to the finale, what Mansfield called her "satire on a strip" where she... stripped. Parody or no, little was left to the imagination when she was done, causing the Plantation crowd to leap to their feet in appreciation. Aware of it or not, Jayne won over the toughest audience she'd ever faced.

In a brilliant move meant to blunt any nose-downlooking that might arise

over such a provocative staging she assembled press and prominents for a Monday luncheon to unveil the "New" Jayne Mansfield, resplendent in a pink sleeveless with rhinestone beaded collar, matching shortie gloves, a sable stole draped across her arms. Twenty-six carats of Richard Blackwell diamonds glistened in the light as she exclaimed, "I've gone from tight-fitting low-cut dresses to tight-fitting high-necked dresses!" As the gathering grew more casual the men gravitated towards Jayne while their wives were pulled in by Mickey gyrating his hips, flexing his bulging biceps and rippling muscles on the dance floor. When challenged on her claim of having an eighteen-inch waist Jayne performed a striptease to prove it but refused to allow anyone to take a tape measure to it... she felt that would be tacky.

To demonstrate her family was like any other Jayne and Mickey Jr. coptered into High Point for lunch at Schrafft's then dined at Cellar Anton's with her husband. She awoke early Tuesday to share a *Good Morning* with Lee Kinard, returned to High Point on Friday for a photoshoot of Mickey Jr. playing with local kids before all three attended an impromptu house party on Revelle Lane. On the last night of her run Jayne presented Junior Johnson with the NASCAR trophy after his '63 Chevy Impala SS roared into the Hillsborough Orange Speedway Winners' Circle. Crash Craddock recalls her off stage demeanor, "She was sweet as she could be, down to earth, that's all there is to it. After the show she'd always come sit at the table with me and Fred. That kinda surprised me, here's a big star like Jayne Mansfield and she's sittin' at the table talkin' and havin' a good time."

Jayne's arrangement with the Plantation had been a risky one, compensation was tied to gate receipts. After eighteen performances before capacity crowds she had raked in $23,000, equivalent to nearly a quarter million dollars today, a staggering sum no other performer working outside the largest cities

had ever come close to. Back in La-La Land industry trades were agog, Hollywood worshiped money and Jayne had proven to the world she was bankable in a most unexpected way. Greensboro was touted as her only nightclub appearance on the east coast but within days offers flooded in from all over the South. What started as a one-off became a full-fledged tour, weeks later she deplaned in Atlanta a day late and inebriated but that didn't dampen the enthusiasm she generated. Boffo engagements in Louisville, New Orleans and Biloxi followed.

A lyric from one of Mansfield's musical numbers, "Unless you think you can live like a steak on a silver grill," might best sum up what happened next. That movie Jayne filmed before her Southern baptism? Not just another tawdry B-movie, *Promises! Promises!* was the first modern motion picture to feature a mainstream star naked. Banned in Boston and in many other municipalities, including Greensboro, *Promises! Promises!* was nonetheless a huge draw nationwide, catapulting Jayne into Top Ten Box Office Attraction status... all for what she didn't want to do in the first place.

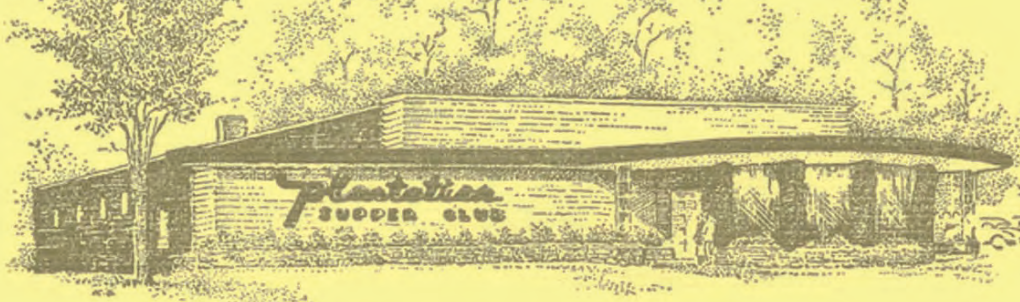
The public at large viewed her triumph as a distasteful and unsavory affront to all that was decent, orchestrated by a desperate sex obsessed trollop. A special edition of *Playboy* released to coincide with the movie's premiere featured shots from the set with Jayne sprawled au natural across an unkempt bed. Miss February 1955 had posed for the men's magazine multiple times but the June 1963 issue was something else entirely. Headlined "The Nudest Jayne Mansfield" the sixty-cent publication quickly sold out with copies changing hands for as much as ten dollars

apiece. Publisher Hugh Hefner's subsequent arrest on indecency charges tainted the entire endeavor as pornographic, effectively aborting Jayne's comeback. A world-shattering realization for someone fancying herself a Grace Kelly-type, if only the right roles came her way.

No longer partying with Presidents and A-listers it wasn't uncommon to find Jayne carousing around and arousing Sunset Boulevard clubgoers, stripping down to her scanties in an amphetamine fueled drunken reenactment of her act's big finish, determined to embody the "man crazy blonde" one of her movie trailers advertised her as. Mickey Hartigay was jettisoned in favor of Matt Cimber, director of her Yonkers' production of Bus Stop. They were married in 1964.

Neither a Marilyn impression on The Jack Benny Program nor recording an album reciting Elizabethan poetry set to Tchaikovsky could reverse the trajectory her career had taken. Turning down the role of Ginger on *Gilligan's Island* was another serious misstep, a network series would have spared her indignities to come, including an ignominious return to the Plantation Supper Club in October of 1964. What the previous season was perceived as kittenish and comically naughty no longer seemed so innocent, folks stayed away in droves. There was little press coverage, only what a major advertiser like the Plantation felt entitled to, a perfunctory feature article or benign photo ops in front of voting machines and such. Maybe it was just as well reporters were scarce, rumors were swirling about Jayne's not-so-clandestine affairs with local businessmen and other lascivious conduct unbecoming a lady. On more than one occasion championship golfer Sam Snead's trademark Mallory straw hat rested on Jayne's bedside table. Slammin' Sammy was able to get in a few holes before traveling to Miami two weeks later to tie for first place in the Doral Open.

On Wednesday night June 28, 1967 lawyer turned abusive lover Sam Brody, a twenty year old driver, and Jayne Mansfield with three of her youngest children packed into a late model Buick Electra after wowing a full house at a supper club in Biloxi, Mississippi. She was scheduled to perform for the troops at Seabee Base in Gulfport but first there was a television interview in New Orleans to get to. Pulling out of the driveway of Gus Steven's Supper Club on to US 90 they headed west. Rounding a curve on an unlit two-lane in the early morning hours they plowed under a truck spraying insecticide fog, the car's top sheared and corrugated all the way to the back seat. The three adults in the front died instantly. The toddlers in back all survived, among them Mariska Hartigay of Law & Order: SVU fame who's star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame is cemented next to her mother's. That mangled Buick became a macabre twenty-five cent carnival-like attraction, trailered across Carolina backwater burgs before landing in a Florida



museum devoted to tragic events. Commercial vehicles today are equipped with what's called a Mansfield Bar, reinforced rear bumpers that prevent automobiles from penetrating the undercarriage. Jayne's Pink Palace was home to Ringo Starr, Cass Elliot and finally Englebert Humperdink before being demolished in 2002.

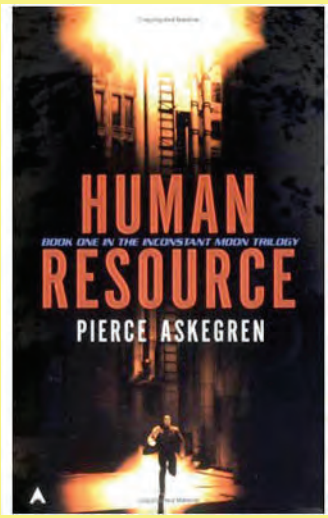
In 1965 Fred Koury stopped booking national acts for the most part in favor of Plantation A Go-Go featuring cage dancers and local musical artists, a decade later Greensboro's finest nightclub burned to the ground.

From 1964. That is not Jayne Mansfield's signature... and her name is misspelled.

Remembering Writer Pierce Askegren

Every once in a while I'll Google someone from the distant past, all too often finding an obit. Sadly, that was the case for Pierce Askegren. I met the 6' 3" goony kid in 1969 at Mendenhall Junior High the one year he lived in Greensboro. Pierce was a year older than my friend John Hitchcock and I but he read comics as we did and was hardcore into science fiction. So we had that in common. Very creative and extremely intelligent.

The one incident at Mendenhall I recall most was the time Coach Loflin made him run around the building for some dumb reason or another, maybe skipping gym class for a doctor's appointment. That place was a concentration camp. As Pierce rounded the building he was experiencing a full blown asthma attack, to his credit Coach became deeply concerned and red-faced with embarrassment.



After that year Pierce moved to Northern Virginia and we kept in touch, at least until I moved to California in 1979, the year he graduated from James Madison University and began writing stories for Warren Publications along with paperback novelizations featuring the Marvel heroes. He even gave a minor character my name in a story he wrote for *Creepy* magazine ('Hell's Playground', illustrated by Leo Duranona in Creepy 108) and was a big fan of the comic strips I was writing and drawing.

He also penned articles for *The Comics Journal.* It was a critical review in 1980 that drew the ire of famous science fiction author Harlan Ellison leading to an extended interview for the *Journal* where Ellison disemboweled Pierce in print, really

tore into him. It was brutal, if you've ever read Harlan Ellison rant over some perceived injustice or other you'll know what I mean, taking insults to a whole new level. An example: "This guy who wrote the piece on *The Illustrated Harlan Ellison* is, you know, Sidney Schlobo from God-knows-

where, I mean, I don't know who this dude is. Maybe next time you can get a one-nostriled, hunchbacked dwarf who speaks in Urdu." By that point I'd lost touch with Pierce, I'm not sure how that public evisceration affected him but I know he stopped writing for any publication I was aware of. Pierce being the kind of guy who was bullied at school I imagine Ellison's barbs stung pretty badly.

Pierce even fashioned his own fanciful origin story with a tale that he was a part of a family high wire act but that his promising career was cut short by a fall. This made it into his Wikipedia entry but was about as true as his being bitten by a radioactive spider.

After 1980 he became a technical writer, returning to comics in the mid-1990s writing prose short stories for anthologies starring Marvel Comics characters beginning with 'The Broken Land' in *The Ultimate Silver Surfer.* A friend and collaborator wrote: "Pierce sent along a wonderful story for *The Ultimate Silver Surfer.* I was impressed with his knowledge of obscure Marvel trivia, his excellent characterizations, and his fine writing style. I also got along with him personally, as dealing with him I quickly learned he had an amazing sense of humor."

Besides the Marvel books he also wrote TV show adaptations for *Alias* and *Angel* and authored the acclaimed *Inconstant Moon* trilogy about the corporate colonization of the moon: *Human Resource* (2005), *Fall Girl* (2005) and *Exit Strategy* (2007). WIKI: "His last short story, 'Try and Try Again' appeared in the anthology *Time Twisters,* released posthumously in January 2007. In 2010, his *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* novelization 'After Image' (2006) was rereleased along with two other *Buffy* books. Askegren was found dead in his Annandale, Virginia, apartment on November 29, 2006 after suffering a heart attack on an unreported date." He was 51.

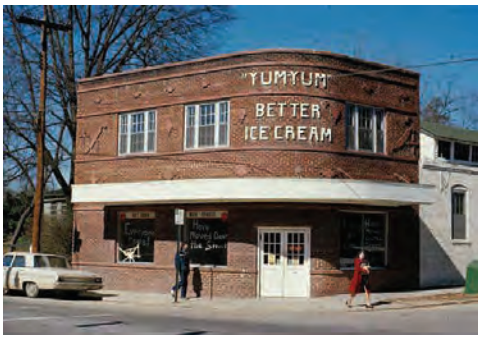
Pierce Askegren was warm, sardonic, curious, loyal, and a gifted writer; dearly missed no doubt by his friends and family.

A Lane Called Paisley

A curious winding lane called Paisley lies marooned across from where Fisher Park dead ends at Smith Street into downtown's newest hotspot, where Joymongers brewery is opening near Preyer and Crafted. Less than a block long, Paisley's most distinctive features are 3 nearly identical broad-shouldered homes built in the mid-twenties with arching gambrel rooflines, gabled bay windows and spacious front porches situated below shaded second story balconies perfect for watching summer storms pass. A very similar fourth example rests on the other side of a farmhouse style 2-story stripped of whatever grace it may have possessed. Tree landscaping on this stretch is some of Duke Power's unmistakable handiwork.

Up the street from Paisley, I was surprised to stumble into an honest-to-goodness local music store. Greensboro Music Center, tucked into a charming standalone facing Greene that looks as if it was sliced off of Otto Zenke's former showroom. It's packed with new and vintage guitars, amps, early '70's Swish China Cymbals, brushed chrome Tama drums, a top of the line Yamaha synth I recognized from the late-1980s. Owner John Clontz learned the ropes as a young man at one of the city's venerable music companies, Harvey West, who sold instruments and sheet music out of 232 West Market beginning in the mid-1940s. John told me, "Harvey worked up until he was 90 then decided to retire. I started this store from scratch [in 1994]. I had people telling me I should just go as a guitar shop but I thought, what if a drummer comes in, you know?" Reminiscent of Greensboro's hippest mid-1980s storefront, Electronic Trader on South Elm, but with even cooler stuff. Time to get the band back together...

Forty Years Ago Today



The 1970s is as distant into the past to a teenager today as the depression era was when I was in high school but in my teen years there were remnants of an earlier time everywhere, in particular dozens of family restaurants that had been plating meatloaf and memories for decades. Where can we escape the crushing corporate sameness enveloping us all to return—or discover —where casual dining cuisine has remained frozen in time for forty years or more? Seek out these juicy joints around the Gate City before they too go the way of Alpat, Habel's Hearth, Greene's Supper Club, Cellar Antons, Libby Hill, O.Henry Cafe, J&S, Bill's Pizza Pub and my misspent youth.

Since 1974, generations have dined at 1219 Spring Garden Street, before that in the original location across the street. Owned and operated by the Aydelette family since 1906 Yum Yum Better Ice Cream's tasty treats were perfected back before loose lips sank ships. They were first known as West End Ice Cream because, well, that was the west end of Greensboro. No fancy-schmancy jalapeno applewood tofu links with cilantro-infused

lobster remoulade at Yum Yum's. Homemade chili and slaw at Yum Yum use the same recipe they did in grandma's day while thick, rich ice cream churns the old-fashioned way right there on the premises. Whoever convinced UNCG not to demolish this institution to erect another police emergency call station deserves a medal.

Church Street Drive In, home of What-a-Burger, is still run by the family that started this cozy cafe more than a half century ago. In days past this was a popular hangout for the Page High lunch crowd. Nothing outré about this place, that's why so many people love it. The way it is at Church Street is the way it was... simple, tried and true.

Stamey's Barbeque at 2812 Battleground Avenue screams 1970s and it's not just the surroundings, their menu remains encased in amber. I'm not a fan of the signature dish or their weird cole slaw but they offer some fine traditional hushpuppies, perfunctory hot dogs and a fairly decent Brunswick Stew, a popular dish in the seventies you don't find all that often today and usually tastes best when it comes from a church.

Another simpler-days eatery is buried in a strip mall, Mayberry Sandwich Shoppe at 946 Summit Avenue, located in Greensboro's very first shopping center. This was once a franchisee of a robust Southern chain that flourished during the polyester decade. Food and desserts prepared as they were then, sandwiches crisping in a foldover toasting iron, all served at a counter with revolving stools. Another Mayberry (before that it was Guilford Dairy) was once located in the Plaza Shopping Center, now a Moe's Southwest Grill.

Watergate Salad, anyone? K&W Cafeteria's dining area is mid-70s moderne preserved, the anchor and sole survivor of Friendly Shopping Center's upscale Forum VI mall experiment. The food hasn't changed but then no one did cafeteria better that K&W. This is comfort food for a dying generation, seriously out of favor with most anyone under forty, it's been years since both lanes were open. It's not hard to imagine a day in our very near future when there will be no more cafeterias, extinct like supper clubs.

Meat and two sides dives were once ubiquitous, long ago replaced by family style descendants like Herbie's, Smith Street Diner and on a larger scale Waffle House. If you're looking for an authentic greasy spoon it lies a-ways down Bessemer at Jolson Street, a diminutive brick hideaway

called Bernie's Bar-B-Q. You could shoot a film noir in this place, in fact that happened twenty years back. One of our last owner operated small town diners, the kind idealized in motion pictures where a mug enters through the screen door to shake rain off his coat, shoot a dirty look at some dame in the corner before sliding into the booth next to hers. In a larger city this would be where hipsters congregate, as it is there are a lot of old timers and friendly regulars. Barbeque, slaw and hushpuppies are among the best you'll find anywhere and you won't believe how inexpensive it all is. Before Bernie bought the place in 1983 this was Beverly Cafe.

On another outskirt of town sits Frosty's B.B.Q. at 4836 Summit Avenue, look for the picture of a chef wielding a bloody meat cleaver chasing a terrified hog on their signage, everyone knows pork tastes best when the pig is in a state of frenzy. Ever wonder why NC barbeque is pulled pork style? It's soft so people with no teeth can enjoy it. That's true! Like Bernie's this is a full service roadside diner with daily plate specials like Fried Chicken Fridays, folks rave about Frosty's Beef Tips on Rice.

I was fortunate to have grown up with my younger brother and sister on a section of Hill Street in Latham Park, what realtors might call 'Old Irving Park adjacent.' Bordered north and south by Wendover and Hammel, this two block stretch had the feel of a cul-de-sac, as did the avenues west and east—Grayland, Briarcliff and Latham. My grandparents had lived in three properties on Hill at various times, my parents at 1116 before settling in to a two-story, late-1920s three bedroom brick bungalow at 1204. Our Mema lived on the corner at 1119 in a charming Tudor Revival cottage and would, almost every afternoon, walk down to ours carrying a basket covered over in gingham filled with still warm silver dollar buttermilk biscuits, lemon chess pies and pound cakes.

We were so close with our next door neighbors the Kings we became family, summer afternoons spent at Blair Park where the city paid two college coeds to babysit, play marbles, weave pot holders and get sugared up when the snow cone truck stopped at 2:00. The park was renamed Troy A. Johnson after the tall, skinny old guy who hung out there pulling quarters out of little kid's ears, a public service if there ever was one. The 'Toot Toot Truck,' a Carolina Blue fifties Ford pickup loaded down with farm fresh produce, candy necklaces, Astro-Pops and Wacky Packages, made two daily stops in front of our home, operated by Mr. Wilbert Sullivan, a kindly, grey-haired country gentleman in a train conductor's cap and bib overalls.

My father Bill Ingram worked hard but not long, whole-heartedly embracing Billy Black's philosophy: "If a man can't make a living by eleven in the morning he ought not to be in business." In cahoots with WBIG's morning man Bob Poole, Dad employed the body shop at Ingram Motors on North Elm to convert a school bus into a booze cruising nightclub, this in the days before liquor-by-the-drink, and could consistently be counted among the faithful at the M&M (Merchants and Manufacturers) Club bourboning weekday afternoons away shooting pool and playing gin rummy behind a black door buried inside the bowels of an increasingly seedy O.Henry Hotel. "Oh, our folk drank at midday, and before," my father's business partner turned author Thomas Peacock wrote. "But still had the grace to be a little ashamed and confined their tippling to places like the M&M Club, where the light of day had never once sullied its crumbling valances." About their decades long association Peacock marveled, "This blithe spirit, this happy warrior, whose work habits could have inspired seminars on how not to succeed, marched to his own bouncy drummer, and like the honey bee whose aerodynamic structure precluded the possibility of flight, flew anyway and made a little honey every day."

Don't get me wrong, my parents were the greatest. It's just that, despite waiting until their thirties, I don't think they cottoned much to the idea of raising kids, not at first. When Dad whistled out the door we were expected to prick up our puppy dog ears and race back to the kennel to be fed and put to bed by 5:30. That was so the adults could fire up The Snake Pit at the end of our shared driveway with the Kings, a circle of tattered lawn chairs littered with crushed butts and Budweiser pull tabs where Irving Park businessmen, car lot lizards, captains of industry, crazy neighbors and tipsy trust-funders gravitated towards during the cocktail hour(s). I believe it was Nancy Merritt who, upon witnessing this motley assemblage, quipped, "I don't know who wrote *Tobacco Road* but I know where he was standing when he thought it up!"

At eleven years old I published a weekly newsletter with content generated by peppering my parents, after they'd had a few drinks, with questions about the neighbors. Carbon-copying what they said, I peddled that chit-chat door to door for 5 cents (my sister insists she got 25). This led to visiting at length with several of the neighbors, like Harry and Daphne Lewis at 1202. Very nice couple in their 70s, the first time I was over Daphne enlisted me in a trick on her husband, a retired copywriter. In the RC Cola on the rocks I was to bring him, she gingerly placed a novelty plastic ice cube with a fly visibly encased within it. On its discovery Harry always acted surprised even though she pulled that gag so often it had to be a subtle form of torture.

Daphne really irked neighboring mothers by sunbathing nude all summer long in her wide open backyard. She couldn't have cared less there were youngsters

playing on all sides, her dried arrangement on full display. If nothing else Mrs. Lewis provided, for a gaggle of elementary school kids, a low bar for any expectations regarding the female form after puberty.

Don't know for who's benefit all that tanning was for, certainly not her husband in light of the sixty minute shrill, harpy-esque haranguing she assaulted him with every night, ending only after he mustered enough bluster to shout her into submission. Even death from a thousand pecks couldn't stop those verbal blitzkriegs, Daphne was convinced Harry's spirit remained seated to her left in some ethereal plane and could hear her every word just as clearly as we could next door. Mrs. Lewis passed away not long after he did but not before having the last laugh. Assisting her sister Dacia in packing up the home, whenever we entered a room knickknacks tumbled from the shelves, shattering against the hardwood floors, and that damn ice cube with the fly in it was in a glass next to where Mr. Lewis always sat.

After I staged a parody of *Dragnet* in a corner courtyard my dear old dad, no doubt intoxicated by its brilliance, station waggoned my brother Hank, sister Rives, Toot & Hannah King, the Warren sisters and myself over to channel 48's studio on Warehouse Street where they videotaped the play for airing on *The Kiddie Scene With Mr. Green*, a Bizarro world children's show hosted by an overly-effusive hippy dude that played 'Yakety-Sax' incessantly. (The 'Hill Street Moppets' had to tape the play twice after Trudie Warren called my 9-year old brother, who in all fairness was playing two roles, a dumbass.)

Mrs. Bunn, Irish born wife of a WWII Army veteran, lived directly across the street. On occasion she and I would sit together on her front steps while she chain smoked, complaining about married life. Hearing an explosion just after dusk in September of 1971, I ran to the front door to witness Mrs. Bunn standing atop her high perched porch, a .22 resting in her hand. Her 51-year old husband lay sprawled across the blacktop between our home, dead from a single gunshot. Naturally, we kids spent the evening posing for pictures inside the chalk outline of the body the police left behind, just like in the movies with one arm pointed up, the other down. Within a short time the shooting was ruled justified. Having exercised her Second Amendment right to a divorce, and following an appropriate period of mourning spent with her boyfriend, she returned to live in the home. A few doors north a homeowner tragically gunned down a teenager outside his home. The boy, who lived one block up on Grayland, was mistaken for (or actually was) a Peeping Tom nuisancing the neighborhood.

But it wasn't naked frivolity or the O.K. Corral aspect to life that made Hill Street so memorable, it was atmospherics of a different sort.

On February 12, 1960, local folks went to bed expecting rain but awoke to a skyfall lasting twenty continual hours, dropping 2¼ tons of ice and snow packed 9 inches deep. A mere prelude to March 9th when the other shoe dropped and a foot landed on the Piedmont, one of three events that month totaling almost two feet of snow. Maybe that's why the prospect of winter weather still excites me, the impression that waist-deep wonderland had on a 3 year old, followed as it was by the many super storms of the sixties... when the city's slipperiest slope, a white capped rapid, beckoned right outside our front door.

Beginning at the Grayland Street summit, West Northwood makes a dramatic plunge as it dissects Hill, Briarcliff then Latham Road before a seamless soft landing into the park where the landscape levels off for another block-long stretch. A quarter-mile long speedway where low riding road warriors whizzed downhill at speeds up to 25 mph. A spectacle this preschooler could still only enjoy vicariously as more than 2 feet of snow carpeted the streets over three months beginning New Year's Day 1962. Instead I was relegated to sledding down the Baby Bump, a short slope on our block traveling a whole sixty feet from the corner.

Hard to believe, but a mere 2-inch glacial glaze knocked the city off its feet for two days on January 12, 1964, sending myself, and even parents in the neighborhood, surging down the big hill under optimal conditions. Without significant drag or resistance, rocketeers reaching peak speeds became momentarily airborne at Briarcliff where the intersection levels off suddenly before resuming an even steeper downward trajectory. Someone would be watching for wayward cars jackknifing into Hill Street from Wendover but, as a city designated sledding area, burning smudge pots barricaded the final two blocks as Northwood shepherded sledders into Latham Park's chilly embrace. Ideally a journey grinding to a halt at creek's edge but, with a surface this slick, it took

considerable effort or a last minute bailout to avoid plunging into icy waters. A badge of honor for some but hardly worth an hour cooling your heels while layers of outerwear hung over a radiator to dry.

On January 25, 1966, for a third time that month, *The Greensboro Record* affixed their snow covered logo to the masthead. The first frosted flakes began darting in the breeze that evening, over the next five days more than 16 inches whited out the landscape as a flotilla of Flexible Flyers slalomed down Northwood, scissoring in and out of crusty ruts like small crafts sailing into breaking waves. Early mornings, after a hard freeze, sleds were needles on a record dropping into hardened grooves worn into the roadway.

My siblings and I were commandeering two sturdy mid-fifties No. 12 Yankee Clippers purchased for about $10 from Fleet-Plumber Hardware; a wood-framed model sporting a jetliner logo embossed into the middle of 3 varnished slats atop red steel blades. But baking pans, cafeteria trays, even flattened cardboard boxes would do in a pinch. New on the '66 scene were blue and yellow round plastic saucers with rope handles, capable of attaining dizzying speeds and rpms. For whatever reason, intentional pilot error maybe, these misguided missiles were highly prone to plowing into crowds, curbside boys and girls toppling like tenpins. The earlier metal versions were even deadlier, especially after traversing the Briarcliff landing when disc and rider parted company mid-air and that outbound torpedo tobogganed into someone's noggin, teeth and crimson ribbons spattering the bright white mantel.

Aluminum trash can bonfires blazed on corners into the wee hours, attracting teenagers, winos and old timers who swapped tales of massive coverings-over the likes of which these young'uns hadn't seen. Like January of 1900 when 2½ feet buried Greensboro alive, or so they said, no one was keeping score back then. They were in 1930 when 14.3 inches landslided from the heavens in a single day, a record that had gone unchallenged until an unlikely contender leapt forward to join that pantheon of champions...

Snowmaggedon '69!

The waning remnants of a slow moving disturbance wreaking havoc first in California then across the midwest was limping out to sea on Friday, February 28, 1969 resulting in a 30 percent chance of light rain in our forecast. It did indeed drizzle that evening, moisture freezing solid as a fury of flurries got underway. A frigid, frisky March lioness had unexpectedly roared back from the warm waters off the coast, a churning mass of swirling storm fronts trashing our state from tip to tail with wild abandon.

There was no let up until after midnight Sunday morning. Ice so densely packed, if your sled got bogged down on Northwood it meant a lightweight Snow Sailor, slicked up with candle wax, could come careening up and over your backside. Residents were urged to stay at home, 10,000 of which were without electricity. Snow scrapers would clear a downtown square only to reverse course and plow it all over again in a futile battle against a feral fallout erasing footprints in a minute, power lines sagging under thick white icing, straining transformers erupting in sparks.

Something breathtaking about that storm after dark; under streetlights haloed in a whirlwind of arctic crystals, fellow revelers just a few feet away were reduced to shadows ensnarled inside a swarming assault of wet feathers lit by a moon nearing full, blinding conditions accompanied by a tinnitus-like hush further smothering the senses.

Up to 14 inches had fallen on Guilford County that weekend but, with temperatures hovering around freezing, that soggy slush had been pushed aside from major arteries to such an extent that school was scheduled to open on Monday. Before buses could be dispatched administrators changed their minds before another storm topped us off with 3 more inches of powder and frozen rain that night. It was only fitting we had snowfall not only for Christmas in 1969 but New Year's Eve as well.

By that point, the Snake Pit days had given way to what passed for parenting in the seventies. Helicopters? Submariners, maybe. As a sophomore I hopped off the bus from Page and walked into our front door to discover everything but the curtains, carpet and greasy appliances gone. 'We' had moved but my devoted parents neglected to tell me. I'd been shown the new house on Blair Street, vaguely aware it was nearby, just not exactly sure where. Miraculously, brother and sister were accounted for when I finally located the place.

Returning to live in Greensboro after a lifetime in Los Angeles, I fell sway to the blizzard of January, 1996, fiercest since '69. Flopping atop a skidder racing down Northwood from Grayland, visibility again nearing zero, I realized that, if indeed you can't go home again, perhaps a moment inhabiting that amorphous space between where home was and where you think it might be now is all the comfort a blanket of snow can promise, or ever possibly deliver.


PLANTATION SUPPER CLUB

Brother Dave

He's got this cigarette over here on this side of his mouth, toothpick out the other side and he's watchin' this waitress walk away totin' this tray. Something or other look like Glory. Like little animals when she walks. So anyhow Chuck says, "Baby?" She say, "Huh?"He say, "Let's blow this joint." She say, "Naw man, pass it on to the waitress."

— **Brother Dave Gardner**

"I met him at the Plantation Supper Club and then a year or two later we went down, me and my group, to Atlanta Georgia to do a nightclub, the Domino Lounge. We went down there to work the Domino Lounge and Dave was down there. Boy, he's a weird guy but funny. He told me one day, he said, 'Crash, I believe there are certain people doing it right here in front of you but you can't see 'em.' and I thought, 'Good God, what are you taking now, Dave?' Now that's a cat who was way ahead of his time."

— **Billy Crash Craddock**

Made in the GSO

22-year old Bobby was a hot-blooded lad;
Living in the basement of an Irving Park pad.

It's a simple abode, Glascock stove and a toaster;
Over his bed an old Joe Camel poster.

Awakening at noon, shaking off crumbs from crackers;
Bobby pulls Cowboy Cuts up, then bangs on his Clackers.

He's supposed to be working at the Greensboro Coliseum;
But hates his supervisor so much it's best he not see him.

Last night's Red Nose Winter Ales left his head in a hurt;
Sliding into Gold Toes, he dons a Ralph Lauren shirt.

Whiffing a Vicks inhaler to jar him awake,
On the counter a Made-Rite sandwich awaits.

Tops the bun with Boar & Castle, then Samson Sauce;
Quits his job with a phone call, then tells off his boss.

A note left by mother has a special request, eh?
"Pick up Liver Pudding when you're down at the Bestway."

Bobby downs an Orange Crush. Then lights up a Kent;
With a David Oreck candle to cover the scent.

He reaches into a box made for El Moro cigar;
That's where he keeps the keys to his car.

A hint of Mother Murphy's butterscotch flavors the air;
Revving up his Jeep Wrangler he's out on a tear.

Pulling into a station alongside a Gilbarco gas pump;
Spies a UNCG coed, Laura Ashley's snug on her rump.

After pumping that gas and imagining that... you know.
He hurls a Boren Brick through the convenience store window.

Loading up on Newports and blu eCig flavors;
This is the kind of afternoon this hoodlum savors.

Shortcutting though woods then driving through thickets;
Bobby smiles, he got that attendant's last two Wyndham Hill tickets.

Approaching the boulevard, picking up speed;
"Stamey's hush puppies and sweet tea, that's what I need."

The punk speeds past a Thomas Built with the stop sign displayed;
(I know, one town over is where that school bus was made.)

Distracted by a HondaJet flying cross the sky;
A dangerous situation misses Bobby's eye.

A Volvo semi jackknifing ahead;
Collision ensues, now Bobby's dead.

A horrible sight, no William Magnum scene;
Or anything you'd see in Our State magazine.

TV cameras begin arriving because 2 wants to know;
Breathless reports coming on The Good Morning Show.

With two mangled vehicles, there's naught left but to pray;
D. H. Griffin and Mack Trucks haul the wreckage away.

Sadly, Bobby's lack of attention and pursuit of frivolity;
Led yesterday to canceling his Pilot Life policy.

Fond of O.Henry endings? Bobby's short life of ill;
Came to a halt right outside of Biscuitville.*

* Where his mom worked, okay? And she fell to pieces;
He'd forgotten to stop and pick up the Neese's!

The Monkees & Jimi Hendrix

When Dusty Dunn cued up "Pleasant Valley Sunday" for the first time on Wednesday, July 12, 1967, a tune that would soon rocket to No. 3 on the WCOG ("Go Go 1-3-2-0!") pop chart, the artists who recorded it were lounging by the pool at Oaks Motel on Summit Avenue. In the event over-excited fans grew unwieldy, two armed police officers stood by, remarking out loud that The Monkees looked like a bunch of "queers."

After a swim and pictures with the few youngsters allowed into the compound they had commandeered, Micky Dolenz and Peter Tork were joined in Michael Nesmith's suite by opening act Jimi Hendrix, dressed for his appearance that night at the Greensboro Coliseum in black crushed velvet pants, leather boots and an orange brocade silk shirt, a string of wooden beads swung around his neck. He'd spent that hot, humid afternoon in his air-conditioned room with a six-pack of Budweiser playing Beatles songs. Sitting on the edge of an unmade bed, Hendrix picked up Nesmith's guitar (the TV star had just learned to play it) and jammed as the guys and their "birds" looked on in amazement.

It was the oddest pairing in music history, one that Hendrix himself likened to "putting Dracula with Snow White" together. He had joined The Monkees tour three performances earlier in Florida, the gig was considered a big break for him. But the rowdy reception from teenyboppers who screamed for Davy Jones throughout his smoking set that included "Foxy Lady"and "Purple Haze" was disastrous for all concerned. It was especially embarrassing for Dolenz and Tork who used their leverage to get Jimi on the summer of '67's hottest ticket. While some remember Hendrix being booed off the Coliseum stage, others recall a raucous reception from those audience members who knew who he was.

What no one forgot was that Hendrix, for the first time since shocking

audiences at the Monterrey Pop Festival with this move just a month earlier, lit his guitar on fire and destroyed it at the end of his set.

Offstage the performers had nothing but love for one another. Peter Tork had this to say about hanging out with the greatest rock guitarist of all time at Oaks Motel, "He was such a sweet guy that it was really just a pleasure to have him around for company. His air of, 'Everything's alright. Things are cool. It's okay,' just made you relax just to be around him."

Even with no air conditioning in the Coliseum, it took eighty policemen ringing the stage to hold back a screaming crowd that drowned out the main attraction with their desperate pleas for some imagined romantic encounter. After the show, The Monkees and Jimi Hendrix Experience boarded a private plane emblazoned with the TV show logo waiting at the Greensboro airport for a champagne flight into New York. Hendrix would exit the tour abruptly after three more dates, walking out in disgust, middle finger extended while silly youngsters chanted, "We want Davy!"

Only the Oaks Motel remains as a reminder of the California resortlike lodging that was all the rage back when babies were booming. Gone are any signs of Cold War era modernity, even the kidney-shaped pool is filled in with dirt, trees planted where once Monkees' knees were planted lounging under tall shade trees. No one at the Oaks seems to remember which room Jimi Hendrix stayed in. It *was* fifty years ago.

Photos shared by Micky Dolenz on Facebook.

Sock It To Me?

In the fifties Burlington Industries became the first textile company to advertise on network TV, sponsoring hour-long specials starring Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin, and series like *The Man From U.N.C.L.E.* and *Rowan & Martin's Laugh-In*. That and other factors led them to becoming the largest textile company in the world, first to pass the $1 billion mark in sales.

In 1971 they moved into their ostentatious ultra-moderne glass and girder office building on Friendly where the 'Shoppes' are now. Before that they inhabited the stone monument on North Eugene that later functioned as the Department of Social Services before making way for the ballpark.

If Burlington Industries was famous for anything it was socks, especially their argyle ankle warmers, almost as well-regarded as Gold Toe, a product the town of Burlington can lay claim to.

In March 2004 Burlington Industries merged with Cone Mills to create International Textile Group. Licensed to another Gate City firm, Kayser-Roth, Burlington Socks generated controversy in 2014 for a series of online ads with nudity, euthanizing grandpa and incest as their themes. No, really. They did.

Mellow Mushroom does business there now but it was Harrison Grocery at 609 South Elm in 1904 when Charles C. Hudson began producing his bib overalls on the second floor with sewing machines purchased from the bankrupt clothier where he'd found work years earlier as a button sewer earning a quarter a day. Hudson's durable, hand-made coveralls were especially coveted by railroad workers and trains stopped here day and night.

Blue Bell Overall Company grew in fits and starts and did so quickly, becoming the city's biggest garment maker and one of the largest overall mills in the world not long after Charles Hudson and his brother Homer erected their L-shaped factory on the corner of Elm and Lee. That's where the first Wranglers in heaviest Sanforized denim with the branded leather patch and bright orange stitching came off the line in 1947.

At that time, Wrangler's marketing efforts concentrated on sponsoring rodeos and winning endorsements from hard-charging champions like Jim Shoulders, Bill Linderman and Harry Tompkins. They were the cowboy's brand of choice when western movies were all the rage, nicely positioned when jeans became fifties fashionable after Marilyn, Monty and Marlon cavorted across the silver screen in denim.

Snug fitting, high-waisted dungarees practically defined the rockabilly style, *Red BlueJeans and A Pony Tail* was Gene Vincent's overly-excited paean to a "crazy little cat" in a pair of tapered Wranglers with white stitching. Despite ever-expanding global competition, by focusing on innovation and comfort Wrangler Cowboy Cuts are more popular than ever.

That shouldn't surprise anyone, after all, this isn't their first time at the rodeo.

Pat McCrory For President

Outwardly conservative, Catawba College in the mid-1970s was a full-on party school—toga parties, Purple Jesus parties, alcohol fueled panty raids, $2.75 all you can drink night at the Buccaneer Lounge. The campus paper was crowded with ads for Old Milwaukee, Schlitz Malt Liquor, and Wild Irish Rose fortified wine. Debates raged over whether students would attend a school sponsored dance if alcohol wasn't served. They wouldn't.

There were so many drunken soirees the jocks and business majors (one and the same at that time) failed to run for office or show up to vote in the 1976-77 elections resulting in a Student Government Association overwhelmed by feminists and long-haired, peace-and-love types. SGA President Frank Mianzo was a hippie right out of Central Casting with stringy, below the shoulder black hair and a full beard he could have easily passed for one of the Fabulous Furry Freak Brothers. He adopted a laissez-faire approach to enforcing the more archaic rules governing campus life. Students hauled before the Judicial Court for public intoxication or dorm visitation violations were most likely let off with a warning as opposed to the overly harsh sentences common in years past.

School beautification was Mianzo's focus, he organized a campus work day that saw half the student body landscaping shrubbery and washing away the purple pools of puke that flowered outside the dorms. He struck out for more transparency in student government, advocated for women and minority issues, and booked concerts by Doc & Merle Watson, folk singer Tom Chapin, and Pure Prairie League. You can almost smell the Patchouli from here.

Many on campus feared without a course correction Catawba College was on the verge of becoming a hippie enclave. The more conservative students, practically everyone who wasn't in the drama or music departments, were especially alarmed over this development.

Who better to turn back the liberal tide than political science major Pat McCrory, the only arch-conservative serving on the senate that year. As leading member of the Grievance Committee his focus up until then had been getting the clocks synchronized on campus. You know who else synchronized the clocks, don't you? Hitler!

McCrory mounted an aggressive campaign for SGA President in 1977 in an effort to return student government to the strident old-boy's-club it had been throughout the 1960s and early 1970s when campus protests raged absolutely nowhere near Salisbury, NC. He and others encouraged jocks from the business, accounting, and economics departments to campaign for office. They flooded the ticket. McCrory's opponent James Shriver was himself a business major with thick Bama Bangs and a winning personality.

As someone who attended Catawba during those years I personally liked Pat, he had a brash confidence I had to admire. I'd never met the guy when he rang me up freshman year after finding my name and address in the student directory to ask if I could give him a ride home to Greensboro the next time I was going. That happened a few times, I can't recall what we talked about during the 45 minute drives but it was clear we had little in common other than our similar upbringings. He was class president in high school, I was class clown. As far as I could tell he was a straight up guy; stubbornly square and proudly so.

Then there was that damn smile of his. What the fuck was he so happy about all the time—being one of the best looking guys around, popular and athletic? Maybe the sun was in his eyes, I don't know, it was unnerving. I had to wonder at times if there was anything of substance behind that Cheshire grin.

During 'The Great Debate' (honest, that's what they called it) between the presidential candidates McCrory stood steadfastly against a proposed $2.87 rise in fees, most of it to be directed toward the struggling student publications. Due to "wasteful spending" he wanted budgetary oversight across the board, especially over the newspaper and arts magazines, and promised a more forceful approach to student discipline. This stood in contrast to James Shriver who didn't share Pat's zeal for budget cutting and supported a more lax enforcement of visitation hours. He planned to continue many of the course corrections enacted under Frank Mianzo's term in office, expressing a desire to work closely with the outgoing President (voted most popular guy on campus that month) and with the heads of all departments.

A get out the vote campaign assured conservatives of a clean sweep and that's just what happened. But McCrory's coup happened without Pat, when the votes were tabulated on April 14, 1977 his reputation as a scold doomed him. In a surprise upset the mellower candidate with no previous political experience prevailed. McCrory obviously learned from this experience when he ran for Governor of North Carolina in 2011, waging a substance free campaign by not expressing his more controversial views or intentions in public—thereby coasting to victory on a Koch and a smile.

Lindley Park Stone Arches on Spring Garden

These monuments, recently restored, once served as the gateway to an amusement park in the early-1900s that featured a lake, casino, bowling alley and a pavillion. The park closed in 1917.

Googie Style!

The American Look. The architectural equivalent of a riot, an audacious departure from a dignified brick-and-mortar past. A-frames of questionable proportions, horizontal and vertical lines jutting outward with abstract angularity, ticky-tacky accents in steel, plastic and glass with disparate splashes of color, generally pink or aquamarine, dressed up with flashing neon and tinted florescent bulbs. Where Modernism and Art Deco collided and neither gave an inch. One critic derisively labeled these ostentatious displays of Space Age kookiness "Googie." The name stuck.

The name and the style can be traced back to a coffee shop in Los Angeles, where other influences include that city's ultra-sleek supersonic drive-in theaters, big-finned car washes of the 1950s, including that spaceship-looking thing at LAX — all exhibitionistic attempts to grab the attention of drivers speeding down the boulevard with the top down, leaning over the side, soundtrack by Getz, Cugat and Esquivel.

Being as far removed from California culture as possible, it's somewhat surprising that Greensboro became home to a menagerie of unabashedly futuristic structures. Edward Loewenstein designed a number of way-out residences in the Googie spirit, including his own spectacular Tomorrowland on Granville Road sporting exposed metal supports, multi-shaped stone flourishes and colossal, outward-swooping windows. You half expect to see Will Robinson from *Lost in Space* along with his roly-poly Robot rounding the corner.

Ground zero for the Brylcreem-slicked hip kids in the '50s and '60s was Honey's. Originally named McClure's, the drive-in restaurant on High Point Road turned heads with its wide-open, A-front entrance resembling a spear bursting through the ground, rounded glass dining areas on either end,

zigzag carports and, coolest of all, the glass enclosed Sky Castle lit by blue fluorescents where Al Troxler, Jerry Oakley and Dusty Dunn broadcast the hits over AM 1320 WCOG (Wonderful City of Greensboro).

Country music legend Billy "Crash" Craddock's first single was on the Sky Castle label, he described the scene, "We teenagers all would go out there and park at the Sky Castle, we'd order hamburgers and whatnot and listen to the radio. The deejay took requests. That was a pretty cool place. Kind of reminded you of that TV show, *Happy Days*." Honey's is long gone, replaced by an Olive Garden.

Googie was reflected in a serpentine concrete awning that waved over the very first class at Walter Hines Page High School in 1958 (still in use). It graced the fanciful Terrace Theatre at Friendly Shopping Center erected in 1966 with a 180-degree Ultravison screen and a high-ceilinged glass and metal lobby. And it lured shoppers to Golden Gate Shopping Center with a sign that beckoned with reach-for-the-stars enthusiasm.

Many of our Googies were imports. From the '50s until the mid-'60s grabbing a burger and fries meant parking and walking up to a counter to order. You could eat in your car or sit at one of a half dozen concrete benches and tables in the center of the parking lot. Part of the early appeal of fast food outlets stemmed from their distinctive 25th-century signage and dingbat exteriors luring motorists in: Biff-Burger's winged roofline and diamond shaped embellishments, Pizza Hut's alternating triangles of smoked glass and wood paneling topped by a vivid red Lego, the dancing neon footwork of Speedee McDonald pointing towards two elongated golden semicircles rising into and out of a wedge-shaped, brushed steel, glass and tile moon base.

Food franchises originating closer to home embraced their inner futurist. Hardee's ("Home of the Huskee") out of Greenville promised "Jet Service" in the '60s under a towering sloping frontage, then gorged on Googie in the '70s with a circular undulating roofline pitching up and down like a circus tent with a center spire tapering to a point two stories high. The fluorescent openness of a California coffee klatch was what Winston-Salem's Krispy Kreme aspired to when they envisioned our Battleground donut factory, fronted by a chrome and glass diner under a soaring triple-pitched roof.

The Krispy Kreme logo and signage was were and are the quintessence of Googie.

An economy stoked on postwar productivity gains and unprecedented consumer demand led to Googie infliltrating everyday life: round portable grills, brightly enameled appliances with streamlined dials, baby blue blenders, Presto percolators, horizontal music consoles with pointed footprints. The martini glass.

Otherwise conservative automobile manufacturers allowed a smattering of their more far-out machinations to go into production: the bat-winged, impossibly outstretched '60 Caddy and the arrow-headed angularity of that year's Chevy Impala. The bullet-shaped '62 Thunderbird Roadster with lit-up fighter jet fins where chrome was coin of the realm, lavished on wraparound bumpers, a front grill and instrument panel with bulbous, spaceship gauges.

If all those 1950s sci-fi movies were correct, and space aliens were coming, we'd want them to feel at home, right? They'd definitely need a place to spend the night. Before high-rise hotels began resurfacing around Greensboro in the 1970s, the city was home to a number of resort lodges and motels, many in the whimsical Googie style that was all the roadside rage in the 1950s and '60s. A quiet

alternative to downtown's multistoried (in more ways than one) O.Henry and King Cotton hotels, these motor courts offered poolside cabanas surrounded by wide open spaces, furnished with modern amenities like air conditioning, Color TV, a private telephone and Magic Fingers vibrating beds.

At the General Greene (later Americana) Motel an office with two-story high vertical windows was shaded by an acutely angled white A-frame, the latter half of which served as a sweeping porte-cochere suspended by four thin iron poles. Like an errant slalom you could ski right into the kidney-shaped pool.

Smith's Ranch Motel's exaggerated rooflines and southwestern adobe chimney were augmented by a bubbling, slanted canopy; Albert Pick's intensely crimson lobby featured mad-mod seating; and Travel Inn's star-burst-topped sign ended in a red neon arrowhead. Do you remember Howard Johnson's triple A-framed office; a teardrop-shaped pool at Holiday Inn; or the Sands Motel logo ripped off from the famous Vegas resort. All très Googie.

On the corner next door to The Towers apartments (now The Hampshire) in 1964 was the King's Inn with its compact L-shaped configuration, center parking, and rooms fronted with glass above turquoise panels. This was mimicked in a T-square layout at West Market and Mendenhall, which today is Greensboro College student housing. (In the 1980s George K's superb restaurant was located where the former Towne House Motor Lodge's dining room plated Continental cuisine.) Built when Battleground Avenue was a wooded outskirt, the Journey's End and Maplewood Motel were far more provincial, unironically rustic, with only hints of stylishness. The last of the streamlined motor courts still offers morning maid service on Summit Avenue. In its heyday, the Oaks Motel was where musical acts on tour and athletes, including the Green Bay Packers, often stayed.

As the city went forth and multiplied, the motels on Battleground found themselves luxuriating on real estate that was highly coveted by national retail chains. They had to go. Still, the Googie-lite coffee shop in front of Journey's End remains blissfully intact, rechristened long ago as Your House. And the rest? Sonic's plasticized affectations notwithstanding, you'll have to look hard to find lingering examples of vintage Googie still dotting the cityscape, one pristine example being the pointed sign and turquoise splendor

of the 1964 era Beaman Building near the intersection of Independence and Lawndale Drive in Kirkwood.

Witness a cornucopia of UNC-Googie: the impressionistic cathedral-like window banks embedded into the sides of Grogan, Cone and Reynolds dorms; the imposing curvature of the metal and glass superstructure surrounding the modernistic Anna M. Grove Student Health Center; whimsical horizontal windows and pylon-accented façades rising up in the front and back of one of UNCG's nursery schools.

On the corner of Lindsay and North Elm a former doctor's office, most recently occupied by blvd Interiors Marketplace, is equipped with a see-through lobby, brick glazed in variegated light shades and a protruding flat roof with embossed squares. A block farther north on Elm and Smith streets sits the most prominent example of our fleeting futurist flirtation, a study in savage modularity. This improbable but happy marriage of Populuxe and Brutalism reflected the avant themes California architects were indulging in when this Federal Home Loan Bank branch was erected in 1970. A Star Trek-ian white concrete upper level is ringed with enormous deeply recessed,

tinted windows like inverted television screens, perched on an upwardly tapered base layered in Carolina fieldstone. Repetitious articulations highlight this minimalist monolith, further reflected in a cantilevered canopy suspended on impressive stony spires once used for drive-thru banking. Widely regarded as a white elephant by the 1990s this is one of the city's gems today. Across Lindsay is an attractive one-story office building with clean, mid-century lines.

The extravagant Odd Fellows Lodge on Smith Street has copious vertical metalicized accents, crisp horizontals and an angular flagstone base closely associated with Googie, as does a tidy office duplex a block away at 416 Smith with a tilted overhang and a facade wrapped in rugged stone brickwork surrounding a steel and glass entrance. Next time you're at Smith Street Diner take a moment to explore this area, an intersection in the 1950s known as O.Henry Square. Without an intervention this block is about to change radically, I suspect.

The Golden Arches are long-gone but a former Burger Chef with one end of its roof hacked off is now serving Mexican dishes at Aycock and Gate City Boulevard.

Farther east a Biff-Burger has had its once exposed front and sides enshrined in glass, with the original sign out front modified to read "Beef Burger."

Just weeks ago the former Libby Hill on Summit was demolished, originally a nifty fifties Hot Shoppe drive-in built adjacent to the Oaks Motel with a

desert diner look. A neon sign with an enormous curved arrow lit up the lot where groovy guys and gals frolicked in early-model cruisers, parking next to Electronic Teleray Car Service squawkboxes that relayed their food orders to the kitchen (What'll they think of next?). Rollerskating car hops delivered double-decker Mighty Mo burgers, Teen Twists, onion rings and Orange Freezes curbside while the elders inside munched on Pappy Parker's Smokey Mountain Fried Chicken.

What was once ultra-moderne is now considered retro. What happened to the bright future in between, did I miss something?

Architectural trends swell and fade but Googie, as a radiant reflection of postwar optimism and spunk, will remain as tied to that period as those long-ago World's Fair amazements. As an act of conspicuous rebellion it was fait accompli, once we realized flying cars weren't forthcoming, after Jet Service was jettisoned for Have It Your Way, when fab begat pre-fab, all but the most subtle expressions of Googie were too defiantly cheeky to last into the future it portended, one decidedly darker and denser than the dancing florescent and neon iconography out front suggested.

NORMAN ROCKWELL
STOCKBRIDGE
MASSACHUSETTS

Dec. 12, 1972

Dear Billy Ingram:

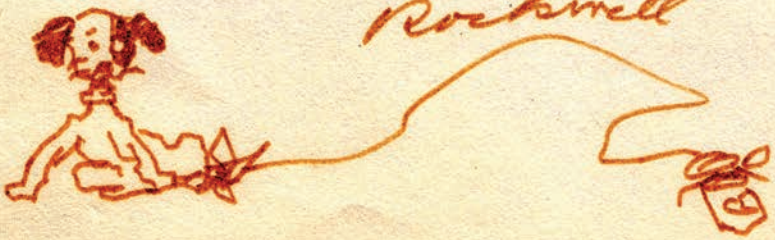
Thank you for your very kind letter and for all the nice things you said in it.

I am afraid I do not have a sketch I could send you, but below is my little dog drawing.

I appreciate your interest in writing to me.

Sincerely yours,

Norman Rockwell



Elvis In Greensboro

Elvis Aaron Presley had sold more records than any other solo artist in history, a quarter billion, at the time of his death at age 42. When *Burning Love* was released as a single on August 1, 1972 it became his 40th and last top ten hit, one he sang on stage for the first time four months earlier at the Greensboro Coliseum before a sold out crowd that screamed and wailed at his every side-ways glance. The tune was so unfamiliar Elvis had to read the lyrics from a sheet, a scene captured by a film crew embedded with the band who were shooting what would be the King of Rock 'n' Roll's 33rd and final motion picture.

No other recording star has had a more enduring relationship with our city than Elvis, that's why his flirtations with Greensboro will remain forever pressed between the pages of our minds, sweetened through the ages just like wine.

The first time Elvis was heard on Memphis radio, in July of 1954, the station was inundated with phone calls and telegrams (expensive, but that was how you tweeted in the fifties). A response so overwhelming the deejay played that acetate 7 times in a row then called Elvis' mom and had her retrieve the shy 19-year old from a movie theater to rush him down to the station for an interview.

Elvis the mama's boy (never an insult down South) didn't drink or smoke, was demure and unassuming, but flung himself into performances with an unnerving intensity accented by quivering lips, unnaturally dark eyes and a slicked up, black ducktail pompadour that took three kinds of grease and considerable time to prep so that it curled and flopped as he threw his head forward to sing. Teen girls squealed and swooned uncontrollably at his pelvic gyrations and raw sex appeal, before long, riots were breaking out with young

women mobbing the singer, tearing his clothes off in a feeding frenzy.

In the spring of 1955, Elvis and his rough-hewn combo played their first dates in North Carolina at the New Bern Shrine Auditorium and Asheville's City Auditorium followed by September dates in those towns, augmented with stops in Raleigh, Wilson and, closer to home, the Thomasville High School Auditorium.

On Monday, February 6, 1956, Greensboro welcomed the up and coming pop star for 2 matinee and 2 evening performances at the ornately fashioned National Theater at 311 South Elm. Elvis had driven into town the night before in his pink 1955 Cadillac Fleetwood just as his first single on RCA Records *Heartbreak Hotel* began climbing the charts. It would reach #1. Now it was his name featured most prominently in advertisements and on the marquee, above more established acts like The Louvin Brothers and the Carter Sisters. George Perry and Jim Tucker, seen as The Old Rebel and Pecos Pete on WFMY-TV, ventured backstage at the National to meet the Carters when a bashful Elvis walked over introduced himself. Talk about your mixing your pop culture metaphors!

Elvis left touring behind soon after, in favor of cranking out lightweight Hollywood musicals, as many as 3 a year. No other movie star was pulling down a million dollars a picture on an ongoing basis, his happy-go-lucky cinematic romps were known as, "the only sure thing in Hollywood." One of the buxom objects of The King's desire in *Tickle Me*, actress Francine York, knows first hand what it's like to be wrapped in the arms of one of

Tinseltown's sexiest leading men. She described Elvis in 1965 to me as, "Not at all shy, very outgoing, great sense of humor. So gorgeous in person. Always kidding around, kiddingly talking back to Norman Taurog, the director. Very kind to me and complimentary. So different than a lot of stars who were stuck up."

While *Speedway* was in production in 1968, MGM lobbied to secure the Jon Voight role in *Midnight Cowboy* as a "Vee-hichle" for Elvis if only the screenwriters consented to, "clean up this script, get rid of some of the smut." But by that time, a succession of hastily-produced, impossibly anachronistic travelogues with sappy soundtracks had diminished Elvis' star so completely he was considered washed up. With rare exceptions he hadn't appeared in concert in over a decade with no apparent demand for such a thing. Singles barely cracked the Top 40 (when they did) and album sales were in steady decline. American tweens had outgrown Hound Dogs and Teddy Bears, gravitating instead towards Partridges, Monkees and Cowsills.

An electrifying performance on an NBC television special in December of 1968 caused America to fall in love with Elvis all over again, the greatest comeback in show business history. Within a year he was riding high again on the pop charts, the biggest act ever to hit Las Vegas. Elvis' first concert outside of Vegas since 1961 made headlines when 207,494 people crowded the aisles for 6 shows in Houston. He took his act on the road beginning in 1970, breaking attendance records everywhere he went but, until 1972, his schedule brought him no closer to Greensboro than Cleveland.

Concert Date: April 14, 1972

Before the Memphis Mafia arrived in Greensboro, Elvis' advance men had already covered with aluminum foil every window on the top floor of the

posh new high-rise Radisson Hilton on West Market, across the street from Greensboro College. This to create an environment unencumbered by the outside world.

A typical day on tour began around 3:00 in the afternoon, after the show that night Elvis partied with his bandmates past dawn. Other than getting in and out of a limousine, the group wouldn't see the light of day for weeks on end. As one of The King's attendants put it, "At a point you get nuts."

Documentary filmmakers who had been recording the stage show since April 9th rejoined the tour in Greensboro after a short hiatus. There was concern on everyone's part that the project would have to be scrapped so a screening of assembled footage was arranged at a local theater for Elvis' manager, Colonel Parker, who was enthusiastic about what he saw and eager to continue. Cameramen were strategically positioned within the orchestra that night at the Coliseum to capture the entire performance for *Elvis on Tour*, what would be Presley's last motion picture.

For this show, Elvis wore his Royal Blue Fireworks outfit, open to the waist, with an Owl Belt and matching cape, draped with one of his trademark scarves that would be occasionally bestowed upon a fan. His every twitch sent forward ripples of excitement, fever-pitched screams, Instamatic cubes flashing like strobe lights, hands reaching out as if to touch what surely must be an apparition but no, The King, Hollywood, Las Vegas, every girl's teen idol, here before them.

Estelle Brown of the Sweet Inspirations told BBC2, "When Elvis walks out on stage it's like the building is being torn down. People were screaming and hollering and falling out and throwing stuff on the stage; oh, it was just amazing. Not only did he have the Sweets and the TCB band but he had the gospel quartets like The Stamps or Imperials. If you include the orchestra it would be about 60, it was a lot of people on stage."

Cameras rolling, Elvis had in mind to attempt a new song this night, one he'd recorded a few weeks before. Holding the lyric sheet in front of him the band struck the opening chords to *Burning Love* and The King had a new anthem, his last Top Ten smash. After finishing *I Can't Help Falling In Love* with amazing vocal flourish, Presley spread his caped wings, exiting like a condor. Amid much fanfare from the orchestra, a booming voice was heard over the Coliseum speakers that spoke with a terse finality: "Elvis has left the building."

Concert Date: March 13, 1974

After a two-year absence, the Coliseum sold all 16,000 tickets for

Elvis' return to Greensboro within minutes with scalpers commanding $200 for a front row seat that cost them $10.00.

The King was looking sharp in his high-collared, Blue Starburst belted jumpsuit with wildly exaggerated, pleated flairs. Pointing out a child in the audience outfitted in a sequined jumpsuit and cape, he brought the boy on stage, draped a scarf around him, then commanded jokingly, "Get him out of here, he's dressed better than I am."

Concert Date: July 22, 1975

There was considerable drama surrounding Elvis' 1975 engagement here. He and his entourage deplaned shortly after midnight on Monday, July 22nd from his newly acquired 96-seat Convair 800 christened the Lisa Marie. The airplane was customized, like all his vehicles, by 1966 Batmobile designer George Barris who lavished it with an executive bedroom, teak paneling, gold bathroom fixtures, 52 speaker sound system and a sophisticated videotape network.

Moments after settling in at the Hilton word went out to the manager of the Greensboro Coliseum that there was a problem. Armed with a telephone and a copy of the City Directory, he began waking up local dentists starting with the 'A's until he found someone who could see the star of that night's sold out concert for an emergency procedure. It wasn't until Dr. J. Baxter Caldwell's patient sauntered in around 3:30am that he realized he'd be working on the most famous mouth in America, drilling behind the upturned upper lip of the King of Rock 'n' Roll. Returning to the Hilton after the procedure around sunup, Elvis dined on a fruit tray before heading off to bed.

Ironically, Dr. Caldwell was known for his reluctance to use painkillers on his patients. If what happened at the dentist he saw in Asheville two days later was indicative of this visit, Elvis ransacked his office for drugs while the doctor was out of the room. It had become a common practice for Presley to remove a filling then be seen on a rush basis for what would eventually yield him a prescription or two. It was also in Asheville that Elvis, angry that his personal physician Dr. Nichopoulos had taken away the drugs he'd scored from the dentist that day and perturbed by a rolling vertical hold, fired a bullet into the television set at the Rodeway Inn that ricocheted into Dr. Nick's chest but caused no injury.

But back to Greensboro. Christopher Newsom shared a snapshot of Elvis leaving the Hilton for the Coliseum on July 22nd, "My dad and his brother went and waited for him to come out. His bodyguards told everybody he had a toothache or something and wouldn't be hanging around to talk."

Elvis had been inexplicably pestering his female backup singers from the stage for several nights with crude insults, serving up most of his vitriol for on-again, off-again girlfriend Kathy Westmoreland who harmonized with the Sweet Inspirations. When it got to be too much, all but one of the women walked off stage mid-performance in Norfolk on July 21st. They had to decided to quit then and there but agreed to make the trip to the Gate City without saying whether they'd go on or not. After a heartfelt apology from Elvis, all but Kathy performed at the Coliseum on the 22nd.

One reviewer declared the show that night, "better than ever." After returning to the dentist's office for a follow-up, Kathy met with Elvis as he sat on his bed in karate pajamas brandishing a handgun in one hand and a gift-wrapped watch in the other. "Which do you want, this or this?" he asked. She nervously took the gift, agreeing to stay on until the end of the tour.

More bewildering, the next afternoon all of those who were supposed to be flying on to Asheville for the final 3 nights of the tour discovered, upon arriving at the airport, that Elvis had left the tarmac and gone ahead without them. After the plane was sent back and they finally arrived at the Rodeway Inn, Elvis was in a contrite mood. Summoning the jeweler that traveled with a portable jewelry store in case he was feeling generous, Elvis purchased everything the merchant had on him, then had more flown in from Memphis, to be distributed to everyone in the roadshow. He took the $40,000 diamond ring off his finger to give to J.D. Sumner of The Stamps. When The King didn't receive his customary standing ovations in Asheville he doled out expensive trinkets to audience members, expending some $85,000 all together, then handed over his guitar to a random fan (who, in 2016, tried to sell it for $300,000).

Like a man possessed, two days later he presented the Colonel with a Gulfstream jet and, on Sunday, July 27th, gifted thirteen 1975 model Cadillacs totaling $140,000 to band members and another to a lady admiring his personal Caddy parked in front of the dealership. When she told him her birthday was coming up, Elvis had a check written so she could buy some

new outfits, “to go with the car.”

Concert Date: June 30, 1976

At this point a theatrical practicality had taken over with Presley only pretending to play guitar, his sultry moves reduced to mere poses. The audience lapped it up nonetheless. Elton John met Elvis backstage a few nights before this show in Greensboro and stated, “He had dozens of people around him, supposedly looking after him, but he already looked like a corpse.”

Every year in the Gate City Elvis wore a different outfit, in 1976 the Blue Egyptian Bird. When he wore this elaborately beaded getup for the first time in March he ripped the seat of his pants and made front pages headlines all around the world. Elvis in 1976 was described by close associate Red West as, “A boy in a man’s body who could not handle the celebrity he had now become. I had a sinking feeling that I would not see my best friend again. And I didn’t.”

While Colonel Parker deserves the credit for making his protégé a star. But by the 1970s, Parker was pocketing somewhere around 50% of everything Elvis earned with under-the-table side deals aplenty. A carny show charlatan of W.C. Fields-ian proportions who's real name was Andreas Cornelis van Kuijk, ‘Parker’ fled The Netherlands to escape murder charges, a criminal past no one in Memphis or Hollywood knew anything about. A degenerate gambler who made business decisions for his only client based on how much cash he needed to pay down his losses to (among others) Elvis’ Vegas employer.

A born loser, this casino owner’s dream once squandered $10 million (in today’s greenbacks) in one sitting. No matter. With Elvis as collateral, the chits kept on coming for The Colonel.

Concert Date: April 21 1977

By spring of 1977, the King of Rock ‘n’ Roll was on a years-long rockin’ roller coaster of amphetamines and downers, a full time nursing staff and a retinue of unknowing physicians in every time zone kept Elvis Presley medicated between near-fatal overdoses and brief bouts of drying out.

Weighing in at over 250 pounds, with a little over a million dollars in his checking account and $500,000 a month in expenses, the King was effectively broke after a lifetime of hit records, movies and sold out concerts. Regardless of his precarious health and chemical dependencies, Presley needed to

be constantly on the road earning. Opening night for what would be the last 10 weeks of concerts before his untimely death was Greensboro, N.C., about which Elvis declared from the stage in more coherent days: "Of all the places we've been to, you're one of the most fantastic audiences we've had."

The enthusiastic capacity crowd of 16,500 at the Coliseum on April 21, 1977 was treated to one of the strongest and most exuberant of what would be The King's farewell performances. Wearing his golden Mexican Sundial suit, Elvis was feeling so frisky he sang 3 songs he'd long ago dropped from his repertoire: *Little Sister, Little Darlin' and Fever*.

He could still send shrieking shock waves throughout the audience with a mere turn of his head but pelvic thrusts had long ago turned to rust, Elvis strained with each movement. Action on the stage was reduced to dispensing as many scarves as possible, his naturally drowsy eyes now woozy winks.

Small wonder. Elvis had been prescribed more than 5,300 pills while on the road, a mind-numbing cocktail of opioids, amphetamines and central nervous system depressants that included (get out your Physician's Desk Reference): valmid, placydil, valium, pentobarbital, phenobarbital, butabarbital, dilaudid, demerol, morphine, biphetamine, amytal, percodan, carbrital, dexedrine, cocaine hydrochloride (ask your doctor if cocaine hydrochloride is right for you) but most especially codeine and Quaaludes.

Back in Memphis in August, 1977, 600 pills were dispensed for Presley on the day before departing on a tour which would have bypassed Greensboro in favor of Asheville and Fayetteville. That wasn't enough. Indicative of a compulsively crepuscular lifestyle, the last photo taken of Elvis was snapped by a waiting fan as The King returned to Graceland in the pre-dawn hours from a trip to the dentist. Hours later he was found dead of an overdose. It had been a little over 21 years after his first show here and just 4 months after his last.

Elvis' co-star Francine York appeared in dozens of motion pictures and memorable television shows like *Lost in Space, Bewitched, Hot in Cleveland*, she even played a villainess on *Batman*. Elvis died on August 16, 1977, but The King made a lasting impression, "I will be going back to Graceland again this year with all expenses paid. It was sad being in his home for the first time in 2008 and seeing his white outfit on display with the cummerbund and watch him singing on the TV up to the left. I just loved him and find it difficult to watch his movies now, it just breaks my heart."

It's in the Sauce

When the Bavarian-esque environs of Boar & Castle welcomed diners in the late 1920s it was situated at the end of a dirt road, on West Market where it meets Walker. That curb-hopping hot spot was a beacon for teens and cruising college kids, as much for the party in the parking lot as the cheap eats. What gave the fries, Castleburgers and Butter Steak sandwiches their unmistakable zip-zing was Leon Thomas' signature sauce which he began bottling in the mid-fifties. The restaurant was an anachronism by 1980 but Boar & Castle's 100+ year old recipe sauce, flavor unique to Greensboro, is still in good taste.

I preferred Samson's Sauce myself, in the sixties mixed up in a backyard bunker in Old Irving Park by Gurney Boren. You had to order months in advance, never knowing when the brewmaster might sober up and get motivated to mixing up another vat. Gurney was a true character during a time when that was considered almost a compliment. By the 1970s word had spread so far and wide about his peppery concoction with the comical label ("Also used for baldness, hangovers, aphrodisia and amnesia.") that orders were pouring in, over whelming the poor guy. Still difficult to find today but well worth the hunt, Samson's Sauce tastes as tangy as it did 40 years ago.

"I'd Toddle a Mile for a Camel"

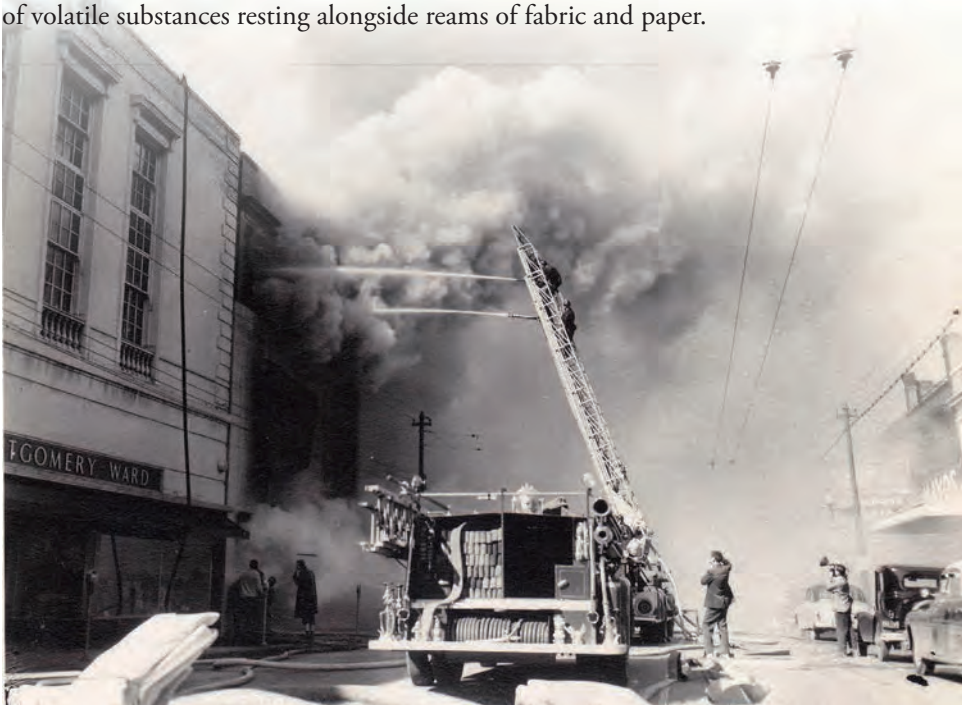
Joe Camel was one of the most notorious and effective ad campaigns of all time, starring a grotesque illustrated pitch-thing that bore an uncanny resemblance, presumably not accidental, to Joe Sixpack with a penis shaped head puffing on a cigarette. Trone Advertising began featuring the jet-setting lunkhead with the junkhead in a series of print ads in 1988, before long you couldn't avoid Joe Camel's turgid mug staring out from magazines, billboards and beach blankets. The AMA argued this cartoon approach was all about humping little kid's minds, an idea reinforced when a study discovered youngsters associated Joe Camel with Camel cigarettes in higher numbers than could link Mickey Mouse to the Disney Channel. The schlong-faced schlub's all-access pass to our eyeballs expired in 1997, not the first party animal to wear out his welcome for being a piss-poor role model for the children.

Fires That Left Deep Scars

When duty calls me, God, wherever flames may rage,
Give me the strength to save some life whatever be its age.

The first explosion rocketed smoke and debris across the rail spur adjacent to the intersection of Cridland and Wendover, a concussion felt underfoot throughout much of the Fisher and Latham Park neighborhoods. Residents on Virginia Street ran from their homes moments before a second detonation sent ambulances sirening off to emergency rooms as flames and chunks of the mammoth factory took flight. Retired Greensboro Fire Department Captain James Goins was with Engine Co. 5, "Wendover wasn't but a two lane street then. We went to turn on Wendover this woman was coming out, I didn't have room to get in and my captain is having a fit. Of course, he was the type to have a fit anyway, he was stomping that siren, motioning for her, screaming and hollering. She was scared to come out and I couldn't get in past her."

Bystanders drawn to this spectacle on June 16, 1971 may have believed they were on hand for the shake & bake of a Vicks Chemical plant but Vicks vacated four years earlier, the five companies racing to 'put the wet stuff on the hot stuff' faced a far more deadly scenario. Guilford Mills had relocated their print division there, firefighters were about to wade into a toxic soup of volatile substances resting alongside reams of fabric and paper.



Our firefighters, long considered among the best in the nation, were up to the task, limiting damage to the one building despite near record temperatures and windy conditions.

This city has been scarred, reshaped and forever altered by spectacular fires that could have erased the city center and obliterated entire neighborhoods were it not for the bravery and skill of those gods and goddesses summoned by a siren's call toward unknown odysseys. Here are just a few of Greensboro's greatest blazes and the firefighters who risked their lives to contain them.

Every apparatus and able body was assembled off Friendly Avenue in flanking positions along the sloping sides of Guilford and down Hunt Street on an unusually hot October evening in 1970, engaged in what appeared to spectators watching from balconies at the Hilton Hotel to be a futile attempt at preventing the sprawling blocks-long Greensboro Bonded Warehouse, stocked with a confounding array of flammables, from cratering the heart of Westerwood. "That was a three-alarmer," Pinecroft Sedgefield district volunteer Ken Karns was strafing the roof with two hundred fifty pounds of nozzle pressure from a ground-mounted Luge Gun that may as well have been a six-year old's Super Soaker for all the effect it was having. "Greensboro had all their ladder trucks out there, everything they could get ahold of. The city called for Mutual Aid from not only our fire department but Fire District 13, which used to cover the north end of town down Yanceyville Street and all out there, they had three stations. McLeansville Fire Department sent equipment. We sent our engines into the city stations to standby in case there were other calls, you always have to have your bases covered. Some, like myself, went straight to the fire scene."

This was GFD's thirty-seventh call of the day, potential for disaster was palpable. An outer wall succumbed then crumbled where a truck loaded with explosives was parked seconds earlier. In the first hour alone two dozen blasts lit up the night, washing machine sized misguided missiles leading a fiery comet's tale bursting in mid-air. Ken Karns was keenly aware of their trajectory, "That warehouse had fifty-five gallon drums with some kind of chemical stored in them. Those drums would get hot and explode, shoot one hundred fifty feet into the air, straight up like bottle rockets. Of course, it's not the going up it's the coming down... you had to watch those things to make sure they didn't come down on top of you." Blazing coals launched onto rooftops and into trees sent firemen darting down avenues dowsing spontaneous outbreaks. Next time you're at the Westerwood Tavern raise a glass to those intrepid souls who fought the good fight across the street and

just a few feet to your east, risking life and limb against a catastrophically stubborn force, refusing to allow the matchsticking of nearby homes. Or the Westerwood for that matter.

Enable me to be alert, hear the weakest shout,
And quickly and efficiently put that fire out.

That same month (a bad few weeks in a fire year that broke all records) an acrid cloud a mile wide made breathing difficult for the phalanx of police officers pushing back thousands of onlookers assembled on the second block of South Elm to witness an uncontrolled burn ravaging one of our first retail centers, the 1920s home to F. W. Woolworth. Erected in the 1890s and framed and floored with bone-dry hardwood lumber, the rock-solid edifice soon turned into a multi-story firepit with twelve blown out front windows and a compromised rear wall, belching flame and smoke for hours. Firewalls held, the devastation confined. 218 South Elm's framework could have been preserved but retailers in 1970 were tip-toeing away from downtown for more modern digs so two one-stories were sandwiched between Kress and the original home to Ellis-Stone built more than a century ago.

In July 2000 the Grissom Building at 310 South Elm met the very same fate but times had changed, downtown was on the cusp of a resurgence. It was still a crapshoot for developer Milton Kern, who coincidentally agreed to buy this impressive late-nineteenth century Romanesque Revival the day before it was disemboweled, to resurrect such a precious architectural touchstone.

On that same block, in the early morning hours of a Friday in October 2003, residents were awakened to a nightmare on Elm; police frantically pounding on their doors, given only seconds to flee for their lives from an inferno roaring from the back of the vacant Mantelworks Restaurant next door. A hip urban enclave from 1974-1986, 324 South Elm was also a former decorative fireplace factory known not just for magnificent interior flourishes but as the meeting place where the Old Greensborough Preservation Society got underway. This three story building was decaying after a quarter century of neglect. As firefighters crossed the threshold, flames lept forward to greet them, caressing the rafters, forcing everyone out. With tons of treated wood engulfed it took more than a hundred workers two hours to gain control of a blaze that decimated the rear and upper floors. Shortly after this event, the Fire Department issued "Do Not Enter" orders on a dozen similarly decrepit sites downtown so as not to put crew members in harm's way to clear uninhabited buildings.

Help me embrace a little child before it is too late,
Or save an older person from the horror of that fate.

April of 1985, minutes before 11:00pm, units were dispatched after reports of smoke seeping from an empty warehouse at 321 Davie Street. First responders encountered black plumes but no flame. As Roof guys laddered up the front, windows beside them exploded in frightening light after the back of the structure collapsed and oxygen flooded the zone. One firefighter and a gathering of lookie-loos attracted to the commotion from the O.Henry Festival missed by seconds being buried beneath superheated brick. A routine call turned General Alarm, within half an hour three adjacent buildings were fueling a firenado towering above the city skyline, lighting up Dixie Belle Textiles on the other side of Davie.

By midnight emergency responders were dealing with six enormous complexes fully engulfed both to their east and west. Ten minutes later a northern assault was underway across Washington Street when lumber and paint for the twenty million dollar Greensborough Court development, formerly Odell Hardware, proved highly incendiary. Due to intense pressure its distinctive Neo-Classical arched face crumbled, exposing apartments under construction to the whirlwind. Firefighters were already dodging thousand pound hunks meteoring off rapidly deteriorating mega-structures, now fireballs were raining down. Battalions were forced into retreat, turning what hoses they could spare on their own trucks to keep them from igniting. Thirty-six year veteran and current Deputy Fire Chief Bobby Nugent describes how dire things were, "The first crews that were there, with the backdraft, it was kind of disorienting. It blew a couple of people across the street, messed up the hose lines, they had to regroup after that and start getting back into firefighting mode."

Ana Heroy and her family resided one block away, "When we were driving home, coming down Market Street, it looked like the whole city was ablaze so we just were freaking out. I'm thinking, 'My God, what if our kids had been in there?' Our babysitter cancelled at the last minute so we had to take our children with us. We weren't allowed to go in our building. Thank God we had taken our children."

With a stinging layer of soot hanging in the air for miles in all directions Greensboro's finest were battling furiously to surround and drown an unrelenting enemy waging Total War on three fronts. From blocks away worse news was arriving. The Rhinoceros Club was being pelted with hot cinders and hastily evacuated; teenagers attending a rave at the Depot were necromancing towards this goliath on Davie; officials ventured out to investigate whether a haze enveloping Northwestern Bank and Tucker

Jones on South Elm was yet another blitzkrieg in the making. Bobby Nugent was informed the firezone would likely be expanded, "If it had gotten to Elm Street the higher-ups had already made the decision we were going to move over to Greene Street in front of the Carolina Theater and confront it there. Because if it had already gotten into those old buildings, there was no way we were going to stop that fire."

Our Thin Red Line prevailed. Davie Street's atmospherically ripe tinderboxes hung with wiring dating back seventy years couldn't have been reclaimed once the torch was lit but were it not for the resolve and expertise of those on the job that night Hamburger Square would be a charbroiled memory.

The city awoke with a blistering hangover that Sunday morning, the near complete obliteration of a major portion of downtown's business district coming just as wealthy suitors were glancing once again at the old gal's sagging backside. Rescued was a cluster of heirlooms on the east 300 block along with much of Greensborough Court's brickwork. In the 200 block of Davie there was a small single unit behind Schiffman's left intact, it was once a welding shop.

I want to fill my calling, to give the best in me.
To guard my every neighbor and protect their property.

In 2014 flames again scorched South Elm, on the other side of Lee Street, when a mechanic's dropped lamp at Import Knights Auto Repair set off a tragic chain of events. Captain Sterling Suddarth with Station 11 was first on the scene, followed closely by Station 7. As per protocol Suddarth and three other seasoned vets initiated an interior attack.

Greensboro Fire Chief Greg Grayson presides over one of two hundred accredited departments in the country, the only in the state with a Class 1 rating. "Two critical things Captain Suddarth didn't know when he entered that building. There had been a delay by the people in the business trying to put the fire out themselves. We always tell people, 'Call us, don't try to put it out yourself.' It had gotten further advanced than expected. What was most critical, employees were working on a gas tank and that vehicle was up on a lift at ceiling level. That's where the fire occurred. And that wasn't known at the time. You had a lot of fire and heat at the roof structure level that had progressed more than anticipated."

Thirty feet into the building the four men were flattened by the heavy infrastructure disassembling above their heads. 'Mayday! Mayday! Mayday!' was transmitted, the only true Mayday call anyone serving in the GFD had

ever heard over their radios. Everything department-wide ceased so all efforts could flow to their fallen comrades. Chief Grayson rode up on a worst case scenario, "Suddarth went down on his back and a beam fell across him, he was completely out. He didn't know anything. This beam was burning, it's a wood timber beam and it's burning. Luckily his protective clothing functioned well, his Air-Pak functioned correctly and we had enough people to lift the debris off of him and get him out in time. We were just really blessed. The time of day, it was lunch time, the admin staff was here, the Fire Marshall staff were working, we didn't have another incident going on in the city and everybody in the department from me to the newest person had just gone through this entrapment maze training. Sometimes the good Lord has a plan and we don't realize how things are coming together. But we had gone through this entrapment training. When the ceiling collapsed, that's what we had.

"They had just opened a new ER at Cone and I'll have this image in my mind 'til I die. There were fifteen people working on him and I focused on all the char on this white, pristine floor, all this char that was coming off of him, his clothing and everything. We truly didn't know if he was going to make it or not. The others were injured, we knew they were going to be okay but we were really concerned about Captain Suddarth's situation. When people apply to be a firefighter they know they're stepping into an Immediately Dangerous to Life and Health, IDLH environment. That's what we do. So when this happens so close to home or to another person here it brings on a lot of, 'I didn't think it would happen to us.' We're a very good fire department. It happened to us."

Following weeks in the care of Wake Forest Baptist's burn specialists and more than a year of continued therapy Captain Suddarth is still recovering from his wounds. He'll wear life-long scars for his service to our community, at present serving light duty. Temporarily, according to Chief Grayson. "We're very blessed to have dedicated people who know their jobs and do their jobs well. That could have been any Greensboro firefighter just as easily as Captain Suddarth who's very well respected here, tenured, solid captain, well known, knowledgeable, sharp guy. Sterling has been high road since day one, taking it in stride, just an outstanding individual. And he's going to be back on the truck. He wants to be."

And if according to thy will I am to give my life,
Please bless with your protecting hand, my children and my wife.
—Fireman's Prayer, author unknown

R.E.M. Slept Here

R.E.M. was just another unknown garage band when they played *(Don't Go Back to) Rockville* at a local pizza pub on 407 Tate Street in May, 1981. Peter Buck told *Rolling Stone* magazine, "There was a place in Greensboro, North Carolina called Friday's. It was a pizza parlor and the guy had bands play." The L-shaped room was an unlikely music venue: "You could see through the bar to the ovens," he recalls, "with the guy with the long stick with pizzas on it, and see us, too."

Admission? One dollar. "We'd get 150 people in there and we'd get the door." 150? If everyone who claimed to have seen R.E.M. on Tate had actually been there that number would be closer to 3,000. A live CD was recorded at Friday's when the band returned in November.

School Spirit

Mary Foust, beloved daughter of UNCG's second president Julius Foust, died giving birth in 1925; one of the magnificent resident halls in the Quad was christened in her honor 3 years later. That's when the unexplained crying noises and other nocturnal anomalies began. Even in recent years there have been reports of footsteps where no person was, horrific shrieks heard only on the third floor... but just below is where most sightings occur.

A spirit haunting Mary Foust would have plenty of company. After hanging herself in the bell tower above Spencer Hall, 'Woman in Blue' Annabelle appears as mist or shadow, hurling objects around, defying the laws of gravity. Then there's the lonely elderly lady found hanging rope over rafters in her home demolished to make way for Aycock Auditorium. Over the last century she's been spotted more often than a happy adjunct professor.

The Bewitchin' Pool

In the fall of 1994 I turned off Pinecroft Road in Greensboro piloting my fully restored, 1970 Mustang with California plates up a pitted, narrow gravel driveway hugging a small body of water. Joining me on this journey was my friend since college, Susan Grant, who had soured on her prospects as a social worker for wayward girls (We're talking waaayward) in Pasadena. Idling up that rugged roadway, we both took note of a spectacular hilltop log cabin at the other end of the pond, a veritable Bavarian ski lodge. Ahead of us were old growth trees, Dogwoods and shrubs so dense we could barely make out the house we had an appointment to see at 2700 Twin Lakes Drive.

Only a few months earlier, while major movie studios were enjoying the biggest box office receipts of the century, I was in Hollywood, living large and working as a movie poster designer — thanks in large part to Elizabeth Bell's art class at Page High School. To my complete surprise, I found myself doing the illustration for *The Hunt for Red October,* plus layouts and typography for *Pretty Woman, Goodfellas, Kindergarten Cop, Total Recall, Dances with Wolves, Rocky V, Ghost, Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, Days of Thunder, Awakenings* and *Flatliners*. I posed in a Nixon mask for *Point Break*; in a wig as Andy Warhol for *Superstar*; and even sang on a Christmas jingle for the sleeper hit *Dirty Rotten Scoundrels.*

Except for what Ms. Bell taught us, I had no formal training. But what I took away from her classes proved invaluable: an emphasis on being proficient across all media, to get by using only the materials at hand along with a willingness to embrace new tools. Most of all, she taught us there was a right and wrong to art, that it's not all subjective.

I first began working as a concept artist for "The Godfather of Modern Movie Advertising," Tony Seiniger, in 1986. It had just become feasible to use photographs on posters, so dozens of illustrators were sidelined in an instant, replaced by a breed of artist, like myself, who hadn't existed before, manipulating images using emerging color-copying technology, typesetting on desktop computers, painting, airbrushing, cutting out pretty prints of movie stars and pasting them against stark backgrounds to create meticulously refined collages that looked like a finished, printed poster at one-quarter size. Pre-Photoshop, we'd be asked to mimic Norman Rockwell, Georgia O'Keeffe, Warhol, Botticelli, '60s Madison Avenue — whatever anyone could dream up, for hundreds of variations on every single film.

I was working in Beverly Hills, a member of a team that was later dubbed the "New York Yankees of the movie advertising world." I had a beautiful home with a postcard view jutting from the hills above Sunset Boulevard. My 1970 Mustang droptop had been restored to showroom condition, I wore designer suits, $400 sunglasses and sported $200 haircuts. I dined on white tablecloths and partied at all the trendy places with Milburn Drysdale from the Commerce Bank. The realization hit me in 1994... I had become a serious jerk.

My last night in Los Angeles, an hour before a goodbye party was to commence at one of those aforementioned trendy spots, everyone everywhere was drawn as

if possessed to the nearest television set, transfixed by live 'copter footage of Al Cowlings behind the wheel of a white Ford Bronco, O.J. in the back holding a gun to his own head. The Bronco was the lead float in a parade of police making their way across L.A. freeways with star-struck crowds cheering from the overpasses. City of Angels my ass.

You Can Go Home Again, Only Accidently

We entered the house at 2700 Twin Lakes Drive through a magnificent front porch framed in 1950s- era brushed steel with glass horizontal blinds over a dramatic blue slate-rock floor. Three enormous French doors opened into a Great Room with hardwood floors and walls, a spectacular ceiling of white pine crafted in Michigan Boat House style. The design couldn't have been more deliberate. With light rippling off the lake, flickering faintly across the whitened walls, there was a distinct feeling of having set sail.

A cavernous fireplace extended into a tremendous living area that looked to have been added in the 1970s with a 25-foot-high wood-beamed ceiling, wide and spacious with bay windows and a groovy built-in bar.

Susan immediately took to the regal master bedroom featuring wall-spanning walk-in closets and three sides of windows with an 180-degree view of nothing but greenery. I felt an instant kinship to the smaller front bedroom. The dining room was in clear sight of the lake where I'd be perfectly positioned to write the great American novel about an innocent kid from a small Southern city who becomes embroiled in LA advertising only to become disillusioned with... I hadn't gotten that far yet.

The spacious kitchen looked to have been remodeled in 1963 with knotty pine cabinets and paneling, wall mounted double ovens, fridge and dishwasher all glazed in butter yellow and Coppertone brown with chrome accents. That was a plus: Both Susan and I loved antique appliances, a huge relief for the landlord who expected 30-year old KitchenAids might be a tough sell. A cozy step-down breakfast nook had been constructed over a smaller slate porch with sleek glass shuttered windows that matched the front.

Signing the lease that very afternoon, we were left alone. Thankfully the electricity hadn't been turned on yet or we might have missed the sun's last rays penetrating fall foliage, lit like a thousand candles, colors prisming off the glass slats on the patio. A red-and-yellow light show painted the walls around us. It slowly faded as a full moon reflecting off still water bathed the room in aquamarine.

After Susan and I described the crazy place we'd just rented my mother stood right up, "Take me out there now!" Incredulous as we rolled up the gravel drive, she stared peculiarly at that monumental log chalet across the lake, as if unsure of something. Coming to a halt in front of our new home she remarked, "This is the place! Those books of North Carolina ghost stories I read to you when you were a young child were written by the man who lived in this house. His name was John Harden."

Things That Go Bump In The Night (And In Your Life)

I remembered well John Harden's compendium of eerie mysteries. *The Devil's Tramping Ground and Other North Carolina Mysteries* (1949) and *Tarheel Ghosts* (1954) remain the definitive tellings of our state's most perplexing paranormalities: spirited sea captains, a headless brakeman, plundering poltergeists, ghostly gold prospectors, that spot in Chatham County where the Devil goes "to walk in circles as he thinks up new means of causing trouble for humanity. There, sometimes during the dark of night, the Majesty of the Underworld of Evil silently tramps around that bare circle — thinking, plotting, and planning against good, and in behalf of wrong." (Is it any wonder Harden was hailed as a public relations genius who served three N.C. governors?) Those somewhat stilted stories were accompanied by unnecessarily crude pen-and-ink illustrations that only heightened the overall creepiness of Harden's books.

Following the death of his first wife, John and Sarah Harden were married in 1953, settling in at 2700 East Lake Drive (now Twin Lakes) where they raised three boys, along with two sons from the previous marriage, in what must have been idyllic surroundings before the city's awkward mid-'70s growth spurt led to Four Seasons Mall metastasizing two blocks away. Neighborhoods, a high school, office buildings, apartment complexes; they paved paradise for miles and miles of parking lots but somehow this bucolic lakeside hamlet remained unmolested, obscured from view inside acres of woods, a cluster of homes frozen in time. Like standing inside a living snapshot of the 1950s.

An odd juxtaposition when you consider it was the place where I was busy creating one of the first online sensations at a time when most folks had never heard of the Internet. Coding and writing up to eighteen hours a day, I dreamt in code, beginning with <HEAD> and ending in </BODY>. In the process TVparty.com became the first to offer features with text, pictures and streaming audio (a year later video), the experience everyone takes for granted today. The very first clips of TV shows ever broadcast on the net emanated from the Harden House.

Exploring the grounds provided a nice distraction. It was obvious this 4-acre habitat had grown too difficult over the last decade to manage. John Harden died in 1985. Sarah had been ill for years but must have had quite a green thumb to have created such an oasis where the grounds were shaded most of the day, an avalanche of pine needles blanketing everything. A stoic line of 6-foot-high boxwoods, what was left of them, struggled for existence alongside a barely distinguishable pathway into the woods where a chimneyed grill was years ago leveled by fallen limbs.

Neglected rose bushes extended along the western edge of the property. Skinny but defiant pink-and-white dogwoods flowered along the driveway. They also bloomed in a garden contained within the circular driveway, where shapeless azaleas bloomed and small trees took root — all buzzed and dragged away in a single week by a beaver whose sudden arrival and unwelcome nocturnal efforts decimated the property of color.

At dawn every morning a gaggle of Canadian geese splashed down in formation, honking, fluttering about before waddling ashore to munch and poop. A blue heron's spindly legs dragging across the surface of the lake as it attempted to get airborne stood in contrast to our hawk's effortless command of the sky. Entering the house one chilly evening I beheld that beady-eyed raptor perched on a branch not five feet away, loudly hissing, one talon pointed at someone who would soon betray us. John Harden wasn't through telling ghost stories, I guess.

The O.Henry Twist

When my mother at Fountain Manor wanted to go someplace in 1995 she'd call and ask, "Are you coming into town today?" "Mom, I'm two blocks from Four Seasons Mall. I'm in town!" She'd never been to the mall. In her mind we were out in the neatly-tamed wilderness of the mid-'50s that she remembered so vividly, living with her in-laws and a new baby in that imposing log mansion on the other side of the lake.

2712 Twin Lakes Drive was built in 1926, the flagship for a sparsely populated subdivision and resort spread across some 200 acres that splintered off the one paved road named for the rustic development, Pinecroft. Houses were constructed out of the trees cleared for them. How tall the trunks were determined the size of the home. "City living in the country," miles outside of town, out in the woods but with all the amenities — electricity, water, mail delivery, bus service, tennis courts, playgrounds, horse trails, abundant fishing from private ponds, dining and dancing at the Pinecroft Inn.

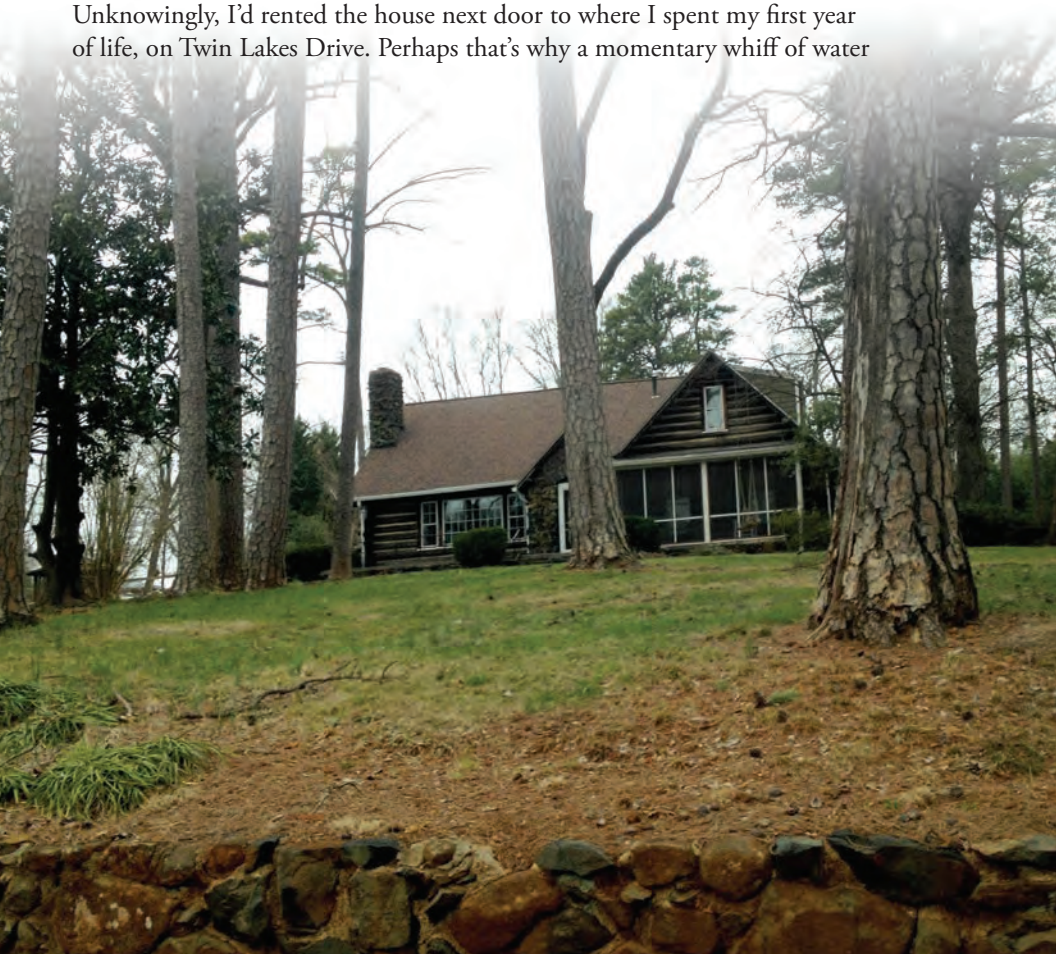
A good number of those hearty log cabins exist today off Pinecroft Road but the palatial estate on Twin Lakes is the largest, most opulent. The outer entrance is an imposing stone encrusted cathedral of massive, rough-hewn rock formations that greet you again inside the vestibule and along a wall of the screen porch. Stone work galore: two towering fireplaces, firepit in the back, wide rounded

lounging stairs down by the lake. The same blue slate patios found at the Harden House are here also but much more expansive both in front and back.

My grandparents Bill and Becky Ingram relocated here from Latham Park in 1946. Without having to raise the roof, they added a second floor for an additional four bedrooms and three baths, for a total of 3,380 square feet. A barn and guest cottage share the architectural style of the stately manor that my grandmother christened "Tall Timbers."

Bill Ingram Jr. spent his last decade as a bachelor here, maximizing the time when his folks were out of town by throwing parties for his buddies and their dates. As guests arrived he'd be on the pier with a couple of fishing poles hoping to hook some entrees for the grill. After marrying my mother, who quickly got pregnant, they moved into the little log cottage behind Tall Timbers.

Unknowingly, I'd rented the house next door to where I spent my first year of life, on Twin Lakes Drive. Perhaps that's why a momentary whiff of water



and wood could awaken some primordial recognition, a lingering fragrance of hidden remembrance.

Before I was born my father built the bridge over the reservoir separating the Hardens and Ingrams, made precarious over the ensuing decades by missing and splintered beams. Stepping gingerly across on October 1, 1994, I chanced to look down. Scrawled into one of the concrete supports, in Dad's handwriting, was the date it was poured — 10-1-54 — forty years earlier to the day. John Harden's book *Tarheel Ghosts* was published on October 1, 1954.

Was I calling out to the past, or it to me? No matter. We were destined to collide in an odd inversion of that *Twilight Zone* episode where two Southern kids dive past the bottom of their pool to emerge in a wooded wonderland, cared for by a kind grandmotherly type.

Susan and I moved on in 1997. As I write this both homes at the end of Twin Lakes Drive are for sale. Tall Timbers remains a masterpiece, the original stonework preserved. There have been substantial changes for the better to the Harden House when it was transformed into Twin Lakes Lodge, a bed and breakfast. A large garage with an upper residence was added and the two-bedroom east wing turned into suites, as was the case with the mother-in-law cottage. The backyard has been trimmed and styled to create a sunny piazza The grounds are a great deal more refined now, open and friendly. And those boxwoods along the wooded pathway are still putting up a brave fight.

Looking back, it's the breeze and quiet I'll recall, leaves rustling overhead, sunlight winking off ripples in the water, echoes of lives well-lived whispering around the pines. Twin Lakes will continue, one hopes, to lure future generations in search of lost gentility by offering a slice of country living deep inside the city. Past the stone columns, beyond a curtain of trees, at the end of a long dusty driveway, Greensboro's Batcave awaits.

Pipe Dreams

If you find your life going down the sewer its likely to do so via products made by the Pomona Terra-Cotta Company, largest manufacturer of clay drainage pipes in the South, fired and glazed in giant beehive shaped kilns. Incorporated in 1886, the company constructed a tract of blockhouses made of wood and red clay for the predominantly black workforce at their Terra-Cotta foundry.

A second foundry with a living community, Pomona, was built closer to town off Spring Garden with a mostly white labor pool to forge manhole covers and cast iron wheels for the cars that rolled the pipes in and out of kilns.

In March of 1962, four workers were killed at the Terra-Cotta plant when a boiler room exploded, a blast so strong it flipped railroad cars off tracks and rained debris for half a mile. Rescue efforts were hindered by a towering smokestack that threatened to topple over on the scene, a photo of it being dynamited in spectacular fashion ran in papers across the globe.

That event signaled the beginning of the end for Pomona and the Terra Cotta neighborhood that serviced it. Worker dwellings were razed soon after, the company land they sat on given over to industrial endeavors. In the midst of one of Greensboro's busiest corridors a shaded cluster of what were then privately owned homes and a church sit in silent testimony of a multi-generational neighborhood that once thrived between West Market and Wendover, behind Green Ford.

In a Nightclub at 1910 East Market Street

In the documentary *My First Name Is Maceo*, drummer Melvin Parker recalled a chance meeting in 1963, when he and his brother were music students at A&T: "I was working with a group at a club called The El Rocco. During one of the performances... James Brown liked the way I played and wanted to hire me to work with him. But of course I didn't go with James Brown at the time." It was a year later when Melvin and his brother alto saxophonist Maceo Parker met with James Brown in the Greensboro Coliseum parking lot to sign on with the JBs. In his autobiography Brown confessed, "I really wanted Melvin but I figured I had to hire Maceo, too, if I wanted to get his brother. I didn't know what I had got!"

What he got was a funked up horn section like no other, fueling a string of Gold Records beginning with *Papa's Got a Brand New Bag, I Got You (I Feel Good)* and *Sex Machine*. Maceo's halting staccato sax solos provided the thrill and thrust for the Godfather of Soul's legendary live concerts, assuming the role of both comic emcee and rhythmic lifeline whenever Brown chose to shout "Maceo!" then toss the spotlight over to him. Having earned his bona fides during James Brown's most revered period Maceo Parker left in 1975 to colonize George Clinton's P-Funking Mothership before re-joining James Brown from 1984 to 1988. Maceo currently records and tours with his own band and in October of 2011 was inducted into the North Carolina Music Hall of Fame.

Free Samples

Richard Spencer jammed alongside Melvin Parker in El Rocco's raucous house band. In 1969, as singer/songwriter for The Winstons, Spencer scored a Grammy Award winning #1 smash with *Color Him Father,* an uplifting but unflinching testimony record from 1969 that effectively bridged the gap separating rap and melody. So it's not at all ironic that 6 seconds of a drum solo from *Amen, Brother* on that 45's B-side, lifted and looped in the 1980s, spread like a percussive contagion, imprinted onto innumerable Deejay Dubplates, the most sampled break beat in history.

That drum lick became known as the Amen break, Hip Hop's primordial backbeat, the sonic underpinning for NWA's *Straight Outta Compton,* Public Enemy's *Bring the Noise,* Mantronics' *King of the Beats* and who knows how many thousands of others.

As artist and writer Nate Harrison explained in 2013, "It has been used as the rhythmic backdrop in everything from late '80s gangster rap to corporate America's recycling hip-hop forms to sell things like Jeeps and blue jeans to suburban America. Just last week I saw a TV commercial for a pharmaceutical company where this drum beat was used to promote some sort of purple pill. It's been used so much I might argue it has now entered the collective audio unconscious and did so about 3 or 4 years ago."

Naturally Richard Spencer, who owns the track, never earned his share of the billions of dollars generated from an untold number of pirated needle drops.

The Torture and Savage Slaying of the East Coast Rave King


LeBrun

Ed LeBrun was the heart and soul of Greensboro's surging supersonic rave scene two decades ago. When Babylon opened downtown in 1994 LeBrun's frenzied First Friday parties brought down the House, booking world renowned DJs—Diesel Boy, Andy Hughes, Bad Boy Bill, Frankie Bones, Ani (On-E), Bobble, Derrick Carter, Keoki, Sven Väth—who held thousands of hyperactive, jumped-up, sweaty club kids from as far away as Florida and New York in a thrall.

The owner of Spins Compact Discs & Tapes in the Lawndale shopping center LeBrun was an essential conduit for ravers around the world, thanked on dozens of seminal dance music releases. Chris Kennedy worked at Spins, "It was the go-to spot for upcoming rave flyers, mix tapes, rare vinyl, and many other things that reflected our culture. If Ed knew you and you asked real nice and bought the blanks from him, he would make you bootleg tapes of all the parties. Mix CDs that were legal and released under a label were rare, simply because many of the records used samples that were unlicensed. This made the culture feel different and unique because having tunes to listen to outside of the party was next to impossible unless you went to Spins. He sold the legit Technics 1200s and did a great deal of special ordering for a lot of the DJs, music that was next to impossible to come by any other way than knowing someone who had access to the many different independent record companies, most of them overseas."

Soft spoken with a shy smile, LeBrun began promoting electronic music nights in the late 1980s at Kilroys before expanding into larger, more exotic locales that only a select few were privy to. "We had to meet someone in the UNCG parking lot on Aycock in order to get a flyer with the directions." That's how Chris Kennedy rolled, "You only really saw most of these people at parties because we all came from different walks of life and from different areas in and around the state. It was like leading a second, secret life that you really cared a lot more about than work or school. It really was it's own culture and Ed was pretty close to being the center of it for most of us.

"Ed managed to rent the Depot in downtown Greensboro on a few occasions. No one seemed to care much about the Depot at that time, since

it wasn't actively being used. What blew our minds the first time we saw it was the lighted dance floor. We didn't know anything about the disco years other than what we heard from our parents but it seemed to us like we had found a forgotten discotheque and brought it through time with us into the future. It was amazing, one of my all time favorite party locations. For one of the last great Depot parties Ed brought in some talent, Fred Gianelli of the Psychic Tv crew, to completely blow our minds. Before they clamped down on security it was a miniature techno utopia for us."

Ed's First Friday jams elevated Babylon, the only nightclub downtown in the mid-1990s, to mythic status. Mike Marion was a bartender there, "We never had any fights, no guns, people weren't getting stabbed, it was all about peace, and love, unity and respect. And yeah, we did drugs, we did a lot of drugs. It was not uncommon for us to be there until noon the next day still spinning records and partying. But Ed was a pioneer, not in facilitating drug use, but a pioneer in bringing music that most of the modern world didn't know about and sharing it with everyone. And it changed people's lives."

Jeremy Elliott fell into the scene in 1995. "So all of a sudden 16-year old Jeremy, who was hanging out with gutter punks and going to Ska shows, meets two people from the Dixie and Shaun O'Connor and starts raving his ass off. They referred to me as a rave baby, because we were under 18 we had to wait until 2:30 to get into Babylon. But they would go until 5:00 or 7:00am sometimes, unleashing all these kids with big pants and huge pupils on Elm Street as the straights were trying to go to work."

The pitfalls of promoting events predicated to a great extent on the use of illegal psychoactives were many but there was an added element of danger for Ed LeBrun, his proclivity for inviting straight, high school aged rough trade back to his home for a lesson in the three D's—Drinks, Drugs, Destined to lead to sex. Ed's friend Shaun O'Connor recalls a Spins employee warning, "'One day one of these guys is going to kill you.' And Ed, shrugging it off as Ed normally did with things, 'Eh, yeah, that's not gonna happen.'"

When Pupils Grow Too Big


Grimes

In late 1998 Shaun O'Connor was joining Ed for early dinners at a casual dining chain on Wendover, "He was just leaving Spins and I'd be getting off work so we would go to Fuddruckers. He liked the hamburgers, liked to build it himself." Another reason, Babylon bartender Mike Marion was manager of that location. Following one of those visits Mike joked with busboy and recent Ragsdale High grad Zachary Grimes about being one of "Ed's boys." Grimes assumed, wrongly, that he knew about an incident that occurred between himself and LeBrun two years earlier.

Mike Marion recalls that exchange, "Yes. It happened. I said it. It was rumored that Ed had encounters with young men. So in that conversation where we were talking about Ed and his parties I told Zac that I had recently been in his home. Zac nodded his head and stated that he had been there before and 'hung out' with Ed in the past. I gave him that wink and a smile saying, 'Oooohhhh, you're one of Ed's boys.' I didn't dwell on it or even think about it after that. I didn't realize that it bothered him at all. He didn't let it show. He just smiled and said, 'Naw man, nothin' like that.' And that was the end of it.

"Zac was cool but there was something about him that struck me as wrong. I knew he was a criminal. I didn't judge him for it, I never hung out with him socially but we laughed a lot at work. I remember one evening specifically, a friend of his came into the restaurant while Zac was working, gave him a backpack and just turned around and left. I'm a responsible restaurant manager, 'Let's see what you've got there, we can't have anything illegal. I want to see what's inside.' It was a hammer, a crowbar, and a screwdriver, that's it. We got into this conversation... he liked to break into cars and steal stereos. It didn't matter what a fun guy he was to be around, he had a darker side.

"Zac would talk about Ed LeBrun sometimes, we'd get in conversations at Fuddruckers. Ed had a really nice house, he put a lot of effort into that house and did an excellent job. I talked about the nice things that were in there, or lack of nice things, he had it very simple. I wasn't conspiring or anything like that I was just talking about this cool house I had seen. Meanwhile, back in Zac's head, I guess he's thinking, 'Huh, this is something I can rob.' That was the farthest thing from my mind. Completely irresponsible on my behalf, to talk about things like that with Zac."

Mike Marion was unaware of the true catalyst behind Grimes' frame of mind. Six months shy of his seventeenth birthday he had been lured to LeBrun's home by a member of his church youth group with the promise of, "a party of sorts with a wealthy guy who provided all the drugs for his get-togethers." Arriving at the tidy Wafco Mills condo it became abundantly clear this was going to be a party of three. After dropping ecstasy for the first time, two hits, and inhaling whippets, the semi-conscious eleventh grader was carried to a bedroom for what's best left to your imagination. Still somewhat woozy the next morning Zac confronted his friend on the ride back about what had happened but was cut short, "You knew what the deal was." No, he didn't.

Zachary attempted to bury what uncalled-for memories festered, suppress the shame, but a yearning for retribution was fermenting. Encountering Ed at his workplace on a regular basis was an involuntary revisitation of the helplessness and humiliation associated with that night. Was Ed mocking, regaling his table mates with "Hey, I had that kid over there," whispering to his boss about it? Zac was sure of it.

In May of 1999, spotting LeBrun topping burgers with a friend, Grimes ducked into the kitchen to connoiter with a new hire manning the fry station. He'd discussed assaulting and robbing LeBrun with co-workers before but this was Robert Reid he was opening up to—a randy, disarmingly handsome eighteen-year old live wire who's steely gaze barely masked a percolating rage, no doubt resulting from frightening sexual abuse he'd endured as a young child. For the next three months Grimes and Reid convened with Zac's roommate Jonathon Coffey, fired from Fuddruckers and now bussing tables at Don Pablo's, to map out how they would enrich themselves at the expense of the music promoter. A Babylon habitué with deep set dark eyes that reflected a Buster Keaton-like cluelessness nineteen-year old Coffey was well aware of Ed's predilections, he had friends who traded sex for pills. Shaun O'Connor recalls the effect Jon had on both sexes at the club, "Oh yeah, he was the heartthrob."


Reid

The 3 Fuddruckerteers bonded over those late night BS sessions. Jon told them about a scrapbook Ed was rumored to have tucked away with naked pictures of all the boys he'd drugged and had sex

with. Zac wanted to get his hands on that. Robert Reid revealed himself to be a Ninja warrior, the embodiment of Joe Musashi from the arcade game 'Shinobi.' A native of Chicago, he boasted about being in a gang and leaving more than ten corpses on the ground. He'd do it again, didn't bother him one bit, happily recounting how he clubbed his alcoholic father to death with an iron pipe when he was eleven years old because the old man reared back to punch him (untrue but a great backstory nonetheless).


Coffey

On the night of August 15, 1999, Zachary Grimes turned to Jon Coffey and asked, "Hey, you want to put this plan in motion?" Coffey did. At 11:30 he picked up Robert Reid who was even more enthusiastic. Back at the apartment they filled a bag with what they'd need—taser, hammers, screwdrivers, and a crowbar in case a safe needed opening. Grimes produced a syringe he'd filled with glass cleaner, "I drew the Windex up and had seen it in a movie, 'Terminator 2.' In the movie a woman escaped a mental institution and used this to kill someone by putting it in his neck." Before heading out everyone laughed at designated boy-bait Robert as he pranced and preened in his tight green shirt and baggy jeans meant to entice their intended. Coffey obtained the address they'd need from Directory Assistance, Ed LeBrun hadn't lived in his home long enough to be in the phone book. Taking two cars they parked close to the newly built brick manse on Mayflower Drive in Sunset Hills.

Robert Reid stepped up to the small enclosed porch and rang the doorbell. When he explained his car had broken down and asked to come in to use the phone Ed, speaking through the closed door, recommended a nearby curb market instead. Reid returned to his waiting accomplices. "The mother fucker would not let me in the house. He wouldn't trust me." Suggesting another try later they drove to a convenience store on Tate Street to purchase a pack of Newports and a Mountain Dew. Inside the mini-mart Zachary Grimes greeted an acquaintance, cryptically hinting weird things were going down, "If anybody asks, you're my alibi."

Pulling behind the building to smoke menthols and wash down some "Mark McGwire pills" Zac had in the vehicle Coffey asked, "What are we doing here?" Grimes indicated he was tired, wanted to go home. Reid feared his co-conspirators were getting squishy, "Are we going to do this or not?" Coffey told them "I'll have a go of it," agreeing to approach the door but only if the others were directly behind him. They outfitted themselves

with rubber gloves and trash bags stolen from work, Reid also had a boot sheathed blade, a 6 foot long black shoestring... and a dagger.

They rolled alongside the curb quietly, lights off, parking just beyond the driveway. Grimes slipped a panty hose over his face, Reid didn't have a mask. Coffey couldn't wear a disguise, his face was his in. Answering the bell LeBrun likely peered from the narrow windows adjacent to the entrance to see a young man he knew from the club with a brooding boy band look and plump BJLs. With the chain latched he cracked open the door. Coffey threw his shoulder against it, tearing off the latch. Placing Lebrun in a headlock they struggled but the teenager was much stronger than his small framed opponent.

In the seconds it took for Grimes and Reid to storm through the entrance the homeowner had been rendered defenseless on the dining room floor. Recognizing Robert Reid from their earlier encounter Ed cried out, "Oh no." Zac Grimes punched him once as Reid placed knees against Ed's neck to tie his hands behind his back, instructing the others, "Sweep the house." In an phony English accent Robert passed the incursion off as a simple robbery, one that would be over in a few minutes. He led LeBrun upstairs while the others ransacked.

Grimes testified, "Me and Jonathon Coffey started going through the rooms not finding anything in two rooms then eventually went to the back room. It was like a disco with glow lamps, pictures, and it also had a egg seat and I wanted, a wax lamp, and Jonathon wanted the turntables. We carried that stuff downstairs and I went back upstairs to get a picture." Inside a Chameleon Twist Nintendo 64 box Coffey discovered prescription pills, eight baggies of crystal meth and six tabs of X. Zac Grimes uncovered a box of coins. When LeBrun told him they had sentimental value, that his grandfather had gifted them to him, the burglar put them back.

Directing LeBrun to the living room Coffey put the pill bottle to his face and asked, "Where is the rest of this?" Confiscating more pain killers from a kitchen cabinet Ed implored them to, "Get it over with and get out of my house, take what you need and get out."

While the other two stacked their haul by the front door Robert Reid guided LeBrun back upstairs to the bedroom where he terrorized his victim with a dual-edged dagger, offering him two possible scenarios—take a tranquilizer so he can't see them leave or be put to death. Yanking the wallet from Ed's back pocket Reid asked for a pin number and got it. In his preposterous 'Clockwork Orange' affectation Robert posed the Hobson's choice again. Sedative or die. LeBrun, who remained passive throughout the ordeal,

understood his hopeless situation. “I really don’t have a choice.” He swallowed the pill. That’s when Robert brought out the syringe.

After injecting Windex into an artery Ed was shot up with air, then rubbing alcohol from the bathroom. Reid told LeBrun he needed another dose then handed the instrument over to Coffey, instructing him to find something appropriate.

Focusing his attention on the cleaning supplies under the kitchen sink Jonathon found just the right chemical for the task at hand, concentrated Simple Green, a solvent promising to eliminate even the toughest stains. He filled the syringe with the Kryptonite colored fluid then bolted back upstairs where Reid plunged the needle deep into Ed LeBrun’s neck. Grimes and Coffey looked at each other, both thinking the same thing... events they should have known could spiral out of control were now playing out in the worst possible way.

Grimes told prosecutors, “Me and Jonathon went downstairs and I carried that wax lamp upstairs and put it back on the speaker and plugged it in. Jonathon put the turntables back to where he got them from. We realized Ed LeBrun was probably gonna end up dead at that point.” Making their way towards the bedroom, “Ed was on the floor groggy and you could tell some pretty ill shit had just happened to him. As we were walking down the hallway I could hear Robert saying his ninja saying, ‘The paths are my shadows and no one will see my face.’ He had told me previous murders that he had been implicated in, that was [what] his group would say to someone before they killed him.”

They each took Reid aside, pleading with him not to go through with it, to no avail. Ed had seen his face, could identify tattoos. Grimes testified, “I walked downstairs, turned around, saw Jonathon at the top by Ed LeBrun’s room. Jonathon turned his head to the left like he couldn’t believe what he just saw, then walked downstairs.” What he witnessed was Reid straddling the 39-year old, plunging the dagger a dozen times into his chest and neck. As they fled the scene Grimes straighten out a small welcome mat that was displaced during their forced entry.

With Zac behind the wheel Robert Reid was exhilarated at “what a rush” it was taking a man’s life, bragging that his skillfully inserted initial wound was directed at an area of the body that excretes endorphins so Ed would be high, rendering each subsequent stabbing painless.

Turning on to Page Street, Grimes and Reid remembered the satchel they brought with them and LeBrun’s First Union Bank card had been left

behind. Reversing course they reentered the house before rendezvousing with Coffey back at their Stonesthrow Homes lair where they snorted some crystal meth, then set out to ditch the evidence. Keying in the number 0664 they extracted $200.00 from an ATM at Super K-Mart then hit two more machines for the daily limit of $500. Combined with the cash taken from Ed's home that came to a little less than $1,600.

With the other two tweaking in the living room Zac slid into bed with his girlfriend around 4:15am and told her what had happened. The alarm was set for 6:30, he was scheduled to open at Fuddruckers. Robert didn't need to punch in until 3:00 that afternoon, after he got off work he met up with Zac and they drained LeBrun's account of another $500.00 before burning the debit card and receipts.

Ever hear that old cliche, the guilty always return to the scene of the crime? That's exactly what Robert Reid and Zac Grimes did the night after the manslaughter, coasting past a phalanx of GPD investigators still on the scene of one of the most grizzly homicides in recent memory. Members of the rave community took to the internet to swap theories over who and why, clubgoers flooded the police department with leads. Neighbors were aghast over the apparent random nature of the ferocious attack.

How 'Ya Gonna Keep 'Em Down on the Farm...

Bulging with Benjamins the three perps got inked at Forever Yours, scored some crystal meth outside of Babylon, then further feathered their nest by burglarizing a gun collector. Now armed with a cache of weapons they boosted a Family Dollar store on September 26th, netting $1,200 in cash and merchandise. That supermarket sweep made them anxious for another big score... and they were considering putting someone else in the ground.

Their buddy Curtis McAlister knew all about the LeBrun butchery, pretty much everybody in their circle did. Reid revealed details to anyone who listened, followed by an admonishment: "If you tell anybody I'll kill you." Impressed with Robert's purloining prowess Curtis was contemplating a heist of his own, a grab and dash to line his pockets and humiliate his asshole supervisor at the same time. On leave for a cut finger he conspired with Jon, Robert, and Zac about how to extract the $50-80,000 in cash the Olive Garden raked in every week adding, "The manager's a pussy." If the back door wasn't open as it sometimes was, plans were made to go in heavy through the front.

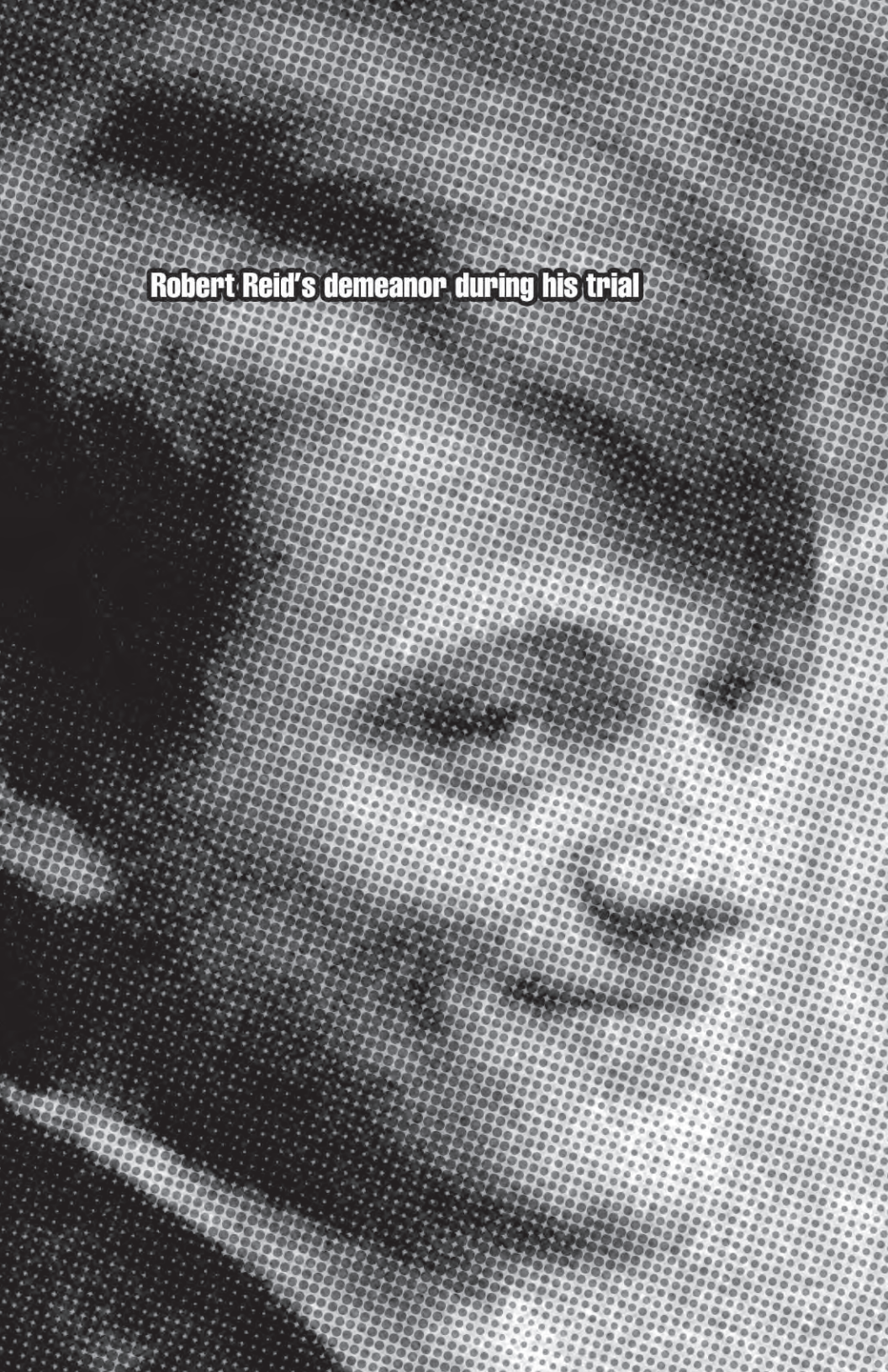
Coffey, Grimes, and Reid were cruising up and down High Point Road October 13, 1999, eyes out for a business to bust-out, when they observed Olive Garden's back door ajar. Grimes idled beside the dumpsters. Bandanas up like a John Wayne movie the other two stumbled through the back door, making so much noise Coffey wanted to call it off but Reid urged him ahead.

With Reid behind him Coffey politely knocked on the office door, pushed it open and pointed a gun at manager Lewis McGraw, "Where's the money?" McGraw looked down at the pile of cash on his desk, what was left in the registers after the night deposit had been made. Reid slid his knife across the terrified manager's back, "Shut the fuck up or you will get hurt," while Coffey urged him over and over, "Leave the guy alone. We need to go. We need to go." They made off with $2,500, a good portion of which Reid tried to swindle his compatriots out of while counting the loot.

When he learned of the caper McAlister was furious at these smooth criminals for going forward without him. He was, after all, the mastermind that made it possible for them to once again be hundred-aires. From that point on Curtis supplanted Zachary when Jon and Robert pulled their B&Es. Coins rained down in a Jamestown laundromat like a loose Vegas slot; a nighttime burglary of the Barnes & Noble at Oak Hollow Mall netted crates of Pokeman cards and Michael Jordan commemoratives.

None of this larcenous activity escaped the notice of the numerous law enforcement precincts these degenerates were thumbing their noses at. While they may have been wanted for dozens of felonies and misdemeanors what Reid, Coffey, and Grimes weren't suspected of was the murder of Ed LeBrun. During their two month long crime spree Greensboro detectives were confident they had the killer locked safely behind bars. In fact, GPD bagged their prey within the first forty-eight hours, even rounding up an accomplice and did it without a shred of physical evidence linking them to the crime.

On the flip side: Railroading doesn't end at the Depot.


Robert Reid's demeanor during his trial

Reckonings

"I was unable to sleep the night I received your letter. A lot escapes the mind after so much time, whether it be repressed or just forgotten. It reminded me what a piece of shit I was. Regardless of what I intended or did at the behest of others doesn't change the fact crimes were committed, a man died, and my person was involved."
Zachary Grimes has a lot to be remorseful about and plenty of time to think on it, he was given a thirty-year sentence for his part in the torture and murder of Ed LeBrun, the east coast's leading rave promoter.

Ed's First Friday events were legendary at Babylon, the only nightclub in Downtown Greensboro in 1994, an after dark beacon amidst a desolate no-man's land summoning amped-up ravers attracted by the biggest names in EDM: Sasha, Icey, Doc Martin, Huda Huda, Christopher Lawrence, Sneak, Supa DJ Dmitry, Micro, Mr. Bubble, Bjørn Svin, and Donald Glaude. Upwards of a thousand blissed-out whirling dervishes flowing in and out of 221 S. Elm Street, glow sticks twirling in each hand, furiously sucking on pacifiers, Vicks inhalers tucked into their back pockets, music blasting 130 beats per minute, humidity approaching monsoon levels.

"What's in the middle of I-95? Greensboro. Not to mention 85 from Charlotte." DJ Mr. Bill spun Progressive House at Babylon, "We had the biggest scene on the east coast, we were bigger than DC, we were bigger than Atlanta. Between Baltimore and Orlando, Greensboro was the spot. We owned it. Club kids would put themselves up somewhere and stay for a month because their favorite DJ was going to be here on the fifteenth. They'd crash at somebody's apartment and hang out in town for weeks."

Ground zero for MDMA, at Babylon everyone was rolling like church buses on Sunday. Young people huddled up and cuddled up along the hallways and in the more mellow upstairs lounge. DJ Mr. Bill explained, "Everybody that was in the know knew not to buy drugs at the club. You bought them like three days before, you made an arrangement. By the night they were sold out. People would show up from outside of Greensboro, the suburbs, and they're expecting to find the drug of their choice and it's gone. You buy on a Tuesday if the party's on a Friday."

While claiming not to be a typical raver a male student who frequented First Fridays revealed to the Duke Chronicle why he actually *was* the archetypal Babylonian, "The music is a mirror of your roll. Even if you aren't rolling, it's a mirror of what you feel like. When the music's pumping you feel like you're gonna fly. You stop, and breathe and then it builds. If it kept going without a pause, you wouldn't be able to handle it. I go and have guys massage me and girls kiss me at the same time. You completely leave the rest of the world. On the dance floor you focus on people's eyes. I feel like I can see through them. I don't know what people's lives are like outside of the rave. But inside, everyone's always happy. The day after you're exhausted. You don't really eat anything. You just feel drained. It's depressing a few days after."

When officers frisked an X dealer and found bags of pills that didn't resemble any illegal substance they'd ever seen before they had no reason to believe it wasn't Vitamin C that enabled kids to dance longer. It was a good four years after Babylon opened before police learned to ID ecstasy. One scenester described the action outside the club, "I was in a car with a guy who had an ounce of cocaine bumping everybody in the parking lot, he had a cooler full of liquid LSD, selling it for $80.00 a bottle. We had a good time for a long time getting away with doing a lot of things we should never have been getting away with doing, and we did it right under the nose of the police department."

DJ Mr. Bill remembers, "There was a guy working security, an off-duty police officer. Friday nights, Saturday nights, he'd go out in the parking lot and confiscate all the liquor he could find and take it home, that was his bonus.

"I was out of town but my girlfriend told me about this the next day—the staff and the owners one night decided to have fun and locked the front doors. They took turns DJing, the staff was on the floor, some got naked some didn't. It was like a party of five, more or less. My girlfriend was dancing butt naked on the little platform under the disco ball. She was like, 'I've got the whole place to myself!' I'm kicking myself 'cause I missed it. I asked her, 'What's that all about?' 'Oh, they do that all the time.'"

Besides promoting First Friday parties Ed LeBrun owned Spins Records & Tapes, the Triad's dance music roundhouse. William Shea was a manager there, he posted this on a message board: "No, Ed did not start the scene in NC. What he did do was take it to the next level. When I learned

of the music in 1992, the Trim Shop was in full swing. Folks from all over the east coast, New York, Florida, Washington, Georgia, you name it. Literally thousands of people at those events, some driving hundreds of miles to pack into a dirty ass warehouse to see a few local DJ's. It was absolute madness, the coolest thing I had ever experienced.

"From there to Babylon and First Friday, one of the longest running monthlies on the east coast. Longer than Buzz, Fever, NASA. DJ's would cancel gigs to come to Babylon because they loved playing there. They could count on good sound, good lights, a good crowd. [LeBrun] was always up front with the talent, Paul Van Dyk came to First Friday in 1995. Ed was one of the first in the USA to book Misstress Barbara and the first to book 1.8.7. after Joe became Jordana. The DJ's loved it here."

At 2:30am doors would open for underage ravers, parents would drop their teens off at the club, presumably unaware of the goings on inside. Ed's friend Shaun O'Connor pinpoints when things turned sour, "This younger crowd came in like '97, '98. You had a bad bunch of people going around that would come in from out of town, make themselves look real cool, and sell a bunch of fake drugs. They'd be there for like an hour, sell all their drugs and leave, you'd never see them again. Greensboro tightened up after that and became more cliquish, people started hanging out at the sofa bar."

When LeBrun didn't show up for work on August 16, 1999 his employees knew right away something was amiss. Chris Kennedy explains, "No matter what happened over the weekend Ed religiously came in to Spins on Mondays to do all his orders for records, mainly the vinyl for the DJ's. When he didn't show up to do it, that is what prompted William Shea to go by his house to check on him."

Andy Guthrie wrote online, "I, along with my boyfriend, found Ed the day he died. I found him face down on the floor in his bedroom, blood soaked into the carpet all around him. I can still vividly recall staring at his brilliant white socks while I straddled his dead body to call the police."

DJ Mr. Bill will never forget that afternoon, "I was working at Elizabeth's and everyone said, 'Turn on the news.' We had TVs in the restaurant so I could see that it was for real. I'm like, 'You gotta be kidding me, I saw him last night.' Elizabeth's was in the same shopping center, we were like six doors down from Spins. I waited until my lunch break, I walked up to Spins, the doors were locked but there were already flowers and cards,

a memorial. So I did the same thing, I left flowers and cards. They were shut at least three days, maybe the entire week. It was tough."

To Project and Swerve:
They Don't Call this Guilty County for Nothing

Sunset Hills was on edge, understandably so, when news spread of the heinous attack just a block from the UNCG campus. Families slept easier when, two days later, a suspect was hauled in for questioning based on a tip and a blurry surveillance photo that matched the culprit, at least to the satisfaction of lead detective David Spagnola who wrenched a confession from nineteen-year old twink Tim Laney, not for murder but for using the decedent's ATM card. That admission of guilt put Laney at the center of the crime. Now the detective needed a name, who gave him the card? Laney implicated his friend Josh Gordon who was quickly jailed.

It was front page news when the arrests were made, sweet music to Zachary Grimes, Jonathon Coffey, and the guy who actually stabbed LeBrun to death, Robert Reid. They were in the clear. Perhaps Reid was the shadowy Shinobi Warrior he claimed to be.

"Had Reid said, 'Let's go kill this man' neither Jon Coffey or I would have gone." Zachary Grimes detailed how his life descended into madness in the weeks following the morning of August 16, 1999. "After the murder of Ed LeBrun we were to meet the real Robert Reid. He had the charisma of a gifted politician. Reid became ever demanding, he wanted us to do more crimes with him. He knew that we knew he was capable of murder. Jon and I complied several times but we were in too deep. We started resisting doing things, our choices were limited and my girlfriend was scared to death. I was sidelined while Jon and Robert continued on [committing crimes]. Reid's threats and spell were wearing off. I was tired, I'd already been thrust further than I ever intended to go with the murder of Mr. LeBrun so I just stopped.

"I was trying to salvage what I believed was the left of my life. I was trying to put the pieces back together but every one I picked up would crumble into more. A line had been crossed that could not be uncrossed. As for Jon, he was deeply affected by being involved in a murder. I believe he knew time was running out and he just gave in to the downward spiral. Jon really was a good person, the extent of his crimes before meeting Robert Reid were taking drugs and maybe selling from time to time. "Robert began to feel the tension and rising reluctance to his every little whim or crime he wanted to commit. Robert would come over when Kara O'Connor, Jon Coffey,

Kenneth Kitts, and I were at the house. He went off about us not being loyal to him and not wanting to really 'build something.' He pulled a gun and started making threats about if we were to tell he would kill us or go to our family's homes and kill them. We knew he had no problem killing so the days leading up to the arrest were stressful. Robert shot a hole in the wall, narrowly missing Jon. Jon and Robert's spree would come to an end the night he stole my car, and in the days after [when he] would break into our apartment with two sixteen-year olds... his new crew and next to be enthralled in his charismatic clutches."

Robert Reid had a habit of boasting about his escapades to any random person then threatening their lives if they ever ratted him out. Busted with his mini-mob in the midst of a burglary in Jamestown he folded like a card table. Omitting any word of his central role in the whole affair he gave up Jon Coffey and Zac Grimes as LeBrun's assailants. The two were swept up and charged with first degree murder.

"I'm not sure who interrogated me. It was late at night when I was brought in and I had smoked weed and dosed a couple of hits." Things looked grim for Grimes, Reid fingered him as the sadist who stabbed the record store owner a dozen times in the neck and chest, a premeditated rage and revenge attack. "The District Attorney's office truly believed I was the man who had killed Edward LeBrun. I would go before a Rule 24 hearing for the death penalty. I just knew Robert had won, his web of lies with a twist of truth was going to lead to my death."

To their credit detectives noticed almost immediately the version of events they were being fed wasn't adding up. Before he could be cut loose Robert Reid was charged with being an accessory to murder. It was only the ringleader's insatiable need to grandstand that allowed the truth to finally come out. Reid bragged to his roomie about his treacherous run of burglary, butchery, and bloodshed. How he was left-handed but had the ability to stab his victims to make it look like a rightie did it. His cell soldier ratted him out... don't they always? Tossing Reid's belongings the screws found a memoir containing key details about the homicide. Combined with letters sent to one of his high school English teachers detectives now had a clearer view of what really transpired.

Tim Laney, the original suspect in the LeBrun murder who 'celebrated' his twentieth birthday during the two and a half months he languished in lockup awaiting a trial date for capital murder, was roused from his cell on Friday, October 30th and abruptly and without explanation spat out on to the sidewalk. Another innocent man Josh Gordon had been sprung six weeks earlier but only after his lawyer demanded a hearing to ascertain exactly what

investigators had against his client. Turns out there wasn't a shred of physical or credible circumstantial evidence against either man. Both had alibis never fully vetted.

The story Laney told the press days after his release was harrowing. A coerced confession after a ten hour long grilling during which the suspect reportedly asked for a lawyer but was told, "This isn't TV." He had an alibi but detectives threatened his witness with life in prison if he didn't change his story. Laney was lied to about his family identifying him in the ATM photo, threatened with the death penalty—all perfectly legal, of course. (Well, except for the part about being denied a lawyer.) Police Capt. Jim Scifres was quoted as saying, "I admit it is not the norm for us to charge people [with first-degree murder charges] and then release them but when we get additional evidence sometimes that occurs." By "additional" the Captain apparently meant actual evidence. District Attorney Jim Kimel found the incident disturbing enough to suggest police start recording interrogations adding, "If a person asks for an attorney, even if they already waived counsel, you ought to stop questioning the person."

Ed's Day in Court

Coffey and Grimes pled to second-degree murder, agreeing to testify against Reid. Shaun O'Connor sat beside Ed LeBrun's father Sid in the courthouse, "Every day of the trial I was there. Robert Reid just sat there spinning his pen with a smug look on his face. I remember vividly Benny from Spins and I having to contain ourselves because all we could think of was taking that pen and sticking it into his neck and chest."

Assistant District Attorney Richard Panosh prosecuted the case for the state, "Ed LeBrun had dreams. He took those dreams and turned them into goals. He worked hard and turned them into a business. "The defendant had fantasies. His fantasy... to become a Ninja Warrior. The defendant dreamed he

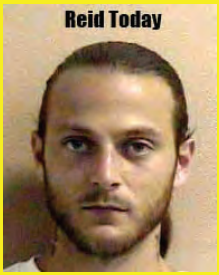
would form his own little army. One of the things he wanted to become was an assassin, and unfortunately Mr. LeBrun became the object of his fantasy." Panosh hammered the point home by pounding the jury box twelve times, once for each slice of the dagger, to highlight not just the brutality and length of the assault but the dozen opportunities Reid had to stop.

The trial lasted more than two weeks, the defense declined to call any witnesses or allow the accused to take the stand. When the verdict was read LeBrun's family and friends were jubilant; tough guy Robert Reid openly wept into his tie. Never again to breathe the air of a free man he barely escaped the electric chair.

Nine months after one of the most depraved murders Greensboro was ever witness to, and following a daisy chain of low level drug busts, local law enforcement and the ABC Board put boots on what had become known as "Babyland" in a pre-dawn raid following a First Friday event in May of 2000. Pills, tabs, baggies and origamis filled with white powder carpeted the floor after club goers dropped their drugs to avoid a possession charge. Cops broomed up more than enough evidence to shutter the nightclub for good.

Zachary Grimes is halfway through his thirty year sentence, Jon Coffey faces another twenty years on ice. Grimes' letters to me are circumspect, riddled with regret: "Every day of this sentence I've been drug free, as the drugs started to be leeched from my body over time my mind started to heal. The pollution that helped magnify my ignorance and studied stupidity was now gone.

"I will never lose sight of the pain I've caused the people who loved [Ed LeBrun]. They never got to say goodbye and their last memory of him is tainted. It's so clear now, I just can't believe I was so stupid. I believe Robert Reid is a truly evil person, sadly our names will be used together as long as the internet exists. I can only pray he lives forever in this place that crushes every last thing you love."

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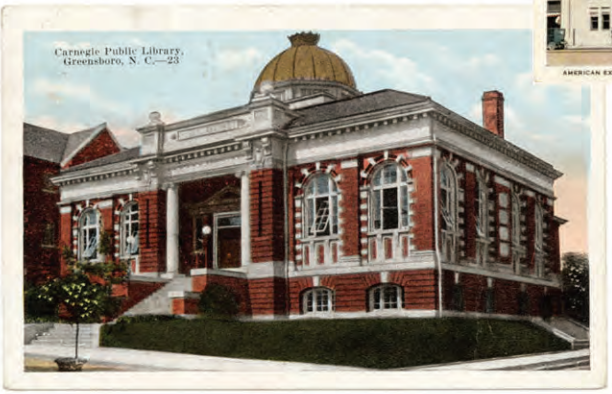


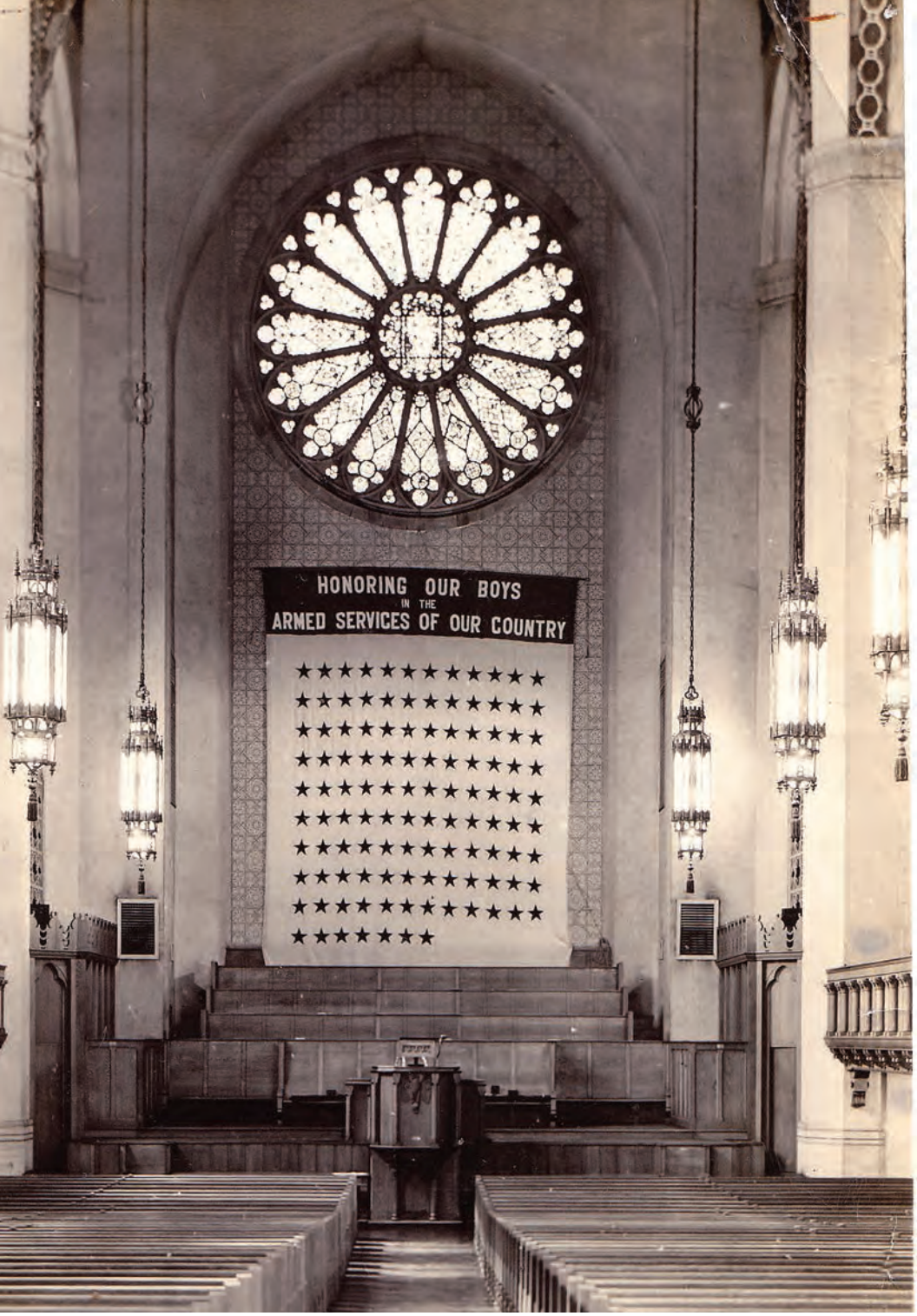

CITY of GREENSBORO

With my thanks
and appreciation to
Miss Shirley Ingram
Roger W. Harrison
Mayor


GREENSBORO
Congratulates
HIGH POINT—
May You Have Many More
Years of Progress

King Cotton Hotel brought down by controlled demolition.

Photo courtesy of Greensboro History Museum


HONORING OUR BOYS
IN THE
ARMED SERVICES OF OUR COUNTRY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HAMBURGERS
WE SELL MILLIONS NATION-WIDE
SHAKES


KWIK-BURGER
FOOD MODELED
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DEL BURGER 29¢
BAR BQ SLAW 40¢
HOT DOGS 25¢

2612 Battleground Avenue 1974

Ely-Bloodworth Motors at 315 N. Elm in 1938


Post Office and U. S. Court House,
Greensboro, N. C.


The

Andy Williams bounced me on his knee during a performance at the Plantation Supper Club when I was a baby. Around the same time Miyoshi Umeki wrote this on a postcard: "I don't know you yet but I like to be your friend." Maybe that's why I've always been a big fan of both.

Tate Street


Bakery Pantry Cellar

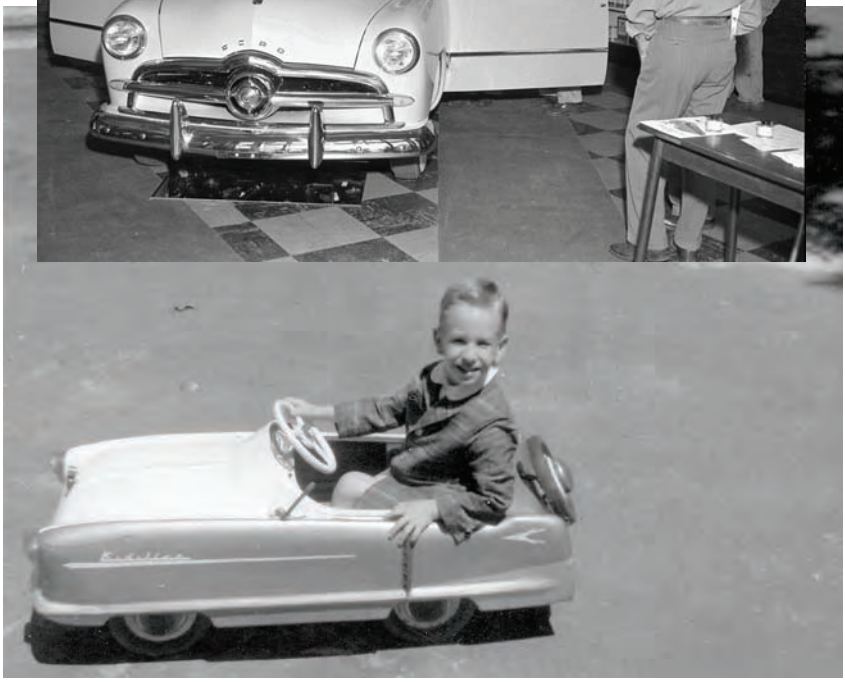

APPLE HOUSE
RESTAURANT
Applecellar


NEMA
THE BEATLES IN THEIR FIRST FULL LENGTH
HILARIOUS FILM "A HARD DAY'S NIGHT"


POLICE
TRAFFIC


Tenth Annual Fair, October 12-15, 1909,
South Elm Street, Greensboro, N. C.
(2232-1)
FAIR


1482
SUMMIT AVENUE LOOKING WEST, GREENSBORO, N. C.



Top photos © Carol W. Martin/
Greensboro History Museum Collection

About the Author

Billy Ingram launched TVparty.com in 1997 and it quickly became one of the internet's hottest spots for entertainment and information, attracting millions of users a month. *TVparty!* was the first to broadcast clips of TV shows online.

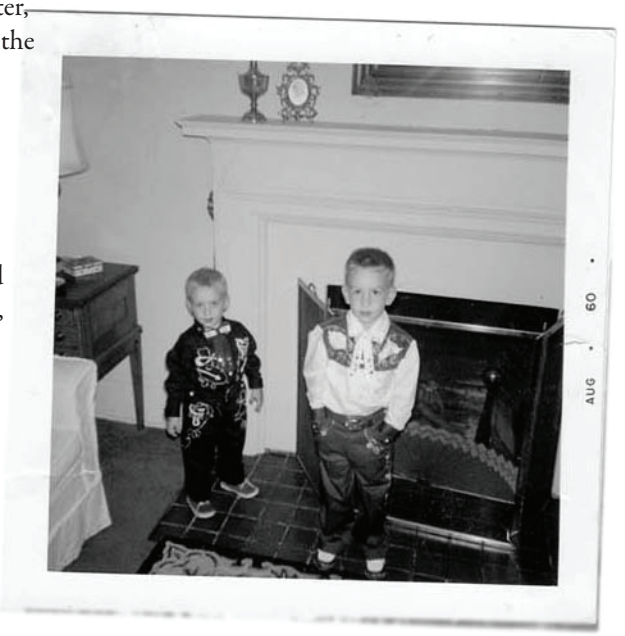
In 2002 he released the best-selling book *TVparty: Television's Untold Tales* to rave reviews from around the world. He wrote and starred in a series for VH1, *Super Secret TV Formulas,* and two series on Bravo along with *The Christmas Special Christmas Special.*

Billy Ingram produced, art directed, conducted and transcribed dozens of interviews to craft the storyline for *Beyond Our Wildest Dreams*, an oral history of The Rat Pack Golddiggers in the 1970s. He also produced the Eisner Award nominated book *Dear John: The Alex Toth Book*. In 2013 he authored a memoir, *Punk,* about his years covering the LA punk rock scene and wrote the novel *Reverend Buck Goes to College* in 2014.

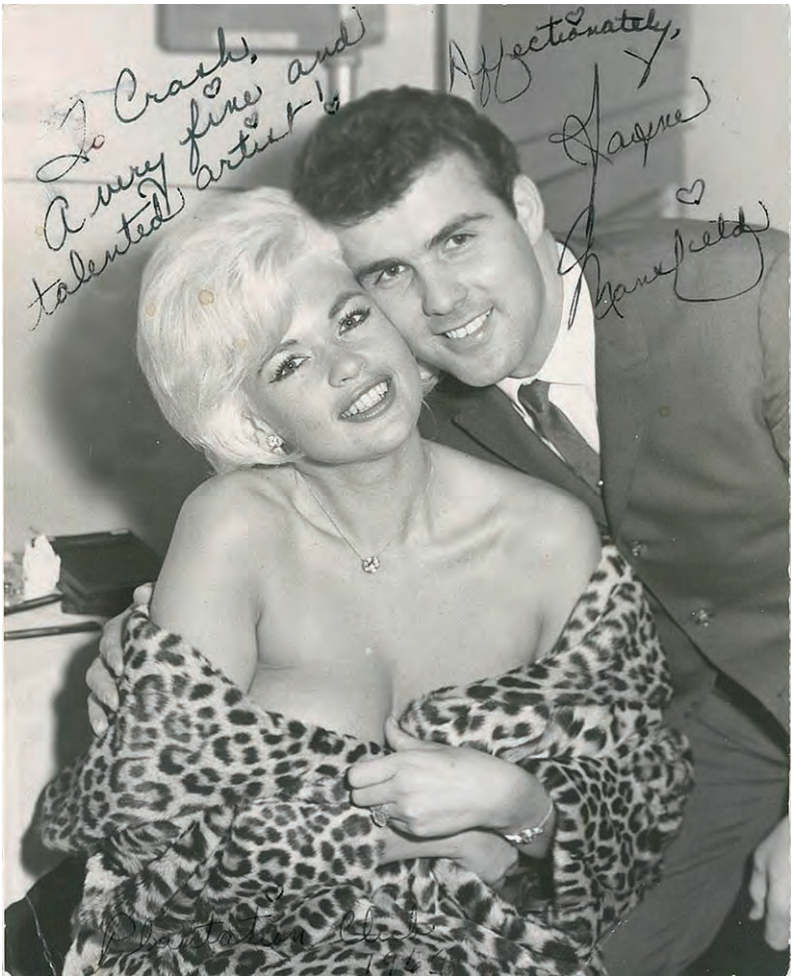
He was a designer on some of the most successful Academy Award campaigns, film trailers, and movie posters of all time, for stars like Harrison Ford, Barbra Streisand, Tom Cruise, Steven Spielberg and many others.

An internationally acclaimed actor, internet pioneer, artist, and writer, Billy Ingram starred in the indie motion picture *Lake of Fire.*

Currently he is writing features for *O.Henry* magazine, *Yes! Weekly* and, in 2017, produced a local music TV series, *The Nathan Stringer Summer Music Show* now on DVD. .



The author with his younger brother.


To Crash,
A very fine and
talented artist!
Affectionately,
Jayne
Jayne Mansfield