

HOOTS & HOWLING MADNESS

A Journal of Liberty County, Texas — Our History and Our History in the Making

VOL. 1 No. 52

“TRUTH WITHOUT BIAS. SARCASM WITHOUT MERCY.”

FEB. 27, 2022

One Year Done and Gone
The Final Issue of Volume 1
Featuring some of the Year's
Better (or less awful) Work



As soon as you can, take a cross country road trip without GPS in a car that has only an AM/FM radio and windows you have to roll down with a crank.

Drive to a place that looks like the world is big, a place where you can see the horizon a hundred miles away.

Find the last working payphone and call your high school sweetheart. Call your parents, if they're still around, and tell them you're okay.

Stay in cheap motels and eat in roadside diners.

Listen to vinyl albums, starting with Frampton Comes Alive.

Read a book that blows your mind.

Take photos on film.

Drink a Coke from a real glass Coke bottle, curvy and green.

Wear blue jeans faded by the sun.

Go surfing.

Dig for clams.

Stay up all night and talk.

Smoke a cigarette, if you want.

Remember for one last time the way things have always been and the way you once thought they would always be. Remember all the things you would do someday.

Everything changes, and we've had the change accelerator pushed to the floor for a long time. Soon we will all be strangers in a strange land. There will be nothing left of the world we knew. Then, a moment later, there will be no one left who can remember it, and no one will ever again know how very good it was.



HOOTS & HOWLING MADNESS

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in Liberty, Texas.

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Identify yourself with the living and the good

By Casey Stinnett, April 4, 2021

Over the past decade there has been a good deal of discussion, and a good deal more argument, revolving around subjects of self-identity — too much of it done by shouting and too little with any serious reflection.

In some cases the issue at hand has seemed simple and clearcut, sometimes to the point of its becoming laughable, such as the scandal over whether Sen. Elizabeth Warren should have identified herself as Native American. In other cases the issues have been very complex, involving sex, race, ethnicity, nationalism, current politics, murders, football, public restrooms, our entire history as a country, and some very deep personal psychology.

Perhaps it would be helpful to step back from it all and think hard about what it means to identify ourselves as one thing or another and why it matters so much.

When we talk about identity in this context, we speak of matters that are deeply personal and emotional, but we also speak of things that are usually without physical substance and often without any factual support. Some of our self-identifying might be entirely illusionary, mere figments of our imaginations. So much so, that despite our believing otherwise, we often have complete control over it.

We each, in a sense, say to ourselves, I am this and not that. I am this because I was born this. My parents and grandparents were this, and so I am this, too. This is in my blood, in my genes. This is who I am. It defines me. I belong to this.

That last bit is key, belonging. Humans, even humans as unsocial as your editor, are social animals. It is hardwired into us as primordial instinct and as powerful as is our instinct to survive. For human beings the two are one and the same. Our most distant human ancestors lived in groups in order to survive.

Acceptance into a group has meaning to us in the very base of our brains. Acceptance means security and survival. There also, in that part of our brains where our most basic instincts abide, next to our hardwiring that regulates our breathing and the beating of our hearts, lies our worst fear, the fear of being rejected by our society, of being abandoned or ostracized. We fear rejection because rejection means death.

Humans are not herding, but trooping animals, like

chimpanzees. At times, for reasons no one yet understands, a chimpanzee troop will cast out one of its own. When this happens, even in a place where food and water are abundant, the rejected chimp will not survive. It will not try to survive. When a chimpanzee is ostracized by its troop, it will simply lie down and die. Chimps have been observed dying of thirst only feet away from water.

Aristotle wrote that to live outside of society one must be either a beast or a god. Even Socrates, when given the choice between ostracism and death, chose death, as to him they were one and the same.

Human beings, to feel safe, to have any sense of self or self-worth, must belong to a troop. We must have that sense of belonging, and because it is driven by instinct, hardwired into us, we must have it even when it serves no practical purpose and is unjustified by our circumstances.

To satisfy our need to belong, we will identify with and give complete loyalty to just about any group that will have us. The group itself does not need to know we identify with it. For that matter, the group does not always have to actually exist in order to satisfy our need for belonging.

Marketers know this and take advantage of it. It is why people become so very loyal to professional sports teams. It is also why people feel brand loyalty, committing themselves to eating only Heinz Ketchup and never Hunts.

Knowing this, we should know much of what makes up our self-identities is under our control. We are not born to it, but acquire our self-identities by choice.

An important example of this is whether a white person living in 21st century Texas thinks of himself, defines himself, as a Southerner in any sense that is related to the events of the 19th century — the Civil War, the Confederacy, Reconstruction, segregation, etc.

There is no rational reason to support such self-identity, and no reason identifying with 19th century Southerners should influence a 21st century person's thoughts on current issues, and yet millions of Southerners today believe they owe a sort of mystical loyalty to Southerners of the past. They imagine themselves to have a bond with their Southern ancestors, a bond of which those late ancestors are wholly unaware and to which they do not reciprocate.

This kind of self-identity is entirely illusionary, existing only in the imagination, and it is dangerous. It is destructive of the bonds we should hold with our living neighbors and our present society.

A short and handy reminder list of things that are not the same

By Casey Stinnett, June 6, 2021

- A gun is not the same thing as courage.
- Fear is not the same thing as cowardice.
- Legal does not mean good, right or honest.
- A flag is not patriotism.
- Belief is not the same thing as knowledge.
- Ignoring reality is not the same as having faith.
- Holding power is not the same thing as deserving respect.
- Disagreement is not the same as disrespect.
- Being popular is not the same thing as being right.
- Wealth is not wisdom.
- Poverty is not failure.
- Failure is not worthlessness.
- Disappointment is not the same thing as having been treated unfairly.
- Turning the other cheek is not the same thing as passivity.
- Passivity is not the same thing as weakness.
- Aggression is not the same as strength.
- Exciting is not the same thing as important.
- Unkind is not the same as immoral.
- Being busy is not the same thing as working.
- Being sorry is not the same as making amends.
- Being offended is not the same as being victimized.
- Getting in the last word is not the same as winning the argument.

History, not heritage

By Casey Stinnett, July 11, 2021

Anyone who argues Confederate monuments should be maintained because they represent our heritage either misses the point or does not know the meaning of the word heritage.

That so many Southerners consider Confederate statues, flags, or anything else about the Confederacy to be part of their heritage, is itself the problem and the reason for getting rid of them.

Heritage is the culture we inherit. Southerners' fondness for sugary iced tea is part of our heritage. Our inability to pronounce certain words correctly is part of our heritage. Gumbo, fish fries, banjos, watermelons, distrust of labor unions, houses with long front porches, and cowboy boots are all parts of our heritage.

Racism is a big part of our past, but it ought to be dead now and no longer part of our living culture. That is, it should be only a part our history, but no part of our heritage.

Likewise, while the Confederacy is a part of our history, it should not be any part of our heritage. It should not be part of our current, living culture inherited from our forebears. Instead, it should be a part of our long dead past, something to be studied, but not lived; a shameful past from which we should distance ourselves, not a part of our history to be honored.

If you identify with the Confederacy, stop doing that. If you respect those fine Southern gentlemen who so bravely fought to defend their state's right to maintain slavery, stop doing that, too.

If you give a fig whether a statue you've never seen, in a place you have never been, is moved to a private location or left wherever it is, then you need to see a psychologist about your weirdly misplaced priorities.

Clinging to the Confederacy as a part of our heritage is only a way of our continuing to avoid admitting the South was wrong, that in betraying their country and seeking to maintain slavery the Confederates represent the worst of our past. They should be a source of shame, not pride.

Hightower, Smith and the process

BY CASEY STINNETT, MAY 9, 2021

Among the many, many things that raced through my mind Jan. 6 while watching on television the events at Washington, D.C. was a memory of an article I read last year about Dallas White's arrest in 1934 for a murder of a man in Devers.

It came to mind because of what happened after his arrest, or what was prevented from happening because of two local elected officials who I believe put aside their own feelings and judgments, and perhaps prejudices, too, and upheld the law at risk to their own lives. The law they upheld in this instance was not the substantive law of right and wrong, but the more important law in a country like ours, the procedural law. That is the law we rely upon to make sure the rest of the law is applied fairly.

Dallas White — alias Dallas Smith, alias Jack Johnson — was a black man accused of the murder of J.J. Andress and the assault of Mrs. Andress who both had surprised White as he burgled their home near Devers.

White stole their car and ran, but he was quickly caught in Beaumont and returned to Liberty County for trial. He was tried quickly, too. He was caught Oct. 10, 1934 and went on trial Oct. 17, 1934.

White confessed to the crimes. There were no other suspects. White tried to commit suicide while in custody and awaiting trial.

There were newspaper accounts of the murder, trial and subsequent execution across the state, and as was the practice of newspapers at that time, whenever the accused was African American, the fact of his race featured prominently and repeatedly in every report.

Such reporting had its effect. On his first night in the Liberty County jail a mob of around 400 collected at the jail with the intent of lynching White.

Between the mob and White stood Liberty County Sheriff L.V. Hightower and District Attorney Clyde E. Smith.

A wire service report of the event says the mob approached the jailhouse door with a telephone pole, evidently intending to batter in the door, but they were stopped by Hightower and Smith, who "told the mob they would be met with 'plenty of fight' if attempts

were made to take the negro."

The report quoted Smith saying later, "After so long a time and much talking, the mob decided to let the law take its course."

We cannot know what Smith or Hightower were thinking at that moment or what either thought of White, and I do not pretend to any special insight, but what I believe I see in this episode are two men dedicated to upholding the highest standards of the law.

With a confession in hand, both men almost certainly believed White guilty. A week later, Smith pursued and won a death sentence for White. Surely, Smith and Hightower anticipated on the night of Oct. 10 that the outcome of the trial would be death for White. Yet, both men stood between White and a mob that would lynch him, putting their lives on the line to save the life of a man virtually guaranteed to die for his crimes.

Whatever their true motives, I want to believe they were willing to lay down their lives for the law, for the processes of the law, that we may continue to have a government of laws and not of men.

It is that we abide by the processes of the law that matters most. The substantive law can be right or wrong, but if the processes of the law are disregarded, then there is no law.

That was the great offense committed Jan. 6. Disliking the outcome of an election, a mob thought it right to put aside the whole of the law. That can never be right. Even in response to corruption, the procedures established by law must be followed.

When an umpire makes a bad call, coach and players might protest, they might argue, yell, kick dirt and so on. But, when they have said all they can say, whether the umpire changes his call or not, whether he was right or wrong, the players and coaches go back to their dugout and go on with the game.

That's the way we do it here.

The former president and his supporters are far from being the first to think they were robbed in an election. They are only the first unwilling to put it behind them and move on to the next election. They are the first who tried to end the game now and forever over what they saw as one bad call.

Words to Live By: Integrity

By Ann Marie Miller

Webster defines Integrity as the quality of being honest and having strong moral principles; moral uprightness.

It's easy to preach Integrity but living those words is the hard part. Actions always speak louder than words. It takes courage to stand up, speak up, and act for what is right. To act with integrity, often means you stand alone in your integrity.

The curse of being honest and operating with integrity is that often times the truth is hard to hear. Others won't respect your integrity and will react against you because the truth doesn't always reflect their thoughts and desires. That's the thing about integrity though, if it's your guiding force; the actions of others aren't as important as staying true to yourself and your morals and ethics.

It's easy to be strong in character in the good times. The test is the bad times. If you can't live your principles then, well they aren't principles they are just hobbies.

Acting with Integrity isn't easy. There's a saying, "what is right is not always popular, and what is popular is not always right." It's so much easier to drop your integrity to meet the needs and views of others but in the end integrity means standing strong but often standing alone. Integrity can be easily purchased with promises of friendship, social status, money, rewards and more but you shouldn't let someone who doesn't know the value of integrity to set its worth. If you value yourself and your integrity, your worth will far exceed short-term rewards.

You see, the price of integrity is high but the reward is great. The reward of integrity is being able to face yourself in the mirror each day. It's being able to sleep with a clear conscience each night. It's being an example for your children and grandchildren, for your co-workers, your friends, and even strangers. Be the leader you would want to follow.

The thing about Integrity is you either have it or you don't, but it's never too late to start operating with Integrity. The choice is yours, hopefully you'll make the right one.

The Value of Thank You Notes

By Trish Robinson

Lately, I've noticed that kids are not being taught to write thank you notes.

I will admit that I'm "old school" about this ritual, but my mother and grandmothers all taught me how important it was to do. It's not so important anymore, by my recent experiences.

Over the past few years, I've bought gifts for people getting married or having babies or graduating, and instead of just sticking money in an envelope, I have spent valuable time searching for something personal. I try to find something that an individual or couple would like or something that aligns with their personality and interests.

What happens next is the puzzling part. I never know if they even received the gift, because I'm never contacted. If I spend the time sending you a gift, you can spend 30 seconds writing me a quick email to let me know you received it, then another 5 minutes writing a thank you note and mailing it.

Recently, I put together a picnic basket with a beautiful quilt inside it, along with plastic dishes that can be used outside and won't get broken. I added some homemade jam and pickles, along with a bottle of champagne and glasses, and one of my favorite poetry books. I thought it was a nice, romantic gesture for a couple getting married and starting a life.

A few months later, the mother of the couple was holding a yard sale, so I stopped by to chat and see what she was selling. Yep! You know where this is going, right? There was my picnic basket, with everything inside it, marked with a price tag of \$5.00!

The mother didn't know it was from me, so I bought it. I will admit that it hurt my feelings.

However, I did learn a valuable lesson. Never give a gift with the expectation of getting anything in return, including any expression of appreciation or thank you. I'm going forward now just buying gifts for people I truly want to give something, and once the gift is let go, I try to never think about it again.

What about you? Share your thoughts. (trishrobinson[at]gmail.com). Are you teaching your children to follow up with gift givers and to write thank you notes? Please make sure they do when they graduate high school. A lot of us old ladies were raised by old ladies and would appreciate the gesture. It will put a smile on our face and remember you as "Jane's nice son Raymond who was raised right." Also, if you plan to regift something or put it in a garage sale, do it in a neighborhood out of town, where someone like me won't stumble across it and realize how much time was wasted buying a gift that was never used or appreciated.

History of Banana Pudding

By Trish Robinson

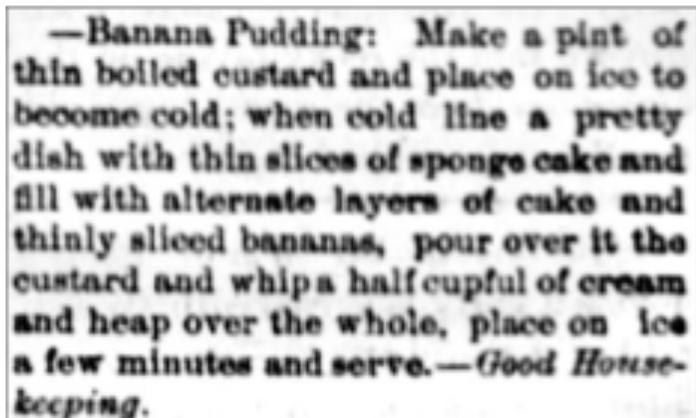
Banana pudding is one of the best, if not the best dessert, in my opinion. I always love seeing it sitting on the dessert table at family reunions, and any time I go to a barbecue restaurant, I always ask if it's on the menu.

Recently, I had some banana pudding that was made a little bit differently than the standard version with cookies, pudding, bananas, and whipped topping or meringue. It caused me to wonder, "Who invented banana pudding and how old is the recipe?" I spent the next several hours attempting to locate the first banana pudding recipe.

I found out that banana pudding is an invention by the home cook, and not a newspaper or magazine. Robert Moss, a food editor and writer for *Serious Eats*, traced the first banana pudding recipe back to 1888, printed in an issue of *Good Housekeeping*. I researched the archives of the magazine, but couldn't locate a copy of the recipe. I wrote to Robert Moss and asked him for the publication date of the magazine that year. He wrote back the following:

"Hi, Trish. I don't have the actual *Good Housekeeping* issue it was published in, but it was reprinted in several newspapers in 1888, including the *Neenah Daily Times* (Neenah, Wisconsin) on Sept 7, 1888. See clip below."

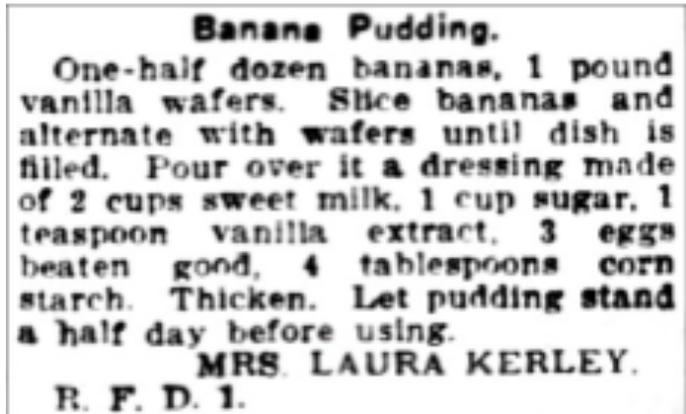
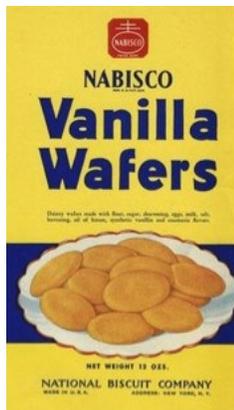
Banana puddings were first made with various forms



of sponge cake in the layers. In the early 1900s, Nabisco produced Vanilla Wafer cookies.

In 1921, Mrs. Laura Kerley submitted a recipe to the Bloomington Illinois *Pantagraph* for the first banana pudding recipe made with these cookies. Her recipe was republished in many magazines and newspapers across the country.

Around 1940, Nabisco began reprinting the recipe on the side of



their cookie boxes, and the modern form of dessert we know as banana pudding was born. The name of the product was not changed to "Nilla Wafers" until 1967.

In 1956, bananas became much cheaper and easier to access due to the Federal Aid Highway Act, leading to a 41,000-mile interstate highway system. Bananas were transported to grocery stores much faster, and the prices dropped considerably. At some point after WWII, banana



pudding became closely associated with the south, with newspapers like the Oregon Statesman describing banana pudding as having "a touch of the south." Robert Moss speculated this was because banana pudding is a dessert that can feed a large crowd, can be made in bulk, and is easy to serve. It also doesn't need to be kept refrigerated for large family gatherings.

My family gatherings always had a delicious banana pudding that was made by one of my aunts or my late great-grandmother. I always wondered what their secret was to such a delicious tasting version. When my aunt passed away, I inherited a collection of family recipes she had gathered over the years. In it was my great-aunt's version of the famous family banana pudding. Imagine my surprise when I read that she used boxed pudding and store bought whipped topping! I think her version was just a little bit better because it was made with love by her. Isn't that what most delicious southern food is really all about?

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INFANTE

By Frank Longoria

As the windshield wipers swept back and forth on this rainy night making their washing machine sound, Infante lit his third cigar of the shift. Luxuriating in the aromatic smoke of a newly-lit Acid cigar, he contemplated his career as he patrolled his district in the southwest part of the county.

Infante had been assigned to this district almost exclusively for the three and a half years he had been employed at the Freedom County Sheriff's Office. During the nine years before that he had worked for the City Police Department which was located within the same district. Infante was in his thirteenth year as a cop and at the age of 44 was somewhere in that physical purgatory of which eventually everyone becomes a victim. He would attempt some physical feat which he had mundanely performed for years only to find, much to his chagrin, that this same task required a second or third effort or even more embarrassingly that he was unable to do it at all.

Infante was a pragmatist, fully aware of the limitations imposed by encroaching age as well as the statistics involving middle-aged officers trying to keep up with the rookies only to find themselves flat on their backs with these same rookies hovering over them clamping their mouths over theirs in a manner which usually included the cost of dinner and a movie. However, those clamping of the lips did not normally include the other person also beating on your chest while screaming "Breathe!"

No, Infante was definitely not the world-beater he had once been, though the truth be told, having entered the law enforcement field at the relatively ripe old age of 32, he had never thought himself to be Superman, an affliction from which most rookies suffered. Infante had been involved in one foot-pursuit in his career. That one had occurred several years before and was a shared victory in that he had actually double-teamed with another officer to catch the bad guy. Lest it be thought that the catch was tainted or should be marked with an asterisk, it should be mentioned that the second officer was the same size as Infante, 6 feet 1 inch tall, 300 pounds, while the bad guy was a slim, 19-year-old male who felt that a night in the county jail was not to his liking, and so had bid Infante and his partner adieu as he bolted for freedom

between them. Infante's partner, although being built similarly to him, was also ten years younger and thus quicker to react.

When the bad guy made his break Infante's partner, Otto, took off behind him and kept up with him for the first fifteen feet, long enough to grab the suspect around the neck in a head-lock, raising Infante's hopes that this would bring the chase to a quick end. His hopes were dashed when he saw Otto trip as he wrestled with the suspect, losing his grip as he fell to the ground, much to the amusement of the bystanders. Infante, who had been trailing along behind Otto and the suspect somewhat diffidently, like a catcher trailing the batter down to first base on a routine ground ball, saw Otto relinquish his grip on the suspect who had also stumbled, almost falling to the ground alongside Otto. Infante resigned himself and, mindful of the jeering crowd, quickened his pace, hoping to catch the miscreant before he was able to regain his balance. It turned out to be a forlorn hope. As he neared the kid, he put his hand down to the ground to steady himself then staggered for two or three steps before suddenly straightening up and putting some distance between himself and Infante.

Infante, seeing the train leaving the station and aware that he couldn't catch the kid in a foot race even if the kid had been running backwards, made a decision and mentally crossing himself, made a move he hadn't tried since high school football, throwing himself at the kid's feet in an attempt to tackle him. As he, in his mind anyway, flew parallel to the ground, Infante realized that the bystanders were watching his desperate move, waiting for him to crash and burn, so that they could have another laugh at the cops' expense. Much to everyone's surprise, especially the kid's, who was probably already formulating the story he would regale his buddies with later, Infante's gamble paid off and he was able to grab the kid at the ankles, or more precisely, ankle, since he had managed to grab just the right foot. As Infante desperately pulled the kid's foot into his chest, while trying to corral the other one, the kid continued to run, looking for all the world like he had one foot nailed to the floor.

Continued on page 27.

THE EDGE

BY BETTY DICKETT

Ms. Mary sat on the edge of life. Some days, if she were not careful, she could feel herself in danger of falling off, today had been one of those days, but Ms. Mary was trying to be careful. Her chair rocked rhythmically back and forth keeping time with the slowed down motion of life that was now her tempo.

It was her secret that she could sometimes feel the world turn, sometimes so gently that it reminded her of the brushing of moth's wings, sometimes with a violent jerk that so shook her she would always look around in surprise that no one else seemed to feel it. She longed to talk about it to someone, but she did not dare — they were always too ready as it was to think her mind had left her. All they needed was an additional excuse and she would be off, transported from home to die miserably in some old folk's home. She had seen the faces of those people when they went to visit Emma, her husband's sister. No, she would be careful. She would keep her secret, perhaps thinking of it would help pass the hours, the eternities, she had to spend alone in her own memories. She had recalled them all so often they were almost worn out now and getting dusty and dim.

There had been nothing particularly exciting about her life to remember, she had never felt any need for there to be, being a mother then had been enough. Not so anymore she thought wryly, being a mother was no longer important to anyone least of all the mother herself, no time for it, no time. There it went again, gently, soft as a whisper, but it did rock. And no importance in being old, in being a mother's mother. Everything was so changed, so different now, no wonder the world rocked.

The porch was large, wide, and curving as she rocked in her chair, gently, in the circle of shade cast by the huge, lavender, vitex bush. It partially obscured her from street view. She felt it a suitable place for her to sit, for one who only half-way existed and that was acknowledged so reluctantly by those she had raised. Someone was coming up the steps, voices carried to her ears — Company! She stopped rocking and sat silently expecting not to be noticed, it was less painful if she was not noticed when not noticed. There had been a day when she first came to live with them when she looked forward to visitors with new thoughts, new words to listen to, but she had learned since then, learned she was meant to be invisible. There it went

again. Harder this time. Large blue veins stood out on her hands as she gripped the arms of the rocker to steady herself. Surely, they had felt it! She looked to see, but they had not.

However, they had seen her after all, and one woman was breaking away and coming toward her. Oh yes! Now she remembered Jana, child-hood friend of her daughters, they still seemed to like each other. Her daughter followed closely — her daughter, that strange, harsh-mouthed woman? Everyday they had played together, often by her feet in the kitchen or in the yard while she worked her day lilies, wherever she was, whatever she was doing. Such a short time ago, such a long time ago. She looked up at her daughter she had always had time for, but that was only natural for a mother then, and for a fleeting second, she saw her again, the soft, sweet mouth, upturned at the corners, the trusting eyes, and then the world shook violently.

She had to stay in bed and rest for awhile after that, but not for long. They were busy and took no notice of her anyway, so she crept back on silent feet, feet made silent from years of looking in on sick or sleeping children and resumed her place on the porch — and rocked. This was where she liked to be, then if the world did rock, she could hold on to the arms of the rocker and be safe. This much was hers. Her one possession, she had insisted on keeping it and she was glad. It had served her many years, many uses, and now it was old, like her, but still useful if used properly, still with a purpose. She liked to think of this heirloom rocker that was once her grandmothers. How many babies it had rocked, how many troubles it had soothed.

The birds sang sweetly in the bush before her. Red-birds were nesting within its canopy. Spring was the sweetest time of the year. She thought that with every season, but if she had a favorite, it was spring. All the springs that she remembered children's voices blended with the birds, playing, running, in the newly greened grass. From inside the house the sound of television gun shots drowned out the red birds, music like tin striking against steel rose over the roar of some electrical appliance, an aid to housekeeping so that the mother could be freer. Freer for what? It all soured the spring air.

Amarillo Alligator

By Chris Brinson

It had been a long week — I just wanted to go home to Robyn and decompress over the weekend. The last thing I wanted on a Friday evening was a circus on our front lawn.

It started innocently enough. We had just gotten the type of thunderstorm in Amarillo that very rarely occurs. Roads were slick, the ground was saturated and ditches were full.

I made it home safely, walked to the curbside to retrieve the rubbish bin and out of the corner of my eye, saw something under the culvert that made me do a double take.

I hurried inside. Robyn was at her computer furiously typing.

“I think there’s an alligator beneath the driveway.” I stated matter-of-factly.

She looked up. “Don’t be absurd, David. An alligator in North Texas?”

I shrugged and said nothing else of the matter.

We ate supper. At half past seven, I went outside for a final check. And sure enough, it was an alligator — a big one. It was fully sprawled upon the lawn basking in the evening sun. I froze, turned around and gingerly stepped back inside.

“Robyn, I whispered.

She looked at me quizzically.

“Come here.” I motioned.

She followed. I held her hand. We stepped toward the driveway. I pointed at our reptilian visitor. She let out a scream that curdled my spine, ran back inside, slamming the door behind her. I quickly followed.

The alligator scampered down into the ditch and back under the driveway.

“What in the hell are we going to do?” she asked.

“I say we just leave it alone.” I stated.

“But how did it get here, David? In Amarillo?”

“Maybe it was somebody’s pet and got too big to be a pet.”

“We just can’t let it stay there!” She started clicking and swiping her phone.

Her social media post travelled faster than light.

A crowd of neighbors gathered in our yard. They were shining flashlights down the culvert and trying to prod the alligator with shovels.

And then they broke out the lawn chairs. Someone

even showed up with an igloo full of beer. Another fool brought a double barrel shotgun and proceeded to pace back and forth over our driveway keeping watch.

Everyone argued about the size of the alligator and what they should name it. Their kids were peering into the culvert saying things like “Here Gator, gator...” as if it were a little lost kitten beneath the driveway.

Before long, the news vans arrived. Helicopters hovered. We sat on our porch and watched the farce unfold.

A couple approached us. “Hey y’all” said the lady, “I’m Wanda, and this is my husband, Roy.”

Roy tipped his hat.

“We rescue rattlesnakes,” said Wanda. She pointed to the snake tattoo on her neck.

I acknowledged the artistry.

“I’d like to crawl in there and fish the little guy out. He’s probably scared as hell,” said Wanda.

“Crawl into my culvert?” I asked.

“Yes.”

“And... rescue the alligator?”

“Exactly.”

“Ever done any alligator rescues?”

“Nope. But it can’t be too different than rattlesnake rescue.”

Robyn and I looked at one another. I looked back at Wanda and said, “Knock yourself out.”

Wanda pumped her arm and fist and exclaimed, “Hell yeah!”

She crawled into the muck filled pipe while Roy hung a frozen chicken at the other end.

The crowd watched. Seconds passed. Seconds became minutes.

“What the hell have we gotten ourselves into here?” I asked Robyn.

Before she could answer, we heard Wanda let out a loud shriek beneath the concrete.

Roy looked in. “Did he bite ya, Babe?”

“No. He just crawled right over me though!”

“See if you can push him towards me, babe.”

“Damn it, Roy. I’m trying!”

We then heard splashing mixed with Wanda’s screams.” An eerie silence soon fell upon the darkness of the pipe.

LIBERTY COUNTY HAD A TOBACCO FARM & CIGAR FACTORY



The image above of the Blair sawmill, along with that of W.F. Blair below are among the items to be found in the W.F. Blair Collection at the Sam Houston Regional Library and Research Center.



There was once a sawmill town north of Liberty and Dayton, on the west side of the Trinity River, called Blairwood beside the Blair sawmill, and near both in the first decade of the 20th century was the Blair tobacco farm.

W.F. Blair & Co. began planting tobacco at Blairwood in the mid-1890s and had established a cigar factory there by 1898 producing four different brands. One brand was called Blairwood Pride.

In 1899, the Blair farm produced 8,000 pounds of tobacco.

In 1902, W.F. Blair & Co. shipped its first carload of Havana tobacco to the East Coast in January the following year.

The W.F. stood for William Francis. He, with C.R. Cummings and W.C. Huff, incorporated W.F. Blair & Co. in 1907 with capital stock of \$10,000 (roughly \$270,000 in today's money).

The Blairs came to Texas from Ohio in the early 1880s. Among them were John Blair, who died in September 1903 after a very long illness; his brother, Frank Blair; and his sister, Belle Mills. John Blair's children who survived him were sons, F.M. and Pearl B. Blair;

and a daughter, Mattie Butler.

Pearl Blair, who had been involved in the Blair's tobacco business, died at age 28 in January 1904.

In October 1904 two drying kilns at their sawmill were destroyed by fire. The kilns were replaced, and those kilns burned in April 1906. Destroyed with them was \$1,500 worth of lumber, part of which was

intended for construction of a city park pavilion in Liberty that was then delayed.

A flood in 1908 left the road to Blairwood impassable for a month.

The June 26, 1896 edition of *The Liberty Vindicator* included this item about Francis Blair:

Monster Shark.

Mr. Francis Blair, who lives up on the Trinity, a few miles from here, informs us that he killed last Sunday a shark—a man-eater—that measured 7 1-2 feet. He said the fish got into shoal water and before he could make his escape he was harpooned, shot and dragged out. But they had a hard fight with it.

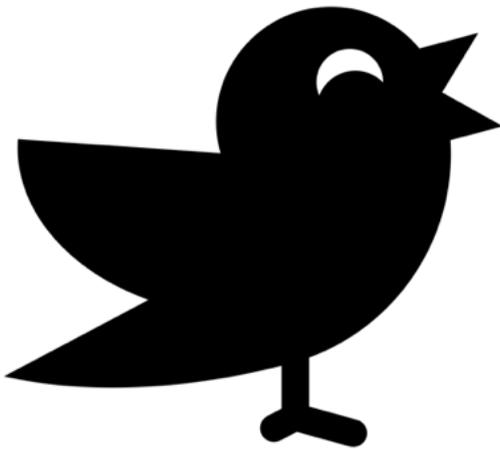
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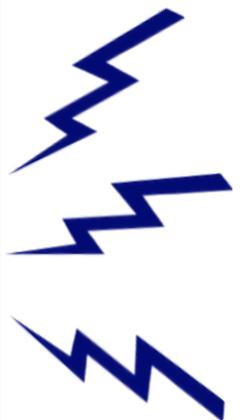
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The Hull State Bank robbery of 1939

and the very odd things to be found on eBay

“Two unmasked gunmen locked two women employees of the Hull State Bank in a vault Wednesday and escaped with an estimated \$10,000 in currency. Two customers walked in a few minutes later and heard the women screaming. Bank officials were located, and the women were released,” says an Associated Press article from July 1939, datelined Hull, Texas.

This was one article found by your editor when researching one Francis Elva Smith, after seeing the item pictured at right for sale on eBay.

The United Press reported, “Officers searched Wednesday for a tall, blond man and his medium-sized, red-haired companion as suspects in the \$14,500 robbery of Hull State bank Wednesday.

“The two men were seen leaving the bank about the time of the robbery. Two women clerks, Florine Hudnall and Hazel Hillard, alone in the bank at the time of the robbery, failed to identify two suspects picked up Wednesday afternoon and the men were released.

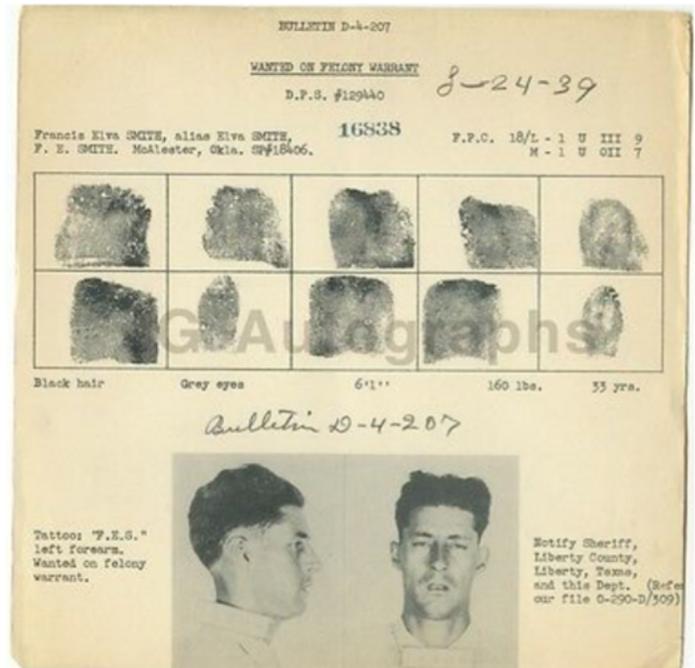
“The bank-robbers entered the bank during the noon hour. One man held a pistol on the two women while the other scooped up all the currency in the vault. The women were then forced into the vault and the door slammed.

“A customer entered the bank 20 minutes later, and hearing the women’s faint screams, he summoned Vice Pres. Guz Ezell.

“Local officers were joined Wednesday night by four Texas rangers—Capt. Hardy Purvis and Rangers R. M. Holliday, Basil Spain and William Rogers—in the search for the two gunmen. Capt. E. W. Mayr, in charge of the Houston office of the state highway patrol, also joined the search.”

An article from the International News Service early that August says, “T. J. “Red” Goldman, 30, was held in the Liberty Jail today on a charge of robbery in connection with the Hull State Bank holdup last July in which \$12,000 was obtained.

“Goldman was surrendered to Sheriff Pat Lowe by Dan Brown, a kinsman, and Jesse Lowe after he ap-



This item was available for sale last March on eBay by JG Autographs in Boston for a “Buy It Now” price of \$49.

peared at Brown’s farm home in Hardin County.”

The United Press then reported from Liberty on Aug. 12, “T. J. Goldman, Corpus Christi oil field worker, admitted today that he and a companion robbed the Hull State Bank near here of \$12,000 two weeks ago. He was arrested on suspicion Sunday and today signed a statement admitting the robbery. He refused to name his companion. Officers said they expected to find part of the money hidden in the woods in Hardin county.”

Aug. 15, the AP said, “Ranger Sergeant E. M. Davenport said today \$2,200 of the \$14,500 obtained in the July 26 robbery of a bank at Hull, Texas, had been recovered here at the home of a father and son held at Liberty, Tex., as suspects in the holdup.

“Part of the money, Sergeant Davenport said, was found in a fruit jar buried in the backyard of the home and the balance was beneath the edge of the house in a large envelope.

* * *

“Sergeant Davenport said the clue that led to re-

covery of the money came from the wife of one of the men held. He said the woman told of seeing her husband bury some money.

"The sergeant said \$470 was found in the jar. Later the father took the officers back to the house and showed them where the balance was cached.

"The man also showed officers where a pistol allegedly used in the robbery had been buried in the yard.

"Both the father and son denied participating in the robbery Sergeant Davenport said.

A Sept. 2, 1939 Associated Press article, datelined Liberty, says "Sheriff Pat C. Lowe filed charges of robbery with firearms here Saturday against Francis Elva Smith, 33, of McAlester, Okla., in connection with the \$12,000 robbery of the Hull State Bank on July 26."

Late that November the local newspaper reported that Francis Elva Smith and T.J. Goleman were jointly charged for the robbery and that Smith, represented by attorney Percy Foreman of Houston, had been released on a \$6,000 bond. The paper went on to name three other men from Houston were "charged in the case with receiving and concealing a part of the loot" — Barney Lee, Gus Lee and William Ray Jarrell.

Out on bond, Smith went on the lam and failed to show for his trial in February 1940. A wire report from mid-March 1940 says, "Sheriff Pat C. Lowe said Sunday that Francis Elva Smith, one of two men wanted for the robbery of the Hull State bank last July, had been arrested in Kansas City.

"Kansas City police wired Sheriff Lowe that Smith had been identified after being arrested for vagrancy. They said Smith agreed to waive extradition proceedings."

A long article in the April 12, 1940 edition of *The Corpus Christi Caller-Times* begins, "The State of Texas today rested its case against T. J. (Red) Goleman, 30, alleged murderer, kidnaper and bank robber, slain last night in a blast of gunfire when he attempted to resist arrest near Kountze, northwest of Beaumont."

"When Hardin and Jefferson County officers trailed Goleman through a big thicket area to a farm home where he was sighted in the yard and closed in on him in a corn crib at the farm house, the suspected murderer and Texas' No. 1 badman, had the following crimes credited to his account:"

The list that followed included the murder of

Charlie "Four Eyes" Brown in Corpus Christi Jan. 11, 1939; the Hull bank robbery; kidnapping Robert Laird, 29, in Dayton March 26, 1940; robbing a bank in Kirbyville; kidnapping and robbing Beaumont cab driver Chester Lockley; and several other kidnappings.

The article went on to say Goleman "knew every pig trail" in the Big Thicket, and that he fired first on the lawmen. Then, said Jefferson County Sheriff W.W. Richardson, "[W]e opened up with sawed-off shotguns and rifles. None of us was hit by Goleman, but he was wounded all over the upper part of his body.

"Goleman had a large supply of groceries and buckshot and was wearing a new pair of overalls," Richardson continued. "He apparently was preparing to hide out in the big thicket."

Smith was on trial in April 1940 when Goleman was killed, and that appears to have been the end of the story as far as the local press or the wire services were concerned.

H&HM has been unable to find whether Smith was convicted or what happened to him afterward.

There is, however, an obituary in the Feb. 16, 1965 edition of *The Odessa American* for a man named Francis Elva Smith, born Sept. 25, 1905 in Blanco, Texas. The obituary says he moved to Odessa in 1953 from Oklahoma. Whoever that Francis Elva Smith was, he was born at the right time to be 33 years old when the Hull bank was robbed, and like the robber Smith, he was from Oklahoma.



Photo of the old jail that stood in Liberty in the 1920s and 30s. Courtesy of the Sam Houston Regional Library and Research Center.

The Collected and Unabridged Adventures of Salon Girl

By Dana Martin

April 11, 2021

As a young woman trying to make my way in life I started college not knowing what I wanted to do. An elementary school teacher friend suggested I get a degree in elementary education so I could have summers off.

I like summers off. So I attended college, thinking I would teach. Then, after 2 years, I finally remembered that as much as I like summers off, I don't really like children so much. They bite and kick. They are forever having to go potty, and the very little ones sometimes need help in the potty. Children need help doing everything. They have to be watched, fed, cleaned, and have their little noses wiped.

I had run out of tuition money, anyway, and was working three part-time jobs as an aerobics instructor, housekeeper and "rose girl."

After a year of barely scraping by, struggling to pay rent and repair my old car, I decided my true calling was the glamorous life of hairdressing.

A year of beauty school and I was on my way.

Now, 32 years later, as it turns out, my career in beauty is not quite as glamorous as I had imagined.

I clip other people's toenails for a living, sometimes thick, fungus-ridden toenails. I help old women to, and more often than you might think, inside, the restroom.

I show them how to use their cell phones, and I wipe their noses.

Once, while doing a pedicure, I had to pick a flying toenail out of my lip gloss.

I have had clients call me to pick them up because they had flats, and once a client had me bring her food to the Verizon store because her blood sugar was low.

Last week, I returned from the supply room to find my elderly client soaking her fingernails in my cup of 7Up.

Yesterday, a sweet little lady asked me not to shampoo her so vigorously because she has arthritis in her hair.

Arthritis in her hair.

My English has been corrected and my clothes ridiculed.

I have been kicked, bitten and slapped.

Some of those tiny gray haired little ladies are as mean as snakes. Or worse, as mean as children.

Gotta go, my next appointment is here.

Lila

April 18, 2021

About 10 years ago, I became attached to an elderly client named Lila. She brought a lot of joy to my weekly visits.

She had a beautiful home and a very expensive car but preferred to drive her RV about town in case she needed to use the restroom or take a short nap between errands and doctor's appointments.

She clipped cars and ran over gas pumps.

She once tore down the awning at the snow cone stand with her RV.

She came in weekly for her shampoo and set and we talked about her life.

She drove alone every year to Las Vegas to see the World Bull Riding Championship Competition.

Once, leaving the salon, she left behind \$600 on my station in cash for payment of her shampoo and roller set.

She drove off as I chased her RV on foot to return her money.

I finally got her to stop and she said "Honey, I left you a tip."

I said "Mrs Lila! Your appointment cost \$20."

She agreed her tip was a bit much, and I gave her \$570 in change.

When a client's scalp is on fire

April 25, 2021

It has not been only my clients that have made my job adventurous. Over the years my many coworkers have been quite the treat to work with as well.

Once, I was finishing a client's color when a co-worker's client said she felt like her scalp was on fire.

She was not my client.

Everyone else had left for lunch. So I called the client's hairdresser to tell her that her customer's scalp was burning from the bleach on her hair.

She had forgotten that her client was still there under the dryer, and she was at Walmart.

I tried to rescue the poor lady, but by then her hair looked like white cotton candy.

The worst situation I have witnessed was when an 85-year-old woman came in for a perm.

She had jet black hair but swore she did not dye it.

So my coworker proceeded with the perm only to see the lady's hair melt off at the scalp as the perm rod's fell into the shampoo bowl with all of her hair still on the rods.

The hairdresser screamed, ran out of the salon, and we never saw her again.

The client paid her bill and went home bald.

My 4 o'clock is here, gotta go.

Draw me a picture

May 2, 2021

A young longtime client came in monthly for cut and color and regularly considered cutting her beautiful long black hair.

I would talk her off the ledge every time as I explained that she should keep her long hair while she is young.

Finally she said that I was not going to talk her out of it anymore.

She scheduled an appointment and promised to bring a picture of the cut she wanted.

When she arrived she handed me a post-it note with a drawing of her desired style.



Going the extra mile

May 9, 2021

I pride myself in my willingness to go the extra mile for my clients. I am always ready for their appointment when they arrive so they know to never sit in the waiting area.

I serve them drinks and snacks and have the TV on

their favorite shows. Sometimes I regret having spoiled my customers, like when they expect me to babysit their children or give them a neck massage.

For years an elderly woman made appointments with me because she could drop off her middle-aged, brain damaged son for a haircut and go next door to purchase groceries while I took care of him.

Once she drops him off and goes to the market. I shampoo his hair and wrap him in a cape to give him a quick cut. I told him I needed to take a restroom break and would be right back.

When I returned my coworker said he left. I ran out to the parking lot and saw him running down the street still wearing my haircut cape.

I was young so I kicked off my heels and ran after him. When I finally caught him two blocks away, he told me he was looking for his mom.

I convinced him that by that time his mother would be at the salon to pick him up. So we walked back, getting to the salon just as his mother arrived, only for her to tell me to just forget about the haircut.

Dementia

May 16, 2021

I have learned a great deal about dementia working with my elderly clients. I used to try to help them by explaining when what they said made no sense. Now I know it is best just to agree with whatever they say.

When Ethel said her husband served in World War II and she emailed him everyday, I just respond "How romantic!"

The morning I spotted Bernice strolling by the shop I went out to get her and she told me that she saw my name on the door but wasn't sure that was where I worked.

Mrs. Lucille brings a plastic doll to her appointments that she believes is her baby. She insists that I hold Sally Sue.

Once I had to change the Sally Sue's diaper.

The most frustrating situation is with Mrs. Betty. She makes weekly appointments and calls every week on the day of her appointment to tell me she is lost.

She tries to tell me her location so I can guide her to the salon — "Dana, I am at the gas station," or "Dana, I am in front of a pink house with a rose bush in front."

Then, I've got to go see if I can find her.

Put that thing up

May 23, 2021

Several years ago I was at work when a homeless man came in and asked for water. He sat in the waiting room as I went to get him a bottle of water.

When I returned he decided to thank me by showing me his penis. I gasped and dropped the water. My coworker calmly told him "to put that thing up."

He obeyed, drank his water and left.

A couple of months later two thug kids came in and saw our jar of cash we keep for people to pay for their specialty coffees. We use the honor system and the jar was by the front door.

They rode up on their bikes, ran in, grabbed the cash and left.

I moved the jar to the back room.

Several days later they came back. Angry that the cash was moved one of the boys took the fire extinguisher and sprayed everything in the waiting room. I chased them through the parking lot as they yelled obscenities at me and spit on my car.

And again, lost is my dream of a glamorous life in the beauty biz.

Dad was a funny guy

May 30, 2021

My dad was a funny guy and we liked to prank each other often.

He was bald, and late in life he lost his teeth, so I gave him lots of gag gifts that mocked his situation.

If that seems cruel, I could tell you a few stories from my childhood that would make you feel a lot better about it.

I made him dentures out of white Chicklets and pink Play-Doh.

I spent a lot of time carving him beautiful teeth out of nail acrylic, but he glued them to a black mouth guard which did not look attractive.

I bought him "Billy Bob" teeth that were ugly, plastic, yellow and looked rotted. Of course my family all took turns wearing them as we posed for holiday photos.

Among the many things I gave my father was a long blonde wig attached to a hat and a cane that had a horn and rearview mirror.

It was all fun until my dad would get his revenge.

One busy day at the salon a coworker whispered to me that there was a weirdo sitting in the waiting area.

It was Dad.

He was wearing his wig, rotted teeth and carrying his cane.



In photos from 1999, Salon Girl and her father model "Billy Bob" teeth. She had also spray painted his bald "spot."

Difficult People

June 6, 2021

I have an obnoxious client that comes every two weeks for her manicure and pedicure appointments.

My coworker recommended me to her and I am still mad about it.

The client has a reputation for being difficult and rude. In addition to her awful personality she has a bit of brain damage from a car accident which she blames for her tantrums.

Twice while doing her nails she has slapped me because she didn't like the way I was filing her nails.

I told her I would no longer tolerate her abuse, so she started crying and begged me to keep her as a client.

I said I would if she would stop physically assaulting me.

Two weeks later, during her pedicure, she tried to kick me in the face.

After I told her again that I would not take her abuse she cried and begged me to continue doing her nails.

She comes in at 2 today.

Critiques*June 13, 2021*

I don't know why my clients feel the need to critique me.

I don't go to the doctor and tell him he has a bad haircut. I don't tell the cashier at the grocery store she has gained too much weight. I don't tell my waiter at the restaurant his clothes are ill-fitting.

Nevertheless, for some reason, my clients feel the need to advise me on my clothing choices, hairstyle and my excess weight.

Once a client told me she remembers when I "used to be good looking."

Another client asked me why I have "let myself go."

He said I used to be "hot."

So, I would like to take this opportunity to apologize to all of my clients and everyone else in the world for my getting old and fat.

You know the old adage about the carpenter's house never being finished? Maybe it's like that. My job is to make you beautiful. Repairs to my own house can wait.

By the way, my dad was a carpenter, and that old adage is literally true. I was grown before I lived in a house that was completely finished. And, by "finished" I mean a house that had all the walls up and all of the doors hung.

Salon Gossip*June 20, 2021*

It has been the typical work week.

Customers complaining and concerning themselves with things that are none of their business.

We have a group of ladies who come in every Thursday morning. They all know one another and love to get in each other's business. When one is drying her hair under the loud hooded hairdryer the others talk about her. Then the next one has to sit under the dryer and it's her turn to be gossiped about. This goes on for the entire morning until all have been shampooed, curled, dried, teased and combed out.

Lilly thinks Velma's grandkids are trashy. Evelyn says Agnes needs to be put in a retirement home. Dorothy makes sure everyone knows that Edith is incontinent.

Other information that I cannot unhear:

Cora has hemorrhoids.

Alice has a gambling problem.

Harriet has a drinking problem.

Mabel is on the verge of bankruptcy because her children are scamming her out of her retirement money.

Other reports include who has diabetes, whose daughter-in-law is a stripper, who wears false teeth and who refuses to contribute to the bake sale.

Let's don't forget my all time favorite — I have inside information about Florence's husband's erectile dysfunction.

(All names have been changed).

Lucille*June 27, 2021*

My older clients love to tell stories about their younger years. They repeat them so many times I can repeat them verbatim.

Lucille is my client that told me that she e-mailed her husband when he was serving in World War II.

Her favorite story is about her and her best friend from high school. Her friend lived in the neighborhood directly across the street from my salon, which prompts the retelling of the story every Thursday morning.

As Lucille remembers it, her friend got a brand new red convertible for her 16th birthday. The two girls loved to ride around on Saturday nights with the top down so all their friends could see them.

One Saturday night they decided to dress up like nuns and ride around while smoking cigarettes.

That was the last time Lucille was allowed to visit her friend or ride in her car.

Lucille told me that she was banned from her friend's house because she was Irish.

Thursday Morning Therapy*July 4, 2021*

Thursday morning clients are all friends and schedule their weekly appointments so that they can all be together to visit and gossip about everyone and each other. They call their weekly meeting at the salon their "Therapy Meeting."

We make sure we have fresh coffee and donuts ready for them.

Last year my coworker and I told them that we would be taking our vacation the same week so the salon would be closed until we returned.

They were all in a tizzy about missing their appointments while we were away.

After the drama calmed down Mrs Marilyn said they should all meet and run the salon while we were gone.

They amused us as they decided who would be in charge and who should be responsible for each salon service.

After deciding who would do the hair cutting, shampooing, coloring, perming and cleaning, they had a blast telling us they were going to hire a hot guy to be the doorman and greeter.

They planned to have a Margarita machine, live music and a disco ball.

We all had a laugh about it especially when sweet little Fran from the church choir said she would be the pole dancer.

Scheduling

July 11, 2021

I'm not just a salon owner, I am the hairdresser, greeter, janitor, accountant, receptionist, babysitter and laundress.

There are constant interruptions from people walking in with questions and my phone ringing.

When people call to make appointments I have to stop cutting, perming, waxing, etc. to talk to them.

The callers sometimes seem oblivious to the fact that I am working and don't have 45 minutes to discuss their bang trim.

They seem unaware that I have other clients besides them.

While listening to them chatter away the client in my chair with wet hair and half of a haircut is tapping her watch and glaring at me.

This is a recent call I had.

Me: Hello.

Sarah: Hi Dana! This is Sarah. I need to schedule a haircut this week.

Me: OK, what day?

Sarah: Wednesday afternoon at 3.

Me: OK, see you then.

Sarah: No, wait. I have to take my son to the dentist Wednesday. He has a cavity. Let's do

Thursday morning.

Me: 10 ok?

Sarah: Yes that would be perfect. Oh! No! I have a Skype meeting at 10:30 so that won't work. How about Friday at 2?

Me: OK. See you Friday.

Sarah: Schedule me for Friday at 2 and I will try to make it. Just hold the spot for me and if I don't show up you will know I am not coming. Thanks. Bye.

By this time the client in my chair is furious and scolds me because she was on her lunch break and will now be late getting back to work.

This is my life.

Elderly and Dangerous

July 18, 2021

As much as I love my elderly clientele, they are dangerous.

I park my car away from the salon because I've seen these ladies try to park.

Just recently one of my clients upon leaving the salon backed her Jaguar into the side of my new Fiat Spyder and drove away. Everyone in the salon saw her hit my car.

I ran through the parking lot waving my arms like a maniac to get her to stop.

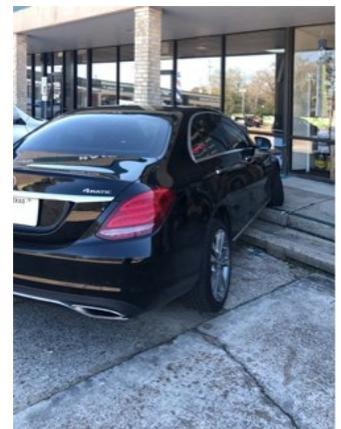
She asked, "What's wrong, honey? You look upset."

I said, "Mrs Patricia, You just backed into the side of my car!"

She said, "No, I didn't."

I said everyone in the salon saw you and you have my car's white paint all over the bumper of your black car!"

Finally, after 20 minutes, I convinced her that she



did in fact hit my car.

Insurance and licenses were exchanged and 3 months and \$4,000 later my car was repaired.

She was more concerned that I would no longer do her hair. But of course, I will still do her hair.

We also have a problem with customers parking in the “no parking area” in front of the handicap ramp.

So I bought large orange traffic cones to prevent this.

But now, everyday, I have to gather up the cones that have been run over and travelled three stores down the parking lot.

One customer mistook the gas pedal for the brake and ended up on our sidewalk in her Mercedes Benz.

The Return of the Mullet

July 25, 2021

The Mullet haircut is making a comeback.

AKA: Hockey Hair, The Bi-level, The Kentucky Waterfall and Business in the front/Party in the back.

The first mention of this look was from the ancient

Greek poet Homer in the Iliad. Homer described the spearman as wearing “their forelocks cropped, hair grown long at the backs.”

The term “mullet” was coined in 1994, thanks to the Beastie Boys song “Mullet Head.”

But it was the 80s that brought us Billy Ray Cyrus and his hall of fame mullet.

Just when I have finally recovered from my guilt over having cut hundreds of mullets and thereby betraying my solemn vow to make this world a more beautiful place, one haircut at a time, now enters the modern mullet.

It is every bit as hideous as the original.

What really compliments a mullet is a white sleeveless undershirt (also known as a “wife beater”).

The History of Hair Extensions

Aug. 1, 2021

If you have ever noticed the transformation that celebrities make between movies and talk shows you can tell the most obvious change is their hair.

It could be extensions, weaves or wigs.

Kim Kardashian has a short bob one week and long flowing hair to her waist the next.

I can't imagine how much hair is in Beyoncé's wig room.

All the hair you want is available to you depending on how much money and free time you have.

We have an employee in our salon who does hair extensions for anywhere from \$650 to \$1,200.

When you make your appointment allow 3 to 9 hours for the service.

We think of extensions as a current trend but actually began in ancient times.

In Cleopatra's day extensions were made from sheep's wool and human hair and then attached with beeswax or resin.

In 18th century Europe extensions gave way to the powdered wig made popular by King Louis XIV.

The big voluminous hair of the 19th century was made possible by hair extensions.

The 20th century brought the “beehive” so Dolly Parton and many others were buying hair as well.

The present day options are endless.

My extensions just clip in.



Missing my big 80s hair

Aug. 8, 2021

Permanents date back to the late 19th century when the first permanent wave machine was invented by French stylist Marcel Grateau in 1870. By 1906 Swiss stylist Karl Nessler created an improved version.

In spite of the improvements the process was torturous.

The machines had electrically heated clamps that hung from a chandelier type frame. The clamps were placed around the pre-wound hair and were counter balanced by weights attached to the “chandelier.”

The chemicals applied to the hair combined with the heated clamps resulted in damaged hair and skin irritation. You really had to be committed to your plan to have curls.

Finally in 1941 the first thioglycolic acid perm was made. The “Cold Wave” revolutionized the permanent wave industry and paved the way for the modern perm.

Thankfully, today we just roll the hair on plastic rods, apply the wave solution, listen to the customer complain about the smell for 20 minutes, then finish with neutralizer.

Voila! Curls.

I loved the 80s. Everyone was getting perms. Young people, old people, men, women, rock stars.

My hair was very long and permed and huge.

In those days my body was small and my hair was big.

Now my hair is smaller and my body is big. 😞



The Adventures of Being My Sister

Aug. 15, 2021

The accomplished Egyptians dabbled in hair color using henna to camouflage gray hair.

The Greeks and Romans used plant extracts to color their strands. They also created permanent black dye that they found later to be toxic. They switched to a formula made with leeches. It took a few hundred years to expand the color choices beyond black.

During the Roman Empire prostitutes were required to wear yellow hair to indicate their profession. Most wore wigs, but some used a mixture of burned plants and nuts to achieve the hue.

The first red hair appeared as a genetic mutation in

the Dark Ages.

The first person with natural red hair was born in Scotland. For many years redheads were believed to be witches.

When Queen Elizabeth took her reign redheads became acceptable.

In the 1800s, chemist William Perkin accidentally discovered a way to make hair die while working on a cure for malaria. The color was mauve and named “Mauvine.”

Shortly after, his chemistry professor derived a color changing molecule from “Mauvine” and it is the foundation for most permanent hair dyes today.

In 1931, after the release of a movie titled “Platinum Blonde,” starring Jean Harlow, many fans dyed their hair to match Harlow’s.

“Platinum Blonde” clubs spread across the country. Years later we have dyeing, highlighting, toning, glossing, baylage, ombré and much more.

As many options as there are today hair color is not an exact science. There are many factors involved such as hair texture, whether the client’s hair is damaged or healthy. If a client has never chemically treated their hair, it is considered “virgin hair.”

Other factors include pre-colored, highlighted or permed hair.

Results are drastically different even if the same formula is used.

This leads me to my story about my sister’s hair.

She has naturally curly, thick, coarse hair. She has been coloring her hair dark brown for a while.

She decided to change from dark brown hair to completely gray hair.

I bleached her hair to remove the dark color until it turned orange. I then bleached her hair until it turned light orange. I bleached it again until it turned blonde.

She did not want to be blonde. She wanted to be gray.

So, I used a formula that a coworker recommended and her hair turned purple.

So, I bleached it again praying that her hair would not melt.

Two appointments and six and a half hours later, she is now beautifully gray and her hair is still on her head.



Psychosarcasm Disorder*Aug. 29, 2021*

Oh shit!

I completely just forgot to do it!!!!

I'm sorry. We are about to go somewhere so if you could run another repeat I will get one together for next week!!!

The above is all we have in the way of a Salon Girl column this week for reasons that are self-explanatory.

Salon Girl once put your editor on the spot asking what I would say about her were I to give the eulogy at her funeral. So, I wrote for her the eulogy that follows. I can hardly wait for the day I get to deliver it.

We are gathered here today to pay our final respects to Donna Stinnett Stout Landry Heiman Martin Gonzales Chan.

While I did not know Donna personally, I am honored to have been asked by the staff here at the Rusk State Psychiatric Hospital to say a few words at her service prior to my book signing at the local Barnes and Noble at 3 p.m., to which you are all invited. My latest work is the third in my Pulitzer Prize winning series, *What the Hell is Wrong with You People?* and is available in hardback for \$29.99.

Donna, I'm told, was the world's oldest nail girl, a vocation she began when she could still pass for a young woman and that she continued both in and out of prison until she was finally committed to the care of the good doctors here at Rusk.

Her first stint in prison was the result of Donna having assaulted one of her clients after the client laughed at the wrong part of a joke Donna was telling. The second resulted from her conviction for fraud, but Donna insisted to her dying day that "World Peace Thru Pretty Nails" was a legitimate charity and that she had honestly intended to use the money she raised through the organization to fund her efforts to paint the nails of poor women throughout the world.

Donna's stay here at the psychiatric hospital came about after she was admitted to a Beaumont emergency room when she rolled her eyes so hard she severely sprained all of the muscles attached to them.

It was there that she came to the attention of psychiatrists and became the subject of a historic mental

health study that led doctors to the discovery of the mental illness we now know as psychosarcasm disorder.

That unusual disorder was not, however, the cause of her demise. Instead, it seems her death was brought about when she suffered an aneurysm while attempting to button her pants.

Thank you for coming, and remember the book signing begins at 3 p.m.

Childhood Fun and Games*Sept. 5, 2021*

The adventures of salon girl are not restricted to the salon. I've had many adventures since childhood. I have four siblings. Every holiday or family gathering we repeat all of our old stories.

One memory I like to bring up often is one of my older brother Steve whom many of you know.

Steve Stinnett. Call him if you don't believe my story and he will verify the facts.

Steve and my sister Kay loved to play together. On the other hand they avoided me, the younger sister. I would do almost anything for them to allow me to join their fun and games.

They were very tricky though. They would pretend that they were going to play "hide and seek" with me then let me hide while they went on their way to something else.

Once I hid in the clothes hamper waiting to be found and fell asleep. My Mom found me over 2 hours later and told me that Steve and Kay were gone riding their bicycles.

That is one of the countless tricks they played at my expense.

One of the worst things they did was tie me inside of a potato sack up to my neck, attach it to the tire swing and push me as high as they could above their heads. The sack broke free and I flew quite a few feet across my grandmother's lawn.

Steve examined me lying there in the sack, pronounced me dead and ran off.

I laid there for a bit to catch my breath and wriggle myself out of the sack and made my way home to tell my mother.

As usual my mom told me to stop being a "tattle tale" and that was that.

The History of Artificial Nails

Sept. 12, 2021

One of the services we offer at our salon is the application of acrylic nails. Many women and some men wear artificial nails.

This is how it all began:

In early 19th century Greece, upper class women wore empty pistachio shells over their nails which slowly spread the artificial nail trend across Europe.

Ancient Egyptian women wore nail extensions made from bone, ivory and gold as a sign of status.

In 1954 dentist Fred Slack broke a nail at work and made a replacement using chemicals and dental equipment.

He mixed a monomer with a polymer and this is the process we use to make acrylic.

I learned to apply acrylic nails in 1988.

The first set of nails I sculpted looked like flattened jelly beans on the ends of the lady's fingers.

It took quite some time before I could make nails look more natural.

Acrylic is sturdy but will break and the nails will fall off if stressed, cracked or not maintained properly.

I have found a few of my lost nails in places like my purse, shoe and pocket. Once I found a piece of my broken nail in my tangled hair.

The worst was when I found my lost nail in the meatloaf I made one evening for dinner.

The History of Hair Removal

Sept. 19, 2021

I am sure everyone is interested in information about the removal of face and body hair so read on.

We are back to ancient Egypt stories when women removed hair with tweezers made from sea shells or used pumice stones or beeswax.

Roman women used razors made from flint and stones.

Queen Elizabeth I started the fashion trend of completely removing eyebrows. She also removed hair around the forehead hairline to make the forehead look larger.

(Ladies, please don't do this. It is not a good look.)

The straight razor was created by a French barber in the 1700s.

The first hair remover cream was formulated by a doctor in 1884.

Finally, King Camp Gillette made the modern day razor in 1880.

Hair removal is a service that most salons offer. I do

only facial waxing. You know, I help ladies rid themselves of their little mustaches and starter goatees. I also assist in keeping their brows from growing into something resembling a couple of caterpillars.

I know a hairdresser who will even wax your nose hair.

Yep. She will pull it right out of your nostrils for only \$20.

This is only recommended for clients with a high tolerance for pain.

Another hairdresser I used to work with does full body waxing. She can remove any and all hair from face to toes. Some men have their backs waxed or their armpits. One of her clients gets his face waxed to remove his beard hair.

He is a big, strong, young man but once I saw tears in his eyes as he was leaving his appointment.

I'm not sure why some women remove their entire natural brows only to use make-up to draw on fake ones.

Appointments

Sept. 26, 2021

I'm not sure why some people make appointments — the clients who schedule a specific day and time to have their haircuts but show up 47 minutes late or 23 minutes early. I'm not opposed to clients showing up early as long as they don't mind waiting their turns.

What is irritating is when one comes too early and stares at me while I work on the customer ahead of her and drums her fingers on the table, taps her foot and keeps looking at her watch every 30 seconds while sighing loudly.

Then there are the people who show up on the wrong day and insist they are on my schedule. Last week a man came in on Friday insisting he had an appointment.

I showed him our texted messages to prove he agreed on a Saturday slot at 2 p.m. He said "That's ridiculous! I would never get my hair cut on a Saturday!"

(*What?*)

We also have clients who show up 30 minutes before we even open. One customer called me early Friday morning from the parking lot to tell me to "hurry up" because she had been waiting in front of the salon for 20 minutes.

I explained we weren't open yet, but that did not seem to matter to her because she was waiting.

So thank you lovely people who make appointments that reflect the time you will actually be there.

If your hairdresser is ever running behind schedule please blame her other clients.

I just want to do your hair*Oct. 3, 2021*

I just want to do your hair. That's all.

I love coloring, cutting, perming and bleaching.

Highlighting, low-lighting and curling.

It is my gift to the world. Making all you people even lovelier is my dream.

At your appointment I will even throw in a joke or funny story, but that is it!

Unfortunately, I constantly get requests from customers that I think are out of line.

I have mentioned this before:

A few months ago a man came in for a cut and offered me \$60 to "rub his head."

I refused and recommended a massage studio near the salon.

A month later he comes back and guess what! He wants me to rub his head for \$60.

Here are some other things clients have asked me to do for them:

- Walk their dog.
- Run their errands.
- Take them to the dentist.
- Babysit their children.
- Bring them food.
- Find them a healthcare worker.
- Find someone to buy their guns.

Today, at 7 a.m. a client called me and asked me to talk to her husband because he wants to commit her to a mental hospital.

Y'all are going to have to commit me if this doesn't stop.

I just want to do your hair, that's all.

The value of cement steps*Oct. 10, 2021*

Growing up the daughter of a home builder I learned many things from my Dad.

One of the things that seemed to be of great importance at the time was the value of cement steps.

Apparently the steps were relatively expensive.

My Dad would build a home and as soon as it was habitable he packed up our family and moved us in and sold the home we left.

There might not be walls in the new place, or cabinets or interior doors or light switches in the new house but we moved in anyway.

Months would pass as my Dad finished the house, but as soon as the light switches were installed we knew it was time to pack as the house was sold and we would

move to the next.

When I was a teenager my father bought a huge mobile home and planted it on a large piece of land down a long dirt road and we made it our home. I thought we were finally in a place we would stay.

My younger brother and I rode the bus home from school everyday. Much to our horror exiting the bus one day we found our house gone.

The surprised bus driver wasn't sure if he should leave us there. My parents did not tell us we were moving again.

I was very upset as my little brother waved a signal for the bus driver to leave. It was embarrassing when all of our school friends are laughing because our house disappeared.

As I paced and fretted, it was my brother that calmed me down. He reassured me that even though it appeared that our parents had abandoned us, the cement steps were still there.

He knew Dad would come back for the steps. So we sat on the steps for a couple of hours until my Dad showed up laughing and loaded us and the steps into his truck and took us to our new home.

Pickup Lines*Oct. 17, 2021*

Just like all women, I've heard my share of corny pickup lines through the years. I'm sure many of you will remember some of these:

"Did it hurt when you fell from Heaven?"

"If I could rearrange the alphabet I would put U and I together."

"Are you from Tennessee? Because you are the only 10 I see."

"Do you believe in love at first sight, or should I walk by again?"

"I'm a psychiatrist, want to come lie on my couch?"

"Something is wrong with my eyes because I can't take them off you."

"Are you tired? You've been

running through my mind all night."

"You know what would look good on you? Me."

"I've met you before — in my dreams."

"My name is Mike but you can call me tomorrow."

"How would you like to be my next ex-wife?"

Once a guy just asked me if I liked planets. (What?) I told the guy, "I'm not crazy about this one right now."

Now that I'm old I don't have men flirting with me very often, but recently a stranger said he thought I was attractive because he likes "THICK" women.

So, yeah, this is what it's come to.

Is my gray hair bouncing?

Oct. 31, 2021

This week I cut a new customer's hair. She loved the cut and asked me how much gray was in the back of her hair. I told her there wasn't much.

She then asked me if the gray hair was "bouncing."

I told her that I didn't know what that meant.

She said, "I just want to know if my gray hair is bouncing."

So I just said, "No."

She seemed disappointed, and that was that.

Some days I feel I am losing my mind.

Last week an elderly man (maybe 80) came in and he told me he was a widow and asked if I knew any women with whom I could fix him up. I told him we have many clients around his age that I could introduce him to.

He responded, "I don't want an old woman! I want a fit, beautiful 40-year-old with red hair and large breasts."

I said, "You must have a lot of money."

He said, "No, I recently went bankrupt."

The good news is my week ended with the FedEx man telling me that he knew from the first moment he saw me that I was his girl and we were meant to be together.

Soooo, I hope that y'all had an interesting week as well, and if the FedEx man does not abduct me, I will write you more of my adventures next week.

Safe cracking in reverse

Nov. 7, 2021

So, today I was in charge of opening and closing the jewelry store where I work as a second job. My boss went deer hunting and asked if I could handle the store while he was away.

Of course I tell him that I can handle it. No problem.

Then, of course, there is going to be a problem.

I open the store. I sell some jewelry. I deal with an irate customer and take in a repair. All is fine.

I need to leave by one to go to my real job at the salon where I have clients scheduled for the afternoon.

My brother Steve stops by to visit. I get all the jewelry put in the safe. Get the cash put in the safe.

Then I can't get the safe to close!

I text my boss.

No answer.

I call my boss.

No answer.

I can't leave the store because the safe isn't locked.

So I decide that I may have to live at the store until Tuesday.

I call my hair clients to schedule for later in the evening.

I try again with the safe.

I slam it. Curse at it. Pray over it.

Then my brother explains to me how all of the cylinders work and I get on the floor to find that one cylinder is not moving.

We clean it up and poke it and pull it.

Finally we get it closed and locked an hour after I was supposed to be at the salon cutting hair.

What would I do without my big brother?

Don't tell my boss what happened. He's hunting deer and thinks I am taking care of his store.



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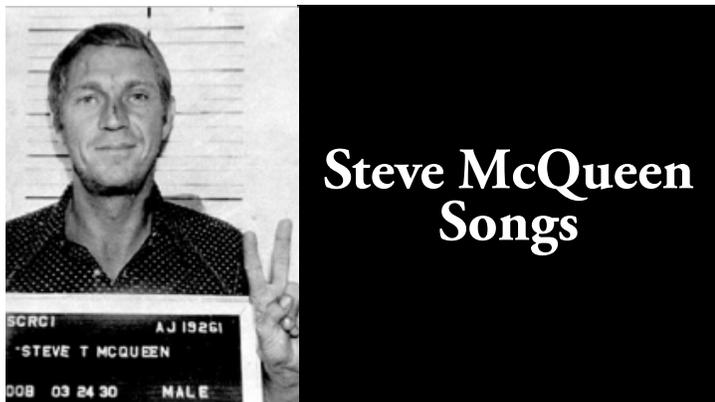
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On the off chance readers should ever need one, here is a list of songs about, titled after, or mentioning Steve McQueen:

- "Steve McQueen" by Sheryl Crow
- "Steve McQueen" by Brian Fallon
- "Steve McQueen" by M83
- "Steve McQueen" by Quicksilver Messenger Service
- "Steve McQueen" by Adam Ant
- "Steve McQueen" by Prefab Sprout
- "Steve McQueen" by Lambchop
- "Steve McQueen" by Patterson Hood
- "Steve McQueen's Garden" by The Red Crayola
- "There Goes Steve McQueen" by Spacerocket
- "I Just Want To Be Your Steve McQueen" by Eytan Mirsky
- "Son of Steve McQueen" by Favez
- "I Drive Like Steve McQueen" by The Mag Seven
- "Jimmy Dean & Steve McQueen" by Julian Velard
- "Lesson Three: Steve McQueen" by Nerk
- "God, Steve McQueen" by Guttermouth
- "Souped Up Mustangs & Steve McQueen" by Michael Yanoska
- "Steve McQueen Jeans" by Leroy X
- "Gimme the Loot" by Notorious B I G
- "Star Star" by The Rolling Stones
- "Is This What You Wanted" by Leonard Cohen
- "Too Young To Die" by David Crosby
- "Postcards from Richard Nixon" by Elton John
- "Electrolite" by REM
- "When You're Beautiful" by Heart
- "High Plains Drifter" by the Beastie Boys
- "Outlaw Man" by UFO
- "Word is Bond" by House of Pain
- "Absent Friends" by Neil Hannon
- "The Great Escape" by I am Kloot

Pre-Trouser Time Travel

This might seem a bit random, but I was on Pinterest looking at images depicting ancient Greece and Rome, and it occurred to me that were it possible to travel back in time, I wouldn't want to go back to any time before pants were invented.

I am not going to wear a robe, kilt or toga. And I'm not wearing whatever those tight leotard things were that we see in Robin Hood movies. When I say pants, I mean actual trousers.

Pre-trouser time travel is for someone else. I'm not doing it.

TEXAS CRAZY: William Cowper Brann

W.C. Brann once wrote in his *Iconoclast*, "The only trouble we have with our Baptists down here is that we do not hold them under the water long enough."

Publishing the *Iconoclast* weekly in Waco, home to the great Baptist bastion, Baylor University, which he described as "that great storm-center of misinformation," editor William Cowper Brann, was far from being the most popular man in town.

One of his biographers has described him as a "mean Mark Twain."

Born in Illinois in 1855, Brann ran away from home at the age of 13. He came to Texas in 1886 to work for the *Galveston Evening Tribune* and then the *Galveston News*. He later wrote for the *Austin Statesman*, the *San Antonio Express* and the *Houston Post* before moving to Waco in 1894 to write for the *Daily News*.

The first journal he published independently called the *Iconoclast* he produced while in Austin, but unable to make a go of it there, he sold his printing press to writer William Sydney Porter, later known as O. Henry.

Brann made a second attempt at publishing his *Iconoclast* after moving to Waco. That version of his journal sold and sold well, reaching a circulation of around 100,000.

Among his readers was a young H.L. Mencken. Literary types who have studied both writers say Brann was an influence on Mencken. In 1900, at 20 years old, Mencken wrote one of his earliest pieces of social criticism for Brann's *Iconoclast*, which continued to be published after Brann's death.

Infante, continued from page 8.

Infante felt the kid's foot slipping out of his grasp and began to yell for Otto who by now had recovered his balance and was lumbering to assist Infante, a sight which apparently fueled the kid's adrenaline as he finally kicked free of Infante's grasp and was once again on the run, no doubt mentally editing his story to include this second escape from the clutches of the cops. What the kid hadn't counted on was that Otto's adrenaline had also kicked in giving him an extra burst of speed, a burst which enabled him to be on the kid more quickly than the kid, or even Otto, for that matter, had imagined. Otto knocked the kid to the ground where he struggled to handcuff him. Infante, who was bleeding from a road rash injury to his right forearm suffered when he tackled the kid, not to mention the attendant soreness associated with a 280 pound, 38 year old man hitting a concrete parking lot, lurched towards Otto and the kid. Infante, having had his fill of the high that all the rookies exulted in as a result of a foot pursuit, pulled his Oleo capsicum canister from his belt, limped towards the mismatched Greco-Roman wrestling match and shouted "O.C."

which warned his partner that something unpleasant was about to occur and that if he didn't want to suffer the same fate as the kid he should disengage forthwith. Otto moved away from the kid even more quickly than he had moved towards him when he caught him, just as Infante leaned down to the kid and gave him a two second blast of O.C. full in the face.

Once the spray hit the kid there was a momentary look of surprise on his face followed almost immediately by an eardrum-shattering caterwauling, high-pitched enough to call a dog. The kid almost immediately began to snot and cry which is what the O.C. is designed to do thus taking the starch out of anybody who might harbor any thoughts of resisting, running or fighting. The kid continued keening in a manner most unbecoming for someone who had actually looked over his shoulder and sneered at his pursuers when the chase began.

This was Infante's one and only foot pursuit, after which he decided that so as not to endanger his pristine record of 1-0, he would refrain from further such escapades, leaving the rookies to enjoy the rush as there had been no endorphins flowing for him, just his blood.

Brann, continued from page 26.

While keeping up a steady barrage against the university, and sadly, writing viciously racist attacks against African Americans, as well as a good deal of misogyny, Brann also threw his literary snark at a wide range of social, political and religious targets. He despised hypocrites and liars. Brann's writing would likely be better known and better liked today but for the author's racism, which often crept into works that otherwise had nothing to do with race, corrupting them and rendering them unquotable and useless without repeated ellipses.

Once kidnapped, beaten, and forced to sign an apology to the university by a group of Baylor students, Brann ultimately met his end in a gunfight on April Fool's Day, 1898. He was shot in the back by Tom E. Davis, angry over Brann's insults of the university he loved. Before dying, Brann drew his own pistol and shot Davis to death.

Here is a selection from the more quotable things Brann wrote:

"A heretic, my dear sir, is a fellow who disagrees with you regarding something neither of you knows anything about."

"No man can be a patriot on an empty stomach."

"Gall is a very common ailment. In fact, a man without a liberal supply of it is likely to be as lonesome in this land as a consistent Christian at a modern camp-meeting, or a goldbug Democrat in Texas. Nearly everybody has it and is actually proud of it."

"I admit that I haven't much respect for law — there's so much of it that when I come to spread my respect over the entire lot it's about as thin as one of Sam Jones's sermons."

Jones was a popular traveling evangelist of the late 19th century whose sermons were widely published and well known.

The Edge, continued from page 9.

Television, iPods, smart phones! No wonder there were no more children, no more grandparents — hers sneered at her. Useless, slow, in the way, grandmother. The world rocked gently, this time stirring a memory in her mind, one not so dusty as the rest although old, and well-recalled. She sat on another porch long ago with an old man and woman, she was a little girl. Far off in the fruit orchard the mourning doves called to the evening and peace answered with the dusky day's end. They were so special, her grandparents. She was not a grandmother like they had been to her. Her grandchildren believed in neither she nor Santa Claus — poor, starved for imagination little things. They would be forever hungry, but she had an almost grandchild, the neighbor child next door. She would slip up

to her rocker almost every day and bring an offering, a tribute in return for finding her there. Today it had been a flower, a buttercup, perhaps the first, or last, it did not matter. This child believed in grandparents, hers lived far away and so it had not been necessary to teach her otherwise. The buttercup was pale, ah, palest pink with fairy butter nestling in its' heart, just right for dabbing on your true love's nose. That had been long ago. That was a memory put fast away with a few others, too pungent to ever forget. And then the world took such a mighty lurch it turned it upside down. The birds were singing out in joy, like angel's voices, and the day was all the blues of sky and water she had ever seen. The buttercup was carrying her back to all the faces she had put away. They found her with it, gently, lightly as she had held life, and now for her, the world would rock no more.

Alligator, continued from page 10.

"Babe..." pleaded Roy.

No answer.

"Babe, can you hear me?"

Finally, she spoke struggling for air, "Roy, I got the bastard in a head lock!"

"Bring him out, Babe."

"Don't you think I would've done that if I could. I'm stuck in this muck down here."

I turned to Robyn and said, "I don't know whether to laugh or press the panic button."

"It's panic button time." She replied.

And then, fire department showed up. They pumped the water from the ditch, tied a harness to Wanda and tried to pull her out but couldn't free her.

Around midnight, a construction crew arrived and proceeded to tear up my driveway with jackhammers until finally the limp figure of Wanda with her arms clinched around the alligator's neck and legs wrapped around it's torso began to take shape beneath the Pan-handle Harvest Moon.

Roy ran to his wife and lifted her. Together, they heaved the alligator onto the road. It appeared to be

dead. iPhones and cameras starting flashing. The news crews shined spotlights. The man with the shotgun said, "Hell yeah, let's take him up to the Big-Tex on the highway and have us some gator-steaks!"

Suddenly, the alligator reanimated from its comatose state, let out a vicious hiss that pushed back the crowd and began galloping down the road. The chase was on.

The alligator climbed up a rocky embankment and disappeared into grove of mesquite trees. And even though they all shined their phones and lights into the woods. And even though they called to it to come out and play with them, the alligator was never seen again. One by one, the gawkers turned and left the scene with looks of disappointment on their faces

Our yard, albeit trampled and destroyed, was silent. It was almost one in the morning. I looked at Robyn and said, "Well, mark the score, Robyn. Alligator, one; Humanity, zero."

"If I live another fifty years," she said, "I will never be that entertained again." She grasped my hand.

A barn owl landed on our Juniper tree and looked at us. She blinked her eyes, indifferent to the world, as if this madness was nothing new to her.

A Creepy Old Guy's Luv

By Casey Stinnett

The creepy old guy in the corner had been watching her. Amy knew it and ignored him. Creepy old guys were always watching her. Creepy young guys watched her, too. Such is the long suffering of all beautiful young things like herself.

Amy was at the bar that night hoping to catch the eye of Jance, who might have been a bit on the old guy side himself, but not too much so, and he was definitely not creepy. Older he might be, but he was still young enough to have that whole bad boy vibe going.

Two random young and studlies had each made plays for her earlier that evening, but she had cut them both short and sent them on their way. Amy thought she must have now mastered the art of distain because she had managed to shake both of them without even really trying.

Finally, tired of waiting, Amy made her way to the bar and squeezed in beside Jance, who immediately turned to see who it was. They made eye contact. Amy ever so slightly tossed her hair back, and expecting him to say something, she was more than a little stunned when all she got for her efforts was a glance and a small but noticeable wince before he turned away.

She skulked back to her table deeply humiliated and hurt.

She would have left, but her ride was dancing with some guy. She decided to wait it out in the fresh air, and just as she was gathering her things, creepy old guy walked by her and dropped a napkin on her table with a note scribbled on it.

"This," she thought, "has to be the absolute end."

She stood up intending to leave without touching creepy old guy's napkin. The last thing she wanted to do was to give him any encouragement, but she saw creepy old guy was leaving himself. He wasn't waiting around to see whether she read his note. This created a different problem for Amy. If anyone else had followed this little train of events and then saw her leave the bar right after creepy old guy had dropped her a note and left, she would have to move to another town altogether.

So Amy sat back down and waited for her friend to stop dancing and take her home. The wait was longer than she liked and when the boredom of it finally outweighed the creepiness of reading creepy old guy's note, she picked up his napkin, and this is what it said:

"Darling, You might have better luck if you clean the dried snot off your nose ring. — Luv, Smack"

That's all for this week.
Thanks for subscribing.

