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October 23-November 5, 2025

SC PRODUCTION GIVES NEW LIFE TO A LEGENDARY GHOST STORY

A group of talented young actors are giving new life to a legendary South Carolina ghost story with two questions. First, what is the cost of love?

For Alice Flagg, a wealthy Murrells Inlet teenager in the mid-1800s, forbidden love doomed her spirit to roam the



Kim von Keller

Lowcountry. According to legend, Alice, age 15, became enamored with a young man, sometimes identified as a lumberman or turpentine dealer, who was below her social station. Her brother, Dr. Allard Flagg, sent her to a Charleston boarding school in hopes that she would meet someone he considered suitable. So when Alice received a ring from her beloved, she wore it in secret, tied to a ribbon she



The Marshlight Girls — An Alice Flagg Mystery

tucked into the neckline of her dress. Sadly, Alice fell ill with malaria and was returned home to recuperate. As she lay dying, Allard

found the ring, ripped it from her neck, and threw it into the reedy marsh. More than a hundred and fifty years later, there are still

those who claim to have seen her ghost in the All Saints Church Cemetery in Pawleys Island, near a gravestone marked only

with “ALICE,” as she searches for her precious ring.

Second, and more interestingly, what if someone found that ring?

That’s the question that Bonnie Ryerson — actor, writer, and director of the Pied Piper Youth Theater South in Murrells Inlet — hopes to answer with a new series being filmed in Georgetown County, “Marshlight Girls.” And the first episode? “An Alice Flagg Mystery.”

Ryerson, a Massachusetts native, has lived in Murrells Inlet for a decade. As an actor and director, she knows a good setting — and a good story — when she sees one.

“The South Carolina Lowcountry is a breathtaking backdrop for storytelling. The marsh, the boats, and the light here are so evocative. And the story of Alice Flagg has intrigued me since I moved here, with

SEE STORY ON PAGE 2



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Memorial service planned to honor the sacrifice of Private Curtis Adams and the Wereth 11 at the American Legion – Post 14 in Anderson

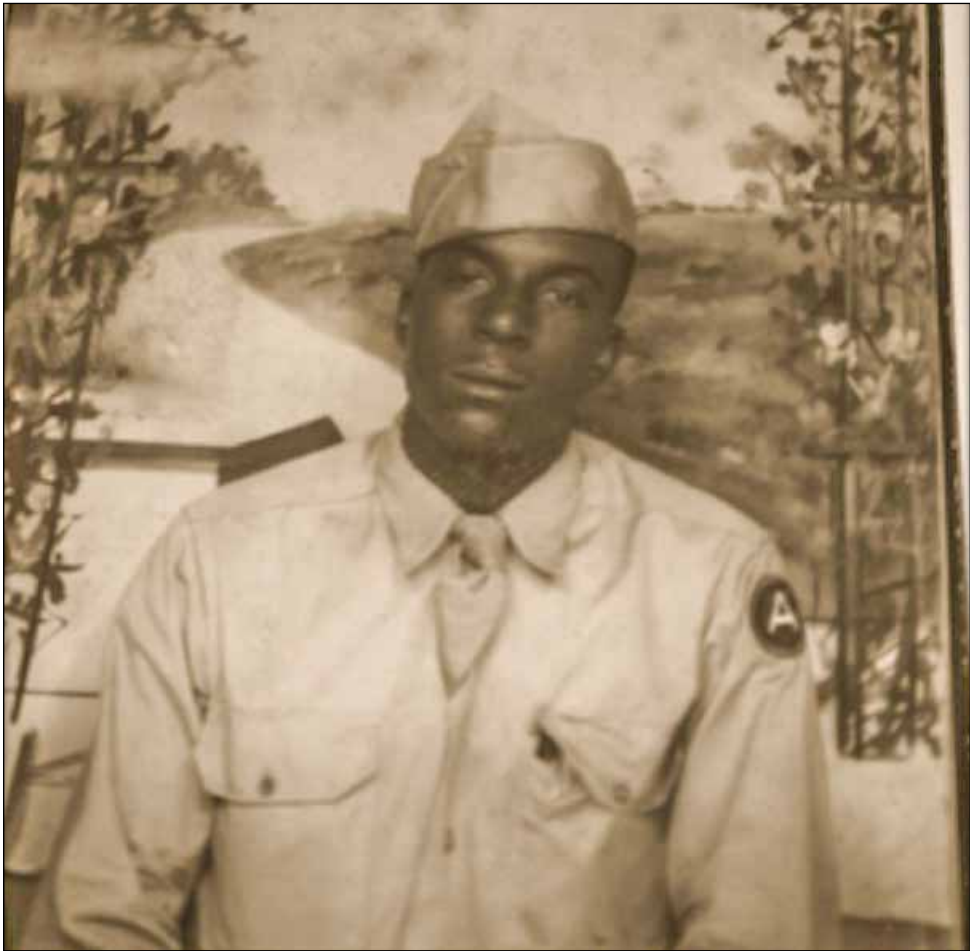
Anderson, SC – Honor for Heroes will host a special memorial service honoring Private Curtis Adams of Anderson, South Carolina, on Tuesday, November 11, 2025, at 11:00 AM. The event is free and open to the public.

Private Adams was one of the “Wereth 11,” a group of soldiers from the all-Black - 333rd Field Artillery Battalion who became separated from their battery during the early hours of the Battle of the Bulge in World War II. Captured by German SS troops, they were brutally tortured and murdered near the village of Wereth, Belgium and their bodies were left lying in a field for months.

Private Adams, a medic and Anderson native, represents a legacy of sacrifice, service, and honor. This memorial service will pay tribute to his courage, along with that of his fellow soldiers, while bringing greater awareness to a story too often overlooked in the history of World War II. After the main event we will have a Quilting Ceremony for veteran Cecil Johnson. Light refreshments and conversation will follow the events.

DETAILS

- Date: Tuesday, November 11, 2025
- Time: 11:00 am
- Location: American Legion - Post 14, 1301 E. Greenville St. Anderson, SC – In case of inclement weather, the ceremony will be moved inside the American Legion.
- Admission: Free
- ** Honor for Heroes is providing FREE



Coffee, Tea, and Donuts to all Veterans from 6 am - 10:30 am

This event is a partnership with the

American Legion and underscores Honor for Heroes’ ongoing mission to recognize, support, and memorialize our Heroes.

Story

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

its elements of love, loss, betrayal, and the supernatural.”

“Marshlight Girls” is part Nancy Drew, part “Ghost Hunters.” Ryerson developed the idea for the series during the COVID pandemic.

“I’ve been teaching a group of young girls since they were around six years old, and now,

they’re young teenagers. They’re just a magic group of kids with outstanding talent, and we have become so close over the years. During the pandemic, I was inspired to write something for them, with characters like them that speak with their voices, something that tells a ghost story in this setting. The funny thing is that they had never heard the legend of Alice Flagg. Without giving anything away, the story starts when they find Alice’s ring. “The Marshlight Girls” will feature these girls and their adventures,

sweet and innocent without meanness.”

“Marshlight Girls” has been a true collaborative effort of cast members and crew members from the area.

“There are so many people who want to help,” Ryerson says. “A local woman is doing set boards and costumes. We’ve been allowed to film at the Kaminsky House Museum in Georgetown. We even had a psychic involved who said that he could ‘smell turpentine,’ on set, a reference to Alice’s beloved.”

If you would like to follow the filming of “Marshlight Girls: An Alice Flagg Mystery,” visit the production’s Facebook account, Marshlight Girls, and its Instagram account, Marshlight Girls. Ryerson’s goal now is to find a home for this and other episodes of “The Marshlight Girls.”

“It’s a beautiful story and a much-needed story, particularly for teen girls. And the end of ‘An Alice Flagg Mystery’ gives way to a whole new story. We can’t wait for people to see “Marshlight Girls!”

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Rams building momentum after tough start to 2025

The script is different this year. Westside High School was a force in AAAA football the past two seasons. The Rams won a state title in 2023 and lost a state title game in 2024.

Powerful stuff.

But this season has been a total rebuild, and coach Brian Lane knew the drill. Painful days ahead.



Brian Hodges

Game 1: a 49-7 loss to Vestavia Hills, Ala.

Game 2: a 49-20 loss to T.L. Hanna.

Game 3: a 42-6 loss to Belton-Honea Path

Game 4: a 59-34 loss to Prince Avenue Christian in Athens, Ga.

Game 5: finally, a 26-20 win over Abbeville.

The Rams have tacked on two more wins, 55-0 over Southside and 43-7 over Emerald. After an 0-4 start, Westside is 3-4 with a winnable game at Fountain Inn on Oct. 17.

Why the turnaround? Lane said it's young guys gaining experience.

"We had three starters return to start the season," Lane said. "Nobody on offense had

any varsity experience - except for senior left tackle A.J. Calhoun."

Those first five games were not against lightweight foes.

"There were three losses among those 5 opponents," Lane said.

But that was his plan. Lane coached at Woodruff High School for six years and learned a lot from Willie Varner, a highly successful longtime coach there.

"Willie Varner always stressed the idea of opening the season against the best competition," said Lane. "Woodruff was a Double-A power years ago, and they always played larger schools like Spartanburg, Gaffney and Byrnes. It was a tough challenge.

"You get an idea of how your young kids can respond against the best teams," Lane said.

Quarterback Bear Woods, and receivers J.C. Clinkscales and Jae White have been standouts so far this season.

Believe it or not, Westside has a chance to win Region 1-AAAA. Their final three reg-

ular-season games are against Fountain Inn, Laurens and Wren.

After that comes the playoffs.

"That's our goal every year," Lane said.



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Community celebration and video shoot for the song 'Super Hero: Ode to Chadwick Boseman' coming to downtown Anderson

Anderson, SC – On Saturday, October 25th from 12pm – 2pm, Carolina Wren Park in downtown Anderson will be the backdrop for a powerful community celebration honoring Anderson native and legendary iconic actor Chadwick Boseman. "Super Hero: Ode to Chadwick Boseman," an original song and visual tribute created by Grammy Award-winning trumpeter Nabaté Isles, NBC's

Date: Saturday, October 25
Time: 12:00 PM – 2:00 PM
Location: Carolina Wren Park,
Downtown Anderson
111 E Whitner St,
Anderson, SC 29621

The Voice standout Beth Griffith-Manley, and hip-hop artist and entrepreneur

Chadwick "Niles" Phillips of The Avant Garde, will be filmed live as part of the event. Chadwick Boseman's brothers Kevin and Derrick Boseman will be in attendance.

This is more than a video shoot—it's a celebration of excellence, purpose, and pride. The event will showcase Anderson's unity and creative spirit while paying tribute to one of its most inspiring sons. This event is FREE to attend and the whole city is invited!

PRODUCTION TEAM

The project brings together an accomplished team of artists and creators:

- Nabaté Isles – Grammy Award-winning trumpeter (New York)
- Beth Griffith-Manley – Acclaimed vocalist and NBC's The Voice standout (Detroit)
- Chadwick "Niles" Phillips – Hip-Hop artist, entrepreneur, and founder of The Avant Garde (Twin Cities)
- Anthony Wideman – Local videographer and director, providing an authentic hometown perspective (Anderson)
- Derrick Boseman – Chadwick Boseman's brother, featured in the production
- Kevin Boseman – Chadwick Boseman's brother, dancer and actor

Together, they weave music, film, and community into a heartfelt tribute that celebrates Boseman's impact as an actor and his enduring legacy of excellence, perseverance, and inspiration.

Everyone is welcome to be at the music video filming and participate in the crowd shoot—this is a unique opportunity to honor a hometown hero while showcasing Anderson's community pride to the world. Hope to see you there!

OCT 25TH 12PM - 2PM

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Spooky drabbles

Drabble – a form of flash fiction made up of precisely 100 words in length, designed to test an author’s brevity and ability to convey ideas in a confined space. These authors each composed a spooky drabble.

THE VISITOR

The candle sputtered, though no wind stirred. I felt it then, his gaze.

From the corner’s blackened hush, something watched, patient as decay.

My breath thickened, trembling in the stale air. “Who’s there?” I whispered, though my voice betrayed me, splintering like rotted wood.

The silence laughed. Slowly, the darkness swelled, curling upward like smoke, shaping a face I once knew: my own. Its eyes wept ash. Its mouth smiled wide, wider still, until the grin split the room in two.

The candle died. I saw nothing, except myself, standing where I had been, whispering, “At last.”

By Emma Frances

GRANDPA’S HAINTS

Grandpa told me scary stories of spooks and goblins, too.

I placed straw brooms he gave me outside doors and in my room.

I hear spirits when the wind blows they rattle things outside.

Could ghosts be in darks attics when things go bump at night?



Aunt Sarah said don’t listen to the foolish things he said. But lately, I’ve been thinkin’ of paranormal books I’ve read.

There are plenty unknown answers hidden in this world so wide like mysteries of South Carolina and Grandpa’s “haints” all hollow-eyed.

By Angela Mason Lowe

DARK

Dark. Alone. I can’t sleep. I can’t move.

I am somewhere no one can reach me. I want to leave, but how do I?

I hear my heartbeat. Then I see it in my periphery. My vessels pump faster. Its shell sharpens into view.

ers. Articulating, limb by limb. It looms closer.

I shut my eyes – inhaling, I pray. Then peek – gone.

I exhale, and I drift into nothingness. But something scratches at my throat.

I heave for air. I feel it. Stuck inside.

Crawling. Waiting.

By Almar F.

DEMONS BELOW THE DAM

Julie’s smile tantalized teenaged boys.

I went to that party to see her. She never noticed.

By midnight, the walk home along Lake Hartwell’s Shoreline Road.

Shadows made my mind wander--local legend—the “Demons.”

Word was they were hillbillies who refused to move when dam construction began in ‘55--poisoned by toxic runoff—changed.

The rumble of an engine shattered my trance. Two things stumbled from a rusted truck, sneering through rotted teeth.

I hurled a rock. It struck a skull with a wet crack.

Monday, I spotted Julie at school, looking at me, white bandage across her nose.

By Jon DuPre

It dangles above – stalking me through the cluster of oculi, taunting me with bristly feel-

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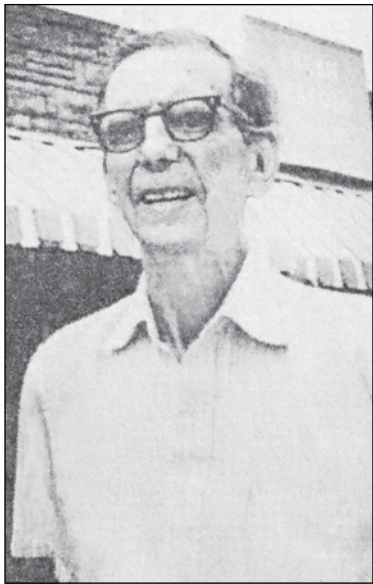
Jim White's memories

BY RICH OTTER

When an infant, in 1911 Jim White's family moved to Anderson where his father went to work at Brogan Mill. His father died not many years later. His parents and their seven children lived in a four-room mill village house. He delivered newspapers as a youngster, worked in a cotton mill and also a fish market in his early years. Newspaper editor and writer Roy Ethridge honored him as an Anderson historian.

In 1933, having acquired experience in a fish market, he decided to go into the business for himself. A few dollars he said could buy hundreds of pounds of fish. It was before refrigeration. He had to move the fish quickly. He sold the fish to mill stores but subsequently developed a retail market.

It is not known if White wrote



Jim White

out his memories himself or if his tales were reduced to writing by his wife Mary, but there exists a fifty-one-page document now in possession of the Anderson County Museum and the Anderson County Library filled with detailed accounts of Anderson in the 1920s and 1930's. His memory was exceptional and he paints a detailed picture of

the community, particularly during the Great Depression.

For instance, he explained there were eight or ten barber shops in Anderson where you could get "the works." The works included a shave, haircut, singe, hair wash, message and tonic—all for less than two dollars. Plus, you received a shoeshine for ten cents. In exchange for cleaning up the shop every night, the "shine boy" could keep all the money for shines and tips. The shine boy also kept a Swiss brush "in his hip pocket" and gave a "brush down" after the barber was finished that could provide an additional thank-you of five or ten cents.

There had been a very prominent Black blacksmith by the name of Dave Dooley who operated his shop on East Whitner Street for a number of years. After he passed away, the old building had suffered the ravages of time. White put together a group of Black and White helpers who worked at night after their regular jobs and rehabilitated the building that then served for many years as his City Seafood and Poultry Market. Over the years he had three

different locations for his market on East Whitner.

Police, on their regular safety tours at night, would check in his storefront window. White would be sure to leave the cash register drawer open at night so a thief would see it and assume it was empty. If the police saw it open, they felt the building was secure.

White recounted memories of costs of everything from food at the local restaurants and groceries to horse cart races on the former Eskey property. He identified notable merchants throughout the community, a peanut butter manufacturing company, and bootleggers.

He described "Little Texas." It was a rough area on Quinn Street near the old Glenn Street School. It was a favorite "hangout" for certain "rough neck" and "jail bait" types from miles around during Prohibition days.

He told of when there were five livery stables in Anderson. In the course of business for a year there were many thousands of mules, horses, cows and goats bought and sold as well as harnesses, saddles,

wagons and buggies. Livery stables were a meeting places where problems were discussed as well as politics. There was also revealed a little "nipping" going on during those friendly encounters. He said that when transportation was primarily on foot, umbrellas were a common accessory. "Umbrella fixers" were prevalent.

White spoke of an individual who was well ahead of his time. He had determined a car could be converted from gasoline to electricity. It would enable traveling from Anderson to Greenville for eighteen cents of electricity. The problem was, the electrical cord would cost \$8,385.00.

Jim White sold his fish market in 1973. He was reported as having created books given to each of his four children with the pictures and stories he collected over the years. He also had a complete collection he had retained. The fifty-one-page document now held in the museum and library is invaluable. It is staggering to think what must be included in his complete collections—wherever they may now be.

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FROM THE FIELD TO THE COTTON MILL – PART 1

After writing about growing cotton last issue, it seemed appropriate to ask my husband, a former loom fixer, for his take on working in a cotton mill. He had plenty to say! So this two-part article should bring back memories for many. Take the (weave room) floor, Mike!



Ann K. Bailes

Not having grown up in a family with cotton mill experience, I was totally unprepared for my first view inside a weave room. I had been living in Newberry, SC, where several mills still operated. Since I needed more income, that offered a good opportunity.

A representative took me on a tour, starting where the raw cotton came in from the gin. We went from there through the card room, the spinning room, the slasher room, and finally to the department where I would spend most of my time – the weave room. The sights and sounds were overwhelming – hearing the clickety-clack, clickety-clack of the operating looms was deafening. To trained workers, the sound of a well-running weave room was music, but to my unfamiliar ear, it sounded like mechanical chaos. I learned soon that there was an art to communicating in the noisy room. My guide was a man with decades of experience who assumed I could understand him. I didn't realize that I needed to read his lips, and could not understand a word that was coming out of his mouth.



Photo from Lowell National Historical Park, Lowell, MA

That was my first adjustment. After about 45 minutes of touring, we went to a room where we could talk. He explained the basics, but it seemed like he was speaking Greek at the time. He referred to parts of the looms, and I knew none of the terms. Then he asked me, "So, you want to be a loom fixer?" And, just wanting a good-paying job, I said yes – not knowing what I was getting into. Training took about a year, in a room with two looms but without all the noise, and I started learning all about the early 20th century looms on which I would be working. Once certified, I went back into the weave room. Again, the noise was overwhelming, but fortunately ear protection was required. That cut out background noise and helped a little with audible communication. Each of the three floors had its own type of loom. My floor was filled with E-model Draper looms that produced a very thin fabric used for baby diapers. I could feel the curiosity from the employees in the weave room about the new man, as they looked at

me and wondered where I was from. I learned that there were several jobs within the weave room. Warper tenders, cloth doffers, battery fillers, weavers, smash-hands, shop mechanics, loom fixers, and overhaulers—all of these people worked toward the same goal of producing quality cloth. The motion of a loom in operation is a sight to behold. Picker sticks on each end sling the shuttle back and forth, back and forth, releasing the yarn in a horizontal motion. Yarn on the back of the loom rolls off a warp and comes through harnesses at a 90 degree angle to the yarn coming off of the shuttle, forming the cross-weave which produces cloth. Dozens of other motions simultaneously work together in unison to produce the thin fabric. The weaver was paid by production, so he or she would pressure the loom fixer to get broken looms back in service quickly. A loom could have many various mechanical problems and automatically stop. That meant that the weaver's production had stopped for that loom. And that's when I went to work. —to be concluded in the next issue—

ANDERSON COUNTY SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT SERVICES
TOTAL COST REPORT

PERIOD OF REPORT:
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TOTAL ANNUAL COST	\$3,697,069
RECYCLING	
TOTAL ANNUAL COST	\$2,163,218
DISPOSAL	
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NET ANNUAL COST	\$9,380,759
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10 THE ELECTRIC CITY NEWS | OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 5, 2025

Do-it-yourself Halloween costumes

Halloween costumes are so nostalgic. They bring back really wonderful memories. As adults, it's now our time to claim back our childhood spirit, dress up and celebrate that. Most of us are headed to some kind of event this season where we may need to be in costumes, and I have some do-it-yourself options where you won't have to break the bank. You can simply pull from your closet, like I always say. These are also great if it's last minute and you're in a pinch and simply just don't have the time. Let's face it, we're always so busy and this will make your life a little bit easier.

My first idea is a flight attendant. All you need is a black blazer, a pencil skirt or whatever black skirt you have on hand. A red scarf to tie around your neck or any silk scarf will suffice. Black pumps, a button-down shirt and a pair of wings. My son still has his "kid wings" that the pilot gave him on a flight when he was little. You could even add a

small suitcase, a red lip, and you're ready to fly.

Another cute idea is a detective. All you need is a trench coat, a magnifying glass and some sort of pocket notebook with a pen. Round turtle shell glasses or sunglasses would really make it authentic and even a pair of gloves. Not to mention this idea is really comfortable

and effortless. An additional idea to the detective if you want to be less modern, would be to add a pipe if you want to appear more like Sherlock Holmes.

An artist costume is another fabulous idea. You simply need something that you don't mind getting a little paint on. Grab a paintbrush and get creative on an old apron or even a pair of jeans and a jacket that you're not planning on wearing. A black and white striped shirt and a beret

on your head will make you look super bona fide. Don't forget to add a wooded paint palette with some primary colors on there as well. Your elementary school art teacher will appreciate that.

In closing, and my personal favorite choice is a fortune teller. All you need is a long flowy skirt. A Kaftan will do. A turban or head scarf and loads of gold jewelry and rings. Do a heavy smokey eye and vamp lipstick. Lace up boots or clogs will add some authenticity. If you don't have a crystal ball, you could always use a snow globe or even a round paperweight. Tarot cards would be a really fun add on and you're good to go. These are all so simple and cost effective and not too mention plush to wear. There's nothing worse than an ill-fitting, itchy costume that's cheaply made.

So, there you have it. You may even win the costume contest after all! What costume are you going to wear this year and who are you going to be? Have a spooky good time y'all!



Kristine March

flight attendant



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Approximately 12 miles to downtown Anderson and 30 miles to downtown Greenville. It is currently being managed as timberland.

School District 2 and close to BHP High School, Electric – Duke Power, Gas – Piedmont Natural Gas (4" line on BHP Hwy). Water – Belton Honea Path Authority (12" line on BHP Hwy, 8" line from BHP Hwy down Floyd Wright Dr. for 1600' + fire hydrant), Sewer – Septic Tank. Rail siding on BHP Hwy. (Greenville Western Railroad)

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THE GARDEN SHOP

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SUSAN
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master
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It is impressive anything is blooming during this drought. As of this press time, there's been no rain at my place since early to mid-September. That rain was decent enough to allow some weeding and tending. Plants for master gardeners' plant sale next April were divided then. Now, the ground is rock hard. I gave up digging a hole for the new confederate azaleas from SCBG's plant sale last month. The other confederate azaleas are getting watered, along with a few other rather newly planted special plants. Otherwise, it's visit plants and ask them to just hang on. Yes, I talk to my plants. In the garden shop area, there are several tubs that are used to soak plants. This is very helpful to be sure the potted plants get a thorough watering. When it's this dry, standing with a hosepipe is tedious, and

often not very effective as water just runs right through.

In the past week or so, mums started putting on a show. Old-fashioned garden mums, like Clara Curtis, Betty Sheffield, Daisy Gold, Ryan's pink/peach/russet are looking good. These types of mums are tough perennials. It may take some searching to find them, but it's worth the trouble, unless a friend has some to share. Online sources categorize them as button, cushion, football, spoon & quill, and more. Daisy mums are a favorite. Over the years, spoon & quill have been tried with no success. Grocery store mums are usually sold simply for porch decorations. Don't get your heart set on them coming back. Often times the roots are not strong enough. But if you love one, it's worth a try to plant it.

A special little yellow mum is blooming for the first time. If I had to guess, I would say it's a cushion mum. It is about eight inches tall and only has about four stems. She has been named Nancy since this special one came from Nancy Cochran's yard. I kept it in a pot for a couple of years to be sure it would make it. Just a little spring would come up from the

spot in Nancy's yard. It was not blooming, so it was a pleasant surprise to see its bright yellow flowers. There aren't many yellow mums in the garden. In a few more years, Nancy's mum should grow to be a couple of feet tall. It was planted in a spot with enough room to grow however big it wants. This specialty even got a plant marker, to remind me to keep a watch on it

There are gardeners who say keep mums pinched back until July 4th to make them more compact. That goes against the natural growth habit of many of the old-fashioned types. Ryan's pink is shorter than it usually is due to this drought, only about two feet tall. With adequate rain, it can easily be three feet

tall. Ryan's russet, even this year, is about three tall. Ryan's pink and peach flop around but that is fine for my garden. Other perennials support some of them. Ryan's russet rarely flops or needs to be staked. Nancy's is still too young to tell.

Mums need at least 5 hours of sun to bloom nicely. Well-drained soil is a must. Otherwise, they are fuss free plants. Oddly, deer have nibbled a few this year. As for the porch mums, don't buy ones in full bloom. Tightly budded ones are best. Keep them deadheaded, mix a bit of water-soluble fertilizer that has a high middle number with most waterings, and they should last until frost.



Nancy's button nose mum

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ANDERSON COUNTY
SOUTH CAROLINA

EXPERIENCE EXCEL ENJOY

FIVE SECONDS WITH KEVIN COSTNER

BY DR. SHEILA HILTON

There are moments in life that brand themselves on our memory like initials carved into an old oak tree — small in duration, but lasting forever. Mine came one spring day in 2005, when I was serving as assistant principal at T. L. Hanna High School.

Anyone who's ever worked in a high school knows the job description might as well read: expect the unexpected. Every morning, I'd pull into the parking lot with a sense of adventure — part educator, part zoo-keeper, part emergency responder. Imagine corralling 1,800 teenagers under one roof, all fueled by hormones, cafeteria pizza, and free Wi-Fi.

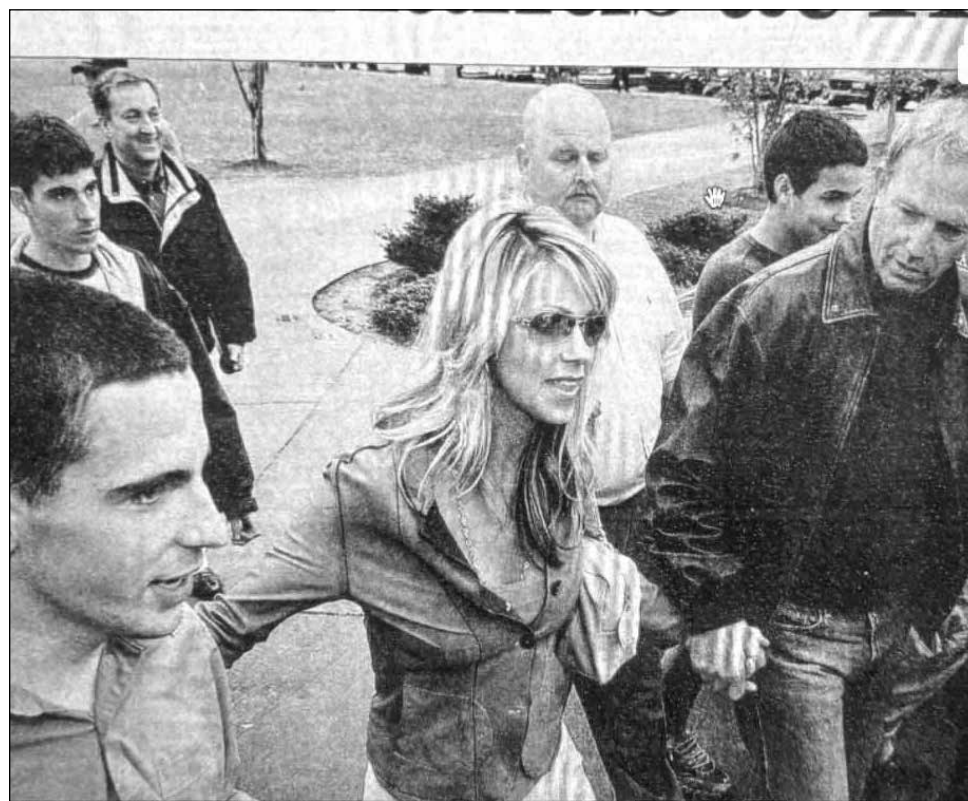
Over the years, I'd seen it all.

There was the "bookbag puppy incident," when a student calmly explained that the wriggling, squeaking backpack at her feet was the result of a puppy accidentally crawling inside for a nap. (I gave that explanation a solid D-minus for plausibility).

And then there was the "medical emergency" that turned out not to be a medical emergency at all — a panicked student whose face appeared alarmingly blue, until I realized he was simply wearing a new navy shirt for the first time. He believed he was looking death in the face.

But my personal favorite came when a cow — yes, an actual cow — escaped from the neighboring pasture and wandered onto school grounds. Picture our entire administrative team, normally quite dignified, attempting to herd a full-grown Holstein back home. Teachers and students pressed against classroom windows, watching us flail about like an outtake from *The Amazing Race: Farm Edition*. The day was saved only when administrator Mary Nell Anthony calmly stepped forward and cooed to the animal until it turned and trotted obediently back to its field. From that day forward, she was forever known as The Cow Whisperer.

And yet, none of those events prepared



me for the day I opened the rear gym door and found myself face-to-face with Kevin Costner.

Yes, that Kevin Costner — movie-star handsome, baseball-field dreamer, bringer of cinematic tears. I froze. He extended his hand. I extended mine. And for five glorious seconds, we stood there, locked in mutual acknowledgment, gazing into each other's eyes. For those five seconds, I was in *Message in a Bottle*, minus the ocean breeze and the tragic ending.

When the next second ticked by, reality struck: the other hand of the Hollywood dreamboat was gently clasping that of a stunning woman — his brand-new wife, Christine Baumgartner. Darn. And just like

that, my romantic subplot was edited from the script.

But how did Kevin Costner end up at the back door of T. L. Hanna High School?

The answer is simple: Ben Comen.

Ben was a senior that year — one of those students everyone knows and loves. A member of the cross-country team, Ben had been born with cerebral palsy, a condition that affects muscle control and coordination. Most would have considered distance running impossible, but Ben simply decided "impossible" was a word for other people. He ran anyway.

He fell often — hard, sometimes bloody — but he always got up. He finished last in nearly every race, but he always finished. His story caught the attention of ESPN, which produced a moving segment about his determination and heart.

Meanwhile, Kevin Costner's friend and golf caddy, Tom Hocht, happened to see the ESPN piece while doing his laundry (proof that great things can happen when you wash your socks). Hocht said he stopped crying long enough to realize that Costner would soon be in South Carolina for the BMW Charity Pro-Am Golf Tournament — not far from T. L. Hanna. He shared Ben's story with Costner, who was so moved he decided to meet him in person.

So on April 26, 2005, Costner took Ben to lunch, then the two arrived at the school by helicopter to a cheering crowd of students, teachers and community members. There, Costner spoke, signed autographs, and helped the Comen family launch the Ben Comen Living Without Limits Foundation, created to support individuals with disabilities and

honor the schools, teachers, coaches and families who help them succeed.

Ben Comen became a local legend, not for how fast he ran, but for how he lived — proving that true strength isn't measured in speed, but in spirit. Not only did he run his race physically, he also excelled in the classroom. He now has a Bachelor's Degree in Psychology from USC Upstate and a Pharmacy Technician Certification from TriCounty Technical College.

So yes, I met a celebrity that day.

But it wasn't Kevin Costner.

It was Ben Comen — the young man who taught us all that courage means getting up when you fall, even when everyone else has already crossed the finish line. Sharing much of the praise for his success is his family, who never told him what he couldn't do — only what he could.

As for those five seconds with Kevin Costner?

Let's just say it made for a great story.

But knowing Ben Comen — that changed my life and perspective forever.

Ben Comen became a local legend, not for how fast he ran, but for how he lived — proving that true strength isn't measured in speed, but in spirit.

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DEARLY DEPARTED

If you're reading this, then as far as I know, you're alive. If you're reading this and are not alive, then I hope you're comfortable and not too warm.

As living beings, we don't care to talk about death. In fact, we have invented many consoling words so that we can avoid saying it, such as... Expired, Departed, Gone, Passed, No More, Perished, Late, Deceased, Lamented.



Neal Parnell

Here in the South, we are empathetic when speaking of death. We have a slightly unconnected view, mostly because we've experienced it daily with farm animals, hunting, or fishing and see it a bit differently. We say things like He Bought the Farm, Kicked the Bucket, Bit the Dust, or Cashed in his Chips. I suppose we are trying to inject some levity into a sad situation when we say He's Pushin' Up Daisies or He's Six Feet Under, but that's nothing compared to what we hear in movies and television. One of my favorite westerns is Gunsmoke. Once Marshall Matt Dillon asked his deputy Festus Hagen, "Where's Jim?" Festus replied, "He's augged in". Festus could always be counted on for his response to that same question about someone's demise "He's Belly Up Matt," "He's Wearin' a Pine Suit" or "He's taking a Dirt nap". The Godfather had the famous line, "He sleeps with the Fishes" and the old gangster movies would proclaim "It's Curtains for You". Some of the more modern euphemisms for death appear by way of our computers and devices. Unsubscribed, Proceed to Checkout, Add to Cart, Return and Replace. Then there was the text message I saw that read, "How did he die?" The reply was TMB (Too Many Birthdays).

I hope I'm not dredging up sad memories for anyone. It's not my intention. I'm one of those odd ducks who doesn't belong at funerals because I outwardly show grief by making light of it, but inwardly I'm crying. Please be advised not to have me at the wake. The last one I attended, my phone rang and my ringtone blared out 'Highway to Hell.'

Funerals, burials, and memorials are for the living, not the dead. We need some form of closure and yet still be able to be near our loved one. Have you heard of The Wind Phone?

It's one of those open phone booths next to a bench, but it is in the graveyard. It's not connected, but it offers a way to speak to a loved one without standing and talking to a headstone. It may seem odd. They have become quite popular and there's never a busy signal. Another popular way to keep the departed close to your heart is the fingerprint necklace. Yes, your loved one's fingerprint is copied and etched onto a pendant, which is worn at all times. The Wind Phone and the Fingerprint Necklace sound like a loving way to keep in touch with the afterlife, but in my opinion, this next one goes beyond the beyond. What they do is use the person's ashes and mix them with porcelain clay. Then they are put back into the oven and come out as a glossy ceramic bowl, pot or earthenware. To each his own, but I just can't imagine drinking out of a cup that says Mom and it actually is.

There's a saying my Grandmother told me. "After the game, the King and the Pawn go in the same box".

R.I.P.



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