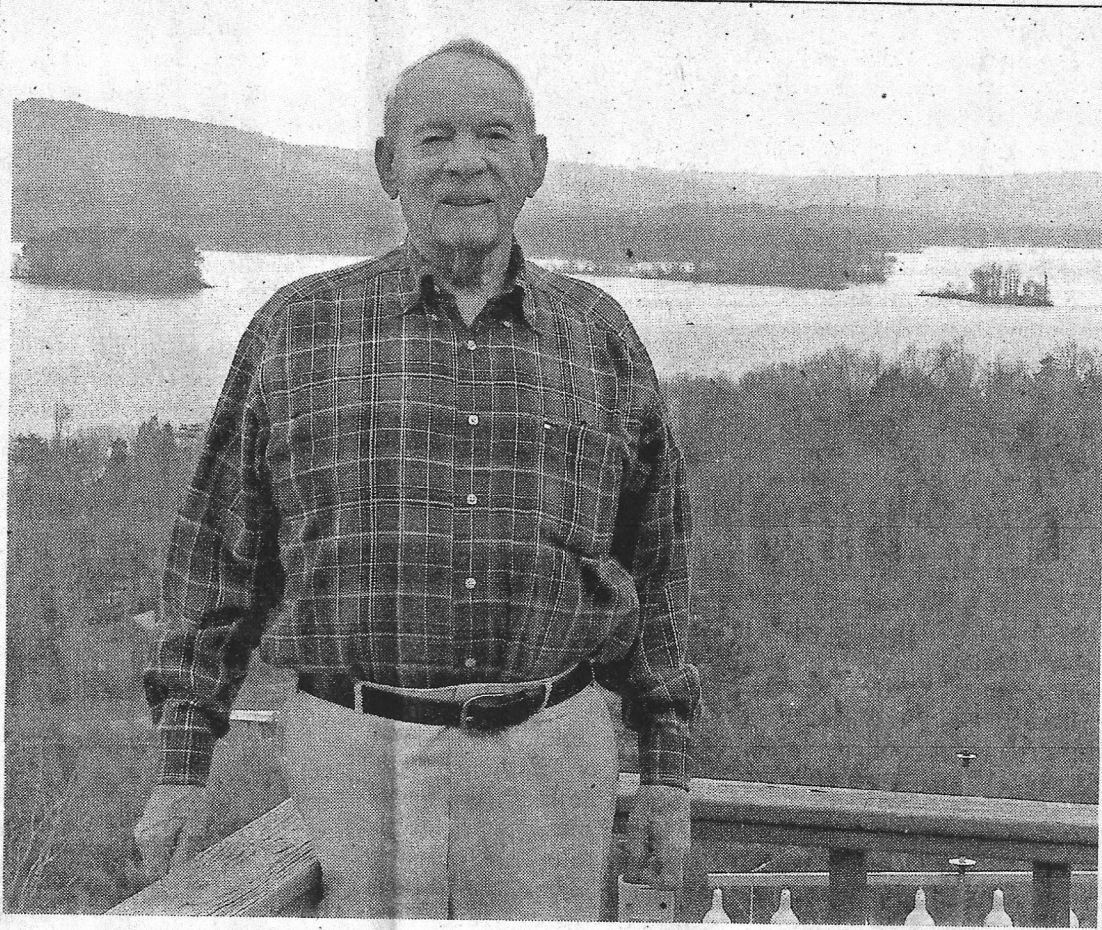


# Advertiser-Gleam

— Guntersville, Ala. 35976 — Our 134th Year, No. 22 — Saturday, March 15, 2014



Jack Godsey stands on the deck of his home on Buck Island, from which he can view the progress of the Guntersville Airport runway expansion as well as the expanse of the lake.

## Eighty-nine is just fine for Mr. Godsey

By Cindy McGregor

When Jack Godsey sends a birthday card to someone in his family, it contains a kind poem

that's what the Godseys do. They also check on the progress of the Guntersville airport runway expansion — from their home on a hill, they have a fantastic view not onl

for the B-29 base. "The island was a large coral reef," Mr. Godsey we were

## Planning Bd. supports rezoning on warehouse

By Anthony Car

Martha Rice asked the Planning Board to rezone property on Creek Field from single-family residential to industrial. Sunrise, a distributor of Kappeler material suits, wants a warehouse on the 17th there.

Five neighbors spoke against the rezoning, saying they had homes all around there. But it is also the Creek Ridge Industrial. It's off Highway

The Planning Board in favor of the rezoning recommendation now the City Council for

Ms. Rice spoke in favor of the rezoning at a public hearing before the Planning Board

"It is proposed for industrial use," she said. "If we don't do this no matter what tonight."

She said

Guntersville High School, 8:00 a.m., GHS

Valley Community monthly meeting, 7:30, Outlaw Public welcome.

Washers' Chapel Methodist, 2737 Chapel Road, Arab, community wide family services, 5:00-6:30.aghetti dinner.

Missionary Baptist breakfast, today 1:00, Signal Point

e, this section)

## Invited to watch bass-fish survey

on Guntersville 5-27 for its annual fish survey." The invited to watch as bi-electrofishing boats bass and crappie

in your boat and ber can ride in one at.

start at 7:30 each's the schedule

## Eighty-nine is just fine for Mr. Godsey

By Cindy McGregor

When Jack Godsey sends a birthday card to someone in his family, it contains a one-of-a-kind poem. No one wrote him a poem for his birthday, so he did it himself.

It starts this way:

*"Eighty nine and doing fine  
Without much wine.*

*So far my troubles are all benign,*

*I will keep trying to walk the line."*

The poem "Eighty-Nine" was written by Mr. Godsey in honor of his last year as an octogenarian.

Mr. Godsey, who lives on Buck Island with his wife of 23 years, Judy, is working on his 90th year. His life has spanned the Great Depression, World War II and satellite communications. He has shined shoes, set off rockets and written a novel.

**MR. GODSEY** and his wife are members of the Guntersville First United Methodist Church, where they sing in the choir. They also sing in the RSVP Chorus.

They have several friends who, as they got older, needed someone to check on them, so

that's what the Godseys do. They also check on the progress of the Guntersville airport runway expansion - from their home on a hill, they have a fantastic view not only of the construction but also of the lake.

Both in their second marriage, they have 7 children, 10 grandchildren and 3 great-grandchildren. Mr. Godsey's oldest son drowned at age 3½.

Mr. Godsey doesn't believe his life is extraordinary, but he has some interesting tales to tell.

**BORN IN** 1925, he recalls his father working in a dairy near McElwain, east of Birmingham. In 1934, nine-year-old Jack won a contest for selling the most newspaper subscriptions to the old Birmingham Post.

The following year his father was hurt when a milk truck he was driving was hit by a drunken driver. He died at home 2 weeks later. Jack was 10 years old.

The family, which included baby Kirby, born 6 months after his father's death, moved in with his father's brother Bobby Godsey. His other brother is Max.

The next year they moved to Hamilton near the Mississippi line. There young Jack shined shoes in the courthouse square.

"**SHOE-SHINES** were only a nickel, but I often got a quarter," Mr. Godsey said. "The earnings were a significant part of the family income. We were on government relief, which paid \$4 a month. You couldn't live on that. My mother turned to me once and said, 'What are we going to do?' I was only 10. I didn't know what to say."

He heard his first boxing match on the radio, which sparked an interest in the sport. He boxed in high school and the Golden Gloves.

In 1938, they moved back to Birmingham, where his uncle had built them a house. Young Jack studied one of his father's old textbooks on electricity and wired the house himself. Four years later, his mother found a job at a defense plant in Mobile, and the boys went to live with relatives.

**THE FOLLOWING** year Jack passed a qualifying test to join the Army Air Corps Cadet program. The Army Air Corps would become the Air Force after World War II. During training he studied aeronautics and flew small airplanes. In 1943, he was sent to airplane mechanic's school in Texas. His specialty was airplane electrical systems.

In 1944 he was sent overseas to Tinian Island near Guam. His group of soldiers secured the island while the Seabees finished the runways and other facilities

for the B-29 base.

"The island was a large coral reef," Mr. Godsey said. "When we were bombed, we frantically and futilely tried to make fox-holes. We lay down beside the big, long rolls of canvas, which would be the tops and sides of our living quarters."

**THE B-29S** from his base bombed Japanese targets with conventional bombs and ultimately sent atomic bombs on the "Enola Gay," which dropped an atomic bomb on Hiroshima, Japan. It and a second bomb dropped on Nagasaki are credited with ending World War II.

"Of course, we didn't know what was happening at the time. The GIs weren't told. But we saw the 'Enola Gay' there," he said.

He returned to the U.S. on his 21st birthday in 1946. Most of that year was "an adventure." He drifted around the country, taking on odd jobs:

- Picking strawberries in Ann Arbor, Michigan.
- Making Jeep engines at a foundry in Pontiac, Michigan.
- Setting up and taking down at a Kelly Grady carnival/circus.
- Building a skating rink in Hamilton.
- Boxing in the Golden Gloves at Boutwell Auditorium in Birmingham.

**HIS BEST** job was at a soda fountain in downtown Birmingham, he said. It was centrally located near the Alabama Theater, the Lyric Theater and the biggest department stores and

(Back page, this section)

## Eighty-nine is just fine for Mr. Godsey

(Continued from front page)

was always the center of activity.

The waiters and waitresses didn't write down the orders, they remembered them and called them out to the cooks.

"That still blows my mind that we were able to do that," Mr. Godsey said. "The best part of that experience was meeting people from every walk of life."

The GI bill paid for classes at Birmingham Southern and Auburn. He got a degree in electrical engineering and worked as a manufacturer's representative selling and servicing high-pressure boilers used at dairies and hospitals.

"I had vowed at 11 or 12 years old that I would never again be poor and dependent as we were then," he said.

In 1951 he went to work at Thiokol Corporation at Redstone Arsenal in Huntsville.

IN 1955 he and a spelunker friend explored caves in the area, including Cathedral Caverns.

Thiokol continued expanding, designing and building rockets for all 3 branches of the armed forces and NASA. One of the rockets put up most of the communications satellites, many of which are still in use today. The company also contracted testing on solid propellant rockets to see if they could be made large enough to boost liquid rockets, which could travel to the moon, he said. The tests were successful.

In 1980, Mr. Godsey was assigned to computerize Thiokol's operations. He was named the American Cancer Society's president of the Marshall County chapter, and started attending Henryville United Methodist Church, where he held many positions over an 8-year period.

**HE WAS A** member of the Guntersville Optimist Club for 9 years, serving one term as president. In 1987 he retired from work and went on a mission trip to Mexico to help get a church started.

He looked at maps in the tax assessor's office till he found almost 40 acres overlooking the lake that he wanted to buy. It's his current location on Buck Island. He was talking to Beaul Hunkapillar about surveying the property. Mr. Hunkapillar asked if Mr. Godsey would like to help start a new Methodist church in Grant, New Life.

In 1990 he married Judy Walker. They designed and built their home. She was the mother of Bruce Walker, who operated

Bruce's Restaurant near the Connors Island business park.

**MR. GODSEY** kept his vow of never being tragically poor again. Since 1987 he has been enjoying his retirement from Thiokol in Huntsville. His brothers also did well: Max Godsey, who lives in Grant, earned a degree in electrical engineering and worked as a supervisor at U.S. Steel, and Kirby Godsey earned multiple degrees and was president of Mercer University in Georgia for 27 years.

In 1994 Bruce Walker was killed, and Judy and her oldest son Randy assumed responsibility for the restaurant. Mr. Godsey acted as busboy, clearing tables, and was good for public relations, Mrs. Godsey said. In 1998 they sold the restaurant to Randy Walker.

His novel is in the process of being published. Called "The Odyssey of Jille Fox," it recounts the adventures of Jille Fox as she tries to rescue a family member who was kidnapped and carried to Argentina. Mr. Godsey expects to have copies of the book in hand around April.

Mr. Godsey stays busy working around his place, growing fruits, nuts and berries and mowing 8 acres of grass. He participates in an exercise class at the senior center, and he and Judy sing in the chancel choir at 2 Sunday morning services. They also sing in the RSVP Chorus. Each Thanksgiving week, they prepare all the cornbread needed to make the dressing for 1,500 meals.

Through his life he has learned some important lessons, but he summed up the best in this manner: "Act honorably, and things will work out for you. Learn things in every aspect of life. Working is a good thing."