

# ECHOES



The  
Escam-  
bia  
County  
Histori-

## The July 2022 Newsletter

The July Meeting will be Tuesday, July 26, at 3:00 pm in the Meeting Room in the Museum on the Brewton College Campus.  
Refreshments Will Be Served.  
Masks are Optional.



### The Program: George Washington, Businessman

Our President, Don Sales, will present a program on perhaps his favorite historical figure, George Washington. However, this will be a different picture of Washington from the usual figure of George the military leader and first president. This will be George Washington as an entrepreneur and very successful businessman.

But first a reintroduction to Don. *From an article in the Brewton Standard by Lydia Grimes published when Don became Museum Coordinator of the McMillan*

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**Sierra Stiles who was to present the program for July has had to reschedule.**

#### The August Program



Author Paul Brueske will present a program on the Last Siege of the Civil War, the Mobile Campaign of 1865.



**US Army Cavalry passing through Canoe en route to WWI.**



**Booth Family Home place, ca.1975. Home built around 1908.**

**Volume 49 No. 7  
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## The Program

*(Continued from page 1)*

**Museum:** Don was born in South Flomaton (now Century, Fla.) and graduated from Century High School in 1962.

“I loved all kinds of sports back then,” Sales said, “but I also had a great love of history and science. I come from a family of five. My mother ran a small store and my dad was a U.S. Navy diver. We had to help my mother with the store, where we sold, among other things, eggs that came from our own chickens.”

After high school, Sales attended Pensacola Junior College and worked at Chemstrand. One day he got a call from his brother, who told him he was opening a car dealership in Monroeville.

He wanted Sales to come to work with him, so in

1965 he joined the staff of Sales Ford and worked there until he retired.

“After retirement, I decided to do what I really loved to do,” Sales said. “My daddy taught me to love history. I worked on a committee to bring back the last steam train engine that had run at Alger-Sullivan. It was about to be junked and we wanted to save it.”

He went on to serve as vice president and acting president of the Alger-Sullivan Historical Society.

He has been the president of the Florida Panhandle Historical Preservation Alliance. We are glad that he is now in Charge of the McMillan Museum and President of ECHS.

Don lives in Century with his wife, Brenda. They have two daughters and four grandchildren.

## News And Announcements

### McMillan Museum Has a New Exhibit: A Model of a Sawmill



Tom Kerins has donated this model of a saw mill to the museum. He and his wife Helen donated a piano from the Downing/Schofner School to the museum last year.

During a visit to the museum, Mr. Kerins saw the model of a farm which is on display.

He was inspired by this exhibit to build an exhibit for the museum. The result is this beautiful model of a saw mill which has amazing detail.

Tom and Helen live on Amelia Island, which is located near Jacksonville.



*(Continued on page 3)*



## News And Announcements

(Continued from page 2)

### The Historical Society Represented at the Blueberry Festival

President Don Sales and Treasurer John Angel participated in the festival representing the society at a table which had materials about the society, membership forms and books which the society makes available through contributions. According to Don, the society received quite a few contributions in exchange for these books at the festival.



### “History Comes to Life in Brewton!” July 30, 2022 in Jennings Park

The Battle of  
Burnt Corn Creek  
Re-enactment will be

held on July 30, 2022 in Jennings Park in downtown Brewton. The actual battle scene will occur at 12 noon to match the historical event. Booths and demonstrations will be available beginning at 9 a.m.

### Sherry Johnston Has Resigned As Society Librarian

Sherry has accepted a position to work part time at the public library in Andalusia. For Sherry this job will be returning home since she grew up in Covington County. She plans to continue to help with the History of Escambia County, Alabama Facebook page and to attend Society meetings. She also plans to continue to help out in the Alabama Room when able.

### The Alabama Room in Need of A Medium or Large Size Refrigerator and Microwave

The Alabama Room already has a small refrigerator and microwave but needs the larger sizes of the appliances to provide adequate storage and heating for the refreshments served at the meetings.

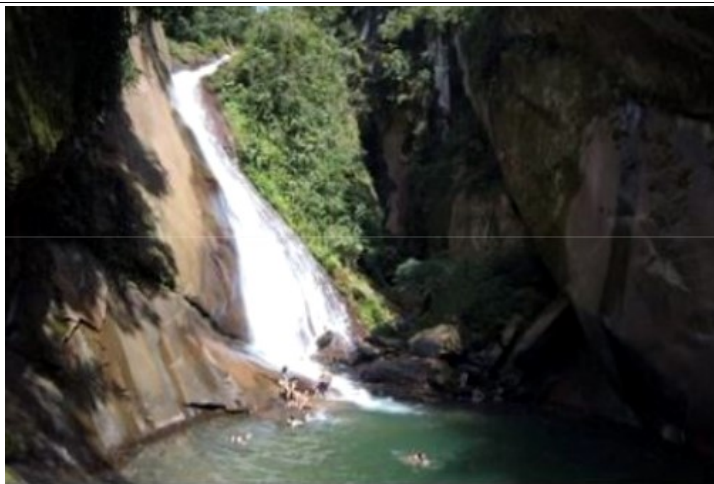
If anyone has either of these items that you are no longer using and which you would like to donate to the Museum/Alabama Room, please contact Don Sales at 251-809-1528 or <escambiacohistoricalsociety@gmail.com>.

## The ECHS Journal Section

### Cascades of Rio Aguaytia

#### By Darryl Searcy

There was an occasion when our work required a trek into the cascade country of the Rio Aguaytia, which river local indigenous people referred to as “up river” and “down river.” At times it was difficult for us to determine in which of the “up” and “down” river areas we were as our orientation in North America is quite clear, whereas the South American waters flow northward toward the equator, so when we refer to “up river” we are headed in a southerly direction. Atop this confusion was the existence of two villages that referred to themselves as the “upriver” people and the “downriver” people. Our dealings fell to the medicine man (Shaman) at the downriver group, but the path we were to follow required that we cross the river to the west in order



to avoid contact with the upriver people.

On this day the sun was at blistering peak, which required that we drape a towel or shirt from our head to shield our bodies from the bright reflection of the tropical sun on the river water.

Previously we had worn a jungle helmet that only kept the sun off our heads and face but not

our arms and lower body. As the sun moved from east to west, we would move the cloth from one side to the other. Keep in mind that in South America the rivers flow north, the opposite of our Mississippi River’s southward flow. This was a difficult pill for us to swallow, but our logistic friends Jacques and Bell kept a cool head about them by simply pointing

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# The ECHS *Journal* Section

## Cascades of Rio Aguaytia

*(Continued from page 3)*

toward Ecuador, seat of the equator, as they lead us in the right direction.

Into the Amazon River flows some 1100 streams, of which 17 are longer than 1500 kilometers. Together they form the largest inland waterway system in the world. Also, rivers in the Amazon are divided according to the color of their water, which is determined by geological and biological structures where the waters originate. We were often at odds to distinguish between “white-water, black-water, and clear-water rivers.”

White-water rivers originate high in the Andean slopes and have the color of coffee with milk. They are very turbid waters and contain high amounts of nutrients and eroded material, mainly clay. Their water has a higher conductivity and almost neutral pH (Rivers Amazon, Napo, Marañón, Tigre, Yuruá, Purús, Madeira ).

Black-water rivers are the product of chemical properties and are set by the sandy soil and type of vegetation known as “campina” and campinarana” (vegetation that grows on infertile sandy soil with poor drainage), which is growing in these soils. Not completely decomposed organic matter, leaves and wood in the soil and soil porosity allows the amount of organic liquid acids to seep into the waters thereby reducing the pH of the water and creating characteristic dark colors (example Rio Negro, Urubu).

Clear-water rivers are usually transparent (up to 5 meters) and originate in Brazil and Guyana. They contain low amounts of nutrients and eroded particles in suspension, thus the waters are chemically pure, with low conductivity and almost neutral pH (Rio Tapajós, Xingu, Trombetas).

So, here we are between two upriver villages where a suspension bridge accommodates automobile traffic to and from a Peruvian township known as Aguaytia (or Puente Aguaytia). The highway ends at Aguaytia, so if local citizenry wishes to go beyond to the city of Iquitos they must do so by water travel.

The township of Aguaytia has a large port area so that trucks from Lima can back down to the edge of

the river to load up bananas and plantain, which is bought by the thousands right off the canoes. These are then transported over the Andes Mountains to Lima. Most buildings in the town have metal roofs; a few with tile roofs and some with palm-thatched. A few buildings stand higher on the hills that are safe from floods when the river is high.

As we made our way through the jungle trails we passed the settlement of Cashibo-Cacantaibo. Its inhabitants were the direct descendants of the deceased Chief Bolivar. Also, east of the Aguaytia River is the farm of a former North American missionary named Reifsnyder, who lived there with his wife and daughter. Their son was grown and had left home to serve in the armed forces of the United States. Mr. Reifsnyder raised cattle on his ranch/farm and spent a lot of time in Lima on business. From this location it was about fifteen or twenty kilometers to the town of Aguaytia. This is where we are going when we complete our collections at the Reifsnyder ranch.

Some hours later when on the outskirts of Aguaytia, we saw a small restaurant, which we were told to be promising. We decided that it would be here that we would take our evening meal.

When all the crew were settled in, and to make service a bit more expedient, the entire group ordered the same dish, a typical Peruvian meal with fried plantain, manioc (cassava), and lomo saltado (a type of fried beef strips cooked with tomatoes and onions).

While sitting in the restaurant and talking among ourselves, as we waited for the food to be cooked, we decided to have a look about. There was no ceiling - just rafters and a thatched roof. We noticed that on the rafters there were big, healthy rats running around, which to some people would play havoc with their appetite.

Afterwards when we had finished our meal, we met a group of missionaries at a local market. The leader of the missionary group asked us where and what we had taken as our meal. We explained it to them and one female said, “Oh, you should never eat there again; the little chunks of meat in the rice are rat meat.”

Hey guys, anybody ready for seconds?



**Lomo Saltado**



# The ECHS *Journal* Section

## Growing Up With The Bomb

By Charlie Ware

I clearly remember that day back in the early 1950's when I was standing on the school playground with a little group of my classmates. We were searching the horizon for the first sign of the mushroom clouds we were convinced were going to appear at any minute. This happened at the old Rachael Patterson School, and I was in the fourth grade. It was a hot, hazy day with the sun barely visible through the haze. What sunlight there was cast an unusual, eerie red glow on everything. I don't know how it started, but a rumor spread among us kids that the sky was red because an atomic bomb had been dropped nearby and we were soon going to be in a nuclear war. We stood there on the playground firmly convinced the world was going to end that day.

Today, we all know nuclear weapons exist and we have some idea of the terrible destruction they can bring. We know that other countries have weapons aimed at us which could be launched at a moments notice, and that there are systems in place which could start a chain reaction of retaliation strikes which would likely result in the destruction of society as we know it. Thankfully, since the end of the Cold War, nuclear destruction is not something we have to spend a lot of time thinking about. There are probably many young people who have never thought about it at all. But for my generation as kids, it was something we did have to think about. It was something we had to deal with

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I was born the same year construction was begun on the first atomic bomb. I was less than two years old when the atomic bombs were dropped on Japan. I was in kindergarten when I heard my dad telling my mom that the Russians had the bomb. At the time, I didn't know exactly what that meant, but I knew it was not good news. I remember, a couple of years later, hearing a news announcement on the radio about a hydrogen bomb which had a destructive capability hundreds of times that of the Hiroshima bomb.

The Cold War had begun, and we were flooded daily with news of the growing tension between the United States and the Soviet Union. For the next three decades they raced to see which could build the most terrible and the greatest number of nuclear weapons. Little kids were exposed to the stark realities of the world situation and the possibility that a nuclear holocaust could

come at any moment. So, in a sense, my generation grew up with the bomb.

It's hard to believe today, but back in the 1950's most people actually expected a nuclear war. The question was, not "if the bomb would be used?," but "when?" A few politicians and military leaders actually urged the United States to go ahead and bomb the Soviet Union and get it over with.

The Strategic Air Command had dozens of bases around the world with bombers on alert and loaded

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# The ECHS *Journal* Section

## Growing Up With The Bomb

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with atomic bombs. There were also loaded bombers airborne twenty-four hours a day and there were hundreds of underground missile silos with armed missiles aimed at the Soviet Union. Bombers would actually be launched daily, and would proceed towards their assigned targets, only to be recalled at a later time. Bomber crews never knew when they took off if it was the real thing or just a drill.

In spite of the many safeguards, the chances of an accidental launch always existed. To make things worse, both the United States and the Soviet Union developed a system called the *doomsday device*. This was an automated system to ensure that, even if their command centers and heads of government were destroyed, retaliation strikes against the other country would continue. A single atomic bomb dropped by either side, whether intentional or accidental, would unleash a chain reaction of counter-attacks that would result in near total destruction of both nations. The military doctrine of the day was called *Mutual Assured Destruction* with the appropriate acronym of MAD.

There were numerous television programs and movies made depicting the horrors of a nuclear war. One of the main themes of these programs was that of a family surviving in an underground shelter and then coming out to find the world was nothing but a smoking wasteland after an atomic war. Sometimes the scenes would be quite graphic showing the results of burns and the effects of radiation sickness. One program actually showed disfigured survivors of the Hiroshima blast. Many Japanese movies were made in which atomic blasts had created horrible monsters, or awakened old ones, to stalk the Earth.

Two of the movies I remember most from this era were *Fail-Safe* and *Dr. Strangelove*. In *Fail-Safe*, a U.S. bomber was mistakenly on its way to bomb Moscow and could not be stopped. The president of the United States, in order to convince the Soviet



premier that it was all a mistake, agreed to bomb New York City. *Dr. Strangelove* was a satirical comedy with the alternate title of *How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb*.

Americans began to make preparations for the expected atomic attack. The Civil Defense agency was in charge of preparedness and branches were set up in every city and town. Warning systems were installed and were tested regularly. Special radio stations

were established as emergency information stations, and radio dials were marked with the CD symbol so they could be quickly tuned in an emergency. There were many publications printed with all the warning signals and information for what to do in case of attack. People were expected to keep a copy posted in their home so they could refer to it quickly. Certain sturdy buildings were designated as fallout shelters and were stocked with supplies of canned food and water. There is still a sign on the side of the Atmore post office designating it as a fallout shelter.

Air raid drills were conducted regularly. When the warning sirens sounded, people were expected to stop what they were doing and proceed to their nearest shelter or to take cover as best they could. We often didn't know if the alarm was real or not. At school, we kids had to crawl under our desk or under a table. This was called "The drop and cover routine." Even as a kid, I wondered what protection a wooden desk would provide against an atomic bomb. Large cities would have practice evacuations where everyone was actually expected to leave the city. I remember news reports of a practice evacuation of New York City turning into a giant nightmare of traffic grid-lock.

Families were encouraged to build personal underground fallout shelters near their homes. Detailed shelter plans were available from Civil Defense and there were companies that specialized in the construction of fallout shelters. These shelters were to be stocked with enough supplies to last at least a month.

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# The ECHS *Journal* Section

## Growing Up With The Bomb

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One of the things recommended to be included in the supplies was a gun with plenty of ammunition. We were told this was because our friends and neighbors who did not have shelters could be expected to storm ours trying to get in, and we would have to fight them off.

My dad refused to even discuss building a shelter. He said that he didn't want to survive a war and then have to come out to face what was left. There are still some homes in Atmore that have the ruins of old fallout shelters in the yard.

One of the events I remember most, something that stuck with me for many years, occurred when I was nine years old. My teacher was talking to the class about preparing for a nuclear blast and she informed us that we were all going to be issued dog-tags. She said "You must wear these so that if you are burned to a crisp by an atomic bomb, your body can be identified." That was pretty intense for a little kid, at least for me it was, and I remember thinking often of all my classmates "burned to a crisp." I don't think the dog-tags were ever taken very seriously though. Later, in high school, boys and girls would often exchange tags as a show of affection.

Someone brought a map of the United States to school one day which showed all of the likely targets of a nuclear attack. I was disappointed to find that Atmore was not considered important enough to make the list. Pensacola and Mobile were potential targets. On the map, there were a series of circles around each target which showed the extent of damage to be expected at various distances. Our teacher explained to us that a hydrogen bomb dropped on Mobile could cause fatal burns as far away as Atmore.



If the threat of nuclear war wasn't enough, there was the ever-present danger of being exposed to radiation poisoning. Into the 1960's, atomic bombs, and even hydrogen bombs, were tested above ground, usually in the Nevada desert. These blasts would release radio-active particles that would travel around the world

in the atmosphere. This radioactivity had the potential to contaminate vegetation and the water supply for thousands of miles. There were numerous publications to warn of the dangers of radiation poisoning and how to prevent it. There was a list of the symptoms to look for which would indicate exposure. Fallout count reports were regularly broadcast on radio. Kids in areas with high fallout counts were required to take a potassium iodine solution to counter the effects of the radiation. I reasoned that if fallout from tests alone caused so much concern, there was certainly no hope of surviving wartime radiation levels. Several times I stood before a mirror examining myself for signs of radiation poisoning. I remember Civil Defense workers coming through our school with Geiger-counters checking radiation levels.

We'll probably never know just how close we ever came to a nuclear war. Since the Cold War ended, there have been reports released by both the United States and the Soviet Union which detail several instances of misinformation or computer error where the decision to launch nuclear weapons was just minutes away. During the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962, many government officials were so sure there would be a nuclear attack that they had their families evacuated from Washington, D.C. It has been revealed recently that a Soviet submarine captain actu-

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# The ECHS *Journal* Section

## Growing Up With The Bomb

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ally ordered his nuclear torpedoes to be armed and was preparing to fire when he thought he had been fired on by an American ship.

There have been a number of accidents involving nuclear weapons. In several cases, bombs have accidentally fallen from airplanes or planes carrying nuclear bombs have crashed. In a few of these cases, the explosive detonators in the bombs have gone off but safety devices prevented a nuclear reaction. Several nuclear weapons have been lost at sea and have never been recovered.

Fortunately, the many safeguards against the accidental launch or detonation of a nuclear weapon were effective, and even more importantly, cool heads prevailed on both sides when it came to the temptation to use these weapons to settle disputes. The consequences just became too great.

So how was the generation that grew up with the bomb affected by the specter of doom that lingered over our childhood? I know that incidents like my standing on the playground and waiting for a bomb to

drop, or the teacher explaining that we could be burned to a crisp, must have had some lasting effect. But, I think it is scarier today looking back than it was at the time. We worked through our fears through our strong family ties, our trust in our nation's leaders, our faith in God, or through other personal ways. We had a strengthened appreciation that life went on and that it was pointless to waste it awaiting a catastrophe that might never come. We just got on with the task of growing up.

Today the government would probably provide counselors to the schools to help kids who were faced with these traumas. I don't know of any case where a childhood fear of nuclear destruction was ever used as an excuse for a mass shooting or of any other act of violence. I think we grew up OK and the generation as a whole seems to have done just fine. Every generation has its problems. The generation before mine had to deal with the great depression and with World War II. They survived, as did we. My grandchildren today certainly have plenty of things to worry about. I just hope that *Mutual Assured Destruction* is not one of them.

## Flomaton Coaling Tower to Be Dismantled



**Construction photo from 1943 of the coaling tower on L&N Railroad in Flomaton. It is scheduled to be dismantled this month, July.**

*From Escambia County Ala. History Facebook <<https://m.facebook.com/groups/223394524364985/>>.*



**This picture of the Flomaton coaling tower shows that Diesel engines since the fifties have not stopped for coal as they use Diesel oil as fuel instead of coal. From Lee Singletary, Alabama Railroad history <<https://m.facebook.com/groups/268429536872720/>>.**



# The ECHS *Journal* Section

## 60 Years Ago. How We Were Living in 1961

From a Post by Elvis-Pat Levoy in the Alger Sullivan Historical Society Facebook Page on August 22, 2021, this handout from a course taught in Century.

### HOW TO LIVE WITH AN ATOMIC BOMB

Survival in the nuclear age of atoms depends on how much you know about the effects of atomic warfare and how interested you are in staying alive in the event of attack. When you know the facts, it will be up to you to intelligently-

1. Look at the risk.
2. Figure your odds.
3. Decide whether to provide protection for your family.

When you know what the threat is and what you can do about it, the odds are greatly on your side. The greatest threat and the greatest fear come from ignorance of the facts.

In order to help you learn the facts about atomic war and protection against it, the Century Lions Club is sponsoring a Survival Course for all interested persons, young and old, at the Century High School auditorium beginning Monday evening, October 23, 1961, at 7:00. The training sessions will be held each Monday evening on successive Monday evenings from 7 until 10:00 o'clock. The entire course consists of twelve hours.

This course is solely for your benefit - no charge, no tests, no grades. Just listen, learn, and survive. Even the critics agree that Khrushchev and company will not attack if U.S. citizens are properly prepared.

This course will be taught by Mrs. Gertrude Garcia, ninth grade science teacher from Brownsville Junior High School in Pensacola. Mrs. Garcia is an expert in the civil defense field and is the top Civil Defense instructor in Pensacola. She has just completed a series of successful courses at Pensacola High School.

Survival films showing atomic explosions and also film strips are used to illustrate the main points of the course.

For further information on this course, call Warren M. Briggs at BL6-3456, or W. N. Showalter at BL6-3501, Century, Florida.

***George Thomas Wilson wrote the following comment on this post:***

**Our whole family went to all four Monday night 3-hour sessions. I was 11 and still remember seeing the atom bomb films and long discussions about how to build a bomb shelter and where to put it in your yard. This was the year before the Cuban Missile Crisis so when that happened we were feeling as prepared as we could be. At the conclusion of the four week course (which was very well attended by Century folk), the community presented Mrs. Garcia with a thank you gift: a Philco portable radio in a gray leather case that daddy had picked up in Pensacola just for that purpose, since one of the points she**

**had emphasized was the importance of having a battery operated radio to use in case of an atomic attack. He actually bought two radios and gave the other one to Mama, which came in very handy on the 22 of November of '63 since she had it on while teaching the girls PE class playing tether ball that day and was therefore the only one at Century High School to hear of the JFK assassination when it happened and took the radio into the office so Bill Showalter could also hear the news and it was in this way that he was able, about an hour later, to announce over the spanking brand new CHS intercom system that Kennedy had died (<https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=10216889842358580&set=g.109720792390612>).**

**ECHOES**  
 THE NEWSLETTER FOR  
 THE ESCAMBIA COUNTY  
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Wildflowers of The Conecuh/Escambia River Basin CD	\$10.00	\$15.00
History of Brewton and E. Brewton (SC)	\$40.00	\$45.00
Flomaton Centennial Scrapbook	\$30.00	\$35.00
Addendum to Headstones and Heritage	\$20.00	\$25.00
Headstones & Addendum Together	\$40.00	\$50.00

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*ECHOES, The newsletter for the Escambia County Historical Society, a 501 (c) (3) corporation, is published monthly except November. Comments are welcome. You may email the Society at [escambiahistoricalociety@gmail.com](mailto:escambiahistoricalociety@gmail.com) or call 251-809-1528.*

<p><b>OFFICERS</b></p> <p>President, <i>Don Sales</i>                  Vice-President, <i>Charlie Ware</i>                  Secretary, <i>Shannon Jones</i>                  Treasurer, <i>John Angel</i>                  Echoes Editor, <i>Ranella Merritt</i>                  Librarian, <i>Vacant</i>                  Publicity, <i>Clay Lisenby and Stephen Salter</i>                  Historian/Curator, <i>Tom McMillan</i></p>	<p><b>Trustees</b></p> <p><i>Ann Biggs-Williams</i>  <i>Ranella Merritt</i>  <i>Tom McMillan</i>  <i>Sally Finlay</i>  <i>Charles Ware, Alternate</i>  <i>Darryl Searcy, Trustee Retired</i></p>
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