

## Chronology of Alabama Events

### 1900-1905

1900-Carry Nation visited Huntsville making speeches denouncing alcohol and fraternities.

1901-The current State Constitution was adopted.

1901-President John McKinnely toured Alabama during his re-election campaign.

1902-Dr. C. Styles discovered hookworm.

### 1906-1910

1908-Huntsville All-Stars Baseball Team defeated the Cherokee Indians for the state championship in the states first night baseball game.

### 1911-1915

1912-Oscar W. Underwood's Tariff Act helped bring the Democratic Party back into power.

1912-Underwood was placed into nomination for the presidency at Democratic Convention, he was a native of Alabama.

1912-W.L.Quick flew, what was believed to be, the first monoplane. He flew it in North Alabama and it is now on display at the Space and Rocket Center. This predates the Wright Brothers.

1915-1919-Work restrictions were placed on children 14 years of age and younger.

1918-Influenza epidemic.

### 1916-1920

1917-World War I, the U.S. enters.

1919-Monument to the bowel weevil is erected in Enterprise, Alabama.

1919-New School Codes established because of reports by the U.S. bureau of Education.

### 1921-1925

1922-John A. Wyeth dies. He was responsible for opening the Polyclinic and developing many important surgical techniques.

1922-Harlem Renaissance begins, lasting for 7 years.

1922-WAPI, began in Auburn as WMAV. Alabama's oldest commercial radio station.

1924-Oscar W. Underwood is nominated for the Democratic Convention for the Presidency again.

1925-University of Alabama were Southern Conference Champs and beat Washington for the national title at the Rose Bowl.

Mid-1920's-The Alabama State Docks Agency built all new port facilities at Mobile for bigger and better foreign trade.

### 1926-1930

1927-Convict lease system was abolished.

1927-The Yellowhammer was adopted as the state bird.

1929-Alabama Tombigbee River System flooded large areas in South Alabama, causing over \$6 million in damage.

1929-The Stock Market Crash occurred and thus began the Great Depression.

1931-More than 60 Alabama banks had failed by this time due to the crash.

### 1931-1935

1930-Monte Sano Mountain was acquired by the state and renovated by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). It is still a state park in Huntsville.

1933-Federal Government created the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA).

1933-"Alabama", a poem written by Julia Tutwiler, was set to music and adopted as the state song.

1934- A popular song was written about Alabama, "Stars Fell on Alabama".

Early 1930's-Alabama passed a state income tax law and the Budget Control Act to help save the state from bankruptcy.

#### 1936-1940

1939-The State Legislature passed a law changing the state seal back to a design closer to the original, instead of the one that was being used since 1868.

1939-State motto was adopted, "Audemus jura nostra defendre".

#### 1941-1945

1941-Redstone Arsenal was established headquarters of the U.S. Army Missile Command.

1941-December 7, Pearl Harbor was attacked by the Japanese and U.S. entered World War II. It ended in 1945.

1941-Central Bell introduced the telephone dial system to Alabama, instead of the old operator system.

Early 1940's-Redstone began developing rockets, satellites, and spacecraft to start the U.S. on its way to the space age.

#### 1946-1950

1947-An amendment added to the constitution that children under 16 years old couldn't hold any job unless it was agricultural or domestic was adopted.

1947-National Veteran's Day was begun in Birmingham.

1949-The state's first television station was established. WVTM television started in Birmingham

ham in May as WABT television.

1949-The state tree was adopted, the Southern Pine.

1950-Verner Von Braun and his team of German scientists were brought to Huntsville to work on rocket development.

1950-1953-Korean War

1951-1955

1951-Redstone Arsenal set up a contractual basis with the University of Alabama.

1953-The state legislature approved Act no.244. This adopted the state Creed.

1954-Supreme Court ruled that school segregation was unconstitutional.

1955-December 1, Rosa Parks refuses to give her seat up on a Montgomery bus.

1955-December 5, Blacks begin to boycott the bus lines.

1955-December 13, U.S. Supreme Court outlaws bus segregation.

1955-Civil Rights Movement begins at the Dexter Avenue Church in Montgomery under Martin Luther King Jr.

1955-Alabama began operating the first state owned educational television network in the nation.  
Public Television Network.

1955- The Tarpon was adopted as the state's fish.

1956-1960

1957-February 14, The Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) is formed with Martin L. King Jr. as president.

1957-August 29, Congress passes the Voting Rights Bill of 1957.

1959-Alabama Power built an earthen dam to create Smith Lake for a source of power in Cullman

County. It has over 500 miles of shoreline.

1959-The Camellia was adopted as the state flower.

1960-George C. Marshall Space Flight Center (NASA) was established in Huntsville. Some years later the Space and Rocket Center museum was created.

#### 1961-1965

1961-Joseph Zoetl, a Benedictine Monk died. He was the creator and constructor of most of the buildings and religious shrines in the Ava Maria Grotto.

1961-Von Braun and his team developed the Redstone Rocket which launched America's first astronaut, Alan B. Shepherd, into space.

1963-November 22, President John F. Kennedy was assassinated.

1963-Four children were killed in the bombing of the 16th. Street Church in Birmingham.

1963-August 28, M. L. King Jr. led a march on Washington for civil rights.

1963-Alabama began to desegregate schools.

1963-June, George C. Wallace stood in the doorway of the University of Alabama to prevent integration of schools.

1964-State of Alabama voted for Senator Barry Goldwater of Arizona for President of U.S. It was the first time since 1872 that Alabama supported a Republican candidate.

1964-Battleship Alabama was presented to the state by the government. It was restored and it had served in W.W.II and now anchored in the Mobile Bay.

1965-March, M.L. King Jr. led a five day march from Selma to Montgomery for voter registration rights.

1965-August, Congress passed Voting Rights Act which made over 100,000 blacks able to vote in

Alabama.

1965-United States troops entered Vietnam Conflict.

1966-1970

1967-The reconstruction of Constitution Hall Park began. This was the site where the first Constitution of Alabama was signed.

1968-Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated.

1969-Marble was adopted as the state rock.

1969-The Supreme Court ruled school districts must end racial segregation at once, and operate unitary school systems.

1969-Another of Verner Von Braun's projects was the Saturn 5 Rocket. It launched Neil Armstrong into space and to the Moon. This was the first man on the Moon.

## Chronological Events of Edward W. Spoon

1925

July 24, Day he was born.

1939-40

Government came to his grandfather, Mr. Johnson, and asked him to sign a cotton agreement.

1941

Had first job with the city of Piedmont, at 16 years old.

1942

At 17 years old, Ed went to work for the Standard Coosa Thatchet Company, cotton mill.

1943

December 5, married wife.

May, he went into the Marine Corps.

Spent 8 weeks in basic training in San Diego, California.

1946

Discharged from the Marine Corps.

1947

Began his family, had one girl and one boy.

1950

Went into the U.S. Army for the Korean War.

Spent 14 weeks at Fort Knox, then Ed was discharged.

1951

Joined the National Guard and began working at the cotton mill again.

1971

Retired from the military with 20 years of experience.

1982

Retired from the cotton mill with 45 years experience.

Had bypass surgery.

1988

Took part-time job at the Piedmont Civic Center supervising the complex.

1996

Remains in Piedmont, working with the children at the Civic Center.



## Interview Questions

1. How many years have you lived in Alabama or have you always been a resident?
2. What kind of jobs have you held and military experience?
3. How did you meet your wife and how many kids do you have?
4. What can you tell me about your marriage?
5. What do you remember about the Great Depression?
6. What do you remember about World War I, Korean War, and Vietnam Conflict?
7. In your perspective, how has warfare changed over the years?
8. How has Alabama changed economically over the years?
9. How do you think the youth has changed since you were one?
10. What do you feel Alabama has to offer and why have you stayed here?
11. What changes have you seen occur in Alabama politics and what would you like to see different?
12. What economic improvements have you seen and would like to see?
13. What did you think about the Civil Rights Movement and how did it personally effect you?
14. What do you feel about the government's efforts to improve health care over the years?
15. Are you sad to see the small farmers dyeing out?
16. What do you remember about the integration of schools?
17. What did you think about the removal of the Confederate flag over the capital building?
18. Do you think racism has changed in Alabama? Is there less than before?
19. When did your family come to Alabama and where from?

**Gift and Release Agreement:**

We EDWARD W SPOON and Emily J. Smith  
(Interviewee, print) (Interviewer, print)

do hereby give and grant to Jacksonville State University, all literary and property rights, title, and interest which we may possess to the audio or video recording(s) and transcript(s) of the interview(s) conducted at Piedmont Civic Center on the date(s) of Nov. 3, 1996 for the oral history collection being compiled by the Jacksonville State University Library.

EDWARD W SPOON  
(Interviewee's signature)

Address 511 First Ave.

Date Nov. 3, 1996

Piedmont, Al.

Phone 447-6258

Emily J. Smith  
(Interviewer's signature)

Address 528 Old Godsden Rd. #1

Date Nov. 3, 1996

Jacksonville, Ala.

Phone 435-0092

Interviewee Background Information

Name: EDWARD W SPOON  
Address: 511 FIRST AVE PIEDMONT ALA  
Phone Number(s): 447-6258  
Approximate age or date of birth: 71 YEARS 1925 JULY 24  
Mother's name: Ada 1907, Born Meiden-Johnson  
Father's name: Luther 1905, Born Spoon  
Places lived and when: Cherokee county, Piedmont

Education: 9th grade, ICS courses, some college courses

Religion: Presbyterian  
Business, political and social memberships (past and present):  
PTA, American Legion, VFW, Lodges (Various)

Present occupation: Retired, Works at Piedmont Civic Center  
Former occupation(s): Military (Marine, Army, Reserves)  
Cotton mill worker.  
Special skills: Military Training  
Major Accomplishments: Live to retire, raise both kids, saved money,  
See grandchildren.

Local events in which you have participated: Senior program at Civic Center, the Director

State and/or regional events in which you have participated: State Senior Events (Various)

National events in which you have participated: Great Depression

International events in which you have participated: WWII, Korean War

Natural born U.S. citizen? Yes/No  
Naturalized Citizen: Yes/No Date: NA  
Country from which you emigrated: NA

Documents, photographs, and artifacts which are in your possession:  
Letters to and from wife during WWII. Family tree on the Spoon side. Some information about the Johnson family side.

Individuals you recommend who might be candidates for an oral history interview: Clyde Pike, Piedmont

Additional information:

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**World War II and the Effects on Alabama From a Personal  
Viewpoint**

**by**

**Emily Smith**

## World War II and the Effects on Alabama From a Personal Viewpoint

Was war good for Alabama? Alabama has always been primarily an agricultural state, so when the war came it caused many different industries to flourish. In Alabama, cotton became a primary raw material of the war, second only to steel. War destroys and kills, but for economy it revives and gives life to old industries.<sup>1</sup>

Edward W. Spoon (Ed) remembers when his grandfather, Mr. Johnson, used to be a small farmer in Alabama. Times were hard during The Great Depression up to the start of World War II. Ed recalls, "A man came up to my grandfather and told him that the government would buy your worst cotton, if you sign this paper." Ed went on to state that, "My grandfather told that man he wasn't going to sign." The government was going to end up telling the farmers that did sign that they could only plant so many acres of land. This tended to hurt Alabama farmers. Ed was working in one of the many cotton mills in Alabama when the war came. He had a first hand look at how the cotton industry was almost taken to nothing and then made to be king of the textiles again.

Other plants were doing well around the state, too. Steel, of course, was the most important war material. Birmingham was the largest steel center in the Southeast, and much of the war efforts turned towards Alabama. Three huge munitions plants were begun around the start of the war in Childersburg, Talladega, and Huntsville.<sup>2</sup> Mobile was not only a key port city,

but it also had an aluminum plant, just like the Muscle Shoals area. Many of the youth worked these factories, so when the war broke out many women had to go to work. This was not common for women to work in the forties, but the factories had to keep going if the war was to be won by the Allies. Alabama was second or third in the amount of men that had enlisted. It was estimated that there were over 170,000 men from Alabama at the start of the war.<sup>3</sup>

There were Alabama men were found on every front line and all branches of the armed forces. Ed was a Marine in World War II and traveled to many places for his active duty. He went to the South Pacific and visited Eniwetok, Saipan, Guam, Iwo Jima, and Tinian. He made the comment comparing Vietnam and World War II soldiers, "We were in the jungles, too. We knew how to respect our sergeant...it was sad (W.W.II)." War no matter when or where is always sad and the no matter where you are stationed your friends and family still lose their lives.

The fighting in the South Pacific was horrible. Ed told a story about a sailor who was left on the island of Guam when the Americans moved out. The natives would hide the sailor during the day and at night he would come out for exercise. The sailor was lucky enough to have a radio and would keep in contact with American ships. That man saved many lives. Ed explained that he was lucky enough to have met these natives on Guam and knew that the sailor had nothing to worry about. Not all battles ended up as good as the last final effort to retake Guam. The Battle of Bataan was one of the worst.<sup>4</sup> The infamous Bataan Death March was felt in many areas around the country, even Alabama.

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The battleship "Alabama" was used in World War II and now sits completely restored in Mobile Bay as a reminder of all the victories and defeats that this country and this state made during those war years. The "Alabama" was a big help in the destruction of most of the Japanese forces that were stationed in the Marshall Islands. The few troops that were not captured or destroyed, retreated out of that area.<sup>5</sup> On August 15, 1945, General McArthur called for a cease fire. The Japanese had surrendered and they were to come to Manila to make an official surrender. The mission to go to Manila was delayed because many of the Japanese threatened to shoot down any peace mission. The delay on the Japanese's part made many Americans wonder and distrust the Japanese. Finally the peace talks were held on August 19, 1945.<sup>6</sup> Now there was peace, what did this mean in Alabama? Ed said, to him, this meant he could go back home to his wife and start his family. He had only spent three months with his wife before he went to war. This was the case for many other men who went to fight for their country.

Alabama as a state was effected greatly by the work that the war created. Employment in the state was higher than ever, for both men and women of all races. The wages that the people were earning were at an all-time high, especially since most of these people prior to the business boom were unemployed. Not all of the effects of the war were good for the state. Because the industrial growth was moving so quickly, the need for labor was too. People were coming from all over to fill the positions and the migration was causing insufficient housing and law enforcement.<sup>7</sup> The State's financial situation was high and stable and the post-war problems did

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not seem to be close to the pre-war problems of poverty and bankruptcy for everyone.

World War II hit America hard. The state of Alabama felt many of its effects, both good and bad. Edward W. Spoon shared his thoughts by saying that he hopes that the younger generations never go through the hard times that he has felt. He was quoted, "This generation only knows about big times and bright lights." Alabama has come a long way since Ed began telling his stories of Alabama life.

## NOTES

1. Sparks, Chauncey. "The Impact of the War on Alabama." War Comes to Alabama. Tuscaloosa, AL: Weatherford, 1943. 1-10.
2. Sparks
3. Sparks
4. Adams, Henry H. Years of Expectation. New York: David McKay Co., 1973.
5. Adams
6. Morison, Samuel Eliot. Victory in the Pacific. United States and Canada: Little, Brown, and Co., 1960.
7. Sparks

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Boggs, Charles W. Marine Aviation in the Philippines. Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1951.

Dooling, Dave and Sharon. Huntsville Pictorial History. Virginia: Donning Co., 1980.

Morison, Samuel Eliot. Victory in the Pacific. United States and Canada: Little, Brown and Co., 1960.

Sparks, Chauncey. "The Impact of the War on Alabama." War Comes To Alabama. Tuscaloosa, AL: Weatherford, 1943.

Some of these books were used only for creating an Alabama time line, so there is no citations in the body of this paper.