
The Thrasher Newsletter

Co-Editors: Sue Q. Thrasher & Nancy T. Cherry - Circulation: John E. Thrasher III - Volume 33 No. 2 – May 2015



Photo of 1990 Thrasher Reunion in Norcross
Taken by Nancy Cherry

Welcome to the 41st annual Thrasher reunion!

There are many kinds of reunions that one attends during a lifetime, and there are all kinds of reasons why one does that. As the date gets closer and closer for our Thrasher Reunion, I began thinking about just why I am so anxious to be there and decided that I didn't have a problem with deciding on the answer: It's the people that I will see!

Our hosts, David Sumner & Joe Stine, will keep us busy according to the schedule that they have planned. I was present at the 1990 Thrasher Reunion, hosted by Frank Combes, when Thrasher Park was dedicated, but remember little of the town of Norcross itself. I don't believe that anyone actually spent the night there, so this reunion will give me a chance to absorb the area that was so influenced by "Cousin" John James Thrasher.

David has arranged that the meeting room will be open and available both Friday and Saturday evenings after dinner time. These two evenings are the best time to gather together and visit, actually have time to talk to friends and new acquaintances! (At the reunion in Reidsville, N. C. Last year, there were folks still in the meeting room discussing family genealogy at midnight - I gave up and went to bed at 10 pm.) This is the time to develop new friendships. It's a time to see the photos, genealogy, posters, books and other family memorabilia that I hope you will share with us all. The items you bring may be placed in the meeting room on Friday and removed by late Saturday evening.

I understand that we will gather in the hotel lobby at about 6 pm on Friday and head out to a selected restaurant for dinner. I may not actually sit at the same table with you, but I certainly will see you afterwards in the meeting room in the hotel!

John E. Thrasher III, Chairman, TFA

Norcross: “A Place to Imagine”

The 41st annual Thrasher Family Association reunion will be held June 12-13 in Norcross, Georgia. The Holiday Inn Express needs your room reservations by June 1 and we need your dinner reservations by June 8 (see details below).

Norcross has historic charm, beauty and robust business activity. The city calls itself “A Place to Imagine” and its website (www.aplacetoimagine.com) describes its many eateries, shopping venues, and cultural events. Readers of *Gwinnett Magazine* voted Norcross as “Best Arts & Cultural Scene” in the county. Its eight downtown restaurants were all busy on Sunday and Monday nights during my Memorial Day visit in 2014.

The 2013 book, *Images of Norcross* (Arcadia Publishing), describes its early history this way: “On October 16, 1869, Atlanta businessman John J. Thrasher purchased land lot No. 254, approximately 250 acres in southwestern Gwinnett County. He envisioned a resort town at the first stop north of Atlanta on the Atlanta & Richmond Air-Line, which was then under construction from Atlanta to Charlotte. When the railroad arrived in 1870, Thrasher subdivided his acreage and sold lots to investors and residents from Atlanta and surrounding farming communities, such as Pinckneyville and Flint Hill. Thus, he established the town of Norcross, naming it for his good friend and fellow Atlanta pioneer, Jonathan Norcross.”

Today John J. Thrasher is well remembered and appreciated by the city that he founded. The Welcome Center and Museum displays posters and photos honoring his role in founding the city. Three historic markers commemorate his role in the city’s history: one which designates downtown Norcross on the National Register of Historic Places; one at Thrasher Park commemorates his role in donating land for the park; another at the original site of First Baptist Church recognizing his leadership role as a founding member.

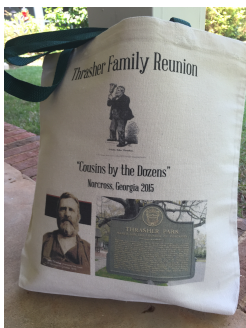
Early arrivals on Friday may meet for dinner in the lobby of the Holiday Inn Express at 6:00 p.m. to visit one of the downtown restaurants. The HIE meeting room will be available Friday evening and all day Saturday to display photos, scrapbooks, and other historic materials.

A walking tour of historic downtown Norcross will meet Saturday morning at the Norcross Welcome Center and Museum at 9:30 for a two hour tour starting at 10:00 led by local historian Dr. Gene Ramsay. A golf cart tour ride will be available, but is limited to those with a physical disability (not for convenience) and reservations are required.

Dinner at *The Crossing Steakhouse* will be at 6:00 p.m. with keynote speaker Bucky Johnson, mayor of Norcross, and his wife. Dinner may be ordered and paid for ala carte from the menu, but we need your dinner reservations to ensure we request the correct number of tables in the special dining room. Please send dinner and golf cart reservations to Joe Stine. Please make your hotel reservations directly with the Holiday Inn Express before June 1 and mention the Thrasher association for a special rate of \$89 (plus tax). After June 1, rooms will be released to the public and may not be available. The HIE offers a free buffet breakfast, business center and swimming pool.

David E. Sumner

davidesumner@gmail.com



The reunion tote bags are ready! Included in the design are pictures of “Cousin John” ringing his famous dinner bell, a dignified photo of John Thrasher who chartered the town of Norcross in 1870, and the historic marker for Thrasher Park. It is just the right size to stash handouts and brochures will be available for purchase at the reunion this year for \$10.70. Email DrSueThrasher@gmail.com to reserve yours.

Reunion Dates: June 12-13, 2015

Hotel: Holiday Inn Express Norcross, 7035 Jimmy Carter Blvd, Norcross, GA 30092. **Directions:**
I-285: Take exit 31B (Peachtree Industrial Blvd.) and go four miles north. Exit on Jimmy Carter Blvd and make a left at the light. The hotel is on the right behind Hibachi Buffet & Grill. **I-85:** Take Exit 99 (Jimmy Carter Blvd.). Turn left and go 4 miles and hotel is on right. **From Atlanta-Hartsfield Airport:** 30 miles via I-285. Non-rush hour: 30-45 minutes. Rush-hour: 45-60 minutes. Taxi charge one-way: \$60 (car rental recommended).

Hotel reservations: (800) 315-2621 or (770)409-0004 • **Hotel deadline:** June 1, 2015

Saturday dinner: 6:00 p.m. The Crossing Steakhouse, 40 S. Peachtree St, Norcross. (678) 280-9081.
Menu: www.thecrossingofnorcross.com

Dinner and golf cart reservations (deadline: June 8): Joe Stine, 407-855-5319 (home), 407-898-2293 (cell), or e-mail stinejoe@bellsouth.net

Map of downtown Norcross: <http://www.norcrossga.net/DocumentCenter/View/620>
Downtown is two miles from the hotel via Peachtree Industrial Blvd. and Holcomb Bridge Road.

Reunion schedule

Friday, June 12: The Holiday Inn Express Meeting Room will be open Friday evening and all day Saturday. Early arrivals meet in hotel lobby Friday evening at 6:00 for dinner.

Saturday, June 13, 10:00 to 12:00. Historic Norcross walking tour by Dr. Gene Ramsay. Gather at 9:30 at Norcross Welcome Center and Museum, 189 Lawrenceville Street (downtown).

- Lunch on your own, 12:00 to 2:00.
- Business meeting and social, 2:00 to 5:30 p.m. Holiday Inn Express meeting room. The meeting room will also be available for socializing after dinner.
- Dinner, 6:00 p.m. The Crossing Steakhouse, 40 S. Peachtree Street. Keynote speaker: Bucky Johnson, mayor of Norcross. See online menu at www.thecrossingofnorcross.com.

Downtown Norcross restaurants:

- 45 South Café and Coffee House • 45 S. Peachtree St. • 770.409.4009
~ Live music, diverse culinary offerings and local artist's exhibits. Craft beers and wine.
- Bleu House Café • 23 Holcomb Bridge Rd. • 770.209.0016
~ Specializing in delicious sandwiches, soups, salads and yummy desserts
- Dominicks Little Italy • 95 S. Peachtree St. • 770.449.1611
~ Family style Italian restaurant serving pasta, seafood, chicken and veal in an old world atmosphere.
- Iron Horse Tavern • 29 Jones St. • 678.291.9220
~ Authentic English pub with excellent draft beer list, tasty menu choices, and outdoor patio.
- Mojitos Cuban Bistro • 35 S. Peachtree St. • 770.441.2599
~ Authentic Cuban food in the heart of Historic Downtown. Outdoor dining available.
- Paizano's • 7 Jones Street • 770.300.0250
~ Real New York pizzas and appetizers, salads, soups, robust sandwiches and classic Italian dishes.
- The Crossing Steakhouse • 40 S. Peachtree St. • 678-280-9081
~ Enjoy the finest hand-cut steaks and seafood, served in Norcross' charming historic train depot.
- Z'Apata Tacos and Tequila Bar • 156 Jones St. • 770.248.0052
~ Authentic and delicious Mexican cuisine. Outdoor deck and great margaritas.

Remember When:

Dr. Franklin Garrett, eminent historian of Atlanta, spoke on *Cousin John* at the 1990 TFA Reunion in Norcross, Georgia. Dr. Garrett stood in the Thrasher Park gazebo with all the Thrasher Family Association members crowded around to hear what he had to say.



Historic Downtown Norcross Walking Tour

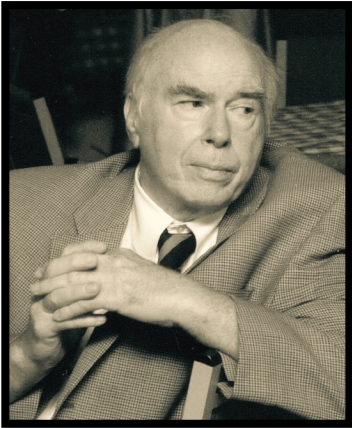
Gather at 9:30, Saturday, June 13, at Norcross Welcome Center and Museum on 189 Lawrenceville Street in downtown Norcross. Begin with welcome and introduction of Dr. Gene Ramsay by Cate Kitchen, Manager, Norcross Welcome Center and Museum.

- Brief historical background at the start:
 - Settlement of North Georgia after War of 1812, land lotteries
 - Establishment of Gwinnett County
 - Norcross area prior to the Civil War – Pinckneyville, Peachtree Road
 - Gwinnett County during the Civil War
 - Construction of the Piedmont Airline Railroad
- Walk to Lillian Webb Park and then corner of Jones and North Peachtree Streets, talking about
 - Fire station / fire museum / Cotton Gin
 - City Hall
 - Lillian Webb Park / baseball in Norcross
 - Skin Alley
 - Johnson's Store / Norcross Depot
- John Thrasher in Norcross
 - Purchase of Land Lot 254
 - Auction of Norcross property June 1870, Bank of Norcross building
 - City charter October 1870 / Thrasher's term as mayor
- Walk to corner of Thrasher & Park Streets (site of Brunswick Hotel)
 - Wingo Street – Ivy Wingo / family
 - Train wreck of 1942 / Roosevelt funeral train
 - Brunswick Hotel – resort, rocking chairs, dinner bell
 - Thrasher's involvement in Methodist Orphanage
- Walk up to old Baptist Church
 - Establishment of church in 1872 by Thrasher and others
 - Point out Barton Street
- Walk to corner of North Peachtree and Sunset
 - "Holy Row", Thrasher's donation of land to preachers
 - Original Norcross High School / Masonic Hall / church building
- Walk back up North Peachtree Street and through Thrasher Park to downtown area
 - Commentary on some of the houses along the way
 - Stop at Thrasher and Norcross plaques in the park
- End of tour / optional visit to city cemetery if desired

Roy Conway Thrasher

Rocket Scientist and Great American

By Al Thrasher



Roy Conway Thrasher

My brother, Roy Conway Thrasher was born July 19, 1940, in Cedartown, Georgia, the third child of Albert Americus Thrasher, Sr. of Henry County, Georgia and Allie Lorraine Dodson Thrasher of Butts County, Georgia.

My first memories go back to 1942 when the family was living in a shotgun rental house between the Polk County Jail and the local Catholic Church. Daddy was the local manager for Georgia Power Company. He held an essential defense job and was not required to serve in the military, but he served as a Local Air Raid Warden, volunteer fire fighter, and was even pressed into service as a lineman climbing poles. Lorraine was a stay-at-home Mom baking cakes that customers picked up on Friday. Due to WWII rationing, customers were required to bring a cup of sugar. It was most frustrating when some customers would bring a teacup of sugar and not 8 ounces!

We were raised in an environment of limited activities. Carmie, Roy and I grew up with a half-dead chinaberry tree that served as our war machines—airplane, ship, tank, or whatever our imagination conjured up. In the front yard there was a vine hanging from a water oak tree that allowed us to swing out over the scraggy hedge and land on the sidewalk or if you could hold-on long enough you could swing all the way back to the porch. A treasured toy was the enameled top from a water heater that enabled us to make a shelter when we stood it up with sticks.

The best description of the Polk County Jail would be “Mayberry RFD!” There may have been 2 or 3 inmates in locked cells but most hung out in the yard, sweeping it with brush brooms and playing marbles with us.

On the other side of the house was the Catholic Church. Typical of the south in the 1940’s, we were whispered to that the Catholics were different. We did not know what was different but we did not go over there!

In 1944, Daddy left Georgia Power and the family moved to Jackson. Daddy and Mama opened an electrical repair and appliance sales shop. Electricity was finally available in rural areas through the REA. I helped Daddy wire many homes. This was a miserable job as we crawled under houses with spiders, snakes or whatever, made midnight rides to repair well pumps, or shared in the excitement of an electric stove being installed in a home!

As the “baby,” Roy lived under the strict protection of Mother and was never required to work like Carmie and I did. In high school, Carmie played the organ and piano at the Jackson Baptist Church, and I sacked groceries. Roy could sit and grin; in fact, sometimes I doubted his intelligence.

Roy finished the fifth grade when we moved to McDonough. Daddy sold the shop in Jackson and began working at the Atlanta General Depot in Conley. Mother held a fulltime job. Carmie was at Agnes Scott College/Emory University. I completed the 10th grade and Roy completed the 8th grade when we moved to Clarkesville.

Daddy was an instructor in electrical theory and applications at the North Georgia Trade School. At that time, there were only two trade schools in Georgia; one in Clarkesville and the other in Americus. Mother taught her private kindergarten with morning and afternoon sessions. Both of them were loved and respected teachers. They expected us to do our best and we were not permitted to play any sports if we did not have all A's on our report cards.

I started football practice in Jackson before moving to McDonough where I played on the varsity team. At North Habersham High School, Roy joined me in football. Roy excelled in football, basketball, and baseball. His opponents did not grin! He was an outstanding natural athlete and could have played major college football or basketball. In fact, he was invited on several recruiting trips his junior and senior years. When I asked where he decided to go, he informed me that he enjoyed the trip, had a pretty date, but that he was going to be a **rocket scientist!** There are those who believe life is like a sine curve and some humans, like Roy, are one-half phase ahead of rest if us - "the man on the street."

Roy entered the co-op program at Georgia Tech the fall of 1958. As the fall quarter was ending and his first round of final exams was beginning, Roy came to my room and said, "Let's go to the movie" (cost \$.50). As his older brother, I admonished him and asked if he had done all of his homework problems. Roy's reply was one of life's great lessons to me. He replied, "Brother, if you understand the concept you can work any problem." He breezed through Georgia Tech graduating with a B.S. in Electrical Engineering in 1964 and B.S. in Applied Mathematics in 1965.

He went to work for Douglas Aircraft in North Carolina and was soon transferred to Santa Monica, California. He received a M.S. in Engineering from UCLA and completed the course work for the doctorate. Roy did not write a dissertation so he was ABD. He said he wanted the information, not a piece of paper. In 1976, he moved to the Huntsville, Alabama area and worked between Huntsville and Santa Monica with McDonald Douglas.

During his "California years" Roy pretty much blocked out the rest of the world to devote his time and energies to his studies and "top secret" work. None of us heard from him except when he sent Christmas presents to the family, especially educational, skill building gifts to his nephews and niece. One summer cousin Robert Rainer and I actually hired a private detective to determine if Roy was dead or alive. Thankfully he was alive and well.

He had purchased a large four-bedroom house with an Olympic-size swimming pool and furnished it with a barstool and sleeping bag (also had a sleeping bag in his office if he was too involved in a project to go home!). He survived on health foods and vitamins. In the mid-1970's he invited his parents out to see him. In preparation he bought two more bar stools and a bed for them! They got to meet Lorraine Martin and were delighted with Roy's girlfriend. He treated them to a grand tour of California and the western states. It was the trip of their lifetime and they cherished the memories until their deaths.

On one of his rare visits home I asked him what he did for a living, and he responded that "*I would not understand.*" However, he did explain his work to our children!

When Daddy suddenly died in 1980, Roy dropped everything and came. His wardrobe in California consisted of shorts, tee shirts, and flip-flops—no button-up shirts nor long pants and certainly not a suit and tie! His 16-year-old niece, our Julie, went with him to a men's store so he could be suitably outfitted for the visitation and funeral.

On one of his assignments to California, he happened upon Lorraine Martin in a parking lot. They resumed where they left off many years before and were married in Las Vegas within the week. They gave us two beautiful and talented nieces, Allie and Cathy. Allie is an RN and Cathy is a mathematician with the Redstone Arsenal. Whenever he was complimented on his family—he would just sit and grin.

During the height of the Cold War, Roy was required to call in and give a code at predetermined times. It is my understanding that Roy's work and identity were so secret that a conference with him involved three adjoining secure hotel rooms: one for Roy, one for the party wishing to communicate with him, and, in between, one for a coordinating committee. Before any exchange of information, a "*need to know*" and proper clearance had to be established. His supervisor told me that during this time even he couldn't fully discuss Roy's work.

Why? Roy knew more about the trajectory of Soviet intercontinental ballistic missiles than anyone in the free world. Roy could tell within seconds of a missile launch where it was going to hit! His formulation of algorithms to describe the actions of these weapons laid the foundation for the missile defense system - a major factor in the fall of the Soviet Union.

Roy worked alone. When offered staff he refused with the answer, "I'm a researcher, not an administrator."

Yes, he realized his dream of becoming a "rocket scientist," he was immensely respected, a great family man, and remained an active athlete until his untimely death in 2012. It is truly unfortunate that due to the nature and secrecy of his work, he will never be recognized for his profound influence on history. We believe that he resides in a new dimension where he can reflect on his accomplishments while *sitting and grinning*.

Another Thrasher Family involvement needs to be recognized: Bill H. Thrasher's "top secret" work with satellite surveillance of the USSR's missile sites furnished the necessary information to enable Roy's mathematical algorithm to function as well as it did. Wow! Two cold warriors in the family, and they both had to keep it quiet!

Gentle reminder:

Be sure to visit our Thrasher Family Association website:

<https://thrasherfamilyassociation.wordpress.com/>

Meet Some of Our New TFA members

By Nancy Cherry

Last summer the Thrasher Family Association gained several new members when the Mid-Atlantic Thrasher Association merged with us. Here are a few of our new “cousins.” More will be introduced in future issues of this newsletter.



Debra and her mother,
Alta Thrasher Hutsell

Debra Hutsell

Debra and her mother, Alta Thrasher Hutsell, live in Fort Wayne, Indiana, near the Allen County Public Library, second largest genealogy library in the country. With the library so handy and her more than 20 years' experience as a professional researcher, Deb works with attorneys, genealogy companies, and individuals through her Facebook page, Huts Genealogy. In the past she has worked with an organization called *Unclaimed Persons*, which helps coroners, and medical examiners identify next of kin for deceased and unclaimed persons.

Sue Roose

Sue is the treasurer for the Mid-Atlantic Thrasher Association and has been a passionate genealogist for 40+ years. She is a retired computer specialist and lives in Springfield, Virginia. She is a double Thrasher descendant as two of her 4th great grandfathers were sons of Thomas Thrasher (1725 – 1804) and his wife Martha Lee. She sends her best to the TFA and would have been with us except that a long-awaited trip to England conflicts with the dates.



Hershel Thrasher



Hershel is the Executive Director of Shelbyville Housing Authority in Shelbyville, Tennessee. He had been searching for his roots and is delighted to have found them. He and Karen are active in the Rotary Club and activities of their church. Karen is a player on the Tennessee state champion senior basketball team, and her team will be competing in the Nationals this summer. Hershel and Karen are looking forward to seeing everyone in Norcross soon.

Editors' Corner

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Please share your news with your “cousins by the dozens.”