

# A Journey Through Time

## The *TIMES* Chronicle



By Linda Reno  
Contributing  
Writer

Last week we talked about the sinking of the U.S.S. Oklahoma at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941 and the death of Albert

Eugene Hayden whose remains were buried in a mass grave on Oahu and the search for a living female relative to provide proof of his identity.

After exhausting all other possibilities, I was down to one potential candidate—Cara A. Biscoe, born June 17, 1900. Cara was living with her parents in 1900 and 1910. In 1920, she was living in Baltimore but after that I couldn't find her. I called the Historical So-

ciety as I know they keep a file of obituaries from the local papers. Susan Wolfe located several of the obituaries I'd hoped would be there. One of them was for Clarence Jefferson Biscoe who died in 1993. His obituary named his siblings, all of whom had predeceased him, and one of them was his sister, Cara Hess.

Now the search resumed to see if Cara had any daughters. Cara was then located in the 1930 census. She had married Edward W. Hess and had one child, a daughter named Ethel M. Hess. Also found was Cara's approximate date of death from the Social Security Death Index. She had died in January 1970. The information was relayed to the Bachmanns. They contacted the Baltimore Sun in an effort to locate Cara's obituary but found that at the time of her death, the workers at the newspaper were on strike and thus no obituary. However, they eventually located the obituary of Edward Hess and there was one child, Mrs. Ethel M. Basley, but she had died

in 2003. At last we hit pay dirt. Ethel had a daughter named Pam who has been located, has taken the DNA test, and now we await the results.

I don't know how this story is going to end but will keep you apprised. Hopefully Albert's remains will be positively identified and permanently laid to rest. The family will choose his burial site and a part of me hopes it will be at St. Joseph's Catholic Church at Manganza beside his parents. This would provide the good people of St. Mary's County the opportunity to honor this brave sailor for giving his life for us.

Regardless of his burial place, he will receive a full military funeral and he certainly deserves it not only for giving his life during WWII, but Albert also served



Albert Eugene Hayden,  
1898-December 7, 1941

in the U.S. Navy during WWII aboard the U.S.S. Texas.

This search was intense, yet interesting. It led me to unexpected people and places. At one point, I called my neighbor, Clarence Davis who I know to be a Pearl Harbor survivor, to seek his advice and found that he too was involved in the search. As an active member of the Pearl Harbor Survivors Association, Clarence was also involved in erecting a monument to the five Marylanders who were lost that fateful day. A monument has been erected in their honor near Annapolis and a picture can be seen at [www.hmdb.org/marker.asp?marker=7819](http://www.hmdb.org/marker.asp?marker=7819)

# Wanderings

## of an Aimless Mind



By Shelby Oppermann  
Contributing Writer

It seems like we had a full week of full moons recently. The moon was beautiful; glowing brightly, luminously. Bright enough to wake me more times than I normally do. No matter what period of sleep I am in, REM, non-REM, or RAM (no, that's the computer's sleep mode) if I see the slightest bit of light I am awakened. I can't have any light visible if I am to sleep for a few hours, or at least past 4 a.m. Any light starts my morning wake-up routine.

If you were to look around our bedroom, you would find black linen tape covering most of the red, blinking, "vampire" lights you find on VCR/DVD's, and clocks. The air conditioner has a blue self-adhesive circle pulled off a pair of new jeans. It softly blinds "new, slim fit" in a powder blue light through the night.

Hotels are a nightmare. Whenever we stay in one, I cover the large digital clock displays with a towel. I turn our cell phones over. I try to remember to bring a safety pin to close the drapes. More often than not, I forget. So, I have to dig up different ways to close them with the drapery cord. And inevitably the heat AC will cut on and blow them open through the night.

When my brother was still a pilot for Alaska Airlines, he told me that most of the hotels around airports have either special rooms, or heavier drapes for the pilots. Maybe I should just stay closer to airports and drive an extra hundred miles to our destination from now on. But, I am going to find those drapes.

I don't know why I am like this — I love sun and light so much. Well, yes I do know why. My Mother was called Theda Bara when she was young after the silent film actress who was referred to as "the vamp". My Mother dis-

## The Light of a Full Moon

liked light and preferred the night time and total darkness. She kept our house dark and what I called "tomb-like." Heavy velvet curtains were in several rooms, including mine. My Mother would sit in the darkened dining room, either watching the street for suspicious persons or looking at the TV, 20 feet away, in the living room. I got used to the darkness, but kept my curtains wide open as much as possible. Light didn't bother me as a teenager.

Now light bothers me. One night last week, I was tossing and turning because of the moon. I got up, stared out the window at the beautiful sight of our yard lit in a cool, blue glow. Then returned to the bedroom to try and sleep again. First, I tried covering our face paneled door to the deck with towels. No luck, the tension rod lays flat against the door. I got frustrated and huffed and puffed my way back to bed. Then I tried covering my face with the blanket, which never works, because after a minute or two, I get claustrophobic and can't breathe. I finally settled on a position with my hand partially covering my eyes, picture the statue "The Thinker". If my husband wakes and sees this, he always asks, "You have a headache?" I tell him, "No, I have a light ache."

This is all made worse, since my husband is my lunar opposite. He loves a full moon and gets this bizarre surge of energy. I, being sleep deprived, would like to shove that cream-cheese filled orb right down his ...oops, sorry, guess I better call about that next anger management course.

To each new night's adventure,  
Shelby

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# Book Review

## "Tinsel: A Search for America's Christmas Present" by Hank Steuver

c. 2009, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt

\$24.00 / \$32.95 Canada

336 pages

By Terri Schlichenmeyer  
Contributing Writer

The Christmas Carol quietly coos that "all is calm, all is bright."

You don't know about calm — the traffic and pedestrian gawfers kind of calm that sentiment — but bright? Yep, that pretty much sums up your neighborhood and all the holiday lights decorating the houses and yards.

Bright? You owe your next month's salary to the electric company.

So why do it? In the new book "Tinsel" by Hank Steuver, you'll read about the holidays run wonderfully amok in one Texas city, and the answer that is — why not?

Author Hank Steuver wasn't really a Christmas kinda guy. Oh, sure, his family celebrated years ago with the requisite gifts and Santa and midnight Mass. But somewhere along the way — maybe when his parents divorced or his sister moved out-of-state — Steuver lost the holiday.

"By 1991," he says, "Christmas seemed to be happening to everyone else."

So when he decided to write a sort-of expose on Christmas during the 2006 season, he envisioned that it might be a book about the ugly side of the holiday, including sweat shops and "oppressed elves."

Instead, he headed for Frisco, Texas.

On the day after Thanksgiving 2006, well before dawn, Steuver began his sojourn in line, outside a major retail store with a forty-something single mother. Later, he signed up to be a volunteer "elf" for a phenomenally energetic woman who started a business decorating million-dollar homes for hundreds of dollars an hour, and

who desperately wanted Steuver to believe in Christmas. And before the week was out, Steuver had spent time learning about bulbs from a couple whose house is so famous for its light show that a video of it went viral.

While in Frisco, Steuver visited megachurches, partly to watch the single mother — a tech volunteer — in action, and partly as a mere voyeur. While helping the decorator, he espied secrets of the too-rich, and he felt a little faded. When he witnessed an emotional and angry family dinner-table debate over the War in Iraq, he compassionately turned off his inner-journalist. And when learning about giving for charity, he discovered that being a snappy can sometimes bust one's bubble.

Still, he says, "It is entirely possible that I suck at all of this Christmas goodness."

I beg to differ. Much like opening a present wrapped in too much tissue paper, to read "Tinsel" is to pick apart Christmas and its meanings, layer upon layer, before you finally reach a gem.

Steuver is witty, and affectionate in regard to the three families of "elves" that helped him explore the frenzy that Christmas has become. He's gently sneering, and oh-so-funny. He doesn't insult, but he's willing to cast light on silliness and spoiled-ness, and things people do in a quest for the "perfect" holiday.

In short, author Hank Steuver is a superbly saucy and cynical chronicler of just one facet of Christmas, and I loved this book.

If you're looking for some bite to your Christmas reading, look for this droll, merry and wonderful holiday book. For you, "Tinsel" definitely sparkles.

