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VOLUME III, ISSUE 1

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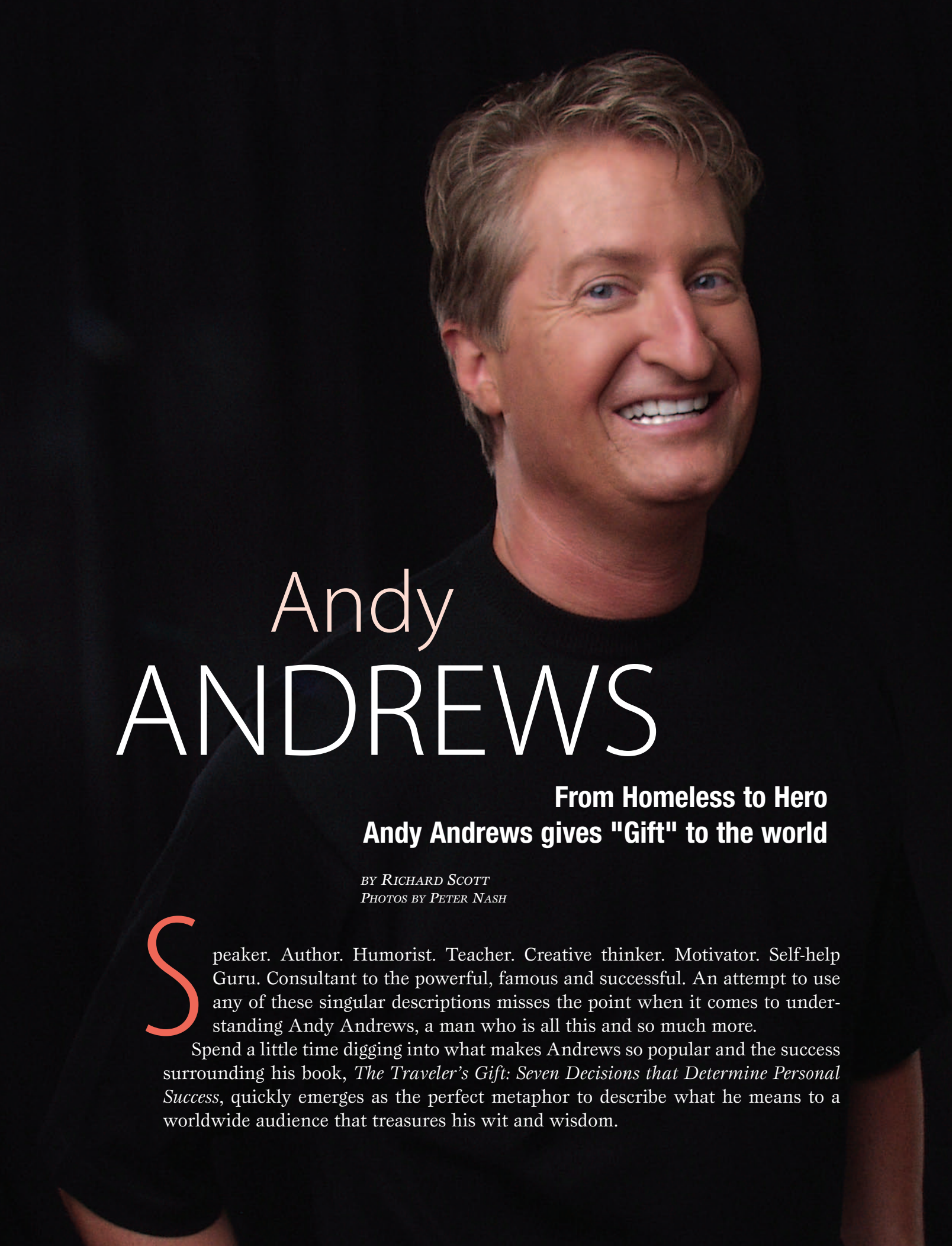
Andy Andrews

Discover what makes him popular
and more...

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A close-up portrait of Andy Andrews, a middle-aged man with light brown hair and a friendly smile, wearing a black t-shirt. The background is dark and out of focus.

Andy ANDREWS

**From Homeless to Hero
Andy Andrews gives "Gift" to the world**

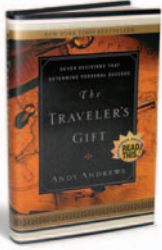
BY RICHARD SCOTT
PHOTOS BY PETER NASH

Speaker. Author. Humorist. Teacher. Creative thinker. Motivator. Self-help Guru. Consultant to the powerful, famous and successful. An attempt to use any of these singular descriptions misses the point when it comes to understanding Andy Andrews, a man who is all this and so much more.

Spend a little time digging into what makes Andrews so popular and the success surrounding his book, *The Traveler's Gift: Seven Decisions that Determine Personal Success*, quickly emerges as the perfect metaphor to describe what he means to a worldwide audience that treasures his wit and wisdom.

“A man of fear lives always on the edge of insanity. A man of faith lives in perpetual reward. Do battle with the challenge of your present, and you will unlock the prizes of your future.”

—Andy Andrews, *The Traveler's Gift*.



The Traveler's Gift became the first book in American publishing history to make the best-seller list in six different categories — *simultaneously*. At one time, it made the *New York Times*' best-seller list in fiction, the *Wall Street Journal*'s list in non-fiction, *Publishers Weekly*'s list in religion, Barnes & Noble's list in self-improvement, Amazon.com's literature list and *USA Today*'s general content list. *The New York Times* then shifted the book to its advice list, then placed it back in fiction and eventually put it on the business list.

Since then, Andrews has gone on to write five additional books, including *Island of Saints*, as well as several CDs and DVDs based on his life lessons. In the process, he has become something of a phenomenon almost everywhere except in his home state of Alabama.

In fact, it took a PBS special on Andrews in December for Alabamians to start noticing a man who has been requested by four presidents and leaders throughout the military, corporate and sports worlds.

“I don't do a whole lot here, it seems like, so the PBS special airing here sort of made people look up and say, ‘you're from Alabama?’” Andrews says. “They said, ‘where do you live?’ I said, ‘I live in Alabama.’ It's really kind of funny.”

When reminded that Mark Twain once said, “the expert is the man from out of town,” Andrews laughs and admits, “yeah, that's probably true. And I don't mind. I tell people all the time when I go places and people kind of think I'm this ‘guru’ or whatever, I have to remind people, ‘look, just because I know this stuff doesn't mean I do all this stuff all the time. I'm still working at it, too. I'm like an eighth-grade science teacher in his first year as a teacher. I'm struggling to stay a paragraph ahead of the class.’”

That humor and humility is rooted

in a life that started in Birmingham and took him throughout the state as a child.

“I had a great family: mom, dad, sister; we were very middle class, and I think I grew up in a great time in our country's history. It was a great time for me to be a kid,” says Andrews, who attended the former Berry High School (now Hoover High). “I remember not really liking any other place enough to think I would ever live there. Alabama has always been a part



Andrews' defining moment came at age 19 when he had no money, no family, nobody to help, no place to live and no job. “I really was at my wit's end, and that was the moment when I asked ‘Is that all there is in my life?’ ‘Can I control this?’ ‘Is this life just a lottery ticket’ and ‘Is this is my ticket?’ So that was when I really started to examine whether life was just chance, or if I had any control at all over my future.”

of my roots. It's where we lived *and* where we went on vacation. I grew up thinking we went on vacation to the greatest place there is.”

That one place captured a special place in his heart and never let go.

“My family used to go down to Orange Beach on vacation,” Andrews says. “We didn't have enough money to actually stay at the beach and we didn't have enough money to stay on the river. We stayed on a canal that was dug off the river. I know now we stayed there because it allowed my

mom to cook, because we couldn't afford to go out, but I just loved it. I grew up fishing down here and just being around the outdoors. I always said if I was ever able to live anywhere I wanted to, that's where it would be.”

When a double dose of tragedy struck him at age 19, Orange Beach also became a place of refuge and retreat. First his mother died of cancer. Just months later, his father died in an automobile accident. Then Andrews left Auburn University and drifted to the coast. People who reached out to him were quickly rejected or discouraged by his behavior.

“I ended up making some bad decisions and ended up homeless before it was even a word,” Andrews says. “Twenty-five years ago no one was talking about homeless people and honestly it never even occurred to me. I slept under a pier a lot. I'd dig in where the concrete and the sand comes together. I'd sneak in and out of people's garages occasionally—which is not safe or smart.

“I was telling that story to some friends about 10-12 years ago and they said, ‘you were homeless?’ And I said, ‘yeah, I guess I was!’ They said, ‘you were on food stamps and welfare and stuff?’ And I said, ‘Could I have? That's something that never occurred to me to do.’ It was just sort of weird how it all happened. It was the worst time of my life, but it really kind of shaped everything I do now.”

That adversity took Andrews to a critical crossroad.

“I started thinking, ‘is there some kind of lottery system in life, where this guy gets happiness and a family and this guy ends up sleeping under a pier?’” Andrews says. “It crossed my mind that if life is a lottery ticket and this is my ticket, I'm not sure I want to stay in this game.”

Instead of quitting, Andrews turned his attention and curiosity toward successful people. Seeking access to the qualities that made those people tick, he immersed himself in more than 200 biographies of famous people at the Foley Public Library. It

didn't cost Andrews a dime to determine what separated his circumstances from those who had risen above their own adversity.

"As I read, I found these seven qualities, and those are the seven decisions that I used to yank myself out of my situation," Andrews says.

Those seven decisions, in turn, opened up a whole new world for Andrews. First, he made the decision to take responsibility for his own life and to take action.

"The constant fight you hear on talk radio is about responsibility," Andrews says. "Both sides fight tooth and nail but neither of them understands responsibility. I really feel like both sides avoid responsibility because of the fight that most people put on in front of them. It's 'until these people learn to accept responsibility' and the other side says, 'but they're not to blame. It's not their fault.' A lot more people would be comfortable accepting responsibility if they understood it wasn't blame in the first place. It's about hope and control. Who among us doesn't want to have hope for a greater future that we have control over?"

Andrews knew he wanted to be a speaker of some sort, but admits, "I really didn't have any life experiences that would give me anything to say." Still, he had always been something of a class clown as a kid and took control by launching a career as a stand-up comedian, working his way up the ladder with a clean routine that eventually caught on, leading to appearances on television talk shows, a tour with Joan Rivers and Las Vegas.

"I understand now I've been given the ability to notice stuff—stuff other people don't notice or to notice it in a way other people don't notice it," Andrews says. "I used that as my comedy thing."

He was on tour with country singer Kenny Rogers when it all started to come together.

"I tell stories and write stories—that's what I do," Andrews says. "The smart authors write the textbooks or non-fiction. I don't learn well that way anyway, but I'll remember a story forever. I started compiling these stories that went with these decisions and found myself on stage sometimes telling these stories."

The more Rogers heard these stories and Andrews' seven decisions, the more Rogers encouraged Andrews

to add the decisions to his routine.

"I said, 'what? Be funny, then be serious, then be funny?' Kenny said, 'transitions are what you do. I get to the end of a song and I tell them I'm going to do another song, but you have to transition. Just learn to transition this stuff into your show.'"

The more he did it, the more people seemed to like it. People would come up to him after shows and talk about his serious segments more than the comedy. Soon, corporations began asking him to speak to their employees, but they specifically requested the more thoughtful elements of his show.

"I get called a motivational speaker a lot, but I really don't like that," Andrews says. "If you want someone to tell you to have a good attitude, I'm not your guy. Your mama should have told you that. I would rather prove something to you than tell you, 'go for it, you can do it.' Motivation is like a shower. It feels good, but tomorrow you start all over again. I want to prove these principles."

Writing *The Traveler's Gift* was the natural and logical next step for Andrews. Using historical personalities such as Abraham Lincoln, Anne Frank, Harry Truman and King Solomon and events such as the Civil War, the Holocaust and World War iii, Andrews wrote a book so deep with truth and self-help information, yet with a fictional storyline and fictional characters, that it defied categorization on multiple best-seller lists. *The New York Times* writer probably came closer than any source when it called him a "modern-day Will Rogers."

It is appropriate that Andrews had to apply the seventh principle multiple times when his manuscript was turned down by 51 publishers during three years before Thomas Nelson Publishers finally picked it up.

"The seventh decision is 'I will persist without exception,'" Andrews says. "If anyone knew how many times I locked myself in my office and read my own book—they'd be amazed."

Once the book caught on the requests for his time and wisdom started flying in from every direction. One of the more intriguing requests came from legendary golfer Nancy Lopez, the captain for the U.S. Solheim Cup team.

"The first day we were getting killed," Andrews says. "That day Nancy flew me in to Indianapolis and



The Seven Decisions

1. HARRY S. TRUMAN

The Responsible Decision:

The buck stops here.

I will not let my history control my destiny.

2. KIM SOLOMON

The Guided Decision:

I will seek wisdom.

God moves mountains to create the opportunity of His choosing. It is up to you to be ready to move yourself.

3. JOSHUA CHAMBERLAIN

The Active Decision:

I am a person of action.

Many people move out of the way for a person on the run; others are caught up in his wake.

4. CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS

The Certain Decision:

I have a decided heart.

Criticism, condemnation, and complaint are creatures of the wind. They come and go on the wasted breath of lesser beings and have no power over me.

5. ANNE FRANK

The Joyful Decision:

Today I will choose to be happy.

Our very lives are fashioned by choice.

First we make choices. Then our choices make us.

6. ABRAHAM LINCOLN

The Compassionate Decision:

I will greet this day with a forgiving spirit.

You will find that God rarely uses a person whose main concern is what others are thinking.

7. GABRIEL

The Persistent Decision:

I will persist without exception.

Reason can only be stretched so far, but faith has no limits. The only limit to your realization of tomorrow is the doubt you hold fast today.

Andy Andrews' quiet success has made him one of the most sought-after speakers today.

You can email him at andy@andyandrews.com.

Visit his website at www.andyandrews.com.



I try to live my life in harmony with the direction in which I believe I'm supposed to be headed. My personal measure of success is that it is not a destination—it is an ongoing process—the process of becoming a better father, of becoming a better husband, of becoming a wiser and more valuable friend and becoming a better communicator for the people who might look forward to, or even depend on the work that I do.



“Performing for the troops has been great. Part of the reason for that is the realization that the troops are doing a job for our world, and that they are not politicized. They are not Liberals or Conservatives—they are people doing a job that has been demanded of them. Whether we agree that they should be there or not, in a very domestic sense, the troops are us—they are our neighbors, our sons and daughters, our fathers and mothers. That is a major part of the reason why they deserve our support, and our love and prayers, because they are us. They represent our nations, and they are not only us, they are among the best of us. Most of them could make more money if in private service, but these young men and women are choosing to give themselves to us, to our nations.”

From an interview with *reSource Magazine*, UK

Life-defining questions spurred Andrews' search for success. He read more than 200-plus biographies of successful, financially secure, influential people and, he says, “In my search, I asked myself what is this about? Were they born this way, or was this something that they did? If it was something that they became, then how long did it take them to do it, and What exactly did they do?” That was how Andrews' discovered the seven principles, which he then used to pull his life out of negative circumstances. These later became the basis for his book, *The Traveler's Gift*.

had me talk to the team—12 women and the caddies. That night, talk about a strange thing, it never occurred to me these women would be in their bath robes with their hair in towels. But they went out the next two days and won the Cup. In their press conferences they talked about the book and what we had talked about that night.

“That’s really the cool thing about it. Whether it’s personal, corporate or sports, these are principles that work every time. These aren’t seven ideas, seven theories, seven habits. They aren’t even mine. I’m not the smart one. Anyone could have read those books and found these. I just figured out the relationship between people who harness these things and the principles, and it’s exciting to see people benefiting from those.”

The list of famous and powerful people who sought an audience with Andrews is impressive, starting with four presidents. “I’ve met alone with them in a room,” Andrews says. “It’s a very strange experience to me when I hold my hand out and say, ‘Mr. President, I’m Andy Andrews’ and he says, ‘I know who you are.’ It’s pretty weird.”

Andrews also spent one-on-one time with a 91-year-old Bob Hope at a time when the legendary comedian was concerned with his legacy and his long-term impact on his family. He

“The first thing I do when I get up in the morning is say a prayer and ask God for his guidance for today. I look in on my little boys, and make sure everyone is okay. If I’m out of town, I pick up the phone and call, and then go about scheduling what I’m doing. I also spend some quiet time in between, where I settle myself and figure out where I’m going and what I’m doing for the day and what I need to accomplish. I realize if I was through, if my purpose was already fulfilled, I wouldn’t be here. So, for now that means there’s more to do, more laughter to enjoy, more success, more children to experience, more friends to help influence—there’s more to my life.”

spent time with Gen. Norman Schwarzkopf at a time when Schwarzkopf was seeking wisdom about guiding and directing his teenage son. He is the last person to formally address Special Operations Squadron Commanders and their spouses before they are deployed. The city of Findlay, Ohio, adopted *The Traveler's Gift* as its official book, encouraged everyone in town to read it and brought Andrews in for a seminar.

“It’s different things with different people at different times,” Andrews says. “There have been confidences, some things I wish I didn’t know, things you feel like you can’t help.

“Most of our biggest issues in our lives come down to real-life issues. The funny thing, at least it’s funny to me, is that I work with General Motors and I don’t know anything about cars. I work for Microsoft and I don’t know anything about computers. I work with Legg-Mason and I don’t know anything about investments.”

No matter how far he roams or who he meets, Andrews always returns to Alabama. Even when Hurricane Ivan wiped out the family’s house in Orange Beach, it wasn’t enough to shake his roots free of Alabama soil.

“What I do for a living doesn’t really require that I live any particular place,” Andrews says, “but I still think Alabama is the best place, so that’s why I live here. There’s nowhere else I want to live.” **A**

Richard Scott is a freelance writer from Helena, Ala., with work in American Football Monthly, Lindy's College Sports Annuals and Progressive Farmer. He is also the author of two books: Legends of Alabama Football and Tales From The Auburn 2004 Championship Season. He's been a joyfully acclimated resident of Alabama since 1989.