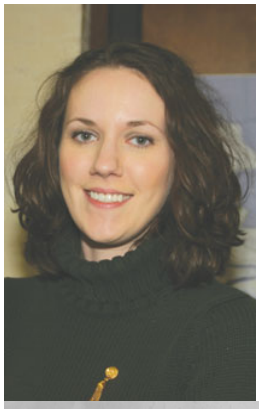

Her name was Alice Faye Wiggins.
She had black, almost blue, hair and a peachy complexion. She loved to square dance and bake cookies.
She had a soft spot for black-and-white romantic movies. She loved to listen to Louie Louie by The Kingsmen.
She was married to Jerry, and they had two children, Michael and Sherry. She lived in a subdivision in Natchez, with flowers in the yard and hot food on the table.
But most importantly to me, she was my Aunt Alice.
She would let me spend the night in an oversized T-shirt. She let me watch The Ewok Adventure movie a million times, despite the numerous objections of my cousins. During bath time, she would sing to me and press the hand rag on my shoulder, causing the water to tickle my back.
She would fix me late night snacks. She let me have an extra cookie.
She spoke to me in a sweet manner and never really disciplined me, even when I probably deserved it.
She was my Aunt Alice, and she was a lady.
Aunt Alice was diagnosed with breast cancer when I was a little girl. I wasn't really sure what cancer was at the time, but I knew it caused everyone to cry when you even mentioned its name.
Aunt Alice had a tough battle with it, but she never let on or let me know how much pain she was in. I never heard her complain.
After her mastectomy, she asked my Momma to come with her to buy a breast prosthesis. I tagged along for the trip, but Momma tried to explain to me what was happening before we picked Aunt Alice up.

In a child's mind, I didn't really comprehend the situation. I was under the impression that Aunt Alice was sick, she had to have surgery and the prosthesis was just part of her treatment.
The notion of femininity and the struggle of adapting with such a life-changing condition never crossed my naive mind.
All three of us were snug inside a small dressing room when we arrived at the store. I sat in a chair in the corner, holding a Barbie doll.
"I feel ridiculous," Aunt Alice said to Momma.
They were having problems finding the right size of prosthesis so Momma left the dressing room to find an attendant.
Aunt Alice sat down in the chair next to me, holding the plastic, gel-like prosthesis.
And then she just started crying, gripping it tighter. I just sat there, unsure of what to do.
And then I will never forget the look she gave me. Raising her head up slightly, she looked over at me and smiled. With tears falling down her cheek, she managed to smile. And I smiled back at her.
"I hope you never go through this," she said, patting my knee.
I didn't say a word. I don't think it was necessary. Even at my young age, I like to think we had an understanding.
Momma came back into the dressing room with an assortment of merchandise for Aunt Alice to try on. I can remember grabbing one and wondering why she was having to go through this. My small mind couldn't grasp it.
The cancer took over Aunt Alice's body. I'm not sure where all it spread, but I remember being told it was in her liver when we rushed to the hospital.
I remember walking into her hospital room. Her eyes had a strange yellow tint. But she looked over at me and smiled. She even let me have the brownie she had in a sandwich bag in her purse.
She died a few days later.
I was nine years old.
Breast cancer is an ugly, cruel thing. I pray that no one in my family is diagnosed with it again. I hope that every woman who picks up this newspaper will make getting regular screenings a priority.
It didn't care that my Aunt Alice was a kind soul. It didn't care that she was the sweetest person in our family. It didn't care that she was a lady.
And as a few tears hit my hand while typing this column, I realize that she put up one heck of a fight.
The soft-spoken woman gave that cancer a run for its money.
And she did it with a smile.