



Will the controversial "Pike Road Way" continue without her?

Freeman to retire as head of Pike Road Schools

By Bill Rice, Jr.
Special to The Gazette

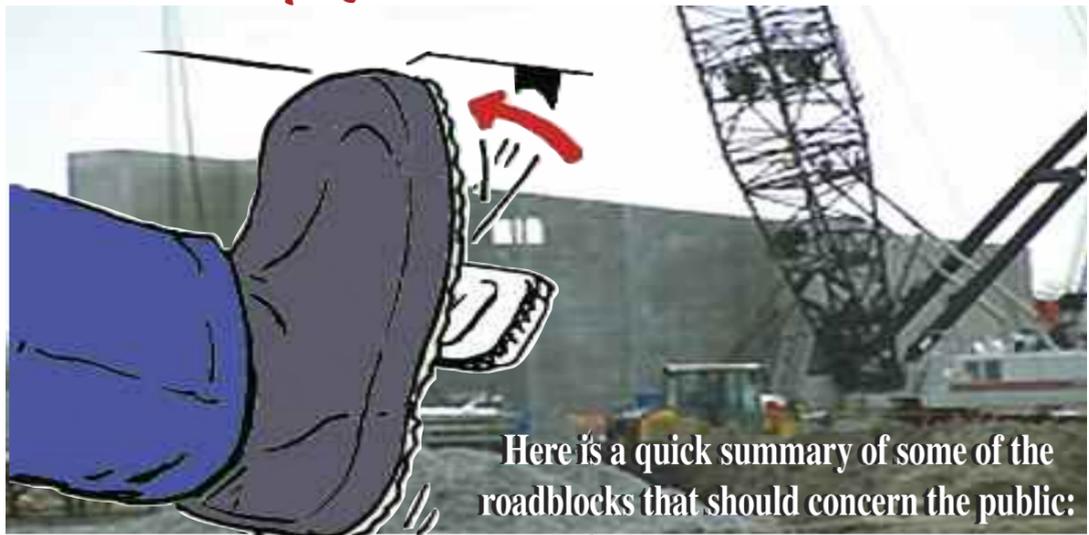


On Feb. 13th, Pike Road Schools Superintendent **Dr. Suzanne Freeman** announced that she planned to retire at the end of June. This announcement came just 17 months after the school opened in late August 2015.

Whether or not Dr. Freeman was encouraged or forced to retire is not yet known. A story published in *The Advertiser* said her decision was a "God thing" and had to do with the health of her parents and her desire to travel more, as well as finish a book and do consulting work to advocate for the spread of the unique features of the so-called "Pike Road Way."

Continued on pages 9A, 10A, & 11A

Alabama should put the brakes on the proposed prison construction project under the current circumstances



Here is a quick summary of some of the roadblocks that should concern the public:

1. The current bill under consideration circumvents the State's bid law.

Generally, public contracts fall under Ala. Code Section 41-16-20 et seq. applies to any state department, board, commission, institution, corporation, authority or office. For a detailed explanation on the many facets of the bid law, one can review on line article by Mary E. Pons, Association of County Commissioners of Alabama, titled Alabama's Competitive Bid and Public Works Law, 2016. Criminal penalties are authorized for violations. The RFP (Request for Proposal) section of the bill simply lacks transparency. Section 41-16-72 provides for professional services with little oversight and less accountability.

2. Sufficient existing State lands and facilities.

Prisons are located on large tracks of land already positioned for expansion. At one time this land was used for farming and now may be repurposed to fit existing demands of prison population growth. For example Holman Prison and Fountain Correctional Center, located off of AL Hwy 21 in Escambia County, sit on 8,200 acres of land with a structural footprint of less than 500 acres.

3. Cherry picking locations for other than legitimate purposes.

Senator Dick Brewbaker represents Elmore County which has five facilities in or near the County. His opposition to the bill rests in part due to Governor Bentley's refusal to identify where the proposed mega prisons will be located. Under the current cloud the Governor finds himself, even the appearance of impropriety by favoring a politically connected location, could result in criminal investigation and an economic disaster for those counties that took the risk in placing a prison in their jurisdiction in the first place.

4. There will be no operational savings to the proposed consolidation.

The argument has been floated that by constructing four of five mega prisons, it will, in the long run, reduce operational costs by personnel efficiency, elimination of continued repairs and upgrades and the current low interest rates making bond issues attractive to State agencies. Senate Brewbaker saw these same promises when the consolidation of law enforcement under the ALEA was proposed. He has seen those promises broken. In reality, costs for ALEA has increased. The \$800 million bond issue will cost the State approximately \$50 million a year for 30 years without a clear method of repayment other than those cited above, (Ref Alabama Prison Transformation Initiative, Information Paper, 2016).

5. New proposed prisons will not eliminate overcrowding.

Figures reflect that the current prison population is approximately at 180% of capacity. Federal action is looming that will force the State to raise taxes to solve this ongoing problem. But the proposed bill even at its best interpretation, will still have a prison population well above federal guidelines. This admission may be found in the Information Paper cited above, p 8. At best, after man years of construction, the prison population will drop to 125% after five years of occupancy.

A number of other legitimate concerns can be cited, and the Gazette will expand on these points in our next issue as well as suggest some practical and fiscally responsible alternatives to the overcrowding of 30,000 plus inmate population, the same size population as Prattville or Phenix City or Vestavia Hills.

What could these areas do with \$800,000,000 ?

Please call your legislator and express your opinion about this important issue facing the citizens of Alabama.



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ROBSERVATIONS... by Robert Tate

CRY WOLF



I am not sure what they are teaching in college these days but I am sure in many cases it is not honor, integrity, critical thinking, wisdom and common sense. I came across this article the other day titled, "*The Writing Center at the University of Washington is telling students that expecting Americans to use proper grammar perpetuates racism.*" Wha-what?!! I am not even sure where to go with this. But here goes. The writing center is willing to argue that "there is no inherent 'standard' of English." I wanted to go into this a little more deeply but I just couldn't do it. Go to breitbart.com/tech/2017/02/22/university-of-washington-declares-correct-grammar-is-racist/ for the full idiocy of this story. I am at a loss here. Whenever the liberal left cannot come to grips with reality, their continued fall back stance is "racism." I for one am tired of hearing their garbage and think they need to revoke Dr. Asoa Inoue's credentials. By the way, back in 2013, a white professor in San Francisco was accused of being racist because he correctly edited a paper handed in by one of his black students. How dare he insist his students properly use capitalization in their work?

The other day, the wife and I were watching local news and they were interviewing some local high school basketball players. One kid in particular took out his razor sharp samurai sword and did the most complete hack job of the English language I think I have ever heard. Ever! With absolutely no exaggeration, I could not understand A SINGLE WORD this kid said. Not one. I looked at my wife in disbelief, ran the DVR back, played it again and nope, still nothing. Nada. Zip. Zilch. Not a friggen word. Yes, it was embarrassing. I was fully expecting to see subtitles under his chin, but no luck. Now, to top that off, am I, as a black guy, to be considered racist because I realize there is likely no way in heck this kid is going to function successfully in the work place? Do you think if I strolled into my Delta interview and spoke a language supposedly being English but needing a translator, that I would have gotten my job? Not a chance. It is idiots like this U. of Washington professor, in every field, who continues to cripple our kids by continually lowering a bar that currently rests three feet in the mud. Sorry race fans, it is not racist to expect our kids to speak intelligible English.

But to be honest with you, it does not surprise me that the goofballs at U. of Washington are still gumming up their school with stupid ideas. Let's go back to 2006 when the student government decided not to have a statue of **Pappy Boyington** displayed at the University. For those of you who do not know about "Pappy" Boyington of Baa Baa Black Sheep Fame, after flying with the legendary Flying Tigers in China, Boyington led Marine Fighter Squadron VMF 214 and was the Marine Corps' top scoring ace all-time with 28 aerial victories in WWII. Behind his leadership, VMF 214 was arguably the most successful Marine fighter squadron of the war. After being shot down, Boyington spent 20 months as a guest of the Japanese and was subjected to beatings, torture and starvation. In every sense of the word, Boyington is an American hero.

Well guess what? From 1930-1934, Boyington was a student at the University of Washington and graduated with a degree in Aeronautical Engineering. 60+ years later, there was a move to consider erecting a memorial to Boyington on the campus of UW. Enter the UW student government Pinheads. Idiots without remorse; losers without a clue. It seems that the student government shot down the proposal for various unimaginable reasons. For starters, student senator Jill Edwards said that she "didn't believe a member of

the Marine Corps was an example of the sort of person UW wanted to produce." In other words, Marines are unworthy to be UW students.

On the heels of Edwards' stupidity, another student senator, Ashley Miller, stated that, "many monuments at UW already commemorate rich white men." Too bad Boyington grew up pretty poor and happened to be half Sioux Indian Miller, failing to resist the urge to look even dumber, further asked "whether it was appropriate to honor a person who killed other people." (Gee, wasn't George Washington a soldier?) Next, student senator Karl Smith, you know the guy who got beat up every day for his lunch money and was picked last for every sport he ever played, well Karl decided that perhaps they could make a monument but not mention destroying enemy aircraft. That way he could be recognized but not "his killing of others." If you are going to honor a Medal of Honor winning fighter pilot, exactly how can you not mention those feats that earned him that medal?

STAND AGAINST RACISM

Again, this is almost too much for me to grasp. According to the non-critical thinking lefties, Donald Trump "is an anti-Semite" but his beloved daughter converted to Judaism and is married to a Jewish man who is one of President Trump's most trusted advisors. President Bush hated blacks and blew up the levies in New Orleans in order to kill blacks yet his black pastor was the man tapped to marry Bush's very white daughter. I saw yesterday where a Walking Dead T-shirt was pulled from a store because it showed Negan's bloody bat with the words, "Eenie, meenie, minee, mo." Racist! You cannot say that because of how it was once used. Yet you have Congresswoman Maxine Waters calling all of President Trump's cabinet a bunch of "scumbags" and you have Muslim Congressman, Keith Ellison, as one of the front runners to chair the DNC and yet he has or supposedly had direct ties to the clearly, loudly vocal anti-Semite Louis Farrakhan. In a real question of racism, how could any Jewish person not revolt at the idea of this man leading their party?

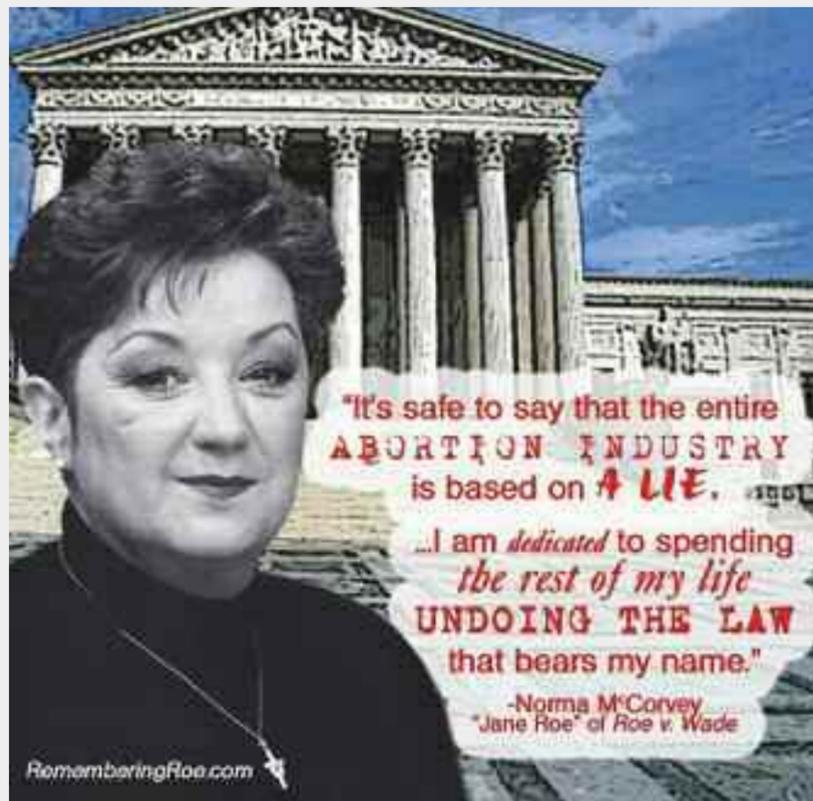
The point is when we conjure up fake instances of racism, when real cases crop up, it is like the boy crying wolf. Nobody is going to listen. Why should they. Also, the term "racist" is way overdone. People need to stop throwing this word around in cases where it is not warranted and fight hard for situations where it is a real problem. Not just a problem in somebody's imagination.

Roe v Wade Plaintiff Dies as Pro Life Advocate

By Staff Writer

Norma McCorvey has died at age 69. Many may not recognize the actual name of the Plaintiff in the landmark US Supreme Court case, Roe v. Wade. That decision has led to over 60 million deaths by abortion of unborn children in the United States alone. Her life's story is a tragic tale of abuse and manipulation which gave way to an acceptance of Jesus Christ as her savior and a repudiation of the law that legalized abortion throughout the United States.

McCorvey's early life was like a Dicken's novel. She was an unwanted child from a broken home in Louisiana, part Cajun and part Cherokee.



Arrested at age 10 for robbery she was sent off to a girl's reformatory. She was raped by a relative. She became a homeless runaway. Norma Jean Nelson married Woody McCorvey at age 16, divorced, and was left pregnant three times by different men. She gave up her children at birth while holding down jobs as a cleaning woman, waitress and carnival worker. Not surprisingly, drugs and alcohol became staples of her diet.

At age 22, she became enmeshed in the abortion rights movement unaware of the personal, political and societal implications of such a move. In 1970, two Dallas Texas female attorneys used her to challenge the State's long standing laws against abortion except to save the life of the mother for

medical necessity. She claimed she had been gang raped resulting in an unwanted pregnancy. She gave birth to her third child even as the infamous case wound its way through the court system to be ultimately decided in 1973.

Justice Harry Blackman, writing for the majority noted, "the word 'person' as used in the 14th Amendment does not include the unborn." This case along with Doe v Bolton, opened the doors to unfettered abortion. McCorvey became a celebrity of sorts for the abortion cause for a number of years attending forums and speaking at rallies and clinics.

In 1987 McCorvey shocked the nation by announcing she had lied back in 1970 when she told reporters her pregnancy was the result of a gang rape which became the motivating factor behind the initial legal challenge of the Texas law. She said she thought that the lie would help her get the abortion.

Something miraculously changed for Norma in 1995. While working at an abortion clinic in Dallas, members of the Operation Rescue team opened an office next door. Rev. Phillip Benham recalled how McCorvey despised the pro-life group. None the less the two began to meet and discuss the volatile issue of abortion and Christianity. It was the first time Norma had heard the real meaning of the words of forgiveness and mercy and love. Within a few months, Reverend Benham baptized McCorvey as a born-again Christian. She disavowed her past actions and views and began to speak boldly for the cause of life for the unborn.

Father Frank Pavone, who was a friend with Norma for over twenty years said, "She was victimized and exploited by abortion ideologues when she was a young woman but she came to be genuinely sorry that a decision named for her has led to the deaths of more than 58 million children. Norma's conversion to Christianity, then to Catholicism, was sincere."

In 1998, testifying before a US Senate subcommittee, Norma expressly denounced abortion in all its forms by saying, "I am dedicated to spending the rest of my life undoing the law that bears my name". To that end she filed a petition with the US Supreme Court in 2005 to overturn Roe, but the Court denied the petition calling the motion moot. Norma was arrested in 2009 at the Supreme Court for protesting during the confirmation hearing of Sonia Sotomayor, President O'Bama's pick for the Supreme Court. She also campaigned against O'Bama for president appearing in a 2012 Florida television commercial stating, "He murders babies".

At the dedication of the National Memorial for the Unborn in Chattanooga, Tennessee, Norma McCorvey proclaimed, "I am now a child of God, a new creature in Christ. I am forgiven and redeemed. Today, I publicly recant my involvement in the tragedy of abortion. I humbly ask forgiveness of the millions of women and unborn babies who have experienced the violence of abortion. In this place of healing, the National Memorial for the Unborn, I stand with those who honor the worth of every unborn child as created in the image of God. I will strive in the name of Jesus, to end this holocaust." These words were later inscribed on a bronze plaque at that location to evidence the power of Christ in someone's life.

As recently as last week at CPAC, Vice President Pence reiterated the Republican Party's goal to reverse Roe v Wade by saying, "this is the time to prove our answers are the right answers for America. Life is winning in America again ... Last month President Trump reinstated the Mexico City policy preventing foreign aid from funding organizations that promote or perform abortions and we will make the Hyde Amendment permanent! (prohibiting federal funds being used for abortions except for cases of rape and incest).

Norma McCorvey, died Saturday, February 18 in Katy, Texas, a suburb of Houston. Her book, *Won By Love* is an excellent read.

A FUNERAL AND A WEDDING



Not to be confused with the South Korean movie “Two Weddings and a Funeral” or the British movie, “Four Weddings and a Funeral”, my real life January events had nothing to do with “hooking up” and instead I endured the most grievous and oft dreaded death of a parent, my Mom and only two days after her funeral my oldest son, Matt (not his actual name) returned to Montgomery and married his most precious and beautiful fiancé, Lisa (not her actual name). How often does one experience an emotional high following such a heartbreaking event?

Ronald A. Holtsford

My involvement in the affairs of my grandparents following their deaths was one more as a laborer to help my parents with the physical assets in their homes. This time it was a parent and my siblings and I rallied to help our Dad as we endured the rather quick demise of our Mom and watched as Dad lost his wife of sixty-two years.

On a Saturday about noon, Mom fell at home and Dad had an ambulance take her to a local hospital in north Alabama. Having a lack of a neurosurgeon she was then taken to UAB. Her condition rapidly deteriorated and within a few hours we were notified that her injury had now resulted in what was probably an unrecoverable situation. In the wee hours of Sunday morning Dad and I checked into the attached hotel only to receive a call a few hours later that she was further declining. In the darkness of the room I relayed to Dad the grim news. They had given Mom a medicine to raise her cardiac output because nothing was in place for her wishes in this type situation. My Mom had not completed an Advance Directive (Living Will) but Dad knew the decisions he would have to make. I remember shaking as I relayed Dad’s wishes to the nurse that no heroic measures should be taken. She had been placed on a ventilator and an IV provided not only fluids but a port for other medicines to make her more comfortable. Before daylight on Sunday I went to sit by my Mom’s bedside followed by my Dad an hour or two later. My siblings arrived from out of town shortly thereafter to be with the very person that carried us for nine months and brought our lives into the world and to be there for Dad in whatever had to be done. While Mom’s vitals had been very low early that morning, she rallied that day and her vitals were very normal. While my brother kept watch over my Mom, Dad and I headed back that afternoon to our hometown so he could better pack a few things and we also called a local funeral home to begin the process of making arrangements. Even though we were told it is on an appointment basis the director was kind enough to wait until we got there late that afternoon. We returned to UAB late morning on Monday as my brother relayed to us that Mom’s rally seemed to be over and life indeed was slipping away. A UAB faculty palliative care physician came by to speak to us regarding Mom’s comfort and allowing Mom to transition to be with our Father in Heaven (my words not his). Early afternoon as palliative care was preparing to remove Mom from the ventilator she transitioned as the newest soprano into the Heavenly choir. A mere mortal seventy years in earthly church choirs was replaced by an eternal choir for which I am certain can never be surpassed. Can you imagine being in a choir with King David and praising God with a stronger voice than you ever had on earth?

Observations:

(1) An **Advance Directive** would have been nice but fortunately we all understood the futility of Mom’s continuation of life and arrived at the same conclusion. I view Advance Directives a bit differently now; while I have known that withholding fluids and food amounts to starvation of sorts I had not appreciated that taking one off of a ventilator amounts to suffocation and of course we were not

willing to allow that. The nurse told us that an anti anxiety medicine is given frequently as the ventilator is removed so that the patient does not experience that sensation of suffocation. Continuous ventilator use does not keep one from dying and may result in pneumonia and/or lung infections after long-term use.

(2) Take care of funeral arrangements ahead of time because not only does the funeral home seek appointments but so does the cemetery. Even though my parents have plots purchased by my grandfather in 1970 you still have to pay for opening, closing, a vault and they have to survey the plots. Only after talking to the manager at the cemetery were we able to get one of their last “appointments” less than an hour after my Mom’s death after I explained my Dad would have to come back to the Birmingham cemetery. Regardless of the appointment rule the counselor was INCREDIBLY helpful and compassionate in our time of need.

(3) I do not anticipate probate of my Mom’s estate as all of my Mom’s assets also seem to be in my Dad’s name. It will be a different story after my Dad is gone. Look for random insurance policies and carefully read the paperwork as some are paid directly to you or if not needed immediately may be rolled over to an instrument for you but with new beneficiaries. I have suggested that my Dad consider a new Will since for instance my Mom was his primary beneficiary, named as primary Personal Representative and some family additions and subtractions have occurred since the last Will was prepared.

(4) While I have greatly appreciated my friends that have offered words of sympathy, I have learned that only those that have lost at least one parent can offer real empathetic support.

Two days after my Mom’s funeral we celebrated the union of my son, Matt (not his name) and his fiancé Lisa (not her name). A beautiful photo of my Mom was prominently displayed at the wedding since my Mom had planned to be there. The tears that day were those of joy. Just as I became Dad to Matt thirty years ago in place of his mostly absent father so did Matt become Dad to a sweet little girl whose father has not been a part of her life. Matt and I had a prior discussion more than a year earlier as he considered the same scenario that I had so many years before.

Final Observations:

- (1) Young newlyweds that do not have many assets generally have no reason to consider a prenuptial agreement.
- (2) The newlyweds should consider proper estate planning documents.
- (3) Depending on the exact situation Matt and Lisa may consider adoption as a choice for his wife’s daughter. Should Lisa suffer an untimely demise, Matt would have no parental rights unless he is allowed by Lisa to adopt her daughter.

This article is informative only and not meant to be all inclusive. Additionally this article does not serve as legal advice to the reader and does not constitute an attorney-client relationship. The reader should seek counsel from their attorney should any questions exist.

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Marcia Chambliss

SMART GIRL POLITICS
 Action
 Engage Educate Empower

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So Much for Tolerance

Sometimes, a Facebook meme sums up current events quite well and one citing a William F. Buckley, Jr. quote recently appeared in my news feed. While I’m fully aware that there are exceptions to everything and I try to be cautious in making generalizations about any identity group, far too many on the left are currently validating Mr. Buckley’s reflection.

“Liberals claim to want to give a hearing to other views, but then are shocked and offended to discover that there are other views.”

From the angry and violent protesting by students at UC-Berkeley regarding a controversial speaker, to the public deriding of Americans by Hollywood celebrities who find those who voted for President Trump for any reason to be beyond despicable, many conservatives find themselves hesitant to share their opinion with anyone outside their known comfort zone.

Conservatives grew accustomed to the name-calling during President Obama’s two terms, as every opposition to liberal policy was met with accusations of racism and bigotry, so you would think we would be immune to the insults by now. But I’m concerned that the element of hysteria we’re currently observing goes far beyond simply losing an election cycle.

The rule of law has long held our nation together and served as a model for other nations, but the loose application of law from the past administration has only emboldened those who see a world without borders or national sovereignty as well as our enemies who wish to dismantle and destroy America. Support of national security or the enforcement of current immigration law does not make one an extremist or a racist, but the mainstream media is certainly working overtime in trying to convince Americans otherwise.

Women are being ridiculed and vilified for their conservative views or any support of President Trump, most visibly on social media. Our own SGP Facebook page was attacked by liberals for our posting of opposing views of the recent Women’s March on Washington, and the language used in describing conservative women was so far removed from the definition of “tolerant” to be downright vile and disgusting.

It was an attempt to shut down conversation and debate, and actually led us to the formation of a private page where our members could discuss current issues without character attacks. The stories these women have shared regarding their personal lives since the election are disturbing – long-term friendships destroyed, families who no longer communicate, a grandmother denied access to her grandchild simply because she voted for Trump – so much for the tolerant left.

Unfortunately, the “tolerance” extends far beyond social media assaults on personal opinion. The orchestrated boycott attack on Ivanka Trump’s clothing brand simply because she is the daughter of a man the left despises displays an amazing level of hypocrisy from liberal women. Perhaps they fail to understand, or don’t choose to understand, that the market determines the success or failure of a business, not political rhetoric. What a shame that it appears the empowerment of women in the business sector as well as politics only applies to those who share the political philosophy of the left.

With the increasing evidence of significant financial funding of George Soros into these opposition movements intent on disrupting the implementation of any conservative policy and intimidating those who voted for a departure from the liberal agenda of the past eight years, we’re likely to see more fueling of the anger than less.

In no way do I deny that there are extremists within the ranks of the political right, but in my involvement in the political process, I’ve found that the majority in the conservative movement tend to disassociate with those who hold extreme views and we do a fairly decent job of calling out and policing our own.

But as far as the left is concerned and evidenced by the reaction to fear of events that have yet to materialize, their brand of radical is being fully embraced by the elitist powers that wish to further transform America, and that does not bode well for our Republic.

Marcia Chambliss serves on the leadership team of Smart Girl Politics, www.smartgirlpolitics.com, an online community for conservative women. She can be reached at: montgomerysmartgirls@gmail.com. Her views do not necessarily reflect the opinions of Smart Girl Politics.



The views of this editorial are not the express views of The Alabama Gazette.

THINK



John Sophocleus

Consider the Olive Branch

Some readers may recall past columns covering John Rice's efforts to weaken the grip 'double-dark money' has on our State. Sad so few understood what this former State legislator (a rare champion of liberty and unflappable small government conservative) was trying to accomplish on OUR behalf - i.e., those interested in promoting the general welfare for ourselves and our posterity over special interests. After calling them out into the light and connecting the dots to expose what these deleterious forces were doing, it effectively ended in a stalemate. Perhaps stalemate was the best victory we could hope for, our current corrupt supermajority legislators show no interest in removing this strain of cancer eating the marrow of our State - one of many they've inflicted upon us these past years. Imagine how illuminating it would be if BCA donors were revealed...

Returning from a League of the South talk in Wetumpka, our discussion recounted some of Rice's efforts these past years. No one has more effectively traveled all over our State to recruit and shepherd exemplary candidates (of referred to as 'Rice Candidates') to victories. He's a proven threat to corporate welfare queens when he commits to exposing them so they must work hard/spend heavily to hold onto their largess or even better lose a seat. When I asked his forecast for the future, he gave me a very rational answer - more of the same... fight the best battles which may be winnable and hope the efforts for convictions, impeachment, etc... continue moving forward. After I made a joke about Alabama improving 'one felony conviction at a time' - it triggered a contemplative moment in this weary political soldier. Mr. Rice seemed willing to offer the Greek proverbial 'olive branch' to the other side, knowing the likelihood it will simply be used to further thrash him.

So in the Spirit of possibly opening a dialog to facilitate a peaceful effort to move us forward, I asked John Rice for a quote worthy to put in an Alabama Gazette column toward this end:

"We all love to protect and promote our home state of Alabama as a good place to live, work, worship, play, become educated, marry, raise children, enjoy family life, start businesses, prosper, and retire. The problem with this theory is that the governance and guides instilled in our state government have been designed of late to enrich a few and burden the remainder of Alabamians with low paying jobs, low expectations and low confidence in public schools, difficulty in establishing new business free from government favors or regulations, and expensive college degrees. This system exists by design of the newest political bullies who have the laws and rules written to accomplish these goals. Alabama has lost her gains in education scores, has become slow to track the economic gains of other states, and has seen its elected officials become felons and corrupt to big business to the detriment of the remainder of the citizens. Now would be the time for those who control the money flowing to campaigns for Alabama's elected officials to take a strong look at the results of the past two election cycles since 2010. The Business Council of Alabama and related big business associations who control PAC contributions and distributions are in control. They have pushed Common Core to the detriment of our children and families and now, big business owns the results and those results are not good. So for our friends in the business of politics in Alabama, look at your results. You own it. For our governor and legislative leaders, you are co-owners. Pray up Alabama."

So, there you have it. I had many other things to write about - e.g., Dr. StrangeLuvGuv, Senator Dial's economic ignorance on who bears the 4% sales tax on groceries, more poor stewardship under Secretary Merrill's special election decisions, Mr. Trump's ignorance of U.S. tariff history and who pays 'border taxes,' U.S. Attorney General Sessions who doesn't care about our 5th Amendment Civil Rights to property nor understand how price controls impact the economy, etc. Nonetheless, it seemed the first best use of my column space is to offer the possibly of civil dialogue between Rice and the BCA. Few have more sweat equity than Mr. Rice in getting the BCA he helped build back on course toward the goal of keeping commerce regular in our State instead of more mercantilism and championing corporate welfare which impedes the long-run health of an economy.

What say you Mr. Canary? Will it be more failed Riley/Siegelman business incentives? Shilling for gas tax increases to lock us into even more overbuilt/unsustainable infrastructure? You know the laundry list of deleterious transfers putting our State into the observed result Mr. Rice enumerates in his quote above. Further saddling of small businesses in our State (who in fact create jobs and improve our general welfare via voluntary, competitive exchange instead of cronyism) with the burden of largess you've successfully implemented will not get us out of the mess you've 'progressed' us into these past years. I observed you on the witness stand in my Lee County Circuit Court Mr. Canary - you impressed me as one of the worst among the 'public servants' who testified on behalf of felon Hubbard. What's past is now prologue - you certainly can change course. I wrote many times asking Mr. Hubbard to take the path of the 'penitent thief' to warrant a more forgiving sentence - his soul seems too lost at the moment after being in the world you shared with him. I find Mr. Rice sincere in offering this olive branch to begin a dialog. I implore you to take it and move forward... you may want to begin by allowing him to explain the history which built the BCA and her noble beginnings before it morphed into the destructive redistributive entity we observe today.

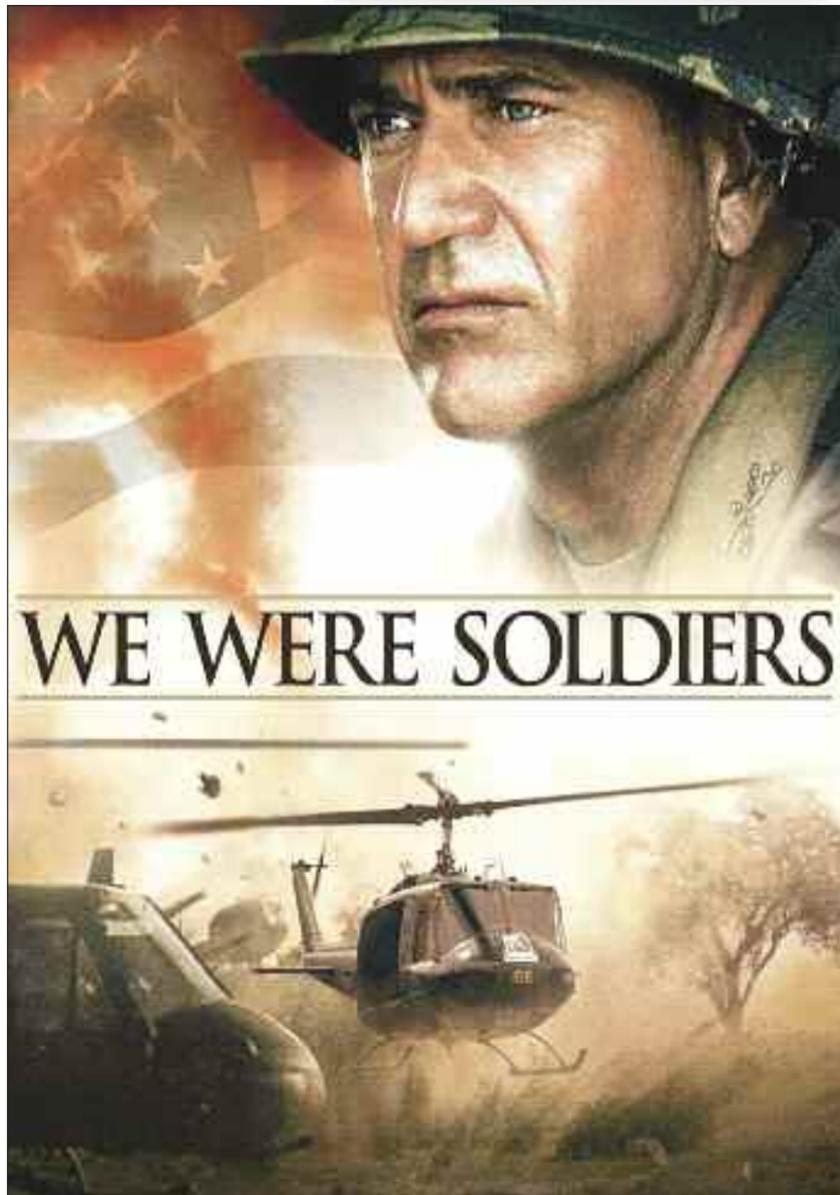
Postscript...

Attending the Christian Burial Mass of **Lt. Gen. Harold Gregory Moore, Jr.** was indeed something special. Say a prayer this good soldier is well received by His Heavenly Father he held so dear. May our nation find her way to live up to dedication and sacrifice of the sort Gen. 'Hal' Moore shown so well in his efforts to follow Christ's path through his extraordinary life. One of the best eulogy moments was describing how this good soul reacted to being among "DC dignitaries." Made one think of how disheartening it is when our local politicians use good soldiers of this sort for cover on how poorly they execute their duties and responsibilities secured by individuals like Gen. Moore we've been so blessed to have as real public servants to be admired.



Legendary combat leader and New York Times Bestselling author, Lieutenant General Harold (Hal) Gregory Moore Jr, passed away peacefully at age 94 at his home in Auburn, Alabama.

**Lieutenant General
Harold (Hal) Gregory Moore Jr,**
(February 13, 1922 -
February 10, 2017)



The Alabama
Gazette

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Loretta Grant

Owner/Publisher
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Published by:
Alabama Gazette Publishing, LLC
Volume 17 - Issue 6 Copyright 2017
The Alabama Gazette 24 pages- 2 Sec.

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The Gazette, (now *The Alabama Gazette*) was created in year 2000 for the people of Central Alabama with the intent of being a thought-provoking, non-partisan publication reaching over 20,000 readers monthly. Written comments, stories, advertisements, social and church events, as well as classifieds are always welcome. The publisher is not responsible for error in text reprinted from other sources. Furthermore, this publication does not establish due diligence on authors or advertisers and cannot guarantee that their offerings or writings are correct or suitable. We assume no responsibility for errors or omissions. We reserve the right to print, edit or condense any and all contents submitted. The publisher reserves the right to refuse advertising and submissions at its own discretion. All articles, ads and photographs may be subject to copyright.

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UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE

MARTHA ROBY

ALABAMA'S SECOND DISTRICT

Martha Roby represents Alabama's 2nd Congressional District. She lives in Montgomery, Alabama with her husband, Riley and their two children.



Communities Make Progress on Career Tech

With February being National Career and Technical Education Month, last week I visited two emerging career tech programs in different corners of Alabama's 2nd District.

Career tech programs help prepare students for a smooth transition from the classroom to the workplace, empower young men and women from all backgrounds to find good jobs, and support local economies throughout Alabama - all at the same time. Alabama is home to a solid network of community colleges, industries and facility partnerships that help provide skills training to prepare our students for in-demand jobs.

At Tallassee High School, in northeast Elmore County, administrators are making big strides to build a program that serves the growing needs of local students. Keith McNaughton, Career Tech Director for Tallassee City Schools, took me on a tour of their growing facilities. They've recently acquired a storefront near the stadium where students will soon be able to take dual-enrollment classes to earn college credit. There is also a machine shop where students now have access to the kind of hands-on training they can put to use in highly-skilled, good-paying manufacturing jobs.

Up until now, students in Tallassee have had to take a bus 30 minutes away to Wetumpka or even an hour away to Trenholm State in Montgomery to access these career tech courses. Now, thanks to the hard work of Tallassee's leaders and educators, students are beginning to access those programs in their hometown.

At Geneva High School, down in the Wiregrass, local and state leaders formed a unique partnership to build a one-of-a-kind career tech program. The

Alabama National Guard has agreed to allow its local armory to serve as the area's career tech center, offering students access to training in high-demand skills, including automotive technology, welding, aviation maintenance and health science. The city and county schools are partnering with Lurleen B. Wallace Community College and Enterprise State to offer the dual-enrollment courses.

Geneva's program will prove invaluable for students as they prepare for their careers and for the community marketing itself for industrial recruitment. Having access to a skilled workforce is a primary factor for companies seeking locations for new facilities.

I believe Geneva's career tech efforts could serve as a model for other parts of the state, but it would not be happening without the leadership State Rep. Donnie Chesteen, who has worked tirelessly to bring state and local resources to bear to fill this need.

For too long, there has been a stigma attached to not completing an academic degree at a four-year university. That's a shame because, with the right training and certification, many workers can land great-paying jobs right off the bat without all the college loan debt to pay off. The good news is that stigma is beginning to change. I've appreciated the State of Alabama's partnership with Mike Rowe, known for his "Dirty Jobs" show on the Discovery Channel, encouraging students to pursue rewarding careers in the trades.

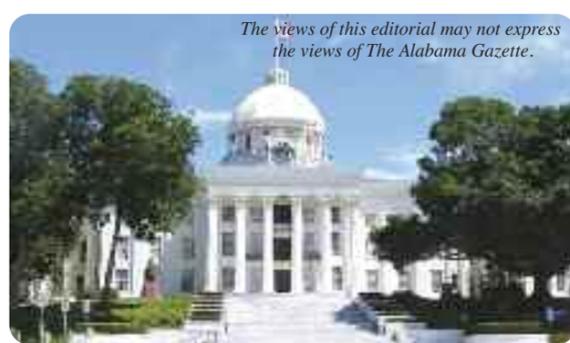
Supporting career and technical education has been and will continue to be a priority for me as your Representative in Congress.



Inside the Statehouse with Steve Flowers

Steve Flowers is Alabama's leading political columnist. His weekly column on Alabama politics appears in over 60 Alabama newspapers.

www.steveflowers.us



The views of this editorial may not express the views of The Alabama Gazette.

We have unbelievable natural resources in Alabama starting with the Tennessee Valley and transcending to the beautiful white sands at Gulf Shores. Many of our natural resources have been exploited over the years. The prime example would be the exploitation of our rich vaults of iron ore discovered in Jefferson County in the early 20th Century. It created the city of Birmingham, the Steel City of the south.

U.S. Steel swept in and bought the entire region and used cheap labor in the mines and steel mills and kept poor whites and blacks in poverty wages and shantytowns. They owed their soul to the company store. Finally they organized into labor unions. The United Steel Workers Union Local in Birmingham became the largest in the nation. Alabama also became the most unionized state in the south.

The TVA workers and Reynolds Aluminum workers in the Tennessee Valley were all unionized. The tire workers in Gadsden, Opelika, and Tuscaloosa were unionized. The federal workers around Ft. Rucker in the Wiregrass were union. The largest employer in Mobile was the docks. The dockworkers were unionized. When you combine these locales with the steelworkers in Birmingham, we were a pretty unionized state.

In the course of our recent history we have been more prudent with our natural resources. The prime example of that would be during the late 1970s when we sold the oil rights in Mobile Bay to Exxon Mobil. We got a fair price and we put the entire corpus aside and preserved the money into a trust called the Heritage Trust Fund.

Governor Fob James deserves credit for this accomplishment. It is the crowning achievement of his two terms as governor. It is quite a legacy. Not all governors leave a legacy. Ole Fob has one. Not as much can be said for our most recent governors. Don Siegelman, Bob Riley, and Robert Bentley cannot point to any accomplishment that will distinguish their time as governor.

Jim Folsom Jr., who only served two years as governor, can lay claim to

having lured and landed Mercedes, which has been the crucible that has catapulted us into the second leading automaker in the nation.

Governor Bentley was given a golden opportunity to garner a place in history with the one-time BP oil spill money. Granted, it was not as much money as the Exxon Mobil oil rights nor did we get as good a settlement as could have been garnered. We will only see \$693 million of the \$1 billion settlement because we bailed out and sold out to get our money upfront. Compared to Louisiana and Florida, it was not a good settlement.

Essentially this one-time windfall will be squandered. The BP money was appropriated in a special session last September. The legislature spent the entire BP oil settlement proceeds with a compromise bill that divided the money between state debt repayments, roads for Baldwin and Mobile counties and Medicaid. The allocation was \$400 million for paying off state debts, \$120 million for highway projects in Baldwin and Mobile counties, and a total of \$120 million to Medicaid over the next two years.

There had been a contentious battle over the funds for Baldwin and Mobile going back to last year's regular session. Lawmakers from the coastal counties fought diligently for the road money because their counties received the brunt of the 2010 oil spill.

Lawmakers from North Alabama felt that the BP settlement should compensate all Alabamians equally. Sen. Arthur Orr (R-Decatur), who chairs the Education Budget Committee in the Senate, led the fight for North Alabama and Sen. Trip Pittman (R-Baldwin), who chairs the Senate General Fund Committee, spearheaded the battle for Baldwin/Mobile.

Senators compromised the final day of the special session. The money from BP is spent. The only thing to show from it will be some highway to the beach. They ought to at least name it the BP Expressway. It would be the only legacy from the windfall.

March 1, 2017



John Martin

What is a Right?

The views of this editorial may not express the views of The Alabama Gazette.

Our Declaration of Independence says that all people "... are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness."

But what, exactly, is a right? And what is not a right? Rights are natural--God-given. Rights are not things provided by others, including governments.

Rights are equal. No person has greater rights than another.

Every human being has rights. Nothing else does.

Everything else is property. Property in itself has no rights, although its owners certainly do.

Everyone has the right to:

1. Own and treat his body as he chooses.
2. Own and treat his property as he chooses.
3. Buy, sell, and exchange goods and services.
4. Travel.
5. Speak, write and publish his thoughts and grievances.
6. Keep and bear arms.
7. Keep his home, family, friends and property secure from violations by others.
8. Be left alone if he chooses.
9. Be free from forced labor or servitude.
10. Choose and live his own lifestyle.
11. Numerous others not defined.

No one has a right to force others to labor or provide for others.

No one has a right to violate the persons or property of others.

Rights belong exclusively to individuals. There are no such things as collective rights. Groups have no rights, but every individual within a group does. Likewise, governments have no rights.

A right is what an individual does with himself and his property on his own

accord. A privilege is something provided at the expense of others. An education is a privilege if it is provided by others. But a person has a right to educate himself, hire a tutor, pay to attend a school, do research, and browse the internet.

Being offered a job is a privilege. The job is the property of the employer, not the applicant. The applicant has a right to ask for one and make a mutual agreement on his hours and salary. But the employer has the right to decide how much he is willing to pay and how many hours he requires to earn it. The applicant can accept or reject the offer, but he has no right to force the employer to exceed his limits.

A privilege is just only if it is provided voluntarily. Numerous charities and churches provide help for needy people in this way. However, nobody has a right to force others to provide privileges for anybody, regardless of how essential they might be.

Privileges provided by government are not only unconstitutional; they are also immoral and unethical. Taxing people to provide privileges for other people is a form of slavery--not one bit more ethical than that of the antebellum plantations.

Examples include:

1. Public education.
2. Welfare.
3. EBT.
4. Affirmative Action.
5. Obamacare.

Of course there are many more. Every last one is **NOT** a legitimate function of government at any level.

In all of world history, governments of every description have violated the rights of people. Some have been more brutal than others, but all have been guilty. The United States is the only nation that has been founded on the principle of protecting individual rights, but even here, it has succeeded only partially. The duty of our government and its laws is to protect the rights of everybody, but it still has a long way to go to refrain from abusing and violating them.



Steve Long

Woods & Waters with Steve



QDMA CHARITY TURKEY HUNT

This past deer season in Alabama's been pretty on and off, but aside from the weather, it's been plenty full of great hunts and greater stories! I've heard and read lots of stories and seen plenty of photos about folks bringing home the meat for the freezer as well as some really nice trophies for the wall. Here's to hoping the next season will be even better!

As for me, my mind's preoccupied with Turkey Hunting. This year the fun kicks off for most counties in Alabama on March 15th, running all the way through April 30th. There are a few exceptions to those dates, so make sure you stop by www.outdooralabama.com and double-check your hunting area's season start and finish dates.

Personally, while I still go solo chasing after those crazy birds, the real fun nowadays is taking along some other folks to go hunting. To me, Turkey Hunting starts off as a social kind of hunt. You crack jokes, share stories, and just enjoy being in the outdoors, until that first gobble rattles off. The moment you hear it, the switch is flipped, and it's business time. The whole gang shuffles on quietly towards that gobble, hoping to set up on that fella before he drops down from the roost in to some giant empty pasture 200 yards away from any sort of cover with eyes on you.

If you're not familiar with chasing down Thunder Chickens, lemme tell you; they have some very, very, very sharp eyes. If you so much as think about twitching from 50 yards out, they'll turn right around and let every other bird in the area know the jig is up. So setting up your shot, getting the gun raised and aimed, and being in the right place at the right time is a great mix of both skill, knowledge, and mostly luck. It creates a kind of tension that can take years off a grown adult, but that thrill is something I can't get enough of, especially when it pays off with a gobbler on the ground.

Of course, this might be a little overwhelming for some folks, but some of us crave that challenge. Naturally, many of you turkey chasers may wonder just how much harder we can make it. I'm glad to report that this year QDMA is presenting a Charity Turkey Hunt in Alabama. Now, the neat thing about this charity hunt is that each hunter has just one shell to use. Laugh, cry, hit or miss, that's all you get.

Naturally, this competition has some rules and regulations to follow. Here's the quick breakdown; 20 hunters will participate. The contest starts on April 6th, as the hunters gather at Great Southern Outdoors, in Union Springs. The hunters will meet with their guides, get some good food and socializing in, and get some

rest. The next morning, each team of hunter and guide will head to their best hunting spots around central Alabama, chasing down some birds, in the first of 3 rounds of hunting. After the morning hunt's over, everyone returns to GSO and grabs some lunch. The hunters that managed to bag a bird that morning are free to hang out, go fishing, hog hunting, or whatever they like at GSO. The rest will make their way back to the field, for round 2. Another dinner, and some more rest, then the next morning starts the third and final round of turkey chasing. All hunters must return to GSO by 12 noon with their bird in order for it to be judged. The hunter with the best bird wins a nice cash prize! Every hunter and guide that participates also gets a Goodie Bag, loaded with outdoor merchandise.

If that sounds like the kind of challenge you'd be interested in participating in, would like to sponsor, or just want a little more info, feel free to shoot me an e-mail at slong@qdma.com. Each hunter's entry fee is \$1000 upfront, and all proceeds go to QDMA to help fund research and education for deer hunting and herd management.

I'm pretty psyched up for this event, and I hope the rest of you are able to ride the wave off of the end of this past deer season into the next few months. 2017 is going to be a great year for getting away from social media, politics, and civilization in general, so we might as well enjoy it in the woods, hunting and fishing. I look forward to hearing more about all of yall's deer hunting on mine and Rob's radio show, Cast & Blast, on Saturdays, so keep up with that ammo and camo, get your turkey calls out and boots strapped on, and go get 'em!



Will Howell QDMA Branch president in Auburn with a nice thunder chicken

Kritter Korner

BATS

There are many things we think of when the word bat is spoken; such as Vampires, Dracula, rabies and diseases. Yes diseases are true but not as dramatic as is put out. All mammals can contract and carry rabies; however bats are not asymptomatic carriers of the disease. In reality, bats contract rabies far less than other animals. Less than 1/2 of 1% of all bats may contract the disease. A variety of wild animals (rabies vector species) can catch rabies, including foxes, skunks, raccoons, coyotes and bats. Cats and dogs and even livestock can also contract rabies. Bats are an asset to our eco system and survival, one bat can consume over a 1000 insects in one night. This keeps our corps from being infested and destroyed and our

persons from being bombarded by insects every time we walk outside.

Bats are the only mammals that can fly. They are also among the only mammals known to feed on blood. Common misconceptions and fears about bats have led many people to regard the creatures as unclean disease carriers, but bats are actually very helpful in controlling the population of crop-destroying insects.

There are more than 900 species of bats in the world 47 of them live in the USA and 16 live in our great State of Alabama. Some experts estimate the number to be as high as 1,200 species. Bats make up one-fifth of the mammal population on Earth. Bats are divided into two main types: mega bats and micro bats. Mega bats include flying foxes and Old World fruit bats. They tend to be larger than micro bats, but some micro bats are actually larger than some mega bats. Flying foxes are the largest bats. Some species have wingspans of 5 to 6 feet and weigh up to 2.2 lbs. One of the smallest mega bats, the long-tongued fruit bat has a wingspan of only 10 inches. This bat weighs about half an ounce. Among micro bats, the largest species is the false vampire or spectral bat with a wingspan of up to 40 inches. It weighs 5 to 6.7 ounces. The smallest bat is the bumblebee bat. It grows to only about 1.25 inches long and weighs about 2 grams.

Bats live all over the world, except for some islands, and the Arctic and Antarctica. They mostly prefer warmer areas that are closer to the equator, and they can be found in rain forests, mountains, farmland, woods and cities. Bats have two strategies for weathering the cold. Some migrate to warmer areas, while others go into torpor. In this short-term form of hibernation, they reduce their metabolic rate which lowers its body temperature, and slows its breathing and heart rate.

Bats roost in trees, caves, mines and barns, anyplace that provides shelter from the weather, protection from predators and seclusion for rearing the animals' young. Bats live together in groups called colonies, which contain 100 to 1,000 bats. These mammals are also nocturnal, meaning that they sleep during the day and are awake at night. Some may fly up to 31 miles to find food during their nightly journeys. In the day, they sleep upside down from trees or the roofs of caves, holding on with their sharp claws. Most bats eat flowers, small insects, fruits, nectar, pollen and leaves, though it depends on the type of bat. Mega bats usually eat fruits, and micro bats generally eat insects.

The Malayan flying fox has a big appetite. It can eat half its body weight every day. The vampire bat outdoes even that, though, eating twice its weight in one day. The brown bat can eat up to 1,000 small insects in an hour. Some bats will squeeze fruits in their mouths and drink the juices.

Vampire bats like a juice of a different type, though. They do indeed drink blood, mainly from cattle and deer, but they don't suck blood like the legends say. Rather, they make a V-shaped cut and then lick up the blood. Bats have some

unique mating behaviors not seen in other animals. Male and female bats meet in hibernation sites, called hibernacula, where they breed. Bats 'swarm' around in huge numbers, chasing each other and performing spectacular aerobatics. It's not clear how the bats choose their mates, but it may be that females seek out the most agile males. During the swarming event, breeding pairs will go off to secluded spots in the cave to mate in private. Mating occurs in the late summer and early autumn, and the females store the males' sperm until the next spring. A pregnant female will carry her young for a gestation periods of 40 days to six months. Then, she will give birth to one baby, called a pup. The pup will weigh about one-fourth as much as its mother at birth. Young bats drink milk from their mothers to survive, much like other mammals. The mothers and pups stay in groups, separate from the males. The other mothers help take care of the pup until it is old enough to care for itself.

Bats are essential to our eco system. Many bat species around the world are threatened with extinction. The Red list identifies more than 250 species as endangered, vulnerable or "near threatened." The Bulmer fruit bat is the world's most endangered bat. It is only found in one cave in Papua New Guinea. According to the Red List, there are only around 160 individuals left in this colony. A fungus that causes a disease called white-nose syndrome has devastated bats in North America. This white, powdery-looking fungus, a member of a group of cold-loving fungi called Geomyces, coats the muzzles, ears and wings of bats and has meant death for hundreds of thousands of the animals in the northeastern United States. Bats "see" using echolocation.

The animals make high-frequency yells and analyze the location of objects around them by perceiving how the sound bounces back off the object showing the angle at which sound bounces back can tell the bat the object's size. Some horseshoe bats can hover and pluck insects from spider webs. An anticoagulant in vampire bat saliva has been adapted for use in increasing blood flow in patients with stroke or heart disease.

There are 16 species of bats living in the State of Alabama:

Little Brown Myotis • Southeastern Myotis • Gray Myotis • Northern Long-eared Myotis • Small-footed Myotis • Indiana Myotis • Silver-haired Bat • Tri-colored bat • Big Brown Bat • Eastern Red Bat • Seminole Bat • Hoary Bat • Northern Yellow Bat • Evening Bat • Rafinesque's Big-eared Bat • Brazilian Free-tailed Bat.



Ron VanHerwyn



Mexican free-tailed Bat

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NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP!

WHEN WILL WE BE SATISFIED?

The views of this editorial may not express the views of The Alabama Gazette.



**College Football,
Ed Jones**

Starting with the football season of 2014, a four team play-off was initiated by the NCAA to determine the real national champion on the football field, replacing the original two team BCS.

The SEC has won or played in the last eleven play-offs. This four team play-off will not satisfy the

football fans of American very long. Many are interested in an eight team play-off. Mark my word! That is the next step for the NCAA and the American Football Coaches Association. It won't be far away!

Let's look at the possibility of an eight team play-off incorporating the five major bowls. In order to be fair to the major bowls, a rotating schedule would need to be implemented. One way would be to rotate using the alphabet; (C) Cotton, (F) Fiesta, (O) Orange, (S) Sugar. Every four years each bowl would have the number one team. For example, starting this coming year (2017) with the Cotton Bowl getting #1 vs. #8. The following year the Fiesta Bowl would get #1. In 2019 #1 would go to the Orange Bowl. In 2020 the Sugar Bowl gets #1. In 2021 the process would return to the Cotton Bowl again. That sounds fair! Every four years the four bowls involved would host the #1 team.

The formula is **CFOS**; Cotton, Fiesta, Orange and Sugar: (See diagram A below.)

2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
1. Cotton Bowl	1. Fiesta Bowl	1. Orange Bowl	1. Sugar Bowl	1. Cotton Bowl
2. Fiesta Bowl	2. Orange Bowl	2. Sugar Bowl	2. Cotton Bowl	2. Fiesta Bowl
3. Orange Bowl	3. Sugar Bowl	3. Cotton Bowl	3. Fiesta Bowl	3. Orange Bowl
4. Sugar Bowl	4. Cotton Bowl	4. Fiesta Bowl	4. Orange Bowl	4. Sugar Bowl

Diagram A

The four bowls would almost be guaranteed to have higher ranked teams than they have been having over the last few years. That should be a positive for this plan.

Let's look at the semi-final round. Do you think Atlanta would be interested in hosting the winner of #1 vs. #8 and the winner of #3 vs. #6 on the second weekend in January? Do you think the Astrodome in Houston would be interested in hosting a semi-final game between the winner of #2 vs. #7 and #4 vs. #5?

The next phase for this plan is to use the Rose Bowl Stadium as the home of the championship game. This is because of the historical significance of how our national champions were selected for much of the history of college football. This plan would not at all interfere with the Rose Bowl itself. It would still invite the champion of the Big 10 and the champion of the Pac 12 to play in the Rose Bowl on the same weekend of the quarter-final games that will be going on in the Cotton, Fiesta, Orange and Sugar Bowls. If one of these teams is ranked in the top eight they would have to choose the Rose Bowl or the playoff. I can't imagine a team turning down an opportunity to be in the playoffs, so the second place team from one of these conferences would have to be their representative in the Rose Bowl. They do this now with the four team play-off.

Note: Prior to World War II, the winner of the Rose Bowl was very likely to be voted national champion. This tradition had been in place since the inception of the Rose Bowl. Usually, during those years, a powerhouse from the East would play a powerhouse from the West and the winner would receive most of the votes, consideration, etc., by the main media centers concentrated in New York and California. The general consensus was that all of the best teams were in the East, Midwest, and the West Coast. That is until 1925 when Coach Wallace Wade accepted an invitation to bring his Crimson Tide football team to Pasadena to play the mighty Washington Huskies in the 1926 Rose Bowl. Alabama shocked the football world by beating Washington 20-19 and was named national champions.

Rose Bowl Stadium seats over 100,000, therefore it is the perfect venue for a national championship game, ie. Alabama vs. Texas in the 2009 championship game and Auburn vs. Florida State in 2013. The weather in Pasadena is usually conducive to such an event. The Southern California area would benefit greatly from having basically two Rose Bowl weeks every year. I can't imagine what resistance could come from the Rose Bowl itself. However, if for some reason the Rose Bowl was not interested in hosting the NCAA National Championship Game on a yearly basis, then we can easily find an appropriate site (Jerry's World in Dallas). One solution would be to use the site of the Super Bowl from the year before. The site would have all the pieces in place to host such an event. This would also allow the championship game to be rotated each year following the site of the Super Bowl of the previous year.

If this plan had been in place this past season, the brackets would have looked like this. (diagram B below).

1 Alabama	Guess What? This past year:
8 Wisconsin	Under the BCS, Clemson would have played Alabama for the national championship.
3 Ohio State	Using the four team play-off, Clemson played Alabama for the National Championship.
6 Michigan	Under an eight team play-off, Clemson would have played Alabama for the National Championship.
5 Penn State	<i>Is this progress?</i>
4 Washington	
7 Oklahoma	
2 Clemson	

Diagram B

By adopting this plan, the NCAA would make more money. The individual schools participating will make more money. Eight teams instead of four will have a chance to play for the national championship. The Bowls will make more money because of higher rated teams in their bowls, plus the obvious heightened interest generated by four bowls becoming quarter-final venues for the NCAA playoffs and the Rose Bowl hosting the national championship game. There would be more excitement in the regular season games because in essence it becomes a 120 team playoff. (There are approximately 120 serious teams playing Division I football). At the beginning of each season every team will have the same chance to make it into the "Top Eight." One or even two losses would not eliminate a good team. Therefore, nobody can have a legitimate gripe



about not making the playoff. If your team is #9, your team is not good enough. Live with it!

The bowls would also benefit from a rotating system using the alphabet as the basis. **The ranked teams would be assigned so that every four years each bowl would have the number one team.**



All four bowls will be played January 2nd. The two semi-final games would be played on the Saturday nearest January 8th. The championship game would be played on the Monday night nearest to January 15th.

I hereby submit this plan to the NCAA, to every Division I Conference Commissioner, to Athletic Directors and Head Football Coaches of the football playing Division I schools and to the American Football Coaches Association. Patience cannot be obtained all at once! I patiently wait for your response!

Email me at: alabamagazette@yahoo.com

Attention: Ed Jones, Sports Editor
12 E. Jefferson St., Montgomery, AL 36014



Coach Nick Saban congratulates Coach Dabo Swinney for Clemson defeating Alabama for the National Championship this past January.

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The Education Station... *By Bobbie Ames*

The Declaration of Independence ~ July 4, 1776

The Christian Idea of Man and Government in America's History

Early in our country's history, the mother country caused great distress among her 'children.' They opposed the Declaratory Acts, the Stamp Act, and other measures. Among the opponents were the Whigs, Patriots, and the Sons of Liberty. Others submitted willingly to the Crown. Both sides claimed to conform to English royalty and be loyal to the British Constitution.

In reading the writings of Buchanan, Locke, Milton, Sidney, and other historians, we find what we call the "Christian idea of man," which embodies the very principles which formed the Declaration of Independence. It became our very own theory of government. Those who signed the document were mostly Whigs, prominent in their own localities. Whigs did not have a large majority of support in the beginning. They were strong in conviction, but that invited fierce opposition. These men were so strong and convicting in their arguments, that their number grew until it became a national party with tremendous influence.

The leading Tories, in opposition, still defended the principle of supremacy of existing law, and were indebted and loyal to the Crown for their positions. They defended arbitrary power. Over time, the Whigs were successful in creating a mass network of committees of correspondence. "Sons of Liberty," in opposition to the Stamp Act, marched with their banner, "Liberty, Property, and No Stamps."

In Richard Frothingham's **The Rise of the Republic**, we read that the "love of liberty under law was the reigning principle... they nurtured the idea that devotion to the cause of justice was a higher obligation than fidelity to the old flag, when it was used to cover despotic power. They revolved [pondered] the saying of a great patriot, that freedom and security, under Providence depended on themselves."

[Then] they turned to their own past history and to God's Word and reasoned, "that Englishmen in former ages had been justly renowned, and might turn the Great People to call on the name of the Lord, and to seek a redress of their grievances with the spear and lance at that glorious seat of justice, where Moses brought the Egyptians and Samson the Philistines."

Through the Declaration of Independence a new American system would be established, local government for the States and a national government for the Union. Each would have sovereignty, each in its own sphere. Americans were to be free from foreign influences and would acknowledge their rights coming from the Creator, inalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. We can affirm that the rights of the American system of government and culture come from the Christian idea of Man.

Fifty six patriots, true sons of liberty, signed the Declaration of Independence.

Have you ever wondered who these men were, and what happened to them after signing this document of our liberty?



For years we have circulated a document sent out in this generation by the National Federation of Independent Business. Their office is located in Washington, D.C. The document, titled "The Price They Paid," we quote in part:

"What kind of men were they?" Twenty five were lawyers and jurists. Eleven were merchants. Nine were farmers or large plantation owners. These were men of means and education. Yet, they signed the Declaration knowing full well that the penalty would be death if they were captured.

When these courageous men signed, they pledged their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor to the cause of freedom and independence.

Richard Stockton returned to New Jersey in the fall of 1776 to find the state overrun with the enemy. He removed his wife to safety, but was himself captured. His home, his fine library, his writings... all were destroyed. Stockton was so badly treated in prison that his health was ruined, and he died before the war's end.

Carter Braxton was a wealthy planter and trader. One by one, his ships were captured by the British Navy. He loaned a huge sum of money to the American cause, it was never repaid. He was forced to sell his plantations and mortgage his other property to pay his debts.

Thomas McKean was so hounded by the British that he had to move his family, almost constantly. He served in the Continental Congress, without pay, and kept his family in hiding.

Vandals or soldiers, or both, looted the properties of **William Ellery, George Clymer, Lyman Hall, Thomas Heyward, Arthur Middleton, Benjamin Harrison, Francis Hopkinson, and Philip Livingston.**

At the battle of Yorktown, **Thomas Nelson, Jr.** noted that the British general, Cornwallis, had taken over the family home for his headquarters. Nelson urged **George Washington** to open fire on his own home. This was done and the home was destroyed. Nelson later died bankrupt.

Frances Lewis also had his home and properties destroyed. The enemy jailed his wife for two months, and that with other hardships so affected her health that she died two years later.

"Honest" **John Hart** was driven from his wife's bedside when she was near death. Their thirteen children fled for their lives. Hart's fields and his grist mill were laid waste. While eluding capture, he never knew where his bed would be the next night. He often slept in forests and caves. When he returned home, he found that his wife had died, and his children were gone.



Such were the stories and sacrifices typical of those who risked everything to sign the Declaration of Independence. These men were not wild-eyed ruffians. They were soft-spoken men of means and education. They had security, but they valued liberty more. Standing tall, straight and unwavering, they pledged: "For the support of this declaration, with a firm reliance of the protection of Divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other, our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor."

Benjamin Rush (1745-1813) was one of the youngest signers of the Declaration in 1776. He was a distinguished physician and scientist who held the first chemistry professorship in America. In 1770, he published the first American chemistry textbook, **A Syllabus of a Course of Lectures on Chemistry**. He established the first free dispensary in America, and published the first American work on mental disorders in 1813. He also helped form the first abolition society in America. He was appointed by President John Adams as the Treasurer of the U.S. Mint in 1797.

His passion for the Bible as the basic textbook in schools, is understood in the context of his personal faith and passion for God's Word. Throughout his life, he was an advocate for the Bible as the source of knowledge.

Quoting from Benjamin Rush's writings and speakings,

1. "Christianity is the only true and perfect religion; and that in proportion as mankind adopt its principles and obey its precepts they will be wise and happy.
 2. That a better knowledge of this religion is to be acquired by reading the Bible than in any other way.
 3. That the Bible contains more knowledge necessary to man in his present state than any other book in the world.
 4. That knowledge is most durable, and religious instruction most useful, when imparted in early life.
 5. That the Bible, when not read in school, is seldom read in any subsequent period of life.
- My arguments in favor of the Bible as a schoolbook are founded."*

As a Scientist, Rush declared, "The memory is the first faculty which opens in the mind of children. Of how much consequence, then, must it be to impress it with the great truths of Christianity... so necessary for our happiness." Rush was very aware that many in the field of Science were skeptics and this made him even more passionate about the necessity of the Bible as a school text book in America's schools. He spoke with passion, "We profess to be republicans and yet we neglect the only means of establishing and perpetuating our republican form of government; that is, the universal education of our youth in the principles of Christianity by means of the Bible; for this divine book, above all others, favors that equality among mankind, that respect for just laws, and all those sober and frugal virtues which constitutes the soul of republicanism."

Today, our challenge as Americans is to restore our heritage of this Christian Idea of Man and Government, as mandated by the God of the Bible and the Judeo-Christian religion. This writer has spent a lifetime in education that focuses on the Christian idea of man and government, through the Christian education of children.

Postscript: We invite any inquiries and comments to our articles.



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Will the controversial “Pike Road Way” continue without her? Freeman to retire as head of Pike Road Schools

The views of this editorial may not necessarily express the views of The Alabama Gazette.

Continued from page 1A

By Bill Rice, Jr.
Special to *The Gazette*

Note; *The following article includes “commentary” or opinions of the author.*

A story in last week’s *Montgomery Independent* suggested that some “city officials” are no longer avid supporters of “The Pike Road Way.” At this time it is unclear if the school board hopes to hire a successor who will continue the “innovative” (or “radical”) reforms found at PRS (no tests, no GPAs, no deadlines for students to learn assigned material, no textbooks and a heavy reliance on “project based learning” undertaken by small groups of students “collaborating” with one another).

Dr. Freeman has said that she believes there is full support among the leaders of the town and school board to continue with the novel “mission” of PRS.

Last May, *The Alabama Gazette* was the first (and only) news organization to report that all might not be well at Pike Road School. This reporter identified approximately 25 negative or unflattering allegations about “The Pike Road Way” and its two lead administrators, Dr. Freeman and principal Angela Lang.

Allegations dealt with the detrimental aspects of the “Schlechty-inspired” school reforms, as well as allegations of general “chaos” at the school, discipline problems, poor planning, over-crowding, an obvious “lack of structure” and the mistreatment of at least some faculty members who Dr. Freeman may have perceived as a “threat” to her program. For full coverage of these allegations refer to *The Gazette* editions of May, June and July 2015 (simply Google “Alabama Gazette Pike Road Schools”).

Since last July, I have been able to identify several other facts that support the thesis that all is not well at PRS. To wit and for example ...

In the first year of Pike Road Schools, **at least 140 students withdrew** from a K-8 school.

Although I tried for months, I never could get a straight answer to my simple question - “How many students have left the system?”

The Advertiser’s Josh Moon apparently did manage to get a vague answer to this obvious question. In a “positive-spin” story published after the *Gazette* series of articles, Moon wrote that “a few” students had withdrawn. Surely most people would agree that 140 students in only nine grade levels does not meet anyone’s definition of “a few.”

An aside: To obtain this figure I had to file a “Freedom of Information Request” and write a check for \$220. This effort/expense got me answers to only some of my questions. Other questions I posed were not answered or I was told the answers would be posted on the school’s website at some point in the future. **The inability to get straight answers to simple questions** was another point of frustration for me as a reporter. For me at least, this also qualified as a “red flag” about the leadership of the school system.

Since the end of the first school term, I have heard that at least a fair number of parents have made the same decision to withdraw their children from this school. The number of students who started at PRS and has now left is certainly a lot higher today than the 140 number of last May. **Elevated departure rates among students and faculty certainly speak to the possibility that all is not well at PRS.**

As do **ACT Aspire test results**. Given the level of interest in Pike Road’s novel approach to education, it’s surprising to me that no journalist has thought to analyze these results. Two obvious question come to mind about the “reforms” inherent to the Pike Road Way: 1) “Well, do they work? 2) What do the standardized test results show?” As such an analysis was never performed or published, I did it myself (See separate article for my summary of this analysis).

The bottom line - revealed in percentages that can be “quantified” - is that **PRS students performed far/dramatically worse than students from other school districts with similar demographics**. The percentage of PRS students deemed to be meeting (“ready”) or “exceeding” standards (or deemed to be on pace to be considered “ready” for future college-level work) **was, on average, 40.4 percent below the scores of the top-performing school districts**.

Other comparative metrics are available for analysis. The State Board of Education has yet to follow through on its pledge to assign “letter grades” to school districts. However, the board did release several metrics that allowed reporters at al.com to assign letter grades. PRS earned an overall grade of C (perhaps the lowest C, although I’m not certain this is the case).

In one metric, the system, per al.com, received a grade of D. **Of particular interest was the finding that PRS students who took the ACT ASPIRE test last spring achieved lower results than they had at their previous schools**. In Dr. Freeman’s estimation, the “PRW” of learning might be superior to traditional education, but at least as gauged by one standardized test that all public school students take, the base of knowledge of PRS students regressed during their first nine months at their new school.

Boosters of “The Pike Road Way” must have breathed a giant sigh of relief that local news reporters opted to not perform and/or publish a single word of “analysis” on PRS’s test results. For what it’s worth, my personal opinion is that **school district rankings and student performance will continue to drop the longer students are exposed to Pike Road’s “new and improved” template for learning**.

Also absent from local news “coverage” was any mention of an eye-opening story written by Mr. Moon, now at *The Alabama Political Reporter*. The story revealed that, per the State Department of Education, **“at least \$1.4 million” in funds that should have gone to Montgomery Public Schools were instead disbursed to PRS. This money is now spent and gone although the story said PRS is obligated to refund the allocation.**

This story did not fully reveal how or why such a “mistake” could have been made. I have seen no “follow-up” story, asking hard questions.

I was also able to document that **approximately one-third of the original faculty and staff members hired by Dr. Freeman in the spring of 2015 are no longer employed at the school**. According to those who should know, faculty and staffers continue to leave the school system. Just last week I was told a teacher recruitment video has been produced to help with staffing concerns. I for one do not think quality, experienced educators are lining up to teach at PRS.

Is it normal or common for more than 10 percent of students and 33 percent of faculty to leave a school within a 10-month span of time? Forget “education philosophy” arguments, what does it say about a boss when 33 percent of the people she herself thought would be excellent employees are either forced out or decide to leave on their own in such a condensed period of time?

Perhaps **the most controversial decision made by Dr. Freeman was her decision to use the “FreshGrade” software package to assess students’ academic performance** (the system uses a color-code system to assess students’ mastery of standards; students are not required to meet immediate deadlines to show their mastery of concepts).

As far as I know Pike Road is the only school district in America to use this program (out of tens of thousands of school districts in the country). This in itself is “news” and makes one wonder why no journalist has bothered to do an in-depth story on this innovation. Is it popular with students and their parents? With teachers? What are its pros, what are its cons?

More specifically, **how are future graduates of PRS going to apply for admission to colleges, or compete for scholarships, or transfer credits to other schools, absent a traditional GPA?** How will eligibility for participation in sports be determined? Parents and students were apparently told to not worry about such concerns, that these questions would be answered at some point. But have they? Do we know what feedback colleges and organizations that award scholarships have offered on this innovation?

In an *Advertiser* story on Feb. 15th, Dr. Freeman states that school leaders

are committed to continuing “the mission of PRS.” **Is it therefore mandatory that Dr. Freeman’s successor also use this non-traditional “report card?”** Not awarding traditional grades - or making students take the tests that determine said grades - forms the entire foundation of “The Pike Road Way.” Discard this foundation and almost everything novel about “the Pike Road Way” evaporates.

The way teachers teach will certainly change. Won’t teachers now have to “teach to the test,” and enforce hard deadlines regarding the time students have to learn specific subject matter? Can students really prepare for exams by “collaborating” with their peers in small groups or working on the latest project “designed” by their “lead learner facilitators?”

By now we all know that the dreaded test, the despised homework, the anxiety-producing report cards - for centuries fundamental elements of “traditional education” - are taboo under the PRW, **But will these traditional educational tools return?** If they do, will not the “Pike Road Way” be just like, say, the “Troy Way” and the “Prattville Way” and the “LAMP Way” and “The Vestavia Hills Way?” Or, the way that you and me - and our parents and grandparents before us - learned?

Indeed, **the million-dollar question** for parents thinking about moving to Pike Road, or taking their children out of PRS, **has so far not been addressed in press “coverage” of the system**. Does the board STILL believe Dr. Freeman’s vision (and mission) is sacrosanct and must be adhered to by her successor? I guess we will soon learn if the “Pike Road Way” was really “The Suzanne Freeman Way” (something I argued in an earlier critique published in *The Gazette*).

Even at this moment, Pike Road parents who are sending their children to private schools are being asked to sign contracts notifying these schools of their intention to send their children to the same school next school year. Whether or not PRS scraps this key feature of “The PRW” is no doubt of supreme importance to many parents’ decision about where to send their child to school.

For space reasons, I will not include discussions of other areas I uncovered in my reporting. If curious, interested citizens can examine the **board’s minutes** (the most sparse and lacking in detail I have ever seen), request a copy of the **“Superintendent’s Evaluations”** (bizarre and also devoid of any metrics typically used to assess the job of a superintendent), **Dr. Freeman’s employment contract** (generous in the extreme), **the use of a controversial temp agency to screen and hire substitutes and the many teachers aides or “paraprofessionals” used by the system**, or explore in detail **Dr. Freeman’s role in designing a school that was far too small** and her role in adding portable classrooms (that were installed much later than was initially announced, as well as financial and planning matters dealing with the proposed new campus(es)). The employment of **teachers and staffers who were not certified to teach their grade level or serve in their administrative positions** is another area of potential focus for an interested reporter.

Also, if a reporter wants to “follow the money,” I recommend taking a **hard look at the taxpayer funds spent with the “Schlechty Center for Excellence.”** Familiarizing one’s self with the tenets espoused by the late Phil Schlechty will also reveal the origins of all the ideas and buzzwords associated with “The Pike Road Way.”

The story on Dr. Freeman’s “retirement” **did not mention if there will be any “buyout” of her original four-year contract**. As reported in my earlier stories, I know Dr. Freeman received a lottery-size buyout when she was terminated from her last superintendent’s job in Trussville. To this day, **the fact she was fired (with 500 Trussville citizens greeting this news with a loud ovation), has not been reported by other local papers or TV stations**.

This, to me, is an egregious example of how reporters and editors, in their roles as “gatekeepers” of information, can present a slanted version of the news (or of the background of individuals they cover) - not by what they report, but by **what they choose not to report**.

The above sentence encapsulates my criticism of the “coverage” of all that has taken place at PRS in the last year and a half. **Our best-known news organizations, in my opinion, have not told the full and entire story.**

I am not saying that reporters should ignore positive stories or fail to highlight the alleged merits of any new approach to education. I am saying that **readers, parents and community leaders should also be made aware of the negative or controversial elements found in such systems. Then and only then can the public make an informed opinion about whether such “reforms” are an improvement over “traditional” education.**

“When Bad Things Happen ...”

For a first-person account of what it was like for one teacher to work at PRS under Dr. Freeman, **I recommend my wife’s recent blog post “When Bad Things Happen.”** This post has been read by more than 1,000 people. Scores of people left comments on both her Facebook page and the blog itself. Not a single person who read this account opined that my wife “made this stuff up.” No current PRS teacher challenged the veracity of anything she reports. Comments by at least three former PRS staffers confirm or support the picture she paints. Most of those who commented expressed shock and sadness that my wife had to endure such a horrible experience.

I mention this to make a simple but important point: **Not everyone believes that “all is great” at PRS. Nor does everyone think Dr. Freeman and principal Angela Lang are “highly respected experts”** (taken from the school’s mission statement, the portion that ascribes how the superintendent should be viewed by Patriots).

Blog address:<http://ricebits.weebly.com/rice-bits-blog/when-bad-things-happen>

UPDATE ...

In my reporting last year, I also learned that that the Pike Road Board of Education - whose members were “trained” and probably selected by Dr. Freeman - interviewed two other finalists before the board ultimately hired Dr. Freeman. One of these finalists was **Dr. Craig Ross**, a principal from Robertsedale, who also enthusiastically embraces “progressive reforms” or the Schlechty-approach to learning.

Ross was subsequently hired as superintendent of Cullman County Schools. Within 18 months, he was told his contract would not be renewed and he submitted his resignation with 18 months still remaining on his contract.

In a story in *The Cullman Times*, Ross’ tenure was described as “tumultuous” and “progressive.” One school board member was quoted as saying he “(thinks) outside the box” about education. His term was also described as “embattled.” Through Internet research I was able to find Twitter posts he made that are highly critical of traditional education components such as grades.

Ross’ “termination” was not surprising to me as, per my research, invariably “Schlechty disciples” who are hired as superintendents are soon deemed to be too radical, too strident, too “polarizing” or “too controversial” and are quickly dismissed (or are forced to retire, where many end up as staffers for the Schlechty Center).

I did not know until reading the *Independent* article that Dr. Ross was hired by the PRS board at Dr. Freeman’s recommendation and currently serves as PRS’s “Director of Learning and Operations.”

The *Independent* story cited an anonymous source as saying it is Dr. Freeman’s hope/plan that Ross be hired as her successor. The source labeled him as “Freeman II.” The source also opined, correctly in my view, that this board serves only as a “rubber stamp” for Dr. Freeman. **Apparently at least some “city officials” have “re-evaluated” Dr. Freeman and are no longer in the**

camp of avid supporters. Nor do these officials seem to be happy about Freeman's possible plan to install Ross as her successor.

By the way Ross earned a salary of \$122,400 as superintendent in Cullman County, a system much larger than Pike Road (which has the second smallest enrollment in the state and has only one school building). By comparison, Dr. Freeman earns a salary of \$165,000. The board also pays for her house payment at The Waters and provides a "car allowance" among other perks. Her original contract was for four years.

Analysis compares results to school districts with similar demographics Pike Road School test results far from impressive

By Bill Rice, Jr.
Special to The Gazette

Given the high level of interest in the novel features of the "Pike Road Way" of teaching students, it might seem that local and state journalists would have reported the school's first round of ACT Aspire test results.

Such an effort might include evidence showing if Pike Road School's radical approach to learning actually was producing better - or worse- results than "traditional education." Alas, such an analysis was never performed or printed by any news organization. One can only speculate why this might be the case.

Because no analysis was forthcoming, I did it myself. This analysis of ACT Aspire test results for the academic year 2015-2016 shows **the performance of Pike Road School students** after one year of "The Pike Road Way" **was not impressive.**

Quick Summary ...

- According to the criteria used by the State Dept. of Education, Pike Road Schools is the fourth wealthiest school district in the state. However, **the gap between PRS and school districts with similar percentages of affluent students is exceedingly wide.** On average, the top-performing district in the state had 40.4 percent more students who reached the "Proficient" academic level than PRS. The "proficient" scores of the other 13 wealthiest districts in the state were also far higher than PRS.

- In **nine** of the 14 grade/subject categories, **fewer than 50 percent of PRS students performed at a standard considered to be "college or career ready."** That is, in most categories/grades, the **majority of PRS students are not considered college ready.** *Two-thirds (or more) of Pike Road students tested below the "proficient" level in five of the tested categories.*

- In general, the correlation between wealth of students and test scores is extremely strong. However, in the state of Alabama **PRS is THE glaring exception to this correlation.**

- In the 14 tested categories, an average of 43.3 percent of PRS students were considered college "Ready" or "exceeding" grade level. Said differently, **56.7 percent of PRS students are not considered to be on pace to one day perform college-level work.** The state average for all tested students was 42.2 percent. Among the top 14 "affluent" districts, the percentage of students reaching the "Proficient" benchmark ranged from the mid 60s to mid 90s - figures significantly higher than at PRS.

- The percentage of PRS students who met the "proficient/college ready" standard was almost exactly the same as students in nearby Autauga County and Elmore County. However, the percentage of students considered to be poor in the Autauga and Elmore school districts is substantially higher than Pike Road.

Notes on sources and terms: The data I worked with came from the State Department of Education. The data presents all Alabama public school districts' performance in the Reading, Math and Science exams. PRS students took this exam at the end of the school's first academic year. To compare "apples to apples," the ADOE provides a color code which identifies the "wealth" or "poverty" of the school districts in the state.

The metric the board uses is "percentage of students qualifying for a free or reduced-price lunch." The idea is that students from middle class or affluent backgrounds can be expected to perform better than students from very poor backgrounds.

That is, students from Mt. Brook will be expected to perform better on standardized tests than, say, students from Bullock County. Indeed with very few exceptions (PRS being the most conspicuous of these) this "correlation" is proven by test results.

As noted, ADOE figures show that PRS is the fourth "wealthiest" school district in the state. In 2015-2016 **only 15 percent of PRS students qualified for a free or reduced-price lunch.** Mt. Brook (0 percent), Vestavia Hills (10 percent) and Trussville (11) are the only three districts with a smaller percentage.

For purposes of this analysis, I primarily looked at the **14 school districts where fewer than 40 percent of students qualify for a free or reduced-price lunch.** Other systems meeting this criteria were Hartselle (29 percent of students qualifying for free/reduced lunch), Hoover (24 percent), Cullman (32 percent), Auburn (29 percent), Homewood (29 percent), Madison City (21 percent), Madison County (37 percent), Shelby County (29 percent), Muscle Shoals (33 percent) and Franklin County (37 percent).

PRS students took the Reading and Math portion of the exams in grades 3 through 8 and the Science portion in grades 5 and 7. This means there were 14 sets/categories of scores I could compare/analyze.

The good news for PRS boosters is that the system did not come in last in every one of these "rankings." Franklin County Schools (which has a poverty rate of 37 percent compared to PRS's 15 percent) actually finished last (14th) in all but one category.

The bad news for boosters of "The Pike Road Way" is that if Franklin County is excluded, Pike Road Schools DID finish last in all rankings except five. When PRS did not rank last, it ranked next-to-last (12th in grades 3, 5, 6 and 7th Grade Math). In the comparison of the 13 richest school systems, PRS's best showing was a ranking of 11th in 6th Grade Reading). **Summarizing: PRS finished 13th out of 13 school districts in nine categories; 12th out of 13 districts in four categories and 11th out of 13 districts in one category.**

Given my previous in-depth reporting on "The Pike Road Way," I was not surprised PRS fared so poorly when compared to other "affluent" school districts. **What did surprise me, however, was the size of the "gap" (or variance) between Pike Road Schools and the other school districts with similar student demographics. To quote Donald Trump, this gap is "huge."**

ACT Aspire ranks student test results in four categories. **Students meeting the benchmarks of "Ready" or "Exceeding" are considered "Proficient" (performing "at or above grade level" and are considered to have "at least a 50 percent chance" of successfully performing college-level work in the future.)** The percentage of a given system's students deemed to be learning at the "Proficient" level is the measure I focus on in this analysis.

In only three of 14 Subjects/Grade categories did at least 50 percent of PRS students meet the "ready" or "exceeding" level. In most categories, PRS students who met the "Proficient" standard ("Ready" + "Exceeding") numbered in the 20, 30 or 40-percent range.

The average of PRS students (across all 14 ranked categories) who reached the proficient standard was 43.3 percent. Said differently, **56.7 percent of PRS students are NOT learning at grade level** (according to ACT Aspire results).

By comparison, students in the best-performing districts who rated as "proficient" typically numbered in the mid-60s to mid 90s percentile.

The smallest variance between the top-performing district and PRS was in 3rd Grade Math. Vestavia students were No. 1 in this category with 90.4 percent of its students scoring at least "proficient." PRS was ranked 13th (among

"wealthy" districts) with 65.8 percent of its students meeting the Proficient benchmark. Thus, Pike Road trailed Vestavia by "only" 24.6 percent in this comparison.

Closer to the norm in these comparisons is the gap found in 8th Grade Math. Mt. Brook ranked No. 1 in this category with 87.5 percent of its students scoring "Ready" or "Exceeding." PRS was (again) 13th, with only **23.5 percent** of its tested students determined to be at this "proficient" standard. **Simple math shows the gap or variance from "top" (Mt. Brook) to "bottom" (PRS) to be 64 percent.**

A glance at these test results quickly shows that **test results** for the top dozen or so performing school districts (with less than 40 percent poverty) **are generally clustered within 15 to 20 percentage points.** That is, at the top-scoring district, 85 percent of the district's students might be deemed to be at the "proficient" level; the same score at the 10th-highest-scoring district might be around 70 percent. Then - *in every single category* - we see a dramatic drop to PRS's performance.

A Summary of PRS rankings (compared to other wealthy districts) ...

Here are the ACT Aspire test results with **the state's top score** (expressed as a percentage of students who were either "Ready" or "Exceeding" standards) **followed by PRS results.** Also included is the difference between the top school district and PRS's results, as well as **where PRS ranked among the 14 "wealthiest" school districts.** (Again, Franklin County was 14th in all but one of these rankings).

Category (PRS rank): Score of Top District - Score of PRS. Dif. b/w top dist. and PRS

3rd/Math (13th):	90.4 - 65.8.	Difference: 24.6
4th/Math (14th):	93.2 - 34.9.	Difference: 59.3
5th/Math (12th):	89.5 - 53.1.	Difference: 36.4
6th/Math (12th):	93.5 - 67.3.	Difference: 26.2
7th/Math (13th):	91.5 - 23.5	Difference: 68.0
8th/Math (13th):	87.5 - 28.2.	Difference: 59.3
8th/Reading (13th):	79.9 - 49.9.	Difference: 30.0
7th/Reading (13th):	74.9 - 31.4.	Difference: 43.0
6th/Reading (11th):	84.1 - 57.2.	Difference: 26.9
5th/Reading (13th):	73.9 - 44.9.	Difference: 29.0
4th/Reading (13th):	81.5 - 35.5.	Difference: 46.0
3rd/Reading (13th):	75.7 - 46.6.	Difference: 29.1
7th/Science (13th):	77.9 - 25.5.	Difference: 54.4
5th Science (13th):	79.5 - 44.1.	Difference: 34.3

The mean score for the top-performing district was 83.8 percent. PRS's mean score (from all 14 categories of its tested students) was 43.4. Again, the "gap" or difference between the top score average and PRS' cumulative average is 40.4.

In nine of the 14 grades/categories, fewer than 50 percent of PRS students were considered to be on pace to be "ready" for college work. (This tally would have been 10 categories but PRS scored 49.9 in 8th grade Reading, which rounds up to 50 percent).

The best result of PRS students was sixth grade math (67.3 percent proficient). **The worst was 8th grade math** (23.5 percent proficient). The closest PRS performed to the top benchmark was a difference of 24.6 percent (third grade math). **The worst PRS performed compared to the top-scoring district was a difference of 68 percent** (7th grade math).

Again, test results of the top 10 to 12 of the richest 14 school districts were generally within 10 to 15 percentage points of one another. As mentioned several times, on average **PRS "proficiency" scores were 40.4 percent lower than the top-scoring district.**

To illustrate this gap and to show how top scores are generally clustered together in a fairly tight range, I picked **4th Grade Math** for a comparison of school district rankings (this graphic was displayed on Page 1 of an [al.com](#) story about ACT Aspire results). The number represents the percentage of each district's students (grades 3-8) who reached the "Ready" or "Exceeding" ACT benchmark.

1. Mt. Brook - 93.2	8. Arab - 78.6
2. Trussville - 87.9	9. Homewood - 77.2
3. Vestavia - 85.5	10. Cullman City - 77.2
4. Winfield - 83.9	11. Muscle Shoals - 76.1
5. Madison City - 83.5	12. Hoover - 72.5
6. Auburn - 80.0	13. Hartselle - 70.7
7. Saraland - 79.6	

Pike Road - 35.0

Note: While the top-performing district (Mt. Brook) scored 93.2, the average of the top 13-scoring districts in the state was 80.45 (a difference of 12.7 percent from the top score). The 13th-ranked district (Hartselle) scored 22.5 percentage points lower than the top district. Pike Road (which ranked below 100 in the state in this category) was 58.2 percent behind Mt. Brook and 35.7 percent behind No. 13 Hartselle in this category.

To be fair, "4th grade math" was one of the weakest categories for PRS. Still, three PRS grades/categories came in lower than this 35 percent "proficiency" percentage.

Note also that only two school districts in this top 13 ranking (Winfield and Saraland) are not on the list of "most affluent" districts listed earlier in this analysis. **Again, the "richest" districts typically fare the best in test rankings/comparison. Except for Pike Road.**

Comparison between PRS and Auburn City Schools ...

I selected Auburn for a highlighted comparison because many people who work in Montgomery actually live in Auburn, primarily due to the reputation of its school system. Also, before PRS opened many people thought PRS would end up having a school system similar to Auburn. The poverty rate of Auburn students is 29 percent (compared to PRS's 15).

Again the numbers are the percentage of this district's students who tested at the "Ready" or "Exceeding" level (= "Proficient.") The number in parentheses represents PRS's percentage in the same category.

Grade	Math	Reading	Science
3rd	83 (66)	62 (47)	
4th	80 (35)	69 (35)	
5th	76 (53)	55 (45)	64 (44)
6th	76 (67)	64 (57)	
7th	65 (24)	58 (31)	64 (25)
8th	49 (28)	66 (49)	

Summary: in every tested category Auburn students surpassed PRS students, usually by a wide margin. The average score for all 14 categories for Auburn students was 66.9 percent testing as "proficient" compared to PRS's 43.4 percent - A difference of 23.6 percent.

Comparison of PRS to Autauga and Elmore County School Districts

It's clear (at least from last spring's ACT Aspire results) that PRS students do not come close to reaching the academic levels of the state's best school districts (or of districts with poverty rates that, like PRS, are far below the state public school average). But how does PRS's performance compare with its two main River Region "competitors" for public school students?

In three words - "about the same."

The average percentage of PRS who scored "proficient" on the ACT Aspire test (across all 14 grade/subject matter categories) was 43.4 percent. The same figure for Autauga County was 44.9 percent. In Elmore County, the figure was 42 percent. Thus: **Autauga County performed slightly better (by 1.5 percent) than PRS; Elmore County Schools performed slightly worse (by 1.4 percent).**

However, the State Department of Education would not consider the above to be "apples to apples" comparisons. **The poverty rate (students qualifying for a free or reduced-price meal) in Autauga County is 49 percent (more than triple PRS's rate of 15 percent). The poverty figure for Elmore County students is 54 percent (3.6x higher than Pike Road).** That is, statisticians - noting the strong correlation between wealth and test scores - would no doubt expect PRS's scores to be much higher than Autauga and Elmore. This was not the case.

Ranking all 14 tested categories, comparing only PRS, Autauga and Elmore County, we find that ...

- PRS finished first six times, second two times, and third six times.
- Autauga County also finished first six times, second five times and third three times.
- Elmore County finished first three times, second seven times and third four times.

Conclusion/Summary: Pike Road students ranked first (in various tested categories) the same number of times as Autauga County students. Pike Road students also finished third (last) more often than Autauga or Elmore Co. students.

If the goal of the founders of PRS was for its students to perform on an equal footing as the students of Prattville, Stanhope Elmore and Wetumpka, this benchmark seems to have been met. If the goal was for PRS students to perform academically on par with students from other top school districts in the state, the goal is far from being met.

Were PRS test results actually 'poor'?

Some might quibble with the characterization of Pike Road School's results as "poor" or "not impressive." After all, the system had more students scoring proficient than the overall state average (by 1 percent). As discussed above, the system's students performed about the same as students in Elmore and Autauga Counties, which probably have decent academic reputations. PRS students performed significantly better than MPS students, who scored among the worst in the state (of course MPS magnet schools score among the very best in the state).

However, most readers would probably agree that the standard or expectation for PRS was not supposed to be "mediocre" or "about average." "We are going to build a school system that will produce results similar to Wetumpka Middle School" was not the rallying cry for creating the Pike Road school system.

Nor was, "we can expect our students to outperform students in Goshen, Alabama at Pike County Schools in most but not all categories. (**Pike County Schools, with a 77 percent poverty rate and schools in tiny Goshen, Banks and Brundidge, actually ranked higher than Pike Road Schools, with a 15 percent poverty rate, in five of the 14 tested categories.**)

In short, the system was supposed to be one of the best in the state. If not of a calibre of Mt. Brook or Vestavia Hills at least of a calibre approaching the reputation of, say, Auburn City Schools.

Compared to state norms, PRS's first ACT test results were the definition of mediocre. Compared to the standards many residents expected, the results have to be considered as very poor, disappointing or even embarrassing.

Is PRS really a wealthy school district?

The expectation for excellence was primarily based on the assumption that Pike Road School's student population would be made up disproportionately of students from a middle class to affluent backgrounds. Hard data and anecdotal evidence confirm this. **Census data tell us that the 36064 zip code is the third wealthiest zip code in the entire state** (of communities with a public school system).

As mentioned above, only three school districts in the state have a smaller percentage of students who qualify for a free or reduced-price lunch. While Pike Road has definite pockets of poverty, most of its single-family homes cost at least \$241,000 (far above the median price of homes in the state).

Compared to other school districts, Pike Road does appear to pull students from a demographic that includes many more "well-off" or "middle class" families than the vast majority of school districts in the state.

Given this wealth factor, it does not seem unreasonable to conclude that the school's academic performance (as measured by standardized tests) would equal those of the relatively few systems with similar demographics. This obviously did not happen, at least according to the first round of ACT Aspire tests.

Reasons why PRS did not excel ...

This author's own view is that the radical reforms of "The Pike Road Way" - coupled with discipline problems, disarray among faculty, poor planning by administrators, the absence of a more structured learning environment, as well as a general atmosphere of "chaos" within the school - largely explain PRS's disappointing results.

Furthermore, all of these issues fall at the feet of superintendent Dr. Freeman, who also served as school principal for the school's first four months. A board that literally does nothing but approve Suzanne Freeman recommendations could and should also accept a full dose of blame.

But my personal views aside, let's look at other possibilities for this poor performance.

Perhaps the students Pike Road School serves are of a low academic calibre. Surely most will dismiss this possibility out of hand. PRS students come from "good families," most with two parents, from affluent or middle class homes.

Most of these students moved to Pike Road School after attending top local private schools, or attending the best schools in MPS, including many who came from MPS's highly-regarded magnet schools. Other students are children of officers and high-ranking enlisted personnel who are stationed at Maxwell AFB (which caters to the cream of the Air Force), as well a fair number of children of Korean families. These children may face language difficulties but are also from a culture which place a tremendous value on academic achievement.

It's probably true that most PRS students were performing "at or above grade level" at their prior school. We know this because ACT Aspire results do follow individual students. One metric recently released by the ADOE shows that the scores of Pike Road School students regressed when tested after one year at PRS. **The fact students tested worse than they did at their previous school probably tells us everything we need to know about the merits of the "Pike Road Way."**

One question comes to mind here. Would Pike Road School students have performed better - perhaps much better - if instead of being exposed to the "Pike Road Way" for nine months, they had been exposed to "traditional" teaching methods with teachers and principals who believe in high standards and knew

how to impose discipline and structure among the student body?

It's impossible to know the answer to this question. All we can do is guess and make an argument to support our thesis. My answer would argue that the way students are taught, the expectations that teachers and administrators define for students; the "freedom" students are given to do what they want (or not do what they don't want) matters a great deal ... and would, in fact, be reflected in test results. Which don't lie.

Did the PRW take a period of adjustment?

The "Pike Road Way" - no tests, no textbooks, no grades, no deadlines, all topics learned via "project based learning" featuring heavy doses of "collaboration" among groups - is as extreme a departure from the "traditional" way of learning as could be found in any school building anywhere in the nation.

Teachers ("lead learners") admit they didn't truly know what was going on, or how they should teach, for months. Student activities seem to have been as disorganized and fluid/changing as anywhere in the nation. This is to say **the "transition" to the "PRW" no doubt DID negatively impact students. How could it not?** However, by now students and teachers have had ample time to adjust to the new approaches to learning. This would seem to argue that better results are to come, right?

Will we see improvement this year?

Time will tell. Defenders of the PRW might tell us so. However, it should be emphasized that Dr. Freeman and defenders of "The Pike Road Way" generally reject the conclusion that the ACT test is, in fact, an important tool to measure student academic performance.

Freeman and other "Schlechty" disciples believe there are other ways to measure genuine "learning." They thus place little weight on the value of state-required tests. They would almost certainly prefer that students did NOT have to take them. (Indeed, they may have requested "waivers" from the state DOE to make this happen). One benefit of no standardized tests? No risk of bad results, an outcome that is sure to generate commentary such as you are reading right now.

Tests are certainly despised among the leadership at PRS. Indeed, **the fact students didn't take tests for nine months probably explains in part why students performed so poorly on the exam** (which was the only test PRS students took all year). Those who want to scrap "The PRW" argue (convincingly) that the more tests students take the better they will do on tests.

Anyway, the "period of transition" and "adjustment" excuse will not be available in October when the test results from April and May 2017 are released. Several former teachers at PRS (correctly) predicted to this writer that 2016 results would be "awful." These same people also predict that test results will only get worse the longer students are exposed to "The Pike Road Way."

"These are the BEST results you will see," predicted one former teacher, noting that most PRS students came to the school "above grade level" and surely had to retain some knowledge from their previous schools. As noted in another essay, more than 140 students have now withdrawn from Pike Road School. One can assume that many of these students were "high-achieving." The departure of increasing numbers of "bright" students probably won't help future test scores either.

Do standardized test scores even matter?

Standardized test scores provide the only measurement which allows observers to compare students from one school (or school district) to another. And to a national or state mean. This is the reason colleges require students take the ACT or SAT.

Without this "assessment tool," colleges could only compare the GPA's of applicants. And all GPA's are not equal. That is, a 3.9 GPA student at Bullock County High School almost certainly does not possess the "base of knowledge" as a 3.9 GPA student at The Montgomery Academy or Auburn High School. (Of course, Pike Road School offers no GPA at all, at least as determined in the manner of 99.9999 percent of schools).

One assumes standardized test results WILL matter when PRS students begin taking the ACT and SAT (beginning next year for PRS sophomores, although these students will not be called "sophomores."). They will really matter in the 2019-2020 academic year when PRS students begin applying for colleges and scholarships.

According to ACT Aspire results, the vast majority of PRS students will not score well on these exams. Indeed, it's doubtful that many seniors will qualify for admission to elite colleges, or for that matter even the University of Alabama or Auburn University (where entrance standards have risen significantly in the last decade). **The number of students qualifying for generous academic-based scholarships will also probably be low compared to students in "good" school systems.** Perhaps at this point, the number of vocal critics of "The Pike Road Way" will increase dramatically.

Indeed, even if the leaders of Pike Road School jettison the radical components of "the Pike Road Way" beginning next fall, **most PRS students will probably require an intense "remediation" effort to "catch up" to their peers who have been exposed to "traditional" education.** Even now, some PRS parents are paying tutors to help their children "catch up" to students in other districts.

That is, there is a potential "hidden cost" for parents who have sent their children to PRS. This cost could be expressed in the scholarship dollars their children may have qualified for (but did not) because of their exposure to the "Pike Road Way" of teaching. Absent scholarship aid, PRS parents will either have to write a check for full college tuition or their children will have to take on larger levels of debt to pay for college.

Other 'costs' of 'The Pike Road Way' ...

There also may be another "hidden" financial cost associated with "The Pike Road Way." **Apparently, home prices in many Pike Road neighborhoods are dropping** (in some cases by significant percentages). Several reasons could account for this recent decline, one of which could be that "the bloom is off the rose" that is/was Pike Road Schools.

That is, **home prices are declining because interest in parents moving to Pike Road has waned.** Some neighborhoods might be "over built" as demand has not been as robust as developers might have anticipated. This theory/trend needs to be explored by journalists in more detail.

What is not known is what home values in our neighborhood would have been if a proponent of "traditional education" had been hired to lead Pike Road Schools. My guess is that a lot more parents would today be seriously considering moving to Pike Road. Also, a lot more parents like ourselves would currently not have their home on the market. The equity we have in our home might be significantly higher.

In short, whether or not Pike Road School's leaders continue with the "Pike Road Way" or choose to abandon this "experiment" is a matter of supreme economic importance to a large number of Pike Road residents.

As has been expressed many times by many people, the perception of a town's schools is often the most important factor in a town's growth (or lack thereof). Pike Road's growth was the fastest in the state in the years leading up to the opening of Pike Road School. But until *The Gazette* published a highly-critical story on the school system last May, the perception that Pike Road Schools would be "excellent" was widespread. This perception may now be changing ... rapidly and radically.

One thing we know. ACT Aspire results will not be trumpeted as an advertisement that "The Pike Road Way" is superior to the way other school districts teach their students.

SPRING HAS SPRUNG AT JASMINE HILL GARDENS

Spring flowers always make Jasmine Hill Gardens and Outdoor Museum in Elmore County a special place to visit. Usually the peak of spring bloom starts in mid-March, but the unusually warm weather in February made many flowering shrubs pop into brilliant color early. Camellias, which are Alabama's state flower, have been especially pretty with a brilliant array of flowers from the lowest to the highest branches open at once. Gardeners at Jasmine Hill commented that they had never seen the many varieties of camellias showing this much color at the same time.

This garden was started seventy-seven years ago by the grandson of Alabama's governor Benjamin Fitzpatrick. Named for his grandfather, Ben Fitzpatrick and his wife Mary conceived the gardens and took the name Jasmine Hill from the brilliant yellow Carolina Jasmine flowers which were blooming wild in the woods on their first visit to the property. The settler's cabin which had been constructed by the Harwell family in 1830 became their home in 1928 after they sold a chain of department stores in Florida, Georgia, Alabama and Mississippi. Luckily they took cash for their sale, because the great depression of the 1930's found them financially sound and able to travel extensively in Greece and Italy finding statuary to bring to their hilltop garden on the first Alabama outcropping of the Appalachians. It would be after their deaths that geologist Dr. David King from Auburn University would discover their garden is located on the western rim of an ancient meteorite crater.

During the depression one of President Roosevelt's CCC (Civilian Conservation Corps) Camps was located on Harwell Mill Creek within the crater. Mr. Fitzpatrick was able to hire the workers living there to collect stones from the creek and transport them to the gardens for building walls and paving walkways. Visiting garden enthusiasts have said that Jasmine Hill probably has more stone walks than any other garden in the country.

On one of their trips to Greece, the Fitzpatricks were introduced to German archaeologists who were busy uncovering ruins of ancient temples surrounding the stadium which housed the first Olympic games beginning in 776 BC. Just outside the entrance to the stadium stood the ruins of the Temple of Hera where the Olympic Flame is started and the Fitzpatricks decided they wanted to duplicate these ruins in their garden. Hiring a German archaeologist and an architecture student from the United States, the plans of the ruins were soon drawn and ready for duplication by the Indiana Limestone Company.

Assembly of the columns took place during World War II when the United States government was flying reconnaissance flights looking for subversive activities. They happened to fly over Jasmine Hill



The gardens are located between Montgomery and Wetumpka off U. S. Highway 231 on Jasmine Hill Road.

Springtime has always been a popular time to visit because of the profusion of flowers. In March the flowering Japanese cherries, redbuds and dogwoods begin their impressive show of blooms along with massive plantings of azaleas and beds of annuals throughout the gardens. As the season progresses many other flowering trees and shrubs, such as crape myrtles, hydrangeas and magnolias, show large splashes of color for visitors strolling the stone walks. Beds of annuals are changed seasonally to insure an abundance of flowers surrounding

the many copies of ancient Greek and Roman statuary. The gardens are designed so that there is something blooming all year.

The weekend of March 24, 25 and 26 the Fitzpatrick cottage within the gardens will be open from noon to 5:00 PM each day for visitors. There is no extra charge for this added treat, and a free Coke will be available for refreshments. Hostess for this event will be Marsha Golden.

Visitors are welcome to bring a picnic to enjoy in the gardens. Family gatherings are always welcome. A wedding garden with raised stone altar may be reserved along with one of the two facilities for receptions. Parties, meetings and family reunions may also be scheduled at any time during the year.

Please LIKE US on



during the construction project which must have looked so strange from the air that they called the FBI to come down and inspect that "strange installation being constructed north of Montgomery." The agents were pleasantly surprised when they were told about the project to reproduce a temple which had been destroyed by earthquakes in Greece. The Jasmine Hill Temple of Hera ruins were used in 1976 as a site for celebrating the 200th anniversary of the American Revolution. This bicentennial event brought thirty folk dancers and musicians from three regions of Greece. Authentic Greek food was provided by Montgomery's Greek Orthodox Church.

In 1996, which was the 100th year of the modern Olympic Games, an estimated ten thousand people gathered to watch the real Olympic Flame arrive to light a cauldron on the Jasmine Hill Temple of Hera. This flame was, of course, started in Greece at the original Temple of Hera and was on its way to the Atlanta Olympic Games. Greek folk dancers and musicians were again part of that celebration.

The gardens are now open for visitors all year on Friday and Saturday from 9 AM to 5 PM and on Sunday from noon to 5 PM.

Group tours can be arranged any day of the year with advance reservations.

More information may be obtained on the website www.jasminehill.org or by calling (334) 328-8917.

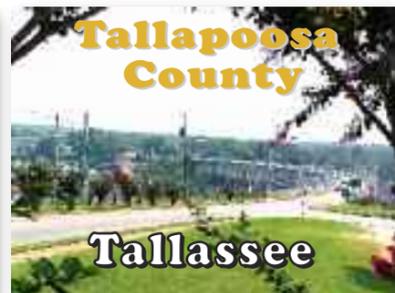
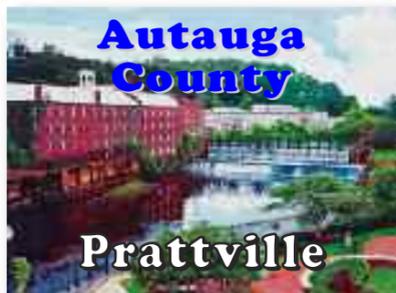
As an added bonus for Gazette readers, you may clip the coupon following this article and bring it with you during the month of March for a 25% discount off of two regular adult admissions.



Good Luck Buckeyes available upon request during the month of March.

Community Lifestyles

We are proud to announce that The Alabama Gazette is also being delivered in parts of Crenshaw, Butler, Pike, Lee and Talladega Counties. If you cannot find the Gazette in your area, please check out our website: www.alabamagazette.com



Cities, Towns and Communities:
Pike Road, Cecil, Mathews, Pine Level, Grady, Ramer, Lapine, Snowdown, Pintlala, Hope Hull and Catoma

Surrounding Town and Communities:
Autaugaville, Billingsley, Booth, Marbury, Pine Level, Independence, Statesville, Jones and Vida

Surrounding Town and Communities:
Millbrook, Coosada, Elmore, Eclectic, Tallassee, Titus, Santuck, Slapout, Rockford, Deatsville, Kent, Red Hill, Weoka and Robinson Springs

Surrounding Town and Communities:
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<p>Eagle Sponsor \$4,000</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two Teams of 4 shooters Friday Lunch at Lower Wetumpka Shotgun Sports Club Friday Afternoon Team warmup Friday Night Reception for all shooters and guests Saturday Competition Saturday lunch Shells included Team picture Logo prominently displayed in all marketing materials and signage at main venues for Friday night and Saturday to include billboards Golf cart provided for the Friday afternoon pre-shoot and Saturday tournament 	<p>First Class Sponsor \$2,500</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> One Team of 4 shooters Friday Lunch at Lower Wetumpka Shotgun Sports Club Friday Afternoon Team warmup Friday Night Reception for all shooters and guests Saturday Competition Saturday lunch Shells included Team picture Logo on all signage at main venues for Friday night and Saturday
<p>Scouting Sponsor \$750</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Friday Night cocktail reception Logo on all signage at all main venues 	<p>Sporting Team Sponsor \$1,500</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> One team of 4 shooters Friday night reception for all shooters and guests Saturday Competition Saturday lunch Shells included

Questions about this event please call Denise Miller 334-282-2697 or email denise.miller@scouting.org.

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At each gathering there will be a donation station to donate food, clothing, toiletries, etc. for homeless Veterans.

We will be gathering at the Crampton Bowl parking lot in Montgomery, AL at 12:30 pm. More information: jw77@comcast.net.

Feel free to advertise and share with others, family, friends! Let's get the word out... Let's Make America Great Again!

To join our group on Facebook go to www.facebook.com/groups/magamarch

I Timothy 2: 1-4

- 1 I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men;
- 2 For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.
- 3 For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour;
- 4 Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.

• Bring your U.S.A. FLAGS
• Bring your Pro Trump Banners
• Pro Veterans banners!
• Pro Military banners!
• Wear Make America Great Again attire!!

Family Law Reform Educational Day and Rally

We have been diligent in talking about education, drugs, prisons, and the budget crisis. Let's have a conversation about the root cause of these issues. Let us work together, hand in hand, and form a solution in order to put the needs of our children first. In Alabama, approximately 40,000 children a year are subjected to being court ordered to seeing one of their fit parents 48-56 hours a month. This is the most important civil and human rights issue of today.

Alabama Family Rights Association

It is time for Alabama to recognize the savings to our children and the economic savings that the re-structure of the custody laws will present to our state and our families.

Family Law Reform Educational Day and Rally
Wednesday, March 8, 2017, at 10 am to 3 pm
State House Montgomery, AL

Join us for our Family Law Reform Educational Day and Rally! "Meet and Greet" your legislators before and after the 12 pm to 1 pm Rally. We will have an informational table setup on the 6th floor, Room 602, where you can pick up informational material to share with your legislators beginning at 10:00 am. Around 11:45 am we will walk downstairs to join the Family Law Reform Rally on the State House steps. Speakers will begin at approximately 12:00 pm - we have invited several lawmakers and agency heads! For any questions, please contact **Kenneth Paschal** at FamilyDay@alfra.org.

RSVP via Facebook or here for the Family Law Reform Educational Day and Rally.

Children Need Both Parents! Our children cannot speak for themselves on this issue. They need us to do it for them. That's the point of the Family Law Reform Educational Day and Rally.

Individuals with the common interest to change the child custody law practices and protect children's relationships with both parents are invited to participate. Hot dogs, chips, and bottled water will be provided for participants through generous donations by the Isaak Law Firm.

Come early for best parking. (Parking around the State House is meter parking).

*****Custom-made signs that accurately support family law reform are welcome during the 12 pm to 1 pm rally.**

"Some things are worth fighting for: Your country and child"

Kenneth Paschal, State President
Alabama Family Rights Association
US Army Retired First Sergeant
205-626-9458
www.alfra.org/see-what-we-do

Dementia Friendly Alabama Golf Classic

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Robert Trent Jones at Capitol Hill
(Legislator Course)
2600 Constitution Avenue, Prattville, AL

REGISTRATION \$125 PER PERSON / \$500 PER TEAM
RESERVE YOUR SPOT TODAY!

Check-In and Quick-Grab Breakfast 8:00A
Tee Time 9:00A
4-Man Scramble

Hats and goodie bags for all participants
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Benefiting Dementia Friendly Alabama
"Let's not forget to fight for those who can't remember!"

For more information, please contact Stephanie Holmes at (334) 240-4680 or Stephanie.Holmes@ads.alabama.gov
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Primary Contact: _____ (First/Last)
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Firearms Familiarization Course

Sign up NOW for our Firearms Familiarization Course scheduled for **Saturday, March 11th**, and learn how to protect yourself! We know that learning how to protect yourself is very important in today's world.



The class is held at our newly dedicated Sheriff D.T. Marshall Firearms Training Center and lasts most of the day and is **FREE** to Montgomery County citizens! The morning session is classroom instruction on firearm safety and firearm laws. The afternoon session allows citizens to practice shooting on our Firing Range for the remainder of the class (if you would like). All classes are under the instruction of the Montgomery County Sheriff's Office Range Master.

Course Requirements:

- *Montgomery County Citizen*
- *Obtain a Montgomery County Pistol Permit (prior to the course date)*
- *Complete an Application for the Course*

Pistol Permit Questions?
334.832.1335 or 334.832.1337

Course Questions or to Obtain an Application?
LisaCrenshaw@mc-ala.org
334.832.1339

Your safety is our primary concern; therefore, we ask that you do not bring children to this class.



Easter Egg Hunt



The time is nearing for our annual Easter Egg Hunt to be held on Saturday, April 15th, from 4:00-6:00pm at Auburn Montgomery. We hope to see you all there!



Sheriff's Office APP

We are getting a lot of positive feedback from our new Sheriff's Office APP!



Montgomery County AL Sheriff

OCVapps
Everyone

In case you missed last month's article, here it is again...

The Montgomery County Sheriff's Office has a new phone app called "Montgomery County AL Sheriff" that can be accessed through your phone's app store. Once you have added this app to your phone, you can easily set your phone up to receive important push notifications. Push notifications are quick, important messages that can notify you of road closure(s), blocked road(s), anything pertinent to your travel, escapee, etc. While our app can help you with many things including checking to see if someone is in the county jail, it is most helpful to receive push notifications. After you have downloaded the app, go through the follow steps to make sure your phone is set up to receive the push notifications:

- Go to your phone's setting icon
 - Scroll down and click "Applications"
 - Scroll down to "MCSO" or "Montgomery County Sheriff"
 - OR
 - Click "Application Manager," if it doesn't take you directly to the location
 - Click "Notifications"
 - Turn 'on' "Allow Notifications" and "Previews in pop-ups"
- You should be all set to receive the Montgomery County Sheriff's Office push notifications!



Neighborhood Watch/Crime Prevention



If you are planning to develop a Neighborhood Watch or Crime Prevention Program, please do not hesitate to contact the Sheriff's Office at 832.7106 to set up a time for us to come out and speak to your group!



Building Renovations



We are continuing our renovation of the 1st floor of our Annex I building at 100 South Lawrence. If you need to access this area, please check with our building security personnel at the public entrance door at 100 South Lawrence. We apologize for any inconvenience this may cause.



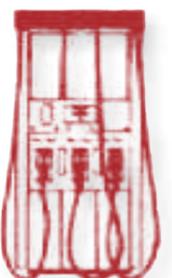
Thank you for your continued support of the Montgomery County Sheriff's Office!

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Clinton Carter, State of Alabama Finance Director, speaks to the Republican Club of Central Alabama

At the February meeting of the RCCA club, members welcomed Alabama's top financial official, Clinton Carter, Finance Director of the State.

When Governor Bentley appointed Carter, he said, "Clinton was the architect of my initiative to achieve one billion in annual savings in my first term. I am honored to have him return to my administration. He is a strong asset."

Carter, a Huntsville native, has an extensive knowledge of investment management, as well as debt management and strategic consulting. Most recently Carter was the VP of Business and Financial Affairs and Chief Financial Officer for the University of North Alabama in Florence.

Carter holds an MBA from the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania where he was a Joseph Wharton Scholar. He earned a BBA in Finance and Accounting from UNA and completed the Institute for Educational Management program at Harvard University.

"Many Alabamians confuse us with the Revenue Dept., said Carter. "They are the guys who bring in the money through taxes. We're the ones on the other side determining how best to allocate and spend taxes (through the budget process.

"A slight change to the Pension System is on our agenda through an idea to allow for an employee to receive a partial lump-sum in lieu of a portion of their annuity. When a state employee retires, he or she would have the option to receive a monthly pension for life, or to reduce that monthly amount and take an immediate lump-sum. The employee benefits by being able to pay off higher interest debt or a mortgage while maintaining the security of their remaining annuity. Further, the State benefits in the long run by floating a bond issue to pay for the lump sums at a lower rate of interest (4%) than our current cost at the pension system (about 8%), explained Carter.

As Chairman of the Governor's Gaming Task Force, Carter engaged the RCCA members in a discussion about the pros and cons of the lottery and casino gambling. "The Governor says the people have the right to vote on them," Carter said.

Carter said his department is discussing the possibility of eliminating the grocery sales tax and ways to go about implementation without handicapping revenue collection, which the State needs.

RCCA members questioned Carter about the problems in Alabama prisons, as well as the state budget and education. He welcomed the lively debate and appreciated the important feedback.

RCCA President Charlotte Meadows defines the club as men and women of Central Alabama who meet each month to promote and encourage the broadest possible participation in the Republican Party. The club welcomes new members to political and social activities.

The RCCA meetings are held at Faulkner University on the first Monday of each month at 6:15 p.m.



The views of this editorial may not express the views of The Alabama Gazette.

Commissioners Corner, PSC

Commissioner Chris "Chip" Beeker, Jr.

Ready to Respond

April 3, 1974. April 27, 2011. Those are two dates that many of us in Alabama will never forget. On each of those days portions of Alabama were devastated by tornadoes. Lives were lost, people were seriously injured, and homes and businesses were destroyed. Compounding those tragedies was the fact that some communities lacked electrical service for several days. Even those who were not directly impacted by those storms must have felt great relief when their electricity was restored. Severe weather season is quickly approaching our state yet again. Although we don't know whether Alabama will suffer from catastrophic storms this year, each of us can take steps to prepare for such an occurrence. That includes the utilities that serve our state. I am pleased that at least one electric utility in Alabama continues to work, as it has for many years, to ensure that it can respond quickly and efficiently to the most violent storms we will experience. That utility is Alabama Power.

It is imperative that utilities be able to respond quickly and efficiently because electricity is vital to meeting the needs of all Alabamians. Without electricity, medical facilities may not be able to meet the needs of the sick, industries can't produce, and stores can't sell supplies people may need to survive. It is not an overstatement to say that lives are saved when electricity is restored. Alabama Power understands that and understands it well; that is why it stands ready to respond. It has placed engineering and line crew resources throughout its service territory. Having them positioned there allows Alabama Power to move these people quickly into areas that have been impacted by severe weather.

As you can imagine, modern technology is a critical element in any plan to respond to storm damage. Advanced meters can now automatically notify Alabama Power of outages. That way, Alabama Power knows about outages even before receiving telephone calls from homeowners and business owners. But older technology still has a role to play in storm damage response. Alabama Power continues to use observations made by people on the ground and in helicopters to assess the scope of storm damage.

Alabama Power has been recognized and rewarded for its outstanding record of being prepared to respond to storm damage. In fact, the Edison Electric Institute has bestowed seventeen storm restoration awards on Alabama Power. This includes seven recovery awards for storms affecting Alabama Power's grid system and ten assistance awards for Alabama Power's involvement with other investor-owned utility companies, helping them recover from significant outage events.

I encourage each of you to take the threat of severe weather seriously and to prepare for it as best you can. We should all hope and pray that Alabama will be spared any devastating storms. If, however, severe weather does strike our state, we can be thankful that Alabama Power has proactively prepared for such events and will work hard to restore electrical service as quickly as possible.



CENTRAL ALABAMA AGING CONSORTIUM

Central Alabama Aging Consortium is sponsoring a Living Well Alabama Chronic Disease Self-Management Workshop in March. The Chronic Disease Self-Management Program (CDSMP) consists of a six-week course designed to teach people with illnesses such as heart disease, hypertension, arthritis, COPD, fibromyalgia, diabetes, chronic pain and other chronic illnesses to manage their diseases, feel better, and lead more productive lives, living life to the fullest.

The program is free and open to this with

chronic health conditions as well as their families, friends, and caregivers. Classes are taught by two trained leaders for 2 1/2 hours once a week. The workshop is interactive and participants learn skills and strategies for managing their symptoms such as pain and fatigue; they learn about healthy eating, relaxation techniques, overcoming depression, managing daily tasks, exercising safely, and attain skills in other areas.

Registration is required and enrollment is limited. There may be funding for respite care.

To register or for more information regarding future classes, contact **Roxanne Diawara, Central Alabama Aging Consortium at (334) 240-4680**

LIVING WELL ALABAMA CHRONIC DISEASE SELF-MANAGEMENT WORKSHOP



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Autauga County Sheriff's Office Launches New Website

The Autauga County Sheriff's Office launched a new Website on February 1, 2017 where residents can find the latest information regarding the operations of the Sheriff's Office. The new Website will serve as an information resource for the public and assist with community policing efforts.

The new Website, www.AutaugaSheriff.org, features press releases, messages from Sheriff Joe Sedinger, as well as pages on the services of each division of the Sheriff's Office.

Other features of the Website include:

Alert Notifications – allows the public to sign up for alert notifications from the Sheriff's Office via email or text – including press releases, messages from the Sheriff, and most wanted updates.

Social Media Links – allows the public to follow the Autauga County Sheriff's Office on Facebook.

Most Wanted Listings – allows the public to view photos and descriptions of wanted individuals.

"Posting information on the Website improves the efficiency of the Sheriff's Office by reducing the number of inquiry calls handled by our office. The new Website provides greater transparency for the Sheriff's Office and encourages the public to take a more active role in community policing efforts. Our intent is for every County resident to visit the site and become familiar with where to find the latest news and updates from the Sheriff's Office. We believe the Website is a huge benefit to the Sheriff's Office and the residents of Autauga County as well," said Sheriff Sedinger.

MostWantedGovernmentWebsites.com by Brooks Jeffrey Marketing, Inc. of Mountain Home, Arkansas, developed the Website. The firm specializes in Website solutions for law enforcement and government offices.

For more information about the Website please contact the Autauga County Sheriff's Office at 334-361-2500 or visit www.AutaugaSheriff.org.

AUTAUGA COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE
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PHONE: 334-361-2500
(24 Hours Non-Emergency)

Created in 1818 by act of Alabama Territorial Legislature. Autauga Indians lived on creek from which county takes its name. Autaugas were members of Alibamo tribe. They sent many warriors to resist.

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Autauga County, Alabama

Welcome to Autauga County! Located in Central Alabama, Autauga County is one of the fastest growing counties in the state. The Autauga County Sheriff's Office is the primary law enforcement agency for the unincorporated area of Autauga County, including the Towns of Autaugaville and Billingsley along with other populated communities: Pine Level, Marbury, Booth, White City, Jones, Evergreen, Kingston, Pentecost, Mulberry and Independence. Law Enforcement and answering 911 calls is a huge part of what deputies in Autauga County are tasked with, however there are many other duties. In addition to answering about 8,800 calls for service annually, Deputy Sheriffs are also responsible for keeping the courts safe, handling mental orders and prisoner transports, serving all civil process for the court system and many other details which allow the county to function safely and smoothly.

MESSAGE FROM SHERIFF:
JOE SEDINGER (Chief)
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County Map

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24 Hours
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Secret Wire: 334-361-2599

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Prattville, AL 36067

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MOST RECENT NEWS

SHERIFF'S QUOTE:

I WANT TO INSPIRE PEOPLE. I WANT SOMEONE TO LOOK AT ME AND SAY, "BECAUSE OF YOU, I DIDN'T GIVE UP."

-UNKNOWN

MISSION STATEMENT
We, the professional men and women of the Autauga County Sheriff's Office, are committed to defend the Constitution of the United States and the State of Alabama. As law enforcement officers, we declare our fundamental duties to serve the community; to safeguard lives and property; and to protect the innocent, weak, and the peaceful from evil while we respect the constitutional rights of all to liberty, quality, and justice. We will fairly and diligently enforce all laws bringing to justice those who violate them. With adequate staffing, continued public relations and partnerships with surrounding law enforcement agencies, we will improve the quality of life for all citizens of Autauga County, by reducing crime and the fear of crime.

ALABAMA JAIL ASSOCIATION | ALABAMA SHERIFFS ASSOCIATION | AUTAUGA COUNTY ALABAMA | NATIONAL SHERIFFS ASSOCIATION

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Prattville Fire Chief Named Fire Chief of the Year



On February 2, 2017, the Alabama Association of Fire Chiefs announced that Prattville Fire Chief Terry Brown had been selected as their Fire Chief of the Year.

Chief Brown started his career with Prattville Fire Department's (PFD) in 1987. Over the course of his career, he has put the department and our community first. He began as a Firefighter/EMT and worked his way through the ranks as a supervisor and company officer.

In 1997, Terry Brown transferred to PFD Fire Marshal's Office. He was promoted to Assistant Chief and appointed Fire Marshal in April 2002. In 2007, Terry Brown became the PFD's first Deputy Chief.

After serving as interim Fire Chief for approximately 18 months, Terry Brown was promoted to Fire Chief September 2012. He has continued to serve this community and the fire service with distinction in his role as Fire Chief.

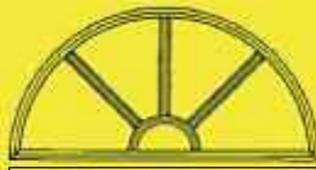
Chief Brown earned an Associate's Degree in Fire Science from Pikes Peak Community College in 2002. He holds numerous certifications through the Alabama Fire College and National Fire Academy.

He has contributed to the fire service through service as a Board Member of the Alabama Fire College Foundation, the Alabama Association of Fire Chiefs, the Southeastern Association of Fire Chiefs, the Fire Marshals Association of Alabama, the Prattville Planning Commission, and the Autauga County Board of Education Safety Committee.

In 2013, Police Chief Mark Thompson and Chief Brown worked together to create a Police & Fire Citizen's Academy. This has been a tremendous benefit to the community and all citizens that have participated in learning more about what Public Safety does and why they function as they do.

Chief Brown's leadership has inspired others in the fire service to take leadership roles in the aforementioned fire associations, ensuring the continuation of the traditions of the fire service for years to come.

On February 9th, Chief Brown will celebrate his 30th anniversary with the City of Prattville. We congratulate him and are proud to call him one of our own!



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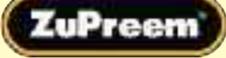
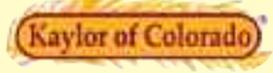
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ESSAY WRITING CONTEST

THEME: How the Arts make Prattville "The Preferred Community"

DEADLINE EXTENDED: March 3, 2017

WHO: Autauga County Students in Grades 9-12

RULES:

- 1.) Only ONE original, unpublished work illustrating the theme will be accepted per entrant.
- 2.) Include a separate cover sheet with the following information: Title, Author's Name, School, Grade, Phone Number, and Email Address.
- 3.) FORMAT:
 - Electronic Submissions via email ONLY
 - Must be submitted as a Word Document
 - 12 pt. font, Times New Roman, double spaced
 - No more than 1000 words

Winners will be notified by email with information to attend the awards ceremony on March 10 where ribbons will be given to 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place in each grade, as well as to the GRAND PRIZE winner!

Essays will be judged based on the following criteria: ideas and relevance to the theme, organization, voice, and conventions.

EMAIL SUBMISSIONS TO BRITTANY.GLENN@PRATTVILLEAL.GOV
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This project has been made possible by grants from the Alabama State Council on the Arts and the National Endowment for the Arts.



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Southern Cuisine

I just got back from a trip to Texas after seeing friends, relatives, and seeing how the places where I use to live and hung-out have changed. My friends and relatives have grown older but they have not changed much. The places where I use to live have changed greatly. And in my opinion, the cities I visited have not changed for the better. They seem to have lost their character; they are no longer fun to be in. The roads are always under construction and the traffic is so bad that the roads are more like parking lots than thoroughfares. You cannot update your Navigation GPS in your car fast enough to keep up with the changes with the freeway interchanges. Free parking is non-existent. I joke with my friends, while we are stuck in traffic, that there are more cars at this intersection waiting for the traffic light to change than there are cars in my town. I guess that is the difference of being in a city with a million people and living in a town of one hundred and fifteen.

In addition, I noticed, the same in Alabama as in Texas, while you drive from town to town or just drive through a large city, the shopping areas all look the same; same stores, same large parking lots and the same traffic. I heard a phrase that describes this sameness. Since everything looks generic, it is called "GenAmerica". However, if you search hard enough and are persistent, you can find locally owned small eateries, sandwich shops, and specialty food stores tucked on a side road, away from the large generic stores. This is where I go eat and where I do much of my shopping. You can find other shops and stores away from GenAmerica, if you are traveling on the interstate highways. When you want to stop for food or to just stretch your legs, do not stop at the fast food and gas station littered turnoffs. There is a small town the highway went around just down the road. This is where the locals shop and eat. This is where you can find a blue plate special; a meat and sides that will fill you up and not empty your wallet. This is where you can find a bakery or some specialty store that the locals know about but has not yet been discovered. On the other hand, they like the small town atmosphere and their business has large internet sales. There are many stories about someone who started cooking for friends and have grown their passion into a large business. Some of these small establishments are producing what is trending in the culinary world.

In these small towns and in the hidden corners of large cities is where I find chipotle powder, dark ancho powder, and coffee chile. Jars of huitlacoche, (corn truffle). Sauces and infused oils made by hand and in the store. This is where I find pure Berkshire Pork Lard. If you want flaky piecrusts, flaky biscuits and traditional tamales, pure lard and butter will give you those results. The restaurants will have a slaw made from Brussels sprouts instead of cabbage. A refreshing Kale salad made with pine nuts, golden raisins, olive oil, and a little lemon juice tossed with skinny strips of kale leaves. The seating for the local restaurant is less than the capacity of the waiting area for some chain restaurants. These small stores and eatery's is where I discovered what is happening in the world of hot peppers.

I have been growing, drying, and canning hot peppers for years. More so since I moved to Alabama. I have been eating spicy foods even longer. The first introduction to spicy food was the curry I ate while I was living in Pakistan. The first time I started using peppers in my cooking was during my chef apprenticeship at the Omni Hotel in Austin, Texas. Stephen Pyles developed the menu for the restaurant in the hotel. Chef Pyles is one of the founding fathers of Southwestern cuisine. He would combine "Southern Homestyle cooking, sophisticated Southwestern fare, Mexican food and Tex-Mex food".

Spicy hot peppers are used in all the recipes. Besides Southwestern cuisine, hot and spicy also shows up in the Deep South also. Cajun and Creole cooking is a good example. The well-known Tabasco pepper sauce is found everywhere. In addition, spicy hot fried chicken (think Nashville and Memphis) has been around for a good while. There are rubs for ribs, brisket, and chicken that have a fair amount of heat in them. I have been mixing some of my dry peppers to produce a meat rub. The trick is to have lots of flavor and not have the pepper distract from the taste of the meat.

However, peppers do not always have to be hot. There are many types of peppers and a large range of heat. At the low end of heat is the bell pepper, a staple in most kitchens. What bell peppers lack in heat, they make up in taste and nutritional value. They are colorful, crunchy, and at times can be sweet. Even though they are from the capsicum family they do not have the chemical that burns your mouth, or makes your eyes water. My favorite way to eat bell peppers is to keep them raw and crunchy, cut the pepper in strips about a half-inch wide and three inches long, and then attack my favorite dip. Even when cooked they will hold their shape well enough so you can stuff them. Of course, you can stuff them with anything, even the leftovers from yesterday dinner.

Here is a recipe for bell peppers and you can use any color you want. It has a little heat with the addition of Tabasco and cayenne, but can be omitted or increased for your taste. Try the recipe and then you can adapt it to your heat tolerance the next time.

STUFFED PEPPERS

INGREDIENTS

1/2 cup uncooked rice	1 teaspoon Tabasco
6 bell peppers	1/2 teaspoon garlic salt
1/2 pound ground beef	1 16 ounce can chopped tomatoes
1/2 pound ground pork sausage	1/2 teaspoon chili powder
1/2 stick butter	1/2 cup grated Cheddar cheese
2 onions, chopped	1/2 cup grated Parmesan cheese
2 green onions, chopped	1/8 teaspoon cayenne pepper
1 tablespoon dried basil	

METHOD

1. Cook rice as per instructions on package. Save until needed.
2. Remove tops and remove seeds and white pith from inside the peppers. Place peppers in boiling water for 6 to 8 minutes or until soft.
3. Brown the meats in large pan with butter. Drain all but 2 tablespoon of liquid and add onions. Sauté for 4 minute to soften the white onions.
4. Add basil, Tabasco, garlic salt and chili powder. Stir well.
5. Divide mixture among the peppers. Place in a walled pan that is sized to keep the peppers from falling over, but not cramped.
6. Add water to just cover the bottom of pan.
7. Bake 25 to 30 minutes at 350 degrees.

This is the bottom of the heat scale for peppers. You can find peppers that have more heat and try them to find your heat tolerance. Pimiento peppers are actually hotter than bells. In addition, pepperoncinis are hotter still, but are commonly eaten on pizzas and in salads. Than you can try a favorite in Tex-Mex restaurants, a stuffed Poblano, called Chile Rellenos. Some restaurants will use Anaheim peppers instead and you have already up to 2,500 Scoville units in heat. If you have eaten a dish with chipotle or jalapeno peppers, you have jumped up to 10,000 Scoville units. This is the limit for most people. If you can eat peppers past the Scoville rating of Serrano pepper (23,000) and you use Tabasco sauce(30,000 to 50,000) regularly, your taste buds are stronger than most. If you



prefer your food hot and spicy, you can call yourself a Pepperhead.

If you want to have a spicy snack that is healthy and easy to make, try this hummus recipe. It can be a test bed for your tolerance to hot peppers.

DARE DEVIL HUMMUS

INGREDIENTS

1 15-ounce can Garbanzo beans (Chick Peas)	1/4 teaspoon cumin
2 small cloves of garlic	1/4 teaspoon salt
2 tablespoons lemon juice	1/4 teaspoon onion powder
3 tablespoons olive oil	One or more teaspoons hot sauce to your taste

METHOD

1. Put all of the ingredients in a food processor and puree until creamy.
2. Put in a seal-able bowl and refrigerate for at least one hour.
3. Serve cold, with your favorite chips, crackers, or bell pepper slices.

NOTES: For your first time making this, start with a small amount of hot sauce. Stir in more as needed and taste for heat.

To slide in the fact that March is National Sauce Month, I found a recipe that is a terrific cold weather dish and can be adapted easily for someone that likes their food on the spicy side. The dish is a ragout and takes less than an hour to prepare.

COUNTRY SAUSAGE RAGOUT with MUSTARD

INGREDIENTS

10 large shallots, trimmed and peeled	8 small new potatoes, halved
10 whole peeled cloves of garlic	1 large bunch small carrots, trimmed and peeled
1 tablespoon yellow mustard seeds	2 cups beef stock
1/4 cup bacon drippings	3/4 pound smoked sausage, (spicy smoked Conecuh works well) cut into one inch pieces
2 bay leaves	3/4 cup Dijon mustard
2 teaspoons each dried thyme and rosemary	1 cup chopped parsley for garnish
1 cup white wine	

METHOD

1. In a shallow pot, cook shallots, garlic and mustard seeds in bacon drippings over moderate heat for ten minutes, stir occasionally.
2. Add herbs, wine, and bring to a boil over high heat.
3. Cook for five minutes or until liquid is almost evaporated. Add the potatoes, carrots and stock and return to a boil. Then reduce heat to moderate and cook until veggies are almost tender (maybe 10 to 15 minutes).
4. Add sausage and mustard and cook 5 to 7 minutes or until sauce has thickened.
5. Serve and garnish with parsley. Dish goes well with a bitter greens salad.

I have mentioned Scoville units earlier. This is a measurement of the heat in peppers. The Scoville Scale is not a precise measurement because it is dependent on the capsaicin sensitivity of the testers. The tasters' palate, sensory fatigue and the number of heat receptors make the test imprecise. Even with that, you can get a general idea that a Carolina Reaper with a Scoville rating of 2.2 million will be something you eat only if you are making a YOUTUBE video to show how crazy you are.

Philosophers have often looked for the defining features of humans--language, rationality, culture, and so on. I would stick with this: "Man is the only animal that likes Tabasco sauce." Paul Bloom.

Remember, you can't expect to look like a million bucks if you eat from the dollar menu...Unknown



St Patrick's Day Menu

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The Undoing Project

By Michael Lewis

It was a clear day in San Francisco. Bay area rivals faced off in game 3 of the 1989 Baseball World Series pitting the Athletics against the Giants.

ABC had just begun its pregame analysis with Al Michaels and Tim McCarver when cries of fear and terror erupted throughout Candlestick Park. What is now known as the World Series quake rocked the coast causing extensive damage and resulting in almost 4,000 injuries and 63 deaths. The Athletics went on to win the Series. But the aftershocks to the baseball world were just beginning.

Athletic's owner Walter Haas, Jr had spared no expense in acquiring the best talent available to attain his ultimate goal. By 1990, the Athletics payroll was the highest of the 30 teams in both leagues. Sadly, in 1995 Haas died as a result of prostate cancer. A violent aftershock was about to rock the Athletics too.

The A's new owners did not share Mr. Haas's baseball enthusiasm so they dismantled the team roster in an effort to drastically cut costs with a resulting decline in performance. Then Athletic's General Manager Sandy Alderson tasked his young scouting assistant, Billy Beane, to apply some sabermetrics in his scouting reports with an eye toward obtaining undervalued players because of the sheer lack of funds. Some may be unfamiliar with the term sabermetrics. Simply, it is empirical analysis of baseball, focusing on statistics that measure in-game activity. The name is derived from the Society of American Baseball Research founded in 1971.

Of course baseball box scores have been around since 1858, but Beane saw some statistical variables that had not been taken into account as he began his quest to get the biggest bang with the smallest buck. With help from Paul dePodesta, a Harvard educated statistician, they changed the trajectory of baseball.

For example, in 2001 the New York Yankees, with a player payroll of \$109 million bested the Athletics in the Division Series. However, the A's only spent \$33 million because of Beane's ability to spot under valued top quality players using the sabermetric analysis which includes subtleties of batting, pitching and fielding. Author Michael Lewis highlighted these statistical phenoms in his New York best seller, *Moneyball, The Art of Winning an Unfair Game*, 2003. It was turned into a mega hit movie with Brad Pitt playing Beane. And the story might end there but for a question that kept nagging Lewis. If so called highly paid professionals in the baseball world who had been using the same strategy to select players since the 1860s had so misunderstood their market, what other industries might be making the same mistake? Therein lies the premise for Lewis's latest novel, **The Undoing Game, A Friendship that Changed Our Minds**, December, 2016.

At the outset it must be noted that this is not a book on statistics, or economics or even psychology. Rather it is an amalgam of all three with the friendship of two men as the covalent bond.

When the *Moneyball* novel came out in 2003, a critique cowritten by economist Richard Thaler and lawyer Cass Sunstein from the University of Chicago wondered why Lewis did not delve into the deeper inefficiencies which surreptitiously sprang forth from the human mind such as the ways a baseball expert might misjudge a baseball player or the way any expert's judgements might be skewed by his own mind. The critics referenced a decades old study by two Israeli psychologists that made Lewis realize he had not broken any new ground at all but simply illustrated what had been out there in the public domain for years much like the eyes of an alligator represent but a minuscule part of an incredible power lurking just beneath the surface.

Lewis had not considered the psychological aspects of the decision making process in *Moneyball* although he was quite aware of the biases that were exposed in the inefficient ways the experts did their jobs. He decided to investigate how the mind worked or didn't work in forming judgements and making decisions. When faced with uncertainty in baseball or any other endeavor, how do we come to a conclusion? What are people doing, including experts, that lead them to misjudgements that could be exploited by others who ignored the experts and relied on data.

The Living Corpse

Danny Khaneman knew exactly what he wanted to be at an early age, an intellectual. As a Parisian child in 1941, he did not have any physical prowess at all. The school boys teased him with the nickname, "the living corpse". Instead he was bookish and precocious with little time for classmates. His maturity may in part have been due to the Nazi occupation that weighed heavily on many Jewish families at the time.

Danny occupied his time by reading novels like *Around the World in Eighty Days* and listening and watching those around him. His father died in 1944 due to complications of diabetes to which no medical help was available. He was not allowed to attend his father's funeral because it considered to be too dangerous. The remaining family abandoned Europe and resettled in the more hospitable (or so they thought) environs of Jerusalem in 1947. Of course in May of 1948, Israel declared its independence and Danny, 14, was thrust into yet another battlefield. These experiences formed the basis for what shaped the man who was to become one of the foremost psychologists of our time and the ultimate devotee of human error.

Danny excelled at Hebrew University, not by instruction as much as his voracious appetite to learn. At the time B F Skinner's behavioralism was the predominant school of thought. Danny wished to pursue the objectivity of the Gestalt school of psychology which postulated that the mind can override external stimuli to arrive at an incorrect conclusion.

Upon graduation, Danny joined the Israeli Army as is required under law. As you can imagine he was not well suited to Army life but none the less placed in the psychological unit, and at age 20, was the Israeli Defense Forces expert in psychology. The IDF was ramping up its forces with over 700,000 recruits arriving to defend Israel. But up to this point, Israel, which looked more like a fort than a nation, had a poorly sewn together bunch of misfits unaware of their individual strengths or weaknesses.

Interviewers of the recruits fell victim to the "halo effect" which assigned unwarranted credit based on an initial positive assessment, say for appearance.

Danny was assigned the task to sort this menagerie out. He gave the interviewers questionnaires for the recruit to complete and thus Danny designed a specific questionnaire that was less about fact seeking and more designed to disguise the facts being sought about the recruit. Rather than the interviewer go with a gut instinct, remove it, and the interviewers judgments improved dramatically.

At 21 years of age this young psychologist revolutionized the IDF to secure a nation's future. The Kahneman's Score as it became known proved so successful that the Israeli Army continues to use it today. The US adopted the KS in 1983.

After his stint in the military, Danny began teaching at Hebrew U. He was outstanding. He was a bold genius, weaving statistics courses into the meaning of life. His teachings on everything from enhancing fighter pilot's performance to rabbi's interpretation of the colors of the Talmud gave insights into his perception class that no one had ever heard or seen, all done without notes or syllabi.

However, this genius came with the price of constant insecurity and doubt, not only about himself but the world around him. To calm his nerves he was known to smoke a couple of packs of cigarettes a day. But this couldn't slow his pursuit for answering life's questions. He had a relentless way of converting insight into application, freely flowing from one idea to the next uninhibited by conventional perspectives.

The New Spartan

In 1957 Hebrew University announced it was opening a psychology department. A pale, young fellow named Amos Tversky, a quintessential Israeli, still in his paratrooper's uniform, was one of only 20 accepted under this new program. A few months before he had won the army's highest award for bravery. However, he seldom mentioned his exploits.

Amos's family had fled the Russian Anti-semitism of the early twenties and were some of the early pioneers of the Zionist nation. His mother excelled as a masterful politician, while his father, a veterinarian, could weave a wondrous tale of his life's experiences. Amos loved that trait and perfected it for himself.

While small in stature, he was quick, brave and agile. He spoke with almost a Catalan lisp, but more often than not, when he spun a tale he would find the high ground, whether a desk or tank and commanded the audience's attention.

He was highly gifted in math and science, but instead pursued the humanities in college rationalizing that he could teach himself numbers and nuclei anytime. While arguably one of the most popular in school, he met and fell in love with a quiet loner named

Dahlia, whose father had been killed in the war. They would marry. They both loved poetry. She later would win Israel's top literary prize and become an international figure in her own right. She thought Amos was the smartest person she had ever met.

So did almost everyone else. Of course that lends itself to somewhat quirky behavior. He maintained vampire hours, going to bed at dawn and waking up at happy hour. He had the preternatural gift of doing exactly what he wished to do without regard to social norms.

Amos finished at the top of his class academically and socially. He pursued a graduate degree in the United States wanting to explore how people made decisions.

If people make choices by comparing some ideal in their head and the real world versions, you have to know how people made such judgments.

Similarity judgments typically ask how closely did the two competing objects or ideas or people have to one another.

Amos began to challenge this notion of similarity judgments, resulting in a theory more akin to "features of similarity". He explained that when two things are compared and judged for the similarity, the person was essentially making a list of features. The more the noticeable the features, the more likely there is an apparent similarity. And if the noticeability of the features can be manipulated by the way they are or are not highlighted, the sense of how similar two things are can be manipulated as well. He had turned conventional wisdom on its head.

Upon his return to Israel in 1966 Amos "settled into teaching at Hebrew University. His new wife Barbara Gans had never been out of the United States, she had never been in a war. That soon changed.

Every man was in the Israeli Army, even the professors. In May 1967, Amos went off to fight again after Egypt closed the Straits of Tiran to Israeli ships, the primary trade route for the country. The war started on a Monday and by Friday it was over.

Barbara spent most of her time in a bomb shelter sewing sand bags. Amos camped out at King Hussein's summer palace and briefly was the military governor of Jericho. But, at war's end the professors simply returned to teaching without ceremony or much fanfare.

Unconventional Friends

These two scholars began to meet to discuss the two sides of their respective fields of psychology. They would usually meet alone, behind closed doors for hours on end interchanging their discussions between English and Hebrew.

Almost immediately this unlikely pair became soul mates. Danny the forever pessimist, Amos the eternal optimist. Amos the life of the party. Danny wouldn't go to the party. Amos was the definition of informality while Danny appeared to be the mortician's apprentice in his relationships. He took everything so seriously while Amos made everything into a joke.

Danny was short tempered, but eager to please. On the other hand Amos couldn't figure out why you would want to please anyone. The most striking difference may have been how each office looked.

Danny's was the absent minded professor look with papers, books and cigarette butts everywhere while Amos had nothing, literally nothing in his office but a pencil and an unused writing pad.

However they did share a few things in common. While neither believed in God, both were grandsons of Eastern European rabbis. Both were explicitly interested in how people functioned. Both wanted to search for simple yet powerful truths. And both were blessed with amazingly fertile minds.

The two decided to collaborate on a paper to which would challenge Bayes theory that whenever presented with a problem there would always be a statistically correct answer to support it. The best part of the exercise was that both men had fun doing it. They joked and laughed and made the project seem effortless. Their first paper was called "Belief in the Law of Small Numbers", 1970, and in essence it proffered that people mistook even a very small part of a thing, as whole. Even statisticians made the leap to conclusions from inconclusively small amounts of evidence.

Another profound work called "Subjective Probability: A Judgment of Representativeness" led Danny and Amos to coin the term "heuristics".

The two were investigating how people assign odds to any given situation when one is more or less guessing. They offered a substitute from rules of chance to rules of thumb, or heuristics. For example, if a 6'8" man walked down the street, someone might conclude that odds are likely that he is a NBA basketball player because his height is representative of NBA basketball players, even though the odds are really low. The two met with international success and is so often the story, that became their undoing.

Lewis has an uncanny ability to not only put flesh to bones but one can actually see the heart beat of these two unlikely friends as the two evolve into something greater than themselves. Their work represents the best research of social science of the past century. It exposed the folly of a rational mind in the decision making process. Whether in the field of medicine or eating habits or even retirement savings, these two psychologists revolutionized how things are done. But as Kahneman explained, this information is not dictated by numbers alone. "No one ever made a decision because of a number - they need a story." Nor is it so unfeeling as to eliminate the core emotions we rely on to relate to one another. Amos explained.

Because stinginess and generosity are both contagious, and because behaving generously makes you happier, surround yourself with generous people."

The 350 or so page book will sometimes baffle the reader with the plethora of test examples given to not only grad students but economists, doctors, politicians and even the CIA. Most subjects usually reaching the wrong conclusion in a most humorous way. Here are but a handful of tests to whet your appetite.

Memory: Consider the letter K

A typical text was selected and the relative frequency with which various letters of the alphabet appeared in the first and third positions of the words was recorded. Words of less than three letters were excluded from the count.

You will be given several letters of the alphabet, and you will be asked to judge whether these letters appear more often and the first or in the third position, and to estimate the ratio of the frequency with which they appear in these positions...

Consider the K. Is K more likely to appear in ____ the first position
____ the third position

My estimate for the ratio of these two values is: ____ to 1

If you thought that K was, say, twice as likely to appear as the first letter of an English word then as the third letter, you checked the first box and wrote your estimate as 2:1. This was what the typical person did, as it happens: Danny and Amos replicated the demonstration with other letters --R, L, N and V. Those letters also appeared more frequently as the third letter in an English word than as the first letter--by a ratio of two to one. Once again peoples judgment was, systematically, very wrong. And it was wrong, Danny and Amos now proposed, because it was distorted by memory. It was simply easier to recall words that start with K than to recall words with K as a third letter. The more easily people can call some scenario to mind--the more available it is to them--the more probable they find it to be.

The Anchor

It is not just that people don't know what they don't know, but that they don't bother to factor their ignorance into their judgments.

Another possible heuristic they called "anchoring". They first dramatize its effects by giving a bunch of high school students five seconds to guess the answer to a math question.

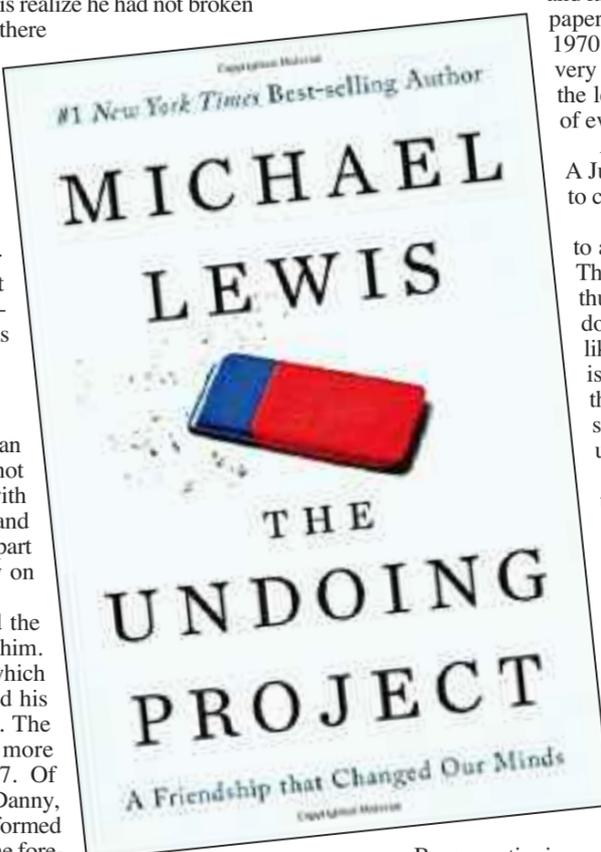
The first group was asked to estimate this product:

8x7x6x5x4x3x2x1

A second group to estimate this product:

1x2x3x4x5x6x7x8

Five seconds wasn't long enough to actually do the math: the kids had to guess. The two groups answers should have been at least roughly the same, but they weren't, even roughly. The first groups median answer was 2250. The second group's median answer was 512. (the right answer is 40,320). The reason the kids in the first group guessed a higher number for the first sequence was that they had used 8 as the starting point, while the kids in the second group had used 1. It was almost too easy to dramatize this weird trick of the mind. People could be anchored with information that was totally irrelevant to the problem they were being asked to solve.



The views of this editorial may not express the views of The Alabama Gazette.

Gazette Seniors...

Dr. John Bitter, Editor
Senior Section

You may be over
the hill if...your family's
evening entertainment was
"watching radio."

Silver Haired Legislator Remembers

In **Ephesians 6:12**, those believing in a Supreme power are told to be strong and to take a stand against the devil's schemes. This caution has increased in importance

with time—a surge of such a shameful degree that we can no longer ignore it.

Unfortunately, the data suggests to us that the devil's schemers, and the variety of their schemes are increasing to a staggering degree. Therefore, the need for a strong law designed to protect seniors from these Machiavellian plotters and intriguers who plague our senior population with growing intensity. They pester us with telephone calls that offer all means of delightful sounding schemes; and usually the caller has a foreign accent. They send us mail that promises us all manner of benefits to be derived from our sharing with them our credit card numbers. They approach us on the street with "get rich quick" schemes, and with other scenarios that promise us immediate wealth, but would end up leaving us impoverished.

And, worst of all, supposed friends, helpers, and even close kin, come up with "too good to be true" schemes purported to be to our advantage, but which end up separating us from our savings.

As the Bible commands, seniors must be strong and stand their ground "against the powers of this dark world. . ."

To assist seniors in this protective effort, the Central Alabama Aging Consortium has prepared, and will share with seniors, information that specifically focuses on this problem, and which offers a wealth of useful information designed to protect and help our senior population. Such is the charge of the Consortium, who will be willing to talk with seniors about this serious failure in our society. Help is at hand; all one has to do is ask for it. Give the Consortium a call at 240-4666. You'll be glad you did.

One of your writer's most enjoyable and invigorating experiences happened during the years spent as a member of the *Alabama Silver-Haired Legislature*.

We operated much the same as the State's House of Representatives, in that each of us prepared and submitted resolutions that urged legislation the regular legislature should enact. They addressed matters that were of particular concern to the State's senior citizens.

Each representative researched and wrote legislative proposals that addressed needs or shortcomings that directly impacted upon our aging population. The growth and severity of this problem increases exponentially. In 1965, for example, the percentage of Alabamians 65 years of age and older was 13 percent. By the year 2010, this number had increased to 13.8 percent, and the projection for the year 2025, would reach 19.6 percent. Along with an increase in age, we find that the degree of particular needs that Alabama's aging population faces are also increasing; as are the instances and severity of elder abuse.

And, we see from research into the significance of this matter, that the number of jacks abusing and taking advantage of those we were brought up to respect and protect are on the rise.

Among the resolutions with which your writer had a direct interest were resolutions calling for vigorous elder abuse legislation, since it was incumbent upon that body to look after the well being of those they served.

As each year passed in the process of seeking action to protect our seniors from a host of abuses, the number of abuses and methods of abusing the senior population increased exponentially.

Will We Ever Learn?

One would think that with more than five centuries of trying, mankind would by now have learned how to create an educational product of some degree of uniformity; one that was capable of producing a product of some semblance of excellence. But one would be wrong.

The Babylonians thought they were on to something back in 3100 BC when they launched the first educational endeavor. Learned men in a community were called upon to share their knowledge and wisdom with the youth of the village. Bureaucrats had not yet entered the picture, so the process was somewhat simpler; and more effective.

They dealt primarily with rote learning, although there were some notable exceptions; Aristotle and Plato as examples. The early classroom employed memorization and a liberal application of the rod as its means of educating the youngsters, as revealed in a clay tablet uncovered in Egypt, on which a student had written: "Thou didst beat me and knowledge entered my head." In today's society, the rigorous use of the rod is frowned upon, resulting often in a rather shoddy end result.

By the first century AD the Jews had perfected the educational product somewhat. Housed usually in Synagogues local young lads learned the laws of society and religion, and learned to read and to write. And in other societies they learned from local wise men who shared with them the knowledge and wisdom they had acquired through their studies and travel.

In all, these early societies took great stock in the educational process, but by the 21st Century, especially in the United States, it all started to unravel.

Initially, education was not a universal endeavor; rather it was the domain of

the ruling elite. They had the means to either hire or require that scholars be hired, or required, to tutor emperors and their families, and the education endeavor grew from there.

At about the same time, heads of households became aware that once their crops had been harvested and until planting time began in the springtime, their sons had time on their hands; and idle hands often did the devil's work. So, heads of households quickly decided that something had to be put into place that would keep their sons busy during this idle time between harvest and planting; and teaching their sons to read and cipher was a suitable endeavor.

And thus, public education was born.

But, in the centuries that followed, community leaders lost sight of their goals and bureaucrats entered the picture; and something quite different began to take over education.

And now, the process is in the hands of bureaucrats and unions, and educators place a greater interest on vacations and holidays, salaries, sick days, attractive bulletin boards, and a host of other elements and tasks that distract from the process of teaching and learning; and today we're close to being back where we started in centuries past.

It seems downright incongruous that those professing to be educators would permit their calling to fall into such a state of disrepair.

CURIOSITY

Curiosity about who had been born or expired on March 11, your humble scribe's birthday, piqued an brought about a search of those whose lives involved that date, which four births and seven deaths of folks of some degree of significance, revealed only a few, which will now be shared with our readers.

In the births ledger there appeared **Band Leader Lawrence Welk**, who was born in 1903; **Rupert Murdoch**, Australian-American who was born in 1931; fellow journalist **Sam Donaldson**, born in 1934, and **Antonin Scalia**, Supreme Court Justice.

Among those who expired on this date were: **Oscar Meyer**, in 1955; **Admiral Richard Byrd**, explorer of note; a favorite writer, **Erle Stanley Gardner**; **John J. McCloy**, who died in 1989, and actor **Vince Edwards**, who died in 1996. Also expiring on this date were **Betty Hutton**, who died in 2007; and fellow Utahan, **Merlin Olsen**, of both professional football, and movie and TV fame, who was born in the same city from whence your writer's parents emerged, Logan. Merlin played for the Los Angeles Rams, and was inducted into both the Pro Football, and the College Football Halls of Fame.

And for those readers who may wonder why this information is provided; there's not a clue.

Reflections

By Michael J. Brooks

THE GREATEST OF THESE IS LOVE

Karen Carpenter was the preeminent voice of the 70s. Along with her brother Richard she sold 160 million record albums. Karen sang love songs. "We've Only Just Begun" has been used at countless weddings over the years since she introduced it to the world.

But in his book, "**Little Girl Blue**," Randy L. Schmidt revealed that Karen Carpenter searched for love and never seemed to find it. Another of her songs is autobiographic: "I'll say goodbye to love / no one ever cared if I should live or die / time and time again the chance for love has passed me by / and all I know of love is how to live without it / I just can't seem to find it."

Carpenter died on February 4, 1983 at age 32. Hers is a story of supreme sadness.

The 1980 movie, "Urban Cowboy," featured the song, "Looking for Love in All the Wrong Places." This is a good summary of our world.

In our search for love, we need to start at right place, and the Bible says, "God is love."

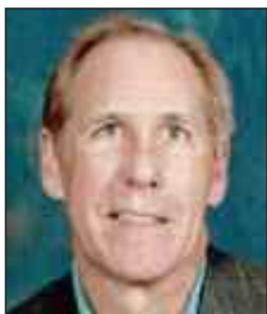
The Greeks had more verbs than we do. We use the single verb "love" when we say, "I love my wife," "I love my cat" or "I love yogurt." The Greeks had "philos" for brotherly love and "eros" for passionate love. But they also had "agape" used exclusively in the New Testament to describe the love of God.

The Apostle Paul wrote that God demonstrated the depth of his "agape" by sending Christ to die for us, and now God has placed his "agape" in our hearts (**Romans 5:12, 5**). So the progression is that God, who is love, showed his love for us and now has placed his love in our hearts. And it is this love that demonstrates to the world that we are Christians according to Jesus (**John 13:35**).

1 Corinthians 13: 4-7 describes God's love in the heart of Christians. Paul insisted that love doesn't focus on itself, love values others, love is kind to others, love is not angry with others and love doesn't seek revenge.

Christian art has used three symbols for the three abiding principles Paul wrote about. Faith is represented by the cross, hope by the anchor and love by the heart. All are important. Without faith, we couldn't become Christians since salvation mandates we have faith in God's work through Christ. Hope gives us the will to endure when things are tough. But Paul concluded that the greatest of these is love. God's agape in our hearts roots out the things that shouldn't be there and molds us into the image of Christ who is our greatest example.

Reflections is a weekly devotional column written by Michael J. Brooks, pastor of the Siluria Baptist Church in Alabaster, Ala. The church's website is siluriabaptist.com.



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THE MARSHALL MOMENT

Soul Searching

DR. RICK MARSHALL
 Pastor, Eastern Hills
 Baptist Church
 Montgomery, Alabama

Walking in the Land of our Lord



As you read this article I will have recently returned from a visit again to Israel, the land of our Lord, with a fine group of people from our area. It is hard to describe to someone who has not been there the unique and special appeal of this tiny piece of arid geography tucked in an out-of-the-way corner of the earth along the eastern shore of the Mediterranean Sea. This remarkable land has cradled the faith of three major world religions, Judaism, the Muslim religion and Christianity.

“To the Jew, this is the Holy Land of promise! Four thousand years ago Abraham responded to the call of the living God to leave Ur of the Chaldees and make his way to the land of promise. Here the patriarchs Isaac and Jacob were born. Here Joshua marched with the children of Israel to recapture the land. Here the Judges, Samson, Samuel and others ruled. Here David was anointed King, Solomon built the first Temple and the golden age of Judaism flourished. Here the prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, Amos and others thundered their message.” To this day Jews still claim this land as their heritage and dream of a restoration of the kingdom Jews once knew.

It is also a Holy Land to the vast Arab world of the Middle East. The great majority of these people are Muslim. They consider Jerusalem and in particular, the Temple Mount, as second only to Mecca in sacred significance. They believe the prophet Mohammed ascended from earth in the Temple area of Jerusalem into heaven and returned to live and die in Medina.

Most of all, Israel is sacred to Christians because it was the home on earth of Jesus Christ. Here He was born to the virgin Mary. In this land He was God in the flesh who walked and talked, helped and healed, died and rose again. It is the place on earth where God broke through in revelation and worked out His eternal plan and purpose for the redemption of mankind.

A visit to Israel makes the Bible come alive for believers. While you did not travel with us, let me give you a brief walk through the most important of the places we visited. Perhaps it will encourage you to study your Bible more and perhaps one day to aspire to travel to Israel. Four major points of interests, or what I might call pillars of the Christian faith, stand out to me.

The first pillar is Bethlehem, place of the Incarnation. It was a tiny village six miles south of Jerusalem in the time of Jesus. We know it as the place of the virgin birth of Jesus. It is surrounded by the Judean hills where taking care of sheep goes on to this day. Bethlehem was prophesied as the birthplace of the Messiah by Micah long before the birth of Christ. History tells us the place where Jesus was born was most likely a cave in the side of a hill. This would have been a common means for people to have their homes in that day. The concept of an “innkeeper” as we think of it today was probably foreign to the time of Jesus.

When Constantine became a Christian in 325 A.D., his mother Helena came to the Holy Land and sought to preserve Christian sites including Bethlehem. She built a church over the site and called it the Church of the Nativity. The foundations stones are still there though others are built over it. The Roman Emperor built a pagan altar over the traditional place of Jesus’ birth in an effort to stamp out Christianity.

The importance of Bethlehem for Christians is the incarnation. This pillar of our faith says that God came in flesh and blood to dwell among us. This Baby was God himself come to us. He came that we might know what He is like. Men always sought to worship some kind of God but never knew who or what He was. God was not just lightning, thunder, justice, energy, but rather a person who comes to deal with people.

The highest expression of faith is not intellectual acceptance of a theological idea or even ethical conduct. The ultimate expression is a personal relationship with God. The Christian faith is not what we believe about God, but rather that we believe Him and have a personal relationship with Him.

The second pillar of our faith centers around a hill we call Calvary. It is the place of the atonement. Atonement is a word in our faith which means to set right or strait. Calvary is where Jesus died on the cross. We believe the sinless Son of God died in our place for our sin in order to provide a way for us to be

set right with God. No other religion has ever had anything like this. Other religions understand the concept of atonement, but always make it our act by some sacrifice on man’s part, even human sacrifice.

Instinctively in every human heart is the consciousness of sin. We know we are not worthy to meet God. Worship is not praise for them, but hope of appeasement in every other faith but ours. They talk about offerings. Christians talk about God’s offering.

The third pillar of the Christian faith is the Garden Tomb, the place of resurrection. Excavations have shown this was the garden of a wealthy man named Joseph. A large cistern uncovered showed a great water supply for a beautiful garden of Olive trees and a magnificent olive press. Nearby is also a tomb carved out of solid rock which belonged to this man. Being just a few hundred feet from the place of execution most Christians have come to believe this is the tomb in which Jesus was buried.

From this tomb Jesus stepped forth alive. The grave could not hold him. Our destiny is not a six foot ditch in the ground. Our direction is not down but up. He said, *“I am the resurrection and the life...because I live you shall live also.”* That is the promise of Jesus.

The fourth pillar is found by walking out the gate of the city of Jerusalem, across the Kidron valley and ascending up a long sloping hill to the top of the Mount of Olives. It is on this hill most people get that magnificent view of the city of Jerusalem with the gleaming gold dome. On a rock on that hill Jesus stood with his disciples and others and ascended back to the Father. Two men in white appeared saying, *“Ye men of Galilee, why stand you here gazing? This same Jesus shall in like manner return.”* The Mount of Olives is the final pillar of the Christian faith. It represents the hope of all believers for the return of Christ. We await the return of the living Christ to draw all believers unto Himself.

The visit to the Holy Land reminds us that God is not through with this world. Moslem pilgrims go to Mecca, Medina and the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. But they remember a dead leader, Mohammed. We came not to venerate a dead leader, but to celebrate a living Lord who is coming again.

What Christ came to do was not finished at Calvary. He paid the price. He showed death is not the end. His return is when time will be over and we will either be with Him forever or in a place of eternal lostness forever. On these four pillars, the incarnation, the atonement, the resurrection and the return of Christ, our faith rests as Christians.

In these brief words, I trust you have come to understand a visit to the Holy Land is not simply a tour. It is a journey of the heart. It is a spiritual pilgrimage. It is for believers, a chance to experience faith and to feel the presence of the living Lord in a way never before known.



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WHEN IS A GOOD TIME TO START RECEIVING SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFITS?



Enjoying a comfortable retirement is everyone’s dream. For over 80 years, Social Security has been helping people realize those dreams, assisting people through life’s journey with a variety of benefits. It’s up to you as to when you can start retirement benefits. You could start them a little earlier or wait until your “full retirement age.” There are benefits to either decision, pun intended.

Full retirement age refers to the age when a person can receive their Social Security benefits without any reduction, even if they are still working part or full time. In other words, you don’t actually need to stop working to get your full benefits.



For people who attain age 62 in 2017 (i.e., those born between January 2, 1955 and January 1, 1956), full retirement age is 66 and two months. Full retirement age was age 65 for many years. However, due to a law passed by Congress in 1983, it has been gradually increasing, beginning with people born in 1938 or later, until it reaches 67 for people born after 1959.

You can learn more about the full retirement age and find out how to look up your own at www.socialsecurity.gov/planners/retire/retirechart.html.

You can start receiving Social Security benefits as early as age 62 or any time after that. The longer you wait, the higher your monthly benefit will be, although it stops increasing at age 70. **Your monthly benefits will be reduced permanently** if you start them any time before your full retirement age. For example, if you start receiving benefits in 2017 at age 62, your monthly benefit amount will be reduced permanently by about 26 percent.

On the other hand, if you wait to start receiving your benefits until after your full retirement age, then your monthly benefit will be higher. The amount of this increase is two-thirds of one percent for each month — or eight percent for each year — that you delay receiving them until you reach age 70. The choices you make may affect any benefit your spouse or children can receive on your record, too. If you receive benefits early, it may reduce their potential benefit, as well as yours.

You need to be as informed as possible when making any decision about receiving Social Security benefits. Read the publication *When to Start Receiving Retirement Benefits* at www.socialsecurity.gov/pubs/EN-05-10147.pdf.

If you decide to receive benefits before you reach full retirement age, you should also understand how continuing to work can affect your benefits. Social Security may withhold or reduce your benefits if your annual earnings exceed a certain amount. However, for every month benefits are withheld, it increases your future benefits. That’s because at your full retirement age Social Security will recalculate your benefit amount to give you credit for the months in which benefits were reduced or withheld due to your excess earnings. In effect, it’s as if you hadn’t filed for those months. You can learn more at www.socialsecurity.gov/planners/retire/whileworking.html.

Social Security’s mission is to secure your today and tomorrow. Helping you make the right retirement decisions is vital. You can learn more by visiting our Retirement Planner at www.socialsecurity.gov/planners/retire.

Kylle’ McKinney, SSA Public Affairs Specialist, can be reached by e-mail at kylle.mckinney@ssa.gov.

Home Town Community News



Patricia Killough

Please send Patricia your family birthdays, anniversaries and weddings to alabamagazette@gmail.com

The Alabama Gazette will make every effort to include your submissions as space permits.

March Birthdays



- | | |
|--|--|
| 1 Jean Bennett
Davis Abbott Mason (1st)
Brett O'Neal
Donna Ross | 15 George Handey
Sandy Stephans Rogers
Betty Lossman
David Hancock |
| 2 Amie Dean
Bill Oates
Norma Renfro | 16 Lisa Gordan Hester
17 Lowell Hattaway (85th)
18 William Watters Box
George McKinley (71st)
Robert Singleton
Jacque Takacs
Olivia Thomas (83rd)
Kayla Woodall |
| 3 Dorothy Fuller (80th)
Frank Reynolds | 19 Charlotte Crane
Keisha Glasscock |
| 4 Todd Cole
Russ Russell | 20 Connie Crowe |
| 5 Glen Yost | 21 Hannah Yost
Murlyne Clements
Dorothy Lasaine |
| 6 Gayle Bosworth
Emmett Poundstone
Marjorie Wright | 22 Kentston Whigham (5th) |
| 7 Everett Cole
Laura Lane
Tony Law
Michael Carroll
Brad Wallace | 23 Ben Garrett
Laura Hudson
Morgan James
Brandy Landreau
Dawn Lane
Lallage Neil |
| 8 Frances Ard
Linda Clayton
David Ehrlich | 24 Robert Adams
Zenia Mims |
| 9 Grace Neighbors (91st)
Courtney Whigham | 25 Deborah Cox
Hunter Hannon
Wanda Madison |
| 10 Jane Grubbs
Paula Lansdon
Cory Smith
Jeanne Villar
Michael Weldon | 26 Ruby Macon
27 Renee Grant
Cynthia Harper
Wendy Powell |
| 11 Dr. John Bitter
Glenn Harper
Herb Meadows | 29 Delicia Fuller
31 Carlie Corbin |
| 12 Angie Ferreira | (Send us YOUR Birthdays!) |
| 13 Linda Richardson
Samantha Jane Rice (7th) | |
| 14 Brian Takacs
Dana Webster (63rd) | |

Mittie B. Stockman turns 90

Mittie B. Stockman celebrated her 90th Birthday on February 10th, 2017. She celebrated with family and dear friends some from as far away as Colorado. She and her husband Winston are longtime residents of Montgomery although she grew up in Highland Home. Mittie always has a friendly smile and a firm handshake for everyone she meets. She enjoys doing Family History (Genealogy) and canning vegetables and the most amazing Pear preserves (or at least her son in law says they are). She is still an amazing cook. She and Winston recently celebrated their 58th wedding anniversary. Their daughter Sandra and her husband have three children (one is a school teacher and the other two are in college).



Alabama Christian Academy Student Honored in Statewide Magazine

Micah Williams, a junior at Alabama Christian Academy, is honored as a **Teen Spotlight in Potential Magazine** for excelling in his leadership; he is featured alongside his mother, Catrice.



At ACA, Micah is heavily involved in the arts. He has been a part of the Alabama District Honor Band Competition three times, and the Alabama Band All-State Competition twice. In addition, he plays clarinet for the Montgomery Youth Orchestra and has been published in **Teen Ink** twice.

Micah's mother is proud of his perseverance and determination, sharing, "I encourage him to go out for what he wants."

I encourage him to step out of his comfort zone."

Micah plans to pursue a career in either medicine or law. He shares, "If I go to medical school, I would want to be an oncologist or psychiatrist. If I choose law, I might practice as an attorney in adoption law or medical malpractice."

Potential Magazine is a multi-media resource for parents of college-bound teenagers. In each issue, high achieving students in the 7th-12th grade are featured and entered to win the \$500 "Reach Your Potential" scholarship awarded in May.

Teens are recommended by their school or community leaders for excelling in one or more of the following areas: academics, business, leadership, philanthropy, overcoming adversity, citizenship and community service, athletics, and the arts. Potential Magazine's advisory board chooses teens to feature in each issue and select the scholarship winner in .

"We love spotlighting teens in Alabama and gaining great advice from their parents," stated Pam Mashburn, publisher of Potential Magazine. Teens who are selected participate in an interview and photo shoot along with their parents for a spotlight feature in the magazine and website. Nomination forms can be found on www.potentialmagazine.com.



Bonnie Smith, a senior at Autauga Academy, has been honored as a Teen Spotlight in Potential Magazine for excelling in her leadership and academics.

Lauren Chambliss, a senior at Prattville High School, has been honored as a Teen Spotlight in Potential Magazine.



Ian Tsekouras, a senior at Saint James, has been honored as a Teen Spotlight in Potential Magazine for excelling in his leadership and academics.



Photos by Shelby Berry

Happy Anniversary

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 Ed & Dot Truitt (65th) | 18 George & Lynn McKinley |
| 5 Frank & Helen Ralph | 19 Johnnie & Shirley Yarbrough |
| 7 Bobby & Myra Mills
Jim & Barbara Garrett
John & Melanie Higgins | 21 Craig & Mindy Trotter (8th)
23 Paul & Cynthia Harper
25 Tim & Nicole Sansom |
| 9 Fred & Connie Crowe
Sonja & Steve Campbell (44th) | 26 Elvin & Cam Stanton
27 Al & Conni Barnett
Mike & Cindy Smith |
| 10 Willard & Joyce Haines (66th) | 29 Bill & Vickie Gulsby |
| 14 Nicholas & Sally Corley | (Send us YOUR anniversaries!) |
| 15 Jim & Linda Richardson
Ken & Linda Stringer (56th) | |
| 17 Wallace & Frances Bush (71st) | |

Sympathy to the families of...

- Easter, Phillip Freeman 'Phil' (80)died January 19, 2017
 Martin, Garry Frank (72).....died January 22, 2017
 Snyder, Jack W. (85).....died January 23, 2017
 Whitt, III, Dr. Anderson William 'Buck' (65).....died January 25, 2017
 Rosier, Jr., James Daviddied January 26, 2017
 Hood, Betty Kelley (85)died January 27, 2017
 Helms, James W. (69)died January 29, 2017
 Jones, Jeanette Merrill (82)died January 31, 2017
 Thompson, Steven 'Buddy' (15)died February 1, 2017
 Easterling, John David (24)died February 2, 2017
 Till, Doris Elizabeth (92)died February 3, 2017
 Sexton, Louise Massey (79)died February 6, 2017
 Woodall, Betty Sasserdied February 8, 2017
 Anderson, Betty Swain (78)died February 12, 2017
 Welch, Wesley Blake (29)died February 12, 2017
 Lanier, Peggy McLendon (64)died February 14, 2017
 Bobo, Jr., Thomas Arlington (81)died February 18, 2017
 Lindsey, Daniel Levon (81)died February 19, 2017
 Owens, Sr., Paul Frederick 'Freddy' (72)died February 21, 2017
 Allred, Milton Travis (89)died February 23, 2017



Phillip Easter ~ 1936 - 2017

Easter, Phillip Freeman, "Phil", 80, native of Rural Sparland, IL and resident of Montgomery, AL went to be with Jesus Thursday, January 19, 2017. He moved to Montgomery from Blue Island, IL in 1977, where he had owned a flower shop. He was a member of Frazer UMC and employed 39 years at CAFFCO/Southern Homes and Gardens. A Celebration of Life Service was held at Frazer UMC Saturday, February 11, 2017. Dr. John Ed Mathison, Rev. Tobin Allyn Miller and Darin Easter officiating. Donations may be made to Sav-A-Life/First Choice of Montgomery or the Widows/Widowers Ministry at Frazer UMC. Southern Memorial Funeral Home Directing.

TODAY'S WOMAN

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Trisston Wright Burrows
 Ms. Wheelchair America/ Alabama 2005

Trisston's Tidbits...

By: Trisston Wright Burrows
www.trisstonwrightburrows.com

"Forgiveness"

Did you know that unforgiveness, bitterness and resentment block the flow of God's blessings in your life? Holding on to the hurts of your past can poison your present and limit your future. However, when you let go of these emotional wounds, you open the door to the life of victory that God has planned.

"Let all bitterness, indignation, wrath, resentment, quarreling, and slander be banished from you..."
 Ephesians 4:31

The enemy will try to use your past to influence your actions and responses. He will try to paralyze you with fear and shame. However, when you choose to forgive those who have wronged you and release your past, you can walk in freedom. You can trade your sorrows for joy. You can trade your shame for peace. You can trade your insecurities for love and victory in Christ!

Remember, you are not defined by your past. You are defined by God's Word and His plan for your life. My friends, God sees you as an overcomer! God sees you as a champion in life.

Many Blessings!

2016 Meeting Schedule



Breast Cancer Support Group Meetings

Support group meetings are free, do not require registration and convene the 2nd Tuesday of each month at:

Frazer United Methodist Church

6000 Atlanta Highway • Room 8114 • Mathison Activity Center • Montgomery, AL

5:30 PM Social time with light meal
 6:15 PM Program followed by Q & A

Tuesday, March 8

Friends on the Journey Together

Presented by Friends & Breast Cancer Survivors
 Lee Hayes & Jannah Bailey

Tuesday, April 12

Finding My Purpose

Presented by Julia Upton, Breast Cancer Survivor

Tuesday, May 10 (Room 8253)

The Role of Physical Therapy in Cancer Treatments

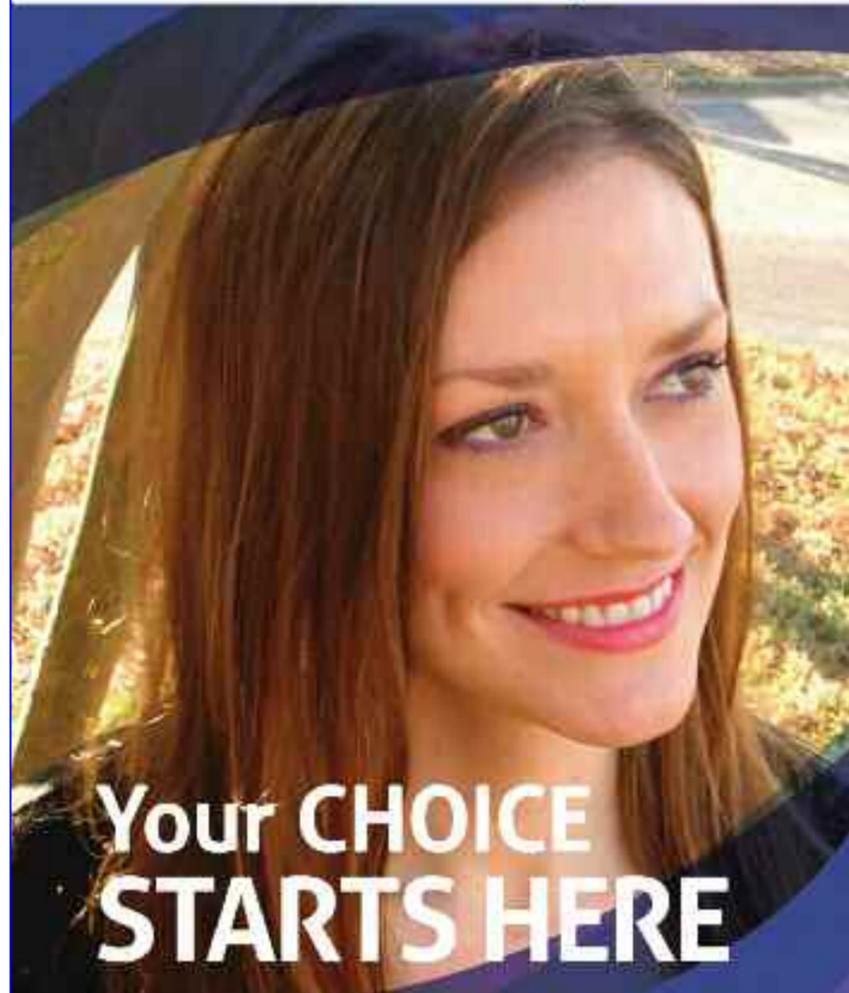
Caitlin Butts, PT, DPT, ATC • Chris Ireland, PT, DPT, OCS
 PT Solutions Physical Therapy

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**Judge
Peggy Givhan**

Southern Gardening Potpourri for March *by Peggy Givhan*

March comes marching in with the wind, where there may still be a slight chill, but one senses winter is over. By mid-March we can confidently plant begonias, certainly geraniums plus impatiens, while getting ready to say goodbye to pansies and dianthus with the next 6 weeks. Everything seems to be happening at once: the grass suddenly needs mowing, regular watering is needed, fertilizing is now a task, and weeding becomes a priority. It would be nice if family members would lend a hand. My motto has always been, "a family who gardens together, stays together."

beauty which surrounds us. We are thankful to live in American, the land of the free and the home of the brave.

Besides the American Basketball "March Madness", there should be a similar March Madness in and around out flower gardens. It is a very hectic time for the gardener whom I term a "hands on gardener," one who has his hands in the dirt, one who we see at this time of year, searching the garden soil for any seeds which should be germinating, and one who has plan in hand, setting out late winter and early spring annuals. The perfect gardener is looking at a prepared bed he made last month, which has been weeded and mulched. He has already purchased seed for summer bloom, such as **zinnias**, **coreopsis**, and **cosmos**. We see in his basket of tricks, new perennials such as Shasta daisies; a variety of hostas for the shady part of the beds; and artemisia for sunny or lightly shady areas. I call this plant a transition species because of its adaptability in growing from U.S. planting zones 3 through 9. (Our region is in zone 8). Incidentally, *Artemisia absinthium*, or common wormwood, was once the source for commercial absinthe. According to lore, Absinthe, if drunk in enough quantity, would produce insanity in the imbibers. The country of France, in the late 19th century, produced the world's greatest supply of Absinthe.

There are many varieties of **Artemisia**, but all grow white to silvery and white gray green foliage. I have used the tried and true, "Powis Castle" in my beds for years, which is a more compact, clumping type. It has one downfall and that is the tendency in the second year to obtain an open and leggy center. To cure this defect, just trim them back severely and let them start afresh. This open center problem is due to heat and too much humidity. *Artemisia stelleriana*, also called "beach wormwood" grows to about a foot and 2 feet wide and is one plant that will do well by the seaside.

These artemisia overall are easy to grow and propagate. They are an easy to care for plant, requiring well drained soil and are drought resistant. I use this plant in the garden as a foil for really bright flowers such as the orange butterfly weed to all the rainbow colors of zinnias. The use of the foil of the grey silvery color enhances the yellows, reds, fuscias, purples and pinks of other flowers. In other words, it help the color stand out with more intensity of color.

March is also a great month to visit botanical and other public gardens in Alabama or for that matter throughout the South. In the Mobile area, Bellingrath Gardens should be in full swing with gorgeous azaleas and spring bulbs in all of their glory. The Birmingham Botanical Gardens should not be overlooked as only perhaps one and half hours away. Just seeing Japanese Magnolias, yellow Forsythia, flowering Quince, Red Bud trees showing their beautiful pink and magenta blooms, lacy Dogwoods make one's heart leap for joy for all the



Artemisia 'Powis Castle'



Coreopsis



Zinnias



Cosmos

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- April 5 *Tomatoes, Tomatoes, Tomatoes!*
- May 3 *Herbs - Growing, Drying, & Storing*
- June 7 *Selecting & Caring for Roses*
- July 5 *Name that Tree*
- August 2 *Water Wisely- Drip Irrigation*
- September 6 *Fall Gardening for Spring Color*
- October 4 *October Backyard Varmints*
- November 1 *Papercrete*
- December 6 *Houseplants*

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Phone: *334-270-4133*

Event Website: <http://www.aces.e...capcitymga.org>
Email: jones57@aces.edu

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