



# The Alabama Gazette

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TAKE ONE!

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For  
unto us  
a child is born.  
Unto us a  
Son is given.

2 And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed.

2 And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.

3 And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city.

4 And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:)

5 To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child.

6 And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered.

7 And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.

8 And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.

9 And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.

10 And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

12 And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

13 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying,

14 Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

Luke 2

King James Version



A Season for Giving!  
**\$1,000**

The Alabama Gazette will again present \$100 cash to ten deserving people in the Tri-County area.

Send in your nomination letter stating why you think your friend or family deserves \$100 cash for Christmas.

Please include address and phone numbers of your nominee.

All nominations must be received by December 15th.

Winners will be notified by December 18th.

Email the Gazette at [alabamagazette@gmail.com](mailto:alabamagazette@gmail.com)

or send your letter to  
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**Peace on Earth, Good Will to Men...**  
**Not in Today's Headlines!**

See Robservations on page 4A.

**John Adams**, our second president, stated, "Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other."

**Robert Winthrop**, Congressman in the 1800's, concurs, "All societies of men must be governed in some way or other. The less they may have of stringent State Government, the more they must have of individual self-government. The less they rely on public law or physical force, the more they must rely on private moral restraint. Men, in a word, must necessarily be controlled, either by a power within them, or by a power without them; either by the Word of God, or by the strong arm of man; either by the Bible, or by the bayonet."

**George Washington** in his farewell address admonished, "Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports. In vain would that man claim the tribute of patriotism who should labor to subvert these great pillars of human happiness, these firmest props of the duties of man and citizens...And let us with caution indulge the supposition that morality can be maintained without religion. Whatever may be conceded to the influence of refined education on minds of peculiar structure, reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle."

**The Sweet Young'Uns 50th Anniversary New Year's Eve Celebration**  
to be held in Alexander City to benefit Camp ASCCA. Sponsored by The Alexander City Elks Lodge and Bluewater Broadcasting. Event information including how to purchase tickets on page 2B.

Come bring in the New Year dancing with the Sweet Young'Uns who will play all your favorite Rock'n'Roll and Country Classics!



Please see December listings for



On Page 10B

**Adams Drugs - Chantilly Corners**

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UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE **MARTHA ROBY**  
ALABAMA'S SECOND DISTRICT



# HOUSE TAKES IMPORTANT FIRST STEP TO MITIGATE RISKS OF SYRIAN REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The House of Representatives took an important first step to mitigate the national security risks presented by President Obama’s plan to allow as many as 10,000 Syrian refugees to resettle in the United States in 2016.

**H.R. 4038, the American Security Against Foreign Enemies (SAFE) Act of 2015**, seeks to ensure ISIS terrorists cannot infiltrate the country through the refugee resettlement program. ISIS has said it would use refugee resettlements to infiltrate western countries and launch attacks. The bill halts the resettlement of any and all Syrian and Iraqi refugees in the United States until:

1. The Director of the FBI certifies the background investigation of each refugee; and
2. Congress receives certification from the Secretary of Homeland Security “with the unanimous concurrence of the Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Director of National Intelligence” that the refugee(s) are not a threat.

U.S. Representative Roby (R-AL) supported the legislation alongside a unanimous Alabama delegation, saying the bill was an important first step toward making sure national security isn’t compromised.

*“More measures will likely be necessary to stop President Obama’s plans to resettle 10,000 Syrian refugees here, but today’s vote, less than a week after the Paris attacks, was an important first step. This strong, bi-partisan vote sends a clear message to President Obama that we have to take these risks seriously.”*

Roby said President Obama’s [recent rhetoric about those concerned with resettlement security risks](#) as “recruiting tools” for ISIS was shameful and not helpful.

*“President Obama’s rhetoric about the Syrian refugee situation is pretty shameful and really isn’t helping matters at all. He has predictably taken to attacking and belittling anyone who doesn’t agree with him rather than acknowledging and dealing with the actual problem at hand.*

*“We know terrorists based in Syria and Iraq have said they would actively game the refugee resettlement process to infiltrate western countries. Common sense Americans are rightfully concerned about this, and our Commander-in-Chief ought to be as well.”*

The bill passed by a strong bi-partisan vote of 289-137, a virtual veto-proof majority. It now goes to the Senate, where many promising proposals have languished lately, Roby acknowledged.

*“There is no question we have had difficulty getting the Senate to pass or even vote on good legislation lately. But, I believe the overwhelming, bi-partisan support in the House is a good indication of how strongly Americans feel about this. I’m optimistic that momentum will carry into the Senate. We really can’t afford to play political games with this.”*

For more information contact Communications Director Todd Stacy at [202-225-2901](tel:202-225-2901) / [todd.stacy@mail.house.gov](mailto:todd.stacy@mail.house.gov).

## ROBY WEEKLY COLUMN: Use Common Sense in Protecting the Homeland

Americans are rightfully concerned about President Obama’s decision to allow as many as 10,000 Syrian refugees to resettle here in the United States throughout 2016. Of course, everyone hates what is happening to people in Syria, and we want to help them in any way we can. However, as your Representative in Congress, my first duty is to make sure your government is doing all it can to keep the country safe. We cannot turn a blind eye to national security risks or allow those who would do us harm the ability to take advantage of our compassionate efforts.

At least one of the Paris attackers was a known extremist who was able to move back and forth from Europe to Syria via Turkey with the wave of Syrian refugees fleeing the war. Just the other day Honduras detained five Syrians who were trying to get to the U.S. with stolen Greek passports. And, don’t forget that ISIS has repeatedly warned they would actively

game the refugee resettlement process to infiltrate western countries.

The United States does have a process for vetting refugees fleeing the Syrian war. However, in testimony before Congress this year, both Homeland Security Secretary Jeh Johnson and FBI Director James Comey acknowledged real gaps in intelligence gathering for the vetting process for many Syrian migrants. Common sense tells us that we cannot risk our security by allowing thousands from Syria to resettle here right now without assurances that our vetting process will keep threats out.

That’s why the House acted swiftly to pass legislation that halts the resettlement of any and all refugees from Syria and Iraq until our federal authorities can certify that they do not pose a security threat. Sometimes in moments of heightened tension, bills like this can be passed in

haste without due diligence. However, that is not the case here. The Homeland Security Committee has been looking at the issue all year and developed this proposal after carefully studying the Syrian crisis and our resettlement process. You can read their in-depth report at [www.homeland.house.gov](http://www.homeland.house.gov).

I’m disappointed that, while traveling abroad in Turkey, President Obama decided to attack and belittle Americans who have concerns about this issue rather than acknowledge and deal with the actual problem at hand. Not surprisingly, he’s already issued a veto threat of our bill. Thankfully, the bill passed with a strong bi-partisan vote of 289-137, a virtual veto-proof majority.

It now goes to the Senate, where many promising proposals have languished lately. But, I believe the overwhelming, bi-partisan support in the House is a good indication of how strongly Americans feel about this. Passing this measure was an important first step toward addressing our security situation. It also sends a clear message to the President and the Senate that we have to take these risks seriously.



Marcia Chambliss

Writing about politics is rarely encouraging. In fact, I’ve been at a crossroads for a few weeks and admit I have been struggling with putting words to paper.

When asked to contribute monthly to *The Alabama Gazette* in October 2010, I was incredibly honored that someone considered my thoughts and words worthy of print.

Initially, writing was somewhat easy because there was so much to discuss – so many battles to fight – so many people who fervently believed we could reverse the political course if only – so we were told – elect more Republicans. Many battles remain but, sadly, the majority we helped elect has seemingly become tone deaf to those of us in the grassroots and have too many times capitulated to the demands of the special interests and political ruling class.

I’ve considered that I have possibly run out of words and that the constant “whack-a-mole” political issues are too far gone for redemption. Or, that too many of us have been deceived to believe anything will really ever change.

Further, the recent and horrific terrorist attacks in France appear to be yet one more sign that this world is simply burning out of control.

But just when I thought it might be time to walk away for a time, I’ve experienced renewed hope. Oh, not that cheap “hope and change” rhetoric that we’ve somehow endured for the past seven years – no, REAL hope for lasting change – and the faith that will never be delivered by politicians.

That hope was expressed in the form of a movie, and in watching its impact on thirty 6th grade Montgomery inner city young men who are being led to rise above the hurdles and hostility of their neighborhoods.

The movie is **Woodlawn** and these 6th graders attend Valiant Cross Academy, an all-male Christian school operating in its first year at River City Church, formerly known as the Dexter Avenue Methodist Church. **Woodlawn** is the production dream of Birmingham-born brothers Andrew and Jon Erwin; Valiant Cross is the education and community dream of Montgomery-born brothers Anthony and Fredrick Brock.

I don’t personally know these 6th graders and my rural Caucasian world is far removed from the one in which they live. Along with several others who have been praying for this new school, I was invited to attend as a chaperone, but our presence was hardly needed as these young men were by far some of the best-behaved and well-mannered children I have ever seen.

At some point during the movie, as I sat with young and old, black and white, male and female, seeing these young children enthusiastically embrace the movie’s theme of forgiveness and Christ’s love as being our only hope, a good bit of my discouragement began to melt away.



SMART GIRL  
POLITICS  
*Action*



Engage Educate Empower

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

## “RISE ABOVE”

I do not pretend that the serious problems in our own communities, state, and nation diminished that day along with my discouragement. If anything, our fiscal, social, and security crises are intensifying at a frightening pace and the chance of our nation destroying itself from within looms larger than ever in my lifetime.

Yet a movie and a fledgling school still provides me hope. **Woodlawn** gives hope because it relates the true story of a football team and an entire school coming together despite racial turmoil because of the love of Christ. Valiant Cross Academy offers me hope because of its intent to not only educate at-risk young men academically, but to also teach them to rise above whatever obstacles life throws at them with honor, discipline, integrity, excellence, and love. Their mission beautifully states: **“The world does not need supermen. It needs supernatural men; men who will learn from their youth, to let go of self, to let the power of the Holy Spirit raise them to new heights. Courageous men, righteous men, committed men, loving men who will rise up to lead, to serve, to inspire.”**

Whether it be movie producers sharing the much-needed Gospel or dedicated adults who commit to giving thirty 6th graders an educational opportunity to “rise above” and beyond their expectations, the lesson to remember is we always have hope – and there is always somewhere each of us can serve to save our nation. It’s time for us all to “rise above.”

Marcia Chambliss serves on the leadership team of Smart Girl Politics, [www.smartgirlpolitics.com](http://www.smartgirlpolitics.com), an online community for conservative women. She can be reached at: [Marcia@sgpaction.com](mailto:Marcia@sgpaction.com). Her views do not necessarily reflect the opinions of Smart Girl Politics.





# The Education Station...

May God Bless you and yours this beautiful Christmas Season.  
God Bless America!

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

By Bobbie Ames

## The Coming of Christ: The Fulfillment Of Covenant Promise

Our Creator God has always extended covenants to His children. To Adam, it was clearly stated that he might eat of **“every tree in the garden, except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.” (Gen. 2:17-18)** Adam's obligation was merely obedience.

To Noah, who found Grace in the eyes of the Lord, God spoke, **“With thee I will establish my covenant, thou shall come into the ark, thou and thy sons and thy sons' wives, with thee.”** Noah's reward came through obedience and trust.

After the Tower of Babel and the dispersion of the people, God still offered Grace through a covenant with Abraham. **“I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless them, and make thy name great, and thou shall be a blessing. And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee, and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed.” (Gen. 12:2-3)**

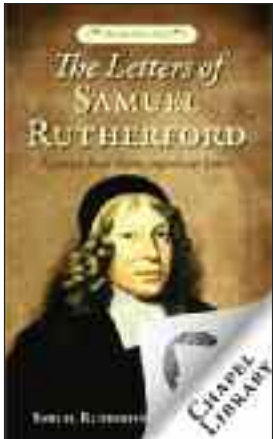
Over the centuries, theologians have placed an emphasis on the Covenants of God. For John Calvin and John Knox, the very substance of the Covenants of the Old and New Testaments were the same: Jesus Christ and the Gospel of Salvation, from the beginning of Creation to the fulfillment of the Second Coming.

Other theologians saw two distinct Covenants: one, a **Covenant of Works**, and the second, a **Covenant of Grace**. The Covenant of Works is sometimes called a legal or “natural” covenant, founded in nature, but also founded in the Law of God, which was written (engraven) in man's heart in the beginning. And in that, Adam was promised eternal life.

Our early American churches were heavily influenced by Reformation thought, and especially cherished was the writing of the Reformers, one being Samuel Rutherford (1600-1661). Rutherford wrote what he embraced as **“The Covenant for Life,”** owing all that we are and have to Him, who gave Himself for us.

Writing in his “Covenant for Life,” Rutherford declared “The Lord punished Christ for us to declare the glory of His justice, in punishing sin in His own Son, who was the sinner by imputation.”

The depth of Rutherford's writing is found in his book, **Christ Dying and Drawing Sinners To Himself**. He alerts us to the fact that the atoning sacrifice for sin, was much more profound than the satisfaction of Justice---it was what took place in the inner heart, the inner person of Jesus Christ.



So as Christmas approaches, and we contemplate celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ, and his fulfillment of the Covenant of Grace, how do we experience that covenant in a very personal way? As we think of the baby Jesus in a manger, can we even fathom the Father's only begotten Son, before the world began, already the appointed Redeemer of the Father's Creation.

It is difficult to even imagine the love that would lead to the Son taking on human flesh of soul and body, and submitting himself to the Law, suffering the death of the Cross, redeeming all who believe from sin and death. Before the world began, Christ agreed to pay the price for our redemption and purchased for us all the benefits of **“free”** Grace and reconciliation.

The Covenant of Grace is foretold in the sacraments of Circumcision, of Baptism, and of the Lord’s Supper. It is beautifully pictured in the sacrifice of the Paschal Lamb, which should enrich our everyday life and constant worship.

One of the respected theologians of today is Dr. Morton H. Smith, who taught in several seminaries, including Reformed Seminary in Mississippi and Greenville Presbyterian Seminary in South Carolina, where he was Dean of the Faculty. He served as Stated Clerk in the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America from its founding in 1973 to 1988.

His writing on Covenant Theology would likely bring a revival to many churches if taken to heart in today's church culture. We highly recommend it. Writing on the Covenants, he reminds us, that “the covenant idea stressed the legal, binding relation between God and His people. Since the covenant idea binds men unto God, this can only be effected on the basis of reconciliation between the Holy God and sinful men. This is the essence of the Covenant designated as the Covenant of Grace.”

When a person accepts Christ by faith as their personal Savior, there is a spiritual union. The judicial ground of that union is found in the Covenant of Grace. Christ sealed the Covenant with His own blood. This glorious truth, writes Dr. Smith, enables us **“to become partakers of the redemption purchased by Christ through the federal, spiritual, and mystical union with Him. Scripture sets forth this union as embracing every phase of the saving relation, both in the purpose of God and in its realization.”**

**I Corinthians 15:19-49** and **Romans 5:12-21** established that, just as Adam was head of the human race, Christ is the constituted head of the new humanity, and acted in a representative capacity to His Elect. We die because of our relation to the first Adam, but we live by faith in Christ. Yes, He gives us eternal life.

**Romans 16:25** addresses the “mystery” which was kept “secret” since the world began. Paul speaks of the **“mystery”** in Romans chapter 5, and again in Colossians chapter 1, which is **“Christ in you, the hope of Glory.”** The very thought of the God of the Universe loving us individually enough to indwell us, is beyond human understanding. And our being united with other believers is promised and fulfilled. Read **John 17** over and over, and rejoice in the Glory.

This glorious Union with Christ gives us daily, even moment by moment, communion with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. We can experience the continual love of the Bridegroom, because through His Covenant, we are reconciled to Him.

**God's Covenant of Grace is the central unifying theme of the entire Bible. Once we are united in Christ, there is no power that can remove us from His Grace. (John 6:39 & John 10:28-30)**

As we gather together and sing our Christmas carols, and reach out to others at this glorious time of the year, may the Covenant remain our focus. **“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him, should not perish, but have eternal life.” (John 3:16)**

\*\*\*\*\*  
For more information about Dr. Morton H. Smith’s writing and Covenant Theology, a good source is the Bookstore of Greenville Presbyterian Seminary, P.O Box 690, Taylors, SC. 29687.



Ronald A. Holtsford

spaghetti and meatballs type “creator” is changing the results with his “noodly appendages.” Apparently this satirical belief system became rather popular among those opposing creation as outlined in the Bible.

It seems that their ridicule of religion is not confined to Judeo-Christian beliefs. A woman in Massachusetts has now presumably mocked those religions that wear head attire which not only include certain Jews, but also some of the religions that arise from the “Near Eastern” nations comprising the old Ottoman Empire, including a few from beyond that area. She finally won the right to be photographed wearing a colander on her head for her driver’s license photograph. A Texas Pastafarian in 2013 had previously won that right to be photographed with a colander on his head.

My wife has asked me why I am giving any sort of recognition to these people. She is right to ask that question and I think of my wife as a wise woman. My answer lies in the liberal mockery that has replaced reason in the interpretation of the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment of the Constitution of the United States.

The men that wrote the most powerful governing document the world has ever known was written by men, mostly men of Faith whose religious roots were in Christianity. These men knew that by example in England it did not work well to declare a state sponsored religion and even among the several states there were those that had an endorsed or majority religion. Connecticut for example was mostly Congregationalist. Thomas Jefferson responded to the Danbury Baptists who were concerned about being a minority denomination. Framed by those that wrote the First Amendment, the Establishment Clause read, “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; . . . .”.

This was a time when only free white men voted and I would think that it was not anticipated that there would ever be a significant percentage of voters who were not Christian. If that was in fact the thinking then I would believe it was a matter of not wanting a particular religion (denomination) to become predominant to a point of influencing politics, the government and laws.

Now through the years the Courts have interpreted the Constitution in a manner that the government, whether that be Federal, State or Local shall not do anything that will “endorse” one religion over all others and shall for the most

## Do the Pastafarians ridicule the First Amendment?

So what in the world is a Pastafarian? The Pastafarians “worship” the Flying Spaghetti Monster and their “church” may also be referred to as the Church of the Flying Spaghetti Monster.

It seems in 2005, that a Bobby Henderson wrote a letter to the Kansas State Board of Education complaining about their decision to teach intelligent design/ creationism in addition to evolution. In his letter he argues against intelligent design and said that any time a scientist carbon dates any object that

part make exception for those religions who request inclusion in holiday displays.

The Courts have typically allowed holiday religious symbols (Christmas, Hanukkah) when displayed with secular symbols (Christmas tree, Santa Claus, etc) or when considered in a historical context.

Two years ago, the State of Florida allowed groups to display their symbols during the Christmas and Hanukkah seasons. Christians displayed a manger scene. One atheist group displayed a banner for the winter solstice and another atheist group displayed a Festivus Pole made of beer cans. The Pastafarians displayed a pile of holy noodles. Satanists petitioned to provide a display of an angel falling into a pit of fire, which was rejected, but was apparently allowed in 2014 after the legal team for the Satanists made a case for their display.

The Bible tells us of the birth of Christ and how it was foretold in the Old Testament including where it would occur. God directed both the lowly shepherds and the wise men from the East to visit the baby Jesus and to worship Him. The birth of a child is always a special occasion; these very small humans have successfully left the security of the womb and fall into the hands of people that love them. These children represent a new beginning of hope and expectation. How much more hope does the birth of a Savior bring to those who have had no hope?

Christmas is not however the primary reason for Christian celebration. While the birth of Christ is celebrated in the Bible by those made aware by God, it is not a designated holiday nor the primary reason for hope in Christ. The primary reason for hope in Christ is that through His example of resurrection we know He is the Son of the true and living God the Father and that through God’s grace and salvation by faith, Christians are promised an afterlife with Him. That is our only hope.

Regardless of your faith, I hope that each of you have a wonderful Christmas, Hanukkah and/ or Kwanza. God bless you, everyone!

*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.*

*"No representation is made that the quality of legal services performed is greater than the quality of legal services performed by other lawyers."*

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ROBSERVATIONS...

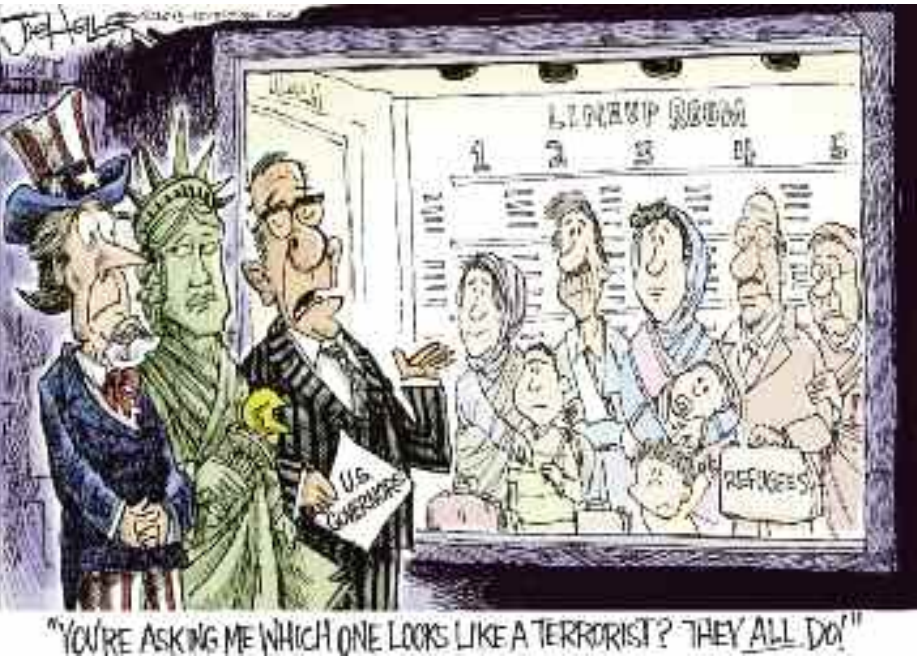
by Robert Tate



WHAT A WICKED WORLD

A lot has happened since my last Robservation. The Paris terrorist attacks, the Russian airline shoot down, the increasing concern over Syrian refugees coming to the States, President Obama’s pathetic, sad and disgusting speech in Turkey, Rhonda Rousey getting knocked out, you name it. I want to touch on them just a little.

- 1. Russian airliner shot down: Not much to say here. Russia has finally admitted that their plane was brought down by a terrorist attack and yes, Vladimir Putin is pretty much pissed. They have launched a couple of thousand sorties to attack ISIS targets while we are still launching roughly 7 sorties per day with many of our airplanes coming home with their bombs still hanging beneath the wings for fear of possible collateral damage (i.e. accidentally killing civilians). We can debate the efficacy of this at a later date but the point here is that the Russians are taking it to ISIS. Funny thing is that their anger, righteous as it may be, seems a little askew when thinking about how just last July (2014), they shot down Malaysia Airlines Flight 17 and nobody seemed to care. Hmmmm.
- 2. Syrian Refugees: Back in September, I wrote a Robservation dealing with the refugee crises in Europe. So now in America, at last count, there are at least 33 governors saying they won’t allow any of those refugees into their states.



This is where the argument intentionally gets chummed up by the left. Many of those who have absolutely no religious affiliation love to take scriptures, almost always out of context, and say how un-Christian we are for not wanting to open the floodgates for their arrival. Does this offend me? Not even close because I realize most of those people have no true understanding of the reality facing them. To most, it is almost as though they expect to see Mr. Roarke and Tattoo dressed in their white suites welcoming them to Fantasy Island. So let’s get some things straight here. Yes, every one of us should have compassion and love for these people as the Bible commands. No true Christian is going to deny that. It hurts my heart when I see those beautiful little children in their current situation. How can it not hurt you?

But what we have going on, as evidence in the behavior of many, is something more ominous. When the 33 governors argue against the admittance of so many refugees, buried within their objections, hidden by the media, is their call for complete, thorough, accurate and honest background checks on each and every one of the so-called refugees. FBI director James Comey, (<http://daily caller.com/2015/10/21/fbi-director-admits-us-cant-vet-all-syrian-refugees-for-terror-ties-video/>), came out and clearly stated that the U.S. does not have the capability or capacity to accurately vet each and every “Syrian citizen” that Obama wants to allow into the country. And yes, folks, President Obama wants to allow 10,000 in here. Even if we could actually clear 90% of those people, that would leave over 1,000 possible terrorists instant access into the US. And please keep in mind, ISIS said that is exactly what they are planning on doing. There is too much to write here but Google something like ISIS vows to infiltrate refugees. Some estimates say 20,000 have already done so. Instead of believing in the goodness of men, in this situation I am going to believe the words and doctrine of ISIS. Just like doctrine guides our military (I used to be a military doctrine analyst), doctrine guides the bad guys. They tend to do what they say so why should I believe some bleeding heart pundit sunbathing on Fantasy Island? Do you guys remember a dude named Adolf Hitler? In his book, Mein Kampf, he boldly called his shots and still nobody wanted to believe it. I don’t think we need a review of those results. I like to take evil people at their word for the evil they want to perpetrate.

The point here is clear. Unless all can be vetted, none should be allowed in.

It is really that simple because here is the question at hand when you cut through all the political correct garbage out there. If you value the lives of the Syrian refugees over that of American citizens, then let them all in no questions asked. If you, like me, however, value the lives of my American brothers and sisters more, guess what? Again, it really is that simple. Really!

So when I hear people crying about how un-American my stance is I simply say, “Shut up. You have no idea how to protect this country and what sacrifices it really takes.” I have heard several people like Attorney General Loretta Lynch talking about the thorough “vetting process” we have in place but you know what? I think I am going to believe what the director of the FBI clearly states and what our own lying eyes are seeing taking place in Europe. You wanna hear a real Christian principle? Yes we are to feed the poor and hungry. Clothe those who need it. Yes, no doubt. But you know what, our leadership’s responsibility is to care for his people first. Even in our own households we are instructed to provide for our own first, and if our leadership refuses to at least try and guarantee the safety of our own people, they are remiss, slack and arguably criminally negligent in their responsibilities. Yes the refugees are important to me, but you know what, American lives happen to be more important. If you don’t like that answer, I really cannot help you, sorry.

By the way, I believe the best method of fixing this issue is to have a vote within the Senate. Only those states whose Senators vote yes will get refugees. Of course, Washington D.C. would get the lion share of refugees since they want it in the first place. I wonder how many “No” votes we would see?

- 3. Paris Attacks: I was going to address this issue but space and time preclude it. I will do so later. All I am going to say is that people in the West had better open their eyes to the reality confronting us and be willing to deal with it. 120+ killed, 352 injured. Really? I heard one person say on television the other day that this is the new normal and we had better get used to it. What? The “new normal.” I refuse to accept that. Sorry. So you want me to believe that in our world today, normal is defined as having a pretty good chance some terrorist gunning me and my wife down while having dinner? Or while we are enjoying a night at the Shakespeare Festival, we can expect some guy to come in and blow the place up? Or should I accept normal as every time I climb into my Delta jet, I should expect a bomb to go off? That is normal? If you think so, you are a sad, sad, pathetic, weak, cowardly and sorry human being. To me, normal is a diverse society where blacks, whites, yellows, browns, blues greens, purples, Christians, Jews, Buddhists, Muslims, Sikhs or whoever it may be, can enjoy time together, at dinner, the theater, movies, baseball games without the worry of being killed by some radical crazies. That, my friends, is normal. Again, if you cannot see that, I cannot help you and I am not sure I even want to.
- 4. Obama Addresses the G-20 in Turkey: I have seen many of President Obama’s speeches over the years and the one he gave the other day was truly a work of art. If you haven’t seen it, go to YouTube and pull it up. Be sure to have a vomit bag sitting close to you. I mean it was really sad to see the President of the United States again refusing to say the words, “Muslim Terrorists” but in the same breath denigrating Republicans running for office. A quick scan of the audience was one of disbelief at his answers. I told my friend it reminded me of the Superman movie when he lost his super powers and the world was in crisis looking for him to come and help. But, alas he was nowhere to be found. The despair on the faces was similar to what I saw in the audience filled with reporters from around the world. People are actively looking and pleading for American leadership but are instead finding it from Russia and France. It is sad to see my great country being reduced in status while our President is sadly filling the role of Neville Chamberlain of the 1930s.

Among President Obama’s most egregious line of statements dealt with his so-called strategies against ISIS. The man has absolutely no clue what he is talking about. None. Lt. General Dave Deptula spelled it out eloquently last night on Fox News. Last month I had an article published in The Weekly Standard online magazine. If you are interested, go to [weeklystandard.com](http://weeklystandard.com) and in the search window, type my name. My article “Why Our Strategies Against ISIS Are Useless” will pop up. Read it and then if someone wants to debate our strategies, bring it. I’m here.

Lastly, the president’s position on Syrian refugees was the clearest argument he made in the entire speech. It obviously demonstrated his main concerns. It is certain that he does not care what his FBI director has to say and that he arguably appears to have more regard for Syrian refugees than American civilians. “Rob, how dare you say that.” See point number 2 above. No vetting equals little to no regard for American citizens, those same citizens he is obligated to protect as the President of the United States.



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John Sophocleus

# THINK



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

## UNplanned Parenthood: an integral part of understanding the Christmas Season

Most Gazette readers require no reminder of the ‘unplanned’ birth of Jesus we venerate during the Christmas season. **Matthew 1:18-20** explains Joseph’s love for Mary and belief in God was so strong he followed the angel’s instructions to continue the betrothed course and not quietly divorce Mary as she was indeed bringing the Son of God into this world. Fewer readers may be familiar with US District Court Judge Myron Thompson’s recent Planned Parenthood ruling further assaulting the civil rights of citizens who do not wish to subsidize those committing infanticide of their children.

Reason Staff Editor Elizabeth Nolan Brown [10/28/15] wrote, “*Alabama must restore the contract with Planned Parenthood as a Medicaid provider, at least for now, because Alabama offered no reason whatsoever for the sudden defunding, the state was likely in violation of federal Medicaid law, which requires letting patients see any provider that accepts Medicaid unless the state establishes that they’re not qualified. Providers, of course, are not generally obligated to take Medicaid patients, and many don’t because of low reimbursement rates. But under federal law, Medicaid patients have ‘freedom of choice’ among qualified Medicaid providers.*”

Planned Parenthood Southeast filed the lawsuit after Gov. Bentley’s determination to end our State’s agreement with the only two clinics (Birmingham & Mobile) in Alabama. The termination letter did not give any reason(s) for ending the provider agreement but Bentley publicly stated concerns over Center for Medical Progress (CMP) videos on fetal tissue programs. Quoting Bentley saying, “*I respect human life and do not want Alabama to be associated with an organization that does not,*” Brown cited neither of Alabama’s Planned Parenthood clinics participate in fetal tissue programs from Judge Thompson’s decision and further reported Alabama as one of several states trying to strip Planned Parenthood of Medicaid funding. Texas health officials informed Planned parenthood clinics were “*liable, directly or by affiliation, for a series of serious Medicaid program violations*” as highlighted in the CMP videos prompting Planned Parenthood Federation of America’s Executive V.P. Dawn Laguens to respond, “*it is completely outrageous that Texas officials are using these thoroughly discredited, fraudulent videos to cut women off from*

*preventive health care,*” vowing Planned Parenthood would “*fight back against this outrageous, malicious, political attack in Texas with everything we’ve got.*” Louisiana also attempted to end its Medicaid relationship with Planned Parenthood, but a federal judge ruled October 19 it must provide funding for at least 14

more days. She also



quoted an NPR report, “*In 2011, when Planned Parenthood was also in the headlines, Indiana passed a law barring Medicaid funding to any entity that also performed abortions, even if those abortions were performed with nonpublic funds,*” later blocked in a federal appellant court. Brown thought Judge Diane Sykes’ quote from the majority opinion, “*Although Indiana has broad authority to exclude unqualified providers from its Medicaid program, the state does not have plenary authority to exclude a class of providers for any reason - more particularly for a reason unrelated to provider qualifications,*” important to include in her report. Most doubt Alabama or Louisiana will succeed in current efforts to cut ties with Planned Parenthood. Ms. Brown concluded her report with, “*If Republicans want to strip Planned Parenthood of state Medicaid funding, Congress will have to change federal Medicaid law first.*”

After suffering all that current news, some ask - doesn’t the Hyde amendment (prohibiting use of federal funds for abortion except cases where the mother’s life is in danger or pregnancy results from incest/incest) apply to this ruling? Hyde addressed a symptom; the source of the problem is unconstitutional federal programs/policies like Medicare/Medicaid imposed by extremists decades ago. In a world of ‘fungibility’ Hyde doesn’t matter. Alabama Medicaid Agency records show \$4,351 (Thompson’s order stated \$5,600) paid for services to patients at Planned Parenthood’s Alabama clinics over the last two years in Mike Cason’s *Al.com* report; payments were mostly for contraceptive services and did not include abortions.

State, local and private efforts can address indigent health care concerns, the federal government is not authorized to address the issue and has shown diseconomies our central government of such a large/populous coalition experiences. Taxpayers who do not wish to subsidize those killing their children have the right to move to another State/locale which doesn’t exchange with a company (who may not engage in the illegal/reprehensible behavior in their jurisdiction) rendering support to the activity in other jurisdictions. The right and tradition of boycott was once strong in our nation.

Some assert Thompson’s injunction reinforces Jane Doe’s right to seek family planning services at the qualified provider of choice - which is absurd. Nothing has been done to deny Jane that right - she (or any private donor who wishes to subsidize Jane) may purchase whatever service and/or provider however she see’s fit. Thompson’s poor training and understanding of letter and Spirit of the Constitution fails to protect the civil rights of citizens in general NOT to subsidize Jane. States as the sovereign unit (who may also authorize local governments to act) may fund/subsidize abortions, fetal tissue, etc. but Alabama does not. Private expenditure of time and effort may also occur, some follow their conscience to take those wanting to end the life of their child to locales which will do so; others follow their conscience to discourage killing and promote adoption, financial help in raising children of mothers often young, inexperience and of meager means for the task. This ‘freedom of choice’ to devote one’s time, money and effort to the manner of assistance they prefer has been usurped for the modern ‘choice’ movement more interested in imposing their preferred choice and have others pay for it.

I’ve made it clear in past columns Roe v. Wade is one of DC’s more tangible assaults on State sovereignty and I’m a pragmatist on the issue. If the people of a State want to allow murder in Massachusetts and not in Mississippi, it is NOT a federal offense. The definition and enforcement of murder isn’t authorised to the federal government. I’m not foolish enough to think banning murder will end all the killing (even less so the immediate and tangible murder of a defenseless child inside or just outside a womb) we’ve observed, but I want the freedom to possibly live in a State which doesn’t subsidize the murder of one’s own child.

If you wish to kill your own child, do it on your own purse. It is not a lot to ask federal judges to ban taking my treasure to subsidize what I find reprehensible. This is an integral part of securing the blessings of liberty for ourselves and our posterity. My biggest grievance is to stop forcing that blood on my hands - it is even sadder commentary upon our churches who’ve allowed governments to be their moral compass instead taking the lead on issues of this sort. The Romans observed and feared the fidelity of the meek and poor to Christians who helped them more than their government asserting kindness and benevolence when the actions and results of Rome clearly provided the contrary. I fear the system is so dysfunctional after so many generations of distorted results, collapse of the corrupt command economy must occur in hopes there are enough surviving righteous folks to reassemble effective private efforts to address indigent healthcare.

In keeping with the Christmas story, there’s little surprise potentates installed by the central authority are willing to use fear and the killing of many innocent children to reassert/hold onto power. **Matthew 2:1-16** explains Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of King Herod where wise men came from the east to Jerusalem asking, “*Where is He that is born King of the Jews?*” Following His star in the east, they came to behold and worship Him. When Herod heard this he was troubled and gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together demanding of them where Christ should be born, and they answered Bethlehem. Herod ‘privily’ called the wise men and inquired about the time the star appeared. Departing for Bethlehem Herod said to the wise men, “*Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found Him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also.*” The star continued before them, till it stood over where the young child was to their great joy! They saw the young child with Mary and fell down to worship Him then presented their gifts of gold, and frankincense, and myrrh. Being warned of God in a dream they should not return to Herod, the wise men traveled back to their own country another way. Similarly, the Lord’s angel appeared to Joseph in a dream saying, “*Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him.*” When Joseph woke, he took the young child and His mother by night, and departed into Egypt and remained there until Herod’s death. The wise men successfully averted Herod which triggered great rage. King Herod slew all the children of Bethlehem and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under according to the time he had diligently inquired of the wise men.

I pray no one is surprised potentates of our modern Rome are just as adept in using fear and killing of innocent children as Herod in the attempt to reaffirm his power and tyranny. I doubt anyone is surprised federal judges who allow juries to decide/convict corrupt politicians like Messrs. Scrushy and Siegelman in 2006 (sadly, the bureaucrat included in the same litigation, who had a much more defined money trail of paying for favoritism was NOT convicted) are threatened with impeachment/must be removed and those with poor docket performance, allow corruption and advance federal hegemony remain. Indeed nothing new under the sun here.

This column is intended to be at least one sobering moment in your Christmas celebration to think about how important it is to be an integral part of standing against despotism in our federal, local and State governments. It is my sincere prayer all who know the power of Jesus Christ’s teachings will take Him into their hearts this blessed season and overcome the distraction of consumerism and destruction at the hands of the ruling elite who have made government their god. I know the Holy Spirit in Jesus Christ, Son of the true God is indeed greater than the spirit of evil in the sons of Nimrod, Caesar(s) et al because it is His name which remains above all nations. This small, unplanned Child of God, relegated to be born in a cave at the behest of a despot setting the world on a course toward increasing darkness, in the City of David among the lowest of mankind by worldly standards would do more to bring light and the Spirit of Zion to a wicked world than Rome could possibly contain.

The wicked want the righteous to give in or die... As you celebrate the beginning of Jesus Christ’s path into this world during the Christmas season, understand the magnitude of the mission His Father set Him upon. If you truly believe and adhere to His teachings, it destroys the power of death and darkness. Without this fear Rome’s (and the many leviathans to follow) ability to advance their despotic ends is thwarted. **Jesus showed us the way; it is up to us to have the courage, faith and wisdom to follow. If we do not stand well against evil and corruption in our everyday lives, we’re failing Him and the righteous efforts many suffered so mankind may not be compelled to endure the agony of Roman despotism again. Resistance to tyranny is obedience to God. You can be God’s servant OR a servant to Rome; it is impossible to serve both. It really is that simple. The choice is yours to make or reaffirm every Christmas...**

**Postscript:** Last month’s column provided various signs of trouble in AU Athletics evoking more hate/love mail than usual, yet no response from administrators as requested. Lavish raises associated with scandals revealed more information to consider. Wall Street Journal reports exposing athletic administrators interfering in academics focused on 2013. During the next (2014) raise cycle associate athletics director for academics received a massive raise published at almost \$24k - very unusual 13% increase (over six times the 2% pool for faculty) and significantly surpassing the 8% standard cap. Recent AU faculty senate discussions indicate no justification memo submitted for this unusual raise. Athletics now claim it was “really” an 8% raise (outrageous to some along with circumventing policy) and the additional 5% wasn’t an extra-special additional reward for a job very well done, but rather additional income taken as transportation reimbursement. Awarding additional taxable income instead of tax exempt business expense was apparently to trump up their “three-high” retirement calculation. Seems expenses of providing vehicle and/or mileage reimbursement to someone in charge of academic advising for student athletics came to EXACTLY 5% of annual salary. Moreover, why would an individual then be due performance-based merit raises on this “vehicle/mileage raise” in subsequent years? Athletics apparently preferred to publicly admit to senators this absurd scheme to perpetrate fraud upon RSA (including Alabama taxpayers) rather than admit giving a very special/unusual raise to an individual front and center of the scandal exposed by the WSJ. Ironically, the individual reporting to AU senators about this unusual raise to circumvent policy and manipulate RSA was VP of Finance, Don Large; the very same Don Large currently serving on the board of control for the teacher’s retirement system and previously claimed to be the senior university official responsible for approving administrative raises recommended by the Athletics Department. Published AU salary files indicate Mr. Large also received a very nice 8% raise (\$28+k) this new budget year. My forecast is a policy change to increase the 8% cap on raises holding back AU Athletics administrators - This IS Auburn...



# 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. He may be reached at [www.steveflowers.us](http://www.steveflowers.us).



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

November 25, 2015:

Last week I gave you an alphabetical list of the 18 potential horses in the 2018 Alabama Gubernatorial Derby. We will begin this week handicapping them in descending order.

The Number 18 horse is current Speaker of the House Mike Hubbard. We will know whether the beleaguered Speaker of the House will remain in the derby by next March. He is on trial in Lee County. A grand jury indicted him over a year ago on 23 felony counts of ethics law violations. If he is convicted on any of the 23 charges, he becomes a felon and will not only be removed from my 2018 Alabama Derby, he will be removed from the House of Representatives and as Speaker of the House.

If Hubbard survives prosecution, he will definitely be in the Governor's Race and he will be in with a vengeance. His followers assume that he will be the beneficiary of a tremendous sympathy vote. He will have the benefit of being able to raise a large amount of campaign dough by virtue of being Speaker of the House. This has been his most advantageous attribute all along and his fundraising ability will remain intact and might even be enhanced.

However, Hubbard's name identification has been badly damaged. Even if he survives the trial, having been the subject of very negative publicity for nearly two years will be difficult to overcome. Regardless, if found innocent, Hubbard will most likely run for governor. He will remain on my list of viable gubernatorial candidates and probably move up significantly from Number 18. However, he will not make the top 10.

The Number 17 horse is Alabama Supreme Court Justice Jim Main. Under Alabama law, a judge cannot seek election after they turn 70. Therefore, Main will be age limited from seeking reelection to the Court in 2018, but he is a young looking 70-ish fellow and not ready to go to the house.

Judge Main has been around Alabama politics all of his life. He grew up in Union Springs, went to Auburn and became a pharmacist like his father. He then went to law school and became a lawyer. He practiced law in Anniston for 20 years, then moved to Montgomery to practice law with Jere Beasley.

In the late 90's, Main was Gov. Fob James Chief of Staff and legal advisor. Main then became a major player in Bob Riley's administration as State Finance Director. He was appointed to the Alabama Court of Criminal Appeals in 2009, and later to the Supreme Court. He won a full term in 2012.

The Number 16 horse is Greg Reed, a young promising State Senator. Reed came to the Senate with the GOP takeover in 2010. He is a Jasper attorney and very popular in his home district. Most political observers predict a bright future for Reed. He is plain spoken and his word is good. People trust him. That is why he has already risen to the rank of Majority Leader in the Senate.

However, in all reality, Reed will probably not be a candidate for governor. Some would assume that he might run for lieutenant governor and he could be a viable candidate for that post but it is going to be a crowded field. My guess is that Sen. Reed remains in the State Senate and becomes President Pro Tem of the Senate. The three GOP leaders ahead of him probably will not return to the upper chamber. Jabo Wagoner is expected to retire and Arthur Orr and Del Marsh more than likely will run for statewide office. Today, being President Pro Tem of the Senate is a lot more powerful than lieutenant governor, which is nothing more than a ceremonial position.

The Number 15 horse is State Senator Arthur Orr of Decatur. Senator Orr is Chairman of the Senate Finance and Taxation Committee. That position allows him to raise lots of campaign money, which he has already done. He was unopposed in his last race and stockpiled a lot of money. He is handsome and marketable for television. My belief is that Sen. Orr starts out running for governor, but drops back to the lieutenant governor's race.

The Number 14 horse is Anniston Mayor Vaughn Stewart, a fourth generation Annistonian. Stewart wants to run for governor and some folks in Calhoun County say he has been running for governor all his life. He is a former University of Alabama SGA president and a lawyer by profession. It will be interesting to see if he pulls the trigger.

We will continue analyzing the potential horses in the 2018 Alabama Derby next week.

Please see Steve Flowers continuation articles at [www.steveflower.us](http://www.steveflower.us)



## Family Therapy



PLEASE TALK TO ME!

*THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNICATION SKILLS*

**Oswaldo Chavez,**  
MS, LMFT-S, LPC-S, NCC  
Clinical Counselor, Non-profit  
organization.

*Hector Oswaldo Chavez, MS, is a Marriage and Family Therapist, Professional Counselor, and Substance Abuse Counselor. He serves on multiple boards and has worked in a variety of clinical settings such as with the Army, Navy, Hospital Inpatient and Outpatient, Community Mental Health, and Private Practice. His professional views may not necessarily reflect the views of other mental health or medical professionals. If you have any personal or family concerns about the topic discussed, please seek professional assistance.*



- Sit or stand on the same level to avoid looking up to or down on your partner.
- Avoid distracting gestures such as fidgeting or using devices like cell phones, mobile tablets, glancing at papers, or tapping your feet or fingers.
- Be aware that physical barriers, noise or interruptions ( children, television, radio) will make good communication difficult.
- Show genuine attention and interest.
- Ask for feedback from your partner on your listening.
- Repeat to the your partner what the you heard for clarification and understanding.

**Food for Thought--**  
**We all communicate without knowing it!**

Communication is essential in all relationships as it allows us to share interests, aspirations, and concerns. It allows us to support one other, to harmonize our lives,

to make cooperative decisions, and to work together in caring for one another. Good communication is not just about the way we talk, but the way we listen, to our demeanor (body language ).

Just recently my wife would make what I called a “Chihuahua face” when she disagreed with something I said or requested from her. I let it go for a while; however, eventually, I started to harbor some resentment towards her non-verbal response. As a result, I asked her if she would she please stop making that face because it made me feel like she did not care or was angry with me for some unknown reason. In like manner, there have been multiple times when my wife would begin a conversation with me, and I would start walking away to get something done or not give her direct eye contact which she requested. This would make her feel like I was not listening to her or that I did not care about what she had to say. I do admit this is something I continue to work on. However, I am aware of her concerns, and I am making a concerted effort to change. As we all know, change does not happen overnight. It is important to be patient with others and gentle towards oneself. My wife and I are constantly learning how to communicate with each other and our children in a manner that is both healthy and meets our individual needs. Do we get it right at all times? No, but having open communication prevents future issues from arising because each person has their own history that may affect the interpretation of what message is being conveyed. If you can't seem to improve the communication in your relationship, consider talking with a counselor. Most of us find some experiences or topics difficult to talk about. It may be something that is emotionally painful or makes us feel uncomfortable. For example, some people find it difficult to express their past hurts. It is often the things that cannot be talked about that hurt the most.



Continued on page 7A.

# Bench - Bar & Beyond

By Judge Dale Segrest



## Judge Philip Dale Segrest

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## Faith: Consensus Reality

Faith is what we really and truly believe. It performs some remarkable functions that do not depend on its ties to religion. All of us believe that we exist in a physical environment on the face of the earth and that by observation we can come to understand that environment. We take for granted that the objects that surround us have names and that there are words that we can use to identify and describe them. Because we live in a social environment in with others who share those same words and names and objects, we are almost unconscious of the shared mental operations that make the words and names useful. We ignore the fact that only by using the words and names that we share with others can we deal with the massive amounts of information and objects that we encounter, and that is required for human survival.

Words and names are signs or symbols that we use to share knowledge with other people. Words represent objects or ideas. Because words represent objects or ideas, they can be identified as abstractions. Words are not the actual object. They are an abstraction of the object or idea. The process of abstraction seems simple enough as long as we are using the names and words to represent physical objects. Abstractions become a little more complicated when they represent ideas, such as numbers, scientific laws, mathematical equations and the like. Some abstractions seem to exist only because we all

share them. For instance, the days of the week like Wednesday which derives its name from the ancient Norse god, Woden, and Thursday, which derives its name from ancient Norse god, Thor. Or the word ten, which represents number ten, which might in turn represent fingers and toes, that are sometimes called “digits.” These important abstractions exist only because we all believe in them.

We can arrange our calendars because we all collectively share and identify the days of the week, particular months and particular years. We all agree upon time. The concepts of time, days, weeks, months, and years are a part of the reality that we create by our shared mental processes. These concepts are very important in organizing the work of our society, on which we all depend. It bothers us if anyone is not “on time.” If it were not a shared reality, it is doubtful that an isolated individual like Robinson Crusoe would ever think about those kinds of things. The reality that we create and share in our common belief system--our faith system-- is best known as consensus reality. Consensus reality has been in existence and growing for a long time. All human progress depends on it.

Of course, we know that consensus reality can be mistaken. The earth is not flat. However, despite its short comings, consensus reality is the only way that we have of creating the useful shared world in which we live and move and have our being. Without

such sharing, we could not function as a society, and our individual needs could not be satisfied.

The sharing creates the reality. There is the story of the ancient Indian philosopher who dreamt he was a butterfly and spent the remainder of his life contemplating whether he were a Indian philosopher dreaming he was a butterfly or a butterfly dreaming he was a Indian philosopher! I think it was the French philosopher Blaise’ Pascal who said that if we dreamt in unison and experienced our waking lives in isolation we would think the situation reversed.

Consensus reality that we collectively create is extremely important. We could not survive without it. With it we build our social systems, including religions, morality, law, economics, and even education, science, politics and government. It brings the food to our tables.

Consensus reality has a life of its own. It is here when we are born, and although it might change during the course of our lives, it will be here after we have passed away. Consensus reality is built by faith, not just individual faith, but collective faith. Because of the important role that consensus reality plays, it is very important that we understand the role that faith plays in creating it. Only by recognizing this huge function of faith can we begin to fully comprehend the importance of religion. But please remember that for faith to create reality, it has to be what we really believe.

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



## TEACHER TENURE LAW LEAVES THOUSANDS OF ALABAMA’S CHILDREN ILLITERATE

**Dr. David Nichols**

Beginning as early as 1909 schools systems began to insulate all teachers from being fired unjustly due to a wide array of unfair reasons such as replacing them with the school principal’s daughter, personal conflict among another more favored teacher, political differences, perceived insubordination involving unreasonable task assignments, etc. Tenure has existed in K-12 education since then, when “good government” reformers borrowed the concept from Germany. The idea spread quickly from New Jersey to New York to Chicago and then across the country. During the Progressive Era both teacher unions and school accountability hawks embraced the policy. In brief, tenure was originally implemented to prevent teaching jobs from being given as favors by political bosses and school officials. Teacher tenure became embodied along with the growth of teachers unions, though usually carried titles such as the “teacher education association” or the “organization of “state” teachers”. Teacher tenure laws now exist in every state in the union. However, there the good news is that tenure for teachers is being weakened by court rulings and state legislative actions.

It should be noted that a common practice which pertained to tenure and existed in most states for decades allowed state treasuries to deduct from teachers’ salaries their teacher association or teacher union dues. In addition to these dues providing legal support from a teacher being terminated from service a portion was set aside and used as political and social leverage usually not what teachers wanted but for the agenda of the union bosses. Teacher association chief executive officers (CEO’s) or executive secretaries wielded much influence on national, state and local elections. Many teachers continue to allow these dues to be deducted from their monthly salaries despite their displeasure with to what political candidates, political parties and/or social issues are supported with their dues. Yet, this practice was alive and well for decades...until resently.

California provides a good case study on removing the political power of large and strong teachers’ unions. In the summer of 2014 a California superior-court judge, Judge Rolf Treu, ruled that the state’s tenure system discriminated against kids from low-income families. This usually meant minority students. Based on testimony that one to three percent of California’s teachers were likely “grossly ineffective”. Thousands of mediocre, ineffective teachers assigned to low-income schools, the judge opined, resulted in the poor and minority students being disproportionately disadvantaged in the teaching-learning process. The more effective teachers seemed to find their way to the more affluent schools in the suburbs. The same held true for first-year school principal assignments. Often these were first and second-year principals who were not seasoned and prepared for instructional leadership. The ruling in this case Vergara v. California had the potential of overturning several California State laws governing how long it took for a teacher to earn tenure; the legal maneuvers necessary to remove a tenured teacher; and which teachers would be laid off first in the event of budget cuts or school closings. This case also raised unpopular issues of the assignments of the most effective teachers to schools where achievement was among the lowest.

After 138 years of Democratic control over Alabama’s two governing

bodies, in the 2010 election Republicans gained control of both houses of the Alabama legislature. This ended the long stronghold of the Alabama Education Association’s Executive Secretary, Paul Hubbert, who died in 2013. The Republican elected State Legislature (2010) voted to remove the payroll deduction for AEA member dues thus significantly reducing the number of members. This is similar to what occurred in Wisconsin after a similar law, Act 10, was upheld by a federal circuit court. The clout once carried by teacher unions has already been reduced nationwide.

While the historical facts of teacher unions and dues may be somewhat fascinating, the thousands of young victims of teacher tenure laws making it near impossible to remove a teacher for ineffective teaching is unconscionable. As a long-time public school teacher, administrator, education consultant, and local school board member (both city and county), I witnessed hundreds of inept teachers who somehow received a degree and an Alabama Teacher’s Certificate who were pathetic teachers lacking the knowledge, skills, genuine care, ability or understanding needed to teach children to read and do math in the early grades. Thus, children in the early grades were usually “socially promoted” or placed in Special Education” often because that first, second and third grade teacher failed to teach them how to read, write and do basic math on grade level. According to former U.S. Secretary of Education, William J. Bennett, “If a child has not been taught to read on grade level by the end of the third grade the likelihood of them not earning a high school diploma was 80 percent. (“The Educated Child”, the Free Press, 1999).

While there are many other factors in children failing to read, Alabama’s teacher tenure law is not usually on the list. Yet, it may be the single most frequent and damaging factor in the progress and learning process of basic skills as any one other. Alabama’s Tenure Law currently gives newly-hired teachers three years to be evaluated as effective in teaching. If the school system determines that teachers are not effective they may be released in writing without reason before the end of the third school year. The tragedy is that far too many principals, university supervisors, systems coordinators and school instructional leaders are unwilling to deal with the reaction of these ineffective teachers. Other reasons include their failure to effectively fulfill their roles avoiding adversity and confrontation with the individual teacher. Instead they perpetuate the continued failure of student learning especially in the early grades thus almost assuring that these struggling students will never earn a high school diploma but are more likely to become part of the 70 percent of Alabama prisoners who cannot read.

It is time for Alabama’s elected and appointed state officials, to include the State Board of Education, to address this serious issue of student failure by either doing away with tenure or modifying the existing law to make it easier with well-documented achievement measurements of effectiveness and hold school leaders accountable for failing schools. This is a better approach to raise student achievement than seeking more money from taxpayers and millions of dollars from the federal government with strings attached, regulations and mandates unproven to be effective. The first thing to do is to remove State Superintendents of Education in Alabama who sell out our children under the guise of another new federally funded and controlled curriculum/program which have had little to no effect on student achievement.

*David Nichols, ED.D., is a retired educator who continues to research and publish on vital issues facing our public schools. He served on two local school boards in Alabama. He served as a teacher, leader and consultant at every level from k – 12 and universities. His publications include three books, featured commentaries in every major daily newspaper in Alabama and dozens of journal articles.*

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

Continued from page 6A.  
**Please Talk to Me**  
*The Importance of Communication Skills*  
Oswald Chavez

Expressing one’s thoughts and feelings is not only important in relationship with family members, it is also important with those who we interact with on a day-to-day basis. During family travels, we often go out to eat. At times, I find myself preoccupied mentally and sometimes, during ordering our food, may be brevilloquent with the waiter or waitress. This is not intentional and is this is no excuse for bad manners. I did not fully become aware of this behavior until both my sister in-law and spouse bringing up my brevity. As a result, I now try harder to be in the present moment when communicating with someone in a restaurant or other settings because my intentions are not to be rude or disengaged—that is not who I am as a person. Nevertheless, I know that’s something I continue to need to work on. These are some of my personal experiences that

I have shared in regards to communication issues that arise for me. We all have some form of communication that can be improved upon. I encourage the reader to explore how he or she is communicating and what can be done to communicate more effectively. Communication comes in many forms. Please be aware and learn about all the ways you communicate. It has been my experience in counseling that non-verbal expressions are the most problematic, and I encourage you to gain awareness of your own nonverbal communications skills. Examine what is healthy and what you can improve on! It takes practice, practice, practice.

*Please feel free to email Oswald with any concern or questions you may have concerning your family or teen relationships. Att. Oswald*  
**e-mail: [alabamagazette@gmail.com](mailto:alabamagazette@gmail.com)**



Steve Long

# Woods & Waters with Steve



## Counting down the Days, Hours, and Minutes till the start of GUN SEASON!

As I type up this article, we’re counting down the days, hours, and minutes till the start of gun season! With bow and muzzleloader seasons underway, there’s already been plenty of action for the avid outdoorsman, and the best part is still yet to come!

I’ve had a few folks hunting with me during muzzleloader season, and they’re seeing deer everywhere! Average field count is almost 40 deer a hunt! Between the cold weather, the lack of pressure, and a great crop of acorns this year, we should have another fantastic year out in the field.

So do you have all of your equipment ready to roll out? There’s still time to check out all of your basics, like hunter’s orange, sighting in your rifle and having a few bullets, good, warm clothing, and a little good luck to go with all of that!

Make sure you’ve got a game plan; do you know which stand or stands you

want to hunt in, or what plots you’ll be over? Is there going to be anybody else nearby? Make sure to get your head in the game early, so you’ll have less to worry about in the field.

And speaking of the field, make sure you’ve got your hunting license and harvest record with you! And while you’re at it, take along the Game Check app on your smartphone, and



help out with the state’s field studies! No, it’s not required, but every bit of harvest data we send in helps our wildlife biologists, as well as our lawmakers, to ensure that we can maintain a healthy population of deer for future generations. So that’s definitely something we should all add to the checklist!

Those same future generations can get a great head start out here, with a little

help from all of us seasoned veterans. Not only do we get to share our great passion and tradition that comes with the outdoors, but we also get our kids up and out of the house. In today’s world of computers and technology, more and more children are inside, pent up and not getting enough work or exercise. This can contribute to early onset diabetes, which can have disastrous results. One easy way to help is to get kids active and involved with the outdoors, and deer season is one of the best opportunities for it! With all the walking and stalking we do on a good day’s hunt, everyone gets a fair bit of exercise, which might just be the spark to start something even greater.

So, get your gear, your gun, and your friends and family together, and get ready for a season to remember! And if you’re looking for me, I’ll be right out there with all of you! Good hunting!



Quail at Great Southern Outdoors in Union Spring, AL

## Tyler and Bailey are a new generation of great hunters. Congratulations to each of them!



## Grizzly Bears

**Grizzly bears** have concave faces, a distinctive hump on their shoulders, and long claws about two to four inches long. The grizzlies have a life span of 20-30 years. The grizzly stand 6-8ft tall and males weigh 300-850 lbs and the females weigh 200-450 lbs. Both the hump and the claws are traits associated with a grizzly bear’s

exceptional digging ability. Grizzlies are often dark brown, but can vary from very light cream to black. The long guard hairs on their backs and shoulders frequently have white tips and give the bears a "grizzled" appearance, hence the name "grizzly." The correct scientific name for the species is “brown bear,” but only coastal bears in Alaska and Canada are referred to as such, while inland bears and those found in the lower 48 states are called grizzly bears.

Grizzly bears are omnivores, and their diet can vary widely. They may eat seeds, berries, roots, grasses, fungi, deer, elk, fish, dead animals and insects. In the late summer and early fall, grizzlies enter hyperphagia, a period of 2-4 months when they intensify their calorie intake to put on weight for winter denning. During this time period they can gain more than three pounds a day!

Historically, there were around 50,000 grizzly bears in North America. Today, there are an estimated 1,800 grizzly bears remaining in five populations in the lower 48 states. Most of these bears are located in the Northern Continental Divide Population (including Glacier National Park) and the Yellowstone Population. Alaska is home to a healthy grizzly (sometimes called brown bear) population. Grizzly bears are found many different habitats, from dense forests to subalpine meadows, open plains and arctic tundra. In North America, grizzly bears are found in western Canada, Alaska, Wyoming, Montana, Idaho and a potentially a small population in Washington. Historically, they could be found from Alaska to Mexico and from California to Ohio.

Grizzly bears are normally solitary animals. However, they are not very territorial and they may be seen feeding together where food is abundant, such as at salmon streams and white bark pine sites. Females will rear their cubs for 2-3 years. When a female grizzly bear leaves her mother, they often set up their home range quite close to their mother’s home range. Males will typically range further, but may also remain close by.

Grizzly bears need to eat a lot in the summer and fall in order to build up sufficient fat reserves to survive the winter denning period. This is particularly true for pregnant females, who must have sufficient fat reserves to give birth to approximately 1-4 one-pound cubs in January or February and then nurse them to about 20 pounds before emerging from the den in April or May.

Grizzly bears are one of the slowest reproducing land mammals. Females do not typically reproduce until they are four or five years old. Grizzly bears mate between May and July, but the female’s body delays implantation of their eggs in the uterus until October or November. If the female has not gained enough fat over the summer to survive and raise cubs, implantation may not occur. A grizzly’s ability to garner enough quality calories through the summer is not just crucial for her survival, but also for her reproductive ability. Mother bears rear cubs for two to three years.

Males do not help raise the cubs. In fact, males can be a danger to the cubs. Females often avoid male grizzly bears while rearing their cubs.

A grizzly bear has a better sense of smell than a blood hound and can detect food from miles away.



Ron VanHerwyn





Sports Editor,  
Ed Jones

As the 2015 football season winds down, the talk centers on what four teams will make the National Championship Playoff, which teams will fill the 40 bowls. (The NCAA needs 80 teams to fill the record high 40 bowl games), and of course, who will win the Heisman Trophy. The Heisman Trophy was originally created to honor the best college football player in America. For the last 65 years it has been presented to the best quarterback or running back in America. The award is named for a former Auburn football coach named John Heisman. He later became instrumental in forming the Downtown Athletic Club in New York where he served for many years. This club initiated the Heisman Trophy in honor of Coach Heisman. It is voted on by a restricted number of writers and broadcasters around the country. In the early days, most of the press were concentrated in the middle eastern part of the United States. Therefore it was very difficult for a player from the south to win because of the small number of voters designated in the Southeast. That changed somewhat when Frankie Sinkwich from Georgia won the award in 1942. He was an all purpose back that did everything for the Bulldogs. Since that time Auburn has had three winners: Pat Sullivan, Bo Jackson and Cam Newton. Georgia had another, Hershel Walker. LSU had Billy Cannon. Alabama had Mark Ingram. So, as the Southern influence of the press grew, it became a more fair representation for players from the South.

Still the Heisman Trophy is not necessarily given to the best football player, but to the best quarterback or running back. This is of course because these are the players that are written about and talked about the most. For example, before the season started this year, I thought that the best football player in the country was Miles Jack of UCLA. He was a terrific linebacker and he played fullback or running back in crucial situations. He was injured early in the season but he would not have won the award anyway. No linebacker has won this award in modern college football.

It will be a running back or possibly a quarterback this year. Leonard Fournette, the running back from LSU, was the favorite at mid-year until he ran into that star studded defense of Alabama. Fournette has now dropped off the map. Even though Alabama's outstanding running back, Derrick Henry had been putting up big numbers in every game, he was not nationally recognized until his performance against what was considered a really good LSU defense. Henry gained over two hundred yards and Fournette gained less than forty. As November ends, Henry has gained well over one thousand yards, having run for over 200 yards in five games. He has also been a steady pass receiver for quarterback Jake Coker.

Derrick Henry has been a big difference maker since his freshman season. However, offensive coordinator at Alabama, Lane Kiffin, did not know how to use Henry. Kiffin was only interested in getting credit for developing four year backup Blake Sims into a record setting passer. In the process of doing so, Kiffin caused Alabama to lose two games last year, and most likely the national championship. With Kiffin's game plans, Alabama should have lost two more in which they were out played, Arkansas and LSU. During the semifinals of the first four team playoff game with Ohio State, Derrick Henry ran the football only thirteen times, averaging over seven yards per carry. Yet, Kiffin chose to have Blake Sims win the ball game in critical situations such as when a twenty-yard punt in the fourth quarter gave Alabama a first down inside Ohio State's twenty-five yard line. Alabama was only trailing by six points on first down with six minutes to go in the game. Kiffin calls for a roll out pass on first down that Sims through short into the end zone. Ohio State intercepted and the game was for all practical purposes over. What if Kiffin had called for four straight tailback powers to the left? Four times seven is twenty-eight-touchdown Alabama. Derrick Henry maybe scores with two minutes on the clock-Alabama wins.

Derrick Henry is no "Johnny Come Lately." He has been a star since his first carry as a freshman at Alabama. He is fast, he is strong, he is durable. When was the last time anyone saw Henry injured to where he could not play? He carried the ball thirty eight times against LSU and could have played another quarter. Had he been used properly over the last three years, Henry would have gained over three thousand yards and Alabama would have been national champions in 2014. Coach Nick Saban finally corralled Lane Kiffin and told him to build the offense around Derrick Henry, give Jake Coker a simple way to get the ball to his playmakers on the outside, don't try to create another quarterback star in Kiffin's crown. Credit Lane Kiffin. He has done exactly that. Alabama has a good run pass ratio this year. For this reason with the defense even better this year, there is no reason Alabama can not take the 2015 National Championship Trophy back to Tuscaloosa. Put the load on the best running back in America, Derrick Henry. He delivers.

Even though Henry looks like the front runner for the Heisman, he could be pushed by first year starter Baker Mayfield from Oklahoma as long as the Sooners keep winning. Mayfield is a taller, smarter version of Johnny Manziel who is also a better passer than Manziel. He is coming on strong. The members of the press are always enamored by quarterbacks. They don't understand that ten other people on the offense must perform flawlessly for the quarterback to

be effective. It has always been this way. It will always be that way. Quarterbacks get too much credit for winning and also too much blame for the failure of their team. They always have. They always will. It would be a disgrace if a quarterback is chosen over Derrick Henry.

Derrick Henry is not a perfect running back as we will find out at the NFL Combine next year. At 6-3, 240 lbs., Henry is much faster than he appears to be. He runs as fast as he has to. The only problem is his starting speed. He probably will not have a good forty yard dash time at the Combine. It takes about three or four steps for him to reach his speed. That is what makes him such a good tailback in college. While he is surveying the line of scrimmage, he has a little extra time to decide what gap he wants. This is a real advantage in the Alabama offensive this year. It should carry over to the NFL. NFL running backs are asked to take a good look at the gaps available before turning on the speed. Derrick just does that naturally. So, his time in the forty will not impress. He will also probably not do well in the cone drill. That involves starting and stopping and getting started again. This is not his forte. When he gets started he becomes what is called a down hill runner. He is mostly a straight line runner who can make deceptive cuts in the open. His straight up running style is not ideal. Scouts would prefer more forward body lean. However, when it is called for, Henry leans on people very well and he lowers his head and shoulders to gain more yards after contact. In other words his YAC (yards after contact) is very impressive. Will the professional coaches try to change him? No way, he is ready. They will draft a pro ready back that can be featured in his rookie year.



Derrick Henry



Heisman Trophy

He is also a very good pass protector which is desired in the NFL. Most pro teams pass 65% of the time. That makes him a first round draft pick even though he will not score well on the four main professional yardsticks, the forty, the cone drill, the vertical jump and the standing broad jump. He will not need any of these measurements when he is running over linebackers in the National Football League.

Derrick Henry has a few more linebackers to run over in college if Alabama is to win the national championship and Henry is to win the Heisman. I get goosebumps every time Coker hands Henry the ball. It's like playing the nickel slot machines. He can be stopped for little or no yardage, but you know one of those carries is going all the way. You just don't know which one. So you have to keep "Feeding the Beast"!

EDITOR'S NOTE:

*This is a good time to say a word on my favorite subject; Too many bowls. A few years ago the NCAA authorized more bowls (32), which meant that at least half of the teams in the top division in college football would be playing in a bowl game. One-half would be left out. As more bowls requested sanctioning from the NCAA, we have reached a saturation point where there will be 80 teams playing in a record 40 bowls this year. This makes for an astonishing statistic. Only 48 teams in America will not go to a bowl. We are approaching the system in America where everyone gets a participation trophy -whether you win or not.*

*Last year I wrote a column called "Cut Bowls.com with a corresponding website of the same name. I got 170,000 hits in the first three weeks. There are millions of football fans all over the country that are tired of the proliferation of bowl games that have been sanctioned by the NCAA.*

*So, the NCAA has reached the point of over scheduling bowl games. The governing body of college athletics passed a resolution a number of years ago that in order to be eligible to go to a bowl, a team must have at least six wins. In 2015 there are not 80 teams that will have 6 wins based on their records as of November 25th. What will the NCAA do? Break their own rules. That would be a new one.*

*Here are the teams that are struggling just to get to 6 wins. At this point in the season it looks like the NCAA will come up a few teams short of 6 wins in order to fill 40 bowl games. It serves them right. It will also be very interesting to me personally to see what the NCAA does to solve this problem of their own making.*

*There are 13 teams as of Thanksgiving Day that have 5-6 records with one game to play: Buffalo, East Carolina, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, Old Dominion, San Jose State, Tulsa, Virginia Tech and Washington.*

*There are 4 teams as of Thanksgiving Day that have 4-6 records with two games to play: Louisiana Lafayette, Georgia State, Kansas State and Texas.*

*There is 1 team with a 5-5 record with two games to play: South Alabama.*

*It is possible for the 18 teams above to not qualify for a bowl. There are only 72 teams that have already qualified with at least 6 wins. Take away the 4 teams participating in the national championship playoff and there are only 68 teams that are qualified. Therefore at least 12 of the above 18 teams must win 6 games and qualify in order to fill the 40 bowl games to be played this year. The NCAA has a problem of their own making. It will be interesting to watch this drama play out!*

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

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<sup>1</sup>You must continue to pay your Medicare Part B premium. <sup>2</sup>Based on the 2016 Medicare and You Handbook of Alabama. Viva Medicare is an HMO plan with a Medicare contract and a contract with the Alabama Medicaid Agency. Enrollment in Viva Medicare depends on contract renewal. The benefit information provided is a brief summary, not a complete description of benefits. For more information contact the plan. Limitations, copayments, and restrictions may apply. Benefits, formulary, pharmacy network, premium, and/or co-payments/co-insurance may change on January 1 of each year. The Formulary, pharmacy network, and/or provider network may change at any time. You will receive notice when necessary. H0154\_mcdac1607A CMS Accepted 10/11/2015



## 50th Anniversary Celebration New Year's Eve

December 31, 2015

Alexander City Elks Lodge #1878  
658 Elks Pkwy., Alexander City, AL

Doors open 5:30 pm

Dr. Sam will DJ from  
6:30 -8:30 pm  
for your dancing pleasure.

Sweet Young'Uns  
8:30 til  
Happy New Year 2016!

Advance tickets are \$40 per  
person & \$50 at the door

Included are party favors, champagne toast,  
and cash bar (reasonably priced) available.

A breakfast will be provided for the  
New Year's merry-makers.

The Sweet Young'Uns began in 1966 and the founding  
members will have played together for 50 years in 2016.  
They have enjoyed entertaining hundreds of thousands  
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## Southern Gardening Potpourri for December

by Peggy Givhan

Judge  
Peggy Givhan

December conjures up such pleasant ideas, scenes and scents, that it is difficult to enumerate them all. Ideas of the past and present that include new uses of ribbons, greenery and ornaments. Mistletoe which used to be just hung with a single ribbon has now become this huge ball of glittery circles and strands of ribbon to the extent that one can hardly recognize the mistletoe with in. And perhaps forgotten in the shuffle, is that if someone stands beneath, then a kiss should be planted on their cheek. We remember scenes from the North of white snow and horse drawn sleds with passengers cloaked in large plaid wool blankets racing through the woods singing merrily the songs of the season, and then stopping to listen to the sounds of snow flakes coming down. And who can forget the cedar and pine fragrances of wreaths and trees which are amplified by the crackling fire in the fire place. Christmas of old and Christmas today has endured changes, but Christmas always remains the same.

Poinsettias are adorning the shelves of markets all over Montgomery. Many years ago, only the red varieties could be found unless one ordered them from a catalog which came from faraway places such as Maine or Vermont. Now we have such a choice, not only red, but white, pink, peach, and peppermint stick colors. I would suggest that when decorating with Poinsettias, that we keep with one color per room. These are great to fill in fireplaces that are not used, hearths, mantels, stairs, tables with. They make wonderful gifts for neighbors and friends. Long blooming, they do not want too much water, as one time per week is plenty. I buy clear plastic saucers to prevent overruns. Forced bulbs such as narcissus, even tulips, Christmas Cactus, and cyclamen make a welcomed addition to the parade of Christmas blooms.

**PLANT OF THE MONTH FOR DECEMBER – POINSETTIA**  
---Euphorbiaceae pulcherrima

They hail from the Euphorbia family of plants which includes annuals, perennials and succulents. Their true blooms are inconspicuous, and usually in the center of the very colorful leaves. These petal like leaves are not the bloom heads, but are termed bracts. Beware that many have poisonous sap.

They grow into hedges in the tropical south, but in our area, must not be left outdoors when the temperature dips. I have witnessed an expensive lesson on the temperature limits of these plants. A friend was having a holiday open house and had decorated their porch, and steps with lovely poinsettias a few days prior to the party. The night before, a sudden freeze engulfed the area, and the homeowner woke up to what appeared to be cooked red turnip greens in the holiday pots. What scrambling to locate more substitute plants you have never seen. A native of Mexico, it needs some sun and its soil only slightly damp.

**Tulips**, if purchased now, can be cooled in the crisper of a refrigerator for 5-6 weeks, and planted in January. Daffodils, and other bulbs may be planted with no refrigeration needed. Amaryllis is another bulb which we associate with this time of year. Once the bulb is forced and blooms, it can be planted out of doors and will over winter with a little mulch in our area. Once out of doors, they bloom in the spring, need regular water, but after the blooms die out, it is best to let them go dormant.

So let this season be joyous, hopeful and filled with blessings for everyone.

**MERRY CHRISTMAS AND GOOD GARDENING.**



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12'5" x 12'5" footprint

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WE HAVE SOME DISPLAY MODELS ON  
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**Chef David Spooner**  
*Retired Chef*

*Volunteer Fireman,  
Lowndesboro V.F.D.*

*Senior Warden,  
St. Paul's Episcopal  
Church, Lowndesboro*

*Town Councilman,  
Town of Lowndesboro*

# Southern



# Cuisine

We made it half-way through two of the biggest holiday meals. Thanksgiving is the holiday when the meal is the showcase and the time to show off your skills to the family and friends that are gathered. The next meal at Christmas is secondary to the reason for the holiday. But the Christmas dinner is still important and it is another time to show off your skills as a cook.

Besides just the holidays themselves, I like cooking this time of year. There is a nip in the air and sometimes it gets downright cold. When you live in a home built in 1830, with 13 “nine on nine” single pane windows plus 10 regular single pane windows on the first floor, a change in the weather is noticeable. So cooking this time of year is to warm my body and soul and my house.

Changing the food you eat at your meals reflects the change in seasons. Going from cold cereal and fruit to a bowl of grits or oatmeal for breakfast, a cold cut sandwich to hot soup for lunch followed by a crock pot of slow cooked meats and vegetables for dinner will satisfy your body’s need for warmth.

The meats cooked are the same throughout the year except for the traditional meats such as turkey and ham mostly eaten at Thanksgiving and Christmas. But the method does change somewhat, using thicker cuts and tougher cuts that can withstand longer cooking times.

The vegetables this time of year like root vegetables can handle longer cooking times and are flavorful and healthy additions to soups and stews. Roasting vegetables in the oven, low heat simmering on top of the stove or crock pot cooking are ideal methods for winter cooking.

Winter squash, beets, turnips, parsnips, kale and leeks are common in cold weather cooking. Except for spaghetti squash, almost any winter squash can substituted for any other in any recipe.

Christmas dinner at Mount Vernon in the 1790’s has the same ingredients found in somewhat more modest dinners served today. Roast beef, roast turkey, baked acorn squash, baked sweet potatoes and baked pies are some of the items still served.

A Christmas dinner in 1847 was much the same, Roast turkey, cranberry sauce, Ham, turnips, beets, winter squash and mince pies.

But one hundred years later we have an article from the Washington Post, Dec. 22, 1959 saying,

*“For modern homemakers who are short on time, the turkey dinner offers a batch of quick tricks. Here they are: Buy a frozen stuffed bird. Leave it in the refrigerator to defrost for 24 hours before roasting time. Roast in a slow oven, 325 degrees until done...Make gravy with condensed, canned soup and drippings. (Cream of mushroom, cream of celery or cream of chicken soup, right from the can, does wonders with turkey drippings. A few turns of a wooden mixing spoon—and presto—creamy gravy with no lumps). Use frozen or canned peas combined with canned with onions (the tiny ones) and buts (?) of chopped pimento for a colorful vegetable dish that ready in 10 minutes. Whip up the smoothest-ever mashed potatoes by using packaged, instant potatoes. Open a can of cranberry jelly and make individual salads.”*

My oh my what have we become?

The fifties was not a good decade. Thank goodness for a menu from Bon Appetit, Dec, 1998. “Crab Cakes and Baby Greens with Lemon Vinaigrette, Champagne, Crown Roast of Pork with Apple and Pork Stuffing and Cider Gravy, Butternut Squash and Rutabaga Puree, Sweet and Sour Red Cabbage, Pinot Noir, Chocolate-Orange Buche de Noel”

What we can do is come to a happy median between the labor intensive costly banquets of the past and the “open a can and make a meal” of the fifties. One way to do this is roasting vegetables. The different root vegetables that are available today are nutritious and flavorful. And this recipe can not be much simpler. For a side dish, this adds flavor and color to your plate.

## ROASTED ROOT VEGETABLES

### INGREDIENTS

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>3 pounds of root vegetables</b><br>(rutabaga, turnips, parsnips, beets, carrots, sweet potatoes etc. What ever is your favorite) | <b>or mild red chili powder (for a slightly spicy mix)</b>                         |
| <b>Handful of whole garlic cloves (optional)</b>  | <b>¼ cup olive oil or canola or grapeseed oil</b>                                  |
| <b>1 medium onion peeled and cut into ¼ inch wedges</b>   | <b>Salt and pepper</b>   |
| <b>1 tablespoon of Smoked Paprika</b>   | <b>Chopped herbs and spices, you can go Italian, or spicy or Herb do Provencal</b> |

### DIRECTIONS

1. Heat oven to 425 degrees.
2. Peel and cut vegetables (except garlic) into about one and a half inch pieces.
3. Put in large bowl and coat with oil and herbs and spices.
4. Add salt and pepper.
5. Put vegetables (except garlic) single layer on sheet pan and place in oven.
6. Cook 20 minutes and check. Tossing and turning the vegetables about every 15 minutes until cooked through and browned and slightly crisp.
7. Add garlic about 20 minutes from finish.
8. Place in serving dish and garnish with fresh herbs.

Takes about an hour and a half and will serve about 8.

I lamented over the menu for Christmas dinner in the 1950’s. A menu that didn’t make you think about the food you were eating and didn’t take much imagination on the preparation. And short cuts that don’t take much skill to prepare. There are short cuts that you can take that have the same ingredients but the method has been up-dated usually because of the utensils and equipment that is now available. An example is Hollandaise Sauce.

When I was in my chef apprenticeship, we had to learn to make hollandaise

## BLENDER HOLLANDAISE SAUCE

*From Ree/The Pioneer Woman*

### Ingredients

- |                                |                                |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <b>2 sticks of butter</b>      | <b>1 juice of whole lemon</b>  |
| <b>3 whole eggs, separated</b> | <b>Cayenne Pepper to taste</b> |

### Directions

1. In a small saucepan, melt the butter until sizzling.
2. Separate the eggs and place yolks in a blender.
3. Turn the blender on to low to combine and then start pouring the melted butter in a thin stream into the blender. The blender should remain on the whole time and be careful to stream the butter very slowly.
4. Keep pouring until the butter is gone and then immediately slowly add the lemon juice.
5. You don’t want the sauce to be too thick. Adjust with lemon juice if too thick.
6. Add generous shake of cayenne pepper and serve.
7. Serves 4.

the old fashion way, in a warmed metal bowl, whisking until your hand hurt. I thought I would never make it as a chef if I had to do this everyday. Well except for that one time, I never made it that way again. And in all the kitchens I worked in, I rarely saw anyone making that way. It was usually another apprentice learning how in front of the Chef. If you are making it for one or two dishes and you want to show off, go ahead. But in a large banquet kitchen where you needed a gallon or so, the metal bowl would hack it.

They would not have invented the blender if they didn’t want you to use it. So this Christmas if you want to add a touch of grace to your meal, add some hollandaise to your vegetables or turn your breakfast egg and muffin sandwich into a Eggs Benedict.

*When what to my wondering eye should appear----  
but 10 extra pounds on hips, thighs and rear.*

*The fondest memories are made gathered around the table.*



*Merry Christmas*



*Jesus is The  
Reason for The Season*



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**Sheriff Derrick Cunningham**

**(334) 832-4980**



**Chief Deputy Kevin J. Murphy**

*Thank you to everyone that attended our annual Halloween Spooktacular! If you had your picture taken during the event, please visit our website [www.MontgomerySheriff.com](http://www.MontgomerySheriff.com) and click the "Flickr" link to view the photos.*

## MCSO Mobile App

The Montgomery County Sheriff's Office has launched an app called "MCSO Mobile". You can install the app on your phone directly from your app store. It is compatible with apple or android phones. This new innovation will give you "breaking news" as news happens in and around the community. You can also check to see if someone is in the County Jail,

has an active warrant, find out if someone is a registered sex offender, receive notification of road closures or if an inmate escapes, etc. You get all the latest and greatest news from the Sheriff's Office!



Another year is in the books for the Alabama National Fair. The Staff of the Montgomery County Sheriff's Office enjoyed meeting citizens at our booth. For those that had their picture taken at our photo booth, you can view the photos by visiting our website [www.MontgomerySheriff.com](http://www.MontgomerySheriff.com) and click the "Flickr" link.

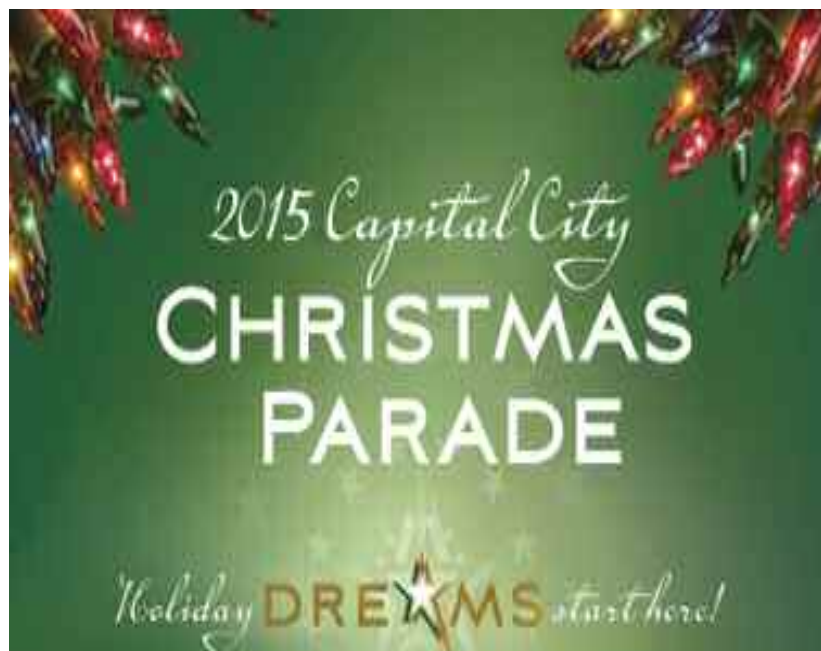
**Thank you for your continued support of the Montgomery County Sheriff's Office!!**

## Christmas ~ The Season of Giving

The Montgomery County Sheriff's Office will have a Christmas tree for the homeless on display at our agency located at 100 South Lawrence Street (downtown) from December 1st--15th. Each branch will have a paper ornament with detailed information such as gender, adult or child, clothing size, shoe size, etc. for a homeless person. We ask that all items be new and that you do not seal the container nor wrap your gift(s) so that we can make sure your gift is delivered to the correct person. If you would like to purchase gifts but are unable to come by our office, please call us and we can have a deputy bring a Christmas wish to you or we can fax or email it. Please make sure you deliver your gift(s) to the Sheriff's Office no later than December 15th or you can contact Lisa Crenshaw at 832.1339 to arrange for a deputy to pick up your items. Please consider giving for the less fortunate!



*As Sheriff of Montgomery County, I want to remind you to be vigilant and aware of your surroundings while shopping as well as disposing of your trash. We receive many calls of theft during the holiday season where someone has placed an empty box on the curb which attracts criminals. If you put a box out for trash collection, criminals know you have a new item in your home and many times they break in and steal the new item so be mindful when disposing of items.*



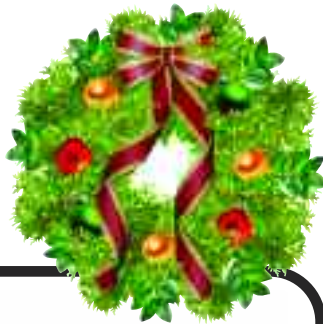
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Sheriff Joe Sedinger



During the **Prattville Veteran's Day Ceremony** that was held on November 11, 2015 at 11am, Sheriff Joe Sedinger honored the Veterans who work for him at the Autauga County Sheriff's Office and Autauga Metro Jail. These Deputies and Corrections Officers were presented with a ribbon to wear on their uniform, a U.S. Flag with the branch of service they served. A few of the Deputies and Corrections Officers were also presented with Combat Service Medals for Iraq, Desert Shield/Storm and Vietnam. Sheriff Sedinger said these men have served their country and now serve the citizens of Autauga County.



For More Information Other Events Please Visit:

[www.prattvilleal.gov](http://www.prattvilleal.gov)

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Merry Christmas

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Dr. John Bitter  
Editor  
Senior Section

# Gazette Seniors...

## ARE MANNERS DEAD?



YOU MAY BE  
OVER THE HILL...  
...if you have to get  
a stretch medicine  
cabinet.

Your writer grew up surrounded by books; the place where toys were stored was adjacent to a voluminous family library, and reading books was a fascination which continued until age diminished the capacity to read.

Biographies were a staple, and one that had a lasting impact was a 1922 book entitled Etiquette in Society, in Business, in Politics, and at Home; in which

Emily Post dealt extensively with behaving properly. For some reason this publication intrigued this young reader, and her words remained a constant.

As our society has progressed throughout its various stages reminders of her rules of proper behavior flare up before these tired eyes with disturbing regularity; especially so with the invention of the cell phone, and advice published by her great-great grand daughter, Anna Post.

Following in the footsteps of her famous family member, Anna wrote excellent advice on cell-phone usage, excerpts of which appear below, and ought to be made law; since Congress seems to be constantly in the mood to write frivolous laws. Further, it should be made required reading for everyone who knows how to read.

The younger Ms. Post begins by urging cell-phone users to learn how to use features such as “silent ring,” or vibrate, to name a few.

There's virtually no reason that those of us who are availing ourselves of various amenities of social life should have to listen to the abominable musical features which come with most cell phones. To add insult to injury, the users of these blights seem to revel in allowing their phone to blast forth an unending cacophony of annoying sound upon those of us who would prefer to enjoy our meal, or even just the quiet of life in its absence.

As to dining room etiquette, high up in the degree of dining room rudeness is to

let ones cell phone blare out some stupid sound; then, after all the diners within earshot have had their diner interrupted, answer the phone and engage loudly in some inane conversation that could have waited for a more convenient time. That's rude!

There's nothing more discourteous, in your writer's estimate, than having to listen to an unending blare of simple-minded music while trying to enjoy a meal, or any other component of daily living. Then to have one's quiet insulter by being made an unwilling witness to witless blather of no intellectual consequence.

It's not enough that cell-phone users have to inflict this abomination upon the rest of us, but they seem to take delight in letting it go on forever.

Ms. Post goes on to urge cell phone users to speak softly when they insist on annoying the rest of us. We don't want to share in their conversation—we don't care to listen in; but we have no recourse.

Miss Post's advice in this regard, is especially true in church, the library, the theater, or at the dinner table. The rest of us don't really care to listen in. Spare us.

And her advice is also true when one is driving. Before your writer finally put his vehicle to rest; being nearly run off the road by cell-phone users was almost a daily occurrence.

Ms. Post notes, regrettably, that people using cell-phones “rarely take others into consideration” when they are using their phones in public. Amen!

At one time the cell phone was a novelty and users seemed to think they should share with others the fact that they have one. Not true any more. Most of us don't care, are not impressed, and would appreciate it if the users would spare us this impertinence.

We're happy that some people have cell phones; but the should use them somewhere else—or better still, don't use them at all in public. Emily, where are you when we need you?

## GIVE THE DINER WHAT YOU PROMISED

If we're going to be forced into vegetarianism, why not be upfront about it?

In an earlier edition your writer discussed “fake meat,” and its tastelessness.

Further research discloses that “fake meat” or “meat analogues” have been on the market for some years. They're even touted as being more healthy for us. Proponents say they are, for whatever reason.

But there are those of us who, when we order a steak, want a steak, despite all the negative aspects attached to eating meat.

We don't want to have to choke down a tasteless product that resembles shirt cardboard, rather than meat.

For some years now there's been a move on to alter our dietary habits by removing beef from the table and replacing it with something more healthy—or so its proponents say.

Of course this will also destroy the livestock industry; but who cares?

Your writer cares.

Being brought up in a Mormon environment, eating meat sparingly was taught as a virtue. That's OK.

But to slip something else off on a person when that worthy is expecting a sizzling steak is fraudulent.

It's downright shameful.

Some years ago your humble scribe entered one of his favorite fast food restaurants and ordered a big, fat, greasy, but previously delicious, hamburger. What was presented; however, was something else. Something disgusting.

When one reads on the menu that steak, or whatever other meat product, is being served, precisely that is what should be presented. Don't sneak in a tasteless substitute—that's fraudulent.

There are some foods a person learns to love and enjoy, and when that person wants this sort of food, that's what he or she should get. Anything else is unacceptable.

But the industries which provide us with our food are convinced otherwise.

Either for profitable or nutritional reasons—and one suspects the profit motive is the strongest—the food industry has been moving rapidly over the years into giving the diner something other than what he or she has asked for—or wanted.

“Fake meat” is touted as being more healthful—and perhaps it is. But if a person wants to eat healthy that should be his or her decision; not someone else's. Especially if that someone stands to make a penny in the process.

That being said, those of us who are obliged to eat in order to stay alive will be forced now not to eat the delicious meats to which we had been accustomed. Especially those of us who have no control over what we're being served. The menus don't tell us we're being fooled; but we are, and that's shameful—if not dishonest.

If those who provide us with our sustenance must cheat, they should be up front about it.

If one wishes to dine on “leavins' and sweepins' then that's what he or she should receive.

But if that person is promised a “steak,” then steak he or she should receive. Not a cheap, tasteless substitute.

And that's, that.

## What's up in December?

December is an auspicious month in the Christian world; for this is the month in which those of the Christian faith celebrate the birth of Jesus.

There are no less than 11 references to this event in the Holy Bible, references located in seven books in the Gospel; in Isaiah, twice, three times in Luke, twice in Matthew, and once each in Micah, Zachariah, and in John and John 1.

In **Isaiah 7:14**, readers are told of the “sign” of the impending birth; and the birth is foretold in **Luke 1:30**; and in **Matthew 1:18-24**, readers of the Scriptures learn just how the birth of Jesus came about.

Predictions of the birth are mentioned in **Isiah 9:6**, and of the fact that “of peace there will be no end;” perhaps.

In **Luke 2:1-15**, Biblical readers are told about Joseph's travels; and in **Matthew 2:1-12** King Herod sends out a search party to learn more about the new king who was about to be born; a person who, in **Micah 5:2**, is said to be the person who will rule over Israel. An event over which **Zachariah 9:9** tells us to “*Rejoice greatly.*”

In **John 3:16** one may read the immortal words: “*For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.*”

And, in **Luke 1:26-38**, Mary is told that she is “*Blessed among women...*” for the child she is bearing.

And to wrap it all up, in **John 5**, we're told that the event was God's testimony, that He “*has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.*”

And this is what Christmas is all about. This is why we decorate our homes, stuff ourselves with delicious meals, spend more money than we should on gifts and revelry, sing songs, and give thanks.

Of all the holidays we celebrate each year, Christmas, for most of us, has the greatest significance. It brings us together, and temporarily lifts us out of the daily trials and tribulations we must endure.

Despite the strife and turmoil that seems to be engulfing us at this time, there's a strong likelihood that we'll survive it all, and next year we'll be celebrating Christmas once again, as we have over years past.

For us, Christmas is the most enjoyable holiday of the year.

From this curmudgeon's quarter: Merry Christmas to all.

*And to all: Be Blessed.*



By Kyle’ D. McKinney

Alabama Public Affairs Specialist  
Social Security Administration  
4344 Carmichael Road, Suite 100  
Montgomery, Alabama 36116



## THE TWELVE SITES OF SOCIAL SECURITY

Familiar carols are a part of the season. This song is so popular that holiday revelers clamored for it again. It’s “The Twelve Sites of Social Security,” inspired by the popular traditional holiday song, “The Twelve Days of Christmas,” — a holiday favorite since 1780.

For the **FIRST** site of Social Security, we give to you: our home page, [www.socialsecurity.gov](http://www.socialsecurity.gov). It’s the place to go for all things Social Security. Everything you could want — from online services and benefit screening tools to publications and frequently asked questions — you can find easily on this site.

For the **SECOND** site of Social Security, we give to you: answers to all of your Social Security related questions at our Frequently Asked Questions page at [www.socialsecurity.gov/faq](http://www.socialsecurity.gov/faq).

For the **THIRD** site of Social Security, we give to you: an easy way to learn how to replace your Social Security card at [www.socialsecurity.gov/ssnumber](http://www.socialsecurity.gov/ssnumber).

For the **FOURTH** site of Social Security, we give to you: an online application for retirement benefits that you can complete and submit in as little as

15 minutes at [www.socialsecurity.gov/applytoretire](http://www.socialsecurity.gov/applytoretire).

For the **FIFTH** site of Social Security, we give to you: five estimates of your future Social Security benefits! Or as many estimates as you would like using different scenarios. Get instant, personalized estimates of your future benefits at [www.socialsecurity.gov/estimator](http://www.socialsecurity.gov/estimator).

For the **SIXTH** site of Social Security, we give to you: a convenient way to apply for disability benefits at [www.socialsecurity.gov/applyfordisability](http://www.socialsecurity.gov/applyfordisability).

For the **SEVENTH** site of Social Security, we give to you: an online application for Medicare that you can complete in as little as 10 minutes, at [www.socialsecurity.gov/medicareonly](http://www.socialsecurity.gov/medicareonly).

For the **EIGHTH** site of Social Security, we give to you: Extra Help with Medicare prescription drug plan costs. You can learn more and apply online at [www.socialsecurity.gov/prescriptionhelp](http://www.socialsecurity.gov/prescriptionhelp).

For the **NINTH** site of Social Security, we give to you: our convenient publication library with online booklets and pamphlets on numerous subjects, at [www.socialsecurity.gov/pubs](http://www.socialsecurity.gov/pubs).

For the **TENTH** site of Social Security, we give

to you: services for people who are currently receiving benefits, such as the ability to replace your Medicare card, get or change a password, request a proof of income letter, or check your Social Security information or benefits. You can do these and other things at [www.socialsecurity.gov/pgml/getservices-change.htm](http://www.socialsecurity.gov/pgml/getservices-change.htm).

For the **ELEVENTH** site of Social Security, we give to you: a way to get your Social Security forms online, at [www.socialsecurity.gov/forms](http://www.socialsecurity.gov/forms).

On the **TWELFTH** site of Social Security (and we saved the best for last): open your own personal my Social Security account, which will enable you to verify your earnings, get future benefit estimates, obtain benefit verification letters, update your Social Security information, and more at [www.socialsecurity.gov/myaccount](http://www.socialsecurity.gov/myaccount).

And a partridge in a pear tree. Find it all (except the partridge and pear tree) at: [www.socialsecurity.gov](http://www.socialsecurity.gov).

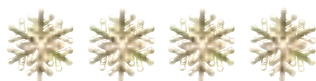
Kylle’ McKinney, SSA Public Affairs Specialist, can be reached by e-mail at [kylle.mckinney@ssa.gov](mailto:kylle.mckinney@ssa.gov).



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Blessed  
Christmas!

# Soul Searching



## THE EMOTIONS OF CHRISTMAS...

As we have now arrived into the Christmas season, I heard a new word describing these weeks before the big celebration. It is “*anticipointment*.” You won’t find it in a dictionary or thesaurus. But I suspect all of us can identify with what it means. The coined word reminds us this season is filled with a wide array of emotions from excited anticipation to frustrating disappointment.

During this season, perhaps more so than any other time of year, our emotions are stirred in so many ways. Consider what we take into our minds and hearts in these few weeks. There is the incomparable grandeur of the Christmas story, the decorated tree, the cards of greetings from our friends, the echoing refrain from familiar Christmas carols, the gifts, the arrays of goodies and the kaleidoscope of colors dancing before our eyes. Actually, such a word like the one above might have filled the season of the first Christmas.

It certainly was a time filled with emotion. One emotion we can identify with in this season is wonder. With quick brush strokes we remember how Luke painted the picture of dramatic and unexplainable announcements about a birth, the baby being born, angels filling the heavens and shepherds kneeling in stunned amazement. **Luke 2:18** says, “*And all who heard it wondered at the things told them by the shepherds.*”

That silent night was split by the glorious presence of God as all the universe reflected the never-before-experienced moment. All the hopes of all the ages were fulfilled in this one spectacular night, yet in quite a different manner than anyone expected.

It’s easy to miss the wonder of the love of Mary and Joseph. The first Christmas so special to us presented them with an awesome challenge. Their marriage had not been consummated when Mary conceived her son. Pregnancy before marriage is unfortunately not so uncommon today, but in that day it was a crisis of immense magnitude. Doubt, confusion and accusation could have followed. The proper thing for a devout man to do was to separate himself from such a woman for the baby she was carrying was not his. But because of his love for her, he turned his back on the wagging tongues of the community. He swallowed his pride and accepted the incredible announcement of the angel that this was a special child given by God.

The Bible says Mary “*pondered those things in her heart.*” Imagine the immense emotional load on a teen-age girl. She certainly thought about the things happening but had no way of fully understanding what was happening around her. She met shepherds who were strangers yet fully aware that God had given her this child. There were Wise Men from afar and two old saints, Simon and Anna who told her they could now die in peace having seen the child.

What an incredible strain on comprehension and love was then and throughout His life. Yet throughout His life from beginning to the cross to the final victory, Mary loved her Son dearly. When we see her love, we are amazed at the strength God gave to this young woman.

A second emotion of the season is joy. Perhaps the most memorable song of the season is “*Joy to the world, the Lord has come.*” How vividly that song expresses our joy in this season. I’m not talking about the fake smiles and polite gestures or the artificial happiness produced by stimulants to cover up empty lives. Joy is not something measured by how big the party or present. Rather it



is that feeling of completeness rooted in a living, personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

In spite of whatever she faced, Mary lived with a constant awareness that God was at work in her life. Jesus brought joy to her life and He still does today to all who believe. When we believe that God loved us enough to become what we were in order that we could become what He is, that brings joy beyond explanation in human words. Joy is experienced in sharing the Good News that this One can meet every need and satisfy the hunger of every soul who would receive Him as Savior and Lord.

Another emotion of the season is sadness. This is not a contradiction of what I have said but recognition of the fact that in the midst of all the joy, there are some who find Christmas a depressing time.

Sometimes it is the demands of the season in time, energy and resources. For others it is an awareness of the real emptiness and inability to enjoy life like others. There are those who look toward the end of the year and feel like a failure in accomplishments set out months before. And there are those who are sad because loved ones are no longer present.

While recognizable and understandable, sadness is not inevitable. A rediscovery of the true meaning of Christmas dispels much of it. If Christmas means anything, it means hope, fulfillment and peace. Peace comes to believers who refuse to march to the drumbeat of the material world and humble themselves before the King of Kings. Fulfillment comes not from delicacies on the world’s tables but from the One who is the Bread of Life. Hope comes not from a denial of death but from the realization that nor even death can eternally separate us from those we love in Jesus Christ.

I heard a story about a dad who found a way to mix truth and grace one year at Christmas. He and his family were putting up a big Nativity scene in their front yard. Finally all the little statues were in place: Mary, Joseph, the Baby in the manger, the Angels, the Shepherds, and various barnyard animals. Then little Scott came out carrying one of his favorite toys: a fierce Tyrannosaurus Rex, King of the dinosaurs. It was one of those plastic figures that you inflate. It towered over the Nativity Scene, looking fierce, big, green ... and certainly out of place.

The dad tried to explain to Scott that Dinosaurs existed thousands of years before baby Jesus was born. He told him that prehistoric beasts just don’t belong in a Nativity Scene. But the little boy looked so heartbroken that the dad mixed grace with the truth. The truth was, a dinosaur didn’t belong there, but out of grace, the dad put the beloved toy behind the scene. So, the fierce Tyrannosaurus Rex hovered over the manger and everyone else.

Actually, that menacing beast hovering over the manger may not have been as out of place as you would think. The truth is that a dinosaur hovering over the manger is more appropriate than we might realize. For each of us there is a menacing character that threatens to rob us of all of the wonder, the joy and hope of Christmas. But at Christmas we can remember that the love of God expressed in the birth of His Son gives us the strength to face whatever comes our way. God has given us the Victory through the Gift of his Son. And that is why we can sing, “Joy to the world, the Lord has come.” I pray that you will experience the true meaning of the season with Christ and it will not be another year of “anticipointment.”



## Reflections

By Michael J. Brooks

### TENDER MERCIES

It was a modest motion picture released in 1983 without much anticipation that it would be a block-buster, but the star won both an Academy Award and a Golden Globe award for best actor the following year. In “*Tender Mercies*,” Robert Duvall played Mac Sledge, a washed -up country and western singer ruined by alcohol. Sledge found a new family when he married a widow, Rosa, played by Tess Harper, and new faith when he was baptized at the local church. He also reached out to his long-lost daughter, Sue Anne, and reconciled with her before her untimely death in an auto accident.

Duvall brought a lot of passion to this film and, interestingly, it brought his only Oscar in a distinguished film career.

The film title comes from Rosa's declaration that every night in prayer she thanked God for his love and tender mercies.

“*Tender mercies*” is used 11 times in Psalms and Proverbs. For example, **Psalm 145: 9** says, “The Lord is good to all: and his tender mercies are over all his works.”

The God of the Bible is a mighty God. He spoke the worlds into existence.

He flung the stars from his fingertips and carved out the oceans with his hands. But we should never forget for one moment his tender mercies for all humanity.

I knew her as a delightful young lady. She was friendly and outgoing and made friends easily. She had a beautiful family and was active in her church. But one day she fell in love with a man not her husband and abandoned her family. She like the prodigal son in Luke 15 went to the far country seeking new excitement. But in the pig pen of rebellion she, like the prodigal, "came to herself," and decided to go home. Her family received her gratefully and restored her to their hearts.

But then there was the issue of her church family. They were the people who prayed for her while she was away, and cared for the family she abandoned. How would they respond? She decided to repent before them in public worship. She did so with fear not knowing what to expect. But what happened was beyond what she had imagined. They received her and loved her and rejoiced that a family was made whole.

This is what the church of Jesus Christ does--we act like the Good Father of **Luke15** who ran to receive his son joyfully. It's not our job to focus on all the details of degradation in the life of another, since we all have degradation aplenty in our own lives. Our job is to restore in joy and rejoice in God's tender mercies.

*Reflections is a weekly devotional column written by Michael J. Brooks, pastor of the Siluria Baptist Church in Alabaster, Ala., and adjunct instructor of speech at Jefferson State Community College, Hoover. Permission is granted to use this material with attribution.*

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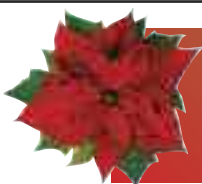
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~ *Proverbs 14:31*



Patricia Killough



# Home Town Community News

Please send Patricia your family  
birthdays, anniversaries and weddings to  
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The Alabama Gazette will make every effort to  
include your submissions as space permits.

## Happy Anniversary

|         |                            |         |   |
|---------|----------------------------|---------|---|
| Dec. 1  | Troy & Kim Worrell         | Dec. 14 | Ronnie & Michelle Blount                  |
| Dec. 4  | Rich & Jacque Takacs       |         | Scott & Debbie Mills                      |
| Dec. 7  | Del & Prasertsi Atkinson   | Dec. 16 | Robert & Georgia Armstrong                |
| Dec. 8  | Buddy & Rhonda Black       |         | Bill & Barbara Berg                       |
| Dec. 9  | Perry & Nancy Butler       | Dec. 18 | William (Windy) &<br>Linda Wingard (45th) |
|         | Danny & Kristie Richardson | Dec. 20 | Wayne & Sarah Watkins                     |
| Dec. 10 | Heath & Dana Crowe         | Dec. 23 | Rex & Esther Jones (55th)                 |
| Dec. 12 | Tom & Caroline Vocino      | Dec. 30 | George & Jeannie Handey                   |

## Sympathy to the families of...

Baum, Charles C. (73) .....died October 24, 2015  
 Brooks, James (Jimmy) Joseph (61) .....died October 26, 2015  
 Levin, Tom E. (74) .....died October 31, 2015  
 Findley, Annie Pearl (75) .....died November 1, 2015  
 Hobbs, Judge Truman McGill (94) .....died November 4, 2015  
 Marcato, Nancy .....died November 7, 2015  
 Wynn, Bessie Bowden (93) .....died November 7, 2015

*Woodland United Methodist Church*  
*Pike Road, Alabama*  
*Christmas Cantata*

*Friday, December 4 • 7:00 pm*  
*Sunday, December 6 • 10:30 am*

*Service of Hope & Healing*  
*December 17th • 7:00 pm*

*Candlelight Christmas Eve Service*  
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## December Birthdays



|    |                      |    |                        |
|----|----------------------|----|------------------------|
| 1  | Chris Hudson         |    | Cindy Stone            |
|    | Emma Louise Wingard  |    | Ruth Cordle            |
| 2  | Faye Ann Mount       | 20 | Maggie Mills           |
|    | Mike Northcutt       |    | Susan Yost             |
|    | Skeeter Rhodes       | 21 | Katherine(Kaki) Hines  |
| 3  | Alison Lee Riley     | 22 | Austin Champion        |
|    | Cam Stanton          |    | Paul Harper            |
| 4  | Gail Cotney          |    | Robert Harrington      |
| 5  | Don Byrd             |    | Dennis Woodall         |
| 7  | Jeannie Leigh Boyles | 23 | Kodee Harrison         |
|    | Tobias Grant         |    | Carla Johnson          |
|    | Belle Sansom         | 24 | Joyce Turnipseed       |
|    | Carol Woodall        |    | Kaitlin Rowe           |
| 8  | Meredith Sellars     | 25 | <b>JESUS CHRIST</b>    |
| 11 | Lauren Lane          |    | Eldridge Bracknell     |
|    | Chad Roberson        |    | Nancy Setzer           |
|    | Justin Sessions      | 27 | Sandy Brown            |
| 12 | Mollie Higgins       |    | Austin Yost            |
| 13 | Anita Tylicki        | 28 | Andy Meadows           |
|    | Jeanette Kinman      |    | William Webb           |
|    | Landon Meadows       | 29 | Amy Boyd               |
| 14 | Fred Crowe           |    | Mallory McGough        |
|    | Ken Stringer         |    | Mary Pat Sikes         |
| 17 | Betty Armistead      | 30 | Tiffany Hammock        |
|    | Travers Grant        |    | Scott Takacs           |
|    | Dorothy Kiser        |    | Sarah Watkins          |
|    | Deborah Kirk         | 31 | Bethany Black Neubauer |
|    | Martha French        |    | Addison Wise           |
| 19 | Brad Echols          |    | Tex Woodall (48th)     |

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## Trisston's Tidbits...

*By: Trisston Wright Burrows  
www.trisstonwrightburrows.com*

### "Jesus Is The Reason For The Season! Rejoice!"

It's that time of year again. December has come and with it all the joys of Christmas. But what is the real meaning of Christmas? Is it the gifts under the tree, the lights in the windows, the cards in the mail, turkey dinners with family and friends, snow in the yard, stockings hanging in the living room, and shouts of "Merry Christmas" to those who pass us in the streets? Is this really Christmas?

For many people, Christmas is a time of sorrow. They don't have the extra money to buy presents for their children, family, and friends. Many are saddened at Christmas-time when they think of their loved ones who will not be able to come home for various reasons. Turkey dinners may be only a wish and not a reality for some.

Yet, Christmas can be a season of great joy. It is a time of God showing His great love for us. It can be a time of healing and renewed strength. You see, Christmas is when we celebrate the birth of the Christ child. God sent His Son, Jesus, into the world to be born. His birth brought great joy to the world. shepherds, wise men, and angels all shared in the excitement of knowing about this great event. They knew this was no ordinary baby. The prophets had told of His coming hundreds of years before. The star stopped over Bethlehem just to mark the way for those who were looking for this special child.

I would encourage you to read **Luke 2: 4-19**.

God sent Jesus to us so that one day, He would grow up to become a very important part of history. His story (history) is one of truth, love, and hope. It brought salvation to all of us. Without Jesus, we would all die in our sins.

Jesus was born so one day the price could be paid for the things we have done that are wrong. The Bible says that all have sinned. We do things that do not please God. Through the sins of Adam and Eve, we have all inherited that sin nature. We need to have that removed. The only way is through Jesus. Jesus came so He could die on the cross for ALL of our sins. If we believe that Jesus died for our sins, we can ask Him to come into our hearts and forgive us. Then, we are clean and made whole. We can know that heaven is a place where we can go to when this life is over.

**"But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us and to cleanse us from every wrong." I John 1:9**

We can truly be happy at Christmas! No matter what may be happening, we can know that we are His children. We then become sons and daughters of God. Heaven will be our home one day.

Look at Christmas in a new way this year. This is the year to invite Jesus into your heart. You will then have a "Merry Christmas." The joy and peace you will receive will last all year as you look to God for all your needs to be met.

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