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Alabama's gets its 4th National Championship in Seven Years!!

WON and DONE!...for the fourth time in seven years. It was a thrilling game but I guess it was expected by the way the national media has avoided it. Yes, Alabama can and does get it FINISHED. Congratulations on a well earned win!

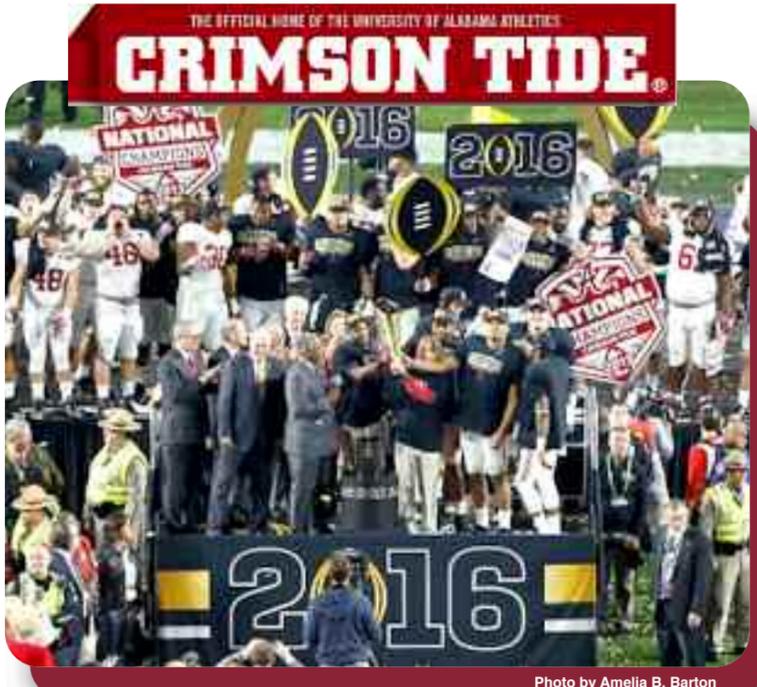


Photo by Amelia B. Barton

Coach Nick Saban and the Alabama team accept the 2015 National Championship Trophy



Photo by Amelia B. Barton

Prattville's own O. J. Howard

THE TIDE ROLLS AGAIN



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Photo by Kent Gidley

#2 Derrick Henry



Photo by Robert Sutton

#17 Kenyan Drake reaches for the end zone

GUN CONTROL... Eroding the 2nd Amendment!

"A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed."

The Second Amendment Defined:

The Second Amendment is a part of the Bill of Rights, which are the first 10 Amendments to the United States Constitution and the framework to elucidate upon the freedoms of the individual. The Bill of Rights were proposed and sent to the states by the first session of the First Congress. They were later ratified on December 15, 1791.

The first 10 Amendments to the United States Constitution were introduced by James Madison as a series of legislative articles and came into effect as Constitutional Amendments following the process of ratification by three-fourths of the States on December 15, 1791.

Expect more Obama Exective Orders in 2016. Most will affect the welfare and constitutional rights of all American Citizens!

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2016 ALERT ISSUES!

- GUN CONTROL
- IMMIGRATION
- RELEASE OF GITMO TERRORISTS!
- TERRORISTS ON AMERICAN SOIL
- ABORTION
- ECONOMIC CRISIS

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Discerning Voters Desperately Needed

Marcia Chambliss

It's a New Year yet, once again, very little has changed in the world of politics. While most of the nation was celebrating the birth of our Savior and spending time with family and friends, our elected "public servants" ended the year with outrageous spending authorizations that will burden our children and grandchildren for decades to come, and further increase the debt that is in the process of destroying our nation.

Keep in mind that this authorization also funds almost everything the Obama administration wanted – all from a Republican-led Congress that promised opposition if we only gave them the House and the Senate. Planned Parenthood is still funded, our borders are still unsecured, and our God-given rights to protect ourselves and our families via the 2nd Amendment are still in danger from this administration.

According to Rep. Mo Brooks, representing Alabama's 5th district and one of our strongest Alabama House conservatives, this increase in spending by tens of billions of dollars is the equivalent of buying Christmas presents to ingratiate yourself with others while forgetting that the credit card bill will come due in January. His take on the only winners? The Democrats and K Street lobbyists.

Do you have children? My husband and I do. What about grandchildren? We're excitedly anticipating the birth of our first grandchild this year. I only wish that this precious gift wasn't saddled with the debt that our Congressional representation seems unable and unwilling to contain.

Along with many conservative Americans, I'm angry; actually, I'm too often "beyond words angry" because conservatives continue to allow ourselves to be played for fools during each election cycle. While I believe that many are becoming more aware of the political games being played by politicians and the establishment power brokers, I have serious concerns that the justified anger might translate into emotional voting in 2016 rather than using discernment in recognizing campaign rhetoric versus true conservative principles.

So who do we believe? The politicians seeking re-election who tell just enough truth about how they have "fought so hard for us" as a means of surviving the next election cycle, campaign ads with 30-second sound bites, or possibly a "conservative" cable news network? Do we listen to the D.C. political pundits who tell us which candidate is "electable" while others are "too conservative" to win?

For me, it's none of the above.

I learned several years ago that many of the votes cast by politicians, particularly those in Washington far away from constituents, are simply "show votes." If you need an example, consider how many times votes have been cast



to repeal Obamacare with no impact whatsoever. Those votes only provide campaign fodder for the next slick election piece touted persistently by those desperate to return to the power base in Washington. Legislative scorecards providing the history of an incumbents voting record are an invaluable resource during election cycles but as with any source, vetting is paramount.

Because the conservative principles espoused by The Heritage Foundation best align with my own, my first scorecard consideration is the one compiled by its grassroots activists arm, Heritage Action for America.

(<http://heritageactionscorecard.com/>)

Heritage Action is additionally an excellent resource in explaining the issues and underlying impact of each piece of legislation. Citizens are provided with behind-the-scenes details of what is really in each bill so that constituents can correctly and intelligently make accountability phone calls to their representation in Washington.

Remember the earlier "show vote" example? There's another voting pattern equally important and used regularly to sway voters at election time - voting with the constituent base on unpopular legislation because they know from leadership their vote isn't needed to pass the bill. Such votes provide tremendous cover for a consistently weak voting record and are regularly utilized in campaign materials to mislead unsuspecting voters. The Heritage Action scorecard gives citizens the ability to research voting records in totality, not just the most recent legislative session prior to the election cycle.

We're in need of a great awakening of the conservative, tax-paying electorate this year, but also one filled with discernment and intelligent, fact-based decisions. Those intent on destroying our nation won't sit this one out – will you?

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

HERE ARE OBAMA'S NEW EXECUTIVE ACTIONS ON GUN CONTROL

President Obama introduced a new group of executive actions to reduce gun violence at an emotional press conference Tuesday. The order, which has not yet been signed into legality, is designed to bypass a gridlocked Congress. Republicans have roundly condemned the executive action. House Speaker Paul Ryan predicted it'd be challenged in the courts, and many 2016 presidential candidates have vowed to overturn the measure.

Here's exactly how Obama aims to improve background checks on gun buyers, community safety, mental health treatment and smart gun technology, in the words of the White House press room.

1. Keep guns out of the wrong hands through background checks.

"We've created a system in which dangerous people are allowed to play by a different set of rules than a responsible gun owner who buys his or her gun the right way and subjects themselves to a background check," Obama said Tuesday.

The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) is making clear that it doesn't matter where you conduct your business—from a store, at gun shows, or over the Internet: If you're in the business of selling firearms, you must get a license and conduct background checks.

ATF is finalizing a rule to require background checks for people trying to buy some of the most dangerous weapons and other items through a trust, corporation, or other legal entity.

Attorney General Loretta E. Lynch has sent a letter to States highlighting the importance of receiving complete criminal history records and criminal dispositions, information on persons disqualified because of a mental illness, and qualifying crimes of domestic violence.

The FBI is overhauling the background check system to make it more effective and efficient. The envisioned improvements include processing background checks 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and improving notification of local authorities when certain prohibited persons unlawfully attempt to buy a gun. The FBI will hire more than 230 additional examiners and other staff to help process these background checks.

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2. Make our communities safer from gun violence.

This part of the order won't change the laws, but it will urge law enforcement to enforce the existing laws, and give federal agencies more resources to do so.

The Attorney General convened a call with U.S. Attorneys around the country to direct federal prosecutors to continue to focus on smart and effective enforcement of our gun laws.

The President's FY2017 budget will include funding for 200 new ATF agents

and investigators to help enforce our gun laws.

ATF has established an Internet Investigation Center to track illegal online firearms trafficking and is dedicating \$4 million and additional personnel to enhance the National Integrated Ballistics Information Network.

ATF is finalizing a rule to ensure that dealers who ship firearms notify law enforcement if their guns are lost or stolen in transit.

The Attorney General issued a memo encouraging every U.S. Attorney's Office to renew domestic violence outreach efforts.

3. Increase mental health treatment and reporting to the background check system.

Obama hit out at politicians who blame mass shootings on mental illness as a way of diverting attention from gun control. "Here's your chance to support these efforts," he said. "Put your money where your mouth is."

The Administration is proposing a new \$500 million investment to increase access to mental health care.

The Social Security Administration has indicated that it will begin the rule-making process to include information in the background check system about beneficiaries who are prohibited from possessing a firearm for mental health reasons.

The Department of Health and Human Services is finalizing a rule to remove unnecessary legal barriers preventing States from reporting relevant information about people prohibited from possessing a gun for specific mental health reasons.

4. Shape the future of gun safety technology.

"If we can set it up so you can't unlock your phone unless you've got the right fingerprint, why can't we do the same thing for our guns?" Obama asked. Again, he's not changing laws here so much as encouraging federal agencies to prioritize gun technology.

The President has directed the Departments of Defense, Justice, and Homeland Security to conduct or sponsor research into gun safety technology.

The President has also directed the departments to review the availability of smart gun technology on a regular basis, and to explore potential ways to further its use and development to more broadly improve gun safety.

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The Education Station...

By *Bobbie Ames*

THE ORIGIN OF OLD GLORY-----OUR AMERICAN FLAG

The story of the Stars and Stripes...



... is the story of our nation.

It is the story of freedom, liberty, and equal justice under law. Our flag has gone through the evolution of our ideas and of our free institutions. The flag is our symbol, our emblem for our ideas, our faith, our laws.

In our early days, when we were 13 British colonies, the banners borne by the Revolutionary forces widely varied.

The local flags and colonial banners displayed on land and

sea during the first months of the American War for Independence carried the various grievances that the colonists had against the Mother Country.

The first public reference to the flag was published on March 10, 1774. A Boston newspaper, the "Massachusetts Spy", ran this poem about the flag:

*"A ray of bright glory now beams from afar,
Blest drawn of an empire to rise;
The American Ensign now sparkles a star,
Which shall shortly flame wide through the skies."*

In the summer of 1775, when George Washington had been appointed Commander in Chief of the Continental Forces for the defense of American Liberty, the Continental Congress was still corresponding with King George to present their grievances. However, by the fall of 1775, the revolting citizens chose a flag that reflected their feeling of unity with the Mother Country, but expressed their demand to obtain justice and liberty.

In Taunton, Massachusetts, a flag was unfurled in 1774 which carried the British Jack in the canton, and had the words "Liberty and Union" printed on it.

The famous **Rattlesnake Flag** carried by the Minutemen in 1775 showed 13 red and white stripes with a rattlesnake emblazoned across it, warning "Don't Tread On Me."



In 1775, the banner that flew over Fort Moultrie displayed a crescent on a blue field with the word "Liberty" printed in white. When this flag was shot down by enemy muskets, a brave sergeant named Jasper, nailed it back to the staff at the risk of his life.

The **Pine Tree Flag** which flew over the troops at Bunker Hill in 1775, displayed the pine tree symbol of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. It was a white flag, with top and bottom stripe of blue, and it showed a green pine tree with the words "Liberty Tree--An Appeal To God."

The first flag to represent the Colonies at sea was raised by John Paul Jones from the deck of the Alfred on December 3, 1775. One month later, George Washington displayed the same design and named it the **Grand Union Flag**. That was on January 2, 1776. It has thirteen alternate red and white stripes and a blue field with the crosses of Saint Andrew and Saint George on it.

After July 4, 1776, the people of the colonies felt the need of a new flag--one that would be a national flag, an emblem of unity and independence. The Continental Congress acted:

"Resolved that the flag of the thirteen United States be thirteen stripes, alternate with red and white; that the union be thirteen stars, white on a blue field."

The significance of the colors was defined thus;

*"White signified Purity and Innocence;
Red, Hardiness and Valor;
Blue, Vigilance, Perseverance, and Justice."*

Francis Hopkinson, signer of the Declaration of Independence and a member of the Continental Congress, is credited with having designed the American Flag.

Betsy Ross, the flag maker in Philadelphia, is credited by historians of that period with having made the first flag and having suggested that the stars be five pointed. Betsy Ross's Philadelphia home at 239 Arch Street is a national shrine, and the flag flies on a staff from her third floor window. Betsy Ross' grandson, William J. Canby, wrote in 1857 that he vividly recalled, as a boy of eleven, being told the story by Betsy Ross herself, his 84 year old grandmother.

He remembers: "It is not tradition, it is a report from the lips of the principal participator in the transaction, directly told not to one or two, but to a dozen or more living witnesses, of which I myself am one, though but a little boy when I heard it..... Colonel Ross with Robert Morris and General Washington called on Mrs. Ross and told her they were a committee of Congress, and wanted her to make a flag from the drawing, a rough one, which upon her suggestions, was redrawn by General Washington in pencil in her back parlor. This was prior to the Declaration of Independence. I fix the date to be during Washington's visit to Congress from New York, in June, 1776, when he came to confer about the affairs of the Army, the flag being no doubt, one of these affairs."

There is in the National Archives of the Navy an order to be sent to Elizabeth Ross of Philadelphia, "for making ship colors" for 14 pounds, 12 shillings, and 2 pence.

The Marine Committee adopted on June 14, 1777 the theme of the red and white striped Union Flag of Holland, to be the flag of the thirteen United States of America. Ezra Stiles, President of Yale University, recorded in his diary the resolution passed by Congress in 1777.

"The Congress have substituted a new constella of thirteen stars instead of the Union in the Continental Colors."

THE FLAG FIRST FLOWN IN BATTLE

On August 2, 1777, British and Indians attacked Fort Stanwiz, at Rome, New York. The fort was defended by Colonel Peter Gansevort with 600 men. Lt. Col. Melton arrived at the fort with ammunition and supplies to defend the fort. He brought newspapers with the account of the newly enacted flag resolution.

Amid great excitement, soldiers gave up their white shirts, one of the wives at the fort donated her red flannel petticoat, and Captain Abraham Swartwout's

blue coat was donated to provide the blue field for the Union.

In the Battle of Guildford Courthouse, March 25, 1781, is the first time that the Stars and Stripes were carried by the North Carolina Militia of the American Army in the Revolutionary War. It had thirteen eight-pointed stars.

A bronze historical marker close to the Detroit Riverfront identifies the spot where the American Flag was first raised along the Great Lakes, on July 25, 1791.

When George Washington transferred his army from Boston to New York, he carried the Grand Flag with him, and raised it over his headquarters.

On April 24, 1778, John Paul Jones wrote, "Following the first naval victory, I hoisted the American Stars."

Flag Day celebrates the birth of our Flag as of June 14, 1777. We continue to celebrate Flag Day on June 14th annually. In 1916, President Woodrow Wilson issued a proclamation calling for a national observance for Flag Day. Harry Truman signed the measure into law.

The great passion for Liberty was expressed in Scripture. The admonition in Lev. XXV: X (25:10) is inscribed on our Liberty Bell. "Proclaim **LIBERTY** throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof."

Our own George Washington proclaimed Liberty, "Government is not reason; it is not eloquence, it is force. Like fire, it is a dangerous servant and a fearful master."

"Woe to them that decree unjust statutes and to those who continually record unjust decisions to deprive the needy of justice, and to rob the poor of My people of their rights..." **Isaiah 12:1-2**

Our Framers and Founders understood that our rights are derived from our Creator, the Great Legislator of the Universe. John Adams, our Second President, said it well:

"You have rights antecedent to all earthly governments; rights that cannot be repealed or restrained by human laws, rights derived from the Great Legislator of the Universe."

Biblical References "Ensign/Ensigns"

- Numbers 2:2** *The Lord said to Moses and Aaron: "The Israelites are to camp around the Tent of Meeting some distance from it, each man under his standard with the banners of his family."*
- Isaiah 5:26** *He lifts up a banner for the distant nations, he whistles for those at the ends of the earth. Here they come, swiftly and speedily!*
- Isaiah 11:10** *In that day the Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples; the nations will rally to him, and his place of rest will be glorious.*
- Isaiah 11:12** *He will raise a banner for the nations and gather the exiles of Israel; he will assemble the scattered people of Judah.*
- Isaiah 18:3** *All you people of the world, you who live on the earth, when a banner is raised on the mountains, you will see it, and when a trumpet sounds, you will hear it.*
- Isaiah 30:17** *A thousand will flee at the threat of one; at the threat of five you will all flee away, till you are left like a flagstaff on a mountaintop, like a banner on a hill.*
- Isaiah 31:9** *Their stronghold will fall because of terror, at sight of the battle standard their commanders will panic.*
- Zachariah 9:16** *The Lord their God will save them on that day as the flock of his people. They will sparkle in his land like jewels in a crown.*
- Psalms 74:4** *Your foes roared in the place where you met with us; they set up their standards as signs.*



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ROBSERVATIONS...

by Robert Tate

AMATEURS, RANK AMATEURS

Here I sit, shaking my head. Next year cannot come too soon for me. That is, next year's presidential election. It has hard for me to fathom the level of mediocrity that emanates from within this administration. It has become a continuous procession of buffoonery that is only topped by the sheer impossibility that such actions should ever occur. I am not even going to talk about Benghazi because there is still too much information that has been hidden, covered, expunged or whatever you want to call it. Others with much more information than I will deal with that at a later date. But there are some issues that should totally anger EVERY American. The sad truth is that most people could care less about the truth and care only for their new Ipad, I-Phone or what the Kardashians are doing now. So here goes.

1. Chuck Hagel: (<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/checkpoint/wp/2015/12/19/why-former-pentagon-chief-chuck-hagels-coming-out-against-the-white-house-matters/>)

Just last week, former Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel spoke about his yearlong tenure in the military's top position. It was both eye opening and sad. Sad because those with open eyes have been seeing this behavior for years. At the time of his resignation, we were told that Hagel was asked to step down because he and the White House did not "see eye-to-eye" on how to deal with the ISIS threat. Later it was mentioned that the president had lost faith in Hagel. Not surprising, Hagel, a year removed from his job is not taking these barbs sitting down and is explaining some of his ideas on what happened.

Hagel's words are a terrific insight into a world of delusion, micro-management and people clearly promoted up and beyond their intellectual capabilities. Not to mention the dozens of general officers that have been fired under Obamas watch. The site (<http://www.rense.com/general96/listof.html>) gives an excellent summary of officers fired as of March of 2014. In Hagel's words, Obama had no clear strategy on dealing with ISIS and apparently he had no desire to hear competing ideas on what to do. After his infamous "red line in the sand" speech, much like Chamberlain's "Peace in our time" speech, the defense department had plans to bomb Damascus directly in order to stop the use of chemical weapons. President Obama quickly shut that down. From incoherent 4-hour staff meetings run by the way over tasked National Security Advisor Susan Rice to having "the hell beat out of him" for daring to delay transfer orders of GITMO detainees because he had serious security concerns about their release, his words are eye opening.

None of this is surprising since Hagel was the third Secretary of Defense to "leave" while working for President Obama. Former Secretary Robert Gates, who served for both President George W. Bush and Obama, wrote that he was "seething" and "running out of patience on multiple fronts" with the administration. Gates likewise penned, "suspicion and distrust of senior military officers by senior White House officials — including the president and vice president — became a big problem for me as I tried to manage the relationship between the commander in chief and his military leaders." Leon Panetta likewise echoed that Obama had a "frustrating reticence to engage his opponents and rally support for his cause." He also lamented that Obama too frequently "relies on the logic of a law professor rather than the passion of a leader." Having four Secretaries of Defense in a seven year period is unprecedented in the modern age. Likewise it is sad and telling. Guess what folks, if you have been married and divorced four times in seven years, it is probably time to take that deep introspective look at yourself. But it is that narrow field of view of the micro-manager that scares the daylight out of those more competent, and dare I say smarter, than the manager who has to have his mitts in the tiniest of actions. It harkens back to a time when President Lyndon Johnson and Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara would sit at the White House selecting the targets Navy and Air Force Airmen were going to attack the next day, despite what commanders in the field wanted. We all know how that turned out. Amateurs.

2. Ash Carter: Okay, on the heels of Hillary Clinton's email debacle, it was disclosed this week that current Secretary of Defense, Ash Carter used a private email for official business. "Oh the humanity!" Are you kidding me? This guy, knowing the climate in Washington actually used a private server for emails. Okay, I will cut him some slack. Just kidding, no slack here. He knew better. Period. It doesn't matter whether there was "classified" information or not. As a Secretary of Defense, just like Hillary as Secretary of State, every email pertaining to work, at a minimum is sensitive. There may be no earth shattering information divulged but guess what, do you want the Chinese or Russians knowing you are having lunch at 1200 at Olive Garden with Secretary Joe Bagodonuts?

What I find amusing from the liberal pundits is that they continue to see nothing wrong

with this behavior. I also find it amusing that most of the people who find nothing wrong with this are the same ones who themselves have never had anything remotely close to a Top Secret Security Clearance and therefore have never handled this type of information on a daily basis. I have. I remember flying with a Delta Captain several years ago and I made a statement about people in our government who by the nature of their actions and associations could never get a security clearance if they were in the Air Force. He became quite indignant and told me I didn't know what I was talking about. I knew he had flown in the Air Force but the plane he flew did not require any clearance of that level. So I said to him, "Well you know what it took . . . oh that's right. You only flew a T-37, you never had a TS clearance. Sorry." I winked and turned away and yeah he was pissed and no I didn't care.

The handling of classified information is, or should be, a very serious thing. In the military, we take it very seriously and woe to the military member who mishandles such information. As for Ash Carter, personally I think he should be fired but unfortunately the precedent has been set with Hillary Clinton as well as a President who steadfastly refused to leave his Blackberry out of classified meetings when he first took office. "Hey, what's the big deal?" you ask. Any device that can receive or transmit data is not allowed into a classified briefing for obvious reasons. But if you have a boss who doesn't really care about security, why should you? Amateurs.

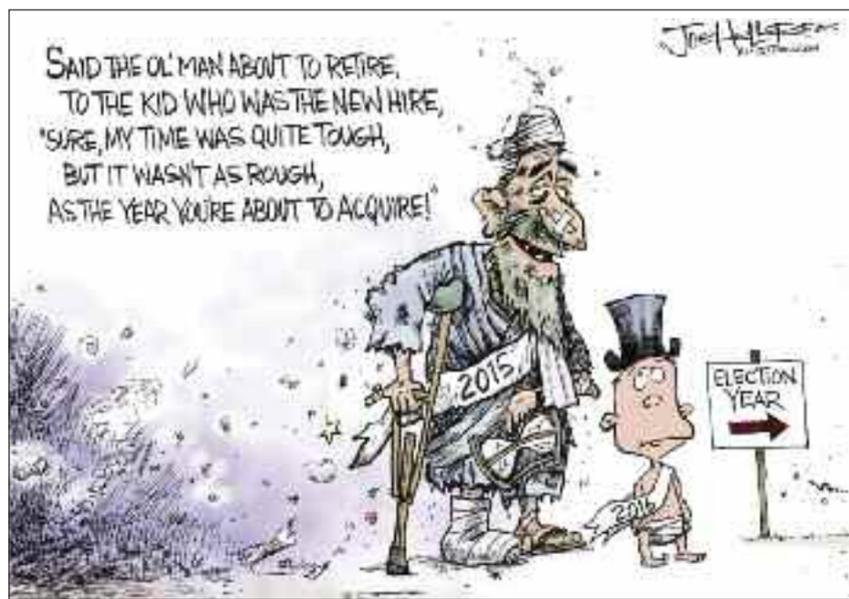
3. Loretta Lynch (<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3346148/Attorney-General-s-greatest-fear-isn-t-Islamic-terrorism-s-attacks-Muslims-backlash-wake-shootings.html>)

Lastly, our Attorney General Loretta Lynch recently told a group of Muslims in Washington that her "greatest fear" since the Paris terror attack is retaliatory violence against members of the religion. Really? That is your greatest fear? Not radical Islamic terrorism? Not ISIS' call for violence in the US? Not the Americans going there to fight for ISIS or coming back with jihadist ideas? Not the fact that ISIS has said, in their own words, that they are going to infiltrate the US under the guise of Syrian refugees? Lynch further stated that "as a prosecutor," she worries that the anti-Muslim rhetoric "will be accompanied by acts of violence," and that "We cannot give in to the fear that these backlashes are really based on."

Look, I agree at one level that as Americans we cannot afford, legally and more importantly morally, to go all WWII on the Muslims in our country. No. Not gonna happen. Should never happen. And as Americans, we have a duty to stop indiscriminate violence against ANY group. But that being said, AG Lynch, is that really your greatest fear? If so, perhaps you need to get another job. I do find it interesting that according to the article above, while addressing this group, Lynch conveniently ignored that the San Bernardino shootings that occurred a couple days previously was carried out by Muslims. Can't offend people with the truth I guess. Her politically correct mumbo jumbo tells me that she is nothing more than another amateur. Sad.

Politico reports that Lynch did not mention the Wednesday shooting in San Bernardino, California, that was committed by two Muslims and is currently under investigation by the FBI during her remarks, while urging Americans of all backgrounds not to give into violent impulses.

We hope your New Year is a very Blessed one!



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HAPPY
NEW YEAR

John Sophocleus

THINK



Congress' Festive Omnibus Bill: 2015

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

Some have said my columns have become too angry, too much serious reporting, etc. instead of Sophocleus opinin' so I thought I'd lighten things up with a poem about the current holiday season:

*Twas the week before Christmas, when all through the House,
All the liberals were stirring, while conservatives groused.
The wish lists were hung on the approps bill with care,
In hopes that Obama would bless it with flair.
The Members were nestled all smug in their heads,
While visions of donors danced in their heads.
As Ryan the new Chief, and Nancy the shill,
Agreed they would stick us with a huge spending bill.
They went to the House floor with most in cahoots,
One trillion and more and tax breaks to boot.
It took some arm-twisting to get enough votes,
While hapless taxpayers must carry the note.
Then on the House floor there came so much chatter,
That Members looked up to see what was the matter.
Away to their cell phones they flew like a flash,
To make sure their pet projects hadn't been slashed.
They spoke not a word, but went straight to their work,
To pass all the goodies, while big-spenders smirked.
And laying restraint aside for the time,
Said let's spend some money, put it all on the line.
Now, Ryan!, Now, Nancy!, Now, Hoyer and all;
On, Schumer! On, Harry! Cried Mitchell, "roll call."
To the front of the room, and let gavel fall,
Now dash away! Dash away! Dash away all!
Their eyes—how they twinkled! Their dimples how merry!
Their cheeks were like roses, from wine and the sherry!
They all slapped their backs and most had a smile,
Though taxpayers will feel the pain for a while.
But some raised a ruckus and said it's not right,
"We promised the voters that we would be tight."
"Who cares?" came the answer, "It's Christmas, don't fear,
We'll just tell the voters we'll do better next year."
Then they sprang to their limos, with drivers inside,
And away they all flew, all filled up with pride.
And I heard them exclaim as they drove out of sight,
Happy Christmas to all, we spent trillions tonight!*

- Merrill Matthews is a resident scholar with the **Institute for Policy Innovation** think tank in Dallas, TX

<http://rare.us!.../twas-the-week-before-christmas-a-poem.../>

Alabama Div. SCV Commander Gary Carlyle's writing on, "some politicians resorting to sensationalism to gain personal acclaim and recognition, instead of working for productive government for all Alabamians," also caught



(Image courtesy of Facebook)

Alabama Division of the Sons of Confederate Veterans Commander, Gary Carlyle at a gathering to celebrate the Birthday of the first Grand Wizard of the Ku Klux Klan, General Nathan Bedford Forrest.

my eye these past weeks. His press release on the matter was as follows:

Black, White, Indian, Hispanic, Protestant, Catholic and Jewish Confederate Veterans stood as ONE in thousands of battles during Lincoln's war to collect revenue and afterwards attended Confederate Veterans Reunions TOGETHER and received Confederate Veterans Pensions from the Southern States.

(See Photos of Black Confederate Veterans at the 41st United Confederate Veterans Reunion in Montgomery on June 2, 3, 4 and 5, 1931 from the Scrapbook of the 41st Reunion in the Alabama Department of Archives and History. And see the attached photo of the Last Confederate Reunion in 1944 on the steps of Alabama's Capitol, also at the Archives)

"There is another class of colored people who make a business of keeping the public, the wrongs, and the hardships of the Negro race before the public. Having learned that they are able to make a living out of their troubles, they have grown into the settled habit of advertising their wrongs - partly because they want sympathy and partly because it pays. Some of these people do not want the Negro to lose his grievances, because they do not want to lose their jobs." — Booker T. Washington

Commander Carlyle's text also included one of my favorite B.T. Washington quotes, "**Character, not circumstances, makes the man,**" predating similarly sagacious words from Rev. M.L. King in the struggle to overcome the political correctness of his day. It evoked a haunting from Christmas past of my first *Gazette* column (December 2009) about the Williams family who owned 80 acres in Marengo county, showing deed and tax records of ownership back to 1874. Some at the Alabama State Lands Division didn't like good folks like Williams owning land because they were black. ASLD asserted the so-called 'public purpose' for this taking was due to swampland designation (in 1906) and compensated them NOTHING for it. In 1967, Circuit Judge Emmett F. Hildreth ruled Willie Williams and a cousin (along with their wives) could live on the land until they died, but could not **farm** or **log** any of the 80 acres taken - sound like swampland? If converting these acres into swampland was such a great idea - why force the land from the Williams family? A private individual or nature conservancy group could voluntarily buy it from Williams if they value it more as wetland - private conservation efforts of this sort appear to be superior

to government outcomes which often subsidize destruction of the environment and over-consumption.

Furthermore, it is hard to make a case \$0 is "just compensation." 18-1A- et seq. of the Alabama eminent domain code includes text where, "replacement/reproduction" is just compensation. Of course, this was not offered to Williams since the true purpose of the taking was to steal his land because he was black not regard for wetlands - i.e., they didn't want Williams to have ANY land, **PERIOD!** This is not to say all bureaucrats at the State Lands Division were terrible people, any more than to say all syphilis researchers were evil because of the so-called 'Tuskegee Experiment' - but those, esp. in government, who do not have to bear cost and consequences of their actions are much more likely to engage in abuses of this sort.

Stated plainly, what was done to the Williams family was a 5th Amendment civil right violation regardless of color. More to the point do you really think the Williams Family would've suffered all they've endured if the ASLD had to pay for their actions? The fundamental reason for the uniformity clause and 5th Amendment text on takings in the US Constitution is to avoid putting the burden of a public project on one individual or specific group. Why must Williams disproportionately bear the cost of providing wetlands regardless if one thinks it is a 'good' or 'bad' public endeavor?

Libertarian candidates had major party status in the 2002 election cycle and made the Williams case an issue - getting enough traction to where then Gov. Siegelman patented the land back to Williams the day before the Democratic primary. Rep. Thomas Jackson (D - Thomasville) was to empanel a group to address this abuse disproportionately burdened upon blacks and poor whites unable to defend themselves in our corrupt legal system. None of the scholars I know on the subject have ever been contacted on the matter and nothing has been done on the issue to make reparations to those devastated by blatant 5th Amendment civil rights violations of this sort.

Very revealing a (non-Democrat/Republican) party who had major party status at the time, trying to bring these civil right abuses to the surface was not allowed in APTV debates for the general election. Since APTV receives State & federal funds, libertarians took it to federal court. Judge Nyrton Thompson ruled it was OK to discriminate against those who had the same major party status as the duopoly (Ds & Rs) parties determined by State law. Libertarians promptly communicated their press release to the effect a federal judge says "back of the bus - you can't use this vehicle to get your message out." Until there is increased competition to allow greater light and discourse in Alabama's political markets, I'm afraid civil rights will continue to be more abused in this manner, given how successful some judges have been in the campaign to remove one of our most important and fundamental rights.

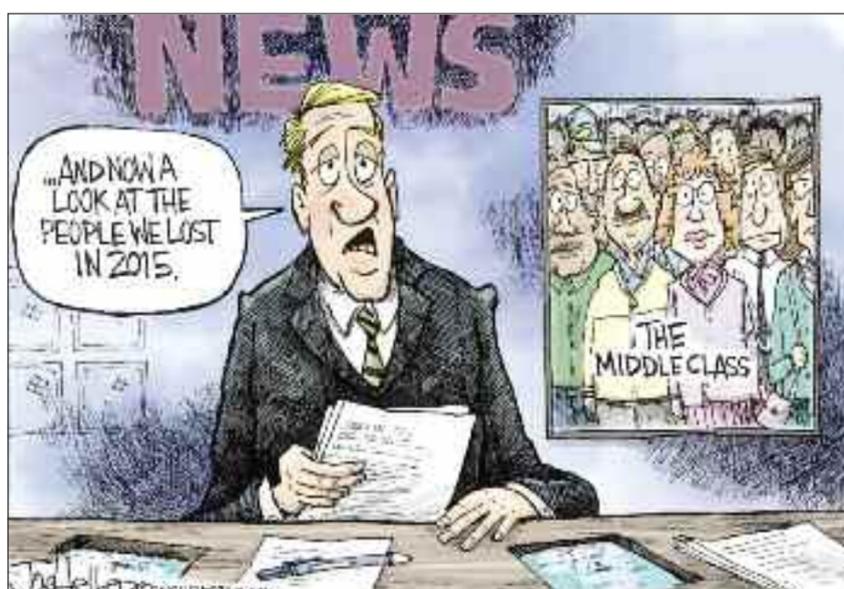
Little surprise champions of big government like Davis, Ford, Holmes, Sewell, Thompson, et al will cry wolf on battle flags and monuments (which seem to have the power to jump off of poles and commit acts of destruction and murder) to remain silent on matters of substance to address any real civil right violation which disempowers the government they deify. One wonders what will be the next bogeyman rhetoric they will conjure up as the command economy policies/programs they accomplish make things worse for general welfare and even more deleterious to the group(s) they claim to be helping. Job security Mr. B.T. Washington wrote of for those making a living out troubles of this sort is in little jeopardy until these 'leaders' are replaced by ones who understand and are willing to address civil rights violations to get us out of the morass we've 'progressed' into these past several score. Indeed unlikely since truly championing civil rights doesn't offer the promise of being well rewarded in this world.

Postscript: with a heavy heart and hands I type of Mrs. Peggy Felicity McComas Allen passing last month. Born 1924 in Louisville (KY) she graduated from Vanderbilt University, elected Phi Beta Kappa Society 1947. She moved to Auburn in 1964 with husband of 64 years, Prof. Ward Allen raising four wonderful children and began work on, **Jefferson Davis Unconquerable Heart** (http://www.amazon.com/Jefferson-Davis-Unconquerable-Heart-SHADES/dp/0826212190/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1450718576&sr=1-1&keywords=jefferson+davis+unconquerable+heart) biography published by University of Missouri Press in 1999. Eric L. McKittrick (11/29/01 New York Review of Books, pp. 39-42) wrote, "She has so identified herself with Jefferson Davis, so internalized all the feelings, convictions, hopes, fears, illusions, and despairs of the man, that we have placed before our eyes what is virtually a living embodiment of what he was." I fondly recall many discussions during our drives to Annunciation Gr. Orthodox in Montgomery about her endeavor; I was pleasantly surprised (and sincerely honored) she included me in her acknowledgements. The Texas Review Press published her **Letters from Prison: Jefferson Davis to his Wife 1865-1866**, in 2014. Her obituary noted the Allen family and generations to come have in these works as a display of Felicity's intellect, careful use of English words, and the character and deportment of a man whom she admired.



Mrs. Peggy Felicity McComas Allen

The Resurrection service made the traditional greeting/exclamation, "Christ is risen from the dead" (Christos Anesti - from the traditional Greek Orthodox Easter celebration) foremost to venerate the one she held most dear. I pray Mrs. Allen is well received in her final judgement. What a blessing it was to have her in my life.



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.



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

January 13, 2016:

Last week we discussed the presidential race. The GOP race for the nomination has been one of the most illuminating in history. Never before have political novices been the frontrunners. It is obvious that voters prefer an outsider with no governmental experience. Donald Trump and Ben Carson would both be considered outsiders, both lacking in political experience and skills and Trump lacking tact. No matter what they say or the amateurish blunders they make they doggedly cling to their lead in the polls.

Over the years I have been able to predict Alabama political races with some accuracy. However, national and presidential politics not so much. A prime example would be the presidential race eight years ago. In 2008, I looked at Fred Thompson and saw a presidential winner. He was tall with a deep gravelly voice. He had charisma and gravitas, not to mention a perfect resume and bio to be president.

Thompson had risen to fame as a Watergate prosecutor, then moved on to become a well-known actor, who was a star in movies and the television show Law and Order. He served with distinction for eight years in the Senate from Tennessee. He was a proven political fundraiser. Hence I boldly declared and predicted that Fred Thompson would be the GOP nominee and probably the next president. Upon hearing of my column and glowing prediction his wife even called from Nashville to thank me for the complimentary column. A week later, Thompson dropped out of the presidential race.

There is an old adage that says once bit, twice shy. Another that says fool me once shame on you, fool me twice shame on me. Well a few months back I tried again and predicted that Jeb Bush would win the GOP nomination and go on to give Hillary Clinton a run for her money, but it currently looks as though Bush is fading nationwide.

Regardless, I still believe that Jeb Bush is the best candidate the Republicans could field to possibly beat Clinton. He has proven himself to be a successful governor of a battleground state. Florida is indeed the ultimate swing state. The

Sunshine State is now America's third most populous state. It is a microcosm of America, probably because most of America has moved there to retire.

Jeb Bush has a Hispanic wife with obvious Hispanic children and he has a very proven following among the Hispanic population in Florida. It does not hurt that he speaks fluent Spanish. Due to the country's dramatic demographic changes and the advantages inherent in the Electoral College for Democrats, a Democrat begins the race as the favorite. However, Bush could pull off the upset. Capturing the all-important Hispanic vote in a pivotal swing state is crucial.

Jeb Bush was considered by most of the Bush family as the more promising of the two sons. He was considered the one to follow his father as president. He is also a prolific fundraiser. Raising campaign money is the key to victory in presidential politics or any politics for that matter. He is a tireless worker who has an impeccable reputation as a family man, which is a stark contrast to the strange Clinton marriage.

Time Magazine was pretty much on the same page as me several months ago. They had a cover story of Bush and summed it up this way, "A two term Governor of the ultimate swing state, Bush earned high marks for ushering in sweeping conservative reforms. He's a Spanish-speaking policy wonk with a multi-cultural family that mirrors the nation's metamorphosis and he may be the only Republican with the mix of money, moxie and political mastery to match Clinton."

However, the premier reason that Jeb Bush is the best candidate against Hillary for the GOP is that he is from Florida. A Republican must carry Florida. Polling reveals that Trump cannot carry Florida or Ohio for that matter against Hillary Clinton. Therefore, if the GOP nominates Trump they are doomed.

If Jeb Bush indeed falters and fails to win over GOP primary conservative voters nationwide, then who could beat Hillary? The answer is obvious. Young Florida Senator Marco Rubio is the only candidate left standing who could beat Hillary. He is Hispanic, very conservative, attractive, young, and articulate plus he hails from Florida. It is all about Florida. It will be interesting to watch.



Family Therapy



Some Children Do Need Psychotropic Medication

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

I would like to discuss the current trend I am seeing as a clinician in regards to medication not being prescribed to children with mental health concerns. In these same cases, the primary care doctor and/or psychiatrist refused to medicate a child after therapeutic interventions have been tried for

several months with little or no success, and have been short-lived due to the fact that the child had not stabilized from symptomatology of a classifiable DSM-5 diagnoses. As a result, the child gets discharged from one counselor to the next, only to have the same issue arise of needing medication to stabilize. Frustrated parents end up having to take the child to their local ER to get temporary assistance, not long term help which they so badly need. "Recent research suggests that up to 15 percent of children and adolescents have a mental health disorder that is serious enough to cause some impairment, unfortunately, only one in five of these children with mental illness receive services by appropriately trained mental health professionals" (Meyers, 2006, p.26) via talk therapy. On the other end of the spectrum, I have been at institutions in other states where I have been fortunate to have a child psychiatrist in-house who had the knowledge and the confidence in prescribing psychotropic medication to children combined with therapy, effectively stabilizing the child to receive services elsewhere.

This commentary does not suggest that the medical profession does not have the skills or the knowledge to address mental health issues as a whole. One of

the main reasons for non-medicating is the actuality that it is a child and not an adult, which weighs heavily on the medical professional's psyche, as most of us do not think children require or need pharmaceutical assistance when they are at the beginning stages of their lives. I do understand that children have developmental stages

they must go through that occur over the child's life span. I think the problem really arises when medical professionals, specifically primary care doctors and certain psychiatrists, have not been given the appropriate training in medical school or during residency in working with children with mental health issues. The primary care doctor/psychiatrist view the child's or adolescent's behavior as normal intermittently returning during developmental life stages. From this de facto, they feel uncomfortable treating a child with depression, trauma, anxiety, etc. There are also parents who are rightly afraid that their child may be inappropriately labeled, with multiple diagnoses, medicines, and therapies which will be initiated without being agreed upon by the all specialists who are providing the services to the child or adolescent, as reported by Parent Advocacy Coalition for Educational Rights (2015, October). I have worked in many arenas and the unwillingness of practitioners to medicate a child goes against the child's best interest. When it is medically indicated that a child meets the criteria for a medical diagnosis and can benefit from medication regimen, this option needs to be explored more extensively. I have observed, in many instances, where children need medication to stabilize from depression in order for therapy / counseling to be effective, only to be prevented because the doctor feels that the child is too young for the medication.

Most of the research studies of psychotropic medication, intended to guide prescribers, have been done mostly with adults and fewer with children, which limits the information that is being utilized to guide the medical doctor in the

form of practice parameters for assessment purposes around medication for children and adolescents. The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) reports that research gaps are hampering the ability to adequately treat a number of serious mental illnesses that impact the lives of children and adolescents (2007, May). This gap of research knowledge creates a dilemma making psychiatrists and primary care doctors apprehensive in prescribing medication to a child. I would recommend that the psychiatrist or primary care doctor get additional training on child psychiatric medication. I am not advocating for all children with mental health issues to be on medication, but I am saying that this is a noticeable trend. Primary care doctors need to be aware that there is strong evidence of efficacy of cognitive behavioral therapy for issues such as anxiety in children; however, few doctors utilize SSRIs that may be effective for children who do not show improvement with behavioral therapy alone. Research has found that, at least with adults, a combination of medicine and psychotherapy work better than either treatment alone. "Studies on depression shows that medications and empirically supported therapies such as cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) and interpersonal therapy are equally effective, with each modality helping about 60 percent of clients. Combined treatments produce even better results: In a literature review in the April 2005 Journal of Clinical Psychiatry (Vol. 66, No. 4, pages 455-468)" (DeAngelis, 2008). There are those who do not fit this category and Fluoxetine (Prozac) is the only medication that has been approved by the Food and Drug Administration to treat depression in children age 8 and older. It may increase the risk for suicidal behaviors in some children, again making it difficult for a psychiatrist or medical doctor to prescribe medication to a child because of the risk ("Antidepressants Medications," 2015 September).

Food For Thought

In general, medicating children and adolescents can be a divisive topic--whether or not to turn to pharmaceuticals to cope with mental health issues such as depression and the symptoms that arise from depression or other mental health issues which cause parents to debate with school administrators, mental health professionals, family friends, politicians, caregivers and even themselves. There is no one-size-fits-all answer when dealing with mental health issues. A doctor's recommendation to use medication often raises many concerns and questions in parents and the child/ adolescent prescribed medication may change how a child/ adolescent interact, play, sleep, eat, and deal with everyday events. Professionally, I feel medication can be an effective tool in the treatment of several psychiatric disorders of childhood and adolescence when all therapeutic attempts have failed. The psychiatrist or primary care doctor who recommends the medication should be experienced in treating psychiatric illnesses in children and adolescents. He or she should fully explain the reasons for medication use, what are the pros and cons, as well as possible risks, adverse effects, and other treatment alternatives.

Anti-depressant medications for children and adolescents: Information for parents and caregivers. (2015, September). National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Retrieved September 25, 2015 from <http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/child-and-adolescent-mental-health/antidepressant-medications-for-children-and-adolescents-information-for-parents-and-caregivers.shtml>

DeAngelis, T. (2008) When do meds make the difference? Monitor on Psychology, 39 (2), 48.

Meyers, L. (2006). Medicate or not? Monitor on Psychology 37 (10), 24.

Minnesota Parent Training and Information Center. (2015, October).

Retrieved October 5, 2015 from <http://www.pacer.org/cmh/does-my-child-have-an-emotional-or-behavioral-disorder/>

NAMI is the National Alliance on Mental Illness (2007, May). Choosing the right treatment: What families need to know about evidence-based practices.

Continued on page 7A



Children's hospital intervention & prevention service

Woods & Waters with Steve



Steve Long

We need COLDER weather to get the deer moving!

Well ladies and gentlemen, the weather hasn't exactly been top-notch this season so far. We're finally starting to see some weather that resembles December, but to this point in the season, the deer haven't done much moving. Unseasonably warm weather means that there's still browse in the woods, so the deer don't have to move far to get their grub. On top of that, deer are a prey animal. They're conditioned to stay as safe as possible, meaning that when the weather gets cold and chilly, the deer will get up and move around in order to generate body heat. Warmer weather means they don't have to move to stay warm, so they're content to just bed down for the day. So while the weather has been bad for deer, the bright side is that fishing and quail hunting have been absolutely fantastic!

That being said, the unusually warm weather isn't just down here; I went to a meeting with a bunch of directors for QDMA the other day, and every corner of the US, even up in Canada, was having a rough time of it. We also talked about disease within the deer population, which seems to be starting to spread around.

We're still mostly in the clear down here in Alabama, but it's coming.

I'm sure of you are still curious as to what all this talk about QDMA is, so let me take a minute to explain what QDMA is all about! QDMA stands for Quality Deer Management Association, and it's a non-profit organization that's all about the preservation and growth of the whitetail deer population, as well as the industry and sport surrounding those deer. QDMA is all about research, education, and awareness. In fact, they have an approach to this that we like to call REACH: Research, Educate, Advocate, Certify, and Hunt! Research involves hunters, biologists, and outdoorsmen and women everywhere, working together to get the facts and statistics needed to make informed decisions. QDMA is focused on whitetail biology, ecology, management, hunting, diseases, and

human dimensions for research. QDMA helps with many practical research projects that both increase knowledge and improve management.

Education is the next part of QDMA's mission. We do our best to ensure that everyone involved with deer have access to and a better understanding of all the factors that go into deer management, habitat improvement, and many other areas.

QDMA hosts many seminars, field days, and its own magazine, Quality Whitetails.

QDMA is also focused on being an advocate. Nature is a harsh mistress, yet we humans are pretty rough on the deer populations as well! With the myriad issues facing the whitetail population, QDMA works hard across the board, ensuring that the whitetail population is stable and healthy, not just for today, but for future generations as well!

Certification programs are another aspect of QDMA. There is an individual certification program that has three sequential steps, teaching and certifying people on how to ensure proper deer management. There's also a Land Certification Program, which in tandem with the individual program, aims to create more knowledgeable hunters and managers!

Finally, QDMA is about hunting. Hunting is the most direct and effective way to see the results of all the work that goes into deer herd management. Through our

Mentored Hunting Program and the membership-based Rack Pack, QDMA aims to foster a greater understanding of hunting, as well as establish a feeling of camaraderie and belonging for young hunters. It's not just about getting more kids hunting, but making them better ambassadors for deer hunting as well!

That's just a brief summary of what QDMA is all about, and of course, there's always more to know! If you'd like to get involved with QDMA, just shoot me an e-mail at slong@QDMA.com. So get your long Johns ready, cause the cold is coming, and go get 'em!



Mike Martin at Giles Island Mississippi with a great Bow kill



WHAT TO DO IF INJURED OR BABY WILDLIFE IS FOUND

Many wild animals are cute, especially babies, and it might be tempting to try and care for one on your own. This is not a good idea! Wild animals can be aggressive and can carry parasites and diseases that may be transmissible to you or your companion animals. Wildlife rehabilitators have the facilities

and knowledge to address the very specific needs of various wildlife species.

These tips can help you decide whether to take action:

1. Signs that a wild animal needs your help.
2. Presented by a cat or dog.
3. Evidence of bleeding.
4. An apparent or obvious broken limb.
5. Featherless or nearly featherless and on the ground.
6. Shivering.
7. A dead parent nearby.
8. Crying and wandering all day long.

If you see any of these signs, find help for the animal. If necessary, safely capture and transport her to the appropriate place for treatment. Determining whether an animal is orphaned and needs your help depends on age, species and behavior. Babies of some species are left alone all day and rely on camouflage for protection, while others are tightly supervised by their parent(s). Read on for descriptions of what's normal for each species. A squirrel who is nearly full-sized, has a full and fluffy tail and can run, jump and climb is independent. However, if a juvenile squirrel continuously approaches and follows people, her mom is probably gone. In this case, you should contact a rehabilitator because the baby is very hungry and needs care.

There are a few cases where you might need to intervene:

1. A baby squirrel falls from a nest.
2. A nest falls from a tree.
3. A felled tree contains an intact nest.

If the baby and/or his nest fell from the tree today, give the mother squirrel a chance to reclaim her young and relocate him to a new nest. If the baby is uninjured, leave him where he is, leave the area, keep people and pets

away and monitor him from a safe distance. If it's chilly outside or the baby isn't fully furred, place him in a shoebox with something warm underneath (like a heating pad on a low setting or a hot water bottle). Be sure to put a flannel shirt between the baby and the heating device, or he could overheat. Do not cover him with anything or the mother might not be able to find him. **If the babies are not retrieved by dusk, take these steps:** Wearing thick gloves gather the squirrels and place them inside a thick, soft cloth, such as a cloth diaper or fleece scarf or hat. Place one of the following items beneath the cloth: a chemical hand warmer inside a sock, a hot water bottle (replace the hot water every 30 minutes) or a heating pad set on the lowest setting. (If the heating pad has no cover, put it inside two pillow cases so the babies don't overheat. Place the baby squirrels, cloth and warmer inside a small cardboard box or carrier. Call a wildlife rehabilitator. People often mistakenly assume that a fawn (baby deer) found alone is orphaned. If the fawn is lying down calmly and quietly, his mother is nearby and he is OK.

A doe only visits and nurses her fawn a few times a day to avoid attracting predators. Unless you know that the mother is dead, leave the fawn alone. Although mother deer are wary of human smells, they still want their babies back. If you already handled the fawn, quickly return the fawn to the exact spot where you found him and leave the area; the mother deer will not show herself until you are gone. If the fawn is lying on his side or wandering and crying incessantly all day, he probably needs help. If this is the case, contact a licensed wildlife rehabilitator.

Fox kits will often appear unsupervised for long periods while their parents are out hunting for food. They will play like puppies around the den site until the parents decide they're old enough to go on hunting trips. Then they will suddenly disappear. Observe the kits from a distance; if they seem energetic and healthy, leave them alone. If they appear sickly or weak, or if you have reason to believe both parents are dead, contact a licensed wildlife rehabilitator.

Baby opossums are born as embryos, barely larger than a bee, and spend about two months nursing in their mother's pouch. When they get to be about 3-4 inches long and start riding around on her back, they may fall off without her noticing. As a general rule, if an opossum is over 7 inches long (not including the tail), he's old enough to be on his own; if he's less than 7 inches long (not including the tail), he is an orphan, and you should contact a licensed wildlife rehabilitator.

If a baby raccoon has been seen alone for more than a few hours, he is probably an orphan. Mother raccoons don't let their young out of their sight for long. Put an inverted laundry basket over the baby (with a light weight on top so he cannot push his way out) and monitor him until well into the nighttime hours (raccoons are nocturnal, so mom should come out at night to reclaim her baby). You can also put the kits in a pet carrier and close the door. Instead of latching it, prop it closed with an angled stick. When mom returns, she'll run in front of the carrier, push over the stick, and the door will pop open. If the mother does not return, contact a licensed wildlife rehabilitator. In spring and summer, people often set traps in a misguided effort to resolve garbage and other "nuisance" issues. Unfortunately, this approach leads to trapped and killed mothers who leave their starving young behind. If anyone in your neighborhood is setting traps, persuade them to use more humane and effective methods instead.

If you see a baby skunk (or a line of baby skunks, nose-to-tail) running around without a mother in sight, he (or they) could be orphaned. Skunks have poor eyesight, so if something scares the mother and she runs off, her babies can quickly lose sight of her. Monitor the situation to see if the mother rejoins her young. If the babies are on the move, put on gloves and slowly place a plastic laundry basket (with lattice sides) over the babies to keep them in one spot and

Please see *Kritter Korner* on page 2B



Ron VanHerwyn

Buster Reynolds

jrmills49@gmail.com



Conecuh River Hunting

Quail and Deer Hunting

At its finest

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Union Springs, AL 36089



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**Sports Editor,
Ed Jones**

FIRST THERE WERE TWO NOW THERE ARE FOUR SOON THERE WILL BE EIGHT!

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

Starting with the football season of 2014, a four team play-off was initiated. This may or may not be better than what we had with the BCS Championship Plan with only the top two teams participating.

The football world has been anxious to come up with any plan that will keep the SEC from dominating the national championship play-off. **The SEC has won or played in the last ten play-offs.** This four team play-off will not satisfy the football fans of American very long. They are only interested in an eight team play-off. Mark my word! That is the next step for the NCAA and the American Football Coaches Association. It won't be far away!

Let's look at the positives and the negatives of an eight team play-off incorporating the five major bowls. One might say that this punishes the bowls by not allowing them to set up the most attractive match-up of top 10 teams. Does it? (See diagram #1 below.)



All four bowls will be played January 1st. The two semi-final games would be played on the Saturday nearest January 8th. The championship game would be played on the Monday night nearest to January 15th.

So, you see the bowls would benefit greatly. They would almost be guaranteed to have higher ranked teams than they have been having over the last few years. That should be a positive position for my plan.

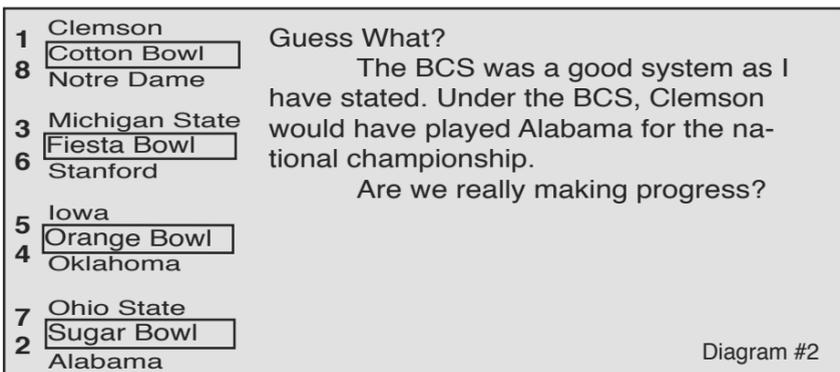
Now, if we can agree upon what we have so far, let's look at the semi-final round. Do you think Atlanta would be interested in hosting the winner of #1 vs. #8 and the winner of #3 vs. #6 on the second weekend in January? You betcha'. Do you think the Astrodome in Houston would be interested in hosting a semi-final game between the winner of #2 vs. #7 and #4 vs. #5? You betcha'. So we have a positive position for the semi-final national championship play-off games.

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

Note: Prior to World War II, the winner of the Rose Bowl was very likely to be voted national champion. This tradition had been in place since the inception of the Rose Bowl. Usually, during those years, a powerhouse from the East would play a powerhouse from the West and the winner would receive most of the votes, consideration, etc., by the main media centers concentrated in New York and California. There was a serious effort to invite the best two college football teams in America. However, the general consensus was that all of the best teams were in the East, Midwest, and the West Coast. That is until 1925 when Coach Wallace Wade accepted an invitation to bring his Crimson Tide football team to Pasadena to play the mighty Washington Huskies in the 1926 Rose Bowl. Alabama shocked the football world by beating Washington 20-19 and was named national champions. Alabama opened the floodgates with this win for southern football to be considered among the elite of college football. Southern teams made numerous appearances in the Rose Bowl after Alabama's visit. The last southern team to play in the Rose Bowl was Coach Frank Thomas' 1945 Alabama team led by Harry Gilmer. They beat USC 34-14 in the 1946 Rose Bowl. Alabama was again named national champions. Since then the unholy alliance between the Pac 10 and the Big 10 has shut out anyone from any other part of the country from participating in the Rose Bowl, the "Granddaddy of All Bowl Games." Only the champions of the Big 10 and the champions of the Pac 10 are invited.

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

If my plan had been in place this past season, the brackets would look like this (diagram below).



By adopting my plan, the NCAA would make more money. The individual schools participating will make more money. Eight teams instead of four will have a chance to play for the national championship. The Bowls will make more money because of higher rated teams in their bowls, plus the obvious heightened interest generated by four bowls becoming quarter-final venues for the NCAA playoffs and the Rose Bowl hosting the national championship game. There

would be more excitement in the regular season games because in essence it becomes a 120 team playoff (There are approximately 120 serious teams playing Division I football). At the beginning of each season every team will have the same chance to make it into the "Top Eight." One or even two losses would not eliminate a good team. Nobody can have a legitimate gripe about not making the playoff. If your team is #9, your team is not good enough. Live with it!

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

The formula is CFOS; Cotton, Fiesta, Orange and Sugar: (See diagram #2 below.)

2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
1. Cotton Bowl	1. Fiesta Bowl	1. Orange Bowl	1. Sugar Bowl	1. Cotton Bowl
2. Fiesta Bowl	2. Orange Bowl	2. Sugar Bowl	2. Cotton Bowl	2. Fiesta Bowl
3. Orange Bowl	3. Sugar Bowl	3. Cotton Bowl	3. Fiesta Bowl	3. Orange Bowl
4. Sugar Bowl	4. Cotton Bowl	4. Fiesta Bowl	4. Orange Bowl	4. Sugar Bowl

Diagram #3

There are probably some negative positions that can be taken regarding my plan. However, I can not think of anything that would be a major deterrent to such a plan. Therefore, I submit this plan to the NCAA, every Division I Conference Commissioner, to Athletic Directors and Head Football Coaches of the football playing Division I schools and to the American Football Coaches Association. Patience cannot be obtained all at once! I patiently wait for your response!

Email me at: alabamagazette@yahoo.com

Please attention: Ed Jones, Sports Editor

12 E. Jefferson St., Montgomery, AL 36014



Jake Coker - Alabama



Baker Mayfield - Oklahoma



Deshaun Watson - Clemson



Ezekiel Elliott - Ohio State



Christian McCaffrey - Stanford



The SEC has won or played in the last 10 national play-offs.

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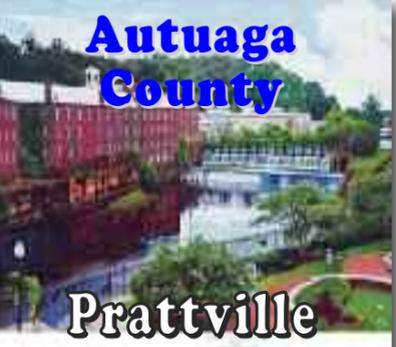
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Montgomery

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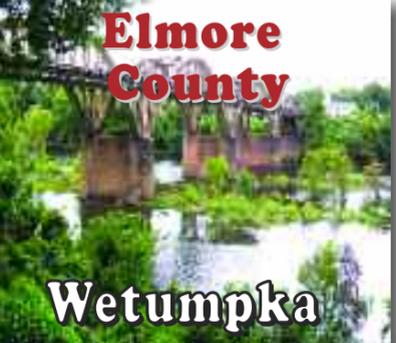
Autauga County



Prattville

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

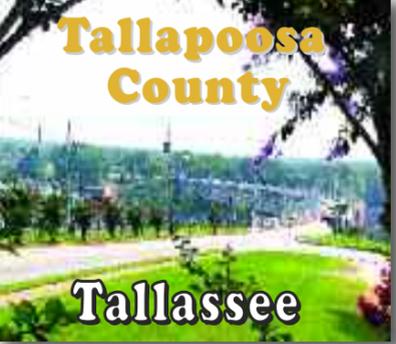
Elmore County



Wetumpka

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

Tallapoosa County



Tallassee

Surrounding Town and Communities: Tallassee, Rockford, Deatsville, Kent and Red Hill

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Vote

Vote

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All of us at Martin's Restaurant would like to say "Thank You" to our customers. We appreciate the opportunity to serve you. We hope that you will continue to join us for lunch and dinner. Martin's Restaurant is owned by David Smith's daughter, Mary Anne Merritt.

The restaurant manager is Annie Calhoun.



Hours of Operation

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Dinner:
Monday - Friday
2:00 PM - 7:30 PM

Sunday Lunch:
10:45 AM - 2:45 PM

Closed on Saturday

Southern Gardening Potpourri for January

by Peggy Givhan



Judge
Peggy Givhan

My, my how time flies. It seems only yesterday that I was waxing on about the January 2015 garden. This year, according to all of the weather procrastinators, we will be experiencing mild temperatures which may be record setting. However, do not let down your guard, because we will get some

freezing weather which mandates protecting some of the more tender plants. If we still have begonias, or even impatiens, this is the category which will need a night time tarp while taking it off during the day. The annuals which we need not be worried about would include dianthus, pansies, dusty miller, lambs ears and winter herbs. It is not too late to plant daffodils, Narcissus, canna lilies, spider lilies, amaryllis, crocus, and other spring bulbs.

If you have not yet cleaned out the flower beds, including cutting back perennials within a couple inches from ground level, and throwing away any dead plant material lying on the ground, do so now. This old plant material either needs to be tilled under for organic matter or piled in a junk heap far from the beds since pesky insects and fungus can winter over with a major surge next spring. If the winter lacks harshly cold temps, many of the insects and their eggs will survive to chew and bite through the flowers next season.

Another task for this time of the year is to make a plan and dream about this year's sensational display of gardening prowess. I always want to try something new in the tapestry of the flower beds. It may be sowing larkspur seed in a sunny area where you need some height or finding a new use for herbs in the beds. Dill seed can be sown now and will give more height in the early summer beds, also cilantro. Perhaps you may want to try Bells of Ireland, a statuesque green flowering plant with the shape of digitalis. You may want to try old fashioned holly hocks, along with shorter Icelandic or California poppies. Perennial artimesia such as Powis Castle and Absinthium are a good choice for our climate and can last for years.

PLANT OF THE MONTH--ARTIMESIA

For the most part, the many varieties of Artimesias are perennial, need good drainage and for the most part, are grown for their unusual leaf patterns. Of course, these would not be good choices for beds in gumbo soil, which must be raised to give good drainage. Full sun is their best placement, and they grow to about 1 to 3 feet tall. Their lacy foliage is spectacular next to hot colors such as fuchsias, reds, violets, and oranges. Many varieties are still going strong during mild winters. Some have gray green leaves, while others are silvery white. The absinthium, or wormwood, has a pungent scent which some say repels pests in the garden. They have tiny yellow flowers and can be placed either in the front of the border or as a background shrub as they grow to 3 feet tall. In an English style plan, this high-low effect in the front of the beds is very appealing. These plants are available at most garden centers and nurseries. Petals from the Past, the nursery in Jemison, Alabama usually carries many varieties of these Artimesias.



They have tiny yellow flowers and can be placed either in the front of the border or as a background shrub as they grow to 3 feet tall. In an English style plan, this high-low effect in the front of the beds is very appealing. These plants are available at most garden centers and nurseries. Petals from the Past, the nursery in Jemison, Alabama usually carries many varieties of these Artimesias.

Happy New Year, and Good Gardening.

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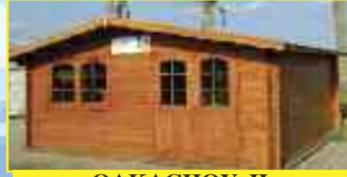
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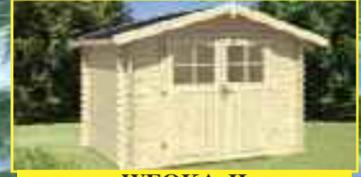
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WE HAVE SOME DISPLAY MODELS ON OUR LOT.

Kritter Korner from page 8A

make it easier for the mother to find them. Do not put a weight on top of the laundry basket. If the mother returns to her young, she will flip up the basket and get them. If she has trouble doing this, you should lift the basket to let them out. Remember that skunks are very near-sighted, so fast movements can startle



PHOTO BY HUGH SIMONS

them into spraying. If you move slowly and speak softly, though, you will not get sprayed. Skunks warn potential predators by stamping their front feet when they're alarmed, so if the mother doesn't do this, you're safe to proceed. If no mother comes to retrieve her young by dawn, contact a licensed wildlife rehabilitator. Once you're sure the animal needs your help, call a wildlife rehabili-

tator for assistance. If you're unable to locate a rehabilitator, try contacting an animal shelter, humane society, animal control agency, nature center, state wildlife agency or veterinarian. Never handle an adult animal without first consulting a wildlife professional. Even small animals can injure you. Once you've contacted someone who can help, describe the animal and his physical condition as accurately as possible. Unless you are told otherwise, here's how you can make an animal more comfortable for transport while you're waiting for help to arrive.

1. Put the animal in a safe container. For most songbirds, a brown paper bag is fine for transport. For larger birds or other animals, use a cardboard box or similar container. First, punch holes for air (not while the animal is in the box!) from the inside out and line the box with an old T-shirt or other soft cloth. Then put the animal in the box.
2. Put on thick gloves and cover the animal with a towel or pillowcase as you scoop him up gently and place him in the container.
3. Do not give the animal food or water. It could be the wrong food and cause him to choke, trigger serious digestive problems or cause aspiration pneumonia. Many injured animals are in shock, and force-feeding can kill them.
4. Place the container in a warm, dark, quiet place—away from pets, children and all noise (including the TV and the radio)—until you can transport the animal. Keep the container away from direct sunlight, air conditioning or heat.
5. Transport the animal as soon as possible. Leave the radio off and keep talking to a minimum. Because wild animals aren't accustomed to our voices, they can become very stressed by our noises. If they're injured or orphaned, they're already in a compromised condition. Keep their world dark and quiet to lower their stress level and help keep them alive.



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

The word of the day is **Compendium**. The definition of compendium is; a collection of detailed information about a particular subject. The particular subject here is Southern Cuisine and cooking in general. With the "cooking season" of Thanksgiving and Christmas behind us, now is the time to reflect on the daunting tasks you had before you and how you overcame the obstacles. Some problems we have in preparing large meals are logistical. Where do we cook the turkey and heat all the sides when there is only a single oven. How do we keep the food warm before serving? And some problems concern the appearance and taste of the food prepared. Why some of the recipes you used did not produce the results you were expecting.

The logistical problems are unique to your home and your kitchen. The appliances you have and how large is the kitchen. I visited a kitchen at a Four Seasons Hotel in Austin, Texas as part of my chef apprenticeship and was amazed with the amount of food that came out of such a small kitchen. Their reputation required high quality food and being a banquet hotel, quantity was also paramount. They overcame their physical restraints.

I have a four burner stove with a single oven that cooks fifty degrees hotter than the oven settings show. There is a large table in the middle of the kitchen that hinders either opening the refrigerator or the oven door. There is not a lot of counter space, but by removing some items (toaster, mixer, and t.v.) it becomes very workable. And I have the usual gamete of kitchen appliances, my favorite being a turkey roaster. My logistical problem is to keep the circuit breakers from flicking off. Physical limitations of your kitchen can be overcome, just think like Alton Brown and McGuyver.

Why did your food taste differently than you expected and not look as appetizing as you wished are topics we can work on in this article. Taste and appearance are only two senses that you need to appease to produce appetizing food. You can smell and touch and hear the cooking process. There are four tastes; sweet, sour, bitter and salty. At least there were four, now there are five. The fifth taste is umami. A particularly appealing taste produced by a chemical in umami rich foods. Now, I am not going to bore you with the scientific studies and countless articles about umami, you can search GOOGLE. But there are ingredients that are rich in umami that give an extra happy feeling to your taste buds.

Adding items rich in umami can turn everyday ingredients into something sublime. Anchovies and dried mushrooms melt away in the cooking process but heighten the taste of the dish. Other items like tomato paste, balsamic vinegar, wine vinegar, garlic, and Parmesan will bring the bland to awe-inspiring. Adding tomato paste to any tomato based sauce will intensify the flavors and a little goes a long way. Reducing balsamic vinegar to a thick syrupy liquid and drizzling it over fresh strawberries will ruin you to any other way of eating strawberries. Try Parmesan freshly grated over steamed green beans, shaved over a plate of prosciutto and melon, or sprinkled on buttered popcorn.

Make gremolata. Gremolata is one of those things where the whole is definitely greater than the sum of its parts. Yet, using common ingredients you have in your kitchen, garlic, lemon, parsley and simply finely chopping them together, is your secret ingredient. Sprinkled over any number of dishes, it will make every mouthful pop with its bright, fresh flavors. A few twists of freshly ground black pepper and your mouth will think it had gone to umami never-never land. Sprinkle it over grilled or roasted vegetables, baked or grilled fish, chicken, or lamb. Many pasta dishes are particularly wonderful with gremolata, as well as creamy bean dishes, especially if they contain meat.

HOW TO MAKE GREMOLATA

Adapted from Apartment Therapy, 2015

INGREDIENTS

- 1 small bunch of parsley, washed and dried well with a towel or paper towels (enough to make
- 1 cup loosely-packed) most of the stems removed
- 1 clove garlic, fresh and peeled
- 2 lemons, firm thick skin and unblemished



DIRECTIONS

1. **Chop the parsley:** Chop the parsley until it is rough chopped. Yield 1/2 cup.
2. **Add the garlic:** Using a Micro-plane or fine-toothed grater, grate the garlic clove over the parsley.
3. **Add the lemon:** Using the same grater (don't bother to wash it), grate just the zest from the two lemons on top of the garlic.
4. **Finish the chopping:** Continue to chop the parsley, mixing in the garlic and lemon as you go, until the parsley is chopped very fine.
5. **Use it:** Use the gremolata right away, it's so easy and quick to make and it won't get better with age.

Makes about 1/3 cup.

Herbs and spices are like coat hangers of the kitchen. If you put two coat hangers in a closet, in a month you will have twenty. Cans of herbs and spices are like that. You go to the store and find a good deal on a half pound of cinnamon and you get home and find out there are four other tins of cinnamon. And there will be tins of other spices that were purchased when the United States was still on the gold standard. When I first made a Chess Pie, I bought a pound bag of corn meal only to find that the recipe called for two tablespoons. Unlike wine and whiskey, those bags of grains, tins of herbs and spices do not get better with age. Try buying soft herbs such as parsley, basil, cilantro and chives that are freeze dried for a good substitute if you don't grow your own.

Another way of enhancing the flavor of your dishes that use a vegetable or meat stock is to make your own. For a vegetable stock, clean the vegetables you are to use in your dish and when you peel them save the clean peelings for your stock. If you want a clear stock don't use potato peelings. Add mushroom stems that you usually throw away and parsley stalks and strips of lemon zest from making your gremolata, and garlic cloves and peppercorn. This will add to the depth of flavor.

The high cost of meat can be a deal breaker for a steak night at home. You can buy cheaper cuts and still have that tender juicy, it's just a matter on how it is cooked. Cheaper cuts have a lot of connective tissue, which makes the meat



tough. Breaking down that tissue is done by cooking the meat slowly and at a low temperature. About 160 degrees to 180 degrees will do the trick. All that will be lost if you do not let the meat rest after cooking. Use your meat temperature to check the center of the meat. When the temperature gets down 120 degrees it won't bleed out when you cut it. Also don't let it rest in the roasting pan, which will retain heat and continue to cook the bottom of the meat, making it dry and tough.

I am on of the chefs that cringe when I hear someone say, "You sear the meat to seal in the moisture." No, you sear the meat to caramelize the proteins of the meat to impart a certain taste, a crusty coating for taste and appearance. Cooking rice seems to fluster many people also. Maybe the reason is that there are so many conflicting instructions on rice cooking. Some say do not boil the water first, some say boil the water. There's a method where you take the lid off the rice once you have determined it is done, and place a dish towel over the pan and then replace the lid and let sit for 5 minutes to keep steam from condensing and dripping back on the rice. There is also a debate if you should rinse or soak the rice before cooking. My suggestion is to go on the Internet to www.wikihow.com/Cook-Rice. But an easier method is to read the directions on the packaging for the rice. The manufacture will want their rice to cook properly so you will buy more of their rice.

Part of any culinary training requires the making of mushroom duxelles. It is not hard to make, it just can be used to in so many ways to bring umami (there's that word again) to a dish.

Add a spoonful to any savory dish to intensify the flavor. Add a little tarragon and use as a ravioli stuffing. Stir in wilted spinach and some heavy cream and a small grate of nutmeg and you have a side dish. Coat a beef fillet with the duxelles then wrap in puff pastry and you have Beef Wellington.

MUSHROOM DUXELLES

Ingredients

- 1/2 pound mushrooms
- 1 small onion
- 1 clove garlic
- 1 tablespoon butter
- 1 teaspoon chopped parsley
- salt and pepper to taste

Directions

1. Finely chop the onion, mushrooms and garlic.
2. Melt butter in heavy skillet until foam stops and you see the butter turns brown and starts to smell like a nutty aroma in the pan.
3. Add mushroom, garlic and onion.
4. Fry hot enough to release the water from the mushroom and slightly brown them. Don't let it stew or burn.
5. After mixture is fairly dry, add parsley and fresh ground pepper and salt to taste.
6. This does not make much but gives you an introduction on cooking it and using the mixture in other dishes.



Remember the **Irish proverb:**

Laughter is brightest, where food is best.

Julia Child: *You don't have to cook fancy or complicated masterpieces, just good food from fresh ingredients.*



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Christmas for the Homeless

We would like to thank everyone for the generosity in donating to the homeless. We have been overwhelmed with all the donations over and beyond the items requested. Thank you again to all those that gave to this worthy cause so that even the less fortunate could have Christmas!

~~~~~

### Montgomery County Sheriff's Office K-9s Aros, Blade, Doerak, Hoss, Ipo and Johnny to get body armor

Hoss is a four year old Dutch Shepherd. He is certified in apprehension and narcotics detection. Hoss enjoys going to schools and interacting with the public. On his off days, Hoss likes to lay under shade trees with his Kong toy.

Corporal Heath has been working with his K-9 partner Ipo since 2014. Ipo is a 3 year old Belgian Malinois. He is certified in narcotics and apprehension. Ipo along with his handler, have been patrolling Montgomery County since January 2014. Ipo is a loveable, laid back K-9 until the command is given for him to be otherwise.

Deputy Morrow has been working with his K-9 partner Johnny since 2014. Johnny is a 4 year old Dutch Shepherd. Johnny is a certified narcotics and patrol. Johnny enjoys working as well as tracking down and playing with his toys.

Vested Interest in K9s, Inc. is a 501c (3) charity located in East Taunton, MA whose mission is to provide bullet and stab protective vests and other assistance to dogs of law enforcement and related agencies throughout the United States. The non-profit was established in 2009 to assist law enforcement agencies with this potentially lifesaving body armor for their four-legged K9 officers. Since its inception, Vested Interest in K9s, Inc. provided over 1,600 protective vests, in 49 states, through private and corporate donations, at a cost



**Aros**



**Blade**



**Doerak**



**Hoss**



**Ipo**



**Johnny**

Montgomery County Sheriff's Office K-9s **Aros, Blade, Doerak, Hoss, Ipo** and **Johnny** will receive bullet and stab protective vests thanks to a charitable donation from non-profit organization Vested Interest in K9s, Inc. K-9s Aros, Blade, vests are sponsored by an anonymous donor. K-9s Doerak's vest is sponsored by Robin Ballina of Shakopee, MN and will be embroidered with the sentiment *"This gift of protection provided by Vested Interest in K9s, Inc."* K-9 Hoss' vest is sponsored by Madeline Hamersley of Sorrento, ME and will be embroidered with the sentiment "In memory of George & Grace Salisbury, Bar Harbor, ME". K-9s Ipo and Johnny's vests are sponsored by an anonymous donor and will be embroidered with the sentiment "So that you may live, my life is yours". Delivery is expected within eight to ten weeks.

Deputy Krzeminski has been working with his K-9 partner Aros for about 2 years. Aros is a Belgian Malinois, and is a dual purpose K-9, meaning he is highly trained in explosive detection and Patrol.

Corporal Talley has been working with his K-9 partner Blade for about 2 years. Blade is a 2 year old Belgian Malinois, he is certified in Patrol and Narcotics detection. Both officers enjoy playing ball and spending time together.

Corporal Henry has been working with his K-9 partner Doerak since 2013. Doerak is a three year old, 85 lb., Belgian Malinois. He joined the Montgomery County Sheriff's Office in September of 2014. Doerak is certified in narcotics detection and apprehension, and has also been trained to track. Doerak enjoys playing with his handler. He dislikes fleeing criminals, and violent offenders.

Deputy Lucas has been working with his K-9 partner Hoss since 2013.

of over 1.5 million dollars. All vests are custom made in the USA by Armor Express in Central Lake, MI.

The program is open to dogs actively employed in the U.S. with law enforcement or related agencies who are certified and at least 20 months of age. New K9 graduates, as well as K9s with expired vests, are eligible to participate.

The suggested donation to provide one protective vest for law enforcement K9 is \$1,050.00. Each vest has a value between \$1,795 – \$2,234 and a five-year warranty, and an average weight of 4-5 lbs.. There are an estimated 30,000 law enforcement K9s throughout the United States. For more information or to learn about volunteer opportunities, please call 508-824-6978. Vested Interest in K9s, Inc. provides information, lists events, and accepts tax-deductible donations of any denomination at [www.vik9s.org](http://www.vik9s.org) or mailed to P.O. Box 9 East Taunton, MA 02718.

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HAPPY NEW YEAR!

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AUTAUGA COUNTY



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Sheriff Joe Sedinger



Sgt. Steve Adams and Deputy Jeff Bert

On August 13, 2015 while headed towards the Sheriff's Office from a call Sgt. Steve Adams and Deputy Jeff Bert were flagged down by a man in pick-up truck. They followed the subject in the pick-up truck to an address on Co. Rd. 85. As they exited their vehicles to see what the issue was someone ran out of the residence saying there was a "drowning baby" inside. Sgt. Adams and Deputy Bert went inside the residence where they located a female with an infant that was unresponsive and not breathing. Deputy Bert immediately gave the infant back blows which caused the infant to spit up a small amount of water. After the back blows were performed,



Sgt. Adams started continuous chest compressions on the infant. After a minute or two the infant began breathing on its own. Moments later an off duty Prattville Fire Medic arrived and the care of the infant was turned over to him. Sgt. Adams and Deputy Bert conducted traffic control on Co Rd 85 for the arrival and departure of Life Flight. To the best of our knowledge the infant made a full recovery.

There is no doubt that the good LORD placed Sgt. Steve Adams and Deputy Jeff Bert in the right place at the right time to assist this family in there time of need.

That is why I would like to present Sgt. Stephen Adams and Deputy James Bert with the Life Saving Medal and Commendation Bar.



Sgt. Steve Adams receives his medal from Sheriff Joe Sedinger



Deputy Jeff Bert receives his medal from Sheriff Joe Sedinger

For More Information Other Events Please Visit:
www.prattvilleal.gov

Prattville

"The Preferred Community"



City of Prattville

2016 Mardi GRAS Celebration

Saturday January 23, 2016

11 AM — food, music, arts & specialty vendors, children's activities

For information 334-595-0854 or www.prattvilleal.gov

Autauga County Master Gardeners Association

Lunch & Learn 2016

1st THURSDAY of EVERY Month
 12:00-1:00 pm
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BRING A SACK LUNCH FREE PROGRAM DRINKS PROVIDED

7 January	Seed Starting Anthony Tarbrough, Master Gardener
4 February	Rose Selections for your Garden Janae Powell, Points From the Past
3 March	Backyard Tomatoes Maury Kelley, ALES
7 April	Pruning Tools and Techniques Mary McGowan, Advanced Master Gardener
6 May	Backyard Birds Carrin Trancapelli, Wildlife Biologist, ALES
2 June	Shade Gardens Phil Easter, Master Gardener
7 July	Citrus Dr. Arlie Powell, Points From the Past

For more information please contact the Autauga County Extension Office (334) 361-7273

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

Gazette Seniors...

BE NICE



YOU MAY BE OVER THE HILL...

...if your "can do" spirit has turned into a "Wish I could" spirit.

As children old timers were taught to be courteous, especially to their elders.

From around the 12th or 13th Century comes the French word courtesy. The noun cour-

tesy refers to an act that is performed as an expression of respect. If a person respects someone it follows that they are courteous to that person in return. Polite behavior is an expression of courtesy. It is a display of excellent manners in dealing with another person.

So it follows that as seniors enter into their twilight years they would expect a degree of courteousness from other people; especially other people whom they are paying to serve their needs.

Unfortunately, this is not always the case. Sales clerks, rather than behaving courteously in their dealings with older people, tend to be rather abrupt and discourteous. Likewise, when an older person is seeking information or some other form of help from

folks in the bureaucracy he or she is often treated abruptly; rather than courteously—for no apparent reason. Granted, sometimes older folks seem to be a bit slow to understand, but they're not stupid; so they resent being treated as though they were.

When one considers the travails older people have undergone over the last eight or nine decades; hurdles they climbed without the aid of Big Brother, but rather through their own grit and tenacity, it seems to follow naturally that they would be due some degree of courtesy. But this is not always the case.

And, one might logically ask: Why?

That is the question; but where and what is the answer.

Can people not tear themselves away from their cell phone or our I-pod to deal courteously with an older person?

Is civility too much to ask for in our daily dealings with older people?

Must it always be assumed that an older person is computer literate, or that he or she is comfortable around all this electronic gadgetry and wizardry that

has overwhelmed their daily lives? The old folks were once quite content to walk great distances to get where they were going. They enjoyed sharing pleasantries with the telephone operator. Conducting transactions with sales clerks who knew their stock and what it was that they were doing they took for granted.

Seniors treated their elders with respect. They shared pleasantries with passersby and greeted one another in passing. They held open doors for ladies. And as Boy Scouts they performed "Good deeds." This was their life. This is what they took for granted in life.

Granted, old folks often seem to be underfoot. They don't always hear too well; or grasp the complexities of modern day life too quickly. You often have to repeat things when you're talking to them, or put up with their slowness at grasping various tasks.

But when you look at old timers and shake your head; remember one thing: You're looking in a mirror. Be courteous to them; they're you.

The Foot Man Speaks



Dr. Ace Anglin

More than two and a half centuries ago the philosopher Socrates observed that: "When our feet hurt, we hurt all over." While that may not have been a profound observation, it must have influenced the course of **Dr. Ace Anglin**, a Podiatrist with whom this writer has enjoyed a long acquaintance, and a person whose expertise goes unquestioned.

Dr. Anglin's presence was first made known in 1998, when he came on board at the Lister Hill Health Center as its first podiatrist. He has continued to serve patients in the area, having moved on into private practice a few years later, at his present location on Mulberry Street.

During this period he also found time to write an excellent book, Saving the Diabetic Foot, which is particularly significant since Alabama has the highest rate of diabetes in the nation.

Dr. Anglin says he was "motivated to write this book because I have seen too many amputations" resulting from diabetes, and through his book he hopes to educate people with diabetes, especially those suffering from nerve damage and other consequences which end in amputation.

Diabetes, he notes, is the leading cause of amputation, and for many an early death as a result.

After an all too long absence, your writer has returned to Dr. Anglin's care at his new clinic, and a renewal of a long and cordial friendship.

As a diabetic who suffers from the painful effects of Neuropathy, your writer appreciates the service Dr. Anglin is able to provide. His presence is an asset to the community, a fact emphasized by a local physician, another excellent physician who your writer cherishes as a friend, Dr. Oluyinka S. Adediji, who says the book "takes the mystery" out of getting one's feet examined, and saving sufferers from the prospect of amputation.

Reading his book, says Dr. Anglin, could well save diabetics with foot problems from the eventuality of undergoing an amputation caused by not taking care of his or her feet.

After once reading this book in an editorial environment, it will now be a pleasure to read it for the knowledge it will provide one who suffers from diabetic foot pain.

Make sure you don't forget the Seniors in your life!

Make phone calls – or better yet – go visit and spend some time with those you love!

Reflections

By Michael J. Brooks

A NEW CHAPTER

Christmas is past, and the new year is upon us. And what a year 2016 promises to be. A year of challenge. And opportunity.

Every new year's sunrise represents the dawning of fresh opportunity.

Have you compiled your list of resolutions yet? Almost half of American adults make resolutions. We commonly vow to lose weight, stop smoking, get better organized and keep better financial records. But consider a few more possible resolutions for the new year.

(1) Go on a TV diet. Turn off the television at least one night a week and do something more constructive. Spend time with your family. Volunteer for some worthwhile community service. Visit a nursing home resident. Read a book. Take a night course at a local college. The possibilities are endless!

(2) Read the Bible through in 2016. Many Christians haven't completed this worthy task which can be accomplished fairly simply: read three chapters every day and five chapters on Sunday. Why not secure a readable translation and devote a few minutes each day to the study of God's Word?

(3) Become a faithful supporter of your church. Your church provides

REMEMBERING BILL MAULDIN

If you were to mention the names "Willie and Joe" to the average American under the age of 70 you'd probably draw a blank.

But bring up these names in the "old folks home" and you'll get a knowing smile of recognition; for these names bring back fond memories of an era the likes of which this country is not likely to see again. Granted, this was a time of great national upheaval, a time when many Americans held a positive, but wary view of their future; a time which was best described in Bill Mauldin wartime cartoons and by Tom Brokaw, in his 1998 book: **The Greatest Generation**.

This was a time in which the characters "Willie and Joe" were brought to America's attention by Mauldin, the cartoonist of World War II fame, who passed away a dozen years ago this month.

As an Army sergeant serving during World War II, Mauldin created these fictitious American Infantry characters and, with his artistic humor, portrayed their trials and tribulations as they slogged through the mud, shivered in cold foxholes, and struggling to defend their nation while enduring the wrath of drill sergeants, the incompetence of "90-day wonders," and the arrogance of self-important generals.

The indignities of life as an Army enlisted man were caricatured by Mauldin in the popular daily military tabloid Stars and Stripes, much to the disfavor of many generals who found his accurate but disrespectful portrayals, less than amusing.

But while the brass often tried to censor Mauldin's cartoons, the average GI eagerly awaited each days' issue of the newspaper to learn how Mauldin had portrayed his existence; for he was usually right on target.

Today, most World War II soldiers still fondly remember many of these images; for they accurately struck home; and the Pulitzer Prize committee seemed to agree, for they awarded Mauldin a couple of their coveted prizes.

A few of his memorable cartoons remain in this writer's memory, one of which was that of Willie and Joe marching down Fifth Avenue in a victory parade, with crowds cheering and bands playing; Willie turns to Joe and remarks: "Enjoy it while you can. Tomorrow we'll be just another drain on the taxpayer."

Another of his memorable cartoons was that of a World War II general standing at the edge of a precipice in some wartime European country, enjoying the evening sunset, and turning to his aide and observing: "Remarkable view. Is there one for the enlisted men?"

Another shows a native of a European village sadly viewing his bombed out home, his orchard decimated by bomb fragments. As they march through his village Willie turns to Joe and remarks: "What's he so unhappy about? His house is air conditioned, his orchard has been pruned and his field's been plowed."

Like so many chroniclers of the events of time, both Brokaw and Mauldin accurately and honestly portrayed an era which many of us fondly remember, and one we'll likely never see again. And those of us who have perused the chronicles of history are sadly aware that history has an uncanny way of repeating itself. Witness Athens, Rome, Paris, the United Kingdom, Hitler's Third Reich, and the list goes on.

America reached its pinnacle during the Reagan years, then began to slide to the point that it's fast becoming another impoverished third-world nation, struggling in vain to get by each day. And most of us who are living out our Golden Years sadly witness Willie's post World War II prediction coming to fruition: We've become just another drain on the taxpayers.

Q.E.D.

services of worship, teaching, fellowship and inspiration every week designed to enrich your life and the lives of your family. Furthermore, the church exists to help people in need through various ministries. The new year can be a time for us to recommit ourselves to the work of the church and make a positive difference in our community. And if not a member, why not join a local church next Sunday and begin a new year in partnership with people of faith?

(4) Spend a few minutes each day in prayer. Pray for yourself, your family, your nation--especially in this election year--and your church. Consider a prayer list to keep you on track.

(5) Get your financial house in order with that first paycheck and begin to honor God with your giving. A significant part of worship is giving him the first and best of our income, and trusting the Lord to direct us in the expenditure of our remaining funds.

(6) Forgive someone who's hurt you. A grudge is too heavy a burden to carry into the new year. Make a phone call, write a letter or go visit that friend or relative who offended you and make amends.

(7) Bear witness for Christ. Your daily world is a mission field. God can use you where you are to uniquely influence people for good.

The new year is a fresh chapter in the book of life. You, more than anyone else, will determine what will be written there.

What will you write in the chapter entitled "2016"?

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.

THE MARSHALL MOMENT

DR. RICK MARSHALL
 Eastern Hills
 Baptist Church
 Montgomery, Alabama

Soul Searching

PRAYERS FOR THE NEW YEAR

Nikos Kazantzakis is an odd Greek name some of us may not recognize. Perhaps you know his work better than his name. Among other books, he wrote *Zorba the Greek* and *The Last Temptation of Christ*. In his autobiography he outlines three prayers. The words go like this: *“I am a bow in your hands, Lord, draw me, lest I rot.” “Do not overdraw me, Lord, for I shall break.” “Overdraw me, Lord, and who cares if I break.”*

Let me explain these words as I understand them. They are like three kinds of prayers rather than just three sentences. They seem to be appropriate thoughts for a new year. If honest, I suspect you can find yourself in one of the prayers.

The first prayer says, *“I am a bow in your hands, Lord. Draw me lest I rot.”* Most of us have at some time made an initial response to God. We have asked God to “take us” and He did. The beginning point of the Christian journey is just that. We offer what we have to God and He takes us as we are.

Like all other relationships, there is a beginning point with God. Some get off to a good start and others do not. It is reassuring to know that God does take us as we are. He takes our warped and twisted motives and seeks to build something meaningful and useful out of them. Someone said, “He takes us warts and all.”

The second prayer says, *“Do not overdraw me, Lord, for I shall break.”* In the middle or maturing years of our commitment to the Lord, many of us find ourselves putting the brakes on. Some of us can identify with C.S. Lewis’ experience. He said he came reluctantly into the Kingdom screaming, kicking and protesting all the way. For though we have reached upward, still there is the downward pull that says, “Don’t get too involved; don’t believe too much; don’t get in too deep. As a Pastor, all too often I hear words like those or see actions that represent similar thoughts.

The second prayer is really a stalling tactic. Marriages will remain frayed, relationships unhealed and churches mediocre when we pray only the second prayer. It is the prayer of mediocrity.

The third prayer moves us on to a deeper challenge. It is a little foolhardy and might even be dangerous to the status quo. *“Overdraw me, Lord, who cares if I break?”* When the Spirit of God is moving in our lives, we yearn and stretch to give more of ourselves to God. The young know it well because they see better and hear clearer. When we get older we get set in our ways and become afraid to take risks. For sure, in some things, that is prudent thinking. There are physical challenges best left to the young and a wise person becomes more careful with financial resources with age.



However, in spiritual matters we can all be young at heart. In the Bible age was never a barrier to hearing and doing great things for God. The beauty of the Christian life is that the trumpet does blow every morning. The Lord has a fresh word for every day. Faith can continue to grow after our bodies have matured and aged.

So which prayer will you be praying as we begin another year? My prayer for this New Year in my home, in my church and in my personal life is the third one. Would you consider making it yours also? “Overdraw me, Lord, who cares if I break?” You will discover that the Lord has no interest in breaking anything except those thoughts and actions, patterns and habits which have kept a wall erected between you and Him. When you thought you were protecting yourself, instead, you were doing harm. When you lose yourself in Him you will find the real person you were created to become and long in your soul to be!

Mark 13:33
Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is.

Mark 14:38
Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. The spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak.

Senior Transportation

Too many public transportation systems are unable to handle the needs of older adults and the disabled.

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A FREE transportation & errand service for the elderly & disabled.



PILOTS FOR CHRIST

We go through life thinking, “That would never happen to us,” but truth is NOTHING is guaranteed. We don’t know what tomorrow holds or even the next minute for that matter. But GOD does and that is why Pilots For Christ is in existence.

PFC is a group of Christian pilots and volunteers whose aim is to help those in need of transportation due to medical reasons and are not able to travel any other way but by plane. PFC is not an air ambulance or a medical aircraft but they believe that it is their mission through the call of our Holy Father to help those that are in need and can not afford the costs.

Pilots For Christ does not receive any form of government funding and does not get reimbursements from insurance companies. They are fully funded by individuals, churches, civic organizations, and businesses. If you feel that the Lord has put it on your heart to make a contribution please visit their website at www.pilotsforchrist.net, and as always your gift is tax deductible.

“Whoever is kind to the needy honors God.”

~ Proverbs 14:31



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



TEST YOUR SOCIAL SECURITY KNOWLEDGE

By Kyle’ D. McKinney

National Trivia Day reminds us that knowledge about Social Security empowers you and prepares you for retirement. Remember, the more you know about Social Security, the more control you have over your bright future.

What is the average number of years someone has paid into Social Security once they start collecting disability benefits?

- A) 2
- B) 7
- C) 13
- D) 22

Because the Social Security Act sets out a strict definition of disability, our beneficiaries are among the most severely disabled people in the country. We provide modest benefit payments to workers who contributed into the Social Security trust fund before becoming disabled. The average disability beneficiary today paid into the disability trust fund for 22 years before they began receiving Social Security disability benefits.

At what age can I begin receiving Social Security retirement benefits?

- A) 62
- B) 65
- C) 67
- D) 70

The answer to this question is not the same for everyone. Depending on when you were born, your full retirement age will be between 65 and 67. You can draw benefits as early as 62, but you will receive a lesser benefit. For more details and a handy chart, visit www.socialsecurity.gov/planners/retire/retirechart.html.

The best time for you to retire will depend on several factors, including when you were born, how long you contributed to Social Security, and how long you expect to live. The longer you work, and the more money you earn at Social Security-qualifying jobs, the more Social Security retirement benefits you stand to receive.

The longer you wait to draw Social Security benefits, the larger your monthly payout will be. Past age 70, there is no longer any advantage to waiting.

How much money can I earn and still receive Social Security disability benefits?

- A) \$500 per month
- B) \$750 per month
- C) \$1,090 per month
- D) None

A worker who is disabled can earn up to \$1,130 per month and still receive benefits. If the worker is blind or has work expenses, this amount is higher. More information about working while disabled is available at

www.socialsecurity.gov/pubs/EN-05-10095.pdf.

Who receives the largest annual share of Social Security benefits?

- A) Survivors of deceased workers
- B) Disabled workers and their families
- C) Retired workers and their families

The answer is C. About 39.5. Of the nearly 60 million people who receive retirement, dependent, disability, and survivors benefits in 2015, the largest share went to retirees and their families, totaling \$53 billion each month. We also paid \$6.7 billion dollars in survivors benefits each month, and \$10.5 billion dollars in disability benefits each month in 2015.

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

Patricia Killough



Home Town Community News

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

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

January Birthdays



- | | |
|-------------------------|------------------------|
| 1 Steve Campbell | Ester Covington |
| Cad Gates | 16 Ann Takacs |
| Tammy Smith | 17 Randy Childs |
| Butch Metcalf | Toni Grimes |
| 3 Ben Davis | Charlene McClanahan |
| 4 Morgan Boone | Bill Northington |
| 5 Jan Johnson | 18 Carly Madison Ellis |
| Barbara Harrington | Joshua C. Kyser (4th) |
| 6 Judy Norman | Joy Fleming |
| Elizabeth Robison | Leslie Garvin |
| 7 Ted Johnson | Laura Hester |
| Nicole Windham | Johnny Hassett |
| Will Woodall | 19 Kaybee Hobbs |
| Tim Pierce | Gina Hunt |
| Danny Bush | Connie Bush |
| 8 Joshua Nix (17th) | Sammy Turner |
| Sam Cassels | 20 Caleb Campbell |
| Burks Crane | Dr. Charles Cloutier |
| Marilyn Evans | Taylor Campbell |
| Mary Ellen Millis | Alyssa Spivey |
| Scott Mills | Randy Kelly |
| Trey Norris | 21 Mildred Athey |
| Sarah Morgan Smith | Tonya Cooley |
| Blake Webb | Cory Griffin |
| Brett Tolerson | Julio Vazquez |
| 9 Bobby Mills | Elizabeth Phibbs |
| Brittany Mitchell | 22 Kayla Cook |
| Megan St. Clair Stewart | Jonathan Aplin |
| Edna Hargrove | Tim Wilsford |
| 11 Jim Aro | 23 Pam Higgins |
| Liz Klauss | Jason Selvage |
| Betty Woodall | Ridge Newell |
| Sue Woodall (76th) | Bernice Bryant |
| 12 Corey Campbell | 24 Donna Gail Andersen |
| Carson Lane Abbott | Tina Campbell |
| Liz Braswell | Anne Pinkston |
| Brenda Moseley | 25 Mary Beth Wadsden |
| Clarice Caldwell | Ellen Robbins |
| James Barton | 26 Mary Price |
| 13 Theresa Henderson | Mack Terrell |
| Shirley Kirksey Jones | 27 Sophie Boyd |
| T. J. Mills | 28 Baleigh Windham |
| Bob Maddox | Darrell Self |
| 14 Tiffany Andrews | 29 Kim Kelley |
| John Black | Faye Law |
| John T. Killough | 30 Wanda Horsley |
| Doug Young | Doris Miller |
| 15 Jennifer Williams | Betty Ann Russell |
| Hayden Kelly | Tiffany Hammock |
| John McClelland | 31 Will Garrett |
| Ross Godwin | |

Happy Anniversary

- | | |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| January 6 Jim & Beth Maxwell | January 14 Mike & Debbie Green (32nd) |
| January 7 Ross & Margaret Goodwin | January 18 Raymond & Ann Tucker |
| January 8 Fred & Nancy Setzer | January 22 Bob & Betty Crowe |
| January 11 Reneau & Virginia Gates | January 23 Jeff & Nancy Beale |
| January 12 Frank & Colleen Rutland | George & Sherry McCulley |

Sympathy to the families of...

- Little III, James "Cliff" (coach) (76).....died November 11, 2015*
Barnett, Dr. Elsie Kathryn (85)died November 14, 2015
Boyd, Lorene Blocker (85).....died November 18, 2015
Emmet, Elizabeth "Tootsie" Thigpen (81).....memorial was November 20, 2015
Cousins, Doris Smith (87)died November 23, 2015
Nachman, Merton Roland, Jr. (91)died November 24, 2015
Tankersley, Major General Will Hill (87)died November 28, 2015
Hurst, Billie Jean (80)died November 30, 2015
Sadler, Wallace McGehee "Mac", Jr. (62)died November 30, 2015
Jones, Rex Chandler (76)died December 1, 2015
Wise, Suedied December 2, 2015
Chambliss, Carolyn Jones (90).....died December 3, 2015
Clark, Blanche Heath (103).....died December 4, 2015
Carroll, Mary Talley "Sugar Babe" (74)died December 6, 2015
Davis, Judge John Walter, III (74).....died December 9, 2015
Murphy, Donna Renee (46)died December 9, 2015
DeRamus, Angela Cromer (49)died December 13, 2015
Cauthen, Alice Brunies "Dopy" (94)died December 17, 2015
Boyd, Melissa "Missy" Mason (53)died December 18, 2015
Danziger, John Kennedy, Jr. (75).....died December 19, 2015
Collier, Ruth Piper (93)died December 21, 2015
Hardin, Dorothy J. (89)died December 21, 2015
Roper, Ruby Ivey (101)died December 21, 2015
Bracknell, E. E. "Brac" (86).....died December 24, 2015
Flowers, Barbar Sellers "Hayes"died December 26, 2015
Cassady, James Davis (87)died December 30, 2015
Roughton, Charlesdied December 30, 2015
Walker, Edwina Lucille Davis (102)died December 30, 2015
Cutts, William Eugene (79)died January 2, 2016

Birth Announcement



Emma Jewel Causey
 was born December 24, 2015.
 She weighed 7 lbs. 13 oz.
 Her mother is Shelby Gunter
 and father is Mathew Causey.



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The Value of a Woman...Be very careful if you make a woman cry – because God counts her tears.



TODAY'S WOMAN



Friendship Mission's service project for January 2016

Purses With Purpose.

We all have gently used purses in our closets; right? Friendship Mission is asking that we take them and fill them with snacks of personal care items to give to the women and young teens in the shelter. Call the number below for more details to get your church or civic organizations involved. There may be other ways to help fulfill the needs of our community.

The Friendship Mission

P.O. Box 230115 • Montgomery, AL 36123-0015
(334) 281-2395

To give online, visit www.friendshipmission.org



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Trisston's Tidbits...

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

"New Beginnings"

Before us stretches a new year, a new beginning. The old is past, put away forever. God invites us always to forget about all the distrust and fears, all the anxieties of the past, all the resentments we have been holding against others, all the grudges, all the criticisms--to put them away and begin again.

The question that hovers over us as we close this book is...on what basis am I going to live in this new year? Will it be on the old basis of it-all-depends-on-me, do-it-yourself goodness before God, trying my best to be pleasing to God and meaning it with all my heart but never realizing the depths of evil with which I have to deal?

Or will I accept the gift of God that is waiting for me every day, fresh from His hand, a gift of forgiveness, of righteousness already mine, of a relationship in which He is my dear Father and I am his cherished, beloved one, and in which I therefore have provided for me all I need, all day long, so that I may say no to evil and say yes to truth and right?

Will it be on that basis? If it is, this will be a year in which my life will be characterized by peace, love, and beauty. And so will yours. Or, if we insist on living it on the same old basis, we will find ourselves arousing the anger and the wrath of God. Though He is patient and merciful, our only escape will be to repent of our evil and rest upon the righteousness of our perfect substitute and return to God for the blessing that He is waiting to give. That is the choice before us, every one of us. How are we going to live in this New Year?

Let us thank our Lord Jesus Christ for this New Year that lies before us. We choose You, Lord. We choose to depend on You, trust You, and accept from Your hand all that You would give us.

Happy New Year & Many Blessings!

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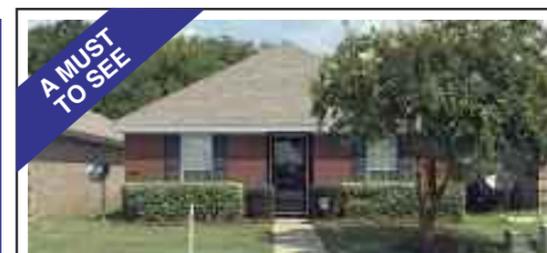
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