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Inside the Statehouse with Steve Flowers

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Reapportionment Done. Legislative Races Begin.

The new lines are finally drawn for next year's state legislative and congressional elections. They have just made it under the wire for the late January qualifying deadline and the May 24, 2022 primary elections.

The legislature should not be blamed for the late formulation of the lines because the U.S. Census Bureau did not produce the final detail figures until September 30, 2021. Therefore, the state legislature did a Herculean job by getting the lines drawn so quickly. They went into special session almost immediately after they received the numbers. However, their immediacy could be because it affects them immensely. Alabama's legislature is tasked with drawing their own legislative lines, as well as the congressional lines for their state, as is called for by both the United States and Alabama Constitutions.

Folks, that is the reason that the census is taken every 10 years. It is mandatory by the constitution to allow for all congressional and legislative districts to have approximately the same number of people. This rule is referred to constitutionally and legally as the one-person, one-vote rule.

Alabama's Constitution of 1901 patterns mandated reapportionment every 10 years like the U.S. Constitution does for Congress. However, Alabama lawmakers simply ignored this mandate for 60 years. the legislative lines had become so unfairly unconstitutional out of proportion that it was comical. As a young page, I observed the representation in the House and knew something was wrong. My county of Pike had 25,000 people and we had two representatives and the Huntsville area had grown to over 200,000 people and they had only two representatives. Lowndes County had a population of 15,000 and had one senator. Jefferson County with a population of 635,000 had one senator. The Black Belt had gotten an unfair distribution of seats during the 1901 constitutional approval debate and had not relinquished their legislative power. Finally, the federal courts stepped in and dictated one-man, one-vote districts in the now famous *Reynolds v. Sims* case in the 1960s, which set the one-man, one-vote principle for the entire nation. It still amazes me that the good people of Jefferson, Madison, and essentially all of north Alabama allowed this incredible injustice to exist for 60 years.

The recently completed Reapportionment Session has drawn the new lines for our seven congressional seats, our 35 state senate seats and 105 seats in the



state house of representatives, as well as our eight-state board of education districts. It was thought that there may have to be two sessions – one for congressional and one for legislative redistricting. However, we in Alabama dodged the bullet and did not lose a congressional district as was expected. By keeping our seven seats, it made it much easier.

However, kudos and accolades go out to the Reapportionment Committees and especially the Chairmen, Senator Jim McClendon (R-St. Clair) and Representative Chris Pringle (R-Mobile). They have worked diligently since the beginning of the quadrennium. Working on re-apportionment is a tedious task, however, very important and powerful.

They had to be aware of political and legal parameters. We in Alabama are still under the eye of the U.S. Justice Department because of the 1965 Voting Rights Act. Therefore, they have to start with the premise that African American voters have to be given preference and there needs to be a proper number of majority-minority legislative districts. They had to begin the congressional redistricting with the fact that the 7th Congressional District of Terri Sewell had to be looked at and protected. The paramount concern was self-political preservation so the most ardent task was protecting the districts of incumbent legislators. The courts have held that partisan and incumbent protection is permissible as long as you do not get too carried away with gerrymandering.

The super majority Republican legislature was attentive to what might trigger an adverse judicial ruling on the redistricting plans. Chairman Chris Pringle was very attentive to not creating new Republican districts. They figured that the 77 Republican to 28 Democrat advantage in the House and the 27 Republican to 8 Democrats in the Senate was enough. The courts might see that as regressing or suppressing African American Democratic political power. It was actually difficult to avoid adding new Republican seats because the population growth has been in Republican leaning enclaves. The Democratic Senators and House members are quietly pleased with the plan because it was incumbent friendly. In other words, the cardinal rule in reapportionment is that you take care of yourself first. Party, race, and colleagues come second.

Under the new congressional lines, we will more than certainly still have six Republican and one minority Democratic district.



Justice Will Sellers

Catching Frank Capra's Christmas Vision

As Thanksgiving morphs into Christmas, the December television schedule will be filled with the usual assortment of Christmas classics, not the least of which is Frank Capra's: *It's a Wonderful Life*. I've lost count of the number of times I've seen his movie and unlike some classics that are tiresome, *Wonderful Life* always grabs me. The idea of selfless giving is made

manifest when the entire community comes to George Bailey's aid. I think every small business owner secretly views his business as the Building and Loan and himself as George Bailey!

But *Wonderful Life* was not Capra's masterpiece. In fact, when it was released in 1946, it was not well received. At all. But, to truly understand *Wonderful Life*, Capra's pre-war films are a must to see his formula that exalted the humble everyman taking on the various Goliaths of the age. If you like *Wonderful Life*, let me suggest a Capra Trilogy to enjoy with your family over Christmas: *You Can't Take It With You*, *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* and *Meet John Doe*. Each of these movies plants a seed of a theme culminating in *Wonderful Life*. I don't think you can watch any of these movies without a renewed sense of what it means to be an individual pitted against a soulless property developer, corrupt political leaders or a manipulative selfish tycoon.

Capra's movies were released in the middle of the Great Depression. His films were an intentional attempt to give people living in this era a vested interest in that uniquely American system that made David's believe that Goliath could be defeated. But the doom of the strong was the happiness that radiated from the success of seemingly powerless little man. Though possessed of limited resources, he had the intangibles that faithful people know as the fruit of the spirit: Love, joy, peace patience, kindness, etc. In fact, all of Capra's movies are really a morality play to inspire people to take on the challenges of their life and to stand up to the shameless bullies who yield power mainly for powers sake and the ego that comes with flexing muscles to show off.

The strain of populism so ingrained in the lives of Americans is perfectly reflected in Capra's films. His focus was on the human actions of the silent majority of those quiet everyday people making decisions based on visions of simple moral clarity. He lifted the permanent things that are so often neglected when compared to the temporary glitz and glamour of material gain. Each film contains a large dose of middle-American values magnified time and again against the traps and situations of a complicated impregnable bureaucratic world. And in each case, the little guy wins, and the big mules not only lose face but are publicly shamed into accepting if not participating in their own defeat.

These films are in many ways a large mirror reflecting not only the tenor of the times, but also the implicit impact of the original sin of human nature struggling for freedom and self-determination. In short, people can see themselves in these films and identify with the characters. Everyone wants to see the characteristics of the white-hatted hero in themselves but are reminded by conscience that some of the traits of the villain are part of their psyche too. Everyone hopes that internally within their personal OODA loop, they will make wise and prudent choices when faced with decisions of moral consequence. Everyone in Capra's films has a shot at redemption but not every character accepts the offer; the developing conflicts that are resolved in favor of the common man are what make each film so entertaining.

Capra's films had consequence when they were initially screened by uplifting average people and giving them hope and a feel-good sense of their personal significance. Perhaps the greatest tribute to the impact of Capra's films is that *Mr. Smith* was the last American film shown in France after the Nazi occupation. To the consternation of almost all the American political class (including Ambassador Joseph Kennedy), the French were inspired by that film and identified with Jefferson Smith. To the French and others, Mr. Smith encouraged people to see that the greatness of the United States was in the power of the intangibles of lively dissention, vigorous debate and free speech. In 1940 as the lights of freedom were dimming all over the world, Capra showed America at its best in the person of Jefferson Smith. There is no way to measure the number of French resistance fighters embolden by this film and encouraged by American ideals.

If you liked *Wonderful Life*, be inspired by the unabashed patriotic films of Frank Capra. You'll be motivated and perhaps even challenged to identify with a character to live out the American dream in simple community with others who also struggle against human nature to find goodness and selfless service in their daily life.



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ROBSEVATIONS...

by Robert Tate

ANOTHER EDITION OF “IN-YOUR-FACE” NEWS

Our two fearless newscasters sit behind their desk as the intro music ends. . .

Jerome: “Welcome to WIYF News. Tonight, we have two breaking, and I must admit, heartbreaking stories to bring to you. First, last month we brought you the story about President Biden’s pick for the Treasury Department’s comptroller of the currency, Saule Omarova.”

Cindy: “Today, the Senate has begun its confirmation hearings for the hard charging Marxist. Hopefully, she will have a rough go of it and at the end, she will be tossed out on her backside.”

Jerome: “There can be no doubt that she is a smart lady, but arrogantly allowed herself to be caught on film saying that the oil and gas industries were ‘troubled industries’ in which ‘a lot of the small players . . . are going to probably go bankrupt.’ Then she followed up with her true self by saying, ‘At least, we want them to go bankrupt if we want to tackle climate change, right?’”¹

Cindy: “Get this. Back in February during a so-called ‘Social Wealth Seminar,’ Omarova opened her mouth, inserted her foot and backed up her previous controversial statement by saying, ‘the way we basically get rid of those carbon financiers is we starve them of their sources of capital.’ Yet at the same time she claims, ‘I am not a communist.’”

Sipping a glass of water, when hearing this statement, a torrent of water shoots out of Jerome’s nose and mouth.

Jerome: “Okay, but what about a Marxist, socialist perhaps? But at least she has finally complied with demands and turned over her Master’s Thesis on Marxism for the panel to review. NOT!! Still in defiance, as of this news broadcast, Omarova has still steadfastly refused to turn over her thesis for review. What do you think she may be hiding? After all she promises she is no longer a communist. Come on, she really didn’t say that did she?”

Cindy: “Yup. When pinned down on her own words, she claims they were simply ‘poorly phrased’ and misunderstood. I believe Senator Tom Cotton had it right when he said, ‘This unhinged socialist wants millions of Americans who work in the energy industry to go bankrupt. And Joe Biden picked her as his top banking nominee.’”²

Jerome: “In his opening statement in the hearing for Professor Saule Omarova to be Comptroller of the Currency, Senator Sherrod Brown, true to the leftist playbook said, ‘They [Republicans] have a formula – start with a passing and inaccurate reference to her academic work. Distort the substance beyond recognition. Mix in words like “Marx,” and “Lenin,” and “communism.” End with insinuations about Professor Omarova’s loyalties to her chosen country. That’s how Republicans turn a qualified woman into a Marxist boogeyman.’”

Cindy: “Doesn’t he mean ‘boogeywoman?’”³

Jerome: Laughing. “Of course, it has nothing to do with her background or her own words. Of course, these are the same people who every time you disagree with them, you are termed a racist and if you disagree with a person of color, like the four women of the squad, you are of course a misogynistic racist.

Cindy: “Before we move on, I have to shake my head and ask how in the heck do these people not see the issue with her nomination? I am sorry, but there is a little, okay a lot, of mental instability going on here. I never thought I would see this day where close to half of the American senators would vote for someone like her to run anything other than a Popeye’s Chicken stand inside of Washington, D.C. I shake my head. Let’s see how this pans out.”

Jerome: “Now here is a story that is going to piss you people off. In Andrea Merkel’s Germany, there was a 15-year-old girl who was raped by nearly a dozen ‘migration-background’ men over the period of several hours.⁴ This rape occurred in Hamburg September of last year.”

Cindy: “Perhaps most disturbing is, besides the obvious grotesqueness of the event with these nasty troglodytes, is that the German authorities are still deciding whether to bring charges against these cretins. Still deciding? What the . . .

Jerome: Interrupting. “Careful, Cindy. There are children watching.”

Cindy: “These mutant bastards, ranging in ages 16 to 23, not only filmed their atrocity (police say they do not have the film), of course they don’t, but are walking the streets today. This article also reported that the Germans are witnessing two gang rapes per day with these bastards preying on young German girls. And most likely boys too. This is how many of them roll.”

Jerome: “Sickening. Recently, similar reports have surfaced from both Belgium⁵ and Spain⁶ where these monsters attack women who don’t cover their heads or just seem like easy targets. Europe is overrun with this kind of behavior. I do not understand. It was reported that 95% of all street rapes in Norway are by Islamic and African immigrants.⁷ Sweden too.⁸ So when does this stop?

“When I was stationed in Germany back in the late 80s and early 90s, I would talk to Germans in my squadron and I would tell them that as bad as the Holocaust was, and it was, in today’s world, they could not let that shame and disgust prevent them from doing what is right in their country today. I fear that is what we are seeing. German government paralysis by not wanting to be labeled Nazis, they are allowing these people to do whatever they want. Hell, they won’t even call them immigrants but ‘migration-background’ men.”⁹

“What does that even mean? That is similar to that wacko college professor at Old Dominion University in Virginia, Allyn Walker, who argues that pedophiles should not be called what they are but rather by the term ‘minor attracted.’ Walker, author of the book titled, A Long Dark Shadow: Minor-Attracted People and Their Pursuit of Dignity, further argued that it is not immoral for adults to have sexual attraction to little children.¹⁰ It is as if the term alone is what determines what these people are. Illegal immigrants are guess what? Illegal immigrants. A pedophile is guess what? A pedophile. A murderer is a murderer. Not a life terminating alternative actor.”

Cindy: “What the heck? As for these ‘migration-background’ guys, I hear what you are saying, Jerome. What I fear is going to happen is when the Germans get fed up with this crap, and yes, they will get fed up, the snapback is going to be something monumental. I cannot for the life of me understand how a government can allow the wholesale rape of hundreds of its citizens to occur annually and then not do anything to stop it for fear of being labeled a Nazi. Being the descendant of 1940s Germans, does not make you a Nazi by default. It is like looking at a young Japanese girl and blaming her for Pearl Harbor.”

Jerome: “It is sort of like so many people here in this country that instead of standing up for what they believe, all someone has to do is throw out the “racist” word and people run in fear. Instead, they need to turn the tables and fight for what is truth. Just because someone disagrees with you, it doesn’t make you a racist. In my case, I have been called an Uncle Tom so many times, I cannot count them all. But that is okay. I realize the average person who uses that kind of language has an IQ of less than their shoe size and it doesn’t bother me in the least. But I tell you what, Andrea Merkel needs to get her act together over there. The German men are not going to take this much longer. If the government won’t act, they sure as hell will. Guess who I will support in this equation?”

Cindy: “Well, as usual, we have run out of time. Until next we meet. Cheers.”

Jerome: “And always remember, in the words of the great American philosopher Mike Tyson, the reason people act the way they do is because they were not punched in the face enough growing up. I’m out!”

Footnotes:

¹<https://nypost.com/2021/11/11/biden-treasury-pick-saule-omarova-wants-fuel-companies-to-go-bankrupt/>

²<https://neonnettle.com/news/17341-pro-marxist-biden-nominee-we-want-oil-companies-to-go-bankrupt->

³<https://www.banking.senate.gov/newsroom/majority/brown-saule-omarova-is-eminently-qualified-to-lead-the-occ>

⁴<https://breitbart.com/europe/2021/11/06/german-girl-15-raped-nearly-dozen-migration-background-men->

⁵<https://www.jihadwatch.org/2021/11/belgium-woman-labeled-racist-badly-beaten-on-bus-after-muslim-migrant-hits-her>

⁶<https://www.breitbart.com/europe/2021/10/27/north-african-migrants-decide-spanish-woman-is-fascist-and-brutally-beat-her/>

⁷<https://isgp-studies.com/immigration-the-rape-of-norway>

⁸<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-5654845/Swedish-woman-raped-sexually-assaulted-Afghan-migrant-teenagers-met-outside-bar.html>

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰<https://christianaction.org/top-stories-of-the-day/va-professor-on-leave-for-saying-pedophiles-should-be-called-minor-attracted/>

DID YOU KNOW?

Third in a Series

Two Union generals issued proclamations freeing the slaves in the areas under their commands. Both were revoked by President Lincoln.

President Lincoln appointed Maj. Gen. John C. Frémont commander of the Department of the West on July 1, 1861. On August 30th, Gen. Frémont issued an order freeing the slaves of owners who will not swear allegiance to the Union. President Lincoln revoked Gen. Frémont’s order on September 11th and relieved him of his command on November 2nd, replacing him with Gen. David Hunter

Gen. David Hunter was made commander of the Department of the South in March 1862. On May 5th, Gen. Hunter issued Order No. 11, freeing all slaves in those three states.

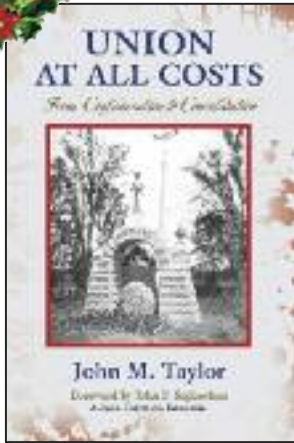
“Slavery and martial law in a free country are altogether incompatible; the persons in these three States – Georgia, Florida, and South Carolina – heretofore held as slaves, are therefore declared forever free.”

May 19th, President Lincoln revoked Gen. Hunter’s order.

“I, Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States, proclaim and declare that the government of the United States had no knowledge, information, or belief, of such an intention on the part of General Hunter to issue such a proclamation . . . And further, that neither General Hunter, nor any other commander, or person, has been authorized by the Government of the United States, to make proclamations declaring the slaves of any State free; and that the supposed proclamation, now in question, is altogether void, so far as respects such declaration.”

Capt. Henry C. Semple Camp 2002
camp2002@alcsv.org

UNION AT ALL COSTS: From Confederation to Consolidation



Alabama native son **John M. Taylor** (Alexander City) has penned a **‘must read’** for all who want to advance their understanding of our morphing from a voluntary coalition of sovereign States to the forced consolidation imposed via war 1861-5 and tyrannical years of ‘reconstruction’ to follow. If you’d like to purchase a copy of **Union At All Costs** below are links where it is currently available.

Amazon: <https://www.amazon.com/dp/B01MY8FLKI>

Booklocker: <https://booklocker.com/books/8983.html>

Barnes and Noble: <https://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/union-at-all-costs-john-m-taylor/1125415955>

Books-a-Million: <https://www.booksamillion.com/p/Union-All-Costs/John-M-Taylor/9781634916479>

Alibris: <https://www.alibris.com/Union-at-All-Costs-From-Confederation-to-Consolidation-John-M-Taylor/book/36647148>

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Ronald A. Holtsford

WHAT HAS CHANGED REGARDING CHRISTMAS CELEBRATIONS AND GOVERNMENTAL ENTITIES?

Little has changed since earlier appellate cases and one will note slight subjective language in the subsequent decisions. These cases have arisen using the Establishment Clause of the Constitution of the United States to back up the adverse claims of individuals or groups in what they perceive as being unconstitutional. There was an opinion from January of this year from the Public Buildings Service (PBS) of the General Services Administration (GSA) that was very interesting and is outlined below.

The Establishment Clause is a part of the First Amendment and reads, “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion,” followed by the Free Exercise Clause, which states, “or prohibiting the free exercise thereof”. The Establishment Clause is an oft-disputed issue, the Free Exercise Clause not so much. Until the Fourteenth Amendment was passed the United States Supreme Court considered the Establishment Clause as not applying to the states and local governments. It was not until 1940 that the Supreme Court held through the Fourteenth Amendment that the Establishment Clause applies to all levels of government. At the time of the formation of the country, six states had endorsed religious institutions so it seems that the eventual interpretive expansion to include governmental application at all levels was a move from the original intent. There have been additional arguments in school prayer cases where it has been argued that the use of certain religious rituals such as prayer in a state supported institution, such as a school, has an impression on the young and may create a peer pressure.

Since the 1980’s it has seemed that the typical way to present anything that has a religious component is to present it in a historical context along with secular symbols.

A Seventh Circuit case out of Indiana in 2015 was only decided three years ago, *Freedom From Religion Foundation, Inc. v. Concord Community Schools, No. 17-1591 (7th Cir. 2018)*. For 45 years through 2014 the Christmas Spectacular was presented at Concord High School in Elkhart, Indiana. In 2015, the Christmas Spectacular was challenged as being impermissibly religious. The District Court enjoined the school from presenting its version even after altered from what was presented in 2014. The show uses about 600 students who function as actors, set designers/ builders, costume makers and it includes a live nativity scene. The school then presented a second modification removing more of the religious content such as New Testament readings. It also added songs celebrating Hanukkah, Kwanza and included more secular songs. The former nativity scene was greatly reduced to using mannequins and only a single religious song. The 7th Circuit decided that Concord’s changes from their 2014 Spectacular suggested to a reasonable person that the show was not just about Christianity even though the Plaintiffs continued to argue that point.

Even though it is understandable that parents do not want an influential activity that is adverse to the teachings of the parents to the child, it is unfortunate that a small minority of individuals in a community and outside organizations such as the Freedom from Religion Foundation can disrupt certain activities.

The teachings of parents to children and the beliefs of a majority within the community I am sure, continue to be held within the Concord Community Schools regardless of the disruption, even without the presented visualization of the nativity.

The opinion mentioned in the first paragraph came from Henry C. Whitaker the Principal Deputy Assistant Attorney General Office of Legal Counsel. This

thirty-page opinion was very well done and looked at the history of the display of religious symbols in Federal buildings. The issues were whether the GSA could “expand its policy to permit the purchase of “religiously significant” decorations for display in federal buildings, or to permit federal employees to donate such decorations”. It was concluded that it could be done. Since 1987, “GAO has recognized that an agency may use appropriations otherwise generally available for building improvements to purchase seasonal decorations if the decorations are “consistent with work-related objectives and the agency mission” and are “not primarily for the personal convenience or personal satisfaction of a government employee.” *Seasonal Decorations*, 67 *Comp. Gen. at* 88. It seems that such decorations that make for a more pleasant working atmosphere and improve employee morale are allowed. I’m sure if an objecting employee was unhappy about the display then it would not be allowed. Further the opinion states, “[T]he determination must be made essentially on a case-by-case basis.”). Generally speaking, though, we believe that an agency will have discretion under the necessary-expense doctrine to permit the purchase of religiously significant seasonal decorations where it deems them to contribute to these purposes.”

The opinion further addresses an employee donation of religious display. “If an employee chooses to decorate a private workspace—such as in the employee’s personal office—it is doubtful that a fiscal law question would even arise. But if an employee-provided decoration substituted for a decoration that an agency might otherwise purchase with appropriated funds, then the private donation of such a decoration to an agency might be considered a gift. Although an agency may only accept gifts as authorized by statute, GSA, including PBS, has specific statutory authority to accept “on behalf of the Federal Government unconditional gifts of property in aid of any Religious Seasonal Decorations in Federal Government Buildings project or function within” its jurisdiction. *40 U.S.C. § 3175; see also 2 GAO, Principles of Federal Appropriations Law 6-222 to 6-224 (3d ed. 2006)*.” Finally stating, “This use of accepted gifts would be an exercise of GSA’s power to “operate, maintain, and protect” public buildings. *40 U.S.C. § 582(a)*. GSA may thus accept employee-donated property such as a menorah or crèche for public display in federal buildings under GSA’s jurisdiction.” In conclusion Mr. Whitaker stated, “GSA may, consistent with fiscal law and the First Amendment, broaden its policy governing the purchase and display of seasonal decorations in the public spaces of federal properties to allow for the display of religiously significant seasonal decorations that are reasonably calculated to improve employee morale. Religious seasonal displays fall within the traditions of our country and do not, without more, contravene the Establishment Clause. The PBS policy forbidding “religiously significant” *45 Op. O.L.C. __ (Jan. 15, 2021)* displays is not required by the Establishment Clause. In certain applications, the PBS policy may raise questions under the Free Speech Clause, if it prohibited employees from displaying religious decorations in a government forum for private speech.”

I do hope that each of you have a blessed celebration of your faith, from myself a Merry Christmas because Jesus is the Reason for the Season.

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THE DAY OF INFAMY

Author’s Note: *Because this December 7 is the 80th anniversary of the tragedy at Pearl Harbor, I am re-publishing my December 2018 article. This is a very important history lesson that every American should learn and remember—one that almost no schools or history books are willing to disclose.*



John Martin

In the 1920’s and ‘30’s, we the people of the United States still retained vivid memories of the horrors of World War I—“The War to End all Wars.” Two decades later, when WWII erupted in Europe, we held a strict non-interventionist attitude to getting entangled into another one. A Gallup poll revealed that 88 percent were solidly against it.

In a 1940 election year speech, our notorious President Franklin Delano Roosevelt announced a campaign promise, “I have said this before, but I shall say it again and again: Your boys are not going to be sent into any foreign wars.”

But FDR had other ideas. He was salivating for a war. But how could he do it? He knew that neither the people nor Congress would approve a war. It could never happen—unless the other side shot first and did terrible slaughter and destruction.

After the beginning of WWII in Europe, FDR attempted to provoke Germany by freezing its assets, sending destroyers to Britain, and even depth-charging U-Boats. But Germany was wise enough not to respond; they wanted no entanglement with the United States after being decisively defeated in WWI.

FDR switched his focus to Japan. Lieutenant Commander Arthur H. McCollum offered him eight provocative options, “If by these means Japan could be led to commit an overt act of war, so much the better.”

FDR quickly implemented them. He blocked Japan from using the Panama Canal, froze its assets in America, embargoed oil and other vital needs, sent warships close to its homeland, demanded it withdraw from China and Indochina, and offered various military threats.

FDR’s bait was our Pacific Fleet. Over the objections of Admiral J.O. Richardson, FDR moved it from our West Coast to Pearl Harbor, which was vulnerable to attack from all directions. Richardson said, “I came away with the impression that, despite his spoken word, the President was fully determined to put the United States into the war if Great Britain could hold out until he was reelected.” FDR quickly relieved Richardson of his command.

In 1940, America cracked Japan’s “Purple” code and was able to intercept and read its secret diplomatic messages. The War Department in Washington knew every action Japan was up to, but this information was withheld from America’s servicemen and, of course, Admiral Kimmel and General Walter C. Short in Hawaii.

In January 1941, right at the beginning of his third term, FDR sent his advisor Harry Hopkins to see Winston Churchill. Hopkins told him, “The President is determined that we shall win the war together. Make no mistake about it. He has sent me here to tell you that at all costs and by all means, he will carry you through, no matter what happens to him—there is nothing he will not do so far as he has human power.” Soon afterward, British-American staff talks began under “utmost secrecy.”



Credit: www.sdp.hs.org

Robert Sherwood, FDR’s biographer, said: “If the isolationists had known the full extent of the secret alliance between the United States and Britain, their demands for impeachment would have rumbled like thunder throughout the land.”

This almost happened when code clerk Tyler Kent discovered the secret plot. He smuggled documents out of the US Embassy in London to show to the American people. But he was caught, tried, and imprisoned until the end of the war.

By November 1941, Japan’s Purple code messages revealed its military actions were heating up while diplomatic deadlines were being pushed forward.

On November 25, the U.S. Navy forbade all US and Allied shipping in the North Pacific and diverted it into the South Pacific. This prevented any accidental observation of Japanese ships, carriers, and planes and the subsequent alerting of people at Pearl Harbor.

Finally, on December 7, FDR got his wish—carnage and devastation—4000 casualties (2400 deaths) in less than 90 minutes and every ship in the harbor sunk. FDR announced it was a sneak attack by the Empire of Japan. Sneak attack? Really?

But it was “a date that will live in infamy”—created and covered up by a President who will live in infamy—a contemptible liar who proclaimed, “I hate war,” and then did everything in his power to condemn our people to enigma in one.

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John Sophocleus

CHRIST IS BORN; GLORIFY HIM!

Many orthodox Christians celebrate Christmas Day circa January 7 to remember Jesus Christ's birth described in the Christian Bible. This date works to the Julian calendar which pre-dates the Gregorian calendar, more commonly applied/used today. Santa (along with the Easter Bunny) was among many things included in my grandparents 'New World' education.

The story of 'Santa Claus' more familiar to my grandparents began with Nicholas, born during the third century in the village of Patara in Asia Minor.

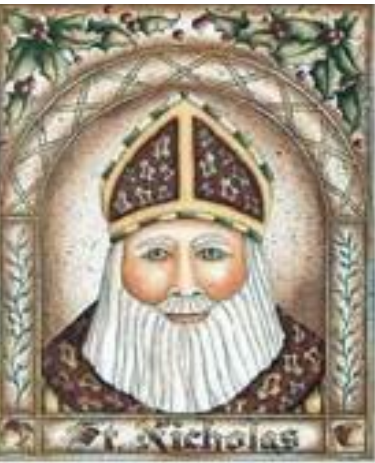


Photo Credit: www.stnicholascenter.org

At that time the region was Greek on the southern coast of what is now Turkish territory. Wealthy parents raised Nicholas to be a devout Christian; they died in an epidemic while he was young. Obeying Jesus' words to "sell what you own and give the money to the poor," Nicholas used all his inheritance to aid and comfort those needy, sick, and suffering in the area. This great dedication to serve God shepherded Nicholas to coronation as Bishop of Myra at a remarkably young age. Bishop Nicholas became known throughout the land for his care and generosity to those in need, his joyful love of children, and genuine concern for sailors.

Under the Roman Emperor Diocletian (a ruthless persecutor of Christians) Bishop Nicholas suffered for his faith, was exiled and imprisoned. The prisons were full of bishops, priests, and deacons hated by despotic Romans as Christians received more favour and respect as ones truly "Philoptochos" – i.e., "Friends of the Poor." After his release (surviving imprisonment) Nicholas attended the Council of Nicaea in AD 325. He died December 6, AD 343 in Myra and buried in his cathedral church, where a unique relic (some call manna) formed at his grave. This liquid substance, said to have healing powers, continued the growing devotion to Nicholas which remains persistent today. The anniversary of his death became a day of celebrated remembrance (Saint Nicholas Day) on December 6th; December 19 on the Julian Calendar.

I find continuous veneration of any person who died almost 1700 years ago salient. Many accounts, stories and legends have been (re)told of St. Nicholas' life and accomplishments. These facts and folklore help one understand his exemplary character and why Nicholas was so beloved and revered as protector and helper of those in need.

One of the more notable stories is of a poor man, father of three daughters. In those days a young woman's father had to offer prospective husbands something of value – a 'preeka' – i.e., a dowry. Larger dowries supposedly increased the chance a daughter would find a 'good' husband. The economist in me would like to know the proxy for 'good' and any empirical verification of this assertion. In short, without a dowry, a woman was unlikely to marry. This poor man's daughters, without dowries, were destined to be sold into slavery. Mysteriously, on three different occasions, a bag of gold appeared in their home... providing the desperately wanted dowries.

The bags of gold, tossed through an open window, are said to have landed in stockings or shoes put by the fireplace to dry. This led to the custom of children hanging stockings or putting out shoes, eagerly awaiting gifts from Saint Nicholas. Sometimes the story is told with gold balls instead of bags of gold. That is why three gold balls (in keeping with the Holy Trinity) sometimes given/represented as oranges, are one of the symbols for St. Nicholas remembering him as a gift-giver.

How does one reconcile this with the January 7th date in my first sentence? Epiphany is one of the most sacred Greek orthodox celebrations, rich in many Christian traditions held onto these past millennia. Epiphany (also called Theofania or Fota) is celebrated January 6 and is a day of joy and brightness where Christians venerate the baptism of Jesus Christ by John the Baptist.

Just as "Christos Anesti" (Christ is Risen) evokes the reply of "Alithos Anesti" (Indeed He is Risen) at Greek orthodox Easter/Pascha; our remembrance of the Nativity of Jesus/Christmas one proclaims, "Christ is Born" which evokes

the reply "Glorify Him!" Not only is it important for us to Glorify Him, but realize how many times we're called upon each day to do so righteously. This column is intended to be at least one sobering moment in your Christmas celebration to think about how important it is to be an integral part of standing against the evil enveloping us. I pray all who know the power of Jesus Christ's teachings will take Him into their hearts this blessed season and overcome the distraction of consumerism and destruction by the politburo who've made government their god. I know the Holy Spirit in Jesus Christ, Son of the true God is indeed greater than the spirit of evil in the sons of Nimrod, Caesar(s) et al because it is His name which remains above all nations.

This small Child of God, born in a cave resulting from the decree of a despot directing the world on a course toward increasing darkness, in the City of David among the lowest of mankind by worldly standards would do more to bring Light and the Spirit of Zion to a wicked world than Rome could possibly contain. The wicked want the righteous to give in or die. As you celebrate the beginning of Jesus Christ's path into this world during the Christmas season, comprehend the magnitude of the mission His Father set Christ upon. If you truly believe and adhere to His teachings, it destroys the power of death and darkness. Without this fear Rome's (and the many leviathans to follow) ability to advance their despotic ends is thwarted. Jesus showed us the way; it is up to us to have the courage, faith and wisdom to follow. If we do not stand well against evil and corruption in our everyday lives, we're failing Him and the righteous efforts many suffered so mankind may not be compelled to endure the agony of Roman despotism again. Resistance to tyranny is obedience to God. You can be God's servant OR a servant to Rome; it is impossible to serve both. It really is that simple. The choice is yours ...



Photo Credit: orthodoxlife.org

So my cherished Alabama Gazette readers: CHRIST IS BORN!

Postscript: This column is dedicated to my paternal grandmother, Despina Sophocleus, a long time member of the Greek Ladies Philoptochos Society and true 'Friend of the Poor' who came to the US after surviving the 'Burning the Smyrna.' Little surprise, Despina [Diana] was very familiar with Nicholas, from her home region she held dear. As for her similar enduring lesson on the timing of Pascha, Yaiya [Grandma] Sophocleus taught me why the chocolate Easter bunnies were so much bigger and better when our Pascha date occurred well after all my non-Greek friends Easter celebration – wait for those after holiday sale rock-bottom prices!



John M. Taylor

"The Informed Southerner"

A Perspective on the Fourteenth Amendment

There has been considerable controversy regarding the Fourteenth Amendment. A brief look into its origin and history reveals, "something is rotten in Denmark." Although it was "adopted" on July 28, 1868, it was never legally ratified. The following is a summary of each section:

Section 1: "All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the state wherein they reside." It asserts that no State can make laws to abridge their rights, deprive them of life, liberty, and property or equal protection of the law. At least superficially, this section was intended to give citizenship to former slaves. In essence, it made prohibitions against the States but not against the Federal Government.

Section 2: "Representatives shall be apportioned among the several states according to their respective numbers, counting the whole number of persons, in each state, excluding Indians not taxed." It also prohibits the abridgement of male voting rights in federal and State elections unless they were involved in a "rebellion." This referenced the Southern States who were denied the right of self-government through military invasion.

Section 3: "No person shall be a senator or representative in congress, or elector of President and Vice President, or hold any office, civil or military, under the United States, or under any state,...[if they] have engaged in insurrection or rebellion against the same..." This section barred over 150,000 ex-Confederates from holding public office. The corporate/government cartel of the North sought to punish any Southerner who dared to believe the Union is voluntary.

Section 4: "The validity of the public debt of the United States, authorized by law, including debts incurred for payment of pensions and bounties for services in suppressing insurrection or rebellion, shall not be questioned." It also says efforts to "pay any debt or obligation incurred in aid of insurrection or rebellion against the United States" would be illegal and void.

Section 5: "The Congress shall have power to enforce by appropriate legislation, the provisions of this article." "This is the enabling clause which allows Congress a free hand in the internal politics of a State...the legal excuse that allows the Federal government to impose upon the Southern people such things as controlling the voting qualifications in the Southern States, busing, reverse discrimination, minority set asides, etc." (Kennedy)

A detailed critique of this legislation appeared in the September 27, 1957, issue of the U.S. News and World Report. "There is no Fourteenth Amendment"

by David Lawrence, dissects the myriad of improprieties surrounding this amendment. Sans the tragic circumstances surrounding the amendment, Lawrence's analyses would likely qualify as a plot for a situation comedy. For example, the following non-Southern/Border States failed to ratify the Fourteenth Amendment: New Jersey, Ohio, Kentucky, Californian, Delaware, and Maryland. "In the South, ten States—Texas, Arkansas, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Florida, Mississippi and Louisiana—by formal action of their legislatures, rejected it under the normal processes of civil law." (Lawrence) Although 28 of the 37 States were required for ratification, only 21 actually approved it. Since it failed to pass legally, the Federal Government essentially created "pseudo" or "puppet" State governments under "military governors" to make sure it passed.

The so-called indivisible Union referenced by Lincoln suddenly required Southern States to be readmitted to a Union they supposedly never left. The Fourteenth Amendment had to be agreed to before these States could have political representation (per an 1867 "law"). President Andrew Johnson realized the unconstitutionality of these requirements; however, since Johnson opposed the corporate-welfare loving and financially powerful Radical Republicans, his opinion was relatively useless. His veto of the 1867 law (pushed heavily by the Radical Thaddeus Stevens) was overridden. Furthermore, the legislatures of New Jersey and Ohio let Secretary of State William Seward know they rescinded their ratification and Seward essentially did a "tap dance" around it. In 1868, Oregon's legislature passed a rescinding resolution based on the failure to legitimately meet the ratification of three-fourths of the States.

As author Andrew C. McLaughlin wrote, "Can a State which is not a State and not recognized as such by Congress, perform the supreme duty of ratifying an amendment to the fundamental law? Or does a State—by congressional thinking—cease to be a State for some purposes but not for others?"

The "passage" of the Fourteenth Amendment is a disgraceful episode in American history. It was never legally passed and never signed by President Johnson. It has been used to further centralize federal power and allow the feds to meddle in State affairs; this "legislation" belongs in the scrap heap of history. Who created this monster? It was the Republican Party – especially the despicable and corrupt Radical Republicans. Is there any wonder why Republicans were so thoroughly despised for generations in the South?

Sources: *The South Was Right*, by Kennedy & Kennedy; *The Land Called Alabama*, by M.C. McMillan; RTR Truth Media; and "There is no Fourteenth Amendment," by David Lawrence, *U.S. News and World Report*, 9/27/57.

Speak Up and Speak Out ... We Want to Hear from You!

Letters To The Editor

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Guest Columnist

falsely accused former President Trump of colluding with the Soviet government to undermine the U.S. political and economic structure.

After untold number of Congressional hearings, bogus indictments, midnight arrests and slanderous statements leading to two political impeachments of a duly elected president, the Independent Counsel has finally revealed that the foundation of the now debunked Russian Collusion originated from Democrats in the Hillary Clinton cabal with the media gleefully if not conspiratorially publishing out and out lies.

Last month, Inspector General John Durham pulled away the corrupt political curtain with the indictment of Igor Danchenko showing from the beginning to end, the Hillary Clinton campaign was up to its eyeballs in dirty tricks by accusing Trump of Russian collusion starting in 2016 with a willing and complicit media carrying the message to the public.

The indictment alleges Clinton associate Charles Dolan of working with Igor to generate salacious and derogatory lies against Trump. Further, Durham’s report clearly shows that the FBI was not duped by the acquired Golden Showers dossier, but instead knew as early as 2017 that it was Clinton operatives who created the document, which led to its “investigation.” The FBI willfully withheld this obvious scam from Congress and fed the coconspirator media information to leak to an unsuspecting public.

Instead of Trump colluding with the Russians, the Democrats were guilty, as is often the case, of doing the very thing they accuse the opposition of doing. Clinton’s campaign paid opposition research firm Fusion GPS to use Christopher Steele, a Fusion employee and British spy who published the dossier, as the go between with Igor and retained him as a contractor. The indictment also alleges Igor used a Clinton supporter as a sub source for the dossier allegations against Trump.

All the malicious and false allegations leveled in the dossier, unravel once exposed to the light of day. Even so, Democrats and some RHINO Republicans stand by their actions. As recently as November 9, Senator Adam Schiff was unapologetic for pursuing the investigation and bringing impeachment charges against Trump. On outlets like NBC’s “Meet the Press” and “The View,” Schiff continued to state that Trump colluded even in the face of undeniable facts. “I don’t regret saying we should investigate claims of someone who (worked for Hillary’s campaign) frankly was a well respected British intelligence officer, and we couldn’t have known, of course, years ago, that we would learn years later that someone who is a primary source lied to him.”

The complete 39-page official indictment can be reviewed at: <https://www.justice.gov/sco/press-release/file/1446386/download>.

(images public domain)



Local Doctor Pens Children’s Book Just in Time for Christmas

Just in time for Christmas is a wonderful time to say, “I love you.”

Dr. Roland Hester, a local physician with Southern Orthopaedic Surgeons in Montgomery, has just published a precious children’s book called *I love you*, a short bedtime story about unconditional love.

The idea for this publication came when Dr. Hester wanted to explain to his grandchildren the principle of unconditional love that Jesus Christ has shown to us.

His decades-long experience as a Sunday school teacher at Trinity Presbyterian Church helped him formulate this whimsically rhyming piece fashioned around his own grandchildren: Adair, Wesley and George. The family dogs, Otis and Riley, also play a role in the adventures found from the backyard baby pool to Lake Martin.

Local artist, Ruthie Carlson, illustrates every page with beautiful images and happy faces.

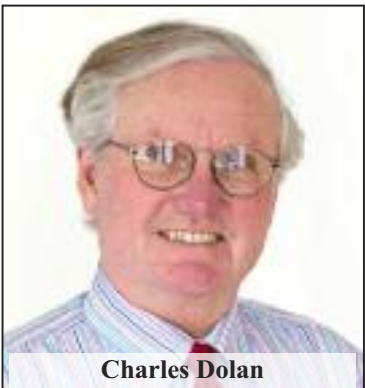
Dr. Hester explains that our little ones need to be taught and to understand that when boys and girls makes mistakes, or get hurt, or things don’t go their way, we would always be there to say, “I love you” no matter what happened, just like Jesus does for us along life’s way.

I love you (25 pages) may be purchased online at www.amazon.com in the children’s book section under the author’s name, Roland Hester. It will make a great stocking stuffer just in time for Christmas!

The views of submitted editorials may not be the express views of The Alabama Gazette.

DEMOCRATS AT CENTER OF TRUMP’S RUSSIAN COLLUSION HOAX

U.S. politicians and partisan political propaganda outlets (generally referred to as the news media) have spent more than five years knowingly propagating false and malicious information relating to the Trump administration’s involvement with Russia. The have



Charles Dolan



Igor Danchenko



Senator (D) Adam Schiff



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

Stan Hurst, Associate Sports Writer



Iron-Bowl-a-Rama 2021

Alabama was a 20-and-a-half-point favorite going into Saturday’s contest. Which proves again why we play the games. The “experts” are not always right, and this one was a game that redefines “the stuff of which legends are made.” As an impartial and rabid fan, I sensed all week that little more than 10 points would decide this rendition of the Iron Bowl.

I settled in to watch the game with my mother-in-law, yes my mother-in-law. I’m her favorite (and only) son-in-law; she is a Bama fan through and through. Such is the exciting life of your Sports Editor, living on the wild side!

The game started with an exchange of punts. This jostling for field position continued throughout the first quarter, winding it up with no score. It’s no wonder my mother-in-law wanted to keep turning the TV off. I wondered where in the world “that” Auburn defense came from. Had Auburn secretly smuggled in the Buffalo Bill’s top rated defense and no one noticed? The Auburn defensive prowess was something to behold. They owned the line of scrimmage for most of the game, and it looked as if Alabama was a lost cause.

At halftime, Auburn led 7-0, and their defense held the Bama offense to 68 yards. While on the other side of the ball, Alabama held Auburn to 159 total yards. Now this is big news no matter who you pull for. A David and Goliath matchup and the War Eagles have blanked the Crimson Tide at halftime! The last time Auburn held Alabama scoreless in the first half was 19 years ago in 2002.

Truly both defensive units played lights out until the very last minute and 26 seconds.

The second half began with what I was sure to include some offensive adjustments made by Bill O’Brien and the staff. However, nothing worked much to slow down the Auburn defense. And by the way, Alabama became their own worst enemy with penalties. A 20-plus-yard run by Brian Robinson, Jr., was called back as a penalty flag dropped for holding. That placed the Tide with a first down and 20 deep in its own territory. As a matter of fact, Bama incurred 11 flags for a total of 129 yards. Auburn, likewise, had just seven for 52 yards. The third quarter ended, during which Auburn kicked a field goal: score Auburn 10-0. Yet another astonishing outing for the War Eagles defense.

During the third quarter, T.J. Finley, Auburn’s quarterback, was sacked by the Bama defense, resulting in a 13-yard loss, and, more devastating, an injured ankle for the Auburn play-caller. Finley appeared to be in a lot of pain. I watched as he limped off and, as the punting team ran onto the field, saw him enter the medical tent. It looked bad enough that I began searching for who the third quarterback would be on the Auburn depth chart.

Amazingly, Finley returned to the game on Auburn’s next offensive possession but was walking with an unmistakable limp. T.J. Finley played on in pain—one of the many heroes of the game. As the end of the third quarter ended, Auburn was still up 10 to zip.

During the fourth quarter, Bama started making progress. The team was getting some adjustments and wrinkles worked out and beginning to mount an offensive threat, which was quashed at times by mistakes resulting in penalty flags. However, the Tide was staying on the field long enough that it began to fatigue the War Eagles defense some. Alabama moved the ball and finally got on the board with a 38-yard field goal and 8:44 left to play.

A rejuvenated Auburn defense took the field and got several stops. The Auburn offense took the field with 2:47 left to play, which at the time I thought would be the final possession of the game; Auburn leading the game 10-3. Auburn moved the ball. Tank Bigsby ran the ball looking for a first down but was tackled and dragged down short of the first down. A lot had been said about this play by the Auburn partisans, “Why didn’t he run out of bounds and stop the clock?” It’s not that he didn’t realize he needed to get out of bounds, he was angling that way, he just got stopped, just a good play by the Tide defense. That’s it, no conspiracy here.

Auburn punted and Bama received the ball at their own 3-yard line with 1:11 remaining in the game. The Tide offense drove the ball 97 yards in 12 plays and scored their first touchdown with a 28-yard pass play to Ja’Corey Brooks, the replacement for Bama’s leading wide receiver Jameson Williams. Williams, who also plays on special teams, was ejected for targeting in the first quarter.

The point after attempt was good, and we were all tied at 10 at the end of the fourth quarter. Alabama was able to pull together and become an irresistible force that could not be stopped nor repelled—as a marching army laying siege to a fortified citadel.

It took four overtimes for this game to produce a winner. The fourth OT is sudden death, and the Tide scored their two-point conversion with Bryce Young passing to John Metchie III for the game winning play. The Tide 24: Auburn 22.

This was a game in which neither team lost hope. The players are all winners in this Iron Bowl. There are commonalities in the life lessons learned by every participant in this hard-fought game. From the players, coaches, and equipment men, and for us as fans. A few that stand out to me are that adversities will invariably come, and when they do, faith and strength are required to survive them. Secondly, focusing on a goal and achieving it under the most adverse circumstances is paramount, rather than moving the goal. I fear we’re teaching our kids that when the going gets tough, just set an easier objective.

The Tide prevailed on the scoreboard and all credits are due to this team. They did what they have done for so many games: they just got it done. However, the War Eagles fought tooth and nail on every play, a defense extraordinaire. The Tide offense cobbled together success when they had to have it and kept the Auburn defense on the field for an astonishing 87 plays. Just watching it was exhausting, seeing each team play hard on every snap of the ball. Auburn played way above anything they have been able to produce defensively during the entire season.

The Crimson Tide never gave up. And most certainly, the Tide defense got the stops when Auburn looked like they were going to bulldoze over Bama with their running attack. Frankly, I thought it was an impossibility for them to win. They had their collective backs against the wall the entirety of the game. They refused to lose. They came to play and beyond that, they possessed a collective will to win far beyond what would seem reasonable to we, the spectators. I’ve never seen coach Saban smile so broadly.

Now I’m sure there will be the group of what-ifers, the folks saying “if only” on social media. Calling for firings of coordinators, second-guessing play calling. Disparaging the officials, and rumors of players wanting to move through the transfer portal. Why? I guess that’s just the way we are these days. But only the game matters, the players spoke with their actions on the field, and this game, this Iron Bowl, well it just speaks for itself.

These are college kids. Young men putting on a great show for us, the fans. Nothing can take away from the effort and tenacity they put on display for us. But most of all they did it for themselves these young men care nothing about their teammates skin color, for these are truly a band of brothers and they deserve all the respect that is due them.

They make me smile! ... Next Time ...

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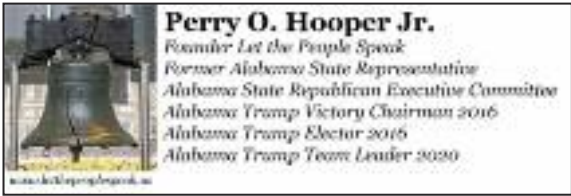
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START MONTH

I'm Proud to be an American ...



Perry O. Hooper, Jr.



Lee Greenwood, a Grammy award winner, CMA award winner, ACM award winner and has achieved over twenty top 10 singles, was celebrated on Tuesday night October 12, 2021, at the Von Braun Center in Huntsville, Alabama, for his forty years of hits in the music industry. Stars from multiple genres of music came out to honor America's well-known patriot Lee Greenwood ranging from non-country hitmakers Gavin DeGraw, Debby Boone, Sam Moore, Michael W. Smith, Scott Stapp (of Creed) to today's hot country hitmakers Lee Brice, Michael Ray, Jamey Johnson, Dustin Lynch to country legends The Oak Ridge Boys, Crystal Gayle, The Gatlin Brothers, Janie Fricke, and more!

"When Lee Greenwood announced that he wanted to host his All Star Salute tribute concert in the Von Braun Center Propst Arena, we were ecstatic!" said Von Braun Center Director of Marketing and Public Relations Samantha Nielsen. "We knew the event would be hugely successful - not just for the VBC, but for the entire city of Huntsville and north Alabama. We can proudly say that this sold-out concert was the third highest grossing events ever held in the VBC's 46-year history! On the night of the concert, multiple hotels in Huntsville sold-out due to the number of out-of-market attendees the show drew in. The best news? The show isn't over, yet! We will continue seeing benefits from hosting this event in Huntsville because there are still three 1-hour television specials from the Lee Greenwood tribute concert that will be aired nationally in 2022. Each special will promote tourism in Huntsville, Alabama. Our VBC team showcased what our facility can accomplish, and we're thrilled to contribute to the continued growth and recognition of the city of Huntsville and the state of Alabama."



A few show stopping moments included Rock and Roll Hall of Fame member Sam Moore and T. Graham Brown's performance of "Soul Man" with Lee Brice, Michael Ray, Janie Fricke, Darryl Worley, and Little Texas frontman Tim Rushlow joining in on the fun; Scott Stapp of Creed performing the Greenwood hit "Going, Going, Gone,"; Gavin DeGraw's performance of the Greenwood hit "I.O.U."; Lee Brice's performance of the Greenwood hit "I Don't Mind The Thorns When You're the Rose"; Tim Rushlow's performance of "God Bless Texas"; The Oak Ridge Boys performance of "Elvira"; Debby Boone's performance of "You Light Up My Life"; and, of course, the finale of Lee singing "God Bless the USA" with the entire ensemble of guests.

The views of submitted editorials may not be the express views of The Alabama Gazette.

I am using this month's column to pay tribute to an American singer and Patriot, Lee Greenwood, whose song "God Bless the U.S.A" has resonated in the hearts of millions of Americans since 1984. Greenwood recently attended a celebration in his honor at the Von Braun Center in Huntsville.

"Lee Greenwood chose Alabama as the place he wanted to celebrate his life of being, first, an American Patriot and, second, a music star. He also brought a star-studded event to Huntsville to commemorate and support our Veterans by giving out houses through the Helping A Hero organization. I love him for this, and this is great for Alabama and the impact on our economy," says Perry Hooper, Chairman of the All Star Salute to Lee Greenwood Celebration. "This is a tribute to Alabama and how much we respect and salute him for what he means for America in these troubling times when being a patriot like Lee is being marginalized. I cannot be prouder for being a fan of his music and his career and what he did for coming to Alabama for this great celebration."

In addition to great music celebrated on stage, Louis and Patti Breland of Breland Homes bestowed keys to two veterans and their families – SFC Scott Barkelow, USA (Ret) and SSG Michael Brown, USA – through a special partnership with Lee Greenwood and the Helping a Hero organization. "We met Lee Greenwood and committed to donating a home to a veteran for this event and were super excited to be part of this celebration. Then we saw two different veterans from Alabama that were so deserving that we couldn't choose one over the other, so we just decided to honor them both," said Louis Breland of Breland Homes. "The event was the highlight of our year. It was an emotional evening all around. Words just can't describe what we were feeling or what everyone in that arena was feeling. There was so much love for Lee Greenwood, America and you could just feel the emotion," adds Patti Breland.

Andy Wickstrom, President of Henry Repeating Arms, presented 3 veterans – GySgt Brad Wallace, Sgt Michael Price, and MSG Ken Knight – with the Henry Military Service Tribute firearms in recognition of all who answer the call of duty. Lee Greenwood was presented with The New Original Henry Silver Deluxe Engraved Edition firearm "When we first heard about this event, we knew that we had to be a part of it. It was about America, our veterans, and Lee Greenwood! So for the festivities, we had to do what we do best, which is make guns. Although we can never truly repay the, it was our honor to present a few of our Henry Military Service Tribute Edition rifles to some truly inspiring local veterans as a small token of our gratitude," says Andy Wickstrom. "Lee Greenwood is an inspiration for us all in making sure we do not forget our veterans. His song 'God Bless The USA' will live on forever and his continued patriotism in unparalleled."

Photo credit: Evan Destefano & Josh Adams



Judge Peggy Givhan

When I think of the month of December the words **cheerful, happy, joyful** come to mind. There is so much to do with family and friends such as decorating the house together, having a few neighbors in for coffee and eggnog, and fine tuning the Christmas tree to make this the best Christmas ever. Every year I always buy a few new tree ornaments to add to the mix. A friend commented last year that I had so many wonderful ornaments that it would take someone until next Christmas to look at them all. Needless to say, I like Christmas trees that are full, not skimpy. But each to his own. And of course, Christmas decorations must include poinsettias. These plants greet anyone who comes into your home with a big loud Merry Christmas.

Also, this is the time of year for giving. Throughout the year, I make different items to give as Christmas gifts. When the pears come in at the farm, I make pear chutney; when the tomatoes come in, I make a delicious tomato relish called Orr Sauce; then there is beer mustard, Jezebel Sauce and pepper jelly. I feel a sense of accomplishment when I gaze upon the glass canning jars filled with these wonderful condiments. But if you are not into canning, home baked goods are always a welcomed gift.

The garden chores switch from constantly weeding, to pulling out the last of the annuals and pruning back the perennials. Many of the annuals have now reseeded such as zinnias, cleome, and torenia. These flowers you can term underground or invisible. I try not to disturb these areas when working in the beds so as not to destroy the seed habitat. I also gather what seed that is left and place them in paper envelopes labeled with the flower and date. These gathered seeds when planted will germinate at a much better rate if sown the next season.

Another chore we need to take a look at is pruning. Many of my canna lilies have encroached into a lot of the bed, so I must dig them out. Cannas also make wonderful gifts. The cast iron plant or aspidistra is another creeping invasive plant that has its place in the garden but not the whole garden. It is funny that when a plant is happy and wants to say "Thank You", it multiplies before your

Southern Gardening

Potpourri for December



very eyes. After a 3-year battle, I thought I had completely eradicated the Mexican petunia or Ruellia, but to my horror, it has shot up about 10 plants. These are the purple variety and the most prolific. I see them in garden centers selling for \$5.00 a gallon. All I can say is "buyer beware." Not so much in Montgomery, but at the farm, I am constantly in hand to hand combat with honeysuckle. It goes without saying that it is too late to prune azaleas, and basically any flowering shrub that blooms in the spring because the blooms for this spring were set about 6-8 weeks after they bloomed last season. If you do prune these now, the areas cut back on the shrub will be devoid of flowers.

PLANT OF THE MONTH – ASPIDISTRA

This plant is also called the Cast-Iron-plant and for good reason. It is almost impossible to kill and has been termed the best houseplant for beginners. Outdoors this plant gives structure to the flowerbeds with its dark to medium lime green blade shaped leaves. Many times it is used as a ground cover under Magnolia trees and Oak trees where precious little will thrive. Aspidistra is native to Japan and China, can survive in most soil types and requires little to no maintenance. It falls into the family Ruscaceae and has hidden blooms. If the leaves turn yellow, just cut them to the ground. One of the best uses I have found for aspidistra is in flower arrangements. The long leaves make a dramatic showing in the arrangements. Since it is a woody, stemmed plant, these leaves hold up for weeks.



Photo: kalliergeia.com

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Chief Deputy Kevin J. Murphy

Community Relations Events

We are slowly getting back into the normal routine prior to the COVID pandemic. Our Drive-Thru Halloween Spooktacular was a great success this year as was our Fishing Rodeos!

Our Firearms Familiarization Course has begun again with courses being held once a month; however, we do not hold courses November-January, due to the weather and the holidays. You can still apply for the course and you will be contacted once the next course is scheduled. Please call 334-832-1339 for more information or to request an application.



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Honoring Our Heroes

SMSgt Douglas M. Terry & Major Beverly J. Henry Terry

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# end #
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# end #
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Beasley (left) & Edwards (right)

Eugene Thomas Beasley is a WWII Veteran of the U.S. Navy who served from 1941-1944. Beasley served as a Signalman aboard the USS North Carolina

Beasley was treated for his eye injuries both in Honolulu when the ship returned to Pearl Harbor for repairs as well as on the mainland. Beasley was honorably discharged in 1944 due to his injuries at the rank of Seaman Petty Officer 2nd Class. (Beasley's article was published in the AL Gazette in the May 2020 issue.



First Sergeant Billy Gene Bonner

First Sergeant (1st Sgt) Billy Gene Bonner served 20 years in the United States Marine Corps. His Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) was Supply Sergeant. He served one tour in Korea, one tour in Vietnam and one tour Okinawa, Japan. His military medals, awards and decorations include: Navy Commendation Medal with "V" which is given for sustained acts of heroism or meritorious service heroism and valor or heroism in combat. Other awards included: Purple Heart, Good Conduct Medal with five stars, Presidential Unit Citation, Korean Service Medal, National Defense Service Medal with one star, Korean Presidential Unit Citation, Vietnam Service Medal with one star, Expert Badge Rifle, Expert Pistol Badge.

1st Sgt Bonner was born January 28, 1931 in Goodwater, AL, to his parents, John T. Bonner and Gillie Duck Bonner. He lived with his mother and grandparents who moved frequently within Elmore County, AL as his grandfather was a sharecropper. He graduated from Wetumpka High School in 1950.

1st Sgt. Bonner volunteered and enlisted in the U. S. Marine Corps March 6, 1950. He completed Boot Camp at the Marine Corps Recruit Depot, Parris Island, S. C. He was assigned to Dispensing because of his mathematical and typing abilities. He remained at Parris Island working as a general's orderly for two months. He then volunteered to serve in the Marine's infantry completing training at Camp LeJeune. He was then deployed to Korea where he endured extremely cold conditions with temperatures of 20 degrees below zero upon his arrival. The Marines slept outside in the weather without being able to erect a tent, and he wore the same clothes for six weeks. He fought in combat for four months and 27 days until he was wounded. He was treated at the U. S. Naval Hospital in Yokosuka, Japan for three months followed by treatment at the rehabilitation center at Otsu, Japan. He remained there as a clerk typist for six months making reservations for military service personnel going on R. & R. (rest and recuperation) and coaching the men's basketball team.

1st Sgt Bonner was then sent to the Naval Air Station at Pensacola, FL, as a clerk typist for almost one year. This was followed by four weeks of training at the Marine Recruiting School at Parris Island. He served at Columbia, S.C. as a supply man in the Marine recruiting office where his first four years ended. He reenlisted in the Marine Corps and served as a Marine recruiter at Spartanburg, S.C., for one year followed by two years at Hickory, N.C., and then to Supply School at Marine Corps Base Camp LeJeune for four months where he remained working with an artillery outfit as the supply chief. Next, he served as the supply chief at the Naval Air Station at Buford, S.C. for one year. He then served three years as a Marine recruiter in Montgomery, AL during 1959-1963. He was deployed to Okinawa on an unaccompanied tour where he worked as the supply chief for one year. He returned to Montgomery, AL, as a Marine recruiter serving 1965-1968 and was promoted to 1st Sgt. in 1966. In 1968, he was deployed to Vietnam and served as 1st Sergeant to Headquarters and Service Company. His Vietnam service ended after six months because of illness in 1969. He was then assigned to the Naval Air Station in Pensacola, FL, for service in the guard platoon office for three months followed by service at the Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, N.C., as 1st Sgt for Headquarters and Service for three months where he retired from military service September 30, 1969.

1st Sgt. Bonner and his wife Bonnie Bonner were married for 26 years and had two children, five grandchildren and 16 great-grandchildren.

After his military retirement, he used the G.I. Bill to complete training in an air conditioning school at the John Patterson Trade School in Montgomery, AL. He worked for the Mid South Supply Company in Natchitoches, LA, for five years. He then started his own company, Bonner Industrial Supply, and after 15 years, he retired in 1995. He is a bass fisherman participating in bass fishing tournaments with professionals throughout the states of AL, GA, FL, LA, TX and AR where he has been successful in winning cash prizes at many of these tournaments. He joined First United Methodist Church in Wetumpka, AL, in 1946, and he has since rejoined this church. He has been a member of the Wetumpka Lions Club and a member of the Natchitoches, LA, Kiwanis Club where he served as the chairman of the winter coat project. He was recognized as the Citizen of the Year by a civic club in Millbrook, AL, because of his service starting and organizing the Dixie Youth Baseball and the youth football programs.

1st Sgt. Bonner's conclusions about his service with the U.S. Marine Corps are: "I feel like that serving in the Marine Corps I probably couldn't have had a profession that I was more suited for than I was as a Marine. I think that having been on recruiting duty for 12 years of my 20 years, every time I signed up a Marine that I was doing him a favor. I let the recruits know that it would be hard. Some of the Marines that I had recruited later came by to see me, and I felt like I had made an impression on them. I felt like I was honored to have survived because I had a lot of close calls. The Lord had better things for me. No one in my family has ever lived past 80, and I am now 90."

#end#

Oak Grove Inn Honors Veterans

On November 11, 2021, residents and guests celebrated Veterans Day at the Oak Grove Inn, a senior adult retirement home providing independent living and assisted living. The Maxwell Air Force Color Guard presented the colors followed by the playing of the National Anthem by Matt Sponsler on trumpet. Mark Barnhardt, Commander of the Townsend Detachment #920 Marine Corps League, was the featured speaker. Oak Grove residents who are veterans were recognized. The program concluded with a moment of silence and the playing of Taps. The oldest veteran present was Helen Lattal (pictured below right), a WWII WAC, who will celebrate her 102nd birthday December 28, 2021.



Master Sergeant William I. Chivalette: Age 69

Master Sergeant (MSgt) William I. Chivalette served 24 years in the United States Air Force, three years as Director for the Airman Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C. and 20 years in Civil Service as Curator for the Air Force Enlisted Heritage Hall, Air Force Enlisted Heritage Research Institute, College for Enlisted Professional Military Education Air University, Maxwell Air Force Base-Gunter Annex, AL. His Air Force Specialty Code was Security Policeman and Air Force Historian. His military medals and decorations include: the Meritorious Service Medal with three oak leaf clusters, the Air Force Commendation Medal with four oak leaf clusters and two Air Force Recognition Ribbons. As a civilian, he earned 13 Air Force Recognition Ribbons and the Meritorious Civilian Service Award.

MSgt Chivalette was born to his parents, Theodore William Chivalette and Elizabeth Joann Maupin Chivalette, December 20, 1951, in Yuma, AZ. He was reared in VA and then in Jacksonville Beach, FL, where he graduated from Fletcher High School in 1970. Following graduation, MSgt Chivalette volunteered and enlisted in the United States Air Force March 25, 1971, at the Jacksonville Naval Air Station. He completed six weeks of Basic Training at Lackland Air Force Base (AFB), TX. From 1971-1985, he served as a Security Policeman at Homestead AFB, FL, Tahkli Royal AFB, Thailand, and K. I. Sawyer AFB, MI. He provided security for nuclear weapons at Homestead AFB, K.I. Sawyer AFB and Barksdale AFB. He served as Air Force Historian at Barksdale AFB, LA., at Osan AB, Korea, and at Lajes AB, Azores during Operations Desert Shield and Storm.

MSgt Chivalette received an award from the Korean JACEES for volunteer service with Korean orphans. He wrote two consecutive histories on the 2nd Bomb Wing's support of the Gulf War, which earned him honors as one of the best wing history programs in the Air Force. His reward from receiving those honors was his accompanying a hand picked group to the Ukraine in 1995, the first such visit since WWII.

Following his military retirement, March 31, 1995, MSgt Chivalette served as the Director of Operations for the Airman Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C. beginning July 25, 1995. While there he authored and edited the first enlisted history, *Unsung Heroes*, and nine other enlisted specific books. *Unsung Heroes* was placed on the CSAF's Reading List in 2000 and was issued to all AF enlisted Leadership School attendees. MSgt Chivalette served as the Curator of the Air Force Enlisted Heritage Hall (EHH) March 16, 1998, until June 30, 2018. He directed the building of 190 displays and won 36 awards for the displays as well as receiving 85 awards personally. He retired from Civil Service with 20 years, three months and 14 days as Curator of the Air Force Enlisted Heritage Hall.

Since retirement, MSgt Chivalette has volunteered at the Air Force Enlisted Heritage Hall and with the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) helping veterans in need. He has constructed whirligig airplanes and four birdhouses, and he has enjoyed participating in activities at the Montgomery Crump Senior Center. MSgt Chivalette has continued writing books including a massive book for the Curator of the Air Force Enlisted Heritage Museum chronicling all major events that took place at the EHH from 1998 to 2018. He holds a life membership with the USAF Museum Foundation, Inc. and the VFW. He has been a member of the Air Force Sergeants Association, the Noncommissioned Officers Association, the American Association of Museums the Alabama Museum Association and the Southeastern Museum Conference. In addition, while serving as Director of the EHH, Chivalette served on the Hospitality Committee of the Montgomery Chamber of Commerce.

MSgt Chivalette and his wife, Dang, have been married 48 years, and they have two children, 10 grandchildren and one great-grandchild.

MSgt Chivalette's conclusions about his military service are, "My Dad said, 'Military service would make a man out of you!'" His words were true to MSgt Chivalette. It gave him a purpose, and his experiences in Southeast Asia and in the Air Force made him realize how precious life is. He enjoyed his Air Force career and prizes honesty and integrity above all else. He tries to serve the Lord every day.

#end#

Veterans Day at S.P.I.R.I.T.

Veterans Day was celebrated at S.P.I.R.I.T. (Special People Involved Regularly in Testimony and Thanksgiving) Frazer United Methodist Church where senior adults enjoyed the patriotic music offered by a quartet led by **Col Walter E. Hines** who also played his saxophone. He



Col Walter E. Hines

served over 30 years in the U.S. Air Force, and his article was published in the December 2019 issue of *The Alabama Gazette*. A special poem, ***I am a Soldier***, was presented by Brig General Lawrence H. Stevenson who served 30 years in the U.S. Air Force. His article was published in the December 2020 issue of *The Alabama Gazette*. Each branch of the military was recognized by



Brig Gen Stevenson

the playing of a special song for each branch of service. The program ended with everyone standing and singing, **"God Bless America."**

I AM A SOLDIER

I am a soldier in the army of my God. The Lord Jesus Christ is my Commanding Officer. The Holy Bible is my code of conduct. Faith, Prayer, and the Word are my weapons of warfare. I have been taught by the Holy Spirit, trained by experience, tried by adversity, and tested by fire.

I am a volunteer in this army, and I am enlisted for eternity. I will either retire in this army at the Rapture or I will die in this army. But I will not get out, sell out, be talked out or pushed out. I am faithful, reliable, capable and dependable. If my God needs me, I am there. If He needs me in Sunday school to teach the children, work with youth, help adults or just sit and learn, He can use me because I am there!


I am a soldier. I am not a baby. I do not need to be pampered, petted, primed up, pumped up, picked up, or pepped up. I am a soldier. No one has to call me, remind me, write me, visit me, entice me or lure me. I am a soldier. I am not a wimp. I am in place, saluting my King, obeying His orders, praising His name and building His kingdom! No one has to send me flowers, gifts,

food cards or candy or give me handouts. I do not need to be cuddled, cradled, cared for or catered to. I am committed. I cannot have my feelings hurt bad enough to turn me around. I cannot be discouraged enough to turn me aside. I cannot lose enough to cause me to quit.

When Jesus called me into this army, I had nothing. If I end up with nothing, I will still come out ahead. I will win. My God has and will continue to supply all my needs. I am more than a conqueror. I will always triumph. I can do all things through Christ. The devil cannot defeat me. People cannot disillusion me. Weather cannot weary me. Sickness cannot stop me. Battles cannot beat me. Money cannot buy me. I am a soldier. Even death cannot destroy me. For when my Commanding officer calls me from His battlefield, He will promote me to captain and then allow me to rule with Him. I am a soldier in this army, and I'm marching claiming victory. I will not give up. I will not turn around.

I am a soldier, marching heavenbound. Here I stand! Will you stand with me?


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Check on Elderly Pet Owners

The holiday season approaching often reminds on us to check on others – elderly, those less fortunate, those facing challenging times. Of course, we should do this year-round but just in case there is no better time than the present. One thing we see too often in animal shelters are elderly owners who not only may be having difficulty in caring for their pet(s), but they may not realize their pet is having medical or other difficulties and may be in need of extra care.

So we bring this up to ask that family, friends and neighbor's please also keep an eye out for the pets of those who may no longer be seeing the reality of their pet's needs and health. They may need help with a ride to a Vet or even need the help of a mobile Vet to come to their house. Or they simply may need the help of checking to make sure they have dog/cat food and that the pet is being fed regularly. Helping a pet suffering from fleas is also helping the owner who may be being bitten by fleas in the house as well. We are asking for everyone to look out for each other AND try to also look out for each other's pets when there is a need for a bit more oversight. *If you love animals this is not only helping the animal, but helping their human as well, and we can all use a lot more of helping each other these days.*



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This is not a normal year. Covid19 has changed everything. You cannot take the same trips that you use to take. You cannot visit places you were planning to visit this year. You cannot buy things you use to buy. I am sure that the items I was planning to buy



are on a container ship floating off the coast of California. You cannot eat the way you use to eat. I have noticed that the grocery stores have large empty shelves. I have found items that were not stocked before. I have found items that were not stocked in the fruit section in the past. Part of this article is about a fruit that I do not remember seeing in the fruit section before. The first part of this article will be about that fruit. One reason you can find this fruit in good supplies is that there is a bumper harvest. The bumper harvest is in China. The fruit is a persimmon. Persimmon planting dates back 1,300 years ago and has evolved into a cottage industry for some areas in Northern China—The persimmon production in one village bringing in an income of about \$300,000. The area is also attracting more visitors due to the beautiful landscapes.

What better way to find out what bringing everyone to the fruit section in your grocery store and to the Shanxi Province in China than to try out this fruit.



Persimmon Jam

INGREDIENTS:
2 lbs persimmons (about 6)
3 cups sugar
Juice of one lemon
2 tsp vanilla extract
2 Tbsp powdered pectin

METHOD:

1. Preheat oven to 375 degrees.
2. Wash the persimmons, remove the stem and leaves – chop finely or put flesh through grinder.
3. Sprinkle with lemon juice and sugar. Let stand covered in a bowl 2-3 hours.
4. Transfer the fruit with juices to a large pan and add the vanilla and pectin.
5. Bring to a boil until all the sugar is dissolved then turn down heat stir frequently for about 30 minutes.
6. Ladle into hot sterilized jars, leaving ¼ inch head space.
7. Tighten lids and invert for a few minutes.
8. Return to upright and let cool completely and store in a cool, dry space.
9. Enjoy as you would any jam.

There is another item found in many recipes that calls for this dairy product. But most of the time a substitute is used. It is served over fruit and baked goods and is added to soups and sauces. Sour cream is used most of the time because it is more commonly found. But the recipes now more than ever call for **crème fraîche** – which is a soured cream but is called for in recipes because it is less sour and has a higher fat content. Sour cream can contain a host of other ingredients not allowed in crème fraîche.

And the taste is different from sour cream. Crème fraîche from Normandy is famous. It is often used both hot and cold in French cuisine to finish hot savory sauces and with it's fat content of over 30%' curdling is not a problem. Of course, when the cream has a crème fraîche label, it is more expensive.

So to lower your food costs and still have the taste, you can make your own. Crème fraîche, the ultra-rich, slightly tangy and impossibly dreamy cream I like to stir into pastas and soups and drizzle over baked fruit desserts is not carried in every grocery store, and even where it is, it's not exactly the most budget-minded ingredient.

Homemade Crème Fraîche

INGREDIENTS:
1 cup room temperature heavy or whipping cream
2 Tbsp buttermilk

METHOD:

1. Mix cream with butter milk in a glass jar and cover.
2. Let it stand at room temperature for 8 to 24 hours, or until it thickens.
3. Stir well and refrigerate for up to two weeks.

Photo: splendidtable.org

Now when someone asks if that is sour cream in your dessert, you can say, "No, it is *crème fraîche*."

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The last item in this article is a favorite of mine. It is simple to make, taste good, perfect for a cold winter night and good for a dinner with friends. And it is very Southern.

Southern Style Chicken & Dumplings

Yield: 6 servings

INGREDIENTS:

SOUP
1 Tbsp olive oil
3 celery ribs sliced
3 carrots diced
1 white onion diced
clove of minced garlic
boneless skinless chicken breasts
1tsp salt
½ tsp pepper
6 cups chicken broth
1 can English peas

DUMPLINGS
1 box McLib Southern Dumplings

METHOD:

1. Heat a large dutch oven pot over medium high heat.
2. Add in olive oil and heat through, 1 minute.
3. Add in celery, carrots, and onion and saute 5 minutes, or until onions are soft and translucent.
4. Stir in garlic and cook 1 minute more.
5. Add in chicken breasts and season with salt and pepper. Pour in chicken broth.
6. Bring to a boil and boil 20 minutes, or until chicken is cooked through and easily shreds with a fork.
7. Use the McLib instructions. (Added chicken broth as needed.)
8. Shred chicken directly in soup pot, or remove to a cutting board, shred, and return to soup. Pour into soup pot, stir in, and return to a simmer.
9. Drop strips into the soup and simmer 15-20 minutes. Serve hot.

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F. W. Ohlandt	Nov. 23
Linda Ingram Logan	Nov. 22
Linda Annis	Nov. 21
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Marilyn Eloise Brown	Nov. 13
Martha Anne Leach	Nov. 11
Juanita Franklin Brand	Nov. 10
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Frances Marie Lysdale	Nov. 8
Barbara J. Wilkerson	Nov. 8
Dorothy WillowDean "Dean"	
Helms Dawson	Nov. 8
George Randall "Randy" Goniotakis ...	Nov. 7
Ollie Mae Dennis	Nov. 4
Bobby Clyde Clark	Nov. 3
Betty Causey Fuller	Nov. 1
Olin Burton LeNoir	Oct. 31

TODAY'S WOMAN

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



By Amanda Walker

Tears & LAUGHTER:

The First Day of the Season of Excess

I'm sure I heard it somewhere, but I can't remember where. Or maybe I read it. I don't know. But for a few years now, when I think about the day after Thanksgiving – or Black Friday as it is more commonly known – I think about it being the first day of the season of excess. It, and the first day of the Christmas season, have somehow become one in the same.

Last year, things may have been less excessive because of COVID. This year, it could be less excessive because of the excessive amount of shipping carts stuck on ships off the coast of California. Or possibly less excessive because the excessive inflation and the cost of fuel. But I doubt it.

That seems to be a constant in our America. We tend to go overboard for Christmas. Whether with food, giving, going, traveling, or spending. We are all in.

It's as if we have not resistance. Even if deep down we long for a more simple, slow, less stressed holiday.

I'm not sure why I feel especially festive this year. Which is absolutely crazy. So trust me I'm weighing that thought late in the night. Because there is also this undertone of sadness. Things aren't the way they once were.



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That is true for all of us one way or another.

Things aren't the way they once were. There are people that are no longer with us.

There are little people who are no longer little.

It is all normal and natural.

But...it's still a little sad too.

Yet, I feel festive. Feel more festive than I've felt in years. I already have decorations placed throughout the house. Some of the decorations I have made using hot glue and various finds from Hobby Lobby. The eye can immediately pick these fine looking,

hand-crafted originals out from the others decorations, but I have enjoyed making them. I...have enjoyed having the time to make them.

This is the last year anyone under 18 will wake up to run to the Christmas tree in my house.

Although already things are not the way they used to be.

And it's not like I haven't seen this coming.

She is the youngest of the five of them. I already know how the story goes.

It is supposed to happen. It happens to families all over the country.

I guess that is not an entirely bad thing.

Nobody asks to sleep under the Christmas tree.

Nobody lurks around in the hall and in the corner of the living room trying to catch Santa Claus.

Nobody wakes up everyone in the house before daylight on Christmas morning.

So, it makes perfect sense for a mother to feel a little sad when we look back and consider all the changes life sends our way in such a few fleeting years when our children are growing up.

Of course, it also makes perfect sense for a mother to look back over all those years...and feel a little festive, too. It is the start of the season of excessive joy.

Amanda Walker is a contributor with *AL.com*, *The Selma Times Journal*, *Thomasville Times*, *West Alabama Watchman*, and *Alabama Gazette*. Contact her at Walkerworld77@msn.com or at <https://www.facebook.com/AmandaWalker.Columnist>.

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Trisston's Tidbits ...

By Trisston Wright Burrows
www.trisstonwrightburrows.com

“The Light That Cannot Be Extinguished”

For this year's Christmas Card, my husband, Brian, and I chose a bible verse that is particularly meaningful to us...John 12:46, ***“I have come as a light to shine in this dark world, so that all who put their trust in me will no longer remain in the dark.”***

There was much division over who people thought Jesus was. Many saw the miracles, received a miracle, witnessed His grace, and believed Jesus was the son of God. Some saw the miracles, witnessed His compassion, and still did not believe. Still, some were conflicted... having seen His power and being touched but His words, but were afraid that if they followed Jesus, they would be an outcast or worse. People driven by fear, hemmed in by threats, held ransom by confusion. Stumbling around in the dark.

Confusion is frightening. Have you ever woken up not remembering where you are, or sat in the Doctor's office wondering what on earth he means, had a panicked phone call about a loved one, been sown a seed of doubt about someone or something you were previously sure of...? The absence of certainty can be terrifying. Fear reigns gloriously in the dark.

Francis of Assisi said, “All the darkness in the world cannot extinguish the light of a single candle.”

Darkness is overwhelming and at times, the fear we experience within, overpowers us and our rationale. It hides our faith and saps us of our peace. The funny thing is it doesn't take much light to dispel the darkness... just a single flame will do.

Jesus didn't bring light with Him, He is light. We don't see our way through this world by the light of our circumstances, the seasons, or the days... the light of Jesus shines independently of these things. We no longer need to fear the dark, the places of uncertainty and confusion, because the love of God lights our lives with faith and hope regardless of the darkness all around. And you can be sure that the night will end, and the morning will dawn.

Trust is the road that leads you out of darkness. It takes you by hand and guides you step by step until the black gives way to grey, then to murky brown, and onto the brilliant golden light of freedom where you can breathe easy and see the way forward.

So this holiday season, don't cower in the dark waiting for the light of circumstance to dawn, look to Jesus... the light that cannot be extinguished. He is our eternal sun.

Merry Christmas & Many Blessings!

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Soul Searching

In the Beginning was the Word... (The Real Reason we celebrate Christmas)

John's version of the Christmas story begins like this:

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through Him all things were made; without Him nothing was made that was made. ... The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us." John 1:1-3, 14

The Word, as referred to here, in the Greek language is Logos. The Logos is the Word, reason or plan. In Ancient Greek philosophy and early Christian theology the Logos is the divine reason implicit in the cosmos, ordering it and giving it form and meaning. In the New Testament, it is explicitly referring to Jesus Christ who is the Word. The Word, Jesus the Son, was in existence from the beginning as part of the Trinity.

"In the beginning" is only used twice in the Bible. There is the well known passage found in Genesis, which is the first book of the Bible. It is actually the first sentence in the scriptures: *"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth."* – Genesis 1:1

Most people think that this is the actual beginning of the grand, epic story God is telling in the scriptures. But Genesis is actually way into the story. It is the beginning of the Bible but not the beginning of the story God is telling. As John Eldredge explains in his book *Epic*, Genesis marks the beginning of the human story, the story of life here on earth.

But if you want to look back into the once upon a time before all time, then you have to start with the Gospel of John in John 1:1-3. Now we are reaching back to things prior to Genesis. John is peering back into the mystery of God's own life, before everything else existed, and he was trying to unveil this: in the ancient past there was a fellowship, a heroic intimacy, something called the Trinity.

You see God has always been Trinity – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. God has always been a fellowship. The whole story begins with something relational. We were created by a relational God who has a personality. Remember the verse in the famous hymn: "Holy! Holy! Holy! Lord God Almighty?"

One of the verses says, "Holy, holy, holy! Merciful and mighty, God in three persons, blessed Trinity."

Why is this important and what does it have to do with Christ and Christmas? Good questions.

Why is this important?

"Through Him (Jesus, the Word) all things were made...."

It tells us we were not created by chance. We are not the result of the Big Bang or some impersonal, uncaring being. Every person has value and worth and is created with a unique personality, DNA and fingerprints. And furthermore, we live in a beautiful, complex and dazzling creation beyond description. Elephants. Jaguars. Deer. Kangaroos. Lizards. Eagles. Octopuses. Dolphins. Pine trees. Tulips. Mangoes. The sun. The moon.

We were created by a relational God who is a person that we can relate to as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. One God who expresses Himself in three different and distinct ways. And He wants to be in relationship with us! And the

Father has revealed His heart and personality to us through Jesus, the Son, the Logos! The Creator is not hidden but from us but seen in Christ. In Jesus, we see the personality of our Creator and the love of our Creator.

What does this have to do with Christ and Christmas?

Jesus Christ is the Son of God and the second person of the Trinity. God sent Himself wrapped in the person of Christ so that we could know God's love for us. So the Son came at Christmas so that we could know the heart of God towards us. Through Christ we can see what the Father is like: *"Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father.Don't you believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me?"* – Jesus, John 14:9-10

"I and the Father are one." – Jesus, John 10:30

Jesus came to reveal the Father to us, to save us from our sins and to bring us into a relationship with the Father.

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son so that whoever believed in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." – John 3:16

As C.S. Lewis put it: "The Son of God became the Son of Man so that the sons of men could become the sons of God."

So, the Word, Jesus the Son of God, came to earth the first Christmas to reveal the Father and the heart of the Father towards us! The incarnate One, Jesus, became God in the flesh as the scriptures tell us, *"the Word became flesh and dwelt among us"* – John 1: 14. Jesus came to us as a human being to teach us, lead us and offer Himself as a once and for all sacrifice for our sins so that we could be in right relationship with God through Christ and walk with the Lord in this life and the next!

That is what Christmas is really all about!

And that is why we Christians celebrate and love the Christmas season so much!

Maybe this Christmas season you could read John's version of the Christmas story in the Bible found in John 1:1-14, and feel free to this article to your family as a reflection or devotion about the real reason we celebrate Christmas!

Merry Christmas to you and yours! And I pray you too will know the love and salvation of the Father as revealed to us through the Son, the Word, the Logos!

"Look for Christ and you will find Him. And with Him everything else." – C.S. Lewis

Blessings,
Dr. Lester Spencer
Lead Pastor
Saint James Church



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Dr. Spencer is Lead Pastor at Saint James Church in Montgomery, Alabama and writes the **Soul Searching** column for *Alabama Gazette* each month.

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