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Read the Christmas story.
Learn how God loved us
so much, he sent his only son
to save all mankind.

Luke 2: 1-7
John 3:16



Luke 2: 11

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



We wish you a
Merry Christmas,
We wish you a
Merry Christmas,
We wish you a
Merry Christmas,
and a **Happy New Year!**

But no one believes Jesus was born December 25 - Do they?

They're celebrating **YOUR** birthday!
But you're not invited, and they'd prefer
your name **NOT** be mentioned.



Col John Eidsmoe

That's the way many want to celebrate Christmas today. The secularizers note that America is more diverse than it used to be, that we shouldn't offend others, that saying "Merry Christmas" might be bad for business, and that public Christmas observances might even violate the First Amendment.

Then they deliver their crowning blow: "*Besides, everybody knows Jesus wasn't born in December.*" But saying "*everybody knows*" begs the question, as saying "*all scholars agree*" defines anyone who doesn't agree as a non-scholar. Some build their reputations by debunking traditional wisdom, but I sometimes enjoy debunking debunkers. At the risk of flying in the face of this collective modern wisdom, *I suggest that there is substantial, though not conclusive, evidence that Jesus was born in December, and probably December 25.*

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Soul Searching....

The CHRIST of Christmas... Why Christmas Is Such A Wonderful Season For Christ Followers!

By Lester Spencer

The Relevance: Through CHRIST God came to earth!

"The Word (Jesus) became flesh and made his dwelling among us." -John 1:14 NIV
"The Virgin will conceive and give birth to a son,,and they will call him Immanuel" (which means "God with us") -Matthew 1:23 NIV

Christmas is relevant for you and me, because Jesus Christ came to earth on that first Christmas to reveal God's heart towards us. The wonder of Christmas is just as relevant today as it was 2,000 years ago, because Jesus is still walking among us and with us.

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Christmas with The Salvation Army



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Col John Eidsmoe

BUT NO ONE BELIEVES JESUS WAS BORN DEC. 25 – DO THEY?

The Biblical Evidence

What does the Bible say about the date of Jesus' birth? Luke 2:6 tells us that "the days were accomplished that she should be delivered," so we assume Jesus was a full-term baby, born nine months after His conception. Luke 1:26 says the angel Gabriel announced the conception of Jesus to Mary in the sixth month of her cousin Elizabeth's pregnancy with John the Baptist. So Jesus was conceived about six months after John the Baptist was conceived. So when was John the Baptist conceived? That's more difficult, but the Scriptures suggest some answers.

John's father was Zacharias, a Levite priest "of the course of Abia [Abijah]" (Luke 1:5). According to 1 Chronicles 24:7-19, King David had divided the priests into 24 orders, and these orders took turns serving in the Temple for a period of eight days twice a year, separated from their wives and children. Zacharias and the other priests of the course of Abia served during the 10th and 24th weeks of the Jewish year.

The angel of the Lord spoke to Zacharias "while he executed the priest's office before God in the order of his course" (Luke 1:8), that is, while he was performing his service in the Temple. After his course was finished, he left the Temple, returned to his wife, Elizabeth, and John was conceived (Luke 1:23-24). If this was after the second course, that is, the 24th week of the year, John would have been conceived around September or October and born around June or July.

Jesus' conception six months later would have occurred around March or April and His birth around December or January. I'm not saying this is certain, recognizing that the Jewish 360-day calendar may have varied over the centuries. But based on the scriptural account of Zacharias's service in the Temple, it is well within the realm of possibility that Jesus was born in December.

The Extrabiblical Evidence

St. John Chrysostom (AD 347-407), whose status in eastern Orthodoxy is comparable to that of St. Augustine of Hippo in the West, argued strongly for a Dec. 25 birthdate because of the course of Zacharias's priestly service. But Chrysostom he also noted that Pope Julius (served AD 337- 352) ascertained the date of Christ's birth "from the census documents brought by Titus to Rome" after the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. Julius determined the date of Christ's birth to be Dec. 25.

Pope Julius was not the first to set the December 25 date. Theophilus of Caesarea (AD 115 - 181) wrote that "we ought to celebrate the birth of our Lord on December 25." Sextus Julius Africanus (AD 160 - 240) concluded that Jesus was conceived on March 25 and therefore born December 25. Hippolytus of Rome (AD 170 - 240) gave the date of Jesus's birth as "eight days before the calends [first days] of January." Irenaeus (AD 130 - 202) came to the same conclusion.

Julius and Chrysostom were not alone in their reliance upon the census documents. Justin Martyr (AD 100 - 165), in a detailed statement of the Christian faith addressed to Emperor Marcus Aurelius, stated that Jesus was born in Bethlehem quote 'as you can ascertain also from the registers of the taxing.' (Apology, I, 34). Likewise, Tertullian (AD 160-250) wrote of "the census of Augustus – that most faithful witness of the Lord's nativity, kept in the archives of Rome" Contra Marcion, Book 4, 7).

These census records are missing today. If they still exist, they are lost in the archives of the Vatican. (This is not surprising; I find stuff in my own files that's been missing for decades!) But the men of the ancient world were careful scholars, and perhaps the better part of wisdom bids us to assume that

Foundation for Moral Law

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these Church Fathers had access to information that we no longer possess, and that they knew what they were talking about.

Why Not December 25?

Some have said that Jesus couldn't have been born in December because shepherds did not keep their sheep in the fields past late autumn. But Alfred Edersheim, in his classic work *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* (1883), cited ancient Jewish sources to the effect that flocks of sheep "remain in the open alike in the hottest days and in the rainy season – i.e. all the year round" (Book 2, p. 186). There was also a special class of Levitical shepherds who kept sacrificial lambs in the field all year round because they were used for sacrifice every month of the year.

Winters can be cold in Palestine; but they vary greatly, and some Decembers are rather mild. A recent study of stalagmites and stalactites in caves near Jerusalem strongly suggests that the average annual rainfall dropped nearly 50 percent from about 3 feet in AD 100 to about 1.6 feet in AD 700. Average winter temperatures may have varied as well. If Mary could have given birth to a baby in a Bethlehem cave or stable, then hardy shepherds could have watched their flocks in the fields at the same time.

Edersheim concluded, "There is no adequate reason for questioning the historical accuracy of this date (Dec. 25). The objections generally made rest on grounds, which seem to me historically untenable."

Stolen From Pagans?

Then we're told December 25 was a pagan holiday, and the Church appropriated the day to celebrate the birth of Christ. That raises a preliminary question: If a Christian holiday and a pagan holiday coincide, why do we assume that Christians stole the day from pagans? Why not the other way around? And what holiday was stolen?

The Roman festival Saturnalia is one possibility. But they celebrated Saturnalia December 15-22 (or 23), not December 25. The Winter Solstice is another. But that was December 21(or sometimes 22), not December 25. Claims that the Roman god Mithras or the Indian/Persian god Mithra were born December 25 are pure fantasy. See Tim O'Neill, The Great Myths 2: Christmas, Mithras, and Paganism, (2016) historyforatheists.com; for an entertaining presentation see "Horus Ruins Christmas," <https://lutheransatire.org/media/horus-ruins-christmas/>; see also, Ronald A. Stephens, "Why December 25?" The Lutheran Witness, December 21, 2022 <https://witness.lcms.org/2022/why-december-25/>.

When you live in a New Age or neo-pagan fantasy world, you can create your own mythology and call it history. Does this mean Christians must celebrate Christmas? Some believe we should not celebrate Christmas because the Bible never commands us to celebrate Jesus' birth. I respect that belief, but I agree with Luther that we may and should celebrate and proclaim Jesus Christ in any way that Scripture does not forbid. As Paul says, "One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind."

(Romans 14:5) I believe we have liberty on this point. In the end, no one's Christian faith should depend upon whether Dec. 25 is the date of Jesus's birth, nor do such questions give us any reason to take Christ out of Christmas. I'd welcome responses from anyone who can prove or disprove this thesis. But sometimes it is reassuring, and even fun, to learn that ancient scholars and ancient traditions may have been right all along. Merry Christmas, regardless!



John Sophocleus

Christ is Born - Glorify Him!

This year's Christmas column is once again intended to be at least one sobering moment in veneration of our Saviour's birth; reaffirming the importance of standing against tyranny in this world.

My devout, wholehearted prayer is all who know the Power of Jesus Christ's teachings will take Him into their hearts this blessed season and overcome alethophobic [fear of truth] distractions and destruction by those make government(s) their god.

Little surprise as more deny/reject God's Truth, enabled by ignorance of historical outcomes which illustrate societies embracing unrighteous paths, fuel more troublous times. All combat is spiritual as we observe evil beget more evil. 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 (observed in many iterations these past millennia) because it is His name which remains above all nations.

This small Child of God, relegated to be born in a cave at the behest of a despot setting the world on a course toward increasing darkness, in the City of David among the lowest of mankind (by worldly standards) would do more to bring Light and the Spirit of Zion to a wicked world that the authoritarians of Rome could possibly contain.

Regression to 'Eye for an eye; Tooth for a tooth' is once again on course to leave many blind and toothless. Again God's chosen move away from the Holy Spirit. Those who invite me to stand with Israel appear unwilling to understand I'm trying to stand with God. The further Israeli national socialists move from God, the more difficult it is to stand with them.

After millions of Jews suffered so terribly under German national socialist authoritarian rule last century (aided and abetted by foolish U.S. involvement in WW I breaking the stalemate... hubris to believe any man-made war may end all wars) a righteous person would never expect Israel pressing similar

'ghetto oppression' as Israeli national socialist imposed upon Palestinians these past few score.

The wicked want the righteous to give in, stand down or be fooled into standing with them. As you celebrate the beginning of Jesus Christ's path into this world during the Christmas season, understand the magnitude of the mission His Father set Him upon. If you truly believe and adhere to His teachings, it destroys the power of death and darkness.

The Light and Wisdom of Jesus we claim to venerate this holiday (dare I type Holy Day?) thwarts despotism. The example and teaching of Jesus showed us the way; it is up to us to have the courage, faith and sagacity to follow.

This Christmas and New Year consider standing with God and provide input as a peacemaker to shepherd Israel toward God and not another iteration of deo-Christian failure. Understand Palestinian frustration under Israeli despotism, but do not applaud the evil manifesting from decades of ahegemony. If we do not stand well against evil and corruption in our everyday lives, we're failing and the righteous efforts many suffered so mankind may not be doomed to endure the agony of more cycles/iterations of despotism. Resistance to tyranny is obedience to God. You can be God's servant OR a servant of despotism; impossible to serve both. It really is that simple. The choice is yours to (re)affirm every Christmas...



THINK



MAY YOU AND YOUR LOVED ONES ENJOY

THE BLESSINGS OF CHRISTMAS AND

LOOK FORWARD TO A HAPPY NEW YEAR!





Dr. Lester Spencer
President Pro Tem



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The Relevance: Through CHRIST God came to earth!
"The Word (Jesus) became flesh and made his dwelling among us."
-John 1:14 NIV
"The Virgin will conceive and give birth to a son,,and they will call him Immanuel" (which means "God with us") -Matthew 1:23 NIV

Christmas is relevant for you and me, because Jesus Christ came to earth on that first Christmas to reveal God's heart towards us. The wonder of Christmas is just as relevant today as it was 2,000 years ago, because Jesus is still walking among us and with us.

God coming to earth in and through the person of Jesus the Christ made an everlasting statement that God is with us. He is our Immanuel which means "God with us." Jesus tells us through his coming that God is indeed with us and for us. God is not our enemy. He is not against us or looking for ways to trip us up or judge us. Rather, Christ shows us that God is on our side every step of the way. God is our biggest cheerleader and advocate.

God, through Jesus Christ, humbled himself and came to earth. The way Christ treated others is the way God treats us ... with unconditional love, forgiveness, grace and salvation. Our need for Christ and his revelation of God's love for us is definitely relevant today and always!

The Reason: CHRIST came for your benefit!
"She will give birth to a son, and you will give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." -Luke 1:21 NIV

"He will save his people from their sins." Christ came for your benefit and for mine. "We are broken people in a shipwrecked world", as John Eldredge states in his book Resilient. We are not only broken, but we are lost as well. All of us, whether we like to admit it or not, are in need of a savior who can heal our broken hearts and save us from ourselves, our sin and our selfishness. When we are lost, we need someone to show us the true north and orientate us toward the right path. Jesus the Christ is the true north, and Christ is the right path or the right way.

Salvation is not just about rescuing people from hell. Although it is about that as well. Salvation is also about a personal relationship with God. Salvation is based on forming a new attachment with God according to Dallas Willard. Salvation is a new attachment, the soul's loving bond to our loving God. As Christians, we celebrate that revelation at Christmas which makes it such a wonderful season for us!

The Result: You can know God through CHRIST!
"Jesus answered, I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him." -John 14:6-7 NIV

Many people believe that Christianity is just another "world religion" to be studied like all of the other religious groups of the world. But Christianity stands out as very different from any of the other religions of the globe, because Christianity isn't about religion - it is about a relationship!

Christ came to earth to offer us a relationship with God through himself. No other religious leader or founder makes that claim. Some religious founders have claimed to point to the right way or they have offered to reveal the truth. But Jesus says "I am the way, the truth and the life..."

Following Christ is all about having a relationship with the Son of God who, in fact, is the very revelation of our Father God in the flesh. If you know Christ, you know God. As Jesus declared to Philip in John 14 when Philip said to Jesus,

Soul Searching...

The CHRIST of Christmas... Why Christmas Is Such A Wonderful Season For Christ Followers!



"Lord show us the Father, and it is enough for us." Jesus responded, "Have I been with so long, and you still do not know me Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father."

God the Father and Christ are one in the same. When you come to know Christ, you come to know the Father as well. That is why Christmas is such a big deal to Christians. The God of the universe has come to us in the person of Christ to offer us salvation through a personal relationship with Jesus the Christ. So, we Christians really believe what Jesus audaciously claims in John 14, "If you really know me (Jesus), you will know my Father as well. From now on (from this point forward), you do know him and have seen him."

In other words, Jesus is saying, *"Hey guys, it's me. I am the the great I Am. I am the God of all creation. And I have come to be in relationship with you, because you matter to me and I love you!"*

Friends, the good news of Christmas is this: Christ came to earth to walk with us and to reveal to us that God is with us. God came through Christ to earth for our benefit and offers salvation in a broken and shipwrecked world. And through Christ, we can personally know our creator God who grants us a deep and life giving relationship with himself. When we know Christ, we connect with our Heavenly Father and experience his love, joy and peace!

For all of these reason, Christmas is such a wonderful season and the reason we as Christ followers celebrate it. So, we invite you to join with us in the celebration!

Merry Christmas to you and yours, and in the Name of Christ may you discover the relevance, the reason and the result of Christmas this year!

Here is an idea: Perhaps you can share this article as a devotion on Christmas Eve or Christmas morning with your family and friends.

Blessings

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INSIDE THE STATEHOUSE With Steve Flowers

Steve Flowers is Alabama's leading political columnist. His weekly column appears in over 60 Alabama newspapers. Steve served 16 years in the state legislature. He may be reached at: <https://steveflowers.us/>

Lister Hill, One of Alabama's Greatest U.S. Senators

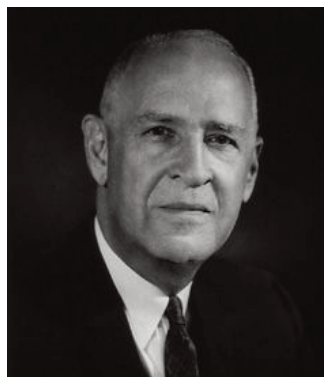
We had a very distinguished congressional delegation from Alabama during the 30-year span of 1934-1964. The congressmen from the Heart of Dixie appeared to be born to serve in Congress. Their pedigrees were all similar. They had pretty much been born and raised in the town that they would eventually represent in Congress. Almost all had gone to the University of Alabama for their education and most had graduated from Alabama's Law School. While at the Capstone, most had been members of Greek fraternities.

In addition to their Greek fraternal affiliation, they were politically active at the Capstone and also belonged to a mystic political fraternity known as *"The Machine."* This group was basically a political party that was made up of the fraternities on campus. It was well organized with secret endorsements made up of the fraternity candidates and the endorsements were only revealed the day before the election. The fraternity candidates very rarely lost. It is a legendary political training ground and almost every member of Congress during this era was a product of *"The Machine."*

After college and law school, these men served a stint in the military. Service in a World War and then membership in the VFW seemed to be a necessity for a political career. Alabamians have always had an affinity for folks who served their country and came home after the war to begin a perfunctory law practice that occupied them until the congressional seat they had been preparing for came open. Once they were elected, they planned on staying there.

After all they figured that a congressional career was what they were born for. They adhered to the adage attributed to many a southern congressman. It was said many times by the solons from the south as they played poker in the cloakroom of the House or Senate, *"I love being in Congress and the only way I will leave will be by the ballot box or in a pine box,"* and usually it was the latter.

The person, who most perfectly epitomized this prototypical congressman and



senator of this era, was the legendary Lister Hill of Montgomery. He was both a Congressman and a Senator. He was elected to Congress at age 28 and served 16 years in the U.S. House of Representatives. He was then elected to the U.S. Senate in 1938, where he served Alabama with distinction for 30 years. Hill had been born into privilege. He was the son of Dr. Luther Hill. His father was one of the first American surgeons to successfully suture the human heart. Hoping that their son would follow his father into medicine, the parents named Joseph Lister after the famous European physician, who was the first doctor to advocate and practice use of antiseptics.

Young Lister Hill decided one day, after watching his father operate, that he would not be a doctor. He actually fainted from the sight of blood. The Hill family was very prominent politically in Montgomery. In fact, at this time there were two political families who were like political parties. You had to run in Montgomery as either a candidate of the Hill family or the Gunter family.

Lister set his sights on politics at an early age, probably dreamed of and maybe expected to be a U.S. Senator. He entered the University of Alabama at age 16 and became the first student government president at the University. He also was the founder of the aforementioned *"Machine."* He was elected to Congress at 28 and served with distinction. He served in the U.S. House for 16 years and rose to be Chairman of the House Military Affairs Committee. He was instrumental in getting the Maxwell-Gunter military complex in Montgomery.

Senator Hill had a hand in most major national legislation from 1938 to 1968. However, his greatest legacy was in the field of Public Health. The great medical center at the University of Alabama at Birmingham is because of Lister Hill. Probably the best-known legislation he was known for was the Hill-Burton Act. Through this 1946 Act, most of the rural hospitals in America and Alabama were built. Lister Hill is without question one of our state's greatest U.S. Senators.

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Justice Will Sellers

When James Monroe addressed Congress 200 years ago, many assumed his annual message would be limited to legislative initiatives. Since he had no spin doctors to help him explain his position, clarify its broad impact, or narrate its context, it was left to him to simply announce the Monroe Doctrine and let others decide its ramifications.

Two centuries ago, the New World was shedding Old World political connections as new nation states were emerging after achieving independence. President Monroe clearly understood the general feelings of his fellow coun-

trymen and realized that the unique American experience provided him a forum to declare his nation's place in the World Order.

The Monroe Doctrine is remembered primarily for its bold limitation on European influence and colonization in the Western Hemisphere, but other parts of the doctrine were of equal importance and expressed American sentiments about the rest of the world. Specifically, the doctrine stated that America had no interest in conflicts in Europe but would respect the existing order in the New World.

When viewed in hindsight, the doctrine was in many ways a concise statement of how America viewed the world and coupled its role with a tinge of isolationism. President Monroe told the entire World that the Western Hemisphere was off limits to European powers. It was a bold move for a nation that was not yet 50 years old and had no military to enforce the policy, but the policy was supported by George Washington admonition that America not involve itself in foreign wars.

The American Revolution changed the dynamics of foreign policy, foreign trade, and foreign investment. Once the revolution ended, wars in Europe waxed and waned with alliances that switched and boundaries that moved so frequently it was hard to keep an accurate tally. Monroe understood that America had no interest in these changing relationships and was ill suited to fully appreciate the dynamics of European diplomatic intrigues.

Monroe's main interest was preserving a sphere of influence with America as the dominant power. There was no need to allow this continent to become a proxy for the varied changes in European politics and reconquest of former colonies. Keeping America stable and secure with its energies devoted toward territorial growth and trade was the president's ultimate goal.

He knew from experience that wars were expensive and diverted time and talent away from domestic improvement. Thus, it was easy for him to disclaim any involvement in Europe, its political theories, and various continental wars, but it was another thing to make a bold statement that European powers were not welcomed to assert control over liberated ex-colonies. Even bolder was the assertion that any such involvement by another country, would be considered a hostile act against the United States.

This provision of the doctrine might be viewed as a NATO-like pledge that any attack by a foreign power against a territory in the Western Hemisphere would be met with force of arms from the United States. Since the United States had a very limited navy and no standing army of any measure, this statement had no enforcement mechanism. If a foreign power tried to invade another country, the U.S. would have been helpless to take effective

action, but the Monroe Doctrine had a silent guarantor in the form of the British Empire, which had plenty of ships and troops to enforce the policy. The British acquiesced to the Monroe Doctrine because limiting other countries' involvement in the New World was advantageous to its long-term interest.

It is not a stretch to say that the Monroe Doctrine cemented the Anglo-American relationship while ensuring American and British interests would never again be so adversarial as to incubate hostilities. From this point forward, the two nations would be joined together in almost a common enterprise of trade and international stability.

Without having to fight wars, the United States could focus on opening and subduing the rest of its territory. For at least some period of time, the expansion of the country created such opportunities that any foreign influence was not occasioned by military invasion, but by swarms of immigrants leaving the old world behind to seek fortune and opportunity in a new place with little historical memory to retard its progress.

Rather than being innovative, the Monroe Doctrine sought to express the consensus of American sentiment about its view of its place in the world. The influx of immigrants would also support this idea that once their home country was on the distant horizon, they were liberated from the politics of the Old World that limited freedom and advancement. Immigrants coming to the United States would gladly agree that they, too, had no desire to involve themselves in the politics of a country they had left. So, while Americans wanted limited involvement with the politics and factious belligerence of Europe, they did not want foreign influence in the New World. Americans would be motivated to apply force only if European countries attempted to assert themselves in our sphere of influence.

This was true even in the last century. During World War I, most Americans had no desire to send troops to Europe, but sentiment changed only after a secret German diplomatic initiative was uncovered promising Texas, Arizona and New Mexico to Mexico if it would ally with the Kaiser. Ending any thought of European influence in our country's affairs proved a strong motivator.

Likewise, in World War II, Franklin Roosevelt was unable to arouse American interest in defeating the Nazis, but once Hitler's secret plan to divide Latin America into Nazi-controlled vassal states was exposed, the average citizen began to sense the Nazi threat.

For 200 years, the Monroe Doctrine has been a centerpiece of American foreign policy. Its broad provisions continue to affirm a commitment to regional independence and put other nations on notice that the Western Hemisphere is a self-determination zone with no tolerance for foreign influence or territorial threat.

Perhaps President Xi needs a refresher course?

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The Monroe Doctrine Turns 200

Monroe Doctrine (1823)

In his 1823 message to Congress, President Monroe warned all outside powers not to interfere with the affairs in the Western Hemisphere.

They should not attempt to create new colonies or interfere with newly independent republics.

At the same time, the United States would not involve itself in European affairs or interfere with existing colonies in the Western Hemisphere.

This doesn't stop us from building our own empire



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ROBSEVATIONS...

By: Rob Tate

ANTI-DWI DEVICES: BOTH GOOD AND BAD

Several years ago, I read with interest an article about Anti-DWI devices in several states being installed on vehicles of convicted drunk drivers. On the surface it sounds like a great idea and I must admit that at least some politicians are trying to keep word on being tougher regarding their state laws. At one level, it seems like many new politicians want to do the right thing in many instances.

But the anti-DWI device can be both a good and a bad thing. First the good. America seems to be finally addressing the problem of drunk drivers and is willing to do something measurable and punitive about them. I am sure (at least I hope) the cost of installing this s-called “interlock device” will be born by the offender, not the state, and this alone may deter some people from driving under the influence. But if people are willing to kill other human beings for the sake of their next drink, paying for the device is certainly not going to deter many. Next, there are finally some codified rules determining punitive action against drunk drivers, no matter how weak they still are. Well, this is about as good as it gets, folks. Now the bad as I see it.

The device itself is a breathalyzer that requires the driver to blow into the machine and if he/she is above a set limit, the car won’t start. Sounds good to me, but what if the driver allows a sober buddy or his 10-year-old son to blow into the machine? What if the offender simply drives his father’s car and not the vehicle with the device in it? What if they are impaired by some drug? Illegal or otherwise? Will the machine detect this? Is there some way to ensure that cannot happen? If so – great; if not – not so great. From what I have seen in the world of reality, there is no way to ensure these cannot not happen.

According to one article I read, one law states that a first-time offender “who injures someone, has a blood alcohol content at or above .15, refuses to provide a blood alcohol content or has a child under 14 in the car” would be required to have this interlock device installed in their car for a period of two years after the completion of the 90-day suspension of their driver’s license.

The law then requires the person with a second conviction, no matter the circumstances (i.e. her excuses), would require the device to be installed for another two years after they got their license back. The third time offender would get another three years blowing into the machine and every time after that, the chronic drunk driver (at this point clearly an alcoholic) would be partners with his machine for another 5 years.

You know, I get a tear in my eye thinking about how proactive our law makers are. Their aggressiveness in doing the right thing makes me proud. Okay, I’m lying. Too many politicians want us to believe they really care what happens on our roads when I personally have my doubts. In a Rob-servation I wrote several years ago, I discussed drunk driving in our country and most of the numbers are quite staggering. I wrote:

“Between 1999 and 2008, approximately 154,755 people died in alcohol related car accidents in this country. Consistently, every year some 13,500 to 16,500 people are killed on our highways by drunks. At the low end of that figure, this equates to 1125 drunk driving deaths per month or 35 per day. Annually, another 700,000 people are injured by drunks behind the wheel of a car. For more perspective, America has suffered close to 650,000 deaths from WWI, WWII, Korea and Vietnam. During that same period of time, over 1.7 million people were killed from alcohol related driving accidents. In 1999, approximately 1.5 million drivers were arrested for DUI from either alcohol or narcotics which equates to an arrest rate of 1 for every 121 licensed drivers in the US.



Here’s the point. Although many of our law-makers want to make it seem as though they care, where is the real, in-your-face-better-not-do-it-again-or-else punitive action against these offenders? Especially the repeat-offender. The law itself sadly provides encouragement for the guy who is convicted of drunk driving 4 or more times. Are you kidding me? Four times convicted of aiming your car down the street as a 2-ton missile, possibly killing innocent people, and you still have a license?

Ecclesiastes 8:11 states, “Because the sentence against an evil deed is not executed quickly, therefore the hearts of the sons of men among them are given fully to do evil.”

In other words, what incentive is there to change their behavior when many know there

is little that is going to happen to them if they get caught DWI/DUI? Oh not to worry, the state takes their licenses away but often generously gives them back just so they can repeat the process again and again. And we are supposed to be okay with this?

In a previous column, I also mentioned the two America West pilots who were convicted of flying drunk in 2005 and one was sentenced to five years in prison while the other one got two and one-half years. People loved this story and cheered at their punishment. “They deserved it.” “They could have killed a hundred people.” Yeah, but nobody got hurt and although I am not condemning their punishment, looking at the previous statistics tells me a lot more people driving need equal or more serious punishment. All I am saying is that drunk drivers should get the same penalty as these two pilots. Change my mind!

So why do we continually let drunk drivers off the proverbial hook? Where no major airline crash in the US has been attributed to drunk pilots, our roads and highways are a war zone every year with the carnage, death and destruction wrought by drunk drivers. I believe this anti-DWI device looks good on the surface, probably makes the law makers feel good about themselves while they are counting their pay raises but still really does little as far as I am concerned. Well I guess it gives money to the company making the devices and the state for all the court fees associated with the repeat offenders. At least somebody benefits from this; not the dead and maimed citizens laying dead on our roads.

Well, Governor Tate, what would you recommend? I’m glad you asked. First time offender, nobody injured or killed: Loss of license for six months, a fine of some kind, community service, alcohol rehab classes, the interlock device on your car for life. Questions? First time offender who injures someone: Loss of license for one year and all the other punishments stated earlier. First time offender who kills someone or a second time offender: Loss of license for life, jail time and shut up, I don’t want to hear it. Done. Did you notice there are no third, fourth, fifth, sixth times here? People, I am sick of hearing the bellyaching about how unfair it would be to punish drunk drivers.

I think people still forget that **DRIVING IS NOT A RIGHT, IT IS A PRIVILEGE**. You do not have a right to drive a car folks. Sorry but you don’t. Either you abide by the rules or buy a bike, start walking, ride a horse or whatever. I don’t care but you are not driving on my roads. Deal with it. I really wish our lawmakers would get the “clue bird” to land on their shoulders. But like I mentioned in a previous Rob-servation, I am willing to bet you a dollar that the reason so many law makers and judges avoid stiff penalties for DWI, not to mention the alcohol lobby that would likely fight hard against such stiff punishments, is because many of them are perpetual offenders themselves. Do you really think they are going to risk putting themselves in jail for their own boorish behavior? I didn’t think so.

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John W. Giles
Former
President &
Chairman
Choose Life
Alabama

message” to legalize gambling has turned into the need for a Gaming Regulatory Commission.

Let’s talk about this seriously flawed proposal.

Gambling in Alabama is already unconstitutional and laws against it should be enforced. Are Attorney General Steve Marshall, the Alabama Supreme Court, a handful of conservative legislators, Greg Davis with Alabama Citizens Action Program (*representing 3,500 churches statewide*), and Becky Gerritson with Eagle Forum the only ones in this state that get it right? All these folks take the position that we should enforce the closure of these unconstitutional illegal operations and arrest the owners.

Instead of following suit, Mr. Speaker, your solution is forming a commission? This is not a solution. You do not regulate an illegal operation, you close it down.

First, let’s break this down. you want to create a new commission, increasing the cost of government, legalizing and expanding current illegal gambling activity, and allowing new casinos – including one in Jackson County, right next door to your own house district.

Economic ~ Social ~ Moral ~ Constitutional Conservatism

\$ \$ \$

Mr. Speaker:
Why Is CASINO GAMBLING
Expansion A Priority?

\$ \$ \$

Mr. Speaker, I read with great interest and frustration the 1819 News article, *“Rampant” illegal gambling in Jefferson County shows need for enforcement arm, House Speaker Ledbetter says.*” In the past, advocacy for legalized gambling was all about the need for additional revenues. Now that state coffers are overflowing with surplus revenue in the General and Education Trust Funds, however, the *“new*

Second, according to the 1819 News article, there are 70 illegal gambling operations in Jefferson County that Sheriff Pettaway refuses to close. He is the top law enforcement officer in Jefferson County. How does this new commission somehow fix irresponsible law enforcement? Such a situation sounds like President Joe Biden turning his head away from the illegal immigrants passing through our border every day. Illegal is illegal, just enforce it.

Third, notice how these conversations always drift to the lottery, making the argument that it has been 25 years since Alabama voters rejected it. Polling back then hit a highwater mark of 60% in favor – until the public realized the lottery prohibition lifted out of the Alabama Constitution paves the way for casinos on every corner, making state corruption soar exponentially.

Here is tip for the readership, anytime a legislator uses the words, *“it’s complicated,”* that is your cue to dig deeper. On this gambling/casino issue alone, the complicated thing for legislators is that their pastors and the facts are pulling in one direction, while the gambling lobbyists funding their political futures are pulling in the opposite direction. Again, we must ask, *“Who is driving Alabama’s legislative priorities?”*

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Ronald A. Holtsford

What is the status of Medical Malpractice cases in Alabama?



From 1980-1986 medical malpractice cases soared over 25% from the prior years. Not only did the cases increase, but the payouts doubled and I noted many law firms were a part of that, I recall rumors of one Alabama lawyer having difficulty in getting medical care because of their involvement as a plaintiff's attorney. The Alabama legislature met and revamped the medical malpractice laws in 1987. Prior to 1987 some insurance companies incurred grave losses, so much that some companies no longer insured health care providers. Physicians saw their malpractice premiums rise significantly. I recall talking to an OB-Gyn physician during that time and he was telling me how he was having to raise the cost of his service one hundred dollars for every OB patient. Maybe not so significant now, but it was some forty years ago and especially to those near poverty and maybe having higher risk pregnancies.

After the revamping of the malpractice laws and over time the State of Alabama has become more friendly to providers and less friendly to plaintiffs. The number of law firms that still take on medical malpractice cases has decreased. Past discussions I have had with medical malpractice plaintiff attorneys have shown that they are very discerning when deciding to take such a case. I read one report that said plaintiff attorneys in Alabama are only successful about one in ten medical malpractice cases, and that is after they may have invested tens of thousands of dollars in building and trying the case.

An interesting case was brought before the Alabama Supreme Court, Mobile Infirmary Association d/b/a Mobile Infirmary Medical Center and Gulf Health Hospitals, Inc., d/b/a Thomas Hospital v. Wayne Fagerstrom, individually and as administrator of the Estate of Sylvia Fagerstrom, deceased, only decided recently but arose in 2018. The case had come from the Baldwin County Circuit Court after a jury trial found in favor of the plaintiff. Sylvia Fagerstrom, of Baldwin County, AL was 85 years of age when a brain tumor was discovered. The tumor was removed but her recovery did not go as expected and she died. Her case was brought by the Personal Representative of her estate and her death as argued by the plaintiffs was due to sepsis brought on by an infected pressure ulcer due to the hospital not meeting the standard of care. During the intervening time between her surgery and death she experienced high blood pressure, lethargy, difficulty speaking, malnourishment, a blood clot, swelling in her lower extremities, nausea, UTI resistant to antibiotics and toxic metabolic encephalopathy. It was asserted that she was not turned enough at the hospital thus getting the pressure sore which ulcerated. She was sent to a nursing home where the ulcer improved and then to another hospital where the sore only got worse. She was sent to a second nursing home where the sore then became infected then back to hospital number two. She was again transferred to nursing home number two where she eventually died three and one half months after her surgery.

The plaintiff's expert witness testified that the infected ulcer led to infected bone which caused the sepsis resulting in her death. The defendants asserted that the plaintiff's expert did not meet the necessary proof in quoting Section 6-5-549, Ala. Code 1975, provides, in part: "In any action for injury or

damages or wrongful death, whether in contract or in tort, against a health care provider based on a breach of the standard of care, the minimum standard of proof required to test the sufficiency of the evidence to support any issue of fact shall be proof by substantial evidence." The opinion stated "[S]ubstantial evidence is evidence of such weight and quality that fair-minded persons in the exercise of impartial judgment can reasonably infer the existence of the fact sought to be proved." West v. Founders Life Assurance Co. of Florida, 547 So. 2d 870, 871 (Ala. 1989).

The defense argued that the experts testimony as to sepsis was speculative and to prove such, there was need of objective testing which should include, "measurements of Sylvia's pulse, respiration, blood pressure, and body temperature". The defense said that one may have sepsis prior to death but not actually die from that. An infectious disease physician that had treated Sylvia noted her death was a result of "renal failure with contributions from deep-vein thrombosis, coronary artery disease, valvular heart disease, and malnutrition. There is no mention on the death certificate of Sylvia's ulcer or sepsis, . . .".

All in all, The Alabama Supreme Court did not feel that the plaintiff supported the necessary proof and the case was remanded back to the trial court for reconsideration based on the Supreme Court's instructions.

In my research there are cases noted which support Alabama as a more friendly state to medical providers. Two that I looked at which hinged on the health facts and not the legal case seemed to me to have plain evidence of failure of a provider or even a blatant and willful malpractice. I do not know the reasons why the cases were not held for the plaintiffs, whether it was ineffective counsel or simply failure to prove damages. Medical malpractice cases do succeed at times in Alabama, but the courts are truly looking to see if the burden of proof is supported and whether the injured patient is really worse off than before the alleged matter occurred.

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

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John Taylor

Mill, Dickens and Southern Independence

The War for Southern Independence impacted events worldwide. In Great Britain debates raged as to why their "*American Cousins*" were in conflict. Two renowned Englishmen -- John Stuart Mill and Charles Dickens -- sparred over this very matter. This was not their first disagreement.

John Stuart Mill was a political economist, politician, and philosopher who endorsed utilitarianism, a theory that advocated maximization of happiness and well-being. He supported free speech, free press, women's rights, and "*benevolent despotism*" relative to his support of colonialism when dealing with "*barbarous*" people.

Mill contended secession was a noble effort unless slavery was involved. "*For Mill, eliminating the scourge of slavery as a moral blight on humanity, far more than its economic disadvantages in that in general slave labor is less productive than free labor, is what justified his ethical support for the Northern cause even when it involved abuses and overreaches beyond the actual powers assigned the Union government under the U.S. Constitution.*" (Ebeling)

Mill ignored the fact that Jefferson Davis and thousands of Confederates stated they were fighting for independence -- not slavery -- and Lincoln repeatedly said the North was fighting to "*preserve the Union*" -- not to destroy slavery. Furthermore, a large number of individuals in both North and South considered slavery more secure in the Union than out of it.

Although he contended slavery as the "*one cause of the separation*" Mill understood the North had little objection to slavery as long as Blacks were confined to the Southern and Border States. He also claimed the South wanted to spread slavery throughout the world despite the fact the Confederate Constitution specifically outlawed the international slave trade. Another omission was that a major plank of the 1860 Republican Party Platform was adoption of a high protective tariff. Unsurprisingly, Mill became a hero to many in the North.

Charles Dickens was one of the greatest writers in history, having written A Tale of Two Cities, A Christmas Carol, Oliver Twist, David Copperfield, Great Expectations, and many other classics. Dickens was socially conscientious, felt great sympathy for the downtrodden, and was cognizant of worldwide events. Unlike Mill, Dickens literally witnessed the suffering of the poor folks in London who had no assurance of food, shelter, and

clothing. Despite slavery's obvious limitations, these three basics were rarely an issue. * Dickens, who fervently despised slavery, not only saw the conflict differently than the "*economist*" Mill, he observed the patent hypocrisy of the North:

"Slavery has in reality nothing on earth to do with it, in any kind of association with any generous or chivalrous sentiment on the part of the North. But the North having gradually got to itself the making of the laws and the settlement of the tariffs, and having taxed (the) South most abominably for its own advantage, began to see,...that unless it advocated the laying down of a geographical line beyond which slavery should not extend, the South would...recover it's old political power, and be able to help itself a little in the adjustment of the commercial affairs. Every reasonable creature may know...the North hates the Negro, and until it was convenient to make a pretense that sympathy with him was the cause of the War, it hated the Abolitionists and derided them up hill and down dale. For the rest, there's not a pins difference between the two parties..."

"As to Secession being Rebellion, it is distinctly provable by State papers that Washington, considered it no such thing -- that Massachusetts, now loudest against it, has itself asserted its right to secede, again and gain -- and that...when the two Carolinas began to train their militia expressly for Secession, commissioners sent to treat with them and to represent the disastrous policy...never hinted it would be rebellion." (RCOcean)

Additionally, Dickens understood agrarian vs. industrial economics and the constitutional requirement that taxes "shall be uniform" throughout; this seemed to escape the economist Mill. Dickens saw the conflict as a "fiscal quarrel," not an effort to defend or end slavery: "*The Northern onslaught upon slavery was no more than a piece of specious humbug designed to conceal its desire for economic control of the Southern States.*" (Kizer) He also recognized the immense harm slavery did to the White working class and predicted secession "*would, in fact, bring us very many years nearer to ending slavery...*" (Adams) Echoing Dickens, Union General Donn Piatt stated, "*Lincoln well knew that the North was not fighting to free slaves, nor was the South fighting to preserve slavery. In that awful conflict slavery went to pieces.*" (Edmonds)

Despite Mill's contention the war was about slavery, Dickens saw through that façade and his response could be properly phrased as "*Bah! Humbug!*"

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John Martin

The Legacy of Lyndon

In my November article about the JFK assassination and others, some people might conclude that Lyndon Johnson’s misdeeds, or at least most of them, had already been covered. After all, his assassinations alone were worthy of a dozen public executions. What more could he have done? There is much more—as Amazon would say it, *“A Truckload More.”*

LBJ was not a nice man by any stretch. He was a heavy drinker and had no qualms about maintaining simultaneous sexual partners. He was very ill-mannered and was probably the most uncouth president in our entire history.

He was a compulsive liar. In college, the other students nicknamed him “Bull”—for bull ****. He was also *“exceedingly vain.”* He always had to be the center of attention. In his first races for the House, and later the Senate, he committed “massive fraud” and then bragged about how he cheated to win.

He boasted about the size of his penis and named it *“Jumbo.”* Sometimes he unzipped his pants in the middle of a meeting and plopped it onto a desk to show it off. He frequently urinated in front of people while having conversations and even urinated in the House Office Building parking lot. Whenever someone objected, he replied, *“That’s all right, son. It’s my prerogative.”*

Johnson liked women a great deal—too much—and he frequently sexually harassed them, even in public. He hated pantyhose because it made it harder for him to finger them. He skinny dipped in the White House pool while dictating to his secretary and interviewing with women reporters. If anyone mentioned JFK’s flirtations, he pounded his fists on his desk and screamed, *“Why, I had more women on accident than he ever had on purpose!”* Johnson brought pretty young ladies from Texas to work in the White House, even if they couldn’t type. He installed a buzzer in the Oval Office that the Secret Service used to warn him when his wife, Lady Bird, was coming.

Johnson was overbearing, power-hungry, and imposed devious measures to control his underlings. He hovered over them with his six foot three inch frame and ordered them to perform useless menial tasks, as if they had no lives of their own.

He did not tolerate opposition. He demanded absolute loyalty and surrounded himself with *“yes men”* to enforce it. One of his quotes was, *“I want LOYALTY. I want him to kiss my ass in Macy’s window at high noon and tell me it smells like roses. I want his pecker in my pocket.”*

As Senate Majority Leader, he violated fundamental Constitutional principles, accepted bribes from Brown & Root, and utilized blackmail. He maintained a filing cabinet containing sexual and financial *“dirt”* on the other senators. Whenever he needed their votes, he let them know the consequences of voting against his policies.

However, these antics were penny ante mischief compared to LBJ’s actions on public policies and the creation of apocalyptic programs and agendas.

Johnson had no sympathy for frugality in government. If he wanted a new program, he ordered and got it, whatever it did to the nation’s economy and whatever it cost the American people.

When LBJ wanted to conscript more of our young men to be cannon fodder and die and/or suffer debilitating wounds in Vietnam for the military industrial complex, he got them. In addition to mass murder, he ordered the destruction of 5.5 million acres of forests and crops with the widespread application of 11 million gallons of toxic Agent Orange—*“a chemical holocaust.”*

In 1967, in an attempt to promote a regime change in Egypt, Johnson committed an act of TREASON by positioning the USS Liberty off of Israel’s coast and then ordered Israel to attack and sink our own ship with all 294 men on board. The ship survived, but 34 crewmen perished, and 174 others suffered debilitating injuries.

Johnson’s greatest catastrophes stem from the Civil Rights Movement, which he claimed would end segregation. Congress passed three major national disasters—the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, and the Civil Rights Act of 1968—all approved and signed by LBJ. They combined the legislative and executive branches with the judiciary, which allowed the federal government to impose numerous oppressions against the American people. Their long-term aftermath still violates us today.

Here is where two-faced Johnson really showed his true colors. In his heart, he had always been a racist. He did not like black people and used the *“N”* word as freely as a drunk sailor. He aggrandized himself on how he could control the black voters, and even said, *“I’ll have them n****rs voting Democratic for 200 years.”* He concocted policies to agitate them in devious manners, such as AFFIRMATIVE ACTION. Instead of just repealing segregation laws and allowing voluntary integration to take its course in a sensible manner, he insisted on forced integration.

In work places across the nation, affirmative action prohibited employers from hiring the best qualified people. They were forced to hire a certain percentage of black people, no matter how unqualified, to satisfy arbitrary quotas.

To impose racial quotas in schools, Johnson supported **FORCED BUSING** to transport millions of white children to black schools and millions of black children to white schools—most of them to locations far from their own neighborhoods. It created massive civil unrest and violence, and of course it cost tons of money that was diverted from useful and needed school programs. It also wasted much of the children’s time.

On the surface, **MEDICARE** sounds like a great idea. But like practically every government program, it cost a great deal more than health care in the private

sector. Prior to Medicare, in a free market, health care costs were reasonable just about everywhere. Since Medicare was created, these costs have exploded far beyond the norm for anything in the private sector, where government meddling was absent.

WELFARE was the really big one. Although *“relief”* programs began under Franklin Roosevelt, LBJ was the one who cranked them into high gear.

Government welfare programs destroy civilized society. They are a serious disincentive to work for a living. They entice people to fabricate *“disability”* or *“need”* to receive welfare checks every month for years and years with little hope of self-sufficiency. It imparted the mentality of *“Why work for a living when I can vote for one?”* They have literally **TRAINED** people to become parasites instead of salaried productive employees.

This is the tragedy of all government-run public assistance programs. For this fundamental reason, aid to help poor and disabled people should be limited to private charities. They are far better able to distinguish the differences between the truly needy and the freeloaders.

The most hideous parts of public welfare are programs *like AID TO FAMILIES WITH DEPENDENT CHILDREN—(AFDC)*. They incentivise the ultimate tragedy—**RECKLESS CHILDBEARING**, which is the primary cause of grinding poverty in third world countries.

AFDC was structured to pay more and more for each additional child, thus encouraging poor, irresponsible women to bear numerous children to inflate their welfare checks. As a result, non-marital birth rates have skyrocketed. Sadly, even with additional money, they had no time to take care of them and teach them to be responsible. The more children they bore, the more neglected they became. Many have grown up to become dangerous gang members and criminals. Generations of feral children are beginning to overwhelm our population and they could soon outnumber and outvote the responsible people. Dramatic increases in crime and violence since 1964 have verified this. It is certain death for civilization.

AFDC has destroyed families. Statistics have proven that beginning in 1964, when Johnson began his authority, numerous poor families, and especially poor black families, declined from two parent to only one parent. Back then, 87% of black families were two-parent. Today, it’s only 25%.

Welfare programs destroy personal responsibility and productivity. In the 1960’s, 40% of blacks had their own businesses. Today, they have dropped down to 7%. LBJ’s policies have been largely responsible for it. They have destroyed ethics and responsibility for millions of Americans, and especially for black Americans.

Welfare programs create more crime. Black people have been particularly vulnerable to their siren songs. As a result, black people commit most of our crime. According to the **FBI**, blacks compose 13% of our population, but they commit 36% of our violent crimes, half of our murders, and over half of our physical assaults.

Welfare programs do not eliminate poverty; they enhance it. They don’t mitigate poor people; they create more of them. Welfare causes dependency, and as benefits increase, recipients and freeloaders increase. Welfare also dilutes our gene pool by the enhanced breeding of people with low **IQs**. **LBJ’s** programs have created an explosion of poverty. And today, they are also enticing hundreds of thousands of destitutes from abroad to storm our borders and invade our country. Once here, pregnant women get free hospital care to bear their “anchor babies.”

Reckless childbearing is a heinous crime. It should never be rewarded. There is one, and only one reform that can make **AFDC** workable. **INSTEAD** of paying poor people to bear children, our government should do everything possible to **PREVENT** unwanted pregnancies, especially teenage pregnancies. All types of **CONTRACEPTION** should be made readily available for everybody.

One final note: Most of the American people were also responsible for LBJ’s crimes. In the election of 1964, we had one of the finest presidential candidates in our history—**BARRY GOLDWATER**. We could have voted for him, and some of us did. But he only won six states. Most of the horrible carnage of Vietnam and our devastating fiscal policies could have been averted. We the people committed national suicide in that election.

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Sheriff
Chris West

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Lord I ask for courage
Courage to face and
Conquer my own fears...
Courage to take me where
Others will not go...
I ask for strength
Strength of a body to protect
others and strength of spirit to
lead others...
I ask for dedication.

Dedication to my job to do it
well.
Dedication to my community,
to keep it safe...
Give me Lord, concern for
others who trust me and
Compassion for those who
need me...
and please Lord through it all
Be at my side.
AMEN



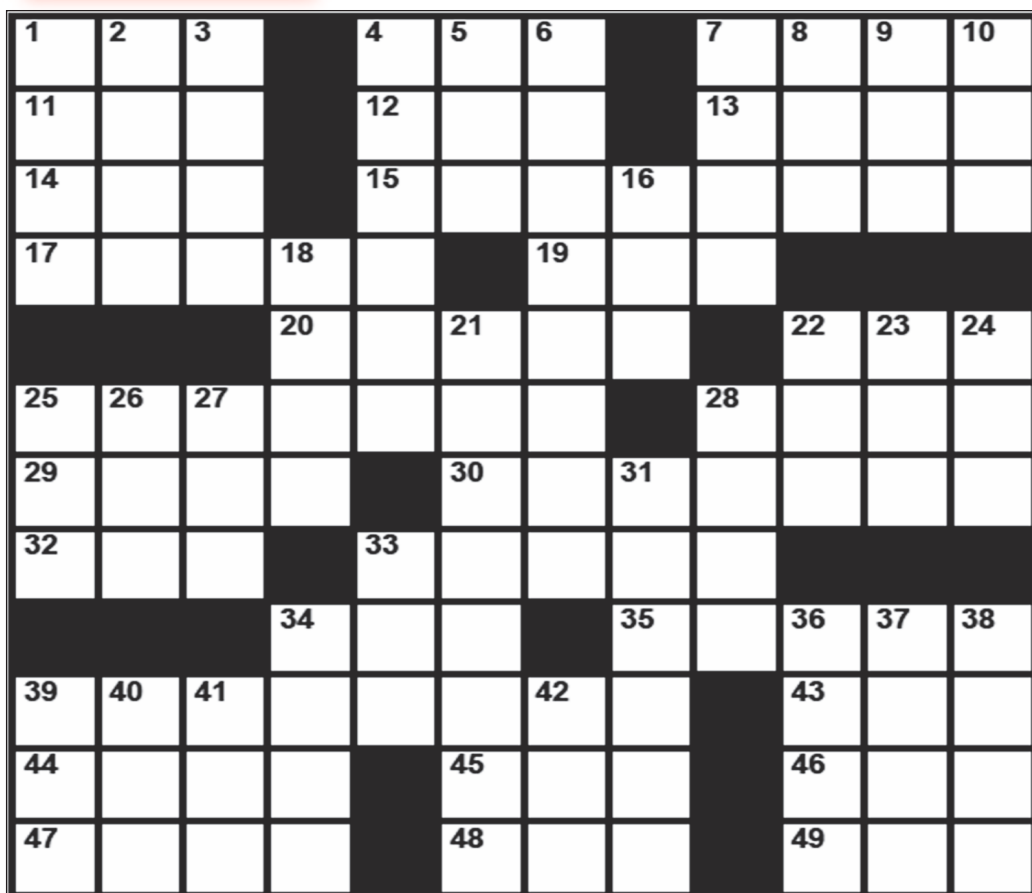
MYLES MELLOR CROSSWORD

Myles Mellor is one of the top crossword writers in the world. Published in over 1000 magazines, newspapers and web outlets. Over 20,000 crosswords published worldwide. Visit him at:

<http://www.themecrosswords.com/>

Also see his CBS interview at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7emsBZqvohY&t=22s>



ACROSS

- 1 Main
- 4 ___ 'wester
- 7 "The Picture of Dorian ___" by Oscar Wilde
- 11 Paddle
- 12 Be beholden to
- 13 Like blue moons
- 14 Occupy
- 15 1992 thriller "Basic ___"
- 17 Soars
- 19 Crest
- 20 Citrus fruit
- 22 Reddish-brown horse
- 25 Pant leg
- 28 Holder of grapes
- 29 Suspend
- 30 Summons
- 32 London's all-seer
- 33 Teams
- 34 Upper crust's home
- 35 Chicken parts
- 39 Noticed
- 43 The ___ of the land
- 44 Michigan or Erie
- 45 Form of "to be"
- 46 Absorbed, as a loss
- 47 Annoyance for an insomniac
- 48 Young boy
- 49 "___ in black"

DOWN

- 1 Some Motown music
- 2 Let up
- 3 Gray ___
- 4 Sounds
- 5 Dominate completely
- 6 Brought back to its original condition
- 7 Film set worker
- 8 Sought a seat
- 9 ___ - welding
- 10 "Are We Done ___?"
- 16 Weight unit
- 18 Talk up in an interview
- 21 Like knight time
- 22 Trash can
- 23 "Go on..."
- 24 "I agree"
- 25 Nice hot drink?
- 26 Bit of sunshine
- 27 Ace, played low
- 28 Arrangement holder
- 31 Good as new
- 33 Word said with a salute, often
- 34 She lost her sheep
- 36 Goes with chowder
- 37 Box in the sky
- 38 Dated
- 39 Worn out
- 40 Prevent
- 41 Word with "bum" or bunny"
- 42 Big Band for example

Answers on Page 7



An Evening of Tribute: Lee Greenwood Honored Our Nation's Veterans at Montgomery's MPAC Theatre November 9th

MONTGOMERY – In a heartfelt expression of gratitude and recognition, the Montgomery Performing Arts Centre (MPAC) was proud to announce a dedicated performance in honor of Veteran's Day by none other than American patriot and musical icon, Lee Greenwood. This event, set against the backdrop of our Alabama's deep-rooted reverence for freedom and sacrifice, was a moving tribute to the brave men and women who have proudly worn the uniform to protect the very ideals we hold dear.

This event came at an especially somber time, as the world witness's heart-breaking scenes from Israel. The recent unprovoked terrorist attacks by Hamas who slaughtered innocent women and children for the crime of simply being Jewish invokes horror beyond belief. While our focus remains on honoring our own veterans, our hearts and prayers also go out to the innocent victims and their families, as well as to all those working towards a resolution in the region.

In these times our country needs *"God Bless the USA"* more than ever. In the wake of events like 9/11, Hurricane Katrina, and the global COVID pandemic, America has consistently found solace in the stirring strains of *"God Bless the USA."* This iconic anthem, penned by Greenwood in 1984, has served as the heartbeat of the nation during its most challenging times. Given the current state of our economy, the divisive political climate, and the broader challenges we face as a global community amplified by the Hamas attacks, this song's message of unity and resilience is pertinent now more than ever.

When asked about his experiences in Alabama, Greenwood warmly remarked, *"I have traveled this country and I always love coming to Alabama. The people love America and love our Veterans. Everyone makes you feel at home and when you go out on stage you know you have fans that have truly supported you all these years in the audience. I've had the pleasure of playing in Montgomery multiple times, and every time I sing the line 'She's Back There In Montgomery' from my song 'Dixie Road,' the crowd's reaction is electric. This performance is my way of saying 'Thank You' for 40 incredible years of support from my fans."*



Perry O. Hooper Jr.

Founder Let the People Speak
Founder Patriots First
Former Alabama State Representative
Alabama State Republican Executive Com



Lee Greenwood's commitment to our nation's heroes goes far beyond his musical contributions. He has formed meaningful partnerships with several prominent organizations that have the welfare of veterans at heart, including Helping a Hero, the *Disabled American Veterans (DAV)*, and the *USO*. Greenwood has graced numerous fundraising stages on behalf of these organizations and has been a vocal advocate, bringing attention to the unique challenges that veterans face. On a personal level, Greenwood's connection to the veterans' community is deep-rooted. His regular visits to veterans' hospitals and VA facilities underscore his genuine concern for their well-being. Greenwood's dedication to our veterans is a testament to his profound respect and appreciation for their service. His passion and personal commitment have touched countless lives, providing hope and solace to many veterans and their families. He stands as a beacon of inspiration for us all.

President Ronald Reagan once remarked, *"Freedom is never more than one generation away from extinction."* It is with this sentiment in mind that we gathered, not just to enjoy an evening of music, but to remember and honor the sacrifices of our veterans. Their unwavering commitment has ensured that the beacon of liberty continues to shine brightly, illuminating the path for generations to come.

The evening not only celebrated the valor of our veterans but also offered a poignant reminder of the importance of unity and the shared values that bind us as a nation. The spirit of camaraderie, resilience, and hope was palpable in the air.

"Join Lee to stand together in gratitude and pride, and remembering those who have served and those who continue to serve our great nation."

Lee Greenwood: An award-winning country music artist, Lee Greenwood has long been an advocate for American patriotism. His song, "God Bless the USA," remains one of the most recognizable patriotic songs in the United States, evoking feelings of pride and gratitude for the nation and its veterans.

Honoring Our Heroes



Veterans Day Celebration at the Crossings at Eastchase

Veterans Day was celebrated at the Crossings at Eastchase, a senior living facility, at Montgomery, AL, on November 10, 2023 with a breakfast for veterans who are residents there. A paper weight titled “Duty, Honor and Country” was given to each veteran. A special program of patriotic music was presented by the senior adult choir at First Methodist Church at Prattville, AL. The Veterans Day Prayer was given by the Rev. Terry Grier. Recognition was given to 31 residents and two staff members at the Crossings who are veterans with each veteran’s rank, name, branch of service, military occupational specialty and length of service. This group of residents is composed of four Vietnam War, four Korean War, one WWII and one who had served in the Korean War, the Vietnam War and WWII. A special patriotic pin and a certificate titled “Thank a Veteran” were given to each veteran.



Col William DePorter



Specialist Henry Jenkins



Lt. Col Stephen Davis

Hope you enjoy reading the Gazette as much as these guys.

BuglesAcrossAmerica.org, click "Volunteer/Audition" and read Volunteer For Bugles Across America. Please feel free to call the AL State Director for Bugles Across America, Raymond Keel, at 334-233-8736 or e-mail him at rkphac@gmail.com.

December BIRTHDAYS

Mary Lybrand	Dec. 1st	Lamar smith	Dec. 19th
LeonArd Norman.	Dec. 1st	William L. Chivalette	Dec. 20th
Robert C. Carr Jr.	Dec. 4th	William Kent Davis	Dec. 22nd
Rhon vernon Carleton	Dec. 13th	Kenneth A. Jackson	Dec. 23rd
Peggy Holley	Dec. 13th	David G. Stainback	Dec. 26th
David Payne	Dec. 14th	Billy G. Mckenzie	Dec. 28th
Robert Harper	Dec. 18th		

Petty Officer Third Class Peggy Holley: Age 101

Petty Officer Third Class (PO3) Peggy Holley will celebrate her 101st birthday on December13, 2023. She served three years and 16 days in the Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Services (WAVES) in the U.S. Navy.



Harold Lamar Smith Age 100!



Army Veteran, Harold Lamar Smith will celebrate his 100th birthday December 19th, 2023. He served during WWII with the Army’s 36th Division which invaded Italy at Salerno and continued to push the German Army north over the mountains and valleys in southern Italy. He was seeriously wounded and recieved a Purple Heart.



In Memory



Col Michael Verne Church, a United States Army veteran who served 30 years passed away November 23, 2023. Since 2016, he served as the rector at St. Thomas Aquinas Anglican Church Montgomery, AL. He would like to be remembered as a man of God and as a soldier’s soldier. His article was published in the October 2023 issue of the AL Gazette.



Private First Class Alex George Jr.: Age 104

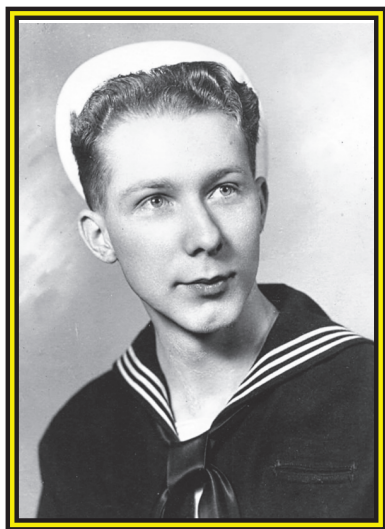
Alex George Jr., a WWII U.S. Army veteran, passed away November 20, 2023 at the age of 104. His Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) was in transportation loading ships for embarkation from the port at New Orleans to the troops in combat in the liberation of Europe. He was part of the Red Ball Express which was an enormous truck convoy system created in 1944 to supply Allied forces moving quickly through Europe after breaking out from the D-Day beaches in Normandy.



Ensign Cecil H. Prescott Jr.: Age 98



Ensign Cecil H. Prescott Jr. served three years on active duty with the U.S. Navy and two years with the U.S. Navy Reserve. His Military Occupational Specialty and ranks were Pharmacist Mate Third Class while on active duty and as Flight Surgeon with the Navy Reserve as Ensign. He received the following medals, awards, decorations and citations: Victory Medal, Atlantic-Pacific Medal and American Theater Medal.



Ensign Prescott was born to his parents, Cecil H. Prescott Sr. and Leila Prescott, at Birmingham, AL, August 8, 1925. While attending high school, he worked at various jobs such as a soda jerk and other jobs before he graduated from Phillips High School. His love for music began when he started taking piano lessons at the age of seven, and he played the saxophone in his high school band. Throughout his life, he played a variety of instruments including the piano, pipe organ, saxophone, trombone, clarinet, etc.

After graduating from Phillips High school, he volunteered and enlisted for service in the U.S. Navy August 7, 1943 at Birmingham, AL. He completed the Naval

Basic Training at the Naval Station Great Lakes. After training as a pharmacist, he was sent to serve at the St. Albans Naval Hospital, New York. While serving there, he was invited to play with the military band, the Medicos of Melody, playing the saxophone. He remained at St. Albans while his unit sailed for Europe, and the unit's ship was torpedoed. He was introduced to the American band director, Glenn Miller.

In January 1945, he was transferred to the Brooklyn Navy Yard, and in May 1945, he was assigned to the hospital ship, USS Consolation, a Haven-class

hospital ship used for hospital services, consultations, preventive medicine and casualty evacuation. In 1960, this ship was renamed SS Hope and was used throughout the world for health treatments. Ensign Prescott was in Honolulu when the Japanese surrendered September 2, 1945. His ship was used to transport POW's from the Bataan Death March back to the U.S.A. Ensign Prescott was discharged from military service at Memphis, TN in 1946. Prescott is proud to have served his country.

Ensign Prescott used the G.I. Bill to complete requirements for a B.S. Degree in Biology from Birmingham Southern College and a Doctor of Medicine Degree from the University of AL. He worked in general practice of medicine at Lineville, AL, 1954 -1958 and at Bessemer,AL 1958-1964.

Ensign Prescott completed his residency in psychiatry at the University of Alabama at Birmingham in 1964. He practiced psychiatry at Montgomery, AL, at Jackson Hospital, Baptist South Medical Center and Meadhaven 1964-1996.

Ensign Prescott and his wife, Nell, were married 77 years before she passed away, and they had three daughters, six grandchildren and six great-grandchildren. They were members of the Montgomery Symphony League and First Baptist Church at Montgomery where he served as a deacon. He continued playing in musical groups in Montgomery including the Recreators, the Capitol Sounds and the Upbeats.



Major Timothy Lawrence Tormey: Age 47



Major Timothy Lawrence Tormey served 20 years in the United States Marine Corps. His Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) was Helicopter Pilot and then Tilt-rotor Pilot. He flew the CH-46E helicopter and the MV-22B Osprey and served four tours in Iraq. He received the following medals, decorations, badges, citations and campaign ribbons: Defense Meritorious Service Medal, Air Medal-Strike Flight eight), Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal, Presidential Unit Citation-Navy, Navy Unit Commendation Medal (three), Navy Meritorious Unit Commendation, National Defense Service Medal (two), Iraq Campaign Medal with three stars, Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal (Iraq), Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, Sea Service Deployment Ribbon (four), Expert Rifle Qualification Badge and Sharpshooter Pistol Qualification Badge.



Major Tormey was born November 26, 1976 to his parents, Lawrence James and Edith Tormey, at Somers Point, N.J. He was reared there and graduated from Ocean City High School in 1995. While in high school, he played soccer and set a school record as its goalkeeper.

Major Tormey graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy on May 26, 1999, was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in the U.S. Marine Corps and selected Marine aviation. He completed 28 weeks of training at The Basic School at Marine Base Quantico, VA, during which new officers receive classroom, field, and practical application training on weapons, tactics, leadership and protocol. In October 2001, he completed flight training with the T-34 Turbo Mentor and earned his wings at the Flight School at Naval Air Station Pensacola, FL, selecting the CH-46E Sea Knight. His follow-on assignment was to Marine Base Camp Pendleton, CA, for six months of training to learn to fly the CH-46E, a medium-lift tandem-rotor transport helicopter. This helicopter was flown by Marine pilots for decades. He then was sent for seven years to Marine Corps Air Station, New River, N.C. He served with Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron 162, the Golden Knights where he learned to be a good copilot. During his career, he deployed to Iraq four times. The first deployment in 2003 was flying assault support missions in support of the initial invasion of Iraq, and in 2005 the second deployment was with the 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit where he flew numerous combat missions. He was then assigned to Marine Medium Tiltrotor Squadron 266, a new designated Osprey squadron and received training to fly the MV-22B. In 2007, he was then deployed for the third time to Iraq to Al Asad Air Base for five months with VMM-266, the Fighting

Griffins. His fourth and last deployment was with the 11th Marine Expeditionary Unit where he served as the Maintenance Officer for the Aviation Combat Element (ACE). Upon returning from deployment, he attended the Marine and Staff College at Marine Base Quantico, VA, and graduated with a Master's Degree in Military Studies in 2011. He was then sent to Marine Corps Air Station, Miramar CA, for four years where he assisted in standing up a new squadron, VMM-163 Evil Eyes. He then made his fourth and last deployment to Iraq on the USS Makin Island in the Persian Gulf. While flying the Osprey, the aircraft had a software malfunction and crashed into the ocean. He was then sent to Maxwell Air Force Base, AL, where he served as an instructor in the Joint War Fighting Department at the Air Command and Staff College. Major Tormey retired from military service June 1, 2019.

Immediately after his military retirement, Major Tormey began working with the Officers' Christian Fellowship at Maxwell AFB. This organization is a nonprofit Christian parachurch organization of 17,000 U.S. military officers, family members and friends at military installations. Through this organization, he tries to assist military officers in living out their faith while serving in the military.

Major Tormey and his wife, Kimberly, have been married 24 years, and they have 15 children including 11 biological and four adopted from Liberia. All of the children are home-schooled. Kimberly serves as the local Director of Classical Conservations, an organization that connects families with a local community of like-minded families who not only learn together, but they do life together. It equips homeschool parents with the confidence to equip their children with a biblical worldview. The family enjoys camping and travel as well as hosting people at their home. They are members of Young Meadows Presbyterian Church (PCA) at Montgomery, AL, where he serves as an elder. He is a life-time member of the Townsend Detachment #920 of the Marine Corps League.

Major Tormey's conclusions about what his military service has meant to him are: "I realized that it was not just my job to fly aircraft. I partnered with the chaplain on the ship and began to lead Bible studies with 19 Marine officers in attendance. This he contends was his real mission in the Corps."

Major Tormey states, "I would like people to remember me as a man who has dedicated my life and priorities to earnestly seeking and communing with God. I want this lifelong zeal to permeate into thoughtful conversations, an exceedingly generous nature, and continual acts of service to others."



Petty Officer Third Class Shanarik Deone McNeal: Age 42



Petty Officer Third Class (PO-3) Shanarik D. McNeal served four years in the United States Navy. His Navy Enlisted Classification (NEC) was Aviation Ordnanceman. He received the National Defense Service Medal.

PO-3 Shanarik was born November 14, 1981 at Los Angeles, CA, to his mother, Belinda Wilson and father George McNeal. After graduation from George Washington Preparatory School in June 1999, he volunteered and enlisted for service in the United States Navy.

PO-3 Shanarik completed Basic Training at the U.S Navy Recruit Training Command at

Great Lakes, IL. He was sent to San Diego where he first served on the USS Peleliu assault ship of the United States Navy named for the Battle of Peleliu of World War II. He worked storing, arming and loading bombs onto aircraft for one year. Then he was assigned to work on the USS Constellation (CV-64), a Kitty Hawk-class carrier for one year then at VS-41 loading ordnance and fuel tanks on to P-3 aircraft. While loading heavy ordnance, PO-3 Shanarik suffered serious, severe back and knee injuries which resulted in his honorable discharge from military service November 22, 2003.

After his military service, PO3 Shanarik used the G.I. Bill for two years studying computer systems at the United Education Institute becoming a computer technician. In 2004, he started his own business, Ingenious

Multimedia. This company provides graphic design and video production. In 2007, he moved to Montgomery, AL. He also has a business, The Woodcraft Specialist, carving custom detailed pieces and plaques, custom canes, furniture restoration and custom home projects. Details about this business can be found online at www.woodcraftspecialist.com and the woodcraft specialist on You Tube. He gives credit to mentors who taught him how to work with wood. Today he assists veterans in locating benefits through Veterans Claims University.

More information on You Tube at: <https://youtube.com/@INHEIRIT?feature=shared> Services are provided to Black owned businesses and corporations with opportunities, locations of resources and classes on how to apply for grants. He serves as the Vice Commander of American Legion Post 2019.

PO-3 Shanarik and his wife, Maria Nicole, have been married 15 years, and they have five children. Nicole is a U.S. Navy veteran who served four years as a gunner's mate, having served two years on the USS Mobile Bay.

PO-3 Shanarik's conclusions about what serving in the military means to him are: "*I grew up in a bad area of Los Angeles. Serving in the military gave me opportunities to see perspectives, to see things, to meet and to talk to people that I would have never met. It made me want to see more.*"





Master Sergeant Paul Robert Williamson: Age 75



Maser Sergeant (MSgt) Paul Robert Williamson served 22 years in the United States Marine Corps. His Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) was Cobol Programmer and Small Computer Systems Specialist. Prior to these, his MOS included Field Radio Operator, Communications and Recruiting.

MSgt Williamson is a highly decorated Marine who demonstrated great valor and received two Purple Hearts while serving in Vietnam. In addition, he received the following decorations, medals, badges, citations and campaign ribbons: Navy Commendation Medal, Combat Action Ribbon, Presidential Unit Citation, National Defense Service Medal, Republic of Vietnam Meritorious Unit Citation, Gallantry Cross of Color with palm, Certificate of Appreciation, Sea Service Deployment with one star, Navy Unit Commendation, Letter of Appreciation, Republic of Vietnam Meritorious Unit Citation (Civil Action Color, 1st Class with palm, Rifle Expert Badge and Good Conduct Medal with one silver star.

MSgt Willamson was born May 14, 1948 to his parents, Robert and Nettie Williamson, at Cincinnati, Ohio. At age 17, he enlisted in the U.S Marines in August 1965. He completed Basic Training at the Marine Corps Recruit Depot at San Diego, CA, followed by assignment to Camp Pendleton, CA, where he was attached to Bravo Company 1st Battalion 26th Marine Regiment. After completing training, his unit B Co 1/26 was sent to Vietnam as Battalion Landing Team, BLT 1/26 on board the USS IWO Jima (LPH-2), an amphibious assault ship. Next, he was assigned to the coastal city of Da Nang, Vietnam, as a field radio operator for six months with Bravo 1/26.

While assigned to the 26th Marines, he participated in combat operations Deckhouse III and IV, Shasta, Mississippi and Independence. He then served for six months with B Co. Battalion 9th Marine Regiment in Quan Tri Province in the interior of Vietnam near the DMZ. There he participated in combat operations Prairie II, III, and IV, Hickory, Cimarron and Buffalo, Hickory II and Kingfisher. He was injured twice with shrapnel resulting in the awarding of two Purple Hearts. Each time after injuries, he returned to combat.

After his Vietnam deployment, he and his wife, Janet, were married in September 1967, and he was sent to Camp LeJune, N.C., working with radio communications for six months. Next, he served in the Mediterranean Sea for six months on the USS Cambria (APA-36), an attack transport ship, and then he returned to Camp LeJeune. He left the Marines for three years and then reenlisted in 1972. After returning to active duty, he was twice promoted meritoriously to the next rank. He returned to Camp LeJeune working as a radio operator, and while there, he was assigned to collegiate studies and completed

his Associate Degree at Coastal Carolina Community College. Next, he served at Okinawa, Japan, for thirteen months. He then completed training at the Recruiting School at MCRD San Diego.

He served as a Marine recruiter at Erie, PA for two and a half years. He was then assigned to collegiate studies and graduated from Edinboro University with a B.A. Degree with a major in Psychology and a minor in Business Administration in 1979. MSgt Williamson was then assigned to the Leadership Instruction Department at Quantico, VA, and served as an instructor. Next, he attended Cobol programming school and worked as a COBOL programmer until 1982 when he was sent to 3rd FSSG on Okinawa as the Information Systems Management Office Chief (ISMO Chief).

In 1983, he was assigned as an instructor at Computer Sciences School at Quantico VA. During his off-duty time at the school, he completed studies, and he received a Master's Degree in Systems Management from the University of Southern California in 1985. MSgt Williamson retired from military service in 1989.

MSgt Williamson worked three years for Burroughs Inc., a business machine company between his two periods of Marine service. When he retired from military service, he then worked with Hilldrup Moving and Storage Company at Quantico, VA, for twenty years retiring as Vice President of Information Systems in 2010.

MSgt Williamson and his wife, Janet, have been married for 56 years, and they have two sons who have served in the U.S. Navy and the U.S. Air Force. Their grandson is currently serving in the Air Force at Albuquerque, NM. At Montgomery, AL, they are members of the Holy Spirit Catholic Church. She enjoys painting and is active in a community new-comers organization and at her church. She worked for 25 years with the Marine Corps at Quantico, VA, as a civilian. In the past, they have enjoyed boating. He enjoys playing golf and wood-working with furniture and bowl turning. MSgt Williamson is a life-time member of three military veterans' organizations, namely, the Townsend Detachment #920 U.S. Marine Corps League, the Military Order of the Purple Heart and the American Legion.

MSgt Williamson's conclusions about his service as a Marine in the U.S. Military are: *"Being in the Marines helped me grow up. It taught me discipline, responsibility and loyalty. It encouraged me to stay in condition physically."* He would like people to remember him as a United States Marine.



City of Montgomery's Veterans Day Celebration

On November 11, 2023 at 11:00 a.m., the City of Montgomery celebrated Veterans Day at the Riverwalk Stadium. The Presentation of Colors by an Honor Guard started the program followed by the singing of the National Anthem by SFC Robert Lobert Laughery. The Invocation was given by Tamar Dennis, US Air Force Retired. Montgomery's Mayor Steven Reed, Col Ryan E. Richardson, Commander, 42nd Air Base Wing and Brigadier General Trent Richardson USAir Force Retired gave inspirational, patriotic addresses. The Capitol Sounds Band played a medley of service songs from each branch of the US Military. A reception providing lunch to veterans and program participants concluded the event.

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SSA TALKS: WILL SOCIAL SECURITY BE THERE WHEN I RETIRE?

That's the question we're answering in the latest episode of our audio series, **SSA Talks**. Our Chief Actuary Steve Goss sheds light on our trust funds and how they relate to your future benefits.

The 12-minute episode includes a fact sheet and transcript. The fact sheet provides more information about the trust funds and how much protection our benefits offer.

We invite you to visit our **SSA Talks** page at www.ssa.gov/news/audio-series.html to listen and subscribe to receive alerts about future episodes! For more information and news about Social Security, we encourage you to check out our **Communications Corner** at www.ssa.gov/news.

Please share this with your friends, family, and colleagues.

SOCIAL SECURITY'S TOP 10 WEBPAGES FOR 2024

SSA.gov is your best resource to learn about Social Security programs and do business with us. Our website is designed to make it easy for you to find what you need. Here are our top 10 webpages:

1. **my Social Security** — You can open a personal **my Social Security** account to verify your earnings, view your Social Security Statement, get benefit estimates, and more, at www.ssa.gov/myaccount.
2. Social Security blog — You can find the latest Social Security news and updates at blog.ssa.gov. You can easily share these informative articles with others.
3. Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) — Do you need answers to Social Security-related questions? Visit www.ssa.gov/faq to find answers to common questions and other valuable information.
4. Retirement Application — You can complete and submit your online application for retirement benefits in as little as 15 minutes at www.ssa.gov/retirement.
5. Disability Application — You can apply for disability benefits online at www.ssa.gov/benefits/disability.
6. Publications — Visit our online publication library for information on key subjects at www.ssa.gov/pubs (includes audio versions).
7. Medicare — Sign up for Medicare at www.ssa.gov/medicare/sign-up.
8. Online Services — You can take care of most business with us by visiting www.ssa.gov/online services.
9. People Helping Others — Use these resources to help your family and others in your community at www.ssa.gov/thirdparty.
10. Fraud and Scam Prevention and Reporting — Learn how to recognize and report Social Security fraud and scams at www.ssa.gov/fraud.

Remember, if you need information or want to do business with us, the first place to go to is our website. Please share these top resources with your loved ones.

SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFITS INCREASE IN 2024

More than 71 million Americans will see a 3.2% increase in their Social Security benefits and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) payments in 2024. On average, Social Security retirement benefits will increase by more than \$50 per month starting in January.

Federal benefit rates increase when the cost-of-living rises, as measured by the Department of Labor's Consumer Price Index (CPI-W). The CPI-W rises when inflation increases, leading to a higher cost-of-living. This change means prices for goods and services, on average, are higher. The cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) helps to offset these costs.

We will mail COLA notices throughout the month of December to retirement, survivors, and disability beneficiaries, SSI recipients, and representative payees. But if you want to know your new benefit amount sooner, you can securely obtain your Social Security COLA notice online using the Message Center in your personal **my Social Security** account at www.ssa.gov/myaccount. You can access this information in early December, prior to receiving the mailed notice. Benefit amounts will not be available before December. Since you will receive the COLA notice online or in the mail, you don't need to contact us to get your new benefit amount.

If you prefer to access your COLA notice online and not receive the mailed notice, you can log in to your personal **my Social Security** account at www.ssa.gov/myaccount to opt out by changing your preferences in the Message Center. You can update your preferences to opt out of the mailed COLA notice, and any other notices that are available online. Did you know you can receive a text or email alert when there is a new message waiting for you? That way, you always know when we have something important for you — like your COLA notice. If you don't have an account yet, you must create one by November 14, 2023, to receive the 2024 COLA notice online.

"Social Security and SSI benefits will increase in 2024, and this will help millions of people keep up with expenses," said Kilolo Kijakazi, Acting Commissioner of Social Security.

January 2024 marks when other changes will happen based on the increase in the national average wage index. For example, the maximum amount of earnings subject to Social Security payroll tax in 2024 will be higher. The retirement earnings test exempt amount will also change in 2024. Learn more at www.ssa.gov/news/press/factsheets/colafacts2024.pdf.

Be among the first to know! Sign up for or log in to your personal **my Social Security** account today at www.ssa.gov/myaccount. Choose email or text under "Message Center Preferences" to receive courtesy notifications.

You can find more information about the 2024 COLA at www.ssa.gov/cola.

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- Get your Social Security Statement.
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You can use our services on-the-go or from the comfort of your home. Please visit www.ssa.gov/myaccount to view the services available to you. We want you to have a safe, happy holiday season and know that we are here for you.

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Remember to always monitor your blood sugar levels and speak with your healthcare provider about any dietary changes.



Judge
Peggy Givhan

in the shuffle. I just hate to rush the season, but it is truly time now to get ready to have the finest Christmas ever. One thing, that with all the reminders, we should be well prepared with no last minute shopping this year. If you are searching for a good gift to give neighbors and friends, think about pots of herbs like rosemary, and cilantro which could be placed on a window sill in the kitchen and used in cooking during the holidays. I have come across pots of rosemary shaped trees in some of the big box stores that are attractive. Spring bulbs such as tulips, daffodils, crocus, cannas and spider lilies are thoughtful gifts. These are the gifts that keep on giving. *(Just remind the ones who receive tulips that they must be kept in the crisper of the refrigerator for about 6 weeks before planting.)* Other gifts could include Poinsettias, Christmas cactus, and potted narcissus or the bulbs for forcing.

Since we in Montgomery and the River Region have relatively mild winters, December is a good time to plant fruit trees and shrubs such as blueberries, pears, figs, plums, peaches and apples. However, blueberries, peach and apple trees must be planted in a neutral to acid soil. I made a large raised bed at the farm in Dallas County with railroad ties and filled it with good sandy loam soil probably 20 years ago. The reason for all this trouble is that gumbo soil is highly alkaline which would kill this list of plants. Many in our area including parts of Montgomery are blessed with neutral to acid soil. The other fruit trees and shrubs listed are actually not pH sensitive, so any soil will suit their needs.

Other gardening chores we should remember this month.

1. Pruning shrubs that have outgrown their space such as privet, roses,

SOUTHERN GARDENING

Potpourri for DECEMBER



ligustrum, cherry laurel, magnolia and other shrubs forming hedges. Do not prune any shrubs or trees that flower in the spring because those have already set their bloom buds in early to late summer. Flowering shrubs and trees should only be pruned within six weeks of the end of the bloom cycle. If there are errant long shoots coming off the camellias, azaleas and sasanquas, then cut these back to hold the shape of the shrub. Hollies can be pruned back now, but these do have abundant red berries at this time of the year, so be judicious in cutting back.

2. Refurbishing the flower beds with compost and good soil.

3. Cutting back perennials

4. Making areas to sow seed and noting these areas on a plan or just use spray paint to outline this seed area..

PLANT OF THE MONTH

Christmas fern--Dryopteridaceae

Christmas fern, also called shield fern, is one of the most popular of the evergreen ferns. Its name comes from the fact that it stays green well past the Christmas season and in our area is evergreen. If the fern is nipped back by inclement weather, they will come back the next spring. This fern is native to North America and a member of the wood fern family. Easy to grow both indoors and outdoors. They thrive in both shade and partial shade, but too much sun exposure can negatively affect its hardiness. They do well in pot gardens, and many times will be planted as a ground cover.



MERRY CHRISTMAS AND HAPPY GARDENING.



GUN SEASON HAS COME

Gary Miller has written Outdoor Truths articles for 20 years. He has also written five books which include compilations of his articles and a father/son devotional. He also speaks at wild-game dinners and men's events for churches and associations.
gary@outdoortruths.org

This time of year, orange fills the woods. It confirms gun season has come. I've sat in many places, thinking I was the only one around, only to scan the horizon with my binoculars to discover an orange vest in a tree closer than I wanted. I can remember one time while hunting in Muhlenberg, Kentucky, staying in a hotel, and nearly every single occupant either leaving early that morning or coming in late that evening, with an orange hat and vest on. It was a hotel from heaven.

Years ago, fish and game commissions determined that orange was both a color that deer cannot distinguish and one that stands out markedly to humans. Shortly afterwards, wearing some form of orange became the law.

Some states require only hats, some only vests, and some both. And the nuances of when it's worn have changed over the years. Sometimes you are allowed to take it off once you are in a stand or blind, and sometimes it must always be on. There is no way to determine how many lives this hunting requirement has saved. It

makes no audible sound. It is simple in its design. It is standard in its application. It comes in sizes to fit anyone. And it makes the same statement whether it is worn by the unknown or famous, or by the extrovert or introvert.

When I think about the statement the orange vest makes, I make an application to how I think one's Christian life is best lived out. It is best lived out by letting it make its own statement. It's best when it is seen and not heard. It's best when it is just a part of our everyday lives and not something in addition to. It's best when its simplicity and subtleness stand out. It's best when it shines like a light on a hill. It's best when others see its value and even its safety, for themselves, and want it.

I cringe at forced faith. *Jesus did not come to force himself on anyone. He came to reveal what we didn't know or understand about the Father. By his own words, He said he didn't come into the world to condemn it, but to save it. And the way He would do that would be by Him putting on my sin and by me putting on His righteousness. Much like my orange vest.*



Gary Miller



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Patricia Boyd Killough

Home Town Community News

**NOTICE! Please send Patricia your family and friends:
BIRTHDAYS, ANNIVERSARIES, WEDDINGS AND EVENTS to:**

alabamagazette@gmail.com

Woodland Methodist Church Veterans Program

was presented
November 11, 2023
in honor of our veterans.

Pastor, Rev. Nick Hughes
gave the invocation.

Dinner was served and music and a
special rendition of *America*
was led by Scott Borders.

Guest Speaker was Col. Christopher K. Lacouture,
Commander of the 908th Airlift Wing.

The Armed Forces Medley and
recognition of branches was presented.

Benediction Rev. Nick Hughes.

Playing of Taps ended the ceremony.



Col. Christopher Lacouture and wife & Martha Washington



Scott Borders and Pastor Nick Hughes

*A special "Thank You"
to Sweet Creek and
Kay Huntsman Quilts of Valor
and all of the members of
Woodland Methodist Church
who made this possible.*



**May God Bless America
in 2024!**

Alabama Gazette's Sympathy to the families of...

Bradley, Rebecca Ruth "Becky" - 74.....	Nov. 1
Flynn Sr., Erich "Papa" Johnson - 67	Nov. 1
Jones, Charles Franklyn - 84.....	Nov. 2
Stutts, Grover Norman - 76	Nov. 4
Barb, Betty Moses. -76	Nov. 5
Eisenhower, Sally Ann - 91.....	Nov. 5
Gilmore, Ruby Maxime - 85	Nov. 5
Lewis, Betty Sue "Nana" Whirley - 87.....	Nov. 5
Gibson, Theo - 88	Nov. 7
Faulkner, Kathleen Kidwell - 95	Nov. 8
Driskill, Platt Walton - 78	Nov. 9
Kelley, James Virgil "Jimmy" - 81	Nov. 9
Lawrentz, Joseph Herbert - 40	Nov. 9
Roldan Jr., Lucas Jerome - 83	Nov. 10
Shaw, Ronnie Dean - 59	Nov. 10
Woodard, James Timothy - 72	Nov. 10
Baker, Brent Philip - 53	Nov. 11
Bear Jr., Joe Frank - 80	Nov. 11
Gordon Jr., Frank Dudley - 82	Nov. 11
Hodges, Richard Paul - 91	Nov. 13
Cain, Emily Jean "Jeanne" - 91	Nov. 14
McCreedy, Shirley Anne - 88	Nov. 14
Phelps, Margaret "Peggy" Black - 86	Nov. 14
Rushton Jr., Varna Avant - 90	Nov. 14
Hare, Dudley Bryan - 85	Nov. 15
Lambert, Larry Eugene - 80	Nov. 16
Brendle, Diana Ruth - 84	Nov. 17
Davis, Doris Brown - 74	Nov. 17
Vaughn, Linda Marie McCook - 73	Nov. 17
Connor, David Steven - 66	Nov. 18
Hutchens, Betty Viola - 92	Nov. 18
Carter, Rosalynn (Former First Lady) - 96.....	Nov. 19
Wilson, Frances - 98	Nov. 19
Jungwirth, Edward John - 94	Nov. 20
Carr, Merle Mayo - 92	Nov. 21
Coleman, Hawthorne - 83.....	Nov. 21
Priester, Hilda Jeanne - 79	Nov. 21
Church, Michael Verne - 75	Nov. 23
Cole, Cloffus "CC" - 93.....	Nov. 23
Marvil, Jerome (Jerry) Crawley - 101.....	Nov. 24
Pendley, Sue Ellen - 61	Nov. 28
Petrey, Kay Cathen - 71.....	Nov. 28
Sievers, Stephen Alan - 64	Nov. 28
Taylor, Mark Edward - 60	Nov. 28
Wood, Amy Charlotte - 60.....	Nov. 28
Bell, Mary Wellborn Clark "Mollie" - 100.....	Nov. 29
Kelley, Dean Earl - 64	Nov. 29
Kirksey, Betty Graham- 94.....	Nov. 29
McQueen, Harold - 95	Nov. 29
Taylor, David Steven - 65	Nov. 29



*Mr. and Mrs. Mason Tanner Grant
announce the upcoming marriage of their daughter
Mary Ellen
to
John Edward Ford
the son of
Mr. and Mrs. Millard Edward Ford, Jr.
The wedding is to be held at
The Chapel At The Waters, Pike Road,
Alabama in January 2024.*



**New Beginnings for Year 2024,
with new purpose and
commitment to happiness.
Have a Blessed New Year 2024!**

December Birthdays

2 Rev. Mike Northcutt	21 Don Meadows
Skeeter Rhodes	22 Austin Champion
3 Jimmy Perdue	Dennis Woodall
Can Stanton	23 Kodee Harrison
4 Gail Cotney	Carla Johnson
5 Linda Beaty	24 Joyce Turnipseed
7 Tobias Grant	25 JESUS CHRIST
Wayne Henry Morris IV	25 Arnie Burgis
Belle Sanson	Nancy Setzer
8 Alice Mobley	27 Sandy Brown
Meredith Sellars	Marlin Ingram
9 Jack Whisonant	Austin Yost
10 Jane Burgis	28 Andy Meadows
12 Mollie Higgins	29 Mary Pat Sikes
Wanda Beasley	30 Tiffany Hammock
13 Landon Meadows	Scott Takacs
14 Fred Crowe	Sarah Watkins
16 Bill Gulsby	31 Bethany Black Neubauer
Betty Armistead	Tex Woodall
Danielle Deavers	
Travers Grant	
Dorothy Kiser	
Deborah Kirk	
18 Robert Harper	
19 Virginia Braswell	
Ruth Cordle	
Brad Echols	
20 Maggie Mills	
Susan Yost	



December Anniversaries

Dec. 4 John & Robin Agnoli	Dec. 13 Dan & Yvonne Mielke
Rich & Jacque Takacs	Dec. 14 Ronnie & Michelle Blount
Dec. 7 Del & Prasertsi Atkinson	Dec. 16 Branon & Haley King
Dec. 8 Buddy & Rhonda Black	Dec. 17 Dane & Leah Floyd
Bradley & Liz Braswell	Dec. 19 Dustin & Sarah Kate Moore
Dec. 9 Danny & Kristie Richardson	Dec. 20 Wayne & Sarah Watkins
Dec. 11 Bro. Tommy & Melissa Fike	Dec. 29 Rev. Gary & Jerrie Burton
Dec. 12 Tom & Caroline Vocino	Dec. 30 George & Jeannie Handey



The Value of a Woman...

Be very careful if you make a woman cry because God counts her tears.

Today's Woman

By: Amanda Walker

Tears & LAUGHTER

Christmas Time Across Alabama

There is a quiet calm that falls over Alabama at Christmas time. Stars seem to be more brightly scattered over a broader more open sky. The type of sky with such depth it can make you believe in miracles and wishes coming true. In destiny, and in fate...if you believe in such things of course.



There is a wreath or ribbon on most every door by now and twinkling lights blinking in colors. There are candles in windows, and decorated trees peeking through open drapes. It is the season of peace and hospitality. Children everywhere are excited with anticipation. It is the season of crowded stores and traffic.

Cookies are being baked and Christmas day dinners planned. Frozen turkeys will soon begin being wrestled with, and there are women who will spend entire afternoons trying to follow old handwritten recipes for fruitcake nobody they know will eat.

They may not even like fruitcake themselves. But they miss the hands that wrote the recipe, so they follow each line precisely. We do that. We reuse their iron skillet and set their gravy boats out like center pieces. During the holidays there seems to be a memory in every taste, every fragrance, every song that plays over the radio. Even the wind seems to whisper reminders. An old, faded Polaroid can act as a portal to the past.

We retell our same old worn-out stories and watch the same movies that always work out for the good in the end. We spread handed down quilts over our beds and trace the stitches with our fingers trying to feel in our souls' moments lost somewhere in time.

Memories are all that get some people through the holidays. Memories, are all some people have. While for many it is the season of hope, Christmas brings to others reminders of loss and the pain of loneliness. The kind of loneliness that makes you feel alone in a room full of friends or on a busy familiar street.

Whoever the first person was that got to harping and singing about Christmas time being the most wonderful time of the year was hitting the egg nog too often. I like Christmas as much as the next person, but we have gotten way beyond simply celebrating our dear Savior's birth.



Unrealistic expectations and over booked schedules can quickly drain joy and energy. It is hard to feel festive when you are frazzled. The constant preparation, cleaning, shopping, and wrapping can make a person crave whiskey and hide from their own family. Try and free yourself from the busyness if you can. Even if it is only for a little while, give yourself some time. There is a quiet that falls over Alabama at Christmas time. The stars seem more brightly scattered across a broader more open sky. The type of sky with such depth it can make you believe in miracles and wishes coming true. In destiny, and in fate...if you believe in such things of course.

Amanda Walker is a columnist and contributor with AL.com, The News, 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>.

By: Trisston Wright Burrows
site.trisstonwrightburrows.com

Trisston's Tidbits:

"The Joy of Christmas"



Ms. Wheelchair
America/Alabama
2005

I once of the story of a family during the great depression was unable to afford anything but the bare necessities. One day the news came that a circus was coming to town. Tickets cost one dollar. The little boy came running home excited and eager to get the money from his dad. The father regretfully told his boy that he could not provide him with that much money, but if he went out and worked on odd jobs, he might make enough to purchase a ticket on his own. The dad promised to match what the boy could earn.

The boy worked feverishly and, just a few days before the circus came to town, he found that he had just enough, including his dad's contribution. He took the money and ran off to town to buy his circus ticket.

The day the circus came to town, he grabbed his ticket and rushed to the main street, where he stood on the curb as the circus parade went by. He was thrilled to watch the clowns, elephants, and all of the performers. A clown came dancing over to him and the boy put his ticket in the clown's hand. He eagerly watched as the rest of the parade went by.

After the parade, the boy rushed home and told his father that he had been to the circus and how much fun it was. The father, surprised that the boy was home already, asked him to describe the circus. The boy told of the parade that went down the main street and of giving his ticket to the clown. The father sadly took his son in his arms and said, "Son, you didn't see the circus; all you saw was the parade."

That boy reminds me of many people at Christmas time. They get caught up with the carols, trees, lights, and gifts. They think that they are experiencing what Christmas is all about. But really, all they're doing is seeing the parade and missing the main event, the true joy of Christmas.

I want each of you to know the real joy of Christmas. The angel announced the source of that joy to the shepherds on that first Christmas night:

"Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy which shall be for all the people; for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord" Luke 2:10-11

The great joy of Christmas comes through receiving
God's gift of the Savior, Christ the Lord.

Merry Christmas & Many Blessings!

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Barbara F. Harrington

Celebrating in December

Last December I knew I had cancer again. However, I thought I could take my time with having to do a surgery since the diagnosis was only cancer in two lymph nodes. When my surgeon was able to do the surgery in January of this year she found cancer in five nodes and one had burst and got into tissue around my breast.

After the visit to my oncologist I found out I had stage three breast cancer and I would start chemotherapy as soon as I healed from surgery for a smart port. It was not as simple as I had thought it would be. With many side effects from the chemo, I

learned each treatment brought new difficulties. I also learned about lymphedema, my previous breast did not cause excessive lymphedema because they only removed one lymph node The doctor gave me some time after treatment for my body to recover from chemo treatments then told me I had an appointment with the Radiation Oncologist.

I had many reservations about radiation treatments, however I did understand why they wanted me to do it after the meeting I had with him. I agreed and that began my journey of having 28 radiation treatments, going five days a week.

At first it seemed easy but then burns began. I ended up with 3rd degree burns in areas on my chest. My lymphedema problems increased also. I had been seeing a lymphedema specialist to help me with the symptoms but I needed to increase the amount of time I went. I also wear a compression sleeve every day and I have a pump I use every night for an hour to help with swelling. I follow up with massaging the arm upwards to get all the fluid from the lymph nodes.

I have learned about platelets being really low and anemia causing me to want a nap many days.

The good news is I am in remission. I have started a chemo pill this month. It seems 2023 has been a year of changes but I certainly have a lot to celebrate as the year ends. I still got to celebrate my children and grandchildren's birthdays and hope to again in 2024. God's plans for me is to treat each day as a celebration!

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For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. Jeremiah 29:11

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Volunteer Fireman, Lowndesboro V.F.D., St. Paul's Episcopal Church,
Lowndesboro Board of Registrars, Lowndes County

Have a Blessed Christmas

Most of the recipes I post are entrée's and are meant for a family lunch or dinner party. Occasionally, I get requests for certain types of recipes, such as desserts. Winter and the Christmas holidays are good times to introduce recipes that are desserts and are sweet. Cakes and pies are popular this time of year and I have gotten several requests for cakes that will go with the meal that is usually served at a Christmas dinner. The cakes are popular during the Christmas holidays but are also popular and served during other celebrations such as birthdays.

I have narrowed the list down to four recipes. Two were requests from friends and two requests from readers of my article. These recipes are found everywhere, and everyone has a copy of their favorite recipe earmarked in a cookbook that has been in the family for years. The four recipes I have picked range from being the most liked cake to the cake that stirs up the most controversy. I will start with the recipe that is the most liked cake in Alabama to the cake that stirs a conversation quicker than college football.



Holiday Greetings from Our Kitchen to Yours!

Fruit Cake

There are as many recipes for the next cake as there are ingredients.

Fruit cake. This is a list, not a complete recipe for an easy Christmas fruitcake. But perfect for the holidays. It's light, tender, and full of dried fruits and nuts. Sprinkle the loaf with brandy or leave it out! Either way, this fruit cake is a welcome addition to the holiday table.



Serve as a dessert or a sweet snack.

Ingredients

- 1 teaspoon Baking Soda
- 1 cup Sour Cream
- 1 cup Dates (chopped)
- 2 cups Raisins
- ½ cup Glazed Cherries (chopped, can sub dried sweetened cranberries)
- 1 cup Walnuts (chopped)
- 2 cups All-Purpose Flour (divided into 1/4 cup and 1 3/4 cups)
- ½ cup Butter (1 stick)
- 1 cup Granulated Sugar
- 1 Large Egg (room temperature)
- 1 tablespoon Rind (one orange grated)
- Salt
- 2 ounces Brandy (optional)

German's Sweet Chocolate Cake



The next cake has its best recipe on the box wrapper of the chocolate used to make the cake. Even though the cake is called German, it wasn't brought over from Germany. Instead, it originated in Dallas, Texas, in 1957 — but, just like the cake, its history is much richer than that. German chocolate cake's story dates back even further to the 1850s when a baker named Samuel German created a sweet baking chocolate. He developed the new chocolate with a higher sugar content for Baker's Chocolate — which, by the way, is also not called "Baker's" because it makes chocolate for bakers, but rather because its founder was named James Baker. The chocolate company named German's creation "German's Sweet Chocolate" after him.

Almost a century later in 1957, The Dallas Morning News published a recipe for "German's Chocolate Cake." The recipe was credited to Mrs. George Clay, a Dallas resident, who named the cake that because it utilized German's Sweet Chocolate. The recipe became so popular that other publications started running it and Baker's Chocolate's sales began to soar. It's believed that through all the various publications of the original recipe, the apostrophe 's' got lost along the way. Thus came the belief that the dessert originated in Germany. Apparently, the idea that German chocolate cake was a German favorite became so ubiquitous that even President Lyndon B. Johnson believed it to be true. He served the cake to German Chancellor Ludwig Erhard at a luncheon in 1963, according to The Dallas Morning News. Baker's Chocolate, which is now owned by Kraft Heinz, still makes and sells German's Sweet Chocolate. However, many German chocolate cake recipes of today don't call for sweet baking chocolate. Some recipes only use cocoa powder, while some use baking chocolate but with a different sugar content than German's — sometimes semi-sweet or unsweetened.

Ingredients

If you decide to make 24 cupcakes using German's Chocolate and frosting for 36 cupcakes.

As it says on the box you will need
1 Pkg (4 oz') Bakers sweet chocolate
¾ cup butter
1 ½ sugar

3 eggs
1 tsp vanilla
2 cups flour
1 tsp baking soda
¼ tsp salt

1 cup buttermilk
Coconut Pecan filling and frosting
prep directions are inside the box for 24 cupcakes .

The next cake is a Lane Cake. The Lane Cake, one of Alabama's more famous culinary specialties, was created by Emma Lyander Lane of Clayton of Barbour County. It is a type of white sponge cake mad with egg whites and consists of four layers that are filled with a mixture of egg yolks, butter, sugar, raisins and whiskey. The cake is typically served in the South, at birthdays, weddings, anniversaries and other special occasions.

Alabama Lane Cake Recipe

Ingredients:

- Cake:**
- 3-1/4 cup plain flour
- 2 teaspoon baking powder
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 cup butter or margarine, softened.
- 2 cup granulated sugar
- 1 cup milk
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 8 egg whites

Filling:

- 1 cup golden raisins
- 1 cup bourbon
- 8 egg yolks
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 1/2 cup butter or margarine, very soft
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1 cup pecans, chopped.
- 1 cup frozen, grated coconut, thawed (optional)

Directions:

Cake: Preheated oven to 375 degrees.
Measure flour and sift, then re-measure flour by spooning lightly into cup. Re-sift flour with baking powder and salt; set aside. In an electric mixer, cream butter and sugar until light. Alternate adding milk, vanilla, and flour mixture, beginning and ending with the flour.
In a separate bowl, beat the room temperature egg whites until very stiff. Gently fold the egg whites in the cake batter until just barely blended.
Using 3 different cake layer pans, prepare pans with Baker's Joy. Pour the batter evenly divided into the 3 pans; bake in the preheated oven for 25 to 30 minutes or until cakes test done.

Coconut Cake



Ingredients

- 2 and 1/2 cups cake flour (spooned & leveled)
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1/2 teaspoon bakingsoda
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 3/4 cup unsalted butter, softened to room temperature.
- 1 and 2/3 cups granulated sugar.
- 5 large egg whites, at room temperature
- 1/2 cup sour cream, at room temperature
- 2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract
- 1 teaspoon coconut extract
- 1 cup unsweetened canned coconut milk, at room temperature*
- 1 cup sweetened shredded coconut.

Coconut Cream Cheese Buttercream

- 1 cup unsalted butter, softened to room temperature.
- 8 ounces cream cheese (not low fat), softened to room temperature*
- 5 cups confectioners' sugar
- 2 Tablespoons canned coconut milk
- 1/2 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- 1/2 teaspoon coconut extract
- 1/8 teaspoon salt
- 2 cups sweetened shredded coconut.

Instructions

1. Preheat oven to 350°F. Grease three 9-inch cake pans, line with parchment paper rounds, then grease the parchment paper.
2. Whisk the cake flour, baking powder, baking soda, and salt together. Set it aside.
3. Using a handheld or stand mixer beat the butter and sugar together on medium- high speed until smooth and creamy, about 2 minutes. Scrape down the sides and up the bottom of the bowl with a rubber spatula as needed!
Beat in the egg whites until combined, then add the sour cream, vanilla extract, and coconut extract. Beat until combined. Mixture will look curdled as a result of the varying textures and solid butter combining. Scrape down the sides and up the bottom of the bowl as needed. With the mixer on low speed, slowly add the dry ingredients and coconut milk. Beat on low speed until combined, then add the shredded coconut. Whisk it all by hand to make sure there are no butter lumps at the bottom of the bowl.
The batter will be slightly thick.

After baking, allow cakes to cool 20 minutes before turning out of pans; cool cakes completely before frosting. Filling: After soaking the raisins in the bour-bon for 1 hour, begin the filling. In an electric mixer, beat the egg yolks until a light lemon color. Slowly add the sugar and the soft butter until well blended. In a double boiler over boiling water, cook the filling until thick, stirring constantly. Add the raisins with bourbon, vanilla, and pecans.

Stir to mix; then immediately remove the top of the double boiler to allow the filling to begin to cool. Cool completely before spreading between cake layers. If using the coconut, it will be used later in the cake assemble step.



Seven Minute Frosting: 2 egg whites, 1-1/2 cups granulated sugar, 1/4 cup plus 1 tablespoon water, 1-1/2 teaspoons white corn syrup, 1/4 teaspoon cream of tartar, 1 teaspoon vanilla, Additional ingredients may be used and added at the same time as the vanilla, such as: chopped pecans, dried fruit tidbits, thawed frozen grated coconut, food color tint, etc.: Be very careful while making this frosting since it requires using a mixer over boiling hot water. Place the double boiler top over the boiling water in the base pot.

Beat all the frosting ingredients, except vanilla and any additions with a rotary or electric beater for seven minutes or until frosting stands in peaks. Remove from boiling water; add vanilla and continue beating until frosting is a good spreading consistency. Add additional ingredients selected at this time. Cake Assembly: After cake layers cool, spread the cooled filling evenly between 2 of the layers; then sprinkle each layer on top, and frost the entire cake. Refrigerate cake overnight before cutting; keep cake refrigerated.