



The Alabama Gazette

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Merry Christmas

JESUS

Jesus

the ANSWER to all our questions,
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Congratulations Auburn!

Ed Jones
Sports Editor

See page 7.

“Jesus is the Reason for the Season” God bless each and everyone!!

May the Joy of this
Holiday Season be
with you now and
all throughout
the coming year!

Please think of the
less fortunate and
give as much
you can now
and throughout
the new year!




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Robservations...by Robert Tate

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

CHRISTMAS: A TIME FOR ALL, A TIME FOR REFLECTION, A TIME FOR PEACE

1. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/special_report/1998/10/98/world_war_i/197627.stm
2. http://history1900s.about.com/od/1910s/a/christmastruce_2.htm

December, 1914. For over four months, Europe has been embroiled in war. What was initially conceived to be a quick conflict has become a stalemate unlike anything the world has yet seen. With the advent of newer, deadlier weapons of war, the word slaughter has been redefined to accommodate the new world of mass killing. In the first Battle of Ypres, a.k.a. Bloody Flanders, the month long battle that had just ended on 22 November, saw over 290,000 total casualties on both sides to include, 19,530 Germans and 7,960 British soldiers killed. It is difficult to find numbers of French and Belgians killed in this battle. Unfortunately for Europe, in the modern vernacular, "They ain't seen nothin' yet."

Instead of being home with their loved ones, the soldiers on either side of "No Man's Land" are equally blighted by life and death in the horrendous trenches. Each man, exposed to the relentless cold and wet winter weather, covered in mud, and surrounded by the dead and decaying bodies of their friends they are unable to bury, yearns to be home this Christmas season. For those claustrophobic few who wish to peer over the trenches to peruse the landscape of their own personal hell, care must be taken every moment because well placed sniper rounds to one's forehead quickly ends any feelings of morbid curiosity. Yes, the battlefields of France in the early days of WWI were a miserable, sorry place. So much more so on the first Christmas in this new age of warfare.

Yet on this Christmas, an amazing, an almost unthinkable thing happened. Whether the motivating factor was fear, homesickness or the love of Christ, or all the above, common men who had been taught to hate and kill their enemy without regard or mercy, rebelled and came together to celebrate life, rejoice in the birth of Christ and to end, albeit momentarily, all the tortuous killing. Yes, folks, the Christmas truce of 1914 really happened. It is no myth or allegory. It happened. Men were willing and able to put aside war and accept peace, if only for a short time. Humanity shone through the overcast of hate.

Every Christmas season I am reminded of this event. Surprisingly, not many people have ever heard of it. There have been dozens of articles written about it and at least one book. The 2005 movie *Joyeux Noel*, worth watching, likewise chronicles this event.

So what prompted the truce? Several factors played a part. On December 7, 1914, after the slaughter in Ypres, Pope Benedict XV suggested a temporary cessation of the war for the celebration of Christmas. Though Germany agreed to the temporary cease fire, they unfortunately stood alone. Regardless, on Christmas Eve, many German soldiers put candle decorated Christmas trees on the tops of their trenches and through the darkness, the British soldiers heard many of the Germans celebrating. Peering over their own trenches many Allied soldiers saw Christmas trees for the first time. Throughout the night, singing and the occasional cat call was shouted out toward the British lines. In thick German accents the British could hear a hearty, "happy Christmas to you Englishmen!" The British responded in kind and the friendly jesting went back and forth.(2) Soldiers exchanged songs like, "O Tannenbaum," "O Come All Ye Faithful," and "The First Noël."

By Christmas day, soldiers took it upon themselves to risk death and entered the killing zones between the trenches. "We won't shoot if you don't shoot" was the word of the day. Slowly at first, men from both sides slowly made their way up and over the trenches to meet their dreaded enemy face-to-face. French, Belgians, Brits and Germans. No hate, probably some fear and trepidation, but no regrets. One German soldier recorded, "It was a day of peace in war. It is only a pity that it was not decisive peace." One British soldier wrote, "while you were eating your turkey, etc, I was out talking and shaking hands with the very men I had been trying to kill a few hours before! It was astounding!" (2) Astounding it was.

All along the front, these men spent the day shaking hands, trading personal items, sharing food, future dreams, photos of loved ones, the warmth of fire, songs, prayers and the love of Christ amid the horrors surrounding them. An extreme example of the fraternization was a soccer game played in the middle of No Man's Land between the Bedfordshire Regiment and the Germans. A member of the Bedfordshire Regiment produced a ball and the large group of soldiers played until the ball was deflated when it hit a barbed wire entanglement.(2) To the surprise of many men on both sides, other than different uniforms, they were the same. It was reported that the Germans got a

kick out of the Scots running around in kilts when they realized they really don't wear underwear. A day of "mooning" caused great laughter on both sides.

Throughout history, Christmas truces have been called as a way of burying the dead and on this Christmas, it was reported that in at least one instance, the British and Germans held a combined service for their fallen comrades.(2) It was reported that in some areas of the front, this celebration was called off at midnight Christmas Day while in other areas; it lasted until New Year's Day.

Informal truces are not necessarily historically isolated occurrences. On individual levels, soldiers have always aided other soldiers and in WWII pilots escorted damaged enemy aircraft back toward their own lines. German mega-ace Hans-Joachim Marseille was notorious for flying through deadly anti-aircraft fire in order to drop notes about downed airmen to their home base or not applying the coup-de-grace on an already damaged opponent. When faced with death and killing, humanity often prevails and although the Christmas truce of 1914 certainly does not stand alone in the annals of armed conflict, it is arguably the greatest example of its kind in modern warfare.

Common soldiers as well as some high ranking officers voluntarily took place in the events that spread across the front that Christmas in 1914. There is also evidence that while some generals opposed the fraternizing actions of their subordinates, they seemed to tolerate and indeed encouraged actions which allowed stress relief, if only temporarily. There would clearly be plenty of time to get back to killing their fellow men.(1) Although certain military leaders were not too happy about this rare form of fraternization, and indeed it was strictly forbidden in following years, the truce was fully publicized from the moment the news reached Germany and England.

Publishing a year later, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle in his history of 1914 called the Christmas truce "an amazing spectacle" and in a memorable description, saluted it as "one human episode amid all the atrocities which have stained the memory of the war".(1) Keep in mind that this "truce" took place only five months into a war that dragged on for another 47 and took the lives of over 8 million people. The humanity shown in December of 1914 would certainly face more difficult times in the years to come.

In many ways, the 20th century was defined by war and the many newfound and quite imaginative ways of killing other people. Trench warfare, mustard gas, machine guns, the advent of airpower, submarines, tanks, atomic weapons, fuel-air bombs; you name it. Mass killing is certainly one of the lasting legacies of the last century and we clearly see that in the city busting of Dresden, Coventry, Berlin, Hamburg, Tokyo, Hiroshima, Nagasaki to name just a few. It has been said human love and decency can only be matched by our unending desire to suffer pain and death up on our own race. It is refreshing, however, at the tactical level of war, where men, like those in 1914, are pitted against other men and killing becomes not just a right but the only way of self-survival that the love of men, each of us created in the image of God, can overcome hatred and the fallacious orders of those who order the soldier to kill those whom they would rather befriend. This is a common theme I found in ALL of my interviews of German Luftwaffe pilots from WWII. Top ace of all time, Erich Hartmann with 352 aerial victories, told me that he hated the war and would much rather have played soccer against the young Russians and Americans that he killed. To him, war was old men telling young men to kill, often without reasons why.

This Christmas season, let us celebrate the love of God and His perfect peace. Those petty differences that separate each of us cannot stand before God's majestic greatness. If soldiers, almost 100 years ago, hell-bent on killing one another in the desolation of worn torn France can set aside their differences and celebrate the birth of Christ in peace, why can't we?

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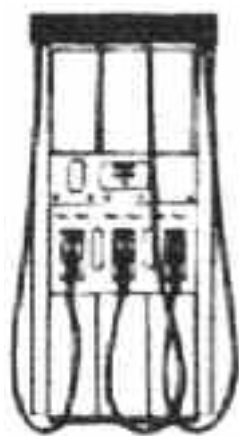
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Inside the Statehouse with Steve Flowers



Steve Flowers is Alabama's leading political columnist. His column appears weekly in 72 Alabama newspapers. Steve served 16 years in the state legislature. He may be reached at www.steveflowers.us.

Believe it or not we are approaching the fourth year of this legislative quadrennium. The legislature will meet early next year because it is an election year. All 140 seats in the House and Senate are up for election in 2014.

These legislators were elected in 2010. Most of them are Republicans. The GOP owns a two to one super majority in both the House and Senate. These folks are not just Republicans in name only, sometimes referred to as "RINOs." They are real Republicans.

They are conservative to say the least. They have placed in indelible conservative stamp on state government and public policy on both social and economic fronts. They have addressed abortion, immigration, gun rights, tort reform and a litany of other hot item topics and placed a reactionary result to all of these hallmark philosophical issues.

They have budgeted state dollars prudently and cut teachers' and state employees' incomes in the process. By virtue of their attack on public employees they have essentially emasculated the once vaunted teachers' union, AEA. They have systematically dismantled this organization in a Machiavellian approach that has not only removed their power over the state's education policy and dollars but has pretty much rendered them hapless in the legislative arena.

My guess is that most Alabamians approve of this GOP group's quest to make us the most right wing state in the union because we are definitely one of the most right wing states in America. However, this trend has been prevalent throughout the country. After the 2010 elections, most states in the country moved into one corner or the other. They either became extremely conservative or extremely liberal. In 37 states, one party now controls both the statehouse and governor's office. That is the most in 60 years. Both parties have used that omnipotent power to make sweeping changes on a myriad of major issues. Indeed in the avalanche of action have been the high profile issues of guns, immigrants, taxes, elections and gay marriage.

They have gone in divergent directions based on the party with the super majority. They have worked with a vengeance in most of these states to stake their claims. The Democrats have forged to the left and Republicans have marched to the right

with both sides striving to go as far left or as far right with focus and expediency.

The two best examples of extremity are Colorado versus North Carolina. Colorado went all Democratic. They enacted total gun control, allowed free driver's licenses and instate tuition for illegal immigrants, voted for gay marriage and chose to embrace ObamaCare by expanding Medicaid.

In contrast, North Carolina Republicans took control of the legislature and the governor's office for the first time since 1870. The GOP in the Tarheel state has put a conservative stamp on education, tax policy, unemployment benefits and a range of social issues similar to Alabama's agenda.

This one party control in 37 states has drowned out minority party voices much like what has happened in Alabama. The party in power has stood united and enacted almost anything they pleased and run roughshod over the minority party. Essentially, red states have turned redder and blue states have turned bluer and fewer states are purple.

In many cases partisan redistricting has driven this one-party domination. This gerrymandering has created super majorities in these 37 states that are two to three or even four to one. There are now only five states with split legislatures. They are Iowa, Kentucky, New Hampshire, New York and Washington. In 22 states one party enjoys a vote proof majority in both chambers. We are one of those states.

Perhaps no issue better illustrates the philosophical divergence more than gun control. Joining Colorado, three other majority Democratic state legislatures, New York, Connecticut and Maryland, tightened gun control laws. At the same time, more than a dozen GOP-dominated states basically did away with gun control. They followed the NRA's lead and gave carte blanche gun carrying privileges to their citizens. Tennessee now permits gun owners to keep their guns in their cars, no matter where they park them. Wyoming voted to allow their judges to carry their guns into the courtroom.

As I said earlier, my belief is that the majority of Alabamians approve of our super Republican majority and their conservative agenda. Therefore, my prediction is that our numbers will remain about the same after next year's elections. We will probably see around a 70 to 35 GOP majority in the House and a 24 to 11 edge in the State Senate for the next decade. We will see.

Bench-Bar- & Beyond

1.03 MARRIAGE MELTDOWN AND MORAL FORMATION

By Judge Dale Segrest

Twentieth century psychology correctly identified the sources of moral formation. Sigmund Freud, Erik Erikson, Jean Piaget, Lawrence Kohlberg and others showed that moral formation occurs in stages of development. Internalization of the commands and images of the parents plays a strong and vital role in moral formation. Traditional family was the first template for moral formation. Earlier in history, "conscience" was believed to be an inherent part of human nature—something humans are born with. While there may be some genetic predisposition to development of conscience, there is also a very strong social component. Basically conscience is instilled by the surrounding culture, and parents play a central role. Moral formation includes both a cognitive (learning) component and emotional component. The emotions that are involved include not only shame and embarrassment because of wrong-doing, but the development of an internal monitor that Freud called the "superego" that demands correct behavior. According to Freud, the superego resulted from the internalization of the commands and the image of the parents.

In an earlier columns, I described the breakdown of traditional family and marriage when the culture shifted from an agrarian to an urban, industrial/technologically based economy. In western civilization, romantic attraction played an important role in pairing couples off, and then, according to the fairy tales, they lived "happily ever after." However, romantic attraction didn't work as well in the non-agrarian economy. "Romantic attraction in offices and factories between members of opposite sexes who were not married to each other produced inevitable results. Laws changed in the 1960's, shifting to no-fault divorce. Change in law was the result, not the cause, of the breakdown of marriage. Courts were ill-prepared to deal with the onslaught of emotion-laden divorces, child custody matters, child support matters. The adversarial system for dispute resolution is the hallmark of the court system, but it definitely was not the best place to resolve the highly emotional issues arising from breakdown of the most fundamental unit of civilization. Because the family was largely responsible for moral formation, the effect of the breakdown of family had significant impact on our society. The system that has evolved for the resolution of emotionally charged domestic disputes leaves much

to be desired. The potential results are far reaching.

Often we hear theories about the cause of crime. Searching for a "cause of crime" is the wrong approach. There is no "cause" for crime, although many social and personal factors may create an environment in which it is more likely to occur. There is a cause for moral, law-abiding behavior. The cause for proper conduct is sound moral formation—the adequate development of conscience. Sound moral formation has been imperiled by breakdown of family, and the resulting destruction of the template for moral formation. Moral formation traditionally depended on the child's strong, healthy relationship with both parents. Our method of dispute resolution does little to improve the prospect. A few hours of a judge's time, with attorneys doing battle to zealously represent clients in an adversarial setting, with economic factors being the pre-eminent concern, is not a good way to make decisions that will drastically affect the entire future for children, mothers and fathers.

When moral formation declines, it is predictable that there will be an increase in crime. The rate of incarceration remained constant in the United States from 1924 to 1964, but began to mushroom in the late 1960's—the same time that traditional marriages began to breakdown at a rapid rate. It would be a mistake, however, to jump to the conclusion that the breakdown of family was the initial cause of the increase in incarceration. Just because two things happen one after another does not mean that the first causes the second. Reasons for the increase in the rate of incarceration included the increased use of drugs, the criminalization of conduct that might not have been criminal previously, and numerous other factors coming out of the tumultuous 60's. But the breakdown of moral formation is likely to cause increasingly poor behavior, and to escalate the rate of incarceration, in a vicious, degenerating downward spiral. What goes on in domestic relations court interacts with what goes on in criminal court.

Thoughtful people are beginning to understand that there is a systemic problem in the way we have dealt with domestic relations litigation. But we have a long way to go. In the next column I will deal with a huge problem in the economics of divorce: Child Support.



Judge Philip Dale Segrest

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John Sophocleus



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

“... A DECREE FROM CAESAR AUGUSTUS FOR ALL TO BE TAXED”

(UNDERSTANDING OUR MOST RECENT ‘WAR ON PRAYER’)

My first Gazette Christmas column contemplated how many are still haunted by Miss Greer Garson’s

voice in the opening narration of the 1958 animated version of “The Little Drummer Boy,” one of the few indelible memories which remain from Christmases of my youth. The King James Version of Luke 2:1 reads:

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

Her narration continued with, “To disobey the Roman Emperor meant certain death,” as the viewer watched the diverse procession to Bethlehem, “. . . young and old; famous and mighty; and some not yet known, but would be revered for all time. They were good people who could ill afford the cruel tax about to be imposed upon them.”

For those like myself who believe in the power of God’s word or the hardest zealot of the atheist religion (I don’t share their belief in negative proof but God teaches me to be tolerant) it certainly is worthy to note the details of this child’s birth celebrated every Christmas. The Gospels make it difficult to dismiss this Roman decree which determined Christ’s grim birthplace into this world - in a cave with lowly animals and shepherds in the City of David. Perhaps a little history on this Roman Emperor is apropos.

Most consider Gaius Julius Caesar Augustus (September 23, 63 - August 19, 14BC) the first Emperor installed to proffer further concentration and usurpation of power from the Roman people. As a young man he was adopted in the last will and testament of his great-uncle Julius Caesar following his (in)famous death in 44 BC. In 27 BC the Senate conferred upon him the title Augustus - i.e., “the revered one.” Upon his death, after a 40 year reign, Augustus was declared a god by the Senate compelling all to worship him. The reign of Augustus was succeeded by his former son-in-law and adopted step-son, Tiberius. Tiberius was the Emperor in power when Jesus is wrongly crucified between two common thieves.

To those interested in reading more on this economic tax history, I always recommend Prof. Charles Adams’ book entitled, “For Good & Evil: the Impact of Taxes on the Course of Civilization,” to illustrate how encompassing the power of Rome applied to Christ’s time on earth. This earthly journey begins with Christ’s birthplace soiled and dictated by Roman despotism as Caesar Augustus mandated return to cities of origin to be taxed. To understand the meaning of Jesus coming from the lineage of David is very powerful, if not predictable to anyone familiar with the history of that era and Old Testament teachings.

Jesus witnessed firsthand the cruelty of Rome which tormented souls of young and old alike - think of the demon “Legion” (one of many) He cast into swine, which some theologians consider a purposeful, thinly veiled symbol of despotic Roman rule. As a teacher, Jesus knew the meaning of David defeating the Philistines (Star of David) the reason for the Maccabean Revolt (Menorah) and other common teachings of this sort to Jewish children; just as our young once knew about Washington’s 1783 victory over the British, War of 1812, War Between the States, etc. . . . when they were taught well to our youth. Along with Miss Garson’s voice, some may also recall many Stars of David and Menorahs displayed so closely aligned with Christian symbols this time of year before little red suits and materialism diverted focus from the powerful meanings of this blessed season.

Not surprisingly, the Romans also understood, taking great efforts to remove Menorahs, Stars and statues of David whenever they (re)conquered the Jews, as known symbols of tax revolt. Think today how our governments and their minions hate when good folks show up with symbols of the Boston Tea Party and flags from our wars for independence. Is anyone genuinely surprised by the most recent ‘War on Prayer’ espoused by Speaker Mike Hubbard (9/22/13 Opelika-Auburn News) even when evoked/used as rhetoric by this political hypocrite? Disdain for God and what the Christian Cross truly represents is a rational forecast as more of the mainstream populace expiates to government as their god in the collective extremism of mandating more of their will/tyranny upon others.

Tiberius, who followed Augustus, Emperor at the time of Christ’s crucifixion was by most accounts one of very poor character. To overcome shortcomings with the public, Tiberius devoted a great deal of effort toward his propaganda campaign “Ti Caesar Divi Aug F Augustus,” - i.e., “Tiberius Caesar, Worshipful Son of the God Augustus.” This was very important to establish after Augustus, who had set himself up as god. For most readers (esp. those who read my column on the First Commandment or understand the scribes’ attempt to trick Jesus with this inscription on the Roman coin handed to Him) little type is required to explain Jesus proclaiming He is the Son of the true God (obviously NOT Augustus) placed him at odds with the pro-government thugs of his day. This included pro-Roman clergy like Annas and Caiaphas comfortable with their place under Roman rule. It would only be a matter of time till Pontius Pilate, the Procurator of Judea responsible for tax collection (with sufficient Roman soldiers in his charge to easily secure the task) would be at odds with the mind, body and spirit of Christ.

At its base, the power of Rome was facilitated by a complete (some may consider irrational) fear of death. Those who Rome wished to use and control via this overpowering fear could be sent into the depths of mines to provide their government’s huge resource demands; could be chained to oars to power Rome’s ships to their very last breath; entertain Romans in blood sports to the death; etc. . . . Consider how our modern Rome has citizens so afraid to die they are willing to mandate theft from others, even steal their own children’s future to continue their existence for another breath. Sad to witness how little regard they have for their dignity and souls to continue ‘life’ in this world to propagate a leviathan which no doubt will make their (and their posterity’s) existence dark and grim. This is highlighted to orthodox Christians witnessing a politician who names their own children after fellow hero corrupt ‘public servants’ instead of those who in fact suffered their faith following Christ’s path; further illus-

trated by political hacks covetous of buildings and streets in their name instead of living a righteous life where the memory of their deeds are eternal through Christ’s name and Spirit.

Rome would fear the righteous teachings of this Rabbi carpenter as they took hold and spread in a region which championed freedom and their true God over government. The power of His words and ideas provided a cure to the growing cancer Roman despotism was on mankind. If Jesus had the will to follow His heavenly Father into the next world - even upon suffering the most horrific death Romans could devise; AND others were also willing to follow -- the tyranny of Rome could not survive. There were those who understood and wanted Christ’s body, passion, spirit and teachings to be buried and forgotten. Others, more cunning, use Christian symbols and teachings (feigning concern for the poor, etc.) to cloak their own avarice. Thanks to the wise disciples’ efforts (including Peter who denied Him in the aforementioned fear) and countless martyrs who followed Christ, His memory and call to righteousness remains.

I pray more will accept His call and give thanks for those who resist tyranny fight corruption and have the courage to endure the hatred levied upon them. Sadly, those who act when pressed by despots are oft despised by those who will benefit most from efforts to stop the wicked before they’re too empowered to remove without great death and destruction. Even fewer seem able to identify and admonish the ‘Judas rhetoric’ (false piety, feigned concern for mankind to hide their own greed and corruption) of our ruling elite today. A recent illustration being our powerful speaker of the House in Montgomery touting Alabama as the “second most religious state” in the US which he claims is the reason why the Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF) targeted Alabama as its first battlefield state in what he believes is an organized and determined “war on prayer.” Mr. Hubbard and his ‘hero’ minion public servant Gov. Riley were noticeably absent when they attacked Chief Justice Roy Moore and our Rotunda. Where were they then? Is it because voters have reversed their efforts and the ruling of a despotic/incompetent federal judge Mr. Hubbard now adamantly claims to care about the war on prayer?

I’ve made it clear Judge Moore argued his case poorly and public servants like Riley and Thompson are empowered to protect our civil rights, even poor jurists like Moore; instead of using Roy Moore types to advance their ends. Imagine if Hubbard and Riley had made a stand then and refused to remove this poor jurist, not because of his poor arguments but because of the rule of law which often escapes federal judges of Myron Thompson’s intelligence and integrity. In short, there were already two remedies in place which Thompson ignored - the legislature could change the chief justice’s role as steward of the Rotunda or the voters of Alabama could remove Judge Moore if they found his interior decorating skills of great import and not to their liking. The absurd Thompson ruling means Chief Justice Roberts must be removed since the US Supreme Court continues to display The Ten Commandments - no doubt this incompetent/poor Chief Justice will not be removed by the same powers which removed Judge Moore.

Speaker Hubbard continued his rant about FFRF extremists’ war on prayer in the Cullman County public schools. Dare I type it escapes most ‘public servants’ of such poor intelligence and character that the extremism they promote positions FFRF to make a compelling case? Federal funding to education is unconstitutional (think Bush’s no child left behind, imposing federal common core standards, etc. - worse still federal faith based initiatives) but once a schoolhouse, courthouse, firehouse, etc. takes federal funding the FFRF extremist can make a case. Some suspect Mr. Hubbard’s new found concern for prayer (after his noticeable absence where it may have made a difference or better still had not supported his corrupt party’s extremist policies) has more to do with worries of facing Tea Party voters in the next election and possible indictment for his deeds as a ‘public servant’ who appears to have served himself very well.

Interesting Mr. Hubbard evokes another of his heroes (Ronald Reagan, sadly not Jesus Christ) who also used school prayer to deflect the Iran/Contra affair pressing upon him. Reagan correctly gambled the big government conservatives would overlook this abuse of power and raising the debt ceiling 18 times with his crony Tip O’Neil to further advance the Rome we suffer today. Andy Rooney cited Reagan’s masterful school prayer ‘teflon president’ play with, “Prayer: the last refuge of a scoundrel.” Imagine if Americans had been less bamboozled by Reagan’s wonderful words while he was exploding debt per capita threefold; there could have been a chance to reverse the inevitable result of remaining on the path to leviathan Rome traditional Christians were taught to admonish. Again, how many modern Christians this season do you think will have this as the centerpiece of their Christmas celebration?

Our Speaker further touts, “every day when the Legislature is meeting, the Alabama House begins each session with a public prayer given by an invited pastor.” I doubt many pastors will be invited who will admonish the despotic actions of the Speaker and his fellow ruling elite Republicrats; if so, I doubt a pastor of this sort would ever be invited again. Furthermore, even if most pastors did convey the Holy Spirit to this body in desperate need of prayer to be reminded “resistance to tyranny is obedience to God” I doubt it would make much difference. Our legislature grows increasingly less representative and restrictive ballot access laws supported by despotic jurists makes these legislators feel untouchable. It will be God’s judgment and discipline which will address their deeds as voters continue to keep individuals of this sort in power, knowing they are corrupt. Sadly, Judgment of this sort is much more difficult to bear in the long-run than suffering the short-run toil of cleaning house before disease sets in.

Please John Sophocleus on page 15



Woods & Waters with Zack

**Zack
Azar**

PRE-RUT CAN BE THE MOST EXCITING TIME OF THE YEAR TO HUNT

December can be a tricky month in deer hunting. The gun season has been in for a few weeks and there has been enough hunting activity in most areas to alert the deer. Seasoned deer hunters know that whitetails respond quickly to pressure, and the additional sounds and smells associated with hunters cause deer to alter their movements accordingly. However, the pre-rut can be the most exciting time of the year to hunt. Testosterone-filled bucks are starting to become reckless, so if you want to kill a mature buck, the pre-rut may provide your best opportunity. This magic time starts in late December and rolls through early January. Bucks are more susceptible to making mistakes but killing a mature buck is never easy...even in the pre-rut.

Three to four weeks before the primary breeding phase, which in this area is late January, bucks begin to travel, making rubs and scrapes. One of the most common pitfalls to be avoided during this phase is mistakenly setting up on a random scrape. Remember that not all scrapes are the same. Some mature bucks make scrapes they never intend to revisit. Ignore all scrapes that don't have an overhead licking branch on which bucks leave their scent. These aren't likely to be revisited on a consistent basis, so they aren't the best scrapes to hunt. I try to locate primary scrapes, those being used by more than one buck. These large scrapes are usually located in an area where topography, bedding areas and food sources require most deer in that area to, at some time, come through a particular spot. Funnels and trail crossings are good places to start your search. Primary scrapes are used year after year, so late winter scouting trips will provide the answers to which areas are to be taken the most seriously. Remember that mature bucks will actively tend their scrapes for a relatively short period of time, usually only two or three weeks. Once the first does come into estrous, the bucks will shift their focus to a hot doe and they will stay with her until she is ready to be bred. That is why, once you see that scrapes are no longer being worked, it's time to change your tactics from hunting bucks to hunting does. Now you need to focus on food sources that are being frequented by does.

While we're talking about scrapes, there are primarily two types of scrape locations; those located along the edges of fields and those located in the woods. I prefer to hunt those scrapes in the woods because years of trail camera photos have

shown me that deer tend to work scrapes on the edges of fields at night. The pictures that I have taken of mature deer working scrapes during daylight hours were always taken on scrapes located in the woods.



During the pre-rut, bucks are also interested in establishing dominance, so they will respond to calls that they believe are coming from another buck in their territory. They will also respond to rattling antlers, because it is during this period that bucks will engage in battles for dominance. During the actual rut phase, bucks are more concerned with finding does that are about to come into heat, so they aren't as quick to respond to rattling. Every buck I've rattled in has come during the pre-rut period. Also keep in mind that the amount of fighting that bucks engage in is directly related to the number of does in the area. There is more competition among bucks when there are fewer does, so rattling will have the best results where you have a good buck to doe ratio.

The timing of the peak of the rut is based upon decreasing daylight hours, but it is also based on a time frame that creates a situation in which when fawns are born about seven months later, they come at the peak of the year's nutrition cycle. This places our breeding activity in January and February. Many hunters still seem to think cold weather brings on the rut. In truth, the rut would occur regardless of the weather. Deer simply are more active during daylight hours when it is cool, and thus their actions are more easily tracked. If the weather is warm during the normal rut period, much of the breeding takes place at night. That causes hunters to speak about a so-called "light" rut – or no rut at all.

The final two phases of the rut, the chase phase and the breeding phase, will occur in January. It is like no other time during hunting season, and it provides the hunter an opportunity to harvest that buck of a lifetime. Next month, we will take an in-depth look at hunting these two phases of the rut. January is the month that a mature, trophy buck is most likely to drop his guard, and it's the most exciting time to be in the woods. We will discuss many strategies, from calling to using decoys, so don't miss next month's article. Be careful in the woods...don't forget to wear a safety harness when hunting from a tree stand and ALWAYS be sure of your target. And if you get a chance, introduce someone to hunting this year.

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**Sports Editor,
Ed Jones**



BAMA BUSTED! DESTINY BEATS DYNASTY

to the national championship was shaken to its knees as the underdog Auburn Tigers miraculously pulled another miracle out of "Malzahn the Magician's" hat. A new but similar bumper sticker will proudly adorn millions of Auburn cars after the Tigers' Chris Davis returned a missed 57 yard field goal attempt by Alabama's Adam Griffith, from nine yards in his own end zone, for the touchdown that ripped the heart out of the Bama Nation. With no time on the clock the kick sailed slightly right and short to Davis, who had just been substituted by Malzahn for the regular safety on field goals. This was one of many moves that Coach Gus Malzahn and his staff made to keep Auburn in the game against a far superior Alabama team. The Alabama field goal team must have all watched the flight of the ball instead of covering their defensive responsibilities, because by the time Chris Davis reached the fifty yard line, there were no Alabama players in sight, only Auburn players running backwards and forwards escorting Davis to the promised land. Auburn fans flooded the field at Jordan-Hare Stadium - **Auburn 34 - Alabama 28.**

With the game tied 28-28, Alabama's T. J. Yeldon made a nice run into Auburn territory and headed out of bounds to stop the clock and give Alabama one last heave by A. J. McCarron to the goal line. In an unbelievable set of circumstances, the officials ruled that the clock expired before Yeldon's foot touched the ground out of bounds. That would have sent the game into overtime. A conference incurred where Coach Nick Saban was adamant that there was still one second on the clock when Yeldon went out of bounds. The play was reviewed by the replay officials who finally agreed that the double zeros had not come up as the play ended. There is no 1/2 second or 1/4 second available on any game clock. So, Saban won the worst argument of his career. One second was put back on the clock. Millions upon millions of people watching the game in person or by television were prepared for All-American and Heisman Trophy candidate A. J. McCarron to throw one in the end-zone and hope one of his guys would come down with it. However, Coach Nick Saban sent out his back-up kicker, who does have better distance than the regular kicker, Cade Foster. Adam Griffith had only tried a few field goals in his career at Alabama. But, whose to question Nick Saban!!! If you can possibly find a tape of the ball game, you can look back and understand why this writer has been saying that Gus Malzahn is a better "game day" coach than Nick Saban.....

As bad as Alabama played, there is no doubt in my mind - Alabama would have won the overtime. But because of Saban, there was no overtime.

On November 30, 2013, the football world was shocked into reality and the BCS race

Now, what does this do to Alabama and what does it do to Auburn. The loss will probably send Alabama to the Orange Bowl, a game that few will be interested in. The win puts Auburn in the SEC Championship Game in Atlanta against the very stingy defense of the Missouri Tigers, who won the Eastern Division with a methodical romp over the late, great Johnny Manziel. That could be the end of the line for this team of destiny, the Auburn Tigers. But, quite frankly the end of the line should have been against LSU, Mississippi State, Texas A&M, Georgia and Alabama. The Tigers are still standing tall!

What if Missouri beats Auburn. Missouri will go to the Sugar Bowl as SEC Champions and Auburn will have to lobby for a good bowl game. Missouri has an outside chance to reach number two in the BCS.

What if Auburn beats Missouri? The picture is not as clear. Alabama's loss to Auburn will knock them out of the national championship picture and out of the top three in the BCS standings. Auburn will move up to number three. This leaves Florida State undefeated and only Duke to play in the ACC Championship Game next week. Ohio State, the number three team for several weeks, and still undefeated, will move to number two behind Florida State. Michigan State will play Ohio State in the Big-Ten Championship Game. The Spartans are sporting a 10-1 record and the best defense in the country. Ohio State barely escaped with a 42-41 win over an average Michigan team (7-5) on October 30. Michigan State is not a threat to overtake Auburn in the BCS standings because of strength of schedule. A loss by Ohio State to Michigan State will put Auburn at number two and in the National Championship Game against Florida State. Even a "bad" win by Ohio State over Michigan State could slide Auburn into number two because of strength of schedule.

FIRST THINGS FIRST! Auburn must beat Missouri in Atlanta for any of this to make any difference. A loss to Missouri or a decisive win by Ohio State on Pearl Harbor Day will end the "Team of Destiny's" chance for a shot at Florida State.

From whence they came (3-9) to a chance to play for the national championship is a miracle unlike any this writer has seen in following college football for over 60 years.

The statistics for the Auburn-Alabama game are very close. The only two that matter are: Auburn, 52 rushing plays for 296 yards - Alabama, 35 rushing plays for 218 yards. If Alabama had rushed 52 times, Auburn would not have been in the ball game. The other is the fact that Alabama missed four field goals, any one of which could have won the game.

The Alabama national dynasty is over. What will be the outcome of this on the state level is yet to be determined. Malzahn's "Team of Destiny" plays on. What can Coach Gus Malzahn do next year that will top this year. He has set the bar high. At this point, Auburn people have no thought of next year. They are floating on the clouds of 2013...a year that will live in infamy for the Alabama Nation.



Courtesy ledger-enquirer.com

No explanation necessary!



Courtesy naplesnews.com

Chris Davis - No explanation necessary!



Courtesy bigstory.ap.org

Tre Mason - 29 carries - 164 yards!



**A. J. McCarron
Fallen Warrior**



**Nick Marshall
Winning Quarterback**

THE SPORTS PAGE...

On Saturday, December 7th at 11:00 A.M. a new and different television show will premier in Montgomery, Alabama on Fox-20. **THE SPORTS PAGE** will be hosted by former Auburn quarterback, Charlie Trotman, former Alabama State football star, Ricky Cotton and former football coach, Ed Jones, who is presently the Sports Editor for The Alabama Gazette. The 30 minute program will feature interviews with prominent sports figures from around the country along with dynamic video of teams and coaches here in the south. This new and innovative program is being produced by Eddie Harris, who is a member of the Fox television crew that brings professional football into your homes each Sunday, and a former member of the production crew at WSFA TV here in Montgomery and Rich Walker, who has taught television production for many years here in Montgomery High Schools.

The theme of the show will primarily focus on college football. However, there will be coverage of high school and professional football and other sports as time and interest allow.

THE SPORTS PAGE will lead the viewers into the biggest college games on Saturday. You will be entertained by the best footage and best sports commentary in Alabama. This program will be "Football Year Round".

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Ronald A. Holtsford



I noticed as I drove east on Atlanta Highway that Frazer Methodist Church had something on their marquee about Operation Christmas Child; I know it is a common program at this time of year.

Many Montgomerians have participated in Operation Christmas Child, generally through their churches. Children get a kick out of giving as they go to stores with their parent or parents to purchase small items that will go to unknown, less fortunate children in another country. I have done this before and you allow your kids to choose toys that in their imaginative minds they can see other children as their eyes widen when they receive their gift. The weird thing is the gift is limited to what can fit inside a shoebox, maybe a lot if it's one of my shoeboxes and not so much if it's a shoebox from a small woman. In addition to toys it may include hygiene items, candies (not chocolates) and maybe a photo or personal note from the one that packs the box. Operation Christmas Child is a ministry of Samaritan's Purse whose President and CEO is Franklin Graham, son of Billy and Ruth Graham. Samaritan's Purse helps in disaster and impoverished areas with physical needs including food and shelter. Pretty good ministry it sounds like.

East Point Academy in West Columbia, South Carolina has participated in Operation Christmas Child the last two years and was preparing for a third year just a few weeks ago. East Point Academy is a Charter School, funded by public money. The American Humanist Association wrote a letter to the school, saying in part, "This letter serves as notice to policymaking school officials of the East Point Academy's unconstitutional conduct and as a demand that the school terminate all promotion, sponsorship, endorsement or affiliation with Operation Christmas Child immediately".

Being a small school with too small a legal budget to fight back, West Point Academy caved to the humanist group. From the website of the American Humanist

DOES THERE SEEM TO BE A GROWING LEGAL WAR ON CHRISTMAS?

Association, they go to great lengths (literally) to defend their thinking, saying "So, with modern humanism one finds a life stance or worldview that is in tune with modern knowledge; is inspiring, socially conscious, and personally meaningful. It is not only the thinking person's outlook but that of the feeling person as well, for it has inspired the arts as much as it has the sciences; philanthropy as much as critique. And even in critique it is tolerant, defending the rights of all people to choose other ways, to speak and to write freely, to live their lives according to their own lights." The website compares and contrasts religious and secular humanism.

It's interesting that the humanists see themselves as socially conscious, that there is an inspiration of philanthropy and they look to defend the rights of all people to choose other ways. I suppose other ways are defined as those not associated with Christianity or any other religion. I wonder how many children did not receive a small gift because one parent at West Point Academy complained about the participation of their child in Operation Christmas Child; I wonder how many children do not receive a little joy in a third world country because of the "philanthropy" of a group determined that above all, the Word and love of God should be stifled at all costs.

Over the years the First Amendment of the United States Constitution has been construed in probably a more liberal sense than the framers and amenders envisioned. The First Amendment says, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances." The Amendment suggests to me that Congress shall not make a law establishing a national religion.

The Federal Courts have over the years come to the conclusion that the use of taxpayer dollars for any reason that involves a religious organization tends to support that religion, thus "establishing" a religion. United States Supreme Court cases such as *Lynch v Donnelly* in 1984, was a Rhode Island case in which the Court held that the inclusion of historical and secular Christmas displays along side a Nativity scene did not violate the Establishment

Clause of the First Amendment. Five years later in *Allegheny County v. American Civil Liberties Union*, and in spite of a forty-five foot Christmas tree along side a crèche, the Court held it violated the Establishment Clause.

Truly it is hard to understand such a disdain for a loving God when His people attempt to publicly celebrate the birth of His Son whether that be a display of a God that sends His Son to Earth, being fully God and fully man or an attempt by His followers to share innocent joy with children in other lands.

Last December, to the delight of my wife Jennifer and I, we welcomed a baby boy. The year has gone by quickly. The love and joy that we have for this little boy has sustained us when we were running on too little sleep or endured other parental maladies from a year of very close hands on parenting. God has shown me that He blesses me with a wonderful and loving wife Jennifer, a terrific stepson, Will, my sweet little boy, Aaron and sons Joshua and Nathan that reside in other states. God has blessed me in so many ways and I think on Joseph and Mary when they welcomed Christ into the world and became His earthly parents. What a tremendous responsibility to know that they were acting as God's surrogates for Jesus during His formative years. My son, Aaron is God's child and I know He has given him to me for a time, I pray that all parents will seek His guidance as they raise up their children.

God bless you all, whether you celebrate Christmas or Hanukkah and to my Islamic friends I send God's blessing as well.

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

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Marcia Chambliss



POLITICS AND OUR UTILITY RATES

Several years ago, I was introduced to former Mobile Press

Register reporter Eddie Curran, author of *The Governor of Goat Hill*, and after purchasing his book, I've been eagerly waiting for Curran to sink his teeth into another investigative journey regarding Alabama politics. For those unacquainted with Curran's book, it's the compilation of his years covering the corruption involving former Gov. Don Siegelman, but also a virtual encyclopedia of political players associated with state government, then and now.

With Curran's interest in the Alabama Public Service Commission, it appears that my wait is over.

Curran is now self-employed in the legal research field and his services were recently engaged by a non-profit group in Mississippi trying to protect state taxpayers from the financial burden of a Mississippi Power plant project. His work for that non-profit inadvertently led him to the rate hearings regarding Alabama utilities and the full assault from numerous political angles on PSC Commissioner Terry Dunn.

What he discovered is fascinating but also extremely disturbing, and informed voters should take the time prior to the June 2014 primary to review his work at www.isalabamapowerbehindtheface.com.

Curran has submitted numerous and necessary questions to the groups attacking Commissioner Dunn but I have one of my own: When did questioning excessive rates of return and consumer utility rates become a red flag in determining that someone is a liberal, tree-hugging, environmental extremist? As I'm also questioning the

opposition to rate hearings as they are conducted in other states, I suppose I'll be slapped with the same label.

Much has been written regarding the utility rate hearings and a simple Google search can provide an abundance of details. I've read those articles as well as various conservative blog postings, received a plethora of emails from organizations I had previously neither heard of nor subscribed to, and even before reading Curran's material, I wasn't convinced that Commissioner Dunn had suddenly turned into the bogeyman as he's being portrayed.

Somehow, Dunn's interest and request for rate hearings indicated that he was an environmental extremist against coal-powered energy. I had a difficult time in making that leap a few months ago and Curran's research is confirming those doubts.

My concern now is pertaining to the enormous amount of effort in defaming Dunn and just who is behind these attacks, especially as it relates to the money trail. This race has already drawn more primary competition than almost any other state-held office in the state. Why? And why was one of those candidates assisted in a fundraiser by former Mississippi Governor Haley Barbour, a lobbyist whose firm has close associations with Southern Company, the parent company of Alabama Power?

According to Curran's obviously self-funded documentary – not a criticism, simply a fact which serves to validate that Curran is not being funded by deep pockets that so frequently obscure political agendas – Commissioner Dunn campaigned on taking a look at utility rates, but once elected, was advised by highly connected politicians to just "leave it alone." From the PSC website, their mission

is "to ensure a regulatory balance between regulated companies and consumers in order to provide consumers with safe, adequate and reliable services at rates that are equitable and economical," yet Dunn was told to "keep your head down" and he essentially keep his job as long as he wanted it. This begs the question of why the PSC is even needed if questioning rates is immediately dismissed and discouraged by the political forces in Montgomery.

Political influence in Alabama by one of the "Big Mules" is certainly nothing new, but the amount of money now expended should be troubling to every voter, especially if it is somehow connected as Curran theorizes to discredit a public servant via questionable tactics.

According to Curran's research, Alabama Power Company spends "almost \$20 million per year to sway public or political opinion which dwarfs the amount paid by other utilities in the region."

At the end of Curran's documentary, he provides this: "Add up all the political money spent at Georgia Power, Mississippi Power, Florida Power, Kentucky Power, Carolina Power & Light, Ohio Power, and Duke Energy in 2008, and it still didn't equal the money spent by Alabama Power that year." Once again, "follow the money" in politics because it is always extremely revealing.

Marcia Chambliss is the Alabama State Coordinator of Smart Girl Politics, a 501(c)(3) non-profit dedicated to the education and training of activists and candidates, and Smart Girl Politics Action, <http://sgpaction.com/>, a 501(c)(4) which focuses on conservative issues. She can be reached at Marcia@sgpaction.com. Her views do not necessarily reflect the opinions of Smart Girl Politics Action.

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The Education Station... By Bobbie Ames

The Gift of Christmas: Grace

Many years ago, I visited Dr. Jim Fleming's Study Center in Jerusalem. He was, and is, an outstanding archaeologist, teaching at the Hebrew University. Besides his teaching, he operated a non profit ministry with the mission of helping people of all faiths experience the ancient Biblical world, in history and culture.

Having been a teacher in a Christian school, and in various church Sunday Schools and Bible Schools, I was keenly aware of the need for children to be engaged in the everyday life of the Bible characters from whom we are to learn so much. So many times, children "lump" Bible stories in the same category as fairy tales of other literature. This had always troubled me, that this was prevalent in many Christian families. Today Christian Media (DVDs) is available to help families to counteract this problem, but it is still a problem.

I came away from that wonderful, glorious visit to Israel, longing for more time with Dr. Jim Fleming and his study center. There was a longing for a deeper understanding of God's Word and his chosen people, Israel. Little did I ever dream, that one day, Dr. Fleming and his team would move to La Grange, Georgia, and establish the most outstanding museum in the Southeast United States on Antiquity, in the light of God's Truth. So I challenge you to go on line, get the museum information. and plan to give your family a special gift during the holidays. Every age person will experience the eye-opening delight of the Explorations in Antiquity Museum in La Grange, Take the short journey to experience the next best thing to Israel itself. Give it to your family as their gift at Christmas.

The recent additions of museum Artifacts from Israel are housed in specially constructed galleries which are now open and are on a long term loan from the Israel Antiquity Authority. The tour guides are outstanding and special tours can be arranged by appointment, as well as Biblical meals. There are tours for all age groups and no one can walk away without fresh understanding of Bible life and times, this alone is a treasured gift. Special teaching areas focus on themes, such as the Nativity, the Life of the Shepherd, The Life and Ministry of Jesus, Passion Week, The Geography of Israel, etc.

I have learned no much from Dr. Fleming's teaching and books. One of his studies, titled, The



New Testament House—one of 10 exhibit areas

Explorations in Antiquity is proud to announce the opening of the NEW Biblical Life Artifacts Gallery! We are one of only 7 museums worldwide, the fourth in the US, and the only museum in the Southeast to have a long-term collection of artifacts from the Israel Antiquities Authority. These artifacts are from the National Treasures of Israel.

Gifts of Christmas, brings to our understanding the gifts that Jesus received and those he gave during his earthly life. The gifts that we would naturally think of as his receiving are the gifts from the Magi: gold, frankincense, and myrrh. These small, but valuable gifts, probably financed their journey into Egypt.

Dr. Fleming's teaching focuses on gifts that are not wrapped, but should inspire us this Christmas season, to give gifts from the heart,...and not simply a purchase. Baby Jesus, hearing his mother compose and sing the Magnificat, what a gift, The gift of his parents' devotion, the gift of his religious education, the gift of others, Elizabeth and Zechariah, etc.

As Jesus grew, he poured out his gifts of comfort to the poor, the meek, the persecuted. He gave food to the hungry from his own hands, and the water of life to the thirsty. He gave the gift of hope to the downcast. He gave dignity and worth to a woman of Samaria, asking her for a drink of water. For one who felt unworthy, Jesus offered her the gift of Grace, living water. He brought life even from death.

The very heart of Christmas, the heart of our faith, is Grace. And what is Grace, but a gift? Jesus

washed his disciples feet, he gave them the communion cup and wafer, he freely forgave all, even Judas. Throughout the Scriptures, we see his gift of touch. He touched the leper. The woman who had suffered from hemorrhages for 12 years, only needed to touch his garment to be healed. He touched the eyes of the blind, for sight. In every village, he touched the sick, and all were healed by his gift.

The is the Lord Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow. His gifts of understanding, compassion, and even his very presence, are his gifts to us today. And Satan tries to block even the mention of his name, or the singing of Christmas carols in public. How can people come to faith, if they do not hear the Good News of the Gospel? Are we more determined than ever to celebrate the true meaning of Christmas? Let La Grange, Ga. be a pilgrimage for you this season, as it will be for me as I view those ancient artifacts and re-live the "ancient paths."

In the Upper Room, he said to Thomas, "Blessed are those who have not seen, but have believed." Our faith is not based on an empty tomb, it is based on the absolute power of his gift of Grace, which transforms lives. It is based on his inspired and infallible Word. Going back to Genesis and the everlasting Covenant with Abraham, we learned that "he believed the Lord, and it was counted to him as righteousness." Genesis 15:6

Today we live in a culture that appears to have forgotten the gifts offered by Jesus: his gift of unmerited favor, of unconditional forgiveness, based on Faith Alone in Christ Alone. During the Christmas season, I plan to drive to La Grange, again, and visit the Antiquity museum, always gaining insights on the glory of his gifts at Christmas. My prayer is that you will make the appointment to do the same things with those you love,

For more information and reservations:
Explorations in Antiquity Center
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www.digging4it.com.

Stop Common Core in Alabama

www.auee.org



Submitted By Sharon Sewell
Alabamians United for Excellence
in Education www.auee.org

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

ALABAMA'S BLENDED STANDARDS

Common Core is an all or nothing proposition. To say that we are using part of CC and part from Alabama Standards is just as ludicrous as saying that one is a little bit pregnant. It doesn't work that way. Common Core Standards are copyrighted and have to be used 100% verbatim, without changes. You are either in CC or you are not in CC. There is no in between.

But I keep hearing about how we took the best from Alabama Standards, which by the way rated better than Common Core's - but only up to a maximum of 15% of course - and blended it with Common Core and came up with our very own "Alabama Blend" called "Alabama College and Career Ready Standards," not to be confused with Georgia College and Career Ready Standards, or Florida College and Career Ready Standards, or Oklahoma College and Career Ready Standards, or Maine etc, etc, etc on out to 50 "totally different" state standards (because they have different names don't you see), which just happen to be identical and unchangeable but are definitely NOT a NATIONAL TAKE OVER OF EDUCATION by the FEDS. And I wish you anti-common core people would quit saying that and confusing people. Why don't you parents just

shut up about it and let the experts in Washington and the good hearted people at the Gate's Foundation do what is best for your kids.

Sorry, I...I got Common Cored away there for a second.

Oh, by the way, that 15% of Alabama's best Standards is forbidden to be used when testing in the assessments phase. Surprised? So, what part of 100% of Common Core did you not understand? I should not have had to explain this to you again but here we go- they have to teach 100% of Common Core and 100% is 100%: OK?

But, just for fun, let's play, "what if." What if you could actually use that 15% to create your "blended standards," what would you have? Well, under Common Core math there is no telling; let your imagination be your guide; the right answer is not even important; the important thing is just the fact (sorry I didn't mean to use that word) ... just that you understand how you arrived at your incorrect answer. Under real math, you would come up with some un-feeling and totally closed minded, un-changeable answer such as 85% CC and 15% Alabama Standards. But under Common Core math,

even though they are never allowed to assess it, they keep calling it their blended standards; sounds like they used a lot of deceptive spin... to mix their blend.

How to put this in real world understandable terms? Ok, let's try this. Say you have a bucket of un-fielded, un- tested, educational solution, that has never been used successfully anywhere in America and to this you add 15% of your finest, proven, Alabama beverage and you stir it up- you blend it. Would you want to serve that to your child with his school lunch? I didn't think so.

So why would that 15% Alabama Blend make it all better? The teachers are going to "teach to the test" anyway so that their students will test well on the Common Core assessments and they will look good in their evaluations and they will keep their jobs. Even if your little darlings knew exactly where to place their straws, they will not be allowed to sip the best- and all the rest is Common Core.Bon Appétit... ..Alabama Ed.

Ken Freeman, ACR



Dr. John Bitter
Editor-Senior Section

Gazette Seniors...

A BIBLICAL LOOK AT ELDER ABUSE

**YOU MAY BE
OVER THE HILL**
...if you remember that
when wishing someone a:
"Merry Christmas" it was
not a Federal offense

When the Lord selected Moses to lead his people He set down some rules. The first four dealt with ecclesiastical matters about who was the leader of the team, and the rules related thereto.

He then got down to laying down temporal rules, and the first of which concerned honoring fathers and mothers. In Exodus 20:12, He told Moses that he and his followers should honor their fathers and their mothers; respect one's elders. In short: When you're young do what they say; when you're older, take good care of them; and, perhaps, they may take care of you—some day.

But over the years man has gone somewhat astray with regard to the respect he renders to his elders; in fact in many cases he has downright made a mess of it.

As a result, we now have legislation languishing about in Congress pertaining to elder abuse: a measure designed to attend to our lapses in honoring our fathers and mothers.

We find that abuse of the elderly is happening all over the country, and the National Center on Elder Abuse is doing its best to keep tabs on them. But it's

not easy since there exists a blur between what qualifies as elder abuse and what does not, claims the center. Furthermore, the situation is worsened by the fact that each state has its own set of rules as it relates to this matter. We can give thanks that Alabama has some good, strong ones.

We Alabamians can take justified pride in the fact that our Legislature has seen fit to endow us with two pieces of legislation pertaining to elder abuse and outlining some stiff penalties for abusers. Not only that, but our Governor saw fit to create a Council for the Prevention of Elder Abuse; a body that meets regularly and most recently produced an Elder Abuse Tool Kit that is being placed in the hands of seniors in order that they might better be able to recognize abuses—and abusers—and that they may know precisely how to respond to them. If you don't have one, ask your ASHL representative about it, or contact your local Aging Consortium for one.

A sad commentary on all this, say the folks at the National Center, is that most seniors are being abused by their own adult children through neglect, abandonment, physical and emotional abuse, sexual assault and exploitation. Now that's shameful.

In 1996, the National Elder Abuse Incidence

Study showed that more than 500,000 Americans over the age of 60 were the victims of abuse that year. On top of that, 84 percent of the cases went unreported and only 16 percent of those who were abused had lodged an official complaint.

To add to the grim reality of this picture is a report from the Senate Special Committee on Aging that tells us that nearly 5 million seniors suffer from elder abuse each year. Elder abuse is a problem that is being addressed by the Federal Older Americans Act, which allots money to the various States in order that they might provide the necessary services that relate to abuse of the elderly.

Apparently there are some federal dollars (that's taxpayer dollars) laying about in Washington, but all this political posturing is getting in the way of this much needed funding getting where it can do the most good. Let's hope that our elected representatives get back to doing what it is they promised us they would do when they wanted our votes.

It might be well for our elected representatives to reconsider the message in Galatians 3:26 in relation to the old folk. Are not all Americans on the same team?

WHO'S LOOKIN' PROGRAM FOR DECEMBER

The month of December got underway on the 2nd with a presentation to Eastdale Estates residents and their friends by **Ms. Jackie Buck**, who represents the Montgomery area Council on Aging's Archibald Center and by **Mary Margaret Kyser** from the Montgomery Area Council on Aging. They informed Eastdale Estates residents, and their friends, about the myriad of activities being offered to Montgomery-area seniors at their facilities in both downtown Montgomery and at their Montgomery East center on the Atlanta Highway.

Dec. 9th - Rep. William L. Richards of the Alabama Silver-Haired Legislature, will talk with the senior residents about his tasks as Montgomery Chapter President of the American Association of Retired Persons, as well as an active member of the Alabama Council for the Prevention of Elder Abuse. As the bearer of those three imposing titles, Mr. Richards has a plethora of information that will be of interest to his audience.

Dec. 16th - Monica Sheeler of the Alabama Attorney General's office will be back at Eastdale by popular demand, to talk about Internet scams. It seems as if everyone wants to put a hand in your pocket these days.

Dec 23rd - Jackson Hospital's affable Patient Advocate, **J. Mark Springer**, will make another repeat performance on December 23, this time to talk about how to deal with the Christmas Blues.

Dec. 30th - Wrapping up this Christmas month will be **Robyn James**, a member of the State's Elder Abuse Council. She will be back after a five-month hiatus to reinforce Mr. Richards' summation of his activities on the 9th and to talk about elder abuse in general.

These weekly presentations are designed to keep seniors apprised of both the many pitfalls that lurk in their paths, and inform them on the progress Alabama is making to protect them from the various forms of elder abuse. They're free and the public is welcome to attend.

AFFORDABLE WHAT?

Ho ho ho, exclaimed Obama Claus as he disappeared up the chimney after leaving a hefty Christmas present of 20,000 pages of rules and regulations wrapped up in a cheery package with red and green ribbons and a card inscribed "Obama Care, read it and weep."

And a lot of weeping is going on as a result. If ever there was an applicable example of the word fiasco, this is it. There are a lot of people around the country this Christmas who are wishing they had voted differently now that they're stuck with the President's Yuletide gift.

In it they'll find all manner of hidden taxes and fees that will jump out and bite them in their quest for a healthy life; if Mr. Obama ever gets this mess straightened out

With the U.S. Supreme Court's constitutional imprimatur on it, the Affordable Care Act may well turn out to be the bus under which we old folks have been thrown.

Happy New Year!



Kyle McKinney

By **Kyle D. McKinney**

**Alabama Public Affairs
Specialist**

**Social Security
Administration**

LET'S ADDRESS SOME FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS POSED TO SOCIAL SECURITY.

Question: How can I get proof of my benefits to apply for a loan?

Answer: If you need

proof you get Social Security benefits, Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and/or Medicare, you can request a benefit verification letter online through your my

Social Security account at www.socialsecurity.gov/myaccount. This letter is sometimes called a "budget letter," a "benefits letter," a "proof of income letter," or a "proof of award letter." You even can select the information you want included in your online benefit verification letter.

Question: I'm getting married soon. How can I get my name changed on my Social Security card?

Answer: After the wedding, gather your marriage document and other papers proving your: identity; and United States (if you have not yet established your citizenship with us) or immigration status (including Department of Homeland Security permission to work in the United States). Then, complete an application for a Social Security card, which you can find at www.socialsecurity.gov. Finally, mail your completed application and documents or take this information to your local Social Security office. You can find your nearest Social Security office at www.socialsecurity.gov/locator. Remember: Your documents must be either originals or copies certified by the issuing agency. We cannot accept photocopies or notarized copies of documents. Any documents you mail to us will be returned to you along with a receipt.

Question: Is it true that ten thousand people are retiring each day? What is the best way for me to apply and avoid long lines in my Social Security office?

Answer: Yes. The best way is to use our online retirement application at www.socialsecurity.gov. You can complete it in as little as 15 minutes. It's so easy. You can apply from the comfort of your home or office at a time most convenient for you. Once you've electronically submitted your application, you're done. In

most cases, there's no need to submit any documents. There's also no need to drive to a local Social Security office or wait for an appointment with a Social Security representative.

Question: Does Social Security offer tools for retirement planning?

Answer: Yes. Social Security offers several retirement planning tools to help you better understand your Social Security protection as you plan for your financial future. Go to www.socialsecurity.gov/planners to get started. Then choose a benefit calculator to estimate your monthly benefit amounts.

Question: I have a 38-year-old son who has been disabled by cerebral palsy since birth. I plan to apply for retirement benefits. Will he be eligible for benefits as my disabled child?

Answer: Yes. In general, an adult disabled before age 22 may be eligible for child's benefits if a parent is deceased or starts receiving retirement or disability benefits. We consider this a "child's" benefit because we pay it on the parent's Social Security earnings record.

The "adult child"—including an adopted child, or, in some cases, a stepchild, grandchild, or step grandchild—must be unmarried, age 18 or older, and have a disability that started before age 22.

Question: I just received my first disability payment. How long will I continue to get them?

Answer: In most cases, you will continue to receive benefits as long as you are disabled. However, there are certain circumstances that may change your continuing eligibility for disability benefits. For example,

Your health may improve to the point where you are no longer disabled; or Like many people, you would like to go back to work rather than depend on your disability benefits and you are successful in your attempt.

Also, the law requires that we review your case from time to time to verify you are still disabled. We tell you if it is time to review your case, and we also keep you informed about your benefit status. You also should be aware that you are responsible for letting us know if your health improves or you go back to work.



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BURGLARIES IN THE RAMER AND PINTLALA AREAS

The recent rash of burglaries in the Ramer and Pintlala area of the county has caused a great amount of concern for the citizens who live in those areas. A town hall type meeting was recently held in Ramer to try to put those concerns to rest. Rumors were rampant and were spreading quickly. Commissioner Reed Ingram and Chief Derrick Cunningham met with the folks recently and most of them were satisfied that we had the problem pretty much under control. It is like a few years ago when the rumors were spreading that there was a B/M who was wearing a bullet proof vest and carrying an assault rifle committing burglaries from Pike Road to the County line. There was a rash of burglaries being committed at that time but the suspect had taken these items during one of the burglaries and when we caught him, he had already sold both the vest and the rifle. He wasn't armed during his arrest. I am glad that the Ramer meeting was held because people were able to get information firsthand about the burglaries. We would like to thank everybody who showed up for the meeting.

As it turned out there were three or four different groups, all from the city, that were committing these burglaries. We flooded the south part of the county with deputies by changing assignments and paying overtime. It came in handy when a home owner on Highway 94 was driving by his home when he saw a vehicle backed up to his house. He got a good description and called us. Deputy Greg Thompson found the car and was able to apprehend three suspects. We called for the Kilby tracking team and for the State Trooper helicopter when the fourth suspect decided he was going to run into the woods. That was a bad mistake for him. He was taken into custody after a two hour chase. I guess he thought that he was in the city where he has probably run before and was able to hide. With the assistance of the dogs and the helicopter, there are not many places to hide in the woods, especially when you are not familiar with the area. All property taken in the burglary, except for a small pistol was recovered in the car. Jazzmine Briggs, Christina Luster, a juvenile and Marlon Ambers have been charged with the burglary and theft and are suspects in other burglaries in the area. Ambers has an extensive record, including being a registered sex offender.

We also experienced some burglaries where mostly jewelry was taken. It turns out that Timothy Clark was our suspect in these cases. He was out on bond in Montgomery, Autauga and Elmore counties for several jewelry burglaries. Clark has been re-arrested and is now stuck in jail until a Judge has a bond hearing on him.



Anthony Vila



Christina Luster-



Jazzmine Briggs



Marlon Ambers



Stephen Hornsby



Timothy Clark

We also had several burglaries during the last month or so in the Woody Road/Mt. Zion Road area that were similar to several burglaries in other parts of the county. It turns out that two men working for a meat sales company were using the door to door sales angle to case the houses and, if the owner was not at home, just break in then. If the owner was home they would later come back and hit the house. Steven Hornsby and Anthony Vila have warrants signed on them for some of these burglaries, but they have taken off to parts unknown. Hornsby has relatives in Elmore County and in North Alabama and Vila is from up north around PA. We have a nationwide lookout placed on them and it is just a matter of time before they are apprehended. Of course both of them have previous records and are not new to the system. We have been able to recover part of the property they took.

I know that it seems like crime is high because of the number of recent burglaries but we are about average in the county. Since 2007 we have

averaged 242 burglaries per year and this year we are around 230 with a month and a couple of weeks left in the year. Of course the holiday season is upon us and burglaries usually pick up. Many of these thieves do their Christmas shopping by committing these burglaries. Make it a little harder on them. Alarm your house with an audible alarm. A thief does not like noise and will spend a lot less time taking your property if there is a lot of noise being made. Be aware of your surroundings and call the Sheriff's office if you see something suspicious. Don't call the local store or a neighbor before you call us, give us a chance to check it out. Don't allow strangers to come into your house. They may be legitimate, but they could also be like Hornsby and Vila. Consider getting a dog, a big one that barks and looks like it will bite or a little one that barks a lot. Join your local neighbor watch and attend the meetings. The Sheriff's Office attends these meetings and we keep the members updated on what is going on in their neighborhood. If you need to know about meetings in your area, call Christie Vasquez at 832-1339 and she will get the information you need.

~~~~~  
*Hope you had a happy and safe Holiday Season and enjoy the football games. Remember if you have a few brews, please do not drive. always have a designated driver and arrive home safely.*  
*We wish each one of you a very Merry Christmas. Please help some needy families in Montgomery County and have a Merry Christmas by coming to the WalMart on Ann Street on December 7 between 7 a.m. and 12 noon and donate a toy to the Deputy Sheriff's Association toy drive. Each year our deputies help several needy families to have a better Christmas by playing Santa to their kids. If you can't make it out to WalMart, Call Jackie at 832-2515 or Christie at 832-1339 and we will arrange to come to you and pick up your donation.*  
*Merry Christmas!*



## John Sophocleus

Continued from page 5

The Speaker also evoked Alabama's state motto "We Dare Defend Our Rights." Frankly he should be ashamed at how weak he's been in the past in this regard and I'm ashamed voters in my district have sent a 'public servant' of such poor character and intellect to Montgomery. Some assert Mr. Hubbard has shown much more daring in mandating insurance to transfer wealth to himself and his cronies; daring to position himself for State contracts; daring to use his position for \$1 million dollar unsecured loans; than daring to defend/protect our civil rights - religious or otherwise. Mr. Hubbard's O-A News editorial is quick to call out the FFRF bigoted bullies he's aided & abetted, so I'll evoke a little Ronald Reagan who may have suggested the Speaker begin with looking at the 'man' in the mirror.

This column is intended to be at least one sobering moment in your Christmas celebration to think about how important it is to be an integral part of standing against despotism in our federal, local and State

governments. It is my sincere prayer all who know the power of Jesus Christ's teachings will take Him into their hearts this blessed season and overcome the distraction of consumerism and destruction at the hands of the ruling elite who have made a modern Roman (Soviet style/command and control) government their god. I know the Holy Spirit in Jesus Christ, Son of the true God is indeed greater than the spirit of evil in the sons of Nimrod, Caesar(s) et al because it is His name which remains above all nations. This small Child of God, 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, with the lowest of mankind by worldly standards would do more to bring light and the spirit of Zion to a wicked world than Rome could possibly contain. And yes... the spirit of Zion has nothing to do with geography - It does not recognise geopolitical boundaries of man. Clearly the wicked want the righteous to go away and die... As you celebrate the beginning of Jesus Christ's path in 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 in this

world. Without this fear Rome's (and the many leviathans to follow) ability to advance their despotism ends is thwarted. Jesus showed us the way - it is up to us to have the courage, faith and wisdom to follow. If we do not stand well against evil and corruption in our everyday lives, we are failing Him and the righteous efforts many suffered so mankind may not be compelled to endure the agony of Roman despotism again.

Venerating the start of Christ's journey as man in this world is indeed a beginning for us all... a time for renewal of our commitment to a better world and the courage to stand well against evil. How will you proceed? Better days are ahead if you follow His path - if not, the growing fear and darkness will continue to envelop us. *I pray the powerful meaning of this season is not lost upon you, so our posterity may enjoy God's blessings if we allow Him into our lives.* Make the difficult effort to identify 'Judas rhetoric' of our despicable public servants. You can be God's servant OR a servant to Rome; it is impossible to serve both... it really is that simple. The choice is yours to make or reaffirm every Christmas.



# Soul Searching

DR. RICK MARSHALL - Eastern Hills - Baptist Church

THE MARSHALL MOMENT



## THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

As we prepare for Christmas among the most prominent symbols of the season are the lights. Perhaps it would seem almost a foregone conclusion that everyone makes the connection between lights and celebrating the birth of Christ. There are reasons we have trees and wreaths among the various decorations and certainly the Christmas characters in small manger scenes all the way to live displays. However, light precedes them all in order. For the announcement was made both with light and about a light, a light of the world.

In **Matthew 2:1-2** we read, "Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? For we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him". Similarly, the angelic announcement to the shepherds came in a spectacular heavenly display of light. "And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord".

(**Luke 2:8-12**)

Jesus spoke of Himself later as recorded in the Gospel of John, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." (**John 8:12**)

To more fully appreciate what Jesus meant consider the setting. Many Bible commentators believe that Jesus spoke these words at a very special moment in the life of the Jewish people. For seven days each year the Jews celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles. God had inaugurated this feast to help them remember that for 40 years their ancestors had wandered in the wilderness before God finally brought them into the promised land. At this celebration a large Menorah with bowls of oil was lit on the Temple grounds. The people were reminded that God had led them in the wilderness with a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. Scholars think Jesus may have spoken these words just as the Menorah was

being lit at the Temple as a reminder that whoever followed Him would never be in darkness again.

Of course Jesus was not referring to the physical day and night, but rather the darkness of ignorance, injustice and sin. Let me offer some more specific thoughts about what He may have been saying and is still telling us today.

Just as their ancestors had been guided through the wilderness on the way to the Promised Land, He would be our guide and protector. I like the story of the grandfather who took his little grandson for a walk in the woods. As they were walking along they stopped for a moment & the grandfather asked, "Do you know where we are?" The little boy said, "No."

The grandfather asked, "Do you know where we're going?" And the little boy again said, "No." The grandfather chuckled & said, "Well, I guess you're lost then." The boy looked up at his grandfather & said, "No, I'm not lost. I'm with you."

No matter what may happen to us in the world or where we find ourselves, the Lord is with us. And when Jesus is with us we are never lost. The Bible says, "He is our light and our salvation. Of whom should we be afraid?"

Even more importantly, I think these words of Jesus remind us of the Truth which is like a light in the dark world of religions and cults. I am reminded of a moving story from someone who had spent some time with missionaries in Thailand. He told about coming to a village nestled in the mountains of Thailand and seeing string everywhere stretched from all the poles and trees and around all the houses and buildings in the village. In fact, the whole village was wrapped in string.

When he asked "Why?" they learned that it was because the week before a girl had committed suicide there. The people, who are Buddhist and fear evil spirits, believed that because of her suicide evil spirits would soon be coming to their village. So they hired Buddhist monks to help them. These monks had wound string around their houses, around their yards and all around their community telling the people that the string would keep out the evil spirits.

When the visitors went by the Buddhist temple they saw many idols and people bowing down

to them. They also noticed that deep little holes had been dug here and there all around the temple grounds. When they asked "Why?" they were told that the priests had dug them and that they would be putting lighted candles down in the holes because the priests believed that the flickering light would frighten away the evil spirits.

This is the kind of superstition and fear Jesus came to replace in people's lives. He is the true light and in Him is no darkness. He came to offer hope through redemption from our sins. With Jesus in our lives we do not have to live in fear of evil or the thought of an eternity apart from God.

While many of us are the recipients of the light and hope Christ came to offer, many have not yet heard. In **John 1:4**, writing about Jesus, the apostle John says, "In Him was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it." Further we read in verses nine through eleven, John says, "The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world. He was in the world, and though the world was made through Him, the world did not recognize Him."

Just as in that day not everyone today will recognize Christ as Savior. Our job is not to force the Gospel on anyone, but to give witness of the light in our lives. What people do with Christ is up to them. One of the certain characteristics of all who have the light of Christ in their heart is to wish it for others. In this season we should be especially prayerful for people of the world who have never yet heard of Christ or of the God who loved them so much He sent His only Son to die on the cross for their sins. They do live in a world of darkness without eternal hope. My prayer is that the light of Christ might be reflected from us into our culture and to the extremes of the earth so that no one will ever miss the opportunity to know the One who is the Light of the World.

One day Jesus Christ will pull back the curtain of time and space, then the light of His presence, the glow of His glory & the brilliance of His splendor will radiate forth as He breaks the fabric of the eastern sky to reveal His eternal victory and claim His reward, His Church. Then we too will shine forth in the beauty of His holiness. I hope this coming transformation of His true church will include you also.

## Christmas Musical Presentations



**WOODLAND UNITED METHODIST CHURCH**  
4428 Wallahatchie Road, Pike Road, Alabama 36064  
334-272-7230  
Friday, December 13th - 7:00 p.m.  
Sunday December 15th - 10:30 a.m.  
"Bethlehem Morning"

**HOPE HULL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH**  
305 Wasden Road, Hope Hull, Alabama 36043  
334-288-3956  
December 15th - 11:00 am  
"Bethlehem Morning"

**TAYLOR ROAD BAPTIST CHURCH**  
1685 Taylor Road, Montgomery, Alabama 36117  
334-271-3363  
December 11th - 10:30 am  
"Adult Choir Christmas Program"

**EASTERN HILLS BAPTIST CHURCH**  
3604 Pleasant Ridge Road, Montgomery, Alabama 36109  
334-272-0604  
December 8th  
3:00 - 4:30 p.m. and 6:00 - 7:30 p.m.  
"Hanging of the Green"

**DALRAIDA BAPTIST CHURCH**  
3838 Wares Ferry Road, Montgomery, Alabama 36109  
Phone: 334-272-2412  
December 8th - 6:00 p.m.  
"Celebration Choir Christmas Musical"  
December 15th - 6:00 p.m.  
"Children's Choir Program"

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is the Reason for Music!

**YOUNG MEADOWS PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**  
5780 Vaughn Road, Montgomery, Alabama 36116  
334-244-1385  
December 8th - 6:00 p.m.  
"Services of Lessons and Carols"  
Reception - 7:00 - 8:30 p.m.



**SNOWDOWN BAPTIST CHURCH**  
6564 Norman Bridge Road, Montgomery, Alabama 36105  
334-280-0217  
December 15th - 11:00 a.m.  
"Christmas Contada"

**HERITAGE BAPTIST CHURCH**  
849 Perry Hill Road, Montgomery, Alabama 36106  
334-279-9976  
Wednesday, December 11th - 6:30 p.m.  
Sunday, December 15th - 6:00 p.m.  
Life Changing Christmas Musical



# Today's Woman

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

**Pregnant?**  
*Maybe...  
 Maybe not...  
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**“THE TRUE MEANING OF CHRISTMAS”**

With the most popular holiday just around the corner, it seems like everyone is trying to get into the Christmas spirit. Stores line their aisles with Christmas goodies and decor, TV shows have switched to the theme of giving and love, and Santas are starting to pop up everywhere. And why shouldn't they? After all, it is that time of year. It's the meaning of the season. Right?

Yet, the very first Christmas seemed to do without all of these. The very first Christmas somehow started a frenzy without the power of TV, without Candy Canes, without Santa, and without Christmas sales. Even more amazingly, the very first Christmas involved a poor couple, nobodies, who would lay the most precious child of all in a manger.

Looking back on Black Friday, I am constantly reminded how far we have come from the true meaning of Christmas. Christmas wasn't just about giving or feeling loved, but it was about true love. Christmas is the celebration of the birth of Christ, the Savior who came into this world to die... for everyone, even those who killed him.

*“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.”*  
**Luke 2:14**

This Christmas Season, let us remember the true meaning of Christmas...for the Savior has come to give us the greatest gift of all. **LOVE!**

**Merry Christmas & Many Blessings!**

## Jesus-Born of a Virgin

**LUKE 1: 26-55**

26 And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth,  
 27 To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary.  
 28 And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women.  
 29 And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be.  
 30 And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God.  
 31 And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus.  
 32 He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David:  
 33 And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.

34 Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?  
 35 And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.  
 36 And, behold, thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren.  
 37 For with God nothing shall be impossible.  
 38 And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her.  
 39 And Mary arose in those days, and went into the hill country with haste, into a city of Juda;  
 40 And entered into the house of Zacharias, and saluted Elisabeth.  
 41 And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost:  
 42 And she spake out with a loud voice, and said, Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb.

**Luke 2: 1-7 - BIRTH**

And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed.  
 2 (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.)  
 3 And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city.  
 4 And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is

called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:)  
 5 To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child.  
 6 And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered.  
 7 And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.

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**Recipe for: Easy Crescent Taco Bake**

|                                                                   |                                      |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1 can (8 oz) Pillsbury® refrigerated crescent dinner rolls        | 1 cup shredded Cheddar cheese (4 oz) |
| 1 lb lean (at least 80%) ground beef                              | Shredded lettuce, as desired         |
| 3/4 cup Old El Paso® Thick 'n Chunky salsa                        | Diced tomato, as desired             |
| 2 tablespoons Old El Paso® taco seasoning mix (from 1-oz package) |                                      |

- Heat oven to 375°F. Unroll dough; separate into 8 triangles. Place in ungreased 9-inch square pan or 10-inch pie plate; press over bottom and up sides to form crust.
- In 10-inch skillet, cook beef over medium heat 8 to 10 minutes, stirring occasionally, until thoroughly cooked; drain. Stir in salsa and taco seasoning mix; simmer 5 minutes. Spoon meat mixture in crust-lined pan; sprinkle with cheese.
- Bake 14 to 17 minutes or until crust is deep golden brown and cheese is melted. Served topped with lettuce and tomato.

Recipe makes 6 servings Pillsbury.com

**Recipe for: Holiday Breakfast Bake**

|                                     |                                                                                 |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 package (12 oz) bulk pork sausage | 10 eggs                                                                         |
| 1/3 cup chopped onion               | 1 cup shredded Cheddar cheese (4 oz)                                            |
| 1/3 cup chopped green bell pepper   | 1 can (16.3 oz) Pillsbury® Grands!® Flaky Layers refrigerated original biscuits |
| 1/3 cup chopped red bell pepper     |                                                                                 |

- Heat oven to 375°F. Spray 13x9-inch (3-quart) glass baking dish with cooking spray. In 10-inch skillet, brown sausage, onion and bell peppers; drain well.
- In large bowl, beat eggs. Stir in cheese and sausage mixture. Separate dough into 8 biscuits. Press biscuits into bottom of baking dish. Pour sausage mixture over biscuit crust.
- Bake 25 to 30 minutes or until egg mixture is set and crust is deep golden brown. Cool 5 minutes before serving.

Recipe makes 8 servings Pillsbury.com

Patricia Killough



Please send Patricia your family birthdays, anniversaries and weddings to [alabamagazette@yahoo.com](mailto:alabamagazette@yahoo.com).

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

# HOME TOWN COMMUNITY NEWS

## December Birthdays



- |                                                                                       |                                                        |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 Chris Hudson<br>Emma Louise Wingard                                                 | 19 Brad Echols<br>Cindy Stone<br>Ruth Cordle           |
| 2 Faye Ann Mount<br>Mike Northcutt<br>Skeeter Rhodes                                  | 20 Maggie Mills<br>Susan Yost                          |
| 3 Alison Lee Riley<br>Cam Stanton                                                     | 21 Katherine(Kaki) Hines                               |
| 4 Gail Cotney                                                                         | 22 Austin Champion<br>Paul Harper<br>Robert Harrington |
| 5 Don Byrd                                                                            | 23 Kodee Harrison<br>Carla Johnson                     |
| 7 Jeannie Leigh Boyles<br>Tobias Grant<br>Belle Sansom                                | 24 Joyce Turnipseed<br>Kaitlin Rowe                    |
| 8 Meredith Sellars                                                                    | 25 JESUS CHRIST<br>Eldridge Bracknell<br>Nancy Setzer  |
| 11 Lauren Lane<br>Chad Roberson<br>Justin Sessions                                    | 27 Sandy Brown<br>Austin Yost                          |
| 12 Mollie Higgins                                                                     | 28 Andy Meadows<br>William Webb                        |
| 13 Anita Tylicki<br>Jeanette Kinman<br>Landon Meadows                                 | 29 Amy Boyd<br>Mary Pat Sikes                          |
| 14 Fred Crowe<br>Ken Stringer                                                         | 30 Tiffany Hammock<br>Scott Takacs<br>Sarah Watkins    |
| 15 Ronnie Suhr                                                                        | 31 Bethany Black Neubauer<br>Addison Wise              |
| 17 Betty Armistead<br>Travers Grant<br>Dorothy Kiser<br>Deborah Kirk<br>Martha French |                                                        |



### Happy Birthday Annabelle Grace O'Neal

Annabelle celebrated her 3rd birthday on November 23rd. Her actual birth date was November 27th, but she wanted a weekend party to have family and friends attend. She is daughter of Brett and Barbie O'Neal and the grand-daughter of Marie Hudson who is the layout artist of The Alabama Gazette.

### College Friends Enjoy Biennial Reunion...



Debbie Partridge, Glenise Boyd and Anita Green

In late September 2013, childhood and college friends Glenise Lyerly Boyd, Anita Hatway Green and Debbie Boyd Partridge enjoyed their biennial reunion in the historic city of Savannah, Georgia, and on Tybee Island. Upon arrival they enjoyed a wonderful meal at the Sundae Café.

The first full day in Savannah they participated in a bus tour which allowed them to get off and on at their leisure to take in the 24 city square/parks of historic Savannah, such as, the Orleans Square, the Telfair Square, Forsyth Park and Calhoun Square (seeing the statue of the John Wesley, founder of the United Methodist Church). On River Street, they had lunch at The Cotton Exchange and leisurely browsed the many shops on this street. Later that afternoon, while walking on the beach and taking in the beautiful sunset on Tybee Island, they noticed two young men with nets catching something...turned out to be shrimp!

On the second day, they visited the Bonaventure Cemetery. This cemetery was built on the site of the Bonaventure Plantation and became a cemetery in 1846. They had lunch at The Pink House, which is located at Calhoun Square.

As always, "parting is such sweet sorrow." However, on their return trip to Alabama, these special friends were already discussing where they would go in 2015!

### Belated Birthday Wishes to Helen Beasley 89 on November 21, 2013



- |                                                              |                                                           |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|
| Dec. 1 Troy & Kim Worrell                                    | Dec. 12 Tom & Caroline Vocino                             |
| Dec. 4 Rich & Jacque Takacs                                  | Dec. 14 Ronnie & Michelle Blount<br>Scott & Debbie Mills  |
| Dec. 7 Del & Prasertsi Atkinson                              | Dec. 16 Robert & Georgia Armstrong<br>Bill & Barbara Berg |
| Dec. 8 Buddy & Rhonda Black                                  | Dec. 18 William(Windy) &<br>Linda Wingard (43rd)          |
| Dec. 9 Perry & Nancy Butler<br>Danny & Kristie Richardson    | Dec. 20 Wayne & Sarah Watkins                             |
| Dec. 10 Heath & Dana Crowe<br>Jim & Jeanette Kinma<br>(54th) | Dec. 23 Rex & Esther Jones (53rd)                         |
| Floyd & Mary Price                                           | Dec. 30 George & Jeannie Handey                           |

### JULIE BEASLEY COMPETES WITH "VERN"



Photograph by Erin Johnson of Snapshot Ranch Photography

Julie Beasley showing her 8-year-old cutting horse, Duallin in the Snow (nicknamed Vern), in Batesville, Miss. They finished Top 15 in the \$15,000 Novice Non-Pro Class and qualified to compete in the National Cutting Horse Association (NCHA) World Finals to be held in Fort Worth, Texas, in December.

### Belated Anniversary Wishes to Todd and Sandy Rogers Celebrating their 10th on November 14th

### Sympathy to the families of...

- Hassey, Elsie Mae Champion (70).....died October 28, 2013  
 Stafford, Warren M. ....died November 1, 2013  
 Johnson, Wylie Pierson (94) .....died November 2, 2013  
 Lee, Durden Coleman "Coach" (75).....died November 2, 2013  
 Olive, Wilbur Naftel (78).....died November 3, 2013  
 Hill, Florence Hardwick (88).....died November 4, 2013  
 Adams, Thomas H. (retired Air Force Captain) (78)died November 6, 2013  
 Melton, Oakley (86) .....died November 10, 2013  
 Hall, Betty Baggett (86) .....died November 15, 2013  
 Maxey, Martha "Bobbie" Brown.....died November 22, 2013  
 Crane, Joanna Breedlove (83) .....died November 23, 2013



**Judge  
Peggy Givhan**

# SOUTHERN GARDENING

## DECEMBER POTPOURRI - by Peggy Givhan

The period of time between Thanksgiving and Christmas can make one believe one is in a time warp, for literally time flies at the speed of light. Everywhere there abounds crisper air, and the bustle of children and adults gearing up for one of America's greatest holidays on December 25th.

From now on, all eyes are on the countdown of days until Christmas. It is a time of year that many think beyond their own family's needs, and reach out in unbelievable ways to make those less fortunate to be a part of the joys of this wondrous season. Wouldn't it be an immense and miraculous event, if everyone in our area take the time to touch a family who is in need whether through a food bank, a church, or one of the hundreds of community agencies who work with and identify those individuals. Even if we can not afford to give material items, a sincere thought or a word of encouragement, a visit to a nursing home, or just a prayer for well being would convey the message for Peace on Earth and Good will to all Men.

And it is officially fall until December the 22nd and many of us struggle daily to rake or blow the leaves which glide down from the trees in sheets. The Wall Street Journal had a good article setting out some of the hazards of this time from allergens to mold and fungus which breeds in the damp piles of leaves. Pollen is the main culprit mainly from grasses, trees and weeds. The solution may be quite simple in wearing hats, gloves and masks; gardening after a light rain since the air is cleared as opposed to heavy thundershowers which bring in more airborne pollens; and raking or blowing leaves either early in the morning or late in the afternoon. So hopefully these hints will keep us sniffle free.

Not only can we enjoy winter annual blooms outside in our gardens, but this time of year, we can create beautiful blooms inside our homes. The first flowers I look for are pots of mature annuals which will eventually freeze if left to the vagaries of the weather. These I have pruned, shaped and fertilized over the summer for this

very use. Two Dragon Wing begonias, one a rich red and another a shrimpy pink are now in brass containers in my library. Next I will bring in some geraniums which were repotted in August and plunge them into indoor containers around the fireplace hearth. I must admit I have witnessed a simply stunning effect.

In the meantime, I purchase narcissus bulbs for forcing which will be blooming by Christmas. Start these now. There are many stores and garden centers which carry these bulbs. Amaryllis bulbs, which come in a myriad of colors, when forced now, will be a showy addition to your home or office over the holidays. Even one big fine bulb with 2 or 3 blooms can be a show stopper. I have seen an arrangement for a dining room or foyer table which was actually very simple, but elegant. Take a shallow container or basket about 4 to 6 inches deep inches high and 15 to 18 inches in diameter, cover several pots of amaryllis with either green moss or Spanish moss, and voila, stunning. I have added battery operated tiny white lights in the moss, and use wired Christmas ribbon to add to the charm. And last but not least is the Holiday Cactus or Christmas Cactus. Colorful and readily available this time of year, use them liberally throughout your home. I am featuring this plant below are the plant of the month.



### PLANT OF THE MONTH - CHRISTMAS CACTUS (*Schlumbergia* spp.)

A favorite flower which blooms this time of year, especially around Thanksgiving and early December. There are varieties which bloom closer to Christmas and there are many colors to choose from. They grow their elongated blooms at the ends of cladodes, which are flattened stems which function as leaves. To be successful growing them indoors, keep the plant cool, with high humidity. Place it at times in the bathroom near the shower while in use. Never let the pot sit in water, nor water too frequently, nor put it in the direct sunlight.

**GOOD GARDENING AND MERRY CHRISTMAS.**

## CONNIE BOYD AND SKIP MAINOR MARRY IN KAUI



*On September 16, 2013  
Connie Boyd and Skip Mainor  
exchanged wedding vows on  
Shipwreck Beach on the isle of Kauai.  
A celebration party was held on  
November 2, 2013 in  
Earl Russell's Barn in Ada, AL*



*Friends and  
family  
celebrated  
with the  
Skip and  
Connie. A  
great time  
was had by  
all!*



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