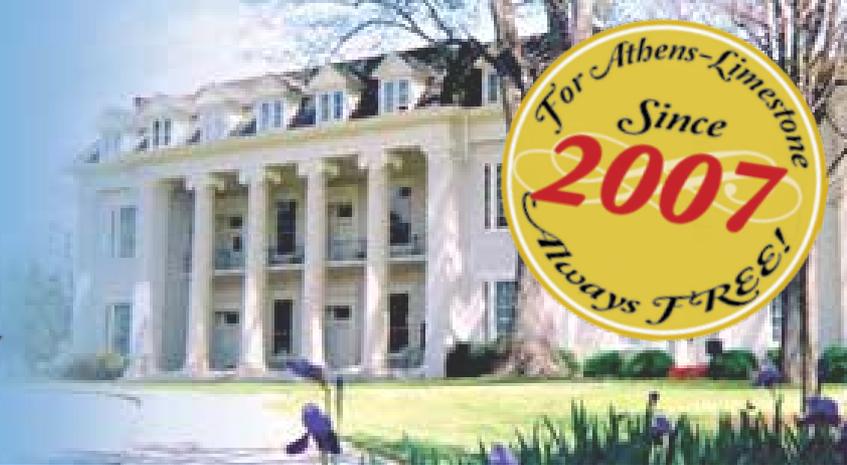


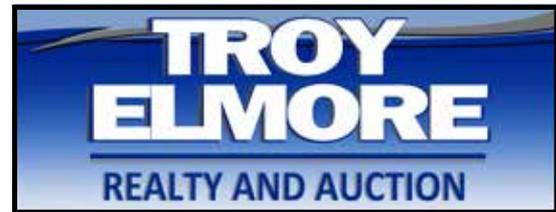
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All Things Soldier



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Life in the military can be tough, as military members and their families face difficult...

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Herbs & More: Delighting Dieters In A Whole New Way

By Ali Elizabeth Turner

For more than twenty years, Herbs & More has been in Athens working hard to improve our total health. That commitment, which has gone through some definite challenges has more than paid off, and as Roy Williams told me recently with conviction, "We have been blessed to be here in Athens, and to be the

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Roy and Gwen Williams,
founders of Herbs & More

Special Feature

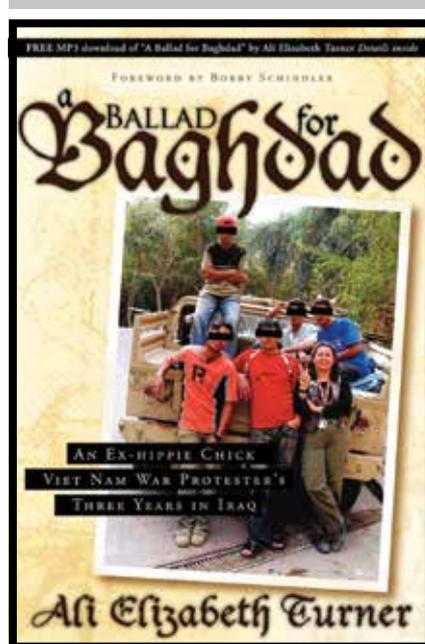
The Stories Project: Cherry Anne Ward...
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Special Feature

Giving Hope...
This past Saturday, thanks to the heart of the church I attend, I was allowed to be part of the greatest Christmas outreach I've ever experienced...

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A Ballad For Baghdad: Fifteen Years Later

By Ali Elizabeth Turner

On November 1, 2008, Morgan James Publishing of New York released a book entitled, *A Ballad For Baghdad: An Ex-Hippie Chick Vietnam War Protester's Three Years In Iraq*. It was an Amazon best-seller, and it launched a writing career -- mine. If you are new to the area or to *Athens Now*, you may not know that I experien-

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Publisher's Point

The Caterpillar And The End Of The World

As I think about 2023 giving way to 2024, and reflect back on what has happened in the last twelve months, I am astounded at the changes that have taken place inside of me. I turned 70, which was wild and weird. You have to remember, mine was the Woodstock generation which said, "Tune in, turn on, drop out," and "Don't trust anyone over 30." Now I am fully twice that and more, and I feel that in so many ways I am just getting started. The good stuff that has bloomed inside has only one Author, the little babe born in the manger whose birth disrupted everything more than 2,000 years ago.

I had the opportunity to be a part of history and attend the Asbury revival, and it was marvelous. It was a taste of heaven; I worshipped with people from

all over the world, and I never wanted it to end. You can't tell me heaven isn't real. I heard it in song and in the kindest voices I have ever encountered. Heaven is real, and while global disaster could erupt, it will be worth it for what is waiting for those who have come to love the One who had animals attend His birth and who was given gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

I spent six months fulfilling an assignment that I felt came from the Home Office, if you will, and that was to study business. A little over fifty years ago, before I surrendered to the King that was born in a stable, I would not have been willing to be caught dead knowing anything about business. After all, that was the realm of what we described with derision as "The Establishment," and

now I am an enthusiastic card-carrying member of the free market.

I had a life-changing weekend at Pure Hope Ranch in Texas. Pure Hope is a place where young women who have been trafficked get the most remarkable care and opportunity to not only survive, but to thrive. You can't go to Pure Hope without being changed, and as an ambassador for the Pure Hope Foundation, I can say that I am honored beyond my ability to express to represent that cause and fight for the end of trafficking.

I watched in fascination as a movie about trafficking defied all odds and took the country by storm. *Sound of Freedom* skillfully portrayed the lives of those who do the rescuing of children from their traffickers, as well as the children who have been taken from their families, and it is something that we now freely talk about. Against all odds, the film not only survived the gauntlet of resistance from Hollywood, pressed past their smears, and earned more than 200 million dollars at the box office.

I binge-watched *The Chosen*, and at a time that I felt I could not bear being stretched ministerially one more inch, in the dark of night I watched as Peter walked on water, looked at his circumstances, sank, was rescued by his Master, and by his crazy step

of faith changed lives, including mine. "Don't let me go," the character playing Peter said to Jesus who knew all about his and my storm long before it hit. And the King held me tight in the fiercest of inner storms.

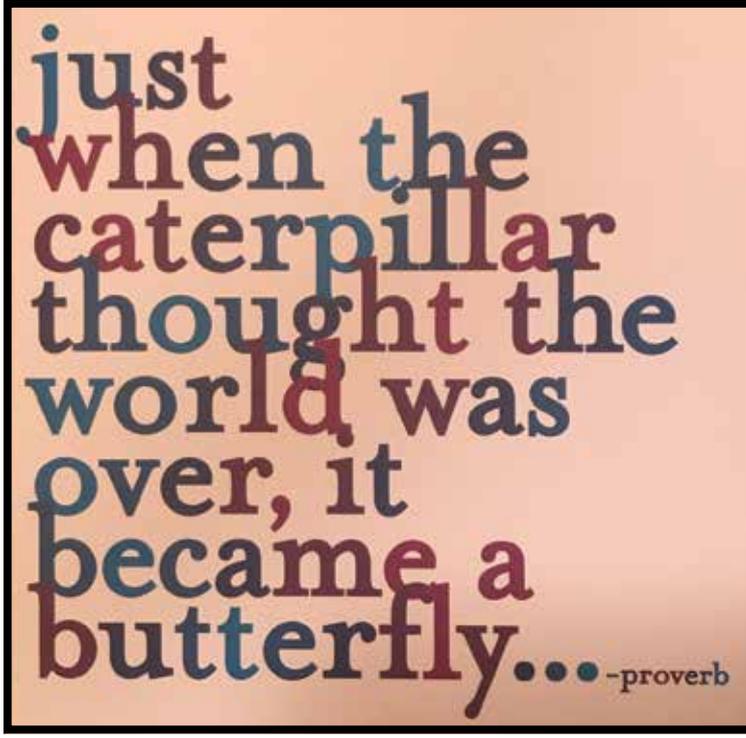
Which brings me to the caterpillar. I was given a refrigerator magnet, of all things, by a friend who is a business associate with a global health food company. She has taught me to dance, has challenged me to keep growing and going, and when she prays with and for me, she starts her prayers with "Daddy..."

What does the magnet say? "Just when the caterpillar thought the world was over, it became a butterfly..."

That's all I want. To go from the rather uncomely, bumpy, plodding, crawling munching insect through the necessary struggle of dissolving, "having the world end," transforming, and emerging as a butterfly. There is only One who has the love and skill to make that happen, and my fond hope is that in 2024 you let Him have His way forever. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to you all.

Ali Elizabeth Turner

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Veterans Treatment Court to Provide Support to Veterans in the Criminal Justice System in Limestone County



by Sandra Erickson

Life in the military can be tough, as military members and their families face difficult challenges and demands that strain even the strongest people. Unfortunately, many veterans find difficulties returning and reintegrating in civilian life. Like civilians, they commonly experience several significantly stressful events at once: moving to a new area, facing unemployment, and challenges finding stable housing. However, veterans transitioning to civilian life often have additional complications. They may return with serious health conditions such as post-traumatic stress, chronic pain, depression, substance abuse, and others. Some find ways to cope that increase the probability they will become involved

in the criminal justice system, ranging from arrests to incarceration.

The Nation's first Veterans Treatment Court (VTC) was established in 2008 in response to the growing number of veterans who were addicted to substances and suffering from mental illness appearing on the criminal dockets. Since that time, there have been hundreds more established in several states, including Alabama. The VTCs help rehabilitate non-violent veteran offenders while reducing the strains on the courts, corrections, and veterans. Through the VTC, veterans may receive mental health assessments, treatment, transitional services, and connections to needed veteran-specific support services.



Members of the newly established Limestone County Veterans Treatment Court.

A Veterans' Treatment Court has been established in Limestone County, Alabama. Limestone County Community Corrections, AMVETS Post 21, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Disabled American Veterans, American Legion, Vietnam Veterans of America, along with judiciary and legal professionals, and veterans' advo-

advocates have worked to establish a VTC to help our local veterans who are involved in the criminal justice system. Limestone County Veterans' Treatment Court held its first hearing on November 13, 2023. By addressing the underlying issues faced by veterans, the Veterans' Treatment Court aims to break the cycle of

recidivism and provide a pathway for these heroes to rebuild their lives.

The VTCs are managed by volunteers and are estimated to save several thousands of dollars of the cost to house incarcerated inmates while still providing the rehabilitation goals sought through incarceration. According to the Department of Corrections, it costs \$30,163 annually to house an Alabama inmate. This can translate into better savings to not only the taxpayer, but the local community and the state, as more participants graduate from the VTCs.

The Limestone County Veterans Treatment Court exemplifies our commitment to recognizing and supporting the unique needs of military veterans involved with the criminal justice system, offering hope and a second chance for those who have served our country, all while ensuring the needs of the veteran, the judicial system, and the local community are met with professionalism, precision, and dedication.

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The Stories Project: Cherry Anne Ward

by Kris Erskine, Assistant Professor of Secondary History / Social Studies Education
Athens State University



Although not a Christmas story, it is a true story that embodies the ideals of love and peace in the Christmas season. In an era where the differences between us are used as a wedge to divide us, a story of peace despite stark differences, love despite hate, a moment of redeeming love in the storm of violence, this is worth retelling.

In the wake of the American Revolution, Native Americans in the southeastern United States were forced into treaties with the U.S. government. The British provided a supply of weapons to native peoples who were willing to resist the westward march of white settlers. On the eve of the War of 1812 and the Creek Wars, violence against native peoples and white settlers was on the rise. Tecumseh's visit to this region in 1811 further encouraged resistance against white settlement and made life dangerous for white settlers.

In this setting, probably around 1810, the Greenberry and Elizabeth Taylor family moved to the area of what is now Cherokee, Alabama, and seem to have quickly established friendly relations with a local band of Cherokee, including a chief whose young daughter Mrs. Taylor is said to have cured from sickness when Native remedies did not seem to help. The daughter lived and, according to oral tradition, the Cherokee chief befriended the Taylors, and later warned them when a band of Choctaw warriors were planning violence against settlers in the region. Violence

against white families was not unusual and became more common during the Creek War (1813-1814). But instead of offering violence, the Cherokee offered the Taylors protection from the attacks. At a time when Native relations with whites were not good, both the Taylors and the Cherokee chose to view the other with compassion as human beings. Despite how different they were from each other, they did not cancel each other. Where hate could have won, love prevailed. The legacy of this story is tangibly alive and well here today in Athens resident Cherry Anne Ward.

When the Taylors asked the chief how they could repay his life-saving kindness, he is said to have asked only that the Taylor's next child be named after the Cherokee people in honor of the relationship. That child was born in April 1812, and named Priscilla Cherokee Taylor. Every generation born in this lineage until 1898 named their first daughter Cherokee. This last daughter was Cherokee Jemison Rountree, but she passed away in 1934, having given birth to only one son, who himself was father to two sons. Seemingly the vow to name first-born

daughters died.

But this vow has a second lineage.

Local Athens resident Cherry Anne Ward's mother was named Cherokee, as was her mother's paternal grandmother. That grandmother was Cherokee "Cherrie" Williamson, born in 1849, and was the first known daughter in this second lineage to bear this name. Cherry Anne Ward has continued the tradition. Her daughter and twenty-year-old granddaughter are both named Cherokee.

Cherry Anne is a long-time Athens resident, moving here in 1960 after marrying Bill Ward. She attended Athens College and became a teacher. "In those days," Cherry Anne says, "women didn't work. So, finding a nine-month job to match my kids' nine-month school schedule was important." Cherry Anne taught language arts at Athens Middle School for more than twenty-five years. "It was a privilege" she says, to work with those kids.

Long retired, Cherry Ann and Bill, husband of sixty-three years, go on bike rides every day. Until the pandemic in 2020, she volunteered with Learn-to-Read's after school program for children. She



also regularly has volunteered for the First Methodist Church where she has been a member since moving to Athens.

Cherry Ann Ward loves Athens and enjoys retirement. Cherry Ann advises readers to savor the sunset, the sunrise. To enjoy the full moon. She adds, "I enjoy our little cat's love, and the leaves falling, and all of God's creatures."

This profile was taken from an oral history conducted with Mrs. Ward as part of The Stories Project, a

project developed by Dr. Kris Erskine for his students, future history and social science teachers in and around Athens. The Stories Project seeks to preserve the stories of average folks in and around the Athens area. If you'd like to be interviewed and have your story preserved and available on the Athens State University digital archive, please go to AthensStateStory.com and make a request through our online contact form. We would love to hear from you.

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Calendar of Events

Silver Sneakers

Every Monday, Wednesday and Friday

Silver Sneaker classes at the Athens Limestone Public Library are now meeting from 1pm to 1:45pm on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. Classes open to all. Equipment is provided. Donations accepted. More info: 256-614-3530 or jhunt9155@gmail.com.

Athens-Limestone Tourism Hosts

North Pole Stroll

Through December 31

Athens-Limestone Visitors Center, 100 N Beaty St, Athens, AL. Hosted by Athens-Limestone Tourism Association and sponsored by Hughes Properties this year, we will once again light up Athens Big Spring Park with 100 unique and individually sponsored and decorated Christmas Trees. FREE to the public to enjoy the entire month of December. 256.232.5411.

Senior Lunch Matinees -

ELVIS CHRISTMAS

Yesterdays Event Center

December 15

10:30am - 1:00pm. Third Thursday Each Month Lunch Shows, Lunch and show \$20. In case of a sell-out, a Friday show may be added (next day), E-mail reservations required in advance. Doors open 10:30am, program including lunch 11am, showtime 12noon, 1 hr show. Cancellation policy applies. Glenn Hall, Director info@yesterdaysevents.com
15631 Brownsferry Rd Athens, Al (256) 232-2506.

Senior Lunch Matinee Series Third Thursdays Monthly

We are back to full speed with our third Thursday Senior Lunch Matinees and first Saturday Early Dinner Shows, already scheduled through Dec 2023. Public events most often will sell out in advance, welcoming attendees from 17 adjacent counties, and 2 neighboring states. Our Senior Lunch Matinees provide guests with a complete lunch including drink and dessert, and a one hour live show featuring one of our roster of 8 of the best regional oldies groups and performers in rotation throughout the year. E-mail reservations are required in advance for all Lunch Matinees and Early Dinner Shows. web: www.yesterdaysevents.com

FB: www.facebook.com/YesterdaysEventCenter

An Athens Christmas Concert

December 16-17

6pm. Presented by the Celebration Choir, Children's Choirs, and Instrumentalists of First Baptist Athens. 201 East Hobbs St., Athens. 256-232-0602. fbcathens.org

Lessons And Carols

December 17

An Advent Service of Lessons and Carols at St. Timothy's Episcopal Church. Carols sung by St. Matthews Episcopal Choir. 3pm December 17th. 207 East Washington Street, Athens, AL.

Coffee with The Sheriff

December 28

7:00am - 9:00am. Meet The Sheriff for coffee the last Thursday of each month from 7:00 a.m. - 9:00 a.m at the Limestone Sheriff's Rodeo Arena.

Coffee Call

January 6

Alabama Veteran's Museum, 100 Pryor St W, Athens, AL. 8-9:30am. Coffee Call Veterans and their families are invited for breakfast and fellowship from 8:00AM-9:30AM at the Alabama Veterans Museum and Archive (100 West Pryor Street in Athens). 256-771-7578

Play Outside Day

January 6

Families everywhere are encouraged to get outside the first Saturday of every month and play in public parks, enjoy trails, hit the waterways, explore greenspaces and just play! Limestone County offers over 20 trails to explore including walking, cycling, horseback riding and kayaking – perfect for all ages. For more information: 256-232-5411.

Digital Literacy Classes

Athens-Limestone County Public Library will host a series of Digital Literacy Classes in conjunction with Calhoun Community College & Drake State Community & Technical College. Classes will boost your digital confidence & provide you with skills and training needed in today's job market. Courses include: Computer & Internet Basics, Email, Windows OS, & Microsoft Word®. M-W 9:00 – 12:00 or M-W 1:00 – 4:00. Classes start January 24th. Call us at (256) 306-2830 to learn more.



Special Feature

Giving Hope

by Donna Clark



This past Saturday, thanks to the heart of the church I attend, I was allowed to be part of the greatest Christmas outreach I've ever experienced. I've supported the causes – Operation Christmas Child, adopted an Angel from the Angel Tree, gave to Toys for Tots and even sorted and bagged Christmas gifts for the Salvation Army. I'm so thankful I had those opportunities and regret that I haven't done more. But of all those wonderful avenues in place to help

those hurting, this Saturday's event of Giving Hope surpassed them all. For that is exactly what we did. We gave hope.

The church I call home is active in 25 campuses throughout Alabama. Each campus either sponsored or supported a fellow campus in this Giving Hope event. The campuses were transformed into a holiday shopping experience where parents could browse through a great selection of donated toys and actually select gifts they

knew would make their child happy. Whether it's a Barbie and all that makes her glamorous, or a bike and helmet, the choice was theirs. After they had completed their shopping, the selected gifts were then passed to the wrapping department. While this was taking place, we talked with the parents, listened to their story and offered the greatest gift of all – a relationship with Jesus Christ. When the wrapping was completed, the parents were notified

for their pickup. The burden of providing gifts for their children was lifted and we, the volunteers, were filled with the joy that comes from helping others.

This Sunday, our pastor reported to us the stats of our Giving Hope event. All campuses combined provided approximately 50 thousands toys to help 3700 families. It's estimated that ten thousand little children will wake up Christmas morning and find gifts, things they wished for, under their tree. All of this is possible due to the donations of people with big hearts and the help of over seven thousand volunteers.

Our pastor reminded us this Sunday, Jesus knows our lives. He sees the pain, abandonment, rejection, struggles, and disappointments that present themselves. He experienced them all, so who better to care for us than one who understands all we are going through. After sharing that hope with these adults, a hope that is only found in Jesus, one thousand accepted Him as their Savior. That is what made this event the most worthwhile.

In today's world, it's easy to be overwhelmed by all the negative news and devastation we see around us. It can become discouraging and we can feel as if we're on a slippery slope with no return, wondering if we will ever again enjoy the land and times we once knew. That's what drove me to share this with you. I've purposely not disclosed the name of my church because this is

not about a denomination or an organization. It's not to boast about an accomplishment. This is just to remind you that the love of God still exists. It was clearly displayed through a group of people coming together to meet the needs of others, offering love and hope to those who so desperately need it.

I believe this scripture in the Bible, if allowed, can search and possibly convict our soul. "If you say to that person, 'God be with you! I hope you stay warm and get plenty to eat,' but you do not give what that person needs, your words are worth nothing. In the same way, faith by itself – that does nothing – is dead." (James 2:16-17) His word repeatedly teaches us to think more of others than we do ourselves and to tell of His love and forgiveness.

If we are to be a true reflection of the person Jesus Christ, then we must strive to follow His commands. In the movie *Miracle on 34th Street*, Kris Kringle said it so well, "Christmas isn't just a day, it's a frame of mind!" For myself, I pray for a mindset that will be as the mind of Christ – that I will be willing to love others more than myself, to care more for those who are hurting, and to never be reluctant to share the special Hope I have in my heart, not just at Christmas, but the whole year through. May it be your prayer too.

Wishing you and yours a Merry Christmas.

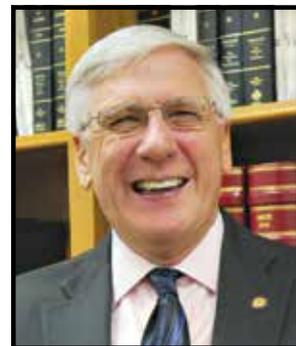
*Dream Small,
Donna*



What Makes Ronnie Roll

What A Year!

by Ali Elizabeth Turner



For the last decade-plus, our last *Ronnie* of each year has had a “looking-back-looking-ahead-and-celebrating-everything” type of flavor, and it seemed that this year was especially so. As far as tough things in the land of Marks, first Ronnie suffered a broken arm when he took his grandson, Quinton, to the batting cages and took a line drive right to his arm. Because he hadn’t wanted the boys to feel bad, he quietly wrapped his arm so they wouldn’t see the blood, dropped the boys off, and took himself to get it taken care of. The pain was daunting and the healing most

welcome.

On another rather scary note, Mayor Ronnie had some surgery, and while the surgery went well, his kidneys did not like the anesthesia and decided they might just shut down. In a word, it would not have been an exaggeration to say that the Grim Reaper had his eyes on Sgt. Marks, and Sgt. Marks and the Lord said, “Not today.” That was indeed a cause for celebration for all of us, and an answer to prayer.

Tornadoes had just struck, both in Birmingham as well as the Nashville area, and six people had perished. We talked about how fragile life is,

and how it is incumbent upon everyone to settle it in their hearts that “If we live, we are the Lord’s, and if we die, we are the Lord’s.” He then grinned and said, “We’ve got 20 months,” meaning that in 20 months his last term as mayor of Athens will be up, so let’s get after it and work like crazy until then. “We have a shot,” said the mayor with regard to making sure that the “campground” is handed off better than when we found it. “We always have to think about public safety and quality of life,” he said.

I asked the mayor, “Tell me quick, without too much thinking, what

was one of your favorite things that happened this year, and what do you want to accomplish in 2024?” He said, “I would have to say Ella’s Gingerbread House Contest,” which indeed was a smash hit and will hopefully continue to be an annual event. He then said, “All the activities at the Activity Center,” which was refurbished and reopened. It has also been popular, and the community has really gotten behind it to make it what it is today. As far as looking ahead, Mayor Ronnie indicated that his concern was to get infrastructure finished, and to hopefully get the kids’ playground

finished through the partnership with Make-A-Way Foundation.

Steve Carter’s retirement party, after 48 years with the Utility Department, was waiting in the wings, and Mayor Ronnie said, “He started off in the ditches almost 50 years ago, and worked hard. It’s hard to believe he is actually going to retire.”

We talked about the “season and the reason,” and he said, “Keep the vulnerable in mind, from the elderly to the young, and simply added, “Merry Christmas to all.” There was nothing left to do but to pray and celebrate, and then it was time for Ronnie to roll.





PlayAction Sports

2023 Wrap-Up And Series Finale

by Tim Lambert

Tune in for the PlayAction Sports Update, three times each weekday on 1080 AM WKAC. Visit us online at www.pasnetwork.net! email: playactionsports@hotmail.com



All things must come to an end, and this month marks the end of the year and the end of my PlayAction Sports Reports in Athens Now. Too many irons in the fire have forced me to cut something loose and this column became the casualty. It's been a good run, as they say, and I appreciate those of you who have (hopefully) been more informed by it. It's not the end of sports for the paper, though. Stick with it—new things are coming in the new year. For now, I'll try to put a neat little bow on things.

Football

Hoover 42, James Clemens 16 (state playoff round one)

Oxford 45, Athens 27 (state playoff round one)

Tanner 64, Lamar County 55 (state playoff round one)

Pisgah 66, Tanner 38 (state playoff round two)

Volleyball

Calhoun defeated Beville State, Pensacola State, Lawson State, Wallace State, Coastal Alabama-North, and Pearl River

ABS advanced to state competition before being swept by University Charter School in the first round.

Basketball

The Calhoun women have wins over Snead State, Volunteer State, Florida State College (Jacksonville), Cleveland State, and Motlow State; the Calhoun men turned back Tennessee Valley Prep, Volunteer State, Louisiana Christian, and Cleveland State.

ABS has boys' wins against Elkmont, St. Bernard, Cullman Christian, and Valley Head; the Lady Trojans defeated St. Bernard, Whitesburg Christian, Cullman Christian, and Woodville.

Ardmore's girls posted victories against Brewer, Madison Academy, Elkmont, St. Bernard, and East Limestone, while the Tigers beat Clements.

Athens boys and girls have victories against Westminster and East Limestone; the Lady Golden Eagles also notched a win against Centennial.

The Clements girls topped West Limestone, Ardmore, Good Hope, and East Lawrence; the Colts defeated Lindsay Lane.

The East Limestone boys stopped Elkmont, St. John Paul II, Madison County, Tanner, Columbia, and Ardmore; girls' wins have come against Elkmont, Madison County, Tanner, and Columbia.

Elkmont's boys knocked off Ardmore; the Lady Red Devils overcame St. Bernard, Whitesburg Christian, and ABS.

James Clemens' boys beat Grissom, Columbia, Sparkman, Muscle Shoals, Athens, and R.C. Hatch;



Athens High cheerleaders placed second in the 6A Varsity Traditional and 6A Varsity Game Day categories at the AHSAA state competition (courtesy photo)

the Lady Jets came out on top of Hueytown, Huffman, Grissom, Columbia, and R.C. Hatch.

Lindsay Lane's girls posted a win against the Alabama School of Cybertech.

Tanner's boys outdid West Limestone, Whitesburg Christian, Ardmore, and both teams beat the Alabama School of Cybertech.

West Limestone's boys defeated Rogers, Priceville, Ardmore, and East Lawrence; the Lady Wildcats overcame Madison County, Ardmore, Elkmont, St. John Paul II, and Tanner.

Cross Country/ Track and field

James Clemens' Luke Alverson won the varsity boys' division at the Huntsville Metro Cross Coun-

try championships; Kylie Gero was first in the girls' category. At James Clemens' Under the Lights cross country festival, the Jets won their 5A-7A varsity boys' division. Athens Bible School's Kaylie Key won the girls' Class 1A-2A race in their sectional meet; the Lady Trojans were team runner-up. Athens High's Catherine Johnstone was first in 6A with the Lady Golden Eagles getting the team win. James Clemens' Kylie Gero and Luke Alverson finished at the top of their respective 7A divisions; the Jets were first as a team. Kaylie Key of ABS was second at the state meet. At the Holiday Invitational indoor track meets in Birmingham, James Clemens' Alverson won the

boys' 1600m and 3200m while the boys' 4x800m relay team came in first.

Bowling

Clements' boys defeated St. Bernard, Priceville.

East Limestone teams defeated Westminster.

James Clemens VB defeated Huntsville, Sparkman, and Buckhorn; VB/VG defeated Mae Jemison.

E-Sports

The James Clemens E-Sports team claimed two state titles with victories in the Mario Kart and Splatoon 3 competitions over the Alabama School for Math and Science and McGill-Toolin. It marked the first all-female team to win a state championship since E-Sports began in 2019.

Herbs & More
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Good Sports

by Phil Williams



Sports has always brought out a fever-pitched reaction from fans. Sporting events create great memories, great lessons, and can serve as a great unifier. Sports can also rally beleaguered people out of their despair and malaise. Sports is about inspiration and challenge. More than just wins and losses, sports can teach us about the ability to win with class and lose with grace.

History gives us so many examples.

In WWII, many of America's athletes went to war. The owners of several major league baseball teams decided to form the "All-American Girls Professional Baseball League." Initially created as a money-maker, the league soon became incredibly popular as it gave the country something to cheer for during a time of war. The league became so popular it played on for nine years after the war ended.

There have been times when individual athletes inspired people to do more, be more, or overcome more. Boxer James J. Braddock did just that at the height of the Great Depression. In 1934, Braddock was down on his luck as a fighter, striv-

ing desperately to feed his family and forced to take government welfare. He earned a chance to get back in the ring and began to make a name for himself as a heavyweight. In mid-1935, as a 10-1 underdog, Braddock was tapped to fight heavyweight champ Max Baer. It was heralded as the fight of the common man against the times and displayed in the locker room scene of his biographical movie when his wife told him, "You just remember who you are. You're the Bulldog of Bergen, and the pride of New Jersey. You're everybody's hope, and you're the champion of my heart." Depression-era Americans everywhere were inspired when Braddock gave more than he got and won a unanimous decision to become the "Cinderella Man." Even more so when Braddock took some of his winnings and repaid the welfare department for the money he had drawn during his down days.

Sports moments can also show us when an athlete that we already admire for their skill on the field is actually far more than an athlete. One of those moments occurred in August,

1982, when a line drive foul hit a four-year-old boy named Jonathan Keane in the head at Fenway Park. Future Baseball Hall of Famer Jim Rice was in the Red Sox dugout that day. When he saw the incident, Rice knew that it was a desperate moment and jumped into the crowd. Rice carried the bloody child back to the dugout and urged the Red Sox medical team to treat him. Rice finished the game in a blood-stained uniform. Doctors later said that Rice's actions had saved the boy's life. But after visiting the family in the hospital, he realized they were not well off and had the boy's medical bills sent to him. Rice and Keane were reunited recently. Young Jonathan grew up healthy and strong and claims that even though his memory of the event is gone, he owes his life to Jim Rice.

But sometimes, in and around sports, things just get a bit on the stupid side. Perhaps one of the most ridiculous moments in modern history came recently when a young nine-year-old fan of the Kansas City Chiefs was accused of being racist by a sports podcast called Deadspin. The young boy was decked out at a recent game in full Chiefs regalia, with a jersey, feathered headdress, and face paint. His image has already become iconic. But the fellas at Deadspin thought that they could use the magic crutch of racism to get some clickbait, and accused the boy of being a white supremacist for wearing what they called

"black face." The kid's face was, in fact, painted black...on one side. Half black, and half red, because those are the colors of the Kansas City Chiefs.

I don't know what the haters are going to use now. Did anyone really believe that a nine-year-old would head out to a public venue with the intent of putting on a racist presentation? The truth is that he was there for the magical moment that kids dream of when they get to dress up to support their team, wear their favorite jersey, paint their face, eat junk food, and yell and carry on at the all-American pastime.

We need for sports to be sports -- pure, simple, and unadulterated. Good times under the lights, with cool breezes, popcorn, and the highs and lows of winning and losing. Sports is the great distraction from all of the junk of the regular world. Sports is a place where super people do mythical things and fans call out their names loudly and cheer wildly.

Sports should always be what Terrance Mann, James Earl Jones' character in the movie Field of Dreams described in his perfect baritone: "They'll walk out to the bleachers; sit in shirtsleeves on a perfect afternoon. They'll find they have reserved seats somewhere along one of the baselines, where they sat when they were children and cheered their heroes. And they'll watch the game and it'll be as if they dipped themselves in mag-

ic waters. The memories will be so thick they'll have to brush them away from their faces. People will come Ray. The one constant through all the years, Ray, has been baseball. America has rolled by like an army of steamrollers. It has been erased like a blackboard, rebuilt and erased again. But baseball has marked the time. This field, this game: it's a part of our past, Ray. It reminds us of all that once was good and it could be again. Oh...people will come Ray. People will most definitely come."

Let sports be sports. We need it.

Play ball...

Phil Williams is a former state senator, retired Army colonel and combat veteran, and a practicing attorney. He has served with the leadership of the Alabama Policy Institute and currently hosts the conservative news/talkshow Rightside Radio M-F 2-5 p.m. on multiple channels throughout north Alabama. (WVNN 92.5FM/770AM-Huntsville/Athens; WXJC 101.FM and WYDE 850AM - Birmingham/Cullman) His column appears every Monday in 1819 News. To contact Phil or request him for a speaking engagement go to www.rightsideradio.org. The views and opinions expressed here are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the policy or position of 1819 News. To comment, please send an email with your name and contact information to Commentary@1819News.com.



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Slinkard On Success

Mindset Is A Choice

by D. A. Slinkard

D.A. Slinkard would love your feedback. You can contact him at da.slinkard@gmail.com



Recently, I had the opportunity to speak to some young teenagers pertaining to a positive mental mindset. I am going to ask you the very questions I asked them, and by a show of hands, please tell me who would be excited if you woke up tomorrow morning with \$86,400 deposited into your bank account? Go ahead, raise your hand, and keep it up high. We can all agree that we would love to have \$86,400 deposited into our very own bank account. Now, let's expand on the premise in that every day you get \$86,400 deposited into your bank account; HOWEVER, you cannot keep the money from one day to the next.

You're reading that correctly in that tomorrow you get \$86,400, but what money you do not spend, you cannot carry over to the next day. If

you don't use it, you lose it. Who, reading this article, would make sure they would spend the entire \$86,400 tomorrow knowing they could not keep one penny from the amount? I am guessing that the readers of *Athens Now* are in much the same mindset as these young teenagers because there was a clear consensus that everyone would spend their money leaving nothing.

We need to put this into perspective in that every one of us on earth has 24 hours in a day. There are 60 minutes per hour and 60 seconds per minute. If we do the math correctly, we find that $24 \times 60 \times 60$ equates to 86,400 seconds. Every one of us has the same amount of time deposited into our daily lives, but what are we doing with the deposit? Just like the money example from above, we cannot take time from today and add it to tomorrow.

It does not matter how much money you have, there is no one who can buy more time. How many of us are wasting our days away because we choose not to spend our time wisely?

An old article I wrote mentioned how we should look at shorter time frames when it comes to our goals. The shorter time frame to accomplish the goal means we must be more aggressive in our actions. The majority of people fail not because their goals are too big; most people fail because they do not take the right amount of actions and effort to achieve their goals. We all want to dream big, but we fail to realize the proper amount of action we must take to be successful. When you are thinking about your goals, I highly suggest you look at your goals in three separate categories. These categories are: 0-3 months, 4-6 months, and 7-12 months.

Typically, your goal for 7-12 months will be a culmination of steps you need to take in months 0-6 to find success. If your goal is to write a book within 12 months, this could seem very daunting and potentially impossible to achieve. However, with the proper goal setting, an individual could break down the tasks over the three categories, and what seemed impossible has come to fruition. We cannot eat the elephant whole, but



we can do it one bite at a time, and doing so will help us reach our full potential.

With the thought process of spending every 86,400 seconds and utilizing the three categories of goal processing, what are you going to do differently to change your life? We cannot get last week back; we cannot get today back; all we can do is make the most of our present time and our future. We have the ability to control our future, but we must first learn to control our actions. Life is all about the decisions we make on a daily basis and our lives, whether good or bad, are the direct result of the choices

we make.

The majority of people walk around with the feelings of remorse and regret for what they have not done with their life. Why? Why are we hanging on to what we have not done when we should be thinking about everything we could be doing? If this is you, why are you partaking in this trap? What we need to realize is that our daily deposit starts over each and every day, and the question becomes what are we going to do about it? It is time for you to think about the life you want to live, what steps you must take, and then go do it.



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Clean, Green And Beautiful

A Year Of Growth

by Claire Tribble - Executive Director, Keep Athens-Limestone Beautiful

As we near the end of 2023, I've been thinking about what a wild and wonderful year it has been. I started at Keep Athens-Limestone Beautiful January 2, 2023. I have learned so much and met so many wonderful people in the whirlwind of a year that was 2023. Every success and accomplishment are because of the amazing volunteers, sponsors, and donors that have gone above and beyond for Keep Athens-Limestone Beautiful.

When I started, I hit the ground running planning the 2023 Earth Day Expo. It was a lot of work, but worth every bit of it. Our event sponsors showed out, and we had one of the biggest Earth Day Expos we've ever had. We had over 40 vendors, 3 main attractions, and over 1200 attendees. To say it was an adventure is an understatement. One of my predecessors told me, "There ain't no tired like Earth Day tired." That

statement was 100% fact.

In between the time I started and Earth Day, we had two big litter cleanups. The Annual United Pest and Turf Control in Ardmore was the first cleanup. I had no idea what to expect, but the crew from United Pest and Turf Control were fantastic, and a real pleasure to work with! They wrangled about 60 volunteers who worked through a cold morning to pick up 1,000 pounds of litter from Ardmore. We haven't set a date for the 2024 cleanup yet, but we can't wait to do it again!

The next big cleanup was the TVA Trash Attack at the Tennessee River. This cleanup was unbelievably successful! We had over 70 volunteers, many from InTech, a company here in Athens. With the hard work of all the volunteers and Limestone County District 3 Commissioner Derrick Gatlin and his crew, we were able to remove 7,820 pounds of litter and trash from Dairy Road,



Hatchett Ridge Road, and the Cowford Campground. I never expected such numbers -- I was blown away by the work of the volunteers.

Next came the Household Hazardous Waste Collection in May. This event was HUGE! Once again, Commissioners Derrick Gatlin and LaDon Townsend volunteered with their crews to help me and the Keep Athens-Limestone Beautiful board with this wildly successful event. We saw 491 cars come through to dispose

of harmful chemicals in four hours...in the POURING rain. We are so grateful that Limestone County residents utilize this free service, and we hope that the response continues to grow. This was one of the largest HHW collections since we started. I can't thank the volunteers enough because it was an absolutely miserable day!

I don't want to underappreciate all the individual cleanups that volunteers have participated in by any means. These small cleanups are instrumental to our mission. They add up and keep things manageable. My office assistant Earl and I have been going out a couple of times a week and cleaning up concentrated areas, and it has made an impact. We've picked up over 1,000 pounds of trash in five cleanups so far. So clearly, it adds up.

So, as I enter my second year at Keep Athens-Limestone Beautiful, I have big plans. I've learned how most things work as far as planning and implementation goes. So, my goal for the next year is to go bigger and more frequently. I hope to have more cleanups, both large and individual. I want to make the Earth Day Expo a bigger event for Limestone County and remain a free event. While I know that I can plan all day long, I also know that I must rely on volunteers and sponsorships. I want everyone to know just how much I value both. None of this would be possible without the wonderful people of Limestone County. So, thank you for an amazing year.



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Cooking with Anna

Things To Be Grateful For

by Anna Hamilton

As we come to the end of the year, we have so many things to be thankful for. I read a quote from author Nakeia Homer that summed up the year perfectly. “Things to be grateful for: What left, What Stayed, and What’s on the Way.” It is easy to dwell on they what could have been. I think it is human nature to want what we don’t have. The “grass is greener” mentality is a real thing!

When something leaves our lives, whether it is a job, someone, a lost earthly possession, or a lost dream, we mourn the loss. Sometimes the loss can become our entire personality. The loss can feel so suffocating that you can forget who you are. The most difficult loss I have ever

experienced was the loss of motherhood. I prayed for my entire life to be a mother. I knew I wanted children and when I got married, I just knew that dream, that prayer, would be fulfilled. However, God had chosen a different path for me to walk. Finding out that I would never be a mother in the traditional sense was the hardest loss I have ever endured, and it became my entire existence for a few years. It has taken lots of prayer and encouragement from family to be thankful for this loss. I may never fully understand why I can not be a mother, but I know that God only gives

continued on page 23

Fiddle Diddles

Ingredients:

½ cup butter

½ milk

2 cups sugar

3 cups rolled oats

1 tsp. vanilla

½ cup shredded coconut

Pinch of salt

Directions:

Add butter, milk, and sugar to a large saucepan and bring to a boil. Remove from heat.

Stir in oats, vanilla, coconut, and salt. Drop by teaspoonfuls onto wax paper. Cool completely and enjoy once firm.





From The Vets' Museum

JROTC Visits The Alabama Veterans Museum

by Yvonne Dempsey

The Alabama Veterans Museum is a great place to visit and an educational destination for school fieldtrips. We have hosted church and social groups, various clubs and organizations, homeschool groups, and school groups of all ages.

Recently, we were delighted to have 34 cadets from Lawrence County High School Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC) tour our museum. The cadets were accompanied by Army Instructor MSG (R) Timothy McGillick, Senior Army Instructor LTC (R) David Shelly, and Nurse Stana Bolton. The JROTC Command-

er is Cadet Lieutenant Colonel Will Sanford and Cadet Command Sergeant Major Gabriel Brown who are both high school juniors this year.

The visitors were extremely attentive and inquisitive throughout the tour, and showed great interest in history and the military. LTC Shelly commented that the tour was "well organized with very knowledgeable staff to provide additional information about the museum's wonderful collection of military equipment, weapons, and memorabilia."

We were delighted to have these cadets visit



The Lawrence County High School JROTC "invades the museum"

the museum and wish them well in their future endeavors. We enjoy seeing young people appreciate the tremendous sacrifices and patriotism of the veterans and their

families that are highlighted in the exhibits and stories on display at our museum.

Please call the museum at (256)771-7578 to schedule group tours.

Our normal hours are Monday-Friday 9 a.m.-3 p.m. However, we will be closed for the holidays beginning at noon on Tuesday, Dec. 19. We will reopen on Monday, January 2.

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Herbs & More: *Delighting Dieters In A Whole New Way*

by Ali Elizabeth Turner

continued from page 1

trusted source of the highest quality health products and supplements on the planet.” The company has grown to the point that product is shipped to 11 countries, including Israel. Word of mouth has always been the primary form of advertising, and people will always talk about what is truly working for them! Every supplement that is under the NEW-tritritional label is produced with the utmost care and carefulness, and an old favorite is back with a new formula: Dieter’s DeLite. Roy gave me a detailed description of the history of the product and the changes it has undergone through the years, largely because he wanted Herbs & More customers and the public to understand the care with which the NEW-tritritional company treats the development of any supplement. Dieter’s DeLite first came out in 1999, and has gone through three iterations. The first version contained ephedra, which is an herb used for

hundreds of years, has some definite uses, and is still part of several prescription and over-the-counter respiratory medications. The problem was that some were misusing it and using it to produce methamphetamines. The Herbs & More customers who had used Dieter’s DeLite with great results, success, and no harmful side effects were not at all pleased with the product being pulled, but resilience is always the best course; they knew that whatever came next would be worth the wait. The second version came out in 2010. Again, the greatest care in formulating a safe and effective product was taken, and people were getting wonderful results. A synthetic form of geranium oil took the place of ephedra, and it was on the market for four years. This was the version with which I personally had success, had no negative side effects, and joined the ranks of satisfied customers. However, it was determined that the synthetic version of geranium oil was no longer going to be allowed

to be used, and so once again it was time to wait. One of the things that has happened in our culture is that we have bought into an idea that there is a pill that can just cure issues with weight, and lifestyle shouldn’t have to matter. As Roy is known to say, “We haven’t created a pill that will keep you from reaping what you sow.” Herbs & More has always encouraged people to eat real food the way God made it. One of the reasons why they have hung in there with all the various rulings and have worked diligently to improve Dieter’s DeLite is because, as Roy says, “Obesity is an epidemic, especially in Alabama. Because America became so obese, we never gave up.” So, the newest version of Dieter’s DeLite is here at last, and Roy says it is the best yet. This one contains a natural type of geranium oil known as Pelargonium graveolens and the previous concerns regarding certain ingredients just aren’t there. “People are raving,” said Roy, and added, “The ingredients are safe and



effective.” People are not only finding that their appetite is not as strong, but eating in general is much easier to manage. Their metabolism is getting fixed, they are able to concentrate better, have more focus, and have much more energy. Having more energy certainly leads to more weight loss because you become much more naturally inclined to move. Other ingredients in Dieter’s DeLite include bitter orange, which works synergistically with the added caffeine in the product. The amount of caffeine is about the same as one cup of coffee, so there won’t be any jittery feeling. Yohimbe bark, white willow, citrus bi-flavonoids, cayenne bark, and more all work together to make what Roy calls a “true answer.” Recently Roy said on his podcast: “It’s back, it’s better, it’s...DIETER’S DELITE! This name may or may not sound familiar to some ears, but for those who are looking to lose weight, gain energy, and increase their focus, this product is calling their name! With the holidays already

here and the new year on the horizon, this is the perfect time for anyone looking to shed a few pounds (or even more than that) to take that leap and start their weight loss journey today!” Dieter’s DeLite is available at both the Athens and Killen stores, and the Herbs & More crew is ready to help you build your health or that of a loved one. They want you to know that Dieter’s DeLite is also available in a 3-day supply for only \$5.00, so you can test it first and be sure it is right for you. Herbs & More would like to wish a very Merry Christmas and a healthy and Happy New Year!

Herbs & More Athens

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From left, Shay Frost, Abbie Cooper, Maddie Cooper and Santa

Blankets And Chairs

by Stephanie Reynolds, Athens-Limestone Tourism Association



“Merry Christmas!”
 “Can I pet your dog?”
 “Merry GRINCHmas...
 MERRY GRINCHMAS!”
 “I’m your worst nightmare”-- a cute little 6- or 7-year-old boy said to absolutely no one in particular. I have known 6-year-old boys. They are very rarely your worst nightmare unless they decide to cut their own hair or baptize the cat.
 “Mom, you’re waving at nothing.” [I was trying to check my work email and be enthusiastic to the parade folk, and there was a gap in the parade]
 These are a few things heard at the Athens Christmas Parade the night of December 7. But let’s wind the clock back a few hours...
 Empty chairs and blankets lined the streets. To an outsider it might look disheveled, but we all knew. We

knew what those chairs and blankets truly meant: That Athens is an incredible place to live where you can put your blankets and camp chairs along the road even a day ahead of time, and they will still be there when you return.

(Ok, it also truly meant that our annual Christmas Parade was going on that night and people were staking claims to watch, but more on that in a minute...)

Think about it, folks. For a moment, let’s just consider what it’s like to live in a place where you can set your gear out and have it there when you return many hours later. Oh, I know it isn’t always like this – I myself have been posting about the weak and cowardly preying up on the vulnerable this holiday season – but more importantly it is still sometimes like this. Often like this – Trusting.



Genial. A community of neighbors.

We have grown. Limestone County is no longer a sleepy little almost-but-not-quite-too-far bedroom community of Huntsville. We are coming into our own—still bonded but separate from our space-age city-cousin to the east. We are experiencing a huge increase in popu-

lation and development. In a country where local economies are depressed and businesses closing, we are incredibly blessed to be riding a wave of prosperity and advancement. The country mouse is thriving with both agriculture and industry.

And through it we are keeping our community morals and habits. We all knew

what those chairs and blankets and empty cars meant and we respected our fellow citizens. On social media, we were trading tips and hints to get the handicapped and the infirm the best seats in the house. Newcomers to our area were being told prime viewing spots. Two of our fabulous local businesses were sponsoring the livestream so that the entire community, even the sick and tired and house-bound, could be a part of the event (Thank you so much Trinity’s and Open Door Logistics!).

We have grown, yes, but we have kept our character, our warmth, our openness. Let’s never lose that. We have the ability, even the responsibility, to be aware – right now – of who we are and to hold on to that tightly with both hands, regardless of the growth and development. We can warmly guide the new people into our way of genteel and respectful living. We can determine how our community culture changes or doesn’t.

That is entirely up to us. And I think we are doing a great job so far.



A Ballad For Baghdad: *Fifteen Years Later*

by Ali Elizabeth Turner

continued from page 1

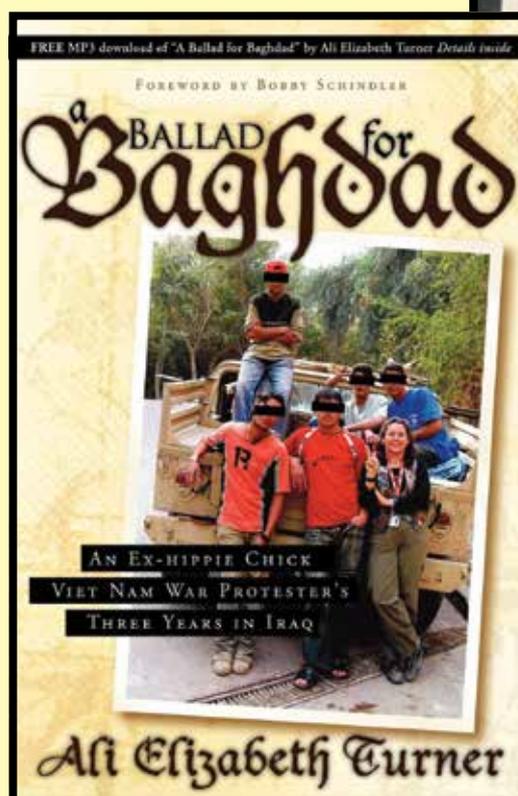
ced the adventure of a lifetime by preparing to go to Baghdad in November of 2003, flying to Houston in May of 2004 for three weeks of training, and landing in Baghdad in June of 2004. I returned to the States in June of 2007, and remain forever changed by the experience of living in a combat zone amongst U.S. soldiers, coalition soldiers, and Iraqis.

I had no intention of writing about my adventures; that idea came from a Juice Plus customer of mine who happens to be one fine, accomplished and experienced editor. Her name is Mary Jo Tate, and she simply encouraged me to send home emails about what was happening. I ended up having a following before followings were a thing. I had a slew of people encouraging me to go for it, that is, write an actual book. My greatest cheerleader and investor was and is my husband, Steve, and I will be forever in his debt.

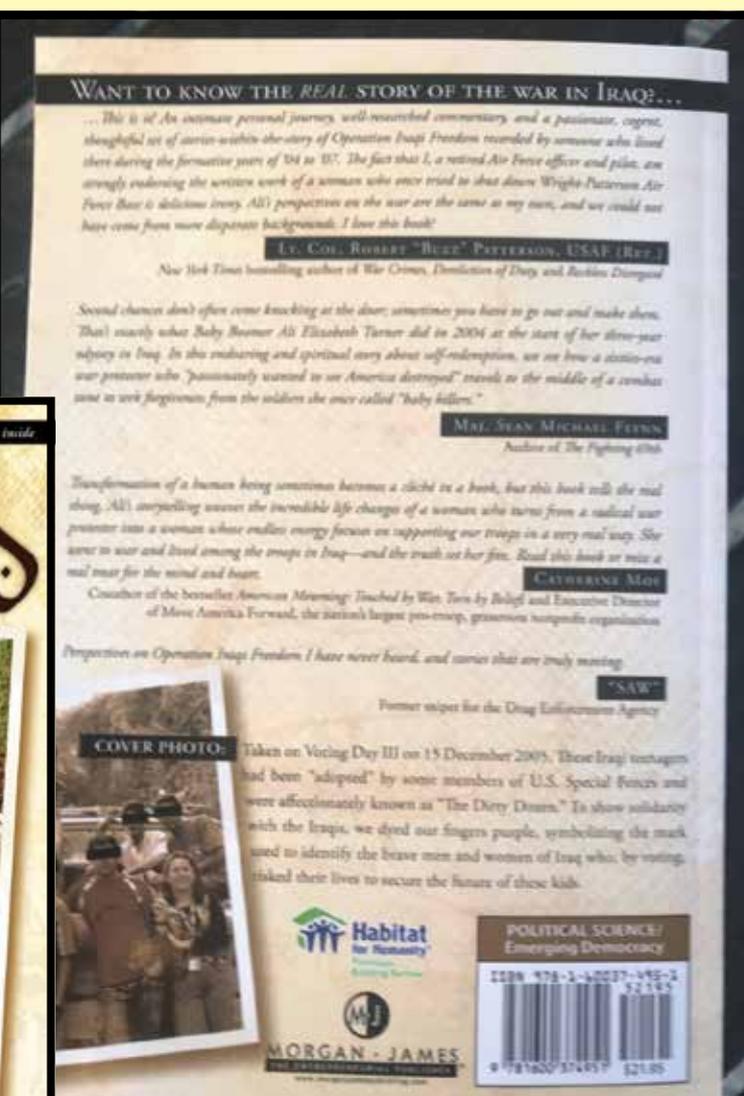
After Morgan James accepted my manuscript proposal, I set to work to make my deadline, and Mary Jo gave me permission to film the thing in my head, "shoot it" through my word processor, and

together we would decide what to keep and what to pitch. That experience was one of the most exhilarating and exhausting of my life. I did what I did because I gave my word to the soldiers and the Iraqis that I would tell their stories; I just didn't know how I was going to keep my word.

So, *Ballad* is the how, and I have a revived reason to make it about the now. Fifteen years and the resulting graying of my hair is a long time for revisionist history to get polished and put a creepy spin on pivotal things and times that might end up being the casualties of an ever-shrinking cultural attention span. Simply said, I was there, I saw what happened firsthand, and not on my watch is what happened getting twisted into some kind of political pretzel. There are soldiers who deserve to be soundly thanked in this holiday season and always for what they did for the Iraqis. There are kids who have no idea who Saddam Hussein was, and they need to. I had the bizarre experience of being within ten feet of the man on more than one occasion and came close to being able to attend his trial. More



importantly, I listened to the stories of those who had been tortured by his goons, had gone on to build extraordinary lives of resilience and hope, and who returned to Iraq as interpreters to help set their fellow Iraqis free. Add to that the soldiers who fought for and wept over Iraqis, worshipped God in Saddam's fishing lodge or the ballroom of Saddam's birthday palace, played ping-pong fiercely and then showed me pictures of their families, and perhaps you will find something different that stirs you this Christmas and beyond. In today's *All Things Soldier* column, (which can be found on page 4) I will also revisit the topic of Weapons of Mass Destruction or WMDs, and hopefully set the



record straight for those who might wonder if that was a hoax. I can assure you it was not.

Ballad is on the *Right Side Radio* website Recommended Reading list at www.rightsideradio.org. It can be purchased on Amazon and several other online stores. Autographed copies can also be purchased locally at the Alabama Veterans Museum, and part of the proceeds cheerfully go to the Museum.

Below are some things that have been said about the book by someone who took great risk during his military career to protect us, Lt. Colonel Buzz Patterson.

"Want to know the REAL story of the war in Iraq? ...This is it! An intimate personal journey, well-researched commentary, and a passionate, cogent

thoughtful set of stories-within-the-story of Operation Iraqi Freedom recorded by someone who lived there during the formative years of '04 to '07. The fact that I, a retired Air Force officer and pilot, am strongly endorsing the written work of a woman who once tried to shut down Wright-Patterson Air Force Base is delicious irony. Ali's perspectives on the war are the same as my own, and we could not have come from more disparate backgrounds. I love this book!"

Lt. Col. Robert "Buzz" Patterson, USAF, (Ret.)
New York Times best-selling author of War Crimes, Dereliction of Duty, and Reckless Disregard

Get yours today, and Merry Christmas!



From all of us at

Athens Now

Timelines... We Only Get One!

by Jackie Warner

Career Development Facilitator
"Impact, Engage, Grow" Community Matters



I think about this year, 2023, and what it meant to me. As I grow older and hopefully wiser, I do believe what my grandparents would always say - Time goes so fast!

The year 2023 came in and said hello and then flew out the door with a fast, "I don't have time to sit down," and started walking out the door! Just like that, December is here, and what did we gain and what did we lose? I look over

my life this year and reflect on some beautiful gains...seeing both of my daughters graduate from college! A proud and thankful mom I truly am. But, more thankful to see they both still served our living God during their time while on their prospective college campuses. I also started going back to the gym, which has helped me spiritually, physically, and mentally. I completed a few major projects around the house, but still have so much

more to do!
Now I share some beautiful losses this year! My dear friend of 28 years started the year 2023 with faithfulness and gratitude, and both always bubbled over into the lives of her circle. Thanks be to God I was in her circle. I was put on her timeline and she was on mine. Her illness was diagnosed years earlier but she was a fighter with faith. And through faith in HIM, she continued her daily

walk and always would say it is in the Lord's hand so she was going to live until He had the final welcome home for her. I am thankful for the 28 years of friendship, advice, check-ins, and intentional love! I miss her dearly, but I have beautiful gains from our time together. Cherish what you are given because time really flies, and there is no way to catch it.
Embrace the moments, opportunities, and rela-

tionships on your timeline!
Wishing you all a blessed holiday season and a beautiful new year!

Until Next Time, Be Sincere, Kind and Intentional

Jackie Warner, Community Outreach Specialist

Email: thebridge.us@gmail.com

Check out upcoming events: <http://thebridge-us.yolasite.com/>



“MARE-Y” CHRISTMAS

by Deb Kitchenmaster



Yes, ‘tis true. My heart has several hoof prints on it from mares of different colors, sizes, and breeds. Each with their own name, personality, life lessons, tattooed on the fabric of my soul.

Song writer Mary Ann Kennedy has written a song about mares. She frames her description from the strings of the guitar. Here we go:

“Mares are different from the boys. They know their job is to take care of their family. So many responsibilities! Oh. It’s not easy to be a mare. Mares see things as they are. Never moving far from the herd that leans on them for their sensitivities. Oh. It’s not easy to be a mare. Mares keep you honest. Make you strong. They let you know when you are wrong. But they will forgive you. They teach humility. There’s not a heart that’s as big as a mare’s.”

A mare is an adult female horse over the age of three,

and a filly is a female horse three and younger. When starting out, you want to choose a horse with a reliable temperament. A mare with these blueprints is an excellent choice.

Deer Park Arianna, a chestnut Morgan, mare became a true friend to me. I got in touch with what was important to her -- safety. She wanted her rider to be safe. I witnessed as she became upset with me for putting a little 4-year-old on her back. After expressing her disgust to me, she walked off in a tip-toe way. Never before had I seen this. Her heart was full of care and concern for humanity. In the 23 years we were together, not one person came off her back. She was so graceful! Even in the moments she got spooked about something. Arianna shared her environment with another mare named Annie. Annie was the dominant alpha horse of the herd. This day I had separated the two into different paddocks. When Arianna realized



Annie couldn’t touch her, she ran to the fence and let Annie know she was tired of being bossed around. It brought a laugh out of my belly. Let me tell you just one more Arianna story. I had learned a new song. “I got a feeling, everything is gonna be all right. Oh. I’ve got a feeling everything’s gonna be all right, all right, all right.” I really got into that song that day out in the lot with the

horses and my dog Jubilee. I was singing, spinning, and, well, let’s say, doing a “happy dance.” The next thing I became aware of was Arianna with her four hooves and Jubilee with her four paws, were joining the 2-legged in the celebration. About that time my husband pulled onto the yard and Annie walked to the gate and nickered to my husband as if to say, “Get me out of here from these critters.” She didn’t get the nickname ‘Queen Ann’ for nothing.

Meadow Run Annie was her registered name. She was a chestnut Morgan mare five years older than Arianna. She was a forward horse. Boy, could that girl move! Annie had a way with humanity too. She wanted you to be a more confident leader than she was. She knew how to lead, and she was a confident mare in her leadership ability. After all, she practiced exercising her leadership every day among the other horses. The rumbles from the other horses were, “Don’t mess with Annie.”

Annie had more humans in tears than a case of tissues could handle. However, after spending time with Annie, you knew what you knew and you knew what you were pretending to know. Tears did not stop Annie from teaching.

Triumphant Sung’s Praise was our first foal from Arianna. She was a bay Morgan. Praise touched many hearts with her spotlight on FOCUS. She knew if one had trauma locked inside their body and she knew how to communicate that to me through ‘the look.’ The ability to focus was high on her radar because she required YOUR presence. She did not allow wandering minds. That was a red flag to her and she knew how to safely get one’s attention.

These three mares are braided together as a cord that rings the bell of joy. “Mare-y” Christmas.

*Your NEIGHbor,
Deb Kitchenmaster*

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Rumination Insights

by Lisa Philippart,
Licensed Professional Counselor



“In the process of letting go you will lose many things from the past, but you will find yourself.”

- Deepak Chopra

In my previous article, we examined the possible origins and types of rumination. As a reminder, rumination is the mental habit of repetitive overthinking about the past or present. In this article, we will look at key insights about rumination as well as tips and tools for dealing with these ruminating thoughts.

Rumination is not healthy reflection. While it is important to think about negative things in the past, healthy reflection means making time to intentionally think about these things with the goal of learning from them and changing future behavior. In other words, healthy reflection is productive.

Rumination is almost always reactive, impulsive, and counterproductive. It is also important to note that a ruminative thought is different from the habit of ruminating. Sometimes uncomfortable thoughts about the past simply pop into our minds. That is not something you can or should try to control. When it does happen, the best thing you can do is to briefly (and non-judgmentally) validate them

and move on. Alternatively, you can choose to elaborate on and continue thinking about negative thoughts. This is ruminating and is a habit that however powerful, you do have control over.

As you have probably already noted, rumination is neither helpful nor uncontrollable. The habit of rumination is often maintained by the belief that it is somehow useful or simply inevitable and not something that can be within your control. A helpful way of thinking about rumination is that it is a reflection of your values and the things that matter most to you. If you are in the habit of ruminating about your mistakes as a parent, that’s probably because being a good parent is a strong personal value for you. Reframing ruminations as an indicator of your values can be a productive way to escape unhelpful rumination and start taking forward action instead.

Now let’s look at some tools for dealing with rumination. Like any unhealthy behavior or bad habit, the key to undoing it is to understand the need it fills and work to get that need met in a healthier way. For example, if depressive rumination about your lack of parenting skills is the habit you want to break, you might identify that the need it’s filling is the desire to feel more con-



fidant in parenting. Actually doing something useful, maybe taking a parenting class, would address that need to parent better in a way that is more valuable, and has none of the downsides of rumination like irritability, sadness, stress, etc. Rumination is often a defense mechanism against helplessness... it temporarily makes you feel like you’re doing something, but it’s ultimately counterproductive. You may be less prone to rumination if you are better at being aware of your feelings of helplessness and practice tolerating and accepting them.

Another tip to decrease rumination is to make time to be sad (angry, hurt, etc.) on purpose. This sounds counterintuitive, but ruminating about a loss, for exam-

ple, can interfere with a healthy grieving process and the ability to accept the loss and move forward. You might carve out 10 minutes a day to sit down and journal about things in your life that make you sad. It may be helpful to have a fixed time and time limit to be validating of the sadness rather than judgmental. And finally, the best way to deal with your mind’s tendency to ruminate is to briefly acknowledge and validate it, then re-focus your attention and behavior on something

more positive and effective. When in doubt, use the 3Ms to choose a new behavior: Move, Make, and Meet. Do something physical and move your body, make or fix something with your hands, or go have a meaningful interaction with someone you enjoy!

Lisa Philippart is a Licensed Professional Counselor, providing mental health services through her own private practice in Madison, Alabama.

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Cooking with Anna (continued from page 13)

Things To Be Grateful For

by Anna Hamilton

the best to his children, even when the child may not understand. “Which of you, if your son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!” Matthew 9-11

Being thankful for what stayed or what we already have, can sometimes be overshadowed by us wanting what we do not have. Learning to be content in your place in life is a skill, for a lack of better words, which takes lots of work, time, and focus. God will always provide for his children, and we are all blessed beyond measure. No matter what your station in life, someone is looking at you and dreaming of being where you are. I look at my life now and sometimes I compare it to where I was 5 years ago, and boy oh boy, the number of blessings that have been poured upon me are astounding! No matter your station in life, being thankful for what you have and where you are in life is a spiritual discipline. “Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails, and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will be joyful in God my Savior. The Sovereign Lord is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer; he enables me to tread on the heights.” Habakkuk 3:17-18

The excitement of things to come can keep you going, even when times are tough. Our refrigerator right now proudly displays a

calendar that features pictures of beautiful white sandy beaches with a countdown to our cruise. It has been a fun thing to look forward to. Sometimes, focusing on “What is on the Way” can keep your spirits high and keep you in a thankful state of mind. God wants what is best for us always. Sometimes our life can feel like it is hard and unbearable. Even in our suffering we are called to praise the Lord and serve him. Times of trouble help polish our faith and can help us be stronger. Placing your eyes on heaven, on the reward to come, makes the troubles of this world seem temporary and able to endure with God’s help. God will continue to guide our steps in the future and that should give us so much joy looking towards what is on the way. “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.” Proverbs 3:5-6

Happy New Year everybody! Let’s look to the future and be grateful for “What we left, What Stayed, and What is on the Way!”

This week’s recipe is a sweet Christmas goodie. We love having this sweet treat at Christmas time, and it makes a great gift to share with your neighbors. I hope you love it as much as my family does!

“Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast.” Psalm 139:7-10

Tennessee Valley Spotlight



Mondays at 10am

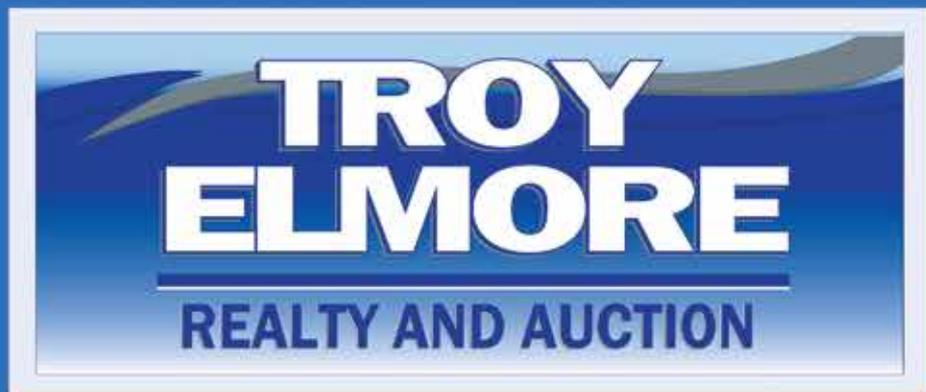
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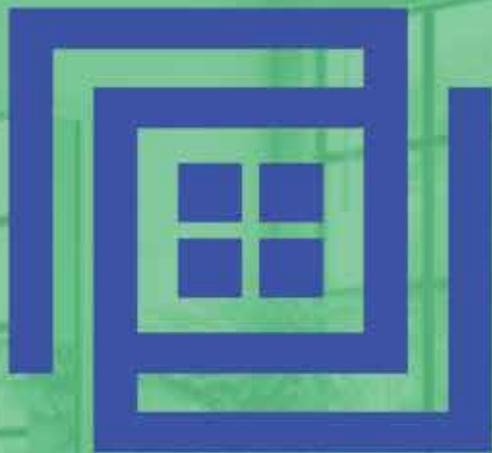
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elves go swimming?

The North pool.

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