

July 18 - July 31, 2025

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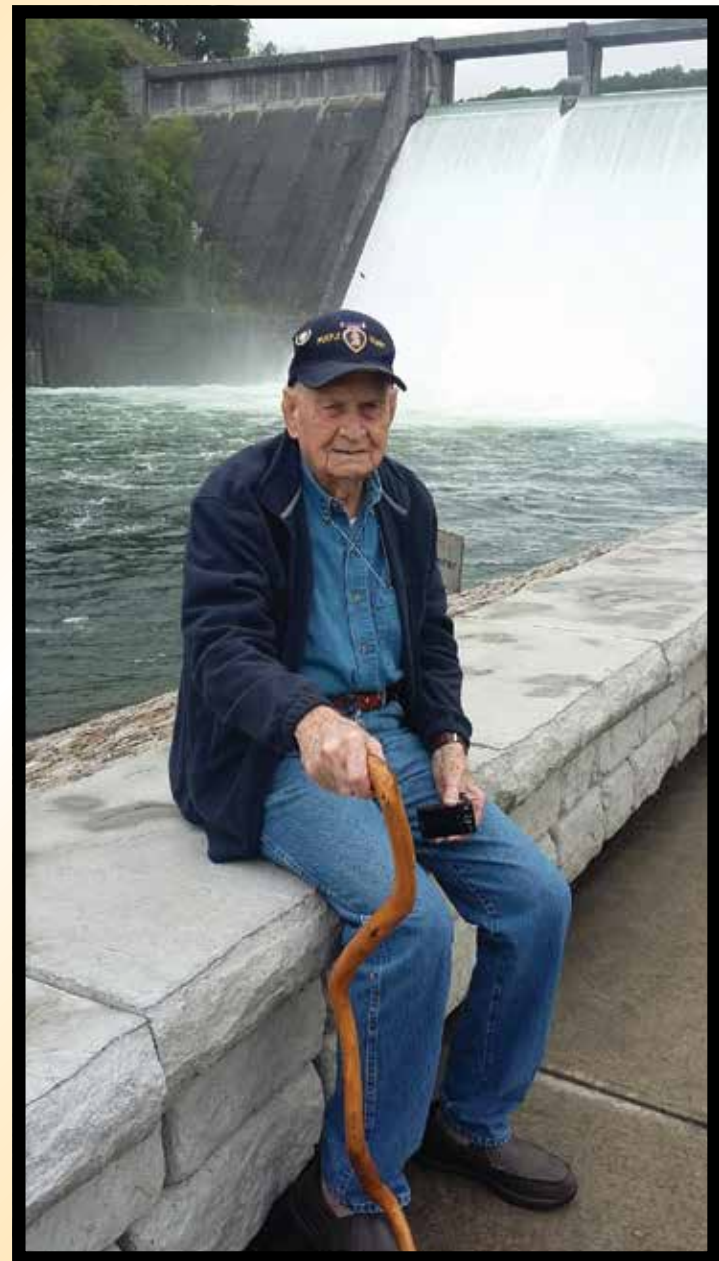
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William C. Ward, Sr. - *Surviving Pearl Harbor And Beyond*

By Ali Elizabeth Turner

William Ward, Sr. was already serving in the U.S. Navy when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor on the morning of December 7, 1941. William "pulled into" the harbor aboard the USS *O'Brien* on the night of December 6, having no idea that the next day, which would be forever referred to as the "day of infamy" would occur only a few hours later. His day began at 0500 hrs. (5 a.m.), and he was casting off lines when the attack be-

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Publisher's Point

The Miracle That Is 1819 News

When we express our gratitude for God's grace by saying things like, "We serve the God of second chances," most of us don't immediately think of something like a close to four-hundred-year prison sentence being reduced down to just about nothing, let alone becoming one of the premier up-and-coming news outlets in the state of Alabama. However, that is Bryan Dawson's story, and the product of that mind-boggling "second chance" is *1819 News*.

Bryan had an extremely troubled childhood, his parents having divorced when he was two. He likes to quip that his life is exactly like what J.D. Vance talks about in his book, *Hillbilly Elegy*, except that "J.D. Vance went into the Marines and went to Yale, and I got into drugs and went to jail." Bryan's mom was "country club" from Colorado Springs, and his dad's family was from West Monroe, Louisiana, the land of the Duck Commander. This was long before the days of *Duck Dynasty*, and the saying in West Monroe was that "the only people poorer than the Robertsons were the Dawsons." Interestingly, Bryan's grandmother taught Sunday School with Miss Kay Robertson for over 30 years.

To say that Bryan "went south" and was circling the drain is an understatement. He didn't just do drugs and deal drugs, he got involved with the cartels. He'll be the



first to tell you that he was facing down charges that included attempted murder, aggravated robbery, and extortion. He is quite open about his past, and when you contrast where he was headed compared to being now happily married to his high school crush and the father of seven children, the concept of "second chances" continues to take on a life of its own.

It was in prison that he came to know Christ, and it was far more than just a jailhouse conversion. Of his time in county jail, Bryan says,

"That's really when God began to work on me," he continued. "He thumped me on the head and said, 'This is your fault.' To normal people, well, of course, this is your fault, Bryan, you know. But for me, up to

that point, it was my mom's fault, it was my dad's fault, it was the cop's fault, it was the judge's fault, it was District Attorney's fault, it was everybody's fault. It was a broken system. I was a victim. Why couldn't anybody see that? And I really believed that, but when God opened my eyes to the fact it was my fault, that was when change really began to happen in my life. I realized that if my bad decisions created these bad circumstances, I was free to make good decisions that would create good circumstances."

Fast forward to a plea deal and enrollment in a rehab program that stuck, and Bryan was able to transfer his parole to the state of Alabama. The miracles continued, and he was able to get a job in media that put a fire in his belly to be a truth teller for the people of Alabama

the Beautiful. Starting up smack dab in the middle of COVID, *1819 News* not only managed to survive, but its growth has been nothing but explosive. It is one of my go-to sources for things that pertain to our fair state, and when you read it, remember that the bulk of the New Testament was written by a murderer who also caused people to blaspheme. We do indeed serve "the God of second chances," and I hope you'll become a raving fan of a news outlet that has a lofty war cry: "Rise to the moment of truth."

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“Forging” Heroes And Saying Thanks

by Ali Elizabeth Turner

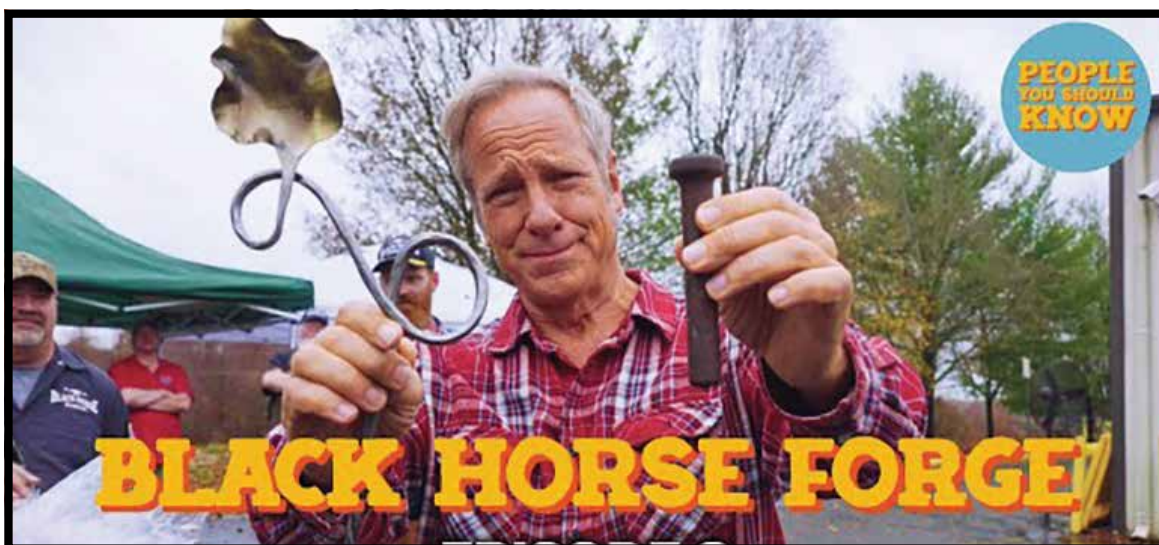


Mike Rowe made hard and dirty work cool again when he started the enormously popular show, *Dirty Jobs*. The concept was simple—stuff needed to be done/fixed/built/restored/ redeemed, and he proved that you could have fun even when it wasn't fun. This led to other shows, including *Somebody's Gotta Do It*, numbers of jobs on the History Channel, Discovery Channel, *People You Should Know*, his own podcast, and more. He is described as being a “trades activist,” meaning that he firmly believes that some of the physical and spiritual disrepair we find in the infrastructure of America could be remedied if the trades were returned to their rightful place of respect in our culture.

To that end, Mike has teamed up to help veterans and first responders regain their footing through forging... literally. Through his organization, mikeroweWORKS, along with other initiatives, Mike is working with Black Horse Forge, which teaches the nearly lost art of blacksmithing. Black Horse has found that vets and responders who are struggling are

impacted in a powerful way by learning how to do something hard, beautiful, dangerous, skilled, artistic, and perhaps most importantly, visible. And, the work of Black Horse Forge also powerfully illustrates the positive impact of community.

When people are dealing with trauma, there is certainly a great deal of hard work that needs to be done on the inside. However, vets in particular can be totally turned off by some of the “therapeutic approaches” that have been used in the past, and they often don't want to talk about it. However, bring in something to heat up, pound out, and physically shape, and good instructors along with fellow travelers learning the skill, and you have something that is literally digging new grooves in their brain matter and teaching old dogs some new neuroplastic tricks. Black Horse Forge has been featured on Mike's show, *Returning The Favor*, and there is nothing like watching worthy organizations receiving much needed cash so that they can continue their mission.



With respect to Black Horse, there have been zero suicides reported amongst their ranks, and their deeply held belief is that all of the aforementioned components “forge” into something tangible and powerful when it comes to meeting the needs of those who have put themselves in harm's way for us.

Black Horse Forge also makes apprenticeship possible through scholarships for those vets who want to go on and make blacksmithing and knife making their career.

Recently, Rowe became a spokesman for Pure



Talk, a cell phone company that has a focus on strengthening vets and first responders. Pure Talk is also committed to causes, companies, and investments that reflect the values of most Americans, and has a desire to be excellent in every regard. Pure Talk is also supporting Black Horse Forge

and other trades-based organizations to help rebuild people, the culture, economy, and our communities. For more information on how you can either participate, benefit, or both, please go to mikeroweWORKS foundation and let your heart get “fired up, pounded out, and made beautiful.”



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Calendar of Events

VVA/AVVA Chapter 511 meeting

The VVA/AVVA Chapter 511 meeting for July 7 has been canceled. The next meeting is scheduled for Mon, August 4.

2025 Kiddie Carnival

Now - July 19

The Athens Lions Club 2025 Kiddie Carnival is open every Thursday, Friday & Saturday night, (CLOSED JULY 3RD, 4TH & 5TH), 6:30pm-9:30pm. We have 10 rides that are best suited for kids ages 2-10 years. Free admission to the carnival and each ride is just a 50¢ ticket. We also have bingo and delicious concessions on site such as hamburgers, hot dogs, chicken sandwiches, chicken fries, funnel cakes, bottled water and soft drinks. Also served are cotton candy, sno cones and other crowd favorites. Bring cash as we do not accept Credit Cards or Debit Cards. For updates and additional information about Kiddie Carnival visit our Facebook page: Athens Lions Club Kiddie Carnival. The Athens Lions Club property is located at 309 E Forrest St. in Athens, AL, it is across the street from the current Athens Julian Newman School. Free parking for the Kiddie Carnival and other events is at a parking lot across the street from the Kiddie Carnival. We do not offer private party rentals.

Pink Lady Walk

Summer Line Dance Fundraiser

July 18

Classic line dancing and a live DJ to raise funds for the Pink Lady Walk and their fight against breast cancer. 6PM-9PM. Eastside of the Limestone County Courthouse on Marion St.

4th Annual Tomato Festival

July 19

Join us on July 19th as we celebrate all things tomatoes! Our 4th annual festival tickets will include all you can eat tomato sandwiches, a drink, dessert, LIVE music, Artisan vendor booths, & a car show. A portion of the car show proceeds will be donated to help benefit the Limestone County Children's Advocacy Center. Come enjoy touring the farm & garden,

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.

visiting the animals, face painting for the children, or just relax under a tree while you hear some great music and eat delicious food. We'll see you there! \$15 pre-purchased ticket REQUIRED. 14594 Zehner Rd, Athens, AL

Fiddlers Concert Series

July 24

The Tennessee Valley Old Time Fiddlers Concert Series, presented by Redstone Federal Credit Union, continues with a special performance from The Kody Norris Show. 7:00PM - 9:00PM. McCandless Hall at Athens State University. 302 Bryan St., Athens, AL.

Race of Champions

July 26

The event will begin and end at Athens High School Stadium. The route will go through the AHS campus to the Swan Creek Greenway with a turnaround at the covered bridge. The route will remain in the confines of the AHS campus and Greenway. 7AM-11AM. Athens High School Stadium, 13829 Lucas Ferry Rd., Athens.

American Farm Heritage Days -

Antique Tractor Parade

August 1

The Annual Antique Tractor Parade will start at the Limestone County Sheriff's Rodeo Arena, south on Lucas Ferry, left on W. Washington, left on N. Marion, right on Pryor, left into the Veterans Museum for a brief visit, right on Pryor, left on Hines, right on Market, right on Lucas Ferry and back to the Sheriff's Arena. 10:00 AM - 12:30 PM

4th Annual SummerFest on The Square

August 23

Bands will entertain while volunteers accept donations from spectators for local charity. 5:00 PM - 10:00 PM. Eastside of the Limestone County Courthouse on Marion Street. 200 W. Washington St., Athens, AL.

2nd Annual Summer Sippin' Festival

August 30

3-7pm. Modeled after Athens Main Street's Sippin' Cider event in December, Summer Sippin', presented by Dream Key Real Estate, will allow merchants to get involved during Culinary Month. Participating merchants will provide patrons with a special summer drink while they visit their stores to shop for summer deals. Event participants compete for patrons' votes to be the summer sippin' champion. Supporting Sponsor: Listerhill Credit Union. A DJ will provide music on the steps of the Courthouse from 4-7 PM. There will also be live music from 5:30-7 PM at Merchants Alley.

Red, White, & BOOM - A Love Letter

by Stephanie Reynolds, Athens-Limestone Tourism Association



(...okay, it's actually a thank you note, but that sounds less poetic...)

I walked into my office and let out a half "Oh, what a mess" and half contented "What a great day!" sigh. Red, White, and BOOM t-shirts, boxes, paperwork, decorations, candy, chalk, and more have taken over the room.

I scooch forms and clipboards and meeting notes to the side of my desk to make room for my coffee. After a week off, it's time to get back to work. I glance around...

The t-shirts strewn on every flat surface make me think of Ana our graphics designer who always creates the most beautiful creations. It makes me happy to see the shirts and think of her. I also think of Randy with Athens Athletics who pulled out all the stops to help me get these shirts done in such a quick turnaround.

We couldn't have done this without our sponsors and the amazing Brooke who helped me get them. My heart smiles when I remember how she reassured me when I thought I had messed something up, which meant more to me than she probably knew. I think of how our sponsors love our community and are willing to give generously for you and me to have a great 4th of July: Ramona J's, Athens State University, Grayson Carter & Son Contracting, Window World of Huntsville, and Zach Conlon Insurance.

I stop writing and look around. My eyes fall upon boxes of sidewalk chalk. The memory is still fresh of me squatting down 80+ times to write booth slots and messages on the parking lot of the Sportsplex in the brilliant blue July sunshine. Our vendors were amazing, easy to work with, and such a blessing!

"Don't get up, it's just me," Debra says in her sweet, deep drawl as she comes into the office, and I smile. She effortlessly takes care of all things HR. As anyone who has ever worked with the government knows, nothing can put a dead stop to a plan like a misfiled form, but she keeps us going.

To my left is a contract for a generator to supply power for the music. I think of Jerome Malone who organized the sound system for the bands. I am so thankful that I could let Mr. Malone handle their needs. I wish y'all could have heard all three bands—they were amazing!

I think about the social media run up. That is where Nikki comes in. Did you see that jump in quality from when I was doing the social media to when Nikki started? That's what happens when you get a brilliant young woman who actually understands social media to take over! She and her new fabulous intern Alondra did a great job (you should follow us, hint hint!).

"Your office is a MESS! I've never seen it be a mess....," a friend of tour-

ism exclaims as I scoot the aforementioned t-shirts off a chair for him to sit in. I chuckle and am slightly pleased. The now dry t-shirts remind me of the two storms that made a liar out of the "zero-percent-chance-of-rain" forecast. The first skirted to our north, but the second bore down on us right in the middle of the festival. I hated that for the vendors and the musicians, but I have a beautiful photograph in my mind of strangers all huddling together under any canopy that they could squeeze into. For 15 minutes we stood shoulder to shoulder, wrangled excited children and chatted, waiting for the rain to stop. No, that wasn't in my plan, but, yes, it made my heart warmer than noon in July.

I think of two very special trucks I saw on the morning of the 4th: Mayor Marks came by just to check on me, encourage me and ask if I needed anything. That meant so much (though I do need to learn to recognize his truck—I wasn't sure who was driving up at first!).

Then Chairman Daly brought his trailer for us to use as a stage and chatted with me about tomatoes. I wouldn't have thought he remembered that I grew them long ago! Both men have been so incredibly supportive, and we couldn't have done this without them.

I am running out of article space but not people who made our first Red, White, & BOOM com-



munity event so successful! Bret and EMS Chief and the police. Sheriff and his LEOs. Sunny, Johnny, Cindy who made the event more fun. Public Works and Public Health who ensured we were kept healthy, safe, clean. The fireworks crew. The news crews and papers who enthusiastically reached out to us.

Our boots on the ground: Keith, Ashton, Ana, and James. And a special thank you to Bert and Parks and Rec who always so generously works with us.

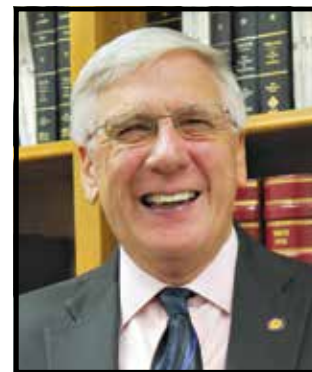
I am also incredibly thankful for Pammie whose enthusiasm, patience, and leadership skills are beyond compare.

There are many more people throughout the city and county I need to thank, but I don't get the whole paper to list them. Please know I deeply, personally appreciate you.

And lastly thank YOU, my incredible Limestoneians and guests, who joined us for our inaugural Red, White, & BOOM event. I can't WAIT for next year!

Why *Crucial Accountability*?

by Ali Elizabeth Turner



For years we have included in the Ronnie column references to various books that the mayor has been reading, and often they are the works of keynote speakers he has personally heard and had to chance to speak with. Some are connected to the nuts and bolts of running actual cities, some have been the works of great coaches like John Wooden, some are written by thought leaders like Stephen Covey or Alabama's own Andy Andrews, and we realized it had "been a minute" since we had done a book series.

So, two came up, both written by the same team of authors, and both are timely given the climate

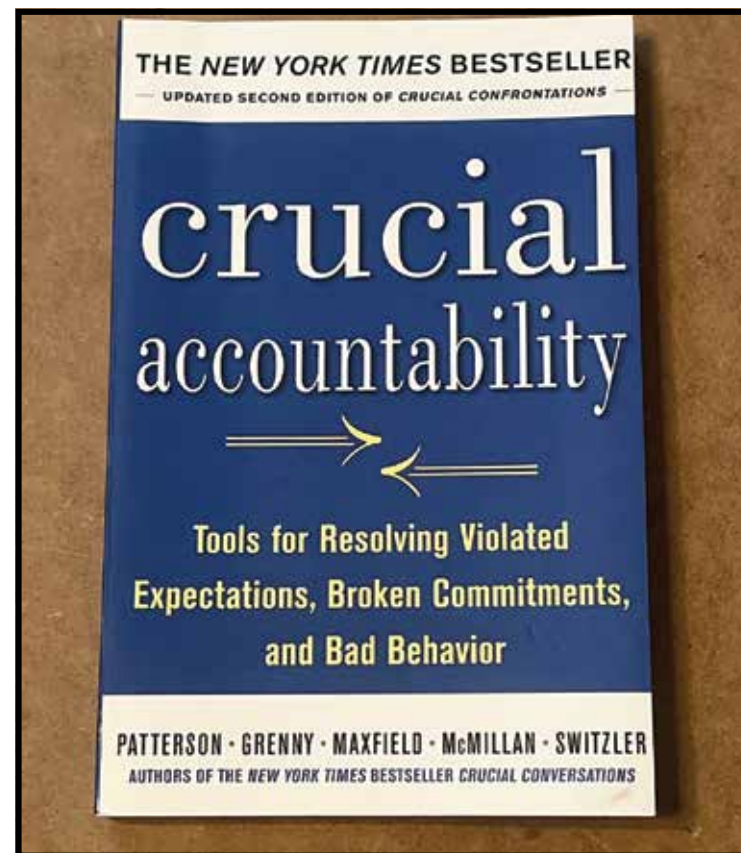
in our culture. They are *Crucial Questions* and *Crucial Accountability*. Department heads in the City of Athens have just gone through a training program regarding *Crucial Questions*, and *Crucial Accountability* is the natural follow on. As the mayor said, "Both topics affect public safety, and public safety has got to be at a high level."

One of the things Mayor Ronnie has done to begin to impart the skill sets necessary to ask the right questions, hold others accountable, and most importantly hold oneself accountable is have mock meetings with role playing at the Mayor's Youth Commission meetings. "We have to learn and to

teach how to respond, and not react."

The books, while hard hitting, are also humorous, and Chapter Two of *Accountability* starts with a quip from George Carlin: "Have you ever noticed: Anybody going slower than you is an idiot, and anyone going faster than you is a maniac." Then the rest of the chapter title sets up the hard work—"How to Get Your Head Right Before Opening Your Mouth." Ouch. That's a skill we all need to first develop and then improve.

The goal, interestingly, is to become curious and avoid the all too familiar approach of "telling ugly stories." From page 61:



"Admitting that a problem might stem from several different sources will change our whole approach. We aren't certain, we aren't smug, we aren't angry, and we slow down. We're curious instead of boiling mad. We feel the need to gather more data rather than charge in 'guns ablazin'.' We move from judge, jury, and executioner to curious participant."

This is not to imply that there is no room for correction or confrontation, or that actions don't have consequences. It just means that research over a 25-year period has proven that the best outcomes in families, companies, organizations and, yes, cities occur when time is taken to gather the facts. "Not only do you need to get your head right, and your

mouth right," said the mayor, "but you need to get your facts right."

Another blurb from the book states what learning the skills will accomplish:

"Broken promises, missed deadlines, poor behavior--they don't just make others' lives miserable; they can sap up to 50 percent of organizational performance and account for the vast majority of divorces. *Crucial Accountability* offers the tools for improving relationships in the workplace and in life and for resolving all these problems--permanently."

These are high goals, and worthy of learning how to achieve. We prayed that we would learn the lessons well, and then once again, it was time for Ronnie to roll.

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Cooking with Anna

My Identity In Christ: *God Says I Am Set Free*

by Anna Hamilton

There are days when it feels like the weight of the past, the fear of the future, and the struggles of today are heavy chains around your heart. But the truth is, if you belong to Christ, God declares that you are set free.

We have freedom through Christ. Jesus said, "So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed" (John 8:36). This freedom is not temporary or dependent on circumstances. It is a deep, spiritual

freedom purchased by Christ's sacrifice on the cross. Through His death and resurrection, you are freed from the power of sin, shame, and eternal separation from God.

You are no longer a slave to fear. Romans 8:15 says, "The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship." You are no longer bound by guilt over past mistakes. Romans 8:1 says, "Therefore,

continued on page 24

Pineapple Tea

Ingredients:

2 Tbsp instant tea

½ cup sugar

1 cup hot water

4 cup pineapple juice, chilled

1 ½ cup cold water

½ cup fresh lemon juice

¼ cup fresh lime juice

¼ cup fresh orange juice

Fruit and mint leaves for garnish

Directions:

Combine tea and sugar. Add hot water and stir until sugar is dissolved.

Add pineapple juice, cold water, lemon, lime, and orange juice. Stir well.

Serve over ice. Garnish with slices of fruit and mint leaves if desired.



The Hidden Sugar Trap: *How To Spot It And What To Do Instead*

by Nick Niedzwiecki - Owner, CrossFit Athens

Sugar isn't just in candy bars and soda anymore—it's lurking in places you'd never expect. From barbecue sauce to yogurt, granola bars to salad dressings, added sugar has quietly made its way into the American diet, often disguised with names like "evaporated cane juice," "corn syrup," or "maltodextrin." And it's wreaking havoc on our health.

Excess sugar intake is one of the leading contributors to weight gain, inflammation, type 2 diabetes, and heart disease. The tricky part? Most people don't realize how much they're consuming. A quick breakfast of cereal, coffee creamer, and toast with jam might seem harmless but could easily pack over 30 grams

of sugar before 9 a.m.

The American Heart Association recommends limiting added sugar to **25 grams per day for women** and **36 grams for men** - but the average American consumes more than **70 grams daily**. That's nearly triple the limit!

So how do we avoid the sugar trap?

1. Start Reading Labels

Look beyond just "sugar" on the label. Watch out for anything ending in "-ose" (like fructose or glucose) or with syrup in the name. If sugar is one of the first three ingredients, it's likely a high-sugar food.

2. Rethink Your Beverages

One of the biggest hid-

den sources of sugar is what we drink. Sweet tea, energy drinks, fruit juice-

es, and even "healthy" smoothies can have more sugar than a soda. Try switching to water with lemon or unsweetened tea and coffee.

3. Don't Trust Health Buzzwords

"Organic," "all-natural," and "low-fat" products often hide sugar to enhance flavor. That "healthy" protein bar may have more sugar than a Snickers.

4. Eat Real Food

The simplest way to cut back on sugar is to eat more foods without nutrition labels - meat, eggs, vegetables, and fruit. Whole foods don't need sugar to taste good or make you feel full. Reducing sugar doesn't mean eliminating joy. It means regaining control. You'll likely notice clearer skin, better energy, and improved mood after just

a few weeks of cutting back.

If you're unsure where to start, you're not alone—and you don't have to do it on your own.

Take the First Step with Fit for Life Nutrition.

At CrossFit Athens, our Fit for Life Nutrition program is open to anyone, not just members of the gym. We'll help you make sense of labels, build simple meal strategies, and finally understand how food affects your energy, weight, and long-term health.

Whether you're looking to lose weight, get off blood sugar medication, or just feel better in your own skin—this is your first step.

Email us at info@crossfitathens.com to get started today.

Your future self will thank you.





Clean, Green And Beautiful

For Goodness Sakes, Look at Those Cakes

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

Do you ever get a sweet tooth but can't make up your mind? If you do, we have something for you! The Athens-Limestone Beautification Board is hosting a fundraiser, "Let There Be Cake"

at the LaunchBox on Marion Street during the last Fridays After Five on July 25, during the Velcro Pygmies! \$5 will get you 3 samples of cakes, and an extra \$1 will buy you a raffle ticket for a 2-layer cake

of your choice! We'll kick off at 4 p.m. and go until we are out of cake. You don't even have to miss any of the concert, we'll have to-go containers for you.

I never knew how much decorating talent there

was until I started doing a little research. We have combed Limestone County to bring you some very talented cake makers and decorators! We have 15 different bakers, and they are all bringing their A-game. Seriously, wear your spandex. Our board members have spent some time planning out our own tasting schedules, and each cake we've added to the list makes it even harder. We will have cookie cakes, chocolate cakes, vanilla petit fours, strawberry cakes (Debbie Hardaway- if you know, you know!).

Some of my all-time favorite flavors will be there too. Carrot, Italian cream cake, butter pecan, almond with almond icing. If you really want to step out of the box, we've got you covered there as well! Vanilla cake with blueberry icing, lemon curd, blackberry cake with lemon icing, a vanilla cake with raspberry filling, vanilla icing and a chocolate ganache, key lime with a key lime cream cheese icing. I mean how do you nar-

row it down? We've decided that you don't narrow it down, you just come back for more!

Some people may wonder why we are having a cake sampling as a fundraiser. Well, it's something Athens didn't already have. I think my favorite part of this fundraiser is that we are helping promote small businesses. I'll admit I didn't think about that aspect at first, but when I did, it made this idea even better. We'll have the bakers' business cards displayed with their cakes, so if you find one that love, you can reorder!

We are hoping that this fundraiser will help us get started on some new and exciting projects throughout the county. We have a lot of ideas brewing, and we are eager to shake things up a bit. So come and join us and satisfy that sweet tooth and find a great local baker for all of your cake needs.



Become a Fan



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It turns out you can have your cake and eat it too!



July 25, 2025

4pm-7pm

The Launch Box

A fundraiser for the Athens-Limestone Beautification Board

\$5 per plate, plus raffles!

William C. Ward, Sr. - *Surviving Pearl Harbor And Beyond*

by Ali Elizabeth Turner

continued from page 1

gan at 7:55 a.m. Hawaii time. The order came to “sortie,” which in that context meant to “get out, now,” and they sped out of the harbor and out of harm’s way. As soon as they could, they turned around, and sailed straight back into a flaming inferno. William had literal nightmares for the rest of his life, and like so many of those who came right up against death so we could be free, he never talked about it. That day the United States lost close to 3500 souls, and the Japanese were sure they had crippled us irreparably. They and Hitler were about to find out just how wrong they were.



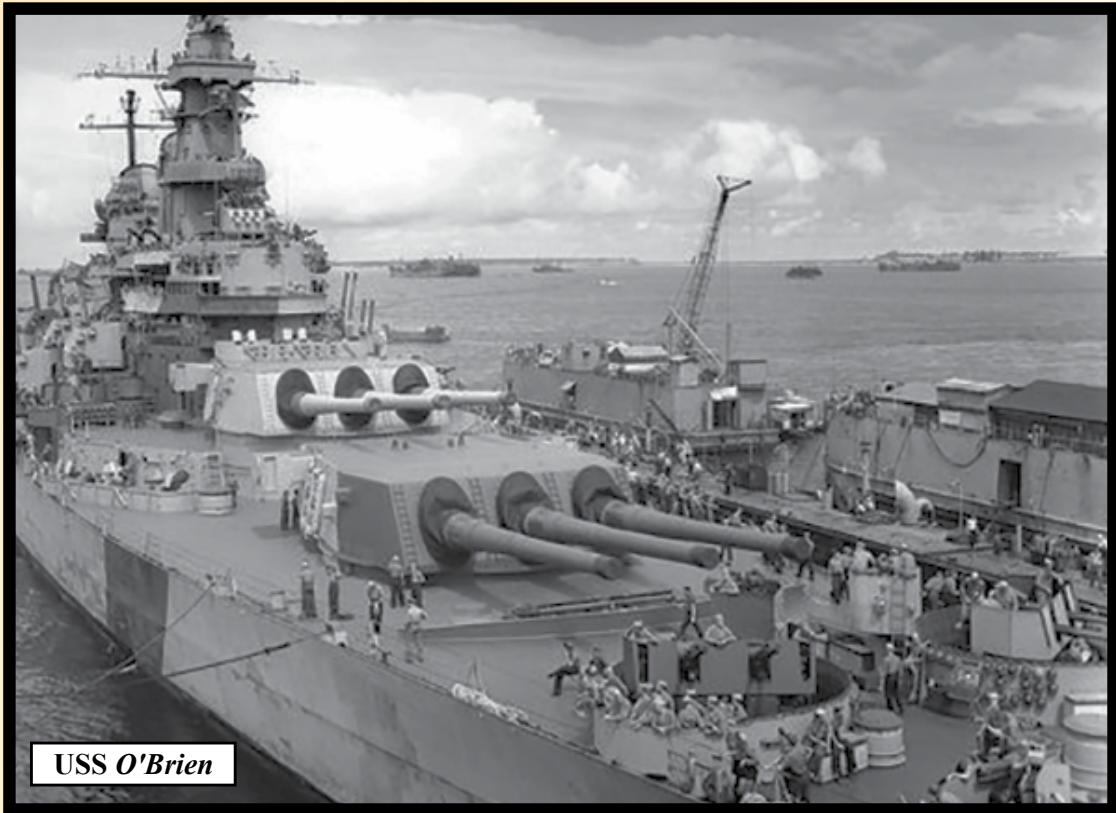
William had eight male relatives who also served at the same time as did he. Their names were DeLeon Edward Ward, USN; Clinton



Ward, USN; Clinton Ward, USN; George Edward Murray, USN; Bryant Murray, U.S. Army; Royce Poitevint, USN; James Aligood, USAAF; and Frank Sharon, U.S. Army.

William was 19 when his military career began, and after Pearl, the *O'Brien* sailed to Singapore to rescue Brits. William was wounded and had a most unusual experience that his son, Bill Ward, Jr., wanted me to share. While in Singapore, there was an attending nurse who had striking blue eyes and short blond hair. One night she stood next to William’s bed and said in a firm voice, “Sonny

boy, you’re gonna be okay.” He thanked her, and later wanted to thank her again for her strong encouragement. He asked around the hospital as to her name and where he could find her, and everyone looked at him as though he perhaps had suffered head injuries that caused him to not see things correctly. No one had ever seen her on the ward, no one responded to his description of her appearance, and flat out told him that there had never been a nurse on staff that fit that description. He didn’t argue; he just knew that he wasn’t making it up, and went on. Years



later, William was in San Diego having his appendix out. She appeared again and said the same thing: “Sonny boy, you are going to be okay.” William told his family about both incidents, and Bill, Jr. himself saw her once. It appears that this angel had a goodly amount of experience guarding the Ward menfolk.

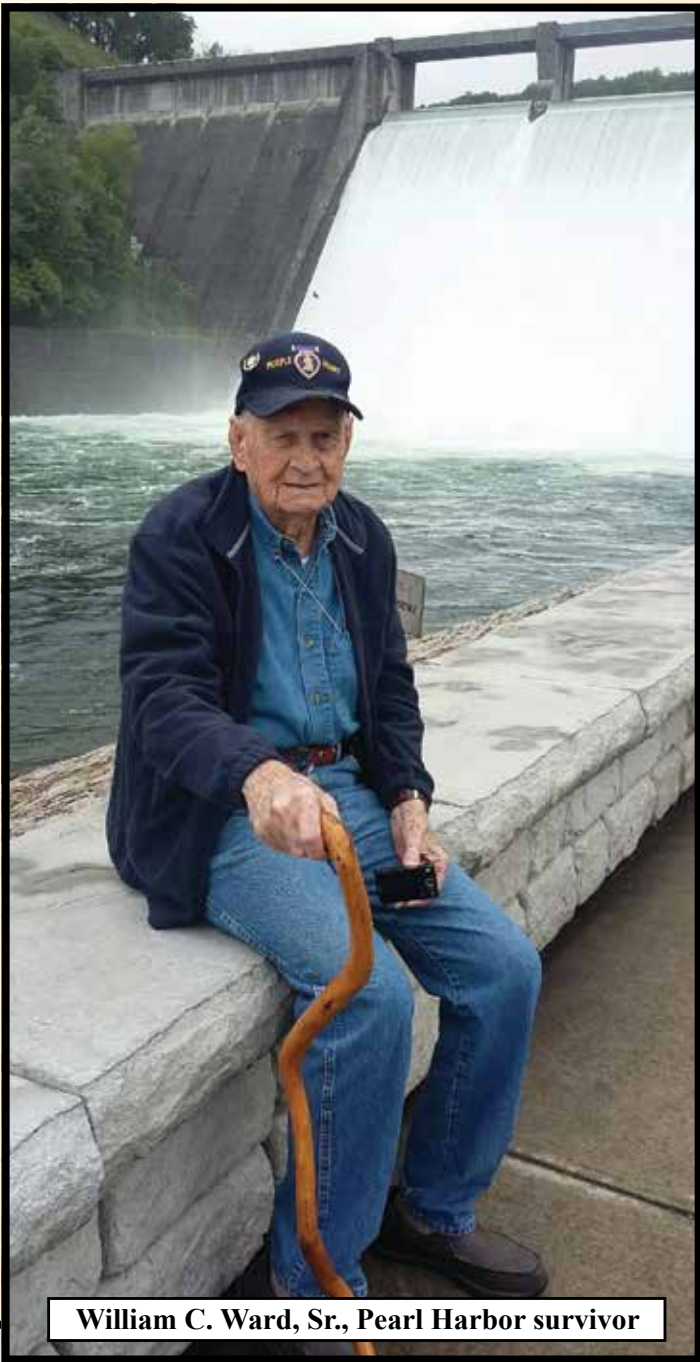
A year after Pearl, William was in Midway and his job was to pick up survivors in the water. There was a man who was in the water, had on a life jacket, but the waves were pressing him down. He was terrified because he could not swim. “God help me, I can’t swim,” he cried out three times. No one knows how it happened, except for the grace of God, but the next thing they knew, the man was in the boat. Once again, God answered prayer. Now,

here’s where it gets really good. Fifty years later, in July of 1992, Bill Jr. and his wife were at a Ward family reunion. Uncle DeLeon was listening to his brother talk about the rescue of the man who couldn’t swim, and said, “I saw that happen.” He went on to tease his brother and say, “You mean you couldn’t stop to pick up your own brother?” There were seven-foot waves, and DeLeon’s own situation was a bit dicey. It was at that point that for the first time Wm. Sr and DeLeon realized that they were actually within 30 feet of each other, and didn’t know it. It was the only time they were near each other the entire war.

The stories go on, and both “Bills” were extras in movies such as *The Sands of Iwo Jima*, *The Fighting Seabees*, and *Tora! Tora! Tora!* Bill, Jr. served in the Air Force in Vietnam;

his career spanning 23 years, and he retired as a master sergeant. Before William died, Bill was able to take his dad back to Pearl and to the USS *Arizona*. William was appropriately honored by those present, and to say it was an emotional event is an understatement. Perhaps some of the “internal wounds” of Dec 7, 1941 were finally healed in that moment.

Bill Jr. wanted to share the stories of his family with you prior to a special event coming up on August 2 at the Alabama Veterans Museum’s monthly Coffee Call. Bill is sponsoring the breakfast that day to honor his family for their service, and will be one of the recipients of a specially designed challenge coin to be given out by Eric Carney of Devoted Health. It is sure to be a wonderful event, and we hope to see you there!



William C. Ward, Sr., Pearl Harbor survivor



USS O'Brien



Captain's Log

Unexpected Warm Fuzzies

by Brenda Wilkerson

This simple pack of scratch paper worked miracles!

The first day you separate the pre-K babies from their older siblings, there will be tears (The first 6 seats are for the littles carefully watched by an older student who shows empathy, patience, and a fun spirit). Give them one of these magical papers and a pencil and voilà, no more tears!

When my hand accidentally hit the lever that closed the double doors with soft rubber edges and accidentally ‘gobbled up’ one of my unexpecting babies, these papers offered sincere apologies and made her eyes light up and caused her twin brother to wish

he had been gobbled up too!

I was running a double route (a middle school run) in my same area when I saw two of my babies who lived in a small apartment complex jumping and dancing as they knew I would be looping back around. As the bus approached the excited girls, they were wide-eyed when I hit the reds and pulled the brake. I grabbed two of these magic papers and handed them out my window. You would have thought I was Santa himself in a big yellow sleigh! These two squealed, laughed, and jumped back to their homes yelling, “Thank you! Thank you!” I hollered back, “You’re welcome! Love you!” As I

pulled the brake and hit the gas, I glanced in that huge review mirror hanging up over my head. Like a big screen TV, the reflection showed that the remainder of my middle school students aboard were silent and perplexed at the warm fuzzies my little girls and I were exchanging!

What a beautiful day of simple gestures that put a spark in someone’s day! Lord, thank you for your example of unconditional love with no expectation for a return of your grace and kindness to us every single day.

So what simple token can you change somebody’s world with today?



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Slinkard On Success

“N” Is For Negative Thinking

by D. A. Slinkard

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



We have come to the letter “N” which stands for “negative thinking.” This is something that has many people trapped in their daily lives. It is such an easy thing to think negatively that many people do not know how to be positive. It has been my experience that it is much easier to be negative than what it is to be positive because trying to be positive in the world we live in can take a lot of work. It takes the kind of work that many people are not willing to put in, but we reap what we sow.

I constantly question how many lives have been destroyed because of negative thinking. How many times have people given up, given in, or not even tried to succeed because they had already planted the seeds of negativity? Thinking negatively is a mentality that hinders so many people, leaving them unable to conquer the things that matter most to them.

I find comfort and joy in Galatians 6:7 which states, “...for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.” I grew up on a small farm in southeast Missouri and my dad would grow corn. It never failed that the crops my dad sowed were the same crops we reaped. There was never a point in time in which my dad planted

corn and we harvested soybeans. There was never a point in time my dad planted corn and the field produced cotton. The field always produced exactly what my dad planted.

Our lives are just like the field of the farmer. The thoughts we think are just like the seedlings that are planted and what we do in our life — from our thoughts, actions, etc. — will determine how the crop grows. If we sow negative thoughts, we need to realize we are going to reap negative factors in our life. If we sow positive thoughts, we need to realize we are going to reap positive factors. We reap what we sow. Even though this concept is elementary, too often we need to be reminded of it in our lives.

What we allow into our mind, what we allow into our heart; what we allow into our speech — it all impacts what we

reap in our lives. What we allow in is like nutrients for the crops; will we have good nutrients or will we allow the weeds set into our lives to choke out any positive results that could happen? The choice is ours to make, but just like the farmer needs to tend to his field, we are going to need to tend to what we are sowing in our mind, heart, and body.

If we sow good things, then we can expect good results, and likewise, if we sow bad things, we need not blame anyone else for our struggles. We do hold the destiny for what we allow into our life, and we cannot fail to hold ourselves accountable for the results we get. We also must be prepared to weather the storm. It takes time for the crops to grow in the field; we cannot plant our positive seeds today and expect to reap tomorrow. It is going to take time for our lives to change, and while we

are waiting for the harvest, we need to ensure we are providing the proper nutrients to obtain the results we desire.

Galatians 6:9 states, “And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.” We need to persevere until the end, and we see that God’s Word tells us we

shall reap if we faint not. Life is going to be tough; life is going to be hard. But just because life gets a little tougher, it does not mean we throw in the towel. Just because life does not go our way 100 percent of the time, it does not mean we give up. We must keep on nurturing our mind, nurturing our thoughts, nurturing our heart. The more we plant positive seeds, the easier it will be to see a positive harvest in our life. Eventually, over time, the negative, nasty, calloused soil will become fertile for positivity in our life. The more we plant positive thoughts, the more we cultivate our mindset to remove the negativity, the more our lives will change. We cannot forget we reap what we sow. It takes work, it will not be easy, but will be worth it all.

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Is Your Glass Half Full or Half Empty?

by Detri McGhee - CLU, ChFC



The TV comment was: “I suppose the answer depends on whether you see the glass as half full or half empty!” My friend (whom I consider my most negative, critical friend!) commented: “I really never have understood what that old saying means! Really! What’s the answer to that question supposed to reveal about the person answering?” The tone carried the idea that the person using this phrase was probably ignorant and wasting their time. Critical to the point of implying they were “stupid” for using it.

Since I have yet to fully learn the valuable lesson that I do NOT HAVE TO ANSWER every question/comment made, I tried to express how I understood that saying could give us a very clear picture of a person’s life choices.

“Well, I see it as I am the one who sees the glass as half full -- thankful I have

some water, appreciate the clean glass, etc. You, on the other hand, would describe it as half empty. Who took the rest of it? Why did they only put in half? Has someone already been drinking from that glass? I see the positive, and you see the negative. I see the advantages and you see the problems!”

Now, I couldn’t talk that way with just anyone, but there is the long-standing banter between us: My friend thinks I am too optimistic, and I think they are too pessimistic. Here’s the rub: I see my friend as negative, pessimistic, difficult, and always complaining and fussing. My friend sees me as avoiding the problems, and not facing reality, too optimistic. Together, we make a great team.

Usually we laugh at the familiar debate. However, Friend’s response to my honesty this time caught me off guard. Friend was

actually a bit offended. “I am NOT negative! I am a realist! That glass is not half full nor is it half empty. It is half a glass of water!” Interesting observation.

Lessons to learn:

- Negative people often do not see themselves as “negative” but rather as a “realist.” Truly negative people grow older in various ways, but two of the most common: 1. They get more critical, grumpy, and impossible to please as they get older, stating the obvious problems and leaving others to solve them while they complain about it all. Or... 2. They work on their Emotional Intelligence growth and become excellent consultants and advice givers, learning to share their keen insights in positive, supportive, profitable ways.

- It is difficult for positive people to be around negative people for long, but if you can do it without

letting your own mental health suffer, you can see life’s problems through them, and deal with those problems faster without making them a permanent part of your psyche.

- Positive people also irritate negative people. They view them as too simplistic, living in an unreal world, not seeing the danger and problems clearly. Instead of trying to change them, keep them in appropriate places in your life. Learn from them when you can. Keep your distance when you feel down, or especially when you are pursuing a dream. They can be great assets when you are analyzing a dream. But when you are in the midst of establishing that well thought-out, clear vision (dream), stay around winners and fellow dream-enablers whenever possible. Better yet, choose carefully those with whom you share your vision. Less is usually more here.

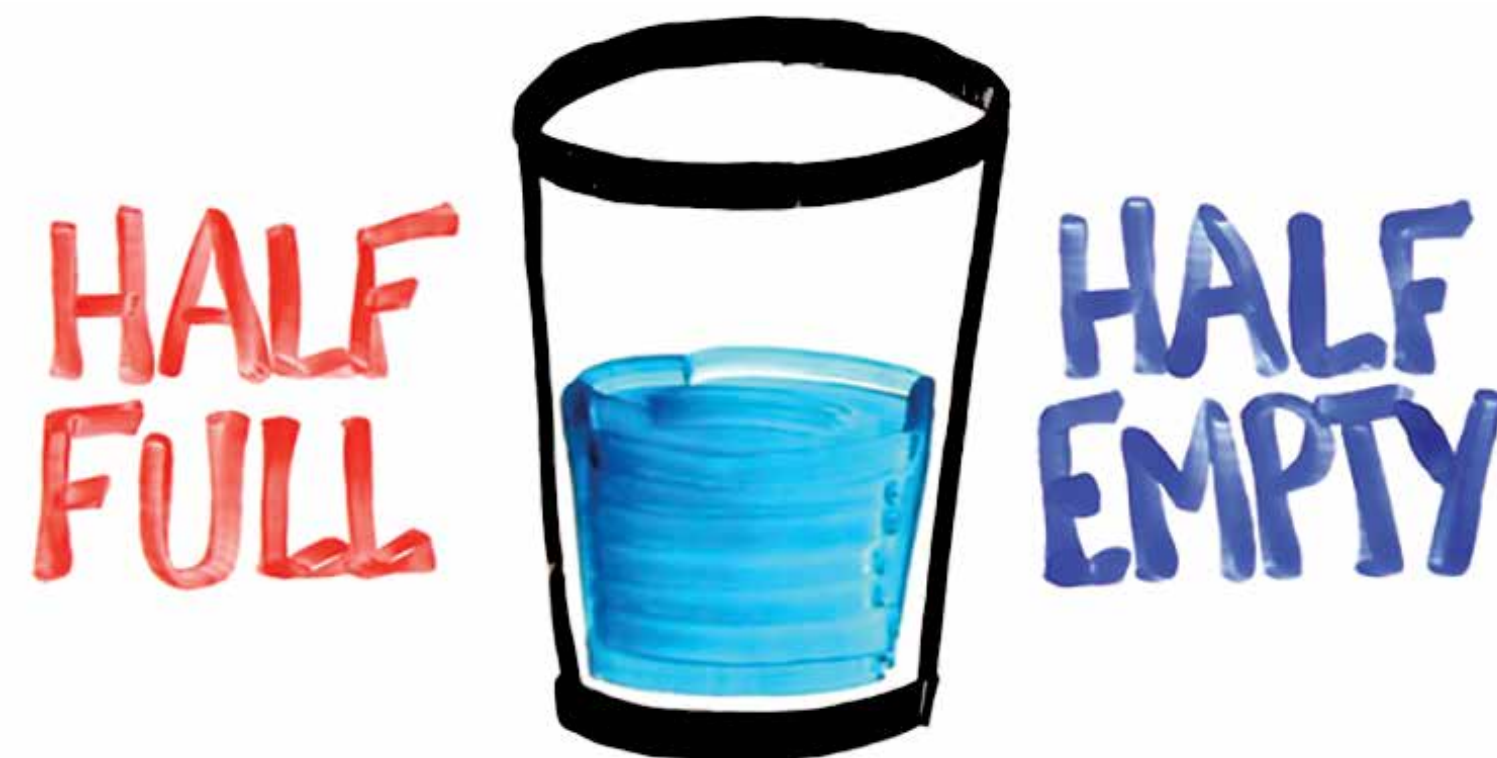
- If you feel a slight headache coming on, drink a full glass of water and take 5 long slow breaths while lowering your shoulders with each breath. You get mildly dehydrated before you feel thirsty. As you swallow, thank God that you have safe, abundant water at your complete disposal.

QUESTIONS OF THE DAY:

1. Is your glass half full or half empty?
2. Which do you do more often: praise or complain?
3. Do you feel compelled to give people advice, even if they don’t ask for it, or even want it, or do you more often find that people come to you for advice?
4. What EI skills do you use to enable you to keep your glass at least half full?
5. Who do you think is responsible for keeping your glass filled?

PRINCIPLE: When you share your opinion, consider how it could affect, influence, bless, or curse others. You are responsible for your words.

Detri would love to hear from you! How do you develop your EI? Especially your thoughts on how to handle criticism, worry, fear or problems you would like to get feedback on from others.
Email: detrimcghee@gmail.com or Facebook: Criticism Management by Detri. Free outline for Criticism Management available at www.criticismmanagement.com





The View From The Bridge

Reclaiming Your Light: *A Call To Show Up Authentically*

by Jackie Warner

Career Development Facilitator

"Impact, Engage, Grow" Community Matters

Have you ever felt like you're dimming your light just to fit into the spaces around you—like you're placing your true self on the back burner to accommodate the expectations of loved ones, friends, or even society at large?

This silent surrender of identity in the name of harmony can be quietly draining—or unmistakably loud in its emotional toll. At its core, this experience is a gentle but urgent invitation to reclaim your voice, your truth, and your joy.

Authentic living isn't about rebellion. It's about alignment—with God's purpose, with your deepest values, and with the person He is calling you to become. And while the pressure to please others can feel overwhelming, choosing to live authentically is an act of sacred courage.

Note to Self: You weren't created to shrink so others can feel comfortable. Your presence isn't a problem to fix—it's a divine gift to offer.

Whether you're navigating family dynamics, friendships, or your role in the world, these five principles can serve as spiritual anchors as you walk in your truth:

1. Choose Purpose over Performance

Let go of the need to

earn approval and step boldly into God's design for your life. When your focus shifts from pleasing people to honoring divine purpose, you stop shape-shifting—and start soul-shining.

2. Clarify Your Core Values

Your values are your spiritual compass. When your words, choices, and relationships flow from what truly matters to you,

you live from a place of peace—not pressure.

3. Practice Self-Compassion

Authenticity is not about perfection—it's about integrity. Treat yourself with grace when you stumble. Celebrate moments where you choose presence over performance.

4. Set Boundaries without Apology

Healthy boundaries protect your emotional and spiritual wellness. Say-

ing "no" to what drains you is also saying "yes" to divine peace, clarity, and self-respect.

5. Speak Your Truth with Courage

Use your voice not to impress, but to express. Sharing who you are and what you need creates space for mutual understanding, deeper intimacy, and spiritual growth.

Living authentically isn't always easy—but it is sacred. As you con-

tinue on this journey, remember: God didn't design you to disappear. He designed you to SHINE BRIGHT!

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/>





Learning As A Lifestyle

Beyond the Spotlight: *Redefining Inspirational Leadership*

by Eric Betts
Assistant Director, Curtis Coleman Center for Religion Leadership and Culture at Athens State University

In our cultural moment, inspirational leadership is often draped in charisma, TED Talk optimism, and viral soundbites pulled from the pages of pop psychology. Leadership is marketed like personality—measured by one’s ability to captivate a room or produce contagious positivity. While these traits can energize and uplift, they are insufficient for the kind of leadership that anchors communities, sustains justice, and restores dignity. Inspiration, at its core, must be more than momentary motivation—it must point people toward meaning.

The seductive appeal of the "charismatic leader" is nothing new. From corpo-

rate boardrooms to pulpits, we’ve been conditioned to equate charm with competence and enthusiasm with effectiveness. But genuine inspirational leadership doesn’t draw its strength from emotional spectacle; it is rooted in clarity, conviction, and the courage to stay present through complexity. It isn’t afraid to confront hard truths or challenge collective complacency. The most inspirational leaders aren’t always the loudest—they are often the ones who speak when it counts, and whose integrity whispers long after the applause fades.

Some leadership styles are mistaken for inspirational simply because they sparkle on the surface: the



overly persuasive salesman, the hype-heavy motivator, or the eternal optimist who never names the storm. These styles often

thrive on performance, not presence. In contrast, quiet leadership -- marked by listening, deep discernment, and consistent integrity -- rarely gets the spotlight but often does the deepest work. Inspirational leadership can also show up in collaborative builders, restorative healers, and prophetic truth-tellers who unsettle the status quo for the sake of collective growth. Their impact isn't always immediate, but it's undeniable over time.

This redefinition matters deeply to communities who’ve had to carry generational weight with limited

resources. In such places, leadership isn’t about hype -- it’s about healing. It’s about helping people imagine what’s possible when they’ve been told to settle for less. Inspirational leadership, then, must be deeply relational and historically aware. It asks not just “How can I inspire,” but “Who am I accountable to?” and “What am I building for the next generation?”

True inspiration doesn’t simply lift spirits; it restores hope. And hope, especially in the face of exhaustion, is revolutionary. That’s the kind of leadership our moment requires.

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The Alternative Approach

“America” Becoming Great Again

by Roy Williams

When I was a boy, anyone running for office that had any leaning toward socialism or communism had zilch, nada, zero chance of winning in any election. Here we are 50 years later and we actually have MAM-DANI, winning a primary in New York. He is a hardcore socialist leaning toward communism who hates America and the freedoms we enjoy. He wants to give away taxpayer money and give government control over everything from our grocery stores, our banking systems, our schools and our health care. He hates billionaires, even though he was raised in a very rich family, saying, they have too much money and the government should be able to take it from them and give to the less fortunate.

Socialist Karl Marx, was famous for saying, "From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs." Socialists actually believe that if you have ambition or are driven, develop your skills and earn large sums of money, that the government should be able to take some of what you build and give it to those who aren't willing or aren't able to work. Remember, when they offer something like free food or health care, what they are really saying is, give us more control. They are power hungry and nothing else matters. We all know that nothing is free, but many of those running for office use that word to gain votes.

Please don't be fooled. Bernie Sanders is another example of a hardcore socialist that wants to take money from those that earn it and give it to those who freeloader.

We continue to hear the deep state and communist news stations say that Trump wants to destroy our democracy. The fools don't realize that we are not and have never been a democracy. Our founding fathers studied governments all over the world and came to the conclusion that a democracy is simply socialism in disguise. They realized that a democracy simply cannot work in a free society because it is nothing more or less than mob rule. That's why we are a representative republic giving each state the ability to put people in government to represent the people in their individual state. Each state then has their own representation in the decisions that are made nationwide. That way each state has a say in everything that goes on in our government, which also gives the voters a say.

America is winning again. Trump is working at light speed. Many who work with him say he is almost super human. He is fast being recognized as a decisive leader, able to make the hard decisions that most politicians will not even touch. He is trying to stop the endless wars and create a more peaceful place for everybody. Many want the world to be at war, and



it seems that only Trump is willing to try and stop them. He has stopped America from being the only country that collects no tariffs, and since we started collecting them, it has already resulted in the U.S. collecting over \$100 billion. Another great victory thanks to Trump, the Big Beautiful Bill has been signed into law, which will lower virtually everyone's taxes.

The oppressors are being exposed for just who and what they are, socialist pigs, elitists that hate America. Trump is moving at light speed reversing the sorry policies the Democrats spoke into power without using legislation. I stress, spoke into power because they didn't pass legislation, they simply gave mandates and expected us to walk in lock-step. But Trump, being who he is, told us recently, and I quote, "When tariffs cut

in, many people's income taxes will be substantially reduced, maybe even completely eliminated. Focus will be on no taxes for people making less than 200K a year. Also, massive numbers of jobs are already being created, with new plants and factories currently being built or planned. It will be a bonanza for America! The external revenue service is happening." Those are just a few of the things that we need in place for America to be great again.

The last thing I would like to leave with you is

that thanks to Robert F. Kennedy, we will soon be able to actually find the root causes of disease and reverse them instead of treating the symptoms only. Many believe that in just a couple of decades, the average American could live anywhere from 80 to 100 years on average without disease. To learn more, go by Herbs & More in Athens, NHC Herb Shop in Killen, call 256-757-0660 or visit our website at nhcherbs.com.

*Your Friend in Health,
Roy P Williams*



Trusting Training, Transitions, And Timing

by Deb Kitchenmaster



God describes YOU as His faithful or goodly horse in battle. Seriously! Sometimes I may not look like that or feel like that, yet looking into a solid, settled forever source (the Bible), I discover God's description of how He sees us. My resource comes from the writings of an Old Testament prophet by the name of Zechariah (10:3-5).

God declares His anger against the negligent shepherds and corrupt leaders who have failed to care for His flock. He vows to punish these leaders. However, He also states that He will personally tend to His flock and make them

strong and victorious, like a magnificent war-horse in battle.

I spent some time with a couple in Arizona who raised racehorses. They do NOT bronc ride these horses in the way you see in rodeos. Their hands are the gentle tools that take the young horses (filly/female or colt/male) one step at a time – building confidence, not breaking their spirits. The halter training of young stock is interesting. They put a halter on the filly or colt and hook it to a mule. It is not long until the filly or colt learns to submit to that mule. This requires both of them to submit to each other, since each has a mind of its own.

In a short amount of time, however, the mule learns to take advantage of the young horse. He learns that if he will hold his head just right, the youngster cannot get up once it lies down. The mule seems to enjoy this superiority, and holds the youngster down at his will.

The time comes to move on from the mule connection. The initial halter training is over and it is time to go further – to be the racehorse it was bred to be. Both mule and horse are somewhat saddened upon the separation. They don't feel emotions like we do, however, they have grown to like each other and tend to miss their

time together. There is a degree of a grieving transition.

God has called you to know Christ in you, the hope of glory. Do not hesitate when the Lord leads you to drop some mule doctrine in order to go to a higher level in preparation to run your race. You are a son or daughter of Abba Father Himself; Perfect, Unfailing LOVE.

The horse is then trained to the harness, bridle and saddle. Little by little, the training continues until the big day when the racehorse steps out of its corral and goes down to the racetrack. There's a new world blowing in the wind. With flared nostrils, the little race-

horse knows that he is about to move into a new dimension. Here, he is introduced to a saddle pony that brings him comfort. Days go by, and soon the racehorse feels at ease in this new environment. He enjoys stretching his legs as he feels the wind blowing through his mane.

Another transition! The saddle pony is gone. It's time to know that what is inside is greater than a form of something on the outside. He begins to trust the one who holds the reins.

So often a person identifies with what he has been all of his life rather than what he is called to be. Do not continue to identify with the mule and saddle pony experience, though thankful for both. They had a part in preparing you to BE. Let us submit to the training in righteousness, become unhooked from mule doctrines and no longer settle to remain in the comfort zone the saddle pony brought.

“What lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters compared to what lies within us.” Ralph Waldo Emerson

Muscle with confidence, courage, and connection, let us run our race set before us.

*Your NEIGHbor,
Deb Kitchenmaster*

horsinaround188@gmail.com





Rightside Way

Left-Wing Libs Fiddle While Cities Burn

by Phil Williams

It is possible to be in a bad situation and still keep order. But it takes leadership and the will of the people to do so.

I had an experience during the early days of the war in Afghanistan. My small team lived for most of a year among the Afghan people, hours away from any military base. Everywhere we looked there was devastation and deprivation brought on by decades of war and tyranny. The detritus of war was so commonplace that the Afghan people had become numb to it.

But on one occasion, I came upon a remote village high in the Hindu Kush Mountains that caught me off guard. Situated well above the rest of the world, the idyllic village seemed different, with beautiful fields of cultivated sunflowers and crops growing beside the rushing mountain streams with small stone foot bridges. The traditional mud brick homes stacked on the hillsides, and perched above streams, all seemed well kept and beautiful. I remarked at the time that it was like the war had never even been there -- it felt like we had discovered the legendary Shangri-La.

The difference was that the people cared. Their leaders cared. They had decided not

to live amongst the debris of war, or succumb to the mindset that "this is just how it is." They had pride in their homes, and lived with the understanding that they could not change the world but they could change where they lived. I would love to go back and see it again under different circumstances.

Consider that same premise in American cities. Left-wing agitators and immigration apologists are constantly, even violently, attempting to interfere with federal law enforcement. Recently, protestors swarmed to a marijuana farm (let that sink in) and assaulted ICE agents and National Guard troops as they served warrants. Over 200(!) illegal immigrants were taken into custody. Agitators blocked roads, climbed on law enforcement vehicles, and assaulted officers. Overhead video showed one individual appearing to fire a gun at law enforcement officers.

We've seen this same scene play out in an endless loop in venues like San Francisco, Los Angeles, and Portland. Where are the leaders? Where are the elected officials? Where are the calls about law and order?

California Governor Gavin Newsom was in South Carolina campaigning against Trump

for reasons no one could fathom. His plan was simply to blame the federal government and encourage the protestors. Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass, a woman out of her league who has become a living meme, held a press conference to announce that she stands with illegal immigrants, will resist enforcement of the laws, and that she had filed a Freedom of Information Act request demanding to know the names of the ICE agents in her city. The mayor of Chicago pronounced an official policy of noncooperation with ICE and calling for citizens to "rise up" against federal agents. Birmingham Mayor Randall Woodfin spoke of a defiance of immigration enforcement on national TV...the same Mayor Woodfin whose murder rate continues to climb while he issues blanket pardons for drug offenses dating back to years in which he was just in grade school.

Let's be clear, the reasons why we are seeing a 500% increase in assaults on federal law enforcement is because #1 - the progressive left is willing to commit violence AND #2 - progressive left leadership is willing to turn a blind eye at best, and encourage it at worst. Liberal left-wing lunatics are burning American cities down while liberal

left-wing leaders are fiddling.

The point is that the people of any community do not have to just settle for disruption and disorder. The essential functions of government include providing for the common defense, promoting the general welfare, establishing justice, and insuring domestic tranquility. Those are mandates that are not just related to national defense on a geopolitical scale. Those are mandates that relate to safe streets, peaceful communities, enforcement of laws. Those mandates are prescribed in our founding documents, and every single elected leader swears an oath to "uphold and defend" them.

But too often, liberals feel that their role is to make life easier for the criminals and harder for the law-abiding citizens. Yet all too often law-abiding citizens grow numb, like the vast number of Afghan citizens I knew who just accepted a life of societal upheaval.

But that Shangri-La village in the mountains? They got it. They knew they did not have to settle for discord and destruction. American cities should take that lesson to heart.

The good folks in these municipal centers of chaos have to speak up and tell their elected leaders that criminal

elements fomenting disorder, crime, and violence will not be tolerated. Tell them that we live here, this is our home, and we care.

For far too long, the people of these blue cities have just capitulated, believing that there is nothing they can do. They live with it

If a village in the high places of Afghanistan can make itself look like a postcard, then we can do the same right here at home. Law and order matters. It is about quality of life. It's about leadership.

Tell the leftist leaders to stop fiddling while our cities burn.

Because this is our house...and it matters.

Phil Williams is a former State Senator, retired Army Col and combat veteran, and a practicing Attorney. He previously served with the leadership of the Alabama Policy Institute in Birmingham. Phil currently hosts the conservative news/talkshow Rightside Radio M-F 2-5 pm on multiple channels throughout the southeast. His column appears weekly throughout Alabama. The views and opinions expressed here are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the policy or position of this news source. To contact Phil or request him for a speaking engagement go to www.rightsideradio.org.





Cooking with Anna (continued from page 9)

My Identity In Christ: *God Says I Am Set Free*

by Anna Hamilton

there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” You are no longer trapped by the lies of the enemy that tell you that you are not enough. In Jesus, you are fully loved, fully accepted, and fully free.

We have freedom from the past. Many people walk through life carrying the burden of regrets, failures, and sins they cannot forget. Yet God’s Word says, “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!” (2 Corinthians 5:17). God does not hold your past against you. Instead, He calls you His child and gives you a new identity rooted in His love and forgiveness.

In Christ, we have freedom to live in purpose. Freedom in Christ is not just freedom from something, but freedom for something. Galatians 5:13 says, “You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free.” God sets you free so you can love, serve, and live boldly in the purpose He has for you.

You are free to walk in joy and peace even in trials. You are free to forgive others as Christ has forgiven you. You are free to live unashamed, confident that God’s Spirit lives within you, guiding your steps daily.

When you are walking in Christ you are walking in your freedom. To live in the freedom God has given you, remind yourself of these truths: You are forgiven (Ephesians 1:7). You are redeemed (Colossians 1:13-14). You are loved beyond measure (Romans 8:38-39). You are free from condemnation

(Romans 8:1).

When the enemy tries to tell you that you are still bound, remind him that Jesus has already paid the price for your freedom. When guilt and fear whisper that you are not free, speak God’s Word over your life, declaring that you are free indeed.

Today, rest in the truth that God says you are set free. You do not have to earn this freedom; it is a gift of grace. You can live boldly, love deeply, and serve faithfully, knowing that Jesus has broken every chain.

Let this freedom lead you to worship, to walk in confidence, and to share the hope of Christ with others who need to know that freedom is possible for them too.

You are free. You are loved. You are His.

This week’s recipe is a delicious and refreshing fruit tea for these dog days of summer. My family actually enjoys it all year long. I hope you love it as much as we do.

“It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery” (Galatians 5:1).



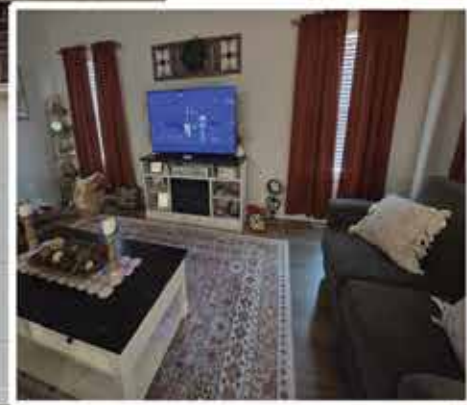
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