

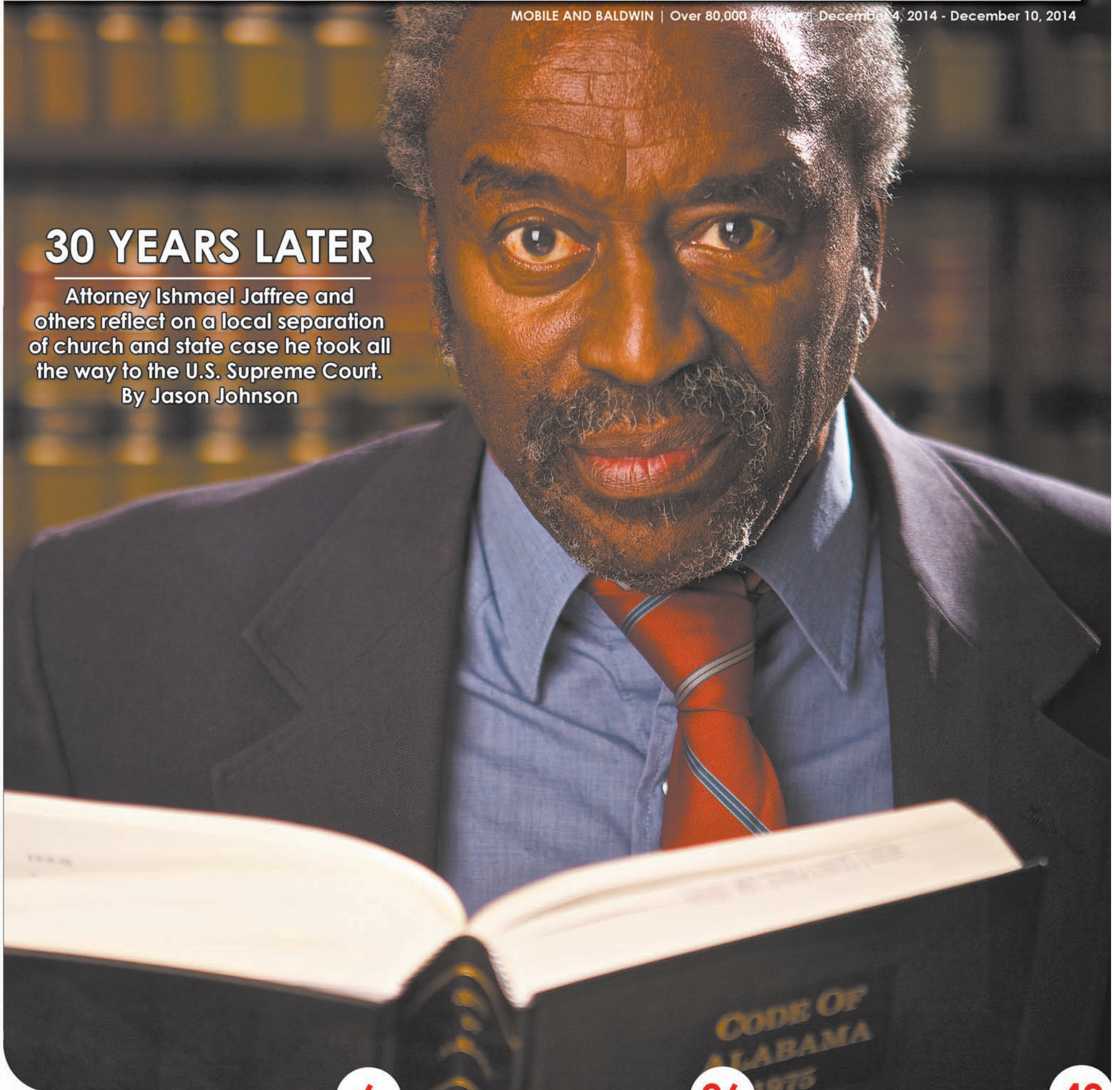
LAGNIAPPE WEEKLY

MOBILE AND BALDWIN | Over 80,000 Readers | December 4, 2014 - December 10, 2014

30 YEARS LATER

Attorney Ishmael Jaffree and others reflect on a local separation of church and state case he took all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court.

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Jeff Poor • Jennifer McDonald
Ken Robinson • Clyde Foster

On the Cover: Ishmael Jaffree by Dan Anderson

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Uneducated rhetoric typical of 'Bama fan base

I have read many controversial articles in my time but the one written by Dale Liesch on Auburn and Alabama ('Hammer time' coming soon for Auburn, Nov. 27) is by far the most pathetic excuse of literature I have ever seen. You should honestly be embarrassed at how moronic and one sided you came off as.

I love your quote about cousins kissing each other and making meth together in a trailer because it encapsulates (sic) 95 percent of Alabama's entire fan base and unless you just crawled out from underneath a rock you would be stupid to try and disagree. A staggering amount of Alabama fans have never attended the college and it consists of backwoods trailer park trash using tin foil to try to pick up the local football game.

"War Eagle" is a disgrace to this state? What kind of sense does roll tide even make to begin with? And I'm so glad you pride Alabama fans on being able to count to 15 but the sad truth is that y'all are close minded and widely uneducated which your article has only reinforced these stereo-

types exponentially. You imply throughout your Ebola ridden ugly string of words (most accurately describes your article) that Alabama invented winning football games, but no they didn't so Auburn winning football games doesn't make us attempting to be like y'all.

Why would anyone want to be as arrogant and obnoxious as the Alabama fan base? Auburn has a slew of traditions, way more than Alabama could ever hope to have. Harvey Updike destroyed our most sacred one. I'm sure you were proud of that man and I bet you're foaming at the mouth to claim him as one of your own. I failed to make even the most distant connection regarding your Lake Martin nonsense. I will leave you with this quote from Pat Dye, "If you're an Alabama fan it's in your head, if your (sic) an Auburn fan it's in your heart" so chew that over for a while you watch your precious team burn. WAR. DAMN. EAGLE.

P.S. The only people you impressed with your unnecessary over usage of a thesaurus is the lesser educated fans of this great rivalry (which would be the Alabama ones).

Stephen Fleming
via email

POLICE DISPATCH

After taking blind plea, sexual predator receives life sentence

BY JASON JOHNSON/REPORTER | jason@lagniappemobile.com

The Mobile County District Attorney's office announced Monday that Jawaun Maurice Dawson, previously convicted of multiple accounts of sexual abuse, was sentenced to life in prison.

The 24-year-old entered a blind plea in late October, admitting to multiple charges including burglary, sodomy, sexual abuse, kidnapping, robbery and fraudulent use of a credit card.



Photo/MCSO

Jawaun Dawson

Dawson was arrested in late April for committing two sexual assaults on concurrent days — one of which took place on the campus of the University of South Alabama and the other near the 100 block of East Drive.

USA police told reporters after Dawson's arrest that video evidence showed him using a victim's credit card at a local convenience store, which helped authorities make an arrest only days after the incidents occurred.

According to the records of the Mobile County Sheriff's Office, Dawson has a criminal history that includes theft and drug-related charges dating back to 2011.

Felon sentenced on secondary firearms charge

This week U.S. Attorney Kenyen R. Brown announced the sentencing of a felon caught with a firearm who had been previously arrested for a shooting incident in Mobile County.

Andre Deon Todd, who has previous convictions of discharging a gun into an occupied vehicle, receiving stolen property and possession of cocaine, was sentenced to 37 months in prison and three years of supervised release recently after being caught with firearm earlier this year.

In April, officers of the Mobile Police Department responded to a call that a vehicle driven by Todd was chasing a truck towing Todd's vehicle. Once the vehicle driven by Todd was stopped, his passenger provided a statement that when confronting the tow truck driver Todd had a firearm in his hand — a .38 caliber revolver — but did not point it at anyone.

Because of his previous felony convictions, possession of the firearm constituted a violation of federal law. According to the records of the Mobile County Sheriff's Office, Todd has a

criminal history dating back to 2003 that includes several drug and weapons-related charges.

Police still searching for suspect in Thanksgiving homicide

Mobile police investigators continue to look for a suspect after a shooting over the Thanksgiving holiday left one dead and another injured. According to reports, around 7 p.m., Nov. 27, officers responded to the 3900 block of Wood Drive in Mobile after it was reported that two individuals had been shot.

Antonio Lacy, 23 of Mobile, died en route to a local hospital. A second victim, a 25-year-old male who has not been identified, was transported to a local hospital where he was treated for multiple gunshot wounds and released.

As of Dec. 1, no arrests had been made in connection to the shooting, which is being considered a murder and attempted murder at this time.

The suspect is described as being a black male in his late 20s, six-feet tall, approximately 275 pounds and brown hair.

Anyone with information is asked to contact the Mobile Police Department at 251-208-7211.

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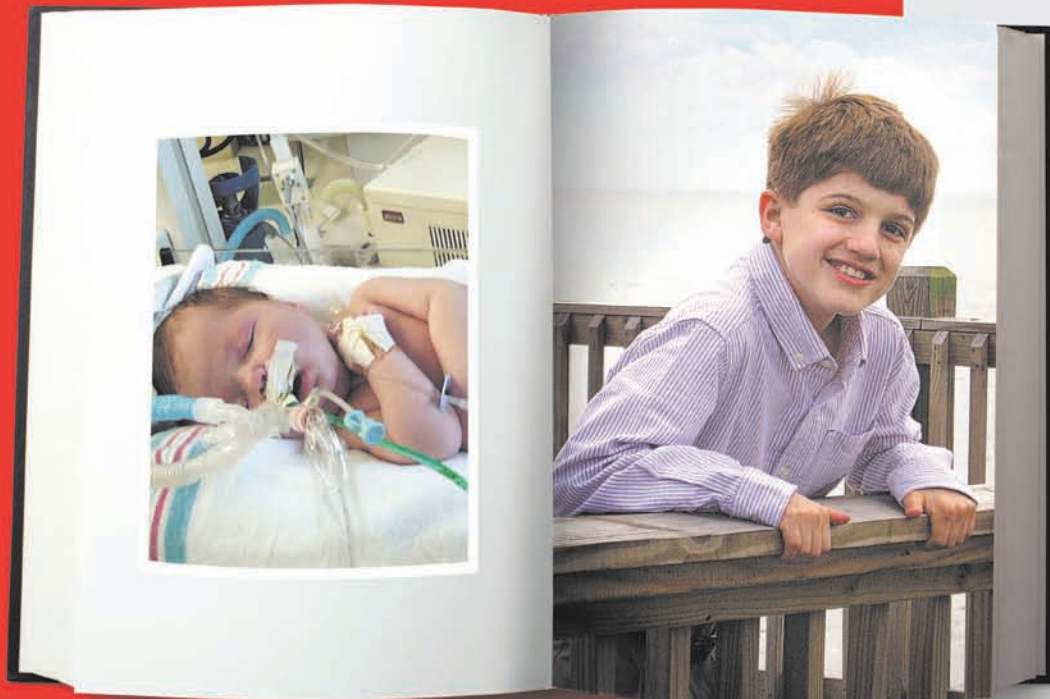
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Free EMA facility may be too good to be true

BY JASON JOHNSON/REPORTER | jason@lagniappemobile.com

County officials have been talking about building an upgraded emergency operations center (EOC) for more than a year, but some believe there's a viable option sitting in West Mobile already.

An EOC is a centralized location used for the coordination of response and recovery processes during an emergency, but portions of the current facility used by the Mobile County Emergency Management Agency (EMA) on McGregor Avenue are more than 60 years old.

Plans drawn up a few years ago have a facility slated for construction on Ziegler Boulevard near the Mobile County Communications District — land given to the EMA by the city of Mobile.

Located on the same property is the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Disaster Response Center (DRC), which was constructed on land the EMA owns as well. Over the past few months, MCCD board members discussed the possibility of using the NOAA facility instead of building a new structure for the EMA.

The 15,500-square-foot, \$11-million DRC — championed by Sen. Richard Shelby — was built in 2012. Similar to an EOC, but much larger in scale, the federally funded facility is set up to be a central location for agencies across the entire Gulf coast in the event of a disaster.

During a November meeting, County Engineer Joe Ruffer — who serves on both the MCCD board and the county's EMA Authority Board — discussed the agreements made between the two agencies when the DRC was constructed.

"EMA owns that land and leased it to NOAA to construct the building with the stipulation that at any such time as it ceases using the facility, EMA gets dibs on the building," Ruffer said. "It's set up for (that), but only if NOAA doesn't get funding to stay in the building."

Mobile County EMA Director Ronnie Adair compared to the situation to how National Guard armories revert back to the city or county they're located in if they're unfunded federally.

Though he's heard no rumors of a funding change, Adair said "you never know what's going to happen" from year to year.

Gary Tanner, director of MCCD, said he approached Sen. Jeff Sessions about defunding the DRC to save the county money three years ago, but no change has been made. Asked what would happen if both a new EOC was constructed and the NOAA facility was stripped of its funding, Tanner said "that would be a disaster."

Charlie Henry, director of the DRC, said his funding is entirely at the discretion of Congress.

"I have no way to look ahead in the future, but right now we're funded from multiple sources," he said. "It takes roughly \$1 million for us to operate and maintain services, but there are some additional monies we put into programs to try to enhance projects throughout the entire Gulf."

Henry said with only 15 offices, the facility currently has more personnel than it has space for, and is looking to house two additional staff members from the Gulf Coast Recovery Council in mid-December. But he also said the original plans behind the DRC were created with the EMA's proposed facility in mind.

"The idea was they were going to design their facility parallel to ours, connect them by a covered walkway and they would be mutually supportive," Henry said. "They weren't going to duplicate some of the rooms we have and we could both use either facility."

According to Henry, more than 700 first responders have used the DRC for training drills, including personnel from the county, state, the U.S. Coast Guard and other federal agencies.

"We're actually providing a service by using it to support the area," he said. "In fact, the region has the added value that, basically, NOAA and the federal government are paying for them to use the facility."

In the meantime, Adair said a larger facility for EMA is a priority because the current EOC is dated.

"They started construction on pieces of the current facility in 1952, and it was upgraded in the '60s," he said. "There's still copper wiring."

Mobile County Commission President Connie Hudson said the EMA has received about \$2 million in federal grants for the EOC and, according to Adair, around \$800,000 of that has already been used to design a structural plan for the new facility.

"We've been looking at different funding mechanisms, but have sort of put it on the front burner because we know time is an issue," Hudson said. "The federal government wants to see what sort of progress you've made, and if by a certain deadline you haven't made progress, they want the money back."

Hudson said the county has already been granted two extensions on that deadline, but said there's no guarantee of additional extensions.

According to the structural plan, the EOC could cost in the neighborhood of \$14 million and would be around 36,000 square feet when completed. Funding for the facility is planned from a hodgepodge of sources including the MCCD, the county and federal grants.

At a County Commission meeting last month, Ruffer said the county's portion of the project would only require a \$7 million commitment from its capital improvements plan (CIP) despite the city of Mobile backing out of its commitment to help fund the project.

"The city, as you know, told us they would not be able to come up with their \$7 million," Ruffer told commissioners. "We also have about \$2.6 million of road work we moved from our 2012 CIP into the most recent Pay As You Go program."

Ruffer said \$9.6 million would be all that's needed from the county, but the MCCD will likely be indirectly contributing \$1.3 million to the facility as well.

According to Tanner, MCCD has set those funds to purchase the old EOC — an amount that's been budgeted for more than four years.

Trey Oliver, a MCCD board member and representative of the Mobile County Merit System Employees Association, addressed commissioners at the last meeting and expressed concerns about rumors of borrowing money to fund the EOC.

Though Hudson said the EOC's funding wasn't entirely worked out, she responded to Oliver by saying, "even with this bond issue we're contemplating at the beginning of the year, our debt service has been reduced by \$2 million (in our most recent budget). If we stop borrowing money, we would very shortly end up in the same situation the city has been in for years with all the money going to operations," Hudson said. "Our constituents don't expect us to put all the money in operations. It's a balancing act."

Oliver said he was concerned more debt would limit the county's operational spending and hinder its ability to increase employee wages, deal with infrastructure needs and address overcrowding at the Mobile Metro Jail, where he serves as warden.

The commissioners agreed the jail's population was concerning, but District 2 Commissioner Merceria Ludgood called the EOC "a critical need."

"The existing EOC is trying to function, but isn't able to, and that's just not sustainable," Ludgood said. "With us being the vulnerable type of community that we are, we've just got to do better."



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Mobile County sees 90 new cases of HIV this year

BY DALE LIESCH/REPORTER | dale@lagniappemobile.com

Oct. 9, 1997 is a date that will always stick out in the memory of a 53-year-old client of AIDS Alabama South, because it was the day he found out he had HIV. The black male, who spoke on the condition of anonymity, said he was tested for the virus when he first arrived and was processed at a Montgomery jail.

"They isolated you," he said. "They didn't tell you. You assumed something was wrong, but you didn't know what it was."

He was eventually told he was infected and was transported to Limestone Correctional Facility, the only prison at the time for inmates with HIV.

"I was scared," he said when he first found out. "I kept hearing about how people were dying. I heard horrible stories."

The prison would supply him with the medication he needed and he would attend a regular program to learn how to live with the virus. Once he came to terms with the diagnosis, he began to help others in prison.

He was released from Limestone in 2002, but went back to jail twice more, including in 2010 for a probation violation. He said living with the virus affected his mindset.

"I was in a cycle and I couldn't break the cycle," he said.

He said he has cleaned up his act since his most recent release and relies on AIDS Alabama South for help dealing with the virus.

"This is one of the greatest organizations out there," he said. "I love everybody who works here. They bring joy to the life of a man like me."

The man is far from alone, as the nonprofit organization serves clients in a 12-county area in southwest Alabama. In all, AIDS Alabama South serves 411 active clients with three licensed social workers on staff, Executive Director Lanita Kharel said.

"You talk about an overload of case management; I've got the best staff that ever breathed," she said. "They're the most dedicated, loyal, compassionate people and they get paid very little to do their work."

During the budget process, Kharel asked the city council for \$16,000 through the performance contract process. But AIDS Alabama South was one of several organizations left out of the 2015 budget.

All of those 411 clients live below the federal poverty line and some are homeless, Kharel said. Social workers help in many ways, but most importantly they help develop life plans for clients. Kharel said life plans are supposed to help make clients more independent.

In addition, AIDS Alabama South helps with housing, nutrition, hygiene, financial assistance and assistance with oral health care, Kharel said.

The HIV/AIDS epidemic hasn't gone away, Kharel said, it has moved southward. This is true in Mobile County, which has seen 90 new cases of HIV this year. That's an increase over last year's 88. There were a total of 669 new

cases in the entire state in 2013. From Jan. 1 to Sept. 30 of 2014 there were 393 new cases this year. She said higher poverty rates, higher incarceration rates and a lack of "comprehensive sex education" has led to the movement of the virus.

"We do not in Alabama, or in Mobile County, have comprehensive sex education," Kharel said. "We have abstinence-only education and that's inadequate."

AIDS Alabama South provides education at local Boys and Girls Clubs, but hasn't been welcome in Mobile County schools, Linkage to Care Specialist Tiffany Collins said.

"We are involved in Dotch Community Center at Trinity Gardens," Collins said. "You know, so we're unable to get into the schools right now, but we are going to exercise other avenues."

Collins said the organization is currently in discussions with Saraland High School. She said a local clinic has made presentations at Davidson High School.

Kharel said presentations at local schools would be a positive step. She said the organization could customize the presentation to cover topics the teacher or principal would want.

Education is important, Kharel said, as 85 percent of the new cases in Mobile County are adolescents and young people between the ages of 15 and 29.

It's also important to get tested for the virus. If treated the right way, a patient's viral load can become undetectable, making it less likely that they'll transmit it to someone else. Kharel said with a suppressed viral load, a patient has only a 2 percent chance of passing the virus on.

"So, that means they're compliant with their regimen every day," Kharel said. "If they stop taking their meds, their viral load comes back up, their white blood cells go down and over an amount of time they will get sick. Only 28 percent of the population are undetectable."

A key to helping stop the spread of the virus is to get everyone tested, Kharel said.

"We have to identify people living with HIV or AIDS and then we have to get them health care," she said. "When their viral loads are undetectable, they are 98 percent less likely to transmit the disease to someone else."

Anyone above 12 years old can come to AIDS Alabama South and get tested for HIV. The free, confidential testing is available Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. until 4 p.m. at the office located at 2054 Dauphin St. Results are available in 20 minutes.

Kharel said the stigma attached to the virus, especially down here, sometimes prevents folks from getting tested.

"The stigma is so great here, especially among the women," she said. "They do not want to come through our front door because we have a sign outside with a red ribbon on it. They want to come through the back door."

As for the 53-year-old client suffering from the virus, which is currently undetectable in his system, he's making plans to attend Bishop State Community College in the spring.

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Judge prescribes two years for Fairhope 'pill mill' doc

BY ALYSON STOKES/REPORTER | alyson@lagniappemobile.com

Dr. Joseph Mwau N'dolo of Fairhope appeared in federal court Monday and was sentenced to two years in prison for three charges of unlawful distribution of a controlled substance.

N'dolo pleaded guilty in April and admitted to running a "pill mill" out of his Fairhope office, Premiere Internal Medicine, from 2008 until 2013.

Back in March, the U.S. District Court Southern District of Alabama released an eight-page criminal complaint against N'dolo, alleging he provided numerous patients with prescriptions for controlled substances, including opiates, Soma and benzodiazepines, without proper medical need. The complaint also claimed N'dolo had sex with or exchanged sexual pictures with some of the patients who received prescription drugs.

During the sentencing hearing, N'dolo's defense attorney John Beck cited the defendant's cooperation with authorities and asked that N'dolo only be sentenced to probation.

Beck, prior to the hearing, filed 131 pages of documents to include a total of 78 letters written in support of N'dolo, plus additional documentation of his treatment progress for alcohol and sex addiction.

"This is a man who is standing up and doing what a man should do," Beck told the judge.

N'dolo's wife Monica took the stand to tell the court that her husband has accepted his mistakes and has taken measures to correct them. She admitted N'dolo was diagnosed with sexual addiction, alcoholism and depression, for which he continues to receive weekly treatment.

"Since his diagnosis and subsequent treatment, I've seen changes," she said.

According to his wife, N'dolo sought psychiatric evaluation in Los Angeles, and underwent intensive treatment there before arranging continued treatment locally.

"Please give Joseph a chance ... to be a better doctor and better husband," she pleaded.

According to court documents, N'dolo has been consistently attending weekly treatment sessions since Aug. 4 and reports he also attended Sex Addicts Anonymous in Mobile as directed. Additionally, N'dolo completed a 12-day intensive outpatient program for sexual addiction.

Martha Amacker, a registered nurse who began seeing N'dolo as a patient in 2011, attested to N'dolo's medical ability and character. Having been a professional in the medical field for many years, Amacker said she never detected any illegal activity at N'dolo's office.

"I never saw Dr. N'dolo do anything inappropriate," she said.

Amacker went on to say that N'dolo is "very knowledgeable" and "people are going to suffer" if he is taken away from his medical practice. Gartrell Agee, another patient of N'dolo, called him "very professional" and "very caring."

Lamech Change, director at the African Cultural Resource Center in Mobile, submitted a letter on behalf of N'dolo, who apparently immigrated to the U.S. in 1978 and has dual citizenship in the U.S. and Kenya.

Change, who has known N'dolo for more than 15 years, said the doctor has sponsored many young people from Kenya, including himself, to study at the University of South Alabama.

"For the last seven years, Dr. N'dolo has been one of our elders and a role model for our youths who would like to follow his footsteps and become doctors ... his character during all this period has been outing and gentlemanly," he wrote. "On behalf of our community, I plead for lenience (sic) from you based on his contributions to the wellbeing of many people."

N'dolo made a statement before Chief U.S. District Judge William Steele prior to the final sentencing, again admitting his fault by saying "I made the wrong choices." N'dolo told Steele he is now "always and persistently" advising other doctors to learn from his mistakes.

After hearing the statements and reading the letters in support of N'dolo, Steele said he took into consideration the "wealth of information" presented, but also noted N'dolo's guilty plea and restated that his actions were a serious violation of the law. Essentially, N'dolo was "taking advantage of patients," Steele said.

"There's no question that offense was quite serious," he said.

According to court documents, "N'dolo characterized his patients as addicts, idiots and stupid. Fully aware of the addictions of some of his patients, N'dolo took advantage of them through means such as sexual acts and communications. He led certain drug addicted patients to believe the quality of his medical care would increase if they flirted (with) him."

The federal investigation also found N'dolo had on occasion shown up to treat patients while under the influence of alcohol. In 2006, N'dolo was arrested and charged with driving under the influence of alcohol in Baldwin County. In 2004, he was arrested again in Baldwin County and charged with second-degree rape, but those charges were dropped when the victim recanted.

Because he was never convicted of any crimes, Steele said N'dolo has no criminal history points, which also helped in the reduction of his sentence.

According to Steele, the original sentencing guidelines called for 87 to 108 months in prison; however, due to N'dolo's "substantial" cooperation, a 50 percent reduction to 44 months was considered.

Furthermore, Steele said N'dolo was entitled to an even greater reduction and ultimately sentenced him to 24 months in prison, which he called "sufficient, but not more than necessary."

Steele also recommended N'dolo be placed in a facility where mental health treatment is available. Additionally, N'dolo will serve three years of supervised release upon his leaving prison and must participate in assessment and treatment of his mental health, specifically sexual addiction, Steele said.

Though Beck hoped for probation, he called Steele's decision a "reasonable sentence."

"I understand what the judge did was well below the guidelines," he said.

License Commissioner Kim Hastie indicted on 16 public corruption charges

BY JASON JOHNSON/REPORTER | jason@lagniappemobile.com

Though her attorneys were quick to claim her innocence, Mobile County License Commissioner Kim Hastie was the subject of a 16-count federal grand jury indictment last week — one that included charges of public corruption, conspiracy, extortion and wire fraud.

In the same case, Deputy License Commissioner Ramona Yeager was also named on five counts of wire fraud and three counts of mail fraud.

The pair is accused of having devised a scheme to “obtain money and property by means of false and fraudulent pretenses, representations and promises,” violations alleged to have taken place between February and July of this year. The felony charges come with sentencing guidelines of up to 85 years in jail and \$1.25 million in fines for Hastie and 60 years and \$750,000 in fines for Yeager.

The indictment paints a picture of a conspiracy to deceive the Mobile County Commission and the citizens of Mobile County by falsifying invoices and misappropriating funds to obtain political lobbying and consulting services. A majority of the allegations are centered on Hastie’s efforts to combine the offices of the License Commission and the Mobile County Revenue Commission with her at the helm of both.

“In or about July 2012, Hastie and Yeager sought to retain services from a political consulting firm and to conceal the firm’s \$10,500 retainer fee from the County Commission,” the indictment reads. “Hastie instructed the consulting firm to seek payment of the fee from (Victor) Crawford even though Crawford had neither benefitted from nor sought out the firm’s services, nor even participated in any manner in the services.”

Crawford, a computer programmer who formerly worked for the county, is the owner and operator of APL Software Inc., which is also known as Bienville Rock Software. Until recently, APL Software was employed by Hastie’s office through a contract with the County Commission.

In previous reports, exclusively pursued by Lagniappe as the investigation unfolded, Hastie discussed employing Chad Tucker and his Strateco PR firm to produce a monthly newsletter informing the public about the merging of Mobile County’s license and revenue offices.

It’s alleged Hastie instructed Crawford to falsify his APL Software Engineering invoice to include Strateco’s charges so the commission would be unaware of the services.

Tucker told Lagniappe earlier this year that his company was in fact paid through APL Software — a fee of around \$2,500 monthly. Tucker says he is no longer working for Hastie or her office.

Records show APL Software charged the county \$292,958 between November 2013 and June 2014 — the largest of four “consultant expenditures” charged by the License Commission during that time period.

“During her tenure as License Commissioner, Hastie cultivated a work environment of intimidation at the office and repeatedly threatened to terminate Crawford’s employment as well as

the employment of several License Commission employees,” the indictment reads.

One such instance cited in the indictment is the \$1,800 fee Crawford paid to the Mobile County Republican Party to qualify Hastie in her campaign for revenue commissioner. Lagniappe has previously reported that Bienville Rock Software, Inc. did indeed make a \$1,800 contribution to Hastie’s campaign for revenue commissioner on Feb. 5, 2014 — the only contribution listed during the reporting period. Hastie paid the political party’s qualifying fee the same day, according to finance reports.

The indictment also says Hastie used unauthorized funds to pay for lobbying efforts to draft legislation related to the merger of the two offices.



Photo/Jason Johnson

Supporters of License Commissioner Kim Hastie discuss her 16-count indictment last week.

Hastie told Lagniappe Jonathan Gray of Strategy Public Relations was paid around \$10,000 to write the legislation in May — though she briefly claimed those services weren’t compensated.

According to the indictment, Hastie arranged to pay Gray with money from a segregated account of the License Commission — funds that were collected from the \$5 charge added to vehicle registration fees in 2013. The indictment also says she did so knowing the funds weren’t authorized for that type of expense.

County Attorney Jay Ross confirmed in September that Gray had been paid out of that restricted fund, adding Gray has since paid back that \$10,000.

As a point of clarification, Strategy Public Relations and Gray are not affiliated with Chad Tucker or Strateco in any way and the companies and their principals are unrelated.

Hastie is also accused of violating the Hobbs Act by extorting Crawford to purchase \$2,316 worth of TVs, iPads and electronics — items that were later raffled at a License Commission Christmas party.

Only hours after the indictment was released, a team of

defense attorneys held a press conference where they called the indictment “ludicrous.”

“Kim Hastie did not trick, deceive or cheat anybody — particularly the citizens of Mobile County, who she has served so faithfully and so well,” attorney Neil Hanley said.

Hanley wouldn’t discuss the details of the case, but said “there were no falsified invoices.”

“The funds spent were perfectly lawful, legal and above board and were related to informing the public on this issue and in getting a bill drafted in the legislature,” Hanley said. “The hiring of this marketing firm to put out a newsletter was proper and legal, and the hiring of a firm to help draft legislation and help to get it passed is perfectly legal and perfectly proper.”

Hanley said Hastie would have no need to break the law for a \$1,800 campaign contribution.

“To say she forced anybody to do (that) is ludicrous — the same way it is to say she forced anybody to provide raffle gifts for the License Commission’s Christmas party,” he said.

According to Hanley, Crawford’s choices to buy the items and donate to Hastie’s campaign were completely voluntary. When asked if Crawford was lying, Hanley said, “what is alleged in the indictment isn’t true, and I’ll let you take it from there.”

Hanley also said Hastie doesn’t have the power to fire Crawford in the first place.

Ross, who attended the press conference as a spectator, said the contract employing Crawford would be in the hands of County Commissioners — though they are advised by the heads of each department on contract decisions.

According to Hanley, Hastie wasn’t required to turn herself in to law enforcement because she will be receiving a summons. He also denied rumors she had previously turned down a plea bargain.

Ross said taxpayers wouldn’t be on the hook for funding Hastie’s defense, and said all three county commissioners had cooperated in turning over documents related to the investigation after they were subpoenaed by the FBI.

As for the oversight, Ross said most invoices are handled by administrative staff members.

“The Commission doesn’t review every single bill in great detail, and the finance department doesn’t audit every single invoice,” he said. “They get hundreds of bills every week, and they have no control over the day-to-day operations of the county.”

State Rep. Margie Wilcox, who co-sponsored Hastie’s consolidation bill and stood in solidarity alongside Hastie’s attorneys, said there is still a plan to move forward with merging the offices. The bill proposing the merger was brought up during the legislature’s last session but never made it out of committee.

Hanley said Hastie has no plans to step down as license commissioner and still plans to assume the position of revenue commissioner in 2015, which she was elected to in November with no opposition on the ballot.

The complete coverage of the FBI’s investigation into Hastie’s office and the full indictment can be read at lagniappemobile.com.



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Doyle Park revitalization cleared for takeoff

BY DALE LIESCH/REPORTER | dale@lagniappemobile.com

The Mobile City Council on Tuesday approved a \$1.7 million revitalization of Doyle Park, a 24-acre park bordering the longest runway at the Brookley Aeroplex, which sees 100,000 operations a year, Mobile Airport Authority Executive Director Roger Wehner told councilors during a public hearing on the measure.

“The hope is to change the aspirations of youth in the community through the fascination of flight,” Wehner said.

The improvements to the park would include two observation pavilions, which would allow visitors to view takeoffs and landings of military, civilian and commercial planes. In addition, plans include baseball, softball, soccer and football fields, as well as a “field of dreams,” with a rubberized surface for lower impact on children with disabilities. Plans also include a splash pad.

Wehner said there are 33,000 homes within a five-mile radius of the park, but he said the hope is to attract many more people beyond.

The effort is a public-private partnership with the nonprofit Friends of Doyle Park raising the funds for the revitalization and the Airport Authority agreeing to maintain it.

“To me, Doyle Park is the perfect example of citizens coming together to start a public-private partnership,” Mayor Sandy Stimpson said.

Wehner said the land used to be part of the U.S. Air Force base, which employed 17,000 people before it was mothballed in 1969.

“It really used to be where the community came to interact with the base,” Wehner said. “It has gone through a period of neglect.”

Once plans are approved by city planners, work on the park should begin and the first phase of the project should be completed in six months, Wehner said.

The park is in District 3, represented by Councilman C.J. Small. He thanked Wehner, the Airport Authority and Michelle Hurdle, director of economic and community development for Airbus, for the work they did.

In other business, the council approved rezoning of 662 Western Drive to allow Magic Recording Studio to continue operations. The owner of the property agreed to follow certain conditions as part of the rezoning approval including full compliance with all municipal codes and ordinances. The property will also revert back to its original business buffer zone distinction if it stops being used as a recording studio.

Operators claim the studio is a ministry that mentors youth, as well as a business that makes a profit through professional recording.

“Countless kids come to learn about production and music,” studio employee Rodney Toomer told the council in October. “Whatever we need to do to keep this going, I think it would be a positive for the community.”

The council also approved a contract with Hutchinson, Moore & Rauch LLC for sidewalks in the Toulminville community.



Photo/Friends of Doyle Park

An artist's rendering of the proposed entrance to Doyle Park.

The work will be paid for through a \$65,000 Community Development Block Grant. The project will be bid out as soon as the plans are drawn, which could take two months, City Engineer Nick Amberger said.

Approval of the project means sidewalks will be placed at Clinton Avenue from Donald Street to St. Stephens Road, Allison Street from Donald Street to St. Stephens Road, Gloria York Avenue from Donald Street to St. Stephens Road, Donald Street from Clinton Avenue to Andrews Street, St. Stephens Road from Clinton Avenue to Andrews Street and Andrews Street from Chavers Street to St. Stephens Road.

Councilman Fred Richardson said he had been asking for sidewalks in his district since 1997. He said the project would provide sidewalks for students walking to LeFlore High School, Booker T. Washington Middle School and Just 4 Developmental Laboratory.

The council also voted to fix costs for the demolition of a vacant home at 3700 Alba Club Road at \$5,050.

Local protesters discuss Ferguson grand jury decision

BY ALYSON STOKES/REPORTER | alyson@lagniappemobile.com

In the wake of the Nov. 24 grand jury decision not to indict Ferguson, Missouri police officer Darren Wilson for fatally shooting unarmed teenager Michael Brown in a case with racial overtones, two local groups last week organized a rally and march from Lyons Park to the federal courthouse building downtown.

At 3 p.m. Nov. 25, a moderately sized group gathered under the park's pavilion as several participants held signs that read “Stop police brutality and racism,” “Can't have capitalism without racism,” “Black lives matter” and the phrase, “Hands up, don't shoot,” which came to prominence after reports suggested Brown had his hands in the air when he was shot.

The march was a collaborative effort made by the Mobile chapter of the national group Socialist Alternative and a local civil rights, nonprofit organization called People United to Advance the Dream, headed by President Jacob Davis.

Davis said the goal of the event was to have a peaceful yet powerful march, free of any argument or discourse between all of the people who united together for the cause.

“We have had some very positive things said today,” Davis said.

Before the march, Albert Terry, a member of the Socialist Alternative's local chapter, spoke to the growing crowd at the park. Terry questioned the credibility of the prosecution in the Brown case, stating prosecutors “almost never” indict police officers in civilian killings.

“This rally is not just about Mike Brown and Darren Wilson,” he said. “This is about something so much more than that.”

The diverse group, comprised of people black, white, young and old, gave a loud round of applause and cheers after each of Terry's statements.

“We have our own voices, and we have to use those voices,” he said.

Roy Moore, a 64-year-old white Vietnam veteran and graduate from the University of South Alabama, said he recently joined the Mobile Bay Socialist Alternative group because he is against a police state and racial profiling. During the rally, Moore held up a sign that reflected his beliefs—“Stop police brutality and racism,” it read.

“I don't [think the] prosecutor tried very hard to find a crime,” he said.

Moore added that he believed the grand jury “probably would have” indicted the officer had the race of the parties involved been reversed. Moore also said from his experience, racism may not be any worse today, but it is “definitely not better.”

“My heart is heavy because we are one America, and we are divided right now. We, in the black community, we don't have leadership,” said Simone De Moore, a teacher at Jeremiah A. Denton Middle School in Mobile. “And I understand some pastors are doing what they can, but we need proactive leadership, not just leadership for the Michael Brown situation or the Trayvon Martin situation. We need leadership that is targeting the black-on-black crime and the destruction and the criminality within our own community.”

De Moore, who at one time sought a Democratic nomination for the U.S. Senate, said when disagreement arises with a grand jury decision, there is a process in America to effect change, and that process is by getting involved with politics, by voting and galvanizing the community.

“Where do we go from here?” he said. “What happens the next time an indictment comes down and is not to my liking? Do we burn down the next building? Do we shoot? Do we loot? Do we act like uncivilized, barbaric people? My heart is saddened because our pioneers are spinning in their graves.”

De Moore did not say whether he believed the Ferguson grand jury decision was right or wrong, citing that he did not personally view the evidence and must put trust in the process. However, he did voice his current disdain for leaders Rev. Al Sharpton, Rev. Jesse Jackson and even President Barack Obama, who Moore said he was “not too impressed with” and should go more proactively into the black communities with a focus on education.

“In order to effect change, and you want to see your own life get better or things get better in your society, you must equip yourself with the power source and that's education,” he said.

“We're our own worst enemies,” he continued. “If you don't connect with the power source being education, you're going to

suffer despair, poverty, hopelessness and so on ... our leaders should go into the community and let people know the importance of these things.”

During the trek down Springhill Avenue, members of the Mobile Police Department and the Mobile County Sheriff's Office peacefully escorted marchers as they repeatedly chanted “No more killer cops” among other rally cries.

Mobile Police Chief James Barber, who was present at the courthouse, said the march was a success and a “working arrangement” between all parties. Barber said the MPD was prepared for any events arising from the grand jury's decision in Ferguson. The MPD was contacted about the march several days in advance and worked with organizers to make sure the event remained peaceful and controlled, he said.

“We respect the First Amendment right of anybody to protest, as long as they've done it peacefully, and we would accommodate that,” he said.

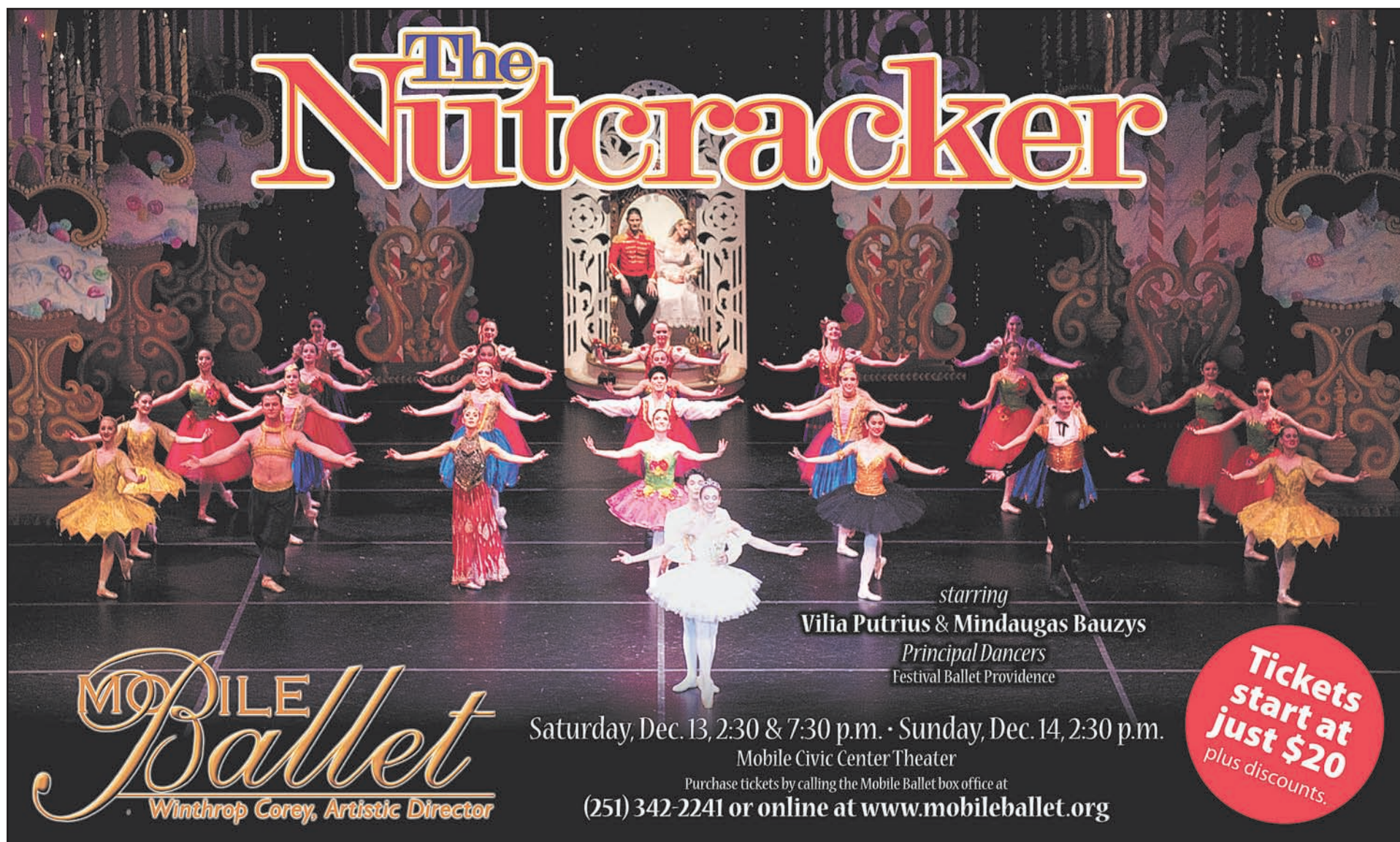
Furthermore, Barber said a permit is usually required for a rally of this type to take place on federal courthouse steps; however, he waived the need for a permit in this case.

Despite the negative chants regarding police officers in general, Barber said the crowds remarks likely stemmed from what took place in Ferguson and were not directed toward the MPD, though he admitted that some of the officers were somewhat uneasy.

“I think even my guys were a little uncomfortable because they're actually escorting a group that's actually pretty berating to them, but it is their First Amendment right ... we don't have to agree with what the message is. As long as it's peaceful, we are completely fine with it.”

Barber wouldn't offer a personal opinion on the grand jury's decision in Ferguson, but he did say people must put faith in the system to reach the right conclusion.

Once the marchers arrived at the courthouse, several participants made short speeches. Mobile City Councilman C.J. Small also made an appearance, reiterating the need for body cameras within the police department to prevent a similar incident from happening in Mobile.



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A free pass because of 10-minute tags?

BY ROB HOLBERT/MANAGING EDITOR | rholbert@lagniappemobile.com

It was a mere three weeks ago when I stood at the Mobile County License Commission's downtown window getting a new car tag AND a new driver's license. The fact I was the only person there that morning may have helped things, but I felt like I was dealing with a government agency at least getting something right.

The lady at the window helped me with a missing document — a situation I figured would easily spiral my tag-acquiring experience far beyond the 10-minute range. While we waited on that, she snapped my license photo, even managing to get a shot that almost makes it look like my actual weight matches the lie on my license.

One fax later and I had my tag. Maybe not 10 minutes, but good enough for government work. Oops. I mean certainly better than the three license commission experiences burned into my mind years ago when I waited roughly two hours apiece and needed to make a second trip at least once.

Time and again I've heard people talk about going down to the License Commission and coming out talking like they went to Disney on one of those rare days when the entire population of South America wasn't there — talking about going to get a car tag like it was an enjoyable experience. I suppose that demonstrates just how much folks dread dealing with government agencies in general, and what a crappy job the previous license commissioners had done in specific.

Let's face it, while it's very nice current License Commissioner Kim Hastie has lived up to her pledge of "10-minute tags" since taking office, she may benefit as much from the failures of her predecessors as from her own managerial expertise. There should never have been a reason for two-hour tags in the first place.

But I've heard time and again people wanting to give Hastie a free pass after being indicted on 16 federal charges last week simply because she brought us 10-minute tags. Moses brought his people to the Promised Land and didn't get that much slack. Two hours at the License Commission or 40 years in the desert, you decide.

Word of a federal investigation into Hastie possibly using some squirrely fiscal machinations to support her efforts to be placed over both the License Commission and the Mobile County Revenue Commission once Marilyn Wood retires has been out there for a few months. Hastie had been charming anyone who would listen and explaining how consolidating the two offices would save big money and intimating that she could do for the sadly run Revenue Commission what she did at her current gig. Following Marilyn Wood would be akin to being president after Herbert Hoover — lots of easy ways to look good.

Alas for the citizens who hold 10-minute tags up there with good schools and indoor plumbing, Hastie is looking down the barrel of 16 federal charges essentially alleging she used her position to bully her computer vendor, Victor Crawford, into funding political efforts to land her the commission consolidation, a job that comes with more pay and power.

Specifically the feds say Hastie and her deputy commissioner conspired to have Crawford pay two political strategy firms help her gain the legislative muscle and popular support needed to get the law changed in Montgomery. They say Hastie told him to pay the firms, then orchestrated a scheme by which Crawford would pad his computer work bills, which she then submitted to the Mobile

County Commission for payment. Of course they simply pencil-whipped it through because though they sign the checks, there really isn't an ounce of oversight of the License Commission or Revenue Commission when it comes to spending money.

It's even alleged Hastie forced Crawford to pay her \$1,800 entry fee to run for Revenue Commission and also made him buy TVs, iPads and other electronic goodies for her to give away and her office Christmas party.

I have no idea whether Hastie actually did any of what she's been charged with, but I am a little shocked by the number of people who seem to want to give her a free ride because she kept her 10-minute tags pledge. Others say she's nice. And a few want to offer the lame argument that she wouldn't be stupid enough to jeopardize herself for such small potatoes.

But if you're looking for examples of politicians jeopardizing themselves for very little, look no further than the Mobile County Water, Sewer and Fire Protection Authority where Kim's father is a board member. This renegade group unethically gave themselves nearly free water for years, violated open meetings laws and allowed some amazingly bizarre spending of public money, including paying an employee's college tuition.

Her former boss, ex-County Commissioner Mike Dean also showed up before that very board trying to solicit work it would have been illegal for him to receive. Media scrutiny is probably all that stopped it.

While that doesn't mean Kim did anything she's accused of, it does point out she's been

around some people who might bend the rules from time to time.

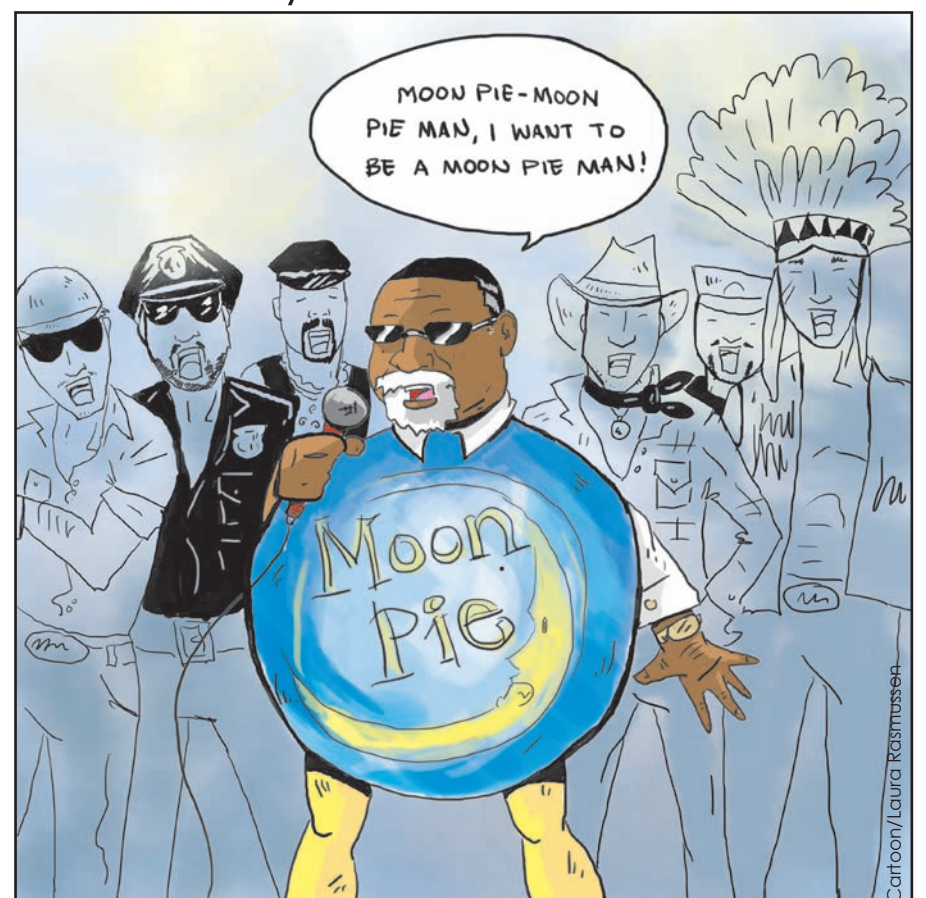
When Hastie met with us about her desire to consolidate the two commissions, she made good points and at the end of it I agreed it would probably save money and anyone certainly could do better than Wood. But I told her my major concern was the consolidation would create an even larger organization that nobody ever pays attention to. I referenced Wood's more-than-\$2 million no-bid contract for a computer system that she slid by the County Commission a few years ago as a prime example of how people in either position have traditionally acted with impunity.

Whether Hastie gets nailed on this or not is hard to say until we see the evidence. On her side is the fact that convicting a public official of corruption in Alabama is a pretty rare thing. I've seen no evidence the Attorney General, the District Attorney or the State Auditor have any real interest in public corruption prosecution. We'll see if U.S. Attorney Kenyen Brown has any follow-through on this.

Regardless of anything else, Hastie's troubles beg the question of why the Revenue and License Commissioners are elected in the first place. The federal indictment outlines — at the very least — a feasible plan for converting public money to pocket money. These positions should be managers appointed by the County Commission and subjected to rigorous audits. It's too easy in the current situation for the elected commissioners to all give each other a wide berth.

I bet we could still have 10-minute tags even without it being a political calling card.

The Gadfly



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How do we get beyond the racial divide?

BY ASHLEY TRICE/EDITOR | ashleytoland@lagniappemobile.com

A little over two years ago, I walked into the Mobile County Sheriff's Department with my mind just about made up. News had just come out that a University of South Alabama police officer had shot and killed an unarmed 18-year-old freshman on campus over BayFest weekend. As additional details began to emerge that the student was nude when he was shot and was only 5'7" and 135 lbs., the judge and jury in my head were ready to convict Officer Trevis Austin of "murdering" Gil Collar.

Questions and rushed judgments like these consumed my thoughts:

This teen could not have been more clearly unarmed, how on Earth could lethal force have been justified in this situation? He was only 5'7" and 135 lbs, you can't tell me that officer couldn't have subdued him without his gun! He was banging on the police station, so what? Why didn't the cop just let him knock and wait for backup? Why didn't he just use his Taser or pepper spray? CLEARLY there is just no way this should have happened!

But then I saw the surveillance tape of the incident as Sheriff Sam Cochran played it for the assembled media at a press conference a few days later and suddenly things weren't so clear anymore.

Collar was obviously unarmed but he was also acting in a very aggressive and erratic manner, like someone who was under the influence of a very powerful drug, which would later be confirmed in his autopsy report.

He wasn't the biggest guy in the world, but he was a wrestler and was very muscular and fit, not the slight 135 lb. kid I had pictured in my mind.

When he was "knocking" on the campus police station, it wasn't just a knock, it was so violent it looked like he could have possibly broken his hand he was hitting it with such force. But he seemed to feel no pain while doing it.

Officer Austin is seen on the tape repeatedly giving him verbal commands to get down, none of which Collar ever complied with.

The actual shooting takes place off camera and what happened between the two in those last moments will never be known for certain, but you get a pretty good idea from the previous footage.

I walked out of the press conference still thinking there might have been a different way Officer Austin could have handled the situation which could have spared Collar's life, but also understanding how Collar's actions must have felt very threatening to Austin, who at the time did not know anything about this naked man who was lunging aggressively at him. He didn't know he was a student or considered to be a "good kid" in his hometown. Split second decisions had to be made.

After viewing the tape, sure you can say Austin "coulda, woulda, shoulda" done a number of different things, which may have changed the outcome of this horrible situation, but I didn't feel like he shot Collar in cold blood either. And I certainly didn't feel like the race of either party involved played any part in it. Collar was white and Austin is black.

I ached for Collar's family and still do. He made a poor choice – one that many college kids make – that tragically cost him his life.

This case was presented to a Mobile County grand jury. Officer Austin was not indicted and was cleared in the incident.

Since the Michael Brown case, several national media outlets and/or pundits have brought the Collar case back up, asking where the Ferguson-like outrage was for Collar?

When I first heard about the case in Missouri, I like many others across the country was outraged. Not because a WHITE officer had killed a BLACK person, but because an officer had shot an unarmed teenager.

But after reading the grand jury testimony and hearing about the forensic evidence in the Brown case, I feel much the same way I did two years ago walking out of the sheriff's office. Perhaps Officer Darren Wilson could have done something differently to change the outcome, but I don't think he killed Brown in cold blood. I think he reasonably believed his life was in danger. I truly believe if Brown had been the whitest kid in America and had just knocked off a convenience store and then punched Wilson in the face and tried to grab his gun, he probably would have met a similar fate as Brown. I think any of us would have, no matter what size or skin color we happened to be.

Like Austin, Wilson was also not indicted by the grand jury and was cleared in the incident.

Once again, it is the case of a kid making a very poor choice, which tragically cost him his life.

Now did the Ferguson police handle this situation horribly from the moment Brown took his last breath? Absolutely. Letting that child lay out on the street for hours is sickening and their lack of transparency in the days following the shooting did nothing but breed the mistrust they are deservedly receiving.

But I really feel like you could exchange the skin colors of any of the players in these two particular incidents and they would have turned out just the same. But I know some disagree.

With that said, I know things are far from perfect in this country. I read the same statistics and articles everyone else does and realize there is a huge disparity in the way white and black people are treated in the American justice system. It's not fair.

After this and the Trayvon Martin case, I remember being heartbroken after hearing African-American men telling how their fathers would sit them down as young teens and talk to them about how to speak to police and even how to hold their hands so they wouldn't be injured or killed. And how they would one day have to have that conversation with their own sons. I just couldn't and didn't want to believe we still lived in a world where that conversation was necessary. And I know this is something I will never fully be able to understand. But I have to believe no one wants this to be a reality.

But I also have to believe, the vast majority of police officers are just trying to do their jobs, and it's not fair to say every time an officer shoots a person with a different skin color, that it is a racially motivated "murder." Because more often than not, that is not the reality either.

We have to be able to trust each other once again.

Transparency is the key to rebuilding that trust, and body cameras seem to be an excellent first step – they would protect good civilians and good cops alike.

If we can all review the black and white footage of these tragic incidents, maybe the details wouldn't end up being so gray.

But ultimately, we have to be able to objectively and honestly assess these situations, not as black people or white people, but just as, well, people.

Unless we can and are willing to do so, the divide between us will forever remain.



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Ferguson protests rooted in systemic mistrust of system

BY KEN ROBINSON/CONTRIBUTING WRITER

The prospect of spending possibly 85 years in prison is a frightening thing! Just ask Mobile County License Commissioner Kim Hastie. Well known by now is the 16-count grand jury indictment handed down to her last week. A federal grand jury found Hastie and her deputy, Ramona Yeager, complicit in engaging in wire fraud, extortion and conspiracy. Almost immediately, supporters of Hastie came out en masse via TV and social media on her behalf, vociferously defending her integrity and sincerity. But her guilt or innocence will be determined at a later time by a jury of her peers.

Throughout 2014, Alabama has seen several notable and sensational grand jury indictments. In October, Mike Hubbard, the speaker of the house and arguably one of the most politically powerful people in Alabama today, was indicted by a Lee County grand jury on 23 counts of public corruption. As in Kim Hastie's case, many have spoken out in support of the embattled legislator, and accusations of political malfeasance and machinations have been tossed about as the driving force in securing the indictment against Hubbard. The veracity of these conjectures remain to be seen.

Earlier in the year, two other legislators, State Reps. Greg Wren and Barry Moore — allies of Hubbard — were indicted on charges stemming from the same investigation. Rep. Wren pled guilty to his charge, and Rep. Moore was found not guilty Oct. 30 of all four counts levied against him.

Even the great state of Texas made headlines with the indictment of Republican Gov. Rick Perry. Perry was indicted by a Travis County grand jury for abuse of power in regards to his role in attempting to force Travis County District Attorney, Rosemary Lehmberg, to resign after her DUI arrest, which led to a guilty plea.

However, the indictment of Perry has been seen as so blatantly politically motivated and such a naked misuse of the

legal system, even many Democrats are crying foul. The oft-repeated phrase, “a prosecutor can indict a ham sandwich if he or she wants to” can often seem to many as a truism.

I point out these high-profile indictments to stress the fact that grand jury indictments are handed down all the time. Both deservedly and in the most frivolous of circumstances. It is the latter which makes the situation in Ferguson, Missouri so egregious.

St. Louis County prosecuting attorney, Bob McCulloch, in delivering the grand jury verdict, gave a verbose and rambling justification of the decision not to indict police officer Darren Wilson for the shooting death of unarmed 18-year-old Michael Brown. Concomitantly, he disparaged and castigated witnesses and testimony that implied Wilson's actions were somehow questionable or led to Brown's death being unjustifiable. Cursory, he also proclaimed that any further investigative action against the officer should not be attempted.

Later, as I watched parts of Ferguson burn and rioters inflict massive destruction on live TV, I could not help but think how much of politics, and effective leadership in general, involves the use of good old common sense.

In a town as racially divided as Ferguson, with a police department that has often been seen, with good measure, of being exploitative and heavy-handed with the black population, and a prosecuting attorney who has had a history of skewing investigations of police brutality in favor of local law enforcement, someone should have had the wherewithal to say: let's at least allow this situation to go to trial, if for no other purpose than to give the appearance of a fair process.

As we know, grand jury indictments are handed down in circumstances far less consequential, and we are content with allowing the legal process to play itself out in cases, be they trivial or not, through a jury trial. It stands to reason that

someone in the state of Missouri, in St. Louis County, or in the city of Ferguson should have understood how the absence of an indictment would have been viewed by the majority of black residents in Ferguson.

This is not to condone the violence. It was counterproductive, misguided, and just plain wrong. But, such a reaction can be understood when placed in the context of the racially polarized situation and the fact that you had a faction of residents who already believed the justice system would not work in their favor, or would not act justly on their behalf. In their eyes, the lack of an indictment was proof or vindication of their faithlessness in the system.

To many protestors, the “Hands Up Don't Shoot” chant is less a statement about the elevation or esteeming of Michael Brown, but more about the condemnation of a legal system they feel runs roughshod over the voiceless in Ferguson, and in minority communities across the country. Like the “I Can't Breathe” protests over the chokehold death of black New York City resident Eric Garner by a NYPD police officer, these movements are not about making heroes or martyrs of the victims, but about speaking to systemic injustices that permeate certain communities.

When people feel voiceless, sometimes it's good to let them know they are being heard. Political leaders in Missouri, in St. Louis County, and in the city of Ferguson had the opportunity to do that by allowing the shooting of Michael Brown to at least be examined by a jury trial. As with the George Zimmerman case, even if the residents had not gotten the verdict they hoped for, it could have been received without incident, as was the case upon Zimmerman's acquittal.

Well did Albert Einstein say, “Peace cannot be kept by force, it can only be achieved by understanding.” We have got to learn to listen to and understand each other better.

In Ferguson and beyond, the more things change, the more things remain the same

BY CLYDE FOSTER/CONTRIBUTING WRITER

The night of Nov. 24, 2014 was an eerie déjà vu ... almost a mirror image of the night of July 13, 2013. For those not in the know, those are the dates the verdicts the Michael Brown and Trayvon Martin cases were respectively announced. Both nights I reluctantly sat in front of the television with my mother. Both nights, against my better judgment, I kept a small glimmer of hope that the jurors could; on a base level of humanity, do their parts to uphold any sense of justice. We all know how both stories ended. Shame on me.

If even for a split second, I was fooled into believing in a post-racial America. I believed that the lives of countless people who look like me were worth a damn. I went to sleep angry, and with a heart so heavy that my attempts to pray it away proved futile.

The feeling of déjà vu continued into the next day. There was a candlelight vigil held on July 14, 2013 at Lyons Park for Trayvon Martin. A couple of friends and I met with a small group of other people. We all discussed how unfair the system was ... how we should demand change, how BLACK LIVES MATTERED.

After about an hour, the group dispersed, and with the exception of the people I showed up with, I never heard from anybody at the vigil. All the talk was just that: talk.

Fast forward to the Rally for Mike Brown at Lyons Park Nov. 25. The scene was basically the same, with a few new things. This time there was police presence and news cameras. The cameras were from WALA and WPML news. I found out later the police were there to direct traffic for the ensuing

march that was planned.

Lagniappe asked if I would attend and at first, that is what I intended and to be let known that I was doing. However, after seeing how out of place the news reporters looked, and being asked for proof of staff membership when I asked an officer how he felt about the verdict (like I would lie about such a thing, I hope this serves as proof), I decided it was probably best if I proceeded undercover. I made my way to the back of the crowd to observe.

If I had to guess, I would say there were anywhere from 35 to 50 people at the rally, a far cry from the turnouts for planned protests in other cities. Everybody gathered in a circle as an account of the murder of Mike Brown was told. The demands for justice echoed the rallies of July 14, 2013. I grew annoyed. Here we were more than a year later, facing almost identical circumstances, yelling and screaming for fairness, for justice ... things that we should be granted by being human, no less American.

I was silent in the midst of claps, brooding in rage. To be honest, had it not been for me giving my word to attend the march, I would have left.

The idea of marching almost automatically draws an allusion to the '60s and the Civil Rights movement. My opinion on the Civil Rights movement are not the most popular, so I will not go into great detail explaining them. I will, however, quote arguably the most recognizable figure from that era, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., to sum up my idea of its effectiveness: “I fear I may have integrated my people into a burning building.”

There's something I've taken note of about the history of my people in America: too often we are blinded by emotion. It is that emotion that prevents us from accurately and collectively assessing the true gains, if any, from the Civil Rights era and tactics implemented in those times. The march on Nov. 25 was no different.

As we paraded the streets reciting chants (my personal favorite was “hey-hey, ho-ho, these racist cops have got to go”) and singing negro spirituals, I wondered if anybody present knew exactly what it is we were hoping to accomplish. I say “we” because midway through the march, I too, had let emotions overcome me. Seeing people lined up outside their places of work, holding up fists in solidarity warmed my heart. Warmed hearts don't bring change, though.

Don't get me wrong, the sentiment behind such public displays were never my problem. It's just that sentiments alone are not enough.

After about two miles, we reached the courthouse. There were speeches given on its steps, the most notable one from City Councilman CJ Small. Small stressed that all police weren't bad, and to prevent the events in Ferguson from happening in Mobile, police should be required to wear body cameras. The crowd erupted with applause. “Finally” I thought, “a tangible plan of action.”

I left the march feeling the same way I felt after leaving the city's periodic race relations panels. Do I applaud Mobile for its efforts? Absolutely. The verdict is still out on how effective the initial steps are in inspiring actual change, though.

The politics of Alabama football

BY JEFF POOR/COLUMNIST | jeffreypoor@gmail.com

If reports are correct, the University of Alabama Board of Trustees will set the course to shut down the football program at its Birmingham campus, or UAB.

The argument is that since its inception in 1991 as a fledgling Division III program, it has been a drain on resources and serves no useful purpose within the University of Alabama system.

But that seems to be more of a justification for something the powerbrokers around Tuscaloosa have long wanted to do.

There's no question Alabama's football program is one of the centerpieces of the University of Alabama. And for good reason: It's one of the most successful collegiate sports programs in history.

The 1926 Rose Bowl, which Alabama defeated the Washington Huskies 20-19, was something that not only the state of Alabama, but also the entire South could rally around — as Dixie still felt the lingering effects of the Civil War and Reconstruction even six decades later.

Since then, from generation to generation, Alabama football (with the exception of a few precincts around Lee County) has been something very important to the state. That importance, whether it was under the leadership of Paul "Bear" Bryant or currently under head coach Nick Saban, has been reflected on the field.

While the University of Alabama at Birmingham's football program is not a threat to the main campus' football program directly, the sentiment among some within the institution seems to be, why allocate resources that could be put toward improving the University of Alabama?

UAB may compete on the margins for some recruits, advertising, etc. But the two haven't faced one another on the field. In fact, the only time the two schools competed in a major sport was in 1993 in a chance meeting in the NIT Tournament. UAB beat Alabama that day, which could be the one of the greatest moments in that school's history.

The middle brother of the University of Alabama system — which includes campuses in Tuscaloosa, Birmingham and Huntsville — is however, likely going to have to stick to basketball as its sport of prominence.

This seems to have been a long-standing policy of the University of Alabama, which is not just relegated to within the university, but the entire state. As an institution, Alabama has gone out of its way to avoid any in-state competition, which arguably seems to be motivated by a sense that competing with lesser institutions would be as if Alabama's recognition would be lending them some sort of credibility. And that credibility, especially if it results in an upset, would do damage to the university's athletic ambitions.

The history speaks for itself.

It took 41 years and a threat from the state legislature for Alabama and Auburn to resume the storied Iron Bowl rivalry in 1948, after discontinuing it in 1907 after a 6-6 tie over per diem and officiating. During that 41

years, Alabama football thrived as the Auburn program never came close to matching that success.

Beyond a handful of games against Samford, Birmingham-Southern and Spring Hill College in the early part of the 20th century, beyond Auburn, the University of Alabama has not played an in-state opponent — not even one for an easy home win.

So much for keeping those dollars in the state of Alabama.

It was not until after the 2007 death of Mayer Mitchell that the ball really got rolling on a football program at the University of South Alabama — a program still in its infancy.

Mitchell was a major donor to the University of South Alabama and was partially responsible for the growth of that institution and its major role in the local economy. But he and former President Gordon Moulton were also rumored to have wanted to wait until the school was "ready" to add football.

There are some interesting politics at play tied to the University of Alabama and its football program. Since the school is a state institution, it's directly tied to politicians in state government. The governor, Robert Bentley, served in the state legislature as a representative for parts of Tuscaloosa. And as governor, he is a member of the university's board of trustees, as he is with all the state-funded institutions in Alabama.

It's hard to imagine Bentley would speak out on UAB's behalf, especially if elimination of the football program at UAB is seen as a move that can only strengthen the effort at the Capstone.

On the other hand, there could be an ugly racial component Birmingham officials could play, which is a predominantly white board of trustees acts against a predominantly black community's largest employer.

Birmingham is having some hard times and UAB football has given a dilapidated Legion Field a tenant, for now. One would think that if cost were the issue, there a number of things within a university that don't turn a profit and are much less of a powder keg for the trustees to take aim.

On the other hand, should UAB football go down, it might be a prime opportunity for the University of South Alabama. It could mean a promotion from the Sun Belt Conference to a slightly more prestigious Conference USA. It would also mean one less competitor in the state for recruiting — a state where the bulk of talent goes to Alabama or Auburn.

USA in a bigger conference could mean more attendance at Ladd-Peebles Stadium, which may ultimately translate to improvements, which would benefit the entire city.

One thing is clear: Despite a win for Alabama over Auburn last week, this move will make Alabama a more hated institution in the eyes of UAB fans than Auburn fans, least for the time being.

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ASPA awards \$20M contract for container facility

BY RON SIVAK/COLUMNIST | business@lagniappemobile.com | Twitter: @rcvak

According to a recent press release, the Alabama State Port Authority (ASPA) has contracted with R.T. Milord Company out of Bridgeview, Illinois, to develop Phase I of the Garrows Bend Intermodal Container Transfer Facility (ICTF) at the Port of Mobile.

The intermodal rail facility is the first part of the Port Authority's three prong development plans that includes a 45-foot draft container terminal and logistics park.

The \$20.1 million contract calls for the construction of two operating tracks, a run-around track and a car repair siding track all design to be a minimum of 3,000 feet. Components in the first phase of construction will also include rubber-tired gantry runways and chassis storage areas, multilane gates, power distribution and lighting, an access road and related surface improvements. The facility will be equipped with high tech optical character recognition (OCR) portals at rail and truck entrances to increase production efficiency.

"We are pleased to get this important phase of our intermodal investment program underway," Jimmy Lyons, director and chief executive for the Port Authority said. "The delivery of an intermodal rail facility is essential to alleviating time and cost pressures for our shippers, while expanding our market reach."

The project was calculated by Martin Associates to create more than 300 direct and indirect jobs and generate more than \$7.4 million in state and local revenue and tax impacts, according to the announcement.

Commercial real estate moves

A new 10,000-square-foot **American Autism & Rehabilitation Center (AARC)** will open in Spring 2015 in Daphne that is unique to the area. The facility, located at **8909 Rand Ave.**, will primarily assist patients with autism and a variety of special needs conditions, as well as diabetes and physical needs. Other services offered include speech therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy and nursing.

"The American Autism & Rehabilitation Center is a locally owned facility that will provide the most comprehensive range of services of its type in the region and quite possibly the entire Southeast," **Kevin Mohler, vice president of marketing** said.

Local and out-of-town investors jointly

purchased 53 partially developed residential lots encompassing approximately 17.73 acres in **River's Edge subdivision** as well as 43 acres of excess land (planned for future development) in **Foley, Alabama** for \$455,000. The property is a **half-mile southwest of State Highway 59 and County Road 12**. The buyers were represented by **Coastal Real Estate & Development. John Vallas of Vallas Realty, Inc.** worked for the seller.

According to reports, **Nathan Cox of Bellator Real Estate and Development** and architect **Forrest Daniell** are currently waiting until Jan. 12, 2015, for a planning commission hearing with the proposed **Ascension and Grace Towers** in Orange Beach. If the city says developers can't build to 35 and 36 stories, Cox stated that his group can build to the zoning specifications.

The new development plans call for heights of 430-plus feet for one tower and 450-plus feet on the other. That size would rival Birmingham's Wells Fargo Tower, at 454 feet, as the second tallest building in Alabama. Mobile's RSA Battle House Tower is the state's tallest at 745 feet.

Daniell stated that if the plan follows the current zoning, a five-story garage would run the length of the property close to Perdido Beach Boulevard. However, if a variance on the height restrictions are eased, then that structure would not be needed.

A new **Romar Hotel** is planned for a site due east of Gulf State Park's Cotton Bayou Beach Access, less than a quarter mile from the proposed Grace and Ascension property. The hotel will go up in an area where a former Days Inn was destroyed by Hurricane Ivan in 2004.

The hotel is expected to have 60 rooms and space for parking 75 cars, including 50 spaces in a planned parking garage. Local zoning ordinance allows for buildings as tall as 25 stories, provided that five of the stories are dedicated for parking and 20 for housing units.

A 22-story complex named "**Junonia**" also recently received official approval on land due west of the Hampton Inn in Orange Beach, located at **25518 Perdido Beach Blvd.** According to a website for the complex, 57 of 97 units have been sold. Plans call for 76 three-bedroom, three-bath units, 18 four-bedroom, four-bath units, and one penthouse suite with three bedrooms and three baths.

Local realtor and former banker Rick Phillips was listed on the website as the Junonia developer.

Mobile Chamber's ACA seminar

The Mobile Chamber will be holding an all-day end of year seminar entitled "Innovations in Healthcare Summit" Thursday, Dec. 11, at the Mobile Marriott to give both large and small business owners a final prep on new Affordable Health Care Act (ACA) legislation enacted moving into 2015.

National experts in healthcare reform will discuss newly developed methods, utilizing web-based tools, to help local business owners make well informed choices about controlling health care related costs while toeing the line on imminent ACA legislation.

Topics covered will include private exchanges, telemedicine, captive insurance and utilizing onsite clinics. The morning session targets small and mid-sized businesses with fewer than 100 employees while the afternoon session focuses on companies employing north of that number.

The lunch features keynote speaker attorney Matthew W. Stiles of Birmingham-based Maynard Cooper & Gale P.C. His lecture is entitled "ACA in Full Swing: Preparing for 2015 and Beyond." Stiles is an expert in labor and employment and employee benefits and executive compensation practices and is also an adjunct professor of law at the University of Alabama School of Law.

"Since the act was signed, the Chamber has been a leader in disseminating critical information to the business community regarding the Affordable Care Act over the years. To date we have offered five educational meetings attended by over 250 business owners, both large and small," Danette Richards, Mobile Chamber's Director of Small Business said.

"These seminars help them better understand what questions they should be asking of their professional advisors. With a continually changing healthcare reform landscape, the business community is looking for better ways to manage healthcare costs and be compliant with the laws."

Cost for the event is \$50 for Chamber members, \$60 non-members and includes lunch. Registrations not cancelled before Dec. 5 must be honored to cover the cost of lunch.

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Island Wing Company urging diners to ‘get baked’

BY ANDY MACDONALD/CUISINE EDITOR | fatmansqueeze@comcast.com

Same on me. It has been a while since I brought the boys out for a review. I had a Sunday afternoon free and was so sick of all the turkey concoctions from this week that I welcomed an hour-long getaway from what Lucas, Graham and I call the Testosterdome.

It's important that we get out and see the world, experience things from our hunter/gatherer perspective, and learn about football and chicken wings. While Graham still couldn't care less for the sport, Lucas is entering his first year of really paying attention to the game, so much so that he treats what I consider meaningless contests between teams I don't even know the quarterbacks' names in the same way I would a Saints Super Bowl. We can flip a coin over non-Manning AFC battles, but by the end of a game we may be cheering and doing chest bumps over a Browns versus Jaguars match.

Though I admire Lucas' excitement, I also appreciate Graham sticking to his guns about how he hates watching football and would rather play video games on the big TV. But both of these budding gentlemen were happy when I said we were going to Island Wing Company with mom.

This would be my second visit to Dauphin Street's IWC. The place opened just in time for football season in the former Ruby Tuesday's building in MiMo, and carries a similar menu to its sister IWCs in Auburn, Gulf Shores, Destin and the "coming soon" Tallahassee. There are jerk items, Caribbean shrimp, fish tacos, a bevy of burgers and of course, as the name suggests, wings.

What sets them apart from other chicken wing purveyors is that the wings are baked, but they totally taste as if they are fried. Even their website sports the slogan, "Get Baked!" Not even the fries are fried. They are oven baked. There's not a fryer in the place. I guess the idea is that there must be some sort of health benefit to "getting baked" as opposed to "getting fried." That's an argument for another article.

So there we sit this past Sunday, in a booth with our own television and our own remote control. I immediately turn to the Saints game as my 4-year-old button pusher asks why we can't watch basketball instead. He's about to learn what a "time out" is. But he's settling down as he finds pink lemonade and a **cheese quesadilla (\$5.95)**. This dish is from the kids menu and comes with a sizable bowl of steamed broccoli, zucchini and yellow squash, and to his credit he did indulge in the latter. Penalty averted.

The waitress goes on and on about **cheeseburger nachos (\$12.95)**. Even the waitress serving the table next to us was bragging about them. At the very least we had to try them. I was taken aback when I saw the monstrosity that came. This gigantic platter set before us began with a bed of multi-colored tortilla chips

smothered in cheese. Shredded lettuce was the second layer. Tomatoes and a ton of pickle chips sprinkled the outer layer and were dressed with special sauce. Think of it as Thousand Island or Big Mac sauce.

At the apex was an 8 oz. ham-burger patty chopped into pieces. It sounds impressive. It was not my favorite. I couldn't get the tastes of Thousand Island dressing out of my mouth for a day. The lettuce and pickles were a little much. But I did find myself going back to them over and over. Maybe order this with the sauce on the side for better results.

They have an impressive maca-



roni and cheese menu five dishes deep. Lucas couldn't resist the **Mac Daddy (\$8.95)**. Cavatappi noodles with cheese and bacon made this dish a knockout.

Missy isn't a fan of wings so she indulged in the **Caribbean Shrimp (\$14.95)**. A dozen jerk shrimp were atop "reggae rice" with red and green bell peppers, a nice amount of soft onions and a small amount of pineapple. The mystery was their homemade "magic sauce," which did create an island feel but was a little rich. The whole dish was slightly over-seasoned with what I am guessing was the dry jerk rub, also found on the rim of the plate for decoration. It wasn't totally offensive, but I won't be coming back for it. Maybe fish tacos next time.

Of course I am the wing man. I'd love to be able to speak on many of the sauces they have, dry and wet, but we had so much food I stuck to only one. I figured my outing should be fo-



Photos/Dan Anderson

Island Wing Company, at the site of the former Ruby Tuesday's on Dauphin Street, enters the local wing market with baked varieties and plenty of sauces.

cused on the middle of the heat scale so I chose Sriracha (dry). The result was a very doable order of seven **traditional wings (\$7.95)** and I can't complain. They do have the fried feel, and I'd love to witness the technique. I have a couple of tricks at home for when I don't want to cover the house in grease on game day, but I am always looking for a new path. Celery, carrots and bleu cheese came free of charge.

Here's the skinny. IWC is in a tough division when it comes to wings. Truth is Mobile has so many homegrown wing places that blow me away. To compete with these guys would be a gutsy endeavor. So where does this put them? Perhaps competing with some of the larger chains is where they could do well. They do offer boneless wings and have around 25 flavors by my count including oddballs like PB&J, Chipotle Cheddar Rub, Orange Ginger and Firecracker Citrus. This could be where they excel.

The service was, if anything, overly attentive, and the prices are very competitive. It's so much food. I think Lucas is the only one who finished his meal, but the flip side of the praise is that the macaroni was the best dish of the afternoon.

Approach this from the standpoint of it being a franchise and you'll be pleasantly surprised. Think of it as a mom and pop and you'll be less enthused.

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Log in and snack: Girl Scouts overturn online cookie sales ban

BY ANDY MACDONALD/CUISINE EDITOR | fatmansqueeze@comcast.com

Things will be a little different this year for Girl Scout cookie sales. The Girl Scouts of the United States of America have lifted a previous media embargo and this season (which begins Dec. 22, 2014 and runs through March 8, 2015) the organization will be offering online sales.

Let us not forget that the near-century-old cookie drive is a contest for troops to raise money, promote social skills, money management and advancing the entrepreneurial spirit of our budding females as individuals and their troops compete for prizes and bragging rights. An Internet embargo was put in place after a daughter of a computer savvy parent had a fairly sophisticated web sales portal complete with youtube promotional videos. She was 8. And you thought they frowned upon parents selling cookies at the office!

The Girl Scouts stepped in and put an end to the site, banning online sales completely. Now the ban has been lifted with the aid of their Digital Cookie site.

This year you will be able to find booths in our area, locate a seller and even buy cookies direct from your favorite scout and have them delivered straight to your door just by pointing and clicking. There will even be an iPhone and Android app. The playing field has been leveled.

Thank goodness the Girl Scouts of South Alabama have joined in the embrace of the new system. Keep an ear out for all your scouting needs and cookie information by logging onto www.girlscoutssa.org. Send all frozen thin mints to Rob Holbert. I will take any surplus of Samoas.

Fairhope Inn holiday dinners

It could easily become a holiday tradition. The Fairhope Inn is now taking reservations for their Christmas Eve dinner so mom and dad can rest in bliss while Santa Claus fills the stockings. With one less thing to worry about on Christmas Eve you'll be able to keep the kitchen clean and ready for your Christmas Day feast.

Of course there is early seating for their New Year's Eve dinner. The three-course meal will include a complimentary glass of

champagne and will cost \$70 per person. The 5:30 p.m./6:00 p.m. and 7:30 p.m./8:00 p.m. seating choices will have you out on the town early and ready for that midnight kiss.

For the foodie who has everything, he or she could always use a Fairhope Inn gift certificate. They will be happy to fill out and mail the document to your lucky holiday recipient. I hope my family reads this issue.

Cream and Sugar and Kitchen on George celebrate anniversaries

Congratulations to Susan Carley and the team at Cream and Sugar for five years of tremendous service. This December marks the half-decade milestone for our Oakleigh coffee house with the cake balls and gumbo over grits. It may be no coincidence that at this point in their timeline Cream and Sugar is offering a new Muffaletta sandwich. This one is served on ciabatta bread, which isn't technically muffaletta bread but it's a lot closer to the real thing than French bread. They make their own.

The next door neighbor at Kitchen on George is closing in on three years and is marking their celebration by serving lunch Monday through Saturday beginning at 11 a.m. This is one more reason the Oakleigh Garden District is your favorite neighborhood.

Best Bites goes to fire-grilled oysters at Original Oyster House

It was truly a nail-biter, but the winner of Mobile Bay Magazine's inaugural Best Bites Challenge out of 32 local dishes was Original Oyster House's fire-grilled oysters. This was a reader's choice poll including must-try food and drinks from different local establishments. The whole thing was set up like a football playoff bracket that culminated into a semifinal round where Callaghan's LA Burger beat out Spot of Tea's Monte Cristo while the oysters overtook Panini Pete's beignets.

In the final showdown Original Oyster House had the votes to overtake Callaghan's, but it was a close race.



Photo/girlscouts.org

Girl Scout cookies can now be ordered at their Digital Cookie site, www.girlscoutssa.org/cookies.

"It's a great honor to be included on this list of Mobile and Baldwin counties' best cuisine and our area's favorite restaurants. We were very excited to be chosen for the challenge and it was a wonderful affirmation to see how much people like fire-grilled oysters. The last two rounds of the Best Bites Challenge were extremely competitive. Fire-grilled oysters received 1,054 votes in the championship round placing it with 55 percent of the votes to win the challenge," beamed co-owner Joe Roszkowski of the Original Oyster House.

I rather enjoyed the amount of social media trash talk from all the establishments and their fans urging loyal diners to vote for their item. It was all fun and showed a great deal of passion. Be passionate about your dining, Mobile, and congratulations to Original Oyster House!

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He'Brew beers may be unorthodox, but they're also jewphoric

BY SUSAN LARSSON/CONTRIBUTING WRITER | thirstywork@outlook.com

He'Brew, The Chosen Beer, is brewed by Shmaltz Brewing Company, now based in Clifton Park, New York. Fewer than 20 years ago, though, the brewery didn't exist, as founder Jeremy Cowan began Shmaltz as a "contract brewer" in California in 1996 — or 5757 as Shmaltz's labels note, the equivalent year on the Jewish calendar. According to the much-publicized legend, He'Brew started as a private joke among friends, took tangible form when Cowan decided to experiment with brewing, and it's my guess now he's laughing all the way to the bank.

Cowan's sales reputedly began with a mere 100 cases of He'Brew in 1996, peddled to retailers from the back of his grandmother's car. Some say Cowan faced a steep learning curve — I've even read that he said as much himself — because he was an English major who had no commerce background. My view, of course, is that English majors are unfairly underrated and actually quite capable of accomplishing anything we — umm, I mean they — set out to accomplish. (Hmmpf.) Anyway, the retailers apparently chuckled at the pun, bought the beer and asked for more. In 2003, Shmaltz began packaging Genesis Ale and Messiah Bold in 6-packs of 12-ounce bottles and shifted production from California to the Mendocino Brewing Company's facility in Saratoga Springs, New York.

What's funky about Shmaltz's beers? Seriously? You'd get a shorter answer if you asked what wasn't funky about them. Their names alone comprise a long list of word-play derived from Hebraic terms, Judaic traditions and self-deprecating humorous stereotypes, while the beers themselves are funkily unusual combinations of ingredients, aging techniques and blends.

The first He'Brew was made with pomegranate juice — not exactly the main ingredient you think of when you think of beer — and this juice remains on Shmaltz's ingredient list. The company's name, of course, harks back to a Yiddish word (shmaltz) for a type of chicken or goose-based cooking fat often associated with Jewish cuisine — as well as with overly sentimental, sappy

movies or other art (now usually spelled "schmaltz").

Let's start tasting beer with the funkiest of them all: **Funky Jewbelation**. Funky Jewbelation is an annual ale produced by Shmaltz each February since 2012. It's an addition to Shmaltz Brewing's "Limited Engagement Barrel-Aged" series and, depending on the year it's produced, is a blend of either six or seven beers aged in bourbon and rye whiskey barrels. The blended beers in my Jewbelation were: Jewbelation Fifteen Ale, Origin Pomegranate Strong Ale, Bittersweet Lenny's R.I.P.A., Messiah Nut Brown Ale, Coney Island Lager and Coney Island Albino Python White Lager — each one individually aged between three to 12 months before blending. (Coney Island is Shmaltz's craft-lager division — distinct from He'Brew, which focuses on ales).

This was, without doubt, the most unusual beer I've ever tried. It started out looking fairly normal and pretty yummy — pouring with a color like cold espresso, completely opaque, and topped by a long-lasting mocha-colored head. Light aromas of whiskey, with the citrus quality whiskey sometimes has, visited my nose. The taste, though, was so sour and un-beer-like that, I have to admit, I initially thought it had turned to vinegar. It tasted somewhat similar to a Belgian Lambic fruit beer, with bushels of tart pomegranate predominating. After a few sips, though, Funky Jewbelation started to grow on me — and it wasn't just the 9.4 percent ABV talking. It was the textbook definition of an acquired taste.

Just to make sure my taste buds weren't on strike, I sought out online reviews and found pretty much the same words as I'd written in my own notes. These included: strange, sour, rich, complex, sour, alcoholic, tart, sour, strong, tart blackberries, subtle whiskey, oaky, interesting, deep, pomegranate, tart, fruity, funky, dark fruity, raisiny, sour, dark chocolate, balsamic vinegar, malty and sour. Did I mention "sour"? No other reviewers said they'd stopped drinking it, though.

I was at a loss as to what to pair with Funky Jewbelation, so I tried another funky extreme: Funkychunky's Peanut Butter Cup snack mix, a blend of popcorn, crushed peanut butter cups, peanut butter, milk-chocolate chunks and peanuts. Salty and sweet, crunchy and chewy, it shaved off some of Funky Jewbelation's sour edge and enhanced its chocolate notes. Overall, though, this was one ultra-funky beer experience and not for the faint of heart. (funkychunky.com; available at Domke Market.)

More mellow beers from Shmaltz Brewing include **Genesis Dry-Hopped Session Ale**, which incorporates Warrior, Centennial, and Cascade hops during brewing, followed by extra servings of Centennial, Cascade, and Simcoe hops added after brewing has stopped. Is it hoppy? What do you think? So, yes, it's hoppy, but Genesis also includes five types of malt, which keep it amazingly balanced and drinkable. This is a great football-watching beer, reasonably low in alcohol (5.5 percent) and friendly with most snacks — from potato chips to buffalo wings.

And if you're looking for a slightly darker brew, there's He'Brew's **Messiah Nut Brown Ale**. It may or may not be "the beer you've been waiting for," but it is a rich, sturdy brown ale whose six malts give it a boatload of taste (or would that be an "ark load"? — not just a pretty color. Messiah has layers of pure malt, chocolate, caramel and coffee flavors playing a round robin game for primacy with your tongue. Warrior, Cascade and Liberty hops bring in lighter notes without adding noticeable citrus. (5.2 percent ABV).

Shmaltz Brewing Company's He'Brew line is available around Mobile in 12-ounce bottles, bombers and on tap (I found mine at one of our smaller grocery chains). Ranked as one of the 100 "Best Beers of 2011" by RateBeer.com, it's definitely worth giving a whirl if you're looking for something new. Mixing good beer with a funky-humor shtick can't help being a winner. After all, it's ample quantities of beer plus a keen sense of humor that have been enabling "4" guys to marry "10" girls for generations.

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The legacy of Wallace v. Jaffree and separation of church and state

BY JASON JOHNSON/REPORTER | jason@lagniappemobile.com

A 30-year-old court case could have left certain science and history books outlawed in the Mobile County Public School System were it not overruled by the U.S. Supreme Court, but before one of Mobile's most divisive civil law-suits got national attention in Washington, D.C., *Wallace v. Jaffree* had many interesting twists and turns locally.

The roots of the case were planted when Ishmael Jaffree, formerly Frederick Hobbs, found out his 6-year-old son Chioke was participating in teacher-led, Christian prayer with his classmates at Morningside Elementary School in Mobile.

The prayers included popular childhood blessings such as "God is great, God is good," as well as the Lord's Prayer, which at the time were recited daily and justified by three Alabama statutes.

As a self-proclaimed agnostic, Jaffree found the practice particularly unsettling. At the same time, he was sure it violated the U.S. Constitution. Jaffree, a Civil Rights attorney, said before filing suit, he made several failed attempts to settle the issue with teachers and administrators in the school system.

According to Jaffree, the teachers gave his children the option to leave the classroom, but he believed that would have done little more than ostracize them. Eventually, he filed suit in federal court here in Mobile with former Judge William Brevard Hand presiding.

Over a three-year period, the case rapidly developed, with parties from all over the country filing briefs in support of or in opposition to Jaffree's attempt to stop the daily prayer practices.

Though it originally targeted three teachers, three principals and other administrators, the case eventually became a showdown over prayer in public schools between Jaffree and the entire state of Alabama.

The complaint

Although he was raised a Baptist in Cleveland, Ohio, Jaffree said he always questioned what he was taught. That was a quality he and his wife agreed to teach their children, choosing not to force any particular religion or social ideology upon them.

"Because of my philosophy of nonconformity, it was inevitable that I would probably bring a case like this someday," Jaffree said. "But, I had no idea this case was going to develop the way it did."

Though Jaffree was and remains a practicing attorney, he wanted to remain the plaintiff in his case against the state. At first, he attempted to contact the American Civil Liberties Union, which declined to get involved. Jaffree said the group later regretted that decision once the case's notoriety grew.

Moving forward, Jaffree elected to hire local attorney Ronnie Williams — though he admits he remained heavily involved in the composition of the litigation.

"I had reservations about filing this lawsuit initially," he said. "I didn't want to generate much attention, and I was concerned about how it would affect me and my children in this hub of super (conservatism)."

According to Jaffree, there was backlash ranging from verbal threats to rocks thrown at his car. He even had some opposition at home. His two older children, who attended E.R. Dickson and

Craighead elementary schools, resented the attention the case inevitably received.

"They were older and got laughed at and talked about by some of their friends, but my youngest child was only 6 years old. He was all excited because the media came and took his picture," Jaffree said. "This is a religious community, and there was some confusion that I was Muslim or an atheist or both, which is a contradiction."

Mounting a defense

At the time, Robert Campbell III was the attorney for the Board of School Commissioners of Mobile County — a position he held for 27 years.

According to Campbell, there was more to Jaffree's original complaint than teacher-led prayer, including requests to "remove Christmas from the school calendar" and "mentions of God from other holiday plays and activities."

Campbell said the school board voted 3-2 to defend the case, and as he recalls it, the deciding vote came from a Jewish board member.

"As a litigation lawyer, I looked at the case not to support prayer or prevent prayer, but to defend the principals and teachers and to keep the board from having to pay out any money," he said. "Unfortunately, it had so much more of an impact than a normal case."

Jaffree's complaint alleged school prayer — permitted under Alabama statute — was a violation of the First Amendment's "establishment" clause and the Fourteenth Amendment that applies the clause at the state level.

At the time, the U.S. Supreme Court had already declared prayer in public schools to be unconstitutional for the same reasons in cases like *Engel v. Vitale*, *Abington v. Schempp* and *Murray v. Curlett*.

The existing precedents led Jaffree to feel confident in his case, and Campbell to realize he had his work cut out for him. The defense was simple: prove the Supreme Court's interpretation of the Constitution and its authors' intentions were wrong.

"You can never really tell what the intent of a law is unless you listen to the debate of the people who passed it," Campbell said. "I wanted see if they intended to ban prayer from the public forum, and Judge Hand let me go with it."

As a part of the defense, Campbell and his team researched all the congressional debates dealing with prayer from 1787 to 1875 and brought in constitutional scholars from all over the country.

A mountain of evidence was presented to the court from early campaign speeches and legislative debates — the first time there was a record of such historic evidence in any trial related to the separation of the church and state, according to Campbell.

"The idea of 'the wall' between church and state was a poorly used metaphor coming from a letter Thomas Jefferson wrote James Madison from France," Campbell said. "They were all fighting over states' rights with relation to the church. All Congress meant to do was to make sure the federal government wouldn't choose the religion for everyone."

Campbell said the congressional debates he reviewed were all void of anything close to how the separation of church and state

is regarded today. He said the Supreme Court's first rulings on prayer in public schools were essentially an "edict," as they lacked evidence from district court to back them up.

"The issue was, 'is prayer unconstitutional?' And all the debates show it's not," Campbell said. "If you don't like the law, change it another way."

Judge Hand agreed and ultimately ruled against Jaffree, dismissing his claims with prejudice and defending the public teachers' actions as constitutional.

"This Court's independent review of the relevant historical documents and its reading of the scholarly analysis convinces it that the United States Supreme Court has erred in its reading of history," Hand's ruling reads. "Perhaps this opinion will be no more than a voice crying in the wilderness and this attempt to right that which this Court is persuaded is a misreading of history will come to nothing more than blowing in the hurricane, but be that as it may, this Court is persuaded as was Hamilton that '[e] very breach of the fundamental laws, though dictated by necessity, impairs the sacred reverence which ought to be maintained in the breast of the rulers towards the constitution.'"

In 1982, Judge Hand's decision marked the first time a district judge had ever ruled against a Supreme Court precedent. Though his decision would later be overturned by the 11th Circuit Court of Appeals and the appellate decision would be upheld by the Supreme Court, Campbell called Judge Hand's ruling "the shot heard around the world" and said it only brought more attention to the case.

More parties step in

"During the trial, a lot of really strange wackos came out from everywhere, and not just against prayer either," Campbell said. "Some were really for prayer. Some thought we ought to have prayer all day long."

Several groups offered support to both sides of the case. Jaffree said he actually had a lot of written and financial support from Jewish groups. According to Campbell, religious leaders such as Jerry Falwell, Pat Boone and Pat Robertson took interest in the defense.

One group of nearly 600 individuals, most of whom were members of Mobile's Cottage Hill Baptist Church, became part of the case after requesting to join as intervenors on behalf of the defendants. Attorney Bob Sherling, who is now a judge in Mobile County's 13th District, represented those individuals and their concerns.

"We took the position, that if you're going to take religion out of the school books, you need to take all the religion out of school books," Sherling said. "Secular humanism is a religion."

In earlier cases, secular humanism was identified as a religion, and the intervenors claimed this was highlighted in several books using the Mobile County Public School System's curriculum, all of which they planned to submit as evidence.

"I thought, 'this just isn't right,'" Sherling said. "You can't promote one religion over another, and that is what's being done."

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They're promoting an idea that instead of creation, it came about through some other means."

Sherling said as an attorney, the case for him wasn't ever about making money. In fact, the intervenors' expenses had to be subsidized by speaking about the case at various churches and taking up collections.

"I think I got paid \$60,000 over the course of four years, and it pretty well consumed my entire practice," he said. "We eventually had to hire a full-time press person to handle all the publicity. It was quite a case."

Jaffree equated the intervenors' claims to that of "book burning," and said when they joined the case a large part of the trial was taken over by their testimony.

However, as the board's attorney, Campbell said the attempt to assist the defense by removing references to secular humanism was actually the equivalent of suing the school system, which in essence, made Sherling's group intervenors for the plaintiff. Campbell made a motion to realign the parties as such — a request Judge Hand granted.

"It was kind of funny," Campbell said. "Here's Jaffree — this self-proclaimed Islamic atheist — and they can't stand him. We took a recess and you could hear them arguing out in the hall. They wouldn't sit at the table with him."

The claims of the intervenors were sustained by Judge Hand's ruling, which would have effectively removed 40 books from the Mobile County curriculum had it not been overturned by the 11th Circuit.

After the Supreme Court reversed Judge Hand's ruling, the secular humanism argument was allowed to continue as a separate case that was ultimately lost. Jaffree said he had no involvement following the high court's ruling.

"Looking back, sometimes I don't know how much benefit there was to the whole thing," Sherling said. "I think it certainly educated a lot of people to the fact there's more to religion than just having a church and a steeple."

The legacy

The Supreme Court's analysis looked more at the intent of Alabama's legislature than it did the actual statutes themselves. Alabama Code 16-1-20, added in the late '70s, only allowed for a moment of silent meditation, but the subsequent addendum 16-1-20.2 created language specific to "God."

The Supreme Court's 6-3 ruling — through examination of Alabama's legislative debates — showed those additions had "no clear secular purpose." The statutes thus failed the "The Lemon Test," which has been used in numerous establishment clause cases to determine constitutionality.

"The law already allowed for silent prayer,

and all this statute did was add words specifying that it included prayer. Legislative history suggested this was really about advancing religion as such," University of Alabama law professor Paul Horwitz said. "The court found it problematic because of the legislature's intention, not because they used that moment of silence to pray."

Horwitz said he's not sure the case had lasting impact, but did say it was important to show the Court had no interest in Judge Hand's "imaginative" interpretation of the founding father's intentions.

"The record here not only establishes that 16-1-20.1's purpose was to endorse religion, it also reveals that the enactment of the statute was not motivated by any clearly secular purpose," Justice John Paul Stevens' wrote in his majority opinion. "(Alabama's) endorsement of prayer activities at the beginning of each school day is not consistent with the established principle that the government must pursue a course of complete neutrality toward religion."

The Supreme Court ordered Judge Hand to reverse his ruling, resulting in a victory for Jaffree, but Campbell said he still views the case as a victory in disguise for the Mobile County Public School System.

"It was victory for a moment of silence, and I won the rest of the case against Jaffree," he said. "There was no judgment against the teachers or the school system. I had them all dismissed."

Jaffree said when the case was finally over, he felt vindicated and was glad to put the issue to bed.

"The governor (George Wallace) was against me and these big political figures in the state and the president had even weighed in on the case, and there was little ol' me," he said. "I didn't have any group behind me. It was just me and my family."

He said as far as his children were concerned, they were never involved in any other kind of religious activities during their enrollment in the Mobile County public schools.

Jaffree agreed with Horwitz that his affect was temporary, but said more than 30 years later, he is still glad he brought the lawsuit against the school system and state, as his philosophy hasn't changed.

"When I was very religious, I would have probably said 'the end justifies the means' and everything you could do to push your religion out in front of other people is OK. If you think you've got something good, whatever strategy you use, whatever works, you do it," Jaffree said. "But, do you draw the line anywhere, and is it the business of school officials to promote any particular religion when you've got a student body that might be consistent of various religions?"

To avoid that, you shouldn't be promoting any religion. Let the families promote religion."

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All I want for Christmas ... The Artifice wish list

BY KEVIN LEE/ARTS EDITOR | klee@lagniappemobile.com

I would like to say I can't believe the holidays are here again so quickly but that's not the truth. One side effect of Mobile's endless heat and humidity is that it makes the time between holiday seasons — otherwise known as “when we turned off the air conditioning for a couple of days” — stretch more than it might otherwise. Who says summer's swelter can't be your friend?

So now that early December is here, I might as well jot down a Christmas list to the guy in the big red suit with the team of prancing venison pulling him across the sky. It would certainly take some elfin magic to make parts of my longed-for reality come to pass.

What made the wish list? There's a little bit of Artifice fun for a lot of different folks.

• **I would like to see more ventures downtown like Urban Emporium and Gallery 450.** We've still got far too many empty storefronts in our oldest sector. Sharing the load always helps pay the bills, so artists and artisans alike can shoulder that boulder through cooperation. And of course, to complement it would be ...

• **Mobilians who turn to downtown sources for their retail needs.** Gifting is the perfect reason. I've made a long habit of turning to books for presents. Not just because I'm a bibliophile but because the nature of the gift requires personal consideration. A pair of slippers or electric blanket can be for anyone but a book has to fit someone's predilections. Random selection is ill advised unless, of course, your Grandma wants that book of burlesque photography.

For that reason, Bienville Books is a logical choice. I support a local entrepreneur and show someone I was thinking of them particularly with one move. The same can be said of artistic purchases of all stripes.

• **Solutions to the LoDa ArtWalk brouhaha.** Histrionics and

ultimatums aren't an answer. I'd like to see the city come up with some way to prevent the event from descending into a flea market free-for-all without becoming too onerous. As I suggested a while back, a prorated peddler's license would seem to provide both oversight and affordability.

• **More variety in the Saenger Theatre show schedule.** I want to see something besides the endless tepid parade of classic rockers, country crossover and sedate soul reviews.

Yeah, I know about the vagaries of this market, what sells tickets and what doesn't, but a Christmas wish list is about idealism, right? The problem at the heart of it is we just don't have the demographics in this area to support much else.

• **I'd like to see more locally written plays for the stage.** Thomas Lakeman, Danielle Juzan, Tom Perez and Scott Morlock have put out some wonderful things but there's always room for more. My experience shows Mobilians love little more than originality geared for their peculiarities. It would be wonderful if someone could take classic storylines from Shakespeare or similar canon and reshape it so it fits life in the north-central Gulf Coast.

• **Better stewardship of our area museums.** The Gulf Coast Exploreum is having a hard go of it right now. Funding has ebbed and they lost personnel in charge of seeking new sources.

The History Museum of Mobile has become the latest playtoy of political brats. Now that directors are bailing out and everyone is lawyering up, it doesn't look to get any more harmonious in the near future.

Mobile Museum of Art is scrambling as fast as it can to improve local involvement with their facility. The latest director, Deborah Velders, has made great strides toward widening the appeal and usage with concerts, workshops, festivals and free events. They've even pulled in the one thing Mobilians truly seem to cherish that's

not in a stadium — Mardi Gras — in a bid to draw focus to the 50th anniversary of an institution that far outpaces local appreciation.

• **A better sci-fi/comic/gamer convention.** There is a lot of creative energy that goes into these repositories of nerd love — easily comparable to Mardi Gras costuming — and this port town is missing the boat. New Orleans' WizardCon pulls in tens of thousands. Atlanta's Dragon Con draws enough to fill a football stadium.

Yes, we've had our version called Mobicon for nearly two decades now but its impact is minimal, normally drawing fewer than 1,000 attendees.

Last year, Pensacon kicked off its inaugural event with more than 10,000 participants and are on track to surpass it this coming February since they've already sold out of passes. The estimated impact on their local economy? A tidy \$6 million.

And the participants are far better behaved than their pre-Lenten, concert-going and gridiron counterparts. Unless D&D dice might possibly scratch a hotel tabletop. Oh, the horror. More on this in a later Artifice.

• **Something to fill the Arts Alive! void.** Now that the annual spring festival is moving to Brookley for the foreseeable future, I'd hate to see that energy wane.

Just a couple of years ago, when SouthSounds premiered and Temporal City Festival was still going, it felt like there was finally some creative critical mass building downtown. That initial weekend was buoyed with promise.

True to its name, Temporal City has wafted away. Arts Alive! has followed suit and downtown just doesn't need the kick to its chops. Rumor has it a local arts organization is on the verge of announcing their own event to try and pick up slack, so we're just hoping they can make a go of it and revitalize interest.

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Trio of holiday shows for men's chorus

BY KEVIN LEE/ARTS EDITOR | klee@lagniappemobile.com

Port City Men's Chorus Holiday Concert 2014

The Port City Men's Chorus are making a joyful noise for the holiday season and doing it in a series of locales sure to spread the holiday cheer. According to their website, the volunteer community chorus was organized "to provide the opportunity for a fellowship of gay and gay-friendly men to build a community spirit by singing together" and "seeks to provide members with rewarding musical experiences, to promote social exchange within a group of men with a common purpose, and to reflect positive aspects of ourselves to our audience and the general community."

Their series of holiday shows includes seasonal holiday favorites like "Rocking Around The Christmas Tree," "Mele Kalikimaka," and "You're A Mean One, Mister Grinch," "Silent Night," "O Holy Night," "Frosty the Snowman," "Let It Snow" a traditional Latin number and Ukrainian bell carol, among others.

The first show is Saturday, Dec. 6, at 5:30 p.m. at Berhnheim Hall in the Ben May Main Branch of the Mobile Public Library. The second is Sunday, Dec. 7, at 3 p.m. at Cornerstone Metropolitan Community Church, 1007 Government St.

Entrance to each is \$15.

A silent auction begins a half-hour before each show that includes homemade throws, art pieces and unique memorabilia including promotional items from NBC's live Dec. 4 performance of "Peter Pan." All proceeds go toward the chorus' trip to Denver in 2016.

For more info, call 251-895-6075 or go to their Facebook page.

No dessert like 'Christmas Pudding'

A Christmas Pudding

Where: Joe Jefferson Playhouse, 11 S. Carlen St.

When: Dec. 5-7

Amidst the carnage and violence that now begins our holiday season thanks to the customary Black Friday riots, there are still signs that some of us remember what is promoted as the essence of the holiday. One will unfold on a Midtown stage.

"A Christmas Pudding" is a collection of stories and song that began as a benefit for the homeless 20 years ago in Los Angeles, penned by famed actor and director David Birney. Directed by Rick Miller with music and choral direction by Charmein Moser, this dramatic comedy features tales by Mark Twain, G. B. Shaw, Shakespeare, Longfellow, Emily Dickinson, St. Luke and others matched with a host of traditional carols and holiday songs. The show is a holiday fundraiser.

Curtain is at 8 p.m. on Friday and Saturday. The Sunday matinee is at 2 p.m.

Tickets are \$15 for adults, \$10 for seniors, military and students.

For more info, call 251-471-1534, go to www.joejefferson-players.com or find them on Facebook.

Violin highlights MSO's 'Appalachian Christmas'

An Appalachian Christmas

Where: Saenger Theatre, 6 S. Joachim St.

When: Dec. 13-14

The Mobile Symphony Orchestra (MSO) brings the "high lonesome sound" to the low country for the holidays when they feature versatile guest violinist, er, fiddler Mark O' Connor center stage for a performance of "An Appalachian Christmas" in early December.

"Mark O'Connor defies categorization," MSO Music Director Scott Speck said in a press release. "He plays the classics, folk, jazz, country and bluegrass. He's a fiddler, a composer and a teacher. He holds yearly workshops for hundreds of musicians around the country."

On the slate for the evening are several original O' Connor pieces, including some with which the audience might be familiar only by sound and not name. Included among that will be "Appalachian Waltz," made famous through PBS documentarian Ken Burns' usage. It was also used by cellist Yo-Yo Ma during his most recent encore with MSO.

The show is sponsored by Wind Creek Casino & Hotel and WKRG News 5.

Performance begins at 8 p.m. on Saturday. Sunday matinee is at 2:30 p.m.

Tickets range from \$20 to \$65. They can be purchased by calling the MSO box office at 251-432-2010, in person at 257 Dauphin St., or online at mobilesymphony.org.

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Mobile's The Mulligan Brothers prepare to debut 'Via Portland'

BY STEPHEN CENTANNI/MUSIC EDITOR | scentanni@lagniappemobile.com

In 2013, Mobile's own, The Mulligan Brothers, a quartet comprised of veteran musicians Ross Newell (guitar/lead vocals), Gram Rea (fiddle/mandolin/viola/harmonica/vocals), Ben Leininger (bass/vocals) and Greg DeLuca (drums/vocals), released their self-titled debut album. After its release, the band quickly gathered a legion of dedicated fans on the local level. But soon their sounds word would spread beyond The Port City.

In 2014, they played to a very enthusiastic crowd at the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival, where their debut album shot into the "Top 10 CD sales" at the festival's merchandise booth, earning them fans from across the country. They have since ventured into a number of states including New York, Virginia, Pennsylvania and Arkansas.

Now, The Mulligan Brothers are preparing to introduce the hometown crowd to their sophomore effort, "Via Portland," at a sold-out pre-release party at the Joe Jefferson Playhouse Wednesday, Dec. 10. While a record release show may seem more at home at one of the city's bigger or more traditional music venues, DeLuca explained that Ross Newell's experience playing the Joe Jefferson Playhouse for the "Port City Rising" concert factored into the decision. For The Mulligan Brothers, the capacity and ambiance of the venue provides both a listening room and concert experience for both the band and the audience.

"We like the 320 capacity there, so we liked the fact that we could get a good size crowd in there but nothing that's going to be too crazy or overwhelming," DeLuca said. "It seemed to be a perfect fit."

For the creation of "Via Portland," the band chose musician/producer Steve Berlin. Berlin is best known for his work as a member of the band Los Lobos, but he is also known for his production work with acts such as Deer Tick, Backyard Tire Fire, Buckwheat Zydeco and Leo Kottke. After a mutual friend passed on a copy of The Mulligan Brothers debut, Berlin quickly expressed interest in working with the quartet.

Berlin's interest came at a perfect time when the band was making plans for their sophomore effort. The Mulligan Brothers loaded up the tour bus and journeyed to Portland to enter the studio with Berlin in the production chair and Jeff Saltzman manning the console.

When they entered the studio, they envisioned the final product would be a continuation of the sounds and vibes of the first album. However, Berlin and Saltzman had different plans. Whereas the band took more of a co-production role with their debut, The Mulligan Brothers decided to let Berlin take the reins for "Via Portland."

According to DeLuca, Berlin was skilled at adding "the little nuances" that took 11 songs and bonded them together into an album. DeLuca said the band was also impressed with Saltzman's ability to capture an accurate representation of the band's instrumental and vocal qualities. The Mulligan Brothers' time in the studio was educational and evolutionary. Berlin's guidance allowed the band to add undiscovered depth to their tracks. Even Berlin's suggestion of a piano in one song will echo throughout future live performances.



Photo/themulliganbrothers.com

Mobile's The Mulligan Brothers have recently enjoyed national exposure. The group is scheduled to debut its sophomore album at an intimate, sold-out performance at the Joe Jefferson Playhouse.

"None of us play piano really, but we're going to end up adding it to our live show," DeLuca said. "It's just stuff that we would not have done ourselves. We're happy that it happened the way it happened. He pulled some stuff out of us that we just wouldn't have done. Not because we don't want it to happen, we just wouldn't have done it."

According to DeLuca, the band could not be happier with the final product, and they should be. The sonic depth of "Via Portland" is truly amazing. The first thing that listeners will note is the overall quality and clarity of the recording. In a time when technology has made do-it-yourself recording popular with many bands, "Via Portland" is a testament to the benefits of recording with professionals in a professional studio.

With The Mulligan Brothers' heavy emphasis on acoustic instruments, Berlin and Saltzman were able to capture every strum and pluck with crystalline accuracy. In addition, each song exhibits a rich sound that has been honed by skilled ears.

Fans can expect "Via Portland" to contrast their debut in many ways. However, The Mulligan Brothers' core sound and musical

philosophy still remain. The band captures the listener with the warm harmonies of "Wait for Me." Newell sets the stage for a story of longing and heartbreak with his acoustic guitar before being joined by a wave of instrumentation from his band mates. The song creates a foundation for an album that is more sonically dramatic and dynamic than its predecessor.

"Bad Idea" displays The Mulligan Brothers' versatile Americana sound, which begins with a fusion of guitar and fiddle and spontaneously dropping into a classic country ballad worthy of the honky-tonk. Ultimately, "Via Portland" maintains the down-home sound and heartfelt lyrics that have brought them rapid notoriety, but their time in the studio has definitely had and will have a lasting positive effect in their future work.

After the pre-release party, The Mulligan Brothers will start planning for 2015. DeLuca explained the band will definitely be working to join festival lineups wherever they can and "to go further than this year." They also plan on getting back to many of the venues they have played in order to introduce old and new friends to the sounds of "Via Portland."

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Electronica meets puppet theater meets punk

BY STEPHEN CENTANNI/MUSIC EDITOR | scentanni@lagniappemobile.com

Band: Mr. Quintron & Miss Pussycat, Bitchin' Bajas, Hibachi Strangers
Date: Wednesday, Dec. 10, 9 p.m.
Venue: Soul Kitchen, 219 Dauphin St., www.soulkitchenmobile.com
Tickets: \$10 through Ticket Biscuit

New Orleans is home to a plethora of musical acts that would be considered traditional to the area. Typically, traditional music from the Crescent City tends to lean towards jazz. However, it is also known as a breeding ground for bands that could be considered traditionally non-traditional. Mr. Quintron & Miss Pussycat is a Big Easy band that has become legendary in their local scene for wonderfully bizarre sounds. With a live delivery to match their unique music, this duo's live shows at the Spellcaster Lodge continue to attract both locals and visitors with each performance.

Quintron is a master of electronic madness. His instrumental ensemble consists of a number of drum machines, keyboards and synthesizers with names such as "The Drum Buddy" and "Weather Warlock." While Quintron mixes his electronic concoctions, Miss Pussycat provides vocals and entertainment with her inflatable puppet theatre.

Their set will be full of electronic beat-driven, danceable music that walks a fine line between the psychedelic and the insane. The crowd can also expect cuts from their latest album "Spellcaster II: Death in Space."

Mr. Quintron & Miss Pussycat will be joined by Bitchin' Bajas and Mobile's undisputed kings of punk, the Hibachi Strangers.



Photo/quintronandmisspussycat.com | Mr. Quintron

Compare and contrast with Blind Mule lineup

Band: Black Titan, Slow Motion Rider, Face on Mars
Date: Saturday, Dec. 6, 11:30 p.m.
Venue: The Blind Mule, 57 N. Claiborne St., www.theblindmule.net
Tickets: \$5 at the door

Black Titan continues to gather fans in the Azalea City and beyond with a thick, raunchy metal sound that harkens to the early days of Black Sabbath. In October, Black Titan brought their metal thunder to a battle of the bands at an Applebee's in Hattiesburg. While this environment might not seem to complement their sound, these darlings of the Mobile underground beat the competition and took home first place. Afterward, Black Titan took their show westward for a lineup of dates that included several in Austin, Texas.

Hattiesburg's Face on Mars will also be performing. Face on Mars has created an electrifying batch of modern stoner metal, which is showcased on their self-titled debut. This release is highlighted by intense tracks like "We Get Loud" and slow, grinding anthems like "Psychedelic Jesus."

Houston's Slow Motion Rider will complete the triple-shot. While the rest of the lineup concentrates on classic metal, this group has taken the psychedelic sounds of the late '60s/early '70s and brought them into the modern age with an undeniable intensity. Slow Motion Rider will add contrast to this show, but their charismatic music should mingle perfectly.



Photo/Facebook/Blacktitanband | Black Titan

King takes the throne at Callaghan's

Band: Luke Winslow King
Date: Sunday, Dec. 7, 7 p.m.
Venue: Callaghan's Irish Social Club, 916 Charleston St., www.callaghansirishsocialclub.com
Tickets: \$8 at the door

New Orleans' Luke Winslow King is quickly moving on to the national scene with a sound steeped in retro sounds. King's composition skills were first honed in his hometown of Cadillac, Michigan. In his teens, the future songwriter studied at the prestigious Interlochen Center for the Arts. Eventually, his education brought him to the exotic streets of the Crescent City, where he studied music theory at the University of New Orleans. While there, he received a scholarship to study in the Czech Republic. He returned to New Orleans and paid his dues playing on various venue stages and street corners.

King is on the road promoting his sophomore effort on Bloodshot Records, "Everlasting Arms." The album's title track reflects the diverse musical influences that King has gathered throughout his travels. The bouncing sway of the mellow song is driven by acoustic guitar and old school ragtime. In contrast, "Swing That Thing" takes the listener back to the early days of rockabilly and adds an infusion of gospel overtones.



Photo/lukewinslowking.com | Luke Winslow King

Entertainment for Christmas season through Mardi Gras

BY STEPHEN CENTANNI/MUSIC EDITOR | scentanni@lagniappemobile.com



The Mobile Pops was born in the spring of 1977. With roots in the Spirit of Mobile Marching 200, the group of musically inclined locals has spent almost 40 years providing the public with orchestral entertainment. In fact, the Langan Park Performing Arts Pavilion was built with performances from The Mobile Pops in mind. Each year, this symphony holds its “Sounds of the Season” concert. The denizens of the Azalea City are invited to spend the evening with The Mobile Pops as they fill their chosen venue with the music of the holiday season. The area can expect two performances of “Sounds of the Season” for Christmas 2014.

The first of these performances will take place on Monday, Dec. 15 at 7 p.m. at the Davidson High School Auditorium. Next, The Mobile Pops will travel to North Mobile County to bring holiday cheer to the Saraland Performing Arts Center at Saraland High School on Friday, Dec. 19 at 7 p.m. Both of these events are free to the public.

Doug Breau's classic Christmas

Doug Breau is a local entertainer who has thrilled many with his classic jazz vibe. Breau (and the Magnificent 5) have been busy preparing for his “Doug Breau: A Classic Christmas” performance. This show will consist of “all your holiday favorites plus American Pop classics from several decades and genres.” “Doug Breau: A Classic Christmas” will take place

at the Davidson High School Auditorium” on Thursday, Dec. 11 at 7:30 p.m. Tickets are \$15 and available at the door exclusively.

Moon Taxi for Mardi Gras

Mardi Gras serves as the epic conclusion of the Azalea's City's prolific holiday season. Two venues are already preparing for the revelry and debauchery of Mardi Gras 2015. On Friday, Feb. 6, The Order of Inca will roll through the streets of Mobile. Afterwards, O'Daly's Irish Pub will be the place to be as Nashville's Moon Taxi entertains the masses with their indie rock sounds. This band is no stranger to the area, and they have already collected many local fans with their memorable performance at the Hangout Music Festival. Moon Taxi will bring fresh sounds from their latest release “Mountains Beaches Cities.”

The Meters' George Porter at LuLu's

Lucy Buffett's LuLu's family-friendly Fat Tuesday celebration has become quite a tradition for both music lovers and bands. For Mardi Gras 2015, LuLu's is bringing back George Porter & the Runnin' Partners to the Gulf Coast with sounds straight out of the Big Easy. Porter is a founding member of The Meters, and he has injected this solo project with the sonic spirit that made The Meters legendary.



Photo/Facebook/ridethemoon

Moon Taxi, who most recently appeared in the area for two sets during the Hangout Music Festival last summer, will return for a Mardi Gras show at O'Daly's Feb. 6.

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THUR. DEC 4

Beau Rivage— Santa & Friends, 7p
Blues Tavern— ZIG, 8:30p
Brickyard— Josh Ewing & Ross Newell
Celtic Irish Pub— Joey Culver
Dahlia's Electric Piano Hall— Scott Morlock, Gene Murrell & David White
Fairhope Brewing Co. — Underhill Family Orchestra, 8p
Felix's— Grits N Pieces
Flora Bama— Bo Roberts, Mark Sherrill, Chris Newbury & Friends, 5p// Josh Newcom, 9p
Legacy— Ryan Balthrop
Lulu's— Adam Holt, 4p
Moe's BBQ (Daphne)— Yellowhammer Productions, 8p
Old 27 Grill— Songwriters Night, 6:30p
Saenger— Babes in Toyland
Traders— The Lizards, 7p
Veets— Micah Hare Live with Veet, 8p

FRI. DEC 5

Beau Rivage— Santa & Friends, 7p
Bill's by the Beach— Lisa Zanghi, 6p
Blues Tavern— Smokin' Toasters, 9p
Brickyard— Josh Ewing
Celtic Irish Pub— Hydrogen Child
Cockeyed Charlie's— Shawna P Trio
Dahlia's Electric Piano Hall— Scott Morlock, Tony Edwards & David White
Felix's— Blind Dog Mike
Flora Bama— J. Hawkins, 2p// Jack

Robertson Show, 5:30p/// LeaAnne Creswell Trio, 6p/// Robert Wayne Band, 10p
Garage— The Tommy Morse Band, 9p
Legacy— Adam Holt, 6p// Holli Mosley, Cary Laine and Tim Kinsey, 9p
Lulu's— JERI, 4p
Moe's BBQ (Mobile)— Aubrey Wollett, 6:30p
Moe's BBQ (Daphne)— Cat and the Truth, 8p
Old 27 Grill— Them Again, 6:30p
Traders— Johanna, Melissa & Laci, 8:30p
Tropics— Velvet Monkey, 7p
Saenger— Jerrod Nieman
Soul Kitchen— Trapezoid Ent./ Full Moon Rage, 9p
Veets— The Family Jewels, 9p
Windmill Market— Jimmy Lumpkin, 11a// Sugarcane Jane, 6p

SAT. DEC 6

Beau Rivage— Santa & Friends, 3p// 7p
Blues Tavern— Ric McNaughton Band, 9p
Brickyard— Uri
Callaghan's— Ryan Balthrop & Friends
Celtic Irish Pub— Hydrogen Child// Four Bears Inn
Dahlia's Electric Piano Hall— Scott Morlock, Tony Edwards & David White
Felix's— Jimmy Lumkin Duo
Flora Bama— LeaAnne Creswell Trio, 1p// Jack Robertson Show, 5:30p/// Rhonda harts 6th Annual Barbies for Charity, 7p/// Big

Muddy, 10p
IP Casino— Sugar Ray & Gin Blossoms, 8p
Lulu's— CoConut Radio, 4p
Moe's BBQ (Mobile)— Brandon Reeves, 6:30p
Moe's BBQ (Daphne)— Aubrey Wollett, 7p
Traders— Harmony Grits, 8:30p
Tropics— Bennie and Katrina Austin, 7p
Veets— The Family Jewels, 9p
Windmill Market— Dale Drinkard, 11a

SUN. DEC 7

Beau Rivage— Santa & Friends, 3p// 7p
Blues Tavern— Art & Lou, 5p
Butch Cassidy's— Trivia, 6p
Brickyard— Eric Erdman & Josh Ewing
Callaghan's— Luke Winslow King
Felix's— Chris Powell, 12p// Brandon Bailey, 6p
Flora Bama— J. Hawkins, 12p// Perdido Brothers, 4p/// Kyle Wilson, 8p
Lulu's— Greg Brown, 1p// Greg Brown, 5p
Old 27 Grill— Sound Carpenters, 11:30a
Saenger— Roman Street & Mithril Christmas, 7:30p
Soul Kitchen— D.R.I. / EXCESSUM / POST MORTEM DELIRIUM / D.R.E.A.D, 7:30p
Traders— Dylan, 4p
Veets— The River Dog, 8p

MON. DEC 8

Blues Tavern— Open Mic
Brickyard— Matt & Sherry Neese
Felix's— Jon Miller
Flora Bama— Cathy Pace, 4p// Kyle Wilson, 8p
Lucky's Irish Pub— Marcus, 8p
Lulu's— Brent Burns, 4p
Veets— Vickie Bailey's Musicians Christmas Jam Party

TUE. DEC 9

Beau Rivage— Santa & Friends, 7p
Butch Cassidy's— David Jernigan & Karl Betts
Cockeyed Charlie's— Matt Neese + I
Felix's— Hannah Wallace
Flora Bama— Perdido Brothers, 5p
Veets— Bonnie & Katrina Austin, 8p

WED. DEC 10

Beau Rivage— Santa & Friends, 7p
BLUEGILL— Ross + I, 6p
Blues Tavern— Grant & Bayne, 8p
Brickyard— Ben Leininger, Greg DeLuca
Bucky's Birdcage (Grand Hotel)— Adam Holt Piano Show, 8p
Callaghan's— Deluxe Trio
Celtic Irish Pub— Mike
Cockeyed Charlie's— Sammy Sixx
Felix's— Lee Yankie
Flora Bama— Rhonda Hart & Brian Hill, 5p
Garage— Kyle and Karl, 8p
Legacy— Brent Loper
Lulu's— Albert Simpson, 4p
Soul Kitchen— Mr. Quintron & Miss Pussycat// Hibachi Stranglers, 9p
Veets— Grits N' Pieces, 8p

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2605 Halls Mill Rd. | 287-7781

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973-1120

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All hope is lost in Nick Hornby's latest adaptation

BY ASIA FREY/FILM CRITIC | afrey@lagniappemobile.com

Nick Hornby is a pleasing novelist whose film adaptations have resulted in some great, smart comedies. "About a Boy" is my favorite, and "High Fidelity" is everyone else's favorite; both are intelligent, heartfelt and mordant enough to enjoy without feeling embarrassed. In both cases, a strong cast pulls off source material that is light enough in its original form to survive the translation intact.

So you would think that this formula would hold up in "A Long Way Down," a film adaptation of a Nick Hornby book that stars Aaron Paul, Toni Colette, Pierce Brosnan, and the lovely but tragically named Imogen Poots as four disparate Londoners who meet on a rooftop amidst their separate suicide attempts. Out of sheer awkwardness, none of them jump but instead form an unlikely alliance to hold their lives together a little longer.

This is one of those hard to swallow situations that needs convincing writing to hang together. The writing, alas, was not convincing. Also, to have such a serious situation resolved in such a facile and unbelievable manner requires convincing performances. The performances were not convincing. The tone of such a tale must walk the line between sadness and comedy. It did not.

Pierce Brosnan leads the story as the narrator; he plays a formerly famous television talk show host who was disgraced and imprisoned after a sex scandal. His character was the most problematic, as he was meant to be a shallow, empty fellow who gains some depth and empathy by interacting with his fellow attempters. This would have required the emoting of some depth and/or

empathy. I missed that part, but perhaps I was in the ladies' room.

Like the movie itself, Brosnan's character has serious tonal issues, flitting between sort of caring and then developing a plan to manipulate the media for his advantage. This also gives us the film's most boring sideline, in which the four people, nicknamed the "Topper House Four" after their story leaks, and the concept of the media is ineffectually skewered.

The other characters make a better effort with their shabbily written characters. Aaron Paul plays a frustrated failed musician, and Poots plays a beautiful party girl with a famous family tragedy. The best actor in the film is Toni Colette, who also gets to play the only person with any real problems, a single mother caring for a severely disabled adult son.

After surviving their New Year's Eve suicide plans, the four form what they call the Pact, swearing they will not attempt again until Valentine's Day. Soon, because of two of the character's fame, their story becomes known, crowds of reporters follow them around, and their pact takes on a life of its own.

Except, of course, it doesn't. A life of its own is



Photo/imdb.com | "A Long Way Down"

Despite a couple of strong performances, Nick Hornby's story of four strangers with a life pact fails to engage.

exactly what this slight and silly film lacks. You keep waiting for the story to dig in, but everyone just skitters over the surface. Revelations, when they are made, are lame. Characterization is willy-nilly.

And there is entirely too much fake laughing. Like, the four of them just fake laugh at inopportune times, and this is meant to signify how amazingly unlikely yet warm it all is. They take an unbelievable, inane vacation together, and fake laugh and swim, and it's just not enough. Their lives get resolved through no effort, and the last scene is as unbelievable as the first.

NEW IN THEATERS



Photos/ imdb.com

ZERO MOTIVATION

An Israeli film set in a remote desert military base where a platoon of young women soldiers serve out their time playing computer games, singing pop songs, and conspiring to get transferred to Tel Aviv — while endlessly serving coffee to the men who run the show.

WILD

Reese Witherspoon plays a heroin user who strikes out on an extended hike through the wilderness to try to get her life back together.



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All listed multiplex theaters

BIRDMAN

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14, Cobb Pinnacle 14, Carmike

Wharf 15

BEYOND THE LIGHTS

Regal Mobile Stadium 18, Carmike Wynnsong 16, Eastern

Shore Premiere Cinema

DUMB AND DUMBER TO

All listed multiplex theaters

BIG HERO 6

All listed multiplex theaters

INTERSTELLAR

All listed multiplex theaters

JOHN WICK

Regal Mobile Stadium 18

OUIJA

Regal Mobile Stadium 18, Carmike Wynnsong 16, Eastern

Shore Premiere Cinema

FURY

Regal Mobile Stadium 18

ALEXANDER AND THE TERRIBLE, HORRIBLE, NO GOOD, VERY BAD DAY

Regal Mobile Stadium 18, Eastern

Shore Premiere Cinema 14

DRACULA UNTOLD

Regal Mobile Stadium 18

GONE GIRL

Carmike Wynnsong 16, Carmike

Jubilee Square 12, Eastern Shore

Premiere Cinema 14, Carmike

Wharf 15

THE EQUALIZER

Regal Mobile Stadium 18, Eastern

Shore Premiere Cinema 14,

Carmike Wharf 15

ANNABELLE

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Regal Mobile Stadium 18

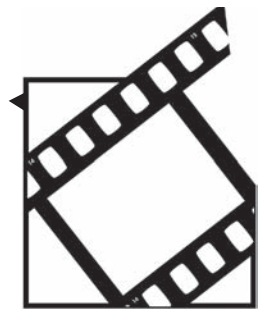
THE MAZE RUNNER

Regal Mobile Stadium 18

THE JUDGE

Carmike Wharf 15

Information accurate at press time; please call theaters for showtimes.



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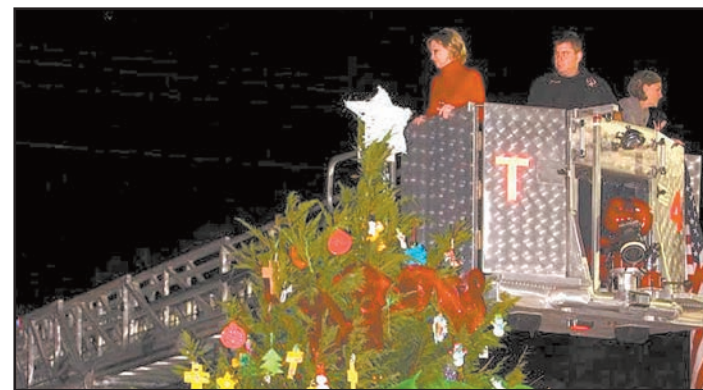
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ST. MARY PARISH TREE LIGHTING

WHEN: TUESDAY, DECEMBER 9 FROM 7-9 P.M.

WHERE: ST. MARY CATHOLIC SCHOOL, 107 N. LAFAYETTE ST.

Lighting up historic Midtown! The 4th annual Christmas tree lighting for St. Mary Parish will be held 7-9 p.m. The tree will be decorated by St. Mary Catholic School students. Santa will arrive on the fire truck and will be assisted by the Lafayette Street Fire Station in lighting the tree. Beverages, cookies and hot chocolate will be available, along with the Geaux Boy food truck and Mellow Mushroom! The event will be held on the campus of St. Mary Catholic School at 107 N. Lafayette St., Mobile. For more information, contact: Laurel Wallace at 251-623-9865 or lwallace@stmarymobile.org.



Photo/St. Mary's Mobile

December 4

Babes in Toyland

Victor Herbert's classic "Babes in Toyland" follows Mary Contrary, Tom-Tom and all the Mother Goose characters through amazing adventures as they help save Christmas. Recommended for all ages. The play will begin at 7:30 p.m. at The Playhouse in the Park, 4851 Museum Drive. Call 251-602-0630 for reservations.

Eat, Drink and Be Ugly

Join the United Way's Emerging Leaders' December 4

Eat, Drink and Be Ugly

Join the United Way's Emerging Leaders' for a Wine Down & Ugly Sweater Contest. The fun begins at 6 p.m. at the History Museum of Mobile, 111 S. Royal St. Register in teams of 2-4 at uwsa.org, each teams brings a bottle of wine, the team with most votes wins the grand prize; there will also be prizes for the ugly, uglier and ugliest sweaters of the night. For more information call 251-433-3624 or visit uwsa.org.

Eastern Shore Choral Society Concert

The Eastern Shore Choral Society, under the direction of Mary Katherine Kilgore, will present their much anticipated holiday concert to celebrate music from across the ages. Featured pieces will include "Gloria" by Randal Bass, "This Little Babe" from Britten's Ceremony of Carols, "O Magnum Mysterium" by Morten Lauridsen, choruses from Handel's Messiah and fun, familiar arrangements of "The Holly and the Ivy," "Do You Hear What I Hear?" and a Christmas carol sing-a-long with audience participation. The concerts will be held at Fairhope United Methodist Church, 155 South Section St., on Thursday, Dec. 4 at 7:30 p.m. and Sunday, Dec. 7 at 3 p.m. Tickets will be sold by all choral members, at the door the day of the concert or online. For more information visit www.escs.org or email us at info@escs.org.

City of Daphne Tree Lighting and Open House

Tree lighting, train rides through Olde Towne, letter-writing to Santa and Christmas crafts. Free refreshments. Daphne City Hall 6-8 p.m. Free.

Thursdays at the Museum

Every Thursday from 10 a.m. until 9 p.m. the Mobile Museum of Art, 4850 Museum Drive, offers free admission to all visitors. Join MMOA each week to experience the museum in new and exciting ways throughout the year. No reservations are necessary.

December 5

LoDa Crawl to Christmas

The beast of all pub-crawls is back. Save the date for the 2nd annual LoDa Crawl to Christmas 2014 with Great Divide Brewing Co. and its award-winning Yeti Series. This six-bar Yeti pub-crawl begins at 6 p.m. at Moe's Original BBQ. Other participating bars include: 7 p.m. at OK Bicycle Shop with Oak-Aged Yeti; 8 p.m. at Draft Picks with Chocolate Oak-Aged Yeti; 9 p.m. at The Haberdasher with Oatmeal Yeti; 10 p.m. at The Blind Mule with Yeti Imperial Stout; 11 p.m. at LODA Bier Garten with Espresso Oak-Aged Yeti. Meet at Moe's Original BBQ in downtown Mobile no later than 6:30 p.m. to receive your pub crawl map and punch card for Yeti goodies along the route plus other information for the Yeti adventure. For more information, visit the Budweiser-Busch Distributing Facebook page.

Mobile Mystery Dinner

'Twas the Murder before Christmas! Join the Mobile Mystery Dinners for their next performance at Azalea Manor, 751 Dauphin St. Advance reservations are required, to make reservations call 251-865-7398. Tickets are \$59 and include dinner and unlimited wine the fun begins at 7 p.m.

Market on Sage

Dec. 4-6 St. Pius Parish will have their annual Market on Sage in the Family Life Center. Shop a variety of vendors including children's clothes, ornaments, wreaths, artwork and much more. The Market will be open Friday 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. and Saturday 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. St. Pius is located at 217 Sage Ave. For more information please call 251-473-5004 or visit stpiustenth.com.

Mini Cheap Chic Boutique

Join Our Sisters' Closet for a Mini Cheap

Chic Boutique at their new location!

Dec. 5, 3:30 p.m. to 6 p.m. and Dec. 6, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. shop winter and holiday separates, suits, dresses and more. Our Sisters new location is the Seton Center of St. Mary's Church, 1413 old Shell Rd. For more information about the sale Our Sisters Closet please visit oursisterscloset.org or call 251-423-2001.



Photox

Fairhope Christmas Parade

Fairhope's Magical Christmas Parade begins at 7 p.m. at the intersection of Morphy and Section streets, and continues down Section to Oak Street. The excitement will build as more than 50 parade units dazzle the crowd in anticipation of Santa Claus' arrival to Fairhope for the holiday season. For a parade application or additional information call Paige Turberville at 251-929-1466.

Family Fun in the Square

Come Downtown in December to help us light up the square with a new Arctic theme. Write letters to Santa and watch "Polar Express" on a giant outdoor screen! Bring a blanket or chairs. The fun starts at 5 p.m. in Cathedral Square, downtown Mobile.

December 6

Swift-Coles Historic Home: Open House

Join the Swift Coles Historic Home for a Christmas open house. The open house will be 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. There will be

live music and good food. Admission is \$15 per person. Jam 'N Folks Dulcimer will play at 10 a.m., followed by Tyler Champion at noon and Lady Banjo and Mr. Harp at 1 p.m. For more information call 251-949-5550. The Swift-Coles Home is located at 17424 Swift Coles Lane, Bon Secour, Alabama, 36511.

St. Lawrence Christmas Bazaar

Join St. Lawrence Parish for a weekend of fun for the whole family! Shop for your Christmas gifts at a variety of unique vendors, including arts, antiques, baked goods and more. The Christmas Bazaar begins Dec. 6, 9 a.m. - 3 p.m. and Dec. 7, 9:30 a.m. - 2 p.m. St. Lawrence is located at 370 South Section St. in Fairhope.

Quidditch in Cathedral Square

Muggle Quidditch in Cathedral Square. No experience necessary and all equipment provided. For the truly earthbound, we'll also have wand-making and butterbeer. The fun begins at 2 p.m.

"A Christmas Pudding"

The Joe Jefferson Playhouse presents "A Christmas Pudding," a holiday fundraiser, Dec. 5-7 at the playhouse, 11 S. Carlen St. "A Christmas Pudding" is a seasonal show of poems, songs, stories and music, guaranteed to get you into the holiday spirit. Showtimes are 8 p.m. on Friday and Saturday and 2 p.m. on Sunday. Tickets are \$15 for adults and \$10 for seniors, military personnel and students. For reservations and information, call 251-471-1534; go to www.joejeffersonplayers.com; or find us on Facebook.

Reindeer 5K Run

The inaugural event will begin and end at the Baldwin Square in Satsuma. The race starts at 8 a.m. The entry fee is \$10. Funds raised from the event will benefit the Satsuma Community Development Organization. This is a civic group that works to improve the city in areas such as the parks, sidewalks and the historic library. For more information, call James Henderson at 251-447-4848 or email info@jameshenderson.biz.

SEND YOUR EVENTS TO EVENTS@LAGNIAPPEMOBILE.COM

CD Release Party

RedBar Espresso & Market will be hosting a special CD release party for Howard Lips and Nori Hendrix at 7 p.m. with a signing afterwards. The acclaimed country duo has a history of rubbing shoulders with the likes of Dolly Parton and Randy Travis. Come check it out along with a little surprise. RedBar is located at 7921 Tanner Williams Road. <https://www.facebook.com/RedBarEspresso>

Spanish Fort Christmas Parade

Let the City of Spanish Fort help put you and your family in the holiday spirit. Make your plans to attend the city of Spanish Fort's 8th annual "Spirit of Christmas" parade. The parade begins at 9 a.m. Saturday, Dec. 6 at the Eastern Shore Centre in Spanish Fort. Be sure to visit with Santa Claus following the parade to tell him what's on your wish list. The Eastern Shore Center is located on State Highway 181, Exit 38 off Interstate 10.



Photo/Springhill Merchants Association

December 7

Christmas on the Hill

Christmas on the Hill in the Village of Spring Hill is scheduled for 1-5 p.m. Boutiques will once again open their doors with special store hours, holiday refreshments, sleigh rides, photos with Santa, holiday music and a variety of children's activities as well as sales and special merchandise promotions. In addition, the event will feature an "Art Walk" where dozens of artists will display their artwork in front of Spring Hill merchant storefronts.

Bella Voce Christmas Concert

A program of familiar and beloved classical selections for the holiday season including works by Rutter, Berg, Berlioz, Guaraldi and Anderson. Featured guest artist Rebekah Atkinson, harpist. 4 p.m. at St. Paul's Episcopal Church, 4051 Old Shell Road, Mobile. Free admission, but donations will be accepted. For more information visit bellavoceofmobile.org or call 251-414-8194.

Eastern Shore Choral Society Concert

The Eastern Shore Choral Society, under the direction of Mary Katherine Kilgore, will present their much anticipated holiday concert to celebrate music from across the ages. Featured pieces will include "Gloria" by Randal Bass, "This Little Babe" from Britten's Ceremony of Carols, "O Magnum Mysterium" by Morten Lauridsen, choruses from Handel's

Messiah and fun, familiar arrangements of "The Holly and the Ivy," "Do You Hear What I Hear?" and a Christmas carol sing-a-long with audience participation. The concerts will be held at Fairhope United Methodist Church, 155 South Section St., on Thursday, Dec. 4 at 7:30 p.m. and Sunday, Dec. 7 at 3 p.m. Tickets will be sold by all choral members, at the door the day of the concert or online. For more information visit www.escs.org or email us at info@escs.org.

Whistler Historical Christmas Tour

Tour of some of Whistler's oldest homes and churches 3-6 p.m. A \$5 donation per person is requested. The tour will begin at the Whistler United Methodist Church on the corner of Whistler Street and North Wasson Avenue.

Open Studio

Come enjoy complimentary mimosas as artists work at the Cathedral Square Gallery, 612 Dauphin St. There will also be works by more than 60 area artists on display. For more information call 251-694-0278.



Photo/Dan Anderson

December 8

Ark of India

"Ark of India: An Alabama Artist Explores Southern Asia" is an exhibit about personal discovery and exploration. It is an account of late 19th and early 20th century India as seen by Alabama artist Roderick D. MacKenzie, using his paintings, drawings, sculptures and most importantly, photographs and writings. The exhibition is organized by the History Museum of Mobile at 111 S. Royal St. and is on view until Sept. 1, 2015.

Magic Christmas in Lights

Visit Bellingrath Gardens and Home during its 19th season of Magic Christmas in Lights! Magic Christmas in Lights begins the Friday after Thanksgiving, runs until January 3, 2015, and is closed on Christmas and New Year's Days. The Gardens are open during Magic Christmas in Lights from 8 a.m. – 9 p.m., and the holiday lights run from 5 – 9 p.m. on each of these days. Home tours run every half hour until 8 p.m. throughout the season. Bellingrath Gardens and Home is located at 12401 Bellingrath Rd. Theodore, AL. Call 251-973-2217

December 9

St. Mary Parish Tree Lighting

Lighting up historic Midtown. The 4th



Photo/bellingrath.org

annual Christmas tree lighting for St. Mary Parish will be held 7-9 p.m. The tree will be decorated by St. Mary Catholic School students. Santa will arrive on the fire truck and will be assisted by the Lafayette Street Fire Station in lighting the tree. Beverages, cookies and hot chocolate will be available, along with the Geaux Boy food truck and Mellow Mushroom! The event will be held on the campus of St. Mary Catholic School at 107 N. Lafayette St., Mobile. For more information, contact: Laurel Wallace at 251-623-9865 or llwallace@stmarymobile.org.

Green Drinks

Mobile Bay Green Drinks is a community group open to anyone interested in sharing ideas for sustainable living. Their goal is to connect with other progressive people in our area who work to address environmental issues in some capacity. There is no charge to attend, but you are responsible for your own drinks. The gathering starts at 5 p.m. at Fairhope Brewing, 914 Nichols Ave., Fairhope.

Holiday Gift Market

Mobile Bay Green Drinks will host a holiday gift market at their monthly Fairhope meeting from 5-7 p.m. at Fairhope Brewing Company, 914 Nichols Ave., Fairhope. In addition to the market, the evening will feature live music, beer specials, food from Sunflower Cafe and a toy drive benefiting Family Promise (FamilyPromiseBC.org), a local nonprofit organization that assists homeless families with children.

BINGO

Join The Haberdasher at 451 Dauphin St. every Tuesday beginning at 9:30 p.m. for Bingo, with prizes every round and drink specials. Free to play. For more information call 251-287-1976.

December 10

2014 Advent Music

Christ Church Cathedral will host the annual Advent Music at noon on Wednesday Dec. 10 and Dec. 17. Immediately following the program at 12:30 p.m. a lunch will be served. An \$8 donation is requested for lunch. Everyone is welcome. Christ Church Cathedral is located at 115 S. Conception St. For more information call 251-438-1822.

Little Discoveries at the Exploreum

Little Discoveries is a weekly programming series in the Exploreum's



Photo/Exploreum

Wharf of Wonder for children five and under. These lessons will fuse science, technology, engineering and math, with creativity, art and reading. Each session will begin with a story reading that will serve as the launching pad for the day's hands-on activities. The topic for Dec. 10 is "Celebrations Around the World." Discover how people around the world celebrate holidays. 10-11:00 a.m. at 65 Government St., downtown Mobile. For more information call Josh Holland at 251-208-6893 or email jholland@exploreum.com.

Bend & Brew

Join Fairhope Brewing every Wednesday night starting at 6 p.m. for Hoppy Yoga. The taproom is transformed into a yoga studio with Soul Shine Yoga leading the session. It's only \$5 to participate in the class and then you can stick around for beer specials as well as light snacks provided by Pretty Mean Sweets. Fairhope Brewing is located at 914 Nichols Ave., Fairhope.



Photo/christmasnightsoflights.com

Christmas Nights of Lights

A 1.5-mile drive-thru Christmas light show at Hank Aaron Stadium open through Jan. 3. The show will begin nightly at dusk and run through 10 p.m. with extended hours on the weekends. For extended information and pricing visit www.ChristmasNightsOfLights.com.

Tour Space 301

Tours of the Main Gallery and Fabrication Hall are every Wednesday and Saturday, 11:30 a.m. and 3 p.m. at the Centre for the Living Arts/Space 301, 301 Conti St. Tours included with the price of admission. Call 251-208-5671 or visit www.centreforthelivingarts.com for more information.



ARCA returns to Mobile International Speedway next March

BY J. MARK BRYANT/SPORTS WRITER | sports@lagniappemobile.com | Twitter @goulaguy

The ARCA Racing Series has announced it is coming back to Mobile International Speedway for a fourth time. The stock car event is set for March 14, 2015, at the oval track in Irvington.

Grant Enfinger of Fairhope said he will be back to defend his title. Enfinger used last season's win to propel him to a 2nd place finish for the ARCA driver's crown.

"As the guy who has two ARCA Mobile 200 Jukeboxes (the race's trophy), I'm planning on being the first to take home a third," said Enfinger, who was also honored this season as the grand marshal for the homecoming parade at the University of South Alabama, his alma mater. "I'm really happy to announce that the ARCA Series will be back at Mobile International Speedway in 2015."

ARCA, which stands for the Automobile Racing Club of America, began in 1953 and is a very unique series in the sport. The drivers and teams are tested over a myriad of conditions. The tracks range in length from .375 miles to 2.66 miles, are run on both paved and dirt surfaces, and also offer both left-turn and right-turn road courses.

Mobile International Speedway, which opened in 1964, is considered Alabama's fastest half-mile track. It also hosts the Sunoco Southern Super Series and the Miller Lite Super Late Model Series, in addition to a regular schedule of Saturday night races. MIS and Talladega Superspeedway are currently the only Alabama tracks used by ARCA.

"Mobile will again be the second race on our schedule, following the season opener in Daytona," ARCA President Ron Drager said. "Our teams and officials talk about the Mobile event all year long, and it has become one of the most anticipated stops of the series. The energy and community involvement we experience in Mobile is incredible."

ARCA Week will kick off Saturday, March 7, with an open practice for the teams. The race will take place the following weekend. Race officials said almost 22,000 fans have attended the three Mobile 200s.

"I've had the opportunity to race all over the country, but there is nothing like racing in front of the hometown fans at Mobile International Speedway," said Thomas "Moose" Praytor, who finished 7th in the 2014 ARCA championship standings. "Grant has won the last two. I hope it's time for another Mobile driver to win."

Other area drivers who have competed in the Mobile 200 include Cale Gale and Darren Mathews. Gale was the winner of the inaugural race in 2012.

Future of LPGA tourney in question

A very cryptic message was left when the 2015 tournament schedule was released by the Ladies Professional Golf Association. Although the Airbus Classic in Mobile was marked down for May 18-24, the word "tentative" was next to it.

No other stop on the tourney's 34-date schedule had this designation. John Cannon, president of the Sunbelt Golf Corporation,



Photo/Grant Enfinger

Driver Grant Enfinger announces the return of the ARCA racing series to Mobile, where he'll attempt to defend his standing from other local drivers such as Thomas Praytor, Cale Gale and Darren Matthews.

which oversees the event, said in a statement he is optimistic the tourney will return to the Magnolia Grove course in west Mobile.

"While work continues on the final details with Airbus and the LPGA, we are very hopeful the Airbus LPGA Classic will be returning to Mobile in May 2015," he said.

There has been no other response from LPGA or tournament officials.

Bowling in Mobile

The picture is getting a little clearer for the next GoDaddy Bowl, which will be played Sunday night, Jan. 4, at Ladd-Peebles Stadium. The representatives from the Sun Belt and Mid-American conferences are starting to shake out.

The MAC championship game is set for Friday, Dec. 5, and will feature Bowling Green (7-5) and Northern Illinois (10-2). The game will kick off at 6 p.m. from Detroit's Ford Field. Finishing just behind NIU in division play were Toledo (8-4) and Western Michigan (8-4).

For the Sun Belt, Georgia Southern (9-3) completed a perfect 8-0 conference mark by rallying to knock off Troy. However, as the school is in its final year of transition to the Football Bowl Subdivision, Georgia Southern is not eligible for the postseason.

The next highest finishers in league play are Louisiana-Lafayette (8-4 overall, 7-1 SBC) and Appalachian State (7-5 overall, 6-2 SBC). GoDaddy Bowl officials are scheduled to announce their selections this Sunday, Dec. 7.

Despite last week's dramatic 42-40 loss to the U.S. Naval Academy, South Alabama is bowl eligible for a second straight season. The Jaguars wrapped up the year 6-6 overall and 5-3 in Sun Belt standings. This tied them with Texas State and Arkansas

State, which has played in three straight GoDaddy Bowls.

The Sun Belt currently has three tie-in contracts with bowls. One squad faces a Conference USA team in the New Orleans Bowl, the second takes on the MAC here in Mobile at the GoDaddy Bowl while a third heads to the new Camellia Bowl in Montgomery against another MAC squad.

According to the Sun Belt website, a fourth bowl will come aboard in 2015: the Cure Bowl (which supports breast cancer research) in Orlando, Florida. The story also mentioned the conference is part of a coalition that will send teams to the Miami Beach Bowl and the Bahamas Bowl on a rotating basis.

Coach Joey Jones is optimistic about the squad's chances to play in the post-season, noting during a news conference Monday "in my opinion, [a bowl invitation] would be the biggest thing that has ever happened to this football program. We have done a lot of good things ... We have a chance to showcase the University of South Alabama, no matter what city we are in and I think we would do a good job of doing that. The anticipation of having that and not knowing is tough, but I feel good about it. I think we put ourselves in very good position to get there."

Jaguar fans will have to wait until Sunday to see if their team is rewarded for its efforts this year.

Scholars and athletes

The University of Mobile recently had several members of its cross country teams named Daktronics-NAIA Scholar-Athletes.

On the list were seniors Daniel Holley of Bay Minette, a elementary education/early childhood education major, and Stephen Tindal of Bon Secour, a sociology major. Also named were senior Katelyn Osborne and junior Sarah LeCroy.

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Mobile man's polar bear encounter a dream come true

BY ALYSON STOKES/REPORTER | alyson@lagniappemobile.com

While New Year's resolutions are oftentimes hard to keep, Mobile business owner Matt Finklea made sure he turned his resolution into reality by embarking on one wild, wintery adventure.

"It's been a dream of mine for a little over 10 years now to see polar bears," he said.

Upon returning home from ringing in the new year in Miami, Finklea set out to fulfill his dream and immediately began researching arctic destinations via the Internet, discovering a cozy hotel called the Lazy Bear Lodge in Churchill, Manitoba, Canada. Though the lodge was full, Finklea was referred to a small bed and breakfast called The Traveller's Touchstone B&B, and was introduced to Denise Earle.

"Her and I got together, and she just guided me in all the right directions," he said.

After Earle set up Finklea with Mark Ingredrigson and Rob Bruce-Barron of North Star Tours, Finklea's plans quickly began to snowball and before he knew it, he was on his way to Canada with winter gear and a backpack in tow.

Finklea first flew into Winnipeg Canada, where he then began a two-day adventure to Churchill. Weather permitting, there is only one flight in and one flight out from Winnipeg to Churchill and only between 25 to 30 people can board each flight, Finklea said.

"So on an average year, there's only about 400 people that actually get to go and experience the bears," he said.

Finklea finally arrived to the "Polar Bear Capital of the World" on Oct. 30. Also known as the "Beluga Capital of the World," the town of Churchill sits on the western shore of the Hudson Bay and is most famous for the many polar bears that migrate to shore, waiting on the bay to freeze.

After the bay freezes over, the polar bears will move out onto the ice and feed on ringed seals, their primary food source, until the ice melts the following spring.

"When I was there, it is their most aggressive time," Finklea said, noting about a three-week time period starting the last week

of October and lasting through the first weeks of November. "They're all getting antsy waiting on the Hudson Bay to freeze over."

According to Finklea, polar bears, whose paws are as big around as a soccer ball, are the only animals that actually stalk and track humans and have a heightened sense of smell that enables them to smell prey from up to 50 meters away.

"They look all soft and cuddly, but they are far from it."

In fact, there is a law in Churchill that requires everyone to leave their car and house doors unlocked in case there is a need to make a fast escape from the polar bears, Finklea said.

Finklea said there were a couple occasions when he got within 40 feet of the bears, but he always ensured he could immediately get into a nearby vehicle if needed.

"They just kind of stopped and stared at you ... at 50 yards, they're pretty much as fast as any human or animal on the planet," he said. "A little joke is when you go out to see the bears, you always want to carry someone that runs slower than you."

However, polar bears do sometimes have an unusually gentle side, Finklea said, noting a National Geographic documentary called "Unlikely Friends" which he said was filmed in Churchill and captured the polar bears commingling and playing with eskimo dogs.

"They've never harmed any of the dogs," he said. "It's just the strangest thing."

Because polar bears will actually roam into town occasionally, Churchill has a "polar bear patrol" and "polar bear jail." When bears are captured, they are marked to track how frequently each particular bear roams into town before they are flown by helicopter back out into the tundra, Finklea said.

"The day I left, I actually got to the airport and Denise sent me a message that a bear was in her backyard in the middle of the day around 2 p.m. ...right in town," he said.

According to Finklea, Churchill is a town of only five blocks and home to only about three restaurants and a couple of remote



Photo courtesy of Matt Finklea

Matt Finklea with polar bears (background).

hotels. The population in Churchill is approximately 800 full time residents and a mixture of "first nation" eskimo Indians, he said.

"It makes small town USA look like New York City," he said.

However, with the average daytime high temperature around negative 7 to 10 degrees Fahrenheit before windchill, Finklea said he was able to take part in other exciting subarctic activities like dog sledding, visiting a rocket testing site used by NASA until the '80s and even trying caribou meat, commonly known as reindeer, for the first time.

But, "without a doubt," the polar bears were the best part of the trip, Finklea said.

"It's just been such a number one thing on my list that I've wanted to do," he said. "Now I'm going to have to come up with my new number one thing. This definitely takes the cake in adventure."

"I was only a couple hundred miles from Santa Claus," he joked. "I was going to fly up there and see him, but I couldn't round up enough reindeer."

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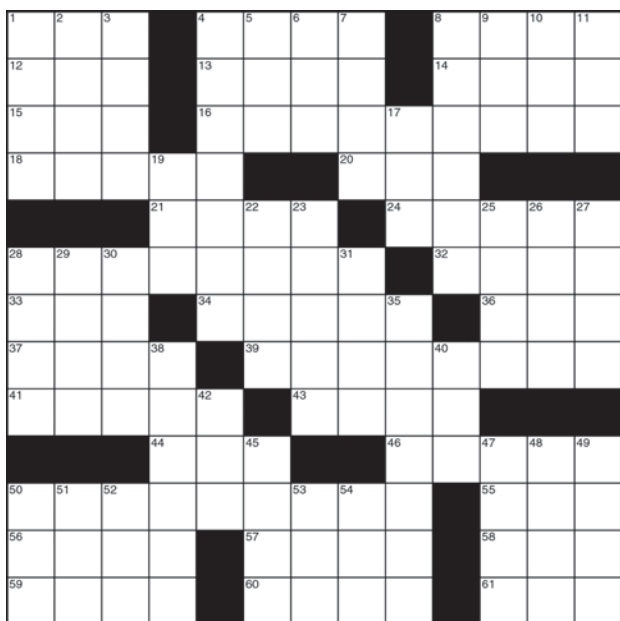
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ACROSS

1. Mac alternatives
4. Clinches
8. From the same tree?
12. "You've Got Mail" company
13. It may come to light
14. _____ fide
15. NY engineering sch.
16. Infuriating
18. Whet the appetite
20. Fitting
21. Hardship's opposite
24. Little run-ins
28. Speech problems
32. Coin in the Trevi Fountain, once
33. One with a beat
34. Baylor of basketball fame
36. Stocking stuffer?
37. Bug-eyed, perhaps
39. Envisions
41. Far from original
43. Certain hardwood
44. Promgoer's woe
46. Salon supply
50. To one's liking
55. Test the patience of
56. Social slight
57. Cub raiser
58. Business apparel
59. Big sport in Japan?
60. Abates, as a tide
61. Plant

DOWN

1. Actor's goal
2. Get along
3. Common cowboy nickname



4. Mirror
5. Opposing
6. List letters
7. Hangar, e.g.
8. Rappel
9. Ornamental carp
10. What a keeper may keep
11. Ride, and then some
17. Brazil, e.g.
19. Favorite project
22. Narcissist's obsession
23. Grain disease
25. Record holder
26. Priceless?
27. Doesn't hold up well
28. Healing sign
29. Robe for Caesar
30. "Once _____ a time"
31. Arab's father
35. Picks up
38. Park structure
40. Make tracks?
42. Blip on a polygraph
45. Saga
47. Lousy deposits?
48. Many a jazz combo
49. Bias
50. Pack animal
51. African grazer
52. Buccaneer's drink
53. It's served with lobster
54. High ball

Answers on Page 44

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-Kim



"A shoe box full of dirty magazines."

-Trey



"A coconut carved to look like a monkey."

-Nancy Marcotte

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Casts are off for Gemini, now prance like an elite

BY DR. ZODIAC/ASTROLOGY GUY

Sagittarius (11/21 - 12/22) — A weekend trip to a comedy show will take a downward turn when your inebriation leads to an attempt at heckling the performer. After being ridiculed from the stage to roaring laughter, eventually he'll come down to the second row and put the mic in your face and ask if you can do better. Unprepared and frightened, you'll say the first joke you can think of, — "What do you call a belt made out of watches?" *Silence "A waist of time." *Additional silence

Capricorn (12/22 - 1/19) — While attempting to purchase beers for the weekend, you'll realize at the last minute you've forgotten your ID. When the clerk refuses to sell to you, you'll be subject to '80s movie trivia and other abject horror to prove you're of age. You'll almost bungle it after failing to remember the entire second verse of "Everybody Wants to Rule the World," but luckily you save it the last minute by perfectly recreating the audition scene from "Flashdance." You'll leave the store soaking wet with beer in tow.

Aquarius (1/20 - 2/18) — Your carelessness threatens to ruin an elaborate engagement surprise, planned for months by an acquaintance and fully involving a cast of his friends and family. He is upset at you, but the emotions work in his favor, as his girlfriend won't know the tears welling up in his eyes are for his missing dog, rather than for his burning eternal love for her. You are forgiven after the missing dog is found, but only you know it is just a decoy dog and regardless, his new fiancé is going to get rid of it right after the wedding.

Pisces (2/19 - 3/20) — Now that the Crimson Tide is in the SEC championship game, you begin to write an apology letter to Lane Kiffin, letting him know you're sorry for doubting him earlier in the season. Surprisingly, he'll write back, eager to let you know that there are no hard feelings, but also that he really needs someone to talk to. The correspondence will continue for months, but you'll get uncomfortable after he sends you draft play schematics for next season that curiously resemble private parts.

Aries (3/21 - 4/19) — Enlightened by a recent article recalling the 30th anniversary of Jaffree v. Wallace, you decide to scale the wall that separates church and state. Authorities are called to the License Commissioner's office after you start meditating in line, leading to 11-minute tags. You are briefly detained at an ALDOT hearing for insisting all intersections be referred to as crosses. But they throw you in jail after you grab the mic at a County Commission meeting, insisting "Imma let you finish, but Moses had the greatest prayer of all time."

Taurus (4/20 - 5/20) — Angry about getting fired from the local grocery store, you'll hatch what you think will be the perfect revenge. You'll sneak in overnight and twist the caps on all the two-liter bottles of soda just slightly. You'll come by the next day and watch as customers complain to management about fizzy drinks. While clever, this trick will get you nowhere closer to being employed. Enjoy the small victory, though, because the cold winter of joblessness will soon crush your already fragile spirit.

Gemini (5/21 - 6/21) — Your casts will come off in a week, but you won't get any relief from leg itch because the werewolf-like tuft of matted, sweaty hair will still leave you feeling irritated. You'll break four razors and a pair of child-safe scissors dealing with the mass, but you'll remain undeterred. Nair will finally do the trick and will leave you with the silky smooth legs you'll want. You'll take a stroll around the neighborhood in 1980s basketball shorts, just to show off.

Cancer (6/21 - 7/22) — Your hot dog cart signs will have the "Sour Krauts" steaming, like fresh buns. In the coming weeks they will take the signs down and steal the wheels from your cart as revenge. They will replace your bun-length hot dogs with regular ones, all in the name of retaliation. The minor annoyances will begin to add up. Finally, fed up with all the abuse, you'll strike back. While the gang members are at a weekly cartel meeting, you'll submerge their supply of buns in water. You'll squeal with glee as the air bubbles rush out of the soon-to-be waterlogged bread.

Leo (7/23 - 8/23) — A week from Wednesday, an intense kolache craving will send you to a local bakery. You'll ask for a pastry filled with cream cheese but receive cottage cheese instead. This mishap will cause you to vomit and become completely disgusted with the poor management. You'll vow to start your own kolache stand to improve the pastry market as a whole. But take heed and be especially cautious of hot dog vendors as you may soon find yourself intertwined in a violent web of food truck rivalries.

Virgo (8/24 - 9/22) — After a friend-of-a-friend tells you that your eyebrows are "on fleek," you'll find the nearest computer to do some research on Urban Dictionary. Initially, you'll be super upset that you're unaware of this new phrase. You'll quickly descend into a pit of despair, attempting to come to terms with the fact that you're no longer hip and trendy. Fortunately, you'll learn "fleek" simply means "on point." Now you can secretly criticize that certain someone whose eyebrows are definitely not on fleek.

Libra (9/23 - 10/22) — A freak post-Thanks-giving football-in-the-yard accident will still have you walking like Quasimodo this week. After hobbling around the office for days, you've come to learn that your coworkers are downright hateful. You've since been a laughing stock and acquired nicknames like "Crooked McCrookster." On the bright side, you'll file a complaint with HR and win a pretty big settlement. But due to your PTSD, you'll never pick up the pigskin again.

Scorpio (10/23 - 11/21) — Realizing your Netflix membership expires by the end of week, you'll start a binge-watching session to rival all predecessors. After two days without sleeping and three seasons into Sherlock Holmes, you'll start to drift in and out of a reality where you exist as an old British detective. Investigating clues around your apartment, you'll concoct a hunch that the local mayor has murdered his estranged wife just before passing out with your beer bottle monacle still firmly in place.

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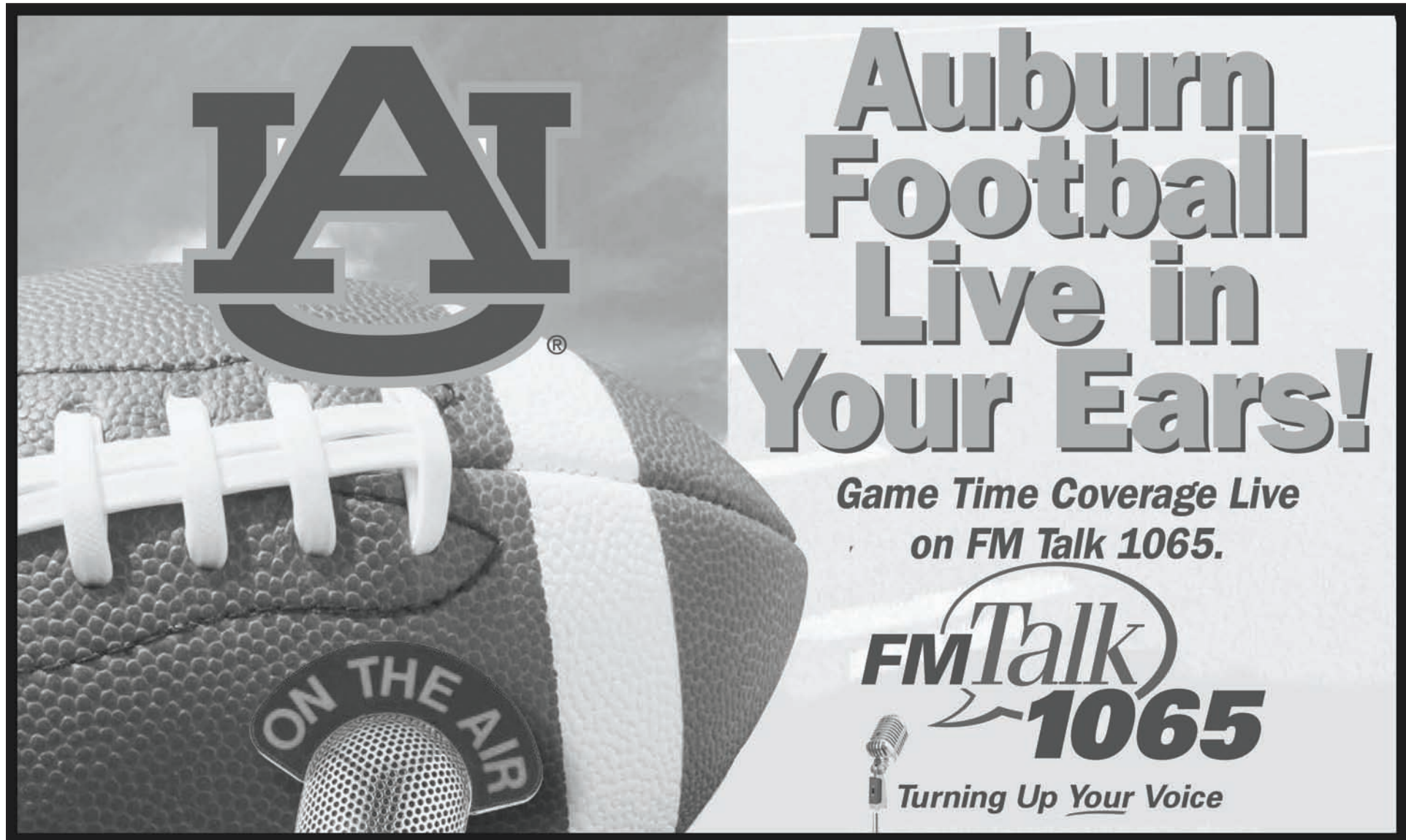
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Silk, balls and videotape

BY BOOZIE BEER NUES/SOCIAL BUTTERFLY

Hold on to your party hats! The madness has begun. We won't stop partying until the ashiest of Wednesdays in mid February, but don't worry I have faith in us to get the job done. And done right!

And I have plenty of scoop to get us going in the right direction, so dig on in!

The Boom Boom is coming!

Being a trashy gossip columnist, I often forget the Mardi Gras madness actually gets kicked off in November at the Camellia Ball. But luckily, my blue-blood spies keep me in the know and filled in all of the champagne (or Deb's Delite, in this case) wishes and caviar dreams of Mobile's rich and famous. Here are a couple of reports filed by one such spy:

Do debutantes have balls?

You can bet your sweet bippie they do, as was evidenced last Wednesday evening at the 62nd Annual Camellia Ball held at Fort Whiting Armory. In the setting of Monet's Giverny garden, 30 young ladies were "introduced" to society, composed it seems, of some 1,400 individuals in attendance. You have to wonder how long that might take to intro that many people to that many young ladies!

There was hardly room to swing a cat, much less a young lady dressed in pink satin, but the crowd took it in style, fueled on by hefty portions of the signature drink of the evening, "the Deb's Delite," composed of vodka, Cointreau and frozen melon balls.

Perhaps the "cat calls" from the balcony during the presentation should be over-looked due to an over-indulgence of these drinks.

At any rate, it was a great kick off to the 2014 - 2015 Carnival Season!

Mardi Gras in the Making

We all know it is said plans for the next Carnival celebration begin as the last OOM float disappears from the streets. But one of the young ladies of next year's court will be wearing a 'stume that

has been in the making for well over 100 years!

Beaded panels of her great-great grandmother's queen's outfit from the turn of the century, Fortuny silk brocade from the '30s from her great-grandmother's royal train, plus silver and turquoise appliques from her grandmother's 1950s queen's ensemble have all been incorporated into the new design.

But there's a kicker...

All the materials spent two weeks underwater and then drying out on the lawn after Katrina at the grandmother's Dog River home. Talk about one wet, hot mess!

After taking a look at the damage, one of Mobile's fabulous train designers and crew "took the plunge" and have resurrected the materials. From what we hear, is a spectacular tribute to the family history of monarchs, and is ready to roll during next year's celebration!

OK, OK, enough about our royal-ty. Back to our real-ty. Not like property. Like regular ol' people. You know what I mean. Nevermind. Just keep on reading.

Iron Bowl shenanigans

For some reason, the venom spewed between Alabama and Auburn folks leading up to the game on Saturday, Nov. 29 did not seem nearly as hateful as usual. Maybe there just wasn't as much riding on it this year. But who would have ever think you would have seen 99 points scored? That was just cray-cray.

Anyway, you are not here for scores and injuries, you want the good stuff.

I hear THE private Iron Bowl party to be at was one in the Oakleigh Garden District. My spies said the "gracious host with the most" had three TVs set up in a fancy tent outside and there were two big TVs inside too with all of the games on.

There was plenty of food and drink and my spy said by the end of the evening, many of the ladies could not even speak. We are not sure if their team performed poorly or there were too many drinkie-poops consumed or maybe both. But I am told it was a very mixed crowd of Alabama and Auburn fans and everyone was getting along just fabulously. Love (and bourbon) really

can build a bridge!

Another spy caught the finest shrine to Alabama football on six wheels at a gas station near Prattville. There seem to be various stuffed elephants prominently placed for idolatry purposes. There is one stuffed tiger in what appears to be a trap and even a stuffed elephant eating another stuffed tiger! You know what they say it's a stuffed elephant eat stuffed tiger world. Also the 2014 Bama schedule was featured on the tailgate as the "12 Most Wanted," which will presumably be changed out for next year.

People have way too much time on their hands. Way too much.

What's worse than the real Nodine?

Just when you thought it was safe to turn your cable television back on, unfortunately the Investigation Discovery network decided to do a piece on former county commissioner Stephen Nodine and the tragic death of his mistress Angel Downs for a series called "Love the Way you Lie."

Nodine was charged with her murder and went to trial but the jury was hung and he ultimately pleaded to the lesser charges of harassment and perjury. He spent time in jail on a federal firearms charge and perjury and was recently released on probation.

Judging by the trailer and the title of the episode, "When she was with him she turned into the devil," it does not appear to portray Downs in a very positive light. But let's just say we are certain the Commish is probably not too happy with the actor chosen to play him either, as they seemed to cast based on the tubbier version of Nodine. All in all, it looks just totally stupid and horribly done and will probably only be watched by people in hospitals who are too sick to change the channel.

You can check out the trailer, if you can stomach it, at www.investigationdiscovery.com.

Well kids, that's all I have for this edition of Boozie Beer World News. Tune in next time for even more worthless news, if that is possible. And remember, whether rain or shine, dramatic or scandalous or just some plain ol' Deb's Delite lovin', I will be there. Ciao!

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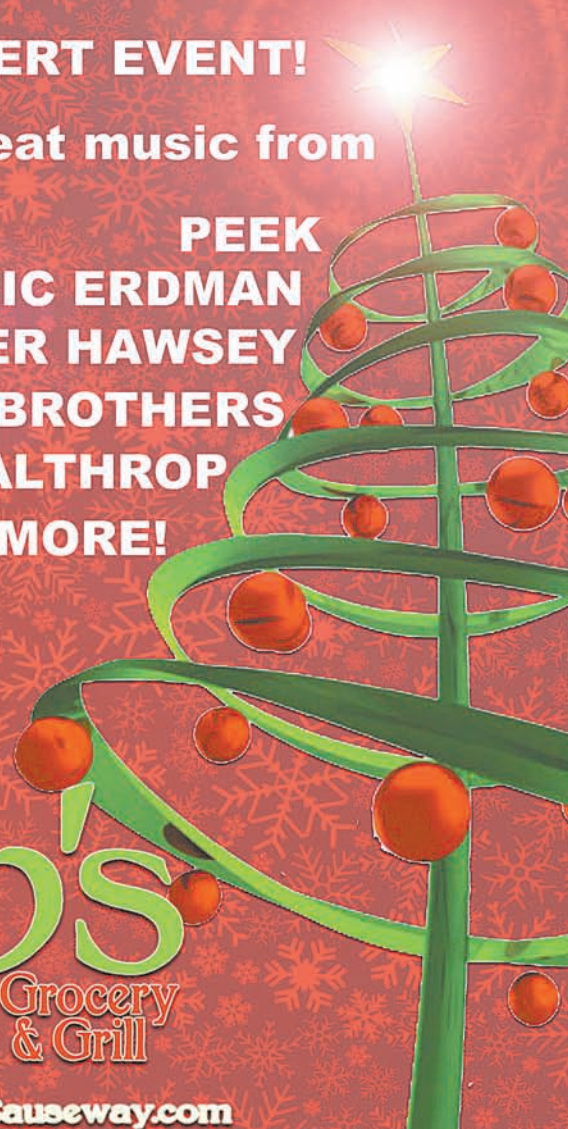
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