

AT LARGE

DANA BEYERLE

ALABAMA EXPOSURE

Education official earns rare praise

The Alabama Commission on Higher Education doesn't get a lot of notice despite its importance in the field of higher education.

ACHE's appointed commissioners often serve without reward and some go without recognition. With that in mind, ACHE chairman J.R. Brooks during the June meeting lauded ACHE commission member Robert O. Watts of Gadsden, that she nears the end of her term after eight years on the board.

Watts is the 4th Congressional District representative to the commission. At the last meeting, commissioners approved a resolution honoring her.

Brooks said Watts is "a dedicated public servant interested in moving Alabama forward in the education field."

"Commissioner Watts has been very diligent in focusing on a statewide perspective for Alabama's higher education programs," Brooks said. "She carefully considered pros and cons of issues before making a decision," said Commission Executive Director Gregory G. Fitch. "Her education background and industry have been tremendous assets to our organization."

Lodging shortage

If you're going to Denver to the Democratic National Convention this August you may have a hard time finding a place to stay.

The Democratic National Committee said there's a short-term lodging shortage in Denver but the political organization is trying to ease any difficulty in finding lodging.

"We have been aggressively working with property managers, development firms and other lodging facilities around the city to amass a strong and viable inventory that will help ease this shortage," said Mark Cervantes, DNC director of operations.

The DNC directs interested parties to www.denverconvention.com for more information.

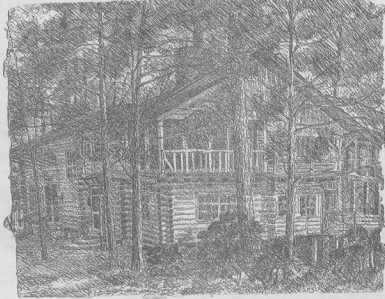
Marking 112 years

Alabama folk artist and Bryce Hospital Alice Kidd Nursing Home resident Frank Calloway is 112 years old, making him one of the world's oldest people.

Calloway was born July 2, 1896, according to the state Department of Mental Health and Retardation that noted his 112th birthday last week.

He's been a resident of various Alabama Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation facilities since 1952, the department said.

He lives at the Alice Kidd Nursing Home on the Bryce Hospital campus in Tuscaloosa. "Mr. Frank," as he is called, is BEYERLE 18D



Dogwood Lodge, built in the early 1930s, burned to the ground 20 years ago this weekend.

DRAWING BY SUE BLACKBURN

Tradition of 'The Lodge' lives on after tragedy

It seems like only yesterday, but it was 20 years ago this weekend that Dogwood Lodge burned to the ground, the victim of lightning from a vicious thunderstorm that passed through, breaking that year's long drought.

The Lodge, a rambling two-story log structure with a huge stone fireplace in the center, was built by Sam and Annie Laurie Friedman, my wife's grandfather and grandmother in the early 1930s, right in the middle of the Depression.

We lived in it for a while, before (luckily) moving over to "The Little Cabin," a similar but much more modest log cabin completed in 1937 where we still live, high above Bee Branch. Sam Friedman was the son of Bernard Friedman, who had emigrated from Hungary in the mid-1800s. He worked as a traveling peddler in Alabama and Mississippi during the Civil War before settling in Tuscaloosa, where he became a highly successful entrepreneur. To this day the Battle-Friedman House, where he lived, bears the family name.

His son Sam also was a successful businessman and a civil engineer who was fond of vacationing at the beach and in Europe. But when hard times hit, he and Annie Laurie did not have the means for such extravagant largesse. So they looked around the family's large land holdings in Tuscaloosa County for a place to build a summer retreat.

They found it some 10 miles east of

Tuscaloosa out here in Bee Branch, where Annie Laurie sketched out the dimensions of what was to become Dogwood Lodge in the dirt with a stick.

Their daughter, my late mother-in-law and former poet laureate of Alabama Helen Friedman Blacksher, included a chapter on the birth of Dogwood Lodge in one of her books, "Mother was a Rebel," which was reprinted by NewSouth Books of Montgomery in 2004.

The Lodge "came into being as a result of two misfortunes not unusual during the Depression," she wrote. "Daddy had loaned money to a 'jack-leg' sawmill operator near [where the Lodge was to be built] who, finding himself in difficulties, had absconded with the cash on hand, leaving Daddy with the worst-out sawmill machinery and few thousand feet of unfinished oak board. 'Why couldn't we see that lumber to build a log cabin on the creek?' Mother tentatively asked.

"There the matter might have rested had not the other fortuitous circumstances occurred," my mother-in-law wrote. "Old Mr. Herring, one of the hill farmers from whom we occasionally purchased milk and eggs, came with a long face. ... His two sons, having lost their jobs in the city, had come with their family and were camping [on the

property]. Did we have some odd jobs they could do? They'd work for a dollar a day and be glad to do it."

Helen wrote that for some time her mother had been collecting magazine pictures of balconied hunting lodges, high-roofed ski retreats, and mountain chalets. "She knew exactly how the cabin should look," she wrote. "Now she could realize her dream."

And what a dream it was: a spacious two-story, multiroom, multiporch structure surrounded by acres of woods and paths to the creek, a bubbling spring and small natural water fall.

"The soaring log walls and huge fireplace of Dogwood Lodge soon became the show place of the country," Helen wrote. "The men who had worked on the house would often bring their families to gaze in wonder at the cathedral-like arches of the living room with its log steps and balcony and massive sliding doors."

Though there were no paved roads in this part of the county at the time — 10 miles was a long way in those days — Dogwood Lodge was the site of numerous family reunions. And Helen wrote that over the course of decades, "Mother and Daddy moved to Dogwood Lodge early in May and stayed until the frosty nights of late October, when they returned regularly back to town."

It also became a great place to have parties. After building a tin-roofed pavilion over what used to be the great room anchored by that great stone fire-

SEE LOGS 18D



TOMMY STEVENSON

COVIEWS

No professional training needed to observe nature

Professional ecologists are the major contributors to our knowledge of the natural history of plants, animals and habitats. But scientists do not hold the franchise on discovery, fascination, facts about the natural world. The origin for some important findings has been "professionally untrained" individuals.

The long-necked turtle of the Australian tropics is the only turtle in the world known to lay its eggs under water. Until an Australian biologist named Desmond reported his research in the 1980s, scientists were not aware that any species of turtle did this. The operative word there is "scientists," because the egg-laying strategy of the long-necked turtle had actually been known for centuries.

Herpetologists have conducted research for decades on animals associated with billabongs, the lakes of Australia that alternate seasonally between



WHIT GIBBONS

wet and dry. Nonetheless, despite searches by scientists, the nests of the long-necked turtle, a relatively common species, could not be found. Finally, after years of mystery and ignorance, Rod determined the unusual nesting behavior of the species through the use of radiotelemetry. He had already hypothesized that the turtles deposited their eggs in underwater nests.

He placed transmitters inside the oviducts of female long-necked turtles that were carrying eggs. Thus, the transmitter sending out a constant signal was deposited in the spot where the eggs were laid. By tracking the transmitters, Rod was able to locate the nest-

ing sites, which were indeed beneath lake floors. He further discovered that the eggs hatch after the waters of the billabong recede during the dry season. Through detailed observations and persistence, science had again revealed a biological truth.

But the story of human knowledge of egg-laying by the long-necked turtle has a twist. I asked Rod why he ever suspected the nests were under water in the first place. The answer was straightforward enough: "Because the Aboriginal people in the region told me that the turtles nested under water." They had known the answer all along. But no one had asked, and they had never told anyone until Rod inquired.

A similar tale about northern Australia concerns another species, the pig-nosed turtle. Unlike any freshwater turtle species of the world, this is the only living member in its family. Instead of having clawed feet like other

freshwater turtles, pig-nosed turtles have flippers, like sea turtles. The first specimen was captured in a tributary to the Fly River in Papua New Guinea in 1896. Scientists did not expect the Fly River turtle, as it was then called, to occur on the southern continent of Australia. The freshwater turtle was assumed to be restricted to New Guinea, more than 150 ocean miles away. But in 1970 herpetologists reported that a population of the species was present in the Daly River in northern Australia. A recent introduction? No. And the turtle's presence was not a surprise to some, namely the Aboriginal people.

Aboriginal drawings on rock walls revealed that the original human inhabitants of Australia knew of the presence of pig-nosed turtles more than 7,000 years ago. Pig-nosed turtles had lived there for centuries, unnamed by scientists because of their assumption

SEE GIBBONS 18D

MICHAEL CIAMARRA

Educational investment will pay dividends

The Alabama Legislature is often criticized on both the left and right of the political spectrum for "underperforming." Regrettably, much of the criticism is well deserved. Often overlooked are those bills passed by the Legislature which are really meaningful to Alabama families but somehow escape the notice of the pundits.

One such bill was the recently enacted tax deduction for contributions to college savings plans. The proposal was a stunning model for the merits of bipartisan cooperation to accomplish real change. Republican State Treasurer Kay Ivey and House Appropriations chair Rep. Richard Lindsey, D-Centre, teamed up to help make saving for college a priority affordable with a long overdue change to the Alabama tax code.

America is rapidly falling behind other nations in producing young adults with a college education. The increase in college-educated young adults in India and China over the last few years, in particular, has represented serious competitors to the U.S. This is not a threat, but a reality and a challenge.

Education is the key to economic competitiveness. Two-thirds of new jobs being created in today's economy require higher education or advanced training. Only half of students who enroll in high school colleges manage to earn a bachelor's degree within six years. Between 2000 and 2005, out of 23 countries, the U.S. was the only country that showed no increase in its postsecondary graduation rate.

College graduates have a greater earning potential than high school graduates. According to the 2005 American Community Survey, the average Alabama high school graduate earned \$29,223, on average. In contrast, the average Alabamian with a bachelor's degree earns \$40,842. In Alabama, 20 percent of students are enrolled in community colleges and 52 percent in our public four-year colleges and universities.

But why is the key to economic prosperity a financial challenge for many families. A recent study from the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, "The State Report Card on Higher Education" graded Alabama an "F" for higher education affordability.

College is a college education has gone up faster than even health care costs. Consider the per-pupil cost of tuition, fees, room and board as tracked by the state's Higher Education Board. At public four-year colleges, the "price" of college rose to an average of \$13,727. That is about \$500 more than the average cost of college. It represents a 4.4 percent increase, which means that costs associated with college are continuing to outpace the general inflation rate of 2.8 percent.

Put that in a larger context: The price of a public four-year college education has increased by more than 500 percent in the last 25 years. All other consumer prices rose by "only" 140 percent in that same time period.

So what does that mean for the average family? An Alabama family that earns the median income of \$44,000 a year has to plan on spending a third of its annual income just to send a child through higher education. Families will make sacrifices, but they'll do it, even if it means cutting their children to college but only at the cost of their sleep debt.

There is some help on the way with the recent measure enacted by the Legislature. Now parents can contribute to any one of the state-sponsored savings funds up to \$500 and claim the program also sets new contribution tax. This new law is retroactive to contributions made after Jan. 1.

Alabama offers two college savings account measures. The Prepaid Affordable College Tuition Program and the Alabama Higher Education 529 Fund. According to the State Treasurer, the program also sets new contribution tax. This new law is retroactive to contributions made after Jan. 1.

SEE PAY 18D

What Obama really believes remains a mystery

WASHINGTON You'll never hear Barack Obama in any way warring with the pin. Again. During the primary campaign, he refused to explain that he'd worn one on 9/11 but then stopped because "it became a substitute for, I think, true patriotism."

So why is he back to sporting neo-conservatism on his chest? Need you ask? The primaries are over. While seducing the hard-core MoveOn Democrats who delivered him the caucus — hence, the Democratic nomination — Obama not only disdained the pin. He disparaged it. Now that he's running in a general election against John McCain, and in dire need of the gun-and-God-kinging working-class voters he could count on against Hillary Clinton, the pin

is back. His country 'tis of thee.

In the last week's column, I thought I had covered Obama as chronicled by Obama's brain reverts

to positive and an abandonment of principles — on public financing of campaigns, on the general election campaign. I missed him. He was just getting started.

Week, when the Supreme Court declared unconstitutional the District of Columbia's ban



CHARLES KRAUTHAMMER

on handguns. Obama immediately declared that he agreed with the decision. This is after his campaign explicitly told the Chicago Tribune last November that he believes the D.C. gun ban is constitutional.

Obama spokesman Bill Burton explains the inexplicable by calling the November — i.e., the primary season — statement "inartful." Which suggests a strategy that allows subsequent self-rehabilitation and denial.

Obama's seasonally adjusted principles are beginning to pile up: NAFTA, campaign finance reform, warrantless wiretaps, flag pins, gun control. What's left?

Iraq. The reversal is coming, and soon. Two weeks ago, I predicted that by Election

Day Obama will have erased all meaningful differences with McCain on withdrawal from Iraq. I underestimated Obama's cynicism. I suspect he will make the move much sooner — using his upcoming Iraq trip to finally acknowledge the remarkable improvements on the ground and formally abandon his primary-season commitment to a fixed 16-month timetable for removal of all combat troops.

The shift has already begun. On June 27, he said: "It's time to end the war in Iraq. It's time to withdraw from Iraq." The next step is clear: simply define "responsible, gradual" as meaning "flexible." It won't be hard. Obama will say he remains pledged to a withdrawal, that the 16-month time frame remains his goal, but that as president he will necessarily take into account the situation

on the ground and the recommendation of his generals in deciding whether the withdrawal is to occur later or even sooner. Done. And with that, the Obama of the primaries, the Obama with last year's most liberal voting record in the Senate, will have disappeared into the collective memory hole.

Obama's strategy is obvious. The country is in a deep malaise and eager for change. He and his party already have the advantage on economic and domestic issues. Obama, therefore, aims to clear the deck by moving responsibility to the center in those areas where he and his party are weakest, namely national security and the broader cultural issues. With these — and most importantly his war-losing Iraq policy — out of the way, the election will be decided on charisma and persona.

In this corner: the young sleek hip legit challenger. In the other corner: the old guy. No contest.

After all, that's how he beat Hillary. As Obama assiduously obliterates all differences with McCain on national security and social issues, he remains refreshingly confident that Bush fatigue, the lousy economy and his own charms will carry him to the White House.

Of course, once he gets there he will have to figure out what to do with the economy. The conventional liberal/populist that he campaigned on during the primaries? Or the reversals he is so artfully offering up now?

I have no idea. Do you? Does he?

Reach Charles Krauthammer at letters@charleskrauthammer.com.

PAY

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state schools based on the weighted average of in-state costs.

The 529 Fund allows investors to contribute to their child's state schools based on the weighted average of in-state costs.

Both programs are state and federal tax free when assets are withdrawn from either of the two programs for educational purposes. The tax deduction provision is incentive for families to make saving for college a priority, but there is more that state lawmakers can do.

As reported from U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings "A Test of Leadership: Changing the Future of U.S. Higher Education" was hard hitting in asking direct questions of higher education. Legislators should review the findings of the report before budgeting for next year.

The commission reported that every school should measure how well it's teaching its students, either through testing or other means. We should re-examine tenure, which gives some faculty members job security other professions couldn't dream of. That means many schools simply can't fire incom-

petent or unproductive professors.

In addition, the Legislature should call on universities to be more financially accountable to students, parents, and taxpayers. Greater financial transparency would lead to dramatically better understanding about rising college costs and encouraging innovative ways to make higher education institutions more efficient.

We need to push students to finish faster. Too many students take too long to earn their degree. Sometimes it's the school's fault, sometimes it's the students, but either way, it increases the costs of college for students and taxpayers.

Alabama's higher education system should be an affordable goal for all who want to go. Investing in our children's future should not mean being saddled with an exhausting mountain of debt. We can demand more from our colleges, but we must ensure when it comes to educating the future of our nation at an affordable price.

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called, uses crayons to draw art on long rolls of butcher paper, the department said.

His art includes farm scenes such as wagons, houses, cars and other scenes recalled from his memory. He creates 30-foot-long murals of red horses, purple mules, and wagon passengers.

"The images have vibrant colors that stem from Mr. Frank's artistic [flair] and the medium he most frequently uses, crayons," the department said.

His work is to be displayed at the American Visionary Art Museum in Baltimore in October.

AVAM Founder Rebecca Hoeburger said Calloway's work was chosen because of "his intuitive grasp of math [to correctly size images] and the colorful execution of his living memories."

Quote of the week

"Well, I don't think riding



FRANK CALLOWAY

at the Alice Kidd Nursing Home at Bryce Hospital in Tuscaloosa, celebrated his 112th birthday on July 2. Calloway, a folk artist, draws farm scenes, street cars, wagons and houses from memory.

in a lighter plane and getting shot down is a qualification to be president," said retired Gen. Wesley Clark about Republican presidential candidate John McCain's leadership

potential.

Clark's comment recalls a similar comment in Alabama in the 1980 U.S. Senate race between retired Republican naval aviator and former Vietnam prisoner of war Jeremiah Denton and Democrat Jim Folsom Jr.

State Democratic Party Chairman George Lewis Bailes was being interviewed by a reporter and Bailes said Denton was dumb to get shot down during the Vietnam war and became a POW.

The reporter, the late Bob Dumanawit, asked Bailes to repeat what he said into a tape recorder and Bailes did.

The comment was credited partly with Denton's narrow win over Folsom to become the first Republican U.S. senator from Alabama in the 20th century.

Sanders has surgery

State Sen. Hank Sanders is recuperating at home following double-knee replacement surgery and rehabilitation in Birmingham.

He said in his weekly Sketches column that he's thankful for the "expressions of care" he received while hospitalized.

"I appreciated every phone call," Selma, had said Sanders, double-knee replacement of Selma, surgery.

"I appreciated every visit," Sanders said he's made "great progress" in his recuperation.

"We are all different in what we think we want," Sanders said. "Even if we don't think we want contact from others, if it's caring, we need it."

Alabama Exposure is compiled by Dana Beyerle in the Montgomery bureau of the New York Times Regional Media Group. He can be reached at 334-264-6605 or by email at dab12345@aol.com.

LODGE

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place, we have them to this day with New Year's and last-Saturday-May blowouts.

There were some dances and drinking parties when the lodge was first completed but, aware that Daddy's strained purse would not permit the freeboarders of former years, Mother devised a practical scheme to keep expenses within bounds.

Helen wrote, "Her friends were simply requested to bring their own liquor and at larger gatherings, everyone chipped in for the supper pot."

Sounds familiar, only now we have people simply bring a fish for our twice-yearly parties and at the weddings and all the other friends have from time to time to what we still call "the Lodge."

The day Dogwood burned down, my then 5-year-old son and I were at a swimming party on Arcadia Drive in east Tuscaloosa. My wife, Len, had taken her daughter to camp and upon returning home had called to say that was gone. I told her I wasn't ready to leave, so

why didn't she come on into town?

She did, but after the thunderstorm blew through, we headed home, only to find the Lodge already a smoking ruin. Only about an hour had passed since she had left to come to the pool party — but she had to stop like a volcano, one of the neighbors said. To this day I stumble over large hunks of charcoal, some 100 yards away from the site of the fire, which had once been part of the massive pine logs that were the walls of Dogwood Lodge.

The metal guts of the stand-up piano that had stood overlooking the great room on the second floor balcony remain exactly where they were after the fire, on the mantle of the fireplace. We've woven Christmas tree lights through the rusted piano strings and now it's "art."

The fire was a family tragedy, but one we've about gotten over now, especially since we have managed to keep the tradition alive through two more generations.

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that the turtles occurred only in New Guinea. The longtime inhabitants of the region knew the truth all along, but again, no one had asked them.

How many examples of this kind exist, in which so-called primitive peoples have knowledge that professionally trained scientists lack? Living coelacanths, ancient fishes assumed by biologists to have gone extinct millions of years ago, were familiar to native fishermen in the Indian Ocean long before their discovery by scientists in 1938. And


Boran people of Kenya told of the remarkable behavior of the greater honeyeater, a bird they said would lead forest hunters to bee hives. The natives of the region had been aware of this phenomenon for centuries, but modern scientists discovered the reports, until a scientific study published in 1989 demonstrated its validity.

The moral of this story (well, one of the morals) is that you do not have to be professionally trained to observe nature. So go on, look around you with a native but discerning eye. It's possible you may see something no scientist has ever seen.


Reach Whit Gibbons' at ecovision@gmail.com.

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