

## West Alabama

MONDAY, JULY 21, 2008

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SECTION B

## LOOKING BACK

## 50 years ago this week

Mail-order sale of individual game tickets began at the University of Alabama ticket office, but the Alabama-Auburn game was already sold out.

Northport merchants protested a proposed change in the city's fence schedule.

Work on the Oak Hill Rest Home, formerly the Shambles Rest Home, was progressing with volunteer workers.

Margaret M. Davis retires from UA after 28 years of teaching Spanish.

Officials seized four stills in the Fosters area, each with a capacity of 840 gallons, as well as 104 gallons of wildcat whiskey.

## 25 years ago this week

UA's \$9.3 million Frank Moody Music Building was dedicated.

Three Tuscaloosa County deaths were attributed to heat as 100-degree temperatures blistered the area in the most severe heat wave in 1983.

A police dog team invited to compete in West Germany included Lamar County Sheriff's Deputy Eric Hester, the town captain, and Tuscaloosa Police patrolman Brad Spruiell.

A railroad brakeman, rescued from a derailed train in east Tuscaloosa County 18 months before, donated a restored 1946 Plymouth to the Town of Brookwood Antique Car Show to benefit the Brookwood volunteer firefighters and ambulance crews who saved him.

## 10 years ago this week

Nearly 30 years of federal court supervision in the city schools came to an end as parties in the desegregation case came to a settlement.

Federal and state authorities were investigating allegations that the Fayette County sheriff accepted protection payments from drug dealers.

Tuscaloosa police opened a substation on 14th Avenue near the 1000 block.

Richard Diehl was named executive director of UA's Museum of Natural History.

City Hall was set to proclaim Roosevelt Sanders Day to honor Central's basketball coach of 19 years.

Some 150-year-old city records in fragile and deteriorating condition were scanned and saved to compact discs by members of the County Genealogical Society.

## Five years ago this week

Louise Crawford resigned as superintendent of city schools, and the board appointed Joyce Levey to serve as interim superintendent.

The Tuscaloosa County School Board adopted a schedule for hiring a superintendent to replace Joyce Sellers, who was retiring.

Workers began tearing down the east night military barracks and hospital at Northington.

A judge ruled in favor of UA in a lawsuit filed by former Crimson Tide defensive coordinator Gibbons Johnson, who claimed the university owed him money after he was terminated.

## One year ago this week

Northport Mayor Harvey Fretwell proposed a city restructuring plan that involved the merger taking over the city administrator duties.

Tuscaloosa doctor Phillip Bobo was back in court under a second indictment. He was indicted, tried and found guilty of fraud in 2001, but the conviction was thrown out on appeal.

Demolition began on Northport's cotton gin.

The City Council extended its ban on billboards within city limits.

Thomas Eugene Ozment, longtime Tuscaloosa jeweler, died at 72.

Harold Reed retired as the administrator of Fayette Medical Center after 37 years.

The minimum wage rose 70 cents to \$5.85.

Compiled by news librarian Betty Sowa.



The Daraja Children's Choir of Africa performs Sunday at First Wesleyan Church in Tuscaloosa.

## A joyful noise

## African children's choir performs at First Wesleyan Church

By James Smith  
Staff Writer

EMERGING from the back of First Wesleyan Church at the start of worship service Sunday morning, the Daraja Children's Choir of Africa swayed to the music of the congregation and took the stage.

After lining up in multiple rows within seconds, the children launched into an hour of God-praising songs, and dance routines that were whirling fusions of synchronized movements.

"Their performance was amazing," said Cindy Jensen, 47, a member of First Wesleyan for 13 years.

"They had so much joy," she said. "The purity of their worship was incredible to me."

Christi Baker, the U.S. tour leader for the Daraja Children's Choir, said the group has 24 children, ages 10 through 15, who hail from Nairobi, Kenya.

Most of the children are orphans, many because their parents died of AIDS, but those of them come from disadvantaged households

where their single mothers couldn't provide for them, Baker said.

"All of the children will go back home to these situations after we're done touring the United States from June 4 to Aug. 8, but traveling with the choir will help them find sponsors to help pay for food and educational fees," she said.

Baker said the Daraja choir, named after the Swahili word for bridge, was started in February 2007 by the "410 Bridge," a missionary organization based in Atlanta that focuses on Kenya.

She said the choir was founded to show people in the United States the "heart and passion" that Kenyan people have for God.

Joel Gorvette, senior pastor of First Wesleyan Church, said he invited the Daraja Choir to First Wesleyan so they could share that passion for Christ with his congregation.

"We're very dedicated to world outreach and travel the globe doing community service projects, constructing churches and meeting people's needs in other countries," Gorvette said. "But we need people to do the same for us, so we invited the Daraja Choir to share the message of love with us, because America needs it, too."

Daraja choir member Rodney Kamau, 12, said he lives in Nairobi with his mother, grandmother, two brothers and one sister.

He said he used to live with his father, but his mother moved him and his siblings out of the house.

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"I sing and dance in this choir for God. It's not for people to see as entertainment. I pray that through what we do, God ministers through us to the people watching us."

Rodney Kamau, 12, of Nairobi, Kenya

## NORTHPORT CITY COUNCIL | DISTRICT 3

## Acker would use his business experience; focus on planning

By Lydia Seabolt Avant  
Staff Writer

TUSCALOOSA Northwood Lake resident Steve Acker hopes to use his experience as a business owner if elected to the Northport City Council.

"The main thing is that Northport should be run like a business and needs to be where it's not so political," Acker said. "Decisions should be made for the betterment of the city and not for political reasons."

Acker, owner of Acker Appliance in Tuscaloosa, will run against a fellow Northwood Lake resident, incumbent City Councilman John Myers, for the District 3 seat on Aug. 26.

Acker said he has no harsh feelings against Myers and that his entry is nothing personal. He simply wants a chance to make Northport's government better and stronger, he said. Long-term planning is important both for the city's growth and financial stability, he said.

"Along with city staff, we want to develop a long-term financial plan to address all operational needs and infrastructure improvements," Acker said. "We must look to the future relative

## STEVE ACKER

Birthdate: Feb. 28, 1957  
Education: Tuscaloosa County High class of 1975  
Career: Owner of Acker Appliance in Tuscaloosa  
Political experience: None. First time running for a political office.



to planning for growth, water and sewer needs and roadway improvements."

If elected, Acker said he wants to focus on the infrastructure and the safety of roads in his district. Alabama Highway 69 is a "nightmare" during rush hour and needs improvements, he said.

Acker has no previous political experience. Campaigning is nothing new to his family, however. His father, Morris Acker, is on the Tuscaloosa County Board of Education.

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## Firefighters: Sprinklers in homes needed

## Home builders not keen on added cost of systems

By Robert DeWitt  
Staff Writer

TUSCALOOSA Residential sprinkler systems save lives, firefighters say.

"What will residential sprinklers mean to us?" asked John Brook, a battalion chief assigned to training in the Tuscaloosa Fire Department. "Eight out of 10 people who die in fires die in residential fires."

But safety like that comes with a price that not every one is willing to pay.

"This is a hot-button issue for the national home builders association," said Todd Vick, Home Builders Association of Tuscaloosa president. "It's one of those deals where it does cost more."

Adding an additional expense to a home is never popular with home builders or the buying public. But it's particularly unpopular in a slumping real estate market.

"Cost is definitely an issue since we're already experiencing a tough housing market," Vick said. "The cost

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Would you pay to have a residential sprinkler system installed in your home? Vote in our Web poll at [www.tuscaloosaneews.com](http://www.tuscaloosaneews.com).



PHOTOS BY THE ASSOCIATED PRESS  
Frank Calloway, 112, is seen July 10 at the Alice M. Kidd Nursing Facility in Tuscaloosa. Below are sections of his murals, including his signature.

## At 112, Alabama man still spends his days drawing

By Kate Brumback  
The Associated Press



TUSCALOOSA | Bent over sitting at a table, gripping a ballpoint pen, marker or crayon, Frank

Calloway spends his days turning visions from his youth into lively murals — and at 112 years old, the images of his childhood are a window to another time.

Drawn on sheets of butcher paper and sometimes stretching to more than 30 feet long, the works mostly show rural agricultural scenes, with buildings, trains and vehicles straight out of the early 20th century. And his colorful creations are gaining more attention in the art world.

The works by a man who has lived about half his life in state mental health centers will be part of an exhibit this fall at the American Visionary Art Museum in Baltimore.

His caretakers have suspended sales of his artwork until after the show after finding out some of his drawings could sell for thousands of dollars.

"They are unique in that they are of a rural, agrarian South, and they speak to a time gone by," said Sara Anne Gibson, executive director of the Kentuck Museum in

SEE DRAWING 12B



