The Cullman Tribune

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Warming stations open in Cullman and Hanceville

As dangerously cold weather descends on area, volunteer relief team called out for first time



W.C. MANN/THE CULLMAN TRIBUNE

Left to right: Cullman Mayor Woody Jacobs, Cullman County EMA Director Phyllis Little, Cullman County VOAD Director Chris Hopper and Cullman Parks and Recreation Director Nathan Anderson

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CULLMAN COUNTY – As temperatures dip down into dangerous lows, authorities and volunteers around Cullman County are responding. Warming stations have been opened at Hanceville City Hall at 112 Commercial St. in Hanceville and at the Donald Green Senior Center at 1625 Cleveland Ave. SW (near the Field of Miracles and Aquatic Center) in Cullman.

On Sunday night, as temperatures began to bottom out, the city of Hanceville had a station open in its city hall, and on Monday, Cullman County Emergency Management Agency (EMA) and a local volunteer relief group followed suit at the Donald Green Senior Center in the city of » PAGE 4

Mark Britton: in his own words

Longtime Cullman coach sits down with The Tribune to talk memories and what's ahead



NICK GRIFFIN/THE CULLMAN TRIBUNE

Coach Mark Britton led the Cullman High School football program for 17 years.

Nick Griffin
Tribune Correspondent

CULLMAN – The 2017 football season was an emotional one for the Cullman Bearcats. After 17 years as head coach, Mark Britton announced his retirement on Sept. 22. That would've been a tough blow on its own, but shortly after an- » PAGE 2

Upcoming legislative session highlights

Guns and monuments get attention; state board of education may get replaced

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CULLMAN – As Alabama's Legislature gets ready to begin the 2018 session, The Tribune took a peek at some of the bills that have already been filed and are waiting on legislators to arrive in Montgomery.

A note on definitions: Under the initial information on each bill, we indicated the party of origin for the bill.

The wording is taken mostly from the bills themselves, with additions by the Tribune to clarify certain points. Where similar or related bills were pre-filed in both legislative houses, the Senate bill number was noted under the House bill explanation to avoid unnecessary repetition.

HOUSE BILLS

HB1 - REOPENING THE DEFERRED RETIREMENT OPTION PLAN FOR STATE EMPLOYEES AND TEACHERS

Republican

Existing law provides for the Deferred Retirement Option Plan (DROP), which contractually allows a member of the Employees' Retirement System (ERS) or the Teachers' Retirement System (TRS) to continue employment with his or her employer for a specific period of time, while deferring a portion of his or her retirement allowance until the end of the participation period, at which time the member withdraws from his or her service. Existing law provides that participation in DROP is prohibited after March 24, 2011.

This bill would reopen participation in the DROP program and would further provide options for Tier I and Tier II members to participate in DROP.

A related bill, SB2, has been pre-filed in the Senate.

HB2 - LIMITATION OF LIABILITY FOR INJURIES CAUSED BY ANIMAL TRAPS TO DOMESTIC ANIMALS OR HUMANS

Republican

Under existing law, a person is strictly liable for civil damages for causing injury or damage to a person or a domestic animal of a person as a result of using traps or other similar devices on public land to take, capture, or kill a fur-bearing animal protected by state laws or rules.

This bill would limit the liability to injuries caused by traps or similar devices used on public land in violation of state laws or rules.

HB4 - REQUIRE LARGE COMMERCIAL VEHICLES TO USE RIGHT LANE ON MULTI-LANE HIGHWAYS

Republican

Under current law, a motor vehicle traveling at less than the normal speed of traffic is required to travel in the right-hand lane or as close to the right-hand curb or edge of the roadway as practicable.

This bill would specify that, on interstate highways and U.S. highways, a commercial motor vehicle having three or more axles would be required to travel in the right lanes unless passing or under certain other conditions.

On an interstate or U.S. highway having four lanes of traffic with two lanes moving in each direction, a commercial motor vehicle having three or more axles shall travel in the right lane unless passing a vehicle or vehicles. The commercial vehicle may not travel in the left-most lane in order to pass another vehicle or vehicles for more than two miles without completely passing the other vehicle or vehicles unless traffic does not allow the commercial vehicle to pass and return to the right lane. On an interstate or U.S. highway having three or more lanes in each direction, a commercial motor vehicle having three or more axles may not travel in the far left lane. Certain exceptions are allowed, in order to deal with adverse weather conditions, road obstructions, vehicles making left turns, etc.

HB6 - REQUIRE ALL ABLE-BODIED SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITIONAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM RECIPIENTS TO WORK, ATTEND SCHOOL, OR PROVIDE VOLUNTEER COMMUNITY SERVICE FOR BENEFITS

Republican

Under existing law, in certain circumstances, a state may request a waiver from the U.S. Department of Agriculture of the work requirements that an able-bodied adult without dependents must comply with in order to receive assistance from the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP). This bill would prohibit the Commissioner of the Department of Human Resources from requesting a waiver of federal work requirements for able-bodied adults without dependents who are applicants or recipients of the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program. This bill would require all able-bodied adults without dependents who are applicants or recipients of SNAP benefits to participate in minimum work requirements, provide documentation of engaging in work training, or participate in volunteer community service and would provide limited exemptions from these work requirements.

HB7 - REQUIRE DIESEL EXHAUST SYSTEMS FOR FIRE STATIONS USED BY FULL-TIME FIRE DEPARTMENTS

Republican

This bill would require existing non-volunteer fire departments in the state that have paid firefighters on duty eight hours or more per day to install a diesel exhaust system in the fire station building or on each of the diesel fire apparatus within a certain time frame. Any new construction of a fire station would have to include in the design the installation of a diesel exhaust system, or if the design process is complete and construction has already commenced, the bill would require a diesel exhaust system be installed within five years.

A similar bill, SB4, has been pre-filed in the Senate.

HB9 - REQUIRE VOLUNTEER YOUTH ATHLETIC COACHES AND TRAINERS TO UNDERGO TRAINING FOR INJURY PREVENTION

Republican

Under existing law, there is no provision requiring unpaid or volunteer coaches and trainers affiliated with a child or youth athletic association or a political subdivision that conducts or sponsors sports or sports training activities to complete a course providing coaches and trainers with information regarding measures that can be taken to reduce the probability that a child or youth athlete will be seriously injured while engaging in youth sports activities. This bill would require that any unpaid or volunteer coach or trainer affiliated with a youth athletics association of the state or a political subdivision of the state that sponsors or conducts any high-risk youth athletics activity where there is a likelihood that a child or youth may sustain a serious injury be required to take a course providing information » PAGE 5

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THE CULLMAN TRIBUNE
JANUARY 2, 2018

Britton (from Front)

nouncing his retirement, Britton was diagnosed with renal cancer on Sept. 27. Britton underwent surgery on Oct. 27 to have the cancer removed and is happy to report that his recovery is going "outstanding." He and his family recently got a good report back from the doctor and it appears that all the cancer has been removed from his kidney and he's starting to "feel like his old self again."

Britton has been teaching and coaching since 1988 when he was hired to teach history, coach baseball and be an assistant football coach at Cullman High School. In their 10 years under Britton, the baseball team made it to the final four of the state playoffs and racked up 199 wins. Two of Britton's former players, Brian Bowen and Brent Patterson, went on to become head baseball coaches at Cullman and won multiple state championships. Brent Patterson is the current head baseball coach for the Bearcats.

Britton left Cullman in 1998 to be the Fairview Aggies head football coach and posted a 17-15 record there before accepting the Bearcats' head coaching job in 2001. Britton's Aggies made the playoffs two out of his three years there and he credits his success to the administration and coaches around him.

"I had a great experience at Fairview. Keith Patilla was my principal, he made things very easy for me and I had a great group of coaches. George Redding is still out there, Marty Hardiman, and I just had a lot of guys on staff that were Fairview graduates, and that makes a huge difference," Britton shared. "They'll work over and above for their home school and I was very fortunate to come in there; the timing was good and the team prior to that was 1-9 and my first year we went 7-4 and made the playoffs. We had a lot of young people playing at the time that kind of had a bad taste in their mouth as far as wins and losses, but they enjoyed the game. I got a group with experience and even though they hadn't had a lot of success they were hungry. So, with that we were able to have some successful years there and I still have players that are extremely close to me from those teams and I see some of them on a daily basis, so I have nothing but fond memories of those days."

In the 17 years since taking the Cullman job, Britton led the Bearcats to a record 151 wins in his tenure, with zero losing seasons during that stretch, before coaching his last game on Oct. 6. He will be a fixture in Cullman football record books forever after filling it up with wins and playoff appearances. Britton and his staff coached the Bearcats through two out of Cullman's four undefeated seasons in school history and coached for 31 of Cullman's 50 playoff appearances. Britton is happy to have been able to spend such a long tenure coaching for his alma mater despite a changing culture in the coaching business.

"I didn't think the tenure would be that long. The coaching business is tough, very tough. I think in the last 17-20 years things have changed. You see a trickle down into the coaching business in high schools where more changes are made than how it was in the past. You have them in college now and that trickles down to your local sports and I don't know if that's always good," Britton said. "The pros and the colleges can go out recruiting and you still have accountability whereas in high school you may get some groups that are small in numbers as far as boys in that class. You may have a group that are great kids and they just don't like football or don't want to participate so you're kind of at the mercy of these classes when it comes to a lot of factors."

He continued, "I think some of the best coaching jobs that my staff did came in years that we probably weren't as productive in the wins and losses column. They'd do twice the work to try and be creative and find a way to get a win. Then you also have injuries that nobody can account for and you have to have a plan for that. This job was something that we were very excited to get in 2001. There was no way we could've seen the journey that we've had coming, and it's been really great but there's no way to predict that. We were just always trying to win the next ball game."

One of the things that Britton will remember most fondly is how involved his family has been in the football program. Both of his sons, Patrick and Matthew, played football during his tenure as head coach and his daughter Meaghan was a water girl and a trainer.

"There were a lot of great moments in my three years at Fairview and my 17 years coaching here at Cullman and there was a lot of change as the boys got older," Britton said. "They were the two oldest and they both played for me. Both of them were defensive guys and what's good about football opposed to other sports is that you have a lot of assistants so you're not always the guy that's correcting your son. We also didn't want a lot of carry-over at the house because all players need to get away from the game, so we had a few rules about that. If the boys brought it up that would kind of open the door and we'd go from there, but it was great, I really enjoyed coaching the boys. In later years Meaghan came along and when she was real young she was a water girl and then she worked with Scott Lochridge's group as a trainer so the whole family was involved during my time at Cullman High School."

So what are Britton's favorite moments?

Britton has a lot of great memories from his time coaching the Bearcats. He has plenty of wins and plays to choose from over 17 years, but Britton reflected on some of the more human moments he experienced and his relationships with former players.

"There's a lot of memories that stick out to me," Britton smiled. "We used to play the opening football game against West Point a lot and usually on a Thursday night. It was always a big game regardless of whether it was in Cullman or West Point and Coach Simmons was the head coach at West Point at the time. We were at Cullman getting ready to play and his wife went into labor just a few minutes before kickoff. We had a quick discussion about delaying the game, but the stadium was packed full and there was no doubt he was going to be with his wife, so he just turned everything over to his assistants. I see Coach Simmons from time to time and his son so that's a memory from early in my career that sticks out.

"Players stick out to me too. We had Andrew Winfrey a few years ago get in a terrible car accident and I got to see the courage of that young man battling back. We've had several kids go on to play at major universities and that's rewarding for us. Spencer Region played in the Under Armour All American Game and now many of those kids in that game he played with are in the pros now."

Britton said one of the things he is most proud of during his time coaching at Cullman is the consistency he's been able to provide his family. Some coaches find themselves moving around a lot, but he was happy to be able to keep his family in one place, so they could grow within the community.

"It's just been amazing, I've been on a great ride, but I think the thing I've been most proud of and excited about is my children were able to go to Cullman City Schools from K-12," Britton shared. "We were not nomadic, and I'm just blessed that when my kids got ready to go to college they had a home and a community they could call home to leave from, so I'm blessed in that way and that's just one of the things off the field and in my private life that I'm more excited about than the numbers that we were able to put up."

Britton shared a little bit of advice that he has for his eventual successor as he or she steps into the role he's filled for the better part of two decades. He said he is proud of the program that he and his assistants have put together and is excited to see what the next coach will be able to accomplish at CHS.

"I think it's a great job, I really do; I think it's a difficult job as well," Britton said "There are a lot of things that you need to juggle around. You're working with teenagers who are living their lives day to day at this point, but my advice would be to just be flexible. Don't take too much too seriously and just try to enjoy it. I know from my coaching experience I felt like as soon as we won a ball game it was very difficult to enjoy because you're worrying about the game next week and injuries and so many things that you cannot control. I think the last few years I took time to enjoy the games and for me personally it was a lot more rewarding, so I think taking time to smell the roses a little bit would be good advice. You have to keep your priorities in order like faith and family, and those things can take a hit if you're not careful."

He smiled, "I think we've got great kids on the horizon and we're leaving an outstanding staff; I can't talk enough about my coaching staff. You get credit for a lot of things as a head coach, but you can't coach football by yourself, you have to have guys that can help you and the trust factor and relationships that I've had with my coaching staff over the years is probably one the things I'm going to miss the most."

Britton hasn't come to a decision about when he will retire from teaching history but is excited for what life has in store for him now that his coaching career has wrapped up.

"Leaving the way we are, you're not going away mad. You're not angry at anyone, it's just a good time to make this move I think for all parties involved," Britton said. "It'll be an exciting time for the kids at Cullman High School to work for somebody new. You know the only constant in this world is change so its just another chapter in the book for us. I'm looking forward to seeing what its like not to be coaching.

"I can't remember the last time I watched a Cullman football game that I wasn't coaching football somewhere so that's going to be new. I know there will be a lot of parts that I miss about it, but there's also going to be some exciting things too. Personally, I'm leaving this job knowing that we did a good job and that's what you want to do, you want to leave something better than you found it and I think we have. We had a good run. I'm very satisfied and I look back with no regrets."

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MOVIE REVIEW: 'Jumanji: Welcome to the Jungle' a fun time

Nick Griffin
Tribune Correspondent

"Jumanji: Welcome to the Jungle" directed by Jake Kasdan is neither a direct sequel, nor a reboot of the original "Jumanji" movie from 1995, but it clearly takes place in the same world. There are some references to the original placed throughout the film but otherwise there aren't any connections made between the newest version and the original.

The film has four main characters but eight actors playing them. When we first meet them outside of the game, Alex Wolff plays Spencer, Ser'Darious Blain plays Fridge, Morgan Turner plays Martha and Madison Iseman plays Bethany. When all four of them find their way into detention at school, they come across an old video game called Jumanji and decide to play. After they're pulled into the game, the characters are portrayed as the avatars they selected. Spencer is then played by Dwayne Johnson, Fridge is played by Kevin Hart, Martha is played by Karen Gillan and Jack Black plays Bethany.

Once they enter the gaming world of Jumanji, the movie really picks up and becomes a solid action comedy with several good actors having fun playing against type. Kevin Hart doesn't stretch as much as the rest of the cast and kind of plays it safe, sticking to his defining comedic style. Hart is very funny but just plays himself for the most part while the rest of the cast is playing against their younger counterparts that we meet early in the movie.

All four of the lead actors have great chemistry with one another and their banter provides a lot of the film's laughs. The comedy doesn't land as well when we are following the younger set of characters but once they are in the game the comedy really picks up.

There are also plenty of cool references to the way video games are designed and how they play. For example, there are several characters in the film described as "non-player characters" or NPCs. The characters have several interactions with them; if you don't play video games the jokes probably won't work for you, but for gamers there is a lot to laugh at.

"Jumanji: Welcome to the Jungle" is a lot of fun when we are with the four leads in the game but outside of that, the movie has some noticeable flaws. There is a plot hole involving someone they meet mid-way through the movie that never gets resolved and the villain is extremely forgettable. The writers had the opportunity to involve the villain with some of the gaming cliché humor but chose to sideline him instead. You will probably struggle to remember his name by the time you leave the theater and it's clear that the director didn't have much interest in him either.



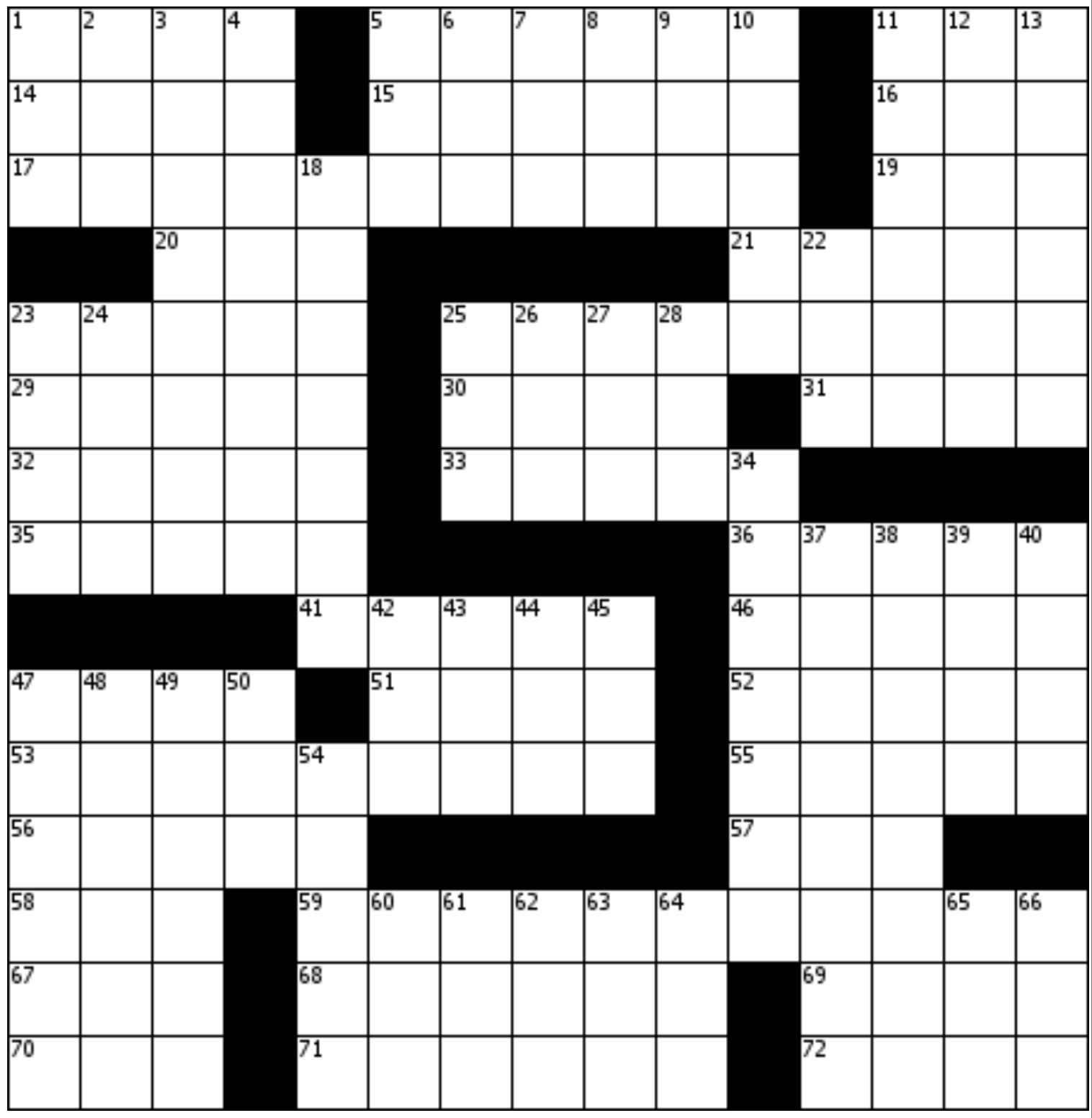
COLUMBIA PICTURES

"Jumanji: Welcome to the Jungle" is a brisk, fun time at the movies despite a disposable villain and the four leads are clearly having a fun time with it as well.

Griffin's score: 3/5 stars

Across

- **1**. Samba move
- **5**. Salt
- **11**. Sis or bro
- **14**. Stray
- **15**. "Scourge of God"
- **16**. Start of a noted trio
- **17**. Steed that won the 1977 Triple Crown
- **19**. Shooter's film image, briefly
- **20**. Sea, to Sartre
- **21**. Soup scoop
- **23**. Stock item
- **25**. Second stage name of Eminem
- **29**. Spanish bucks
- **30**. Slave of opera
- **31**. Sorrowful cry
- **32**. Site for a bracelet
- **33**. Show off
- **35**. Superman's makeup
- **36**. Strong guys
- **41**. "Same Time, Next Year"



Down

- **1**. SAT takers
- **2**. Shoe part
- **3**. Saint of Hollywood
- **4**. Setter of many Major League records
- **5**. "Somebody Up There Likes Me" actor Mineo
- **6**. Scarfed down
- **7**. "So __ you"
- **8**. Small, in dialect
- **9**. Señor's cheer
- **22**. Shout of triumph
- **23**. Stitches
- **24**. Slight
- **25**. Stockholm flier
- **26**. Sass
- **27**. Sworn statement?
- **28**. Scuff up, e.g.
- **34**. Somber situation
- **37**. Shaft traveler
- **38**. Supportive in an aggressive way
- **44**. Samuel's teacher
- **45**. Seine
- **47**. Show high regard
- **48**. Six of one and a half-dozen of another
- **49**. Stopped
- **50**. Suffers from
- **54**. Shakedown cruises, e.g.
- **60**. Savings vehicle, for short

Mail in your completed crossword puzzle to 219 2nd Ave SE, Cullman, AL 35055 for your chance for a free 1-year print subscription.

For those digitally minded email your completed puzzle to news@cullmantribune.com.



JOSH MCBRAYER/THE CULLMAN TRIBUNE

In last week's West Point Christmas Classic, the freshmen title went to the Cullman Bearcats, who beat Muscle Shoals 44-35.

PREP BASKETBALL

Schedule of games this week

Sammy Confer
Tribune Correspondent

CULLMAN COUNTY – Here's a look at basketball matchups around the area this week.

Jan. 2

- Cullman @ Guntersville (9B, JVG, JVB, VG, VB)
- James Clemens @ Fairview (JVG, JVB, VG, VB)
- Good Hope @ West Point (9B, JVG, JVB, VG, VB)
- Falkville @ Vinemont (JVB, VG, VB)
- Meek @ Oakman (JVB, VG, VB)

Jan. 4

- Winston County @ Addison (JHG, JHB, VG, VB)
- Cold Springs @ Hanceville (VB, VG)
- Dora @ Good Hope (9B, JVB, VG, VB)
- Marion County @ Meek (JVB, VB)

Jan. 5

- Lynn @ Addison (JHG, JHB, VG, VB)
- Cullman @ Albertville (9B, JVG, JVB, VG, VB)
- Fairview @ West Point (9B, JVG, JVB, VG, VB)
- Hanceville @ Carbon Hill (JVG, JVB, VG, VB)
- Holly Pond @ Susan Moore (JVG, JVB, VG, VB)
- West End @ Vinemont (JVB, VG, VB)
- Meek @ Brilliant (JVG, JVB, VG, VB)

Stations (from Front)

Cullman.

Cullman County EMA Director Phyllis Little sent out the following request, via the Cullman County Volunteer Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD) volunteer relief group's Facebook page:

"Volunteers needed to assist with a warming center. If you can help, text me at 256-736-3974."

VOAD Director Chris Hopper posted a short time later:

"Hey guys, the City of Cullman is looking to open a warming station for people in need at the Cullman County Museum (location later moved to Senior Center). The plan, if they can get enough volunteers, is to keep it open 24 hrs a day through this coming Saturday.

"If they can't get enough volunteers to do that the priority would be to keep it open during the night hours when it is the coldest. PLEASE let me know if you can help with this, or know someone who can. Thank you for your willingness to help serve our community!!!"

Hopper told The Tribune, "This is Cullman County's newly-established VOAD team's first callout. This is our first chance to actually work in a real-life situation, and to just see where we can improve and how we can work together. That's why we're here, to work together with other organizations."

Afterward, a decision was made to move the warming station from the museum to the Donald Green Senior Center. The station opened at 3 p.m. Monday, with plans to stay open until 8 a.m. Tuesday. At that time, a decision will be made about the next step. According to Hanceville Mayor Kenneth Nail, Hanceville's station will be open at any time the temperature is below freezing.

At the senior center, The Tribune met with Little, Hopper, Cullman Mayor Woody Jacobs and Cullman Parks and Recreation Director Nathan Anderson.

Little cautioned that the senior center will be a come-and-go warming station and not a long-term shelter, saying, "What we're doing is setting up a warming center for folks. This is not a full-blown shelter. People need to bring some snacks to snack on; there are some vending machines here. If they have to take medications, they need to bring their medications with them. They can bring a blanket with them to stay warm."

Hopper added, "If you'd like to volunteer, you can just contact Phyllis or I. We need all the volunteers we can, just so we don't put too much on one certain amount of people. The more volunteers we have, the easier it's going to be on everybody. We do have volunteers for tonight and tomorrow. Starting tomorrow, we're going to need a few extra folks. Just let us know when you're available."

On Monday afternoon, Camp Liberty's Col. Joseph Land announced that camp staff and cadets are prepared to assist as needed.

In Hanceville, Nail echoed Little's remarks about limited resources at the station. Those coming to either the Cullman or Hanceville station should bring their own food and blankets, pillows, etc.



W.C. MANN/THE CULLMAN TRIBUNE

The fountain at Depot Park in Cullman, seen on Monday, Jan. 1, 2018.

A wind chill advisory remains in effect for the area until noon on Tuesday, according to the National Weather Service in Huntsville.

At a glance

Warming station locations

- Hanceville City Hall, 112 Commercial St., Hanceville. Open 24 hours, at any time temperature is below freezing
- Donald Green Senior Center, 1625 Cleveland Ave. SW (near the Field of Miracles and Aquatic Center), Cullman. Open 3 p.m. Monday to 8 a.m. Tuesday; plans to open other times will be determined Tuesday morning.

Contact

- Phyllis Little/EMA office phone and voicemail 256-736-5388, text message to 256-736-3974
- Chris Hopper/VOAD email to chrishopper@daystarchurch.tv
- For Hanceville station, contact Hanceville Police Department 256-352-9811

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Highlights (from Front)

to reduce those risks. The law would apply to those working with sports programs for youth age 14 and younger.

HB13 - REQUIRE TEACHERS AND OTHER EDUCATION EMPLOYEES TO GIVE 30 DAYS' NOTICE WHEN RESIGNING

Republican
Under existing law, a tenured K-12 or postsecondary education employee may not terminate his or her employment within the 30 calendar days' prior to the beginning of a school term and is required to provide five days' written notice at any other time.

This bill would delete the requirements for postsecondary education employees. It would provide that the law applies to all K-12 teachers and would increase the time frame required for a teacher to give notice before terminating his or her employment at any other time of the year from five to 30 days.

A similar bill, SB14, was pre-filed in the Senate.

HB14 - REQUIRE PERSONS WHO AVOID DUI CONVICTION THROUGH A PRETRIAL DEFERRAL PROGRAM TO PAY THE SAME FEE TO THE ALABAMA HEAD AND SPINAL CORD INJURY TRUST FUND AS THOSE CONVICTED

Republican
Under existing law, when a defendant is convicted of driving under the influence and a certain portion of the fine has been collected, $100 of the fine less a five percent administrative fee is deposited in the Alabama Head and Spinal Cord Injury Trust Fund.

Existing law does not provide for a fee to be collected and distributed to the Alabama Head and Spinal Cord Injury Trust Fund if a person completes a pretrial diversion or deferral program when the individual was charged with driving under the influence.

This bill would provide that a mandatory fee of $100 would be collected from an individual who successfully completes a pretrial diversion or deferral program in a municipal, district, or circuit court if the individual was charged with driving under the influence.

HB15 - EXEMPT FROM THE ALABAMA MEMORIAL PRESERVATION ACT ANY MUNICIPALITY WHOSE GOVERNING BODY CHOOSES NOT TO PARTICIPATE

Democratic
(The Alabama Memorial Preservation Act requires local municipalities to get state permission before moving or renaming any historically significant building or monument 40 years old or older.)

Under existing law, certain entities and government agencies are exempt from the Alabama Memorial Preservation Act of 2017. This bill would authorize any municipality to opt out of the provisions of the act upon vote of the governing body of the municipality. A related bill, SB11, pre-filed by a Republican in the Senate, would exempt all preK-12, postsecondary, and higher education institutions and facilities from the Alabama Memorial Preservation Act of 2017, allowing those with controversial names (memorializing an event, person, group, movement, or military service) to be renamed.

HB16 - REPEAL THE ALABAMA MEMORIAL PRESERVATION ACT

Democratic
Under existing law, the Alabama Memorial Preservation Act of 2017 provides for the preservation of certain architecturally significant buildings, memorial buildings, memorial streets, and monuments on public property, as well as memorial schools. This bill would repeal the Alabama Memorial Preservation Act of 2017.

HB17 - EXTEND THE PERIOD A GOVERNOR-APPOINTED SENATOR CAN SERVE BEFORE THE SEAT MUST BE FILLED BY ELECTION

Republican
Under existing law, whenever a vacancy occurs in the office of United States Senator less than four months but more than 60 days before a general election, the vacancy is filled at that election. If the vacancy occurs more than four months or less than 60 days before a general election, the Governor is required to call a special election. Under existing law, whenever a vacancy occurs, the Governor is authorized to make a temporary appointment to serve until a successor is elected and qualified.

This bill would require the Governor to appoint a person to a vacancy in the office of United States Senator and issue a writ of election to fill the office for the remainder of the term at the next general election occurring more than one year after the vacancy occurs. The bill would also provide that if the vacancy occurs within 76 days of the general election immediately before the end of the term of the office, the election would proceed and if the incumbent received the most votes, there would be a vacancy in the office, to be filled by appointment of the Governor.

(If already a law, this would have kept Luther Strange in Jeff Sessions' vacated Senate seat until the 2018 election.)

A similar bill, SB18, was pre-filed in the Senate.

A related pre-filed Senate bill, SB15, would provide that "a vacancy in either the House of Representatives or the Senate that occurs with less than two years remaining in the term would be filled by a person qualified to hold the office and appointed by the Governor," and "also would provide that a person appointed to the vacancy is not eligible to run for the office in the election for the next full term for the office."

HB20 - CREATE THE ALABAMA PHYSICIAN INITIATIVE TO PROVIDE PHYSICIANS TO UNDERSERVED RURAL AREAS

Republican
This bill would establish the Alabama Physician Initiative. This bill would provide scholarships for certain medical students who are enrolled in and attending any college of medicine in Alabama and who contract with the Alabama Medical Education Consortium to practice for five years after the completion of their residency in rural areas of the state with the greatest need for physicians with funds allocated through the State Department of Public Health.

This would phase in the provision of 100 scholarships per year beginning with 25 scholarships in academic year 2018-2019 for certain medical school students enrolled in and attending a college located in Alabama and who commit to practice family medicine in rural areas of the state with the greatest need for physicians.

HB21 - ALLOW HUNTING DEER AND FERAL SWINE BY MEANS OF BAIT, WITH A STATE-ISSUED PERMIT

Republican
Under existing law, by regulation of the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, as it relates to hunting deer on private lands, there is a rebuttable presumption that any bait or feed located beyond 100 yards from the hunter and not within the line of sight of the hunter is not a lure, attraction or enticement to, on, or over the areas where the hunter is attempting to kill or take the deer.

This bill would allow the taking of whitetail deer or feral swine by means of bait when a person purchases a baiting privilege license from the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. The permit would cost $14 plus a one dollar issuance fee, and would allow hunting on baited fields within privately owned or leased hunting lands.

HB24 - DECREASE THE POSTING TIME OF EDUCATION PERSONNEL VACANCIES FROM 14 DAYS TO SEVEN DAYS

Republican
Under existing law, a local board of education is required to post notice of each personnel vacancy in a conspicuous place at each school campus and worksite at least 14 days before the position is to be filled. This bill would require the local board of education to post notice of each personnel vacancy on the board website, at a minimum, or in a conspicuous place at each school campus and worksite, at least seven days before the position is to be filled. Supervisory, managerial, and newly-created positions would continue to be posted for 14 days.

A similar bill, SB22, was pre-filed in the Senate.

HB26 - PROHIBIT SMOKING OF TOBACCO PRODUCTS IN A VEHICLE IN WHICH A MINOR IS A PASSENGER

Democratic
Under existing law, there is no prohibition against smoking tobacco products in a motor vehicle when a minor is also riding in the vehicle. This bill would prohibit smoking tobacco products in a motor vehicle when a minor is also riding in the vehicle. Violation would result in fines of up to $100.

HB34 - PROTECTION FROM PROSECUTION, UNDER CERTAIN CIRCUMSTANCES, FOR PERSONS USING DEADLY FORCE AGAINST CRIMINALS ON CHURCH PROPERTY

Republican
Under existing law, a person is justified in using physical force, including deadly force, in self-defense or in the defense of another person under certain conditions, and an occupant of a dwelling or business property may use deadly physical force, and is legally presumed to be justified in using deadly physical force, in self-defense or the defense of another person against a person committing or attempting to commit certain specified crimes.

This bill would provide that a person is not criminally liable for using physical force, including deadly force, in self-defense or in the defense of another person on the premises of a church under certain conditions. Among general conditions that apply to many other locations as well, a church-specific clause removes criminal liability for the use of force against a suspect "using or about to use physical force against an employee, volunteer, or member of a church or any other person authorized to be on the premises of the church when the church is open or closed to the public while committing or attempting to commit a crime involving death, serious physical injury, robbery, kidnapping, rape, sodomy, or a crime of a sexual nature involving a child under the age of 12." A hearing must be conducted to make sure the conditions were met.

HB41 - SUPPLEMENTAL MEDICAL COVERAGE FOR CERTAIN RETIRED FIREFIGHTERS DIAGNOSED WITH CANCER

Republican
Existing law provides for certain benefits, including insurance coverage, disability, and workers' compensation, for any active city or state firefighter who has an occupational disease, including cancer, which manifests while the firefighter is employed with the city or the state.

This bill would provide that a retired certified firefighter who is diagnosed with a cancer that is considered an occupational disease would receive supplemental insurance coverage or reimbursement of his or her actual expenses for medical treatment related to the cancer that is not covered by his or her own health insurance or Medicare, if the cancer was diagnosed within 10 years of his or her retirement.

SENATE BILLS

SB3 - EXPAND LOCATIONS IN WHICH FIREARMS MAY BE CARRIED, AND REPEAL RULES REQUIRING PERMITS FOR CONCEALED CARRY

Republican
This bill would repeal certain restrictions on the carrying or possession of a firearm on certain property or in a motor vehicle by persons with or without a concealed pistol permit. This bill would also revise certain restrictions on the carrying or possession of firearms at certain locations.

The bill would allow carrying without restriction or need of a permit in wildlife management areas, on private property, and at public demonstrations or gatherings. It would, additionally, reduce the penalty for carrying a gun while committing a crime, and allow concealed carry and vehicular transport of loaded firearms without a permit.

SB7 - CIVIL PENALTIES FOR TERRORISM, COMPENSATION FOR VICTIMS

Republican
This bill would provide for expanded civil liability for injuries resulting from acts of terrorism, including the forfeiture of all property used in the course of, or derived from, an act of terrorism. This bill would authorize a person injured by an act of terrorism and law enforcement agencies or private entities involved in the investigation, prosecution, mitigation, seizure, or forfeiture process for acts of terrorism to file a claim for costs or damages to be satisfied from forfeited property. This bill would provide for the allocation of proceeds from a forfeiture and disposition, and would specify that investigation expenses must be paid first. This bill would provide a limitation period for asserting a claim against forfeited property. This bill would also authorize a person injured by an act of terrorism to file an action for damages against a person committing an act of terrorism, and would authorize the recovery of specified damages.

SB16 - EXPERIMENTAL STEM CELL TREATMENTS FOR PATIENTS WITH SEVERE CONDITIONS

Republican
Under existing law, there is no provision to allow for the administering of certain investigational stem cell treatments to patients with severe chronic diseases or terminal illnesses. This bill would provide for the availability of stem cell treatment options for certain patients with terminal illnesses or severe chronic illnesses under certain conditions.

SB20 - REQUIRE INFORMATION ABOUT DROWSY DRIVING IN DRIVER'S EDUCATION

Republican
Under existing law, the Alabama State Law Enforcement Agency may provide by rule for the topics covered on the driver's license examination and the manner in which the examination is administered. Under existing rule, the Alabama Driver's Manual contains information on the topics tested. This bill would require the Alabama State Law Enforcement Agency to include information on the dangers of drowsy driving in the Alabama Driver's Manual and other licensing examination materials issued pursuant to its rules. This bill would also require the State Department of Education to include instruction on the dangers of drowsy driving in its approved driver's education courses.

SB21 - LUMP SUM PAYMENT TO RETIRED TEACHERS

Republican
This bill would provide for fiscal year 2017-2018 a funded one-time lump-sum payment in the amount of $400.00 to each person whose effective date of retirement for purposes of receiving benefits from the Teachers' Retirement System is prior to October 1, 2016, and who is receiving or is entitled to receive a monthly allowance from the Teachers' Retirement System on September 30, 2017.

SB24 - REPLACEMENT OF THE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION AND SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION

Republican
Under existing law, the membership of the State Board of Education includes the Governor as an ex officio member and eight members elected from districts provided by general law. Also under existing law, the State Superintendent of Education is appointed by the State Board of Education. This bill would propose an amendment to the Constitution of Alabama of 1901, to establish the position of Director of Education as a cabinet level position in lieu of the State Superintendent of Education and to provide for the appointment of the Director of Education by the Governor, subject to confirmation by the Senate. This bill would also propose that a Board of Counsel be established in lieu of the State Board of Education and that the Director of Education appoint the members of the Board of Counsel.

If enacted into law, the terms of all current board members will end as soon as a new Director and Board of Counsel can be appointed.

SB25 - CREATION OF A BOARD OF COUNSEL TO REPLACE THE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION (SIMILAR TO SB24)

Republican
This bill would establish a 13-member Board of Counsel in lieu of the State Board of Education, would remove the Governor from ex officio membership on the reconstituted and renamed board, and would provide for the appointment of the members of the board by a Director of Education, who is appointed by the Governor, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate. It would eliminate the position of State Superintendent of Education and provide for the creation of the position of Director of Education as a cabinet level position with service at the pleasure of the Governor, specify the qualifications of the members of the Board of Counsel, provide for the terms of office and the filling of vacancies of members, and also provide for the election of a president and vice-president of the Board of Counsel.

SB27 - ALLOW RETIRED LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS TO CARRY FIREARMS IN CERTAIN PLACES WHERE ONLY ACTIVE LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS ARE CURRENTLY ALLOWED TO CARRY

Republican
Under existing law, a person, including a person with a valid pistol permit, is prohibited from possessing a firearm in certain designated places, including law enforcement stations, jails, mental health facilities, courthouses, and athletic facilities. A person, including a person with a valid pistol permit, is prohibited from possessing a firearm in a building or facility to which access is limited by security measures. These prohibitions do not apply to a law enforcement officer in the lawful execution of his or her duties. This bill would also provide that the prohibitions would not apply to a qualified retired law enforcement officer as defined in the federal Law Enforcement Officer Safety Act of 2004. Under the federal definition, a qualified retired law enforcement officer among other requirements has to be honorably retired with 10 or more years of service and meet the qualification for active law enforcement officers to carry firearms.

This list is not exhaustive. For a detailed look at all pre-filed legislation, visit http://alisondb.legislature.state.al.us/Alison/SessPrefiledBills.aspx and https://legiscan.com/AL.

Obituary Announcements: Jan. 2 - 6

Funeral service for Glenn Edward Beck, age 67, will be at 12 p.m. on Tuesday, January 2, 2018 at Cullman Heritage Funeral Home with; burial at Good Hope Cemetery. Cullman Heritage Funeral Home is in charge of arrangements. Mr. Beck passed away on Wednesday, December 27, 2017 at Cullman Regional Medical Center. He was born, January 15, 1950 in Sioux Falls, South Dakota to Harold and Geraldine Beck. Mr. Beck was an avid gun collector and pet lover. He served as a policeman for 39 years. During that time is served as police chief in Nichols, Iowa before moving to Cullman where he ended his career in law enforcement. He was a great friend to all who knew him and will be missed by so many. From his wife God speed, there are so many people waiting for you, so take God's hand and be at peace. He is preceded in death by his, parents, daughter, Tessa Beck, brother, Gerold Beck. Survivors include his, wife, Christine Beck, daughters, Alicia (Bill) Bright, Brianna (Jeff) Sytsma, Brooke (Jeff) Hammons, and Blake Ervin, grandchildren, Logan and Jase Bright, Greyson and Haley Sytsma, Rowan Hammons, Mackenzie and Braxton Ervin, and brother, Joel (Kathryn) Beck. Visitation will be from 11 a.m. until 12 noon on Tuesday, January 2, 2018 at Cullman Heritage Funeral Home.

Gwenda Lowery Howard of Cullman passed away December 28, 2017 at her residence at 73. She was born in Boaz on June 25, 1944 to Rev. Elton and Virginia Edwards Lowery. She is preceded in death by her parents, and sister Brenda Padgett. Funeral services are Tuesday January 2, 2018 at 1 p.m. at The First United Methodist Church of Cullman with Rev. Todd Henderson officiating. Interment will follow in Cullman City Cemetery. Survivors are: husband Tommy Howard, sons Chad (Stacy) Howard, Alan Howard, brother Sonny (Mary Ann) Lowery, grandchildren Gage, Cooper and Piper Howard. Visitation will be at the church on Tuesday from 11 a.m. until 1 p.m.

Funeral services for Joe Rodney Thomas, 78, of Hanceville are Wednesday, January 3 at 11 a.m. at Hanceville Funeral Home; with interment in Nectar Cemetery. Visitation Tuesday from 6 p.m. until 8 p.m. Mr. Thomas passed away on December 30, 2017. He was born in Blount County on September 3, 1939 to Onis Leroy Thomas and Emma Imogene Turner Thomas. He attended J.B. Pennington High School where he excelled at football. He was a machinest by trade; working for Jackson Industries in Birmingham and Veitch Machine Company in Fairfield. Joe Thomas, a man of few words will be missed and not forgotten. He was preceded in death by his parents and a brother, Steven Allen Thomas. He is survived by his wife of 55 years, Iva Absher Thomas; daughter, Amy (Scott) Parvin of Smokerise; grandchildren, Allyson and Jackson Parvin and sister, Barbara (Ralph) Rogers of Garden City.

Funeral service for Eunice Ann Bentley, age 79, will be at 2 p.m. on Tuesday, January 2, 2018 at Cullman Heritage Funeral Home with Terry Bentley and Dan Anderson, officiating; burial at Good Hope Cemetery. Cullman Heritage Funeral Home is in charge of arrangements. Mrs. Bentley passed away on Saturday, December 30, 2017 at Valley View Nursing Home. She was born, May 15, 1938 to Joseph Roy and Vassie Lee Madison. She is preceded in death by her, parents, husband Bob Bentley, and daughter-in-law, Kathy Bentley. Survivors include her, sons Terry (Diane) Bentley, Mike Bentley, daughter, Jenny (Clayton) Schneider, grandchildren, Janie (Chris) Hale, Christopher (Heather) Bentley, Health Renner, and 4 great grandchildren. Visitation will be from 1 p.m. until 2 p.m. on Tuesday, January 2, 2018 at Cullman Heritage Funeral Home.

Funeral services for Nathan Bruce Hunter, 75, of Cullman are Wednesday, January 3 at 2 p.m. at Hanceville Funeral Home; with interment in Hopewell Cemetery. Visitation on Tuesday from 6 p.m. until 9 p.m. Mr. Hunter passed away on December 30, 2017. He was preceded in death by his parents, David Bruce Hunter and Daisy Weeks Hunter; his wife, Dean Hunter; children, Timothy and Lisa Kay Hunter and grandchild, Lisa Renee York. He is survived by three children, Shelley (Jimmy) York, Jonathan (Lila) Hunter and Kelly (Taylor) Hunter; grandchildren, Brittany York, Gina Hunter, Dominick Hunter, Destaney Hunter, Meleah Hunter, Levi Hunter, Austin Hunter, Weston Thompson and Addalynn Rassman; great grandchildren, Braydon Dobbs and Adeline Burt.

Wilba L. Lauderdale, 93 of Haleyville, entered into rest on Saturday, December 30, 2017 at her home surrounded by her loving family. Wilba was born on August 20, 1924 in Haleyville. She was a member of New Hope Baptist Church for approximately 60 years. Visitation will be held on Wednesday, January 3, 2018 from 1 p.m. until 2 p.m. at Nichols Funeral Home in Haleyville, where services will be held at 2 p.m. Brother Rick Yocom will officiate. Burial will be in New Hope Baptist Church. She is survived by her son, Kim Lauderdale and his wife Sheitha; and sister, Faye Gaskin.; and niece and nephew, Danny and Jerita Whitaker. She was "MawMaw" to 4 grandchildren, Leah Yocom and her husband Rick, Ashley Kelly, Warren Lauderdale and his wife Amanda, and Shelley Lauderdale; and 9 great grandchildren. Wilba was preceded in death by her husband, Clemon Lauderdale; and son, Rhodes Lauderdale.

Vivian Houlditch Hart, 96, a longtime Cullman resident, passed away peacefully on Wednesday, Dec. 27, following a short illness. The eldest child of Walter Lee Houlditch and Nora McCary Houlditch, Vivian was born July 22, 1921, in Birmingham, Ala. She was an exceptional person from her earliest years and throughout her life. Graduating from Shelby County High School in 1938, she was Vice President of the freshman class at Howard College (now Samford University) in Birmingham and a member of the student Senate, the May Day Scholarship Honor Court, and the A Capella Choir. She held three jobs simultaneously while earning her undergraduate degree in English, which was conferred in February 1942. Three months later she married John Thomas Strickland, moving to Tuscaloosa where he began medical studies at the University of Alabama. He completed his M.D. at the University of Pennsylvania while Vivian worked in the Home Economics Department at the Philadelphia Electric Company and at the University of Pennsylvania Hospital. John Strickland was a Captain in the U.S. Army Medical Corps at the outbreak of the Korean War. He was assigned to a Mobile Army Surgical Hospital (MASH) unit within 25 miles of the front-line fighting. His exploits were the basis, in part, of the "MASH" motion picture and television series. In 1958, while serving in the Alabama National Guard, then Lt. Colonel Strickland was tragically killed in an automobile accident. Vivian later married Alvin deGraffenreid Hart, the Probate Judge of Cullman County. From 1965 to 1990, she and her husband were co-owners of the Hanceville Nursing Home. "Graf," as he was known, was athletic director and golf coach at St. Bernard College in Cullman from 1976 until it closed in 1979 and later golf coach at Wallace State Community College in Hanceville. Their home was a beautiful and welcoming place for family and friends, especially during the holidays, when their talent for generous-spirited hospitality was most vividly on display. Indeed, their home reflected Vivian's lifelong emphasis on style, which is eternal, rather than on the transitoriness of fashion, with which it is often confused. Vivian's Christian faith was central to her being. In Cullman, she was a member of the First Baptist Church, where she held many leadership positions over the years. She was superintendent of Vacation Bible School and also led the Girls' Auxiliary and Women's Missionary Unit. She was also co-facilitator of adult Bible Study and taught various Sunday School classes. Vivian was president of the Dogwood Garden Club in Cullman and active in Cullman's Community Concerts Association. She was a longtime supporter of Yokefellows, a Christian organization based at Earlham College in Richmond, Ind. She enjoyed international travel, current events and reading. She was an elegant speaker and writer; and, as all who knew her can attest, an elegant person. Left to cherish her memory are her son, John David Strickland, of Cullman; her daughters, Peggye Hart Knight of Huntsville and Linda Beth Hart of Atlanta; her grandson, Lenn Knight of Huntsville; two great-grandchildren; her nephew, Allen Sawyer of Gainesville, Fla.; and her niece and namesake, Vivian Ruth Sawyer of Louisville, Ky. She was predeceased by her husband, Graf Hart; her daughter, Amanda Jane Strickland of Cullman; and her sister and only sibling, Bette Houlditch Sawyer of Gainesville, Fla. A funeral service will be held on Wednesday, January 3, 2017 at 11 a.m. at Moss Service Funeral Home Chapel with burial to follow in Cullman City, Cemetery. The family will receive friends for one hour prior to the service. Expressions of sympathy may go to Cullman First Baptist Church, World Hunger, Jimmy Hale Mission or Gideon's International.

Funeral service for Refford Eddy, 77, of Cullman will be at 11 a.m., Thursday, January 4th, 2018 at Cullman Funeral Home Chapel with interment in Bethsadia Cemetery, Revs. Larry Brown and Tim Nabors officiating. Cullman Funeral Home is in charge of the arrangements. Mr. Eddy passed away December 30, 2017 at Cullman Regional Hospital. He was born December 30, 1940 to parents, Arthur Clarence & Jeannie V. Blackmon Eddy. He served his country in the United States Army and served two tours in Vietnam and one in Cambodia. He was a member of Living Faith Baptist Church. Mr. Eddy was a family man who dearly loved his wife, children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. He was preceded in death by his parents; two brothers, Truman and Buford Eddy and a sister, Mary Stricklin. Survivors include his wife of 55 years, Annette Eddy; son, Griffin (Bethany) Eddy; daughters, Tammie (Shannon) Brown, Sonya (Blake) Morris; brothers, Dillard (Wilda) Eddy, Billy Ray (Barbara) Eddy; sisters, Hazel Kris, Charlotte (Garrold) Hamilton; grandchildren, T'aira (Michael) Ugarkovich, Tyler Gibbs, Chase Talley, Chance Talley, Calan Talley, Jordyn Eddy, Ty Eddy, Emily Morris, Trey Morris, Garrett Brown; great-grandchildren, Katherine Ugarkovich, Bryson Wright, Brynlee Wright, Emmett Talley, Spencer Gibbs, Charlie Talley; and a host of family and friends. Visitation will be Wednesday evening at the funeral home from 5:30 p.m. until 8 p.m.

Nancy Ann Carey, age 72 of Decatur, passed away on Friday, December 29, 2017 at her residence. She was born, July 23, 1945 in Providence, RI to Stanley and Marie Banach. Cullman Heritage Funeral Home is in charge of arrangements. She is preceded in death by her, parents, grandchild, Ian Eslick, sister, Janice, brother, Stacho Banach. Survivors include her, daughter, Shannon (Adam) Swanner, sons, David (Angie) Carey, Scott Carey, grandchildren, Donielle Eslick, Shawn Eslick, Dawn Carey, Natasha Carey, Christopher Carey, and 3, great grandchildren, sisters, Paula Morelli, and Tina Strazzullo, brother, Kevin Banach. A memorial service will be January 5, 2018 at 1 p.m at Annunciation of the Lord Catholic Church, 3910 Spring Ave SW Decatur, AL 35603

Graveside services for Mrs. Martha Ann Andrews, 75 of Cullman, will be at 2:30 p.m. on Saturday, January 6, 2018 at East Point Cumberland Presbyterian cemetery, with a Celebration of Life service immediately following at St. John's Church in the Ruehl Building. Cullman Funeral Home is directing. Mrs. Andrews was born on May 1, 1942; and passed away on Friday, December 22, 2017 at Woodland Village Health Care Center. Survivors include two – Sons – Jim R. Andrews & Scot (Lisa) Andrews; one Granddaughter – Bailie Andrews; one Brother – Robert Zinsmeister; and a Host of Loving Nieces & Nephews. The family request in Lieu of Flowers, donations be made to the Scleroderma Foundation or the United Way in her memory.

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OPINION

The 'merchants of death' survive and prosper

Lawrence Wittner
Contributor

During the mid-1930s, a best-selling exposé of the international arms trade, combined with a U.S. Congressional investigation of munitions-makers led by Senator Gerald Nye, had a major impact on American public opinion. Convinced that military contractors were stirring up weapons sales and war for their own profit, many people grew critical of these "merchants of death."

Today, some eight decades later, their successors, now more politely called "defense contractors," are alive and well.

According to a study by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, sales of weapons and military services by the world's largest 100 corporate military purveyors in 2016 (the latest year for which figures are available) rose to $375 billion. U.S. corporations increased their share of that total to almost 58 percent, supplying weapons to at least 100 nations around the world.

The dominant role played by U.S. corporations in the international arms trade owes a great deal to the efforts of U.S. government officials.

"Significant parts of the government," notes military analyst William Hartung, "are intent on ensuring that American arms will flood the global market and companies like Lockheed and Boeing will live the good life. From the president on his trips abroad to visit allied world leaders to the secretaries of state and defense to the staffs of U.S. embassies, American officials regularly act as salespeople for the arms firms." Furthermore, he notes, "the Pentagon is their enabler. From brokering, facilitating, and literally banking the money from arms deals to transferring weapons to favored allies on the taxpayers' dime, it is in essence the world's largest arms dealer."

In 2013, when Tom Kelly, the deputy assistant secretary of the State Department's Bureau of Political Affairs was asked during a Congressional hearing about whether the Obama administration was doing enough to promote American weapons exports, he replied: "[We are] advocating on behalf of our companies and doing everything we can to make sure that these sales go through. . . and that is something we are doing every day, basically [on] every continent in the world . . . and we're constantly thinking of how we can do better." This proved a fair enough assessment, for during the first six years of the Obama administration, U.S. government officials secured agreements for U.S. weapons sales of more than $190 billion around the world, especially to the volatile Middle East. Determined to outshine his predecessor, President Donald Trump, on his first overseas trip, bragged about a $110 billion arms deal (totaling $350 billion over the next decade) with Saudi Arabia.

The greatest single weapons market remains the United States, for this country ranks first among nations in military spending, with 36 percent of the global total.

Trump is a keen military enthusiast, as is the Republican Congress, which is currently in the process of approving a 13 percent increase in the already astronomical U.S. military budget.

Much of this future military spending will almost certainly be devoted to purchasing new and very expensive high-tech weapons, for the military contractors are adept at delivering millions of dollars in campaign contributions to needy politicians, employing 700 to 1,000 lobbyists to nudge them along, claiming that their military production facilities are necessary to create jobs, and mobilizing their corporate-funded think tanks to highlight ever-greater foreign "dangers."

They can also count upon a friendly reception from their former executives now holding high-level posts in the Trump administration, including: Secretary of Defense James Mattis (a former board member of General Dynamics); White House Chief of Staff John Kelly (previously employed by several military contractors); Deputy Secretary of Defense Patrick Shanahan (a former Boeing executive); Secretary of the Army Mark Esper (a former Raytheon vice president); Secretary of the Air Force Heather Wilson (a former consultant to Lockheed Martin); Undersecretary of Defense for Acquisition Ellen Lord (a former CEO of an aerospace company); and National Security Council Chief of Staff Keith Kellogg (a former employee of a major military and intelligence contractor).

This formula works very well for U.S. military contractors, as illustrated by the case of Lockheed Martin, the largest arms merchant in the world. In 2016, Lockheed's weapons sales rose by almost 11 percent to $41 billion, and the company is well on its way to even greater affluence thanks to its production of the F-35 fighter jet.

Lockheed began work on developing the technologically-advanced warplane in the 1980s and, since 2001, the U.S. government has expended over $100 billion for its production.

Today, estimates by military analysts as to the total cost to taxpayers of the 2,440 F-35s desired by Pentagon officials range from $1 trillion to $1.5 trillion, making it the most expensive procurement program in U.S. history.

The F-35's enthusiasts have justified the enormous expense of the warplane by emphasizing its projected ability to make a quick liftoff and a vertical landing, as well as its adaptability for use by three different branches of the U.S. military.

And its popularity might also reflect their assumption that its raw destructive power will help them win future wars against Russia and China. "We can't get into those aircraft fast enough," Lieutenant General Jon Davis, the Marine Corps' aviation chief, told a House Armed Services subcommittee in early 2017. "We have a game changer, a war winner, on our hands."

Even so, aircraft specialists point out that the F-35 continues to have severe structural problems and that its high-tech computer command system is vulnerable to cyberattack.

"This plane has a long way to go before it's combat-ready," remarked a military analyst at the Project on Government Oversight. "Given how long it's been in development, you have to wonder whether it'll ever be ready."

Startled by the extraordinary expense of the F-35 project, Donald Trump initially derided the venture as "out of control." But, after meeting with Pentagon officials and Lockheed CEO Marilynn Hewson, the new president reversed course, praising "the fantastic" F-35 as a "great plane" and authorizing a multi-billion-dollar contract for 90 more of them.

In retrospect, none of this is entirely surprising. After all, other giant military contractors--for example, Nazi Germany's Krupp and I.G. Farben and fascist Japan's Mitsubishi and Sumitomo --prospered heavily by arming their nations for World War II and continued prospering in its aftermath.

As long as people retain their faith in the supreme value of military might, we can probably also expect Lockheed Martin and other "merchants of death" to continue profiting from war at the public's expense.

Dr. Lawrence Wittner, syndicated by PeaceVoice, is Professor of History emeritus at SUNY/ Albany. He is the author of "Confronting the Bomb" (Stanford University Press).

COLUMN

Surviving Winter

Dave Robinson
Contributor

Just by definition, winter carries its own personality. The weather is cold, icy, snowy and in my neck of the woods, rainy and windy. Any responsible adult taking to the highways during the winter months will take extra precautions before he travels. Checking the weather and forecast for his route of travel, and his destination.

It's not uncommon for pilots to cancel their flight plans at this point, but earthbound travelers will rarely cancel their road trips merely because of bad weather.

Unfortunately, every year many pay the price simply because they underestimated Mother Nature and their level of preparedness.

The wise traveler will already have a kit in the trunk of his car. Maybe a couple of blankets, some snacks and a thermos of coffee.

If heading into snow country, tire chains or at least studded tires are a good-sense requirement. Of course, a small shovel, some kitty litter or sand, maybe even a tow strap would mean the difference between spending the night in your car or at grandma's house.

And don't forget, keep your tank on the top half. It costs no more and would really come in handy when you're stuck behind the guy that's stuck in a snowbank.

Keep a phone-charging cord in your car. A phone call may be the key to keeping you alive if stranded.

The key here is "keep it in your car." Sometimes we need a charging cord and it goes in the house where it does us no good at all when our phone is dead miles from home.

Winter can be very unforgiving for the unprepared. Always be thinking, "what can go wrong?"

Try to run through every scenario and imagine what you will need if disaster happens. Then resolve (after all this is the New Year and you need to make at least one resolution) to get your car prepared for winter driving.

Even if you're not planning winter travel, there are other considerations to keep in mind. Many years ago, when I heated the house solely with firewood, I neglected to stock up on wood.

I can recall splitting up the chopping block, throwing the wood in the woodstove and heading for the woods with my power saw.

Not the example I want to set for my kids or neighbors. Keeping the pantry stocked with soup mixes or other easily prepared foods will help get you through that power outage or when snow-blocked roads keep you hunkered down at home.

A small amount of preparing and planning may just make a difficult season so much easier this winter. Remember what your mother used to say, "a stitch in time saves nine." That same bit of philosophy works for preparing your family's survival.

As always, send your comments and questions to disasterprep.dave@gmail.com. Previous columns can be found on my blog at www.disasterprepdave@blogspot.com.

Dave Robinson is a retired Postmaster and the author of "Disaster Prep For The Rest Of Us," available on Amazon.com, Barnes and Noble and other online booksellers.

COLLEGE FOOTBALL

UCF stays perfect, defeats Auburn in 2018 Peach Bowl, 34-27

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ATLANTA – It was a rough start for both the University of Central Florida (UCF) and Auburn University to open the 50th Chick-fil-A Peach Bowl. The Knights won the toss but were quickly forced into a three-and-out by a swarming Tiger defense and were forced to put the ball. Following a good Knights punt, the Tigers returned the favor and went three-and-out, thanks in part to a timely UCF sack of Jarrett Stidham.

Auburn's defense came up big again, this time forcing a fumble that was recovered by the Tigers. Auburn took advantage of the turnover, marching the ball down to the UCF 8 where Daniel Carlson capped the nine-play, 44-yard drive with a 25-yard chip shot field goal to give his team the 3-0 lead with 7:01 left in the first.

The Auburn defense continued to impose its will on the Knights' offense, keeping it in check and forcing the second three-and-out in three possessions. Not to be outdone, the UCF defense showed what it was made of, sacking Stidham for the third time on Auburn's next possession. This put the Tigers deep behind the chains where they had to settle for a 53-yard field goal attempt by Carlson that went wide right and gave the ball back to UCF.

Riding the wave of momentum created by the missed field goal, UCF went to work. Starting from their own 36, the Knights marched the ball down the field with confidence. They were able to convert a crucial third-and-10 to keep their drive alive, but the Tiger defense was stingy and locked down inside the red zone. UCF had to settle for a 35-yard field goal by Matthew Wright to knot the game at 3-3 with 11:11 left to play in the first half.

Auburn's next drive ended in disaster when Stidham coughed up the ball at the UCF 49 where it was scooped up by Tre Neal at his own 43. He returned the fumble to the Auburn 21. It took the Knights a mere 47 seconds to capitalize as QB McKenzie Milton on back-to-back rushes scored the game's first touchdown, from 18 yards out. The PAT was true, and the UCF Knights took a 10-3 lead over the Auburn Tigers with 8:51 left in the half.

After trading punts with the Knights, Auburn found themselves with the ball back in the latter stages of the second quarter. The Tigers put together an impressive 15-play drove that covered 62 yards, but unfortunately for Auburn, they were unable to get the ball in the end zone and had to settle for a 46-yard field goal off the right foot of Carlson. Just as Auburn looked as if it had picked up a little momentum heading to the half, UCF responded with a six-play drive that covered 42 yards and ended in a Wright 45-yard field goal to put the Knights on top 13-6 heading to the halftime break.

Auburn received the ball to open up the second half of play, and the Tigers made the most of it. Noah Igbinoghene took the opening kick and returned it 72 yards to the UCF 26. Two plays later Stidham connected with Will Hastings for the 26-yard touchdown strike. Carlson booted through the PAT and the Tigers quickly tied the game at 13-all. The Auburn defense fed off its offense and came up with a big stop to put the ball back in Stidham's hands, and he went right back to work. He found three different receivers on the 10-play, 82-yard drive, but the biggest play was not a pass, it was a rush. A Kerryon Johnson rush to be exact. Johnson took the ball from Stidham and blasted up the middle for a 4-yard touchdown run. Carlson's PAT was good, and Auburn took the lead 20-13, its first lead since 7:01 in the first.

Two possessions later, UCF answered the Auburn score with a score of its own. The Knights started on their own 35 and marched the ball down the field and ended the seven-play, 65-yard drive with a 12-yard touchdown pass from Milton to Otis Anderson. The Wright PAT was good, and the UFC Knights tied the game at 20-20 heading into the fourth quarter.

The Knights started the fourth with the ball and they did not squander their opportunity. They chewed up 3:17 off the clock to go 57 yards on eight plays. They finished with an 8-yard touchdown from Milton to Dredrick Snelson. The PAT put UCF on top 27-20 with 11:36 left to play in the game. Auburn started its next drive in promising fashion but a costly interception that was returned 45 yards for a touchdown by Chequan Burkett put the Knights up by 14. Down but with a puncher's chance, Auburn quickly moved the ball down the field in six plays to cover 89 yards and only use 1:39. The drive was capped by a 12-yard touchdown run by Eli Stove to make the score 34-27 in favor of UCF.

UCF had the opportunity to put the game away with a field goal, but it was missed wide right and gave Auburn an opening. The Tigers started their drive with no timeouts and 2:18 left on the clock. Stidham marched Auburn down the field, all the way to the UCF 21, but an ill-timed pass toward the end zone while he was under duress proved to be the finisher the Knights were looking for as Antwan Collier was there waiting. The pass came to rest in his hands and the 2018 Chick-fil-A Peach Bowl trophy will travel back to Florida with the undefeated UCF Knights. Final score: UCF 34, Auburn 27

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