

Opinions, yours and ours

The Chatter Box

By Deborah Bennett

To all of those who have inquired as to the health of my mother, Martha Robbins, I sincerely thank you for your concern.

Mama recently had surgery. The operation went well but the recovery is rough. So, please continue to remember her in your prayers.

So many times we tend to think of praying as the "least" we can do for someone when in reality it is the "most" important thing we can do.

I feel so fortunate to have several "prayer warriors" I can call upon when needed.

Barbara Burke of Dixie Crescent Drive brought a beautiful blooming Iris by the office on Friday for us to enjoy. Apparently it is very unusual for an Iris to bloom in January.

Unfortunately, the flower was white, and it did not photograph very well. So, I will just have to tell you that it was beautiful.

Thanks, Barbara.

Happy birthday this week to: Dudley Boynton, Tracy Edenfield, Sandra Sherrod, Valerie Sharkey, Brien Linder, Ethelene Young, Sydney Hooks, Charlotte Becton, Linda Fuller, Bessie Lee Saxon, Susan Brown, Glynn Bassett Jr., Matt Wallace, Dee Dailey, and Jessica Herrington.

Celebrating wedding anniversaries this week are: Mr. and Mrs. Charles Oliver and Mr. and Mrs. Danny R. Becton.

Military Active Duty List: **Capt. Donald Slade Burke**, Travis Air Force Base, Fairfield, Calif.; **SPC Grade E4 Arthur Lamont Milton Jr.**, HHC 1-36 Infantry Support, Friedberg, Germany; **Staff Sgt. Gilbert C. Sheppard III**, 48th Brigade, 118th Field Artillery, Ft. Stewart; **Petty Officer 2nd Class Jamie A. Yager**, U.S. Navy, Maryland; **Petty Chief Officer Andy D. Crosby**, U.S. Navy, Elroy Destroyer, Norfolk, Va.; **Stephanie Crosby, R.N.**, U.S. Navy, Lafayette Destroyer; **LCPL Dwain "Cade" Lee**, 1st Marine Division Combat Service Support Group II Security Element, ArRamadi, Iraq; **Jimmy Cooper**, U.S. Army National Guard, 878th Engineering Battalion-Augusta, Persian Gulf; **1st Lt. J.R. Taylor**, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, Iraq; **SPC. Daniel Stuart**, 18th MEDCOM, 121 General Hospital, Seoul, Korea; **Capt. Andrew P. Thomas**, U.S. Marines, 2nd Marine Division, F.A.S.T. Company, Yorktown, VA; **Sgt. 1st Class Steven Yager**, 362nd Sig. Company, Korea; **MM3 Jeffrey Sweat**, U.S. Navy, USS Kauffman, MM3 59/E-Division, A-Gang, Norfolk, Va.; **Cpl. Larry Lamont Clark**, U.S. Marine Corp, 2nd Marine Expeditionary Force, Camp Lejeune, N.C. Bagdad, Iraq; **Khan Young**, U.S. Navy, U.S.S. Kitty Hawk, Persian Gulf; **Robert Milton Jr.**, E-3, U.S. Army, Ft. Stewart, Hinesville, Ga., Mission Kuwait; **SFC Ronnie Perryman**, E-7, Georgia Army National Guard, Battery A, 118th Field Artillery Regiment, 48th Brigade Combat Team; **Arnold R. Mosley**, 2nd Lt., U.S. Air Force, Randolph AFB, Texas; and **Debra A. Mosley**, Tech. Sgt., U.S. Air Force, Randolph AFB, Texas



Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor and folks in Jenkins County:

I'm feeling very angry and very sad. When I went for my appointment at Ogeechee Mental Health on Jan. 2, the information of its being closed on Jan. 31, 2007 was posted on the door.

Do people not realize how beneficial this service is to Jenkins County? Some consumers have a choice to travel to Sylvania, Waynesboro or Swainsboro.

What about the consumers who are unable, for various reasons, to do this? What about the youth in our school system?

I encourage those who read this to contact our governor, Sonny Perdue, at the following address: Sonny Perdue, Governor State of Georgia, State Capitol, Atlanta, Georgia 30334, by phone at 404-656-1776, or online at www.georgia.gov.

It's my opinion that our gov-

ernor has his priorities in the wrong place. I am told that the funding is being put in our prison system to build larger prisons because the mentally ill are being put in prison rather than declaring them as such and getting them treatment. What about helping people before they make poor choices and are sent to prison?

We all have stresses; that's part of life. What about those of us

who need help in dealing with those stresses and choose to get help?

Another factor in the decision to close this Jenkins County facility: the building that houses it is owned by the county and is in need of repairs. Instead, requests have been ignored and the rent has been raised. Lord, have mercy.

Sincerely,
Dolores Waters

Bill Shipp

WHY ARE THESE GUYS LAUGHING?

One has to wonder why our just re-elected governor and legislative leaders are in such a joyous mood. A tsunami of state spending is on the way, and they know it.

Georgia's relatively modest \$18.6 billion annual state budget could double in less than a decade. Gov. Sonny Perdue spent much of the past two years bragging about the accumulation of a half-billion-dollar budget surplus. He failed to mention that he was amassing the surplus partly by failing to meet the coming crunch. Programs involving health care, public retirement funding and transportation have been drained of resources to make re-election candidate Perdue look like a frugal uncle. The election is history, and the wolf at the door is about to claw its way in.

The Georgia Legislature has accomplished little in preparing the state infrastructure (transportation, education, health care and public safety) for the demands of an exploding population. Both House and Senate leaders have spent the last two years enacting the state Chamber of Commerce's agenda (oh, the persuasive powers of those talented lobbyists!) and creating an unmatched reputation for extracurricular hanky-panky that has become entangled with their legislative duties.

When Speaker Glenn Richardson's behavioral problems surfaced last week, several GOP leaders responded: "Democrats did much worse." Sorry, fellas, that won't wash. Democrats are not in charge; you are — and you haven't been minding the store. Here's a thumbnail glimpse of the coming crisis:

- Georgia will need new millions to fund children's health benefits. Congress has failed to provide the state with enough federal dollars to finance PeachCare and similar child health programs. As a result, the Legislature and Perdue are racing toward a serious dilemma: find more money for PeachCare or start denying insurance for poor kids.

- Georgia trauma care is well behind the national level. In parts of the state, it does not even match Third World standards. One group of health-care units in metro Atlanta is known among medical and legal professionals as the "hospitals from hell." Meanwhile, more Georgians continue to die daily as a result of inadequate trauma care. Lawmakers are considering an \$85 million annual Band-Aid to be financed by increasing car-tag taxes or creating a new cell-phone tax.

- More and more overwhelmed school districts are raising Cain about state funding inequities and inadequacies. A funding lawsuit filed by more than 40 school districts is still pending. The eye-popping price tag for a settlement is in the billions.

- The monumental cost of state retiree benefits continues to spiral. Pensioners and soon-to-be pensioners are becoming restive at reports that the state is trying to welsh on its retirement promises.

- And then there's the mind-boggling transportation mess. That multibillion-dollar ongoing catastrophe — along with Medicaid — continues to expand like some kind of extraterrestrial blob.

Any item on this emergency list will consume in a flash Perdue's much-vaunted budget surplus.

In his first legislative session, Perdue recognized the growing crises and proposed panoply of tax increases to fix them. The House leadership, still in the hands of Democrats, screamed in anguish at the governor's plans, and Perdue settled for a modest increase in tobacco taxes, which wasn't enough to make a dint in the problems. However, Democratic lawmakers who voted for the smaller Perdue increase were hammered by Republicans in the next election.

Four years later, Speaker Richardson has proposed a massive revi-

sion of the state tax code to find more revenue and, at the same time, reduce or eliminate certain levies. A key component would be increases in consumer taxes applied to groceries, medicines and services, which are not currently taxed. The burden for this regressive tax would be most painful to Georgia's expanding low-income population. The ideas come from Arthur Laffer, an economist who achieved fame during the 1980s for his trickle-down economic ideas — the ones that several experts believe are responsible for record-high deficits.

Considering the current atmosphere of controversy surrounding Richardson, the speaker may have difficulty gaining approval of any dramatic shifts in taxation.

Meanwhile, the Perdue administration and the Legislature have sent signals to special interests that they are ready to do business again in relaxing environmental requirements on the coast and creating a less regulated climate for developers across the state.

And who knows what new private legislative matters may be waiting in the wings as the 2007 session gets under way? Surely, we won't see renewed attempts to write customized tax laws to fit public officials' personal investment situations.

Georgia sits on the cusp of troubling times that require vision and intelligence for survival and continuing prosperity. Take one look at the current merry band running government, and you will see that those characteristics seem in extremely short supply.

You can reach Bill Shipp at P.O. Box 440755, Kennewick, WA 98501.

Letters policy

Letters to the editor of *The Millen News* are welcomed and encouraged. These are pages of opinions, yours and ours.

The unsigned editorials generally appearing on the left side of the editorial page represent the opinion of the newspaper and not that of any one person on our staff. Personal columns represent the opinions of the writers whose names appear on them and are not to be considered the opinion of this newspaper, its management or owners. Letters to the editor voice the opinions of the newspaper's readers.

The Millen News reserves the right to edit any and all portions of a letter. Unsigned letters will not be published. Letters must include the signature, address and phone number of the writer to allow our staff to authenticate its origin. Letters should be limited to 400 words.

The deadline for letters is Monday at 9 a.m. You can email letters to deborah@eastga.net.

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FRIDAY AT NOON:

Wedding Announcements
Engagement Announcements
Anniversary Announcements
Birth Announcements
Memoriams and Thank You's

FRIDAY-5PM:

School News, Chatter Box Items,
General News Items.

MONDAY-9 AM:

Letters to the Editor

MONDAY-10 AM:

Datebook Items, Church News & Obituaries

MONDAY-11 AM:

Classified & Legal Ads

MONDAY-NOON:

Retail Display Ads