

Opinions, yours and ours

The Chatter Box

By Deborah Bennett

A banking era in Jenkins County came to a close this week with the departure of Kirk Rocker and Sandy Becton from Regions Bank. They are the last two employees of the former Bank of Millen.

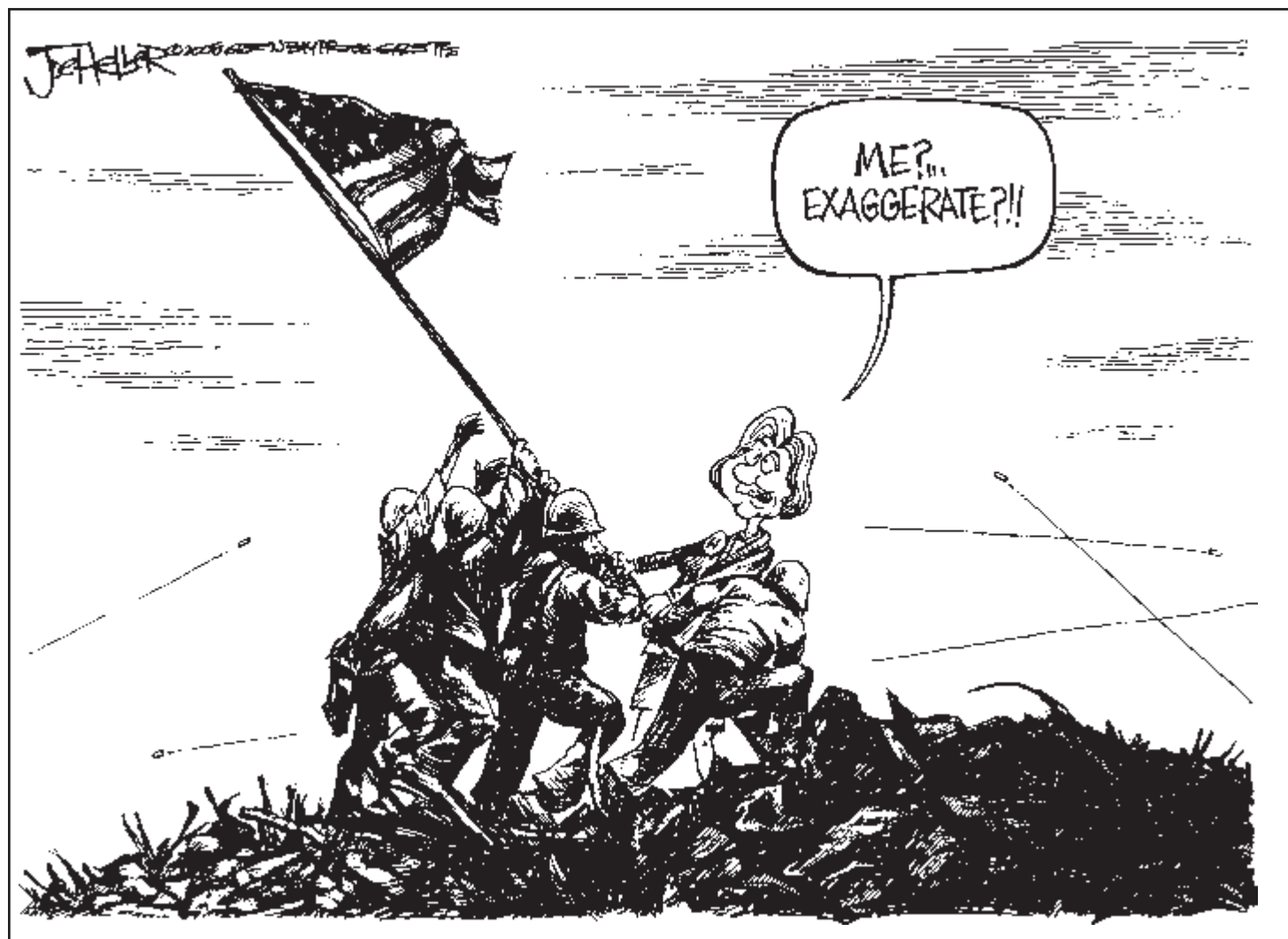
Kirk, as everyone is aware, followed in the footsteps of his father, Watson Rocker, and entered the banking business upon graduation from college. Sandy was employed with the original Bank of Millen upon graduation from high school and has been there since.

Kirk and Sandy will be missed by their customers, co-workers and friends, and I wish them only the best in their future endeavors. Stay tuned next week for a feature article.

Happy birthday to: Lynne Hodges, James Williams, Midge Chance, Milton Paul Godbee Sr., Arianna Hernandez, Johnny Murdock, Robert Deason and Mickey Boynton.

Celebrating wedding anniversaries this week are: Mr. and Mrs. Joel Hooks and Mr. and Mrs. Roy Cheney.

Military Active Duty List: **Lance Cpl. Lee Ogden**, U.S. Marines, Radio and Communications, Bahria, Iraq; **Petty Officer 3rd Class Eric B. Kelsey**, U.S. Navy, NSA Bahrain; **PV2 Ashley Clifton**, U.S. Army, Yongsan, Korea; **Airman First Class Charles F. Woods**, Moody Air Force Base, Valdosta, GA; **Capt. Andrew P. Thomas**, U.S. Marines, F.A.S.T. Company, Yorktown, VA; **Stuart Burrus**, U.S. Air Force, Bossier AFB, Bossier, LA; **SPC 4 Travis D. Motes**, 1st Calvary Division, T. Hood, Texas; **Capt. Donald Slade Burke**, Travis Air Force Base, Fairfield, Calif.; **Staff Sgt. Gilbert C. Sheppard III**, 48th Brigade, 118th Field Artillery, Iraq; **Petty Officer 3rd Class Jamie A. Yager**, U.S. Navy, Marine Corps Base Hawaii; **Petty Chief Officer Andy D. Crosby**, U.S. Navy, Elroy Destroyer, Norfolk, Va.; **Stephanie Crosby, R.N.**, U.S. Navy, Lafayette Destroyer; **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; **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; **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.



Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor:

The Millen-Jenkins County Chamber of Commerce is the first place people look for when they come to our county. We provide general information about our community and numerous other services.

I know a lot of businesses are in a crunch because of the closing of so many plants. The Jenkins County Development Authority is working all the time trying to attract industry. I should know because I am the executive director of the chamber and development authority. It consumes your life. That is all you think about.

I have sent out about 50 letters to companies in the State of Georgia letting them know if they are planning to expand to please look at Jenkins County. We have a trained workforce willing and ready to go to work.

The chamber and development authority has also helped the people with job losses by contacting Cong. Jon Barrow's office, and they have been very helpful. Do you know there are about 80 ladies in Jenkins County that are going to school to further their education or to get a GED?

We cannot give up. I know most of you know about my son. Paul Herrington. At the age of eight, they said that he would not live a year. My husband and I would not give up. Now he is 26 years old. Without the grace of God this would not be possible, and believe me it has been a fight to keep him living. That is the way I look at Jenkins County. We can't give up.

Yes, we have industry prospects for Jenkins County, but we have to make excuses to them for the trash on the side of the roads and building that are falling down. We should not have to do this! The city and county could

hire people to cleanup, but can you imagine what our taxes would be? They can not do it by themselves. It is going to take all of us.

I hear all the time from people who live in Jenkins County that they don't know why people want to come and live here. Yet, every person who comes in my office, and most of the time move here, say that Millen and Jenkins County is a good place to live. Think about what you say about your hometown. People are listening. This is ours, and we need to take care of it as if it was our child. That is the only way we are going to be successful.

I challenge you to be part of any group that is working to make Millen and Jenkins County a better place to live and work.

Sincerely,
Paula Herrington
Executive Director
Millen/Jenkins County
Chamber of Commerce
Jenkins County Development Authority

Dear Editor,

Everyone has an opinion and this is mine.

When I heard that Mrs. Mable Jenkins had the chairman position, I said, "Good, now we have someone who'll make a difference and try."

She's smart, with a good mind for business. She's strong and I believe in her, but she can't fix our problems alone. One mule can't pull a heavily overloaded wagon. It takes a strong and powerful team.

First, everyone in the county should be involved and have their say — all citizens. The county should be able to vote on things, or at least be polled.

Town Hall meetings should be publicized well in advance, and held at a time when everyone can show up. Put it in the newspaper

two weeks in advance on the front page, and print flyers and put them all around town. If need be, put it on television. In other words, try to get everybody involved and have a debate. Find out who is trying, and who isn't. Get ideas from everybody, and then come up with a plan. Use our big, fine new gym to hold the meeting, and make use of our tax dollars.

This county is at a standstill, or on the verge of heading backward. What this county and citizens have to do is face reality and the true facts. The government is our biggest problem!

The U.S. Government has got this country in the fix it's in. We get so much contaminated staff, and viruses or diseases, from foreign countries. It's time for the citizens to take our county back. There are a lot of changes that need to be made, that never will be.

We can't control our nation, but we can control our county. I say make this a wet county, and keep our tax dollars here. The more ways we can find to generate money in this county, the better.

We need to find businesses that will always be around. Racing has been around since the first cars were built, and computers are here to stay. I think it's time we took a different avenue. We need to focus on getting a NHRA sanctioned half-mile drag strip with supporting industries, and we need to try to get some computer-related industry to locate here. This whole county could go wireless broadband for a few thousand dollars.

Remember, everyone has an opinion and freedom of speech — so do you!

Old car restoration is big, and so is racing.

Billy Amerson
Perkins Community

Dear Editor:

Recently I had the opportunity of hearing the Jenkins County Elementary School (JCES) fifth grade chorus perform and had intended on writing the Jenkins County Board of Education (BOE) to praise their performance and thank them for offering music to the students. They were such a well organized and behaved group of children who all seemed to be enjoying the performance as much as the audience. My regret is that before I could write, I heard the news that the school system would be discontinuing the music program in the schools next year. How could they?

My original thoughts on the subject were, how wonderful it would be if music and art were offered in all three schools, and then maybe one day our community would have the privilege of attending a high school musical on the beautiful gym stage. I guess this is a pipe dream if our board doesn't start thinking outside the box and do some creative planning. One teacher may be able to serve more than one school, thereby giving our students a more well-rounded education. It's not that I have anything against sports, because they are important also, but art and music programs certainly reach more children than team sports.

Board members, I urge you to go back to the drawing board and figure out how you can reinstate the positions you recently cut. Maybe you could cut a program that only affects a chosen few. What is Power School anyway, and how many hits a week does it get?

A concerned citizen,
Jane Johnson

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 Friday at 5 p.m. You can email letters to themillennews@yahoo.com.

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Jon Burns

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

With only one week left in the 2007 legislative session, the House has already completed many of the important issues we promised our constituents we would address. We have adopted two fiscally responsible budgets that fund our priorities in education, natural resources, public safety and healthcare. We have adopted a statewide water management plan and a plan to make it easier to build new water reservoirs. The House addressed transportation needs by enacting a plan to give regional power to raise funds for local transportation projects.

Senate Resolution 845 is a constitutional amendment that would allow a 'Regional Commission Area Transportation Tax.' Currently in Georgia, there are Regional Development Centers that exist and under another measure would be changed to Regional Development Commissions made up of local elected officials in a multi-county area. These commissions would meet to determine the top transportation needs of the region and then would be able to propose a ballot question to the region's voters calling for a transportation sales tax not to exceed 1 percent and only for a specified time period. All funds raised will stay within each of their regions to fund transportation projects in that region.

There were some concerns with the bill and so the House addressed those on the floor. We amended the bill to say that an individual county could choose to 'opt out' of participation in the regional transportation sales tax. We also amended the mea-

sure to include certain exemptions to the tax including fuel for off-road heavy duty equipment, farm and agricultural equipment, locomotive, aircraft and water craft. The logic here was that these different vehicles do not use the traditional roadways. We also added one other key amendment. Currently, funds collected from our motor fuel taxes are deposited into the state's general fund. We adopted an amendment that creates a special fund within the Department of Transportation to collect the motor fuel taxes so that those can then be used for transportation projects.

This bill addresses our transportation needs on a regional basis rather than attempt a 'one size fits all' solution. This is a better solution because our rural communities have different priorities than Metro Atlanta and we are empowering every corner of the state to address their own needs. We have also put the power of taxation at the smallest level of government — directly in the hands of the taxpayers! This bill gives those who would pay the tax the voice to decide if they want to pay the tax.

The biggest news in education was that the House budget restored \$90 million to the "austerity cuts" that were in the Governor's budget. We also restored \$1.3 million to Math Mentors — the Superintendent's #1 priority based on the overwhelming success of the Science Mentor program that the House of