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What's important to America?

I am a fan of Jamie Dimon and have been for many years. Dimon is the CEO and Chairman of the Board of JPMorganChase, the largest U.S. bank by assets, and when Dimon talks, the world listens. While giving an interview at the Reagan National Economic Forum in May, Dimon caused a stir with his answer to the question, “Do we need to rethink what constitutes national security?”

His answer, “We know what constitutes national security. We don’t need to be stockpiling bitcoin; we need to be stockpiling guns, bullets, tanks, planes, drones, and rare earth minerals.”

The media seized on that answer and suddenly Dimon was everywhere — on social media and the national news networks. Perhaps you have heard about or seen his comments already.

While Dimon’s answer may have been an awakening to some, it was comments he made later in the interview that really struck a nerve with me. When talking about the national deficit and what needs to be done to curtail spending, Dimon told the interviewer that there were 13,000 lobbying groups in Washington, D.C. He said 10 or 12 belonged to the banks, but the rest lobby for cotton, corn, sugar, unions, and every possible business or interest you can imagine. All of them are coming to D.C. and wanting to either start a new program or keep an existing program going. Dimon said this was damaging our country, and we need a “Reagan Type” to convince Americans that the time had come to sacrifice personal interests for the common good.

The comments made my heart sink because that is what I do, both in Jackson and D.C. I act on behalf of our electric cooperatives to ensure that they can deliver affordable, reliable power in a manner that is environmentally conscious. Is asking that the

Rural Utility Service and Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) be fully funded hurting our country? Is LIHEAP a bad program? (LIHEAP is an energy assistance program that helps low-income families pay utility bills.)

As I sat there pondering Dimon’s words, I thought about how my board would feel about me if I did not deliver on those issues. I also wondered how the clients of those 13,000 lobbyists would react to their “special interest” not being passed. My guess is they would all be unemployed. I remember our former U.S. Senator Trent Lott once famously said, “If money goes to another state, it’s called pork spending, but when it comes to Mississippi, it’s economic development.”

I asked AI what our national debt was. The answer was \$36.2 trillion as of April 2025. That figure includes debt that is owed to the public (including other countries) and debt owed between government agencies. Honestly, that number is difficult for me to comprehend.

This month America will celebrate its 249th birthday. Maybe it is time that we as Americans do some soul searching and decide what is important to us. Do we continue with this current course of self interest and leave our posterity crippling debt and a bleak future? Or do we become good Americans and set aside personal interest, so our country can last another 249 years? The choice is ours to make, but our children will have to live with it.

Happy Birthday, America! 



by Michael Callahan

*Executive Vice President/CEO
Electric Cooperatives of Mississippi*

TIPS TO AVOID ENERGY SCAMS

Always be cautious of unsolicited calls (or in-person visits) to your home from companies claiming to conduct energy audits. These are typically telemarketing firms that claim to be a third-party company or pose as a representative from your electric utility to gain access to homes and sell services with the promise of government rebates. Many electric utilities provide energy audit services, but they are typically scheduled at the member’s request.

Source: Better Business Bureau



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On the cover

Master Craftsman Greg Harkins sits in one of his hand-made rocking chairs inside his Canton-based woodworking shop.
Photo by Chad Calcote.

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First Mississippi Buc-ee's opens in Coast Electric's territory

Buc-ee's opened its first Mississippi location on June 9 in Pass Christian to big crowds and bigger fanfare.

The Harrison County location is served by Coast Electric.

Guy Johnson, Coast Electric's vice president of economic development and sustainability, said the cooperative is proud to provide electric power to the state's first Buc-ee's.

"Part of our mission as a local electric cooperative is to support economic development in our community. Buc-ee's has already had a positive impact on our local economy, creating hundreds of jobs and increasing sales tax revenue in our area. We will work with Buc-ee's representatives to ensure they, and their millions of guests, will receive reliable service from Coast Electric," Johnson told *Today in Mississippi*.

"Part of our commitment to the project is constructing a new substation to serve Buc-ee's and the anticipated additional load that will come as a result of their new location in our service area."

The new store is approximately 74,000 square-feet and features 120 gas pumps.

More than 1,000 fans attended the grand opening, according to the *Clarion Ledger*.

The new Buc-ee's is located off Interstate 10 at the Menge Avenue exit in Pass Christian.



Guy Johnson, Coast Electric's vice president of economic development and sustainability, with Buc-ee at the recent grand opening in Harrison County.

GRAND GULF

Celebrates 40 Years of Service

Grand Gulf Nuclear Station, Mississippi's first and only nuclear power plant, turns 40 this year.

In 1980, South Mississippi Electric Power Association — known today as Cooperative Energy — acquired a 10% undivided ownership stake in the Port Gibson-area power plant. The remaining 90% is owned and operated by Entergy subsidiary, System Energy Resources, Inc.

Under the partnership, Cooperative Energy funded 10% of the plant's construction costs and covered the same amount of its operating and manufacturing expenses and future decommissioning costs. In exchange, Cooperative Energy garners 10% of the electric power generated by the plant.

"For four decades, Grand Gulf has grown into a regional powerhouse, providing safe, clean, carbon-free, affordable energy while serving as one of the largest non-carbon emitting power plants in the world," said Mark Smith, senior vice president of power generation at Cooperative Energy.

"In other words, the qualities that made Grand Gulf a sound investment in the 1970s are the same ones that continue providing benefits for Mississippi communities and the environment today."

About 40,000 tons of reinforced steel and 460,000 cubic yards of concrete were used to build Grand Gulf Nuclear Station. Crews broke ground on the plant in 1974.

Cooperative Energy, based in Hattiesburg, is a generation and transmission electric cooperative that provides power to 11 distribution electric cooperatives around the state — Coahoma Electric, Delta Electric, Twin County Electric, Yazoo Valley Electric, Southern Pine Electric, Dixie Electric, Southwest Electric, Magnolia Electric, Pearl River Valley Electric, Coast Electric, and Singing River Electric.



Yellow Blooming Plants make GARDENS CHEERFUL

Yellow-blooming plants bring a bright, cheerful energy to my garden. There's something about that bold splash of golden color that lifts the spirit and catches the eye, especially after the gray tones of winter.

In Grenada, Devo and Rosemary Lancaster have a couple of show-stopping yellow bloomers in their landscape.

The first is the Lady Banks' Rose, known scientifically as *Rosa banksiae*. It is an old-fashioned climber with timeless charm and exceptional resistance to pests and diseases. This vigorous, rambling rose is nearly thornless, making it easy to train over fences, arbors, or trellises.

As spring settles in, Lady Banks puts on one of the most breathtaking floral displays I've ever seen. In early to mid-spring, the long canes are smothered in clusters of soft yellow blossoms, each about an inch across.

“

Yellow-blooming plants bring a bright, cheerful energy to my garden. There's something about that bold splash of golden color that lifts the spirit and catches the eye, especially after the gray tones of winter.

The rose blooms range from semi-double to fully double, and their sheer number creates the illusion of a golden waterfall spilling down the garden structure. These have a delicate, sweet fragrance and completely transform the plant for a few glorious weeks with their abundant blooms.

Lady Banks is relatively low maintenance once established. It thrives in full sun but tolerates light shade, especially in hot Southern gardens. Well-draining soil is a must, and a layer of mulch around the base helps retain moisture and regulate soil temperature.

You can give this rose a light pruning after it blooms to shape the plant and remove any dead wood, but this is not necessary. In Mississippi, it holds its deep green, glossy foliage nearly year-round, providing a lush backdrop for other plants, even when it's not in bloom.



Japanese Rose plants thrive when planted in partial shade, making it useful where other plants struggle.



Lady Banks' rose is an old-fashioned climber that is nearly thornless. Soft yellow blossoms smother its long canes in spring.

Another standout I saw is the Lancasters' Japanese Rose plants, which are known scientifically as *Kerria japonica*. These graceful and adaptable shrubs bring a completely different but equally delightful presence to the garden.

Japanese Rose plants have elegant, arching stems that create soft, fountain-like form. In early to mid-spring, they are covered with bright, golden-yellow double flowers that look like tiny pom-poms or ruffled miniature roses. Each bloom measures about 1 to 2 inches across and glows against the fresh green foliage.

This plant thrives when planted in partial shade, making it useful where other plants struggle, like under trees, along woodland edges, or in mixed borders with dappled light. Its slender green stems remain eye-catching in winter, adding structure and color to the dormant landscape when most plants fade into the background.

Japanese Rose is a hardy and low-fuss shrub that thrives in average, well-drained soil. It is especially tolerant of shade, drought, and even some neglect. Rejuvenate it by pruning it hard every few years right after flowering to encourage fresh growth and more blooms the following season.

Both of these yellow bloomers bring brightness to the spring garden. Their glowing flowers, graceful growth habits, and reliable nature make them standout plants in the landscape. 🌸



by Dr. Eddie Smith

Southern Gardening columnist Dr. Eddie Smith, a gardening specialist and Pearl River County coordinator with the Mississippi State University Extension Service, is an internationally certified arborist, Produce Safety Alliance certified trainer, and one of the developers of the Mississippi Smart Landscapes program that encourages the use of native plants in the landscape.



Frogging

for the bellowing beasts of the dark

Hunting loud swamp predators on hot evenings

On sweltering summer evenings, bellowing beasts wait on dark, swampy shorelines ready to pounce on anything that might venture too close.

These vicious, gluttonous predators swallow whatever fits into their cavernous mouths. They will prey on those almost their same size. They even eat their own family members and can jump more than 10 times their own length.

Fortunately, these predators don't grow more than about two feet long with their powerful legs extended and might weigh about 1.5 pounds. Not counting their legs, bullfrogs grow to about five to nine inches long. Their slightly smaller cousins, pig or lagoon frogs, grow to about 5.5 inches long. Bullfrogs and pig frogs look similar. Pig frogs have narrower, pointed snouts and bullfrogs look more rounded. A white lateral stripe through the rear and middle of each thigh also distinguish pig frogs.

A smaller cousin, bronze frogs also occur throughout Mississippi. They look similar to the others, but only grow to about four inches

from snout to tail. Many people misidentify them as juvenile bullfrogs or pig frogs.

Practically all Mississippi swamps, lake and river shorelines, or other wetlands provide excellent habitat for the sonorous amphibians. Bullfrogs live throughout the state. Pig frogs generally range south of Hattiesburg.

Frogs usually turn more active on hot summer nights. They pick good spots in thick weeds or on shorelines, waiting for prey to pass close enough to snatch. They regularly bellow out their calls, giving away their positions.

Most people hunt frogs by boat. One person drives, cruising slowly along lake and river shorelines. Others in the boat shine lights to watch for frogs. The hunters scan shorelines, lily pad patches, weed beds, and other hiding spots.

When a light beam illuminates a frog, its white chin and eyes typically shine like two dots hovering over a bright cottony throat splotch. The light in its eyes temporarily stuns the normally wary frog so it freezes, allowing people to approach close enough to catch it.

Some people use nets or gigs to catch frogs. Others prefer mechanical “frog grabbers.” Some people choose to sneak close to frogs and grab them by hand. Before grabbing anything at night by hand, look around closely because other things, like snakes, alligators, or snapping turtles, might also want to catch that frog.

Although most sportsmen hunt amphibians by boat, froggers on foot can still jump into action. Ponds, stream shorelines, roadside ditches, small irrigation, or drainage canals and similar places make great places to hunt frogs on foot. Frogs thrive in the tiniest places as long as they remain reasonably wet with some access to dry ground or structure.

When frogging on foot, work in teams. Each person walks along a different side of the waterway. After spotting a frog, one person shines the light into its eyes while the other sneaks up from behind to catch the frog.

Hunting frogs on hot summer evenings creates great memories and can provide delicious meals. The tradition of eating sumptuous fried frog legs goes back centuries. 🍷



by John N. Felsher

John N. Felsher is a professional freelance writer, broadcaster, photographer, and editor who lives in Alabama. An avid sportsman, he's written more than 3,300 articles for more than 170 different magazines on a wide variety of outdoors topics. Contact him at j.felsher@hotmail.com.

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Retiree comes to Mississippi, builds his own course

by John N. Felsher

Many people dream of retiring and moving close to a golf course, so they can play their beloved game as often as possible. One Mississippi man brought the course to himself.

Don Adsitt lived in Washington state and worked as a senior computer network engineer for a large company. He retired in 2024. He and his wife, Miriam, bought three acres near Carthage and headed to Mississippi.

"I wanted a place in the country with a garage, and we decided Mississippi was a good place to retire," Don said. "Mississippi people are the nicest people. When we first came here and met our neighbors, we had the greatest feeling of community. When we backed in the moving van, nine neighbors came over. That's Southern hospitality."

In Washington, Don owned a third of an acre and put in a little golf course on that property. Now, with more acreage in Mississippi, he decided to go bigger.

A company wanted to charge \$10,000 per hole, or \$90,000 plus tax, to build nine holes. Don believed he could do the work himself

for much less and started planning his backyard course. In late November 2024, he began work on the Walking Possum Back Yard Golf Course.

"With us retiring, I needed a way to stay fit," Don explained. "I thought golf would be the best way to get exercise. First, I had to mark out the distances and where the placement of the greens would be. I bought nine flags and planted them in the grass. I hit balls back and forth to see how they would work. Everything seemed to be fine on how I wanted to lay it out."

He wanted real greens instead of artificial ones. On the internet, he found some instructive material on how to make real greens. For his first green, he put down gravel layers, smoothed the surface, and put the green down.

"That went well, but it was very time consuming and quite expensive," he said. "For the second green, I decided to do something that I saw on the internet. I bought an underlayment about three feet square used for patio bricks. It's a half-inch thick of expanded polyurethane."



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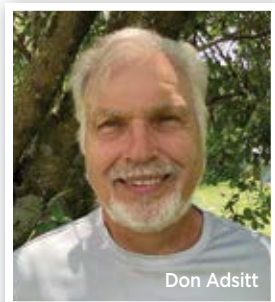
I wanted a place in the country with a garage, and we decided Mississippi was a good place to retire. Mississippi people are the nicest people. When we first came here and met our neighbors, we had the greatest feeling of community.

Don placed the material where he wanted it and stapled everything into the ground. Then, he put artificial greens on top and nailed down the edges. That worked and now everything looks just like a regular course.

“The course is designed around a 50% weighted ball, which is the same size as a regular ball,” Don said. “These practice balls hit the same as a real ball, but only go half the distance. We use these practice balls instead of real golf balls as a safety issue.”

Working mostly alone, but with some help from his neighbor Phillip May, Don finished his course in about six months for around \$18,000. Rain and wintery conditions halted work on some days.

“All our neighbors play,” Don said. “It is free to anyone in Carthage, 6 years old or older. We have a driving range out front and a fairway for every green. The longest hole is about 180 yards. That’s equivalent to about 500 yards on a real golf course. Most of the holes are about 130 to 140 yards. One hole is a Par 3. Every other hole is a Par 4. The holes are challenging. The fairways are narrow. Some of them are through the trees. One is on a little slope, so it’s a challenging place to play.” ❁



Don Adsitt

People can watch Don playing on his Walking Possum Back Yard Golf Course here:

<https://tinyurl.com/26xyk53x>

For more information about the course, email Don at Donaldadsitt@gmail.com.



Before consistent rain in Mississippi hindered planting conditions, row crop growers in the state had already indicated scaling back how much cotton they would plant this year by 30% from 2024.

RAINFALL AMOUNTS, TIMING HAMPER COTTON CROP

by Robert Nathan Gregory – MSU Extension Service

Expect to see significantly less cotton than usual blooming in Mississippi later this year.

Row crop growers in the state had already indicated scaling back cotton acreage by 30% when they locked in their planting intentions for 2025, anticipating planting about 360,000 acres. That was before consistent rain through much of May -- the crop's primary planting window in Mississippi -- kept planters out of fields.

The latest crop progress and condition report from the U.S. Department of Agriculture for the state shows only 54% of the crop had been planted as of June 2 compared to 89% by that time last year.

"Planting conditions for cotton this year have been possibly the worst I've ever seen," said Brian Pieralisi, cotton specialist with the Mississippi State University Extension Service. "It's hard to say how much is planted so far, but I can believe it's less than half the intended acreage."

Favorable weather in April allowed for early planting, but some acres planted in cotton became stunted by excess rainfall.

"It's been tricky," said Pieralisi. "Some regions had more planting windows than others. Most of the Delta was able to get intended acres planted. Some of the eastern and central Delta was wet, and the Black Prairie and northeast Mississippi have been wet most, if not all, of May."

John Michael Blankenship, MSU Extension agriculture agent in Bolivar County, reported at least four farms there with prevented planting acreage and numerous waterlogged, unplanted fields. Prevented planting refers to financial protection provided to growers after a failure to plant an insured crop by its final planting date due to flooding or drought.

“You should have cotton planted or be at a good stopping point by the end of May for it to have enough time to develop,” Blankenship said. “We’ve had more than 10 inches of rain in the last two or three weeks, and that makes it impossible to get anything out in the field. Any relief we see now may be too little, too late for cotton, and growers planting late will have to plant what they can.”

Corn, soybeans, rice ‘coming on strong’

The majority of acreage for other row crops in Mississippi is in much better shape. Virtually all the state’s corn has been planted, with more than 70% in either good or excellent condition, according to the weekly USDA progress report. Those two categories also describe more than 60% of the rice crop, with none of it graded below fair. The crop was around 90% planted as of June 2.

“This year, our growers had their seed and planters ready, and there was a mad rush at the beginning of the season to plant as quickly as possible,” Blankenship said. “While cotton has been hung up for the most part, the growers that hit their target planting dates for other row crops are satisfied right now with how their crop is looking. Early planted corn is coming on strong.”

This also largely applies to soybeans — the state’s most grown row crop and the one that can be planted latest in the year. That crop’s planting progress has just passed 80%, and 71% of what’s in the ground is in either good or excellent condition.

MSU Extension soybean specialist Justin Calhoun said while this year has been a tough one to lock in an accurate acreage estimate, he believed the final total would land close to the 2.25 million acres the USDA forecasted in March.

“Soybeans tend to be the most adaptable to plant date of any of our crops. We have optimum windows for maximum yield

potential, but even if you fall before or after that optimum window, you’ll still make a decent crop if the conditions are right,” Calhoun said.

Calhoun said there were areas of the state that were dry enough to capitalize on a very early planting window around the last few days of March that extended into nearly the first half of April.

“The soybeans in that window have benefited from the rains and look fantastic,” he said. “Since that second week of April, which is usually when the bulk of our planting gets going, the rain has been persistent across the state and has delayed planting quite a bit. The majority of the Delta region is planted, but it has all gone in sporadically during dry windows, and there are still a few acres out there still waiting to dry out to be planted.”

In the eastern portion of the state where rains have been much more consistent, very few dry windows have occurred, causing major delays in the planting progress.

“It’s no doubt that the majority of the 25% of the state’s acres that are left to plant are located on the eastern side,” Calhoun said. 🌾



“

This year, our growers had their seed and planters ready, and there was a mad rush at the beginning of the season to plant as quickly as possible. While cotton has been hung up for the most part, the growers that hit their target planting dates for other row crops are satisfied right now with how their crop is looking.

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PEPA reminds members to **BE AWARE OF SCAMS**



by Jennifer Johnson

The phone rings and you see a local number or a familiar one. The caller on the other end of the line tells you there has been a mistake with your power bill, and you've been overcharged. Your thoughts race – you could really use some extra money for medicine or food.

But wait – you could be dealing with a scammer. Some Pontotoc Electric members have received calls lately, stating the caller was from PEPA and needed the member's bank account number to send a refund. That's a red flag. In most cases, a utility will apply a credit to your account to cover future charges or refund an overpayment with a mailed check.

“

Make sure you never give out personal information. If you have any doubt, give us a call to discuss it.

Another thing to look out for is a fraudulent website pretending to be an electric utility. Scammers often create look-alike sites to steal your personal or payment information. Always type your utility's official web address directly into your browser instead of clicking email or text links. Watch for signs of a secure website, such as “https://” in the address bar and a padlock icon.

Please be mindful of the information that is being asked for and don't fall victim to a scam. PEPA General Manager Frankie Moorman said, “We want our members to know there are schemes out there to try to take their money. We don't want that to happen to anyone. We want to remind our customers to be vigilant about these things.”

PEPA Manager of Customer Accounts Lavonia Lackey said, “Make sure you never give out personal information. If you have any doubt, give us a call to discuss it.”



Pollard Thrives on Learning



The Pollards pictured before an Independence Day Parade in Pontotoc.

by Jennifer Johnson

When it comes to learning new things, PEPA Member Felicia Pollard is like “the kid in the candy store.” It’s been part of her life since childhood. She remembers learning and playing board games with her grandmother. “We would sit for what seemed like hours playing games like Trouble, Sorry, or Parcheesi. She never let me win. I had to earn my win.”

She loved school, in part because of how much time she spent there with what she calls her extended family. “My mom was a teacher. School was a safe place for me. I knew the teachers. I roamed the halls in the summers. I always felt at home at school.”

After graduating from high school in 2001, Pollard continued learning. She got her undergraduate degree in elementary education at the University of Mississippi, then worked in the School of Education as a graduate assistant while earning her master’s degree in curriculum and instruction.

“

I want people to say they came to know Jesus more because they knew me. I hope I am remembered for my work ethic. I hope people see me as someone who was a doer and as someone who enjoyed serving.

During her time at Ole Miss, Pollard met future husband Cullen. They were introduced in college by Pollard’s roommate during junior year but didn’t start dating until Pollard was in graduate school.

Pollard said when she was in high school she had a conversation with her mother about a certain kind of man that she wanted to marry. “I told my mom I was praying I met a supermodel who loved Jesus. When Cullen and I started dating, I told my mom he was too nice. We will be married 18 years this summer, and I’m more thankful each passing year that I chose the nice guy that loved Jesus.”

After college, Pollard worked for two years in the Tupelo Public School District and taught for three years at Pontotoc Elementary. Then, she entered the principal corps at Ole Miss to earn her

specialist degree in educational leadership. (The four levels of degree are bachelor's, master's, specialist, and doctorate. Pollard has all four. She's also a National Board Certified Teacher.) After that, she took a job as a school administrator in the Lafayette County School District. A decade later, Pollard returned to Pontotoc to work in the district office at Pontotoc City Schools.

Pollard keeps busy. Between her job, community work, and raising a family – they have three boys: Jett, 12, Crosby, 7, and Berkley, almost 2. Pollard has a lot on her plate. She cherishes not just the big moments in their lives, but also those that have eternal significance. “We’ve had the opportunity to see our oldest accept Jesus and be baptized, and we eagerly await for our younger boys to do the same. Those kinds of sweeter moments are more meaningful in the grand scheme of life.”

Pollard finds enjoyment in painting and in making and decorating sugar cookies. She took up sewing about 20 years ago, and she said she comes back to it time and again. She studied to become a yoga teacher after the pandemic, and most recently, she learned to play and teach Majong, a game that originated in China in the 19th century. She credits mom Sarah Carter Brown, a retired teacher, with passing down the desire to be creative. “I grew up with an insanely talented mother, so her hobbies growing up are where I find comfort as I age.”

Pollard said she’s enjoying this chapter of her life but does have big plans for years down the road. “I’m beginning my 20th year in education, but with a child under 2, I know I will be in education for several more years. When I eventually retire, I know I won’t be a sit-at-home person.”

And one day when the road comes to an end? “I want people to say they came to know Jesus more because they knew me. I hope I am remembered for my work ethic. I hope people see me as someone who was a doer and as someone who enjoyed serving.”



Above: Pollard enjoys painting wedding scenes as the ceremonies take place.



Left: A completed picture of a bridal couple painted by Felicia Pollard.

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10
Years

Rhianna McClellan: 10 years of service

CORRECTION - In the service anniversaries in the June 2025 issue of *Today in Mississippi*, Service Clerk Rhianna McClellan was recognized as having five years of service. Rhianna has 10 years of service. We apologize for the error.



SUMMER RECIPES

for desserts bright as the sun!

Ice Cream Sandwich Cake

Betty Armstrong, PEPA Retiree

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1 package German chocolate cake mix | 4 eggs |
| 2 sticks margarine | 8 ounces cream cheese, softened |
| 1 box powdered sugar | 1 teaspoon vanilla |

Mix cake mix, 2 eggs, and 1 stick melted margarine. Press in a 9 x 13 pan. Cream 8 oz. cream cheese, 1 stick margarine, 2 eggs, and vanilla. Add to powdered sugar and put on top of cake mixture. Bake at 350 degrees until cake is set (40 -50 minutes or longer if needed.) Do not dry out.

Banana Split Pie

Mary Williamson, Collection Manager

- | | |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 2 cups graham cracker crumbs | 1 large Cool Whip |
| 3 bananas, sliced | 2 cups confectioner sugar |
| 3 sticks oleo | 1 cup pecans |
| 1 large can pineapple, drained | 1 small jar cherries |
| 2 eggs | |

Mix graham cracker crumbs with 1 stick melted oleo. Place in 9 x 13 Pyrex dish. Mix eggs, sugar, and 2 sticks oleo. Blend for 10 minutes. Pour over crust. Layer sliced bananas, pineapple, and Cool Whip. End by adding cherries and pecans on top.

Key Lime Pie

Jennifer Johnson, HR Manager

- | | |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------|
| ½ cup key lime juice | 2 tablespoons sugar |
| 1 tablespoon lemon juice | 1 can sweetened, condensed milk |
| 3 eggs, separated | |

Beat egg yolks. Add sweetened, condensed milk and juices. Beat egg whites and add sugar. Fold white mixture into yellow mixture. Pour into graham cracker crust and bake 15 – 20 minutes at 325 degrees. Allow to cool, then top with Cool Whip. (Best to refrigerate about 6 hours before serving.)

Lemon Pound Cake

Sue Cook, PEPA Retiree

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|------------------|
| 1 yellow cake mix | 1 cup sour cream |
| 1 package Jello instant lemon pudding | 4 eggs |
| | ½ cup oil |

Mix together and pour into tube pan. Bake at 350 degrees for 55 minutes or until done.

WARNING - WARNING - WARNING

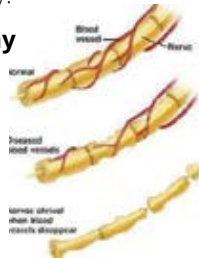
If Your Hands, Arms, Feet, or Legs Are Numb - If You Feel Shooting or Burning Pain or An Electric Sensation - You Are at Risk Don't Let Creeping Nerve Death Ruin Your Life

Get The Help You Need - Here's What You Need to Know...

Purvis, MS - If you experience numbness or tingling in your hands, arms, legs, or feet or if you experience shooting or burning pain, this is important.

Please read this carefully.

Peripheral Neuropathy is when small blood vessels in the hands, arms, feet or legs become diseased and tiny nerves that keep the cells and muscles working properly shrivel up and die.



Early-warning symptoms include tingling and numbness, mild loss of feeling in your hands, arms, legs or feet, inability to feel your feet, which increases your risk of foot-injury and falling.

More Advanced Symptoms Include...

- Loss of coordination & dexterity, which puts you at increased risk of accidents.
- Inability to feel clothing like socks and gloves.
- High risk of falling, which makes walking dangerous, and makes you more dependent on others.
- Burning sensations in your arms, legs, hands or feet that may start mild, but as nerves and muscles die, may feel like you're being burned by a blow torch.

Ignore the early warning signals long enough and you risk progressive nerve damage leading to muscle wasting, severe pain, loss of balance and a lot of staying at home wishing you didn't hurt.

When every step is like walking on hot coals, sitting still may be the only thing you feel like doing. But there's little joy in sitting still all day long.



Without treatment, nerve degeneration that begins with slight tingling or numbness may lead to a hot burning sensation and intense pain. Without treatment muscle wasting, loss of mobility and loss of independence is often the next stop.

Now here's the scary part....

- Nerve damage CAUSES cell damage.
- Cell damage SPEEDS UP nerve degeneration

Without treatment this can become a DOWN-WARD SPIRAL that accelerates.

The damage can get worse fast. Mild symptoms intensify. Slight tingling, numbness or lack of feeling can turn into burning pain.

Before you know it, damage can become so bad you hurt all the time.

Unless this downward spiral is stopped and nerves return to proper function - the damage to nerves and cells in the affected area can get so bad your muscles begin to die right along with the nerves and cells. And that sets the stage for weakness, loss of mobility, disability, and dependence on others.

If you have early warning signs of peripheral neuropathy, (tingling &/or numbness, loss of feeling or pain) it's CRITICAL you get proper treatment.

It's critical, because with proper treatment the symptoms can often be reversed. Without it, you are playing Russian Roulette with your health.

Once your nerve loss reaches 85%, odds are there's nothing any doctor can do to help.

The most common method your doctor may recommend to treat neuropathy is prescription drugs



Drugs like Gabapentin, Lyrica, Cymbalta, & Neurontin are often prescribed to manage the pain. But, damaged nerves and dying cells do not heal on their own.

Pain pills do not restore healthy nerve function. They just mask the pain as the nerves continue to degenerate and cells and muscle continue to die.

Taking endless drugs and suffering terrible side effects that may damage your liver & kidney and create even more problems, is not a reasonable path. You deserve better.

Three things must be determined to effectively treat neuropathy. 1) What is the underlying cause? 2) How much nerve damage has been sustained? 3) How much treatment your condition will require?

With proper treatment, shriveled blood vessels grow back & nerves can return to proper function. How much treatment you may need depends on your condition.

At **Purvis Chiropractic** we do a complete neuropathy sensitivity exam to determine the extent of your nerve damage. The exam includes a detailed sensory evaluation, extensive peripheral vascular testing, & a detailed analysis of the findings.

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Greg Harkins

Will Rock

Greg Harkins has made rocking chairs by hand for 50 years.



Photos by Chad Calcote

by Steven Ward

Master Craftsman Greg Harkins, who has been making rocking chairs by hand for 50 years, hopes his art doesn't vanish after he passes.

Virtually no one does it anymore.

"Not enough people are doing it. I can't find anybody," Harkins, 73, said recently at his woodshop in Canton.

"I'm always looking for another Hodges," Harkins said, referring to his 24-year-old apprentice, Hodges Boland.

Boland, a family friend originally from Jackson who grew up in Michigan before moving back to Mississippi, started to work with Harkins four years ago.

Boland built and sold his first rocking chair a year and half ago.

Boland said he learned the rocking chair process from Harkins, plus a whole lot more.

"I've learned all kinds of random stuff from Greg. What I love about the chairmaking process is the meeting of practicality and art," Boland said.

Still, Harkins is always on the lookout for "another Hodges."

"Nobody really understands what I do," Harkins said.

“

Sometimes I was working 18-hour days.

No way I could have done that without my work ethic. It was in my blood. You also must love it.

He's always hoping to change that, either through 5-day classes he teaches to willing participants or just maybe through the sale of his chairs to the public.

Harkins, a Mississippi native originally from Jackson, is world famous for his rocking chairs.

He has made and sold his chairs to residents of more than 35 countries and sold "multiple chairs to people in every state in the union," he said.

He's made chairs for five former presidents — Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan, George H. W. Bush, Bill Clinton, and George W. Bush — and President Donald Trump. He also made a chair for Pope John Paul II.

He signs and dates each chair, which run in price from \$1,500 to \$3,500. He makes his chairs with oak, walnut, and bodock wood, which is yellow and slowly transforms over the years into a mahogany-type color.

Harkins picks out the trees, has them cut down, peels the bark off the hickory logs, uses a sawmill to cut them, whittles them down, builds the frame, hand weaves the backs and bottoms with the cut tree bark, builds the arms and rocker, puts pegs in, sands them, assembles them, and then creates the finish.

Today, he can build one to two chairs a week. When he was younger and had more help, he made about 15 a week.

Like Boland learning the craft from Harkins, Harkins was an apprentice to Mississippi woodworker Tom Bell. Bell, based in Thomastown in Leake County, worked with Harkins for about a year and half in the early 1980s following Harkins' time at Mississippi State where he earned a degree in psychology.

"I didn't make much money back then, about \$30 a week. He would fill my tank up," Harkins said.

Harkins said Tom's wife, Mabel Bell, kept him fed in those days, with both food and good stories.

Although he worked with seven different woodworkers when he was younger, Harkins said Bell was the teacher who pulled everything together for him in the end.

"Each man had a different slant on it (woodworking), but the common thread was chairs. And Tommy Bell was fantastic," Harkins said. He also said the other craftsmen he worked with all thought Bell was the best around.

Harkins said making rocking chairs by hand is hard work, and he couldn't do it without the work ethic passed down to him from his father and grandfather.

"Sometimes I was working 18-hour days. No way I could have done that without my work ethic. It was in my blood. You also must love it," Harkins said.

Harkins, who called himself "sentimental and tender," has fond memories of all his grandparents, including his paternal grandmother, Thelma Harkins, who he called "Nanny."

Harkins has a walnut rocking chair given to him by Thelma Harkins, a chair that is 125 years old and has been used by seven generations of his family.

"You can look at the chair and see that there's not an error in it."

Harkins said he spent a lot of time at Thelma Harkins' farm in Leake County when he was young.

"We would be in her chicken yard and sitting on the tree stump where that chair was made. And she would just tell me these wonderful stories again and again," Harkins said.

Harkins' national reputation as a chair maker is "staggering," he said. But it's hard for him to see himself in that light.

"I'm not anybody but me. I'm not Superman. I'm just me," he said.

Harkins said he seems to sell more chairs to people outside of his home state.

Harkins said he was once at a crafts show in Dallas when a man came up to him, complimented him on his chairs, and said he wanted to buy four of them.



Hanging from the rafters of the shop are coils of bark, stripped from trees, to be used in the seat webbing of rocking chairs.



Above: Hodges Boland, Harkins' apprentice, sits in the workshop while crafting a chair and learning how to perfect his skills. Right: Harkins uses a drill press to route holes in the turned wood designs to prepare the chair for final assembly.





Harkins, with the help of his friend Mark Stietenroth, works at a band saw, as he cuts strips of bark.



Harkins with his apprentice, Hodges Boland.

“The man told me, ‘We have nice chairs in Mississippi, but nothing like this.’ I asked him if he was from Mississippi. He said he was from Durant. I told him I lived in Vaughn. He was shocked,” Harkins said laughing.

Although his home and shop were based in Vaughn for years, he now owns about 80 acres in Canton, where he lives and works today.

Harkins is fan of birds.

The space between his house and woodshop is spotted by cages with multi-colored Chinese pheasants, as well as chickens, pigeons, and other kinds of birds.

“Aren’t they beautiful,” Harkins said looking at one of the Chinese pheasants.

Harkins said he plans to use a former Catholic church on his property to open a school — the St. Anne’s School of Arts and Crafts.

The church was built by the Harkins family as a log church and rebuilt as a brick church before it was dedicated to the Catholic Church.

As for Boland, Harkins will be leaving his materials and tools to his apprentice.

“Hodges is a dream come true. Tom Bell was frantic to find someone to carry on his legacy, and now I understand why,” Harkins said.

“I would like to leave him with about 100 orders. That will give him work for a long time.”

Having said that, Harkins isn’t planning on retiring exactly.

“I should have stopped a couple of years ago. But I have such a love for this. I will keep on building these chairs until I die.” ✨



For more information about
Harkins, his chairs, or classes,
visit harkinschairs.com
or call 601-201-1480.



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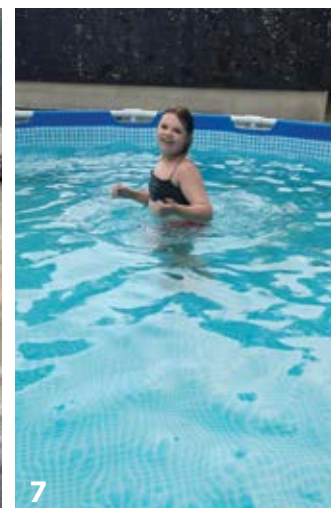
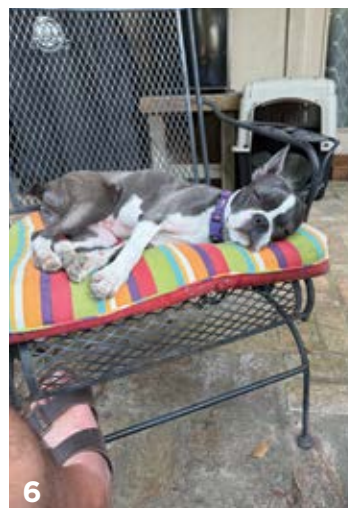
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Outdoor Fun



1. Grandson Braxton's great catch. **Tammy Bufkin** of Lena; Central Electric member.
2. Evelyn. **Desiree' Wilson** of Steens; 4-County Electric member.
3. Caught. **Blanche Walters** of Picayune; Pearl River Valley Electric member.
4. Getting wet. **Natalie Sandford** of Bassfield; Pearl River Valley Electric member.

5. Fall leaves. **Tammy Bufkin** of Lena; Central Electric member.
6. Nola takes a nap. **Andy Tuccio** of Brandon; Central Electric member.
7. Fun in the pool. **Blanche Walters** of Picayune; Pearl River Valley Electric member.

Next in Picture This:

GIDDY UP



Send us a photo of your horses or the horses you and your family ride. Maybe your kids or grandkids have taken pony rides. Send us their photos. The photos must be high-resolution JPG files of at least 1 MB in size. Please send the photo as an attachment to an email and send it to news@ecm.coop. Each entry must be accompanied by photographer or sender's name, address, and co-op.

SUBMISSION DEADLINE: Sept. 2. Select photos will appear in the October 2025 issue.



The FARMHOUSE Kitchen

with Vicki Leach

COBBLER TIME WITH A SUMMER'S BOUNTY

Once upon a time in a land of sweet tea and sweltering temperatures, blackberries would grow alongside winding back roads in remote areas of the country, close to where I grew up. People would drive out into the wilderness, clad in fishing boots and carrying 5-gallon buckets, with one mission in mind: fill up the bucket with blackberries. And, if by chance said 'people' was my mom, we — my brothers and me — would be invited to tag along. Smelling of Avon Skin-So-Soft and DDT, we'd busy ourselves picking berries. Wild blackberries didn't grow in rows, and I can't tell you how many times I got my ponytail tangled up in a bush. The work wasn't for the faint of heart. We'd pick some, eat a few, and I'd be fine until she'd say something motherly like, "rattlesnakes like blackberries, too, so y'all be careful where you step." (I've come to

learn that she lied when she said that) But, when we were done — covered with splinters, fingers stained with inky juice, and eaten up with chiggers — we'd head home to a Clorox bath and a nice early bedtime.

I have fond memories of all the things made from our summer's pickings — jams, jellies, preserves, and cobblers. The memories of those summer activities are just as sweet as the foods that went along with them. Sitting under my maw maw's peach trees shucking corn was about my least favorite thing to do, but the peaches those trees put out were the sweetest I've ever tasted.

Summer's bounty should be enjoyed. Pick a few berries. Buy a few peaches. Make a cobbler or two. Use these recipes if you don't have your own, and thank the good Lord that you don't have to dodge rattlesnakes or briar bushes to put something delightful on your table! 

BLACKBERRY COBBLER

Serves 8

FOR BERRIES

- 2 pounds frozen blackberries (2 1-pound bags)
- 1 ½ cups granulated sugar
- 2 cups water

FOR CRUMBLE TOPPING

- 1 cup self-rising flour
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 1 stick cold butter

The filling might be a little thin for your taste when it's piping hot out of the oven. We're OK with that, but to thicken the mixture a bit, mix 2 tablespoons of cornstarch with 2 tablespoons of water and stir into the berries while they are boiling. Remember, as the cobbler cools, the fruit will thicken a little more.

Heat frozen berries with sugar in a 4-quart saucepot until the berries begin to thaw a bit and the sugar begins to melt, stirring as they come to a boil (about 5 minutes). Add 2 cups of water and bring back to a boil. Cook for about 10 minutes. There will be about twice the amount of liquid as berries at this point. Pour into a well-sprayed 2-quart casserole dish.

Combine flour, sugar, and butter in a medium bowl, cutting in the cold butter with a pastry blender (use your fingers or a fork if you don't have one). Butter should be in pea sized or smaller pieces, and the mixture will be crumbly. Sprinkle this mixture evenly over the hot berries in the casserole dish. Place dish on a foil lined pan. Plan on it bubbling over. Bake at 350 degrees for 25-30 minutes. Top will be crusty and browned.



PEACH COBBLER

Makes 12-16 servings

INGREDIENTS

- 1 stick butter
- 1 cup milk
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 1 cup self-rising flour
- 2 29-ounce cans sliced peaches, drained slightly and chopped up a bit
- ½ cup granulated sugar
- 1 teaspoon vanilla

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Melt the stick of butter in a 2-quart casserole dish. Remove from oven. Mix together the milk, 1 cup of sugar, and flour with a whisk in a bowl. Pour into the melted butter. Don't mix, but using a knife, swirl the batter around in the butter just to distribute a bit.

Stir the ½ cup sugar and vanilla into peaches. Pour peaches into the pan of batter. DON'T MIX. Bake for 40 minutes until hot and bubbly, and the top is browned.

This is Peach Cobbler that resembles a dump cake. This one creates a nice fluffy, cake-like crust around and on top of the peaches. A touch more liquid in the peaches can make it a bit juicier. Substitute other fruits if you like. Using about 8 cups of frozen peaches will work. Increase sugar to at least a cup. Fresh peaches are always the very best for cobblers. A heaping 4 cups of sliced peaches with about 1 ½ cups of sugar will work.



by Vicki Leach

Vicki Leach is a full-time chef/culinary instructor at Mississippi State University in the Department of Food Science, Nutrition, and Health Promotion. She teaches Science of Food Preparation, Foodservice Organization, and Quantity Food Production. She lives in a 130-year-old farmhouse that speaks to her old soul.

Events open to the public will be published free of charge as space allows. Submit details at least two months prior to the event date. Submissions must include a phone number with area code for publication. Email to news@ecm.coop. **Events are subject to change.**

Frost Bridge Camp Meeting. July 18-27. Waynesboro. The camp is located at 1455 Matherville Frost Bridge Road. The camp is a Bible-based family camp that meets once a year. Very reasonable rates for dining hall meals, boys' and girls' dorms, and newly remodeled hotel rooms for adults. Join us for service or come stay the whole week. Bible study daily at 9 a.m. in small groups for all ages. Morning worship begins at 10:30 a.m. and evening worship starts at 7 p.m. We have music led by the Isbell Family and enlightening preaching by nationally known evangelists, Rev. Friedeman and Rev. Womack. Youth rate to stay the entire 10 days is only \$200. Hotel rooms beginning at \$25 a night and RV with full hookups for \$25 per day. Details: 205-292-9176 or visit frostbridgecamp.com.

Magnolia State Bluegrass Association Summer Show. July 19. Mathiston. From 1 p.m. to 7 p.m. at the Sherwood Community Center, 23E Sherwood OCL Rd. Concessions in site. Bring a chair. \$15 a ticket. Free for members, Children 12 and under with an adult get in free. Details: 601-527-9127 or visit MSBAmusic.com.

The 10th Clarke County Chamber of Commerce River Fun Run. July 26. Desoto to Quitman. Bring kayaks, canoes, or flat bottom boats to paddle the Chickasawhay River from Desoto to Quitman. Children must be accompanied by an adult. The entry fee is \$35 which includes a t-shirt, lunch, and prizes. Details: 601-776-5701.

The Calhoun County Sacred Harp Convention. Aug. 9 Vardaman. The event will be hosted at Mt. Herman Primitive Baptist Church 163 County Rd 427 (Hollis Switch Road), approximately 3 miles west of Vardaman. Singing starts at 10 a.m. with lunch in the fellowship hall at noon. Adopted tune books for this singing are the 1991 Sacred Harp and the 1911 Sacred Harp (J.L. White Edition). Details: 662-507-9434.

The Mississippi Sacred Harp State Convention. Aug 23 and 24. Forest. This event will be hosted at Antioch Primitive Baptist Church, 6931 Miss. Highway 21, about 6 miles north of Forest. Singing begins at 10 a.m. on both days. Adopted song books are the 1991 Sacred Harp, B.F. White Sacred Harp (Cooper Book), 2010 Christian Harmony, and the 1911 Sacred Harp (J.L. White Edition). Details: 601-940-1612 or email marksdavi19@gmail.com.

Harrisville Day. Sept. 27. Harrisville. The event will be held at 1767 Harrisville Community Park. Fun, food, games, music, bounce houses, vendors and car show. Firefighters will be cooking barbecue. The event starts at 8 a.m. Details: 624-927-0445 or 601-942-1480.

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Summer ROAD TRIPS

The three of us were riding together on our way back from doing a live half hour “Your Home Town” episode in Brookhaven for our “Daily Sip at 3:30” show on WJTV. My co-host, Ken South, was one of my passengers along with our producer, Zach Mason. Both Ken and I have done television shows going around the state showing what we’ve seen. Ken’s segment, “South Bound” ran for many seasons on WJTV. I host “Mississippi Roads” on Mississippi Public Broadcasting. So, Ken and I were comparing notes on places we have been.

“

I am really fond of Tishomingo State Park. The old Civilian Conservation Corps cabins remind me of a past I never experienced, except in stories the “old folks” told after supper at Grandma’s house in Fulton.

We sort of dwelled on northeast Mississippi for a while — Corinth, Iuka, J.P. Coleman, and Tishomingo State Parks. Ken remembered Borroum Drugs in Corinth and the slug burgers. I remembered the Old Courthouse Museum in Iuka. It houses lots of family records and census data along with artifacts. I did a story there several years ago. When I’m in an old building, I sometimes ask, more or less as a joke, is it haunted? The genealogist I was interviewing told me, “No. I’ve never seen a ghost. But if I did, I’d probably ask him who his grandfather was.”

I am really fond of Tishomingo State Park. The old Civilian Conservation Corps cabins —built during the Great Depression — remind me of a past I never experienced, except in stories the “old folks” told after supper at Grandma’s house in Fulton. The stories were about our pioneer ancestors who settled in that part of the country. I particularly like to slip up that way in fall or winter. Usually there aren’t so many other people around that time of year, and I can build a wood fire in the fireplace.

I guess I should have told Ken about one of our summer stays at Tishomingo. That was when Miz Jo taught me to cuss.

We were shooting several days’ worth of “Mississippi Roads” shows in that area. Instead of getting a motel room, I got us five nights in one of the old cabins at Tishomingo State Park. The first day we shot our story in whatever town it was, and then, Jo and I headed to the peace and quiet of the park. That night was wonderful. There was no television and no cell phones, just the breeze on the screen porch and the crickets.

The second day we feverishly shot two shows because bad weather was coming later in the week. I was looking forward to the cabin that night. No television, no telephone, just the breeze and the crickets.



The third day we dutifully did our filming for another show, and Jo and I headed back to Tishomingo Park to the cabin, the side porch, the evening breeze with no television, no telephones, just the crickets.

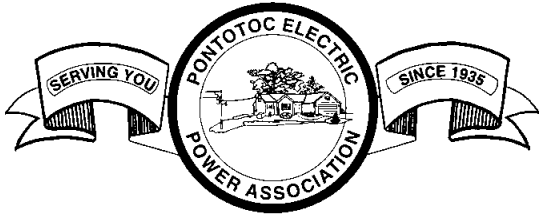
That’s when Jo said, “If I hear one more d - - n cricket!” She never said exactly what she’d do. I knew better than to ask.

So, I put her in the car and took her to the Walmart in Iuka, so she’d feel more at home. 🌿



by Walt Grayson

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