



I met Mike and some of my North Carolina friends for a day of fishing. Mike is a striper guide and I have been with him many times when he has put everyone on top of a school of these fighters. I've also noticed one of his best tactics for finding fish is not mounted to his boat. It's held in his hand. It's his phone. When the fish are not biting, he simply picks up the phone and calls another striper guide, and the other guide shares this helpful information with Mike.

Many times, there have been three different guides fishing within a few yards of each other. No selfishness. Nothing hidden. Just different guides trying to help each other be better guides, for the benefit of their clients.

In all of fishing, this is really unique in how they work together. I wish I had seen this in other areas of my life when I was growing up.

In the church world, I was raised in a time where it seemed we weren't allowed to help one another. After all, the Methodists are not as good as the Baptists, and the Pentecostals have so much more of God than the Presbyterians. So, we were all told. Surely God cannot bless

those who don't speak in tongues or who believe baptism is essential to salvation, or someone, God forbid, that doesn't believe in the premillennial return of Christ! And as a result, we kept fishing in the same dry hole, because it was better to fail than to partner with the beer drinking Catholics. And as a result, we all missed out on so much.

One of the most amazing truths that has rocked my world in the past few years is how just hours before Jesus was crucified, (yes, hours) he joined twelve men in an upper room and gave them one final commandment. It was to love people. Jesus said it this way. A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.

By this everyone will know that you are my disciples if you love one another." (John 13) Read that again if you need to. It's crazy good. He didn't say people will know we are followers of Christ by our affiliation, but by our affection.

Let me tell you another truth you may not have realized.... God is tenseless. That means God does not refer to or live in the past, present, or future. Everything is now. Everything is present. Everything is happening in real time with God. What a tremendous thought. Let me tell you why. Our world is in a mess today, and the question is, if Jesus were in the upper room today, what would God tell him to tell us? But he IS in the upper room today, and he is telling us the same thing. You see, it would be easy to say God was looking ahead when he told Jesus to give us this one commandment of love. But God was not looking ahead. He was looking around. He was looking around at pandemics and racism. He was looking around at genocide,

homicide, and suicide. He was looking around at injustices. He was looking around at the hungry and the homeless and the prisoner. And while he was looking around, he said, Jesus tell them this. "By this everyone will know you are my disciples if you love one another." So simple, yet so tremendously hard. Why? Because I must love the one I'm standing against.

You see, as Jesus looks around today, know that he didn't come to take sides. He came to make a new side. He didn't come to stand with a party. He came to make another party.

This new party is the party of lovers. The platform is love and those who affiliate with it will be people who are known for love. Because by this one thing, everyone will know we are followers of Jesus.

Not by our denomination or our differences, but by that one thing all followers share. Love.

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Attala Center holds PN pinning

Press Release

The Attala Center of Holmes Community College held a Pinning Ceremony for the graduating Practical Nursing Class of 2020 on June 25 at the center in Kosciusko. Included in the ceremony were the face-to-face students and the first graduates of the hybrid PN program.

Nineteen students were recognized during the ceremony including face-to-face graduates: Kristi Bagwell of McCool; Brianna Branch of Sallis; Lexie Brown of Kosciusko; Lanie Davis of Lexington; Christina Dossett of Winona; Jordan Eldridge of Carthage; LaKenya Latiker of Carthage; Carrie Lee of Kosciusko; Carley McClain of French Camp; Brittany McDaniel of McCool; Tiffany Sisney of Kosciusko; and Lanikka Thompson of



LANIE DAVIS



LANIKKA THOMPSON

Durant. Hybrid graduates included: Erin Hopkins of Richland, Sherita Latiker of Carthage, Lisa Nipper of Chatham, Jennifer Potts of Water Valley, Brandy Raines of Pontotoc and Cherry Singh of Ridgeland.

Each graduate entered the multi-room individually with their parents and received their diploma cover, pin and candle. They each heard a message from Class President Jordan Eldridge and a welcome from PN Chair and Instructor Dr. Christi Blair before reciting the nursing oath.

Awards for the face-to-face class included: valedictorian, Kristi Bagwell; salutatorian, Christina Dossett; and honors, Carrie Lee, Carley McClain, and Meagan Henry. Valedictorian for the hybrid class was Jennifer Potts while Cherry Singh and Brandy Raines were salutatorians.

Along with Eldridge, the other officers included: Carrie Lee, Vice-President; Brianna Branch, Secretary; and Brittany McDaniel, Treasurer.

Celebrate the good, while working on the rest

What says "forever Mississippi" to you?

When my children were young I had them smell things to imprint things deeply. In my lectures I often show a photo of Zoe with her face deep in a big magnolia flower, and explain that no matter who or where she ends up, for the rest of her life every time she encounters a magnolia flower its sweetness will evoke memories of her childhood home.

This sense of place is important: it's part of who we are, individually and collectively.

As I travel across the world, I'm often asked where I'm from and, because of our both good and bad cultural baggage, when I say "Mississippi," I get looks, comments. Many are favorable; some are not.

I just hold my head up and go on, because I treasure my ancestral home's peoples and cultures, knowing that we celebrate our good while working on the rest.

And to me, nothing epitomizes us better than our state flower. Its huge, fragrant flowers are instantly recognizable worldwide - I've photographed them across five continents (even in New York City); Europe's oldest botanic garden features an oversized magnolia flower sculpture.

It's not everyone's landscaping cup of tea, of course. It's a huge native tree; the largest in the world is a Delta monster topping 135 feet, and they drop leathery leaves thickly atop shallow roots. However, tidier, more compact cultivars are available for landscape use, including my favorite, the long-blooming Little Gem which is appropriate for accents and

screens in small gardens.

Still, there are reasons why we have long branded ourselves the Magnolia State. This largest flower in North America is our official floral emblem and state tree.

The durable Creataceous Period survivor, which still grows wild in our every county, outlived whatever killed the dinosaurs.

Because it represents both the enduring strength of our diverse people and cultures, as well as our natural heritage, since 1949 the Mississippi Department of Archives and History has featured a bold rendering of its flower and leaves on historical markers found in every community. And the Garden Clubs of Mississippi's Avenue of Magnolias astonishes every visitor and returning native with fourteen miles of the

stately trees lining the eight major entrances to the state. Impressive, to say the least.

All this is to say that, as of last month, we have a mandate to create something strong and evocative to represent Mississippi well to people both near and far. It's a chance to be uniquely reminiscent, much like Texans' Lone Star and the South Carolina's palmetto.

We have an opportunity to extend our positive market brand by putting, rather than something nearly generic, our world-celebrated state flower on a new state flag.

Our legislature has decreed that "In God We Trust" be including in the design. That's not my concern because it can easily underwrite a simple, bold rendering of the flower.

Note that I am not thinking

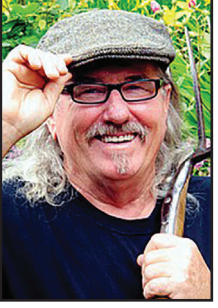
of the magnolia tree, just the flower itself, perhaps along the lines of what's featured on our historic markers.

Main thing is, little this side of roses brings more smiles than our magnolia flower, which, like the ancient trees, doesn't care who our Mamas 'n them were, but watches over us equally, regally, nonplussed about our shortcomings. I hope it ends up, in one form or another, on the Magnolia State's flag.

Regardless, magnolias will always kindle sweet forever memories. Get a child to smell its flower, then draw one for the 'fridge door. Looks good there, too.

For more information and photos, visit the detailed MagnoliaFlowerFlag.org link on my blog.

Felder Rushing is a Mississippi author, columnist, and host of the "Gestalt Gardener" on MPB Think Radio. Email gardening questions to rushingfelder@yahoo.com.



FELDER RUSHING



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