

GRACE VISITS ONCE AGAIN

Well, “Grace” has visited me once again. I am really tired of her surprise visits and the destruction that she leaves in its place. I had a procedure done in Jackson last week and was given a big dose of anesthesia. I don’t know how everyone else reacts to this “la la sleep” but I am zonked out far longer than my wake-up period. Of course, my husband was my principal driver as we drove home, a drive I do not even remember. The last thing I remember was the doctor waking me up and telling me it was over and then I remember being

helped up from underneath the bumper of my husband’s car with blood streaming down my face and my left leg twisted underneath me. I understand it was quite the situation of his getting me on my feet and mobile to get inside. (It seemed I wanted to crawl around on the carport on my hands and knees.)

To make a long story short, with the help of one of our grandsons, they did get me in a wheelchair and to the emergency room for ex-rays and to close the cut above my eye. Still, I didn’t feel too much pain, not yet as my “la la sleep” was still holding on.

Now I have been in a wheelchair and on a walker for nearly a week and my left eye and side of my face looks as if I may have gotten the bad end of a fight with Sugar Ray. I have a deep cut above my left eye that has turned my eye completely black that causes onlookers to take a second and third look. I twisted the anterior ligament behind my knee and cannot walk so I am “wheeling”.

My skills are not very good at driving this four wheeled

chair as I have run over my dog a couple of times, nearly missed the seat from not securing the brakes, got hung in the middle of a door, scraped the tops of both hands pushing by my brick walls, and backed into numerous pieces of furniture.

As I have said before in my column, I have broken a shoulder, an arm, an ankle, a foot and a toe. I am comparable to a bionic woman with all my replacement parts, and now I can add a knee to my repertoire.

I’m giving you a very easy recipe, one that I can fix in my chair with wheels or holding on to the top of the cabinet to stand.

SMOKED SAUSAGES AND POTATOES

1 pound of cut up white potatoes and 2 sweet potatoes, 1 minced onion, 1 minced bell pepper, 1 package of smoked sausage cut into inch chunks, 2 t. Italian seasoning, ½ t. red chili pepper, ½ t. minced garlic, 3 T. of oil, salt and pepper



Peggy’s Take



Saving for college

I have two interesting facts to begin today’s article with. First, the oldest millennials are turning 40. Second, about two-thirds of them are still paying off their student loans. Let those numbers sink in for a minute.

The student loan crisis is real, and it’s only growing. Between 2007 and 2017, the average student loan debt increased 58.5 percent. Unfortunately, it grew faster in Mississippi than in almost any state in the nation.

The average Mississippi student now graduates with \$30,328 worth of debt. So, it shouldn’t surprise any of us when we learn that about 30 percent of young people choose to delay major life

I use a big cast iron skillet, sprayed. Mix all the ingredients really well with oil and seasonings. Cover and place in a 350* oven for 45 minutes and uncover for about 10. Sprinkle with Parmesan cheese.

Peggy Sims is a life-long resident of Attala County and columnist.

milestones - like buying a home, getting married, or starting a family – because of these loans.

This begs the question: What do we do about it? How do we protect the next generation from this burden of debt?

I do not support progressive proposals that force taxpayers to foot the bill for existing student loans. For one, it would be expensive, with costs ranging from \$373 billion to \$1.6 trillion. Secondly, it would fail to allow the free market to work, removing much of our ability to hold colleges and universities accountable for tuition spikes.

Instead, being grounded by the conservative principle of personal responsibility, I am simply working with families to better prepare for the cost of a modern-day college degree. More specifically, the State Treasury offers two Mississippi 529 plans to help families save.

The first, MPACT, allows you to lock in today’s rates and prepay your child’s col-

lege tuition, thereby protecting you from future increases. The earlier you start an MPACT plan, the easier the month-to-month financial lift will be. Visit Treasury.MS.gov/MPACT to learn more.

The second, MACS, allows you to put away money in a tax-advantaged savings account. This money is able to gain interest over time. Money from your MACS account can be used to pay for tuition, but it can also be applied to room and board expenses, books, and much more. An account like this has a very low bar for entry; just \$25 can get you started! Learn more at Treasury.MS.gov/MACS.

As we continue to celebrate Financial Education Month this April, I encourage you to learn more about the opportunities we offer to financially prepare for college expenses. If you have any questions, please contact my office at 601-359-3600.

Mississippi Treasurer David McRae is the 55th Treasurer for the State of Mississippi. In this role, he helps manage the state’s cash flow, oversees College Savings Mississippi, and has returned more than \$20 million in unclaimed money to Mississippians. For more information, visit Treasury.MS.gov.

Mississippi marijuana program hinges on initiative arguments

JACKSON, Miss. (AP) — The Mississippi Supreme Court heard arguments Wednesday in a lawsuit that’s trying to block a voter-approved medical marijuana program by disputing how the issue got onto the ballot.

Arguments were not about marijuana. Instead, they were about Mississippi’s initiative process.

Voters in November approved Initiative 65, which requires the state Health Department to establish a medical marijuana program by the middle of this year. The department is working to create a program, even as the legal fight continues.

To get Initiative 65 on the statewide ballot, organizers gathered signatures from the five congressional districts that Mississippi used during the 1990s. They did that based on legal advice issued years ago by the state attorney general’s office.

Madison Mayor Mary Hawkins Butler filed a lawsuit days before the election, contending that the state’s initiative process is outdated.

The Mississippi Constitution says petitioners must gather an equal number of signatures from five congressional districts. The state dropped from five congressional districts to four after the 2000 Census, but the constitution’s language



Mississippi Supreme Court Chief Justice Michael Randolph questions attorneys presenting arguments over a lawsuit that challenges the state’s initiative process and seeks to overturn a medical marijuana initiative that voters approved in November 2020, Wednesday, April 14, 2021, in Jackson, Miss. (AP Photo/Rogelio V. Solis)

about initiatives was not updated. Butler’s lawsuit argues that this creates a mathematical impossibility with four districts because the constitution still specifies that no more than one-fifth of the signatures may come from any single district.

In papers filed Dec. 28 and in the Supreme Court on Wednesday, state attorneys argued that Mississippi has two sets of congressional districts — one set used for congressional elections and one set used for other purposes.

Kaytie Pickett, an attorney for Butler, argued that the only purpose of a congressional district is to have geographical boundaries for

electing U.S. House members.

“To define it as anything else is to deprive it of its meaning,” Pickett told justices.

Deputy attorney general Justin Matheny argued that Mississippi uses congressional districts and Supreme Court districts for other purposes. For example, members of some boards or commissions are nominated from those districts to ensure geographical diversity — and some of those boards are based on the five old congressional districts.

Chief Justice Michael Randolph said seven bills have been filed over the years to update Mississippi’s ini-

tiative process to remove confusion about signatures coming from old or new congressional districts, and legislators have not made the change.

Justice Dawn Beam said at the beginning of Wednesday’s hearing that the case affects medical marijuana but the legal dispute is not about that issue.

“It is totally irrelevant what this court thinks of Initiative 65, or how we voted,” Beam said.

Butler opposed Initiative 65 because it limits a city’s ability to regulate the location of medical marijuana businesses.

The Health Department, the Mississippi Municipal League and some others filed briefs supporting Butler’s lawsuit. The Health Department argued that Initiative 65 seeks to transform the department “into something it is not,” even as the department is stretched because of the coronavirus pandemic.

During the legislative session that recently ended, the Senate tried to create rules for a state medical marijuana program, but the House defeated the effort. Republican Sen. Kevin Blackwell of DeSoto County said the proposal was a backstop to have a program in place in case the Supreme Court agrees with Butler and invalidates Initiative 65. But supporters of Initiative 65 balked at the Senate’s proposal, saying they saw it as an attempt to usurp the will of the voters.

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