

Excerpts from Bob Edmonds' books

The older people had just about forgotten about Reconstruction when the boll weevil, Herbert Hoover, and the Great Depression came along – all in just over a decade – to remind them of the bad old days. Folks just were not prepared for anything like that combination. The boll weevil reached McCormick County in token numbers in 1919. By 1921, it was primed for destruction and in 1922 the pest virtually destroyed the cotton crop. Farmers desperately fought back and tried to hold on to cotton for their main cash crop. But, during the next two or three decades “King Cotton” would die a slow inglorious death – less than that befitting a king. Indeed, men had fought and died, had enslaved, and been enslaved to savor his riches. His death finally came about with only scant mention.

Almost all the homes lacked both electricity and running water. Men tilled the fields with mule-drawn plows. Women cooked on wood-burning stoves, washed clothes by hand, and joined the men in the fields during the busy seasons. Families salted meat for winter storage, counted fish caught or game hunted part of their dietary staples, and often substituted a fall hog slaughter for Thanksgiving celebrations. Radio, powered by batteries, offered glimpses of the modern world outside.

Black Thursday, October 24, 1929, stunned the Nation. It stunned McCormick County folks. Failure of Farmers Bank to open on Wednesday morning, June 11, 1930, sent shock waves through the community. As the depression deepened, it produced conditions in McCormick County that were among the worst in the country. The suffering of the farmers produced reverberations throughout the county's economy. Peoples Bank and businessmen had loaned money for spring fertilizer, seed, and stock, and with a poor harvest, farmers could not repay the loans. Merchants in the rural towns could not sell their merchandise. School districts encountered growing agitation from a segment of citizens to cut the school year, and to halt local public improvements or road building and repair. County residents were just that year seeing much-needed first road paving as contractors placed concrete pavement on Main Street in the town of McCormick and on Route 43 (now U.S. 378) from McCormick to the Edgefield County line. These activities depended on local tax levies, and some farmers wanted the levies cut. Officials argued against cutting local spending and activities, because spending cuts would also mean increased unemployment as road construction and maintenance workers and schoolteachers would be thrown out of work.

Cotton, perhaps more than anything else, was the driving economic force in the creation of McCormick County. Cotton had created two dominant labor systems, slavery in the Old South and sharecropping in the New South.

The Great Depression had arrived in McCormick County. “King Cotton” was sick, and the disease infected the whole organism, from the poorest farmer to the rich businessman. In 1930, dry weather conspired with depression to make for a dismal year marked by poor crops and continuing business decline.

By September the price of cotton dropped to 8¼¢ per pound. Farmers depended upon cotton for cash. The timber industry offered another source of earnings supplements for self-sufficing farmers seeking cash. Farmers often worked at sawmills during periods when cotton and other row crop farming would permit their absence. But the lumber business also fell on hard times leaving many farmers and timber men unemployed.

From *Growing Up Southern: A Memoir*



Bob Edmonds



The wild horses of Cumberland Island.

- Tom Poland photo

Across the Savannah Wild horses

By Tom Poland
Walk-On Writer
Back Road Explorer
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When I hear some determined soul say “wild horses couldn't pull me away” thoughts race through my mind. First, I think of Muscle Shoals, Alabama. You'd think it'd be Mussel Shoals as mussels and waterways go together, but no, it's Muscle Shoals. Why do I think of Muscle Shoals? Because that's where the Rolling Stones recorded their big hit, “Wild Horses.”

Then I think of Chuck Leavell, once with the Allman Brothers Band and now with the Rolling Stones, who once worked at Muscle Shoals as a studio musician. At the tender age of fifteen, he struck out for Muscle Shoals where he began his ascent. His path and mine crossed and so when I hear those two words, “wild horses,” I think of Chuck.

Another thought sends me back to 2010 and a hot August day when I followed men on marsh tackies. They were hunting wild hogs on stalwart horses the Spanish stranded on our Atlantic shore in the 1600s. That was when stunned English explorers, mouths agape, beheld Cherokee and Chickasaw Indians riding small, rugged horses. Abandoned by the Spaniards, feral marsh tackies sought refuge in Lowcountry marshes, where they were captured and domesticated, first by native people, then by European settlers and African slaves. Conquistadors, thank you for gifting us wild horses. Whether left behind by design or here because shipwreck sent them swimming ashore, we're glad to have them.

Yet another notion pops into my mind, Cumberland Island. Yes, Cumberland Island where another ill-fated Kennedy, John Junior, married. This national seashore is home to wild horses and the majestic ruins of a majestic place with a majestic name, Dungeness. The list of those who built and lived on Cumberland reads like a who's who of the famous and extraordinary. Among the names are James Oglethorpe, Nathaniel Greene, Henry “Light-Horse Harry” Lee, father of Robert E. Lee, and Thomas M. Carnegie, brother of Andrew Carnegie. It was the Carnegies who built Dungeness. Fire, possibly arson, destroyed the mansion in 1959 and today its ruins send a clear and utterly undeniable message – nothing lasts forever.

When I hear the Stones song or when someone says, “You know up on North Carolina's Outer Banks wild horses run free,” I get another thought. I think of an October day when the sun rained down gold as I rode a tour boat near Fernandina Beach, Florida. We cruised along green marshes and sandy shores of aforementioned Cumberland Island. Sure enough, wild horses grazed along the edge of the maritime forest.

The next day Georgia played Florida. Just before the half in an electric three minutes and change, the Dawgs put away the Gators with a three-touchdown flurry. When the game ended, wild horses couldn't have dragged the red-and-black throng into the streets, much less the St. Johns River, that lazy river that flows north towards Georgia.

It's funny how the mind works. Just two words, “wild horses,” take me in several directions. Rock and roll and recording studios, an assignment to cover men hunting wild hogs, ruins and the famous, and a golden Saturday when the football gods smiled on the Dawg Nation. All of it swirls together in the colorful alchemy of the mind and its wondrous capabilities. Pray tell what do “wild horses” drag into your mind?

Shocking behavior at council meeting Feb. 15

We would like to address the Feb. 15 county council meeting and the redistricting vote by the county council. We were stunned at the behavior of the majority of individuals that attended. As we looked for seats, we found flyers distributed on empty chairs that did not just state “Vote for Map#3” (as they did the day prior), but were attacks on anyone favoring Map 2.

“What would George Wallace do?”; “Republicans for Diversity”; “Map #2 Violates the Voting Rights Act”; “Map #2 is racist”; “Democrats Dividing the Country since 1860”. After the councilmembers voted for Map #2, a member of the audience **shouted** “YOU ARE VOTING BY RACE!!”. While it is true that there were three Black councilmembers who voted for Map#2, it should be noted that the two councilmembers that voted **against** Map#2 were white.

Is this how our McCormick County community wants to be depicted? Or are they just a vocal minority? Outbursts and inflammatory signs do not display civility and grace. Our democracy relies on civil discourse between parties, between neighbors and between family. We see that failing at the national and state level on a daily basis. Unfortunately, it seems to have percolated down to McCormick County as well. This was readily apparent as the sheriff needed to escort Chairman Jennings safely to his car after the council meeting adjourned.

- Mike and Renee Finney

Kitty's Korner

By Kittye Craig - Jackson

There is a great attraction in wisdom. But there's also a great danger in searching out too much wisdom and focusing on logic and intellect, for if we do so we lose the wonder and the awe of the world around us. If we can see the world through the eyes of a child and experience the wonder of the world, but still remember the wisdom of the world that helps us to deal with problems and obstacles that crop up, we can create a magical balance that can help us to make the world a wonderful experience for us.

The wisdom of the ages tells us to love one another, to help one another, to treat each other well, to trust life, to give our best to all that we do, not to allow worry to overwhelm us, not to allow other people's actions to rob us of our peace of mind, to set our priorities on lasting things instead of fleeting things and not to get caught up in materialism and greed.

The wisdom of the world tells us many things. Looking at the world through the eyes of a child helps us to see the beauty in things, helps us to see things as special rather than “mundane,” keeps us from getting trained to wonder and keeps us from taking things for granted. And to see the world through such eyes takes a bit of effort, but it's possible for us to try. It requires us to suspend judgment and accept things for what they are and to remember the magic that allows a tree to grow a hundred feet tall and not fall over and to be fascinated by all the cool ants that are scurrying around searching for food and taking it back to their hill. What a balance! Find this balance and you'll find a beautiful way to live, an extraordinary way at looking at the lives we live and the world in which we live. The wisdom of the ages takes on a completely new set of meanings when considered through the innocent, trusting, and fascinated eyes of a child – which are your eyes, after all.

A country in need of some fixin'

It is almost impossible to start an analysis that deals with the quagmire the United States finds itself in, and getting worse by the day, and now the fallout from this Russia invasion (Or is it an insurrection) of the Ukraine, is going to have an impact on everybody. Our continuing decay, in our country, is turning to crisis. Oh wait, there is an appropriate title, and I borrow this, “America In Crisis!”

Biden's war on America, spurred by his day one attack on our energy industry, and the growing impact on every segment of our economy, is a woke joke. All he has to do is turn on American oil again. We were energy independent, a supplier to the world, and now Joe begs Russia, and OPEC, for millions of barrels of oil. There are an awful lot of people who could/should call this stupid.

Don't tell me Mr. Biden has approval ratings in the 30% range on anything. He cannot possibly have a rating anywhere near that, unless we have that many really stupid people. Period! I think anybody who will debate that fact, lives very high on the stupid tree.

- Message To Joe – Thank you for the 14 free month trial of Communism, but if it's okay with you, I'll stick to Capitalism! Just in case he does not know what the American people really want (well, most of us), an America that is like it was before he and his Democrat Party, took over.

- Joe Looking Out For Us – We can't wrap our minds around and fix our inflation, supply chain issues, education issues, crime issues, illegal immigration issues, drug issues, homelessness, hunger, poverty, and education, but we can pour money on, and dig our heels into fixing Mother Nature (Climate Change). You stupid, stupid people.

- John Kerry – Here is a guy, whose lifestyle of the rich, and famous, and personally violates carbon emission tenets, has the incredible audacity to be very concerned that Russia invading the Ukraine will slow down his efforts in the Climate Change Arena. He actually said it. We will soon learn as politicians push this agenda that climate ideology does not mean economic reality, just the opposite!

- Trudeau – The people in Canada, very concerned about freedom and government over-reach, decides on a trucker convoy into the capitol and are finally met by a dictator who invoked a seldom used weapon, and lowered the boom on anybody, anywhere near the demonstration. He has even seized bank accounts, even if you handed a trucker \$20 for food, or gas. He says that anyone against him is a racist. He seriously has to be a Democrat to play that card.

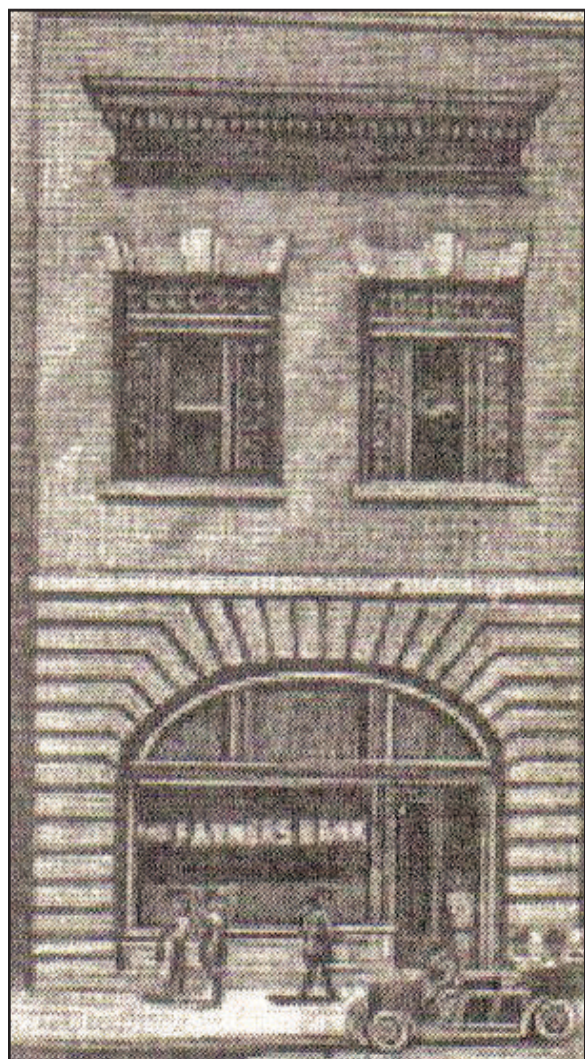
- Trump – Don't you miss the way he says, “China”? Have you figured out that the Jan. 6 demonstration, with so much truth purposely being withheld, that this is nothing but another “Get Trump” exercise. The final report has been written, for some time, but the show must go on.

- Leadership 101 – As Russia continues to pound the Ukraine, our President wants to assure us that he is keeping a watchful eye on everything, said, and I quote, “There would be costs for Americans as a result of my foreign policy decisions with respect to Russia invading the Ukraine.” I guess that I will go out on a limb and ask why. Should every effort not be executed to minimize any “costs” that might impact the American people.

- BLM – Finally, this fraudulent organization is now having the books audited. Apparently, the leaders used significant money for personal use, including very expensive houses, in California. Too bad that it was not used for some very worthwhile endeavors. There certainly are a number of them.

- Kamala – She was so successful with her Southern Border Assignment that Joe decided to send her to Europe to deal with this Russia/Ukraine thing. Her opening speech went off like a lead balloon, “Listen, you guys.....”! That did not go over well. Wonder if she picked up the beer tab after the meeting? She is beginning to look like having a thumb in the middle of your forehead, useless. You know the old one, in youth baseball, where you have that player that you can't hide, and just want to give him a ticket to the movies? Well.....?

- Robert Patrick



The Farmer's Bank failed to open on June 11, 1930.

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