

Lanier County**News**

is owned by
Good Shepherd
Media, LLC

CONTACT US:

By Phone:
229-854-0186

By Location or Mail:
60 Cypress Trail
Lakeland, Georgia 31635



Carol A. Moore
Publisher
carol.moore@laniercountynewsline.com



Alicia Davis
Marketing
marketing@laniercountynewsline.com



Theba Sirmans
Marketing
marketing@laniercountynewsline.com



Marsha Tallent
Digital Editor
marsha.tallent@laniercountynewsline.com



Cliff Ulmer
Cartoonist
cliff.ulmer@laniercountynewsline.com



Jon Moore
Cartoonist
Jon.Moore@laniercountynewsline.com



JnC Photography
Staff Photographer
jncphotography@laniercountynewsline.com

OUR GOAL: Lanier County News is created proudly for the citizens of Lanier and the surrounding area by Good Shepherd Media in Lakeland, GA. Our goal is to produce a quality, community oriented newspaper that you, our readers, are proud of. We will reach this goal through hard work, teamwork, loyalty and a strong dedication toward printing the truth.

OUR POLICIES: Letters to the Editor are welcome. Please sign and include address, telephone number and e-mail.

•Liability for an error in advertising will not exceed the cost of space occupied by the error.

•All pictures are filed after publication, but may be picked up by the owner at Lanier County News office in Lakeland.

DEADLINE: the deadline each week for all news and advertising copy is Monday at 5:00 p.m. Submittals can be placed in the drop box located by the door of the Lanier County News office.

Elected Officials**Mayor of Lakeland**

Bill Darsey • 229-482-3100

Lanier County Commission Chairman

Alex Lee • 229-482-2088

Lanier County Board of Education Center

Mitchell Chason
229-482-3966

GA State Representative

James D. Burchett
912-816-7745

GA State Senator

Ellis Black

Lanier County Sheriff

Nick Norton • 229-482-3545

OPINIONS & VIEWPOINTS



HISTORICALLY SPEAKING

current events through a historical lens

Dr. James Finck, USAO History Professor

“The First Muslim” by Lesley Hazleton

By James Finck, Ph. D.

With tensions in the Middle East elevated due to the conflict in Gaza and now American soldiers being killed by Iranian backed terrorists, I believe it is wise to learn as much as possible about the Middle East to make the most informed decisions possible going forward.

A key to understanding the Middle East is to understand Islam. While there are many similarities between Christianity and Islam, the differences make the two religions seem worlds apart. Just like it is impossible to understand Christianity without knowing Jesus of Nazareth, it is likewise impossible to understand Islam without knowing Muhammad. While there are dozens of portrayals of Jesus, most recently with “The Chosen,” there are no such programs about Muhammad, leaving most Westerners with little understanding of exactly who was Muhammad. To fill that void, Middle Eastern correspondent Lesley Hazleton wrote “The First Muslim: The Story of Muhammad” to show that Muhammad was a complex leader who led a difficult life.

Like Jesus, Muhammad drastically changed the world around him creating a religion that filled the world and shaped the lives of many today. Yet, Muhammad was also a man with human flaws that changed his message from one of peace to conflict.

While Hazleton breaks her book down into three parts, I actually found Muhammad’s life divided in half—the years before Medina and the years after. There seemed to be a fundamental change in Medina as Muhammad went from being an outsider in Mecca, preaching a new religion, to the undisputed religious and political leader in Medina. It is similar to Christianity but a reverse order. Whereas the Old Testament was much more militant while the New Testament spoke of peace, in Islam the revelations that made up the Quran go in the opposite direction.

Muhammad had little chance for success. Being born after his father passed and his mother dying when he was six, he grew up an orphan in a society that cared little for orphans. Yet, without any power or prestige, he earned the reputation for integrity and honesty as he worked his way up to positions of importance with his uncle’s trading caravans. However, after feeling as if he had earned respect, he was reminded who he was when his uncle denied his marriage to his daughter because of his low status. Hazleton writes, “To a boy imbued with the rough egalitarianism of Bedouin life, all this could only have come as a shock. His own people had co-opted faith, piously declared it even as they contravened its most basic principles. From his perch on the sidelines, he saw the social injustices of what was happening all too clearly.”

One eventual positive in his life was Khadija, a wealthy women 25 years his senior, who hired him to help with her caravans until they fell in love, and she proposed marriage. While their years together were difficult, they loved and supported each other for 25 years.

When Muhammad first told her he heard the voice of the angel Gabriel and thought he was either possessed or going mad, Khadija told him to listen and accept the messages. She stood by him as he began to preach the message of Islam and felt the hatred from the Mecca elite. Muhammad loved Khadija and refused any other marriages until after her death.

According to Hazleton, during these early years, the verses in the Quran were “an impassioned protest against corruption and social inequity. They took the side of the poor and the marginalized, calling for advantaging the disadvantaged. They demanded a halt to the worship of the false gods of profit and power along with those of the totem stones. They condemned the concept of sons as wealth and the consequent practice of female infanticide. And above all, they indicated the arrogance of the wealthy—‘those who amass and hoard wealth,’ who ‘love wealth with an ardent passion,’ who ‘are violent in their love of wealth.’” Yet, turning away from the gods whom the pilgrims of Arabia visited could greatly hurt the wealth of Mecca, so much so that when Muhammad’s uncle and protector died, other Meccan leaders teamed up to kill the threat to their livelihood. Fortunately for Muhammad, he was warned in a dream and he and his followers made the trip to Medina where he had been invited to come as a judge but eventually became their leader and prophet.

In Medina, now as the leader, the revelations were less about a peaceful society and more about governance and control. Revelations now said, “Permission is granted to those who fight because they have been wronged...those who have been driven out of their houses without right only because they said our god is God.”

Consolidating his power, Muhammad eventually either exiled or killed the three Jewish tribes at Medina when they did not join Islam. Turning his attention toward Mecca, his forces began attacking caravans. Eventually the two cities were in an all-out war. Muhammad was able to take over Mecca making himself the undisputed political and religious leader.

Rising from an lowly outsider managing caravans for his uncle to become the religious and political leader, one would expect changes in the Quranic verses. It may have been the burden of leadership or the loss of Khadija, but Muhammad changed in Medina, which was reflected in the Quran. The verses transformed from societal actions to a guide to enforce God’s law.

Hazleton writes in such a way that the book reads more like a novel than nonfiction. Her storytelling ability brings the life of Muhammad to life for Western readers. She presents his life as a timeless journey of an underdog who grows up to start a major world religion. She is respectful in narration while at the same time showing that Muhammad is not just the prophet of Islam but also a man with both positive and flawed characteristics. Hazleton does an excellent job also explaining the origins of Islam while also challenging some false perceptions such as the role of women that occurred after the prophet’s death. For anyone concerned with the region, it is necessary to understand Islam and Hazleton’s “The First Muslim” is a perfect place to start for readers at any level.

James Finck, Ph.D. is a professor of history at the University of Science and Arts of Oklahoma and writes for the Southwest Ledger. You can follow Historically Speaking on Facebook or at Historicallyspeaking.blog.

It’s Time To Increase Penalties For ‘Swatting’

Between the two of us and our families, we have been swatted 14 separate times. Thankfully, none of these instances has resulted in injury to us, our families, or law enforcement officers who are needlessly put in harm’s way.

Each time we’ve been swatted, our brave law enforcement officers wasted vital resources and manpower tending to a call that was meant to stoke fear, chaos, and violence. This type of deranged behavior cannot be allowed to continue.

For those who are unaware, swatting is the act of anonymously reporting a fake emergency at someone’s home to the police. The intent is to force law enforcement officers to show up at the homes of elected officials, other prominent people, and even everyday citizens to cause chaos. Swatting can have deadly consequences, as in the tragic case of Mark Parkinson in Northwest Georgia in late 2017.

Along with the attacks on elected officials and innocent citizens, these swatting incidents are also an attack on our law enforcement. Our brave officers put their lives on the line every day to keep our families safe. These spineless swatters directly place them in harm’s way by calling in fake emergencies. Additionally, swatting is a blatant abuse of police resources. These swatting incidents divert police resources that are oftentimes already stretched far too thin. Every second spent responding to a fake emergency is wasted time that our law enforcement could spend fighting the skyrocketing waves of crime that we have all witnessed across our nation. We will not stand for these anti-police acts.

It’s no accident that recent swatting incidents have mostly targeted one side of the political spectrum. Swatting has become a tool of the radical Left to attack and potentially cause harm to pro-Trump, America First conservatives who pose a very real threat to those on the Left. They wish us harm because they hate the way we fight for an America First agenda.

Let’s be very clear: swatting is the act of a coward. The radical Left can’t win the fight over ideas in the public square and chooses to hide behind anonymity and incite violence. There are serious consequences to these actions, and we will fight together in Washington and in Georgia to increase penalties for this crime. While swatting is not currently a federal crime, we are fighting together to change that and make sure these criminals are brought to justice.

In Georgia, we are advancing legislation that will strengthen sentences for these criminal offenses. No longer will someone simply receive a slap on the wrist for committing such a heinous and cowardly crime. Increased sentences will help to both deter future criminal activity while enabling law enforcement to properly punish criminals. In Washington, we are working to make it easier for our law enforcement officers to catch these criminals. It is essential that we take this issue seriously, so that we can end this practice.

If these swatting incidents are allowed to continue, it will result in someone being seriously injured or killed, just like the tragedy in Walker County. No one’s family should ever again have to experience a swatting call. Those of us who have experienced a swatting incident are not afraid of those who wish us harm. We are simply emboldened.

We will not be silenced in our mission to deliver conservative, America First wins for our nation and state. No matter how hard they may try, those who wish us harm will not interfere with our capacity and willingness to lead.

Burt Jones has served as Georgia’s lieutenant governor since 2023.

Marjorie Taylor Greene has represented Georgia’s 14th Congressional District in the U.S. House of Representatives since 2021.

Visit our website and subscribe to our digital version of Lanier County News.

