

Retiring Chamber leaders: Change is coming

Brad Harper, *Montgomery Advertiser* 1:17 a.m. CST February 8, 2015

Three retiring Montgomery Area Chamber of Commerce leaders are quick to point out the progress that the city and its business community have made over the past 15 years.

Getting them to take credit is a little harder.

“The Chamber is about partnerships,” Cameron Martindale said. “We can’t take credit for the work we do because it depends on all of these partners. We work together.”

It’s the second retirement for Martindale, who left the Troy University system seven years ago to help the Chamber work with schools to build new education programs. She retired as senior vice president of community development last month.

Longtime friends and colleagues Harold Boone and Douglas Jones will follow her into retirement this spring after nearly 15 years of working together to help build the Chamber’s Small Business Resource Center. Jones, an Air Force veteran, serves as vice president of business services and Boone, a former consultant and children’s advocate, works as vice president of minority business development.

The three talked to the *Advertiser* about how things have changed since they came to the Chamber and the road ahead.

With the spotlight on Montgomery this year because of the anniversary of the Selma-to-Montgomery March, do you think that this city is still a place of progress?

Jones: It’s the ideal place for progress because it’s come from such a long way, but you can still see the future. You can see the light, and it’s not the train. (Laughs) We have a way to go, but because we’ve made such progress, there’s hope that we can get to that future place.

Martindale: People still think of Montgomery and its history, but because of that focus we have the opportunity to let people around the country know that you can learn new ways of relating to each other. You can understand and become one community. You can do it through dialogue and a commitment to make things better.

Jones: Absolutely. People see the images in the movie “Selma,” and they form ideas about what the South is like, Montgomery being a part of that. But so often when they get here they are just blown away by what they find. Many of them, for that reason, end up staying here.



Boone: Doug and I grew up 30 miles from here in Tuskegee. That was back during segregation, and we'd have to come to Montgomery to shop. I remember going in one of those stores when I was a kid and getting hit upside the head by a white man just because I was black. But to come back after being in Europe for almost 15 years and other parts of the country and see the difference, it's phenomenal. It's welcoming and an inviting place, but it's going to continue to take work. No city, no organization is perfect. But you build on your successes and keep those bridges open. The future is out there for an even better quality of life for all citizens, and we need to make sure we're a part of that change.

What are some of the things that stick out in your mind about your time with the Chamber?

Jones: It would probably surprise some, but it's the change in diversity that I've been able to witness at the Chamber. When I started at the Chamber, I'd say there were probably three African-American board members. There are 11 now, and four women and three Asians. There's more diversity there than we've ever had. I think that's because we've helped to create an atmosphere where people feel more invited to be a part and are more willing to engage.

Boone: We started an outreach in the minority business community. We stuck our hand out there in friendship and invited them to become a part of it so that they understand what the Chamber is about, and it's not the same old white boys club that it used to be. We didn't do a very good job in the early days of getting the message out. We changed that to hit all segments of the community — not just the east side, but the west side and the south side. The (Chamber-sponsored) Diversity Summit was an offshoot of that and took it to a more national/international level.

Martindale: The Diversity Summit was an incredible opportunity to help us understand diversity in the workplace. It was just the right time in our community to have that conversation. We were amazed when we started to do it by the caliber of people who wanted to participate in the conference. The speakers would tell us about how we're positioned to be this hub for diversity. They kept saying, "This needs to be a regional summit, then it needs to be a national summit." Montgomery has been recognized as the beginning of the Civil Rights movement, and we're in a prime position to take that role.

What kind of successes have you seen from the Chamber's small business incubator program?

Jones: We have grown some very successful businesses out of our incubation program. Up and Running, Transcendence, Certified Technical Experts, Tish's Cupcakes. It's from little companies to the larger ones. Josh Bush of Up and Running is now on the Chamber's board of directors, and it's because of his success. In addition to that, we started the first co-working space in the River Region. It allowed people who were working out of their homes or coffee shops all day long to get a space that was theirs with co-workers and peer mentoring.

Your job may be over, but the work goes on. What's on the horizon? Are you starting to see Montgomery's future take shape?

Martindale: One of our big initiatives over the past few years has been to engage our young professionals and give them a reason to want to stay in Montgomery. In partnership with Leadership Montgomery, we started the Emerge program. That's another initiative that has really taken off, and people recognize that these young professionals are critical to the decisions we make about the future of our city.

Boone: The other piece of that is we've been able to reach a significant Asian population, which helps identify potential leaders. We talk about innovation. You can only have innovation when you bring in new ideas and new ways of thinking. For the Baby Boomers, it's time for that change. People talk about change, but when change happens and it affects you, it's like, "Oh, not that kind of change. That's not the kind of change I'm talking about."

Diversity Summit

The Montgomery Area Chamber of Commerce's annual Diversity Summit started in 2008 as a half-day conference with a few hundred mostly local attendees and speakers. It's now a full-day event that routinely sells out while attracting attendees and speakers from around the world. Speakers have included the chief diversity officers for Coca-Cola, Walgreens and McDonalds.

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Constitution, not Bible, is supreme law of the land

Montgomery 10:29 a.m. CST February 6, 2015

Vanzetta Penn McPherson

My first-grade reader consisted of straightforward declaratory sentences. They were designed to reinforce language and ideas via simplicity and repetitiveness. My school used the "Alice and Jerry" series, a typical page of which read:

"Come, Alice, come. See Spot run. Run, Spot, run. Jerry will run."

Negative responses to the federal court decision which outlawed Alabama's ban on same-sex marriage as unconstitutional remind me that sometimes even adults need simplicity and repetitiveness to learn lessons. Since the responses were grounded mostly on religion -- notably Christianity -- their authors clearly need a refresher course on marriage to secure the enlightenment they failed to glean after decades of American citizenship and numerous civics courses. Here are some simply stated facts.

The Bible is the textual foundation of religious doctrine among Christians. It governs spiritual beliefs and practices, and its teachings instruct Christians on the moral propriety or impropriety of human behavior. Faith in a deity is the premise of its tenets.

The Bible is the exclusive textual foundation for Christians only -- not so for Muslims, Jews, Buddhists, Hindus, agnostics or atheists.

The United States Constitution is the supreme law of America. It governs individuals' legal relationships with each other and citizens' relationships with government. Reason and analysis are the premises of its tenets. The Bible does not articulate or govern legal relationships, and the Constitution does not articulate or govern spiritual belief. The Founding Fathers acknowledged their spiritual and religious beliefs, but they went to great length to assure that (1) religious faith was not a condition of citizenship, (2) America would not be a church-state, (3) the state would not regulate religious institutions, and (4) religious institutions would not regulate the state. As Thomas Jefferson said in 1814, "Christianity neither is, nor ever was a part of the common law."

The Bible is a holy book that Christians follow because they choose to do so. The Constitution is a document that every American is required to follow because the law compels it.

Marriage is a ritual that establishes legal rights and responsibilities. It is subject to the practices and rules of the church or the state. Two people can be married in a religious ceremony or in a civil ceremony. However, in America, marriage has always been determined by the rule of law.

Marriage is a legal relationship. Simply satisfying the church's requirements for getting married is not enough to create a marriage. The two parties must also satisfy the government's requirements (including securing and paying for a marriage license).

The church cannot create marital relationships without the government, but the government can create marital relationships without the church.

The government's rules about marriage supersede the church's rules. These include rules about polygamy (which some religions permit, but the law does not), age requirements (which the law articulates, but the church does not), and parental consent (which the law requires in some instances, but the church does not).

Christianity does not prohibit a person from getting married immediately after a divorce, but (Alabama) law requires that divorcees wait at least 60 days before marrying a different person.

Christianity does not recognize -- and in fact condemns -- cohabitation between two persons who have not formally married. Christians regard them as fornicators and sinners. Though the marital partners may be sinners to Christians, Alabama law recognizes "common law marriage," and the

two partners are entitled to the same rights and subject to the same responsibilities as two people who secure a license and undergo a formal marriage in a religious or civil ceremony.

James Madison, our fourth president and a Founding Father, warned in 1819 that "The civil government functions with complete success by the total separation of the Church from the State." Separation of the church from the state means, among other things, that it is OK to observe religious practices and to oppose practices that are inconsistent with religious belief. But it is not OK for the government to deny civil rights and privileges because of the church's opposition.

Marriage is a legal bond, the validity of which is controlled by the law, not the church.

Class dismissed.

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**Rebuttal of Dr. Kenneth Edward Scott (Word Count: 716 for McPherson; 716 for DrK)
Community College/University Professor, Technologist, and Veteran**

Bible, not Constitution, is supreme law of the land
Submitted for Alabama Voices, 9 February 2015

Without denigrating the basic cognitive functions of American citizens as purporting their inability to absorb lessons from secularists who would 'speak down' to them from on high, and not assuming that they are incapable of deep learning in terms of constitutional, moral, or Spiritual cogitations, and without the abrasive "class dismissed" mentality, I offer you a counterpoint to a recent diatribe titled, "Constitution, not Bible, is supreme law of the land." Fellow citizens, please be seated.

The Founding Fathers of this nation, without space here for the prerequisites of their lives and Faith, have been selectively and contextually noted in the article just identified. George Washington, in his inaugural address of 1789 stated: "We ought to be no less persuaded that the propitious smiles of heaven can never be expected on a nation that disregards the eternal rules of order and right which heaven itself has ordained."

John Adams declared: "Our constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate for the government of any other (1798)"; "Religion and virtue are the only foundations, not only of republicanism and all free government, but of social felicity under all governments and in all the combinations of human society (1811)."

"God who gave us life gave us Liberty. Can the liberties of a nation be secure when we have removed a conviction that these liberties are the gift of God? Indeed I tremble for my country

when I reflect that God is just, that His justice cannot sleep forever.” –Thomas Jefferson (1774). To continue, Jefferson, with the help of Benjamin Franklin, also said this in the Declaration of Independence: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their *Creator* with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness.”

A moment of truth in the article alluded to is that the framers of the constitution did indeed have strong reflections on not establishing a national form of religion. However, as Billy Graham has rightly noted, “The framers of our Constitution meant we were to have freedom of religion, not freedom from religion.” This life-construct by Dr. Graham is a baseline from which Christians live within the auspices of God’s free-will among humanity, not humanity’s usurpation of God’s Laws.

It was surmised in the article also that Biblical Truth is superseded by Man’s Truth. This assumption regrettably assumes that God is not the Authority of all creation. Does this then presuppose that if The Constitution of the United States is a founding legal basis for our lives, as the author suggested, that the Constitution is to take precedence over God’s Law? I think not.

The logical and Spiritual cogitations for this reasoning are simple. If we presuppose that God’s Laws are inadequate or interfere with our Civil Liberties, then pray tell, which came first: our existence on this Earth or our Constitution? While debate may rage over creation or evolution, for Christians, our Creator made the Heavens and the Earth for us as a means to Worship Him. That is our right as a prerequisite to the Constitution. Therefore, our Constitution is not absolute; that is solely within the purview of God’s Law.

The debate as noted in the identified article is one in which God has stated in His Law is contrary to His Word. Whether I disagree or not with the tenets of the writer’s points is not whether I believe in the Constitution, but whether I believe in God and His Rulings of Law. Therefore, Christians have an obligation and mandate from God to uphold His Teachings as they are Prima Facie for our Faith.

Quiz Question (True/False): “The government's rules about marriage supersede the church's rules.” False. Rationale: “But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD" (Joshua 24:15). Let him who hears understand.

Dr. Kenneth Edward Scott is a community college/university professor, technologist, and veteran with a combined tenure of 42 years.

- ***It should be understood in this article that Christians are MORE likely to follow enacted laws, whether the Constitution or other, even if we disagree with their intent. Period.***