

# The Nerve



A Weekly Newsletter of the Rotary Club of Tuscaloosa

P.O. Box 2403, Tuscaloosa, AL 35403 — [www.Rotarytuscaloosa.com](http://www.Rotarytuscaloosa.com)

Volume 96 — Issue 4—July 30, 2013

Nerve Editor: Ryan Stallings

## This Week, July 30, 2013 Ed Conyers

### Officers, 2013-14

Karen Baldwin  
*President*

Chuck Turner  
*President-Elect*

Nancy Jones  
*Secretary*

Joe May  
*Treasurer*

Frank Deaver  
*Executive Director*

Bruce Burrows  
*Sergeant-At-Arms*

### Directors, 2013-14

Susan Caples  
*Membership*

Larry O'Neal  
*Programs*

Ryan Stallings  
*Communications*

Liz Obradovich  
*Vocational*

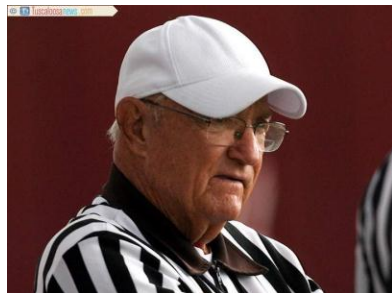
Mitchell Loper  
*Community Service*

Margaret King  
*International*

J. G. Brazil  
*RI Foundation*

James Leitner  
*Past President*

Jim Shamblin  
*Tuscaloosa Memorial  
Foundation*



For roughly a 20-year span in the 1960s and 70s, Conyers officiated Alabama football practices Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays, local high school games Thursdays and Fridays and Gulf South Conference college games on Saturdays.

“I don’t see how anybody could’ve seen more [snaps],” he says. “I guess you could say I was a bit snap happy. I don’t know if that’s something to really hang your hat on, though.”

The Tuscaloosa native and University of Alabama alum, who entered his 50th season officiating UA football practices this fall, started his half-century hobby in 1955 when long-time friend and mentor Gordon Pettus recruited him to join a local officiating association.

Pettus is also inadvertently responsible for initiating Conyers’ UA officiating career. When UA head football coach Paul “Bear” Bryant’s right-hand man Carney Laslie was trying to reach Pettus, who was inexplicably absent from a UA practice one afternoon, he called Conyers to track him down.

“He had hit the panic button,” Conyers says. “He asked me if I officiated, and I said ‘Yeah.’ And he said, ‘Well, come out here.’ ”

He and UA practices were quite the fit, Conyers says, and 50 years later, “It’s still a thrill every time I go out there.” Conyers says during his first decade, Bryant didn’t even know his name, and he

worked the practices free of charge. After the NCAA passed a rule in the 1970s requiring all on-field persons in an advisory role at practice to be paid, Conyers says he started receiving \$10 per practice.

“With the Lord as my witness, when I first heard about the rule, I thought I was going to have to pay them \$10,” he says. “I thought, ‘I only have \$5 on me, I hope they’ll still let me go.’ I’d probably still pay if I had to.”

Conyers graduated from Tuscaloosa High School in 1946 and joined the Navy directly afterward. After a two-year stint, he returned to attend the University for two years, after which he was again called into service for two more years. He returned to graduate in 1954 with a B.S. in advertising.

After working at Allen and Jemison in downtown Tuscaloosa, Conyers secured a job in the College of Continuing Studies as the assistant to the dean, where he worked from 1978 to 1993, when he retired.

Today, Conyers says current head coach Nick Saban has him and his crew of four throw penalty flags and records each penalty they see in detail for film review later, in contrast to Bryant’s style of having them call the fouls on field during practice.

Of his time on UA’s practice field, Conyers says he’s had “quite a ride.”

“Seeing all of the great players, it’s just been a thrill and an honor.” he says. “I really don’t know when I’ll give it up. My wife said I’ll be out there in a wheelchair, rolling back and forth down the field, and I don’t think I’d mind that at all.”

## Last Week, July 23th

### UA Athletics Director Bill Battle

Our speaker today was UA Athletic Director, Bill Battle. He recollected the events of the two weeks of the hiring process and how tough it was to make the decision. The first 6 weeks were very stressful with the death of Mal Moore, the funeral, daughters wedding and two close family member's surgery, and all the time trying to focus on the mission to meet over 350 employees and over 400 athletes in the Athletic System.

The first six weeks were spent listening and learning about the phenomenal growth over the last 10 years at UA. When he first came he stayed at Bryant Hall which was finished in 1963 as a state of the art dorm just as he was graduating – so he never got to live there. As the building had deteriorated over the years, instead of tearing it down – Mal Moore had the vision to convert it into a fantastic training and learning center for Academic studies for athletes. There are two beautiful suites there and so he finally got to live "at the dorm"!

There was a steep learning curve associated with the position of Athletic Director. He met all the staff, all the athletes, spoke at 5 Crimson Caravan events, the AHSAA Banquet, and said that he attended more meetings in the last four months than he had in the last 20 years! Meanwhile he and his wife got to get out in Tuscaloosa in the evenings and enjoy what he referred to as "an amazing downtown". "It is indeed a great time to be in Tuscaloosa", he stated.

Through Mal Moore's vision and foresight of setting the standard high for the student athletes that the system serves, he is proud to carry on this great tradition. It is not all about the sport. It is about academics and life skills. Preparing the young athletes to go out into the world and be champions in life. He is charged with helping them achieve the highest possible level in athletics and in life and do both with honor & integrity. He is proud to go to work each morning in the Mal M. Moore Athletic Facility, and is glad that Mal had the opportunity to work in this building before he died. The average GPA for student athletes is currently 3.1 – higher than the student body with graduation rates 2 pts. Above the SEC average.

With his previous job, UA was his first client. He was in charge of licensing and branding the Athletic Department and it was a thriving business. Now he is applying this business sense to the "business of being an Athletic Director".

As you learn what to do – and what not to do in business – so it is in his current position. With over 200 events annually with 21 sports it requires great insight.

With only 2 out of 21 sports on campus considered "profitable" there is much work to do. With HD television creating the ability to watch sports at home in a superior fashion – it is all about the fan experience. You have to work to get more fans in the seats at sporting events other than Football and Basketball. Even with these programs – you cannot coast on the past championships, etc. Every single part of the fan experience from the food & beverage – to the ticket counter clerk to the moment they walk out has to be first class. He encouraged all Rotarians to get out and support baseball, softball, and all the other sports offered.

"I did not come here to maintain" said Battle, "we always want to get better, the alternative is getting worse". It is a big job and when I used to refer to a big job in the past, I used the anecdote "How do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time", but that didn't seem to go over too well here" he quipped so I have gone with "How do you move mountains? One shovel at a time". Better than that he likes to say "A rising tide lifts all boats – so let's keep the TIDE rising!"



## Announcements

- **REMINDER:** Our first off-site meeting will be held August 13th at 11:30 at the Bryant Conference Center. This will be a combination meeting with the United Way of West Alabama's Campaign Kickoff. Signup sheets will be on the tables during the meetings prior to the off-site. All Rotarians that are planning to attend will need to sign up so that we can have an accurate head count of who will be attending
- Jim Shamblin presented the two organizations recommended by the committee for the next Rotary Memorial Foundation project, which are the Dinah Washington Cultural Arts Center and the Salvation Army. Motion passed by those present – for \$40K financial commitments to each.

- President Karen advised us that there are yellow index cards on the table for the purpose of each person writing a funny fact or story about their life. Throughout the year, a card will be drawn each meeting and a tidbit of the story shared and then each Rotarian will then get up and tell the "rest of the story". Last week we drew Alan Hartley and his claim to fame was performing in Vegas at the ripe old age of 14. He came up and told how in 1969 he and his family were on vacation and in Las Vegas where they attended the Rowan & martin's Laugh In show. He had met comedienne Jo Anne Worley earlier in the day (they were staying at the famous Sands Hotel & Casino owned by Howard Hughes, who lived in the penthouse), During the show she announced to the audience that Mr. Hughes always came down to the show each evening but was always disguised. The spotlight hit Alan and she announced him as Howard Hughes & got him up on stage and that is his "15 minutes of fame"



## **News from the Rotary International Foundation**

**By J.G. Brazil**

Again this week individualized Paul Harris Fellow (PHF) reports will be available to Rotarians. This report provides each member with full information regarding (1) Current Paul Harris Fellow Level; (2) Contributions Needed for Next Level; (3) Points You Can Donate; and (4) Quarterly Billing Option. This information will help members plan their Foundation giving for the 2013-2014 Rotary year. Please stop by the Rotary Foundation table as you enter the club to pick up your personalized report.

## UPCOMING PROGRAMS

August 6<sup>th</sup>  
Lauren Ballard  
Angel Flight Soars

---

August 13<sup>th</sup>  
United Way  
Campaign Kick-off  
Off-site Bryant  
Conference Center

---

August 20<sup>th</sup>  
Ronnie Bruno  
Bruno Event Team  
Manager of fan  
logistics

---

“If there is any one particular in which I would have Rotary distinguished from other organizations, it is in the quality of character which results in the doing of things.”

— Paul Harris



## At the Head Table July 30<sup>th</sup>

**Mike Hardin** (Invocation), **Mark Nelson** (Pledge), **Samory Pruitt** (guest intro), **Buddy Moman** (speaker intro).



## Guests July 30<sup>th</sup>

### Guest at the Jul 30<sup>th</sup>

**Ron Abernathy** (Tuscaloosa Sherriff's Office), guest of Karen Baldwin; **Leslie Abernathy**, (UA), guest of Karen Baldwin; **Vickie Davis**, (Southland National) guest of Debbie Besant; **Bobby Brag**, (Jamison, Money, Farmer), guest of Jim Page; **Greg Davis**, (D Group advertising), guest of Tina Jones; **Daniel Niefield**, (TTSC), guest of Tina Jones; **Don Salls**, guest of Dianne Salls; **Susan Duckworth**, guest of Linda Pruitt; **Paul Adams**, (American General Life Insurance), guest of Stacie Kirkland; **Kristin & Mark Roberts**, (UA), guest of Stacie Kirkland; **Joe Hocutt**, guest of James Lietner; **Brett Pepper** (Loan Officer First South Farm Credit), guest of Ryan Stallings; **Will Kelly**, (Frontier Enterprises), guest of Mike Chambers, **Tommy Ford** (UA Athletics), guest of Karen Baldwin; **Maley Wiggins**, (Red Oak Legal), guest Steve Wiggins.

## ABSENT? MAKING UP ATTENDANCE IS EASY...

- Visit with the Morning Rotary Club every Thursday at 7 AM at Indian Hills Country Club.
- Attend another club's meeting within two weeks before or after an absence.
- Participate in a Rotary event, such as a committee meeting, social function, Interact event, etc.
- Make up at E-club online: [www.rotaryclubone.org](http://www.rotaryclubone.org).

REPORT ALL MAKEUPS TO CLUB SECRETARY NANCY JONES

