

ASU merits saving

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By BOB MARTIN

Alabama State University has a long history of offering those of African-American descent an institution of higher learning that provided, if not an excellent learning environment, at least one that was good enough to attract a somewhat diverse student body.

But of late the wheels have begun to fall off the wagon with respect to the leadership of the school and the quality of that leadership.

The revelation in the unsuccessful appeal by the school of a sexual harassment charge against two of its administrators, which will cost the taxpayers in excess of a million dollars, clearly demonstrates that the school's leadership must change. It is time for Gov. Bentley, who by virtue of his office is the board president, to use the power of his position to insist on changes.

The governor should immediately appoint an impartial overseer for the school who has no connections to anyone with a vested interest in employment or otherwise at Alabama State.

The school is funded with our tax dollars and should be a concern because of that and because of its' importance to the students who are paying tuition to attend, along with its symbol as a premier African American institution in Alabama. The School's Board of Trustees should be

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asking the governor, who is ex-officio president of the board, to take this action. Where are they?

Feds actually raid a flea market

It was a first for me. In my years on this earth I had never heard of federal agents, or any agents for that matter, raiding a flea market. But this is Alabama folks and it happened this past week at the Santuck Flea Market in Elmore County. And yes, they found some infested fleas; about \$2 million dollars worth of goods they deemed to be counterfeit, probably including a few Rolex watches.

Agents said the raid was the end result of a lengthy investigation. Two folks were arrested, but not for the counterfeit goods; they were nabbed on immigration charges. The counterfeit goods turned out to be mostly carrying bags, clothes, footwear and pro football merchandise. Yes, there were fleas on some dogs in the area, but they escaped capture.

UNA hosts Gunn Event this week

I'll be traveling to Florence this week to attend a part of the weeklong commemoration of the integration of the school in September of 1963. That was at a time when I had voluntarily taken a cut in pay and moved from the mail room to the newsroom, becoming a reporter at the Florence Times/Tri-Cities Daily, now known as The Times/Daily. Back in those times the papers delivered on the north side of the Tennessee River were delivered as the Florence Times and on the south side, were delivered as the Tri-Cities Daily.

I will be catching up with many former friends at the university who will be attending a breakfast at the University Thursday morning commemorating the enrollment of Wendell Wilkie Gunn, a Tuscumbia, Ala. native, who was then attending a college in Tennessee. Gunn will be the speaker at the event. Alabama noted historian Dr. Wayne Flynt will be on hand as a speaker at another event and will be conducting workshops on relevant topics.

As I wrote a few weeks ago Gunn was the second African American to graduate from a

previously white-only college or university in the state. He was the third to enroll in a previously white-only school.

Have the rights of children been diminished?

Jimmy Sandlin, the director of Alabama Child Defend, thinks so. He says the Alabama Supreme Court recently decided that children have very few individual rights relating to their associations. He says the decision by the court in a recent case grants that power almost exclusively to the parents and the courts are forbidden from considering whether a decision is in the best interests of the child.

In a dissent in the case Justice Jim Main agrees, saying the majority opinion focuses on the liberty interests of the parents, almost as though the children were chattel. He said the decision should have focused on the best interests of the child.

"Those of who are involved in our family courts on the ground level see the selfish, petty and destructive actions of parents using their children as pawns in an effort to gain some advantage for themselves," Sandlin, a former circuit judge, says.

This opinion by the court "places grandparents in an "all or nothing position" if they decide to legally intervene and challenge the treatment of a child by a parent. "As a result, he says, grandparents will be placed in a position of "all or nothing" if they decide to legally intervene and challenge the treatment of a child by a parent."

"As a result, children will remain in abusive environments for longer periods and the state will be forced to take custody of a larger number of children who could be in the care of a relative."

It sounds like this decision should be given another look by the High Court.