

BALDWIN HONORS BAMA'S GILBERRY

PACKED GYM AT BCHS INCLUDES TIDE COACH NICK SABAN/1C

HOME INVASION

POLICE SAY TEENS BROKE INTO MIDTOWN HOUSE OF WOMAN, 86, AND ROBBED HER/1B

PRESS-REGISTER

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BALDWIN EDITION

MONROEVILLE

Child sex plea nets life in prison

► Former EMT pleads guilty to sodomy, porn charges

By **CONNIE BAGGETT**
Staff Reporter

MONROEVILLE — A former ambulance worker was sentenced to two life terms in prison after pleading guilty Friday to sodomizing a 12-year-old girl and recording the abuse in photographs and videos.

"I'm glad he is getting what he deserves," said the child's mother, who wept with her daughter during the hearing. "I had no idea he was capable of this. It just shows you that you don't really know anyone."

The girl, whose name was not released because of her age and the nature of the crimes against her, said she was glad the ordeal was over.

Monroe County District Attorney Tommy Chapman said Tobin Michael "Toby" Parrish, 34, engaged in deviant sexual contact with the child over several years. The child was well-known to Parrish and often visited his home, Chapman said.

Parrish was arrested in June 2007 after the child told a friend she had been sexually abused. Word got back to the victim's mother, who contacted authorities.

Officers confiscated computers, sex toys and other evidence from Parrish's home and soon found more than 100 images of the girl engaged in various sexual acts. Parrish was indicted on 10 criminal counts, including engaging in deviant sexual intercourse by forcible compulsion, sexual torture, and multiple counts of possession of and producing pornography involving a child.



Tobin Parrish

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Correction

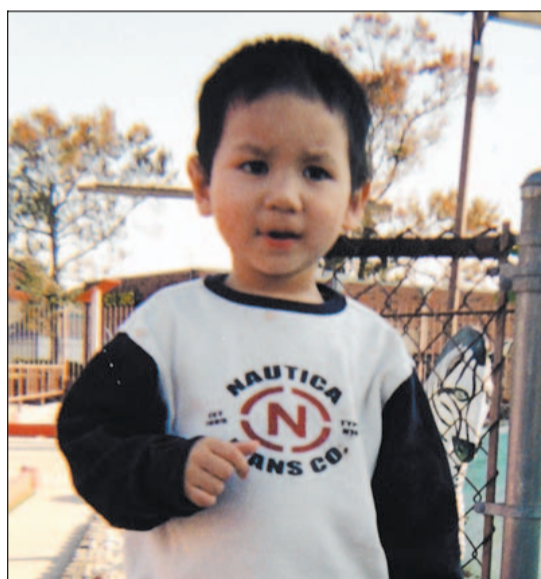
A story on the Business pages of Thursday's Press-Register included an incorrect price for land being sold by the state docks to Frascati Shops Inc. The company is expected to pay \$30,000 an acre, or a total of \$360,000 for 12 acres.

DAUPHIN ISLAND BRIDGE DEATHS

STORIES OF 4 LITTLE LIVES

Bright, loving and loved, they dash in and out of their mother's memories. They're the children believed thrown from the Dauphin Island bridge.

Here are their stories.



Ryan Phan, 3 years old



Hannah Luong, 2 years old



Danny Luong, 4 months old



Lindsey Luong, 1 year old

By **JILLIAN KRAMER**
Staff Reporter

In September 2007, Kieu Ngoc Phan gave birth to the last of her four children. In January 2008, she lost them all.

Their father, Lam Luong, sits in a cell at Mobile County Metro Jail as police and prosecutors build their case against him. They say Luong has admitted to throwing the children off the side of the Dauphin Island bridge.

Phan once clung tightly to her young children's hands. Now, she holds onto these memories.

Ryan Phan

Like any typical 3-year-old child, the world was bright and bountiful to Ryan Phan.

"What's that?" his mother said Ryan would routinely ask.

Those things that he did know — mostly a prized collection of toys, clothes and movies at the family's modest brick house in Irvington — were always stacked neatly in one spot, away from other children's things, Phan said.

His organizational instincts led Ryan to join in with household chores, his mother said; he

Please see **Mother** Page 4A ►

INSIDE: "WE'VE GOT TO FIND THAT FOURTH ANGEL,' SAYS SEARCHER/1B

MOBILE COUNTY

School principal is target of probe

► Bernard Johnson, who is also a pastor, is placed on leave after 'financial irregularities' are found during audit of Booker T. Washington Middle School

By **RENA HAVNER**
Staff Reporter

The promising principal at Mobile's Booker T. Washington Middle School has been placed on paid administrative leave and is under investigation because of "financial irregularities" uncovered at the school, officials said Friday.

Bernard Johnson, who is also the pastor at Stewart Memorial C.M.E. church, has been on leave since Monday as a result of a regular audit of the school, said Paul Tate, assistant superintendent for human resources with the Mobile County schools.

On Friday, school officials turned the matter over to District Attorney John Tyson Jr., according to school system spokeswoman Nancy Pierce.

When asked for comment, Tyson would say only that his office did receive a call from the school system, and an investigation has begun.

Tate and Pierce declined Friday to speak further about the case.

Efforts to reach Johnson at home and at his church were unsuccessful Friday.

A Press-Register public records request revealed that from Sept. 25 to Oct. 11, 2007, Johnson signed five Washington Middle checks worth \$25,375 made out to his church.

He then repaid the full amount out of his own personal account Oct. 16.

School officials declined to say if those checks were the focus of the investigation.

Johnson, 42, took over at Washington Middle this school year and has won praise in the system as an up-and-coming leader. He led the prayer at Superintendent Roy Nichols'

Please see **School** Page 4A ►

INSIDE SUNDAY'S NEWSPAPER

MARDI GRAS TIME IS HERE!

On Sunday, we'll publish the Press-Register's 56-page guide to Mardi Gras 2008 in Mobile and coastal Alabama. The section — a reader favorite every year — is filled with information about parades, floats and royal courts, and features the Masked Observer's first column of the '08 Carnival season.

Today 47° Brisk
Tonight 25° Freeze

Rain 80%

Complete Weather 6B

Group to fly rebel flag over Interstate 10

► 80-foot pole will stand on private property

By **ROY HOFFMAN**
Staff Reporter

The local Sons of Confederate Veterans plan to install a 12-foot-by-18-foot Confederate Battle Flag on an 80-foot pole built close to the eastbound side of Interstate 10 in south Mobile County.



A Confederate Battle Flag

Sponsor says Confederate history is "not getting the proper respect."

Ben George, SCV commander of the Lee-Moses-Dixon Vindicator Camp in Saraland, said that the flag installation — which includes two light poles with 2,000-watt halogen lamps — cost between \$15,000 and \$20,000, which was raised largely through contributions.

George said the flag will be on private property, but he would not say who owned the property.

The project has been in development for more than a year, said

George, whose organization is scheduled to dedicate the flag at 1 p.m. today to mark the 201st birthday of Robert E. Lee.

Confederate history, George said, is "part of the gumbo that refers to the diversity of Mobile. This is one part of that diversity that's not getting the proper respect."

He said Confederate history is part of what draws tourists to

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School principal is placed on leave

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swearing-in ceremony this month.

Washington Middle is a 570-student school on Andrews Street in north Mobile's Toulminville community.

It is one of 12 troubled middle schools participating in a system reform plan. Washington and the other middle schools got new principals and teachers this year as well as extra funding.

On the school's Web site, Johnson mentions that "expectations are indeed high" at Booker T. Washington and that "failure is not an option."

In Johnson's absence, Reginald Wilson from Denton Middle School is acting principal at Washington Middle, officials said.

Johnson began working for the Mobile County Public School System in 2000 as a sixth-grade language arts teacher at Booker T. Washington, according to his personnel file. He was an assistant principal at Dunbar Magnet School before he took over as principal at Washington.

His annual salary is \$78,875.

If the school system decides to take further action against Johnson, it would have to bring the matter before the Mobile County school board for a hearing, according to Alabama's teacher tenure laws.

School board President Fleet Belle said Friday that he had not been briefed on the situation.

"I have no earthly idea what is going on," Belle said. "As a person, I know him, and he's been a very successful local pastor, and he's just good people."



JOHN DAVID MERCER/Staff Photographer

Kieu Ngoc Phan, the mother of the four children who police say were thrown to their deaths by their father from the Dauphin Island bridge, participates in a candlelight vigil for the children Monday in Bayou La Batre. Searchers have found the bodies of three of the four children.

Mother clings to the memories of her children

Continued from Page 1A

would "carry as much clothes as he could handle" to the washing machine and help her with laundry.

"The thing about Ryan is ... he can see the emotion from other family members, especially his mom," Phan said through a translator. "Anytime there was a problem, he could spot it. He's a bright child. He watched and observed you."

If a family member was ill, Ryan was the first to throw a blanket over him or her, Phan said.

The oldest of the four children, Ryan as an infant was "dedicated to Christ" during a service at the Hoi Thanh Baptist Vang Phuc, a small Vietnamese church in Hollinger's Island, said the Rev. Phi Vo, the associate pastor there.

Hannah Luong

Hannah Luong was a fashionista in training.

Though the 2-year-old hadn't fully developed her motor skills, Phan said Hannah would meddle with her mother's makeup and don fancy clothes.

"There were many times she would put on the makeup and come out the room and say, 'Look, mom, am I pretty?'" Phan said.

Hannah had a particular fondness for her older brother, Ryan, Phan said.

"That bond you cannot educate or force," she said.

Hannah was often by Ryan's side, Phan said. "She was bright and intelligent. She got it all."

The small girl was particularly



BILL STARLING/Staff Photographer

Lam Luong, center, is escorted into a Mobile courtroom Tuesday. The 37-year-old father is jailed on four counts of capital murder in connection with the deaths of his four children, who police say were thrown by Luong off the Dauphin Island bridge.

protective of her possessions, Phan said.

"If it's her stuff, it's her stuff," Phan explained. "If you borrow it, she's watching you."

Hannah loved high heels, a fascination she shared with her younger sister, Lindsey.

Lindsey Luong

One-year-old Lindsey Luong was most comfortable in her mother's arms.

She was the first to line up at the

front door and demand a hug when her mother returned at night from working at Fancy Nails in Irvington, Phan said.

Lindsey also held tightly to her brothers and sister as they would play, Phan said, even 4-month-old Danny.

"As little as she was, she loved to hold the baby," Phan said.

Though Phan said Lindsey was too young to play with her older siblings' toys, she watched their possessions carefully and would wait for

help if anyone disturbed them — especially their shoes.

"Lindsey loved to try on shoes," Vo said, relaying a message from the child's grandmother, Dung Ngoc Pham.

Lindsey held a special spot in her heart for Pham, her mother said.

"Every time she would see her grandmother, she would say, 'I love you,' and kiss her," Phan said. "After that, she would say, I want this or that."

Despite her frequent requests to her grandmother, Phan said, Lindsey was "a very accepting child. She takes what you give her."

Danny Luong

Phan said she will most remember 4-month-old Danny Luong's innocent smile and infectious laugh.

"It's different from the other children," she said. "It brings joy to my heart."

In her arms, Danny was content to listen to Phan's voice.

Danny had just begun to actively follow her words, Phan said, almost as if he was learning their meaning.

His grandmother, Pham, said that Danny was "very small and he had a heart problem," according to Vo.

Inside his tiny heart, a vein had "leaked," his mother said, a complication after his birth that required surgery to repair.

"He was taken to the doctor and was fine after that," Phan said.

Because of his fragile condition, his grandmother "cared for Danny a lot," Vo said.

He was as lovable and affectionate, Phan said, as any of the other children.

Confederate group to install big rebel flag

Continued from Page 1A

Mobile.

He noted that there are huge rebel flags visible to major highways in other locales in the South, such as the flag north of Montgomery, in Prattville.

"They're going up in frustration," he explained, "with some of the things happening with heritage."

Clarence Mohr, a professor of history at the University of South Alabama and author of books and academic papers on Southern history, including the Civil War, said he believes that the flag will repel and polarize rather than attract.

"It's time that Alabamians realize we live in a global community," Mohr said. "If we are to be full participants in a society in which every-

thing is interconnected, we need to step away from symbols that invoke a narrow and backward-looking view of the Southern past.

"There's no doubt in my mind that the overwhelming majority of Alabamians, black and white, understand that the Civil War is over, and the time has come to move on.

"If we want to attract businesses like ThyssenKrupp and other businesses, if we want the port of Mobile to realize its full potential, we want to show the positive, not negatives of our history.

"A giant Confederate battle flag will do little to enhance the state's image in the eyes of tourists or investors."

Mike Dean, Mobile County commissioner for District 3, which includes the Confeder-

ate flag site, said, "I think people feel different ways about that flag. This is America, and everyone's got a view they want to represent. It's on private property."

Did Dean feel that the flag would be bad for local business or generate negative responses?

"It will have no impact," he said. "It's a matter of how people want to look at it. People have the right to feel either way on this issue.

"They're doing something," he said of the SCV group, "to remember heritage."

The county's only black commissioner, Merceria Ludgood, who represents District 1, said of the SCV's flag project, "It's certainly their right to do it," but that "they're out of step in where people are in this issue.

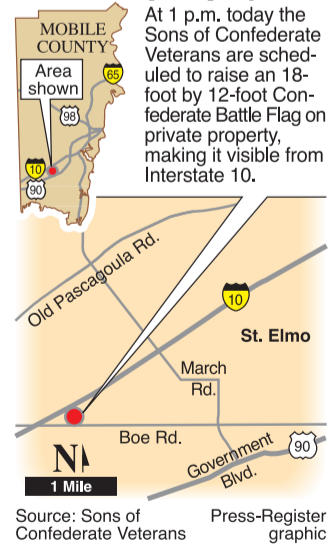
"My district is very diverse, some parts rural. People are looking for the things that we have in common and embracing those things, rather than (those that) divide us.

"I think it takes us backward."

In response to the commonly used maxim about Confederate history, "Heritage, not hate," Mohr said, "It's impossible at this point to disentangle the Confederate flag from the many negative causes it's been associated with since the Civil War, especially states' rights, resistance to the civil rights movement, and frequent displays of the Confederate flag at neo-Nazi rallies and Klan rallies.

"It appears consistently in these settings, and there's no use pretending it doesn't."

Battle Flag display



At 1 p.m. today the Sons of Confederate Veterans are scheduled to raise an 18-foot by 12-foot Confederate Battle Flag on private property, making it visible from Interstate 10. Source: Sons of Confederate Veterans. Press-Register graphic

Former EMT pleads guilty in child sex case

Continued from Page 1A

Under a plea bargain, Parrish pleaded guilty to sodomy, possession of pornography, and production of pornography with intent to distribute. Monroe County Circuit Judge Dawn Hare sentenced Parrish to two life terms plus 20 years, all to be served concurrently, and a \$5,000 fine. Chapman said he could be eligi-

ble for parole in 10 years, but the prosecutor said he would vigorously oppose parole for Parrish.

Chapman said Parrish could have faced nine life terms plus 20 years, but under Alabama law, the sentences would have run concurrently, giving him virtually the same jail time as the plea. Parrish's attorney Paul Hardin declined to comment re-

garding the case.

Hare ordered Parrish to allow the victim to retrieve personal property at his residence, but blocked Parrish from getting his computers back. Parrish said there were images of his parents stored on the computers he wanted to keep, but Hare said releasing the computers could allow further dissemination of the

pornographic images stored there.

"You may object," Hare said sharply, "but I'm not letting them go anywhere."

Parrish was an employee of Simmons Ambulance Service in Monroeville and had been a part-time instructor of emergency medical technician courses at local schools at the time of his arrest.

Central Alabama could see snowfall

Associated Press

BIRMINGHAM — The weather service said central Alabama could receive as much as 6 inches of snow by this afternoon from a storm that resembled the one that gave the state its last big winter blast 15 years ago.

The heaviest accumulations were expected in one of the state's most densely populated areas — south of Interstate 20/59 and north of Montgomery.

The National Weather Service issued a heavy snow warning for an area that included metro Birmingham, Montgomery and Anniston from 3 a.m. to 8 p.m. Saturday. Weather service meteorologist Gary Goggins said the I-20 corridor may get 1 to 2 inches while areas farther south down I-65 could see 3 to 6 inches. He said the I-85 corridor would definitely be affected by heavier snow.

Forecasters said snow would likely begin in the pre-dawn hours Saturday, and afternoon high temperatures were predicted only from the mid-30s in north Alabama to around 50 in the south.

Moist air from the Gulf of Mexico was expected to collide with cold air from the North, creating the likelihood of snow.

Alabama drivers aren't used to wintry roads, and the state highway department was getting ready for the worst with dump trucks and spreaders loaded with sand. Public safety officials asked motorists to limit travel if the weather begins getting bad.

"I encourage Alabamians, especially those in the northern and central parts of our state, to stay alert to changing weather conditions and take necessary precautions to keep themselves and their families safe," Gov. Bob Riley said in a statement.