

Features



TOP

Columbus-Belmont: 'Gilbratar Of The West'

JANUARY 31ST 2012 BY UNKNOWN

Columbus-Belmont: 'Gilbratar Of The West'

*By Annabeth Miller,
ShowMe Times Editor*

COLUMBUS, Kent. - It's a quiet little town in Kentucky. But 150 years ago it was the scene of some of the earliest fighting in the Civil War and the site of a rather ingenious plan to retain control of the Mississippi River.

Even today, Columbus has fewer than 100 households, but has a beautiful park to commemorate its significance in American history and for today's families to enjoy.

In the early fall of 1861 the Confederates under General Leonidas Polk controlled the beautiful river bluffs at Columbus. Polk dubbed the fort the "Gibraltar of the West." Across the river was Missouri – Belmont in Mississippi County. Polk knew that control of the Mississippi River was vital.

A key to Polk's defense of the river and to prevent movement on the river of Union supply ships, was a giant chain that was stretched across the water from Columbus to Belmont. Each link in that mile-long chain weighed more than 20 pounds. The anchor securing the chain weighed 9 tons.

Attacking Columbus directly would have been foolhardy for the Union, not only because of Polk's chain but because Columbus was the home to 140 cannons. The biggest was the "Lady Polk" – that park signs say it was named for Polk's wife - a cannon that shot 128-pound cannon balls and reportedly was the largest operated by the Confederacy at the time.

But on Nov 7, 1861, the Confederate camp at Belmont was attacked by Union troops that floated down river from Cairo and landed at Hunter's Landing in Mississippi County. The troops were led Brig. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant. This action was Grant's first campaign leading a large contingent of men.

But Grant almost didn't leave Missouri that day. The cannon at Columbus fired into the Union ranks, and Union gunboats exchanged fire. Grant is said to have told his men, "Well, we must cut our way out as we cut our way in."

But once the general reached the landing he turned around to go back and look for a missing Union regiment. But, lo and behold, Grant only found Confederate soldiers headed in his direction. Grant spun his horse around and headed back to the gunboat. The boat was casting off from the bank of the river.

"The captain of the boat that had just pushed out recognized me and ordered the engineer not to start the engine: he then had a plank run out for me. My horse seemed to take in the situation. He put his fore feet over the bank without hesitation or urging, and, with his hind feet well under him, slid down the bank and trotted on board," Grant wrote in his memoirs.

Park signs report that Civilian Conservation Corps workers built a number of picnic shelters and an observation point overlooking the river. These structures are still in use today

</images/AB 2012/1.31.2012 lookout point.jpg>

– they fit well into the landscape and are beautiful and well-cared for. The view from the cliffs is breathtaking, with a wide, clear view of the river and Missouri.

Unlike other historic sites, this park also has “family-friendly” activities. There are wonderful camping sites, many overlooking the river, and an activity center, including a mini-golf attraction.

An antebellum farmhouse that was used during the war as a Confederate hospital is now the park museum (not open in the winter).

And yes, a stretch of that famous chain and the 9-ton anchor is prominently displayed outside in the park.

Notes:

- Travelers wanting to cross the Mississippi on the Hickman-Dorena Ferry should check before taking off to Mississippi County to catch to the boat. It is currently closed, according to Hickman County authorities, due to engine problems.
- If you drive down Illinois Highway 51 from Wycliffe, don't miss the Fort Jefferson Cross at the Confluence, which overlooks the river south of town. And don't forget the “fragrant” aroma at the paper plant!

In observance of the 150th anniversary, this report is the first of periodic series on Civil War sites in our region.

ShowMe Photo Gallery

Columbus-Belmont Park
photos by Annabeth Miller

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[TOP](#)

Decade By Decade: Girl Scouts To Celebrate

JANUARY 26TH 2012 BY UNKNOWN

Decade By Decade: Girl Scouts To Celebrate

By Annabeth Miller, SMT Editor

This March 12 will be a very special day.

On March 12, Girl Scouts from Savannah to San Francisco, Washington, D.C. to Dexter will celebrate the 100th anniversary since the founding the Girl Scouting in America.

Girl Scouts was founded March 12, 1912 in Savannah, Georgia by Juliette Gordon Low gathered 18 girls - including her niece – with a mission "I've got something for the girls of Savannah, and all of America, and all the world, and we're going to start it tonight," is the clarion call Low issued 100 years ago.

It didn't take long for Girl Scouting to spread throughout the county, reaching the Bootheel of Missouri in the 1920s, with one of the first troops formed in 1922 in Kennett. Troops those days were organized locally, and leaders just purchased a handbook to learn more about the program and then teach the girls.

Mrs. J.E. Strickland established the first Girl Scout troop in Dexter in 1934. There were 12 members.

Now, 100 years after that very first troop, Girl Scouts in the area are getting ready to celebrate a centennial birthday. And Girl Scouts of the Missouri Heartland is looking historic memorabilia for an anniversary display in Dexter.

The display is slated to be at the Keller Public Library in Dexter during March.

We are asking for help in collecting items for the display, said Anne Hyde, marketing/public relations manager for Girl Scouts of Missouri Heartland. “Items will be catalogued and well-protected; they will be returned to the original owners after the special exhibits close.”

Hyde said they are looking for Girl Scout uniforms through the World War II era, international Scouting uniforms, memorabilia, personal collections and unique items from the local area.

Items will be accepted until Feb. 15 at the Dexter Area Girl Scout Service Center, 1420 Girl Scout Way during business hours, Monday-Friday 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Persons wishing to loan items may contact April Isbell at the Dexter Service Center at 1-877-312-4764 ext. 1413.

Links of Interest

- [Girl Scouts of the U.S.A.](#)
- [Girl Scouts of Missouri](#)

Photo Above: Cadette Girl Scouts from the former Cotton Boll Area Girl Scout Council stand on the steps at Memorial Union on the Southeast Missouri State University campus in Cape Girardeau after receiving the First Class Award in a ceremony held with the former Otahki Girl Scout Council. This photo is circa 1970. Can you find women you know in this photo? (Archive photo)

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[TOP](#)

Community Of Friends Helps Kigers After Fire

JANUARY 25TH 2012 BY UNKNOWN

Community Of Friends Helps Kigers After Fire

By Annabeth Miller, SMT Editor

Sometimes when life is the darkest, a bright light comes shining through.

Last Thursday evening, Jerry Kiger looked out the window after dinner, and saw smoke billowing from the shop that held his business. He got to the structure and realized that he would not be able to save anything from inside. Tools, a computer, equipment, the family's Christmas decorations – all destroyed.

Fire crews from Dexter and Essex arrived, contained the fire and kept it from spreading to the family home, the woods surrounding the home, and the neighborhood south of town.

Before long, word spread throughout the community that there was a fire at the Kiger's. And folks showed up – church friends, neighbors, friends, teens that came for their kids, Wyatt and Jackie. All came to support, give hugs, and help in any way possible.

“I am just floored by people,” Karen Kiger said this week. “We may be down, but we still are going.”

It is the reaching out of a community – in friendship and love – that has sustained the family.

“People will do anything if they think it will help. It’s just amazing,” she added.

And that faith continues to hold them as they work to overcome this obstacle. This is the second crisis the Kiger family has weathered. In August 2010, Jerry took a tumble from a light pole at Charles Bland Stadium at Dexter High School. His gear was caught as he made his descent. He fell 40 feet, managing to not hit a concrete pad by inches. Jerry had a shattered right heel, broken left leg, three vertebrae broken in his back, and a broken sternum.

The Kigers know what it means to overcome tough times and that it takes faith, family and friends to take that journey.

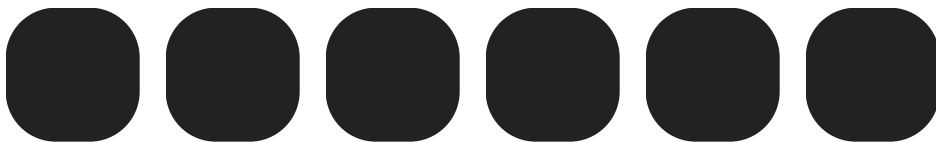
So they are working – re-establishing and re-building. Before the night was over last week, calls and messages were coming in from friends and colleagues offering equipment and tools, church friends were there with offers to help clean up the mess, to help in any way.

“God knows this happened – it happened for a reason,” the positive-minded Karen said. “We may not ever know why. But God knows; He knows, and He’s here.”

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The Top Ten: Sawyer Smith On Politics

JANUARY 23RD 2012 BY UNKNOWN

The Top Ten: Sawyer Smith On Politics

By Annabeth Miller, SMT Editor

Sawyer Smith is a unique fellow these days.

He is interested in politics and has met three of the major GOP candidates seeking that party's nomination for President, plus one who's name has been volleyed around during this election season.

What a deal for a kid from Dexter to meet Mitt Romney, Herman Cain, Rick Santorum and "the Donald" himself - Donald Trump.

Sawyer is the son of Kip and Pam Smith of Dexter, and a 2010 graduate of Dexter High School.

Sawyer plays baseball for the Palm Beach Atlantic Sailfish and is pursuing a degree in marketing & finance.

SMT TOP TEN QUESTIONS for Sawyer Smith:

- **Name:** Jon Sawyer Smith
- **Age:** 19
- **Attends:** Palm Beach Atlantic University

Why does politics excite you so? There is never a dull moment to me in politics. I could go on and on about who and what in politics interest me and why but, the most important reason I become excited is because I love this country and care deeply about the paths it chooses to take day in and day out. These paths are determined ultimately through politics.

</images/AB 2012/NEW TopTen graphic.jpg>

How have you had the opportunity to meeting three of the 2012 presidential candidates? Well, God has certainly blessed me with some wonderful opportunities and opened doors that most do not get to walk through so first off I am very thankful for that. Through my college republicans organization, student government association, and other personal connections. I have been fortunate enough to cross paths with people like this from time to time.

/images/AB 2012/sawyer and santorum.jpg

Who have you met and where? As far as presidential candidates go in 2012, I have shook hands with some Rick Santorum, Herman Cain, and Mitt Romney. Also, if Donald

Trump announces his candidacy for president, he will make a fourth candidate I've had the pleasure of meeting. I was very upset I missed my chance to meet Newt Gingrich and Rick Perry over Christmas break when I was home from school.

Use three words to describe each candidate. Professional. Intelligent. Enthusiastic.

Why is the election of 2012 important? While all elections have been and remain important, this particular election of 2012 may be the most vital yet in deciding our nations ever changing course in history. We will either decide to continue this downward spiral we have been experiencing for so long or we will elect a different individual that will lead us with hopes of turning things around in Washington and returning America to the place it once was before it is too late.

/images/AB 2012/sawyer and herman.jpg

Traditionally, young voters are one of the smallest voting groups in national elections. What would you say to encourage your peers to become involved in the process and

to vote? Before I would tell them to go vote, I would first tell them to learn and understand on their own behalf the issues and things taking place in our country if they do not know already. Find out what you stand for and support it by voting. Far too often I witness others show no interest in politics, I think they fail to realize that whether they are interested or not it affects their lives too; not only theirs, but their families and friends also. Take initiative to care about what's happening in our great country and hit the polls wholeheartedly, your vote does count and can make a difference.

Who is your political hero and why? I do not have just one political hero. There are too many that I look up to only to say one name.

/images/AB 2012/sawyer and donald.jpg

What are Sawyer Smith's career goals? I certainly know that my interest and heart is in government/politics and/or business but I do not yet know what the Lord has planned for my life. I am taking it

one day at a time open to whatever comes my way; always ready to seize an opportunity.

What is your favorite sound? Music in general. I love all kinds.

What is your favorite word? Love.

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Dexter's Kruse Honored For Service To Ag

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Dexter's Kruse Honored For Service To Ag

By Annabeth Miller, SMT Editor

HONOLULU – He grew up in Stoddard County, walking cornrows side-by-side with his dad, with his hands in the rich Bootheel soil. He and his wife came back to their hometown to raise a family, to walk those cornrows with his sons – and now his granddaughters – and to make a positive impact in the community.

Along the way, Charles Kruse has been a vital part in the largest farmer organization in the ShowMe State, has served the state, as Director of Agriculture, served his state and nation in the Army National Guard, has been a trusted agricultural advisor to government leaders.

The American Farm Bureau Federation honored former Missouri Farm Bureau President Charles Kruse recently with its highest honor – the Distinguished Service to Agriculture Award. The recognition was announced at the national organization's recent annual meeting in Honolulu.

AFBF established the Distinguished Service Award to honor individuals who have devoted their careers to serving farming and ranching.

A fourth-generation farmer, Charlie Kruse has dedicated more than 40 years to agriculture, including service on numerous local, state and national committees, among them the Lower Mississippi Delta Development Commission, the Governor's Advisory Council on Agriculture and President George H.W. Bush's Council on Rural America.

For 18 years, until his retirement at the end of 2010, Kruse served as president of the Missouri Farm Bureau. Prior to that, Kruse was the director of the Missouri Department of Agriculture, from 1985-1991.

The list of accolades Kruse has received for his work for Missouri agriculture is long, and his support for farming and ranching across the country is equally, if not more, impressive, according to AFBF President Bob Stallman.

“Charlie Kruse embodies Farm Bureau as well as any one person could,” Stallman said. “We are proud to call him our own and honored to have worked alongside him to ensure a strong future for American agriculture.”

Kruse's national appointments include work on the FARMER-MAC board of directors, President George W. Bush's Advisory Committee for Trade and Policy Negotiations and the Commission on 21st Century Production Agriculture.

Kruse has represented U.S. agriculture in numerous efforts to grow international markets for American food and fiber. In addition, in 2010, as a retired brigadier general in the Army National Guard, he assisted in creating agri-business development teams in Afghanistan.

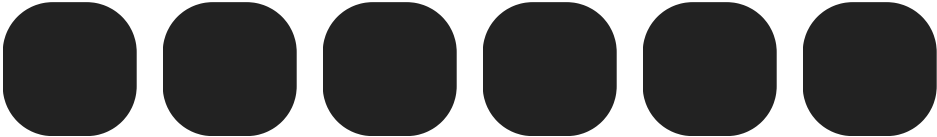
Along with serving as Missouri Farm Bureau president from 1992-2010, Kruse's involvement with Farm Bureau includes service on the AFBF board of directors from 1995-2010 and the organization's executive committee from 1996-2010.

He was chairman of AFBF's Task Force on the U.S. Livestock Industry in 2003 and the group's Trade Advisory Committee in 2004 and 2005.

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