

LOOKING BACK: June 20

By Betty Slowe

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50 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

Alabama football coach Paul W. "Bear" Bryant collapsed just as he began a speech at the annual Pepperdine College coaching clinic near Los Angeles. He clutched his chest and cried out, "I don't know what it is -- is there a doctor in the house?" before he collapsed. Bryant was taken to the college infirmary, then to View Park Community Hospital. After tests were run, Bryant flew to Birmingham for a stay in the University Hospital there. The diagnosis was duodenitis, but the doctor informed Bryant that if he wanted to continue coaching, he should cut out much of his busy outside schedule. Bryant canceled outside activities for the remainder of the year and those scheduled for the following year.



Staff file photo | The Tuscaloosa News
10 years ago: Dancy First Baptist Church, one of nine churches burned during a two-week period in February, held a homecoming and re-dedication service for its new building. The Rev. Walter Hawkins introduces guest speaker the Rev. Schmitt Moore to a crowded church on June 25, 2006, during the Homecoming/Rededication Program. The church in Pickens County was one of nine churches burned in Alabama within a two-week period. This service was the first held in the newly renovated church.

A contract was awarded for construction of a three-story Alabama Power Co. office building to cost in excess of \$1 million and to be built on Queen City Avenue at the site of the old Tuscaloosa Junior High School.

Slum housing owned by the city in the Kaulton area came under attack from the Tuscaloosa Council on Human Relations and prompted one city commissioner to suggest that the city give 90-day eviction notices and clear the area. The houses were formerly owned by the old Kaul Lumber Co.

After asking attorney Ted Northington to prepare an ordinance concerning the improvement of vacant lots by property owners, the Northport City Council turned down the ordinance. If the lots were not cleaned up by the owners, the job would be done by the city and the bill sent to the owners. Some board members said the city had no provision for caring for the lots and it would be an expensive thing to try to do.

Ralph "Shug" Jordan, head football coach at Auburn University, accepted the co-chairmanship of the committee to raise funds for chapels at Bryce Hospital and Partlow State School. With Paul W. "Bear" Bryant, the chairman of the drive, sidelined, Jordan was called in to help push the million-dollar drive over the goal.

25 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

Representatives from Tuscaloosa, Northport, and Tuscaloosa agreed in principle to terms of the joint project widening Watermelon Road to five lanes from McFarland Boulevard to Sokol Park. However, Tuscaloosa City Councilman Jerry Plott lambasted both the project and Northport officials. The project would be 75 percent funded by federal money, 12.5 percent by state money and the remaining 12.5 percent -- about \$300,000 -- would be paid by local money over a three-year period.

Northport planned on paying \$150,000 and wanted Tuscaloosa to pay the other half of the local money. Plott's argument was that the road is in the city of Northport.

Tuscaloosa County Crimestoppers Inc. received its 1,000th call that ironically provided information on the first case the program featured when it was launched two years before -- the slaying of Chanda Fehler. The 23-year-old kindergarten teacher and UA student was taken from a UA pool in 1987 and killed. Her body was discovered nearly a week later in the Black Warrior River. However, her killer had not been found.

Construction continued on the new Hillcrest High School, a \$7 million project that would serve students in southern Tuscaloosa County. The school would open early the following year.

A 1-cent sales tax for Fayette County schools was defeated by an almost 2-1 margin in a special referendum.

10 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

The Tuscaloosa City School Board approved a contract for the design of the Westlawn Middle School.

Neighbors of a man in Livingston who was willing to keep an 8-foot alligator in his backyard pond were not happy with his decision. The man said he just didn't want the creature killed, adding that there ought to be a better option.

A judge closed the case on former Tide booster Logan Young. Young died from head injuries due to a fall in his home in April.

Two \$5 million lawsuits alleging two sexual assaults at Partlow Developmental Center were filed against the Alabama Department of Mental Health and Retardation. The victims, both mentally retarded males, were sexually assaulted and injured by two males staying at the facility. One of the attorneys said it was obvious that the victims were not supervised properly.

Upperclassmen on the UA campus were given incentives to move off campus. Most freshmen were required to live on campus, leading to more demand for campus housing than there was space.

UA gymnast Ashley Miles was a finalist for Collegiate Woman Athlete of the Year.

Lowe's announced that it would build a store on U.S. Highway 82 West, across from Walmart.

Dancy First Baptist Church, one of nine churches burned during a two-week period in February, held a homecoming and re-dedication service for its new building.

FIVE YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

The city of Tuscaloosa was named one of the nation's "most livable" cities by the U.S. Conference of Mayors. Tuscaloosa received the honor for the first time because of the city's involvement and mayoral leadership in its Pre-K Initiative, which prepares academically at-risk 4-year-olds for kindergarten.

Tuscaloosa Police Officer Howard Davidson and his wife, Christon, adopted the 4-year-old German shepherd that belonged to Tuscaloosa Police Officer Trevor Phillips who was killed in the line of duty while escorting a funeral procession.

Eleven people named "Pillars of West Alabama" by the Community Foundation of West Alabama would be honored. They included Delores and Weldon Cole, Dennis Steverson Sr., Harry C. Lee, Jonathan "Jack" Warner, Lee Allen Hallman, Madeleine

Hill, Mary Ann Phelps, Richard Losch, Travis Gary Fitts and William Lackey Stephens.

The city of Tuscaloosa disputed a bill of \$940,260 submitted by a contractor who provided food for city employees who worked around the clock in response to the April 27 tornado.

Two-term Tuscaloosa County Commissioner Don Wallace announced that he would not seek re-election.

Bids were taken to demolish two schools: the tornado-ravaged Alberta Elementary and the old Westlawn Middle School.

The Metro Animal Shelter was hit by burglars. Hundreds of dollars in donations, gift cards and adoption fees and \$4,000 to \$5,000 in medical supplies were missing.

Tuscaloosa lacked a shelter for the homeless after the Salvation Army shelter was destroyed in the tornado. The Salvation Army had housed 60 to 70 homeless on an average night, offering two hot meals a day to the people who stayed there.

ONE YEAR AGO THIS WEEK

UA President Judy Bonner was the namesake of an annual prize to recognize “unselfish service” by a faculty or staff member. A \$1 million gift by Trustee John D. Johns and his wife, Nancy, funded the Judy Bonner Presidential Medallion Prize.

Deaths this week included Dr. Lydia Stefanescu, 66, who practiced medicine for more than 30 years in Tuscaloosa.

Tuscaloosa boxer Deontay Wilder became the subject of a book for children, “Deontay the future World Champ, a story inspired by Heavyweight World Champion Deontay Wilder.” The book aims at affirming good eating habits, working out and sticking to goals.

The 2015 class of “The Pillars of West Alabama” were honored. Included were Mary Jolly, Herbie E. Burkes Jr., Bryan Ross Chandler, Dr. Elizabeth White Cleino, Dr. Willie Clyde Jones, Robert W. Kuhn Jr., Everett Cameron “Buddy” Powel Jr. and Mark G. Sullivan.

Compiled by retired News librarian Betty Slowe.

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