

MHA NEWS

Dinner Meeting

Monday, September 26, 2011

6:30 pm — Dinner; program following at 7:15 pm

Fellowship Hall
Trinity Presbyterian Church
3115 Providence Road



Upcoming Dinner Program

A Defense of the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence

By Judge Chase B. Saunders



▪ A motion for appropriate relief seeking the re-examination of the record of history by the academic community and exoneration of the drafters of the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence.

▪ A motion seeking the trial of UNC Professor Charles Phillips for academic misconduct in his 1853 publication, defaming the drafters and declaring the episode a fraud, for wanton negligence in conducting his research and thereby failing to meet generally accepted standards of academic research and materially deviated from said standards.

This presentation was given to the Horace Williams Philosophical Society earlier this year. It is an examination of the Meck Dec from a legal perspective examining the proofs tracking the Chain of Error book. Copies of Chair of Error will be available for \$25. All proceeds go to MHA.

Chase is a 5th generation North Carolinian and Charlotte native, former judge and prosecutor and current business and family matters lawyer. He is currently involved in Charlotte Rotary, The Trail of History, The Little Sugar Creek Greenway Board, and serves as

the Chair of Justice Initiatives, a court support non-profit. Chase is also the past president of our Mecklenburg Historical Association.

November Meeting

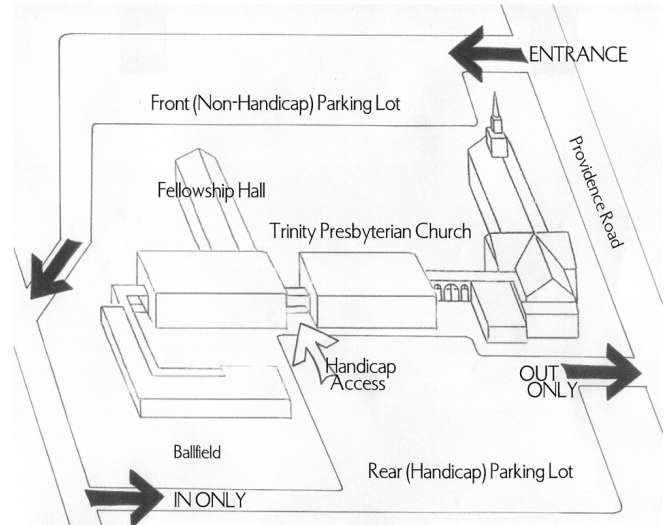
Mark your calendars for November 14th (earlier in the month because of Thanksgiving) when we will have our second fall dinner meeting. Patti Proctor will present her program on "Liberty's Ladies" and will portray women in our local area who held off the British.

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**The MHA meets in Trinity Presbyterian Church's Fellowship Hall.
3115 Providence Road**



Remarks from the President

It's that time of year again when we "get back in gear" and enjoy the company of our history friends at the MHA dinners. We have a special treat in store for the September 26th dinner meeting at Trinity with Chase Saunders' program on the Meck Dec from an attorney's point of view. Also, mark your calendars for November 14th (note this is earlier in the month because of Thanksgiving) when we will have our second fall dinner meeting. Patti Proctor will present

her program on "Liberty's Ladies" and will portray women in our local area who held off the British. I'm also happy to announce that Jared, our former caterer from Izzy's, will be back with us to cater the MHA dinners. Andrew King accepted a new position as manager and head chef at The Inn On Lake Lure. Andrew sends his best wishes for MHA.

On a very sad note, I want to recognize the passing of two history matriarchs of Mecklenburg, May Davidson and Belle Banks, both at age 92. They were

longtime MHA members, great champions of local history and will be greatly missed.

I encourage you to help us recruit new MHA members and have included our membership information in the newsletter. We look forward to an active year for MHA and if you have any issues or projects we should address, please let your Board of Directors know. See you at the September dinner!

Linda Dalton, President,
704.661.8470, leaseace@aol.com.

Passing of Belle Banks and May Davidson

Mrs. Margaret Pierce 'Belle' Banks, 92, of Huntersville, NC died Tuesday April 12, 2011, after a brief illness at her residence.

Born August 1, 1918, to Mary Donaldson and Leslie Sherman Pierce in Coatesville, PA, Mrs. Banks was predeceased by her husband of 56 years, Richard Torrance 'Dick' Banks.

She is survived by her daughter, Margaret Banks Basinger and her husband Dale of Rockwell and by her son Richard Torrance Banks of Huntersville. Mrs. Banks was active in community and church affairs. She served in several capacities in women's activities in Huntersville Presbyterian Church. She was a member of the Democratic Woman's Club. She served for 12 years as a commissioner on the Mecklenburg County Parks and Recreation Board, earning the Order of the Hornet for her service. She was Chairman of the Board, Central Piedmont Community College during the organizational period leading to the establishment of the North Campus.

She held several offices in the Huntersville Woman's Club and was active in the Mecklenburg Historical Association. A dedicated history preservationist, she served for several years on the Board of the Hugh Torrance House and Store restoration project. She and her husband devoted their lives to restoring Cedar Grove, the Torrance home place built in 1831.

Ms. May Davidson, 92, of the Pines in Davidson, NC died Wednesday, June 22, 2011. May Davidson was born May 5, 1919 at Historic Rural Hill, Huntersville, NC, the ancestral home of the Davidson Family. She was the daughter of the late Jo Graham and Annie May Alexander Davidson. May was a direct descendant, the sixth generation, of Major John Davidson and his wife Violet Wilson Davidson, both of whom were North Carolina Patriots during the American Revolution. Ms. Davidson was the last surviving direct descendant of Major John Davidson and his wife, Violet, who was born and raised at Rural Hill. May and her siblings had not married and this brings an end to six generations of the Davidson Family that lived at Historic Rural Hill. The Davidson Family of Rural Hill and Holly Bend were one of the most prominent family's of Mecklenburg County in the 18th and

19th centuries. The historic homestead was purchased by Mecklenburg County in 1992. It has been operated by Historic Rural Hill, Inc., a non-profit organization, as an historic site, working farm and the home of the Rural Hill Scottish Festival and Loch Norman Highland Games since 1994.

May was a member of the Mecklenburg Chapter DAR and was a member of the Daughters of the American Revolution from 1960. She was a graduate of Woman's College (now University of North Carolina, Greensboro) in Greensboro. After college May worked for the NC State Department of Agriculture in Raleigh. She then worked in Washington DC for Rep. Joseph W. Ervin, NC, Rep. William Colmer of Pascagoula, MS and completed her Washington career working for Senator Sam Ervin, NC. May was a member of Hopewell Presbyterian Church. Ms. Davidson was preceded in death by her brother, John Springs Davidson, Lieutenant Jo Graham Davidson, who died while serving in the U.S. Army Air Force in World War II, and one sister, Elizabeth Hampton Davidson. She is survived by her cousins, Robert Davidson and wife, Jane, of Columbia, SC, Jim Davidson and wife Cooper, of Bahama, NC, and Bob Davidson and wife Donnelly, of Columbia, SC.

From the Docent Chairman

It was a 'Historical' summer....regardless....of the extreme 'historic' HEAT!

What fun I had visiting historic sites this summer—from the coast to the mountains. Some I visited with family; some I toured with other Docents. And I can say that I am 'rich' in newly acquired knowledge and friendship of Docents.

I would encourage everyone to see the new permanent exhibit, North Carolina from prehistory to 1830s, at the North Carolina Museum of History in Raleigh. It is so well done with a lot of information displayed. The second part from 1830s to present will open mid-November. Do not miss the Thomas Day exhibit. Thomas Day was a free man of color, skilled as a furniture maker. He was sought after by the wealthy of North Carolina for his furniture (just before the Civil War). He owned slaves (apprenticed them and

protected them). He educated his children by sending them to schools in New England. Then go next door to the North Carolina Natural Sciences Museum and see the special exhibit 'Batiks of the Barrier Islands'. We spent over an hour in this exhibit learning about the art of batik. The pieces are absolutely stunning!! (This exhibit ends in early November.) I am eager for more historic outings this fall, along with soothing coolness. Audrey Mellichamp.

Charlotte on Historypin

Historypin is an award-winning application that allows users to upload and view historic photographs "pinned" to modern Google maps, and to compare modern and historic street views. The global site launched on July 11 and within days local history organizations were adding Mecklenburg images to the map. At the Charlotte Museum of History, summer intern Jess Blossfeld digitized and placed a series of Charlotte street and traffic images from the mid twentieth century. You can view them online at www.historypin.com and even add your own stories and recollections.

historypin

MHA Docent Anniversary

The MHA Docents are twenty years old! We will celebrate this grand occasion on Saturday, November 12th with a gala luncheon at Trinity Presbyterian Church. The event is for docents, former docents, their spouses, and invited guests who have been important to our development. We'll have a short program highlighting our accomplishments these past twenty years (otherwise known as bragging) then ask members of the group to recall their special docent memories. We'll have a table for photos and other memorabilia, so gather a few mementos, and think about your own poignant or hilarious "docent moment".

We have combed old rosters for names of former docents, but have lost touch with some and do not have current addresses. If you have the address of a former docent contact Lisa Tappy, Valerie Jones,

or Ann Williams; or email mhadandeli-on@mindspring.com. In mid-October invitations to the celebration will be mailed which will include further details and cost of the luncheon.

Mecklenburg Declaration Celebration, May 19 and 20

On Thursday, May 19, the May 20th Society held a reception at the new Mint Museum, uptown. The speaker was Andrew Roberts, historian, commentator, and author of many books on historic subjects. His address was delightful; he led off by saying that he had studied the evidence of the Meck Dec and had concluded, as a historian, that it did, in fact, exist. Here is the text of that portion of his speech:

"I'd like to preface my remarks, if I may, by briefly looking at and commenting on the mystery, the controversy surrounding the Mecklenburg Declaration, because I've learned in 20 years of writing history books that because there is no extant contemporaneous document as proof of something, it doesn't mean it didn't happen, that fires that destroy crucial documents are incredibly common throughout history and that oral history can sometimes be more visceral and honest than written history, anyhow. Of course the Mecklenburgers of 1819 couldn't remember verbatim precisely what they declared so bravely in 1775, but that doesn't in any way undermine the likelihood of their having called for independence a year earlier than the revolutionaries of Philadelphia. The 26 North Carolinians say that something took place, my inclination as a historian is to believe them.

What also makes me suspect that the Mecklenburg Declaration did indeed take place is that most of the people on that list were Scots-Irish. You can take it from an Englishman that there are no worse trouble-makers in history than the Scots-Irish."

The reception provided by the May 20th Society was excellent – good food and drink, and lots of it. We heard two pieces of news that evening before we read them in the newspaper the next morning. Dr. Tony Zeiss told us that progress was being made in raising money to erect four more bronze statues on the Trail of History, and also that by next May 20th we will have an uptown Charlotte Liberty Walk with new bronze markers, multimedia interpretation, and steel horseshoes in the pavement to guide us along the path. Enhancing the evening was the participation of members of the 6th NC Continental Line and the MHA Docents. Fife and Drum music, musket firings and beautiful ladies always make the evening more enjoyable.

At noon on Friday, May 20th, we reverted to our previous location, on the square at the intersection of Trade and Tryon Streets. (Last year we dedicated the Captain Jack Statue on Little Sugar Creek Greenway.) The celebration at noon was the same as in years past, with political speeches, the reading of the Meck Dec, and muskets and

cannon firing into Polk Park. This year we also rededicated two NC Historical Markers that had been reinstalled after many years in a warehouse. The unveiling of the General Greene and Battle of Charlotte markers were moving moments, and the later was enhanced by a photo in the Charlotte Observer the next day of our drummer, Tom Phlegar, unveiling the marker (the photo at right was on the second section, page 1, above the fold!). Then we marched to Settlers Cemetery to lay a wreath on the grave of Colonel Thomas Polk to cap the day's festivities.
-Jim Williams



History on display at Mec Dec Day uptown

Membership Renewals

Membership renewal letters for the 2011 calendar year have been mailed. You can save your organization the costs of printing and mailing by renewing now. Please fill in the form, make your check payable to the Mecklenburg Historical Association, and mail it to P. O. Box 35032, Charlotte, NC 28235. If your employer has a "matching grant" program, or you are retired from such an organization, please include the matching grant form with your check.

Membership form:

Name _____
 Address _____
 City, State and Zip _____
 E-Mail Address _____

category	single	couple
senior citizen (over 60)	\$15.00	\$25.00
general	30.00	50.00
patron	60.00	100.00
life (single payment)	300.00	500.00
student	free	n/a

September 26, 2011 Dinner Meeting Reservation Form

Mail to: Mecklenburg Historical Association
 c/o Jane Johnson, 210 Pineville Forest Drive, Pineville, NC 28134
 or email: JJCNC@aol.com

Please make checks payable to Mecklenburg Historical Association.
 Questions? Please email Jane Johnson (JJCNC@aol.com) or call her at 704.544.0698.
 Please mail your check one week before the dinner so we know how many meals we need.

Enclosed: \$ _____ (total) for _____ seats (\$12 for Seniors)
 \$ _____ (total) for _____ seats (\$14 for all others)

MHA Docent Programs

Meeting will be held in the Fellowship Hall of Sugaw Creek Presbyterian Church. Refreshments at 9:30 am, business meeting at 10, program at 11. Visitors are always welcome.

Tuesday, October 4, 2011

Early America's Sleeping Beauty: King Cotton

We all know that antebellum southern plantations were dependent on a single magnificent crop: cotton. But how did it happen? This program will show how the unruly fiber was tamed by Eli Whitney's cotton gin, a device he might never have invented had he not been smitten by Nathaniel Greene's flirtatious widow. Nearly overnight cotton became hugely profitable all over the south, but there was a dark side to "white gold". Its labor intensity revived a demand for slaves, and its role in the national economy was a major factor in precipitating the Civil War.

Ann Williams, a docent at several historic plantations, wanted to know more about plantation farming, especially as it related to slavery, and researched the topic. She discovered that cotton was botanically fascinating, yet wily and difficult. The enormous wealth derived from cotton enriched not only the South, but the entire nation. She will show slides illustrating cotton's quirky nature and back-breaking production and examples of local farm records. Cotton was indeed a King who wielded a mighty and often cruel scepter.

October Journey to Asheville

On Tuesday, October 18th the MHA Docents are taking a bus trip to the Zebulon Vance Birthplace and the Thomas Wolfe Memorial. We invite you to join us on a day when mountain autumn color should be at its peak.

In 1830 **Zebulon Vance** was born in his grandfather's farmhouse near Weaverville, a surprisingly sophisticated log home for 18th century western North Carolina. Zeb grew up to be a colorful lawyer and political leader and was considered to be the greatest and most beloved man in North Carolina in the 19th century.



When the Civil War began he was a US Congressman who opposed secession. Shots were fired at Ft. Sumter. Then Lincoln ordered North Carolina to send troops to the Union Army. Vance changed his position in an instant. He became a Confederate Officer, then North Carolina's governor serving two terms until the war ended. Vance was imprisoned after the war, and on the way there was befriended by a Charlotte Jewish merchant, Samuel Wittkowsky. After Vance's release from Federal prison, Wittkowski encouraged him to practice law in Charlotte, which he did for a few years. Among his clients was accused murderer Tom Dula, the subject of the folk song "Tom Dooley." He was elected Governor again and then to the US Senate where he served until his death. He was a famous public speaker and gave his Scattered Nation speech hundreds of times over the years. This famous speech praised the Jews and called for religious tolerance and freedom amongst all Americans. There is an excellent article on Vance and the Civil War in the July, 2011, issue of Our State magazine.

The **Thomas Wolfe** Memorial is Wolfe's mother's boarding house where he lived for most of his boyhood. "Old Kentucky Home" – called "Dixieland" in Wolfe's novels – was a prominent feature in his book

"Look Homeward, Angel". It was built in 1883, much augmented over the next decade, then improved once again by his mother in 1916. His mother Julia was an opinionated hard-nosed businesswoman obsessed by acquiring property. His father, W. O. Wolfe, was a cutter of tombstones with a fondness for strong drink. He and Julia had a contentious relationship and, though never divorced, lived separately through most of their marriage. Wolfe's novels are highly autobiographical and the characters that inhabit them can easily be imagined walking through the rooms of the impeccably restored boardinghouse, bickering every step of the way.



Trip Details: The bus will leave Sugaw Creek Presbyterian Church promptly at **8 AM**. Travel time to the Vance site is about 2 1/2 hours. We'll have ample snacks on the bus in anticipation of a slightly late lunch. After touring the Vance site we'll have lunch at the Stony Knob Café in Weaverville. They have lots of Greek and Mediterranean items as well as American fare. Most are in the \$8 to \$10 range. After lunch we'll tour the Wolfe site in downtown Asheville. We should be back in Charlotte by 7 pm. The cost of the trip is \$40 per person which includes everything except lunch.

We need at least 25 people to make this trip a go, and the bus will hold about 40. So there is plenty of room for spouses, friends, and visitors. Reserve your space by sending a check to Valerie Jones for \$40 by October 4th. **Make checks payable to MHA Docents.** You may mail your check to Valerie at 4700 Coronado Drive, Charlotte, NC 28212. This should be a splendid fall day in the mountains filled with lots of interesting history.



"Preserving Mecklenburg's Heritage"

Post Office Box 35032
Charlotte, North Carolina 28235
Phone: 704-333-6422

VISIT US ONLINE
WWW.MECKDEC.ORG

The History Calendar

Admission charged at all events unless otherwise noted. Check the Charlotte Regional History Consortium website for other events.
www.charlotteregionalhistory.org

Historic Rosedale

3427 N. Tryon Street, Charlotte, NC, 704 335 0325,
<http://www.historicrosedale.org>

Victorian Funeral. Saturday and Sunday, October 8 & 9 from noon to 5 pm.

Sickness hits the plantation! Pay your respects to the Caldwell family and slaves as they bury their loved ones, and learn the funerary practices of the 1840's. Discover the customs and superstitions of the time, see a funerary exhibit and see how African traditions integrated with Victorian customs. Costumed interpreters will portray members of the family and the slaves. Pre-register online for admission discount.

Spirit Walk. Saturday, October 29 at 6 & 8 pm.

Join us and the Charlotte Paranormal Society as we walk the steps of those who worked, lived, and died here. Actual footage and audio from an investigation will be available. Advanced registration on-line is encouraged. Limited to 30 people per tour.

Midnight Tour. Saturday, October 29 from 11 pm to 1 am

Explore the grounds and house with the Charlotte Paranormal Society. Be the first to witness supernatural "incidents" in the house, and be in the spaces where paranormal experiences have occurred. \$95 per person or \$85 with registration prior to October 25th. Registration closes on Wednesday, October 27th. Limited to ten people. No refunds under any circumstances.

Latta Plantation

5225 Sample Road, Huntersville, NC, 704 875 2312,
www.lattaplantation.org

Folklife Festival. September 23 & 24, from 10 am to 4 pm.

Latta Plantation's 30th Annual Folklife Festival and Craft Show. Enjoy live music, traditional and modern arts and crafts vendors, and many children's activities. Historic interpreters will demonstrate folkways of the past, and open-hearth cooking.

Halloween Activities.

All Hallow's Eve – Saturday, October 15, from 10 am to 4 pm

Ghost Tales in the Dark – Saturday, October 15; Friday and Saturday, October 12 & 22

Tours at 8, 9, and 10 pm

Civil War Ghost Walk – Friday and Saturday, October 28 & 29, from 7 to 10 pm

The Charlotte Museum of History

3500 Shamrock Drive, Charlotte, NC, 704 568 1774,
www.charlottemuseum.org

Singgalot Family Free Day. Saturday Oct. 1 from 11am to 5pm, free.

Celebrate our new exhibit from the Smithsonian Institution, Singgalot: The Ties that Bind.. Learn and enjoy the rich cultural traditions of the Philippines. See traditional dance performances and demonstrations by Filipino artisans.

Scholars Forum – Jamestown Lost and Found: New Discoveries at 1607 James Fort. Tuesday, September 13 at 7 pm.

Come learn about Jamestown in this lecture given by Dr. William Kelso, the director of Archaeological Research and Interpretation for the Jamestown Rediscovery Project at

Historic Jamestown. Dr. Kelso's presentation will include a discussion of new discoveries at the fort as well as what artifacts tell about daily life in early Jamestown.

Revolutionary Charlotte and 18th Century Life. Sat., Sept. 24 from 1 to 6:30 pm.

Take a walk back in time and explore varied viewpoints during the Revolutionary War. Patriots, loyalists, and those still undecided share their experiences in interactive vignettes on our historic grounds. Guided tours at 3:30, 4:30, and 5:30; space limited.

Hispanic Heritage: Dia de los Muertos. Saturday, October 15 from 11 am to 4 pm

This program offers families the opportunity to explore the diverse and rich Hispanic culture that is in our community during Hispanic Heritage Month. Dia de los Muertos (Day of the Dead) brings families and communities together to remember those who have passed.

Hugh Torance House and Store

8231 Gilead Road, Huntersville, NC,
www.torancehouseandstore.org

Tours will continue on the first and third Sundays from 2 to 5 pm during September and October. During the winter, private tours can be arranged. The public tour schedule will resume in the Spring.

Rural Hill

4431 Neck Road, Huntersville, NC, 704 875 3113, www.ruralhill.net

Amazing Maize Maze. Sept. 3 – 25: Friday – Sunday from 10am to 6:30pm

Sept. 30 – Nov. 13: Fridays, from 10 am to 5 pm; Saturday & Sunday from 10 am to 6:30. Flashlight tours on Fridays from 6:30 to 8:30 (continued...)

The History Calendar

(...continued) The Amazing Maize Maze challenges your skills as you look for mailboxes containing clues and “Kernels of Knowledge”. Staff and water stations will help when needed. Hayrides, and food vendors will be available. Wear comfortable shoes. On selected weekends enjoy “Cabin Days” at the 1760s homestead featuring open-hearth cooking, blacksmithing and more.

See the website for details and to arrange group tours.

Charlotte Regional History Consortium

The Charlotte Regional History Consortium is an umbrella group made up of representatives from local historic sites and organizations. This summer the consortium elected new officers. They are President, Scott Warren; Vice President, Bill Helms; Secretary, Deborah Hunter; Treasurer, Kristin Toler; and Publicity, Nicole Cheslak. The consortium also decided to meet bi-monthly rather than quarterly. The next meeting will be October 3rd at the Hugh Torance House and Store at 10 am.

Charlotte Folk Society

Great Aunt Stella Center, 926 Elizabeth Ave., Charlotte,
www.folksociety.org

Gathering, Concert and Jams. Fridays at 7:30 pm. Great Aunt Stella Center. October 14: Blues-Based Gospel by Bishop Dready Manning; donations appreciated

Wells Fargo Community Celebration. Saturday, October 29 from 10 am to 4 pm. McGlohon Theater, Spirit Square. Gospel, blues, stringband, bluegrass, Americana, and Irish music. Free event.

Duke Mansion

400 Hermitage Road, Charlotte, 704 714 4448, www.dukemansion.com

Romare Bearden’s Charlotte, 1911. Sunday, September 18 at 3 pm. Free.

In honor of the 100th anniversary of the birth of the nationally renowned Charlotte born artist, Levine Museum historian Dr. Tom Hanchett debuts an interactive web-based exhibit exploring this city during Bearden’s childhood. RSVP’s required: pmartin@tlwf.org or (704) 714-4448.

Houses of Worship in Mecklenburg County. Sunday, October 23 at 3 pm. Free

An architectural appreciation of Mecklenburg County’s landmark religious buildings, presented by Historic Charlotte. RSVP’s required: pmartin@tlwf.org or (704) 714-4448.

President James K. Polk State Historic Site

12031 Lancaster Hwy., Pineville, NC,
(704) 889-7145
www.polk.nchistoricsites.org

Rounders to Baseball. Exhibit Opening Saturday, October 1, from 10 am to 4 pm

This exhibit traces the history of baseball from its origins as an English game called Rounders through the first professional game played during President Polk’s administration. Costumed interpreters will play period baseball and much more.

Schiele Museum

1500 E. Garrison Blvd., Gastonia,
N.C. 704 866 6900
www.schielemuseum.org

Autumn in the Backcountry. Sunday, September 25 from 1 to 5 pm

Visit the Backcountry Farm to observe how folk in the 18th century enjoyed the fruits of summer. Taste fresh apple butter cooked over the fire. Visit the kitchen garden. And try 18th –century dancing.

Scottish Heritage Festival. Sunday, October 23 from 1 to 5 pm

Explore the Scottish Heritage of the Carolinas with the Loch Norman Pipe Band and the Scottish Country Dancers. On the Backcountry Farm learn about the lives of early Scottish immigrants on the colonial frontier. See cooks prepare traditional Scottish dishes. Ladies and children, try your luck at the Tossin’ of the Hagis!