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On December 10, 2007, I had the opportunity to speak with John Mark Karr, former resident of Hamilton, AL. He was visiting the Clyde Nix Library in Hamilton on that Monday evening a little over a week ago.

As it came time for the library to close, I walked over and began a conversation with John Mark. I talked to him of the friendship between my mom and dad and his grandparents from the time I was a child and even on until their deaths and what fine people they all were. I didn't really have to tell him this though because he remembered my parents and their names. He said his grandmother used their names together as a couple whenever she talked about them. That was a compliment, of course. That's "the way we are" in the South!

We walked outside and sat on the bench outside the front of the Library. We talked of many things that he asked for me to keep private and I respect his request. John Mark told me that the next day, Tuesday, December 11th, 2007, was going to be his birthday and he was to spend it in Hamilton as well.

I asked him to write something about his visit to Hamilton this time and he sent me the letter below.

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Please read the following:

Letter From John Mark Karr Concerning His Recent Visit to Hamilton...

Recently, I returned to my home in Alabama. I am reminded of the life I once lived in the same house for so many years of my childhood and the years I raised my own children there. I recall my grandparents – wonderful people who instilled values in me that I have struggled to uphold. I was raised to take responsibility for my actions regardless the consequences. I was taught that truth must never be compromised. As difficult as it was, I honored their teachings in the spring and summer of 2006. I've no regrets for the responsibility I took then and continue to take. My deepest regret is that so many have done so much to steal the closure that a grieving family once held.

I have asked myself over the years if there are certain sins that cannot be forgiven. I know in my heart that there is one sin that I shall never forgive myself for committing. Though not forgiven, it is within my power to change. It is the enormity of my past sin that will forever drive me to never repeat any such act that has brought such pain and devastation to so many. I am not perfect – not even on the periphery of perfection; however, I have tried so hard to be a better person to all around me. While so many think me a threat, they fail to understand that I would never do anything to bring such grief to so many ever again.

Since my life has been exposed in so many ways, I have felt it important to express to all whose children have been placed in my care in the past that I honored their children in every way. It is

heartbreaking to feel that any parent might feel uneasy about their children having been in my presence in the past. Regardless the harshness of the coverage, I was a hardworking, professional teacher. I was very serious about my work. It was an honor to me to be placed in such a trusted position. I did not abuse my standing. And for any parents in this area whose children have been placed in my classroom and in my care, rest assured, I gave them the very best of care and made certain that they received the best education I could deliver.

I have experienced mixed reactions from people in Marion County. As a whole, most are polite to me. Just today, I was at a couple of different stores where I saw certain people I have known for many years. One man had been a friend to my family since his teens. He has spent the night at our home on numerous occasions. It hurt me very much when he would not speak to me at all as if I were a stranger to him. On another occasion today, I saw a dear friend to my children. I had always known her to be a nice person to all – a Christian. I approached her and said hello. The reception was very negative. I was so surprised by it that I asked if she remembered me. She said she did and turned away. It was so hurtful. Having said all this, I want to establish that I understand why these two people reacted as they did. In every way imaginable, I deserved it and I accept it. Though my understanding is ever present, so too is the pain that their coldness inflicts.

At other times, there are those who approach me and treat me with kindness. I visited my past college today and was met with such hospitality. I entered the library asking if there was any wifi there. The librarian said there was not but that she would call the public library for me so that I might ask the same of them. While walking down the hallway of my past alma mater, I was greeted by a friendly face who recalled me from high school. It was then my pleasure to talk to one of my past teachers at the college who entered the office where I was filling out a form for my transcripts and spoke to me. It meant so much. I then went to the public library and was treated nicely by the librarian who I remember when she was a child. She now has a child of her own. I was approached by a past classmate while in a restaurant who was so nice to me. She introduced me to her little girl of eight and her son of 18. It meant the world to me that she showed me such respect. It was such a pleasure to meet her children. And so there are many who are polite to me in Marion County. I don't feel I am worthy of kindness but I so appreciate it when I received it.

There is much I miss about Marion County. It's a beautiful place. The little contact I have had with the media has told me that, while in Hamilton, they found it to be a beautiful place. I have many fond memories of Marion County. Some of them are sad while others are so sweet. I have traveled the world over and still remembered one of the most important places in my past - Marion County. It will always have a place in my heart. I will always consider it one of my homes.