



Weather forecast from Wakulla High School

Thursday	Friday	Saturday
AM Showers	Mostly Sunny	Mostly Sunny
Hi: 63° Lo: 38° 33%	Hi: 56° Lo: 36° 4%	Hi: 58° Lo: 35° 6%
Sunrise 7:32 AM Sunset 5:45 PM	Sunrise 7:32 AM Sunset 5:46 PM	Sunrise 7:32 AM Sunset 5:46 PM



\$1
One Section

"It's a New Day"

Locally Owned
& Operated

Our 2nd Year 51st Issue
Thursday, December 28, 2023

Ordered held in jail

Matthew Williams ordered held in jail after threatening Shell Point neighbors

By WILLIAM SNOWDEN
Editor



Shell Point resident
Matthew Williams

A Shell Point man who was arrested two weeks ago after making threats against his neighbors and then arming himself was ordered held in jail.

On Saturday, Dec. 16, Matthew Williams, 48, was arrested by Wakulla County sheriff's deputies after they spotted him leaving his home with numerous firearms. He initially refused orders from deputies to get down on the ground.

Wakulla Circuit Judge Layne Smith did a first appearance on Williams on Sunday morning and ordered him released on his own recognizance.

On Monday, Wakulla Chief Prosecutor Andrew Deneen filed a motion for pretrial detention and a warrant was issued for

his arrest. Williams apparently turned himself in at the Leon County Jail. (Williams has family in Tallahassee.)

At a hearing on Tuesday, Dec. 19, Judge Smith ordered Williams to continue to be held and ordered a mental health evaluation.

Williams appeared at the hearing from the Leon County Jail by Zoom and was reportedly

very agitated, wanting to talk, and being frequently told by Wakulla Chief Public Defender Matt Ream not to talk.

Several neighbors appeared as witnesses at the hearing, saying they were in fear of Williams and had called off family Christmas celebrations at Shell Point because of him. They told stories of increasingly erratic behavior by Williams and escalating threats of violence.

"I will not return to our home with him free and out," one neighbor told the court via Zoom from his primary home in Georgia.

Another neighbor testified that he has since obtained a firearm for protection. He expressed concern that he has "to wait for (Williams) to shoot and hope he's a

bad shot before I can protect myself."

At the point deputies confronted Williams on Dec. 16, he was armed with a 12 gauge "bulldog" shotgun, a .45 pistol in his waistband and a .22 pistol in his pocket – and lots of ammunition.

Several of the neighbors had filed petitions for injunctions against Williams, but Judge Smith had denied those because they were for protection against repeat violence – and one incident doesn't qualify.

One resident of Sandpiper Lane in Shell Point said Williams had been standing on his balcony overlooking the road and was brandishing a pistol. The neighbor said Williams pointed the pistol at him.

The judge indicated

Turn to Page 3

St. Marks holds special budget hearing

By WILLIAM SNOWDEN
Editor

The City of St. Marks appears to have finally gotten its tax levy and budget for 2023-24 approved.

The city had initially advertised its tax levy and budget and held a hearing back in September. But the state Department of Revenue expressed concern that the city's Public Notice didn't meet advertising requirements that the millage rate is a tax increase over the rollback rate.

In November, the city advertised the levy and budget again but somehow the city's accountant submitted the wrong budget numbers for advertising.

"This time, we think we got it right," said Mayor Steve Remke at a special budget hearing on Saturday, Dec. 23 that took less than 5 minutes.

City Commissioner Sharon Rudd made a motion to approve the property tax levy of 6 mills in the city, which is higher than the rollback rate of 5.984 mills. (A mill is equal to \$1 per \$1,000 of value, meaning a property valued at \$100,000 would pay \$600 in city taxes – not calculating in Homestead Exemption or other taxes.) The motion of seconded by City Commissioner Paula Bell and approved 3-0. (City commissioners Paul Shedd and Dan Albers were absent.)

Mayor Remke noted that the increase in taxes was needed to cover increases in prices faced by the city, especially for its insurance.

As for the city's \$4.299 million budget, it was also approved 3-0.

At the meeting on Dec. 14, a citizen asked St. Marks City Commissioner Paul Shedd to resign. See Story on Page 3

NATIONAL SIGNING DAY



Wakulla War Eagle Nehemiah Chandler signs his scholarship to play football for the Georgia Tech Yellow Jackets as assistant head coach Grady Guess looks on.

Two War Eagles sign scholarships

Nehemiah Chandler signs with Georgia Tech; Haden Klees with Samford

By WILLIAM SNOWDEN
Editor

Two dynamic Wakulla War Eagle football players signed college scholarships on National Signing Day on Wednesday, Dec. 20 – Nehemiah Chandler signed with Georgia Tech, and Haden Klees signed with Samford.

Chandler signed his papers at a ceremony at Wakulla High School. Klees was playing in a Florida Athletic Coaches Association All-Star game on Wednesday, and signed there.

HADEN KLEES

Assistant Coach Grady Guess noted some of the gaudy numbers that Klees earned this year as quarterback, including throwing 50



Haden Klees, in a photo from before the start of the season, was playing in an All-Star game and signed with Samford.

touchdowns this year. 21-13.

Over his high school career Klees has thrown 93 touchdowns and for more than 7,850 yards. He had 472 pass completions and only 10 interceptions over his career.

He was the FACA All-Big Bend Player of the Year. And his team won the FACA All-Star game,

NEHEMIAH CHANDLER

Besides Georgia Tech, Chandler received offers from the University of Central Florida, Maryland, Arkansas, and Liberty University.

Chandler played both wide receiver and defen-

sive back for the War Eagles this year, but he is being sought-after for his defensive skills.

Guess noted that, as a defensive back, Chandler did not give up a completion during the regular season, and not until the second game of the playoffs.

Asked why he chose Georgia Tech, Chandler said that during his visit to campus, no one spoke to him about football during his entire visit. The coach guaranteed him he would graduate.

His grandmother, on the tour with him, told him: "I'm gonna beat your (butt) if you don't come here."

Chandler thanked his teammates – the room was packed with supporters – and how he loved Wakulla and the brotherhood of the team.

Motion to dismiss heard in former deputy's lawsuit

Robert Standeford sued after leaving the sheriff's office, claiming he suffered whistleblower retaliation

By WILLIAM SNOWDEN
Editor

The lawsuit by former Wakulla deputy Robert Standeford against the sheriff's office for wrongful termination was before Wakulla Circuit Judge Layne Smith on a motion to dismiss the case last week.

Judge Smith did not rule on the matter at the hearing, held via Zoom on Thursday, Dec. 21.

In the lawsuit, filed in 2021, Standeford has claimed he was a whistleblower and was forced to resign after he complained about such matters as anti-Muslim bias in the agency – Standeford's mother is of Middle Eastern descent – as well as issues such as not being provided with adequate equipment as a School Resource Officer.

The sheriff's office reportedly gave Standeford an option to resign or be terminated after he was charged with perjury for lying at a trial at the Division of Administrative Hearings. Transcripts of the hearing indicated Standeford claimed that he had some sort of military service in the Middle East after 9/11, and that he had a dog that is a certified service animal. It's undisputed that he lied in his testimony. The perjury charge was eventually dropped by the state attorney's office, but a Giglio letter was filed – which indicates a law enforcement officer has a history of being untruthful and their testimony is not credible. It is often a career-ending development for a law enforcement officer.

The sheriff's office also contended that Standeford made comments to other deputies that he served as a U.S. Marine, but he has not served in the military. Standeford has indicated that other

Turn to Page 3

Correction

• Last week's front page story about the Christmas light display incorrectly stated that the characters at the display were hired actors, when they are actually volunteers.

We regret the error.

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Lisa Craze, CFC
 Wakulla County Tax Collector

Florida SAMPLE Live the Dream

Live the Dream:
 Enacted: 07/01/2004.
 The "Live the Dream" plate is to be distributed by the Dream Foundation, Inc. When you purchase a "Live the Dream" specialty plate above, a percentage of the proceeds go to Sickle Cell Association of Florida (to distribute to sickle cell chapters throughout Florida)

FLORIDA Y12345

Red, White and Blue Bikers Care: Enacted: 10/01/2003.
 Purchase the red, white and blue Bikers Care tag, you will help thousands of citizens by funding programs to prevent blindness and provide support for Floridians with disabilities.

Flower of the Week at Sopchoppy Depot Park Dahoon holly



Dahoon holly grows to 20 to 30 feet in the wild.

By LYNN ARTZ, SANDY TEDDER and DAVID RODDENBERRY

Dahoon holly (Ilex cassine) delights in winter with its showy bright red-orange fruit. Clusters of small berry-like drupes on female trees attract birds and other wildlife. A small long-lived evergreen tree, dahoon holly grows to 20 to 30 feet tall in the wild. Its glossy green leaves lack the spines found on many hollies. In spring, tiny sweet-smelling white flowers on both female and male trees support native bees including a specialist bee. Underused in home landscapes, dahoon holly can be a specimen tree or used for screening. Naturally a wetland plant, dahoon holly prefers consistently moist soil in full sun to part shade. It resists hurricane winds and mildly tolerates salt spray. Several dahoon hollies grace the pond perimeter at Sopchoppy Depot Park.

Gingerbread house winner

Waypoint Properties won the Gingerbread house contest with a gingerbread beach house. There were 11 entries in the contest including 4H, Haddock Automotive, Wakulla Springs Lodge, Shepard Springs Animal Hospital, Waypoint Properties, Bluewater Realty, Wakulla Realty, Wakulla Title Group, the Wakulla County Chamber of Commerce, The Cove, and Zaxbys. The gingerbread houses were on display at Capital City Bank and people could come in and vote for their favorite. The money raised by entry fees, totaling \$300, was donated to Operation Santa. The event was coordinated by Mary Wallace of Capital City Home Loans and Heather Ryback of Ryback Realty. (Photo Special to The Sun)



Waypoint Realty won the contest with a gingerbread beach house.



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Sopchoppy gets update on water system plan

By **LEGION TAYLOR**
Reporter

Sopchoppy city commissioners were provided an update on the master plan for the water system, which they had put in motion a few months ago.

The meeting was held last week, on Monday, Dec. 18.

Ric Delp from Baskerville-Donovan Inc. presented the commission with a brief update on the master plan, saying that they're nearing completion on the project.

This master plan involves a breakdown of the estimated increase in water usage, and how the proposed improvements will have an effect on the water system. It also included a breakdown of those improvements, such as what order they're to be completed in and when each should be finishing up. It also had a map of pipeline improvements that would be required in order to compensate for the growth that's expected over the next 10 years.

Most of the improvements, however, are on the well sites, which have been discussed at length at previous city commission meetings.

In another matter, a few citizens came to express concern with the emergency communication tower that was approved at the November meeting, including Katrina Kearn, who lives adjacent to the site where the tower is to be built. She claimed that it could hurt property values around it by as much as 20%, and that it would hurt wildlife in the area as well.

Wakulla County recently moved forward with improvements to the county's radio communications system, including the addition of new radio towers. First responders – including the sheriff's office and firefighters – have said the new system is badly needed. For example, there is limited to no radio service in the Smith Creek area of the county.

But some Sopchoppy residents are concerned about the location of the tower in the city.

David Kearn said it would affect the natural beauty of the town and the neighborhood. He also brought up the impact on property values, showing articles and surveys done nationwide that showed a decline in value the closer a property is to a tower such as this.

Commissioner Glenn Rudd stated that "There's gonna be an impact on anything you do" and expressed that the impact on property values would be minimal compared to what the improvement to emergency communications would be worth.

Both commissioners Rudd and Roger McKenzie brought up that there are many cell towers in the county, and property values around them haven't depreciated much at all, and have in fact increased, although neither of them cited specific examples.

No action was taken to change the location of the tower.

In another matter, Mayor Lara Edwards' signature was needed on a state Community Development

Block Grant engineering contract so it could go to the Department of Commerce for approval.

The contract covered the creation and improvement of storm drainage systems along Orange Avenue and Yellow Jacket Road. The contract was accepted in a 4-0 vote with Commissioner Michele Harden absent, and was signed by Mayor Edwards.

In another matter, Florida Rural Water should have its study results at the next general meeting, which should help the city government secure funding for the well improvements via a grant.

The city had a grant for \$70,000 that was going to be spent on current projects, but those projects, which were involving improvements to a boat ramp on the Sopchoppy river, were estimated to cost about \$600,000 more than that. The city commission decided to look for more funding, rather than attempt to cover that from the city's budget.

District teachers, employee of the month



TEACHER: Jennifer Williams from the District Office – ESE Department.



EMPLOYEE: Carissa Johnson representing Crawfordville Elementary School.



TEACHER: Melissa Lytle representing Medart Elementary School.

Citizen asks St. Marks commissioner to step down

By **LEGION TAYLOR**
Reporter

A citizen appeared at the St. Marks city commission meeting two weeks ago to call for Commissioner Paul Sheddan to resign from the commission entirely.

That citizen, Charles Dunlap, appeared at the meeting on Thursday, Dec. 14, and asked Sheddan directly to step down, saying that his outbursts were unbecoming of a community leader and that he is unfit to stay on the commission.

"You cannot function in the best interest of St. Marks," Dunlap said.

He also asked that there be a change made to the city charter to allow the city commission to vote out commissioners, as currently there is not.

Sheddan remained silent, but Mayor Steve Remke stressed that the mayor only has the power to run meetings, and is by all other metrics the same as the other members of the commission. No motion was made, and no action taken.

In other matters:

- Justin Ford from Dewberry Engineering came to talk about the new paving project, specifically to ask the commission for approval to begin designing the improvements.

He also alerted the commission that they would need to hire a different firm to do inspections, as his company could not both do the work and inspect it, under Florida law. The commission voted to give Dewberry approval, 4-0, with commissioner Dan Albers absent.

- Shadrach Hines of St. Marks Waterfronts announced that the golf cart parade will be pushed off to the 22nd, due to inclement weather last weekend.

- The city got its emergency generator installed, with most of the cost being covered by FEMA as the generator is to provide backup power

during storms.

- The city's Wakulla River Park phase 1 grant has run out, but some pieces of equipment are currently on back order and will be placed in the park once they are delivered.

- The city is applying to have Tallahassee street resurfaced, and to have Mock street paved.

- Coast Charter School will start to pay its own insurance, as the price has increased over the last few years and the city commissioners do not want to continue footing the bill. The City of St. Marks owns the school building used by Coast.

Williams ordered held in jail

From Front Page

along with numerous county that the probable cause affidavit filed by deputies in the case was confusing, and that he had ordered Williams released because it wasn't clear that he pointed a gun at anyone. The PC says that Williams had a gun and pointed a finger at the neighbor.

At the hearing, there was much discussion about whether the court could order Williams to be Baker Acted – which is an involuntary commitment to a mental health facility for up to 72 hours.

Judge Smith expressed reservations about a Baker Act, indicating he wanted a court-review – not just for Williams to be released after two or three days.

Smith found that Williams is a threat to himself and others, and expressed concern that Williams might harm his neighbors or that Williams' neighbors might harm him.

Meanwhile, the Wakulla County Sheriff's Office filed a Risk Protection Order with the court. That is

the so-called "Red Flag Law" to take firearms away from people who are at risk for committing violence.

Judge Smith signed the RPO later in the afternoon on Dec. 19 with findings that Williams made threats of violence and that there is evidence of Williams being seriously mentally ill.

Williams indicated at the time of his arrest, when the three guns were seized, that he had other firearms.

Additionally, it wasn't clear that Williams is actually indigent and entitled to the services of the public defender. He had a felony case in October for false imprisonment, dismissed in November, in which he was represented by a private criminal defense attorney. In that case, Williams claimed some people in car threw something at his car and he followed them to a convenience store and blocked them in, refusing to let them a leave. A Florida Highway Patrol trooper responded and found Williams had a pistol in his waistband.

The charges were later dropped.

Motion to dismiss in deputy's case

From Front Page

deputies might have misunderstood that it's actually his son who is in the Marine Corps.

Avery McKnight, attorney for the sheriff, argued the case should be dismissed because Standeford is unable to establish that he was a whistleblower engaged in some statutorily protected activity who suffered an adverse employment action.

Standeford's attorney, Marie Mattox, argued at the hearing that there was disparate treatment of deputies who faced the same action of being untruthful – and Mattox focused on former deputy Colton Sheridan, who resigned earlier this year rather than be terminated after an Internal Affairs investigation found he was lying in his reports about his reasons for traffic stops and other untruthfulness. (The Sun ran a report on allegations about Sheridan in the Oct. 19 issue.)

When Judge Smith raised a question about Standeford being

Giglio-impaired, Mattox answered that Sheridan's lies were worse: "Standeford lied about himself," she said. "But Sheridan made false statements in arresting people." She noted the state attorney's office refused to write a Giglio letter on Sheridan.

Mattox presented a timeline in which Standeford was called in for a meeting with Undersheriff Billy Jones on March 10, 2020 in which Standeford claimed to raise issues. The next day, March 11, Jones went to Internal Affairs with concerns about Standeford's truthfulness. On April 2, 2020 Standeford was given the option by Jones to resign or be fired.

Mattox also argued that choice presented Standeford with duress and he was unable to consult with his lawyer before submitting his resignation.

The attorneys are submitting additional materials to the court and Judge Smith indicated he will rule after the first of the year.

Opinions

THE FIRST AMENDMENT
 “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.”

Looking back on nearly 2 years of The Wakulla Sun



By **WILLIAM SNOWDEN**
 Editor

I can't believe we are about to head into our second year of The Wakulla Sun.

It was February 2022 when our first issue came out.

For decades, we were the staff of The Wakulla News, until Paxton Media bought the paper. Without even being aware of our profitability, they ordered me to fire half the staff – and then to implement changes to take away local control.

I contacted the corporation about buying the paper, was refused. Tried again, made an offer to buy, and was refused again.

I submitted my resignation, unsure of what I was going to do next – but several people suggested I start my own paper, and eventually was convinced.

But this isn't a one-man show. The whole staff of The Wakulla News resigned and came here to start this paper: Lynda, who had been the News for more than 30 years; Eric, who'd been there for nearly 20 years.

I often think of core staff of the Sun as a three-legged stool – me on news, Lynda on sales, Eric on building ads and our systems – and without any one leg, the stool is broken.

Credit to other staff: Jessi Smith was the newspaper carrier at the News for 10 years; Riddhi Patel was a correspondent at the News and was our first reporter for the Sun.

Krystal Sheppard was inside sales/reception at the News for five years.

I do not take lightly the leap of faith they all took to do this with me.

They all believed in

our mission: together to put out publications that reflect the community.

In addition to the weekly newspaper, we also publish the Sun Monthly, which goes to every home in the county; and our annual magazine, Gulf Coast Breeze, a visitors guide to Wakulla.

But a newspaper also needs readers: it needs advertisers and subscribers.

I cannot express how much I appreciate the support this newspaper has received from the community.

We have seen explosive growth in our readership – and we keep growing. Thank you.

And thank you to our advertisers who have been with us, stuck with us, and are a part of our community family. We couldn't do this without you.

When starting this newspaper, I debated whether to go with the regular for-profit business model or non-profit. Each had its benefits and its drawbacks.

I decided to try a hybrid: set up as a regular limited liability company, but we would accept tax-deductible donations through the Florida Press Foundation, which is a 501(c)3 tax-exempt organization.

As I was writing this, I got a call from the Florida Press Foundation that a large check had come in from a Sopotchoppy subscriber. A check for several thousand dollars.

Earlier this week, a subscriber stopped by the office to renew the annual subscription of \$35 and rounded it up to \$50 as a donation.

Throughout the year, people have made donations to keep this newspaper going because they believe in what we're doing.

These donors believe in the role of a local newspaper that is locally run, locally owned, staffed by people who have been a part of the community for decades.

Thank you to all of

our supporters. What you do makes it possible for us to do what we do.

At the risk of leaving somebody out, I want to thank our correspondents, columnists and contributors who make this newspaper special:

Thanks to Buckhorn News columnist Ethel Skipper, who has been writing her column for at least 30 years. Thanks to Wakulla Station News columnist Verna Brock, who had written a column for years for the News, had to stop because of her job, and then agreed to start again with the column for the Sun when she retired.

Thanks to Carolyn Brown Treadon who writes the Coast Guard Auxiliary column, which she took over from the late Sherrie Alverson, whom she remembers every week with the tagline: “As Sherrie would say, safe boating means no accident!”

Thanks to Marj Law and her Home on the Range gun column, which she'd written for 10 years (?) for the News before coming over to the Sun.

Thanks to Sheryl Boldt and her faith column – I don't know how many years it's been, but I gave her column a chance and now she's published in newspapers all over the region. Thanks to Cheryl Cruce who started her column here almost two years ago and I've noticed she now has at least one other paper carrying her column.

Thanks to Lynn Artz, Sandy Tedder and David Roddenberry for the Flower of the Week. That started as a project for Joey and Jack Coetzee to earn volunteer hours and the three of them have continued the column.

Thanks to photographer Gerald Brown and correspondent Linda Ann McDonald.

And thanks to Ken Fields for the football pictures.

Happy New Year!

William Snowden is editor and publisher of The Wakulla Sun.

LETTERS FROM READERS

Make airport users pay for the airport

Editor, The Sun:

Seems it has been a while since issues of “who owns and operates” the Wakulla Airport have been addressed. Maybe it is time to do so again.

I receive a monthly financial report regarding the operations and expenditures of the airport. I noticed that Tarpine residents (users) are no longer making any type of contribution although they are the primary users of the grass runway.

Anyone who uses a boat ramp/launch area is expected to pay a fee. You can do this with each use or buy an annual pass, making a “donation” to the county coffers. Not so with the airport. The most recent “scheme/proposal” identified by David Edwards is to get land around the airport “donated” to bring the airport up to FDOT standards. Yeah, take those properties off the tax roll for the benefit of a very small group!! The county has such a surplus of funds this year and FDOT

has expressed no interest in this project in the past.

In the November statement, the county paid for electric utilities, liability insurance, maintenance & repair and fuel. This was without ANY income from users adding to the county's debt more than \$900 in just one month. This appears to happen monthly.

I hope Commissioners have a detailed PUBLIC report how they will fund this boondoggle other than counting on “everyone else's money.” At least go back to charging users (Tarpine) a fee to help cover the costs of maintaining the grass runway. Let's not expect others to cover the costs and charge the USERS.

Val LaHart
 Ochlockonee Bay

Editor's Note: With her letter, Val LaHart included a pdf of Wakulla Airport expenses that she contends are evidence of “misuse of funds.” It is shown below:

WAKULLA CO BOCC							
Statement of Revenues and Expenditures - 2F123-24 - Airport MGR							
001 - General Fund							
1100 - Wakulla County Airport							
From 11/1/2023 Through 11/30/2023							
Current Period	Current Year	Total Budget -	Total Budget -	%	Prior Year Current	Prior Year Current	
Actual	Actual	Revised	Revised	Budget Used	Period Actual	Prior Year Actual	
Expenditures							
Airports	542						
Utilities - Electric	5430	30.79	30.79	400.00	369.21	7.69%	0.00
Liability Insurance	5452	0.00	875.00	2,700.00	1,825.00	32.40%	0.00
Maintenance & Repair	5460	0.00	0.00	1,200.00	1,200.00	0.00%	0.00
Fuel	5521	0.00	0.00	200.00	200.00	0.00%	0.00
Total Expenditures		<u>30.79</u>	<u>905.79</u>	<u>4,500.00</u>	<u>3,594.21</u>	<u>20.13%</u>	<u>0.00</u>
Net Revenue Over Expenditures		<u>(30.79)</u>	<u>(905.79)</u>	<u>(4,500.00)</u>	<u>3,594.21</u>	<u>20.12%</u>	<u>0.00</u>
							<u>(1,039.31)</u>

Something on your mind?

Email Letters to the Editor to editor@thewakullasun.com; or mail it or drop it by the office at 12 Arran Road, Crawfordville FL 32327.



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- More reporters on the street
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- More local content on the environment and local businesses

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We would very much appreciate your contribution.

William Snowden
 Editor & Publisher
 The Wakulla Sun

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We accept donations by card or check. If by check, payment must be made to the Florida Press Foundation and write in the check memo line that you want the donation to go to The Wakulla Sun.

Send it to Florida Press Foundation at 336 East College Avenue, Suite 304, Tallahassee FL 32301

"It's A New Day!"

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Reporter: Legion Taylor
Production Manager/IT: Eric Stanton
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◀ Question of The Week ▶

– Compiled by Lynda Kinsey

Pb led at the Galactic Musician's Christmas Party

Who do you think originally inspired you musically?



MIMI HEARN
Musician

In the early y ars,
it wu ld be d dy
Cb lins,t hen later
Bo nie Raitt g me
interested in play ng
and sing ng



JOHN OWEN
GalacticMusician m

The Beatles were
inspiratin al in
mye ra,t hey were
the trend setters?"



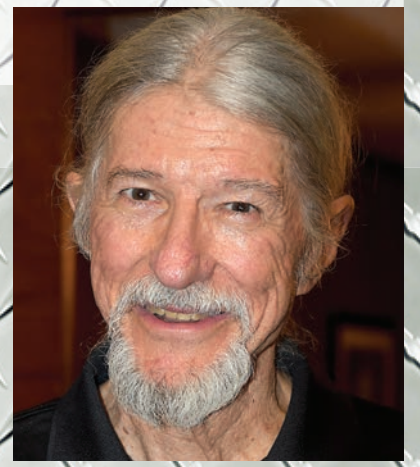
SUSAN SOLBURG
Musician

It was early w by
sn g .W en I was 3
I had a cowgirl outfit
and a red rider ho se.I
wu ld listen td he record
play r,s ingn d ride my
ho se fo hu rs?"



SNORRI SOLBURG
Musician

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the g itar while I
was g w ingu p,he
was inspiratin al and
helpful tom e?"



MIKE RYCHLIK
Musician/sn g riter

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pp ular drummer in the
e . We had music
play ng the stereoa l
the time.M ym m play d
the o gn and mys ister
was a g eat sing r."

Buckhorn News

By **ETHEL SKIPPER**

This is the season and time. No matter how many times we have read or heard the words of Jesus, we need to read and hear his words again and again.

This is important because as Jesus' disciplines, we live by his words. So commit to read Jesus' instructions and his teaching and example as found in the four canonical gospels and through

his spirit-inspired messengers.

In doing so, we will know Jesus, the Father, and the Holy Spirit. And we will be better informed about what the Lord expects of us daily as born-again Christians.

While anyone can read the words of Jesus to know what he expects of each person, it is only by relying upon the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit that we can live consistently for Christ.

Matthew 1:18 "Now the birth of Je-

sus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost."

Isaiah 7:14 Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.

Immanuel is interpreted as God with us.

To all who hear the gospel, the divinely given message communicated by the miraculous conception and virgin birth of Jesus is God is with us.

God knows everything. He became incarnate in Christ we could know that He knows, loves, and cares for us.

God gave His son. The magi gave to Jesus. Jesus gave his life for us.

Christmas is a time for giving, not only to family and friends, but to those in need.

Our prayers and concern goes out to all the sick and shut-in, those in the hospital and nursing home, prison, homeless, all in need of help everywhere.

On the Horizon

Calendar of events for the week of December 28

Thursday, December 28

- Rotary Club of Wakulla meets at TCC Wakulla at 8:30 a.m.
- The VFW Auxiliary Bingo Night will be held at 7 p.m. at 475 Arran Road in Crawfordville, every Thursday. There are concessions and raffles.
- Gentle Yoga at 9 a.m. and Yin Yoga at 6 p.m. with Zoe every Thursday. Classes are \$12, at New Posh on 3079 Crawfordville Hwy. RSVP to newposh3079@gmail.com or text/call at (850) 528-5838.
- Alcoholics Anonymous meets at 6:30 p.m. every Thursday at the American Legion, 54 Ochlockonee St.

Friday, December 29

- Alcoholics Anonymous meets at noon and 8 p.m. every Friday at the American Legion, 54 Ochlockonee St.

Saturday, December 30

- The Wakulla Caregiver Support Group will meet at the Public Library at 10 a.m.
- Alcoholics Anonymous meets at 6:30 p.m. at the American Legion, 54 Ochlockonee St.

Monday, January 1st

- HAPPY NEW YEAR!
- The American Legion Post 114 will be meeting at the Wakulla County Public Library at 6:30 p.m.
- The Wakulla Respite Program is available weekly for anyone with

memory impairment at no cost from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at Lake Ellen Baptist Church.

- Yoga with Nellie, Restorative yoga at 9:30 a.m. and 6 p.m. Classes are \$12, packages available at New Posh on 3079 Crawfordville Hwy. RSVP to newposh3079@gmail.com or text/call at (850) 528-5838.

- Alcoholics Anonymous meets at 6 p.m. and 8 p.m. at the American Legion, 54 Ochlockonee St.

Tuesday, January 2nd

- The Wakulla County Board of County Commissioners meets at 5 p.m. in the commission chambers.
- Sopchoppy community dinner is held every week at the Towles House at 6:30 p.m.
- Alcoholics Anonymous meets at 6:30 p.m. at the American Legion, 54 Ochlockonee St.
- Yoga with Nellie, Restorative yoga at 9:30 a.m. and 6 p.m. Classes are

\$12, packages available at New Posh on 3079 Crawfordville Hwy. RSVP to newposh3079@gmail.com or text/call at (850) 528-5838.

Wednesday, January 3rd

- Muffins with Moms Prenatal Support Group meets at 9 a.m., 9:30 a.m., and 10 a.m. at the Wakulla County Health Department. Contact Liz Neighbors at 850-888-6078 or elizabeth.neighbors@flhealth.gov for more information.
- A line dance class is held at 1 p.m. at the Wakulla Senior Center every Wednesday.
- Alcoholics Anonymous meets at noon and 6:30 p.m. every Wednesday at the American Legion, 54 Ochlockonee St.
- Gentle Yoga and Stetching Class, every Wednesday, 11 a.m. Wakulla Community Center. Bring a mat. Come early to sign in. Chair Yoga participants welcome. \$2 per class.

Reasons to take care of your mental health

By **STAN POPOVICH**

Many people underestimate the impact that mental illness can have on an individual or family. It can be difficult to admit that you have a mental health problem in your life. Secondly, it can be just as difficult in getting the people you know to understand your situation without making any kinds of judgments.

As a result, here are six reasons why you should make your mental health an important priority in your life.

1. Your situation will improve if you get help: Your anxieties and fears can be challenging to manage and more than likely you will need some help. Just as you talk to your doctor about your regular health, you should not be hesitant in seeking help for your mental health. If left untreated, your anxieties and fears may not go away.

2. Drugs and alcohol are not the answer: Drugs and alcohol can make your problems more complicated. Many people have said that drugs and alcohol will only add more problems to your situation. Be smart and learn how to cope with your mental health issues by talking to a qualified professional. There are many health professionals in your area that can give you some ideas on where you can go for assistance.

3. You will save time and money: Eventually, you will have to confront your fears and mental health issues. Save yourself the time and heartache and confront your problems now rather than later. You will save months of struggling by getting help right away. The sooner you get assistance the faster you will start getting some relief.

4. You are not alone: Everyone deals with fear, stress, and anxiety in one's life whether your friends and others care to admit it. In addition, do not be embarrassed that you are getting help. We all learn new things from others on a daily basis and learning how to manage your anxieties is no different. In addition, your goal is to get your life back on track and not to get everyone's approval. If people start asking you questions, just say your dealing with stress. Most people can relate to dealing with stress and anxiety!

5. Do not make the mistake of doing nothing: There are many people who struggled with anxiety and other mental health related issues, and they tried to ignore their problems. As a result, some of these people struggled on a daily basis and eventually things became more difficult. It can be scary asking for assistance, but the key is to take things one day at a time.

6. You have a variety of options:

There are many mental health support groups, organizations, and counselors in your area that can help get your life back on track. Talk to your doctor to get more details on where you can go for some assistance. Help is available but you must be willing to make the choice of getting better. Remember that every problem has a solution. You

just have to make the effort to find the answers.

Stan Popovich is the author of "A Layman's Guide to Managing Fear" which covers a variety of techniques that can drastically improve your mental health. For more information, please visit his website at www.managingfear.com.



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Outdoors

outdoor sports

HOME ON THE RANGE

The older shooter and how to cope, Part 1



By MARJ LAW

“Is it too late to learn to shoot?”

One tiny 80-year-old woman has met Joe and me at the Wakulla County Sheriff's Office range.

“It's never too late,” I assured her, “but why do you want to shoot a handgun? Why now?”

“My husband passed 6 months ago. I'm alone in the big house surrounded by 25 acres where we raised two boys and a daughter. They all have families. “At first, the house seemed empty and silent,” she says. “Silent except for sounds in the night. I know many bird calls and they don't bother me. But it's the knocks against windows, the creak of a floorboard, a thump outside...”

“I don't know why I never heard them before, but now I wonder. I wonder if someone is trying to get in a window. I wonder if someone is creeping up the steps. Is a person walking around outside, or is it an animal?”

“Probably all these things are harmless,” she says, “but now I'm afraid to stay in my old house. When I talked to my children, they became upset at the thought of me selling the house and moving to a smaller place.

“There's so much room here when we

bring our children, and so much for them to do. So many memories for them to make in the same place where we grew up. Please don't sell the house,' they've begged me.

“So,” she says, “I've come to the conclusion that if I know I can take care of myself should someone try to break in and harm me, I think I'll be able to let go of my fears and enjoy our home once more.”

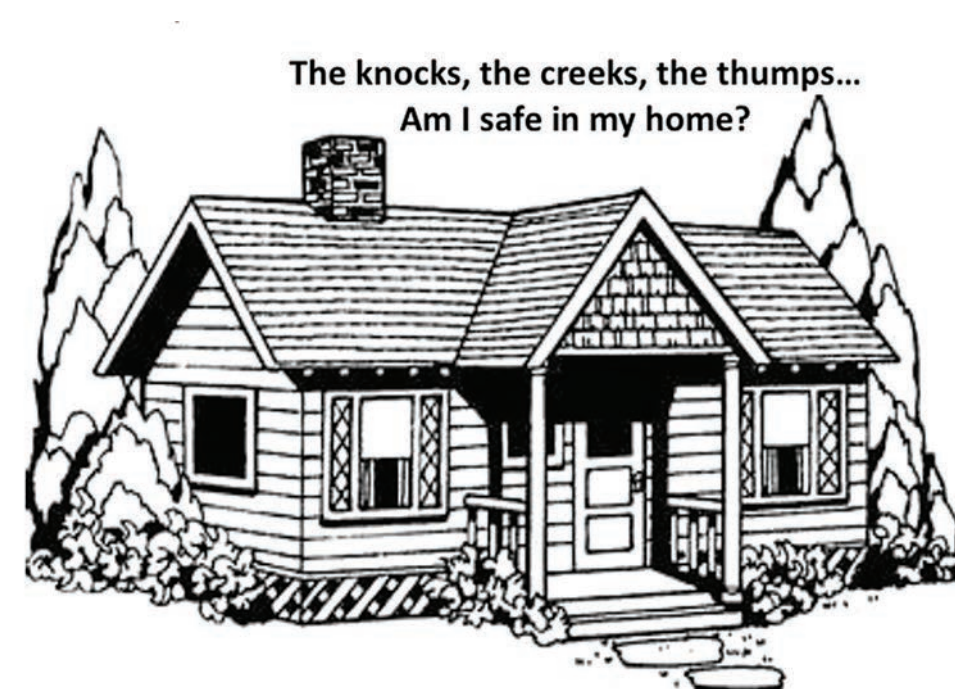
This woman, and quite a few more in a similar situation, have come to the range to figure out what kind of gun will help them shoot accurately, easily, and best of all, give them the feeling of security they want. They want to learn how to become safe and how to keep their gun out of the reach of anyone coming to the house.

But it's not just little old ladies who want to shoot. Many men and women have grown older, and are now facing changes in their lives that affects their shooting.

A small group from a local church have joined us at 10 a.m. Wednesday morning at the range. Except for holiday time, and happenings with the sheriff's men and the range, Joe and I are there on Wednesdays to offer assistance.

“I have rotator cuff problems,” says one man. “My shoulders aren't holding up as well as the rest of me. I can't even draw my gun from its holster.”

“You think that's bad,” says another. “You should try to aim using my bifocals! I have to arch backward to aim from the bottom of my lens. Makes me look like a newbie, and I've been shooting all



my life.”

“I can hardly type with these fingers,” adds a woman. “Makes my job difficult, but I can't imagine shooting. Can we find handguns that we can shoot despite our difficulties?”

“What do you think, Joe?” I ask him. “How many ideas can we come up with to make shooting at targets easier?”

Joe suggests watching a YouTube video by Massad Ayoob. He's a mature police officer who has found some of these same difficulties.

“According to the Marines, ‘improvise, adapt and overcome,’” Ayoob says. He points out difficulties to manage including: trigger finger, eyes wearing bifocals, loss of strength, arthritis, loss of motion and the necessity of learning to carry a gun a different way.

According to the site Gun Tests: “The older you are, maladies such as arthritis, carpal-tunnel syndrome, and injuries can come home to roost, affecting how you handle a firearm. Repetitive movement may become difficult.”

What handgun would make your life easier, and how can you adapt your ways to enjoy

shooting once more? How can we “improvise, adapt and overcome?”

Gun Tests offers a list of tips for shooters:

- Trigger action needs to be easier and smoother for seniors.

- The handgun should be physically easy to handle, so perhaps both the slide and the trigger need extra surface area to ensure this.

- Recoil should be minimized.

- Sighting options are important.

These are good thoughts to keep in mind, and we will add several more. This is going to be part 1 of a couple articles addressing concerns of those with age or physical difficulties to overcome.

First of all, the question Joe and I hear the most frequently is: “Does it have much recoil?”

Many of us have seen a YouTube video of a guy handing a pretty blonde woman a large caliber handgun. He gives her no instruction and he stands back to watch her. He finds it very amusing when the harsh recoil makes her hands fly in the air and the gun whack her in the forehead.

Mean, wasn't it? Not

funny at all.

- A .380 or a 9mm gun would have been much more useful to her. Smaller caliber handguns are generally easier to manage and have less recoil, so I'd start with suggesting one of these two caliber guns. Recoil is the concern we hear the most.

- Weight and length are other factors. The weight of the gun can matter a lot – especially when you're practicing shooting repetitively for an hour or more. If you're carrying in your purse, weight is a factor there too. And, speaking of that purse, how long a barrel can it accommodate comfortably?

- Is it easy to rack the slide? You'd be surprised at how many guns seem to require the strength of Popeye to pull back that slide. Well, mature people aren't out to prove their strength: they simply want to be able to manage the slide comfortably.

- Loading. If you're loading a semi-automatic handgun, how many rounds can you load before your thumbs wear out? Now, Joe was taught to load using his thumbs. He's never going to change

his opinion that loading this way is the only way.

Forget that. Buy an UpLula or similar loader. It takes the stress off your hands.

“You can't take an UpLula with you in the service!” Joe pronounces.

Well, we're not in the service, and we just want to load comfortably. Spend that \$30-\$40 to make your life easier and to protect your hands.

- Sights. I like two big white sights in the rear and one big white sight in the front. Why? Because they are easy to see. Those brightly colored fiber optic sights are great too. They focus available light and are so bright, you'd think they come with batteries. Good contrast between front and rear sights makes it a lot easier to learn to aim your gun and acquire muscle memory. Many, if not most new handguns have sights that can be swapped for ones that are easier to see.

Choosing the right caliber for you, selecting the gun with weight and length you can manage, finding a gun with a slide that's easy to rack, getting an instrument to help you load your magazine, and choosing sights that are easy to see are major steps in finding the gun that suits you best.

The next article will cover other suggestions to make shooting life easier and more fun.

It's never too late.

Marj Law is the former director of Keep Wakulla County Beautiful who has become an avid shooter in retirement.



HARDHEAD SALTWATER CATFISH
(*Arius felis*)

With painfully sharp spines on its fins, hardheads growing to 2ft and 4lbs. They are bottom feeder using whisker-like barbells to aggressively locate food on sandy or muddy bottoms. Females lay 50 or so pea sized eggs which males pick up and hold them in their mouths until hatching. The growing babies then use their father's mouth as a home. He does not eat during this month long period, but once his appetite is triggered he will not hesitate to eat his own offspring. The bones of this catfish are sold in curio shops as the 'crucifix' bone.

Eukarya, Animalia, Cordata, Actinopterygii, Siluriformes, Ariidae



HUGE SELECTION
MASKS, FINS & SNORKELS,
CYLINDERS, REGULATORS, COMPUTERS,
SPEARFISHING SUPPLIES, WETSUITS,
AIRLINE HOOKAHS (SURFACE SUPPLIED AIR),
BC SYSTEMS, CAMERAS & HOUSINGS,
SIDEMOUNT UNITS & MORE.

Wakulla Diving Center
WAKULLADIVING.com 850 745-8208
2784 COASTAL HWY., CRAWFORDVILLE

WEEKLY WILDLIFE PHOTO



Retired Wakulla Springs State Park Ranger Bob Thompson took this photo of an anhinga during one of his recent weekly wildlife surveys at the park.

Water Ways

a peek into life on and under the water

Local writers share their experiences



SEA TOW

24/7 PRIORITY ON-WATER ASSISTANCE

ARE YOU A MEMBER? SEA TOW BIG BEND \ 850-984-3456 \ seatow.com

Thursday 28	
Sun rise/set 7:31AM 5:44PM	Moon rise/set 7:19PM 9:06AM
Moon Illumination 98%	
Friday 29	
Sun rise/set 7:32AM 5:45PM	Moon rise/set 8:18PM 9:47AM
Moon Illumination 94%	
Saturday 30	
Sun rise/set 7:32AM 5:46PM	Moon rise/set 9:15PM 10:22AM
Moon Illumination 89%	
Sunday 31	
Sun rise/set 7:32AM 5:46PM	Moon rise/set 10:10PM 10:53AM
Moon Illumination 82%	
Monday 1	
Sun rise/set 7:32AM 5:47PM	Moon rise/set 11:04PM 11:20AM
Moon Illumination 74%	
Tuesday 2	
Sun rise/set 7:33AM 5:48PM	Moon rise/set 11:57PM 11:46AM
Moon Illumination 65%	
Wednesday 3	
Sun rise/set 7:33AM 5:49PM	Moon rise/set ----- 12:11PM
Moon Illumination 56%	

For tides at the following points add to Dog Island Listings:

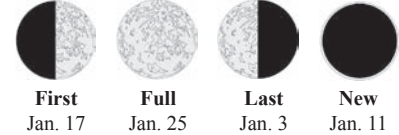
High Tide	Low Tide
Carrabelle 28 Min.	25 Min.
Apalachicola 1 Hr., 53 Min.	2 Hrs., 38 Min.
Cat Point 1 Hr., 13 Min.	2 Hrs., 31 Min.
Lower Anchorage 1 Hr., 36 Min.	2 Hrs., 3 Min.
West Pass 1 Hr., 26 Min.	2 Hrs., 39 Min.

Gulf Coast Weekly Almanac

Dec. 28 - Jan. 3



Tid charts by tides4fishing.com



Best fishing days this month January 11-25

Thursday 28	
Minor Times 8:21AM 6:34PM	Major Times 12:30AM 12:56PM
Friday 29	
Minor Times 9:02AM 7:33PM	Major Times 1:21AM 1:45PM
Saturday 30	
Minor Times 9:37AM 8:30PM	Major Times 2:08AM 2:31PM
Sunday 31	
Minor Times 10:08AM 9:25PM	Major Times 2:53AM 3:14PM
Monday 1	
Minor Times 10:35AM 10:19PM	Major Times 3:34AM 3:54PM
Tuesday 2	
Minor Times 11:01AM 11:12PM	Major Times 4:14AM 4:33PM
Wednesday 3	
Minor Times 11:26AM -----	Major Times 4:53AM 5:12PM

Th	1:45 am ▲ 3.4 ft	9:09 am ▼ -0.8 ft	3:39 pm ▲ 2.8 ft	8:38 pm ▼ 1.2 ft
Fr	2:23 am ▲ 3.3 ft	9:43 am ▼ -0.7 ft	4:12 pm ▲ 2.8 ft	9:17 pm ▼ 1.1 ft
Sa	3:00 am ▲ 3.2 ft	10:14 am ▼ -0.4 ft	4:44 pm ▲ 2.7 ft	9:59 pm ▼ 1.0 ft
Su	3:39 am ▲ 3.0 ft	10:43 am ▼ -0.2 ft	5:17 pm ▲ 2.7 ft	10:43 pm ▼ 1.0 ft
Mo	4:22 am ▲ 2.8 ft	11:10 am ▼ 0.1 ft	5:43 pm ▲ 2.6 ft	11:35 pm ▼ 0.9 ft
Tu	5:12 am ▲ 2.5 ft	11:42 am ▼ 0.4 ft	6:16 pm ▲ 2.6 ft	
We	12:36 am ▼ 0.8 ft	6:19 am ▲ 2.2 ft	12:20 pm ▼ 0.8 ft	6:51 pm ▲ 2.5 ft

Th	2:21 am ▲ 3.1 ft	10:13 am ▼ -0.8 ft	4:15 pm ▲ 2.6 ft	9:42 pm ▼ 1.1 ft
Fr	2:59 am ▲ 3.1 ft	10:47 am ▼ -0.6 ft	4:48 pm ▲ 2.6 ft	10:21 pm ▼ 1.0 ft
Sa	3:36 am ▲ 3.0 ft	11:18 am ▼ -0.4 ft	5:20 pm ▲ 2.5 ft	11:03 pm ▼ 0.9 ft
Su	4:15 am ▲ 2.8 ft	11:47 am ▼ -0.2 ft	5:53 pm ▲ 2.5 ft	11:47 pm ▼ 0.9 ft
Mo	4:58 am ▲ 2.6 ft	12:14 pm ▼ 0.1 ft	6:19 pm ▲ 2.4 ft	
Tu	12:39 am ▼ 0.8 ft	5:48 am ▲ 2.3 ft	12:46 pm ▼ 0.4 ft	6:52 pm ▲ 2.4 ft
We	1:40 am ▼ 0.7 ft	6:55 am ▲ 2.0 ft	1:24 pm ▼ 0.7 ft	7:27 pm ▲ 2.4 ft

Th	2:00 am ▲ 3.3 ft	9:37 am ▼ -1.0 ft	4:04 pm ▲ 2.7 ft	8:53 pm ▼ 1.4 ft
Fr	2:38 am ▲ 3.3 ft	10:12 am ▼ -0.8 ft	4:37 pm ▲ 2.6 ft	9:32 pm ▼ 1.2 ft
Sa	3:16 am ▲ 3.2 ft	10:44 am ▼ -0.6 ft	5:08 pm ▲ 2.6 ft	10:15 pm ▼ 1.1 ft
Su	3:57 am ▲ 3.0 ft	11:14 am ▼ -0.4 ft	5:40 pm ▲ 2.6 ft	11:01 pm ▼ 1.0 ft
Mo	4:43 am ▲ 2.8 ft	11:43 am ▼ -0.1 ft	6:07 pm ▲ 2.6 ft	11:54 pm ▼ 0.9 ft
Tu	5:35 am ▲ 2.5 ft	12:14 pm ▼ 0.2 ft	6:39 pm ▲ 2.6 ft	
We	12:53 am ▼ 0.7 ft	6:40 am ▲ 2.2 ft	12:50 pm ▼ 0.6 ft	7:14 pm ▲ 2.6 ft

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Fr	2:15 am ▲ 2.5 ft	9:54 am ▼ -0.5 ft	4:04 pm ▲ 2.1 ft	9:28 pm ▼ 0.8 ft
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We	12:47 am ▼ 0.6 ft	6:11 am ▲ 1.6 ft	12:31 pm ▼ 0.6 ft	6:43 pm ▲ 1.9 ft

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Fr	2:09 am ▲ 2.5 ft	9:45 am ▼ -0.8 ft	4:39 pm ▲ 1.8 ft	9:07 pm ▼ 1.2 ft
Sa	2:54 am ▲ 2.4 ft	10:22 am ▼ -0.6 ft	5:09 pm ▲ 1.8 ft	9:56 pm ▼ 1.1 ft
Su	3:42 am ▲ 2.2 ft	10:57 am ▼ -0.4 ft	5:39 pm ▲ 1.8 ft	10:51 pm ▼ 0.9 ft
Mo	4:36 am ▲ 2.0 ft	11:30 am ▼ -0.1 ft	6:04 pm ▲ 1.8 ft	11:53 pm ▼ 0.8 ft
Tu	5:35 am ▲ 1.8 ft	12:05 pm ▼ 0.2 ft	6:36 pm ▲ 1.9 ft	
We	1:01 am ▼ 0.6 ft	6:47 am ▲ 1.5 ft	12:42 pm ▼ 0.5 ft	7:11 pm ▲ 1.9 ft

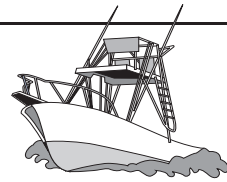
Th	1:34 am ▲ 2.3 ft	9:17 am ▼ -1.0 ft	4:53 pm ▲ 1.7 ft	8:40 pm ▼ 1.3 ft
Fr	2:16 am ▲ 2.2 ft	9:55 am ▼ -0.9 ft	5:16 pm ▲ 1.7 ft	9:19 pm ▼ 1.2 ft
Sa	2:57 am ▲ 2.1 ft	10:33 am ▼ -0.7 ft	5:38 pm ▲ 1.6 ft	10:14 pm ▼ 1.2 ft
Su	3:42 am ▲ 2.0 ft	11:08 am ▼ -0.5 ft	6:00 pm ▲ 1.6 ft	11:14 pm ▼ 1.0 ft
Mo	4:34 am ▲ 1.7 ft	11:39 am ▼ -0.2 ft	6:18 pm ▲ 1.6 ft	
Tu	12:09 am ▼ 0.8 ft	5:26 am ▲ 1.5 ft	12:07 pm ▼ 0.1 ft	6:42 pm ▲ 1.6 ft
We	1:09 am ▼ 0.6 ft	6:30 am ▲ 1.2 ft	12:34 pm ▼ 0.5 ft	7:12 pm ▲ 1.6 ft

Best hunting and fishing based on solunar times. MAJOR feeding periods are 2 hours long, centered on the solunar time. MINOR feeding periods are only 1 hour long, again centered on the solunar time.



Coast Guard Auxiliary Reports

By Carolyn Brown Treadon



With the New Year upon us, many boaters take to the water to enjoy festivities, which can involve shooting off fireworks.

It may seem obvious, but doing fireworks on boats is never a good idea. The Florida Times-Union reported that the Consumer Product Safety Commission stated that on average, 280 people go to the emergency room every day with fireworks-related injuries in the month around the July 4th holiday. This is an important fact to be mindful of if you are planning to shoot off any fireworks this New Year's Eve.

As disused in an article found in The Log, boaters often look at civic fireworks festivities as an opportunity to discharge expired marine flares. And, while this may be done without any intent to commit a hoax, the

Boating Emergencies

Coast Guard Station
Panama City (850) 234-4228

Coast Guard Station
Yankeetown (352) 447-6900

Coast Guard Auxiliary
Apalachee Bay (Flotilla 12) (850) 942-7500
or (850) 284-1166

firing of a red marine flare in a non-emergency is still a false distress message. It is a federal crime and can be treated as such.

As we head into the holiday weekend, one of the leading causes for accidents is boating while intoxicated. Remember to drink responsibly and designate a driver. Boaters 21 years of age or older are considered to be under the influence, and may not operate a boat or PWC, if their blood alco-

hol level is 0.08 or more or if drugs are detected. Additionally, many boaters with limited or no experience on the water are out in heavier than usual traffic. When accidents do happen, the Coast Guard will often broad cast out of channel 16 a series of messages.

Thanks to Sherrie, we will always remember safe boating is no accident!

Please contact us for more information about

our safe boating classes or learning more about getting involved in the Auxiliary, check out our website at www.uscgaux.net follow us on Facebook @ Apalachee Bay Flotilla 12 or contact our Flotilla Commander Phil Hill at pnkhill2000@yahoo.com

If you would like to learn more about vessel safety checks, please contact Steve Hults, Staff Officer for Vessel Examinations at steve.hults@uscgaux.net.

The Coast Guard Auxiliary is the uniformed civilian volunteer component of the U.S. Coast Guard and supports the Coast Guard in nearly all mission areas. The Auxiliary was created by Congress in 1939. For more information, please visit www.cgaux.org.

Underwater Wakulla

By Rusty Miller

Ditch and don scuba continued.

Well, Christmas is but a memory by the time you read this article, we will be rolling towards the new year 2024. I hope everyone had a blessed Christmas, I know we did in the Miller family.

Now as promised I will continue with the ditch and don scuba skill. When I left off last week I had described how to remove the gear at the bottom of the pool and safely ascend to the surface then go back to the bottom and put the gear back on. Remember the key component of the gear was the weight belt and how important it was to be removed last and then put on first. You can see how that skill can no longer be taught the same with the integrated weight system in the BCD.

But wait, there's more: Just for fun I used to have my students giant stride in the pool at the deep end then descend to the bottom and remove all their gear including the mask and fins, then swim to the surface and get out of the pool. Once they where out I would have them dive to the bottom and they would have to put their gear back on and swim to the shallow end of the pool.

Several of you older divers (55 and older) remember that type of skill when you first got your certification. That really was a fun part of the class. Now the question might be asked is why would you need to learn that type of skill. The answer is pretty simple. If you have ever been diving off Panama City Beach at several of the bridge spans that haven't deteriorated to collapse you will know that people still fish those and they break off their lines when they get them snagged on the cross members of the span. Sometimes when you swim through the spans you might get caught on the lines to the point you can't move forward or backward. What do you do if you can't cut the lines that are stuck on your first stage without cutting a vital hose?

If you were taught the ditch and don then you would simply remove your BCD with the regulator in your mouth and carefully cut away the fishing line so you can put your gear back on and keep diving rather than panicking about the situation.

You could still do that with the integrated weight system but it can be a little more dangerous because you might be to buoyant and have to hold on to the span to cut out of it. Hopefully your dive buddy is very close by and can cut the lines that have you hung up so you don't have to take off your equipment.

Now instead of removing the gear at the bottom we teach to inflate your BCD at the surface and remove it there and put it back on. There are pros and cons to having integrated versus non integrated BCDs. I will tell you that when time in the pool permits I have the students play a little game in the shallow end that encompasses all the skills they have learned in the pool class. I match them up by size of their gear, then I have each buddy team with one fully geared up the other one with no gear. No BCD, tank, regulator, fins, and mask. The one with all their gear shares the octopus with their buddy and they swim under water to the other side of the pool and while under water they switch out the gear then swim back to the other side. They really enjoy that one.

Well, until next year – keep making bubbles and have a safe and happy new year

Russell Miller #59999

FWC Law Enforcement Report

From FWC

This report represents some events the FWC handled Dec. 1-7 in the North Central Region. (There were no cases reported for Wakulla County or the Northwest Region.)

BAKER COUNTY

- Officer Waychoff was patrolling Osceola Wildlife Management Area when he performed a resource inspection of two hunters. The inspection of a cooler revealed a recently harvested deer. One of the hunters claimed the deer and said it was an antlerless deer. Charges of failure to provide sex evidence, failure to comply with harvest reporting requirements, and possession of antlerless deer during closed season will be filed.
- Officer Burned was

on patrol when he saw a deer on a pickup truck dog box. He stopped the vehicle to conduct a resource inspection. During the inspection, he determined the deer was harvested in Georgia and transported into Florida in whole condition. Possessing or importing deer, elk, moose or caribou carcasses or high-risk parts from anywhere outside of Florida is prohibited to reduce the risk of chronic wasting disease.

COLUMBIA COUNTY

- Officers Fanelli and Shope were working at Osceola Wildlife Management Area when they located a pack of hounds pursuing deer in the still hunt-only area. Four hunters were found and charged with allowing dogs to pursue deer in the still hunt-only area.

LEVY COUNTY

- Officer Dean and Lt. Johnston were on night patrol in a remote area bordering Goethe Wildlife Management Area. They observed a vehicle shining a spotlight from the county-maintained road. The subjects in the vehicle were shining trails and clearcuts of the surrounding hunt clubs in a manner consistent with night hunting for deer. The driver of the vehicle shined his spotlight directly on the marked patrol truck and then fled the area at a high rate of speed. The passenger threw several objects out the passenger side window of the truck. After about two miles, the driver stopped the truck and Lt. Johnston and Officer Dean made contact. Inside the vehicle were three loaded guns and a spotlight. Further

investigation revealed the suspects had killed an illegal antlerless deer earlier in the day. The driver was arrested and booked into Levy County Jail. Multiple charges are pending with the state attorney's office including attempting to take deer at night with gun and light, taking antlerless deer in closed season, flee and elude, and tampering/destruction of evidence.

- Officer Bell responded to a complaint of night hunting and road hunting on county road 326. Officer Bell found two subjects in possession of an illegal antlerless deer. The investigation revealed the subjects had illuminated the deer with the vehicle's headlights and shot it from the road. Charges include taking deer at night with gun and light and taking antlerless deer in closed season.

Rate your 'joy level' for 2023



By **SHERYL H. BOLDT**

Did your choices throughout the year (specifically behavior-related) bring an abundance of joy or way too

many regrets?

I hope you're among those in the "abundance of joy" group. But if 2023 was a tough year, I pray 2024 will be better.

Perhaps you've been struggling with a temptation that has had such a tight grip on you that you've just about decided to stop resisting it. Or you continue to give in to a behavior, even though you hate yourself every time you do.

Many of us struggle with actions we're not proud of. Whether they're as addictive as

pornography or as destructive as being disrespectful to our spouse, sinful deeds leave us feeling ashamed and hopeless. Why do we sabotage and doom ourselves to failure by falling for the lie that participating in these activities will fulfill us?

What if, rather than spending time justifying why we should visit that porn site, mouth off to our spouse or cheat on our income taxes, we mentally switched course and did something radically different?

How would it change our mindset if we spend that time worshipping God instead?

I realize this sounds crazy – especially when we're in the grip of temptation. But what if we chose to place ourselves in the grip of praise instead?

I'm not minimizing the stronghold of that sin. I'm maximizing the power of praise – no matter what we're up against. Let me illustrate. Let's pray, using Exodus 15:11 as a starting point.

"Father, there is no god like You. There is no god that compares to Your majesty and Your holiness, for You, alone, are awesome in splendor. So I come humbly before You in great need of Your wonder-working power to change my heart and my will."

Then, be completely honest with your heavenly Father about your struggle. Thank Him for all the times He's delivered you and acknowledge that you've made it this far because of Him. Wouldn't this be

worth trying? Watch and see how praising a holy, wonder-working God can change your heart and will. Then do it again the next time. And the next.

I'm confident that the more often we do this, the higher our 2024 will rank on the "joy-level" scale.

Sheryl H. Boldt is a sales executive for Wave 94 and author of the blog, www.TodayCanBeDifferent.net. Connect with her at SherylHBoldt@Wave94@gmail.com.

The day after



By **CHERYL CRUCE**

Christmas is climatic! The anticipation begins the day after Thanksgiving with Black Friday specials and television commercials that tug at the heartstrings. Homes are decorated with bright lights and yard ornaments.

Children give Santa Claus a wish list while parents capture the moment with a photo. The expectations of Christ-

mas begin.

So many traditions during this time of year revolve around gift-giving and family-gathering activities. There are the usual Christmas Caroling and hot Apple Cider evenings as the scent of freshly baked cookies lingers in the kitchen. The traditional giving of gifts remains. However, some exchanges are enhanced with the "White Elephant" games.

In my youth, it became a tradition to stand around the burn pit with Dad as he sifted through the colored paper, looking for one missing piece of a gift lost during the excitement of Christmas morning. As a mom, I have tried different remedies to overcome this tradition. I have given

my children the responsibility of their own trash bags. Fail! The bags were too soon forgotten. One Christmas, I tried to give out one gift at a time. Fail! The anticipation of my little ones overruled this idea as they began reaching underneath the tree, bypassing my approach.

The missing piece tradition seems to be unchanged. As a Grandmother, I know that sometime during the moments or days that follow Christmas morning, I will receive a phone call or a text telling me of a small piece of something missing from a gift. All too often, I am caught in the search and find tradition, looking through the endless mounds of paper and

boxes for some valued treasure.

Regardless of our traditions, December 26 can be an emotional drop from the climatic Christmas morning. A person can feel lost when the excitement of previous days dies down. Suddenly, the lights lose their shine, the decorations become clutter, and the yard ornaments lay on the cold ground waiting to be returned to their boxes in a closet. The day after, we open our eyes to the demands of work, worry, and concern for loved ones.

Nevertheless, even if the tree looks empty, our hearts can still be filled with the joy of the previous days. The true spirit of Christmas is not our name on a gift but

our name on a page in the Lamb's Book of Life (Revelation 21:27), for we are more than a tradition. We are God's valued treasure, the apple of His eye (Psalm 17:8). He gave us the gift of His Son, Jesus, so that we could know the true joy of Christmas.

There will always be a "day after" in life, yet we become more than conquerors because of His love for us. Scripture teaches that nothing can separate us from His love, not angels nor demons, not life nor death, not our today nor our tomorrow. The hope we found in Him on Christmas morning remains our hope the day after. (Romans 8:37-39).

Whatever the missing piece is in your life,

trust it to the One who loves you. Allow the Lord to sift through the debris and restore what was lost to you. There is a reason to continue the celebration. We are engraved on the palm of our Father's hand and continually before Him (Isaiah 49:16). The spirit of Christmas does not have to end when our hope and joy remain in Him.

Romans 15:13 ~ May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit, you may abound in hope.

Cheryl Mixon-Cruce is Pastor of Ochlockonee Bay United Methodist Church and Sopchoppy United Methodist Church.

OUT TO PASTOR

Another jingle bell Christmas in the tree



By **JAMES SNYDER**

It doesn't seem possible another Christmas has come and gone. They come and go so fast that I'm not sure I can keep up with all of this. Every year, our family has more people, which is never bad.

One thing we do is gather as a family around the Christmas tree and enjoy a wonderful time of fellowship. We will open our Christmas gifts together and just laugh at all of those gifts.

After the gifts are opened, we play a game called "Jingle Bells on the Tree."

What it is, The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage will get together a bunch of Jingle Bells. They will be different colors: blue, yellow, red and green.

This game is new to me, but with The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage, nothing seems to be new. Along with the colored Jingle Bells, there is a little box filled with tickets: each ticket has one of the four colors associated with the Jingle Bells.

The idea of the game is that the box with the little tickets is passed around, and everyone would have to pick a ticket. Now, the color of that ticket matches the color of one of the Jingle Bells.

If, for example, you pick a blue ticket, you

would have to get up and go to the blue Jingle Bell and jingle it for at least one minute. While that was happening, everybody was clapping and singing, "Jingle Bells."

I'm not sure where she came up with that idea, but I never know where she comes up with any of her ideas. But everybody enjoys the little game.

As I was sitting there participating in the game, the kitchen table was behind me. On the kitchen table, I had my coffee. I occasionally took a sip and then put it back on the table. But, also on that table were several plates of Christmas cookies. These were the cookies that The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage had baked in anticipation of our Christmas gathering.

I never thought too much about it, but this year, just before everybody came for the Christmas dinner and celebration, The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage told me I could only have one cookie. As she said

that, she handed me one cookie and then said, "This is your one cookie. Do you understand?"

Of course, I understood. I smiled and shook my head as I munched that delicious little cookie.

A thought began dancing in my head as we played the game. I love it when I have a thought, which, by the way, is very rare.

That thought had to do with the cookies on the table behind me. All the cookie plates were within reach because God gave me long arms. Now I know why I have such long arms.

How am I going to take advantage of this family game time? Nobody was paying attention to me; everybody was watching the person going up to ring the Jingle Bell on the tree.

I casually reached back, got my coffee, took a sip and returned the cup. When I did that, my thoughts began to

crystallize.

It boils down to this: whenever someone picked a ticket and went up to the tree to ring the appropriate Jingle Bell, I could reach behind me and pick a cookie. Everybody was so focused on the game that nobody realized what I was doing.

I must confess I was smiling quite a bit because I was getting away with something, and I did not believe I would get caught.

I cheered the next person going up to ring the Jingle Bell as loud as I could get away with. Everybody was focused on that. While that was happening, my right arm reached behind me to collect the next cookie. I munched on that cookie while everybody laughed, clapped and sang Jingle Bells.

I have never enjoyed a family game as much as this one. I don't remember how many cookies I ate then, but I enjoyed every one.

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Obituaries

DEATH NOTICES

• **Billy Joe Sanders**, 57, of Woodville, died December 18, 2023. Family Funeral Home at Harvey Young Chapel. 850-926-5919 Familyfhc.com

• **Loretta J. Story**, 90, of Tallahassee, died December 19, 2023. Family Funeral Home at Harvey Young Chapel. 850-926-5919 Familyfhc.com

BEREAVEMENT COLUMN

Funeral myths – grave robbing



By **TRACY RENEE LEE**

If you've ever attended a disinterment, you'd know that modern day grave robbing is next to impossible. Back in the day when caskets had flat tops that were (in most cases) nailed shut, grave robbing, although overly laborious for small gains, may have been the norm for very desperate people. Also, a hand dug grave would have most likely been a shallow grave; thus, a grave that would have

likewise required less effort to reopen than today's modernly dug, deep depth graves.

Jumping forward to our current century, modern caskets have a convex top, and many of them have a locking mechanism that requires a key to open. Likewise, grave digging has also modernized with heavy machinery making deep graves easy to dig. Additionally, unlike grave digging of old, society and indeed municipalities have enacted regulations requiring minimum depth allowances that are deep in depth.

A casket with a nailed on flat top can be opened within the confines of the original grave as the top may be lifted straight up upon the removal of

the nails. A modern day casket with a curved top requires an additional 16-inch width to open. That means that the original grave will not allow the casket to be opened without widening the grave on the hinged side. Additionally, if the casket has been upgraded to a sealer casket, it will require a casket key to open. A sealer casket has a bar that engages with the winding or cranking of the key. There is no popping it open without the casket key. Not even a crowbar will break open a sealer casket; not to mention the additional width it would require to get enough space for a crowbars usage.

As previously mentioned, modern heavy digging equipment and

grave depth requirements make reopening graves by hand laboriously prohibitive. Even if someone were overly motivated to rob a modern day grave, they would still be faced with having to widen the grave in order to allow room for the curved top to open. Additionally, if the casket were keyed, they would need to lengthen the grave 10" to 26" depending on the key in their possession.

Realistically, I don't know how a potential grave robber would acquire a casket key. A casket key is only obtainable from a casket manufacturer and they don't sell their keys to the general public. In order to obtain one, a grave robber would need to open a wholesaler's account with a

casket supplier or a funeral merchandise supplier. In order to open such accounts, a grave robber would need proof of a state licensed funeral home.

It has been my experience at disinterments that in order to access a buried casket, an area of no less than twice the width and at least half the length increase of the casket is required. Disinterments look like an excavation site rather than a gravesite. The amount of required digging by grave robbers without heavy machinery would be impossible for one night's work.

If a person is motivated to invest this much effort into robbing a grave, why wouldn't they just get a day job and buy the items they think exist within a

certain grave? If you're considering robbing a grave, I think you're crazy.

Trust and believe me when I tell you that your time and efforts would be better applied to an honest profession rather than grave robbing.

Tracy Renee Lee is a Certified Grief Counselor (GC-C), Funeral Director (FDIC), published author, syndicated columnist, Podcaster, and founder of the "Mikey Joe Children's Memorial" and Heaven Sent, Corp. She is the American Funeral Director of the Year Runner-Up and recipient of the BBB's Integrity Award. It is my life's work to comfort the bereaved and help them live on.

Weekly Roundup: Exit strategy?

By **JIM SAUNDERS**
News Service of Florida

TALLAHASSEE — Sure, college football is about tradition, rivalries and rooting for the old alma mater.

But it's also about money. Big money.

And Florida State University argues it's getting shortchanged.

FSU on Friday filed a lawsuit against the Atlantic Coast Conference, taking aim at a media-rights deal and alleging the conference has "persistently undermined its members' revenue opportunities."

The end game could be for FSU to leave the ACC after more than 30 years and play on Saturday afternoons in a conference where television deals are more lucrative, such as the Southeastern Conference or the Big Ten conference.

FSU Board of Trustees Chairman Peter Collins said the ACC's deal has left FSU drawing \$30 million to \$40 million a year less than if it were in other big football conferences.

"There should be no debate that our brand media value and competitiveness across all sports are among the very best in collegiate athletics,"

Collins said.

But the ACC immediately signaled it is ready to do battle. Commissioner Jim Phillips and Jim Ryan, chairman of the ACC Board of Directors, issued a statement that said FSU's decision to go to court "is in direct conflict with their long standing obligations and is a clear violation of their legal commitments to the other members of the conference."

They said lawyers for the conference "will vigorously enforce the agreement in the best interests of the ACC's current and incoming members."

The case, filed in Leon County circuit court, focuses on a media-rights deal that will run for another 13 years and on steep costs for schools exiting the conference, including what the lawsuit describes as a "withdrawal penalty" of \$130 million. The case involves challenging a "grant of rights" that FSU and other schools in the conference are tied to in an ESPN contract.

The contract gives the league control over TV revenue and broadcasts and stipulates schools would have to buy out of the deal if they want to leave early.

David Ashburn, an

attorney with the Greenberg Traurig law firm who represents FSU, said the contract violates restraint of trade under Florida law; imposes an "unenforceable" penalty because the conference's contract with ESPN would remain unchanged with an FSU exit; and fails to provide FSU with the value of its media rights.

NO NEED

House Speaker Paul Renner, R-Palm Coast, created a stir this summer when he raised the idea of consolidating judicial circuits.

After Florida Supreme Court Chief Justice Carlos Muniz appointed a committee to study consolidation, prosecutors, public defenders, judges, sheriffs and other officials from across the state spoke out against the idea.

The committee recommended against consolidation, and the Supreme Court on Thursday followed suit.

"We have considered the committee's report and recommendation. And we ourselves have evaluated the issues relevant to consolidation, guided by (criteria in a court rule)," a unani-

mous Supreme Court decision said. "Based on the committee's findings and recommendations and on our own independent judgment, we do not find that there is a need to consolidate Florida's judicial circuits."

After the Supreme Court decision, Renner's office issued a statement saying he wouldn't pursue the idea during the legislative session that will start Jan. 9.

"The speaker put forward a thoughtful and timely request to review how our courts are structured hoping to find economies of scale to better serve Floridians," the statement said. "We appreciate and accept the Supreme Court's opinion and thank the committee for their diligent work in presenting their recommendations. We do not intend to bring any legislation forward this year regarding circuit court consolidation."

Florida has 20 judicial circuits, a number that would be reduced by consolidation. Critics of the idea argued, in part, that consolidation could diminish access to courts for lower-income people and rural residents, pose logistical problems and be costly.

But in a June 15 let-

ter to Muniz that led to appointment of the committee, Renner said the "boundaries of Florida's judicial circuits have been unchanged for decades despite significant population and demographic changes during that timeframe."

ONLY A MATTER OF TIME

The executive board of the Republican Party of Florida on Sunday stripped party Chairman Christian Ziegler of his powers and cut his pay to \$1 amid a Sarasota police investigation into an alleged sexual assault.

It appears that Ziegler won't have the chairman's title much longer, as the party's executive committee prepares to meet Jan. 8.

Vice Chairman Evan Power, who was given authority over many of the party's day-to-day operations on Sunday, quickly said he will run for the chairmanship and received endorsements.

"Evan has worked tirelessly to build our party from the grassroots. He has earned the opportunity to lead and has my full support!" Northwest Florida Congressman Matt Gaetz posted online.

Peter Feaman, a Re-

publican national committeeman, also announced that he will seek the chairmanship.

"My mission is simple: Restore the good name and reputation of the Republican Party of Florida, previously the most admired in the country," Feaman said in a post on the social-media site X. "Raise money for the party using my national contacts gained through 12 years on the RNC (Republican National Committee). Unify the grassroots and work with our presidential nominee to deliver a decisive victory in November."

STORY OF THE WEEK: Florida State University filed a lawsuit against the Atlantic Coast Conference related to athletic revenues.

QUOTE OF THE WEEK:

"The overall driving force of denying transgender validity underlies all of it. It's one other piece of a whole mosaic of evidence ... of invidious discrimination." — Thomas Redburn, an attorney for plaintiffs during a trial Thursday in a lawsuit challenging Florida restrictions on treatments for transgender people..

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