

“Mama LuLu,” turned 95 years young on Dec. 24th See Page 5



# The Wakulla Sun

WAKULLA WeatherSTEM

Weather forecast from Wakulla High School

Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Partly Cloudy	Mostly Sunny	AM Rain
Hi: 61° Lo: 39° 95% Sunrise 7:34 AM Sunset 5:50 PM	Hi: 66° Lo: 57° 95% Sunrise 7:34 AM Sunset 5:51 PM	Hi: 69° Lo: 45° 84% Sunrise 7:34 AM Sunset 5:52 PM



\$1 One Section

“It’s a New Day”

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Our 3rd Year 1st Issue Thursday, January 4, 2024

# 2023 Year in Review



PHOTO BY LYNDIA KINSEY

Former Wakulla Property Appraiser Brad Harvey is taken out of the courthouse after his sentencing on Sept. 7 and loaded in a van for transport to the Wakulla County Jail.

## A look back at some of the top stories and photos of the past year

By **LEGION TAYLOR**  
Reporter

### BRAD HARVEY GETS 12 1/2 YEARS

Brad Harvey, the former Wakulla County Property Appraiser, was convicted on embezzling charges, being sentenced to 12 1/2 years in prison and 17 1/2 years of probation once he gets out.

This comes after a months-long investigation into his theft of more than \$200,000 during the 3 years he was in office. This theft came in the form of \$176,000 of overpayments to himself, and \$26,000 of charges on the office credit card that were personal expenses. Some of the money was spent on outfitting a hunting truck, and taking his family on a cruise shortly after his daughter graduated from high school.

“Brad Harvey was elected by the people of Wakulla County to a position of trust,” Judge Smith said at Harvey’s September 7th sentencing. The judge then went through the definition of an “organized scheme to defraud.” Noting that Harvey had written himself dozens of paychecks to overpay himself, the judge commented, “This was not a one-time lapse of judgment, this was a systematic, organized scheme to defraud with

some effort to escape detection or avoid detection.”

Harvey justified the overpayments by pointing to a \$30,000 supplement he was paid for his work on the county’s Fire and Solid Waste tax rolls which he received during his time as Chief Deputy under then-Property Appraiser Donnie Sparkman.

According to Wakulla Chief Prosecutor Andrew Deneen, who prosecuted the case, Harvey wasn’t entitled to the bonus as property appraiser, as he went outside his office and hired a consultant to do the work. Even then, the county paid \$30,000 a year for the additional work, but Harvey paid himself more than \$76,000.

He was originally investigated after he failed to deposit money from a Rotary Club of Wakulla fundraiser back in 2018.

In 2020, Harvey was arrested and booked at the Wakulla County Jail, and Gov. DeSantis removed him from office the same day.

Several months ago, unrelated to the criminal case, the state Ethics Commission ordered Harvey to pay a civil penalty of \$40,000 in addition to restitution of \$209,000 to Wakulla County for ethics violations related to the overpayments.

### SCHOOL BOARD REJECTS FOREIGN TEACHERS

At the School Board meeting on January 17th, the agenda included consideration of a contract with TPG – an Orlando-based company that vets and coordinates cultural exchanges for teachers. At the time of the meeting, there were 28 vacant teaching positions in Wakulla County Schools, and this contract would be a way to fill one or two much-needed positions, specifically in the High School’s Math department. Six citizens at the meeting spoke out against it, concerned about the high cost of these new personnel or that they wouldn’t be able to speak English, although district staff disputed these claims.

CFO Randy Beach and HR Director Lori Sandgren argued that because the district had already budgeted for the 28 vacant positions, and these international teachers wouldn’t need to be provided with retirement and social security, it would save the district money, rather than cost extra. However, members of the school board such as Laura Lawhon expressed that there are likely better “tools in

Turn to Page 3



PHOTO BY GERALD BROWN

Daughter Cecelia with Beth and Dewayne McClain in front of Soppchoppy Grocery on May 17, the day they closed it after 30 years of ownership.

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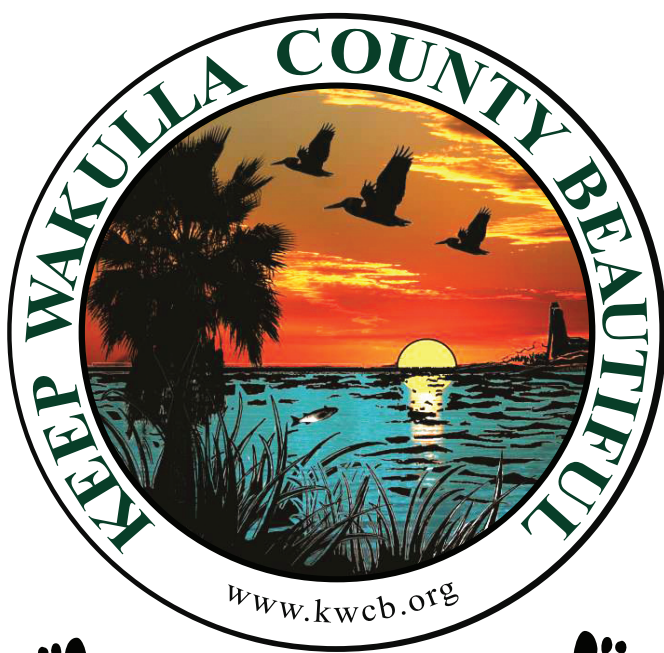
## Flower of the Week at Sopchoppy Depot Park Flower seeds and stems



Flower seedheads at Sopchoppy Depot Park.

By LYNN ARTZ, SANDY TEDDER  
 and DAVID RODDENBERRY

After flowers have faded, seedheads remain and can be attractive themselves. Leave them on native wildflowers to seed next year's blooms and to feed seed-eating birds. Leave the dead flower stalks, too, as these provide hibernation and nesting habitat for native bees. Unlike hive-dwelling European honeybees, native bees are solitary nesters and many nest within hollow stems. Leave wildflower stems intact over the winter for bee hibernation. In spring, cut dead stalks down to 8 to 24 inches for nest cavities. Leave the cut stalks for 2 years as it takes that long for adult bees to emerge from eggs laid inside stems. New growth hides the cut stalks. At Sopchoppy Depot Park, many seedheads and cut flower stalks remain in the gardens to support native bees and birds.



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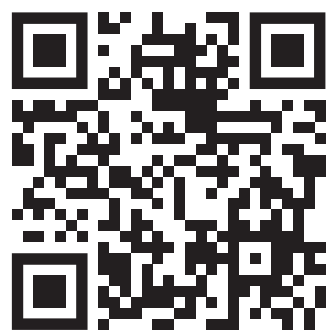
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# 2023 Year in Review



Hundreds of people packed the arena at 3Y for the Chamber's 12th annual Low Country Boil on April 1. (Photo by Gerald Brown)

### From Front Page

the toolbox” when it comes to battling the teacher shortage. Some suggested ideas were to address the high cost of insurance, to help retain teachers in the county, or helping cover costs for paraprofessionals to get their teaching certificates. Superintendent Pearce was worried that these ideas would take too long to fix the shortage, and was in favor of the proposal. The motion failed, after not receiving a second.

### SOPCHOPPY GROCERY CLOSES

On Friday, March 17th, Sopchoppy Grocery closed its doors forever.

There had been rumors that the owners Dewayne and Beth McClain had found a buyer who would continue the grocery, but it didn't happen.

Originally named RNL Trading Co., the store opened at that location in 1926, operated by the Rodenberry family. It was later taken over by the Langston Family, until the McClains began to run it, which they did for over 30 years.

After 97 years open, it was one of the oldest continually operated businesses in Wakulla County.

### COUNTY CONSIDERS SPRINGS PROTECTION

On Monday, May 1st, the county commission moved forward with a springs protection ordinance to safeguard underground water systems from damage that development might do to them. This comes as a result of the proposed gas station at the intersection of Bloxham Cutoff and Highway 319, which would have been on top of Chip's Hole cave, which feeds into Wakulla Springs.

The proposed ordinance would update the current ordinance, which was approved in 1994, and would require more site-specific studies – such as three 30-foot ground borings for each 5,000 square feet, rather than one 15-foot boring for the area. These changes come after consultation with experts such as Tom Lewis, a geologist with

Terracon Consultants.

It would also require that geologic data be reviewed by a third party prior to construction. What it doesn't include is requirements for a setback from underground caverns, because according to county leadership such as County Administrator David Edwards, it's incredibly difficult to get reliable data about a cavern's location, which makes setbacks impossible to concretely establish.

The commission voted to move forward with it 4-1, with the only dissenting vote coming from Commissioner Chuck Hess, who did not believe that the proposal was strict enough.

### HUGE CROWD AT MEETING ON GAS STATION

In early January, two divers, Steve Cox and Blake Wilson discovered a tunnel that links Chip's Hole, a sinkhole north of Bloxham Cutoff near Highway 319, with Wakulla Springs.

The two divers were looking for the connection as part of the Wakulla Karst Plain Project, which seeks to map the underground caverns and waterways that exist underneath Wakulla County.

At the county commission meeting on August 7th, more than 200 people were present to express their discontent with the proposed gas station, due to its location at the corner of Bloxham Cutoff and Highway 319, which is over of the Chip's Hole Cave system, meaning that chemicals from the station could potentially leech into the groundwater, which would flow into Wakulla Springs via the caves underneath.

Around 150 people were left outside in the heat, as the county commission chambers couldn't fit everyone.

This led into heated debates over how best to protect the springs, whether to do that by setbacks or having above-ground gas tanks, or if it would be best to simply bar the gas station from being constructed at all.

Because of the number of people outside commission chambers in the extreme heat, the county commission unanimously voted to postpone the

**Turn to Page 11**



## Judge Brian Miller is sworn-in

Wakulla Circuit Judge J. Layne Smith administers the oath of office to new Wakulla County Judge Brian Miller as Miller's wife and daughter, Kelly and Elliot, look on, at a judicial

investiture ceremony on Feb. 10. Miller was elected after County Judge Jill Walker retired after serving 32 years on the bench. (Photo by William Snowden)



Petra Shuff, who served executive director of the Chamber since 2007, gets a hug from Mary Wallace on the porch at Sherlock Springs on Feb. 7 at her retirement party. John Shuff in the background. (Photo by William Snowden)



County commissioner Quincee Messersmith serves up birthday cake in the shape of “180” – as in 180 years old at Wakulla Wonderful on March 11, celebrating the founding of Wakulla County on March 11, 1843. (Photo by Gerald Brown)

# 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.”

## LETTERS FROM READERS

### Are we in Florida next?

**Editor, The Sun:**

Those of us fortunate to live in Wakulla County, can only marvel in bemusement of the recent actions taken by the Kolorado Supreme Court.

Colorado, just a generation ago, was a reliable conservative state with a strong spirit of the Old West. Concurrently, this spirit was aligned with conservative values. Then, Kalifornia happened.

A generation ago, California became Kalifornia. Seismic shifts (no pun intended) in politics were so concerning that many firms, with an eye on the future, relocated from Kalifornia to Colorado. Focus On The Family, an international organization, is a prime example.

Kalifornians became complacent and became reliable voters for a party machine which had forsaken its traditional mission and values. I know, I still have relatives in Kalifornia. Very few questioned the intent of politicians and one party emerged to obtain a super-party status. And the citizens did not pay attention or care.

When Kalifornia became very expensive, the thinking crowd saw economic opportunities in Colorado. And Colorado, in good frontier fashion, welcomed them. The emigrants from Kalifornia merged themselves in Colorado society and lore, primarily settling from Colorado Springs to Fort Collins. And the Kalifornians began to be-

come engaged in Colorado politics. Pay attention now- they went grass-roots and infiltrated the local school boards, county commission boards, local district attorneys, then they infiltrated the state political apparatus.

Fast forward to today, Colorado is no more. Rather, Kolorado is known for persecuting cake bakers and for throwing constitutional guarantees aside such as one must be proven guilty. Just last week, the Kolorado Supreme Court ruled one can be guilty without being convicted, a direct assault on our Bill of Rights.

This is the lesson learned- we welcome everyone to our lovely locale. We wish all well and good fortune. However, we must be vigilant and not let twisted or anti-American views/politics poison our garden. We must confront the Progressive ideals and push back- push back hard. Get involved, hold the local school boards, the county commissioners accountable. Don't accept "well, that's the way we've always done it" or "its good for xxx". Its ok to point out and call bovine feces when your meter is pegged out. Counter the "opinions" of recent arrivals in a thoughtful manner by using critical-thinking skills.

Otherwise, we'll be the next to be "occupied."

**Robert Franco**  
Surf Road

### Program set on fisheries, law enforcement

**Special to The Sun**

Local author J. Kent Thompson will be speaking at the Wakulla County Historical Society meeting on Tuesday, Jan. 9, at 4:30 p.m. at the Wakulla County Public Library, 4330 Crawfordville Hwy.

His topic will be the History of Florida Fisheries and Conservation Law Enforcement. An emphasis will be the early 1900s and the passage of fishery laws leading to the creation of agencies to enforce them.

Thompson is a graduate of Florida State University with a B.A. in History. After a 37-year career with the Florida Marine Patrol and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission he began to write about his experiences protecting the states natural resources. His books



**Author J. Kent Thompson**

focus on North Florida and its rich history.

He has written about Florida's fishing history, the "Forgotten Coast" of North Florida, local Tallahassee history and the surrounding areas. He has a seven book fictional series called "Marine Patrol Tales" relating the experiences of a North Florida maritime law

enforcement officer.

He has also written a seafood cookbook that includes some of the best recipes an aspiring seafood cook could find. A barbecue pit master, he recently chronicled his journey around the South on a 11 state, 10,000 mile bucket list trip to all the old barbecue pits that still cook food low and slow over wood fires.

His books are available from his publisher at Lulu.com, the Wakulla County Historical Society Museum Gift Shop, and various businesses around the coast. They are available on line from Amazon or Barnes and Nobles. Signed copies of his books will be available after his presentation.

We look forward to seeing you at the meeting. For more information, please call 850-926-1110.

### Thank you for the newspaper

**Editor, The Sun:**

Thank you all for a very good paper. It is so well done and is truly what you need and want in a home town paper

We hope and wish for each of you a very Merry Christmas and a New Year

filled with good health, happiness and success.

Thanks again,

**Janice Williams**  
Ochlockonee Bay

### Something on your mind?

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

## On the Horizon

### Calendar of events for the week of January 4

#### Thursday, January 4

- 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.

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 9

- Students return to school from winter break.
- 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.

#### Friday, January 5

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

#### Saturday, January 6

- The Panacea Community Garden Farmer's Market will be held from 9 a.m. to 12 noon in Panacea.
- 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 8

- The Sopchoppy City Commission meets at 6:30 p.m. at City Hall.
- Crawfordville Woman's Club monthly meeting is the second Monday of each month at 6:30 p.m. at 64 Ochlockonee St., in Crawfordville. Call (850)566-5727 for more information.
- The American Legion Post 114 will be

#### Wednesday, January 10

- 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.

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William Snowden  
Editor & Publisher  
The Wakulla Sun

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*"It's A New Day!"*

The Wakulla Sun



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## < Question of The Week >

– Compiled by Lynda Kinsey

Polled at The Wakulla Sun:

# What's your New Year's tradition?

				
<b>WILLIAM SNOWDEN</b> Editor & Publisher	<b>LYNDA KINSEY</b> Sales & Marketing	<b>ERIC STANTON</b> Production Manager / IT	<b>KRYSTAL SHEPPARD</b> Circulation	<b>LEGION TAYLOR</b> Reporter
<b>“Eat blackeyed peas and turnip greens and watch football.”</b>	<b>“Lounge around the house. Have some blackeyed peas and cornbread.”</b>	<b>“Spend time with friends and eat some blackeyed peas and greens.”</b>	<b>“Try to spend the day the way I want to spend the rest of the year.”</b>	<b>Setting off fireworks at midnight with my friends.”</b>

## Wakulla Station News

By **VERNA BROCK**

As I sit to write another column, I want first to wish each of you a very Merry Christmas. By the time you read this, we all will have celebrated, opened presents, and enjoyed time with friends and family.

We can give thanks to our loving Creator for His grace, His amazing gift

of a babe in a manger, the One who changed the trajectory of not just history, but the world. If only the world could see Him for what He offers it... peace. Right now, we need it more than ever.

This past weekend, Crawfordville was downright bustling with last minute shopping, holiday preparations, and folks stopping to greet friends and

neighbors. I ran into Jerry Evans while last-minute shopping at Publix. and it was so good to see him. I also saw my neighbor Fred Mohrfeld while there, and was delighted catch up with his family news.

We were granted a reprieve from the chilly temperatures, with blue skies and balmy breezes. They were made even sweeter by the predictions of a rainy Christmas Eve and Christmas day. The better to enjoy the warmth of Christmas lights and children's laugh-

ter while safe and cozy inside, I suppose!

Last Thursday, Ed spotted a column of smoke just North East of us, and several emergency vehicles went speeding by to put out the fire. We have no idea what was burning, but certainly offered prayers for whomever was affected by it. I hope everyone is OK.

Please continue to remember Jim Lannon, Thelma Watts, and Bennie Mott in your prayers.



## Underwater Wonderland

Gulf Specimen Marine Lab in Panacea held its Christmas program, Underwater Wonderland on Friday, Dec. 22. Attendees included, at top, Ella Iverster with dad Antony at the touch tank and the

lab's director, Cypress Rudloe, entertaining visitors dressed as Santa Claus. The event was originally set for a week earlier but had to be postponed because of bad weather. (Photos by Gerald Brown)



## 95th birthday celebration

Dorothy Lucille Simmons Noegel, known affectionally as “Mama LuLu,” turns 95 years young on Dec. 24th and we had a little party at C-Quarters Marina in Carabelle. This was not the first gathering for Mama LuLu as her 85th, 90th and now 95th were hosted at C-Quarters by her

daughter, Amy, and son-in-law, Russell Cohoon. Mama LuLu served the citizens of Florida with the Road Department (DOT) and then the Public Service Commission. She was born in Monticello and resides in Oclockonee Bay. (Photo special to The Sun)



## Legion meets

Post Commander Roxann Dressel is thrilled at the large turnout of the meeting of the American Legion Jake Pigott Memorial Post 114, at the Wakulla County Public Library on December 18th. “Growth, whether it's our

Post or the Veterans Meetup, makes me happy. Bringing veterans together, those who might be alone or are lonely, those who are suffering from illness who don't know how to access the care they are entitled to, and/or serving the community and fellow veterans is always the takeaway. Camaraderie and service,” Dressel said, “that's what we're all about.” (Photo by Marj Law)

# Outdoors

outdoor sports

## HOME ON THE RANGE

### The older shooter and how to cope, Part 2



By MARJ LAW

It's never too late to learn to handle a handgun. Last week, we gave suggestions on how the mature person can manage to shoot a handgun for target shooting or for self-defense.

When you have a:

- caliber you can handle,
- a gun with weight and length you can manage,
- a gun with a slide that's easy to rack,
- an instrument that will help you load your magazine, and
- sights that are easy to see,

then you are on your way to finding the handgun that suits you the best.

But wait! Wait! There's more to consider!

Another factor in choosing your gun is trigger pull. Is it difficult to pull the trigger? Can you pull over and over again comfortably?

Some handguns are DA only. That stands for "double action." What does this mean to you?

There is single action (SA) and double action (DA). This refers to how much work the trigger has to do. The hammer or striker must be cocked to fire and then it has to

be released. In single action, the hammer or striker is already cocked, so all the trigger has to do is to release the hammer.

In double action, the trigger must first cock the hammer, and then release it. These are two actions. When the trigger has to perform two duties instead of one, then the trigger is harder to pull.

If you ask a certain person to take out the trash, that's one action. If you ask him to take out the trash and then do the dishes, that's two actions. It will be harder for him to complete the two actions, just like when the trigger has two actions to perform.

Generally, if your gun is only DA, the trigger will be harder to pull. You probably don't want to start out with a gun that is DA only.

This is why we discussed that having a single action gun with an easy-to-rack slide is important. When you rack the slide, you are cocking the hammer, so now the trigger only has to release the hammer. Now it's doing only one job instead of two, which will make the trigger pull lighter and easier for you.

Some handguns are DA/SA. Here, the trigger first cocks the hammer, then releases it. Two jobs. The act of firing the gun pushes the slide back, therefore cocking the hammer for the next round. Now, the trigger has only to release the hammer; back to the one job. That's how the gun is DA/SA.

This is why a gun with an easy to rack



slide is so important. When you rack the slide, you are cocking the hammer and taking one job away from the trigger. And easy-to-rack slide means an easy-to-pull-trigger.

Have you held your prospective gun? How does it feel? Normally, you will hold the gun with your index finger along the frame. This is for safety. If your finger is off the trigger, the gun won't fire.

However, your index finger has to reach comfortably on the trigger. After the shop owner has pulled back the slide to show you that there is no round in the gun, take the gun and point it in a safe direction away from other people. Now you can reach the trigger. Or, can you?

The grip is very important.

If you need to stretch your finger to get it on that trigger, the grip is too large for you. Check how your hand fits. Does the web between your thumb and index finger sit high in the uppermost part of the grip? If, to reach the trigger, you have to turn your hand counter clockwise, then your web won't sit tight in

the top of the grip. That top grip groove is called the beavertail. Your hand needs to fit securely there. Some guns have nice deep beavertails which help snug you into a great grip.

Now, take your finger off the trigger again. Yes, we know the gun is empty, but this is good gun etiquette. Your finger stays off the trigger at all times unless you are ready to shoot.

Does the grip feel flat in your hand? Some grips do have flat sides. Some people like this. Other grips have rounded sides called "palm swells." Other people like feeling the grip all around their hand. Which do you prefer?

How long is the grip? Do all your fingers fit on the grip?

If the grip is so short that your little finger is hanging off it, we call this "pinky dangle." You hold your gun more securely when all your fingers are on the grip.

Some handguns will have a magazine with a curved buttplate as well as a flat buttplate. The curved magazine buttplate allows your

pinky room on the grip. Some handguns have extended magazines which allow for more room on the grip. Again, you want a gun with a grip that fits your hand.

Some grips have finger grooves. Do the grooves fit your fingers?

Some grips are small. Do you need a wider grip? You can purchase a rubbery sleeve to slide over the grip. This will make the grip larger. Some of these sleeves have finger grooves built in. Many people like these sleeves because they give you a good grab when your hand is sweaty and slippery.

Why harp on the grip?

Guns do have recoil, and a firm grip will help you control your gun so that you stay on target. A weak grip? Your aim will be off.

Speaking of control...

Your significant other thinks you should have a .38; not a .380 or a 9mm handgun. Why? Because it's a revolver. All you do is point and shoot. The .38 has great "take-down" power and some are small enough to fit

in a purse. But at what cost?

The .38 has a lot of recoil and a heavy trigger pull. Sure, you can cock the hammer first, then the trigger is easy to pull. Will you remember to cock the hammer before squeezing the trigger when Mr. Bad is charging at you?

You can find .38s that are small and lightweight. Great. Fits in your purse. The drawback is that a light gun has more recoil than a heavier one. A gun with more mass will absorb more recoil.

Will you want to practice shooting a gun with the recoil of the .38? Some sturdy people can handle the .38. I'm not crazy about its recoil, and prefer not to shoot a .38. If all you have is a .38, well, that's the way it is.

To make shooting the .38 more bearable, you can usually find ammunition called "wadcutters" for it. These rounds contain less powder. Powder inside the round sets off the explosion that pushes out the bullet. Less powder means less explosion and therefore less recoil.

Next time, we'll talk more about ammunition for the .380 and the 9mm handguns.

Do you have a friend who shoots? Ask his or her opinion too.

The more you chew over and the more you think through, the more responsible gun owner you will be.

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



HOG CHOKER  
(*Trintectes maculatus*)

This small flatfish (4-7") is found in subtropical Atlantic coast and so often in major river systems that they are also known as "freshwater flounder". They got their name because free roaming hogs ate them on the beach, and sometimes choked. The fish can also use their bellies like a suction cup to hang onto rocks and so are called "freshwater fluke". They like soft mud bottoms in water 50' deep small animals to eat. Adults travel downstream to mate and spawn and larvae swim upstream after hatching.

Eukarya,Animalia,Cordata,Actinopterygi,Pleuronectiformes,Achiridae



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 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 resumed his weekly wildlife survey at the park last week and shared this photo of a limpkin at the Wakulla River.

FOLLOW THE SUN.

# Water Ways

a peek into life on and under the water

Local writers share their experiences



## 24/7 PRIORITY ON-WATER ASSISTANCE

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



### Gulf Coast Weekly Almanac

Jan. 4 - Jan. 10



Tide charts by tides4fishing.com



Best fishing days this month  
January 11-25

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.

#### St. Marks River Entrance

Th	1:48 am ▼ 0.7 ft	7:51 am ▲ 2.0 ft	1:10 pm ▼ 1.1 ft	7:33 pm ▲ 2.5 ft
Fr	3:05 am ▼ 0.1 ft	9:38 am ▲ 2.3 ft	2:15 pm ▼ 1.4 ft	8:23 pm ▲ 2.6 ft
Sa	4:14 am ▼ 0.1 ft	11:04 am ▲ 2.5 ft	3:29 pm ▼ 1.7 ft	9:20 pm ▲ 2.8 ft
Su	5:12 am ▼ -0.3 ft	12:06 pm ▲ 2.5 ft	4:39 pm ▼ 1.7 ft	10:18 pm ▲ 2.8 ft
Mo	6:03 am ▼ -0.7 ft	12:56 pm ▲ 2.7 ft	5:37 pm ▼ 1.7 ft	11:12 pm ▲ 3.0 ft
Tu	6:50 am ▼ -1.1 ft	1:40 pm ▲ 2.9 ft	6:26 pm ▼ 1.6 ft	
We	7:46 am ▼ -1.0 ft	2:12 pm ▲ 2.2 ft	7:22 pm ▼ 1.1 ft	

#### City of St. Marks

Th	2:52 am ▼ 0.6 ft	8:27 am ▲ 1.9 ft	2:14 pm ▼ 1.0 ft	8:09 pm ▲ 2.3 ft
Fr	4:09 am ▼ 0.4 ft	10:14 am ▲ 1.9 ft	3:19 pm ▼ 1.3 ft	8:59 pm ▲ 2.3 ft
Sa	5:18 am ▼ 0.1 ft	11:40 am ▲ 2.1 ft	4:33 pm ▼ 1.5 ft	9:56 pm ▲ 2.4 ft
Su	6:16 am ▼ -0.3 ft	12:42 pm ▲ 2.3 ft	5:43 pm ▼ 1.5 ft	10:54 pm ▲ 2.6 ft
Mo	7:07 am ▼ -0.6 ft	1:32 pm ▲ 2.5 ft	6:41 pm ▼ 1.5 ft	11:48 pm ▲ 2.8 ft
Tu	7:54 am ▼ -1.0 ft	2:16 pm ▲ 2.7 ft	7:30 pm ▼ 1.5 ft	
We	8:42 am ▼ -1.3 ft	2:56 pm ▲ 2.8 ft	8:15 pm ▼ 1.3 ft	

#### Shell Point, Spring Creek

Th	2:01 am ▼ 0.5 ft	8:07 am ▲ 2.0 ft	1:35 pm ▼ 0.9 ft	7:54 pm ▲ 2.7 ft
Fr	3:15 am ▼ 0.3 ft	9:46 am ▲ 2.0 ft	2:31 pm ▼ 1.2 ft	8:41 pm ▲ 2.7 ft
Sa	4:25 am ▼ -0.1 ft	11:11 am ▲ 2.2 ft	3:35 pm ▼ 1.4 ft	9:35 pm ▲ 2.7 ft
Su	5:27 am ▼ -0.4 ft	12:17 pm ▲ 2.4 ft	4:42 pm ▼ 1.6 ft	10:31 pm ▲ 2.9 ft
Mo	6:22 am ▼ -0.8 ft	1:10 pm ▲ 2.6 ft	5:43 pm ▼ 1.6 ft	11:26 pm ▲ 3.0 ft
Tu	7:12 am ▼ -1.1 ft	1:57 pm ▲ 2.8 ft	6:37 pm ▼ 1.6 ft	
We	8:03 am ▼ -1.4 ft	2:41 pm ▲ 2.9 ft	7:27 pm ▼ 1.5 ft	

#### Alligator Point, Ochlockonee Bay

Th	1:59 am ▼ 0.5 ft	7:43 am ▲ 1.5 ft	1:21 pm ▼ 0.8 ft	7:25 pm ▲ 1.9 ft
Fr	3:16 am ▼ 0.3 ft	9:30 am ▲ 1.5 ft	2:26 pm ▼ 1.0 ft	8:15 pm ▲ 1.9 ft
Sa	4:25 am ▼ 0.1 ft	10:56 am ▲ 1.7 ft	3:40 pm ▼ 1.2 ft	9:12 pm ▲ 2.1 ft
Su	5:23 am ▼ -0.2 ft	11:58 am ▲ 1.9 ft	4:50 pm ▼ 1.2 ft	10:10 pm ▲ 2.1 ft
Mo	6:14 am ▼ -0.5 ft	12:48 pm ▲ 2.1 ft	5:48 pm ▼ 1.2 ft	11:04 pm ▲ 2.2 ft
Tu	7:01 am ▼ -0.8 ft	1:32 pm ▲ 2.2 ft	6:37 pm ▼ 1.2 ft	11:55 pm ▲ 2.4 ft
We	7:46 am ▼ -1.0 ft	2:12 pm ▲ 2.2 ft	7:22 pm ▼ 1.1 ft	

#### St. Teresa, Turkey Pt.

Th	2:14 am ▼ 0.4 ft	8:18 am ▲ 1.4 ft	1:28 pm ▼ 0.8 ft	7:49 pm ▲ 1.9 ft
Fr	3:23 am ▼ 0.1 ft	10:00 am ▲ 1.4 ft	2:29 pm ▼ 1.1 ft	8:31 pm ▲ 2.0 ft
Sa	4:21 am ▼ -0.2 ft	11:28 am ▲ 1.6 ft	3:40 pm ▼ 1.3 ft	9:16 pm ▲ 2.1 ft
Su	5:11 am ▼ -0.5 ft	12:32 pm ▲ 1.7 ft	4:44 pm ▼ 1.4 ft	10:03 pm ▲ 2.2 ft
Mo	5:57 am ▼ -0.8 ft	1:20 pm ▲ 1.9 ft	5:34 pm ▼ 1.4 ft	10:51 pm ▲ 2.3 ft
Tu	6:42 am ▼ -1.1 ft	2:02 pm ▲ 2.0 ft	6:17 pm ▼ 1.5 ft	11:38 pm ▲ 2.5 ft
We	7:26 am ▼ -1.3 ft	2:42 pm ▲ 2.0 ft	6:58 pm ▼ 1.4 ft	

#### Dog Island West End

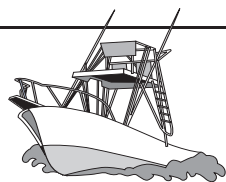
Th	2:23 am ▼ 0.4 ft	8:27 am ▲ 1.1 ft	1:02 pm ▼ 0.8 ft	7:50 pm ▲ 1.7 ft
Fr	3:30 am ▼ 0.1 ft	10:29 am ▲ 1.1 ft	1:36 pm ▼ 1.0 ft	8:34 pm ▲ 1.8 ft
Sa	4:31 am ▼ -0.2 ft	11:59 am ▲ 1.3 ft	2:41 pm ▼ 1.2 ft	9:23 pm ▲ 1.9 ft
Su	5:31 am ▼ -0.6 ft	1:02 pm ▲ 1.5 ft	3:46 pm ▼ 1.4 ft	10:13 pm ▲ 2.0 ft
Mo	6:24 am ▼ -0.9 ft	2:36 pm ▲ 1.7 ft	4:51 pm ▼ 1.5 ft	11:04 pm ▲ 2.2 ft
Tu	7:09 am ▼ -1.2 ft	3:09 pm ▲ 1.8 ft	6:52 pm ▼ 1.5 ft	11:47 pm ▲ 2.3 ft
We	7:50 am ▼ -1.4 ft	3:41 pm ▲ 1.8 ft	7:32 pm ▼ 1.4 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



The following is from our Flotilla Commander Phil Hill:

As this year draws to its end, along with my tenure as commander, I wanted to look back at my term of office.

Our flotilla has continued to promote boating safety for the last three years. This has been accomplished through the vessel exam days where individual boats are checked for gear required by law to safely operate on our nation's waterways.

Program visits have been important in getting the safety message out to the public by USCG Auxiliary members talking to businesses about safety on the water, new laws that affect boaters, and passing out pamphlets to educate the boating public.

The flotilla has also continued to hold operational patrols along the coastal waters of the Big Bend area. Crewmem-

**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

bers have helped with events along the western coast of Florida. Members have also been present at different community events throughout the years explaining the value of protecting the waterways, safe boating practices, and the purpose of both the Coast Guard Auxiliary and the Coast Guard.

As our new leadership begins their term of office on January 1, 2024. All the programs listed above will continue. Our mission will still be to educate the pub-

lic about safe boating. Wish our new leaders well as they embark on the upcoming year. Jim Kenny and Mike Casey are well equipped to take on the roles of Flotilla Commander (FC) and Vice Flotilla Commander (VFC). It has been a privilege to serve in leadership of this great organization for the last several years.

Very Sincerely,  
Philip G Hill

Thanks to Sherrie, we will always remember safe boating is no acci-

dent!

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](http://www.uscgaux.net) follow us on Facebook @ Apalachee Bay Flotilla 12 or contact our Flotilla Commander Phil Hill at [pnkhill2000@yahoo.com](mailto: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](mailto: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.uscgaux.org](http://www.uscgaux.org).*

## Underwater Wakulla

By Rusty Miller

### Happy New Year, Wakulla!

When you get this publication it will be 2024 so Happy New Year!

Reflecting on 2023 for scuba diving it was a very interesting and fun-filled year for me and my students. The interesting part was the poor visibility we had on almost every dive in the Gulf.

Normally we would have an average visibility of 30-50 feet but this year we were lucky if we had 15-25 feet of visibility. It didn't dampen our excitement about the dives, it just made us more aware of how unpredictable the ocean can be. I might add that the water really was fairly calm, less than 2-foot swells where in 2022 we would have 2-5 foot swells on almost every dive.

The fun-filled part was the sea life we would encounter throughout our dives. Almost every dive the students would see creatures live in the water that they had only seen in videos online (I was about to say in books, but no one reads books much anymore).

I think the reason we saw so much sea life is the low visibility, you had to really be close to the structure in order to see anything. We saw so many sea urchins, starfish, and sand dollars (these are the creatures that will tell you if there is something bad going on in the water like pollution), because there was a time about 35 years ago when the ocean around Panama City Beach was dying quickly because of the raw sewage that was being pumped about a mile offshore.

Now they don't pump the raw sewage, they have treated it and pump it several miles out and as a result the ocean has regained its sensitive sea creatures.

The other creatures we saw were sand sharks. Normally sand sharks aren't readily available to be seen by divers but this year we saw several on every dive. While at bridge span 2, I was just watching a starfish on the bottom at about 70 feet deep when I looked up in front of me there was a 3-foot sandbar shark about a foot in front of me watching me and not moving. It started to move closer to see what I was so when it got a few inches away from my mask I reached up and lightly thumped its nose and it shot away from me.

The last creature and the most memorable one that my students and I saw was on everyone's bucket list of sea creatures – the whale shark. You will mostly find whale sharks in foreign waters like Malaysia or somewhere it would cost thousands of dollars to go and swim with them or in the Atlanta aquarium 5-6 hours north of us.

The dive was supposed to be on a wreck that was a couple miles farther out but the weather was looking questionable so we stayed more inshore. We were on our ascent when I noticed something big coming towards me. I thought it was strange that it had such a wide mouth, then I realized it was in fact a whale shark. I was getting out of the boat and the dive master yelled out "whale shark!" and all of us scrambled back into the water. We got to swim with it as it was about 5 feet below us for about 10-15 minutes until it slowly made its way deeper and disappeared. I don't know if I will ever do that again in my life time but it was amazing. Until next time keep making bubbles.

Russell Miller #59999

## FWC Law Enforcement Report

From FWC

COUNTY

This report represents some events the FWC handled Dec. 15-21 in the Northwest Region.

### WAKULLA COUNTY

- While on patrol near Piney Island on the opening day of duck season, Lieutenant Smith and Officer Nelson conducted a resource inspection on a group of individuals who were on a guided hunt. During the inspection, the officers discovered the subjects had harvested over their daily bag limit of ducks. The officers addressed the violation appropriately.

### SANTA ROSA

- Officer Lewis located a game camera over an illegally baited area in Blackwater Wildlife Management Area. The officer seized the game camera and secured a warrant for the search of the camera. A subject captured on the game camera was identified via facial recognition software. The officer interviewed the subject, and the subject admitted to placing the bait around the game camera. The officer issued the subject a notice to appear citation for the violation.

- Officer Bower was on patrol and located a subject fishing. The subject stated he had not caught any fish but was observed attempt-

ing to hide one undersized redfish and two undersized stone crab claws in his cooler. The subject was issued a notice to appear for the violations.

- Officer Bower located a sailboat on state waters without documentation or Florida registration displayed. Officer Bower located the hull identification number and determined the vessel was documented and the US Coast Guard assisted in identifying the owner of the vessel. The vessel's registration expired in 2013. The current owner of the vessel purchased the sailboat in the spring of 2023 and failed to register the documented vessel. The owner was

cited for the violation.

### WASHINGTON COUNTY

- Officers R. Hicks and E. Fowler received information regarding ducks being shot at a late hour. The officers conducted resource inspections on two hunters returning by boat. One had shot several times after legal shooting hours. The other subject stated he would have shot as well but was in a bad spot and no birds came by. A boating and safety inspection was also conducted, and several violations were found. Both subjects received appropriate citations for the violations.

# Human smuggling may be in our community



By **SHERYL H. BOLDT**

At only 11 years old, “Stacey” found herself on the streets. She was afraid, but she knew it had to be better than the home situation she was running from.

Her optimism kept her going. She truly believed some caring adult would

see her and offer help. But this never happened. Not one adult offered to help her – not one caring adult, that is.

Instead, Stacey experienced the unspeakable horrors of human trafficking.

With 800,000 men, women and children being trafficked (forced into prostitution or involuntary labor) worldwide every year, how long do you think it will be before this heinous crime affects you or someone you care about?

This underground evil often imprisons its victims in deplorable conditions for years until they escape or are rescued. Human smuggling is like-

ly happening right now – in your community.

Despite how prevalent human trafficking is, we’re often blind to what’s going on, even in our own neighborhoods. We must open our eyes and boldly speak up – and intervene when we suspect abuse.

Proverbs 31:9 (ESV) speaks strongly about what to do when we see others being mistreated:

Open your mouth, judge righteously, defend the rights of the poor and needy.

I spoke with three extraordinary people doing exactly this: Julie Smith (the then social services program coordinator for the Salvation Army), and Elder Lee Thomas and Dr.

Kimberly Thomas (pastors of Destiny Church of God, International).

During our conversation, I learned what human trafficking is, how to spot it in our communities and how to help end it.

They told me true stories, like Stacey’s (a name I made up). And about how Pastors Lee and Kimberly were horrified to learn why their server at their favorite restaurant had a numbered tattoo on her neck.

Other indicators that someone may be in danger could include a child who has suddenly dropped out of school, a person with bruises in various stages of heal-

ing, someone who displays personality changes (such as startling easily or becoming despondent) or a person who appears undernourished.

Julie spoke about a woman who was subjected to human smuggling as a teenager, only three doors from her home. Thankfully, she’s come out of human trafficking and now shares her story to help others.

What would happen if we were to give these stories the attention and compassion they deserve?

I would like to end with a challenge from Pastor Lee which goes well with this week’s verse: “Make it your business to get in-

involved just as you would want others to if it were your child, grandchild, niece or nephew who was in trouble.”

For more information about Human Trafficking, please contact:

Pastors Lee and Kimberly at [DestinyChurchOfGod@gmail.com](mailto:DestinyChurchOfGod@gmail.com).

The END IT Movement ([EndItMovement.com](http://EndItMovement.com))

Rescuing Hope, founded by Susan Norris ([RescuingHope.com](http://RescuingHope.com))

*Sheryl H. Boldt is a sales executive for Wave 94 and author of the blog, [www.TodayCanBeDifferent.net](http://www.TodayCanBeDifferent.net). Connect with her at [SherylHBoldt.Wave94@gmail.com](mailto:SherylHBoldt.Wave94@gmail.com).*

## The New Year resolution



By **CHERYL CRUCE**

A new year is upon us. 2024 will ring in with the usual celebration of New Year fireworks and champagne. Collard greens and black-eyed peas will fill the dinner table as families celebrate the dawning of a new year. Engagements will happen, promises will be made, and resolutions will be set in the hearts and minds of many. 2023 will lapse into yesterday’s book of

memories on social media as we turn a page in time.

The tradition of resolution comes with the ringing of the New Year. I have often set these personal resolutions — the promise of personal challenges, like exercising and losing those added holiday pounds. I have wanted to lose 20 pounds for some time, and most days, everything I do feels like exercise at 64. Nonetheless, personal challenges benefit the mind, body, and soul. These challenges can also carry significant benefits for the communities we live in.

I have found that making a resolution often sets me up for disappointment when I falter on my promise to

do better. Why does one day’s vow set the tide for the following 364? What worked yesterday may not work today. My determination should be to begin refreshed every morning as I start my day, for each day is unique with its challenges.

If I failed yesterday, I should forgive my mistakes and allow a clean slate for the new day. Desmond Tutu said, “Forgiveness says you are given another chance to make a new beginning.” Our Heavenly Father is a God of compassion. He scatters our sin as far as the East is from the West. He shows compassion for His children, removing our brokenness and healing us (Psalm 103:12-18). New begin-

nings start with the forgiveness of old endings. Our Father, who created new beginnings, also created forgiveness.

As we learn to forgive self-let us also learn to forgive others. It is impossible to have a new beginning when you fail to allow others to have theirs. There is a lot to be said about forgiveness of others that reflects on the forgiveness of self. When Peter asked Jesus about forgiveness, Jesus replied not seven times but seventy-seven times (Matthew 18:21-22). The Apostle Paul writes to the Church of Colossians that we are to forgive each other as the Lord has forgiven us. How can we resolve for a New Year when we cannot forgive the year

that has passed?

God set a rhythm for new beginnings in the creation story when He called the light day and the darkness night. There was evening and morning, the first day of creation, and He saw it was good. God carried the goodness forward and added to His creation, meeting the needs of each new day (Genesis 1). That should be our resolution: to bring the goodness of each day forward and let go of the unforgiveness that deters us and discourages another.

We could all use a new beginning — days when only goodness is brought forward and when forgiveness of self and others is left behind in the sea of forgetfulness, days where

brokenness is turned into healing. Maybe a good New Year resolution would be to put one foot forward and not look back, looking to His Kingdom and not our failings, knowing that His compassion and faithfulness are new every morning.

Lamentations 3:22-24 Because of the Lord’s great love, we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. I say to myself, “The Lord is my portion; therefore, I will wait for him.”

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

### OUT TO PASTOR

## The regifting queen of the family



By **JAMES SNYDER**

Sitting around the Christmas tree with my family and opening up Christmas presents stirred fond memories of my Aunt Edith. She was known as The Regifting Queen of our family. And believe me, she earned that name quite well.

Most of the family didn’t catch on to what she was doing. I know I didn’t realize it until several years before she passed.

Little did we know that when we gathered as a family at Christmas time, the gifts we received from Aunt Edith were regifted. I had no idea what that meant then, but I was to find out what it was all about.

One of my cousins caught on first. One Christmas, he received a gift that he remembered from last Christmas, which was given to her. At first, he thought he was imagining things, but as the gifts kept going around, he began to notice that the gifts given to his family members were given to his Aunt Edith last year.

She had it very well worked out because nobody got a gift from her that they gave to her the year before. When my

cousin mentioned this to me, I thought he was joking, and I just went along with him. But I was to realize that maybe what he was saying was true.

I started paying attention to the gifts Aunt Edith gave to the family so I could remember them for next year. And sure enough, the following year, people received gifts from Aunt Edith that had been given to her the year before.

My cousin looked at me, looked back, and we just smiled, hoping we could keep our secret.

Based on that thought, my cousin and I gave Aunt Edith a present we would want the following year. Sure enough, those gifts appeared to our family from good old Aunt Edith. Everybody smiled, thankful for Aunt Edith’s thoughtfulness at Christmas time.

That was the one thing my cousin and I looked forward to each year. And the thing was, everybody got from Aunt Edith a present they gave her the year before. She was very good at this regifting.

We discovered that when Aunt Edith got a Christmas gift, she always put the giver’s name on the gift. That way, she would not get the gifts mixed when she regifted them.

My cousin and I let it fly because we did not want to embarrass Aunt Edith. She was such a wonderful lady, and we felt that if that was her way of celebrating Christmas, so be it.

As the years went on, Aunt Edith got older. No

surprise there. Everybody gets older. But as she got older, her memory began to play tricks on her.

I began to notice one year when Aunt Edith gave me a Christmas present that I gave her the year before. Up to this time, that had never happened. She was very particular in how she distributed her regifting.

As I opened my gift from her, I began to chuckle because it was what I gave her last year. I didn’t say anything because I respected her and everybody makes mistakes. I just went along with her regifting program.

I almost told my cousin, but I thought I’d just better leave everything under the table at this point. After all, Christmas is a merry time of the year, and I didn’t want to sabotage the merry element.

Watching Aunt Edith throughout the year, I noticed her memory was slipping. With that in mind, I was anxious for Christmas to come and see how Aunt Edith would handle her regifting.

As it turned out, that year was the last year Aunt Edith was around for Christmas. It was a special Christmas, although we did not know it then.

As the gifts were being passed around and as people began opening their gifts from Aunt Edith, people began to recognize that this was a gift they had given her last year. It was hard for

me to believe, but everybody got from Aunt Edith what they had given her the Christmas before.

After all those years of meticulously regifting those Christmas presents, it was finally catching up. Nobody knew what to do or say at that point. Everybody just thanked Aunt Edith for her wonderful Christmas presents. Nobody realized what was happening, but Aunt Edith confused the names on the gifts as the “for” and not the “from.”

It wasn’t until Aunt Edith’s funeral that people began to share their ideas about Christmas. Someone said, “Did you know that at the last Christmas party, I received a gift from Aunt Edith that I gave her the year before?”

When she said that, everybody began to laugh and had the same story to tell. Aunt Edith had been

meticulously regifting all her Christmas presents for all those years, and nobody knew it until her last Christmas.

What I took away from it is that if I’m going to give a gift, I should give a gift I want to receive myself. And I must thank good old Aunt Edith for that thinking.

I couldn’t help but think of a Bible verse. “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall

he also reap” (Galatians 6:7-8).

Whatever I do to others will finally come back on me. Give what you want to receive is my motto.

*Dr. James L. Snyder lives in Ocala with the Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage. Telephone 1-352-216-3025, e-mail [jamesnyder51@gmail.com](mailto:jamesnyder51@gmail.com), website [www.jamesnyderministries.com](http://www.jamesnyderministries.com).*

**TRINITY LUTHERAN CHURCH**  
**LUTHERAN CHURCH**  
MISSOURI SYNOD

**SUNDAY SERVICE... 10:17a.m.**  
**MID WEEK ADVENT SERVICE**  
7:00p.m. Dec. 6, 13 & Dec. 20

**850-926-7808 • 3254 Coastal Hwy., Crawfordville**  
In Medart Across from Wakulla High School

**Sopchoppy United Methodist Church**

**Sunday School** 9:45 a.m.  
**Worship** 11 a.m.  
**Bible Study** Wed. 6 p.m.

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# Obituaries

## DEATH NOTICES

• **George Michael Harrison**, 76, of Crawfordville, died December 24, 2023. Family Funeral Home at Harvey-Young Chapel 850-926-5919, www.familyfhc.com

• **Raymond Jernigan**, of Carrabelle, died December 24, 2023. Family Funeral Home at Harvey Young Chapel. 850-926-5919 Familyfhc.com

• **Jean Marie Rueth**, 69, of Chattahoochee, died December 25, 2023. Family Funeral Home at Harvey Young Chapel. 850-926-5919 Familyfhc.com

• **Janice Carol Roach**, 86, of Crawfordville, died December 24, 2023.

Family Funeral Home at Harvey Young Chapel. 850-926-5919 Familyfhc.com

• **Peggy Ann Burns**, 85, of Crawfordville, died December 28, 2023. Family Funeral Home at Harvey Young Chapel. 850-926-5919 Familyfhc.com

• **Jenny Lou Reeves**, 66, of Tallahassee, died December 28, 2023. Family Funeral Home at Harvey-Young Chapel, 850-926-5919, www.familyfhc.com

• **Dennis Ray Tornow**, 78, of Carrabelle, died December 28, 2023. Family Funeral Home at Harvey-Young Chapel, 850-926-5919, www.familyfhc.com

## BEREAVEMENT COLUMN

# Funeral myths – estate burials



By **TRACY RENEE LEE**

In many areas of the United States of America, estate burial is legal.

Since opening my funeral home in East Texas, I have buried numerous decedents on family estates. I guess it wasn't a thing until I opened because when I contacted the county

authority, they said they had never received such a request and would have to research it. Now that I have been here for 13 years, the county authority is rather used to it.

My first request for an estate burial came from a man who owned a 40-acre ranch. He wanted his wife buried at the top of a beautiful hill covered with shade from an ancient oak tree. The husband and his wife would have their morning coffee in their lawn chairs while they watched the birds, deer, and squirrels beginning their daily routines. His wife

loved this spot, and he wanted her there with him as he carried on their morning coffee routine.

Before moving forward with an estate burial, your funeral director will check for any restrictions and file for any permits required in your area. In rural areas, you may need only a county permit. In municipal areas, you may need permits from your county and city. There may also be restrictions related to population, size of property, and proximity to property lines.

If estate burial is permitted, be sure that

you follow any digging precautions or requirements. In my area, I must call "Blue Stake" before any digging can take place, especially deep digging. Blue Stake will come out, and little flags and spray paint lines will be set out to identify restrictions within the desired area. You must do this before the first shovel hits the dirt. If you fail to do this, you may cause some severe damage to water lines or electrical lines. You may also find that your expenses have increased due to hefty fines.

Two more areas of

concern:

In Texas, burial grounds must be set aside as a private cemetery. This means that if you or a future heir decides to sell this family estate, there will be a private cemetery on the property. Not everyone wants a cemetery on an estate they are considering purchasing.

Secondly, a property with a private cemetery must grant access to others wishing to visit that cemetery. The concern is that you may not want others having access to your private cemetery, but in that it is a cemetery, others may request access to

it, and you must allow it. Potential buyers of your estate may not like others having access to their new property either.

*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.*

# Backroom Briefing: More congressional seats coming?

By **JIM SAUNDERS**  
News Service of Florida

TALLAHASSEE — hough the next U.S. census is still more than half a decade away, early projections show Florida picking up three additional seats in Congress.

But the projections are not a sure thing, at least in part because population growth and state-to-state migration totals have been somewhat skewed by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Michael Li and Gina Feliz of the Brennan Center for Justice, in a paper released Dec. 19, said the magnitude of potential reapportionment after the 2030 census might not be as large as it looks now.

It's still early in this decade, and "the significant migration of recent years to southern and mountain states might slow as higher interest rates and rising housing costs impact the willingness or ability of people to move," Li and Feliz wrote.

Li and Feliz also said that if international im-

migration returns to pre-2017 levels, states like California and New York could see their populations stabilize after recent declines.

"There are signs that some of this may be happening: The most recent census figures for the period between July 1, 2022, and July 1, 2023, show a decrease in the heightened outbound migration of the pandemic years," Li and Feliz wrote.

A U.S. census annual estimate shows the South has been the primary beneficiary as the nation grew by an estimated 1.6 million people over the past year.

At the current pace, Texas would gain four congressional seats and Florida would gain three after the 2030 Census, with Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina and Tennessee each picking up a seat.

But the U.S. Census Bureau, in posting estimates on Dec. 19, noted that "population trends are returning to pre-pandemic norms as the number of annual

deaths decreased last year and migration reverted to patterns not seen since before 2020."

And there are always other issues --- the unknown unknowns --- that will arise during the second half of this decade.

Heading into the 2020 census, Florida anticipated picking up two congressional seats.

But Florida ultimately gained just one seat, with concerns raised that Florida, Arizona and Texas undercounted Hispanic residents. Among possible reasons: a lack of outreach and a chilling effect of efforts to include a citizenship question on the once-a-decade count.

### SOME THOUGHTS

The more than 1,000 pieces of legislation filed for the upcoming 2024 session include a littering of resolutions and memorials that give the lawmakers a chance to express themselves — but often have little real effect.

The proposals range

from issues about international sanctions to praising the "free-spirited life" of the late musician Jimmy Buffett.

The Florida House has scheduled floor time during the first week of the session to debate concurrent resolutions (HCR 703 and HCR 693) that would back a balanced federal budget and congressional term limits. The session will start Jan. 9.

Often political, memorials directed toward Congress, the U.S. president or some other executive or legislative body express the views of a majority of Florida lawmakers.

For example, Sen. Tom Wright, R-New Smyrna Beach, wants Congress to consider expanding the size of the Florida National Guard (SM 226). Sen. Blaise Ingoglia, R-Spring Hill, has proposed memorials that call for a secure southern border (SM 598) and to designate drug cartels as foreign terrorist organizations (SM 1020).

"It is time to get seri-

ous about stopping the plague that is human and drug trafficking," Ingoglia said in a news release.

Sen. Bryan Avila, R-Miami Springs, has put forward a memorial (SM 398) supporting U.S. economic sanctions against the Maduro regime in Venezuela and a memorial (SM 540) to "condemn the emerging partnership between the Chinese Communist Party and the communist regime in Cuba."

Resolutions come in several forms. Concurrent resolutions, needing approval of both chambers, focus on federal issues. Other House or Senate resolutions are more ceremonial in nature.

Proposals for the 2024 session include recognizing the Everglades Foundation for 30 years of service (SR 154) and "outstanding achievement on and off the field" by the soccer team Club Internacional de Fútbol Miami, perhaps better known as Inter Miami CF (SR 336).

Sen. Gayle Harrell,

R-Stuart, has offered a resolution (SR 642) "commending and celebrating the life and contributions of musician, environmentalist, entrepreneur, and philanthropist Jimmy Buffett."

Other resolutions seek to recognize June as "Scoliosis Awareness Month" (SR 360); August 2024 as "Amblyopia Awareness Month" (SR 482); the fourth Wednesday in February as "Hypertrophic Cardiomyopathy Awareness Day" (SR 816); Feb. 14, 2024 as "Gator Day" at the Capitol (SR 1002); and to offer "best wishes" to the Tallahassee-Leon County Bicentennial (SR 630).

### SOCIAL MEDIA POST OF THE WEEK:

"Symbols matter. They tell the world what we stand for and what we aspire to be. By removing the confederate monument from Springfield Park, we signal a belief in our shared humanity." — Jacksonville Mayor Donna Deegan (@MayorDeegan).

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# Year in Review

## From Page 3

meeting.

A resolution was eventually reached to protect the caves and Wakulla Springs, which was to have Conservation Florida buy the parcel of land there. Then it could be turned into a welcome center or a park with trails, which keeps the cave system safe from potentially damaging development. The proposed gas station would then be moved to the south side of the same intersection, where no caves have been found, allowing the development to still occur, though the proposal was pulled Southwest Georgia Oil Company shortly after the meeting in August.

## \$307 MILLION ERROR

In October, the Property Appraiser's office found a massive overvaluation of a 50x100 foot vacant lot, putting its value at \$307 million, rather than its actual taxable value of \$7,500.

The error came about when an employee multiplied the assessed value of the land (\$7,500) by its value of \$41,000 and came up with a \$307,500,000 total value. It was caught by Wakulla County Tax Collector Lisa Craze after it had slipped through both the property appraiser's office and the State Department of Revenue when it went there for approval.

This error was not caught until after both the county and the school system had already made and approved their budgets for this fiscal year, leaving a hole of \$1.6 million in the school's budget, and a hole of \$2.4 million in the county's budget. Both the county government and the school district were forced to scramble for a solution, to keep things running as smoothly as possible.

"Thank God we have reserves," said County Administrator David Edwards. His plan to deal with the error is to dip into the county's reserves for about \$1.2 million, to delay hiring any new positions for at least six months, and potentially using money in the Revenue Stabilization Fund – the fund created years ago to cover shortfalls in the old jail-bed program.

Superintendent of Schools Bobby Pearce said that the school district is entitled to state funds to cover the budget error. The real worry is that this error will affect the negotiations over salary with the teacher's union, as the funds that could have been set aside for raises are no longer available in the same magnitude.

## ELECTION SUIT OVER

The lawsuit over the 2020 Property Appraiser election was resolved in July, finding that Ed Brimmer was properly elected, defeating Colby Sparkman by only four votes.

Sparkman's lawsuit was based on the treatment of 12 ballots out of the 9,104 ballots cast in the election. Those 12 ballots had been rejected by the canvassing board because they were mail-in and the signature on the ballot did not match the signature on file. Sparkman's attorney argued that those ballots could not be cured due to misconduct by the Supervisor of Elections, such as not telling voters whose ballots were rejected and the correct amount of time they had to cure the problem.

Judge Flury, who presided over the case, said "No evidence has been presented that shows the precluded ballots favored any particular candidate, factually, the mathematical probability of a change in the result here is nonexistent."

Attorneys representing Brimmer and the canvassing board acknowledged that there were errors made, but argued that there was no fraud, and no intention of helping one candidate over another. The judge agreed: "There is no evidence to suggest that there was an ulterior nefarious motive that actually drove the canvassing board's decision. There is no reason to overturn the will of the people as expressed in the election results presented."

Sparkman did, however, win his wrongful termination lawsuit, which came about as a result of Sparkman being fired from his position of Deputy Property Appraiser by Brimmer once Brimmer had replaced Brad Harvey. Harvey was removed from office in 2018 after being arrested for embezzlement, and Brimmer had been appointed to replace him before an election was held.

## CONCERN ABOUT RATE INCREASES

At the September meeting of the St. Marks City a group of citizens led by Tim Roach expressed their concerns over a 75% increase on the cost of water services.

The City Commissioners voted to raise the cost by that much at the August regular meeting, to compensate for several years where the price of the water service did not increase at all, and to raise more money for the city to use. Prior to the meeting, citizens met at Bo Lynn's Grocery to discuss concerns about the increase, and ways to address it, which were compiled and presented by Roach at the City Commission meeting the next day. Ideas such as selling some of the city's property, such as the old Seminole Refinery, or getting better about collecting fees at the boat ramp were suggested as alternatives to the price hike.

At the meeting, Roach and others also asked for there to be a workshop scheduled, so that ideas could be brainstormed and a better solution could be reached. Some citizens also raised concerns about a perceived lack of communication between the city government and the residents of St. Marks, as many felt blindsided by the rate increase. The city commissioners agreed to work on that, including by doing things such as putting notices of such changes at the local post office, where many people could see it.



Brett Shields of Shields Marina and Stan West of Riverside Cafe talk about Hurricane Idalia. Both have been through numerous storms.

## Hurricane Idalia hits

St. Marks received high waters in the streets. Riverside Café flooded again, but Stan West, owner of Riverside Café was grateful that it has not gotten into his kitchen.

en equipment. Brett Shields of Shields Marina says that the water was not brackish. Both Shields and West have weathered these storms many times before. "It is what it is, and we move on," West says. "When the water goes down we will clean, disinfect and hopefully reopen on Friday." Below, flooding at Bo Lynn's. (Photos by Lynda Kinsey)



Attorney General Ashley Moody speaks at the sheriff's office's annual Law Day on May 3. On the dais: Sheriff Jared Miller, Prime Meridian's Susan Payne Turner, Congressman Neal Dunn, and Undersheriff Billy Jones. A crowd of hundreds attended the event, catered by Posey's, held at English Financial. (Photo by Gerald Brown)



Divers Steve Cox and Blake Wilson in Turner Sink cave system on Saturday, Jan. 14. The pair linked Chip's Hole to Wakulla Springs. (Photo by Lauren Wilson/WKPP)

## SPORTS

## WAKULLA HIGH WRESTLING

## War Eagles compete in Beast of the Beach

By **WALT JACOBS**  
Special to The Sun

On Friday and Saturday, Dec. 22nd and 23rd, the Wakulla High wrestling team along with teams from Alabama, Georgia, Tennessee, and Kentucky converged on Fort Walton Beach High School to compete in the Annual Beast of the Beach tournament.

On the first day of competition, Wakulla defeated Bay High 66-9 and Port Charlotte 42-30, before falling to Carrollton, Georgia 48-33 and LaRue County, Kentucky 42-25.

The War Eagles' efforts were enough to advance them to the championship bracket on day two of the tournament.

In their first dual on day two, Wakulla defeated Niceville 48-24. In the following

contest, the War Eagles fell to Collierville, Tennessee 48-20.

Wakulla faced Mosley High in the final dual of the day. The contest would end up in a 36-36 tie. Mosley was declared the winner by tie-breaking criteria.

Coach Pafford commented, "The tournament presented us with an opportunity to get a bunch of matches for the young guys. It was a great thing."

The War Eagles will travel to Mosley High School in Panama City on January 5th and 6th to compete in the 1A District Duals and the Panhandle Duals.

Action shot of Nate Jacobs of Wakulla vs Connor Metcalf of LaRue County, Kentucky.



## FLORIDA STATE FOOTBALL

## Plenty of blame to go around – but not players, coaches

By **CURT WEILER**  
Of The Osceola

There's plenty of blame to go around for how Florida State's 2023 season ended, with a depleted roster no match whatsoever for a uber-talented and much-more-intact Georgia roster.

Blame the College Football Playoff committee for a historic snub the likes of which we have never seen and will never see again, leaving out an undefeated Power Five champion.

Blame the ESPN personalities who began the narrative of leaving undefeated FSU out of the Playoff in favor of one-loss Alabama BEFORE Jordan Travis got hurt, no matter what they say now.

Blame SEC Commissioner Greg Sankey for leading a gutless public charge that the high-and-mighty SEC couldn't dare be left out of a single Playoff — even in a year where it was relatively down by its lofty standards — while ACC Commissioner Jim Phillips sat on his hands with one ineffective statement he released after FSU won its 19th straight game to improve to 13-0 this season.

The one group of people I urge everyone not to blame are the FSU players and coaches. Not the players who elected not to play in this game and definitely not the players who played, even if they struggled mightily.

Because this team in its true form did everything in its power and then some to earn a Playoff spot. It won its first 11 games with Travis at quarterback. Then it won at rival Florida with a backup quarterback. Then it won the ACC Championship Game with a third-string, true freshman quarterback.

FSU's defense allowed one total touchdown over its final 2.75 games as an intact unit after Travis' injury.

And still, 13 CFP committee members decided that FSU wasn't good enough, perfect record or not.

"Tonight was a very difficult night. It's been a very difficult month, to be honest with you," an emotional Mike Norvell began his postgame press conference Saturday by saying.

So I don't blame a single player with any NFL Draft buzz who decided not to play in this game. Because they were all told four weeks ago with

a cold splash of water to their faces that their undefeated season, all 13 wins of them, didn't mean anything.

A number of late additions to FSU's absent list for the Orange Bowl could have put off their surgeries they were set to have once the off-season began had FSU been in the Playoff. But with how things ended, who can blame them for getting a head-start on their recoveries and what lies ahead?

Sure, they could have all rallied together and decided to try to make a statement by playing in this game. But let's be honest, even if the entire FSU roster had opted in and the Seminoles managed to knock off the Bulldogs, the national narrative wouldn't have owned up to the mistake of leaving FSU out.

It would have instead flipped to one of, "Georgia has won the last two national titles. You think that team was remotely motivated to play in a meaningless Orange Bowl?"

But, of course, because these players opted out and the game was ugly as it was, there were more shameful bad-faith arguments proving this Orange Bowl validated FSU's snub than you could possibly spend time replying to on Twitter.

From his comments after the loss, it would appear Norvell wasn't especially bothered by the decisions of his players who elected to not play in the Orange Bowl.

"It was hard choices for a lot of the young men that were on our team. We were hurt. When you do the things that our guys did throughout the year, the way that they responded, the way that they fought, the way they pulled together, it hurt when we were not selected. It was the most challenging month I've ever had in my coaching career," Norvell said. "You feel for your players and as you sit there and go through it with them, there were some tough choices that individuals made. Ultimately, I had talked to them about the opportunity. Obviously, there are guys like Kalen (DeLoach) who came out here and gave all that they had through the finish. I'm grateful for that. I'm grateful for the guys who have been on the journey throughout the season and I'm grateful for the guys who were a part of this team and quite a few of them

didn't play tonight. They did so much. I hate that I didn't get one more game with them. That's probably the thing that hurts as much as anything."

While this game got abominably ugly, I'd also strongly urge everyone to not blame any of the players who stuck around. Because it's believed FSU had 53 scholarship players available for its Orange Bowl matchup, technically below the 55-player threshold that could have warranted the game being canceled due to lack of safety.

Overall, 16 starters/co-starters on FSU's ACC Championship Game depth chart were not available Saturday. Eight total players were making their first career starts for the Seminoles on Saturday, six on defense and two on offense. And once again, a true freshman was at quarterback.

Against a Georgia team that was never going to make the playoff given how things broke down but certainly appears to be one of the four best teams in the country, that was never going to go well.

Blame the Bulldogs as well, I guess, for bringing a killer mindset to a meaningless game in the grand scheme of things. About the only way this game could have been remotely competitive was if UGA brought a sense of apathy to this game after seeing its 29-game winning streak snapped. Safe to say, the Bulldogs did not do that.

What made Saturday truly tough to watch is that those who did play deserved better. Everyone around the program did. Quite a few players returned for one more season with a "January to January" mantra and did everything in their power to make that a reality.

How the season ended Saturday doesn't change what the true 2023 version of the FSU football team accomplished. But it does make things much more depressing.

Saturday's loss will go down as the most lopsided loss in FSU football history. And the most lopsided loss in college football bowl history.

It's really a shame FSU's name goes next to those in the record books. Because if you ask me, the College Football Playoff committee's name belongs there for finding out exactly how unmotivated a team can be to play a New Year's Six bowl game.



PHOTO BY KEN FIELDS

Georgia Bulldog tight end Oscar Delp tries to vault over FSU defensive back Kevin Knowles II, but gets tackled. The Bulldogs won the Orange Bowl 63-3 over FSU.

20th Annual **Free Trees!**  
CRAWFORDVILLE

**ARBOR DAY**

Saturday, January 20<sup>th</sup>

10:00 am - 1:00 pm

84 Cedar Avenue

Wakulla County Extension Office  
Rain or Shine

**Hundreds of young trees  
(in pots) will be given away!**

Parsley Haw, Eastern Mayhaw,  
Live Oak, Pignut Hickory, Possumhaw,  
Southern Red Cedar, Rusty Black Haw,  
Dahoon Holly, Chinquapin, Redbud,  
Overcup Oak, Red Maple, River Birch,  
Sweet Shrub, Longleaf Pines, & more.

**Drive-Thru Giveaway  
2 Trees per Vehicle**

From Courthouse (Arran Rd.), drive north on Ochlockonee St.,  
pass Hudson Park on right, turn left onto Cedar Ave.,  
follow signs, turn right onto circle drive at Extension Office.

Wakulla County Garden Club, Florida Forest Service,  
Sarracenia Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society,  
UF/IFAS Extension & Master Gardeners, & National Wildlife Federation  
with Florida Wildlife Federation, Just Fruits & Exotics, The Wakulla Sun & The Wakulla News.