

The Front Porch

Where The Tea Is Sweet and the Talks Are Long
January/February 2025

FULL SPECTRUM ABA

Page 12

Gus Potsdamer

Jack of All Trades
Page 22

Bill Moon

In Love with Woodcarving
Page 34

Andrew Pine

Jennings' Cowboy Star
Page 18

Summer Baldwin

Dancing with Herself
Page 28

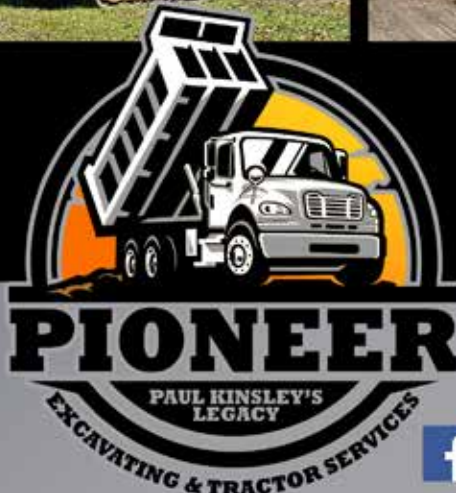


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 - Your mattress is falling apart, especially at its seams.
 - You are aware of the springs in your mattress because you can feel them.
 - Your sleep quality is suffering month after month for no particular reason.
 - Your mattress is more than 10 years old.
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contents

The Front Porch | Jan/Feb 2025

8 **SITTIN' ON THE PORCH**
Donnell Davis

Features

12 **COVER STORY**
Full Spectrum ABA
There Is Always Hope



PAGE 12

18 **Andrew Prine**
Jennings' Cowboy Star

22 **Gus Potsdamer**
Jack of All Trades

28 **Summer Baldwin**
Dancing with Herself

34 **Bill Moon**
In Love with Woodcarving

42 **Regional Reads**
Books by Local Authors

44 **What's Happening**
Jan/Feb Calendar of Events



PAGE 18



PAGE 22



PAGE 28



PAGE 34

The Front Porch

Where the tea is sweet and the talks are long

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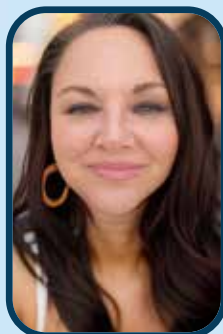
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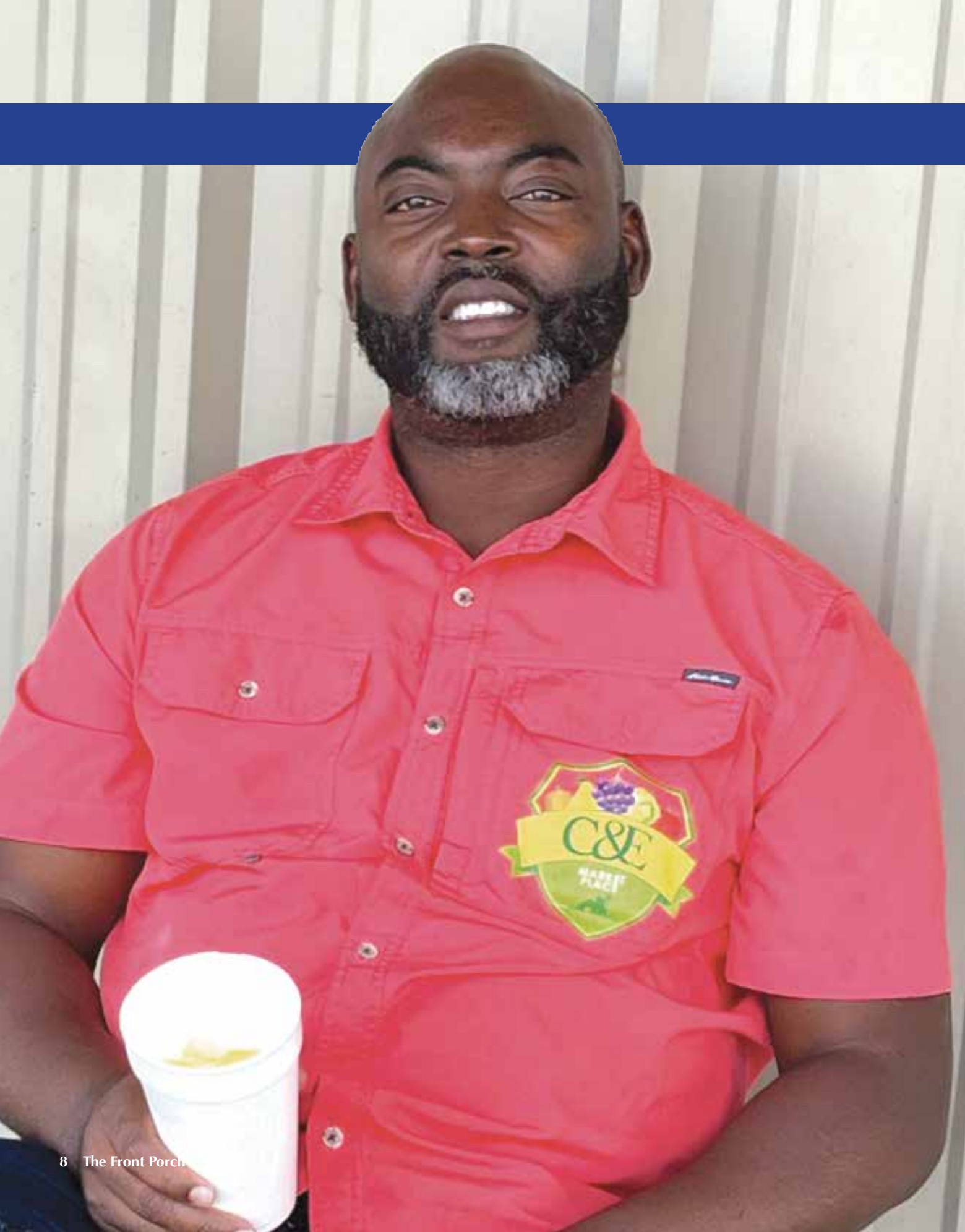
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Donnell Davis

Story and Photograph by Mickey Starling

Madison native Donnell Davis is no stranger to the folks in Madison County. A 1996 graduate of Madison County High School, Davis also holds a bachelor's degree in Business Management from Texas Southern University. While he is well known for his excellent cooking skills and catering service through C & E Marketplace, Davis is primarily a tax preparer who has owned and operated Tax Pro Services since 2014.

"Catering was not my first love, but it has become my passion," said Davis.

His restaurant and catering interests arose as a way to give back to the community and help others.

"It is especially hard for those getting out of prison to get on their feet and back in society," said Davis. "I'm happy that I can help with that. I don't know what my next season holds, but I've done the assignment I was given."

Davis is equally passionate about seeing his community improve as a whole.

"The phones and technology of today are a challenge for young people," remarked Davis. "My challenge is to find something that I can incorporate that the kids will still love. I want to reach kids. I get to mentor and encourage the kids that come my way."

Because of his background, Davis feels uniquely qualified to reach the younger generation.

"I grew up here. I wasn't the smartest kid in school," said Davis. "You have to get up every day and apply yourself. It's tougher for me because I don't sell beer and cigarettes and all that. My goal is to make people better. It sometimes makes me a villain, but I'm not going to compromise myself and my relationship with Christ to please people."

With Davis' commitment to serving others came a surprise blessing. A group of young students were asked if they would like to recognize anyone for their efforts after one of the recent hurricanes damaged our area. They had seen Davis serving food to others who were without power. The youngsters chose Davis and drew pictures of him, which they delivered to the Marketplace, along with their appreciation for his help.

"I didn't even think they would know me," said Davis. "Their artwork was a statement of their appreciation and it reminded me of the fact that I am touching lives."

Another issue that concerns Davis is the lack of respect some children demonstrate.

"I tell my wife that it isn't really the kids' fault if

they aren't being taught at home. I'm still a 'yes sir, no sir' kind of guy. We need to give more than what the world does. This technology is killing us. The kids don't have to work for anything. We have to teach the value of working."

As Davis ponders the world around him, he sees material goods replacing the true needs of children.

"We can give them phones, but the phones wear out," Davis reflected. "What they are really looking for is love. The phone is nothing. At the end of the day, we need to sit down and have conversations with them so they can know they are loved."

While athletics provides support and sometimes college scholarships, Davis sees some drawbacks to focusing on sports for becoming successful.

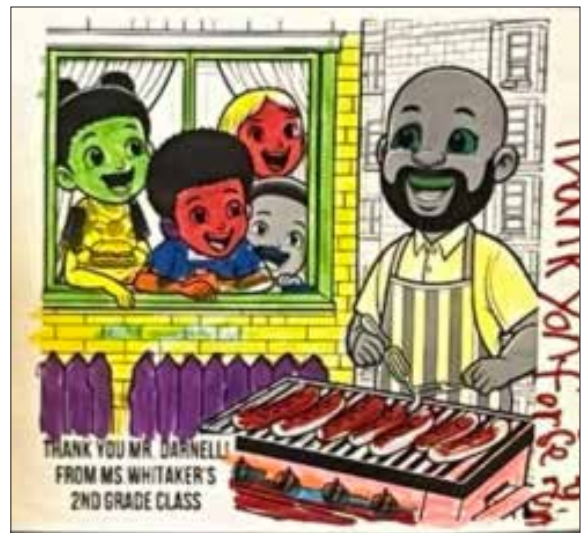
"I love football, and it has helped me be successful through my marketing company, but it hurts me because when the game is over and the championship is over, what is left?" he asked. "I see them walking across here everyday. They are lost after that, and they have nothing to hang their hats on if they haven't applied themselves for it."

Davis sees education as a most valuable asset to help kids have a brighter future.

"I want things to be better for these kids," said Davis while greeting his customers with a big smile and telling many of them, "I love ya!"

He and his wife, Yolanda, are active members at Mt. Olive Primitive Baptist Church, where he is a Bible teacher and deacon. Davis and a group of volunteers finished the year with a toy and food giveaway to help the community celebrate Christmas.

"I love ministering to people," said Davis. "That's just my heart."



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COVER STORY

FULL SPECTRUM



ABA

There is always hope





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Story by Heather Ainsley
Photographs Courtesy of
Full Spectrum ABA

Autism has become an epidemic, with approximately one in 36 children identified as having Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), according to the Center for Disease Control (CDC). Autism affects individuals that belong to all racial, ethnic and socioeconomic groups and, much like the name implies, affects individuals on a spectrum, meaning that the types of symptoms and severity of the condition varies widely between those who have it. In short, autism does not look the same for everyone.

This can make it a challenge for autistic people to find therapy and assistance that is engaging and helpful to their specific needs. This is where Full Spectrum ABA excels, as they have a significant number of doctors and expert BCBA's (Board Certified Behavioral Analysts) who serve a wide variety of behavioral needs. Clients with high support needs who may want assistance with severe behaviors like elopement, aggression, property destruction, or who have skill deficits in speaking or communicating, or need support with feeding-related issues, are able to find the expertise they seek. Likewise, autistic individuals with lower support needs who may only require assistance with more minor behaviors like social skills, or other skill development areas are also able to find support with Full Spectrum ABA.

Full Spectrum ABA is a Florida-based company founded upon the science of

behavior analysis as a means of improving the lives of individuals on the Autism Spectrum or who have developmental disabilities. They specialize in Educational Applied Behavior Analysis and have providers that work in more than 150 schools and facilities across the state, offering services and care in the home as well. Full Spectrum ABA is owned and run by BCBA's and Board Certified Behavior Analyst Doctorates (BCBA-Ds) who have a vested interest in providing quality clinical care that enables their clients to reach their full potential and find a sense of belonging and acceptance.

A major goal of Full Spectrum ABA is to raise awareness of autism and the benefits of early intervention and ABA treatments. As Dr. Jennifer Bellotti-Streetman, BCBA-D, who is the executive vice president of Full Spectrum ABA, mentions, many families may begin to notice their child having difficulties around ages two to five years old, generally around the time they begin attending school settings. From there, there can be long wait lists for Comprehensive Diagnostic Evaluations, also called CDEs, which can take up to two years just to get an official diagnosis.

"You need a diagnosis in order to get therapy," she continues. "A lot of ABA companies have long wait lists too, and in the meantime, the child may continue to fall even further behind. So, the awareness is really essential."

"ABA is considered the 'gold standard' of treatment for Autism Spectrum Disorder," says Collin Streetman, BCBA, who works as the vice president of marketing at Full



Full Spectrum also offers Bible Based ABA, where they can train local communities and churches on how to improve their interactions with individuals with disabilities, and increase inclusivity and involvement within faith-based activities.

Spectrum. "We work with mal-adaptive behaviors – if a child has problematic behaviors such as self-injury, aggression, property destruction, elopement or even things that could be more minor concerns, like inability to attend to class or tasks. We also work on skill development. That could be things like teaching a client to talk, use sign language or PECS, which is a picture exchange system that we utilize, sitting still, playing with peers, or social skill development. For clients with lower



Collin Streetman

support needs, that could be something like establishing friend groups, how to talk to people and make friends.”

Full Spectrum ABA works hand in hand with families and primary care professionals to establish a therapy regimen that meets every patient where they are, with a goal of empowering them to have a positive quality of life; to achieve a sense of belonging in the world, and maintain a meaningful, joyful and independent life. While this goal may look different for different patients, Full Spectrum ABA is highly dedicated to helping all of their clients in the fullest capacity possible.

ABA therapy focuses on analyzing the behaviors of the client and discovering the root cause of the behaviors in order to fully understand the client as an individual and gear the therapy towards something that will be useful and effective for them specifically. There are different reasons an



Dr. Jennifer Bellotti-Streetman

autistic child may present certain behaviors, so in order to address the behaviors, whether it is to encourage or discourage them, it is important to first be able to recognize the cause or function of the behavior.

Full Spectrum ABA believes strongly in the importance of including autistic voices. A statement on their website reads, “Full Spectrum ABA is unwavering in its commitment to promoting diversity and inclusion by actively seeking to employ individuals with autism and related neurodiverse conditions. We firmly believe that harnessing the unique talents and perspectives of these individuals enriches our team and strengthens our capacity to provide comprehensive care. Through a dedicated approach, we strive to create a supportive and inclusive workplace environment that celebrates neurodiversity.”

“We also run a group each month,” says



Dr. Danielle Cimorelli

Streetman, “where our neurodivergent staff train our neurotypical staff. Outside of that, we hold three trainings a month. Trainings could be on an ABA methodology or skill, or a journal article, where we distribute peer-reviewed research, have our staff read it and then host a training on it to teach them how to consume and apply research. This also allows us to stay up to date on the latest research and ensure that our providers are also well-informed and up to date as well.”

“The autistic advocates,” mentions Bellotti-Streetman, “is a really nice opportunity for families as well, as you can imagine, because here you have individuals who started off not speaking, their parents were told they should be institutionalized, and here they have received the therapy themselves, and now they are training our providers based on their experiences, so that we can really listen to autistic voices. Then, they are in the homes and in the schools, working side by side with autistic children, and so then it really becomes a great example to families that anything is possible.”

The ability for autistic advocates to share their perspective strengthens the therapy programs as a whole, as not only can they relate on a closer level to what the child may be experiencing or struggling with, but they can also enable a child to see someone like themselves represented as part of their care who has been through the therapy and has insight that a neurotypical caregiver may not necessarily have. Additionally they can provide insight to others about new methods or techniques that could be more effective in helping children who are struggling.

In addition to developing beneficial skills and de-escalating mal-adaptive or harmful behaviors, Full Spectrum has also developed a job training program that they offer for free. The program is called Neurodiverse Training In Creative Industry (NTICI), and can be utilized using an





Dr. Philip Erb

interactive app. Users can select the type of job training they would like to explore, whether it is web design, graphic design, video editing, equipment, social media and more. The app explores the different skills which are incorporated by the type of job, and it offers tips, training and tutorials that are led by someone who is on the autistic spectrum.



Dr. Sara Mulholland

families and children with disabilities. For the professionals who work at Full Spectrum ABA, the most rewarding part of their work is seeing progress in children, especially those who may have previously received a severe or extreme diagnosis, and seeing these children grow to thrive. Being able to employ autistic advocates, and see the therapy come full circle for clients is a deeply rewarding part of their programs. Many

families may feel hopeless

or be uncertain of what the future holds, and Full Spectrum ABA strives to assist their clients with finding that hopefulness in a strong, positive quality of life for their child or loved one.

“It all starts with raising awareness of services that are available,” mentions Streetman. “The therapy is so individualized, based on the needs of the patient. To allow children and young adults to reach their full potential is our biggest focus, and that can vary so drastically between clients. But no matter where on the spectrum a client sits, here is always hope.”

“From a provider standpoint,” says Dr. Bellotti-Streetman, “we want to provide life-changing therapy for children with special needs, with autism or ADHD – neurodivergent individuals – and help them to be as independent, as successful and as joyful as possible. We want them to have a really high quality of life; that’s essential for us, because we don’t want to change behaviors that aren’t helping the client to get what they want and what they need. That’s where that functional communication training is so essential.”



Dr. Susanne Ohihoin

Full Spectrum ABA is covered through Medicaid, and has Florida office locations in Tampa, Monticello, Defuniak Springs, Bradenton, Daytona Beach, Melbourne, Fort Meyers, Summerland Key and Marathon. They also have out-of-state offices in South Carolina, Mississippi, Tennessee and Georgia. For more information about how to apply for ABA therapy, visit Fullspectrumaba.com. ■



“We also have our own app,” mentions Streetman. “It’s the Full Spectrum ABA app. We have around 20,000 users. It’s one of the biggest apps in the industry, and we give away free trainings. One of the big things about us is the number of Ph.Ds we have working with us. There’s a full list of our doctors available on the app and website (www.fullspectrumaba.com). We also have autistic staff – we make hiring people with autism a major part of our focus. There is also a list of our current autistic staff members, and through the app or our website you can see more about their individual stories.”

Full Spectrum ABA is currently accepting new clients and accepts new clients even if a patient is already on a waiting list for another therapy office or clinic. They work regularly in schools and are passionate about being there to support





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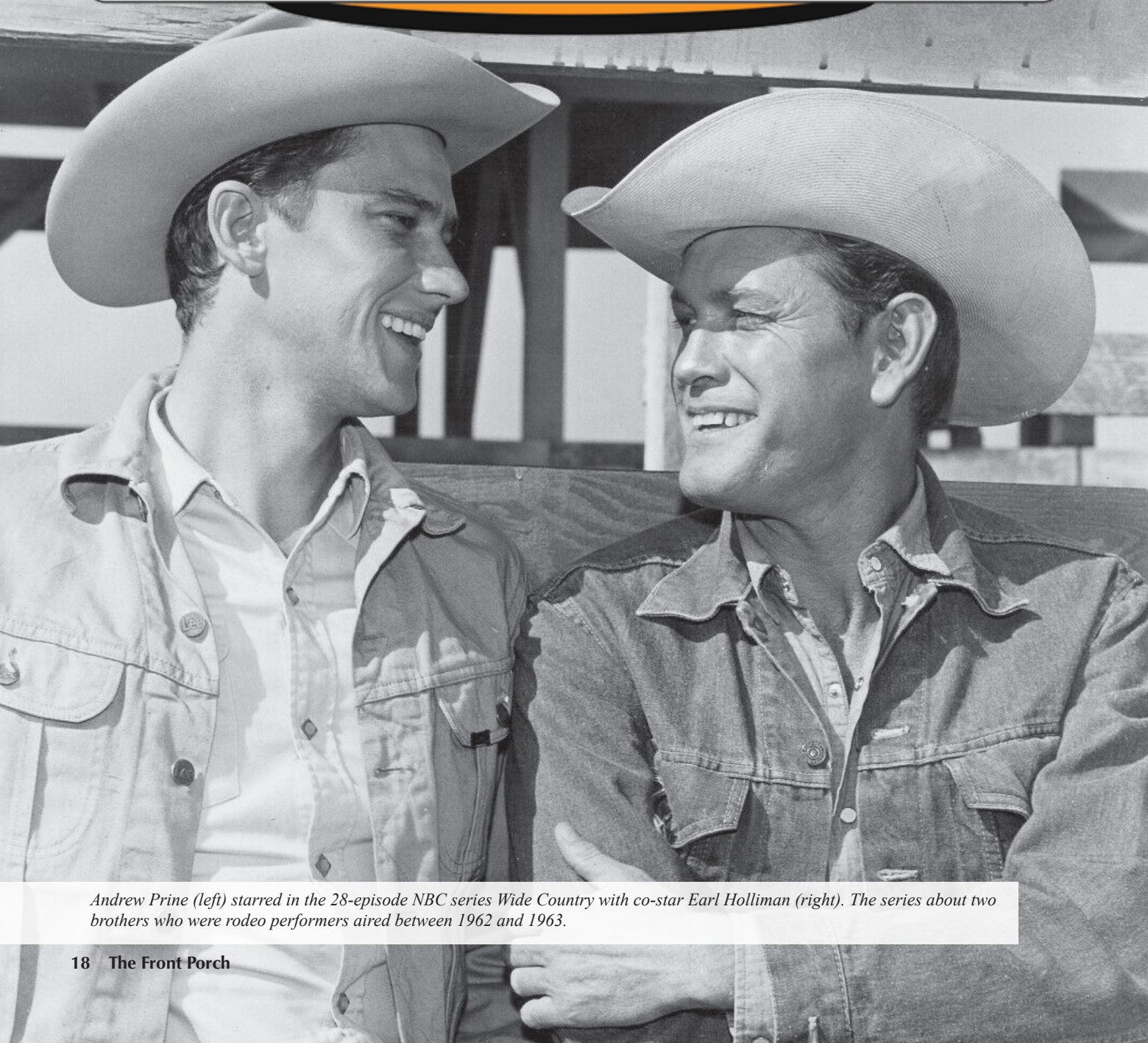
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Andrew Prine

JENNINGS' COWBOY STAR



*Andrew Prine (left) starred in the 28-episode NBC series *Wide Country* with co-star Earl Holliman (right). The series about two brothers who were rodeo performers aired between 1962 and 1963.*

Story by Rick Patrick

Andrew Prine was born February 14, 1936, the son of a Pullman railroad conductor, in the small North Florida town of Jennings. He is best known for his decades of work as an actor in television, film and on the stage. During his long career, he appeared in many different western movies and television shows, including *Gunsmoke*, *Chisum* (with John Wayne) *Gettysburg*, *Bonanza*, *The Virginian*, *Wagon Train*, *Daniel Boone*, *Kung Fu* and dozens more.

Although he was raised in the small North Florida farming community, he graduated from high school in Miami, from Miami Jackson High School. Prine stated that he became interested in acting after seeing a production of *Showboat* in Jacksonville, Fla., as a young teen.

"When I saw them all on stage, I said, 'Oh, I'm an actor!'" Prine recalled.

After graduating from high school, Prine attended the University of Miami on an acting scholarship, while studying and performing with the student-run theatre at the University of Miami, the Jerry Herman Ring Theatre. However, he dropped out in order to pursue an acting career in New York City.

Prine's early career found him in the Big Apple, working as a stage actor. His professional acting debut was in a 1957 production for the *United States Steel Hour*, a television program sponsored by United States Steel that brought hour-long dramatic productions to television audiences.

The next year, Prine replaced Anthony Perkins in the Broadway production of *Look Homeward Angel*, by Thomas Wolfe. The play was popular, running for a total of 564 performances before it closed on April 4, 1959. It won the 1958 Best American Play and was nominated for several Tony Awards.

"Fortunately, I did *Look Homeward* for two years, and what I did while playing the lead and being paid was learn how to act," Prine stated later. "The stage manager came backstage every night with copious notes, and his job was to keep me on target. I learned how to act, really, on Broadway."

While Prine was performing on Broadway, representatives from Universal Studios saw him and invited him to star on a rodeo series.

"So I said, 'I'm just going to go out [to California] and do [that] and I'm coming right back to Broadway,'" he recalled. "Then I found out how much money they would give me just to sit on a horse and I said, 'So long, Broadway.'"

Throughout a 60-year professional career that spanned from 1957 to 2017, Prine acted in 186 movies and television shows, according to the International Movie Database (IMDb). In 2001, Prine was presented with a Golden Boot Award for his long career in movie and television westerns.

"I managed to take on so many roles in the period during the 1970s because I never met a film role I didn't like," said Prine in 2013 during an interview for his 1976 cult-classic film, *The Town that Dreaded Sundown*, which was based on the true story of a hooded killer that haunted Texarkana, Texas, in 1946.

"I'm a working actor," he said. "I don't wait for a year for a picture."

Prine passed away of natural causes while vacationing in Paris, France, on Oct. 31, 2022. He was 86 years old. ■



Jennings native Andrew Prine had an illustrious career in television and movies as a character actor. He appeared in a wide variety of films, from westerns to crime dramas and science fiction. / Photograph by Glenn Francis of www.PacificProDigital.com



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GUS POTSDAMER

Jack of All Trades

Story by Eric Musgrove

Some events and characters in history will make you smile, laugh or drop your jaw in disbelief. One such character is Gottshalk Augustus "Gus" Potsdamer. In fact, Gus Potsdamer is probably one of the most interesting characters you'll ever read about in Suwannee County's history.

Potsdamer, of German descent, was born in 1853 according to his tombstone. He grew up as a Jew during a time of general anti-Semitism around the world. By the 1870s, Potsdamer lived in Lake City. According to the July 11, 1876, Savannah Morning News, on July 3, 1876, Gus and a friend, George Harris, narrowly escaped death on one of the lakes around Lake City. Their rowboat capsized; if it had not been for nearby assistance, they would certainly have drowned. Gus was liked in the Lake City community, enough

to be elected town marshal (now called chief of police) prior to 1880.

By late January 1880, Town Marshal Potsdamer had a long-running heated dispute with the Columbia County sheriff, John C. Henry. The conflict escalated into a fistfight when the two met on Main Street (now Marion Street), and Potsdamer fatally wounded Henry with a pistol. According to the February 3, 1880, edition of the Savannah Morning News, the men had met in a saloon after seeing a performance of the Park Theatre Troupe. A personal quarrel began that spilled into the streets. The newspaper described the fight and mortal wounding of Henry, lamenting the fact that "they are both young men of reputation and promise, though both of rather rash and hasty tempers, and the unfortunate difficulty between them is regretted by the whole



community.”

Gus Potsdamer was charged and tried for first-degree murder, convicted of second-degree murder and sentenced to life in prison at the state convict camp near Live Oak. The jury’s recommendation of mercy saved him from hanging. Potsdamer’s conviction was controversial, with many reports stating that Sheriff Henry had started the trouble and was beating Potsdamer over the head with the butt of his pistol when Potsdamer got loose and killed him. Furthermore, Potsdamer was very popular and had a reputation as a city marshal who always enforced the law fairly.

Because he was Jewish, and because he had killed a lawman, it was feared that Potsdamer would be lynched by one faction or rescued by another. J.C. Powell, captain of the state’s convict camp in Suwannee County, wrote about taking custody of Potsdamer in his book *American Siberia*.

Powell writes, “When the train from Lake City pulled in, a large crowd had assembled at the depot, and five men with shotguns first disembarked. Then came the prisoner, a frail, pallid young man, so loaded down with chains, handcuffs, shackles, and manacles of every description that he could hardly walk, and another guard of five men brought up the rear. Almost all of the prominent Hebrews of the state came pouring out of the cars after this procession.”

The new Columbia County sheriff and state attorney asked Powell where the posse was that would escort Potsdamer to the convict camp. Powell replied that he alone would take Potsdamer to the camp and unchained him for the four-mile walk. Potsdamer was thankful for the kindness that Powell showed him, and the book reported that Powell made “staunch friends” of the Jewish people that day. Potsdamer served only thirty days in the convict camp before he was released while his case was on appeal.

The July 21, 1880, *Savannah Morning News* quoted the *Live Oak Bulletin*: “On last Monday night, Mr. Gus Potsdamer was returned to the convict camps by order of the Supreme Court, which sustained the action of the court below, and refused to grant a new trial in his case. It will be remembered that at the last fall term of the Circuit Court for Columbia County, Mr. Potsdamer, who had been indicted for the killing of Sheriff John Henry, was convicted of murder in the second degree, and sentenced to the penitentiary for ninety-nine years. His attorneys asked for a new trial, which was refused by Judge Cocke, who was then presiding, and an appeal was taken to the Supreme Court, with the result as above stated. Mr. Potsdamer has many strong friends and sympathizers, and we presume that a mighty effort will be made to secure a pardon for him.”

Potsdamer’s friends did in fact appeal his murder conviction through the legal system

and eventually won the case. Gus Potsdamer was released after only two months of incarceration. According to Captain J.C. Powell of the convict camp in Live Oak, Potsdamer took his incarceration good-naturedly. Afterward, Potsdamer would speak often of Powell as his “old boss.”

By 1884, Potsdamer had moved to Live Oak and become a respected businessman in several ventures. On April 9, 1884, he was elected to the Live Oak Town Council, a position he served in until resigning on February 15, 1886. From minutes of the period, it seems that many men who served in various local government capacities resigned before their terms were up. The May 23, 1884, issue of the *Lake City Reporter* noted that the progressive Potsdamer had inaugurated a movement to “telephone” Live Oak – in other words, to provide telephone service using Alexander Graham Bell’s practical telephone patented less than ten years before. The same newspaper issue notes that Potsdamer ran a fine livery stable, a billiard and poolroom and the “Pastime,” which was noted for “refreshments for the inner system of mankind.” An ad in the same paper reads, “O, ye denizens of dry towns, lend an ear and order your ‘little brown jugs’—the best in the land—from Gus Potsdamer, Live Oak, Fla. Prompt attention given to orders.”

Gus Potsdamer is also mentioned in the May 23, 1885, edition of the *Tropical Paradise*, a newspaper from Jacksonville, as having a turnout service (a taxi service using a horse and buggy) that traveled between Live Oak and the health resorts in nearby White Springs. The November 14, 1885, edition of the *Florida Bulletin* (a predecessor to the *Suwannee Democrat*) mentions Potsdamer’s many endeavors. Besides his businesses at the time, he ran a livery and stable and sold carriages, harnesses, liquor and buggies (including the popular T.T. Haydock variety). He also served on the Live Oak Town Council. The same year, Gus Potsdamer was first lieutenant of the Suwannee Guards (the local militia unit that was later known as the Suwannee Rifles). The unit was under the command of Captain A.L. Woodward; William Bryson was the second lieutenant. The Suwannee Guards had five sergeants and corporals, as well as forty-six privates in its fifty-eight-man total.

On February 7, 1887, Gus Potsdamer was appointed “Scavenger for the town of Live Oak” by the town council; the closest modern-day equivalent of this would be the sanitation department director. The official duties of such a “scavenger” would be to collect all ashes, waste and garbage around town and dispose of it. Potsdamer probably did not remain in this position long; he was sworn in as duly elected town marshal and tax collector on April 26 of the same year. Potsdamer was now fulfilling a similar role in



Governor Park Trammell.

Live Oak that he had in Lake City less than ten years prior. This time, however, there were no lethal fights with the sheriff! At the time, the town and the county had their own tax collectors, a position now handled by the Suwannee County tax collector. Potsdamer served in that capacity for less than three months; on July 5, he resigned from the positions of town marshal and tax collector. This was not the end of his political career, however.

On October 21, 1889, the town council voted to go to Potsdamer to secure the use of a hall for meetings. The most likely explanation was that, because Suwannee County became a dry county in 1889, Gus had to close his liquor establishment and thus had the space available. Either way, the transaction was approved, because multiple town council minutes discuss the payment of rent to Gus Potsdamer until April 3, 1894, when the new Masonic lodge was approved for use by the council.

Potsdamer continued to be well liked by the community. He had enough support to be elected Suwannee County sheriff in 1889, in which capacity he served until 1893. During his time as sheriff, he became known for hunting down fugitives of the law and otherwise keeping order in the county.

According to the *Waycross Reporter* of December 21, 1889, Potsdamer arrested a man named Robert McCoy for carrying concealed weapons.

McCoy told Potsdamer, “You have arrested me for something else than carrying a gun, and can’t fool me in this way.”

“What else?” asked Potsdamer, and McCoy admitted to a murder that he had committed a few weeks before. McCoy also gave the names of the others involved in the murder. Potsdamer and others had been looking for the unknown murderers for weeks

without luck, and then one admitted to the killing when arrested for a relatively minor infraction! Potsdamer turned McCoy and his information over to the proper authorities; McCoy and the others were either hanged for their crime or killed while attempted to evade capture.

Sheriff Potsdamer's enforcement of the law continued. The July 8, 1890, edition of the Indianapolis Journal states, "A notorious negro outlaw, supposed to be Bob Brewer, the Jessup murderer, who also shot a deputy sheriff at Boardman, last week, was captured near Live Oak, Fla., Sunday night, by Sheriff Potsdamer."

Unfortunately, others would sometimes trump Potsdamer's official duties. On December 18, 1891, a mob of dozens of masked men (about one hundred men, according to the Sacramento Daily Union, and about thirty men according to a Fulton County, Ga., newspaper) jumped off a train passing through Live Oak and made their way to the residence of Sheriff Potsdamer. Armed with rifles and revolvers, they seized the outgunned and outnumbered Potsdamer and took from him the keys to the county jail. Rushing to the jail behind the courthouse, the mob then took from a cell two African American men suspected of the murder of H.D. Parramore of Valdosta on the streets of New Branford (now Branford) the week before. The mob hanged the two men from a tree a short distance from the jail and riddled the bodies with bullets before fleeing the scene.

In addition to his government positions, Gus Potsdamer also continued to run several businesses in the late 1800s and early 1900s. In 1889, he expanded his livery and stable business by purchasing the livery and stable of the deceased W.F. Bynum Jr. that was situated on the southwest corner of Duval Street and Ohio Avenue; this site later became the location of the Masonic lodge. In 1892, Potsdamer purchased the building on Conner Street in which he had been running his original livery and stable business for several years as he continued his expansion. He was also an undertaker and ran other businesses, many of which sold alcohol (at least when Suwannee was a wet county). In 1892, Potsdamer purchased Live Oak's artesian well from C.H. and Mamie Tedder for \$200. This well, used for many years to provide Live Oak with drinking water, was located approximately where the Live Oak Fire Department stands today on Duval Street. He sold the property to Thomas Dowling in 1897, the same time that he sold additional property to Dowling a block farther east to be used as the location for the Dowling Waterworks (later the City of Live Oak's waterworks).

Despite being a lawman off and on for many years, Potsdamer did not always follow



George E. Porter in Suwannee Guards Uniform - Circa 1898.

the law. While sheriff in 1888, he was sued by John M. Lawrence for payment of wages. It seems that the former sheriff had received a request to pay wages, and Potsdamer refused to comply after he entered office. Potsdamer was found guilty and sentenced to pay not only the past wages but also the court costs. In 1891, William Adams filed a lawsuit against Potsdamer for false imprisonment and extortion. According to Adams, Potsdamer had falsely imprisoned him for six hours and then extorted \$10 from him to secure his release. Adams sued for \$5,000 in damages.

Beyond lawsuits brought against him as sheriff, Gus Potsdamer had several other run-ins with the law. Suwannee County court records have several instances of him being charged with things like "holding shop without a license" and "selling liquor without a license." In September 1897, for instance, he was found guilty of possessing 150 bottles of liquor and 150 bottles of beer in violation of the 1889 election that had made the county dry. Earlier in the year, he had been charged (along with several other individuals) with selling whiskey, brandy, wine, rum, gin and malt beer. He posted a \$500 bond, and the trial began in May 1897. He pled guilty, and his sentence was suspended upon payment of costs. Similar charges from the same period were continued until the next court term for years before apparently being dropped.

Potsdamer was actually convicted on December 19, 1895, of "engaging in business of a retail liquor dealer without paying the

special tax" in Jacksonville. His sentence was thirty days in the Duval County Jail and a fine of \$100. He received a presidential pardon for this charge on May 28, 1897, (he must have had friends in high places!). Gus was charged in 1899 in Suwannee County for cohabitating with Sallie Reese without being married to her. He paid his \$250 bail; in December 1902, a jury found them not guilty. Potsdamer always seemed to get out of serious trouble, and apparently it did not impact his political ambitions.

Potsdamer became the first fire chief when the Live Oak Fire Department was established on September 30, 1903, with a budget of \$1,240. It was housed in a small shed on the northeast corner of the courthouse yard (this was before there was a dedicated city hall) and comprised two hose carts, sixty feet of fire hose and two firefighters along with sixteen volunteers. Potsdamer served as fire chief until he resigned in June 1906. He was replaced by H.H. Hair, one of his original firefighters. Potsdamer continued running his other businesses during this time. In 1907, he is listed as a merchant in Live Oak with a stock of less than \$1,000. An article in the April 23, 1907 Live Oak Daily Democrat states, "Potsdamer & Bird is a new firm here to supply Florida stall-fed beef to butchers in this section." In addition, a number of obituaries and articles comment upon Potsdamer's coffins and his undertaker business in Live Oak.

After nearly a quarter century out of office, Potsdamer again ran for sheriff of Suwannee County in the 1912 election. One of his campaign ads (from either 1911 or early 1912) states, among other things: "If you elect me to fill the office of Sheriff, I promise to be faithful to the obligation of that office and live up to the oath that I will take when I enter upon the duties prescribed by law. I shall employ only competent deputies, and shall personally do those things the Sheriff should attend to. I shall personally look after the court house, yard, and jail, and see that they are kept clean, and that the prisoners have plenty of good wholesome food, such as the law permits; and during my entire term will strictly attend to the Sheriff's office, if you elect me."

Potsdamer's ads seemed to pay off – he was elected sheriff near the end of 1912, taking office on January 7, 1913. However, his enforcement of the law was somewhat lax this time around. This could have been because of his continued undertaking business.

The Suwannee Democrat, as quoted in volume 51 of the Inland Printer of 1913, stated: "At the solicitation of old friends, Sheriff Potsdamer has consented to continue in the undertaking business, as he can do so without in the least interfering with his duties as sheriff. Mr. Potsdamer has been interested

in the undertaking business in this city for years, and his old friends would not hear to his giving up the business.”

One of the first duties of Sheriff Potsdamer was to repair the jail and then remove the fence surrounding the courthouse yard. The pickets from the fence would then be sold to the highest bidder for cash, according to the January 7, 1913 minutes of the Suwannee County Board of County Commissioners. As requested by locals, Potsdamer continued his undertaking business throughout his second tenure as sheriff. There are several instances in the board of county commissioners’ minutes where he was paid for coffins and for performing burials (probably for paupers). Potsdamer also provided rewards for the capture of certain criminals, but the board did not always unanimously go along with this. The June 4, 1914 minutes state that Sheriff Potsdamer had paid \$50 (about \$1,600 today) for the capture of Allen Fort and that two commissioners refused to pay it.

On September 2, 1913, the Suwannee County Board of County Commissioners authorized \$300 (approximately \$10,000 in today’s money) to Sheriff Potsdamer for the purchase of two bloodhounds to pursue criminals. However, the sheriff apparently pocketed the money or otherwise squandered it. The commissioners made an attempt in October 1914 to have the money returned via an official resolution, but if it was done so, it was not recorded in the board’s minutes. This action, coupled with his general lack of law enforcement (especially when it concerned illegal alcohol sales), led to Potsdamer being suspended from the office of sheriff by Governor Park Trammell on December 22, 1914, effective December 31.

Among the governor’s stated reasons for removing Potsdamer was that, during his present term, the sheriff had failed to use reasonable and proper diligence and efforts to detect and bring before the courts parties selling intoxicating liquors within the said county in violation of the law; and it being shown by the evidence before me that during the present term of office of said Sheriff violations of the law prohibiting the sale of liquors have been flagrant within said county; and it further appearing from the Auditor’s report that while the said Potsdamer, upon the date that the report was made, had accounted for and paid all the fines collected by him, that he had been dilatory and slow in paying over the fines collected by him, having delayed payment in some instances for several months, and having quite generally failed to pay over the fines collected by him within the time required by law; and it appearing that the conduct above referred to of the said Potsdamer as such Sheriff constitutes neglect of duty in office.

The Florida Senate studied the



governor’s suspension and, on May 14, 1915, agreed with his findings. As a result, the senate consented to the removal of Gus Potsdamer from the office of sheriff effective immediately. He was replaced by W.H. Lyle, who had been appointed acting sheriff during Potsdamer’s suspension and who would remain sheriff until his death in 1934.

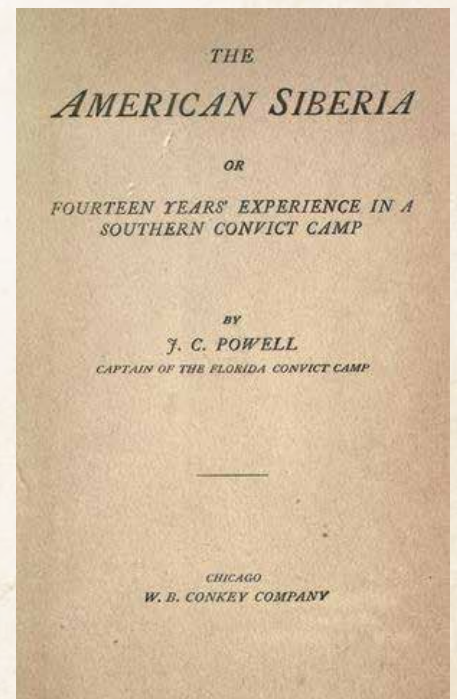
Despite the apparent shame in being removed from office, Potsdamer remained in Live Oak, at least for a time. He appears to have enjoyed other pursuits, including sports. In the early years of the twentieth century, Live Oak had a reputation for good sports teams, especially baseball, and Potsdamer appears to have been one of their staunch supporters. According to the July 23, 1915, edition of the Palatka News, Live Oak’s baseball team “was regarded as the finest aggregation of semi-professional ball tossers in Florida.” Unfortunately, the team lost to Palatka in a series of games that week, even after having hired experienced professional players from Charleston, S.C., and the Georgia State League after the first day of defeats to server as ringers. After the defeats, the Palatka News reported, “Thursday was another wet day, especially for Live Oak, where it is said that old Gottschalk Pottsdammer [sic], as he read the telegraph bulletins from Palatka, wept a continuous stream of tears and refused to be comforted.” He really got into his baseball!

By all accounts, Gus Potsdamer lived a very interesting life. The January 5, 1918, Jacksonville Times states: “Gus Pottsdammer [sic], 63, a well known resident of Live Oak, died in this city early yesterday morning, after an illness of over a year’s duration. He was formerly sheriff of Suwannee County and for many years was engaged in the undertaking

business at Live Oak. The funeral took place yesterday afternoon, Rabbi I.L. Kaplan, of the Temple Ahavath Chesed officiating. The interment was in Temple cemetery.”

Few Suwannee County individuals could claim to have led the varied and charmed life that Gus Potsdamer lived!

The life of Gus Potsdamer appears in Eric Musgrove’s book, Lost Suwannee County, published by The History Press in 2017. This article has been modified from the original by using current inflation values for the American dollar. ■



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SUMMER BALDWIN

Dancing with Herself



Aloneliness: a screendance

Story by Robin Postell

As Director of Dance and Acting at Rock U 2 School of Performing Arts in Ocean Springs, Miss., Madison native Summer Baldwin strives to offer non-competitive, safe, and creative dance, acting and mindfulness classes to children and adults of all ages and skill levels. Her kids' mindfulness workbooks, *I Can Be Calm*, are also available to buy on Amazon.

But before any of that, there was an idyllic childhood growing up in Madison in the magical 40-acre wood, full of free-flowing imagination.

The perfect place to create babies and art, her parents had discovered the property outside Madison's city limits close to Cherry Lake after leaving St. Petersburg, Fla. before Summer was born. Her father Robert Baldwin had finished dental school and had an artist's true nature, and her mother Julie was an actress at heart – both bursting with natural creativity. Along with some friends, they built their home and an artist's retreat.

"We didn't have television in our house so there was a lot of playing outside and playing dress up," Summer says. "Our dad was a dentist but also a visual artist – a painter and sculptor, always drawing and making pottery – and he would make all these trails for us out in the woods on the 40 acres. We were surrounded by dad's art and

mom acting in local plays. It was a great place to grow up – very outdoorsy and art-based."

Summer was preceded in birth by Ivy, her only sibling eight years her senior. Both took dance at Madison's best and only dance studio, Becky's Dance Steps Studio owned by Becky Robinson.

"We did some competition there, but it wasn't competition like it is now so we would go a few times, but it was mostly taking classes and working on the recital pieces," Summer recalls her days at Becky's studio. "If we were super interested in dancing and went multiple times a week, we could usually choreograph a little bit so she kind of allowed that to happen which was nice."

Drawing inspiration from old movies, musicals, ballet, live theater and "watching my sister dance," Summer evolved into more than a dancer. She loves anything creative, including acting.

But first the girls had to leave the woods. Ivy left, heading for North Carolina's School of the Arts, where she studied dance followed by NYU's Tisch School of the Arts, where she received her master's in dance.

Summer's time came soon, leaving Madison with dreams and a free spirit to pursue life beyond the 40-acre wood. Summer attended Valdosta State University, where she received her BFA in Theater and Dance in 2002, deciding to move to New York City five

years later in 2007.

While in NYC, Summer trained and performed with Julie Ludwicks' aerial dance company, Fly-By-Night Dance Theater, including portraying Dafne in her 2011 aerial adaptation of the opera *Apollo and Dafne*.

"I also had the pleasure of performing in *Scarlet Fever*, an experimental opera written and directed by Ryan Tracy with The Collective Opera Company."

Scarlet Fever was presented at the Park Avenue Armory in NYC and Mt. Tremper Arts in Mt. Tremper, N.Y.

"As an actress, I performed in the one-act plays *A Curious Thing* and *A Summer Song* for Impetuous Theater Group and *Scarlet Fever* with The Collective Opera Company" Summer recites. "I was also the lead actress in two episodes of the web-series *Joseph Kaplan*. One of my favorite NYC gigs was swinging from a harness as a mystical wood nymph, for a Belgium energy commercial!"

Of her time in NYC, Summer says she loved it. "New York City is a perfect place to live, work, and grow as a performer, artist and human being. The things I struggled with were the amount of people, fast pace, and noise but I loved being immersed into the opportunities and experiences of a big city for my early years as a professional dancer and actress. It was great for my 20s."

Of course, there was the "cute boy"





(Kristopher Carter) she met in Central Park – at a wedding, no less – that helped her out of those bustling 20s and into a marriage of her own. The two live on the Mississippi Gulf Coast together and Summer hasn't looked back at the big city life.

"Ivy loves it and that's what she's meant for," Summer says. "We kind of chose different paths. Performing live isn't my favorite part. My favorite is the process of being in class, things like that. I started doing screen dance, which is creating a dance that's supposed to be viewed as a film and that way I don't have to be on stage as much. I've also chosen to follow teaching and working with kids as the Director of Dance and Acting at a performing arts school here in Mississippi."

Summer's most recent screendance project, *this little house i planned*, is one of her favorite pieces because it joins together her love for film and dance. "Performing on stage is my least favorite part of the process so making a film is much more enjoyable to me," she underscores with a chuckle.

Since moving to the Gulf Coast, Summer has been performing in and around New Orleans, La., and Ocean Springs. In 2013, she was featured in a two-minute promo on WGNO's "News with a Twist" and voted as one of the TOP 3 Performing Artists of the Year for RAW: New Orleans for her performance of, *The Betty Dance*, on the low-flying trapeze.

"My favorite New Orleans project was being cast as Betty in the black and white short film noir, *The Dead Man's Number*, directed by Jackson Hill," Summer says proudly. "*The Dead Man's Number* won the Audience Choice Short Film Award at the 2013 Fairhope Film Festival; a Gold Remi Award at the 2014 Worldfest-Houston International Film Festival and I was nominated for Best Actress in the 2015 Philadelphia Horror Film Festival and 2017 Southern Shorts Awards. My most recent film work includes playing the lead female role of Beth in *Cornbread Cosa Nostra*, directed by Travis Mills."

Summer's professional choreography experience began with two low-flying trapeze duets: *Whatever You Think is Best* (2011) and *petite bash* (2012) at Soundance Studios in Brooklyn, NY. Her work on the Gulf Coast includes *If It Suddenly Rains*, performed inside

the Ohr-O'Keefe Museum of Art in Biloxi, Miss., and *Ever So...*, which was a part of the 2013 New Orleans Fringe Festival.

"My most recent original stage work, *Aloneliness*, was a collaboration between mixed-media artist Julia Reyes, sound designer Billy Louviere, dancer Katy Gaines and singer Leah Rodgers," Summer says.

Other work includes two improvisational duets with Leif Anderson, *40 Years Between Us* at The Mary C. and *Movement is Born* at the Walter Anderson Museum of Art. Her first screendance project, *Aloneliness: a screendance*, was a dance film collaboration with MS Gulf Coast-based filmmaker Rachel Searcey (A Girl and her Goldfish Productions). *Aloneliness: a screendance* was chosen for numerous film festivals including Oxford Film Festival, Southern States Indie Fan Film Fest and Lady Filmmakers Festival in Beverly Hills, Calif..

The Baldwin family remains closely connected, able to see each other throughout the year. "They'll come here to Ocean Springs, Miss., where I live, and then we'll go to New York to see Ivy, so we see each other a lot," Summer says. "We can bounce around spots, and I like going home to the woods several times a year."

Summer loves being a teacher, freestyling her lifestyle just the way she wants it - going boating, camping, drawing birds and flowers, and practicing mindfulness through yoga, meditation, and explorations outdoors.

Follow her on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/summer.baldwin.5> ■





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In the skilled hands of **BILL MOON**

Story by Laura Young

Nectar from the white-green blossoms of the tupelo tree make some of the rarest, most sought-after honey in the world, and its lightweight, pale wood is prized by many a woodcarver as well.

One such woodcarver is Bill Moon. Tupelo has been his wood of choice for capturing the likenesses of North Florida's birds since he discovered it around the age of six. Actually, the first flying thing Moon decided to carve was a World War II fighter plane, like the ones he often watched landing and taking off at Dale Mabry Field in Tallahassee, which was an active Army Air Base when he lived across the street from it as a young boy.

Moon's interest shifted from carving planes to statuettes of birds when his family moved to the shores of Lake Jackson, where his dad ran a fish camp. What he then began seeing every day, in addition to motorboats, were all kinds of migratory ducks. Moon's development as a woodcarver dovetailed with an interest in hunting. Like most hunters, he gained a growing reverence for his prey and an appreciation for their natural beauty, which he was able to study up close and then recreate in tupelo wood.

As a carving technique, Moon learned to use cast-off dental drills to fashion the intricate features of his model birds. His keen eye and skilled hands produced sculptures so lifelike that they have been compared with the world-famous porcelain figures created by Edward Boehm. Over time, Moon's subjects came to include not only game birds but also species like eagles and hummingbirds, and he included flowers in his three-dimensional compositions as well.

Recently, in preparation for the October 2024 retrospective exhibit of Moon's work at Jefferson Arts Gallery (JAG), Curator Susan Rissman commented, "His birds are so realistic that they can fool the viewers to think a live bird has landed on the branch of one of his sculptures."

The show, entitled *Bill Moon's Love Affair with Woodcarving*, also paid homage to Moon as a key founder of JAG. He had become a part of the Monticello art scene after moving to the community around 1975. By that time, Moon had completed a civil engineering program at Lively Technical College, was well into his 30-year engineering career, was

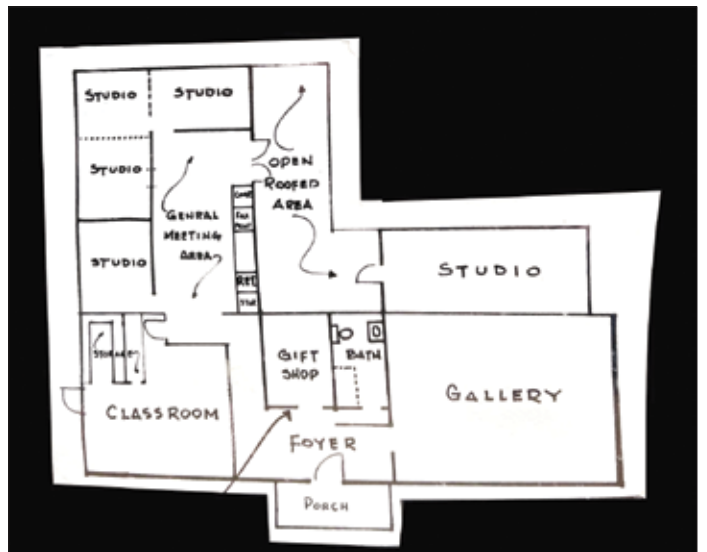


married to Lissa, who worked at WCTV, and had two children, Wendi and Craig.

As a sideline during the 1970s, the Moons got involved with friends in collecting antiques. Their jaunts to various auctions often took them through Monticello, and one day as they drove down Pearl Street Lissa "went crazy" over one of the oak-shaded historic homes there. That was that, and the 1888 sky-blue beauty that caught their

heart has been their home to this day. Over the decades, the time Moon devoted to woodcarving had ebbed and flowed, but the move to Jefferson County brought him close to Lake Miccosukee, rekindling his interest in game birds and making carvings of them.

In the 1990s, Moon was among a dozen or so artists in Jefferson County who were looking for a local place to exhibit their work. The Monticello Opera House provided a





venue for a one-day show, but Moon recalls that the historic structure turned out to present difficulties for displaying art due to various restrictions, such as not being able to put nails in the walls. Then they found out about a building just a few blocks away that was owned by the school district but no longer in use.

They were offered a 25-year lease for just one dollar a year – an amazing opportunity – but the federal paperwork necessary to officially operate as a non-profit organization was daunting. Members of the group felt that Moon was the only one among them who could really manage it. Feeling a bit “shanghaied” when the administrative task was thrust upon him, Moon nonetheless did handle it, and in 1997 Jefferson Arts Gallery came to be. Members got busy renovating the property to serve their purposes, which entailed termite treatment, rewiring, installing more sinks and even enclosing some adjacent outdoor areas to make new rooms. Today, JAG boasts a stable membership of around 150 artists and continues to provide essential support for artistic and cultural activities in the community. It curates a new exhibit each month, has studios for local artists, offers classes in a wide variety of mediums and includes a gift shop with affordable original works created by its member artists. It was recognized as a 2024 Best of Florida Winner, one of just eight art galleries statewide to receive this highest level award from *The Guide to Florida*.

Woven through all of his other accomplishments, Moon has been using his skillful hands to strum beautiful music on the guitar. He and Lissa met when they were part of The Chaotics, a professional group that regularly brought their rock-and-roll sounds to venues all over North Florida.

Today, at age 90, Moon still likes



Lissa and Bill Moon - today.



The Chaotics ~ 1990.

on occasion to join meetings of the JAG Bluegrass Group, an informal jam session open to the entire community every Thursday night. In a fellow artist's studio, he picks up an instrument and smoothly delivers a tune from deep in his memory.

He still has his own art studio in the back of the JAG building, but a heart attack five years ago put a halt to this creative work in the middle of carving a night heron. Looking through the space now, Moon fingers the scattered blocks of tupelo wood, sheaves of sketches for carving projects and boxes of drill bits with practiced ease. He's not sure if his health can handle the excitement of woodcarving anymore, but that doesn't keep him from coming out to the gallery most Wednesdays and Saturdays anyway.

As he did in the beginning, he's there to lend a hand of support and to be in the company of his artist friends, both the new ones who bring fresh perspectives to the gallery and the old ones who have been there with him all along. ■



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Regional Reads

Story by Laura Young

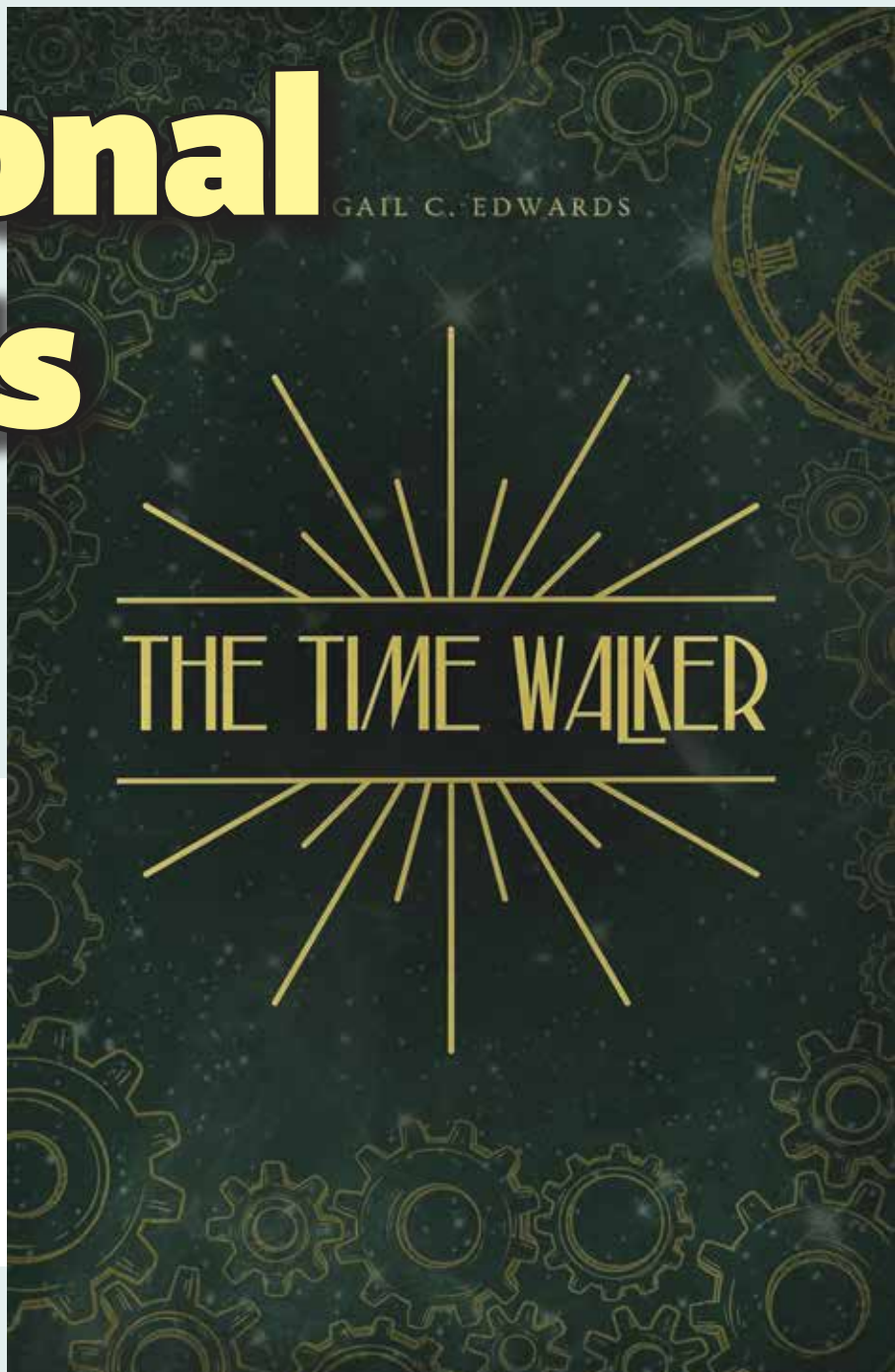
Florida's Big Bend forms a junction of sorts, situated as it is where the panhandle curves into the state's woodsy, river-fed interior and brushing shoulders with the Deep South while dipping its toes into the fecund salt marshes of the Gulf. The interesting small towns that dot the landscape anchor strong communities where a fascinating fusion of people make their homes, pursue their livelihoods and delve into the various mysteries and joys of life. For more than a few residents, what's on their mind makes its way into equally fascinating books. Here are just a few to consider for your reading list.

The Secret Door by Christy Bass Adams (WordCrafts Press, 2024)

Madison's own award-winning author Christy Bass Adams recently released a second book in her *Adventures of Cricket and Kyle* series: *The Secret Door*. With illustrations by Lisa Isadora Thompson, the book made its debut in November of 2024 at #60 on Amazon's Hot New Releases in the Children's Mystery category.

In this story, Cricket and Kyle accidentally find a secret door under Kyle's bedroom rug, and through it they descend into a hidden room. From there, with a dusty old map, an unfinished letter and a baffling picture, the pair embark on an exciting journey, following clues that lead them back in time to the days of the Underground Railroad.

Adams learned to love children's stories in her own youth and developed that passion during her 18 years as an educator. Now she works as a church outreach coordinator and keeps busy as the mother to two adventurous kids of her own. She writes a weekly column for *Greene Publishing, Inc.* and is a regular contributor to *CBN.com*, *christiandevotions.us* and *inspireafire.com*. To learn more about



Adams, visit christybassadams.com and wordcrafts.net.

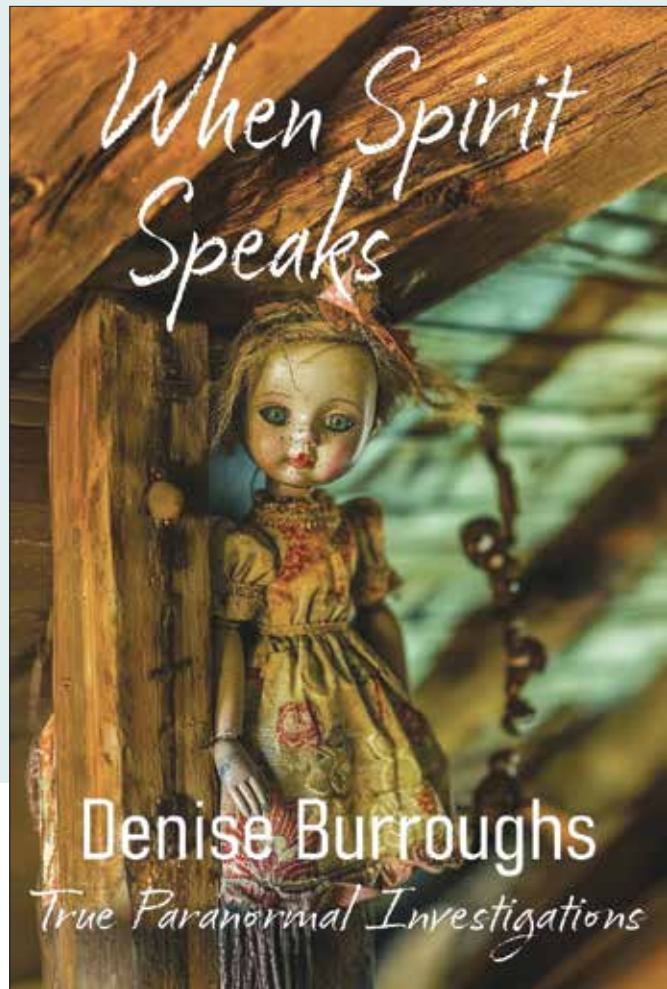
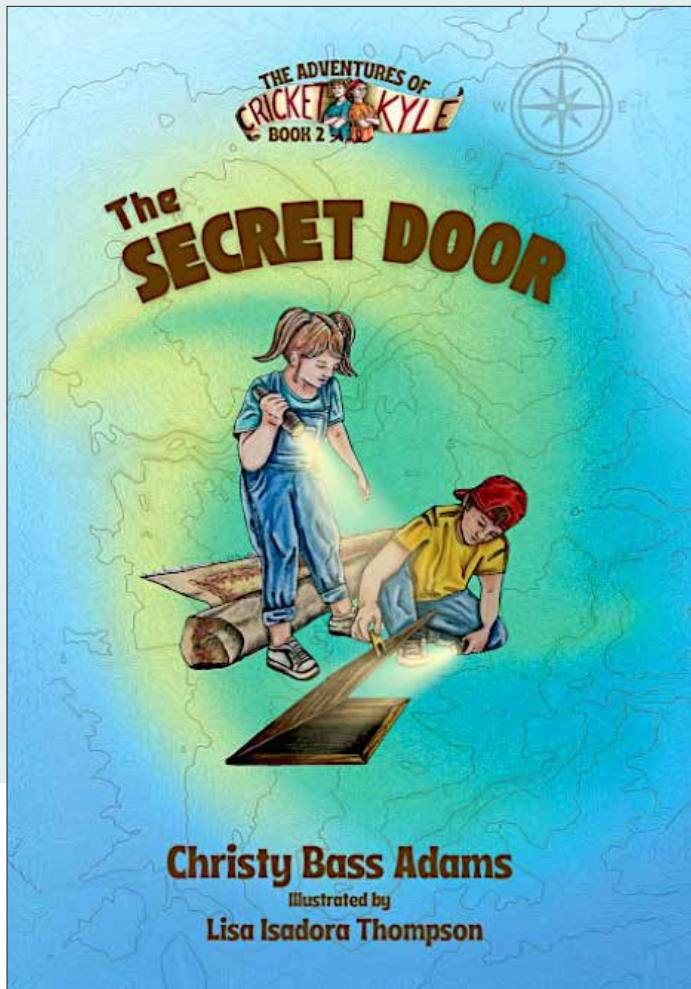
Her books are available at her own website and through Amazon.

When Spirit Speaks by Denise Burroughs (Inkd Publishing, 2024)

Denise Burroughs has been conducting investigations into haunted encounters for more than 25 years, and the team she founded called Paranormal Investigators of North Florida has an office in downtown

Perry, Fla., where she's lived since 2015. For the past four years, Burroughs has worked at chronicling some of her experiences in book form, and the resulting collection of eerie tales was released on October 31, 2024.

In the introduction, Burroughs opens up for the first time about her gift for communicating with spirits. She shares about how, with guidance, she learned to use her abilities to help others – both living and dead – and to be at peace within herself through trusting and accepting her particular



sensitivities.

The book includes a chapter on “The Seven Signs of a Haunting,” and one about “The Equipment” describes nine devices Burroughs and her team use to pick up on paranormal energies. The remaining 35 chapters discuss cases she undertook across the country, with a concentration on locations in Florida.

Nearby reports of hauntings that she’s investigated include Greystone Manor and the O’Quinn Drug Company in Perry; the Old Jefferson County Jail, Roseland Cemetery, the Monticello Opera House and several residences in Monticello’s historic district; and the Sanitarium site as well as the building where Madison Books is located in Madison. Many of the cases are described without revealing the exact location of her research, such as a haunted brothel, various haunted objects, the last house on Shiloh Road and a train to nowhere.

In concluding the 211-page book, Burroughs thanks her team (Ladonna Denmark, Chris Estes and Cliff Burroughs) and emphasizes the value of their work for the clients who seek answers through them.

Burroughs holds a degree in

parapsychology and also has studied a variety of religions in order to be able to relate to people of any belief system. She has been featured on *Haunted Hospitals* (T&E and the Travel Channel), and her podcast *Haunted Florida* is available on Spotify. Her books, including *When Spirit Speaks*, *Let’s Eat*, *The Adventures of Willow Spider and Friends*, and *The Story of the Day You Were Born*, are all available on Amazon and various other outlets worldwide. Burroughs can be reached by messaging through the Facebook page of Paranormal Investigators of North Florida or by emailing HauntedFloridaPodcast@gmail.com.

***The Time Walker* by Abigail C. Edwards (2021)**

Abigail C. Edwards was working at Tupelo’s Bakery and Café in Monticello, Fla., when she self-published her first young adult novel, *When We all Bled Oil* (set in a bakery!), in 2021. She was working simultaneously on another novel, *The Time Walker*, which came out soon after. This latest book, which Edwards spent 10 years crafting and rewriting, offers a complex fantasy adventure complete with a forbidden festival, a dangerous rescue, haunted graveyards,

black markets and of course time travel. Along the way, the main character, Greyfoot Volkov, encounters watchmakers, pirates, fugitives and friends as he seeks his long-lost mother, who had disappeared 15 years earlier into the labyrinth of time.

In the Author’s Note for *The Time Walker*, Edwards says, “This is the story I wish I had had when I was a teenager. This is the story I would have loved as a young homeschooler. This is the story my sister and my brother love.... I had loads of fun writing [it], and I hope that you have just as much fun reading it.”

Born and raised in North Florida, Edwards’ experience at Tupelo’s came at a time when she was earning her bachelor’s degree in Hospitality & Tourism Management from Florida State University. She went on in 2023 to receive her Advanced Baking Diploma from the School of Artisan Food, located in Nottinghamshire, United Kingdom, and is currently living in Scotland. Expect her next book, *Canary Girl*, soon!

Signed copies of *The Time Walker* are for sale in Tupelo’s, located at 220 W. Washington St., in Monticello. Her novels are also available at acedwardsbooks.com. ■

WHAT'S HAPPENING



January 5, 12

North Florida Pride 10U Travel Softball Tryouts

North Florida Pride's 10U traveling softball team will be holding tryouts at 2 p.m. on Sunday, Jan. 5, and Sunday, Jan. 12, at Suwannee High School's softball field (1301 Walker Ave. S.W., Live Oak). Girls with a birth year of 2014/2015 are eligible to tryout. For more information, contact Jared Compton at (850) 843-1836, Tay Casey at (386) 855-0346 or Jarrod Pepper at (850) 755-7443.

January 8-29

Annual Fiber Arts Exhibit at JAG

The Jefferson Arts Gallery, 575 West Washington St., Monticello, Fla., is open on Wednesdays and Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. and by appointment by calling (850) 997-3311.



January 10-26

The Laramie Project at MOH

Staged at the historic Monticello Opera House, this docu-drama presents a breathtaking collage of voices from the town of Laramie, Wyoming, relating to the 1988 kidnapping of 21-year-old university student Matthew Shepard. For more information and tickets, call (850) 997-4242 or visit www.monticellooperahouse.org.



January 11

Suwannee Bombers 9U Spring Baseball Tryouts

Suwannee Bombers' 9U baseball team will be holding tryouts at 3 p.m. at the First Federal Sportsplex (1201 Silas Dr. S.W., Live Oak). Eligible players can't turn 10 before May 1, 2025. For more information or to RSVP, call (386) 590-4612 or email SuwanneeBombers@gmail.com.

January 11

Monticello Second Saturday

Enjoy karaoke, arts/crafts vendors, extended shopping hours and other fun in downtown historic Monticello from 5 to 8 p.m. Check the Monticello FL Second Saturday Facebook page for posts about this month's special theme.

January 13

Bingo at Grumpy's Diner

The Madison County Chamber of Commerce is hosting a BINGO! fundraiser at Grumpy's Diner on Main (244 S.W. Range Ave.) from 6 to 8 p.m. There will be five games of three cards each, split 50-50 with the Chamber. There will also be a bonus game of "Winner Takes All." Cards are \$2 each, or three for \$5. Ticket purchases are non-refundable. For more information, call (850) 973-2788.

January 15

Lunch and Learn about Tuscany Trip

The Madison County Chamber of Commerce (228 S.W. Range Ave.) hosts a free lunch and learn event about their upcoming

trip to Tuscany, Italy, which is scheduled to take place Nov. 4-12, 2025. For more information, call (850) 973-2788.

January 16

Dale Carnegie Leadership Workshop

The Madison County Chamber of Commerce (228 S.W. Range Ave.) hosts a free Dale Carnegie Leadership Workshop 6-7:30 p.m. For more information, call (850) 973-2788.



January 17-19

Live Oak Winter Classic

Enjoy a weekend full of youth exhibitors showcasing their beef cattle with the Live Oak Winter Classic. This three day event will begin on Friday, Jan. 17, with check-in between 2 p.m. and 5 p.m. A mandatory meeting for participants takes place at 6:30 p.m., followed by a guest speaker at 7 p.m. On Saturday, Jan. 18, beginning at 9 a.m., youth will compete in showmanship for bulls, steers and homegrown steer/bull. At 5 p.m., youth will compete in the Skillathon. The final day, Sunday, Jan. 19, youth will begin showing off their cows/calves, heifers and homegrown heifers at 9 a.m. Online entries close Sunday, Jan. 12. To register, visit www.showman.app/shows#/live-oak-winter-classic-838b.



January 20

Suwannee MLK Day

The Suwannee County Martin Luther King Jr. Committee will be presenting MLK Day 2025 at Paul Langford Stadium (302 Parshley St. S.W., Live Oak). The event will feature plenty of vendors, along with the annual MLK Day Parade at 10 a.m. For more information on becoming a vendor, call (386) 249-5641 or (904) 466-9920.

WHAT'S HAPPENING

January 20

Jefferson MLK Day

The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Community Center in Monticello has planned a Peace Walk, MLK Day Parade and Family Day with games, music, vendors and food, beginning at 11 a.m.. For more information, call (850) 933-2012 or email johnsonalthera1@gmail.com.

January 25

Texas Hold 'em Tournament

The Madison County Chamber of Commerce hosts a Texas Hold 'em Poker Tournament from 4 to 9 p.m. Seating is limited for this Chamber fundraiser, so reserve your place today. There will be fantastic prizes for the top five finishers. The event will take place at 701 BC Venue and Brewery (701 S.W. Range Ave.). For more information, call (850) 973-2788.



January 25, 26

Wild Wonders Weekend at NFWC

The North Florida Wildlife Center (1386 Cook Rd., Lamont) offers a special weekend of fun with animal presentations, goat feedings, keeper talks, face painting, arts/crafts, vendors, wine/beer and local food/drink. Tickets are just \$9.50 for kids and \$14.50 for adults when you order online at NorthFloridaWildlife.org. At the door, kids are \$14.50 for kids and \$19.50 for adults.

January 30

Bingo in Lee

The Madison County Chamber of Commerce hosts BINGO! at The Edge of Town Bull Pen (8289 E. U.S. Hwy. 90, Lee) from 6 to 8 p.m. There will be five games of three cards each, split 50-50 with the Chamber. There will also be a bonus game of "Winner Takes All." Cards are \$2 each, or three for \$5. Ticket purchases are non-refundable. For more information, please call (850) 973-2788.



January 31 - February 16

I Love you, You're Perfect, Now Change at MOH

The historic Monticello Opera House presents this Valentine's Dinner Theater experience, with sketches and songs that celebrate the mating game and pay tribute to the agonies and triumphs of relationships. For more information and tickets, call (850) 997-4242 or visit www.monticellooperahouse.org.

February 1-26

Afro American Spotlight Show featuring Earl Washington and Felita McNeill at JAG

The Jefferson Arts Gallery, 575 West Washington St., Monticello, Fla., is open on Wednesdays and Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. and by appointment by calling (850) 997-3311.



February 1

All Aboard Festival

Suwannee Festivals will be presenting the All Aboard Festival from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the Suwannee County Historical Museum (208 Ohio Ave. N., Live Oak). Get ready for a day filled with live music, arts and crafts, food vendors, historical presentations and local authors. There will also be fun activities for children, including games, crafts, a Storytrail, free books, Touch-a-Truck, a kiddie train and a train display. Admission is free.

February 8

Monticello Second Saturday

Enjoy karaoke, arts/crafts vendors, extended shopping hours and other fun in downtown historic Monticello from 5 to 8 p.m. Check the Monticello FL Second Saturday Facebook page for posts about this month's special theme.

February 10

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WHAT'S HAPPENING

February 13

RIVEROAK Technical College Career Fair and Program Showcase

Explore career opportunities with RIVEROAK Technical College's annual Career Fair and Program Showcase. The event will be held on the college campus (415 Pinewood Dr. S.W., Live Oak) from 9 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Over 60 businesses and agencies will be represented. For more information, contact (386) 647-4200 or email rtccareerday@gmail.com.



February 14-16

Steinhatchee Fiddler Crab Festival

Enjoy fiddler crab races, live music, a fishing tournament, car show, boat show, chili cook-off and more. For more information, contact the Steinhatchee River Chamber at (352) 356-8185.



February 15

Pet Adoption Event

With the help of Madison County Animal Rescue, Ragans Family Campground will be hosting a special Valentine's adoption event. For more information, call (850) 973-8269.



February 15

Third Annual Chili Cook-off and Brewfest

Forgotten Coast K9 and the Madison County Chamber of Commerce present the Third Annual Chili Cook-off and Brewfest. From 1 to 6 p.m., come to Lee City Hall (286 N.E. County Rd. 255) to sample the best chili from around the area and wash it down with refreshing craft beers. Tickets are \$5 for unlimited chili samples and \$25 for unlimited chili and craft beer samples (must be 21 years of age or older to sample beers, ID required). Cash prizes and awards will be given for the Fan Favorite, the Judges' Best Overall Chili and the Judges' Scorcher Award. There will also be live music and vendors. Proceeds will benefit the Madison County Chamber of Commerce, along with veterans and first responders. For more information, call (850) 973-2788.



February 22-23

Fifth Annual Strawberry Fest

Grab the family for the Fifth Annual Strawberry Fest at the Suwannee County Fairgrounds (1302 11th St. S.W., Live Oak). This two-day festival offers Plant City strawberries, arts and crafts, delicious food, free bounce houses, a classic car show, live entertainment, rock painting, a hula hoop contest, pony rides, a strawberry relay, face painting, a toddler play area, a pie eating

contest, train rides, yummy strawberry treats and much, much more. Admission is \$7; kids ages two and under are free. For \$1 off admission, visit www.liveoakfestival.com/Coupon or bring a canned good for a discount. Food donations benefit the local food bank.



February 27

Bingo in Lee

The Madison County Chamber of Commerce hosts BINGO! at The Edge of Town Bull Pen (8289 E. U.S. Hwy. 90, Lee) from 6 to 8 p.m. There will be five games of three cards each, split 50-50 with the Chamber. There will also be a bonus game of "Winner Takes All." Cards are \$2 each, or three for \$5. Ticket purchases are non-refundable. For more information, please call (850) 973-2788.



February 28 - March 16

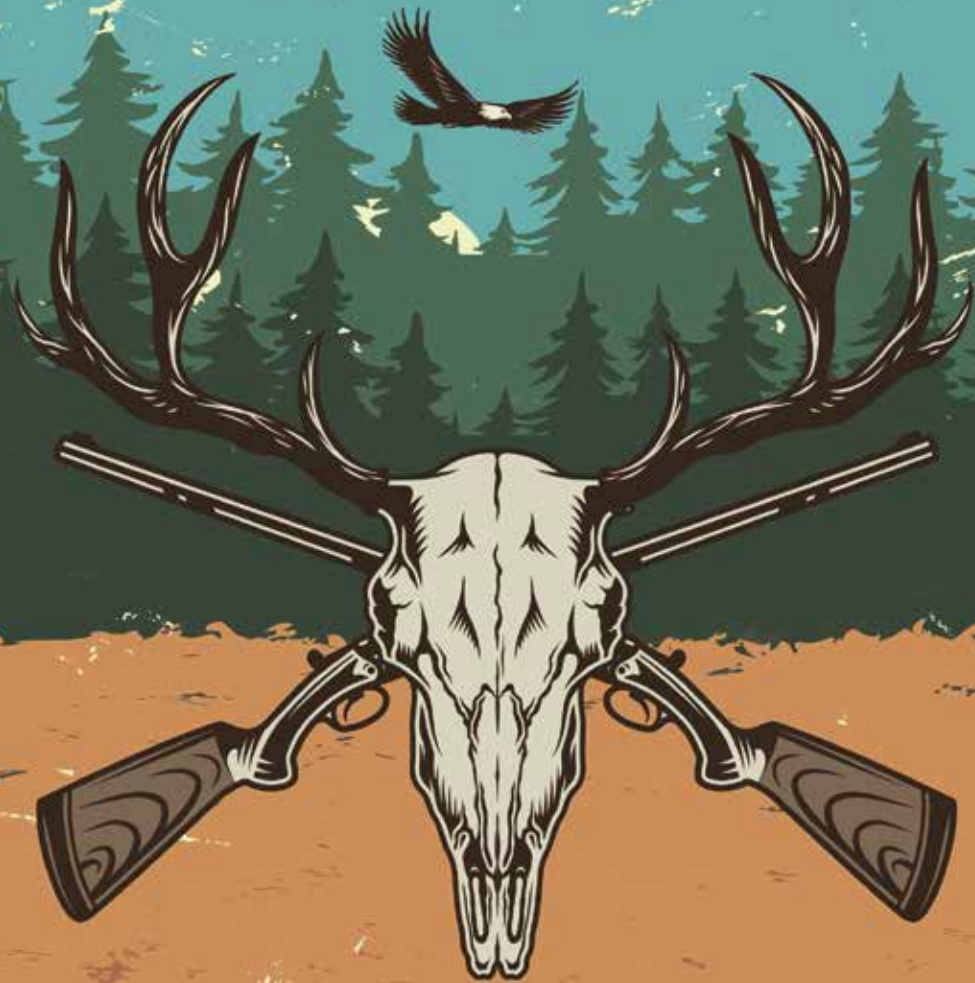
Grease at MOH

The rock-and-roll musical *Grease* gets its name from the 1950s working-class youth known as greasers. The storyline follows ten teenagers as they wrestle with peer pressure, politics, personal core values and love. The show had a 3,388-performance run on Broadway, was made into a feature film and is being staged locally at the historic Monticello Opera House. For more information and tickets, call (850) 997-4242 or visit www.monticellooperahouse.org.

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