

'A special kind of evil ...'
Man sentenced to life for murdering cousin

By PAYTON TOWNS III
Senior Reporter

A man found guilty of killing his cousin in 2023 and then concealing the death was sentenced Tuesday to life without the possibility of parole.

A Laurens County jury found that Edwin Lamar Wilkinson murdered James

Douglas "Doug" Wilkinson, 58, of East Dublin.

Edwin Wilkinson, 63, was convicted of two counts of felony murder, one count of malice murder, aggravated assault, concealing death of another, possession of a firearm during commission of a felony and possession of a firearm by a convicted felon.

In addition to life without the possibility of parole, Chief Superior Court Judge Jon F. Helton added 15 years to be served consecutively.

"The thought of a cousin killing another cousin, and then disposing of his body in a backyard where critters can eat it up and the body can decompose outside, takes a special kind of evil,"

said Dublin Circuit District Attorney Harold McLendon.

"The evidence showed that (Edwin) wrapped the body in a carpet and used some type of chemical on the body. The body had decomposed for about 30 days."

Family members report-

MURDER
Continued on page 8



Doug Wilkinson was missing for several weeks before his body was found at his cousin's residence/RODNEY MANLEY

VA honors veterans
with Last Roll Call

By PAYTON TOWNS III
Senior Reporter

The sound of the gong reverberated around the room as the names of veterans were said aloud and that person's picture, or name, were shown on a screen.

At the end of the presentation, Nelson Mainor, an employee at Carl Vinson VA Medical Center, hit the gong several times before stopping and letting the sound fade into silence.

Calvin McNeal, who had only moments early helped with the folding of an American flag, stepped to the side of the auditorium and played "Taps."

The VA held its most-recent Last Roll Call ceremony, an event that is held twice a year, on Jan. 31. The one in January is held to honor the VA's veterans who have passed away between July 1, 2025 and Dec. 31, 2025. On Friday, the VA, along with family and friends, remembered and honored:

Ervin Austin (U.S. Army), Joseph Daszkiewicz (U.S. Army), Paul L. Dixon (U.S. Army), Ray S. Ellerbee (U.S. Air Force), James E. Hunter (U.S. Army), Jimmie L. Johnson (U.S. Army), Jacob Lott (U.S. Army), Howard

B. Lowell (U.S. Army), Lewis W. Pratt (U.S. Air Force), Walter P. Smith (U.S. Navy), Gerald L. Spressard (U.S. Army), Joseph F. Thomasson III (U.S. Army), Curtis L. Wadley (U.S. Army), Willie L. Turner Jr. (U.S. Army), Edward A. Williams (U.S. Army), Curtis B. Atkinson (U.S. Army), Jerry Fincher (U.S. Army), Paul D. Hobbs (U.S. Army) and William A. Evans Jr. (U.S. Army).

"We are here for one single purpose and that purpose is to make that final roll call," said Chaplain Donald Retemiah. "Today we are making that final roll call, and it is significant because we are remembering those who are not here with us physically. They are with us in spirit."

Chandra Miller, executive director of the CVMC, admitted that they gathered for this event with heavy hearts. She said it is a solemn moment to remember the veterans who have died at the CVMC.

"Each name we hear represents more than just a person," Miller said. "It symbolizes a life of service, sacrifice and dedication to the principles we hold so dear. These individuals answered the call of duty during



The VA Honor Guard presents the American flag during the Last Roll Call ceremony/PAYTON TOWNS III

the times of war and peace. They demonstrated unwavering courage and enduring commitment to the freedoms we cherished."

Miller asked everyone to remember the family and friends the veterans have left behind.

"Your strength and resilience continue the legacy of these brave souls," she said. "You served, too. You stayed home, waited and loved. As we recite their names, let's take a part of their spirit and hold on to it."

When they have a chance, they were encouraged to share about their veteran's impact



LAST CALL
Continued on page 8 Nelson Mainor strikes the gong for each veteran/PAYTON TOWNS III



CLEAN UP: FIREFIGHTERS, POLICE CLEAR SCENE

Dublin firefighters, including Fire Chief Matthew Cutler, work to clear up a two-vehicle wreck that happened around 1 p.m. Monday near the intersection of Gaines and Jefferson streets. Wrecker crews towed both vehicles away as police worked the scene/PAYTON TOWNS III



Almost 100 students attended the first statewide FLEX field trip/SPECIAL PHOTO

Students entrepreneurs visit state Capitol, AmericasMart for inaugural FLEX field trip

SPECIAL TO THE COURIER HERALD

Nearly 100 student entrepreneurs from across Georgia participated in FLEX's first statewide field trip, taking part in FLEX Day at the Capitol and an educational visit to AmericasMart in downtown Atlanta.

Students representing eight FLEX communities – Laurens, Houston, Bibb, Chattooga, Tift, Turner and Candler counties – gathered at the Georgia State Capitol for a day focused on civic engagement, entrepreneurship and real-world business learning.

State Rep. Leesa Ha-



Students from the Dublin-Laurens County area talk during the field trip to the state Capitol/SPECIAL PHOTO

gen of House District 156 recognized FLEX Day at the Capitol during morning orders on the House floor, highlighting the importance

of the Georgia FLEX program and its role in empowering young entrepreneurs

FLEX TRIP
Continued on page 8

Barcode and publication information.

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OBITUARIES



LaRue Fountain

LaRue Fountain, a cherished pillar of the Rentz, Ga. community, a devoted family man and a respected farmer, passed away peacefully in his home on Feb. 1, 2026, at the age of 92. LaRue was born on Nov. 20, 1933, in Rentz, to his loving parents, the late T.D. Fountain and Mae Cowart Fountain. He was the embodiment of dedication, faith and love throughout his life.

Growing up under the Southern sun, LaRue cultivated a life as rich and bountiful as the fields he tended. His hands, weathered from years of hard work, brought forth the abundance of soybeans, cotton, peanuts and the sounds of livestock that were music to his ears. LaRue's work extended beyond his farm as he actively served on the Laurens County Board of Education for eight years and contributed his wisdom to the Little Ocmulgee EMC Board of Directors for an impressive 39 years.

As a founding member of Green Acres Golf Club, LaRue was known for his love of golf, a passion that was only eclipsed by the love he had for his family. His faith, as steadfast as the Georgia pines, was evident to all who knew him, particularly in his long and devoted service as a deacon at Rentz Baptist Church. LaRue also played a significant role in the creation of the New Farmers Peanut Co-op, once again showing his dedication to his community and craft.

The Fountain family has lost its patriarch, but the memory of LaRue will be felt through generations. In addition to his parents, he was preceded in death by his beloved wives, Pat and Sue Fountain; sons, Mark and Chuck Fountain; granddaughter, Lindsay Fountain Weaver; son-in-law, Dusty Savant Jr., and brothers, Paul, Gerald and E.J. Fountain.

Left to cherish his memory are: his son, Mike Fountain and wife Diane of Lawrenceville; his daughter, Cindy Savant of Rentz, and stepdaughter, Jennifer Lindsey. He was the loving grandfather to, Dan Kersey (Tiffany), Ashley Graham (Brenton), Mandi Dillon (Alex), Jessica King (J.B.), Magen Waldrep (Dustin), Bekka Dixon (Fred), Brandon Fountain, Josh Savant (Challee), Jake Savant (Erica), and Tyler Fountain (Jessica). Each grandchild's success and happiness were a source of great pride for LaRue but his greatest desire was for those closest to him know Jesus as their personal Savior. He was a beacon of light to his many grandchildren and great-grandchildren who will treasure his unwavering love and kindness. LaRue is also survived by his brother, Silas Fountain, along with

several nieces and nephews. He leaves behind his cherished and devoted friend, Harrison "Hoot" Jones, who will always treasure the memories they shared together as they worked tirelessly alongside each other for over 60 years on the Fountain family farm. LaRue's kindness, love, and warm presence will be profoundly missed by his family, friends, and all who were blessed to know him. His life was a testament to the meaning of hard work, faith, and family.

Funeral services will be held at 2 p.m. on Thursday, Feb. 5, 2026, at Rentz Baptist Church. Rev. Grady Mimbs and Rev. Harrison Jones will officiate. Burial will follow in Rentz Cemetery. LaRue's family will receive friends on Thursday from noon until service time at Rentz Baptist Church.

Mike Morton, Sam Andrews, Alan Watson, Tracy Butler, Billy Fountain, Edwin Avery, Caleb Skipper and Jimmy Skipper will serve as active pallbearers. Honorary pallbearers will be the deacons of Rentz Baptist Church and the New Farmers Co-op Directors.

Please visit www.townsendfuneralhome.com to sign the online memorial registry.



Margaret Thomas Pippin

Margaret Thomas Pippin passed away on Feb. 2, 2026, in Dublin, Georgia, at the age of 80. Born on Sept. 6, 1945, in Laurens County, Georgia, to the late Dewey and Alma Melton Thomas, Margaret lived a life that was a testament to her unwavering spirit and the joy she found in her family and faith.

Margaret's early years in Laurens County were filled with the warmth of a close-knit community and the strong values imparted by her parents. Her journey in life took her to many places, but it was in Dublin, Georgia, that she built her legacy of love and devotion. She was married to the late George R. Pippin, with whom she shared a lifetime of cherished memories and raised a family that was her pride and joy.

A devoted homemaker, Margaret's life was a tapestry woven with the threads of care and attention she gave to her children, Melissa (Andy) Neal, Tony (Toni) Pippin, Brooks (Kathy) Pippin, and Sissy (Brent) Allen. Her grandchildren, Emilee and Lane Neal; Brooke (Dustin) Payne; Brandon (Samantha) Pippin; Blake (Ashley) Scarborough; Britt (Karleigh) Pippin; Shyre Pippin; Eva Pippin; Blake Eubanks; Dillon (Niah) Eubanks; and Carlie Allen, were the apple of her eye. Margaret's joy was multiplied with the addition of her 12 great-grandchildren, who brought her immeasurable happiness. She is also survived by her brother, Gene Thomas, and nephew, Richard (Joy) Thomas.

Margaret's faith was the cornerstone of her life. As a long-standing member of Liberty Church, she found solace and strength in her community of worship. She was also an active member of the Honeybees' Widow

Group, where she found companionship and support. Her love for going to church was matched only by her love for her family.

Throughout her life, Margaret went by many titles, including wife, mother, and sister, but the title of "Nana" was her favorite. She wore it with honor and a sense of duty that she fulfilled with every hug, story, and word of wisdom she shared.

Funeral services will be held at 2 p.m., Thursday, Feb. 5, 2026 at the Mary Whitaker Townsend Memorial Chapel at Townsend Brothers Funeral Home with burial to follow at Mt. Zion Baptist Church Cemetery. Rev. Nate Dooley will officiate. The family will receive friends from 1 p.m. until 2 p.m. at the funeral home.

Pallbearers will be Lane Neal, Brandon Pippin, Blake Scarborough, Britt Pippin, Blake Eubanks, Dillon Eubanks and Richard Thomas.

Please visit www.townsendfuneralhome.com to sign the online memorial register.

Townsend Brothers Funeral Home has charge of the arrangements.



Shana Williams Gilmore

Funeral services for Shana Williams Gilmore, of Hawkinsville, Georgia, will be held on Saturday, Feb. 7, 2026, at 11 a.m. at the Anderson Gift Baptist Church, 75 Anderson Gift Church Road in Hawkinsville. Viewing will be on Friday, Feb. 6, 2026, 10 a.m. - 5 p.m. at Angel Heights Funeral Service, 510 Progress Avenue in Hawkinsville.

Shana Williams was born on Thursday, July 12, 1984, in Hawkinsville, Georgia. Shana accepted Jesus Christ as her Lord and Savior and became a member of the Anderson Gift Baptist Church of Hawkinsville, Ga. She was a faithful member. Shana later moved her membership to Everlasting Gospel Non-denominational Church of Dublin under the leadership of Apostle Dr. H.J. Sinclair. Shana was educated in the Pulaski County School System. She graduated from Hawkinsville High School. She was a proud member of the graduating class of 2002. Shana loved to sing, her family, and hang out with "the girls." Shana married the love of her life, Kelly Gilmore. God blessed this union with two children, Kelvron Karice Gilmore and Kueston Amir Gilmore. The union was with two bonus children, Spiritual and Kelwaun Gilmore.

On, Tuesday, Jan. 27, 2026, GOD put his arms around our beloved Shana, 41, closed her eyes and whispered "Peace be thine" as she transitioned from this earthly life to eternal rest. She was preceded in death by her mother, Glo-

ria Williams, sister, Raven Williams, grandparents, Frank and Mollie Williams, Charles and Pearlle Mae Jackson, her aunts, Evangelist Sarah Brown, Maggie Green and her uncles, Frank Williams Jr. and W.J. Williams.

Shana's memories will forever be cherished by every life she touched. She is survived by her loving and devoted husband, Kelly Gilmore; children, Kelvron Gilmore, Kueston Gilmore of Hawkinsville, Ga.; Spiritual Gilmore and Kelwaun Gilmore of Dublin, Ga.; father, Ray Jackson Sr., of Hawkinsville, Ga; sisters and brother, Babs Williams Antley of Warner Robins, Ga., LaShonda Brown of New Jersey, and Ray Jackson Jr., of Hawkinsville, Ga.; sister-in-law, Barbara Gilmore; loving aunts and uncles, Elizabeth Williams, Verlene Williams, Mollie (James) Glenn, Jerome Green, Carol Williams, all of Cordele, Ga.; Fontella Williams, Jerome Williams, both of Vienna, Ga.; Beatrice (Brian) Mantle of Deal Kent, England; Reverend Barry (Joyce) Redding of Texas; Merion (Felicia) Redding of Maryland; Sharrod Law of Byromville, Ga.; Robert and Hattie Ladson of Hawkinsville, Ga., Stacy and Tracy Jackson of Eastman, best friend, Les Marshall, and longtime friend, Keisha Miller of Hawkinsville, Ga.; and a host of cousins and other relatives.

Please post your condolences online at ServicesbyDudley.com.

Services by Dudley Funeral Home and Cremations of Dublin.



Leo Charles Wise Jr.

Leo Charles Wise Jr., of Adrian, Georgia, was born on Sunday, Nov. 27, 1949, to Valerie and Leo Charles Wise Sr., in Fort Wayne, Indiana.

Leo, aka 'Chuck', spent six years proudly serving in the United States Navy. It was during this time in 1972 that he met and married his beautiful wife, Karen Kay Harris, and adopted his two girls, Penny and Tina. Not too long after, he was blessed with two incredible boys, Leo III, and William. After leaving the service, he went to work at a cable company, starting out climbing poles. He quickly rose to the top of his field, becoming an electronics engineer. During his career he built on several companies making them very successful, even earning his own patents along the way. From there, he bought into his own company, was vice-president, and built it up to be a multi-million-dollar business. Unfortunately, in 1997, just before his 48th birthday, he had a devastating motorcycle accident which left him as a paraplegic. He persevered, of course, with the help of his wife, who never left his

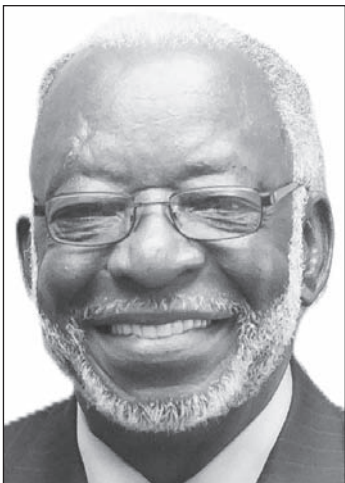
side always staying strong for his family, giving the love and support of an angel. His wife, Karen, was his one true love and they were married for 53 wonderful years. He loved all of his family including his extended family fiercely and would go to the end of earth for them. His grandchildren were his absolute pride and joy...he will be missed more than words can ever say.

Leo passed away on Saturday, Jan. 31, 2026. He had a younger brother, Rex Allen Wise, who preceded him in death in 1989.

He leaves behind: his wife, Karen Kay (Harris) Wise; children, Penny Marie Wise Thomas/Ron Kennerknecht, Tina Marie Wise-Pusey/Jeremy Michael-Pusey, Leo Charles Wise Jr., and William Louis Wise/Becky Mock; grandchildren, Steven Charles Wise Thomas, Melissa Anne Williams/Henry Williams Jr., Dakota Canyon Kennerknecht, Phoenix Hunter Kennerknecht, Sierra Jade Kennerknecht, Montana Chase Kennerknecht, James Robert Edgecombe, Travis Allen Edgecombe, Rebecca Katelyn Winslow/Gregory Winslow, Lachlan Wise, Leo Charles Wise IV, Destiny Katlyn Wise, William Louis Wise Jr.; great-grandchildren, Chastidy Lynn Williams, Jasmine Kay Williams, Zolena Marie Williams, Henry Frederick Williams III, Cassidy Rose Thomas, Aiden James Edgecombe, Athena Walker Edgecombe, Kylie Jo McGrath, Chase Edgecombe, Abigail Edgecombe, and Colton Edgecombe; and great-great-grandchild, Eleyana Anne Williams.

Please post your condolences online at ServicesbyDudley.com.

Services by Dudley Funeral Home and Cremations of Dublin.



John Edward Martin

Funeral services for Mr. John Edward Martin, 81, of Wrightsville, Georgia, will be held on Saturday, Feb. 7, 2026, at 12 PM at the Williams Chapel Baptist Church, 1142 Georgia Hwy 29, in East Dublin. Interment will follow in the Old Holly Springs Baptist Church in East Dublin.

John Martin was born on Monday, July 31, 1944, in Dublin, to the late Joseph and Lula Bell Martin. In 1965, John was drafted into the Vietnam War as a soldier in the 82nd Airborne Fort Bragg, North Carolina. During his Vietnam tour, he was wounded and ultimately received a Purple Heart for his brave and dedicated service. Upon his return

home, he met his late wife, Anna Mary Martin, whom he later married on Sept. 14, 1969. They shared 56 beautiful years of marriage. On Oct. 30, 2025, John lost the love of his life. Early in his career, John worked in a carpet plant, served as a United States Army Reservist, and attended Middle Georgia College. He worked for 30 years and retired from the Carl Vinson Veterans Administration Medical Center in Dublin, Georgia. Nevertheless, his greatest happiness was spending time with his family and helping his community.

He also found great fulfillment in worship and fellowship within his church community. During the early 1980s, John Martin, Rev. E.J. Wilson, Rev. Cornelious Horton were an integral part of the Civil Rights Movement in Wrightsville and surrounding cities. They encountered several racial conflicts but were never afraid nor deterred. John, Rev. Wilson, and Rev. Horton garnered the respect and recognition of Jet and Ebony magazines by bringing national attention to racism by local officials. They also coordinated one of the largest anti-racism marches in Wrightsville, led by then-President of the National SCLC, Dr. Joseph E. Lowery. John Martin was a pillar in the community, known for helping his fellow citizens.

Mr. Martin transitioned on Sunday, Jan. 25, 2026.

He leaves to cherish his memory: his children, Kelvis Snell, Darick Martin, Randy Martin, and Alicia Buie; daughters-in-law, Patricia Snell, Terese Martin, and Syreeta Martin; son-in-law, Traune Buie; grandchildren, Kendrick Shine, Ashley Salter, Tavis Snell, Jamar Snell, Darick Martin Jr., Darrienne Madkins, Randy Martin Jr., Brianna Martin, Ariel Martin, Layla Martin, and Amiyah Buie; four great-grandchildren, Jayden Snell, Vanesa Flood, Nyla Snell, and Aaliyah Buie; brothers and sisters, Martha Johnson, Dorothy Harvey, Solomon Martin, Larry Martin, the late David Martin, the late Joseph Martin, the late Oletha Martin, and the late Essie Martin; brothers-in-law, Otis Snell, Artis Snell, Ronnie Snell, Charles Snell, Lambert Snell, Travis Snell, Robert Cason, and the late Kenneth Bordley; sisters-in-law, Doris Martin, Jullene Snell, Rose Bordley, Marilyn Cason, Paulette Snell, Georgette Snell, Evelyn Snell, Felicia Snell and the late Charlene Snell; and numerous nieces, nephews, cousins, other relatives and friends. He will always be remembered for his unwavering willingness to help others, his devotion as a loving and supportive husband, his dedication as a father and grandfather, and his commitment to caring for his extended family.

Please post your condolences online at ServicesbyDudley.com.

Services by Dudley Funeral Home and Cremations of Dublin.

BIRTHDAYS

Feb. 5
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Kamorra Crafton
Wylene Powell
Ron Smith*

Feb. 6
Carlos Coney

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OBITUARIES



Denise Moore Givens

Denise Moore Givens, 71, of Macon, passed away on Feb. 2, 2026.

Mrs. Givens was born on Oct. 11, 1954, in Bibb County, Ga., to the late Bobby and Cecile Ann Howard Moore. In addition to her parents, she was preceded in death by her son, Glenn Allen Givens, and her sister, Lisa Thomaston.

She was a member of Cross Keys Baptist Church and was a devoted and loving wife, mother, and Nana. Her greatest joy was found in helping people in need and spending time with her family.

She is survived by her husband, Joey Givens, of Macon; her children, Robert Givens (Eugene) of Atlanta; Rebecca Newsome (Daniel) of Dublin, and Brandon Givens (Amber) of Macon; numerous grandchildren; sister, Lynn Arnold (Gerald) of Lizella; brother, Bob Moore (Anita) of Charlotte, N.C. and several nieces and nephews.

A memorial service celebrating Denise's life will be held at 2 p.m. on Friday, Feb. 6, in the Mary Whitaker Townsend Memorial Chapel at Townsend Brothers Funeral Home.

Please visit www.townsendfuneralhome.com for service updates and to sign the online memorial register.

Larry James Yawn

Larry James Yawn, 78, of Eastman, Ga., died on Friday, Jan. 30, 2026.

Funeral services were held at 2 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 4, at Southerland Funeral Chapel, with interment in Robbins Cemetery.

He is survived by his sister – Tina Yawn Albritton; brother – Danny Yawn; nieces and nephews – Jennifer, Stephanie, Lance, and Jason; great-nieces and nephews – Kailey, Timothy, Jewels, Gabriel, Starla and Stormy; and ncle – Samuel Sheffield (Gloria).

The family will receive friends in Southerland Funeral Chapel from 1 p.m. - 2 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 4.

Stokes-Southerland Funeral Home of Eastman has charge of arrangements.



Daisy Cherry

Funeral services for Mrs. Daisy Cherry, of East Dublin, Georgia, will be held on Saturday, Feb. 7, 2026, at 12 p.m. in the C.D. Dudley Memorial Chapel at the Dudley Funeral Home, 617 East Jackson Street in Dublin. Interment will follow in the Dudley Memorial Cemetery.

Mrs. Cherry was born on Oct. 9, 1945, to David Lee and Elizabeth Grace Christian.

She passed away on Feb. 2, 2026. She was preceded in death by her parents, her husband, Robert Lee Cherry, brothers, Samuel Green, Renald Christian, Willie James Christian and Billy Hazley.

Daisy Cherry leaves to cherish her memories her brother, Willie (Rosa) Green, sisters, Minnie Adams Rozier, and Patricia Rozier, all of Dublin, step-daughter, Sandra (Jerry) Lumpkin, sister, Diane (Errol) Cummings of Fort Myers, Florida and a host of nieces nephews, cousins and friends.

Please post your condolences online at Servicesby-Dudley.com.

Services by Dudley Funeral Home and Cremations of Dublin.

Gloria Jean Downs

Graveside funeral services for Gloria Jean Downs, 74 will be held at 11 a.m. Thursday, Feb. 5, 2026, at Blue Springs Baptist Church Cemetery. Rev. Tim Powell will officiate.

Mrs. Downs was born April 2, 1951, in Jacksonville, Florida. She was the daughter of the late George Eason Thigpen and Lonie Sterling Thigpen. She was a retired manager at Dairy Queen. She was a member of Charity Baptist Church. Mrs. Downs passed away Sunday, Feb. 1, 2026, at Dublinair Nursing Home and Rehabilitation.

Mrs. Downs is survived by her husband, Daniel M. Downs of East Dublin; two sons, Daniel Anthony Downs of East Dublin and Shawn C. Downs of East Dublin; two sisters, Stella Clyde Graham of Soperton and Delores Thigpen Graham of Dublin; and two grandchildren, Daniel Downs and Derek Downs.

The family will receive friends from 10 a.m. until 11 a.m. Thursday, Feb. 5,

2026, at Blue Springs Baptist Church Cemetery.

Stanley Funeral Home and Crematory/Dublin Chapel has charge of funeral arrangements. To sign the Online Register Book please visit www.stanleyfuneral-home.com



Mary Jim Benton Garrett

Mary Jim Benton Garrett, 95, of Eastman, Georgia, died Saturday, Jan. 31, 2026.

Services will be held on Friday, Feb. 6, at 2 p.m. in Southerland Funeral Chapel, with interment Dubois Baptist Church Cemetery.

Left to cherish her memory are her son, Larry Garrett (Edna), her daughter, Tina Garrett, her granddaughter and bonus grandson, Jessica and Jonathan Hanson, and her great grandson, Canaan Hanson.

The family will receive friends in Southerland Funeral Chapel from 1 p.m. - 2 p.m. on Friday, Feb. 6.

Stokes-Southerland Funeral Home of Eastman has charge of arrangements.



Thressa Ann Morris

Funeral services for Thressa Ann Morris, 74, of Dexter, Georgia, will be held on Saturday, Feb. 7, 2026, at 2 p.m., at the Faith Center, 617 South Washington Street in Dublin. Rev. Calvin Flanders will officiate and Rev. Tolan J. Morgan Sr., will deliver the eulogy. Repast will follow at the Verline P. Copenny Center, 205 West Mary Street, Dublin.

Viewing will take place at Dudley Funeral Home on Friday, Feb. 6, 5 p.m. - 7 p.m.

Thressa Ann Morris was born on Sunday, Nov. 8, 1951, in Dudley, Georgia, to Ulysees Morris Sr. and Vernency Baum Morris. She was educated in the Laurens County and Dublin City Schools. She later went on to receive her General Educational Diploma. Her last place of employment was Maidenform in Jacksonville, Florida.

Thressa's hobbies were

drawing, painting, decorating, and most people didn't know she had another talent because she hid it; she was our very own songbird! She had an angelic voice.

She accepted Christ early in life under the leadership of Bishop R. D. Fields at the Faith Temple Church of God in Dublin.

Thressa Ann Morris passed away on Thursday, Jan. 29, 2026, at Fairview Park Hospital surrounded by her loved ones. She was preceded in death by her parents, her husband, Thomas Wright, Sr., and one sister, Janice Hicks, three brothers, Calvin Morris, Johnny "Smoke" Morris, and Cecil Hicks, three sons, Baby T. Wright, Wilbert Leon Morris, and Tony Tyrone Morris, aunts, Mamie Powell, Leola Baums, Jennie Mae O'Neal, Susie Mae Stephens, Jenelle Liggins, Mamie Morris, and Lillie Mitchell, and an uncle, Tommy Baums.

Thressa leaves to cherish her two sons, Thomas Wright, Jr., of East Dublin, Ramon (Deon) Wright, Sr., of Dexter, and her daughter, Sherry (Randy) Wright of Warner Robins, and her bonus children, Lorenzo Hightower of Wrightsville, Celester Wright of Warner Robins, Dara Wright of Warner Robins, and Chara Wright of Dublin, five sisters, Rosaline (Alfred) Flanders, Margaret Hughes, Jackie (Bobby) Walker, Sabrina Morris (Powell), and Sarina Morris of Mableton, four brothers, Timothy Morris, Darrell (Avia) Morris, Ulysees Morris, Jr, and Lucious Morris, all of Macon, two aunts, Katherine Strachan of Miami, Florida and Willie Mae Williams of Valdosta, one special friend and cousin, Barbara "Bobbie" Holmes, and a host of grandchildren, great-grandchildren, nieces, nephews, cousins and friends.

The family will receive friends at the home of her sister, Margaret Hughes, 514 Saxon Street, Dublin.

Please post your condolences online at Servicesby-Dudley.com.

Services by Dudley Funeral Home and Cremations of Dublin.



PIECES OF OUR PAST
By SCOTT B. THOMPSON SR.
The et cetera chronicles - vol. 124

TWO BOYS LOST AT SEA - In the year 1870, the steamer “Two Boys,” based out of Dublin, was plying the waters of the Atlantic Ocean off the coast of Sapelo Island. Terrible trouble arose when the steamer’s drum exploded, leaving the doomed craft helpless. When a strong gale arose, eight men jumped ship and made it to the beach. The rest of the crew could not steer the lifeless boat against the strong winds, killing everyone else aboard. Cleveland, Ohio Plain Dealer, Feb. 12, 1870.

THAT’LL BE THE DAY THAT I DIE - It was around the middle of July 1879 that M.J. Guyton, of Laurens County, had an intense feeling of his impending death. Guyton strongly believed that he would die before September 1st. As the Dog Days of August progressed, Guyton became increasingly sure of his prediction. Beginning of the 21st day of August, Guyton inquired of the day of the month. On Sunday, August 31st, the day dam of his doom, Guyton began counting the hours. When he got down to two hours before his death, he counted the minutes. At 5 o’clock on that Sunday afternoon, Guyton began to whisper about the sunset. As he whispered once again about the sunset, he passed on. His sister had a similar occurrence concerning her death. Macon, Telegraph, Sept. 26, 1879.

THE TREE MAN - Joel Coney, a leading Dublin citizen and benefactor in the mid 1880s, is given credit for planting the oak trees along Bellevue Avenue. Coney had a home on the southwestern corner of Coney Street (named in his honor) and Bellevue Avenue, the former “Old Hawkinsville Road.” In the cold of January 1889, Coney, who had been a well-liked state representative in Atlanta, began to show signs of illness in his hand. Doctor Charles Hicks and Doctor Herschel V. Johnson, Jr. were brought in to save Coney’s life. Their efforts failed, and Coney died of lockjaw on Jan. 24, 1889. Ironically, the man who gave Dublin her most beautiful tree-lined avenue was killed by part of a tree, a splinter which was lodged in his hand and caused his death. Savannah Morning News, Jan. 25, 1889.

POLL WORKERS NEEDED FOR THE 2026 ELECTIONS

Do you enjoy assisting your friends and neighbors?
Do you want to make sure we have fair and honest elections?
Do you need volunteer hours?

Ask for details about joining the

Laurens County, Ga Election Day Team

Election Day Hours: 5:45 am - close of polls

Requirements: be a U.S. citizen and a resident of Laurens County, be at least 16 years of age, be able to attend the scheduled training days, and have the ability to sit or stand for extended periods of time.

If you are interested: Email registrars@dlcg.com or call (478) 272-2841 to request a poll worker application be mailed to you.

Applications can be returned to the
Laurens County Board of Elections & Registration
via mail:
Laurens County Board of Elections & Registration
PO Box 2130
Dublin, Ga 31040
or by email:
registrars@dlcg.com

PUBLIC NOTICE OF QUALIFYING FEES
November 3, 2026 General Election

Per State Election Code O.C.G.A. 21-2-131(a)(1), the following qualifying fees were set by the Laurens County Board of Commissioners.

Office	Qualifying Fee
County Commissioner, District 1	\$ 144.14
County Commissioner, District 4	\$ 144.14
County Commissioner, District 5	\$ 144.14
Member, County Board of Education, District 1	\$ 108.00
Member, County Board of Education, District 4	\$ 108.00

Qualifying for the offices listed above will begin at 9:00 a.m. through 5:00 p.m. each day beginning Monday, March 2, 2026 and ending at 12:00 noon on Friday, March 6, 2026.

Qualifying for the Democratic Party will be held at 114 E Johnson St. Dublin, GA. Contact Bennie Jones at 478-279-1125.

Qualifying for the Republican Party will be held at 1217 Chennault Dr. Dublin, GA. Contact Todd Gay at 478-290-2955.

Qualifying for the Non-Partisan Party will be held at the Laurens County Board of Elections and Registration Office, Courthouse Annex Building, 117 E Jackson St., Suite A, Dublin, GA. Contact Susan H. Rooks, Election Supervisor at 478-272-2841.

General Primary Date: May 19, 2026
General Primary Runoff Date: June 16, 2026
General Election Date: November 3, 2026

50th Annual Black Festival Citizen of the Year

Please Submit Your Nomination Form To:
Black Festival Awards Committee,
P.O. Box 1867, Dublin, GA 31040

(Please check (x) one)

☐ Senior Citizen of the Year
A resident of Laurens County for a minimum of (5) years who meets the designated age category of the DIAMOND AWARD (66 and older).

☐ Men/Women of the Year
A resident of Laurens County for a minimum of (5) years who meets the designated age category of the GOLD AWARD (ages 36 to 50 and or the PLATINUM AWARD (ages 51 to 65).

☐ Young Achiever of the Year
A resident of Laurens County for not less than five years who meets the designated age category of the SILVER AWARD (ages 20 to 35)

☐ Youth of the Year
A resident of Laurens County for not less than two years who meets the designated age category the BRONZE AWARD (ages 14 to 19).

☐ Pastorial Excellence Award: This award recognizes pastors in Dublin-Laurens County who has made an electrifying impact throughout the community through leadership. Must have pastored in Laurens County for at least 2 years. A bridge builder demonstrates effort to collaborate with others. And work with the local city government officials to be a voice for those who cannot speak.

☐ Humanitarian Awards: A person or organization that has faithfully supported the committee financially for 5 years. A person or organization that has been instrumental in promoting, economic and social justices within their community. Has served as a catalyst for the alleviation of human suffering, protection of life, and the promotion of health. Has served as an advocacy for young adults while educating them on the importance of humanity and protection of human dignity. A person or organization that has worked to promote mutual understanding, cooperation and lasting peach among all people.

☐ Exceptional Achiever Awards: A person who has been diagnosed with a Mental Health Disorder as outlined in the DSM-5 guide. Must be active in church and school. Must be well diverse in social organizations. Must be an individual that has preserved through their disability in order to engage within society.

Please attach a separate sheet with the following information:

- o Name of the Nominee
- o Age
- o Address
- o Phone

• Special Accomplishments

• List current activities/involvement in the community/Church

• List previous humanitarian/Civic duties roles performed within the community

• List current or previous leadership roles held or performed.

• List any other endeavors that nominees have been involved in.

• How has the nominee worked to help advance the mission, goals and vision that the Dublin-Laurens Black History Festival Community Committee, Inc. or wish to achieve.

All Nominations must be postmarked by February 6, 2026.

OUR TAKE...

Time to tax tobacco (and vapes)

A few members of the Georgia House of Representatives spent the summer of 2025 studying the use of tobacco and vape products across the state. Spoiler alert: It's still bad for you.

The dangers of smoking have well been documented over the past few decades. Smoking is the No. 1 cause of pre-mature deaths in the United States and it is estimated that more than 16 million Americans are living with a disease caused by smoking, including cancer; heart disease; diabetes; and COPD. Second-hand smoke contributes to more than 41,000 deaths per year.

Smokers, especially if they are enrolled in Medicare or Medicaid, are a massive burden to public resources and the healthcare system. So, governments across the country, large and small, have sought to curb the ill effects of this addictive habit by making smoking inconvenient and expensive.

Many have turned to vape products, which studies suggest are no safer than cigarettes, and are more targeted to young people. Vapes pens come in all sorts of shapes and sizes and countless flavors making them enticing to younger and younger consumers. Stores peddling liquid nicotine and THC began popping up everywhere, so much so that many cities, including Dublin, have limited how many can operate.

The best way to stop folks from doing something bad for them seems to be to hit them where it hurts - the pocketbook. Many states have imposed hefty taxes on tobacco and vape products. In New York state a pack of smokes will cost you an extra \$5.35 cents. Just last year Indiana enacted a \$2.99 excise tax on cigarettes.

Georgia is lagging way behind on such taxes. We rank second to last in the country, with a measly .37 cents per pack. We are gambling with people lives and leaving money on the table. Georgia lawmakers haven't touched that tax since 2003. It appears that lawmakers have no craving (see what we did there?) to take on that issue in the current session.

Taxes on vapes are a little more modern, but are starting to show their age. Enacted in 2020, the state collected .05 cents per fluid milliliter on a closed vape product, a single-use pre-filled product, and 7 percent of the wholesale price of an open, or refillable, vape.

The American Lung Association consistently gives Georgia failing grades in its annual State of Tobacco Control report. Low taxes, ready availability of products and poorly funded prevention and cessation programs is a recipe for disaster. The health and productivity of every Georgian lies in the balance.

With lawmakers eager to improve quality of life by keeping money in the hands of consumers with further cuts to the state income tax and the possibility of eliminating property taxes, its high time to increase tobacco, and vape, taxes to help Georgians live long enough to enjoy it.

— Kyle Dominy

THOUGHT FOR TODAY

"I prefer to be true to myself, even at the hazard of incurring the ridicule of others, rather than to be false, and to incur my own abhorrence."

- Frederick Douglass

DAILY SCRIPTURE

"Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue. For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God."

- John 12:42-43

EVERY DAY'S A HOLIDAY

February 5, 2026 is...
• World Nutella Day
• Western Monarch Day
• National Chocolate Fondue Day
• Optimist Day

The Courier Herald

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This newspaper is committed to the idea that the press should tell the truth without prejudice and spread knowledge without malicious intent.

Weather and politics: Prep affects perception

Politics is a lot like the weather. Everyone likes to complain about it. Few are willing to do anything about it.

Perhaps that's an unfair comparison, but weather has been on many Georgians' minds for the past couple of weeks. The temperatures have been a bit on the cold side even for winter.

Add in some precipitation and some wild and perhaps overhyped forecasts of ice and snowfall and you get most everyone obsessing over the same thing at the same time. Outcomes differed widely. Much like politics, the perception of those outcomes also varied from household to household.

What happens after a weather event has a lot to do with what actions happen in the days – or even years – that precede it. We focus a lot on whether we can get roads covered in salt and brine before precipitation has the chance to turn to ice.

Georgians have a bit of tolerance for short storms that are cured by the sun within a day or two. Our northern friends do not. They get a lot more snow, and the temperatures in winter regularly stay below freezing for weeks. If the snow isn't removed immediately, it can block roads and sidewalks for months.

Our friends in Washington D.C. are questioning their Mayor about new ice formations and their inability to navigate the nation's capital right now. They Mayor has responded for citizens to come and pick up salt and be part of the solution. ...Good luck with that, I guess.

Thankfully, at least in Georgia, we don't have to worry too much like our friends in Texas do that we have sufficient base load power generation to account for peak electric demand for heating. It took several ice storms for the body that loosely regulates Texas' independent power grid to notice that the averages they use to predict wind power don't work when there is a high correlation between deep freezing temperatures and a lack of



By CHARLIE HARPER

wind.

Redundant backup power requires investment. In a crisis, that pays off. When skies are sunny and the wind is blowing as normal, people complain about their electric bills.

Our friends in Texas have invested in backup generation and dodged most of the last two weeks' worth of weather. Much of Nashville Tennessee, however, has been without power for over a week with full restoration not expected until this weekend.

Their problem is not the same as Mississippi, where a generational ice storm took out most of the above ground infrastructure over a wide and disparate area. There is only so much humans with limited capital

can do to prepare for natural events.

Nashville's grid operator is facing outages much more severe than their more rural neighbors. There are open questions if their management turned their preparation and training away from restoration and into political reorganization. Time will tell if their system was more focused on HR than critical operations.

The perception of these events has a lot to do with the folks that often are disassociated with the preparation nor responsible for the aftermath. "Official" weather watches and warnings come from the National Weather Service. Many of us still use local broadcast stations to provide advance cautions leading up to these warnings.

The TV folks are now competing for the same online views and the ad dollars that follow them with "independent" weather sources. Some are very reliable. Some aren't weather sites at all – just hype machines that invest heavily in deception to generate clicks. Sounds a lot like politics too, doesn't it?

When the storm comes, some of us get relative calm and quiet. Those of us who got snow and were lucky enough where preparation kept our power on, our streets cleared, our pantry's full got to enjoy a day inside where it was warm and we

were well fed.

Not everyone was this lucky, even here in Georgia. But a lot of hard work by a lot of different people in the public and private sector went into most of us getting this good luck.

The aftermath, too, is often telling. There are those who claim the storm was overhyped. Some feel they were promised a different outcome – especially those who live on the western side of the state.

The thing about weather is that we all know it's unpredictable. We've seen enough snow (and non-snow) that we know we're almost always on the line of where it happens and where it doesn't. This weekend a 20 mile difference in metro Atlanta determined whether you got no snow or 6 inches of it.

Sometimes we just like to complain. It's easier to blame someone else than to look at readily available data, understand that there is always uncertainty, and plan then act for a variety of outcomes.

The media can bring us some data. The utilities can invest in what they can control. The government will make decisions based on their own models plus a risk-averse set of decisions of what might happen. But we ultimately remain responsible for our own preparations – be it for weather or anything else.



Georgians are subsidizing an uneven data center boom

For years, Georgia leaders have boasted that a major reason the state became a hot spot for artificial intelligence data centers was a generous tax break passed in 2018.

However, a new state audit tells a different story – most of those data centers would have come here, anyway.

According to the report, only about 30% of Georgia's data centers can be traced to the tax break. The other 70% were already likely to be built, drawn by cheap land, access to relatively inexpensive power and Georgia's geographic location. Even so, taxpayers are losing nearly half a billion dollars a year to keep the unnecessary, ineffective incentive in place.

In other words, we're overpaying, and it will cost us.

Data centers offer a complicated financial calculus. During the construction phase, those in the building trades are the big winners. However, once the massive edifices are built, employment opportunities evaporate.

Buildings dedicated to towers of computer servers and the transfer of electronic information require only a skeleton crew to maintain. Instead of people, what data centers do need – forever – are enormous amounts of electricity and water.

Because of their need for



so much power, Georgia is now planning for thousands of megawatts of new demand largely to serve these facilities.

Instead of funding tax breaks to create jobs, everyday Georgians are instead footing the bill through higher power bills, dramatically increased water rates, louder neighborhoods, fewer trees and more strain on aging water systems – but the burden will not be shared evenly.

As those along the I-20 corridor can attest, many of the fastest-growing data center projects are being built in Black communities and in rural areas. Those who know Georgia's history surrounding land-use decisions know several of these places have historically dealt with the effects of toxic landfills, warehouses and other heavy industries.

Residents often learn about new projects late in the process, when decisions are already made. The limited jobs promised rarely meet the pledges – but the

impacts linger.

Democracy is not simply found in the act of voting. Voting is a mechanism through which we demand representative leadership make good decisions on our behalf – and invest our resources wisely. The reflexive tendency to spend billions for headlines and yield little for communities is not right.

It violates the intention of an effective democracy. We cannot justify bad deals under the vague, unproven promise of growth. If the state is giving away hundreds of millions of dollars in corporate welfare, the public should see and feel the benefits.

Technology has been an economic engine for Georgia – from financial tech founded in Columbus to startups powering metro Atlanta. As a legislator, I supported both, and as an author, I have explored the promise and challenges of AI in my books.

I know we don't have to be anti-tech to be pro-ac-

countability.

During my time under the Gold Dome, I supported tax incentives tied to real prosperity and voted against boondoggles that benefited the wealthy and powerful. Using its authority to protect Georgians, the General Assembly must tighten these tax breaks, require proof of real job creation, demand transparency about water and power use, and give communities a real voice in the process before projects are approved.

Right now, too many Georgians are paying the costs of the AI boom, but they're not reaping much benefit.

We don't need ChatGPT or Gemini to tell us that the math doesn't add up. Old-fashioned calculators work just as well – and also consider the bipartisan rebuke to the state's Public Service Commission last November.

Affordable choices for constituents make up the "real stuff" of democracy. As the legislative session heats up and politicians start jockeying for a return trip this coming election season, remember to tell those who speak for you to listen up.

Stacey Abrams is a best-selling author, entrepreneur and host of the podcast "Assembly Required." She previously served as minority leader in the Georgia House of Representatives.



Why in &\$!?" would anyone want to be super-intendent in Dublin? That is a pile someone would be crazy to step in.

I hope the new super slashes to the bone and starts with IGA, all the extra sports crap, and goes back to just teaching the kids. Dublin got too big for its britches and wallet.

Did y'all know there is a school leader working with kids who wrote an erotica book series? Great role model – writing smut.

Dublin City still projected to be 5 million in debt! That's a lot. Better cut

NEWS DIGEST...

The Dublin City Council will hold a pre-council meeting at 4:30 p.m. in the International Room at city hall followed by its council meeting at 5:30 p.m. on Feb. 5. The agenda follows:

- Call to order
- Invocation and Pledge to Flag

some more fluff – including IGA. That is a Fred program that Dublin could never afford.

Letting the current school board decide who the next superintendent will be is like letting the wolf decide who gets to come in the chicken house. Disaster!

Calling all churches: We are not a big city, but we have homeless too. If there are those who will volunteer time and resources to help Dublin have warming shelters and places for a hot meals daily.

Laurens County, you do not have to be home-

less to need a warming shelter or a place to eat when adversity hits. As servants to all mankind, together we can get through any weather condition.

I agree with the new board member, Davis. Dublin City Schools is not just about sports, it's about education.

I hope whoever is calling about consolidation for the schools will quit. Nobody in the county wants consolidation.

As a protest of the way the Dublin City Schools have done spending the taxpayers' money, I will not pay

my city taxes until the very last day. We usually pay those taxes the day we get them. But this time, it will be a while. Everybody else is saying the same thing.

Who cares what Stacey Abrams has to say? The only good thing she ever said was that she wasn't running for governor again!

The people that live outside the city limits and out in the country are there because they want to be. They do not want to be under the city government or under the city leaders. That's the reason they moved to the country. We do not want to consolidate the school systems. They got themselves into

this problem. Let them get themselves out. Don't let the county people foot the bill for it.

To the deputies in Mustang chase cars and GSP troopers who make their speed traps on 441 at mile marker 24-25: All of Laurens County knows you're there. They drop to 55 just before the hill then hit 80 when they're past you. Here's a thought: sit somewhere else.

The Dublin City Schools continue to show bad judgement searching for a new superintendent when they can merge with Laurens County, which already has a great superintendent in Mr. Hall.

LOCAL MATTERS

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Local 7-day Forecast:

The next 48 hours:

THURSDAY:

47°

Chilly with increasing amounts of sunshine.

Sunrise: 7:24 a.m.

THURSDAY NIGHT:

27°

Mostly cloudy.

Sunset: 6:08 p.m.

FRIDAY:

60°

Plenty of sunshine.

Sunrise: 7:23 a.m.

FRIDAY NIGHT:

35°

Clear.

Sunset: 6:09 p.m.

Saturday 2/7

HIGH/LOW 63/30

Plenty of sunshine.

Sunrise: 7:22 a.m. Sunset: 6:10 p.m.

Sunday 2/8

HIGH/LOW 60/36

Mostly sunny.

Sunrise: 7:21 a.m. Sunset: 6:11 p.m.

Monday 2/9

HIGH/LOW 62/38

Clouds and sunshine.

Sunrise: 7:20 a.m. Sunset: 6:12 p.m.

Tuesday 2/10

HIGH/LOW 64/44

Low clouds.

Sunrise: 7:20 a.m. Sunset: 6:13 p.m.

Wednesday 2/11

HIGH/LOW 72/48

Warm with plenty of sunshine.

Sunrise: 7:19 a.m. Sunset: 6:14 p.m.

River levels...
Oconee (at Dublin) 3.58'
Ocmulgee (at Macon) 6.56'

nance #26-02 to rezone parcel D10B 210 from B3 (neighborhood business) to R5 (high density residential development)

- Discussion and action on resolution #26-06 to approve and adopt an amendment to the future land use map of Laurens County Joint Comprehensive Plan
- Discussion and action on resolution #26-07 to accept an agreement with Flock Group, Inc. for live view cameras
- Discussion and action on resolution #26-08 to approve the engagement of Dublin Construction Company as the construction manager at risk for the street division of public works facility project
- Discussion and action on declaration of surplus
- Discussion and action on board appointments (if needed)
- Citizens comments
- Council comments
- Executive session if needed to discuss real estate, pending litigation, or personnel
- Adjournment

The city of Rentz will hold a council meeting on Monday. Feb. 9 at 6 p.m. at city hall. The agenda follows:

- Call to order
- Invocation
- Approval of January minutes
- Approval of financial statement
- Acknowledge visitors
- Old business
- New business
- Comments
- Adjourn

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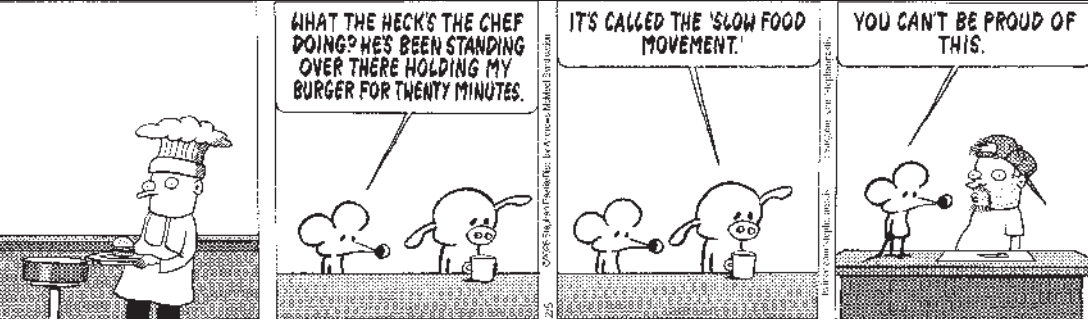
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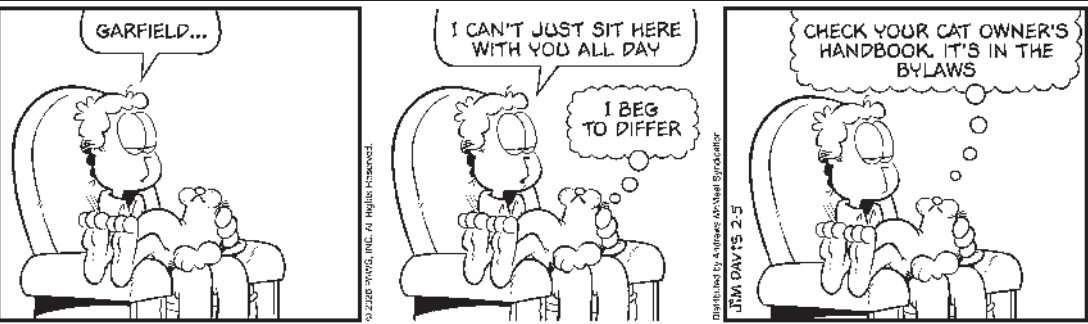
PEARLS BEFORE SWINE

BY STEPHAN PASTIS



GARFIELD

BY JIM DAVIS



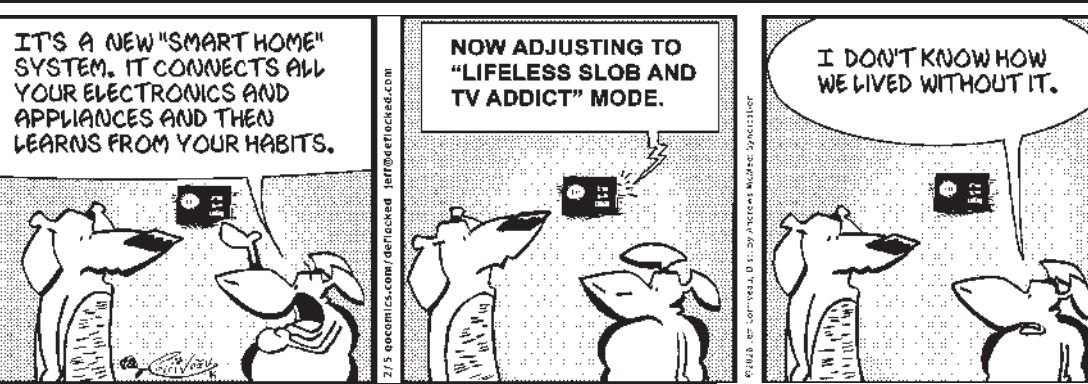
OVERBOARD

BY CHIP DUNHAM



DEFLOCKED

BY JEFF CORRIVEAU



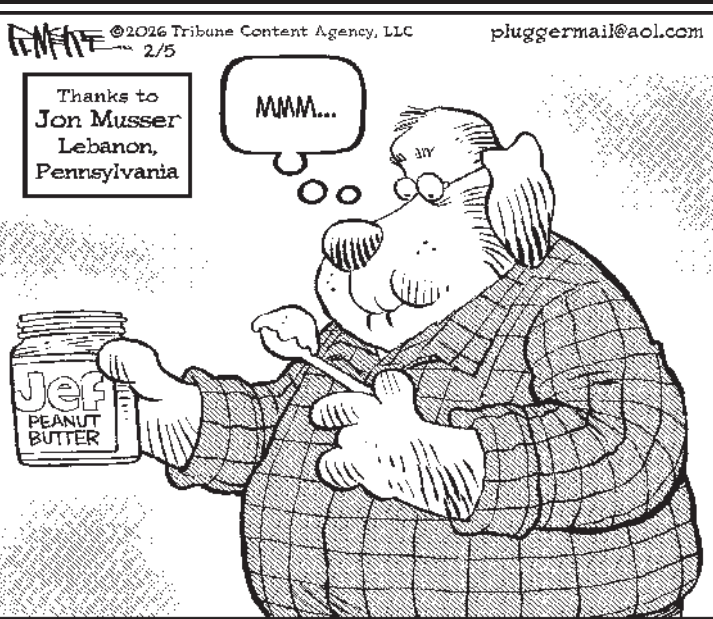
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BY TOM WILSON



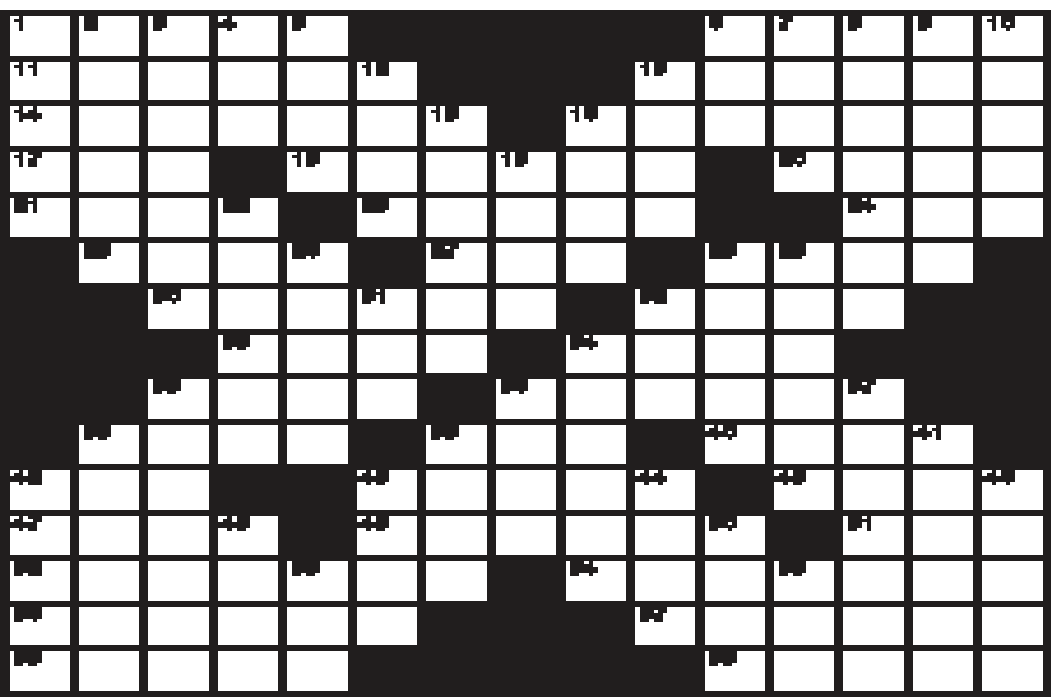
PLUGGERS

BY JEFF MACNELLY

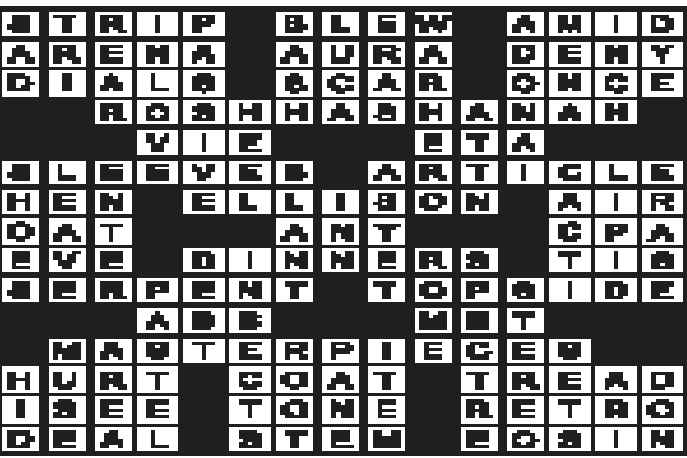


THE Daily Commuter Puzzle by Stella Zawistowski

- ACROSS**
- 6:25-10:22 radio sign
 - "Futurama" actress Tierney
 - Highway access point
 - What rains attach to
 - Book after Anna
 - Most in-demand
 - The 17th month: Abbr.
 - Security gate wanted
 - Heavy burden
 - Speak unclearly
 - Banana, ice-cream treat
 - Cursing
 - Address
 - Bananas
 - Golf-course standard
 - Fierce determination
 - Address Judd
 - Actor, "Carole"
 - Looked over
 - Log-carrying tools
 - Fing-Pong or Pong
 - Manhattan's stream
 - Ball jump
 - Late-2000s Nintendo system
 - East
 - Prohibition
 - California
 - Catch in a snare
 - Behave
 - Soda bottle used
 - Non-emitter
 - Frying pan
 - Pumpkin
 - Depended (on)
 - Incidental
 - Comments
 - Highly skilled
 - Committed recovery
- DOWN**
- Canadian waterbirds



- Created by Stella Zawistowski
- ACROSS**
- Highlighted, as best: 2 wds.
 - Disrupt style
 - Totally awesome
 - Friend, in French
 - "Futurama" sig
 - Mid-level voice
 - Fork or spoon
 - Outcome
 - Culturally pretentious
 - Crums
 - Person throwing a party
 - Jumped on one leg
 - Will beneficiary
 - Work for the stage
 - Usher to a new spot
 - Self-playing question: 2 wds.
 - Stance loosely
 - Be offended by
 - Director Ang or Spike
 - Car's fuel
 - Not-matched



- ACROSS**
- Non-Jewish
 - Jump verb
 - Submarine missile
 - Very muscular, in slang
 - End one's time
 - Big beer container
 - Lead port city
 - Luge vehicle
 - Opera solo song
 - Shower's own
 - Minor mistake
 - Be rude to
 - Allow
 - Casino area

Boyfriend has an unusual annual tradition!

DEAR ABBY: My longtime boyfriend has been divorced for more than 20 years. Every year, his ex comes to stay at his house for a week or two and brings along another female friend. He caters to them, driving them around and entertaining them at restaurants, etc.

I am never included, even though I have expressed an interest in doing so. Am I wrong in thinking this is disrespectful to me and for feeling resentful over having never been introduced to his annual houseguests? I include him when I have houseguests.

-- LEFT OUT IN FLORIDA

DEAR LEFT OUT: Your longtime boyfriend is acting like you are his guilty secret rather than his lady friend. (Is his ex aware that he has a girlfriend?) I can't blame you for feeling disrespected and excluded. Because this is an annual event, it may be time to consider taking a vacation of your own during the time your boyfriend will be AWOL.

DEAR ABBY: I am 76 and live in a great neighborhood. However, there are almost as many canines as there are houses. As a result, many of them are walked by my house at least twice a day. I like to go for walks in my neighborhood, but I'm afraid of dogs.

If I meet someone walking



DEAR ABBY

By ABIGAIL VAN BUREN

their dog, they usually want me to pet their dog. If I tell them I'm afraid of dogs, they often say I shouldn't worry because their dog is friendly and would rather lick me than harm me. However, I don't want to be licked either.

I've tried timing my walks to avoid these encounters, and I don't want to drive elsewhere and waste gas to go for a walk. Suggestions, please.

-- SOLITARY STROLLER IN THE EAST

DEAR STROLLER: I do have a suggestion for you. Smile at the dog walkers and KEEP WALKING. That way, you will project friendliness but won't be forced into an extended encounter that is unpleasant for you. It's no sin to not want a licking.

DEAR ABBY: How do I ratchet down gift-giving? I am

80 years old. I have just about everything I want and far more than I need. Yet, I have a daughter-in-law and a sister-in-law who lavish me with a half dozen or more gifts each holiday and birthday -- books I will not read, clothes I will not wear, items I already have. All of them are new and not inexpensive.

I do not wish to cause a schism. Any suggestions on how to approach these ladies to suggest that, while it is nice to be remembered, one is enough? -- STUFFED WITH STUFF IN MASSACHUSETTS

DEAR STUFFED: Talk to your daughter-in-law and sister-in-law individually. Tell them how grateful (and touched) you are that they are so generous with you, but explain that it is causing a problem. You no longer have space for more things and, if they feel they must give you birthday and holiday gifts, you would appreciate it if they would donate the money to a charity of your choosing. It's honest, and I'm sure the funds would be welcomed.

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

Thursday, February 5, 2026

GOREN BRIDGE

WITH BOB JONES
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MONIE CARD READING

North-South vulnerable, South deals

NORTH		EAST	
♠ A Q 6		♠ 9 4	
♥ A J 10 9 4		♥ Q 3	
♦ K 9		♦ Q 10 4 3	
♣ K J 6		♣ 9 4 3 2	
WEST		SOUTH	
♠ 8 7 3		♠ K J 10 5 2	
♥ 7 6 5 2		♥ K 8	
♦ 8 6 5		♦ A J 7 2	
♣ A 10 5		♣ 8 7	

The bidding:
SOUTH WEST NORTH EAST
1♠ Pass 2♠ Pass
2♥ Pass 3♥ Pass
3NT Pass 4♥ Pass
4♠ Pass 5♠ Pass
All pass

*Artificial game force

Opening lead: Five of ♣

Underleading an ace against a suit contract is a dangerous thing to do. You might lose your ace. Most players never do it. If you do choose to underlead an ace against a suit contract, you are hoping that dummy

has the king, partner has the queen, and either dummy or declarer has the jack. The underlead will then have a deceptive effect. Declarer will never play you to have under led the ace but will rather hope that you have led from the queen. He will play the jack from dummy, or low if declarer has the jack, and partner will win with the queen. Every time. Declarer will never play the opening leader for the ace in this situation. Well, almost never.

In today's deal, American expert Eric Goren was West. The bidding is not completely clear to us, but dummy showed a very powerful hand and declarer showed a balanced or semi-balanced hand. There was a fair chance for the underlead to be successful. Goren did underlead the ace of clubs and caught the card combination he was hoping for. Declarer was Denmark's Martin Scholtz, who asked himself if an expert like Goren would lead away from a queen after an auction like this. He decided the answer was no and he played the king from dummy! He ended up with all 13 tricks when the queen of hearts fell doubleton. What a lead! What a play!

(Bob Jones welcomes readers' responses sent in care of this paper.)

SUDOKU

9	5		8	2		3		
							7	6
								2
		4						
8	9				7		6	
	7				4			
						9	5	
			4					
3	6	8		5		7		
					3			2

Level: Intermediate

Here's How It Works:

Sudoku puzzles are formatted as a 9x9 grid, broken down into nine 3x3 boxes. To solve a sudoku, the numbers 1 through 9 must fill each row, column and box. Each number can appear only once in each row, column and box. You can figure out the order in which the numbers will appear by using the numeric clues already provided in the boxes. The more numbers you name, the easier it gets to solve the puzzle!

2	8	1	3	9	6	9	4	7
3	6	7	2	8	1	5	7	4
4	5	9	8	7	4	6	3	2
7	3	5	6	8	9	2	1	4
8	9	6	2	1	5	7	4	3
5	2	4	7	3	8	9	6	1
6	8	4	3	7	1	2	5	9
2	3	1	4	5	6	8	7	9
9	5	7	6	2	3	1	4	8

ANSWER

Friday fast-break: Falcons trounce Jefferson County, Irish swept at Wheeler County

From STAFF REPORTS

An up-tempo glance at last Friday's local high school basketball action...

East Laurens girls 72, Jefferson Co. 25

This rout was much smaller in scale than the 77-pointer that went down in Louisville a few weeks earlier, but the Lady Falcons (18-3, 9-1 region 2-High A) cruised in similar fashion as they dropped 15 unanswered in the first three and a half minutes, and extended that lead to 20 by the end of a quarter and 30 going into the half – sufficient for both final segments of the second half to be reduced to six minutes.

East Laurens boys 68, Jefferson Co. 44

The Falcons (17-4, 8-2 region) needed no buzzer-beater, or overtime, to get past Jefferson County in this rematch thanks to a double-digit surplus in both the second (20-8) and fourth (29-9) quarters.

The Warriors rallied to get as close as three points late in the third, but went completely silent for the first four minutes of the final period as Zion Dixon, Anthony Pounds and Jeremiah Rozier keyed a run that stacked 15-straight points on top of East's original lead of four.

Skyler Snead (25), Dixon (12) and Major Floyd (11) led the fast-paced offensive charge. Dixon added a team-high nine boards, and Snead seven assists.

Wheeler Co. 45, Dublin girls 44

A costly Lady Irish turnover led to the fast-break basket that flipped a one-point deficit into the final lead for Wheeler County with only a few seconds to go.

Dublin (10-10, 4-5 region 2-High A) came up empty on a couple of final mid-range attempts at the win as time expired.

Top scorer Khalil Maddox hit five triples, and finished with 18 points. Jordan Renfroe had 10 and eight rebounds.

Wheeler Co. 66, Dublin boys 48

Major shortfalls in quarters 1 and 3, which carried respective scoring gaps of 13 and 19 points, did the Irish in as their recent slide extended to eight games Friday night.

Next...

Due to a Richmond County school postponement, West Laurens' Tuesday-night matchup with Cross Creek was rescheduled to Feb. 10.

Dublin, visiting Washington County, and East Laurens, at Dodge County, were both in action on the road.

HIGHLIGHT REEL: MORE REGION/AREA WRESTLING ACTION



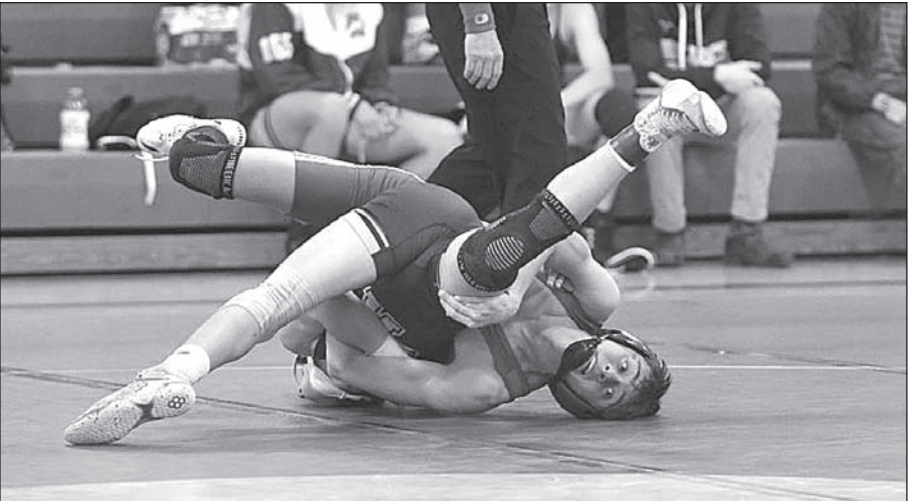
HAMBURGER-STYLE: West Laurens' Jonathon McDonald folded up Harlem's Jailyn Coakley for this inverted pin in the first period of his 157-pound semifinal match. McDonald would finish runner-up to Baldwin's Trysten Anderson by virtue of a come-from-behind pin in the finals/**CLAY REYNOLDS**



WHILE THE MATCH IS STILL YOUNG: Dublin's Kye Young wasted little time tossing ECI's Andrew VanHorn to the mat, with a takedown (above) only eight seconds into the opening period. The eventual Irish runner-up would complete his pin (below) before even a full minute had elapsed in this 132-pound semifinal/**CLAY REYNOLDS**



SWING MATCH: Trinity's Cooper Miller tangles with Bulloch's Camden Mager in his second match of two in the three-man round robin that made up the 126-pound weight class. The result made the difference between a tie of the three contenders, and a second victory to capture the region crown outright for Mager, who trailed in the count for the entire first period, but recovered to pin Miller for the key victory/**CLAY REYNOLDS**



EXCUSE ME, SIR: Scoring matches at a wrestling tournament can sometimes be a demanding job for table staffers, though not as much when it comes to inputting points (as officials signal with separate hands marked by red or green wristbands corresponding to the anklet worn by competitors) as it is notifying the ref – who's hard-pressed to keep his eyes on both the action and clock – when time has expired in each period. Though doing so is as simple as delivering a tap on the shoulder, catching him as he moves around, sometimes suddenly to get the best vantage point after quick twists and turns in the match, can take some agility and awareness. Thankfully, this West Laurens mat girl didn't have to go far to reach a stationary target during this match at Friday's region 4-AAA championships/**CLAY REYNOLDS**



HOLD THAT TIGER: Dublin's Corde Ashley hung tough through three periods with Swainsboro's Landon Akridge to grab this win, by 8-5 decision, in the 157-pound weight division/**CLAY REYNOLDS**



GOING A FEW ROUNDS: West Laurens' Jayden Starley spun around Harlem's Jaxon Sanchez at least twice after gaining the upper hand within seconds of the restart after a blood break. But he didn't spin his wheels for long before gaining the needed leverage for a pin before the first period was out. Starley went on to win an all-Jayden final later on, pinning Westside Augusta's Jayden Daniels to claim the region title at 132 lbs./**CLAY REYNOLDS**

SCOREBOARD

GIRLS HOOPS
Tuesday
Washington Co. 60, Dublin 38
East Laurens 72, Dodge Co. 36
Windsor 57, Trinity 54
BOYS HOOPS
Tuesday
WACO 52, Dublin 40
Dodge Co. 59, EL 49
Windsor 59, Trinity 46

PREP SCHEDULE

BASKETBALL
Friday
Brentwood at Trinity
Dodge Co. at Dublin
West Laurens at Richmond Academy/6 p.m.
Saturday
ECI at Dublin/3 p.m.
WL at East Laurens/4 p.m.
Tuesday
Cross Creek at WL/5 p.m.
Bleckley Co. at Dublin
Central Macon at EL/6 p.m.
BASEBALL
Thursday (scrimmages)
EL at Thomson
Veterans at WL/5:30 p.m.
SOCCER
Thursday
WL at Perry/5 p.m.

CONTACT US:
Email sports information to tchsports77@gmail.com, or call (478) 272-5522, ext. 403

BULLETIN BOARD...

Registration is under way for the East Dublin Recreation Department's 2026 boys baseball and girls fastpitch softball season, open to any Laurens County resident age 4-14. Sign-up forms are due along with \$50-per-child registration fee (scholarships are available for families with more than one player) to East Dublin City Hall by 5 p.m. Feb. 16. Call or text Dawn Wood at (478) 609-4381 for more information.

Another strong second half for Lady Crusaders in split at CFCA

By JEREMY PAYNE
Correspondent

Trinity's basketball teams traveled to Macon Friday night for another region matchup with Central Fellowship. The Lady Crusaders got another win over the defending state champions 53-41. Unfortunately, the Crusader boys saw their two-game win streak snapped in a 79-57 loss.

In another rematch of last year's state title game, the Trinity girls were able to complete the season sweep of the Lady Lancers.

They led just 10-9 after one quarter as both teams got off to a

slow start offensively. Brinley Vinson, who had a huge night for the Lady Crusaders, scored nine in the quarter.

Vinson and Chloe Rozier had six each in the second as Trinity outscored CFCA 14-10 to take a 24-19 halftime lead.

Vinson scored nine more in the third as the Lady Crusaders continued to extend the lead. They would again outscore the Lady Lancers 17-12 in the period to go up 41-31.

Trinity continued to hold a double-digit lead throughout the final quarter.

Vinson had 28 to lead Trinity

and Maddy George added 12.

Morgan Riley led CFCA with 14 and Samiyah Woolfolk finished with 12.

The Lady Crusaders (16-7, 4-2 region 2-AA) remain in second place.

The boys' game was close early on, but the bigger, deeper and more athletic Lancers pulled away for a solid win.

Coming off his historic game Tuesday, Jagger George continued to cook early in this one to keep the Crusaders in it. The sophomore scored 10 in the first quarter and Trinity trailed just 17-15 after one.

The Crusaders went ice-cold in the second. CFCA outscored them 15-8 in the stanza, and Trinity trailed 32-23 at the half.

The Crusaders found some confidence from deep as they connected on four 3-pointers in the third quarter. Unfortunately, that would account for their only 12 points in the period.

Meanwhile, they had no answer inside for Josh Sanders or Abram Austin as the Lancers scored 22 to take a 54-35 lead to the fourth.

The Crusaders were able to score 22 in the final quarter, but CFCA added 25 more.

George finished with 20 to lead

all scorers, but was held in check after the first. Kolbi Grooms finished with 12 and Hayden Bowles added 11. Trinity made 12 3-pointers in the contest.

Sanders, the 6-foot-8 eighth grade phenom who is ranked as the top 14-year-old in the nation by multiple recruiting services, led CFCA with 16. Austin, Sirron Chambers and Shaheem Barbosa had 14 each.

The Trinity boys are now 10-12 on the year.

Both Crusader teams returned to Macon on Tuesday to play Windsor.

MURDER

Continued from page 1

ed Doug Wilkinson missing to the East Dublin Police Department on June 12. They told officials he had been missing since June 1 when his truck had been left at Edwin’s house on 883 Ralph Keen Road. On June 23, the EDPD requested assistance from the Georgia Bureau of Investigation, which eventually led agents serving a search warrant at Edwin Wilkinson’s home on June 27. While searching the property, agents discovered human remains which were later identified as James.

McLendon said the investigation, which continued after the arrest, showed that the victim had inherited some money. The GBI, he said, was able to find a witness who had been told about the crime by the defendant.

“The defendant was kind of bragging about this in the jail,” McLendon said. “The witness was interviewed, and it gave us a nail to put in the coffin. He actually admitted to this guy that he did it.”

A woman who lived with Edwin Wilkinson also was arrested initially, but McLendon said her charges were later dismissed. Assistant DA Kayla McLendon was the prosecutor in the case, which was worked by the Georgia Bureau of Investigation and the East Dublin Police Department.

“The officers never gave up on this case,” the DA said. “We are glad to be able to give this family some closure.”



Calvin McNeal plays "Taps" at the Last Roll Call/PAYTON TOWNS III

LAST ROLL CALL

Continued from page1

through their stories.

“Those are treasured memories to inspire us,” Miller said.

“May we find inspiration in their courage and dedication to serve our communities and our country. To our departed heroes, we say ‘thank you’ for your service. You have left a legacy that will never fade, and you will forever be in our hearts and minds.”

DID YOU KNOW ...

By JACK BAGLEY
Georgia Trust for Local News

If you will indulge me, I want to use this week’s column introduction to wish my little brother a very happy 66th birthday.

The day the column appears in its home newspapers is my brother Mark’s birthday, so I want to wish many happy returns of the day to my childhood tormentor, protector, and friend.

Mark and I are as opposite as peas and avocados. He’s an outdoorsy type, who enjoys hunting and fishing ... I am a bookworm, happiest indoors and not a big fan of the elements. I never learned to hunt and haven’t fished in more years than I care to think. We both retired as teachers, working for many years in the same system - but often, we had to show papers to prove we were related. We’re that different.

Happy 66th, Mark. Have 66 more!

Now, on to what you came

here for ... the trivia. Enjoy!

Did you know ...

... a popular representation of our Founding Fathers is incorrect? The iconic painting of the signing of the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776, by John Trumbull (1756-1843) is so well known it is even depicted on the obverse of the \$2 bill. There are two things wrong with the painting, however. One is that it isn’t of the signing of the Declaration, it’s of the presentation of the first draft by Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826). And two ... what is depicted never happened in the first place. Historians note that there was never any time in which all of the delegates to the Continental Convention were together in Philadelphia, as shown in the portrait. (But it looks so cool on the two-dollar bill!)

... baby elephants use their trunks as pacifiers? (Well, they don’t have thumbs, so there’s that.)

Now ... you know!



Laurens County sent 10 students to the first statewide FLEX field trip/SPECIAL PHOTO

FLEX TRIP

Continued from page 1

across Georgia. The Foundational Leadership and Entrepreneurship Experience (FLEX) is an entrepreneurship program for high school students that engages them in the business world through experiences and mentorships.

During their time at the Capitol, students toured the historic building, heard from guest speakers and legislators, and had the opportunity to meet Georgia Agriculture Commissioner Tyler Harper, along with multiple legislators from across the state.

Students learned how legislation impacts small businesses and gained insight into the vital role entrepreneurship plays in Georgia’s economy. For many participants, the experience was a first. Seventy-five percent of students reported this was their first-ever visit to the Georgia Capitol, highlighting the importance of access to experiential learning opportunities.

Following their Capitol visit, students traveled to AmericasMart, where they ex-

plored the Georgia Grown Temporaries booths and vendors. There, students met directly with business owners, learned about product display and packaging strategies, and practiced pitching their own products.

Hearing from entrepreneurs who once stood in their shoes helped students better understand the growth potential of their businesses and the opportunities available through FLEX partnerships.

“This field trip allowed students to see how education, entrepreneurship and government intersect in meaningful ways,” said Melissa Dark, the executive director of Georgia FLEX. “By connecting students with policymakers and business leaders, we are helping them envision what’s possible for their futures and their communities.”

The inaugural FLEX field trip marked a major milestone for the program, reinforcing its mission to prepare students for success through hands-on entrepreneurial experiences and statewide partnerships. This trip was made possible thanks to Georgia FLEX’s partnerships with the Georgia Department of Agriculture and the Georgia Chamber.

FEBRUARY 7, 2026

10AM-4PM



MIDDLE GEORGIA

Lit Fest

MIDDLEGALITFEST.COM

NORTH HOUSTON SPORTS COMPLEX

900 NORTH HOUSTON ROAD

WARNER ROBINS, GA 31088

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