

# The Courier Herald

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THURSDAY, MARCH 26, 2026

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## Whitaker found guilty of wife's murder

By **PAYTON TOWNS III**  
Senior Reporter

MADISON - A Morgan County jury took three and a half hours to examine the evidence and return a guilty verdict on all counts against a Laurens County man on trial for the fatal shooting of his wife in June 2021, a few months after they were married.

Ben Whitaker was found guilty of one count of malice murder, one count of felony murder and two counts of aggravated assault of Tiffani. There was a brief cheer as Clerk of Courts Tonya Rogers read the first count of guilt before Dublin Circuit Superior Court Chief Judge Jon Helton asked for the courtroom to remain calm. After the remainder of the verdict was read, defense attorneys requested the jury be polled.

One by one, Helton asked jury members if the verdict that was read was their decision and if they still stood by it. As each jury member affirmed their decisions, sounds of sniffles from people crying - either tears of joy or sadness - were heard.

"I know it has been a long week or two that didn't happen in your county," Helton told the jury before dismissing them for the final time. "Thank you for your service because this could not have



Defense attorney Mitch Warnock and defendant Ben Whitaker return to the courtroom before the guilty verdicts were returned/PAYTON TOWNS III

been done without you."

Helton set a sentencing hearing for 9 a.m. on May 6 at the Laurens County Courthouse. Dublin DA Harold McLendon spoke with Tiffani's family after court was adjourned. Her mother, Julie Scarborough, thanked the DA's office and law enforcement officials for their work on the case.

"I wish you would have known Tiffani," she told them. "She was a spitfire."

The trial was moved to Morgan County after Whitaker's first trial - held in September of 2025 - ended in a hung jury. The second tri-

al began on March 17 with both sides presenting their cases before closing arguments began Monday afternoon. The jury received their instructions from Helton Tuesday and began deliberating around 9:45 a.m.

People sat in the courtroom and waited from that time until noon. No cell-phones were allowed in the Morgan County Courthouse, except for law enforcement and court officials, so those in the audience either sat quietly or talked with each other while waiting for word. Around noon, Helton dismissed the jury for lunch.



District Attorney Harold McLendon speaks with Tiffani's mother, Julie Scarborough, and other family members after the trial/PAYTON TOWNS III

They returned at 1:15 p.m. to restart deliberations. At 2:30 p.m., a bailiff informed court officials that the jury had a unanimous decision and court was called back to order.

McLendon said it had been 1,729 days since Tiffani was killed.

"We are relieved the case has been tried," McLendon said. "It was tried very well on both sides. The jury considered the evidence and found him guilty."

Chief Assistant District

Attorney Kelly Weathers called the jury one of the most studious ones she has seen in a long time.

"They were taking notes and listening to the evidence," she said. "We agree with their verdict. (Whitaker) had fantastic counsel and this case has grown me as a lawyer."

On June 30, 2021, law enforcement responded to a house at 212 Penn St. after Tiffani's colleagues reported she did not show up for work at Dublin OB/GYN.

During the welfare check, officers from the Dublin Police Department found Tiffani on the floor in the kitchen. Whitaker was not at the scene at that time. Around 2:15 p.m. that day, Whitaker's truck was located in Wilkinson County, and he was later arrested without incident.

During closing statements Monday, Whitaker's attorneys Mitch Warnock

**WHITAKER GUILTY**  
Continued on page 8

### ST. PATS SNAPSHOTS: 'DUELING PIANOS' RAISES MONEY FOR THE UNITED WAY

The United Way held the St. Patrick's Festival's Dueling Pianos, a fun evening raising money through the musical talent of The Andrew Brothers, last week at the DuBose Porter Center on the campus of Oconee Fall Line Technical Center. The brothers took requests ranging from "Sweet Caroline," "Baby Shark" and "Tomorrow" to "Baby Got Back," "The Devil Went Down to Georgia" and a selection from Snoop Dogg/PAYTON TOWNS III



From left: Honorees Angela James, Angela Tullia, Sandra Flowers, Ellestene Stephens, Marie Hooks and Clifford Garnto with CIS' Jackie Curtis/PAYTON TOWNS III

## Communities In Schools honors residents in fourth annual gala

By **PAYTON TOWNS III**  
Senior Reporter

Communities in Schools Laurens-Twigg Counties held a celebration to honor six local residents for their contributions to education.

Sandra Flowers, Clifford Garnto, Marie Hooks, Angela Jones, Pastor Ellestene Stephens and Angela "Angie" Tullia were showered with the accolades they provided during their time as educators, or for some, helping with education in their communities.

David Westerfield, board chair of CIS, welcomed everyone to The Ice House. He and CIS Laurens-Twigg Counties Executive Director Jackie Curtis have been working together for 27 years.

"We are proud to have

you here with us," Westerfield said. "Educators, business sponsors and friends are here to support students. These individuals being honored tonight have supported their time into Communities In Schools. Every success story is for someone who believes. Thank you for believing in our children. When we support students, we help to shape our future."

Curtis said the honorees are all known for going above and beyond in their communities. Flowers, who has the only daycare center in Twigg County, was the first recipient to be recognized.

"The older you get, you know you have more years behind you than you have in front of you and you really

want to make a difference," she said. "I have been wanting to help children all of my life and God has allowed that to happen."

Hooks was a principal in the Dublin City School System. She called what Curtis and her staff at CIS does for students "amazing."

"I have the beneficiary of the goodness of Jackie Curtis," Hooks said. "Her Communities In Schools changes lives. There are so many children and their parents are so busy working so they don't have time to sit with them and read with them and help them do their homework. Jackie and her people do. They have wonderful people working for her and it is one of the

**CIS GALA**  
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**OBITUARIES**



**Daryl Walden**

Funeral services for Mr. Daryl Walden will be held Thursday, March 26, 2026 at 2 p.m. in the Chapel of Higgs Funeral Home in Soperton with Rev. Mark Sweat officiating. Burial will be in the Westview Cemetery in Treutlen County. Mr. Walden died Sunday, March 22, 2026.

Mr. Walden, 72, was the son of the late Luther and Mary Esther Walden. He was born in Soperton on May 11, 1953, and grew up on his family farm. He graduated from Treutlen High School as a member of the "class of 1971" and went on to attend Mercer University and Georgia Southern College to earn an Industrial Engineering degree and masters of education. He was an engineer for General Telephone Electronics (GTE) and The National Peanut Research Laboratory in Dawson, Ga. He later taught high school engineering and drafting and was the advisor of Vocational Industrial Clubs of America (VICA).

Daryl and his wife Harriet lived in Soperton most of their life, but currently resided in Dublin. Daryl loved his family, gardening, country music, and his beloved chihuahua Bentley. He was a Baptist by faith. His two brothers, Rabon (Roy) and Larry preceded him in death.

Daryl is survived by his wife of 46 years, Harriet Walden; daughter, Melanie Walden, both of Dublin; daughter and son in law Mallory and Shane Lively; two grandchildren, Connor and Beau Lively of Dawsonville, Georgia, and two brothers, Phillip Walden of Valdosta and Gary Walden of Soperton.

Visitation will be held Thursday from 1 p.m. - 2 p.m. at the funeral home.

The family will be located at their home at 1821 Pine Forest Circle Dublin, Georgia.

Higgs Funeral Home (higgsfuneralhomeandflorist.com and Facebook) of Soperton has charge of arrangements.



**Tommy DeWitt Moon**

Tommy DeWitt Moon was welcomed into the arms of Jesus on Tuesday, March 17, 2026.

Funeral Services will be held at 4 p.m. Saturday, March 28, 2026, at Maynard Baptist Church, 1195 Juliette Road, Forsyth, Georgia, with the Revs. Stanley Harrell, Mark Goolsby and Mathew Bishop officiating. Burial will follow at Forsyth City Cemetery, Newton Memorial Drive, Forsyth, Georgia. The family greeted friends, Wednesday, March 25, 2026, from 5 p.m. - 7 p.m. at Monroe County Memorial Chapel 86 West Main Street, Forsyth, Georgia.

Tommy was a lifelong resident of Monroe County and proudly called Juliette his home for more than 50 years. He was born to the late John William Moon and late Ruby Vera Moon on Feb. 7, 1943, in Forsyth.

Tommy is survived by his devoted and loving wife of 52 years, JoAnne Belknap Moon, of Juliette. To his adoring children, Dianna Moon Byrd and Jerry DeWitt Moon he was more than a father, he was their hero, a steady source of strength, guidance and unconditional love. Along with his children, he was immensely loved by their spouses, son-in-law and friend Robert Brian Byrd and his favorite daughter in law Courtney Wilson Moon, bringing him the most joy in life were his "grands" Witt & Andy Byrd and KadyMac and Will Moon.

Tommy is also survived by his sister Elia "SistaLou" Dittman (Lou), sister in laws, Judy Belknap Evans (Barry Stuart) and Rosemary Porter (Scott) Tommy was also cherished by his nephews, nieces, great nephews, great nieces and numerous cousins and extended family members.

In addition to his parents, he was welcomed into heaven by his late sister, Laverne "Meme" Moon Williams.

Tommy began his life on the Ensign Mill Village moving to the Trio Mill Village, both in Forsyth, soon after. He spent his childhood days playing with his buddies, house mates and sisters eventually attending Mary Persons. He enlisted in the United States Marine Corps where he faithfully served his nation with honor for 13 years, including Vietnam, time overseas, and being stationed at Headquarters Marine Corp. Upon honorably returning home he continued to serve his community as a police officer and deputy sheriff. He then continued his law enforcement career in security at Georgia Power; upon his retirement he continued to serve while working with the United States Marshals. He then began his career at The Honeycomb in downtown Juliette where he spent his days charming the locals and visitors. You could find him there, telling his stories, never meeting a stranger, and making the lives of everyone just a little brighter.

Along with his innate love of people and community, Tommy loved the outdoors and animals. He was an avid lover of birds, from the game birds, chickens, canaries, and finches he raised to the daily visitors to his feeders. 4-M Farm came about from his unwavering support for his children and their show animals, the many cherished pets, and numerous strays and orphans that ended up at 118. Tommy was an avid beekeeper for over 40 years and loved those tiny creatures who have the greatest impacts on the world. He loved to garden and took great pride in tending to those plots of earth. He loved history, westerns and reading. He enjoyed supporting his children in all the activates they grew up participating in but his greatest joy came from being in the stands cheering on his "grands"

Tommy Moon accomplished more in 83 years than can possibly be put into

words or even fit on a page. He was a husband, daddy, papa, friend, son, brother, Marine, uncle, cousin, family member, coach, teacher, Mason, 4-H'er, Santa, volunteer and so much more. Most importantly he was a Christian and had the very biggest servant's heart. He belonged to and attended numerous churches in his life but found his home at the Juliette Methodist Church, where they opened their arms and hearts to him and JoAnne.

Tommy will be remembered for his steady presence, his unwavering love of family and community, and the light of joy that he brought to anyone who was privileged to meet him.

We will miss him with every breath we take but we know exactly what he would say:

"Just remember, me and the good Lord love you"

Please visit [www.monroecountymemorialchapel.com](http://www.monroecountymemorialchapel.com) to express your condolences and share your memories of Tommy.

Monroe County Memorial Chapel has charge of the arrangements.



**Ruby Thaggard Knight**

Ruby Thaggard Knight passed away at her home on March 19, 2026. Born on Aug. 26, 1932 in Dublin, Georgia, Ruby was the daughter of Neal S. Thaggard and Mettie Holliday Thaggard. She met M.L. Knight of Rentz when she was employed by McDaniel's Pharmacy in Dublin. They married on August 28, 1960 and had three children—Tina Kukanza, Steve (Sherri) Knight and Paul (Vicki) Knight.

Ruby was a devoted wife, mother and grandmother and a faithful member of Rentz Baptist Church, where she was in the choir and served in many roles through the years. She constantly invited people to church and strove to greet every visitor who entered the doors. Her Bible is a record of every sermon, date and preacher; and she seldom missed a service until her health declined.

Besides her husband and children, she is survived by her grandchildren, Sloane Kukanza, Shannon (Brandon) Brantley, R.P. Knight, Blair (Bailey) Howard, Shae (Evan) Grimes, and Peyton Knight. Her granddaughter, Sydney Knight predeceased her. Ruby is also survived by four great grandchildren, Saylor Kate Brantley, Brynson Brantley, Nova Grimes, and Sara Cathryn Howard, along with several nieces and nephews.

Ruby's twin sister, Ruth (Urban "Hot") Browning predeceased her along with their other siblings—Ella Frances Thaggard, Neal Alex (Mae) Thaggard, Arthur (Betty) Thaggard and Theora (George) Mallory.

The family extends special thanks to Bernadette Meeks for her faithful caregiving.

Townsend Brothers Funeral Home is in charge of arrangements. The funeral service was held Sunday, March 22 at 3 p.m. at Rentz Baptist Church. Visitation took place at 2 p.m. Burial followed at Rentz City Cemetery. Rev. Grady H. Mimbs and Rev. Tom Vann officiated.

Pallbearers will be R. P. Knight, Peyton Knight, Brandon Brantley, Evan Grimes, Bailey Howard and Dean Thaggard.

Please visit [www.townsendfuneralhome.com](http://www.townsendfuneralhome.com) to sign the online memorial register.

Townsend Brothers Funeral Home has charge of the arrangements.



**Barbara Ann Brown-Watkins**

Funeral services for Mrs. Barbara Ann Brown-Watkins will be held on Friday, March 27, 2026, at 2 p.m. at the Christ Deliverance Temple, 403 East Garner Street in Dublin. Interment will follow in the Dudley Memorial Cemetery.

She was born as Barbara Ann Brown on Tuesday, May 31, 1966, in Laurens County to Willie Thomas Brown Sr., and Mattie Mae Brown. A woman of grace, strength and unwavering love, Barbara touched the lives of all who knew her with her kindness and nurturing spirit. She departed this life on Friday, March 20, 2026. She was a devoted wife and mother and a former employee of Fairview Park Hospital, where she faithfully served for 13 years as a Certified Nursing Assistant. Prior to that, she worked at Dublinair Nursing Home, where she also provided compassionate care.

Mrs. Watkins was preceded in death by her father, Willie Thomas Brown Sr.; her mother, Mattie Mae Brown; two sisters, Annie Mae Brown and Brenda Michelle Brown; and one brother, Charles Christopher Brown. She was also preceded in death by her grandfathers, MC Kellam and Johnny Brown; her grandmothers, Nellie Mae Adkins and Retha (Pauldo) Mayweather; her uncle, LC (Shirley) Rozier; and her beloved aunt, Gloria Hunt.

Mrs. Watkins leaves to cherish her loving memories her devoted husband, Ray Charles Watkins, with

**BIRTHDAYS**

Mar. 26  
**Jamiria Stuckey**

Mar. 27  
**Ryan Plummer  
Marquita Timmons**

whom she shared 25 years of marriage; two sons, Malcolm (Rikita) Watkins of Roswell, Ga., and Torey (Courtney) Watkins of Dublin, Ga.; and one daughter, Rachael D'Andrea Watkins of Warner Robins, Ga. She also leaves a goddaughter, Nicole (Charlie) Brown of Soperton, Ga.

She is lovingly remembered by her grandsons, Dustin Ja'Corey Robinson Jr., Malvric O. Watkins, Malcolm Z. Watkins, Ayden Ah'Jorean Watkins, and Kruz Jayce Watkins; and her granddaughter, Malorie Laura Rose Watkins. She is also survived by three sisters, Betty (Julius) Walker, Carolyn Brown, and Kathy Brown; and five brothers, Ronnie (Karen) Kellam, Lonnie (Mary) Kellam, Johnny (Phyllis) Brown, Willie Brown Jr. and Michael Brown. Additionally, she leaves to cherish her memory her aunts, Donnie Smith and Geraldine Floyd, both of Dublin, Ga.; her uncles, Larry (Maritza) O'Neal of Dublin, Ga., and J.C. (Charlene) Kellam of North Carolina; along with a host of nieces, nephews, cousins, and other loving relatives.

Please post your condolences online at [ServicesbyDudley.com](http://ServicesbyDudley.com).

Services by Dudley Funeral Home and Cremations of Dublin.



**Ardric Lee Smith**

Funeral services for Mrs. Ardric Lee Smith, of Dublin, Georgia, will be held on Saturday, March 28, 2026, at 2 p.m. at the Christ Deliverance Temple, 403 East Garner Street in Dublin. Interment will follow in the Dudley Memorial Cemetery.

Ardric Lee Smith, a devoted wife, beloved mother, grandmother and friend, passed away peacefully, leaving behind a legacy of love, strength and joy.

Ardric, who passed away on Tuesday, March 17, 2026, was preceded in death by her devoted and loving husband, Ernest Smith Jr.; her brothers, Marion, Robert Lee Marion, Ardric Marion Jr., Willie James Marion; and her sister, Alice Marion.

Ardric was a dedicated and hardworking woman who faithfully served her community through her employment with Bassett Furniture, Mohawk Industries, and in private home healthcare. She took great pride in caring for others, both professionally and personally. Her nurturing spirit touched the lives of many.

She was known for her vibrant personality and her deep love for family. Ardric found joy in cooking and hosting family gatherings, where her home was always

filled with laughter, warmth, and good food. Her famous cornbread dressing was a cherished favorite, requested by many and made with love every time. She also loved to dance, play cards, and was truly the life of the party — bringing energy and happiness wherever she went.

Ardric leaves to cherish her precious memory her loving children: Juanita Marion, Walter Marion, Jackie Pilcher, Tracy Pilcher and Walter Pilcher III. She was also a caring and devoted mother to her bonus children: Lonny Smith (Ammie), Mary Smith, Ulyesses Smith, Naomi Coleman (John), Willie Brinson (Charlene), Patricia Smith, and Ernest Smith (Pamela).

Ardric is survived by her siblings Geneva Ferrell, Martha Mae Stuckey, James Henry Marion, Juanita Perry and Charles Marion (Brenda).

Her legacy will continue through her beloved grandchildren: Te'Sheika Chappell, Aneikue' Martin, Kaylon Causer (DeMetris), Kailee Branch (Dante'), Jaxson Marion, Jeremiah Pilcher, Aubrey Fuller, and Max Pilcher, along with a host of extended family and friends who will forever cherish her memory.

Ardric will be remembered for her loving heart, her joyful spirit, and the way she brought people together. Her presence will be deeply missed, but her love and legacy will live on in all who knew her.

Please post your condolences online at [ServicesbyDudley.com](http://ServicesbyDudley.com).

**BIBLE TRIVIA**

By WILSON CASEY  
King Features

1. Is the book of Rehoboam (KJV) in the Old or New Testament or neither?

2. From Genesis 4, what righteous man started the practice of herding sheep? Adam, Cain, Abel, Job

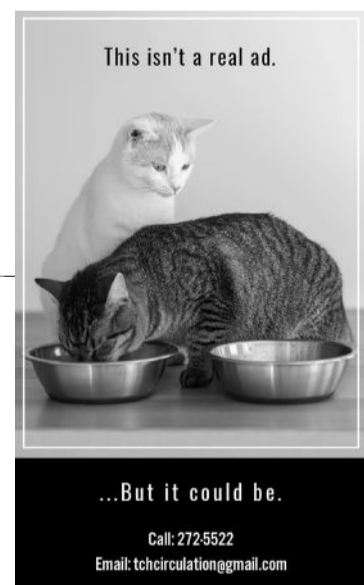
3. How many times is the word "Bible" mentioned in the biblical scripture? Zero, 3, 49, Over 1,000

4. According to Jesus, what was Satan from the beginning? Deceiver, Evil, Thief, Murderer

5. In biblical times, which was a large unit of money or weight? Levy, Talent, Shekel, Sepulcher

6. Of these, who wasn't a son of Noah? Shem, Ham, Levi, Japheth

ANSWERS: 1) Neither, 2) Abel, 3) Zero, 4) Murderer, 5) Talent, 6) Levi



**Notice of Public Hearing**

The Dublin Housing Authority has developed its Agency Plan in compliance with the Quality Housing and Work Responsibility Act of 1998. It is available for review at the Authority's Administrative Northside Office located at 500 West Mary Street beginning February 26, 2026. The hours of Plan availability are Mondays through Thursdays from 9:00 am to 4:30 pm. These administrative offices are closed daily from 1:00 to 2:00 pm.

The Public Hearing for the 2026 Annual Plan will be held on April 9, 2026, at the Verline P. Copenny Center, 2B(C) West Mary Street, Dublin Georgia beginning at 5:00pm.

All citizens are invited to attend this hearing to discuss this plan. Should special requirements for foreign language interpretation or accommodation related to disabilities necessary, please contact Brenda B. Smith, Executive Director, before 4:00 p.m. on Thursday, April 2, 2026, to ensure that necessary arrangements can be made.

City of Dublin will be closed on April 18th, 2025 to Observe Good Friday. There will be no recycle that week. Monday and Tuesday route customers will be on April 25th, 2025.

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## The et cetera chronicles - vol. 128: Adrian

**ABOVE THE LAW** - It was a quiet day in the sleepy town of Adrian, Ga., when a fancy car rocketed through town on May 30, 1949. Police Chief E.W. Avery saw the car and took off in hot pursuit. Avery's patrol car overcame the speeder within a mile. Much to his surprise, the blazing car was the car of Georgia governor Herman Talmadge.

The governor wearing his trademark bright red suspenders, stepped out of the car and immediately told the officer that he had the right to drive as fast as he wanted and did not need to obey traffic signals.

After first offering to post a bond for the \$11.25 ticket. Then Talmadge yelled, "Speed trap!" The ticket was issued to the governor's driver, Haralson. Chief Avery issued a statement that the governor was most likely napping during the event. The matter quickly faded away in a few days, although the chief held on to the ticket. Decatur, Alabama, June 17, 1949; The Spokesman Review, Spokane, Washington, June 18, 1949.

**CAN'T YOU SEE MY NECK!** - Lt. Thomas Frazier, a favorite son of Adrian, Ga., knew that his back was hurt. The pain was overbearing and unwaning. During World War II, Frazier served as a bomber pilot. His neck broken when his fighter plane crashed into the China Sea.

The Air Force denied that Frazier was injured enough to take him off the flight list. Frazier continued to fly missions as scheduled by the brass. The lieutenant flew one after another for fifteen missions. To be able to sit in the cockpit, Frazier was strapped to the board and strapped into his seat. You see, Frazier's neck and upper spine were broken! Lt. Frazier was first diagnosed as having a strained back. A

pinched nerve in his neck was so severe that the flier's arm became useless.

After the surrender in September 1945, Frazier remained in the care of doctors. He entered Walter Reed Hospital in October 1947 after he had been discharged in April earlier that year.

Finally, Frazier had had enough of the red tape wrapped around him and other fellow servicemen. In the winter of 1948, Frazier and three other men, one being Captain Carlos Ogden, a Congressional Medal of Honor awardee, appeared before a congressional panel in Washington, D.C. The men were there to ask for a disability pension based on their injuries. Unfortunately, there was no follow up by the media. Bakersfield Californian, Feb. 27, 1948.

**THE PHOENIX RISES** - The town of Adrian and the entire Adrian community were stunned when the town depot burned to the ground on June 13, 1937. For more than a third of a century, the depot, commercial center of town, served the intersection of the Brewton and Pineora Railroad and the Wadley & Mt. Vernon Railroad. The people of Adrian quickly rebounded. By the end of the first week, E.A. Taylor, the railroad agent, led the crew that rebuilt a new depot in ten days. Macon Telegraph, June 19, 1937.

**STAY AT THE GILWAM** - In the center of Adrian is the town's only traffic light. It was there because U.S. Highway 80, an East Coast to West Coast highway, intersects Georgia Highway 15, a 346-mile Northeast to Southeast Georgia road. Mrs. Carl L. Gillis, Sr. and Mrs. Kermit Wammock realized the need and profitability of a hotel for persons

## PIECES OF OUR PAST



By **SCOTT B. THOMPSON SR.**

traveling through town. It did not take long to find a location, probably owned by their husbands. It was the long-closed Bank of Adrian building. The name was the contraction of their last names (Gillis and Wammock) Mrs. Thurmon Cook opened a café in the completely remodeled bank. Macon Telegraph, May 9, 1939.

**ADRIAN FIGHTER PILOT** - John R. Gillis grew up dreaming of flying high in the sky. As a B-25 bomber pilot based out of Corsica, Lt. Gillis flew nearly 75 missions, earning a Distinguished Flying Cross and six air medals. His unit took out many strategic targets in North Africa and along the Mediterranean Sea. Gillis and his fellow pilots scored the highest bombing accuracy score in the Army Air Forces. Macon Telegraph, Jan. 23, 1945.

## DID YOU KNOW ...?

By **JACK BAGLEY**  
GTLN

Now we are ensconced in spring! The time of year when the robins return, the sap flows, and the leaves bud and turn green.

Days get longer, nights get shorter, and we progress toward the next part of the year. I kind of like the rhythm in that, don't you?

It certainly beats the arrival of spring on, say, Venus - 800° in the morning, and sunset doesn't come for 245 days. Yeah, I'll take spring on Earth any day of the week.

Just like I'll share trivia any day of the week ... especially today! Enjoy!

*Did you know ...*

... an episode of Pokémon in Japan sent hundreds of children to the hospital? On Dec. 16, 1997, an episode of the cartoon show was shown on Japanese television, and in that episode the character of Pikachu uses a "thunderbolt attack" to ward off a foe. The attack was depicted with rapidly flashing colors on the screen, causing some 685 children to go into seizures and be transported to hospitals nationwide. Scientists examining the issue believe the flashing colors may have triggered undiagnosed epilepsy in some of the children, but no one is certain why so many were affected. (Mass hysteria has been suggested.)

... the capital of the nation of Haiti was named after a ship? Port-au-Prince was founded in 1749, and it was named for the French ship Prince that was at anchor in the bay. (As good a reason as any, I suppose.)

... one of the most iconic scenes in cinema history lasted less about 45 seconds on screen, but took seven days to shoot? Warning: spoilers ahead. In the 1960 thriller Psycho, directed by Alfred Hitchcock (1899-1980), the infamous "shower scene" featuring the murder of Marion Crane by Norman Bates lasts about 45 seconds. But shooting the scene took an entire week. In the scene, Crane, played by Janet Leigh (1927-2004), is stabbed to death by Bates, portrayed by Anthony Perkins (1932-1992), while she takes a shower in her room at the Bates Motel. Hitchcock used 78 rapid cuts and special rigs for water and the chocolate syrup that simulated blood in the scene, as well as a specially constructed shower set with removable walls. Leigh, who had to spend an inordinate amount of time in the shower as the water poured down, said it was kept warm so she was comfortable. The scene was shot using extreme close-up shots with swift edits, and Hitchcock filmed several takes of each short scene portion to get the exact look he wanted. Additional trivia note: Leigh, though on set for the entire week's filming, was not filmed in the close-ups with the knife. That honor went to her body double, actress Marli Renfro (born 1938) Neither woman was nude in the shower during the scene, though the camera shots suggested otherwise. And Perkins was not on the set at all; he was in New York starring in a play on Broadway.

... the first self-service restaurant was in New York? Opened in 1885, the Exchange Buffet was rather Spartan by today's standards. Only men were allowed to eat there. The restaurant opened directly across the street from the New York Stock Exchange and catered to the stockbrokers. Customers could either get their food and eat it at the counter standing up, or take it to a table - there were no servers on staff. The restaurant closed in 1963. (Tipping was easy.)

... there are no direct descendants of William Shakespeare living today? The great British playwright (1564-1616) had three children - son Hamnet (1585-1596) and daughters Susanna (1583-1659) and Judith (1585-1662). Hamnet died at the age of 11. Judith had three children, but all died before she did and none had any children of their own. Susanna had one daughter, Elizabeth (1608-1670), but she died childless. (To be or not to be?)

... a Soviet agronomist created the world's largest collection of plant seeds? Nikolai Vavilov (1887-1943) devoted his life to studying cereal crops that could sustain the entire world's population. His work led to the largest collection of plant seeds ever made, but he ran afoul of Soviet leader Joseph Stalin (1874-1953), who had him arrested and imprisoned. Apparently Vavilov's work was the opposite of that done by a scientist whom Stalin liked, Trofim Lysenko (1898-1976), and Stalin - who was not the kind of guy to admire opposite sides of an issue - removed Vavilov from his post. (I guess under Communism, science is what the leaders say it is.)

... the first projection of an image on a screen was made two hundred years before cameras were invented? In 1646, German priest Athanasius Kircher (1602-1680) used a candle or oil lamp to project hand-painted images on a white screen. The first actual photographic camera was created in 1827 by Joseph Niépce (1765-1833) in France. (And an industry was born.)

*Now ... you know!*

## A century of glory: Stories of the World Cup

The world in 2026 is not, it must be said, presenting its finest face.

The evening news on TV now adds an ending "There's Good News Tonight" segment after the glum stories that led the way. But now we can say, "There's Good News This Summer," since World Cup 2026 is on its way!

Having basked recently in a global moment of shared humanity during the Winter Olympics in Milan/Cortina, we do it all again in the spirit of togetherness at this summer's FIFA World Cup. Both the Olympics and the World Cup are imperfect institutions, run by imperfect human beings, contested by imperfect nations. And yet both carry something rare and precious - the capacity to remind us, however briefly, of what we are capable of when we compete in a friendly spirit, when we measure ourselves against each other by skill and heart rather than power and might.

The World Cup arrives this summer with its usual pageantry - and this year, with something more urgent underneath it.

To understand why, it helps to know where this tournament came from.

### The dream of Jules Rimet

In 1930, a French lawyer and football administrator named Jules Rimet gathered 13 nations in Montevideo, Uruguay, for the first FIFA World Cup.

His vision was audacious and, to modern eyes, almost poignant in its idealism: that competitive football between nations could build bridges, foster mutual understanding and give the world a shared arena of peaceful rivalry. Uruguay won that inaugural tournament, and the gold trophy bearing Rimet's name began its journey through history.

His dream was simple and radical in equal measure - that the nations of the world might meet on a football pitch rather than a battlefield.

The tournament has not always honored that dream - and, in a dark irony, neither has the trophy that bore his name. In 1966, just weeks before England hosted the World Cup, the Jules Rimet trophy was stolen from a London exhibition, sparking a national scandal. It was recovered, somewhat improbably, by a mongrel dog named Pickles, sniffing beneath a garden hedge in South London.

England went on to win the tournament - their only World Cup triumph to date, as I am reminded every decade or so - and the trophy was safely returned. Less



By **CHRISTOPHER BLAKE**

happily, in 1983, the trophy was stolen again, this time from football headquarters in Rio de Janeiro. It has never been recovered - the most storied prize in world sport, almost certainly melted down by thieves who had no idea what they held and no interest in finding out.

Jules Rimet's dream, it seems, has always had to contend with the baser instincts of our species.

### The moments that defined a century

The stories accumulated across 19 World Cups constitute something close to a collective human mythology. In 1954, West Germany - a nation still raw with post-war shame - defeated the magnificent Hungarian team in what became known as the Miracle of Bern. For a broken country, it was the first hint of restored dignity. Football did what politics could not do yet.

Four years later, in Sweden, a 17-year-old Brazilian named Pele announced himself to the world with a performance of such athletic poetry that hardened European journalists reportedly wept in the press box. He scored twice in the final, and when the whistle blew, he collapsed in tears himself.

Here was the game at its most elemental - a boy from poverty in Santos, Brazil, illuminating the world's largest stage.

Fast forward to Mexico City, 1986, and, in the space of four extraordinary minutes, Diego Maradona produced the two most famous goals in World Cup history. First, the "Hand of God" - a deliberate, unpunished handball that infuriated England and delighted Argentina in equal, tribally predictable measure. And then, from the restart, what FIFA would later vote the "Goal of the Century," a 60-yard run past five England defenders that left commentators speechless.

In one afternoon, Maradona embodied everything complex and magnificent about this sport: the cheating and the genius, the controversy and the beauty, all tangled inseparably together.

And then there is the story that most painfully illustrates how far the game can

fall from Rimet's dream. In 1994, the World Cup came to the U.S. for the first time. In a group stage match, Colombia's defender Andres Escobar deflected the ball into his own net. Colombia was eliminated.

Ten days after returning home, Escobar was shot dead outside a restaurant in Medellin - murdered, it is widely believed, by those who had lost money gambling on the tournament. The beautiful game had been touched, horribly, by the very darkness that Jules Rimet had hoped football might one day help us transcend.

### America's own story

Americans tend to believe their World Cup history begins with the 1994 hosting. In fact, it begins earlier and more dramatically. In 1950, the U.S. - a ragtag collection of part-time players and postal workers - defeated England one goal to nil in what most football historians consider the greatest upset in the tournament's history.

England, who invented the game, went home humiliated by the Americans. The New York Times initially printed the headline as a typo. It was not a typo.

### The price of the dream

There is, however, a shadow falling across this summer's celebration - one cast not by geopolitics but by FIFA itself. When the U.S., Canada and Mexico bid for this tournament in 2018, officials promised group-stage tickets starting at \$21, a nod to the democratic spirit Jules Rimet had always intended.

That promise has not aged well. Under FIFA President Gianni Infantino, tickets for the 2026 World Cup have arrived priced as high as \$8,680 for premium final seats, with group-stage tickets for high-profile matches beginning at over \$500. The price increase, compared to the 2022 tournament in Qatar, runs to roughly four or five times more.

Fan organizations across Europe have labeled the pricing "extortionate" and a "monumental betrayal" of the tournament's traditions, while prominent football writers have warned that

stadiums stripped of passionate supporters risk becoming little more than corporate hospitality events.

FIFA, for its part, introduced dynamic pricing to the World Cup for the first time - a ticket model borrowed from the American entertainment industry, familiar to concertgoers and NFL fans but deeply foreign to football supporters who have traveled on tight budgets to follow their nations for generations.

After a global backlash, FIFA offered a modest concession: a small number of \$60 "Supporter Entry Tier" seats for each match. Infantino defended the broader pricing structure by pointing out record demand - over 150 million ticket requests in one sales window - suggesting that the market had spoken.

Perhaps it has. But markets and dreams are different things, and Jules Rimet was not a market economist. The worry is that the crowds in those magnificent American stadiums this summer will look rather less like the world than the World Cup ought to.

### The world coming to us

And yet the World Cup endures, imperfect and irresistible. This summer's expanded tournament - 48 nations instead of 32 - means that countries from every corner of the planet will compete on North American soil. Nations qualifying for the first time will bring their flags and their songs and their improbable stories to our stadiums.

Jules Rimet imagined exactly this: a world gathered in common cause, measuring itself in skill and heart. He could not have imagined the wars and fractures that would still mark the century ahead. But he would have found some comfort in this - through everything, the World Cup endures. The trophy bearing his name, though long since lost to thieves, left behind something more durable than gold. Billions of human beings still choose, for one summer, to watch rather than fight.

That is a dream we all need so much right now, and the World Cup tournament is a place for those dreams to thrive. The stories of a century are calling. It is worth pausing to hear them.

*Christopher Blake is president of Middle Georgia State University. He is a passionate supporter of Tottenham Hotspur Football Club and the men's and women's national football teams of England and the U.S.*

OUR TAKE...

Open season on wild hogs

About 20 years ago, in the pines of a south Georgia hunting preserve, the legend of "Hogzilla" was born.

That's when photos surfaced of a hunter posing with a humongous wild boar, along with claims the beast weighed 1,000 pounds and measured 12-feet long. It had been buried – by backhoe to dig a hole large enough – so many dismissed Hogzilla as myth.

The next year, however, in 2005, National Geographic sent a team to exhume the remains, and it confirmed that Hogzilla did, indeed, exist, although he may not have been quite as large as first claimed.

Nonetheless, wild pigs do not have to be head-line-hogging monsters to inflict massive damage to our farms and forest lands.

Feral hogs cost farmers millions of dollars each year, eating and trampling crops. They're also threats to livestock, preying on new sheep, goats and calves while also spreading disease.

The majority of feral hog damage come their feeding habits. They're called "nature's bulldozers" for a reason. Their tough snouts and strong necks destroy property and habitats as they constantly root for grub worms and plant roots. Hogs also damage trees by rubbing off bark while marking their territory, making the trees susceptible to disease and harmful insects. They also dig up pine seedlings and feed on the roots.

A bill passed by the General Assembly – and signed into law Monday by Gov. Brian Kemp – should help. The new law will allow Georgia residents to trap feral hogs without a hunting license, as long as the hogs are killed upon capture.

The allows hunters to hunt from moving vehicles (namely ATVs) and to use drones to track down the animals.

The wild hog is the most destructive of all the invasive species in our state, and the Legislature was right to declare open season on them.

– Rodney Manley

YOUR TURN:

Share your opinion on current events, or topics covered in The Courier Herald by emailing us: tchnewsreporter@gmail.com

THOUGHT FOR TODAY

"Behind every great man is a woman rolling her eyes."

- Jim Carrey

DAILY SCRIPTURE

"Likewise, exhort the young men to be sober-minded, in all things showing yourself to be a pattern of good works; in doctrine showing integrity, reverence, incorruptibility, sound speech that cannot be condemned, that one who is an opponent may be ashamed, having nothing evil to say of you."

- Titus 2:6-8

EVERY DAY'S A HOLIDAY

March 26, 2026 is...

- Major League Baseball Opening Day
- Epilepsy Awareness / Purple Day
- Equal Pay Day
- National Spinach Day
- National Nougat Day
- Good Hair Day
- Live Long and Prosper Day
- Make Up Your Own Holiday Day
- Solitude Day
- Wear A Hat 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.

Our calendar: Holy week mixed with politics

Next week many of us will be observing Holy Week. With Palm Sunday on March 29th, Passover beginning April 1st, and Easter Sunday on April 5th there will be a heightened focus on religious observances in our days ahead. (I'll note for my Greek Orthodox and other Eastern Orthodox friends, they have an extra week to observe Lent before their Easter Sunday celebrations.)

This time of year has an interesting overlap for those of us who work in and around state politics. The calendars usually align with the last week of the Georgia General Assembly. This year the calendar was arranged so that April 1st will be a work day for committees to conflict as little as possible with Passover observances. The last day of session will be Thursday April 1st, with the state's legislative business wrapping up in the wee hours of Good Friday.

The juxtaposition of the highest of holy days with the peak frenzy of state politics often has me questioning both at the same time. I'll add my usual disclaimer here for when I delve into writing about religion. My perspective is that of a Christian. I write knowing I am a sinner and fellow traveler, not a saint.

The extent to which we mix our religion with our politics has been a question since we were a loose collection of colonies. How we mix or separate the two has long been a moving target.

We have some who believe the answer is absolute. There is a group that believes freedom of religion is freedom from religion. There are others who will state quite confidently that "America is a Christian nation" and that the founding fathers, writing constitutional protections for citizens who had just fled an oppressive church-nation state, somehow just forgot to state this.

If pressed, many of these well-intentioned but misguided folks will open things up to say we're a "Judeo-Christian nation" before returning to their biblical basis for the Con-



By CHARLIE HARPER

stitution. They will then in separate conversation wonder why their candidates are not getting the Jewish vote, without any self-awareness that their entire thesis pushes them and their religion out of the founding documents.

After decades of the religious right trying to monopolize Christian voters, it both somewhat amusing and equally sad to see the rise of the religious left. Some of this is now institutionalized, with many large denominations now demanding the government use its power and largess to do the charitable work churches are called to do.

It should be noted that many of these same denominations get hundreds of millions of dollars from the government to do this work. It's helpful to remem-

ber that it was during holy week that Jesus turned the money changers tables over at the Temple.

I've been somewhat intrigued by the ongoing "No Kings" protests, held not just here at home but in nations across the world. I'm sure King Charles got a kick out of the one in London.

When Jesus road into Jerusalem on the back of a donkey, the crowds greeted him as their new king. Jesus rejected an earthly kingdom in favor of a crown of thorns. The week between Palm Sunday and Easter wasn't about building a government. It was about something much bigger.

It is extremely important to note the culpability and fallibility of man in this story. Those cheering for a new king sentenced him to death just days later as part of a frenzied, fickle mob. The only time Jesus ever appeared on a ballot, Barabab won the election.

Collectively, we're no smarter now. We have entire industries dedicated to moving popular opinion. Some sell us products and services. Some create awareness. And some seek to divide us from ourselves and our fellow citizens.

My thoughts on religion and politics change over time with the examples of the day, but generally remain fixed on two guardrails to help keep me between the lines.

One: I used to think that

those who used religion as a litmus test for partisan purposes cheapened my politics. I now realize that politics too often cheapens my religion.

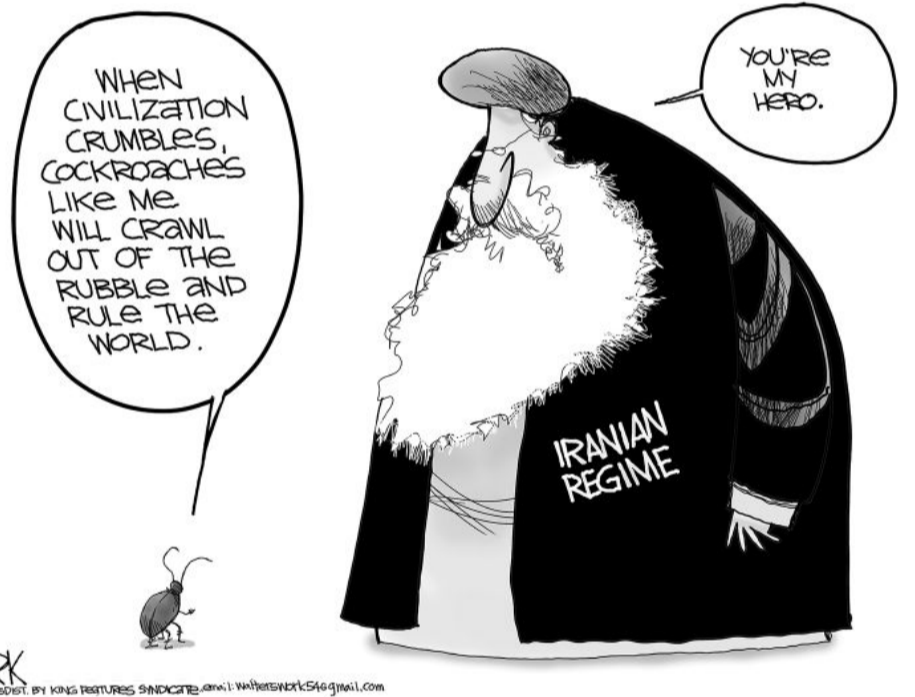
Two: For those who chose religion to divide and exclude, there is a quote from Abraham Lincoln that stands the test of time. "... My concern is not whether God is on our side; my greatest concern is to be on God's side, for God is always right."

I do not wish to have my religion guided by the power of the state, nor the whims of the electorate. Nor do I want citizens to practice religion out of any sense of duty to or fear from the state.

God's gifts to us don't require a pass through at any capitol. They can only be fully accepted and appreciated without a government's participation or coercion.

The hard part for those of us who profess this faith is understanding that free will permits rejection of these beliefs. The hardest part is that if and when we understand that the government won't do our recruitment and compliance for us, then we have to do the work ourselves to market the path to salvation.

That's a tough lesson in reality for Holy Week. I will acknowledge it is one where I fall far too short. It's also why I'm grateful of the gift of Easter, for the sinners and not the saints.



FIRMER GROUND: WAR AND REPENTANCE

On Friday, March 20, David Brooks suggested that the severe weakening of the Iranian regime, especially their military capacity, has been a positive benefit for the region, if not for the Iranian people. This is perhaps the single positive outcome of the US and Israeli attack which began on Feb. 28. But whether this outweighs the costliness of this war is another question.

There are 1,500 dead in Iran, more than 1,000 in Lebanon, 15 in Israel, 13 U.S. military members and many others wounded. The dead and wounded include many civilians, among them the many children killed or wounded in a misdirected U.S. missile attack on a primary school. Some 3 million people displaced. And this when the work of aid agencies has been become much more difficult both because of our country's cuts to international assistance and because of rising energy costs associated with war. The war's first week alone cost the US \$11.3 billion ...

One thing this has exposed is our lack of interest in the country of Iran, its people and its history. An excellent article by Iranian American educator Nina Rees reviews briefly the complexities of Iran's recent history and the ambiguities of what's happening now. While pointing to the brutality of the Khamenie

regime and her own experience with this, she also points to the complexity of the situation.

"The world's difficult conflicts rarely fit into neat narratives of good and evil. Today, Americans are watching events in Iran without a clear sense of the plan, the objectives, or the path forward. That uncertainty should concern anyone who cares about democratic governance or global stability ... The human cost of war is never abstract when your relatives, childhood neighborhoods, and cultural landmarks remain there." And this, "Above all ... I want to invite educators to see their important role in understanding this war and other international crises. Moments like this offer opportunities for classrooms to explore conflicts through multiple lenses ..."

Anything like the careful consideration or concern for democratic governance she highlights here would seem to be completely missing from President Trump's decision to go to war. His impulsive and go it alone approach has further weakened international order and made the U.S. even more an outlier in this regard. As should have been anticipated, the war is wreaking havoc with national economies around the world.

Marine Corps veteran

GUEST COLUMN

By STEVE BULLINGTON

Phil Klay takes issue with the absence of prior deliberation and the failure to define a coherent purpose for the military operation. He's also taken aback as am I by what seems to be the general attitude here, "the administration's delight in displays of violence and domination." "... What these men (who want to Make America Great Again) don't seem to realize, or care about, is that their language of brute force represents a fundamental break with American traditions around war going back to the Revolution." War is never something to be glorified. And regarding the videos of "Epic Fury" the White House has been posting, that mix images of death and destruction with footage from video games and sports highlights, Cardinal Blasé Cupich of Chicago spoke for many of us. "The video presentation that the White House posted was deeply offensive, especially not only to the people who were killed in the war so far, but especially to our American troops."

Hopefully the bombing and killing will end soon. When it does, the President no doubt will claim that we "won" spectacularly. And will we have learned anything? Will be there be any honest accounting of the impetus for this and the costs incurred? Will we mourn the dead? Where there is no moral culpability, no willingness to question one's judgment or admit fault, no sorrow or capacity for remorse, we are already traveling in darkness. Many of us wonder about the moral price we as Americans are paying by association with this administration.

The Muslim faithful completed the fast of Ramadan on March 20. Christians are moving quickly now to Good Friday and Easter. Lent has been a season for self-examination and penance. It began for us with the prophet Joel's call to, "return to me with your whole heart, with fasting, and weeping, and mourning." It comes to a climax with Jesus on the Cross, Isaiah's suffering servant, "He was spurned and avoided by men, a man of suffering, accustomed to infirmity ... Upon him was the chastisement that makes us whole."

For her sake and for the sake of the nation and the world, the church has got some educating of her own to do.

# Woman of the Year luncheon welcomes Kolbie to select club

SPECIAL TO THE COURIER HERALD

The Woman of the Year luncheon held on March 19, 2026, continued a custom which began on March 14, 1984, when 13 Women of the Year met to form a club to welcome new ladies who were so honored. This year, Mrs. Kirk Kolbie was welcomed by Mrs. E.B. Claxton, Jr. (WOTY 1979), Mrs. Wallace Miller (WOTY 1986), Mrs. Steve Garner (WOTY 2023), and Mrs. Lillie Hobbs (WOTY 2024) at a luncheon at the Dublin Country Club.

After a welcome by Mrs. Claxton, Mrs. Miller presented Mrs. Kolbie to the 19 former honorees who were present and gave her a gift. She then introduced her to these 19 members who were present:

Mrs. E. B. Claxton, Jr. (WOTY 1979), Mrs. Wallace Miller (WOTY 1986), Mrs. Hugh Moore, Jr. (WOTY 1993), Mrs. George Evans (WOTY 1995), Mrs. Joseph Uliano (WOTY 1996), Mrs. Robert Walker (WOTY 2001), Mrs. Jerry Hall (WOTY 2003), Mrs. Larry Brantley (WOTY 2005), Mrs. Bob Dixon (WOTY 2006), Mrs. Macon Core



Sara Kolbie (center) was welcomed to the club of St. Patrick's Festival Women of the Year honoree/PAYTON TOWN III

(WOTY 2007), Mrs. N. L. Yates, Jr. (WOTY 2010), Mrs. Ben Knight (WOTY 2013), Mrs. Kenny Baker (WOTY 2015), Miss Deborah Bush (WOTY 2017), Mrs. Lincoln Jones (WOTY 2019), Mrs. Allen McMichael (WOTY 2020), Mrs.

Steve Garner (WOTY 2023), Mrs. Lillie Hobbs (WOTY 2024), and Mrs. Martin Christian (WOTY 2025).

The 2026 Senior Citizen, Mrs. Jeanette Fulford, was introduced by Mrs. Miller, and the 2015 Senior Citizen, Mrs. Ballard, was acknowl-

edged.

Mrs. Miller then presented an eulogy for Mrs. Reggie Hedrick (WOTY 1985) who passed away November 24, 2025. A book will be given to the Laurens County Library in her memory.

Lunch was served at ta-

bles adorned with beautiful shamrock embroidered linens and floral arrangements given by Mrs. Yates in memory of her mother, Mrs. Joe Wingard (WOTY 1983). The blessing for the meal was given by Mrs. Hobbs.

Hostesses for the 2027 meeting were announced. They are Mrs. Moore, Mrs. Evans, Mrs. Uliano, and Mrs. Jarrard.

The attendees "bade farewell" by joining Mrs. Jones in singing "The Irish Blessing."



## POLICE BEAT...

### Dublin Police Department

- On March 29, around 9:35 p.m., an officer was patrolling the area of Walke Dairy Road and Industrial Boulevard when spotting a vehicle with what appeared to be a non-working driver's side taillight.

The officer ran the vehicle's tag through NCIC and found that the vehicle had no insurance. The officer pulled the vehicle over and approached it from the driver's side. The driver, identified as Andrew Starks, license came back suspended.

Starks said he was unaware that his license was suspended. The vehicle was turned over to the passenger. Starks was able to get valid insurance on the vehicle before he was arrested.

Starks was transported to the police department where he was fingerprinted and released with a citation for driving while license suspended or revoked.

- Jessica Dawn Elvine, 44, was charged with driving while unlicensed, on Claxton Dairy Road around 5:46 a.m. on March 10. An officer made a traffic stop in reference to a broken headlight.

The driver was identified as Elvine. Her license had expired on July 2, 2025. The officer informed Elvine that her license was expired and she could not operate the vehicle until got her driver's license fixed at the DMV.

Elvine was arrested and transported to the police department where she was fingerprinted and released on citations. Her vehicle was turned over to a licensed driver.

- Devante D. Strickland, 31, was charged with possession of marijuana less than one ounce on North Jefferson Street around 2:28 p.m. on March 11.

An officer collected suspected marijuana in a room at the Candle Light Motel.

### Laurens County Sheriff's Office

- On March 5, a deputy met with a man and woman at the sheriff's office in reference to fraud that happened on Woodfield Drive.

- A deputy was dispatched to the sheriff's office in reference to a walk-in about an incident that happened at the eastbound rest area around 11:40 a.m. on March 10.

- A deputy was dispatched to the B&T's Grocery in Rentz in reference for a possible hit and run around 6:46 a.m. on March 10.

- Property was damaged on Ga. 57 West around 5:45 p.m. on March 10.

- Property was damaged on Stewart Street around 10:45 a.m. on March 10.

- Jason May, 41, of Milledgeville was charged with possession of methamphetamine at the intersection of U.S. 441 North and the bypass.

- On March 8, around 2:15 p.m., a deputy conducted a traffic stop at the I-16 mile post 39 on a silver Mercury Gran Marquis for speeding. This led to Deondre Richardson, 38, of Savannah, being charged with driving under the influence.

*Editor's note: This information is public record and was taken from reports of local law enforcement agencies. These reports do not reflect guilt or innocence. An "arrest" does not always indicate incarceration. Readers are cautioned that people may have similar names. Police Beat does not identify minor children, victims of sexual assault, suicide attempts or medical conditions. Cases dismissed do not appear if the newspaper is notified before deadline.*

# A clock that doesn't jump around twice a year? Georgia lawmakers are working on it

By TY TAGAMI  
Capitol Beat New Service

ATLANTA — Anyone who is still groggy from, and maybe a little bit resentful about, the time change earlier this month, might find solace in the Georgia Senate's action Monday.

The chamber gutted a bill about ambulances and replaced it with language that would effectively do away with daylight saving time.

Eliminating the semiannual back and forth shifts in the Eastern time zone would require an act of Congress. Since it might be easier to alter the rotation of the sun, the state Senate opted for moving Georgia eastward on the time map, to the zone occupied by places such as New Brunswick and Nova Scotia to the north and Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands to the south.

House Bill 154 would shift Georgia from the Eastern to the Atlantic time zone, aligning the state with parts of Canada and the Caribbean that do not wobble between standard and daylight saving time.

No act of Congress required, just permission from the U.S. Transporta-

tion secretary.

HB 154 would require that Gov. Brian Kemp seek that permission. Should Congress ever grant authority for year-round daylight saving time, the governor would be obliged to request a return to the Eastern zone.

One of his allies, Sen. Bo Hatchett, R-Cornelia, is responsible for the new language in the bill.

"Every time we change the clock, we create confusion for families, for businesses, for schools, and for anyone trying to maintain a consistent routine," Hatchett told his fellow senators Monday. "And for what? The evidence that this system does what it was originally intended to do is weak at best. But the evidence that it disrupts people's lives, that is overwhelming."

Sleep, workplace productivity and safety all suffer, he said.

One source of opposition to such a shift in the past has come from parents concerned about their little ones catching a school bus in lingering darkness.

But schools could adjust start times to address local concerns as needed, he said, using a scalpel to address seasonal changes in daylight rather than

forcing millions to adapt to a changing clock.

The only critic was a fellow Republican, Sen. Ed Setzler, R-Acworth, who observed that Georgia would be as much as two to three hours out of step with neighboring states at some points on the calendar.

But Sen. Nikki Merritt, D-Grayson, said children suffer even more than adults under the current order.

"I remember when I had small children and what children thrive on is a routine," she said. "And every time the time changes back and forth, that routine gets disrupted."

She added that if Georgia leads, other states might follow, a message echoed later by Hatchett.

The measure passed 45-5, with Setzler joined in opposition by four Democrats, including Sen. Harold Jones, II, D-Augusta, the minority leader.

This led Lt. Gov. Burt Jones to quip that it was "the most interesting coalition of nays I've ever seen."

Hatchett, who is a floor leader for Kemp, said later that he was not pushing the bill for the governor. It now goes to the House for consideration of the amendment.



## TELL IT!

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up and file civil suits against everyone associated with DCS. Top of the list: Fred.

*(At the risk of sounding redundant, please see the previous editor's note.)*

**In 2023, 2024 and 2025,** the Dublin taxpayers tried to tell the Dublin City School board about the financial crisis because we knew what they were taking out as far as taxes goes. At that point, we knew how much they were giving the superintendent. We will never forget this.

**Just read the headlines** of the audits of Dublin City School. It is clear that the current board, except for the one just elected in the last election, should be fired. Every one of them should be terminated. The school will not make it five years. They are going to lose their federal funds. Even after all of the information brought to the public, they still didn't have the paperwork in on time. Of course I know the standard answer will be they did not realize it. Folks, I think it is time for the city of Dublin to take this over and stop the charade.

**It's funny how everyone** was complaining about eggs, but now gas prices

are climbing and it's crickets. You need gas. Eggs you could live without.

**At what point will coaches** stop playing politics and start playing the athletes who actually perform?

**Dublin City School** cited for "lack of financial controls." Why do people feel the need to water down, minimize the theft of \$13 million (the real sum is probably much more)? Using terms like "financial control." Crimes were committed. Money was stolen. Not paying the IRS is a crime, felony and federal offense. Taking money from employees and diverting it somewhere else is a crime. Using DCS credit cards for personal use is a crime. Why are city officials so afraid of calling the DCS embezzlement criminal activity?

*(Editor's note: The \$13 million was a projected deficit for the end of this fiscal year, not money missing from the general fund.)*

**Why would the Dublin City Schools** expect the city of Dublin or Laurens County to pay them out whenever the city of Dublin taxpayers have already paid them one time? Why should they go out on the limb again?

**There are only two** lasting requests we can hope to give our children. One of these are roots and the other weeds.

**From the audit of Dublin City Schools FY2023:** "operational deficiencies" is a polite but cowardly term for "stealing" or "embezzling." I thought Fred was supposed to be some great superintendent for which he was paid a ridiculous salary. How did he sanction what the audit cites as over hiring, over paying, wasteful spending? DCS supposedly has safeguards in place now. Brilliant. We're supposed to congratulate DCS on making changes after the \$13 million was stolen. The system in place won't hold anyone accountable, so it's time to lawyer

**What an awesome March** we have had! The St. Patrick's festivities have been remarkable. I think the very best we've ever had. Just another way to show everyone what a fantastic community we have. Thank you to everyone that joined together to bring this wonderful festival to everyone.

**I appreciate the willingness** of Boy Scouts from Troop 65 helping clean up after the Arts and Craft Festival. Keep it up boys. Do a good turn daily.

**Question to those in the know,** do any of the school sports that grace this paper with the pictures on several pages sell tickets to them?

**The county needs to buy Jefferson Street** Baptist Church and move the court house. It would be a great investment with a lot of potential including great parking.

**I saw Twila** with Sue's curly fries.

**SOCCER ROUNDUP...**

# Off into the wild, Blue yonder...

## Raiders sweep Trinity to continue midseason climb; Reverse splits for Falcons at Treutlen, vs. Dodge Co.

By **CLAY REYNOLDS**  
Sports Editor

Spectators looked on from the stands, and the skies, as a couple of pivotal goals were scored just minutes apart in one of two crosstown matches between Trinity and West Laurens Friday afternoon at the SHU.

In a unique sight, the separate celebratory moments – as the Lady Crusaders tied the score at 1, then the Lady Raiders answered to climb back into the lead – took place as a ReMax hot air ship involved in the weekend's Irish Balloon Festival activities inflated for takeoff from the school track just over the visitor-side grandstands, then floated away overhead.

West Laurens' squads continued their ascent toward some exciting late-season horizons with a pair of statement wins over their friendly crosstown foes.

The Lady Raiders blew up the Trinity girls' six-match streak without a loss or an opposing goal as they hung on to win 2-1, and the West-side boys got off the ground in a hurry, and sailed to a 6-0 victory to stretch their unbeaten record to 13-0.

The balloon's lift-off couldn't have come with better timing to add to a picturesque second-half backdrop as the Lady Crusaders, less than 10 minutes in, sent their inevitable PK scorer Addie Kendrick to the line after a hard defensive bump delivered by West Laurens – in a noticeably physical restart to the match – near the top of its box drew a whistle.

The recognizable red, white and blue craft could be seen standing up from the side as her rolling right-footed trickled past a diving Natalie Howell to even things up at a goal apiece.

Play resumed just before it could get airborne, and a flight trajectory directly over the field offered a perfect vantage point for the Lady Raiders' goal to re-take the lead as a similar situation unfolded on the opposite end of the field.

The earlier West Laurens score had also come on a set piece late in the first half as Jiya Patel launched a free kick in the direction of the goal.

She was positioned closer this time as a Trinity handball set her up from a little more than 25 yards away straight on. And though her kick hooked a bit wide, it was close enough to bring goalkeeper Lyley Mills out for a play on it.

She batted it wide, and attempted to chase the ball out toward the short corner to her right.

But the Lady Raiders' Landry Hall got to it first, and bumped the ball back toward the middle where plenty of both teams' players surrounded a wide-open



**GOING BACK UP:** The Lady Raiders celebrate after Kristen Ivey's tiebreaking goal, just as a hot air balloon was taking to the skies above The SHU, put their spirits back on the rise in the second half of Friday's match/**CLAY REYNOLDS**

net.

It would come to West's Kristin Ivey, who had an angle on two Trinity defenders, took aim and ripped the ball home.

And the balloonist, watching from above, joined in as players in blue got together to celebrate the goal – and their 2-1 lead – with a few blasts of its burner on the way higher into the evening sky, and out of sight.

Roughly 30 minutes of action remained, but West Laurens locked things down defensively from there to frustrate virtually every remaining Trinity opportunity before it unfolded.

In addition to a third-straight overall this season, the win is the Lady Raiders' first over their neighbor, and perennial GIAA contender, since 2018. This year, according to head coach Nate Smith, is also the first ever that West Laurens' girls have notched a win over both the Crusaders and East Laurens (whom they routed 8-0 Feb. 23) in the same season.

The Lady Raiders (9-4, 7-2 region 4-AAA) also posted a 4-0 shutout victory in Macon last Tuesday night to open a sweep of Howard.

The West Laurens boys started quickly in the following game, with Dalton Oxford scoring on an attack from the left hand side only minutes in to open the scoring.

Little else would come together for the Raiders until Alex Derochie – seconds after subbing in ahead of a corner kick, headed one in off a low line drive from the near post to make it 2-0 late in the first half.

Bryson Morgan would break the school's freshman scoring record with goals to add on in the second half,



**SOME WIND IN THE SAILS:** After a bubble-bursting West Laurens goal ended their season-long shutout streak late in the first half, the Lady Crusaders saw confidence pick right back up with this Addie Kendrick PK to even the score early in the second/**CLAY REYNOLDS**

his first on a high header directly in front of the net to make it a 3-0 lead with 35 minutes to go.

Trinity lost its goalkeeper Graham Forth to a leg injury as the sophomore dove after a ball near the front of the goal box moments later.

West Laurens scored again three minutes after the lengthy stoppage. New keeper Brooks Barrs boxed up a driving shot from the Raiders' Payton Everly, but got outmaneuvered by a few additional blue shirts on some similar action a next time down, with Everly thrusting the ball home to make it 4-0 with 28 minutes left.

Another goal followed around the 21-minute mark, as the ball wound up in the hands of keeper Clyde Warren on the end of a long Trinity sprint toward the opposite end.

He punted one nearly to Rentz, and after some pinball action near midfield, the ball got sent to Derochie on the wing for a mid-range try that connected to make it 5-0.

Morgan scored his second on a soft tapper, taking advantage of an overplay by a few Crusader defenders, with less than 30 seconds to play.

The Raider boys (13-0, 9-0 region 4-AAA) ground past Howard 3-1 on Tuesday

night with the help of second-half goals on a soaring 20-plus yard shot from Jack Yearwood, a cleanup off a deflected header by Judd Walker and an Oxford penalty kick.

West Laurens' teams were slated to travel to Harlem Tuesday, and host Baldwin Thursday, in their next two contests.

The Trinity girls (6-1, 5-0 region 6-AA) and boys (4-2-1, 3-0 region) both throttled Covenant by 10-0 finals in their only other matches of the week Tuesday night at Cleve Warnock Field.

Brinley Vinson and Addie Kendrick both had hat tricks (Kendrick's her third in a row) to lead the way as the Lady Crusaders extended their early unbeaten and unscored-on streaks in a sixth match.

Kendrick also assisted two goals and Maddy George lent a hand on four as Abby Gillis chipped in two additional goals, and Bristol Batchelor and Chloe Rozier added one each.

Jagger George scored four times, and Thomas Polhill had a hat trick plus an assist, while Parker Smith, Brooks Barrs and Josh Mosley had one goal each for the Trinity boys.

Mosley collected three assists, Hein Schaaf had two and Forth saved Covenant's lone shot on goal.

Trinity's squads were set to visit Vidalia Heritage in their next fixtures on Tuesday.

Over on the Eastside, the Falcons and Lady Falcons celebrated senior night with a region split versus Dodge County.

The girls (8-6, 5-1) pulled out a 1-0 win by virtue of Za'Kiyah King's goal with 1:17 left to go in the first half. The senior got ahold of a ball and outflanked the Indians on an attack from the right just as things were beginning to wind down for the last-second score.

Dodge, with similar timing, had one of its best opportunities at a goal coming back as a free kick got kneed skyward in the box, and came down in front of an Indian for a header that veered a little wide.

Goalkeeper Deanna Lowther knocked the ball down and secured it for good measure to ensure no further trouble in the remaining 17 seconds, and maintained a clean sheet the rest of the night.

The Falcon boys (10-4, 5-1 region 2-High A) fell to Dodge 4-1 after getting behind on consecutive goals from Aggrey Summey, C.J. Barret, Armondo Godoy and Jose Pacheco that made it 2-0 going into the half, and put the visitors in command by a 4-0 score after back-to-



**FIRST IN A PAIR:** There was no comma needed between one goal and a second for the Raiders' Dalton Oxford (23), who punched this shot past a sliding Trinity goalkeeper Graham Forth to open Friday's scoring, then added a second via penalty kick in the second half/**CLAY REYNOLDS**



**SECOND-HALF STRETCH:** West Laurens and Trinity boys teams do the "upward dog" pose while spending a few minutes de-stressing with some group yoga during a several-minute injury timeout early in the second half/**CLAY REYNOLDS**

**SCOREBOARD**

<b>BASEBALL</b>
<b>Monday</b>
East Laurens 17, Montgomery Co. 4
Stratford 10, Trinity 0
<b>Tuesday</b>
West Laurens 10, Howard 0
Trinity 26, Central Fellowship 1
East Laurens 15, Southwest Macon 0
<b>GIRLS SOCCER</b>
<b>Tuesday</b>
Trinity 9, Vidalia Heritage 0
Harlem 3, WL 0
Washington Co. 2, Dublin 0
<b>BOYS SOCCER</b>
<b>Tuesday</b>
Trinity 10, Vidalia Heritage 0
WL 3, Harlem 2
Dublin 5, WACO 2

**PREP SCHEDULE**

<b>BASEBALL</b>
<b>Wednesday</b>
East Laurens at Jefferson Co./5 p.m.
Dublin at Wilcox Co.
West Laurens at Bleckley Co./6 p.m.
<b>Thursday</b>
Howard at WL/5:30 p.m.
Dublin at ACE Charter CFCA at Trinity/6 p.m.
<b>Friday</b>
ACE Charter at Dublin /4 p.m.
EL at Southwest Macon /4:30 p.m.
<b>SOCCER</b>
<b>Thursday</b>
Baldwin at WL/5 p.m.
EL at Bleckley Co.
Jefferson Co. at Dublin /5:30 p.m.
<b>TENNIS</b>
<b>Thursday</b>
WL at Baldwin and Howard /4 p.m.
<b>GOLF</b>
<b>Thursday</b>
WL at FPD/3:30 p.m.

**CONTACT US:**  
Email sports information to [tchsports77@gmail.com](mailto:tchsports77@gmail.com), or call (478) 272-5522, ext. 110

back scores came within a minute midway through the second.

Lerri Lopez scored East's only goal on a PK with 19 minutes to go.

The Falcon boys shut out Treutlen 5-0 on the winning side of a Tuesday-night split on the road (the girls fell to the Vikings 2-0), led by goals from Christofer Vasquez, John Thang, Jamari Harvey, Brandon Carver and Taylen Demmons. Jaden Wright and Jason Lopez also provided assists, and Luis Roman had three saves in goal.

Both also picked up wins via forfeit in Wednesday's scheduled match against Northeast Macon, which is not fielding a team.

East Laurens will visit Bleckley County Thursday night in its only matches of this week.

Dublin's teams were swept by Swainsboro last Tuesday night.

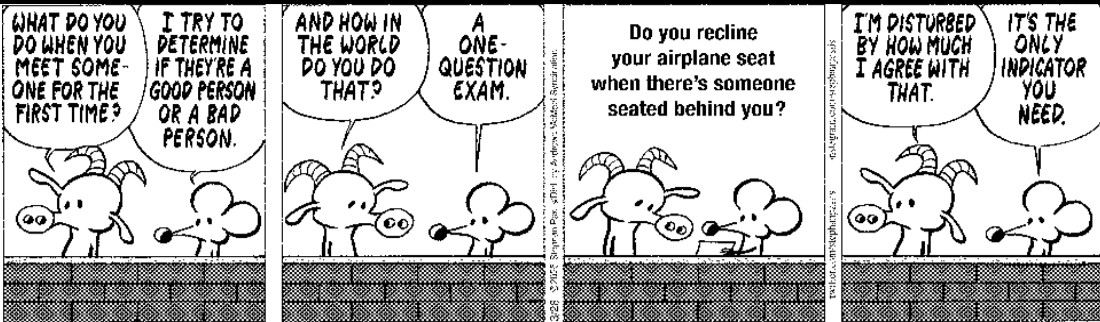
Natalya Sannicolas scored two of the Tigers' five goals as the Lady Irish (3-6, 2-3 region 2-High A) fell in a shutout.

Jaymi McLendon registered eight steals, Bianca Edmond had seven and Heaven Richardson had six, while Lizzie Brantley added eight saves to their stat tally.

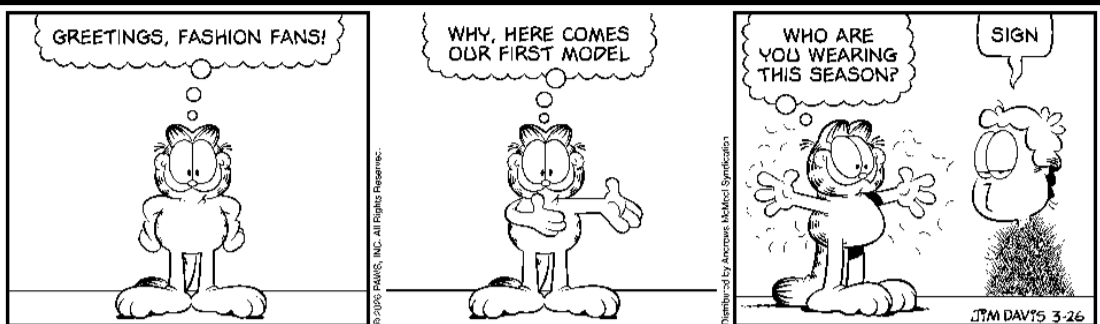
Dublin's boys (1-6, 0-4 region) answered two Swainsboro goals in the first half, but were blanked as the Tigers put up five going away in the second, with Angel Castillo and Kamm'Rynn Bell record two each.

The Irish had home matches with region rivals Washington County and Jefferson County on the slate for Tuesday and Thursday.

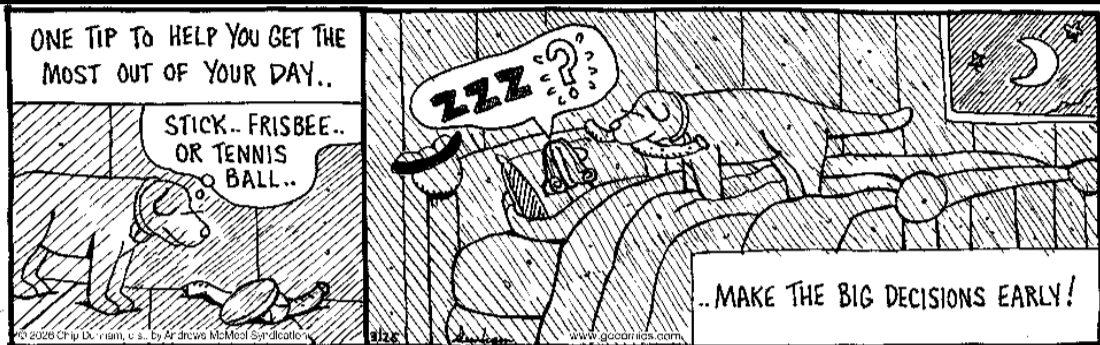
PEARLS BEFORE SWINE



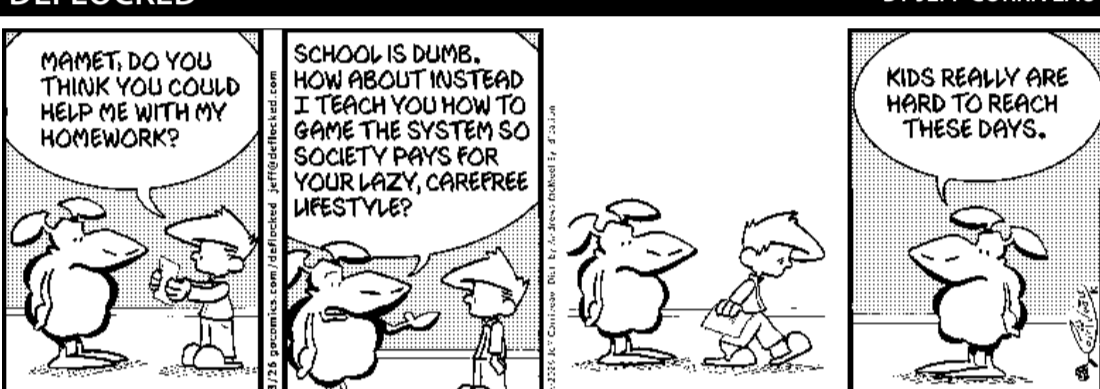
GARFIELD



OVERBOARD



DEFLOCKED



ZIGGY



PLUGGERS



If you don't recognize yourself in your latest DMV license photo, you're a plugger.

Aunt's Passing is followed by a bitter falling-out!

DEAR ABBY: My favorite aunt was dying. Her daughter is my favorite cousin, so I texted her almost every day with encouragement. When the doctor said the end was near, I backed off messaging to give the family space to themselves.

Thirteen days later, I received a text with a photograph of my aunt's grave. Ensnuing texts and phone calls indicated that my cousin's older brother had grandstanded and taken over. Questions about her service and burial went unanswered. I expressed dismay; our family had been the first to call about almost everything.

I have read a great deal about forgiveness -- when to offer it, and when to forgive the messenger but not the action. That is the stance I have taken. My once-beloved cousin responds as if all is well between us, though she has asked twice if I would rather she stop communicating, given that I rarely respond. Twice I have said, "That is up to you."

Admittedly, I would love some closure on this, one way or the other. In my youth, I would have forgiven it all, probably even apologized for her "pain" while subjugating my own. I am not in that frame of mind now. Do I forgive? Forget? Move on? -- BEWILDERED IN FLORIDA



DEAR ABBY

BY ABIGAIL VAN BUREN

DEAR BEWILDERED: What happened was not your cousin's fault; the fault lies with her grandstanding brother. Do not allow this to interfere with your formerly loving relationship with her. By all means, forgive and move on. Also, put aside your passive-aggressive attitude. When people are grieving a death, even one that is expected, they are usually distracted, in pain and not thinking about how their actions affect others.

DEAR ABBY: I have a 42-year-old son, "Wade," who has anxiety, depression and a wild temper. He receives minimal, below-poverty-level disability payments. Wade's father and I give him money when he says he's hungry and out of food. (We are both retired.) Wade claims his lack of money is "the system's" fault. Wade also imagines he

can earn a living in the music industry. I am beyond tired of this. I'm a retired teacher. How can I help our son to become independent? Wade says our family is "broken" and doesn't work "as a team." I have my own bills to pay. -- OVER HIM IN TEXAS

DEAR OVER HIM: If Wade defines "working as a team" to mean he can hit you up for money any time he wants, I beg to differ. If he were meant to be a success in the youth-oriented music business, his career would have been in full swing by the time he was 30.

Encourage Wade to find a way to supplement his disability payments so his cupboard won't be bare at the end of the month, and let him know firmly that you won't be giving him more handouts. Your family isn't broken; the only thing that's broke is your son.

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](http://www.DearAbby.com) or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

Thursday, March 26, 2026

GOREN BRIDGE

WITH BOB JONES  
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EFFICIENT PLAY

Neither vulnerable, West deals

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

The bidding:  
WEST Pass NORTH Pass EAST Pass SOUTH Pass  
Pass 2♣\* Pass 4♣  
All pass  
\*Drury. Good spade raise for a passed hand.

Opening lead: 10 of ♣

South in today's deal was Norwegian star Boye Brogeland. Drury is a very popular convention, enabling a partnership to stay at the two level when a partner opens light in third or fourth seat. The North hand is a bit light for the bid by American

standards but was probably within range for this partnership. Brogeland played low from dummy on the opening club lead as East played an encouraging card, winning with his ace.

This is a complicated deal but Brogeland handled it very efficiently. He started with two high trumps, happy to see the queen fall. He then led the jack of hearts from his hand. West played low and East won with the king, then shifted to the jack of diamonds. Brogeland played the queen from his hand and took West's king with dummy's ace. He led the queen of clubs from dummy, covered with the king, and ruffed in hand. Brogeland crossed back to dummy with the 10 of spades and discarded a diamond on the jack of clubs. He then simply led a diamond from dummy. East won with the eight and continued with the 10, which Brogeland ruffed. He led a heart toward the queen and claimed his contract when West played the ace. Very neatly done!

(Bob Jones welcomes readers' responses sent in care of this newspaper or to Tribune Content Agency, LLC., 16650 Westgrove Dr., Suite 175, Addison, TX 75001.)

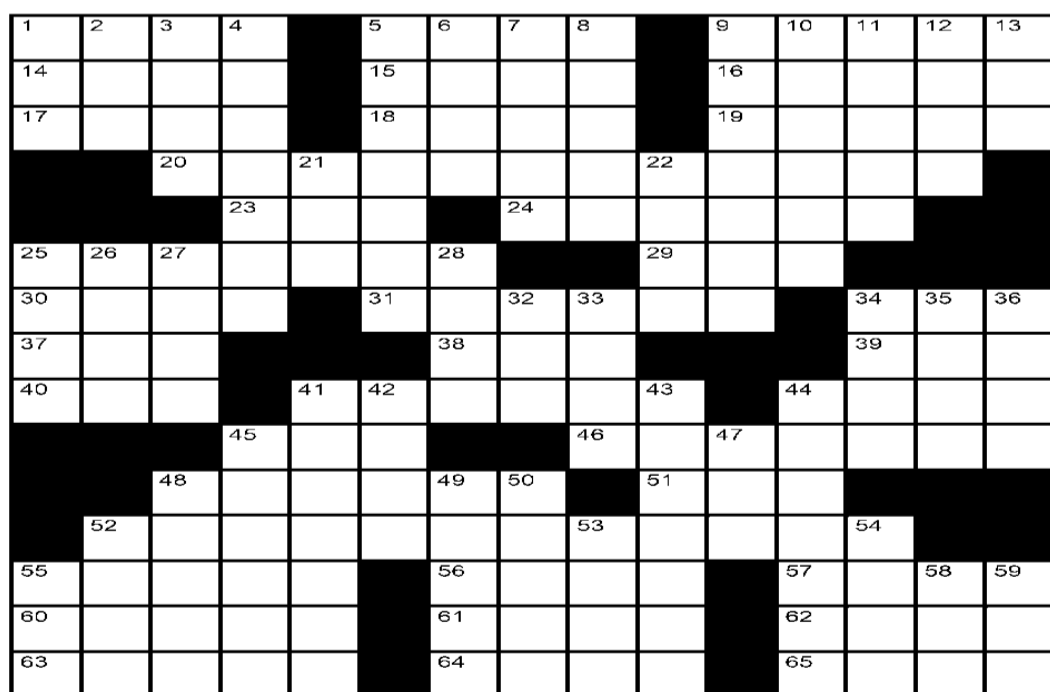
THE Daily Commuter Puzzle by Stella Zawistowski

ACROSS

- 1 Baby's bed
- 5 Difficult task
- 9 Imbibed
- 14 Floor model, e.g.
- 15 Melody
- 16 Indian currency unit
- 17 Expelled saliva
- 18 Middle Eastern sultanate
- 19 English class assignment
- 20 World Series, e.g.
- 23 Historical period
- 24 Poker plays
- 25 "That's right!"
- 29 Was in charge
- 30 Bonobos and gorillas
- 31 Footer's counterpart
- 34 Didn't get used
- 37 Salty body of water
- 38 Do damage to
- 39 Chess (Southern dessert)
- 40 Wrap up
- 41 Minnesota's capital: 2 wds.
- 44 Travel by taxi
- 45 Had a meal
- 46 Peelable fruits
- 48 Use Hulu, e.g.
- 51 Part of an atlas
- 52 Polly-O product: 2 wds.
- 55 Pink-slipped
- 56 Clickable desktop image
- 57 Like a skyscraper
- 60 Wipe data from
- 61 Misplaced
- 62 Actor Kate Dillon
- 63 Small salamanders
- 64 Looks over
- 65 Bank (on)

DOWN

- 1 Old music holders: Abbr.
- 2 Sales agent, for short



Created by Stella Zawistowski 10/17/25

- 3 Apple computer
- 4 Pesters
- 5 Organ connected to the esophagus
- 6 Unit of sugar
- 7 Broadcasting: 2 wds.
- 8 Salami city
- 9 Chest of drawers
- 10 Hurried
- 11 Point in an orbit
- 12 Type of tide
- 13 "Ivory" piano part
- 21 "\_\_\_ you serious?"
- 22 African river
- 25 Job for a detective
- 26 Unlock
- 27 Enjoy a book
- 28 Short-term worker, for short
- 32 Driver's club: Abbr.
- 33 Soundly defeat
- 34 Turn in circles
- 35 Verdi opera
- 36 Shirts worn with jeans
- 41 Big steps



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- 42 High schooler, often
- 43 Bemoans
- 44 Hip-hop celeb: 2 wds.
- 45 Not moving: 2 wds.
- 47 Scottish "no"
- 48 Drinking utensil
- 49 Light on your feet
- 50 The real \_\_\_
- 52 Horse's father
- 53 Hydrant attachment
- 54 Simplify
- 55 Boggy area
- 58 \_\_\_ Nas X
- 59 \_\_\_ down the law

SUDOKU

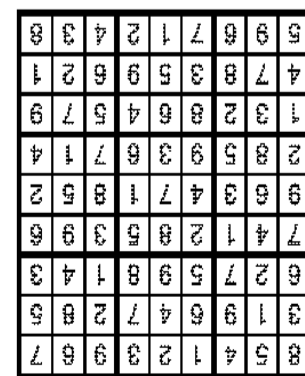


Fun By The Numbers

Like puzzles? Then you'll love sudoku. This mind-bending puzzle will have you hooked from the moment you square off, so sharpen your pencil and put your sudoku savvy to the test!

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!



ANSWER:

**WHITAKER GUILTY**

Continued from page 8

and Amanda Palmer took turns talking to the jury. Warnock reminded the jury that Whitaker was an Eagle Scout who was described by people as gentle and kind, and how it did not make sense to them that the defendant would just shoot his new wife without any provocation.

"Ben was involuntarily intoxicated," Warnock said. "Tiffani and Ben were in love with each other. None of this adds up. We have an answer that Julie Scarborough (Tiffani's mother) doesn't want to hear. It's the medicine. It's the only thing that makes sense."

Palmer said Whitaker should not be found guilty if he was unable to distinguish right from wrong.

"The medicine had the



During closing arguments, Chief Assistant DA Kelly Weathers urges the jury to return a guilty verdict/PAYTON TOWNS III

potential side effect of causing serotonin syndrome," she said. "The combination

of medicine is dangerous and can cause anger and lead to serotonin syndrome.

Mr. Whitaker has no prior violence. There is no other issue or explanation on why Ben shoots Tiffani. ... Ben picked up a gun but did not know right from wrong."

Both attorneys pointed out that Whitaker's and Tiffani's texts from that afternoon showed their love and concern for each other.

Weathers began the DA's closing statement by reminding the jury that Tiffani was only married for a short time to Whitaker - 59 days.

"What is not in dispute is he killed her," Weathers said. "He shot her five times before she fell. He is saying his medicine made him do it."

Weathers said the medicine did not play a factor in this case, pointing out that Whitaker took the same medicine in the county jail after his arrest that he did before the shooting - and yet had none of the symptoms he later said he had the afternoon of the tragedy.

"It took him two years to pay and bring you this theory

of involuntary intoxication," Weathers said. "During the afternoon (of the shooting), Ben does not tell (Tiffani) about what symptoms he's going through."

She argued that if Whitaker had serotonin syndrome, he would not have been able to tell right from wrong. Weathers said Whitaker shot his wife, packed and then drove to family-owned land in Wilkinson County.

"The evidence does not support a finding that he did not know right from wrong," said Weathers, who played part of the Dublin Police Department's interview with detective John Knight. "The first thing he said (to Knight) was the most honest thing he said. He was in the crosshairs of that investigator."

During that interview, Whitaker told Knight that he and Tiffani had an argument and she was "chastising me about having a couple of drinks. I guess that nagging feeling set me off."

He described going into his bedroom, grabbing his gun and shooting her in the

back. "He wants you to believe he was laboring under symptoms," Weathers said. "Nobody with serotonin syndrome can shoot with that kind of accuracy."

McLendon finished closing by saying Whitaker, without any justification, killed his wife. The medication, McLendon said, was not the issue.

"He never tells anyone he was in pain (the day of the shooting)," the DA informed the jury. "There was no confusion. ... You can't be crazy one minute and fine the next. That's unbelievable."

When talking about the medicine Whitaker took the day of the shooting, McLendon reminded the jury that he had the same medicine later in the county jail. But there was a difference in the two situations. At the county jail, Whitaker "didn't drink alcohol and he didn't have a nagging wife."

"We ask that you come back with a verdict that speaks the truth," McLendon said.

**CIS GALA**

Continued from page 1

most successful programs I have ever been the beneficiary of."

Garnto recently retired as the superintendent of Laurens County Schools and is the Heart of Georgia Regional Educational Service Agency's executive director. He said Curtis knew how much he really liked - or not like - to speak. But he thanked Curtis and Laurens County Schools, especially for what they meant to him during his career.

"I can't thank them for the opportunity they gave me to make an impact on children," Garnto said. "Jackie came to me in 2011 or 2012 and wanted to add something else to a young principal's plate. The people she sent us I did not have to manage, and they were a great resource for our school."

James, who is in her second year as superintendent in Wilkinson County, gave God the honor and glory for her to be able to be recognized.

"On behalf of the students in Wilkinson County, they are better because of Communities In Schools," James said. "When I became superintendent, I had done research on CIS and saw all the great work that was happening in counties around us. I wanted that in Wilkinson County."

Stephens is a retired Twiggs County educator who has been a part of Family Connections. She thanked Curtis for the job she has done in Twiggs County.

"I was floored when I was told I was receiving this reward," Stephens said. "It is always good when somebody else recognizes your work."

Tullia, owner of Gees Boutique, is not in

education but she supports every school in the area. She thanked Curtis for honoring her.

"I see the ones who have come before me tonight and I see how they are educated and have taught our children in schools," she said. "I wanted to make sure that God gets the blessings. I am deeply honored and humbled to be able to get this award tonight."

Tullia said her recognition belong to every child or parent who needed someone to listen to them.

"Someone to notice and someone to care," Tullia said. "My passion to giving back was because I grew up in foster care. I know what it felt like to be unseen or have no one know what you are going through. That's why I do this work, because children don't always have the words to ask for our help."

Ocoszio Jackson, a 2010 graduate from Dublin High School, was happy to be at the event where Hooks was honored.

"Communities In Schools fueled my flame," Jackson said when talking about the organization. "CIS is not a daycare. CIS is a training ground. The greatest reason to continue supporting CIS is because I'm a product."

Ben Lanier was called on to talk about how CIS makes a difference. He said it changed his life when he became a facilitator in a CIS summer program.

"It pulled me out of my own tunnel vision and put me face-to-face with reality, with kids who were bright, funny, capable and also carrying things that many

adults would buckle under," Lanier said. "I saw firsthand what happens when students are navigating life with more barriers than support, and I also saw what happens when one steady caring adult enters the picture and refuses to give up on them."

He told the crowd that CIS places trained and committed adults into the lives of those students who need them the most. The adults become a part of CIS' students lives during a time where young people are seen in the local news in obituaries or mugshots for crime stories.

"That is not normal," Lanier said. "That is not acceptable. And it is not inevitable. Considering those realities, it is our moral obligation to roll up our sleeves and do the work."

He urged people to mentor a student from one of the public schools and show up consistently to be the adult a child can count on.

"Because the power of a caring adult can change a story," Lanier said.

Tinsley Curtis gave some special remarks at the end of the program about her mother, who had a kidney transplant almost a year ago.

"She still went to work and still provided for me and her family," Tinsley said. "She never allowed her diagnosis to define her. Today, I want to honor my mother on a day where she celebrates and uplifts everybody else, I want to remind her that she is the most honorable person in this room."

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**Classifieds**  
**Employment**

**Greensman Part Time**  
 The City of Dublin is accepting applications for a Part Time Greensman. Must be available to work on Saturday and Sunday. Provides labor and support for a variety of entry level golf course conditioning functions to include but not limited to hand raking, push rotary and fly mowing, laying sod, topdressing, shoveling, range care, greens check, and debris care. All duties must be performed in a safe and efficient manner, and in a manner that does not disrupt golfers. This position's primarily responsible for operating equipment and providing knowledge, labor and support for the daily conditioning of the golf course. Work is performed under the direction of the Golf Course Superintendent. Starting salary is \$13.52 per hour. Successful applicant must pass a drug screen and have a valid Georgia Driver's license. Applicants may apply online through our www.cityofdublin.org website until position is filled. The City of Dublin is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

**Real Estate**  
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Houses for Rent: 2 bedroom \$1,050/month and 2 bedroom \$725/month. No Animals. References required. 478-278-9012

**Jefferson Street Baptist Church**  
**Holy Week Services**

Monday-Friday @12:10pm

Monday, March 30 -Matt Haywood  
 Pastor, Bethlehem Baptist Church

Tuesday, March 31- Max Rodgers  
 Pastor, Olivet Baptist Church

Wednesday, April 1- Matt Greene  
 Pastor, Dudley Baptist Church

Thursday, April 2- Keith Collins  
 Pastor, New Bethel Baptist Church

Friday, April 3- Bryce Robinson  
 Pastor, Jefferson Street Baptist Church

*Box lunch for all in attendance!*

**jsbcdublin.com**  
**209 N Jefferson Street Dublin, GA (478)272-7750**