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## December on the Forgotten Coast: A Season of Light, Tradition & Community

December on the Forgotten Coast has always carried a special kind of magic, but this year feels even more vibrant. From Mexico Beach to Port St. Joe and across Apalachicola's historic streets, the region is stepping into the holidays with a full calendar of celebrations, bustling small businesses, and a strong sense of togetherness that defines life here. As cool breezes settle in and the shoreline quiets, locals and visitors alike are embracing the season with renewed appreciation for the coast's charm.

Festivities officially kick off with community tree lightings, coastal parades, and beloved traditions like St. George Island's Lighting of the Palms, where families gather beneath glowing silhouettes of palms wrapped in thousands of lights. Downtown Port St. Joe continues its holiday transformation with storefront decorations, extended shopping hours, and weekend markets showcasing handcrafted gifts, coastal art, and locally made treasures. In Apalachicola, the annual Holiday Fresh Market and the



highly anticipated Christmas parade add to the joyful energy filling Water Street and the riverfront.

Local businesses are also stepping into the spotlight this month. Restaurants are rolling out festive menus, boutiques are offering special shopping nights, and makers are debuting new seasonal pieces for the holiday rush. Many shops

are seeing increased foot traffic as residents make a conscious effort to support the small businesses that give the Forgotten Coast its character. For some, December is their most important month of the year, bringing a welcome boost during what can be a quieter economic season.

Arts and culture take center stage, too. The Joe Center for

the Performing Arts is packed with holiday programming, from choir performances to family-friendly shows that draw in crowds from across the region. Local galleries are hosting winter exhibits, highlighting coastal-inspired work and giving visitors unique opportunities to meet area artists. Meanwhile, outdoor enthusiasts are enjoying cooler

weather on the trails, quieter beaches, and the start of winter fishing—another hallmark of the season.

Above all, December here is about community. Neighbors exchange homemade sweets, volunteer groups deliver meals and toys to families in need, and local churches and organizations come together to make sure every corner of the coast feels the warmth of the holidays. Whether it's watching a small-town parade, shopping at a weekend market, or simply enjoying a peaceful sunset over the bay, the month is filled with moments that remind us why the Forgotten Coast is such a deeply cherished place to call home.

As the year winds down, there's also a sense of reflection throughout the region. Many locals see December as a chance to look back on the milestones of 2025—new businesses opening their doors, community projects taking shape, festivals returning in full force, and families finding new roots along the coast.



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## Winter Exhibits Along the Coast: Local Galleries + Art Walk Highlights



BY CARA GOODMAN

Winter is one of the most inspiring times along the Forgotten Coast, and the region's galleries are embracing the season with new exhibits, special showcases, and lively art walk events that bring the community together. From Port St. Joe to Carrabelle, Apalachicola, and Eastpoint, local artists are filling coastal spaces with fresh work that reflects the beauty, texture, and character of life by the water. Whether you're an art collector, a casual browser, or simply looking for a unique holiday outing, this year's winter exhibits offer something for everyone.

Port St. Joe is buzzing with

creative energy as galleries debut seasonal collections perfect for holiday shoppers. Many spaces are featuring coastal landscapes, handmade pottery, jewelry, and mixed-media pieces inspired by the natural charm of St. Joseph Bay. Regular art walk evenings give visitors a chance to meet local artists, enjoy live music, and step into the welcoming studios that anchor the town's growing arts district.

Over in Carrabelle, winter brings a fresh lineup of exhibits highlighting the work of both emerging and established talent. Galleries are showcasing everything from maritime photography to folk art and handcrafted woodwork. The town's art walk events continue to grow each season, offering a relaxed, intimate atmosphere where visitors can explore galleries at their own pace while enjoying refreshments, artist demonstrations, and a taste of Carrabelle's warm community spirit.

Apalachicola remains a cul-



tural hub this time of year, with its historic downtown lined with galleries bursting with creativity. Winter exhibits often feature oyster-shell sculptures, watercolor scenes, metalwork, and fine art that capture the mood of the riverfront and its timeless Southern charm. The monthly art walk draws crowds from across the region, turning downtown into an open-air gallery full of artists greeting patrons, shops staying open late, and visitors strolling beneath twinkling holiday lights.

In Eastpoint, the arts scene

continues to expand with new spaces and pop-up exhibits that showcase the heart of the working waterfront. Local makers are offering coastal-inspired pieces ranging from driftwood art to handmade crafts and small-run prints. Winter markets and art walk events give residents and visitors the chance to connect directly with artists, learn about their creative process, and take home one-of-a-kind pieces that reflect the character of the bay. As winter settles in, these galleries and art walks offer a vi-

brant way to experience the Forgotten Coast's creative side. Each town brings its own flavor, giving residents and visitors a chance to celebrate local talent, support small businesses, and enjoy a season filled with color, imagination, and community.

As the season progresses, many of these galleries are also hosting special holiday open houses, giving guests a chance to browse new collections while enjoying warm drinks, live music, and festive coastal décor. These events not only celebrate the talent of local artists but also strengthen the bond between the arts community and the residents who support it.

Forgotten Coast *Living!*

Published Monthly  
Mailed FREE to the  
Communities of 32457, 32456,  
32346, 32328, 32322, and  
32320

Circulation: 8,000 households  
and 3,000 extra copies for  
tourists.

301 Turtle Cove  
Panama City Beach, FL  
32413

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# Thank You Letter From The Editor: Jack Smith



and engaging. These additions will include expanded classified ads—such as legal notices, wedding announcements, and community updates—along with comprehensive coverage of all local high school sports. We're also creating dedicated space for local officials, including mayors, sheriffs, and school superintendents, to share important information directly with our readers. In addition, we'll be featuring Letters to the Editor and Publisher, giving our community an even stronger voice in these pages.

As we close out 2025, we want to extend our sincere thanks to our readers, advertisers, and community partners for the warm welcome and continued support you've shown us. This publication exists because of you, and we are truly grateful for the trust you place in us to share the stories that matter most along the Forgotten Coast.

Looking ahead to 2026, we're excited to introduce several new sections and hope you'll find them both useful

Most importantly, we want to remind you that this is not our publication—it's yours. Press releases, announcements, and article submissions are always encouraged, and we welcome your participation as we continue to grow together. From all of us, we wish you a safe, healthy, and prosperous New Year, and thank you again for being such an essential part of our community.

You can pick up your free copy of Forgotten Coast Living throughout the community at

convenient locations, including:

- Dollar General stores in Mexico Beach (2), Port St. Joe (3), Apalachicola (2), Eastpoint (1), St. George Island.
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From all of us, we wish you a safe, healthy, and prosperous New Year, and thank you again for being such an essential part of our community.

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# 2025: The Year in Review for the Forgotten Coast

As 2025 comes to a close, the Forgotten Coast stands at the intersection of growth, resilience, and renewed community spirit. This year brought a wave of new openings, meaningful milestones, and memorable events that shaped life from Mexico Beach to Apalachicola. While change is inevitable, the region continues to hold tightly to the charm and character that make it one of Florida's most beloved coastal communities.

Port St. Joe saw steady momentum in both business and recreation throughout the year. Several new restaurants and boutiques opened along Reid Avenue, breathing fresh energy into the downtown district, while long-awaited improvements to local parks and waterfront spaces made outdoor life more accessible for families and visitors. The city also welcomed expanded community events—from spring art fairs to summer market nights—that brought record attendance and gave small businesses a welcome boost.

Apalachicola experienced its



own wave of progress in 2025, with new galleries, cafés, and specialty shops filling historic storefronts and adding to the town's vibrant cultural identity. The return of beloved annual events like the Florida Seafood Festival and the Independence Eve Celebration reinforced Apalach's reputation as a gathering place for the entire region. The year did bring a few closures as well, as rising costs and staffing challenges forced some long-standing businesses to say goodbye, but each

change opened space for new entrepreneurs to step in.

Carrabelle and Eastpoint also made strides, especially in community development and waterfront revitalization. Carrabelle's marina upgrades and expanded outdoor events drew a surge of weekend visitors, while Eastpoint continued its quiet comeback with new eateries, renovated public spaces, and more visibility for local makers and seafood producers. Both towns celebrated strong turnout for festivals, holiday

parades, and art walks, proving that community traditions remain the heartbeat of the coast.

Despite the natural ebb and flow of openings and closures, 2025 will be remembered as a year of strengthening roots. The resilience shown by local families, business owners, artists, and volunteers reflects a coast that continues to adapt while honoring the traditions that define it. As we look ahead to 2026, one thing is clear: the Forgotten Coast remains a

place where community comes first, and where every year brings new stories worth celebrating.

Looking back, one of the most defining themes of 2025 was the region's growing commitment to collaboration. From Chambers of Commerce working together on regional tourism efforts to local nonprofits expanding outreach programs, partnerships played a major role in strengthening community ties. Volunteers showed up in record numbers for coastal cleanups, school fundraisers, and holiday drives, reminding everyone that the Forgotten Coast's greatest asset isn't its beaches or businesses—it's the people who consistently step up for one another.



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# Diane's Keys to the Coast: Life at Windmark Beach



BY DIANE PEEVY, SALES ASSOCIATE AT PEEVY TEAM KELLER WILLIAMS

Looking for a place where coastal living feels easy, welcoming, and real? Let me hand you the key to Windmark Beach, one of Florida's most family friendly and thoughtfully designed coastal communities.

Located along the calm waters of St. Joseph Bay, Windmark Beach offers walkable streets, 11 dedicated beach accesses, and resort-style amenities, including two community pools, restaurants, cafés, and local shops. The community features homes thoughtfully

designed for everyday living, secondary vacation retreats, and long-term value. It's a neighborhood where golf carts are welcome, families ride bikes, and evening sunset beach walks are part of the daily routine.

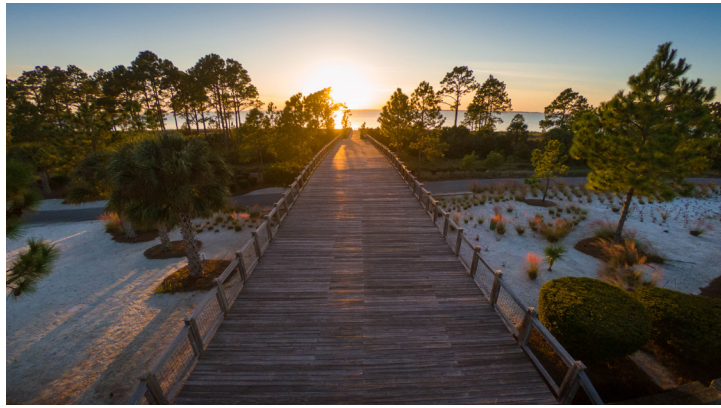
December is a magical time here — fewer crowds, cooler weather, beach homes lit up delightfully for Christmas, and peaceful beaches make it the perfect season to experience what life on the Forgotten Coast is truly like.

As your Keys to the Coast, I help families unlock communities that feel like home. Windmark Beach isn't just a destination. It's a lifestyle.

### WHY FAMILIES CHOOSE WINMARK BEACH

Families are drawn to Windmark Beach for one simple reason: it works!

- Walkable, safe streets
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- Golf cart friendly design



- Easy access to beaches, dining, and shopping
- A strong sense of neighborhood connection



### READY TO UNLOCK THE COAST?

If Windmark Beach feels like the kind of community you've

been looking for—or if you're exploring real estate anywhere along Florida's Forgotten Coast—Diane Peevy of The Peevy Team is here to help.

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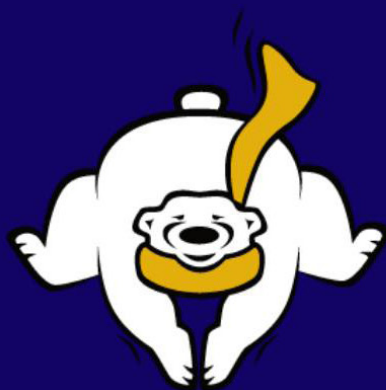
When you're ready for the next step, the right keys make all the difference. Scan the QR code to see which home for sale might be right for you!

Until next time, I'm Diane Peevy, Your Key to the Coast. Helping families unlock life on

Florida's Forgotten Coast since 1998!



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## Break 50 (And Beyond)

By ALAN M. WATSON, PRESIDENT,  
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I don't know if you are like me, but lately I have been consumed by YouTube golf. Of course, by "consumed" I don't mean literally because between work, wife, dog, sleep, and food, I don't have a lot of free time. However, some of my precious free time I have used to peek into the world of internet golf and most of that exists on YouTube. One of the most popular channels related to golf on that platform is created by and stars LIV golfer Bryson DeChambeau. Bryson famously plays unique golf clubs that almost no one else uses. He is a numbers guy who uses high-level mathematical formulas and calculations for every wedge shot, putt, and more. Most fans of golf thought he was slow, droll, and quirky before the LIV/PGA split, but since then, Bryson has come out of his shell and with the aid of the internet, become one of the most popular and successful golfers in the world. His series, "Break 50," is something worth noting, and I'll tell you why. Break 50 (And Beyond)

In "Break 50," Bryson and one or more guests play a golf course from the Red tees in an attempt to literally break 50, shoot 49 or better. This takes a lot of skill, even from the shorter tee



box (and some luck, of course). It has been done, albeit rarely.

Should you or I attempt such a feat, even with a few of the best golfers at our respective courses, we would most likely fail; nevertheless, I think "Break 50" has lessons to teach us as golfers.

First is that putting is KING in golf. He (or she) who putts well usually wins. We should all spend more time practicing our putts and learning to read greens and our scores would drop. One thing I have noticed is that Bryson rarely, if ever, leaves a putt short. He tends to pick a line and a pace that would have the ball rolling out about six inches to a foot past the hole if the hole didn't exist. Lesson – hit the putt firm enough to go in and some. It won't go in if it doesn't even get there!

The second lesson is that the farther you can hit it off the tee, the better. There is no way in any world on any course with any two, three, or four professional golfers could shoot 49 from the back tees. The distance is just too great. But in his series, Bryson and some of his guests can drive many greens due to the shorter tee starting point. Even if they miss the green or drive it just short, with an impressive short game, you can get in the hole in fewer strokes. You can't get up and down regularly from 150 yards. But you can when you are pin high in one stroke. Tiger Woods, John Daley, and Bryson have all proven over the years that even if you aren't that accurate off the tee, distance is still a huge advantage.

The third lesson I've learned from "Break 50" is that details

matter. My personal calculation of wind, temperature, and green speed conditions when hitting an approach shot are short and sweet. I might say something like "Well, it's 147 by the laser to the pin and the wind is in my face so I'll hit a 153 club." Good guess, but probably wrong. When Bryson lines up a shot he has a more accurate gauge on the wind – direction and speed – he knows his numbers perfectly so he can then pick the right club and he factors the green condition – will it be firm and bounce, will it hold, how will the ball bounce given the type of shot he is hitting (high, low, draw, or fade). Wow, that's a lot to consider. However, it makes a huge difference. I'm not suggesting we take laptops and Doppler equipment with us to the course, but

maybe taking another few seconds to think things through would help.

Finally, I think the most important thing to learn from this whole series is to never give up. I know it sounds like a high school football movie trailer tag line, but I'm serious. When you need 11 birdies and 4 eagles to achieve your goal and you make a mistake of any kind, you dramatically lessen the chance that you will achieve the goal. However, it's not impossible. I feel like many of us have a bad start to the round and we give up. Or we have a blow-up hole and then ruin the next few holes while we are still in our heads about the snowman we carded back on hole 6. We three putt early in the round and then declare, "Well, I guess I just can't putt!" But that's not the end. We have to keep going and remember that we can't fix the previous hole or holes. We have to buckle down and get after the next shot and the next shot and so on. I want to encourage you, the next time you tee it up – maybe your goal is nowhere near as ambitious as Bryson's and his YouTube series of shooting 23 under par. Maybe your goal is to break 100 or 90 or 80. Maybe it's just to make your first legit par or birdie. Whatever it is, hang in there! You can do it!

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## Redfish: The Fish That Keeps on Giving



BY CAPTAIN KRISTA

If you think December means hanging up the rods and switching to couch fishing, think again. The cooler months are a great time to beat your “PB”: “personal best” (or ensure it’s better than your buddy’s) and a wintertime “bull redfish” (locally, over 27”) is the perfect contender. Tis’ the season for big, breeding bulls to spend time closer to shore, and there’s nothing more fun than catching a 35-40” beast on light tackle. Get the camera ready, let’s GO!

The December redfish are all about efficiency - they’re looking for a warm seat and room service. The low temps invite hungry reds to seek the warm-

er waters of shallow grass flats and dark bottom areas where the water heats up faster. Plan fishing trips to coincide with the incoming tides from late morning to early afternoon (10am - 3pm). The clear, calmer waters in December make them easier to locate and target. But the fish can see everything, including bad decisions, so be stealthy and don’t spook the school.

### WEATHER MATTERS

A successful day of fishing for these spooky spot tails depends on a combination of factors: water clarity, temperature, tides, wind, moon phase, weather/fronts, but it’s equally important not to scare them off before you even get your bait wet. The melody-making drum species, including black drum, redfish, and croakers, is very attuned to sound. They use auditory senses and vibrations to communicate, attract mates, locate food and detect danger so, don’t slam boat hatches or toss anchors, and in skinnier waters. Fishing is hunting, so treat it as such and

you’ll increase your opportunity.

### LURE THEM IN

We all know an indecisive eater, and redfish can be equally picky, or they might bite whatever you throw at them. Prepare for fishing a multitude of depths and conditions, and pack a variety of bait options to get their attention. Redfish will munch on soft artificials, a silver spoon or lure, attractants like “Fish Bites”, live shrimp or fresh dead shrimp under a popping cork, blue crabs, mullet, bait fish and cut bait. If you aren’t having any luck, switch it up.

### GO DEEP

When fishing the deeper channels with moving water, cast upstream and allow your bait to travel with the current. Anglers fishing jetties or passes will find the big bulls by dropping a “Carolina rig” to the bottom, and allowing the tide to pull the rig along the bottom, with the boat in neutral. Be sure to drop the line on the “wash side” of the boat so your line isn’t underneath the vessel

as you drift.

### WISH LIST

**The Heat Is On:** Target dark mud flats and oyster bars. Darker bottoms absorb sun better; on a sunny afternoon, these flats can be several degrees warmer, drawing reds out of deep channels to sunbathe and snack.

**The Deep Cuts:** Early in the day, fish deep. Look for holes 8 feet or deeper near creek mouths or “funnels” between mud flats and oyster bars.

**Sleep In:** Unlike summer, the “early bird” gets a cold nose and no fish. Wait until the sun has had a few hours to warm the shallows (late morning to mid-afternoon) before hitting the flats.

**Watch for “Wakes”:** Redfish will push into water less than a foot deep on sunny afternoons. Look for nervous water or “V” wakes that signal a moving school.

**Picky Eaters:** Fish and women like options. If your current choice isn’t working, offer something different.

**Tackle The Job:**

7-8 foot medium action rods for versatility, 12-15lb braid for larger redfish, 15-25lb fluorocarbon leaders depending on water clarity

**PRO TIP:** Most of us can’t tell you what we got for Christmas last year, but clients always remember the trophy they bragged about all year long. So, give the gift of memories this holiday season!

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# The Red Tide Crisis in Port St. Joe

Port St. Joe has been dealing with one of the most persistent and unusual red tide events the community has seen in years. What began as a localized bloom in St. Joseph Bay has continued far longer than expected, lingering through the fall and into winter. Red tide typically develops offshore and is more common in Southwest Florida, but this year the bloom settled heavily in Northwest Florida — and St. Joe Bay has taken the brunt of the impact. Residents have watched thousands of dead fish wash ashore along the bay and beaches. Everything from mullet and flounder to rays, trout, and even small sharks have been affected. Local charter captains say the fishing has come to a standstill, with many reporting entire areas of the bay completely devoid of life. As the fish die and decompose, they release additional nutrients into the water, making it even easier for the bloom to sustain itself and harder for the problem to fade.

The environmental effects aren't the only concern — the community's health and daily life are being affected as well. Red tide releases toxins into the air that can lead to coughing, burning eyes, sneezing, and respiratory irritation. Many residents, especially children, seniors, and those with asthma or lung conditions, have been experiencing symptoms when winds push the toxins toward shore. Officials have advised



residents to stay out of affected waters, avoid harvesting fish or shellfish, and be cautious on windy days when airborne irritation is most noticeable.

Scientists say one reason this year's bloom is so stubborn is St. Joseph Bay's natural circulation. In certain conditions, the water flow can trap the algae inside the bay, giving it time to build and preventing it from drifting away. Nutrient runoff is also a major factor. Fertilizers, stormwater, sewage leaks, and land disturbance can all feed algae once it reaches the shoreline. Local residents have expressed concern that nutrient levels in the bay have been rising over time, creating a perfect environment for red tide to thrive.

The economic effects are just as serious. Charter captains have temporarily shut down operations, bait shops are seeing fewer customers, and wa-

terfront businesses say foot traffic has dropped. Tourism — a major part of Port St. Joe's economy — naturally slows when the beaches are covered in dead fish and visitors worry about air quality. Locals who make their living on the water say this may be the toughest season they've managed in years.

Marine life is suffering across the board. Fish kills are only part of the story — sea turtles, dolphins, birds, and other wildlife can also be affected by the toxins. The ripple effect through the food chain will likely take time to fully understand. Even after the bloom disappears, the bay will need time to recover, and rebuilding fish populations could take months or even years.

Local and state agencies continue monitoring the water and shoreline conditions daily. Health advisories are being updated as the situation changes. While crews have been cleaning up fish kills and keeping the community informed, there is no practical way to eliminate a red tide bloom once it takes hold. Past attempts in other parts of Florida have shown that trying to chemically treat a bloom can cause more environmental harm than good. The focus, therefore, shifts to prevention: reducing nutrient pollution, improving wastewater management, limiting fertilizer runoff, and supporting natural systems like wetlands that help filter water before it reaches the bay.

For now, Port St. Joe is doing what it always does — sticking together. Residents are checking on elderly neighbors,

helping clean affected areas, and supporting local businesses that depend on a healthy bay. While this year's red tide event has been difficult, the community's resilience is evident. With continued monitoring, strong environmental stewardship, and efforts to protect the bay's water quality, Port St. Joe can move toward recovery and prepare for future challenges.

## Red Tide Health Tips:

### Limit exposure on windy days.

If the breeze is blowing onshore, toxins can become airborne and irritate your eyes, nose, and throat. Those with asthma or other lung conditions should be especially cautious.

### Avoid swimming in affected areas.

Red tide can cause skin irritation, rashes, or burning sensations. Children and pets are more sensitive and should stay out of the water entirely when conditions are poor.

### Don't harvest or eat distressed fish or shellfish.

Fish kills and weakened marine life are a sign that toxins are present. Shellfish in particular can accumulate high toxin levels and remain dangerous even after cooking.

### Keep medications handy.

Residents with asthma, COPD, or allergies should have inhalers, antihistamines, or doctor-recommended medications available during active

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blooms.

### Close windows and use air conditioning.

Running A/C helps filter indoor air and reduces exposure to airborne toxins, especially for those living close to the bay.

### Rinse off after beach visits.

If you've been near affected areas, shower and wash your clothes to remove any lingering irritants.

### Watch your pets.

Dogs may sniff or try to eat dead fish, which can be harmful. Keep pets on a leash and away from the shoreline during blooms.

### Stay informed.

Follow local health advisories and beach condition updates. Conditions can change quickly, and alerts help you know when it's safest to visit the water.



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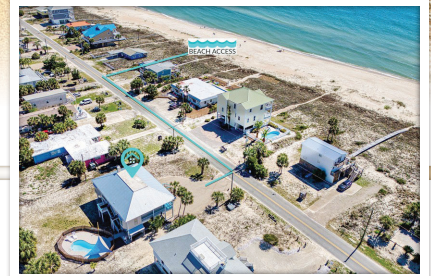
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As moonlight danced softly on sand everywhere.

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With nets hung to dry and the tides at low tide.  
Porch lights were glowing from Cape to the Point,  
And garlands were wrapped 'round each weathered joint.

Stockings were hung near the windows with care,  
Some seashells, some driftwood, some Santa flair.  
Kids dreamed of dolphins, of snow made of sand,  
And gifts that arrived by sleigh—or maybe by hand.

So here's to our coast as the year fades from sight,  
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## Wildlife in Fall

BY HELEN PETRE

Welcome to fall! It is time for us humans to break out the blankets and jackets, but what do our wild animals do to prepare? Fortunately, they have everything they need to stay warm. In the fall, most animals start eating a lot. They need to add a layer of fat to keep them warm and provide energy to sustain them through the winter when there is little food.

### The Florida black bear, *Ursus americanus floridanus*

The Florida black bear is the only bear in Florida. There are about 4,000 in all of Florida, but only about 120 in the western Panhandle, mostly in Eglin. They prefer dense undergrowth in scrub oak ecosystems, swamps, and flatwoods. One was seen in Grayton Beach State Park recently, and it was not small. Should we be worried about large, dangerous animals while walking in the woods or on the beach? Probably not. As with all wildlife you encounter in their habitats, give them room and do not try

are hiking in an area that is bear habitat, make noise. If the bear hears you, he will most likely move away from you.

Bears mate in the summer, but the eggs do not implant until November, and then, only if the female has gained enough weight. The cubs are born in January as tiny, helpless things weighing less than a pound. Females feed and protect them dened in the saw palmetto understory until spring.

Males are much larger than females, weighing about 350 pounds, while females weigh in at around 200 pounds. Bears that eat garbage, pet and wildlife food are much larger because those foods are higher in calories than the normal diet of mostly plants and insects. Bears eat bees, wasps, and other insects, soft mast consisting of saw palmetto and holly berries, and hard mast, a variety of acorns and hickory nuts.

In fall, bears eat about 20,000 calories a day in order to prepare for the winter when there is less food, and females are dened with their offspring. That's as much as a normal

or the caloric count of about eight pizzas. In fall, bears feed for about 18 hours a day, so the chance of seeing a bear is rather good.

It is illegal to feed bears in Florida. Considering they are trying to gain weight in fall, if a bear finds your garbage, he will happily eat it. This is not good for many reasons. Human garbage and dog food is not very nutritious for bears. Bears that are accustomed to eating your garbage and dog food lose their fear of humans and become aggressive if you do not have food for them. To prevent bears from wanting to be in your yard, keep garbage in the garage or lock your containers. Take in pet and bird feeders. Bears are usually solitary and quiet animals, but if they smell your tasty buffet, they will come to get it.

### White-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*)

Deer are actually more dangerous than bears, not because they attack people, but because they tend to run out on the road right in front of moving

edge of the highway, especially in fall, when they, like bears, are trying to fatten up. Males are about 115 pounds and have antlers, and females are about 90 pounds. White-tailed deer are edge species, choosing to browse low-growing vegetation along an edge where they can see predators. This makes the side of highways and yards that back to woods, or the edge of fields, great places to see deer. When they are alarmed, they lift their white tails, stamp their feet, and snort.

Deer are crepuscular, active at dawn and dusk, like mosquitoes, making driving during those times a bit tricky. Deer often follow each other, so if one deer crosses the road, be prepared for the next. If you come across a silent, bedded fawn while walking in high grass or woods, please leave it alone. Does teach their fawns to sit silently, not move, and wait for their return. If humans intervene and try to help the fawn, it usually does not end well.

### Eastern Gray Squirrel

Even if you do not get out into the forest and see bears, you will see squirrels, busily collecting their favorite foods, acorns and hickory nuts, getting ready for the winter. The Eastern Gray Squirrel is our backyard squirrel, and has adapted to feeding from bird feeders, if available. These are our friends, as their habit of burying nuts leads to forest regeneration. If you are quiet, you can hear them chattering to each other as they search, bury and eat mast.

As we enjoy the cooler weather and fall colors, this is a good time to go out and walk in the woods or along the dunes at one of our parks. Our animal friends are busy preparing for winter, eating lots of calories and putting on an extra layer of fat to keep them warm in the coming cold. This is a great time to explore nature and learn how animals prepare for the lean season to come. Remember to give them space and let them show you how their world works.

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DEC 17 APALACHICOLA HOLIDAY MARKET 9 AM - 1 PM

DEC 24 CHRISTMAS EVE ON THE COAST 5 PM -8 PM AT THE GIBSON

DEC 25 MERRY CHRISTMAS!

DEC 31 APALACHICOLA OYSTER DROP 6 PM AT THE RIVERFRONT PARK IN APALACHICOLA

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# The Unsightly Medical Condition: Actinic Purpura



BY BRIDGET SULLIVAN, PA-C,  
COASTAL SKIN SURGERY AND  
DERMATOLOGY

Actinic Purpura, also known as bruising, is a common skin condition seen in older adults that causes red or purple patches on the skin, typically on sun-exposed areas such as the arms and hands. These red and purple patches are caused by fragile blood vessels that rupture beneath the skin and from the skin being thin. These patches are harmless, though unsightly, and will fade between one to four weeks.

There are certain medica-

tions that can make a person more susceptible to bruising easily. These include, but are not limited to, blood thinners, aspirin, and fish oil supplements. Also, there are certain medical conditions, blood disorders, and nutritional deficiencies that can contribute to bruising, so it is important to get your annual blood work from your Primary Care Provider in order to rule these out. In addition, sun damage over the years is a large contributor to our skin thinning, making it more susceptible to bruising. Make sure you wear your sunscreen and sun protective clothing to ensure that you don't contribute to more sun damage and skin fragility.

Treatments for bruising that I recommend to my patients are over-the-counter Dermend Anti Bruise cream, two times daily. This cream has great ingredients that I have found help fade bruising quickly.



Also, arnica supplements and topical cream have been proven to help with bruising and inflammation.

I hope this article has helped relieve anxiety about the unsightly condition of Actinic Purpura and can ease your mind knowing it is not harmful, the common contributing factors, and some easy and effective over-the-counter solu-

tions. As always, please contact your dermatology medical provider if you have any questions or concerns regarding your skin conditions. It is important to keep the skin supple and healthy.

No matter your age, consistency, protection, and a gentle approach remain the core pillars of great skincare. Healthy skin is always the most beautiful skin.



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# Flooring Depot Enhances Customer Experience with RoomVo Kiosk

BY AUBRIE ROUNDS | MARKETING COORDINATOR, FLOORING DEPOT OF PANAMA CITY

In a bid to revolutionize the shopping experience and help customers make more informed decisions, Flooring Depot is proud to announce the installation of the innovative RoomVo kiosk in their store. This cutting-edge technology allows shoppers to visualize flooring options in their own rooms, bridging the gap between imagination and reality.

Choosing the perfect flooring can be a daunting task, with endless options in materials, colors, and patterns. Flooring Depot recognizes this challenge and has taken a significant step to make the process easier and more enjoyable for their customers. The new RoomVo kiosk empowers shoppers to see how different flooring options will look in their actual living spaces, making the decision-making process much simpler.

The RoomVo kiosk is user-friendly and intuitive. Customers

can upload a photo of the room they are looking to renovate or choose from a variety of pre-loaded room scenes. With just a few taps, they can select different flooring options and instantly see how each one transforms the space. The kiosk offers a wide range of flooring materials, including hardwood, luxury vinyl plank, and carpet, ensuring that there is something for every taste and budget.

Upon uploading a photo, the RoomVo technology seamlessly integrates the chosen flooring into the image, providing a high-resolution, realistic preview. This feature allows customers to experiment with different styles, from classic oak hardwood to contemporary vinyl planks, without the hassle of physically handling multiple samples. The kiosk's advanced imaging technology ensures that lighting and room dimensions are accurately represented, giving a true-to-life depiction of how the flooring will appear in their home.

## Benefits of the RoomVo Kiosk

### 1. Enhanced Visualization:

The RoomVo kiosk provides a realistic preview of how different flooring options will look in a customer's home. This helps in making a more confident and informed choice.

### 2. Time-Saving:

Instead of taking multiple samples home, customers can now make quick decisions in-store, saving time and effort. The convenience of visualizing flooring in-store means fewer trips back and forth, streamlining the shopping process.

### 3. Personalized Experience:

The ability to see flooring in their own room gives customers a personalized shopping experience, tailored to their specific needs and preferences. This personalization fosters a sense of ownership and satisfaction in the final decision.

### 4. Increased Satisfaction:

Shoppers can feel more assured that their chosen flooring will complement their existing décor and meet their expectations.

Early reactions to the RoomVo kiosk have been overwhelmingly positive. Shoppers have praised the technology for its ease of use and the clarity it provides in visualizing potential purchases. Many have expressed that this feature significantly enhances their shopping experience, making Flooring Depot their preferred destination for flooring needs.

One customer shared, "I was struggling to choose between several types of flooring, but the RoomVo kiosk made it so much easier to see which one would look best in my living room. It saved me a lot of time and helped me make a decision I'm really happy with."

Another customer mentioned, "Being able to see how the flooring looks in my own home setting made all the difference. The RoomVo kiosk is a fantastic tool, and it made my shopping experience much

more enjoyable."

The introduction of the RoomVo kiosk is just one of the many ways Flooring Depot is committed to innovating and improving customer experience. By embracing the latest technology, they are setting a new standard in the flooring industry, ensuring that their customers receive the best service and support throughout their shopping journey.

In addition to the RoomVo kiosk, Flooring Depot continues to offer expert advice from their knowledgeable staff, a wide range of high-quality products, and competitive pricing. They understand that every home renovation is unique and strive to provide solutions that meet the diverse needs of their clientele.

Experience the future of flooring shopping at Flooring Depot. Visit our main location at the corner of 15th and Lisenby and try out the RoomVo kiosk to see how your dream floors will look in your home.

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## Money Can't Buy Love, But the Right Gift Can



BY JAMIE C. WILLIAMSON, PHD

Most gift givers assume that a more expensive present will be more appreciated, yet receivers don't appreciate expensive gifts more than other less expensive gifts. And, that goes for gifts of clothes, wine, home décor, jewelry, and even the price of an engagement ring.

Research clearly shows that money can't buy you love. Instead, when it comes to gift giving, it truly is the thought (and effort) that counts.

So, how do you select the "right" gift?

Selecting the right gift begins with the understanding that the gift you give – no matter the cost – communicates how you feel about the receiver and the

relationship you share. If you want your partner to receive a message of love, appreciation, admiration, and commitment, then you need a gift that makes that statement.

A good gift is tailored to the needs and desires of the receiver and communicates commitment to the relationship.

But the best gifts do all of that and more. The best gifts also reflect effort and high levels of involvement. It truly is the thought and effort that counts.

For example, if your husband dreams of owning a sailboat and you can't afford it, don't buy him a toolbox or new pair of running shoes. Show him you want his dreams to come true. Buy him a sailboat (and captain) for a day. Arrange with his boss for a day off, schedule childcare, buy him a pair of deck shoes. Then, the two of you go for a day of sailing. If that is too much, buy him a subscription for Sailing magazine, open a special "sailing" savings account, and start saving for next year's rental or even boat ownership. Just let him know his dream is your

dream, too.

Or if your wife is a busy mother who longs for the romance and excitement of your early marriage but barely has time to blow dry her hair, don't buy her a gold bracelet or the truly forbidden food processor (unless it comes with a cooking class in Italy). If she longs to feel passionate again, show her she is still the woman you married. Buy her a day of luxury and romance.

Do all the planning. Book her into a resort spa, arrange for her to have a day off, arrange childcare, schedule her a massage, mani-pedi, facial, and blow-out (or whichever services you can afford). Give her a new sexy top to wear, and end with an overnight "date night" at the resort. If that's too much, then give her the mani-pedi, send the kids to grandma's, and prepare a romantic dinner at home. Just let her know for sure that, to you, she's not just a mom, she's the love of your life.

Here's a less extravagant example. Last year around Thanksgiving, my husband broke his favorite reading glass-

es. I could have easily ordered him a new pair of readers. But, I knew they wouldn't be the same. So, I found an optometrist office willing to repair the old ones, wrapped the repaired glasses in tissue, and put them in his Christmas stocking.

Getting the glasses repaired was tailored to my husband's needs and the effort showed my commitment to him and our relationship. The effort also showed a high level of involvement (I had to do a lot of running around rather than just order something on-line).

Although my husband received other more expensive gifts last year. The repaired readers were his favorite because they communicated to him the lengths I would go to make him happy. In turn, he was happy with me.

Love is, after all, an action word.

Try sharing this article with your partner to start a discussion about what you both might want most for yourselves and your relationship this year. Acknowledge that the best gifts are tailored to the receiver's unique needs and desires,



reflect effort and involvement on your part, and demonstrate your commitment to the person and the relationship you share. Then shop creatively so you have the best (and perhaps, least expensive) Christmas ever.

Want to give your partner a private and fun marriage refresher course? Contact me and I'll set it up for you.

*Jamie C. Williamson, PhD is a FL Supreme Court Certified Family Mediator and Gottman Methods Couples Counselor. She is an owner and partner at Amity Mediation Workshop, LLC, a mediation practice specializing in "friendly divorce" mediation and marriage revitalization sessions for couples. Dr. Jamie speaks frequently on relationship topics and authors the blog "Work it Out." You can find her online at amitymediationworkshop.com.*

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## Design and Culture: Local Design

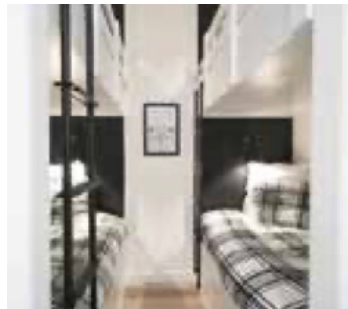
RiverCamps on Crooked Creek is one of the many beautiful communities located in the Panama City Beach area. It is pure serenity with its open and peaceful natural vistas. Another draw is the architecture and interior design of the homes. Laura Dobbins is a local interior designer. She is originally from Birmingham, Alabama, and has been in Panama City Beach since 1993. Dobbins has been a designer for over 20 years and recently completed her home in RiverCamps. She allowed us in to see her lovely and cozy modern cottage home.

The exterior of this charming cottage has a rustic cabin feel with some contemporary components. The colors accentuate the home's natural environs, while slightly modern touches such as the metal roof and dark windows keep it firmly in the twenty-first century.

This RiverCamps interior is sleek and modern with clean lines. It utilizes dark and warm colors to create an inviting space for entertaining. Contrasting elements such as the flat panel door style in matte black, the light countertop, the luxury vinyl floor in a natural wood color, and the touch of natural wood on the island work together beautifully. The furniture selections, the barn-wood door, and the lanterns with driftwood add a rustic feel to the spaces. Throughout the home, a black and white palette offers a coherent color theme with soft textures and warm colors added in through furniture and accessories to create minimalist yet welcoming spaces. Some of my favorite touches are the chandeliers in the master bedroom and the use of driftwood throughout the design.



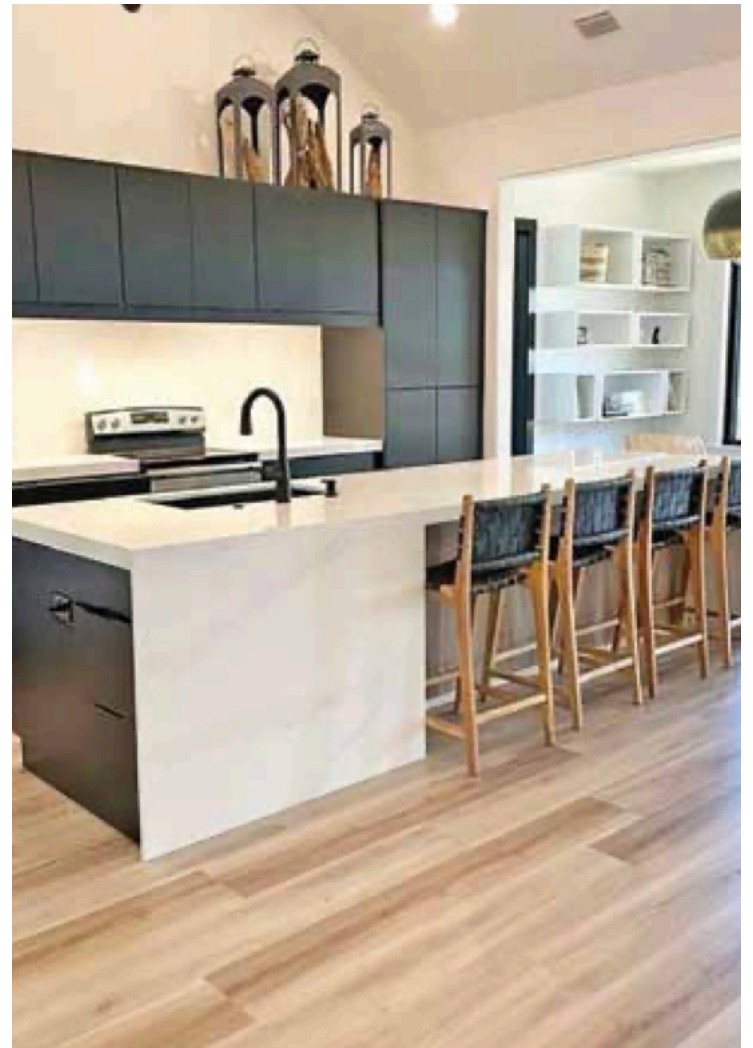
Architect: Bryan Almodovard of Almodovard Drafting and Design  
Builder: Cam Cameron of JC Homes  
Interior Designer: Laura Dobbins



If you are looking for a local interior designer, Laura Dobbins would love to assist you with your next project. You can contact her at (850) 625-1736 or email her at [lauradobbins3@yahoo.com](mailto:lauradobbins3@yahoo.com). You can also follow her on Instagram @Lauradobbins3.



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# Cozy, Classic, and Energy-Smart: Why Plantation Shutters Shine This Holiday Season



BY DONNA GODWIN, OWNER OF  
MADE IN THE SHADE

### Timeless Gift for Your Home

As the holiday season fills your home with warmth, light, and laughter, now's the perfect time to make your space both beautiful and comfortable.

Plantation shutters aren't just a stylish upgrade—they're a smart, lasting investment that keeps your home cozy through winter and bright all year long.

At Made in the Shade Bay Walton, we love helping homeowners find window treatments that look amazing while adding real, everyday value

### 1. Keep the Warmth In and the Chill Out

When temperatures drop, plantation shutters act like a built-in layer of insulation. Their solid louvers and snug fit help block winter drafts and retain indoor warmth—keeping your family comfortable and your energy bills lower. It's the perfect blend of holiday comfort and long-term savings.



### 2. A Beautiful Backdrop for Holiday Décor

From sparkling trees to festive garlands, shutters frame your holiday décor beautifully.

Their clean lines and classic design make any room feel polished and timeless. Whether your style is rustic, coastal, or modern, plantation shutters create a crisp canvas that complements every Christmas color scheme.

### 3. A Year-Round Gift That Adds Value

Unlike temporary décor, custom shutters keep giving long after the holidays. They're one of the few window treatments that increase home value—a lasting upgrade that enhances curb appeal and resale potential. Durable, easy to clean, and always in style, they're a gift your home will thank you for year after year.

### 4. Celebrate in Comfort and Style

This season, give your home

the gift of beauty, comfort, and efficiency. Plantation shutters bring warmth to your winter gatherings and elegance to your everyday living.

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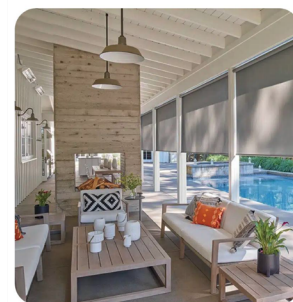
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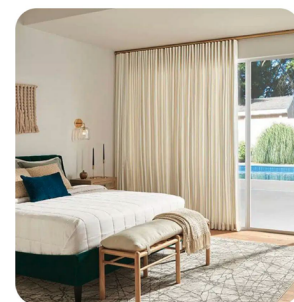
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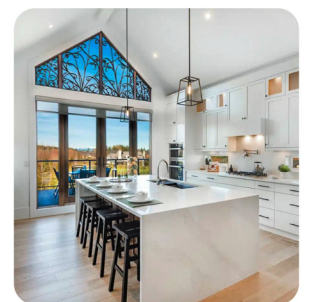
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## Sean of the South: Christmas Cheer



BY SEAN DIETRICH

I was 15 years old. I walked into the rural library. My father was freshly dead. I was a middle-school dropout. We were poor. It was Christmastime.

The small, public library was decorated for the holiday season. There was plastic holiday crapola everywhere. It was cold outside. I had no winter coat.

I stepped into the library with a blast of sleet and rain. I was wearing a T-shirt. My hair was soaked.

“Where’s your coat?” said the librarian.

“I don’t have one.”

“You don’t have a coat!?! It’s

30 degrees outside!” Shrug.

The librarian’s name was Miss Terry. She was old enough to predate the Roosevelt administration. Her hair was cotton white. Her shoes were Reeboks. Her embroidered sweatshirt read: “Dear Santa, I can explain.”

The library was a converted residential house. And I was a regular here.

“You can’t go around without a coat,” Miss Terry said.

“You’ll freeze.”

Shrug Number Two.

I wandered to the fiction section. Fiction was all I was interested in. I read fiction each morning, afternoon, and night. It was escapism, I see that now. And I was a classic escapist. But then, there were very few happy things in my life. Who wouldn’t want to escape?

That day, I checked out two Louis L’Amour books, a few Dick Francis novels. When I brought my selection up to the counter, Miss Terry just looked at me with warm eyes.

“I have a book I want you to read,” she said.



“You do?”

She placed a leather-bound book atop my stack of books. Written by Lucy Maud Montgomery.

“I think you’ll appreciate this one.”

“It looks like a girl book.”

“Try to keep an open mind.”

I took the books home, I read them the way I always read books. Ferociously. But when

I read the Lucy Maud Montgomery book, time stood still. And my heart moved sideways in my chest. I had never read a book with more tenderness.

When I returned to the li-

brary a week later, Miss Terry asked how I liked the book. I told her it was maybe the best book I ever read.

I returned my books, and checked out more. This time, she placed another book atop my stack. This one was written by Laura Ingalls Wilder.

I took the books home. I read them in a frenzy, just like before. But Laura Ingalls Wilder was immediately my favorite. I brought the books back to the library.

“How did you like the book I gave you?” she asked.

“I read it twice.” She smiled.

Then it happened. After Miss Terry accepted my stack of books, in return, she gave me a gift-wrapped box. The box was wrapped in glittery red paper, with a green ribbon.

“What’s this?” I asked.

“It’s for you,” she said.

“Is it another book?”

“Just open it.”

I tore the paper. There was a coat inside. Warm and fluffy. I cried when I put it on.

“We can’t have you catching a cold and getting sick,” she said. “There are too many books left for you to read. You might even write one of your own someday.”

I wiped my face. “One day I’m going to grow up and write a book,” I told her. “And when I do, I’m going to write something about you, and how you gave me this coat.”

She smiled and straightened the collar of my jacket. “You won’t even remember me when you’re all grown up.”

Well. I showed her.

## Book Review: The Gift of the Magi By O. Henry

REVIEW BY JACK SMITH

During the holidays I tend to reflect on melancholy moments. I lost my mother several years ago and think of her often. Millie was an enigma wrapped in a riddle and in a very strange way reminds me of that great holiday story “The Gift of the Magi” written by O. Henry in 1905. My mother believed that she had a manifest destiny to borrow (make that steal) items from her children if she thought that they would look better in her house.

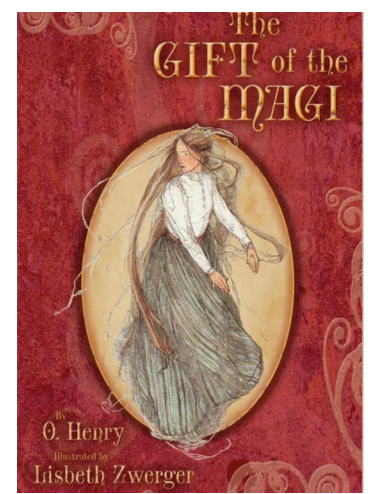
I called my sister on a rainy Christmas day and asked what she was doing. She explained that she was in an upstairs bedroom watching our mother drag her coffee table down the driveway. I was treated to running commentary: “She’s got one end on the bumper,” then, “she’s got it in the trunk.”

Several minutes later I received a call from my mother, “Honey, can you come over and help me get a piece of furniture out of my trunk? When asked where it came from, without hesitation she answered,

“Your sister gave it to me for Christmas.” Sometimes an article would magically reappear, suggesting that she had found a better item for that space. Several weeks later, she asked my wife if she could attend Mass with her. The priest asked the congregation to help with a special collection. A member’s child needed a very expensive electric wheelchair and when the collection plate was passed, my mother wrote a check for the entire amount. Hence my earlier comment about an enigma.

By now you are probably wondering what all of this has in common with the O. Henry short story. He tells the story of a newlywed couple without much money, who through sacrifice and selfless acts, manage to save their first Christmas. This story defines the term “irony” and that love can be found in more than just material things. The couple, like so many of us, are living in the present and thinking about short term happiness. This story resonates with me as my mother read

it to us every Christmas Eve.



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Pandora has been connecting Forgotten Coast buyers and sellers for 23 years. She made her first investment in St. George Island in 1992. She became a permanent resident of St. George Island, FL, in 1999 and immediately discovered a second career. She has facilitated over \$375,000,000 in real estate transactions and has consistently been a Top Producer on St. George Island, Apalachicola, Eastpoint, and Carrabelle, FL for Naumann Group.

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