

COMPLIMENTARY

# Ascension

## MAGAZINE

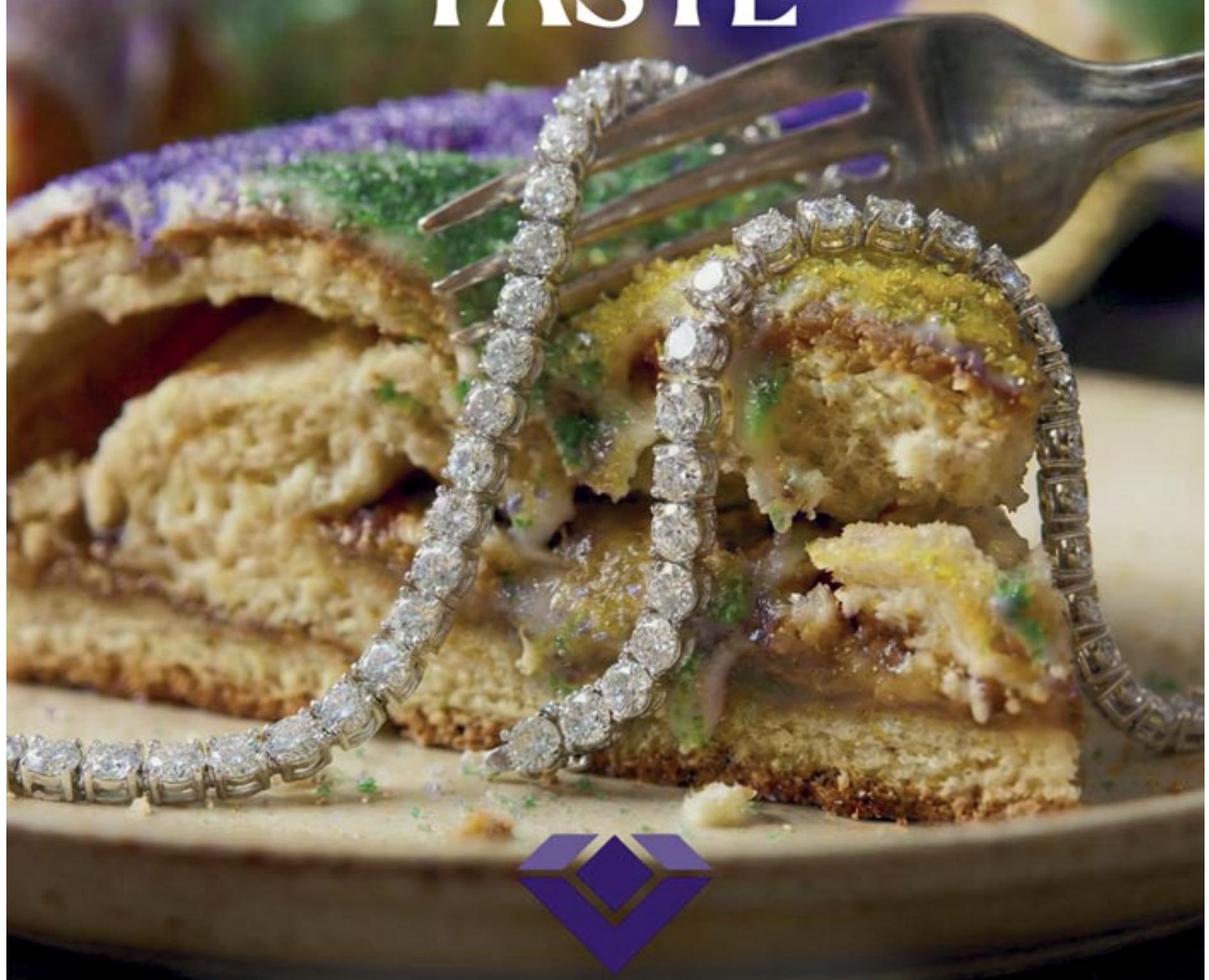
JANUARY 2026, VOL. 24 ISSUE 1



*Steven Milam*

LET'S GO FOR 2!

FOR THOSE WITH  
EXCELLENT  
TASTE



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JEWELRY & DESIGN

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Prairieville, LA 70769**Table of Contents**

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**ON THE COVER ... LSU Baseball 2026 .. Articles and photos provided by LSU Athletics**

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# Jambalaya Festival



## Miss Gonzales Jambalaya Queen, Presley Womack Rides in the Rose Parade

As your 2025 Miss Gonzales Jambalaya Queen, I was formally invited to ride in the Rose Parade held in Pasadena, California. It was more than a parade to me. It was truly a once in a lifetime opportunity, experience and a blessing.

We started off day 1 at 3:30 am and headed to the airport. When we landed in Pasadena at 10:00 am the first of many photo opportunities started by the flight attendants and the pilots with my beautiful new crown in the cockpit. We arrived at the hotel and rested up for the long week ahead of us. Day 2 of this amazing trip was a free day so we hiked up to the LA observatory to get pictures of the Hollywood sign, which was a bucket list check-off for me. Not only did I get my picture with the sign but I got it with my crown. The couple of minutes that I had my crown on I had some people timidly approach me to take pictures. I was so happy and proud to explain what Jambalaya is



and the history of the festival and the city of Gonzales. We ended day 2 off with some shopping in Beverly Hills and pictures with the Hollywood Boardwalk. Day 3, the

morning started off with interviews for all the news stations and social media posts, followed by a fun welcome party co-hosted by Louisiana and Mississippi

tourism departments at the Rose Bowl field. I have to say, the views were incredible and we were able to meet and greet other riders from our float as well as Mississippi's beautiful float. We ended the night with some music performed by our very own John Foster and Mississippi singer Charlie Worsham. Day 4 we took part in decorating the beautiful float.

If you ever have the opportunity to volunteer to decorate a Rose Parade float, I highly encourage it! Seeing all of the hard work by so many volunteers decorating each inch of every float was an experience I'll never forget. I had the honor to put the first rose on the Louisiana, Gulf to Gumbo float. Southern Boyz Outdoors drove in with their huge pots to cook a true Louisiana jambalaya and of course I felt obliged and proud to serve it to our guests (and explain what it was to so many newbies). Even when some unsure guests said "just a little bit" knowing that wasn't





Rain hasn't come on parade day in 20 years but our Louisiana Krewe brought more than just the fun. The rain followed us. Although it rained the entire parade route, it was so fun and the amount of people that still showed up in the rain was so shocking. I have been blessed with many wonderful childhood memories but this experience was definitely in the top of my favorite memories made in my life. Riding on the parade reminded me how blessed

possible. While cooking, we were introduced to "Big Dane" with West Coast Customs, the car shop of all car shops that has filmed many shows including "Pimp my ride". And as anyone in the south knows, just because they close up shop, doesn't mean the party is over. So, we took it to the hotel lobby and hung out with all of our new friends for hours until we were ready for bed. Day 5 was another off day but we work hard and play hard so we spent the day at Disney Land, which was a very fun-filled day. We opened it and played hard until we were forced to leave. We rode all the rides and got all the treats. Day 6, dress rehearsal day. Having to show the judges how Louisiana shows up and shows out was probably the easiest thing that I have ever done. The amazing team that rode on the float with me had such incredible attitudes and helped show how its done down here in the real LA!! Our teamwork made the dream work. And what a Dream it was! Day 7, PARADE DAYYY!!!



I truly am and I wouldn't want to represent any other community. I owe a huge thank you to everyone who helped me get to where I am today and make the parade possible for Ascension Parish to be represented as well as our incredible state of Louisiana.

Till next time,

Presley



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- Paperware
- Serving Utensils

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- Grits
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- 1 Pancake
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- Paperware
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# From the Gonzales Garden Club

# *Members Sharing with Members*

The program of the garden club's January 7 meeting was "The How and Why of Flower Arrangements" presented by Members Conchita Richey and Marilyn Rice. Conchita used illustrations to complement her speech about conditioning garden flowers to extend their freshness in arrangements. Marilyn used floral accessories and tools in her discussion of creating balanced arrangements and styling niches to complement floral designs. Books, pamphlets and LSU AgCenter publications on floral design were displayed for members to browse.

President Flo Hernandez's agenda for the business meeting addressed an expanded canned goods project, membership guidelines, appreciation of the club's library partnership, the state garden club federation convention, the Arbor Day program and the budget.

Members sharing Garden Inspiration ideas were Dale Bowman with narcissus



***Standing behind the table of seed exchange and garden inspiration items are hostesses Angelle Croman, Jamie Trisler, Janis D'Benedetto and Flo Hernandez.***

flowers, Paola DiNatale with rose propagation, Razzie Cagnolatti with Holy Dirt from Chimayo, New Mexico where the Native Americans believed in its Godly healing powers, and Dana Teepell growing philodendrons to highlight her coffee mug collection. Raakhee Malani presented an informational PowerPoint on the tulsi plant and its health benefits. Some members brought seeds to share. The

seeds in the exchange were from basil, red canna lily, blanket flower, pink swamp hibiscus, Texas star hibiscus and loofah.

The Horticulture Hint for January is to start a garden journal and describe current plants or features of interest. In horticulture design, keep vases and storage buckets clean and free from decaying material and bacteria.



*Dale Bowman brought a keepsake vase from Ireland filled with narcissus blooms.*



**Razzie Cagnolatti testified to the legendary power of the Holy Dirt collected from the mountains behind the Santuario De Chimayo Church in Chimayo, New Mexico.**



**Conchita Richey displayed information, illustrations and resource books on traditional floral design.**



*Marilyn Rice used greenery from ginger, bird of paradise, devil's backbone, cleyera and red matchstick to fill the space around sunflowers and driftwood stalks in a ceramic vase set on a pedestal under cloth in a black niche.*



Paola DiNatale showed the new growth and roots on a propagated rose bush stem.



Marilyn Rice showed containers, risers, flower frogs, moss, picks and tape in her explanation of floral design mechanics.



Groupings of fresh produce on round placemats served as colorful centerpieces.



Conchita Richey presents best practices for conditioning flowers with the assistance of Razzie Cagnolatti.



Raakhee Malani presented slides depicting the health benefits of tulsi plants.

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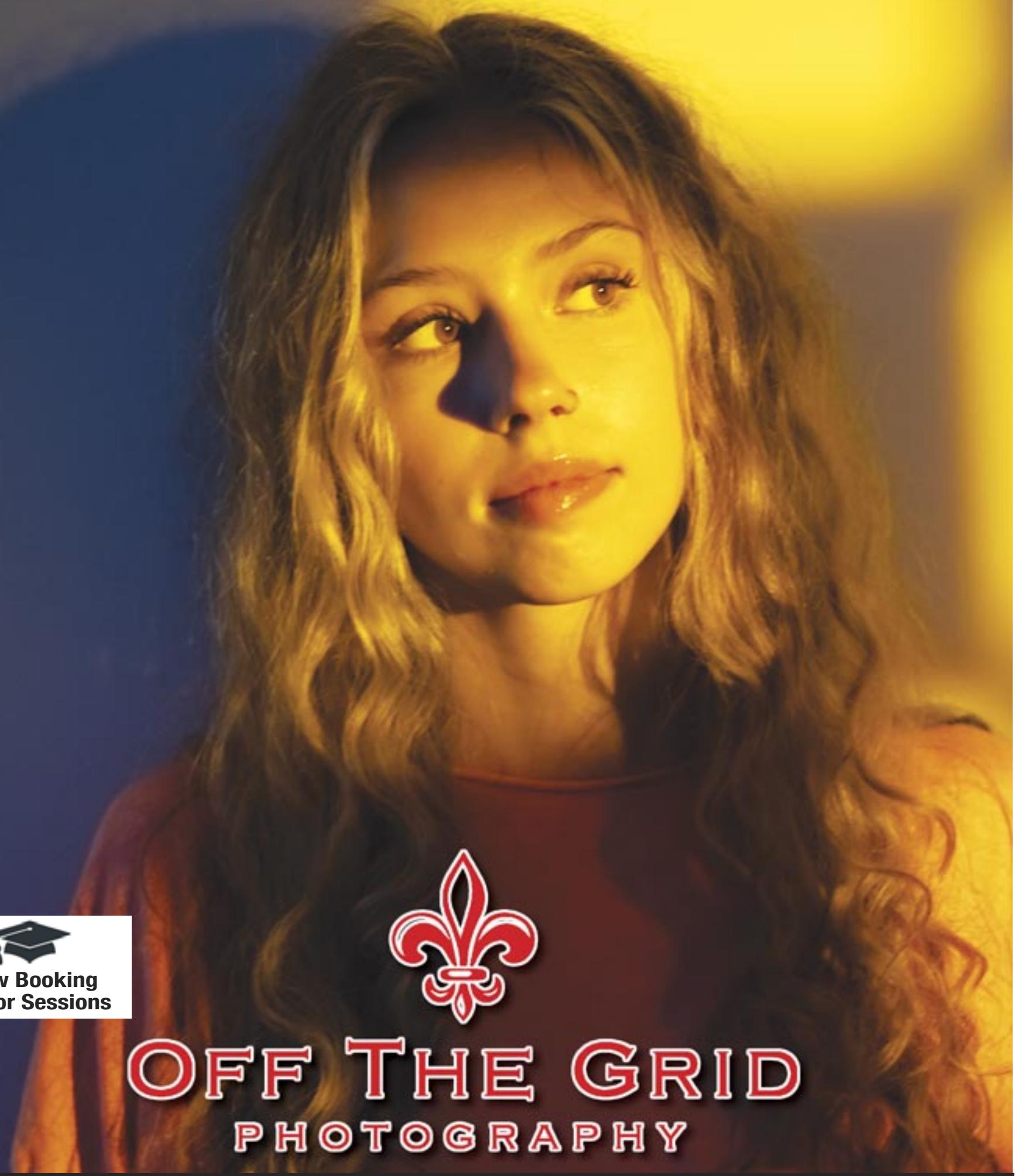


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# YOUR ESTATE MATTERS



By Linda Melancon

## **Mom Had a Will — Why Do I Have to Do a Succession?**

In my years of practice, I have heard one question again and again: "Mom passed away eight months ago, and she left everything to me in her will. I thought that meant I didn't have to do anything else. But the bank won't let me touch her accounts, and I can't sell the house. Why do I still have to do a succession?"

This is far more common than most people think. In Louisiana, even if someone dies with a will, that will does not automatically transfer ownership of anything (not the house, not the bank accounts, not the car titles). What it does is tell the court what your loved one wanted to happen. But it's the "Succession" that actually makes it legal.

In most states, people call this process probate. In Louisiana, we call it a succession, and it's what the court uses to transfer property after someone dies. The court must identify all of the decedent's assets and debts, confirm the will if there is one, and then issue

a Judgment of Possession that legally puts property into the heirs' names.

A will might say you get the house, but until the court signs that Judgment, you don't legally own it.

When Mom had her will drafted, she probably assumed it would take care of everything. And she wasn't alone; most people think that once a loved one dies with a will, the rest happens like clockwork. But that's simply not how Louisiana law works. A will is a set of instructions, and only the succession can carry out those instructions and transfer ownership.

In most cases, the will tells the court who should inherit what. But until a succession is opened in the parish where Mom lived, the bank won't release any funds, and the title company won't transfer the house. That's because Louisiana law requires a succession before third parties will recognize new ownership.

Generally, a succession follows these steps, and this is how I explain the process to my clients:

### **1. File the will with the court:**

The first step is getting the will filed in the proper parish. That starts the succession process.

### **2. List all assets and debts:**

Every bank account, vehicle, piece of real estate, and even personal items must be documented for the court.

### **3. Pay debts and taxes:**

Before property can be distributed, legitimate debts must be paid.

### **4. Get the Judgment of Possession:**

This court order is what finally makes the heirs the legal owners.

That Judgment of Possession is a court order that officially recognizes heirs or legatees and puts them into possession of the deceased's assets. Only after that Judgment is issued can Mom's heirs sell the house, cash account checks, or change titles.

When clients first come to me in this situation, they usually are trying to sell a parent's house and divide the accounts. Once we open the succession and obtain the Judgment of Possession, Mom's kids are finally able to clear

title and access the accounts.

I tell families all the time: estate planning isn't just about writing a will. It's about making sure your loved ones aren't stuck in legal limbo when you're gone. A will is only half the story, and the succession is what makes that story real under Louisiana law.

If you've found Mom or Dad's will and wondered why you still have work to do, you're not alone. Sit down with an experienced estate planning attorney who knows how to navigate these waters.

The information provided is not intended to be legal or tax advice and does not constitute any attorney/client relationship. You should consult with an attorney for individual advice regarding your own situation.

Ms. Melancon is an attorney with Legacy Estate & Elder Law of Louisiana, LLC with offices in Baton Rouge, New Orleans and Lake Charles, LA. The primary focus of her practice is estate planning, probate, special needs planning, and elder law. For more information or to attend an upcoming estate planning seminar, call her office at (225) 744-0027.

**Joie de Vie**  
**SALON**

*Amber Tullier*

Amber graduated from Denham Springs beauty school in 2016 and has been at Joie de Vie for 8 years.

She specializes in highlights, extensions, makeup and special occasion styles. Her favorite part of being a stylist is making her clients feel special.

When she is not working you can find her running after her two young boys and spending time with family and friends.

*"If you are not willing to learn, no one can help you. If you are determined to learn, no one can stop you."*

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# Christ Healing Community Closet and Pantry

**Free food & clothing to those in need!**

Follow us on FB @ CHC Closet and Pantry. Thank you and God bless.

## Busy and blessed pretty much describes 2025 at CHC Closet and Pantry.



By the end of the year we had purchased lots of groceries and hygiene items and had even more donated. A small example of what we bought is:

**Body wash 729  
Toothbrushes and paste 857  
Bologna 523  
Cereal 573 boxes  
Ramen 217 cases  
Peanut butter 719 jars  
Jelly 758  
Mayo 769  
Mustard 790  
Deodorant 416.**

We also bought many cases of corn and other vegetables, meat, mac and cheese and so much more.

This is only a partial listing of purchases and does not count the many items donated by schools, clubs, businesses and the community. There is more donated than what we buy. I do have the exact count of purchases if anyone wants to come by and check it out.

We were blessed recently with a very nice donation from a local business who does not wish to be named and another great donation from an individual who wants to be unnamed also. We know who they are, God knows who they are and we thank them very much.

Ms. Connie King with Tankproof brings us food from Olive Garden and arranges for us to pick up extras from Chick-Fil-A. She recently had us meet at Whole Foods to pick up a large donation of



produce, frozen foods and other things. We thank her and the good people at Whole Foods.

Thank you to the people who support us monthly with checks.

New Song Community Church helps us out with so much. They are so caring and generous. Things show up on

a regular basis from them.

P'Ville Boot Camp brought hygiene items and socks, Graceworks church brought pre-made meal kits, the Haven of Ascension gave hams and other food, Hwy 44 Body shop brought food and clothing.

If you are interested in making a donation or being a volunteer, check us out on FB or call us at 225/647-8612.

If I have missed thanking someone I am truly sorry. We are blessed by God and the community of Ascension Parish.

God bless,

*Janell Brent*

Manager,  
CHC Closet and Pantry

**God bless you.**

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Jennifer Holley,  
FNP-C,



Jerrica Kitto, PA-C

## Why Experience Matters in Aesthetics: Trust Your Face to True Medical Experts

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Injectables such as neuromodulators and fillers may look straightforward, but they involve:

- Facial anatomy
- Vessel pathways
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- Safety protocols
- Artistic judgment

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- Safety considerations
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# Meet St. Amant Max



Ascension Magazine kept hearing about a Cajun children's book about a dog named St. Amant Max. With a little research and meeting George Snyder, we were fortunate enough to contact the author and meet Max himself. As a dog lover, I have to say I was impressed with Max's attention to his master and best friend Robert. Max is a Long Legged Rat Terrier, bred by George Synder.

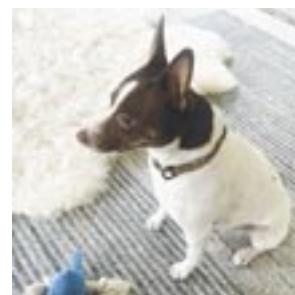
With a read through of the book, I discovered Max was a sweet pup with a big heart, who introduces you to the spirit and culture of Louisiana. The book shares his adventures as he enjoys the outdoors with Grand-Père and Grand-Mère down on the bayou.

Max enjoyed the life of a home-cooked meal and had a welcome back y'all attitude that is the backbone of southern hospitality.

## About the Author

Rob was born and raised in Oakdale, Louisiana.

There he was introduced to hunting and fishing by his Uncle Billy and spent many wonderful weekends outdoors. After graduating from McNeese State University, Rob moved to Baton Rouge where he learned to chop an onion and make a sauce from his Ville Platte buddies. He earned a graduate degree in geology and spent 18 years working in Houston as a petroleum geologist. Rob has retired from the fast-paced city life and now enjoys the comfort and peacefulness of the Piney Woods with his daughter Chloe and dog, Max.



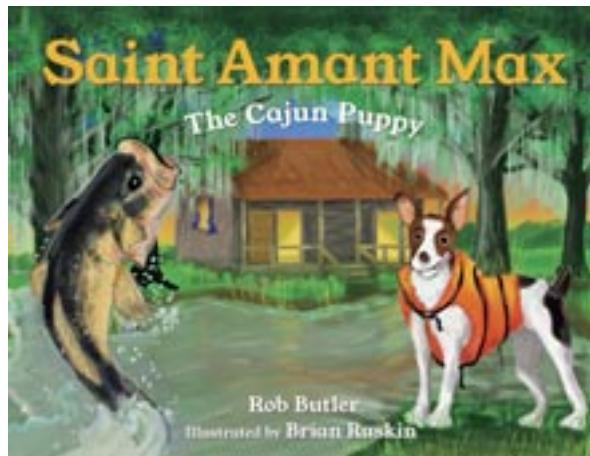


## Dedications

Rob dedicates this book to his daughter Chloe -

*"our bedtime stories have become a wonderful book to share, my love."* He expresses gratitude to his home state of Louisiana and the communities and people who raised him to appreciate nature and the outdoors. He is thankful for

Brian Ruskin and the illustrations he created to bring Saint Amant Max to life.



*Find a book at Ascension Living and Outdoors*

## About the Illustrator

Brian Ruskin grew up in

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania,

where he nurtured a

love of art and

science. He pursued

degrees in studio arts

and geology at the

University of

Pittsburgh and a

PhD in geosciences at

Cornell University,

where he met his wife,

Christina. They now

live in the Rocky

Mountains of Colorado

with their daughter,

Avery. Darcy the

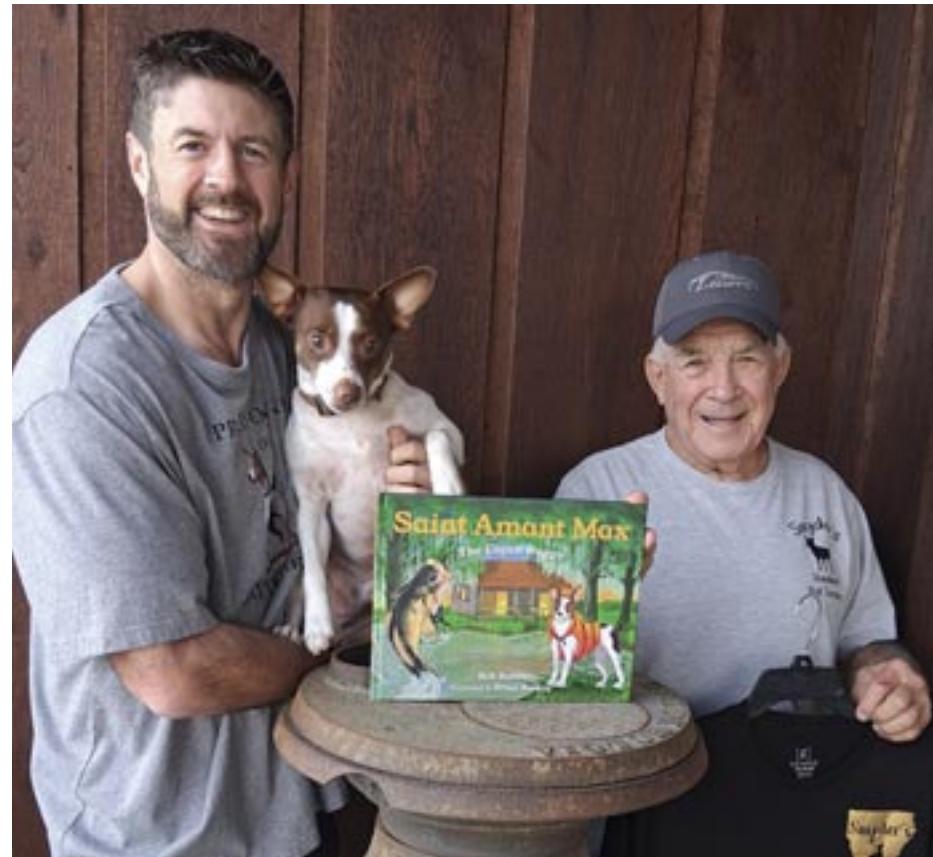
border collie and Izzy

the black cat also



share their home.

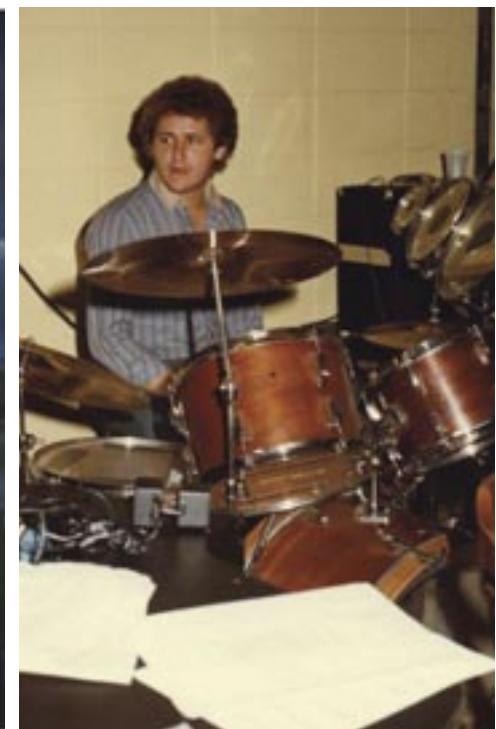
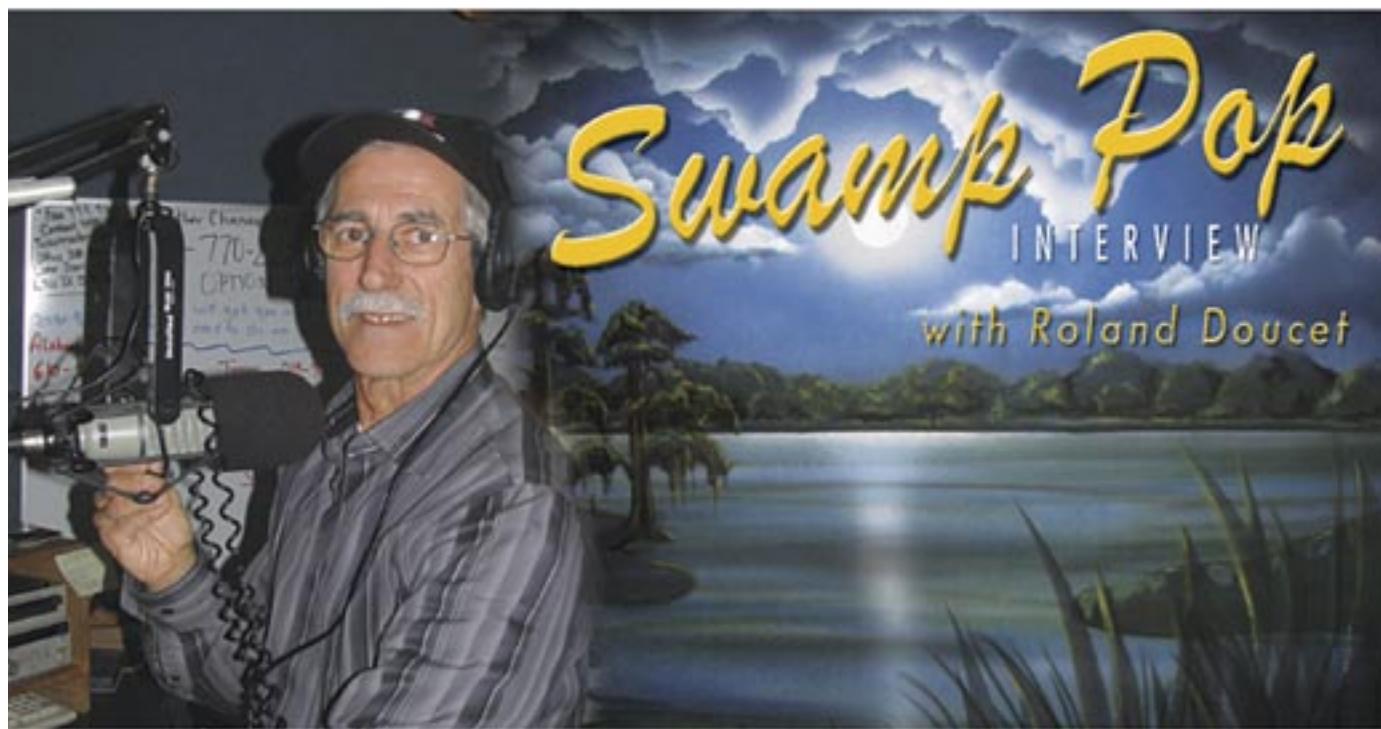
Brian enjoys hiking, painting, music, and especially being Avery's dad.



Shown with Rob is George Snyder, Breeder from Synders Standard Rat Terriers. Look for him on Facebook.



*Publisher of Ascension Magazine, Mike Strong, receives a personal signed copy*



# Randy Carpenter, Drummer Extraordinaire

I recently had the opportunity to sit down with a “drummer extraordinaire”, as I call him, Randy Carpenter. Randy got his first drum at the tender age of seven from his parents, Noelie & Carroll Carpenter, for Christmas. On behalf of music lovers, I want to thank them for the foresight and the pain that must have caused at first. But what a talent they unleashed! Married to the former Celeste

Kling for the past 32 years he has built an electric company and is self employed. His father-in-law told him he needed to be self employed so it would be easier to pursue his music. Much credit is given to Mr. Harvey Kling for helping get the business started. They

have three daughters Cara, Caleigh, and Caroline.

Like a large number of musicians Randy got exposed to music from the radio and going to wedding receptions listening to live bands perform. He credits most of his early music knowledge from playing with his best friend Gary Daigle in the family garage. The first Randy playing with LeRoux and the Allstars opening Charlie Daniels on Ellis Island, New York.

Recording he participated in was a Catholic Christian album at the age of 21 in 1979 with Gary Daigle and the Dameans. Encouragement, in the early years, came from people like

Jimmy Millet at the Gonzales music Store and Johnny Sanchez who worked for Jimmy at the Music Store at the time. Mr. Jimmy was great at positive encouragement feeding Randy's and Gary's passion for music.

Early on Randy admired local drummers such as: Jr. Bergeron, Leslie Thomassie, Johnny Sanchez, “Snagg”, Snake Templet (who plays the bass now) and Ricky Sebastian who went on to teach at the Manhattan School of Percussion. All these guys gave Randy encouragement and taught him various styles of music which Randy has made his own style making him one of the premier

drummers of our time.

After high school Randy attended Southeastern University to study music. When the opportunity to tour with country music legend Lynn Anderson came along he grabbed it and went on the road for about a year. Lynn actually bought him his first suit, boots and cowboy hat. After a year on the road with Lynn he landed a gig in Fort Walton Beach, FL with a house band, however, home was calling and he had to answer, so he took a gig with “Joe Landry and Slick”.

I found Randy to be very humble trying to give other musicians more attention but since I'm writing the article the



Randy playing with LeRoux and the Allstars opening Charlie Daniels on Ellis Island, New York.



Randy playing with Edgar Winter in Dallas



Randy & his father Carroll, Christmas 1965

focus will stay with Randy.

Randy has recorded or played with a number of great artists such as: Tommy T. Scott, Tareva Henderson, G.G. Shinn, The Boogie Kings, Al Hurt, King Floyd, Hank Williams Jr., C.J. Chenier, Doug Kershaw, Big Luther Kent, Edgar Winters, Jo-el Sonnier, Waylon Thibodeaux, Bruce Daigrepont, John Fred, Joe Stampley, Dr. John, Amanda Shaw just to name a few.

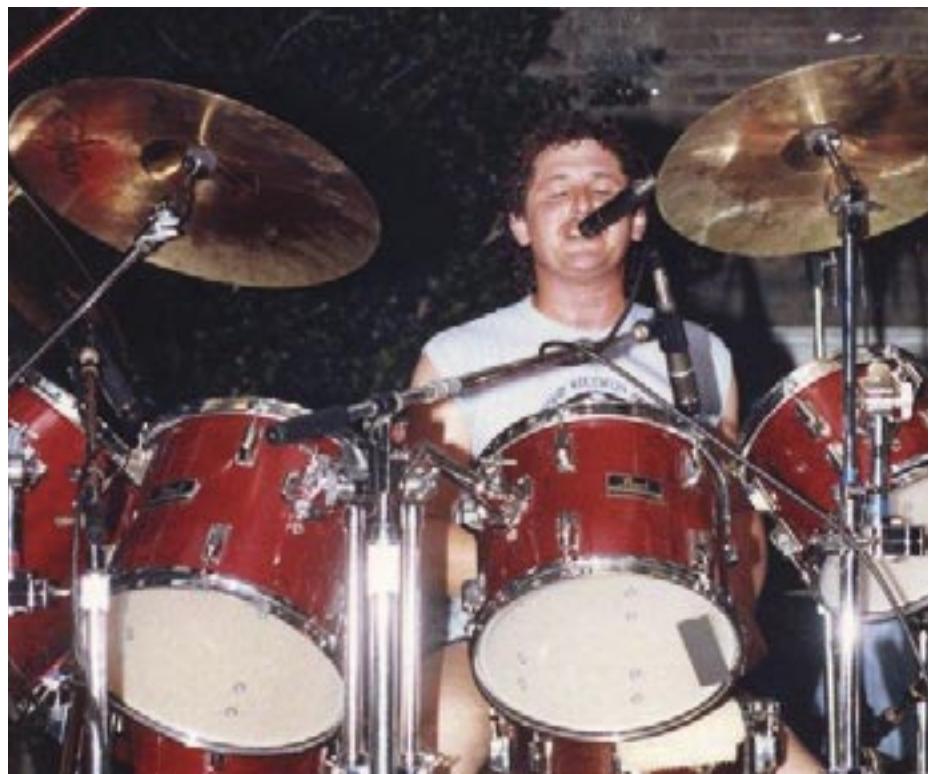
I put him on the spot so if anyone is left off it's my fault; he was working hard to remember everyone. Currently his is playing with Jo-el Sonnier, Louisiana LeRoux, Waylon Thibedeaux and Big Luther Kent.

It is easy to pick up on Randy's passion for many types of music when talking to him. Some of local drummers

that he admires are: Kim Diez, Lynn Boudreaux, Bryan Brignac, Trey Landry (his nephew), Alan Ray and David Peters. Having played with some big name artists throughout Japan, Switzerland, Canada, Nova Scotia, Mexico and the United States with names of Tom Johnston, of The Doobie Brothers, and Steve Cropper (The Blues Brothers), Edgar Winter, Jimmy Hall (Wet Willie).

Randy is still a hometown boy at heart. In February Randy will be traveling to Wimbledon, England to play with Jo-el Sonnier, Reba McIntire, Ricky Scaggs and Billy Ray Cyrus.

I had to wrap this interview up so Randy could get down to New Orleans to play with Bruce Daigrepont at Tipatina's on Sunday afternoon so I feel like I have just scratched the



surface of his career.

Ever humble and proud to be asked to play his drums Randy Carpenter has been a Louisiana ambassador for many years and we hope many to come. If you get a chance to see Randy play with one of the numerous groups he's playing with be sure to take it. You will be delighted to watch the magic he performs. I want to thank Randy for allowing me the time to talk to him and for being such an asset to our community and the music we all love.



Randy & Gary at 7th Grade Talent Show Gonzales Elementary. They came in second to Jacque Abadie's dance routine.

**Roland was  
gracious  
to write articles  
about our  
local musical family  
a few years back.**

**Ascension Magazine  
is going to re-run  
these articles.  
As time goes  
by old memories  
are still good  
memories.**

**We live in  
Swamp Pop  
Heaven!!**

# High Lights of 2025



## **Jared White Wins Jambalaya Festival Championship with wife Brittany!**



**Koby Thacker Wins Jambalaya Festival Mini Pot Contest**



**Braden Bourque catches 13.24lb bass at Caney Lake**



**East Ascension Class of 1975 • 50 Year Reunion**





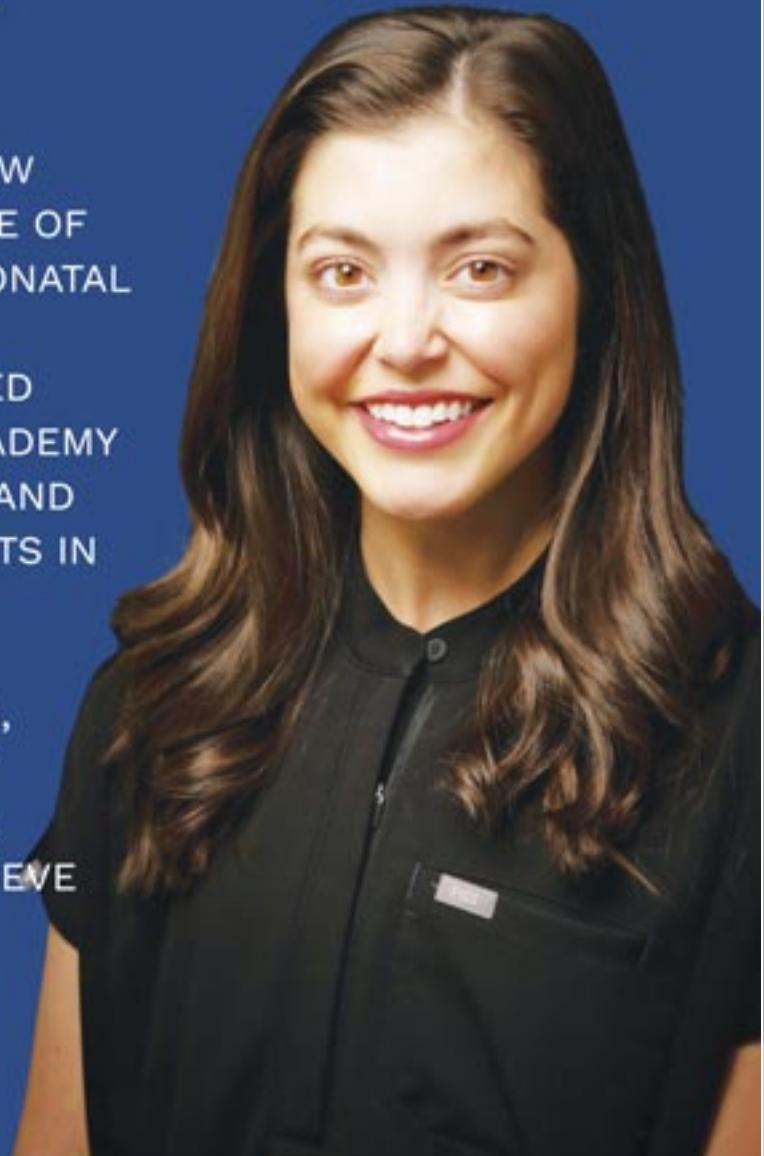
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## East Ascension Sportsmen's League

Letter from president -  
**Greg Cedotal**

I spent the end of 2025 reflecting back over the years of hunting and fishing, remembering the fun and interesting things that have happened. I would like to share a true story from years ago, deciding to title it "A Different Kind of Trash Fish". Names of the fishermen have been omitted to protect the innocent, and I cannot remember everyone's name that was on a trip from some forty plus years ago.

Way back when, a group of young men from Gonzales set out on a charter fishing trip out of the Grand Isle Marina at the end of Grand Isle. The trip started out like many trips we had been on before. Gathering at the dock with anticipation of tying the boat off to an oil rig and filling the ice huge chest with many croakers, king mackerel, and whatever else would take the bait. Excitement filled the air as laughter was

heard coming from everyone. When the captain started the diesel engine and the sound and smell of the exhaust filled the air, we knew it was time to climb aboard and get ready for the long ride out to the deep-water rigs.

We sat in the cabin listening to the hum of the diesel engine as it pushed the boat across the gentle waves of the gulf waters. We could feel the excitement building even more than it did on the dock. Some were planning what side of the boat they would start fishing on and if they were going to the front or the back of the boat to account for the current drift of the bait as it descended to a depth of about two hundred feet.

I can remember counting the turns of the handle on the Penn reel that it would take to get a fish from the bottom into the boat being about one hundred turns, if the fish did not pull drag. The first time was fun, but by the twentieth time it was becoming more like a chore. It must have been addicting, while some complained, no one quit. Time after time we dropped our lines to the bottom and reeled up another fish.

Then somewhere in the middle of the day someone yelled, "I have a big one on, or I'm hung on the bottom". We all looked to see a huge bend in the fishing rod as the fisherman pulled up on the rod. Then someone said, "I see the line moving", to which the fisherman responded, "I feel a fishing fighting". What we did not know was this would be a battle that would last at least an hour or more. It was a game of taking up two inches of line and giving up an inch or two or three. Close to an hour later you could see the line dancing to and fro in the water, first to the left then to the right and back every time the rod was raised.

We could see the pace of which the fisherman was reeling slow as he said in an exhausted voice, "I need someone to take over, I cannot go anymore". The nemesis had whipped one fisherman. Now a second fisherman took the rod and began the back straining task of raising the rod and cranking on the reel as the rod was lowered. It was a continuation of the game of taking up two inches of line and giving up an inch or two inches. We all found a place to watch when we realized this battle was almost won. The anticipation was high as we wondered out loud, what kind of fish could this be, a grouper, maybe a demon of the depths someone would say. We could hardly wait to see what the foe might be.

Then someone yelled, there it is. It's long, and, and slender. What the heck is that was heard over the chatter. It's an eel, no wait, is it a new species? As the fisherman managed to get the nemesis closer to the surface where we could see it better in the clear gulf waters, we realized it was a piece of one inch diameter by about six- or seven-foot-long cable with a fishing line wrapped perfectly in the middle. As the fisherman pulled on the rod you could see the cable wiggle as it danced from one side to the other. The roar of the laughter drowned out the hum of the diesel engine as we watched deckhand cut the cable free and it sank back to its resting place at the bottom of the gulf.

When the laughter ended back to fishing we went. We were fishing fanatics to say the least. Later in the day the deckhand hollered out, "y'all know you can take a break now and then", to which someone replied, "quiet, cut more bait, we're here to fish". And fish we did. As I was reeling up

another fish, I can remember thinking, how did that line get wrapped around that cable? Maybe a bull croaker did it or could it have been a multi brain Octopus playing games. No one knows for sure, but one thing is certain, that was a different kind of trash fish I will always remember.

Now for a little bit about EASL events. You must be a member to participate in these events. The EASL Bass Club will fish their first tournament of the year on January 17th.. If you are interested in fishing with the bass club in 2026 contact Jim Hebert at 225-717-6037. The 22 Rifle Silhouette Match will be January 23rd at the Sheriff Shooting Range starting at 8:30 AM. Don't forget to weigh your bass for the Monthly Big Bass contest and weigh your specs for the Monthly Big Speckled Trout contest.

If you decide you would like to serve on the board of directors and help move the organization forward, let us know. You do not have to wait until December to become a board member.

Time to go outdoors with family and or friends and enjoy nature. Remember to be safe and conserve our resources for future use. Questions or comments you can email me at gdced1@gmail.com.

**EASL's next regular meeting is March 16th at the VFW Hall on Churchpoint Road, starting at 7:00 PM.**

# EASL Bass Club News

The EASL Bass Club met on January 8th to start up its Tournament Schedule for 2026. The first tournament will be January 17th. The tournament will be out of Doiron's on the Lake Verrett side.

Bubba Rossi won the Angler of the Year title last year. He was not present for the meeting, but he will receive his jacket at the next meeting. Congratulations to Bubba on a great job for the year.

The tournament schedule is:  
January 17th  
February 21st  
March 13 & 14th at Toledo Bend (San Miguel State Park)  
April 4th  
May 23rd  
June 27th  
July 18th  
August 22nd  
September 26th  
October 17th  
November 14th (Classic Tournament)



L-R Bubba Rossi with Tim Guillaume.

# FINANCIAL FOCUS

## Why Social Security matters more for women

When planning for retirement, Social Security isn't just another item on your financial checklist. For women especially, it's often the cornerstone of a secure retirement. The Social Security Administration reports that nearly 55% of Social Security benefit recipients are women, and for many, it's their primary source of retirement income.

Unlike investments that can lose value when the market drops, Social Security provides

guaranteed income that adjusts for inflation and generally lasts as long as you live. That reliability makes it valuable for helping to address two major retirement risks: rising costs and the possibility of outliving your savings.

**Life expectancy.** On average, women live about five years longer than men (CDC 2023 Life Expectancy measure). That means they rely on Social Security for a longer period, making the decision of when to start benefits especially important.

Taking Social Security early reduces your monthly benefit. You can claim benefits as early as age 62, but every year you wait increases your monthly

payments by two-thirds of 1%, or 8% per year, maxing out at age 70. Given women's longer life expectancy, that patience can pay off.

**Building your benefit.** Your Social Security benefit depends on your 35 highest-earning years. If you have years with zero or very low earnings in that calculation, it can reduce what you receive in retirement. Many women step away from work or reduce their hours to care for family members, and that trend is increasing. A 2025 University of Kansas analysis found that the share of mothers with children under age 5 leaving the workforce fell more in early 2025 than at any point in the past 40 years. The study also noted that rising return-to-office policies may continue to impact working mothers.

While staying in the workforce builds a stronger earnings history and better benefits, that isn't realistic for everyone. Those who can't may need to plan and fund alternative sources for retirement income. Protection for married women. Marriage can provide additional Social Security options. A lower-earning spouse may receive up to

50% of their partner's full retirement-age benefit.

If your spouse dies, you can receive the higher of your own benefit or up to 100% of your deceased spouse's benefit. However, if you remarry before age 60 (age 50 for disabled widows), you lose eligibility for survivor benefits from your late spouse while the new marriage lasts.

Women divorced after at least 10 years of marriage may qualify for benefits based on an ex-spouse's record. If you remarry, you forfeit spousal benefits while the new marriage continues.

**A word of wisdom:** Report any name changes following marriage or divorce to the Social Security Administration to ensure your earnings and benefits are correctly credited.

Navigate carefully. Given the complexity of Social Security rules, the unique retirement challenges women face and the lasting impact of claiming decisions, working with a qualified financial advisor can be invaluable. An advisor can help you navigate questions about timing, spousal benefits and how Social Security fits into your overall retirement plan.

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Articles and photos provided by LSU Athletics



# LET'S GO FOR 2!!

## LSU No. 1 in Perfect Game Baseball Preseason Poll

by Bill Franques

LSU is ranked No. 1 in the 2026 Perfect Game Baseball preseason poll released Thursday, representing the second time in four seasons the Tigers appeared at the top of a preseason poll.

LSU also began the 2023 season ranked No. 1, and the Tigers went on to claim the national championship. The 2025 Tigers won LSU's second national championship in three seasons after beginning the season ranked No. 2.

The 2026 season starts on Friday, February 13, when LSU plays host to Milwaukee in Alex Box Stadium, Skip Bertman Field.

Head coach Jay Johnson, who has directed the Tigers to the 2023 and 2025 National

Championships in his four-season LSU tenure, enters his fifth season with a very talented squad that has 19 returning players and 20 newcomers on its roster.

The Tigers feature seven returning position players with





**Steven Milam**

starting experience at LSU, including senior outfielder Chris Stanfield, senior infielder Tanner Reaves, junior shortstop Steven Milam, junior outfielder Jake Brown, sophomore outfielder Derek Curiel, sophomore catcher Cade Arrambide and sophomore infielder John Pearson.

The pitching staff contains 10 hurlers who have recorded innings at LSU, including senior right-hander Zac Cowan, senior right-hander Connor Benge, senior right-hander Grant Fontenot,

junior right-hander Gavin Guidry, junior right-hander Jaden Noot, junior left-hander DJ Primeaux, sophomore right-hander Casan Evans, sophomore left-hander Cooper Williams, sophomore right-hander Mavrick Rizy and sophomore right-hander William Schmidt.

"We're always very intentional about what we do, how we do it, and then helping players take the next step forward," Johnson said during the fall. "What I like so far is how our returning players, like Derek Curiel, Jake Brown, Steven

Milam, Chris Stanfield, those guys are leading this team. Zac Cowan, Casan Evans, Cade Arrambide, William Schmidt – there are so many guys returning that played a part in the 2025 National Championship, and it's given us a really good foundation of how to work, and how we roll.

"To see them take pride in that without me having to say a whole lot, that makes me feel really good."

The 20-player class of newcomers is composed of eight NCAA Division I transfers, one NCAA Division II transfer, two JUCO transfers and nine high school signees. Five LSU rookies have been ranked among the Prep Baseball Report Top 100 College Freshmen, and another six of the Tigers' newcomers appear on the Baseball America list of the Top 100 College Transfers.

LSU is one of nine Southeastern Conference teams appearing in the Perfect Game 2026 preseason Top

25, along with No. 3 Tennessee, No. 4 Arkansas, No. 6 Mississippi State, No. 8 Texas, No. 10 Auburn, No. 12 Florida, No. 15 Georgia and No. 19 Vanderbilt.

2026 Perfect Game Baseball Preseason Poll

- 1 LSU
- 2 Georgia Tech
- 3 Tennessee
- 4 Arkansas
- 5 UCLA
- 6 Mississippi State
- 7 Oregon State
- 8 Texas
- 9 Florida State
- 10 Auburn
- 11 TCU
- 12 Florida
- 13 Oregon
- 14 Virginia
- 15 Georgia
- 16 Louisville
- 17 Coastal Carolina
- 18 North Carolina
- 19 Vanderbilt
- 20 Clemson
- 21 UC Santa Barbara
- 22 NC State
- 23 Southern Miss
- 24 Miami
- 25 East Carolina

## Three Tigers Listed Among Perfect Game Baseball Top 100 Juniors

by Bill Franques

Three LSU baseball players are listed among the Top 100 Collegiate Juniors for the 2026 season by Perfect Game.

The list includes LSU shortstop Steven Milam (No. 28), infielder Trent Caraway (No. 54) and outfielder Jake Brown (No. 55).

Milam, a product of Las Cruces, N.M., was named to the 2025 College World Series All-Tournament Team, hitting .350 (7-for-20) in five games with two doubles, two RBI and four runs.

He hit .385 (15-for-39) in LSU's 11 NCAA Tournament games last season with five doubles, one homer, a team-high 13 RBI and 13 runs scored. Milam was voted to NCAA Baton Rouge Regional All-Tournament Team, batting .417 (5-for-12) in four games with one double, three RBI and five runs.

Milam committed only five errors at shortstop over the



**Chris Stanfield**

entire 2025 season, posting a .979 fielding percentage in 234 chances. He hit .295 (71-for-241) on the year with 14 doubles, two triples, 11 homers, 57 RBI and 50 runs.

Milam was named a 2025 Third-Team Academic All-American, posting a 3.72 GPA as a sport administration major, with a business administration minor.

Caraway, a native of Dana Point, Calif., batted .281 (88-for-313) in two seasons (2024-25) at Oregon State with

20 doubles, 14 homers, 57 RBI and 67 runs before transferring to LSU this summer.

He was voted the 2025 NCAA Corvallis Regional Most Outstanding Player, and he hit a total of six home runs in the 2025 NCAA Tournament, marking the most in Oregon State history.

Brown, a product of Sulphur, La., played in 64 games last season, hitting .320 (57-for-178) with nine doubles, two triples, eight homers, 48 RBI and 45 runs. He was named

to 2025 College Sports Communicators Academic All-District team with a 3.68 GPA as a sport administration major.

Brown batted a team-high .385 (5-for-13) in the College World Series with four RBI and two runs scored. He delivered a clutch two-run single versus Arkansas in the CWS semifinal to give LSU a 2-1 lead in the sixth inning.

Brown batted .324 (11-for-34) in LSU's 11 NCAA Tournament games with one double, one homer, nine RBI and six runs. He was 3-for-5 with two RBI in a CWS win over UCLA, tying his career high with three hits. He was 2-for-4 in NCAA Super Regional Game 2 versus West Virginia, blasting a two-run homer and collecting four RBI.

LSU begins the 2026 season on Friday, February 13, when the Tigers play host to Milwaukee in Alex Box Stadium, Skip Bertman Field.

# Five Tigers Listed Among Perfect Game Baseball Top 100 Sophomores

by Bill Franques

Five LSU baseball players are listed among the Top 100 Collegiate Sophomores for the 2026 season by Perfect Game.

The list includes LSU outfielder Derek Curiel (No. 1), right-handed pitcher William Schmidt (No. 12), right-handed pitcher Casan Evans (No. 14), left-handed pitcher Cooper Williams (No. 45) and catcher Cade Arrambide (No. 54).

Curiel, a product of West Covina, Calif., was voted the 2025 National Freshman of the Year by D1Baseball.com after a superb rookie season in which he helped lead LSU to the NCAA National Championship.

A 2025 Second-Team All-America, First-Team Freshman All-America, Second-Team All-SEC selection and First-Year SEC Academic Honor Roll member, Curiel hit a team-high .345 with 20 doubles, two triples, seven homers, 55 RBI and 67 runs.

He was named to the College World Series All-Tournament Team after collecting six hits, three RBI and three runs in LSU's five CWS games. Curiel hit a team-high .571 in the Tigers' NCAA Super Regional sweep of West Virginia with one double, one homer, five RBI and six runs.

Schmidt, a product of Catholic High School in Baton Rouge, appeared in 17 games (six starts) last season as a true freshman, posting a 7-0 record and a 4.73 ERA in 32.1 innings with 22 walks, 41 strikeouts and a .226 opponent batting average. He was also named to the 2025 First-Year SEC Academic Honor Roll.

Schmidt pitched 3.1 innings to post a win over Southeastern Louisiana on April 29, allowing two runs on four hits with one walk and seven strikeouts. He



**Casan Evans**

earned the win at Nicholls on April 8 with dominant relief effort, firing 4.0 shutout innings, with no hits, two walks and a career-best eight strikeouts.

Evans, a right-hander from Houston, Texas, earned 2025 Third-Team All-America and First-Team Freshman All-America recognition, as he posted a 5-1 mark with 2.05 ERA and seven saves in 19 appearances (three starts). He worked 52.2 innings, recording 19 walks, 71 strikeouts and a .228 opponent batting average.

He posted an excellent relief outing versus UCLA in the College World Series, earning

the win and limiting the Bruins to two runs on four hits in 4.1 innings with no walks and five strikeouts. Evans earned the save versus Arkansas in LSU's CWS opener, working 1.0 inning with no runs on one hit and one strikeout.

Evans, who was named to the 2025 First-Year SEC Academic Honor Roll, delivered one of the best postseason outings in LSU history on June 2 in the Tigers' NCAA Baton Rouge Regional championship game win over Little Rock. He entered the game in the second inning and allowed one run on four hits in 6.0 innings with three walks and a career-best 12 strikeouts.

Williams, a native of Alvin, Texas, appeared in 21 games last season as a true freshman, posting an 0-1 mark and a 1.80 ERA in 20.0 innings with 13 walks, 21 strikeouts and a .186 opponent batting average.

He recorded an excellent relief effort versus Little Rock in the NCAA Baton Rouge Regional on June 1, working 3.2 shutout innings with three hits, one walk, and four strikeouts.

Williams, a member of the 2025 First-Year SEC Academic Honor Roll, made three appearances in NCAA Tournament games – including one versus UCLA in the College World Series – working a total of 6.2 innings with one run on five hits, four walks and five strikeouts. He pitched 8.2 relief innings without allowing an earned run from April 26-June 7, logging 10 strikeouts and two walks in that span.

Arrambide, a product of Tomball, Texas, played in 36 games (19 starts) last season as a true freshman, batting .242 (15-for-62) with three doubles, four homers, 14 RBI and 11 runs.

He was 3-for-4 with a solo homer and two runs scored in a win over Arkansas on May 10, and he produced three RBI versus Louisiana Tech on April 1, delivering a two-run single in first inning of the contest.

Arrambide, a member of the 2025 First-Year SEC Academic Honor Roll, was 3-for-4 with a double, a two-run homer and three RBI versus UL Lafayette on March 25, and he launched a two-run homer in LSU's win over New Orleans on March 18.



**Mavrick Rizy**

# Six Tigers Listed Among Perfect Game Baseball Top 100 Freshmen



Six LSU baseball players are listed among the Top 100 Collegiate Freshmen for the 2026 season by Perfect Game.

The list includes LSU infielder Jack Ruckert (No. 14), outfielder/first baseman Mason Braun (No. 20), catcher Omar Serna Jr. (No. 28), right-handed pitcher Marcos Paz (No. 33), right-handed pitcher Reagan Ricken (No. 46) and outfielder William Patrick (No. 77).

Ruckert, a Baton Rouge native and product of Catholic High School, was rated the No. 1 overall high school player in the state of Louisiana by Perfect Game. He was also rated by Perfect Game as the nation's No. 32 shortstop and the No. 83 overall player.

He led Catholic High to the 2025 state title, hitting .372 with a .503 on-base percentage, seven home runs, six doubles, 35 RBI and 50 runs scored.

Braun, a native of South Bend, Ind., was rated No. 1 on the 2025 Perfect Game list of the nation's best first basemen. The product of Penn High School also ranked as the nation's No. 64 best overall player and the No. 1 overall player in the state of Indiana.

He participated in the 2025

MLB Draft Combine and launched the longest home run – a 430-foot shot – and he tied for the most 400-foot blasts in the combine with three.

Serna Jr., a product of Lutheran South Academy in Houston, Texas, was rated as the nation's No. 4 catcher and the No. 1 catcher in the state of Texas by Perfect Game.

Serna Jr., who was No. 132 on the MLB.com list of overall Top Prospects for the 2025 MLB Draft, hit .465 as a high school junior in 2024 with eight homers, 35 RBI and an .851 slugging percentage.

Paz, a product of Hebron High School in Carrollton, Texas,

was rated No. 22 among the nation's best right-handed pitchers and No. 3 among the best right-handers in the state of Texas by Perfect Game.

He was ranked No. 90 on the MLB.com list of the overall Top 100 Prospects for the 2025 MLB Draft.

Ricken, a product of Great Oak High School in Temecula, Calif., was rated by ESPN as the No. 121 overall prospect in the nation for the 2025 MLB Draft.

An excellent athlete who also played quarterback for the Great Oak High football team, Ricken has a fastball that has reached 97 mph.

He was ranked by Perfect Game as the No. 4 right-handed pitcher in the state of California and the No. 13 right-hander in the nation.

Patrick, a native of Monroe, La., who played at St. Frederick High School, was rated No. 26 among the nation's best outfielders by Perfect Game. He was also ranked by Perfect Game as the No. 1 outfielder and the No. 2 overall player in the state of Louisiana.

Patrick, rated No. 90 on the MLB.com list of the overall Top 100 Prospects for the 2025 MLB Draft, batted .472 as a high school senior with a .607 on-base percentage and a 1.460 on-base plus slugging percentage. He collected five homers, 13 doubles, three triples, 23 RBI, 44 runs and 27 stolen bases.

The 2026 season begins on Friday, February 13, when LSU plays host to Milwaukee in Alex Box Stadium, Skip Bertman Field.

**Zac Cowan**





Welcome Home! John "Spud" McConnell



Robin Stevens of "Off the Grid Photography" meets Tami Erin aka. Pippi Long Stockings

# Cajun Con

Photos by Off the Grid Photography

## "WHAT THE HELL IS CAJUN CON?"

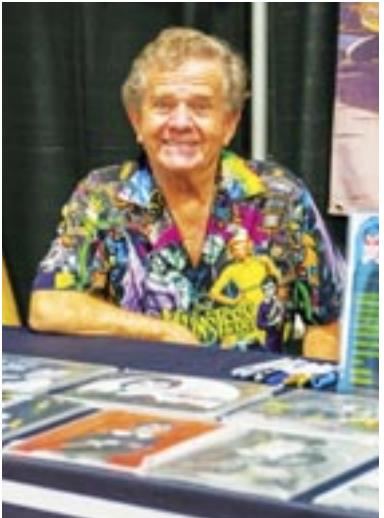
Ascension Magazine's trusty photographer sent me some photos that I really didn't know what to think of. As I looked through I saw people from movie

or television history. I then realized it was the island of misfit toys.

I guess everyone has followers and this was an opportunity to get an autograph or

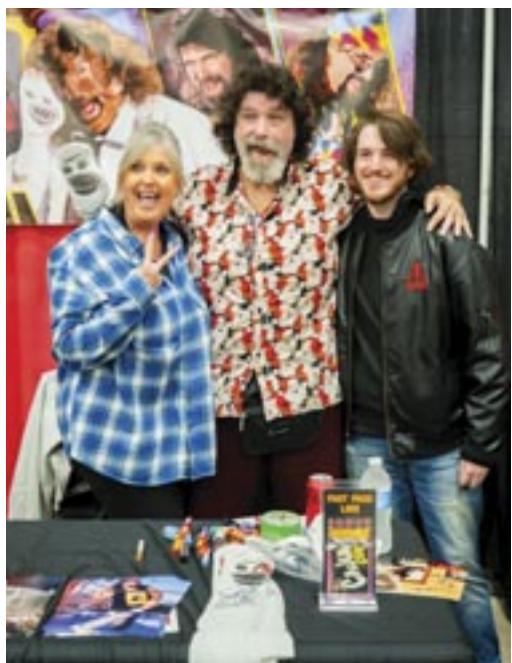
possibly a photo with a part of history.

Take a look through and see who you recognize? I guess Ascension is moving with the times.



Butch Patrick,  
Eddie Munster





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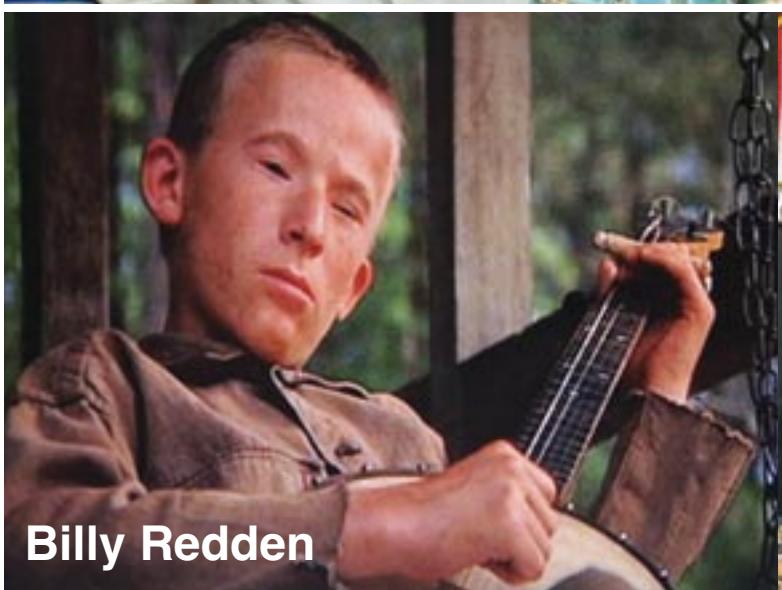
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**Billy Redden**  
William Redden (born October 13, 1956) is an American actor. He is best known for his role as a backwoods mountain boy in the 1972 film *Deliverance*. (He faked the Banjo playing)



**Mindy Sterling**  
Frau Farbissina  
Austin Powers  
character



# 2026 -The Year in Preview-or-Something's Rotten in Denmark

by Bill Delaune

*"Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan-We got a lot to drink about..."*

**Jimmy Buffet.**

Welcome to the year 2026-and hope it's not our last. I don't know about you but I don't feel real safe when our government starts fooling around with those South American countries. Maybe former Detroit Tiger Miguel Cabrera and current Atlanta Brave Ronald Acuna Jr.-both native Venezuelans-can help straighten things out. They both swing pretty mean bats as I recall.

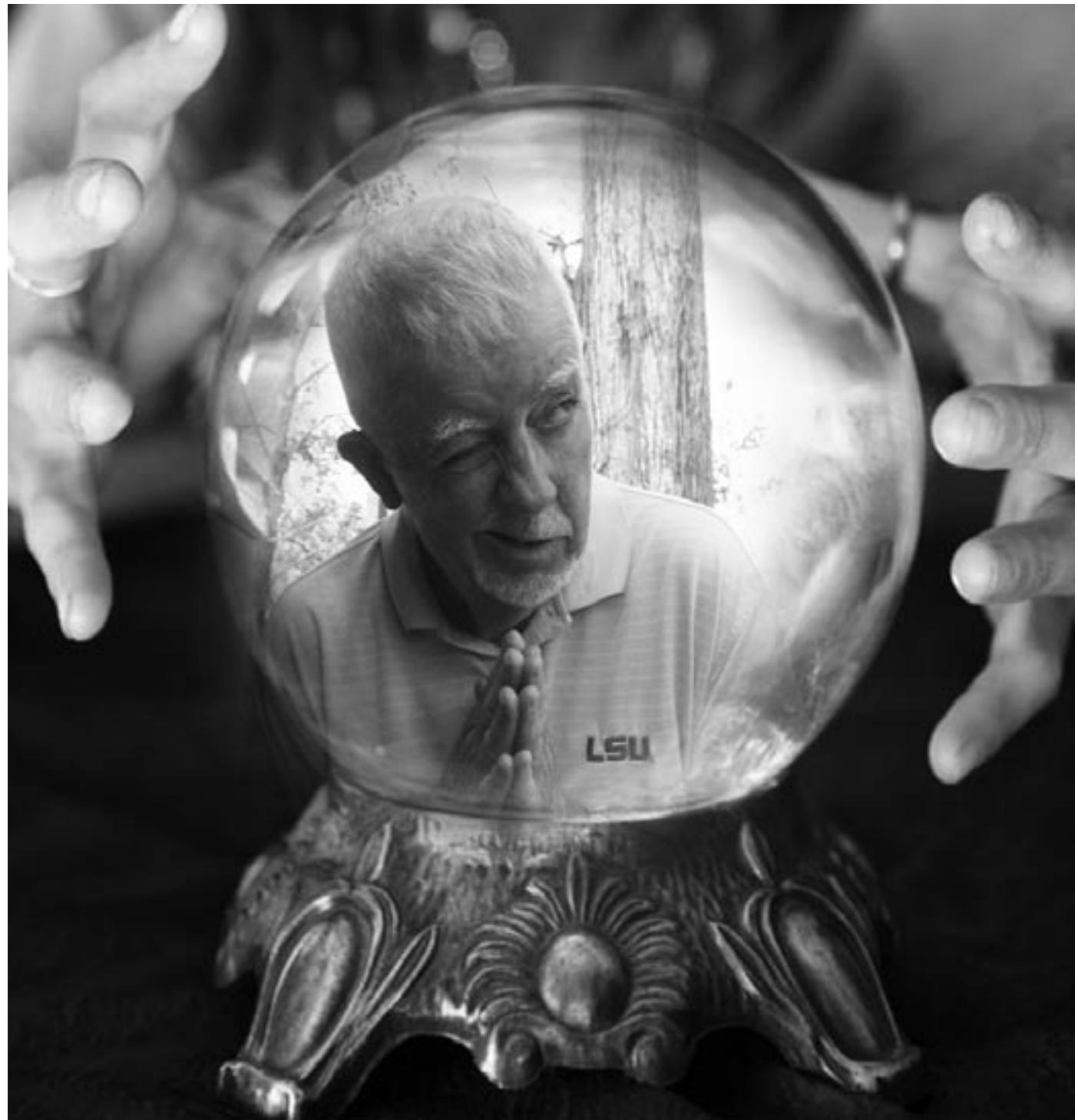
Anyway, Happy 250th Birthday to the USA. We've made it this far despite doing some things to our beloved constitution that would make our forefathers cringe. Come to think of it, where are the Washingtons, Jeffersons and Jacksons of today?

Probably playing in the NBA if I had to guess.

But history tells us that all great Presidents had a major objective. Washington had to create a new nation; Lincoln had to preserve the Union, and Roosevelt had to stop the Nazis from taking over Europe. And, of course, our current President's goal is right up there in rank of importance-an-nexing Greenland.

But there is some good news-2026 is the Year of the Horse, specifically the Fire Horse, so maybe I'll get some hot tips to come through at the track.

And as a wiser man than I once said, "That's why the Good Lord put our eyes in front of our face instead of the back-so we can see where we're going and not where we've been," let's take a look at what lies in store for us in 2026...



## **January-**

Louisiana's Governor Jeff Landry, President Trump's special envoy to Greenland, returns with an offer that may sound familiar to people of this state. The U.S. will lease Greenland for 10 million dollars a year for 10 years with a 50 million dollar buyout if the deal falls through.

The King of Denmark, which owns Greenland, is enraged and threatens military action-forgetting for a moment that his army has fewer weapons than those mystery-solving teenagers have on "Stranger Things". Trump counters by

imposing a tariff on Danish pastry saying, "It's important to occupy Greenland because they produce 80 per cent of the world's popsicles."

## **February-**

Pope Leo, a Chicago native, proclaims his hometown Bears the Super Bowl champions even though they lost to the L.A. Rams. Outraged, the Rams all enter the transfer portal, drop the periods from LA and move to LSU where they are welcomed with open arms-and an open pocket book-by Coach Lane Kiffin.

In a shocking broadcasting

note, an NBC sports announcer does an entire live broadcast without using the word "physicality". Of course, it was during the Women's Figure Skating event at the Winter Olympics.

## **March-**

"There's something rotten in the state of Denmark"-a famous line from Shakespeare's 'Hamlet' gets a different twist at the Academy Awards when the movie "Hamnet" wins Best Picture. Trump, who dislikes most of the liberal film makers anyway, is convinced it is a Danish

conspiracy and orders the California National Guard into Hollywood. Unfortunately, that unit left the state during last year's wildfires and was last seen secretly selling something called "Vienna Bread" (Austrian for bootleg Danish pastry) on the streets of Vegas.

#### April-

Nicolai Hojgaard, a PGA member from Denmark, wins the Masters prompting Trump to send ICE agents to Augusta to export all foreigners. The first two victims are golfer Xander Schauffele and his wife Maya of San Diego, California.

Kim Mulkey and her LSU Women's team are knocked out of the NCAA tournament by UConn's women who go on to join the Husky men for a double championship. Controversy ensues when an announcer refers to the women with a term usually reserved for female dogs.

#### May-

In the Year of the Fire Horse, a fiery colt named "Smoke Gets in Your Thighs" owned by ex-porn star "Long John" Johnson wins the Kentucky Derby by a long tongue. Johnson's only previous experience with horses was at the "Bride and the Burro" show in Tijuana. However, Smoke is upset in the Preakness by "Fire Down Below" who makes a late "Night Move" to win even though he was "Running Against the Wind". The winner is owned by rock star Bob Seger.

#### June-

After Sweden's Ludvig Aberg wins the PGA in May, President Trump, desperate for an American winner in the U.S. Open, decides to enter himself. Playing alone-except for a secret service man keeping score-Trump claims victory with a score of 280.

When his score is questioned by a reporter, Trump shoots back, "What's the matter? Doesn't 280

always win the Open?"

"It does when you play all four rounds," comes the reply. A Sports Illustrated article calls the President "Commander-in-Cheat".

In Omaha, not only does the LSU baseball team get eliminated by Texas, the Longhorns also knock the Tigers out of the Rocco's Jello shots championship with a group of transfers from an Austin alcohol re-hab facility.

#### July-

Soccer jokes are all the rage as the World Cup comes to America. The most popular in the South and Midwest—"It might be football to you but it's soccer to me. Soccer to me; soccer to me!"

Another favorite-especially in the sushi bars—"It might be rice wine to you but it's Saki to me!"

#### August-

Heads roll in Washington after the disastrous 250th birthday party for the USA as anyone remotely associated with the event is fired. The problem arose when a nation-wide broadcast of a patriotic documentary called "Born on the 4th of July" was mistakenly replaced by a film named "Porn on the 4th of July" starring "Long John" Johnson.

#### September-

September 19-a day that will live in infamy as LSU's Lane Kiffin returns to Oxford. Ole Miss fans pelt Kiffin with batteries, golf balls and at least one grenade simulator but Kiffin and the Tigers get the win with an explosive offense. Led by Arizona State transfer quarterback Sam Leavitt and LA Ram transfer receiver Puka Nacua, Kiffin escapes with a victory, a few minor injuries and a couple dozen Top Flight range balls.

"I guess times are hard in Mississippi," says Kiffin. "They couldn't afford Titleist balls like Tennessee."

#### October-

The San Francisco 49ers honor long-time fan and deceased member of the Grateful Dead Bob Weir by placing the band's skull logo on their helmets. Other NFL teams soon follow suit-Miami donning a Parrot Head for the late Jimmy Buffet and Seattle putting a train on their headgear for the recently deceased Todd Snyder ("Play Me a Train Song"). Kansas City chooses a picture of Travis Kelce and Taylor Swift prompting questions about shouldn't the honorees be dead?

A Chief's spokesperson responds, "You play in the NFL 13 years and try to keep up with Taylor-your legs are pretty much dead."

#### November-

The Pope visits New Orleans to honor his Creole heritage and has a special blessing for the city's football team. On All Saints' Day the Pontiff prays over the team in Latin which

loosely translated means—"Make it to the playoffs and I can help you out. As long as you don't play Da Bears."

#### December-

President Trump drops his plans to annex Greenland and sets his sights on the Caribbean.

"Jeff Epstein had a cool little place down there- so I've been told- and I think this country could use a few tropical isles for recreational spots."

Trump selects a popular sports figure as special envoy to the islands—"someone with knowledge of their customs, food, drugs"-Aaron Rodgers. "Aaron has a Caribbean soul he can barely control," assures Trump.

Well, there you have it, boys and girls. Now get out there and eat lots of Danish and popsicles and bet on horses with fire references. And if that doesn't work, you can always enter the transfer portal.

**Happy New Year!!!**



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# Jammin' with Goosie

## Wasteful

I've been blessed to have lived longer than I probably should have considering my sometimes wild lifestyle. During that stretch of time I have witnessed many changes occur in the fields, swamps, marshes, and forest that I so dearly love to inhabit from time to time.

I have belonged to several hunting clubs of which most if not all of our leased land has been owned by timber companies. Hunting these territories can be very challenging at times for sure. Events such as logging or

opinion I feel the biggest reason that their land is inhabited by many game species is the fact that they simply have a lot of land available. My experience of roaming these lands for a long time now has shown me very little of what they've done to actually help the game species that inhabit their properties. After clearing several hundred acres of forest I have witnessed a food plot or two that had been planted by the companies involved before they left the site. To my knowledge no employee has ever returned to check it out or make any improvements to it. I have never seen one that has ever developed into anything



enjoy my moments on that landscape. At that time, I'm here to tell you, the property mentioned was a beautiful mix of mature hardwood and pine. Cutting and the replanting of pine seedlings has made the area a typical pine tree plantation. I can remember back in time when at least fifty yards of mature timber would remain uncut along each side of the land's many creeks for

someday become a very healthy forest with some needed nutrition available. The company naturally shot that idea down.

We all need wood and paper products. Logging companies are in business to make money selling their product and the cash made leasing their property to hunters is secondary. I support that concept 100 percent but like many other things in life certain things for each of us, probably could have been done in a better manner. If there is one thing about the industry that I don't understand and never will agree with is the amount of waste that is left behind from that industry after the harvest is complete. From my most early days of watching logging operations to this day and time I have seen these people leave enormous piles of cut timber behind that never gets picked up. That's been going on for a long time and is still going on today. As a matter of fact I saw this wasteful occurrence just this morning while I was hunting with some friends of mine on their lease. I've heard several assumed reasons for that behavior and I don't agree with any of them. Sugarcoat it any way you want. It's a waste of a natural resource and money that is left there to rot. The amount of product that they leave behind would probably be close to the planting of that one oak to every 100 pines suggested by our group's forefathers.



replanting in the area that you are hunting before the season opener, and in some cases during the open season are a pain in the you know what. I have seen times where individuals have had to move their hunting platforms during the season for one reason or another to satisfy company policies. These situations can be very aggravating for the individual directly involved to say the least. Although several of these companies' owners boast what all they have done for wildlife on their lands, I feel that a lot of what they take credit for is untrue propaganda for sure. In my

valuable at all for the wildlife left behind. At least they tried something. Our club members work hard on their chosen sites and do a much better job of maintaining those plots for the game species of that locality.

For 40 years I have belonged to a hunting club in one of our Florida parishes that has seen several timber company owners come and go during that time span. I am still a member of that group and I do not regret spending a penny of the money that it has cost me to do so. It has been a blessing for me to have had the opportunity to explore and

streamside management. At some point that came to an end and at this day and time streamside management has evolved into leaving one tree on each side of the drain. When the intense cutting and replanting first began our board members of that era actually made a proposal to the company managers of the time that seemed to make a lot of sense to us hunters if you truly would want to help with the quality of wildlife in your forest. Their suggestion was why not plant one oak for every one hundred pine trees that were planted. As the growth would mature it would

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### **Useless Random Facts with Kellie**

In Chinese, the KFC slogan "finger lickin' good" comes out as "eat your fingers off" in its literal interpretation.

In 2003, there were 86 days of below-freezing weather in Hell, Michigan.

Of the 247 billion email messages sent every day, 81% are pure spam.

Archaeological evidence suggests that pigs were domesticated around 10,500 years ago in the Near East, before farmers first brought them to Europe around 8,500 years ago.

A retired California high school teacher admitted that he taught for seventeen years while being illiterate.

The blood in the famous shower scene in Hitchcock's Psycho was in fact Hershey's chocolate syrup.

In the 1920s, popcorn was banned from movie theaters because it was too noisy.

The right hand is mentioned positively 100 times in the bible, while the left hand is mentioned only 25 times, all negatively.

People who fidget burn an extra 350 calories a day. This could work off ten to thirty pounds a year.

The five interlocking Olympic rings are black, blue, red, green, and yellow because at least one of these colors appears on every flag.

# Thoughts from Bully

## Running with Uncle Joe!!

I run into people all the time that say, "You're Bully?"

I get the question constantly, "Why the name Bully?" Bully was my fathers nickname back in the 50's.

I write stories each month that are 90% true and are always full of life with unique settings. I must tell you I get it naturally and learned it from my Uncle Joe.

Uncle Joe told us life stories every time we saw him as kids. We'd gather around to listen to each story with young minds wide open. It was, as if, Andy Griffith was talking to us when he spoke. He had all of Andy's mannerisms. He'd say things like, Aawwww and knawwww.

As a young boy I loved to listen to the war stories.



He told me about when he had to parachute behind enemy lines with heroics beyond belief.

He told me about Audie Murphy and how he'd have never been the most decorated war hero of World II without following him up a hill and ambushing a fox hole.

In reality I learned later in life that his term of duty consisted



of pulling KP and peeling potatoes. He was also in charge of distributing sporting supplies. I'm sure he has a few governmental issue volley ball nets and tennis rackets stowed away in his attic still. I hope the statute of limitations has expired since WWII.

All-in-all he never saw any real war action but his stories stuck with me.

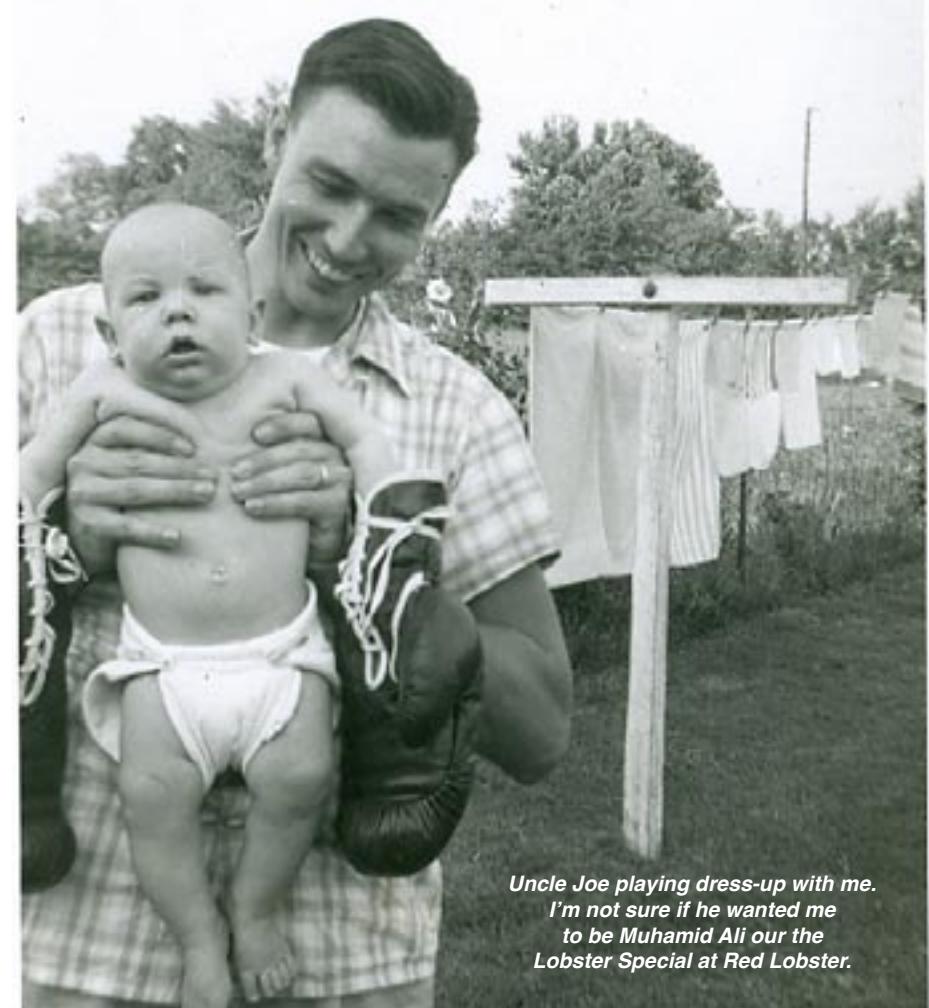
I remember once when he

was 15 years old he decided to hitch hike from Fordoche, Louisiana to Memphis. While on the road he was thumbing on a highway in Mississippi. A vehicle came rolling over the hill at a fast rate but stopped abruptly to pick him up. The guys hurried my uncle in the car and took off down the road.

About 1/2 mile down the road from where Uncle Joe was picked up, the car came



*Shown here is my Mom, Thelma Joell Waddell and my Uncle, Joseph Allen Waddell, Jr.*



*Uncle Joe playing dress-up with me. I'm not sure if he wanted me to be Muhamid Ali our the Lobster Special at Red Lobster.*

upon a police road block with flashing lights, guns drawn, and megaphones shouting, "You are under arrest!"

Well, they all got arrested because the guys that picked him up had just robbed a store. They had figured that any police would be looking for 2 guys in the car and not 3.

While he was being lead to the cop car a local citizen that had been driving down the same road told the cops that he had seen Uncle Joe hitch hiking and with this revelation the police let him go.

As a young man he would help my father on his delivery route in Vicksburg. They were driving a big truck of soft drinks and were behind on the deliveries. My Dad knew a short cut to his next delivery that would catch up a lot of time but it required that the truck drive over a bridge that did not rate the weight of the truck and it could collapse. When they got to the bridge my Dad had Uncle Joe cross the bridge and wait for the truck. The plan was to tie the stirring wheel in a straight position, place a weight on the gas pedal and let the truck drive itself across the bridge.

Uncle Joe's assignment was to jump in and stop the truck. Fortunately the plan worked and the truck survived the bridge and apparently 2 dumb asses.

Years later, after my father passed away, my uncle would keep me for 2 weeks at his home in Shreveport. Once when I was about 4 years old we were in a store. He was pushing the buggy and I placed a toy dump truck in it. With am approving glance I then picked up a football and threw it in along with several more toys. I guess he felt sorry for me and was going to let me have all the toys I wanted. I was enjoying the day when I picked up a box of Kotex and threw it in the buggy. He said, "Boy you're just picking stuff up!" He put all the toys back but let me keep the dump truck.

For years I visited him for those 2 weeks. It was always the most exciting time of my summers. We started traveling around the country on vacations. The Griswalls had nothing on us. I have traveled from coast to coast on summer vacation. It would be Uncle Joe, Aunt Carol, my

Grandmother Mamaw, my cousins Peggy and Keith, and me. We piled in his Oldsmobile Delta 88 and were heading for California.

On this particular trip he had boasted about a surprise he had for us. As we got on the road he pulled the surprise out. It was two 8 track tapes. 'Roy Clark Sings' and 'Tom Jones Sings Vegas' tunes. We listened to these tapes for 3000 miles. I listened to Tom Jones sing Proud Mary so many times that every once in a while my Grandmother would bust out singing like she had Turrets. She'd blurt out, "Rolling, Rolling, Rolling on the River."

Now Mamaw was sick and tired of fast food. When we checked into our room in Flagstaff, Arizona, she pulled out her hot plate to heat up some cream style corn. Soon as she plugged it in the electrical power blew out in the entire motel. Hotel staff came to each room asking questions but like Schultz's of Hogan's Heros, "We knew nothing."

The next day we were traveling through the desert. It was 102 degrees. The gas gauge was getting low as we passed gas station after station. Ya see, Uncle Joe is an accountant and counts pennies for a living and just knew the next gas station would have a better price and save him at least 3 cents per gallon. He saw a billboard with the right gas price indicating 2 miles ahead. That's when the gas ran out. No problem, he had me hike to the station in sweltering 102 degree weather. He even mentioned, "You're young, maybe you can run so we don't loose too much time."

Those days, in one way, are the best young memories of

my life but most of all I learned to laugh at myself and enjoy the life we are dealt.

I am just glad I didn't fall in the Grand Canyon when he had me get on the other side of the retaining wall. He positioned his 8mm camera to view the top of the retaining wall and through the lense the camera viewed down in the canyon. After shouting, "Quiet on the set" my fingers eased over the edge of the stone retaining wall. I proceeded to act as if I were climbing up the wall of the Grand Canyon. I made it to the top of the wall, took a deep breath and lost my balance and fell back behind the retaining wall appearing to fall back down in the canyon. He then yelled, "Cut! That's a take!"

What a great time we had. We weren't the Griswalls, we were the Waddell's heading for the worlds largest ball of string.

#### **'A Personal Note'**

*I ran this article about 10 years ago. I lost my Uncle and best friend over the Christmas Holidays. He was 94 years old and still working as the best CPA in North Louisiana. Up every morning at 5 and started his day at home. Then while driving to the office I was told he would sit at red lights next to early morning workers in their souped up trucks and would revve his engine in his big motored Lexus. They would laugh then he would smoke them.*

*Once a police officer put the lights on him. When he looked in the window at my 94 years young Uncle he would get a warning and a drive safe Mr. Waddell.*

*"I miss him and am forever grateful for his golf lessons, guidance and love."*

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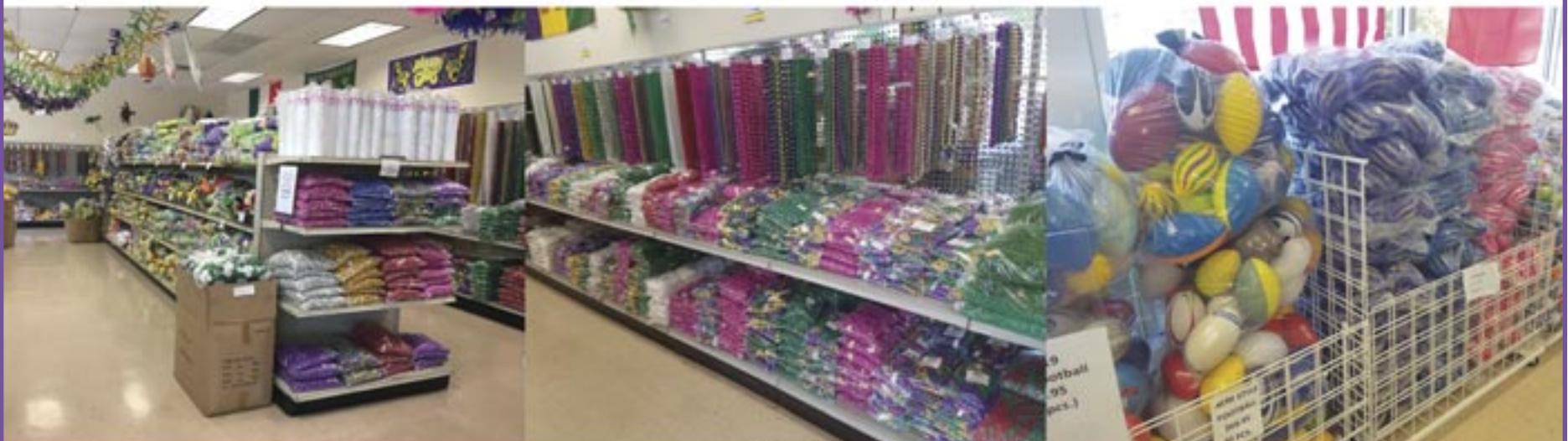
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## Crab & Apple Bruschetta



Executive Chef, John Donaldson

### Yield:

10-15 servings

### Prep:

15 minutes

### Cook:

10 minutes

### Serving: 4

### Ingredients:

8 ounces fresh Jumbo Lump crabmeat  
1 small loaf French bread  
1 Granny Smith apple  
4 ounces Smoked Gouda (whatever cheese you like)  
8 cherry tomatoes  
1 ounce fresh basil  
2 ounces extra virgin olive oil  
2 lemons  
Kosher salt & fresh ground black pepper to taste

### Method:

First thing you want to do is get those toast points cooked. Set your oven on 375 and allow it to preheat. Take your French bread and cut it into 1/2 inch slices then lay them out on a sheet pan/cookie sheet. Drizzle them with olive oil and bake for 5 minutes or until lightly browned. Remove them from the oven and allow them to cool and get nice and crispy.

Next, grab your crabmeat and put it into a small mixing bowl. Drizzle the crabmeat with a little olive oil, the juice of the lemon (no seeds), and salt & pepper to taste.

Now get your cheese. Here we are using Smoked Gouda, but you can use any of your favorite cheeses. Shred the cheese and set aside until it's time to use. Take out your cherry tomatoes and cut them in 1/2 and add them to the bowl of crabmeat

Thinly slice the basil leaves

The last ingredient to prepare is the apple. Remove the core of the apple either with an apple corer or simply by cutting off each side of the apple. Cut the apple into small cubes and put them into the small mixing bowl with the crabmeat and tomatoes, then drizzle with the juice of the last lemon (no seeds). This will keep the apple from turning brown.

### LET'S PUT IT ALL TOGETHER!!!

Lay out your crispy French bread toast points and top them with the crabmeat, tomato, and apple mixture. Sprinkle the shredded Smoked Gouda over the top then finish them off with the fresh basil. Serve immediately and enjoy this fresh and simple to make dish as an appetizer or accompaniment.

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