

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE FIRST CIRCUIT,
IN AND FOR ESCAMBIA COUNTY, FLORIDA

STATE OF FLORIDA,
Plaintiff,

v.

Case No.: 2009-CF-3249C

LEONARD P. GONZALEZ, JR.,
Defendant.

DEFENSE EXHIBIT LIST [Filing 2 of 3]

COMES NOW the defendant, Leonard P. Gonzalez, Jr., by and through undersigned counsel and hereby gives notice of the exhibits that he intends to present at his evidentiary hearing to be scheduled:

CLAIM 1 - EXHIBITS

- A) PNJ - Library Articles
- B) Curriculum Vitae for Dr. Edward J. Bronson.
- C) Report and Evaluation of Leonard Patrick Gonzalez, Jr. by Dr. Edward J. Bronson.
- D) Media Reports
- E) Media Reports (July - September, 2009)
- F) Media Reports (October - December, 2009)
- G) Media Reports (2010)

CLAIM 2 - EXHIBITS

- H) Report from Dr. Mark Cunningham

CLAIM 3 - EXHIBITS

- I) Correspondence Re: Escambia County Sheriff's Office

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I HEREBY CERTIFY that on February 15, 2016, I electronically filed the foregoing with the Clerk of the Court by using the CM/ECF system which will send a notice of electronic filing to: the Honorable Nickolas P. Geeker (keri.igney@FLCourts1.gov, and Kasey.watson@FLCourts1.gov), Berdene Beckles, Assistant Attorney General (Berdene.Beckles@myfloridalegal.com and capapp@myfloridalegal.com), John A. Molchan, Assistant State Attorney, (jmolchan@sa01.org and wsmith@sa01.org). Served by U.S. Mail to Leonard P. Gonzalez, Jr., DOC# 768915, Union Correctional Institution, 7819 NW 288th Street, Raiford, FL 32026.

/s/ Eric C. Pinkard

Eric C. Pinkard

Florida Bar No.651443

Chief Assistant CCRC

CAPITAL COLLATERAL REGIONAL

COUNSEL-MIDDLE REGION

12973 N Telecom Parkway

Temple Terrace, Florida 33637

813-558-1600

Pinkard@ccmr.state.fl.us

Support@ccmr.state.fl.us

EXHIBIT A (cont)

APPLE UNVEILS MUCH-ANTICIPATED iPad TABLET, 4A

PENSACOLA News Journal

THURSDAY, JANUARY 28, 2010

POKER ROOM

Pensacola Greyhound Track's newest attraction opens its doors. Page 18

STATE OF THE UNION ADDRESS

'Time to get serious'

Tea party brews up dissent

Rep. Miller talks to constituents

Less than two hours before U.S. Rep. Jeff Miller sat in the U.S. Capitol listening to President Barack Obama's State of the Union address, he was addressed and took questions from constituents in Pensacola.

Well, at least a jerky, electronic version of him with a sometimes-gerbil voice.

"I sure hope (Obama) focuses on job creation," Miller told about 80 people gathered in his Pensacola office watching him via computer connection. "I suspect the president will talk about reining in spending. Well, it's about time."



President Barack Obama delivers his State of the Union address Wednesday in Washington.

Obama touts job creation, global leadership, equality

WASHINGTON — President Barack Obama fought to recharge his embattled presidency with a State of the Union address that promised to get jobless millions back to work and stand on the side of Americans angry at Wall Street greed and Washington bickering.

BILLINGS MURDERS

Plea deal expected today

Thornton could agree to testify

One of seven people charged with first-degree murder and robbery in the death of Byrd and Melanie Billings is expected to enter a plea during a hearing this morning.

See BILLINGS, 4A

PNL.COM/BILLINGS

Find videos, an interactive audio/visual presentation on the case, a searchable database with arrest reports, investigative reports and other public records in the case, and more.

ESCAMBIA SCHOOL DISTRICT LAND DEAL

Church pulls its offer

Brownsville Middle property goes unsold

Friendship Missionary Baptist Church has called off its plan to buy the old Brownsville Middle School and convert it into a community center.



The Rev. LeTimothy May's Friendship Missionary Baptist Church in Pensacola had planned to purchase the former Brownsville Middle School and turn it into a community center.

But May delivered a letter to the School District on Wednesday, saying the renovation costs were more than the church could afford. The deal was to be completed by the end of the month.

MOTIVATIONAL SEMINAR

Bush, Bowden offer words of wisdom

Daylong event draws a packed crowd to Civic Center

Former first lady Laura Bush and Florida State football Coach Bobby Bowden spoke to a captivated audience at the Pensacola Civic Center on Wednesday.

Quick Read

- In Local**
 - BOY RECOVERED:** Volunteer divers on Tuesday recovered the body of 11-year-old Cameron Williams, 33 of whom, a missing Whiting Field Naval Air Station flight instructor whose aircraft crashed Saturday in Lake Pontchartrain near New Orleans. Page 18
 - TEACHERS PLEA:** Former Jay High School teachers Ashley Elaine Burnett and April Burford Watson entered no contest pleas Tuesday to three counts of unlawful sexual activity with certain minors. They face a maximum 83 months in prison if convicted. Page 18
- In Business**
 - CANCER CENTER:** A dedication ceremony will be held for the \$31.5 million Sacred Heart Cancer Center slated to open on Monday. Page 18
- In Sports**
 - DISTRICT BOOBS:** Gulf Breeze found a way to top Pensacola High 2-1 in double overtime during the District 1-4A semifinals at Washington High on Wednesday. Page 18
- In the Nation**
 - CAMPAIGN SPENDING:** A conservative foundation asked federal regulators to give a green light to corporation and union election spending. Page 4A
- In Florida**
 - STATE JUDGE:** Gov. Charlie Crist said Wednesday he does not expect to call for layoffs or pay cuts in the state budget recommendations he sends to legislators. Page 4A

Breaking news on your cellphone Text PNLNEWS to 44636 (4INFO)

pensacola.com Where Entertainment Starts

And in your e-mail Sign up for e-newsletters featuring news and photo galleries at pnj.com.

TO SUBSCRIBE 877-424-0028 A Gazette Paper Copyright 2010 75 cents a copy

3

7
2
8
2
1
0
1
0

NATION

Regulator asked to abolish campaign restrictions

Associated Press
WASHINGTON — A conservative legal foundation on Wednesday asked federal regulators to give green light to corporations and unions to begin spending their treasuries to influence this year's congressional elections.

The James Madison Center for Free Speech asked the Federal Election Commission to formally throw out its rules that restrict corporate and union spending on politics, saying the step is needed to implement last week's Supreme Court decision that freed such groups to get more directly involved in election campaigns.

Without formal action by the FEC, Bopp said, advocacy groups will be hesitant to take full advantage of the new leeway granted in last week's controversial 5-4 ruling.

feeling they might be subject to enforcement action. The FEC needs to know that the corporate restrictions are no longer enforceable, and to repeal other regulations that are based on that," he said. "Until they say so, people are still worried."

Apple unveils \$499 iPad



Apple Inc.

Associated Press
SAN FRANCISCO — Apple CEO Steve Jobs unveiled the company's much-anticipated iPad tablet computer Wednesday, calling it a new category of mobile device that is neither a smart phone nor laptop, but something in between.

The iPad will start at \$499, a price tag far below the \$1,000 that some analysts were expecting. But Apple must still persuade consumers who already have other devices to open their wallets yet again. Apple plans to begin selling the iPad in two months.

Jobs said the device would be useful for reading books, playing games or watching video. The half-inch-thick iPad is larger than the company's popular iPhone but smaller in design. It weighs 1.5 pounds and has a touch screen that is 9.7 inches diagonally. It comes with 16, 32 or 64 gigabytes of flash memory storage, and has Wi-Fi and Bluetooth connectivity built in.

Jobs said the device has a battery that lasts 10 hours and can sit for a month on standby without needing a charge. Raven Zachary, a consulting analyst with a mobile research agency called the 451 Group, considered the iPad a laptop replacement, especially because Apple is also selling a dock with a built-in keyboard.

How the iPad measures up

Joselyn Minkz
Associated Press
Apple Inc. says its tablet-style iPad computer represents a whole new category of consumer-electronic device, ideal for watching videos, surfing the Web and reading electronic books.

Here is how it stacks up with other Internet-connected portable devices that consumers are already using:

iPad vs. laptop
The iPad is easier to reach and carry than most laptops. The device weighs just 1.5 pounds, compared with a few pounds for the typical laptop. At a mere half-inch thick, the iPad is also thinner than most laptops, including Apple's super-thin MacBook Air. The entry-level iPad is less expensive than most full-sized laptops and claims to have longer battery life at 10 hours, compared with three to four hours for a typical full-sized laptop. But with maximum of 64 gigabytes of storage, the iPad can't hold as many photos, movies and songs as most laptops, which typically have hard drives that are several times the capacity. It doesn't come with a physical keyboard as laptops do, though Apple will sell an add-on dock with a keyboard.

Photos, movies and songs as most laptops, which typically have hard drives that are several times the capacity. It doesn't come with a physical keyboard as laptops do, though Apple will sell an add-on dock with a keyboard.

iPad vs. notebook
As Apple CEO Steve Jobs said Wednesday, smaller laptops known as notebooks are "not better than a laptop at anything. They are just cheaper. They are less-powerful chips than regular laptops, and as a result they don't handle video or other processing-intensive tasks well. The iPad uses a new chip that is custom designed by Apple. Jobs said the chip is "designed to be the best of both worlds."

iPad vs. e-readers
Using the iPad's touch screen to buy books and start reading seems fast compared with the navigation required on Amazon.com Inc.'s Kindle, which you navigate by pushing physical buttons on the device because it has no touch screen. Book covers are displayed on a "shelf" in the iPad's display, the look of a paper book. But the iPad has a glossy screen, so it might be as easy on the eyes as the Kindle and other e-readers, which generally sport electronic-ink technology. And it probably won't be as easy to read outdoors on the iPad.

No state jobs will be cut, Crist predicts

Bill Cotterell
Florida Capital Bureau
TALLAHASSEE — Admitting he may be optimistic, Gov. Charlie Crist said Wednesday he does not expect to call for layoffs or a rate in the state budget recommendations he sends to legislators.

But House Speaker Larry Crist, R-Ocala, and Senate President Jeff Atwater, R-North Palm Beach, were far more skeptical about how state employees will fare.

Crist said he will roll out an FY10 budget in June and focus on economic growth, education and environmental issues. He said that for the first time in his administration, state budget director Jerry McDaniel forecasts more tax money — about \$2 billion — to work with than in the previous year. "You know I'm an optimist, some might think I'm not," Crist said. "Asking if the budget will require layoffs of state employees, pay cuts or an end to paid-up health insurance for the employees who get the sack, the

governor said no. "I don't think so, I don't." Crist said. He said forecasts and pay cuts can be avoided "by smart budgeting our entire budget. I think that after Friday you'll see that Jerry McDaniel has done a tremendous job of making sure that we have a balanced budget that does live within our means and does not require layoffs."

Some legislative leaders have said state budget constraints might force lawmakers to make all employees pay monthly health-insurance premiums, about 27,000 state employees, including elected officers and many midlevel managers, have state-paid insurance. "I don't anticipate that either," Crist said of insurance-benefits changes. "We're going to change the current health insurance the way it is."

Senate Minority Leader Al North, D-Tallahassee, said making all employees pay would be unfair to nearly 17,000 workers enrolled in 2002 — losing job security in return for other benefits. Lower also and employees haven't had a general raise in four years.

But the iPad has a glossy screen, so it might be as easy on the eyes as the Kindle and other e-readers, which generally sport electronic-ink technology. And it probably won't be as easy to read outdoors on the iPad.

Gov. candidates share views on oil, health care

Bill Cotterell
Florida Capital Bureau
TALLAHASSEE — Competing candidates for governor agreed today that proposed offshore oil drilling is a threat to Florida's beaches but took sharply differing positions on national health care.

Attorney General Bill McCollum and Chief Financial Officer Alex Sink separately addressed news editors and other journalists at the annual Associated Press conference on the top floor of the state Capitol. McCollum, the leading Republican candidate for governor, said he wanted to make the campaign a conversation about Florida's economic growth — including property taxes, insurance and water use — while Sink said she would be "an ambassador for Florida" as governor.

A Quinnipiac University poll released today has McCollum ahead of Sink 41-31. Pollsters noted, however, that McCollum, a former congressman, has been on the political stage a lot longer than Sink, and that both are relatively unknown. The poll shows that in the race,

25 percent of voters are still undecided. Sink, who won her only political campaign in the CPO race four years ago, referred to McCollum as a "career politician," saying he has been on the ballot 13 or 14 times as a member of Congress for 20 years and three statewide campaigns. She said the Republican's lead in the polls is attributable to his name identity but predicted the would climb up in the six months remaining in the race.

McCollum, who has threatened to sue the federal government over national health care, referred to Sink as "a national Democrat." She said she's a Florida Democrat and a fiscally conservative Democrat and that she will wait and see what Congress produces on health care.

Sink said any plan that passes has to provide federal funding for any expansion of Medicaid, which she said already consumes a large part of Florida's budget. "We have to have health care reform," she said, adding that "the two people on standby to figure out how the final bill affects Florida."

LOCAL

Billings

FROM IA
to one or more charges as part of an agreement to testify against his co-defendants and avoid the possibility of the death penalty.

The Billings were killed July 9 in the Gulfh house, authorities say when four men and a teenage boy invaded their home and stole a safe.

Two suspects waited outside in getaway vehicles.

LOCAL
A woman is charged as an accessory after the fact. The state previously announced that it would seek the death penalty against the four men who allegedly went inside. But that could change in Thornton's case.

Attorney Robert Beasley, who represents the Billings' daughter Ashley Markham and her family, said the hearing is most likely the result of a deal Thornton made with prosecutors to help convict accused ringleader Leonard Patrick Gonzalez Jr. and the others.

"If the prosecution has made a deal with Thornton so they can firm up their case with (Gonzalez Jr.), then we can't second-guess their strategy," Beasley said.

Five days after the murders, Thornton, a Paulsboro, N.J., resident, told investigators that Gonzalez Jr., 35, recruited him for the attacks. Thornton described the murders as a robbery gone awry.

Gonzalez Jr. said the Billings home contained a safe with \$18 million in it, and promised Thornton a \$100,000 cut if he participated, Thornton told investigators.

Thornton said Gonzalez Jr. was the only shooter in the attacks.

"I know I'm going down for it, but I don't want to go down for something I didn't know that he was going to do," Thornton said in the hour-long interview on July 14.

"I didn't know that they were going to shoot him. I thought he was going to get the money and that was it."

Seminar

FROM IA
"But as the new president and his wife walked up the Marine One after the inauguration, we felt not sad, not a solemn pride, but a solemn pride," he said.

"As George has said many times, we're the big ship America. We may lean to the left or the right, but we always stay on course."

Later in the afternoon, prosechanters boomed as Bowden took to the stage for a 30-minute speech. The college football coaching legend used stories from his 57-year career to illustrate the leadership values necessary to build a winning team.

"We learned that you've

HEALTH SEMINAR
Dizziness & Balance Disorders
Bethesda Anderson, Physical Therapist with Sacred Heart Rehabilitation
Thurs., January 28 - 12:00 p.m. - 1:00 p.m.
The Club (1230 Crane Cove Blvd. in Gulf Breeze)
To reserve a seat, please call (850) 416-1620.

Sacred Heart Senior Services

You'll Get The Cleanest Carpet In Pensacola
You'll love how beautiful your carpet looks. This system is designed to go WAY beyond what most cleaners think of doing. Your carpet is cleaned by experienced, honest technicians who excel at pleasing you.
Guaranteed NO return spins. If any spots remain within 30 days of cleaning, we'll come back at NO CHARGE. We even have a way of removing pet stains from your carpet padding. This new "Dreamstar" process is designed to clean, dry FAST, and clean better than old systems. The finest carpet retailers in Pensacola recommend us.

To see videos on our carpet, call and the process go to CarpetCare.com. FREE GIFT. The first 27 callers get a FREE bottle of spot remover with lifetime refills (\$50 value). Call 474-1131 for a friendly, no-obligation estimate.

All Pen
Our e sta
Full I 2
2 LA
Siem
Our
DIG HEARI 3 LICEN SAME DA 4 I MOST RE
For m

Inside This Section

Details of... info available... items reviewed...

LOCAL

Local News Contacts

Breaking News... Chief Content Editor... E-mail information...

OPINIONS More fallout from the Billings case

Frederick Thornton Jr. did the right thing, approving Thursday...

Thornton's no-contest plea to second-degree murder charges...

On the plus side, Thornton, a skinny guy with a beard, seems less evil than some of his co-defendants.

He wasn't the triggerman, and he insisted he didn't know anyone would get hurt.

While Thornton began to rebuild his life, co-defendant Pamela Long Wiggins lost a bid to get out of jail.

She requested a reduction in the \$500,000 bond that keeps her behind bars on charges of being an accessory after the fact.

Others also praised Long Wiggins; they were stunned by the way cops and others portrayed her in the news media.

"All I have ever seen is kindness, understanding and big-heartedness," said Link, who has known Long Wiggins for 16 years.

"There is something very strange going on," she wrote in a letter to Conner.

"She is only guilty of being a friend, trusting in the wrong people," said Jennifer Goodwin at Bay Minette, Ala., a friend of 20 years.

"The Pamela Long that has been in the media the past few months is not a reflection of the Pamela Long that I have known for many years," he said.

Just ask Frederick Thornton Jr. He says he never imagined Gonzalez was going to lead a sword-bath, but now he's 18 and hoping to avoid life in prison.

Quick Read

- Health alert removed, other warnings still in effect
The Escambia County Health Department on Thursday removed a health alert for waterways at Big Lagoon State Park in Escambia County.
The alert was issued after tests of the water showed reduction of bacteria in the area.
Health alert, advising against water-related activities, remain in effect for the following areas:
1 Bayou Chico at Lakewood Park
2 Bayou Grande at Navy Point, north of Summit Avenue bridge.
3 Bayou Grande at Navy Point, south of Gibbs Road
4 Bayou Tezur at Bayview Park
5 Sanders Bayou
6 Fortson: 696-6786

Council nixes consolidation

City seeking commitment from UWF on park museum

The Pensacola City Council on Thursday stuck to its initial vote to oppose a county consolidation plan.



Ed Gray

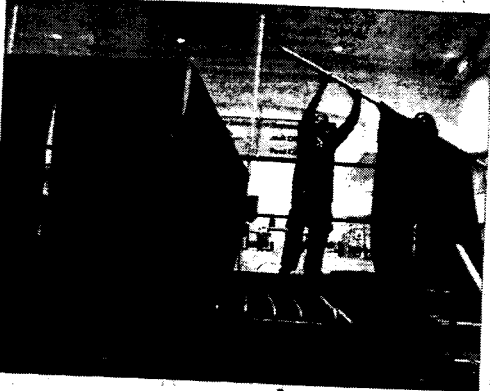
The council said it agreed with the general concept of the museum proposal but has issues with the specifics of the land use, and the lack of several hundred thousand dollars in offer for building a museum.



Diane Mack

As City Manager Al Coby said, the city must set a Feb. 8 deadline to identify how it plans to use the \$18 million in tax credits it hopes to secure.

MARDI GRAS



Martin Jacobs, left, and Dan Britlow set up the stage Thursday for Saturday's Cordova Ball. The ball is one of seven Mardi Gras activities this weekend.

Mall Ball one of several fun events this weekend

Sean Dugas... Seven Mardi Gras events, two days, are on the menu: a king cake-sized hangover. Another January weekend means another round of Mardi Gras revelry in the Pensacola area.

Jury out in Thornton grand theft court case

Tom McLaughlin... Jurors in the grand theft case of the former Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office chief of staff will resume deliberations today.

The defendant took advantage of opportunities presented to her to take money and items she was not entitled to," he said.

Edgar has contended throughout the trial that Thornton led Morris on by encouraging him to think she would one day be his lover.

The manipulation began in earnest as the two had on Dec. 9 and Dec. 11, 2006, Edgar said, when Thornton met Morris at a dinner.

At that time she presented him with a list of grievances she had over her October firing, which Morris testified was for failure to show up for work.

Morris retired Thornton following the dinner, though he said her employment and her \$80,000 salary.

He said her accepting a salary when she wasn't working amounted to grand theft. So, he argued, was taking financial payments to cover her debts and using Sheriff's Office-issued equipment even though she lived in Tallahassee.

See BALL, 4B See THORNTON, 4E

Pensacola police look for man wanted in carjacking

The Pensacola Police Department has released a sketch of a man wanted for a carjacking on Jan. 19. Police said a 41-year-old woman was stopped in a car at Davis Highway and Jay Street in Pensacola about 2:30 p.m. when a man opened the car door, punched her and told her to get into the passenger seat.



Carjacking suspect

but she said the carjacker threw her keys into a yard and ran away. The victim then called police. The woman told police the man took some money from her purse. The suspect is described as about 5 feet, 10 inches tall and weighing 170 pounds. He was wearing an unbuttoned blue shirt with a white tank top underneath, blue jeans and blue and white gym shoes. Anyone with information, call 435-1900.

Dillard's donates \$16,031 to Ronald McDonald House

The Ronald McDonald House in Pensacola has received more than \$16,000 from three local Dillard's stores. The Dillard's donation of \$16,031.20 will sponsor 114 family stays at the Ronald McDonald House and allow families with critically ill children to stay close to hospitals serving the children, said Andrea Farago, executive director for Pensacola's Ronald McDonald House. Donations were raised through cookbook sales at Dillard's locations in Pensacola, Fort Walton Beach and Pier Park in Panama City, a news release from the Ronald McDonald House said. For more information, call (850) 477-2278 or visit www.rmh.pensacola.org/fundraising/oharennight.html.

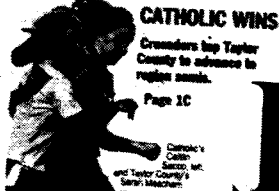
Corrections To report an error, call 435-8511 or e-mail: corrections@prj.com.

Follow our feeds online Learn more and subscribe at prj.com/news We're on Twitter at www.twitter.com/prj

LOTTERY Afternoon Cash \$ 6-3-2 Evening Cash \$ 2-0-5 Afternoon Play \$ 1-5-5-2 Evening Play \$ 9-6-1-8 Fantasy \$ 1-2-5-10-31 Lotto winners: Page 4B

JAN 29 2010

BACK IN TIME: THE WEDDING SINGER HITS THE SAENGER, WFEKENDER



CATHOLIC WINS

Crossers tip Taylor County to advance in regular session.

Page 1C

PENSACOLA News Journal

FRIDAY, JANUARY 29, 2010



SANTA ROSA Tax office worker's sentence suspended

Judge scraps prison term in theft case

Travis Griggs

The 47-year prison term of a former Santa Rosa County Tax Collector's Office employee charged with stealing taxpayer money was suspended Thursday by the same judge who sentenced her.



Addison

Dana S. Addison, 36, of Milton was found guilty in November 2007 of grand theft of more than \$100,000 and money laundering. She delayed the deposit of tax payment checks and used the money for herself in the meantime.

Circuit Judge Ron Swanson sentenced Addison to 56 months in prison followed by 20 years of probation and ordered her to pay \$70,000 in restitution. But she was released on bond after sentencing, pending a ruling on her appeal. The First District Court of Appeal denied Addison's appeal last December 2009. On Jan. 1 she was locked into Santa Rosa County Jail for the start of her sentence.

See THEFT, 5A

BEULAH COUPLE SLAIN

Billings suspect takes plea



Frederick Thornton Jr., left, and his attorney, Cheryl Alverson, appear before Circuit Judge Nick Geeker on Thursday morning. Thornton entered a plea of no contest to charges of second-degree murder in the July deaths of Byrd and Melanie Billings.

Thornton to testify against six others charged in slayings

Travis Griggs

One of seven people charged with the murders of Byrd and Melanie Billings pleaded no contest to second-degree murder charges Thursday as part of a plea deal in which he will testify against his alleged accomplices.

Frederick Thornton Jr.'s plea means he will avoid the death penalty. He can be sentenced to as much as life in prison.

The Billingses were killed July 9 in their Beulah home when five people, including Thornton, invaded their home and stole a safe, according to police. Two suspects waited outside in getaway vehicles.

A hush fell over the crowded courtroom as Circuit Judge Nick Geeker read the charges against Thornton, 19, who was wearing shackles and a neon-yellow jail jumpsuit.

Thornton, who was with his attorney, Cheryl Alverson, answered most of the judge's routine questions about Thornton's understanding of the plea with a simple "Yes" or "No."

When Geeker asked if Thornton had any questions, Thornton said he didn't understand how he could be charged with murder when he wasn't the one who pulled the trigger.

See BILLINGS, 7A

FULL BILLINGS COVERAGE ONLINE AT PNI.COM/BILLINGS

Dozens of photos from the case

Interactive audio/visual presentation

Database of the case's documents

INSIDE: More fallout in Billings case, 1B

TOP STORIES 1

City Council officials with vote to oppose consolidation, 1B

2 Sheriff's Office theft jury still in deliberations, 1B

3 Million picks new coach, 1C

ESCAMBIA COUNTY SCHOOLS

All eyes on Warrington as the FCAT approaches

Superintendent hopes for A's, B's, C's

Rebekah Allen

FCAT testing is just around the corner, and this year, the Escambia County School District is hoping to come out with only A, B and C schools.

Florida school grades are determined primarily by Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test scores. So the year eyes are on the four remaining D schools in the district: Montclair, Oakrest and Northwest High School.

But for Superintendent Malcolm Thomas, the pressure is on at Warrington Middle School, which he restaffed and restructured from the ground up last summer. Warrington Middle rose to a C school under the leadership of ousted Principal



Destri Jones, 14, an eighth-grader at Warrington Middle School, takes notes in Lavetta Metzger's FCAT writing workshop recently.

FCAT schedule

Writing test for grades 4, 8, 10: Feb. 9-11
Reading and math for grades 3-10: March 9-10
Science for grades 5, 8 and 11: March 9-10

Christine Nixon — said Thomas has promised that it will be an A school in two more years. "But Thomas said he doesn't expect an A or even a B in Warrington Middle's immediate future. He said he will be pleased as long as the school holds onto its C this year. "I take time. We didn't get here overnight, and we're not

going to get out overnight," Thomas said. "She me in two years, though, and if we're in the same boat then, I'm going to be very disappointed." Warrington Middle, like many other schools in the district, began its "FCAT Blitz" when students returned from the holidays. This month, eighth-graders are having daily writing workshops to prepare for the writing test in February. A class of students sits in the library with a teacher who hands out a prompt. "Should teams be forced to do community service?"

See FCAT, 5A

FLORIDA BUDGET

College funds doubled under Crist's proposal

Governor outlines 'knowledge-based economy' plan

Bill Keenan

TALLAHASSEE — Gov. Charlie Crist and higher education officials announced a plan Thursday to build a "knowledge economy" in Florida by doubling state university funding over the next five years.

As a first step, Crist recommended a \$100 million increase in annual state university spending for the next budget year beginning July 1. That's far short, though, of what it will take to reach the \$1.75 billion, six-year goal set by the Board of Governors, which oversees Florida's 11 public universities.

"This \$100 million continues our commitment toward reconfiguring Florida's economy," Crist said during a webcast from the University of South Florida in Tampa. "You know everything's about the economy and it should be."

What the board calls its New Florida plan closely follows a proposal by the Florida Council of 100, which the business leadership group announced as part of a larger proposal to improve education two weeks ago with Crist and former Gov. Jeb Bush.

The new university dollars would be focused on science, technology, engineering, math and medical research and education as part of an overall \$7.1 billion higher education budget recommendation. Crist also is proposing a \$67 million increase for community and state colleges to help them accommodate enrollment growth.

Crist has proposed no increase in college or university tuition. Universities — but not colleges — have the authority, though, to raise tuition by up to 15 percent each year with board approval.

The higher education spending recommendation is one of several budget elements that Crist has been announcing for the past week daily basis for the past week. The governor today will present his complete budget proposal to the Legislature.

See CRIST, 4A

INSIDE: OBAMA TOUTS FLORIDA RAIL, 4A

Quick Read

In Local

NAVY SYMPOSIUM: The U.S. Naval Academy Alumni Association of Pensacola is sponsoring a symposium Saturday for high school students interested in attending the U.S. Naval Academy or earning a Naval ROTC scholarship. Page 2B

PIT APPROVED: A construction and demolition debris pit will be built near wells that supply drinking water to much of south Santa Rosa County. The Santa Rosa County Commission on Thursday approved a permit for the seven-acre pit. Page 2B

In Business

GAS FUEL PROBLEMS: Toyota Motor Corp. said Thursday it's coming in on solutions to a gas pedal system problem, but it still had no details on when drivers would see repairs. Page 3B

In Sports

NEW MILTON COACH: Former Baker County coach Bobby Johns is expected to take over the Milton High football program. Page 1C

In the Nation

DEBT CEILING RAISED: Senate Democrats needed all the 60 votes at their disposal Thursday to pass through legislation allowing the government to go \$1.3 trillion deeper in debt. Page 3A

In the World

THE LONG HAUL: Afghan President Hamid Karzai warned Thursday that foreign troops must stay in his country for another decade. Page 3B

INSIDE

Business — 2A
Calendar — 2B
Classified — 1-6C
Column — 6C
Crossword — 7C, 7E
Local — 1B
Letter — 1C
Movies — 1B
Obituaries — 4B
Opinion — 1-7C
Sports — 1B
Television — 7C

Get local sports on your cellphone
Text PNI5PORTS to 44338 (4INFO)

INSIDERSCHOOL.COM
BY SCHOOL, BY TEAM, BY SPORT

And in your e-mail
Sign up for e-newsletters featuring news and photo galleries at pni.com



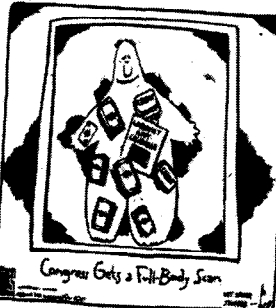
TO SUBSCRIBE
877-424-0099
A Gannett Paper
Copyright 2010
75 cents a copy

J
A
N

2
9

2
0
1
0

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



Dogan dead-on: No dogs at restaurants

I sincerely hope the Pensacola City Council will pass the ordinance for restaurants to allow well-behaved dogs in outdoor eating areas.

Reynold Dogan ("Dining and dogs just don't mix," Jan. 21) beat me to the point of my concern. I expressed in his column most of my concerns, including several I did not thought of.

Several restaurants my husband, friends and I frequent are included among those that would like to adopt this policy. One wonderful thing about living in Pensacola is dining alfresco, and I would hate to give up that pleasure in those establishments. I have dogs. I've owned a few, but I never took them out to dinner. I hope other pet owners will continue to dine with theirs at home, too.

— Andrew Walker, Pensacola

Park vision

A park should be a place of enjoyment. Doesn't everyone realize that? What is not needed is commercial space with its "for rent," "for sale" and "for lease" signs. There is an abundance of commercial space available, both within the park's plan, and in the nearby areas, including downtown.

I wish Pensacola would put on its thinking cap and do what other cities do with their sites: use our downtown and the new park with a walking path. Do other "planners" ever get out of the drawing room and see what real life is about? If I planned it, the commercial space in question would not be included.

A museum complex such as the one the University of West Florida envisions will bring people in, not only for seminars and learning opportunities, but also will bring both tourists and residents to the museum and its changing exhibits.

A museum is not stagnant. One of the first things I look for when I travel (and I do love to travel) are museums of all types. Shopping is just about the same now wherever one goes, and to say UWF has the vision, I wish them well.

— Barbara Lewis, Pensacola

Cut the fat

The people have spoken! Throw out this mishmash of everything but public health care. Obama Care includes too much pork, special interests, tax increases, bribes, and it is way too costly. It also fails to cover millions of Americans presently without health care.

Why reinvent the wheel? A good starting place would be Ottawa. Canadians tell us their system is not perfect. But we would be wise to use their system, and tweak it to our situation.

It would make it lean, paid by an additional sales tax, and for every citizen. If bills and bribes are desired, private insurance would be available. The politicians would be wise to stop the health care bill from carrying over and bribes. When the health care bill demands a tax increase to pay for it, it should not include high-speed rail to Las Vegas or other tumbler.

— Bob Duke, Pensacola

Saving America

As we headed for a major election in this country? An economy so rapidly nearing the point where taxes won't pay the interest for an ever-increasing debt load that is chasing the ever-increasing approved debt ceiling, a military facing mission impossible with the infamous "do more with less" syndrome rampant in the halls of Congress and Pentagon, a crumbling national infrastructure, job losses, no involved housing market (I use the term market loosely), and a partisan attitude on both sides that threatens to completely stymie any forward progress.

There are two things that may help: two-term limits for the House and Senate to eliminate those who continuously work to save their long-term career aspirations instead of doing what is best for the country. And a line-item veto authorization to keep the politicians focused on the needs of the country.

— Dana Calk, Cantonment

Water outrage

The election in Massachusetts is the tip of the iceberg. Americans are taking our country back! NO more out-of-control spending. NO idiotic cap & trade policy. NO increased taxes. NO more closed-door deals. NO more buying of votes. NO more health care bill that no one wants. NO more patty-cake with terrorists.

The outrage of the American people will be felt!

— Ed McDonough, Pensacola

BILLINGS SLAYINGS



State Attorney Bill Eddins, center, talks with reporters about his decision to accept a second-degree murder plea from Frederick Thornton Jr. for his role in the deaths of Byrd and Melanie Billings. Photos by Tony Silverman/silverman@pq.com

Billings

Prosecutors charged with two counts of premeditated first-degree murder. State Attorney Bill Eddins said prosecutors accepted the no-contest plea to the lesser charges of second-degree murder and a charge of home-invasion robbery with a firearm because Thornton's testimony will strengthen the case against his co-defendants.



Billings murder suspects: Leonard Patrick Gonzalez Jr., 35; Leonard Patrick Gonzalez Sr., 56; Wayne Thomas Colclough, 41; Dennis Ray Shalworth Jr., 28; Gary Lamont Sumner Jr., 31; Rakeman Florence, 17.

The following people have been charged with two counts of first-degree murder and one count of home invasion robbery with a firearm and are being held at the Escambia County Jail without bond. Also charged: Pamela Long Wiggins, 46, two counts accessory after the fact, in custody with \$500,000 bond.

were in agreement with it. I, in all probability, would not have taken this position without agreement from the family.

Robert Beasley, the Billings' family attorney, said it was difficult for the family to see the potential punishment reduced for one of the suspects, but they understand the prosecution's position.

"I think our perception is that these people are guilty and they should all pay, but the prosecution said that obviously this is an issue of strategy," Beasley said.

Eddins said prosecutors offered the plea agreement to Thornton partly because he confessed his involvement in the crime shortly after being arrested and honestly described the chain of events.

According to court documents, five days after the murders, Thornton, a Fort Walton Beach resident, told investigators that Gonzalez Jr. recruited him for what Thornton thought was going to be a robbery, not two murders.

Gonzalez Jr. said the Billings home contained a safe containing \$18 million, and promised Thornton a \$100,000 cut if he participated. Thornton told investigators that Gonzalez Jr. was the only shooter.

"I know I'm going down for it, but I don't want to go down for something I didn't know that he was going to do," Thornton said in the hour-long interview on July 14. "I didn't know that they were going to shoot him, but I thought he was going to get the money and that was it."

Members of the Billings' family were present in the courtroom Thursday morning, including Ashley Markham, 27, their daughter, and her husband, Blue. They left the courtroom without comment.

The Markhams have taken over the care of the Billings' nine adopted children. The children suffer from various physical and mental disabilities.

Eddins said prosecutors met with the Markhams and other family members to discuss the case before going forward with the plea agreement.

"We laid out the overall circumstances involving the case, and we explained our rationale," Eddins said. "And they



Ashley Markham was in court Thursday morning to set an attorney for Frederick Thornton Jr. pleaded no contest.

NOT HEARING MESS LATELY? CALL 476-3644 FOR A FREE SIEMENS LIFE DEMONSTRATION. ALLFLORIDAHearing.COM

ALL NEW 2010 CADILLAC CTS LIMITED LEASE OFFER \$369 MONTH. VINCE WHIBBS CADILLAC 2601 PENSACOLA BLVD, CAR CITY, PENSACOLA 850-433-7671

THE LINEN CORNER Gift • Home Accessories • Ladies Boutique Winter Sale 70% off Winter Clothing & Selected Gift Items 2 Days Only!!! Fri Jan 29th & Sat Jan 30th

Weight-loss surgery is not what you have to lose, it's what you have to gain. Dr. Robert Beasley, M.D., for Meet the Doc. Wednesday, Feb. 3 • 6:30 p.m. Baptist Medical Center Meeting Rooms 1000 West Moreno St. Call (904) 434-4888. You'll Love the Way Baptist Cares for You

JAN 29 2010

AT EGLIN, NO F-35 TILL 2015 STORY, PAGE 1C

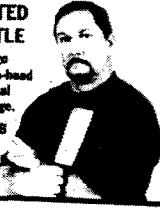
PENSACOLA News Journal

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 3, 2010

HEATED BATTLE

Chiefs go head-to-head in annual challenge.

PAGE 1B



LEGISLATURE

State stalls tax raise on employers

Unemployment-compensation tax delayed for 2 years

Carlton Proctor and Jim Ash

TALLAHASSEE — Legislators Tuesday agreed to grant nearly a half-million businesses a two-year delay in a massive unemployment-compensation tax increase.

The House approved the measure 117-0 shortly after convening the 60-day session Tuesday afternoon. The Senate followed suit later in the afternoon, voting 39-0 to send it off to Gov. Charlie Crist, who signed it into law Tuesday evening.

Without action, businesses would see their unemployment-compensation tax rates increase, in some cases, as much as 1,000 percent, on April 1. Businesses will still see the minimum per-employee tax rate from \$8.40 to \$25.20, but it will be much less than the \$109.30 rate they would have otherwise faced.

Rep. Dave Murrain, the Pensacola Republican who is chairman of the committee that wrote the bill, Tuesday pledged that the measure was no silver bullet. But he said it was necessary to stave off another round of layoffs.

See TAX, 4A

BIGAMY CASE

'I do.' She didn't. Who knows?

Long Wiggins back in news, but not for Billings case

Kris Wernowsky

Panela Long Wiggins may have said one "I do" too many, but her attorney says she still shouldn't have been charged with bigamy.

In a motion to dismiss the charge against her, defense attorneys Bruce Miller offers the argument that Florida law prevented Long Wiggins from marrying a second man while she was married to the first. So, he's arguing, bigamy is actually legally impossible.

On March 9, Circuit Judge John Brown in Okaloosa County will consider a novel motion from Miller that claims the state filed an erroneous bigamy charge.

Long Wiggins, 48, of Gulf Breeze is charged as an accessory to first-degree murder in the Billings case. She is in Escambia County Jail under \$500,000 bond.

She is accused of providing a van for the armed robbery by seven suspects at the Billings' rural Bayshore home on July 8.

Long Wiggins' friend Leonard Patrick Gonzalez Jr., 36, the alleged

See BIGAMY, 4A

STATE OF THE STATE

Crist's last voyage

Gov. at helm for final time, with economy in focus

Breandan Farrington

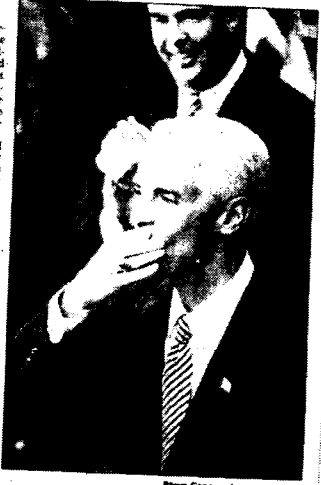
TALLAHASSEE — Gov. Charlie Crist compared leading the state in a down economy to guiding a ship through a storm and told lawmakers during his last State of the State address Tuesday that they have to put aside ideology and work together to help Floridians.

INSIDE

More from the legislative session

Page 4A

Gov. Charlie Crist throws a kiss to the crowd after finishing his last State of the State speech Tuesday as Senate president Jeff Atwater, background, applauds.



Brian Cannon/Associated Press

See CRIST, 4A

EARTHQUAKE IN SOUTH AMERICA

Disaster takes bite out of time

Massive Chile quake tilts Earth, shortens day

Malcolm Ritter

NEW YORK — Earth's days may have gotten a little bit shorter since the massive earthquake in Chile, but don't feel bad if you haven't noticed.

The difference would be only about one-millionth of a second.

Richard Gross, a scientist at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena, Calif., and colleagues calculated that Saturday's quake shortened the day by 1.26 microseconds. A microsecond is one-millionth of a second.

The length of a day is the time it takes for the planet to complete one rotation — 86,400 seconds or 24 hours.

An earthquake can make Earth rotate faster by nudging some of its mass closer to the planet's axis, just as ice skat-



Roberto Conde/Associated Press

A Chilean flag waves Tuesday at an area struck by the 8.8-magnitude earthquake that hit Chile early Saturday in Constitución, Chile. The quake was so massive that it shortened Earth's day by microseconds.

INSIDE // 4A

Chilean authorities struggling to stop looters in quake aftermath.

quakes could add up to make the day shorter, "but these changes are very very small."

So small, in fact, that scientists can't record them directly. Gross said actual observations of the length of the day are accurate to five-millionths of a second. His estimate of the effect of the Chile quake is only a quarter of that span.

"I'll certainly look at the observations when they come in," Gross said, but "I doubt I'll see anything."

Quick Read

- In Local**
 - MURDER SUSPECT:** Pensacola police believe Marvin James Smith shot and killed a customer at the Oakcrest Lounge on Oct. 23 and also gunned down a young man walking on Wright Street in downtown Pensacola on Oct. 4. Page 1B
 - SEX ABUSE:** Santa Rosa County deputies are looking for other people who may have been victimized by a Milton man arrested on charges of sexually abusing children. Christopher Lee Lowery, 26, was arrested Monday. Page 3B
- In Business**
 - IN THE DRIVER'S SEAT:** The Obama administration is considering requiring all cars and trucks sold in the U.S. to have brakes that can override gas pedals. Page 6B
- In Sports**
 - DAMAGING LOSS:** Florida failed to score in the last 3 minutes of the game and lost at home to Vanderbilt on Tuesday night 64-50. Page 1C

SUPREME COURT

Court may extend gun owner rights

Justices weigh Second Amendment's reach in cities, states banning firearms

Joan Bakopio

WASHINGTON — During a spirited hour of oral arguments Tuesday, the Supreme Court appeared ready to rule that the Second Amendment right to bear arms applies to firearms regulation in the states and cities.

Several justices, including Anthony Kennedy, signaled their questions that they believed the right to firearms is sufficiently "fundamental" that it should cover people challenging state and local gun regulation, as well as that passed by the federal government.

Tuesday's arguments in a dispute over a Chicago handgun ban followed from a 2008 ruling in which the Supreme Court said for the first time that the Second Amendment protects an individual right to bear arms. The prevailing judicial view until then had been that it protects only collective right of state militias, such as a National Guard.

That 2008 case, District of Columbia v. Heller, covered regulation by the U.S. government and

federal enclaves, such as Washington. It left open the question of whether the new right extends to firearms regulation in states and cities.

The overriding question Tuesday was whether the newly established right to bear arms is so fundamental that it should protect people against state and local laws. The city of Chicago contends it is not and argues that the Second Amendment is significantly different from other provisions in the Bill of Rights because it involves a right associated with a weapon designed to kill or cause serious injury.

"If the right to bear arms" is not fundamental, then Heller is wrong," asserted Kennedy, who was in the majority in the 2008 decision and often is a swing vote. Chief Justice John Roberts, who also appeared ready to vote that the right to bear arms would extend to people in the states, said "the political process" would allow some firearms regulations, for example, on how guns could be carried.

INSIDE

Business	40
Calendar	24
Classified	548
Comics	48
Crossword	36
Food & Wine	25
Local	10
Lifestyle	15
Obituaries	35
Opinion	47A
News	1C
Travel	30

Breaking news on your cellphone... Text PINNEWS to 44638 (4INFO)

pensacola where Entertainment Starts

And in your e-mail Sign up for e-newsletters featuring news and photo galleries at pnj.com

TO SUBSCRIBE (877) 424-0028 A General Paper Copyright 2010 75 cents a * * *

20 Massez
21 Warm and
July
33 Earn
34 Casino
36 City
38 Not for
38 Slight
39 Boat
bottom
40 Toss off
42 Jan part
43 "That's It"
44 75th anniversary
45 1914-1918

FR. A word used
Simple letters,
words are all

IN Z H
K I P L
G N R V
S J E B T
I L L E R
O T H E R

M
A
R

3

2
0
1
0

Post-quake chaos, looting wound Chile's pride

Michael Warren
Associate Writer

CONCEPCION, Chile — Chile's president defended herself Tuesday against charges of government incompetence in a disaster that not only shattered lives and property but challenged the nation's vibrancy.

A society built on pride in its wealth and orderliness found itself suddenly facing

gangs of robbers, a wounded economy and a shaken sense of civic responsibility. A government that sent 16 tons of food and medicine, a search and rescue team and 30 doctors to Haiti after the earthquake there found itself seeking emergency aid from other countries.

In Lota, a former coal mining town of 30,000 along the heavily damaged coast, Mayor Jorge Venegas said

Tuesday that a "psychosis" had taken hold.

A gas station went up in flames, gunfire rattled through the night and residents guarded streets against roaming bands of looters, he told Radio Bio Bio. He said 2,000 homes had been destroyed, thousands were living in the streets and people were wielding guns, iron bars and long sticks to protect

their possessions.

"It's urgent that the army reach our city," Venegas pleaded.

"It's a collective hysteria," said Francisco Santa Cruz, 20, an aid worker caring for 56 families in a camp for the newly homeless in San Pedro, across the Bio Bio River from Concepcion, the biggest city in the quake zone.

Lake Venegas in Lota

Santa Cruz said he heard gunfire throughout the night.

"They used to call us (Chileans) the jaguars of South America," he said, using Chilean slang for proud and strong. "But now we know that we're not even close to that."

President Michelle Bachelet was on the defensive against a storm of claims that the government's

response to the disaster was a failure.

La Tercera, an influential daily, said the looting and violence showed "uncomprehensible weakness and aimlessness" by authorities. El Mercurio, a conservative publication many consider Chile's paper of record, called on President-elect Sebastian Pinera, who takes office March 11, to "restore hope" to Chile.

M
A
R

Tax

FROM 1A

Murzin said the bill also does not fix the problem of an underfunded unemployment compensation trust fund.

"The problem is there are a lot of Floridians unemployed," Murzin said. "We saw the train coming last year and made changes to restore the state's unemployment compensation trust fund."

But Murzin said Florida's businesses are still far too vulnerable to unemployment insurance rate increases.

"This will buy us some time," he said. "But the train is still going to hit us in two years."

The Legislature's swift action on the issue drew praise from Tom Kirschner, tax president and chief operating officer of Landrum Companies, a Pensacola-based temporary staffing business.

"We appreciate the fact the Legislature listened to the business community," Kirschner said. "Obviously raising taxes in the middle of a recession is not a good idea."

Kirschner said any employer that utilized part-time workers would be especially hard hit by the tax increase under the 2009 legislation.

Although the bill passed Tuesday would roll back the sky-high increases, most business owners still will see a slight increase in the minimum rate charged per employee, Kirschner said.

Unless the economy turns around, and a large number of the 3.1 million Floridians cashing unemployment checks find work, the minimum tax rate will rise to \$50.90 in 2011 and \$62.90 in 2012. The increases are necessary to begin paying interest on more than \$11 billion the state has borrowed from the federal government to keep the benefits flowing.

Crist

FROM 1A

The speech was part reflection on the governor's first three years in office, part a reason for his last year and at times he seemed to be sending a message to his rival in the Republican Senate primary, former House Speaker Marco Rubio.

The governor directly addressed his push for the \$787 billion federal stimulus package, an issue for which he is constantly criticized in the Senate campaign.

"Given our budget shortfall and given that Floridians are paying for part of the stimulus package — doesn't it make sense to spend our energies maximizing the benefit of that package? Isn't it our duty to advocate that Florida receive her fair share? Isn't it more helpful to Floridians than engaging in hollow ideological posturing that achieves nothing?" Crist said.

Democrats stood and applauded Crist while Republicans sat still as Crist talked about the stimulus.

Crist told lawmakers they shouldn't elevate ideology over real solutions.

"Look around the globe. Can't we agree that our world would be better with less overheated rhetoric and more common sense?" he said.

FLORIDA LEGISLATURE



Gov. Charlie Crist, center, enters the house to deliver his last State of the State speech on Tuesday.

which would have raised \$433 million.

Crist also asked for \$100 million in tax cuts, including a cut in the corporate income tax and the return of a sales tax holiday for back-to-school clothes and supplies. He also wants \$125 million to attract companies to Florida.

He will also seek ways of streamlining licenses and permits for business.

"This session, and for the remainder of my term as governor, my strongest focus will continue to be creating new and better jobs for Floridians. While corporate productivity seems to be growing, we still long for a corresponding increase in the number of job opportunities," Crist said.

He also wants to restore the Florida Forester program by committing \$50 million to purchase conservation land. Crist called for programs to promote solar energy and other clean energy sources.

Continuing to improve schools must also be a focus, he said.

"We want to add to the accomplishments of Governor Jeb Bush and this administration by continu-



Steve Grimm, Associated Press

ing to build the best public school system in America," he said.

And lastly, he pushed for stronger ethics in government, particularly by making the Public Service Commission's communications more transparent.

"I thought that it was unfortunate that a lot of Republicans don't understand that we see where we are and we're going to have to look at raising some revenue," Padden said. "Otherwise, we're just rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic."

The two leading candidates to replace Crist, Democrat Alex Sink and Republican Bill McCollum, predictably had different reactions to the speech.

"It was one of the best speeches he's given," said McCollum, the attorney general. Yet even he said he wouldn't have endorsed the federal stimulus. "I never thought it was a good idea to pass it in Washington, and I think it's been overall far less effective than people thought it would be. But I suspect some of the business you heard on that subject was that Sink and Florida's chief financial officer, said Crist didn't lay out a plan to turn the economy around."

"It's hard to take credit for anything when we're in the worst economic crisis that we've ever been in the history of our state. We've got to be more forward looking. We're in a crisis right now and we need to hear plans for how we're going to turn our economy around and grow jobs in our state," Sink said.

Lawmakers call for gov't reforms

TALLAHASSEE — Money is short, voters are losing patience and state government is in desperate need of a comprehensive tune-up to make it more efficient, transparent and accountable, House leaders said Tuesday.

Acting on the first day of the 2010 legislative session, House Speaker Larry Croft, R-Coast, and other Republican leaders proposed a package of changes that would repeal outdated laws, look for savings in an array of purchasing contracts, and "modernize" state employee health care, among other measures.

Those changes also would consolidate two state agencies — the auditor general's office and the Legislature's Office of Program Analysis and Government Accountability — into a Legislative Accountability Office. The objective, to enhance oversight of state government by combining two agencies that now separately track spending.

"We're trying to do more and do it better with less money," said Rep. Elyn Boggs, R-Port Lauderdale. But "we're not getting the information we need as legislators."

Those changes also would practice sufficient agencies by withholding funds until deficiencies are corrected.

Associated Press

3

and more common sense."

and more common sense."

and more common sense."

and more common sense."

and more common sense."

and more common sense."

LOCAL

Bigamy

FROM 1A

mastermind of the robbery, is accused of gunning down the couple.

He and five others are charged with first-degree murder and armed robbery. A seventh suspect, Frederick Thurman Jr., 19, of Fort Walton Beach, pleaded to assist in January to second-degree murder charges and agreed to cooperate with prosecutors in the case.

While the murder case was under investigation, the state charged Long Wiggins with bigamy. Her trial was scheduled to begin March 15 but will likely be delayed, Assistant State Attorney Lindsey Jensen said.

In 2007, Long Wiggins married James Maulden in Baldwin County, Ala. The couple separated, and on Dec. 31, 2008, she married Hugh Wiggins.

Circuit Judge Michael Allen granted Maulden a divorce Nov. 13 in Escambia County.

Miller, a Shalimar attorney, has asked the judge to preclude Long Wiggins marriage license, application to marry and evidence of marriage as evidence in a possible trial.

The six-page motion says since Long Wiggins had an outstanding marriage in the state of Alabama, her marriage to Wiggins in the state of Florida would not be officially recognized by the state and a void.

"The State has apparently taken the position that simply because a marriage certificate was applied for and obtained and a ceremony conducted, the defendant 'married' huge

Wiggins," Miller wrote in motion. "A license and ceremony does not create a marriage."

Miller provides case law that he believes shows the state of Florida has long held that a bigamous union entered into knowingly is not a valid marriage under the state law.

In a second motion to dismiss the bigamy charge, Miller wrote that "as a matter of law, the defendant's union to Hugh Wiggins was not a 'legal union' and does not fall within the definition of marriage."

Miller cites the 2006 Proposition 8 ratification that defined marriage as the legal union of only one man and one woman.

Wiggins," Miller wrote in motion. "A license and ceremony does not create a marriage."

Miller provides case law that he believes shows the state of Florida has long held that a bigamous union entered into knowingly is not a valid marriage under the state law.

In a second motion to dismiss the bigamy charge, Miller wrote that "as a matter of law, the defendant's union to Hugh Wiggins was not a 'legal union' and does not fall within the definition of marriage."

Miller cites the 2006 Proposition 8 ratification that defined marriage as the legal union of only one man and one woman.

WAIT'LL YOU HEAR THIS!

Introducing a Hearing Care Program Exclusively for AARP® Members.

Because we all want to hear what life has in store for us.

Call the HearUSA Hearing Care Network today to schedule a hearing consultation. 800.203.7048

AARP members receive:

- 20% savings on a wide range of digital hearing aids
- 90-day money-back guarantee
- 3-year manufacturer warranty
- Free batteries, extended follow-up, & many other extras at no additional charge.

WHILE SUPPLIES LAST!
FREE AMPLIFIED SPEAKERPHONE with purchase of hearing aids.

Minimum purchase restrictions apply. Not valid with any other offer or discount.

The only hearing care program endorsed by AARP

HearUSA does a quality test on AARP hearing aids to ensure they are used for general purposes. AARP hearing aids are not used for specialized purposes. HearUSA makes available a network of hearing care professionals. AARP members may access AARP Hearing Care Program. The AARP program and may be discontinued at any time. AARP does not endorse any specific product, service, or program. You are strongly encouraged to evaluate your needs.

AARP Hearing Care Program

Spring into Spring with Andrews Sodding & Lawn Services

1100 N. Blue Angel Pkwy
Pensacola, FL 32506
Hours: Monday - Friday
(850) 458-2090

Free Fresh Strawberries & Vegetables

Gilg Prosthetics, Inc.
Kevin Gilg, Licensed and Certified Prosthetist (and amputee)

Artificial Limbs... are not supposed to hurt!

Over 25 Years Experience
(850) 474-0414
www.gilgprosthetics.com

M
A
R

3

3

3

OPINIONS Billings suspect was a follower

At first, Frederick Thornton Jr. said he had nothing to do with the attack on Melanie and Byrd Billings. He claimed he stayed outside their British home...



Mark O'Brien

Thornton now has told the lawyers the background to the July 9 attack, spending most of a day explaining how he became involved and reinforcing previous accounts that portray Leonard Patrick Gonzalez Jr. as the unquestioned leader of the ring...

Thornton gave his testimony Feb. 17, after he turned 20 in jail. He will remain there a long time; he pleaded guilty to two charges of second-degree murder, escaping a possible death sentence by agreeing to testify against his co-defendants.

A transcript of the interview was placed in court files last week as lawyers prepare for trials later this year. It's Thornton's most detailed account of the incident and some of the players in the case. In the interview, Thornton comes across as a follower. He quit high school in the 11th grade and lived in Fort Walton Beach, smoking marijuana daily and mixing Gray Goose vodka with juice. On the night of the killings, he was "a little bit" having smoked some pot about 30 minutes earlier, he said.

See O'BRIEN, 3C

Auction a surefire way to seize upon hot deals Police, airport selling off items Saturday

Need a crossbow? Want a digital camera for pennies on the dollar? Looking for that perfect mountain bike but don't want to spend \$1,000 to get it? Then check out Saturday's public auction of police-seized property at Garth's Antiques & Auction Gallery...



Cindy Schaefer

This Saturday, Garth's Antiques will sell lost, seized and stolen property collected by the Pensacola Police Department and Pensacola Gulf Coast Regional Airport. It's the first time the Pensacola Police Department has used a third-party broker to sell its recovered property, said Pensacola Police Assistant Chief Cliff Simmons.

Until now, police staged their own auctions at the downtown headquarters. Officers served as auctioneers, selling the seized goods along with lost or unclaimed items and luggage from the airport, which doesn't have its own auction.

See AUCTION, 3C



Robert Garth looks over a crossbow that is among the stolen items from the Pensacola Police Department that will be up for auction Saturday at Garth's Antiques & Auction Gallery.

Want to Go?

- WHAT: Pensacola Police seized property and lost luggage auction. WHEN: Auction preview 9 a.m. Saturday with bidding to follow. WHERE: Garth's Antiques & Auction Gallery, 3930 West Navy Blvd. DETAILS: Call 456-7182 or go online to www.garthsauction.com.

Street paving plows ahead

City still behind, but progress seen

The City of Pensacola is about five years behind in its effort to catch up on street repaving. But that's a marked improvement from only two years ago when the city was an estimated 10 years behind on paving.

The city's new 2010 paving list — recently approved by the City Council — has 566 blocks in immediate need of maintenance but the city only has enough money set aside to repair 305 blocks of streets.

The \$1.28 million worth of paving is expected to begin in late summer. It has been 30 to 40 years since some streets have had a fresh coat of black asphalt. Take P Street, for instance, from Gregory Street to Chase Street. It was last resurfaced in 1974.

See PAVING, 2C

Tour is over, but volunteer's job never done

Former Peace Corps worker returning to Thailand to teach, help form nonprofit

Carman Paige joined the Peace Corps in 2007, she wanted to see the world and do good work. Douglas was assigned to Thailand. She spent the first three months of her 32-month tour learning the culture and language before teaching elementary and high school students.



Carman Paige

"I'm trying to start a nonprofit with my parents, Chuck and Pat Douglas, and some members of our church, Community of Christ in Navarre, to help Thai students go to college," she said. When Douglas arrived in the province of Khon Kaen, which is known for its silk manufacturing, she lived with a family that did not speak English. "I was the first person they had hosted," she said.

objects was the main way I communicated. During her three-month stay, Douglas said she was treated well by the family of 10, which included parents who were sugarcane farmers, children, a grandmother and cousins. She then moved to the school where she taught. "They made a bedroom out of sheets so I would have privacy," she said. "They treated and loved me like family. Adjusting to the food took a while for Douglas, who developed a bacterial infection that led to kidney stones and gall bladder surgery.



Carolyn Rebekah Douglass

AGE: 31. FAMILY: Parents, Chuck and Pat Douglas, retired Santa Rosa County teachers; sister, Lydia Douglass, 21, a University of Florida student majoring in history. EDUCATION: Milton High School, Alabama Southern Community College and the University of Florida, bachelor's degree in history.

Quick Read

Walk for Mommy & Me set for Saturday in Milton

The third annual Walk for Mommy & Me is 10 a.m. to noon Saturday. The free event will feature 18 informational booths, face painting, prizes and an appearance by McGruff the Crime Dog. The walk will begin at the Blackwater Heritage Travel Visitor Center on Alabama Street, next to the Milton Public Library. Booths along the route will provide information on our most safety, smoking cessation and other issues. This event is sponsored by the Santa Rosa County Health Department's Women, Infants and Children Program. Details: Call DeDe Barrett at 888-8250 or go to www.healthysanta.com.

Easter at the Santa Rosa County Fair



Children buzz around the Santa Rosa County Fair Easter egg hunt on Sunday.

ONLINE More photos from this year's fair. pnj.com

Wildlife Sanctuary plans Baby Shower

The Wildlife Sanctuary of Northwest Florida is getting ready for baby shower with its annual Baby Shower and Supply Drive on Saturday, April 17. The event will be from noon to 2:30 p.m., and the public is invited to walk the grounds, meet the facility's wild residents and attend a puppet show. There also will be a bake sale, plant sale and a pelican feeding booth. Children can play wildlife games and see herds of prey being carried around by their handlers. The sanctuary is open seven days a week as a wildlife hospital for injured and orphaned wildlife and relies on donations to support and care for its animals. The following items are on the sanctuary's Baby Shower wish list: paper towels, tissues, heating pads, liquid laundry soap, postage stamps, peanut butter, sunflower seeds, fresh or frozen small minnows, pecans, raw peanuts in shells, 45 gallon trash bags, gallon-size freezer bags, frozen or fresh berries, jars of meat baby food, canned chicken, and apples and sweet potatoes. For more information, visit www.pensacolawildlife.com or call 435-9453.

LOCAL

Paving

FROM IC

Clarence Hale, 59, remembers it. He has been living in his F Street home since 1970, and he was 24 when it was last paved...

Catching up

The city maintains 326 miles of streets — roughly 4,000 city blocks — which have been repaved at an average rate of 200 to 350 blocks a year in recent years...

The city's paving list today is a major improvement over the average 100 blocks it traditionally paved annually until about three years ago...

Danielle Sledge is a 19-year-old college student who lives in an apartment on Underwood Avenue, a tony, potholed street that will be repaved this year...

When passing an oncoming car on that end of Underwood, swerving around potholes can cause accidents there, she said.

Why we are behind The real turning point came during the past three years.

O'Brien

FROM IC

"But the door was locked. So we turned around and went back and got in the truck and left," Thornton told the lawyers. Still, Gonzalez didn't see the event as a failure...

Thornton said he expected someone would make Brett Killings open the vault that held the purported \$13 million, and repeated again

City streets

The City of Pennacola will spend \$2.30 million in local gas tax and sales tax money this year on street paving, street reconstruction, intersection improvements and sidewalk improvements...

The city began using a share of local option sales taxes that never had been put toward street maintenance before. Then in December 2008, the city quit using its gas tax money to fund Escambia County Area Transit, and left the local funding burden on the county...

Today, the city puts an average of about \$1.5 million a year in gas taxes and \$500,000 in sales taxes into pavement maintenance. "We had gotten down to a point at one time when the city was only putting about \$250,000 to \$400,000 a year in resurfacing," Garza said...

"Any roadway addressed in the last 15 years should be in pretty good shape," Garza said. The condition of streets has a great deal to do with annual rainfall. Pennacola sees 67 inches of rainfall in both 2005 and 2009 compared to an average of 64 inches a year with normal circumstances...

All residents know is they want their streets paved and they want it now. "It's probably the number one complaint I get, how our roads are maintained," Hall said. "But we do have a plan out there, and we are funding that as robustly as we can."

Getting caught

Days after the attack, Escambia County investigators were in Fort Walton Beach, asking questions and getting closer to identifying Gonzalez's accomplices. Thornton decided to tell his grandmother and aunt that he had been at the scene, but only for marijuana. He and a co-defendant, Raheem Florence, voluntarily went to authorities, but thanks to the videotape, Thornton's first account quickly fell apart...

Auction

FROM IC

"It became too manpower-intensive for us," Simmons said of auctions. "We can't keep all the property here. We don't have the space. That's when police called on Robert Garth. Since he was a boy, Garth, 40, has worked in the family business started by his father in 1970 and currently located at 3930 W. Navy Blvd.



Rebekah Douglas teaches her seventh-grade students 'The Holy Pokey' at the Khon Kaen Education Welfare School in Thailand.

Douglass

FROM IC

Her parents often sent her to school with macaroni and cheese, Hamburger Helper, Pop-Tarts and Slim Jims. "The Thai food you order in a restaurant is not what was put on my plate," she laughed. Douglas' new home also had unusual visitors — a cobra and scorpions. "I killed a cobra," she said. "It wasn't long, about finger to elbow."

"I worked with teachers to make classrooms more student-centered and tested students' abilities," she said. Her students at Khon Kaen Education Welfare School, a boarding facility for underprivileged children, were easy to work with, Douglass said. Her stint as a substitute teacher in Santa Rosa County proved helpful.

"You had some teachers with perfect lesson plans and some would be like 'good luck,'" she laughed. "But, it gave me good training to be prepared for anything." Douglass also drew on the experience of her retired educator parents. "I helped with English," said Pat Douglass, who taught second grade at Bagdad Elementary School. "As for classroom management, Bekah is good with that."

The Douglasses visited their daughter for two weeks. Pat Douglass was happy to see how helpful teachers were, especially her mentor teacher, La-angela Pungpak. "Some of Bekah's teachers were so generous and

Garth has sold everything from stuffed hunting trophies to an 8-foot-tall German-made music box. He has broken deals for five left-wild custom pieces of furniture and has a glowing collection of Tiffany-style lamps in his showroom. He was surprised by the things people bring him to sell, Garth was curious about some items retrieved from the vaults of Pennacola's airport. "How do you forget your guitar or (prescription) glasses on an airplane?"



Rebekah Douglas teaches her seventh-grade students 'The Holy Pokey' at the Khon Kaen Education Welfare School in Thailand.

Peace Corps

It began in 1960 when Sen. John F. Kennedy challenged students at the University of Michigan to serve their country in the cause of peace by living and working in developing countries. Nearly 200,000 volunteers have served in 130 host countries on projects from AIDS education to information technology and environmental preservation.

She got a call to solve the scorpion problem. To make it to work each day, Douglas rode a bicycle on rough roads and through rice fields. "I worked with teachers to make classrooms more student-centered and tested students' abilities," she said. Her students at Khon Kaen Education Welfare School, a boarding facility for underprivileged children, were easy to work with, Douglass said. Her stint as a substitute teacher in Santa Rosa County proved helpful.

"You had some teachers with perfect lesson plans and some would be like 'good luck,'" she laughed. "But, it gave me good training to be prepared for anything." Douglass also drew on the experience of her retired educator parents. "I helped with English," said Pat Douglass, who taught second grade at Bagdad Elementary School. "As for classroom management, Bekah is good with that."

The Douglasses visited their daughter for two weeks. Pat Douglass was happy to see how helpful teachers were, especially her mentor teacher, La-angela Pungpak. "Some of Bekah's teachers were so generous and

Garth asked, 'I couldn't see without my glasses, and these people leave theirs on the plane.' Bicycles and home electronics are among the most common items seized and recycled by police, Simmons said. New clothes, many still with tags, and portable electronics were the most common items collected from the airport, Garth said. He expects the numerous MP3 players he received to sell for \$10 to \$20. "The property is so widely

varied. You name it. We've seized it," Simmons said. "We seized a postbox boat one time. You'd be surprised what people steal." There is no specific time frame for how long seized property is held before it is sold, Simmons said. When the police's property warehouse starts to fill up and Schaefer runs out of places to store stolen bicycles police have recovered, it's time for an auction. Normally, that happens about twice a year, Simmons said.

Advertisement for HealthSource Expo on Saturday, April 17, 2010, at 9 a.m. - 3 p.m. at Lou Ross Center. Admission is FREE. Can food donations accepted at entrance for Manna Food Pantry.

Advertisement for ORECK clean home center. Features a vacuum cleaner and text: 'If It's Perfect For Hotels, It's Perfect For You. Get three incredible ORECKs for only \$299.' Includes contact information for financing and store location.

Large advertisement for LAWLINE Monday & Wednesday 7 p.m. on BLAB-TV. Includes photos of three men in suits and the text 'CALL US ON LAWLINE Monday & Wednesday 7 p.m. on BLAB-TV'.

killed in y bombing

April targeted worshipers gathered for Friday prayers in a string of explosions that killed 72 people, mostly men, in mosques and places of worship in Baghdad. Earlier on Wednesday, three people were killed and 23 were wounded in northwest Baghdad when a booby-trapped body exploded near a grocery store.

A police official said the body was left near a shop and exploded after people gathered around.

The attacks come as Iraqi security officials have been carrying out raids and searches in areas such as Hilla and Basra, following a wave of violence Monday that unfolded throughout the day and stretched from Mosul in the north all the way to Basra in the south, at least 19 people were killed in the bombings and shootings in what was Iraq's bloodiest day this year.

Iraq has yet to seat a government — or even finalize the results — following the March 7 election in which Shiite Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki narrowly lost out to secular challenger Ayad Allawi, who had strong Sunni support.

E DING



W
W
W

Inside This Section

News changed
 with DLJ
 435-6538
 news@prj.com

Topics
 will lead the
 2012 Progression
 435-6538
 topics@prj.com

Results
 to lead off
 Fantasy for
 435-6538
 results@prj.com

LOCAL

Local News Contacts

Staff Writer
 Tom Newsom
 435-6538
 tomnews@prj.com

Staff Writer
 Sharon Minton
 435-6538
 sharonm@prj.com

Assistant
 435-6538
 news@prj.com

SECTION B/PAGE 1
 Find more news and publish your own at prj.com

Local News Contacts
 Thursday, May 13, 2012

OPINIONS Pensacola Marine makes grade

Craig Crenshaw's roots are in "Shoreline" as the area near his childhood home at E and West Beary streets is known.

Now, he's about to become the 17th general in the history of the U.S. Marines Corps. He'll be one of seven active-duty black generals.

T. Degan
 435-6543

Crenshaw is currently commander of the Combat Logistics Regiment 25 at Camp Lejeune, N.C. His career has included stints in Japan, Operation Desert Storm in Iraq, the Pentagon, and even in the wilds of Southern Los Angeles after the Rodney King verdict in 1992.

He was assigned to a general staff position at the Pentagon in 2007. He has yet to seat a government — or even finalize the results — following the March 7 election in which Shiite Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki narrowly lost out to secular challenger Ayad Allawi, who had strong Sunni support.

Following orders
 The sixth of eight children and the youngest son of John Robert and Callie Crenshaw, the new general attended C.A. West Elementary School in Woodham Middle before graduating from Woodham High in 1980.

Rising through ranks
 Crenshaw was in middle school when, seeing his older brother, Robert, standing tall and looking sharp in a Marine uniform, he decided he too wanted to be a part of the few and the proud.

Quick Read
Ceremony today honors Pensacola Police officers
 At a ceremony today, Pensacola Police officers and civilian personnel will remember officers who have lost their lives in the line of duty, died or been seriously injured in service to the community.

Celebrating bike month
 Dozens of biking enthusiasts rode through the streets of Gulf Breeze on Wednesday to celebrate National Bike Month.

Corrections
 To report an error, call 435-8511, or e-mail: corrections@prj.com.

Billings suspect No contest



Raymond
 435-6543

Florence, 17, enters plea, agrees to testify against his co-defendants

Kris Wernow
 krisw@prj.com

Rakeem Florence went to Beulah to rob a bar house. He entered the house armed and without a license to carry a handgun. He heard a series of pops.

Those fatal shots struck the 17-year-old father into the middle of a botched robbery and the murder of Byrd and Melaine Billings.

On the ride away from the house in a large red van, co-defendant Deane Hallworth told Florence what had happened and gave him an ominous warning: "He was like, 'Dude killed somebody.' Florence entered a plea of no contest in court July 18 with the trial scheduled to begin July 15.

ONLINE

More photos at prj.com

Billings case suspects
 The following people have been charged with two counts of first-degree murder and one count of home invasion robbery with a firearm and are at Escambia County Jail without bond. They are due back in court July 18 with the trial scheduled to begin July 15.

- Leonard Patrick Gonzalez Jr., 36
- Leonard Patrick Gonzalez Sr., 57
- Wayne Thomas Coakran, 41
- Darlene Ray Stashworth Jr., 29
- Gary Lamont Sumner Jr., 31

Also charged:
 ■ Pamela Long Wiggins, 48, two counts accessory after the fact, in custody with \$500,000 bond.

PCC GRADUATION



Photos by Katie Kang/taughtprj.com

PCC's 800 grads a diverse group

College has 35th commencement

Erin Kourkounis
 erink@prj.com

When Una Moala walked outside in her cap and gown, her loved ones proudly draped her in made out of candy flowers and ribbons over her head.

"I'm excited," Moala, 21, of Tatakamotonga, Tonga, said as she took a break from hugging and taking pictures with more PCC relatives and left graduation photos for Penacola Christian College graduates.

"I'm going to come back here and get my master's degree in business administration."

Eight hundred graduates and about a 600 family members and friends attended graduation ceremonies Wednesday in the Crowder Centre Auditorium — the college's 35th commencement.

The 800 graduates hail from six continents, every state except Utah and 30 other countries or territories.

ABOVE: From left, Pensacola Christian College graduates Una Moala, 21, of Tonga; Barbara Rari, 28, of Tonga; and Frances Piliu, 28, of New Zealand pose for pictures adorned in garlands of flowers, ribbons and candies made by their families to honor their graduation on Wednesday. About 800 students earned degrees. They represent 49 states, six continents and 30 other countries or territories.

RIGHT: Graduate Candisha Carroll, 22, of Nassau, Bahamas, hugs and congratulates her newly graduated girlfriends.

Park contract vote set for tonight

Jamie Page
 jamie@prj.com

Pensacola City Council members Wednesday evening were handed a final draft of the most anticipated design-build contract with the Maritime Park development team.

The council had Wednesday and today to read over it before they vote tonight on the contract. If approved, it would clear the way for full construction to begin on the project.

The contract between the Community Maritime Park Associates and Maritime Park Development Partners would allow the park's developer, MPPDP, to also act as the project's general contractor.

Here are highlights of the 73-page contract.

- The project must be substantially complete — able to be used for its intended purpose — by Dec. 31, 2013. If not, liquidated damages start Jan. 1, 2012.
- The damages start at \$1,000 per day for the first month, \$2,500 per day for the second month, \$5,000 a day for the third month, and \$7,500 a day thereafter.

Want to go?

■ Pensacola City Council will meet at 6 p.m. today to consider the design-build contract between CMPA and MPPDP. The meeting is in the second-floor conference room at City Hall, 222 W. Main St., in Pensacola.

■ Council is to vote on contract at its regular meeting, 7 p.m. today, Council Chambers.

■ Council's OK will be pending an approval by the CMPA, which meets at 1 p.m. Friday, second floor City Hall conference room.

Pace to honor Frank Lay after 40 years in education

The Pace community is preparing to honor Frank Lay, the Pace High School principal who is retiring after 40 years in education. A public retirement celebration is planned for 9:45 a.m. May 21.

Residents will ask Santa Rosa County School Board members tonight to name the Pace High football stadium the H. Frank Lay Stadium.

Lay became a national figure last year after he was charged with violating a federal order prohibiting school and district officials from participating in prayer at school. A federal judge ruled Lay did not intentionally violate the order.



Follow our feeds online
 Learn more and subscribe at prj.com/rss. We're on Twitter at www.twitter.com/prj

LOTTERY Cash 3: 5998, 2337, 6737
 Play 4: 4-13-17-26-32
 Fantasy 5: 4-13-17-26-32
 Lotto: 4-11-22-31-34-37
 Powerball: 37-51-52-53-58 PB: 38 x 2

LOCAL

Billings

FROM ID

see him testify against his co-defendants.

Florence is the second of seven suspects to agree to cooperate with prosecutors.

The teen initially was charged with two counts of premeditated first-degree murder. Prosecutors accepted the no-contest plea to the lesser charges of second-degree murder and home-invasion robbery with a firearm.

Suspect Frederick Thornton Jr., 20, made the same deal in January.

First-degree murder charges against five other defendants remain. The state is seeking the death penalty against three men.

Leonard Gonzalez Jr., 36, Wayne Colinton, 41, Dominic Stallworth Jr., 29, who entered the house, an eighth person — whose name is not being released — is charged as an accessory after the fact.

Florence, who also went inside the house, was not eligible for the death penalty because he is a juvenile because he is under 18 years old at the time of the offense. Florence's sentence of the previous substantial assistance to the state.

Park

FROM ID

day for the fourth month and thereafter.

MPDP would receive a \$900,000 — 3 percent — general override and profit fee for being the general contractor. This is in addition to the \$1.3 million — 4 percent — development fee that's in the development agreement.

The contractor must construct to guaranteed maximum price for seven phases of the project when the design for each of these phases is 60 percent complete.

Total cost of construction will not go above \$36 million in public funds, or \$11.4 million in New Market Tax Credit proceeds.

MPDP must have builders risk insurance that will fully reimburse or other damages of partially built structures during construction.

MPDP has a joint venture with Birmingham, Ala.-based Hour Construction. Hour is the majority owner of the joint venture, which is called Magni Construction. Each entity will be jointly and severally liable for any default on the contract.

All materials for the project must be purchased through the City of Pensacola or CMFA as a cost-saving measure because the city is exempt from paying sales tax.

The contract gives a detailed description of the scope of work for each element of the park to make clear what the contractor is agreeing to build. The contractor would have to get permission from the CMFA to deviate from this scope of work.

For any reason, the CMFA can fire the general contractor, but would have to pay the contractor either 2 percent of the remaining contract or \$250,000, whichever is less. MPDP still could remove the master developer even if fired from being the contractor.

The contractor has the right to terminate the contract if the CMFA creates repeated delays for more than three months.

Naval symposium features discussions and big names

FROM ID

Erin Koszarskiewicz

Today and Friday, members of the Pensacola community will get the chance to learn about Naval aviation from prominent figures in the field as part of the 24th Naval Aviation Symposium.

The National Naval Aviation Museum at the Pensacola Naval Air Station will host three free panel discussions that are open to the public.

Shelley Ragadale, the foundation's marketing director, said the symposium provides a great opportunity to learn about the contributions Naval aviation has made to the United States.

work this year," she said. "We're certainly excited about it."

Along with the discussion, which typically draws 300 to 500 people, a sold-out luncheon featuring author Steven Cozart is today. The public is invited to a book signing at 1:15 p.m. of "Flight of the Intruder," Cozart's No. 1 bestseller.

Additionally, there will be a reception with guest speaker Neil Armstrong, the first person to set foot on the moon, which is also sold out.

Armstrong will be inducted into the Hall of Honor at 9 a.m. Friday at a public ceremony in the Blue Angels atrium.

For more information, go to navalaviationsymposium.org.

"Our mission here at the Naval Aviation Museum Foundation is to inspire and educate the general public and our active-duty military about the history and heritage of Naval aviation," Ragadale said.

Panel topics range from the birth of Naval aviation to advancements in the field that are being made today.

Ragadale said this year's topics were chosen to lead up to the 100th anniversary of Naval aviation next year.

"We're laying the ground-

Louisiana fire kills 4 children

ASSOCIATED PRESS

RAGLEY, La. — Four children were killed in a house fire in Beauregard Parish, La. State Fire Marshal H. "Butch" Browning said Wednesday that a woman and her 3-year-old son, who was sleeping with her, escaped the blaze late Tuesday, but her four other children died from smoke inhalation.

Browning said the woman tried to rescue her children, who were in the rear of the house.

She suffered burns and smoke inhalation and was listed in stable condition at the Charles Memorial Hospital. Her name and the name of the surviving child was not released.

The victims — all girls — were identified as 6-year-old twins Karyn and Keiley LeBlanc, 8-year-old Kassandra LeBlanc and 1-year-old Adeline. All four sisters were pronounced dead at area hospitals.

Beauregard Parish Sheriff's deputies said the children's father was working in Texas at the time of the fire.

Browning said an extensive investigation is under way to determine what started the blaze. Smoke detectors were in the home, but he said it has not been determined whether they were working.

"It has been over a year since we have had four or more Louisianians die in a single fire," Browning said. "I am so upset to see this loss in such innocent and helpless children."

PCC

FROM ID

urged the graduates to stand by their faith despite an ever-changing world. He discussed how things have changed since they were born, as well as things that should remain the same: Christian faith, American liberties and tradition.

"Certainly God and his work are unchanging," he said. "We must conserve the truth on which our faith is built and the truths of our American liberties."

Now that Blair Jacobson of Glen Burnie, Md., has finished her undergraduate work in business management and marketing, she plans to continue her education.

"I'm going back home to pursue a degree in culinary arts. I want to open a restaurant," she said. "I'm going to miss the college and the people here."

graduate students in territories.

The bus drove for a lot of students is a lot of Christian philosophy while they're still training as nurses, nurses or whatever," said Ann Glenn, the college's chief communication officer.

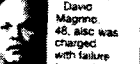
The graduates lived into the Crown Center as the college's orchestra played "Hail to the Chief."

The ceremony opened with an invocation and a performance of "Psalms of Celebration" by the symphony choir. A scripture reading and the singing of "Great is Thy Faithfulness" followed.

PCC Vice President Troy Stelmacher's commencement address

Man charged with DUI in van-bus accident

The Florida Highway Patrol has charged a Pensacola man with drunken driving and driving with an expired license after he crashed his van into an Escambia County school bus.



David Magrino, 48, also was charged with failure to maintain a single lane after the driver's side of his van struck the rear driver's side of the bus, which was headed west on West Avery Street on Tuesday, the FHP said.

A witness told troopers that Magrino veered off the road as he headed east on Green Street then steered back onto road hitting the bus.

There were five Pine Forest High School students on the bus, and one suffered minor injuries. The bus driver's assistant, Virginia Evans, 56, also suffered minor injuries. The FHP said the driver of the bus, Arnie Marie Bingham, 42, and the other four students aboard were not injured.

Grandparents meet

The Council on Aging of West Florida will have a meeting at 6 p.m. today for grandparents raising grandchildren. The meeting is free and will be at the Homewood Suites by Hilton, 5049 Corporate Woods Drive, Pensacola. Call 432-1475.

BEER BUDGET BUYS CHAMPAGNE TASTE



LEASE SPACE AVAILABLE

Office, Retail or Warehouse all sizes - short or long term

- Downtown • East Hill
- Tiger Point • North Hill
- Customwood • Gulf Breeze

Moulton Properties, Inc.
850-438-5655 call-591-8300
jim@moultonproperties.com

ETA

pensacola museum of art

art in the park

seville square

pensacola, fl

may 15 & 16, 2010

10:00am-5:00pm

Featuring over 220 artists from across the country!

- food vendors
- children's area
- music

Proceeds will benefit the Pensacola Museum of Art, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.

Free Admission

850-432-6342 or www.artintheparkpensacola.com

ANTIQUE MARKET

AUCTION!!!

MAY 21ST 5 PM

GARTH'S

THE ESTATE OF ART MULLEN

HIS COLLECTION OF ANTIQUE AND DECORATOR FURNITURE, JEWELRY ART ETC. ALSO INCLUDED PRIMITIVE AND MARBLE TOP FURNITURE, SIGNED BASEBALLS, ANCIENT ROMAN POTTERY, LOST OF EUROPEAN PORCELAIN, PLUS MUCH MUCH MORE

GARTH'S 3930 NAVY BLVD

WWW.GARTHSAUCTION.COM

850-456-7192

Veranda of Pensacola

If you are a Wartime Veteran or the Spouse of a Veteran, in need of Assisted Living, you may be entitled to a significant monthly income, ranging from \$1,056 - \$1,949* per month from the Veterans Administration.

Join us as Veterans Financial explains what benefits are available, who qualifies & how to apply.

Thursday, May 20 - 10:00 a.m.

Refreshments will be served

rspv to **850-944-8800**

6982 Pine Forest Road, Pensacola

www.VerandaPensacola.com

*Actual benefits determined by VA based on eligibility

AL# 11196

LOCAL

Gangshot wound leaves local man hospitalized

A Pensacola man was in serious condition Wednesday at Sacred Heart Hospital recovering from a gunshot wound.

The Escambia County Sheriff's Office needs the public's help to identify the shooter who was caught on a Sheriff's Office surveillance camera.

Christopher Jason Formosa, 26, was shot once about 9 p.m. Monday. The gunshot hit the mouth and shoulder.

Escambia County Sheriff's Office spokesman Sgt. Ted Roy said.

The incident occurred near Ervas Boulevard and Chryens Circle, south of Massachusetts Avenue. Formosa and two other men — Lee Young, 23, and Robert Dykes, 27 — were driving on Ervas Boulevard to purchase narcotics, a Sheriff's Office report said.

Dykes was in the front seat of Formosa's gold-colored Kia when Formosa was shot.

The shooter, described only as a black male, can be seen on the surveillance video running next to Formosa's car and shooting into the vehicle.

After he was shot, Formosa drove to a gas station at Beverly Parkway and W Street where paramedics responded.

The video can be seen at prj.com.

Anyone with information about the shooting is asked to call the Escambia County Sheriff's Office at 436-9530.

Goodin prefiles for third-term run

Two-term Republican Santa Rosa County Commissioner Gordon Goodin has prefiled to run for a third term.

Goodin, a Navarre businessman, joins fellow Republicans Jim Melvin, Mark Goodie and Ruth DuPont Esser in the Aug. 24 party primary. The primary winner will face Eita Lawler, who has qualified to run with no party affiliation, in the Nov. 2 general election.

So far, no Democrat or other party candidate has qualified for the race.

Although Goodin has twice stood for election, he has never faced an opponent.

You

You'll your e system WAY cleaners Your by ex technicians pleasing! (Guara spots)

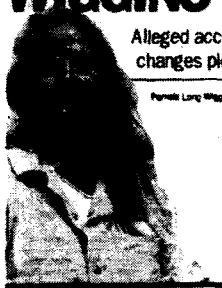
WY

3375

WIGGINS IN COURT | ALL-STARS

Alleged accomplice in Billings slayings changes plea in bigamy case. LOCAL, 1B

Escambia's best take on Santa Rosa and Okaloosa standouts. SPORTS, 1C



Pamela Long Wiggins



PENSACOLA News Journal

TUESDAY, MAY 18, 2010

Outlook for Keys worsens

Worries grow that loop could carry sick to reefs

Jeffrey Collins and Matt Bedenak

ROBERT, La. — With BP finally gaining some control over the amount of oil spewing into the Gulf of Mexico, scientists are increasingly worried that huge plumes of crude already spilled could get caught in a current that would carry the mess all the way to the Florida Keys and beyond, damaging coral reefs and killing wildlife.

BLACK TIDE

- BP gives \$25 million to Fla. for tourism.
- Santa Rosa to push for fair share of funds.
- BP's plan shows lack of readiness for spill.

MORE ON PAGE 6A

called loop current soon if it hasn't already, though they could not say exactly when or how.

See SPILL, 6A



The Deepwater Horizon oil spill is shown in the Gulf of Mexico in this satellite image provided by NASA. Scientists worry that a loop current in the Gulf could carry the spill through the Florida Keys and into the Atlantic Ocean.

U.S. SUPREME COURT

Inmate's sentence affected by ruling

Juvenile offenders must have chance at parole, court says

Kris Veronovsky

Joe Sullivan was only 13 when he robbed an elderly woman's house in West Pensacola. He later returned with a knife to rape her.

Circuit Judge Nick Decker sentenced the boy to life in prison for the 1988 crimes without any chance of recouping to the outside world. He already had a lengthy juvenile record.

On Monday, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled 5-4 that it was unconstitutional for a Florida court to sentence Terrence Graham to serve life in prison without the possibility of parole. The teen was 16 when he committed a slew of robberies.



Sullivan

INSIDE

Not all offenders affected by ruling. SA

See SULLIVAN, 5A

MILITARY

N.Y. says retailer ripped off soldiers

Financing scheme at issue

Joseph Spector
Gannett News Service

ALBANY, N.Y. — New York Attorney General Andrew Cuomo is expected to file a lawsuit today against a national electronics retailer that has allegedly ripped off soldiers at military bases across the country through a costly financing scheme.

In a May 10 letter obtained by Gannett's Albany bureau, Cuomo's staff alerted Defense Secretary Robert Gates and Army Secretary John McHugh of the pending lawsuit against SmartBuy, based in Fayetteville, N.C., and several

its affiliates nationwide. The lawsuit will seek restitution for what Cuomo's office estimates may be tens of thousands of military members who were allegedly duped by SmartBuy and its stores near military bases in at least a half-dozen states, including New York, Texas, California and Georgia.

In March, Cuomo sent a letter to SmartBuy about his intent to sue the company because of a store it set up near Fort Drum in northern New York. Thousands of victims may have been impacted at

See SOLDIERS, 7A



Ruth Smith, a 76-year-old teacher at Pleasant Grove Elementary School, checks the art work of Kai Davis, 10, as student Veronica Thomas looks on.

EDUCATION

Escambia's oldest teacher to retire

Ruth Smith, 76, taught 43 years

Carmen Fraige
oppe@floridapost.com

Ruth Smith, 76, decided when she was 5 years old, growing up on a farm near Sheridan, Ind., that she wanted to be a teacher.

"We didn't have kindergarten," she said. "I had four big brothers who went to school every day, and it would kill me."

But she had aunts and uncles who taught school, and they took turns taking her to their classrooms.

"That's when I knew teaching was what I wanted to do," she said.

See FMDTEL, 7A

Quick Read

In Sports

SPRING FOOTBALL:

Coach Sid Whalley and his Northwest Chiefs have big shoes to fill if they're looking for a repeat of last season. Page 1C

In Local

BEACH PARTY:

The Escambia County Sheriff's Office will host about 40 deputies on the beach Sunday in anticipation of an influx of young visitors from Mobile celebrating high school graduations. Past gatherings have been named by violence. Page 1B

BIGAMY PLEA:

Pamela Long Wiggins, who faces accessory to murder charges in the deaths of Byron and Melanie Billings last summer, pleaded no contest Monday to a charge of bigamy. Page 1B

INSIDE

CHILES RISE: The son of former Gov. Lawton Chiles said Monday he may enter the Democratic race. Lawton "Bud" Chiles II said he is talking with family members and political allies about challenging Gov. Francis S. "Al" Sink for the party's nomination. Page 1B

In Business

SOCIAL SECURITY: A new congressional report says the massive \$3.3 trillion Social Security shortfall could be erased with only modest changes to payroll taxes and benefits. Page 4B

Section	Page
Business	4B
Calendar	5A
Comics	4B
Classified	5B-7B
Local	1B
Opinion	1B
Special	1B
Sports	1C
Travel	1C
Weather	1C

Breaking news on your cellphone Text **FLNEWS** to 44556 (4INFO)

pensacola.com Where Entertainment Starts

And in your e-mail! Sign up for e-newsletters featuring news and photo galleries at pnj.com.

Central Station
Pensacola, FL
www.pensacola.com

OPINIONS

Weight-loss pledge aids food bank

In a society where people are taught to win at all costs, it's good to know that sometimes it pays to lose.

It's called the Pound for Pound Challenge, and the goal is to lose weight for a good cause.

For every pound you manage to lose through the end of June 30, the Pound For Pound Challenge will donate 14 cents to Feeding America — enough to deliver one pound of groceries to a local food bank.

Locally, the Escambia County Sheriff's Office and Pensacola Beach officials are ready to post about 40 deputies on the beach Sunday in anticipation of an influx of young visitors from Mobile.

The annual gathering is billed as a graduation celebration for seniors from Mobile high schools, but some partygoers are in their 20s or older.

Past celebrations have had problems, including a shooting in 1998, snarled traffic and parts of the beach covered with litter. Last year's party ended with fights in the Casino Beach parking lot and deputies announcing that the beach was closed.

Fourteen arrests were made last year for a variety of offenses, including fighting and alcohol violations.

About 10 deputies work on the beach on a typical Sunday afternoon, Chief Deputy Larry Aiken said.

The Sheriff's Office is hoping the extra deputies on hand will prevent any problems, Aiken said.

"Typically, it's a very small group that we have problems with when they have events like that," he said. "If there is an element that does come that wants to cause problems, we are going to be there to ensure that it's minimized."

The gathering is one that some beach residents like Tom Barron, 58, dread.

"They leave trash out there," he said. "They really don't do anything for the economy of the beach. They don't spend any money. They bring all their own stuff out and then they leave all their own garbage there when they are done."

— Chief Deputy Larry Aiken

Beach security beefed up

Visit by Mobile youths has spawned trouble in the past

Thyrus Bland
 thyrus@pcj.com

The Escambia County Sheriff's Office and Pensacola Beach officials are ready to post about 40 deputies on the beach Sunday in anticipation of an influx of young visitors from Mobile.

The annual gathering is billed as a graduation celebration for seniors from Mobile high schools, but some partygoers are in their 20s or older.

Past celebrations have had problems, including a shooting in 1998, snarled traffic and parts of the beach covered with litter. Last year's party ended with fights in the Casino Beach parking lot and deputies announcing that the beach was closed.

Fourteen arrests were made last year for a variety of offenses, including fighting and alcohol violations.

About 10 deputies work on the beach on a typical Sunday afternoon, Chief Deputy Larry Aiken said.

The Sheriff's Office is hoping the extra deputies on hand will prevent any problems, Aiken said.

"Typically, it's a very small group that we have problems with when they have events like that," he said. "If there is an element that does come that wants to cause problems, we are going to be there to ensure that it's minimized."

The gathering is one that some beach residents like Tom Barron, 58, dread.

"They leave trash out there," he said. "They really don't do anything for the economy of the beach. They don't spend any money. They bring all their own stuff out and then they leave all their own garbage there when they are done."

— Chief Deputy Larry Aiken

A good cause

The best thing is that you don't actually have to checking in to register and somebody's checking to see if you really lost the weight you pledged.

The important thing is that you make the pledge, and the food banks will get their donations, whether you lose weight or not.

Are you up to the challenge? What have you got to lose but a few pounds?

Imagine all that you'll gain by taking part in the challenge to lose weight and help the needy.

It's all for better health and a good cause, especially since more than 57,000 people today are living in poverty in Escambia and Santa Rosa counties. Many of them don't know when or from where their next meal will come.

For those of us who would rather run in front of a car or jump in an alligator pit than run or jump to get exercise and lose weight, there are many simple ways to get a workout and cut calories.

Two hours of house-cleaning burns 400 calories; an afternoon of shopping, including walking from store to store and trying on clothes will get rid of 500 calories; a one-hour walk on the beach will burn 510 calories.

Become a hero

By going to PFPChallenge.com for the national challenge or pcj.com locally, you can join a team associated with a local food bank and start pledging now.

Wouldn't you love to be a part of something that helps you live a healthier life and helps ensure that the needy have enough to eat?

Pledge now, or if that doesn't seem like something you want to do, you can easily donate or volunteer at your local food bank.

Join the fight against hunger in your community by challenging yourself to get in shape and lose weight.

This is one time when it pays to be a loser.



Pamela Long Wiggins, who faces accessory to murder charges in Escambia County, enters an Okaloosa County courtroom Monday to enter a plea to the charge of bigamy. Long Wiggins charged her not-guilty plea to a plea of no contest in the bigamy case.

Long Wiggins changes bigamy plea to no contest before trial

Sentencing scheduled June 30 in Shalimar

Tom McLaughlin
 northwest.florida@pcj.com

SHALIMAR — Pamela Long Wiggins, who faces accessory to murder charges in Escambia County, entered an Okaloosa County courtroom Monday to enter a plea to the charge of bigamy. Long Wiggins charged her not-guilty plea to a plea of no contest in the bigamy case.

Long Wiggins, 48, of Gulf Breeze changed her not-guilty plea to a plea of no contest just prior to her scheduled trial in Okaloosa County circuit court.

Asked by Circuit Judge John Brown if she believed the plea to be in her best interest, Long Wiggins answered, "It seems so."

Brown ordered a presentence investigation and scheduled her sentencing for 9 a.m. on June 30.

She faces a maximum sentence of five years in prison and a \$4,000 fine.

Long Wiggins married James Maulden in 2007 in Baldwin County, Ala.

She was accused of marrying Hugh Wiggins on Dec. 31, 2008, when she was separated, but not divorced, from Maulden. Maulden was granted a divorce in November.

Defense attorney Bryce Miller said she entered the plea primarily to move her case to an appellate court. He plans to renew his argument, already rejected by Brown, that bigamy cannot occur under Florida law.

In making that argument, Miller cites Florida law defining marriage as "a legal union between one man and one woman."

"If it were determined that the union was not a 'legal union,' then the defendant did not 'marry' Hugh Wiggins," Miller's argument states. "And there is no criminal liability."

In the Billings case, Long Wiggins is accused of providing a van that was used in the July 9 home invasion and murders in Beach.

Five suspects remain jailed on first-degree murder charges and are scheduled for trial July 19. Two others have pleaded no contest to second-degree murder and are awaiting sentencing.

Long Wiggins is jailed on \$500,000 bond pending trial on the accessory charge. She was arrested on the bigamy charge on July 30, soon after she was arrested in the murder case.

Chiles may run for governor

Son of ex-governor would face Sink

Bill Costerwell
 news@pcj.com

TALLAHASSEE — The son of former Gov. Lawton Chiles said Monday he feels "almost a compulsion" to run for governor and will probably enter the Democratic race by the middle of next week.

Lawton "Bud" Chiles III said he is talking with family members and political allies about challenging Chief Financial Officer Alex Sink for the party's nomination to succeed Gov. Charlie Crist.

Chiles, who lives in Tallahassee, had considered a bid for CFP last September but got involved in statewide advocacy for improved funding of education and child health programs — a program he dubbed "Worst to First." He returned some steps of his late father's famous walk across Florida in the 1970 Senate race.

"I know I'm late to the party, but for a good reason," said Chiles.

"I've been out there working with communities and trying to make a difference in Florida policy for families, children, health care, seniors and jobs."

Katy Jennings, communications director for the Sink campaign, said the CFP remains confident. She has raised about \$6.5 million in the race and, although some little-known Democrats have announced plans to seek the nomination, she has been campaigning as the acknowledged frontrunner in the race.

Chiles offered no criticism of Sink but said he wanted to take on "the system" that runs state government.

"It's not about me or Alex Sink; it's about the system," said Chiles. "It's part of a family that has deep commitments about how the system should run for the people. It's about being a voice for the people."

Chiles, 51, began running for governor in 2006 but was tripped up by the constitutional requirement that governors must live in Florida for seven years.

Chiles had lived in New York until 2003.



Quick Read

Salvation Army thrift store scheduled to open today

The Salvation Army in Pensacola will open a new thrift store in northeast Pensacola at 9:30 a.m. today in a shopping center at the corner of Beach Drive, Highway and Fairfield Drive, in the former Merritt's Paint store.

It will be open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Saturday.

To schedule a pickup for donated items, call the thrift store at 432-1943.

Revenue from the store will be used to support the Salvation Army's social service mission, including shelter for the homeless, emergency assistance with food, clothing, medicine and utilities for needy persons, disaster relief services, substance abuse and other offerings.

Details: Call 432-1943.

Lawmakers to take questions on WSRE-TV May 25

"Legislative Review: Dialogue with the Delegation" will give citizens the opportunity to ask state legislators questions on subjects ranging from the economic stimulus package impact, the state's foreclosure problems, the impact of the national health care legislation on Florida's budget, the economy in general or any other topic.

Submit questions now by e-mailing them to questions@wsre.org or phone them in on the live program on May 25.

All questions must include your name and city of residence.

Participating legislators include: Sen. Don Gmetz, District 4; Rep. Greg Evers, District 1; Rep. Clay Ford, District 3; Rep. Dave Murzyn, District 2.

Sen. Durrell Peadar has not confirmed participation at this time.



Corrections
 To report an error, call 435-8511 or e-mail corrections@pcj.com.

Follow our feeds online
 Log on more and subscribe at pcj.com/pcj. We're on Twitter at www.twitter.com/pcj

Man struck by 2 vehicles in Milton dies from injuries

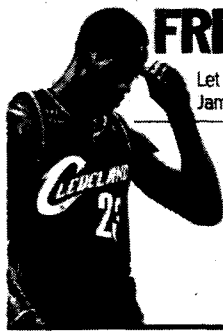
A Santa Rosa County man died early Sunday morning after being struck by two vehicles traveling on U.S. 90, said a Milton Police Department news release.

Kevin J. Shoto was struck about 8:30 p.m. Saturday near the Taco Bell restaurant on the 6200 block of U.S. 90.

Milton police did not provide a description of either vehicle that hit Shoto, and the accident report was not released because of the ongoing investigation into the crash, police said Monday.

The identities of the drivers involved also were not immediately available Monday.

Following the crash, Shoto was taken by helicopter to Sacred Heart Hospital where he later died.



FREE LEBRON | NASCAR DEBUT

Let the sweepstakes begin: NBA's James is a free agent. **SPORTS, 1C**

Johanna Long will take the wheel in NASCAR truck series. **SPORTS, 1C**

PENSACOLA News Journal

THURSDAY, JULY 1, 2010



Is the water safe? You'll have to 'wing it'

Local officials going by their gut when deciding if beaches OK for swimmers

Travis Griggs
travisgriggs.com
Despite detailed water-quality tests and daily oil-spotting flights, local officials said a lack of federal guidance is forcing them to "wing it" when deciding if local beaches are safe for swimmers.
At a press conference at the

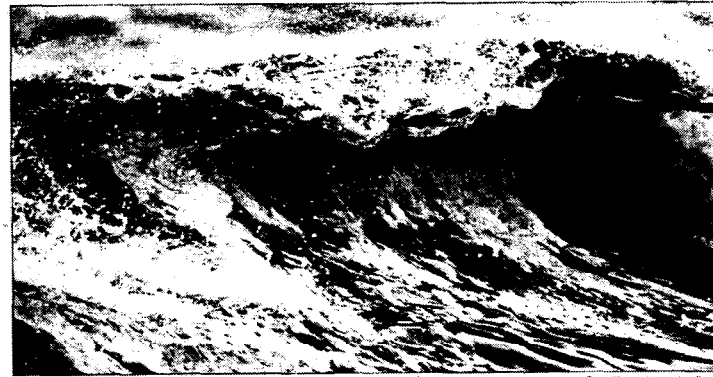
Pensacola Beach Golf Pier on Wednesday, Escambia County and Pensacola Beach officials voiced concern about the lack of information about the health risks of oil washing ashore.
"The thing that frustrates public officials is there is no science. There is no science that you can use to see exactly when it

INSIDE // 5A
A list of area beaches and which ones are under health advisories.
is unsafe," said Keith Wilkins, deputy chief of neighborhood and community services for Escambia County.
Wilkins said the Environmen-

tal Protection Agency, the University of West Florida and the county all are testing the water quality at some local beaches.
"The location and frequency of the EPA's water testing is unclear, Wilkins said, but county and UWF officials are testing water at surf zones at six locations — four on Santa Rosa

Island and two on Perdido Key. Water quality tests are done twice a week and results take two to three days to be returned from the laboratory.
Wilkins said recent tests have come back positive for dissolved oil in the water near the beach.
See **SAFE, 5A**

STORM IN THE GULF Oil rolls in as Alex churns



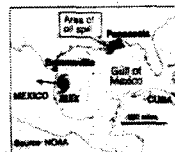
Dave Martin/Associated Press

Oil waves come ashore in Orange Beach, Ala., on Wednesday. Heavy seas from Hurricane Alex helped push more oil from the Deepwater Horizon oil spill disaster toward Florida and Alabama coasts.

Though miles away, hurricane kicks up surf, tar balls on Gulf shores

Kris Wernowski
wernowski.com
High surf and strong winds created by Hurricane Alex may push more tar balls onto area beaches and oil sheen into inland waterways just in time for the July 4 weekend.
"According to the forecasting that we are seeing, there is certainly a potential for further impact," Escambia County Emergency Manager John Doah said. "The question is how much, and I think Mother Nature is the only one that really can answer that."
More than 1,400 oil cleanup workers were working along

INSIDE // 6A
Mexico, South Texas racing for Hurricane Alex.
Pensacola Beach and Perdido Key on Wednesday but their cleanup efforts were hampered by rain and lightning. For safety reasons, crews are not deployed if lightning is in the area.
There is a 90 percent chance of rain today and a 60 percent chance tonight.
Alex made landfall Wednesday evening as a Category 2 storm in northeastern Mexico.
Along parts of the Gulf, red flags



Ron Shelton/Associated Press

for as 60 yards from the water. Oil deposits appeared worse than in past days, and local officials feared the temporary halt to some skimming operations near the coast would only make matters worse ahead of the July 4 holiday weekend.
"I'm real worried about what is going to happen with those boats not running. It can't help," said Tony Kennen, mayor of Orange Beach, Ala.
High surf from the storm pushed tar balls from the BP oil spill along Pensacola Beach and Perdido Key on Wednesday.
See **ALEX, 5A**

Snags in BP claims process for businesses

Oil company struggling to overcome delays

Jamie Page
pagejournal.com
If you've watched television at all in the past month, you have probably seen Darrell Willis, vice president of resources for BP America, at commercial hearings of the Gulf Coast Oil Spill Claims Office. Willis said recent tests have come back positive for dissolved oil in the water near the beach.
See **SAFE, 5A**

OIL SPILL IN THE GULF

MORE INSIDE PAGE 5A
The 31-member task force was created by Florida Gov. Charlie Crist to help businesses deal with oil-related losses. It includes local and state government officials, and other stakeholders in Florida.
So far, BP has paid more than \$18 million in claims to 22,000 Floridians and another \$63 million in grants to the State of Florida, Willis said.
See **CLAIMS, 6A**

Flight Academy gets \$1.25 million boost from St. Joe Co.

Erin Kourkousian
kourkousian.com
The National Flight Academy at Pensacola Naval Air Station received a \$1.25 million donation Wednesday morning during a "unveiling the stars" ceremony at the construction site.
Britt Greene, president and CEO of St. Joe Co., a Florida real estate development company, presented academy officials with the check.
"This academy will be a unique

benefit to the students of this region," Greene said. "Get them hooked early, get them involved, and you build a future not just for them but for the region."
Vice Adm. Gerald Hoewing, president and CEO of the National Aviation Museum Foundation, said \$1 million of St. Joe's dona-

tion will be used to sponsor joint size-1 agency and operations centers in the academy. The other \$250,000 will fund scholarships for students.
"What you're doing here today is investing in the future of the United States of America and investing in the region," Hoewing said to Greene.

The National Flight Academy, which is set to open in 2012, is an educational program of the Naval Aviation Museum Foundation that will offer week-long seminars to students in seventh through 12th grades. Its purpose is to motivate students to learn more about science, technology, engineering and math with a more hands-on, adventurous approach.
See **ACADEMY, 6A**

What you're doing here today is investing in the future of the United States of America and investing in the region.
— Vice Adm. Gerald Hoewing

Quick Read

Sure thing?
ORDER BY THE COURT: Supreme Court nominee Elena Kagan traded up her confirmation hearing Wednesday. Page 7A

In Local
BIGAMY CASE: Pamela Long Wiggins was sentenced Wednesday to two years' probation for her simultaneous marriage to two men. She is the only woman charged in connection with the deaths of Brett and Melissa Gilbert. Page 1B
BREWER SHOOTER CHARGED: A Pensacola man has been charged in connection with the death of a teenager who was shot in a motel room. Robert Pooley is charged with manslaughter and premeditated murder in the death of Brandon David, 19, of Pensacola. Page 1B

In Business
JOBS REPORT: For the first time in six months, the federal unemployment report will likely show a net loss of jobs. Page 9B
In the Nation
DEATH TOLL CLIMBS: Coalition service members killed in Afghanistan topped 100 in June, the highest monthly toll yet and approaching some of the deadliest months in the Iraq War. Page 6A

INSIDE
Business 1B
Calendar 2A
Columns 1A-2C
Comics 6E
Crosswords 7E-8D
Local 1E
Letters 1E
Obituaries 4E
Opinion 1C
Sports 1C
Television 7E

TO SUBSCRIBE
877-424-6628
A. Garnett Place
Copyright 2010
No cents...



JULY 1 2010

Video proof
Arkansas officers
charged in
shooting, 2B

Stings back
Judge orders
retrials, 2B

New law
Mississippi
crackdown on
meth making, 4B

Breaking News
Tom Newberry
435-8596
tnewberry@pnj.com

Chief Content Editor
Shawnee Beckerman
435-8536
sbeckerman@pnj.com

Announcements
K. Tracy Olfert
on local events to
news@pnj.com

OPINIONS
It's hard
to think it
will be OK

I'm stuck in denial. I don't want to see it or believe it. I prefer not even reading or talking about it. But because of what I do for a living, it's impossible for me to avoid it. Nevertheless, I still find myself trying to deny that our beautiful beaches are in peril. For those of us who live near the Gulf of Mexico, this Deepwater Horizon oil disaster is a personal tragedy in some ways comparable to losing a close friend or a loved one. As a result of this seemingly unstoppable oil spill we are slowly losing a way of life, a vital part of what makes Northwest Florida beaches so attractive, appealing and enticing to so many people near and far.

Stages of grief
On vacation last week, I went to Pensacola Beach. I waded in the waters on the sound side near the pier at Porfino Boardwalk. The water was sandy brown as usual and clear of any oil as I expected. I was reluctant — fearful of what I would see and feel — to go take a closer look at what remained of the once-pristine white sands on the Gulf. But eventually I made my way to the shoreline near Fort Pickens and let my feet crunch in the soft, sugary sands as waves from the emerald waters crashed ashore. The workers must have performed a miracle that day. I didn't spot one tar ball. But it was still distressing to see people draped in white protective suits combing the beaches, sopping up oil-stained sand and dumping it into plastic bags. I wanted to pretend that what I saw was not really happening. I didn't want to believe what my eyes had seen. In her book, "On Death and Dying," Elisabeth Kubler-Ross outlined the five stages of grief: denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance. I'm still mired in the first stage. It's still too hard to accept the reality of what I've seen, heard and felt. At some point in all our lives, each of us faces the loss of someone or something dear to our hearts. The grief that follows such a loss can seem unbearable, but grief, I've learned, is actually a healing process. But before I can start healing, Kubler-Ross' book says I must go through the five stages. Sometimes we get stuck in one of the first four stages. It can be a painful process until we are able to move to the fifth and final stage — acceptance. **We will survive** Certainly, this too shall pass, but those are empty words right now that hold little meaning in the midst of this catastrophic ecological event. To be sure, things always could be much worse. With life comes hope and recovery. Pensacola and other places along the Gulf are weakened, frazzled, afraid and angry. But we are a resilient bunch and will bounce back stronger than before the oil spill left its stinking, sticky mark on our waters and along our shores. That I surely cannot deny.



Regina T. Dogan
regdogan.com
435-8534

Bigamist put on probation

Woman still faces trial in Billings murder case

Kria Wernowsky
kwernowsky@pnj.com
A judge on Wednesday sentenced Pamela Long Wiggins to two years' probation for her simultaneous marriage to two men. Circuit Judge John Brown's sentence for Long Wiggins — the only woman charged with a crime in the 2009 double murder of Byrd and Melanie Billings — includes that she be evaluated and treated for substance



Pamela Long Wiggins

abuse. Long Wiggins pleaded no contest May 17 to a bigamy charge that accused her of marrying Hugh Wiggins on Dec. 31, 2009, when she was separated, but not divorced, from James Maulden. Maulden was granted a divorce in November. Long Wiggins will not begin

servicing her probation until after the outcome of the case offered to the Billings' murder. Long Wiggins is accused of providing a van that was used in the July 9 home invasion and murder in Decatur. Five suspects remain jailed on first-degree murder charges in that crime. Two others have pleaded no contest to second-degree murder and are awaiting sentencing. Long Wiggins is jailed on

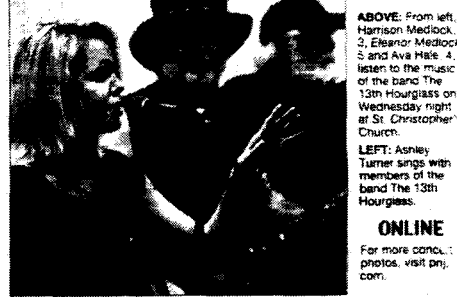
\$500,000 bond pending trial on the accessory charge. She was arrested on the bigamy charge on July 30, soon after she was arrested in the murder case. She faces up to 20 years in state prison if convicted of the charge of accessory after the fact to first-degree murder.

Long Wiggins is scheduled for trial July 15 in that case, but Assistant State Attorney John Mochan said he expects the trial to be delayed.

SUMMER SERENADE



Photos by Bruce Geaney/bgeaney@pnj.com



ABOVE: From left, Harrison Medlock, 3, Eleanor Medlock, 3, and Ava Hite, 4, listen to the music of the band The 13th Hourglass on Wednesday night at St. Christopher's Church. LEFT: Ashley Turner sings with members of the band The 13th Hourglass.

ONLINE
For more content, photos, visit pnj.com.

Woman arrested in robbery

Sean Dugan
sdugan@pnj.com
A 19-year-old woman charged with robbing an East Olive Road convenience store at gunpoint could be connected to either holdups in Escambia County. Cherrina Cristie Campbell of the 1000 block of Echo Circle was arrested about 10:30 p.m. Tuesday on Montclair Road, about six miles from her residence. She was charged with robbery with a firearm and wearing a mask during the holdup at the TQ Mini Mart. The store is less than a quarter mile from her home. Escambia County sheriff's



Cherrina Cristie Campbell

investigators say Campbell entered the convenience store about 11:20 p.m. Monday and pointed a gun at the clerk and demanded money. She was wearing a black ski mask. She then ran from the store, but removed her mask and turned back toward the business, allowing the clerk to see her face. A Sheriff's Office dog tracked her to a trailer on Echo Drive, but she was not there. However, investigators found a photo matching the description of the robber.

The photo was shown to the clerk, who identified Campbell as the robbery suspect. She admitted to the crime when interviewed Wednesday by investigators. Investigators did not provide details on how they tracked down Campbell. While investigators believe Campbell may be responsible for other robberies in Escambia County, spokesman Sgt. Ted Roy refused to discuss how she might be connected to those crimes, citing the ongoing investigation. Campbell is being held without bond at the Escambia County Jail. Her next court date is scheduled for July 22, jail officials said.

Suspect in motel shooting charged

Thyrie Blaud
tblaud@pnj.com

A Pensacola man has been charged in connection with the death of a teenager who was shot in a motel room.



Robert Pooley

Robert Pooley, 26, of the 100 block of Rega Drive is charged with manslaughter and third-degree murder with a weapon in the death of Shannon Elsaid, 19, of Pensacola. He also is charged with possession of a firearm by a convicted felon. Elsaid was shot on the late May 31 at the Motel 6 at 5829 Pensacola Blvd. She died June 7 at Sacred Heart Hospital.



Shannon Elsaid

Pooley is being held without bond at Escambia County Jail on the manslaughter and third-degree murder charges. He is being held on \$750,000 bond on the firearm charge. Pooley is scheduled to be arraigned at 9 a.m. today before Judge Joel Bales at the M.C. Blanchard Judicial Building in Pensacola. Pooley's bond also will be addressed during the arraignment.

A witness to the shooting said Pooley dropped a gun, the gun went off, and the gunfire hit Elsaid according to Escambia County Sheriff's Office reports. Pooley, who was dating Elsaid, called 911 after Elsaid was shot. He accused Wali Ross, 27, of the 3700 block of Tennessee Drive of the shooting, according to Sheriff's Office reports. Pooley said Ross brought two guns to the hotel room. He accused Ross of attempting to pat Elsaid on the behind with one of the guns, but the gun slipped out of his hand, hit Elsaid and discharged, according to Sheriff's Office reports. Ross is not charged in Elsaid's death. He was charged with being a convicted felon in possession of a gun in connection to the shooting. Ross is free on \$10,000 bond. The investigation into Elsaid's death is ongoing, Assistant State Attorney John Mochan said.

Quick Read

Voters can now check registration status online

Beginning today, Escambia County voters can verify their registration status and track their absentee ballot online. With the "Am I Registered" function, voters can check to see if they are registered in Escambia County, their address of record, party affiliation, polling place information, voting districts and more. Once voters verify their registration, they can check their absentee status — date requested, date mailed and date received by the elections office. Voters are encouraged to check their registration status before the Aug. 24 primary election. Any new registrations or party changes must be made on or before July 26. Visit EscambiaVotes.com to use the service.

Man sought in shooting after drug deal goes bad

The Escambia County Sheriff's Office continues to search for the person who shot a 55-year-old man in the foot during a robbery of West Navy Boulevard. The shooting occurred about 7:50 p.m. Monday after Timothy Phillips walked from his home to a park at about a quarter-mile away at Ravend and Harris streets to buy drugs. Phillips then got into a red Nissan sport utility vehicle with Myron Edwards, 21, and two other men. Escambia Sheriff's Office spokesman Sgt. Ted Roy said. One of those men, whom investigators

have not identified, pulled a black handgun, demanded money and shot Phillips in the leg. Phillips, who lives on Lytle Drive, was shot in the left foot. He was treated at Bayview Hospital and released. Edwards was arrested Monday night and remains at Escambia County Jail on \$75,000 bond. He faces charges of robbery with a firearm or deadly weapon and is scheduled to appear in court on July 22. Anyone with information about the shooting is asked to call the Escambia County Sheriff's Office at 436-9630.

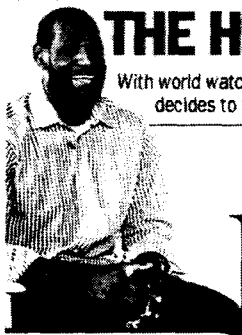
Crist appoints two to Bay Bridge Authority

Gov. Charlie Crist announced two appointments to the Santa Rosa Bay Bridge Authority — which governs the Garrison Point Bridge — on Wednesday. Bill Hae Bruce, 65, of Navarre, owner of Century 21 Island View Realty, out-redding Pamela Langham. Nathan O. Botte, 67, of Milton, certified public accountant with Saltmarsh, Cleveland and Gault, succeeding Elaine Willis. Both of their terms began on Wednesday and run through Jan. 3, 2014.

Corrections
The 2009 Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test scores for East Milton and Chumuckla elementary schools were incorrect on Page 6A of Wednesday's News Journal. The correct scores can be found online at pnj.com.

LOTTERY
Cash \$ 250
Play 6: 05-13 04-24
Fantasy 5: 21-24-27-33-34
Lotto: 5-9-12-17-31-46 x4
Powerball: 6-38-43-47-48 Pk: 27 x5

JULY 1 2010



THE HEAT IS ON HECKUVA ROUND

With world watching his TV special, LeBron decides to play for Miami. **SPORTS, 1C**

Paul Goydos amazes golf fans by hitting a 59 at John Deere. **SPORTS, 1C**

PENSACOLA News Journal

FRIDAY, JULY 9, 2010

Pelicans Baseball
Big Beach Towel Giveaway!

GAME TONIGHT
@ 6:45

Get 5 Tickets for \$30, 850-696-0263
— PensacolaPelicans.com —

Crist plans session on drilling

Governor seeks referendum on offshore oil amendment

Jim Ash
West Journal staff bureau

TALLAHASSEE — Setting up a dramatic showdown with Republican lawmakers, Gov. Charlie Crist said Thursday he will call a special session July 20-23 to put

a constitutional ban on offshore drilling on the November ballot. Crist noted the clock is ticking toward an Aug. 4 deadline to get the ballots printed in time for the general election. "I feel a compelling duty to protect Florida," Crist said. "I think the rightness of this is clear." Crist indicated he has some

support from moderate Republican leaders in the Senate. But by calling the session without an agreement from House Speaker Larry Cristul, R-Deerfield Beach, Crist is signaling opponents will face a public pressure now that will from the April 20 Deepwater Horizon blowout in the Gulf of Mexico is fading Panhandle beaches.

Crist said Crist was not returning his phone calls. If the House doesn't go along, Crist has little to lose. He is stepping down in six months to seek an open seat in the U.S. Senate. He abandoned the Republican Party in April when polls showed he would lose both in a primary fight with Marco Rubio, a former Republican House speaker from Miami.

OIL SPILL CLEANING UP THE GULF

• **ANOTHER CHANCE:** Gulf's duty; see further to be mitigated.
• **COUNTY HELP:** BP charges plan to pay nearly \$1 billion costs.

INSIDE • PAGES 4A, 8A



5 things to know: Blue Angels

Your guide to surviving this weekend's air show

Kimberly Blair
Staff Writer

By 8 a.m. Thursday, Dani and George Holmes and seven friends and family members were relaxing under a beach tent on Casimo Beach, sipping on cool drinks while they waited for the Blue Angels practice show at 2 p.m. They were among several dozen early arrivals for the practice that prepares the Pensacola-based Navy's flight demonstration team for shows today and Saturday.

Arrive early and plan to stay late as the Holmes' family mania when it comes to beating the traffic and crowds during the Blues beach shows. "Some people come in the middle of the night and set up," said George Holmes, 55, of Pensacola. He and his wife plan to arrive at 6 a.m. Saturday to set up an even larger Blues-watching camp for 15.

And Ardylbe Haas of Gulf Breeze plans to hang out with family and friends at Paradise Bar & Grill after the show while they wait for the traffic to thin.

The Holmeses, Haas and beach officials offered the following tips to help you enjoy the air show.

See BLUES, 7A
Photos by Tony Giberson/tgiberson@com

Midway man drowns while trying to aid swimmers

Kris Wernowaky
Staff Writer

Randall Toney loved his four children. He loved his two grandchildren. He loved the beach.

The 46-year-old Midway man drowned Thursday afternoon while trying to pull two teenagers in distress from the Gulf of Mexico off Navarre Beach, a Santa Rosa County Sheriff's Office spokesman said.

"When I pulled up and got out of the car, my daughter said her dad was dead," his wife, Pamela Toney, said Thursday night. "They didn't know at the time what even happened."

Toney was pronounced dead about 5:15 p.m. on the beach near parking lot seven along Gulf Boulevard, spokesman Sgt. Scott Haines said.

Toney and two men ran into the water in an attempt to aid two teenagers who were struggling to swim.

Toney, who worked in the deli at a Navarre Wal-Mart, got about halfway out to the teenagers and disappeared. He wasn't found for another 10 minutes, Haines said.

Pamela Toney, his wife of 26 years, said her husband went to the beach with two of their grown children.

His children walked to a nearby restaurant to eat, and Toney stayed at the beach. By the time they returned, their father was gone.

Their children range in age from 17 to 25. The 19-year-old daughter who went to the beach with Toney is eight months pregnant.

"She's a mess. My daughter blamed herself for leaving her dad," Pamela Toney said. "She thought he got out there in the ocean with red flags. We found out about an hour ago that he went out there to get two teenagers out."

Their mother said a deputy brought her husband's belongings back to their home about 9 p.m. Thursday.

See DROWNING, 8A

MORE BLUES IN WEEKENDER



Byrd and Melanie Billings were found dead in their beautiful home a year ago, victims of a home invasion.

NEWS JOURNAL photo

BILLINGS SLAYINGS: ONE YEAR LATER

For family, horror of murders lives on

Kris Wernowaky
Staff Writer

They stand as perhaps the most unusual and horrific murders in the Pensacola area's history.

A year ago this evening, Byrd and Melanie Billings, who were adoptive parents to nine special-needs children, were gunned down in their beautiful home by men dressed in what the sheriff described as "tunjs gear."

Within five days, six men and a 16-year-old boy were arrested on charges of first-degree murder and home invasion. A day later, a woman was charged as an accessory.

For Ashley Markham, the Billingses' 27-year-old daughter, the horror lives on.

With the tragedy, she and her husband, Blue, moved to their parents' home to take on the daunting task of caring for the children.

The children are between the ages of 12 and 4. They suffer from a variety of disabilities, including autism and cerebral palsy.

"She's surviving," said one of her attorneys, Robert Beasley of Pensacola. "She has taken over the mission of her

parents. It's not easy. It's day by day. But she has not broken down."

The children's emotional troubles abound as they deal collectively with their parents' deaths. They have issues in school. They have medical and other problems due to their various disabilities. The calendar of doctors' appointments is full.

Markham has largely stayed out of the public spotlight since an appearance on the Oprah Winfrey show last October.

"Her unwillingness to talk publicly is because each time she talks about

See SLAYINGS, 8A

Quick Read

<p>In Local</p> <p>BOARD OF CONTENTION: Some neighbors of Pensacola Christian College are bucking a plan by the county to turn over a stretch of Rowan Lane to the college. Page 1B</p> <p>FIRE AND WATER: About 150 teenagers were baptized in Santa Rosa Sound on Thursday while attending the 14th annual Branded by Fire youth conference at Brownsville Assembly of God. Page 1B</p>	<p>In Business</p> <p>STORE CUTS: Stores deepened discounts more than planned in June to draw recession-weary shoppers to buy summer merchandise. Page 8B</p> <p>In Sports</p> <p>ALL-STAR PELS: Three Pensacola Pelicans earned spots on the American Association's South Division all-star team for their performance during the first half of the season. Page 1C</p>	<p>In the Nation</p> <p>SPY SWAP: Ten Russian spies pleaded guilty Thursday and were sent back to Moscow as part of a spy swap reminiscent of the Cold War. Page 4A</p> <p>NURSE HIRING GLOWS: Even as a national nursing shortage looms, many newly graduated registered nurses can't find jobs because the recession has delayed retirement of experienced nurses. Page 4A</p>	<p>INSIDE</p> <p>Business — 8B Calendar — 14C Classics — 4C Columns — 1C, 7C Local — 1B Letters — 7B News — 1A, 2A, 3A Opinion — 8B Sports — 1C Travel — 7C</p> <p>TO SUBSCRIBE: (817) 424-0221</p> <p>A Gannett Paper Copyright © 2010 75 cents a copy</p>
--	--	---	--

BILLINGS SLAYINGS: ONE YEAR LATER

The defendants

Leonard Patrick Gonzalez Jr.

Age: 36
Job: Karate instructor, former used car salesman



Charges: Two counts of first-degree murder and one count of home invasion
Role in murders: Investigators and his co-defendants say that he had the lead role in the planning and execution of the robbery.

Leonard Patrick Gonzalez Sr.

Age: 57
Job: Laborer



Charges: Two counts of first-degree murder and one count of home invasion
Role in murders: Gonzalez Jr. recruited his father to drive a van during the robbery.

Wayne Colbron

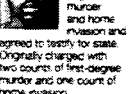
Age: 42
Job: Laborer, plumber



Charges: Two counts of first-degree murder and one count of home invasion
Role in murders: Colbron was recruited to assist in the robbery.

Frederick Thornton

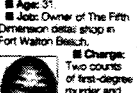
Age: 20
Charges: Pleaded no contest to second-degree murder and home invasion



Role in murders: Thornton, a Fort Walton Beach resident, told investigators that Gonzalez Jr. recruited him for a robbery.

Gary Sumner

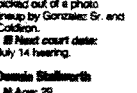
Age: 31
Job: Owner of The Fifth Dimension retail shop in Fort Walton Beach



Charges: Two counts of first-degree murder and one count of home invasion
Role in murders: Sumner knew Gonzalez Jr. and was asked by Gonzalez Jr. to help him find people to pull off a robbery.

Donnie Stallworth

Age: 28
Job: Former staff sergeant in the U.S. Air Force at Hurlburt Field



Charges: Two counts of first-degree murder and one count of home invasion
Role in murders: Stallworth participated in practice runs for the crime.

one count of home invasion he faces the death penalty

Role in murders: Stallworth entered the house armed. He later threatened the two younger suspects, saying Gonzalez Jr. shot some people and they told anyone their families might be in danger.

Charges: He entered a plea to second-degree murder in exchange for testifying for the state.

Role in murders: Thornton got involved because he lived across the street from the city Detention in Fort Walton Beach, where Gonzalez Jr. was recruiting participants.

Charges: He entered a plea to second-degree murder in exchange for testifying for the state.

Role in murders: Thornton got involved because he lived across the street from the city Detention in Fort Walton Beach, where Gonzalez Jr. was recruiting participants.

Charges: He entered a plea to second-degree murder in exchange for testifying for the state.

Role in murders: Thornton got involved because he lived across the street from the city Detention in Fort Walton Beach, where Gonzalez Jr. was recruiting participants.

Charges: He entered a plea to second-degree murder in exchange for testifying for the state.

Role in murders: Thornton got involved because he lived across the street from the city Detention in Fort Walton Beach, where Gonzalez Jr. was recruiting participants.

Charges: He entered a plea to second-degree murder in exchange for testifying for the state.

Role in murders: Thornton got involved because he lived across the street from the city Detention in Fort Walton Beach, where Gonzalez Jr. was recruiting participants.

Charges: He entered a plea to second-degree murder in exchange for testifying for the state.

Role in murders: Thornton got involved because he lived across the street from the city Detention in Fort Walton Beach, where Gonzalez Jr. was recruiting participants.

Charges: He entered a plea to second-degree murder in exchange for testifying for the state.

Role in murders: Thornton got involved because he lived across the street from the city Detention in Fort Walton Beach, where Gonzalez Jr. was recruiting participants.

Charges: He entered a plea to second-degree murder in exchange for testifying for the state.

Role in murders: Thornton got involved because he lived across the street from the city Detention in Fort Walton Beach, where Gonzalez Jr. was recruiting participants.

Charges: He entered a plea to second-degree murder in exchange for testifying for the state.

Role in murders: Thornton got involved because he lived across the street from the city Detention in Fort Walton Beach, where Gonzalez Jr. was recruiting participants.

Charges: He entered a plea to second-degree murder in exchange for testifying for the state.

Role in murders: Thornton got involved because he lived across the street from the city Detention in Fort Walton Beach, where Gonzalez Jr. was recruiting participants.

Charges: He entered a plea to second-degree murder in exchange for testifying for the state.

Role in murders: Thornton got involved because he lived across the street from the city Detention in Fort Walton Beach, where Gonzalez Jr. was recruiting participants.



ABOVE LEFT: A van involved in the murders is loaded onto a tow truck after it was found behind a shed two days after the slayings.

ABOVE RIGHT: Postcreators carry caskets holding Byrd and Melanie Billings during their burial at Pensacola Memorial Gardens.

Slayings

FROM 1A

It is so upsetting to bring all those memories back, Beasley said. She can't stop to talk. It distracts her from what's necessary to do. She has to focus on the work of the day.

For Markham, Thursday just more than 24 hours before the anniversary of the shootings, she gave a deposition to defense lawyers. She responded to one question after another from the lawyers, all attempting to shift the blame to another defendant or suggesting the real blame belonged with one or more people not arrested.

To acknowledge the one-year mark, Markham placed a memorial on the News Journal obituary page today, recalling the love she and her parents have for their parents and thanking family and friends.

"Thank you for all the support this year from the community," she wrote. "We are blessed to have such gracious family and friends."

Media attention The international media attention after the murders was immediate, stoked by frequent televised news conferences by Escambia Sheriff David Morgan.

Morgan pointed out that the Mexican media could be involved, and more arrests would be coming down the road.

His speculation, it turned out, was based on statements by the man quickly tabbed by officials as the ringleader and gunman, Leonard Patrick Gonzalez Jr.

A year later, what appeared to be a calculated evasion appears to be a bungled attempt to steal a purported payday of cash from Billings, a used car dealer and auto financier.

The evidence collected so far suggests that Gonzalez Jr. recruited his father and a band of small-time criminals and people in dire financial straits to steal a wife that he was convinced contained some \$13 million in cash.

The co-defendants' statements indicate they didn't have an inkling Gonzalez Jr. would gun down Billings and his wife.

Yet, within a second or two of entering the house, Gonzalez Jr. screamed "You're going to die," according to video surveillance footage from a system used to monitor the children.

He shot Byrd Billings in the leg in front of a



Byrd and Melanie Billings were killed in their home in Beach on July 9, 2009.

child, then took him into the master bedroom and executed him, investigators believe. He then shot Melanie Billings.

Rumors abound A year after the sensational crime and subsequent news conferences, the possibility of Mexican mafia involvement seems remote. Other rumors about a disgruntled fellow car dealer ordering the murders haven't panned out either.

"Our office has focused on the defendants who have been arrested and developing the case to try these defendants," State Attorney Bill Eddins said. "You are always evaluating evidence. I cannot rule out the possibility of additional arrests."

Gonzalez Jr.'s trial is scheduled to begin either Oct. 25 or Nov. 2. The state will seek the death penalty.

He is the primary defendant in my opinion, Eddins said. In the past year, two of Gonzalez Jr.'s accomplices — Frederick Thornton and the juvenile, Rakem Florence — have pleaded no contest to reduced charges of second-degree murder and agreed to testify in trials of the six others.

With his plea to the lesser charge, Thornton avoids the possibility of the death penalty and faces a maximum sentence of life in prison. Since he was 16 at the time of the crime, Florence was never eligible for the death penalty, he, too, faces a maximum of life in prison.

Separate trial Gonzalez's trial is to be followed by individual trials for the four others charged with first-degree murder and the woman charged as an accessory, meaning the weeks-long trials could stretch well into 2011.

Several of them have made statements, Eddins said. In those cases, there's some U.S. Supreme Court case law that prevents us

from trying them together." In addition to seeking the death penalty for Gonzalez Jr., the state also will ask for death for two others — Wayne Colbron and Donnie Stallworth, both of whom entered the house. Life in prison will be sought for Leonard Patrick Gonzalez Sr. and Gary Sumner, accused of serving as lookouts outside the house.

Pamela Long Wiggins, charged as an accessory, faces up to 30 years in prison.

Circuit Judge Nick Geesler, who has handled numerous high-profile murder cases, is to preside over all the cases.

Public image Gonzalez Jr. is a former used-car salesman and karate instructor with a hot temper and a short fuse, interviews with family, neighbors and his co-defendants over the past year have revealed.

That's in sharp contrast to the public image he created for himself. Weeks before his arrest in the murders, he was the Berline Settons Club's Servo to Mankund Award for his work in teaching self-defense to children through an organization he ran with his wife, Tabatha, called Project FIGHT-BACK.

As his karate business faltered and he struggled to raise his and his wife's

child, he began to plan something big. Gonzalez Jr. told friends and potential accomplices stories of a great fortune hidden in the Billings large home — as much as \$15 million, he told one member of his potential crew.

He told others the house held a secret stash of cocaine.

And in a last-ditch bid to recruit his father as a getaway driver, he said Byrd Billings garnered a harem of children whom he routinely sexually abused.

None of that was true, according to police and court records.

The shooting left Gonzalez Jr.'s accomplices rattled, according to their statements.

They quickly earned from the home a sale. But it contained nothing of value, except children's prescription drugs, costume jewelry and some papers.

A second sale left behind in a closet on the second floor contained more than \$180,000 in cash.

Next to the safe: The sophisticated home surveillance system that captured almost the entire grim scenario.

It's video from that system that led to the first suspect's arrest, starting the dominoes falling. And it's that video the defendants will have to dispute when they go to court.

Blues

FROM 1A

SUPPLIES

1. Pack plenty of water and food in ice chests. Take plenty of snacks, sunscreen and hats or vests. A beach umbrella or tent is a must with the temperatures expected to be in the mid-90s and heat indexes soaring to 100 to 105, according to the National Weather Service in Mobile. Don't forget to wear your Blue Angels, Navy or patrol hat, but kites and balloons are prohibited. No glass allowed on the beach.

GETTING THERE

No one knows what to expect this year, in terms of crowds, thanks to the oil spill. Traditionally, the shows attract as many as 150,000 people on Saturday and Sunday. That creates a traffic jam into Gulf Breeze. Fuel up your car before going to the beach.

ST CLEAN LOOK FOR SAVI OFF ALREADY REE

LADIES' SHOES Look at your Total Sav

LADIES' SANDALS Reg. \$19.99 to \$8 Yellow Ticket: \$8

EXAMPLE: Regular \$29.99. WITH COUPON SAVE

40% OFF ENT LEAT

SAVE ON OUR ENTIRE STOCK. THESE WITH THIS 4-

20

ENTIRE STOCK HATS, HOSIERY, BIRTH SALE & REGI THESE WITH THIS 4-

Barcode and numbers

Pensacol Spanish Friday & Sa

Meet an Academy Representative Wednesday, July 14 at Courtyard by Marriott 451 Creighton Rd. Pensacola LYMAN WARD MILITARY ACADEMY GRADES 6-12 SUPERVISED STUDY SPORTS / BAND JROTC SACS ACCREDITED For more info Call 1-800-798-9151 or visit www.lwma.org

LIBERTY CHURCH Southern Bible School

BIG SHOES TO FILL

Fisher opens season in shadow of a legend. 1B

TRASH TREASURE

Rubber like gold for local jeweler. Tucci. 1B



PENSACOLA News Journal

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 4, 2010



500 jobs a new dawn for Century

Lumber company would give struggling town 'double shot in the arm'

Century has been helping Jim Craft, the lead managing partner for Century Lumber and Land, put the deal together for seven years. However, money had always been the hold-up in the past, Craft said. "But I think they have their ducks in a row, and the money is out there for them this time," McCall said. "Right now, I am

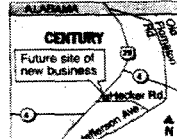
at a Century Chamber meeting Thursday. "This has been a long, ongoing thing, and it's going to be big," Century Mayor Freddie W. McCall Sr. said. "It's going to be a double shot in the arm for us in Century." McCall, a Century Chamber board member, and Chamber



McCall

President Benny Barnes have been helping Jim Craft, the lead managing partner for Century Lumber and Land, put the deal together for seven years. However, money had always been the hold-up in the past, Craft said. "But I think they have their ducks in a row, and the money is out there for them this time," McCall said. "Right now, I am

at a Century Chamber meeting Thursday. "This has been a long, ongoing thing, and it's going to be big," Century Mayor Freddie W. McCall Sr. said. "It's going to be a double shot in the arm for us in Century." McCall, a Century Chamber board member, and Chamber



See CENTURY, 5A

Fed rules limit dig for oil on beach

Cleanup can't go deeper than 6 inches in sand

Kimberly Blair
kblair@wpri.com

BP is poised to begin deep cleaning of sandy beaches as it shifts from oil spill response to restoration and recovery, a BP spokesman said Friday. Ray Meick, working at United Command in Mobile, told the News Journal that process is in the works, but he does not know exactly when BP will shift into that phase, which is being called Phase III.

And digging deeper than 6 inches to clean BP's oil out of the sand on Escambia County beaches won't happen until BP gets a federal waiver from the Department of Interior, Meick said.

"It's an archaeological issue," Meick said. The cleanup might disturb cultural sites protected by the national historic preservation act, he said.

This finally answered some of the questions Santa Rosa Island Authority Executive Director W.A. "Buck" Lee had been trying to find out for weeks.

"I guess they think we'll find a ship on the beach," Lee said. "They won't find a ship, but if they dig deep enough they may find a beer can." Lee is happy to finally discover why oil spill response workers have only been allowed to clean the first half foot of sand.

See BEACH, 5A

I guess they think we'll find a ship on the beach. They won't find a ship, but if they dig deep enough they may find a beer can.

See BEACH, 5A

PHS KICKS IT OFF WITH A WIN



PHS KICKS IT OFF WITH A WIN

Pensacola High fans cheer for the Tigers on Friday night as the defending Class 3A state champions opened the season with a 24-7 win over Pine Forest High on the Eagles' home turf.

FRIDAY'S SCORES

PENSACOLA HIGH	24	ANITE (I.A.)	13
PINE FOREST	7	PACE	12
CATHOLIC HIGH	34	MILTON	34
CHOCTAW	16	GULF BREEZE	6
WALTON	34	NAVARRA	14
WEST FLORIDA	11	FORT WALTON BEACH	0
ESCAMBA	27	NORTHVIEW	24
P.C. RUTHERFORD	14	GRACEVILLE	6

SPORTS // 1D, 4-5D: FULL COVERAGE OF AREA GAMES

Charges mount in Billings murders

Hugh Wiggins, wife, friend indicted for trying to ditch guns

Kris Wernowsky
kwernows@wpri.com

Hugh Wiggins, Pamela Long Wiggins and an acquaintance of theirs were indicted Friday in Mississippi on charges that they tried to ditch guns used in last summer's robbery and murder of Byrd and Melanie Billings.

A grand jury in Pascagoula handed up necessary-after-the-fact charges against the couple and Eddie Denson of Moss Point, Miss. The charge carries a potential five-year prison sentence.

Hugh Wiggins, 49, and Denson, 46, turned themselves in to authorities in Pascagoula. Wiggins is expected to make his first court appearance in Pascagoula on Tuesday. Denson was released on his own recognizance.

Pamela Long Wiggins, 48, already arrested last year in Escambia County on a charge of accessories to first-degree murder, has been in Escambia County Jail since then.

See BILLINGS, 5A

Oil rig owner opposed safety changes

Year before blast, company fought rules calling for steps to prevent human error

Frederic J. Prosser
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The company whose Gulf of Mexico oil platform erupted in flames this week cited the industry's "excellent safety record" when it opposed a proposed federal rule last year that would require offshore oil and gas operators to have safety systems aimed at reducing workers' mistakes.

The government still hasn't put the safety rule in place despite Interior Secretary Ken Salazar's recommendation months ago that it be adopted. Marathon Energy Inc. and others in the industry — including BP — opposed it when it was proposed last year. The rule would require operators to develop safety and environmental management systems that

federal regulators said could have prevented at least some of the 33 major accidents they studied. A former senior U.S. regulator — Elizabeth Barnbaum, who lost her job after the BP oil spill — previously told Congress that the safety rule would eliminate two-thirds of all offshore accidents. It was not immediately clear whether these safety systems could have prevented the fire in the Gulf, which is still under investigation.

See RIG, 8A



Boats spray water on the oil and gas platform that exploded in the Gulf of Mexico on Thursday.

Quick Read

In Sports
STILL IN IT: With no more chances to lose, the Pensacola Pelicans won their first game of the playoff series against Shreveport on Friday. Page 2D

In Local
VIRTUAL MEDICINE: A group including the Andrews Institute, Baptist Health Care and a Massachusetts Institute of Technology professor is developing an interactive website that will provide access to Andrews' expertise in injury prevention, education and surgical procedures. Page 1C

In Business
JOBLESS WAGES: Employers are hiring more workers, but the unemployment rate is rising because not enough jobs are being created to absorb the growing jobless rolls. Page 1B

In the Nation
EARL, HAD TO DIE: The remnants of Hurricane Earl headed for southeastern New England on Friday night, but the storm was losing steam. Page 4A

INSIDE
Business 10C
Classified 1-12E
Obituary 5E, 12E
Life 1-12E
Local 1-12E
Lobby 1C
Opinion 4C
Calendar 4A
Sports 1-12D
Television 5E
Weather 5C

TO SUBSCRIBE: (877) 424-0028

A Gannett Paper
Copyright 2010
75 cents a copy



LOCAL

Century Billings

FROM IA

optimistic, but I don't want to get excited. I feel like in two weeks, when they make the announcement, I can get excited then."

Craft says it will happen. "I am 99.9 percent sure that this is a sure thing," Craft said. "We plan to have the ribbon cutting in a few weeks."

The three companies will offer related services, including treating railroad cross ties with a biodegradable and environmentally safe chemical, building and selling lumber kilns, treating domestic-produced lumber for the building industry using a dry kiln, growing and processing Paulownia trees for wood products and home fuel, railroad maintenance, and freight railcar repair work.

100 jobs just the start

Within 100 days of getting a final agreement, the companies have committed to creating close to 100 jobs, Craft said.

The railcar repair and railroad track construction and maintenance portion — in which Railmark will serve rail areas in Florida, Alabama, Mississippi and Georgia — would begin by putting 20 people to work.

Then Century Lumber and Land's kiln treating and sales would create 75 jobs as proposed, Craft said. The biomass portion would start in eight to 10 months.

When the operation goes full-scale, it is anticipated to create an estimated 300 to 500 jobs within the next three to four years, Craft said.

The jobs will start on the low end at \$18.50 to \$19 per hour, and run up to salaried jobs ranging from \$65,000 to \$120,000 a year, Craft said. The jobs will include a retirement plan, 401(k) and paid vacations.

"We want good people, and the better you treat a person, the more you are going to get out of them, and the longer they are going to stay," Craft said. "And I don't think you can go out in the world and ask somebody to come to work in Century, Florida, without paying them well, unless they just like to look at a railroad track."

Incentives

To help Craft with financing, the Pensacola Bay Area Chamber of Commerce has been looking at incentives available through the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Rural Business Opportunity Program.

The Century area has been tremendously hit by the economic downturn in the last few years," Wood said. "Anytime there is an opportunity for job creation, especially on the northern side of the county, we want to do everything we can."


The lumber complex sits along the CSK Railroad line, which runs freight from Pensacola to Montgomery.

Craft is in discussion with CSK about installing a rail spur at the lumber complex so train cars can be loaded and unloaded inside the new lumber facility.

The concept of the venture revolves around Craft's specialized formula for treating cross ties and lumber in a way that's environmentally safe and fireproof and in a way that does not require drying time for the wood. That means cross ties and lumber can be used immediately.

"This process is going to change the whole wood-treating process throughout the world because they are the only ones with this formula," McCall said. "That's how big it is."

TRY HOME OWNERSHIP!



30 Day Home Ownership Program

Give us a call today!

Billings

FROM IA

She'll face the Escambia charge before she's sent to Mississippi to answer the new charges.

Byrd and Melanie Billings were shot to death on July 9, 2009, inside their rural Beach home, where they cared for nine adopted children with special needs.

Eight people, including Long Wiggins, were charged last summer. Friday's indictments bring to 10 the number of people charged.

"We engaged in a thorough, meticulous investigation regarding the matter and what occurred in Florida first," State Attorney Bill Eddins said. "Then we contacted the district attorney in Mississippi after we did our investigation, and it took a while for them to investigate the matter."

Leonard Patrick Gonzalez Jr., a friend of Long Wiggins, is the accused ring leader and triggerman. He faces two first-degree murder charges and a house invasion charge, and the state is seeking the death penalty.

Six co-defendants also are charged with first-degree murder and home invasion. Two have entered pleas, and the rest are scheduled for trial starting in October.

Long Wiggins' accessory to first-degree murder charge in Escambia alleges that she helped the co-defendants after the murders. She faces a possible 30-year prison sentence.

She's accused of providing a van used to transport a safe containing nearly \$200,000 away from the Billingses' home and burying it beneath a pile of bricks in the backyard of her Gulf Breeze home.

Dispatching the guns

In a statement made to Escambia County sheriff's investigators days after the murders, Denson said the Wigginses came to his hometown of Moss Point on July 14 and gave him several assault-style guns to hold for them.



In this shot taken from a video, Hugh Wiggins, far right, talks with law enforcement in July 2009 about the details surrounding the deaths of Byrd and Melanie Billings. Wiggins was charged Friday as an accessory after-the-fact in the slayings.



Leonard Patrick Gonzalez Jr. waits for a court hearing to begin this week. Gonzalez is the alleged ring leader and triggerman in the slayings.

The new charges allege that the weapons were used by Gonzalez's co-defendants in the home invasion. The guns do not include the 9 mm pistol allegedly used to shoot the couple.

Denson rented a motel room for the Wigginses in his name. In the motel, Long Wiggins repeatedly scanned the television channels for news about the Billings case, Denson said.

In addition, Denson said, Hugh Wiggins threw a small two-way radio out the window of a moving vehicle.

When Pamela Long Wiggins was first taken into custody last summer aboard her yacht, "The Classy Lady," in Orange Beach, Ala., her husband accompanied her to the Escambia County Sheriff's Office.

He eventually gave statements to investigators but not before his attorney secured him limited immunity from prosecution as a cooperating witness.

That immunity does not apply in Mississippi, and Eddins said authorities there believe there is enough evidence to prosecute him without the statements he made shortly before his wife was charged.

Ties to Gonzalez

In his interview with investigators, Hugh Wiggins said he was working offshore on an oil rig when the Billingses were shot to death, and prosecutors have been unable to show that he had any direct involvement in the murders.

However, witnesses placed Hugh Wiggins with Gonzalez at many of the alleged planning meetings that preceded the robbery and murders.

Lomax Smith, a longtime friend of Gonzalez, said he was asked to participate in the robbery but refused.

Smith said that about a year before the slayings he met Gonzalez and Hugh Wiggins on the Wigginses' yacht moored off Palatka Pier in Pensacola.

Smith told investigators that he overheard Hugh Wiggins tell Gonzalez that he was a gun-runner.

Dillard's

LABOR DAY WEEKEND

SALE

- Ladies' Sportswear
- Ladies' Dresses
- Ladies' Suits
- Ladies' Shoes
- Handbags
- Jewelry
- Juniors' Apparel
- Swimwear
- Men's Shoes
- Boys' Sportswear
- Girls' Sportswear
- Children's Shoes

50% off

BEDDING COLLECTIONS

From Croscill, Rebo, Lauren, and more

LIMITED TIME!

\$19.99

LADIES' PRINTED KNIT TOPS

From Peter Nygard and Nygard Collection.

orig. \$29.00-\$55.00

\$19.99

YOUNG MEN'S SHORTS

From your favorite names.

orig. \$24.99-\$29.99

\$14.99

LADIES' CAPRIS

From Caribbean Joe, ethnic & Tribal.

orig. \$29.99-\$34.99

\$14.99

JUNIORS' SHORTS

From Celebrity Pink.

and more.

orig. \$19.99-\$29.99

\$7.99

LADIES' RUBY RD BURNOUT BLOUSE

In solids or prints. orig. \$29.00

Dillard's Woman sizes \$9.99. orig. \$39.00

\$5.99 Each

LADIES' ACTIVOLOGY SEPARATES

Select from knit tops, capris & shorts. Also in panties & Dillard's Woman.

orig. \$19.99-\$29.99

\$4.99

BOYS' & GIRLS' SHORTS & TEES

Choose from a variety of names, colors & styles.

orig. \$14.99-\$48.00

LIMITED TIME SAVINGS!

PERMANENTLY REDUCED MEN'S SPORTSWEAR

Classic & Contemporary Designer Collections • Furnishings

Roundtree & Yorke Sportswear • Big & Tall Sportswear

Items are selected unless otherwise noted. Selection varies by store and availability. Call 1-800-345-6273 for details.

2010
said
local
of to
may
occ-
k.
said
his
be-
ca-
be-
f the
sum
acts
that
amb-
com-
con-
ers of
clear
and
con-

ed.

st di-
side.
we'll
trailer
ster is
is and
nd re-
teach,
ns at
se the
space
nearly
said,
g and
KOU a
y

ation
ermin
dding,
ec, an
cy in-
ca an-
king's
d.
pical-
id egg
urners
pers
is be-
com-
rading,
said Feder-
id egg
laving

ing
th

Commission agrees to terms with county administrator, 2B
 Council on Saturday proposes ordinance, 2B

\$2.8 million aimed for job creation program, 2B

Breaking News
 Tom Nishette
 435-8008
 tnishette@prj.com

Chief Content Editor
 Shannon Nicholson
 435-8538
 snicholson@prj.com

Advertisements
 E-mail information on local events to news@prj.com

OPINIONS Time ripe for selling City Hall

Let's put Pensacola's City Hall up for sale.

The time is right. Work is under way for the Community Maritime Park, and a replacement for the Main Street Wastewater Treatment Plant is up and running.



Mark O'Brien
 mo'Brien@prj.com
 435-8578

The seven-story City Hall is prime property, with wonderful views of the park and Pensacola Bay, and it will be worth a lot more once the wrecking ball ends the stretch from the nearby sewage plant.

Sell City Hall for some much-needed cash and give the 25-year-old building a new use more fitting than a palace for paper-pushers.

Thanks to downsizing and other changes, much of this water-view building is empty; part of it is being used for storage — storage, I kid you not!

Put a new, scaled-down City Hall in an area more centrally located — perhaps in a vacant strip mall or a neighborhood that needs a strong presence.

Go for it

I feel good about Pensacola's future; selling City Hall could help us get there in good shape.

Think of the pluses: We seem to have outlasted the recession and the BP oil spill, downtown entertainment spots are bustling — especially for much-desired young people — and Pensacola Beach is creating a new market of nightlife and weekend entertainment.

The city is about to get a "strong mayor," and the Pensacola Bay Area Chamber of Commerce has hired a top gun to develop industry.

So let's see what offers City Hall draws on the market, which obviously is down but not out because of the real estate slump.

And please, please don't give it away to one of the usual good ol' boys or snoot that only locals can bid on it.

That North Korean way of thinking is one reason we've been spinning our wheels for so long.

Looking back

I first raised this idea in early 2005, when City Hall was closed by Hurricane Ivan and needed \$5 million worth of repairs.

Some council members liked the idea, and people began developing proposals.

The building offered great potential for businesses and offices, maybe even condominiums.

But city employees said it would be disruptive and hard for morale if they couldn't return to City Hall.

Feeling heat from employees, the council soon voted 9-1 to do as the employees wished and to not even consider offers — I repeat, to not even consider offers.

The only exception was Mike Wiggins.

Today, times at City Hall are much different from 2006. Put up the "For Sale" sign.

We have much to gain and nothing to lose.

Gonzalez trial move sought

Motion filed for suspected gunman in Billings slayings

Kris Wernowsky
 kwernow@prj.com

Attorneys for the man accused of killing Eyrd and Melanie Billings have asked a judge to move the trial.

The motion filed Thursday by attorneys for Leonard Gonzalez Jr. notes the extensive media interest that followed the July 9, 2009, murders at the couple's home in Beechdale. That interest, the motion says, would make it difficult to find jurors who



Gonzalez
 Northwest Florida Daily News

haven't seen or heard something about the high-profile murders.

The motion references stories from the Pensacola News Journal, the Northwest Florida Daily News, a slew of national media outlets. You'll also find defendant statements and Escambia County Sheriff David Morgan's numerous news conferences and TV appearances.

"Therefore, in the interest of justice, to obtain a fair and impartial jury, and a fair and impartial trial, the trial of this case should be moved to a county in Florida outside the 1st Judicial Circuit," attorney John Jay Gontarek wrote.

The 1st Judicial Circuit includes Escambia, Santa Rosa, Okaloosa and Walton counties.

Assistant State Attorney John Molchan said the motion for a change of venue might have come too soon because case law requires the attorneys still must attempt to select a jury in Escambia County.

Gonzalez, 36, is expected to appear at a 11:30 a.m. evidence hearing today at the M.C. Blanchard Judicial Building in Pensacola. Circuit Judge Nick

See TRIAL, 2B



Tammy, left, and Adel Tomasek are grandparents to Maliah Tomasek, 13 months old. The two have been together 17 years and plan to participate in the mass "Wedding of Hearts" on Saturday at Seville Square.

'Wedding of Hearts' set Saturday at Seville Square

Festival in the Park

Pensacola's 2010 gay pride week Festival in the Park is set for from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Saturday in Seville Square in downtown Pensacola.

A military appreciation ceremony is set for 11:30 a.m. and a mass wedding for gay, as well as straight, couples is set for noon.

Other recognitions, entertainment and children's activities are set throughout the day.

Other pride week events include:

- Saturday: Pride Concert: Daphne Multrick, 7 p.m., Holy Cross Metropolitan Community Church, 3718 W. Fairfield Drive. Cost: \$10.
- Sunday: Pride Cocktail: 1 to 5 p.m., The Roundup, 560 E. Hancock St.
- Sunday: Disco Skate Party: 6:30 to 8:30 p.m., Dreamland Skate Center, 2607 E. Olive Road. Cost: \$10.
- Monday: Candidates' Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgender Equality Forum, 6 p.m., Tyson Branch Library, 1200 Langley Ave. For details, e-mail GayGrassrootsNWFL@gmail.com.

Couples welcome

All couples — same-sex and opposite-sex — are welcome at the "Wedding of Hearts" at noon on Saturday in Seville Square.

However, couples who wish to receive a true "Wedding of Hearts" certificate are asked to pre-register online at www.surveymonkey.com/s/1XZK058.

Nevertheless, they want to publicly show their love and commitment for each other, so they will be among the same-sex and opposite-sex couples who plan to exchange vows at noon Saturday during the "Wedding of Hearts," part of the day-long gay pride festival in Seville Square.

So far, 14 same-sex couples have registered, and others may show up on Saturday.

For the Tomaseks, the ceremony will be a recommitment.

"They first held a commitment ceremony in 1993.

See WEDDING, 2B

Panhandle could use some rain

Area in midst of moderate drought

Carmen Paige
 cpaige@prj.com

Pensacola area residents looking to the skies for relief from a moderate drought may have to wait awhile.

The last time it rained in Pensacola was Sept. 27 when 0.05 inches of water fell. Jack Cullen, a National Weather Service meteorologist, said.

And there is little hope for precipitation for the weekend.

"A 20 percent chance of rain is expected Tuesday, but that's all for October," he said. "The area would need a tropical system to get any rain, and that is not looking likely."

While mainly empty dry, sun-baked days with cooler temperatures, a lack of rain can be a problem for some this time of year.

The dry weather is taking a toll.

See DROUGHT, 2B

Area rainfall

- September: 0.62 inches
 - Average rainfall for September: 5.75 inches
 - October: 2.5 inches
 - Average rainfall for October: 4.38 inches
- Source: National Weather Service



Louise Morm of Lowe's of Fairfield Drive waters plants in the garden center of the store. Crops in the Panhandle could use some rain.

Quick Read

Homecoming parade today for Washington High School

Booker T. Washington High School in Pensacola will have its first homecoming parade today before its homecoming football game.

The community is encouraged to attend the parade, which will begin at 5:30 p.m. at the school, 6000 College Parkway.

The parade and game will wrap up a week of homecoming activities themed "Wilkest Adventures."

For more information, call 478-5257.

Corrections

To report an error, call 435-8511, or e-mail corrections@prj.com.

Funeral for bicyclist on oil-spill ride will be Monday



Roger Grotters

The funeral for a Gulf Breeze man killed while cycling to raise money for families impacted by the BP oil spill will be held at 11 a.m. Monday at Gulf Breeze United Methodist Church, 75 Fairpoint Drive.

Roger Grotters, 66, was hit by a truck while cycling on State Road 21 in Bay County. He was more than 2,000 miles into a transcontinental bike ride that began Sept. 10 near San Diego.

The truck was driven by Eddie Hogg, 41, of Molino.

The Florida Highway Patrol continues to investigate.

The Rev. Jack Knie, pastor of the church's Worship at the Water service which Grotters and his wife attended, encouraged people to consider donating to the cause Grotters promoted.

"That way, maybe they can help him finish what he started," Knie said.

Information can be found at the church's website www.gbmc.org.

Fundraising roast Oct. 15 for Sheriff David Morgan

The Arthritis Foundation on Oct. 15 will host a fundraising roast of Escambia County Sheriff David Morgan.

Don Parker of radio station WNOA 1370 AM will emcee the fundraiser, which includes dinner, a cash bar and a silent auction.

Roastees will include Rick Outzen, publisher of the Independent News, and Pensacola City Councilwoman Sherry DeWiese.

The event begins at 6 p.m. at New World Landmark, 608 S. Palatka Place in Pensacola. Tickets are \$50 per person, and benefit the Arthritis Foundation.

For tickets, visit www.BestSheriffMorganKitchen.org or call 471-1541.



Morgan

LOCAL

Trial

FROM 1B

Geekie could decide on the morning today.

The Billings were shot and killed during a post-robbery in the home where they cared for nine adopted children with special needs. The robbers, including Gonzalez, left the home carrying the wrong safe, which contained personal papers, birth certificates and expired children's prescriptions, according to statements and investigation reports.

A second safe on the second floor of the home contained nearly \$200,000.

Eight people, including Gonzalez, have been charged. Gonzalez is charged with two counts of first-degree murder and faces a potential death sentence if convicted.

Jury selection in the trial is expected to begin Oct. 21.

Also at today's hearing, defense attorneys are expected to seek permission to introduce evidence that two defendants who entered into deals to testify against Gonzalez were involved in drug sales before their arrests in connection with the murders.

Prosecutors Thornton 29 and Katherine Flannery 37, pleaded not guilty to second-degree murder and home invasion and agreed to testify for the prosecution.

Both entered the home and originally were charged with first-degree murder.

Melchior said he would object to any reference to the extensive criminal history, saying that it's not relevant to this case.

Drought

FROM 1B

on the 100 acres of peanuts at Holland Farms in Jay.

"We are using our traveling gun irrigation system once a week to keep the peanuts watered," owner Beau Holland said.

"When it's dry, the peanuts will not finish maturing out, and that makes it hard to dig out of the ground."

An inch of rain a week is good, Holland said.

"But, it's been so dry for so long, an inch wouldn't get it now," he said.

Because of the dry conditions, the National Weather Service has issued a red flag warning, meaning the area is prime for fire. The warning is issued when humidity levels are below 25 percent for four or more hours, Callow said.

"This warning is for commercial operations that do things like controlled burns," he said. "However, it is probably not a good idea for anyone to be burning."

The Florida Division of Forestry has not issued a burn ban, said Joe Zwickowski, public information officer with the Blackwater Forestry Center.

"However, the state burn authorizations we are issuing go to certified burners," he said. "More restrictions are likely if we don't see relief from this weather pattern shortly."

Gunman who shot man in leg sought

A man was shot in the leg Thursday on Yonge Street in Escambia County.

The victim, whose name was not available, was shot about 4:30 p.m. He was taken to a local hospital to be treated for an injury that was not life-threatening. Escambia County Sheriff's Office spokesman Sgt. Ted Roy said.

The victim told deputies that he was walking along Yonge Street when a man got out of a car. Roy said.

The two men struggled, and a gun went off, Roy said. The suspect got back in the car. Two other men were in the car when it left the scene, Roy said.

The car possibly was a Toyota Avalon, he said. No arrests have been made in connection with the shooting.

Wedding

FROM 1B

up primarily of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender Christians.

O'Steen said she performs about 20 same-sex ceremonies a year, and about three traditional marriage ceremonies annually.

Each couple at Saturday's event will receive a certificate showing they participated.

"Same-sex couples have ceremonies for a variety of reasons," O'Steen said. "They want to celebrate the commitment with family and friends, in hopes that one day such ceremonies will be legal, to make a holy and sacred vow to each other, and to signify the relationship, just to name a few."

Tammy, 42, said the commitment is important to her regardless of the legal standing of the union.

A commitment

"It was a commitment between us and God," Tammy said. "We wanted some form of paper to show each other, to look at as a physical aspect, something that we can use to show our kids that says, 'We are committed to each other.'"

Tammy and Adel met in 1992 when they were co-workers at Texaco in Pensacola.

Now, Adel is a construction supervisor with the Santa Rosa Island Authority maintenance department, and Tammy stays home to care for their granddaughter.

Tammy said she legally changed her last name from Nicholas to Tammy in 1996 to show "total commitment" to Adel, and out of a closeness with Adel's family.

"I was proud," Adel said. "No one had ever said they wanted to take my name. When she told me she wanted to take my name, I was certain."

Lack of recognition

The lack of formal recognition, however, has been both frustrating and problematic.

"We're now raising our grandchild, but I can't be on Adel's insurance," Tammy said. "None of her benefits time to me. All of her co-workers can insure their wives and can insure their children."

When their children were in elementary school, there also were problems.

"They didn't want me to put Adel's name on the kids' records," Tammy said.

"Once we would go up there as a couple and they met us, sure, it was OK for Adel to get up there and pick the boys up from school."

Medical issues arise, they said.

In 2000, when Adel

broke a finger, hospital personnel "were very adamant" that Tammy not go into the exam room.

In general, though, longevity has brought the couple greater acceptance.

"People get used to seeing you together," Tammy said.

"Now, everywhere we go, people ask about the other person because it's like we're one. If they see me, they know Adel's not far behind, or vice versa."

What do they call each other?

"We're life partners," Tammy said. Smiling broadly, Adel corrected her. "She's my wife."

YOUR LOCAL DEALER FOR WATERWAY AND HEWITT BOAT CANOPIES.

COASTAL DOCK SYSTEMS

THESE CANOPY FRAMES ARE WIND RATED UP TO 140 MPH AND WITH THE COVER ON UP TO 90 MPH.

IN YOUR LOCAL DEALER:

- Boat Canopies
- Boat Covers
- Dock Accessories

2559 GULF BREEZE PKWY
GULF BREEZE, FL 32963 • 850-934-4474
WWW.COASTAL-DOCKS.COM

Great Weather. Great Events. Great Rates.

Bischofs to Woodlands Tour

- Changing All Month Long:
 - Sweet Success Farms - even After
 - Fall Foliage Empire Tour
 - Adventure's Island
 - Holiday Farm Tour
 - Gulf Breeze Zoo - Adventure
- October 8 - 9:
 - 4th Annual Marshak Mathew Butterfly Festival
 - Friends of the Historic Library - Fall Book Sale
- October 9 - 10:
 - 20th Annual St. Rose of Lima International Fall Bazaar & BK
- October 10:
 - 17th Annual Equestrian Hunt & Club
 - Lock and Saddle Fall Tournament
- October 11:
 - West Florida Railroad Museum Days Celebration
 - Museum's 100th Anniversary Festival
 - 4th Annual "Novels in the Hills" Island Novels Festival
 - 10th Annual Long House Tour
 - "Making It in The Sun" in Time Terrace Restaurant

Leading specials at participating condos, hotels and campsgrounds. Golf course Special Rates.

More than 40 events! Join our Facebook page for updates and specials or download event map and schedule at: www.thebeachestowoodlandstour.com

1-800-480-SANI7 (7263)

I SELL A HOME EVERY 2.01 DAYS

IF YOU WANT YOUR HOME SOLD - CALL ME

Alexis Bolin

478-5446 or 777-0275

ERA Legacy Realty

ERA Legacy Realty

alexisera@aol.com

www.alexisrealty.com

Professional Hearing Aid Center

FREE Hearing Test

We are a Medicare Dealer

Authorized Distributor of Medicare Insurance

PENSACOLA

115 North Palmetto Street

438-4092 Toll Free 1-800-855-HEAR

BUDGET BRAKES

ALIGNMENT

SERVICE INCLUDES:

- Free Alignment Check
- Get Tire Pressure
- 100 mph Detection
- Alignment by Hunter

\$29 \$39

Lifetime Warranty Brakes \$78.00

BUY ONE TON GET ONE \$10.00 OFF

8700 Mainway Hwy (at Hwy 90) 8436 Airport Blvd 2430 Gulf Dr

Mobile, AL Mobile, AL Mobile, AL

850-657-6727 251-304-1077 251-479-1550

CONFIDENTIAL PAPER SHREDDING & RECYCLING DONE RIGHT. ON SITE.

- Security cleared personnel
- A fleet of more than 33 trucks serving N. Florida & S. Georgia
- Scheduled or call-in services available - 24 hours a day
- Free estimates
- Family owned & operated since 1988

Shred-It

626-9242

www.shredit.com

Never miss a word with a FREE amplified phone

If you are a Florida resident with a certified hearing loss, a new telephone can help make conversations easier. The phone is offered at no cost through the nonprofit Florida Telecommunications Relay Inc. The Clarity W425 Pro Cordless amplifies incoming sound up to 40 decibels, almost four times louder than a standard phone. Its hearing aid compatible with large numeric numbers and a bright visual ring.

Ask about the Clarity W425 Pro or other specialized phones for yourself or a family member. Florida is speaking up for clearer communication.

Relay now available in your area!

CIL Disability Resource Center

3600 North Pace Blvd.

Pensacola, Florida 32505

850-595-5366 (V)

877-245-2457 (Toll Free)

Florida Telecommunications FTRI Relay Inc.

www.ftri.org/pcola

OPINIONS

Leave the little ghosts, goblins alone

Reginald T. Dogan
 regdogan@prj.com
 (904) 443-4443

Little Johnny can't read, his mommy can't find a job and his daddy is unemployed to be found. Our education system is struggling to teach our economic system can't produce enough jobs, and our social system can't solve family crises. So what's the priority for local officials in Santa Rosa County? Moving Halloween from Sunday to Saturday because the ghoulish holiday falls on the Sabbath. Get a life and buy some candy! Locusts won't devour the crops nor will fire and brimstone engulf the Earth because some kids dress up like ghosts and goblins on a Sunday night to trick and treat for a bag full of sweets. Are Christians really that insecure as to worry about costumes and candy? If there's anything to fret about it should be the dental bill.

Let it be
 Halloween is traditionally celebrated on Oct. 31, not a day before or a day after. Santa Rosa County Administrator Hunter Walker said the county has traditionally made the change when Halloween falls on Sunday because many residents attend evening services. "I've been going to church most of my life, and I'm willing to wager that more people don't go to church — especially to an evening service — than those who do. But whether certain people, churches, counties or cities want to waver the holiday is moot. We can't arbitrarily alter the date of a traditional holiday without a congressional decree or nationwide consensus because of some religious hang-ups or outdated beliefs. Every six or seven years, Halloween falls on a Sunday and this always creates confusion, especially in some parts of the South. It irks me that some unscrupulous scoundrels would ruin what is now a child's holiday for such a ridiculous reason as "Oh, no, the devil might take their poor children's souls!" Grow up, folks!

Let the kids enjoy some harmless tricking and treating and worry not. While a devil costume may be popular, the day has nothing to do with satanic worship. Halloween is a mix of ancient Celtic practices, Catholic and Roman religious rituals and European folk traditions that blended together over time to create the holiday that is celebrated today. Somewhere around the 19th century, Halloween began to lose its religious connotation, becoming a more secular, community-based children's holiday. You could make a similar argument that as we have commemorated Christmas, it too has become a secular children's holiday.

Halloween holiday
 As for me, I wouldn't give a flying witch's tail if the day were celebrated on Oct. 1 or Oct. 31 or not at all. If county leaders really want to change something, maybe they should consider changing Sunday services to Saturdays. At least, then they would be doing something right since the original Sabbath is Saturday. If enough Johnnies could read, they would know that truth and stop spreading myths about harmless holidays.

LOCAL

Park developer cleared

Maritime Board throws out accusation of diversity agreement breach

Jamie Page
 jamiepage@prj.com

The developer for the Community Maritime Park is following the park's diversity agreement that ensures minority participation in the \$52 million project. That was the determination made Friday by the Community Maritime Park Associates board — Local Business Opportunity Committee. The decision was in response to a report last

Flaming
 Davison

to a report last submitted by Ed Fleming, the board's attorney, accusing the developer of a "material breach" of the Equal Business Opportunity Agreement. It claimed the developer — Maritime Park Development Partners — failed to create a Contractors Academy, hire staff for construction training, spend any of the \$250,000 it committed to the academy and assist minority contractors with construction bonding. However, Lon Ray, the board's compliance officer for that agreement, looked into the criticisms and said there was no material breach. Scott Davison, vice president of development for Maritime Park Development Partners — the development team — submitted a point-by-point response Friday to the report, saying he's in full compliance. "After reading Mr. Fleming's report, it became even more evident that his approach was a fishing expedition that

See PARK, 4D

BILLINGS MURDERS



Patrick Gonzalez Jr., right, a suspect in the murders of Byrd and Melanie Billings, sits with his attorney, Randall Ethendige, in the courtroom Friday.

Friends, family salute cyclist

Gulf Breeze man remembered for helping others

Kris Kourkounis
 kourkounis@prj.com

Roger Groeters was passionate about staying active and helping others. This is why his family was not surprised when the 66-year-old decided to bicycle across America to raise money for victims of the BP oil spill. "He's a modest person, but he had a passion for life," said his son, Ben Groeters, 31. "He was a fun-loving guy."

Jark Kale, pastor of Gulf Breeze United Methodist Church's Worship at the Water service, which Roger Groeters attended, remembers him as someone who wanted to make a difference in the world. "He was deeply moved by the oil spill and wanted for other people to know about it," Kale said. "In other parts of the country, he recognized that wouldn't see the results of the suffering that was going to come as a result of the oil spill. He wanted to draw some awareness."

Roger Groeters' trip began Sept. 10 near San Diego, Calif., and was to end in Jacksonville. He was accompanied by his wife Yvonne, who followed him in a Chevrolet Suburban. On Wednesday, Roger Groeters was nearing the end of his journey when he was hit and killed by a Chevrolet pickup about 6:35 a.m. in Bay County. He was struck while pedaling his Corbeau bike along State Road 20.

Roger Groeters rode about 100 miles per day, which he logged in a log devoted to his trip. In his last log post on Tuesday, he had logged 2,178 miles. He had less than 500 miles to complete his journey. "The best word to describe it is

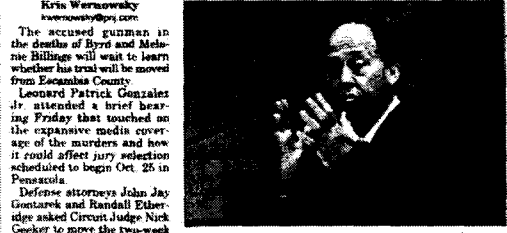
See TRIAL, 4D

Trial stays put

Attorneys must try to find impartial jury in Escambia for accused gunman before moving trial elsewhere

Kris Wernowsky
 wernowsky@prj.com

The accused gunman in the deaths of Byrd and Melanie Billings will wait to learn whether his trial will be moved from Escambia County. Lawyer Patrick Gonzalez Jr. attended a brief hearing Friday that touched on the expansive media coverage of the murders and how it could affect jury selection scheduled to begin Oct. 25 in Pensacola. Defense attorneys John Jay Gontarski and Randall Ethendige asked Circuit Judge Nick Geeker to move the two-week trial from the local judicial circuit, encompassing Escambia, Santa Rosa, Okaloosa and Walton counties. But Geeker agreed with Assistant State Attorney John Molchan that the law requires attorneys to first try to select an impartial jury from the county in which the crimes took place. Only if that proves impossible is the trial moved elsewhere.



Circuit Judge Nick Geeker listens to lawyers for Patrick Gonzalez Jr. as they seek to change the venue of the murder trial.

The Billingses were shot to death on July 9, 2009, during an invasion of their home in rural Beulah. Their adult daughter, Ashley Marikham, sat in the spectator section near the back of the courtroom, during the brief hearing. She declined to comment afterward. Gonzalez was seated in the jury box for the hearing. His wrists were shackled and bound to a chain around his waist. In another matter, Geeker said he will allow the attorneys to submit questionnaires. See TRIAL, 4D

Quick Read

Mack endorses Wiggins for mayor
 Pensacola City Councilwoman Diane Mack on Friday endorsed Mayor Mike Wiggins in his bid to become the city's first swing mayor. Mack finished third in the four-county August primary, drawing 2,023 ballots out of some 13,000 votes cast.

Mack
 Second-place finisher Ashton Hayward III and Wiggins, who led the field with 4,892 votes, will face off in the Nov. 2 general election. Mack gave fourth-place finisher Charles Barr, who won 1,763 votes in the August primary, no endorsing Wiggins.

Mack said her decision to endorse Wiggins was based on her experience working with him on the City Council, and his "strength of character, knowledge of how the city operates, work ethic, stamina and fiscal conservatism."

Milton man killed in crash in Escambia County
 A Milton man died Thursday morning following a two-vehicle crash at Blue Angel Parkway and Sorrento Road in Escambia County. Daniel Jay Yale, 30, died at Baptist Hospital in Pensacola where he was taken after the 3:35 a.m. crash. Yale's passenger, Kimberly Dale Edwards, 30, of Robertsdale, Ala., also was taken to Baptist. Her condition was not immediately available. The driver of the second vehicle was James A. Montavon, 48, of Pensacola. He suffered minor injuries and was not hospitalized, a Florida Highway Patrol crash report said.

According to the Highway Patrol, the crash occurred as Yale was headed west on Sorrento Road, approaching Blue Angel Parkway and failed to stop for a red light. The front of Yale's four-door car hit the right front side of Montavon's pickup, which was headed north on Blue Angel Parkway. Yale was not wearing a seat belt and was thrown from the vehicle. He died about 10 a.m. Thursday after being taken by helicopter to the hospital. No one was ticketed in connection with the crash, the Highway Patrol report said.

Woman robbed at ATM on Garden
 Pensacola police are looking for a man who robbed a woman Friday morning at an automated teller machine in Garden Street. The robbery occurred about 8 a.m. when the suspect approached Whitney Bank ATM, 191 W. Garden St. As the money was dispensed, the man asked the woman to step away from the ATM and told her he needed money for his kids. The woman complied and he took the money. He was last seen headed east on Garden Street. Pensacola police said. The robber was wearing a *ski mask*, a dark-colored jacket, heavy blue jeans and New Balance shoes. Anyone with information about the robbery is asked to call Detective Shannon Fortenberry at 435-1878 or 688-0649 or the Pensacola Police Department at 435-1801. To view a video of the robbery, visit prj.com.

LOTTERY
 Afternoon Draw: 2-6-50
 Evening Draw: 3-3-3
 Afternoon Play 4: 3-0-5-2
 Evening Play 4: 2-8-4-2
 Fantasy 5: 11-17-26-28-36
 Mega Money: 1-22-29-39 WB: 22

LOCAL/FLORIDA

Property tax break for military on Florida ballot

Curt Anderson
Associated Press

MIAMI — A lot of people talk about supporting U.S. troops who are overseas in harm's way. Florida voters have a chance in the November election to do something tangible by approving a new property tax break for thousands of military personnel.

Amendment 2 would create a new tax homestead exemption for troops serving in certain conflict areas outside the United States. If it passes, the Legislature would decide exactly which conflict regions qualify.

State Rep. Mike Horner, R-Kissimmee, said he proposed the amendment after hearing stories of Florida-based soldiers serving in Afghanistan who were worried about paying property tax bills back home.

"These folks are in a combat situation, and they need to focus on what's important, which is the mission at hand, and not whether they are going to be able to keep the house," Horner said.

The measure passed the state House and Senate

"These folks are in a combat situation, and they need to focus on what's important, which is the mission at hand, and not whether they are going to be able to keep the house."

— State Rep. Mike Horner, R-Kissimmee

unanimously and polls show three out of four Floridians are in favor of the measure, which will appear on the Nov. 2 ballot. Like all amendments, it must be approved by 60 percent of the voters to pass.

If the tax break had applied to personnel involved in the Afghan, Iraq and Iran wars in 2008, more than 25,000 military personnel would have qualified for the exemption, according to the state Revenue Estimating Conference.

The price tag was pegged at about \$14 million in lost tax revenue. No opposition has emerged, including none from cities or counties that would be directly affected.

The exact amount of each individual tax break would be set by

the Legislature and based on the number of days a person was deployed in the conflict region during the preceding calendar year. In addition, each taxpayer would have to already have property that qualifies for the homestead exemption, which currently protects the first \$50,000 of a home's value from property taxes.

To qualify, a home has to be the person's primary residence. The constitutional amendment would take effect Jan. 1, if it passes.

It applies to active and reserve military personnel and the Florida National Guard. Former military personnel who are disabled are already entitled in Florida to an additional \$5,000 property tax exemption.



West Nile Virus found in Hernando Co.

BROOKSVILLE — Hernando County residents are warned to avoid being bitten by mosquitoes after two chickens tested positive for the West Nile virus.

Mosquito Control Supervisor Guangye Hu says the results mean mosquitoes carrying the virus are present in the area, and residents should be on alert for symptoms that include fever, headache, fatigue, weakness and dizziness.

Hu says they will increase inspection and spraying in the area where the sentinel chickens were located.

Pirate rap station breaks into classical

LAUDERDALE LAKES — Listeners of two South Florida radio stations got a surprise when their Christian and classical music was interrupted with rap and profane language.

On Thursday, authorities found out why: A pirate station was using a nearby frequency.

The Broward County Sheriff's Office says the illegal signal came from a Lauderdale Lakes home where an aspiring rapper had attached a laptop, audio mixer and computer to a large antenna.

The station called itself Tap Radio and was using a frequency in between Christian and classical music broadcasts. Listeners called the licensed stations to complain.

Mikhael Riccda has been charged with unauthorized transmission or interference with public or commercial radio.

Plane evacuated after engine fire

ORLANDO — Passengers have been evacuated from an Allegiant Air jet at Orlando-Sanford International Airport after the plane's right engine caught fire.

The Federal Aviation Administration says Flight 700 was still at the gate Friday morning when the fire occurred. It was quickly extinguished and there were no reports of injuries.

Passengers were evacuated using the jetway. The MD-80 aircraft was scheduled to depart to Roanoke, Va. An Allegiant Air spokesman said 142 passengers were onboard and would be placed on the next flight.

The cause of the fire remains under investigation.

Associated Press

Trial

FROM 1D

to potential jurors before they are questioned by attorneys for possible inclusion on the jury. The eight-question document asks whether the jurors have formed opinions about the case and whether they believe the death penalty is an appropriate sentence.

"It may help the court and the attorneys speed up the process," Gonzalez said.

Gonzalez is charged with two counts of first-degree murder and with home invasion. He faces a potential death sentence.

Seven co-defendants also were charged with first-degree murder. Four are accused of going inside the house with Gonzalez; two others are accused of remaining outside in get-aways cars.

Several of Gonzalez's co-defendants have said he is the triggerman.

The couple's nine adopted children, all with special needs, were in the home.

Geeker also ruled Friday that the defense will not be allowed to introduce evidence that two defendants who entered into deals to testify against Gonzalez were involved in drug sales before their arrests in the murders.

Frederick Thornton, 20, and Rakeem Florence, 17, pleaded no contest to second-degree murder and home invasion and agreed to testify for the prosecution. Both entered the home and originally were charged with first-degree murder.

Thornton and Florence said they went to the Billingses' home with the impression that they were there for a robbery, not to murder anyone. Both admitted during depositions that they were involved in small-time marijuana deals prior to their involvement in the home invasion and murders.

LAZYBOY
FURNITURE GALLERIES

Pre-Columbus Day SALE

Recliners starting from **\$299**

Reclining Sofas starting from **\$699**

Sectionals starting from **\$1,999**

Sofas starting from **\$599**

12-Month Special Financing Available

HURRY IN - Sale ends Monday!

LAZYBOY
FURNITURE GALLERIES

PENSACOLA	5078 BAYOU BLVD	(850) 479-9800
MOBILE	5955 AIRPORT BLVD	(251) 341-1036
SPANISH FORT	34000 BASS PRO DR.	(251) 300-2020

Monday - Saturday 10am - 6pm • Sunday 1 - 5pm
WWW.LAZYBOY.COM/GULFCOAST

CONSIGNMENT FURNITURE

GULF BREEZE PENSACOLA

934-6200 477-9106

Hall's
Screens & Windows

We repair screen doors and windows

with high quality
New York City screening

6556 Nury St • Milton • 625-6652

PAGE 2 Notebook UNITED WAY

Hundreds volunteer on Day of Caring

Today marks the 18th annual Day of Caring in Escambia County. More than 1,100 volunteers are out making a difference today, getting their hands dirty to help others.

A total of 80 volunteer projects are scheduled to take place today in Escambia County, benefiting more than 40 nonprofit agencies and schools. Numerous volunteer groups in Santa Rosa County will complete more than 30 projects as part of the 18th annual Day of Caring in Santa Rosa.

Volunteer projects include yard work at homes of elderly or disabled residents, repair of playground equipment at children's centers and schools, planting gardens and grounds beautification at schools and nonprofit outreach centers, and helping build a Habitat for Humanity home.

It is inspiring to think of so many volunteers coming together on one day in a shared spirit of helping others.

Day of Caring in Escambia County is sponsored by Regions, Publix, Baptist Health Care, Armstrong World Industries, Corus Advanced Fabrics and Gulf Power. These sponsors made it possible to provide a complimentary breakfast to all



Krista Thomas
United Way of Escambia County marketing and communications director.

volunteers and provide a breakfast for all. Krista Thomas, United Way of Escambia County marketing and communications director, is excited about the beach walk as an opportunity for residents and families to help boost local recovery from the Gulf of Mexico oil spill.

"One of the biggest frustrations following the oil spill was that there was very little for volunteers to do," she said. "We saw the experience of the community to help what 1,000 volunteers showed up May 2, with just 48 hours' notice, to clean Pensacola Beach and Perdido Key beaches in anticipation of oil landfall."

The Beach Walk gives everyone an opportunity to help address the false perception that there is oil on our beaches.

According to Visit Florida, 58 percent to 73 percent of Americans still have the impression that there is oil on Northwest Florida beaches. If you would like to help communicate the truth about Florida's beautiful coastline and invite the world to come see for themselves, be sure to register by 5 p.m. Nov. 4 at www.visitflorida.com/beachwalk. Also, look for more local details at www.facebook.com/UnitedWayEscambia.

See for yourself

Krista Thomas, United Way of Escambia County marketing and communications director, is excited about the beach walk as an opportunity for residents and families to help boost local recovery from the Gulf of Mexico oil spill.

According to Visit Florida, 58 percent to 73 percent of Americans still have the impression that there is oil on Northwest Florida beaches. If you would like to help communicate the truth about Florida's beautiful coastline and invite the world to come see for themselves, be sure to register by 5 p.m. Nov. 4 at www.visitflorida.com/beachwalk. Also, look for more local details at www.facebook.com/UnitedWayEscambia.

SUNDA PREVIEW



Sunday, the News Journal takes a look back at the July 8, 2002, murders of Byrd and Melanie Billings through the eyes of two young men present during the killing.

Leonard Patrick Gonzalez Jr., the man accused of shooting and killing the parents of nine adopted special-needs children, is expected to stand trial beginning Monday morning.

The story will focus on present testimony of Frederick Thornton and Patricia Rowland, his heirs from Fort Walton Beach recruited to assist in the widely publicized robbery that resulted in the Billingses' deaths.

Find out about this and more in Sunday's News Journal.

ELECTION 2010



Democratic gubernatorial candidate / center, greets her supporters Thursday campaign stop in Pensacola.

Sink

Reports poll released Wednesday showed Scott ahead, 50 percent to 44 percent. An Oct. 19 Quinnipiac University poll showed Sink with 44 percent to Scott's 40 percent.

Thursday, Sink tested the numerous endorsements she's received from newspapers and organizations across the state, including Florida State Fraternal Order of Police and the Police Benevolent Association. In some ads, she asks the help of Republican law enforcement officers and prosecutors.

Escambia County Sheriff David Morgan, a Republican, was in attendance at Sink's rally Thursday. Sink recognized Morgan, but he did not address the crowd. After the event, he said he attends many political events as sheriff and stopped short of endorsing Sink.

"We're not committed to any candidate right now," Morgan said. "I had a chance to work closely with her during the BP oil spill. She did an outstanding job."

Other elected officials at the rally included Pensacola City Council members Larry E. Johnson, Diane Mack, Marco DeWeese and P.C. Wu.

Stephanie Jarratt, 20, was at the rally. She said she will cast her first-ever ballot for governor.

"I think she is moderate on most of her issues, and I don't think she's doing a lot of the mud-slinging that Rick Scott is doing," said Jarratt, a junior at the University of West Florida. "I'm interested in environmental policy and energy reform, and I think she puts good policies forth."

Kelly Moore, 54, also was at the rally. He likes that Sink has political experience while Scott never has run for office before. He also doesn't like Scott's background as a hospital executive for a company that was charged with multiple counts of Medicare fraud.

"He supposedly didn't know what the people below him were doing," Moore said. "If I run a company, I own it. I've got to know what the guy below me is doing."

WHITE'S Housewashing
Mild and safe for your home.

BEST BUYER'S MARKET
It's the way of shopping at a mall!

Calendar

Today

- Garage sale for Mission Strides Against Breast Cancer: 7 a.m. to 2 p.m. today and Saturday, Corral & Marzola Realty, 2107 Airport Blvd. Call Rose Mary McGraw, 261-2788.
- Haystack: 4 to 9 p.m. Friday, and noon to 9 p.m. Saturday and Sunday through Oct. 29 in the physical education field across from S.S. Dean Primary, 4500 Pace Pastel Blvd., Pace. The event features a hay maze constructed with 4,000 bales of hay. Admission is \$5 per person. Call 982-8498.
- Gallery Night: 5 to 9 p.m. today in downtown Pensacola. Stroll through downtown, and explore galleries and businesses that will feature works by local artists. Many businesses will provide light refreshments. The last Gallery Night of this year is scheduled for Nov. 16. Visit www.downtownpensacola.com.
- Barn Bash: 6 p.m. today, Escambia County Equestrian Center, 7750 Mobile Highway. The bash features children's games, pumpkin painting, bounce houses,

of hay. Admission is \$5 per person. Call 982-8498.

Gallery Night: 5 to 9 p.m. today in downtown Pensacola. Stroll through downtown, and explore galleries and businesses that will feature works by local artists. Many businesses will provide light refreshments. The last Gallery Night of this year is scheduled for Nov. 16. Visit www.downtownpensacola.com.

Barn Bash: 6 p.m. today, Escambia County Equestrian Center, 7750 Mobile Highway. The bash features children's games, pumpkin painting, bounce houses,

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 24

Walter's special delivery service is available for all orders. Please call for more information. Walter's special delivery service is available for all orders. Please call for more information.

costume contest and a haunted hayride. Admission is \$5 per car. Call Brandi Zepher, 595-3476.

Haunted house at the Pensacola Lighthouse: 6 to 8:30 p.m. today and Saturday, and Oct. 29 to 31 at the lighthouse on Pensacola Naval Air Station. Visit one of America's most

haunted lighthouses and tour the keeper's quarters. Costumed guests are welcome. Admission is \$5 for adults, and \$3 for children ages 12 and younger. Call Jon Hill, 395-1951.

At Main Street Mall's fourth annual haunted house: 8 p.m. today and Saturday, and Monday

through Oct. 30 at 5232 Wilton St., Milton. The haunted house will have 15 themed areas and about 40 actors to scare guests. Admission is \$5 per person. Call 985-6246.

Pensacola Historical Society's haunted house and trolley tour: 6 to 8:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday through Oct. 30. Pensacola Historical Museum, 118 E. Zaragoza St. Costumed guides will scare attendees with horrifying tales of Pensacola's darker history. Walking tours leave every 30 minutes from 6 to 8:30 p.m., and trolley tours leave hourly from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. Walking

tour tickets are \$10 for adults, and \$2 for children ages 12 and younger; trolley tour tickets are \$16 for adults, and \$4 for children. Reservations and advanced payment required. Call 985-1560.

Call Angela Nolan, 528-1016.

Gulf Coast Regional

ASHLEY FURNITURE HomeStore

Jupiter Sofa \$297

50% off

Limited Quantities! Shop Early for best selection!

Queen Headboard \$46 <small>Retail \$187</small>	Comforter Sets \$47 <small>Retail \$295</small>
Entertainment Cabinet \$95 <small>Retail \$393</small>	3pc Occasional Tables \$198 <small>Retail \$550</small>
Media Chest \$396 <small>Retail \$1106</small>	Leather Sofa \$397 <small>Retail \$1096</small>
Table with 4 Chairs \$497 <small>Retail \$1801</small>	Sectional \$596 <small>Retail \$1263</small>
Queen Bedroom \$678 <small>Retail \$1348</small>	Sofa, Chair & Ottoman \$795 <small>Retail \$2262</small>

6859 N 9th Avenue • Pensacola, FL
Friday & Sat. 10:00 am - 7:00 pm • Sunday 1:00 pm - 6:00 pm
Closed Monday, Thanksgiving, unless Monday is a Holiday

STARS

CELEBRITY NEWS



Oprah Winfrey will be the November President George W. Bush, among other big names, on her show in November.

Winfrey leads President Bush, Jackson's parents

CHICAGO — Former President George W. Bush and Michael Jackson's parents are among the big names "The Oprah Winfrey Show" has booked for the November ratings season.

Harpo Productions released a schedule Friday, including the show featuring Bush discussing his memoir, "Decision Points," on Nov. 9 — the day of his resignation.

No date was given for the Jacksons' interview. The production company says Katherine Jackson will talk about her son's life from childhood stardom to his death. She'll be joined by her husband, Joe Jackson. Singer and actress Barbra Streisand will appear for an interview and a rare performance Nov. 16.

On Nov. 2, Ricky Martin will talk about raising twin boys and his decision to come out as gay. This is the 25th and final season of Winfrey's talk show.

Associated Press

PAGE 2

Students of the month

ESCAMBIA COUNTY

The following Escambia County students were selected as Students of the Month for October. The awards are sponsored by the Escambia Association for Administrators in Education, and are presented to teachers from participating schools.

Elementary schools
Bellevue: Payne M. Clacker, kindergarten; Nicholas H. Forsyth, 2nd grade.
Beulah: Thomas G. Holland, fourth grade; Danielle L. Myers, fourth grade.
Bluebonnet: Kayla J. Johnson, first grade; Zachary M. Cornell, first grade.
Coke: Katherine M. Lupton, fourth grade; Noah C. Stogdole, first grade.
Cordova Park: Franklin H. Fazzal, fourth grade; Eden E. Eckstein, fourth grade.
Emley: Carissa M. Odum, first grade.
Florida Ave.: Gabriel M. Pearson, first grade; Sydney J. Nguyen, first grade.
Hullmark: Naom N. Steele, first grade.
Alisha E. Odum, fifth grade.
Madison: Kayla J. Johnson, fourth grade; Jacob C. Haller, fifth grade.
Jill Allen: Jason S. McDowell, fourth grade; Hannah S. Goodale, fourth grade.
Lipscomb: Sa-Nayven Gray-Mey, first grade; Austin N. Lee, third grade.
Longleaf: Arlene L. Smith, fourth grade; Benjamin N. Arnold, fourth grade.
Meadow: Katelyn J. Jackson, fourth grade; Trenton A. Healy, fourth grade.
Molino Park: Michael D. Arntsen, second grade; Jeffrey J. Gahmer, third grade.
Myrtle Grove: Kaitlyn K. Sawyer, fourth grade; Giovanni D. Hayes, fourth grade.
New Point: Tyler I. Starkenshit, fourth grade; Gian M. Velez-Nicastro, first grade.
Pine Meadow: Jackson E. Carmichael, first grade; Ryleen J. Allen, first grade.
Pleasant Grove: Larraun M. Roberts, kindergarten; Noah R. Blanchard, kindergarten.
Sonic Heights: Leslie P. Guadian, first grade; Jackson G. Enfrase, first grade; Tryston R. White, first grade.
Sherrwood: Lathan O. Peeden, fourth grade; Zylayn M. Wilson, fourth grade.
Spencer Hills: Erynna M. Turner, kindergarten; Tracey J. Marinowski, kindergarten.
Stuter: Julia C. O'Sullivan, fourth grade; Adam J. Davis, fourth grade.

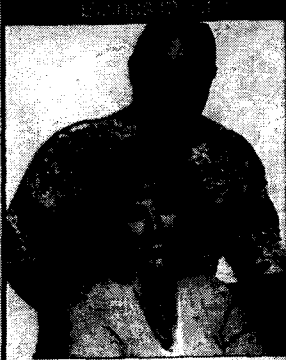
Washington: Gertrina J. Swann, fourth grade.
Wells: Marquita A. Simmons, fourth grade; D'Andre M. Jones, fourth grade.
West Pensacola: Fiona L. Redgrave, first grade; Ewend L. Lora, first grade.
Yulee: Sharrin M. Aubrey, fifth grade; John M. Park, fifth grade.

Middle schools
Bellevue: Justin T. O'Donnell, seventh grade; Dominique C. Martinez, seventh grade; Danielle: Yesson D. Durant, seventh grade; Justin K. Tilman, eighth grade; Brown: Bryan Ashley L. Crowley, eighth grade; Daniel E. Boyd, eighth grade.
Emmett: Ernest M. Kuykendall, eighth grade; Liberty D. Frazier, seventh grade; Perry N. Barde, eighth grade.
Perry Park: Quiana Ziegler, seventh grade; Abanham M. Logan, seventh grade.
Pine Forest: Seth S. Benning, eighth grade; Madison R. Roudreau, sixth grade.
Washington: Luke A. Ponce, eighth grade; Ronalde D. Franklin, seventh grade.
Wheeler: Isabel R. McKnight, seventh grade; Rodney S. Butler, seventh grade.
Worsham: Regan E. Kelley, seventh grade; Austin Teah-Nan Cao, seventh grade.

High schools
Northwest: Justina N. Nelson, 10th grade; Dawn L. Collins, 10th grade.
Pine Forest: Seth S. Benning, 10th grade; Austin B. Williams, 12th grade.
Tate: Anna B. Barlow, 12th grade; Lerner D. Cyrus, 12th grade.
West Florida: Dwayne R. Johnson, 12th grade; Hannah A. Pace, 12th grade.

Special centers
Beulah: Academy of Science: Staysal Charis Nelson, seventh grade; Kayli L. Talbot, sixth grade.
Escambia Wellness: Robin K. Brooks, 12th grade; Alexis A. Knutler, 10th grade; Devonta D. Hayes-Giles, fifth grade; Ibrahim A. Al-Ahdi, third grade; Dequane J. Johnson, eighth grade; Courtney C. Cook, seventh grade.
Jackie Harris Prep Academy: Mar'nia Thomas, second grade.
Judy Andrews Center: Stephen M. Meyer, eighth grade; G. Pollock, eighth grade.
PATS Center: Daniel Green, fifth grade; Chantessy Dunlap, fourth grade; Connor Groff, seventh grade; Eva Ernst, eighth grade.

SUNDAY PREVIEW



Sunday, the News Journal takes a look back at the July 9, 2003, murders of Byrd and Melara Dillings through the eyes of two young men present during the slaying.
Lance Patrick Gonzalez, Jr., the man accused of shooting and killing the parents of one adopted special-needs child, is expected to stand trial beginning Monday morning.
The story will focus on Patrick's testimony of Frederick Thornton and Rakeem Flowers, two teens from Fort Walton Beach recruited to assist in the widely publicized robbery that resulted in the Blingee's deaths.
Find out about this and more in Sunday's News Journal.

Birthdays

Singer Barbara Ann
Headline of The Daily Cups
is 67. Director Ang Lee
is 56. Jazz singer Diana
Reeves is 54. Country
singer Dwight Yoakam
is 54. Singer "Weird Al"
Yankovic is 51. Baseball
Robert Trifiro of Melilla
is 46. Actor Ryan Reynolds
is 34. Actress Jessica
Stroup: (902)107 is 24.

School briefs

Marching bands competing today

The Panhandle Marching Classic is 5 to 7:45 p.m. today at Pace High School, 4255 Morris Road, Pace. Two high school marching bands from Florida, Alabama and Georgia will compete for class and overall awards along with first, second and third place. Local bands scheduled to compete are Escambia, Navarre, Pine Forest and Tate. The Pace High band is scheduled to perform an exhibition at 6:05 p.m. Gates open at 4 p.m. Admission is \$8. Details: Call 905-2600.

Robotics competition today at UWF

Fourteen middle- and high-school robotics teams from Escambia and Santa Rosa counties are scheduled to compete today at the Emerald Coast BEST Robotics Competition. The University of West Florida once again will host the event, which will demonstrate design and functions of robots that were created by the student teams. Competing local schools that are signed up to participate are Bailey Middle, Bellevue Middle, Escambia High, Hobbs Middle, Holy-Hawes Middle, Milton High, Pace High, Pensacola High, Sams Middle, Tate High, West Florida High, Woodham Middle, Woodburn Beach Middle and Workman Middle. The event is 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. in the Field House at UWF, and is open to the public to watch. Details: Visit <http://uwf.edu/roboticscompetition/>, or call Bill Weber at 474-3407.

Superintendent to speak at PTSS on Tuesday

Santa Rosa County Superintendent Tim Myczek is scheduled to speak Tuesday at Gulf Breeze High School. Myczek has been asked to speak to the school's Parent Teacher Student Organization meeting. He will discuss issues facing the school district. The meeting is at 6:30 p.m. in the cafeteria. Details: Call 914-1100.

Band sets top ratings at competition

More than 1,000 marching band students from Escambia and Santa Rosa counties competed Oct. 18 at the District 1 Florida Bandmasters Association's Music Performance Assessment in Fort Walton Beach. A panel of five judges rated each band on its music, marching and maneuvering, practice and general effect. "Peggy" scored an "A" superior, excellent, good, fair and poor. Results: Escambia High, superior; Gulf Breeze High, excellent; Tate High, superior; Milton High, superior; Navarre High, excellent; Pace High, superior; Pensacola High, superior; Pine Forest High, superior; Washington High, excellent.

No class Monday for Santa Rosa students

Santa Rosa County students will be out of school Monday for a teacher planning day. Class will resume Tuesday. Details: Visit www.santarosa.k12.fl.us.

'Pony wars' under way at West Florida High

West Florida High School is participating in a competition that will raise money to help fund the prevention of juvenile diabetes. The high school's Health Occupations Students of America chapter will compete against other chapters in a "pony wars" competition that lasts through December. Each chapter has a jar in which students will collect as many pennies as they can. The chapter that collects the most pennies wins the competition. All proceeds will go to the Juvenile Diabetes Association. HOSA is a national student organization that aims to promote career opportunities in the health care industry and to advance the delivery of quality health care. For more information, call Monica Diaz-Spry, nursing instructor at West Florida High School, at 941-6221.

RECYCLE

Escambia County Division of Solid Waste Management

Regional Roundup

8 a.m. to noon, Saturday, October 23 at Tate High School

FREE and SAFE Disposal of Household Chemicals, Four Tires* and Electronics (no appliances)

Escambia County, FL citizens only

Escambia County citizens can properly dispose of household hazardous waste such as cleaners, paint, aerosols, lawn and garden chemicals, automotive maintenance products and up to four tires per vehicle, per household, per event. We are also collecting electronics such as computers, monitors, copiers, fax machines and TVs, as well as shoes for Soles4Souls.

837-2180 • www.EscambiaRecycles.com

If you have large quantities of electronics please call Solid Waste Management, 937-2180, for an appointment.

*Maximum of four tires per vehicle, per household, per event.

*Type of household appliance doesn't matter, power and fridges not accepted.

ASTRO

20,000

ASTRO

News Journal

Member of the Associated Press Vol. 122 Issue 286

HOW TO REACH THE INFORMATION CENTER:

For general information, call 905-2600. For advertising information, call 905-2600. For subscription information, call 1-877-424-0028.

Category	Rate	Rate	Rate
Annual	\$12.00	\$12.00	\$12.00
6 Months	\$6.00	\$6.00	\$6.00
3 Months	\$3.00	\$3.00	\$3.00
1 Month	\$1.00	\$1.00	\$1.00

HOW TO PLACE AN ADVERTISEMENT:

Call 905-2600, Ext. 4000. Delivery: 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Please print your name and address.

FOR QUESTIONS ABOUT HOME DELIVERY:

Call 905-2600, Ext. 4000. Delivery: 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Please print your name and address.

FOR EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES:

Call 905-2600, Ext. 4000. Delivery: 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Please print your name and address.

Today

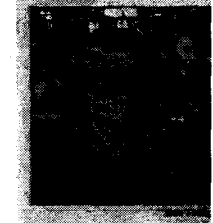
College men for Making History Against Breast Cancer: 7 a.m. to 2 p.m., Central & Mainland Pkwy., 2107 Abbott Blvd., Call 291-4700.

Brine Across the Bridge for Breast Cancer Awareness: 8 a.m. Join us for the Bob Dole Bridge and be dressed blue together to walk across the bridge from Gulf Breeze to Pensacola Beach. Participation is \$5 and the donation of a new or gently used bra will be given to a local women's shelter after the event. Meet at 7 a.m. in the AppRiver complex in Gulf Breeze or at The Grand Martin parking lot on Pensacola Beach. Visit www.colm00491.com.

Old East Hill Preservation District's Family Fest: 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. The event features food, live music, a raffle, fortune telling, dancing and a neighborhood-wide yard sale between the houses of North Avenue and Conventas, Hayne and Wright streets. Call 920-1101.

Local Sweet Corn Farmers' corn roast: 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturdays and 1 to 5 p.m. Sundays. Oct. 31: 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. Oct. 22: 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Oct. 23: 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Oct. 24: 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Oct. 25: 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Oct. 26: 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Oct. 27: 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Oct. 28: 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Oct. 29: 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Oct. 30: 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Oct. 31: 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

TODAY AT THE P



Emily Davis, 10, and her brother, Wiggle Worm ride Thursday afternoon of the Pensacola Intertaste Fair. Through Oct. 31.

PNJ.COM/FAIR: PH

CHA

Save an additional \$10 off the sale of a chair. See store for details. Luxe

NEWTON'S LAWS | LETTIN' LOOSE

Auburn QB Cam Newton runs circles around LSU in record-breaking performance. **SPORTS, 1D**

Bras span Bob Sikes Bridge for breast cancer awareness. **LOCAL, 1B**



SUNDAY'S News Journal

OCTOBER 24, 2010, PENSACOLA, FL

Area's Only Accredited Chest Pain Center

ER West Florida HOSPITAL

Palin pumps GOP in Orlando

Conservative darling knocks Dems at rally

By Bill Cottrell
News Journal staff writer

ORLANDO — Sarah Palin told fired-up Republicans on Saturday that Florida can change the country's direction by electing GOP congressional challengers.

Palin got a rapturous welcome from about 2,000 conservative activists who waved American flags and red signs inscribed "Fire Pelosi." The 2008 vice presidential nominee said the stakes are huge on Nov. 2, and winning control of one or both chambers of Congress will determine whether President Barack Obama's policies will continue for two more years.

We have life or death choices coming on Nov. 2
—Sarah Palin

The Republican National Committee's "Summit to the Finish" rally featured crowd-pleasing appearances by U.S. Senate nominee Marco Rubio, state Cabinet candidate Jeff Atwater, running for chief financial officer and U.S. Rep. Adam Putnam, the GOP nominee for agriculture commissioner.

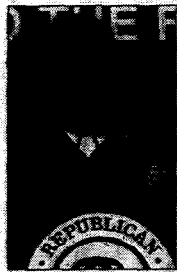
Attorney General Bill McCollum, who belatedly endorsed gubernatorial nominee Rick Scott on Friday, put in an appearance but didn't address the crowd.

Sen. and Rep. Ron Roubal, the Republican nominee for attorney general, did not attend.

Tickets to the rally were \$25, but a private reception with headliners cost \$1,000.

Attendees chanted "Sarah, Sarah, Sarah," and some brought "Palin for President" items from vendors outside the event.

See PALIN, 17A



Former Alaska Gov. Sarah Palin speaks to supporters at a Republican National Committee rally in Orlando on Saturday.

FACING JUDGMENT

Leonard Patrick Gonzales Jr. faces trial in Billings slaying



News Journal file photo

Leonard Patrick Gonzales Jr. stands trial starting Monday on two charges of first-degree murder and a charge of home invasion in the deaths of Byrd and Melanie Billings. Gonzales is the first to go to trial in the couple's death.

Testimony of two teens reveals details of long-planned heist that led to couple's death

Kris Wernowsky
kwernowsky@prj.com

It was a robbery that was more than a year in the making.

Leonard Patrick Gonzales Jr. had his sights set on a safe in the home of Byrd and Melanie Billings that he believed contained \$15 million. To get the riches, he assembled a crew of small-time drug pushers and thugs to help him burst into the home on a sprawling lot in Beulah, take the safe and run.

But the heist spiraled into far more.

Shortly after entering the home, two members of the crew saw Gonzales Jr. shot



PHOTOGRAPH BY JEFFREY HARRIS

and killed Byrd Billings. Moments later, Gonzales Jr. fatally shot Melanie Billings. Nine adopted children, all with special needs, also were in the home.



PHOTOGRAPH BY JEFFREY HARRIS

On Monday, Gonzales Jr.'s trial on two charges of first-degree murder and a charge of home invasion is scheduled to begin in Escambia Circuit Court.

See KILLINGS, 16A



Melanie and Byrd Billings

INSIDE: 16-17A

■ Did Gonzales Jr. span "Mexican Mafia" rumor?
■ The 10 defendants and their charges in the couple's death.

ONLINE

More about the Billings and the defendants at prj.com/billings

Vote for change or more of same?

Same Hill leaders could emerge from voter upheaval

Lauree Kellman

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Change at the top? Not necessarily.

Whichever party controls the House and Senate after the Nov. 2 elections probably will install the same leaders whose policymaking helped bring about the sour economy, nearly double-digit unemployment and deficit spending that has led voters to call for fresh faces.

But different lineups could mean different fates.

For health care, taxation, government spending and regulation, energy and foreign policy, and President Barack Obama's bid for a second term.

The newly elected, no matter how big their freshman class, will have to wait for power. At most, they may get junior leadership seats in each chamber as a symbolic gesture to the populist wave they rode in on, lawmakers and congressional officials said.

Democrats would have to find a new leader to run the Senate if they keep their majority but Harry Reid faces to lose party favorite Sharron Angle in Nevada. Little more than a week before the election, their race is a toss-up.

The last time voters turned out a sitting party leader in the Senate was in 2004 when Democrat Tom Daschle of South Dakota lost to Republican Sen. John Thune.

If Republicans make good on what's widely seen as a House majority for the taking, the new speaker is almost certain to be Rep. John Boehner of Ohio. The 60-year-old has been in charge of House Republicans since the last two years of George W. Bush's presidency.

Democrats have spent the campaign season portraying him as Bush redux.

Should the GOP fall short, Republicans may look to a new slate of self-described "young guns" who are more strident in many of their views than Boehner. They include current Rep. Eric Cantor of Virginia, the second-ranking Republican, Wisconsin's Paul Ryan, a fiscal conservative who came close to dethroning Bush's \$700 billion bank bailout, and Kevin McCarthy of California, who after only two years in Congress took charge of recruiting the party's field of House candidates this year.

See CONGRESS, 17A

Quick Read

In Life
WOMEN'S WORLD: The Women's Club of Pensacola is celebrating 50 years. Page 1E

In Local
EARLY VOTING: Can't wait to cast your ballot? Early voting continues this week in Escambia and Santa Rosa counties. Page 1C

MAKING A DIFFERENCE: Residents in the two-county area volunteered at several projects. Page 1E

SHIFTING SANDS: The Santa Rosa Island Authority could have a new source of sand for Outerwater Beach. Page 1E

In Business
SO LOW: With mortgage rates near an all-time low, now might be a good time to take advantage. Page 1B

In the World
WIRELESS BACKLASH: Documents detailing alleged prisoner abuse by Iraqi officials are prompting fresh doubts about the prime minister's bid to remain in power. Page 6B

INSIDE

Business	1B
Calendar	3A
Classified	14F
Community	2E, 3F
Local	1C
Lobby	1C
Military	1C
Obituary	1C
Opinion	12-14A
Sports	1E
Travel	1E
Weather	1C

TO SUBSCRIBE: 877-424-0228
A Gannett Paper
Copyright 2010
\$1.50 **



BILLINGS MURDERS

Gonzalez's bragging likely spawned mafia hit rumors

Kris Wozniak
Pensacola News Journal

It became a rumor that defied the darker side of an already dark town.

The idea of the "Menton Mafia" being involved in the Billings slaying arose out of Leonard Patrick Gonzalez Jr.'s initial interview with homicide investigators at the Escambia County Sheriff's Office. Not charged with a crime at that time, Gonzalez Jr. presumed his deposition that the murders were a part of something more sinister.

"LA Mafia" he said. "The Menton Mafia."

"It's that what he's involved in," investigator Bobby Guy replied.

"I just heard that he chased money for them," Gonzalez Jr. replied.

The investigation revealed that Gonzalez Jr. also conspired in multiple hitmans as a brother and defendant man — and Hugh Higgins held recruitment meetings as early as a year before the murders.



Patrick Gonzalez Jr., right, talks with his attorney, Russell Chertkovsky during a hearing earlier this month.

said plans, and they made the decisions while using language of grandeur to intimidate the others involved.

Escambia County Sheriff David Stegman took to the podium at news and spoke of a possible contract killing and mafia connection.

A Sheriff's Office spokesman now says Morgan never publicly pushed a theory that the murders were somehow connected to the mafia.

"After the Menton Mafia arrests, Sheriff's Office was only investigating and report cases, which he had read and heard throughout the investigation," spokesman Sgt. Ted Boy said.

"I don't recall the sheriff ever individually offering a theory on Menton Mafia involvement in the murders."

They told investigators that Steven Gonzalez had dealings with the "Menton Mafia."

Steven Gonzalez gave Tice a \$20,000 loan and had he got the money from the Menton Mafia, Steven Gonzalez told an investigator he made up the mafia story thinking that Tice would not pay him back.

"You can check my account at the bank," he said. "I get my money, but it's no Menton Mafia. It's mine. I protect my money."



Asked via e-mail whether she believed the theory, she said she believed the theory.

Palin

Palin alternately poked fun at Obama and conservative Democratic leaders and issued stern warnings that the nation's economic future, military strength and diplomatic standing around the world would be better off in Republican hands.

She hammered at the president's \$787 billion economic stimulus package and poked about his "apologies" to some world leaders, saying Obama ought to apologize to 11 million

ELECTION 2010

out-of-work Americans.

She also lampooned Tallahassee's "tortle tunnel" as an example of wasteful stimulus spending.

"Tallahassee got \$3.5 million for a turtle tunnel — a turtle tunnel that will help the turtles and alligators get to the other side," she said, drawing laughs and protest from the crowd.

Palin quipped, "you can't make this stuff up," and added, "Nothing will stimulate the economy like a turtle tunnel in Tallahassee."

Republican National Committee Chairman Michael Steele and Palin said Republican control of Congress depends on anti-

Congress

The three make few bones about their ambitions. They even wrote a book about how they would run the House in a post-Boehner era. Attending the book party earlier this fall, Boehner served up a reality check of sorts: That particular kind of change is not at hand.

"The three of them know that my job is to make sure that they're well qualified and ready to take my place," Boehner said with a semi-serious grin, "at the appropriate moment."

Indeed, if that moment comes anytime soon, it's most likely because the Republicans failed to win the majority in November. In that less likely scenario,

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., probably would keep her post as second in line of succession to the presidency, even after being vilified by Republicans throughout this election season as the face of the Washington establishment.

Whether Democrats retain or lose the majority, Pelosi, 71, has a far less appealing job as leader of a smaller caucus. Publicly, she has refused to entertain the notion that she will return in any less role than as speaker.

No one has stepped forward to challenge her or her lieutenant, Majority Leader Steny Hoyer of Maryland, another "old hand" with 30 years in the House. It's uncertain whether Pelosi would want to head her party as minorie leader, a job she held four years dur-

Obagi... Beauty. It's in the details

Fall... THE SK N CARE CENTER • GULF COAST PLASTIC SURGERY

40% Off all Photo Facial Packages & all Fracture Treatments

474-0155 43 Fontaine St. Pensacola www.gulfcoastplasticsurgery.com

WE MAKE HOUSE CALLS

WE MAKE HOUSE CALLS

WE MAKE HOUSE CALLS

2010



PENSACOLA News Journal

TODAY OCT 23 MONDAY, OCTOBER 23, 2010

'Fiscal steward' presides over 'Taj Mahal'

Courthouse building chairman Judge Hawkes tasked with cutting spending under Gov. Bush



First District Court of Appeal Judges Paul Hawkes, left, and Brad Thomas wear personalized hard hats as they take state Rep. Marti Coley, R-Marianna, on a tour of the new courthouse under construction in Tallahassee last December.

Lucy Margum
St. Petersburg Times
TALLAHASSEE — Four times Paul M. Hawkes tried to become a judge. Four times without success. Success came on the fifth try, after then-Gov. Jeb Bush gained control of the nominating process. Bush picked Hawkes, a policy adviser in the Republican-controlled House, over five other nominees, including three judges. On his application, Hawkes wrote, "A judge should be accountable to the public as a fiscal steward. A judge should

not utilize practices that may be more convenient but would violate the stewardship responsibility of the court." The "fiscal steward" then set out to build what is now derided as the "Taj Mahal," a monument to prodigal spending with no taxpayer dollar spared, a courthouse outfitted with 20 miles of African mahogany, etched glass and, for each bedroom, a private kitchen and bathroom.

A reputation for thriftiness
Hawkes lost his first bid for the Florida House in 1984 to Dick Lacher of Inverness, but he won a rematch two years later. Hawkes made his reputation as a fiscal conservative looking to cut wasteful spending. In 1992, he produced his own version of the state budget, an alternative to Gov. Lawton Chiles' budget. A freshman Republican in the Democrat-controlled House, Hawkes and his budget had no prayer.

See TAJ MAHAL, 3A

Miller in line for vets post

GOP-controlled House could make Rep. chairman

Best January
News about the new House.
WASHINGTON — If the Nov. 2 elections give Republicans control of the House as expected, Rep. Jeff Miller could become chairman of the committee that oversees issues vital to veterans living in Florida's Panhandle. Miller, 51, said he is excited to lead the Veterans Affairs Committee for years to come. "The committee's goal is to find those areas that need remediation and assist the department in fixing them," he said. But first the Chamuckale Republican must defeat three independent-minded rivals who say Miller hasn't done enough for the 1st Congressional District. Nonpartisan handicappers such as the Cook Political Report and Congressional Quarterly rate the seat as "safe Republican," meaning Miller is expected to win. Miller has represented the district since 2001, when he succeeded Republican Joe Scarborough, who resigned. Miller enjoys an enormous financial advantage over his three challengers. He has raised more than \$500,000 and had \$33,532 left on Sept. 30. His best-funded challenger, John Kravus, a Pensacola private investigator, raised \$22,771, including \$9,822 that he lent himself. But Kravus had only \$540 left for the final month of the campaign. Joe Cantrell, a Pace retiree, loaned his campaign \$11,000 and

See MILLER, 3A

'EXTREME' HOMECOMING

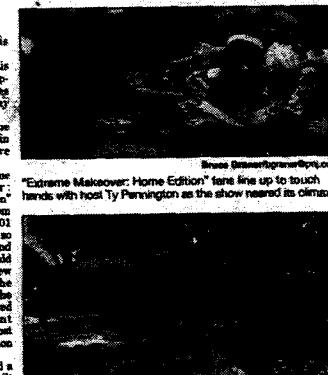


Fans of "Extreme Makeover: Home Edition" gather outside the new home of Firis Gaston and his family Sunday afternoon just hours before the home was revealed to the family.

'Makeover' family gets a very warm welcome

Crowd roars as family sees new house

Thyrin Bland
tnews@tp.com
Tears rolled down Firis Gaston's face. It was the moment he, his family and a throng of supporters behind him had been waiting for all day Sunday. Firis, his family and the crew of "Extreme Makeover: Home Edition" fans lined up to touch hands with host Ty Pennington as the show neared its climax. "Extreme Makeover: Home Edition" fans lined up to touch hands with host Ty Pennington as the show neared its climax. "Extreme Makeover: Home Edition" fans lined up to touch hands with host Ty Pennington as the show neared its climax.



Construction of the 3,800-square-foot "Extreme Makeover" home continued on Thursday afternoon. The home was built over the course of six days last week.

See MAKEOVER, 3A
MORE PHOTOS: INSIDE • 5A // ONLINE • PNJ.COM

1st trial starts in Billings killings

Jury selection for Gonzalez Jr. case begins today

Kris Wernowsky
kwernowsky@tp.com
At the peak of fascination with the murders of Byrd and Melanie Billings in the summer of 2009, more than a dozen news agencies flooded the news conference and camped outside the Escambia County Sheriff's Office and the couple's funeral. As the first trial is scheduled to begin at 9 a.m. today for Leonard Patrick Gonzalez Jr., the man facing two counts of first-degree murder in the couple's deaths on July 9, 2009, the scene will look decidedly different. Media interest has tapered, but TruTV, formerly known as CourtTV, is expected to cover the trial from start to finish along with The Associated Press and other local media outlets, said Sheila Sims, media coordinator for the court. Today, two prosecutors and two defense attorneys are ready to begin questioning a pool of 100 potential jurors for a trial that is expected to last two weeks. They'll witness the jury pool to 12 jurors and two alternates. Circuit Judge Nick Geeker, who will preside over the trial, said it could take up to two days to pick the jury. Gonzalez Jr.'s attorneys already have requested the trial be moved. Geeker has ruled they must attempt to pick a jury in Escambia County, where the murders occurred. After that attempt, a decision to move the trial could be made.

See BILLINGS, 3A

Quick Read

Sports
TIGERS ON TOP: Curt Harmon and the Auburn Tigers are No. 1 in the BCS standings. Page 1C

In Local
CARBIDE MADE: Gulf Power Co.'s new Lantana Gas-to-Energy Facility is now turning smelly methane from Escambia County's rotting garbage into electricity. Page 1B

In Business
ONLINE TV: Broadcasters took a step toward eliminating free shows on the Web after they blocked access to programming online. Page 6B

Nation
OIL SPILL: Scientists have found substantial amounts of oil on the Gulf seafloor, contradicting statements that the oil largely had disappeared. Page 4A

INSIDE
Business — 2B
Calendar — 2A
Classified — 1-3C
Columns — 6C
Commentary — 2C
Local — 1B
Lifestyle — 1B
Columns — 2E
Opinion — 2E
Sports — 1C
Television — 5C

TO SUBSCRIBE (877) 421-0222
A Gannett Paper
Copyright 2010
75 cents + tax



10025192010

FLORIDA

Taj Mahal

He left the Legislature in 1994 to run for circuit judge in the Central Florida District. He lost the race. Two years later, he announced plans to run again but dropped out before the election.

The November elections that year brought Republican control of the House and Senate. In 1996, Hawkes became a behind-the-scenes adviser.

In 1999, Hawkes applied for appointment to an open seat on the Central Florida District. The nominating committee did not send him his name to the governor.

The tide soon changed for Hawkes. Legislators approved a change in the way judges are appointed.

Hawkes made his fourth failed try for a judgeship in August 2001.

A seat came open on the 1st District Court of Appeal in late 2002. By then, the impact of the new law giving voters more say in the election of judges was being felt.

And for Hawkes, the fifth time would be the charm.

Key appointment: Having never been a judge, landing on the District Court of Appeal was big. The court not only hears appeals from 82 counties from Pensacola to Jacksonville, it also hears most appeals involving the state and all workers' compensation cases.

By tradition on the appeals court, the position of chief judge rotates by seniority, but Hawkes wanted the job.

The election for the chief judge to take over in 2009 divided the court, literally and figuratively. Hawkes challenged Judge Peter D. Webster, who was next in line by seniority. The initial vote was 7-7. Hawkes won the runoff.

At the ceremony when Hawkes took over as chief judge, he presented the crown that is part of a long-running tradition on the court.

Reigning Chief Judge Edwin B. Browning, remembering handing over the crown and mangling the Shakespeare quote, "Lenny has the head that wears a crown."

Little did he know: Speaking afterward, by the time Hawkes became chief judge, he and fellow 1st DCA Judge Brad Thomas had worked several years to

Billings

FROM LA: Gonzalez Jr.'s attorneys have argued that the public will see surveillance footage from the Billings' home that shows the robbery — unless the court blocks it.

Gonzalez ordered the videotape removed from public viewing last year at the request of the Billings' surviving family members.

Members of the media were allowed to view the tape under the supervision of the State Attorney's Office.

Gonzalez Jr.'s attorneys John Jay Gonzalez and Randy Etheridge said it would be improper to let the public see the video because it could potentially taint the jury pool for other defendants in the case.

Four jurors who allegedly participated in the robbery haven't entered pleas and will stand trial.

The judge said that despite his order, the surveillance footage will be treated like any other piece of evidence.

Assistant State Attorney John Molchan said he expects to call the Billings' oldest daughter, Judy Markham, as his first witness so she can remain in the courtroom for the entire trial.

Witnesses are usually sequestered in the hallway outside the courtroom so their testimony isn't tainted by comments made by other witnesses.

Billings

FROM LA: Gonzalez Jr.'s attorneys have argued that the public will see surveillance footage from the Billings' home that shows the robbery — unless the court blocks it.

Gonzalez ordered the videotape removed from public viewing last year at the request of the Billings' surviving family members.

Members of the media were allowed to view the tape under the supervision of the State Attorney's Office.

Gonzalez Jr.'s attorneys John Jay Gonzalez and Randy Etheridge said it would be improper to let the public see the video because it could potentially taint the jury pool for other defendants in the case.

Four jurors who allegedly participated in the robbery haven't entered pleas and will stand trial.

The judge said that despite his order, the surveillance footage will be treated like any other piece of evidence.

Assistant State Attorney John Molchan said he expects to call the Billings' oldest daughter, Judy Markham, as his first witness so she can remain in the courtroom for the entire trial.

Witnesses are usually sequestered in the hallway outside the courtroom so their testimony isn't tainted by comments made by other witnesses.

LOCAL

FROM LA: Gonzalez Jr.'s attorneys have argued that the public will see surveillance footage from the Billings' home that shows the robbery — unless the court blocks it.

Gonzalez ordered the videotape removed from public viewing last year at the request of the Billings' surviving family members.

Members of the media were allowed to view the tape under the supervision of the State Attorney's Office.

Gonzalez Jr.'s attorneys John Jay Gonzalez and Randy Etheridge said it would be improper to let the public see the video because it could potentially taint the jury pool for other defendants in the case.

Four jurors who allegedly participated in the robbery haven't entered pleas and will stand trial.

The judge said that despite his order, the surveillance footage will be treated like any other piece of evidence.

Assistant State Attorney John Molchan said he expects to call the Billings' oldest daughter, Judy Markham, as his first witness so she can remain in the courtroom for the entire trial.

Witnesses are usually sequestered in the hallway outside the courtroom so their testimony isn't tainted by comments made by other witnesses.



Byrd and Marissa Billings were slain in their Beulah home on July 9, 2008.

ELECTION 2010

Miller

FROM LA: And Jim Bryan of Laurel Hill, the 2008 Democratic nominee who lost with 30 percent of the vote, is trying again, this time as a write-in candidate to avoid the cost of filing fees.

The strictest barrier to entry for voters is in military issues. Miller serves on the Armed Services Committee, the Intelligence Committee and the Veterans' Affairs Committee.

Rep. Cliff Suarez, R-Ocala, would be next in line to become chairman if Republicans regain control of the House.

But if Suarez attempts a different chairmanship — of the Energy and Commerce Committee — Miller has a virtual lock on heading Veterans' Affairs.

"I think there has been very little oversight," Miller said of the committee. "When you've got the second-largest agency in our country administering everything from health care to benefits to our nation's largest program, there are tremendous opportunities for good work as well as substandard."

If Miller doesn't end up heading Veterans' Affairs, he also is in line to head either the Armed Services Subcommittee, which deals with terrorism issues, or the Intelligence subcommittee on Oversight and Investigation.

With no chance to match Miller in fundraising, the three independent challengers use websites and appearances at local gatherings to get their message out.

Krasne and Cantrell echo Miller's 2006 vote in favor of the Central American Free Trade Agreement as one of the best reasons to oppose him.

The legislation, which the two challengers say shipped jobs overseas, was approved 217-215, meaning a no vote from Miller could have changed the outcome.

Krasne, 64, described himself as a Reagan Republican eager to offer tax breaks to manufacturing firms that create jobs. He also would like to replace the federal income tax with a "fair tax" on consumption.

Control, 75, said his priorities include raising tariffs on imports to save American jobs, deporting illegal immigrants and denying citizenship to their children born in the U.S. and withdrawing from all foreign wars.

Bryan, 63, a retired Army paratrooper, would like to build a veterans hospital in the district or veterans wouldn't have to travel to Biloxi, Miss., or Montgomery, Ala., for medical care.

He also would like to encourage companies making renewable energy products to locate along the Interstate 10 corridor.

"We need fresh eyes in Congress," Bryan said.

NewsJournal Classifieds section containing various notices, contact information, and subscription rates.

Major's Betterliving Sunrooms advertisement featuring images of sunrooms, pricing, and contact information.

2010 OCT 25

PENSACOLA News Journal

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 26, 2010

TODAY OCT. 26
ADULTS: \$4.00
CHILDREN: \$2.00

City to curb moonlighting

Outside employment policy to be revised; at least one employee to be disciplined

Janice Page
page@cityjournal.com

The City of Pensacola will revise its policy on employment and outside employment, train employees on the changes and discipline at least one employee for violation of the policy.

These actions by City Manager Al Oddy are in response to an independent investigation into whether Pensacola firefighters were abusing their outside

employment privileges.

Robert Saffien — a Tallahassee attorney hired by the city to look into the matter — issued a report saying there's no significant problem with moonlighting abuse within the Pensacola Fire Department.

"A majority of the individuals with whom I spoke advised that they have no knowledge, either direct or indirect, of any PFD employee engaging in substan-

tive work relating to his secondary employment while on his shift as a firefighter," Saffien wrote.

The firm interviewed 26 fire department employees, most all of whom have outside employment, the report says.

City policy allows employees to hold second jobs as long as the work does not take place on city time or conflict with city duties.

The report noted firefighters'

admissions of a few "incidental" violations, such as making a brief call phone call to a customer of their outside business, or driving by an outside job site to check on workers.

The investigation into PFD outside employment arose after former fire Capt. Robert Sumner plead guilty to grand theft last month. He was accused of

In other business

The City Council's Committee of the Whole on Monday filed four Community Maritime Park Associates board seats that are set to expire soon.

Out of 11 nominees, the four incumbents currently in these CMAPA seats — Dick Baker, Juanita Scott, Collier Merrill and City Councilwoman Megan Pratt — were reappointed.

CVTATA
TALLAHASSEE
1000 N. GULF BLVD.
TALLAHASSEE, FL 32302
904-833-1111

CVTATA
TALLAHASSEE
1000 N. GULF BLVD.
TALLAHASSEE, FL 32302
904-833-1111

CVTATA
TALLAHASSEE
1000 N. GULF BLVD.
TALLAHASSEE, FL 32302
904-833-1111

CVTATA
TALLAHASSEE
1000 N. GULF BLVD.
TALLAHASSEE, FL 32302
904-833-1111

9th Avenue
850-476-8666

2000 Lexus RX 300
Auto, leather, Ext. Condition
\$26,999

2002 Lexus RX300
70K mi. AT, leather
\$19,999

2005 Nissan Altima
70K mi. AT, leather
\$14,999

2003 Infiniti G35 Coupe
white pearl, low mi. auto.
\$14,999

2007 Mitsubishi Eclipse GS
4K mi. sunroof, auto.
\$16,999

2004 Jaguar XJ6
AT, leather, nice
\$18,999

2007 Ford Edge SLE
New, sunroof, chrome wheels,
\$22,999

2008 BMW 328i
Auto, leather, Only 14K mi.
\$28,999

YEAR 100,000 MILE POWERTRAIN LIMITED WARRANTY
Dodge Nitro SLT 4x4

CERTIFIED PRICE \$20,995
Chevy or Ford & Country Touring

CERTIFIED PRICE \$23,996
PRE-OWNED SPECIALS

2009 Chevy Malibu LT \$16,424
1.8L, 20K miles

2008 Dodge Ram 1500 Sport \$17,995
Cumulative 27K miles

2008 Chrysler Pacifica Touring \$19,275
Auto, DVD, 20K miles

2007 Nissan Pathfinder LE \$19,906
Auto, leather, 20K miles

2007 Jeep Wrangler X \$19,927
SERVICED, 20K miles

2008 Dodge Journey SXT \$19,937
leather, 20K miles

2007 Saturn Icy \$19,960
Auto, 20K miles

2010 Jeep Grand Cherokee \$20,456
SERVICED, Auto, leather, 20K miles

2010 Ford Edge SEL \$23,984
Auto, full power, clean, 19K miles

2010 Ford F-150 Supercrew \$24,991
XL, Appearance, 10K miles

2009 Ford F-150 Limited \$33,827
4.6L, Auto, leather, leather

888-879-5060

'EXTREME MAKEOVER: HOME EDITION'



Frank Loti III of Heritage Home, far right, introduces Finis Gaston's family to government and civic leaders Monday.

Home is just the beginning

'Makeover' family gets money, vehicle, scholarships

Troy Moon
moon@cityjournal.com

Finis Gaston's new "home" looks ready for Christmas. Green wreaths with red ribbons adorn the brick house. A giant Christmas tree stands in the yard, already decorated with ornaments. But the presents given Gaston and his family can't fit under a tree.

Gaston, 29, was given the 3,600-square-foot home on Sunday from the ABC reality program "Extreme Makeover: Home Edition." On Monday, the

More photos and video online of the Extreme Makeover family and Monday's wrap party at pjd.com

presented last, coming:

- College scholarships.
- A new vehicle.
- \$50,000 to help with bills and expenses. And more.

The girls were given during a Monday press conference at Gaston's new home near Michigan Avenue.

"I'm just so grateful to everyone who has helped," Gaston said. "This is all so overwhelming."

Community leaders, business owners, even Escambia County Commissioners Grover Robinson IV and Wilson Robertson attended Monday's event, where gifts were bestowed on the family.

University of West Florida President Judy Bense awarded Gaston and his family a \$75,000 university scholarship.

Gaston previously attended Alabama A&M University. He

left after his mother died to care for his sister's three children. Gaston will live in the home with his two young nephews, his niece and her infant son.

The family also was given \$50,000 by Pen Air Federal Credit Union, a 2004 Ford Explorer from a national non-profit organization that provides vehicles to needy families, free services from Cox Communications, season tickets to Pensacola Pelicans baseball games and more.

BATTLING BULLIES

Recent teen suicides heighten awareness locally, officials say

Brian Kozakounis
kozakounis@cityjournal.com

Alex Simmons was supposed to be a graduate from Milton High School in May. Instead, the openly gay 18-year-old dropped out and is completing his senior year online.

Simmons came out when he was 18 and he's been bullied ever since. Once, a student threw a can of soda at him in the

Inside // 4A

Study finds "bullying" ethics among teens. Half of U.S. high schoolers say they have bullied or been bullied in the past year.

When you're in a high school environment, especially in this area, everybody has a certain standard," Simmons said. "If you don't meet that standard, you're looked

What can you do?

If you're being bullied by a firm, it's a firm, it's a firm, it's a firm. This is not funny. You're hurting your feelings. Practice saying those things with your parents, or in front of a mirror.

Stick with your friends. It's harder to bully a group of people.

Talk to an adult, such as a parent, teacher or school counselor. This is not being a "tattle-tale." It is sticking up for yourself the right way.

Don't retaliate. This gets you in trouble. Plus when you're victim, you get becoming a bully yourself.

—Compiled by Gen' Lincoln, guidance counselor at Baldwin Middle School

Quick Read

In Local

TURTLE BEACHING: The number of sea turtle nests found on Pensacola beaches was down considerably when compared to last year's nesting and hatching season. Oil spill cleanup operations are likely to blame, wildlife experts say. Page 1B

SEARCH FOR BIBLE: Leaders in Santa Rosa and Escambia counties look for the first step Monday in a process that may give leaseholders on Santa Rosa the option of taking ownership of their property. Page 1B

In Business

TECH PRIME: Phase one of the Downtown Technology Campus in Pensacola will get under way next month thanks to the approval of a \$2.26 million construction contract. Page 6B

In the World

DRUG WARS: Armed men burst into a drug rehab center in Tijuana, and police said at least 10 people were killed. Page 4A

In the Nation

ELECTION: One week before Election Day, the critical "enthusiasm gap" between Republicans and Democrats is a chasm, a new USA Today/Gallup Poll finds. Page 4A

SOLAR PROMISE: The Obama administration approved a 1,000-megawatt solar project in Southern California, the nation's largest solar project ever planned for public lands. Page 6A

INSIDE

Business: 1B
Calendar: 2A
Classified: 2A-4C
Comics: 4E
Illustration: 5C-6C
Local: 7B
Lobby: 7B
Opinion: 7B
Sports: 7C
Television: 7E

TO SUBSCRIBE: (877) 424-0026
A General Paper
Copyright 2010
75 cents a copy

OIL SPILL

CLEANING UP THE GULF

BP hits back

CEO defends company against media, politicians

Janice Wardell
wardell@cityjournal.com

LONDON — BP Chief Executive Bob Dudley accused some politicians and the media on Monday of being too hasty to pin all the blame on his company for the devastating Gulf of Mexico spill — and emphasized the need for deep-water drilling.

In his first major public speech since taking the top job, Dudley also said BP would not pull out of the United States — and that the U.S. needs a company with BP's resources to meet its vast energy needs.

Dudley delivered a speech whose mood hovered between firm and penitent, seeking to make clear that BP was learning every lesson possible from the disaster. He stressed that he also has met with experts from other hazardous industries, including the nuclear and chemical industries, as part of the company's focus on improving safety.

"We were certainly not perfect in our response, but we have tried to do the right thing," Dudley added. Before becoming the



Dudley

See BP, 3A

OPINIONS

Take right seriously, go to polls

Let's just be perfectly honest and face the stark reality: There are a myriad of reasons to be skeptical about electoral politics.

Not matter how hard we, John Q. Public, try to get involved, stay engaged and believe in the system of government, we find ourselves disappointed, downright disgusted with what we see and hear from our elected officials.

For many of us, the question of whether we will participate in the process comes down to this question: Why bother?

It's a legitimate question that is being asked even more as Election Day next Tuesday inches closer.

Why I will vote

I saw a headline in the newspaper the other day that said, "Many people just not interested in voting."

In the article, it referred to a 2006 survey by the Pew Research Center for People and the Press that found that 32 percent of adult Americans weren't registered or believed their registration had expired.

The main reasons given were a lack of time, a recent move or a disinterest in politics.

I know the empty feeling of being disinterested in politics in general and dissatisfied with almost every candidate seeking office.

I'm well aware of the sad and sad of excuses people use for not voting. I used to sing in their choir. I, too, had become weary of politicians who tout personality over principles and money over morals.

But I soon saw the seeds of my ways. I began to realize that by not voting, I was giving into the hands of those who need their power and persuasion to keep others locked to a corrupt system that is controlled by money and special interests.

Come next Tuesday, I will vote because I know that, while politicians cannot act as from ourselves, they can be a powerful symbol of the best within us.

I will vote on Nov. 2 because my ancestors not only endured oppression, physical and verbal abuse, and humiliation, but died for my privilege.

I will vote because I have found the real world is sometimes an alienating place, and this is one way to feel less alone.

Voting is a gift

We don't always appreciate how lucky we are to live in a democracy that allows us a say in who runs our local, state and national governments.

As with any privilege, it is an easy to take the right to vote for granted or become blasé about its importance.

But you shouldn't. Voting this precious right off so easily.

Voting is a tremendous gift. People in other countries are still fighting and dying for this right. You should be thankful because you can. I can and I will vote next week. If you haven't already, you should, too.

It pays to vote. It costs too much not to.

Markham testimony set today

Billingses' daughter to appear in Gonzalez Jr. murder trial

Opening statements are expected to begin at 9 a.m. today in the trial of a man accused in the shooting deaths of Byrd and Melaine Billings.

Jury selection began at 10 a.m. Monday with attorneys for Leonard Patrick Gonzalez Jr. and prosecutors reserved for the public and the media on Monday.

The 12 jurors and one alternate — 11 women and two men — were selected after a day of questioning by attorneys.

Assistant State Attorney

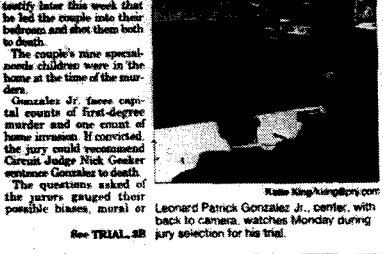
John Molchese said the Billingses' daughter Ashley Markham will be his first witness and should testify later this week that he led the couple into their bedroom and shot them both to death.

The couple's nine special-needs children were in the home at the time of the murders.

Gonzalez Jr. faces capital counts of first-degree murder and one count of home invasion. If convicted, the jury could recommend a death sentence.

Current Judge Nick Gonsky sentenced Gonzalez to death.

The questions asked of the jurors gauged their possible biases, moral or



DOUSING THE FLAMES



Forest ranger Staur Lowrey hoses down a smoldering tree stump Monday following a wildfire south of Interstate 10 in Santa Rosa County. The Florida Division of Forestry has not determined the cause of the Saturday fire that closed the Interstate 10 bridge over Escambia Bay for more than 12 hours.

The I-10 bridge reopened about 7:20 a.m. Monday, according to Brad Baker, the emergency services coordinator with Santa Rosa County Emergency Management.

The bridge closed Sunday when smoke from the nearby fire decreased visibility. Traffic was diverted north to U.S. 90. The fire burned about 15 to 20 acres of woodlands on Escambia Bay south of Interstate 10, said Joe Zwierchowski, public information officer for the Florida Division of Forestry.

Beach property ownership discussed

Leaders in Santa Rosa and Escambia counties took the first step Monday in a process they hope will give beachfronters on Santa Rosa Island the option of taking ownership of their property.

Members of the two county commissions met in joint session in Milton to discuss seeking federal legislation to allow property on Navarre Beach and Pensacola Beach to be transferred to willing leaseholders.

"I've been here since 2002, and this is the fourth time our commissions have gotten together to talk about this," Santa Rosa County Commissioner Gertie Goodin said. "It's not going to be, necessarily, a quick process, but we're going to start the process today."

Escambia Commissioner Grover Robinson IV said the time is right now because recent court cases have approved levying taxes against beach property, essentially as if the leaseholders did own it.

"We're not here to decide if there will be taxes on the property; we're here to decide if there are options that we're simply here today to see if there are options that are not

Oil spill, beach cleanup, turtle nests don't mix

How to help?

Report any injured, dead or disoriented sea turtles to the Wildlife Alert hotline at (800) 406-3822. If you pick a sea turtle on your fishing line, do not cut the line, immediately call the hot line to get the turtle assistance.

If you spot a sea turtle crawling on the beach, or should you find a sea turtle nest, call the Gulf Islands National Seashore at (850) 916-3070.

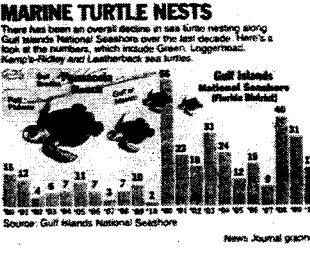
Kimberly Blair
 kimblair.com

The majestic, underdog beaches of Gulf Islands National Seashore are attractive to nesting sea turtles searching for a quiet place in which to dig a hole and deposit up to 100 eggs.

But throw in armies of noisy BP cleanup crews, all-terrain vehicles, beach rakes and Sand Sharks roosting around the beach 24-7, and it's no surprise the number of nests this year dropped significantly.

The peak nesting and hatching season runs from May 1 to the end of October. Only 24 nests were discovered on beaches from Navarre to Gulf Islands National Seashore's Johnson Beach during the season.

Of those, 12 nests were moved to the East



Quick Read

Pond given initial approval

A Pensacola City Council committee on Monday agreed to award a nearly \$1.1 million contract to Utility Services Co. Inc. of Gulf Breeze to construct the Admiral Mason stormwater pond and facilities.

As part of its partnership in the technology park project, the city is handling construction of the stormwater retention facility with the project's development costs.

The vote of the full council is Thursday.

Visit the Firehouse of Horror

The Holley-Navarre Fire District and Holley-Navarre Fire District Professional Firefighters will host the Haunted Firehouse of Horror and open house from 7 to 11 p.m. Friday and Saturday.

For more information, call 330-5226.

Two injured in Sunday accident still hospitalized

A Pensacola man and a Gulf Breeze woman remain hospitalized Monday after the vehicle they were in struck a tree Sunday evening on Lakeview Avenue in Pensacola.

Montie A. Lewis, 24, was in serious condition, and Ann A. Pope, 25, was in critical condition, Baptist Hospital staff said.

The 3:15 a.m. crash occurred as Lewis was driving a Ford pickup west on Lakeview Avenue near 16th Avenue. A

Pensacola police crash report said.

According to police, the pickup was traveling an estimated 70 mph when it hit the tree in the median of the 1600 block of Lakeview Avenue.

Despite the pickup's high rate of speed, there were no skid marks from the vehicle.

The posted speed limit in the area is 30 mph, police said.

Pensacola police continue to investigate.

Three vehicle break-ins reported at Extension Office

The Escambia County Sheriff's Office is investigating three vehicle break-ins at the Escambia County Extension Office in the 3700 block of Stadium Road.

The passenger-side windows were broken out of two Chevrolet pickups and a Chevrolet sport utility vehicle.

Two laptops and a baton were stolen from the vehicles, the Sheriff's Office said.

The break-ins were discovered Monday morning.

No arrests have been made in connection with the vehicle burglaries.

Corrections

To report an error, call 435-0511, or e-mail corrections@prj.com.

Follow our feeds online

Learn more and subscribe at prj.com/rss. We're on Twitter at www.twitter.com/prj.

OCT 26 2010

EXHIBIT B

**(Curriculum Vitae for Dr. Edward J.
Bronson and List of Articles/New Journal)**

Curriculum Vita
October 2015

Edward J. Bronson Professor Emeritus, Political Science, Public Law
Home Office: 2086 Vallombrosa Ave. California State University, Chico
Chico, CA 95926 e-mail: ebronson@csuchico.edu
(530) 343-6653

EDUCATION Ph.D., Political Science (Public Law), University of Colorado, 1972
 LL.M., New York University, 1961
 B.S., J.D., University of Denver, 1957, 1959

ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE

Professor of Political Science, Public Law, California State University,
Chico, since 1969 (now Emeritus)

Courses: Constitutional Law, Administration of Justice, Legal Analysis

University of Colorado

Visiting Assistant Professor, Spring 1972. Teaching Associate/Instructor, 1965-69

University of Alaska, Anchorage

Visiting Scholar, Spring 1981

College of Micronesia

Visiting Scholar, Spring and Summer 1978

Visiting Scholar, Grant Sawyer Center for Justice Studies, 2000

Center for Judiciary Studies, Ministry of Justice, Lisbon, Portugal

Fulbright Scholar, Researcher and Lecturer, Spring 1992

OTHER TEACHING (summer teaching and other programs)

School of Law, University of Santa Clara, 1991, 1983, 1979, 1975, 1974

Constitutional Law, Jurisprudence, Legal Analysis (CLEO)

School of Law, Univ of San Francisco, 1990, 1982. Jurisprudence, Legal Analysis (CLEO)

Hastings College of Law, University of California, 1989. Legal Writing (CLEO)

La Raza LEOP, 1976. Constitutional Law, Legal Analysis

School of Law, University of San Diego, 1988, 1987. Jurisprudence, Legal Analysis (CLEO)

University of California School of Law, Berkeley, 1986, 1984
Jurisprudence, Legal Analysis (CLEO)

California Western School of Law, 1985. Jurisprudence, Legal Analysis (CLEO)

Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands; Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands; and Ponape, Federated States of Micronesia; 2002, 2000, 1994, 1987, 1979, 1978, 1977. Program Director; taught Constitutional Law, Legal Writing and Analysis

Justice Center, University of Alaska, Anchorage, 1982, 1981, 1980
Program Director; Constitutional Law

School of Law, University of Puget Sound (now Seattle), 1981. Constitutional Law, Jurisprudence (CLEO)

School of Law, University of California, Los Angeles, 1977. Legal Analysis (CLEO)

Third World Studies Institute. New College of Law, 1977. Constitutional Law, Legal Analysis

Cal Northern School of Law. Former Academic Advisor to Board of Directors; currently on Board of Trustees, taught Constitutional Law

PUBLICATIONS AND CONFERENCE PAPERS

Change of Venue, with J. Philipsborn, Ch. 15, in *California Criminal Law: Procedure & Practice*, 1995-2014 ed.; Berkeley: Continuing Education of the Bar, California

Pretrial and Trial Publicity, with J. Philipsborn, Ch. 14, in *California Criminal Law: Procedure & Practice*, 1995-2014 eds.; Berkeley: Continuing Education of the Bar, California

Change of Venue Declaration in *United States of America v. Dzhokhr A. Tsarnaev in Boston*, 2015 Capital Case Defense Seminar Syllabus. L.A.: California Attorneys for Criminal Justice and California Public Defenders Association

Underlying Factors to Consider When Deciding Whether to File for a Change of Venue, 2014 Capital Case Defense Seminar Syllabus. L.A.: California Attorneys for Criminal Justice and California Public Defenders Association

Sample Declaration in Support of Motion to Change Venue (*U.S. v. Mitchell*), in Krauss, et al. (Eds.), *Jurywork: Systematic Techniques* 2012-15, Thomson Reuters

Declaration on a Change of Venue in the Night Stalker Case, 2013 Capital Case Defense Seminar Syllabus. L.A.: California Attorneys for Criminal Justice and California Public Defenders Association

Elements of a Change of Venue Motion in California: A Brief Primer, 2012 Capital Case Defense Seminar Syllabus, Sacramento: California Attorneys for Criminal Justice and California Public Defenders Association

Analyzing Pretrial Publicity in the New Media Universe, published as part of the national meeting of American Society of Trial Consultants, Seattle (2011)

Some Alternatives to Consider in Dealing with a High Profile Case, 2011 Capital Case Defense Seminar Syllabus, Sacramento: California Attorneys for Criminal Justice and California Public Defenders Association

Some Thoughts on a Change of Venue Motion, Capital Trial Advocacy Program, The Center for American and International Law, Plano, Texas, 2010

Based on What You Know... : Race, Prejudgment, and the Death Penalty, with R. Ross, Public Opinion Pros, July 2007 (selected for publication by editors from among papers presented at national meeting of AAPOR)

Support for the Death Penalty When Knowing the Defendant's Race, with R. Ross, presented at American Association for Public Opinion Research, Anaheim, 2007

True Feelings: Strength of Opinion of Those Who Support the Death Penalty, with R. Ross, Public Opinion Pros, July 2006 (selected for publication by editors from among papers presented at national meeting of AAPOR)

Severance, in W. Rountree (Ed.), *Jurywork: Systematic Techniques* (3d ed.), New York: Clark Boardman, 2006 ed., now in 2014-15 edition, Thomson Reuters

Strength of Opinion in Death Penalty Decisions: An Investigation of Death Qualification on Producing Pro-Prosecution Attitudes and Unrepresentativeness of Juries in Capital Cases, with R. Ross, presented at American Association for Public Opinion Research, Montreal, 2006

Severance of Defendants in Capital Trials, 2006 Capital Case Defense Seminar Syllabus. Sacramento: California Attorneys for Criminal Justice and California Public Defenders Assn.

Death Penalty, in E. Krauss & B. Bonora (Eds.), with D. Logan. *Jurywork: Systematic Techniques* (2nd ed.), New York: Clark Boardman, 1987-2005 eds., 2006 ed., W. Rountree (Ed.), now in 2014-15 edition, Thomson Reuters

Change of Venue in Civil Cases, presented at national meeting of American Society of Trial Consultants, Austin, 2006

Standards for Survey Research in Connection with Motions to Change Venue, with R. Dillehay, E. Krauss, S. Macpherson, American Society of Trial Consultants, revised for adoption at 2006 national meeting

The Effects of Race on the Prejudgment of Guilt and Penalty in 60 Venue Surveys, with R. Ross, presented at American Association for Public Opinion Research, Nashville, 2003

The Media and Pre-Trial Prejudice, presented at national meeting of American Society of Trial Consultants, Reno, 2003

Size of the Community As a Factor in Change of Venue: When a Large Community Becomes Small for Purposes of Venue. Originally published in California State University, Chico Discussion Paper Series, 1999. Also published in "Jury Reforms and Innovations, The American Society of Trial Consultants 2003; also in 2000 Capital Case Defense Seminar Syllabus. L.A.: California Attorneys for Criminal Justice and California Public Defenders Association

Some Notes on Waiting Until Voir Dire to Decide Whether to Grant a Change of Venue: Bad Law, Bad Social Science, 2003 Capital Case Defense Seminar Syllabus. Sacramento: California Attorneys for Criminal Justice and California Public Defenders Association

Exploring the Standards for Prejudice from Pretrial Publicity. 2003, 2002 Capital Case Defense Seminar Syllabus, L.A.: California Attorneys for Criminal Justice and California Public Defenders Association

Guidelines for Survey Research in Connection with Motions to Change Venue, updated 2002 from Proposed Minimum Standards for Survey Research in Connection with Motions to Change Venue, with S. Macpherson, E. Krauss, R. Dillehay. Court Call, Journal of the American Society of Trial Consultants, Spring 1998; republished as part of Code of Professional Standards, American Society of Trial Consultants, 2003; also printed in Change of Venue, in E. Krauss & B. Bonora (Eds.), with D. Logan. Jurywork: Systematic Techniques (2nd ed.). Ch. 7. New York: Clark Boardman, 1999 rev.

A Declaration on Sealing the Grand Jury Transcript and on a Possible Change of Venue, The 2002 CACJ/CPDA Capital Case Seminar Electronic Syllabus

Survey Data to Support a Change of Venue: How Much Prejudice Does It Take? with R. Ross. California State University, Chico Discussion Paper Series, 1998; also published as How Much Prejudice Does It Take for a Change of Venue? in 2001 Capital Case Defense Seminar Syllabus. L.A.: California Attorneys for Criminal Justice and California Public Defenders Assn.

The Effects of Race on the Prejudgment of Guilt and Penalty in 20 Venue Surveys, with R. Ross, presented at VIIIth Conference of International Society for Justice Research, International Society for Justice Research, Tel Aviv, 2000

A Meta-Analysis of the Effect of the Race of the Defendant and Victim on the Prejudgment of Guilt and Penalty by Whites and Blacks in the Jury Pool, with R. Ross, presented at American Association for Public Opinion Research, Portland, 2000, published as part of California State University, Chico Discussion Paper Series, 2000

Gender and Salience As Factors in Jury Pool Bias: A Preliminary Investigation, with R. Ross, presented at panel at Southwestern Political Science Assn, San Antonio, 1999, published as part of California State University, Chico Discussion Paper Series, 1999

Minimum Standards for Venue Surveys, presenter, organizer and chair of panel at American Association for Public Opinion Research, St. Louis, 1998

Measuring Prejudice in Venue Surveys: How Much Is Enough? with R. Ross, presented at panel, Surveys and the Courts, at American Association for Public Opinion Research, St. Louis, 1998

Chair, Plenary Session, The Death Penalty in America; presenter, The Continuing Impact of Race in the Administration of the Death Penalty, VIIth Conference of International Society for Justice Research, Denver, 1998

Discriminatory Charging of the Death Penalty: A Modest Proposal, 1998 Capital Case Defense Seminar Syllabus. L.A.: California Attorneys for Criminal Justice and California Public Defenders Association

Jury Selection in High-Profile Cases: The Perverse Effects of Voir Dire, with R. Ross, California State University, Chico Discussion Paper Series, 1997

Declaration in Support of a Motion for Discovery on Arbitrary Charging of the Death Penalty, 1997 Capital Case Defense Seminar Syllabus. L.A.: California Attorneys for Criminal Justice and California Public Defenders Association

Developing Standards for Change of Venue Surveys, panel at Midwest Association for Public Opinion Research, Chicago, 1997 (convener of panel)

Jury Selection in High Profile Cases: The Perverse Effects and Limitations of Voir Dire, with R. Ross, presented at American Association for Public Opinion Research, Norfolk, 1997, organizer of panel: The Change of Venue in High Profile Cases: Measuring Prejudice and Its Impact on the Jury

Political Process and Race in the Administration of the Death Penalty, presented at VIth Conference of International Society for Justice Research, Potsdam, FRG, 1997

Prejudgment in High-Profile Cases: A Preliminary Analysis of the Relative Importance of Print Versus Electronic Sources of Information, and Its Implications, with R. Ross, California State University, Chico Discussion Paper Series, 1996, presented as

Prejudgment in High-Profile Cases: A Meta-Analysis of the Relative Importance of Print Versus Electronic Sources of Information, at American Association for Public Opinion Research, Salt Lake City, 1996

Race in the Courtroom: It's More Than the "N" Word, California Death Penalty Defense Manual (1996 ed.). L.A.: California Attorneys for Criminal Justice and California Public Defenders Association

Declaration on Discriminatory or Arbitrary Imposition of the Death Penalty, California Death Penalty Defense Manual (1996 ed.). L.A.: California Attorneys for Criminal Justice and California Public Defenders Association

The Meaning of Life: Why Capital Jurors Choose Death. California State University, Chico Discussion Paper Series, 1995

Severance of Co-Defendants in Capital Cases: Some Empirical Evidence, 21 Forum 52 (1994). (Also published in California State University, Chico Discussion Paper Series, 1994.)

Fatal Misconception: Convincing Capital Jurors That LWOP Means Forever, with J. Ramos & J. Sannes-Pond, 21 Forum 42 (1994)

The Effectiveness of Voir Dire in Discovering Prejudice in High-Publicity Cases: An Archival Study of the Minimization Effect, California State University, Chico Discussion Paper Series, 1989. Also published as The Effectiveness of Voir Dire in Discovering Prejudice in High Publicity Cases: A Case Study of the Minimization Effect in 20th Anniversary Celebration Seminar. California Attorneys for Criminal Justice, 1993

A Practical Approach to Researching and Presenting the Basis for a Change of Venue Motion, with J. Philipsborn & Q. Denvir. California Death Penalty Defense Manual (1993 ed.). L.A.: California Attorneys for Criminal Justice and California Public Defenders Association

Change of Venue in the California Courts: What They Say and What They Do, California State University, Chico Discussion Paper Series, 1992. Also published in Proceedings of the Annual Meetings, American Political Science Association 1992. Also published as The California Appellate Courts and the Change of Venue: Politics in Search of Law in 20th Anniversary Celebration Seminar. California Attorneys for Criminal Justice, 1993

Exposing the Capital Defendant to Jurors Biased by Prejudicial Pretrial Publicity: The Fruit of the Poisoned Pen, panel presentation on Pretrial Publicity and the Capital Juror in Symposium, Justice and the Capital Juror, IVth Conference of International Society for Justice Research, University of Trier, FRG, 1993

Change of Venue in the California Courts: What They Say and What They Do," presented at national meeting, American Political Science Association, Chicago, 1992

Justice in the Era of the High-Profile Defendant: Will a Change of Venue Help? presented at national meeting, American Political Science Association, Washington, D.C., 1991, published as part of Proceedings of the Annual Meetings, American Political Science

Association 1991. Nominated by Section on Law and Courts for the Pi Sigma Alpha Award for best paper at annual meeting. Also published by California State University, Chico Discussion Paper Series, 1991

Declaration in Support of Motion to Compel Discovery of Death Penalty Charging Practices, California Death Penalty Defense Manual (1992 ed.). L.A.: California Attorneys for Criminal Justice and California Public Defenders Association

Effective Jury Voir Dire, with Hon. M. Virga, J. Morris, Jr., C. Wieckowski. Tapes and materials. Berkeley: Continuing Education of the Bar, 1991

California Appellate Decisions Since Maine, in M. Arkelian, Ed., Homicide Defense, California Public Defenders Association, 1991

Declaration in Support of a Change of Venue Motion, in E. Krauss & B. Bonora, Eds., Jurywork: Systematic Techniques (2nd ed.) Appendix E-2). New York: Clark Boardman, 1987, 1989 rev. Reprinted as part of Ch. 7, 1990 rev., 1998 rev.

Does Prejudicial Pretrial Publicity Affect Jurors? A Case Study of the Minimization Effect, presented at national meeting, Law and Society Association, Madison, 1989

Challenging the Death-Qualifying Voir Dire After Lockhart, in E. Krauss & B. Bonora Boardman, 1987

Declaration in Support of Proposed Voir Dire Procedures. California Death Penalty Defense Manual (1987 ed.). L.A.: California Attorneys for Criminal Justice and California Public Defenders Association

Surveys and the Law, panel at American Statistical Association national meeting, Las Vegas, 1985

Does the Exclusion of Scrupled Jurors in Capital Cases Make the Jury More Likely to Convict? Some Evidence from California, 1981 Woodrow Wilson Journal of Law

Measuring the Number of Automatic Death Penalty Jurors: A Response to Hovey 1981. Research monograph submitted to several courts

The Exclusion of Scrupled Jurors in Capital Cases: The California Evidence on Conviction Proneness and Representativeness, California State University, Chico Discussion Paper Series, 1979

Trial by Numbers: The LSAT and Cultural Bias, 1977 The Guild Practitioner

On the Conviction Proneness and Representativeness of the Death-Qualified Jury: An Empirical Study of Colorado Veniremen, 42 University of Colorado Law Review 1, 1970

NON-ACADEMIC CONFERENCES & OTHER PROFESSIONAL PRESENTATIONS

- Publicity and Venue, 2014 Capital Case Defense Seminar Syllabus, Sacramento:
California Attorneys for Criminal Justice and California Public Defenders Association
- Publicity and Venue, 2013 Capital Case Defense Seminar Syllabus, Sacramento:
California Attorneys for Criminal Justice and California Public Defenders Association
- Elements of a Change of Venue Motion in California: A Brief Primer, 2012 Capital
Case Defense Seminar Syllabus, Sacramento: California Attorneys for Criminal
Justice and California Public Defenders Association
- Analyzing Pretrial Publicity in the New-Media Universe, national meeting of American
Society of Trial Consultants, Seattle (2011)
- Some Alternatives to Consider in Dealing with a High Profile Case, Death Penalty
Conference, Monterey (2011)
- Some Thoughts on a Change of Venue Motion, Capital Trial Advocacy Program, The Center
for American and International Law, Plano, Texas (2010)
- Using Venue and Jury Composition Challenges to Get Better Trial Conditions, Death Penalty
Conference, Monterey (2008)
- The Crime Within: Prison Law Symposium, King Hall, University of California, Davis School
of Law (2007)
- Federal Death Penalty-Multi-Defendant Cases, Death Penalty Conference, Monterey (2007)
- Community Attitude Survey in Civil Cases, national meeting of American Society of Trial
Consultants, Austin (2006)
- Severance of Defendants in Capital Trials, Death Penalty Conference, Monterey (2006)
- The Media and Pre-Trial Prejudice, national meeting of American Society of Trial
Consultants, Reno (2003)
- Free Press vs. Fair Trial, invited presentation, San Diego Psych-Law Association (2002)
- The Role of Juries in a Democratic Society, invited presentation for the CNMI Council
for Humanities and the Commonwealth, Supreme Court, Saipan (20002). Also, a
separate invited presentation, Public Funding of Private Schools
- Social Science in the Courts: Change of Venue in a High-Profile Case, invited
presentation at McGeorge School of Law (2002)
- Voir Dire Procedure, CLE presentation, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana

- Islands, Saipan (2002)
- Exploring the Standards for a Change of Venue Motion, Death Penalty Conference, Monterey (2002)
- How Much Prejudice Does It Take for a Change of Venue? Death Penalty Conference, Monterey (2001)
- The Role of the Jury in a Democratic Society, invited presentation at the Public Law Forum, sponsored by the Northern Marianas Council for the Humanities, Saipan (2000)
- Change of Venue Motions, Death Penalty Conference, Monterey (2000)
- Venue and Social Science, Visiting Scholar Series, Grant Sawyer Center for Justice Studies, and Graduate Program in Social Psychology, University of Nevada, Reno (1999)
- Discriminatory Charging of the Death Penalty: A Modest Proposal, presentation at plenary session, Death Penalty Conference, Monterey (1998)
- How Size and Nature of the County Affects Venue and Other Issues, presentation in panel, Small County Issues, Death Penalty Conference, Monterey (1998)
- The Anti-Terrorism Act: Can We Rely on a Politicized State Judiciary? presented in Symposium, The Politics of Criminal Prosecution, California State University, Chico (1997)
- Effective Jury Voir Dire, presentation, Continuing Education of the Bar, Sacramento (1997)
- Race in the Courtroom: It's More Than the "N" Word, presentation at Death Penalty Conference, Monterey (1996)
- From Oklahoma City to Denver: The Change of Venue in a High-Profile Death Penalty Case, Public Lecture at University of Colorado School of Law (1996)
- Social Science in High-Profile Death Penalty Cases: Examining Pretrial Publicity, Race, and the Jury, Public Lecture sponsored by Grant Sawyer Center for Justice Studies, University of Nevada, Reno (1996)
- Delegate to First National Conference on Eliminating Racial and Ethnic Bias in the Courts, National Center for State Courts, Albuquerque (1995) (appointed by Chief Justice of Supreme Court of the Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands); Racial and Ethnic Fairness Subcommittee meeting, California State Team. Los Angeles (1997)
- The Meaning of Life: Why Capital Jurors Choose Death, panel presentation on Death Penalty Justice: Social Science Research and Courtroom Practice, Vth Conference of International Society for Justice Research, University of Nevada (1995)

Effective Jury Voir Dire, presentation, Continuing Education of the Bar, McGeorge School of Law, Sacramento (1995)

Presenting Social Science Research in Support of Novel Motions and Other Courtroom Applications, presenter and panel chair, American Society of Trial Consultants, Portland (1994)

The Third Constitutional Convention of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, two public fora sponsored by the Commonwealth Council for the Humanities, Saipan (1994)

Bold Beginnings for the Defense: Venue and Jury Selection Strategy, address to annual meeting, California Attorneys for Criminal Justice, San Francisco (1993)

In Limine and Trial Motions, Death Penalty College, School of Law, University of Santa Clara (1993)

Lectures given in Portugal during Fulbright Scholar Award: Public Opinion, Media, and Criminal Justice, university lecture, Centro de Estudos Sociais, Faculdade de Economia, Universidade de Coimbra, Coimbra, Portugal (1992); Lisbon (1992): Social Science Research in the Courts, and The Adversary System of Justice in the United States, lectures to faculty and student body, Centro de Estudos Judiciários, Ministério da Justiça; The American Justice System, lecture, Faculdade de Direito de Lisboa, Cidade Universitária; Law and Justice in the United States, Juries and Public Opinion, lectures, Instituto Superior de Ciências do Trabalho e da Empresa; The Role of Juries in the Transformation of Society, lecture, Universidade de Psicologia, Instituto Superior de Psicologia Aplicada

Effective Jury Voir Dire, presentation, Continuing Education of the Bar, McGeorge School of Law, Sacramento (1991)

The Change of Venue in California, presentation to California Public Defenders Association meeting, Homicide Defense, Napa (1991)

Analysis of Media Coverage of Capital Cases, presented at national meeting, Amnesty International, Chicago (1989)

Social Science Analysis of Pretrial Publicity, at Death Penalty Conference, Monterey (1988)

Venue Issues and Answers, at Death Penalty Conference, Monterey (1988)

Invited speaker, Legal Education Conference, Ponape, FSM (1987)

Change of Venue, panel presentation at Death Penalty Conference, Monterey (1986)

A Matrix Remedy Analysis of Solutions to Hovey, in panel, Jury Selection in Capital Cases, Death Penalty Conference, Monterey (1985)

TESTIFYING & CONSULTING: TRIAL AREAS

VENUE: Expert witness on change of venue motions in 132 cases, testifying (27 times by declaration) regarding publicity analyses, public opinion surveys, evaluations of research, and remedies in California (state and federal), Colorado, Florida (federal), Illinois, Kansas (state and federal court), Massachusetts (federal), Mississippi (federal and state), Missouri (federal), Montana (federal), Oklahoma (state and federal), Oregon, Tennessee, Texas, and Utah (federal). (Motion granted in 54 cases.) Consulted on venue issue in over 200 other cases

Cases in which I have testified or consulted on have included the Oklahoma City bombing case, Boston Marathon bombing case, Loughner/Tucson assassination case, Holmes/Aurora, Colorado movie theater slayings, Enron/Jeff Skilling/Ken Lay case, Night Stalker case in L.A., Unabomber case, Richard Allen Davis/Polly Klaas case, American Taliban case, Hurricane Katrina insurance cases, Oakland BART case, Elizabeth Smart case in Utah, San Francisco dog mauling case, Billionaire Boys Club, etc.

Presented evidence on venue by declaration or affidavit in other cases (pretrial and post-trial, criminal and civil) in Alabama, Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Virginia, and Wyoming. Consulted with attorneys, did publicity analyses, and worked on public opinion surveys on venue in many other cases. Reviewed and analyzed many transcripts of voir dire in high-publicity cases. Wrote and/or analyzed juror questionnaires

Recommended against the need for a change of venue in 194 cases, including 27 cases in which I testified or submitted a declaration. Testified in favor of change of venue in 108 cases

SEVERANCE: Testified about, consulted on, and empirically researched issues related to severance and joinder, pretrial and post-trial, particularly in capital cases. Dealt with severance of co-defendants and of charges. Research dealt with case-specific problems and general issues

On severance of defendants, testified in New Mexico (federal court), Colorado (federal court), Pennsylvania, California in counties of Fresno, San Diego, San Francisco, San Jose, Trinity. By declaration in federal courts in Arizona, California, Colorado, Delaware, Florida, New Mexico, New York, Oklahoma, Virginia, West Virginia; in state courts in California and Indiana

On severance of charges, testified in San Diego, San Bernardino, Sacramento. And by declaration in other cases

DISCRIMINATION: Testified, submitted declarations and/or consulted on possible abuse of prosecutorial discretion in death penalty charging in several counties. Presented statistical analyses

Testified, submitted declaration and/or consulted on jury selection and discrimination issues, including compositional challenges to trial and grand juries, cognizability of certain groups;

presented statistical analyses of data

Testified on possible effects of community racial discrimination against Indians, as measured by media coverage on Indian and police officer in killing of police officer

Testified and/or consulted on impact of community racial prejudice on fair trial rights

Delegate to First National Conference on Eliminating Racial and Ethnic Bias in the Courts, National Center for State Courts, Albuquerque (1995) (appointed by Chief Justice of Supreme Court of the Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands)

Did studies and consulted on community prejudice regarding race, as it affected police, prosecutors, and prospective jurors. Conducted community forum attempting to alleviate racial tension between police and young black males

VOIR DIRE: Testified numerous times as expert witness and submitted many declarations on voir dire conditions and on the efficacy of voir dire in various contexts, including death qualification, pretrial publicity, insanity, and sensitive issues (such as race, gangs, mental issues, and AIDS). Issues included use of questionnaires, attorney-conducted voir dire, individualized and sequestered voir dire, questioning techniques. Also, on ineffectiveness of counsel at voir dire

Appointed by court in capital trial as its advisor on voir dire, jury selection procedures, death qualification, and related matters (San Joaquin County Superior Court, 2006)

DEATH QUALIFICATION: Testified in *Hovey v. Superior Court* (1980) 28 Cal.3d 1, and *Lockhart v. McCree* (1986) 476 U.S. 162. My research cited in these and many other appellate cases

Testified as expert witness on death-qualified-jury issues over 50 times. In Alabama, Arkansas (federal court), Arizona, California, Colorado, Illinois, Nebraska, New Mexico, and Oregon

Submitted affidavits and/or consulted with attorneys regarding death qualification in dozens of cases throughout U.S. and in Canada, pretrial and post-conviction. Issues included guilt proneness, juror attitudes, voir dire, representativeness, the automatic-death-penalty juror problem, voir dire process effects, and various remedies

POST-CONVICTION: Testified in many post-conviction cases throughout the country on issues such as venue, possible ineffectiveness of counsel in several areas, and on other issues

OTHER TESTIFYING AND CONSULTING

Testified, consulted, and did empirical research on other jury issues, including compositional challenges (grand and trial juries), closing preliminary and competency hearings, sealing transcripts and other records, various areas involving possible ineffective assistance of counsel, meaning of LWOP to jurors and its effect on sentencing decision

Consultant to Continuing Education of the Bar, California, for California Criminal Law Procedure & Practice, on venue, voir dire, and death penalty

Court-appointed coordinator to monitor and coordinate implementation of consent decree regarding conditions at Butte County Jail (1994-2012)

Consultant, Amnesty International, content analysis of media coverage of the death penalty in the United States (1989)

Consultant, United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service, training on penal history for Alcatraz staff (1989-90); Member, Advisory Board, Alcatraz Exhibit, Federal Bureau of Prisons and United States Department of Interior (1990-91)

Consultant to Justice Improvement Commission, Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, criminal justice education, training, and practice; also on legal education (1977-1987)

Consultant, Legal Services section, Title I, Higher Education Act (1970-1973)

SURVEY RESEARCH: Part of four-person team that was commissioned by American Society of Trial Consultants to write standards for venue surveys

Wrote, consulted on, commissioned, testified about hundreds of surveys, primarily in connection with case issues

CONTENT ANALYSIS: Did content analysis of hundreds of various situations involving media coverage of issues and cases, survey responses, jury questionnaires, voir dire, and social science experimental research

OTHER: CRIMINAL JUSTICE ACTIVITIES:

Court-appointed Coordinator to monitor, coordinate, and audit implementation of Superior Court consent decree regarding conditions at Butte County Jail, 1994-2012

California Correctional Center, Susanville, California: Taught in-service training for prison correctional staff; taught law classes for prisoners and paralegal classes for Inmate

Resource Center program; on Board of Directors. Member, Chavareem, multiracial prisoner group

Served on oral boards for court OR program director, probation, and police hiring

Established, coordinated Criminal Justice program; established and taught in off-campus degree programs for criminal justice personnel. California State University, Chico Criminal Justice Chair, Law Enforcement Committee, Regional Criminal Justice Planning Board Executive Comm., Training and Education System Project that planned Butte Regional Criminal Justice Training Center, member of advisory board and committees, one-time vice chair; and Chair, Policy Sub-Committee, Butte County Jail Advisory Committee; Project STAR, Teaching Criminal Justice Role Training, Academy of Justice, Riverside, CA

GRANTS AND PROGRAMS FOUNDED OR CO-FOUNDED

Legal Services section, Title I, Higher Education Act, 1970, CSU Chico

Public Law Internship. Follow-up to Title I grant, from Associated Students, CSU Chico. Now Community Legal Information Center (CLIC), 12 separate clinical law programs

Chico Area Legal Services grant. Also, former Chair, Board of Directors, Senior Information and Referral Center grant, now Area Agency on Aging. Project Director, then Vice-Chair of board; Board of Directors, Legal Services of Northern California and predecessor organizations

Founded Other Local Program Development (all programs still operating):

Butte County Welfare Rights (1970)	Chico Consumer Protection Agency (1974)
Own Recognizance Bail Project (1971)	Penal Law Project (1974)
Housing Affairs Office (1971)	Women's Law Project (1975)
Family Law Program (1972)	Disabled and the Law Project (1976)
Environmental Advocates (1973)	

Micronesian (Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas). Legal education to prepare Micronesians for and gain admission to American law schools. Also consulted on and taught in criminal justice education and training

OTHER:

Served on doctoral committees in psychology and political science at University of California, University of Colorado, University of Nevada

Reviewed manuscripts for possible publication in various peer reviewed social science journals

Consultant, Amnesty International, content analysis of media coverage of the death penalty in United States (1989)

Consultant, United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service, training on penal history for Alcatraz staff (1989)

Some additional past activities: Coordinator and founded the following: the Public Law Program; the Community Legal Information Center (CLIC); the Paralegal Certificate Program. Also founder and advisor, Minority Student Law Union. Campus Pre-Law Advisor; Chair, Speech and Advocacy Committee (all at California State University, Chico over many years), developed Criminal Justice major curriculum

Past Vice-Chair, Butte County Personnel Appeals Commission

Trustee, Cal Northern School of Law

Clerk to Justice of the Colorado Supreme Court (while law student)

The Outstanding Teacher, 1988, California State University, Chico. Also, the Meritorious Professional Performance Award, 1990; Professional Achievement Honors Award, 1995; Chico Emeritus and Retired Faculty Association Hall of Honor, 2012

Fulbright Scholar Award, served in 1992 in Portugal, lecturing on the ways American courts deal with juries and social science evidence, with were newly emerging issues in Portugal. Focus was on speaking to those training to become judges and prosecutors. In Portugal those wanting to become either judges or public prosecutors were civil service employees and had to obtain four-more years beyond their law degrees of specialized education in the institute to which I was attached

Ed Bronson-Ron Dillehay Award, established by the American Society of Trial Consultants Foundation for significant contributions through research and education in the fields of venue, voir dire, and procedural justice (2006)

Endowed grants to Chico State University to establish Edward J. Bronson Excellence in Legal Studies Merit Award (for students demonstrating a commitment to social justice, leadership in community service, and academic excellence); the Edward J. and Marion D. Bronson Endowment for the Community Legal Information Center (CLIC) Fellows (for student leaders of CLIC, which provides legal services in the area); the Alumni Judge Program, to bring judge/alumni to campus to meet with students

**Leonard Patrick Gonzalez, Jr. articles
Pensacola, FL News Journal
2007 - 2010**

Index #	Date	Headline	Page Section	Type	# of printed pages	Short (S)	Pic-tures	Side bars
1	3/22/2007	Program teaches kids many ways to protect selves from strangers			2			1
2	4/24/2007	Martial arts workshop teaches youth how to defend themselves			2			1
3	4/28/2007	Local Briefs: Kidnap awareness workshop scheduled for today in Pace	C1	Briefs	2			
4	4/28/2007	What's Happening Today: Project Fight Back		Briefs	1			
5	6/25/2007	Pace residents have shared their desires for the future	A1		4		1	1
6	9/16/2007	Escambia and Santa Rosa County Business Licenses		List	7			
7	4/13/2008	Santa Rosa County Business Licenses		List	3			
8	8/2/2008	School News		Briefs	1			
9	8/3/2008	Death Notices: Nicole (Nikki) Michelle Billings		Obituary	10			
10	8/3/2008	Nicole Billings		Obituary	2			
11	8/17/2008	Back to school on a good foot	C1	Briefs	1			
12	2/25/2009	For the Record Felony Arrest			3			
13	7/1/2009	Death Notices: Connie Parise Gonzalez (NOTE: This was Jr.'s grandmother)		Obituary	8			
14	7/1/2009	Connie Gonzalez			1			
15	7/10/2009	Billings murders leave community in shock			3		1	
16	7/10/2009	Couple who adopted 12 children shot to death			2		1	
17	7/11/2009	What moms are saying		Briefs	2			
18	7/11/2009	Questions mount in Billings slayings			3		1	
19	7/11/2009	Killings have big impact on small community			3		1	
20	7/12/2009	2 charged with murder in Billings deaths			2			
21	7/12/2009	Police find red van			3			
22	7/13/2009	'We will pull together'			2			
23	7/13/2009	Billings children speak out			1			
24	7/13/2009	'A move for humanity'			2			
25	7/13/2009	Bail set at \$500K			1			
26	7/13/2009	Gonzalez Jr. taught self defense			1			
27	7/13/2009	Two charged with murder			3			1

Index #	Date	Headline	Page Section	Type	# of printed pages	Short (S)	Pic-tures	Side bars
28	7/14/2009	4th man arrested, more sought in slayings	A1		3		1	1
29	7/14/2009	Gonzalez Jr. taught kids self-defense	A1		3			
30	7/14/2009	Children will stay together, sister says			1			
31	7/14/2009	Judge doubles bond for Gonzalez Sr.			2			
32	7/14/2009	Evil, dumb bad traits for crooks	B1	Commentary	2			
33	7/14/2009	For the Record Deaths: Billings		Obituary	3			
34	7/14/2009	For the Record Felony Arrest			3			
35	7/14/2009	Gonzalez Jr. claims innocence			3			
36	7/14/2009	No bond for Coldiron in Billings case			1			
37	7/14/2009	Wayne Thomas Coldiron jailed in '92 death			2			
38	7/14/2009	2 teens arrested in couple's slaying			1			
39	7/14/2009	'We have found them'			4			
40	7/15/2009	The suspects			1			
41	7/15/2009	Time line of events			1			
42	7/15/2009	Gonzalez Jr. talks talk but won't walk	D1	Commentary	2			
43	7/15/2009	Death Notices: Byrd "Bud" Starling Billings / Melanie Anne Billings		Obituary	8			
44	7/15/2009	For the Record Felony Arrest			3			
45	7/15/2009	Media flock to sensational story			2			
46	7/15/2009	'Mastermind' rebuffs dad's confession			3			
47	7/15/2009	Suspects cooperating			1			
48	7/15/2009	Gulf Breeze woman charged as accessory in slayings			2			
49	7/15/2009	Legacy to continue			1			
50	7/15/2009	Byrd and Melanie Billings		Obituary	2			
51	7/15/2009	Another arrest, new details in Billings case			2			
52	7/15/2009	'Granny Drew' helped break Billings case			1			
53	7/15/2009	'We have found them'			3			
54	7/15/2009	Neighbors tell of suspect's rage			3			
55	7/16/2009	Suspects charged thus far			1			
56	7/16/2009	Mistaken identity			1			

Index #	Date	Headline	Page Section	Type	# of printed pages	Short (S)	Pic-tures	Side bars
57	7/16/2009	Death Notices: Byrd "Bud" Starling Billings / Melanie Anne Billings		Obituary	8			
58	7/16/2009	Friends and family attend Billings visitation			2			
59	7/16/2009	Updates on 2009 homicide cases in the community			3			
60	7/16/2009	Wiggins associated with Gonzalez Jr.			3			
61	7/16/2009	Wiggins rode in van, hid Billings' safe at her home			1			
62	7/16/2009	For the Record Felony Arrest			3			
63	7/16/2009	Eighth arrest made			2			
64	7/16/2009	Trust formed to help children			1			
65	7/16/2009	Cases to go to grand jury			4			
66	7/16/2009	Grandmother reported red van			2			
67	7/17/2009	For the Record Felony Arrest			3			
68	7/17/2009	Suspects charged thus far			1			
69	7/17/2009	Crime Stoppers should pay for help in solving homicide		Editorial	2			
70	7/17/2009	Grandmother deserves \$3,000		Letter to the Editor	2			
71	7/17/2009	Pay the reward		Letter to the Editor	2			
72	7/17/2009	Pay her		Letter to the Editor	2			
73	7/17/2009	Billings funeral is this morning			2			
74	7/17/2009	Stop the questions			1			
75	7/17/2009	Billings safe found in suspect's backyard			3			
76	7/17/2009	And people in hell want ice water!		Editorial Cartoon	1			
77	7/18/2009	Suspects charged thus far			1			
78	7/18/2009	A bittersweet introduction			3			
79	7/18/2009	Billingses laid to rest			1			
80	7/18/2009	Safe held medicine, family papers, jewelry			4			
81	7/19/2009	Suspects charged thus far			1			
82	7/19/2009	Sheriff Morgan shined in handling Beulah murders		Editorial	2			1
83	7/19/2009	Daughter defends Billings' business			6			
84	7/19/2009	Billings case hearing			2			
85	7/20/2009	Sheriff probing why cameras not disabled			2			

Index #	Date	Headline	Page Section	Type	# of printed pages	Short (S)	Pictures	Side bars
86	7/20/2009	News alert: Billings backed Gonzalez			2			
87	7/20/2009	Document links Billings to "organizer" of the killings			4			
88	7/20/2009	Stallworth still in Ala. Jail			1			
89	7/20/2009	News alert: Coldiron got cold feet before robbery			1			
90	7/21/2009	Gonzalez Jr. was sole shooter			3			
91	7/21/2009	Lead suspect, Billings had financial ties			4			
92	7/21/2009	Stallworth remains in Ala. jail without bond			2			
93	7/21/2009	He's a humdinger!		Letter to the Editor	2			
94	7/22/2009	Suspects: Only Gonzalez fired shots	A1		1			
95	7/22/2009	Suspects: Gonzalez the only shooter			3			
96	7/22/2009	'My child is a victim'			2			
97	7/23/2009	Suspects charged thus far			1			
98	7/23/2009	Billings investigation's public phase ending			2			
99	7/25/2009	TaxWatch study cites fiscal blunders	A1		4	S		1
100	7/25/2009	For the Record Felony Arrest			3			
101	7/26/2009	Lighthouse night out, volunteers needed, sound off about F-35s		Briefs	3	S		
102	7/26/2009	Huge debts, huge troubles			4			
103	7/26/2009	EPA eyes suspect's real estate ventures			2			
104	7/27/2009	Warrant issued for Stallworth			1			
105	7/27/2009	Long Wiggins investigated for food stamp fraud			2			
106	7/28/2009	Long Wiggins eyed in fraud probe			2			
107	7/30/2009	Bond denied for suspect in Billings case	A1		2			
108	7/31/2009	Wiggins charged with bigamy	A1		2			1
109	7/31/2009	Sheriff addresses rumors			1			
110	8/1/2009	Contract hit not ruled out in Billings slayings			1			
111	8/3/2009	The Jerry Springer Show: Pamela Long-Wiggins		Editorial Cartoon	1			
112	8/4/2009	Teen in Billings case charged as adult			2			
113	8/5/2009	Teen charged in Billings case appears in court			2			
114	8/6/2009	Another arrest made in relation to Billings case			2			

Index #	Date	Headline	Page Section	Type	# of printed pages	Short (S)	Pic-tures	Side bars
115	8/6/2009	Billingses' suspects in court this morning			2			
116	8/7/2009	Business associate questioned in killings			2			
117	8/7/2009	Grand jury to decide charges next week			3			
118	8/8/2009	Rumor on top of innuendo			4			
119	8/11/2009	Grand jury indicts 8			2			
120	8/11/2009	\$164,000, jewelry were in second Billings safe			2			
121	8/12/2009	7 Billings suspects indicted			2			
122	8/12/2009	\$500,000 bond sought for Pamela Long Wiggins			1			
123	8/12/2009	Second safe had \$164,000 cash			2			
124	8/13/2009	Billingses' murder suspects arraigned			1			
125	8/13/2009	Wiggins to appear in court on Monday			2			
126	8/13/2009	Prosecutors won't release evidence			2			
127	8/14/2009	Defendants give not-guilty pleas			2			
128	8/14/2009	Can't afford to prosecute Lay		Letter to the Editor	4	S		
129	8/14/2009	Court mulls whether to seal evidence			2			
130	8/16/2009	Unplug Zoo, Dave dapper, OK Simpson	C1	Commentary	2			
131	8/17/2009	Long Wiggins back in jail, with bond raised			3			
132	8/17/2009	Billings details revealed			4			
133	8/18/2009	Boater tells of locating Long Wiggins			2			
134	8/18/2009	Ties unclear in murders			4			
135	8/18/2009	Long Wiggins' bond increased to \$500,000			3			
136	8/18/2009	Murders' grisly details made public			4			
137	8/18/2009	Monday jail log			3			
138	8/19/2009	For the Record Felony Arrest			3			
139	8/19/2009	Military man not typical defendant	D1	Commentary	2			
140	8/19/2009	Ties unclear in murders			3			
141	8/19/2009	Transcripts released from 'person of interest'			2			
142	8/19/2009	History		Letter to the Editor	3			
143	8/21/2009	His mom: 'Write off' Gonzalez Jr.	B1	Commentary	2			

Index #	Date	Headline	Page Section	Type	# of printed pages	Short (S)	Pictures	Side bars
144	8/22/2009	Public can view video, photos in Billings case			1			
145	8/23/2009	Billings slayings: Anatomy of a conspiracy			5			
146	8/23/2009	Billings suspects: Criminal masterminds?			7			
147	8/26/2009	One of Long Wiggins husbands pursues divorce			1			
148	8/26/2009	In the mail?		Letter to the Editor	2			
149	8/27/2009	Billings video made available			2			
150	8/27/2009	Estranged husband seeks to divorce Long Wiggins			1			
151	8/27/2009	Deputy transferred after 'humdinger' e-mail			3	S		
152	8/28/2009	Ambush at Billings home shown in video			2			
153	8/28/2009	Blackburn declared fit for duty			1	S		
154	8/30/2009	Toys, a dog, children, and killers		Commentary	2			
155	8/31/2009	Children cared for as Melanie Billings wished			2			
156	9/1/2009	Melanie Billings' wishes for children granted			2			
157	9/2/2009	Clues seen in actions by suspects	B1		2			
158	9/10/2009	New gang and gun prosecutor, Billings video and youth victims			2			
159	9/18/2009	Oprah to examine Billings' case			1			
160	9/19/2009	Billings daughter will talk to Oprah	C1		2			
161	10/9/2009	A caring home for nine kids	B1		2			
162	10/12/2009	Death penalty sought in Billings murders			2			
163	10/13/2009	Four suspects face death in Billings killings	A1		2			
164	10/20/2009	Suspect details deadly home invasion			3			
165	10/21/2009	Promise of cash led to Billings murders	A1		3			
166	10/22/2009	Mafia theory falls flat in Billings murder case	A1		3			
167	10/22/2009	Gonzalez Jr. charged			1			
168	10/23/2009	Gonzalez charged with pencil stabbing in jail	A1		2			1
169	10/23/2009	Sunday Review: Billings Evidence tug of war		Commentary	1			
170	10/23/2009	Sheriff won't rule out mafia in Billings case			2			
171	10/25/2009	Hugh Wiggins interview like 'pulling teeth'	A1		5			1
172	10/27/2009	Billings case suspect wants bond reduced			2			

Index #	Date	Headline	Page Section	Type	# of printed pages	Short (S)	Pictures	Side bars
173	10/28/2009	Long Wiggins asks judge to lower \$500,000 bond	D1		3			1
174	11/7/2009	Billings murder suspect enters pencil-stabbing plea	C1		1			
175	11/13/2009	Billings case suspect accused of bigamy gets divorced			1			
176	11/14/2009	Ex gets Harley in Wiggins divorce	C1		2			
177	12/1/2009	Crist appoints David Rimmer to serve as judge			1			
178	12/2/2009	Prosecutor David Rimmer is appointed circuit judge	D1		1			
179	12/4/2009	New face in Billings case	B1		1			
180	12/13/2009	The face of a victim: Byrd and Melanie Billings 66 and 43, respectively, of Beulah			5			
181	12/13/2009	Man's death won't bring charges, prosecutor says	C1		2	S		
182	12/23/2009	Billings family moving on	A1		5			1
183	1/3/2010	Stories of the Decade: Billing murders shock the region, nation, 2009	E1		4			
184	1/4/2010	Chief deputy demoted			2			
185	1/5/2010	Escambia sheriff demotes top deputy			2			
186	1/16/2010	Sheriff David Morgan to speak to PR group		Meeting notice	1			
187	1/18/2010	Escambia Sheriff Morgan to speak to group Thursday		Meeting notice	1			
188	1/21/2010	Investigator Cephas to get Medal of Valor at ceremony			1			
189	1/23/2010	Rescue earns Cephas the Medal of Valor award			3			
190	1/27/2010	Billings murder suspect to enter plea			2			
191	1/28/2010	Plea deal expected today in Billings murders			2			
192	1/29/2010	More fallout from the Billings case	B1		2			
193	1/29/2010	Billings suspect takes plea deal			3			
194	2/3/2010	Man who took plea in Billings case moved to Santa Rosa jail			1			
195	3/3/2010	Attorney: Drop Long Wiggins' bigamy charge	A1		2			
196	4/5/2010	Billings suspect was a follower	C1		3			
197	4/11/2010	NewsRadio 1620 AM wins award for Billings coverage	B1		1			
198	5/12/2010	Billingses' suspect in court			2			
199	5/13/2010	Billings suspect: No contest	B1		2			1
200	5/14/2010	Long Wiggins' bigamy trial jury selection set	C1		1			
201	7/1/2010	Bigamist put on probation	B1		1			

Index #	Date	Headline	Page Section	Type	# of printed pages	Short (S)	Pic- tures	Side bars
202	7/9/2010	For family, horror of murders lives on	A1		8			
203	7/27/2010	Correction	B1	Correction	1			
204	9/2/2010	Gonzalez's lawyer wants out			1			
205	9/3/2010	Robbery attempt admissible in Billings case	B1		2			
206	9/4/2010	Charges mount in Billings murders	A1		5			
207	9/4/2010	Hugh, Pam Wiggins indicted			1			
208	10/7/2010	Who's best for court? You be the judge	A1		4	S		1
209	10/8/2010	Gonzalez Trial move sought	B1		2			
210	10/8/2010	Billings homicide: No decision on moving accused gunman's trial			1			
211	10/9/2010	Trial stays put	D1		2			
212	10/14/2010	News Journal Editorial Board Endorsements: Judicial races		Editorial	2	S		1
213	10/22/2010	Sunday Preview: Billings murder trial			1			
214	10/24/2010	Facing Judgment Gonzalez trial starts Monday in Billings slayings	A1		7			
215	10/24/2010	Gonzalez's bragging likely spawned mafia hit rumors			2			
216	10/24/2010	Billings slayings: The defendants			3			
217	10/25/2010	1st trial starts in Billings killings	A1		2			
218	10/26/2010	Markham testimony set today	B1		2			
219	10/26/2010	Billings homicide trial: Witnesses refused to join robbery			1			
220	10/26/2010	Billings homicide: Jury selection begins for accused ringleader			3			
221	10/27/2010	Billings Trial: Day 2 Gonzalez Jr. won't look at crime photos	A1		3			
222	10/27/2010	Billings Trial: Day 2 Witnesses			3			
223	10/27/2010	Gonzalez manipulated the gullible	D1		2			
224	10/27/2010	Billings homicide trial: Accomplice cross-examined			2			
225	10/27/2010	Billings homicide trial: Daughter details father's meeting with Gonzalez			2			
226	10/27/2010	Billings homicide trial: Accomplice talks about his recruitment			2			
227	10/27/2010	Billings homicide trial: Teen details home invasion			2			
228	10/28/2010	Billings Trial: Day 3 Evidence mounts	A1		3			
229	10/28/2010	Billings Trial: Day 3 Witnesses			3			
230	10/28/2010	Billings homicide: Medical examiner presents evidence			1			

Index #	Date	Headline	Page Section	Type	# of printed pages	Short (S)	Pic-tures	Side bars
231	10/29/2010	Billings Trial: The Verdict Gonzalez guilty	A1		4			
232	10/29/2010	Sheriff's greeting: Does it sway jury?	A1		3	S		
233	10/29/2010	This time, lawyers do his talking	B1		2			
234	10/29/2010	Billings Trial: Day 4 Witnesses			1			
235	10/29/2010	Billings homicide trial: Gonzalez found guilty			4			
236	10/30/2010	Jury recommends death for Gonzalez	A1		4			1
237	10/30/2010	Billings trial, Day 4: Witnesses			2			
238	10/30/2010	Billings homicide trial: Jury recommends death penalty			2			
239	11/6/2010	Well done		Letter to the Editor	2			
240	11/14/2010	Good job		Letter to the Editor	4			
241	11/17/2010	Leonard Gonzalez Sr. rejecting counsel	A1		3			
242	11/17/2010	He has the lingo of a lawyer	D1		2			
243	11/17/2010	Gonzalez Sr. wants to represent himself			1			
244	12/7/2010	Gonzalez Jr. in court Thursday			1			
245	12/9/2010	Gonzalez sentencing begins today	B1		3			1
246	12/9/2010	No death penalty for 2 Billingses' suspects			2			
247	12/9/2010	Gonzalez sentencing begins today			2			
248	12/10/2010	'Fast-food' justice	A1		3			
249	12/10/2010	Gonzalez won't take any blame for killings	C1		2			
250	12/10/2010	Gonzalez blames sheriff, media for conviction			3			

Leonard Patrick Gonzalez, Jr.
Articles in Pensacola, FL News Journal
2007 - 2010

Number of articles with some reference relevant to case: 250

Type of article:

News articles -211

Letters to the editor, editorials, commentaries, editorial cartoons- 2

Information boxes/sidebars-17

Briefs-6

Front page or front page of interior section-59*

(* not all articles indicated page numbers)))

Graphics-6

Yearly breakdown

2007: 6

2008: 5

2009: 171

2010: 68

EXHIBIT C

**(Report and Evaluation of Leonard Patrick
Gonzalez, Jr. By Dr. Edward J. Bronson)**

**GONZALEZ CASE REVIEW OF POSSIBLE
INEFFECTIVE ASSISTANCE OF COUNSEL**

Declaration of Edward J. Bronson

I, EDWARD J. BRONSON, declare as follows:

Introduction. Counsel for Leonard Patrick Gonzalez Jr. have asked me to assess whether there was a need for a change of venue in his capital trial and whether counsels' failure to pursue a motion to move the case outside of Escambia County was ineffective assistance of counsel.

I will examine in this declaration the pretrial publicity that surrounded the case to form my opinion on this issue. In summary, it is my opinion, based on my content analysis as described below, that the failure by defense counsel to move for a change of venue to move the trial outside of Escambia County and to take other steps to protect the defendant's fair trial rights rendered counsel's assistance ineffective under *Strickland v. Washington*, 466 U.S. 668 (1984).

Qualifications. Education and Employment. I have attached a copy of my curriculum vita to this declaration as Exhibit 1, but I will briefly summarize my qualifications here. I have completed the graduate degrees of a J.D. from the University of Denver, an LL.M. from New York University, and a Ph.D. in Political Science from the University of Colorado. As part of the study for my doctorate, I received training in various types of social scientific analysis.

I have been employed since 1969 at California State University, Chico, in the Political Science Department, from which I am now retired, and where I long taught courses in Administration of Justice, Legal Analysis, and

Constitutional Law. In addition, I have taught at several other universities, both in law schools and in other departments, as a Fulbright, a Visiting Scholar, and a Visiting Professor, both in the United States and abroad.

Research and Consulting: General. In my research, dating back to 1968, I have studied the attitudes of jurors toward relevant issues of criminal justice, the effects of those attitudes on verdicts, and the way that various processes, including voir dire and publicity, affect jury behavior. I have conducted research and published articles about these subjects, a number of which are set forth in the accompanying curriculum vitae. I have previously qualified as an expert witness in nearly 300 cases, and have submitted declarations and consulted on jury issues in a large number of cases in both state and federal courts around the country.

Venue. I have acted as a consultant on change of venue, ways to improve the fairness of voir dire and jury selection, and other issues since 1970, primarily being retained by defense counsel, but also by prosecutors and the court, and testifying in approximately 200 of such cases, both in federal and state courts. I have testified in favor of a change of venue motion in 121 cases, but I have recommended and sometimes testified against a change of venue in 194 cases (even though almost all of those cases were brought to me by defense counsel).

Listing a few of the better known cases dealing with venue on which I have consulted, there is the Boston Marathon bombing case, the Oklahoma City bombing case, the Unabomber case, the Tucson assassination case (*Loughner*), the Polly Klaas case in California (*Richard Allen Davis*), the *Skilling* case in Houston, the Holmes/Aurora, Colorado movie theater slayings, the Elizabeth Smart case in Utah, and many others.

I have also testified in and/or consulted on several capital and non-capital cases in Florida. These have included the Al-Arian case in Tampa,¹ the Johnny Copeland case from Wakulla County,² and others, including one civil case.

Content Analysis. I have previously qualified hundreds of times in various courts around the country on the content analysis of pretrial publicity and related material, such as grand jury transcripts, pretrial publicity, survey comments, social science experiments, and the like, assessing both their social science and legal impact. Many of the cases involved the issues related to venue and ineffective assistance of counsel, as defined in *Strickland v. Washington*.

Survey Research. I have also qualified over 200 times on the conducting and critiquing of public opinion surveys. I have testified as an expert on my own surveys and on the surveys of others, both as to the methodology and analysis of surveys, especially relating to venue issues. I have education, training, and extensive experience in this area and have conducted research and presented professional papers in the field. I am a member of the American Association of Public Opinion Research, and have spoken at national and state meetings of this and other professional groups, including both social science and legal. I was a member of a four-person group that was commissioned to write standards for venue surveys, which have subsequently been adopted and published by the American Society of Trial Consultants.

¹ This was the notorious federal case in which the alleged terrorist defendant had been a key figure in the 2004 United States Senate election.

² My work on that case led to an extensive study on venue and voir dire presented at the national meeting of the Law and Society Association.

Death Qualification. I have studied the process of qualifying juries in capital cases and have published several studies on this subject which have been cited many times by appellate courts, including the California Supreme Court and the United States Supreme Court, e.g., *Hovey v. Alameda County Superior Court*, 168 Cal.Rptr. 128 (1980), *Lockhart v. McCree*, 476 U.S. 162 (1986). My research was the first post-*Witherspoon* study on death qualification. I have testified on the issue in well over 50 cases, including *Lockhart v. McCree*, in which I was the major witness in the Arkansas habeas hearing.

Jury Voir Dire. I have also done much research on voir dire procedures, published in this area, lectured on the topic at professional meetings both for lawyers and social scientists, taught Continuing Education of the Bar classes on the topic, and testified many times on it as an expert witness, both as a possible remedy for prejudicial pretrial publicity or misjoinder, and as to its effectiveness in a particular case, both in pretrial and post-conviction legal contexts.

Ineffective Assistance of Counsel. I am generally familiar with the legal issue of ineffective assistance of counsel (IAC) and have submitted declarations to courts on the issue in cases when the substantive issue was one I was knowledgeable about, although I am aware that my role is limited to assessing the role of the attorney and the likely effects of any IAC on the fairness of the trial.

The standard for testing the effective of counsel was established in *Strickland v. Washington*, 466 U.S. 668 (1984), which held that counsel has a duty to bring to bear such skill and knowledge as will render the trial a reliable adversary testing process. 466 U.S. at 688. There are two prongs to making an effective IAC *Strickland* claim: the “performance” prong and the “prejudice”

prong. Under the performance prong, the petitioner “must show that counsel’s performance in representation fell below an objective standard of reasonableness.” *Id.* at 687-688. “The proper measure of attorney performance remains simply reasonableness under prevailing professional norms.” *Id.* Prejudice is defined as “a reasonable probability that, but for counsel’s unprofessional errors, the result of the proceeding would have been different. A reasonable probability is a probability sufficient to undermine confidence in the outcome.” *Id.* at 694.

Through my experience in dealing with hundreds of capital cases over almost 50 years³, I am familiar with prevailing norms for capital defense representation in the areas of venue, jury questionnaires, jury voir dire on possibly dangerous pretrial publicity, jury voir dire on life-death qualification, and other aspects of jury voir dire.

My assessment of Mr. Gonzalez’s counsels’ performance under the first prong of the *Strickland* IAC test is that it was deficient, both at the motion stage and during trial. I also believe that their performance met the second prong, that the defendant was thereby prejudiced.

That is, first, because obtaining a venue change was crucial to saving Mr. Gonzalez’s fair-trial rights, both at the guilt-innocence phase and even more so at the penalty phase. A proficient performance by his attorney in seeking that change very likely would have convinced the court to transfer the case. Second, as I will demonstrate next, I believe that counsels’ performance during the voir dire also clearly met the *Strickland* test for IAC. Certainly the combined performance in the motion presentation and during the voir dire makes this a clear instance of *Strickland* error. Later in this declaration I will assess the performance of counsel during the voir dire, especially during life-

³ I first testified as an expert witness in a capital case in 1970.

death qualification.

I will begin with the basis for counsels' decision to drop their motion for a change of venue, examining whether the extant publicity demonstrated an apparently clear need to move the trial elsewhere. Then I will consider whether there were legitimate tactical reasons nevertheless to try the case in Escambia County.

Methodology. I will briefly describe my methodology. In a typical case I receive a call from defense counsel concerned that pretrial media coverage has prejudiced the fairness of the trial for his or her defendant. Step one is to conduct a limited review of the media coverage. Only if that initial review reveals substantial prejudice do I recommend pursuing the case by conducting a community survey, a necessary element of proof in almost all modern change of venue hearings.

If I do not find sufficient prejudice for a survey, that ends my involvement in the case. Of the 194 cases in which I ultimately found no basis for a change of venue, in 135 (69.6%) of them I found there was not even sufficient prejudicial publicity to justify the time and expense, including my fees, for conducting a community survey.⁴

However, where there is sufficient negative publicity to be concerned that a change of venue might be needed, one needs to have evidence of its prejudicial impact. One cannot go into court with just some newspaper articles, a hortatory speech, and the hope that the trial judge will somehow conclude that your client cannot get a fair trial locally.⁵ The needed evidence

⁴ In the other 59 cases, I believed there was sufficient indication of prejudice to conduct a survey, but the survey did not provide enough evidence to justify my testifying in support of a change of venue.

⁵ That requires the usually locally elected trial judge to conclude and even state on the record that one or usually all three of the following vital political constituencies has or

should include a community survey, a careful analysis of the media coverage, and/or expert testimony. The expert might be a media expert, a social scientist, or someone familiar with public opinion in the community.

Counsel in the *Gonzalez* case did none of these things. Perhaps expecting the trial judge to put off ruling on the motion until after reviewing the questionnaires and the voir dire, which he said he would do, counsel presented no evidence and let the motion die without further action. That was IAC.

But that should have led to a meaningful questionnaire and an effective voir dire. Unfortunately, neither happened, and counsel never was able to adduce the evidence needed to prove the need for a change of venue.⁶

The Standards for My Venue Analysis.

Determining Prejudice in Media Coverage. I use both legal and social science standards in my analysis in which I attempt to assess the impact of possibly prejudicial pretrial publicity. The legal standard comes from the decisions of appellate courts, primarily in the venue area. The social science standards are a product of a substantial body of research on the topic.

Social Science Literature. I am generally familiar with the literature concerning the prejudicial effect of pretrial publicity. In a meta-analysis of 44 empirical studies, representing 5,755 subjects, conducted by dozens of scholars using a variety of methodologies spanning over 30 years, the authors concluded that, “Subjects exposed to negative pretrial publicity were significantly more likely to judge the defendant guilty compared to subjects

will act unfairly and improperly: law enforcement or the prosecutor, the local media, and the local citizens who will form the jury panel. Or perhaps the judge is from elsewhere or retiring and so has no concern with retention.

⁶ Those issues will be dealt with in this declaration after the venue section.

exposed to less or no pretrial publicity.” The prejudicial impact was found at all three stages: pretrial, post-trial but prior to deliberations, and post-deliberation.⁷ I have also done considerable research myself on this topic.

The authors in the Steblay study suggested that PTP leads to the development of a “story model,” like the idea of an evidentiary prism. The story model has been explored in a variety of work on memory.⁸ The model provides the means by which negative publicity provides not just isolated fragments of information, but a belief framework about the defendant’s guilt. Those exposed to PTP construct a story to make sense out of a particular event. Once that belief is formed, it is very difficult to dislodge. New information that is consistent with the story is readily absorbed, while inconsistent information tends to be rejected.

The story of the case thus becomes the prism through which trial evidence and legal theories are viewed at trial. If our story model leads us to believe that the defendant is guilty, then the credibility of prosecution witnesses is enhanced, and alibis or other defenses will not ring true, regardless of their actual veracity. Forming a story model is both useful and inevitable for a juror, but that process should be accomplished at trial, not well before through exposure to the media.

A review of the way memory works, based on themes or “schema,” shows that “themes distort memory.”⁹ Thus, it is likely that trial jurors hearing the defense evidence at trial will not use the evidence in ways that

⁷ N. Steblay, et al., “The Effects of Pretrial Publicity on Juror Verdicts: A Meta-Analytical Review,” 23 Law & Human Behavior 219 (1999). An updating study is T. Daftary-Kapur & S. Penrod, “Are Lab Studies on PTP Generalizable?: An Examination of PTP Effects Using a Shadow Jury Paradigm,” 26 The Jury Expert 1 (2014), expanded and republished in Law & Human Behavior.

⁸ See some of the citations at Steblay, *op. cit.*, 231.

⁹ *Id.*

conflict with their story model. This is particularly troubling not just because of the powerful impact, but because of the great difficulty a voir dire questioner will have in discovering the information or attitude.

The Legal Standards. There are various standards that courts use in assessing the need for a change of venue, depending on the stage of the trial and the state or district where the trial is held. The first standard, which arises if the motion is brought before the trial commences, is whether the pretrial prejudice is sufficient to create a reasonable likelihood of prejudice if the trial is held in the local jurisdiction. Reasonable likelihood has been defined as a lesser standard of proof than more probable than not, but more than merely possible. Thus, when the venue issue is raised by motion before trial, any doubt about the need for a change of venue must be resolved in favor of a venue change. Since neither the voir dire nor the trial itself have been conducted and are available to the trial judge at that time, only the likely future impact of the publicity itself is available to the trial judge to measure the likely impact of any prejudice, although such measures as a community survey, a content analysis of the publicity, and opinion testimony, expert and otherwise, can be used for by the court in that determination.

Under that first standard, reasonable likelihood of prejudice from pretrial publicity, it is clear that a change of venue was needed in the *Gonzalez* case, as I will show below. That is the test that is generally used pretrial, when there is no evidence of actual prejudice, since there has been no voir dire or trial.

A second standard courts use to test for the need for a change of venue, one which arises in cases on direct appeal, is actual prejudice. Cases

on appeal will have a trial record of the claimed impact of the pretrial media on producing any unfairness in the trial by way of seating any biased jurors, as revealed through voir dire, juror questionnaires, or other facts.

Under that standard I believe it is also clear that a change of venue was needed in the *Gonzalez* case, not because any jurors demonstrated actual partiality or prejudice, but because trial counsel failed to move for a change of venue in the face of a great amount of pretrial publicity that was highly prejudicial and inflammatory, nor did counsel adequately even investigate the need to request the transfer of the case to another county. Counsel did move pretrial for a change of venue, but presented no meaningful evidence to support it, and appeared to abandon the motion.

The third standard that is commonly used by courts to test for the need for a change of venue at any stage is when prejudice is presumed, which arises when it can be demonstrated that the negative publicity has so pervaded or saturated the community as to make it virtually impossible for the jury not to be unfairly prejudiced by bias and prejudice either as to guilt or penalty. That standard is typically used on appeal, but certainly could be used at any stage. While this is the highest standard to meet for a change of venue, I believe that the pretrial publicity in the *Gonzalez* case easily met that standard as well.

It was clear that counsel needed to investigate the need for a change of venue with a careful analysis of the pretrial publicity and a public opinion survey, since the most cursory review reveals how prejudicial the climate in Escambia County was to the fair trial rights of Mr. Gonzalez. In fact, as noted, at an earlier stage defense counsel had filed a change of venue motion, but he failed to pursue it.

Of course, in some cases, counsel may have legitimate reasons to refrain from seeking a change of venue, even if the pretrial publicity may be sufficient to meet the legal standard to leave the local jurisdiction.

For example, in one case on which I consulted, the defendant was capitally charged with the murder of a highway patrolman, counsel decided not to seek a change of venue, even though the publicity was very bad and the survey indicated high levels of prejudice. The reason was that although much of the county was rural, a major public university was located there, and if the case were moved, it would probably go to another rural county, but one without such a university. There was little guilt-phase defense, so the major trial issue was likely to be whether the defendant would receive the death penalty.

Many studies show that opposition to the death penalty is associated with individuals with higher education. Counsel believed that having larger numbers of the university community in the jury pool would be helpful, so counsel withdrew his venue motion.

In another case on which I also consulted, a Native American was charged with murdering a deputy sheriff on the reservation. There was massive media coverage and survey results that demonstrated substantial prejudice. However, a few of the survey responses suggested that some community members were aware of a past history of some law enforcement discrimination against Native Americans in the community. Counsel withdrew his motion.

On the other hand, in some cases, counsel withdraws or does not file a venue motion for less appropriate reasons, such as it will be inconvenient to be outside of town for an extended time, or it will be costly to fund the motion, or it will involve extra work or time, or that filing such motions are

not well received by the court. Obviously, such reasons are not sufficient to avoid the onus of possible Ineffective Assistance of Counsel.

It is also possible that the results of the jury questionnaires and the voir dire might reveal that there is no prejudice, that whatever problems that may seem to have existed from the media will not affect the fair trial rights of the defendant, that jurors can put aside any biasing information and attitudes, and decide the case solely on the evidence presented in court.

I have reviewed the voir dire transcript, and it does not give me any confidence that the jurors in the *Gonzalez* are devoid of dangerous attitudes, knowledge, or bias, and that they can put aside any such material if they have absorbed it.¹⁰

I have not reviewed the filled-out questionnaires, since counsel does not have them, but I have examined the blank questionnaire that was distributed to the jury panel. With only eight questions covering both case knowledge and death penalty attitudes, that is the shortest questionnaire (two pages) I have ever seen, and thus it is a very limited instrument to get all the needed information.

On the issue of whether counsel had reasonable tactical reasons for abandoning the venue motion, while none seem plausible, it is possible that counsel may have had something in mind, and current counsel have not to date questioned them, and that might come during collateral litigation, if necessary. However, it is difficult to conceive of any appropriate reasons that counsel may have had for trying the case in Escambia County.

Thus, in the *Gonzalez* case there does not appear to be any appropriate reason why counsel abandoned the venue motion; doing so is in my opinion ineffective assistance of counsel.

¹⁰ See review of voir dire below.

Highlights of Prejudice in the Gonzalez case. I noted the following major prejudicial themes in the *Gonzalez* case:

1. The extent of local coverage, 250 articles.
2. The coverage of the case is highly prejudicial.
3. It is a capital case.
4. The victims were prototypical sympathetic victims.
5. The population of the county is relatively small.
6. Unlike most murder cases, there are eye-witness and awful descriptions of the actual murder(s), provided by some of the defendants themselves.

Content Analysis of the Media Coverage. Introduction. When confronted with a substantial amount of material, as is the media coverage of this case, social scientists and others use a technique called content analysis. Content analysis is a research tool devised to analyze large amounts of material in a manner that is objective, neutral, and systematic.¹¹ It is widely used in the social sciences and elsewhere to investigate areas as diverse as the interpreting of open-ended comments in a public opinion survey, to whether some of the work traditionally attributed to William Shakespeare was actually written by Francis Bacon, to whether a media network is biased and if so, whether liberally or conservatively.

Where the issue is whether the media coverage of a case has biased the community sufficiently to require a change of venue, the means for measurement are the social science and legal criteria. The review will be scientific rather than impressionistic and selective only by being specific about what it is in the publicity that is prejudicial (or exculpatory), doing a systematic review, and identifying the sources.

¹¹ See generally R. Weber, *Basic Content Analysis* (1985).

My content analysis is primarily based on the coverage of the case in the Pensacola News Journal. I have attached downloaded copies of these articles as Exhibit 2; a log and a breakdown of those articles is provided in Exhibit 3.¹²

Outline of Content Analysis.

- I. Extent of Publicity
- II. Nature of the Publicity
 - A. Inflammatory Characterizations
 - B. Possibly Inadmissible Material
 - C. Possibly Inaccurate Material
 - D. Presumption of Guilt
- III. Nature of the Crime
- IV. Gravity of the Crime
- V. Status of the Victim
- VI. Status of the Defendant
 - A. Hostile or Negative
 - B. Mitigating, Positive, or Possibly Helpful
- VII. Size and Nature of Community

I. EXTENT OF NEWSPAPER PUBLICITY

The extent of the newspaper coverage of the *Gonzalez* case is huge, with 250 articles referring to the case; indeed, it is extremely high in comparison to the number of articles I have found in the other 133 other change of venue cases that I have dealt with in court¹³, where the median number of articles has been just 92. This case ranks number 27 of all those very high profile venue cases around the country in federal and state courts.

Of all of those cases in which the trial judge reached either granting of denying the venue motion and which had fewer articles than *Gonzalez* (102

¹² The Log lists each article by an index number, date, headline, and other characteristics. At the end of the log there is a breakdown and summary of some of the characteristics of the articles.

¹³ With either testimony or declaration, but does not include the many more cases in which attorneys brought cases to me seeking a possible change of venue, but which I rejected as not satisfying what I believe was sufficient pretrial prejudice.

cases), the motion was granted in 45, or 44.1%. Thus, even where there were fewer articles than we find in the *Gonzalez* case, sometimes far fewer, trial judges granted the motion nearly half the time.

Another important factor to consider that in almost all cases, the newspaper coverage is by several area newspapers. In the *Gonzalez* case, I have only counted articles from the Pensacola News Journal,¹⁴ and very few readers read more than one local newspaper. Thus, the real ranking of this case, as measured by readers of the articles containing references to the case, is substantially higher.

Clearly, the *extent* of the coverage of the *Gonzalez* case found in the Pensacola News Journal weighs heavily in favor of the need for a change of venue.¹⁵

II. NATURE OF THE PUBLICITY

Nature of the Newspaper Coverage. Besides the *extent* of coverage, it is important to consider the *nature* of the coverage. Attachment 3 contains

¹⁴ There are additional area newspapers, but daily coverage appears to be primarily limited to the Pensacola News Journal. The Independent News Journal is a weekly newspaper, the Pensacola Voice and Pensacola New American Press are weekly African American newspapers, and the Escambia Sun Press is a legal newspaper.

¹⁵ I do not have the content from any of these sources and learned of their existence from information provided from juror and alternate questionnaires plus from the transcript of the voir dire in the case. Typically, TV, radio, and online coverage of these kinds of news events is more pervasive, graphic, and prejudicial to the defendant than newspaper coverage -- especially in a case such as Mr. Gonzalez ' which involved such intense local interest. I note references to other materials that are cited in the Pensacola paper:

More on the Billings case ONLINE 28

Find photos, surveillance footage from the Billingses' home videos, archived stories, a list of who's who, and the latest news on the investigation at pwj.com/Billings 28

Each of the articles in the Pensacola News Journal is numbered, 1-250. When I make a reference to something in an article, rather than give a formal citation to it, I will simply give the article number; if the word is repeated elsewhere in the articles, the number of times is shown in parentheses.

downloaded copies of the 250 articles published in the Pensacola News Journal. The possible prejudice in the nature of the coverage is measured by doing a content analysis of what has appeared in that newspaper.

Hierarchy of Prejudice: In analyzing the nature of the publicity, I have developed what I call a hierarchy of prejudice, with four levels or types of prejudicial material:

- A. Inflammatory publicity
- B. Inadmissible material
- C. Inaccurate coverage
- D. Presumption of guilt

I use these criteria to measure the extent to which the media coverage of the case is prejudicial. Obviously, even if the coverage is massive, it must also be prejudicial to require a change of venue.

A. Inflammatory Material.¹⁶ At the top level of publicity that generates concern with possible prejudice is that which is *inflammatory*. Inflammatory coverage contains elements of sensationalism or hostile, inflated, emotional, or loaded themes or language. The primacy of such material is clear because of court decisions and social science research, but is also intuitive.

Emotionally laden coverage has more saliency to readers, affects them more powerfully, and is more likely to be remembered. It cannot be displaced in our memories.

The *Gonzalez* newspaper coverage was replete with inflammatory terms. While to some extent the use of inflammatory terms was inherent in the incident itself, the reporters and editors selected how the incident was

¹⁶ Small variations in terms may be included in some counts, e.g., “horror,” “horrendous,” “horrible,” “horrific,” and “horribly.” Also, when the term appears multiple times, a very few uses may be out of context.

While I counted all the times some terms appeared, even though it was repeated again and again throughout the coverage, I typically entered it under only under one category.

described.¹⁷ The use of incendiary, emotive, and extreme terms set the tone for the way prospective jurors would have related to the crime charged, and that factor necessitated an especially careful voir dire and assessment of meaningful questionnaires.

Overall, the coverage presents powerful and prejudicial elements of media coverage plus, of course, there are also some straightforward accounts of court proceedings and other non-inflammatory material included. But the overall tone of the media coverage of the case and its volume can clearly be characterized as inflammatory overload.

Below are many of the terms used in the coverage. The power of these terms, the great number of them, and the number of times they are used is overwhelming, and thus highly inflammatory, providing strong support for a change of venue:¹⁸

Brutal (6), 32, raw brutality 132
 Grisly (3) 32
 Terrible (9) 16
 Heinous (6), 46
 Gruesome (5), 149
 Evil (8), 29
 Devastated, devastating (4), 15, 16, 19, 19
 Tragic, tragedy (13), 21
 Unimaginable (3), 22
 Humdinger (20), 19
 Sensational (10), 22

¹⁷ In addition, the inflammatory characterizations of the case created a framing for it that was difficult for defense counsel to overcome, since that impression had been gelling in jurors for a year-and-a-half.

¹⁸ All of these terms appeared in the coverage of the Pensacola News Journal. The numbers after the term are as follows: If in parentheses, they are the number of times the term appeared. If not in parentheses, the number is at least one of the numbers of the articles in which the term appeared. Each article is numbered 1 through 250. That number can be found in the top right hand corner. All articles are in Exhibit 2.

It should be noted that several of the terms or expressions would fit with equal aptness under several categories in the content analysis.

“Morbid exploitation by some members of the public and the
 sensationalism surrounding the criminal case” (2) 126
 Senselessness, senseless (8), 18, 32
 Ridiculous (2), 58
 Hatred, “I can't believe there are people in this world capable of
 this kind of hate” 49
 Bizarre (5), 83
 Reeling (2), 19
 Gun-downed (7), 21
 Mind boggling 27
 Execution-style slaying 28
 Shocked, shocking (9), 15
 Stupid thugs 32
 Idiots (2), bumbling idiots 32
 Brash 32
 “Extremely violent act upon this family” 22
 Sad, saddened (10), 32
 Sordid 32
 Ugly (3), 35
 Dumb (7), 32, 35, 35
 Insane, insanity (2) 35
 Scary creep 42
 “The extensive security home surveillance system captured the footage of
 the violence that took place, including the murder of the Billingses and
 the codefendants’ interaction with the minor children” 126

And see III. Nature of the Crime, below

B. Possibly Inadmissible Material

It is of course the Court’s role to determine whether certain information
 in the media’s coverage of the case was admissible, but I will note herein
 some of the coverage that the Court may determine to be improper.
 Obviously, it would be of little value to the defendant to bar the admission
 of such prejudicial material if one or more jurors were already familiar with
 it.

Confessions. Perhaps the most damaging type of evidence against a
 defendant is a confession. *See Rideau v. Louisiana*, 373 U. S. 723 (1963).

While Mr. Gonzales Jr. never confessed, his father did, directly implicating his son. Presumably, the father's confession was inadmissible at the son's trial, but any juror who might have read about it or internalized its impact could have been strongly affected by a father's "testifying" against his own son, who confessed to driving his son and two other people to the Billingses' rural Beulah home. There were 14 references to the confessions of co-defendants in the coverage of the case 46. Of interest, the prosecution usually characterized those confessions as "truthful" or "honest" when the speaker had entered a plea bargain to testify against the defendant 192, 193. Such a characterization buttressed the testimony against Mr. Gonzalez.

Leonard Gonzalez Jr. challenged the Escambia County Sheriff's Office's investigation into the Byrd and Melanie Billings slayings, saying the confession that led to his arrest was made by a man with mental illness, referring to his father 35.

As part of their own confessions or admissions, several case suspects offered incriminating information against their co-defendants, particularly against Mr. Gonzalez Jr. 121

C. Possibly Inaccurate Material. None was noted that was seriously prejudicial.

D. Presumption of Guilt

Williams v. Superior Court, 34 Cal. 3d 584, 590 (1983): [E]ven factual accounts . . . can be potentially prejudicial. 'A reasonable likelihood of unfairness may exist even though the news coverage was neither inflammatory nor productive of overt hostility.' [Citation.]

Guilt-Oriented "Evidence"

Within a second or two of entering the house, Gonzalez Jr. screamed “You're going to die,” according to video surveillance footage from a system used to monitor the children 202 (The newspaper subsequently printed a correction, noting that the surveillance system had no audio and that the child did not attribute the statement to a particular suspect. Of course many who read and absorbed the initial damning report may not have read the correction.)

Editorial: we have been impressed with the Sheriff's Office's quick, thorough and decisive response in handling the ongoing investigation and arrests in this double homicide, solving this complex case 69

With the recovery of that pivotal piece of evidence and several guns, including a murder weapon, the major investigative phase of the case is at an end, State Attorney Bill Eddins said at a news conference 75

Mastermind (21), 37

Ringleader 190, leader 190

Brains of the operation 171

Defendant (and others) held without bond, bail or very high bond (196), 20

\$500,000 bail for Leonard Gonzalez Sr. 25

Jail garb, leg shackles (6), 65, his wrists were shackled and bound to a chain around his waist 213, defendant had leg chains (2), 220

More than 25 armed Escambia County sheriff's deputies lined the walls of the courtroom 128

Deputies in civilian clothes sat behind several of the defendants, who sat handcuffed inside the jury box 129

The extensive surveillance system captured footage of five masked men -- some dressed as "ninjas" -- slipping into front and back doors at the sprawling and isolated home. Two drivers waited in vehicles 51

Video surveillance footage from inside Billings home 21

Surveillance video shows three armed, masked men enter the home, two doors forced open 27, two suspects carrying long guns, 9mm shell casings recovered 26

Father admitted to driving assailants to and from the Billings, repainting the car 27

Saw the red van 21

Defendants trained together 39

When one of the co-defendants got cold feet just before the home invasion, the defendant told him, "You're in too deep, and you've got to go with us" 91

The defendant approached several people asking if they would participate in some type of "job" to get a safe, one of the people asked to participate said Gonzalez had attempted to rob the Billingses a month before the murders, but fled when security lights activated the house lit up like a Christmas tree 134

The defendant said he had found somebody that had like two kilos of coke, and that if I would get involved with driving them to the house, he would take care of everything else 134

The defendant's grandmother said that Gonzalez had been planning a robbery, discussed doing a "job," said the house contained a safe with \$2 million and a "bunch of cocaine" 134

The defendant pulled the trigger on the 9mm pistol that killed Byrd and Melanie Billings 90

Two of the co-defendants told the investigators they saw the defendant kill the couple 90

The defendant accused by four of his co-defendants of shooting the couple
127

The defendant identified by several of his co-defendants as the sole shooter
132

“Dude killed somebody, if y’ all tell anybody, they said they’re going to
kill your whole family” 199

Patrick just told us - told me and Rakeem - if we say something to
anybody, he would kill us and our family 216

Spectators were checked for weapons upon entry into the courthouse and,
in an unusual step, again directly outside the courtroom 129

Leonard Gonzalez Jr., the man accused of killing Byrd and Melanie
Billings, faces a new criminal charge of stabbing a fellow inmate with a
pencil, later stabbed him a second time 167

Billings document search tool. Use our user-friendly searchable database
to find arrest reports, warrants, investigative reports, crime scene records,
witness statements and other public records related to the Billings case
196

Gonzalez’s father was persuaded to take part by the defendant telling him
that children were being sexually abused - “gonna do a job on a pervert” 146

Special Category: Improper Biasing Statements by Government Officials

One issue in this case that was of special concern to me was the extent to which some of the very prejudicial pretrial publicity emanated from the Escambia sheriff, David Morgan. The prosecution is the usual official source of ethical concern in venue cases, but the status of the sheriff raises comparable concerns, even though he is not a lawyer. The A.B.A. Model Rules of Professional Conduct, Rule 3.6, Trial Publicity, states:

(a) A lawyer who is participating or has participated in the investigation or litigation of a matter shall not make an extrajudicial statement that the lawyer knows or reasonably should know will be disseminated by means of public communication and will have a substantial likelihood of materially prejudicing an adjudicative proceeding in the matter.

The Michigan Supreme Court ordered the dismissal of a civil suit because the plaintiff's counsel prejudiced the jury pool with his public comments.

Maldonado v. Ford Motor Company, 2006 Mich. LEXIS 1469. Under Pennsylvania law, official comments weigh particularly heavily for changing venue. See *Commonwealth v. Cohen*, 489 Pa. 167, 178, 181-84, 413 A.2d 1066 (1980); *Commonwealth v. Pierce*, 451 Pa. 190, 303 A.2d 209 (1973). Those are criminal cases in which the government acts as the functional equivalent of a plaintiff in civil cases.¹⁹ In my own experience, in a discrimination lawsuit filed against a very prominent law firm in federal court, the trial judge ordered a nine-month delay as a remedy for the prejudice created by the plaintiff's attorney appearing just once and making biasing remarks on a 6 A.M. Sunday television program with an audience that was a tiny fraction of those who saw, heard, or

¹⁹ There are similar comments in federal cases, e.g.:

In this case . . . some of the information obtained by the media may have been released by the government -- and this fact can be an important factor in weighing the prejudicial effect of pre-trial coverage (citation omitted).

United States v. Stevens, 83 F.3d 60, 66 (1996):

read about the many prejudicial comments by Sheriff Morgan. The status of a government official, here an elected head of local law enforcement, lends special credence to the accuracy of Sheriff Morgan's comments and their prejudicial impact. The plaudits the sheriff received from the newspaper, readers, and others strengthens the state's case.²⁰

Quotations from Sheriff:

"Hatefulness and senselessness of this act" 18

The case rivals "a movie script" 19, murder saga as rivaling a movie script 27

Scope of the investigation "mind boggling" 27

The case is a "humdinger," sheriff remark that the Billings murder case is a "humdinger" has been quoted again and again across the nation (20), 19

"We are very anxious to share this story with Escambia County and the nation. ... It's going to be a humdinger," Morgan said 20

"Numerous federal agencies and law enforcement agencies in other states involved 27

Gonzalez Jr. has an extensive criminal history, home invasion and battery with a firearm 27

Defendant is the "mastermind" (21), 28 and leader 190

He spoke of secret training missions, practice runs, and a network of criminal conspirators who stretched across state lines and national borders. And at the center of it all: a "mastermind" named Leonard Patrick Gonzalez Jr 146

In the days after the murder of Byrd and Melanie Billings, Sheriff David Morgan squinted into the bright lights of national TV cameras and described a coordinated, military-style assault that played out like a

²⁰ However, the sheriff also noted other theories such as the mafia's possible involvement.

summer action flick. He spoke of masked men, dressed in black, descending on the Beulah home and carrying out their attack with surprising quickness. Four minutes. In and out 146

But information released by the State Attorney's Office last week paints a far different portrait of the characters behind this criminal conspiracy. Those documents suggest that the so-called polished and practiced criminal team actually was a hastily assembled collection of small-time criminals and financial failures lured by promises of a million-dollar score. What the sheriff suggested was a reconnaissance run on the Billings home before the murders appears to have been a half-baked robbery attempt that was foiled when motion-sensing security lights sent the suspects scrambling. And the mastermind, Gonzalez Jr., was more than anything else a big-talking boaster who ran with low-lifes, was quick with a lie and constantly cooked up schemes to get rich quick 146

Four of the suspects in the death of Byrd and Melanie Billings are cooperating with investigators, Escambia County Sheriff David Morgan said this morning in an interview with "Today Show" host Matt Lauer 47

"The big break was the video surveillance system that the Billings family had in the home and on that compound, the big break, we have found them" 53

Editorial: One week after the murders of Byrd and Melanie Billings at their Beulah home, Escambia Sheriff David Morgan stood in front of the nation's television cameras Thursday and proclaimed the majority of his department's work to be over 82

Editorial: Through it all, Sheriff Morgan kept his feet on the ground and his mind focused on the task at hand; making arrests and giving the public as much information as he thought possible and prudent. His image, carried around the nation and the world, was one of professional resolve. He and his department have the thanks of their community 82

Editorial: But on the biggest stage, Morgan took a leadership role, arrested the apparent bad guys quickly and calmed a troubled city. Well done, sheriff 82

I agree with the News Journal's editorial ("Sheriff Morgan shined in handling Beulah murders," July 19) that Escambia County Sheriff David Morgan has done commendable work on this case 148

Sheriff to Billings daughter: "I asked you if there was anything I could do for you," Morgan said. "And your response to me was, 'Find the people who did this.' It is my honor to tell you, Ashley, and your family, we have found them, and they are in custody" 53

Morgan has made several media appearances and held multiple daily news conferences since the Billings murders 98

Escambia County is so fortunate to have the honor of David Morgan as our elected sheriff. His professionalism, candor and knowledge are beyond reproach. The way he has handled the Billings case is outstanding! The team of Sheriff Morgan and State Attorney Bill Eddins is solid. I'm getting phone calls from family and friends around the country concerning this crime that has national news coverage and how impressed they are with Sheriff Morgan 93

Sheriff Morgan is pulling out of the public spotlight at the insistence of investigators and the State Attorney Office 98

Sheriff conducted a news conference to address "contract hit" rumors surrounding Billings slayings 109

Morgan would not say whether "the Mexican mafia" had anything to do with the Billings murders 114

Escambia County Sheriff David Morgan took to the national airwaves and spoke of a possible contract killing and mafia connections 217

The sheriff has shone in his national media appearances while explaining the slayings of Melanie and Byrd Billings 130

The Sherriff also played a special role as the self-designated official greeter for jurors. This may have enhanced his credibility with jurors:

On Monday mornings, as prospective jurors board a trolley for the ride from a parking lot ... Sheriff David Morgan typically greets them, hands them

business card and thanks them for their service. Then when the prospective jurors assemble ... Morgan speaks them again, thanks them for their service. He does so in full uniform 232

Exculpatory.

An interview with Mr. Gonzalez Jr in which he suggests that Billings, a used car dealer, was having trouble with other dealers. One of the dealers told him the group wanted Billings “whacked,” but he refused the job. He also made grandiose claims about the involvement of the “Mexican mafia” (75), 82.

It was the defendant who planted the seed that investigators should look into the powerful and violent organized Mexican crime syndicate known as M5-13 for connections to the Billings homicide 132

“If this is about the killings, I didn’t do it, I can prove I didn’t do it, but I may know some people who may have done it”²¹ 132

The defendant said that he had been used in the past by car dealers in Pensacola to execute people 132

There is an overwhelming volume of coverage that either explicitly or implicitly demonstrates not only that Mr. Gonzalez is guilty, but that he was the sole shooter, the instigator, the planner, and a powerful Svengali in manipulating the co-defendants and everyone around him. Even his alibis and alternative theories are so many and ultimately so incredible that they strengthen rather than weaken the support for his guilt.

III. NATURE OF THE CRIME (as portrayed in the media).

Especially Bad Crime. Under the *nature* of the crime criterion, we are interested in whether there are aspects of the case charged that make it particularly bad as compared with other cases of the same category in the penal

²¹ Unfortunately, some of the defendant’s “grandiose” claims seem more *inculpatory* than *exculpatory*.

code. As compared with other murder cases, this case stands out -- especially because it's a death penalty case.

Perhaps the most unusual and horrific murder in the Pensacola's area history 202

Horror lives on, tragedy 202

Byrd Billings shot in head, an execution-style slaying 28

His body had six bullet wounds - one in the back of each leg, two in the face and two in the back of the head 132

Melanie Williams was shot five times - twice in the chest and three times in the face and head 132

Home invasion 18, suspects all dressed in black 18

Some of home invaders dressed in black ninja garb and were wearing masks (20), 28

One of the victims was shot to death after hands bound by plastic zip ties 90

Eight children, ages eight to 14, were in the house 18

One of the children discovered the bodies 18

The Billings had 16 children in all, four biological, six had Downs syndrome, three adopted children had died 19, many more references to the Billingses' children.

Three of nine children saw it, one left home to get help 28

A child - one of the couple's nine adopted children with special needs - said that "bad men" woke his father and told him "You're gonna die." He watched as his mother was "shot in her shirt" 132

One of the Billingses' nine adopted children stood and watched. The child started to cry 216

When the mother was shot, a baby was lying on the bed, and another child was standing in the room 216

As millions watch the case unfold on 24-hour cable TV news and the Internet, it's hard not to wonder how criminals could be so evil and so dumb at the same time 32

Areas are smeared with blood, signaling the horror that struck the Billingses' home, you see the bodies of a man and a woman shot again and again. Blood covers much of Melanie Billings' Elton John T-shirt. More blood streams in three directions from her mouth as she lies on her back 154

Nearby, Byrd Billings lies on his stomach, having been shot even as he raised his hands in apparent surrender when men burst into the Beulah house. The attackers wore black over their heads and carried long guns. In the grainy camera images, they resemble Grim Reapers as they beat Byrd Billings on the floor of his own living room. Byrd Billings' face seems scrunched up in agony from bullets fired into him 154

He is lying not far from the couple's bed. There, above the headboard, a neatly lettered sign says what could be the couple's motto: "Just one life time won't be enough for us" 154

"I can't understand why they had to kill them just to rob them" 58

Persistent rumor that killings a "contract hit" 90

Wal-Mart security camera footage shows Gonzalez meeting with other suspects on day of killing 145

It was like something from a movie script 146

Photos detail gruesome scene 149, pictures depict violent, gruesome details of the attack 149

Robbery that went horribly awry, thought there was \$13 million in the safe 164

See II. A. Inflammatory, above.

The nature of the crime, as portrayed in the media, is so powerful and so prejudicial that it provides significant support for the change of venue.

IV. GRAVITY OF CRIME. The next aspect to be evaluated to determine the need for a change of venue is the *gravity* of the crime. A death penalty case is, of course, the most serious of all cases in the law, and thus of the highest gravity.

The fact that the Defendant is facing the death penalty is a factor that has special significance in a venue motion because the jurors' role in a penalty phase is different from their role in the guilt-innocence part of a trial. At the penalty phase, the jurors' role is not merely to determine facts, but to make an individualized normative decision on whether the Defendant should live or die.²²

That issue is independent of the impact of the media coverage of the issue. The *fact* that this is a capital case weighs in favor of a change of venue, but in addition, the coverage repeatedly referred to the fact that the District Attorney was seeking the death penalty.

Death Penalty References. Total references to death penalty: 142 + 32 references to capital punishment + others, *e.g.*, ultimate penalty and others.

²² The fact that this is a capital case is a factor that supports a change of venue. However, the repeated association in the media of the death penalty with this case may also tend to desensitize prospective jurors to the death penalty and make them more willing to vote for it. One study has shown that jurors in simulated trials are more willing to vote for death just by watching the voir dire of a death qualification voir dire. *See* Haney, C., "On the Selection of Capital Juries: The Biasing Effects of the Death-Qualification Process," 8 *Law and Human Behavior* 121 (1984).

V. STATUS OF VICTIMS. The media plays an especially important role in the penalty phase, if reached. The defense wishes to humanize the Defendant; the prosecutor wishes to humanize the victims, to present the victim impact story, as well as dehumanizing the Defendant. In this case the media coverage performed the prosecutor's role with respect to both the Defendant and the victim.

A. Victims' Personal Qualities.

The Billings family was profiled in the News Journal on Christmas Day 2005, well before their murder. At the time, they were parents of 16 children, 12 of whom were adopted 21.²³

A framed copy of a newspaper story dated Christmas Day, 2005, hangs on the wall near the kitchen inside the Billings' Beulah house. The front page photo depicts a grinning family sprawled across the house's playroom floor. In the middle, surrounded by a swarm of smiling kids, Byrd and Melanie Billings beam with pride. It is a snapshot of a life many people didn't understand. A life with a dozen adopted children, many with special needs. A life of challenges, to be sure, but also happiness. A life that on July 9, tragically was cut short. "Christmas was my mom's favorite holiday," said Ashley Markham, 27, as she sat at the kitchen table in her parents' Beulah home Monday. Her mom loved to shop, she said, and relished in the annual opportunity to shower the kids with gifts. It's a role that, this year, Markham is doing her best to fill. In the living room, a dozen stockings hang from the mantel over the fireplace. A Christmas tree draped with flashy decorations towers overhead. The house is light and cheery, and, for the moment, surprisingly quiet. The dull drone of cartoons on the living room TV is the only noise. Sunlight pours in through broad picture windows, illuminating

²³ Where the status of the victims is used as a factor to assess the need for a change of venue, it is sometimes argued that it is their status prior to the murder, not simply their prominence acquired after death, but their prominence before they were killed, such as a mayor or well-known doctor.

The newspaper had already covered the Billings family and they were apparently well known and respected among a segment of the local community for their extraordinary humanity, not just in their adopting and caring for so many abandoned children, but for choosing so many who were disabled mentally or physically.

walls covered with wedding portraits and framed photos of happy family memories 182

The Billings Family Trust For Children was formed to help provide for the nine adopted children of Byrd and Melanie Billings. The children, five of whom have Down syndrome and all of whom are disabled, were in the family's Beulah home when their parents were slain by intruders 64

Deputy admired their efforts to give a better life to abused, neglected and disabled children 18

Billingses had 16 children, four biologically 7, 12 adopted, six with Downs syndrome 15. Some had been sexually and/or physically abused, some came from homes where drugs were abused 15

The children's emotional troubles abound as they deal with their parents' deaths. They have issues in school, medical, and other problems due to their various disabilities 202

"The most loving people I've ever known" 15, 19, "very loving people" 16

"Very good people" 19

The Billings take in other people's children with huge troubles and raise them as their own 42

Extremely concerned and worried about the children 19

The children with special needs and it just tugs at the hearts 45

"By example, Bud and Melanie taught us to overlook disability, to be color-blind, to be patient with others and to give of ourselves. Their lives centered around children, their family and each other. They loved deeply and unconditionally" 79

"They embraced the complexity of raising children with special needs, and they were their advocates. They gave these children a joyous childhood and a much needed voice" 79

"They are just angels from heaven, wonderful, wonderful people 58

Daughter of Billingses: “We know they are looking down upon us from Heaven, they are by our side every step of the way” 49

“We have lost two people who were truly trying to make the world a better place, one person at a time. The family plans to continue their legacy in the community, as that is what they taught us to do” 64

“The world lost somebody wonderful in Melanie, and Bud Billings did not deserve to be killed in his household” 118

VI. STATUS OF DEFENDANT

A. Hostile and Negative Characterizations.

Dumb crooks (7), 32

Stupid thugs 32

Bumbling idiots (2) 32

Thank God the accused criminals were just as dumb as they were evil 32

Insane 237

How criminals could be so evil and so dumb at the same time 32

Mastermind (21), 37

The “organizer” 54

Scary creep, same for father 42

Former landlords and a neighbor of Leonard Patrick Gonzalez Jr. paint him as a pistol-waving “nutcase” who always was late with the rent (4), 54

A former neighbor once described him as a “pistol-waving nutcase,” saying that he was prone to walking his Gulf Breeze neighborhood with a gun drawn while threatening people 222

Hot temper and a short fuse 202

An ‘evil man’ 29

“A bad seed, he always acts like a thug, a mafia type and wannabe” 143

Gonzalez Senior a scary creep, ditto for his son. Contrast in family values, the Billings take in other people’s children with huge troubles and raise them as their own 42

And in a last-ditch bid to recruit his father as a getaway driver, Gonzalez said Byrd Billings garnered a harem of children whom he routinely sexually abused 202

The women in his life were unhappy with him, too, and deservedly so. His mother urged his wife to “write him off,” that’s pretty bad when your own mom is saying that about you” 143

“I’m angry, he has this extensive criminal history” 29

Criminal record of seven convictions, stretch in state prison 42

Has an arrest record that dates back to the 1990s 222

In the 1990s he was convicted of robbery, forgery, battery and grand theft 29

While serving a prison sentence, he put a female officer in an arm lock and was convicted of battery on a corrections officer 29

Some of the charges include an assault on a sheriff’s deputy after his arrest outside a bar at Pensacola Beach 222

Neighbor said Gonzalez pointed a gun at him in anger shortly after moving in following Hurricane Ivan. It happened when Gonzalez came home one afternoon and found hurricane debris at the curb. “He just went off, grabbed a pistol and started threatening me, saying that I’d better get my ... stuff out of his yard,” ranted and raved and stormed up and down the street. I just figured he was a nutcase” 54.

“A real boaster and a sort of obnoxious person” 118, a liar and a boaster 132

Guys like Leonard Patrick Gonzalez Jr. always remind me of a line from “The Maltese Falcon,” an old Sam Spade detective story: “The cheaper

the crook, the gaudier the patter.” Guys like Gonzalez strut around, full of talk, gestures and grandeur, only to tumble eventually 143.

See II.A. Inflammatory, above, and III. Nature of Crime, above.

B. Possibly Mitigating, Positive, or Helpful.

Claimed he was “socially prominent” for teaching self-defense classes to children 42

Won a Sertoma
Club award for his community service 42

Enjoyed a positive public reputation, had a non-profit organization, FIGHT BACK, taught thousands of children martial arts self defense, gaining praise and accolades 54

In a 2007 News Journal story, they said some 3,000 children in Northwest Florida had gone through the program, learning basic martial arts and safety tips 29

Gonzalez, 35, also taught self-defense to women. Among other activities, he appeared in 2005 at the University of West Florida's Take Back the Night event to demonstrate defensive maneuvers 29

Gonzalez's good deeds make allegations that began unfolding this weekend even more unimaginable 29

He operated a not-for-profit self-defense and kidnapping awareness program for children called Project FIGHTBACK 91

Last month, the Pensacola Seville Sertoma Club presented Gonzalez and his wife the “Service to Mankind Award” for their dedication to Project FIGHTBACK 29

Weeks before his arrest in the murders, he won the Seville Sertoma Club's Service to Mankind Award for his work in teaching self-defense to children through an organization he ran with his wife, Tabatha, called Project FIGHTBACK 202

“I’m really shocked,” Sertoma spokesman Gwinn Corley said Monday. “He was very personable when I met him, and I just never would have guessed he’d be arrested, period, let alone for this” 29

In a 2007 News Journal story, Gonzalez and his wife claimed their sole interest was protecting children from being victimized by sexual predators and child abductors’ 29

VII. RESPONDING AS A SMALL COMMUNITY

Population Size and Nature of the Community. Size and Nature of the Community. While to some extent, the size and nature of the community is reflected in the way the case was covered in the media, this factor is first determined separately from the newspaper reports by the county population size.

The population of Escambia County was at the time of the trial 297,619.²⁴ That is a moderately-sized community. That is a population that is neutral, neither favoring nor opposing the need for a change of venue. However, that is not the end of assessing venue under this factor, as I will explain below. First, I will explain how this factor plays into the analysis.

Underlying Policy Reasons for Considering the Population Size of the County As a Factor in Change of Venue. There are four reasons why the size of the local jurisdiction, in this case the population of Escambia County, is important in deciding a change of venue motion:

(1). Size of Pool to Pick From. First, the larger the community, the better the chance, at least theoretically, of obtaining a venire that is untainted by pretrial publicity or other prejudice. In a high-profile case in Los Angeles County in California, even if over 90 percent of the county has prejudged a case, that still leaves almost a million people to pick a jury from. In a small county, once we reduce the population of the jury pool by those who are ineligible because of age, hardship, non-

²⁴ United States Census Bureau, State and County QuickFacts.

citizenship, ex-felon status, those who don't return their questionnaires or don't show up when called, or several other factors, the numbers of jurors left in a middle-sized county like Escambia is fairly small to begin with, typically no more than half the population, once we omit those too young, are non-citizens, those ineligible for other reasons, and those who never show up.

(2). Communication Network. A second reason that size of the community is important relates to the network of communications through which residents learn about a case and make judgments thereon. Word travels more quickly in a smaller community. The communication is informal -- gossip over the back fence, rumors, coffee shop interchanges -- rather than formal, that is, through the media. That is especially true when the population is relatively homogeneous, and the smaller the county, the greater the likelihood of homogeneity. There tends to be a higher level of cultural integration and shared values; people are less alienated and fragmented than in the large urban centers. That can make it more difficult to find a fair jury. In a smaller community, there also is a multiplier effect operating on whatever publicity one examines, which works through an informal communication system: the coffee shop, the service clubs, the few large employers, and the like.

(3). Impact of Case. A third reason why a change of venue is more likely to be granted from a smaller community is that a story of a sensational event would receive less attention in a larger area. It would, unfortunately, be less unusual, and would have to compete with a greater number of other local news stories. In large urban communities, even bad murders become only the case du jour, 15 minutes of fame and then forgotten. In a smaller county like Escambia County, a major case can become part of the historical lore of the community; in a sense it is seared into the psyche of the community. Such cases are not forgotten, and even with passage of time the memory may not dim too much.

(4). Those with Contact or Special Knowledge. A fourth reason for using size of the population as a factor is that the number of people with a direct or indirect connection to a case is fairly stable across cases. The number of victims and their families and friends, the witnesses, police and medical personnel, those who live nearby or have some involvement, plus all of their families and friends, are not much different in a case arising in a small county or a large one. But as a percentage of the total population, that percentage is much higher in a small county than a large one, leading to a much greater proportional tainting of the jury pool in the small community.

A related point is that in a smaller community, people tend to know each other. That includes jurors who know each other or they know case victims, the attorneys, and witnesses. Jurors are likely to believe their identity is known not only to the victims and their family members, but also to other members of the community. As the chosen representatives of their community, they are likely to feel some pressure to return the verdict the community expects. After all, they must continue to live in that community.

In a small county, more people are likely to live near or be familiar with the events that occurred, giving the event greater salience to a large percentage of the populous. Such salience leads to greater awareness of the case, more focus on news accounts about it, more of a personal reaction to it, and thus more potential bias about the case.

In the *Gonzalez* case, all the policy reasons came into play in supporting the need to change venue. Looking at the media coverage, there are themes I will identify, showing some facets of the small community:

All these factors increased the salience of the case to those who lived locally: Cases are salient when they seem especially relevant to our lives. Salience may arise because of propinquity, it could happen to me, people like me are involved, and other

factors. Salience adds to our interest of the case, our personal and emotional involvement, and our knowledge. It is the reason that editors put local stories on the front page. While everyone knew about the Oklahoma City bombing, it had special salience to the people of Oklahoma. They lived through, identified with the local victims, and were suffused with coverage. I consulted on both cases; while I recommended a change of venue in Oklahoma City, but not so in Sacramento. In my own research, I have found that pretrial prejudice in high profile cases varies dependent on their closeness to home and how it resonates in the personal lives of respondents and in the local community.²⁵

A. General

Small community reeling 15, 19

Beulah is an idyllic, quiet rural community 19

Sent shockwaves through this community 32

It's unfortunate that a place as beautiful as Pensacola is getting worldwide attention for something so ugly 32

Massive media coverage of the murders 212

B. Signs of Small Community: Gossip and Rumor

Rumor (25), 64

Persistent rumor that killings a "contract hit" 90

"Contrary to rumors of as much as \$12 million in the home the night of the murder ..." 123

²⁵ E. Bronson & R. Ross, "Gender and Salience As Factors in Jury Pool Bias: A Preliminary Investigation," California State University, Chico. Discussion Paper Series, 1999. Presented at Southwestern Political Science Association, San Antonio, 1999; and "Justice in the Era of the High-Profile Defendant: Will a Change of Venue Help?" California State University, Chico. Discussion Paper Series, 1991. Also published as part of Proceedings of the Annual Meetings, American Political Science Association 1991, presented at national meeting, American Political Science Association, Washington, D.C. (1991).

(The involvement of the Mexican Mafia) became a rumor that defined the darker side of an already dark event 217

It was rumored that Billings had business acquaintances in Alabama and laundered money for Mexican gangsters 166

Speculation, hoopla and speculation (11), 80

C. Many References to Memorials, Donations, Support from the Community

A trust fund established to help the nine youngest 49

As the story made national news, there were a wave of donations 182

Friends and family have stepped up, donating their time and providing emotional support 182

Family: “Everyone in the community ... has done so much for us” 182

An outpouring of support from the community 182

The Billings Family Trust For Children was formed to help provide for the nine adopted children of Byrd and Melanie Billings. The children, five of whom have Down syndrome and all of whom are disabled, were in the family's Beulah home when their parents were slain by intruders 64

At least 1,200 expected to attend funeral 58

Ten Escambia County sheriff's cruisers escorted the funeral procession 79

D. Saliency of the Case to the Community and the Reaction to It

Top ten local stories of the decade: 2009 - Billings murders shock the region, national 183

“It's because of the children, they had children with special needs, and it just tugs at the hearts of all the viewers” 45

Millions watched the case unfold on 24-hour cable TV news and the Internet 32

At the funeral, national and local reporters camped outside the church trying to get a view of what was going on. The public was invited to attend the visitation but the news media was asked to remain outside 58

Local and national reporters have viewed the video (of the bloody murder scene) 158

News conference sometimes twice a day, one had nine news cameras, TV networks carried the news conference live 59

Room full of local and national reporters 39

National television networks came to town, regularly broadcasting from Escambia County Sheriff David Morgan's frequent news conferences as the case evolved. "Dateline NBC" did features. Even international reporters were in Pensacola 216

See the many comments from Sheriff Morgan and his press conferences, above.

E. Other Community Responses.

While there are no specific textual citations, one perusing the articles in the local newspaper in preparing this content analysis gets a real sense of local pride that so much national, even international, attention has been focused on Pensacola in connection with the Billings case. Reporters from all over the world had come here, there were network television cameras rolling, there was even some local pride in the attention paid to Sheriff Morgan, despite his egocentricity and spreading of false rumors.

F. Media Response, Publicity

Drawn to the mystery and intrigue of the brash, grisly, shocking story 32

The case contains many of the elements that captivate crime connoisseurs and the general public. Wealth. Intrigue. Children at risk. Uncertain motives. A team of suspected killers who worked with military precision 45

Oprah to examine Billings's case, the Pensacola double-murder case that has caught the attention of the world has raised the interest of one of the biggest media moguls of our time, Oprah Winfrey. Ashley Markham, daughter of murder victims Byrd and Melanie Billings, is traveling to Chicago to tape a show with Winfrey about her parent's mission to help special-needs children and her effort to pick up that mantle. The Billings had nine adopted special needs children in their Beulah home. Escambia County Sheriff David Morgan also is scheduled to appear on the show via Internet teleconference from his Pensacola office 159

Watch the Oprah segment. Click here to watch the clip from "Oprah" about the Billings family 161

Vicious invasion stunned Pensacola and much of the nation 161

The case has received lots of media attention, including numerous discussions by cable news celebrities like Anderson Cooper, Nancy Grace and Larry King 159

Visit pnj.com/billings for our special section with stories, archives, a database of public documents, photo galleries, videos and more on the Billings case 159

The grisly details of what happened to Byrd and Melanie Billings in their home on July 9 played out in the national news. Five masked men wielding guns burst through the doors as some of the children slept upstairs. In the chaos that followed, Byrd and Melanie Billings were shot and killed 182

"If you're a crime reporter, this has got it all," said Bruce Swain, a journalism professor at the University of West Florida. "You may have had 10 other murders (in Escambia County this year) but how many involve people who at some point were caring for (17) kids, and living in a spacious home in an isolated area, and involving people entering the house, and leaving with great precision?" 45

"It's because of the children, they had children with special needs, and it just tugs at the hearts of all the viewers" 45

Story made national and international news 59

Room full of local and national reporters 39

Millions watched the case unfold on 24-hour cable TV news and the Internet 32

At the funeral, national and local reporters camped outside the church trying to get a view of what was going on. The public was invited to attend the visitation but the news media was asked to remain outside 58

Local and national reporters have viewed the video (of the bloody murder scene) 158

News conference sometimes twice a day, one had nine news cameras, TV networks carried the news conference live 59

This was a made-for-cable news event. Nancy Grace kept wanting interviews. CNN sent a reporter here. Inside Edition wanted to tell the story to the world 81

One week after the murders of Byrd and Melanie Billings at their Beulah home, Escambia Sheriff David Morgan stood in front of the nation's television cameras Thursday and proclaimed the majority of his department's work to be over 82

Outside the office during the interview was a TV satellite truck, a singular symbol of what the crime has become -- a full-blown national story, with unanswered questions, speculation about both the accused and the victims, bloggers posting their own theories and beliefs. At one point, one national network drew an unsourced tie between the accused and a Mexican gang 83

A journalism professor said a relatively new element of information-getting, blogging and social networking, could contribute to the spreading of rumors 83

Even inside the office, the hum of a TV truck parked outside could be heard through closed windows. On the street, a reporter rehearsed his lines 83

Billings daughter: "It's enough to go through a parent's death, to go through it twice, plus deal with a criminal investigation, plus deal with the media, it's very overwhelming" 83

Many news cameras and late-night press conferences 101

See the many comments from Sheriff Morgan and his press conferences, above, Special Category: Improper biasing statements by government officials

At the peak of fascination with the murders of Byrd and Melanie Billings in the summer of 2009, more than a dozen news agencies flooded the news conferences and camped outside the Escambia County Sheriff's Office and the couple's funeral. Media interest has tapered, but TruTV, formerly known as CourtTV is expected to cover the trial from start to finish along with The Associated Press and other local media outlets, said Sheila Sims, media coordinator for the court 219

G. Media Recognition of the Newsworthiness of the Killing
Gained international media attention 32

Story made national and international news 59

NewsRadio 1620 AM has been awarded the regional Edward R. Murrow Award from the Radio Television Digital News Association for outstanding achievement in broadcast journalism. The Pensacola news and talk station received the award for its coverage of the murders of Byrd and Melanie Billings, a Beulah couple slain July 9, 2009, during a home invasion and robbery. NewsRadio 1620 now is a finalist for the national Edward R. Murrow Award. ONLINE NewsRadio's winning audio entry can be found at www.newsradio1620.com 197

Many highly prejudicial comments about the co-defendants that also prejudiced the Defendant are not included.

H. More References to Sheriff Morgan

Sheriff Morgan in the national and international spotlight 45

Sheriff interviewed by "Good Morning America," NBC's "Today Show," and CBS's "Early Show," with interview requests from Oprah Winfrey,

“Dateline NBC” and news organizations as far away as Sweden and Poland
45

CNN's HLN (formerly Headline News) has broadcast live coverage of Morgan's many news conferences, while Sheriff's Office spokesman Sgt. Ted Roy, substituting for Morgan, has been interviewed by Nancy Grace on her eponymous, crime-heavy nightly program 45

I. Salience of the Case to the Community and the Reaction to It

“It's because of the children, they had children with special needs, and it just tugs at the hearts of all the viewers” 45

Millions watched the case unfold on 24-hour cable TV news and the Internet
32

At the funeral, national and local reporters camped outside the church trying to get a view of what was going on. The public was invited to attend the visitation but the news media was asked to remain outside 58

Local and national reporters have viewed the video (of the bloody murder scene) 158

News conference sometimes twice a day, one had nine news cameras, TV networks carried the news conference live 59

Room full of local and national reporters 39

National television networks came to town, regularly broadcasting from Escambia County Sheriff David Morgan's frequent news conferences as the case evolved. "Dateline NBC" did features. Even international reporters were in Pensacola 216

See the many comments from Sheriff Morgan and his press conferences, above.

J. Coverage Related to Possible Change of Venue

Attorneys for the man accused of killing Byrd and Melanie Billings have asked a judge to move the trial. The motion notes the extensive media interest that followed the murders at the couple's home in Beulah. That interest would make it difficult to find jurors who haven't seen or heard

something about the high-profile murders. The motion references stories from the Pensacola News Journal, the Northwest Florida Daily News, a slew of national media outlets, YouTube videos of defendant statements and Escambia County Sheriff David Morgan's numerous news conferences and TV appearances 211

Defense attorneys already have raised concerns that they will be unable to pick an impartial jury because of the extensive local coverage of a crime that was one of the most shocking in Pensacola's history 216

A television cameraman photographed potential jurors as they entered the courthouse 222

WATCH IT LIVE: Follow the trial in its entirety at pnj.com. We are streaming video throughout the day and will replay the footage in a loop after court ends each day. **PHOTOS:** Scenes from court throughout the day. **LATEST NEWS:** Updates on testimony and court developments all day 228

Most jurors said that they were familiar with some of the details of the murder 220

Conclusion on Size and Nature of the Community. While the population size of Escambia County is a neutral factor in weighing the need for a change of venue, the residents of the county have very much responded to the murder of the Mr. and Mrs. Billings in the manner of a smaller county.

The community has united in its horror at the crime, have supported the victims' survivors, have spread many rumors, been overwhelmed by the extent of the sensationalized media coverage, and was shocked that such a crime could occur in their community. On balance, this factor supports the need for a change of venue.

**DEALING WITH PREJUDICIAL PRETRIAL PUBLICITY:
QUESTIONNAIRES, VOIR DIRE, AND OTHER TECHNIQUES**

There are many possible ways to deal with excessive prejudicial pretrial publicity in addition or as an alternative to a change of venue. It was likely clear to the trial judge in the *Gonzalez* case that something might be needed to offset the impact of the widespread case knowledge and prejudicial attitudes in his venire. The local Pensacola newspaper reported that, “Most jurors said that they were familiar with some of the details of the July 9, 2009 murder due to the heavy media coverage that followed in the weeks after” 218.

The voir dire confirmed the panel members’ widespread knowledge about the case, e.g.:

District Attorney: Now, a number of you -- and I think probably quite a few of you -- have had some knowledge. I’ll ask that question. Just by show of hands, how many of you know something about this case from the media? Basically, everyone in that situation.”²⁶

The prosecutor then asks a typical put aside question, and no one raises a hand to indicate they couldn’t put aside what ever they know or whatever opinion they may have. It was then clearly crucial to investigate, at least by defense counsel, to figure out what knowledge or attitudes those prospective jurors had, to attempt to determine how prejudicial those matters were likely to be, and to calculate how easy it would really be for each of them to ignore aspects of a case that was characterized as “brutal,” “raw brutality,” “grisly,” “terrible,” “heinous,” “gruesome,” “evil,” “devastating,” to cite only a tiny handful of newspaper characterizations of what happened at the Billings house the prior year, and therefore what most of those jurors had surely read about the case.²⁷ In fact, most of the voir dire questioning was less a dialogue than a monologue, where counsel seemed less interested in what the

²⁶ Record on Appeal, Leonard Patrick Gonzalez, Jr., Appellant Vs. The State of Florida, Vol. IX, at 41.

²⁷ See p. 18, *supra*.

prospective jury members knew or thought than in ingratiating himself. Yet obviously the important thing was to get jurors to express what was on their minds.

Getting the jurors to like him may have been useful, but given the nature of the case, counsel should have been primarily concerned about two matters: the first was finding and excusing those jurors who were indeed biased by the prejudicial media about the case. The second was excusing those who would automatically vote for the death penalty and protect those who opposed the death penalty but would not always vote against it.

Jurors learned from listening to others how to pass the test of having their answers accepted. For example, during death qualification, when asked about their opinion about the death penalty, “neutral” became the magic talisman, and panelist after panelist kept repeating it.

On the venue issue, counsel was seriously handicapped in doing his job by the voir dire process adopted by the court. After all, for example, if a panelist would have explained that his or her serious bias was having read that the defendant had a long criminal record and/or was the “mastermind” of the robbery and sole shooter, counsel would learn that, but so would all the other prospective jurors.

The obvious and necessary answer to this dilemma was to have not only individual voir dire, but sequestered voir dire as well, that is, some or all of the voir dire held out of the presence of the others. I do not know if counsel requested sequestered voir dire, but without it, counsel could not explore the crucial matter of what the jurors knew and how it might affect them. Since counsel didn’t even know what that juror knew, he was left with the ineffectual process of asking them if they could put aside anything they knew or any bias they might have and decide the case solely on the evidence presented in court. Such a hypothetical was barely helpful when the juror was unlikely to know what might be biasing or to be aware of how difficult it is to ignore the 400-pound gorilla or even a much smaller version.

Such questions satisfy form but often lack function. The question is leading by being highly suggestive of the answer. As with questions on applying the presumption of innocence and following other court instructions, they are asked in court, and prospective jurors are looking up at the judge in black robe next to the American flag, been socialized to the correct answers by their Civics 101 class, seen those who would not “do their duty” “fired” from the jury, been told what the “correct” answer is, and then heard all the other jurors give that answer. Voir dire is an imperfect means of measuring the fairness of a jury, but non-sequestered voir dire especially significantly weakens its efficacy in high-profile cases like *Gonzalez*.

In answering the question of whether the techniques used by counsel in *Gonzalez* actually protected the Defendant from the obvious and prejudicial media coverage, it is useful to compare what was done in *Gonzalez* with the recent and leading Supreme Court case on venue of *Skilling v. United States*, 561 U.S. 358 (2010).²⁸

The Court noted that while the prejudicial publicity did not create a presumption of prejudice in the case (although the Fifth Circuit had so found), it certainly did agree that the prejudice was great, but the need for a change of venue was avoided by alternative means adopted by the trial judge and facts in the case. I will compare those facts and techniques in *Skilling* to the facts and options in *Gonzalez*.

Facts in the *Skilling* Case. The following facts in *Skilling* lessened the need for a change of venue, as compared with *Gonzalez*:

1. The huge population. Size of the population is a standard criterion used in venue cases, as explained above. The population in the Houston venue, where *Skilling* was tried, was four and a half million, 15 times the size of the Escambia

²⁸ I note that I was a consultant in *Skilling* and also submitted a lengthy declaration.

County population, thus lessening the need for a change of venue in *Skilling* as compared with that need in *Gonzalez*.

2. Gravity of the crime. *Gonzalez* is a capital case, while *Skilling* involved white collar crimes. Obviously, the gravity of the crime was much less in *Skilling* and a change of venue less mandated.

3. Delay. In *Skilling* there was a four and one-half year delay between the initiation of the publicity and the trial, over four times the length of delay in *Gonzalez*: just over a year between the murders and start of trial. Thus, there had been much less time for forgetting and healing in *Gonzalez*, and more need for a venue change.²⁹

4. Acquittals. In *Skilling*, as Justice Ginsburg pointed out in her opinion, the fact that the same jury had acquitted the defendant of some of the charges against him and that other juries had acquitted other Enron defendants of charges against them in earlier cases indicated to the Court (of “prime significance”) that the jurors had considered the cases without being unduly biased by the pretrial publicity.

All of these factual features that lessened the need for a change of venue in *Skilling* were missing in *Gonzalez*. However, there were some useful remedies noted in *Skilling* that might have been used in *Gonzalez*.

Techniques Adopted in *Enron* to Deal with Pretrial Publicity.

1. An extensive questionnaire. The *Skilling* court used a 14-page questionnaire including 77 items. It was mailed out to prospective jurors in November; trial started January 30, so attorneys had ample time to review them carefully and then conduct a better and more efficient voir dire.

The *Gonzales* trial court did use a jury questionnaire, but it was, as previously noted, unusually short, the shortest I have ever countered, just four pages

²⁹ Delay is often noted as a possible remedy for prejudicial pretrial publicity, but rarely granted unless it has already arisen prior to the trial.

long, including one and one-half pages of instructions and one blank open page labeled “Explanations.” The remaining one and one-half pages were the questions, just eight of them, three on the pretrial publicity and five related to the death penalty. The three questions about the pretrial publicity might have provided a good start for a helpful voir dire, but counsel rarely dealt with that topic.

2. Individual and sequestered voir dire. In both trials, *Skilling* and *Gonzalez*, the members of the venire were questioned individually, a very helpful technique to help identify prejudice. Thus, the major and crucial distinction between the two voir dices is that the *Skilling* voir dire was sequestered, that is, the jurors not being questioned could not hear the responses by the juror being questioned, while in *Gonzalez*, each juror’s answers could be overheard by the rest of that panel. While non-sequestered voir dire damages the voir dire in multiple ways, it is of special concern when trying to assess any prejudice generated from pretrial publicity. When questioning a panel member about what they have read, seen, or heard, the answer given may provide the rest of the panel with exactly the most dangerous information, precisely the information you hoped they didn’t have. This may be what happened in the *Gonzalez* case and may explain why the voir dire was so unhelpful in discovering prejudice: you can’t identify prejudice if you don’t ask about it.

3. As a minor matter, both trial courts allowed extra peremptory challenges.

The *Skilling* decision provides does not weaken the argument for a change of venue in *Gonzalez*. There are important distinguishing facts that make the *Gonzalez* case a stronger one for transfer to another locale: Population size, non-death penalty, substantial delay between event and trial, and partial acquittals all make *Gonzalez* a stronger candidate for transfer than *Skilling*. Also, the open voir dire seriously interfered with the ability of counsel to impanel an untainted jury,

None of these factors directly indicate Ineffective Assistance of Counsel, except to the extent that counsel did not request questioning out of the presence of other jurors, and I have no information on this, as well as the shortness of the questionnaire, which it appears was primarily written by the defense,

SUMMARY OF OVERALL OPINION ON INEFFECTIVE ASSISTANCE OF COUNSEL (IAC) UNDER *STRICKLAND V. WASHINGTON*, 466 U.S. 668 (1984).

It is my firm opinion that counsel conducted the defense of Mr. Gonzalez with respect to the venue issue in a manner that fell below prevailing professional norms, the first prong under *Strickland*, that is, below an objective standard of reasonableness. That conduct includes not investigating the objective need for a change of venue, including a content analysis of the publicity, doing a community survey, and getting professional help. If this work had been done in a professional manner, it would have demonstrated a clear need not to withdraw the motion for a change of venue. In addition, the voir dire was below professional standards, but if counsel did request sequestered voir dire and the Court rejected that request, he had probably done all he could on that aspect of his duty.

In summary, counsel's failed the first prong under *Strickland* in the following ways:

1. Failure to seek and follow through on a change of venue before trial.
2. Failure to seek professional help regarding the change of venue.
3. Failure to conduct a community survey regarding pretrial publicity.
4. Failure to perform a content analysis of the media coverage of the case.
5. Failure to seek a change of venue after questionnaires and voir dire.
6. Failure to write a helpful jury questionnaire.
7. Failure to conduct an adequate voir dire as to the impact of pretrial publicity.

As to the second, or prejudice, prong under *Strickland*, it seems clear that, “but for counsel’s unprofessional errors, the result of the proceeding would have been different. A reasonable probability is a probability sufficient to undermine confidence in the outcome.” 466 U.S. at 694. That is, the evidence that could have been presented in a professionally prepared hearing on venue would have led to a successful change of venue motion and protect the fair trial rights of Mr. Gonzalez.

Therefore, it is my opinion that counsels’ performance in the *Gonzalez* case in the areas I have discussed met the two prongs of the *Strickland* standard for ineffective assistance of counsel.

NOTES

The content analysis is based on material found in the Pensacola News Journal. The word or phrase is taken directly from the newspaper, usually a direct quote.

There are usually either one or two numbers inserted after the word, phrase, or passage found in the indented formats of this declaration. If the number is in parentheses, it refers to the number of times that the word or passage appears in all the newspaper articles (Exhibit 2). If there is a number appearing after the word or passage that is not in parentheses, it is the number of one of the newspaper articles found in Exhibit 2, even if the word or passage appeared multiple times.

If quotation marks used, the passage was from someone quoted in the article (and in quotation marks in the article). All material is an accurate reflection of the newspaper material, either a direct copy or shortened version.

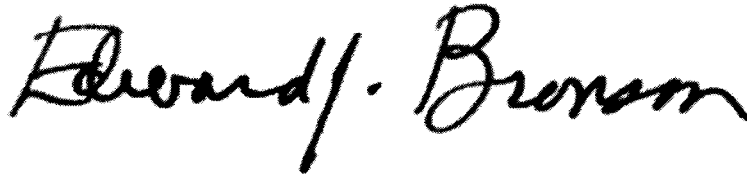
Some materials in the analysis are my explanations, definitions, analysis, or summary, and very occasionally, material is repeated where applicable under a second category.

A few of the articles at the beginning mention the defendant before the murder, and some articles may only mention the case, but all articles refer to the case or parties.

Such words as “alleged” are usually omitted.

I declare under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct, except as to those matters stated on information and belief, and as to those matters, I believe them to be true.

Executed on this 15th day of February 2016, at Chico, California.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Edward J. Bronson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'E' and 'B'.

EDWARD J. BRONSON

- Attachment 1. Curriculum Vitae
- Attachment 2. Newspaper articles from Pensacola News Journal
- Attachment 3. Log and summary of newspaper articles relating to case

EXHIBIT D

(Media Reports)

Billings Child Told Police Dad Fought Murderers

- By Sarah Netter
Close
More from Sarah

- Lee Ferran
Close
Follow on Twitter
More from Lee
Aug. 18, 2009

- 0 Shares

- Email
- Star
- 0 Shares

- Email

It was a terrifying surprise: Two men burst into the bedroom of Byrd and Melanie Billings and brutally murdered the Florida couple, execution-style, as one of their beloved disabled children watched in horror.

According to 700 pages of court documents and witness interviews released on the Billings case, the child in the room that day -- one of the couple's 13 special needs children -- used sign language to tell police he heard a knock on the door before the two men entered.

The child told police he heard one of the men say, "You're gonna die -- one, two, three." The boy said his father then grabbed one of the suspects and that his mother got shot in the shirt.



Play

null

When it was over, Byrd Billings was found inside the master bedroom, shot six times, including twice in the back of the head, in what police believe may have been a contract hit. His wife, found in the hallway outside her bedroom, had been shot five times, including three times in her head.

The alleged ringleader of the operation, Leonard Patrick Gonzalez Jr., told police that his involvement was "very deep," according to the newly released documents and that he wanted to "talk to the Feds about this."

Investigators told ABCNews.com earlier this month that at least one source told police that the couple were the targets of a contract killing. They were murdered July 9.



Play

null

"Early on in this investigation we had an uncorroborated statement from this individual that it could have been a contract killing," said Escambia County Sheriff David Morgan. "We have pursued and continue to pursue [this possibility]."

Morgan declined to clarify the individual's relationship to the case, other than to say that the statement was made to police "during the course of the investigation." He would not say if corroborating evidence to support the statement had been found. The Billings were well known for having adopted and cared for 13 special needs children. While police continue to investigate the possibility of a contract killing, the sheriff's office is working with the state attorney to build a case against the eight individuals already charged in connection with the crime, seven of whom are charged with the Billings' murder.

"Everybody is concerned that nothing be done to jeopardize the existing case," Morgan said.

Police have repeatedly said that robbery was the prime motive for the deadly crime that was executed with "military precision." A single safe was taken from the home during the robbery and was later revealed to hold only some jewelry, children's medication and family documents.

"The one motive that we know, and is prosecutable... is that it was a home invasion, a robbery and a murder occurred. Those things are very definitive. When you get in the realm of, 'Was there an additional motive?' therein lies the conundrum," Morgan said. Nine of the Billings' children were in the home when their parents were killed.

Billings' Wealth Built by Many Businesses

Byrd Billings was a 66-year-old entrepreneur who dabbled in used cars and boats before finally hitting it big. Melanie Billings was a 43-year-old country music lover who fed the homeless and was devoted to her MySpace page.

Together, they adopted 13 children with autism, Down syndrome or other developmental disabilities and lived in a sprawling home west of Pensacola.

Interviews and court records obtained by The Associated Press also portray Byrd Billings as a former strip club owner turned used car dealer who was once sentenced to probation for an adoption scam. He frequently crossed paths with "shady characters," according to an ex-wife, but police have offered no evidence linking his past to the murder.

Known around Pensacola as "Bud," Billings spent his early years in Mississippi and Tennessee. He incorporated a boat company in 1976, which was dissolved in the 1980s, and owned a car dealership in Mississippi in the 1980s.

In divorce records from the dissolution of his second marriage, in 1993, Billings reported having a net worth of just \$1,400, including total cash assets of \$100 and a net monthly income of \$1,190. Four months after the divorce, Melanie became his third wife.

At the time of their death, they were living in a \$700,000 home -- opulent by Pensacola standards -- and associates say they employed several people to care for the children. But how they got there from such a humble beginning to their marriage is unclear, the AP reported.

Billings' background also includes a strange criminal case. In 1990, he and his second wife, Cindy Reeve, pleaded nolo contendere -- which means they did not admit guilt but agreed to a punishment -- to charges they doctored birth records and tried to obtain a newborn for \$2,100. They both received two years' probation, which was later amended to a year.

When reached by the AP, Reeve said she wanted to be left alone and the adoption "got blown out of proportion." However, she said Billings "always dealt with shady characters."

At the time of their divorce, documents show, Billings worked as a consultant for Back Seat Inc., a holding company for a topless bar, which opened in 1990 and no longer exists. Arety Kapatanis, owner of the Pensacola strip club Arety's Angels, said Billings turned her life around after hiring her there as a waitress.

"Bud Billings was a man of integrity. He was generous," Kapatanis said. "He ran his business in the most professional manner. It could have been a shoe store or a bakery. I mean, this type of business tends to get a really bad rap. People expect shady dealings, and they expect all kind of things like that. There was never any of that with Bud."

Billings later opened a used car lot, which, according to state business records, was registered to Melanie and her daughter, Ashley Markham. The business runs on a worn-out slab, surrounded by pawn shops and bail bond companies.

During the funeral service, Ed Brock, Melanie Billings' brother, praised the couple's selflessness and kindness, exemplified by their adoption of 13 children with mental and physical disabilities.

"Their lives centered around children, their family and each other," said Brock. "They loved deeply and unconditionally. They embraced the complexity of raising children with special needs, and they were their advocates. They gave these children a joyous childhood and a much needed voice."

Though seven men and one woman have been arrested and charged in connection to the murders, investigators are searching for "one more individual" who they believe was supposed to disable the Billings' sophisticated security system.

Mystery Woman, Realtor Pamela Wiggins, Complicates Case

Pamela Wiggins, a wealthy Florida realtor, is the woman once held in connection to the case on charges of accessory after the fact for allegedly helping to hide the safe that was stolen as well as the transporting of guns used in the robbery. She was released in July on bond.

Wiggins' husband, Hugh Wiggins, first said that the stolen safe was hidden in the backyard of one of her homes, according to police reports.

Wiggins also owns the red van that was used to transport both the safe and the weapons used during the deadly crime, the report said. She was riding in the van while the guns were being transported following the robbery and "had knowledge" they had been used in the murders, one cooperating suspect said in the police report.

Last month, Morgan would not confirm or deny if Wiggins knew the suspects planned to use her van or home before the operation or had any involvement in hiding the safe.

Wiggins was a person of interest in the case after police found she was "associated" with one of the suspects up to the day of the murders. After police questioned her, Wiggins was charged with accessory after the fact of a felony murder and was released after she posted \$10,000 bail. If convicted, she faces a maximum sentence of 30 years in prison, state attorney Bill Eddins said.

Morgan, in referring to Wiggins' release on \$10,000 bail, said she is "absolutely" not a threat to society.

Wiggins was originally arrested in connection to the case when she was aboard her yacht, the Classy Lady, in Alabama. She also owns a dozen properties in three states and a Rolls Royce.

Weapons Recovered, Feds Involved

Last month, police recovered several weapons including the probable "murder weapon or weapons." It was not immediately clear from where investigators recovered the weapons. Police have enlisted the help of the federal Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms to test the weapons for prints, DNA, blood splatters and ballistics, Morgan said.

Morgan confirmed reports that the Drug Enforcement Agency was helping in the investigation, but he refused to spell out their role other than to say the DEA was investigating the suspects.

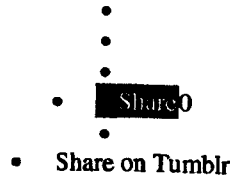
"Look at it from a broad perspective," DEA spokesman David Melenkevitz told ABCNews.com. For the sheriff's office to call in the DEA, "There has to be some drug connection somewhere."

Melenkevitz would not elaborate on the DEA's investigation.

The Associated Press contributed to this report.

Fla. Panhandle Murder Case Has Many Twists

BY CATHARINE SKIPP 8/4/09 AT 8:00 PM



Filed Under: U.S.

If you talk to those who knew Byrd Billings over the years, two portraits of him emerge. One was of a wealthy, bighearted man who, along with his wife, Melanie, adopted 13 children, most of them with special needs. The couple took in kids with Down syndrome, autism, and fetal alcohol syndrome, and raised them lovingly in a nine-bedroom mansion in Beulah, Fla., near the Alabama border. They lavished them with clothes and toys and annual trips to Disney World. When one of the older girls had her senior prom, they outfitted her in a white Cinderella-style dress and rented a stretch limo. The Billingses "had the capacity to love lots of children who others were unable to care for," says Suzy Watson, who taught two of the youngsters.

Yet the other Byrd Billings was erratic and bullying. Some of his actions involving the children were bizarre. In 2004, for instance, one of the kids with Down syndrome was accidentally burned in the bathtub by scalding water. The boy later died during treatment from an air bubble that entered an artery. After an incident like that, the Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF) typically investigates (though the agency wouldn't confirm that it did so in this case). Billings concocted a strange scheme involving

DCF, in an attempt to keep the agency at bay, says lawyer Robert Beasley, who has represented Billings on other matters in the past. Billings tried to trademark seven of the adopted kids' names. Then, each time DCF referred to one of them in correspondence, he claimed a trademark violation and demanded \$10 million—in silver coins, for some reason—from the agency and from specific employees. Eventually, a DCF attorney told him to send all communications to the legal department, and Billings stopped.

ADVERTISING

In his business dealings, Billings could be similarly combative. "Some days, you didn't want to deal with him," says Tim Higley, a former employee. "One time, he threw a baseball bat at a guy doing some remodeling work," because he considered it subpar. It's unclear how Billings was wealthy enough to afford his sprawling mansion. He once owned a strip club, the Back Seat Lounge, but the more significant moneymakers were apparently an array of ventures tied to used cars. Billings handled all aspects of the trade: sales, financing, and repossession. His interest rates and fees were notoriously steep, says Higley. In fact, his financing company was cited and fined twice by the state for imposing excessive charges on buyers, says Crystal Spencer, a former lawyer for the Billings family. As part of his work, Billings also associated with decidedly unsavory characters at times, according to three people who did business with him and declined to be named out of fear for their personal safety.

Try Newsweek for only \$1.25 per week

All of this is now the focus of intense scrutiny, given that Billings and his wife were murdered last month. Within days, authorities arrested eight suspects and retrieved a safe stolen from the couple's house. None has entered a plea yet, though arraignments are scheduled to begin on Thursday. The crime was elaborately conceived, but certain basic elements, like the motive and the connection between the victims and the suspects, remain shrouded in mystery. At first, officials insisted that the motive was robbery. But last Friday, Escambia County Sheriff David Morgan said at a press conference that it was "a possibility" that the slayings were a contract hit.

As authorities continue their investigation, the case is only getting more convoluted. It features a collection of dubious characters, Byzantine relationships, and elaborate swindles that are fantastical even by Florida's baroque standards. "There is nothing about this case that is a straight line," Morgan told NEWSWEEK. "It's a running con game."

The invasion of the Billings home was a methodically planned operation, spearheaded by a man named Leonard Gonzalez Jr., according to court documents. Gonzalez and his gang rehearsed the caper for more than a month, says Sheriff Morgan. They met regularly at Gonzalez's father's home, where they practiced breaking into a house and subduing victims. (The father, who was one of those arrested, is "presumed innocent," says his lawyer.) Surveillance cameras at two local Wal-Marts recorded members of the crew buying supplies, including black watch caps, black cargo pants, and zip-ties (which could be used as handcuffs). In

the buildup to the crime, says Morgan, the group surreptitiously staged a dry run at the Billings house.

On the evening of July 9, the gang deployed, arriving at the Billings home in two vehicles. Three armed men wearing balaclavas broke through the front door, while a pair of others entered simultaneously through a rear door, authorities say. Two of the alleged participants, Wayne Coldiron and Frederick Thornton, later told law enforcement, according to arrest reports, that Gonzalez killed the Billingses with a 9mm pistol (their bodies were later found in their bedroom). Nine of the kids were home at the time, and a few of them witnessed the break-in. Authorities say the men quickly retrieved a safe, loaded it into one of the waiting vehicles, and everyone sped off. The whole operation lasted less than 10 minutes.

But the gang apparently botched the job in a few crucial respects. According to one source with knowledge of the investigation, who requested anonymity because it's ongoing, the assailants were after a different safe—one that had more than \$100,000 in it—but were unable to crack it. The one they took, perhaps as a consolation, ended up containing only children's medication, documents, and heirloom jewelry. In addition, the attackers failed to disable the Billingses' surveillance system, a slew of cameras that the couple had installed throughout the house, as well as outside, to watch over the kids. As a result, cops captured images of the two getaway vehicles, including a red van, and with the help of tips found the van hidden behind a shed on Gonzales's father's property. Authorities hauled the father in, and, in short order, seven other people.

The chief catch so far, say authorities, is Gonzalez. A self-styled goodfella who grew up in the Florida panhandle and served in the National Guard, "he used to wear this black wool jacket, looking like a Mafia guy. That's what he always wanted to be," according to a former friend, Barry McCleary. In a deposition in an unrelated matter last year, Gonzalez, who served time for robbery, battery, and petty theft, claimed that his past exploits granted him keen, and highly marketable, insights. "I'm an expert in criminal countermeasures and defensive tactics," he said, according to James Jenkins, the attorney who deposed him in the earlier case. Most likely embellishing, Gonzalez added, "I do situational-control workshops for government agencies, for private individuals, for corporations." Sheriff Morgan sums up Gonzalez this way: he is "an inveterate liar" and "a psychopath."

For the Billings job, Gonzalez enlisted a friend named Pamela Long Wiggins, authorities say. It's unclear how the two met, but he rented a house from her, and their kids attended the same school. A 47-year-old businesswoman who grew up in Albany, Ga., Wiggins, like Gonzalez, cultivated an outlaw mystique, according to her soon-to-be ex-husband, James Malden. She used to brag about "people from the underworld" that she knew from her days running a pawn shop in Georgia, he says. "She is a shady person, and very smart." In 1993, she was the prime suspect in an arson case involving a property that she owned, but she was never charged, says James Carswell, the fire chief in Albany. Though media reports have described her as "wealthy," that's not exactly true. She has loads of assets—about 10 properties in the panhandle and a 47-foot yacht (The Classy Lady)—but "they're

mortgaged to the hilt," says Ed Seitz, Malden's lawyer. (Charlie Wiggins, no relation to Pamela, who has represented her in the past, had no comment; Pamela has no attorney of record yet in the Billings case.) At least five of her properties are now facing foreclosure, according to county records Seitz showed NEWSWEEK.

As for the remainder of the crew, they appear to be ancillary figures whom authorities believe Gonzalez recruited as muscle. Of the eight people arrested so far, seven, including Gonzalez, allegedly participated in the home invasion and now face murder charges. The eighth, Wiggins, has been charged as an accessory after the fact, since the safe and some guns were discovered at her house. As authorities build cases against these eight, they've declined to answer some key questions. For instance: how exactly is Gonzalez connected to the victims? All that's known from arrest reports and the sheriff's public statements is that Gonzalez once worked for one of Billings's companies; that at one point he obtained financial backing from Billings for a martial-arts studio he wanted to open; and that his father, who owned a pressure-washing business, did some work on the Billings property. But how would Gonzalez have known that the victims had a safe full of cash in their home? And if the killings were indeed a contract hit, for which Gonzalez was paid as much as \$50,000, according to the source privy to the investigation, who ordered it?

Here's where things get exceedingly murky. One person police interviewed the night of the murders was a man named Henry Tice, who also works in the used-car trade. He and Billings have had joint interests in a number of ventures. For instance, state

records filed in 2007 show that Billings's financing company provided funding to Hispanic-American Auto Sales, a Tice-run business. Tice is also "good friends" with Gonzalez, who has worked for him in the past, according to a former Tice associate who requested anonymity out of fear. Both men were martial-arts fans and used to work out together, the associate says.

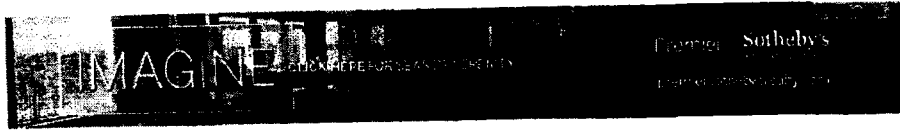
Tice's relationship with Billings, however, became poisonous, according to three people who knew them both and requested anonymity for similar reasons. Two of them explained that Billings had invested in a "floor-planning" deal with Tice, which involves fronting money for bulk vehicle purchases, usually in exchange for the titles and gradual repayment, plus interest. But Tice, they say, pocketed the cash and made off with the cars, fleecing Billings to the tune of at least \$100,000. As a result, according to the two acquaintances, Billings went to the Escambia County sheriff's office, which began investigating (the detective believed to be handling the case did not return calls for comment).

Watch Now Presidential candidate Bernie Sanders interviewed on CBSN /

CBS News / CBS Evening News / CBS This Morning / 48 Hours / 60 Minutes / Sunday Morning / Face The Nation / CBSN

Log In Search

Video | US | World | Politics | Entertainment | Health | MoneyWatch | SciTech | Crime | Sports | Photos | More



By CBSNEWS / CBS/AP / July 14, 2019, 3:17 AM

7 Suspects Held in Slaying of Fla. Couple



photo of Leonard Patrick Gonzalez Sr., Wayne Coldiron, Gary Lamont Sumner Jr. / AP / ESCAMBIA SHERIFFS DEPT

Comment / Shares / Tweets / Stumble / Email

More

An ex-convict who taught self-defense to children. A day laborer who served prison time for killing a man in a fight. An Air Force staff sergeant attached to an elite special operations unit.

Somehow, authorities say, they ended up part of a loosely connected group of seven men charged in the shooting deaths of Byrd and Melanie Billings, a wealthy Florida Panhandle couple known for adopting children with special needs.

The suspects, some dressed as ninjas, stole a safe and other items during the break-in Thursday at the sprawling Billings home west of Pensacola. Nine of the couple's 13 adopted children were home at the time. Three saw the intruders but were not hurt. Authorities would not say what was in the safe or what else was taken.

Some of the masked men entered through the front door, while others slipped in through an unlocked utility door in the back. They were in and out in under 10 minutes. The crime was captured by an extensive video surveillance system the Billings used to keep tabs on their many children.

"It was a very well-planned and well-executed operation," said Escambia County Sheriff David Morgan.

Personalized advice. Award-winning performance.




Learn More

BUILT TO PERFORM.

CREATED TO SERVE.

Most Popular

- 01 Suspect in 2 Mississippi slayings: I'm "not going to jail" 108265 views
- 02 Chile rocked by deadly 8.3 magnitude earthquake 89743 views
- 03 Ky. clerk: I am being forced to disobey God 87556 views
- 04 Rivals pile on Trump at second GOP debate 74581 views
- 05 10 best and worst deals at Target 60756 views

Watch CBSN Live



Watch CBS News Live

Watch CBS News anytime, anywhere with the new 24/7 digital news network. Stream CBSN live or on demand for FREE on your TV, computer, tablet, or smartphone.

The last three of the seven suspects were arrested Tuesday, though Morgan said there still might be more arrests. State Attorney Bill Eddins said robbery was the main motive for the crime.

Adult daughter Ashley Markham - one of four Billings children from previous marriages - sobbed Tuesday as she hugged Morgan, who said he kept a promise made to her the night of the slayings.

"It is my honor today to tell you, Ashley, your family we have found them and they are in custody," Morgan said.

The suspects ranged in age from 16 to 56, and several were day laborers who knew each other through a pressure washing business and an auto detailer they worked for. One, Donnie Ray Stallworth, was with the Air Force Special Operations Command with an aircraft maintenance squadron at Hurlburt Field near Fort Walton Beach. It wasn't clear how he knew the others.

"We're dealing with a group of folks with rare exception - of course, there's a couple of people who are not - that again are basically day laborer sorts, folks that get odd jobs, part-time jobs and they drift," Morgan said. "With the exception of Mr. Stallworth you don't have any career-minded people in this group."

Morgan called 35-year-old suspect Leonard Gonzalez Jr. a "pivotal person" in organizing the crime, but stopped short of identifying him as the mastermind. He was charged Sunday with murder.

In court Tuesday, he read a statement proclaiming his innocence.

"The sheriff intentionally thrust me into the public's eye without any charges being filed and also intentionally placed me in a suicide ward to make me look even guiltier," Gonzalez said.

Described by friends as a loving husband and father, Gonzalez's passion is teaching karate to young children, reports CBS News correspondent Terrell Brown.

Just last month, he won an award from a community organization for "Service to Mankind," Brown reports.

Gwinn Corley, a spokesman for the group that gave Gonzalez and his wife the award for their program, said they brought their six young children to self-defense presentations.

"We were impressed with them," Corley said. "He was talking about children and their respect for their elders. They both seemed to have a passion to teaching the arts to abused women and kids, they had a vision for how to give free self defense."

Gonzalez also once served in the National Guard - police think it was that experience that helped pull off the attack with military-like precision, Brown reports.

Records show Gonzalez, who was arrested Sunday in the Billings case, served time in Florida State Prison on burglary and forgery charges in the mid-1990s.

His father, Leonard Gonzalez Sr., was also arrested. The 56-year-old was charged Sunday night with evidence tampering after authorities said he tried to cover up some damage on a red van seen on surveillance video pulling away from the house. Officials said the damage was unrelated to the crime. Tips from the public led police to the van Saturday.

The elder Gonzalez owned a pressure washing business and may have visited the

Watch Now



play VIDEO

Beverly Hills street race caught on tape

Most Shared



Muslim boy arrested after teacher mistakes his clock for bomb



Kids who get more sunlight less likely to need glasses



Muslim teen cuffed over clock mistaken for bomb speaks out



Moses Malone, 3-time NBA MVP, dies age 60



Toddler among youngest ever with type 2 diabetes



21 PHOTOS

New limbs, new hope for Africa's hunted albino children

Billings property once before. Another man arrested and charged with murder Sunday, day laborer Wayne Coldiron, 41, sometimes worked for him and also may have visited the property, Morgan said.

Coldiron, who appeared in court Tuesday and said he had lost his job as a plumber, served two years in a Tennessee prison in the early 1990s after killing a man during a fight. He also served nearly two years in prison in Florida on an aggravated assault charge.

The other four suspects were arrested Monday and Tuesday.

Authorities in neighboring Okaloosa County arrested 31-year-old Gary Sumner, another day laborer who was in a county jail on an unrelated traffic charge. On Tuesday, three more men were arrested: Stallworth, 19-year-old Frederick Lee Thorton, and a 16-year-old whom officials are not naming because he is a minor.

Eddins, the prosecutor, said he would seek first-degree murder indictments from a grand jury against all the suspects, including Gonzalez Sr. He would not say whether he will seek the death penalty.

Escambia County Judge Tom Johnson refused to set bail for the younger Gonzalez and Coldiron at the request of State Attorney Bill Eddins. Johnson set their arraignments for Aug. 6. Bond for the elder Gonzalez had already been set at \$500,000. The suspects arrested Monday and Tuesday are due in court this week except for Stallworth, who must be extradited from Alabama, where he was arrested.

The Billings family attended the hearing Tuesday but made no statements. Some were in tears afterward.

Friends, meanwhile, struggled to understand how the couple could have been killed in such a horrific way.

"Melanie and Byrd both would give you the shirt off their back and maybe they were too trusting," said Patsy Brown, who had known Melanie Billings for 22 years.

© 2009 CBS Interactive Inc. All Rights Reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten, or redistributed. The Associated Press contributed to this report.

Comment / Shares / Tweets / Stumble / Email More +

SHOW COMMENT +

Featured in U.S.



American stops flights at major airports amid computer woes

Popular

Ingrid Bergman at 100

Soldier who disappeared during parachute exercise in Washington state found dead

Gravity-defying crocodile uses tail to leap out of water

Cars in Reno, Nevada neighborhood damaged by watermelons

Most Discussed



Ky. clerk: I am being forced to disobey God
1991 COMMENTS



Muslim teen cuffed over clock mistaken for bomb speaks out
1634 COMMENTS



Rivals pile on Trump at second GOP debate
1570 COMMENTS



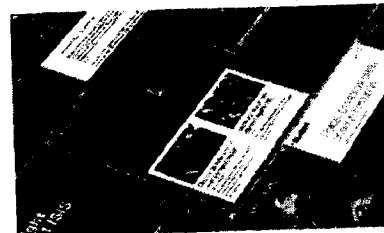
Obama's decision to take in refugees faces criticism
1264 COMMENTS



New poll: Trump still leads, but Carson makes strong gains
724 COMMENTS

Retirement Age
We'll Do the Work For You. Compare Your Retirement Options.

New Android App



CBS News App for Android®

For your Android phone and tablet, download the FREE redesigned app, featuring CBSN, live 24/7 news.

Download

Computer-systems problem grounded planes heading to and from Dallas, Chicago and Miami



Pushing the Limits: The "brutal" thrill of skyrunning

If you think running a marathon is a feat in itself, imagine doing an ultra-marathon up a mountain



CBSNews.com

- Site Map
- Help
- Contact Us
- CBS Bias
- Careers
- Internships
- Development Programs

CBS Interactive

- Privacy Policy
- Ad Choice
- Terms of Use
- Mobile User Agreement
- About CBS
- Advertise
- Closed Captioning

Follow Us

- Facebook
- Twitter
- RSS
- Email Newsletters
- YouTube
- CBS Radio News
- CBS Local

Copyright © 2015 CBS Interactive Inc. All rights reserved

Search...

One of those arrested Sunday, 35-year-old Leonard P. Gonzalez Jr., was a Pensacola martial arts instructor. He and his wife, Tabatha, received a Service to Mankind Award in June from the Pensacola Seville Sertoma Club for their work in teaching self defense to children and abused women.

Gonzalez and his wife had as many as six young children and brought them to the self-defense presentations, said Gwinn Corley, a spokesman for the Sertoma club.

"We were impressed with them," Corley said. "He was talking about children and their respect for their elders. They both seemed to have a passion to teaching the arts to abused women and kids, they had a vision for how to give free self defense."

Several of the suspects were day laborers who knew each other through either a pressure washing business or a car detailing group, Morgan said.

The arrests started Sunday with 56-year-old Leonard Gonzalez Sr., who was originally charged with evidence tampering but will be charged with murder, authorities said. He is accused of driving a red van seen on surveillance video pulling away from the Billings home and then trying to paint over it.

His son, Gonzalez Jr., was also arrested Sunday along with day laborer Wayne Coldiron, 41. Both were in court Tuesday to face murder charges.

Another day laborer, Gary Lamont Sumner, 31, was arrested on a murder charge in a nearby county Monday after he was pulled over in a traffic stop. Morgan said investigators have placed Sumner at the scene, though he would not provide details.

Three more people were arrested Tuesday — a juvenile whom police did not identify; Frederick Lee Thorton Jr., 19; and Donnie Ray Stallworth, 28, who was arrested in Alabama but lives in Florida.

The break-in was captured by an extensive video surveillance system the Billings used to keep tabs on their children.

Surveillance video showed three armed, masked men arriving in the red van, entering through the front of the house and then returning to the vehicle. Others dressed in what the sheriff called "ninja garb" went in through an unlocked utility door in the back. They were in and out in under 10 minutes.

"I think you'll find this particularly chilling and here's why: We have a team that enters at the rear of the home and another that enters at the front of the home," Morgan said. "It leads me to believe this was a very well-planned and methodical operation."

Morgan said, however, that there was no indication anyone had unlocked the door for the intruders, adding that people in the community felt comfortable leaving their doors unlocked.

The couple owned several local businesses, including a finance company and a used-car dealership. They lived in Beulah, a rural area west of Pensacola, near the Alabama state line, in a house set deep in the woods. They had 17 children in all — 13 of them adopted.

Tips from the public led police to the van on Saturday.

The Associated Press contributed to this report.

LOGIN

MENU

Search foxnews.com

Ad Choices ▶

Three More Arrests Made in Murders of Florida Couple With 17 Children

Published July 14, 2009
FoxNews.com

0 0

Three more suspects were arrested Tuesday in the carefully orchestrated home-invasion murders of a wealthy Florida Panhandle couple known for adopting special needs children, the sheriff said.

That brings to seven — six adults and one juvenile — the total number of people arrested in the deaths of Byrd and Melanie Billings, said Escambia County Sheriff David Morgan.

"We have found them, and they are in custody," Morgan told reporters and the couple's sobbing adult daughter, Ashley Markham, Tuesday afternoon. He called the robbery "well planned" and "well executed."

[Click here for photos.](#)

There is at least one more person at large suspected of "aiding and abetting" in the crime, Morgan said.

The Billings were known for adopting children with developmental disabilities and other special needs.

They were shot to death early Thursday evening in their home near Pensacola. Nine of the couple's 17 children were home at the time and three saw the intruders but were not hurt.

Masked suspects, some dressed as ninjas, stole a safe and other items during the deadly break-in at the couple's sprawling Florida Panhandle home.

"Last Thursday, tragedy occurred ... (and) we witnessed the worst in man: hatefulness, cruelty and indecency," Morgan said.

Three people — two adults and the 16-year-old juvenile — were caught Tuesday. Three suspects had already been arrested over the weekend and a fourth on Monday evening.

"The primary motive was robbery," said prosecutor Bill Eddins. Morgan had earlier said that there were multiple motives for the crime.

Authorities would not say what was in the safe or what else might have been taken from the house.

Morgan said investigators were still looking for at least one more person in the case and at least one of the suspects in custody may have done work at the Billings home. He has previously said the suspects had no direct connection to the victims.



Sign In | Subscribe



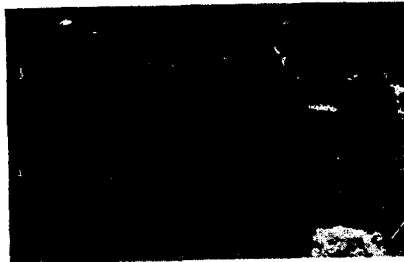
The Pensacola Adoptive Couple's Murder: A Hit?

By Tim Padgett | Saturday, Aug. 22, 2009

Like **3** Tweet

Read Later

By most accounts, Leonard Patrick Gonzalez Jr. — the failed karate instructor who allegedly murdered a wealthy Pensacola, Fla., couple last month in front of their young adopted children — is a blowhard. "He's always got a big game," one friend told police, "he's always got some bullsh-t to talk about." Said another, "He's always blowing smoke up everybody's tail about, you know, 'I got this going on, we're gonna make some money,' da-da-da." As a result, "it would be easy to dismiss Gonzalez as a lying con man, which he is for the most part," notes David Morgan, sheriff of Escambia County in Florida's northwestern panhandle, who says he has heard some tall tales from Gonzalez since he was arrested. "But sadly there are instances in his life when his boasting had elements of truth."



Phil Cooke / AP

Pall bearers at the Byrd and Melanie Billings funeral carry one of the two caskets to the grave site in Pensacola, Florida.

Like the \$150,000 Gonzalez, 35, claimed he was paid last year by a wealthy but bitter divorcee who lives near Pensacola. He said she hired him as a gumshoe to trail her ex-husband around the country and dig up anything illegal in his life that she could use to get him arrested. Gonzalez never uncovered anything incriminating; but the story, says Morgan, actually checks out.

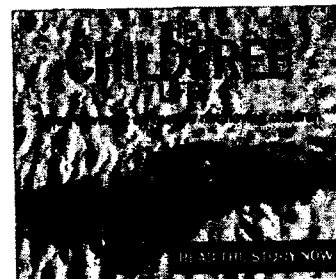
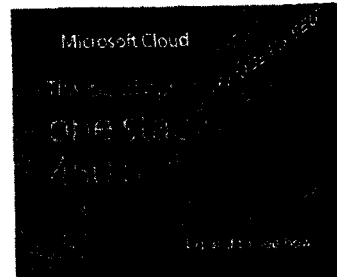
(See the top 10 unsolved crimes.)

Which makes the sheriff more inclined to believe that Gonzalez — who is charged with shooting Byrd "Bud" Billings and his wife Melanie in their spacious home as he and six others allegedly robbed it the night of July 9 — was hired to commit the murder by resentful local business rivals. In police documents released this week, Gonzalez says one used-car dealer, Henry "Cab" Tice, told him that he and other dealers wanted the 66-year-old Billings "whacked" and asked him to do the job. (Gonzalez claims he refused — although he boasted to police, without offering details, that he's taken part in other murders for hire.) Morgan tells TIME he expects to make more arrests soon in a homicide case that's become shocking and sordid enough to recall Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood* — and one that has orphaned the Billings' 17 children, 13 of them adopted and most with disabilities like Down Syndrome. "We'd all prefer it if this were a group of losers visiting a random act of violence on this family," Morgan says, "but with each passing day and each new witness, we're finding that's probably not the case."

(See the top 25 crimes of the century.)

Tice denies involvement in any conspiracy, insisting to a Pensacola television station this week that he "never wanted any harm to come to Bud or Melanie." Still, Morgan says Tice and "three or four other people" remain "persons of interest" in the investigation. Tice, 63, a former business partner of Billings, has acknowledged that he "hated Billings" and that they had a rancorous falling out over thousands of dollars Tice owed Billings' loan company, Worldco. (Tice, in fact, has been charged with grand theft after Billings turned him in last year for allegedly writing Worldco \$17,000 in bounced checks. Tice denies the charge and claims he had an agreement with Billings to hold the checks until he could cover them.)

The new case documents do suggest the Billings murders were a "hit." Billings, for example, was shot six times with a 9-mm handgun — once in the back of each leg, twice in the face and twice in the back of the head, the kind of deliberate execution-style pattern often meant to send a message. One of the Billings' adopted special needs children, an autistic boy who was in the couple's bedroom where they were killed, told investigators via sign language that "bad men" burst in and told Billings, who briefly struggled with them, "You're gonna die." Melanie, ...



RELATED

Florida Looks at New Ideas for Battling Hurricanes

Florida Goes to War Against the Pythons

Florida's Marijuana Boom: Home-Grown, and Potent

Email Print Share Reprints

Follow @TIME

Sponsored Links

The Tampa Tribune / The St. Petersburg... \$55.84 Tampa Tribune / St. Petersburg Tribune - Up to 82% Off Group

Remove Malware - Free Quick Malware Removal in 2 minutes. Free Download (Highly Recommended) free-malware-removal.spentrust.com

GoFers Over 80 Are Beating Guys Half Their Age With This One Weird Golf Swing Tip moenormingolf.com


[Sign In](#) [Subscribe](#)

charged as an adult but will not face the death penalty.) An eighth defendant, a woman charged as an accessory to the murder for allegedly providing a van used in the crime, has also pleaded not guilty. But investigators say Gonzalez's accomplices have fingered him as the sole gunman — and add that while they'd been lured by his promise of millions of dollars he believed Billings kept in a safe at the home, most of them didn't know Gonzalez allegedly planned a murder. As it was, the group — many of them captured on home security video in black ninja-style clothes and masks — hauled away one of Billings' empty safes instead of the one that contained money (about \$164,000) and jewelry.

Morgan says "the one common thread" now expressed by Gonzalez's co-defendants, as well as their friends and family members, is a fear of being whacked themselves by figures who they believe contracted Gonzalez to organize the break-in and shooting. Making the investigation more baroque is the \$20,000 that Tice, hoping to save his struggling car business, recently borrowed from people he says turned out to be "Mexican mafia" and wanted their money back more quickly, and at higher interest, than he could handle. The shadow of organized crime retribution, real or imagined, is another oft-mentioned anxiety in police interviews. Gonzalez even told investigators that he's in "very deep" and fears for his and his family's safety because of it.

Tice, a former employer of Gonzalez and one of his karate students, telephoned Gonzalez the night of the murders (for computer help, he told police) and again the next morning. Morgan admits that's not enough at the moment to bring conspiracy charges against Tice or any of the other car dealers who Gonzalez told police "just did not like Billings at all" and who described the deceased as a loan shark. But the sheriff believes "the pieces are coming together." Billings, like his competitors, many of whom owed him money, inhabited a Florida panhandle business world that resembled a tawdry cable TV drama series. "Bud Billings was a very hard-nosed, unyielding businessman because he had to be," Morgan says. "He was in a high-risk business, loaning money to the kind of people who can't get it anywhere else."

Gonzalez was one person Billings didn't loan money to. Gonzalez's wife Tabitha told police that Billings once donated \$5,000 to their nonprofit program to teach people self-defense, but he refused them a loan to save their martial arts studio, which later went under. According to Tabitha, she and Gonzalez have six children.

Still, Morgan says he doesn't buy into the idea "that Bud Billings brought this on himself." He points to the fact that Bud and Melanie "opened their home and fortunes" to their adopted brood as proof of their charitable side. But even that admirable domestic picture has come under scrutiny in the murder's wake: Billings, who was arrested in 1989 for adoption fraud, tried earlier this decade to copyright his adopted children's names in a bizarre scheme to extract money from Florida's Department of Children & Family Services. He had also recently thrown two of his teen-aged children out of the house because he didn't like the people they were dating.

Morgan insists that if his department ultimately "can't prove a conspiracy, we'll drop it immediately. But as long as there are believable threads there, I have to pursue them. You can't have that kind of collective element operating in your community if it's true." Many Pensacola residents — including journalist Rick Ostzen, who first broke the murder-for-hire story on his blog last month — now agree with him. Meanwhile, another friend whom Gonzalez tried unsuccessfully to recruit for the July 9 robbery told police the alleged killer "always acts like he's a thug, you know, a mafia wannabe." But unfortunately, there may be a tragic element of truth to this Wannabe's big game.

With reporting by Duwayne Escobedo /Pensacola

See TIME's crime covers.

© 2015 Time Inc. All rights reserved.

EXHIBIT E

(Media Reports July-September, 2009)

ACR TIMELINES

- [Home](#)
- [Help](#)
- [Search](#)
- [Calendar](#)
- [Members](#)
- [Profile](#)
- [Messages](#)
- Welcome ericpink. [Logout](#)
- [new Participated](#)

ACR TIMELINES

NEWS ARTICLES

[Billings Case News Articles \(July-Sept 2009\)](#)



Billings Case News Articles (July-Sept 2009)

Billings Case News Articles (July-Sept 2009) Thread started Oct 21, 2009 at 2:45pm

Post by acandyrose on Oct 21, 2009 at 2:45pm

www.tallahassee.com/article/20090710/BREAKINGNEWS/90710010/Beulah+couple+who+adopted+12+children+shot+to+death

Beulah couple who adopted 12 children shot to death

Travis Griggs • PENSACOLA NEWS JOURNAL • July 10, 2009

acandyrose

Administrator

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

The Big

Cheese



Posts: 1509

"Janice Thomas, circuit administrator for the Florida Department of Children and Families, said that as of this morning, her agency has not been contacted about becoming involved in the Billings' case or taking over the care of the couple's minor children.

"We are aware the children are all with relatives," Thomas said.

Thomas said only three of the Billings' children were adopted through DCF's foster care system.

"The others were adopted through other states," Thomas said.

Thomas said in general, DCF does provides post-adoption services for families, including counseling and access to resources."

Last Edit: Sep 3, 2010 at 8:19pm by scooter

Billings Case News Articles (July-Sept 2009) Reply #1 posted Oct 21, 2009 at 3:15pm

Post by acandyrose on Oct 21, 2009 at 3:15pm

www.pnj.com/article/20090710/NEWS01/907100342

acandyrose

Administrator

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

The Big

Cheese



Posts: 1509

Caring by the dozen
Beulah family blessed with love of adopted children
Nicole Lozare • Pensacola News Journal • July 10, 2009

Editor's note: This story by former News Journal staff writer Nicole Lozare originally was published in the Pensacola News Journal on Dec. 25, 2005. Byrd and Melanie Billings were found shot to death in their home Thursday, July 9, 2009.

"The couple took two trips to Disney World last summer, breaking the children up into two groups so that they could spend quality time with each."

"Byrd has two biological children from his first marriage, a son he adopted during that marriage died. He also has another son, adopted after his divorce in 1986.

His eldest son, Michael, 41, lives in Tampa. His daughter, Melissa, 29, lives in Phoenix.

His first adopted child, John, choked to death after an argument with a girlfriend in 1995"

"For extra protection, the driveway has a sensor and the house is fully alarmed. When a door is opened, a beep is sounded and an adult checks to make sure a child has not stepped out.

The house also has a camera in every room. Thirty days of footage from each camera is constantly retained."

Original December 2005 News Print Screen Capture:



Last Edit: Oct 22, 2009 at 10:21am by [acandyrose](#)
 Billings Case News Articles (July-Sept 2009) Reply #2 posted Oct 21, 2009 at 3:33pm
 Post by [acandyrose](#) on Oct 21, 2009 at 3:33pm
www.pnj.com/article/20090711/NEWS01/907110323/1006/NEWS01

[acandyrose](#)
 Administrator
 ☆☆☆☆☆
 The Big Cheese

Killings have big impact on small community
 The Billings family touched many in their rural Beulah neighborhood
 Troy Moon • tmoon@pnj.com • July 11, 2009

"Karia Arnold, 47, a clerk who works at the nearby Swifty Serve convenience store, said the Billingses had been coming in the store for years. "They were very good people," she said. "The kids would be with them sometimes. Some had Down syndrome and were in wheelchairs. They were real good people."



Arnold, who lives about a mile away from the Billings home, said she has a cleaning business on the side and cleaned the family's home on three different occasions."

Posts: 150 ♀

"Regina Spence is the biological sister of one of the Billingses' children, Justin Billings, who was adopted right after his birth in 1989. Spence, 21, was adopted by another family about the same time.

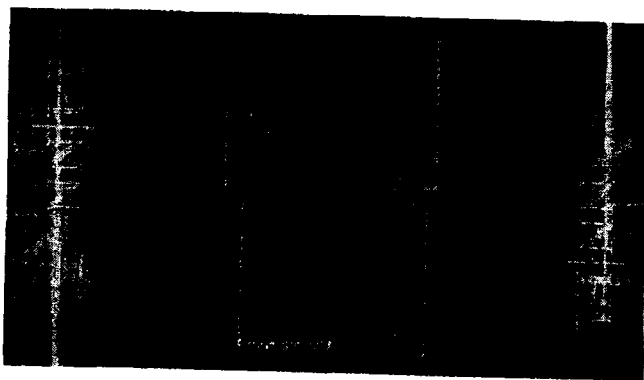
She has never seen her brother or spoken to him but has been "balling my eyes out," she said Friday."

[acandyrose](#)
 Administrator
 ☆☆☆☆☆
 The Big Cheese

Billings Case News Articles (July-Sept 2009) Reply #3 posted Oct 21, 2009 at 3:35pm
 Post by [acandyrose](#) on Oct 21, 2009 at 3:35pm
 VIDEO: 3 sought in slaying of couple with 16 kids
www.msnbc.msn.com/id/21134540/vp/31864240#31864240



Posts: 150 ♀



Red Van leaving the property with the three men

Last Edit: Oct 22, 2009 at 5:23pm by [acandyrose](#)
[Billings Case News Articles \(July-Sept 2009\) Reply #4](#) posted Oct 21, 2009 at 3:39pm
Post by [acandyrose](#) on Oct 21, 2009 at 3:39pm
www.cnn.com/2009/CRIME/07/10/Florida.couple.killed/index.html

Couple who adopted 12 children slain

Story Highlights
Eight children found in home with slain parents, authorities say
Byrd and Melanie Billings had adopted 12 children
Parents were found shot to death in their Florida home, near Pensacola
Surveillance video shows three men in a red van entering property before deaths

updated 1:59 a.m. EDT, Sat July 11, 2009

"The victims were identified as Byrd and Melanie Billings by Jeff Martin, director of the District Medical Examiner's Office. Autopsies have not been completed, he said."

[acandyrose](#)
Administrator
The Big Cheese

"Nancy Markham, a relative of the family, told CNN affiliate WEAR-TV that her son was inside the Billings' home when the shootings occurred. He said that Bud and Melanie had, both of them had been murdered," Markham said."



Posts: 1509



Last Edit: Oct 22, 2009 at 5:25pm by [acandyrose](#)
[Billings Case News Articles \(July-Sept 2009\) Reply #5](#) posted Oct 21, 2009 at 3:43pm
Post by [acandyrose](#) on Oct 21, 2009 at 3:43pm
abcnews.go.com/US/story?id=8059867&page=1

[acandyrose](#)
Administrator
The Big Cheese

Cops Hunt Van as Kids Cope With Killings
Cops Seek Van, 3 Men After Parents of Approximately 16 Found Shot Dead in Bedroom

By STEVE OSUNSAMI and MICHAEL S. JAMES
July 11, 2009

"They are surrounded by many family and friends," said John Markham, whose brother is married to the second oldest sister in the large family of the two victims, Byrd "Bud" Billings, 66, and Melanie Billings, 43, of Beulah, Fla."



Posts: 1509

Last Edit: Oct 22, 2009 at 10:27am by [acandyrose](#)
[Billings Case News Articles \(July-Sept 2009\) Reply #6](#) posted Oct 21, 2009 at 3:48pm

Post by acandyrose on Oct 21, 2009 at 3:48pm
www.pnj.com/article/20090711/NEWS01/907110322/1006#pluckcomments

acandyrose Administrator

 The Big Cheese

Sheriff: 'Persons of interest' interviewed
 Van thought to be connected to killings found Saturday
 Travis Griggs • tgriggs@pnj.com • July 11, 2009

"Escambia County Sheriff David Morgan said that phone calls from citizens led investigators to a red 15-passenger work van that was seen at the home the night of the shooting.



The van was located at about 1:30 p.m. today behind a single-wide trailer on the 300 block of Palm Court, near W Street and Beverly Parkway."

Posts: 150 ♀

"According to court documents filed in 2007, the couple were given temporary legal custody of two additional children by a mother from Arizona. On Friday afternoon, the News Journal was unable to verify if these children still were living with the Billingses"

Billings Case News Articles (July-Sept 2009) Reply #7 posted Oct 21, 2009 at 3:51pm
 Post by acandyrose on Oct 21, 2009 at 3:51pm
www.cnn.com/2009/CRIME/07/11/Florida.couple.killed/index.html

Two questioned in killings of Florida couple

Story Highlights
 Two people are being questioned and a third is being sought
 Red van, caught on surveillance cameras leaving the home, has been found
 Byrd and Melanie Billings were found dead in their home Thursday
 Eight children found in the home are being taken care of in undisclosed location

acandyrose Administrator

 The Big Cheese



Posts: 150 ♀



"Interviews with associated neighbors, friends and family" led to a relative of the van's owner and another person, who were being questioned Saturday evening, the sheriff said. "

Billings Case News Articles (July-Sept 2009) Reply #8 posted Oct 21, 2009 at 3:53pm
 Post by acandyrose on Oct 21, 2009 at 3:53pm
www.northescambia.com/?p=9379

acandyrose Administrator

 The Big Cheese

Family Statement On Double Murder
 July 12, 2009

The family of double murder victims Byrd and Melanie Billings released the following statement on their death:



Posts: 150 ♀

"We are deeply saddened by the tragic events that have occurred. Our first obligation is the children. The nine Billings children that were in the house are all safe and coping well. They are surrounded by many family and friends. The children have not been separated nor will they be. Bud and Melanie's world revolved around all of their children....our second obligation is finding the people responsible for this."

The Billings were shot to death Thursday evening at their home in Beulah

Billings Case News Articles (July-Sept 2009) Reply #9 posted Oct 21, 2009 at 4:01pm
 Post by acandyrose on Oct 21, 2009 at 4:01pm
today.msnbc.msn.com/id/26184891/vp/31875403#31875403

acandyrose Administrator

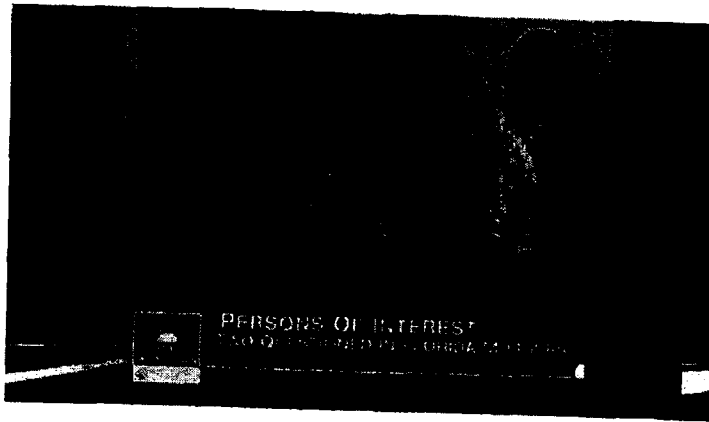
 The Big Cheese



Posts: 150 ♀

Sheriff Morgan on the Today Show this morning

July 12, 2009



Billings Case News Articles (July-Sept 2009) Reply #10 posted Oct 21, 2009 at 4:11 pm
Post by acandyrose on Oct 21, 2009 at 4:11 pm
m.wltx.com/news.isp?key=98447&rc=na

FL Police Find Van in Connection with Parents Murder
July 12, 2009 14:24 PM

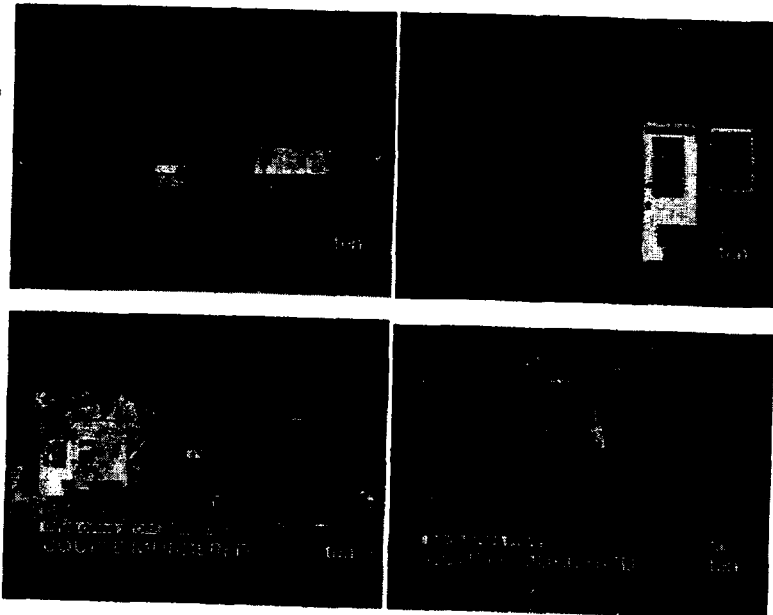
"Crime scene investigators and detectives still were examining the van on the property on which it was found at 7:15 p.m. Saturday.
Morgan would not say if the van belonged to the owner of the mobile home.
The trailer belongs to Leonard P. Gonzalez Sr. and Carol S. Brant, records from the Escambia County Property Appraiser's Office show.
Frank Gonzalez, who lives two houses down on Palm Court and who identified himself as the estranged brother of Leonard Gonzalez, said he was unsure whether the van was his brother's.
The mobile home, surrounded by chain-link fence and shrubbery, has only one entry point, a gate at the front of the property.
The 1982 Dodge van was tucked behind a detached storage shed in the home's backyard and was barely visible from the street.
The van didn't appear to have a license plate."

acandyrose
Administrator
The Big
Cheese



Posts: 1509

Fox10 Video Screen Captures below of 318 Palm Court:



Last Edit: Oct 22, 2009 at 5:37pm by acandyrose
Billings Case News Articles (July-Sept 2009) Reply #11 posted Oct 21, 2009 at 4:19pm
Post by acandyrose on Oct 21, 2009 at 4:19pm
www.chron.com/disp/story.mpl/ap/top/all/6526195.html

acandyrose
Administrator
The Big

2 held on murder charges in Fla. couple's slaying
2009 The Associated Press

July 12, 2009, 10:22PM

Cheese

"Thomas Brown, who works in the area where Byrd Billings owned an auto business, says residents can only guess about who would commit this type of carnage.



David Mack, who owns a company next to Byrd Billings' auto business, says Billings will be missed. David Mack, owner of neighboring business, in interview. David Mack, who owns a company next to Byrd Billings' auto business, says Billings will be missed."

Posts: 150 ♀

"Escambia County Sheriff David Morgan says day laborer Wayne Coldiron turned himself in around 9 p.m. EDT Sunday. He says Leonard P. Gonzalez Jr. was arrested later in Santa Rosa County.

Morgan says Coldiron was friends with 56-year-old Leonard P. Gonzalez Sr., who was charged earlier in the day with evidence tampering."

Billings Case News Articles (July-Sept 2009) Reply #12 posted Oct 21, 2009 at 4:28pm
Post by acandyrose on Oct 21, 2009 at 4:28pm
www.wkrg.com/crime/article/three-arrests-in-billings-murders/181174/Jul-13-2009-1-55-am/

Three Arrests In Billings Murders

By Chad Petri Reporter
Published: Mon, July 13, 2009 - 1:25 am CST
Last Updated: Mon, July 13, 2009 - 1:55 am CST

"First, 56-year-old Leonard Gonzalez Senior was arrested Sunday afternoon. He was charged with tampering with evidence in a murder investigation. Authorities say he tried to change the appearance of this van confiscated by the sheriff's office. Then law enforcement officials announced the arrests of 41-year-old Wayne Coldiron and Gozalez's son, Leonard Gonzalez Junior. Those two have been charged with an open count of murder--but connections to the billings are unclear.

"We have no information that would lead us to believe that Mr. Coldiron had any previous contact with the Billings family," says Escambia County Sheriff David Morgan.

According to Coldiron's arrest report, Gonzalez Senior claimed to be the getaway driver when his son, Coldiron and several other unknown men road to the billings home in the now infamous red van. The report says Gonzalez Senior saw his son, Coldiron and the others enter the Billings home to commit a robbery but he didn't know who fired shots killing Byrd and Melanie Billings."

acandyrose
Administrator
★ ★ ★ ★ ★
The Big
Cheese



Posts: 150 ♀



Escambia Sheriff's Department - AP

Three people are in custody. From left are Leonard Patrick Gonzalez Jr., Leonard Patrick Gonzalez Sr. and Wayne Coldiron. Coldiron and the younger Gonzalez are charged with murder and home invasion. Gonzalez Sr. is charged with evidence tampering.

Last Edit: Oct 22, 2009 at 5:41pm by acandyrose
Billings Case News Articles (July-Sept 2009) Reply #13 posted Oct 21, 2009 at 4:34pm
Post by acandyrose on Oct 21, 2009 at 4:34pm
Sheriff Morgan on The Today Show

The Big Cheese

07/13/09



today.msnbc.msn.com/id/26184891/vty/31887264#31887264

Posts: 150 ♀



Related Link:



Related Link:

Last Edit: Oct 22, 2009 at 5:53pm by [acandyrose](#)
[Billings Case News Articles \(July-Sept 2009\) Reply #14](#) posted Oct 21, 2009 at 4:49pm
Post by [acandyrose](#) on Oct 21, 2009 at 4:49pm
www.cnn.com/2009/CRIME/07/13/florida.couple.slain/

Daughter of slain Florida couple: 'We want justice'

[acandyrose](#)
Administrator

The Big Cheese

Story Highlights

- NEW: "I have to be strong for the children," sibling Ashley Markham says
- Wayne Coldiron and Leonard Patrick Gonzalez Jr. face murder charges
- Gonzalez's father arrested earlier Sunday, charged with evidence-tampering



updated 36 minutes ago [07/13/09]

PENSACOLA, Florida (CNN) --

Posts: 150 ♀

"At a news conference Monday, one of the couple's grown children said the family does not know the suspects.

"We have no knowledge of them," said Ashley Markham, the biological daughter of Melanie Billings.

"We just -- we want justice."

[acandyrose](#)
Administrator

The Big Cheese

[Billings Case News Articles \(July-Sept 2009\) Reply #15](#) posted Oct 21, 2009 at 4:51pm
Post by [acandyrose](#) on Oct 21, 2009 at 4:51pm
www.pnj.com/



Family Statement

www.pnj.com/assets/pdf/DP138461713.PDF

Posts: 150 ♀

[acandyrose](#)
Administrator
Post by [acandyrose](#) on Oct 21, 2009 at 5:03pm
[Billings Case News Articles \(July-Sept 2009\) Reply #16](#) posted Oct 21, 2009 at 5:03pm

www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,531968,00.html

Police Probe Business Ties of Murdered Florida Couple With 16 Kids

The Big Cheese

Monday, July 13, 2009
AP



PENSACOLA, Fla. —

"It began as what we thought was a home invasion. At this point because of the complexity and the ties this family had through the business community, we're moving many other directions. Could be money, could be a whole host of things," Morgan said on the NBC "Today" show.

Posts: 150 ♀

Morgan also cited the family's business ties in an interview on the CBS "Early Show" but declined to be more specific and said investigators are working on "multiple motives."

[Billings Case News Articles \(July-Sept 2009\) Reply #17](#) posted Oct 21, 2009 at 5:06pm
Post by [acandyrose](#) on Oct 21, 2009 at 5:06pm
www.cnn.com/2009/CRIME/07/13/florida.couple.slain/index.html

More arrests planned in slayings of Gulf Coast couple

[acandyrose](#)
Administrator

The Big Cheese

Story Highlights
- NEW: Bail set at \$1 million for two suspects charged with murder, robbery
- NEW: Sheriff says as investigation deepened, case took "a hard right or a hard left"
- "I have to be strong for the children," sibling Ashley Markham says

updated 8 minutes ago [07/13/09]



"The investigation into Thursday's shooting deaths has become "a window into something bigger," with multiple motives, multiple suspects, and sudden twists and turns, Escambia County Sheriff David Morgan said at a briefing Sunday night.

Posts: 150 ♀

"This is like a movie script. The more we've delved into this and worked this case, the different avenues that it would go down. Just when you thought, 'All right, we're in a straight line at this point with this investigation,' it would take a hard right or a hard left, and it was almost as though you had another investigation that you were initiating."

"We are very anxious to share this story with the citizens of Escambia County, and with the nation if you will," Morgan said. "It's gonna be a humdinger."

Last Edit: Oct 22, 2009 at 10:28am by [acandyrose](#)
[Billings Case News Articles \(July-Sept 2009\) Reply #18](#) posted Oct 21, 2009 at 5:11pm
Post by [acandyrose](#) on Oct 21, 2009 at 5:11pm
www.wishtv.com/dpp/news/national/south/nat_ap_pensacola_motive_probed_in_slaying_of_florida_pair_with_16_kids_200907131159_2634996

Motive probed in slaying of Fla. pair
Multiple motives, more arrests possible

[acandyrose](#)
Administrator

The Big Cheese

Updated: Monday, 13 Jul 2009, 3:28 PM EDT
Published: Monday, 13 Jul 2009, 12:01 PM EDT
MELISSA NELSON,
Associated Press Writer



"The extensive surveillance system that captured the break-in was installed to help them keep track of their children as they wandered through the large house and yard, said Susan Berry, principal of Escambia Westgate School in Pensacola, which some of the children attended."

Posts: 150 ♀

"Byrd Billings, 68, was bigger than life, with an even bigger smile and twinkling eyes. At one school function, his big hand enveloped Berry's, leaving a neatly folded check for the school in her palm. She couldn't believe the sum.

"He said, 'I wanted to do it for you,' and Mel was beaming, too," Berry said. "They weren't only generous with their children, they were generous with everyone that touched their children's lives."

The couple created a Cinderella scene for one daughter's prom. The girl's dress was white, her date wore a white tuxedo with a pink tie and the couple emerged from a white limousine — but the Billings' smiles shone the brightest, Berry said."

[Billings Case News Articles \(July-Sept 2009\) Reply #19](#) posted Oct 21, 2009 at 5:15pm
Post by [acandyrose](#) on Oct 21, 2009 at 5:15pm
www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/ALeqM5iTAQQx619OXpq7P0lcpzqc9Zg-cwD99DPCGO3

The Big Cheese



Up to 8 people involved in Fla. couple's death
By MELISSA NELSON — 3 hours ago [07/13/09]

"Investigators were looking at business ties for a possible motive in the slaying of a wealthy Florida couple known for adopting 12 children with developmental disabilities and other problems, authorities said Monday."

Posts: 150 ♀

[Click here to remove banner ads from this forum.](#)

Follow this community on mobile. Get the free Tapataalk app. Get the App

This Forum Hosted For FREE By [ProBoards](#)

Get Your Own [Free Message Boards & Free Forums!](#)

[Terms of Service](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Notice](#) | [ETC Disclosure](#) | [Report Abuse](#) | [Mobile](#) | [Advertise Here](#)

ACR TIMELINES

- [Home](#)
- [Help](#)
- [Search](#)
- [Calendar](#)
- [Members](#)
- [Profile](#)
- [Messages](#)
- Welcome ericpink. [Logout](#)
- [new Participated](#)
- [ACR TIMELINES](#)
- [NEWS ARTICLES](#)
- [Billings Case News Articles \(July-Sept 2009\)](#)

See all of our features at www.forums.net

a new service by ProBoards
Professional, white label, hosted forums

CLICK HERE TO SIGN UP

Billings Case News Articles (July-Sept 2009)

[Billings Case News Articles \(July-Sept 2009\) Reply #20](#) posted Oct 21, 2009 at 5:18pm
 Post by [acandyrose](#) on Oct 21, 2009 at 5:18pm
www.northescambia.com/?p=9438

BREAKING NEWS: Deputies Looking At Five More Suspects In Double Murder; Picture Released

July 13, 2009

[acandyrose](#)
 Administrator
 ★★★★★
 The Big
 Cheese



Posts: 150 ♀



Pictured above: Sheriff David Morgan says this Walmart video shows murder suspect Leonard Patrick Gonzalez, Jr. and two unknown black males. They were purchasing items used in the Billings murders, the sheriff said. Submitted photo for NorthEscambia.com, click to enlarge.

Deputies are searching from five more suspects in last week's double murder in Escambia County, and Escambia County Sheriff David Morgan said he expects more arrests later today. At least two of the suspects were wearing Ninja gear"

Last Edit: Oct 22, 2009 at 5:18pm by [acandyrose](#)
[Billings Case News Articles \(July-Sept 2009\) Reply #21](#) posted Oct 21, 2009 at 5:24pm
 Post by [acandyrose](#) on Oct 21, 2009 at 5:24pm
abcnews.go.com/TheLaw/Story?id=8067376&page=1

The Big

Robbery Not Only Motive in Fla. Killings

Billings Kids Safe With Relatives as Cops Search for Motive

By STEVE OSUNSAMI and EMILY FRIEDMAN
July 13, 2009

"The "mastermind" who allegedly led as many as seven accomplices to rob and murder a Florida couple known for adopting disabled children has been identified and arrested by authorities, police said today.

Escambia County Sheriff David Morgan told a news conference that robbery was just one of the motives in the double murder case.

Suspects are charged in the slaying of a couple who adopted special needs kids."We have a motive of robbery...that is a motive," said Morgan. "We believe there are other motives."

Cheese



"The sheriff showed a surveillance tape from the Billings home that Morgan called "chilling and shocking." It showed two men emerged from among trees in the rear property and hurry to a back door of the house.

Posts: 150 ☞

They are believed to have been traveling in a metallic blue flake or gold flake Escalade that has not yet been located.

Detectives have been viewing surveillance tapes from local merchants such as K-Mart, Target and Wal-Mart in hopes of spotting some of the assailants buying clothing used in the assault, Morgan said. "

"The family's driveway had a sensor and the home was "fully alarmed," according to the article in the Pensacola News Journal.

"When a door is opened, a beep is sounded and an adult checked to make sure a child has not stepped out," according to the report.

The outdoor play area is fenced in and there is also a gate around the large swimming pool."

Last Edit: Oct 22, 2009 at 6:09pm by [acandyrose](#)
[Billings Case News Articles \(July-Sept 2009\) Reply #22](#) posted Oct 21, 2009 at 5:26pm
Post by [acandyrose](#) on Oct 21, 2009 at 5:26pm
www.wear.tv.com/newsroom/top_stories/videos/wear_vid_2712.shtml

[acandyrose](#)
Administrator
★★★★★
The Big
Cheese

Exclusive Interview With Gonzalez Family



ESCAMBIA COUNTY - Family members of the father and son charged in the case, Leonard Gonzalez Senior and Junior, have nothing good to say about the men.

Posts: 150 ☞

In an exclusive interview with our **Mollye Barrows**, the sister and brother of Gonzalez Senior say they are not surprised he's been charged in this case.

Regina McCartney: "They're not crazy. They are mean. They are hateful. They are dangerous. They need to be removed out of society."

That's what Regina McCartney has to say about her own brother, Leonard Gonzalez Senior, and his son, Leonard Gonzalez Junior also known as Patrick.

McCartney says her brother has long struggled with drugs and alcohol.

McCartney: "He's a drug addict and it's all about money."



In fact, McCartney says her brother Leonard has threatened her life and her brother Frank's life after their father died several years ago.

McCartney was left in charge of their mother and their estate.

Regina McCartney/Suspect's Sister: "He wants drug money and he assumes my parents had money and with my mom in late stages of Alzheimer's, it's taken a lot of money to care for her."

Both Leonard and his son have a criminal record.

In fact, their family says the two were separated for years by divorce but got to know each other again after they were coincidentally put in jail together.

Frank Gonzalez/Suspect's Brother: "They reunited in jail, locked up one time, that was about the time Patrick took his name Gonzalez back. They don't care about anybody, but what they want at that time, other than that the world revolves around them."

McCartney says the third man arrested with them, Wayne Coldiron is a longtime friend of her brother's. And she believes they're all dangerous, and money is the root of all this violence.

McCartney: "He wants more and more and more. There's no stopping him. I don't think the good Lord can stop Leonard." What about his son, how would you describe him? "The apple doesn't fall from the tree." Exclusive Interview With Gonzalez Family

Last Edit: Oct 22, 2009 at 10:31am by [acandyrose](#)
 Billings Case News Articles (July-Sept 2009) Reply #23 posted Oct 21, 2009 at 5:42pm
 Post by [acandyrose](#) on Oct 21, 2009 at 5:42pm
www.cnn.com/2009/CRIME/07/13/florida.couple.slain/index.html

Police: 6 to 8 suspected in Florida couple's slaying

Story Highlights

- NEW: Surveillance video shows 5 masked people storming home
- NEW: Police seek 2 men caught on camera outside Wal-Mart with suspect in custody
- NEW: Robbery a motive, but "we believe there are other motives," sheriff says

[acandyrose](#) updated 1 hour, 37 minutes ago [07/13/09]

Administrator
 The Big Cheese



Posts: 150 ♀

"Authorities released two surveillance tapes taken from the front and rear of the Billingses' home. Each shows a vehicle pulling up to the property, and five people dressed in black and wearing masks entering the home through two entrances -- including through a utility door left unlocked, something Morgan said is not uncommon in the community. Authorities believe drivers remained in both of the cars.

Investigators believe one motive in the deaths was robbery, but "we believe there are other motives," Morgan said. He would not say what, if anything, was taken from the home."

"Although the Billingses were well known in the community, the sheriff said authorities are still trying to unravel why they were targeted. He compared their deaths to the slaying of the Clutter family of Kansas, inspiration for Truman Capote's novel "In Cold Blood," noting the Clutter murders were something the community struggled with for years.

"It will be a very long time, I believe, until we piece together the truth of why this family was selected," Morgan said."

Billings Case News Articles (July-Sept 2009) Reply #24 posted Oct 21, 2009 at 5:46pm

Post by acandyrose on Oct 21, 2009 at 5:46pm
www.weartv.com/newsroom/top_stories/videos/wear_vid_2720.shtml

What's the connection?
07/13/09

acandyrose
Administrator
☆☆☆☆☆
The Big
Cheese

ESCAMBIA COUNTY-So far, the only known link between the Billings and the men accused in their murders.... is Wayne Coldiron.... the first man to be charged with murder in the case.

Coldiron's stepdaughter told us today he worked as a lawn maintenance man at the Billings' home.



That link was reinforced by State Attorney Bill Eddins this afternoon on 'First at Four'... When he commented on lessons the community can learn from this case.

Posts: 150 ♀

Dawn Center said, All I know is that he had been doing landscaping or something for them. That's all me and mom ever knew."

"Dawn Center says her stepfather has had his issues in the past, including problems with alcohol."

acandyrose
Administrator
☆☆☆☆☆
The Big
Cheese

Billings Case News Articles (July-Sept 2009) Reply #25 posted Oct 21, 2009 at 5:50pm

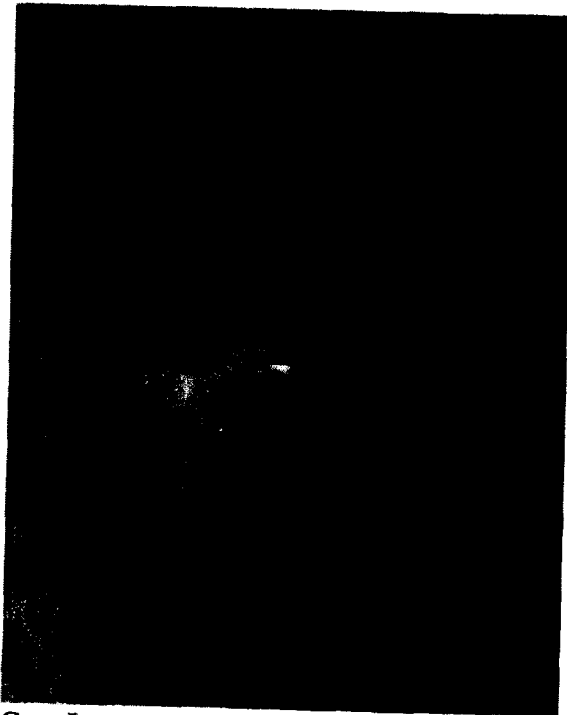
Post by acandyrose on Oct 21, 2009 at 5:50pm
www.nbc15online.com/news/local/story/Fourth-arrest-made-in-Billings-Murder-Case/87fG5cgoME6Dx-XYT5Cieg.csp

Fourth arrest made in Billings's Murder Case

Reported by: NBC 15 News Staff
Email: nbc15@nbc15online.com
Last Update: 9:47 pm



Posts: 150 ♀



Gary Lamont Sumner Jr., was arrested as the fourth person in the Billings's murder case.

(PENSACOLA, Fla.) July 13 - "Escambia County Sheriff David Morgan says a fourth arrest has been made in the murder case of Byrd and Melaine Billings.



Gary Lamont Sumner, 30, was arrested in Okaloosa County on an unrelated traffic violation, but he has now become the third person facing murder charges in Thursday's double homicide. He is being held in the Okaloosa County Jail.

Morgan says up to eight people may have been involved in the murders, and the sheriff's office has released surveillance video showing men in "ninja garb" advance toward the Billings's home."

acandyrose Billings Case News Articles (July-Sept 2009) Reply #26 posted Oct 21, 2009 at 5:55pm
Administrator Post by acandyrose on Oct 21, 2009 at 5:55pm

www.fox10tv.com/dpp/news/crime/Billings_Businesses_Closed_Til_Monday

The Big
Cheese

Billings businesses "Closed til Monday"
Updated: Tuesday, 14 Jul 2009, 9:25 AM CDT
Published : Monday, 13 Jul 2009, 9:28 PM CDT



Cherish Lombard
Liz Nelson

Posts: 150 ♀



Photojournalist: Riccardo Montgomery

"PENSACOLA, Fla. - Byrd Billings, or "Bud" as he was known to friends, owned several businesses in the area. Two of those businesses are Markham Auto Sales and WorldCo financial.

His business neighbors all describe Billings as "a nice guy, who never had anything negative to say about anyone."

"He's a good business man been around here for years," said Randy Spivey of Carson's Pawn Shop.



A sign on the front door of WorldCo Financial reads, "We'll be closed until Monday."

"John Coleman works across the street from WorldCo Financial, and has known Byrd Billings for three years.

"We spoke in the mornings, just general 'Hi, how are you?' He seemed like a real nice fellow, easy to get along with, and we had no problems doing business with him," said Coleman.

Byrd Billings also owned Markham Auto Sales. David Mack has owned a business next to it for more than 30 years.

"I did some business with him and he's a nice guy. He just, just on the business dealings with him, he was real nice," said Mack."

acandyrose
Administrator
★★★★★
The Big
Cheese



Posts: 150 ♀

Billings Case News Articles (July-Sept 2009) Reply #27 posted Oct 21, 2009 at 5:59pm
Post by acandyrose on Oct 21, 2009 at 5:59pm

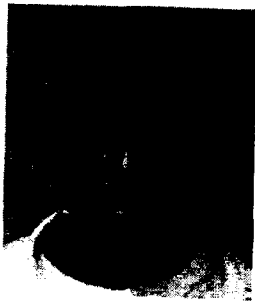
www.nwfdailynews.com/news/okaloosa-18895-pensacola-arrested.html

Two more Okaloosa residents arrested in Pensacola slayings (with SURVEILLANCE VIDEO, MUGS, SURVEILLANCE PHOTO)

July 14, 2009 - 8:17 AM
Robbyn Brooks
Daily News

"Two more Okaloosa County residents have been arrested in connection with the brutal shooting deaths of a Pensacola couple, according to the Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office.

Frederick Lee Thorton Jr., 19, and a not-yet-identified 16-year-old male were arrested for two counts of murder early Tuesday morning."



"On Sumner's MySpace page, he refers to himself at "Da Mayor" and, although his page is set to private, his mood is "killin da hatas" and there's a laughing smiley face next to that. Sumner last accessed his page on Sunday.

Sumner was arrested after he was pulled over in a traffic stop in Okaloosa County. Escambia County Sheriff David Morgan said he believed Sumner was one of the men dressed in "ninja garb" seen on surveillance video at the murder scene."

"The arrest of Gonzalez Jr. comes in sharp contrast to what he was known for in Escambia County. Gonzalez, known to most by his middle name, Patrick, is the program director and chief instructor of PROJECT FIGHT BACK. The program provides free abduction awareness and kidnap-prevention training to children in Northwest Florida. The program also focuses on women's self

defense and rape awareness classes.

According to one of Gozalez Jr.'s MySpace pages, he and his wife received the "Service to ManKind Award" from the Pensacola Sertoma Club on June 25 for recognition of the program they began five years ago. His page boasts more than 20,000 local women and children have benefited from PROJECT FIGHT BACK. The site even says the Florida Department of Children and Families and the University of West Florida were clients.

Gonzalez Jr. has seven children, one of which he was using MySpace to try and find."

Billings Case News Articles (July-Sept 2009) Reply #28 posted Oct 21, 2009 at 6:01pm
Post by acandyrose on Oct 21, 2009 at 6:01pm
www.northescambia.com/?p=9472

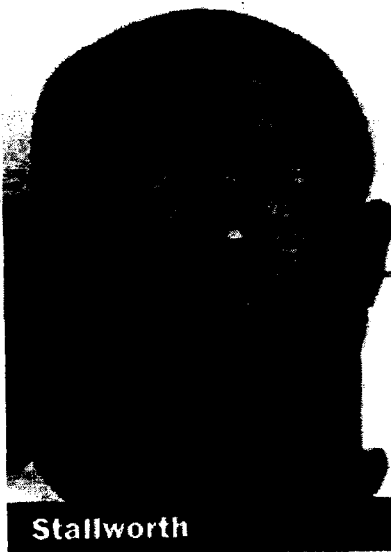
BREAKING NEWS: Three More Arrests In Billings Murders, Including One In Escambia County, Ala.; One May Be In Air Force

July 14, 2009

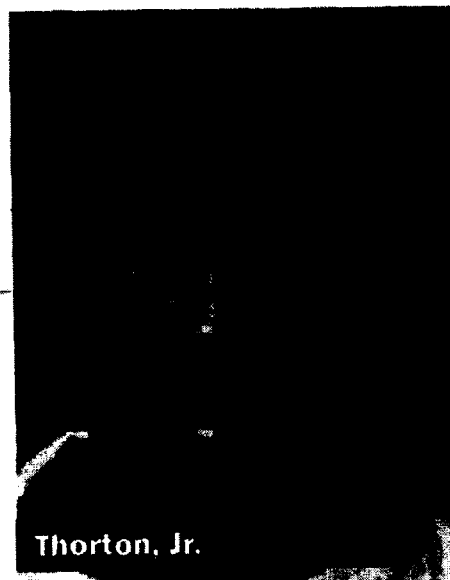
acandyrose
Administrator
☆☆☆☆☆
The Big
Cheese



Posts: 150 ♀



Stallworth



Thorton, Jr.

"Donnie Stallworth, Jr., 28, turned himself in at the Escambia County (Ala.) Detention Center in Brewton about 9:00 Monday night. Stallworth provide a Hurlburt Field address in Fort Walton Beach, Florida. Stallworth is believed to be enlisted in the Air Force.

And Escambia County (Ala.) judge will decide this afternoon if and when Stallworth will be returned to Escambia County, Fla.

Another has been identified as Frederick Lee Thorton Jr., 19, from Okaloosa County. The other is a 16-year old that has not been named."

acandyrose
Administrator
☆☆☆☆☆
The Big
Cheese

Billings Case News Articles (July-Sept 2009) Reply #29 posted Oct 21, 2009 at 6:12pm
Post by acandyrose on Oct 21, 2009 at 6:12pm
www.ksn.com/mostpopular/story/St-Johns-Military-School-reacts-to-murder-of-FL/d92JZpRn1E2SZ7AaDav1Yg.csp

St. John's Military School reacts to murder of FL couple

Last Update: 7/14 12:17 pm

SALINA, Kansas – The murder of a Pensacola, Florida couple has a Kansas connection.



Posts: 150 ♀ "The news about the Billings shocked the closely knit family at St. John's Military School.

"This is something that should be in the movies," said George Stelljes, commandant at St. John's. "It's not something that should experience in real life."

Stelljes has a very close relationship with the Billings' son Justin, a former student at St. John's who graduated last year."

"Stelljes says Justin's parents would visit the boarding school often and left a lasting impression on the staff as they were always checking on how their son was doing in school and maturing. Stelljes spoke with Justin on Sunday. "

"Justin was not in the home when the shooting happened and has been living in a nearby apartment in Pensacola. A number of his classmates plan to attend Friday's funeral."

Last Edit: Oct 22, 2009 at 10:33am by acandyrose

acandyrose

Administrator

★★★★★

The Big Cheese

Billings Case News Articles (July-Sept 2009) Reply #30 posted Oct 21, 2009 at 6:22pm

Post by acandyrose on Oct 21, 2009 at 6:22pm
www.nwfdailynews.com/news/okaloosa-18895-pensacola-arrested.html

Sheriff: Okaloosa County murder suspects worked for auto detailer



(with SURVEILLANCE VIDEO, MUGS, SURVEILLANCE PHOTO)

Comments 57 | Recommend 2

July 14, 2009 - 8:17 AM

Robbyn Brooks

Posts: 150 ♀ Daily News

"Frederick Lee Thorton Jr., 19, and Rakeem Florence, 16, and Donnie Stallworth, 28, were arrested for murder early Tuesday morning.

Those three arrests come on top of the Monday arrest of Gary Lamont Sumner Jr., 30. Sumner was arrested in Okaloosa County on a murder charge and driving with a suspended license and will eventually be returned to Escambia County.

The four worked for Fifth Dimensions auto detailers and were linked to the others arrested through a series of friendships and business dealings, said Escambia County Sheriff David Morgan.

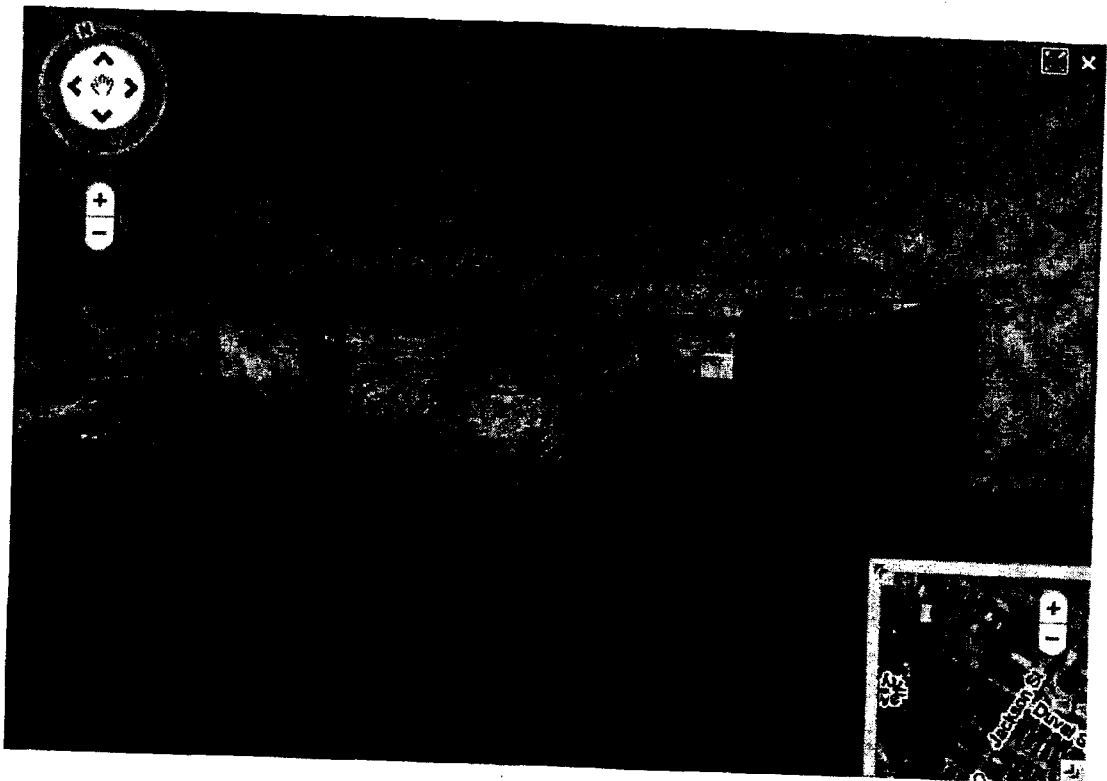
Florence was a student in Okaloosa County who was recognized in 2001 with an Okaloosa County Schools Turnaround Award. The award praises students who are able to reverse academic failure.



He was in Mary Esther Elementary School at the time, according to Daily News archives."

"Gonzalez Sr. owns a pressure washing business where some members of the group worked on an as-needed bases. Through him, Coldiron can be placed at the Billings' property at least once, Morgan said."





Last Edit: Oct 22, 2009 at 6:17pm by [acandyrose](#)

[Billings Case News Articles \(July-Sept 2009\) Reply #31](#) posted Oct 21, 2009 at 6:24pm

[acandyrose](#)
Administrator

★★★★★

The Big
Cheese



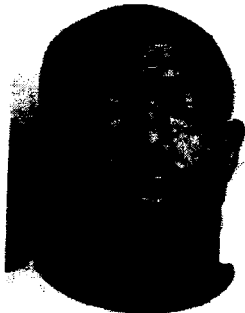
Posts: 150 ♀

[Post by acandyrose on Oct 21, 2009 at 6:24pm](#)
blog.al.com/live/2009/07/brewton_man_arrested_in_slayin.html

Brewton man arrested in slaying of Florida couple

Posted by **Connie Baggett**, Staff Reporter July 14, 2009 1:04 PM

Categories: Breaking News



"Donnie Stallworth Jr. of Brewton, Ala., charged in slaying of Florida couple Authorities have arrested a Brewton man in connection with the slaying of Byrd and Melanie Billings last week at their Beulah, Fla., home, Chief Deputy Mike Lambert said.

Donnie Stallworth Jr., 28, will appear at 2 p.m. today for an extradition hearing in Brewton. Stallworth, who is charged in a Florida warrant with premeditated homicide, surrendered to



Brewton authorities at 9 Monday night."

acandyrose Billings Case News Articles (July-Sept 2009) Reply #32 posted Oct 21, 2009 at 6:27pm
Administrator **Post by acandyrose on Oct 21, 2009 at 6:27pm**

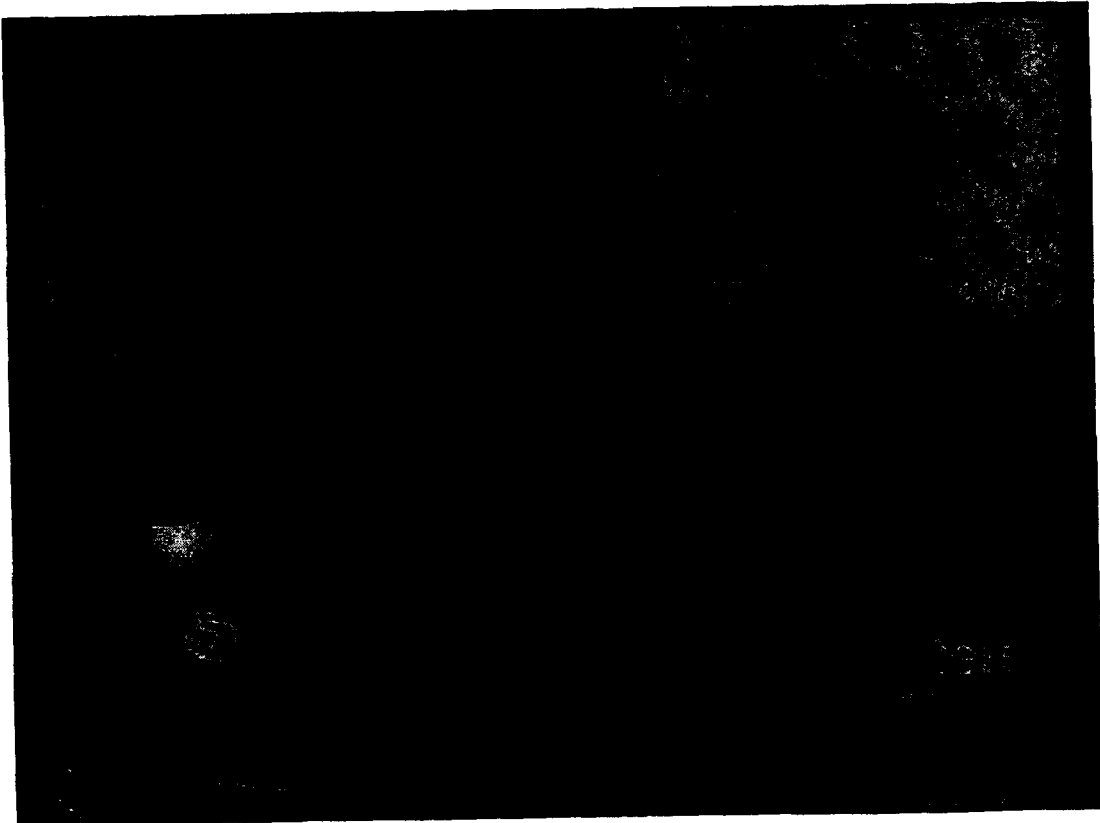
www.fox10tv.com/dpp/news/crime/Oldest_Billings_Child_Speaks_Out

The Big
Cheese

Oldest Billings child speaks out
Updated: Tuesday, 14 Jul 2009, 3:08 PM CDT
Published : Monday, 13 Jul 2009, 5:31 PM CDT



Posts: 150 ♀



Christina Leavenworth
Photojournalist: Hal Scheurich

"PENSACOLA, Fla. - 26-year-old Ashley Markham sat down early Monday morning, explaining to the media her favorite memories with her family.

"Our parents told us to love despite differences in people. Christmas was always the favorite holiday in our house. Our mom never left out anything when it came to Christmas. My mother and father touched many many lives across the country."

All Markham and her 15 brothers and sisters have left is memories of their parents.

Markham said, "Our mom and dad only had love in their lives, since the day they met 19 years ago, they knew they were soul mates. They chose a life that many people did not understand, together they decided to adopt a child which turned into the adopting of many children."

The entire community is mourning the loss of Byrd and Melanie Billings. Crime scene tape still remains outside the home, mixed with flowers and kind words left by friends. Markham explains what they've been going through.



"Our family cannot begin to find the words of the pain and disbelief we are in. To know there are people who are capable of this violence and people with this magnitude of hate in their lives is sickening."

Billings Case News Articles (July-Sept 2009) Reply #33 posted Oct 21, 2009 at 6:31pm
Post by **acandyrose** on Oct 21, 2009 at 6:31pm
www.wctv.tv/home/headlines/50730687.html

Pensacola Murder Suspect Spent Time in Our Area
07/15/09

acandyrose
Administrator
★★★★★
The Big
Cheese

"Suspect Wayne Thomas Coldiron did time in the Wakulla County Correctional Facility in Crawfordville. Coldiron and five others have been arrested in the murders of Byrd and Melanie Billings, a couple who had opened their large, rural home to children with disabilities. Coldiron was released from the Crawfordville facility in 2000.

According to an article in the Pensacola News Journal, He was arrested in 1998 in Broward County, on an aggravated assault charge.



He served 21 months in state prison and was released from the Wakulla Correctional Institution."

Posts: 150 ♀

"Coldiron's stepdaughter, Dawn Center, says she's shocked.
"He's not the type of person to normally do something like that, I can't believe that he would even try go into a house with kids, he loves kids," said Center.

One of the other murder suspects, Leonard Gonzalez, Junior, spent time in prison for burglary, forgery and grand theft. But he recently had been teaching martial arts to Pensacola area kids and was known as an advocate for children. Ironically, his Project Fightback program gave kids a sense of purpose and showed kids how to protect themselves from danger."

acandyrose
Administrator
★★★★★
The Big
Cheese

Billings Case News Articles (July-Sept 2009) Reply #34 posted Oct 21, 2009 at 6:34pm
Post by **acandyrose** on Oct 21, 2009 at 6:34pm
www.wkrq.com/crime/article/beulah-murder-suspect-had-been-given-a-civic-award/184885/Jul-14-2009-10-43-pm/

Beulah Murder Suspect Had Been Given A Civic Award

By Steve Alexander Reporter
Published: Tue, July 14, 2009 - 10:01 pm CST
Last Updated: Tue, July 14, 2009 - 10:43 pm CST



Posts: 150 ♀

"So who is Leonard Patrick Gonzalez, Junior?

He's labeled by authorities as the instigator of the crime.

On Gonzalez's arrest report, his last current business was listed as Project FIGHT BACK.

A description of Project FIGHT BACK on My Space said it provides free abduction awareness kidnap prevention workshops for children.

It was only a month ago that the Pensacola Seville Sertoma Club presented Gonzalez and his wife with the "Service to Mankind" award for their dedication to Project FIGHT BACK.

Sertoma Member Gwinn Corley said he heard about Gonzalez's arrest from a reporter.

Corley said, "I was flabbergasted. I could not believe what she was telling me."

He described Gonzalez as personable.



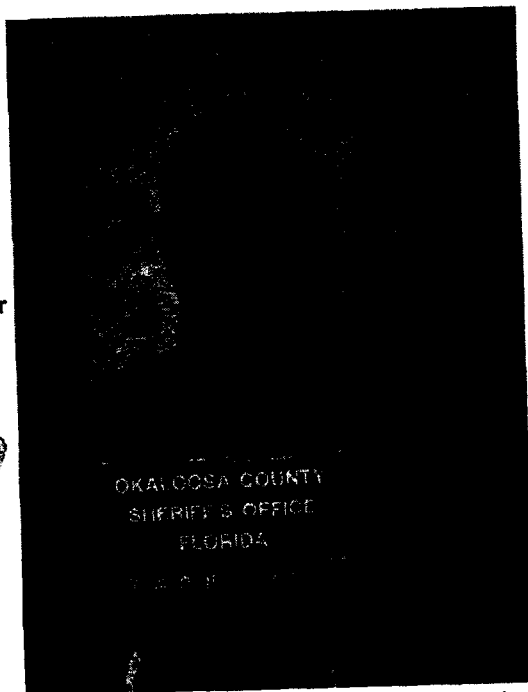
Corley said, "His wife was with him. They were very attached to each other. They talked about the kids, and their own kids. They've got six of their own."

In fact, Corley said Gonzalez' wife attended his Sertoma meeting and made a speech this past Thursday, the day authorities say the murder happened.

Corley said, "We asked her to let these people know here about their program and, so, she got up and in about five minutes just said what they're doing."

Billings Case News Articles (July-Sept 2009) Reply #35 posted Oct 21, 2009 at 6:37pm
Post by acandyrose on Oct 21, 2009 at 6:37pm
www.wkrq.com/crime/article/fort-walton-teenager-arrested-in-billings-murder/184717/Jul-14-2009-8-25-pm/

Fort Walton Teenager Arrested In Billings Murder



acandyrose
Administrator
★★★★★
The Big
Cheese



Posts: 150♀

By Jamie Burch
Published: Tue, July 14, 2009 - 8:17 pm CST
Last Updated: Tue, July 14, 2009 - 8:25 pm CST

"The Escambia County Sheriff's Office has identified the 16-year-old they say was involved in the robbery and murders of Byrd and Melanie Billings.

According to the probable cause statement obtained by News 5, 16-year-old Rakeem Florence of Fort Walton Beach confessed to taking part in the home invasion and that he was armed."

Last Edit: Oct 22, 2009 at 10:35am by acandyrose
Billings Case News Articles (July-Sept 2009) Reply #36 posted Oct 21, 2009 at 7:10pm
Post by acandyrose on Oct 21, 2009 at 7:10pm
www.pnj.com/article/20090715/NEWS01/907150329

The Big
Cheese

Neighbors tell of suspect's rage
Gonzalez Jr. no model tenant, landlord says

Louis Cooper • lcooper@pnj.com • July 15, 2009

"From September 2004 to May 2005, Gonzalez and his wife, Tabatha, rented a home in the 4700 block of Bay Breeze Drive in Gulf Breeze.

Neighbor Damon O'Donnell said Gonzalez pointed a gun at him in anger shortly after moving in following Hurricane Ivan. The incident happened when Gonzalez came home one afternoon and found hurricane debris at the curb, he said.

Because of the way the street is configured, O'Donnell's debris was in front of Gonzalez's house.

"He just went off. He went and grabbed a pistol and came over and started threatening me, saying that I'd better get my ... stuff out of his yard," said O'Donnell, a former Marine sharpshooter. "He ranted and raved and stormed up and down the street. He didn't fire. I just figured he was a nutcase."



Posts: 150 ♀

"The home is owned by Larry and Jo Ann Gers, who now live there. They rented the home to Gonzalez after Ivan."

"While Gonzalez rented the home, he sublet a storage shed in the back to hurricane recovery workers, without the Gerses' knowledge.

"They were all using the bathroom in the woods," Jo Ann Gers said.

When the Gerses came to move back, in accordance with an agreement with Gonzalez, they had to get the Santa Rosa County Sheriff's Office to help get Gonzalez to empty the home. Then, the Gerses had to address about \$3,000 in damage to the home.

"I had to replace the washer and dryer. I had to replace the refrigerator (and carpet)," Lerry Gers said. "They totally wrecked this place."

Last Edit: Oct 22, 2009 at 11:39am by [acandyrose](#)
Billings Case News Articles (July-Sept 2009) Reply #37 posted Oct 22, 2009 at 5:14pm
Post by [acandyrose](#) on Oct 22, 2009 at 5:14pm
www.pnj.com/article/20090715/NEWS01/907150327

[acandyrose](#)
Administrator
★★★★★
The Big
Cheese

'Mastermind' rebuffs dad's confession
Kris Wernowsky • kwernowsky@pnj.com • July 15, 2009

"With the exception of the statements that have been made, coerced, bullied or manipulated out of a mentally ill person, there is no hard evidence that links me to the scene of the crimes that occurred July 9," said Gonzalez Jr., whom investigators have called the slayings' "organizer."



Posts: 150 ♀

"I respectfully ask the court, that due to a lack of hard evidence, my family situation and as well as community activism, to release me on my own recognizance or greatly reduce my bond and allow me to prepare to defend myself against these heinous charges, which is my constitutional right," Gonzalez Jr. said."

[acandyrose](#)
Administrator
★★★★★
The Big
Cheese

Billings Case News Articles (July-Sept 2009) Reply #38 posted Oct 23, 2009 at 3:53am
Post by [acandyrose](#) on Oct 23, 2009 at 3:53am
www.pnj.com/article/20090715/NEWS01/907150328&referrer=FRONTPAGECAROUSEL

'It's still not real,' says sister of deaths
Nicholas Beadle • Jackson (Tenn.) Sun • July 15, 2009



"Five days after the call from her nephew, Judy Sisson still is trying to catch her breath."



"It's like somebody has hit me in the stomach," said the Jackson, Tenn., woman. "It's still not real. I know it in my head, but my heart hasn't connected yet."

Her younger brother, Byrd Billings, 66, whom she calls Buddy, and his wife, Melanie, 43, were shot to death in a home invasion in Beulah on Thursday."

(SNIP)

"Sisson said she and her brother originally were from Longtown, Miss. Their parents eventually moved to Memphis, Tenn.

Posts: 150

She said Byrd Billings lived with her and her husband in Jackson, when he was a teenager.

Byrd and a previous wife later lived across the street from Sisson and her husband until he moved to Greenville, Miss., in the late 1970s.

He moved to Florida after he and his first wife separated, she said."

(SNIP)

Billings Case News Articles (July-Sept 2009) Reply #39 posted Oct 23, 2009 at 3:56am
Post by acandyrose on Oct 23, 2009 at 3:56am
pnj.com/article/20090715/NEWS01/907150331/-1/special

acandyrose **Gonzalez Jr. talks talk, won't walk**
Administrator Mark OBrien • July 15, 2009

☆☆☆☆
The Big
Cheese

"No, sir, I haven't seen an arrest report," Gonzalez told Judge Thomas Johnson, as if he knew nothing about the slayings of Byrd and Melanie Billings in their Beulah home.



"This entire case is based on hearsay ... " said Gonzalez, 35. He was "socially prominent" for teaching self-defense classes to children and recently won a Sertoma Club award for his community service, said Gonzalez, reading at times from a prepared statement.

Posts: 150

The charges were bogus, he assured the judge. The Sheriff's Office had juggled the figures to make him look bad despite "the lack of hard evidence."

(SNIP)

[Click here to remove banner ads from this forum.](#)

See all of our features at www.forums.net

a new service by ProBoards
Professional, white label, hosted forums

CLICK HERE TO SIGN UP

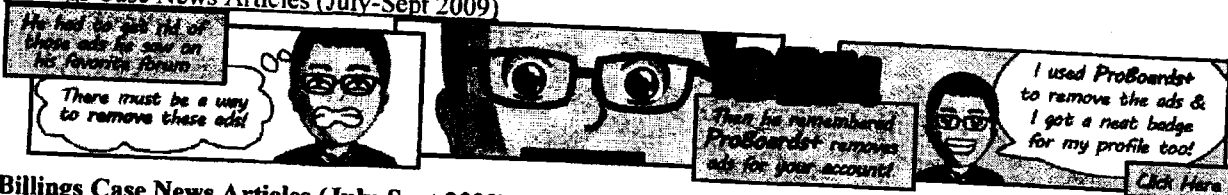
This Forum Hosted For FREE By [ProBoards](#)
Get Your Own [Free Message Boards & Free Forums!](#)
[Terms of Service](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Notice](#) | [FTC Disclosure](#) | [Report Abuse](#) | [Mobile](#) | [Advertise Here](#)

ACR TIMELINES

- [Home](#)
- [Help](#)
- [Search](#)
- [Calendar](#)
- [Members](#)
- [Profile](#)
- [Messages](#)
- Welcome ericpink. [Logout](#)
- [new Participated](#)

ACR TIMELINES
NEWS ARTICLES

Billings Case News Articles (July-Sept 2009)



Billings Case News Articles (July-Sept 2009)

[acandyrose](#)
 Administrator
 ☆☆☆☆☆
 The Big Cheese

Billings Case News Articles (July-Sept 2009) Reply #40 posted Oct 23, 2009 at 4:00am
 Post by [acandyrose](#) on Oct 23, 2009 at 4:00am
www.wear.tv.com/newsroom/top_stories/videos/wear_vid_2741.shtml

Frederick Lee Thorton Junior Background
07/15/09



Posts: 150 ♀

Dan Thomas/Reporter: "We're here on Duval Street. This is the home of Freddy Thorton, the 19 year old wrapped up in this case, charged with two counts of murder. Just across the street, is 5th Dimension Auto detailer owned by Gary Sumner, who is also charged with two counts of murder. Across the street from here: Freddy's Cousin who says Freddy has nothing to do with this case."

Billings Case News Articles (July-Sept 2009) Reply #41 posted Oct 23, 2009 at 4:04am
 Post by [acandyrose](#) on Oct 23, 2009 at 4:04am
www.wesh.com/news/20049265/detail.html

Florida Couple's Slayings Put Spotlight On Sheriff

[acandyrose](#)
 Administrator
 ☆☆☆☆☆
 The Big Cheese

Byrd, Melanie Billings Leave Behind 17 Children
 BILL KACZOR, Associated Press Writer
 POSTED: 11:13 am EDT July 14, 2009
 UPDATED: 3:49 am EDT July 15, 2009
 (SNIP)



Posts: 150 ♀

"The case has thrust this military town into the spotlight, and its new sheriff hasn't shied away from the glare. He's given reporters ample time to ask questions at daily news conferences, and he appeared two days in a row on morning shows for ABC, CBS and NBC.

The blunt-talking Morgan, who was elected in November, spent 23 years with the Air Force security police before retiring as a major in 1994 at nearby Eglin Air Force Base. He then started a private investigation agency with his wife, Susan, a retired Air Force colonel.

"Oddly enough, I worked the defense side for the last 15 years," Morgan said Tuesday. "In the first part of my military career, of course, I worked the prosecutorial side. So I've got a blend of both."

[acandyrose](#)
 Administrator
 ☆☆☆☆☆
 The Big Cheese

Billings Case News Articles (July-Sept 2009) Reply #42 posted Oct 23, 2009 at 4:08am
 Post by [acandyrose](#) on Oct 23, 2009 at 4:08am
www.wear.tv.com/newsroom/top_stories/videos/wear_vid_2745.shtml



Billings Murder Reaction

07/15/09

(SNIP)

Cheese

"Bea Thomas, Billings Friend: "I knew bud and Melanie, when Bud proposed and I saw Melanie's engagement ring."



Bea Thomas knew the Billings from the beginning. Whether it was buying a car from Byrd or working at the Billings home with the kids.

Posts: 150 ♀

Bea Thomas, Billings Friend: "I sat with their daughter Nicole at the hospital and I was so fond of Nicole and working with kids with disabilities. That's how we met each other and we've been friends ever since."

(SNIP)

acandyrose

Administrator

★★★★★

The Big Cheese

Billings Case News Articles (July-Sept 2009) Reply #43 posted Oct 23, 2009 at 4:13am

Post by acandyrose on Oct 23, 2009 at 4:13am

hosted.ap.org/dynamic/stories/U/US_FLORIDA_COUPLE_SLAIN?
SITE=FLTAM&SECTION=US

Jul 14, 10:04 PM EDT

7 charged with killing Fla. couple, stealing safe

By MELISSA NELSON and BILL KACZOR

Associated Press Writer

Posts: 150 ♀



"The suspects ranged in age from 16 to 56, and several were day laborers who knew each other through a pressure washing business and an auto detailer they worked for. One, Donnie Ray Stallworth, was with the Air Force Special Operations Command with an aircraft maintenance squadron at Hurlburt Field near Fort Walton Beach. It wasn't clear how he knew the others.

"We're dealing with a group of folks with rare exception - of course, there's a couple of people who are not - that again are basically day laborer sorts, folks that get odd jobs, part-time jobs and they drift," Morgan said. "With the exception of Mr. Stallworth you don't have any career-minded people in this group."

(SNIP)

"But records show Gonzalez, who was arrested Sunday in the Billings case, served time in Florida State Prison on burglary and forgery charges in the mid-1990s.

His father, Leonard Gonzalez Sr., was also arrested. The 56-year-old was charged Sunday night with evidence tampering after authorities said he tried to cover up some damage on a red van seen on surveillance video pulling away from the house. Officials said the damage was unrelated to the crime. Tips from the public led police to the van Saturday.

The elder Gonzalez owned a pressure washing business and may have visited the Billings property once before. Another man arrested and charged with murder Sunday, day laborer Wayne Coldiron, 41, sometimes worked for him and also may have visited the property, Morgan said.

Coldiron, who appeared in court Tuesday and said he had lost his job as a plumber, served two years in a Tennessee prison in the early 1990s after killing a man during a fight. He also served nearly two years in prison in Florida on an aggravated assault charge.

The other four suspects were arrested Monday and Tuesday.

Authorities in neighboring Okaloosa County arrested 31-year-old Gary Sumner, another day laborer who was in a county jail on an unrelated traffic charge. On Tuesday, three more men were arrested: Stallworth, 19-year-old Frederick Lee Thornton, and a 16-year-old whom officials are not

naming because he is a minor."

(SNIP)

Billings Case News Articles (July-Sept 2009) Reply #44 posted Oct 23, 2009 at 4:20am
Post by acandyrose on Oct 23, 2009 at 4:20am
www.al.com/news/press-register/metro.ssf?/base/news/1247649337234480.xml&coll=3

Brewton airman refuses to waive extradition in deaths of Florida couple
Wednesday, July 15, 2009
By CONNIE BAGGETT
Staff Reporter

"BREWTON — An active-duty airman stationed at Hurlburt Field in northwest Florida sat before a judge in his hometown of Brewton on Tuesday and declined to waive extradition to Florida, where he stands accused of murder in the slayings Thursday of Byrd and Melanie Billings.

acandyrose
Administrator
☆☆☆☆☆

The Big
Cheese

About 20 people gathered in support of Donnie Stallworth Jr., 28, including his parents and several church members, as his attorney, David White, told Escambia County, Ala., Circuit Judge Bert Rice that his client was "not prepared at this time to waive extradition."

(SNIP)



"Stallworth entered the courtroom in an orange jail outfit, handcuffed and wearing flip-flops. He glanced at his family several times, but spoke to no one but his attorney.

The defense attorney's cousin, Jeff White, represented the district attorney's office."

Posts: 150 ♀ (SNIP)

"He worked in the Air Force at Hurlburt Field doing maintenance on gunships," said Escambia County, Ala., Sheriff's Chief Deputy Mike Lambert. "He had been in the Air Force 10 years, and his major said he is a good man. There's just something very complex here that we don't know yet."

Stallworth is his mother's only child, relatives said, and the whole family had been stunned and devastated by the accusations and his possible involvement. His mother works at the Escambia County Department of Human Resources, and his father runs a used car lot in Milton, officials said. Both declined to comment.

"Donnie's a great guy," said Jennifer Blunt, assistant pastor at Christ's Kingdom Ministry in Brewton. "He and his mother came to our church. I have known him since he was about 8 years old. He's a great guy, very intelligent. I just don't understand what went wrong."

acandyrose
Administrator
☆☆☆☆☆
The Big
Cheese

Billings Case News Articles (July-Sept 2009) Reply #45 posted Oct 23, 2009 at 4:23am
Post by acandyrose on Oct 23, 2009 at 4:23am
www.heraldtribune.com/article/20090715/ARTICLE/907151028/2055/NEWS?Title=A-suspect-in-slaying-of-parents-haunted-Sarasota-family-



Suspect in slaying of Pensacola couple haunted Sarasota family
Leonard Patrick Gonzalez Jr. is charged in the Escambia County slayings. His daughter, ex-wife and former in-laws live in Sarasota.

By Anthony Cormier
Published: Wednesday, July 15, 2009 at 1:00 a.m.
Last Modified: Tuesday, July 14, 2009 at 8:34 p.m.

Posts: 150 ♀

"Once or twice a year, Leonard Patrick Gonzalez Jr. would call the Herkel residence in Sarasota

and demand to see his daughter.

Usually, Rebecca Herkel would try to placate her former son-in-law, who is now a suspect in the killing of a Pensacola couple last week, explaining that he lost his parental rights and needed to go through the legal system if he wanted visits with the girl.

But in April, Gonzalez took a new route: MySpace, and with it a new level of intensity that eventually amounted to cyberstalking.

Months before he was charged in the murderous home invasion near Pensacola that has shocked the nation -- a crime that led to the slaying of a couple that raised numerous foster children -- Gonzalez started a Web page devoted to the Herkels, who live in northern Sarasota and run Bill's Mobile Home Repair.

Gonzalez used MySpace, the social networking site, to make wild claims about the Herkels, post intimate photographs of the family and write fabricated claims from local public figures that suggested he had a right, and their support, to be in his daughter's life.

Authorities arrested Gonzalez, 35, on Sunday in connection with the slayings of Byrd and Melanie Billings in rural Northwest Florida, who were known for giving generously to schools and adopting children with special needs.

Seven people have been charged in all. Authorities say the group meticulously planned the break-in, wore ninja-style clothing and shot the couple during what appeared to be a robbery.

The murders left the Herkels shaken, wondering whether Gonzalez -- a karate instructor who raised his own family of six boys in Gulf Breeze -- was stalking them through MySpace and whether his violent online outbursts could have led to something worse.

"I don't think I'm qualified to get into his psyche," said Rebecca Herkel, whose daughter married Gonzalez eight years ago and was divorced two years later. "But I know that he is a truly diabolical man, an evil man."

Photos and fabricated testimonials were posted on his MySpace page, appearing to come from Sarasotans such as former Mayor Lou Ann Palmer, and business people including real estate broker Charles Knowles and banker Veronica Brady.


Gonzalez married Katie Herkel while she was away at college in Pensacola, but it was a rocky marriage that ended in 2002, according to court records. Herkel's mother says Gonzalez was supposed to have supervised visits with their daughter, Bella, but he failed to pay child support and did not take required parenting classes.

After his ex-wife won sole custody and moved back to Sarasota, Gonzalez would call the Herkels every few months and lash out at his former in-laws.

But the calls stopped recently, and it appeared that Gonzalez had turned to MySpace to gather information on the family and seek others to take up his custody battle. On the site, he posted the Herkels' home phone number. He wrote about his ex-wife's sister, posting her name, her work phone number and an e-mail address of a supervisor.

About his daughter, Gonzalez claimed: "She was taken from me, against my will several years ago, and I miss her very much. I have made many numerous attempts to be a part of my daughter's life, but they have kept her from me.... for NO GOOD REASON!!!"

Rebecca Herkel says the family called local law enforcement officials but were told that nothing could be done. The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office says that it has no record of meeting with the Herkels about Gonzalez.

Meanwhile, Gonzalez was also making up messages from local business leaders and politicians. He apparently copied their photographs from Web sites and claimed they were his online "friends." 

One of his targets was Palmer, the former mayor. Gonzalez fabricated a message from Palmer saying that she would e-mail a lawyer's name and phone number for help. "Please feel free to call my private line once you have spoken with him to let me know how things are looking," the message claimed.

Palmer, reached Tuesday, said her relatives were shocked and scared that her photograph had appeared on the MySpace page. "I don't even use MySpace," she said.

In the last few weeks, the messages took on a more ominous tone.

June 21: "BIG REWARD FOR ANY INCRIMINATING INFORMATION OR PHOTOS OF THESE PEOPLE"

July 6: "We are getting closer."

July 9: "Making a move for humanity."

Then, on Thursday, several men were captured on a home surveillance system breaking into the Billingses' home, according to authorities.

Officials in Escambia County claim it was a well-planned attack, that two teams entered the front and rear of the home and silently killed the couple. One of the other suspects is Gonzalez's father, Leonard Patrick Gonzalez Sr., who drove the getaway van, authorities said.

"When I saw the newscast last night, I just knew that he was the mastermind," Rebecca Herkel said. "I said, 'Oh, it's him. He is diabolical enough to do that.'"

Herkel said she has not been contacted by law enforcement in relation to the Pensacola killings, and said she has no reason to believe there is any connection between Gonzalez Jr.'s stalking of her family and the Billings murders."

Billings Case News Articles (July-Sept 2009) Reply #46 posted Oct 23, 2009 at 4:25am
Post by acandyrose on Oct 23, 2009 at 4:25am
www.necn.com/Boston/Nation/2009/07/15/Markham-Our-family-is/1247659861.html

acandyrose
Administrator
☆☆☆☆

The Big
Cheese

Markham: Our family is 'devastated'
07/15/09

"Ashley Markham, one of four adult children of Byrd and Melanie Billings, stood beside her husband, aunt and uncle at the press conference. She thanked law enforcement for their work.



"We are relieved that the people involved in this crime have been apprehended and we are certain that justice will be served," Markham said. "The events that have unfolded in the last week and the last couple of days have devastated our family."

Posts: 150 ♀

"Mom and Dad devoted their lives, in large part, to educating others about children with special needs. While many say the children were blessed to have my mom and dad, my mom and dad would often say they were the ones most blessed."

acandyrose
Administrator
☆☆☆☆

The Big
Cheese

Billings Case News Articles (July-Sept 2009) Reply #47 posted Oct 23, 2009 at 4:32am
Post by acandyrose on Oct 23, 2009 at 4:32am
www.wkrq.com/crime/article/two-more-arrested-in-billings-murder-case/183701/Jul-14-2009-8-24-pm/



Three More Arrested In Billings Murder Case

By The Associated Press

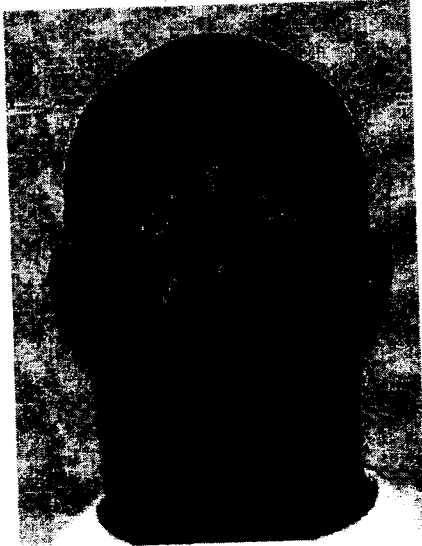
Published: Tue, July 14, 2009 - 10:29 am CST

Last Updated: Tue, July 14, 2009 - 8:24 pm CST

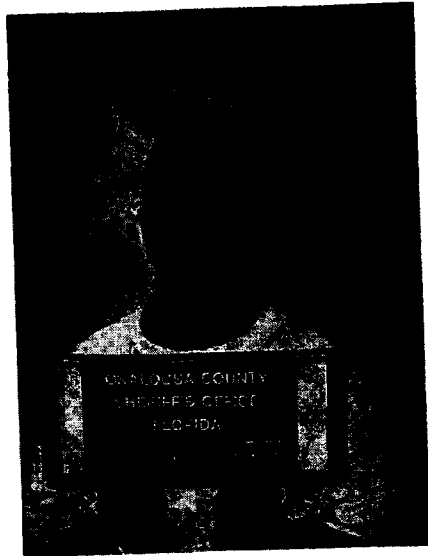
Posts: 150

8:24 p.m.

Click here to read the arrest warrant for Leonard Gonzalez, Jr.
www.wkrg.com/document/pdf/billings_arrest_warrants

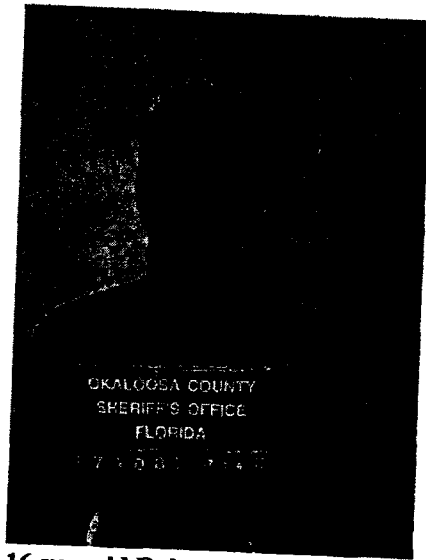


28-year-old Donald Stallworth



19-year-old Fredrick Thornton





16-yearold Rakeem Florence

Billings Case News Articles (July-Sept 2009) Reply #48 posted Oct 23, 2009 at 4:34am
Post by acandyrose on Oct 23, 2009 at 4:34am
www.abcactionnews.com/news/state/story/Suspect-in-double-murder-had-violent-past/8nAJgN_Gc0ecqM2p8namMw.csp

acandyrose
Administrator
★★★★★
The Big
Cheese

Suspect in double murder had violent past
Reported by: Associated Press
Contributor: Chris Martinez
Last Update: 7/14 9:30 pm

"MORRISTOWN, Tenn. (AP) -- One of seven suspects in the murders of a Florida couple was convicted in an East Tennessee death in 1992.



Posts: 150 ♀

According to documents from the Hamblen County Sheriff's Department, William "Wayne" Coldiron and Terry Corbett argued on Dec. 13, 1992, at a home in Russellville. Corbett, who at first refused hospital treatment after Coldiron notified authorities, later died.

According to WATE-TV in Knoxville, Coldiron later pleaded guilty to an amended charge of criminally negligent homicide in Corbett's death. He was sentenced to two years in the Hamblen County Jail."

(SNIP)

acandyrose
Administrator
★★★★★
The Big
Cheese

Billings Case News Articles (July-Sept 2009) Reply #49 posted Oct 23, 2009 at 4:38am
Post by acandyrose on Oct 23, 2009 at 4:38am
www.fox10tv.com/dpp/news/local_news/pensacola/Sheriffsayssuspectstiedbybusiness



Posts: 150 ♀

Sheriff says suspects tied by business
Updated: Tuesday, 14 Jul 2009, 11:07 PM CDT
Published : Tuesday, 14 Jul 2009, 11:01 PM CDT
Cherish Lombard

(SNIP)

"I think we were able to confirm that he was at the property at least one time, but again, where you would think to look for long-term relationships where the people could be under surveillance by those wanting to do harm, we've yet to confirm that", said Sheriff David Morgan.

According to the Sheriff, Leonard Patrick Gonzalez "Jr.", was friends with the four other suspects from Okaloosa County, one of them being 19-year-old Frederick Lee Thornton Jr.

"We have four individuals over there that are tied to an auto detailing business called "5th Dimensions Auto Detailing", said Sheriff Morgan."

(SNIP)

"We have information that indicates that there was an amount of practice that was involved. There are a couple of individuals that have military backgrounds in this group", said the Sheriff.

Gonzalez Jr. Is a former member of the National Guard and the Sheriff says he was "the organizer."

(SNIP)

Billings Case News Articles (July-Sept 2009) Reply #50 posted Oct 23, 2009 at 4:40am
Post by acandyrose on Oct 23, 2009 at 4:40am
www.fox10tv.com/dpp/news/crime/Funeral_set_for_Billings_couple

acandyrose

Administrator

☆☆☆☆☆

The Big Cheese

Funeral set for Billings couple - Trust fund created for kids

Updated: Wednesday, 15 Jul 2009, 7:13 AM CDT

Published : Wednesday, 15 Jul 2009, 7:13 AM CDT

Linda Jones



"Ashley Markham, the murdered couples oldest daughter, said a trust is being set up for the children. Markham said there has been an outpouring of support from people in the community and around the nation. Papers are being drawn up now to formalize the trust.

Posts: 150 ♀

Funeral services for the Billings are now complete. Visitation will be Thursday from 5 p.m. until 8 p.m. at Liberty Church on South Blue Angel Parkway. Funeral services are planned for Friday at 11 a.m. at Liberty Church. Burial will follow at Pensacola memorial gardens."

acandyrose

Administrator

☆☆☆☆☆

The Big Cheese

Billings Case News Articles (July-Sept 2009) Reply #51 posted Oct 23, 2009 at 4:49am

Post by acandyrose on Oct 23, 2009 at 4:49am

www.pnj.com/article/20090715/NEWS01/907150327/1006

'Mastermind' rebuffs dad's confession

Kris Wernowsky • kwernowsky@pnj.com • July 15, 2009



(SNIP)

Posts: 150 ♀

"In a 400-word monologue he read from a prepared statement, Gonzalez Jr. gave a litany of complaints about the case against him.

He said the Sheriff's Office added 30 pounds to his weight on paperwork — the arrest report says he weighs 185 pounds — so that he would better fit the suspect's description. He said that without cause he was placed in a suicide-watch ward in Escambia County Jail."

(SNIP)

"I am also socially prominent with work I've done in Project FIGHTBACK," he said. "I've trained over 20,000 local children in abduction awareness and kidnap prevention, and a few weeks ago won the Seville Sertoma Club's Service to Mankind Award."

"Coldiron's bond revoked. Unemployed day-laborer Wayne Thomas Coldiron, learned Tuesday he'll remain jailed without bond.

Escambia County Judge Thomas Johnson considered a 1998 aggravated-assault conviction in Broward County in deciding whether to increase or reduce the plumber's bond. Johnson also noted that Coldiron, 41, had criminal convictions in Ohio and Tennessee."

"Coldiron said very little during his hearing but that he moved to Northwest Florida in 2000 after his release from a South Florida prison, where he served one year and nine months on the Broward County charge.

Coldiron said that he was a "plumber by trade" but that he had been unemployed due to the downturn in the construction business."

(SNIP)

acandyrose
Administrator
★★★★★
The Big
Cheese

Billings Case News Articles (July-Sept 2009) Reply #52 posted Oct 23, 2009 at 4:51am
Post by acandyrose on Oct 23, 2009 at 4:51am
www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/ALeqM5iTAOQx619OXpq7P0Jcpzqc9Zg-cwD99ES3FO2



Sheriff: Suspects trained before Fla. couple slain
07/15/09

"Escambia County Sheriff David Morgan told the CBS "Early Show" on Wednesday that investigators believe the group trained together for at least a month before the attack."

Posts: 150 ♀

acandyrose
Administrator
★★★★★
The Big
Cheese

Billings Case News Articles (July-Sept 2009) Reply #53 posted Oct 23, 2009 at 5:00am
Post by acandyrose on Oct 23, 2009 at 5:00am
www.tampabay.com/news/publicsafety/crime/article1018506.ece



Slaying of Florida couple with 17 children called "the worst of man"
By Ben Montgomery, Times Staff Writer
In Print: Wednesday, July 15, 2009

"Over the course of a month, the sheriff here said, the seven suspects had fired weapons and trained and plotted the specifics of their night-time assault on a home in Beulah, a few miles west of this panhandle town, on a stretch of Mobile Highway lined by churches and gas stations and hay fields."

Posts: 150 ♀

(SNIP)

"Morgan painted the crew as a small militia, with ties to criminal operations out of state and outside the country. Two of the men, he said, have military training: Leonard Patrick Gonzalez Jr. in the National Guard, and Donald Ray Stallworth in a special operations unit with the Air Force.

The group's mastermind, whom Morgan wouldn't name but hinted was Gonzalez Jr., had recruited the others for the invasion: day laborers, mechanics, auto detailers.

The sheriff has arrested six men and a juvenile, while one person with intimate knowledge of the crime is still at large, he said."

"The web of crime expands beyond Escambia County. The sheriff said the FBI and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives are involved in the investigation.

"It involves other businesses, other states, other countries," he said. "The individuals involved with these crimes are involved in other areas." He declined to elaborate."

"I find that hard to believe," said Dave Barnes, 82, who lives two houses down. "He has a lot of

cookouts, but no training that I've seen."

Barnes was home Saturday when Gonzalez Sr. stopped by with his son, a few hours before they were arrested. They came bearing jalapenos they picked from their garden. They both seemed comfortable and friendly.

Barnes said he thought about calling the police when he saw a red van parked behind Gonzalez Sr.'s trailer that was similar to the photo of the getaway van he saw in the local newspaper, but someone beat him to it.

"I just can't believe that Leonard would do something like that," Barnes said. "He's real outgoing, sociable."

(SNIP)

Billings Case News Articles (July-Sept 2009) Reply #54 posted Oct 23, 2009 at 5:05am
Post by acandyrose on Oct 23, 2009 at 5:05am
www.cnn.com/2009/CRIME/07/14/florida.couple.slain/index.html

acandyrose
Administrator

The Big
Cheese

Police: Suspect sought after 7 arrests in Florida couple's slaying
updated 6:01 p.m. EDT, Tue July 14, 2009

"We've got the primary individuals and suspects in custody today," Sheriff David Morgan said. The eighth person is believed to have aided and abetted the crime, he said, and authorities know that person's name and location."

(SNIP)



Posts: 150 ♀

"Police have released two surveillance tapes taken from the front and rear of the Billingses' home. Each shows a vehicle pulling up to the property and five people dressed in black and wearing masks entering the home through two entrances, including a utility door left unlocked, something Morgan said is not uncommon in the community. Authorities believe that drivers remained in both of the cars.

Both the Billingses were shot multiple times, Morgan said."

acandyrose
Administrator

The Big
Cheese

Billings Case News Articles (July-Sept 2009) Reply #55 posted Oct 23, 2009 at 5:25am
Post by acandyrose on Oct 23, 2009 at 5:25am
www.wkrq.com/crime/article/person-of-interest-in-the-billings-murder-case/186209/Jul-15-2009-2-06-pm/

'Person Of Interest' In the Billings Murder Case

By Jamie Burch
Published: Wed, July 15, 2009 - 2:03 pm CST
Last Updated: Wed, July 15, 2009 - 2:06 pm CST



Posts: 150 ♀

"The Escambia County Sheriff's Office is looking for 47-year-old Pamela Long who they call a 'person of interest' in the murder of Byrd and Melanie Billings.

Sheriff David Morgan says Long has "significant and substantial information" his investigators need to close the case. He says it's imperative they speak with her.

If you recognize Long, please call the Escambia County Sheriff's Office at 850.436.9620 or Crime Stoppers at 850.433.7561.

Sheriff Morgan says Long, who has five aliases (Pamela Long Wiggins, Pamela L Malden, Pamela Long Link, Pamela Laverne Long Coco, Pam Long), is a realtor and that she rented property to Leonard Gonzalez Jr."

(SNIP)

Billings Case News Articles (July-Sept 2009) Reply #56 posted Oct 23, 2009 at 5:30am
Post by acandyrose on Oct 23, 2009 at 5:30am
www.allheadlinenews.com/articles/7015798347?Police%20Seek%20Suspect%20For%20

acandyrose
Administrator
★★★★★
The Big
Cheese

Police Seek Suspect For "Gaping Hole" In Florida Couple's Murder
July 15, 2009 1:49 p.m. EST
Melvin Baker - AHN Reporter

"Authorities here are seeking two persons for questioning in the murders last week of a Panhandle couple with 16 children.



One of the persons being sought is alleged to have been responsible for disabling the security system before a robbery at the home of Byrd and Melanie Billings."

Posts: 150 ♀ (SNIP)

"The sheriff said investigators also are attempting to locate a Gulf Breeze woman, Pamela Laverne Long. He described Long as "well known" in the Gulf Breeze area, but did not detail why she was wanted other than to say she was a "person of interest."

acandyrose
Administrator
★★★★★
The Big
Cheese

Billings Case News Articles (July-Sept 2009) Reply #57 posted Oct 23, 2009 at 5:42am
Post by acandyrose on Oct 23, 2009 at 5:42am
edition.cnn.com/2009/CRIME/07/15/florida.couple.slain/

Authorities seek woman for questioning in Florida killings



Story Highlights

- NEW: Investigators seek woman who earlier gave information, disappeared
- NEW: Pamela Laverne Long rented property to a suspect arrested in crime
- Drug Enforcement Administration participating in investigation of killings

Posts: 150 ♀

updated 1 minute ago [07/15/09]



Pamela Long, also known as Pamela Wiggins and by other names, is a "person of interest" in the Florida case.

"Pamela Laverne Long is a Realtor and had rented property to one of the suspects already arrested in the case, Leonard Patrick Gonzalez Jr., according to Escambia County Sheriff David Morgan, who described Long as a "person of interest."

"We believe Miss Long has significant and substantial information we need to conclude this case," Morgan said, holding up a photograph of Long at a news conference. "We are concerned because we've had no contact with her for 48 hours."



Morgan said Long used numerous aliases -- Pamela Long Wiggins, Pamela Elle Malden, Pamela Long Link and Pamela Laverne Long Coco -- but cautioned that the aliases may simply be the result of numerous marriages. Long is not believed to be a danger to the community, he said.

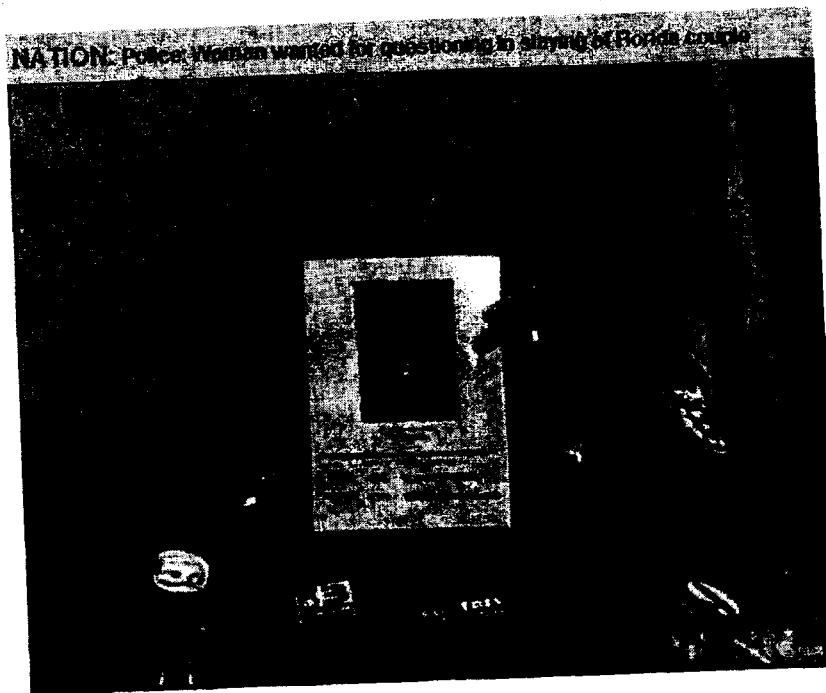
(SNIP)

"Police said Tuesday they know the name and location of one more suspect involved in the crime. Morgan would not say Wednesday if Long was that person.

The sheriff's news conference came shortly after the Drug Enforcement Administration confirmed it is assisting in the probe of the murders. Watch sheriff describe crimes »

"Escambia County sheriff's department did call for our assistance this week," David Melenkevitz, spokesman for the DEA in Miami, Florida, said.

Morgan wouldn't confirm the DEA's involvement during the briefing to reporters."



acandyrose Administrator **Billings Case News Articles (July-Sept 2009) Reply #58** posted Oct 23, 2009 at 5:46am
Post by acandyrose on Oct 23, 2009 at 5:46am

www.cnn.com/2009/CRIME/07/15/florida.couple.slain/

The Big Cheese

Police find woman wanted for questioning in Fla. killings case




Story Highlights

- NEW: Woman police want to question found in Orange Beach, Alabama
- Pamela Laverne Long rented property to a suspect arrested in crime
- Drug Enforcement Administration participating in investigation of killings
- Seven suspects face murder charges in deaths of Byrd and Melanie Billings

Posts: 150 ♀

updated 17 minutes ago [07/15/09]

"Pamela Laverne Long was found in Orange Beach, Alabama, Morgan said. The sheriff had said 

earlier that Long is a real estate agent who had rented property to Leonard Patrick Gonzalez Jr., one of the suspects already arrested in the case.

She is returning to Escambia County, Florida, with her attorney, he said, but she is not in law enforcement custody.

"It is my understanding that she's currently being cooperative," he said. Authorities had no contact with her for 48 hours, he said, explaining she was "not in the public eye" and was not in contact with her friends and neighbors."

(SNIP)

Billings Case News Articles (July-Sept 2009) Reply #59 posted Oct 23, 2009 at 5:55am
Post by acandyrose on Oct 23, 2009 at 5:55am
abcnews.go.com/GMA/story?id=8086274&page=1

Pamela Long, Sought in Fla. Killings, Escorted Back to Florida
Pamela Laverne Long Turns Herself in for Questioning as Police Seek Another Person of Interest
By LEE FERRAN, STEVE OSUNSAMI and EMILY FRIEDMAN
July 15, 2009

acandyrose
Administrator
★★★★★
The Big
Cheese

"A woman sought as a "person of interest" in the killing of Florida super parents Byrd and Melanie Billings, is returning to Florida with a police escort for questioning by police today, just hours after police held up her photo in a nationally televised news conference."

"She is not in custody. She is coming back of her own volition." The sheriff said Long is with her lawyer and following another police car to meet with his investigators.



Long was spotted by Alabama police in a marina in the town of Orange Beach and apparently did not know police were searching for her."

Posts: 150♀ (SNIP)

"In a surveillance tape from the Billings home that Morgan called "chilling and shocking," two men emerge from among trees in the rear property and hurry to a back door of the house.

They are believed to have been traveling in a metallic blue flake or gold flake Escalade that has not yet been located."

[Click here to remove banner ads from this forum.](#)

This Forum Hosted For FREE By ProBoards
Get Your Own [Free Message Boards & Free Forums!](#)

[Terms of Service](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Notice](#) | [FTC Disclosure](#) | [Report Abuse](#) | [Mobile](#) | [Advertise Here](#)



ACR TIMELINES

- [Home](#)
- [Help](#)
- [Search](#)
- [Calendar](#)
- [Members](#)
- [Profile](#)
- [Messages](#)
- Welcome ericpink. [Logout](#)
- [new Participated](#)

ACR TIMELINES

NEWS ARTICLES

[Billings Case News Articles \(July-Sept 2009\)](#)



Billings Case News Articles (July-Sept 2009)
[Billings Case News Articles \(July-Sept 2009\) Reply #60](#) posted Oct 23, 2009 at 6:05am
 Post by acandyrose on Oct 23, 2009 at 6:05am
www.americanchronicle.com/articles/yb/132987327

4 Okaloosa Men Arrested in Murders
 July 15, 2009
 By Robbyn Brooks, Northwest Florida Daily News, Fort Walton Beach

[acandyrose](#)

Administrator "Those arrests came after Monday's capture of Gary Lamont Sumner Jr., 30. Sumner initially was stopped in Okaloosa County on a traffic violation and arrested for driving with a suspended license. He will be returned to Escambia County to face murder charges."

The Big Cheese

(SNIP)



Posts: 150 ♀

"Hurlburt Field public affairs confirmed Tuesday that Stallworth is a staff sergeant with the 1st Special Operations AC Maintenance Squadron. He joined the Air Force in February 2000 and arrived at Hurlburt in June of the same year. Stallworth was a support section supervisor. He and his family come in second place in a base-sponsored Christmas lights decorating contest in 2007, according to information on Eglin Air Force Base's Web site.

"The Air Force will cooperate with the Escambia County Sheriff's Office," said Lt. Mark Lazane with Hurlburt. "The Air Force will support them with whatever information they require from us."

(SNIP)

[acandyrose](#)
 Administrator [Billings Case News Articles \(July-Sept 2009\) Reply #61](#) posted Oct 23, 2009 at 6:12am
 Post by acandyrose on Oct 23, 2009 at 6:12am
www.christianpost.com/article/20090715/family-of-slain-fla-couple-requests-for-prayers/index.html

The Big Cheese

Family of Slain Fla. Couple Requests for Prayers

By Eric Young
 Christian Post Reporter
 Wed, Jul. 15 2009 06:38 PM EDT



Posts: 150 ♀

"The family of a Florida couple known for adopting special needs children is asking for prayers following a deadly break-in last week.

"Our family cannot begin to find the words to express the pain and disbelief that we are in," said Ashley Markham, the 26-year-old daughter of the slain couple, during a news conference Monday.

morning.

"We're coping as a family and request that everyone continue to pray for our strength and also keep our privacy in mind while we grieve," she added."

(SNIP)

Billings Case News Articles (July-Sept 2009) Reply #62 posted Oct 23, 2009 at 6:13am
Post by acandyrose on Oct 23, 2009 at 6:13am
www.wkrg.com/crime/article/trust-fund-established-for-billings-children/186678/Jul-15-2009-5-52-pm/

acandyrose
Administrator



The Big
Cheese

Trust Fund Established For Billings' Children
By Jamie Burch
Published: Wed, July 15, 2009 - 5:52 pm CST



Posts: 150 ♀

A trust fund for Byrd and Melanie Billings' children has been set up at Compass Bank.

The couple, known for adopting special needs children were killed Thursday during a robbery/home invasion in Beulah, Florida. Nine of the children were at the home when the Billingses were shot.

Donations to the "Billings Family Trust For Children" can be made at any Compass Bank.

Billings Case News Articles (July-Sept 2009) Reply #63 posted Oct 23, 2009 at 6:15am
Post by acandyrose on Oct 23, 2009 at 6:15am
www.fox10tv.com/dpp/news/crime/Murder_Suspect_Still_Held_In_Alabama

Murder suspect still held in Alabama
Donnie Stallworth will be extradicted to Fla.
Updated: Wednesday, 15 Jul 2009, 6:38 PM CDT
Published : Wednesday, 15 Jul 2009, 6:38 PM CDT
Hubert Tate
Liz Nelson

acandyrose
Administrator



The Big
Cheese

"Donnie Stallworth remains at the Escambia County, Alabama Jail, his bond set at \$1,000,000. Authorities say Stallworth is a murder suspect in the deaths of Byrd and Melanie Billings.

Mannie Bradley remembers Stallworth well. He would see Stallworth when he was a child visiting his grandparents, whom have now passed away.



Posts: 150 ♀

When news broke that Stallworth was a suspect, Bradley could barely keep his composure.

"Ah, man. I was knocked off my feet to hear that about him because he always was a good guy," said Bradley."

(SNIP)

'Stallworth went to T.R. Miller High School. After that, he became an Air Force sergeant and was stationed at hurlburt field.

Tony Williams went to high school with Stallworth.

"It ain't no telling what's on somebody's mind anytime they do something. But I hate it had to happen like that," said Williams."

Billings Case News Articles (July-Sept 2009) Reply #64 posted Oct 23, 2009 at 6:17am
Post by acandyrose on Oct 23, 2009 at 6:17am

acandyrose
Administrator

www.pnj.com/article/20090715/NEWS01/90715013

☆☆☆☆☆
The Big
Cheese

Long found on yacht
Brian Kelly • bkelly@pnj.com • July 15, 2009



"Long and an unidentified man were found shortly after 2 p.m. today aboard the "Classy Lady" boat. They were seen in handcuffs as they were being led off the boat.

Posts: 150 ♀

Several plainclothes Escambia County officer, assisted by Orange Beach, Ala., police, led Long and the man from "Classy Lady," a 45-foot boat moored at dock "L" at The Marina at The Wharf in Orange Beach."

[Click here to remove banner ads from this forum.](#)

See all of our features at www.forums.net

a new service by ProBoards
Professional, white label, hosted forums

CLICK HERE TO SIGN UP

This Forum Hosted For FREE By [ProBoards](#)

Get Your Own [Free Message Boards & Free Forums!](#)

[Terms of Service](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Notice](#) | [FTC Disclosure](#) | [Report Abuse](#) | [Mobile](#) | [Advertise Here](#)



EXHIBIT F

(Media Reports October - December, 2009)

ACR TIMELINES

- [Home](#)
- [Help](#)
- [Search](#)
- [Calendar](#)
- [Members](#)
- [Profile](#)
- [Messages](#)
- Welcome ericpink. [Logout](#)
- new Participated
- ACR TIMELINES**
- NEWS ARTICLES**
- Billings Case News Articles (Oct-Dec 2009)



Billings Case News Articles (Oct-Dec 2009)
 Billings Case News Articles (Oct-Dec 2009) Thread started Oct 21, 2009 at 11:21pm
 Post by acandyrose on Oct 21, 2009 at 11:21pm
www.srpressgazette.com/news/walk-8432-4th-annual.html

4th annual Buddy Walk to raise awareness
 October 02, 2009 1:45 PM
 MATHEW PELLEGRINO

acandyrose
 Administrator
 ★★★★★
 The Big
 Cheese

"Grab a buddy, and head down to the Rosa Sunshine Buddy Walk at the PJC outdoor track off of Highway 90 in Milton. The event, which kicks off a week from today, is the walks' fourth year in the Santa Rosa Community. The walk, which begins at 9:30 a.m. helps educate people about Down Syndrome and other developmental diseases.



"We want to promote awareness and advice of children with Down Syndrome," said President of Northwest Florida's Down Syndrome Association, Angie Dunn."

Posts: 150 ♀

(SKIP)

"This year's walk will be in memory of Byrd and Melanie Billings, who were one of Dunn's closest friends.

"They were wonderful people that gave back to the community, and showed me that children with disabilities are still just children," said Dunn."

Last Edit: Sep 3, 2010 at 8:20pm by scooter
 Billings Case News Articles (Oct-Dec 2009) Reply #1 posted Oct 21, 2009 at 11:24pm
 acandyrose Administrator Post by acandyrose on Oct 21, 2009 at 11:24pm
 ★★★★★ www.northescambia.com/?p=11311

The Big
 Cheese

Taking It To The Streets: Sheriff David Morgan Walks Walnut Hill Neighborhood



October 3, 2009

Posts: 150 ♀



"For Escambia County Sheriff David Morgan, days at the office are getting back to normal. After the Byrd and Melanie Billings murders cast him into the national spotlight, he was spending a lot of time doing interviews with the big boys in the news business — CNN, FOX, ABC and all those other three letter networks and celebrities like Larry King, Aaron Cooper and even Oprah.

But Friday afternoon, Morgan was back where he likes to be... on the streets of Escambia County. After taking part in Northview High School's Homecoming Parade, the sheriff, Lt. Roger Grice and Escambia County District 5 Commissioner Kevin White walked Juniper Street in Walnut Hill. It was a chance for Morgan to meet some of the residents on a street that is often plagued by crime. Just last week, an Escambia County teacher's aide was busted on Juniper Street after the sheriff's department executed a search warrant and recovered a large amount of cocaine."

acandyrose
Administrator
★★★★★
The Big
Cheese

Billings Case News Articles (Oct-Dec 2009) Reply #2 posted Oct 21, 2009 at 11:26pm
Post by acandyrose on Oct 21, 2009 at 11:26pm
www.oprah.com/dated/oprahshow/oprahshow-20090924-florida-massacre

Oprah Exclusive: Inside the Home of the Florida Massacre



"It was one of the most heartbreaking stories in the news last summer. Now, our cameras go inside the home where the gruesome murders took place. (PG)

Tune in on 10/07 to watch this show"

Posts: 150 ♡

acandyrose
Administrator
★★★★★
The Big
Cheese

Billings Case News Articles (Oct-Dec 2009) Reply #3 posted Oct 21, 2009 at 11:28pm
Post by acandyrose on Oct 21, 2009 at 11:28pm
www.northescambia.com/?p=11357

Oprah Winfrey Show On Billings Murder, Family To Air Wednesday With Daughter, Sheriff
October 6, 2009



Posts: 150 ♡





Pictured above: Escambia County Sheriff David Morgan waits to film a segment on the Oprah Winfrey show via an Internet teleconference from his office September 24. Submitted photo for NorthEscambia.com

[Billings Case News Articles \(Oct-Dec 2009\) Reply #4](#) posted Oct 21, 2009 at 11:30pm
Post by acandyrose on Oct 21, 2009 at 11:30pm
www.wear.tv.com/newsroom/top_stories/videos/wear_vid_4328.shtml

acandyrose
Administrator

The Big
Cheese

10/06/09
"ESCMABIA COUNTY - An Escambia County judge ruled today that all witnesses in the Billings' murder case will only have to give one deposition.



The request to consolidate the deposition process came from State Attorney Bill Eddins. He argued that it wouldn't be fair to ask each witness to give eight different depositions to eight different defense attorneys. Those attorneys gave little objection and will now start working with the state attorney's office to coordinate a schedule."

Posts: 150

Last Edit: Oct 21, 2009 at 11:35pm by acandyrose
[Billings Case News Articles \(Oct-Dec 2009\) Reply #5](#) posted Oct 21, 2009 at 11:42pm
Post by acandyrose on Oct 21, 2009 at 11:42pm
www.nydailynews.com/news/national/2009/10/07/2009-10-07_ashley_markham_daughter_of_slain_florida_couple_appears_on_oprah_is_raising_parent.html

acandyrose
Administrator

The Big
Cheese

Ashley Markham, daughter of slain Florida couple, on Oprah, is raising parents' adopted kids
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS
Wednesday, October 7th 2009, 2:19 PM



Posts: 150
"Markham, who appeared with her husband on the show, said her parents, Byrd and Melanie Billings, traveled a lot, and that her mother asked that the children be kept together, not placed in group homes or foster care.

"I told her, 'You don't ever have to worry about that.'" Markham, who has declined numerous interview requests from the national media, allowed the show's cameras into the home west of Pensacola, Fla., where her parents were killed and where she and her husband, James "Blue" Markham, now raise the children.

She said after sleeping on the couch when they first arrived, she and her husband now sleep in the bedroom where her parents were shot during what authorities say was a home-invasion robbery."

"I heard shooting guns and all of that downstairs, but I thought it was my dad yelling at the dog for eating a shoe or something,"
Adrianna said.

A boy who was not identified in the clip said of his parents' death: "They died by some mean guys shot them."

"She and her husband also said they are getting by financially and that they hope to sell the house they were living in before they moved into their parents' home.

But they said while they have received about \$1,100 in donations, that money is only a fraction of what it costs to raise nine children.

"The power bill was \$1,285," her husband said."

Billings Case News Articles (Oct-Dec 2009) Reply #6 posted Oct 21, 2009 at 11:44pm
Post by **acandyrose** on Oct 21, 2009 at 11:44pm

acandyrose
Administrator

The Big Cheese



www.fox10tv.com/dpp/news/local_news/pensacola/escambia_co_sheriff_to_appear_on_oprah
Escambia Co. sheriff to appear on Oprah
Updated: Wednesday, 07 Oct 2009, 11:38 AM CDT
Published: Tuesday, 06 Oct 2009, 10:16 PM CDT

"The Escambia County sheriff talked to Oprah Winfrey via Skype from his office in Florida. He talked with FOX10 News about the case, which is still ongoing.

Posts: 150

"It's still an open case. We're still pursuing actually four persons of interest," said Sheriff Morgan."

Billings Case News Articles (Oct-Dec 2009) Reply #7 posted Oct 21, 2009 at 11:48pm
Post by **acandyrose** on Oct 21, 2009 at 11:48pm

acandyrose
Administrator

The Big Cheese



news.google.com/news?um=1&ned=us&hl=en&q=%22Byrd+and+Melanie+Billings%22&cf=all&scoring=n
An Albany woman remains jailed in Florida couple's murder

Posted: Oct 07, 2009 4:54 PM EDT
Updated: Oct 07, 2009 4:54 PM EDT
By Jennifer Emert

"ALBANY, GA (WALB) - An Albany native remains in jail in Florida for a case involving the murder of a Florida couple." (SNIP)

Posts: 150

"Wiggins was jailed a second time after a grand jury increased the charges against her from a third degree evidence tampering to a first degree felony. Wiggins admitted having a close relationship with the suspected ringleader, Patrick Gonzalez, and his father. Gonzalez used her van the day of the murders.

Wiggins told investigators she allowed him to come and go from her home but said she had a hard time remembering the day of the murders. A safe stolen from the Billings home was found in Wiggins backyard. Her next court date is a bond hearing scheduled for November third."

Billings Case News Articles (Oct-Dec 2009) Reply #8 posted Oct 21, 2009 at 11:50pm
Post by **acandyrose** on Oct 21, 2009 at 11:50pm

acandyrose
Administrator

The Big Cheese



www.weariv.com/newsroom/top_stories/videos/wear_vid_4385.shtml
Judge To Appoint Leonard Patrick Gonzalez Jr A New Attorney
10/08/09

ESCAMBIA COUNTY - "The alleged mastermind of the murders of Byrd and Melanie Billings will soon be appointed a new lawyer.

Posts: 150

Today, a judge allowed two attorneys to remove themselves from representing Leonard Patrick Gonzalez Jr. Rick Hill and Elton Killern cited a conflict involving one of the witnesses in the case."

Billings Case News Articles (Oct-Dec 2009) Reply #9 posted Oct 21, 2009 at 11:55pm
Post by **acandyrose** on Oct 21, 2009 at 11:55pm
OPrah Video

acandyrose
Administrator

The Big Cheese



www.oprah.com/media/20090924-tows-ashleys-life-florida

Posts: 150



www.WatchOPRAHshow.info



www.WatchOPRAHshow.info



www.WatchOPRAHshow.info

acandyrose Billings Case News Articles (Oct-Dec 2009) Reply #10 posted Oct 21, 2009 at 11:56pm
Administrator Post by acandyrose on Oct 21, 2009 at 11:56pm

The Big lawprofessors.typepad.com/trusts_estates_prof/2009/10/slain-couple-leaves-behind-twelve-special-needs-children-no-valid-will.html

October 12, 2009
Slain Couple Leaves Behind Twelve Special Needs Children & No Valid Will

Cheese

"The murders of Byrd and Melanie Billings, a wealthy Florida couple, has left everyone wondering who will take care of their 12 adopted, special needs children. Byrd did not execute a will, and a Florida court recently determined that Melanie's will is invalid because it was not signed in front of two witnesses.



For more information, see Hubert Tate, *Melanie Billings' will "not valid"*, FoxTen, Aug. 31, 2009.
www.fox10tv.com/dpp/news/crime/Melanie_Billings_Will_Not_Valid

Posts: 150

Special thanks to Mike Kent (Stetson University College of Law) for bringing this case to my attention.
October 12, 2009 in Current Events, Estate Administration, Wills | Permalink

[Billings Case News Articles \(Oct-Dec 2009\) Reply #11](#) posted Oct 21, 2009 at 11:58pm
Post by [acandyrose](#) on Oct 21, 2009 at 11:58pm
cbs4.com/wireapnewsfl/State.seeks.death.2.1243308.html

[acandyrose](#)
Administrator
☆☆☆☆
The Big
Cheese

Oct 12, 2009 4:11 pm US/Eastern
State Seeks Death For 4 In Couple's Killings

PENSACOLA, Fla. (AP) "Prosecutors will seek the death penalty for four men charged in the July home-invasion killings of a Panhandle couple known for adopting numerous children with special needs.



State Attorney Bill Eddins announced Monday he will seek the death penalty against alleged ring leader Leonard Patrick Gonzalez Jr., 35, Air Force Staff Sgt. Donnie Ray Stallworth, 28, Wayne Thomas Coldiron, 41, and Frederick Lee Thornton Jr., 19.

Posts: 150

Another man and a 16-year-old boy have pleaded not guilty to first-degree murder. A woman has pleaded not guilty to accessory to first-degree murder."

[Billings Case News Articles \(Oct-Dec 2009\) Reply #12](#) posted Oct 21, 2009 at 11:59pm
Post by [acandyrose](#) on Oct 21, 2009 at 11:59pm
www.fox10tv.com/dpp/news/crime/death_penalty_sought_for_four_suspects

Billings murder: Death penalty sought
Updated: Monday, 12 Oct 2009, 3:27 PM CDT
Published: Monday, 12 Oct 2009, 3:16 PM CDT
Liz Nelson

[acandyrose](#)
Administrator
☆☆☆☆
The Big
Cheese

PENSACOLA, Fla. - "Florida State Attorney Bill Eddins says the State plans to seek the death penalty against Leonard Gonzalez, Jr., Wayne Coldiron, Donnie Stallworth, and Frederick Thornton, Jr. in connection the murders of Byrd and Melanie Billings.

Authorities believe the four men were the ones who went into the house."



Click here to read the notices of intent.
media2.fox10tv.com/news_documents/BILLINGS.pdf

Posts: 150

"Another person of interest, Henry "Cab" Tice, has been questioned in connection to the case. Tice was a former business partner of Byrd Billings, and allegedly stole thousands from him.

Sheriff David Morgan said Tice was into the Mexican Mafia, and allegedly owed tens of thousands of dollars to them. The sheriff went on to say they don't believe Billings had any ties to the Mexican Mafia. Tice is charged with theft.

Pamela Long Wiggins has been charged with being an accessory after the fact, first degree. She's in the Escambia County Jail, under \$500,000 bond. Her husband, Hugh Wiggins, is also a person of interest in the case."

[acandyrose](#)
Administrator
☆☆☆☆
The Big
Cheese

Last Edit: Oct 22, 2009 at 12:01am by [acandyrose](#)
[Billings Case News Articles \(Oct-Dec 2009\) Reply #13](#) posted Oct 22, 2009 at 12:04am
Post by [acandyrose](#) on Oct 22, 2009 at 12:04am
www.ksl.com/?nid=157&sid=8282705



Fla. to seek death for 4 accused of killing couple
October 12th, 2009 @ 4:12pm

By MELISSA NELSON
Associated Press Writer

Posts: 150

(SNIP)

"Cheryl Alverson, an attorney for Thornton, said she heard the news late Monday and hadn't had a chance to talk with her client. "We are not happy about it," she said. "Anytime there is an issue like this, you have to prepare for the worst."

Alverson, who was appointed by the state, said she would likely withdraw from the case because she was not qualified to defend a death penalty case.

Gonzalez Jr. is without an attorney because of a previous conflict of interest issue and because his former attorney was not qualified to handle death penalty cases, the public defender's office said.

David White represents Stallworth, an Air Force staff sergeant from nearby Hurlburt Field. White learned prosecutors would seek the death penalty after being contacted by The Associated Press.

"In any murder case, we cautiously and prudently prepare as if it will be a death penalty case unless the state attorney notifies us otherwise," said White, who added that he didn't want to say anything else until he spoke with his client.

An attorney for Coldiron did not immediately return phone messages.

(SNIP)

Billings Case News Articles (Oct-Dec 2009) Reply #14 posted Oct 22, 2009 at 12:07am
 Post by acandyrose on Oct 22, 2009 at 12:07am
www.brewtonstandard.com/articles/2009/10/14/news/doc4ad5d080aa121363985023.txt

acandyrose
 Administrator
 ☆☆☆☆
 The Big
 Cheese



Posts: 150 ♀

Stallworth to face death penalty
 from staff reports

Published: Wednesday, October 14, 2009 8:43 AM CDT

"Brewton native Donnie Ray Stallworth, one of seven people charged with murder in the deaths of a Pensacola-area couple, will face the death penalty, a state attorney announced Monday in Florida."

(SNIP)

"Stallworth, a 1999 graduate of T.R. Miller High School, has pleaded not guilty to murder in the July 9 shooting deaths of Byrd and Melanie Billings, a Beulah, Fla., couple known for adopting special needs children."

(SNIP)

"At a probable cause hearing held when Stallworth fought extradition to Florida, an Escambia County, Fla., sheriff's deputy said Stallworth carried a gun into the Billings home and also carried a small safe out of the house."

acandyrose
 Administrator
 ☆☆☆☆
 The Big
 Cheese



Posts: 150 ♀

Billings Case News Articles (Oct-Dec 2009) Reply #15 posted Oct 22, 2009 at 12:09am
 Post by acandyrose on Oct 22, 2009 at 12:09am
www.nbc-2.com/Global/story.asp?S=11347790

Alleged leader in couple deaths calm in interview
 Associated Press - October 20, 2009 4:14 PM ET

"The 70-minute interview with Leonard Gonzalez Jr. was recorded July 11 and released to the media by the State Attorney's office on Tuesday as part of public information request."

"During the interview, Gonzalez told investigators that Billings had business ties to the Mexican Mafia and that he believed the couple were victims of gang-related hit."

acandyrose
 Administrator
 ☆☆☆☆
 The Big
 Cheese



Posts: 150 ♀

Billings Case News Articles (Oct-Dec 2009) Reply #16 posted Oct 22, 2009 at 12:14am
 Post by acandyrose on Oct 22, 2009 at 12:14am
www.miamiherald.com/news/florida/AP/story/1291741.html

Alleged ringleader in killings calm in interview
 By MELISSA NELSON
 Associated Press Writer
 Posted on Tuesday, 10.20.09

"Leonard Patrick Gonzalez Jr., 35, had not been arrested and was speaking without an attorney during the 70-minute July 11 interview. He was arrested less than 24-hours later.

He told detectives he learned about Byrd and Melanie Billings' deaths from television news.

"I hope you all get this solved because the guy had like 15 kids," he said.

"The woman, that's the thing that really gets me."

The 70-minute interview was among 26 CDs and DVDs of suspect interviews, evidence lists, photographs and other information released by prosecutors as part of a public information request in the July 9 home-invasion."

(SNIP)

"Throughout much of his interview, the younger Gonzalez leans back in his chair while chatting and joking with the investigators.

"I'm wondering why nobody got shot, you know what I mean, because Byrd used to carry a gun," he tells investigators.

When the investigators ask how Gonzalez knew that Billings carried a gun, Gonzalez, a karate instructor, says he talked with Billings, a used car dealer, about self defense. Billings once donated \$5,000 to help him and his wife teach self defense to women and children, Gonzalez says.

"He was very security conscious. This guy was well prepared. I'm surprised this went down like that without a shootout or something," he says."

Patrick Gonzalez's Father:

"In his interview with detectives, the older Gonzalez said he never believed the Billingses were going to be killed.

"I was under the impression that the guns were going in there, that there were going to be four or five shots fired -bam, bam, bam, now open the safe, the big safe, give us your money and give us your jewelry," he said.

"I had no idea there was going to be a homicide or a murder. Had I had that idea, I never would have gone," he said."

Billings Case News Articles (Oct-Dec 2009) Reply #17 posted Oct 22, 2009 at 12:20am
Post by acandyrose on Oct 22, 2009 at 12:20am
www.pnj.com/article/20091020/NEWS01/91020016/1006

Suspect details deadly home invasion
Kris Wernowsky • kwernowsky@pnj.com • October 20, 2009

acandyrose
Administrator
★★★★★
The Big Cheese

(SNIP)

"Thornton then opened up.

He described the rehearsal of the robbery inside Gonzalez Sr.'s trailer in the 300 block of Palm Court.

He described the surveillance photographs Gonzalez Jr. took of the Billingses' home.

He described entering the left-most door to the sprawling home and what happened inside.

Thornton said he saw Gonzalez Jr. fire a gunshot into the floor near a startled Byrd Billings.

The shot startled Thornton, too. He'd never heard a gun fired before. "

(SNIP)



Posts: 150 ♀

acandyrose
Administrator
★★★★★
The Big Cheese

Billings Case News Articles (Oct-Dec 2009) Reply #18 posted Oct 22, 2009 at 12:24am
Post by acandyrose on Oct 22, 2009 at 12:24am
www.wear.tv/newsroom/top_stories/videos/wear_vid_4613.shtml



Posts: 150 ♀



New Discovery In Billings' Murder Case
10/20/09

VIDEO AT LINK

(SNIP)

"Even before investigators told him he was a suspect, Patrick Gonzalez Junior hinted that there was much more to the killings that he believed the Mexican Mafia was connected.

Investigator: "We appreciate you coming in." Leonard Patrick Gonzalez Jr./Suspected Triggerman: "What ever I can do you know, believe me when I saw the pictures on the TV I was like Damn I know that guy."

(SNIP)

Gonzalez said he had heard that Bud Billings was in business with organized crime.

Investigator: "What kind of dealings?" Leonard Patrick Gonzalez Jr./Suspected Triggerman: "Just that he cleans money for them."

Investigator: "You think it's rumor, tell us the rumor and let us be the judge of that. That's all I'm asking."

Leonard Patrick Gonzalez Jr./Suspected Triggerman: "Okay, it was rumored that he has business acquaintances with certain Mexican business people. Is that enough?"

Investigators: "What kind?"

Leonard Patrick Gonzalez Jr./Suspected Triggerman: "La Eme"

Investigator: "Who?"

Leonard Patrick Gonzalez Jr./Suspected Triggerman: "La Eme?"

Investigator: "What is that?"

Leonard Patrick Gonzalez Jr./Suspected Triggerman: "Mexican Mafia."

(SNIP)

"At that point investigators left Gonzalez alone for 10 minutes.

When they returned, he was under the impression the video recording had stopped and shared more information about the Mexican Mafia.

Leonard Patrick Gonzalez Jr./Suspected Triggerman: "They make their biggest money on the drugs for the Mexican Mafia, in the South. These guys are moving down here from all over to plant their seeds because everything like in LA and Washington is so hot right now. And I know that the word on the street is that they were all in bed together."

Last Edit: Oct 22, 2009 at 1:26am by acandyrose
Billings Case News Articles (Oct-Dec 2009) Reply #19 posted Oct 22, 2009 at 12:27am
Post by acandyrose on Oct 22, 2009 at 12:27am
www.local15tv.com/news/local/story/Prosecutors-Release-More-Evidence-in-Billings/fRVHXv8e8E-lYI9pYBUrJg.csp#x

Prosecutors Release More Evidence in Billings Murders

Reported by: Mike Rush
Email: mrush@local15tv.com
Last Update: 7:01 pm

[acandyrose](#)
Administrator
★★★★★
The Big
Cheese

(SNIP)

"But Gonzalez's father told detectives a different story when he was interviewed before his arrest. "Everybody jumps in, doors are kicked open, freeze on the ground and that's all I thought it was was restraining people," stated Gonzalez, Sr.

Leonard Gonzalez, Senior describes in the interview how his son and others ran in the house with guns while he sat in the red van ready to drive away when it was over. At one point State Attorney Bill Eddins asks Gonzalez, Sr., "What did you think when you heard that pow, pow, pow, pow, pow?"

Gonzales, Sr. responded, "I'd like to sh*t on myself. I thought 'Oh, Dear God No.'"

"The discs also have interviews with other suspects. They also contain details on physical evidence like footprints and DNA found at the Billings' home."

[Click here to remove banner ads from this forum.](#)



Posts: 1508

This Forum Hosted by Proboards.com
Get Your Own Free Message Boards & Free Forums!
[Terms of Service](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Notice](#) | [FTC Disclosure](#) | [Report Abuse](#) | [Mobile](#) | [Advertise Here](#)

CLICK HERE TO BROWSE ►



ACR TIMELINES

[Home](#)

[Help](#)

[Search](#)

[Calendar](#)

[Members](#)

[Profile](#)

[Messages](#)

Welcome ericpink. [Logout](#)

[new Participated](#)

ACR TIMELINES

NEWS ARTICLES

[Billings Case News Articles \(Oct-Dec 2009\)](#)

DID YOU KNOW YOU CAN COLLECT BADGES FOR YOUR FORUM PROFILE?
YOU CAN

[CLICK HERE TO BROWSE >](#)



Billings Case News Articles (Oct-Dec 2009)

[acandyrose](#)

[Billings Case News Articles \(Oct-Dec 2009\) Reply #20](#) posted Oct 22, 2009 at 12:33am

Administrator

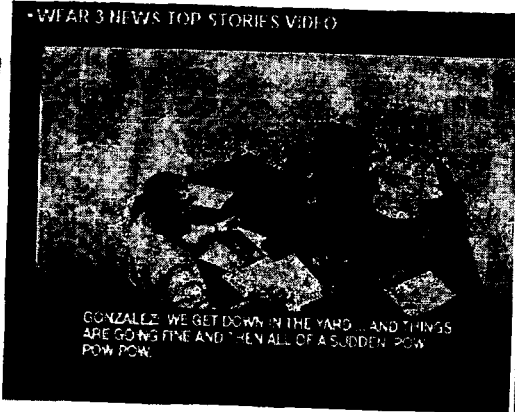
Post by acandyrose on Oct 22, 2009 at 12:33am

www.wearv.com/newsroom/top_stories/videos/wear_vid_4618.shtml

The Big Cheese



Posts: 1509



Gonzalez Senior Says He Didn't Know About Billings Murder Plot

10/21/09

ESCAMBIA COUNTY - The evidence keeps coming.

(SNIP)

"Leonard Patrick Gonzalez, Jr./Suspected Trigger Man: "If I was going to do something, or anybody I know would do something, I would not let them do it in my van."

(SNIP)



"In his interrogation, Gonzalez Sr. admits to riding in the van as it pulled up to the Billings home.

- Buddy NeSmith/Investigator: "Okay, you pull in the driveway and what happens?"
- Gonzalez, Sr./Suspect in Billings Murder: "Everybody jumps in, doors kick open and 'FREEZE, GET ON THE GROUND.'"
- NeSmith: "Okay, alright."
- Gonzalez, Sr.: "We get down in the yard, and things are going fine and then all of a sudden, pow pow pow."
- NeSmith: "What did you think when you heard the Pow Pow Pow?"
- Gonzalez, Sr.: "I like to s**t on myself. I thought 'dear God, NO.' I'm hoping they're just shooting at the ceiling or something like that."

Gonzalez, Sr. said his son Patrick and Wayne Coldiron carried handguns into the home.

He even described passing police cars as he drove away from the murder scene.

Gonzalez, Sr.: "We got down around Mobile Highway where that Alabama Produce Mart used to be, and the county mounty comes flinging around the corner 'bloop bloooooop.' I said 'Oh s**t, we know where they going."

Gonzalez, Sr. went on to say his son Patrick was in charge of divvying up the goods.

- Gonzalez, Sr.: "When everything gets taken care of, then we'll split it up."
- Bill Eddins/State Attorney: "Who said that?"
- Gonzalez, Sr.: "Patrick did."

(SNIP)

"Another person of interest in the case, Cab Tice, told us he owed money to the Mexican mafia as well as Byrd Billings.

But among the evidence the state attorney released Tuesday is an interview with a Sylvano Gonzalez, who loaned Cab Tice the money.

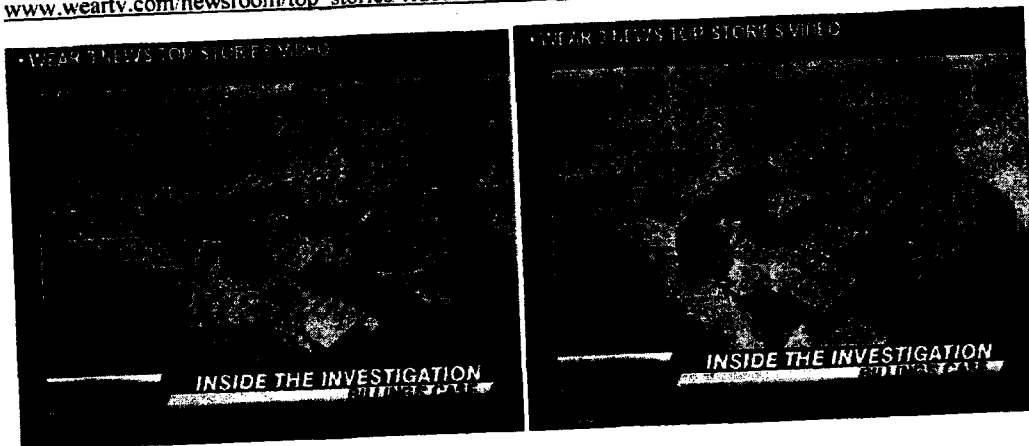
Sylvano says he made up his connection to the Mexican mafia to scare Tice into paying back the money."

Last Edit: Oct 22, 2009 at 1:24am by [acandyrose](#)
 Billings Case News Articles (Oct-Dec 2009) Reply #21 posted Oct 22, 2009 at 12:41am
 Post by [acandyrose](#) on Oct 22, 2009 at 12:41am
www.wear4.com/newsroom/top_stories/videos/wear_vid_4639.shtml

[acandyrose](#)
 Administrator
 ☆☆☆☆
 The Big
 Cheese



Posts: 1509



Inside Hugh Wiggins's Interrogation
10/22/09

ESCAMBIA COUNTY - "He says he knew about the murders of Bud and Melanie Billings months before they happened."

(SNIP)

"Hugh Wiggins says he knew as early as March that there was a contract on Bud Billings's life.

As it turned out, the gun used to murder Bud and Melanie was owned by Hugh Wiggins."

(SNIP)

- Tyree: "And who is it that he said gave him the contract?"
- Wiggins: "He told me that Cab Tice put the contract out for \$20 grand."
- Tyree: "So you were told he was going to be paid 20 grand to take out the Billings? I'm assuming?"
- Wiggins: "Him."
- Tyree: "Him? Mr. Billings?"
- Wiggins: "Mr. Billings."
- Wiggins: "The people that are involved in this are not nice people by any stretch of the imagination. If what I think is true, then these people are very very bad people."
- Tyree: "Well go ahead, then..."
- Wiggins: "Mexican Mafia."

(SNIP)

"Wiggins says Patrick Gonzalez expected over a million dollars to be in the Billings home because they believed Bud Billings was laundering money for the Mexican Mafia.

But Wiggins says he told Gonzalez to forget it and concentrate on his karate business. but Wiggins says Gonzalez wouldn't let it go.

Wiggins: "He kept hammering on me about the money and you know he said all will be good man everything will be good. I said fine, I'll do it."

But the night of the murders, Wiggins was out of town and says he returned to find out his wife Pam Wiggins had been involved against his wishes.

In fact Wiggins did tell investigators he knew about a bank robbery he says was committed by Patrick Gonzalez."

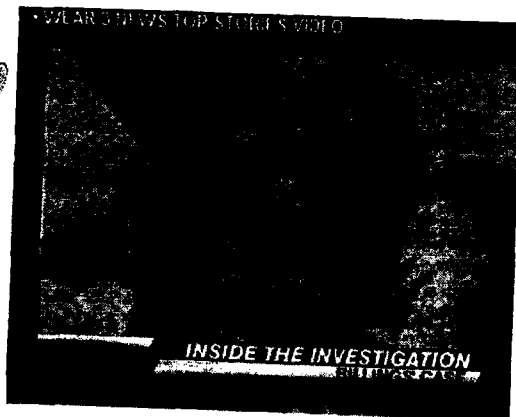
(SNIP)

acandyrose
 Administrator
 ★★★★★
 The Big
 Cheese



Posts: 1509

Last Edit: Oct 22, 2009 at 1:20am by acandyrose
 Billings Case News Articles (Oct-Dec 2009) Reply #22 posted Oct 22, 2009 at 1:07am
 Post by acandyrose on Oct 22, 2009 at 1:07am
www.weartv.com/newsroom/top_stories/videos/wear_vid_4646.shtml



Wiggins Interrogation Reveals More About Gonzalez's Past
10/22/09

ESCAMBIA COUNTY -

(SNIP)

He spoke for hours about his role in helping plan the robbery of Bud and Melanie Billings, even admitting he knew Bud Billings was going to be killed.

(SNIP)

- Hugh Wiggins/Person of Interest: "It's not like doing an armored car or a bank where you know they got money. You know a bank's got money. You know an armored car's got money. You may get \$50,000 in quarters but at least you got money."
- Bobby Guy/Investigator: "Have you done that before?"
- Wiggins: "Me?!?"
- Lee Tyree/Investigator: "Know of anything about a bank robbery?"
- Wiggins: "I haven't done a bank robbery or an armored car robbery I've never done anything like that."
- Tyree: "What about Pat?"
- Wiggins: "What about Pat?"
- Tyree: "You know about him doing a bank robbery in Gulf Breeze?"
- Wiggins: "Yep. I uh, uh."
- Tyree: "You said Yep."
- Wiggins: "Yep, he told me he did one."

That one, claims Hugh Wiggins, is the Pen Air Federal Credit Union in Gulf Breeze, in November of last year.

He says Patrick Gonzalez, Junior parked at this Whataburger and walked into the bank, without even using a gun.

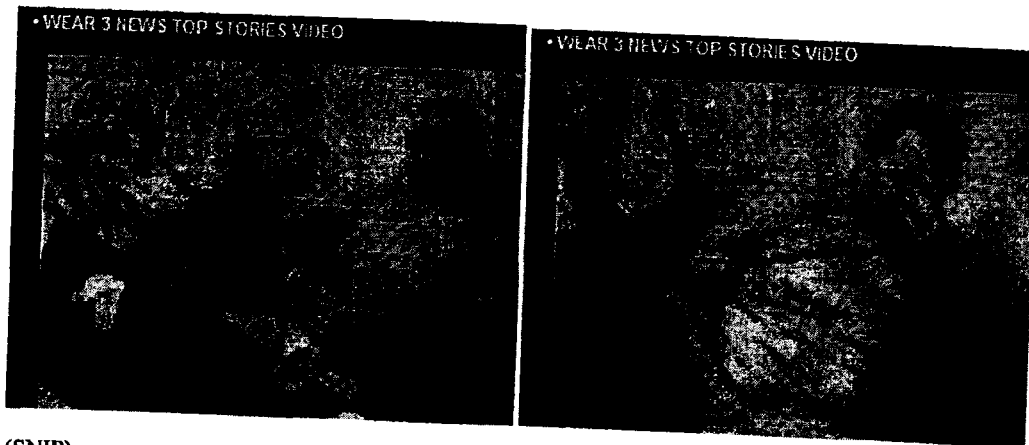
This is video from the robbery. A man crouched down wearing black clothing goes from teller to teller grabbing cash. He's in and out in about 30 seconds.



At the time, Gulf Breeze police were looking for a white male about 160 pounds.

(SNIP)

- Wiggins: "he told me he buried a body."
- Investigators: "He buried a body?"
- Wiggins: "And got a van out of the deal."
- Tyree: "What other spectacular crimes did this guy perform? You say he's done murder, actually just removal of a body. He's done bank robbery. Then he did a double homicide. What else you got up there?"
- Wiggins: "They tried to take down a coke dealer."
- Tyree: "They tried to take down a coke dealer? How did that fail?"
- Wiggins: "They couldn't get in they had a security gate."



(SNIP)

Last Edit: Oct 22, 2009 at 1:46am by [acandyrose](#)

[Billings Case News Articles \(Oct-Dec 2009\) Reply #23](#) posted Oct 22, 2009 at 2:47am

Post by [acandyrose](#) on Oct 22, 2009 at 2:47am

Archived news article from November 2008 regarding the bank robberies in Gulf Breeze.

The Big Cheese

www.gulfbreezenews.com/news/2007/1108/front_page/001.html



SunTrust robbed
FROM STAFF REPORTS Gulf Breeze News news@gulfbreezenews.com
November 2008

Posts: 150

"Gulf Breeze Police and Santa Rosa and Escambia County Sheriffs Departments officials gather at SunTrust Bank after a man robbed the bank and fled on foot.

The SunTrust Bank in Gulf Breeze was robbed in broad daylight last week. On Nov. 1 just after 12:30 p.m., an unidentified man entered the SunTrust Bank, located at 11 Hoffman Drive, and demanded money from the teller. Witnesses described the man as a white male, approximately 5 foot 8 inches tall, weighing around 160 pounds, dressed in a black hooded sweatshirt, black pants, black gloves and a black mask. Eyewitnesses said after the robber made off with an undisclosed amount of cash in a plastic bag, the suspect left the bank on foot and headed toward a gold or silver car parked behind Gulf Breeze Elementary School. One eyewitness reported seeing the alleged robber change from his black attire into normal street clothes before leaving the scene in the car parked behind the elementary school. All three Gulf Breeze Schools were put on lockdown while police searched the area for the suspect. Eyewitnesses reported the vehicle was last seen heading westbound on Highway 98 before police arrived on scene.

The SunTrust Bank is the second financial institution to be robbed in Gulf Breeze in less than six months. The People's First Community Bank on Shoreline Drive was robbed July 27. Police reports said the suspect in that crime was described as a middle aged man close to 6 feet tall and weighing approximately 230 pounds."

m.pnj.com/news.jsp?key=142513&p=1

Gunman robs credit union
Thyrie Bland tbland@pnj.com
November 14, 2008 01:11 AM

"A masked gunman wearing all black robbed a Gulf Breeze credit union Thursday and escaped.

The heist marked the second time this year the Pen Air Federal Credit Union on Gulf Breeze Parkway has been robbed. An armed man robbed the credit union in May.

Gulf Breeze police officers were called to Thursday's holdup at 2:12 p.m.

Scott Muir, 23, of Pensacola was in the bank paying on his car loan when the robber burst through the bank's glass doors and demanded that everyone get on the floor.

Muir said the man was wearing a mask, hat and gloves."



(SNIP)

"The robber left the credit union and went through some nearby woods, Gulf Breeze Deputy Police Chief Robert Randle said.

After going through the woods, the robber got into a red Ford Explorer parked on private property, Randle said."

Billings Case News Articles (Oct-Dec 2009) Reply #24 posted Oct 22, 2009 at 2:53am
Post by acandyrose on Oct 22, 2009 at 2:53am
www.pnj.com/article/20091022/NEWS01/910220315

acandyrose
Administrator
☆☆☆☆☆

Mafia theory falls flat in Billings murder case
Kris Wernowsky • kwernowsky@pnj.com • October 22, 2009

The Big
Cheese

"Tice, who claimed "a father-son relationship" with Gonzalez Jr., told investigators he had business dealings with what he called the "Mexican mafia" through Silvano Gonzalez. Silvano Gonzalez and Leonard Patrick Gonzalez Jr. are not related.



Silvano Gonzalez gave Tice a \$20,000 loan and told him he'd gotten the money from the Mexican mafia. But Silvano Gonzalez told an investigator that he made up the mafia story, thinking that Tice would not pay back the loan otherwise.

Posts: 150 ♀

The money came from Silvano Gonzalez's personal bank account at a Regions Bank and he had the paperwork to prove it, according to an Aug. 19 statement he made to Investigator Bobby Guy."

Billings Case News Articles (Oct-Dec 2009) Reply #25 posted Oct 22, 2009 at 3:13am
Post by acandyrose on Oct 22, 2009 at 3:13am
www.escambiaclerk.com/xml/xml.asp?ucase_id=61281808

The Big
Cheese

Escambia County Florida Clerk of the Circuit Court
Case Number 2009 CF 005012 A Case Judge A / GEEKER, NICKOLAS P.
Case Type FELONY File Date 10/16/2009
Case Action Code Case Status OPEN



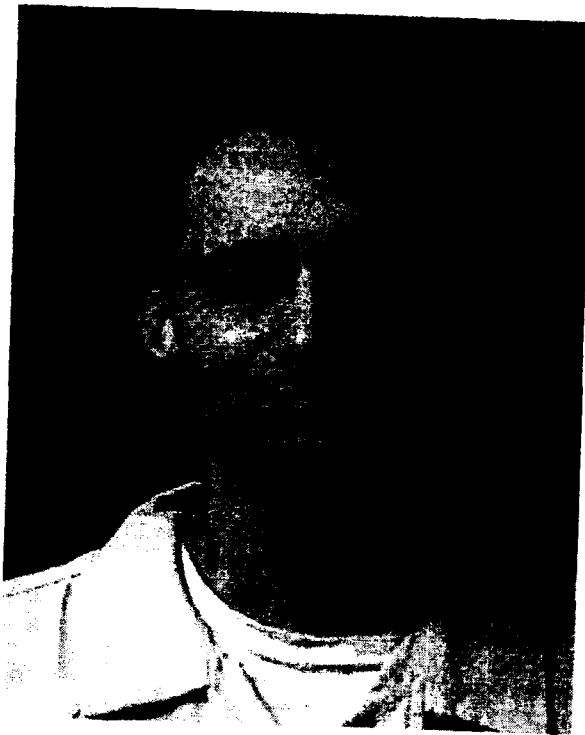
PARTIES
Rcd Party Type Name Race Gender D.O.B. / D.O.D.
1 Defendant GONZALEZ, LEONARD PATRICK XRef-ID: 5763534 W M 01/31/1974
Address: 1200 W LEONARD STREET ESCAMBIA COUNTY JAIL PENSACOLA FL 32501 (Home Address on 10/16/2009)

Posts: 150 ♀

Attorney: FLOWERS MICHAEL A
PARTY CHARGE SUMMARY

Rcd Chg/
Cnt Phase Charge Description Charge Disposition Disposition Date
1 1 Initial AGGRAV BATTERY-PERSON USES A DEADLY WEAPON
5 10/16/2009 COURT EVENT SET

Event: ARRAIGNMENTS
Date: 11/06/2009 Time: 9:00 am
9 10/16/2009 CONFLICT ATTY M. FLOWERS APPT PER ORDER FROM DIV A'
10 10/16/2009 BOND SET AT: \$25,000 C/P, NO CONTACT WITH VICTIM



GONZALEZ, LEONARD PATRICK (W / MALE)

Status: In Jail

Booking Date: 07/13/2009 12:47:15

Bond Amount: \$0.00

[Enlarge Photo](#)

Address Given: 1200 W LEONARD ST (ECSO JAIL) PENSACOLA FL

STATUTE	CASE NO	CHARGE	DEGREE	LEVEL	BOND
784.045.1A2	09WAR026176 (ESCAMBIA COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE)	AGGRAV BATTERY	S	F	\$25000.00
812.135.2a	09-3249 (ESCAMBIA COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE)	HOME-INVASION ROBBERY	F	F	\$0.00

Billings Case News Articles (Oct-Dec 2009) Reply #26 posted Oct 22, 2009 at 11:32pm
 Post by scooter on Oct 22, 2009 at 11:32pm
www.wear.tv.com/newsroom/top_stories/videos/wear_vid_4655.shtml

scooter
 Administrator
 ★★★★★
 Maintenance
 Chick

Billings Evidence



Snip



ESCAMBIA COUNTY - The State Attorney's office has released video testimony by a man who claims to have known beforehand that there was a contract on Bud Billings' life.

Posts: 550 ♀

Hugh Wiggins came forward after making a deal for immunity with the state attorney's office. He's admitted to owning the pistol used to kill Bud and Melanie Billings and located it for investigators.

Last Edit: Oct 22, 2009 at 11:34pm by scooter



Billings Case News Articles (Oct-Dec 2009) Reply #27 posted Oct 22, 2009 at 11:33pm
Post by scooter on Oct 22, 2009 at 11:33pm
www.wear.tv.com/newsroom/top_stories/videos/wear_vid_4665.shtml

scooter
Administrator

Maintenance
Chick

Billings' Murder: New Evidence Emerges Against Pamela Wiggins

Snip

ESCAMBIA COUNTY - We now know more about what evidence investigators had on Pamela Long Wiggins in the days following the murders of Bud and Melanie Billings.

Wiggins was arrested on her boat six days after the Billings were gunned down in their Beluah home.

Posts: 550 ♀

Meeting with her attorney and State Attorney Bill Eddins, Wiggins learned investigators believed she was sitting in her red mini-van down the street from the Billings' home that night.

They also believed she transported the safe taken from the home.

Billings Case News Articles (Oct-Dec 2009) Reply #28 posted Oct 22, 2009 at 11:35pm
Post by scooter on Oct 22, 2009 at 11:35pm
www.wear.tv.com/newsroom/top_stories/videos/wear_vid_4666.shtml

scooter
Administrator

Maintenance
Chick

Leonard Gonzalez Junior Accused of Attacking Inmate

Snip

ESCAMBIA COUNTY - The man accused of pulling the trigger in the murders of Bud and Melanie Billings is now accused of stabbing a fellow inmate in the Escambia County Jail.

Posts: 550 ♀

Billings Case News Articles (Oct-Dec 2009) Reply #29 posted Oct 23, 2009 at 12:58am
Post by scooter on Oct 23, 2009 at 12:58am
www.wear.tv.com/newsroom/top_stories/videos/wear_vid_4671.shtml

scooter
Administrator

Maintenance
Chick

Billings' Son Thought Parents' Murder Was a Contract Hit

ESCAMBIA COUNTY - The son of Bud and Melanie Billings believed his parents were the victims of a contract killing.

In the first 24 hours following the murders, investigators interviewed Justin Billings 3 times

snip

Finally, on the third interview he explained what he thought happened.

Posts: 550 ♀

- Justin Billings/Parents Were Murdered: "I've been trying to do this on my own, trying to figure out what's going on."
- Bobby Guy/Escambia Investigator: "That's what we're saying, it's not working out too well for you is it?"
- Billings: "All I got so far from my friend is that it is 3 men from Colorado."
- Guy: "Who told you that?"
- Billings: "One of my friends from Colorado. He has a rat that's part of a gang. He said there was a hit somewhere in Florida that fit the description I gave him."
- Investigator: "Why would a gang come after your Momma and Daddy?"
- Billings: "I don't know."
- Investigator: "How would a gang know where your Mom and Dad live?"
- Billings: "That's what I've..."
- Investigator: "Bulls**t, Justin. That's not going to fly."
- Billings: "Well, that's the truth."

scooter
Administrator

Maintenance
Chick

Billings Case News Articles (Oct-Dec 2009) Reply #30 posted Oct 23, 2009 at 2:10am
Post by scooter on Oct 23, 2009 at 2:10am
www.pnj.com/article/20091023/NEWS01/910230344

Sheriff won't rule out mafia in Billings case
Kris Wernowsky • kwernowsky@pnj.com • October 23, 2009

Escambia County Sheriff David Morgan still believes the reason for the slayings of Melanie and Byrd Billings could be more than it appears.

snip

Thousands of pages of investigative documents now publicly available give no substantial evidence of either theory, beyond statements that originated with the alleged shooter, Leonard Patrick Gonzalez Jr.

Posts: 550 ♀

But Morgan said Thursday he still believes the Mexican mafia could be involved.

He said he has independent knowledge, beyond what Gonzalez said, of possible Mexican mafia ties among the eight suspects arrested in the slayings.

Last Edit: Oct 25, 2009 at 2:22am by scooter
Billings Case News Articles (Oct-Dec 2009) Reply #31 posted Oct 25, 2009 at 2:22am
Post by scooter on Oct 25, 2009 at 2:22am
www.pnj.com/article/20091025/NEWS01/910250314

Hugh Wiggins interview like 'pulling teeth'
Interview brought out solid details, but the information didn't come easy

Mark O'Brien • mobrien@pnj.com • October 25, 2009

SNIP

Hugh Wiggins says he told his wife not to be part of the ring that invaded Melanie and Byrd Billings' home in Beulah and left the couple dead in pools of blood.

Still, Pamela Long Wiggins was involved.

"She's a woman. What are you going to do?" Wiggins said near the end of a lengthy interview by officers investigating the home invasion, which occurred with nine adopted children inside the home.

Wiggins said his wife felt a duty to help Leonard Patrick Gonzalez Jr., a family friend described as the brains of the operation.

"He needs me," Hugh Wiggins quoted his wife as saying of Gonzalez.

Video of the interview, obtained recently by the News Journal, shows Wiggins answering questions as part of a "use immunity agreement" meant to help investigators get more details about participants in the attack while protecting Wiggins' constitutional right against incriminating himself.

The officers can use the information for their case against other people, but they cannot charge Wiggins on the basis of what he told them. However, they can charge Wiggins if they find incriminating evidence against him without his help.

scooter
Administrator

Maintenance
Chick



Posts: 550 ♀

Much of the information already has been made public, but the video offers a rare close-up of a real-life interview of a person of interest in a major crime.

Also to the right of this article

Wiggins' statement 'critical' to case

SNIP

Prosecutors say they got a good deal by giving immunity to Hugh Wiggins in exchange for information he gave investigators.

Wiggins' statements led officers directly to guns used in the attack on the home of Byrd and Melanie Billings and to the safe hidden under bricks in the yard of the Gulf Breeze home he shared with his wife, Pamela Long Wiggins.

No video posted of the interview ... hopefully they will put that up ☹

scooter
Administrator
Billings Case News Articles (Oct-Dec 2009) Reply #32 posted Oct 27, 2009 at 7:29pm
Post by scooter on Oct 27, 2009 at 7:29pm

www.pnj.com/article/20091027/NEWS01/91027027

Billings case suspect wants bond reduced
Kris Wernowsky • kwernowsky@pnj.com • October 27, 2009

SNIP

A central figure in the deaths of Byrd and Melanie Billings has asked a judge to reduce her \$500,000 bond.

Circuit Judge Nick Geeker will hear the request at a Nov. 3 hearing, his assistant said Tuesday.

SNIP

Maintenance
Chick

Cashwell also complained that her client, who previously underwent a gastric bypass procedure, has health concerns.



“Due to a previous medical procedure, she requires a specific diet which she is not receiving while incarcerated,” Cashwell wrote. “This can result in anemia, kidney and intestinal damage. She is suffering ... and losing her hair.”

Posts: 550 ♀

www.pnj.com/article/20091027/NEWS01/91027027

Pamela Long Wiggins' legal woes

SNIP

Pamela Long Wiggins has a host of legal issues beyond her alleged involvement in the Billings homicides.

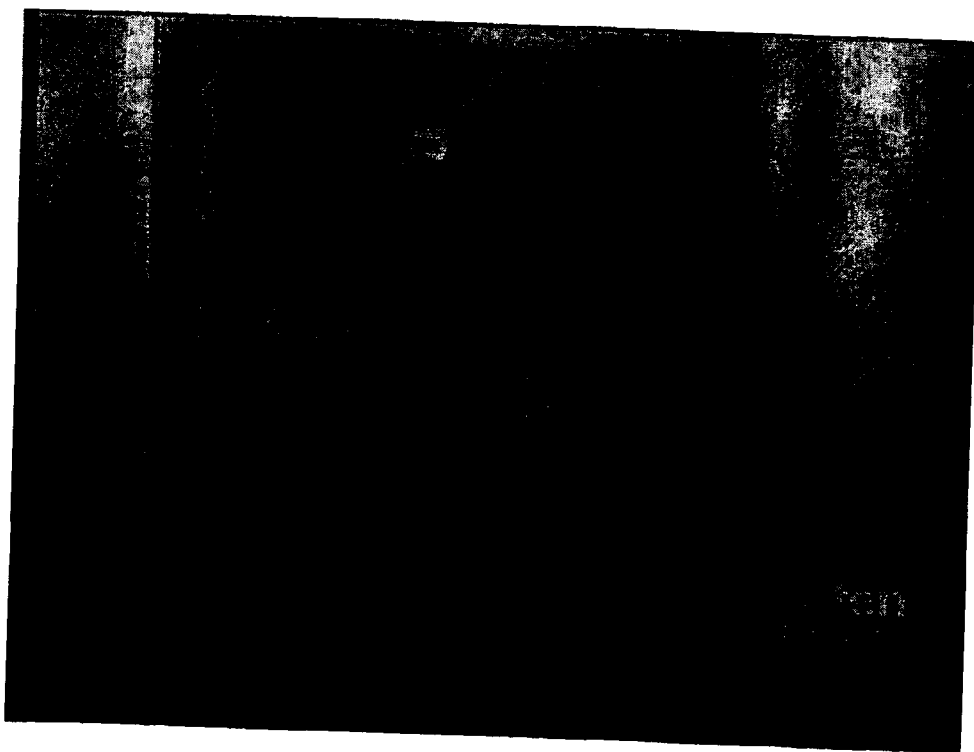
Last Edit: Oct 27, 2009 at 7:31pm by [scooter](#)
[Billings Case News Articles \(Oct-Dec 2009\) Reply #33](#) posted Nov 4, 2009 at 2:24am
Post by [scooter](#) on Nov 4, 2009 at 2:24am
www.fox10tv.com/dpp/news/local_news/pensacola/attorney_removed_from_billings_case

Maintenance
Chick



Attorney removes self from murder case
David White removes himself as Stallworth's atty.
Updated: Tuesday, 03 Nov 2009, 6:41 PM CST
Published : Tuesday, 03 Nov 2009, 6:41 PM CST

Posts: 550 ♀



Christina Leavenworth
Blanton Box
Photojournalist: Eric Lowe

SNIP

PENSACOLA, Fla. - For the first time since the murders of Byrd and Melanie Billings, Fox10 sat almost eye-to-eye with one of the suspects. Donnie Stallworth appeared in the judge's chambers.

Stallworth's parents sat behind him, as his attorney explained the family can no longer afford him. Defense lawyer David White says his costs will more than quadruple to prepare a case when the death penalty is on the line.

Video posted by WALA

stallworth

11/03/09

11

Last Edit: Nov 4, 2009 at 2:25am by [scooter](#)
[Billings Case News Articles \(Oct-Dec 2009\) Reply #34](#) posted Nov 4, 2009 at 2:25am

[scooter](#)
Administrator
☆☆☆☆

Post by [scooter](#) on Nov 4, 2009 at 2:25am
www.fox10tv.com/dpp/news/local_news/pensacola/Wiggins_hearing_postponed

Maintenance Chick



Wiggins hearing postponed
Updated: Tuesday, 03 Nov 2009, 10:23 AM CST
Published : Tuesday, 03 Nov 2009, 7:08 AM CST

Posts: 550



Linda Jones
PENSACOLA, Fla. - A bond reduction hearing for Pamela Long Wiggins has been postponed.
The hearing was originally scheduled for Tuesday, November 3. A new court date has not been set.

Wiggins is charged with accessory after the fact to the murders of Byrd and Melanie Billings.

The couple was murdered in their home while their children were present.

Billings Case News Articles (Oct-Dec 2009) Reply #35 posted Nov 4, 2009 at 2:46am
Post by scooter on Nov 4, 2009 at 2:46am
www.vear.com/newsroom/top_stories/videos/wear_vid_4887.shtml

scooter
Administrator

Update in Billings' Murder Case

Maintenance Chick *SNIP*



ESCAMBIA COUNTY - There are new developments in the Billings' murder case.

The state attorney's office has made more evidence public in the case.

Included in the latest release is audio interviews from several suspects and witnesses.

Meanwhile, one of the suspects will soon have a new attorney.

Judge Nicholas Geeker allowed Donnie Stallworth's attorney to withdraw from the case today.

Billings Case News Articles (Oct-Dec 2009) Reply #36 posted Nov 4, 2009 at 5:42pm
Post by scooter on Nov 4, 2009 at 5:42pm
www.wkrg.com/florida/article/billings_autopsy_reports_released/503909/Nov-04-2009_2-48-pm/

Billings Autopsy Reports Released

by Jamie Burch
Published: Wed, November 04, 2009 - 2:48 pm CST

scooter
Administrator

Maintenance
Chick

SNIP



PENSACOLA,, Florida - The Florida State Attorney's office released the autopsy reports on Byrd and Melanie Billings.

--

According to the reports, Byrd was shot three times in the head and once in each leg. Melanie was shot twice in the head and twice in the chest

Posts: 550♀

--

Click here to read the reports
www.wkrg.com/document/pdf/billings_autopsy/

Billings Case News Articles (Oct-Dec 2009) Reply #37 posted Nov 7, 2009 at 5:06am
Post by scooter on Nov 7, 2009 at 5:06am
www.pnj.com/article/20091107/NEWS01/911070320/1006/NEWS01/Billings-murder-suspect-enters-pencil-stabbing-plea

scooter
Administrator

Maintenance
Chick

Billings murder suspect enters pencil-stabbing plea
From staff reports • November 7, 2009



A suspect in the July murders of Byrd and Melanie Billings made an appearance in court Friday on an unrelated assault charge.

Leonard Patrick Gonzalez Jr., 35, is accused of stabbing a fellow Escambia County Jail inmate twice with a pencil in late September. Gonzalez pleaded not guilty Friday to the charge of aggravated assault with a deadly weapon. The maximum penalty is 15 years in prison.

Posts: 550♀

Gonzalez faces a first-degree murder and other charges in the home invasion that resulted in the July killings. The state is seeking the death penalty.

His next court appearance in the pencil-stabbing incident is Jan. 6.

Billings Case News Articles (Oct-Dec 2009) Reply #38 posted Nov 13, 2009 at 1:41pm
Post by scooter on Nov 13, 2009 at 1:41pm

Maintenance

www.pnj.com/article/20091113/NEWS01/91113005/Billings-case-suspect-accused-of-bigamy-gets-divorced

Billings case suspect accused of bigamy gets divorced
Kris Wernowsky • kwernowsky@pnj.com • November 13, 2009

SNIP

All James Maulden wanted was his motorcycle and a divorce.

Chick

He got both.



Long Wiggins Divorce

A deputy led Maulden's estranged wife, Pamela Long Wiggins, into the courtroom this morning. Dressed in a lime-green jumpsuit issued to her at the Escambia County Jail, Long Wiggins appeared unaffected when a judge granted her a divorce from one of her two husbands during a hearing at the M.C. Blanchard Judicial Building.

Posts: 550

Long Wiggins Divorce Pictures

[www.pnj.com/apps/pbcs.dll/gallery?
Site=DP&Date=20091113&Category=BILLINGSCASE&ArtNo=911130802&Ref=PH](http://www.pnj.com/apps/pbcs.dll/gallery?Site=DP&Date=20091113&Category=BILLINGSCASE&ArtNo=911130802&Ref=PH)

Last Edit: Nov 13, 2009 at 2:00pm by scooter
Billings Case News Articles (Oct-Dec 2009) Reply #39 posted Nov 14, 2009 at 10:45pm
Post by scooter on Nov 14, 2009 at 10:45pm
www.pnj.com/article/20091114/NEWS01/911140323/-1/special/Ex-gets-Harley-in-Wiggins-divorce

Ex gets Harley in Wiggins divorce
Billings slaying defendant still faces bigamy trial
Kris Wernowsky • kwernowsky@pnj.com • November 14, 2009

scooter
Administrator
★★★★★
Maintenance
Chick

Updated

Snip



Assistant State Attorney Bridgette Jensen said her office will not drop the bigamy charge in light of Long Wiggins' fresh divorce.

Posts: 550

Maulden will receive the title to the 1996 Harley Davidson motorcycle he got as a gift from Long Wiggins and will not stake a claim on any other property. Long Wiggins owns nearly a dozen homes in the Gulf Breeze area, many of which are in the foreclosure process.

As he left the courtroom Maulden said he's ready to put Long Wiggins behind him.

"I'm glad that's over," he said.

[Click here to remove banner ads from this forum.](#)

DID YOU KNOW YOU CAN REMOVE THESE ADS YOURSELF WITH PROBOARDS + ? [CLICK HERE FOR PB+ ▶](#)

YOU CAN



This Forum Hosted For FREE By ProBoards
Get Your Own Free Message Boards & Free Forums!
[Terms of Service](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Notice](#) | [FTC Disclosure](#) | [Report Abuse](#) | [Mobile](#) | [Advertise Here](#)

ACR TIMELINES

[Home](#)

[Help](#)

[Search](#)

[Calendar](#)

[Members](#)

[Profile](#)

[Messages](#)

Welcome ericpink. [Logout](#)

[new Participated](#)

[ACR TIMELINES](#)

[NEWS ARTICLES](#)

[Billings Case News Articles \(Oct-Dec 2009\)](#)



Billings Case News Articles (Oct-Dec 2009)

[Billings Case News Articles \(Oct-Dec 2009\) Reply #40](#) posted Dec 1, 2009 at 8:57pm
Post by scooter on Dec 1, 2009 at 8:57pm

www.pnj.com/article/20091201/NEWS01/91201022

Crist appoints David Rimmer to serve as judge

From staff reports • December 1, 2009

SNIP

Longtime Pensacola prosecutor David Rimmer on Tuesday was appointed by Gov. Charlie Crist to serve as a circuit judge.

Rimmer, 61, has served as an assistant state attorney for the four-county First Judicial Circuit since 1982. The circuit runs from Escambia to Walton County.

He has prosecuted numerous high-profile murder cases, including that of Derek and Alex King, the Cantonment boys convicted of killing their father in 2002.

Rimmer had been assigned to prosecute the eight suspects in the July slayings of Melanie and Byrd Billings. A new prosecutor has not yet been named.

[Billings Case News Articles \(Oct-Dec 2009\) Reply #41](#) posted Dec 4, 2009 at 2:23am
Post by scooter on Dec 4, 2009 at 2:23am
www.pnj.com/article/20091204/NEWS01/912040315

New face in Billings case

With Rimmer becoming judge, Molchan joins prosecution

Kris Wernowsky • kwernowsky@pnj.com • December 4, 2009

SNIP

The promotion of a longtime assistant state attorney to a judgeship leaves an empty seat at the prosecution table in seven local murder cases, including that of Byrd and Melanie Billings.

Gov. Charlie Crist on Tuesday appointed homicide prosecutor David Rimmer to a position vacated by Circuit Judge Kim Skievaski, who will retire in January.

State Attorney Bill Eddins has acted as the lead prosecutor in the Billings case with assistance from Rimmer.

Assistant State Attorney John Molchan will take Rimmer's place in the Billings case and also will handle most of the office's other murder cases as well, office spokesman Greg Marcille said Thursday.

Last Edit: Dec 4, 2009 at 2:23am by scooter
[Billings Case News Articles \(Oct-Dec 2009\) Reply #42](#) posted Dec 8, 2009 at 9:43pm

[scooter](#)
Administrator

Maintenance
Chick



Posts: 550 ♀

[scooter](#)
Administrator

Maintenance
Chick



Posts: 550 ♀

Post by scooter on Dec 8, 2009 at 9:43pm
www.time.com/time/specials/packages/article/0,28804,1945379_1943832_1943841,00.html

The Top 10 Everything of 2009 TIME charts the highs and lows of the past year in 50 wide-ranging lists.

Top 10 Crime Stories

9. The Deaths of Byrd and Melanie Billings

The details of the murder of the wealthy Pensacola, Fla., couple that had adopted many disabled children were so shocking, they recalled Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood*: after their home was invaded by men in black ninja-style clothing, Byrd Billings, 66, was shot three times in the head and once in the leg, and his wife, 43, was shot twice in the head and twice in the chest — all in front of their nine young children. (In all, the Billingses had 17 kids, 13 of them adopted and most with disabilities like Down Syndrome.) The alleged killer was Leonard Patrick Gonzalez Jr., a failed karate instructor, who the local sheriff said may have been part of a conspiracy to get rid of Byrd Billings, who ran a loan company. Six other men were also charged with capital murder. Like Gonzalez, they pleaded not guilty. Investigators said Gonzalez's accomplices fingered him as the sole gunman.

scooter
Administrator

Maintenance
Chick



Top Ten Crime Stories 2009

1. Finding Jaycee Dugard
2. The Cleveland Serial Rapist-Killer
3. The Craigslist Killer
4. The Headscarf Martyr
5. The Mystery of the Dead Census Worker
6. Murdering the Abortionist
7. The Tacoma Massacre
8. The Annie Le Murder
9. The Deaths of Byrd and Melanie Billings
10. The Return of the Pishtacos

Posts: 550 ♀

Read more:
www.time.com/time/specials/packages/article/0,28804,1945379_1943832_1943841,00.html#ixzz0Z9hkrmwz

scooter
Administrator

Maintenance
Chick
[Billings Case News Articles \(Oct-Dec 2009\) Reply #43](#) posted Dec 11, 2009 at 5:50am
Post by scooter on Dec 11, 2009 at 5:50am
www.inweekly.net/article.asp?artID=10902

Winners & Losers 2009

Snip

Pensacola was consistently in the national news in 2009. Whether it was the Spanish royal visit, a sensational murder case, Jude Law's baby momma, or being punked at a Tea Party rally by a liberal blogger, there were few dull moments.

Posts: 550 ♀

It was tougher than years past, but The Independent News was still able to round out its annual top Winners and Losers.

Winners

DAVID MORGAN

He mothballed his helicopters, dealt with a Department of Justice investigation of his predecessor, Ron McNesby, revamped the K-9 unit and cuts millions of dollars from the Escambia County Sheriff's Office budget. By the end of the summer it was clear that Sheriff David Morgan could take on about anything thrown at him--even an Oprah interview.

After the murders of Melanie and Byrd Billings brought national attention to Escambia County in July,

Morgan showed he could handle the media and the added responsibility of being in charge of one the most bizarre criminal cases the area has ever seen.

The wake of the "humdinger" (as Morgan described the complexity and mystery of the case) gave the sheriff a chance to fully address public for the first time on the offensive and as a law enforcement leader. It was a huge swing from the months prior, when his administration was dealing more with K-9 dogs biting citizens and mysteriously escaping from patrol cars and county officials upset with the size of its proposed budget.

In the last 12 months, the Morgan administration has helped bring transparency to a law enforcement agency long known as a "good ol' boy" haven, where instances of improper jail deaths, police brutality and administrative mismanagement have been swept under the table.

In addition, David Morgan has also held up to his standards of a vocal king. Singing for area churches, fundraisers and ballgames, Morgan has gained community relation kudos across the demographic spectrum.

CRYSTAL SPENCER

This was the year for Crystal Spencer. The trial attorney seemed to be on every committee, commission and organization affecting the City of Pensacola. She was even the legal representative for the Billings' children in the first weeks following the Beulah murders in July.

During the media explosion of the murder case, she stayed cool under pressure; speaking at several press conferences and proving to be one tough cookie when required.

But what she'll be most remembered for in 2009 is her role as Charter Review Commission chairman.

After nearly two years of evaluating different government charters from across the U.S. and listening to expert opinions from mayors and planners and gathering citizen input, her commission was able to revise the outdated 1931 charter and create something voters could stand behind.

Spencer never backed down to naysayers of the "hybrid" form of government the group created, which included a strong mayor and term limits for elected officials. On top of that, she took the issue of government consolidation in stride, brushing off notions that the charter revision could become void in 2010.

When people doubted Pensacola's progression, citizens like Crystal Spencer proved them wrong.

scooter

Administrator

☆☆☆☆

Maintenance

Chick

[Billings Case News Articles \(Oct-Dec 2009\) Reply #44](#) posted Dec 12, 2009 at 10:52pm

Post by scooter on Dec 12, 2009 at 10:52pm

maggiesnotebook.blogspot.com/2009/12/hugh-wiggins-patrick-gonzalez-wiggins.html

Friday, December 11, 2009

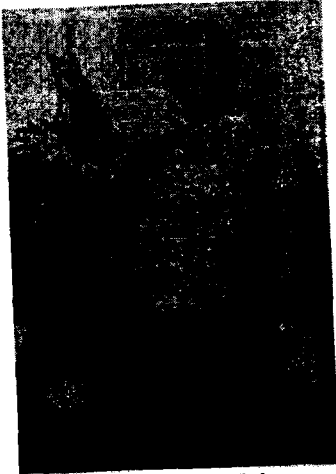


Hugh Wiggins Patrick Gonzalez? Wiggins Fingers Cab Tice Patrick Gonzalez: Hugh Wiggins Bud Billings

Posts: 550 ♀

Hugh Wiggins says Cab Tice offered Patrick Gonzalez \$20,000 to kill Byrd Bud Billings, and he knew about the hit as early as March 2009 before the June murders of Billings and his wife, Melanie.





Hugh Wiggins under questioning

Hugh Wiggins

Wiggins said that Gonzalez expected up to a million dollars ripe for the taking at the home of the Billings when the murders occurred, making the hit far more profitable than the miserly sum of \$20,000.

At one point, Wiggins says Gonzalez hounded him to the point that he agreed to take part in the hit. Wiggins says he left town, and oh woe, his wife Pamela Wiggins helped Patrick Gonzalez hide evidence of the murders in her (their) own backyard, loaned him a car, and maybe participated in his getaway. Hugh Wiggins just didn't understand why Pamela would take the chance when there was no certainty that big money would be found on the property. After all, he opined, it wasn't like hitting a bank armored vehicle known to have money on board. Nothing about murdering another human being - murdering two humans, gave the man any remorse.

Wiggins could have stopped the murders and chose not to. Now, he will skate any serious prison time because he cooperated with authorities.

Here is the transcript from WEARTV:

Channel Three's Dan Thomas has been combing through evidence and joins us now with more.

Hugh Wiggins says he knew as early as March that there was a contract on Bud Billings's life.

As it turned out, the gun used to murder Bud and Melanie was owned by Hugh Wiggins.

But so far, he hasn't been charged with anything.

That's because just days after the murders, he got a deal from the state attorney's office and came clean.

- Hugh Wiggins/Person of Interest: "This is what I know."

- Lee Tyree/Investigator: "Then tell me everything."

- Wiggins: "Everything involves more than just this."

- Tyree: "Then tell me more than just this, let's go."

Hugh Wiggins says it started with a contract Patrick Gonzalez, Jr. accepted to murder Bud Billings.

- Tyree: "And who is it that he said gave him the contract?"

- Wiggins: "He told me that Cab Tice put the contract out for \$20 grand."

- Tyree: "So you were told he was going to be paid 20 grand to take out the Billings? I'm assuming?"

- Wiggins: "Him."

- Tyree: "Him? Mr. Billings?"

- Wiggins: "Mr. Billings.

He claimed that local car dealer Cab Tice and perhaps others wanted Bud Billings dead because they were tired of paying back loans he had made them, then he added this:

- Wiggins: "The people that are involved in this are not nice people by any stretch of the imagination. If what I think is true, then these people are very very bad people."

- Tyree: "Well go ahead, then... "

- Wiggins: "Mexican Mafia."

Wiggins says Patrick Gonzalez expected over a million dollars to be in the Billings home because they believed Bud Billings was laundering money for the Mexican Mafia.

But Wiggins says he told Gonzalez to forget it and concentrate on his karate business, but Wiggins says Gonzalez wouldn't let it go.

Wiggins: "He kept hammering on me about the money and you know he said all will be good man everything will be good. I said fine, I'll do it."

But the night of the murders, Wiggins was out of town and says he returned to find out his wife Pam Wiggins had been involved against his wishes.

Wiggins: "The risk is way too high. For something you don't even know that you're going to return. It's not like doing an armored car or a bank where you know they got money."

In fact Wiggins did tell investigators he knew about a bank robbery he says was committed by Patrick Gonzalez.

We'll have the video from the bank robbery tonight at 10.

As for his wife Pam Wiggins, she faces thirty years in prison if she's convicted as an accomplice after the fact.

There are many videos of Hugh Wiggins talking to investigators. In the first, he tells them the whole thing is "messing up his world." Again no thought of the two dead people and 9 needy children, at least, without a parent.

Start the video series here.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=pp5JWYtv178

Last Edit: Dec 23, 2009 at 9:22am by scooter

Billings Case News Articles (Oct-Dec 2009) Reply #45 posted Dec 15, 2009 at 5:07am

Post by scooter on Dec 15, 2009 at 5:07am
www.pnj.com/article/20091213/NEWS01/912130330/The-face-of-a-victim

scooter

Administrator

Maintenance

Chick

December 13, 2009



The face of a victim

16 faces of homicide in Escambia County in 2009

Posts: 550 ♀

Compiled by Thyrie Bland and Kris Wernowsky
tbland@pnj.com and kwernowsky@pnj.com

In dozens of interviews with family members of homicide victims, words like "senseless" and "tragic" almost always surface.

Behind every senseless and tragic story are families left without sons and daughters; children left without mothers and fathers; and lifelong friendships severed in moments of unspeakable violence.



There were 16 faces of homicide in Escambia County in 2009; names and faces taken from the world in the most unnatural of ways. Here are their stories.

SNIP

Byrd and Melanie Billings 66 and 43, respectively, of Beulah

Byrd Billings was in the used car and finance business for years. But he and his wife, Melanie, were best known for adopting 13 special needs children whom they were raising in their sprawling Beulah home.

-- Case synopsis: The double homicide July 9 became the most sensational murder case in Pensacola's recent history. The couple was shot to death inside their home when five men entered in pursuit of a safe that was said to hold millions of dollars; two other assailants remained outside. The suspected ringleader, Leonard Gonzalez Jr., is accused of firing the fatal shots. The assailants removed a safe with little of value in it, leaving another safe with \$165,000 cash behind.

-- Case status: Leonard Gonzalez Jr., Leonard Gonzalez Sr., Wayne Coldiron, Donnie Stallworth, Frederick Lee Thornton, Rakeem Florence and Gary Sumner, all held in Escambia County Jail, are charged with first-degree murder. The state is seeking the death penalty against Gonzalez Jr., Coldiron, Stallworth and Thornton, who went into the house. Life terms are being sought for Gonzalez Sr. and Sumner, who remained outside, and for Florence, who went inside but is a juvenile. A trial is expected in mid to late 2010. An eighth person, Pamela Long Wiggins, is charged with accessory to first-degree murder and also is jailed.

Last Edit: Dec 23, 2009 at 9:22am by scooter
 Billings Case News Articles (Oct-Dec 2009) Reply #46 posted Dec 23, 2009 at 9:20am
 Post by scooter on Dec 23, 2009 at 9:20am
www.pnj.com/article/20091223/NEWS01/912230328/Billings-family-moving-on

**Billings family moving on
 Children mark first Christmas without parents**

Travis Griggs • tgriggs@pnj.com • December 23, 2009

scooter
 Administrator

 Maintenance
 Chick

Snip

A framed copy of a newspaper story dated Christmas Day, 2005, hangs on the wall near the kitchen inside the Billings' Beulah house.



The front page photo depicts a grinning family sprawled across the house's playroom floor. In the middle, surrounded by a swarm of smiling kids, Byrd and Melanie Billings beam with pride.

Posts: 550 ♀

It is a snapshot of a life many people didn't understand. A life with a dozen adopted children, many with special needs. A life of challenges, to be sure, but also happiness.

A life that on July 9, tragically was cut short.

"Christmas was my mom's favorite holiday," said Ashley Markham, 27, as she sat at the kitchen table in her parents' Beulah home Monday.

Last Edit: Dec 23, 2009 at 9:23am by scooter
 Billings Case News Articles (Oct-Dec 2009) Reply #47 posted Dec 24, 2009 at 7:42pm
 Post by scooter on Dec 24, 2009 at 7:42pm
www.fox10tv.com/dpp/news/local_news/community-rallies-for-billings-children

scooter
 Administrator

 Maintenance
 Chick

Community rallies for Billings children

Updated: Wednesday, 23 Dec 2009, 4:44 PM CST
 Published : Wednesday, 23 Dec 2009, 4:44 PM CST
 Christina Leavenworth



Posts: 550 ♀

Snip

PENSACOLA, Fla. - It's the first Christmas the Billings children will spend without their parents, and the community is rallying to make the holiday easier for the family.

Byrd and Melanie Billings were found shot to death in their Beulah, Florida home in July 2009. Their nine adopted special needs children were all in the home at the time of the brutal killings.

Five months ago, the Billings' daughter, 27-year-old Ashley Markham, became the parents of those nine children. As the family attorney, Robert Beasley, described, the family is still trying to come to terms of the Billings' deaths.

"These children are coming to deal their grief in different stages," he said.

Beasley said the holiday season has been the hardest. Markham is trying to keep everything like how it used to be.

"The absence of Bud and Melanie at Christmas is being felt more, because Christmas was such a special time for them. They invited other people into their home. Because these children were such a great celebration, the void and absence is more," he added.

Markham and the children are in Mississippi, but they'll be back home on Christmas. Thanks to the help of the community, Santa won't be skipping over their house.

"So right now, what Ashley is paying attention to is the gifts. That's where community has helped, blessed where people have said take this money by buying the kids the toys," Beasley said...

scooter
Administrator

Maintenance
Chick

Billings Case News Articles (Oct-Dec 2009) Reply #48 posted Dec 25, 2009 at 4:11pm
Post by scooter on Dec 25, 2009 at 4:11pm
blog.al.com/live/2009/12/family_of_slain_florida_panhhan.html

Family of slain Florida Panhandle couple moves on

By The Associated Press
December 25, 2009, 12:00PM

SNIP



Posts: 550 ♀



(AP Photo/The Pensacola News Journal, Karena Cawthon) In this 2005 file picture shows Byrd and Melanie Billings with their children, 10 adopted and two biological, at their home in Beulah, Fla.

PENSACOLA, Fla. -- A framed copy of a newspaper story dated Christmas Day, 2005, hangs on the wall near the kitchen inside the Billings' Beulah house.

The front page photo depicts a grinning family sprawled across the house's playroom floor. In the middle, surrounded by a swarm of smiling kids, Byrd and Melanie Billings beam with pride.

It is a snapshot of a life many people didn't understand. A life with a dozen adopted children, many with special needs. A life of challenges, to be sure, but also happiness.

A life that on July 9, tragically was cut short.

"Christmas was my mom's favorite holiday," said Ashley Markham, 27, as she sat at the kitchen table in her

parents' Beulah home Monday.

Her mom loved to shop, she said, and relished in the annual opportunity to shower the kids with gifts.

It's a role that, this year, Markham is doing her best to fill.

In the living room, a dozen stockings hang from the mantel over the fireplace. A Christmas tree draped with flashy decorations towers overhead. The house is light and cheery, and, for the moment, surprisingly quiet. The dull drone of cartoons on the living room TV is the only noise. Sunlight pours in through broad picture windows, illuminating walls covered with wedding portraits and framed photos of happy family memories....

scooter
Administrator
★★★★★
Maintenance
Chick

Billings Case News Articles (Oct-Dec 2009) Reply #49 posted Dec 29, 2009 at 11:17am
Post by scooter on Dec 29, 2009 at 11:17am
ricksblog.biz/?p=8322

Tuesday December 29th 2009

Billings case recap: Early Thursday Evening, July 9

SNIP

I've been reviewing the various reports on the home invasion and murder of Byrd and Melanie Billings and have put together a narrative of the first eight days of the case, including the events of that tragic night and the subsequent arrests. The narrative is divided into days and in few instances subdivided further based on the events of the day. I will post the segments over the next few days. If you have anything that you want to add, please email me - rick@inweekly.net.

Part 1: "MOM AND DAD ARE DEAD"

On early evening of Thursday, July 9, 2009, an old red van pulls onto the front yard of the large home owned by Byrd "Bud" and Melanie Billings. April Spencer, who helps Melanie take care of the nine disabled kids that lived in the home, had left the residence about 90 minutes earlier after helping Melanie bathe two of her daughters.

Bud Billings is watching TV and Melanie is getting dinner ready in the kitchen as Spencer walked out the door to her trailer on the Billings' property.

Around 7:15 p.m. Adrianna Billings, age 11, pounds on Spencer's door, yelling, "Come, Mom and Dad are dead." Leaving the young girl at her home with her daughter, Spencer runs to Billings' residence to find the laundry room door, which is on the southeast side of the house, kicked in.

Jacob "Jake" Billings, a 10-year-old with Down's syndrome, is standing in the living room pointing to his parents' bedroom. Jake can't speak and communicates only through sign language.

Spencer walks into the master bedroom and finds Bud lying in front of the dresser, face down in pool of blood. He is dressed in blue jean shorts with no shirt. Melanie is lying, face up, in a hallway that leads out of the master bedroom towards a nearby study. Both have been shot multiple times. Spencer grabs Jake, runs to her trailer and called 911.

There is panic in her voice when Spencer calls. The Escambia County Sheriff's 911 dispatcher does her best to clam the woman down:

Spencer (shouting): "The mom and dad, I live next door and the daughter came over and said the mother and father been shot and they're dead....."

Dispatcher: "She, She said they been shot?"

Spencer: "Yeah."

Dispatcher: "Hold on."

Spencer: "I gotta go get the kids, there's kids in the house."

Dispatcher: "Where's she at?"

Spencer: "They're in the bedroom, ma'am, they're dead....Please come."

Dispatcher: "Ma'am, I'm trying to get someone there, you said the mother and father both had been shot?"

Spencer: "YES!"

Dispatcher: "Okay, I'm going to get someone there, I'm trying to get some information.....What is your name?"

Spencer: "This is....."

Dispatcher: "I'm sorry?-(To a patrol car) They're supposed to be signal seven, both of them she is saying. -Ma'am what's your last name? Ma'am, Ma'am, I'll get somebody on the way, okay, they're already on the way I'm just trying to get some information. What's your first name?"

Spencer: "I gotta go find the kids, the kids are"

Dispatcher: "How old are the kids?....."

Spencer: "Ages from four years....."

Dispatcher: "How many kids are supposed to be in the house?"

Spencer: "Please help! Ma'am, I gotta go be with these children, but I don't know..."

Dispatcher: "Ma'am, I don't want you to be in any danger, okay?"

Spencer: "Ma'am, Ma'am I'm sorry, I'm sorry, Please come."

Dispatcher: "Ma'am, Ma'am, I need you to take a deep breathe for me, okay. You there? Hello?" (To her fellow dispatcher) "She hung up on me. She said she's gonna go in and find the kids."

Spencer: "Ma'am?"

Dispatcher: "Ma'am, You there?"

Spencer: "Yes."

Dispatcher: "I thought you hung up. I didn't know..... Okay, I've got several officers on the way to you."

Spencer: "Hurry."

Dispatcher: "I need to know how many kids are supposed to be in the house?"

Spencer: "It's nine children."

Dispatcher: "It's how many children? Ma'am your phone's cutting out. Ma'am?"

While Spencer is calling 911, the Billings' oldest daughter, Ashley Billings Markham, is doing the same. She had called the Billings home shortly after the intruders had left. Adrianna got on the phone, but Ashley couldn't understand with the young girl was trying to tell so she tells Adrianna to run and get Spencer. Markham calls 911 and her brother, Justin Billings, who she asked to get to house and find out what is wrong.

Markham fights back tears as she makes her 911 call:

Dispatcher: "Sherriff's 911, this is Jeff."

Markham: "Hi, I need someone to got out to my parents house, I is on the phone with my sister and trying to get in touch with them and she said they are on the bathroom floor and there's nobody there, um, she said they are dead and I don't know what she is talking about."

Dispatcher: "What's the address? And what's your name ma'am? And your phone number? And what's her name?"

Markham: "Melanie and Bud Billings."

Dispatcher: "And you said Billings?"

Markham: "Billings, B-i-l-l-i-n-g-s."



Dispatcher: "Okay, and you said they're down in the bathroom?"

Markham: "Yes, that's what she said, I kept telling her to take her the phone, and she said I can't, she's on the floor and she's dead. I didn't know what she's talking about and we have a neighbor and I tells her to over and get the neighbor...."

Dispatcher: "Can you hold on a second ma'am?"

Markham: "Okay."

Dispatcher- to a patrol car: "Three eighty. I'm on the phone with the other part. Ten-four. It's gonna be a possible thirty two (dispatch code for shooting) victim. We have two callers on the phone. ... The caller advised that her sister advised her that there are two subjects down on the bathroom floor, possibly Melanie and Bud, not twenty six (dispatch code for suspicious person) on what's going on but are on the phone with another complainant."

Markham: "Did somebody else call?"

Dispatcher—to a patrol car: Can you be enroute to back? Ten-four, car seventy twenty six? Ten- four." (To Markham) "Okay. Ma'am."

Markham: "Uh, huh."

Dispatcher: "O.K."

Markham: "Did somebody else call?"

Dispatcher: "Yes Ma'am, are on the phone with somebody else, hold on one second."

More at link above 

Last Edit: Dec 30, 2009 at 3:31pm by scooter

Billings Case News Articles (Oct-Dec 2009) Reply #50 posted Dec 30, 2009 at 2:37pm

Post by scooter on Dec 30, 2009 at 2:37pm

ricksblog.biz/?p=8351

scooter
Administrator
Maintenance
Chick



Posts: 550 ♀

Billings recap: Later Thursday, July 9

SNIP

FAMILY FEUDS

Investigator Terry Hardy arrives on the crime scene at 9:05 p.m. Sgt. Rusty Hoard has been named the lead on the case. Hardy, Tyree and Guy are to assist him.


After being updated by Hoard, Hardy is asked to interview April Spencer, who lives in a trailer on the Billings property. She tells him about Adrianna Billings knocking on her trailer door and what Spencer saw when she entered the Billings residence.

Spencer doesn't know anyone who might want to hurt the Bud and Melanie Billings. When asked if Bud Billings kept large amounts of money in the house or if there was a safer, she tells the investigator about the safe upstairs in the camera room.

Spencer helped Melanie take care of the children and is familiar with the camera system and how it includes cameras in the kids' bedrooms and other rooms of the house as well as the outside of the house on the front and rear of the residence. She says that the oldest son, Justin Billings, who also lives on the property, knows how to operate the system.

When Hardy asks about the other adult Billings children, Spencer says that Kristyn Billings had moved out of the house about three weeks ago under "bad terms." Kristyn was actually Bud's granddaughter, the daughter of his natural daughter, Melissa, and that Bud and Melanie had adopted Kristyn earlier in the year.

.....

More at link above 

Last Edit: Dec 30, 2009 at 5:21pm by scooter
Billings Case News Articles (Oct-Dec 2009) Reply #51 posted Dec 30, 2009 at 2:38pm
Post by scooter on Dec 30, 2009 at 2:38pm
ricksblog.biz/?p=8357

Billings recap: Friday, July 10

SNIP

IT HASN'T SUNKEN IN

Friday, July 10

scooter
Administrator
★★★★★
Maintenance
Chick



Posts: 550 ♀

The Pensacola News Journal reports on its front page that "a Beulah couple who adopted 12 children and owned several local businesses were found shot to death in an apparent home invasion Thursday evening."

In December 2005, the daily newspaper had featured the Billings family. At the time, they were the proud parents of 16 children. Twelve were adopted — among them, children of drug users, children who were sexually abused and children with developmental disabilities. Six of the 12 had Down syndrome. Two had died.

There was some confusion of the actual number of the children that the Bud and Melanie had adopted over the years. It took a few days before the media got the correct count of 18 children. Since the 2005 article, Bud and Melanie had adopted their granddaughter, Kristyn Markham.

Eight children, ages 8 to 14, were in the house when the shootings took place. The full magnitude of the story doesn't sink in.

National media shows some interest. CNN reports it on its website with the title, "Couple who adopted 12 children slain." CBS News reports "Parents of Sixteen Slain."

More at link above 

Last Edit: Dec 30, 2009 at 5:21pm by scooter
Billings Case News Articles (Oct-Dec 2009) Reply #52 posted Dec 31, 2009 at 3:55pm
Post by scooter on Dec 31, 2009 at 3:55pm
ricksblog.biz/?p=8322

Billings Case Recap by Rick Ouzen

scooter
Administrator
★★★★★
Maintenance
Chick



Posts: 550 ♀

I've been reviewing the various reports on the home invasion and murder of Byrd and Melanie Billings and have put together a narrative of the first eight days of the case, including the events of that tragic night and the subsequent arrests. The narrative is divided into days and in few instances subdivided further based on the events of the day. I will post the segments over the next few days. If you have anything that you want to add, please email me - rick@inweekly.net.

Billings case recap: Early Thursday Evening, July 9 - "Mom and Dad Are Dead"
ricksblog.biz/?p=8322

Billings recap: Later Thursday, July 9 - Family Feuds
ricksblog.biz/?p=8351

Billings recap: Friday, July 10 - It Hasn't Sunken In
ricksblog.biz/?p=8357

Billings case: Friday, July 10 - part 2 - Family Ties
ricksblog.biz/?p=8384

Billings case: Saturday, July 11 - Hunt For Red Van



ricksblog.biz/?p=8390

Billings case: Saturday, July 11 part 2 - The Dam Breaks
ricksblog.biz/?p=8395

Billings case: Saturday, July 11 part 3 - Cab and The Mexican Mafia
ricksblog.biz/?p=8397

Billings case: Sunday, July 12 - Humdinger
ricksblog.biz/?p=8401

Billings case: Sunday, July 12 part 2 - Contract Hit
ricksblog.biz/?p=8403

Billings case: Sunday, July 12 part 3 - Okaloosa Traffic Stop
ricksblog.biz/?p=8405

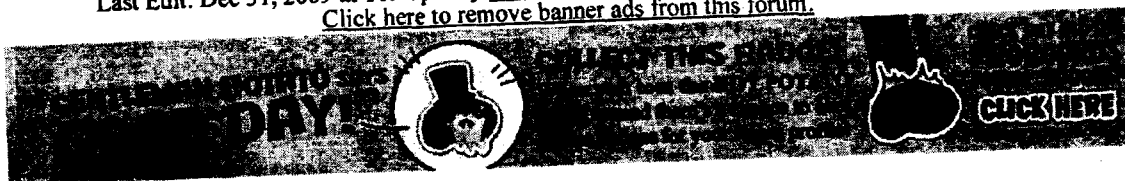
Billings case: Monday, July 13 - Ninjas On Video
ricksblog.biz/?p=8415

Billings case: Monday, July 13 part 2 - Okaloosa Gang Of Four
ricksblog.biz/?p=8419

Billings case: Tuesday, July 14 - "We Have Found Them"
ricksblog.biz/?p=8423

Billings case: Tuesday, July 14 part 2 - Media Circus
ricksblog.biz/?p=8425

Last Edit: Dec 31, 2009 at 11:47pm by [scooter](#)
[Click here to remove banner ads from this forum.](#)



This Forum Hosted For FREE By [ProBoards](#)
Get Your Own [Free Message Boards & Free Forums!](#)
[Terms of Service](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Notice](#) | [FTC Disclosure](#) | [Report Abuse](#) | [Mobile](#) | [Advertise Here](#)

Stratton, Teresa

From: noreply@myflcourtagency.com
Sent: Tuesday, February 16, 2016 11:39 AM
Subject: Processing Completed for Filing # 37811091

Dear Eric C. Pinkard:

This email verifies the processing of your Filing # **37811091** with the Escambia County, Florida Circuit Criminal Division.

Status: **Accepted**
Filing Date/Time: 02/15/2016 01:52:57 PM
UCN: 172009CF003249XXXCXX
Clerk Case #: 2009 CF 003249 C
Case Style: STATE OF FLORIDA VS GONZALEZ, LEONARD PATRICK JR
Matter #:
Memo:
Filing Fee: \$0.00
Exhibits and Transcripts List of Exhibits: \$0.00
Statutory Convenience Fee: \$0.00
Total Paid: \$0.00
Fee Status: Processing
Paid By: No payment required
MFC Order #:

Documents

#	Document Type	Status	Filing Date	Rejection Reason
1	Exhibits and Transcripts List of Exhibits	Accepted	02/15/2016	

Fees

Your filing has been docketed with the Clerk's office. The fee is in the process of Processing.