



THE ORLANDO LOCAL NEWS

Serving

Dr. Phillips ...

Wintermere ...

Bay Hill ...

Orange Tree ...

Ocoee ...

Downtown...

Winter Garden...

Williamsburg...

Baldwin Park...

Winter Park...

Maitland...

Casselberry...



PRICE 75 CENTS

ESTABLISHED 1980 • NEW YEARS EDITION

JANUARY 2021

The Latest LOCAL NEWS AND OPINION

Winter Park Mayoral Candidate

Raised Taxes During his term in office as commissioner, Phil Anderson raised taxes... Page 2

State Attorneys Worrell and Ayala

Corrupt to the Core ... Page 2

Rachel Saunders Plakon Files for District 29 ... Page 2

Communist Style Shaming at Rollins College... Page 3

Winter Park's First Woman Mayor ?

Former city commissioner Sarah Sprinkel kicks off her campaign... Page 3

Sabatini to Fight Big Tech ... Page 3

New Seminole GOP Chairman Ben Paris Elected... Page 3

Pastor's Corner: Brother John Harris Offers Words of Wisdom in a Dark Hour... Page 4

Bay Hill at New Years... Page 4

In Memoriam: Michael

Mennello..... Page 4

ENTERTAINMENT, DINING & MISC.

Antonio's Brings Italy's Finest Flavors to the Table... Page 5

Exclusive: Rocky Patel Interviewed by the *Local News* at Corona Cigar in Doctor Phillips... Page 5

Jimmy, Johnny and Eckhard Polka Their Way Into 2021 at Hollerbach's Willow Tree Cafe... Page 5

Local Company Among First to Install New Tesla Powerwall for Residents... Page 6

Disney World to Become Vaccination Site?... Page 6

TRAVEL: New Years in

Copenhagen..... Page 7

Letters to the Editor.....Page 8

Local News Throwback...Page 8

HAPPY NEW YEAR CENTRAL FLORIDA!

By THE ORLANDO LOCAL NEWS EDITORIAL BOARD

While 2021 seems to be just as cantankerous as last year, so far, most are still breathing a sigh of relief 2020 is over, and hope for a better twelve months to come. No one can predict the future, and certainly not a year like our last, but in the end they say "hindsight is 2020." In this case, literally. From Coronavirus to civil unrest to impeachment and even the shuttering of borders, we're glad for a fresh slate of dates on the calendar. Throughout the past year at the *Local News*, we sought to bring only the most professional coverage within the limits of the COVID economy, and we are grateful to all of our readers for their loyalty and patronage. The highlight of our year came on December 4, as we honored the *Best of Central Florida* as our way to say "thanks" to you. We wish you and yours a prosperous and healthy 2021 and send our best wishes to each and every one of you!



Pictured: Fireworks boom over Sea World, the only major theme park to offer the experience

Winter Park Mayoral Candidate Raised Taxes, Voted to Defund Public Transportation



Pictured: Former Winter Park Commissioner Phil Anderson

\$9 billion in assets it was only a slight millage rate increase. Maybe slight is in the eye of the taxpayer. He then goes on to say that "we have grown our financial "rainy day reserve" from \$2.7 million to \$17 million." What he doesn't say is that he had nothing to do with that. Mr. Anderson served for one three-year term and it was subsequent Commissions that made the tough decisions and increased the reserves, all while balancing the budget and not raising the property tax rate. But why let the facts get in the way of a good political point. This incredible piece of revisionist history demanded that we do a little digging. Here's what we found; When Phil Anderson voted to raise the property tax rate in 2008 most residents didn't know about the effort. In an "emergency city meeting," Anderson and then Mayor David Strong convinced fellow Commissioner Beth Dillaha to raise the city millage rate without public debate. Commissioners Karen Diebel and Margie Bridges argued against saddling our citizens and small businesses with a property tax hike in the middle of the Great Recession, but to no avail, as the Anderson led majority was intent on raising taxes. The following year, Anderson voted to raise electricity rates as well, putting an additional burden on small businesses and those recovering from the Great Recession. **CONTINUED PAGE 2**

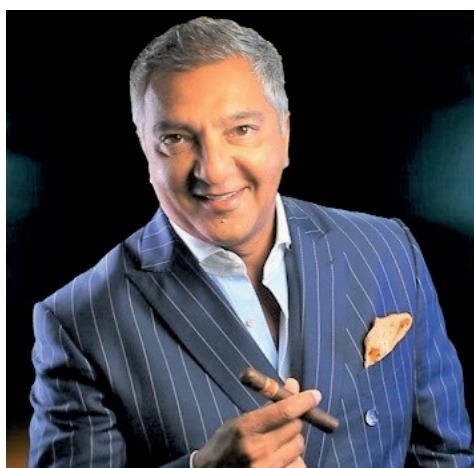
By MARTHA KING - OPINION

On January 14th Phil Anderson sent out an email explaining his efforts to raise the Winter Park property tax rate. At first, he brags a little about his background saying, "As Commissioner, I used my financial management background during the Great Recession to spearhead policies that kept our City safe and prepared us for the future." Because the City had very low reserves during Mr. Anderson's tenure on the Commission, he is careful not to say he increased the reserves, instead he blames them for his decision to raise taxes, "With limited reserves at the time, my fellow Commissioners and I voted to raise our millage rate slightly..." According to Anderson's campaign material he has developed over \$9 billion in assets. There is no doubt that as a developer, Mr. Anderson is in elite company. As an accomplished developer he certainly would seem to have quite a bit of experience in making budgets work, but after crowing about his business acumen, instead of using it to balance the budget, he did the easy thing and just raised the property tax rate. And according to the man who has developed

Local News Exclusive: Rocky Patel Visits Corona Cigar of Dr. Phillips, The Local News Interviews Cigar Mogul Rocky Patel at Corona

By MARSHALL SWANSON

For cigar aficionados, last month's visit by Rocky Patel helped cap off the year right. at Corona Cigar in Dr. Phillips and Lake Mary, hosted by founder Jeff Borysiewicz. Initially, Patel began his career as an attorney for Hollywood's elite, but later gravitated to the cigar world where he eventually attained the status of legend. A wide variety of challenges to the industry plagued Patel and Borysiewicz alike during the past two decades as they both grappled with government overreach and relentless attacks from well meaning but misguided proponents of the anti-tobacco lobby. We recently interviewed Patel in relation to his career, the present state of the cigar industry and what the future might hold under the incoming Biden administration. **CONTINUED PAGE 5**



Pictured: Cigar Mogul Rocky Patel

Opinion: State Attorneys Worrell and Ayala Corrupt to the Core

By THE ORLANDO LOCAL NEWS EDITORIAL BOARD

Some wonder whether incoming State Attorney Monique Worrell really believes in the radical agenda of BLM, or simply pays lip-service to capture votes from her high and mighty political demagoguery. BLM has long supported radical positions such as defunding the police and reparations which was attested as early as Ellen McGirt's 2016 article, "Why Ford Foundation Is Underwriting Black Lives Matter" in *Fortune Magazine*. **CONTINUED PAGE 2**

Sabatini to Fight Big Tech Censorship in 2021 Session

By FRANCISCO GONZALEZ

Censorship is all the rage these days. Well, that is, if you're working for a social media company. The rest of us plain don't like it and find it un-American. That's part of the reason that State Representative Anthony Sabatini is introducing a bill that would allow Florida residents to take legal action against social media companies. When Twitter suspended the account of the President of the United States, Donald Trump, it prompted concerns... **CONTINUED PAGE 3**

Mayoral Candidate Continued...



Above: Local yard sign protesting tax increases. Photo Credits: *The Orlando Local News*

Many residents experienced déjà vu several months ago, when a similar vote to raise the property tax rate took place in a commission meeting. This time a strong public effort prevented taxes from being raised. Despite the fact that the millage rate remains at a historic low, the city now takes in more revenue than ever before as a result of adjustments in property values which have increased over the past decade since the recovery of the economy. Even now as the COVID-19 crisis continues, the city emergency fund remains well-stocked and revenues at all time highs.

We believe in fairness at the Local News, and that's why we encourage all of our readers to chime in at www.localnewsorlando.com, and submit their own op-ed or letter when they feel called to do so. Email: Editor@localnewsorlando.com to provide your own feedback to our opinions and editorials!

Rachel Saunders Plakon Files for State House District 29

By FRANCISCO GONZALEZ

January 2021 is here and some candidates in Florida have wasted no time in announcing their intention to run in 2022. While some constituents may want a break from politics, it seems that these days candidates aren't as fortunate, needing to get a jump on fundraising and getting their name out there to potential voters.

Fortunately, for Rachel Saunders Plakon her last name will go a long way on the ballot for Florida House District 29. The seat she is running for is currently held by her husband, Scott Plakon, who will be term limited after eight consecutive years in the Florida House. This district currently covers parts of north Seminole County, including Longwood, Lake Mary, Heathrow, and Sanford.

"I'm excited today to announce my candidacy for the Florida House of Representatives," said Mrs. Plakon in a January 12 Facebook post. "Thank you to my husband Scott, my family, friends, and community for your encouragement to serve."

While she has lived in Central Florida for nearly a decade, Mrs. Plakon is originally from Bonifay, Florida, a small town in the Panhandle, and was born to second-generation timber farmers. She will bring with her the experience of a businesswoman who has also kept an interest and involvement in politics throughout her life. Mrs. Plakon owns a real estate investment company and brokerage firm. She is a graduate of Oral Roberts University, where she was President of the College Republicans. She later returned to her native Florida to work with Governor Jeb Bush's child mentoring initiative. Mrs. Plakon also once lived in Nashville, where she started a successful real estate business and pursued her passion for Christian music. One of the songs she wrote and performed, "Strong Heart," climbed to #1 on the Inspirational Country Music charts. Returning to her home state of Florida in 2013, Mrs. Plakon grew her real estate investment business and later began working as a Land Specialist with one of Central Florida's top commercial real estate brokerages. The Orlando-Sanford International Airport was among her major clients. These experiences should be assets to her candidacy, as land and transportation are some of the most important issues for the future of Central Florida.

Mrs. Plakon has also continued her service as an active volunteer in civic and charitable causes. A former vice chair of the Planning and Zoning Board in Winter Garden, Mrs.



Photo Credits: Rachel Saunders Plakon

Plakon was tapped by successive House Speakers to serve on the Florida Commission on the Status of Women. In 2019, she was appointed by Governor Ron DeSantis to the Florida Women's Suffrage Centennial Commission, making numerous appearances across the state to celebrate the 100th anniversary of women's right to vote. Mrs. Plakon was wed to her husband, Scott Plakon, in 2019, becoming a part of a family that includes six children and four grandchildren. Mr. Plakon has served in the Florida House from 2008-2012 and then again from 2014 to the present. His first wife, Suzanne Plakon, lost a long and very public battle to Alzheimer's disease, passing away in 2018 at the age of 57. Mr. Plakon has demonstrated a record of fiscal responsibility in the Florida House and was an early supporter of criminal justice reform. In 2020, he cosponsored a bipartisan bill to eliminate time limits for the prosecution for sexual assault of minors. Mr. Plakon has faced several hotly contested elections from Democratic challengers but has managed to win each and every time since 2014. He is surely now gearing up to help his wife win her first. Mrs. Plakon has already been endorsed by Seminole County Sheriff Dennis Lemma, State Attorney Phil Archer, and public defender Blaise Trettis. Representative Scott Plakon expressed his pride in his wife taking this leap. "It looks like Seminole County voters will be getting an upgrade!"

State Attorney Continued...

Putting aside the violence perpetrated by fringe groups on both sides of the spectrum, BLM still remains dangerous in their lack of basis in reality. We decided to go through the statistics and history ourselves to demonstrate just how deranged Worrell's pet organization is. Fact: a police officer is 18 1/2 more likely to be killed by a black male than an unarmed black male is to be killed by a police officer (*Wash. Post*). Fact: only three shootings of an unarmed black male occurred in Orange County within the past decade (*Wash. Post*). Fact: the US distributed reparations following the Civil War in the form of funds from "Freedman's Bureau," and the government continues to support underprivileged groups, including those urban areas, by means of SNAP and a wide array of welfare programs like Medicaid and Section 8 housing. Fact: the majority of wealth generated in the US derived from the northern industrial states, not the agrarian, aristocratic south where most post-Revolution slaves were held captive. Without statistical evidence and historical backing, the BLM movement's policy objectives don't have many legs to stand on, and Worrell, as an educated adult should know this. What is really going on? You can decide that for yourself. But in the end, as Worrell's racist policies and divisive rhetoric rip our community apart, we should all ask ourselves where her allegiance lies? With the people, or the power of political office?

Opinion: Casselberry Commissioner Must End Political Divisiveness For Well-being of Town

By ANDREW RICHTER

Casselberry residents deserve better than the divisive tone and obstructive attitude Commissioner Chad Albritton exhibited at a recent town hall meeting. Out of order and out of line, Albritton fails to even grasp the most rudimentary elements of a city meeting. Albritton seems to spend more time reading and spewing the words of Karl Marx than Robert's Rules. What's more, according to a source within the city, Albritton refused to open his agenda packet, instead focusing his efforts on attacking a fellow Commissioner and displayed little respect or decorum for the rules. Perhaps if Albritton arranged his attention toward solving his own property's code violations, or do more than grift off a government salary, more voters would take him seriously in his obvious aspirations for high office.

Opinion: Orange GOP Faces Crisis in Leadership



That the Orange County Republican Executive Committee can write checks under Charles Hart is not secret. But can it win? Very few Republicans living in Orange County believe in their party's leader. Despite throwing everything and the kitchen sink at winning, the GOP chair can't seem to pull his weight across the finish line. When asked recently about the state of the GOP in Orange County at the state Republican Convention on January 15-16, Hart told our Editor, "I really don't have time for this stuff!"

Why can't any Republican candidates seem to win in Orange County anymore, outside of Winderemere? The answer can't lie with the candidates. The formidable and highly charismatic Bruno Portigliatti lost handily to Geraldine Thompson, even though his appealing background as a businessman and first generation immigrant served as a positive for voters. Vennia Francois, obviously an underdog in the race against Val Demings, lost by more than she needed to in her district. Moreover, the Orange GOP also failed to produce a single significant win in terms of city or county commission races this past year. Even more disturbing, Orange County under the leadership of Charles Hart has failed to keep up with Republican voter registration which is currently rising in most counties across our state.

The answer to the question is mobilization. For local candidates to win, the County GOP requires an inspiring leader, not to mention, one with an acutal plan. Speaking to several county party leaders on the subject, most agreed with the assessment. When asked about the dilemma with the leadership in the Orange County REC, one neighboring REC leader replied: "I'm surprised you used leadership and Orange County in the same sentence." In less than two years, a generation of conservative leaders were wiped out and the party lost the burgeoning young professionals once filling the ranks of Orange County's REC and YR legion. Orange County Republicans must hold Hart accountable for his lack of vision and poor planning. But some say this "Hart-less" performance may only be the tip of the iceberg.

According to the Florida Bar, Charles Hart's physical address indicates he may not reside in Orange County, a requirement of party rules and regs in determining eligibility for chairmanship. No formal complaint has been filed. However, our sources declined to say whether they will do so.

Sabatini to Fight Big Tech Censorship

(continued from page) ...concerns not only from many Americans, but also heads of state of foreign governments including Mexico, France, and Germany. In a statement released by her spokesperson, Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany said, "The right to freedom of opinion is of fundamental importance. Given that, the chancellor considers it problematic that the president's accounts have been permanently suspended." It's not every day that you find Anthony Sabatini and Angela Merkel agreeing on something. But freedom of speech is one of the foundations of America and an idea that has become popular in many parts of the world since the United States enshrined it as the first natural right that government is established to protect. Some might argue that the only protections the U.S. Constitution guarantees is the right of free speech from the federal government. After all, the amendment reads: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances." However, there are additional things that make Twitter's censorship so troubling. First, it is the fact that censorship – anytime, any place – does not promote a culture of free speech. Secondly, these Big Tech companies are becoming so



powerful that they are becoming as much or (as some argue) even more powerful than the government.

More so, these social media platforms have become the new town square. And if they have the power to silence the President of the United States from getting his message out to the public in our new town square – the internet – then they have the power to silence any one of us. Some might also argue that the free-market answer is to create an alternative platform. One of those platforms, Parler, was gaining in popularity, especially among Trump supporters. However, just days after the Twitter banned the President, Big Tech giants Google, Apple, and Amazon virtually eliminated access to Parler. Google and Apple banned the apps from their stores and devices and Amazon removed Parler from its web hosting services. Clearly, these Big Tech giants have now proven to use their monopolistic powers to remove any competition. It didn't take the President being removed for Representative Sabatini to take action. He had the foresight to start making moves on Big Tech in December, when he filed House Bill 33, the "Stop Social Media Censorship Act." In a message he tweeted on December 4, Sabatini argued that "this Bill would allow for a state cause of action (lawsuit) against large social media companies that censor user's content. Big-Tech censorship is a threat to our

Republic." If the bill passes the Florida legislature and is signed into law by the Governor, it could go into effect as soon as July 1. Lawmakers across Florida should get behind this bill and stand up for the right of every American to have access to the new town square – before it's too late.

Calls for "Pres. Donald J. Trump Highway" Gain Momentum



In addition to fighting big tech censorship, State Rep. Anthony Sabatini has proposed to rename a Florida highway in honor of the state's first resident to serve as Chief Executive: "This legislative session I will be sponsoring an amendment to rename U.S. Highway 27 as the "President Donald J. Trump Highway." Looking forward to working on this important designation honoring one of the greatest Presidents in American History."

It remains unclear which city Trump will make his final residence. However, the Sunshine State seems to be his final choice. Palm Beach forbids Trump from taking up long term residence at his Mar-a-Lago club where he returned to on January 20 at 11 AM (pictured above).

Ben Paris Elected Seminole County GOP Chairman

When Ben Paris stepped into the Seminole GOP office for the first time as Chair, one thing seemed very clear: something needed to change. The county's political evolution gallops along at a blistering pace, inaugurated first with the loss of Congressman John Mica, and now with increasingly closer electoral margins for state and local races. The deep red of the formerly strong Republican county has now shifted to a dark purple. After years of what many have characterized as vacant leadership from Seminole GOP officials, Republicans may be headed for a rebound in the election of Ben Paris. The former Longwood commissioner, known for his trademark moustache and charming personality,

brings a fresh perspective to tackling the problems the county Republican Executive Committee faces. One county party member explained his frustration at the past few years' stagnation, lavishing praise on Paris' vision and energy: "Let's face it: the REC's a wreck! We've seen what Ben's done in Longwood and at the Chamber. I'm confident he'll come through for us."

We asked Paris at the state GOP convention where he sees the party headed in 2021. He stated that "the Republican Party is going to return to its roots as the big tent party. We need to move away from being viewed as the "death-by-thousand-cuts" party, and instead, develop into the cohesive voice for conservative Republican policy in Seminole County, fighting for everyone's rights and freedoms."



Above: Seminole County Republican Executive Committee Chairman Ben Paris poses with State Legislator Jason Brodeur at the state GOP convention.

Right: Greg Fournier, newly elected Vice Chair of the Osceola County Republican Party at the Rosen Shingle Creek.

Greg Fournier Elected Osceola GOP Vice Chair

The Osceola County GOP recently elected political guru Greg Fournier to the place of Vice Chair for the Republican Executive Committee. A veteran formerly serving in the Army Airborne, Fournier ventured into a political consulting career following his time in the US Army. His expertise has earned him the distinction of advising politicians at all levels of elected office, including members of congress. Despite the conundrum faced by Osceola GOP leaders, many are hopeful Fournier and his team will be able to craft a better future for the Republican party in that county.



Sarah Sprinkel Kicks Off 2021 Mayoral Campaign in Winter Park

By THOMAS CHAPIN

Sarah Sprinkel recently kicked off her Mayoral campaign in Winter Park at the Winter Park Nine Golf Club. Scores of residents dawned their warm clothes, put on their masks and showed up (outside) to wish Sprinkel well and show their support for a candidate who might be Winter Park's first female Mayor.

The past year's trials for a world, nation and community left a longing for stability and a firm hand in leadership. Sprinkel's supporters declared that "she remains the most qualified," and, "a steady hand for the city" in these trying times, in addition, to bringing a "fresh perspective on family and community" as woman. After a career in education and business consulting, Sprinkel decided to run for Winter Park commission where she honed her skills as a public servant, with a keen eye for reform and efficiency. Now, Sprinkel says she wants to do the same thing as Mayor, and bring our community together.



Photo Credits: The Orlando Local News

Opinion: Communist Style Shaming at Rollins?

By SHEILA HARMON

A now defunct social media group based out of Rollins College attempted to shame students into wearing a mask by publicly exposing them online. Not only does this behavior fit into cyber bullying and harassment, it also qualifies as something out of a Communist regime.

In many cases, a student sent home for disobeying the rules might never be able to return, especially if they retain foreign citizenship.

Although it appears the school administration acted to stop the students, the institution's history may tell the story of the years to come: the suppression of free speech and the exercise of religion litter the university's past. Let's hope the administration and school's board gets it right the next time.

Pastor's Corner: Brother John Harris Offers Words of Wisdom in a Dark Hour

Everyone had high hopes for 2021. Many still do. The first week of January put those hopes on hold for a great deal of Americans, with our nation's divisions on full display. "How did we come to this point as a nation?" That is the question asked of brother John Harris, a long-time Pastor in Baptist ministry both here in the US at First Baptist Church of Orlando, among others, and abroad.

In his deep, hallmark British accent, Harris explained: "I think the biggest thing for me, is what happened to truth? No one tells the truth anymore; neither party tells the truth." The Bible says, "the truth will set you free." Pastor Harris feels the challenge of honesty in our national rhetoric needs to be addressed and that the church must speak out.

Among the multitude of problems faced by our country today is the politics of vengeance, or "social justice," so often brought up in the discourse of our political leaders and the news media. While scripture mandates justice, it also commands the followers of Jesus to forgive. Brother Harris emphasized the necessity of forgiveness in our national conversations: "The other thing that concerns me deeply about America is this-- where is the voice of the church since Billy Graham died? Why isn't the Christian church speaking up about forgiveness?"

Brother Harris knows hardships and the difficulties life entails. But he also understand the immense promises of God and those who love and trust in his Son. Harris first began his Christian walk as a young man in Wales. Born into a mining family, his career didn't start with the clergy. Instead, he joined the Royal Air Force and later went into insurance.

During this time he also became heavily engaged in his church as a part time minister, where he met his wife after first hearing her on a film reel sent to Germany for the troops during his time in military service there. Before moving to the US on business, Harris founded a program to rehabilitate drug addicts in Great Britain by showing them the love of the Lord and counseling them at a fifty room, 17th century estate he leased in the English countryside for 1 pound from a generous donor. Upon moving to the US, Harris again re-entered the ministry and for 25 plus years served as an Assistant Pastor at First Orlando. In the edition we will further explore the life and story of Pastor Harris in an upcoming bio as a part of our "Pastor's Corner" column.

Pastor's Corner will be a recurring column by local clergy to provide spiritual sustenance for your monthly walk. The heartening words and uplifting content of these columns will be certain to bring you peace and warmth during these times.



Bay Hill Ballyhoo: Arnold Palmer's Club Celebrates the New Year in Style



Photo Credits: *The Orlando Local News*

By STAFF WRITER

Residents and members of the Bay Hill Club rung in the New Year with style feasting upon their choice of duck, lamb or scallops. For an appetizer, diners enjoyed French Onion Soup and a delicious seafood platter of shrimp and crab.

Easy listening, country and rock filled the room as members enjoyed the soft sounds of cocktail hour. Decked out for the holidays, garlands and Christmas trees filled the rooms and halls of the club.

Pictured above, the Chef and restaurant staff welcome guests for the annual dinner. Upon arrival, members were greeted with New Years props including hats and were also given complementary champagne to kick off the night's festivities which lasted until 9 PM when guests dispersed in preparation for their own New Years Eve countdowns at home or on the town. Despite a long night of fun, many members were also seen on the grounds for a New Years Day golf match to "drive" their year in the right direction. For members or guests of the Lodge, Bay Hill presents an unforgettable experience on New Years one will always remember.

GOD'S WORD

"For the Lord guards the way of the righteous,
But the way of the ungodly shall perish."
Psalms 1:6

WORDS TO THE WISE

"Our liberty depends on the freedom of [expression], and
that cannot be limited without being lost."
Thomas Jefferson

IN MEMORIAM: The Life & Legacy of Michael Mennello: 1933-2020

By MARSHALL SWANSON

At the close of 2020, Central Floridians remembered the legacy of Michael A. Mennello, co-founder of the Mennello Museum of Art he supported with his late wife Marilyn.

Friends and political leaders expressed sadness upon his passing: "He was just a dynamo," said long-time friend Mary Kenny to the *Orlando Sentinel*. "He had a vision for the arts in our community. He was an Orlando icon."

Mennello and his wife Marilyn met in 1975 in Winter Park at a cocktail party. Mennello said it was love at first sight: "I fell in love with her the moment I met her," Mennello said in a 2012 interview. "Art was one of our common denominators."

Long-time friend Ross Silverbach, told the *Sentinel*, "they were a power couple." And a generous power couple at that.

The Loch Haven Park museum bearing their name is adorned by 35 paintings by folk artist Earl Cunningham — worth \$2.7 million, according to the city of Orlando. The couple's famous holiday party had continued over the years, even in the aftermath of the passing of Michael Mennello's lifelong love Marilyn in 2006. The annual holiday party in December attracted Winter Park's elite and power players from all sectors of Central Florida—though Mennello and his aides cancelled this year's due to Coronavirus concerns. Mennello's annual party normally took place the weekend of his passing, making

the occasion all the more somber and reflective on the life of a man whose legacy will live on for many years to in hearts, minds and museums in Central Florida and around the world.

Mennello and his wife remained active in politics and developed fond friendships with several Presidents and all ranks of politicians, including former Congressman John L. Mica, who described his experience at Mennello's parties to the *Sentinel* in the early '80s: "I've been to affairs of state all over the world, and the Mennellos could entertain as well or better than anything I've ever seen... It doesn't get more elegant than this in Central Florida." The elegance and class of the Mennello's holiday soirées also reflected the beauty of their inner core: a love for their community, nation and world.

In 2018, Mennello further expanded the museum with artwork valued at \$8.75 million. For their contributions to art, our publication also selected Michael Mennello with an award for his efforts to bolster the arts. Sadly, his health did not allow him to attend our event at the University Club in early December, though his good friend Ross Silverbach accepted the award following his passing.

Michael Mennello and his late wife Marilyn will be recalled for generations to come as titans of art philanthropy and patriots. We salute their work.



Above: Michael and Marilyn Mennello at a black tie event to promote the arts in Central Florida.

Photo Credits: The Mennello Museum of Art

Antonio's Brings Italy's Finest Flavors to the Table

By MARSHALL SWANSON

When Greg Gentile started a small Italian market in Maitland some three decades ago, he might never have imagined the establishment would become the upscale restaurant it is today. Known by many residents as one of Central Florida's finest Italian restaurants, diners flock from all over to quench their thirst for fine wines and fill their stomachs with good, hearty Italian food, with many recipes passed down through the family.

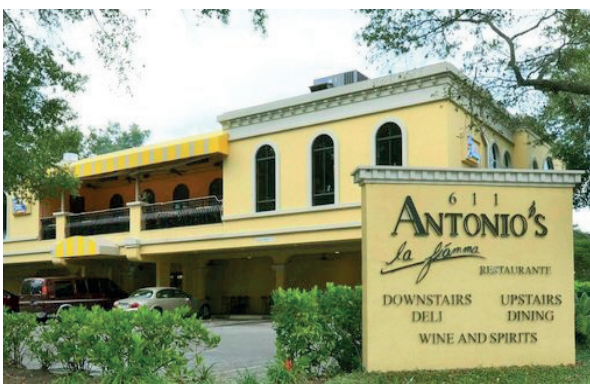
Gentile grew up running a bar and liquor store with his father, though he yearned to chart his own course. Antonio, his grandfather, from whom the restaurant derives its name, arrived as a first generation immigrant to the United States from Sicily just a few decades prior. A long-time local resident, Gentile grew up in Maitland and attended Bishop Moore.

Following the founding of his small market, he discovered a great demand not only for the goods of his shop, but also an interest from customers in eating there. As a result, Gentile set up four stools for his guests. His patrons kept pouring in, and soon even adding several sets of tables and chairs didn't solve the problem. And so, in 1990, Gentile added a second floor to the building, inaugurating his formal dining restaurant, Antonio's Upstairs. Thus is the story of man whose hard work, ingenuity and a little bit of luck culminated into one of our state's most successful dining establishments.

Les Callahan, General Manager at Antonio's Upstairs, explained Gentile's theory: "If I buy the finest ingredients and freshest food, I can't lose." Indeed, his theory proved was vindicated.

Antonio's ambience and culinary mastery not only provide the perfect backdrop for a romantic evening or a celebration, but also beckons diners for any occasion. On our recent visit, we enjoyed the three course Halibut with smoked Salmon and Coconut Pie. However, everything on the mouth-watering menu tastes exquisite, especially with one of Antonio's wide varieties of Vino.

Whether a resident or from out-of-town, Antonio's is the place to find the perfect combination of savory Italian cuisine and a relaxing ambience. Buon appetito!



Top Left: An external shot of Antonio's. Bottom Left: Antonio's special Halibut dish. Bottom Right: Antonio, Greg Gentile's grandfather, with his children. Top Right: Gentile's mother.

Photo Credits: Antonio's Upstairs

Jimmy, Johnny and Eckhard Polka Their Way Into 2021 at Hollerbach's Willow Tree Cafe



Left to Right: Jimmy Horzen, John Horzen, Eckhard Wachsmuth

By MARSHALL SWANSON

"Direct from Stuttgart, Germany, it's Eckhard Wachsmuth!" shouts accordionist Jimmy Horzen. His musical partner blasts away on the Alphorn and its trumpeting sound echoes through Hollerbach's Willow Tree Cafe and out onto the streets of downtown Sanford. The two are joined by Jimmy's son John seasonally. A student at Yale and musical prodigy, John plays the saxophone and violin as well. The trio performs a wide range of tunes from Polka to Jazz and even Rock.

From Friday through Sunday, diners can hear the group perform live at Hollerbach's as they feast upon traditional German dishes passed down through the generations. From Eisbein to Bratwurst, Weiner-schnitzel to Sauerkraut, Hollerbach's has it all! While dining, you'll get to make special requests for your favorite songs, most of which the trio can play with ease. Among the top musical requests: Edelweiss, the Beer Barrel Polka (known as Rosamunde in German), the Pennsylvania Polka, and the Liechtensteiner Polka. Young and old alike congregate to join in the fun, as dancers fill the floor, including 86 year old Marge Freeman from Cleveland, Ohio, one of the birthplaces of American Polka.

Sitting in front of Marge's table: a 21st birthday party and a 99 year old visitor toasting the establishment's signature anthem: "Ein Prosit, Der Gemütlichkeit!" On December 31st, the restaurant held a German New Years countdown and rang in 2021 with style, literally, as Eckhard played his trademark cowbells and Jimmy the accordion. In addition to playing the Alphorn and cowbells, Eckhard also sings in German and English.

There is no doubt that the musical experience at Hollerbach's will leave you pining for more as Gemütlichkeit fills your heart. For those choosing to visit during the week, the Greg Parnell Trio performs Thursdays 6-9 PM as well through March 2021. The restaurant has also expanded to three levels, including a rooftop bar, and contains a deli and shop right next door to the main building. For a great time, with good friends, visit Hollerbach's in Sanford—where Gemütlichkeit happens!

Rocky Patel Continued...



Above: Rocky Patel and Jeff Borysiewicz pose for a socially distanced photo

Fighting fake news isn't just a pastime for reporters (or President Trump, depending on your viewpoint). The cigar lobby also defends itself against blatantly false attacks every year. Patel sounded off about misinformation about the health and demographic implications of cigar smoking. According to a *Cigar Aficionado* survey posted on Feb 12, 2016, out of 7,500 persons polled, most smokers tend to vote Republican. Despite strong support from the cigar community, President Donald Trump signed into law legislation to curb youth access to smoking by raising the legal age to 21.

The policy, though well meaning, doesn't take the facts into account, according to Patel: "Education is key. What most people don't know, including regulators, is that usage patterns differ between cigar users and cigarette smokers. For example, there are very few youth access issues for cigars as opposed to cigarettes."

He further opined: "It doesn't make sense that you can go over to Afghanistan and fight for your country but not smoke a cigar if you're an adult under 21. That is also why Jeff and I have been so supportive of the great patriots in our military, for all that they do for us."

When asked about the health ramifications of cigar smoking, Patel hit back, explaining that "FDA regulators don't have enough conclusive evidence cigars cause cancer... There is really no scientific data to prove this. We've been working with the Trump administration and we look forward to working with the incoming administration as well to resolve these issues."

Although health opponents of cigars point to cases such as the recent cancer diagnosis of radio talk show host Rush Limbaugh, they often fail to take into account underlying conditions and other usage habits such as cigarette smoking. Some studies have shown that cigars actually lower blood pressure, aid in digestion and promote mental health through relaxation. But in the uphill battle against the nanny state, cigar smokers can rest assured with Rocky Patel and Jeff Borysiewicz as advocates.

Local Company Among First to Install New Tesla Powerwall for Residents



By MARCUS BRANSON

With the advent of the 2020 Coronavirus pandemic, most white collar workers and students transitioned to working from home. Many seniors also retreated in fear of illness. With demand for energy on the rise, low interest rates and the possibility of large stimulus packages, the cost of living and inflation may be spiking soon.

Solar technology offers a solution for those in need a break from the stranglehold of the electric company. And a large slate of companies exist to meet those needs. But one company's state of the art solar panels and professional installation is just the tip of the iceberg! Among their other products and services, One Stop Solar

now offers the Tesla Powerwall. The Tesla Powerwall rejuvenates the lost solar energy normally returned to the grid.

One Stop Solar gives locals a reasonable and economical solution to the problem of high energy bills. One Stop Solar is a local company with multiple offices in Florida and Puerto Rico. With over 100 certified engineers and certified technicians ready to service the market, the company works to afford their customers top service in the most efficient way possible. To schedule your estimate, call (866) -568 – 9042 or email info@1stopsolar.com.

ROLLINS HAIRCUTTERY & SALON

CUSTOM STYLING
MEN AND WOMEN'S HAIR CUTS

COLOR SERVICES

BRAZILIAN BLOW OUTS

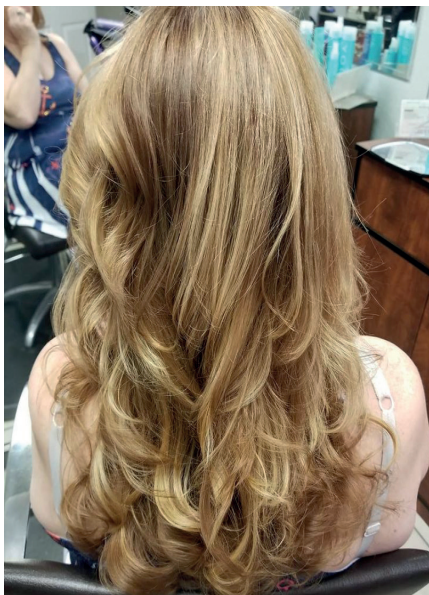
BALAYAGE

KERATIN COMPLEX

TONERS

MANICURE

WAX & MORE!



631B FAIRBANKS AVE.
WINTER PARK, FL 32789

407-488-9754



Advertisement

Will Disney World Become COVID-19 Vaccine Site?



By STAFF WRITER

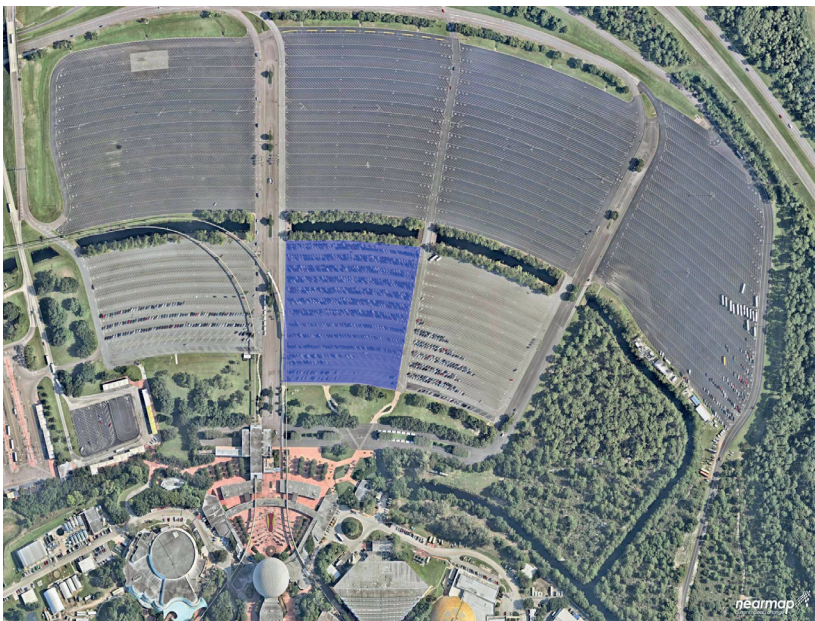
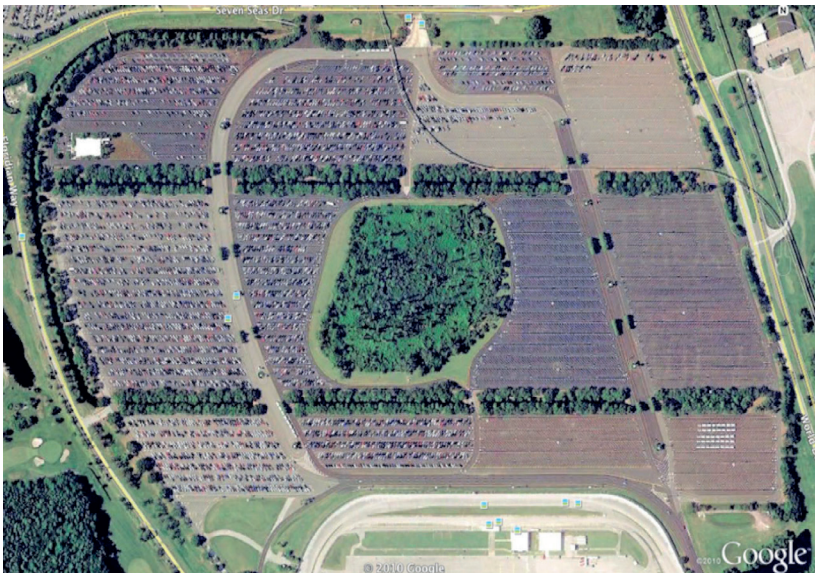
Although the general public is not able to ride any attractions at Disneyland in California, the theme park recently opened as a COVID-19 vaccination center and the parking lot will serve as a location were thousands receive injections on a daily basis.

Is it possible that Walt Disney World in Orlando might serve a similar purpose? According to officials, it is. The state received word from Disney World that the company is offering to aid in the vaccination any way it can. Disney relayed that it is focused on community service during the pandemic. Walt Disney World also stated that the company has the ability to store the vaccine with ultra cold freezers. Jared Moskowitz, a spokesman for Disney, explained “we have no ultracold

freezer storage problems here in the states. There are plenty of hospitals with them. County health departments have them. Some universities have them. Walt Disney World has one.”

Governor Ron DeSantis suggested at a Longwood press conference recently a similar possibility: “You literally could drop a bunch of vaccines at Disney, Orange County Schools, wherever”

With over 75,000 cast members before the shut down and millions of visitors each year, Disney has great experience managing crowds. With giant parking lots, some the size of airports, the capacity exists to better deploy inoculations than anywhere else, advocates of the idea argue.



Top Right: Magic Kingdom parking lot. Bottom Right: EPCOT parking lot. Bottom Left: Magic Kingdom guests receive their temperature checks.

Photo Credits: Walt Disney World Resorts; Google Maps; Near Map

TRAVEL: New Years Copenhagen (2017)

"We Travel For Your Pleasure!" -----✈



Top Left/Center: Tivoli Gardens. Top Right: Nyhavn. Bottom Left: Almanak Restaurant. Mid Right: Carlsberg Brewery. Bottom Right: Kronborg. Photo Credits: Marshall Swanson

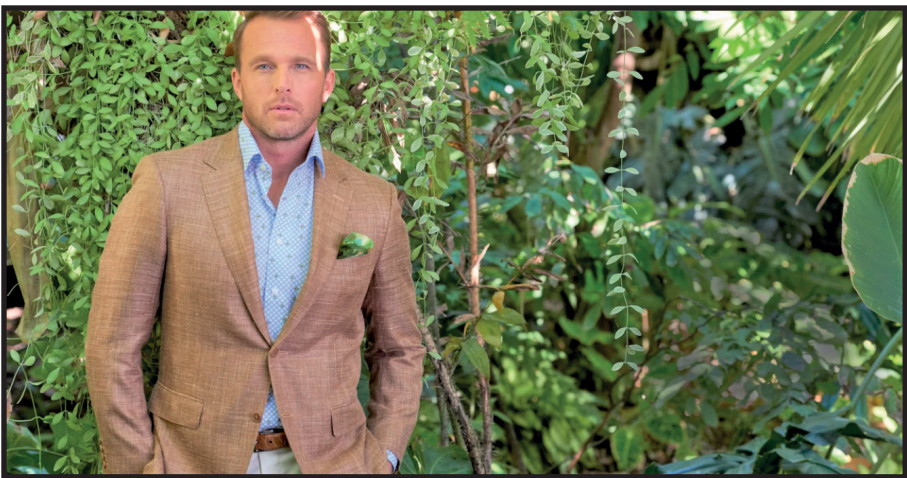
By MARSHALL SWANSON

The vaccine has finally arrived, but for many, the wait for freedom of travel still seems like a trip to the DMV. However, with a hope for the relaxation of restrictions in the coming year, a boost in travel will certainly be expected en masse. New Years Eve 2020 closed the door on the dreadful months of dullness and pain and opened the door to a better celebration in 2021. But how and where will you make plans to celebrate on NYE 2021? While the holiday season remains a long twelve months away, planning always makes for a perfect ending. In this article, we present Copenhagen, Denmark as an ideal New Years retreat and the secrets to a successful trip to the modern Nordic city.

Pack several layers of warm clothing. Be prepared to spend at least fifteen euros per meal, if you're not on a starvation diet. And while the country's high minimum wage and taxes make goods and services more expensive, visitors can still find ways to budget. Even the economical tourist can find free sights and sounds to enjoy in the city, from the old orange colored naval barracks to the colorful buildings of Copenhagen's Nyhavn Harbor. Local churches also offer concerts and free services with beautiful music on New Years Day. A reasonable but classic venue for lodging is the Scandic Hotel, the oldest hotel in Copenhagen, which also contains one of the oldest "swing doors" in the world.

For less than just \$100, New Years Eve celebrants may attend Tivoli Gardens' spectacular fireworks show and enjoy dinner inside in the warmth. An inspiration for Walt Disney's

Magic Kingdom and Disneyland, Tivoli Gardens contains fun for people of all ages, with rides and amusements for everyone. Following New Years holiday celebrations, you'll find Copenhagen and the surrounding towns and villages to be filled with charm and history worth sticking around for. Take a quick train ride to Malmo, Sweden and explore the surrounding churches and historic buildings. Closer to Copenhagen, fans of Shakespeare will be enthralled with the magnificent Kronborg Castle, known best in the English speaking world as the setting of Hamlet. For beer connoisseurs, the Carlsberg Brewery presents a unique opportunity to tour the company's main production site and enjoy some fresh tastings along with a delicious lunch. To complete your time in Copenhagen, splurge by dining at one of the world's finest restaurants: Almanak, offering modern Nordic cuisine and succulent dishes representing the finest culinary minds of Scandinavia. If 2020 brought you down, take a trip up to Denmark and see just what the city of Copenhagen holds for you.



JOHN  CRAIG
VISIT JOHN
CRAIG'S ALL *NEW*
POP-UP SHOP ON
THE AVENUE IN
WINTER PARK
Limited Time Offers

339 S Park Ave.
Winter Park, FL 32789

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

"After a difficult year, where so many of us were constantly apart, it was so nice to see so many leaders in the community come together at your *Best of Central Florida* awards luncheon in December. Thank you for taking the necessary precautions and bravely providing a forum for in-person interaction at the conclusion of 2020. We enjoyed it."

Jon M., Orlando

"In a region that gets an unfair reputation for its strip malls and tourist traps, it's nice to see Central Florida getting a high-quality club like London House. While I personally cannot currently afford the high-priced membership, it gives me something to aspire to – and perhaps I'll find a wealthy friend or sugar daddy to take me as their date."

Wendy T., Kissimmee

"2019 was the centennial year for a woman's right to vote. I've enjoyed your coverage of Sarah Sprinkel and hope that 2021 will be the year that Winter Park residents finally elect their first woman mayor!"

Louise B., Winter Park

"I really take issue with your jest that "a cigar a day keeps the COVID away." Says who? Cigars are filthy and COVID is dangerous. Please, just wear a mask!"

Anna E., Orlando

"I read your paper - first page to last. Headline about Christmas and Hanukkah - splendid! Much news about our Central FL communities and well written articles - straight forward and to the point. I will surely look for the next publication."

Marge F., Sanford



Full Portfolio of Letters Available Online at www.LocalNewsOrlando.com

Email Your Feedback At
Contact@LocalNewsOrlando.Com

Local News Throwback
Circa 1982, Dr. Phillips
Marketplace... Then & Now



Photo Description: Above: Developers of Dr. Phillips' first shopping mall and the owners of Loomis Drugs stand on the recently cleared lot, circa 1981-82. From left to right: Jack Turner, Stan Loomis, Larry Turner, Mike Loomis. Below: The Dr. Phillips' Marketplace 2021 (Credit: The Local News - www.localnewsorlando.com)



ABOUT THE LOCAL NEWS

The Orlando Local News was originally founded by Roger Swanson in 1980. His founding of *The Local News* followed a distinguished career in media and public relations that began in the US Army Air Force and eventually took him to the *Kansas City Star* where he served as Travel Editor and Sunday Editor. Later, Swanson moved to Florida where he served as Vice President of Public Relations at Walt Disney World. He then branched out into broadcast news on Channels 9 and 6 in Orlando before founding *The Local News*.
A one of a kind publication, this newspaper seeks only to protect and enhance the interests of the citizens living in these communities, to become a guardian in a sense of the beauty, the privileges, the freedoms and the challenges which make this area such a desirable and delightful place to live. We have no axes to grind; no particular philosophical or political point of view to expound. All of us engaged in the

newspaper are neighbors or friends of these communities. The editor of *The Local News* is Marshall Swanson, who has been involved in radio, government, philanthropy and politics for many years. The main reason for the existence of *The Orlando Local News* is bringing a voice to a wilderness—a wilderness that lacks a voice, a point of view — or simply lacks the coverage of news, current events and personalities in these communities most wish to hear. Other publications simply have not paid much attention to these residents.
We refuse to submit to the pattern of conformity so prevalent among a majority of news publications in this area: out of touch, out of town corporate newspapers seeking nothing less than to gin up division and ideological propaganda in our homes.
The editorial board of this paper will certainly give opinions on matters and topics pertinent to the community represented in this publication. However, we will allow any of those opposed to our point of view a place to voice their opinions, unlike most papers in this area.

About the Editor:

Marshall Swanson is the grandson of founder Roger Swanson. He is the current Editor of *The Orlando Local News*. He previously worked in the US House of Representatives, operated in the field of political activism and campaigns, as well hosting a radio program on both the AM and FM dial. In addition, he has travelled to Iraq on numerous occasions for charity and research which he submitted to Members of Congress and the National Security Council at the White House.



SUPPORT US!
Advertise, sponsor, subscribe
or contribute NOW!
WWW.LocalNewsOrlando.COM