

Pg. 6 Most Read of the Month: Trump's Announcement Effect on Citrus Politics

Citrus County's Monthly
Periodical about Local
Public Affairs for the
Intellectually Curious

Citrus County Concurrent

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**Remembering
Randy Oliver**
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FREE: Please Take One | Vol. II Edition 10

December Edition

www.theconcurrent.com | Monthly Publication

What Comes Next?

The elections are over and a new administrator starts while tragedy strikes with our recently retired one

2023

a bunker mentality

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Concurrent is Free

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Turnout Brainteaser

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EDITORIAL NOTE - The *Concurrent* is a multimedia network of opinion-based news in Citrus County.

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WHAT WE'RE SAYING ON THE WEB

But look, I know very little bit about national politics. I know it feels like I should be a good source of that but there's only so much I can keep straight in my brain and I prefer to prioritize in this order: local issues, statewide issues, academic research, the last 15 years of stats for the Tampa Bay lightning hockey team, and then somewhere after 50 ft of crap is what goes on in federal politics.

- Bobby Winsler Show 11/15/22



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Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!



Remembering Randy Oliver



The Commission honored Randy Oliver during his last meeting on Nov. 7, 2022. He was the administrator for almost eight years.

By Bobby Winsler

November 27

This was a streak I never wanted to have.

For the second consecutive Sunday, an untimely death dominates the other news and becomes the topic of focus, first with dedicated chamber volunteer Chris Delgado and now with former County Administrator Randy Oliver.

Randy was the kind of person who you could ask three people about and end up with five different opinions. He'd personally care about none of them.

He and I got off to a rocky start. I wrote a couple of letters to the editor in 2017 shortly after moving here accusing him of orchestrating the county's abrupt takeover of fire services and he didn't talk to me much when we were at meetings, which wasn't surprising to me because he didn't strike me as the kind of guy who would conversate with anyone - let alone me.

But this changed. After I managed Commissioner Scott Carnahan's successful 2018 bid for reelection, Randy would seek me out in meetings with resounding greetings and stay for some small talk.

One thing that always shone

through no matter the conversation was his sheer brilliance.

He was built like a computer from the 1960s that would impose against a wall yet his brain had the operating capacity of machines not yet designed.

His deliberately slow conversational tone and objectively disengaged demeanor may have been mistaken as a lack of attentiveness to the job, but in reality, Randy's work ethic was legendary.

Before every big decision the commission had to make, there would inevitably be a commissioner who thanked him for the email they received at 3 a.m. after having emailed him after close of business on a weekend.

He truly defied the traditional stereotype of a 9-5 government employee.

We do this, though, with superstar athletes, longtime politicians or our neighbors.

We gloss over the bad and only remember the good in times when tragedy strikes too soon. Kobe Bryant's checkered past with criminal allegations and sharply declining play while still demanding to be the highest paid player were rarely discussed in the wake of his fatal helicopter crash.

And it's also worth noting that Randy wasn't our neighbor.

He retained residency in Escambia County in the tip of the Panhandle, the county that had previously fired him before he was hired in Citrus, during his entire eight year tenure.

The *Chronicle* reported the board had just found out that Randy had remarried after his wife had died about a year prior.

That would be a strange thing to not know about someone you work so closely with, but yet it was quintessentially Randy.

The appointed leader of the county was as stoic as he was enigmatic so we shouldn't be surprised to find out that the same person who was so tied to his Escambia County home that he commuted half the state for almost a decade had already road-tripped the east coast and had plans to travel Europe.

Yet Randy's life serves as a good lesson for how we can remember him in death.

Two things that seem like their opposites can be true at the same time.

He can be a dispassionate administrator and romantic traveler. He undoubtedly saved Citrus County from financial insolvency and yet

ran the county on such a skeleton budget that it potentially hurt us in the long term, especially on residential road resurfacing.

He was both overqualified for his position, and so terrified of losing it that the assistant county administrator position was left vacant for five years, a supplemental leadership void that likely led to a mass senior staff exodus over the last year and a half.

He could be the most efficient administrator in Citrus' history and also be an ineffective communicator who created a lost culture among his staff and a distrusting climate among his constituents.

Lastly, he could have represented a time in Citrus that had run its course and yet still have a legacy that will stand the test of time.

Earlier this year, it was floated to name Meadowcrest after the late commissioner Dennis Damoto. Naming something after Randy would be appropriate as well.

As Commissioner Scott Carnahan told the *Chronicle*, it's hard to describe because it hasn't sunk in yet.

That remains true even days later.

We would not be where we are without him, for better and for worse, and he will be sorely missed.

Why the Concurrent Did Away with the Paywall

Website Content is Fully Free Once Again to Become a Platform, Not Publication



By Bobby Winsler

November 6

One of the most monumental stories in media is the Elon Musk takeover of Twitter.

This happened a week ago from Friday and has been producing headlines ever since from him floating an \$8 a month charge to have a blue check mark to mass layoffs.

An infamous exchange that went viral was Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (AOC) laughing at Musk for, “trying to sell people on the idea that ‘free speech’ is an \$8/mo subscription plan.”

The Congresswoman is mistaking a definition of free meaning “gratis” with free meaning “liberty.”

Same word; two very different meanings.

If you can’t tell the difference, walk into the *Chronicle* office, demand a complimentary subscription based on your First Amendment rights and see what they say.

As bad as this mistake from AOC is, the media’s coverage, including personalities on Twitter itself, hasn’t been much better.

Underlying the absurdity of their analysis is a fundamental misunderstanding of value.

But truthfully it’s hard to cast stones because I too have been struggling with the same concept while building the *Concurrent*.

What I’ve learned from Elon

Musk this week, combined with running into the buzzsaw that is Apple, the world’s most valuable company, has led me to this decision - the *Concurrent* is better without a paywall.

First let me thank those who did subscribe.

I’ve had great discussions with dozens of you over these last 10 months and even more I’ve never talked to, but judging by the numbers of views on each piece, are faithful readers.

I put my faith in people’s intellectual curiosity and you stepped up.

Now here’s what happened. I reprioritized the value that the *Concurrent* can provide Citrus.

I used to think that this value was my perspective on issues. You’ve taught me with your own writing that it’s so much more than that.

The enrichment of as many voices as possible is what is best.

Even Elon Musk recognizes the value a platform can bring the public when run properly and that’s why he viewed buying Twitter as “freeing” the platform.

This is why the *Concurrent* has shifted its focus to two roles: a news aggregator and an editorial platform.

The aggregator is to combine a bunch of the voices who have been doing it a while professionally in one place.

The platform is to amplify your voice because a good idea can come from anywhere.

A few recent changes reflect the emphasis on these two goals. Anyone can create a free account on the *Concurrent* and post about whatever topic they want.

That post now instantaneously appears at the top of the homepage of the website. The forum is also a new standalone tab on the mobile app.

The landing page for the mobile app though, the thing everyone sees when they open it, is the news aggregator.

The *Concurrent* is not in the reporting business the way the *Chronicle* or even Just Wright Citrus are, but we are in the “connecting you to the news” business and our ability to use push notifications to keep you instantaneously in the know about local affairs is an important part of delivering value to you.

This means the mobile app is of the utmost importance.

That’s where Apple comes in. If you haven’t received a push notification in a while, it’s probably because you’re on an iPhone.

Apple takes 30% of any in-app purchases as a tax for being allowed to be listed in their app store. You don’t get to a \$3 trillion valuation without some super intrusive, anti-competitive practices. The premium subscription

option got flagged as not paying the piper and the functionality (such as push notifications) was disabled for much of the year.

The mobile app does more than just push notifications.

It has a live stream of tweets, the Facebook feed, the pictures from Instagram, the audio podcasts from Anchor and the video content from YouTube - all without requiring the user to visit different websites or, even more importantly, have an account.

This means with both the *Concurrent* print edition and the mobile app the platform can truly become a bridge between the traditional and digital worlds all without requiring the person to be on social media.

For much of this year, I defined value as instant monetization. That was necessary but it’s not the goal of the *Concurrent*.

Value should instead be defined as the need it fulfills for you. The aggregator and platform approach, in print and on mobile but independent of social media, is what I sincerely believe is best.

Oh yeah, and I’m going to keep writing too.

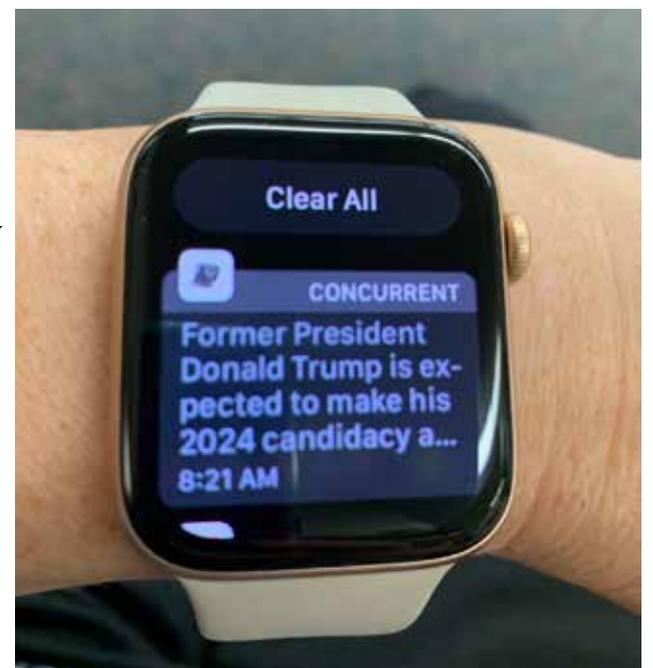


Photo by Barb Warner



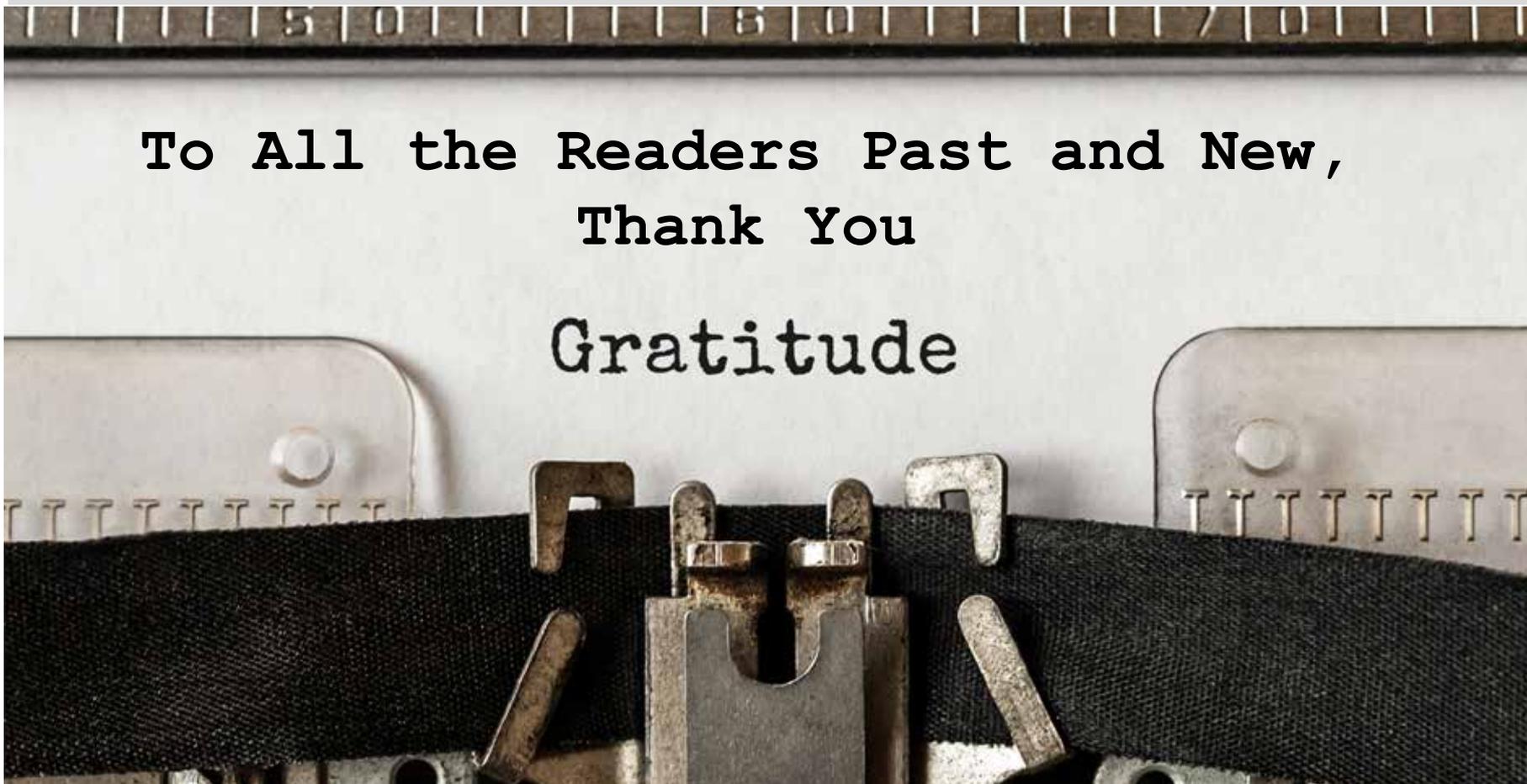
VOTER TURNOUT IN CITRUS GENERAL ELECTION

Answers on Back Page

- ① Total # and % of All Citrus County Voters: ?
- ② Total # and % of Citrus County Democrats: ?
- ③ Total # and % of Citrus County Republicans: ?
- ④ Total # and % of Citrus Non-Major Party: ?

To All the Readers Past and New,
Thank You

Gratitude





Most Popular Column of the Month

THE 2024 CYCLE MIGHT START SOONER
THAN YOU THINK LOCALLY AS WELL

What Former President Trump's Announcement Means for Citrus Candidates

By Bobby Winsler

November 17

Exactly one week after the midterms concluded in Florida, or halfway through the vote counting depending on where you live in the country, former President Donald Trump made his candidacy official as he seeks to win back the office he lost 2 years ago.

The *Concurrent* has been talking about this across a range of mediums from sending out a push notification Tuesday morning to talking about it on the podcast later that afternoon and even posting a picture, albeit for comedic purposes from the number of phones that were out, from the announcement itself.

Some of you, especially long time readers, might be wondering why a national story is attracting so much of my attention.

Until now, the focus has always been hyper local which you probably prefer. I do too.

The announcement has several implications for local elections however. Let's start with the most obvious one.

How many Republicans will continue to back Trump?

This question is far more complicated in Florida where we have our popular governor who is all but certain to join the race as well.

Gov. Ron DeSantis did artfully deflect yesterday saying that, "people just need to chill out a bit" when talking about 2024.

He's right and that's an excellent Florida Man way of putting it.

But think of how difficult that is to say given the circumstance. DeSantis is coming off a larger than



expected margin of victory in an election cycle that saw weaker than expected results from Republicans, including several losses from hand-picked Trump candidates.

This electoral momentum, combined with Trump likely being DeSantis' fiercest competitor entering the race this early, and the Governor's reaction is to slow things down and keep the attention on the Georgia Senate runoff race.

That takes a tremendous amount of confidence.

There's good reason to have it. Fox News had a headline about DeSantis receiving applause minutes before Trump's announcement, a story of at best questionable newsworthy value and at worst an outright declaration of the network's preference. (Editorial Aside: the weirdest headline goes to Politico that described DeSantis' reaction to the announcement with the man shrugging emoji).

Locally the former president remains tremendously popular however. The Citrus County President Trump Republican Club became Club 45 after the 2020 election cycle and its meetings are regularly as well, if not slightly better, attended than meetings of the established Party.

At the risk of this sounding like this is creating conflict, which is certainly not the case because the Republican Executive Committee (REC - the official Party structure locally) has never been better attended or financially stronger, the organization does have elections next month that will suggest if the county's most involved Republicans are firmly behind Trump or open to other challengers.

The former president's early entrance has one other significance for Citrus.

It will likely get 2024 started just as early, which would be the oppo-

site of how 2022 went.

With the exception of Diana Finegan who filed in the summer of 2021, no major countywide candidate filed for election until 2022 and several months into the year at that.

School board member-elect Joe Faherty who took the most votes in the primary before winning the November runoff filed in early March and commissioner-elect Rebecca Bays, who had initially entered the state house race, didn't begin her campaign for county commission until May 12.

That's just 103 days in between entering the race and the election as opposed to the over 600 days that lie between Tuesday's Trump announcement and the 2024 primary election. This will undoubtedly draw other candidates into the fold much earlier than we saw last cycle.

We've seen this before. Pat Crippen, a 2020 challenger to Sheriff Mike Prendergast, started campaigning before the 2018 primaries had concluded and had blanketed the county in road signs in early 2019. He ultimately took 16.20% of the vote.

Ideally this would not happen. I have called campaign signs trash on sticks although I do think I underestimated their effectiveness this last cycle. But the county deserves a break.

All indicators point to 2024 being a hotly contested primary battle well before even the general election. The longer we can delay that locally across all elections, the more the citizens benefit.

Maybe we can heed our governor, and even as campaigns rage on nationally, all learn to just chill a little.

Howard's Hints for Car Care: Get the Right Light



Howard Warner delivers the Concurrent papers. A lifelong car guy, he was the parts manager at Nick Nicholas Ford for over 20 years.

Just recently I read that the price of a new light for this person's vehicle was \$4,000!!

While I have not seen any quite that expensive, vehicle lights have changed a lot. Looking at headlights in particular there are many different ones on today's vehicles.

We used to have a "standard" sealed beam headlamp and while not being extremely bright we all had the same in every make and model. When the halogen headlights were introduced, they were much brighter and we thought great this is a welcomed upgrade; however, halogen bulbs get very hot and would often melt the plastic housing.

Halogen bulbs also cloud up and get dimmer with age - something you won't notice until you have to replace one that's why they are often sold in pairs. A few vehicles had HID or high intensity driving lights. These were the ones that would make your eyes water and sting when they were in the oncoming lane.

This type of headlight was an assembly with a ballast and were expensive for their day as there were only 2 replaceable parts not many of these were used in everyday vehicles.

The projector beam headlight is still a popular unit used today, this uses a lens like a movie projector to focus and magnify the light from a replaceable bulb.

You can tell this type of headlight in oncoming traffic when it initially seems way to bright but as you get closer it seems to dim and not blind you.

Today's technology has given us LED headlights these give a bright white light and are great for the driver and the passing motorist both.

One problem is when LED replacement bulbs are retrofitted into older vehicles. I put LED bulbs in my 2007 and promptly removed them because, although they were brighter and "whiter" than the halogen, the beam that was put out in front of the vehicle was not correct and I actually had reduced visibility. The reduced visibility was because the headlight housing was made for the halogen bulb and the reflector that points the beam out in front of the car was not correctly placed for the many LED chips that made up the new bulb.

Thinking on this I would say I want nice bright headlights when I'm behind the wheel and dimmer lights on the vehicles in oncoming traffic. Let's stay with what the manufacturer installed and always remember be courteous with bright lights.

WANT TO JOIN THE CONVERSATION?

- Leave a Comment on Social Media
- Post on the Discussion Boards
- Write a Letter to the Editor



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Community Letters to the Editor

Time on My Hands

By Cheryl Melton
Letter to the Editor

As a flight attendant, I was always waking up in different time zones. But this biannual routine of setting the clocks up (or back) an



hour really messes up my routine. Ben Franklin saw the financial benefit of rising with the sun and retiring early. This would save on candles. Franklin had a habit of staying up late and playing cards. He usually slept until noon. In an essay he pokes fun at his bad habit by suggesting several things to get people up at sunrise such as tax on window shutters, rationing candles and even ringing church bells at sunrise to get people up. He never proposed resetting clocks by one hour.

In 1918 the U.S. first enacted Daylight Savings Time (D.S.T.) to save energy. Many farmers were against this change. It was hel-

ter-skelterr the time zones even within state boundaries. Thus in 1966, the Uniform Time Act set up time zone boundaries in the country. Arizona, Hawaii, and the American territories do not observe DST. In a March 2022 (Monmouth University poll), 61% of Americans would prefer making D.S.T. the permanent time.

Why have the hassle of changing clocks twice a year? Or the hassle of a starving dog wondering why his supper is now an hour later? It is nice having light at the end of the day to enjoy the evening.

Retail stores love D.S.T. as it means people are out and about shopping. It seems to hurt drive-in movie theatres as later sunsets mean less night movies. In 1966 there were more than 4,000 drive-in movie theaters . . . Today, only

about 300 remain. Some feel that D.S.T. meant doom for this industry. D.S.T. was not shown to cause decreased energy use. In a study in California, there was only a 0.2% decrease in energy use during D.S.T. Changing back and forth can even effect people's health. Research suggests more heart attacks, car accidents, mental problems, and immune-related issues on the day after the March spring forward change.

On Mar. 15, 2022, the US Senate unanimously approved a bill that would make DST permanent as of Nov. 20, 2023. It has not yet been approved by the House or signed by President Biden. The delay is meant to give transportation providers time to make schedule changes. We need to get our sanity back and change to D.S.T. year round.

Watching You

By Roy San Martin
Letter to the Editor

Don't you hate this? You get a song stuck in your head and think about it everywhere. I heard "Every Breath You Take" and keep singing the words:

"Every breath you take
And every move you make
Every bond you break
Every step you take
I'll be watching you".

It sounds more sinister than a love song.

But it also made me think about the popularity of the social platform, Tik Tok which "watches" its users as a data espionage issue.

ByteDance, a Chinese governmental company, owns Tik Tok. Cy-

bersecurity experts warn that China has already been monitoring its own people through this technology and could also gather and exploit information on Americans.

Tik Tok users find entertainment and information here.

China controls the largest part of the digital "territory" of the world through its popular Apps: WeChat, Sina Weibo, Tencent QQ, Douban, Baidu Tieba, Xiahongshu, and Youku.

All seem to send users' data back to Beijing. In fact, these Apps are entering the financial markets as WeChat has issued a digital Yuan to promote digital currency.

Many social apps track the location of their users for "advertising" purposes.

They claim that ads will be specific to the area that the user lives. But FBI sources have noted Tik Tok had specifically tracked the physical locations of US government officials, activists, public figures, and journalists.

The U.S. Treasury Department's Committee on Foreign Investments in the U.S. noted that Apps like Tik Tok had financial information on Americans which could be used in future business negotiations.

The Chinese warrier, Sun Tszu believed the ultimate goal of warfare is to win without fighting.

China is winning by controlling the digital territory and minds of the world.

Sun Tszu said: "If you know the enemy

and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles.

If you know yourself but not the enemy, for every victory gained you will also suffer a defeat.

If you know neither the enemy nor yourself, you will succumb in every battle."

Through Tik Tok, China is learning all about the Americans (their enemy) and will not succumb in the final battle.



Building a Solid Foundation

By Don Farley

Letter to the Editor

Today when you turn on the news, it is about two political parties (Republicans and Democrats) and the bickering in Congress.

But when the Constitutional Convention delegates met in Philadelphia in 1787, they purposely omitted any mention of political parties from the constitution.

Many harken back to the bloody civil wars in England in the 1600's where political parties were seen as corrupt and self-interest.

In 1796, George Washington's farewell address warned against three dangers that could destroy the union: "regionalism, partisanship, and foreign entanglements."

On regionalism, he said: "The name of American...must always exalt the just pride of patriotism more than any appellation derived from local discriminations."

These words fell on deaf ears as sixty-five years later (April 12, 1861), the first engagement of the Civil War took place at Fort Sumter (Charleston, S.C.) which almost destroyed our nation.

People want to belong to a group with similar ideas. Political parties sprang up right away both for and against the Constitution.

By the presidential election of 1796, there were two main parties: Federalist (Alexander Hamilton) and the Democratic-Republicans (Thomas Jefferson and James Madison).

Today we have the Democrat and

Republican parties. 59% of Americans see a great deal of difference between the two parties in 2022 up from 55% in 2020.

Americans seem more polarized and each election means "the fate of our nation lies in the balance".

Talk radio and social media, though informative, have contributed to the polarization.

Political gridlock in Congress might eventually lead to political compromise and return to civility and rule of law.

Hopefully this can happen in the next 10 years or 50 years before this country is changed forever.

America has tried to remain an isolationist but reluctantly intervened in the two world wars.

We have used "nation building" to correct flaws in foreign governments.

The world has grown smaller and more dependent on each other.

We learn during COVID about our dependence on China which is over \$521 billion dollars or 17.2% of China's exports.

Our forefathers envisioned the principles of checks and balances of power.

Regional and party differences need to be met with compromise.

We need to apply our history lessons of isolation and shrink our involvement in foreign commitment.

We need to repair the damage from these three dangers that Washington has warned against before it is too late.

Targeted Justice?

By Dennis Melton

Letter to the Editor

In September 2022, a suburban family were awakened at 7:05 a.m. with pounding on the door by 25-30 armed FBI agents there for the arrest of Mark Houck.

Back in 2021, Houck, a pro-life minister, had shoved a pro-abortion volunteer after the man had repeatedly curse Houck's 12-year-old son.

The charges were later dropped. But Merrick Garland's Justice Department decided to pursue the case with this unnecessary show of force.

When Houck had open the door that morning, he had agreed to go peacefully.

Before taking him away, the agents forced his seven hysterical children upstairs in a bullying manner.

It is very odd that the Justice Department used so much energy on a minor altercation while ignoring the many violent attempts to terrorize pro-life pregnancy centers.

Another FBI raid unfolded in March 2022 in Los Angeles.

FBI agents raided the safety deposit boxes of 800 customers in a Beverly Hills bank and collected over \$86 million dollars, rare jewels, old coins, and precious metals.

Their reasoning is that there had been criminal activity.

In over eight months time, there has been no proof and many have filed a lawsuit that this dragnet forfeiture operation is unconstitutional.

Yet the government has yet to return the property.

There is a provision in the "Build Back Better Bill" which was very controversial.

It would require banks to report deposits and withdrawals of \$600 or more.

This was later raised to \$10,000 and will become effective in 2023.

The American Bankers Association believes it "raises significant concerns regarding the privacy of personal financial information".

Not all people have been treated equally by the FBI.

Some that have been proven to have committed a crime such as Hunter Biden, Peter Strzok, Andy McCabe, and Michael Sussman have never been "visited" by the FBI.

These people are high profile people, but what about ordinary citizens?

Thanks to the Patriot Act, we now classify both domestic and international terrorism in which the government can seize your assets often without notice.

At a civil hearing, it must prove that the assets were involved in terrorism by a burden of evidence.

Our judicial system is based on constitutional laws which protect our rights that are fundamentally important.

We should rely on the Supreme Court to interpret these rights in accordance with the Constitution.

We all need to be vigilant and protect our freedoms from within.

Not all people have been treated equally by the FBI.



Musical Chairs

By Ellie Brahe

Letter to the Editor

Well the elections are over until 2024. We can now relax. But elections always seem like musical chairs in which someone is left without a chair (position) as they were voted out.

It got me thinking of many things. Marco Rubio ran for U.S. Senator from Florida. Since he represents all of Florida, Florida voters voted whether to re-elect him or not. Since he does not represent

Georgia, Georgia voters did not vote to elect Rubio. Ralph Massullo was elected State Representative for House District 23 which covers a specific area of Citrus County and a little of Marion County.

Voters of this area voted to re-elect Ralph Massullo. Dade county voters could not elect Ralph Massullo as they did not live in District 23.

This sounds all confusing. And yet we elect our Commissioners at large. They are required to live in their district (at least after the election) and yet all of Citrus Coun-

ty votes for all 5 commissioners. Recently Diana Finegan won the commissioner district 2 position. She resides in Homosassa which is part of that district.

Yet her opponent Paul Grogan lived in Inverness (District 4) but would have moved to Homosassa if he had won the District 2 position. I live in Lecanto and not in Homosassa yet I could also vote for Diana Finegan.

We need to stop the confusion and go to single-member district voting. If I lived in District 1 (for example) then I would only vote for the District 1 commissioner that would then represent the voters of my district. I would not vote for all

5 commissioners. This would be a fairer representation of the local issues of that district. We have elected members of congress and state legislatures from single member districts.

This provides more equity for the voters. You have someone that represents your interest as a region. The elected commissioner is more accountable to his local district instead of diluting his accountability by representing all the voters of Citrus County.

Let's keep things simple. This benefits localized democracy. It allows the elected commissioner to focus on the needs of their localized voters rather than the interest of all.

Gift Giving

By Richard Tomlinson

Letter to the Editor

I remember when I was first on my own after college, I lived in a duplex.

My neighbors were a blind woman and her adult daughter. They were nice and chatted with them often as I came and went. But they had little in the way of money or comforts.

I really don't remember what I got them as a Christmas gift but I wanted to see a smile.

When I brought the small gift, they thanked me awkwardly and went inside for a few moments

as they said they had a gift for me. After a lengthy time, they returned with a hastily wrapped gift.

I opened it as soon as I got home to find a Daytona Beach towel. It made me feel sad as I had put them on the spot.

They had to find something to give me in return. I learned a lesson that day. If I am the receiver of an unexpected gift, I will show my heartfelt appreciation.

I won't reciprocate a gift back to them as it cheapens their gesture. Perhaps months later, I might do something for them.

A gift should be given to bring joy to the receiver. When we give a gift, we also experience feelings of expectant gratitude, to be rewarded, and to be praised for our actions.

But we should not let our ego take over.

Instead, we should put ourselves in the recipient's place and see the joy that he got out of receiving the gift.

It is a joy of knowing that someone thought enough to want to give a part of themselves whether a physical gift or their time to another.

Many feel Christmas has become too complicated. Madison Avenue seems to rule the season. The Three Wise Men brought gifts for

the Baby Jesus. But that tradition has become piles of presents which means mounds of accumulated debt.

We must simplify the season. For a Christian, it is the birth of Christ who was sent to save us from our sins.

For others, Christmas is a celebration of steadfast love with family and friends through our gifts.

Gift-giving should be an altruistic act of unselfish concern for the well-being of others.

Simplify things and have the best Christmas ever!



Thanksgiving Blessings

By Annie San Martin

Letter to the Editor

This is one of my favorite times of the year.

It reminds me of the story of the blind boy who was sitting on the sidewalk with a sign that read "I am blind. Please help me".

There were not many coins in the blind boy's hat. So a passerby took the handmade sign and wrote a different message on the other side. In no time, there were coins jingling in the hat from each person that passed.

The next day, the blind boy heard the familiar footsteps of the passerby and asked him what changes had he made to his sign.

People had started donating coins. The passerby said: "I made your message more hopeful". I wrote: "Today is a beautiful day but I cannot see it." The second sign showed a more positive message that we should be thankful that we can see the beauty in this world.

Years ago, a friend in Columbia, S.C. was walking along the river. There was an old black man fishing. My friend noticed a slight slant to the old man's smile.

In talking, he learn that the man had suffered a stroke only six months before and yet he was

strong. He did not appear to have any frailties.

The man said that after the stroke, his son carried him outside daily to the grandchildren's swing set. He used the bars and exercised to gain his strength and coordination. He was grateful and thankful that people cared and wanted to overcome his condition.

Today many see Thanksgiving as a gluttonous feast. We need to learn to regularly practice expressing gratitude rather than criticism. We will always have something to complain about but step back some-time and turn those complaints into something to be thankful for.

When we sit around the table among family, among friends, or when alone: reflect on the good things in our lives.

This letter is rambling but the main point is be thankful for what you have and think positive.

Life will give you 50 reasons to cry. Change that into 100 reasons to smile. We cannot change the past but we can prepare for our future with hope. Make Thanksgiving a part of your "everyday" and not just once a year.

To see others smiling is a beautiful thing. To know that you were the reason for their smiling is even better.



**WANT TO ANSWER A DISCUSSION QUESTION?
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Cryptic Plans

By Tina Sanders

Letter to the Editor

I am not a financial wizard by any means. That is why you won't find me living in a large mansion or driving around in an Aston Martin. You won't see me buying Cryptocurrency which I know little about.

All I know: it is a digital currency used as a medium of exchange through a computer network. I don't understand how the value is determined. The cryptocurrency exchange is rife with ponzi schemes and rug-pulls.

A major rug-pull happened recently with FTX cryptocurren-

cy exchange. U.S. Aid money for Ukraine was invested in FTX and later liquidated to avoid financial reporting in a pyramid scheme.

This money increased the value of FTX crypto which would lure more investors. FTX at its peak had capital over 200 billion dollars but a few days ago it went bankrupt.

At least a billion dollars has "mysteriously" disappeared. Samuel Bankman-Fried (FTX Founder) is the second largest donor to the Democrat party. He formed "Protect Our Future PAC" that spent over \$1.9 million on suburban Atlanta candidate Rep. Carolyn Bourdeaux (D-GA).

Both Sen. Dick Durbin (D-IL) and Rep. Chuy Garcia (D-IL) received \$2,900. Other recipients include Rep. Lucy McBath (D-GA) and Salud Carajal (D-CA) who got \$2900 and \$5800 respectively in their tight races. Protect Our Future spent \$10 million to boost Carrick Flynn (D-ORE) chances in a crowded Democratic primary.

Loopholes in PACs mean that it is more money donated to campaigns with less transparency as to who is donating. FTX donated mainly to Democrats but a few Republicans also benefited.

\$44,000 went to the National Republican Congressional Committee which is chaired by Rep. Tom Emmer (R-MN) who is a vocal crypto supporter. Rep. David Schweikert (R-AZ) also benefited with a

\$2900 donation .

We have only scratched the surface of the FTX Bankruptcy Scandal. When clients began asking for their money as a return on their investment, they discovered that it was not there much like a pyramid scheme. We need to investigate this further and find out who knew what and why.

Our Campaign finance system (especially PACs) cause a growing disconnect between candidates and the people they are supposed to represent.

Super PACs allow wealthy special interests to pour more funds into a campaign and shield the donors' identities. We need better commonsense campaign finance laws to prevent other FTX scandals in the future.

Social Media and Violence

By Danielle Beckemeyer-

Letter to the Editor

Social media is both a blessing and a curse.

Seeing what is happening to my friends and family is a blessing. But it is also a curse as through the anonymity of social media, many engage in hateful dehumanizing language without fear or consequences.

A 2015 study found that roughly 53% of Americans reported being exposed to hate speech on social media.

But most Americans can't agree on what speech is hateful, offensive, or simply a political opinion.

Social media allows one to see

different viewpoints on an issue.

Unlike some universities that offer "safe spaces" from opposing viewpoints, 66% of Americans feel universities aren't teaching students the value of free speech.

They feel that universities need to present all viewpoints, even if biased or offensive against certain groups.

The cyber-world and real-world seem to collide for some people.

In the cyber world, it has allowed for groups to come together and share interests that might be looked down by society as a whole.

One can forget social mores and resort to rudeness. The cyber-world is a form of escapism.

Humans have relied on escape

from the real world through television, video games, and books in years past.

There is no direct line between violent rhetoric and political violence if the speakers are careful not to name specific targets and means, and otherwise incriminate themselves.

These edited remarks may be retweeted and amplified sharing with millions of followers in record time.

We have had violence against political leaders recently such as Paul Pelosi (husband of Nancy Pelosi), Sen. Rand Paul, Sen. Susan Collin, Rep. Steve Scalise, and Justice Brett Kavanaugh.

Now a permanent fixture, Social

Media has many benefits but needs reasonable limits. Person-to-person communication will lead to a less violent future.

In a 2018 survey (Cigna), nearly half of 20,000 U.S. adults report they always feel alone and isolated. Loneliness and social isolation are twice as harmful to physical and mental health than being obese.

The positive benefits of the internet (improved efficiency to information) is being overwhelmed by the negatives- disconnection from the real world that can unleash ugly behaviors.

There are no easy answers. Perhaps treating it as an addiction and offering counselling.

Outside social activities and limited internet use should start in young children.

Whatever the solution, we need to see this as a problem that will only get worse.



Major Overhaul

By Barbara Murtagh
Letter to the Editor

Florida is the only state that borders both the Atlantic Ocean and the Gulf of Mexico.

You're never more than 60 miles from the nearest body of salt water. Since 1851, 41% of all hurricanes have hit Florida.

Floridians pay roughly three times the national average on homeowners insurance premiums.

We make up roughly 7% of the U.S. population and about 8% of all property insurance claims – but it also represents almost 80 percent of all property insurance litigation.

Florida's lawsuit system promotes frivolous litigation scams which ends up costing every homeowner with higher premiums.

Through Senate Bill 2D, a program called "My Safe Florida Home Program" offers funds for free hurricane mitigation inspections.

It offers a \$2 match for every dollar spent to harden your home from hurricanes up to \$10,000. The Reinsurance to Assist Policyholders (RAP) program was enacted to reimburse 90 % of an insurer's covered losses and 10 % of their loss adjustment expenses for the two most damaging hurricanes during the contract year.

Insurers do not pay premiums for RAP program coverage, but must reduce rates to reflect savings. Insurers that participate in the RAP program for 2022-2023 with rate reductions by June 30, 2022 or participate for 2023-2024 with rate reductions by May 1, 2023.

Coverage can not be denied if the roof age is less than 15 years old or determined to have at least 5 years useful life remaining.

Thirty year old condominiums (three or more stories) must be inspected every 10 years. Twenty-five year old condominiums along the coast must also be inspected every 10 years. Since frivolous fraudulent claims cause increased premiums, the bill would limit the assignment of attorney's fees and adjustment claims regulations.

More rules on open communication concerning denial or partial denial of claims may prevent litigation lawsuits.

Insurance companies' financial strength ratings is reviewed yearly by Demotech. Ratings below an "A" can affect policyholders who still hold a mortgage.

The Florida Office of Insurance Regulation (OIR) with a reinsurance fund through Citizens has helped downgraded companies to meet these requirements.

Protecting from financial strength rating downgrades, curbing scams and approaching insuring Florida homes differently will save the homeowners insurance market.

These measures will take time. Perhaps in 2023 we will see some relief.



Election Deniers

By Richard Tomlinson
Letter to the Editor

Banks are fairly safe to store your money. It gets mingled with other people's money but when you need it, there are ways to get it back. It is much safer than storing my money under my mattress or burying it in the backyard.

That being said, banks are not totally safe as by human nature, other people find ways to get your money through bank robberies or scams by obtaining your bank routing number.

Elections are fairly safe where your vote is mingled with other's votes to decide which candidates will serve in office. The term "election deniers" is being floated around as a bad word.

But by human nature, other peo-

ple find ways to steal your vote or to cause election fraud.

Florida has a photo-signature Identification requirement to verify each legitimate voter.

Counties have a computer system that records when and how a voter voted (by mail-in ballot, early voting period, or on election day).

This will flag if a voter has already voted to prevent voting twice.

Florida statewide voter registration ensures voters are only registered in one county.

Mail-in Ballots are only sent out upon request. Thus if a voter moved or died, a mail-in ballot is not automatically issued.

Florida has several safeguards as does Citrus County to prevent voter fraud.

Secret ballots and improved security measures have largely ensured fair outcomes in elections.

People are mostly honest, and people mostly believe other people

— and deception is more of a kind of exceptional thing rather than a chronic worry.

Lastly: back to election deniers. They have existed throughout recent election history.

In 2000, many Democrats denied the election of George W. Bush due to the hanging chads.

The U.S. Supreme Court reversed an order by the Florida Supreme Court for a selective manual recount of that state's U.S. presidential election ballots.

In a 2016 CBS interview, Hillary Clinton dismissed President Trump as an "illegitimate president" and suggested that "he knows" that he stole the presidential election. In 2020, several Trump supporters cried fraud in the 2020 election.

Election denier should not be a derogatory word.

Looking at past elections and finding ways to improve the process to be fair and honest should be everyone's concern.



The Alphabet Phenomenon

By Richard Musgrove

Letter to the Editor

It seems that where a person's name is on the ballot can affect their chances of getting elected.

This is more apparent in "low information elections" - where voters are not able or willing to find out much information on all the candidates.

When it is a relatively important selection and party affiliation is also known, then ballot order has little or no effect on the voter's decision.

Some have suggested that randomizing or rotating ballot order, even a little more costly, might yield legislators who enjoy the most sup-

port of the voters.

Alphabetized ballots allow for less deserving candidates to always win and actually be worse off for the state.

Most Asian names are farther down the alphabet such as Leung, Wang, or Zhang.

This is less advantageous and more likely these candidates would lose in an alphabetized ballot.

Thus we need to reform ballot order rules in order to conduct fair elections.

Since this is a complex issue, we should be careful of arbitrary rules on ballot order which might interfere with the best qualified candidates winning the election.

California used to always put the incumbent first on the ballot.

This gave this candidate a 3 point advantage according to several studies.

California Code, Elections Code - ELEC § 13112 was enacted to ensure fairness.

The Secretary of State has a randomized alphabet drawing of each letter of the alphabet.

That is the order that the candidates will appear in all ballot races.

For example if letters were drawn X, R, A, C, B then Xavier, Ross, Anderson, Collins, and Bailey would be the order of Candidates on the ballot.

Eighty-two days before the

primary and eighty-two days before the general election, a randomized alphabet drawing will take place. Thus ballot order changes between all elections.

Voting is a responsibility that should be taken seriously.

We will always have uninformed voters.

Perhaps randomized alphabet drawings will level the playing field for candidates.

The U.S. ranks 31 out of the top 50 countries on voter turnout.

It is difficult to determine the percentage of voters that are uninformed.

Sadly this could undermine our democracy.



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The Thinking Zone: Why Trump?

The Thinking Zone is Written by Frank D. Lovell and Can be Found on Facebook



By Frank D. Lovell
Guest Contributor

First, realize we are at war to save this Republic so be careful of what you see, hear & read concerning events in America, our only concern should be facts. Any other info is intended to deceive us & mold our opinion.

Now I'm hearing things that are negative concerning Trump, blame for lost elections, etc. so what is going on? So far Trump's endorsement rate in state elections across the country is Senate 68 percent & House 87 percent many states elected republicans, some sent them to Washington others are in state legislatures, and over 200 people he endorsed won elections.

If I had to blame someone it would be the Republican Party for failing to support those candidates in various states, some they wouldn't even endorse & that is a critical error of leadership,

THEY cost us elections & that is just one issue.

Also sensing some conflict between Trump & DeSantis, etc. & like you I have no idea what is going on behind the scenes & there is always 'something' going on behind the scenes.

I do know we have to be careful of what the media tells us because something like this is what they will twist & build up to divide us, dividing forces is one of the 1st rules of war.

As for me, as I said I have no clue only guesses, but I do know whatever is going on if anything, that is between Trump & DeSantis, etc. to make right & put America First. Maybe you should tell them that.

Back to why Trump. so, let's

look at some facts. He didn't take a paycheck, & as far as I know, he never made any \$ for being President. He & his family were under constant attack, and the number of subpoenas issued to his family is mind-boggling.

Keep in mind Trump is looking at all these attacks on his family, because of who he is, how would you feel?

Survived 2 impeachments which was a degrading insult to the integrity of the impeachment process, that was as they say, 'an attack on democracy;' S

urvived numerous investigations, Russia, Russia, all made up, numerous attacks from the NY Attorney General, attacks on his friends who support him, swat teams, handcuffs, jail, etc. And not once any evidence of Trump's wrongdoing, not once.

During all this, what did Trump accomplish for America in his 4 years? I won't even go there, you were here, you remember how your life was 2 years ago, you know what he did or at least felt what he did while living your life. You lived in a thriving economy, you had jobs & opportunities, you were free. I don't have to tell you how you were better off then.

During all this history I only see 2 mistakes he made & I'm sure he won't make them again. 1. trusting certain people he dealt with who he felt believed in America First & 2. not completely draining the swamp, he left a lot of people who had the power to oppose his policies simply by slow walking them, etc.

This time he will 'drain the swamp,' by cutting off their \$ flow, etc., or dismissing them from govt.

Do you know why Ulysses S. Grant was the general of the northern army during the Civil War?

Because he won battles, he was proven not by what he said but by what he did.

So, history says he was a drunk & he was kinda ornery, the reali-

ty is he got the job done, became Secretary of War & later the 18th President.

A little unknown piece of history, he brought his wife's slaves to the town hall & signed papers granting them freedom because it's what he believed, it was his character.

So here comes Trump who made us promises & kept them during all the attacks against him & his family which continue to this day.

He is now making us more promises if we elect him, so what are the odds he will keep them? All we have is history to rely on & his history says we can trust what he says.

I really don't care if some people don't like him, what I care about is what is he going to do for America which translates to what is he going to do for us.

Now another critical battle before us takes place in the House of Representatives not only to stop America's bleeding but to expose facts to the American people on what this govt has been doing before we vote for a President in 24, we need information & the House can produce that through investigations. You know what would be good, another Jan 6th hearing, a real hearing, to reveal exactly what happened on that day & days leading up to it.

We need many investigations on many issues in America, the people need to have facts before them before they vote in another election.

That burden falls on every one of us to be aggressive with our Representatives & demand they uncover the facts on so many issues, this is yet another critical battle we must win.

Saving America takes time & effort by everyone so let's focus on the battle before us, we will protect America (& ourselves) one battle at a time.

The House should be mindful that the goal shouldn't be about compromise, we can no longer compromise with the Democrats, they are not interested in that.

The only objective of the House should be to stop the bleeding & expose facts, that's it.

We have another battle in December in Georgia for the Senate, if Herschel Walker wins that evenly divides the Senate & if by some miracle, we have another state conduct a Senate election recount that favors a Republican we win the Senate but let's not count on that, we must concentrate on reality.

An afterthought, why did the Democrats give illegals cell phones, and for what purpose?

Could it be those phones are receiving a lot of text messages informing illegals of all the services & funding they are 'entitled' to offered by the Democrats? Could it be the Democrats are nurturing & conditioning the illegals to become Democrat voters?

Pay attention to the Democrats & don't be surprised if you hear a lot about offering amnesty & a path to citizenship for illegals who will become the new Democrat voting bloc.

We all have a lot to do, not only with contacting our Representatives but everyone we know to keep them informed with information.

The bottom line with all this is it's going to come down to a Presidential election & we better make sure Americans have all the information they need to make intelligent votes.



Life Lessons Learned from the 40 Under 40 Luncheon



Photo by Ryan Downs; Citrus County Live

By Bobby Winsler
November 20

“I try to live my life such that in the hour of my death, I would feel joy rather than fear.”

I considered this quote when asked for my favorite while filling out a profile in acceptance of a 40 under 40 award from the Citrus County Chamber of Commerce.

Before you make your joke about there not even being 40 people under 40 in the county, just know we heard all of them at the event and I’m sure yours is just as funny.

The man who said it you might not have heard of but his life deserves a movie. Witold Pilecki spent nearly his entire life fighting for a free Poland. As a teenager, he scouted during World War I.

He fought in the Polish-Soviet War during the early 1920s. This combat prepared him for his wild-est idea.

During World War II, he volunteered to go to a concentration camp in an attempt to overthrow it from the inside. Not just any camp. He gave himself up to go to Auschwitz..

And though his uprising plan was unsuccessful, he did personally escape and get information back to the Allies that helped enlighten

the West about the atrocities being committed.

His loyalty to Poland against post-WWII communist influences led to his early death at age 47, though as his quote said, he undoubtedly met that moment with joy.

The 39 other award winners on Friday may not have been thrust into back-to-back world wars, but they all were uniquely impressive in their own ways.

It was someone who wasn’t in the room, though, that made the luncheon particularly memorable.

Late Wednesday night, news broke of the sudden passing of Chris Delgado. Ms. Delgado devoted countless hours to the chamber and was usually among the first faces greeting new businesses to the area or a friendly face welcoming people back to annual events like the Manatee Festival.

I didn’t know her well, but every interaction I had with her was positive. One of the reasons I didn’t know her better was because I’ve never wanted to be too involved with the chamber. This casual indifference toward the chamber turned to outright anger after the 2020 election cycle when the organiza-

tion’s leadership actively worked against Sheriff Mike Prendergast in a way that I felt overstepped appropriate bounds. That opinion hasn’t changed. The feelings toward the chamber have though.

The luncheon began with a moment of silence in remembrance of Chris and concluded with a 50/50 drawing in which the chamber announced it would donate its half to the Delgado family to help with expenses. What happened next was simply remarkable.

Every ticket they had, three wheels worth, sold (and someone in the crowd joked Chris would have been able to sell six rolls) thanks largely to a large purchase from the Barco/Sundberg family of Lollygaggers among other businesses.

While checking their tickets, they also pledged to match the 50/50 amount. This triggered a string of pledges from others as well. Theresa Foster West of West Central Solutions, Dr. Doug Alexander from the New Church without Walls, Josh Hicks of Handy Hicks and many others who were incredibly generous but unfortunately I can’t remember pushed the total to around \$4,000 within minutes.

The representative from Citrus Mobile Welding, who won the 50/50, donated his \$315 portion to the cause.

That wouldn’t have happened without the value the chamber brings to the county.

The organization can be infuriating, cringy and self-congratulatory. It can also be inspiring, celebratory and the best reflection of our community.

I expect to be on the opposite side of campaigns from chamber CEO Josh Wooten more times than not and passionately so. I used to think this meant any relationship between him or the organization was irreconcilable.

Friday demonstrated how wrong I was. I’m not going to become some chamber groupie but I do have a renewed appreciation for the role it plays.

Pilecki lived a life in service of his mission, but his quote about death is focused on himself..

What I learned this week is how much even the most everyday friendly faces of life can impact other people..

I have no idea what Chris felt in the final hour of her life, but I do know she left behind a legacy of joy over fear that filled an entire room of those who miss her.

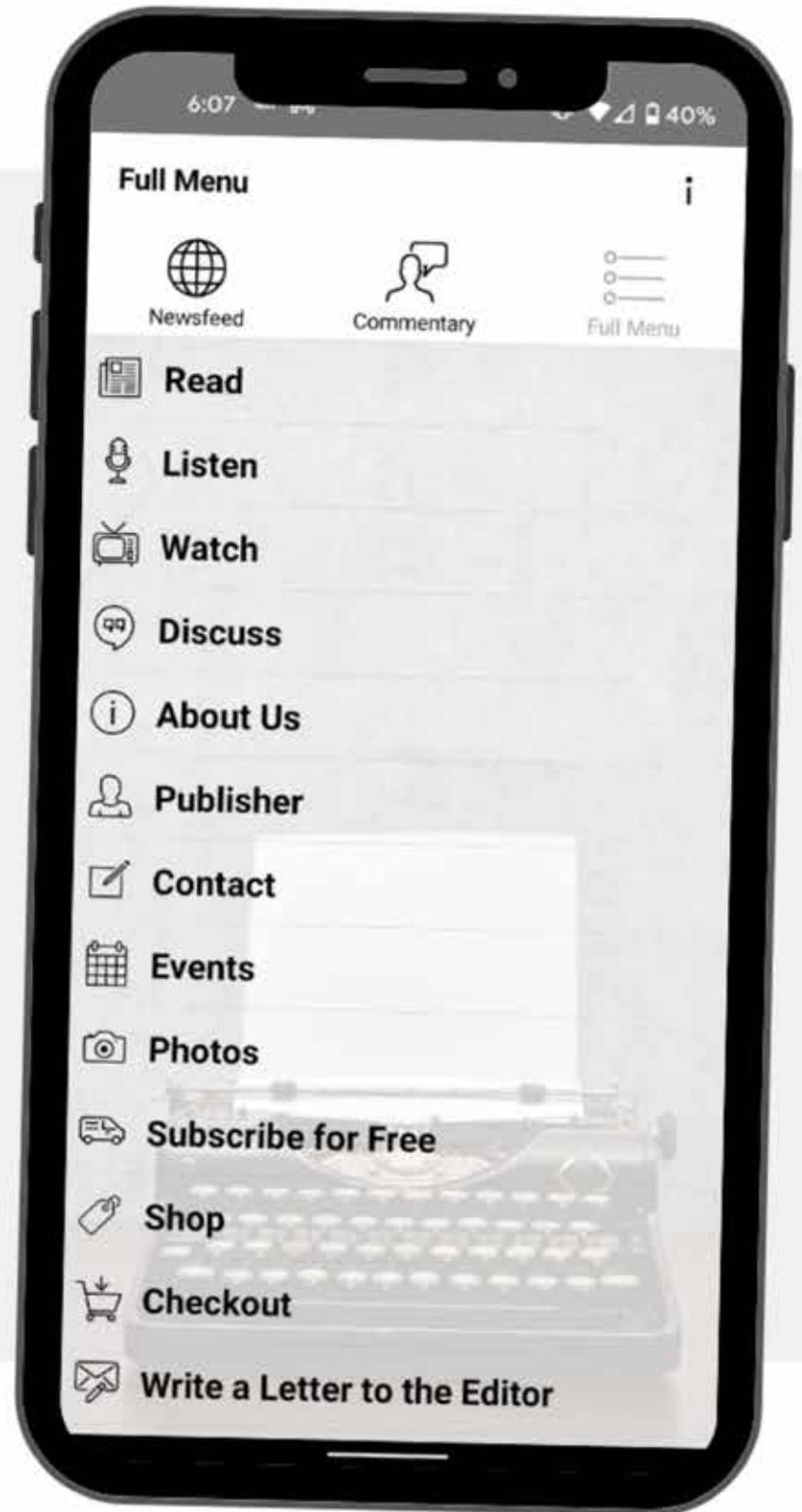
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Trivia Answers: 1, Citrus Total: 76,032 (62.23%)

2. Citrus Democrats: 15,776 (60.01% of total Dems) 3. Citrus Republicans: 46,031 (66.44% of total Repubs) 4. Citrus Non-Major Party: 14,225 (45.70% of total non-major party)