

THE

Magnolia

NEWS

NEWS OF INTEREST TO THE RESIDENTS OF MAGNOLIA POINT

VOLUME 7 • ISSUE 4

APRIL 2026



Hello April - Happy Anniversary!

It's year four! Our first issue was April, back then, with a cover that celebrated the Clay Fair, which, like clockwork, runs from **April 2-12**, right out our back gate. Which is also the vantage point on this month's **'EXTRA!'**. Which, four years ago, would have seemed like the wildest of imaginings. Has much changed? Of course, but we're still here, and this, our **48th** issue, arrives without fail yet again, on the 1st (**no foolin!**) of this month. And we hope, as you've made plain, you continue to find what's inside useful, and at least a little fun!
And, mark the date, **COMMUNITY YARD SALE, Saturday, April 25!**

Luke Byrne takes us for a spin in his classic Porsche 966 in 'Magnoliachrome', **pages 10-11.**



Becky's back with some fine photography on **pages 23-25.**



It's the Annual Jack & Jill, and a lot of other golf, **pages 15-17.**



Start the season off right with the latest in golf cart must-haves in 'Cart Bling', **pages 27-28.**

A new feature, 'Don't Even Start', premieres on **page 18.** Got something to get off your chest? Let us know!



If it's Wednesday, it's Zoey's 'Open Mic' at Saloon 17, and on this night, the sparks fly! **Page 30-31.**



Bill feeds us a classic recipe with 'Mussels & Clams Pasta' on **pages 19-20.**

...and on the next page, our first 'MIXmagic' recipe pairing, the 'Clam Digger', on **page 21.**



THE MAGNOLIA NEWS

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MAGNOLIAresidents.com

The Magnolia News does not accept political, social commentary, or opinion pieces for publication.



EXTRA!

VOLUME 7 ISSUE 4

“BREAKING NEWS FROM BEHIND THE HEDGES”

APRIL 2026





MPCA NEWS



VOLUME 7 ISSUE 4

NEWS FROM THE ASSOCIATION

APRIL 2026



LANDSCAPE & IRRIGATION



Photos: C. Francisco



ACCESS CONTROL

Rear Gate Lightning Suppression

A CMCE lightning suppression unit was recently installed at the rear gate to help protect our gate equipment from storm related damage as has occurred over the past several summers. The CMCE uses a process called deionization to drain the atmosphere of the excess positive and negative ionic charges that build up during a thunderstorm. Once absorbed into the device, the CMCE internally rearranges the charges, converts them to harmless milliamperes, and grounds them through a grounding system. This process balances the electrical field, preventing lightning strike formation within the CMCE coverage area (180-ft radius).

Rear Gate Improvements - Work will begin very soon for several much-needed modifications:

- The metal gates will get new hinges and control arms along with a new paint job.
- The old access control equipment box will be replaced with a new NEMA container.
- The existing gate arm operator will get replaced by two new operators, dividing the entrance for residents and visitors. Residents will only be able to enter on the right side, visitors (with a pass) will only be able to enter from the left side. The gates will be synchronized such that only one gate arm will be open at any given time, with priority given time.

- CHUCK COX

STRATEGIC PLANNING

This past election in March was the first actual use of our new electronic voting system. The vast majority of the people in attendance that night had voted electronically, and they agreed that it was very easy to use. Paper ballots were entered into the system during the meeting. What used to take a couple of hours (or longer) to manually count ballots was completed in 40 minutes! Results tabulated and handed to the board in 40 minutes!

We still have work to do here. If you voted electronically, please tell your friends and neighbors how easy it was, and encourage them to sign up.

Now Strategic Planning will continue our work on the 5-Year High-level Strategic Plan, as well as a Club Contingency plan. We will be reviewing and finalizing both documents at our next meeting, which is April 6.

I would also like to ask if there are any residents who might be interested in joining our committee. As the saying goes, “many hands make light work” and in our case, having many varied opinions is a valuable asset. We typically meet twice a month at the Green Cove Spring Police Department EOC Room.

- ANN SIMS





April



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Supporting Vineyard Transition Center

Several Magnolia Point Women's Club members joined in to help the Vineyard Transitional Center by attending their Bingo Fundraiser on Saturday, March 14. The event was held at St. Mary's Episcopal Church and included a dinner of hamburgers and hot dogs. The ladies were lucky with nearly their entire table winning a door prize or one of the bingo games. The Vineyard Transitional Center is a 501(c)(3) charity raising funds to support their mission and new building going up on Pine Avenue. Their mission is to provide a second chance for men attempting to enter the community and workforce after release from jail. The Center will be able to provide temporary housing, counseling, and job training skills to help them succeed in life.

Strengthening Our Foundation: MPWC Leaders Attend Reinhold Workshop



On Wednesday, March 11, **Donna Habing** (Past President/Advisor) and **Adele Murphy** (Vice President/Incoming President) represented the Magnolia Point Women's Club at a Reinhold Foundation leadership training workshop. The workshop, "Building a Strong Volunteer Program: Policies and Procedures", was highly practical, providing a comprehensive workbook that Donna and Adele reviewed and compared with the policies and procedures for the Club. This manual will serve as a vital roadmap, offering clear guidance and direction for both our Board and our dedicated volunteers. Beyond the paperwork, the event was a fantastic opportunity to connect with peers in the Clay County non-profit community. Donna and Adele spent time networking and exchanging ideas with representatives from several impactful local agencies, including: Hope

Continued



MPWC

Therapy, Clay County Behavioral Health, Habitat for Humanity, and The Way Clinic. By investing in these professional resources and local partnerships, leaders are ensuring that the MPWC continues to grow and serve its community effectively for years to come. The Reinhold Foundation offers annual workshops for leaders of non-profits throughout Clay County; all expenses are covered by the Foundation and they also award a cash gift to the organization for attendance. The workshops are developed and taught by the Rollins College Edyth Bush Institute for Philanthropy & Nonprofit Leadership, located in Winter Park, Florida.

Upcoming Events

The Activities Committee has planned a member picnic for Saturday, April 18, at Spring Park in Green Cove Springs. Members are welcome to bring their families, and enjoy the games and great food. Look for more information in the next weeks.

The Women's Club will also be participating in the upcoming community-wide yard sale held on Saturday, April 25. This fundraiser, organized by Donna Habing and the Fundraising Committee, will consist of multiple stations with catchy names – Book Nook, Clothes Closet, Designer Boutique, as well as a plant sale. All items are donated by Women's Club members, so come out and shop as you hit up other sales in the neighborhood.

Membership

New members can join at a discounted rate of \$20 until the end of April 2026. Any woman who is a Magnolia Point resident or property owner, or a member of the Country Club, can become a member. If you know of someone who would like to become a Women's Club member, please have them contact Diane Lochner, Membership Director, at diane.scorpio@gmail.com.

On a Lighter Note:

Let the games for 2026 begin! Some MPWC ladies played Mahjong today at the clubhouse parlor marking the beginning of another year of all sorts of fun games to play. This is one game, however, that requires skill, strategy and luck and is very challenging. The game has walls and tiles; the tiles include circles, cracks, bamboos, and dragons and is based on an official Mahjong card of options that changes every year to keep you on your toes.

Mahjong originated around the mid-to-late 1800s during tChina's Qing Dynasty. Its popularity reached the U.S. in the 1920s. American Rules were standardized in 1937 with the creation of the National Mah-jongg League. A few years ago, **Lori Miller** helped many of us learn the game. She is ready to start up a new training group. If anyone is interested, please contact her and get in line to learn a very interesting game. This is one game you have to play regularly to get good at it.



The name Mahjong means “sparrow” due to the clacking sound of the tiles. If you do go to a game, besides the clacking of tiles, you might also hear a lot of ‘clucking of of hens’ busy chatting and playing this unusual game!

J. LaBeouf - MPWC Blog - January 2, 2026





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LUKE BYRNE'S • 2000 PORSCHE CARRERA

What year and make is your car, and what attracted you to it? It's a 2000 Porsche Carrera C2 996. I was attracted by the classic lines of a now Vintage Porsche, its performance and the ability to corner.

Can you tell us about the history and original use of your car? I bought some 20 years ago, then let it sit with little use for some five years having lost 2nd gear and needing additional work! I finally sent it in for some major work and it came back like new and a *fun ride*. The down side was you could buy a new compact car with that shop bill!

out on my own to experience out of the way golf courses. Nothing like rolling up on an out of the way muni in a classic 911!

What do you do to maintain it and keep it running well? Porsches are not easy to drive but they can be a boat load of fun! Having six speeds gives you lots of options.

Do you participate in any classic car clubs or organizations, any events or shows? I belong to a Porsche 996 group which helps with advice, etc. No events, as that's not my bag. One friend came by with



How did you acquire it? From a guy in Miami who'd tracked the car, blew the engine and replaced it.

Have you restored or customized the car, and if so, can you tell us about the process? Lots of mechanical restoration: rebuilding the transmission, clutch, differential, suspension, plugs, seals, oil, filters (there are seven) plus a ton of other stuff!

How often do you drive your classic, and where do you take it for drives? As often as possible especially when playing golf with MP groups at golf courses throughout the area. Sometimes I just put the clubs in the car with a weekend bag and head

his new mid-engine Corvette only to comment, 'What a classic shape!' and 'Like a piece of art!'

Are there any unique features or quirks about the car that you enjoy? And ones you don't? The best experience is driving it on a controlled track at high speed, knowing the car can handle it!

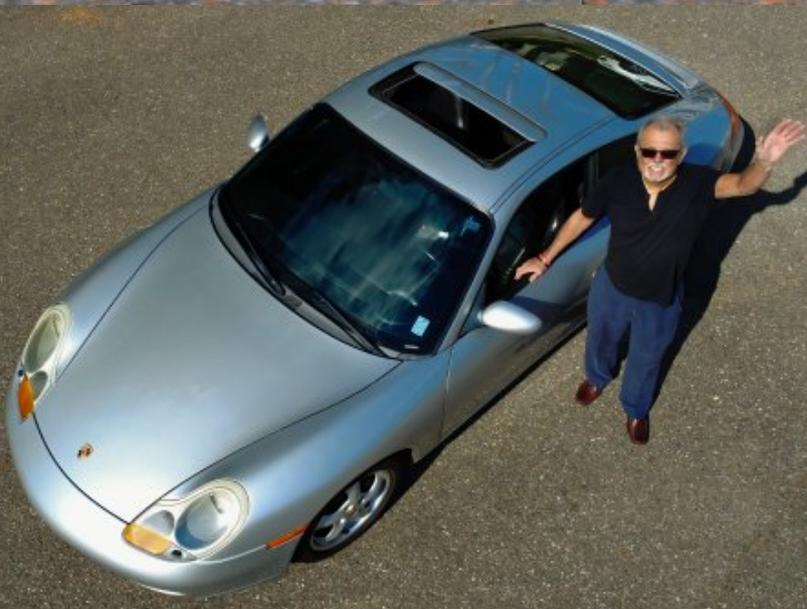
What is your favorite memory or experience with your car, and what do you love most about owning it? The Porsche is one of eight ways I have of going to have coffee and a bagel at the best coffee shop in our town, Spring Park Coffee. The owner has more than once said leave the old Vespa out front it attracts people...my **other** classic ride!

Continued



“

The best experience is driving it on a controlled track at high speed, knowing the car can handle it!



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April 11th

Reservations from 8:30 am - 9:15 am and 11:00 am - 11:45 am

FOR CURIOUS RESERVATIONS: 904-555-1212, ext. X

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-  Kids: 28++
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Wonderland Sliders (Alice-Approved for all sizes)
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Gryphon's Sausage Gravy & Biscuits

Walrus & Carpenter's Thick-Cut Bacon
Mock Turtle Home Fries
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"Drink Me" Omelette Station (Choose your own transformation ingredients!)

WONDERLAND

TO THE CAUCUS RACE / HUNT

Magnolia
POINT





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LADIES 9 LEAGUE THE JACK & JILL

We completed our annual **Jack & Jill Tournament** on 3/26/26 on the Back Nine. Six foursomes for a total of twenty-four golfers came out to play the Step-Aside Scramble format. All team members (Jack's & Jill's) would hit their drive and then the team selected the best shot. The remaining three players move their balls to that location and the player who hit that shot "steps aside" and does not hit the next shot. This is continued until a ball was on the green, at which time all team members putt.

Thank you to **Shirley Orvosh** for coordinating a very fun day with an Easter theme! Thank you to all the "Jacks" who came out to play!

Results: Cash prizes awarded for teams placing 1st, 2nd and 3rd; net-tie used card roll off on #10:



- STORY, PHOTOS: D. DEARTH

1st Place - Don & Dianne Dearth and Larry & Judy Sessions - Gross 49/Net 42 *

2nd Place - Rita Altman & Pat O'Neill and Cheryle Newman & Patrick O'Neill Jr. - Gross 47/Net 42

3rd Place - Deb Elsea & Bruce Gorman and Bede Johnson & Bob Gove -Gross 50/Net 44

Closest to the Pin - Jack's (Men) -
Hole #14 - **Don Dearth**
Hole #17 - **Randy Young**

Longest Putt - Jill's (Ladies) -
Both #14 and #17 Par 3's - **Shirley Orvosh!**

"I have been a member for over 20 years and enjoy the Jack & Jill very much. In the early days, we used to play 18 holes for this tournament and you did not play with your spouse but mixed up with all "Jacks". Later it changed to playing with your spouse, which I enjoy. I love the camaraderie that the game elicits." - Sharon Sprott

"I have played with the 9 Hole League well over 20 years. I really enjoy playing with my "Jack". It is especially fun when all team members contribute to the score and feel good about their game." - Val Flemming

"I recall when we used to alternate, one year we would play with our spouses the next we would mix it up and play with the other's spouse. That was fun. One year, Frank my spouse, insisted our team finish the game even though everyone else had headed for the clubhouse as it was raining like crazy! It's a fun team game." - Sandy Waldrup





Couple's NINE HOLE LEAGUE

- DIANNE DEARTH

March 8 - A small but fun group, the weather beautiful for a Front Nine Sramble, only 1 stroke difference!

March 22 - We completed our 9th round today. A beautiful day where **12 couples** competed in foursomes on the Front Nine. New couple Jack &



1st Place - **Doug & Mauricia Buchanan** and **Don & Dianne Dearth's** team with a **39!**

Only three more rounds until the end of the season. Where did the time go?

Lynn Houston came to play, and played well!

1st Place - **Jack & Lynn Houston** and **Doug & Mauricia Buchanan** with **37!**
2nd Place - **Bill Grash & Anita O'Donnell** and **Colt & Laurie Bracken** with **41**



LADIES 9 LEAGUE

March 5 - A beautiful day for a round of golf on the Front Nine. We had 9 players to play Stableford, with some great points recorded.

1st Place - Sandy Waldrup, Taunya Vice and Karen Lioce - 61 Pts
2nd Place - Bede Johnson, Dianne Dearth and Val Flemming - 50 Pts

March 12 - Three teams of 3 players reported wearing St. Patrick's green and ready for fun! The game was a "The Leprechauns Shillelagh" scramble on the Back Nine.

1st Place - Deb Elsea, Dianne Dearth and Karen Lioce - 74
2nd Place - Sandy Waldrup, Bede Johnson and Shirley Orvosh - 77

March 19 - Some very brave members signed up for play on this very chilly morning. They played an individual game on the Front Nine.

1st Place - Deb Elsea - Net score of 35
2nd Place - Bede Johnson - Net score 36
3rd Place - Dianne Dearth - Net score 39

- DIANNE DEARTH



We need to talk. About what could be the absolute lowest rung of human evolution. I'm not talking about corrupt politicians. I'm not talking about people who talk on speakerphone in public restrooms.

I'm talking about the people who finish loading their groceries into their mid-sized crossover SUV and then just abandon their shopping cart in the middle of an empty parking space! Or somewhere else!

Who raised you? Seriously, were you raised by wolves? No, that's an insult to wolves. Wolves are pack animals; they care about the survival of the community. You were raised by solitary, selfish dung beetles.

There is a corral. It is literally twenty feet away. It's constructed of bright, shiny metal tubing. It is a pen specifically built for the cart and its peers! But no, Brenda is already five minutes late to hot yoga, so **she just wedges the front wheels of her cart up on the landscaping mulch like she's parking a Jeep Wrangler in Moab.**



"Technically, once the wheels touch the mulch, it's Landscape's job."

DON'T EVEN START

"Well, I'm actually leaving it out so it's convenient for the next person," she'll insist.

You did us no favors. Now I have to do a panicked 12-point turn to get my Honda Civic into the spot while three cars wait behind me, honking, because your rogue metal death trap is sitting right in the middle of the painted lines, just waiting for a light breeze to send it careening into my bumper. Where *Shopping May Be A Pleasure*, but today, *Parking Isn't!*

The shopping cart is the ultimate litmus test for whether or not you are a functioning member of a civilized society. Think about it. Returning the shopping cart is an easy, convenient task, and one which we all recognize as the correct, helpful thing to do.

Spoiler Alert: returning the shopping cart is objectively illegal nowhere. There are no Shopping Cart Police. You will not get fined. You will not get arrested. You gain absolutely nothing by returning the shopping cart

Which means you must return the shopping cart out of the goodness of your own heart. You must return the shopping cart because it is the right thing to do. And for the \$0.25 you'll get back at our soon-to-open Aldi's.

And if you don't? It means you are a savage who is only kept in check by the threat of actual prison time. It means if The Purge actually happened, you wouldn't be stealing TVs, you'd be the guy blocking the hospital entrance with a stack of unreturned flatbeds from Home Depot.

Just put the cart back, Brenda. *Namaste.*

- STORY, DRAWING: EDITOR



THE Traveling Fork

Photos: Editor



Too many clams and mussels from the Paella Fest you had over the weekend? What can you do with them? Well, your passion for pasta is providing the answer. I brought together several researched pasta recipes and created on just for you Here it is:



MUSSELS & CLAMS PASTA

INGREDIENTS

- 3/4 lb littleneck clams
- 1/2 lb mussels
- 1/2 large shallot (use an onion and 1/4 cup of chopped chives if a shallot isn't available)
- 2 large cloves of garlic minced
- 1 whole lemon or lime (take zest from the skin, juice from half, and cut remainder into wedges for serving with the finished product)
- 1/8 cup of fresh parsley leaves
- 1/2 lb spaghetti, fettuccine, or linguine pasta
- 1 1/2 tbsp EVOlive oil
- 1/4 tsp red pepper
- 1/4 tsp salt plus more for cooking the pasta
- 1/2 cup dry white wine
- 3 tbsp unsalted butter
- 1/4 tsp fresh ground black pepper

DIRECTIONS

Place the clams and mussels in a large bowl of cold, lightly salted water and let soak for 10 minutes. Drain and scrub the shells gently; remove the beards (small hairy fibers) with a small knife.

Bring a large pasta pot of salted water to a boil. Thinly slice/chop the large shallot (or onion, about 1/2 cup). In a large pan, add the olive oil and heat until simmering. Add the shallots (or onions, chopped, with the chives) and the garlic, Saute' over medium heat until these ingredients soften. Add the dry white wine and bring to a boil. Boil the pasta about 8 minutes (al dente).

Add the mussels and clams. Add the 3 tbsp butter. Cover and cook, stirring occasionally. Add the red pepper flakes, and 1/4 tsp of salt. After 5-7 minutes the mussels and clams should be open. Discard any that do not open after 7 minutes. Add the drained pasta and 1/4 cup of the pasta cooking water to the pot. Toss until the pasta is well mixed with the shells and the sauce is thickened and coats the pasta, about 2 minutes. Add the reserved lemon (or lime) zest, lemon juice, parsley and the black pepper. Taste and add salt or pepper to your taste.

Remove from the heat and transfer to pasta bowls, dividing the mussels and clams evenly. Garnish with more red pepper flakes (if desired) and serve with the reserved lemon/lime wedges.

If you want a good quality source of shellfish as well as all kinds of fresh seafood, look no further than that well-known fish market on US Hwy 17 in Orange Park. That's where we get our shellfish, shrimp (local from Mayport) and a wide variety of fresh fish. It is reasonably priced. I recommend!

- BILL BLACKWELL



MIX *magic* CLAM DIGGER

INGREDIENTS

- 4 oz Tomato Juice
- 2 oz Chilled Clam and Mussel Broth (reserved from the pasta cooking liquid, infused with white wine, garlic, and shallot)
- ½ oz Fresh Lemon Juice
- A pinch of Red Pepper Flakes (or a few dashes of hot sauce)
- A pinch of Salt and Fresh Ground Black Pepper
- Garnish: Fresh parsley sprig, a lemon wedge, and a reserved cooked mussel or clam.
- Alcoholic Option: Add 2 oz of Vodka to turn this mocktail into a classic, coastal Bloody Caesar.

RECIPE

Reserve about 2 ounces of the simmering, butter-and-wine infused broth from the Mussels & Clams Pasta recipe in this issue, and allow to chill. Fill a cocktail shaker with ice, combine the tomato juice, the chilled shellfish broth, fresh lemon juice, red pepper flakes, salt, and black pepper. (If you are utilizing the alcoholic option, pour in the 2 ounces of vodka here). Shake gently for about 10 seconds to thoroughly chill and combine the ingredients. Strain the mixture into a tall Collins glass filled with fresh ice. Garnish the rim with a sprig of fresh parsley, a lemon wedge, and a shell saved from your pasta dish.



A savory companion to this month's *Traveling Fork's Mussels and Clams Pasta* by **Bill Blackwell**, this coastal cooler acts as a Southern-style 'Virgin Caesar'. By creatively upcycling the actual cooking broth from the littleneck clams and mussels, capturing the depth of umami, highlighting the sautéed garlic, shallots, and dry white wine used in the meal. The bright tomato base, subtle pepper-flake heat and fresh lemon juice provide a crisp, acidic lift and finish that ties the flavors of the sea and the table together seamlessly.

- RECIPE, PHOTO: EDITOR



MAGNOLIA POINT BRIDGE

New Players Welcome!

All games are friendly, and we welcome new players. Sign up with a partner or as a single. For social one prize is paid out for each table, i.e., if there are four tables, the top four scores win money. Duplicate pays first three winners NS and EW with Mitchell movement.

Duplicate and Social Bridge play on alternate Thursdays in the clubhouse dining room from 1:30 to 5:30PM. The fees are \$2.00 for Social and \$3.00 for Duplicate to cover the cost of prize money and supplies.

CONTACT

Social: mamers3@bellsouth.net

Duplicate: JonBastress@gmail.com

Social Bridge, Thu Feb 26

1. Alice Lodge & Kaaren Tague
2. Marty Essex & Cindy Jennings
3. Jon Bastress and Joe Thill
4. Connie & Michael Byers
5. Joan & Ron Richardson
6. Kim Belcher & David Miller

Duplicate Bridge, Thu Mar 05

East/West Winners

1. Sharon Sprott & Ed Szymanski
2. Jon Bastress & Joe Thill
3. Connie & Michael Byers

North/South Winners

1. Joan Sabanski & Carol Studer
2. Mary Kendall & Sharon Murphy
3. Roy Gullick & Joan Richardson

Social Bridge, Thu Mar 12

1. Connie & Michael Byers
2. Marty Essex & Cindy Jennings
3. Evie & Joe Ezzell
4. Monica & Steve Harmon
5. Kim Belcher & David Miller
6. Don Maneval & Nancy Petillo

Duplicate Bridge, Thu Mar 19

East/West Winners

1. Sharon Sprott & Ed Szymanski
2. Connie & Michael Byers
3. Evie & Joe Ezzell

North/South Winners

1. Kim Belcher & David Miller
2. Cindy Jennings & Marty Essex
3. Alice Lodge & Kaaren Tague

Social Bridge, Thu Mar 26

1. Jola Griener & Sharon Sprott
2. Kim Belcher & David Miller
3. Jon Bastress & Joe Thill
4. Marty Essex & Cindy Jennings
5. Don Maneval & Nancy Petillo
6. Connie & Michael Byers



- SHARON MURPHY

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Bill Blackwell • Dianne Dearth • Cindy Francisco • Becky Hinson • Susan Mitchell • Christian Smith • Sandy Waldrup





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CART BLING

Start the Season Off Right With The Latest Must-Have Accessories



The **"Divot Dozer"** - Automated Divot Filler: This contraption is a miniature, solar-powered Roomba-like device that attaches to the front bumper of the golf cart via a heavy-duty, industrial-grade suction cup. It's equipped with a small, spring-loaded hopper filled with pre-mixed soil and grass seed. When the cart is stopped, a sensor detects a divot (or any small depression in the grass), and the Divot Dozer disengages, scoots over, fills the hole with its contents, and then scurries back to its charging base on the cart. It even has a tiny, extendable brush to smooth out its work.

The **"Grip-N-Glow"** - Heated and Cooled Golf Club Holders: A collection of insulated sleeves that clamp onto the golf cart's bag rack. Each sleeve is designed to hold a single club. A small, battery-powered unit attached with a bungee cord to the back of the cart provides a thermoelectric charge to the sleeves. The player can use a small remote to heat their grips on a cold morning or cool them down on a hot day, ensuring the perfect grip temperature for every shot.



Continued





The **"Snack-Trak"** - Self-Navigating Beverage and Snack Caddy: A sleek, carbon-fiber drone with a built-in GPS and a small, solar-powered refrigerated compartment that attaches to the cart's roof. When a player wants a snack or a drink, they simply tap a button on a wrist-worn remote. The Snack-Trak launches, navigates to the player's location, and offers its contents from a temperature-controlled drawer. Once the player has made their selection, it automatically returns to the golf cart.

The **"Caddie-Cam"** - AI-Powered Swing Analyzer: A small, articulated camera that attaches to the golf cart's windshield with a powerful suction cup. This camera uses AI to track the player's swing. After each shot, a small, built-in speaker provides a ridiculously detailed, often-irreverent analysis of the player's form, complete with technical jargon like, *"Your hip rotation was a mere 3.2 degrees off the optimal axis, you dingbat."* The data is then sent to a companion app, generating a comprehensive, unnecessarily complex report on the player's game uploaded to the cloud for future reference.



- STORY, PHOTOS: EDITOR







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THE VOICE OF THE COVE

KARAOKE WRECK SHOCKS SALOON 17!

SINGERS INTERRUPTED, HEROIC DRIVER RESCUE!

Patrons fall silent as inferno blazes yards from 'Open' sign. Quick-thinking patrons and police pull driver from burning wreck just moments before total engulfment. FULL DRAMATIC STORY, PAGE 3



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SALOON 17 KARAOKE INFERNO: Patrons Tell of Chaos, Heroic Rescue

Singer's 'Don't Stop Believin' Cut Short by Explosion; Patrons Describe Pulling Driver from Burning Wreck.



THE AFTERMATH: Authorities survey the car. Driver is in stable condition.



SILENCED VOICES: Patrons at the weekly karaoke night describe the 'shockwave'.

THE MOMENT OF IMPACT

Inside, local resident Jess was halfway through her Amy Winehouse set list, when the shockwave hit.

"One minute I'm gearing up for a high note, and the next, the entire building rattled. The front doors practically bowed inward," she told the *POST*, still clutching a half-drained Bud Light, her hands visibly trembling. "We thought a bomb went off. Then somebody screamed, 'Fire!'"

Patrons spilled out the front door into the parking lot, witnessing a mangled silver four-door engulfed in flames. The driver, later identified by authorities as a 28-year-old out-of-towner, was trapped behind the wheel, unconscious.

A RUSH TO HELP

That's when the regulars of Saloon 17 proved they were more than just amateur vocalists.

Bar manager Christine didn't hesitate. Grabbing the heavy-duty fire extinguisher from behind the bar, she pushed through the crown and sprinted into the blinding heat. Close behind him were off-duty Green Cove police officer Mark Davis and two

unidentified patrons who had been playing pool just moments before.

"The heat was melting the plastic on my boots," Sullivan recounted. "Davis took his jacket, wrapped it around his arm, and just smashed the driver's side window. The smoke pouring out of that cabin was thick as tar."

Working together, the group managed to unbuckle the unconscious driver and drag him through the broken window. They pulled him across the asphalt, just seconds before the vehicle's gas tank ruptured, sending a secondary fireball into the night sky.

WITNESSES SHAKEN

Emergency services arrived three minutes later, fully extinguishing the blaze and tending to the driver. Authorities confirmed early Wednesday morning that the driver is currently in stable condition at a local hospital, treated for smoke inhalation and minor burns.

"If those guys hadn't rushed out there, we'd be looking at a

fatality, no question," said Green Cove Fire Chief Henderson at the scene. "They had seconds to act, and they didn't blink."

Back inside Saloon 17, Zoey remained on station at her laptop, and the karaoke carried on without a hitch, "Back To Black" still scrolling silently across the screen. For the patrons nursing their drinks in the aftermath, the reality of how close tragedy had come was just beginning to set in.

"We always say this bar is a family," Zoey whispered, watching the flashing lights of the fire engines through the front door. "Tonight, I guess we proved it."

FULL DRAMATIC STORY

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