

THE
Magnolia
NEWS

NEWS OF INTEREST TO THE RESIDENTS OF MAGNOLIA POINT

VOLUME 7 • ISSUE 8

AUGUST 2026





The Ice Cream Headache Issue!
*You'd think something serious was going on, that sharp, pang right between the eyes! It's a 'cold-stimulus headache', and you know you'll get over it! It's as perennial as sprinkles! It's the cherry on top! And even Maggie P falls victim now and then, **page 3!** A special welcome and thanks to **Larianne Stutts**, President of the [Village Improvement Association](#) for her '**Rivers Run Through It**', a look at the Rivers House, a renovated treasure of the Spring Park and Green Cove Springs, and important link to the past here, on **pages 5-7**. And we look forward to Larianne's contributions to TMN this holiday season!*



'Okra Dokey', it's time to get stewin'! In no time you'll lose the slime and discover the delights of this classic southern dish, **pages 15-16**.



It's the only headache we can laugh about, and we hope you can spare a few for this month's tongue-in-frozen cheek, **page 25**.



While you're at it, another classic, Fried Green Tomatoes, this time guilt free, awaits you 'on the side' on **page 17**.



This month, Christian is 'in play' in Santee, Georgia, where he learned *again* a few things he already knew, and tell us all about it, **pages 27-28**.

A home without Camellia at Magnolia Point just isn't right! What you need to know if your landscape is lacking, **pages 19-20**.



Miss Puddles has her paws full with a keyboard-warrior cat, and a mighty daschund on **pages 31-32**.



It's 'Ice Cream Headache', the drink! A throwback recipe that never gets old, **page 23**.

Two well-known visitors that perch throughout Magnolia Point, and make a *point* of singing about it! 'Bird Break' is on **page 26**.



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MAGGIE'S BRAIN FREEZE



Every Tuesday at precisely 3:17PM, Maggie P, in the company of Baxter, occupied that swing bench in Spring Park with the solemn dedication of lighthouse keepers. Maggie maintained it was for the scenery. Baxter maintained it was because someone eventually dropped...*something*!

This particular Tuesday began with a towering vanilla cone lavishly decorated with sprinkles, a purchase Maggie described as "a modest investment in emotional resilience."

Baxter stationed himself at her feet, ears forward, watching the cone with the unwavering concentration normally displayed by airport security.

Maggie admired the masterpiece. "We're going to do this sensibly today."

Three bites later, reality intervened.

The *freeze* arrived with all the subtlety of a marching band entering a library. Maggie's eyebrows climbed her forehead. One eye narrowed while the other seemed to file a formal complaint.

"Oh... no..."

Baxter recognized the expression immediately. It was the same face Maggie made when trying to assemble patio furniture or remember where she'd hidden the emergency chocolate.

Nearby joggers slowed, mistaking her silence for deep philosophical reflection. One even nodded at her respectfully, as one does at a woman clearly wrestling with the great questions. In fact, she was attempting delicate negotiations with the inside of her skull. The '*freeze*' intensified.

According to local legend, which Maggie herself began circulating about thirty seconds later, an ice cream headache had cracked open a brief portal to an alternate dimension, one where every poor decision she'd ever made was calling to reschedule. The patio furniture wanted a word. So did the emergency chocolate. Somewhere, a voice was reading back the minutes.

Baxter ended the meeting with a single bark, the flat, unimpressed bark of a dog who has personally rescued this woman from the metaphysical abyss every Tuesday since March. The

headache vanished.

Maggie blinked. "The universe has released me."

Baxter nudged her calf politely. He wasn't interested in metaphysics. He was in this for *dairy*.

The swing drifted gently. The river shimmered.

Maggie took a much smaller lick.

"Growth," she declared.

Baxter was unconvinced.

- STORY, PHOTO: EDITOR



RIVERS RUN THROUGH IT



Photos: City of Green Cove Springs

Spring Park is often described as serene and peaceful. Locals enjoy the shaded pavilions as they listen to the hum of the river. Couples feel the breeze as their young children play on the enclosed playground. The park is punctuated with memorable tributes to local heroes, decorative gazebos, and porch swings dedicated to beloved citizens who were taken too soon. The healing springs, which brought tourists to our town over a century ago, keep our pool and splash pads cool and refreshing. The park remains the host for various community events such as River Fest, Food Truck Friday, and Clay's Christmas Parade. It is also the setting for birthday parties, weddings, and family reunions.

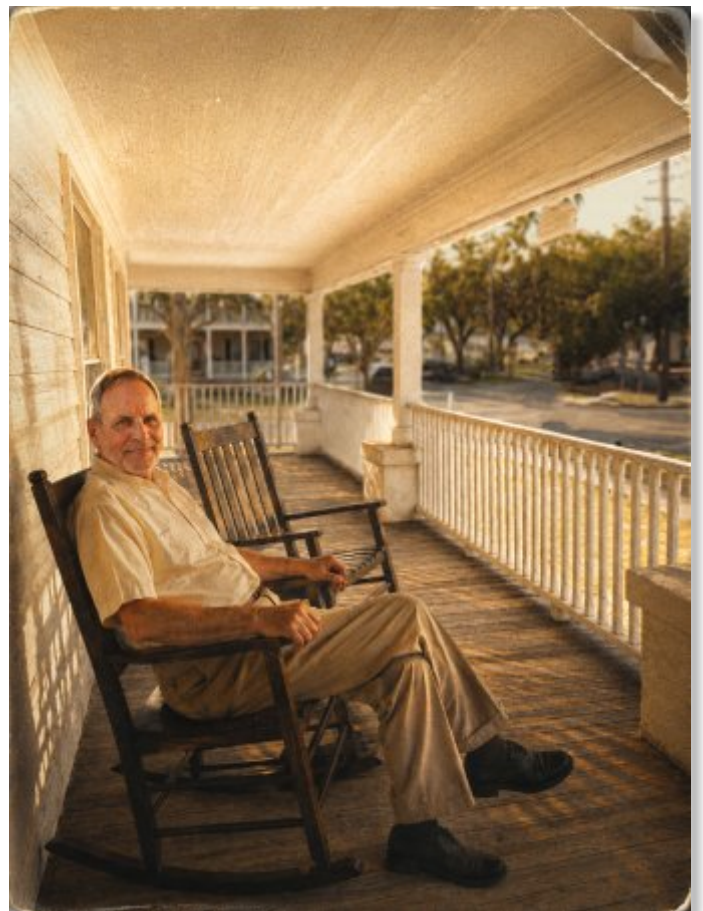
Spring Park, however, looked quite different in the early 1900s. It was home to what was likely one of the most luxurious hotels the town had ever seen. The Qui Si Sana Hotel stood where City Hall is now, and it served as lodging for renowned guests who came for the healing waters of our springs. The park was the first stop for tourists, shoppers with discretionary income, and travelers who could afford lodging with full amenities.

One constant over the last 140 years is the beautiful Victorian home that sits along the edge of Spring Park, strong and sturdy still today. To residents, this house has affectionately become known as the Rivers House, not because it sits so close to the river, but because it was once the home of one of Green Cove's most notable citizens, Judge Thomas J. Rivers.

Vaughan Rivers, the son of Judge Rivers, remembers growing up in that house during the "Hotel Era" of Spring Park. He could sit on the front porch of his home and see the guests relaxing on the porch of the Qui-Si-Sana. Often, he would walk over to visit with

them as they enjoyed the hotel's amenities. Living in the park, so close to the magnificent hotel, certainly had its perks.

The pool was the most popular pastime for the youth of the 1950s. There was a jukebox in the pavilion, owned by the family that managed the pool for the city. While it was an annoyance to many of the adults in the area,



Continued





the teenagers loved it. The music was always cranked up very loud, and it could easily be heard from the porch of the Rivers House. Fats Domino, Chuck Berry, and Buddy Holly were all favorites of young Rivers. The Rivers House porch was almost as popular as the pool itself, and Vaughan's friends regularly stopped by to "hang out" whenever they visited the park.

The open pavilions were also the setting for many political rallies during that time. There was almost always something smoking in the barbecue pit or bream frying to bring in the crowds. The aroma of fresh fish carried into the park, where guests from the Qui-Si-Sana would gather alongside local residents.

Even though he lived near the magnificent hotel and interacted with wealthy guests, Vaughan was taught to be conservative and frugal. He said that many people don't realize his father, Judge Thomas Rivers, grew up in poverty after losing his own father at a very young age. Thomas Rivers' stepbrother paid his tuition to the University of Florida, and he rode a boxcar back and forth to Gainesville until he graduated with a law degree in 1930. Vaughan credits his parents with shaping his life and instilling in him a strong work ethic.

Vaughan still reminisces about the way it felt to walk outside every morning to the best location Green Cove Springs had to offer. To his right was the river, the birds, the wildlife, and the neighbor, and the smell of sulfur water floating over the park. To his left was the most outstanding display of wealth that he could



imagine. In just a few steps, those strangers from far away places with dreams of wealth and youth could feel the warmth and appreciate the slow pace of Green Cove Springs. The front porch of the Rivers House bridged the gap then, just as it does today.

The Rivers House remains an important fixture in Spring Park. The citizens of Green Cove value their history and often describe feeling connected to the house because of its long history in the city's most beautiful setting. Only time will tell what the future holds, but for now, the Rivers House remains a treasured landmark and a favorite conversation piece for locals and visitors alike.

- LARIANNE STUTTS, PRESIDENT
VILLAGE IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION



MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

RIVERS HOUSE HERITAGE AND ADVENTURE CENTER ★ PORCH FEST ★

TAILDRAGGERS ULTRALIGHT

Friday,
August 14

7:00–9:00 PM

219 Spring Street,
Green Cove Springs

\$40 RESERVE YOUR LAWN CHAIR SPACE

Your reservation helps pay for entertainment and
creates funds for restoration of the historic Rivers House.



Cheri Starnes, President,
Green Cove Springs
Preservation Society,
invites you to help
restore the historic
Rivers House by
reserving a space for
your lawn chair on
the lawn for \$40.



<https://www.zeffy.com/en-US/ticketing/rivers-house-porch-fest>

Note: Zeffy may suggest an optional donation, but you can
skip that offer by selecting "Other" and entering 80.



EXTRA!

VOLUME 7 ISSUE 8

"BREAKING NEWS FROM BEHIND THE HEDGES"

AUGUST 2026



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3312 Blackstone Court
\$550,000



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SOLD



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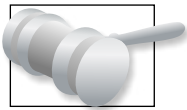


CURB DROP



- EDITOR





MPCA REVIEW



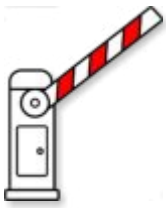
VOLUME 7 ISSUE 8

- SOURCE: magpt.org • SUMMARIES BY EDITOR

AUGUST 2026

Hello again! As we cross the midpoint of the year, it is time to update our year-to-date look at the hard work, challenges, and decisions guiding the Magnolia Point Community Association and shaping its future. By incorporating the latest July 2026 Committee reports into our January through July analysis, we have put together a summary of what is happening behind the scenes.

Here is your updated summary of core accomplishments, ongoing challenges, shifts in strategy, and action items, organized alphabetically by committee. (NOTE: the CLC and Covenants Consolidation Committees are not included, due to lack of activity.)



ACCESS CONTROL

Chair: *Chuck Cox*

The ACC continues to wrestle with the community's most expensive headache: gate damages. Despite successfully installing new barrier arms with a "swing-away" feature designed to reduce damage, the

community saw a staggering 10 billable incidents in June alone. Drivers have repeatedly struck the gates while attempting to tailgate, and in one instance, a driver physically pushed the new gate arm out of the way to enter. Year-to-date, gate damages billed to drivers have skyrocketed to \$19,500, but the HOA has only successfully recovered \$9,000.

On a positive note, the committee successfully oversaw the replacement of all four leaking gearboxes on the metal gate operators, replaced a burnt-out motor on the front resident barrier arm, and resolved intermittent signal issues by replacing the access control board.

Shifts in Priorities, Reversals, & Action Items

A major leadership shift is on the horizon: Chairman Chuck Cox has announced he will step down at the end of July, though he will remain on the committee to assist with the transition. We urgently need a volunteer to take over this vital role.

Regarding the long-delayed RFID rollout, the project is finally moving forward after earlier reversals on how to fund the resident credentials. The RFID reader panel was successfully installed at the rear gate, and the front gate installation is planned for late July.

July Action Items

Install the front gate RFID reader, begin RFID software integration, run a dedicated water line to the guard shack, and evaluate maintenance plans for all gate and video equipment.

From 7 reports submitted of a total of 7 year to date.



ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW

Chair: *William M. (Wally) Bransford*

The ARC remains highly productive, processing an impressive 19 homeowner requests in June alone, bringing their year-to-date total to well over 100 reviews. Recent approvals cover everything from roof

replacements and new room additions to whole-house generators and decorative pool fountains.

A major ongoing challenge is non-compliance by speculators and lot owners. The committee recently had to formally disapprove two after-the-fact requests from an owner who completely clear-cut all trees on two lots on Barton Creek Circle without prior ARC approval. These violations have been forwarded to the Rules Enforcement Committee and the Board for disciplinary action. Furthermore, Chairman Wally Bransford is still actively seeking to resign as soon as a capable volunteer steps up to take his place.

Shifts in Priorities, Reversals, & Action Items

The committee continues to enforce its long-standing rule prohibiting "separate structures," recently reminding a prospective buyer that standalone pool houses are not permitted, though attached additions are considered. This remains a firm boundary despite earlier state legislative reversals forcing the HOA to allow small, hidden storage sheds.

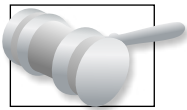
July Action Items

The ARC formally recommends that the Board explicitly define and publish policies outlining fines and disciplinary actions for owners who clear-cut lots without ARC permission.

From 7 reports submitted of a total of 7 year to date.

Continued





MPCA REVIEW



VOLUME 7 ISSUE 8

- SOURCE: magpt.org • SUMMARIES BY EDITOR

AUGUST 2026



COMMUNICATIONS

Chair: Joanne LaBeouf
(No July report was submitted; summary reflects January–June data). The Committee successfully launched the brand-new MPCA

website and fully retired the old HOA-Express platform. Community emails are now officially flowing through Constant Contact, which also houses the community database. While the migration was a massive success, the committee had to manage bottlenecks regarding registration difficulties and field complaints from residents unhappy with the new site's visual design or the registration process.

Shifts in Priorities, Reversals, & Action Items

A key strategy shift involved setting firm boundaries on database management; the committee had to explicitly clarify that residents are strictly responsible for updating their own contact information, reversing assumptions that the committee would do it for them. Furthermore, the committee decoupled the email system from the website platform to enhance security.

July Action Items

No new action items for July. Ongoing efforts focus on managing the community newsletter and supporting resident website registrations.

From 6 reports submitted of a total of 7 year to date.



LANDSCAPE & IRRIGATION

Chair: Cindy Francisco
L&I continues to battle the elements to keep our community beautiful. Recently, volunteers have been weeding, fertilizing, and renovating flower beds along Magnolia

Point Blvd. and the shadow box fence. However, Mother Nature remains their biggest bottleneck. The unseasonable winter freeze followed immediately by a severe spring drought—and subsequent Phase II watering restrictions from the St. Johns River Water Management District—have severely delayed sodding and planting projects.

Additionally, the committee is fighting aging infrastructure and the fallout of the front gate road-widening project, which damaged landscape lighting and compromised irrigation lines.

Shifts in Priorities, Reversals, & Action Items

Because the weather has limited new plantings, the committee has temporarily shifted its focus toward

hardscaping, irrigation repairs, and preparing for future enhancements, such as wrapping utility boxes with vinyl and redesigning landscape lighting.

July Action Items

A formal motion was submitted requesting the release of funds to repair the irrigation systems at the Medinah and Magnolia Point Blvd. gates. Recommendations include restoring irrigation to the Colonial pond, adding park benches, and discussing the creation of a walking trail around the front entrance fountain pond.

From 5 reports submitted of a total of 7 year to date.



ROADWAYS, DRAINAGE & WATERWAYS

Chair: Dave Sprinkle
RDW is making major strides in preventative maintenance and safety. In June, the committee selected A

Team Site Works to complete July road repairs for \$8,544, and they are actively touring the neighborhood to map priority crack-filling projects.

To improve traffic safety, they installed a new 30" stop sign at Colonial and Quaker Ridge and will be installing two new electronic speed limit signs (one on Colonial and another on Muirfield or Olympic). Fortunately, recent settlement issues at the 3658 Oglebay drainage outlet were successfully repaired by the contractor under warranty at no cost to the HOA.

A major bottleneck is manpower: the committee recently lost Tom Sprott, an excellent volunteer, and is urgently seeking new volunteers to help monitor the community's massive stormwater infrastructure.

Shifts in Priorities, Reversals, & Action Items

The committee executed a massive strategic shift toward proactive hurricane preparation. Following the catastrophic \$500,000 Oglebay pipe collapse earlier this year, they are focused on verifying the health of the entire storm system before a major storm hits.

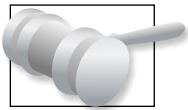
July Action Items

The committee will hire a local surveyor to shoot elevations and install gauge boards on all 28 (or 31) community ponds to easily monitor water levels. They have also requested that engineer John Nevin formally identify and map the water flow on the master stormwater drainage map.

From 3 reports submitted of a total of 7 year to date.

Continued





MPCA REVIEW



VOLUME 7 ISSUE 8

- SOURCE: magpt.org • SUMMARIES BY EDITOR

AUGUST 2026



RULES ENFORCEMENT

Chair: Larry Francisco

The REC continues to monitor the neighborhood, with landscape maintenance (47%) and general maintenance (30%) accounting for the vast majority of the violations written in June. Encouragingly, resident compliance seems to have ticked up slightly this summer; the committee did not have to hold a single violation hearing in June, nor did they need to issue any "Intent to Fine" letters.

Shifts in Priorities, Reversals, & Action Items

The committee's earlier strategic reversal toward leniency (holding dead-lawn violations in abeyance due to the severe drought) appears to remain the standard operating procedure as water restrictions persist.

July Action Items

No formal motions or action items were submitted for July.

From 5 reports submitted of a total of 7 year to date.



STRATEGIC PLANNING

Chair: Ann Sims

(No July report was submitted; summary reflects January–June data.) The SPC achieved its major goals for the year, successfully drafting and submitting both the community's 5-year Strategic Plan and the comprehensive Club Continuity Handbook. These massive documents provide Key Performance Indicators for the HOA and outline emergency steps the Board can take should the community lose access to MPI's amenities.

Shifts in Priorities, Reversals, & Action Items

With the heavy lifting complete, the committee is shifting its strategy toward drafting targeted community surveys regarding traffic and speeding, and is considering taking a well-deserved summer hiatus.

July Action Items

No new action items.

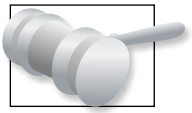
From 5 reports submitted of a total of 7 year to date.

EDITOR



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BOARD NOTES



VOLUME 7 ISSUE 8

- SOURCE: magpt.org • SUMMARY BY EDITOR

AUGUST 2026

Between January and July 2026, the Magnolia Point Community Association (MPCA) Board of Directors underwent leadership changes, altered its communication methods, and fundamentally redirected its agenda to address the potential acquisition of the club.

January to May: Fractured Voting and Escalating Infrastructure Costs

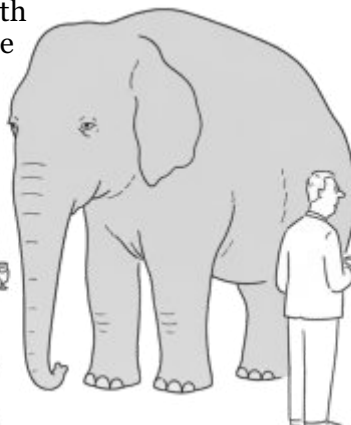
In January, under President Sprinkle, the Board operated with unanimous votes and a rigid stance toward social media. Asserting they were "not committed to making changes to please everyone," the Board summarily terminated the online Members Forum. Furthermore, the Board dismissed persistent resident speeding complaints, citing police studies to assert that no actual speeding problem existed. By February, infrastructure spending increased sharply, with the Board approving an \$80,000 front entrance expansion, over \$60,000 for Medinah Gate upgrades and painting, and nearly \$40,000 for emergency stormwater repairs.

In April, David Miller assumed the presidency. Voting became fractured, with several motions passing on split 4-1 or 3-2 decisions. To replace the Forum, the Board allocated up to \$20,000 for a printed monthly newsletter over a dissenting vote. They moved \$525,000 from reserves into Certificates of Deposit and began drafting a Request for Proposal (RFP) to solicit a new HOA management company.

In May, the agenda was disrupted when the club owner announced a pending agreement to sell all Magnolia Point Investment (MPI) assets and the Red 9 to a third party, RCBF Properties, LLC. The HOA responded that it would review its option to purchase the assets.

June: Shifting Focus to Asset Acquisition

Following the MPI announcement, the Board abruptly changed its strategic emphasis. It tabled the search for a new management company to focus entirely on the club sale. President Miller publicly acknowledged the MPI sale as the "*elephant in the room*," and the Treasurer reported meeting with First Citizens Bank to gauge the viability of obtaining a loan if the community decided to purchase the club.



The Board allocated significant HOA funds to evaluate buying the club, approving a series of June action items:

- \$9,000 to CBRE for a golf course appraisal.
- \$7,500 to hire a new land use attorney, Brennan Manna Diamond.
- \$3,500 for a contingent USGA evaluation of the active 18 holes.

June also revealed a shift in the Board's stance on community safety. Contradicting its January claim that speeding was not an issue, the Board spent \$1,200 on radar speed signs as a "beta test" to determine their value. The Board also began fielding questions regarding the confidential MPI sales agreements, confirming they contain contingencies for government approvals, and emphasized that future community updates would be "fluid" living documents. Additional June action items included a \$2,550 gearbox replacement and a \$4,900 charge to replace a gate arm struck by a resident.

July: Financial Posturing and Stricter Boundaries

-EDITOR

In July, the Board's strategy centered on securing time and capital. The CBRE appraisal was completed and posted, valuing the club at \$4.15 million, and the USGA site visit was scheduled for late July. In a major strategic move, the Board unanimously approved a request to extend their Right of First Refusal for the club by 90 days. Financially, the Board further matured its investments by moving an additional \$375,000 from an ICS account into a new CDARS ladder.

July finalized a complete reversal of the Board's January position on traffic safety. Moving beyond the June radar signs, the Board voted 4-1 to hire off-duty police officers to randomly monitor the community for up to 25 hours per month.

Finally, the Board instituted stricter boundaries regarding community engagement and intellectual property. The Board registered the MPCA logo with the Copyright Office and explicitly notified residents that it is "not committed to engage in discussions on social media," directing all concerns exclusively to the website's contact portal. Routine July action items included \$9,500 for road repairs, \$4,000 for gate preventative maintenance, and a light pole replacement, while a significant tree trimming request was tabled pending further review.

- SUMMARY OF MINUTES AND HIGHLIGHTS, BY EDITOR
THROUGH JULY 31, 2026





GOOD²GO

MAGNOLIA • HOMEGROWN • RECIPES



Stewed okra and tomatoes is a staple of the Southern vegetable plate, perfectly capturing the bright flavors of summer produce in a single skillet. While many traditional versions rely heavily on bacon grease or slow-simmered meats, this classic dish is incredibly easy to modernize into a quick, plant-based meal. It comes together in just 30 minutes, making it a perfect weeknight go-to when you want something hearty, savory, and highly nutritious. Below is the foundational vegan recipe, followed by a few simple ways to customize it with your favorite proteins!

The 'Good 2 Go' Fast Fact: *If you are worried about okra's infamous "slime," fear not! Cooking the okra in a hot skillet first, combined with the natural acidity of the tomatoes, breaks down the mucilage (the plant goo). As it cooks, it simply thickens the broth into a rich, luscious sauce.*

OKRA-DOKEY, LET'S GET STEWING!

INGREDIENTS

- 1 lb okra (fresh or frozen), trimmed and sliced into 1-inch rounds
- 1 sweet yellow onion, diced
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 tbsp olive oil or cooking oil
- 1 vegetable bouillon cube, crushed into powder
- 1 (14.5 oz) can diced tomatoes (fire-roasted are excellent), undrained
- ½ cup vegetable broth
- 1 bay leaf
- Sea salt, black pepper, and crushed red pepper to taste



Continued





DIRECTIONS Heat your oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Add the diced onion, crushed vegetable bouillon, sea salt, black pepper, and crushed red pepper. Sauté for about four minutes until the onion is fragrant and translucent, then stir in the minced garlic for one more minute.

Add the sliced okra to the skillet, tossing it in the oil and aromatics for 2 to 3 minutes. Next, pour in the diced tomatoes with all their juices, the vegetable broth, and the bay leaf.

Bring the mixture to a gentle bubble, reduce the heat, let simmer uncovered for 20 to 25 minutes, stirring occasionally. The dish is ready when the okra is tender and the tomato juices have reduced into a thick, savory sauce. Taste for seasoning and serve warm over a bed of fluffy white or brown rice.

OPTIONAL

Hearty Plant Proteins: To keep the dish completely vegan but add a substantial protein boost, stir in a

handful of cooked garbanzo beans (chickpeas) or red beans during the last few minutes of simmering. **Poultry or Seafood:** For a lean, savory addition, fold in shredded rotisserie chicken or peeled shrimp during the final 5 minutes of cooking until they are perfectly warmed or cooked through.

Sausage: Sliced smoked sausage, kielbasa, or Andouille can be browned in the skillet first, set aside, and then stirred back in at the end for a delightfully smoky, robust flavor.

The Classic Bacon Route: If you want a truly traditional Southern flavor profile, start by crisping up 4 strips of diced bacon in your skillet. Remove the crispy bacon with a slotted spoon and use the leftover bacon drippings in place of the olive oil to sauté your vegetables. Sprinkle the crispy bacon bits over the top right before serving!

RECIPE, PHOTOS: EDITOR



NEW! SOUTHERN ON THE SIDE

Fried Green Tomatoes

If you firmly believe that authentic Southern vegetables must be baptized in bacon fat in a well-seasoned cast-iron skillet, you can skip this page. We love tradition, but this month's "SOS" is taking a beloved classic and giving it a much-needed jet-age update. Welcome to a faster, lighter, and remarkably crispy take on an absolute staple: **Air Fried Green Tomatoes!** WARNING: Blasphemies Ahead!

Let's be honest, traditional fried green tomatoes aren't exactly health food. By trading the skillet and a pool of oil for an air fryer, we keep the crunch and tangy flavor while dramatically improving the nutrition profile. Better yet, this method cuts prep and cooking down to a mere 13 minutes from start to finish.

'SOS' Fast Fact: Using an air fryer means just a tiny mist of oil to achieve that golden-brown crust. This saves on calories and fat but eliminates the messy splatter of pan-frying. But use a manual oil mister! Non-stick sprays are not for air fryers and can damage your basket!

Directions:

Pat your tomato slices dry with paper towels and season them well with salt and pepper. Set up a quick three-step breading station. Coat each slice lightly in the flour, dip it into the egg and buttermilk mixture, and finally, press both sides firmly into the cornmeal and Panko blend for maximum crunch.

Preheat your air fryer to 400°. Mist the basket lightly with oil, place four slices in a single layer, and mist the tops of the

Comeback Sauce

A classic, zesty dipping sauce from 1920's Mississippi, a cross between remoulade and Thousand Island. Typically includes:

- 1/2 cup mayonnaise
- 2 tablespoons chili sauce (or ketchup)
- 1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice
- 1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
- 1 teaspoon hot sauce, to taste



Ingredients:

- 2 to 3 firm green tomatoes, cut into 1/4-inch slices
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 1/2 cup all-purpose flour
- 2 large eggs, whisked with 1/2 cup buttermilk
- 1 cup yellow cornmeal mixed with 1 cup Panko breadcrumbs (the secret to an extra crispy coating)
- Olive or vegetable oil, in a manual mister

tomatoes. Air-fry for 5 minutes, flip, give them one more quick mist of oil, and fry for 3 more minutes. Not much longer than that!

Serve them piping hot as an appetizer with a side of **Comeback Sauce (see inset, above)**, or layer them into a BLT! You get all the comfort of the classic dish with a fraction of the guilt!

RECIPE, PHOTOS: EDITOR



LIMITED TIME

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The Potting Bench



Welcome to this month's installment of "*The Potting Bench*"! As we plan our North Florida suburban landscapes, it is easy to focus all our energy on spring and summer blooms. However, if you want a dependable, long-lived shrub that provides a spectacular display of colorful flowers during the fall and winter, the classic **Camellia** is an absolute must-have.

While some camellias can grow quite large, there are many compact and dwarf varieties available that fit perfectly into smaller suburban yards or statement containers.

Here is your guide to sourcing, transplanting, and maintaining beautiful Camellias in your landscape:

Sourcing Your Camellia

You can find camellias at local nurseries, garden festivals, and specially hosted camellia flower shows, which are great places to find unique or heirloom varieties. There are two main types to consider. **Camellia japonica** typically has larger leaves and spectacular, showy flowers, while **Camellia sasanqua** has smaller leaves but blooms incredibly profusely.

Varieties

Because our warm falls can delay early bloomers, midseason flowering varieties (blooming November through January) generally perform best here. For a compact footprint, look for **C. sasanqua** 'Shishigashira' (a dwarf variety with rosy-red blooms) or 'Yuletide' (an upright, compact grower with single red flowers and prominent yellow stamens).

Transplanting and Placement

- **When to Plant:** The best time to plant camellias is from November to February. This allows their root systems to establish before the harsh summer heat arrives.
- **Light:** *Camellia japonica* performs best in partial shade. The *sasanqua* types can tolerate full sun, but they still prefer some protection from the harsh afternoon heat.
- **Soil and Planting:** Camellias demand well-drained, acidic soil with a pH between 5.0 and 6.5. If your soil is very sandy, amend the entire planting bed with 3 to 6 inches of organic matter. Dig a hole two to three times wider than the root ball, but slightly shallower—the top of the root ball must sit 1 to 2 inches above the soil line to allow for settling. They cannot tolerate being planted too deeply.

Continued





Maintenance

- **Watering and Mulch:** Apply a 2- to 3-inch layer of mulch (like pine straw) around the plant to conserve moisture, but keep it pulled back from the actual root ball to allow for air exchange. Camellias are fairly drought-tolerant once established, but need about an inch of water every 10 to 14 days during dry spells, and weekly watering while flowering. Be careful not to overwater, as they are highly susceptible to root rot if kept too wet.
- **Feeding:** Camellias require very little fertilizer. You can apply a specialized, acid-forming "Azalea & Camellia" fertilizer once or twice a year: first in spring after they finish blooming, and optionally again in early to midsummer. Never fertilize in late summer or fall, as this pushes tender new growth that can easily be damaged by winter cold.
- **Pruning:** These shrubs possess a naturally beautiful form and require minimal pruning. If you need to shape the plant or remove dead, crossing, or low-hanging branches, do so in late winter or early spring right after the blooming finishes. Avoid pruning in late summer, or you will accidentally cut off all of your winter flower buds.
- **Pest Watch:** The most common pest to look out for is "tea scale," which appears as white, cottony masses or gray/black bumps on the undersides of the leaves, often causing yellow splotches on top. If you spot this, an application of horticultural oil in late winter or early spring will help smother the pests.



- STORY, PHOTOS: EDI





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THE ICE CREAM HEADACHE

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- ☐ 1 OZ PINEAPPLE JUICE
- ☐ 1-2 DASHES OF ORANGE BITTERS
- ☐ 1 TSP FRESHLY GRATED GINGER OR 1 OZ GINGER SYRUP
- ☐ 4 SCOOPS OF VANILLA ICE CREAM
- ☐ ORANGE SLICE AND MAGNOLIA BLOSSOM FOR GARNISH

- *In a blender, combine the vodka or rum (if making the alcoholic version), vanilla syrup, fresh orange juice, fresh lime juice, pineapple juice, and orange bitters.*
- *Add 2 scoops of the ice cream, blend until smooth.*
- *Add the other 2 (or 3...who's counting?) scoops of ice cream to a tall, frosted glass, pour in the mixture.*
- *Garnish with an orange slice*



A headache you'll want: frosty, sweet, creamy and citrusy with a refreshing tartness; the vanilla and pineapple add tropical notes, and the orange bitters a depth of flavor. The hint of ginger give it a ginger peppery 'snap', reminiscent of a magnolia's fragrance. The ice cream will make it thick and milkshake-like. YUM!

RECIPE & PHOTO: EDITOR

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"Good news! It was an ice cream headache."

TOONS



"I like that we don't blame ice cream headaches on each other."



BIRD BREAK

Ah, those early mornings on the lanai, the silence broken by the odd frog, a NAS JAX flyover, a too-early leaf blower, and *those birds!* Hard to ignore, with over 520 recorded species in our neck of the woods, including year-round residents, wintering migrants, and seasonal visitors. And those early-rising vocal few who take up the stage in the trees and bushes of our backyards. And ring in the day. As we plan our attack on the daylight hours with a cup of coffee and open ears. Songs are longer, musical melodies used primarily to attract mates and defend territory. Calls are short, simple sounds used for everyday communication like warning of danger, locating a flock, or begging for food. You might not know that the call and song that have greeted you from above all this time are from the same bird!



The call of the **Red-shouldered Hawk** is so distinct that Hollywood has assigned it to the sound every eagle makes upon entering a scene. It is the bird world's most theatrical middle manager, surveying the yard from on high with the expression of someone who owns the place and has the paperwork to prove it. The rusty barred chest suggests it dressed for a Renaissance fair and never looked back. Blue Jays famously imitate its call, which the hawk finds professionally insulting. Eats squirrels whole and feels nothing. Maintain eye contact. Show no fear.

Song and Call: Red-shouldered hawks don't really have a "song" in the technical sense that songbirds do: they're raptors, not passerines ('perching' or 'songbirds'), so they lack the specialized vocal apparatus (the syrinx complexity) that lets songbirds produce those varied, musical, learned phrases. What a red-tail has instead is a small repertoire of calls, each tied to context, and people sometimes lump them together as "the hawk's song" when really they're all functionally calls. It has two distinct calls, one a repeating hoarse, rasping, descending '**KREEEeeerr**' that drops in pitch toward the end; the other a screaming '**KEE-aah KEE-aah KEE-aah**' that sounds like a nature documentary has suddenly become personal.

The **Eastern Bluebird** sings like someone who has genuinely processed their feelings and arrived at peace, a soft, warbling so relentlessly wholesome it makes you question your life choices. It is the bird world's most sincere optimist, which is suspicious. That improbable blue, the color of a sky that only exists in children's illustrations, seems factory-installed to make you feel you haven't been outside enough. It perches on fence posts gazing into the middle distance with the quiet confidence of someone who meditates successfully. To have a mating pair settle in your yard (provided you supply the proper domicile, which yes, is possible at [Magnolia Point](#)) is considered the near-impossible pinnacle of animal husbandry! Bluebird numbers collapsed for decades, then recovered, thanks to efforts by folks like Magnolia's Melanie Dean and others. This cheeky little songbird processed that too, apparently, and decided it's fine after all. It's all fine.



Song and Call: The most notable song is a '**Churle-churl-lee, Churle-churl-lee**'. When calling, it's a soft, downslurred '**Tu-a-wee**' or '**Pew**' though with a chattering or scolding note when alarmed. It's more subdued and liquid-sounding, almost like the bird is singing under its breath. Males sing most from a perch near the nest cavity, especially at dawn, to attract a mate and defend territory. It's a relatively simple, repetitive song compared to virtuosic singers like mockingbirds or wrens; bluebirds aren't big mimics or improvisers, and would pretty much suck at karaoke at Saloon 17.

So, then, the contrast with the hawk is basically this: the bluebird's song is the musical, structured vocalization tied to courtship and territory, sung mostly by the male in breeding season, while its calls are the shorter, simpler, everyday notes both sexes use for contact and alarm, a true song/call split, rather than the single-repertoire-of-calls situation you get with a raptor like the red-tail.

Full disclosure: my thanks to Cornell Lab of Ornithology for their brilliant 'Merlin Bird ID' app, which uses your phone to identify the birds in your backyard by their calls! You gotta try this! The rest I noodled up on my own. You know, before coffee when I have some sense!

EDITOR



Playing Through

- CHRISTIAN SMITH

IN PLAY - SANTEE COOPER

In late July, six of us went up to South Carolina to play in the **Summer Invitational** at **Santee Cooper Golf Club** on Lake Marion. Jimmy Arnold continued his legacy as a player by winning the Super Senior Division and posted the low round of the day on Day 1 with a 2-under 70. I finished in 2nd place in the regular

been hitting it well and was very confident going into the final round. I made a couple of critical mistakes on two of the first four holes that ended up costing me. I made a solid par on the first hole and was in the middle of the fairway on the 2nd. The flagstick was on the back of the green and my yardage to it was in between a PW and a 9i. I chose to hit a knock-down 9i because I knew I couldn't get the PW to the back section of the green. I hit a perfect 9i right at the flag and it landed just over the back fringe on a downslope and caromed off down the hill and up against a pine tree 10 yards over the green. I had to pitch out sideways because I had no backswing due to the tree. From there, I was in deep rough, with a back pin, and the green sloping away from me. I hit a great pitch but could only get it about 20 feet from the hole and 2-putted for double bogey...not the way you want to start.

On the 4th hole, I made a similar decision, but this time I didn't think the PW I was hitting could get me in trouble going long. Again, I hit a really solid shot right at the flag and had the same result...over the back, deep rough, pitching back into a green sloping away from me. I don't know whether it was adrenaline, or maybe catching a bit of a jumpy lie, but both went longer than I expected. In both cases though, the smart play would have been to take the shorter club, play for the middle of the green, and walk out with a par. Instead, I made a double bogey, and a 6-foot putt to save par on #4 left me behind the 8-ball right out of the gate.

Why do I mention this? I think it is important to think of where the pin position is when you are hitting approach shots. The main reason is that you don't want to 'short-side' yourself after an errant approach. What I mean by that is leaving yourself very little green to work with for your chip/pitch when you miss the green. This varies, so sometimes it may not be bad to have a chip/pitch to a front pin location if you are short of the green and it is an uphill shot. The main thing to think of is: "If I miss this shot short or long, am I going to be able to get



Senior Division and had a chance near the end. I was just outplayed by a wonderful man and player, Steve Barfoot, from Dublin, GA. I want to take you through some thought processes I had during the tournament to give you an 'inside the ropes' perspective, and maybe things you can incorporate or avoid when you play.

I was tied for the lead after round 1 with two other players and another few a stroke or two back. I had

Continued



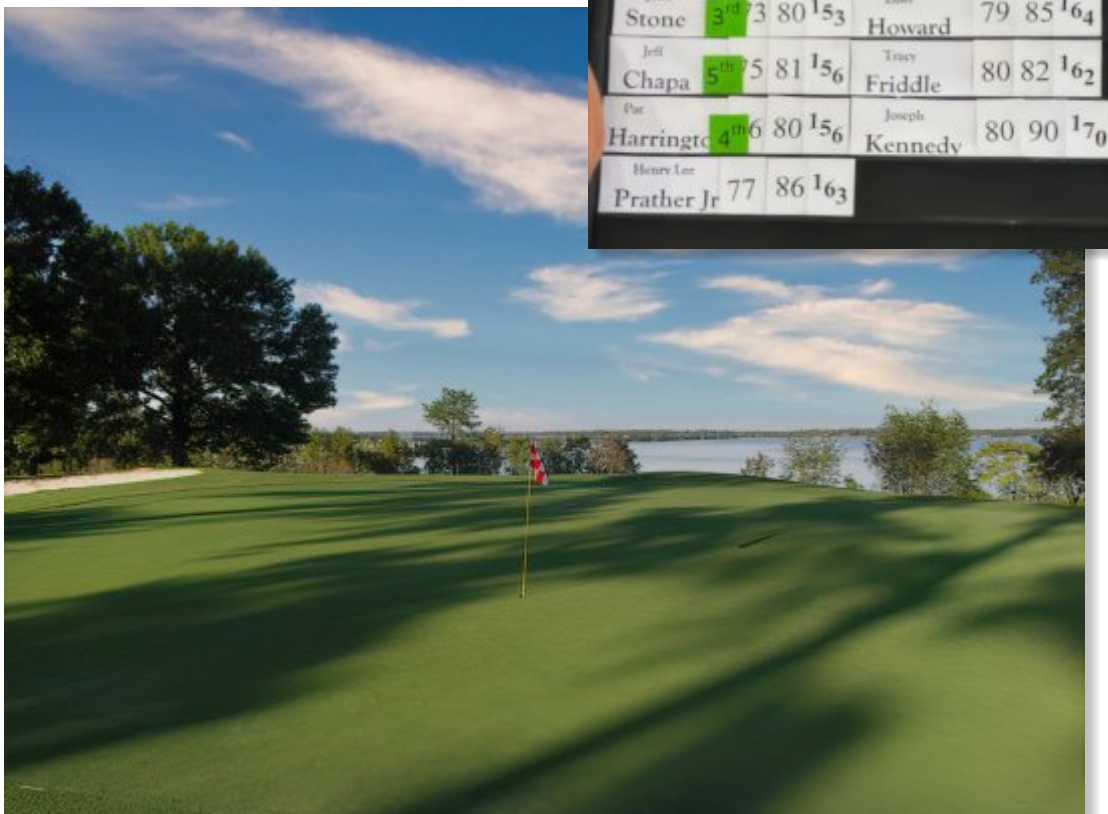
the ball close to the hole on the next shot?" In my case, I put myself in jail both times where I couldn't get the ball close to the hole if I erred in one direction. As a general rule, playing to the center of the green never hurts you, so adjust your club selection that way. This also applies to where the pin is horizontally on the green. If it is tucked on the left side 10 yards or less from the edge, you don't want to miss that shot left and be stuck with a tricky pitch that will be hard to stop.

The second takeaway from the weekend has to do with putting. The greens at this course were very fast. In our practice round, we had more than one guy 4-putt a hole. I was constantly running the ball by the hole and left with 4- to 6-foot putts coming back. I decided going into the tournament that I was going to focus more on avoiding 3-putts than making the first putt. I did execute this really well because I did not have a 3-putt in the two days of the tournament, but I also didn't make a lot of my initial putts on the green. It's kind of a pick-your-poison strategy, because you can either be more aggressive to try to make putts, or you can decide to lag it close to the hole in hopes that the next one is a tap-in or close to it. When

lagging that way, you can often leave putts short (which I did a lot), but as long as the next one was basically a formality, I didn't care. I didn't make as many putts as I would have wanted, but I also may have saved myself a lot of strokes by not creating stress on the subsequent putt.

One thing to consider with lag putting that not a lot of people think about is the line you take, and how it determines the difficulty of your next putt. Generally, it is better to play more break, because when you miss a putt below the hole and it is breaking away from the hole, that ball is going to continue to get farther away from the hole. If you play too much break on the high side, the ball is still moving toward the hole. The only caveat to that is on putts where you absolutely do not want to leave the ball above the hole — where you have a 2-foot downhill that is going to go by 5 feet if you miss it. I saw that several times this weekend. If it is a relatively flat putt, it doesn't make that much difference, but when you have a steep slope on fast greens, you are almost always better off missing just below the hole. Trust me, it will save you strokes.

Obviously, to play well (whatever that means for you), you have to execute shots well, but that is not the entire picture. Strategy and course management are very overlooked components of scoring. I made two crucial mistakes by



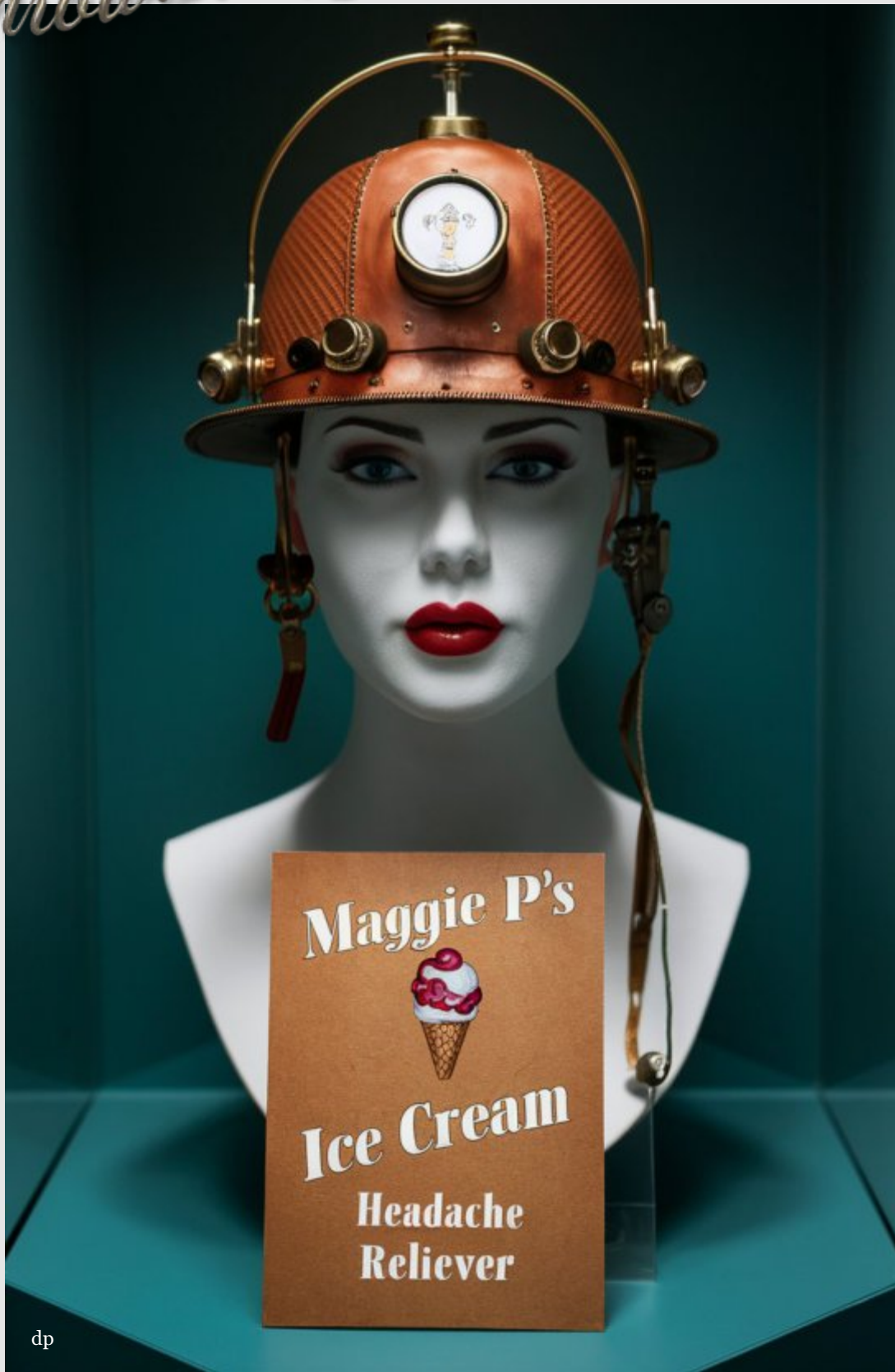
making wrong club decisions that may have cost me the tournament. It's important to consider: if I miss this shot, where do I want to miss it? When you are playing your best, you can probably be a little more lenient with that approach, but it is still a factor. I felt very good about my swing, my game, and my comfort in the heat of the battle. All it took was a little lack of focus in my decision-making to cost me. It wasn't ability; it was strategy and execution.

So, the next time you pull a club on a par-3, think about hitting the green, but if you don't, what's the best side to miss it? When you have that putt, do you want to try to make this, or do you need to be a little more cautious so that if you miss, your next one is a tap-in?

I hope this finds everyone well, and I look forward to seeing you out there soon. Hopefully, we can weather the next month or so and get some cooler temperatures.

-CHRISTIAN





dp

Head Games

The 'Maggie P' brand is no stranger to merchandise marketing, and though their own ice cream brand did little to light up the frozen dairy categories, it didn't prevent them from lavishing most of their R&D budget to this gadget, which debuted in 1954. And quickly disappeared: the steam-mist and incense powered helmet took far longer to get operational and in position for headaches that pass so quickly, and was never proven to work actually work(!). The helmet caught the eye of actor Art Carney, 'Ed Norton' on the television show 'Honeymooners', and he wore it in one episode, *sans* fittings and guage. It was the only one Maggie P's sold. Shown with original instruction manual.



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DEAR MISS PUDDLES

Hello. I am Miss Puddles Worthington III, a.k.a. "Miss Puddles". Each month, residents submit questions regarding pet etiquette, behavioral confusion, emotional turmoil, mysterious barking, unexplained zooming, or patio gecko diplomacy. I shall answer them with compassion, wisdom, and the quiet disappointment of a cat who watched someone buy "designer rain boots" for a Labradoodle. So, let the letters continue! If I were to assign a theme to this month's submissions, it would be, *'pets vs. household objects as competition for your affection'*.

Letter #4 - "Our Cat Hijacked My Husband's Professional Reputation"

Dear Miss Puddles,

Our tortoiseshell, Marigold, ignores everyone until my husband begins a work video call. The moment he unmutes, she enters the room, walks across his keyboard, and either types something into the chat or changes a setting none of us can subsequently find or reverse. Last week she turned on the virtual background, a tropical beach, and my husband presented a budget report from Bora Bora for eleven minutes before anyone mentioned it. His colleagues now ask if Marigold will be "joining" the call.

- Mortified in Magnolia



Dear Mortified,

I have reviewed the facts and I find myself, with qualification, on Marigold's side. (*Full disclosure: my daddy was a tortoiseshell!*) Your husband was presenting a budget report. Marigold assessed the situation and introduced a beach. Engagement almost certainly improved. If anything, Marigold should be submitting this as a case study.

- Close the office door before every call. Marigold will sit outside in silence for the duration, pressing one paw under the door like a note being passed in detention. This is not a solution. This is a different problem.
- Purchase a keyboard cover for when the computer is unattended. Marigold will sit on the keyboard cover. You will then have a warm keyboard cover and the same number of problems.
- Review whatever Marigold typed into the chat before your husband deletes it. I am not suggesting she made a coherent contribution. I am suggesting do not assume she didn't. Eleven people read it before he noticed.

Continued



- Create a Marigold virtual background: her portrait, professionally framed, centered. Make her the environment. Stop fighting the tide.

Miss Puddles' Bonus Holistic Suggestion:

Lavender calming wipes are lovely. However, I have found that playing a recording of a *vacuum cleaner* causes most cats to briefly reconsider their entire career. Try also: a recording of another cat meowing, played from the opposite end of the house. Watch her attempt to file a report on herself.

Letter #5 - "Our Dachshund Has Declared War on the Roomba"

Dear Miss Puddles,

Our miniature Wheaten Dachshund, Biscuit, has been stalking our robotic vacuum for three weeks. He follows it room to room, barking. Last Tuesday he body-checked it into the refrigerator. We are concerned this may escalate.

- Constanica Concerned



Dear Concerned,

Biscuit is not malfunctioning. He has correctly identified an intruder: a disc-shaped creature that speaks in monotone, moves without purpose, and answers to no one. This is a threat assessment, and frankly, it is not wrong. The Roomba cannot be reasoned with. Biscuit senses this. You should sense this too.

- Name the Roomba. Introduce Biscuit formally. "Biscuit, this is Gerald. Gerald lives here now." Dogs respond poorly to ambiguity and remarkably well to bureaucratic protocol.
- Allow Biscuit one supervised "inspection" per cleaning cycle, during which he may sniff the Roomba thoroughly and issue whatever verdict he sees fit. Then remove him with the quiet dignity of a diplomat escorting someone out of a summit.
- If he body-checks Gerald again, do not laugh. I understand this will be difficult. Do not laugh.
- Under no circumstances allow them to be in the same room unsupervised. I have seen how this ends. Gerald will win. He always wins. He has no feelings to hurt and a full battery.

Miss Puddles' Bonus Holistic Suggestion:

Biscuit needs a job that does not involve geopolitics. Teach him to find hidden treats using his magnificent nose. A dachshund with an occupation is a dachshund too busy to destabilize the household. Also consider placing a small bandana on Gerald. Research suggests this does nothing. It may, however, confuse Biscuit long enough for Gerald to finish the living room.

- STORY, PHOTOS: EDITOR



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CURB DROP II



- EDITOR



