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Gospelfest draws singers from 19 churches, Page 1D



LAWYERS UP IN ARMS: A CALL FOR A REVIEW
Miami-Dade State Attorney Katherine Fernandez Rundle faces growing unrest over her prosecutors' conduct, Page 15A



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Miami Herald

'Shame on them': How police fumbled the case of gymnastics coach accused of sex abuse

BY ANA CLAUDIA CHACIN AND CLARA-SOPHIA DALEY
achacin@miamiherald.com
csdaly@miamiherald.com

In March 2012, a mother came to the Key Biscayne Police Department with her 14-year-old daughter, who had been sent steamy love letters from a grown man — Oscar Olea, her 26-year-old gymnastics coach.

Shortly after, a second mother independently came forward, telling the then-chief of police that the same coach, Oscar Olea, had raped her 17-year-old daughter. Both moms were reluctant to get their daughters involved. And the 14-year-old denied anything sexual was going on. Various law enforcement experts told the Miami Herald that, willing victims or not, that's the

kind of information police departments should do something about: sternly warn the coach, survey parents and students, conduct surveillance. *Investigate.* Key Biscayne police did none of that. Then-Chief Charles Press, upon hearing the rape allegation, didn't even put



Charles Press

a memo in the file. Olea continued to coach — and push boundaries. Students described him as flirty, making sexualized comments, supplying back rubs, handling girls in ways that made them uncomfortable, asking whether students were virgins or whether they'd had their periods, even

hanging out at the beach or cruising to the mall with the students. A Facebook video shows a car stopping at an intersection while giggling girls jump out, circle the car and jump back in — a "Chinese fire drill." Olea was driving, former students said. Parents and supervisors at the venues where he coached took little note, although some have since

said they had to warn him at times about being alone with students. Olea's world crashed after the Miami Herald published a story in January called "Key Biscayne's Dark Secret," which quoted the 14-year-old, now a married mother of three, saying she'd been serially sexually abused by the coach. She said Olea

SEE COACH, 5A

They're fighting for the River of Grass

The people who live in the Everglades or depend on it keep waiting on a state-federal restoration effort that has dragged on for decades.

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PATRICK FARRELL, WFLN

As Haiti sinks into anarchy, how much is U.S.'s fault? Critics point to U.S. policy

BY ANDRES VIGLUCCI
avigluc@miamiherald.com

When a sitting Haitian president was assassinated in 1915, U.S. President Woodrow Wilson sent in the Marines to protect American interests and secure stability. The military occupation, which lasted 19 years, marked the start of more than a century of close and controversial U.S. entanglement in the volatile internal affairs of Haiti.

Though the particulars of the always-fraught relationship between Haiti and the United States have since shifted time and again, one thing has not: Very little of real political import happens in Haiti without the involvement of the U.S. government.

U.S. policy in Haiti has been inconsistent at best, observers and insiders say, swinging from maintaining order at gunpoint to decades of propping up repressive, reviled leaders through political pressure and monetary and military aid. In more recent years, U.S. policy has focused on trying, and mostly failing, to secure a measure of democracy, political stability and economic development for the Caribbean country.

When things go wrong, as they often do in a poor nation long prone to political instability and shattered by a series of natural disasters in the past two decades, American administrations have shouldered the blame from Haitians and the outside world, accused at times of doing too much or, at others, not enough.

That persistent dynamic has come into stark relief once more as Haiti stands at a dangerous new boiling point following the 2021 assassination of unpopular, U.S.-backed President Jovenel Moïse. The installation by the U.S. and its allies of an

SEE HAITI, 6A

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WEST SHORE

TRAVEL

Lush foliage, dazzling beaches put

FIJI'S ISLANDS ON THE MAP

BY ANNE Z. COOKE
Tribune News Service

NADI, FIJI ISLANDS

"That's Tom Hanks' island, in 'Cast Away' the movie," said the passenger sitting nearby, on the rear deck.

We'd seen him standing in line, a college kid in a red shirt, packing and repacking a knapsack while we waited to board the early morning ferry out of Viti Levu, largest of Fiji's 330 islands. Leaning over the railing, he pointed at the horizon and a faint grey-green shape.

"Its real name is Modriki, and it's small, just 100 acres," he said. "But the beach is awesome. Tourists can't wait to go."

No surprise there. For most South Pacific travelers, nothing rivals Fiji's sandy beaches, palm-shaded gardens, starry nights and Melanesian hospitality. We'd island-hopped over the years, tried a dozen different beach resorts, and liked most of them. Until 2019, when we joined a hiking group for a long look at the island's mountains.

Finally last fall, with COVID

in decline and Fiji open for tourists, we hopped a plane and headed back, this time for another look at what makes the country tick. Finding hotels wasn't easy; Fiji is to Australians what Hawaii is to Americans. But we crossed our fingers, found five with rooms and struck gold at three places begging for a repeat visit.

The Fiji Orchid, a stately manor house near Viti Levu's northwest shore and the former home of Hollywood actor Raymond Burr, star of the detective series "Perry Mason," felt nothing like a hotel

and everything like a home away from home. With an inviting living room and framed memorabilia, it beckoned at the end of a very long day.

Hotel Manager Deepika Dimlesh arranged an authentic Fijian dinner, and co-owner Gordon Leeswie told tales of Fiji life in the early days. Though Nadi (NAN-dee) International Airport was 20 minutes away, our bare (BOO-ey, room, house), one of six in the lush tropical garden, was as quiet as a cemetery.

"We've had guests who

stayed for weeks," said Dimlesh at dinner. "One was even writing a book. But most are international travelers, businessmen flying through. We tell them, if you have a layover don't try to sleep in the lounge. We'll pick you up, you can use the pool, eat dinner or go to bed, and we'll drive you back."

Curious about Lautoka, Viti Levu's second-largest town on the northwest shore, we hired tour guide and driver Kesbo Goundar, who (like many Fijians) speaks Fijian, English and Hindi. Stop-

ping at the town's huge covered market, he bought a couple of kava "sticks," the gifts we would need - for the chief - if we visited a village.

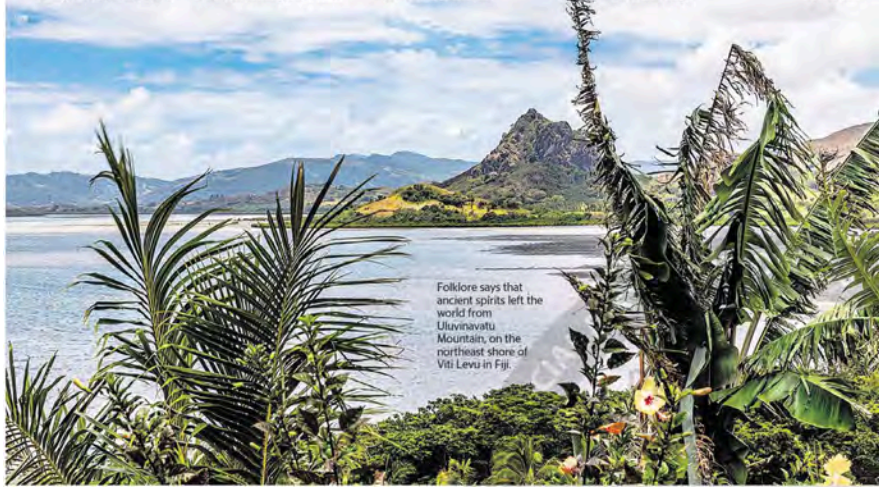
Then it was on to the Sabeto Mountains and the Garden of the Sleeping Giant. A popular park, it was founded by Burr, a worldwide orchid collector. Hundreds of orchids, planted along the trail to the summit, a huge head-like rock, are the highlight of a visit. And the adjacent forest - a tower of vines, shadowy branches and strange flowers - was a set waiting for a movie.

The next day we headed upcountry to Navala Village, the country's last thatched village, driving past barnyards, gardens, sugar cane fields, villages, the occasional manufacturing plant and Methodist, Muslim, Sikh, Hindu and Catholic-oriented primary schools.

At first glance Navala looked empty, until guide Mark Navaroka came out to collect our \$25 entrance fee and a kava stick for the chief.

"This is how we used to build houses," he said, leading us inside the chief's official struc-

SEE FIJI, 8D



Folklore says that ancient spirits left the world from Uluvinavatu Mountain, on the northeast shore of Viti Levu in Fiji.

STEVE HAGGERTY: THE

This Florida water taxi has become a popular tourist attraction — but there's a problem

BY JAMES A. JONES JR.
jjones@bradenton.com

BRADENTON

On sunny days when the seas are calm, a new water taxi service between the Bradenton Riverwalk and Anna Maria Island operates with full loads of passengers.

On other days, not so much. In fact, the water taxis might not leave the dock.

"On a full day, we're moving about 360 to 380 passengers,"

Elliott Falcone, the county's tourism director, told members of the Manatee County Tourist Development Council on Monday.

That works out to about 180 to 190 cars taken off the roads daily on Anna Maria Island and the causeways linking it to the mainland.

But there have been 22 days this year when the weather was bad and the water taxis had to stay tied up at their moorings.

"That's 7,000 passengers who couldn't get on the ferry,"

Falcone said.

WATER TAXI SEES SUCCESSFUL START

What's needed is a larger boat with an enclosed passenger compartment to supplement the service provided by two 50-foot open-air catamarans, the Miss Anna Maria and Downtown Duchess.

The enclosed boat could operate in more kinds of weather and keep passengers dry.

On Monday, the tourist ad-

visory board agreed that the water taxi has gotten off to a good start and that to ensure future success, it recommends the Manatee County Commission authorize placing an order for a larger boat with an enclosed passenger cabin.

"We see that water taxi every day, and it's full coming and going," said Bradenton Mayor Gene Brown.

"It's going to connect our cities together and when we can add something that's not costing our citizens money, I'm

all for it," Brown said. "Traffic is probably the biggest thing we talk about every day."

Tourist bed tax money was used to buy the Miss Anna Maria and Downtown Duchess.

"We wouldn't have a water taxi without the tourist tax," Falcone said.

MANATEE COUNTY WANTS ANOTHER FERRY

Restaurateur Ed Chiles congratulated Falcone for his

SEE WATER TAXI, 8D



The Gulf Island Ferry fleet of two catamarans were blessed and launched on Monday, Nov. 20, 2023, after a brief ceremony on Bradenton's Riverwalk.

MIAMI HERALD/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Tee up a golf-centered vacation

BY LYNN O'BROURKE HATES
FamilyTravel.com

Make golf the cornerstone of your family holiday. The game provides youngsters the chance to develop skills in a sport that can be enjoyed for a lifetime.

Here are some places where your tribe can tee it up together.

Juniper Preserve (Bend, Oregon)
Set amid ancient juniper groves in Central Oregon's high desert, this resort, near Bend, is a mecca for outdoor lovers. Bond with your crew during a round of golf on the Jack Nicklaus-designed course, or a par-72 championship track crafted by Tom Fazio.

Later, ride bikes, explore the on-site cave or plan a hike along nearby rivers or on forested trails. Spend a day at the full-service spa, sampling restaurant's specialties. Visit the wellness tepee for yoga classes, music-enhanced guided meditations, crystal-including workshops and essential herbal tastings. Stay in vacation rentals or the 104-room Juniper Lodge where panoramic views of the Cascade mountains will take your breath away.



Scenic and unique golf courses can be the centerpiece of your family's next vacation.

For more:
www.juniperpreserve.com
Big Cedar Lodge (Ridgedale, Missouri)
Nature lover Johnny Morris, founder of Bass Pro Shops and Big Cedar Lodge, built three championship courses as well as a par 3 and a walking course, hoping to inspire people to play amid extraordinary natural beauty. Among the three courses is Payne's Valley, an homage to Ozark-native and World Golf Hall of Fame member Payne

Stewart. It is also the first public-access golf course designed by 82-time PGA TOUR winner Tiger Woods and his golf course design firm, TGR Design. Players on The Buffalo Ridge course roam with, yes, buffalo. Tee times on the scenic Ozarks National are also possible. In addition to water sports, spa time and biking, resort guests will also want to access Dogwood Canyon, a 10,000-acre nature park offering hiking, wildlife tours, horseback riding

and trout fishing among towering bluffs, waterfalls and creek beds.
For more:
www.bigcedar.com
Oasis at Death Valley Resort (Furnace Creek, California)
At 214 feet below sea level, the rolling 18-hole, par-70 Furnace Creek course scores extra points as the world's lowest elevation golf course (and for the occasional golf-ball-snatching coyote). Palm trees frame the fairways and majestic mountains

provide arresting vistas throughout the course. Water comes into play on nine holes and multiple sets of tees provide a challenge for every member of the family. The course is located at Death Valley National Park, where hiking, biking, wildlife viewing, star-gazing, swimming in spring-fed pools and exploring old movie sites are all possible. Stay at The Inn or The Ranch, two unique and historic properties. Ask about family golf lessons.
For more:
www.oasisatdeathvalley.com
Four Seasons Resort Lanai (Lanai City, Hawaii)

It's a lush island of contrast, where sea-faring activities and land adventures compete for your attention. Play a round of sunset golf on the stunning, oceanside Jack Nicklaus Signature Manele Golf Course, where the views will take your breath away. They don't get much better than this coastal feast for the senses, linking along the southeastern shores of the island. Built on lava outcroppings, you'll be hard-pressed to keep your eye on the ball. Your biggest hazard on at least three holes? The Pacific Ocean. Complimentary clubs, including sets for junior players, are available as well as a lesson program

for beginners. Off the course your family can relax amid the towering pines, tropical flowers and brightly hued birds on the property. Spend a day at the beach where surfing, snorkeling, kayaking and turtle watching are on the itinerary.

For more:
www.fourseasons.com/lanai
Madden's on Gull Lake (Brainerd, Minnesota)

Games take center stage when you visit Madden's on Gull Lake in Minnesota, a historic and classic Midwestern resort in the Land of 10,000 Lakes. Take a family stroll around the Social 9, a casual, tree-studded setting where eight par 3s and a lone par 4 provide an ideal introduction for new players or a tune-up for the more experienced. Then, test your skills on one of three longer tracks. Don't miss the Classic, where the stunning views, challenging shots and punishing pin placements make for an unforgettable round. Practice your game year-round via the resort's Trackman technology. For more game time add a little croquet, horse-shoes, badminton, shuffleboard or fishing competition to your itinerary. Ask about golf packages.

For more:
www.maddens.com and www.exploremniscosta.com

THE TRAVEL TROUBLESHOOTER

Delta Air Lines rescheduled my flight by 9 1/2 hours: Do I have to accept this ticket?



BY CHRISTOPHER ELLIOTT
Elliott Report

Dianne Ness and her husband were stunned when Delta Air Lines rescheduled their upcoming flight from Boston to Phoenix by 9 1/2 hours. They were looking forward to landing in Phoenix, picking up a rental car and making the scenic drive to the Grand Canyon while it was still light outside. "The new flight would have had us driving through the Grand Canyon at 1 a.m. — an ill-advised idea, espe-

cially for someone who does not know the area," she says. But they were even more surprised that Delta offered them only one option. "You can cancel the flight," a representative told them. "But you purchased a nonrefundable flight so all we can do is give you a credit for future travel." True, the Nesses had Basic Economy tickets, the most restricted airfare Delta offers. But did they have to accept Delta's offer?

Ness' mess begs several questions: What are your rights when an airline delays your flight? How do you turn an airline ticket credit into a refund? When will airlines stop lying to us? But before we get the answers, let's take a closer look at Ness's Arizona vacation.

'T WAS THE ONLY OPTION'
Faced with either losing the value of her flight or accepting the ticket credit, Ness did what she thought she had to: She canceled her flight. "It was the only option I was given," she says. "I took a credit for future travel, which was nontransferable and had to be used by the end of the year." This is typical for airlines. They give you the information that suits their business interests. Yes, it's true that Ness and her husband qualified for a ticket credit. But there was more to the story.



A Delta Air Lines jet.

Lawmakers are onto such tactics. The U.S. Senate version of the FAA Reauthorization bill would have required airlines to disclose all passenger rights — not just the ones that enrich the airlines. Ness thought she was stuck with a ticket credit that she'd have to use by the end of the year but might not be able to. And if that happened, Delta would be able to keep all of her money without flying her anywhere.

WHAT ARE YOUR RIGHTS WHEN DELTA AIR LINES RESCHEDULES YOUR FLIGHT?
If your airline delays your domestic flight, you have rights under federal regulations. If an airline cancels your flight, it must offer a full refund or a new flight of the airline's choosing. The airline may also owe you some compensation, depending on where you're flying or the reason for the delay. By the way, that's also true if the airline ends service to a destination. It has to offer a refund or a replacement flight. If an airline delays your flight, your airline owes you less. There's no requirement that your airline keep its timetable in the United States. For longer delays, though, federal law requires that the airline offer a full refund. It must be a "significant" delay, which airlines define differently. (If your flight is to or from a destination in Europe, you may be eligible for more compensation.) But for Ness, the important question was: What is a "significant" delay for Delta? The answer: 120 minutes.

"If you have experienced a flight cancellation or delay, SEE DELTA, 12D



A Manatee County map shows where water taxi service is now offered between the Bradenton Riverwalk and Anna Maria Island.

FROM PAGE 7D

WATER TAXI

leadership in making the water taxi possible. "Like they say in 'Jaws,' we need a bigger boat," Chiles said. The bigger boat envisioned by the TDC and the water taxi operator, Gulf Coast Water Ferry, would have a capacity of between 100 and 150 passengers and cost about \$2.8 million. The two 48-passenger catamarans that Manatee County launched its water taxi service with each cost about \$450,000. Assuming the county commission signs off on the tourism advisory committee

recommendation, it would be about a year before the boat could be delivered. **WATER TAXI EXPANSION PLANS** The water taxi now has stops at the Bradenton Riverwalk, the Anna Maria City Pier and the Bridge Street Pier in Bradenton Beach. Falcone said he anticipates adding stops at the south Coquina Beach boat ramp and Longboat Key, near the Mar Vista and Shore restaurants, this fall. Another stop could be added near the Palmetto

Estuary Nature Preserve early next year, he said. About 40% of riders on the water taxi have been from outside Florida. One of the benefits of adding a third boat to the water taxi fleet would be the ability to offer free passage to hospitality workers who now commute from the mainland to island businesses. That would also help remove more automobile traffic from local roads, TDC members said. One-way tickets are \$8 per person. For more information, visit www.GulfCoastWaterTaxi.com.
James A. Jones Jr.
941-720-4839, @ajones1

FROM PAGE 7D

FII

ture, where a couple of village leaders sat cross-legged, talking. They built it in 1954 when five dying Catholic villages joined together," he continues, leading the way to the school and church. Turning onto the Nausori Highland Road — not another car in sight — we lunched uphill over a rocky track for more than an hour, each hill steeper than the one before, until we rounded the top, a photographer's delight. Finally, around the corner, we passed two hunters on horseback with rifles and dogs. Moving to Viti Levu's southwest corner, we checked into the Intercontinental Fiji Golf Resort & Spa, a 35-acre landscaped property on Naitadze Bay. And instead of salesmen in suits, the hotel was as busy as a country club on a holiday weekend. Dads and kids played volleyball; moms worked out at a fitness center. We spotted kids racing hermit crabs, and others learning Fijian words and Polynesian dances. Menus at the hotel's several restaurants listed continental and some Fijian dishes, and our favorite, the lively Toba Bar & Grill, took our order in five minutes and

served the food in 10. Coaxed into trying the Jet Ski "experience," we flew over the waves, riding tandem behind two watersports guides. But the six were trumped by the hotel's Coral Planting project, headed by marine scientists Lawaci Koroyawa and Lake Romanaqaba. Joining them in the water, we learned how to plant healthy corals onto damaged reefs. Most memorable was the river cruise with Singatoka River Safari. Wide and long, the river winds through an endless valley, weaving past rocky hills, farms and meadows. Children splashed in it and men scrubbed their horses, waving as we passed. Pastoral and peaceful, it was a nod to an older century. The 35-mile-long trip ended at a village, with a tour, lunch at the community center and a kava ceremony — shared cups — with the chief and town fathers. Kava is calming, some say. Just more weak tea, say others. How many villages are there, we wondered. "Hundreds, but that's not all," said the hotel's desk clerk. Each indigenous Fijian family belongs to a village that owns the land its on. It's like a clan, she explained. And only indigenous Fijians can own land. So add all the villages and their land and it's

nearly 90% of the country. "The government makes Fiji's laws, but the villages rule themselves. That's why they're important." As our last week approached, we took the ferry to Lomani Island Resort — an adults-only beach resort — on Malolo Lailai Island, a single-hour ferry ride to the mainland and Nadi International Airport. You can stay overnight and still make it to the airport on time. "But it wasn't the beach that earned the gold star. It was the charming cottages, each with a private yard and plunge pool. The smiling waiters and creative, chef-designed meals, served at candle-lit tables. The "double-X" swimming pool and the water sports center. "It's peaceful here," said Shelley White, the general manager, when we met at the cocktail hour. "And quiet. But with Nadi next door, we stay busy with weddings and anniversaries, and lately, even business retreats. We can order everything we need and get it delivered the next day," she added. "Still, we love to have visitors like you, people who know this place and like it," she added, with a pucker smile. "Let me know the next time you travel. I might decide to come along."