

JR News

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Winter/Spring 2023

WORK, HOME, AND PLAY

Life is precious... Remember to make the most of each day

I missed the Fall 2022 update. Not because I am lazy, but rather because I was excessively busy “living a life well lived!” With my health being strong and work going well, Erika and I made the best of the holiday season of 2022. Please enjoy the winter/spring 2023 edition of the JR News.

PLAY:

Starting with the enjoying life theme, we had a busy Fall and Holiday season. Fall started with Labor Day weekend in New Orleans for the FSU vs. LSU game. We had an epic finish, winning with a blocked kick and a field goal. Hollywood screenwriters could not have captured such a game. This victory started the FSU climb back into national rankings and ended with a Bowl game victory against Oklahoma and a 10-win season. New Orleans is back, and the city is busy. We shared the city with the annual LGBTQ+ pride weekend, LSU fans, and your basic convention/tourist folks. Restaurant food lines were unimaginably painful. Thank goodness for the Marriott Crown Room. It was our go-to spot for coffee, snacks, and breakfast.



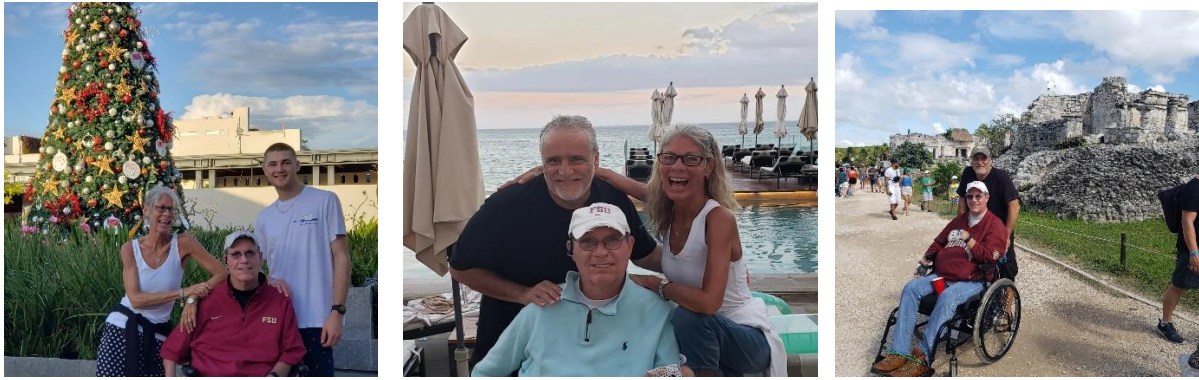
Thanks to my PCA Brian who happens to be a boat captain, we had a great time fishing and boating through the tidal waters of St. Marks. We managed not to catch a single fish, lose 2 kites off the back of the boat, and get sunburned, but fun was had by all.



On my business trip to Birmingham, AL, we stopped in Montgomery and spent a great afternoon with a high school classmate (John Albritton). He was most kind to arrange for a hotel room that handled my medical respite and treated us to some good southern cooking. As most of you know, Erika and I love critters, and we spent some time at the Birmingham Zoo. Their elephants, giraffes, zebras, and big cats were not quite the same as South Africa, but a stop worthwhile. The day was perfect, and their walkways were most accessible. Birmingham has transformed their downtown area into a truly vibrant community with lots of restaurants, nightclubs, green spaces, and their historic charm merged into a very nice collection of activities and spaces.

Thanksgiving is always enjoyed with mom and dad. The weather prohibited our annual water cruise through the intercoastal area, and dad's stories keep getting repeated. This trip was a little different because we included my mother-in-law. Always interesting to see how the two very distinct matriarchs get along. Their personalities are most different.

Mexico and specifically Playa Del Carmen is a spot worth going to. We had the pleasure of enjoying the Mexican cuisine, the Tulum Ruins, Xcaret, Fifth Avenue shopping/dining, and the spectacular weather in the Caribbean. It was made even better because another high school classmate (Armando Peniche) helped put together the logistics and spent time as our language guide in his home country of Mexico.



We ended the 2022 year in Hawaii. Yes, that was two trips in the month of December. This blended both fun and work. It was rather unique to celebrate the New Year in the last part of the US and the World. This time we had a chance to see and feel the Arizona Battleship at Pearl Harbor. The last time we went, this particular venue was not open. The Hall of Remembrance and the teardrop oil were very powerful symbols of sacrifice and service. I was also able to identify the general spot on Waikiki Beach in which my father had the chance to first meet me in the Spring of 1967. He was on leave from Vietnam. I have seen the picture that memorializes our first visit together sitting on his dresser for 57 years. We wanted to go gliding, but the one day that we could do it, the weather just did not cooperate.



HOME/HEALTH:

90% of 2022 was healthy. As reported, I do have a pressure ulcer on the right shin, but it is finally healing. My PCA team is down to 3 people because of graduation issues and students simply growing up faster than I want. Progress on recruiting new PCAs is not advancing as rapidly as I would hope. Do keep your fingers crossed. I will lose one of the current 3 PCAs over the summer due to ROTC training requirements. This would put an unfair strain on the other 2. While they are both great people, I would be asking a lot if I do not find them some help. It will work out, but it does get exhausting to continuously recruit, train, and retain. Sometimes it feels like a full-time job.

As I write to you, I am encountering some unknown and sporadic debilitating pain. Often people ask, "What does the Doctor say?" Are you kidding me? The Doctors look to me to have the answers or say let's go do this test or that test. This story goes back to the fact that living with quadriplegia is a full-time job and a road less traveled. We could treat the issue, if we knew what it was, or at least where it is coming from.

Yesterday I was surprised by my wheelchair provider with a new wheelchair cushion. Apparently, I had ordered it back in September of 2022 and it took insurance 5 months to approve it. Maybe the extra padding on the rear end will mitigate some of these pain issues. I did not order the cushion just because I felt like it- there must have been a reason back in September. All of the health issues get difficult because I recently lost a few good friends who were living with quadriplegia. They were a few years older and had a few more years in the chair,

but it still makes you feel vulnerable. Further affirming this vulnerability, the disability community just lost a great one-Judy Heumann. She is considered by most to be the matriarch of the Disability Movement and the star of "[Crip Camp](#)." Thank you for allowing me to share with each of you.

WORK:

Busy as ever. I probably work too much, and that is not fair to Erika. At the same time, I always feel the need to overperform in the workplace. The three classes, the hurricane, the annual University of Choice Speaker Series, and a little consulting kept me frightfully busy throughout the fall. With our two holiday trips during the Christmas break, I had to be ready for the spring semester by December 16th.

Over the break, I attended and presented at the International Educational Conference in Hawaii. Some 1200 academics came from all over the world. It was super cool to have a paper accepted, but it was disappointing not to have more people attend our session. In truth, this is like any other conference. Too many concurring sessions and too many other fun things to do.

This semester, I am teaching both the Leadership class and the Nationally Recognized Workforce Inclusion course. The students are doing well. The spring semester is moving more smoothly because we are not working around a hurricane. In fact, the other day, I was surprised by receiving an email that I was nominated for outstanding undergraduate teaching. Should I receive this recognition, it would be a big deal. Just being nominated out of my 115 fellow

faculty members is still the most significant. I will learn who received the award on April 18th during our annual College of Business Leadership Banquet night.

My UoC students have been selected to present at the upcoming 25th annual Family Café conference in Orlando. We will be discussing the past, present, and future inclusion efforts in higher education. The café is an event I enjoy and have attended almost all of them. I will be reviewing Christopher and Dana Reeves's grants later this spring. Also received great news about a peer-review article being accepted. This is some research I have been working on with my colleague from the College of Education at FSU. We have been studying the efficacy of the FSU experience class I teach for freshmen with disabilities. The Journal of Post-Secondary Education and Disability will publish it in about 10 months. Getting research out takes a long time. To be honest, I do not know how my colleagues who are research-focused manage all their multiple articles and timelines. It's a whole different kind of process mapping.

Each spring, I recruit a new TA. I am in the middle of this process now and hope to have a new candidate ready to start by mid-May. This way, we can update the curriculum and preprogram the canvas instructional platform over the summer months.

With the annual Legislative session, I hope to advocate for an ADA observation platform (wheelchair friendly tree fort) for Rish Park and to introduce surviving spouse benefits for primary home property tax in Florida. Currently there is a provision in law for survivors of first responders and veterans, but I believe spouses

married to individuals with significant disabilities have also made generous contributions of time and other natural supports that may have prohibited careers. As a result, they should not be hit with a surprise tax bill that was not previously present. Wish me luck with the Legislature, and if you are from Florida, feel free to call your member and support these two issues.

PLAY:

Erika and I are most excited about our big trip this summer. We are doing 18 days in the British Isles, with 5 days in London and 12 days on a cruise ship. Our stops include Ireland, Scotland, and France. I have never been to England, and Erika has been busy planning some of our must-see things as well as fun stuff like a comedy show, Ascot Horse Races (and maybe the royals will show up), the gunpowder experience, changing of the guard, and Churchill's War Bunker. We will be gone from June 20th-July 8th.

A national not-for-profit called "Different Brains" recently published one of my travel stories for their readers. They are a not-for-profit dedicated to neurodiversity and full inclusion of all people. Here is the link:

<https://differentbrains.org/disabilities-travel-the-trip-of-a-lifetime/>

We hope to get into some other fun activities like Rish Park. It's finally going to open for overnight guests. On a side note, a fellow person with a disability wrote a piece called "48 hours in Tallahassee". It was good to read that my efforts and the efforts of others in this little town are making a difference. For those interested, here's the link:<https://newmobility.com/48-hours-in-accessible-tallahassee/>

Until we talk again, I hope all of you remain safe and well and have a great summer.

I look forward to hearing from you all.

JR