

JR News

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Fall 2024

WORK, HOME, AND PLAY

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

As I start the 2024 Summer/Fall review, I realize it's already the holiday season—Christmas and New Year's! Therefore, I wish each of you a Merry Christmas and a fabulous holiday season. Please enjoy this installment of JR Work, Home, and Play Journey.

PLAY:

This past summer/fall, Erika and I hit the triple play for fun activities (cruise, Rish Park, and Key West). We had a delightful experience exploring Portugal and Spain on a 10-day Norwegian Cruise. We chose this particular cruise line because it included stops at the Normandy Beaches in France and Gibraltar Rock; however, due to labor strikes in France and other port difficulties, two of our stops were redirected 48 hours before the sailing date. Despite these disappointments, we had a fabulous time in Lisbon, Barcelona, Cadiz, Malaga, and Palma Majorca. Some highlights are shown below.



Inside the Sacred Family Church (Basílica de la Sagrada



Overlooking the baby Golden Gate Bridge (Lisbon)



Inside the Palma de Mallorca Cathedral



Roman Statue in Beller Castle (Palma de Mallorca)

We cannot say enough about Barcelona's accessibility and other access points in Old Europe. They have done a really great job with barrier removal and inclusion. We had a chance to stay in the same hotel that the Beatles used in the 1960s. The hotel was on the edge of the city's new and old towns. It was a perfect location for sightseeing, food, and shopping. We happily would return for deeper investigations into architecture, history, and food.

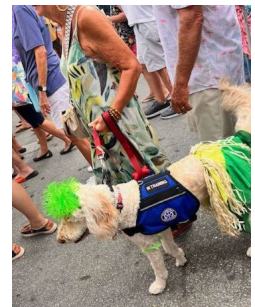


Kissing moment in Barcelona harbor.

The Norwegian Cruise line will not be on our list in the future. Some of their accessibility features and customer service were simply not up to par with Princess Cruises. Sometimes, you get what you pay for. Saving a buck is **not always** the best course of action.

We also had a most enjoyable vacation on the 4th of July at our beloved Rish Park. This was a remarkable achievement because the new reservation system is challenging. The whole world is fighting to find affordable and accessible experiences. To amplify my observation, our next reservation is not until August 2025. We miss the old days when we could go four to five times a year without batting an eye.

We closed the summer season with Labor Day in Key West. If you have never experienced a Jimmy Buffet parade, place it on your list. There's nothing like watching a bunch of old white drunk people dance with the Gen-Z kids to "Cheeseburger in Paradise." I'm glad the dog didn't pee on my chair. 😊



Thanks to one of my graduating PCAs, who is now a lieutenant in the U.S. Army, I had a chance to go to the shooting range. Devin (the PCA) engineered a tripod to hold the weapon for me. It had been over 20 years since I had the chance to have some target practice. Truth be told, I got lucky and hit the first five rounds at 25 yards. One day, I hope to do some actual hunting. It will take a little more practice to hit a moving target (and to keep others safe while doing it). As a true hunter would, I had my "spit cup" with me.



2004



2024

Sadly, there is not much going on with the FSU Football season except for an epic fall from an elite college team to one of the worst in the country. It is terrible to have season tickets and not even want to go. I do hope they can turn it around during the 2025 season. Frustrating all fans is the booster capital campaign and the ticket price increases.

Here is an interesting, fun fact: This is a clip from the old Harding resort in Michigan. My father spent many summers working for my grandfather there. A fellow Delta Disability Advisor in the area supplied the [newspaper clip](#). Sadly, the old Bed and Breakfast hotel is being torn down for upscaling.

Mom and Dad will be joining us this year for Christmas. Erika and I enjoyed their company and some of their friends during Thanksgiving. The amount of people on the road was truly unbearable. I wish we had some of the infrastructure, like Europe, regarding railroads and other safe and dependable public transportation options.

WORK:

My work as an advocate, educator, and leader never stops. To be honest, I probably do too much, and this fall, I was a little overwhelmed. The work journey is always more enjoyable when I'm able to include Erika. We make a wonderful team. In early fall, we were highlighted together, along with others, in a [Florida State Parks article](#). The piece captures some of the treasures that are found throughout our local region. This time, we were at Wakulla Springs State Park (and we were included in the third section). This is the exact location where the early Tarzan movies were made, and I did one of my open-water scuba diving assessments in the mid-90s.

Forty-one years ago (when my injury first happened), I was very motivated to stay out of disability institutions. In fact, it was my one and only goal back then. This year, the nation celebrated the 25th anniversary of the Olmstead Decision, which states that people with disabilities should live in the “least restricted” environments possible. For those interested in the historical context and story behind the Olmstead Decision, please click [here](#).

This past summer and fall, I was busy writing newspaper articles. My local paper was kind enough to publish two separate pieces. The first was about the 34th anniversary of the ADA ([Proud To Be A Floridian](#)), and the second was for Disability Employment Awareness Month ([Empowering People With Disabilities In the Workplace](#)).

Working with my University of Choice student group, they planned and hosted their 9th annual speaker series on living and thriving with a disability. This year's speaker was Abbas Karimi, a two-time Paralympian and two-time silver medalist. The local radio station (WFSU) picked up a [little piece](#) on our event. As a quad, I am very sensitive to the loss of limbs, and being one of the best swimmers in the world without arms is remarkable. I can barely float. 😊

My service with Delta Airlines continues at light speed. We are raising the bar on accessible travel each quarter. I am so impressed by their dedication to removing barriers throughout the travel ribbon. During our recent in-person board meeting, I took a moment to take a picture next to the museum display that tells Delta's story and the contributions that PWDs have made over the years. I was extremely touched that Delta has included PWDs in their story. It was more than an affirmation; it demonstrated their character. It is through actions like this that we will remove unnecessary barriers in all of life's activities. [Here](#) is an example of their leadership. They recently released updated touchscreen accessibility features to enable all passengers to be capable of using inflight entertainment. A fun fact is that 45% of travelers like to watch the inflight map tracker. Now, all travelers can know where they are.

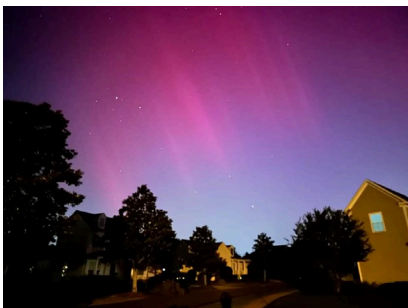


The semester ended on a strong note. I was able to get my promotion paperwork in on time, and I am keeping my fingers crossed for an early promotion. I was also informed that I am picking up more students next spring. This is both good news and bad news. I will need to use the upcoming semester as a “test” to see what is working and not working with bigger classes.

With the economy humming long, disability lawsuits are also picking up. I had a few different cases this fall that included some of the traditional problems like the path of travel, bathrooms, and steep ramps. These are simple things but essential. However, there were some new issues which were refreshing to see. From my perspective, I still see the architects, designers, and businesspeople meeting the minimum standards with access rather than exceeding them. I believe we will run into some parking, housing, hospitality, and transportation challenges as the baby boomers come of age and acquire disabilities.

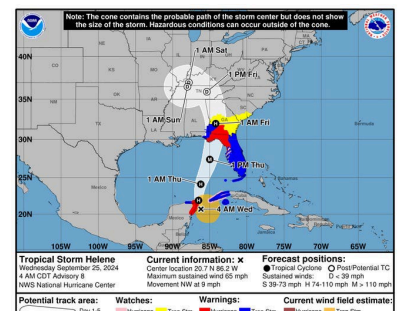
Home/Health:

My health is remarkably good, considering I have lost two trusted PCAs and picked up two new ones. I have been at this for quite a while but this time around, the onboarding process was not as smooth. The students actually had to videotape the process (God help me if it ever gets out). Their addiction to social media is interfering with their attention span and, thus, my overall care. I do have a little boo-boo on my knee, and I constantly watch for skin breakdown in the posterior area. Oh well, life as a quadriplegic, right? Before bringing the new ones on, I had a bowling night with the old team. This time, I was not the high scorer. The tall fellow (now Lt. Penman), and he's the one who took me to the gun range. This spring, I will begin the recruiting process again. It is a never-ending cycle. Sometimes, we get rockstars who understand both care and preference and sometimes, we just get people to show up (which is 90% of it).



I should have included this tidbit in the Spring 24 letter, but it slipped my mind. Tallahassee and other southern areas had the pleasure of enjoying the northern lights. Who says you have to go to Norway, Iceland, or Greenland to see some of Mother Nature's wonders?

On the other side of the powers of Mother Nature, we had one tornado and two hurricanes. My computer was overloaded with the power surge that came from the tornado. I recommend that everybody double-check their iCloud uploads and other important information that needs to be backed up. You cannot count on your computer working when you need it to.



We also had some copper pipes under the house exploding through the floor like a volcano. This caused a total reconstruction of the piping throughout the walls and attic of the house. Can you say a 5-week project is expensive? You may recall that back in 2018, with Hurricane Michael, we lost almost every one of the trees in our backyard. The remaining five trees now need to be cut for safety issues. Oh, what a joy it is to be a homeowner sometimes.

Faith can create a home away from home for many. Tallahassee is now the location of the most recent Mormon Temple. This one marks the 202nd Mormon Temple in the world. It was open to the Tallahassee public for two weeks just before Thanksgiving. Thanks to one of my business colleagues at FSU, we were able to get a personalized tour of the inside and learn about the value and meaning of the Temple. It just recently got blessed and is now closed to the public and limited access to Mormon children under 18. It was a memorable experience to see behind the doors of the Mormon faith. This is a big deal to the people of the Mormon faith because the closest Temple in Florida was in Orlando. Now, they can conjugate when necessary for any holidays or special occasions. I love their landscape depictions of faith and family. It resonated with me. The picture to the right was taken just after our tour.



I spent some time with Mom and Dad for Thanksgiving (South Florida) and did a little boating, golfing, and entertaining. We have the pleasure of having them come to Tallahassee for Christmas. The picture to the left is of me, Mom, and Dad (Erika took the photo) at mini golf. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to all!

This is a good segway to conclude my 2024 work, play, home, and health updates. I hope everyone had a fabulous 2024, and I look forward to speaking with you in 2025.

-JR