

JR News

Spring 2025

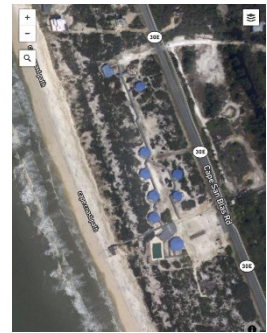
WORK, HOME, AND PLAY

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

Spring 2025:

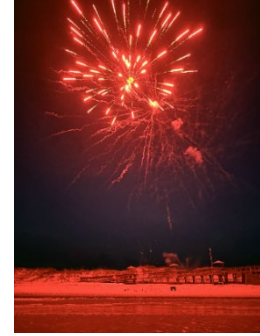
PLAY: The other day, I came across a quote from my childhood memories and thought it was worth repeating. "We'll be friends forever, won't we, Pooh?" Asked Piglet. "Even longer," Pooh answered (AA Milne). I appreciate you for your time, laughter, memories, and support. Here's to "even longer!"

Many of you may recall from the Fall 2024 update that we visited Rish Park. We had a great Fourth of July week at our favorite place. Rish is accessible, quiet, and magnificently rustic. It's not fancy, but it has everything anyone would need at the beach. While there, I randomly encountered friends that I had not yet met. They were a family staying in the next-door cabin from the middle of Georgia. They have been coming to Rish for almost as long as we have. They had always wanted to know who had advocated for the park, who raised the money, and who helped fight to get it rebuilt after Hurricane Michael in 2018. Of course, I had several stories for them and told them



about the many voices that helped make it possible. My new friends were kind enough to take some great Fourth of July pictures from our show (yes, I still break some rules every now and then, fireworks at state parks). I would have shared these photos earlier, but I received them after the Fall edition was shared... Here are some of my favorites. You can see we have a vast beach without the tacky high-rise condos. The gentleman (my new friend) sat on the water's edge and took about a hundred great shots. We are not as fortunate as last year

to be present during the holiday weekend, but we will still go twice. Once in August, then again over my birthday weekend in September. It's just simply hard to "game" the online reservation system. It was the price we paid to get it reopened after a 3-year closure and millions in hurricane damage.



Another fun event this past winter was hosting Mom and Dad for Christmas. This was one of the rare times they had come to me rather than me to them. It was a festival affair, and Dad repeated his previous statement



that "we eat good in this house". Having both mothers under the same roof was interesting, but I hope they can come again sometime soon. In the meantime, we will be sharing a Christmas 2025 cruise in the crystal-clear waters of the Caribbean with stops in Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands.

Finally, Erika and I are going on one of our last big life trips. This time we are going back to the Mediterranean and seeing places like Rome, Pompeii, Istanbul, Chania, Mykonos, and Athens. We are returning to the Princess Cruise line because we find this product more accessible and consistent with our needs and wants. We have been doing our history show programming to educate ourselves beforehand. Sadly, some of these big life trips will be coming to an end soon because the budget is just about drained. With some hard work and good health, there will be a few life trips during retirement days.

WORK:

We've all heard the story that academic researchers must either publish or perish. The natural question becomes, does anyone actually read any of this research? The short answer is yes. The other day, I received an email note saying "Congratulations- 300 different people read your piece, *Transitioning Experiences for Freshman with Disabilities in a Public Research University in the United States*". Sometimes, analytics can be fun!

April 17th, 2025 will be a day that many within the FSU community will never forget. For the second time in 15 years, we had an active shooter incident. Sadly, two people passed away and six others were injured. The actual shooting happened near the College of Business, just outside of the new student union. Individuals with mental health crises still possess some level of thought. The shooter chose to do it during the busy lunch hour of the student union building. I happened to be teaching at the exact time. I must give my students a great big shout-out. They responded to the active shooting in seconds by securing our door, turning off the lights, and getting into better protected positions. They maintained their cool and kept us updated with social media. SWAT eventually escorted us out of the building about 45 minutes after the incident. Ironically, I do teach two whole lectures on emergency preparation and some of the special issues associated with individuals with disabilities (nothing like a dose of reality).



When it came time to get out, the secured route was not an accessible one. SWAT had to go room by room, building by building, to clear the premises. Fellow faculty members who were not present and had their doors locked discovered that their doors had been kicked in when they returned the following day. You will notice that law enforcement wrote “clear” on the side of every door. They were very thorough.

These lessons will be applied in the future. The shooting occurred near the end of the semester, so the interruption to the whole semester was manageable but not ideal. Typically, Floridians plan for hurricane days, but they are not accustomed to this type of disruption. Is anyone really ready for a Warzone?

Switching to more positive news, I also received a very nice note from the president’s office in April. The early promotion that I was hoping for came through. Starting in August, my new title will be Senior Lecturer, or the more bureaucratic-sounding title Teaching Faculty III. It comes with a real pay raise, but more importantly, it comes with a much longer contract than I was currently operating under. I am now assured that I can retire as an FSU faculty member. In truth, should my health stay strong, I will work as long as possible because it is my

passion, I am good at it, and I like it. I believe they call that a hobby rather than a job.

My University of Choice (UoC) student group is making positive waves. We are presenting at the FSU Panama City campus during the month of May and at the annual Family Café Conference in mid-June. I can't say enough positive things about these young leaders who are "carrying the baton" forward.



Not only is it important to teach about the Americans with Disabilities Act and accessibility standards, but the next generation also needs to know about ethics, courtesies, and related social protocols. [This article](#) about air travel caught my attention and simply infuriated me. Ironically, of course, they focused on the state of Florida and perhaps some of our fellow citizens who think being disabled comes with some kind of privilege without thinking about the expenses, time, and optics of faking a disability.

The faking of disabilities comes up all the time. Just trying to find a parking place or a hotel room with accessible features can be most frustrating. Erika and I frequently must book our cruises, flights, and hotel rooms nearly a year in advance to secure those so-called "privileges" of living with a disability.

Switching to politics, I tried running the Surviving Spouse of Quadriplegics Bill once again. Like last year, the bill passed all three House committees this year and had a unanimous floor vote (115-0). Unfortunately, the Senate Companion Bill went sideways again, but this time for different reasons. It is very frustrating because House members in Florida can only run three bills, and senators can run unlimited bills. In my opinion, this can be a little distracting for Senators because they have too many "irons in the fire." The issue is either important or it is not. I am hopeful that I can get some members to try one more time, but I may have to wait until 2027 to avoid some of those unforeseen issues on the Senate side of the chamber. Those members will have timed out by then. I can't say enough about State Representative Allison Tant. She has been a true champion of this issue for two straight years. Of course, when the time comes, all of you fellow Floridians are welcome to help advocate. To refresh your memory, the bill

numbers are below. Here are the 2025 bill numbers, which are also searchable in the [Florida House of Representatives website](#).

- **HJR 163 - Ad Valorem Property Tax Exemption for the Surviving Spouse of Quadriplegics** - This bill details the language that would be included on this year's ballot as a constitutional amendment. **(Passed unanimously in all committee hearings.)**
- **HB 165 - Tax Exemptions for Surviving Spouses of Quadriplegics** - This bill would allow specific surviving spouses of quadriplegics to maintain the homestead exemption their spouse had in certain circumstances. **(Passed favorably in all committee hearings.)**

I will continue my work for Delta Air Lines for the next year or two until my term expires. They had a [great article](#) about our work on their news feed. The advisory board has been in place for 25 years, and I have been on it for 18. When my time is up, I will miss the work of making Delta the carrier of choice for PWDs, but I have made some life-long friendships as well as some modest contributions to a barrier-free travel experience for my fellow passengers. I am excited for what can still be done before it is time to “pass the baton.”

This summer, I will be onboarding two new TAs, and I will greatly miss my current TAs as well as my previous ones who have helped me do so well at FSU. They have taken an ownership role in *our* success.

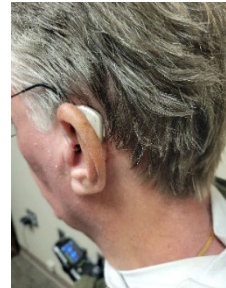
Home/Health:

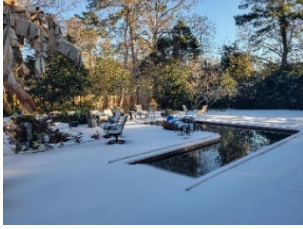
Taken as a whole, my health is quite good. The “boo-boo” on the knee is finally making progress. I have been tackling this issue for nearly three years. The challenge is that it is right on the kneecap where the leg has to bend, and it takes most of my weight when sleeping on my belly. Current protocol and progress give me reason to be optimistic. The last thing I want to do is go to the wound care clinic and have them argue for surgery.

I am also onboarding three new PCAs and one new administrative assistant. For the last month or so, we have had a lot of personnel in and out of the house with training days. We just started the new summer schedule, and they are now running solo. Unfortunately, most of these new team members will be starting their senior year in the fall, and I will have to repeat this process in March and April 2026.

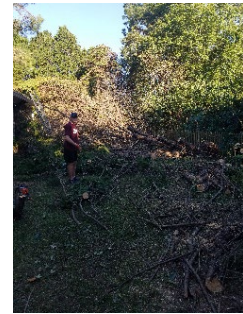
As a consumer of our healthcare services and products at much higher levels than the able-bodied population, I have witnessed firsthand how corporate efficiencies mean products of lower quality, more out-of-pocket expenses, and more frustration. Supplies used to be delivered on the third of every month, but somehow, they have been bureaucratically delayed because of the billing processes and now arrive late in the second week of the month or early in the third week. This makes planning and supply management more challenging. At least twice a month, I order supplies from Amazon to fill the gaps that insurance no longer covers or has delayed delivery times. Sometimes I wonder what my sixteen thousand dollars a year in healthcare coverage buys. Each year it seems to shrink. One more item on my “soapbox”, come September, the state of Florida will have another minimum wage pay hike, which means that the exact services I am paying for now regarding my care, will go up 2,500 for the year and then another 2,500 next year for a total of 7,500 dollar increase for the last three years. So much for my pay raise with my promotion. But at least I am not going completely backwards.

As I lament about the high cost of getting out of bed every day, I have a new expense coming. Apparently, my one and only good ear is aging with me- it is like being grandpa, not being able to hear- yes, that means I am getting a hearing aid. Insurance does not cover aids, and they range from about 1800 to 4500, depending upon their features and if they interact with your smartphone. I am still in the trial process and will be picking up my second trial model next week. The hearing issue is very serious, and remember, sign language is not a skill I can learn or execute due to my paralysis. These hearing aids are quite remarkable. It's kind of like getting glasses, it's like hearing all the noises you couldn't hear before, or being able to read your computer screen without your glasses, but it is a little overwhelming sometimes as well, because I am not used to hearing as clearly.





Some interesting things, the panhandle of Florida (Tallahassee is in the middle of it) had its first [major snowfall](#) in seven years. We had about two inches stick, and the whole town came to a screeching halt, and yes, school was canceled for a whole week. It was quite beautiful, not the disruption from school, but having a little winter wonderland in the backyard. Speaking of the backyard, the six trees that did not come tumbling down during Hurricane Michael in 2018 had to finally be removed. They were about eight years past their average lifespan, and I did not want them falling into my neighbor's yard. Tree removal is profitable if you are ever looking for a business. The average cost is a thousand dollars a tree, and that does not include stump removal.



Most of you know that I enjoy bowling and take my PCAs out regularly for team building. This time, I had to pass the champion trophy to someone else. I am no longer the supreme bowler... Hunter took me down. This is the picture of me passing our mini bowling trophy over to him. It is good fun, and I am glad someone humbled me. Maybe I am just getting older or need to modernize my equipment; it is twenty years old now, but it has treated me well. As Erika likes to remind me, Hardings don't replace things until they actually break.

Springtime in Tallahassee is quite wonderful. We get our azaleas, tulips, and the Christmas bulbs all blooming around the same time. Here is a little snapshot near the barbecue grill and a little spring color. About the same time that the colors were popping, there was a big article about how Tallahassee has earned its third All-American city recognition.





I always try to end on a positive note because life goes on, and we must persist. On Friday, April 26th, I had some good fortune, a little scratch-off card from the Florida lottery. We hit a four-figure winner (thousand bucks)! Any winnings over 599 dollars, you have to go to a lottery store to pick up your winnings because of taxes. While waiting on the paperwork, I met two new friends in the room, each picking up

significantly more money than I was, but I was still happy to be there. We will use some of our winnings on the upcoming cruise, and maybe we will get lucky again.

Look forward to hearing from you. Please have a great summer!

JR

With the summer season upon us, let me recommend one or both of my books for some quick and entertaining reading. If not for you, maybe for a friend in need. They are ["Now What?"](#) and ["ADA Adventure"](#).

