

George Goewey, 62. "If you cried, they beat you harder."



Don Stratton, 64. "It was a shameful thing."



Eddie Horne, 59. "A 3-foot-long leather strap. It had metal in it"

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# FLORIDIAN



Dick Colón, 65. "I looked over to my left and one dryer was going. There was a black boy in it."

A one-armed man. A leather strap. Bloody pajamas.  
Fifty years ago, the state taught these men a lesson they'll never forget.

## FOR THEIR OWN GOOD

### MARIANNA — THE MEN REMEMBER THE SAME THINGS:

blood on the walls, bits of lip or tongue on the pillow, the smell of urine and whiskey, the way the bed springs sang with each blow. The way they cried out for Jesus or mama. The grinding of the old fan that muffled their cries. The one-armed man who swung the strap.

They remember walking into the dark little building on the campus of the Florida School for Boys, in bare feet and white pajamas, afraid they'd never walk out.

For 109 years, this is where Florida has sent bad boys. Boys have been sent here for rape or assault, yes, but also for skipping school or smoking cigarettes or running hard from broken homes. Some were tough, some confused and afraid; all were treading through their formative years in the custody of the state. They were as young as 5, as old as 20, and they needed to be reformed.

It was for their own good.

Now come the men with nightmares and scars on their backsides, carrying 50 years of wreckage — ruined marriages and prison time and meanness and smoldering anger. Now comes a state investigation into unmarked graves, a lawsuit against a dying old man. Now come the questions: How could this happen? What should be done?

Those questions have been asked again and again about the reform school at Marianna, where, for more than a century, boys went in damaged and came out destroyed.

CONTINUED, NEXT PAGE



The White House. "There was blood on the walls." — Jerry Cooper



Bill Haynes, 65. "You don't trust anybody. I'm that way to this day."

STORY BY BEN MONTGOMERY  
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OF THE TIMES



# FOR THEIR OWN GOOD



The small, flat-roofed building known as the White House — on the right — stands toward the back of the reform school campus. Some former students say this is where they were beaten with a wide leather strap attached to a wooden handle.

**IN THE LATE 1950s, A 13-YEAR-OLD KID** who slicked back his long hair like Elvis stood in front of a judge in Tampa. A car had been stolen from the neighborhood. Someone said they saw Willy Haynes driving it.

Willy didn't know how to drive, but the judge didn't know that. Here was a boy who grew up in a little house off Columbus Avenue, in Six Mile Creek, a scrappy neighborhood on Tampa's eastern edge, where a poor kid learned early how to protect himself. When the judge warned the boy to behave or he'd be sent to reform school in Marianna, Willy surprised the court.

*Why can't I go now?*  
He had heard the Florida School for Boys had a band and a football team and maybe even Boy Scouts, and it didn't cost a penny to participate. He kissed his mother goodbye at the courthouse and left Tampa in the back of a state cruiser. Big, beautiful, oblivious Florida blurred by outside the window.

This was before the interstates sliced through the state, and they took Highway 41 north and connected with U.S. 19, then transferred to Highway 90 west, through Tallahassee, to the tiny panhandle town of Marianna.

Willy wasn't scared as the state car pulled onto the gravel road that led to the state's only boys' juvenile reformatory, the Florida School for Boys. No fences. Manicured lawns. Tall pines and stately buildings. It looked like college. It had to be better than home.

Inside, he signed a ledger.  
*William Haynes Jr.*  
*April 11, 1958.*

The books were shelved in rows, and each was filled with names of hundreds of boys from across Florida. Some were man-sized boys with criminal records. Others were retarded, or so young they didn't have hair under their arms.

A boy escorted Willy Haynes to Tyler Cottage and told him to keep his belongings in Locker No. 252. He was given a toothbrush and pajamas and his own military bunk. The poor kid from Tampa felt like he was finally home.

He was there barely a week when it happened. Some bullies caught him outside the showers, and the next thing he knew he was in the middle of a tangle of feet and fists. Willy knew how to fight, and he was choking one of his attackers in a headlock when a cottage father busted in.

The school's disciplinarian, R.W. Hatton, asked Willy who he had been fighting, but the boy would not give up the names. Better to be punished than be branded a puke.

*You're going down,* Hatton told him.  
They dragged him across that manicured campus, toward the squat concrete building called the White House. They dragged him through the door.

**BOYS WERE DRAGGED TO THE WHITE** House in ones and twos and threes, and sometimes there was a line outside, and sometimes a white dog kept watch.

Here came Marshall Drawdy, Eddie Horne, Robert Lundy, Manuel Giddens . . .

And Jerry Cooper, snatched from his bed at

midnight and dragged through the dark, bare feet over wet grass.

*Shut your f----- mouth!* one of the men told him. *What do you know about a runner?*

Just outside the door he saw a limp figure lying still. A boy. Blood on his pajamas.

And Larry Houston, Bryant Middleton, Donald Stratton . . .

And William Horne, waiting to go through the door when he heard a boy scream inside.

Then: *I think we done killed him.*

And Charles Rambo, George Goewey, James Griffin . . .

And Roger Kiser, a scrawny orphan. The stench hit him as he walked through the door. He tripped and fell and a man grabbed him and slung him on the bloody mattress. Over his shoulder, he could see that the man only had one arm.

*Bite that pillow.*

And Paul Carrin, Michael Greenway, Henry Williams, Roy Conerly, Willie Roberts, John Brodnax, Frank Marx, from different cottages, different years, different circumstances, the same destination.

And Willy Haynes, who had asked the judge to send him here, who had wanted to throw a football under the pines. Over 18 months, the men dragged Willy into the White House again and again.

*Lay down. Hold the rail. Don't make a sound.*

He could hear the strap coming. It started with the pivot, the shuffle of boots on concrete. The strap hit the wall, then the ceiling, then thighs and buttocks and back, and it felt like an explosion.

When he got back to the cottage, Willy stood in the shower and let the cold water wash bits of underwear from his lacerations, as his blood ran toward the drain.

**THE MEN GATHERED AT THE FLORIDA** School for Boys on Oct. 21, 2008.

The last time they had stepped on this sprawling campus, they were fresh-faced punks with the world before them. Now their hair was gray and their faces sagged. Their backs ached from a night in motel beds. They carried pictures of children and grandchildren in their wallets.

Dick Colón had flown in from Baltimore, where he owns an electrical contracting company. The 65-year-old was tormented by the memory of seeing a boy being stuffed into an industrial dryer. Next to him stood Michael O'McCarthy, a writer and political activist from Costa Rica, who was beaten so badly he was treated at the school infirmary. To his left was Roger Kiser, a *Chicken Soup for the Soul* contributor who had driven down from Brunswick, Ga., bent on retribution. On the end was a quiet man named Robert Straley, who sells glow lights and carnival novelties. He drove up from Clearwater. He had been having recurring nightmares of a man sitting on his bed.

Then there was Willy Haynes. He was 65 and went by Bill now. A tall, broad man, Haynes had worked for 30 years for the Alabama Department of Corrections. Haynes didn't feel good. There were plenty of places he'd rather be. But he knew

he had to do this.

The men now called themselves the White House Boys.

In the past year, they had each searched online for information about the Florida School for Boys, for something that suggested they weren't the only ones burdened by their experience at the school. They had found Roger Kiser's Web site. Kiser added their memories and photos to his blog.

They approached the state, seeking official acknowledgement that they had been abused and hoping to find some resolution along the way.

They found a friend in Gus Barreiro of the state Department of Juvenile Justice. He set up this ceremony to close and seal the White House. He even ordered a plaque to be mounted on the building:

*In memory of the children who passed these doors, we acknowledge their tribulations and offer our hope that they have found some measure of peace.*

*May this building stand as a reminder of the need to remain vigilant in protecting our children as we help them seek a brighter future.*

A small crowd gathered that Tuesday morning: state officials, school staff, television crews and newspaper reporters.

Bill Haynes approached the podium. He was nervous, but he tried to speak clearly.

"I have tried to understand why as a child in need of supervision I had to be beaten in such a brutal and sadistic manner," he said. "My experi-

ence at F.S.B. has mentally scarred me."

When it was time, the men turned to go inside the White House. The reporters and photographers surged close.

Bill Haynes stood at the door and stared into the darkness. He had driven so far. He had to go in, to face as an adult whatever it was that haunted him.

He tried to step through the door.  
His knees buckled.

**ONCE THE WHITE HOUSE BOYS TOLD THEIR** stories in front of the cameras, other men came forward with other memories.

George Goewey heard about the newspaper story at a St. Petersburg Starbucks. He remembered how the one-armed man would swing from down low, and how the strap would hit the ceiling, and how you could time the pain.

Eddie Horne was at work at a downtown St. Petersburg Publix when he saw the newspaper photograph of the White House. God's got a beating coming for the men who swung that strap, he says.

One man told of how he had holed up in the library, reading *Tom Sawyer* 11, 12, 13 times, to hide, to stay out of trouble. One remembered a kid who tried to run away and died from exposure while hiding under a cottage. Another had a story about a boy who was taken to the White House and never seen again.

Most of the men recalled being beaten by two staffers: R.W. Hatton and the one-armed man, Troy Tidwell. At least three men described being sexually abused by other guards in an underground room they called the rape room.

And there was something else. Newspapers had published a photograph of a small cemetery. Thirty-one white crosses. No names.

As stories of deaths and disappearances emerged from their collective memory, the White House Boys began to believe that they were the lucky ones.

When Troy Warren heard of the cemetery, his mind went back to his stay at the school. He says he and another boy were ordered to dig three holes behind the chow hall. They were to dig at night. Tidwell and another guard told them to make the holes 4 feet deep, and as long as a boy.

**MONICA ADAMS WAS IN BED AT HER** home in Tampa, drifting in and out of sleep with the television on in the background. Life had not been the same since her husband, Ed, died in September 2004. He weighed heavy on her mind, always.

About 1 a.m., something made her sit up straight. There it was, on CNN. This is what he had been talking about.

Ed had died a painful death. He was abusing antidepressants and had stopped eating. He had shriveled from 165 pounds to less than 100. As he neared the end, it seemed to his wife that he was reliving his childhood. He sat up at night for hours on end writing, filling pages of notebook paper.

*After I saw these straps — long ones, thick ones, short ones — they reminded me of razor straps on the side of barber chairs. . . . I knew something horrible was going to happen to me. I was taken into a room and placed on a small bed about 3 ft wide, maybe 5 or 6 feet long. The bed was near the floor and had a filthy mattress on it. I was told to hold on to the end of the bed and not move or cry out. And then I remember the sound of something cutting the air, followed by a pain I can't describe. The most horrible pain a human being can imagine. It hurt so terribly bad. I would try and move to get up from the bed. God, Please make them stop beating me. But they beat me and beat me so bad.*

He wrote of being beaten by the one-armed man.

*I can't write anymore about this. God make them stop.*

Night after night, while his family slept.

*God please stop this! Please!!*

Just before Ed slipped away, he scribbled a note for his wife and children, a last will and testament on notebook paper. He had two dying wishes.

The first was to transfer the Elvis songs he

ON TAMPABAY.COM



For a video in which the men describe their experiences at the school, for more photos and documents, and to read the 1968 *St. Petersburg Times* story "Hell's 1,400 Acres," go to [magazine.tampabay.com](http://magazine.tampabay.com).



Marshall Drawdy, 70, holds his head at a reunion for men who were at the reform school in Marianna. He spent 17 months there in the '50s for throwing a boy's bicycle into a ditch. "The whole place was just a damn hellhole and I can't forget it," he says. "They need to be in hell."





**Former superintendent Lenox Williams, 76, told the *Times* recently that if any abuses happened, they were kept from him. “I’d be foolish if I said no, it cannot happen,” he said. In a 1997 deposition, he admitted punishments at the school at times got out of hand.**

had recorded from cassette to compact disc. The other was to tell people how he had been abused at the Florida School for Boys.

**THE WHITE HOUSE BOYS GOT A LAWYER** and filed suit against several state agencies. More than 200 men signed on. R.W. Hatton was dead, but Troy Tidwell, the one-armed man, was still alive. He is named in the suit.

Gov. Charlie Crist called for an investigation into the graves. The Florida Department of Law Enforcement started pulling records and asking questions. They talked to Troy Warren, who remembers digging boy-sized holes.

How could this happen? How was this allowed to continue? Why didn’t someone speak up sooner?

But people have been speaking out about the Florida School for Boys for more than 100 years.

**THE FIRST SCANDAL CAME IN 1903, A MERE** three years after the school opened. Investigators found children “in irons, just as common criminals.” This was no reform school, their report said. This was a prison for children.

The investigation would launch a seemingly endless cycle of exposés and fleeting reform.

In its first two decades, investigators discovered that school administrators hired out boys to work with state convicts. They also learned that students were brutally beaten with a leather strap attached to a wooden handle.

In 1914, six boys and two staff members died trapped in a burning dormitory. A grand jury learned the superintendent and staff were in town on a “pleasure bent” when the fire started.

The superintendent lost his job. Trouble continued with each passing year, from reports of inadequate medical care to the murder of two students by peers.

Outsiders had no idea. Every year, thousands of families came from miles around at Christmastime to see elaborate decorations built by the boys. Headlights stretched down dirt roads as people puttered through the campus, past waving mechanical Santas, plywood nativity scenes and angels with tinfoil wings.

By 1956, the overcrowded Marianna facility housed 698 students and 128 staffers. It had become the largest boys’ school in the country, and it was growing.

In March 1958, a Miami psychologist and former staff member at the school told a U.S. Senate committee about mass beatings with a heavy, 3½-inch-wide leather strap.

“The blows are very severe,” Dr. Eugene Byrd testified. “They are dealt with a great deal of force with a full arm swing over his head and down, with a strap, a leather strap approximately a half-inch thick and about 10 inches long with a wooden formed handle.”

“What is your opinion?” a senator asked. “In my personal opinion it is brutality.”

In 1968, corporal punishment was outlawed in state-run institutions. By then, the school had been renamed the Arthur G. Dozier School for Boys, after a longtime superintendent. That year, Gov. Claude Kirk visited Marianna. He found holes in the leaking ceilings and broken walls, bucket toilets, bunk beds crammed together to accommodate overcrowding, no heat in the winter. Kirk declared it a training ground for a life of crime.

“If one of your kids were kept in such circumstances,” he said, “you’d be up there with rifles.”

An official from the U.S. Department of Health called it a “monstrosity.” One juvenile court judge who toured the facility vowed never again to send boys there. Another said it was so understaffed that boys were left alone at night and sexual perversion was common.

A year later, a reporter for the *Christian Science Monitor* visited the school and found a 16-year-old named Jim in solitary confinement. Jim had eaten a lightbulb, then used a glass diffuser pried from a lighting fixture to gash his arm a dozen times from wrist to elbow.

“No one seemed to care,” the reporter wrote. The headline read, *Bulldoze them to the ground.*

More reforms were ordered, administrators were replaced. A preacher began a ministry at the school. Staffers visited a successful juvenile program in Red Wing, Minn., and brought back

lessons. Love, not fear, is the best remedy.

For a few years, all was quiet. Ten years later, in 1978, Jack Levine was teaching delinquent kids at a short-term residential center in Tallahassee when he heard about the Dozier school. The kids said it was a bad place.

One Sunday afternoon in November, Levine drove up to the entry gate and showed Health and Rehabilitative Services credentials. He found a lockup facility at the back of the campus. He could see a long hallway lined with metal doors. It was dark and reeked of body odor and urine.

*Are there kids in here?*  
*Yeah*, said the guard.

*I want to meet one. How about this cell?*  
There were top and bottom slip locks and bolts. One lock wouldn’t budge. The man went back to his desk, grabbed a book — the Holy Bible — and whacked the lock.

Inside on a concrete slab, not a mattress, Levine saw a very thin, small, frightened boy with a shaved head and pajama bottoms, no shirt.

*How long have you been in here?* Levine asked. The boy shrugged.

*He’s been here for a while*, the guard said.

The guard told Levine the boy was locked up for his own protection. The boy said the older boys were sodomizing him with a broom handle.

*Why is his head shaved?* Levine asked. *The boy has been pulling his hair out*, the guard said.

*Is he getting any help?*

*We just pass the food in.*

Levine, who would become a well-known child advocate, told his supervisor back in Tallahassee. Nothing came of it until Levine brought it to the attention of an ACLU attorney. In 1983, the class-action “Bobby M” lawsuit was filed on behalf of students at Marianna and two other state reform schools.

The suit made a number of allegations, the most serious concerning isolation cells where boys were held for three weeks, sometimes longer. They were hogtied — forced to lie on their stomachs with their wrists and ankles shackled together behind their backs.

The suit was in the courts through three governors. Superintendent Lenox Williams was transferred. On the eve of the 1987 trial, the state settled, agreeing to sharply reduce the population at Dozier and another juvenile institution. “These reforms launch Florida into a new and progressive era in the way we treat young offenders,” HRS secretary Gregory Coler said at the time.

It didn’t last. In 1993, teenagers attacked two British tourists at a rest stop near Monticello, killing one. Already upset with increasingly violent youth, Floridians were in no mood to coddle young criminals. By 1994, Gov. Lawton Chiles asked a federal court to throw out the population caps at Dozier.

Juvenile justice rides the waves of public perception. Investigations bring outrage. Outrage brings promises of better funding and training, better monitoring, better checks and balances. Then the attention fades, and with it the reforms. In 1903, investigators found kids in shackles. Nearly 80 years later, investigators found kids hogtied.

The school is still open, and still called the Arthur G. Dozier School for Boys. It houses about 130 kids.

The state now makes available a telephone that children at the school can use to report abuse. The Department of Children and Families monitors those calls.

From July 2004 to March 2009, DCF investigated 316 allegations of abuse at the school, according to documents obtained by the *St. Petersburg Times*. Seventeen of those were verified. Thirty-three had “some indicator” of legitimacy.

One incident was caught on security camera. Now it’s on YouTube.

On Feb. 11, 2007, a skinny 18-year-old named Justin Caldwell is standing still in a dormitory at the school. A heavy-set guard approaches him and stands there for a moment. Then he grabs Caldwell by the throat and slams him backward on the ground. The guard drags the boy into the center of the room, his head bleeding, and leaves him. Caldwell looks to be unconscious. His legs twitch.

Two months later, the school’s superintendent and a guard were fired. State officials decried operational problems at the school that “span the chain of command from top to bottom.” The school’s 200 employees would be trained to use verbal intervention instead of physical contact. Again.

**WHAT IS THE COST TO SOCIETY OF SUCH** a place? It’s hard to know whether trauma at the Florida School for Boys set children on a course for violence. But one man knew that the school was harming kids: Lenox Williams, who took over as superintendent in 1966.

The *St. Petersburg Times* interviewed Williams

for a 1968 story, “Hell’s 1,400 Acres.” He acknowledged the school was so understaffed that kids were learning how to sniff glue, break into groceries, or sodomize other kids.

“I know some children are harmed by their experience here,” Williams told the reporter. “But what can we do?”

Studies at the time showed that in facilities with fewer than 150 children, only 6 percent got into trouble and were sent back. Overcrowded Marianna had a returnee rate of nearly 30 percent, Williams said, while the rate of children going on to a life of crime was even higher.

Many of the children who left the school in the 1950s and ’60s went on to rape and rob and kill.

After 14 months at the school, Leon Holston killed three younger boys in Pompano Beach. He has been serving a life sentence in state prison since 1968. Roger Lee Cherry is facing execution for the 1986 murder of an elderly DeLand woman. Robert Hendrix is on death row for shooting a Sorrento man and slitting his wife’s throat in 1991. Frank Smith died on death row.

Donn Duncan is serving life for the 1990 murder of his fiancée in the Orange County home they shared. He broke a knife off in the woman’s back in front of her 13-year-old daughter. “I remember that place like it was yesterday,” Duncan wrote in a letter to the *Times*.

The list goes on. Others have been in and out of prison their whole lives.

George Goewey has been arrested 38 times, most recently accused of cocaine possession and sale. He says he’s clean now, and the 62-year-old has a stable job at a scooter shop in St. Petersburg, but he blames the school for ruining his life.

“You learned how to be sneaky,” he says. “I lost all respect for authority.”

Manuel Giddens was serving time in Marianna while his father was founding Lighthouse Gospel Mission, preaching to Tampa’s homeless and building a successful recovery program. By the time Giddens got out, he had learned to hot-wire cars and pick locks. Shortly after his release, he broke into a hardware store in Fort Myers. Then he started running marijuana and cocaine out of Colombia, through Miami and Fort Lauderdale, into Fort Myers in shrimp boats, to cities up and down the East Coast. He has been in and out of prison for 40 years.

“Marianna is the root of my whole problem,” he says. “If I hadn’t have been through that period of time, I would have took on my father’s religion. I was born to be a pastor, and it didn’t happen. I was born to take over the mission, and I turned and went the other way.”

What about the others? How does childhood trauma manifest itself in law-abiding adults?

Robert Straley stopped leaving the house much when he nearly had a meltdown at a Wal-Mart. Roger Kiser is in his sixth marriage and still has trouble with hugs. Charles Rambo couldn’t sleep in the dark until he was 25. James Griffin is 63 and still can’t.

Jerry Cooper is 64 and takes Lexapro to calm his nerves. His wife once told him that the manager at the grocery store had asked for her number. Cooper drove to the store and waited in the parking lot. He walked to the man’s car and punched through the window. It took five police officers to pull Cooper away.

“Even today I have a problem with authority,” he says. “It has plagued me all my life.”

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**Gov. Charlie Crist has ordered the Florida Department of Law Enforcement to investigate 31 graves near the school. “Please determine whether any crimes were committed and, if possible, the perpetrators of these crimes,” Crist wrote.**



# FOR THEIR OWN GOOD

## A TIMELINE: WHAT THEY SAID

**June 1, 1903:** Report from investigative committee to the Florida Senate

“We found them in irons, just as common criminals, which in the judgment of your committee, is not the meaning of a ‘State Reform School,’ as defined by the law creating said school, and should not be so construed by those in authority of said Reform School. We have no hesitancy in saying, under its present management it is nothing more nor less than a prison, where juvenile prisoners are confined.”

**1911:** Report from an investigative committee

The children are “at times unnecessarily and brutally punished, the instrument of punishment being a leather strap fastened to a wooden handle.”

**Jan. 5, 1915:** Jackson County grand jury

“We ... find that the employees were men who were not settled in life, who have had no experience in raising boys of their own or anybody else's and who know nothing about the science of bringing up children in the way they should go. We find that the young men having direct supervision of the boys were immoral and not proper persons to lead wayward boys toward reformation.”

**March 18, 1948:** Superintendent Arthur G. Dozier

“When a boy leaves Marianna, he is in good health, has caught up with his studies, has a new set of values, a fair basic knowledge of a trade and is usually resolved to lead a new and better life.

“The chances are about three to one that the boy will have no further conflict with law enforcement agencies.”

**March 3, 1958:** Dr. Eugene Byrd, testimony before a U.S. Senate subcommittee on juvenile delinquency

“There are two rooms, one room in which they weighed in; the other room in which they are beat consists of a cot on which they lay down. They are told to hold the head rail and not to yell out nor to move. They are beaten by the director of the department, not the superintendent of the school. The superintendent does witness each beating.”



Times files (1968)

**A staff member feeds a boy a meal through a slot in the door. The superintendent at that time, Lenox Williams, said the school was understaffed. “A youngster can go through here without getting any real attention at all,” he told the *Times* in 1968. “We are more or less warehousing kids.”**

Robert Lundy tried to drink the demons away. It cost him three marriages.

Michael O'McCarthy turned to alcohol, too, but the drinking led to paranoia and depression and self-loathing. Just a few years after Marianna, O'McCarthy tried to rob a gas station in California with a pretend gun. He spent seven years in prison.

“Look at what they did to us,” he says. “We were children. We were still kids.”

Bryant Middleton earned a Purple Heart in Vietnam. He'd go back there before he'd go back to Marianna.

Eddie Horne sometimes has phantom pain. “I'll be laying in bed and I can feel the pain from where they beat me,” he says. “I just want to go up there and make them pay.”

**FROM OUTWARD APPEARANCES,** Stu Kruger has enjoyed good things in life. The 67-year-old worked on Wall Street and now runs a credit repair business in Miami. But he's never been able to stay put more than a year or two. He feels like someone is always after him.

“I've never told anybody this before,” he says. He fishes into his pocket for something.

In Marianna, he and another boy had tried to run. They were marching back from the Saturday matinee in town, *The Bridge on the River Kwai*, when they tore off into the woods. They stole a car and peeled toward New York. But the state police caught them a mile or two out of town.

At the White House, the other boy went in first. Kruger sat in another room. As his friend screamed for his life, Kruger bent over and picked up a small pebble off the floor and rolled it in his fingers and thought about how small it was and how good it felt.

Fifty years and five marriages later, he pulls his hand out of his pocket. In his palm is a tiny pebble.

“I can't go anywhere without it,” he says. “Fifty f----- years.”

**THE CITY OF SOUTHERN CHARM:** Marianna, pop. 6,200.

On weekends, hunters chase white-tailed deer through the thick pine woods. Preachers pack churches on Sunday mornings. Traffic along Marianna's picture-postcard main street slows to a crawl at 5 o'clock on weekdays, when the bells ring at the First Baptist Church and the sun sets on a tall Confederate memorial downtown.

In some ways, not much has changed in 50 years. But Interstate 10 cuts south of the city now, and a cluster of chain hotels and restaurants and a Wal-Mart Supercenter have sprung up around Exit 142, edging the city toward modern America.

Since the allegations of abuse were made public, some in town have pulled together to defend the school. They've suggested the White House Boys are exaggerating — even lying — and trying to milk money from the state. During a Chamber of Commerce breakfast, someone suggested



Times files (1968)

**Gov. Claude Kirk toured the facility in 1968 and found it overcrowded and in deplorable condition. “Somebody should have blown the whistle on Marianna a long time ago,” he said then.**

the memorial plaque at the White House be removed. The local newspaper launched a series: “In Defense of Dozier.”

“Unfortunately, you can throw mud and dirt further than you can throw clean sand,” wrote a columnist for the *Jackson County Times*. “These claims have not been proven or substantiated, but much national media attention has been generated which includes very negative publicity for our community.”

A few men who worked at the school long ago still live in the area.

Sammie West lives outside town. He's 71 now.

West started at the school in 1960 and stayed for 40 years in a number of jobs including cottage father. He says he personally spanked two boys, and he administered fewer than 10 swats each. He even remembers their names. But that was state-approved protocol at the time, and it was always witnessed by a supervisor. The staff stopped paddling boys in 1968, he says.

“I do not know what went on behind closed doors,” he says. “I would not say that there has never been a boy abused. It's going to happen. But I never saw it or heard about it. ... I think they was spanked, and that's it.”

He recalls three deaths at the school in his 40 years: A boy was found at the bottom of the swimming pool, a boy died from a heart condition in the gymnasium, and a boy drowned during a canoe trip on the Chipola River.

He says when the boys would run, he and other men were responsible for tracking them down, a task that often took hours. And a lot of boys ran before the campus was fenced in.

“Sometimes you'd go a month without boy hunting,” he says. “And sometimes you'd go boy



Photo courtesy of the Tidwell family

**Troy Tidwell with his great-granddaughter. The former school staffer is named in a lawsuit filed by the White House Boys. His family disputes the accusations and calls him a loving person.**

hunting every night.”

Former Gov. Claude Kirk, now 83, remembers boys locked in their dorms at night with a chain. But he says he never heard about physical or sexual abuse. “None of that surfaced at the time,” he says. “If it had, I would have done something about it. Put somebody in jail.”

The men who were beaten say there's no way the abuse could have been kept secret. They say they sent photos of their behinds out with friends who were being released. Some told their families on visits, but things didn't change. Many needed medical treatment after their beatings. Some recall a Dr. Wexler smearing ointment on their lacerations.

Wexler is dead, but his daughter remembers helping her father, who had poor eyesight, when their family lived on campus. Sheila Wexler says he occasionally treated boys who had cuts or welts on their behinds. “But if they needed a stitch,” she says, “it would only be a few.”

Lenox Williams lives down a dirt road, in a sturdy cabin he built himself, where a sign that says “Grandaddy's House” hangs beside the front door, and the porch radio is tuned to a Southern preacher. Inside, the walls are covered with antique farm implements and family photos. A framed certificate proclaims Williams a deacon at Trinity Baptist Church.

When he was hired as a psychologist in 1960, the school had a history of anemic funding. Buildings were falling apart. Mentally handicapped children shared the campus with 18-year-old sex offenders, because the state had no other place to send juvenile delinquents. The population swelled to more than 900 boys supervised by only 140 adults, which made keeping order a constant battle.

“There probably were some abuses,” says Williams, who was superintendent from 1966 to 1986. “Anytime you've got human beings together, you're going to have people abusing each other.”



Photo courtesy of Roger D. Kiser

**In October, five men returned to the White House, where they were beaten as boys. The rooms were so small the strap would hit the wall. “It smelled like death,” said George Goewey, 62.**





Marianna is nicknamed the City of Southern Charm. The town readily accepted the reform school in 1900, thinking it would provide an economic boost. Today, some residents resent the accusations against the school, which has employed local families for generations.

Williams does not believe anyone was beaten to death. The old cemetery was there when he arrived. He ordered a Boy Scout troop to clean it up and fashion 31 new metal markers. He asked a Florida State graduate student to compile a history of the school and try to learn who was buried there.

The student found that the cemetery held six boys who died in the 1914 fire; 10 who died during an influenza epidemic in 1918; a boy who died after a prolonged illness in 1935; a runaway whose decomposed body was found under a private residence in Marianna in 1941; a boy found dead in the laundry after being beaten by another boy in 1949; two dogs and a peacock named Sue. He could account for 22 of the 31 graves.

Williams suspects the names of the others have been lost to time, not something more sinister.

He says he has never seen a leather strap the men talk about. He says it was protocol to give 10 to 12 licks, depending on a boy's size.

"We used a paddle," he says. "We were supposed to administer it to the buttocks and nowhere else, and we did."

Williams may have a faulty memory. In 1997, he was deposed when former boys' school student Roger Lee Cherry appealed his death sentence.

"Was corporal punishment used at that time in 1962?" an attorney asked.

"Yes," Williams replied.

"Did that ever get out of hand?" the attorney asked.

"At times it did, yes."

A later superintendent, Roy McKay, who has died, offered a sworn statement for the same appeal.

"Although I never witnessed or participated in the strappings that were used as a form of punishment in the 1960s and 1970s at Dozier, I did witness the aftermath of this form of discipline. On many occasions, a child would come to my class and would be unable to sit down after being beaten with a leather strap in the woodshed we called 'the White House.'"

In a later interview with the *Times*, Williams says he may have been aware of the beatings before he was promoted to superintendent in 1966. He pauses over his grits. "I think there were some who might have enjoyed it on our staff," he says. "Might have enjoyed the over-spanking."

**TROY TIDWELL LIVES IN A WHITE HOUSE** near the center of Marianna. He doesn't answer his door.

"We're trying to shield him as best we can," his landlord says on the phone. "He's an 85-year-old man."

"You're just trying to ruin a good man's life," says his ex-wife, Mary. "Leave him alone!"

Tidwell's granddaughter, Tiffany Pippin, says her family doubts the stories. They know a man who danced the fox-trot on Friday nights, who took his grandchildren fishing, who flirted with the ladies behind the perfume counter at the mall in Dothan, Ala. They know a man who always dressed sharp before he left the house and sat quiet in the First Baptist Church on Sunday mornings.

"He's a good man," says Pippin, 29. "He loved his wife. He never beat his children."

Tidwell's family lived in Bascom, a tiny town north of Marianna, Pippin says. His father died when he was young. When Troy Tidwell was 6,

he played with his father's shotgun. He leaned on the barrel and accidentally fired the gun, which severed his left arm.

He's self-conscious about it and sits with his arm facing the wall when the family goes out to dinner. Pippin says her grandfather has worked hard his whole life to overcome the handicap, and after more than 40 years at the school he deserves a peaceful retirement. That's why the allegations burn.

"It's an embarrassment and defamation of character," she wrote in an e-mail to the *Times*. "That's why we are so upset about the lies and exaggerations made up by these men in an attempt for them to receive retribution."

But she says neither her mother nor her uncle have asked Tidwell about the allegations. They respect him too much to ask.

Tidwell's lawyer, Matthew Fuqua, says Tidwell admitted that staffers used corporal punishment, but says the White House Boys' accounts are exaggerated or completely false.

"He said, 'I never saw any child with bloody pants, bruised and bloody from being whipped. Certainly I never did it, and I can't imagine that anybody else did it either because I would have known about it.'"

How does that square with the stories?

"I don't know," Fuqua says. "I don't know whether they're lying, or the abuse that happened when they were a child was magnified over a time. All those kids, it was a bad situation they were here. Most of them were lonely and from broken homes. I don't know if it was magnified in their eyes. But the allegations of bloody underwear and that type of stuff, he just says didn't occur, or he was not aware of it occurring."

**BILL HAYNES IS RETIRING AFTER 30** years working for the Alabama Department of Corrections. He and his wife have a nice patch of land off a dirt road in a small town outside Montgomery. They live in a warm little brick house with a dachshund and a china cabinet full of glass Jesus figurines.

He's been having a hard time sleeping. His old nightmares are back. He dreams he is running through the swamp, dogs behind him. He wonders if he ever should have gotten involved.

What is he owed? How do you measure a life of conversations cut short? How do you repay a man for years of distrust?

He wants reparations from the state, if it will make the juvenile officers of Florida think twice before hitting a child. He'd like to see Arthur G. Dozier's name come off the school. He says he took a beating from Dozier himself, and that kind of sin should preclude the man from posthumous honor.

Bill Haynes thinks about Troy Tidwell sometimes. He thinks he'd like to knock the taste out of his mouth. "But that would make me no better than him," he says. "I should

have compassion for him."

He is told that Tidwell has been upset by the lawsuit, physically and emotionally, that it has disturbed what little life he has left. He stopped going to church. He hasn't been dancing. He asked his granddaughter if she would like to have his furniture.

Haynes is told that Tidwell can't sleep at night, and that he's alone, blinds drawn, scared to come out of his little white house.

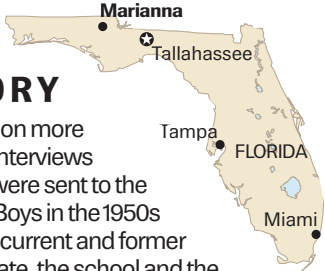
Maybe, he says, that's good enough.

*Times* researchers Caryn Baird and Will Gorham contributed to this report. Ben Montgomery can be reached at (727) 893-8650 or [bmontgomery@sptimes.com](mailto:bmontgomery@sptimes.com). Waveney Ann Moore can be reached at (727) 892-2283 or [wmoore@sptimes.com](mailto:wmoore@sptimes.com).

## ABOUT THIS STORY

This story is based on more than 100 hours of interviews with 27 men who were sent to the Florida School for Boys in the 1950s and '60s, and with current and former officials with the state, the school and the Department of Juvenile Justice. The interviews were supplemented with newspaper clippings, congressional and court testimony, archival photographs and other documents. Over five months, the reporters traveled to Marianna four times. Since launching its investigation, the Florida Department of Law Enforcement has sealed access to the school, now called the Arthur G. Dozier School for Boys. Through his attorney, Troy Tidwell declined to be interviewed.

The *Times* plans continued coverage of the Arthur G. Dozier School for Boys. To talk to a reporter, call (727) 893-8650 or (727) 892-2283.



Dick Colón, 65, displays scars on his left buttock from the beatings he received nearly 50 years ago. He says he was taken to the White House 11 times and received more than 250 lashes.

**March 11, 1958:** Superintendent Arthur G. Dozier

"There has been no brutality in this school."

**Dec. 21, 1967:** Joseph Miele, a Pinellas County court-appointed defense attorney, arguing his client, Gary H. Reed, shouldn't be sentenced to Marianna

"If you send him up there, you will be putting a good apple in a barrel with some rotten apples. Up there they are going to teach Gary to do things without getting caught."

**March 20, 1968:** *St. Petersburg Times* news story

"Roy Manella, an official of the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, said at a Tallahassee news conference that the Marianna institution was one of the worst examples in the nation of a boys' reform school."

**March 31, 1968:** "Hell's 1,400 Acres," *St. Petersburg Times*

"Here, friends, are 605 of your delinquent children. If they weren't Really Bad when they got here, chances are they're learning. Learning to sniff glue, gasoline and shoe wax. Learning to steal cars and break into groceries in a more professional way. And sometimes learning about sodomy and other perversions."

**Feb. 24, 1969:** Judge Frank Orlando, Fort Lauderdale

"When a couple of boys I sent up there came over to say hello I felt like a rat for sending them to that place."

**Feb. 25, 1969:** *Evening Independent* editorial

"It is time that we quit being shocked every time an outsider visits Marianna. It is time we found out why such conditions continue to exist and who is responsible for them."

**Nov. 24, 1982:** *St. Petersburg Times* editorial

"The cruel practice cannot be justified. Guards wouldn't be allowed to hogtie inmates in adult prisons. Why should authorities be allowed to do something that barbaric to children? State officials responsible for allowing the practice deserve more than admonishment. They should be fired."





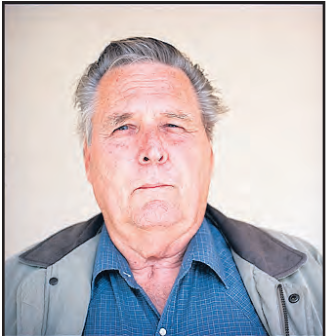
Roger Kiser, 63. "I was praying to Jesus to come save me."



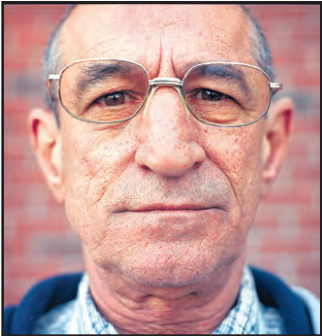
A bathroom in an abandoned school cottage.



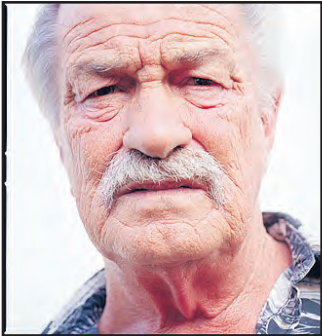
Manuel Giddens, 64. "Marianna destroyed me."



Roy Conerly, 63.



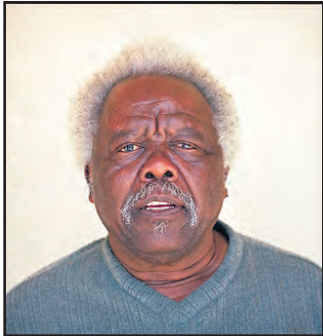
Willie Roberts, 61.



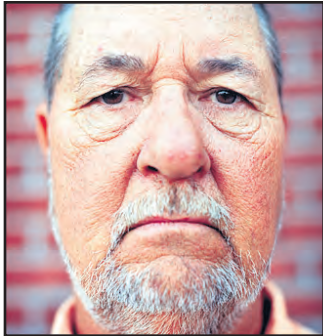
Jerry Cooper, 64.



John Brodnax, 66.



Henry Williams, 67.



Robert Lundy, 61.



Arthur G. Dozier School for Boys today. "We do things totally differently now." — Frank Peterman Jr., Department of Juvenile Justice secretary



James E. Griffin, 63. "Marianna took a piece out of everybody's life."



Frank Marx, 66. "They beat me 'til I passed out."



Robert Straley, 63. "They were like wolves. They ruled the night."



Michael O'McCarthy, 66. "The little kid inside me didn't deserve that."



Marshall Drawdy, 70. "I fought the law all these years. I never amounted to nobody."



In the know

CELEBRATING 125 YEARS

MANY WHO STILL HAVE JOBS ARE EARNING LESS

New numbers are out on unemployment, and they remain grim. Bad: The jobless rate is at 9.5 percent, with 14.7 million people out of work. Worse: The average weekly salary slipped \$2 in June. **Business, 4B**

Jackson memorial is Tuesday in L.A.

A public service for Michael Jackson will be held at the Staples Center arena. Details are expected to be announced today. **Etc, 2B**

It is all Williams at the All England Club

Serena Williams, left, needs almost 3 hours to win an epic semi-final, while sister Venus cruises in less than 50 minutes. Andy Roddick plays for a spot in the men's final today (noon, Ch. 8). **Sports, 1C**

No charges against ex-commissioner

Former Hillsborough County Commissioner Brian Blair will not face charges stemming from a Father's Day altercation with his son. The State Attorney's Office deems it discipline. **Tampa Bay, 1B**

Court: Crist must pick judge from list

The state Supreme Court says the governor violated the Constitution by refusing to pick an appeals court judge from a list of nominees. He wanted more diversity on the list. **Tampa Bay, 1B**

California starts paying by IOUs

As the state's budget crisis heads past a deadline, California prints almost 29,000 IOUs worth a total of more than \$53 million to stay in business. **Nation, 2A**

TODAY'S WEATHER

Thunderstorms

8 a.m. Noon 4 p.m. 8 p.m.

80° 84° 87° 82°

40% rain chance.

Get the complete forecast inside Sports, Page 7C

tampabay.com

Pages in history

To celebrate the St. Petersburg Times' 125th anniversary, we've picked our 10 most important or most interesting front pages. Now we want your opinion. To vote for the page you like best, go to **tampabay.com/st-petersburg-times-history**. Voting ends on Monday.

INDEX

Astrology 4F Etc 2B

Business B Lottery 2A

Classified F Movies F

Comics 3F Puzzles 4F

Crosswords 4F Television 2F

Editorials 14A Weather 8C

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St. Petersburg Times

Florida's Best Newspaper

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Friday, July 3, 2009 | 50¢

# New front in Afghan war

It's the largest mission in the country since 2001. Meanwhile, an American soldier is taken captive.

*Times wires*  
CAMP LEATHERNECK, Afghanistan — Columns of U.S. Marines in eight-wheeled armored vehicles pushed deep into southern Afghanistan on Thursday in an attempt to cut off Taliban supply lines from Pakistan and restore order in areas long neglected by short-handed NATO forces.  
One Marine was killed and several others were injured or wounded on the first full day of

the assault, the largest military operation in Afghanistan since the fall of the Taliban government in 2001.  
Almost 4,000 Marines, backed by helicopter gunships, pushed into the volatile Helmand River valley, reporting little resistance from Taliban fighters, whose control of poppy harvests and opium smuggling in the area provides major financing for the Afghan insurgency. The Marines are part of a larger deployment of addi-

tional troops being ordered by the new American commander in Afghanistan, Gen. Stanley A. McChrystal, to concentrate not just on killing Taliban fighters but on protecting the population.  
Shortly after the offensive began, the American military said that it believed a soldier missing since Tuesday had been captured by the Taliban in eastern Afghanistan. The soldier was not involved in Oper-  
» See AFGHANISTAN, 10A

A U.S. Marine is one of 4,000 troops who poured into southern Afghanistan on Thursday. The area is a Taliban stronghold.

For Their Own Good | A Times special report

## Torment and truth

Jerry Cooper says he endured horrific abuse at the Florida School for Boys. A guard admits only to “spankings.” Indignant, Cooper takes a polygraph test.

EDMUND D. FOUNTAIN | Times

Jerry Cooper, who was a ward of the Florida School for Boys in the 1960s, is consoled by his wife, Babbs, on Thursday after he took a polygraph test. He wanted to prove he is telling the truth about the horrors he and others endured at the school.

BY BEN MONTGOMERY  
Times Staff Writer

TAMPA  
Jerry Cooper has always lived an insult away from assault. He has been cuffed in parking lots, chained inside jail cells, ordered to anger management classes. He is surprised he has yet to kill a man.  
All that meanness started one night in 1960, he says, when he was a 16-year-old ward of the Florida School for Boys in Marianna. A one-armed man dragged him to a building called the White House and hit him 135 times with a leather strap.  
Now that man claims it never happened. Even though more than 325 former inmates say they were beaten at the state-run school, the old guard,

Troy Tidwell, says he never gave a boy more than a dozen state-sanctioned licks.  
“Spankings,” he called it.  
One of them is lying. Cooper drove from Cape Coral to Tampa on Thursday to prove it isn’t him.  
...

“The purpose of this exam today is to test you on the truthfulness of your experience at the boys school,” says Mike Alaiwat, a forensic psychophysicologist.  
Jerry Cooper sits facing a blank wall at the base of a tall office building in Tampa. Alaiwat has attached medical devices to Cooper’s torso, his arm, his fingertips. The devices measure breath-  
» See TRUTH, 8A

### Read “For Their Own Good”

In April, the Times published a special report on child abuse at the Florida School for Boys. Hear Troy Tidwell talk about the “spankings” in his deposition and read “For Their Own Good” at **magazine.tampabay.com**.

Shaiunna Hare, 2, was killed by the family's 8½-foot pet python early Wednesday in her crib.

## Autopsy: Python crushed toddler

Questions linger over whether criminal charges will be filed.

BY MICHAEL KRUSE  
AND EMILY NIPPS  
Times Staff Writers

OXFORD — An autopsy Thursday confirmed what happened early Wednesday in a crib in a child’s bedroom in this rural Sumter County community: 2-year-old Shaiunna Hare was crushed to death by her family’s pet python.  
“Death by asphyxiation,” sheriff’s spokesman Lt. Bobby Caruthers said.  
The questions now: Whose fault was it? And will criminal charges be filed?  
Shaiunna lived in a tiny, tan, single-story house with her mother, Jaren Ashley Hare, 19, and her mother’s boyfriend, Charles Jason Darnell, 32, and Darnell’s two children, 12 and 7.  
On Wednesday morning, Darnell woke up and noticed the 8½-foot albino Burmese python missing from its terrarium, discovered it coiled around the toddler’s body and stabbed the snake with a knife and a meat cleaver before making a tearful, panicky 911 call. Shaiunna died at the scene.  
The autopsy showed one snake bite on her upper right  
» See PYTHON, 9A

## Return of the Botox Bandit

A woman’s weakness for facials she doesn’t pay for may be more than skin deep.

BY JUSTIN GEORGE  
Times Staff Writer

TAMPA — The woman came in looking to peel off her past.  
Blond hair, blue eyes, gym shorts. Like the girl next door, thought the manager of Skin NV, a med spa that opened in May.  
The client said her 10-year high school reunion was around the corner and she wanted to be the envy of everyone else.  
The spa obliged.  
Chemical peel: \$50. Laser

treatment: \$348. A protein-rich recovery cream: \$155. Clarisonic Skin Care Brush: \$195. Prescription-grade Vitamin A: \$74.  
Then came the bill: \$851.68, not uncommon in South Tampa, where looks matter and women have the means, said Anne Nelson, Skin NV’s manager.  
The client wrote a check and signed it Jaimie Merk.  
Five days later, on June 15, the check bounced. It bounced again on repeat tries. Nelson has the

bank paperwork to prove it.  
That’s when she learned the story of the Botox Bandit.  
“What kind of girl does this?” she asks now. “I just don’t understand.”  
...  
On Jaimie Merk’s Facebook page, her profile photo flashes an even, bright white smile.  
She’s single, 32, and says she works as a weight-loss clinic  
» See BOTOX BANDIT, 8A

Jaimie Merk is on probation until 2012 for theft and check fraud.

## A jury backs Bay Pines workers who spoke out

Four women, including three doctors, claimed retaliation.

BY WILLIAM R. LEVESQUE  
Times Staff Writer

TAMPA — The employees at the Bay Pines VA Medical Center said their bosses made their work lives miserable after they filed employment discrimination claims at the St. Petersburg hospital.  
They often felt helpless as they watched their professional reputations attacked by supervisors who denied them choice assignments with higher

pay and gave them poor job evaluations. They are helpless no more.  
A federal jury Thursday awarded the four women, including three doctors, \$3.73 million in damages after deciding that the administration at Bay Pines, the nation’s fourth-busiest veterans hospital, violated the law by retaliating against them.  
The VA’s liability for damages awarded for emotional pain and anguish is  
» See BAY PINES, 13A



From the front page»

» BOTOX BANDIT continued from 1A

# Spa manager believes Botox Bandit got her

director.

She majored in psychology at the University of North Florida.

Yoga is her new obsession, she notes on Facebook. She loves lying in the sun, hearing a baby laugh and getting facials.

She has nearly 400 friends. Some write her daily.

She doesn't like to be called "ma'am."

Elsewhere, a different picture of Merk appears.

Once, in a courtroom, a doctor testified that her self-esteem was so low that she resorts to stealing Botox to feel better, according to an attorney who was part of the proceedings.

In April, Tampa police reported they took Merk into protective custody for mental evaluation after she sent her ex-boyfriend a text message indicating she was suicidal. Police noted she was taking medication for depression.

People victimized by Merk do not have much sympathy.

Their names show up in lawsuits and court judgments.

...

In August 2007, the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office asked the public for help catching the "Botox Bandit."

A woman had shown up at Rejuva Plastic Surgery Center and Medi-Spa, received a facial and cosmetic procedures, and then disappeared leaving an \$850 bill. She used an alias.

The Sheriff's Office had a picture of the suspect — made possible because the plastic surgeon had taken a "before" photo.

A tip led deputies to Jaimie Merk, Hillsborough County Sheriff's officials said at the time.

It was just one of several cases that landed her on probation until 2012 for several convictions of grand theft and worthless checks in Hillsborough and Pinellas counties, according to the state Department of Corrections.

Her civil court and probation files contain claims from pet supply stores, renters and even an adoption agency saying she owes them money.

Those who have dealt with Merk wonder whether there are other victims.

...

Pregnant in 2004, Merk agreed to turn over her unborn child to adoptive parents through Heart of Adoptions of Tampa, according to a lawsuit the agency filed.

She told the adoption agency that she had no idea who the father was, the lawsuit stated. She said she met him at a bar.

Medical records stated that Joshua Sean Squires was the father. But Merk signed a notarized statement disputing that, the lawsuit said.

The adoptive parents and the agency paid her more than \$5,000 for living expenses, attorney fees and other costs.

A few weeks later, the agency heard from Squires.

In an interview with the *Times*, he said he was in a weeks-long relationship with Merk when she became pregnant.



Medical cosmetologist Kaisha Marshall, left, and office manager Anne Nelson display the returned check written to their Tampa spa by a Jaimie Merk, a.k.a. the Botox Bandit.

"She knew she was pregnant with my child," he said. "There was no one-night stand with anyone, and I was in the delivery room on Dec. 23, 2004."

Squires, 30, now has custody of the 4½-year-old girl.

In 2006, a judge ordered Merk to pay the agency \$6,113, court records show.

The agency's executive director, Brigitte Barno, said Monday that Merk has paid nothing.

...

In January 2008, prospective renters responded to an ad on Craigslist advertising a Seminole Heights house that belongs to Merk's mother, according to Hillsborough property records.

Two of them, Angela Hart and Eric Younghans, wound up suing Merk in small claims court. Hart also sued Merk's mother.

They say Jaimie Merk showed them a house and collected \$1,900 from each of them.

Hart, suspicious after Merk delayed the move-in date, looked her up on Google and learned of her Botox Bandit past. She asked for her money back. In a court document, she said Merk agreed.

Younghans, meanwhile, learned from Merk that the house wouldn't be available. Merk told him she would refund his money, he said.

Neither got a refund. Merk made excuses, they said. Sometimes she didn't return calls.

In 2008, a judge ordered her to pay each \$2,075. In Hart's case, Merk's mother was also held responsible, according to the final judgment.

So far, Hart, 30, has received \$150, she said.

"She's never going to learn her lesson," Hart said of Merk. "People say people change. They don't."

Younghans, 56, has received \$150, he said.

"She seemed very believable," he said. "She's very good at it."

...

Merk did not respond to a voice mail message from the *Times* for this story. A note was left at her door seeking comment. An attorney who represented her did not call back.

"I'm not giving any comments," said her mother, Debra

Merk, who owns a \$1.1 million waterfront house in Clearwater Beach. "As far as I know, what you're saying is not true."

...

In hindsight, the Skin NV manager said she felt a little wary about Merk's June 10 check when she noticed the address in a neighborhood of rentals.

After the check bounced, she tried to call Merk. The phone numbers Merk left didn't work.

Nelson sent her business partner to Merk's stated address, a pink apartment building. The partner left a note.

No one called back.

Nelson contacted the Hillsborough County Victims Assistance program. A counselor helped her start the process of filing a bad check complaint. That process is now under way. No charges have been filed.

Nelson even tried to connect with Merk by inviting her to be a "friend" on Facebook.

Merk didn't respond.

On June 25, after a *Times* reporter left messages for Merk, she sent an e-mail to the spa.

"I'm very sorry I did not contact you sooner," she wrote. "I have not had a phone since you left that letter at my apartment, and I just received another letter in the mail today."

"I just want you to know that I am very sorry for this, and of course I'm going to pay for the services I received," she wrote. "I am just not sure why you have chosen to take this further without even giving me the opportunity to rectify the situation."

Merk said she would bring the money in this week.

Nelson told her the spa would be closed Friday.

By the end of the day Thursday, Merk hadn't paid.

...

On a Facebook quiz, Merk writes that she loves the smell of flowers and wants to meet the man of her dreams.

Two things she is proud of? Her daughter and family.

Two things she is not proud of? "Let's keep those in the closet," she wrote.

*Times* researcher Shirl Kennedy contributed to this report. Justin George can be reached at (813) 226-3368.

# Britain asks allies' help on staff arrested in Iran

It's unclear exactly how many are being held.

*New York Times*

STOCKHOLM, Sweden — Britain continued to push other European countries on Thursday to take a tough stance against Iran for detaining at least one employee of the British Embassy in Tehran, but European Union diplomats were searching for other ways out of the standoff.

The Iranian authorities, who have taken to blaming foreigners for the recent unrest that followed disputed presidential elections, have directed much of their ire at Britain and arrested nine Iranian staff members of the British Embassy over the weekend. Several have since been released.

The number of British Embassy staff members being held remained unclear on Thursday. Iranian state television said all but one of the nine were released. But Carl Bildt, the foreign minister of Sweden, which holds the European Union's rotating presidency, said "more than one" remained in custody.

Iran's leaders are struggling to put the elections, and the passionate dissatisfaction the results unleashed, behind them. Although the govern-

ment managed to halt the huge protests days ago using tactics that included mass arrests, it has been unable, or unwilling, to silence Mir Hossein Mousavi, the moderate who says the election was stolen from him, and some of his influential supporters.

On Wednesday, Mohammed Khatami, the charismatic former president who remains extremely popular in Iran, made his strongest statements yet. He condemned the election, which the government said President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad won in a landslide, as well as the bloody government crackdown of the protests that followed.

Khatami called the election "a coup against the republicanism of the system," and warned, "Do not think that suppressing the protests would put an end to them. They will emerge again but in different forms."

This week, the Interior Ministry said it would withdraw the permit for the Association of Combatant Clergy, a political party to which Khatami belongs, as well as two other reformist parties that have thrown their support behind him in the past.

# U.N. chief Ban seeks release of Suu Kyi

*Associated Press*

YANGON, Myanmar — U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said ahead of his trip today to Myanmar that he plans to lobby the military-ruled country's top leader directly for the release of pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi.

Ban arrives in Myanmar for meetings with leaders on the same day that Suu Kyi's widely criticized trial resumes. The U.N. chief's visit magnifies the international spotlight on the trial, which has been delayed for a month but is expected to wrap up quickly after a final defense witness takes the stand today.

Ban said this week that the two-day visit, which includes talks with the country's military leaders, will be "a very challenging one." It was not clear if he would be allowed to meet with Suu Kyi.

The 64-year-old Nobel Peace Prize winner is charged with violating the terms of her house arrest when an uninvited American man swam secretly to her home and stayed for two days. She pleaded not guilty but faces five years in prison if convicted.

Ban is scheduled to meet today with the country's leader, Senior Gen. Than Shwe, in Naypyitaw, the remote administrative capital the junta moved its government offices to in 2005.



Jerry Cooper, once a ward of the Florida School for Boys, takes a polygraph test Thursday in an effort to prove that he, and not a former guard, is telling the truth about what happened there.

» TRUTH continued from 1A

# Time to test the truth

ing fluctuations, heart rate and the heat in Cooper's fingertips.

Cooper paid \$400 for this test himself. He picked at random Alaiwat, who has nine years in the field.

Polygraph tests aren't typically admissible in court, but Cooper felt like he had to do something. It's been two months since he and other men were featured in a *St. Petersburg Times* special report, "For Their Own Good." The civil lawsuit the men filed against Tidwell and several state departments is lumbering along. An FDLE investigation into the Florida School for Boys, now called the Arthur G. Dozier School for Boys, hasn't turned up much. Criminal charges against the aging former guards appear unlikely. And Jerry Cooper can't sit still and just take it.

Alaiwat will ask Cooper a series of questions. Some pertain to the beating while others are innocuous. If Cooper lies, Alaiwat will know because Cooper's heart rate will increase, his breathing will fluctuate or his fingers will sweat.

Cooper has given Alaiwat three questions — the industry standard — in advance. He crafted the questions after watching Troy Tidwell deny beating boys in a deposition in late May, a video he could not watch twice. He has not slept much since he decided to do this four days ago. His wife waits in the lobby.

Question 1: "Did Troy Tidwell give you more than 30 lashes that night he thought you had information on a runner?"

Cooper remembers that night. He was 15. He'd been sent to the school after police caught him riding in a stolen car with an AWOL Marine. Things were okay for the first few weeks.

That night, he was sleeping in Roosevelt Cottage when two men

woke him up.

*What do you know about a runner?* one man asked.

*I don't know anything about a runner,* Cooper replied.

*Liar.*

He was dragged in his white nightgown to the White House, forced down on a bloody mattress and told to grab the bed rail. Someone shoved Cooper's nightgown between his legs.

Then he heard a strap cut the air.

"Yes," Cooper replies.

Question 2: "Did Mr. Tidwell and two other staff give you more than 100 lashes that night at the White House?"

That first lick lifted him off the spring mattress, and they kept coming.

Cooper played quarterback on the football team and put up with a mean stepfather. He knew how to deal with pain.

*You're nothing but a g----- liar!* the man said and he slapped Cooper's face. Cooper scrambled, trying to flee. The men forced him down. One punched him in the mouth. Another mashed his toe.

Another man took the strap. When he tired, another. The boy waiting in another room counted to 135.

"Yes," Cooper says.

Question 3: "Were you told to wrap towels around your body that night to keep blood off your mattress?"

Cooper woke up on the floorboard of a state car. His thighs and buttocks were swollen. His nightgown was splattered red. He had trouble walking.

His cottage father escorted him inside and told him to put Vaseline on his injuries and to wrap two towels around his waist and tie them in place with a sheet.

The next morning, he peeled the towels off and backed toward

the mirror. His rear was black and crusted. He swore he'd never let anyone hurt him again.

"Yes," Cooper says.

...

When the test is over, Cooper is crying. His hands shake in front of his face.

"I'm sorry," he says. "This isn't me."

"Could you tell my wife to come in?"

Babbs Cooper knew this would be hard. She has lived with his anger for 28 years.

"I walk 10 steps behind him," she says.

She wasn't sure he should come. No one asked him to do this. She knew the lawyers were apprehensive.

And what if he failed?

She saw how mad her husband grew when he watched Tidwell deny beating the boys, even though so many of them told the same story.

How could the old man not show some mercy and tell the truth? she wondered.

She sees her husband in the corner and rushes to him. She holds his head as he sobs.

"I passed," he says. "I'm so sorry. I'm so sorry."

"It's okay," she says. "It's okay." Alaiwat closes his computer.

"There was no deception indicated," he says. "It appears that Mr. Cooper is being truthful regarding his experience with Mr. Tidwell and other staff in the White House at the Florida School for Boys."

Outside, Cooper lights a cigarette. The man who still bears the scars from his beating says he feels great. He says he'd like to challenge Troy Tidwell to take a polygraph test.

Ben Montgomery can be reached at [bmontgomery@sptimes.com](mailto:bmontgomery@sptimes.com) or (727) 893-8650.

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# STAYING AFLOAT

Can Raheem Morris restore the Bucs to their past glory? He says everyone's on board. **Gameday, Section Y**



## Next ...

After opening acts, Florida is prepped for Vols. **Colleges, 1X**

|         |    |
|---------|----|
| Florida | 56 |
| Troy    | 6  |
| FSU     | 19 |
| Jax     | 9  |
| USF     | 35 |
| W. Ky.  | 13 |

# St. Petersburg Times

Florida's Best Newspaper

tampabay.com

Sunday, September 13, 2009

## Still needs care, but where?

After almost 3 years and \$1.7 million, Larry Brazil has to leave the hospital. His options are slim.

BY RICHARD MARTIN  
Times Staff Writer

TAMPA — Larry Brazil has been a patient at University Community Hospital for nearly 1,000 days.

He has racked up a hospital bill — in addition to his doctors' fees — of more than \$1.7 million, his family says.

His mind is alert, but he can't

walk or talk and must use a ventilator to breathe 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

But soon the 77-year-old retired printer and dump truck driver will be discharged under a court order, ending the hospital's unprecedented two-year effort to move him and taking his family into uncertain territory as they

attempt to care for him at home.

Lengthy stays and million-dollar hospital bills are not unheard of. But Brazil's case raises serious questions about health care access and costs. How can one patient remain in the hospital for so long — likely at taxpayers' expense — at a time when millions of others struggle to get health care?

And why is it so difficult for families like the Brazils to find good options for long-term care outside the hospital?

Brazil's case "is an anomaly, but it's an expensive anomaly," said Jay Wolfson, an expert on health policy at the University of South Florida.

» See CARE, 12A



Loretta Brazil shows a greeting card to her father, Larry, in his room at University Community Hospital in Tampa. He will be discharged from the hospital this month.

KATHLEEN FLYNN | Times

For Their Own Good | A Times special report

## A lingering pain

Four decades later, Carol Smelley agonizes over the beating she says her son took while at the Florida School for Boys.



"I wanted to go down there and kill them men," says Carol Smelley, 82, of the staff at the Florida School for Boys whom she blames for killing her son Michael in 1966. She and her husband, Terry, have been silent about their son's death for decades, giving up hope that it would ever be investigated.

STORY BY BEN MONTGOMERY | PHOTOS BY EDMUND D. FOUNTAIN | Times Staff

CRESTVIEW— Carol Smelley keeps her memories of Michael in a worn scrapbook on the end table, by the Holy Bible and the *TV Guide*. Inside, Michael Clifton Smelley is forever fresh-faced and smiling, wearing blue jeans and a white button-up, holding a basketball in front of a patch of North Florida pines. ¶ Ms. Smelley, 82, has surrounded the faded photograph with girlish stickers: ¶ My Special Angel. ¶ Sweet Baby. ¶ Missing You. ¶ "She don't talk about him much," says her son Robert. "Because she starts crying when she does." ¶ Michael died in March 1966. The cause, according to his death certificate: carcinoma of spine and lungs. ¶ But it's what happened just before he died that has kept Ms. Smelley up nights for 43 years now, and what has moved her again to join a fight against the state of Florida. ¶ Her son, she says, was beaten by guards at the state-run Florida School for Boys. » See BOYS SCHOOL, 13A



To hear Carol Smelley and Donnie Schoffner talk about the death of Michael Smelley, and to read previous Times coverage of the Florida School for Boys, go to [magazine.tampabay.com](http://magazine.tampabay.com).

## Crist's strong support may belie shaky base

Being a nice guy has worked so far, but he may be vulnerable to a simmering GOP.

BY ADAM C. SMITH  
Times Political Editor

Charlie Crist is swimming in campaign money, and polls consistently show him to be among the most popular politicians in America.

But something ominous and unpredictable is brewing in Florida, and a growing number of Republicans are starting to consider the unthinkable: The people's governor could lose his campaign for U.S. Senate.

"It's rare that I talk to anyone that's got a good thing to say about the governor right now. It's hard to find a real Charlie Crist ally," said former state Republican chairman Tom Slade. "Charlie Crist is a marvelous politician, but rarely do you use the word statesman with Charlie Crist. That's his vulnerability, getting branded as another self-centered politician, and he doesn't have many more opportunities to muff up before that happens."

It's a testament to Crist's remarkable political skill, of course, that the entire world doesn't view him as politically



In an August poll, about 60 percent of Floridians approved of Gov. Charlie Crist's performance.

vulnerable. Consider the climate.

His state is losing population for the first time in 60 years. Unemployment and foreclosures are soaring. Taxes haven't dropped like a rock as he promised, and Florida remains one hurricane away from bankruptcy. County Republican parties are openly revolting against Crist, while a charismatic young rival, Marco Rubio, is being hailed on the cover of William F. Buckley's *National Review* magazine as the future of the GOP.

Yet click on local TV news in almost any part of Florida and there's a smiling Charlie Crist looking as calm and gracious as ever. It's hard to imagine anyone could seem more honored and humbled to be serving Floridians.

"To have an opportunity to play a small role in returning this beautiful sea turtle back to the sea is a very special privilege," Crist said last week. » See CRIST, 7A

## Thousands cheer, assail Obama plan

As he and his health care plan are applauded in Minnesota, angry protesters march in D.C.

Times wires

MINNEAPOLIS — Thousands of roaring supporters turned out Saturday to rally behind President Barack Obama's call to overhaul the nation's health care system, packing a basketball arena in Minneapolis as Obama warned that nearly half of all Americans under 65 could lose their insurance at some point during the next decade.

Opponents to a health overhaul and big government spending also roared Saturday, as tens of thousands of protesters marched to the Capitol in Washington, showing their disdain with slogans such as "Obamacare makes me sick" and "I'm not your ATM."

The president's rally was

### Rallying in Tampa

The Organizing for America bus tour backing the president's health care overhaul makes a stop in Tampa. **Tampa Bay, 3B**

the first of a series of presidential events intended to whip up public support for a health overhaul. One of the biggest obstacles the president faces is winning support from middle-class workers who already have insurance, so he is stepping up his warnings that people could lose coverage at any time.

"It can happen to anyone," the president declared.

The White House estimated that 15,000 people attended » See HEALTH CARE, 8A

### Correction

The winning numbers in Friday's Fantasy 5 drawing were: 3-13-16-22-36. An incorrect number was listed in Saturday's paper.

### INDEX

|           |      |            |       |
|-----------|------|------------|-------|
| Arts      | 2L   | Classified | F     |
| Astrology | F    | Crossword  | 5P, F |
| Books     | 7-8L | Movies     | F     |

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### TODAY'S WEATHER

#### Thunderstorms



8 a.m. 78° Noon 84° 4 p.m. 85° 8 p.m. 80°  
60% rain chance.  
More, back page of Sports

### IN FLORIDIAN

#### Fall TV

With the increasing success of quality, scripted shows on cable, networks are going for unscripted, less-expensive fare. **1E**

### IN LATITUDES

#### Cabin fever

If your idea of roughing it includes a cabin, there are plenty of spots in Florida where you can enjoy camping in the great indoors. **1L**



### IN TAMPA BAY

#### Always Boss

Bruce Springsteen and his E Street Band make a triumphant return to the bay area with a wild show at the Ford Amphitheatre. **1B**



## For their own good >>



Photos by EDMUND D. FOUNTAIN | Times

**Florida School for Boys inmate Michael Clifton Smelley is shown in an undated family photo in a scrapbook at his parent's home in the Panhandle town of Crestview.**

» **BOYS SCHOOL** continued from 1A

# Pain of boy's death still lingers

The school is the subject of an ongoing investigation by the *St. Petersburg Times*. More than 400 men who were juvenile inmates at the school in the 1940s, '50s and '60s have joined a class-action lawsuit against the state, saying they were dragged to a small, putrid building they called the White House, forced down on a cot and beaten bloody by the school staff with a weighted leather strap. The men have told the *Times* that the beatings were so brutal they had to wash fabric from their underpants out of their lacerations. Some men still bear the scars.

In the 1960s, Purl G. Adams, a Crestview lawyer, took on the Smelley's case pro bono and petitioned lawmakers in Tallahassee to look into the abuse at the school, according to Ms. Smelley.

"They didn't believe him," she says now. "They wouldn't listen."

So the old woman again faces a government she says has blood on its hands. Ms. Smelley is sharing her story publicly for the first time.

...

Michael Smelley was slower and sweeter than other boys. He didn't talk right, and he couldn't always keep up, but he brought home every stray mutt he came across on the dirt roads here in the rural Florida Panhandle.

"He was born with a dead cell in his brain," says his mother. "He was a good boy. Slow in learning, but good just the same."

Terry and Carol Smelley were working-class. Terry drove tug boats out of New Orleans and cut wood when he could and stocked the shelves of a grocery store for a dozen years. Carol stayed at home to raise the children.

When Michael was 13, he and his older brother Butch got into trouble for skipping school. The judge ordered them to the Florida School for Boys in Marianna, Ms. Smelley says. They were there a few months when the school sent Michael home in an ambulance. He couldn't walk. Couldn't feel his legs.

She took him to the hospital in Pensacola where doctors found a tumor on his spine. He underwent surgery in 1962 to remove the tumor and soon regained his ability to walk.

But a judge ordered Michael and Butch and two other boys back to the school after another run-in with the law. The boys had broken into the Five and Dime in Crestview and stolen a stack of comic books, M&Ms and a suitcase to lug the loot home.

"Michael was crying and begging me not to let them send him down there," says Ms. Smelley.

The pleas did no good. Michael, Butch and two Crestview brothers — Donnie and Joe Schoffner — were sent to Marianna together. Soon after they arrived, they hatched a plan to escape.

Donnie Schoffner, 63, is the only one of the four still alive.

"Soon as we got there, we made a deal," he says. "We was going to wait until 10 o'clock, then one of us was going to flash the porch lights on the cottage. We did it, and all four of us just ran."

There were no fences around the 1,400-acre campus, so the boys slipped into the swamp without notice. The plan was to catch a freight train west,

through DeFuniak Springs to Crestview. They ran for what felt like hours, sloughing through black water and tripping over cypress stumps. Before long they heard dogs bawling in the darkness behind them.

"Mike got tired of running," Schoffner says. "They got him first."

Schoffner was last. He started over a barbed-wire fence when the headlights hit him.

"Don't try to run," he remembers a man saying, "or I'll shoot."

He said the man was calm, and he remembers these words hanging in the cab on the way back to the campus:

"You gonna have it whipped like you ain't never had it before."

By the time they brought him back to the White House, the others were gone. Schoffner got 45 licks. He did not cry. He stood in the showers and let the water wash his underpants out of his wounds.

The next morning at school, something was different about Michael.

"He was staggering around," Schoffner says. "He wasn't right. ... He got worse and worse. You could tell he was in pain. His whole physical well-being was just gone."

He said Michael soon couldn't walk. He was moved into the infirmary, and the staff began to cater to him. Schoffner was called to the head office. He can't remember who sat across the desk, but the message was clear: If you don't want this to happen to you, keep your mouth shut.

He never saw Michael Smelley again.

...

Ms. Smelley kept the medical records and legal notes for years, until a storm tore the roof off her old trailer and ruined boxes of documents.

But Michael's medical records are still on file in the hospital in Gainesville. The *Times* obtained them with Ms. Smelley's permission. The doctor's notes say Michael was admitted to the Health Center at the University of Florida in July 1965 (he was 16 at the time) "with a 4-5 day history of paraparesis (weakness in lower extremities) culminating in paraplegia."

The notes say Michael had been paraplegic before the first operation in 1962, but had "recovered full function of his legs in about one week."

"The interim history has been unremarkable except for the patient's conflict with the law and subsequent assignment to the penal institution," the report says. "The patient states that 2-3 weeks prior to admission he began to experience generalized weakness in the lower extremities which culminated in a frank weakness four days prior to admission. He was seen several times in the prison infirmary and subsequently referred here for further evaluation." The notes say nothing about Michael having been beaten.

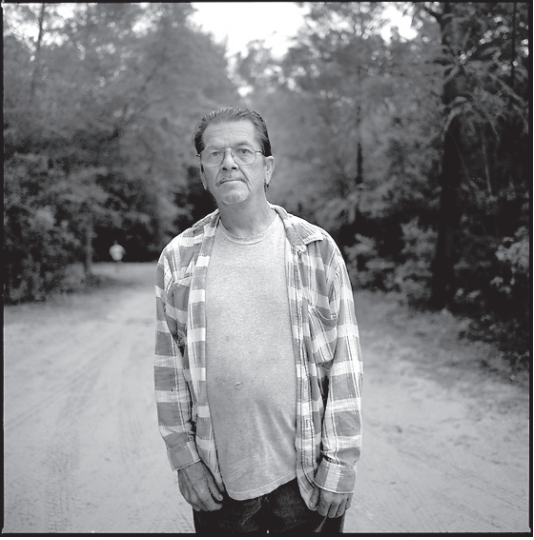
Surgeons performed an emergency decompression and sent him back to Florida State Prison. According to the notes, he was able to walk using a walker, but never fully recovered. By December, he was back in the hospital for another surgery. Doctors removed a portion of the tumor.



**Terry Smelley's drawing depicting the funeral of his son Michael hangs on the wall of his home in Crestview. Michael died of cancer after being sent home from the Florida School for Boys in 1966. Some believe that beatings he received at the school aggravated his condition and hastened his death.**



**When Michael Smelley and three other boys ran from the Florida School for Boys in Marianna, they took off sloshing through the swamps surrounding the school, hoping to catch a freight train headed west back to Crestview. They were caught and punished.**



**Donnie Schoffner, 63, ran away from the Florida School for Boys with Michael Smelley and two others in 1966. They were caught. He remembers the guard who caught him telling him he might get shot if he tried to run away.**

Notes by nurses in the next few days suggest the 16-year-old was in pain.

"Crying."  
"Complaining of muscle pain."  
"Had episode of coughing. Raising white frothy mucus."  
"Complaining of ribs hurting."

The notes say he was discharged on Dec. 8 on a stretcher, accompanied by a guard. He was returned to the state prison at Raiford, then sent home to his mother. She bathed him and changed him and held his hand as he cried.

...

Michael Smelley died March 15, 1966, a week before his 17th birthday, two years before the

state banned corporal punishment. His parents buried him in a donated casket, in a grave with no headstone, behind the Baptist church in Crestview. But covering the boy with dirt didn't bring any closure. Every time Mrs. Smelley visited his grave, she wanted to dig down and bring him back home.

"I wanted to go down there and kill them men," says Ms. Smelley now. "I had nightmares about it."

The Smelleys found an attorney to work on the case for free.

"I thought we had a good case," Ms. Smelley says, "but they just didn't believe that they whipped the boys like that."

The attorney, Purl G. Adams

Sr., is long dead. One of Adams' former legal secretaries, reached by phone, said she remembers the name Michael Smelley, but no details.

Adams was not the first to take complaints about abuse at the school to Tallahassee.

In 1941, the mother of a boy named James Young gave 5 acres to a Bradenton lawyer to petition the state to release her son from custody. The mother had visited her son at the school in Marianna and the boy told his mother he had been beaten bloody in the White House. She made him pull his pants down.

She was outraged.

Gov. Spessard Holland summoned Young to Tallahassee.

James Young is 82 and blind now, but he remembers the trip. He was 14, and he sat between Arthur G. Dozier, for whom the school is now named, and Mullard Davidson, the school's superintendent.

"They drilled me the whole way up there," Young says. "They said, 'You weren't abused. You were spanked.'"

Young was questioned by the governor's Cabinet. He did what he had to do.

The next day the newspapers carried this news:

*Governor Holland and other members of the state cabinet, all former school teachers, approved the disciplinary pad-*

*dling of boys in the State Industrial School at Marianna. It was their answer, supported by the expressions of confidence in Superintendent Mullard Davidson, to the charge by Mrs. C.S. Thompson of Wauchula that her son, James D. Young, was whipped with a three-inch board. Davidson said Mrs. Thompson's claim of brutal treatment of her son and other boys was "utterly false."*

"It really broke my mother's heart," Young says now. "She didn't intend to have this thing happen."

"These kids there wasn't bad kids."

...

At the *Times'* request, Dr. Frank D. Vrionis, director of complex spine surgery at H. Lee Moffitt Cancer Center, reviewed Michael Smelley's medical records.

He said it's clear the cancer on Michael's spine and in his lungs killed him. Whether his death, or paraplegia, was accelerated by a beating is difficult to know.

"The timing was suspicious," he said. "It could have been so severe that it might have aggravated it, but it's almost impossible to prove."

He said violence consistent with the stories of men who were beaten in the White House could break a very fragile spine.

"It would have happened anyway," Vrionis says of Michael's death. "Whether this violence sped things up, it's possible it did. That was quite a bit of force."

One person is certain. Donnie Schoffner was there that night.

"They contributed," Schoffner says. "They beat a slow boy until he couldn't walk. Then he died."

One of the school staffers has been deposed by the attorneys bringing the class-action lawsuit. Troy Tidwell, 85, said that boys were "spanked" and that he never gave a boy more than 10 or 12 licks in his 40 years at the school, and that the 400 men making the claims must be lying. Another, Lennox Williams, told the *Times* he wouldn't be surprised if there was abuse at the school, but he had no direct knowledge of it.

Carol Smelley knows better.

When she's not in the hospital, Mrs. Smelley lives in a mobile home heated by a wood-burning stove. The walls are covered by Mr. Smelley's magic marker drawings and the roof hasn't been fully repaired from the hurricane.

When she opens the scrap book, it hurts all over again.

"I just never have gotten over his death," she says. "I've been bitter. All these years. ... I just can't seem to forget about that boy."

*Times researcher Caryn Baird contributed to this report. Ben Montgomery can be reached at [bmontgomery@sptimes.com](mailto:bmontgomery@sptimes.com) or (727) 893-8650.*





HOWARD TROXLER  
htroxler@sptimes.com

## No-limit money, and fake names too

If you like your elections filled with sleazy attacks, paid for with legally laundered money — well, you're in luck.

That's what we've got in Florida, and it's going to get worse unless the Legislature does something about it.

The recent election in Jacksonville to replace the late state Sen. Jim King turned into a slime-fest of competing interest groups.

The winner, John Thrasher — a former speaker of the state House trying to return to the Legislature — was favored by the state's business community and opposed by the state's trial lawyers.

This past week, we learned that the lawyers were behind a particularly nasty, racist mailer with photographs of President Barack Obama, the Black Panthers, the Rev. Louis Farrakhan of the Nation of Islam, and black marchers with ACORN signs. The caption: "Is this the change YOU want to believe in?"

The irony is that the lawyers' group, the Florida Justice Association, is more closely identified with the Democratic Party than conservative causes. The intent apparently was to rile up conservative voters against Thrasher in a Republican primary.

The lawyers hid behind the names "Conservative Voters' Coalition" and "Conservative Citizens for Justice."

Not that the Republican side was sitting around idle. We also learned this past week that business groups have poured \$1.1 million since May into an outfit called the "Freedom First Committee," controlled by the future president of the Florida Senate, Mike Haridopolos, R-Melbourne. He formed the committee to help Thrasher's campaign.

My colleagues Steve Bousquet and Shannon Colavecchio report that major donors to the group include the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, insurers, agriculture, the alcoholic beverage industry, hospitals and real estate development.

And if you thought Haridopolos might at least be slightly ashamed, you'd be wrong: "That is the price of doing business," he declared, "and I'm not going to leave my friends in the Senate out there without protection."

Bousquet and Colavecchio note:

*Haridopolos' committee is one of nearly 100 that have proliferated in recent years, allowing 76 current and former lawmakers to circumvent the \$500 contribution limits to their own campaigns. Contributions to lawmaker-controlled committees are unlimited, and there are few restrictions on how the money can be spent.*

To add to the confusion, a federal judge recently threw out Florida's law requiring "electioneering" groups to register and report their finances. These groups often attack candidates without specifically urging people to vote against them.

If I were king (hah!) I'd throw out every rule we have and write the law this way: You can give as much money to a candidate as you want, as long as you give it under your own name and it is immediately made public. Let the voters know who's really paying.

A different approach is advocated by state Sen. Charlie Justice, D-St. Petersburg, who files a bill each year to limit all contributions to committees to \$500.

At the least, the Legislature should try to draft a law to replace the one thrown out by the federal judge.

Or we could just let big-money interests keep buying politicians and policy while hiding behind fake names. They are poisoning the democracy, and worse, they are doing it on purpose.

# TAMPA BAY

» LOCAL  
» STATE  
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★ ★ ★ Sunday, September 27, 2009 | 1B

# Abuse leaves deep scars

Years after the floggings of the White House Boys ended, their wives felt the fallout.

BY WAVENEY ANN MOORE  
Times Staff Writer

ORLANDO — The women couched their words carefully, even apologetically.

True, their husbands have been quick-tempered, terrifying with their bullying and thunderous tirades and even beatings.

But at heart, these were good men. Men, who as boys had been

sent to what is now called the Arthur G. Dozier School in Marianna, where they were thrashed bloody with leather straps, sometimes until they passed out. Men who still bore the emotional and even physical scars of the long-ago abuse.

Married 29 years, Lorie Moore, 46, accepts her husband Tom's verbal outbursts. "Look what

he's been through. He has to take that anger out somewhere," she said Friday evening as her husband and other men who say they were abused at the reform school gathered with their wives at a Days Inn in Orlando.

Tom Moore, 62, is one of the White House Boys, so called because of the small white building on the sprawling cam-

pus they knew in the 1950s and 1960s as the Florida School for Boys. It was in the White House that they were made to stretch facedown on a mattress for searing floggings on their backs and buttocks.

This weekend marked the third meeting of these unwitting alumni who, after finding each other in recent months, gath-

ered to talk about their secrets and pain, nightmares and night sweats and strings of failed relationships.

Peggy Marx, 59, helps to keep the reunions organized. Her purple and pink plastic bins hold files and name tags. Men call her to share their stories, but she can tell her own. Her marriage ended in 1971. **» See WHITE HOUSE, 4B**

Tampa Bay Harvest, a gatherer of food for the needy, is going broke. It helps supply the daily bread of more than 100 pantries, soup kitchens and shelters.



JIM DAMASKE | Times

A volunteer with Tampa Bay Harvest, Jay Keyes, picks up bread from a Clearwater Publix this month. It will be dropped off at the RCS Food Bank, Pinellas County's biggest distributor of food to the needy.

# Hard times for harvesters

BY MIKE BRASSFIELD | Times Staff Writer

Silver-haired retirees Jay and Jan Keyes steer their Hyundai into a deserted alley behind a Clearwater strip mall. They park between a Dumpster and a loading dock. From the back door of a Publix, they pull out big plastic bags of day-old bread, bagels and buns. ¶ They drive it straight to a food bank where, three hours later, Brett Perry picks up a loaf of wheat bread and a package of rolls from their haul. He's an 18-year-old telemarketer whose employer is going out of business. Hunger twists in his belly. ¶ "I would starve if it wasn't for this," he says.

The Keyeses are members of an invisible army of volunteers who scour the Tampa Bay area for leftovers, quietly parking at rear entrances to collect unsold food from restaurants and supermarkets. They bring it to food pantries, soup kitchens and shelters to feed the growing ranks of the hungry.

Now this invisible army is in trouble.

...

Tampa Bay Harvest gathers 3 million pounds of food a year in Pinellas and Hillsborough counties — good food that's not quite fresh enough for businesses to serve to paying customers.

The Harvest runs on a shoestring budget

of \$50,000 a year. It has 600 volunteers, two refrigerated trucks and one employee, a general manager who runs the operation from his house in Brandon.

The group never had to do much public fundraising because it was supported by a charitable foundation. It would rather not name the foundation publicly so as not to embarrass it, because that source of money has run dry. Tampa Bay Harvest is about to go broke.

"It's crunch time for us. We're going to be short at the end of this month," says Rich Gonzalez of Clearwater, president of the board. Without a full-time manager riding herd on **» See HARVEST, 4B**

## » FAST FACTS

### Tampa Bay Harvest

**What:** An all-volunteer charity that collects food from restaurants and supermarkets and distributes it to feed the hungry. It's marking its 20th year.

**Info:** (727) 538-7777 or [www.tampabayharvest.org](http://www.tampabayharvest.org). Mailing address: 612 Princeton St., Brandon, FL 33511.

### America's Second Harvest of Tampa Bay

**What:** A Tampa-based food bank that serves 10 area counties, it sometimes gets confused with the other Harvest.

**Also known as:** Feeding America

**Info:** (813) 254-1190 or [www.a2htampabay.org](http://www.a2htampabay.org)

# Prudent city can brag as it saves

As other Florida cities struggle with budgets, Miami Gardens is still hiring and building.

BY JANET ZINK  
Times Staff Writer

MIAMI GARDENS — Lay-offs, pay cuts, park closures and fee increases have been common this budget season for most of Florida's local governments.

Not so in Miami Gardens, the state's largest predominantly black city.

There, the payroll will grow by 17 positions this year. Employees will get cost-of-living and merit raises as well as matching contributions to retirement plans.

And instead of dipping into reserves to balance its \$150 million budget like other cities, Miami Gardens leaders expect to stash \$300,000 into a rainy day fund.

How has Florida's 15th-largest city achieved near-miracle financial health in these dire economic times?

City leaders say it's because, as a new government carved out of Miami-Dade County six years ago, they've spent money on only the most vital functions.

"We were very cautious about how we built the city," said City Manager Danny Crew. "You tend to only hire those people you actually need."

That means Miami Gardens, where 96 percent of the 109,000 residents are minorities, doesn't have some luxuries like other cities. It has no poet laureate. It has no graphic designers. It has no city television station.

"We were not going to be a bloated government. We pride ourselves on the fact that we have necessary staff to get the **» See MIAMI GARDENS, 4B**



"We were not going to be ... bloated," says Mayor Shirley Gibson.

# Poor schools' bridge to success

Using pay incentives to draw top teachers works, but it's not perfect.

BY TOM MARSHALL  
Times Staff Writer

TAMPA — Money really does draw qualified teachers to high-poverty schools where they're needed the most, according to a new evaluation of an incentive pay program in Hillsborough schools.

Twice as many teachers have applied to teach in the district's low-income Renaissance schools since 2003, when Hillsborough began offering a 5 to 10 percent bonus. And more than 70 percent of teachers surveyed said

the extra pay influenced their decision to stay in those schools.

Such help can't come a moment too soon, as the recession pushes more schools past the program's eligibility threshold of at least 90 percent of students qualifying for a free or discounted lunch.

Seven new schools have joined the list of those eligible for the bonuses, raising the total number of Renaissance schools to 30. Six more schools passed the threshold this fall, but will have to wait

until spring to qualify.

"I'm thrilled," said principal Arlene Babanats, whose Tampa Bay Boulevard Elementary School joined the group for the first time.

"With the dollars you're able to receive, you're able to expand programs, resources, and training for teachers," she said. "But it also helped with teacher retention because it provided some incentive. I really did not have a lot of turnover this year."

Like other schools in the **» See SCHOOLS, 8B**




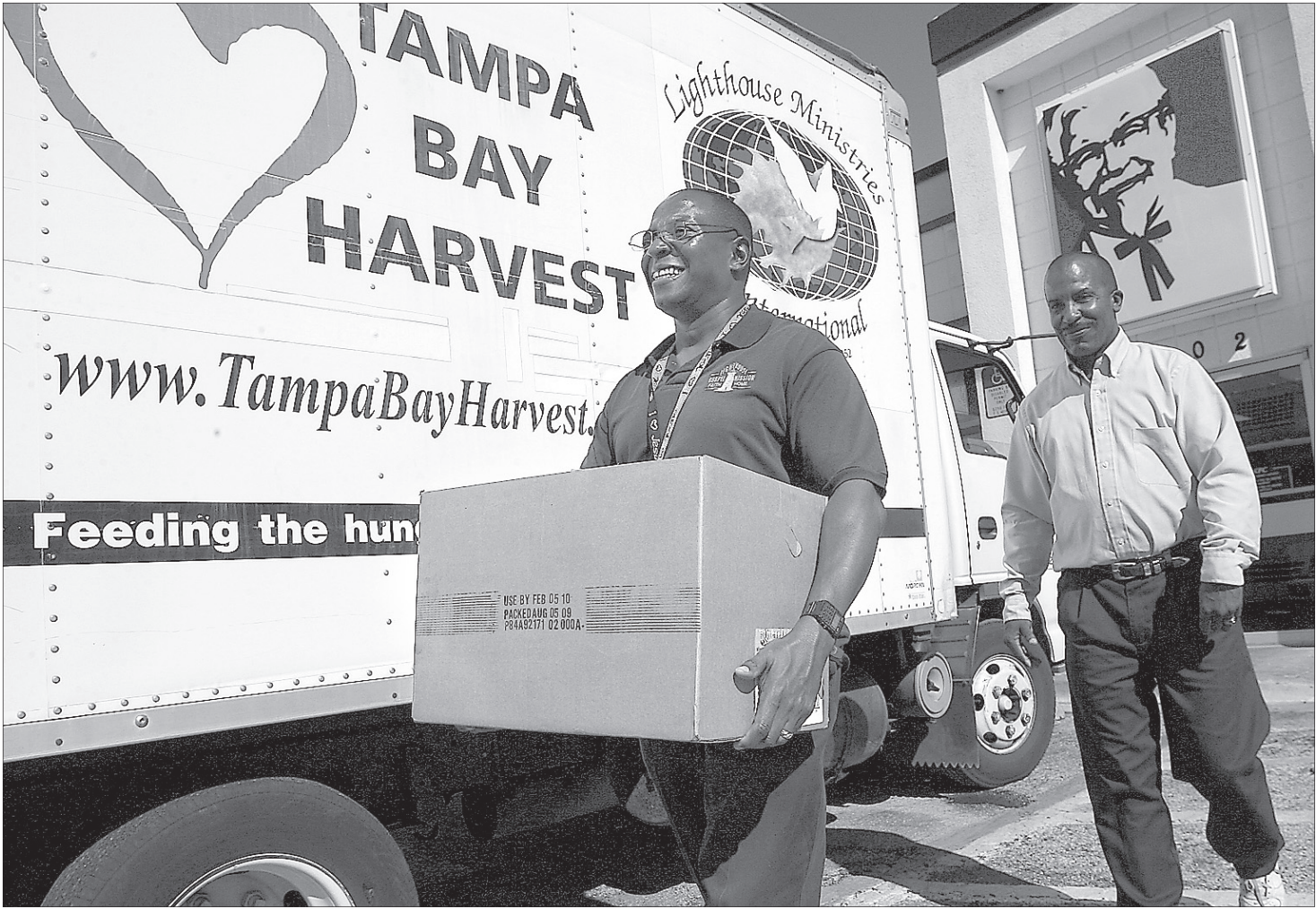
STEPHEN J. CODDINGTON | Times

High poverty qualified Tampa Bay Boulevard Elementary, where Michelle Bertsch teaches, for the Renaissance schools program.



From the front page»

 [tampabay.com](http://tampabay.com) for the latest news



Tampa Bay Harvest driver Paul Owens, left, and volunteer Leandris Drew pick up food from a KFC in Tampa earlier this month. Tampa Bay Harvest gathers 3 million pounds of food a year in Pinellas and Hillsborough counties.

» HARVEST continued from 1B

# Hard times for harvesters

pickups and dropoffs, Gonzalez knows they'll harvest a fraction of the food they do now.

"Right now, we have a central person working with the Publixes and Longhorn Steakhouses and Olive Gardens," he said. "Without that, you lose the ability to coordinate and direct."

If the Harvest runs on a shoestring, Will Carey, the sole paid employee, is the shoestring. With a laptop and cell phone, he functions as a sort of air traffic controller for Tampa Bay's leftovers.

If a pallet of frozen chicken is up for grabs, if a fishing tournament nets a load of fresh trout, if a Pizza Hut has a pile of personal pan pizzas, Carey gets the goods to whoever needs them most.

"I'm the steering mechanism," says Carey, 57. "Those packaged deli sandwiches from 7-Eleven, they're like gold to us."

• • •

Unaccustomed to asking for contributions, the charity has added a big digital "Donate" button to its Web site, [www.tampabayharvest.org](http://www.tampabayharvest.org).

In a last-ditch effort to raise cash, a group of volunteers is planning a Family Fun Fest on Clearwater Beach on Oct. 24-25. They've been scouting other local festivals for ideas. The neophyte organizers have found themselves faced with decisions like how much of a fee to charge food vendors, or whether to allow a bungee jumping stand to set up on the sand.

The Harvest's reach extends from the beaches to eastern Hills-



RCS volunteer Margaret Chize hands a loaf of bread to a client. The Harvest supplies about 15 percent of the pantry's total.

borough. That's where volunteer Greg Massey, a pastor at Lighthouse Ministries in Riverview, makes a dozen pickups a week at a Taco Bell, a KFC, a 7-Eleven. "It's tedious. But the vendors look forward to seeing us." The food is spread around to a battered women's shelter, a drug treatment program and churches' cupboards.

Massey worries about what will happen if the food charity can no longer employ a manager: "There probably wouldn't be a Tampa Bay Harvest."

Some volunteers do it for religious reasons. Others are looking for a little volunteer work with flexible hours. That's how Clearwater retirees Jay and Jan Keyes, in their 70s, started picking up baked goods from two Publixes twice a week. On a recent Thurs-

day, they start their rounds at 9 a.m. By 10 a.m. they're handing over 200 pounds of French bread, rolls, pies and cupcakes to the RCS Food Bank, Pinellas County's biggest distributor of food to the needy.

They run into RCS director Kathi Trautwein, who notes that the pantry is serving twice as many people as it did two years ago. Clients can come in once a month and get enough to eat for three or four days. Many of the new clients are laidoff workers who are shell-shocked to find themselves at a food bank.

Some used to donate to it. Trautwein is pleased to see all the bread: "Publix donates it instead of just tossing it like a lot of other stores do."

The Harvest supplies food to

## » IF YOU GO

### Clearwater Beach Family Fun Fest

**What:** An arts and crafts show with food and beer vendors, kids games and entertainment, with proceeds benefiting the Tampa Bay Harvest.

**When:** Oct. 24-25.

**Where:** The BeachWalk promenade facing S Gulfview Boulevard.

**Seeking:** Vendors, volunteers, sponsors and donations.

**Info:** (727) 394-1012 or [www.FamilyFunFest.net](http://www.FamilyFunFest.net).

more than 100 pantries, soup kitchens and shelters a day. In the last 12 months, it has contributed 160,000 pounds of food to RCS, nearly 15 percent of the pantry's total. "There would be a huge impact if that went away," Trautwein says.

The pantry will start handing out food at noon. Its waiting room begins to fill up with people — normal-looking, non-homeless people who aren't really sure where next week's dinners will come from. Soon the line extends out the door.

It's just another morning in the land of plenty.

Mike Brassfield can be reached at [brassfield@sptimes.com](mailto:brassfield@sptimes.com) or (727) 445-4160.

*"They go from having very hot tempers to being overly passive. There's no middle road with any of these guys."*

Diane Fudge, who is married to one of the White House Boys.

» WHITE HOUSE continued from 1B

# Wives share agony of abuse at White House

riage to husband Frank, 65, has had tumultuous moments. Two of their five children no longer speak to them, she said.

"I have two grandsons I've never seen," she said.

The children hated her husband's anger, said Marx, who added that she was physically abused during the first five years of the marriage. "He was always saying to the boys, 'I'd kill you before I'd see you in Marianna.' "These guys went through hell, but they put their families through hell."

Babbs Cooper, 64, chokes up when she talks about her husband, Jerry, 65, and their 28 years of marriage.

"It is very difficult to talk about it," she said. "He'll tear a house up in five minutes. It would be the smallest of things that would set him off."

Jerry Cooper was a teenager when he was sent to Marianna. He had been caught riding in a stolen car with an AWOL Marine. He said he was flogged 135 times with a leather strap by a reform school employee named Troy Tidwell. Recently he took a polygraph test to prove that the stories he's told about his beatings are true. He passed. His wife was there to comfort him as he sat shaking when it was over.

"I have caused a lot of havoc in the family because of my attitude and temper," Cooper said.

The White House Boys' wives find comfort in each other.

Diane Fudge, an outgoing woman with a Long Island accent, said she's learned a lot about the men's common personality traits from discussions with other wives.

"They go from having very hot tempers to being overly passive," said Fudge, a 48-year-old Homosassa woman who has been married for 10 years.

## To learn more

 For more coverage of the Arthur G. Dozier School for Boys, including video and photo galleries, go to [magazine.tampabay.com](http://magazine.tampabay.com).

"There's no middle road with any of these guys. We learn what buttons not to push."

The wives also complain that their husbands have a difficult time showing affection, she said. "My husband's way of showing me he loves me is giving me jewelry, which is nice, but sometimes I think, 'Just go with me for a walk and hold my hand.'"

Her husband, Charles, 61, the owner of an antique auction gallery, said he and three brothers were all sent to the Florida School for Boys. He has been married twice before and was not "the loving, caring husband that I should have been," he said. "I'm sure that was a big part of my divorces. I didn't beat them, but I'm sure I gave a lot of verbal abuse. When my wives didn't do what I told them, I figured that I was in charge, the way my instructors were."

His present wife, who describes him as the most generous person she knows, is familiar with his past verbal abuse.

"Ten years ago, when I married him, I would never know when he would blow up," she said.

"One time, the big fight was what time we were going to have Thanksgiving dinner. The other time was how I was peeling the potatoes. ... About seven or eight years ago, he became a Christian. If he gets angry once a year, that's a lot, and I'm not afraid of him anymore."

Waveney Ann Moore can be reached at [wmoore@sptimes.com](mailto:wmoore@sptimes.com) or (727) 892-2283.



Thomas Moore, 62, and Lorie Moore, 46, have been married for 29 years. Lorie learned recently that her husband had been abused at the Florida School for Boys.

EDMUND D. FOUNTAIN | Times

» MIAMI GARDENS continued from 1B

# Prudence is paying off for predominantly black Miami Gardens

job done," said Mayor Shirley Gibson, who was part of the eight-year push to create the city.

## More with less

Miami Gardens benefited in its first four years from rapidly rising property values that boosted city revenue as much as 20 percent a year.

"During the good years, what most cities do is add people on," Crew said. "We didn't build in any continuing expenditures, only those bare ones that we had to have to operate."

Gibson and the six City Council members are paid \$12,000 a year and share three legislative aides. Crew shares an administrative system with two other managers.

"I do all my own typing," he said. "There are things you really don't need, but you think you do. We run a tight ship."

With only 600 employees, Crew said, people help each other out when necessary. He once worked as a crossing guard.

"We don't have this rigid type of thing," he said. "We're still small enough that you have that feeling."

## Focus on parks, crime

City founders had two priorities: police and parks.

"People didn't like the way the county was providing police service. Some of it may be undeserved, but it doesn't matter," Crew said.

Miami Gardens had a reputation for violent crimes, ranking 17th in a list of the country's most dangerous cities in 2008, based on figures from 2007.

That's the same year the city started its own police force after increasing taxes by 64 percent. The property tax rate in Miami Gardens is 5.37 per \$1,000 of assessed value, compared to Clearwater's 5.15 and Tampa's 5.73.

Clearwater, which has a budget of \$374 million, and Miami Gardens have nearly the same number of residents.

"We didn't mess around. We wanted the best police department we could get," Crew said.

To attract top officers from around the country, Miami Gardens offers new recruits a \$12,000 signing bonus, \$5,000 in moving expenses, a \$2,000 yearly bonus if they live in the city and a \$58,000 starting salary. A Tampa patrol officer's starting salary is \$46,384.

In the department's first year, the city reported a 19 percent drop in violent crime.

Parks also got extra attention. "We've always had lots of parks here. But they were never main-



Miami Gardens, Florida's 15th-largest city, was carved out of Miami-Dade County six years ago and built cautiously.

JANET ZINK | Times

tained. They were never renovated. They never had any programming," said Gibson, who has lived in Miami Gardens for 50 of her 65 years.

More than \$30 million in grant money has gone to upgrade four pools and 17 parks that offer everything from after-school care to line dancing. Construction of the city's first major recreation center, a 55,000-square-foot, \$12 million facility, will be done next year.

## Boost from stadium

Gibson, who is running to replace Democrat Kendrick Meek in Congress, led the push to separate the area from

Miami-Dade County, starting in 1995.

As a sheriff's deputy, she worked in tony neighborhoods such as Coral Gables and Bal Harbour.

"I could see how other folks lived," she said. "I could see the disparity." And it seemed to her, the "other folks" kept benefiting from grant and tax money generated for the county.

"Where they already had 10 beautiful parks, they got two more," she said. "I knew there were dollars that we could never actually be in control of unless we were a city."

Case in point: Land Shark Stadium — home of Super Bowl

XLIV in 2010, the Hurricanes and Dolphins — generates about \$700,000 a year in property taxes for the city. About half of that money used to go to the county.

## Fading skepticism

Carrie Williams, 23, who works as a cashier in Hallandale Beach, grew up in the city. She considered leaving three years ago, after her daughter was born.

But things are different now. She feels safer, she said. It looks better.

"Right here was nothing but a bunch of woods and trees," she said while at the checkout line in a new Office Depot across the street from a new Wal-Mart.

Bhemis Parks, 29, a Miami Gardens resident for six years, also sees a difference.

"There isn't as much graffiti as there used to be," he said. "It's a more pleasant place to be and look at."

Claudette Brinson, a Miami Gardens native who raised two children there, admits being skeptical about the push to incorporate Miami Gardens. She worried about her taxes going up and being misspent.

"A lot of people were concerned," she said. "We were angry in the beginning. If you would have called me when the city first formed itself, you would have heard that."

Now, though, she likes what she sees. She points to drainage improvements, cameras at intersections to keep drivers from running red lights, and more police presence.

"There was a time where the center median off the main street, I mean, it just looked dead. Now they've put in beautiful landscaping," she said of her hometown. "I can see where my tax money is going."

As the city moves forward, it remains to be seen if it will start packing on fat.

An annual jazz concert, launched four years ago, and the Miss Miami Gardens pageant, started two years ago, now cost the city money. The parks department produces some slick publications, and the city started contracting with a company to publish a community newspaper.

Crew says it's likely Miami Gardens will end up with expenses that some might consider discretionary. But for now, restraint is a guiding principle.

"A city can't be everything to everybody," he said.

"You have to have a council that knows how to say no to their constituents sometimes. And that's very difficult to do."

Janet Zink can be reached at [jzink@sptimes.com](mailto:jzink@sptimes.com) or (813) 226-3401.



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# Tebow up for LSU

Questionable after a concussion, Florida's QB returns to lead the Gators over LSU 13-3. **Colleges, 1X**



**Bolts win 5-2**  
Ryan Malone has three goals in first win of season. **Sports, 1C**

# St. Petersburg Times

Florida's Best Newspaper

tampabay.com

Sunday, October 11, 2009

For Their Own Good | A Times special report

# 100 YEARS LATER AND IT'S STILL HELL

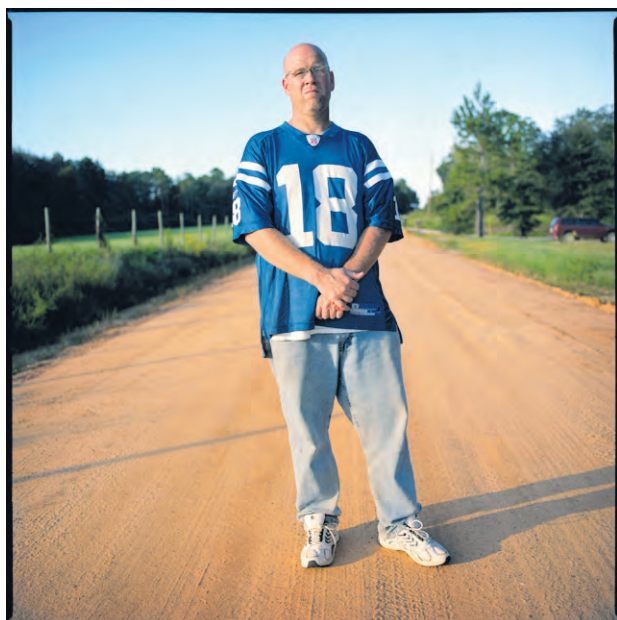
STORY BY BEN MONTGOMERY AND WAVENEY ANN MOORE  
PHOTOGRAPHS BY EDMUND D. FOUNTAIN | Times Staff



Once home to several hundred juveniles, the Dozier School for Boys now houses about 130.



"He needed help and counseling, not to lock the door and throw away the key," Mark Caldwell says of his son.



"They knew I had a learning disability. They'd make fun of me," said John Bennett, a former guard.



"I don't want to see anybody who made a mistake like I did go through what I did in there," said Matthew Schroeder.

Bloody noses. Broken bones. At the Arthur G. Dozier School for Boys, reform seems to be mostly in the rhetoric.

MARIANNA  
The boys were watching. They had noticed the old men and the television trucks gathered at the Arthur G. Dozier School for Boys. They were not allowed outside, but this day last October was about them, too. So said the plaque about to be fixed to the building called the White House. *May this building stand as a reminder of the need to remain vigilant in protecting our children as we help them to seek a brighter future.* The men outside called themselves the White House Boys. They were assured that the abuse they endured here 50 years ago — beatings that left them bloody, ruined

their sleep, wrecked their marriages and destroyed their lives — would never be repeated. This was a different place now. The boys inside were safe. After the ceremony, the superintendent would write to her staff: "I am proud to show what our Dozier is truly all about today." But behind closed doors, were those boys safe and protected? Were they being nurtured toward brighter futures? "When the media was around, they would hide us," said a boy named Matthew Schroeder. "They didn't want us saying a word to anybody, because they knew what we would say. "We'd tell the truth." » See DOZIER, 12A

**More online**  
To read more coverage of the Arthur G. Dozier School for Boys, and to see videos and documents referenced in this story, go to **magazine.tampabay.com**.

# Take a look at what Rifqa left

There was a cultural conflict, but was there danger when she ran away?

BY MICHAEL KRUSE  
Times Staff Writer

WESTERVILLE, Ohio — Rifqa Bary saw a girl. She kept seeing her. She saw her in the bathroom and the lunch room and the locker room. "And for some reason," Rifqa said later in a video posted on YouTube, "I told her I was a Christian." Which she wasn't. Not yet. "Wanted to fit in, maybe," she said.

Eventually she would run away from her home here and flee to Florida, believing her Muslim family had to kill her because of her conversion to Christianity. Eventually she would become for some a crucial character in a culture war. Eventually, her story would fill TV airtime, stoke partisan blogs and spark dueling custody cases in courts in two states.

But this is where it started: Rifqa saw a girl. The girl asked her to go to church. So she went. The Korean United Methodist Church is a brick building with a low roof on a busy road in Columbus. The sign outside says "Welcome." Inside, on Nov. 18, 2005, people stood and sang, "with fire in their eyes," Rifqa said, and so » See RIFQA, 7A



Special to the Times  
Rifqa Bary was a junior varsity cheerleader at New Albany High School in 2008.

# Influencing investment of billions

Financial firms deny they land big fees by giving to politicians holding purse strings.

BY SYDNEY P. FREEDBERG AND CONNIE HUMBURG  
Times Staff Writers

On June 23, Florida Attorney General Bill McCollum pulled in a bundle of campaign checks from a single address in Pittsburgh. In all, \$28,000 in checks from that address made their way to McCollum's campaign for governor.

Many donors listed their occupations as homemaker, investor or student. They can be traced to people connected with Federated Investors, which last year was awarded a lucrative contract with the Florida State Board of Administration — a board that McCollum helps oversee.

In 19 months since getting that contract, how much has Federated made in fees? More than \$3 million.

It's business as usual at the SBA, which has a ton of public money to invest — about \$132 billion — on behalf of hundreds of Florida cities, counties and state organizations, and on behalf of the pension fund for a million current and retired teachers, police officers and other public servants.

Investment firms want the SBA's business because the fees for managing the money run into the millions. The firms are happy to spend a few hundred thousand if it might help get



Attorney General Bill McCollum got contributions tied to a firm with state investment business.

the job.

So what do they do? Some financial firms pay to play. They contribute to the campaigns of politicians who oversee pension funds, with an eye toward getting business from the public investment agencies.

Federal and state investigators — but not in Florida — are investigating pay-to-play around the country. They're looking into how investment companies use middlemen and lobbyists as well as donations to parties, political fundraising groups and non-profit organizations that make it hard to track their efforts to influence the decision makers.

The companies deny any wrongdoing, and Ash Williams, who took over as the SBA's executive director last year, says Florida has no pay-to-play problem. He says the SBA has an excellent reputation.

"Under my watch there has been no connection between political contributions and any investment decisions made by » See CONTRIBUTIONS, 5A

# Pakistan's army headquarters hit

Three hostages and six soldiers are among 13 deaths in the brazen attack by militants.

Times wires

RAWALPINDI, Pakistan — Militants staged a deadly attack on the Pakistani army headquarters Saturday in the most audacious indication yet of their willingness to battle the government.

The attack amounted to a stunning security breach as the Pakistani military prepares what it says will be an all-out assault against militants in the Taliban and al-Qaida stronghold of South Waziristan, near the Afghan border.

Pakistani commandos raided a building inside army headquarters early today and freed 25 people held hostage for more than 18 hours, a military spokesman said. Three captives

and four militants were killed in the operation. A fifth attacker was taken into custody.

Up to five heavily armed militants took the hostages after they and about four other assailants attacked the main gate of the army headquarters on Saturday, killing six soldiers.

Analysts said the attack in this city just outside the capital, Islamabad, served as a warning by militants — whom Pakistan has been accused of nurturing — that the military must rethink its South Waziristan plans.

The Pakistani Taliban asserted responsibility for the Rawalpindi attack, according to Pakistani television.

Earlier this year, the Pakistani » See PAKISTAN, 14A

## IN LATITUDES Crossing in style

Pack your tuxedo and gown for a trans-Atlantic crossing on the elegant **Queen Mary 2, 1L**

## TODAY'S WEATHER

### Few showers

8 a.m. 80° Noon 90° 4 p.m. 90° 8 p.m. 81°  
30% rain chance.

More on 10C

## IN FLORIDIAN An unlikely second chance

A demanding father and a wayward son find a new beginning in a place where failure reigns. **1E**

## INDEX

|            |      |           |       |
|------------|------|-----------|-------|
| Arts       | 2L   | Crossword | 5P, F |
| Astrology  | F    | Letters   | 2P    |
| Books      | 7-8L | Lottery   | 2A    |
| Business   | 1D   | Movies    | F     |
| Classified | F    | Travel    | 4L    |



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# For Their Own Good »

» DOZIER continued from 1A

# 100 YEARS LATER, IT’S STILL HELL

...

Here is what the men there that day did not know:

That five months before, a boy had his ear sewn back together with 10 stitches after a scuffle with staffers.

That four months before, a 39-year-old guard punched a 16-year-old boy three times in the face and slammed him into a fence.

That a month before, a 16-year-old boy was attacked by other boys in an unsupervised bathroom.

Or that three days before, a boy who had been peeing blood for days sat down and wrote: “I was refused medical attention and I need to see an urologist about my kidneys.”

Today, the state’s oldest reform school houses about 130 of the 6,000 juveniles in the custody of the Department of Juvenile Justice.

They are kept behind fences topped with razor wire, at a place where kids have been abused for 100 years. Over the years boys have been beaten here, shackled here, hog-tied here. Kept in isolation, driven so crazy they ate glass. Eight died in a fire here, neglected by guards. Hundreds of men who were beaten here in the 1950s and ’60s have sued the state. Dozens of boys are buried here on a little hill, their graves unidentified, the details forgotten.

What kind of place is the Dozier School for Boys today?

The Department of Juvenile Justice, citing the pending lawsuit and strict privacy laws, refused for months to let the *St. Petersburg Times* on campus to inspect conditions, interview boys or talk to staff. On Friday, as this story was headed to publication, DJJ officials agreed to schedule a visit.

For now, that leaves little more than the word of the state and the public record.

Using the state’s public information laws, the *Times* obtained more than 8,000 documents to better understand the school’s recent history. Those documents betray a place of abuse and neglect, of falsified records, bloody noses and broken bones.

In the past two years, according to the school’s own reports:

A suicidal boy drank cleaning fluid when no one was watching.

A boy so disturbed he threatened to cut off his finger to prove he wasn’t human climbed to a rooftop before guards could tackle him, breaking his arm.

Two boys went missing on campus for nine hours. Five staffers failed in their duties that day, and the superintendent of the high-security portion of Dozier didn’t report the incident. When it came to light, he resigned.

Another guard slapped an inmate during a basketball game, bloodying his nose. The boy asked to call the state’s abuse hotline, but was denied.

When an inmate is allowed to report abuse, the complaint goes to the state Department of Children and Families. In the past five years, DCF has opened 155 investigations at Dozier and verified seven cases of improper supervision, four of physical abuse, one of sexual abuse and one of medical mistreatment. An additional 33 cases had “some indicator” of abuse, mistreatment or neglect.

DCF’s investigative summaries were released by a judge after the *Times* argued that the public has good reason to see the records. According to those documents:

In January 2006, a guard grabbed a boy by the neck and head-butted him, breaking the boy’s nose.

In July 2006, a diabetic boy whose blood sugar was low was unresponsive for 20 minutes as two staffers ignored him. One staffer later quit and another, still on staff, was reprimanded.

One guard allegedly stuffed a boy in a laundry bag, and when the boy tried to chew through the strings, the guard encouraged others to scratch and pinch him. Investigators found “some indicators” of abuse: the boy’s bruises. Without video or witnesses, the allegations are sometimes impossible to prove. The guard resigned.

Yet another guard chased a boy through the dining hall with a broom, broke the broom on a refrigerator, then chased the boy with the sharp end. The guard grabbed the boy in a headlock and fractured his jaw. The guard then tried to sabotage the investigation. He was placed on leave and is no longer on staff.

The Dozier campus sits on the edge of town on a patch of land carved out of the pines. Some of the buildings date to the early 1900s. Boys complain about mice, spiders and roaches.

“While in the Dining Hall I was eating my food and a roach crawled out of my food,” a boy wrote in February. “This is not the first time this has happen.”

The response from the staff?

“Dining Hall was cleaned and checked. We will control this as much as we can.”

Late last year, a visiting supervisor found roaches in the suggestion box.



EDMUND D. FOUNTAIN | Times

...

Matthew Schroeder is 18, and small for his age.

He was born with cystic fibrosis, a condition that requires daily medication and care. When Schroeder was arrested in the little town of Crawfordville for burglary and larceny, he landed at Dozier, because it was thought to be the facility best equipped to deal with his medical needs.

Schroeder said he spent the first 65 days at Dozier, sick in his cell with vomiting and diarrhea, his stomach knotting. Schroeder can’t digest food without medication, and day after day in June 2008, he said, he received his medication late or not at all.

“I couldn’t get out of bed,” he said.

“He was in excruciating pain,” said his aunt, Susan Lidondici, who complained to the school.

Boys were often overmedicated or undermedicated. In a single week in September 2008, at least eight either missed getting their medication or nurses failed to document it.

Nurses at Dozier worked 12-hour shifts, plus overtime, because of staffing shortages. At times, the school had four nurses when it should have had nine. The starting salary for a licensed practical nurse at Dozier was until recently \$11.80 per hour, below most all other nursing jobs in the area. At one point, an administrator warned of a “highly contagious bacteria” in the infirmary.

The head nurse repeatedly warned superiors about the shortages.

“I am very concerned for the youth in our care,” she wrote in August 2008.

And in October 2008: “Our medical department has reached its most critical level ...”

And in December, after she quit due to a stress-related medical condition, her replacement wrote: “We need nurses now! ... I am unwilling to continue to jeopardize the well-being of the youth in our care.”

Schroeder got so ill he spent a week at Shands Hospital in Gainesville. Doctors told his family his bowels were impacted and his condition was exacerbated at the school. He lost about 50 pounds there, he said.

On March 19, after almost a year, Matthew Schroeder walked out of the reform school.

“Hell,” he called it.

...



Caldwell family photo

What does it take to work at Dozier?

The state has two requirements — you must be at least 19 and have a high school diploma or equivalent. But superintendent Mary Zahasky, the school’s sixth leader in eight years, expects more.

“The first thing we look for is someone with good character,” she wrote in an e-mail to a potential applicant. She looks for someone who is “a good role model to teenage kids.”

But a number of employees have criminal charges, including passing worthless checks, driving under the influence and domestic abuse.

In the past two years, one guard came to work reeking of alcohol and was referred to counseling. Another came in high on cocaine and marijuana. And another admitted to being a habitual drug abuser after he came to work high and was sent to the emergency room.

In 2005, the school hired James Edge. Three years before, the 265-pound man with a snake tattoo on his leg was arrested for domestic battery and violating a protective order. According to his wife’s sworn complaint, Edge wrenched her arm behind her back, fracturing her shoulder.

Edge is the same officer involved in the May 2008 scuffle in which a boy’s ear was split open. The following month, records show, he bloodied a boy’s nose and slammed him against a fence, cutting his thumbs. Then Edge was fired. Officials now say they are investigating his hiring.

Guard Arthur Edmon Jr. posted photos on his MySpace page in which he

makes obscene gestures and poses on a cash-covered table (caption: “f--- u haters”). He also posted a homemade rap video of friends dunking a basketball and pointing a gun at the camera.

Guard Frank Bernaldo has a MySpace page that contains sexual images and language and the following biographical nugget: “I like to go hunting but not for animals, only for people who piss me off.”

“We didn’t know about this,” said DJJ spokesman Frank Penela. “We would certainly not want someone with a character that portrays negativity or violence or bad personal conduct to be working with kids.”

Starting pay for an entry-level guard is about \$11.29 an hour, or about \$23,500 a year. “But we train them well,” Penela said. That includes 240 hours in topics such as first aid, verbal de-escalation techniques, adolescent development, gang awareness and ethics.

John Bennett, 41, worked as a guard at Dozier for more than a year, often alone with boys, often at night, and sometimes, he said, as the sole adult in charge of three teens on suicide watch. Bennett took special education classes throughout his schooling, his brother said, and struggles to read and write.

“I have a learning disorder,” he said.

“We were shocked that he got the job,” said his brother, Ed Bennett. “We thought that maybe they’d hire him as a janitor or something.”

Asked if training was hard, John Bennett said: “It was easy. They gave us all

the answers to the tests.”

Bennett said a boy once slapped him in the face. He told the boy not to do it again. The boy slapped him harder.

His biggest problem was with the supervisors. “They made fun of me.”

They called him slow and stupid, he said, and ribbed him over mild infractions. One day, he was a minute late for work and got a stern warning. The next day, he came to work 15 minutes early and announced his arrival over the radio.

“Mr. Bennett, reporting for duty 15 minutes early, sir!”

That got him in trouble for using the radio.

“He wasn’t retarded,” spokesman Penela said. He doubts Bennett was helped with the test.

Bennett was fired in July 2008 for absences and sleeping on the job. He thought sleeping was a minor infraction because his own supervisor would regularly sleep in a van on the night shift.

Records show this is common. A nap might seem minor until you consider what happens when guards aren’t looking.

Documents show that boys had oral sex in a van and in the showers. A boy said he was raped in the shower. A juvenile sexual offender roamed at night so frequently that boys would barricade their doors with their desks.

Fights often broke out in the showers. A boy from Yulee, who asked the *Times* to withhold his name because he was

» See DOZIER, 13A

**ABOVE:** Mark Caldwell drives to the Lake City Correctional Institution to visit his son Justin. Sent to Dozier at 13, Justin is now 20. Justin was beaten by a guard at Dozier in an incident captured on video. He was later convicted of battery on a detention officer for a related incident. He will be 23 when he is released, and his father wonders what kind of man he will become.

**LEFT:** Justin Caldwell is shown at home shortly before he was sent to the Dozier School for Boys.



# For Their Own Good >>



A razor-wire fence rings the Dozier School for Boys. The fence serves a dual purpose: to keep juveniles confined and to keep outsiders away. “What happens behind that razor-wire fence stays there, and you can’t get to it. You can’t find truth,” said Mark Caldwell, whose son was injured at the school.

## >> DOZIER continued from 12A

arrested as a juvenile, was blindsided as he entered the bathroom. “They came up behind me and hit me in the back of the head as I was walking in. I woke up on the floor.”

His mother and father visited him a few days later.

“He looked terrible,” said his mother, Laurie Bland. Black eye, constriction wounds on his neck, impact wounds on his chest, back and rib cage.

The boy doesn’t know how long he was unconscious, just that it would not have happened had the guards been doing their jobs.

The boys on the outside say not all staff are bad. They can easily rattle off staffers who made an impact on them.

“The staff is generally there for the kids,” said Chris Windau, who was arrested for breaking into a CiCi’s Pizza. “But there are others who, it’s just a job for them.”

Child advocate Gus Barreiro took an interest in Dozier. The former state legislator from Miami was hired last fall to oversee Dozier and three other programs. He was fired in January after DJJ found adult pornography on his state laptop. He denies the charge. The rumor among the boys at Dozier was that he was helping them too much.

“That place is full of generational employees,” said Barreiro, 50. “My great-grandfather worked there, grandfather worked there, so I work there.”

Barreiro wanted to know why turnover was so high. “I was asking things like, ‘What brought you here? What do you like about the job?’” he said. “The No. 1 answer was always benefits or retirement or salary or job security. It wasn’t until you got to No. 5 or 6 that they said anything about working with kids.

“It’s like working at Sea World and getting to No. 5 before you say you like whales.”

• • •

Dozier isn’t the place it used to be, because now boys have options to report mistreatment. They can file a grievance. They can call the abuse hotline.

But that system fails.

If they want to call the hotline, sometimes they have to phone in front of the alleged abuser.

“Twice, I asked to call abuse and they told me it wasn’t an option,” Matthew Schroeder said. “They told us if you called abuse and if it came back false, then they could press charges on you for making a false report and the maximum penalty was five years.”

“They told us that all the time,” said the boy from Yulee.

And grievances?

One boy wrote that a guard told him they “wipe their a---- with grievances.”

Another wrote, “I don’t know why y’all have grievances. They never work.”

On April 6, a boy wrote: “I’m afraid of Mr. black. He has an anger problem and I feel like he might hurt me.”

The response from a supervisor: “I talk to Mr. Black about this youth he just Doing his Job.”

Child advocate Cathy Corry filed a complaint in November after someone posted allegations on her watchdog Web site: Younger kids being beaten up; staff members sleeping, threatening boys to keep them quiet and falsifying reports.

Dozier’s assistant superintendent dismissed them outright.

“All of the above allegations apparently came from the Justice4Kids Web site where anyone can report their own opinion!” wrote Milton Mooneyham. “We will conduct an internal investigation to disprove these allegations.”

Asked whether an “investigation to disprove these allegations” is really an investigation, spokesman Penela defended the school’s second-in-command.

“When we do an investigation, it’s certainly unbiased, it’s certainly thorough,” he said.

Corry, who has been an activist for 10 years, wasn’t surprised.

“It’s pathetic,” she said. “The child is viewed as a liar right away, so the child has to prove that they’re not lying, and that’s difficult for them to do.”

• • •

Mark Caldwell checked into Room 115 at the Ramada Inn in Lake City, caught a few hours of sleep and was up before the sun.

In the lobby, he flipped through pictures of his only child.

Here was Justin cooking. Here he was on a lawn mower. Fishing. NASCAR. And here they were with matching haircuts.

“He’s my baby,” Caldwell said.

The photos stop when Justin hits puberty.

That’s when Justin started getting into trouble. He stole money from a neighbor and threw a rock at a school bus. Then his stepmother caught him touching his little brother.

He was 13 when he was sentenced to a South Florida DJJ program, then later transferred to Dozier. His sentence was extended due to allegations of bad behavior, his father said.

He turned 18 in Dozier.

Then came Feb. 11, 2007.

What happened that morning is Justin’s word against the guard’s.

James Wooden said Justin elbowed him in the cafeteria, then head-butted him, knocking off his DJJ hat. Wooden tried to take down Justin, but their feet got tangled. When Wooden stood up, Justin kicked him.

Justin claimed Wooden head-butted him. Several boys testified that Wooden slapped Justin on the forehead, accord-



Frank Peterman Jr., the secretary of the Department of Juvenile Justice, concedes problems at the Dozier School for Boys. “There was a time when everything was shrouded in secrecy. I think that’s changed somewhat.”

ing to news coverage of the short trial.

In court, Justin’s attorney pointed out that Wooden was 5 inches taller than Justin, which would have made it hard for Justin to head-butt him. The attorney also showed it would have been hard for Justin to kick Wooden, based on how the two were positioned.

A jury had to decide who they wanted to believe. A seven-year DJJ employee, or an inmate?

What is known is that later that day, Feb. 11, a video camera caught Justin standing still. A heavy-set guard grabs him by the throat, slams him backward on the ground, then chokes him. Guards pick up Justin and are leading him away when he falls and slams his head on a table. The guards drag him to the middle of the room where they leave him, bleeding. His legs twitch.

Police charged Justin with battery on a detention officer. Two months later, the superintendent and the guard, Alvin Speights, were fired.

The DJJ secretary at the time, Walt McNeil, called for a “change of culture” at the school.

Justin was sentenced to five years in prison, the maximum.

The guard, Speights, was not indicted.

“It’s a crime what they did,” Mark Caldwell said. “If my neighbor’s dog walks into my yard to do its business and I kick the dog and somebody sees me, I’m going to serve time.”

Every few months Caldwell, a tool and die maker, rents a fuel-efficient car and drives 350 miles, from Spanish Fort, Ala., to the Lake City Correctional Institution, his Wal-Mart watch set to Eastern time — “Justin’s time.”

Every tick is a second closer to 2012, Justin’s release date.

Mark thinks about the man he’ll take home that day. He’ll be 23. He’ll have an arm covered with prison tattoos. His closest relationships will have been with criminals.

What Florida citizen, Caldwell wonders, believes that the best treatment for a 13-year-old is to jail him for 10 years? How did slamming Justin’s head into the concrete help to reform him? What kind of life can he expect to lead?

The White House Boys, those men who came of age at the school in the 1950s and ’60s, overwhelmingly say they grew up angry and distrustful. They took out that anger on their wives and kids, even on strangers. They went back to jail.

Five decades later, can Mark Caldwell reasonably expect anything different for his son?

Caldwell bought Justin a ’92 Camaro. When the time comes, he will teach a grown man how to drive, how to pay for gas, how to behave on his first date.

He climbs into his rental and heads toward the prison, quarters in his pocket for vending machine pizza. He drives past a park and a forest and a commu-



State Sen. Al Lawson, D-Tallahassee, said he has heard no complaints about the school.

nity college and pulls up to an 894-bed prison surrounded by razor wire and men with dogs. He walks past a giant Florida flag and disappears inside.

• • •

Reform in Marianna?

It was ordered in 1909, when investigators found faked records and the superintendent quit.

And again in 1911, when the superintendent was hitting kids with a leather strap.

And again in 1913, when children were hired out to pick cotton and the superintendent resigned and laws were changed.

And again in 1914, 1920, 1921, 1953, 1963, 1968, 1976, 1982 and 2007, two months after Justin Caldwell was beaten, when the DJJ head said: “There are systemic operational problems at our Dozier facility that span the chain of command.”

Was it fixed?

Can it be fixed?

Matthew Schroeder’s aunt: “The culture in that place was established long, long ago and it’s just going to continue.”

Matthew Schroeder: “Change the atmosphere, or cut it off.”

Mark Caldwell: “Dozier is a place of evil. Dozier needs to be shut down.”

Now comes a new DJJ secretary, Frank Peterman Jr., a Baptist preacher and former state representative from St. Petersburg.

He said Dozier has a cultural problem. He has no tolerance for hurting kids, and his agency fires guards who do. He is already seeing results: lower numbers of employees filing for workman’s compensation and fewer kids being sent to hospitals.

“What we’ve tried to do is change the culture ... to make sure we try to back off the kids,” he said. “We will become restraint-free.”

Peterman, appointed in February 2008, said he is focused on prevention, transparency and verbal de-escalation, and on hiring better people with better pay. Example: Today, Dozier’s 10 nursing positions are filled thanks to a pay hike this year.

Better pay means getting more money from the Legislature to fund a place that has been strapped from its beginning.

So what about the people who control the money?

State Rep. Darryl Rouson, D-St. Petersburg, is arranging a visit to Dozier for the Criminal and Civil Justice Appropriations Committee, on which he serves. If the findings are true, “I would be as appalled and outraged as any human being.”

So would Rep. Marti Coley, R-Marianna, she said, if she knew of any abuse. But so far, “I have not gotten any calls whatsoever except from you.”

Sen. Al Lawson, a Democrat who has served in the Legislature for 27 years and whose district includes Marianna, initially said he did not accept the *Times*’ findings about the school, and did not want the *Times* to send him the DCF reports.

“I’ve not had one complaint about conditions out there,” he said.

But he did review the reports, and later expressed concern. “It’s imperative and important that they have a way of dealing with the problem up there.”

In February, Lawson spoke at a Jackson County Chamber of Commerce meeting in Marianna, according to the local newspaper. Near the end of the meeting, someone suggested that the plaque be removed from the White House. For some, the plaque is like a stain on the town.

Lawson told the crowd that he would try to get it removed.

Eleven days later, a boy was kicked and stomped by other youths, then placed in isolation. He asked to call the abuse hotline, to let somebody know what was going on. He was denied.

*Times* researcher Caryn Baird contributed to this report. Waveney Ann Moore can be reached at wmoore@sptimes.com or (727) 892-2283. Ben Montgomery can be reached at bmontgomery@sptimes.com or (727) 893-8650.

**About the story**

This story is based on more than 8,000 documents obtained under the state’s public records laws, including e-mails, internal incident reports, grievances filed by boys at the school, personnel records, surveillance video and DCF investigative summaries. For months, the *Times* was denied access to the school, its students and its staff. Friday afternoon, as this story was headed to publication, officials with the Department of Juvenile Justice agreed to schedule a visit.





# « Gators washed away by Tide

**Tim Tebow and the No. 1 Gators** lose 32-13 as No. 2 Alabama wins the SEC Championship and a spot in the BCS title game. **College Extra, 1X**

» **ACC Championship:** Georgia Tech beats Clemson 39-34 in Tampa to win the conference title.

# St. Petersburg Times

Florida's Best Newspaper

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Sunday, December 6, 2009

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### IN LATITUDES

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### IN SPORTS

## The short run

Unable to find a rhythm with a running back rotation, the Bucs rank 23rd in rushing. **1C**

### IN FLORIDIAN

## Tiana time

Disney's first black princess is taking over the Mouse House, and some observers say the new film is a clear sign of progress. **1E**



## TODAY'S WEATHER

Partly cloudy

8 a.m. 47° Noon 63° 4 p.m. 66° 8 p.m. 63°  
0% rain chance.  
More, back page of Sports

## INDEX

|            |      |           |       |
|------------|------|-----------|-------|
| Arts       | 2L   | Crossword | 5P, F |
| Astrology  | F    | Letters   | 2P    |
| Books      | 7-8L | Lottery   | 2A    |
| Business   | 1D   | Movies    | F     |
| Classified | F    | Travel    | 4L    |

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## Correction

A photo caption on Page 1A of Saturday's editions should have referred to emergency room wait times at three HCA hospitals.

FOR THEIR OWN GOOD

# A ROSTER OF THE LOST



"Marianna left scar tissue," says Aaron Burns, who was sent to the Dozier School for Boys at age 15. "It was a place where you were made to feel like you were worthless." The tattoos now covering his torso and arms are testament to a life spent in and out of prison.

Of 180 boys detained at Florida's Dozier School in 1988, at least 97% were arrested again. At least 97%.

STORY BY BEN MONTGOMERY AND WAVENEY ANN MOORE  
PHOTOS BY EDMUND D. FOUNTAIN | Times Staff

MARIANNA — The cottage is snared in vines, as if the jungle is trying to consume the bricks and broken glass. It sits on an abandoned edge of the Arthur G. Dozier School for Boys, a 109-year-old reformatory for the state's troubled kids. ¶ The old cottage is the only accessible corner of an inaccessible place, a state-run institution with a long and ugly history of violence and abuse, protected by privacy laws and razor wire. ¶ Inside, past the graffiti-covered lockers and overturned bunks, is a bathroom. In a toilet, on a cold morning earlier this year, a reporter found a document. Four fragile pages containing 180 names. A list of boys confined here on April 22, 1988.

Such records are supposed to be kept confidential. No telling why this one survived in a toilet for two decades. But the list offers a window into an unexplored time at the reform school. It allows, for the first time, a public accounting of a single Dozier class.

Using public records, the *St. Petersburg Times* tracked the boys on the list. How good was this place at fulfilling its mission of reform? What

became of the Dozier Class of '88?

At least 174 of them — 97 percent — were arrested again after Dozier. They raped and killed. They sold drugs near schools and beat their wives and swung on cops. They held guns on store clerks, drove getaway cars and left victims across the state.

Talk to them, and many say their real troubles started here. They are Dozier's legacy.

» See MARIANNA, 6A



David A. Straz Jr. Center for the Performing Arts  
**Janet Dacal plays Alice, who in this version is a New York author with an overdue manuscript and failing marriage.**

## Striking visuals, puzzling story line

Produced in Tampa, the new musical 'Wonderland' marks a milestone for the local arts.

TAMPA — Lewis Carroll was a great one for riddles in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, such as "Why is a raven like a writing desk?" That riddle doesn't have an answer, and neither does this one at the moment: Can *Wonderland: Alice's New Musical Adventure* make it to Broadway? And more important: Can it be a hit there?

The new musical, a contemporary spin on Carroll's surreal saga from Victorian England, is loaded with talent onstage, and the Frank Wildhorn score boasts one insanely catchy pop song after another. The show is a visual feast, with dazzling costumes, marvelously funky dance and a flashy, high-tech production design.

But *Wonderland* also has a problem: It makes almost no sense. The book needs a major rewrite, and not just a tweak here and there. What Wildhorn and his colleagues — director Gregory Boyd and lyricist Jack Murphy, co-authors of the book — or somebody else can do to bring at least a measure of dramatic logic to the musical will ultimately decide its fate.

For now, though, Tampa Bay audiences can revel in the boffo production, which had its world premiere Saturday night in Ferguson Hall of the David A. Straz Jr. Center for the

» See WONDERLAND, 18A



**JOHN FLEMING**  
*Times*  
Performing Arts Critic

## Obama's war plan born amid intense debate

After an arduous review with advisers, he pushes for a quick jolt to alter the Afghan war.

New York Times

WASHINGTON — On the afternoon he held the eighth meeting of his Afghanistan review, President Barack Obama arrived in the White House Situation Room ruminating about war. He had come from Arlington National Cemetery, where he had wandered among the chalky white tombstones of those who had fallen in the rugged mountains of Central Asia.

How much their sacrifice weighed on him that Veterans Day last month, he did not say. But his advisers say he was haunted by the human toll as he wrestled with what to do about the 8-year-old war. Just a month earlier, he had mentioned to them his visits to wounded soldiers at the Army hospital in Washington. "I don't want to be going to Walter Reed for another eight years," he said then.

The economic cost was troubling him as well after he received a private budget memo estimating that an expanded presence would cost \$1 trillion over 10 years, roughly the same as his health care plan. Now as his top

» See WAR, 14A

## The high cost of bringing the biggest boats to port

Shippers say pilots charge too much. Pilots say they're worth every cent.

BY STEVE HUETTEL  
Times Staff Writer

Harbor pilot Joseph Shary ticks off some hazards of his profession as he rides out to climb aboard a tanker bigger than the tallest building in the Tampa Bay area.

An engine could malfunction. A rudder could fail. A sudden storm could push the ship aground. A helmsman from a

foreign country could misunderstand a command and steer in the wrong direction.

Any of which could lead to disasters.

Now, the 98 harbor pilots who guide huge freighters and the world's largest cruise ships into Florida's 14 deep-water ports face a different threat: a challenge from shippers compelled by law

to use their services.

A trade group dominated by cruise lines argues that Florida pilots charge too much. Rates, the trade group says, are kept artificially high because pilots hold a monopoly over an essential maritime service.

State harbor pilots earn average annual compensation of

» See PILOTS, 9A



EDMUND D. FOUNTAIN | Times

**Harbor pilot Joseph Shary prepares to board the tanker *Clipper Mars* in the Gulf of Mexico. Pilots are paid an average of more than \$300,000 a year to safely navigate the waters of Tampa Bay.**



FOR THEIR OWN GOOD

# DOZIER'S ROSTER OF THE LOST

» MARIANNA  
continued from 1A

Aaron Burns is on the list.  
In September, in his final days in prison, he secretly bequeathed his pet lizard to an inmate he trusted and made a promise to never come back.

He put on the clothes his sister saved when he was booked two years ago: Wolverine boots and blue jeans. He pocketed his wallet, which contained a Social Security card, a Winn-Dixie preferred customer card and a receipt for the guitar he pawned for \$20 to buy gifts for Christmas 2007.

That's when he found himself out of work and broke. He drank vodka and woke up in jail and learned he had hit his girlfriend.

Two years later now, the first step in his plan to fix his life starts at Serenity House West in DeLand, in a room full of men trying to mend their mistakes. He takes a seat under a sign that says "First Things First."

The man up front begins.

"If we're not careful, we tend to think of ourselves as bad people," he says. "We're not. Put the plug in the bottle and we're very intelligent, capable, friendly people. Society out there doesn't understand this."

"Check your own story, folks."

Where does Burns' story start?  
At age 6, when his dad killed himself in the garage?

At 13, when he and some friends broke into a house looking for booze and walked away with a pistol?

Or at 15, when he arrived at the Dozier School for Boys in Marianna?

The first week, he was attacked while a guard looked the other way, he said. When it happened again, he fought back. That was the start of months of ambushes and sleepless nights, and pity the kid who tried to tell an adult.

"Marianna left scar tissue," Burns says, smoking a cigarette outside the halfway house. "They'd tell you, 'Your parents don't love you. Nobody loves you. That's why you're here.'"

"You think you've got nothing to lose."

• • •

Can you blame the choices of a batch of criminals on a single place? No. But it's hard to argue that time at Dozier makes boys better citizens.

The *Times* has written about two other generations molded by Dozier. Hundreds of men who spent time there in the 1950s and '60s, called the White House Boys, have filed a lawsuit claiming they're haunted by the bloody whippings they endured.

Those types of beatings were stopped, but documents show the boys there in the past five years have suffered medical neglect, sexual abuse and broken bones.

So what about the Class of '88?

Out of 180 boys, at least 174 were rearrested after Dozier was supposed to have straightened them out.

Of the other six, one was shot and killed in St. Petersburg in 1989, riding in a drug dealer's Thunderbird. Another died in 1998 in Jacksonville at age 27. One has no criminal record and appears to have led a successful life. The *Times* couldn't account for the other three.

At best, the Class of '88 represents a lifetime recidivism rate of 97 percent.

Three-fourths were rearrested within three years. Eighty-three percent were rearrested within five years.

Many have long rap sheets and served numerous sentences. They have helped drain the coffers of a state where Department of Corrections spending has shot from \$600 million a year in 1988 to more than \$2 billion.

Twenty-one years later, almost a third of them — 51 of the 180 — are still incarcerated in Florida. Four are serving life.

Still others are dead after serving sentences.

It's hard to compare Dozier to some statistical mean, because states calculate data in different ways.

But 97 percent?

"This is extraordinarily high and deeply concerning," said Angela Hattery, professor of sociology at Wake Forest University who is co-authoring a book, *Prisoner Re-entry and Social Capital*.

It's especially high because many Dozier kids were sent there for nonviolent crimes.

"Those kids are not difficult to turn around," said Kathleen Heide, professor of criminology at the University of South Florida and author of two books on juve-



Photos by EDMUND D. FOUNTAIN | Times

**Aaron Burns, right, holds his head in his hands during a meeting at Serenity House West in DeLand. In the 20 years since his time at Dozier, he has been to prison four times. Each time he was released, he told himself that he would stay out of trouble, but he never did.**

nile homicide. "Those figures are alarming. They're tragic even."

• • •

Dozier should have been a safe and effective program in 1988.

Aaron Burns had been there a short time by then, and state officials had just announced plans to overhaul the juvenile justice system. Dozier was finally getting cleaned up.

Ever since kids were found shackled in 1903, one investigation after another had documented abuses and fueled fresh alarm. In 1968, an official from the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare called Dozier "one of the worst examples in the nation of a boys' reform school." Gov. Claude Kirk visited and told reporters: "If one of your kids were kept in such circumstances, you'd be up there with rifles."

In 1983, the ACLU and others filed the class-action Bobby M lawsuit claiming kids were hog-tied and isolated for long stretches. The resulting settlement forced the state to outlaw hog-tying, reduce the population at the school, retrain staffers and install a federal monitor.

"These reforms launch Florida into a new and progressive era in the way we treat young offenders," said the secretary of the state's Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services.

Here is how men who were there in 1988 describe that progressive era:

"Kids were raped, beaten and abused all the time," wrote William Mantle, 37, who is held in Tomoka Correctional Institution for stealing a car. "I've been to prison 3 times and ... there isn't a prison I've been to that compares to Dozier."

The *Times* wrote letters to everyone on the 1988 roster who was incarcerated in Florida. About half wrote back. One man said he was locked in a dog cage for several hours as punishment for hiding on campus. Another said guards beat him unconscious, then told him not to tell. Many said rape and beatings were common among the boys, and guards looked the other way. Some said guards pit kids against each other, offering single cigarettes or Little Debbie snacks



Family photo



**Phyllis Coachman's son Randy Griffin wasn't bad, she says, just misguided. When a judge sentenced him to the Dozier School for Boys, she thought he would be reformed. "He came back even worse," she says. She called often to check on her son, but says she was never able to speak with counselors or see his grades. "They didn't teach them anything there," she says. Randy, shown above in a photo taken while he was at Dozier, was shot and killed outside an Atlanta nightclub in 2007.**

to the winner.

Charles Anthony Jones, imprisoned for 18 of the past 21 years, said he was whipped with a belt until he was bruised and bleeding. Steven Long, a 39-year-old addict serving time for forging prescriptions, said he saw boys with those kinds of injuries locked in the infirmary.

"I still have facial scars that reminds me of Marianna every time I look in the mirror," wrote Sherman Atkins, 37, serving time in Wakulla for cocaine possession and driving with a suspended license. "I still think about how scared I used to be when I was confined there. ... We was constantly threatened repeatedly not to speak about it with no one, especially our family, and I never did."

"It was a gladiator school," said Derek C. Gavin, 38, who was released from prison in 2003. "It was dog eat dog. It was a terrible experience in that dorm. Man, I'm talking about like you wouldn't believe."

• • •

The man who ran Dozier in 1988 is dead. The assistant superintendent, Daniel Pate, is 63. He retired in 2002 and still lives in Marianna.

He acknowledged that during the Bobby M litigation, and during the transition period after the settlement in '87, the school had troubles.

"There was chaos for a while." Staffing was too low, he said, and there were "a lot of things that happened during the litigation

that caused the staff to feel vulnerable and kids to feel empowered." A power struggle ensued.

Carole B. Shaffer, executive director of the Youth Law Center, worked on the Bobby M suit and visited the school before the case was filed.

"The conditions were terrible, but the most basic thing is that the staff hated the kids," she said. "The staff spoke contemptuously of the kids. ... The staff just thought they were bad kids and there was absolutely no other way to control them."

The man who was assigned to monitor Dozier as part of the '87 settlement said the reforms did not handicap the guards, they just reduced the brutality.

"Dozier was a brutal place for

years and years, and it had brutal policies and practices," said Paul DeMuro, who led a team of monitors. "And the Bobby M decree did not put the kids in charge."

Pate said things at the school began to get better after the staff was retrained and funding was increased, around 1988.

He said he is surprised by the stories of the boys who were at Dozier then.

"I'm sorry that they would have said that," he said. "I'm sorry that they had a bad experience. I really am."

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Randy Griffin is on the list. He had been a quiet kid who liked to shoot pool after school at  
» See MARIANNA, 7A





Derek Gavin of Wildwood went to Dozier three times and says that learning to manipulate the system is the only reason he got out. “I made them think I was rehabilitated,” he says. Gavin says guards at the school would bring him marijuana. After getting out of Dozier, he served 12 years in prison and has been out for six.



A cottage on the former campus of the Florida School for Boys, now called the Arthur G. Dozier School for Boys, still contains bunks, mattresses and messages from boys who lived there. It also contained a list of 180 boys who were confined here on April 22, 1988.

» MARIANNA continued from 6A

Campbell Park in St. Petersburg, but somehow got misguided. His mom, Phyllis Coachman, believed the judge when he said reform school was the best place for her son.

The Marianna compound reminded her of a college campus. But her son would confide that he couldn't sleep for fear he would be beaten. She didn't know what to do.

"I thought when I was sending him there that he was going to learn something or that his behavior was going to be different," said Coachman, 62. "But he came back even worse. He came back offensive."

After Dozier, he was arrested again and again for 15 years: cocaine possession, counterfeiting, grand theft. In 2007, Randy Griffin was shot dead outside a nightclub in Atlanta.

David Allen is on the list. He was always big for his age, his mom said, so when he got into trouble for things like throwing rocks at a school bus, police in the small town of Madison took it seriously. Rocks became deadly missiles.

"They would just lock him up for any old thing," said Margie Allen, 68.

Now David Allen is 38. He's 6 feet tall and nearly 300 pounds. His muscled arms and shoulders bulge under his prison jumpsuit. "I can't really remember a lot of what happened during those years," he said in an interview.

At Dozier, they gave him a pill three times a day. It made him groggy, a juvenile zombie. He spent about four years at Dozier.

He remembers getting into a fight. The guards dragged him to the isolation unit and

handcuffed his wrists to his ankles behind his back. He can't remember how long he was left on his stomach, but he can remember how dark it was and how alone he felt.

"If I wouldn't have went there and experienced the things I did, I wouldn't be here now," he said. "How they treated you, it made you suspicious of everything."

He has spent 16 of the past 21 years in prison. In 2007, he was convicted of robbery with a weapon and grand theft. He's due to be released in 2066.


"I been locked up all my life," Allen said. "I don't know how to relate to people anymore. I just don't know what goes on out there in the world."

Donald Wheeler is on the list. In November 1997, the Pinellas County man led police in Maryland on a 50-mile chase in a stolen Oldsmobile.

He stopped on the median of a highway and held police at bay for eight hours, until they fired a tear gas canister into his car.


Wheeler, who had told his family he wasn't going back to jail, put a bullet in his own head.

Voices from the Dozier Class of '88



**Charles Anthony Jones**, 37. Has spent 15 years in prison. Currently serving nine years for theft and fleeing an officer.

IT'S ABOUT TIME FOR SOMEONE LOOK INTO THE PROBLEMS GOING ON IN (DOZIER). I WAS SENT THERE (2) TIMES. THAT'S ONE OF THE WORST PLACE I'VE BEEN IN MY LIFE. I WAS ABUSE SO BAD, I PRAYED FOR GOD TO TAKE MY LIFE. I WAS BEAT WITH A RAZOR BELT SO BAD, THAT I WAS SCARED TO TALK, AND I WAS TOLD IF I TOLD ANYBODY IN MY FAMILY THAT THEY WILL KILL MY FAMILY, AND THEY WILL NOT FEED ME, JUST TO THINK ABOUT IT I WENT WEEKS WITHOUT FOOD, IT'S A PLACE I NEVER FORGET, THE STAFF TOOK US TO THIS



**Sherman L. Atkins**, 37. Has spent seven years in prison. Currently serving five years for cocaine possession.

REPORTED TO ME. MY TIME AND EXPERIENCE AT (DOZIER) FOR BOYS WAS/SOMETHING I WILL NEVER FORGET. IT'S BEEN OVER 20 YEARS NOW, AND I'M STILL HAVING DREAMS & NIGHTMARES ABOUT IT TO THIS DAY. I TRULY FEEL I WAS MENTALLY EFFECTED BY IT. SO, WAS IT HELPFUL? NO! IT WAS JUST A TIME AWAY FROM FAMILY (I FEEL) TO GROW UP WITH THE TYPE OF PEOPLE A MOTHER WANTS A CHILD TO STAY AWAY FROM. BUT ALL OF THE STAFF WASN'T BAD BECAUSE THEIR WERE SOME STAFF THAT REALLY TRIED TO HELP UP GROW INTO MATURE ADULTS, BUT MOST OF THE PHYSICAL VIOLENCE 'BUT WEIGHED' THOSE HELPFUL ATTEMPTS. ALTHOUGH I ONLY EXPERIENCED PHYSICAL ABUSE IN CONFINEMENT WHICH WAS CALLED "I.S.P. BACK THEN. I STILL HAVE FACIAL SCARS THAT ALSO REMINDS ME OF MARIANNA EVERYTIME I LOOK IN A MIRROR. I STILL THINK ABOUT HOW SCARED I USE TO BE WHEN I WAS CONFINED THERE, KNOWING I WAS ABOUT TO SEE SOME TYPE OF PHYSICAL

"They treated you like trash, always putting you and your family down, telling you you would never amount to anything. What they loved the most was to humiliate you. To make you feel you were the worst person that ever lived."

**Steven E. Long**, 39. Serving four years for forging prescriptions

"I was a pretty troubled child. I think I did around six years (in detention centers) as a kid. ... Dozier was by far the worst."

**William R. Canfield Jr.**, 37. Serving 15 years for lewd and lascivious battery on a minor. He has a tattoo on his left arm that says TRUST, and one on his right that says NO ONE.

"The whole atmosphere felt like I was being prepared for prison."

**Lamar A. Miffin**, 39. Convicted on five charges a few months after he was released from Dozier. He has been in and out of prison since.

Dozier.

The 38-year-old lives in Jacksonville, has a \$70,000-a-year job and is married with three kids. "I've got a pretty good life now," he said.

Not because of Dozier. Hamza, who grew up popcorn-for-dinner poor in Jacksonville and started stealing food at an early age, landed there at 16 for a series of crimes. He remembers fights that turned into riots and guards who burst in swinging sticks to break them up. He said he saw a boy

Abraham Hamza is on the list. He's one who made it. He's the only man the Times could find who was not rearrested after

raped and saw another blinded during a fight.

After nine months at Dozier, Hamza said he was transferred to a better program in Jacksonville where juveniles received therapy. He got his GED, left the state and joined the Marines.

He's not surprised he's one of the few. "Everywhere else I went, they were trying to fix you," he said. "At Dozier, they weren't trying to fix you. They were trying to hold you."

By almost any measurement, Dozier falls short.

Heide, the USF professor, offers a comparison to a program in Texas that treats a rougher population than Dozier — exclusively kids with violent histories who are most likely to reoffend. The Giddings State School decreased the probability of reincarceration within five years by 55 percent, and decreased the probability for any additional felony offense by 43 percent.

"The hard part of the puzzle is figuring out how much of the recidivism is related to the experiences these young men had in juvenile facilities, and how much is a result of other problems in their lives," said Hattery, the Wake Forest professor. "Either way, their experiences at Dozier must have contributed to their life trajectories."

Heide observes that juvenile justice legislation in Florida hobbles along on good intentions and a severe lack of funding. When lawmakers cut budgets, juvenile justice is a favorite target because young criminals don't vote.

It is easy to say criminals deserve whatever rough treatment they get. "Yet, not treating them will end up costing all of us more," notes Heide's colleague, assistant professor Shayne Jones. "Some individuals will pay for this lack of treatment by becoming victims of offenders we failed to treat. And taxpayers will continue to have their hard-earned money being used for more police patrols, increased court dockets, and prisons."

The DOC estimates that it costs taxpayers \$20,108 a year to imprison an inmate, which means Aaron Burns' confinement has cost Floridians somewhere near \$170,000, not including the associated costs of police services, prosecutors, defense attorneys, judges or county jails. That's enough to pay the yearly salaries of six juvenile justice residential officers today.

Using the same calculation, the 100 men on the list who have spent the most time in prison cost taxpayers about \$22 million in the past two decades.

"If we had done nothing," Heide said, "we'd have done better for these kids."

When Aaron Burns was released from Dozier, he took a Greyhound home to Deltona and decided to live right. It didn't last. The police came to his house to investigate a burglary in the neighborhood. He says he was innocent, but when he saw the cops, he ran.

In the two decades that followed, he was sent to prison four times: burglary, grand theft, battery on a law enforcement officer and escape. He has spent more than eight years behind bars, long enough to learn to make tattoo ink from melted checkers and guitar picks from snuff cans.

Burns is trying to stay straight this time. At the halfway house, they're teaching the men about changing their attitudes, teaching them to value themselves and to identify the root cause of their grief and to move on. Burns has thought a lot about Dozier in the past few weeks.

"I really don't know how my life would have turned out," he says. "But maybe I wouldn't have just assumed that I'm no good. Maybe my first instinct would not have been to run."

"A lot of my aggression was instilled in that place. It's something you learn as a young kid and it doesn't go away. It becomes a part of you."

He listens and scribbles notes in the margins of his handouts. If only he had learned these lessons 21 years ago, he says.

Every evening, he looks in the mirror at a man whose hair is graying, who has wasted much of his life.

He is free to leave this place when he wants. There are no bars or locks to keep him in. For the first time, he's not trying to run.

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