



**RUSS
LEMMON**
INDIAN RIVER
COUNTY

Training site could be storage facility

Six bite-size Lemmon Drops to nibble on while going through the mental checklist of your clocks on this "spring forward" day:

- Do you have a boat or a motor home that you'd like to store at Dodgertown?

If so, give County Administrator Joe Baird a call.

Maybe he will give you the same deal he's giving Craig Callan, whose vehicle has been parked at Dodgertown since the first of the year.

Callan, vice president of spring training for the Dodgers, has been in Arizona with the big league club. The team's lease in Vero Beach expired Dec. 31.

Longtime county resident John Corapi first brought this to my attention in a Jan. 6 e-mail. He has called Baird three times since, the last time being Friday, to complain about "Good Old Boys" smell in this arrangement.

"The Dodgers are gone, and we need to turn over a new leaf," Corapi said. "That's county property, and it needs to be used for purposes of the county."

Baird did not return calls seeking comment.

With the upkeep of Dodgertown now running about \$60,000 a month, perhaps the county could offset expenses by temporarily turning the complex into a giant storage facility, charging \$8 and up a day.

For the vehicle in question, the bill for the Dodgers would be \$536 and counting. (The math: \$8 a day for the 67 days since the expiration of the lease.)

- Business owner Betty Reeves called to tell me about a mystifying theft that took place outside her office on Ocean Drive.

Someone took the light bulbs from four exterior fixtures. These aren't your typical fixtures — basically, the light bulbs are enclosed in small metal cages. Which means before snatching the bulbs, someone had to use a wrench to remove the cage.

Here's the kicker: Whoever took the bulbs left the metal cages on the ground, underneath their respective light sockets.

Reeves estimated the stolen bulbs — described as "upscale" — cost \$15 to \$20 apiece. "Times are tough," she quipped.

- I recently had a "Groundhog Day" experience, compliments of WQOL FM 103.7. At 7 a.m., the start of my workday routine, I got in the car and "Turn the Beat Around" (Gloria Estefan's cover) was on the radio. At 7:30 p.m., at the end of my workday, I got in the car and — you guessed it — "Turn the Beat Around" was on the radio.

- A few months ago, I wrote about Julianne Price making me feel old with her blank stare when I mentioned "Eddie Haskell." (She had no idea what I meant.)

A different young woman, let's call her Jessica, had the same reaction a week or so ago. In talking with her about her boss, Andy Taylor, I said: "I bet he gets kidded a lot about that name."

- Current total for the out-of-state license plate count: 37. (That already exceeds my projection of 35 for the entire month.)

- Gotta go. I have to clean out my garage. I'm hearing there might be a "storage-palooza" next weekend at Dodgertown.

Indian River County columnist Russ Lemmon can be reached at (772) 978-2205 or russ.lemmon@scripps.com.



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Time to bring back old slogan

Six bite-size Lemmon Drops to nibble on while waiting for the April 6 conclusion of March Madness:

- If we're getting out of the business of spring training for good, I'd be OK with putting all of our eggs in the tourism basket.

To elevate our game in that area, I suggest we go retro.

Once again embracing the "Where the Tropics Begin" slogan — and promoting the heck out of it in cold-weather states — might allow Vero Beach to maintain its national identity, for which we owe the Dodgers a debt of gratitude.

"Where the Tropics Begin" is marketing gold. That's why Lake Worth also claims it.

Richard Kletty sent an e-mail last month, wondering whatever happened to the "Where the Tropics Begin" entrance signs in Vero Beach. He reminisced about seeing them in the 1950s.

"Where is that sign, why was it taken down and who came up with that slogan?" he asked.

I made a few calls, but I couldn't find anyone who knew why the slogan has been effectively de-emphasized through the years. The slogan is on the city's seal, but that's about the extent of the city's marketing effort.

While geography may give Lake Worth a more legitimate claim to the slogan, history is on Vero Beach's side.

Be it conventional tourism or ecotourism, "Where the Tropics Begin" is a slogan that will draw people from all over.

- According to the chicken scratches on the notebook in my car, here are the final leaders in the 2009 out-of-state license plate count: New York 77, New Jersey 40, Massachusetts 38, Ohio 33, Illinois 32.

- Brian Whipp, a former local resident, will be participating in the Avon Walk for Breast Cancer in Washington, D.C. He'll walk 26.2 miles Saturday and 13.1 miles Sunday.

In an e-mail to family and friends seeking donations, he had touching words about his mother back home, Sharon Whipp:

"I'll be walking in support of the estimated 3 million women living with breast cancer and my mom, who was diagnosed with late-stage breast cancer in 2007. Throughout her diagnosis, treatment, surgery and recovery period she has kept her head held high and selflessly continues to worry more about the well-being of family and friends than herself."

- There's nothing like reading an old newspaper to put things in perspective. Such was the case last week with a Press Journal from Oct. 6, 1988 — the Dow Jones Industrial Average had closed at 2,107 the previous day. (So, by comparison, Friday's close of 8,017 looks pretty good.)

- The race at the corner of U.S. 1 and 53rd Street is in the homestretch. Which drug-store will open first, CVS or Walgreens?

- Upon entering JP Matty's restaurant in Sebastian on Wednesday, I successfully pulled an April Fools joke on co-owner Jerry Peterman.

After realizing he had been had, he offered advice that I'll keep in mind on every April 1 to come.

"Don't ever mess with the person making your food," he said.

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Animosity on display in the Commission



RUSS LEMMON
INDIAN RIVER COUNTY

Seven bite-size Lemmon Drops to nibble on while waiting for the "Twilight" buzz to subside:

- For five consecutive years, the County Commission voted for its vice chairman to ascend to the chairmanship.

Following that model of progression, Joe Flescher was poised to become chairman on Tuesday.

But Gary Wheeler torpedoed the bid.

The outgoing chairman, Wesley Davis, nominated Flescher to be his successor. Wheeler nominated Peter O'Bryan.

O'Bryan prevailed by a 3-2 vote.

I saw it as payback by Wheeler. Two years ago, you may recall, Flescher's vote derailed a move toward charter government — which Wheeler had called the most important issue since the county's inception.

Assuming it was payback, Wheeler got even Tuesday. That's because Flescher also lost the vote to retain his role as vice chairman. Wheeler nominated Bob Solari, who — you guessed it — prevailed in a 3-2 vote.

"It's not a payback or anything else," Wheeler said Friday. "I lack respect for his character and his ability ... I think Peter will be a stronger chairman. I think he has more ability."

Flescher was not surprised by Wheeler's double-snub.

"He's a vindictive individual," Flescher said. "He has shown his vindictiveness for several years — not just on Tuesday."

Flescher, who intends to run for re-election in 2010, noted Wheeler's open support of former Sebastian City Councilwoman Dale Simchick, who has declared her candidacy for the District 2 seat. Wheeler has a Simchick bumper sticker on his vehicle.

"He has made it very well known that he will do everything he can to make sure I'm not re-elected," Flescher said. "He's not in the race, but he's definitely running a campaign (for Simchick)."

Wheeler said, as of now, he's staying out of the other commission race in 2010 — a rematch of the contentious 2006 contest

between O'Bryan and Tom Lowther.

- Wheeler calls charter government — which, as proposed in 2007, would require voter approval for movement of the Urban Service Area boundary — a dead issue. "It's over and done with," he says.

Flescher sees the political landscape much differently. He says victories in 2010 by O'Bryan (over Lowther) and Simchick (over himself) would give charter advocates a 3-2 advantage on the County Commission.

"This election is going to be all about charter government," Flescher said. "Charter government will come back in a silent auction, and no one will see the nod."

- This just in: Taking part in a Hooked on Phonics demonstration at a local elementary school, Flescher says "ta-may-toh," and Wheeler says "ta-mah-toh."

- A few months ago, I mentioned the Web site utilityreportcard.com, which tracks energy use in public schools, and the eye-opening costs for electricity locally. At the time, it was costing \$3,369 per day at Vero Beach High School.

I'm happy to report energy consumption dropped dramatically in September. Consumption at School District offices, for example, was 0 kilowatts. Well, at least that's what was reported.

"It looks like we can say the lights are out at the Superintendent's office," one wag said.

- A round of applause, please, for Sandra Blakley, whose Dog Kidz Country Daycare & Boarding was mentioned on the Web site forbes.com. Pretty cool.

- The city of Vero Beach paid more than \$10,000 for out-of-state consultants to attend Monday's workshop on electricity? That won't go down as the wisest expenditure in city history.

- For posterity's sake, I note oldies station WQOL (103.7 FM) flipped to all-Christmas music Nov. 18.

Surely that'll be the earliest all-Christmas start ever for the station, right?

All together now, facetiously: "Yeah, right!"

Russ Lemmon is a columnist for Scripps Treasure Coast Newspapers. This column reflects his opinion. For more on Indian River County topics, follow his blog at tcpalm.com/lemmon. Contact him at (772) 978-2205 or russ.lemmon@scripps.com.