

DOTHAN EAGLE

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"For I heard them say, 'Let us go to Dothan.'" — Genesis 37:17

75 cents

Today: Sunny
Winds at 5-10 mph

High 76°
Low 52°



Flock divided

Why do some evangelicals support Trump despite candidate's muddled morality? **Page 8A**

FORMIDABLE FIRST LADY

Nancy Reagan dies at 94

7A



LADY GOVS WIN DOUBLEHEADER



1B

Apparent shooting death leads to arrest

BY LANCE GRIFFIN
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Dothan Police confirmed Sunday afternoon a man has been arrested in connection with an apparent shooting death Saturday night in Dothan.

Police Chief Steve Parrish confirmed Sunday that Starlin Oneil Knight, 22, of Gary Street in Midland City, was taken into custody Sunday morning and arrested Sunday afternoon.

Details remain sketchy but police initially responded to a report

of a motor vehicle accident at the intersection of East Spring and Persimmon streets Saturday at 8:38 p.m. A vehicle struck a pole and burst into flames. However, emergency calls related to the incident indicate the accident happened in conjunction with

shots being fired in the area.

Coroner Robert Byrd identified the deceased as 33-year-old Shira Dwayne McKinnie of Wendell Avenue in Dothan. Byrd said McKinnie was transported by ambulance to Southeast Alabama Medical Center, where he

was pronounced dead an hour later. Byrd said the preliminary indication is that McKinnie suffered at least one gunshot wound, which could be the cause of death.

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A message of hope Musician moves crowd with his feet



DANNY TINDELL / DOTHAN EAGLE

Tony Melendez, who was born with no arms, plays the guitar with his feet for the parishioners at St. Columba Catholic Church in Dothan on Sunday.

Despite being born without arms, Tony Melendez has become an accomplished guitar player and a source of inspiration

BY LANCE GRIFFIN
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"How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!"

Romans 10:15b

Tony Melendez once played the guitar to get.

The Melendezes lived on California's west coast after coming to the United States from Nicaragua. Tony was born with no arms and a clubbed foot, the result of a drug called Thalidomide his mother took when she was pregnant. Tony's father won a lottery in Nicaragua to get to come to the United States so doctors could fix his foot. He was fitted with prosthetic arms, but it didn't feel right, so Tony jettisoned them when he was 10.

The family decided to stay in the United States, but struggled to make ends meet. Tony's father was an accomplished guitarist (on the fringe of being professional, Tony said). Although his father hesitated, he allowed Tony to experiment playing his beloved guitar with his feet.

It wasn't really music to begin with, Tony said. Over time, he was accomplished enough to strum a song or two and decided to help out his family by playing on a street corner in Laguna Beach for donations.

Everything changed on Sept. 15, 1987, when 25-year-old Tony Melendez was selected to perform for Pope John Paul

II during his trip to Los Angeles. His selection was titled "Never Be The Same."

Now, Tony plays the guitar to give. Melendez's performance moved the pope out of his seat and onto the stage where he approached the wide-eyed Melendez. The pope kissed Melendez on the cheek and the assembled crowd of 6,000 cheered wildly.

Since then, Melendez has performed in all 50 states and 44 countries. He has also performed for Pope Benedict and Pope Francis.

Sunday, he made his first appearance at St. Columba Catholic Church in Dothan, moving the crowd with his talent and his message.

"My message is hope," Melendez said Sunday, just a few hours before his evening performance. "When I played for the pope, he said 'My wish to you is to continue giving this hope to all the people'. That is when I knew the Good Lord's grace moved my toes," he said.

Melendez said the overwhelming personal attention can often be uncomfortable, but he has learned to use it as a vehicle.

"I call it the Hollywood craze," he said. "But it is simple. God has used a guy with no arms to inspire hope. That is how I have to take it. It can go to my head if I let it. But the fame part of it can help with numbers, with getting people to hear the message or help with fundraisers."

Melendez has experienced many touching moments during his travels. During one appearance in Texas, a woman came with a friend who could

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Tony Melendez

not hear, see or speak. She told Melendez her friend wanted to hear his performance, and the only way she could was by feeling his guitar while he played. The crowd had two sources of inspiration to draw from that evening.

Later, during another appearance, a man approached him with a dollar bill. "I told him that wasn't necessary, but he told me he had been going to Alcoholics Anonymous meetings. He said that when someone in the group, when they failed, they had to give a dollar. He told me that because of my story, he felt he could go to the next meeting without giving a dollar so he wanted me to have it," Melendez said.

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'Walk Hard'

Veteran encourages participants to persevere

Students at university walking to raise money for veterans' charity

BY GREG PHILLIPS
Special to the Eagle

BONIFAY, Fla. — Sometimes it helps to put your problems into perspective.

That's exactly what happened Sunday night for 31 members of Troy University's Alpha Tau Omega fraternity who are in the midst of walking from Troy to Panama City, Fla., to raise money for a local veterans' charity.

After finishing the third day of their six-day "Walk Hard for Heroes" journey, the walkers were exhausted physically and mentally when they stopped for a meal and some words of encouragement at the First Baptist Church of Bonifay.

Enter retired Army Staff Sgt. Bobby Dove.

Dove was wounded in Afghanistan in 2012, losing two limbs in the process.

Through it all, Dove persevered, and his message to the college students was simple: persevere, because it's worth it.

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Utilities have right of way

Q: How much authority do companies like CenturyLink, WOW or other cable and phone companies have to paint lines on lawns and dig up lawns to bury lines and cables when that homeowner is not the one having the service installed? Sometimes they are quite a ways up in yards and shooting cable under driveways. I don't particularly care for three different colors of paint in my lawn that will be there for months since it's winter and most likely for a couple of mowings after that, especially when I'm not even getting the service done.

Answer: Dothan Public Works Director Jerry Corbin said utility companies, through franchise agreements with the city, do have the authority to enter rights of way to install, maintain, replace, etc., their lines.

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