

BORN AND STAYED

Life in the Flight Path

I CALL MYSELF a born and stayed Savannahian, having lived here for 71 of my 73 years. These days I mostly get invited to talk about how things 'usta' be. And let's be honest, usta is a great Savannah word. Here's how things usta be out here around Eisenhower Drive and Waters Avenue.

Ever wonder why something is the way it is? Who decides what and who gets to be where, and for what reasons? I've heard it said that 'a lot of the civil rights movement was about who decides who gets to be where? Separate but equal? Redlining? Three bathrooms? Who gets to be where??

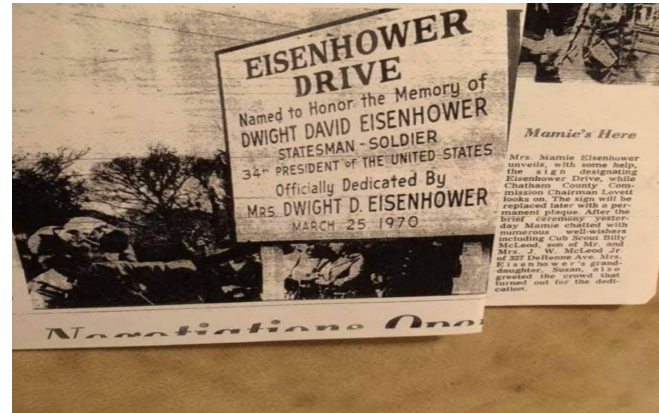
Flight paths ... When I was 13 years old my friends Donny Cogdell and Stevie Bryan and I went to see James Brown and the Fabulous Flames at the National Guard Armory, a couple of hundred yards east of Waters Avenue on what we usta call Intermediate Road. Today we call it Eisenhower Drive. It was quite a night for the three of us. The place was packed and not air-conditioned. As three white boys we were definitely in the minority. Stevie was invited back to The Godfather of Soul's dressing room by Ervin Gardner, aka Rock the Jock, who was a disk jockey and music promoter back in the day.

Stevie still has the pair of cufflinks that James Brown gave him that night. Stevie's connection to Rock the Jock was geographical. When Steve was a kid he delivered groceries for his family's business, Bryan's Grocery, which was right around the corner from WSOK AM radio, both of which were on the other end of Waters Ave, where it dead ends into Wheaton Street. "The broadcasting studio was lower than the street, so you could walk past and look down and see the jocks broadcasting". By the time Stevie was 11 he was part of a local band called The Checkmates. Ervin Gardner took them under wing, had them open for visiting acts, such as Sam and Dave, and recorded their music under his label Thunderbolt Records. Stevie's musical path took flight after that including touring Europe with bands like The Coasters and Little Anthony's Imperials.

Over the years I wound up spending a lot of time on Eisenhower



Tom Kohler has lived in Savannah for 71 of his 73 years. He attended our local public schools, Armstrong and the University of Georgia. He was educated at Jim Collins Bar. The founder and longtime coordinator of Chatham Savannah Citizen Advocacy has been involved in creating a variety of civic organizations thru the years including the Jim Collins Bar Alumni Association, Savannah Rocks!, and Emergent Savannah.



James Brown's cufflinks

Drive. After graduating from Jenkins High School in 1970, I went to Armstrong College for a couple of years, then stopped out and went to work full time as a teacher at Chatham Association for Retarded Children (to use the language of the day). The 'Center,' as we called it, was right across from the National Guard Armory and consisted of a pre-school building, a school building, a workshop building and a lunchroom building that was right at the corner of Eisenhower and Seawright Drive. That building had been the white juvenile hall, or juvie as we called it, prior to the Center taking it over. The black juvie was in a similar building next door which was later taken over by the Psycho-Ed Center (again to use the language of the day).

There was a farm with a couple of out buildings on the northeast corner of Waters and Eisenhower Drive. One of the out buildings had what looked like a little apartment up top. I was looking to move out of my mother's house and I drove my VW bus onto the property, got out, introduced myself to the landowner, got a little small talk going about how things were changing out this way, and then, as a set up to asking about renting the little place above the barn, I said: "Well, I guess your property taxes are going up now that they have started developing the gas station across the street?".

"Not really", he replied, as he pointed his finger up into the air and said two words "flight path".

Turns out he didn't pay property taxes, as the land was deemed valueless because of the roar of the SAC (Strategic Air Command) bombers flying low taking off and landing at Hunter Air Force Base

which was less than a mile away straight down Eisenhower.

Several years later I would begin to see this as part of a much larger pattern based on a set of ideas called the normalization principles, which were embraced and promoted by Wolf Wolfensberger. Developed in Scandinavia in the mid 1960's and introduced into the United States in the mid 1970's, this set of ideas challenged commonly held assumptions, policies and practices, rooted in the ideology of eugenics, that had gone unquestioned for decades.

Turns out that it's common for land that is considered to be of 'no or low value' to be where you find all sorts of services for people who are deemed the same by society. Back in that day you could call Eisenhower Drive, from Waters to Skidaway 'social services row' - or deviancy row - Georgia Regional Hospital, Chatham Association for Retarded Children, the Juvenile Detention Centers and the Psyc Educational Center, to name a few.

I didn't get the apartment, though I did continue to work at 'the Center' for the next few years, as a teacher, then as a program director. I remember getting a phone call one day (before cell phones) from someone who simply said: "One of yours is loose." I checked my shoelaces; they were both tied. I went outside and there was a gentleman walking down Eisenhower. The assumption of course was that he'd escaped and was 'one of ours'.

Ever wonder why something is the way it is? Who decides what, and who gets to be where, and for what reasons? Flight Path.

SAVANNAH AGENDA

Encouraging Engagement



The Darling Oyster Bar Finds a Second Home in Savannah

Story by Vanessa Lantos Daly
Photos by Andrew Cebulka

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New stormwater utility fee coming

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#StayEngagedSavannah



Savannah Agenda was created in December 2019 by Eric Curl shortly after leaving his job at the Savannah Morning News, where he had worked as a reporter for 14 years. In May 2022, Eric took the plunge and left his job as a communications manager for the local transit agency in order to turn his passion project into a viable business and true community resource.

With Savannah Agenda, Eric strives to encourage engagement and raise awareness of all things local – whether that is a city council meeting, business endeavor, building development or community cause. In addition, he believes strongly in the importance of local news and community media outlets, which is why Savannah Agenda features the hard work of other Savannah journalists, writers and historians.

Every so often, Eric gets a hankering to try to make people laugh (emphasis on “try”) by posting original cartoons and satirical columns. He also posts quizzes and games in an attempt to provide an entertaining way to learn about local issues and entrepreneurs.

If you find value in the website or this zine, please consider contributing via the payment form at the top of the page. In addition, you can also send contributions using Paypal @SavAgenda or via Venmo @Savannah_Agenda. Your support, no matter how much you give, is appreciated and help ensure this endeavor’s success.

You can also show your support by sharing Savannah Agenda with others via email or social media or by subscribing.

In addition, Savannah Agenda is now selling ad space to local businesses and for local events.

Savannah Agenda content is available for media outlets to republish (discounts available to nonprofits). Local businesses are also welcome to sponsor Savannah Agenda quizzes. Email eric.curl@savannahagenda.com for details or if you want a free Savannah Agenda t-shirt.

#StayEngagedSavannah



SAVANNAH CITY COUNCIL

The Savannah City Council typically holds meetings at 2 p.m. on the second and fourth Thursday at City Hall, 2 East Bay St. A workshop will typically be held before the meeting. Remote viewing options include SGTV Comcast Channel 8, the city of Savannah YouTube page and the city of Savannah Facebook page.



TYBEE ISLAND CITY COUNCIL

The Tybee Island City Council typically holds its meetings at 6:30 p.m. on the second and fourth Thursday of the month at the public safety building, 78 Van Horne Avenue. Regular meetings are streamed on the city’s video page: <https://reflect-vod-cityoftybee.cablecast.tv/internetchannel?site=1&channel=1>



CHATHAM COUNTY COMMISSION

The Chatham County Commission typically holds its meetings at 9:30 a.m. at 124 Bull St. every other Friday. The meeting can be viewed on the county’s YouTube page and Facebook page.



THUNDERBOLT CITY COUNCIL

Thunderbolt City Council meetings are held at 6:30 p.m. on the second Wednesday of the month in Town Hall unless noted otherwise. Find upcoming Thunderbolt events at the town calendar and the town’s latest news page: www.thunderboltga.org.



CHATHAM COUNTY BOARD OF ELECTIONS

The Chatham County Board of Elections meets at 3:30 p.m. on the second Monday of the month: elections.chathamcountygga.gov/Meetings



HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

The Historic Preservation Commission meets on the fourth Wednesday of the month at 2 p.m. at 112 E. State St. The meetings can be viewed remotely by registering via the Metropolitan Planning Commission’s homepage: www.thempc.org.



POOLER CITY COUNCIL

The Pooler City Council typically holds meetings at 6 p.m. on first and third Monday of each month at City Hall Council Chambers. The meetings are streamed live: www.pooler-ga.gov/government/public-meetings.

LOCAL MATTERS

What the new stormwater fee funds following split vote

By Eric Curl

THE SAVANNAH CITY Council voted 5-4 to approve a stormwater utility rate ordinance during their Jan. 22 meeting after extensive debate, establishing what officials say is a needed dedicated revenue source for stormwater infrastructure maintenance and improvements.

“It’s a fee, it’s an F-word, I get it,” said Alderman Nick Palumbo ahead of the vote. “But it’s an investment that I’m willing to make, that I’m going to make, and I know that our community needs to make.”

The 2026 budget year will serve as a transition year, with many drainage projects still funded through existing sources while stormwater utility revenue begins in July. City officials have said the utility is expected to play a larger and more explicit role in funding drainage projects in future budgets.

The 2026 budget for drainage ditch maintenance is nearly doubled, and the stormwater fee revenue supports more than \$2 million allocated for 17 new positions, technology, and vehicle equipment including two vacuum trucks and operating crews to address high-demand community drainage.

The 2026 capital plan includes \$1.4 million in stormwater fee revenue for \$2.25 million in neighborhood drainage projects, with the remainder funded through existing sources such as SPLOST and the general fund.

“We have these localized flooding issues that sometimes take a hundred thousand, two hundred thousand, a million dollars in order to repair,” said City Manager Jay Melder. “And this is what this

utility is really designed to address.”

City officials estimate total stormwater capital needs of roughly \$465 million. The stormwater utility fee is intended to provide a stable, recurring revenue source to help address those needs over time, while reducing reliance on the general fund for stormwater services. Unlike SPLOST funds, which can only be used for capital projects, the stormwater fee revenue can support ongoing operations and maintenance.

The proposal faced opposition from some faith leaders representing multiple ministerial alliances. Pastor Andre Osborne, who said he represented about 80 churches across three organizations, said that the fee would fall hardest on struggling families already choosing between basic necessities.

“Savannah’s been given much and our tax digest is growing,” Osborne said. “Our city is prospering, but with that blessing comes responsibility to ensure that the prosperity reaches all of the residents and in our humble opinion, the stormwater fee we’re considering will fall hardest on those who can least afford it.”

However, some community members supported the measure. Glenda Jones, president of the Liberty City Neighborhood Association, acknowledged her dislike of any new fees but emphasized the necessity given flooding problems in her neighborhood, stating she would pay approximately \$12.53 monthly to help address flooding issues.

DRAINAGE PROJECTS FOR 2026:

- Cedar Grove Plantation Drive Canal Improvements – \$200,000
- Evergreen Drainage Improvements – \$200,000
- Forsyth Park Field Drainage Survey & Design – \$150,000
- Liberty Parkway & Staley Avenue Culvert Replacement – \$350,000
- Louisville & Lathrop Avenue Drainage Improvements – \$250,000
- Possum Canal Improvements – \$250,000
- Storm Sewer Rehabilitation (Citywide) – \$850,000

“That’s a small price for me to pay to help my neighbor on Champion Street who has to park his car on Liberty Parkway when there’s a heavy rain because it floods at his house,” Jones said.

After almost two hours of discussion, Mayor Van Johnson joined council members Kurtis Purtee, Detric Leggett, Nick Palumbo and Linda Wilder-Bryan in approving the fee. Council members Alicia Miller Blakely, Bernette Lanier, Estella Shabazz and Carol Bell voted against the motion.

“A stormwater drainage fee is inequitable in essence because it’s a fee just like any other tax,” Lanier said.

The vote came after the council previously approved in an 8-1 vote the creation of a stormwater utility enterprise fund in December 2024 – with Lanier voting no – and established an advisory committee with members nominated by each council member. Staff then conducted multiple public meetings between November 2024 and the January vote to gather community input.

As a result of those meetings, the ordinance includes provisions for a community equity program to ensure all communities benefit from

the fee and maintains the advisory committee structure for ongoing project recommendations. City Manager Melder also committed to working with a nonprofit organization to establish a utility hardship fund for residents who cannot afford the fee.

Johnson also said the council had reduced the property tax rate in anticipation of the fee, noting that fee-based funding ensures all properties contribute, including tax-exempt entities that don’t pay property taxes. The fee, Johnson added, would eventually generate about \$8 million annually, with residents paying about \$2 million while tax-exempt properties such as the Savannah College of Art and Design and warehouses would contribute the remaining \$6 million.

“The reality is, nothing improves until we make a significant sustained investment in our stormwater,” he said. “So this is part of the work, being up here making hard decisions.”

For typical households, the fee ranges from \$4-5 per month, with the exact amount based on impervious surface area on each property, according to city officials.

The fee’s approval comes amid increased concern about the legal risks associated with utility fees following a \$30 million court ruling against Chatham County’s now-abandoned fire protection fee. In that case, a judge ruled the county’s fee was an illegal tax, ordering refunds to tens of thousands of residents. Chatham County is now appealing that ruling in Georgia Supreme Court.

SAVANNAH ILLUSTRATED (SATIRE)

Green Now Prohibited on St. Patrick’s Day in Effort to Stop Radical Clean Energy Agenda



Satire by Eric Curl / Art by Julia Licht (www.julialicht.art)

Follow the QR code to find more art, satire, Funked Up Photos, quizzes and games at SavannahAgenda.com.



FUNKED UP PHOTOS – ANDERS THOMSON TRIO



Find all five differences in the photos of The Anders Thomson Trio playing at Over Yonder.

Connect Savannah describes native son Anders Thomson’s music as “a miraculous sonic stew reminiscent of Chet Atkins stumbling over Dick Dale who just walked into a pole staring at Dolly Parton while lost at a rodeo.”

Find more Funked Up Photos and other quizzes and games at SavannahAgenda.com.



The Darling Oyster Bar Finds a Second Home in Savannah

By Vanessa Lantos Daly (Spicy Melon)

THE CORNER OF Franklin Square where The Darling Oyster Bar now resides, at 27 Montgomery St., has been quite active in local conversations for most of 2025.

People excitedly awaited the opening of The Darling, sometimes even anxiously. Some whispers even chanted that they might have changed their minds and not open at all, that perhaps the city gave endless red tape, since things seemed to move slowly.

The truth? They simply took their time to create a stunning space with different areas to experience their delicious menu. I sat down with their General Manager, Philip Howell, for a friendly chat and to get all the details. I was also curious if they had any red tape issues with their awaited opening.

"The building needed a complete overhaul of construction, and our interior designers are very detail oriented," he shares. "Most of the details, light fixtures, and furniture in the restaurant are custom made, so turnaround times are long. This is a large space with two floors. It fully accommodates nearly 300 guests. A private dining room with its own kitchen and raw bar upstairs. So a combination of that, and the roof caving in from a tropical storm."

He is, of course, speaking of Hurricane Helene. Oh Helene, who showed up on Sept. 27, 2024, in the middle of the night when nobody was even worried, with a 2 a.m. sky shining bright green and taking The Ordinary Pub with it, plus displacing residents in that (now condemned) building.

The Darling Oyster is a Charleston staple: well-loved and part of the charming Charleston experience. Philip is no stranger to The Darling, having been with the company since the very beginning. "I was hired as the General Manager six months before the Charleston restaurant opened, to help with the opening," he shares. "I have been with the company for a little over 10 years, and now I'm director of operations overseeing both stores and helping with the opening in Savannah as well."

In our industry, that's always a great sign. Managers are often not appreciated or cared for, and turnover is often high. I worked at a fine dining restaurant until recently where we went through six different general managers, and I worked there for five years.

It is well known that the magic and loyalty of satisfied guests comes from within, and it starts with happy employees. When people love their job, they invest themselves in it and create amazing experiences for visitors. Who would have thought?

We all love the closeness of Charleston for a weekend away or a day trip, just a mere two-hour car ride away, but Philip has made this commute a regular part of his current life. "I live in Charleston. But I've been splitting my time with Savannah 50/50 equally over two years, maybe a bit longer. I don't mind the commute, and Savannah is a great city. I see parts of my own beloved city in Savannah."

I can hardly imagine ...

He continues: "The construction process started over two years ago. This space sat empty for a long time. It was a long process, they wanted to keep the historical aspects of the building, which they successfully did. The interior designers are Smith Hanes Studio, based out of Atlanta. They were also the interior designers for the Charleston store and did a fantastic job in that historical building."

I ask him how the Charleston community feels about The Darling in Charleston. He shares: "The space is beautiful, and people come in for a great experience and have made it a favorite in Charleston for many years now."

My conversation with Philip is bright and easygoing. Even with him busy living his very own tale of two cities, without the whole French Revolution part, of course. It is very refreshing to see this youthful excitement from a General Manager in an industry that is often stressful and unpredictable.



As delightful as our short conversation is, I know GMs are very busy people, so I cut to the chase.

I ask him what The Darling Bar is to Charlestonians and what it hopes to be for Savannah locals. "Neighborhood bar and restaurant. We want to be a place where people can come in and dine a few times a month, not just on special occasions. We believe in providing quality products and local seafood when we can, as well as very friendly and welcoming service, without pricing people out of the restaurant."

This is true. Upon my visit to The Darling I sat at the bar, per usual, and was presented with an amazing happy hour. Off the bat, one dollar oysters. James River oysters that day. So they were quality and amazing. Their happy hour is offered daily from 4 to 6 p.m., including weekends. They also offer affordable options like a \$14 burger and a \$15 fried chicken sandwich, both with choice of a side. This is on their regular menu and it is a great value downtown.

If you take a short stroll down Congress Street to the next square, you will find yourself on Ellis Square, where Sorry Charlie's is located, offering a very similar one dollar oyster happy hour. I ask him why local peeps should choose The Darling. He continues, "I think there is room for both. Sorry Charlie's is very good, I've been there a few times. They do a great job. I think Savannah has a lot of room for many raw bars and seafood. Visitors come from inland cities to enjoy fresh seafood. In Charleston there are between 20 to 25 raw bars in the city, and most of them are always very busy. Savannah has the same great capacity to offer great seafood experiences."

I ask him, of course, about their bestselling plate since they opened. "Our Creole Shrimp has been on the menu in the Charleston store since we opened, and we definitely wanted to keep that on the menu here too. I would say that one, and the scallops. Both are best sellers in both cities."

Philip was kind enough to share interior photos from their photographer, Andrew Cebulka, who has been their photographer for over 10 years. Beauty and attention to detail on every corner can be observed. You can enjoy a seafood dinner downtown in a beautiful new space and spend 20 dollars or 200 dollars.

Affordable places in downtown Savannah with quality offerings are becoming more and more of a rarity.

Something about this company... it just seems like when they hire people, these

people are happy and they never want to leave them. No, I'm not jealous, you are jealous.

I am smitten with them including a cocktail with Savannah's name: the "A Savannah Winter," which is made with fiery habanero tequila, Aperol, agave, lime, and cucumber. Very fitting since many northerners spend a milder and more enjoyable winter with us. If you are so lucky to have Caitlin as your bartender, she crafts perfect cocktails with an electric smile. Go see her.

I wonder if a snow spell will make a guest appearance in our city this year? I stayed home a whole week last winter.

I asked Philip what the guest favorite cocktail is at The Darling. "The London Fog is one of our best. It is a refreshing gin-based cocktail made with lavender and lemon, and it goes amazing with seafood." This cocktail lists just three simple ingredients on the menu: there's always beauty in simplicity.

Speaking of delicious, while sipping my Savannah Winter cocktail, everyone around me started ordering the Baked Crab Dip. Not me getting jealous again... I ordered myself one immediately and it is pure bliss. Begrudgingly shared with my husband in exchange for kisses. Do you remember the crab dip at The Crystal Beer Parlor? Did your heart break when they took it off the menu? Mine did.

Go get yourself some of this dip, it is sinful. Phil shares their message to Savannah residents. "We are so very excited to be here. It has been a long time coming. We are trying to create a beautiful, fun and inviting space for all. And I'm extremely happy with the local staff that we have hired, they are all so friendly and excellent in many ways. I'm very proud of what we have accomplished."

There are also plans to open the restaurant for private events in the upstairs space. Opening for lunch service and outdoor seating is next year's mission.

The Darling Oyster Bar has been open for a bit over a month now and opens every night at 4 p.m. for dinner. Come try them for happy hour, and if you stay a bit longer, a London Fog cocktail plus that Creole Shrimp is a match made in heaven.

Love always,

Vanessa

FROM LEFT TO RIGHT:

Interior spaces at The Darling Savannah. Photo Credit: Andrew Cebulka

Caitlin Cormican and The London Fog Cocktail

"A Savannah Winter" cocktail

Happy hour fresh James River oysters, and the Baked Crab Dip

BRINGING THE INSIDE OUT

Beekeeping and Redemption

By Chris Underwood

THE RAIN STOPPED just a couple hours ago, but the air in this residential neighborhood, a stone's throw from Daffin Park, remains cool for early July, and we will not be working in the usual Savannah sauna.

Today, I'll be helping Alec and Elle harvest honey from the "supers" — the boxes hung below beehives where the insects store the extra food they don't immediately need. The quantities we'll be working with don't justify renting out the commercial space where Alec bottles his Wild Light Honey that he brings to market, so we're working in a friend's garage. Two days ago, he brought the supers and the "honey tumbler," essentially a primitive dryer turned ninety degrees with a small battery-powered generator clipped to the side. The box fans have dried the honeycomb on the supers' frames to a workable consistency. Alec got here a few minutes ago, and he's configuring the setup for the most seamless workflow.

"We don't look like much, but what we're making here is good," he quips as he moves around the garage, seeing where he can place the draining basin, the electric knife, and the plastic buckets to minimize the movements we will need to make.

Alec's thankful for the recent rain. Replete with water near their own hives, the neighborhood bees will not be searching for other sources. We can leave the garage door open and feel moving air as we work. As the local plants bloomed with flowers, the past three months have been relentlessly busy for Alec. Six days of the week, he wakes at 4 a.m., gathers his supplies, gets to one of his bee-yards by six, and works all day, placing shallow dishes of water for the bees to drink without drowning, removing filled supers, and replacing them with empty ones that the bees rapidly fill again. Once home, he builds more supers to place at the five other locations he'll work during the week.

Lifting these boxes of honey, weighing eighty to one hundred pounds, has changed Alec's body. His back bulges at the shoulder blades, and the chiropractor knows him well. Alec visits every late July, the end of the busy season, and the bees go dormant until the fall, when flowers bloom and the land isn't dry. The pain he feels now brings him pride — not like the ache that brought him to this city seven years ago.

After dropping out of high school in the early 2000s, Alec became deeply involved in Atlanta's punk scene. Working at the Plaza Theater when the sun was up and playing in bands when it was down entertained him. The days flashes of new faces and sensations, some wholesomely enriching and others not. In those early days, even with a burgeoning heroin addiction, he advanced his position, going from washing dishes at Fellini's Pizza to baking at Alon's in the Virginia Highland neighborhood. He learned fine dining techniques and married them with memories of flavors from Indian dinners with his cuisine-enthralled grandfather. His talents brought him to a chef de partie position at Rathbun's restaurant in the swanky Inman Park neighborhood, with stints in the fine dining kitchens of his boss's friends in Los Angeles. No matter how far he'd come, though, the needle called him back.

After his thirtieth detox in half as many years, Alec had grown tired of it all. On the recommendation of an old friend who herself had become a drug counselor after getting sober in a Statesboro clinic, he came down to Savannah as one of the inaugural patients of the Core 24 program run by Recovery Place. After a couple months of establishing trust between each other, the director of the program allowed Alec to walk, unsupervised, the three blocks to Sentient Bean on Saturday mornings for the remainder of his stay in the facility.

After drinking his coffee those four months of Saturdays, Alec visited long-time honey purveyor Readee, of Readees Bees, at his honey stand in the Forsyth Farmers' Market. Their conversations brought Alec back to a time before life got complicated, to his weekend visits to Newnan, still rural then even though just thirty minutes outside of Atlanta, to the floral scent of nectar punctuated with a pleasant smokiness that filled his beekeeper father's



At top, Alec Bruns extracting a swarm of bees. Above right, Alec as a youngster in his father's bee yard. Above left, Wild Light Honey can be found on Saturdays at the Forsyth Farmers' Market, where you'll find Elle Rundstrom slinging jars of the golden "light in a bottle." Photo source: Forsyth Farmers' Market Facebook page



Chris Underwood is a Fayette County native who once happened upon a used copy of *Kitchen Confidential* while picking up his 9th grade summer reading at the Omega Bookstore. He's been fascinated with food and the people who grow and cook it ever since. On Saturday's, he'll probably be at the Forsyth Farmer's Market buying fresh ingredients for delicious meals he prepares and posts to his Facebook page.

basement, and further back, to his family's stories of his being in a "telling of the bees" ceremony soon after his birth, immediately after coming home from the hospital. Like all beekeepers, Readee was secretive and territorial at first, but allowed Alec to sell comb honey at his stand once he figured that Alec couldn't be stopped.

So Alec went to work. In his time free of work as a carpenter at Southern Pine Company, he'd build bee boxes and outfit them with Readee's old screens, stuffing them with feral swarms of bees he grabbed from the hollow Corinthian columns of the antebellum mansions around this town. Yet to have his driver's license reinstated, he paid his friends to drive him around town to spots with unique nectar sources and he'd pay them again to go retrieve the boxes before harvesting the honeycomb and bringing it to Readee for sale. Batch by batch, he became able to pay his own way and to invest into capital for his own business.

Now able to drive, Alec can give even more to this occupation that he says "requires no less than 100 percent of the force I can bring to life." His business is booming, and he can pay his bills while bringing a couple more people into the business, helping them pay theirs. At this point, he is ready to take a step back from the day-to-day operations and would like to devote more of his time to

Find a recipe for Tempura Eggplant with Goat Cheese and Hot Honey at savannahagenda.com.

working on genetics, improving the chances of the bee's survival in this part of Georgia particularly susceptible to the ravaging effects of climate change.

I use a serrated knife to scrape the honeycomb off of the super frame and into the basin that filters out the flies and other impurities before draining into a bucket, then Alec places the frames into the upright dryer that bangs them around to drain the rest of the honey inside. And the reasons why most spiritual traditions reference bees and honey become apparent. Like bees, we move through the world, collecting experiences along the way, and we store them in our mind. Sometimes, the memories are easy to access and can be tapped for quick inspiration to action, like honey during a wet season, when the nectar flows abundantly and the bees store it in a hurry, capping it only once. Other times, when nectar is scarce, the bees must cap it each time they find a small amount, with still so much space in the frame, and will continue to cap it whenever they find incrementally more nectar, until the cell is full. But through whatever process works for each of us, like Alec does with beekeeping and harvesting the fruits of it, we come away with something sweet and delicious and representative of everything we've been through.

At the end, you'll have light in a bottle.

OUT & ABOUT

The Laundry Diner Makes a Splash

By Vanessa Lantos Daly (Spicy Melon)

LAST YEAR, A very busy Liz Massey sat down with me for 20 minutes to interview for an article in *The Savannahian*.

The Laundry Diner, located at 1401 Paulsen St., is part of the Two Tides Brewery group and has been awaited since November of 2022.

When I sat with her for the first time, in the early morning at an empty table next to Float Coffee Bar, she had an excited glow when she said: "The opening goal is mid to late September, there's still a ton of work to do on this space but I need to visualize it." At the time, Liz shared a wish list of menu items she wanted for her very hip new diner. Even almost a year ago, she would use the term "Elevated Waffle House" to visualize the vibe and offerings.

I thought to myself back then... Opening THIS September? 2024? Quietly admiring her drive and ambition with some incredulity. She doubled down: "Yes! If we need to move the date we will move it, but I need to see it in the calendar."

The article shares how The Laundry was a monster of a project. That it had nothing ready for a restaurant. It was truly starting from scratch. Even on August 21st, Liz posted how much work was still left to be done on the space, and referred to The Laundry as "The most challenging project I've ever worked on."

Then shortly after that August interview, Hurricane Helene hit, Paulsen had road closures right in front of them, they had a fire which led to a pipe bursting, flooding, and tons of damage. And I'm sure that when all was well and done and fixed, the city of Savannah took them for a walk around permit city with the speed of someone who just had a double serving of shrimp and grits. As they do.

It was impossible not to root for The Laundry all the way until the opening date. I feel like the appeal of following their story for over two years on their Instagram page showed scattered glamour shots, but also the nitty gritty reality of how it all went down.

Unlike many restaurants, they didn't just open and show their prettiest photos. It was the good, the bad, and the ugly, in a colorful and creative aesthetic that they share in all their projects.

Their first soft opening happened mid-June, and it was like that corner of Paulsen St. and Anderson exploded. Waving the white flag after just two days of soft opening with a "We are out of food" post and even showing a line out the door in their consequent stories.

I have visited The Laundry Diner three times since it opened. Happily busy every time, with great energy all around. Before my first visit, I messaged Liz to see if she might like another article, this time with the descriptions of all the flavors and color on display. She was



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Shorty Beef Hash Bowl, The Laundry's Strawberry Milkshake, and Liz Massey.



very interested, but we couldn't coordinate a time.

Then, on my first visit, I see Liz, dressed as one of the servers, running food and cleaning tables. Working non-stop.

I visited with a friend and discreetly pointed in her direction. "That petite blonde over there? That's the owner." My friend, who didn't know her, said confused, "No, that's a server." I smiled, because I didn't recognize her at first either. Grinding and working the shift like any and all of us, there she was. The first time I interviewed her, she mentioned having worked every restaurant role before opening Two Tides Brewery, including being a dishwasher. That alone told me this woman has no fear of hustling, and her drive powers all her projects.

I approach her and her eyes widened. She flashes me a beautiful, panicked smile, "Hi!!! I'm sorry for not getting back to you, I am currently working 20 hour days!"

I can only imagine. She and her husband James own multiple businesses, their flagship being Two Tides Brewery in the same building as Crispi, Smol Bar, and Float Coffee. She is also a mom.

Whenever I think I'm too busy for anything in life, I think of Liz juggling her colorful empire of all things food and drinks and life in general, and everything seems more doable.

Liz shared their idea from the beginning was to offer all of that

in a diner: their beers, their coffee, their food. All in a cohesive experience and offering late-night comfort bites, aiming eventually for a 2 a.m. closing time.

That part is super exciting. Savannah's late-night food scene doesn't have a lot of variety. Mostly "Please sober me up" food options. Some better than others: bites at Social Club, tacos at Orale on Congress Street, Kay's pizza, Fancy Parker's, Bandana burgers, chicken tenders at McDonough's with a background of drunk karaoke. And of course, any of the iconic 24-hour Waffle Houses, even though a drive down President Street from downtown after 1 a.m. always feels a bit risqué.

This is their first sit-down restaurant, and with the following of all the ones who love Two Tides, the expectations were sky-high from the beginning. They have built a reputation for having very creative, high-quality items in all their menus.

The Laundry Instagram page had nearly 10k followers before the restaurant opened.

Liz shares: "That has been interesting for me. We have done a bunch of smaller projects over the years as part of Two Tides, but I've never opened a business that had almost 10 thousand followers before it even opened. That was exciting and terrifying and all those things in one."

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