



Mother: 10-year-old accidentally killed brother

A mother has confirmed that her 10-year-old son shot and killed his older brother in Deerfield Beach Saturday afternoon.

Police and fire rescue were called to the scene on the 700 block of Northeast 44th Street.

According to police, 11-year-old Randy Reddick was shot and pronounced dead on the scene.

Randy and his younger brother, Terrence, were inside a black pick-up truck when he heard the gunshot. They had been asked to go to the vehicle and grab their father's hat.

While looking for the hat, Terrence discovered the gun and accidentally shot Randy in the face.

Witness Spencer Wayman told Helberg, "He just said, 'It was a mistake. It went off by itself. I didn't mean to do it. I shot my brother!' So, his father came out and I told him that - I didn't know it was his father - said a boy's been shot right there. He said, 'Yes, that's my son.' And he got hysterical and he leaned done and kissed his son and covered him up."

Latavia Green, the children's mother, told Helberg that the gun belongs to the boys' father. Police confirmed that he has a valid permit for the weapon. According to a report, the father said he placed the gun in the console under the arm rest when he left for the post office and mistakenly left it in the car after returning home.

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NEWS

Man faces manslaughter charge in shooting of friend

A man fiddling with a firearm shot his friend's girlfriend and then tried to lie to deputies about the incident. The woman died from her wound, while the man is now facing serious charges.

A driver in Pompano Beach noticed a commotion on the side of the road in the 100 block of Atlantic Boulevard at around 12:30 a.m. and called 911. Broward Sheriff's Office deputies immediately responded and found a woman lying on the ground near a car parked in the parking lot of City Hall.

The woman, 21-year-old Tiffany Littlepage, told deputies she had been shot. Pompano Beach Fire Rescue responded to the scene and transported her to North Broward Medical Center, where she was later pronounced dead.

The two passengers in the car driven by Littlepage, her boyfriend and her boyfriend's friend, 26-year-old Carlos Martin, were transported to the BSO Pompano Beach District office to provide a statement.

Unbeknownst to Littlepage's boyfriend, Martin, who was in the backseat, had a gun. He was playing around with the weapon when it fired, striking Littlepage.

Littlepage's boyfriend took control of the vehicle and left Littlepage and Martin on the side of the road while he secured the car away from the main thoroughfare. At that time Martin tossed the weapon by a nearby bus bench.

Littlepage's boyfriend believed his girlfriend might have been the victim of a drive-by shooting. Martin tried to hide his involvement in the incident by telling responding deputies that Littlepage was intoxicated. Once deputies patted down the two males they found bullets in Martin's pocket.

At that time he confessed. Martin is being held at the BSO Main Jail facing charges of manslaughter, tampering with evidence and possession of a firearm while engaged in a felony.

Littlepage's boyfriend was interviewed and released.

Hijackers' Florida apartment demolished

An abandoned apartment building in Hollywood, Florida where two of the September 11 hijackers lived for several months before the attack was demolished Friday, MyFox National reported.

A crowd gathered to watch the building in Jackson Street be torn down, MyFox Phoenix reported.

"It's almost like it was a monster's lair and I don't think anybody would want to live in a place like that," demolition expert Darren Fradin said.

"We're happy to take this thing down," he said. "We understand there used to be some monsters that lived in this place."

Not long after hijackers flew two planes into New York City's World Trade center towers in 2001, police descended on the Florida property gathering evidence.

Mohamed Atta and Marwan al-Shehhi lived there from May to June 2001 before their suicide mission, MyFox Phoenix reported.

The property developer intends to turn the area into a parking lot and a community pool.

Manatees rescued from chilly waters

Wildlife officials are working to rescue distressed manatees across the state.

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission says teams were out over the weekend and again on Tuesday providing aid to the mammals, many of which had signs of cold stress.

Out of 10 manatees the groups attempted to rescue, four were taken to rehabilitation facilities. Three others were in such poor condition that they died before they could be transported.

Another manatee was able to swim away after being rescued from a storm drain. Two more eluded rescuers.

The cold weather in Florida this winter has taken an unprecedented toll on manatees. Wildlife biologists have said close to 200 of the endangered creatures have perished because of the extreme cold.

Inactive grenades found

A bomb squad was sent to Pompano Beach on Tuesday afternoon after a maintenance worker discov-

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Falling confidence hypes economic fears

Confidence drops as consumers' job worries grow

Americans' confidence in the economy has suffered a sudden relapse, dimming hopes that they will start spending — and spurring job growth — any time soon.

The Consumer Confidence Index figures released Tuesday were much worse than analysts had expected and showed that Americans are morose about the job market and their economic prospects. That bodes ill for the sort of uptick in consumer spending that normally powers job growth, and could raise pressure on the Obama administration and Congress to create jobs themselves.

The index fell almost 11 points to 46 in February, down from a revised 56.5 in January and the lowest level since a 40.8 reading in April 2009. It erased three consecutive months of improvement, according to the Conference Board, the research group that releases the monthly index.

Analysts were expecting only a slight decrease to 55. Economists watch the confidence numbers closely because consumer spending accounts for about 70 percent of U.S. economic activity.

Outside of the Great Recession, the index hasn't been this low since December 1974.

"It still feels like a recession," said Lynn Franco, director of the Conference Board Consumer Research Center.

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Confidence has been recovering fitfully since hitting a historic low of 25.3 in February 2009. Many economists believe it will remain well below healthy levels for at least another year or two. A reading above 90 indicates an economy is on solid footing. Above 100 signals strong growth.

Dana Huskey of Chattanooga, Tenn., said she's being very cautious with her spending — limiting her trips out to eat and her drives around town. The 26-year-old lost her job at Ann Taylor in July and has lined up a job at a yarn store, but it won't open until this summer. Her family has been helping her since then.

"I try not to go out to eat unless I have to," said Huskey. "I got a subscription to the local paper for the weekend edition, to do coupons."

Some economists say Americans won't start to feel better and spend more until they see clear evidence of sizable job growth. In past recessions, however, the employment picture didn't improve dramatically until after a recovery in consumer spending and confidence.

Many economists say business investments and exports can help drive the nascent turnaround in the short term, but a rise in consumer spending is essential to keep it going.

"Without a sustained acceleration in consumption growth, this recovery will eventually fade," said Paul Ashworth, senior U.S. economist at Capital Economics Ltd.

The consumer confidence report put a scare into the stock market, overshadowing retailers' reports that showed stronger holiday profits but also offered cautious sales outlooks. There were also signs that the U.S. housing market is continuing its bumpy recovery: A key index showed home prices rose for the seventh straight month in December.

Executives at discount chain Target Corp. said they expect the recovery to continue — slowly — as shop-

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Florida's high unemployment rate continues to hurt consumer confidence

Florida's consumer confidence fell in February by two points to 72, reflecting concerns about unemployment that is growing worse statewide even as it improves for the nation at large, according to a new University of Florida survey.

"While national unemployment edged downward in January to 9.7 percent, Florida's unemployment increased to 11.8 percent," said Chris McCarty, survey director of UF's Bureau of Economic and Business Research. "This month Floridians may be coming to terms with the possibility that Florida's economy will not recover at the same pace as other states."

Three of the components that make up the index declined, and two increased.

Expectations of U.S. economic conditions over the next year fell five points to 67, while expectations of U.S. economic conditions over the next five years fell four points to 75. Perceptions of personal finances now compared with a year ago rose one point to 54, while expectations of personal finances a year from now fell four points to 82. Perceptions of whether it is a good time to buy big-ticket consumer items rose one point to 81.

The two-point decline in the overall index follows a five-point increase in January to 74.

"January's index seemed more optimistic than it should have been given the economic climate in Florida," McCarty said. "It's worth noting that January's higher index value was based on data collected prior to the release of unem-

ployment figures for Florida."

On the positive side, respondents report progress in their current personal finances, McCarty said. Some of the optimism may result from increased saving, improvement in home prices compared to the past two years as well as a sense of stability in the U.S. stock market, he said.

"There is no question that the economy is in better shape than it was even one year ago," he said. "Financial markets are functioning and banks are lending, although they are being cautious. Many of the bad loans made during the latter part of the housing boom have cleared and the extent of the effects is now largely known."

In other positive news, layoffs have largely abated, he said.

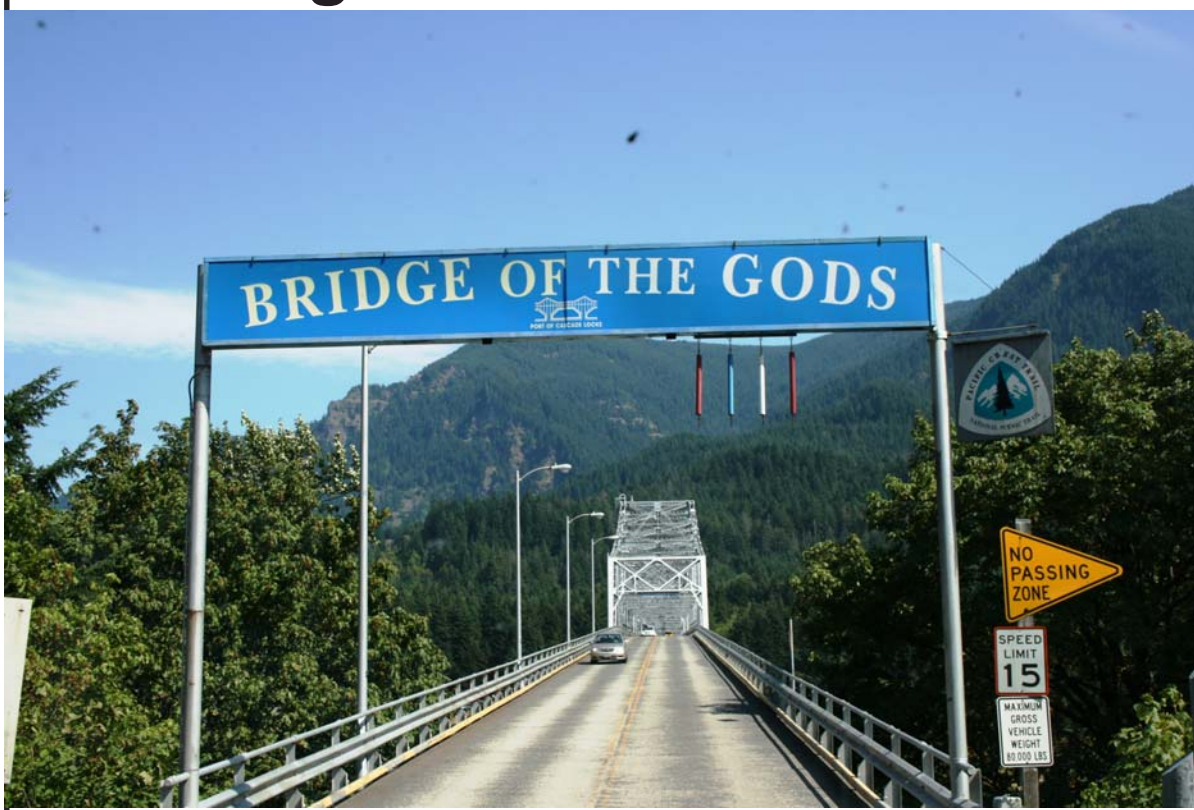
All five of the components that make up the February index are above what they were a year ago, he said.

"The problem comes down to employment and the potential effects of extended high unemployment on other areas of the economy, such as retail sales and housing," McCarty said. The long-term unemployed, those out of work for more than six months, now make up nearly 40 percent of all the country's unemployed, he said.

Although data on long-term unemployment by state are not available, certain sectors that Florida relies on are disproportionately represented, such as construction, McCarty said. Many of the long-term unemployed in Florida are getting close to running out of benefits, he said.

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Trucking Troubador by Fran Lawless



I'm just north of The Dalles in the Cascade mountains of Oregon. This bridge spans the Columbia River into Washington state. It was named "Bridge of the Gods" because of Klickitat Indians who once ranged these rugged hills west of the Rockies. I'm hauling Mohawk carpets out of Atlanta into Vancouver, Washington. Not often that I carry non-refrigerated loads in a reefer, but this was one of those times. I watch the little melodic pipes hanging across the span...they'll tell me if the trailer is too high for the bridge if they clink along on it.

The Klickitat's were around for an earthquake sometime after the first millennium. A great land mass was upended and wound up blocking the Columbia River, effectively creating a land bridge that spanned the width

of the Columbia. It eroded away over time, and when this 'modern day' bridge was built in 1926, homage was paid the Indians by naming the bridge after the seismic event in the 11th century that they witnessed.

Don't look for the tribe or its lost language today. Long ago, the Klickitat's that Lewis and Clark encountered in 1803 were banished to the Yakima Reservation along with Chinooks and Salishans. All that is left is a street named after them somewhere in Portland.

Funny thing...the Mohawk carpets I'm hauling. The company has always been in Georgia, but the Mohawk Indians never got down by there.

They were a New York tribe who rarely ventured beyond the Bronx.

Shock over voided Puerto Rican birth certificates

Native Puerto Ricans living outside the island territory are reacting with surprise and confusion after learning their birth certificates will become no good this summer.

A law enacted by Puerto Rico in December mainly to combat identity theft invalidates as of July 1 all previously issued Puerto Rican birth certificates. That means more than a third of the 4.1 million people of Puerto Rican descent living in the 50 states must arrange to get new certificates.

The change catches many unaware. Julissa Flores, 33, of Orlando, said she knew nothing about Puerto Rico's law.

"I was planning a trip and now I don't know," she said. "Do I need to go get a passport? If my birth certificate is invalid, am I stuck here?"

People born in Puerto Rico, a U.S. commonwealth, are U.S. citizens at birth. Anyone using a stolen Puerto Rico birth certificate could enter and move about the U.S. more easily, which could also pose security problems.

Puerto Rico's legislature passed the law after raids last March broke up a criminal ring that had stolen thousands of birth certificates and other identifying documents from several different schools in Puerto Rico.

Puerto Ricans on average get about 20 copies of their birth certificates over their lifetimes, said Kenneth McClintock Hernandez, the commonwealth's secretary of state.

This is because they are regularly asked to produce them for such events as enrolling children in school or joining sports leagues. Schools and other

institutions have typically kept copies, a practice prohibited under the new law since January, McClintock said.

As much as 40 percent of the identity fraud in the U.S. involves birth certificates from Puerto Rico, McClintock said he was told by the State Department.

"It's a problem that's been growing and as the need in the black market for birth certificates with Hispanic-sounding names grew, the black market value of Puerto Rican birth certificates has gone into the \$5,000 to \$10,000 range," McClintock said.

Thus far, there seems to be little effort by the U.S. or Puerto Rican governments to educate the 1.5 million people born in Puerto Rico and living on the mainland about the new law.

Rep. Jose Serrano, D-N.Y., has been getting a steady stream of calls about the law at his district office. Serrano - who must replace his birth certificate, too - said he is trying to provide answers without triggering a panic.

"No one has thought about what effect this could have, if any, on those of us born in Puerto Rico who now reside in the 50 states," Serrano said.

McClintock said a news conference held in Puerto Rico in December did not draw national media attention he hoped would spread the word. He noted there is no deadline for getting a new birth certificate. After July 1, the government will issue a temporary, 15-day certificate for those who need a birth certificate in an emergency.

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Experts see no meaningful recovery in commercial real estate before 2011

Although the economy has been growing lately, fallout from the recent recession continued to negatively impact commercial real estate sectors in the fourth quarter, but there is hope for some improvement next year, according to the National Association of Realtors®.

Lawrence Yun, NAR chief economist, said commercial real estate almost always lags the economy. "Because of the lingering impact from the deep recession over the past two years, vacancy rates will trend higher and many commercial property owners will need to make rent concessions," he said.

"With the job market expected to turn for the better later this year, we'll see rising demand for office and warehouse space, but that isn't likely before 2011," Yun said. "At the same time, improved consumer confidence would help sustain the retail sector and encourage more people to enter the rental market."

Yun notes that commercial vacancy rates remain high in most market areas and are depressing rents.

The Society of Industrial and Office Realtors®, in its SIOR Commercial Real Estate Index, an attitudinal survey of more than 700 local market experts, suggests a flattening level of business activity in upcoming quarters with 55 percent of members expecting the market to improve in the second quarter.

The SIOR index rose 0.2 percentage point to 35.5 in the fourth quarter, compared with a level of 100 that represents a balanced marketplace. This is the first gain following 11 consecutive quarterly declines. Although some indicators show that a decline in commercial property values is beginning to flatten, 86 percent of respondents report prices are below replacement costs.

Nearly nine in 10 survey participants said new commercial development is virtually nonexistent in their market areas, and rent concessions are reported almost everywhere. An independent survey earlier this

month showed a couple dozen banks are willing to expand commercial credit this year, which is critical. The lending expansion is aided by the Federal Reserve's Term Asset-Backed Loan Facility, which is encouraging issuance of commercial mortgage-backed bonds. In addition, regulators are prodding lenders to extend terms for many existing commercial loans.

"We have a long way to go for satisfactory levels of commercial credit, but these are important first steps," Yun said. "Given that about \$1.4 trillion in commercial debt will come due over the next three years, more extensive action is needed and the Fed needs to more actively help resuscitate commercial mortgage-backed securities. The credit improvement will mean more commercial property sales in 2010, even some at deeply discounted prices."

Looking at the overall market, commercial vacancy rates generally will stay at elevated levels, according to NAR's latest COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE OUTLOOK.2 The NAR forecast for four major commercial sectors analyzes quarterly data in the office, industrial, retail and multifamily markets. Historic data were provided by CBRE Economic Advisors.

Office Market

With a lot of sublease space currently on the market, vacancy rates in the office sector are forecast to rise from 16.3 percent in the fourth quarter of 2009 to 17.6 percent in the fourth quarter of this year; the longer term outlook is for vacancies to average 17.4 percent in 2011.

Annual office rent is projected to decline 7.2 percent in 2010, following a drop of 12.7 percent last year. In 57 markets tracked, net absorption of office space, which includes the leasing of new space coming on the market as well as space in existing properties, should be a negative 27.3 million square feet in 2010.

Industrial Market

There is proportionately less in-

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