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Boat Drinks with Ben Bellinger Calhoun

Seabrook: A Book You Must Have

Charleston Mercury

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Lowcountry Rambler



A Spoleto Banner Tale

Spoleto Festival USA turns 30 this year, bringing more artistic discussions to breakfast tables and plenty of tourists to town. We could not help but note Nigel Redden's wisdom in moving swiftly to pull together an exceptional exhibit of three Revolution-era flags. (Please see page ten and our editorial on this subject.) When you see the flags flying in front of the Old Exchange, let them remind you of this gallant gift to the historical fabric of the Lowcountry and then make plans for a visit. Plenty of busy persons would have let this opportunity slip into the sands; fortunately for visitors and locals alike, Mr. Redden stood tall for his community. The exhibit opens May 26.

A Palmetto Gentleman

Speaking of noble personalities, we were delighted to learn that Governor Mark Sanford bestowed the Order of the Palmetto upon Mr. John C. von Lehe, Jr. for his lifetime of exceptional, dedicated service to the Palmetto State. Mr. von Lehe, a Nelson Mullins Riley & Scarborough partner in the Charleston office, is the type of humble and gentle public-spirited servant your *Mercury* truly admires. In presenting the state's highest civilian honor, the governor said: "To me, the Order of the Palmetto is about a life not just of accomplishments, but one that transcends to a life of helping others, and you have done that." (See our photograph on page six.)

The governor cited Mr. von Lehe's service as a former assistant attorney general assigned to the S.C. Tax Commission. Governor Campbell appointed Mr. von Lehe to the Tax Study Commission, where he served until the commission's termination. He has also served on the University of South Carolina Board of Trustees since 1998. He is a former chairman of the board of the State Museum Commission and is immediate past chairman of The Charleston Museum. He has been listed in *The Best Lawyers in America* from the date of the book's inception to the present.

Order of the Possum

In addition to sweeping acts of service to country, considerate neighborly acts also deserve recognition. The Rambler has come up with the Order of the Possum, which is given by Possibility Possum to an anonymous person helping to make someone else's life more pleasant. PP tells us that a Charleston dinner party was heading for the rocks when, at the last minute, the host ran out of gas for his grill and then found that his corkscrew was incapable of opening a bottle of wine. In the grand scheme of life, these are small things, but these days it seems more difficult to find a neighbor who comes to the rescue in both of these cases and with a smile. We understand the dinner party was a rousing success, and the neighborhood spirit is alive and well, despite all we hear about absentee owners downtown.

Macho Men Beware!

The furry creature, PP, has been at it again. It seems he heard tell that a few locals have decided to have a Spoleto-like performance in someone's backyard in the Old Village. The friends promise to sport Kiawah Indian attire — nothing but tattoos — and sing the greatest hits from — you guessed it — the Village People. PP promised this was going to happen years ago, but the participants, nearly nude, chickened out at the last minute when a neighbor pruned the bushes that had once provided privacy. The intrepid Sully Witte has many eyes on the case, so beware, macho men.



MELISSA F. BROWN Tomboy to Lawyer to Jewelry Designer

BY C. W. CHILDRESS

Special Features Correspondent

Melissa F. Brown grew up as a true Lowcountry girl, all feminine but a tomboy in the best sense of the word. In our mind's eye we see a long-legged little beauty accompanying her lawyer father on deer hunts, sitting alone on her deer stand in the trees at Harmony Hall with her own gun at the ready, studying the woods for a deer. This fair-haired girl fished the creeks and rivers around Charleston with family and friends, loving every minute of the sunshine, breeze and water. She attended school at Charleston Day and Ashley Hall, playing tennis with fervor until she became a state tennis star. As a teenager she learned to love inshore and deep sea fishing, camping and duck hunting, and now as an adult she still loves to shoot skeet and trap. The little tomboy may have grown up, but outdoor adventure is still in her heart.

Little Melissa learned patience on the deer stand and with a fishing rod in her hand; teenage Melissa learned persistence as a tennis player, taking the bus from downtown every day to meet the challenge of becoming the best that she could be on the tennis court. She learned to fly fish — even conquering the tedious process of tying flies — and to ride horses at the A-Bar-A Ranch in Colorado where she worked during summers between her college years at the University of Virginia. She skied to work in Vail when she took a year off



PHOTOGRAPH BY BLAIR HALFORD

Melissa Brown stands next to some of her recent jewelry creations.

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GOP Candidates for Lieutenant Governor Debate

We thank the candidates for agreeing to participate in our debate for the June 13 GOP primary race for lieutenant governor of South Carolina; the winner will face Robert Barber in November; he is a longtime public servant and the owner of Bowen's Island. We edited responses lightly, so that readers would be able to ascertain the true voice of the particular candidate. We suggested the candidates limit responses to a total of 800 words. The brevity of some allows for us to include the more detailed responses of others.

Question #1

What is the worst problem facing S.C. and what would you do as Lt. governor to help fix it?

Henry Jordan

S.C.'s biggest challenge is IMPROVING EDUCATION. I believe we should adopt Gov. Sanford's program, Putting Parents in Charge. If implemented, S.C. could go from worst (#50 in the nation) to first in less than a decade.

André Bauer

We are all very fortunate to call South Carolina home.



PHOTOGRAPHS PROVIDED
Henry Jordan



André Bauer

Families from across the country visit our great state, and many relocate here because of all the opportunities and activities our state has to offer. Unfortunately, with all these assets, we are currently struggling with some of the highest unemployment rates in the nation. As Lt. governor I have supported efforts to create a business-friendly environment such as cutting taxes on small business and passing

comprehensive tort reform.

Mike Campbell

On December 29, 2005, Judge Thomas Cooper's decision concluded that some of South Carolina's students "are denied the opportunity to receive a minimally adequate education because of the lack of effective and adequately funded early childhood intervention programs designed to address the impact of poverty on their educational abilities

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Mike Campbell

Oh, the Kennedys *The Royal Pains Persist*

BY TIM HAMES

Chief European Affairs
Correspondent

If there is one thing more strange than the often-excessive American interest in British royalty, it is the British obsession with what we take to be its American equivalent — the Kennedy family. Reports of Rep. Patrick Kennedy crashing his car in the midst of Washington, D.C. in the very dead of night and his seemingly astonishingly

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Patrick Kennedy

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between college and law school at the University of South Carolina.

After more than a decade of practicing law the tomboy-turned-lawyer has recently begun creating beauty. Melissa Brown's gorgeous jewelry is on show in her office display room at 145 King Street. She creates necklaces and earrings in the evening and on weekends, keeping her slender and graceful hands busy as she spends time with her husband Todd, and two children, Ellen Hudson, age 12, and Fleetwood, age 11. Todd C. Brown is regional head of RBC Centura Bank in South Carolina.

Legally Wired Too

I was hooked like a trout

caught by a dry fly! While in North Carolina at Kanuga, an Episcopal camp, her friend Eleanor Washburn taught Melissa to make bug pendants and flower necklaces. Melissa came home to Charleston eager to buy materials to make more pendants and necklaces, ultimately working in semi-precious stones and sterling silver. Her favorite materials are freshwater pearls, smoky topaz and turquoise. "Pearls remind me that out of life's challenges — intruders that are bits of grit in oyster shells — come opportunities for beauty — pearls. We can get blessings out of challenges."

Melissa loves to string long lines of pearls to wrap around the neck several times and then hang with a stunning pendant. As she suggests, a marcosite bale will allow the wearer to hang a

different pendant each day for a distinctive look. Marcosite in the form of a bale or clasp is made of chips of crystals embedded in silica. It is a striking look that intensifies the effect of pendant and pearls, or pendant and a string of semi-precious stones. Friends and clients love her designs. Dragonfly pins made of pearls fly off her shelves, with people "going nuts over them." Each piece of "Legally Wired Too" jewelry is hung with a tiny sterling tag signifying that Melissa created it, the silver tag becoming part of the beauty of the piece.

Necklaces are inspired by the personalities of friends or photographs in magazines or by the stones or pearls, but each piece is unique to itself. "In the past I have become motivated by the personality of a friend to create a

necklace that reflects that person. For instance, recently I thought of my friend Kathryn Nelson who radiates happiness; I made her a necklace of pink quartz and amethyst. Lalla Lee Campsen is a delicate person; I made her a necklace of 4 mm silver pearls with a magnet clasp that can be worn on the front or back; it has a matching cross of pearls with a marcosite bale from which it hangs."

The prices of pieces do not mirror the hours of concentrated, happy work put into making the necklaces, earrings and pendants. Melissa seeks to make each piece marketable while still paying for the exquisite materials. Clients have discovered her prices are excellent.

She has found professional devices that enable her to tailor earrings perfectly (the wig jig), to make the sterling tags (a silver stamp), or to hold the piece perfectly still (a fly-tying device). In her bead room she has stones and pearls in plastic shoe holders affixed to walls where she can look at them for inspiration and stimulation for her weekend or evening's crafting, along with boxes of faceted stones and coral and heaps of silver wire.

In the afternoon she packs a briefcase on wheels with jade, pearls, amethyst, turquoise or smoky quartz and heads toward her son's or daughter's sports event, seldom missing one. Later the same afternoon or evening she works on jewelry while helping with homework or relaxing beside her husband, checking her e-mail from clients and friend every now and then. Son Fleetwood has learned to weave sterling silver wire on the jig wig for intricate earrings, charging his mother and gleaning off some of the profits of the pieces.

Melissa most enjoys the challenge of making more complex pieces of jewelry, but she realizes that her clients often like simplicity. She also has learned to make repairs to jewelry if she has the right tools to solve the problem.

Balancing Religion, Family, and Law

I am a better lawyer when I can create beauty to balance my work, beauty in place of sadness. That is what creation of jewelry means to me. After a number of years in legal practice she now has the ability to choose cases in which she and her clients can work as a team, resulting in many becoming lifelong friends. A little over half of her clients are male, and ninety-six percent of Melissa's cases are settled out of court by negotiation or mediation.

She is a certified Family



A fly-tying vise serves Mrs. Brown well in the creative process.

Court Mediator and has held offices in the Family Law Section of the South Carolina Bar Association. She relishes teaching continuing legal education seminars, seeing them as challenges that make her research the subjects intensely and deliver them successfully. She has also written articles for legal journals.

"I'll admit that being a lawyer can be high stress, and a few times it's been tough on my marriage. But we are Christians and have always been able to work it out." Her faith and her husband Todd are her strengths. Now with the flexible hours of a sole practitioner she is able to devote more time to her husband and children.

Melissa said, "At one point I wondered how as a resolute believer I could be a lawyer. I sought counsel from my pastor, Rick Belser at St. Michael's, and I sought guidance from God. I came to realize that I could be a bridge to a fair resolution between people who are suffering. And I could do it from a Christian viewpoint. I seek every day to behave in a Christian way. I know I am not perfect, but I try, and I know that the church is a haven for sinners. I want to help people."

Melissa Brown's Christian

heritage is a strong one. Her uncle was John A. Hammond, pastor of First Baptist Church. When Melissa was seven years old she became a Christian and was baptized by immersion. Later her family changed churches, and she was confirmed during high school years at St. Michael's Episcopal Church, the church she and her husband Todd attend with their children and where they have served in numerous capacities. Their son Fleetwood attends Sunday school in her old bedroom of the family home where Melissa grew up, the house now being used by St. Michael's Church.

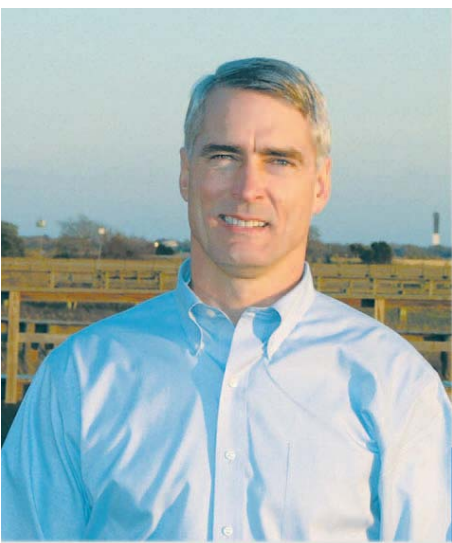
This summer Melissa and Todd Brown will take their children to the A-Bar-A Ranch for the first time. The tomboy will return to the nature that she loves, but you can be sure she will take along some pearls, smoky topaz and pink quartz in her baggage. After two weeks of riding, fly fishing and hiking, Melissa F. Brown will return to her law practice with her long, graceful fingers dripping with glittering faceted necklaces, earrings and pendants, pearls glowing and turquoise shimmering.



An attractive display case of Melissa Brown's stunning creations.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY BLAIR HALFORD





To manage our unprecedented growth, we must proactively mitigate negative effects, which include inequitable property taxes, urban sprawl and unacceptable traffic congestion.

Republican - District 2

DICKIE SCHWEERS

Charleston County Council

Lowcountry Values
Lowcountry Leadership

I am often asked why I am running for County Council. The reason is really quite simple...

I have lived in Charleston County all of my 43 years and have never considered living anywhere else.

We have world-class historic sites, an expanding employment base, pristine forests and marshes, scenic beaches, a diverse culture and much, much more.

I'm running because I want to ensure that one day my great grandchildren - and yours - have the opportunity to share my passion for our wonderful Lowcountry lifestyle.

Paid for by Schweers for County Council

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