

Shoals Modern Man

September 2023
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TIMES
DAILY

Chef Johnson Ogun



Chef Jack White



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More than being
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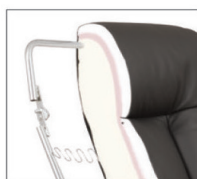
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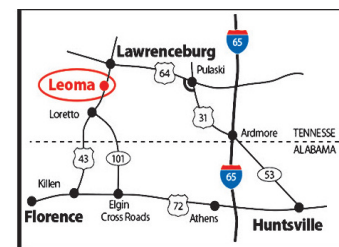
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Chef's Path

Becoming a restaurateur and food stylist requires more than being a good cook

by SHERHONDA ALLEN

When Jack White sat down recently to talk about his career, he had just put a tray of focaccia in the oven to bake at his downtown Florence restaurant, Jack's Place Bistro.

He also had just washed the dishes.

Be assured the focaccia, which, though made with yeast, is a flat, Italian bread seasoned with olive oil and herbs, will be delicious. Also note that washing dishes is not uncommon for Jack White, who has an extraordinary and storied career as a chef, food stylist, restaurant owner, caterer – and actor. In the 1980s he had a recurring role on “The Guiding Light” as Lionel Harris, and appeared in “Iron Man 2” as “Jack,” the sidekick to the character, Sam Rockwell.

There are more than 100 films and counting that feature his work as a food stylist, including blockbusters “Iron Man,” “Iron Man 2,” “The Hunger Games,” and the everlasting popular television series “The Office.”

“My favorite was ‘Iron Man 2’ – because I’m in it,” he said and laughed.

At the center of his success is his talent for creating food that not only looks stunning in a film scene, but looks equally scrumptious when it's served from his kitchen at Jack's Place Bistro. He said producing those tantalizing dishes is the result of a lot of trial and error.

"My parents had a little catering company when I was growing up so they always cooked a lot, so I was never afraid to cook anything," he said. "They would do catfish fries after horse shows for two or three hundred people. Then, when I got to New York, I worked for several great chefs that taught me a lot through trial and error.

"My food styling probably came from the ballroom where Felipe Lombardi was the chef, and he introduced tapas to America, that's what he was famous for and he also opened the Dean & DeLuca grocery store in Manhattan, so he had a very keen eye not only for things tasting good but looking good, too."

Lombardi, who came to America from Peru, is credited with introducing tapas to the American dining experience. Tapas are small plates of food served as a light snack during happy hour or before the main course. Dean & DeLuca is an upscale grocery chain founded in Soho in New York in the 1970s.

"(Lombardi) taught me how to style things," White continued. "Because it was a champagne bar I had to set it up every day ... more than once, maybe three times, maybe four times til he liked it so ... through trial and error, you take it apart and put it back together, you take it apart and put back together - you just learn how to place something so it's right where it's supposed to be."

Though understanding food is almost a genetic inheritance, White said learning the restaurant business was work of a different sort. When he attended the University of North Alabama, there were no culinary majors or classes, something he

would advise budding chefs who want to own their own restaurant to take advantage of - and UNA now offers a degree in culinary management.

"Chef training is not a bad thing," he said. "It can help you learn the basics: knife skills, how to multiply a recipe or divide a recipe down. All of that stuff you would practice if you were going to culinary school. I probably missed some of the business aspects of it by not getting formal training. I had to learn a lot of that on my own."

Johnson Ogun, Ed.D., C.F.B.E, the professor and director of UNA's Jeff Eubanks Culinary Arts Management Program, agrees with White about formal training before embarking on restaurant ownership, warning there's more to it than "just knowing how to cook food."

"One of the things I see a whole lot in the last 25 years in the business is that a lot of people open (restaurants) because ... they love to cook and they have the money to do it," Ogun

said. "They open a restaurant. A year, two years later, everything collapses. And the reason that it collapsed is that they don't ... (plan) - they don't have plenty of operating money. By the time they break even they are already going broke, so after that, they shut down.

"Restaurants, or the hospitality industry in particular, is a lot of work. A lot of time they don't think about how much work you have to put into it. So if they are not willing to put the amount of energy into it, it can collapse."

Ogun said even when planning a special event, there is the business side to consider.

"Location," he said as one example, "what am I going to be cooking and how is it going to be affected in that place?"

Ogun and his culinary students recently planned an event that, to the layperson, looked chaotic, but was in fact a well-orchestrated kitchen.

"I'm going to the location to ...



Chef Ogun and culinary student.

Photo by UNA Photography



Chef Jack White poses by framed movies that featured his work as a food stylist.

Photo by Sherhonda Allen

look and see where I'm going to do the staging," he said. "This event, we started planning about a month ago. First we have to think about the menu that we're going to be using," he continued and held up a typed menu list. "Do we have the equipment to make (the) items? Would we even find the product that we need? Then the day of the event, we have to think what can we (prepare) in advance? What can we do immediately?"

"With our students right now, what we are training them (to do is) not just know how to cook, not just know how to make good food presentation, at the same time you have to know the front of the house, how to look at the numbers," Ogun said. "Because in the industry, it's no mercy.

If the owner tells you they want 12 percent profit - if you give them 10 percent, they might give you one chance to make the correction. That's why you see a lot of restaurant managers rotating out - you see that

one, one year, two years later they are not there anymore. It's because they are not maintaining what the owners want."

White hopes to keep his staff trained and motivated to provide the service his customers expect from his restaurant, as well as prepare the food to his standards. He said looking forward in his career, he may want to open "one or two" other restaurants.

"(I will have to) make sure they get everything the way (I) want it and not the way they want it, because that's kind of what happens a lot of times," he said. "In Anthony Boudain's 'Kitchen Confidential' book, he says he never hired a chef, he always hired people that didn't know what they were doing because that way he could train them exactly the way he wanted it done, not retrain them to rethink what they learned already from somebody else."

White said his menus are "pretty simple. I try to keep everything as

clean and fresh as possible, so it doesn't take a rocket scientist to follow my recipes. Some of my desserts and things are based upon my Mom's recipes that I extended out and made in bigger quantities." He laughed and said, "Her chocolate pie is one of my biggest selling things in here, so I don't mind giving her credit."

He said he would advise budding chefs to "find a really fun restaurant to get started in and not be afraid to be a dishwasher to start with and learn your way up. If you really want to learn, then you've got to start at the base."

He said they also must have "good taste buds and not to be afraid to try things - not be a picky eater, because you can't be a picky eater and run a restaurant."

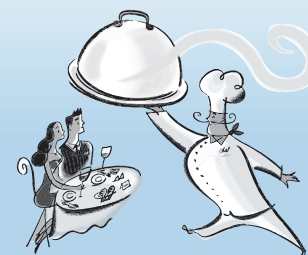
White said braise meat is his favorite to cook because it's a slow cook and "really doesn't require much seasoning. And his favorite food

creativity outlet is still food styling. He said he hopes to return to it when the writer's strike and the actor's strike is resolved.

Meanwhile, he's enjoying his restaurant and the Florence community, and continues to develop recipes his customers love.

Like his focaccia. He suddenly lifts his head as if listening to a particular sound.

"My bread timer is going off," he said, standing. "Got to get the focaccia out of the oven."



Contractor's blueprint for life leads to company success

by TIFFANI HILL-PATTERSON

Photos courtesy of Eagle Pro

In his four years as a business owner, Bradley Talley has achieved some lofty goals.

Talley, a 2014 graduate of Wilson High School, is the founder and president of Eagle Pro Mechanical-Construction, and Eagle Pro Heating, Cooling, and Insulation.

An engineer, he studied math at UNA for two years before graduating from the University of Alabama with a bachelor's degree in civil engineering and construction engineering.

"Growing up, I always had a passion for the hustle and entrepreneurship in general," Talley said. "So while finishing my senior year of college, I took the remaining funds of my student loans, hired my first

employee, and launched Eagle Pro from my college apartment in 2019."

Today, the Eagle Pro family of businesses has over 25 full-time employees and will finish 2023 with more than \$10 million in annual revenue, Talley said. That's \$10,000,000 in eight figures.

So how did he go from a college kid with one employee to \$10 million in revenue in just four years?

Talley, 27, explains: "Both companies started extremely simple. With just two vehicles and a couple of field employees, we hit the road promoting the company and finding work."

In the beginning, he said he would take on any project of any size, with

most work bringing in around \$10,000 to \$20,000 revenue while requiring a five- or six-hour drive out of town. But these jobs allowed payroll to be made and helped the company begin building its reputation.

Talley said, "In 2021, Eagle Pro got our first \$100,000 plus subcontract doing the HVAC installation at the Culver's restaurant on Cloverdale Road. This helped us close the year out at \$600,000 in revenue. From there, we continued to invest in our people and processes with the goal of hitting \$10 million."

He built his business on what he calls the "five F's" – faith, family, finances, fitness, and fulfillment.



Employees of Eagle Pro outside their office.

Faith

But that growth did not come without a few pains.

“From 2019 to 2022, growing the business was stressful and often discouraging,” Talley said, mentioning a handful of occasions when they came close to not being able to make payroll. “Most of the time, I isolated myself in my head trying to solve the daily issues that arose. I sought comfort in the gym and completely isolated myself from the world. The company was growing, but there was always something missing and that kept me from being happy.”

In October 2022, Talley made a change when he committed 100% to trusting God with his life and his business. In return he said that faith helped him learn how to recognize who and what his business needed.

“In one instant,” he said, “all the stresses of the world went away, and, coincidentally enough, our business started to scale beyond what I thought was possible. God started to reveal people we needed and those we did not need, processes we did not have, and business development opportunities that I never would have imagined.

“In 2023 alone, we are projecting 300 percent growth, closing 2023 out at an estimated \$12 million in revenue. All thanks to having faith in God and his plan for our business and having an amazing team!”

Talley credits his faith with the exponential growth of Eagle Pro. And allowing him to enjoy the success of his business.

“This is above all the most important: My entire life changed when I started putting God first in my life. Having faith in God allows you to see the world through a different lens,” Talley said. “The silly things we stress about, such as work, traffic, money, relationships, mother-in-laws, and many other things become of the world and much less important.

“After all, we will leave this world with nothing, so why not chase something beyond what is now? I have been happy before God, but I have never experienced peace and joy until God, which is why faith is one of my ‘F’s.’”

What drives Eagle Pro?

Eagle Pro Heating and Cooling was not part of Talley’s original business

plan. As an engineer, he said his entire professional background had been commercial and federal contracting.

“Being on a construction job site is one thing, but when you are in people’s homes, it is an entirely different ball game,” he said.

During the early stages of Eagle Pro’s

provide a quote on new gutters, so I took off work for the appointment, and, of course, the gutter contractor was four hours late,” Talley recalled. “When he arrived, the experience was terribly unprofessional. The vehicle was not labeled, the workers were ‘not presentable,’ and they used language



Bradley Talley, wife Ariel, daughters Charlie and Payton.

growth, a couple events happened that inspired the residential branch of the company to be started. The most impactful “a-ha” moment was when Talley called a contractor out to his house while remodeling it.

“The contractor was coming out to

not appropriate for the home.”

This experience triggered a fixation for Talley on research around residential services. He realized that most homeowners have had similar negative experiences and an overall lack of trust in contractors.

“I was already in the HVAC space, so I decided to start a residential HVAC company to solve this issue.”

Below are some of the problems Talley said he learned about the residential service business and how his company works to resolved those issues.

The main issues homeowners had with other companies were:

- They do not answer the phone.
- They do not show up on time.
- The pricing was too high.
- They did not feel the technicians were qualified.

Issues within the trade itself were:

- Technicians were underpaid and under trained.
- More technicians were retiring than entering the workforce (worker shortage).
- Most companies did not appeal to new employees.
- Customer service was non-existent.
- Quality control and workmanship expectations were extremely low or non-existent.

Eagle Pro was founded with 5 key goals to solve these issues:

- Have a work culture that is centered around faith and having a fulfilling career.
- Have a priority centered around the customer experience.
- Have the highest-paid and the highest-qualified employees in the market.
- Be the absolute best at every service we offer.
- Be educators to the customer, so they can always make the best financial decision.

Family

Talley is married to Ariel Talley, his high school sweetheart, and he calls himself a “girl dad” to his two daughters, Charlie and Payton. He attends church at The Father’s House in Florence, where he serves as the drummer for the worship team. Family is the second “F” in his formula for success.

“The moment I started Eagle Pro, I committed to my wife that I would “leave my laptop at the office,” meaning I would not bring my work home, mentally or physically. You can have so many successes in life, but if

you have no one to share them with, what is it good for?"

He credits Ariel with Eagle Pro's success. "She works with me and I couldn't do what I do without her."

Talley acknowledges that there are a few days when work stress does come home and he is a little late on switching into "Husband and Dad Mode."

"I try to be intentional with this commitment, and one thing I do as soon as I get home is change from my work clothes to my comfy clothes. Something about this transitions me from work mode to girl dad."

He also spends time with his girls in the mornings before work, helping get them ready and taking them to school.

"I am lucky enough to spend 1-2 hours with our girls each morning before school," Talley said. "When they are sick, my wife and I take off and I am with them. As they grow up, we will be present in all they do and support them the entire way. I have been exposed to many miserable multimillionaires in my life, but I never met a miserable person who loves God and has a family behind them."

Talley offered a simple lesson: Do not make money or business or achievements the center of your "why" in life – that will only get you so far.

"Focus on creating core memories and being present while growing a family, and you will have a wholesome life."

Finances

Money makes the world go 'round and to make it spin in the right direction, Talley said you have to understand finances and that starts by working backward: what do you want to accomplish and how much money will it take? Knowledge of your finances is his third "F."

"The world operates by money, so in order to live a wholesome life, I had to understand my finances," he said. "Do not establish an arbitrary number that you think sounds good. Decide what type of material possessions you want, how much free time you want to have, what type of infrastructure you want for the next generations of your family, and what kind of things you want to do with your family. Once that is determined, calculate what type of income is needed."

The goal does not have to be more,

more, more.

Talley said, "The answer is not 'the more, the merrier.' The answer is to bring in the finances needed to achieve what is necessary to fulfill your specific life goals."

He offered an oft-repeated phrase about the work-life balance: "If you do what you love every day, you will

Fitness

Part of Talley's work-life balance is tending to his physical health, especially since he works best with motivation, structure, and commitment. These elements make up his fourth "F."

"A fitness routine is a good way to start developing these habits that



Eagle Pro cargo van.



Eagle Pro HVAC vehicle.

never work a day in your life. If you can align yourself into a career that you love and achieve the finances and time needed to meet your goals in life, you're in the sweet spot."

are required to become something more," he explained. "When I get in a slump, I know I have not been in the gym for a couple of days. Developing a consistent fitness routine limits the

exposure to depression-like slumps and keeps motivation at a high.

"Nobody 'wants' to go to the gym, but a successful entrepreneurship requires perseverance." Like going to the gym when you'd rather go home and put on your comfiest sweats.

Fulfillment

The four previous "F's" in Talley's plan led to the sum of his fifth "F" – fulfillment.

"Fulfillment at its core is what makes you tick as a person. For me, this falls into a couple different buckets," Talley said. "For me, if you can get to fulfillment, you are 100 percent living a wholesome life."

What brings Talley fulfillment?

- Helping others: "This is why I love my job. As an owner, I can help employees achieve what they want to achieve in their career at Eagle Pro."
- Community: "Eagle Pro Heating, Cooling, and Insulation helps thousands of homeowners every year and seeing the positive feedback from the community makes me extremely happy. I hope to continue to be able to give back to the community with the resources God has blessed our business with."
- Family time: "Being the best 'girl dad' and husband I can be. As they grow older, whatever hobbies my daughters like, I will like. (Please be basketball.) Saturday morning breakfast and 'Bluey' are musts."
- Helping other businesses: "One of my goals that I have not achieved yet is to use any skills I have to help other small businesses. My goal is to become a business coach or angel investor of some sort to help small local businesses figure out what is keeping them from achieving greatness."

Good relationships mean success

"I have learned a lot in the past 4 years of growing a business and a family," Talley said. "I enjoy the thrill of growing businesses, but most importantly I enjoy growing people and relationships along the way."

It is extremely fulfilling watching an employee go from being miserable at a previous job to a thriving employee achieving their goals with Eagle Pro. Honestly, it is one of the things that

keeps me going through the valleys of entrepreneurship.”

Talley said he has never been driven by financial success, that relationships are worth more.

“My goals are 100 percent centered around people and relationships. I have learned through a ton of self-reflection that if I can achieve success in each of these categories in my life, I will be at the peak of my happiness.”

About Eagle Pro LLC

Eagle Pro Mechanical – Construction is a commercial, industrial, and federal mechanical general contractor. The company services customers within a four-hour radius from their home office in Muscle Shoals. They utilize plan and spec and design build procurement methods for their customers. They have a wide range of individual project sizes, with their current largest project being \$3.2 million. Currently, they are in the process of becoming a licensed general contractor. This would complete Talley’s plan of becoming a general contractor with an “in-house” HVAC division.

Eagle Pro Heating, Cooling, and Insulation is a local home services company serving homeowners and businesses across the Shoals. Currently they are the fastest-growing HVAC company in the area, recently adding Insulation to their services. They provide service, maintenance, and new installations for HVAC

systems, as well as a full-service line for indoor air quality. In just three short years they have developed a 5-star team that focuses on technical understanding and a “white glove” customer service experience, standing behind their slogan “THE LAST HVAC COMPANY YOU WILL EVER NEED.”

What’s Next for Eagle Pro?

Eagle Pro Mechanical- Construction will be maintaining its current work volume with a goal of \$10M per year, focusing on streamlining processes and procedures to achieve optimal quality and efficiency. They also aim to introduce their General Contracting division.

Eagle Pro Heating, Cooling, and Insulation has doubled every year for three years in a row, according to the company. They aim to keep growing as long as the Shoals community continues its support. They continue to grow their team, focusing only on the best talent in the area, as well as developing talent on our own. The company’s long-term goal is to be known as the best HVAC company you can trust and to maintain that reputation as they grow to be the largest in the area.

They have recently expanded their services to include Indoor Air Quality, Duct Cleaning, Custom Homes Design/Build HVAC, and Insulation.



EAGLE PRO



Eagle Pro company picnic.

**Creativity
keeps
Blalock
engaged
on and off
the job**



Florence Police Sergeant Shane Blalock poses in his patrol gear. (Photo courtesy of Sergeant Blalock.)

by TIFFANI HILL-PATTERSON
Photos by Shane Blalock & Mara Beth Cravens

Florence Police Department Sgt. Shane Blalock believes he is where he is supposed to be.

"I'm doing what I'm supposed to be doing," he said when asked why he got into law enforcement in 1997. "An opportunity presented itself and it's worked out well so far."

However, sometimes, where he is supposed to be can also be stressful, leading Blalock to find creative outlets: by training others, by woodworking, and by writing music.

As a Mental Health Officer for 18 years, and the coordinator of MHOs for Lauderdale County for the past 10, one way Blalock deals with the difficulty of his day job is by training other Mental Health Officers.

"This is the best part of my job and I enjoy helping others learn about mental illness and how to work with those in crisis," Blalock said.

He created and teaches two classes: Responding to the Mentally Ill in Crisis and Cumulative PTSD in Law Enforcement. One course discusses how to help community members, while the other teaches law officers to recognize the signs of post-traumatic stress disorder in themselves and their co-workers and how to manage it.

In his earlier years as an officer, Blalock, who is pursuing a degree in behavioral science, said he saw a need for a focus on mental health and that led him to being a leader in the field.

"One of my supervisors told me to teach everyone how to do what I

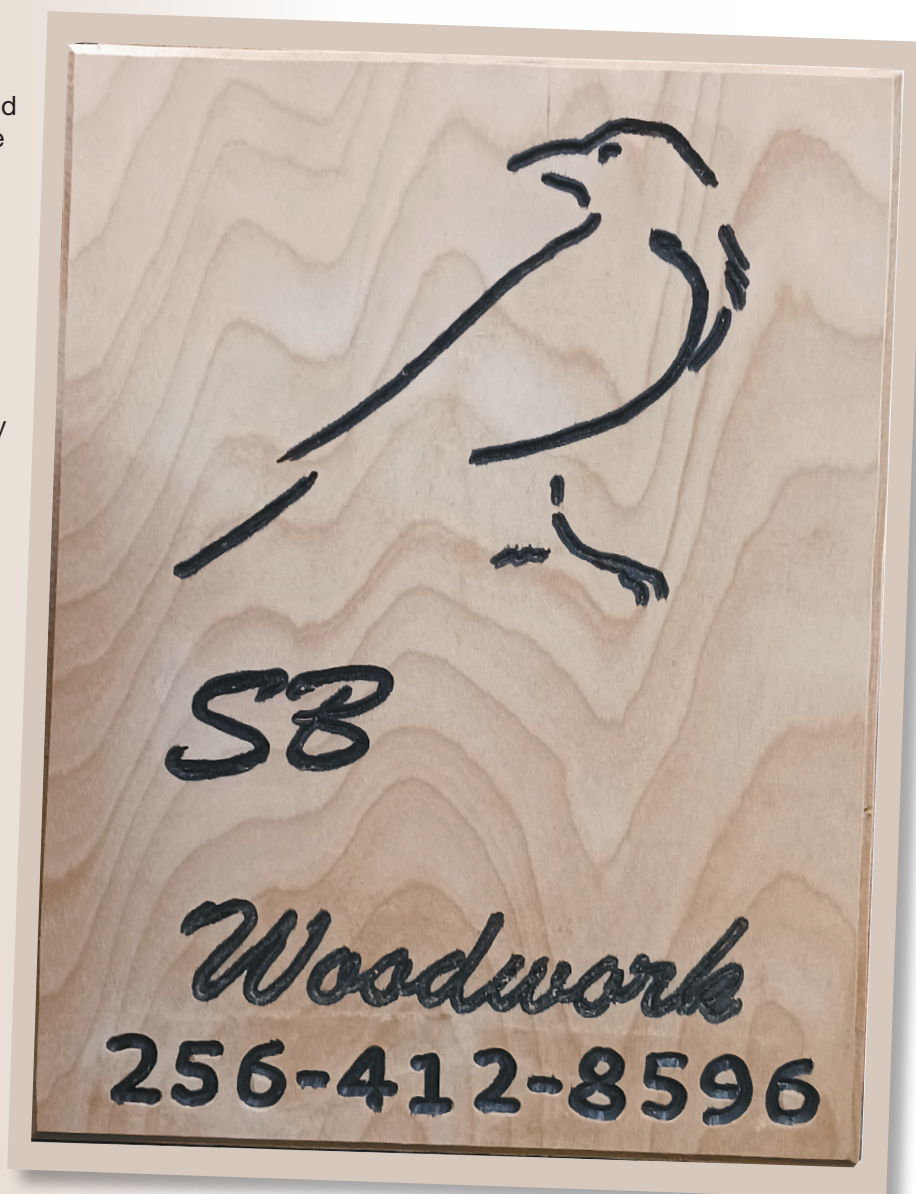
do," he said. "So I had to sit down and figure out what I did." That led to the class Responding to the Mentally Ill in Crisis.

"As I was teaching that first class, the people I was working with are showing the signs I'm telling them to look for, and it's because of what this job does to them."

That experience led to his creating Cumulative PTSD in Law Enforcement. "It seems to have gone over pretty well so far," Blalock said.

Reduction of resources

While helping understand how to assess and try to meet the needs of those in mental health crises is something he enjoys, the toughest part of that role is the lack of resources and the cutting of mental health



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udgets and accommodations. Since 2012, Alabama has closed three psychiatric hospitals, leaving only 268 state-owned beds available. Recently, for fiscal year 2024, the state approved a budget of \$211.4 million for the Alabama Department of Mental Health – including funding for statewide crisis centers that treat emergencies and offer short-term care.

“The state got rid of many long-term beds in 2015 and since then the crisis has spiraled out of control and it’s not getting any better,” Blalock said. Those cuts put law officers on the front lines of the mental health crisis, forcing agencies to find ways to help the mentally ill and keep them and the rest of the community safe.

“Mental illness is a disease and there is a lot of stigma that people have to overcome,” Blalock said. “It can be treated, but a lot of the treatment is expensive and people don’t have the money or insurance so they end up trapped in a system that was not created to help them.



Cheese board & knife set. Studio 23, Florence.

“Those with mental illness who ‘self-medicate’ [with drugs or alcohol] face judgment from people who don’t understand the side effects of prescription medications or the price tags that go along with them. When I talk to people who have been really sick, they say everything over-the-counter makes them feel like a zombie, so they choose to ‘self-medicate.’ ”

Blalock said that stigma and judgment is why he tries to educate people about the disease process and how to deal with it. “We want to teach others how to deal with people who are in crisis, how to stop them before they get to crisis, and how to educate them about the resources we have in this area.”

For his efforts, Blalock has been awarded the Chief’s Distinguished Service Award, the S.W. Lipscomb Award, two lifesaving medals, and other commendations.

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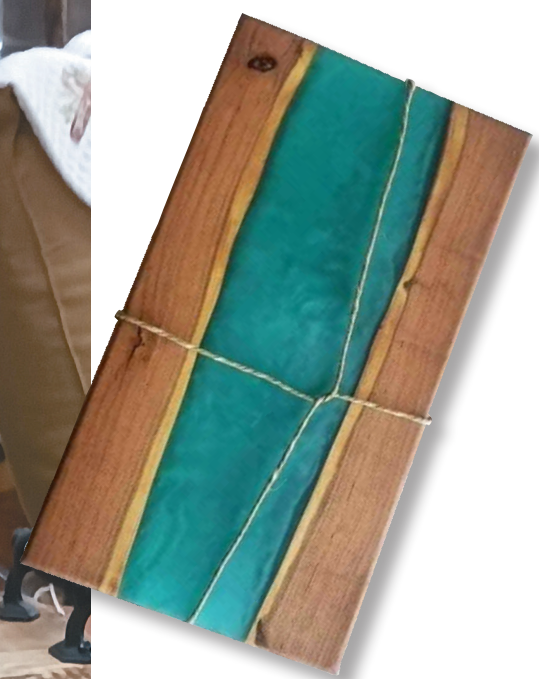
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One of a kind solid chopping board with black iron handles. A sample of wooden utensils. Studio 23, Florence.



Versatile piece, cheese charcuterie board. Studio 23, Florence.

Whittling away worry

While he uses his training role to manage on-the-job stress, Blalock also has outside interests that give his mind a break from the difficulties he faces as a Mental Health Officer on the police force.

During the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, Blalock took up woodworking as his “stress medication.”

“I started doing it seriously around when COVID started,” he said. “I make tables, cutting boards, coffee tables; I use a lot of epoxy.”

When folks saw his work, they began making requests. “People ask, ‘Hey, can you build this?’ ” And he tries to accommodate them. He even has a booth at Studio 23 in Florence.

“My booth is full and I just try to keep adding new and different stuff to it,” said Blalock, whose favorite piece he’s made is a live edge spalted maple coffee table for his wife, Erin Blalock, a local attorney. This type of maple gives furniture a rustic, natural look.

As far as how he got into woodworking, Blalock said one grandfather was a carpenter and the other was a metalworker so he was exposed to this kind of creative work as a child, even whittling, which has become a lost art these days. He said his grandfathers whittled all the time.

“Most people would look at you today and say, ‘What is that?’ ”

Tuning out tension

Blalock’s other creative outlet is playing and writing music, something he has been doing for 25 years. He’s performed in different bands and worked at a couple of local studios as a staff writer.

“I just enjoy it. I started college on a performing arts scholarship, and it was because I was raised around music my whole life,” he said. “My father was a choir director in the same church for 47 years, so I grew up with music.”

Blalock’s style of music is country/Americana, similar to what another hometown singer-songwriter, Jason Isbell, plays. While he hasn’t played live in a few years, he was willing to share some music he and his co-writer Wendell Franks have published on iTunes.

Friends since college, Blalock said

and Franks have a catalog of about 100 finished songs. When asked if he had a favorite, he explained, “Several, and each one is special for different reasons.”

“We’ve sold CDs and had stuff on iTunes for 15 years,” he said. “Some of the songs are listed under the name of our old band, Waywhilago.”

Blalock said ‘Waywhilago’ is a saying from one of Wendell’s relatives. Upon being asked when something took place, they’d say, “Oh that was a ‘way, while ago.’ ”

That fits right in with the country/Americana style.

And how does Blalock find the time to pursue these projects in addition to his full-time job? “I don’t like sitting still, and I try to make good use of the time I have,” he said.

On call in crisis

For anyone who may be suffering from a mental health crisis, Blalock said Mental Health Officers in Lauderdale County are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. The county has eight MHOs – five with Florence Police Department and 3 with Lauderdale County Sheriff’s Office.

“Anyone can call the police department anytime and ask to speak to a Mental Health Officer and be put on the phone with a Mental Health Officer,” Blalock said. “The officer will ask about the situation and will make recommendations on what they should do next. My guys are good at assessing [situations] and providing help and resources that are needed.”

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Waywhilago songs on iTunes

Trickle Down Effect
<https://music.apple.com/us/album/trickle-down-effect/1136737577?i=1136738283>

Devil With A Badge

<https://music.apple.com/us/album/devil-with-a-badge/1136737577?i=1136738282>

EMBRACING THE IDEA OF BEING A ROLE MODEL



by BARRY CRAVENS

The Oxford dictionary defines a well-rounded individual as, "someone having a variety of experiences, abilities and a fully developed personality." This defines Terrance Jermaine Mayes, TJ to his family, friend's and peers.

TJ grew up in Muscle Shoals, the son of Terry and Brenda Mayes. When he talks about his mom and dad his face lights with a big TJ smile. Brenda, his mom, is a legend in The Shoals area (Brenda is a member of multiple sports halls

Terrance Jermaine Mayes "TJ" stands in front of his 1986 T-Top Chevy Monte Carlo SS. (Photo by Barry Cravens.)

of fame in Alabama). His dad, who is still one of his best constructive critics at games he officiates, was a basketball player in high school and college and has been refereeing games for over 30 years.

After you get to know TJ, you see him demonstrate these qualities in a quote I found related to his mother, "Coach Mayes was a magnet for all students, and she never took the magnitude of her role for granted. She led by example and always made time for students. Her office was full of pictures and letters sent to her by grateful students. She did what most people dream of doing. She made a difference."

In high school TJ participated in football, basketball, and track & field. His coaches helped him

be a better athlete through hard work, respect, and integrity. Because of his parents and his coaches, he has an understanding that to achieve greatness you must expect greatness and have attainable goals. These traits are something he efforts to display and teach to the young people he encounters through being a game official or coaching a team.

TJ is a sanctioned official for the Alabama Athletic Association for Football and Basketball (18 years calling high school and junior high games) and in the summer an AAU Basketball coach. TJ is also a certified gear head (TJ loves cars), which offers him an escape from the daily grind.

As an official TJ calls both high school basketball and football games as well as

Junior College basketball games. Having watched TJ referee basketball and football games you can see even before the game starts a person who through his mannerisms and pre-game interactions with coaches, players, fans, and other officials, loves and takes his profession seriously.

In his 18 years of being an official TJ has never had to remove a coach or player from a game, think about that for a moment, pretty significant accomplishment. Although high school sports in Alabama do a great job ensuring sportsmanship is at the top of the list, coaches and players still have their moments. TJ approaches these moments as teachable opportunities for others and learning opportunities for himself, part of his drive to

be better. For College the game is moving faster and interactions with coaches and players are not as tempered. Because he has respect for that difference it allows him to have successful communications when situations of disagreement occur.

TJ always knew to respect his coaches and understood they were teaching him to not only to be an athlete but were also teaching him to be a better person. His coaches were there for him on the field, but they were also there when he needed someone to talk with about a problem or an issue. He was fortunate to have a good support system at home and at school and strives to be in that support system for others he encounters daily. TJ coaches because of

the love of the game and is a molded leader (it is in his blood) and embraces the challenge to "make a difference" in the lives of kids who need a leader/mentor. It is more than just winning to him, it is the opportunity for kids to get better with their game, learn to play as a team, communicate and deal with adversity. Unlike the infamous Charles Barkley quote, "I am not a role model", TJ is a role model, and embraces the opportunity.

Many of the kids that TJ coaches in the summer are from single parent homes. His mission is to help mold these young athletes to be better people by teaching them to respect each other and respect the people around them (players, coaches, officials, parents,

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TJ and a group of referees. (Courtesy Photo)

teachers, etc.). Through his coaching and mentorship, he hopes his kids learn how to adapt situations they find themselves in both on and off the court. He strives to ensure his kids understand what having integrity means.

On the flip side of that coaching coin is the competitive guy who gets to “run his mom’s offense” and coach to win. This is another way TJ can feed the need to compete, be a better coach and person. TJ will tell you “There are also good lessons in winning.”

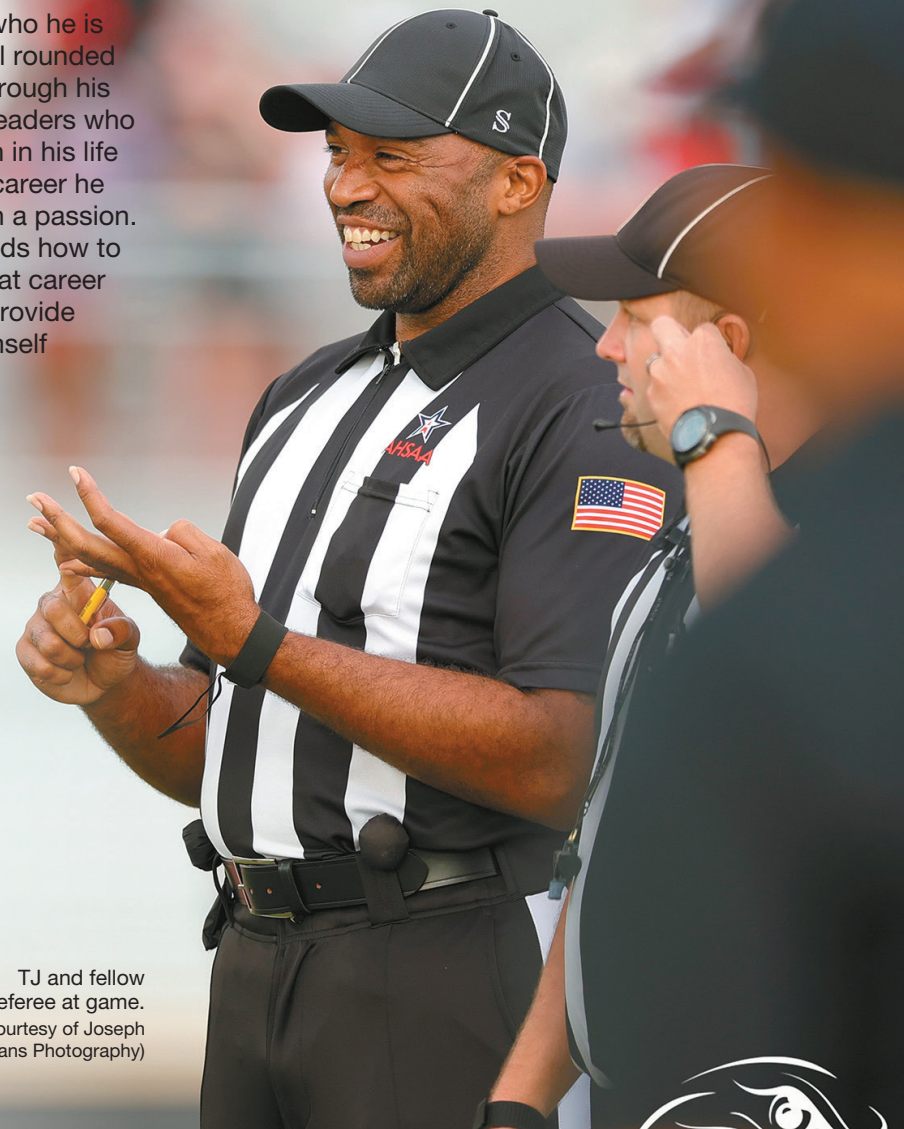
TJ the Gear Head. He developed a passion for cars when he was in high school through friends, his uncles and one of his grandfathers. TJ likes Hot Rods and he always wanted “That Black Trans Am that Burt Reynolds drove in Smokey and The Bandit”. TJ face lights up when he talks about popping those tops out of his Chevy Monte Carlo and just taking a ride through Muscle Shoals or down River Road.

TJ is a sports fan, Duke

basketball and Florida State football. So how does an official watch a game? Per TJ it is different for him because where most people are watching the ball, he is watching a lot of what is going on around the play. As a fan he does not agree with every call made in a game he is watching but with his background he can take the emotion out of it and try to see what the official saw at that moment (something all fans should learn to do).

Because of his parents and his coaches TJ understands that “hard work beats talent when talent fails to work hard.” In his chosen profession there is a competition where officials are graded upon their performance. For any high school official the ultimate achievement is to be assigned as part of a crew officiating a state championship game. Last year TJ met that goal for the first time when he was in the 3a championship football game.

What makes TJ who he is relates to how well rounded he has become through his experiences, the leaders who are and have been in his life while choosing a career he can approach with a passion. He also understands how to step away from that career and take time to provide enjoyment too himself and those around him. Terrance Mayes is a person who is out to make a difference.



TJ and fellow referee at game.
(Photo Courtesy of Joseph Romans Photography)

Men, did you know?

by METRO NEWS

Get serious about stroke

Stroke is a serious medical condition and a leading cause of disability in North America. According to the American Stroke Association, stroke is the fifth leading cause of death in the United States. However, 80 percent of strokes are preventable.

Sometimes called a brain attack, or a cerebrovascular accident, a stroke happens when something blocks blood supply to part of the brain or when a blood vessel in the brain bursts, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. This can deprive the brain of oxygen and cause brain cells to begin to die within minutes, warns the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute.

A stroke is a medical emergency. If someone is suspected of having a stroke, emergency personnel should be called immediately. Every minute counts when a person is suffering a stroke, and medical personnel can begin potentially life-saving treatment on the way to an emergency room.



- Sometimes there is trouble seeing in one or both eyes, including blurry or blackened vision.
- Headaches will come on severely, and can be accompanied by vomiting, altered consciousness or dizziness.
- Someone having a stroke may stumble or lose balance and experience coordination issues.

The National Stroke Association and other organizations use the acronym FAST to educate the public about detecting signs of stroke.

- **F (Face):** Ask the person to smile and look for drooping on one side.
- **A (Arms):** Have the person raise both arms and check to see if one arm drifts downward or cannot be raised.
- **S (Speech):** Ask the person to repeat a simple phrase and check for slurring or strange sounds.
- **T (Time):** Call 911 or emergency medical help immediately if any of these indicators are present.

Symptoms of stroke

Sometimes symptoms of stroke can occur out of nowhere, and other times there may be subtle signs that something has been brewing. The Mayo Clinic says these are the most common signs of stroke.

- Trouble speaking and understanding what others are saying. This may include slurred words or trouble understanding speech.
- Paralysis can occur in the face, arm or leg. Numbness or weakness also may occur. This often affects just one side of the body.

Modern car features drivers love



Modern vehicles are technological marvels, which has had a profound effect not only on how much drivers enjoy driving, but also how much they're spending to get behind the wheel.

Data from Cox Automotive indicates that the average transaction price of a new vehicle in March 2023 was just over \$48,000. That can raise the eyebrows of any budget-conscious car enthusiast, but it's also worth noting that modern vehicles have become more economical in other ways. For instance, the Environmental Protection Agency indicated that the average fuel efficiency for new cars recently improved to a record 25.4 miles per gallon. More fuel-efficient cars and trucks can lower the costs of vehicle ownership.

Many drivers feel that, in addition to being more fuel-efficient, modern vehicles are more fun. That's because modern vehicles boast a number of popular creature comforts that have changed the way people drive. Drivers who haven't shopped for a new car in recent years can look for any number of fun features as they begin their search for a new vehicle.

- Electronic door handles
- Touchscreens
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Modern vehicles are loaded with futuristic features that can make driving more fun.

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Warm up the crowd at this year's playoff tailgate!

by METRO NEWS

Tailgating at the big game is a time-honored and beloved tradition for millions of football fans. Tailgates tend to be parties in parking lots, and no party is complete without food.

The best teams in the National Football League will battle it out on the gridiron in their quest for a championship this January and February. Despite chilly temperatures, fans of those teams will undoubtedly be tailgating outside the stadium before and after the games. A hearty dish that sticks to the ribs can make it easier to withstand winter weather at this year's playoff tailgate. This recipe for "Brisket Chili" from Will Budieman's "The Essential Kamado Grill Cookbook" (Rockridge Press) can be just what football fans need to stay warm at this year's tailgate. Better yet, it makes excellent use of leftover Texas-style beef brisket, giving football fans a great reason to smoke some brisket in the days before the big game.

BRISKET CHILI

Serves 8

- 3 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1 tablespoon cumin seeds
- 1 medium yellow onion, chopped
- Kosher salt
- 1 tablespoon tomato paste
- 2 teaspoons cayenne pepper
- 1 28-ounce can diced tomatoes
- 2 15-ounce cans kidney beans, rinsed and drained
- 1 pound Texas-style beef brisket (see below), chopped

1. Bring the grill to 500 F with the cooking grate installed, then preheat a 5-quart cast iron Dutch oven on the grate with the lid closed.

2. Pour the oil into the Dutch oven and close the grill lid. Once hot, add the cumin seeds and cook for about 15 seconds or until they start to pop.

3. Add the onion and stir until coated with the oil. Close the grill lid and cook for 8 to 10 minutes or until softened and browned.

4. Season with salt. Stir in the tomato paste. Close the grill lid and cook for 1 minute or until bright red.

5. Stir in the cayenne, tomatoes with their juices, and beans. Remove the Dutch oven from the heat.

6. Wearing barbecue gloves, carefully remove the grate, install the heat deflector, and replace the grate.

Reduce the grill temperature to 350 F.

7. Put the Dutch oven back on the grate. Close the grill lid and bring to a simmer. Cook for 1 hour or until thickened. Serve immediately.



TEXAS-STYLE BEEF BRISKET

Serves 6 to 8

- 1 8- to 10-pound beef brisket
- 3 tablespoons kosher salt
- 3 tablespoons freshly ground black pepper

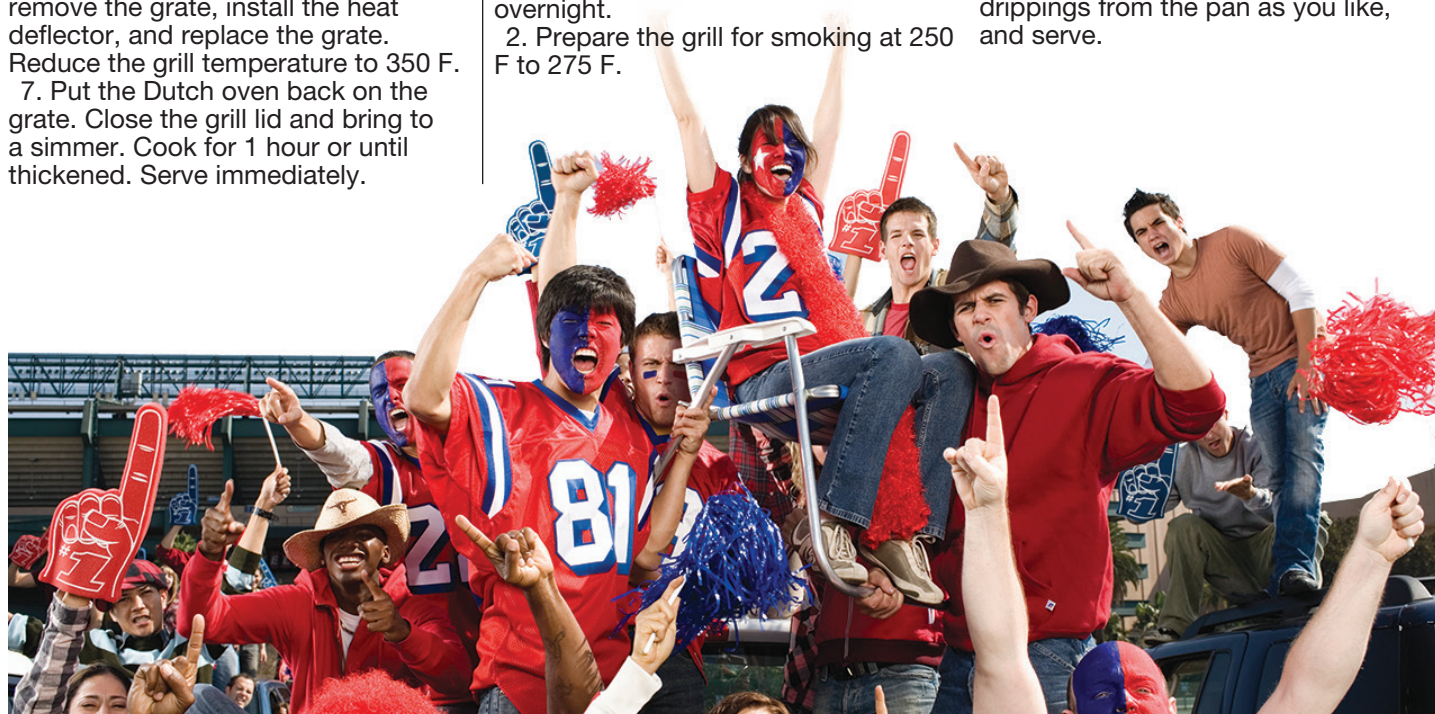
1. Trim off any hard fat from the brisket and square off the edges. Trim the fat cap down to an even 1/4-inch thickness. Sprinkle evenly on all sides with the salt and pepper. Refrigerate overnight.

2. Prepare the grill for smoking at 250 F to 275 F.

3. Place the brisket fat-side up on the grate over the drip pan. Close the lid. If desired, wrap in aluminum foil after 5 to 6 hours or once the bark (crust) is dark brown.

4. Turn over the brisket, close the lid, and continue cooking for 2 hours, 30 minutes to 3 hours, 30 minutes or until an instant-read thermometer inserted into the center registers 200 F.

5. Rest the brisket, wrapped in foil, for 1 to 2 hours before serving. Cut across the grain into 1/4-inch-thick slices. Pour over as much of the drippings from the pan as you like, and serve.



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