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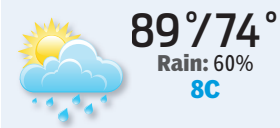
SCRIPPS TREASURE COAST NEWSPAPERS

TCPalm.com

Sunday, July 10, 2011

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**IS TIGER  
BIGGER THAN  
THE GAME?**

With the British Open coming up and a talented pack of fresh faces prepare to tee off, columnist Ray McNulty says it seems Tiger isn't the star many believed.

**SPORTS, 1C**



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**TODAY, 1E**



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“No employee should ever be put in the position where he or she is compelled to make a public plea to be compensated for services rendered.”

**Rich Campbell  
OPINION, 10A**

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**FLORIDA CITRUS**

## A sweet and sour reality

■ Industry faces changing market, must adapt to new demands



FILE PHOTO

Citrus worker Narciso Gurrero empties a bag of just-picked oranges into a bin as citrus workers harvest a grove at the Heller Bros. Packing Corp. property in western Fort Pierce in 2010.

**By Nadia Vanderhoof**  
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772-978-2285

A decade of obliterating disease, a string of calamitous hurricanes and sprawling urbanization have permanently altered the landscape of the Treasure Coast's citrus industry.

The controversial statewide citrus canker eradication program alone destroyed 25,000 commercial acres and set ablaze 3 million commercial trees on the Treasure Coast.

Those hardships have set forth a different almanac for Florida's citrus belt, with farmers adapting new business strategies and costly cultivation techniques just to survive.

It costs \$2,400 per acre annually to grow commercial citrus now. Ten years ago it cost \$1,000.

Some growers are selling fruit exclusively to lucrative international markets while others have expanded to specialty online gift sales. Some growers may cultivate soil for new crops such as peaches and farm fuels. Still, others are contemplating switching to alternative land uses such as water farming or residential development to replace their citrus groves.

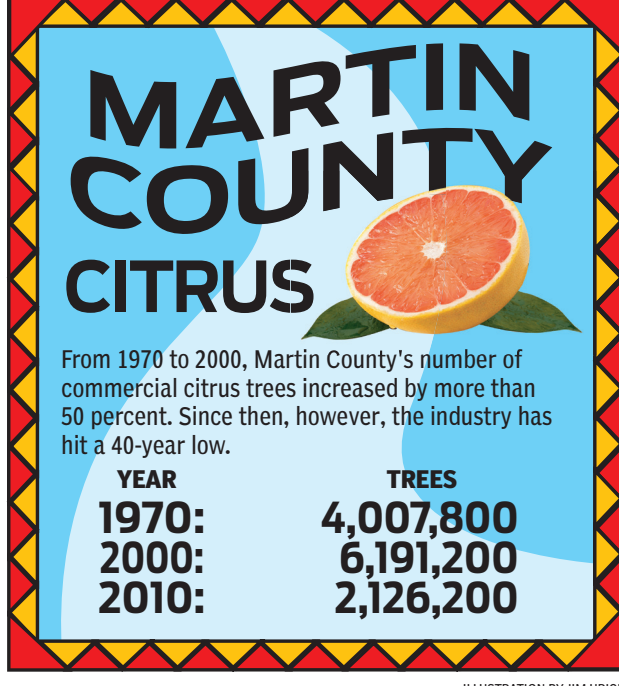


ILLUSTRATION BY JIM URICK

University of Florida researchers said the citrus industry employed 75,828 statewide in 2007 and had a total economic impact of \$8.91 billion. No study has been done since.

As the CEO of Vero Beach-based Riverfront Groves Inc., Dan Richey has spent countless days on planes, walking the halls of Congress, talking to anyone who will listen to the new challenges Florida's citrus industry faces and how the past

decade has changed the way generational legacies will farm grapefruit and oranges for years to come.

"I am very bullish on our future," Richey said without hesitation about the 4,000 acres of citrus he manages and owns on the Treasure Coast. "This is who we are. It's what we do."

That grit and determination is deeply rooted in the culture of citrus farming in the Indian River District, a narrow strip of land on

**INSIDE, 4A**

A look at the decline of the citrus crop in Indian River County.

Citrus sales have decreased across the Treasure Coast. Where is the money going?

Despite poor returns, citrus growers are in it for the long haul.

“I am very bullish on our future. This is who we are. It's what we do.”

**Dan Richey, CEO,  
Riverfront Groves Inc.**

Florida's eastern seaboard stretching from New Smyrna Beach through the Treasure Coast and into Palm Beach County.

Growers here are the descendants of pioneer citrus farmers who took a chance on Florida swampland and hedged their bets on growing a crop that would eventually become the staple beverage of every breakfast table in America.

About 70 percent of the world's grapefruit crop is grown in Indian River County and three out of

See CITRUS, 4A



**EVE  
SAMPLES**

COLUMNIST

## Evidence abounds to prove courts imperfect

The work of a jury is rarely as cut-and-dry as its verdict indicates.

The entire country saw evidence of that fact last week when 12 jurors found Casey Anthony not guilty of killing her 2-year-old daughter — even though it made them “sick to their stomachs” to acquit the woman, as one juror put it.

And, while sifting through decade-old court records on Friday, I found signs of two other conflicted juries.

Both convened in 1999 during driving-under-the-influence cases against David Whelan.

Both found Whelan not guilty of the DUI charges.

Whelan, you might remember, was the 58-year-old who drove the wrong way on U.S. 1 in Hobe Sound the night of June 23, crashing his car head-on into a pickup truck driven by South Fork High School cheerleader Jessica Smith. The accident killed both drivers.

Because Whelan had been arrested more than 40 times in Florida — including at least five times on DUI charges — family members and friends have been wondering why he was not behind bars at the time of the accident.

The answer, in part, may lie with the juries that acquitted him. I inspected court records from the two 1999 cases in Palm Beach County (but not a third Monroe County DUI case in which he also was found not guilty) and discovered jurors struggled with the evidence they faced.

In one of the Palm Beach County cases, the jury sent several questions to the judge as it deliberated.

“Is there any other information about the conversation between the officer and the defendant?” the jurors wrote on a yellow legal pad. “Is there any other testimony from the two attending officers?”

See SAMPLES, 5A

**SOCIAL SECURITY: GRAVE MISTAKES**

## Are you sure you're alive? SSA may say otherwise

■ Social Security Administration per month falsely reports 1,200 living Americans dead

**By Tyler Treadway**  
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772-221-4219  
**and Thomas Hargrove**  
Scripps Howard News Service

JENSEN BEACH—Charles Lauricella knows exactly how Mark Twain felt when the great American writer quipped, “The reports of my death are greatly exaggerated.”

The 84-year-old Lauricella, who's very much alive and kicking in Jensen Beach, was reported

dead Dec. 12, 1989, by the Social Security Administration.

The federal agency each month falsely reports that almost 1,200 living Americans have died, according to Scripps Howard News Service research. These clerical errors can be found in a database ominously titled the “Death Master File,” which includes 24 Treasure Coast residents.

The local listees contacted by Scripps Treasure Coast Newspapers, all of whom have been rein-

**GRAVE MISTAKES**

Read more about people erroneously declared dead by the Social Security Administration at TCPalm.com/grave.

stated in the land of the living, can look back on their time among the “undead” with a smile.

But for others around the country contacted by the news service, the experience was a nightmare of denials for mortgages, credit cards and job interviews.

Judy C. Rivers, 58, of Jasper, Ala., for example, was detained by

**MORE GRAVE MISTAKES, 9A**

Death registry missing 9/11 victims.

Erroneous death reports may lead to identity theft.

Doctors, researchers wary of SSA.

police for several hours last year under suspicion of identity fraud when she tried to use her debit card at a local Walmart.

“It has just been one thing right after another since I found out that I was dead,” Rivers said. “Right now, I am still looking for a job. I hate to give out my Social

See ALIVE, 5A