

Today

Saturday, June 29, 2013 »

■ What's on TV?

"Anna Nicole" (8 p.m., Lifetime), Lifetime's latest tabloid-driven re-enactment, is too faithful to its pathetic subject to rise to guilty pleasure status and too belabored to be endured by anyone but those besotted by such down-market checkout-line fodder. **7E**

JUDIE RAPPAPORT

ELDERCARE 911

Nursing home makes Mom feel more safe

Dear Judie: Have you ever heard of someone wanting to go to a nursing home? On her 70th birthday, Mom began telling me she never would go to a nursing home. At 80, she moved to assisted living and loves it. She's now 85, recently fell, had hip surgery, went to a nursing home for rehab and refuses to leave the nursing home! She's says she "feels safe" there. It's a nice place, but this still doesn't sound kosher to me.

— **More frightened than Mom, Port St. Lucie**

Dear More Frightened:

Your radar is working — it's important to identify the reason for Mom's new attitude. Mom might be afraid of falling again or unsure of her ability to live without the 24-hour assistance she has in the nursing home. She also might be experiencing adverse medication reactions that produced hallucinations or paranoia or have an undiagnosed illness that needs immediate treatment. The best way to help your mother is to see a board certified geriatric physician for diagnosis and treatment.

DAD'S BEING CONNED

Dear Judie: Dad (88) has early dementia and his doctor feels he's still capable of taking care of his needs. Lately, he's become friends with a young woman he meets every morning at the coffee shop. He invited her to his house and she showed up last Saturday with her boyfriend. They gave dad some sob story about not having money for a wedding and asked him to pay for the reception at a local restaurant. He's agreed — he says she's his friend. Dad's always been kind and generous but never careless with his hard-earned money. What can I do?

— **Roy, Vero Beach**

Dear Roy: Dad's a victim of emotional and financial abuse. His new friend makes him feel important by paying attention to him and adding new interest to his life. After gaining his trust, she feels safe asking for money. Notify the police immediately. Dad's probably not the first victim they've conned into paying for their wedding reception. Ask the police to tell Dad the truth. Don't be disappointed if he doesn't believe you because he sees these people as his friends. Next, contact an elder law attorney to discuss the best ways to protect your father's assets.

Judie Rappaport is president of Preferred Lifestyle Services and the author of "Eldercare 911." Email questions to eldercare.givinghelp@comcast.net. Include phone number.

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Social
FIND FUN HERE.

Where are you having fun on the Treasure Coast? Let us know by snapping a photo or sharing your comments and tagging it with the hashtag #TCPalmSocial, on Facebook, Twitter or Instagram.

Zaimarie De Guzman writes about religion. She can be reached at 772-223-4741.



PHOTOS BY HOBIE HILER/SPECIAL TO TREASURE COAST NEWSPAPERS

Andrew Mamangakis, 17, of Stuart stains the hand-carved Icons of the Creation of Man on June 20 during the installation of the iconostasis that was hand carved by Father Menas at St. James Orthodox Church in Port St. Lucie. The iconostasis took Menas two years and three months to complete. "It shows what countless hours of work can do," Mamangakis said.

Symbols of faith

■ Monk's hand-carved icon screen makes its debut at Port St. Lucie church

By **Zaimarie De Guzman**

zaimarie.deguzman@scripps.com
772-223-4741

Two years and three months, six days a week, six hours a day.

That's how long it took Father Menas, a monk from Maine, to hand-carve the 40-foot icon screen installed last week at Port St. Lucie's St. James Orthodox Church.

Detailed vines, doves, crosses and birds symbolizing the biblical story of Genesis cover the piece, which is meant to separate parishioners from the holy authorities. At the altar, a carved depiction of The Last Supper and paintings of religious icons, by another artist, now face parishioners.

The icon screen and artwork are the first step in the church's plans to transform the sanctuary's modern look to a more traditional style, said Deacon Paul Hilko.

Hilko wouldn't reveal how much the piece cost, but said it would have cost more than \$200,000 if the church had hired someone outside the country to do the work.

"Usually, you'd have to go to Russia or Greece to have this built, but we're supporting our own — an American," said church member Steve Mamangakis, who visited



Father Menas (left) shares a light moment with St. James Orthodox Church member Anthony Couluris of Port St. Lucie on June 20 as they work on the installation of the iconostasis, hand-carved by Menas, at St. James Orthodox Church in Port St. Lucie.

Menas in Maine six times to see the work in progress. "When I went to see Father Menas' work, it was just amazing. And his story — that's amazing, too."

Long before he was a monk, 48-year-old Menas was known as Anthony Vlatas, an engineering student and football player at Princeton University. He was picked up as a free agent by the Miami Dolphins, but shortly after "seeing the cold reality of what it's like to play professionally, decided to study business," he said.

Menas studied at Texas A&M University, then went to Columbia Law School. But

Menas wasn't fulfilled with his degrees in business and law.

He became a monk in 2000, and shortly after took a wood-carving class.

"That was when I finally felt at home," Menas said.

About three years ago, those at Menas' Maine monastery thought they would try to pay some bills by starting a carving business. The first call Menas received came from Port St. Lucie, a place he never had visited.

The bearded, 6-foot, 7-inch, Philadelphia native took to drawing the screen's design.

"You pray, you draw, you erase. I did that a lot until I got

ST. JAMES ORTHODOX CHURCH

Address: 2201 Airoso Blvd.,
Port St. Lucie
Information: 772-971-5106

it right," he said.

Menas continued his prayers and listened to recordings of the Bible 10 times while carving the wood, so that "while the hands are occupied, the mind and heart are, too," he said.

Menas' attention to detail is not just seen in the design of each feather on the carved birds, but in the wood itself. He chose to work with oak because it is durable, and left a piece at the Port St. Lucie church for three months to measure how much the humidity caused it to expand.

Menas used a chisel and mallet last week to put the final touches on the piece, before returning home. About 20 church attendees helped the monk install the heavy icon screen.

"I don't take credit for any of this," Menas said last week while staring at the screen. "This is the product of me asking God to help me make this church beautiful."

Fort Pierce residents raise concerns about proposed Muslim cemetery

When a local Muslim earlier this month requested to rezone about 5 acres in Fort Pierce to build an Islamic cemetery, the proposal was met with opposition from the community.

Despite 20 resident objections, the St. Lucie County Planning and Zoning Commission on June 20 approved rezoning the grassy land on Christensen Road for use as a cemetery. County commissioners will vote on the issue July 2.

Some residents cite traffic issues in the residential area. Others worry about environmental problems associated with Islamic burial traditions, which typically involve no caskets or vaults.

"From the research we have done on the Internet about their burial practices, they're going to wash the body there, wrap it, put in the ground with no casket, and then with all the unneeded traffic — it's just all going to be a constant



ZAIMARIE DE GUZMAN

RELIGION MATTERS

problem," said Buffie Traylor, whose house faces the property.

But none of that will happen if the cemetery is approved, said Imam Dr. Syed Rahman, leader of the mosque on Midway Road.

Burial procedures will be the same ones local Muslims have followed for more than 40 years as they have buried friends and relatives at Hillcrest Memorial Gardens, the cemetery between Fort Pierce and Vero Beach.

Local Muslim organizations bought land at Hillcrest to create a burial area for those of their faith. The Islamic religion prohibits Muslims from being buried

next to non-Muslims.

When a local Muslim dies, Rahman said, four or five relatives wash and wrap the body in white linen cloth in a private room at the funeral home. The body is placed in a secure vault to avoid contaminating the ground, then taken to the cemetery. Mourners share prayers for several minutes before the burial.

"Muslim traditions can be similar to Christian and Jewish ones. This is just a problem in which people are misunderstanding us and they think something weird is going to happen here, or that we're going to always pray here. That's what the mosque is for, though," Rahman said.

Grave markers are flat and level with the ground. Adel Nefzi, who made the rezoning request, said shrubs and trees will create a 25-foot buffer around the cemetery.

On average, Rahman said, there are three to four Muslim burials per year.

Hearing Rahman's explanations, Traylor said her concerns over the Islamic cemetery are "null and void." But her husband, Steve, feels differently.

"Every morning when my children wake up and look out the door, they're going to be reminded of death," Steve said.

There are about 1,200 Muslims in the Treasure Coast area. Five years ago, there were about 400, estimated Rahman, who has operated a Fort Pierce walk-in clinic since 2003. The land at Hillcrest eventually will run out, and the closest Islamic cemetery is in Miami.

"The Muslim population in South Florida is growing for sure, and will keep growing," said Ghazala Salam, a representative of the Council of American Islamic Relations, South Florida Chapter.

"Families moved here a long time ago, and now their families are moving here to be with them,"