Bayside BRIEFS:

San Leon Woman Gets 20 Years Prison For Intoxication Manslaughter Conviction:
A little more than two years ago, on the evening of August 28 of 2013, two lives were ruined in San Leon as a direct result of drunk driving. The first victim was Brion Vaughn, by all accounts a good guy who helped anyone who asked and was beloved by his friends and family. He was the passenger in a vehicle which crashed that night, and he was pronounced dead after being taken to UTMB in Galveston with spinal trauma. His back was broken in two places.

The second victim, and the cause of the whole mess, was 48-year-old Darcie Spillers, also of San Leon. Darcie was the driver that night, and it was determined later that her blood alcohol level was .24, three times the legal limit. After the crash, Spillers ran to a nearby house beat on the door, saying she had crashed her truck and needed help. She told the couple at the home that her friend was hurt, and the three set off with a flashlight to find the crash site. But Darcie was apparently too drunk to lead them to the scene, so they headed back home. When they got there, the police and San Leon VFD were already responding.

At this point, Darcie asked the couple to turn off the flashlight and keep quiet so she could get away, but it was too late – Deputy Jacob Manuel had arrived at the house, and he then questioned Spillers, who claimed she had been a passenger in the vehicle. Manuel stated in his report that Darcie appeared to be intoxicated, and that she gave differing accounts of who was driving. Evidence at the scene showed otherwise. Darcie had been the driver. She had run through a stop sign and into a ditch. She was arrested on Intoxication Manslaughter.

Spillers entered a Not Guilty plea, and stayed with her store that someone else was driving, but the jury didn’t buy it, and last week she was found guilty, and facing a term of anywhere from 2 to 20 years in state prison.

Note To Our Readers:
Dear Steve, the only blind newspaper editor in Texas, has lost his rest of his eyesight, at least for the time being. He is not able to send or receive text messages, can’t access the rest of his eyesight, at least for the time being.

In the meantime, Montgomery County Sheriff’s Investigator J. Blackwell had been putting together a case with help from two investors in November of last year. Peterson collected large sums of money from a number of other investors in that neighborhood, and the Petersons were raking in enough money to buy a bar and restaurant called the Tiki Bar.

After that story came out, Jay and Lisa started a different scam, finding investors for a phony “house flipping” scheme. The new company was named Coastal Realty Solutions LLC. According to his arrest affidavit, Jay took $185,000 from two investors in November of last year. Peterson collected large sums of money from a number of other investors to “flip” the same properties. Flipping is the process of buying a property, making some improvements, then selling it at a profit. All of the investors were expecting a return of 20-50% and none of them were aware that there were other investors in the same houses, which were also encumbered with multiple liens. Some of the investors got suspicious and searched online to find out more about Jay Peterson, and were incredulous when they read the articles we had written about his previous illegal schemes. They went to the police and also filed a lawsuit against Peterson. Other victims came out of the woodwork as well. One man made a down payment and monthly “mortgage payments” to Peterson for three years, then one day he was evicted from the house he had “bought” from Peterson on a lease-purchase agreement.

When paychecks started bouncing at the offices of Analytical Realty, employees also searched the web and discovered our articles. They quickly realized they were working for a scammer. But Peterson kept on working his nefarious schemes. He was slapped with a lawsuit in Biloxi, Mississippi where he expressed interest in buying the Great Southern Golf Club there for development.

In the meantime, the Club met Jay, but wasn’t buying into his line of BS, describing him as “unprofessional and sleazy” in manner. Peterson also looked at a large tract near Lake Conroe, which he never contracted for, but he told prospective investors he was going to build a tourist attraction there similar to the Kemah Boardwalk. The total amount collected on this scheme is unknown, but one investor gave Jay a check for $100,000 for a 2% stake in the project.

In the meanwhile, Jay and Lisa were living in a mini-mansion on 8 acres – a property they bought on credit and defaulted on the first payment. They were in the process of being evicted. With no investors to buy out in these houses, it was time for the next scam. Peterson called in some help, and the employees of the bar and restaurant were the next to go unpaid. There wasn’t even $200 to pay the band on a Saturday night in July, and Lisa told the manager to get the money from the waitresses to pay the band, and they would get reimbursed. They weren’t.

On the Fourth of July the police were called to the bar, where an employee claimed he had been assaulted by Jay Peterson. In front of witnesses, Lisa Peterson offered the victim $2,000 cash to drop charges. Jay was arrested on Assault charges, and Lisa was picked up that same night on Witness Tampering.

In the meantime, Montgomery County Sheriff’s Investigator J. Blackwell had been putting together a case with help from some of the victims. He submitted an affidavit for an Aggravated Theft warrant on August 28, and the warrant was served. Since then, Jay has been in the Montgomery County Jail on bond totaling $350,000. If he manages to post bond – and he might – he will be gone. This man will not stay and face the music.

For three years, the Seabreeze has been working to get justice for the victims of scam artist James Howard Peterson Jr. and his wife, Lisa Peterson. We wrote about him in January of 2014, after he disappeared from his jet ski business named Full Throttle Powersports on FM 646 near Bacliff, leaving behind a number of victims who claimed they were defrauded of sums exceeding $100,000.

After we now in jail on felony theft charges, and that his arrest was facilitated and aided by the Seabreeze Newspaper. Lisa Peterson has also been arrested, charged with Witness Tampering. Other charges against the pair are expected to be filed, and their investigations are widening.

The second victim, and the cause of the whole mess, was 45-year-old Manuel. He was the passenger in a vehicle which crashed that night, and he was pronounced dead after being taken to UTMB in Galveston with spinal trauma. His back was broken in two places.

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At any rate, we at the Seabreeze are proud that we were able to play a role in getting this crooked bastard locked up, and we hope the District Attorney adds charges of Racketeering and Organized Crime against both Jay and Lisa.

James Howard Peterson Jr. is a versatile criminal. He has done everything from auto theft to distributing child porn to operating a multimillion dollar scammery.

Information from the Seabreeze helped victims identify him as a con artist and convince Montgomery County investigators to put him behind bars.