

Local author part of anthology series

First Coast Romance Writers recently released its fourth installment of the group's anthology series, and a local author is one of the participants.

St. Marys resident Melody Johnson contribution is "Spelled for Survivor," an action/adventure paranormal romance and the six installment in her "Witchy Business" short stories series.

"We all need a little escape from reality sometimes, and I hope this anthology of short stories will help readers enjoy their summer to the fullest," Johnson said. "Not everyone has the money or means to treat themselves to a vacation, but through the magic of storytelling, we can not only transport ourselves to the topics, we can fall in love along the way."

"Romancing the Tropics" is the anthology series. This compilation of short stories features a



Melody Johnson has work published in "Romancing the Tropics."

variety of romance genres—historical, contemporary

and paranormal — and promises to sweep readers

away to enchanting tropical locales where love, action, adventure, humor and warmth combine in classic tales that prove it's never too late for love. "Romancing the Tropics" was released Wednesday, July 19, and is available online in ebook and paperback formats. The hero of Johnson's "Spelled for Survivor," Parker Peters, will do anything to win the reality TV contest Castaway Casanova and its \$50,000 grand prize, even use his magic to help him survive each episode's challenge. Or so he thinks until he meets Stevie Dynamite, his co-star and fellow final contestant, in person. With the fate of his expanding business on the line, will Parker stay true to his goal even if winning Castaway Casanova means betraying Stevie? Or will the magic he finds between them be more valuable than anything money could buy?

"I love returning to the magical comedy of my Witchy Business world," Johnson said. "In 'Grave Promises' (story 1), I explore a haunted house and the theme of unfinished business. The characters in 'Fated by Fire' (story 3) attend a costume party and discover that Halloween may not be the only time of year a person hides behind a mask. And in 'Til Death Don't Us Part' (story 4), my opposites attract couple are trapped in a corn maze. 'Spelled for Survivor' (story 6) was especially fun to write because summer is my favorite season. Uprooting my witches from their hometown during Halloween to a tropical island definitely put them out of their comfort zone and upped the stakes of the story."

The authors participating in this anthology include Lia Davis, Johnson, Vickie

Wollan, Leah Miles, Gloria Ferguson, Sara J. Walker, Laura E. Salas, Kelle Z. Riley, Maggie FitzRoy, V.L. Czerny, L.J. Green, M.J. Gates and Merrie Angel. All 13 authors are members of First Coast Romance Writers, and proceeds from this anthology benefit their organization, a nonprofit that helps writers hone their craft and expand their knowledge of the publishing industry.

In addition to her contributions to the "Romancing the Holidays" and "Romancing the Tropics" anthologies, Johnson has also published the award-winning sci-fi romance novels "Beyond the Next Star" and "Sight Beyond the Sun," as well as a gritty, four-book paranormal romance "Night Blood Series" with Kensington Publishing/Lyrical Press.

Submitted by author Melody Johnson

Association to assist in the building of the new stage within the facility.

"This financial support will help our mission of enhancing the cultural life of Southeast Georgia and Northeast Florida by offering a stimulating, creative and supportive outlet to our community youth, teens and adults," Saltwater Performing Arts Executive Director Marci McCosh said. "Saltwater provides the means to build confidence, character, self-expression, independence and responsibility. These

Saltwater Performing Arts recognized, awarded grant

Saltwater Performing Arts is honored to have been recognized by local, regional, state and national organizations as worthy of receiving funding to provide much needed support for its upcoming Season 10 productions, general operating expenses and expenses associated with moving into its new Performing Arts Center.

As Saltwater Performing Arts begins its 10th year of providing community theater that specializes in performing arts education for children, youth and adults, and bringing professional level productions to a five-county area, the theater's leadership is grateful for the financial support it has received to

help make Season 10 a truly remarkable year.

Saltwater's recent programming expansion to four separate theater troupes (Kids for kindergarten through second grades, Junior for third through fifth grades, Mainstage for sixth through 12th grades, and Encore for adults and multi-generational productions) has significantly increased the licensing expenses to produce shows associated with these troupes. Season 10 is slated to have nine stage productions costing almost \$30,000. In support of that, Saltwater received the Okefenokee Rural Electric Membership Corporation Foundation grant award of \$3,000 and the Communities of Coastal

Georgia Foundation grant award of \$7,500, which covered about 35% of those licensing fees.

To help defray the operating expenses associated with such impressive growth in the organization, Saltwater was fortunate to receive \$2,250 from the General Dynamics Mission Systems Community Investment Program. This funding was initiated through a corporate contribution request submitted by an employee. The Georgia Council for the Arts, a strategic arm of the Georgia Department of Economic Development, awarded Saltwater a \$9,180 Bridge Grant in its 2023-24 grant cycle. The Bridge grants are designed to assist nonprofits

in continuing their recovery from the economic slowdown caused by the pandemic. Both monetary investments in Saltwater's future are a positive reflection of the confidence the community instills in this organization.

As Saltwater takes its next big step and finally moves into a home of its own in St Marys, it is faced with the expense of an extensive renovation project to provide a true performing arts facility able to support its many troupes and class offerings simultaneously, while providing stage productions almost every month. It recently received a \$600 grant from Kings Bay Submarine Officers Spouses' Charitable

traits are fulfilled through professional educational, performance and technical training combined with live performance experience opportunities."

The nonprofit will continue to look for additional financial support to assist in the renovation project. Those interested in supporting this effort through monetary donations or by volunteering may contact the organization at 912-510-9700, online at saltwaterpac.org, or by email info@saltwaterpac.org.

Submitted by Saltwater Performing Arts

OBITUARIES



Judy Lynn Deen

DEEN — Mrs. Judy Lynn Deen, 78, died Tuesday, June 27, 2023, at Southeast Georgia Health System in Brunswick following a long illness.

She was a native of Ware County and preceded in death by her husband, James Huey "Red" Deen, and her parents, James Manning "Bud" Davis and Fannie Missouri Douglas Davis. She was a member of Blest Community Church.

She was also preceded in death by a daughter, Maggie Deen, and seven siblings, Levo Davis Steedley, Floyd Davis, Wilmer Davis, Gehu Davis, Evelyn Davis Stevenson, Carrie Davis O'Berry and John Davis.

Survivors include her daughters, Fannie Miller (Tom) of White Oak, Ga., Judy Lynn Deen (boyfriend, Thomas Gray) of Waycross, Ga., and Journie Leigh McCarthy (Tony) of Waverly, Ga.; four grandchildren, Tripp Logan Deen, Hannah Marie Miller, Crystal Wilkinson and Kade Dakota Whitrock; three great-grandchildren, Remington McCarthy, Violet McCarthy and Gene Austin; sister, Laila Jones of Brunswick, Ga.; two brothers, Ronnie Davis of Waycross, Ga., and the Rev. Clayton Davis of Millwood,

Ga.; and numerous nieces, nephews and other relatives.

A graveside service was held at 11 a.m. Friday, June 30, 2023, at Burnt Fort Cemetery. The family received friends 5-7 p.m. Thursday, June 29, 2023, at Music Funeral Home. Sympathy may be expressed by signing the online registry at musicfuneralhome.com.

Music Funeral Home of Waycross was in charge of the arrangements.



George Smith Jr.

SMITH — George Smith Jr., 76, of St. Marys, Ga., passed away at his residence July 21, 2023.

George was born Aug. 26, 1946, in Baxley, Ga., to the late George and Gertrude Morris Smith.

He is survived by his wife, Joan M. Smith, and daughter, Charlene Rose (Jeff), both of St. Marys, Ga.

George was a U.S. Air Force veteran. He retired from the Georgia State Prison and was a Mason with Santa Maria #496. George enjoyed volunteering and spending time at the St. Marys Senior Center and the Woodbine Opry. George liked camping, playing cards, dancing and being around his friends.

In addition to his parents, he was preceded in death by his siblings, Jerry Smith, Tommy Smith and Willie Dean Rue.

A Celebration of Life will be Thursday, July 27, 2023, at Allison Memorial Chapel. Visitation will be 3-4 p.m., and service will begin at 4 p.m.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests donations to be made to Georgia Hospice Care.

Allison Memorial Chapel is in charge of arrangements.



Robert James Walker

WALKER — Robert James Walker was the third child of seven born to the union of Simon Walker Sr. and Annie Kelly Tyson Walker on Nov. 25, 1937, in the "Rough and Ready" Community. He attended the local schools of Camden County until seventh grade. After leaving school, he began working in the timber industry, where he worked until taking a brief break, spending 27 years at Hercules in Brunswick, Ga. He joined Oak Hill United Methodist Church at an early age and served faithfully until joining Browns Chapel AME Church, where he continued his service to God's Kingdom until his health declined.

He was preceded in death by his parents; brothers,

Clifton Edwin, Simon Jr. and Johnnie Lee; sisters, Gloria Jean and Lilla Virginia; and a host of other relatives.

Robert departed this life Thursday, July 20, 2023.

He leaves to mourn his passing his son, Dale (Bernice); daughter, Sabrina (LaTia); brother, Emmanuel (Jannie Bell); six grandchildren; seven great-grandchildren; special friends, David Williams, Gregory Reed, Stanley White and Jimmy Foddrell; and a host of nieces, nephews, cousins and friends.

Funeral services will be 11 a.m. Sunday, July 30, 2023, at Browns Chapel AME Church, 334 New Post Road in White Oak, Ga. Interment will be in Oak Hill Cemetery, 3-R Fish Camp Road in White Oak. There will not be a wake. The body will lie in state for viewing at the church two hours prior to the service (9-10:55 a.m.).

Sunset Funeral Home is in charge of arrangements.

In Memory Of
Bryan KeAndre (Lil' Bryan) Jones

July 28, 1993...
The day that changed everything
For the Jones Family.

It was a beautiful day, just like any other. Who would've thought it'd be the day we'd lose a son... a grandson... a brother?!

You left Granny's that day, seemingly in such a haste. We didn't know that it would be the last time we'd see your precious face.

The last time that we'd see you smiling, excited and having fun. The last time indeed, as moments later, your assignment here with us would be done.

You touched SO many lives in the short time that you were here. 30 years later, we're still holding on to those precious memories, keeping them near.

We still have days where we remember, we reflect and we cry. Still some days in disbelief, but realize that we'll understand it better by and by.

Sleep on dear son, grandson, brother, you're now in God's care. Continue to rejoice with our other loved ones, and just know: you can't crown Him until we get there!

*We love you, forever in her hearts,
Daddy, Momma,
Javan, Jeremy and Kristen*

Lil Bryan, it's been 30 years since you've been gone. I think of all the memories I was robbed of creating with you. I've spent my whole life

imagining what our conversations would've been like. I wonder what kind of advice you would've given me whenever I came to you seeking guidance. I cry when I realize I was too young to remember what your hugs felt like, what your voice sounded like, or just know the depth of your love towards me as your little sister! For 30 years...the only memory I have is missing you daily. I've had to hear everyone around me tell me how much I remind them of you when they see my green eyes. When I look at myself in mirror I sometimes imagine it's you staring back at me and my eyes swell with tears! I find comfort in believing God knew I needed you as a guardian angel more than I needed you as a big brother. Even though I feel I need you as my big brother now more than ever, I have to trust that God knows what's best! The family misses you Lil Bryan and until we meet again, you will always and forever be in our hearts!

Love, Kristen

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Final Arrangements Handled With Care

- Traditional Funeral Services
- Pre-arrangements
- Military Service
- Cremation
- Monuments
- Shipping & Receiving

Allison Memorial Chapel
FUNERAL HOME
Family owned and operated ... Allyson Chapman & Sloan Chapman-Tindall
10141 Colerain Road • St. Marys, GA 912-729-5000