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# Naples Daily News

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## A SIP TOWARD GREATNESS



SCOTT MCINTYRE/STAFF (2)

**ABOVE:** Dinah Leach sniffs a white wine during a sommelier class with local sommeliers who were looking to elevate their skill levels Tuesday at Sea Salt in Naples. **TOP:** Victor Valdiva, center left, and Mladen Stoev taste wine during the sommelier class Tuesday.

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See more photos and watch a video of a sommelier class at Sea Salt in Naples.

## Festival's 'somm school' grooms its students for master honors

By Harriet Howard Hekthaus  
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Drinking at 10 on a Tuesday morning isn't a future most parents would dream of for their children.

However, the young wine stewards and sommeliers nestled into a pale aqua dining room at Sea Salt restaurant in Naples are sipping, sloshing and — breathe easy, Mom and Dad — spitting out wines. There's much less intoxication than education going on; this sedately dressed, button-down group are sharpening their skills as interpreters of the vintner's craft in their respective dining rooms.

Sommeliers are the confidential informants of the viticulture world, slipping diners the secrets of wines that will turn that rack of lamb, poisson du jour or a \$30 chicken breast into a culinary thrill.

But they train in a way that makes an abstinent reporter and photographer want to weep. Bottle after bottle largely ends up in the beer-size, blue plastic "expectorant urns" or is left sitting in glasses. The word "delicious" comes only in

See SOMMELIER, 6A

EXCLUSIVE

## Unsolved Mo. case lingers in suspect's past

By Jessica Lipscomb  
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ST. LOUIS, Missouri — Soon after Curtis Wayne Wright was arrested in connection with the death of Dr. Teresa Sievers, a detective visited him in a Missouri jail to question him about another case.



Teresa Sievers

For nearly 20 years, investigators in Jefferson County have been trying to answer the question of what happened to Ronnie Bolin, a 33-year-old former minister from Hillsboro, Missouri. Wright, who reportedly was the last person to see Bolin, became a person of interest almost immediately after Bolin went missing on July 8, 1996.



Curtis Wayne Wright



Ronnie Bolin



Corey Lynn Fox

Wright's link to the Bolin case was brought back into the spotlight with his Aug. 27 arrest in the Sievers case. Although law enforcement in Missouri describe Wright as an active person of interest in the Bolin case, a letter from an Illinois prisoner with ties to the case says Wright "did not kill or have any share in the 'disappearance' of Ronald Bolin."

"He was not there; not even as a bystander, confere, or accomplice," according to a letter from Corey Lynn Fox, who himself confessed in 2001 to killing Bolin.

Every scenario provided by tipsters to detectives about Bolin's death includes either Wright or Fox, according to the case file. Wright never has been charged. Fox was arrested, but

See SIEVERS, 6A

## Spouse strategy for Social Security benefits eliminated

By Laura Layden

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File-and-suspend is being suspended.

The little-known, but lucrative strategy that has allowed married couples to boost their Social Security benefits will quietly go away in six months, affecting retirees in Southwest Florida and across the country.

The two-year budget deal President Barack Obama signed Nov. 2 will do away with the strategy and a few others that some describe as "loopholes."

"We're getting a lot of ques-

The strategy can boost a couple's Social Security income over their lifetimes by more than \$50,000.

tions from our clients and our prospective clients about how it will affect them," said Myles McHale Jr., a senior vice president and managing director for The Private Client Reserve of U.S. Bank in Naples.

Under current law, retirees can file to collect their Social Security benefits, then suspend the payouts, allowing their benefits to grow, up until age 70. Their spouses can then immediately

start collecting half of their other half's check at age 66, delaying their own benefits and letting their own benefits grow.

By delaying their benefits by four years, retirees' checks will be 32 percent higher (at a growth rate of about 8 percent a year). The strategy can boost a couple's Social Security income over their lifetimes by more than \$50,000.

The strategy also has benefitted

singles. Those who have reached the age of 66, still can take advantage of it through May 1, 2016, before the new rules kick in.

The law change didn't come as a surprise to McHale, as it has been discussed by the Obama administration since late 2013, and there are more important changes for retirees to worry about when it comes to Social Security benefits next year, he said.

The federal government's decision not to give the millions who receive Social Security

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## SOMMELIER

from 1A

passing. The earnest discussion rides on specific descriptors: "wet forest floor," "meatiness," "ripe blackberry," "pineapple" and "limestone."

Bruce Nichols, a Naples wine columnist and vintner liaison for the Naples Winter Wine Festival, presides at the one-hour sip-and-tell. A 30-year-plus industry veteran, he holds monthly tests for these eight wine professionals, most of whom are working toward a coveted master sommelier certification. The drinking is double-duty: It helps the group advance their skills and it makes conversant assistants for master sommeliers who will fill glasses at the wine festival Jan. 29-31.

Only 243 people in the world hold the title of master. Its test is unnerving, with statistical minutiae ("Name a vineyard in Ukraine"), brutal customer service role-playing and make-or-break tastings. The master sommelier pourings have been a charmed addition to the festival.

"Vintners love it because they know wines will be served at the best they can be. Chefs love it because the master sommeliers reach out long before the (week-end vintner) dinners to learn about the food," said Nichols.

"Of course, the guests love speaking to the somms about the wines throughout the weekend. And the local sommeliers love that they can learn from the masters."

### DEVILISH CHOICES

Nichols sounds much more soothing than his table of wines was about to prove. The first white wine stumps everyone. Victor Valdivia, head sommelier at Grey Oaks Country Club, calls it a bold chardonnay, an Old World one. Clement Cariot, sommelier at Bleu Provence, judges it a white Grenache-Rhone blend, from France. The chardonnay vibe rings



Mladen Stoev tastes a red wine during a sommelier class Tuesday with local sommeliers who are looking to elevate their skill levels at Sea Salt in Naples.



Liset Malaya examines a white wine during the class.

around the table as the tasters chime in during

the three-minute discussions that follow the

“Look at us. We're very close to what you would expect in a city like Chicago or New York.”

Mladen Stoev, beverage manager and sommelier for Bay Colony Golf Club

designated taster's four-minute summary time.

"You're all going to be surprised. You all have had this wine and none of you got it right," Nichols lectures his group. The elusive label: a 2013 Donelan Roussane-Viognier from the Sonoma Valley.

The students have been surreptitiously sniffing each glass bowl, trying to get a head start on the taster's challenges:

- Dissect the bouquet, or "nose"; the taste on the palate and the duration of that taste, or finish;

- Name the type or types of grapes used in the wine;

- Identify the continent, country and region of its origin;

- Ultimately, the wine type and vintage.

Conversation during the tasting evokes a sensory feast: flavors like green pepper, apple, white peach; fragrances like "crushed rock" or

"orchard fruits"; or spices like anise, ginger and pepper. Liset Zelaya, the host sommelier of Sea Salt, even pinpoints a cardamom note in the 2012 Donelan Syrah she tastes.

Nichols, close to sprouting horns and cloven hooves, has tucked into the eight-wine mix a 2011 Radevic Estate Wines cabernet sauvignon.

Andrew Carmody guesses it as New World, five to 10 years, and can only muster 40 seconds of information.

It leaves everyone speechless.

All of them groan when they see the label: Radevic Estate Wines is in the Adriatic-washed Eastern European country of Montenegro — not a household word among wine lovers. But it's the VIP vintner of the upcoming Naples Winter Wine Festival post-auction dinner.

By Jan. 29, all of them

will know Radevic Estates Wines.

### COMRADES IN CORKSCREWS

Afterward, the entire tableful gathered to snap photos of themselves — and the wine labels.

"We're like classmates," Zelaya said. "We formed this group so we could study for this."

"For the tasting you have to do it together," said Kiril Tsarev, sommelier for Marco Resorts. "We brainstorm, and it helps us see more things about the wine, things we might not have seen on our own."

Like the rest, he's a volunteer at the Naples Winter Wine Festival, which he praised on two levels.

"We're very happy we met Bruce. He's introduced us to networks of all these owners, winemakers and sommeliers we can call on. It's a fantastic experience," Tsarev declared. "And doing this linked us to helping children, who are our future."

"The wine festival is one of the most important events in our town," declared Mladen Stoev, beverage manager and sommelier for Bay Colony Golf Club.

Stoev has been volunteering at the festival since the master sommelier program began in 2012. It has put the city's reputation on an entirely new plane in both its charitable work and its appreciation for wine and food, he said.

"Look at us. We're very close to what you would expect in a city like Chicago or New York," he said.

They plan to be here, perhaps wearing the red-and-gold master sommelier pin when Naples reaches the status each mentioned: a food and wine destination like the major cities it already matches with its wine festival.

Neither goal will be easy. Valdivia said he had just failed the test for his advanced sommelier status, one rung under a masters.

He was philosophical. "It's got a 95 percent failure rate," he said. "Not many pass it without three or four sittings."

## SIEVERS

from 1A

the murder charge later was dismissed. It's unclear if the two men knew each other — or if either man is responsible for what happened to Bolin — but statements by Fox indicate he has more than a casual knowledge of the case.

Fox confessed to killing Bolin while Fox was being held in an Illinois jail in an unrelated homicide case. On the day Bolin disappeared in 1996, Fox told detectives he was hanging out with Bolin and a friend named Charlie Walker. Fox said he and Walker smoked marijuana, with Bolin abstaining, hung out and watched TV with Bolin at a small house.

After Walker left, Fox said Bolin propositioned him in a car. Fox told detectives he pushed Bolin's head down at the steering wheel, breaking his neck, and said he later shot him and buried the body beside a lake in the city of House Springs.

When asked about Walker, Fox told detectives the name Charlie Walker was not the real name but rather a clue. He underlined the letters C, E and W.

In his letter from prison, Fox did not explicitly say if he ever had met Curtis Wayne Wright. When asked if knew anything about the possibility of Wright's involvement in Bolin's disappearance, Fox dismissed the idea.

"Wright did not kill or have any share in the 'disappearance' of Ronald Bolin. If you believe differently, simply ask this Curtis fella one very simple and revealing question: 'Where is Bolin's body buried?' He, of course, could never give you the answer to that query, because it is information he has absolutely zero knowledge of," Fox wrote. "You'll find any path leading to (or from) Wright, a dizzying dead end. That is, as it applies to Ronald Bolin."

Detectives have not established a link between Fox and Wright, according to Lt. Doc Coombs, of the special investigations division of the Jefferson County Sheriff's Office. Lee County Sheriff Mike Scott has declined to comment on the Bolin case or say if it will play a role in the Sievers investigation.

### JUSTICE FOR BOLIN

After Fox's confession, law enforcement arrested him in May 2001. Yet detectives were unable to find Bolin's remains at the two locations provided by Fox as the burial site.

Along with confessing to having killed Bolin, Fox said he was responsible for about a dozen other homicides. Detectives in multiple jurisdictions had trouble verifying those confessions, and prosecutors said they believed Fox simply was trying to derail the prosecution of the original case on which he was being held in Illinois,



Greg Bolin holds a book last month that his daughter brought home from her school library, which he later discovered also had been checked out by his brother Ronnie several decades ago.

the stabbing death of a former coworker at a St. Louis area factory.

"We started getting together to figure out whether he was telling the truth, and he recanted everything that he said about all of those crimes," said Bob Wilkins, who prosecuted the Bolin case and now is a judge in Jefferson County. "The county sheriff was unable to corroborate anything that he said."

Eight months after his arrest in Bolin's death, the state dismissed the murder charge. Still, it bothered Wilkins that Fox seemed to know so much about the case.

"Either he did these, or he knows who did, or

he's the most avid reader (of newspaper crime stories) in the history of the world," Wilkins told the St. Louis Post-Dispatch at the time. "He's got facts about cases that nobody knows, but it's all uncorroborated. There's no physical evidence to tie him to the scenes."

In his letter from prison more than 13 years later, Fox continued to hint at his involvement in Bolin's death.

"My familiarity with Bolin's case derives from a seed of authenticity," he said. Fox wrote that he was in possession of Bolin's vehicle, Bible and clothing after his disappearance, something detectives and

Bolin's family members dispute.

"I've asked anyone that I could possibly think of that was closer to my brother than I was, no one had any recollection of a Bible he described," Ronnie Bolin's brother Greg said.

In 2010, Fox wrote another letter to investigators about Bolin but changed his story significantly, claiming he had stabbed Bolin in the backseat of his car, which he then set on fire. Reports say Bolin's vehicle was abandoned at a car wash, was not burned and did not show any signs of a struggle.

"We came to the conclusion he was just a nutcase,"

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Read previous coverage on Teresa Sievers death.

Wilkins said.

Greg Bolin said he doesn't believe Fox is responsible for his brother's death. But he does believe Wright had something to do with it, pointing to investigative reports that say Wright met with his brother at a Pizza Hut and was the last person to see Bolin before he disappeared.

"Corey Lynn Fox is a liar. ... Unless (Ronnie) left the Pizza Hut and met up with this guy (Fox), he is full of it," Greg Bolin said. "(Fox) has burnt too many bridges and no one believes him."

Through the years, Greg Bolin says he has encountered situations he believes are signs from Ronnie. In 2009, Greg's daughter was at school when a library book fell off a table nearby. She picked up the book, a guide to puppet making, and saw a familiar name inside. When she brought it home, Greg Bolin opened the cover and saw that his brother Ronnie had checked out the same book as a child on April 5, 1973.

"Some things are very, very hard to explain and this is one of them," Greg Bolin said. "I think he wants closure. He wants justice."

Anyone with information about the disappearance of Ronnie Bolin is asked to call the Jefferson County Sheriff's Office at 636-797-5515.