
NATIONAL AP NEWS FEATURES BY JENNIFER KAY

Lasers may ease pain for 'Napalm Girl' in AP Photograph

"The fire was stuck on her for a very long time."

By JENNIFER KAY

October 25, 2015

MIAMI (AP) — In the photograph that made Kim Phuc a living symbol of the Vietnam War, her burns aren't visible — only her agony as she runs wailing toward the camera, her arms flung away from her body, naked because she has ripped off her burning clothes.

More than 40 years later she can hide the scars beneath long sleeves, but a single tear down her otherwise radiant face betrays the pain she has endured since that errant napalm strike in 1972.

Now she has a new chance to heal — a prospect she once thought possible only in a life after death.

"So many years I thought that I have no more scars, no more pain when I'm in heaven. But now — heaven on earth for me!" Phuc says upon her arrival in Miami to see a dermatologist who specializes in laser treatments for burn patients.

Late last month, Phuc, 52, began a series of laser treatments that her doctor, Jill Waibel of the Miami Dermatology and Laser Institute, says will smooth and soften the pale, thick scar tissue that ripples from her left hand up her arm, up her neck to her hairline and down almost all of her back.

Even more important to Phuc, Waibel says the treatments also will relieve the deep aches and pains that plague her to this day.

With Phuc are her husband, Bui Huy Toan, and another man who has been part of her life since she was 9 years old: Los Angeles-based Associated Press photojournalist Nick Ut.

"He's the beginning and the end," Phuc says of the man she calls "Uncle Ut." "He took my picture and now he'll be here with me with this new journey, new chapter."

It was Ut, now 65, who captured Phuc's agony on June 8, 1972, after the South Vietnamese military accidentally dropped napalm on civilians in Phuc's village, Trang Bang, outside Saigon.

Ut remembers the girl screaming in Vietnamese, "Too hot! Too hot!" He put her in the AP van where she crouched on the floor, her burnt skin raw and peeling off her body as she sobbed, "I think I'm dying, too hot, too hot, I'm dying."

He took her to a hospital. Only then did he return to the Saigon bureau to file his photographs, including the one of Phuc on fire that would win the Pulitzer Prize.

Phuc suffered serious burns over a third of her body; at that time, most people who sustained such injuries over 10 percent of their bodies died, Waibel says.

Napalm sticks like a jelly, so there was no way for victims like Phuc to outrun the heat, as they could in a regular fire. "The fire was stuck on her for a very long time," Waibel says, and destroyed her skin down through the layer of collagen, leaving her with scars almost four times as thick as normal skin.

While she spent years doing painful exercises to preserve her range of motion, her left arm still doesn't extend as far as her right arm, and her desire to learn how to play the piano has been thwarted by stiffness in her left hand. Tasks as simple as carrying her purse on her left side are too difficult.

"As a child, I loved to climb on the tree, like a monkey," picking the best guavas, tossing them down to her friends, Phuc says. "After I got burned, I never climbed on the tree anymore and I never played the game like before with my friends. It's really difficult. I was really, really disabled."

Triggered by scarred nerve endings that misfire at random, her pain is especially acute when the seasons change in Canada, where Phuc defected with her husband in the early 1990s. The couple live outside Toronto, and they have two sons, ages 21 and 18.

Phuc says her Christian faith brought her physical and emotional peace "in the midst of hatred, bitterness, pain, loss, hopelessness," when the pain seemed insurmountable.

"No operation, no medication, no doctor can help to heal my heart. The only one is a miracle, (that) God love me," she says. "I just wish one day I am free from pain."

Ut thinks of Phuc as a daughter, and he worried when, during their regular phone calls, she described her pain. When he travels now in Vietnam, he sees how the war lingers in hospitals there, in children born with defects attributed to Agent Orange and in others like Phuc, who were caught in napalm strikes. If their pain continues, he wonders, how much hope is there for Phuc?

Ut says he's worried about the treatments. "Forty-three years later, how is laser doing this? I hope the doctor can help her. ... When she was 18 or 20, but now she's over 50! That's a long time."

Waibel has been using lasers to treat burn scars, including napalm scars, for about a decade. Each treatment typically costs \$1,500 to \$2,000, but Waibel offered to donate her services when Phuc contacted her for a consultation. Waibel's father-in-law had heard Phuc speak at a church several years ago, and he approached her after hearing her describe her pain.

At the first treatment in Waibel's office, a scented candle lends a comforting air to the procedure room, and Phuc's husband holds her hand in prayer.

Phuc tells Waibel her pain is "10 out of 10" — the worst of the worst.

The type of lasers being used on Phuc's scars originally were developed to smooth out wrinkles around the eyes, Waibel says. The lasers heat skin to the boiling point to vaporize scar tissue.

Once sedatives have been administered and numbing cream spread thickly over Phuc's skin, Waibel dons safety glasses and aims the laser. Again and again, a red square appears on Phuc's skin, the laser fires with a beep and a nurse aims a vacuum-like hose at the area to catch the vapor.

The procedure creates microscopic holes in the skin, which allows topical, collagen-building medicines to be absorbed deep through the layers of tissue.

Waibel expects Phuc to need up to seven treatments over the next eight or nine months.

Wrapped in blankets, drowsy from painkillers, her scarred skin a little red from the procedure, Phuc made a little fist pump. Compared to the other surgeries and skin grafts when she was younger, the lasers were easier to take.

"This was so light, just so easy," she says.

A couple weeks later, home in Canada, Phuc says her scars have reddened and feel tight and itchy as they heal — but she's eager to continue the treatments.

"Maybe it takes a year," she says. "But I am really excited — and thankful."

Sea rise threatens Florida coast, but no statewide plan

“If I were governor, I'd be out there talking about it every day.”

By JASON DEAREN and JENNIFER KAY

May 10, 2015

ST. AUGUSTINE, Fla. (AP) — America's oldest city is slowly drowning.

St. Augustine's centuries-old Spanish fortress sits feet from the encroaching Atlantic, whose waters already flood the city's narrow streets about 10 times a year — a problem worsening as sea levels rise. The city relies on tourism, but visitors might someday have to wear waders at high tide.

"If you want to benefit from the fact we've been here for 450 years, you have the responsibility to look forward to the next 450," said Bill Hamilton, whose family has lived in the city since the 1950s. "Is St. Augustine even going to be here? We owe it to the people coming after us to leave the city in good shape."

St. Augustine is one of many chronically flooded communities along Florida's coast, and officials in these diverse places share a concern: They're afraid their buildings and economies will be further inundated by rising seas in just a couple of decades. The effects are a daily reality in much of Florida. Drinking water wells are fouled by seawater. Higher tides and storm surges make for more frequent road flooding from Jacksonville to Key West, and they're overburdening aging flood-control systems.

But the state has yet to offer a clear plan or coordination to address what local officials across Florida's coast see as a slow-moving emergency. Republican Gov. Rick Scott is skeptical of man-made climate change and has put aside the task of preparing for sea level rise, an Associated Press review of thousands of emails and documents pertaining to the state's preparations for rising seas found.

Despite warnings from water experts and climate scientists, skepticism over sea level projections and climate change science has hampered planning efforts at all levels of government, the records showed. Florida's environmental agencies under Scott have been downsized, making them less effective at coordinating sea level rise planning in the state, documents showed.

"If I were governor, I'd be out there talking about it (sea level rise) every day," said Eric Buermann, former general counsel to the Republican Party of Florida and a former water district governing board member. "Unless you're going to build a sea wall around South Florida, what's the plan?"

The issue presents a public works challenge that could cost billions here and nationwide. Insurance giant Swiss Re has estimated that the economy in southeast Florida could sustain \$33 billion in damage from climate-related damage in 2030.

Communities like St. Augustine can do only so much alone. Cities lack the technology, money and manpower to keep back the seas by themselves.

In a brief interview with the AP in March, Scott wouldn't address whether the state had a long-range plan. He cited his support for Everglades restoration and some flood-control projects as progress but said cities and counties should contact environmental and water agencies to find answers

— though Scott and a GOP-led legislature have slashed billions from those agencies. Spokespeople for the water districts and other agencies disputed that cuts have affected their abilities to plan.

In a statement, Scott said the state will continue investing in Florida's environment.

Florida's Department of Environmental Protection is in charge of protecting the state environment and water but has taken no official position on sea level rise, according to documents.

In St. Augustine, flooding has long been problematic, but residents say it's worsened over the past 20 years. St. Augustine's civil engineer says the low-lying village will probably need a pumping system to keep water out — but the state has been unhelpful.

"There's no guidance. ... Everything I've found to help I've gotten by searching the Internet," engineer Reuben Franklin said.

Water quality is one of the biggest concerns. It's especially bad in South Florida — Hallandale Beach has abandoned six of eight drinking water wells because of saltwater intrusion.

While South Florida water officials have led the charge in addressing concerns in their area, their attempt to organize a statewide group was unsuccessful, documents show. Scott's administration has organized just a few conference calls to coordinate local efforts, records show.

Meanwhile, government officials have been adamant that employees and scientists not "assign cause" in public statements about global warming, government emails show.

For example, a 2014 email approving a DEP scientist's request to participate in a National Geographic story came with a warning: "Approved. Make no claims as to cause ... stay with the research you are doing, of course," the DEP manager, Pamela Phillips, warned.

"I know the drill," responded Mike Shirley, the state scientist.

DEP spokeswoman Lauren Engel said Phillips was a lower-level staffer whose views did not necessarily reflect the entire administration. Scott refuted allegations that his administrations urges scientists not to assign cause when discussing climate change.

Scott administration officials are moving forward on a five-year plan that will provide basic guidance to cities dealing with sea level rise.

The Department of Economic Opportunity has received nearly \$1 million in federal grants for the plan. More than half has been spent on staff time and travel or hasn't yet been allocated, according to documents. The rest, about \$450,000, went to contract researchers who are helping create the document, due in 2016. Agency spokeswoman Jessica Sims would not comment and refused requests for the program's manager to be interviewed.

Exotic termites find love in Florida, worrying researchers

“Let's keep our fingers crossed that they're ... donkey termites.”

By JENNIFER KAY
March 25, 2015

MIAMI (AP) — Two particularly hungry, exotic termite species apparently have found love halfway around the world and, as with so many other Florida hook-ups, the results are disturbing.

Asian and Formosan subterranean termites are two of the most destructive termite species in the world, responsible for much of the estimated \$40 billion in economic losses attributed to termites annually. Their habitat ranges overlap in lush South Florida, already home to a daunting number of invasive plant and animal species thriving where they should not. Each termite invaded Florida, probably through cargo shipments, several decades ago, but experts believed the colonies didn't mingle because their aboveground mating swarms launched in different months.

That is, until University of Florida researcher Thomas Chouvenc noticed something unusual about the termite swarms in his Fort Lauderdale neighborhood two years ago.

The two species were flying around looking for mates at the same time — and they were giving each other that look.

The research is preliminary and leaves many questions unanswered, but the idea of a hybrid termite carrying the destructive capabilities of two invasive species worries experts.

"That's big news," said Matthew Messenger, an entomologist at the U.S. Department of Agriculture. "They're two bad ones, too."

Chouvenc is the lead author of a study published Wednesday in the journal PLOS ONE detailing observations of Asian and Formosan termite swarms in downtown Fort Lauderdale and then in a lab at UF's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences.

In the field, including Chouvenc's own yard, researchers documented the two species swarming at the same time and in the same places. The same behavior was documented again last year, and Chouvenc said he's seeing again this spring.

"What we didn't expect to see was when they're in the same place at the same time, we saw the male Asian subterranean termites looking for the female Formosan termites in the field," Chouvenc said.

"When we put them in vials and brought them back to the lab, to our biggest surprise they started laying eggs and the eggs started growing."

The resulting "hybrid" colony in the lab grew more vigorously than colonies produced by either species alone, researchers said. Genetic analysis confirmed they were looking at a hybrid species.

Similar hybridization has been documented in invasive bee and fire ant species, but not in termites. The two termite species also are found together on the island of Oahu in Hawaii and in Taiwan, but the simultaneous swarms and hybridization found in Florida appears to be a new phenomenon.

It's still unknown whether a hybrid colony has survived in the wild in Fort Lauderdale, or whether the hybrids bred in the lab can reproduce. Female termites can lay millions of eggs, but it takes five to eight years for a colony to produce the mature adults that fly in the mating swarms.

"Let's keep our fingers crossed that they're not able (to reproduce) and that they're donkey termites," said Messenger, who reviewed the data but did not participate in the UF study.

Even if hybrid termites can't reproduce, they could cause damage over many years. Alone, each species is a challenge to control. Their below-ground colonies are bigger than those of native termites and can be hard to find.

The Formosan termites originated in China but now are established throughout the Southeast and blamed for roughly \$300 million in property damage each year in New Orleans alone. Asian termites normally found in tropical southeastern Asia have spread to Brazil, the Caribbean and South Florida.

Asian termites aren't expected to spread farther north in the U.S. than South Florida because they don't tolerate colder weather, but a hybrid might be able to thrive in a greater range than either species alone.

Liquid insecticides injected into the soil or baited traps are effective ways for homeowners to fight back against Asian and Formosan termites, and those methods should work against any hybrid, Messenger said.

Millions of GMO insects could be released in Fla Keys

“This is essentially using a mosquito as a drug to cure disease.”

By JENNIFER KAY

January 25, 2015

KEY WEST, Fla. (AP) — Millions of genetically modified mosquitoes could be released in the Florida Keys if British researchers win approval to use the bugs against two extremely painful viral diseases.

Never before have insects with modified DNA come so close to being set loose in a residential U.S. neighborhood.

"This is essentially using a mosquito as a drug to cure disease," said Michael Doyle, executive director of the Florida Keys Mosquito Control District, which is waiting to hear if the Food and Drug Administration will allow the experiment.

Dengue and chikungunya are growing threats in the U.S., but some people are more frightened at the thought of being bitten by a genetically modified organism. More than 130,000 people signed a Change.org petition against the experiment.

Even potential boosters say those responsible must do more to show that benefits outweigh the risks of breeding modified insects that could bite people.

"I think the science is fine, they definitely can kill mosquitoes, but the GMO issue still sticks as something of a thorny issue for the general public," said Phil Lounibos, who studies mosquito control at the Florida Medical Entomology Laboratory.

Mosquito controllers say they're running out of options. With climate change and globalization spreading tropical diseases farther from the equator, storm winds, cargo ships and humans carry these viruses to places like Key West, the southernmost city in the continental U.S.

There are no vaccines or cures for dengue, known as "break-bone fever," or chikungunya, so painful it causes contortions. U.S. cases remain rare.

Insecticides are sprayed year-round in the Keys' charming and crowded neighborhoods. But *Aedes aegypti*, whose biting females spread these diseases, have evolved to resist four of the six insecticides used to kill them.

Enter Oxitec, a British biotech firm that patented a method of breeding *Aedes aegypti* with fragments of genes from the herpes simplex virus and *E. coli* bacteria as well as coral and cabbage. This synthetic DNA is commonly used in laboratory science and is thought to pose no significant risks to other animals, but it kills mosquito larvae.

Oxitec's lab workers manually remove modified females, aiming to release only males, which don't bite for blood like females do. The modified males then mate with wild females whose offspring die, reducing the population.

Oxitec has built a breeding lab in Marathon and hopes to release its mosquitoes in a Key West neighborhood this spring.

FDA spokeswoman Theresa Eisenman said no field tests will be allowed until the agency has "thoroughly reviewed all the necessary information."

Company spokeswoman Chris Creese said the test will be similar in size to Oxitec's 2012 experiment in the Cayman Islands, where 3.3 million modified mosquitoes were released over six months, suppressing 96 percent of the targeted bugs. Oxitec says a later test in Brazil also was successful, and both countries now want larger-scale projects.

But critics accused Oxitec of failing to obtain informed consent in the Caymans, saying residents weren't told they could be bitten by a few stray females overlooked in the lab.

Instead, Oxitec said only non-biting males would be released, and that even if humans were somehow bitten, no genetically modified DNA would enter their bloodstream.

Neither claim is entirely true, outside observers say.

"I'm on their side, in that consequences are highly unlikely. But to say that there's no genetically modified DNA that might get into a human, that's kind of a gray matter," said Lounibos.

Creese says Oxitec has now released 70 million of its mosquitoes in several countries and received no reports of human impacts caused by bites or from the synthetic DNA, despite regulatory oversight that encourages people to report any problems. "We are confident of the safety of our mosquito, as there's no mechanism for any adverse effect on human health. The proteins are non-toxic and non-allergenic," she said.

Oxitec should still do more to show that the synthetic DNA causes no harm when transferred into humans by its mosquitoes, said Guy Reeves, a molecular geneticist at Germany's Max Planck Institute.

Key West resident Marilyn Smith wasn't persuaded after Oxitec's presentation at a public meeting. She says neither disease has had a major outbreak yet in Florida, so "why are we being used as the experiment, the guinea pigs, just to see what happens?"

Migrant flow into US from Caribbean spikes

"I would put on a life vest next time."

By JENNIFER KAY

January 4, 2015

MIAMI (AP) — Just starting a five-year sentence for illegally re-entering the United States, George Lewis stared at the officers staring back at him at Miami's federal detention center and considered whether he'd risk getting on another smuggler's boat — a chance that soaring numbers of Caribbean islanders are taking — once he's deported again.

U.S. authorities deported Lewis following a four-year sentence for a felony drug conviction in May 2013 to the Bahamas, where he was born but lived only briefly. His Haitian mother brought him to Miami as an infant, and though he always considered the U.S. home, he never became a legal resident.

Just five months after he was deported, he got on a Bahamian smuggler's boat with over a dozen other people trying to sneak into Florida. It capsized and four Haitian women drowned. He and the others were rescued.

So would he dare make another attempt?

"Yeah," Lewis, 39, said with a sigh. But, he added, "I would put on a life vest next time."

A recent spike in Cubans attempting to reach the United States by sea has generated headlines. But the numbers of Haitians and other Caribbean islanders making similar journeys are up even more. And while federal law grants legal residency to Cubans reaching U.S. soil, anyone else can be detained and deported.

That law, the so-called wet foot-dry foot policy, and Coast Guard operations related to migrants remain unchanged even as Cuban and U.S. leaders say they are restoring diplomatic relations after more than 50 years.

"The Coast Guard strongly discourages attempts to illegally enter the country by taking to the sea. These trips are extremely dangerous. Individuals located at sea may be returned to Cuba," said Lt. Cmdr. Gabe Somma, spokesman for the Coast Guard's 7th District in Miami.

According to the Coast Guard, in the fiscal year that ended Sept. 30, U.S. authorities captured, intercepted or chased away at least 5,585 Haitians, 3,940 Cubans and hundreds from the Dominican Republic and other Caribbean countries attempting to sneak into the country.

That's at least 3,000 more migrants intercepted than in the previous fiscal year. It's also the highest number of Haitian migrants documented in five years and the highest number of Cubans recorded in six. It's unknown how many made it to U.S. shores without getting caught, or how many died trying.

More than 1,920 migrants — most of them Cuban or Haitian — have been intercepted so far in the fiscal year that began Oct. 1. The Coast Guard worries that number will only increase as news spreads about recent changes to the U.S. immigration system, including fast-tracking visas for some Haitians already approved to join family here and an executive order signed by President Barack Obama that would make millions already illegally in the U.S. eligible for work permits and protection from deportation.

"Any perceived changes to U.S. immigration policy can cause a spike in immigration because it gives a glimmer of hope," even to people not eligible under those changes, said Capt. Mark Fedor, chief of response for the Coast Guard's 7th District.

It's unclear why the numbers are jumping. Poverty and political repression have long caused Caribbean islanders to attempt the journey, and the outlook remains dismal for many. Coast Guard and U.S. immigration officials think another calm summer without many tropical storms and a recovering U.S. economy might have encouraged more to take to the sea. They also say the increased captures may reflect better law enforcement.

Smuggling operations in the region range from individual opportunists looking to use their vessels for extra money to sophisticated networks that may add drug shipments to their human cargo, said Carmen Pino, an official with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement in Miami. Smugglers also

lure people, especially in relatively new routes that send Haitians into the neighboring Dominican Republic to board boats bound for Puerto Rico.

Lewis said he easily talked his way onto a smuggler's boat with about a dozen Haitians and Jamaicans hoping to make it to Florida under the cover of darkness. He just struck up a conversation with some locals at a sports bar in Bimini, a small cluster of Bahamian islands 57 miles off Miami, where Lewis figured he could find a boat home.

"It was like getting a number from a girl. I just needed the right line," Lewis said in an interview in November. The failed trip cost \$4,000.

After his rescue, U.S. authorities initially accused him of being a smuggler, partly because he was the only person on board with a phone, which he used to call 911 when the boat started taking on water. He scoffed at the allegation. He remembered that on the boat he was talking to a teenage Haitian girl and thinking about his mother's boat trip from Haiti to the Bahamas as a young girl, a crossing he never thought he would emulate. "I said, 'Run behind me when we hit land.'" He said. "I said, 'Follow me, I'll get you there.'"

Now Lewis finds himself back in the U.S. but not at home and facing another forced return to the Bahamas, a homeland he doesn't know and where the government considers Haitians who have migrated illegally and their children an unwanted burden.

Lewis knows he'd try to reach the U.S. again.

"It's not worth losing your life, but what life do you have when you have a whole country against you? I'm completely alienated from a country where I'm supposed to be from," Lewis said.

Coast Guard, Cuban migrants play deadly hide-and-seek

"It's fair to say that this is the 'Wild West' of the Coast Guard."

By JENNIFER KAY and TONY WINTON

June 12, 2015

ABOVE THE FLORIDA STRAITS (AP) — With a shift in the relationship between Havana and Washington, many Cubans are now attempting a risky sea crossing out of fear that the U.S. will change its "wet-foot, dry-foot" policy allowing any Cuban reaching U.S. land to stay and pursue citizenship.

Without it, they'd be treated like other foreigners caught illegally in the country — ineligible for citizenship and subject to deportation.

The U.S. Coast Guard returns any Cuban migrants caught at sea to the communist island. Authorities have captured or intercepted more than 2,600 since Oct. 1, and that tally is expected to match or surpass last year's total of nearly 4,000.

"It's fair to say that this is the 'Wild West' of the Coast Guard," said Lt. Cmdr. Gabe Somma, spokesman for the Coast Guard's Miami-based 7th District, which patrols the Florida Straits. "We've got drugs, we've got migrants and we've got search and rescue, and we've got an enormous area, approximately the size of the continental United States."

PILOT'S VIEW

The steady hum of a Coast Guard aircraft flying low loops over these swift, dark blue waters broadcasts a distinct message to migrants: Nothing has changed.

The Coast Guard planes are equipped with sensors that pick out shapes on the water's surface miles away. From a patrol altitude of about 1,500 feet, cruise ships look like smudges on the horizon and sailboats are white dots with long wakes.

A migrant vessel appears the size of a buoy. Pilots look for something suspicious: waves that don't break quite right, a dark speck in a cloud's shadow, the glint of something tossed overboard or the ripple of a blue tarp.

"I've seen two guys on a Styrofoam sheet with two backpacks," Lt. Luke Zitzman said from the cockpit of a recent patrol.

Coast Guard crews will open their cargo doors to toss buckets containing water and food, sometimes their own lunches, down to migrants frantically signaling for help.

They've also watched migrants push away life jackets and inflatable rafts thrown down to keep them afloat in deep waters before a Coast Guard cutter arrives. If they can see a shoreline, many migrants will try to swim for it.

"That must be really frustrating, to see that's freedom but not realize how far away that it really is," said Lt. Hans de Groot, the pilot of a recent patrol.

FORCED ROOMMATES

Once picked up by the Coast Guard, migrants find themselves transferred from cutter to cutter before they return to Cuba.

Aboard the cutter Charles David Jr., crew members sometimes recognize faces among the roughly 900 migrants who have crossed the decks since 2013. A family with a 4-year-old girl has shown up twice, and other migrants have confessed to getting caught half a dozen times or more.

Although Lt. Cmdr. Kevin Beaudoin calls the migrants his guests, some can't be pacified. Past guests have lashed out at crew, refused food and water or tried to hurt themselves, hoping to win a transfer to Florida. (That rarely works.)

"They're humans; they're trying to make a better life for themselves. They're not just trying to come to the U.S. to freeload. We've had some that have been on board six, seven times, and there's definitely desperation there," said Boatswain 2nd Class Matthew Karas, watching over the migrants.

In their wake, the Coast Guard burns or sinks migrants' rafts. Lately, Beaudoin has noticed many rafts primarily made from construction spray foam, enforced with rebar and wrapped in vinyl tarps. These won't sink, and the Coast Guard rigs them with transmitters that alert other vessels to the obstacle in the water.

"You look at all the risks that they're taking on those ventures and not being successful, and yet not being thwarted enough to say, 'I'm not going to do it a 16th time,'" Beaudoin said, squinting into the sun's glare off the water. "One can't underestimate the power of the motivation of the migrant trying to enter the United States."

Once-condemned doctor turns to helping Haitians

"I'm convinced he was Haitian in a different life."

By JENNIFER KAY

December 16, 2013

NORTH MIAMI, Fla. (AP) — It may be hard to remember now, but there was a time when a mysterious disease baffled doctors and frightened a world unfamiliar with what is now called AIDS. Arthur Fournier recalls the rise of the epidemic far better than most. In some ways it made him. In others, it nearly broke him. Above all, it helped define the rest of his life.

In 1979, Fournier was a young doctor at Miami's public hospital when patients exhibiting the symptoms of AIDS began flooding in — only these patients weren't gay men, who accounted for many early cases of the disease. Rather, they were Haitian.

Confounded, Fournier and some of his colleagues soon published a study about what they were seeing among their Haitian patients, concluding "it is possible that this syndrome ... is the same as that found among homosexual men."

Their work would go a long way toward helping the medical community better understand how AIDS spread, but it also had unintended consequences: Just being Haitian was initially listed by the federal government as a risk factor for AIDS, along with heroin use, hemophilia and homosexuality — a macabre "4-H club," as it became known.

For years, discrimination and recrimination against Haitians ensued. Fournier and the other doctors were blasted for committing bad science, asking biased questions, failing to employ Haitian Creole translators when talking with their patients and targeting an immigrant community derided as "boat people."

Now, some 35 years later, Fournier is one of the Haitian community's biggest champions: A man whose early missteps led to a career dedicated to improving access to medical care for Haitians in Miami and back home.

"I think I believe in reincarnation, and I'm convinced he was Haitian in a different life, because he has given and done so much for Haiti and the Haitian community," says Dr. Marie-Denise Gervais, a professor of medicine at the University of Miami who works with Fournier in a network of school-based health clinics.

Gervais, a native of Haiti, remembers feeling the stigma about Haitians and AIDS as she pursued her medical degree. For a time, even after a ban on Haitians donating blood in the U.S. was lifted, she stopped giving blood just to avoid being questioned about her heritage.

Gervais sees Fournier as a pioneer of the movement to improve health care for Haitians, not as the cause of the stigma.

"Looking back, obviously he wrote some article, but the scientific community had no clue. They're seeing all these cases, and this is how the scientific mind works: You're trying to put all the pieces of the puzzle together. When you're right, it's wonderful, but sometimes you have trial and error before you get it right," she says.

From Fournier, now 65, there was never an "I'm sorry" for what happened in the aftermath of those early AIDS studies. Shortly before the research in Miami was published, officials at the Centers for Disease Control began warning doctors who cared for Haitians that their patients might be prone to terrifying infections.

In the panic that followed, Haitians in the U.S. reported losing jobs, and their children were taunted at school. The U.S. government would briefly ban Haitians from donating blood. Anger in the

Haitian-American community manifested in massive rallies that blocked the Brooklyn Bridge and Miami streets.

Fournier, who endured pressure to cut back on his AIDS work, says he never felt like he had to apologize for contributing to the stereotype that shadowed Haitians for years. Rather, he says: "I did it with my words and actions."

Growing up north of Boston, Fournier was the oldest of six children whose assembly-line worker father died at age 40. In medical school, he was keenly aware that he hadn't shared many of the privileges enjoyed by most of his classmates — they were the sons of lawyers and doctors, while he was selling his own blood to help pay for the engagement ring he gave to the woman he courted with dates in the medical school cafeteria.

He wanted to work with the poor — circumstances he found familiar — and after completing his residency at the University of Miami hospital, he spent two years practicing medicine in rural Virginia. Fournier's return to Miami to teach public health in 1978 coincided with the arrivals of thousands of Haitians, mostly by boat.

When these Haitians got sick, they lacked the money to go anywhere else but Miami's public hospital, exposing Fournier for the first time to Haitian culture and AIDS.

"The people in the hospital, they were going nuts," is how Fournier remembers those early days of the AIDS epidemic. He would step into elevators at Jackson Memorial Hospital to see orderlies dressed head to toe in protective suits just to transport AIDS patients, whom some residents refused to examine. When he got home from work his wife, terrified of infection, ordered him to shower before he did anything else.

Amid the criticism from Haitian community leaders that the doctors had failed in the most basic aspects of medical exams — simply asking their patients about their health — Fournier stood by his work and continued to treat Haitians and other patients with AIDS.

"I feel like they were my brothers and sisters," says Fournier, who later published research about the socio-economic forces that helped HIV and AIDS spread worldwide. "It's not really guilt, but I was extremely disappointed when ... our identification of HIV amongst the Haitians so led to their stigmatization. That was so wrong."

Fournier and others in the medical community later would come to understand that poverty played a significant role in AIDS cases among Haitians, the homeless and other impoverished communities.

Prostitution and sexual tourism, drug use and social and political forces affecting women, families and minorities also facilitated the spread of AIDS. The most effective treatments and education about preventative measures such as condoms required large amounts of money and time from a limited number of doctors — resources often out of reach for the poor.

In the years that followed, Fournier focused on community health and finding new ways to provide health care for the homeless, immigrants and schoolchildren in South Florida, projects funded with more than \$71 million in grants he secured. He served for 25 years as associate dean for community health at the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine.

In Miami's Little Haiti, he participated in health fairs and helped fund a medical clinic at the Center for Haitian Studies. He developed a program to provide comprehensive health care to schoolchildren in Miami-Dade County's impoverished, largely immigrant neighborhoods. Today, 11,000 students receive care that includes vision, dental and mental health services at clinics based in 10 area schools.

Fournier also invented a device that allows women to privately screen themselves for sexually transmitted infections, something that researchers who tested the device among Haitian women in Miami noted was valuable in a community still stung from the AIDS stigma and reluctant to divulge personal information to doctors.

The doctor worked to redeem his early mistakes with Haitians by becoming fluent in Haitian culture and Creole, the country's most widely spoken language, says Marleine Bastien, a longtime Haitian-American advocate who has worked on health care issues in Little Haiti with Fournier since the 1980s.

"It lessens the impact of his involvement, the fact that he was able to leverage it with such good work over the years, always trying to understand the people ... and making them feel important enough to invest his time, to learn the language and bring information about prevention and access to health care to them," Bastien says.

Soon, the culture Fournier found charming but mystifying when his first Haitian AIDS patient showed up in 1979 became like a second skin.

In 1994, Fournier co-founded Project Medishare, a nonprofit that provides health care in rural Haiti, far from the resources centralized in the country's teeming capital. It was then that he made his first trip to one of the world's most impoverished nations.

Like most first-time visitors, Fournier was shocked by the extreme poverty he saw. When his vehicle stopped in a slum in the Haitian capital, little girls rushed to his window, their hands reaching for the disposable cups they spotted inside. Fournier watched them take the used cups and dip them into puddles for something to drink.

Something clicked: The girls' poverty and lack of resources left them susceptible to illness, not their nationality. Fournier thought back to the Haitian AIDS patients he had seen in Miami.

In the 20 years since that first visit, Fournier has been back more than 150 times, bringing University of Miami medical students to teach them about Haitian culture in hopes of encouraging them to pursue careers in global health and change medicine for the poor, says Dr. Barth Green, who co-founded Medishare with Fournier.

"He's a very special person who does believe in Santa Claus and the Tooth Fairy," says Green.

Today, Fournier still travels to both Haiti and parts of Miami, continuing his work with the community to which he committed his career. He recently showed off the benefits of a medical clinic embedded in a North Miami high school, and he reflected back on his years of work with the Haitian people.

"When you come from impoverished circumstances, I think you realize there are barriers to class and culture that consciously or unconsciously interfere with the people you're trying to serve," Fournier says. "I used to think that all you had to know to be a good doctor was to know medicine, but you really have to have a bond with the people you're trying to serve."

Nyad's team responds to skeptics doubting her swim

"When you know how hard it is, you kind of want those details."

By JENNIFER KAY
September 8, 2013

MIAMI (AP) — Diana Nyad's 110-mile swim from Cuba to Florida has generated positive publicity and adoration for the 64-year-old endurance athlete — along with skepticism from some members of the small community of marathon swimmers who are questioning whether she accomplished the feat honestly.

On social media and the online Marathon Swimmers Forum, long-distance swimmers have been debating whether Nyad got a boost from the boat that was accompanying her — either by getting in it or holding onto it — during a particularly speedy stretch of her swim. They also question whether she violated the traditions of her sport — many follow strict guidelines known as the English Channel rules — by using a specialized mask and body suit to protect herself from jellyfish.

"When you know how hard it is, you kind of want those details," said Andrew Malinak, a Seattle long-distance swimmer who crunched the data available from the GPS positions tracked on Nyad's website and concluded that he didn't trust what he saw.

Nyad's navigator and one of the swim's official observers told The Associated Press this weekend that Nyad didn't cheat and that she was aided during the rapid part of her swim by a swift current. And neither Nyad nor her team ever said she would follow English Channel rules, developed for swimming the waters between England and France.

Those rules outlaw neoprene wetsuits and contact with a support boat. Nyad wore a full non-neoprene bodysuit, gloves, booties and a silicone mask at night, when jellyfish are a particular problem, and removed the suit once she got over the reef on her approach to Key West.

According to Nyad's team, she finished the swim Monday afternoon after roughly 53 hours in the water, becoming the first to do so without a shark cage. It was her fifth try, an endeavor apparently free from the boat troubles, bad weather, illnesses and jellyfish encounters that have bedeviled Nyad and other swimmers in recent years.

Nyad's progress was tracked online via GPS by her team, and some critics say they think information is missing.

Many wonder about a roughly seven-hour stretch when Nyad apparently didn't stop to eat or drink, recalling her 2012 attempt when she got onto the boat for hours during rough weather. Nyad eventually got back into the water to try finishing, but her team was criticized for delaying the release of that information to the public.

Malinak said the hours-long spike in Nyad's speed after 27 hours of swimming is particularly questionable — she went from her normal pace of roughly 1.5 mph to more than 3 mph, then slowed down again as she approached Key West.

Nyad's spokeswomen did not immediately return telephone calls this weekend, but her navigator and Janet Hinkle, one of the official observers for the swim, told the AP that Nyad didn't cheat.

Navigator John Bartlett said the increased speed was due to the fast-moving Gulf Stream working in her favor, nothing more.

"At some points we were doing almost 4 miles an hour," Bartlett said. "That's just the way it works. If the current is in your favor at all, that explains it."

The data collected by Bartlett and two observers will be submitted to three open-water swimming associations and the Guinness World Records for verification, Bartlett said.

An oceanographer not affiliated with Nyad's team said the swimmer couldn't have picked a more perfect current to get from Havana to Key West.

Mitch Roffer of Melbourne-based Roffer's Ocean Fishing Forecasting Service Inc. said he got an email questioning whether Nyad's swim was a hoax, so he decided to look at the charts for himself. What he saw convinced him that she could do it.

"Many times that current runs west-east and you're constantly fighting the current if you're swimming north. In this case, it was in the shape of an S, and the angle was almost exactly from Havana to Key West," Roffer said.

Janet Hinkle, a Key West boat captain and acquaintance of Nyad's, was called to be an observer for the swim when Steve Munatones, a former U.S. national open-water coach, was unable to make it. "I can say unequivocally she swam every stroke without question," Hinkle said.

Critics have said Hinkle was too close to Nyad to be an independent observer of her swim. Hinkle has in the past helped Nyad by providing housing for her when the swimmer stayed in the Florida Keys, but she said she remained on the periphery of Nyad's team. "I think anyone who knows me knows me as a person of high integrity. I believe that's why Diana asked me, and I took my job very seriously," Hinkle said. "She was giving her all and I would give her my best."

Since none of the various open-water swimming associations dictate how someone should swim from Cuba to Florida — officially accomplished only by Nyad and Susie Maroney, who used a shark cage — Nyad just had to follow generally accepted rules about not getting out of the water or using equipment such as fins.

Australian Chloe McCardel followed English Channel rules in her attempt to swim the Florida Straits in June. She had to be pulled from the water after 11 hours after being stung jellyfish.

"Generally the rules are: You walk in, you swim across and you walk out, and you do it under your own power," said Munatones, who consulted with Nyad for this swim and observed her attempts in 2011 and 2012.

The elaborate, full-body suit and protective mask Nyad wore to protect herself from venomous jellyfish actually weighed her down, Munatones said.

"To put that on is like putting on a wedding gown in the ocean," he said. "It's different from the English Channel rules, but the water is different from the English Channel."

To many, it seems Nyad hasn't exactly endeared herself to those in the marathon swimming community. Some consider her primarily concerned with gaining the spotlight instead of helping others advance the sport.

At her post-swim news conference on Tuesday, Nyad admitted that she had not been rooting for McCardel and that she was miffed some members of her team would jump ship to work for a competitor.

McCardel said she was disappointed to hear Nyad call those crew members "traitors."

"One of the greatest things, I believe, about international marathon swimming is how people across the world support crew for and mentor each other. I wouldn't change this aspect of our sport for the world!" McCardel posted on her Facebook page.

Nyad defends herself to skeptics of Cuba-Florida swim

"First of all, I was trying to feel some joy."

By JENNIFER KAY
September 11, 2013

MIAMI (AP) — Addressing her skeptics, Diana Nyad claimed the right to set the ground rules for future swims from Cuba to Florida without a shark cage.

Speculation that she had gotten into or held onto a boat during part of her 53-hour journey drove Nyad and her team to hold a lengthy conference call Tuesday night with about a dozen members of the marathon swimming community.

Nyad said it was her understanding of the sport that the first person to make a crossing got to set the rules for that body of water. She said her "Florida Straits Rules" would largely maintain what they all agree on: no flippers, no shark cage, no getting out of the water, never holding on to the boat, never holding on to the kayak, never being supported by another human being or being lifted up or helped with buoyancy.

She would allow innovations such as the protective full-body suit and mask she wore to shield herself from the venomous jellyfish that can alter a swim as much as a strong current. Marathon swimming purists had questioned whether that gear violated the traditions of the sport.

"It is the only way. The swim requires it," Nyad said. "I don't mean to fly in the face of your rules, but for my own life's safety, a literal life-and-death measure, that's the way we did it."

Nyad said she never left the water or allowed her support team to help her beyond handing her food and assisting her with her jellyfish suit.

"I swam. We made it, our team, from the rocks of Cuba to the beach of Florida, in squeaky-clean, ethical fashion," Nyad said.

Her critics have been skeptical about long stretches of the 53-hour swim were Nyad appeared to have either picked up incredible speed or to have gone without food or drink. Since Nyad finished her swim Sept. 2 in Key West, Fla., long-distance swimmers have been debating the topic on social media and in online forums.

After the call, Evan Morrison, co-founder of the online Marathon Swimmers Forum, said Nyad and her team addressed most of the issues that concerned the members of the forum.

He was pleased by Nyad's pledge that all the observations and notes taken by her navigator, John Bartlett, and two official observers of the swim will be made available for public examination.

"I wouldn't expect to discover anything untoward, but I think it will help us understand a lot better what happened and give us a fuller picture of the achievement," Morrison told The Associated Press. "That's just part of the process. This was a great first step."

Nyad's speed, at some points more than doubling her average of 1.5 mph, has drawn particular scrutiny. Bartlett attributed her speed to the fast-moving Gulf Stream flowing in her favor.

Nyad's fastest speed averaged about 3.97 mph over a 5.5-hour period over about 19 miles on Sept. 1, crossing the strongest parts of the Gulf Stream, which was flowing at a favorable angle, Bartlett said.

"What you're seeing is the combination of the speed of Diana propelling herself in the water and the speed of the current carrying us across the bottom," he said.

An oceanography professor at the University of Miami said data collected from a research buoy drifting in an eddy referenced by Bartlett confirms that ocean currents contributed as much to Nyad's speed as Bartlett said they did.

The eddy appears periodically in that region, and it alters the course of the Gulf Stream. The buoy's average speed was about 1.6 mph, said Tamay Ozgokmen.

"So, if you're close to (the eddy), you're going to benefit from it, too," Ozgokmen said. "I don't have trouble believing that she said she essentially doubled her speed during her swim because of the ocean currents."

Nyad and her team said published statements by her doctors that she went seven hours without eating or drinking were mistakes, and while there were hours when she didn't eat solid food, she never went more than 45 minutes without water once she was well on her way from Cuba.

Not all of the open water swimmers on the call questioned Nyad's methods or track.

"I feel sorry for the questions you were just asked, understanding that when you're the first person to do something, the questions you're asked are rather ridiculous," said Penny Dean, who set records swimming across the English and Catalina channels. "I think the only thing she needs to show are the logs of the swim."

Nyad attempted the swim from Cuba to Florida four times before finally completing the journey on her fifth attempt, making her the first to make it without the aid of a shark cage.

Nyad said she had not known about all the controversy over her methods and speed until it made national news.

"First of all, I was trying to feel some joy," she said.

Florida 'python challenge' draws about 800 hunters

"It's very safe, getting out in the Everglades. People do it all the time."

By JENNIFER KAY

January 13, 2013

BIG CYPRESS NATIONAL PRESERVE, Fla. (AP) — An armed mob set out into the Florida Everglades on Saturday to flush out a scaly invader.

It sounds like the second act of a sci-fi horror flick but, really, it's pretty much Florida's plan for dealing with an infestation of Burmese pythons that are eating their way through a fragile ecosystem.

Nearly 800 people signed up for the month-long "Python Challenge" that started Saturday afternoon. The vast majority — 749 — are members of the general public who lack the permits usually required to harvest pythons on public lands.

"We feel like anybody can get out in the Everglades and figure out how to try and find these things," said Nick Wiley, executive director of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. "It's very safe, getting out in the Everglades. People do it all the time."

Twenty-eight python permit holders also joined the hunt at various locations in the Everglades. The state is offering cash prizes to whoever brings in the longest python and whoever bags the most pythons by the time the competition ends at midnight Feb. 10.

Dozens of would-be python hunters showed up for some last-minute training in snake handling Saturday morning at the University of Florida Fort Lauderdale Research and Education Center in Davie.

The training came down to common sense: Drink water, wear sunscreen, don't get bitten by anything and don't shoot anyone.

Many of the onlookers dressed in camouflage, though they probably didn't have to worry about spooking the snakes. They would have a much harder time spotting the splotchy, tan pythons in the long green grasses and woody brush of the Everglades.

"It's advantage-snake," mechanical engineer Dan Keenan concluded after slashing his way through a quarter-mile of scratchy sawgrass, dried leaves and woody overgrowth near a campsite in the Big Cypress National Preserve, which is about 50 miles southeast of Naples and is supervised by the National Park Service.

Keenan, of Merritt Island, and friend Steffani Burd of Melbourne, a statistician in computer security, holstered large knives and pistols on their hips, so they'd be ready for any python that crossed their path. The snakes can grow to more than 20 feet in length.

The most useful tool they had, though, was the key fob to their car. Burd wanted to know that they hadn't wandered too far into the wilderness, so Keenan clicked the fob until a reassuring beep from their car chirped softly through the brush.

The recommended method for killing pythons is the same for killing zombies: a gunshot to the brain, or decapitation to reduce the threat. (The People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals doesn't approve of the latter method, though.)

Pythons are kind of the zombies of the Everglades, though their infestation is less deadly to humans. The snakes have no natural predators, they can eat anything in their way, they can reproduce in large numbers and they don't belong here.

Florida currently prohibits possession or sale of the pythons for use as pets, and federal law bans the importation and interstate sale of the species.

Wildlife experts say pythons are just the tip of the invasive species iceberg. Florida is home to more exotic species of amphibians and reptiles than anywhere else in the world, said John Hayes, dean of research for the University of Florida's Institute for Food and Agricultural Sciences.

Roughly 2,050 pythons have been harvested in Florida since 2000, according to the conservation commission. It's unknown exactly how many are slithering through the wetlands.

Officials hope the competition will help rid the Everglades of the invaders while raising awareness about the risks that exotic species pose to Florida's native wildlife.

Keenan and Burd emerged from the Everglades empty-handed Saturday, but they planned to return Sunday, hoping for cooler temperatures that would drive heat-seeking snakes into sunny patches along roads and levees.

Burd still deemed the hunt a success. "For me, I take back to my friends and community that there is a beautiful environment out here. It's opening the picture from just the python issue to the issue of how do we protect our environment," she said.

Even police shocked by gore in face-mauling attack

"It was not only grotesque, it was just very sad, the amount of blood."

By JENNIFER KAY

May 29, 2012

MIAMI (AP) — It is being called one of this city's goriest crimes: A naked man was on top of another nude man along a busy highway, biting into the man's face, tearing it to pieces. A police officer arrived to help, but the maunder growled at him and continued to chew away, stopping only when he was shot to death.

Miami police said little Tuesday about the attack, which took place Saturday afternoon in the shadow of The Miami Herald headquarters. Surveillance video from the newspaper's security camera showed cars, motorcycles, pedestrians and bicyclists passing by.

The victim, identified as 65-year-old Ronald Poppo, a homeless man who lived under the causeway, was in critical condition.

"He had his face eaten down to his goatee. The forehead was just bone. No nose, no mouth," said Sgt. Armando Aguilar, president of the Miami Fraternal Order of Police. "In my opinion, he just happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time."

Sgt. Javier Ortiz, vice president of the Miami Fraternal Order of Police, said it was one of the bloodiest "and goriest scenes I've ever been to."

"It was not only grotesque, it was just very sad, the amount of blood. It was very sad to see what happened to this gentleman that had his face eaten," Ortiz said.

It's not clear what led Rudy Eugene, 31, to attack Poppo. Eugene's ex-wife, Jenny Ductant, told WPLG-TV, said he was somewhat paranoid.

"I wouldn't say he had mental problem but he always felt like people was against him ... No one was for him, everyone was against him," she told the station. She and Eugene's mother declined comment when reached by The Associated Press.

Larry Vega was riding his bicycle off the causeway, which connects downtown Miami with Miami Beach, when he saw the attack.

"The guy was, like, tearing him to pieces with his mouth, so I told him, 'Get off!'" Vega told Miami television station WSVN (<http://bit.ly/L6kwWt>). "The guy just kept eating the other guy away, like, ripping his skin."

Vega flagged down the Miami police officer, who can be seen exiting his car on the Herald video. Vega said the officer repeatedly ordered the attacker to get off. Eugene just picked his head up and growled at the officer before continuing to maul his victim, Vega said.

The officer shot Eugene, but he just kept chewing, Vega said. The officer fired again, killing Eugene.

Vega refused to comment when reached by The Associated Press, saying he wanted to put what he witnessed behind him.

Detective William Moreno would not release details about the shooting, citing the ongoing investigation. The Miami-Dade County medical examiner declined to provide any information until after the autopsy, which was scheduled for Tuesday. Police have not released details from the autopsy and it could be weeks before the results of toxicology tests are available.

Ortiz said the officer, who is part of a crisis intervention team and trained to deal with the mentally ill, had no choice but to fire.

"He's clearly shaken up," Ortiz said, adding that the officer had been administratively reassigned pending an investigation, as is standard after an officer-involved shooting.

After the shooting, the Herald's video zooms in on the scene. Most of it is blocked by an overpass, but two sets of uncovered legs can be seen. One set never moves, while the other twists and turns as if the person is in pain.

"It was just a blob of blood," Vega said. "You couldn't really see, it was just blood all over the place."

Court records show that Poppo has several arrests for public intoxication.

According to Miami-Dade court records, Eugene had been arrested for multiple misdemeanors, mostly marijuana-related charges. The most recent arrest was in 2009. The Herald reported that he played football at a Miami area high school in the late 1990s.

Ives Eugene, who identified himself as Rudy Eugene's uncle, described his nephew as a "nice and hard-working" man who washed cars at a local dealership.

He said his nephew had asked his girlfriend to borrow her car, but she said no. "So he rode the bicycle, and he never came back home," he said.

Face-chewing victim will have surgery, long recovery

"The human mouth is basically filthy."

By JENNIFER KAY

May 30, 2012

MIAMI (AP) — A homeless man whose face was mostly chewed off in a bizarre, vicious attack faces a bigger threat from infection than from the injuries themselves, according to experts on facial reconstruction. He will require months of treatment to rebuild his features and be permanently disfigured.

Though gruesome, such severe facial injuries are generally not life threatening. The most serious risk to Ronald Poppo as he remained hospitalized Wednesday were germs that may have been introduced by the bites of the naked man who attacked him. One of the 65-year-old's eyes was also gouged out.

"The human mouth is basically filthy," said Dr. Seth Thaller, the chief of plastic and reconstructive surgery at the University of Miami's Miller School of Medicine.

It's not clear why Poppo was attacked Saturday afternoon by 31-year-old Rudy Eugene alongside a busy highway. Police have released few details about the attack, but surveillance video from a nearby building shows Eugene pulling Poppo from the shade, stripping and pummeling him before appearing to hunch over and then lie on top of him.

A witness described Eugene ripping at Poppo's face with his mouth and growling at a Miami police officer who ordered him to get off the homeless man. The officer shot and killed Eugene.

Eugene's younger brother said that he was a sweet person who didn't drink much or use hard drugs.

"I wish they didn't kill him so he could tell us exactly what happened. This is very uncharacteristic of him," said the brother, who asked for anonymity to protect his family from harassment.

Police union officials representing the officer said the scene on the MacArthur Causeway was one of the goriest they had ever seen.

"He had his face eaten down to his goatee. The forehead was just bone. No nose, no mouth," said Sgt. Armando Aguilar, president of the Miami Fraternal Order of Police.

Poppo has been in critical condition in recent days, but police didn't give an update on his condition Wednesday.

Thaller, who is not treating Poppo, and other plastic surgeons said the rebuilding of Poppo's face would happen in stages after doctors try to keep his wounds clean, salvage viable tissue and determine a plan for skin grafts. Protecting his remaining eye and maintaining an airway are priorities.

To keep the wounds clean, doctors use grafts of the patient's skin, cadaver skin or synthetic skin to cover the exposed bone or cartilage, said Dr. Blane Shatkin, a plastic surgeon and director of the wound healing center at Memorial Hospital Pembroke in South Florida. The coverage would act like a dressing, protecting the wound as it heals.

Poppo's lifestyle and health before the attack could determine how doctors proceed and whether they eventually consider a facial transplant, plastic surgeons said. Poppo had been homeless for more than 30 years, previously survived a gunshot wound and faced multiple charges of public intoxication, among other arrests.

"You would not just take this guy to the OR for a face transplant — you really have to go in a staged fashion. You save what you can and use what you have available first, don't burn any bridges and move forward slowly," Shatkin said. "And you have to see what he wants."

Psychological care is important to the recovery, and patients need to participate in the decision-making process, said Dr. Bohdan Pomahac, a surgeon at Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston. He performed a facial transplant on a Connecticut woman who was mauled by a friend's pet chimpanzee in 2009.

"I think the patient has to be able to cope with the injury and the trauma and needs to figure out what has happened. It often takes them weeks to understand what has happened," Pomahac said.

The will to live is as important for Poppo's survival as medical technology, said Ara Chekmayan, spokesman for Pomahac's patient, Charla Nash. Nash lost her nose, lips eyelids and hands.

The chairman of the Miami-Dade County Homeless Trust, Ron Book, said the last time Poppo sought help from the agency finding someplace to sleep was in 2004. However, on Thursday the Jungle Island zoo on the MacArthur Causeway called for an outreach team to deal with Poppo, who had been living on the roof of the attraction's parking garage.

Poppo was belligerent and aggressive, but he was not arrested, Book said.

The nearly 18-minute attack Saturday in the shadow of The Miami Herald headquarters was captured by the building's security cameras.

The newspaper posted the uncensored video online late Tuesday.

In the Herald video (<http://hrlid.us/N9GIGB>), a naked Eugene walks west on the sidewalk alongside an off-ramp of the causeway. A bicyclist speeds past Eugene just as he turns to something in the shade, in an area obscured by the tops of palm trees.

After a couple minutes, Eugene rolls Poppo's body into the sun and begins stripping off his pants and pummeling him. Later, the footage shows Eugene pull Poppo farther up the sidewalk. Though the view is partially obstructed by the mass transit rail above, Eugene appears to hunch over and lie on top of Poppo.

The footage shows a bicyclist slowly pedaling past the men about halfway through the attack, followed by a car slowly driving on the shoulder of the ramp. Cars regularly pass by the scene from the beginning of the attack, but their view was likely obstructed by a waist-high concrete barrier.

Two more bicyclists cross the scene before a police car drives the wrong way up the ramp nearly 18 minutes into the attack.

An officer gets out of the car and appears to do a double-take at the scene before pulling out his gun. He fatally shot Eugene, apparently within a minute of arriving, but the shooting is obscured from view by the tracks.

Miami police have not released 911 calls. The Miami-Dade County medical examiner declined to discuss Eugene's autopsy. It could be weeks before the results of toxicology tests are available.

Eugene left his girlfriend in Fort Lauderdale around 5 a.m. Saturday, then stopped at a friend's in North Miami. He said he was on his way to Urban Beach Week, a series of outdoor concerts and parties on Miami Beach, according to his brother. No one knows what led to him walking naked on the causeway.

"Where's the car, where are his clothes? We don't know where his stuff is," the brother said. "How did he get there naked in the middle of the daytime and nobody saw him?"

Eugene had a job detailing cars at a dealership and had been arrested a handful of times on marijuana-related charges, his brother said.

"I don't understand any of this," the brother said. "I know my brother, and anybody else who knows him knows he was a genuinely sweet person."

Haitian teenager gets a new face at Miami hospital

"She looked like a rhinoceros or a hippopotamus or a big cow."

By JENNIFER KAY

November 27, 2006

MIAMI (AP) — The 3-year-old girl in the photograph wore a white dress and cap. She had her mother's nose, big brown eyes and two baby teeth peeking through her wide smile.

But what Marlie Casseus now saw in the mirror bore no resemblance to the girl in the picture. All that was left of Marlie's nose were two distended nostrils. A single tooth poked through the membrane of her upper lip. Her reflection barely looked like a girl.

As a toddler, Marlie looked like she had the bone structure and symmetry of a beauty. By the time she was 14, whatever was under Marlie's skin looked like a basketball, two eggplants, a Voodoo curse, a hippo's snout, a second stillborn head.

Hidden in her family's Port-au-Prince home from the pointing of strangers, Marlie compared her reflection with the photograph. She peered at both images with her one good eye, then to her mother's face. Why had this happened to her? One night last year she stood at the mirror with a knife, making slashing motions, as if she wanted to cut the massive deformity out of her face and end her misery.

It would take a team of Miami doctors to cut away the 16-pound monster and release the girl inside.

Dr. Jesus Gomez, the maxillofacial surgeon who led the medical teams operating on Marlie at Holtz Children's Hospital in Miami, says the tumor-like mass that engulfed Marlie's face probably started growing when she was as young as 5.

The bone was softening and seeping into the hollow spaces of her skull.

Maleine Antoine says Marlie's speech was never really clear, and her permanent teeth weren't coming in, but she never worried until she noticed the two small bumps growing on either side of her 8-year-old daughter's nose.

She consulted the family's dentist, because Marlie was beginning to complain that her mouth and throat hurt when she ate.

The dentist was the first Haitian doctor to examine Marlie and say there was nothing he could do.

With no advanced medical imaging in the impoverished Caribbean country, no one could see that the bumps were not growing on the bone -- the bumps were the bone growing wrong, ballooning and turning to jelly, riddled with pockets of liquid and air.

What everyone did see was Marlie's nose stretching into a snout, her eyes sliding farther apart and her upper lip pushing out past her chin.

Marlie kept going to school, but spent most of her time learning to hide behind walls and trees, avoiding the other students who pointed at her face. Passengers on the city's buses yelled out questions as they backed away from her: Did her mother anger the Voodoo spirits? Was the girl cursed? Was she a cow?

Antoine transferred her daughter to a trade school when she was 10. The teachers there coddled Marlie and explained to the other students that her face was sick, but her mind and her hands were fine.

Marlie stayed at the trade school until she was 12, when she could no longer speak -- the choked sounds she now made were barely words at all.

She retreated home to do the ironing, wash her family's clothes, clean their concrete block house and cook their meals. Her father bought her a black-and-white TV to keep her company. For the next two years, she hid indoors, and the neighbors forgot about the family's middle daughter.

By chance, Marlie's father caught a local news broadcast last summer about Gina Eugene, a Miami woman who, with her twin sister, runs a Haitian children's charity.

Eugene says the father only mentioned "something little" growing on his daughter's face when he called her the next day. Sitting in the family's dark kitchen, she did not expect to see the face that followed the labored wheezing she heard coming toward her.

"Something little" was a 16-pound mass under Marlie's skin. Her upper lip protruded like a second forehead, and the girl supported her head with her hands.

"I thought it was an animal with a human body, or two heads -- I didn't know what I was looking at," Eugene said. "She looked like a rhinoceros or a hippopotamus or a big cow."

The 14-year-old's upper lip was starting to blacken and rot. With its blood vessels obliterated by the mass, the tissue was dying. So was Marlie.

Early last month, Marlie sat in a hospital bed playing a handheld video game, oblivious to the circling stream of doctors and nurses. Her new life had begun in December much like this -- in a hospital gown, with the Eugene twins holding her mother's hands and singing "God Bless America" as she was wheeled into the operating room.

Three surgeries later and ready for a fourth, the teen no longer hides behind her mother from strangers.

The week before her October surgery, she makes eye contact and stretches her foot toward a reporter. The mass is gone from her face, but she still cocks her head to the right as if the 16 extra pounds still weighed down her head.

Her lips make the shape of a diamond, but don't close completely. She drools slightly into a blue terry cloth bib around her neck.

Dr. Gomez says the lesion that distorted Marlie's face probably will not grow back, though her condition -- a rare form of polyostotic fibrous dysplasia, a nonhereditary genetic disease -- requires lifelong monitoring.

Marlie and Antoine have been living at the Ronald McDonald House at the Jackson Memorial Medical Center. Marlie draws hearts and Haitian and American flags to send to her sisters and father in Port-au-Prince, or give away to Gomez and the Eugene twins.

Before her last surgery, Gomez told Marlie to start practicing her whistle to strengthen the facial muscles she'll need to eat and speak.

Marlie has not eaten real food in a year, just the liquid diet pumped directly into her stomach. Not surprisingly, her favorite TV programs are cooking shows.

A scar loops from one tear duct, down around the reduced nostrils and the back up to the other side. The new nose is flat, but Antoine says Marlie can pick up the scent of McDonald's when they drive past the fast-food restaurant on excursions off the hospital campus.

Marlie has a book bag packed for the day she returns home. She used to count down the days to each surgery. Now she asks her mother when she'll be starting school.

"She's happy she will go back to school," Antoine said, "because she will be like everyone else."

Haitian teen finds normalcy after facial growth removed

"Marlie can eat now."

By JENNIFER KAY

January 1, 2007

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (AP) — As her cousins, sisters and parents settled down at the kitchen table for a meal, Marlie Casseus surveyed the plates of soft foods before her: balls of fried egg and cheese, beans and rice, tomatoes sliced as thin as paper, a cake with white frosting.

Foods she, too, could eat, now that she was no longer weighed down by a 16-pound tumor-like mass pushing out from beneath her nose and mouth.

The Christmas Day meal was one of the first in years where she did not lay a heavy head on the family's table and slurp mashed-up morsels through what was left of her mouth and only airway.

The 14-year-old held her head up and spooned small bites of food into her mouth. Haitian doctors had told her parents she would never do anything this normal.

Marlie underwent four surgeries in the past year at Holtz Children's Hospital in Miami to remove the growth, recenter her eyes, define her nose and rebuild her mouth and jaw so that she could again swallow and speak. The mass was replaced with titanium plates and a hard polymer customized to fit under her skin as a synthetic skeleton.

She will return to Miami in about six months for a checkup. There's no sign of regrowth from the mass that threatened her life and stretched her features so far apart that only her nostrils, eyes and a single tooth cutting through her bloated upper lip were recognizable, according to her doctors.

"Marlie can eat now," her older sister Stellecie Casseus said through an interpreter. "Before, Marlie used to feel different, between herself and other people. Now Marlie may not feel that way because she can eat."

Everyone knows how Marlie feels these days. She's finally talking, even howling at the indignity of cold bath water on Christmas morning, after more than two years of near silence since the growth pushed her tongue behind her mouth and made each breath and meal a life-or-death struggle.

Marlie emerged from Port-au-Prince's airport Dec. 23 as the sun was setting, casting shadows on the dusty, potholed roads lit mostly by candle because electricity is scarce. Her mother softly sang a French hymn as the sport utility vehicle they were riding in lurched and sped toward the center of the Haitian capital, taking Marlie farther away from the artificially lit sterility of the Florida hospital campus.

She didn't come home completely cured. A rare form of polyostotic fibrous dysplasia, a nonhereditary genetic disorder that causes bone to balloon and jellify, affects every bone in her body: She is bowlegged, her fingers and feet are swollen and crooked and one shoulder rises higher than the other.

Still, Marlie - who can't articulate consonants without teeth - wants to go to school, and she wants to be a cook, her mother, Maleine Antoine translates.

Teeth implants are still at least two years away, after additional surgeries on her nose and jaw; U.S. doctors are waiting for her to stop growing before finishing a facial reconstruction they began last year.

A small, curious crowd surrounded Marlie, her mother and nearly a dozen of their suitcases and duffel bags in the airport parking lot. They asked what the U.S. doctors had done for Marlie's face, which bears thin scars around her nose and mouth but is more symmetrical and flattened than when she left for Miami last year.

After a French-language Mass at a nearby church the next morning, Marlie indulged friends of her mother with hugs and smiles, but the peering stares of beggar children outside sent her bolting in tears to hide in the pews.

Those kinds of stares in public forced Marlie to retreat from school at age 12 and hide in her home for nearly two years, even from her neighbors. They had not known she was coming home and were shocked to hear her voice as she ambled across the broken concrete front yard they share. Marlie tilted back her head to show them the scar on her throat from a tracheotomy that had helped her breathe, and lifted her shirt to show another scar near her belly button from a feeding tube removed days before.

Like most other homes in Port-au-Prince, a concrete wall shields the yard from the street. As relieved as they are that Marlie is no longer burdened by the 16-pound mass and slowly braving the

community that scorned her disfigurement, her parents hope to shelter her behind that wall a little longer.

The family lives in a relatively middle-class neighborhood near the center of Port-au-Prince, where the average citizen lives on less than \$2 a day. The city has been plagued by a recent wave of child kidnappings and Marlie's father won't even allow 15-year-old Stellecie to leave the house alone. He also brought an armed police officer friend to the airport to pick up Marlie.

It will not be easy holding Marlie back. Her mother brought home a hospital wheelchair to push Marlie through the city's winding streets, but the teen is getting stronger and walking longer distances without needing a lift over the uneven pavement.

She'll settle for tutoring from Stellecie, but she yearns to attend school. The dark home is a comfortable refuge, but Marlie no longer wants to hide.

Kansas Woman's Plane Missing Over Africa

“I’m just praying she will reappear and give me hell and say, ‘You gave me a lousy airline.’”

By JENNIFER KAY

August 23, 2007

MIAMI (AP) — The first few hours of silence after Lori Love's plane disappeared off West Africa didn't come as much of a surprise to those who know her.

The "lone wolf," as she likes to call herself, doesn't like mid-air chatter. She had asked for this solo flight through long stretches of sky not covered by radar.

A longtime friend, Steve Hall, had hired her to ferry a single-engine Beechcraft from Florida to South Africa. She exchanged a cheerful, routine radio transmission with another pilot about an hour after taking off from Accra, Ghana, last Friday night, Hall said.

That was the last time anyone heard from Love. Ghana air traffic controllers failed to establish contact with her about 15 minutes later. Her expected arrival time in Windhoek, Namibia, late Saturday morning passed without her wheels touching down.

Most troubling: The ace pilot and skydiver never activated a handheld emergency beacon that would have tipped rescuers to her location by GPS, Hall said.

Search efforts from several African countries have stopped tracing her expected flight path, failing for almost a week to find any sign of her plane or her emergency raft, Hall said.

Love would not have taken off from the Ghanian capital if she hadn't been confident her plane was fine, Hall said. A minor electrical problem in the plane's alternator switch had been fixed during a brief layover in Accra, and she had 18 hours of fuel for the nearly 2,300-mile flight south to Namibia.

"Something catastrophic must have happened," he said. It's not known whether the electrical glitch resurfaced, or if it was part of some fatal problem.

"I'm just praying she will reappear and give me hell and say, 'You gave me a lousy airplane,'" he said.

If it flies, Love knows how to keep it in the air. The 57-year-old woman raised in Wichita, Kan., was certified to teach flying and skydiving, rig parachutes and fly helicopters, gliders, single-

and multiengine planes that could touch down on land or sea, according to Federal Aviation Administration records.

She logged 15,000 hours as a pilot and completed 4,000 parachute jumps before a bad back made her give up skydiving in 1999, her colleagues said. Love never stays in one place too long, but she ran her own airport in Alabama for five years before feeling the itch to move again.

She keeps her late 1970s Dodge Maxivan rolling, too _ 555,000 miles and counting, Hall said, tuned with a set of tools at least as old as the vehicle.

"Everything I own is inside it," Love told a National Air and Space Museum photographer for a 1997 book about women pilots. "I honestly thought by now I would be tired of that lifestyle and be ready to settle down, but it hasn't happened."

She's had a couple scrapes: a brief marriage after college, a tangle of power lines that dumped her crop duster upside-down in a cotton field. Nothing she couldn't walk away from.

Love wasn't a daredevil child, but it was hard to keep her on the ground once she picked up skydiving at the University of Kansas, said her father, Loren Fred.

She once parachuted off a utility pole in Oklahoma, he recalled. She also dropped tools from her helicopter to lumberjacks in Alaska, and defied a chauvinist crop duster in Arizona.

"He wasn't going to hire a woman pilot, but he consented to put her in a plane and in the most difficult positions and see if she couldn't get out of them," Fred said. "She did, and she got the job."

Flying also eased the strain of scoliosis on her back, her father told The Associated Press.

"That was a relief, really," he said.

After years of moving around the country, Love settled for a time in Gainesville, Fla., to pursue a doctorate in special education at the University of Florida. Three years ago, she gave up her studies and returned home to Wichita to care for Fred, 95, when his health began to fail.

Love just started ferrying planes again, commuting from Kansas to Tampa whenever Hall had work for her. She wants to make enough money so she could take time off this winter to finally finish her dissertation, her father said.

Hall looks for a special kind of pilot for the international aircraft delivery company he runs out of Tampa: those who can handle flying alone nonstop for nearly a day at a time to remote air strips.

Love's independence makes her perfect for the job, Hall said.

"She didn't like to travel with people," he said. "When she didn't call the other pilot after one hour, that's Lori. She didn't want to talk to you."

They have worked together on and off since 1978, and she called him up eight months ago looking for work ferrying aircraft again.

She asked for the long flights to India and Russia, even Afghanistan if he'd let her. Hall trusts her as "a good stick."

On her last job, she had hopscotched from Tampa to Maine, the Azores, the Canary Islands and then Ghana over eight days. She wanted to make it to Cape Town, South Africa, in just one more jump after Ghana, but Hall persuaded her to add the brief rest in Namibia. Heading there, she disappeared.

Love lives for the adrenaline rush of flying, but she leaves nothing to chance back on the ground. She always leaves a note that begins, "In the event I don't come back...," on a counter in her apartment, detailing instructions for taking care of her ailing father and beloved 22-pound cat, Jeda, friends said.

"It was kind of a schoolteacher-y thing. She was very organized like that," said Judi Ladd, a fellow UF graduate student in Gainesville who has been entrusted with Love's cat.

Love is a vegetarian and dotes on animals. She volunteers to round up feral cats in Wichita, where she had been piloting skydiving trips over the past year.

"It was kind of interesting to see her around the airport. She looked like somebody's grandmother more than a pilot extraordinaire," said Martin Myrtle, owner of Wichita's Air Capital Drop Zone.

Love is pursuing her special education doctorate to advocate for the severely handicapped, Ladd said.

She wasn't worried about the long trip, Ladd said.

"She had done that run at least once before," Ladd said. "To her, it was pretty run-of-the-mill, just back and forth."

Haitian artist paints boat migrants as Voodoo gods

"It's one way I can give them importance and respect."

By JENNIFER KAY

October 11, 2009

MIAMI (AP) — The officers on deck confront the Voodoo love goddess with broad shoulders and stoic faces, eyes darkened by sunglasses. She pauses on the gangplank, barefoot but resplendent in a gold crown and ruffled pink dress.

The goddess in Haitian artist Edouard Duval-Carrie's 1996 painting, "Ezili Intercepted," is bewildered, bemused maybe, but not desperate. She seems to smooth her hair with bejeweled fingers. Ezili is notorious for charming the men in her path.

Duval-Carrie's migrant deity is so different from the Haitian migrants photographed with U.S. or Caribbean authorities when their overcrowded vessels founder. Lying prone on boat decks or stretchers, they have no names, no power.

Thousands of Haitians attempt to flee their Caribbean homeland of more than 9 million by boat each year. Detained at sea or on U.S. and Caribbean beaches, they appear as blurry masses of refugees.

In painting after painting and a flotilla of sculptures, Duval-Carrie has depicted these migrants as vibrant Voodoo gods.

He has had many opportunities to reflect on their journeys — the U.S. Coast Guard has interdicted an annual average of 1,524 Haitian migrants for each of the past 15 fiscal years. The lucky ones who reach "the other side of the water" without notice find protection in an underground economy. The ocean swallows countless dead.

"The news is so dramatic that I'm pulled right back. When will there be a respite?" Duval-Carrie said recently in his studio in Miami's Little Haiti neighborhood. "I wish it would go away and I could concentrate on something else."

But the migrants keep coming, and there are always victims to grieve. The bodies of three women who perished when their overloaded sailboat capsized off South Florida in May were buried recently

in a Miami-area cemetery beneath plaques reading "Unknown." None of the 16 survivors professed to knowing them, and no relatives came forward to identify them.

"It's one way I can give them importance and respect," Duval-Carrie said. "There's a total disrespect here for them."

He strands the same cast of colorful gods in wooden boats or on rocky shores: the lord of the cemetery in his signature black top hat; the gatekeeper to the spiritual world; the god of healing; the love goddess who resembles Carmen Miranda; the coiled serpent god; temperamental twins; and the skeletal spirit of the dead.

Their faces — sometimes serene, sometimes leering — comprise a dual warning. Authorities outside Haiti should respect the migrants' courage, Duval-Carrie said. Meanwhile, Haiti is losing its identity through constant migration.

In two panels of a recently completed, silver-toned installation titled "Memory Without History," finely dressed skeletons join the gods' voyage.

"They're all dead already," Duval-Carrie said.

He paints migrants as an expatriate himself. He was born in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, in 1954. His family fled the Duvalier regime for Puerto Rico when he was boy and did not return to Haiti until he was a teenager. The homecoming lasted a year before Duval-Carrie moved to New York to finish high school. He studied art in Montreal and Paris, then settled about 15 years ago in Miami, where he was delighted to find a part of the city called Little Haiti.

"He's both within and without this profound Voodoo culture," said Donald Cosentino, professor of world arts and cultures at UCLA. The university's Fowler Museum of Cultural History is one of three museums in the past decade to showcase Duval-Carrie's ongoing exploration of migration and Haitian Voodoo, a blend of Christian tenets and African religions.

"He knows profoundly the plight of his own people, but he also knows how that fits into American society," Cosentino said.

Duval-Carrie first took up migration as a theme in 1989 for a Paris exhibition. "Altar of the Nine Slaves" shows nine green-headed men chained in Africa, crowded into a boat and then at work in sugar cane fields in Haiti.

The slaves' Middle Passage never ends, as they mingle with the gods throughout Duval-Carrie's subsequent work. The boats mostly drift, sometimes aided by the serpent god bridging the distance between the palm-lined shores of Haiti and menacing Coast Guard vessels guarding the glittering lights of Miami. Mystical "power points" bind land, sea and sky in webs of sparkling dots.

The boat gods' few landfalls appear traumatic. They shipwreck on tiny reefs jutting out of the water, and when they do reach Miami, the city seems to blind them. Searchlights block the entrance of a lone migrant in "Vigilante City," while the gods stand stunned under a Miami Beach causeway in "The Landing."

Duval-Carrie calls his work reflective, not political, though Haitian migrants represent the effects of political and economic policies throughout the region.

"These are people, they're real people. There should be a basic minimum of respect and understanding," he said. "You cannot just treat them because they're black or they're poor any differently than your poor people here. And it's a reflection on the United States, how they behave."

The dark sense of humor evident in his work bubbles up as Duval-Carrie considers what he could paint if the boats ceased coming. "Something lofty or something banal. I would like to paint flowers," he said, chuckling.

He probably won't have that opportunity soon. About 40 Haitian migrants were detained in early September after their boat came ashore in a storm in Providenciales, Turks and Caicos; 15 people died and dozens were missing after a sailboat packed with Haitians struck a reef near the same island in July. Eleven Haitians were detained as they landed at a South Florida beach in July. Earlier this month, the Coast Guard repatriated 164 Haitians found in a freighter in the Bahamas.

"The problem hasn't come to an end yet," said Peter Boswell, senior curator at the Miami Art Museum. "He feels the need to continue to address it and not let it be a period in his art. The situation in Haiti hasn't really changed enough for him to take on a new subject."

Threatened butterfly vanishes from Florida Keys refuge

"Even if Miami blue goes extinct, we should still remove iguanas."

By JENNIFER KAY

February 15, 2012

BAHIA HONDA KEY, Fla. (AP) — For more than a year, Bahia Honda State Park biologist Jim Duquesnel traversed the nature sanctuary with two hopes. He wanted to see a Miami blue butterfly and rid the Florida Keys outpost of as many iguanas as he could.

The reason: The Central American invader may be driving the Miami blue into extinction by eating the leaves where it lays its eggs -- a bit of butterfly caviar in every bite.

No confirmed Miami blues have been seen on Bahia Honda since July 2010, and with each passing day it becomes less likely any exist there. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service last August issued an emergency listing of the Miami blue as an endangered species and three similar butterflies -- cassius blue, ceranus blue and nickerbean blue -- as threatened. The emergency listing continues through April, and federal officials may make it permanent.

In the listing, federal officials noted that the only surviving Miami blue population appears to be a few hundred living in the Key West National Wildlife Refuge, about 50 miles west of Bahia Honda.

Still, Duquesnel has tried to keep hope alive -- and eradicate the iguana from his 600-acre park in the Middle Keys.

Perhaps, he says, a half dozen Miami blues survive on some corner of the island, waiting for the right weather to emerge.

"And if that happens and the weather starts changing and if Miami blues start breeding, we want them to find this a good place to be doing that like they used to," he says. "In this case, that means it will be lacking in iguanas."

If the Miami blue makes a comeback, it wouldn't be the first time.

The pale blue butterfly -- about the size of a quarter -- was once ubiquitous in the hardwood hammocks, pines and scrub along the Florida coasts from the Keys north to Tampa Bay on the Gulf

Coast and Cape Canaveral on the Atlantic. But the region's development after World War II slowly shrank its habitat until by the early 1990s it was found only in the Keys.

After the monstrous winds of Hurricane Andrew blew through the islands in 1992, no Miami blues were to be found and many thought them extinct.

But seven years later, a colony of 50 was found in Bahia Honda and it slowly grew.

Their population grew into the hundreds, until they were easy to spot year round from public trails. Jaret Daniels, a butterfly specialist at the University of Florida, remembers Miami blues landing on his hat.

"You could always swat them away. There were hundreds," Daniels says. "I'm sure thousands of people walked by with Miami blues flying around them."

Daniels and other scientists collected Miami blues from the park for a captive breeding program at the University of Florida's Maguire Center for Lepidoptera and Environmental Research. Roughly 30,000 were bred in a lab from 2003 to 2010, and Florida scientists transplanted the butterflies in the Upper Keys to try to expand the Miami blue's geographic range.

None of those colonies survived, but scientists clung to hope for the species because a new population of Miami blues was discovered in 2006 on a remote island in the Key West refuge.

But then, after a 2008 drought followed by cold snaps in 2009 and 2010, the population in Bahia Honda began a significant decline. Green iguanas soon emerged as a likely suspect in their demise.

The large, vegetarian lizards, probably the descendants of pets released by their owners when they grew too big or burdensome, had developed a taste for the nickerbean leaves where Miami blues laid their eggs. The nickerbean was among the only plants to quickly recover from the cold snaps, and the iguanas chewed through them, likely eating any butterfly eggs clinging to the leaves.

Duquesnel got the news that the Miami blue had received an emergency endangered listing while making his way to the old Bahia Honda Rail Bridge, brandishing a noose at the end of a long pole, which he uses to catch iguanas. He had set metal traps baited with sliced cherries, nectarines and strawberries in more restricted areas of the park, and now he was stalking the lizard from the public trail.

That day, there was no shortage of butterflies flitting about Bahia Honda: cassius blues and one ceranus blue, rust-and-gray Eastern pygmy blues, gulf fritillaries, skippers, bright orange sulphurs, a black-winged swallowtail and a handful of other species that fluttered away before they could be identified. Duquesnel also caught four iguanas, but saw no Miami blues.

In the winter, volunteer snowbirds help Duquesnel tally butterflies in the park. They carry clipboards with a picture of the Miami blue alongside pictures of the cassius blue, ceranus blue and nickerbean blue.

"I tell the volunteers you only need to identify one butterfly: the Miami blue. If you can do that, then you can help. Anything else is a bonus," Duquesnel says.

By helping to record what species are present in the park, the volunteers are supplying Duquesnel and other scientists with data that may help determine if something besides iguanas contributed to the Miami blue's disappearance. It could be the pressure from development eating up habitat, pesticides, droughts, the effects of climate change, over-collecting by butterfly enthusiasts, cold snaps or accidental harm caused by human behavior -- or something else scientists haven't identified yet.

But iguanas are something Duquesnel can catch.

When Duquesnel was hired in November 2010, he saw 40 or 50 adult iguanas a day in the park. Now he sees just a couple big ones a day, and they're harder to catch because they've adapted to his hunting and trapping. To keep the lizards guessing, he tries to tag along with tourists walking along the trails.

"They know the difference between looked or gawked at and being stalked," he says.

It's too soon to say whether more than a year of trapping iguanas has had any significant impact other than reducing their numbers, Duquesnel said recently. The iguanas he catches now still have bellies full of nickerbean, and the plants show signs of being nibbled, but whether iguanas or insects are to blame, he can't say.

And if the Miami blue never returns to Bahia Honda, Duquesnel still wants to make the park's environment better for all butterflies landing there.

"Even if Miami blue goes extinct, we should still remove iguanas," he says.

'Uncle Luke' for Miami-Dade Mayor?

"I'm a changed man!"

By JENNIFER KAY

May 16, 2011

MIAMI (AP) _ It's a late Friday night in a Little Havana restaurant when Luther "Luke" Campbell's campaign volunteer suggests announcing to the handful of other diners that a candidate for Miami-Dade County mayor is in their midst.

The former rapper nods in agreement, then jokingly reconsiders as the curly-haired volunteer walks away. Her short-shorts are demure by Miami standards, even practical on a humid night, but maybe the older couple she's approaching will get the idea that his campaign is about booty shaking.

"I'm a changed man!" Campbell says, laughing with three other male volunteers at his table.

The former 2 Live Crew frontman is best known for raunchy rap albums, mostly in the 1980s and 1990s, that were among the first to boast parental advisory stickers, as well as R- and X-rated videos. His legal battles defended freedom of speech, including a U.S. Supreme Court victory that secured an artist's right to parody others' material.

But it's not his "Uncle Luke" rap persona that's running for mayor in Florida's most-populous county: Campbell's campaign is built on decades of community involvement in his hometown. He insists it isn't a publicity stunt or vanity campaign. He wants voters to see him as a fellow angry taxpayer fed up with local politics — money disappearing from the county agencies; poor community policing; mismanagement at the publicly funded hospital; taxpayer money spent on a new Florida Marlins baseball stadium; and a lack of jobs in impoverished neighborhoods.

He touts his business experience as a record company executive to back up his plans to boost the county's economy. The most headline-grabbing plan involves strippers, but not in a "Me So Horny" sort of way — Campbell wants to impose a license fee to dance in strip clubs to raise revenue.

"I'm dead serious. Are you?" reads Campbell's campaign flyers.

Campbell is one of 11 candidates running in the May 24 special election to replace Carlos Alvarez, who was recently ousted in a recall led by billionaire car dealer and former Philadelphia

Eagles owner Norman Braman. Voters outraged over a property tax rate increase and a salary raise for county employees in a struggling economy made Miami-Dade the most populous area, with more than 2.5 million people, ever to recall a local official.

If no one gets a majority, the top two candidates will have a June runoff.

If elected, Campbell promises a model of government transparency. His foibles, after all, are out there for the world to see, including a 2008 VH1 reality show that featured some of his six children, preparations for his wedding and the lewd videos he was selling at the time.

Despite building his legacy in what some would call smut — producing sexually explicit songs, R-rated music videos that set the benchmark for rap and gyrating women, and even porn production — there has been little discussion made of Campbell's past in the campaign. (He makes occasional appearances at clubs, but he's not regularly performing any more, and says he will have someone else run his record label if he becomes mayor. The porn videos are still for sale on the website, but he's not making any new ones).

Some voters who were among dozen or so audience members at a town hall in a predominantly black neighborhood seemed willing to see Campbell for the 50-year-old man he is, instead of the mouthy young rapper he was, especially when he complains about the same issues that concern them — jobs, gas prices, improving education opportunities in poor neighborhoods and the fatal shootings of seven black men by Miami police officers in less than one year.

"We've all done some crazy things in our youth. Consequently, we have to move past that," says Akua Scott, a 50-something writer and educator from Miami Lakes who hasn't decided who she's supporting.

If voters consider Campbell's rap career at all, it should be in the context of his legal battles defending 2 Live Crew's First Amendment rights, says Gary Johnson, executive director of political research for the Transportation Workers Union Local 291.

"It goes back to the heart of the man, who fights for what he believes in, and you have the characteristics of a leader when someone will fight. Would he do that for the people of Dade County?"

That's why he's running for mayor, because he's willing to fight for the people," says Johnson, who also remains undecided about who will get his ballot.

Local elections such as the Miami-Dade County mayor's race often come down to name recognition, and voters may cross ethnic lines to vote for Campbell because they remember him standing up for First Amendment rights, says George Gonzalez, a political science professor at the University of Miami.

But, he asks, will that be enough to sway voters struggling with school cutbacks, joblessness and the real estate market collapse? "Here we are talking about Luther Campbell only because he was a rapper 20 years ago," Gonzalez says.

Campbell was raised in Miami's tough Liberty City, where he's a familiar face through a football program he started more than 20 years ago. He coaches at high schools struggling to meet state standards, and with the pride of a father, brags about the players who made it out of the neighborhood to attend college.

At one candidates' forum, Campbell was asked what headline about his leadership of county government would be after 18 months in office. Campbell's response: "He brought respect back to county government."

When asked how that answer would fly with people familiar with Campbell's vulgar exploits, and he said Miami-Dade residents know he has changed.

"The people here locally, they know me as a community servant. They know me as a disciplinarian, versus people outside of this community," Campbell said. "They'll tell you, 'He don't play about his community.'"

Campbell says he learned politics through the court cases his rapping seemed to inspire, though he wasn't completely unprepared. His mother named him after the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. and an uncle insisted he read the newspaper every day.

"You have to know the issues, the law of the land. It's a test. I understood that," Campbell says. "When you got a Senate subcommittee hearing on the lyrics, you get really lost if you're not politically savvy. So I became a political junkie of sorts."

The manager of the Little Havana restaurant comes over to test Campbell about the campaign promises listed on his flyer. He doesn't recognize the former rapper, but he's familiar with political campaigns because all politicians go out of their way to make stops on Miami's famous Calle Ocho.

"How are you going to create jobs?" the manager asks. Campbell explains that in Little Havana, he would support lengthening the annual Calle Ocho daylong carnival to a week to bring in more business.

Entertainment creates jobs, and he did it himself while building his rap empire, he says. With a busboy mopping the floor around them, Campbell cajoles the manager, "I'm no politician, I'm like you: I'm a business owner."

Everglades Crash Hero Emerges Again from the Dark

"I'm one person in the midst of all this. I'm no doctor. I didn't know what to do."

By JENNIFER KAY

December 26, 2007

HOMESTEAD, Fla. (AP) _ An airboat speeding across the saw grass and mud. A ringing in the ears when the engine was cut. Moaning. Screams for help. Desperate gasps at the water's surface. Helicopters in the distance. Christmas carols.

These are the sounds Bud Marquis heard in the black swamp that night.

Then, for more than three decades, there was mostly silence about the Dec. 29, 1972, crash of Eastern Airlines Flight 401 in the Everglades.

Investigators and reporters stopped calling. His airboat rusted in the yard. A rubber boot that had squished through swamp water and jet fuel deteriorated on the back porch, right where he took it off.

Marquis sat alone on his front porch in Homestead, on the Florida peninsula's southern tip.

Acquaintances described a prickly old man in failing health. Sudden interest in the 35-year-old crash disturbed his quiet. He had saved lives, but he wasn't used to people asking about it.

But admirers and some of the 77 people who survived the crash wanted to rebuild his airboat and make sure he finally heard thanks.

"I didn't feel it was any great, heroic thing," Marquis said. "I accept the award because they said I deserved it. I figure I didn't do anything that anybody else wouldn't have done."

Even today, as metropolitan Miami swallows more of the Everglades, getting to the Flight 401 crash site is a half-hour airboat ride over sharp saw grass. No road stretches that deep into the alligator-infested swamp.

On that moonless night, Marquis was teaching a friend how to gig frogs from his airboat. Miami was just a distant pinpoint of light.

Above him, Capt. Robert Loft, First Officer Albert Stockstill and Second Officer Donald Repo steered Flight 401 toward Miami International Airport after an uneventful flight from New York. The jumbo jet carried 163 passengers and 13 crew members.

As they began their approach just after 11:30 p.m., the pilots informed the tower they would have to circle -- the light indicating whether the plane's nose gear was down hadn't illuminated.

Controllers gave their okay and told the crew to maintain an altitude of 2,000 feet.

The pilots engaged the autopilot, and Repo went below the cockpit to inspect the gear.

No one noticed when one of them bumped a steering column, disengaging the autopilot and sending Flight 401 into a slow descent.

About 20 miles west of the airport, the crew received permission to turn back and make another approach. It was then the pilots realized they were just feet above the Everglades. Seven seconds later, the plane's left wing dug into the swamp at 227 mph, sending it pinwheeling.

From 10 miles away, Marquis and his friend saw a fiery orange flash and sped toward it.

Marquis had recently turned to commercial frogging after years as a state game officer. He knew how to pick out island silhouettes in the dark, to feel the changing terrain beneath his boat.

Fifteen minutes later, he reached a levee where he'd thought he'd seen the flash.

Marquis heard a voice: "I can't hold my head up anymore!" Jet fuel seeped into his boots when he jumped into the water to yank the man up. All around, he could see people still strapped in their seats, some turned face down in the water.

"I'm one person in the midst of all this," Marquis said. "I'm no doctor. I didn't know what to do."

Flight attendant Beverly Raposa was gathering survivors around her when she heard the airboat. She started singing Christmas carols, so rescuers would hear them.

"I knew they would find us," said Raposa, now 60.

Helicopters swooped just south of the wreckage. The pilots couldn't see the site -- the fire extinguished in the swamp. Marquis turned his headlamp skyward, waving them toward a nearby levee.

Petty Officer 2nd Class Don Schneck was aboard a Coast Guard helicopter that followed Marquis' light. He dashed to the airboat, carrying only a flashlight, a radio and a hatchet. Marquis ferried him deeper into the wreckage, as far as he could go without running over victims. Schneck waded out alone toward the cockpit; he was the last person to see Loft alive.

"I couldn't even see the crash. It was pitch dark," Schneck said from his Arkansas home.

Marquis pulled survivors from the water and ferried rescuers. At one point, he stopped near Raposa, who had found fellow flight attendant Mercedes "Mercy" Ruiz still strapped into her seat.

Ruiz had serious back and pelvic injuries, but she refused to be airlifted -- she was done with flying. To calm her screams, the rescuers carried her to Marquis' airboat.

Ninety-four passengers, the three pilots and two flight attendants were dead. Investigators marveled that anyone, let alone 77 people, survived.

Marquis, now age 78, greets visitors with a firm handshake and twinkling eyes. Hardly anyone has stopped by in 35 years to discuss the crash.

One survivor, certain Marquis carried him to safety, once showed up with a \$1,000 check.

News clippings Marquis had kept flew out his broken windows when Hurricane Andrew blew through Homestead in 1992, but he is lucky: The storm destroyed the five houses across the street.

Hurricane Wilma brought back the crash. As he talked to a roofer fixing his home after the 2005 storm, their conversation turned to the crash. The roofer posted an online message in June 2006 about Marquis' plight to a Flight 401 crash forum.

Another forum for airboat enthusiasts picked up the discussion and rallied to raise funds for Marquis and restore his airboat. Meanwhile, separate efforts began to recognize the rescuers and bring the survivors together with victims' families.

Marquis met Ruiz, Raposa and other survivors for the first time at a Dec. 3 ceremony. The man he heard struggling to stay above water thanked him.

"Had it not been for Bud, there would not have been a grandpa for the children, there would not have been a grandpa to share the good times in life with," said David Kaplan, now 71.

On Saturday, 60 airboats will carry survivors and victims' relatives to the crash site. Marquis, in his reconditioned craft, will lead. The survivors hope to build a memorial near the site.

"Hopefully this will help the people that haven't been there" since 1972, Marquis said. "They can see what a vast area it is."

Passenger Ron Infantino will join him. He remembers the sound of Marquis' engine. He strained to hear his wife's voice, but she never answered his cries. She had died, 20 days after they married.

"I need to do it. I never was able to see my wife. I need to go back there," said Infantino, a 61-year-old Miami insurance agent. "I always said to myself, 'I don't know where to go.' I've always wanted some kind of recognition for the people who've lost their lives."