

## Spencer Lawton: A Tribute

BY NOEL WRIGHT & DAN WILLOUGHBY

Sadly, our friend and Isle of Hope neighbor Spencer Lawton passed away peacefully at his home on Parkersburg Road on November 13th. Savannah and Isle of Hope lost one of its most earnest and most effective public servants. We all lost a Southern gentleman who left a lasting impact on his community and beyond.

Spencer had deep roots in Savannah and Isle of Hope. While he spent his early childhood in Savannah, Spencer left at a young age and moved to Atlanta where he was raised. He went off to boarding school for high school in Virginia at Woodberry Forest. Spencer's college years, first at the University of Georgia and then at Tulane, were interrupted by a four-year stint in the Air Force. Spencer then finished his formal education at the University of Georgia Law School where he graduated in 1961.

For all his formal education, Spencer would be quick to tell you that he learned the most outside of



school from his own personal reading. He was a voracious reader, a chain reader really, reading book after book after book. If unimpressed by a book, he was its toughest critic. If he liked a book, he became its most ardent evangelist, recommending it to all nearby.

Spencer was a talker and loved conversation and the free discussion of ideas. His active tongue was aided by a quick wit and a near limitless vocabulary. Few things gave Spencer the joy of working

*Continued on Page 8*

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# Front Porch

BY CHRIS BRANTLEY, EDITOR

In 1979, during Christmas break, I packed up my childhood and moved to Savannah from Dalton, GA. I was excited to open the encyclopedia in my 5th grade class and look at the dot off the coast of Georgia on the Atlantic Ocean. It was not too far from Florida which I associated with beaches, the ocean, and our yearly family vacation. Living near the beach seemed like it would be a vacation all year long.

But the morning we drove down Walnut Avenue, the main street in Dalton, and turned on to I-75 South, my sister and I looked back and began to cry. Maybe, my mom did too. We had left our home and were headed to an unfamiliar place. I was starting a new life. All the friends I had known growing up wouldn't be in my classroom when I got back from Christmas holidays. I would go to a new school, have to make new friends, and wear a uniform everyday. I would have to rebuild my place in the world.

Of course, my 11-year-old mind didn't grasp that, but my stomach did. I began to get recurring stomach aches. The doctor found nothing wrong and chalked it up to nerves, the stress of moving to a new, unknown



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place.

A year later, we moved to 7613 Peridot Lane on Isle of Hope. The house had just been built and there were no trees in the yard. My mom planted one. It was a twig growing out of the ground in the middle of the front yard. I had to remember not to

run over it every time I mowed the grass. Frankly, it was a pain in the ass. If you drive by now, you will see a full-grown tree, a reminder of how the years have passed.

While I struggled then, I have no regrets now. When asked where

*Continued on Page 10*



**The Isle of Hope News is a quarterly publication serving Isle of Hope area residents & advertisers.**

It was started by Isle of Hope resident Ed Yannett in 2011 and mails to 2,500 residents in Isle of Hope, Dutch Island, and surrounding areas.

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# The Market at 3 West Ridge: Improving the World

BY KAREN DOVE BARR

*Q. What can you do to improve the world?*

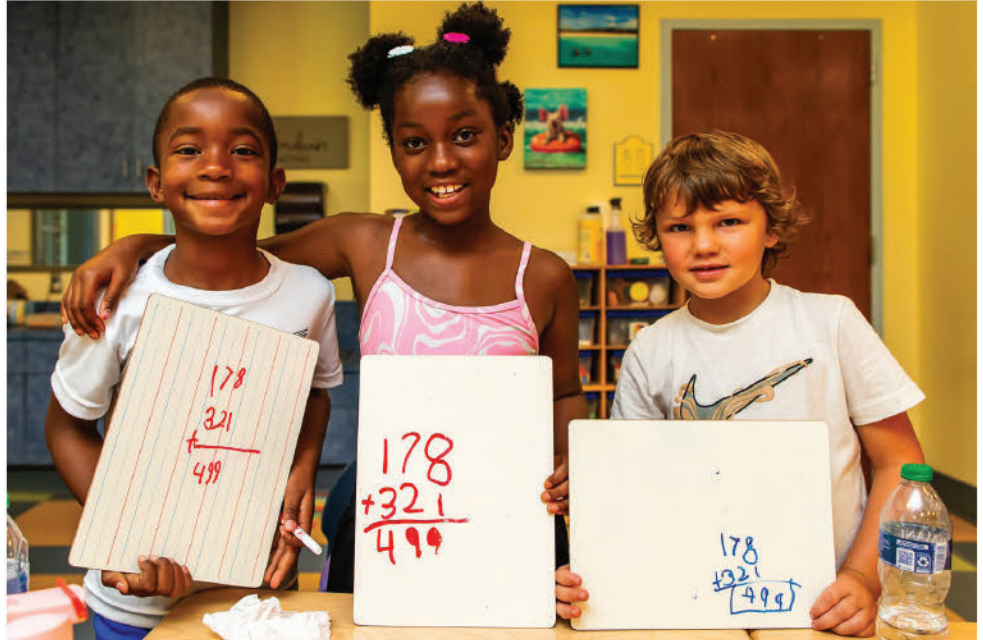
*A. "Education is the most powerful weapon you can use to change the world for the better," said Marian Wright Edelman, who help start the national Headstart Program.*

The Market at 3 West Ridge Street has chosen two charities to support that do just that.

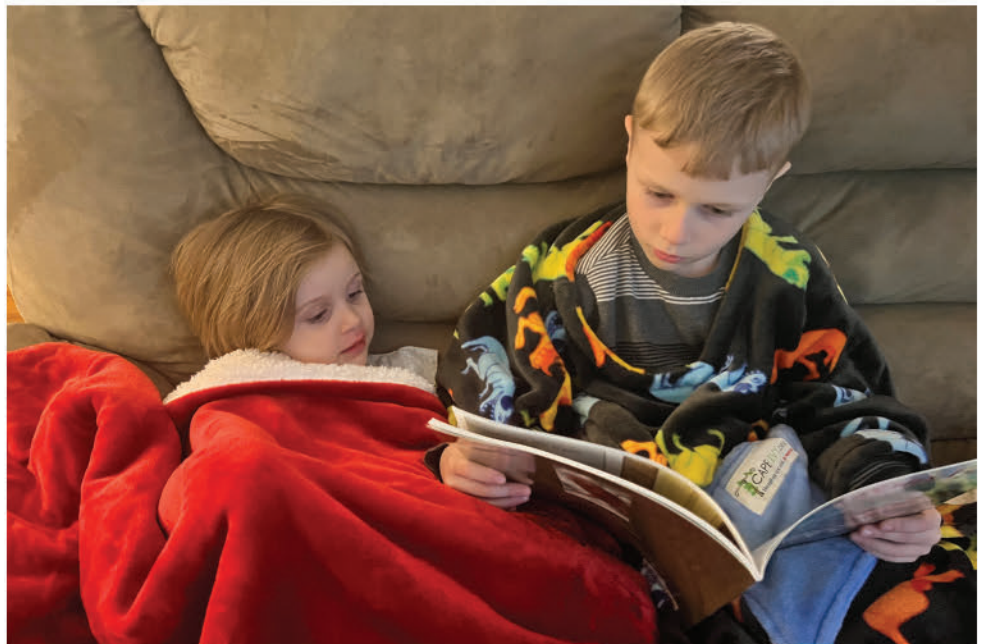
The 2025 Market at 3 West Ridge will be held from Tuesday, February 4th through Thursday February 6th, 2025. The market begins with a festive wine and hors d'oeuvres reception and shopping on Tuesday from 4:30 P.M. till 7:00 P.M. Shopping continues Wednesday from 10:00 A.M. through 5:00 P.M. and Thursday from 10:00 A.M. through 4:00 P.M. Shoppers will have a choice of carefully selected vendors from across the country offering unique clothing, accessories, and home décor merchandise, and a wide assortment of beautiful flowering Spring plants, available for preorder or purchase at the Market. A delicious lunch is provided for purchase on Wednesday and Thursday.

All funds raised from The Market this year will go to non-profits First Readers and Horizons Savannah, which support and supplement the education of at-risk children.

First Readers supplies monthly age-appropriate books to parents who commit to read to their children from birth to age five. Research shows that 85% of a child's brain is developed by age three. Children not exposed to language and literature at this developmental age enter kindergarten at least three years behind children who are read to from birth. First Readers partners with Parent University and The YMCA of



**Participants in Horizons Savannah Summer Camp**



**First Readers Provides Books to At-Risk Children**

Coastal Georgia to identify and serve the children who need them most. The partners provide day care for the children and are able to monitor the cooperation of the parents and the improvement in the child's language

skills. Research shows the single most influential factor in a child's early educational success is being read to at home prior to entering school. First Readers presently serves over five hundred Chatham County children and

has plans to expand that number.

Horizons Savannah continues educating at-risk children where First Readers leaves off. Horizons operates and funds a six-week enrichment program during summer recess for children from kindergarten through eighth grade. This year three schools offered their campuses serving 339 at-risk children. Rigorous academic coaching includes reading, math, and science. The program also includes swimming lessons, yoga, art, photography, dance, and drama. Studies conducted by Horizons show graduates are less chronically absent, score higher on standardized tests, and are less likely to repeat a grade

or receive disciplinary referrals. The number of applicants for the program is more than twice the present number of available openings. Priority is given to already enrolled students and their siblings.

*To support these proven charities, please join us and shop at The Market at 3 West Ridge located at St. Peter's Episcopal Church on Skidaway Island on Feb. 4th, 2025 from 4:30-7:00 P.M., Feb 5th 10:00 A.M.-7:00P.M., and Feb 6th 10:00 A.M.-4:00 P.M. Your contribution is a powerful instrument to better the world for Savannah's most vulnerable children.*

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# Ask?

## Mr. Ed

Straight From The Horse's Mouth



## Ask Yourself: What's Your Personal Philosophy?

WOW, we made it. By the time you read this, the election will be over! Some of us are happy, and some are disappointed. But I am getting older, and I can tell you the sun will come up tomorrow. If you need proof, visit Bluff Drive around 6:45 a.m. or check out the Isle of Hope Neighborhood Facebook Page. Guaranteed, one of our neighborhood, early-rising photographers will post a sunrise picture of our beautiful island! No matter who wins, our lives will go on. Now, it is up to your "PERSONAL PHILOSOPHY" on whether you will thrive or wither in the wake of the results. I have participated in 11 presidential elections, and under EVERY one of them, I have made more money than the one before and been better off over time! Why? My philosophy. If it's to be, it's up to me!

As a real estate agent I hear a lot that the American Dream of homeownership is dead or dying. Not true! You have to ask yourself, what is your "Personal Philosophy"? What do you believe in? Is your glass half empty or full? As my grandfather used to say, when things get hard, do you "cry in your beer" or make things happen for you and your family? Control what we can control! Currently, rates are high, making buying a home seem impossible, with rates on car loans between 5% to 19% and average credit card rates at 25.37%. What can you do? It is hard,

but you can choose your hard!

For example, today's average car payment is \$732 per month. Now, include insurance and gas, and add \$217 for insurance and \$200 for gas and maintenance. On average, driving a new car costs a whopping \$1,149 a month! If that is not crazy enough, the average vehicle depreciates over 60% over 5 years. Below is a chart of the least depreciating car models: At about \$100k, you only lose \$40k on that new Corvette or lose only \$22k if you buy a new Bronco. And listen, these are the cars with the least depreciation! One of the worst is the Audi A7, which loses almost 60% of its value. A new one will set you back about \$70k. In 5 years, you will lose \$42,000!

Invest in things that increase in value, and STOP buying stupid SH#T! Do you need a NEW car? You need a reliable used car to get you to and from work, not a car to flex on the people who see you driving your new money pit! EVERYONE needs a roof over their head! My advice for families is to keep your kids at home as long as possible so they can save enough money to buy their first house! Set their goal to move out once they can afford a down-payment. Now your first house will not be on Bluff Drive, but you can still find a nice home in a nice neighborhood as your first home! It is not your DREAM home but your first home, where you

Least Depreciating Car model	Average resale value after 5 years
2024 Ford Bronco	66.7%
2024 Toyota Tacoma	62.6%
2024 Mercedes-Benz G-Class	61.2%
2024 Toyota Tundra	60.4%
2024 Chevrolet Corvette	59.0%

can watch some YouTube videos to learn how to do fixer-upper projects to increase your equity and trade up in 5 to 10 years!

Remember above: "It is hard, but you can choose hard!" It's hard to save money. It's hard to say no to the millions of temptations in the world that are begging you to waste your money. It's hard to drive an older car when everyone has a new one. It's hard to take

your lunch to work when everyone goes out! It's hard to eat at home when everyone is on Instagram, showing off all the fancy places they eat! But I have seen it with my own two eyes—dozens and dozens of clients who make the hard choices early in life, only to cash out big when they sell their homes! Right now, there are 5 or 6 homes for sale on IOH, and the owners will make almost double their money since they bought their homes! Some will bank more than that! Because rent is like paying 100% interest—you see nothing in return!

Now, I can hear the critics finding things to argue about, and that's to be expected. Ultimately, this comes down to your "PERSONAL PHILOSOPHY." If you disagree, that's okay—good luck renting and setting your hard-earned money on fire. My advice to home buyers is to find a home in an area you love—not necessarily a perfect home, but a neighborhood or community that feels right. Start with what you can afford, and make small improvements over time. By putting in the work, you'll see your home's value and your equity grow steadily, transforming your investment into something truly life-changing.

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## Real Estate Market Activity Isle Of Hope 2024

	Address	List Price	Close Price
Active	50 Richmond Dr	\$989,000	
Active	1 Bransby Dr	\$769,000	
Active	7617 Lynes Ct	\$750,000	
Active	5 Richmond Dr	\$578,000	
Active	23 Dolan Dr	\$499,000	
Active	38 Noble Glen Dr	\$1,200,000	
Active	5 Jameswood Av	\$535,000	
Active	7621 Central Av	\$1,349,000	
UC	35 Flinn Dr	\$799,000	
UC	31 Jameswood Av	\$465,000	
UC	55 Henderson Av	\$750,000	
UC	121 Chriswoodelle Dr	\$875,000	
SOLD	27 Noble Glen Dr	\$1,100,000	\$1,092,000
SOLD	24 Diana Dr	\$725,000	\$702,000
SOLD	8 Richmond Dr	\$450,000	\$425,000
SOLD	3 Wymberly Cr	\$409,000	\$407,000
SOLD	41 Cardinal Rd	\$1,990,000	\$1,650,000
SOLD	147 Hopecrest Av	\$699,000	\$679,500
SOLD	202 Parkersburg Rd	\$1,175,000	\$1,119,000
SOLD	26 Smith Dr	\$485,000	\$495,000
SOLD	7632-A Laroche Av	\$899,000	\$875,000
SOLD	7633 Peridot Ln	\$574,900	\$530,000
SOLD	11 Wylly Av	\$689,900	\$689,000
SOLD	4 Fallowfield Dr	\$779,000	\$725,000
SOLD	105 Herb River Dr	\$2,675,000	\$2,500,000
SOLD	107 Hopecrest Av	\$640,000	\$640,000
SOLD	135 Cardinal Rd	\$949,000	\$925,000
SOLD	8 Garmany Ln	\$859,990	\$859,990
SOLD	7619 Peridot Ln	\$459,900	\$463,000
SOLD	8 Flinn Dr	\$825,000	\$800,000
SOLD	52 Richmond Dr	\$925,000	\$952,750
SOLD	7610 Skidaway Rd	\$449,900	\$432,000
SOLD	115 Jacquelyn Dr	\$405,000	\$405,000
SOLD	9 Raleigh Dr	\$575,000	\$567,500

# Spencer Lawton: A Tribute

*Continued from Page 1*

a six-syllable word into the conversation.

After law school, Spencer returned home and joined the family law firm, Lawton, Sipple and Chamblee. Later, showing a characteristic independent streak, Spencer started his own firm with the Hon. Michael Karpf. Private law practice did not satisfy Spencer's desire for public service. He soon ran for the Chatham County School Board, winning in a landslide by all of seven votes. A few years later, in 1980, he ran for and was elected District Attorney for Chatham County, defeating the incumbent against all odds.

Spencer served as Chatham County's District Attorney and chief criminal prosecutor for a remarkable 28 years. He won an astonishing 14 straight elections in a position that is a lightning rod for controversy, the target of both those unhappy with too harsh prosecutions and those unhappy with too lenient prosecutions. Spencer was able to serve for so long because of integrity and innovation. Spencer demanded that members of the District Attorney's office practice the highest ethics and professionalism. More importantly, he led by example in both these areas. Chatham County's citizens and Chatham's County voters recognized this and re-elected Spencer again and again. Perhaps Spencer's greatest contribution to the law was enacting the first Victim Assistance program in Chatham County with a Victim's Bill of Rights to ensure that the voices of victims of crimes were heard and respected. His groundbreaking program served as a model adopted throughout the state.

While District Attorney, Spencer was involved in many important cases, including prosecuting the famous murder case against Jim Williams that was the centerpiece of John Berendt's bestselling book, *Midnight in the Garden of Good and*



*Evil*. When Clint Eastwood made a movie of the book, he made several mistakes. First, he changed Spencer's name to Finley Largent. Then, he miscast the actor Bob Gunton in the role of Spencer. Gupton, who also played the warden in *Shawshank Redemption*, did not have Spencer's strength of conviction or his hair. Spencer had great hair into his 80's. Spencer really should have played himself in the *Midnight* movie. He would have done a fine job acting. Indeed, Spencer was Matlock before there was Matlock.

When Spencer retired, he became heavily involved in Isle of Hope community affairs. His focus was working with an island group interested in reenergizing the Isle of Hope Historical Association, which had been dormant for several years. Many Isle of Hope residents were concerned that homes in the Bluff area were in danger of being replaced with structures incompatible with the historic ambience of Isle of Hope. With Spencer's help, the IOHHA was rejuvenated with its number one priority to designate the Isle of Hope Bluff as a historic district. Spencer's expert advice was indispensable in the development of proposed guidelines

for the district. He testified and lobbied in support of the proposal.

Spencer's support for the historic district was crucial and understandable. The Lawtons had deep roots at Isle of Hope. The family home, known locally as "The Lawton House," stood at 7 Bluff Drive. Spencer's father lived there as a boy. That Lawton line could be traced back to Spencer's great-great-great-grandfather, Alexander Robert Lawton (1818-1896), a well-regarded Savannahian and Civil War general who led the southern forces who seized Fort Pulaski from federal troops in 1861. Leadership was in Spencer's DNA.

Spencer's passion to protect the historic fabric of our community is ongoing after his passing. Efforts to designate the Bluff as a historic district will require a showing of island wide support. The IOHHA looks forward to carrying out Spencer's legacy so future generations will enjoy Spencer's vision for our great island.

*Donations in Spencer's memory can be made to the IOH Historical Association. In care of Tiffany Alewine, 44 Richmond Dr. Savannah, GA 31406.*



# Susan Cummings Wylly (1943 - 2024)

It is with deep sadness that Polly Wylly Cooper and Johnny Wylly say goodbye to our beautiful little sister Sue who passed away recently.

She taught so many children to swim, race sailboats, aqua-plane, and dive gracefully (or do a belly-buster) into the salt-water. Later she became professor Emeritus of art at Georgia College in Milledgeville.

Our great-great grandfather George Washington Wylly lived at Isle of Hope at 3 Bluff Drive in a house built in 1848. He was mayor pro-tem of Savannah when Sherman invaded.

Our mother Polly Brooks also lived on Bluff Drive for the final years of her life. She attributed her longevity to (a few short weeks of 100) to the friendly folks, the charming view of the Skidaway River, and shrimp and grits for breakfast.

Our whole family admires the effort being done by the Isle of Hope Historical Association to preserve these old homes and fisherman's cottages and keep the flavor of the island.

If inclined, the group would be highly pleased to receive a donation in honor of Sue Wylly to go towards this rewarding work. In care of Tiffany Alewine, 44 Richmond Dr. Savannah, GA 31406. Let's try to leave the world in a better place for future generations to enjoy as we do today.



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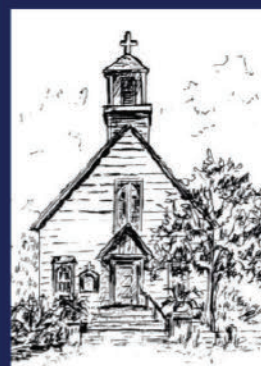
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*Continued from Page 2*

home is or where I grew up, I say Savannah – on a quaint, charming island named Isle of Hope.

I moved back to Savannah in 2004 and Isle of Hope in 2018. I had always wanted to come back to the island, but didn't know if it would ever happen. For the the first time in my life, I felt settled, like I could live here for the rest of my life.

It's the time of year when we can't help but think about the ghosts of Christmases that have passed. The gathering of family and friends mingles with the longing to celebrate with those who are no longer with us.

My goal has always been to share stories written by residents about the island's people, events, and idiosyncrasies. For the IOH News to have a distinctly local flavor. So during this time of thanksgiving, I would like to thank readers, contributors, and advertisers who have helped us accomplish that.

My wish for you during this holiday season is that you would take a breath in the midst of the hustle and bustle, the good food and cheer, and savor your friends, your family, and the blessed, unique place you call home.

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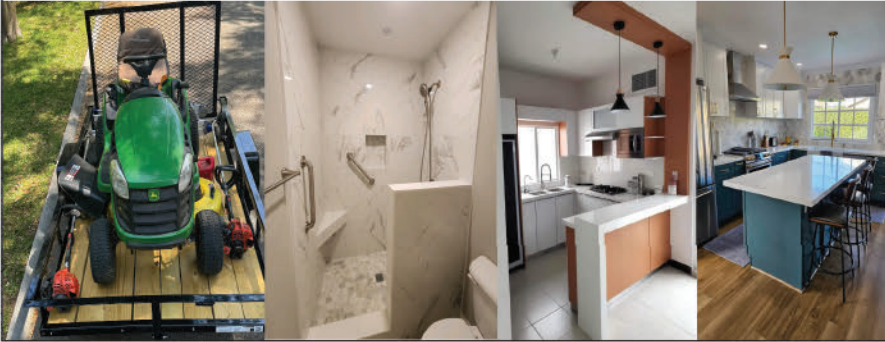


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