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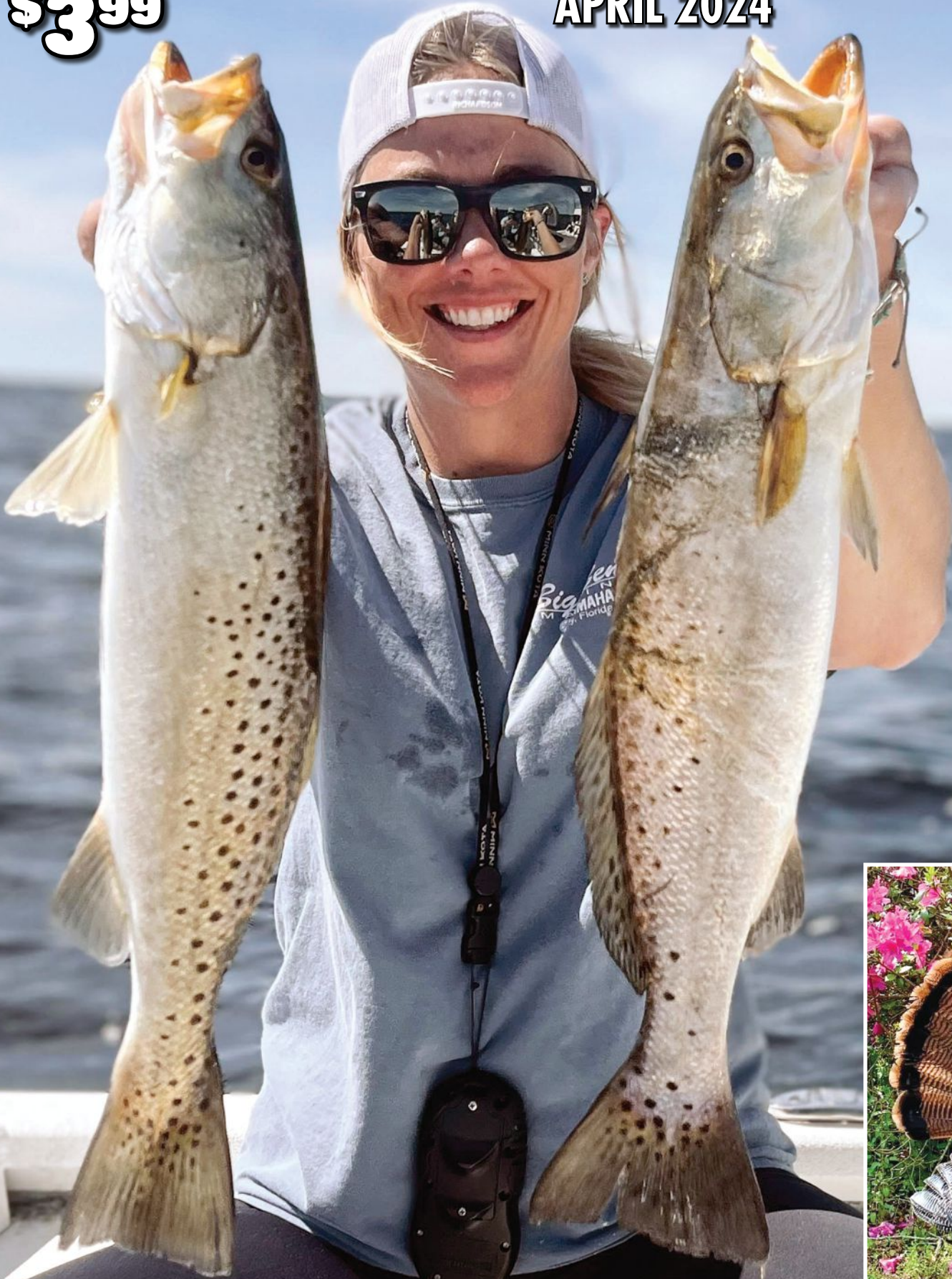
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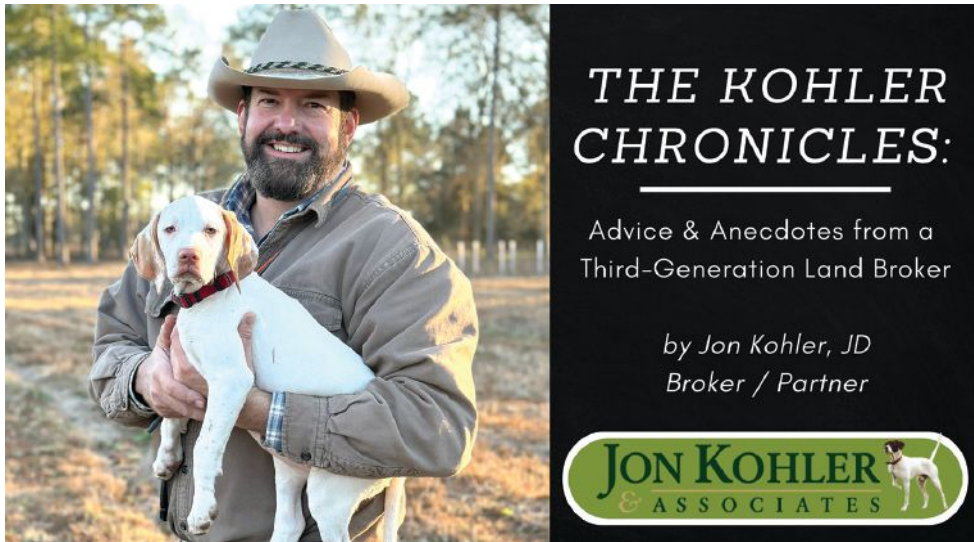
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What's up with all those orange signs?

by *Christiana Roussel*
TRAILBLAZERS

You've no doubt seen those bright orange Plantation Security, Inc. (PSI), signs all over Southwest Georgia and North Florida. Over the years, these signs have come to be something of a status symbol, but there is deep meaning behind the signs posted at some of the most famed and renowned recreational plantations. These signs alert passersby

to the increased level of security plantation owners have engaged to protect one of their most prized assets.

But, have you ever driven by one of these signs and thought about how they came to be? Or, as famed radio broadcaster Paul Harvey used to say, "the rest of the story?"

In simpler times, the primary purpose of these posted signs was to deter poachers and local criminal mischief.

This is an American success story, much in the same vein as that of the Pinkertons or the Texas Rangers, where citizens came together when traditional law enforcement couldn't or wouldn't address the crime problem.

Today, wherever you find an orange Plantation Security sign, you know it is one of the safest places in America, because criminals know there is someone watching the property, someone beyond local law enforcement.

Jon Kohler likens it this way: "It is like that scene in Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid. Agents from one of the country's first private security agencies, Pinkerton National Detective Agency, were hired to protect their clients' cargo from outlaws. Pinkerton gave chase where local law enforcement could not or would not."

Any private property marked as protected by Pinkerton let criminals know they were being watched.

"These orange Plantation Security signs are much the same," Jon said.

If you are familiar with the history of the Texas Rangers, the group got their start in the 1830s much in the same way. Born out of necessity, the original Texas Rangers were formed and hired by settlers in that region to protect against attacks by Native Americans.

This cadre of minutemen used their own horses and firearms to protect the assets and welfare of citizens who were under near-constant threat. Later absorbed into state highway patrol in 1935, this cadre served an invaluable role in safe-keeping the early Texas settlers. Plantation Security does much the same today in the Red Hills Region.

HOW THE SIGNS CAME TO BE

God works in mysterious ways. It was on a drive home from church one Sunday that the idea for a dedicated plantation security service first occurred to Kathleen Lamarche, wife of Plantation Security, Inc., founder, Alan Lamarche.

(Not long ago, Alan Lamarche suffered a debilitating stroke which has impaired his speech and hearing but not his cognitive abilities or memory. His dedicated wife, Kathleen, was by his side as he started Plantation Security and enjoys sharing the legacy of this company on his behalf.)

Kathleen tells the story this way: "At that time, Alan was working for the

Florida Game and Freshwater Fish Commission. He was training officers and working undercover. While he was undercover, there was a rash of burglaries amongst several local plantations. As an officer, he was quite familiar with these plantations and their owners, very fond of them. These criminals were entering plantations, killing their wildlife and stealing anything and everything they could from the homes – portraits, firearms, silverware, anything they could get their hands on."

"As an officer, he was eventually able to go on and arrest every member of the plantation burglary ring.

"Alan took these crimes personally, feeling very badly about these plantation owners being harmed. I took it personally too, because it was so important to my husband. So, it was after Mass one Sunday, I told him, 'Alan, why don't you start a company called Plantation Security, to help these owners?'"

It would take another two years for him to put all the pieces into place, and he established Plantation Security, Inc. on Aug. 1, 1980, and their first client was Foshalee Plantation.

"One of the first things we did was put up those bright orange signs at every plantation we represented – every 500 feet and at every corner," Kathleen said. "Posted signs make trespassing illegal. That was important to us. We put everything we had into this company so that it became the standard. PSI was born out of love for these plantations and a recognition for their vulnerability. We devoted ourselves to the protection of these people and places we love."

ENDURING TRADITION

Lamarche and his team, including Rich Latera, grew the business until it was time to pass the mantle on. Lamarche then called Kohler to ask who he might suggest as a successor – someone committed to tighter security and safety, someone proactive about addressing more sophisticated threats to people and property. There was one name that came to mind, Charlie Strickland.

Charlie was already well-known in the region, as the owner of Talon Security and as co-host of the Talon Outdoors radio show. Like Lamarche, he graduated from Florida State University, with degrees in social science and business

(Continued on page 8)

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'Many of the services we provide are very discreet'

(Continued from page 6)

management before going on to earn an MBA. He also has 20 years of SWAT team experience, as well as 32 years of law enforcement duty and still serves as a reserve deputy training law enforcement officer.

As owner of Plantation Security, he has continued to grow the business to reflect the expanding needs of the clients he and his firm serve. Beyond posting those bright orange signs, PSI regularly patrols properties, identifying signs of trespassers and possible threats. PSI personnel and their patrol vehicles are equipped with cameras to document any encounters.

As an owner of an operating farm himself, and one who enjoys deer and quail hunts, he understands the value PSI brings to these property owners.

SIGNS OF SIGNIFICANCE AND VALUE

Some folks take for granted that we don't have huge crime issues here, but there are outliers. Jon recently listed a 1,200-acre property in Taylor County, a location that is conspicuously absent of

those orange signs. He noticed an unusual lack of wild game on this property, so he checked with the area game warden, one of the first lines of defense. He remarked that there was indeed a poaching problem in the area – not unlike the Wild West. A property like this would benefit mightily from the services PSI offers.

The world we live in today is very different from the time of those original Pinkerton Detectives and Texas Rangers. With an unprecedented wave of unidentified illegals coming across our Southern border, crime levels have escalated. Not content to simply poach and trespass, the criminal element of today targets high-value assets and will stop at nothing – including stalking and home invasion – to gain what they seek.

Threats come in other forms as well. Jon notes that several years ago, there were rumors of violence and targeted arson from organizations such as Antifa and Black Lives Matter who wanted to destroy area historical sites like Pebble Hill and other landmarks.

"Local law enforcement cannot always keep up with all of these potential



SPOTLIGHT ON SECURITY - A Plantation Security, Inc. (PSI), agent stands alongside his patrol truck with their signature orange sign, a symbol of safety.

threats," Jon said. "That is where guys like Charlie Strickland come in. PSI can work with local law enforcement when a potential situation is identified and requires resolution. They can work in partnership with law enforcement to reduce the occurrence or severity of any crimes."

PSI agents are trained to issue trespass warnings and handle potential confrontational situations, such as terminating employees, placing an extra safeguard between the owner and the employee. Additionally, PSI personnel serve as a liaison with local law enforcement and have given valuable testimony in criminal cases. They can also provide security for special events.

"A lot of the services we offer today are very discreet," Charlie noted. "While our (PSI) trucks are out front-and-center, it is the things you don't hear about that we are already addressing."

Charlie expanded his services to include personal protection training as well, instructing clients on the proper in-home safety and installing cameras that monitor activity in real time.

THE VALUE OF SECURITY

Through Jon Kohler & Associates, Jon offers clients a variety of land options, one of which he calls "Social Storm Properties."

These are identified as parcels with high value to individuals seeking a refuge from potential global issues such as pandemics, economic collapse, EMFs, martial law or terrorist activity. He sees these properties as unique assets that serve as a safe-haven for what we value most: family. Identifying eight key attributes every Social Storm property must possess – land quality, security, natural resources, hard assets, location, family-friendly, lodging and ease of use operationally – Jon is a pioneer in developing this unique asset class.

Plantation Security, Inc., is a valuable partner in protecting these proper-

ties and the investment they reflect.

"Not long ago, I had the CEO of Quail Forever (where Jon serves on the board) and top staff, showing them a plantation," Jon said. "They noted the PSI signs they were seeing all over the region. I told them these are some of the safest places in America because of the resources we have in place and the communities that support those resources."

One of Jon's guests told the story of the time his wife and kids were at home in Nebraska and his trail camera caught a pair of camo-clad men in face-masks carrying suppressed AR-15s.

"All that man could do was call his neighbors to be on the lookout. Local law enforcement was not engaged. There was nothing he could do but worry."

Had that same scenario played out in the Red Hills Region, Charlie and his PSI personnel would have been on the scene immediately to identify and diffuse the situation and offer security to the family.

"If I had that problem, PSI would have been all over that until the threat was extinguished anywhere there was an orange sign," Jon added.

The orange sign that stands for a community of shared values.

"What the orange signs mean is that you are part of our community," Charlie said.

Christiana Roussel is a Birmingham-based editor and award-winning food + travel + lifestyle writer whose work has appeared in Garden & Gun, Covey Rise, Good Grit, Sporting Classics, Bourbon+, as well as Birmingham Home & Garden and several other regional publications.

She is a proud member of the Birmingham chapter of Les Dames d'Escoffier, as well as the Industry Advisory Board of Auburn University's Horst Schulze School of Hospitality Management.

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