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Photo provided  
Jim Hurt, left, and Rick Boyen, right, meet with former Lynyrd Skynyrd security chief Gene Odom in Florida.

**Former Skynyrd security chief set for an evening with Hoopeston**

An intimate evening with the former security chief for Lynyrd Skynyrd will be the result of scope creep for a recent vacation taken by two Wellington-area men in January.

Rick Boyden and Jim Hurt, both Skynyrd fans, planned to go to the band's memorial site near Gillsburg, Miss., created after the group's Convair CV-240 ran out of fuel before reaching its destination, Baton Rouge, La., crashing on October 20, 1977. The crash killed front man Ron-

nie Van Zant, vocalist/guitarist Steve Gaines, his sister, backup singer Cassie Gaines, and road manager Dean Kilpatrick. The pilot, Capt. Walter McCreary and First Officer William John Gray also died. Twenty others aboard the plane survived. Among survivors was Gene Odom, close friend of Ronnie Van Zant, and the band's security manager.

When Boyden and Hurt planned their trip, "it started out See SKYNYRD on other side

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## Skynyrd continued from other side

just very basic, and just to only go visit the Skynyrd monument," Hurt said, "but it kept expanding and we traveled to Hank Williams' gravesite in Montgomery, Ala., - which worked out because we wanted to avoid Atlanta, Ga., and by going to Montgomery, we could drive straight

### Obituaries

**GONZALEZ** - Arnulfo "Arnie" Gonzalez, 74, of Hoopeston, died at 7:08 p.m. Wednesday, July 10, 2024, at OSF St. Joseph Medical Center, Bloomington. Visitation will be 10 a.m. - noon Tuesday at Anderson Funeral Home, Hoopeston. A funeral Mass will be held at 12:30 p.m. Tuesday at St. Anthony Catholic Church, Hoopeston. Burial will follow in Floral Hill Cemetery, Hoopeston. Memorials are suggested to St. Anthony Catholic Church, 423 S. Third St., Hoopeston IL 60942. Condolences may be shared at [anderson-funeral-home.com](http://anderson-funeral-home.com).

**MILES** - Lenice Calley Miles, 89, of Penfield, died at 9:18 p.m. Wednesday, July 10, 2024, at home. Visitation will be 1 p.m. until the 2 p.m. funeral Monday at Anderson Funeral Home, Hoopeston. Burial will follow in Potomac Cemetery. Condolences may be shared at [anderson-funeral-home.com](http://anderson-funeral-home.com).

east from there and go to Macon, Ga. - to visit the Allman Brothers "Big House," their resting place, and tour the southern rock birthplace, "Capricorn Studios."

When Hurt learned Odom was in the Jacksonville, Fla., area - where Lynyrd Skynyrd was born - the men set aside a day to spend with him. "We hit it off like peas and carrots right off the bat as soon as we met," Hurt said. Just by talking, things fell into place, and asking questions "and here we are," he said.

"Here" is "Remembering Lynyrd Skynyrd: An Evening with Gene Odom," to be held Saturday, July 27 at The Legion Event Center, 502 E. Penn, Hoopeston. Doors open at 5:30 p.m. and starting at 7 p.m., the event will feature southern rock music, including Skynyrd, Charlie Daniels, Outlaws, Allman Brothers, Marshall Tucker and others, all on vinyl, played on a restored vintage Kenwood receiver and turntable powering a pair of Pioneer 200 watt speakers. "We will be rattling windows playing good southern rock music," Hurt said, adding there will be "no skinny jean, bro country, Bud Lite stuff."

Odom will discuss growing up in Jacksonville with the band members; being Van Zant's lifelong friend, personal body guard and fishing buddy; band history and stories;

the plane crash; and the turmoil surrounding the 1988 Skynyrd reunion tour.

"Many people know the band and name Lynyrd Skynyrd - but the story how these kids grew up in a poor, blue collar part of West Jacksonville, Fla. - all this talent - and they were just normal kids who liked to hang out, fish, hunt and these guys met each other mostly playing sandlot baseball," Hurt said. "It is a true Americana story! People think these guys had a God-gifted talent - and there is some truth to that, of course - but nobody worked harder at their music than Lynyrd Skynyrd and practiced for years in their hot as blue blazes, "Hellhouse," a story

### Briefly

#### Meetings

**Rossville Village Board**, 7 p.m. Monday, village office. Agenda items include discussion on renewing three-year vendor agreement with EC Community Action Agency for low income energy assistance program; renter request for refund of fees paid to get services turned on; updates on various buildings, April 1 consolidated election, accept bid for seal coat project. Full agenda at [villageofrossville.org](http://villageofrossville.org).

**Hoopeston City Council**, 7 p.m. Tuesday, city hall. Agenda items include resolution to allow Donohue Engineering to proceed with bidding phase for Market St. water main project; motor fuel tax project review and bid acceptance; revised golf cart and public nuisance tow ordinances, electric bicycle/scooter ordinance; resolution to rezone 42 N. Dixie Hwy. Full agenda and Zoom link at [www.cityofhoopeston.com](http://www.cityofhoopeston.com).

#### Celebrate Recovery meetings

Celebrate Recovery meetings will be held at 6 p.m. Thursdays at Hoopeston First Church of God, 1004 E. Orange. It applies biblical principles to any hurt, habit or hang-up you're struggling with. All are welcome. Dinner and/or snacks at 6 p.m., lessons begin at 6:30 p.m., followed by small group discussion. Transportation available on request. Call (217) 283-6301.

#### Weather

HEAT ADVISORY through 1 p.m. Monday. Sunny today. High 92. Tonight, chance of thunderstorms. Low 74. Tomorrow, chance of showers, thunderstorms. High 87, low 66.

For real time Hoopeston weather, visit [justthefacts.net/weather/](http://justthefacts.net/weather/).

Odom will relate at the appearance.

Along with getting information about Lynyrd Skynyrd in the public, another reason for the event is "there are people in our area who would love to meet Gene and hear Gene tell stories about growing up with Ronnie Van Zant, Allan Collins, Gary Rossington, Billy Powell, Leon Wilkeson, Coach Leonard Skinner" (purported to be the source for the band's name) "and others, that would most likely never have a chance to do," Hurt said.

Then, too, due to the "peas and carrots" camaraderie, Boyden and Hurt wanted to help Odom, who was injured in the plane crash and lost sight in one eye. Now 75, Odom is on a fixed income. He will get the proceeds from this event and Hurt hopes the evening is something Odom will be able to repeat in communities closer to home.

Seating is limited to 150 people. Tickets are \$25, available in advance by calling/texting Hurt at (217) 495-0261 or Boyden, (217) 474-1273, or at the door - if any are left then. "When the last seat is sold, that is it," Hurt said, adding selling tickets online would have made things easier for he and Boyden but would have cost local residents more. "And we will not be packed in there like sardines either - it will be a comfortable setting and atmosphere," he added

### Classifieds

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