

The MULLET RAPPER

What's Happening in the Everglades City Area

FRIDAY, JANUARY 11, 2008

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P O Box 617, Everglades City, FL, 34139

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Local Man to the Rescue!

By Shirley Leonard

Everglades National Park rangers credit local fishing guide Jason Sine for rescuing two elderly women whose canoe became swamped Dec. 29 as they paddled from Pavilion to Turkey Key.

A friend of the swamped duo, Dale Samler, 65, in a kayak alerted Sine who was camping on Mormon Key. Sine, 33, and several other campers responded.

Ethel Winters, 79, and Claudet Benton, 70, were not wearing life vests and struggled in deep water. They were about 1½ miles from Mormon Key. By time Sine arrived, both women were very cold, and Winters was becoming hypothermic.

"Jason was scared to death he was going to find a dead body," Winters said. "He couldn't see me."

"It was pretty scary at first," Sine said. "I could see only one woman, and I knew there was supposed to be two... My biggest fear (became) their ages. I was worried about their core temperatures and going into shock. It was the closest someone's come to hypothermia in my experience. They were in the water about two hours."

Sine, a guide for Chokoloskee Charters/Everglades Kayak Fishing, based out of Everglades City, is a former Marine and trained in water rescue. Using his paddle float and rescue sling, he was able to help Winters into his kayak. He then emptied and righted the canoe. Winters paddled Sine's kayak, Sine and Benton the canoe, to Mormon Key.

Sine started a fire, fixed them dinner, lent them sleeping bags and tents for the night and prepared them breakfast. Other campers collected the women's gear, brought it to the beach in their boats and helped them dry it.

"The sun rises and sets on Jason so far as we're concerned," Samler said.

Winters said the swamped canoe was her first in a lifetime of canoeing. They had overloaded it for the ten-day trip, she said.

"Next year it'll be two canoes," Winters said. "A kayak just doesn't hold enough gear. The canoe was too heavy."

Despite the mishap the women continued their trip and returned to Everglades National Park Gulf Coast Visitor Center on schedule Sunday, Jan 6. Besides Mormon, they camped at Pavilion Key, Highland Beach, Plate Creek and Darwin's Place, Watson's Place and Sunday Bay Chickee.

Ranger Cliff Edwards and Sine admired their spunk.

"If that had happened to me, I think I'd have said, 'That's it. I've had it. I got my money's worth. I'm going home,'" Edwards said.

"They're troopers," Sine said. "I was glad I was able to be there."

Edwards has recommended that the park give Sine special recognition for the rescue.

CITY COUNCIL

Mayor Sammy Hamilton started the new year with good news at the meeting on Tuesday, January 8, when he announced that the water tanks in Copeland and Everglades City had been cleaned. Scott Lewis of U. S. Water explained that a diver with a huge "vacuum cleaner" had sucked a half-inch of iron sediment at the bottom which had been causing the discoloration when it got stirred up. He further said that permission had been gained to introduce a sequestering agent to bead the iron that naturally occurs here. Fran Tiff, from the floor, said she had cleaned her toilet tank after noticing all the sediment.

Lt. Mark Milligan from the Sheriff's Office reported that several vehicles had been broken into recently and that CID is looking into it. He also said that during Seafood Festival, there would be more deputies and that traffic would become one-way out of town in the evening if gridlock occurred. The Mayor said that deputies were doing a great job and that wanton vandalism seems to have disappeared.

See page 11 for Public Comments and the discussions that followed.

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FEATURE: "MISS NEAL", page 5

JANUARY 2008

<u>SUN</u>	<u>MON</u>	<u>TUES</u>	<u>WED</u>	<u>THURS</u>	<u>FRI</u>	<u>SAT</u>
6	7 Hour of Prayer Everglades Community Church 7 pm Trail Cmtee ECC, 9 am	new moon ○ 8 FME mtg Comm. Church 9 am City Council City Hall, 5:30 pm	9 Ladies Coffee Havana Cafe 8 am ESHP mtg City Hall, 10 am	10 Great Gators School, 9:30 Chamber of Commerce 5:30 pm	11	12 Pet Vet see p.3 Clyde Butcher Reception Museum, 1-3 pm, see p.3
13 Pet Vet surgery only see p.3	14 Hour of Prayer Copeland Baptist Mission, 7 pm OFCD Board Fire Sta, 6 pm Early Voting see p.3	15 Reach Out Comm. Church 8:30 a.m.	16 Ladies Coffee Everglades Scoop 8 am Park Meeting School, 6:30 pm see p.11	17 Lions Club Bd Mtg, 5:30 pm Copeland Civic 7 pm	18	19 Art-in-the- Glades 10 am - 2 pm see p.3
20	21 <u>Martin Luther King Day</u> Hour of Prayer Chokoloskee Church of God 7 pm	full moon ● 22 SAC meeting Media Center School, 3 pm	23 Ladies Coffee Ruth Hefflefinger Home 8 am	24 Gaither Gathering Germain Arena for tickets phone 695-3514	25	26 Pancake Fly-In Airport, 10-12 am
27	28 Hour of Prayer Holy Family Catholic Church 7 pm	29 Primary Election 7 am to 7 pm	30 Ladies Coffee Triad Seafood 8 am	31 ESHP Talk "Barron Collier" Museum, 2 pm see p. 9	FEB 1 Seafood Festival Family Evening	2 SEAFOOD FESTIVAL
3 SEAFOOD FESTIVAL	4 Hour of Prayer Everglades First Baptist Church 7 pm Trail Cmtee ECC, 9 am	5 FME mtg Comm. Church 9 am City Council City Hall, 5:30 pm	6 Ladies Coffee Havana Cafe 8 am School Early Release	new moon ○ 7 Great Gators School, 9:30 ESHP mtg City Hall, 10 am Lions Club Depot, 7 pm	8 Blackwood Gospel School, 7pm Wild Turkey Banquet see p.3	9 Pet Vet ORA Bazaar Chokoloskee

THRIFT SHOP: Mon, Wed, Thurs, Fri, Sat, 11:00 am - 3:00 pm

MUSEUM: Tues-Fri, 9 am to 5 pm; Sat, 9 am to 4 pm

FOOD PANTRY: Sat, 8:30 to 10:30 am, Community Church

CHRIST-CENTERED 12-STEP PROGRAM: Tuesday, 6:30 pm, Chokoloskee Church of God Annex Building

NATIONAL PARK GULF COAST VISITORS' CENTER: daily 8 am to 4 pm (boats 8:30 am to 4:00 pm)

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE INFORMATION CENTER (Carnestown): daily, 8:30 am to 4:30 pm

SHERIFF AT CITY HALL: 1/11/08 (9-11 am) 1/14 (1-2:30 pm) 1/15 (10-12 am) 1/16 (9-11 am) 1/24 (9-11 am)

SKATING RINK: Friday/Saturday, 7:00 - 10:00 pm

SMALLWOOD STORE: daily 10 am to 5 pm

ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS: Wed, 5 pm, Community Church

EARLY VOTING

Although the election takes place on January 29, early voting begins on **Monday, January 14**, and continues every day except Sunday through Saturday, January 26. Polls are open from 10:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. in City Hall. Bring your driver's license or formal ID with you.

Only registered Republicans and Democrats can express a preference for Presidential candidates in their own party but everyone who is registered can vote on the Amendment to the Florida constitution on Property Tax Exemptions. The official sample ballot sent to householders has the exact wording. You can see a copy at www.colliervotes.com.

Wild Turkey Banquet

The Everglades Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation is holding its 2nd Annual Banquet on **Friday, February 8**, in the Oyster House. For tickets, phone Keith at 695-1577 or Tony at 695-4150.

Blackwood Gospel Quartet

This famous group will perform here on **Friday, February 8**, at 7:00 p.m. in the School cafetorium. There is no admission charge but donations are welcome.



Clyde Butcher's "Visions of Big Cypress" is now on display at the Museum. There will be an open house to **MEET THE ARTIST** on **Saturday, January 12**, from 1 to 3 pm. The exhibit continues through February.

PLAN AHEAD IN 2008

- Feb 16-17: Blue Grass Festival, Collier Seminole State Park
- Feb 24: "Chick Cruise" leaves
- Feb 26 - Mar 1: MSD Festival
- Mar 1: Art-in-the Glades
- Mar 1: Lions Club Cast-Off
- Mar 23: Easter Sunday
- Apr 26-27: Tamiami Trail 80th and Museum 10th Celebrations
- May 10: Firefighters' BBQ
- May 23: School Graduation

RESTAURANT NEWS

- Havana Cafe in Chokoloskee is now open every day from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. and then from 5:30 to 8 p.m.
- Subway at BP Gator Express is now serving breakfast starting at 7 a.m.

OCHOPEE FIRE CONTROL DISTRICT

- 12/27/07: Chest Pains, Everglades City
- 12/28/07: Vehicle Accident, 65m I-75
- 12/29/07: Fuel Spill, US 41 & SR 29
- 12/29/07: Person Fell, Everglades City
- 12/30/07: Person Sick, Everglades City
- 12/30/07: Person Stopped Breathing, Ochopee
- 12/30/07: Vehicle Accident, 59m I-75
- 12/30/07: Vehicle Fire, 65m I-75
- 12/31/07: Sick Person, Oasis Ranger Station
- 01/01/08: Vehicle Fire, US 41 East of Port of the Islands
- 01/02/08: Vehicle Accident, Ochopee
- 01/03/08: Vehicle Accident, 54m I-75
- 01/03/08: Vehicle Accident, SR 29 & US 41
- 01/04/08: Median Fire, 65m I-75
- 01/04/08: Smoking Power Pole, Port of the Islands
- 01/04/08: Unknown Medical, SR 29 & US 41
- 01/06/08: Boating Accident, 53 m I-75
- 01/06/08: Chest Pain, 51m I-75
- 01/06/08: Vehicle Accident, 76 m I-75
- 01/08/08: Brush Fire, 68m I-75

MOBILE PET VET

Dr Baker will be here on **Saturday, January 12** in McLeod Park from 9:00 am to 1:00 pm and in Copeland from 2:00 to 4:00 pm. She will also visit on **Sunday, January 13** from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. for surgery by appointment only. Phone 777-PETS.



Art-in-the-Glades

Come along to Art-in-the-Glades on **Saturday, January 19**, in McLeod Park from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. There will be arts & crafts items for sale, live music thanks to Joe Stem & friends, and lunch. For info, phone Marya at 695-2905.

TIDES FOR BARRON RIVER

INFORMATION FROM <http://TIDESANDCURRENTS.NOAA.GOV>

01/11/2008	Fri	03:10AM	2.7	H	11:33AM	-0.3	L	05:10PM	2.4	H	11:36PM	0.5	L
01/12/2008	Sat	03:56AM	2.5	H	12:08PM	-0.2	L	05:41PM	2.4	H			
01/13/2008	Sun	12:26AM	0.4	L	04:52AM	2.4	H	12:44PM	0.0	L	06:11PM	2.5	H
01/14/2008	Mon	01:26AM	0.3	L	06:06AM	2.1	H	01:23PM	0.3	L	06:42PM	2.5	H
01/15/2008	Tue	02:36AM	0.2	L	07:38AM	1.8	H	02:07PM	0.5	L	07:18PM	2.5	H
01/16/2008	Wed	03:51AM	0.0	L	09:24AM	1.7	H	03:08PM	0.7	L	08:05PM	2.6	H
01/17/2008	Thu	05:01AM	-0.2	L	11:28AM	1.7	H	04:29PM	0.8	L	09:09PM	2.7	H
01/18/2008	Fri	06:05AM	-0.3	L	01:12PM	1.9	H	05:45PM	0.8	L	10:24PM	2.8	H
01/19/2008	Sat	07:04AM	-0.5	L	01:59PM	2.0	H	06:51PM	0.8	L	11:32PM	2.9	H
01/20/2008	Sun	07:58AM	-0.6	L	02:30PM	2.1	H	07:49PM	0.7	L			
01/21/2008	Mon	12:29AM	3.0	H	08:48AM	-0.6	L	02:57PM	2.1	H	08:41PM	0.6	L
01/22/2008	Tue	01:21AM	3.1	H	09:33AM	-0.6	L	03:22PM	2.2	H	09:29PM	0.5	L
01/23/2008	Wed	02:08AM	3.1	H	10:15AM	-0.5	L	03:48PM	2.2	H	10:14PM	0.4	L
01/24/2008	Thu	02:54AM	2.9	H	10:54AM	-0.4	L	04:16PM	2.3	H	10:59PM	0.3	L
01/25/2008	Fri	03:41AM	2.7	H	11:31AM	-0.2	L	04:45PM	2.3	H	11:44PM	0.3	L

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SCHOOL NEWS

phone: 377-9800 or 695-2561

website: www.collier.k12.fl.us/evg

IMPORTANT DATES

Tues, Jan 15: Boys' Basketball, 5:00 p.m.**Tues, Jan 15: Girls' Basketball, 6:30 p.m.****Thurs, Jan 17: Girls' Basketball, 5:00 p.m.****Thurs, Jan 17: Boys' Basketball, 6:30 p.m.****Tues, Jan 22: SAC Meeting, 3:00 p.m.****Thurs, Jan 22: Boys' Basketball, 4:00 p.m.****Thurs, Jan 25: Girls' Basketball, 5:30 p.m.****Thurs, Jan 25: Boys' Basketball, 7:00 p.m.**

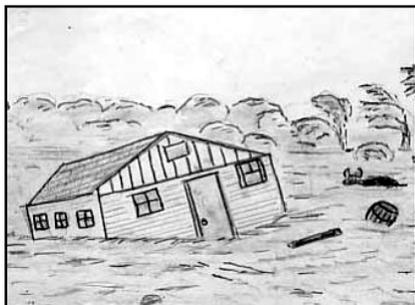
From Savannah's Eyes

Well, I have been back to School for two days and I am having a lot of fun. My Christmas vacation was wonderful. My sister LaShaun who's from Sebring came down for 15 days and we played and played and played. We went skating and, by the way, she is not my real sister. She is my brother's daughter but she is like my sister because she used to live by my house and she came over everyday and played with me. And, so, I love her just like she is my sister. When it was Christmas Day all of our family came over to visit, then ate all of the food, opened all of the presents, and then it was time to go to bed. So I am back in School now and waiting for the next vacation.

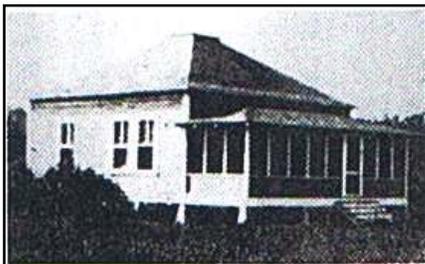
Good-bye 'till next time!

Savannah Oglesby is a 5th grade student at Everglades City and a regular contributor to this paper.

This is a sketch by Rob Storter of the school house being washed away in the 1910 hurricane. At that time, the school was located at the mouth of the river. The picture is part of the Storter Collection at the Collier County Museum.



This is a photo of the school in 1921 from a book about Lee County education. After Collier County was formed in 1923, the high school was added so that older students did not have to go to Ft Myers.



Who Was Miss Neal?

"The Gator" (school annual) for 1963 is dedicated lovingly to Miss Neal "with respect for her fairness, impartiality, understanding and sincere interest in our progress". According to the 1991 Reunion Memory Book, she never missed a day of school in the many years she taught until her retirement in 1973.

Ruth Neal came to Everglades City in 1926 to visit her father Otto "Pop" Neal who was an engineer on the construction of the Tamiami Trail. She began teaching mathematics and science at our school and was on the staff when the first students graduated from the Everglades City High School in 1928. Generations of local people went through her classes and still remember her. She made math easy and science interesting. She also coached girls' sports. However, she had a reputation for keeping discipline by throwing erasers from the blackboard!

Out of school, she would take groups on trips to camp out or catch fish or make seagrape jelly as a lesson in chemistry. She led them in building a greenhouse and then gathering plants in the Glades. Thanks to former student Janet Lapello Treadway who emailed "I remember when we went on our field trips we all had such fun while learning. She treated all of her students equally and if you had to ask for help she was there for you."

Miss Neal lived on Allen Avenue and donated trees from her garden to plant in front of City Hall in 1988. She died at age 92 in 1996.

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Recipe of the Month

Island Crab Casserole

By Camille Baumgartner



This is a recipe Camille submitted to us that she made up while on the "Island" (as she recalls Everglades City when she lived here from 1978 to 1993). She says she use to pick up all the "lights, shorts and cracked" crab claws before fish houses threw them back. She picked crab all day, froze the meat in 1 cup bags. She would make a big pot of crab soup and take it back to the Fish House as a thank you and as a reason for them to give her more crabs. Enjoy during our stone crab season!!

- | | |
|--|------------------------------------|
| 1 or 2 cups Crab pieces | 1 box Stove-Top Stuffing "Chicken" |
| 1 can Cream of Mushroom Soup | 3-4 tbs. of Sherry |
| Tiny Green Peas (Frozen) | Potato Chips |
| Lots of Shredded Cheese (Cheddar or other) | |

Follow directions for stuffing mix on box. Mix crab, cheese, peas in a bowl. Stir sherry into mushroom soup. Put layers of stuffing and crab into casserole dish; pour soup and sherry over all. Top with crushed potato chips.

Bake covered for 15 minutes at 350; then uncovered for 15 minutes till casserole bubbles up. Let set a few minutes. Kids love this, too!

You can use shrimp or any other seafood in this easy stew.

Swamp Tales

by Bob N. Wallace

If you ever go to a *real* Florida barbeque, it won't be complete unless it is served with *real* Florida swamp cabbage. I ate my first swamp cabbage at a restaurant in north Florida where my wife asked me, "What is that?" I told her, "Swamp cabbage and I think it is delicious the way it was cooked." It reminded me of regular cooked cabbage with its look and taste.



Swamp cabbage is the vegetable of choice of any old-time Florida "cracker." You get it from the heart of the cabbage palm (*S. palmetto*), which just happens to be Florida's official tree. Cabbage palms grow wild all over the state, usually in clusters in hammocks.

Sabal palm trees are protected from indiscriminate cutting and are grown in large numbers to be sold for landscaping and ornamental placement; however, they are not grown as a vegetable.

If you are interested in preparing a sabal palm for eating you may do two things: First, you can attend the LaBelle Swamp Cabbage Festival, in Hendry County, which is an annual Southwest Florida event begun in 1965 by the LaBelle Jaycees where you can see swamp cabbage prepared and eat plenty of it there.

Or, you can fix it yourself. First, you need to cut the heart out of the cabbage palm and strip off the boot, or outer hard tough fronds, to reach the actual white heart. That is the tenderest part and you should cut it into 1/2 inch strips or cubes. Then you can fry some fatback and onions first before you add chopped swamp cabbage. When it starts to brown, you can add tomatoes, sugar, pepper, and thyme. Simmer it until it thickens and the tomatoes cook down. That's the secret. Then you may add a teeny pinch of thyme about ten minutes before it's done. Sound good? It is! In addition, you can truthfully say that yes, we do eat trees in Florida -Palmetto, that is!



Holiday Reading

by Marya Repko

“Ronnie; The Autobiography” by Ronnie Wood
“Clapton; The Autobiography” by Eric Clapton

I indulged in two related books during the holiday season. Indulgent because I gorged on nostalgia about the 1960s English pop music scene – Beatles, Rolling Stones, The Who, Jimi Hendrix, and all the peripheral goings-on that we don't much hear about on this side of the Atlantic.

Both Eric Clapton and Ronnie Wood describe their careers: rubbing shoulders with the greats, memorable experiences (like Bob Geldof's “Live Aid” extravaganza performances on July 13, 1985), recording sessions, and the interminable tours – airplanes, hotels, miscellaneous bodies in the crowds. And, both write about the drink and drug culture in which they grew up and, then, their efforts to overcome habit and addiction.

The scene might sound like one book repeats the other, especially since they are both South London boys, but these men have very different personalities. Ronnie Wood had a secure and loving, albeit funky, childhood. Besides his musical talent, he developed his artistic side and organized gallery shows for his paintings to coincide with Rolling Stones' tours. He also became a successful racehorse breeder and owner in Ireland where I bumped into him off and on at the major steeplechase tracks. And, he has a sense of humor; for example, relating the telegram he got from U2 “congratulations to the best pop group in the world, outside of Ireland”.

Eric Clapton describes being brought up by his grandparents and being a very shy child. After playing with several bands and trying to devote himself to pure blues, he declined into a reclusive state but was dragged out by friends (see Wood's book) to play music again. He now focuses on rehabilitation and has built a clinic in Antigua, where he has a home, and raises money by organizing auctions of famous musicians' guitars and annual concerts. He has also become a trained counselor and devotes much of his time to helping others.

I found both volumes at our local library on the “new books” shelf. Thanks to the Collier County Public Library for sending them to us.

Open Studio For Artists

An informal group of painters meets several times a week. Anyone is welcome to bring along his or her art supplies and join in. For info, phone Jean on 695-0202.



GLADES DAZE

by Patricia Huff

Sometimes I wonder what it's like for land lovers who move here for the quaintness of old Florida and our friendly way of life. I wonder if they realize that we actually live on an island in Everglades City; Plantation is an island and Chokoloskee was once a separate island community before the causeway was built in 1955.

I am so fortunate to be married to someone who “lives” on the water, who wants to be out there 14 hours a day. I have the advantage of being able to join my husband on his “off days” to go fishing. To me it is a special privilege, especially this time of year when the air is cooler and there are so many migratory birds.

One day recently Steve and I and our friend Mike left the dock early and traveled to an area where flocks of American egrets cruised the river alongside us. They guided us through the winding waterway for miles. It was a spectacular sight; although Steve and other guides are used to experiencing these wonders, Mike and I were in awe. We couldn't get enough of the beauty. Then we drove around flats where roseate spoonbills were wading and feeding along the shore.

It was the last day of snook season and, of course, our hopes were high in catching a “keeper” but, as Steve often says, just being out there is what it's all about. We did catch some small snook but none legal size; I saved the day by bringing home a nice redfish for dinner.

I realize that many people may not be able to go out with their own fishing guides, but I do believe that everyone should take advantage of the wonders in our area by getting on a tour boat, an airboat, a kayak or canoe, just to be able to “be there”. It's an experience you that will soothe your soul. Remember that we live on an island and you won't forget what a special treat it is to be a part of our wild and beautiful world.

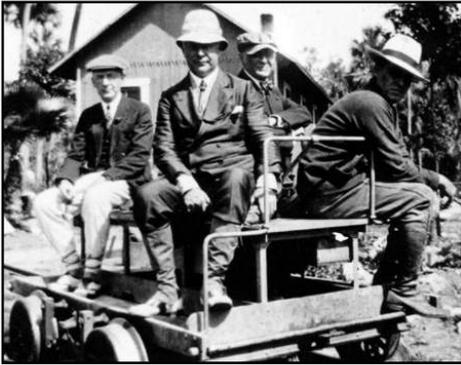


photo Collier County Museums, Naples, FL

LOCAL HISTORY

A giant of a man, maybe not in physical stature, but in ambition and achievement Barron Gift Collier stood out during his era. We know of him as the founder of our County and its largest landowner. He also provided the inspiration and funding for the construction of the Tamiami Trail in this area. His various enterprises ensured that local people in his employ had a good standard of living.

But, did you know ... he was the first person to suggest having a yellow stripe down the center of the road to keep vehicles on the correct side? He was also instrumental in the founding of Interpol, the international police, and was a leader of the Boy Scout movement.

He moved in high-powered circles in New York City where his subway advertising companies operated. He advised President Coolidge on the economic outlook and loaned his yacht to Mayor Walker.

There is so much to say about Collier. He died suddenly in 1939 before he could see all his projects to fruition but he did leave us a legacy in the City and the County and the Trail.

You can marvel at this remarkable man's life at an illustrated talk entitled "Barron Gift Collier, His Life & Times" on **Thursday, January 31**, at 2:00 p.m. in the Museum of the Everglades. The presenter is David Southall of Collier County Museum. The event is sponsored by the Everglades Society for Historic Preservation, who will be providing light refreshments, and everyone is welcome. RSVP to 695-4642 or 695-0202.

More Bridge Players Needed

The Wednesday afternoon group on Storter Avenue is looking for players. Any level welcome. Phone 695-0903.



photo Dennis Giardina

FELINE NEIGHBORS AND FRIENDS

by Adela Padron-Butler

Have you ever wondered about all the panther crossing warnings along our area roadways? Did you envision, like I did, when I was a newcomer to the area, that panthers and their cubs would be skulking about? Well, for years, this image has kept me on the alert for a live, wild, panther sighting every time I have driven to town or elsewhere on State Road 29 or Tamiami Trail (SR-41) from my domain in the Everglades City area. My experiences along these lines have been limited and a tease at best.

First, during one of our motorcycle excursions from Miami via the 'Trail' heading west, circa mid-1980's, my husband and I came upon Joan's Kwik Stop Country Store, (now Joanie's Blue Crab Cafe, still open and serving today). Stopping to rest, quench our thirst and quell growling stomachs, we ambled up the steps to the quaint building amid a growing crowd now gathering at the landing. Thinking there was a waiting line, we were prepared to wait. Then I caught a glimpse of it. Behold, a panther ... on a leash! A patron of the store, Joe, (now living in Montana) was causing quite a stir with his young pet, a tan panther named Pooh. When the crowd dissipated a bit, we got a closer look and stroked the stoic, tender cat. Not exactly a wild sighting, but a start.

On another venture, we sadly spotted a grown panther on the side of the road, most likely the victim of an auto encounter. Later, when we became more acquainted with the community to which we now belong, we discovered that a local petting zoo at Wooten's Everglades Airboat Tours had a beautiful black panther on exhibit. Although not native to the area, we considered it an unofficial 'sighting'. Today, native Florida panthers can be seen there.

Then, while exploring Fakahatchee Island on foot after a 20-minute boat ride from Everglades City heading north, we came across the desiccated poop of a large cat complete with coiled, dense hair that gave the bulk its shape; a panther's? Finally, Bill came home excitedly one day after a solo dirt bike trip to Bear Island. He had been traveling north on Turner River Road and had just passed Wagon Wheel Road when to his left, in the tall grass, panther and human startled each other. The huge cat had been resting and as Bill neared, it leapt into the air and disappeared into the thick savannah. I was so envious and happy for him.

With renewed resolve, I continued to be vigilant for my very own live, wild, panther sighting. It was not enough that I had already been blessed with sightings of black bears, Florida deer, otters, bald eagles, wild hogs, brown rabbits, and an occasional salt water crocodile (related to but not the same as the ever present alligator). This mind set was put to rest, however, when we went to Kentucky this past summer. My feline focus would turn to relatives of the panther: the domestic cat.

to be continued ...

© 2008, Adela Padron-Butler

Grocery Shopping with a Wheelbarrow

by Sue Evans

Jasper and I were in Wernigerode, Germany, for the dedication of a church we had helped build (actually, it was an old wood-processing plant remodeled into a house of worship), when we received a call from the North Carolina Baptist Men asking if we could go to Macedonia. Two things to note here:

- #1. When we began our mission work, I had specifically told the Lord I did not want to go into any country that did not have flush toilets and did not use the ABC's their language.
- #2. Paul's vision in Acts 16:9 of the Macedonian man begging Paul to come over to Macedonia and help them was an episode in Paul's missionary journeys, not necessarily a call for me to go to Macedonia.

Added to these two reasons for not going, it was the summer of 1999 and there was a war raging in neighboring Kosovo. The people of Kosovo were crossing the border and seeking refuge in Macedonia. Food and clothing were needed by the refugees. Our missionaries in Macedonia had found a warehouse where goods could be stored but volunteers were needed to organize the goods, pack boxes with food, and go into the villages where the refugees had found shelter and distribute the food boxes.

The next thing I knew we were on a flight from Berlin to Zurich and then on to Thessaloniki, Greece, where we were met by a man driving a van who would get us across the border into Macedonia and to an apartment in an undisclosed location in Skopje. This was the stuff of a best-selling novel, it couldn't be the life of just regular people! However, the reality of it hit when we were stopped at the border at approximately 3 a.m. and gruffly asked by the Macedonian guard, "Why you come to Macedonia?" And, our fearless leader responded, "Vacation." The guard, with a heavy accent but in clear English growled, "Americans go to Disney World on vacation, not Macedonia." And, then, he waved us on through! We had arrived!!!!

There is so much I would love to tell you about our living quarters, the neighborhood, the food, the bombers flying overhead at night, but space does not allow. So, I'll skip right to the delivery of the food boxes to the villages where the Kosovars were living. When our van arrived in a village we were met by men and children with mule-drawn wagons, tractors, and wheelbarrows – anything they could use to get their food boxes to where they were living. Seven little boys with a wheelbarrow approached the coordinator and showed the forms needed to qualify for food distribution. We loaded the wheelbarrow but none of the children was big enough or strong enough to push it. I was given the task of getting their groceries home! And, so, I left. Walking down a dusty



road with seven little boys who spoke no English, leaving behind the only people I knew and not knowing what lay ahead for me, all I could do was silently sing *Trust and obey for there's no other way to be happy in Jesus but to trust and obey.*

The children wanted to talk to me and I wanted to talk to them ... but, how? They used that language with no ABC's. It was all so foreign. Then, we passed a herd of goats and I tried to ask if they were their goats. One little boy said in German that the goats were owned by his aunt. What made a Macedonian child say something in German? And, what made him use German words I knew? No, I don't speak German, I just know a few words. And, he used a couple of those words. Immediately, the other kids realized we had made a connection and joy broke out. They rushed ahead to let the others know we were coming. When we reached the house where they were staying, I discovered the father of the little boy had worked in Germany for many years and he and I were able to exchange a few words. I sat with those 30 or 35 men, women and children and drank a red, strange-tasting juice and was treated as kindly as if I were at a neighbor's house for tea.

When I began my trek back to the village along that long, dusty road, the children insisted on going with me. My final thoughts were these: the Americans they see on TV and in their newspapers wear uniforms and carry guns; this was one time they could see an American in a borrowed dress (that's a story for another day), pushing a wheelbarrow of groceries with no agenda but to show God's love and care for all His people. I hope they will remember because I will never forget them.



VIP Report

by Shirley Leonard

Within the Gulf Coast area of Everglades National Park this past two weeks, fire closed Watson's Place campsite for several days; a manatee was found dead near Watson's Place; and the expected flock of winter visitors from all over the world arrived.

Park rangers closed Watson's Place campsite, an archeological gem and former home of E. J. Watson, after a fire scorched the few remaining remnants of its foundation and cistern. Damage was not extensive, but park archeologists wanted to document and photograph it before reopening it to public use. It reopened Dec. 31st to back country campers. Anyone with information about how the fire happened should contact a ranger at the visitor center, 239-695-3311.

The manatee had *not* been killed by a boat's propellers, the leading cause of death among these endangered "sea cows." It did not even have boat propeller scars, a rarity in these heavily boated waters. Park biologists performed an necropsy December 31 and its results were not available.

Since this is my first year as a VIP (one of many in the Volunteers-in-Parks program) I wasn't quite prepared for the extent of the tourist arrival Christmas week. In the week leading up to and including Christmas Day, the total visitor count was 1,955 (Dec. 18 through 25). The week after, Dec. 26 through 31, the count more than doubled to 3,998. These numbers come from an electronic counter at the center's front door and are reasonably accurate. The leading attractions: alligators and dolphins.

Readers should report *anything at all of interest* they think other readers and visitors would appreciate. You can reach me by phone from 8 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. Sunday through Wednesday at the center (239-695-3311) or email anytime to ReporterSr@verizon.net

PARK MEETING REVISED SPEED ZONES

There will be a public meeting about manatee protection zones in the Everglades National Park on **Wednesday, January 16**, at 6:30-8:30 p.m. at Everglades City School.



The alternative proposals are intended to put the ENP in line with existing regulations in other parts of Collier County so that boaters will not be confused crossing the park boundaries.

The park welcomes comments in writing about the alternatives before February 16. For more info, contact Kevin Donnell, Gulf Coast District Ranger at 695-4217 or email him at Kevin_Donnell@nps.gov.



COLD WEATHER & LOW WATER

Last week California experienced hurricane-force winds while in Everglades City we had record-breaking temperatures dropping to a low of 34 degrees. We didn't have a power outage, but there were consequences: fishermen were stuck on the dock due to extreme low tides and wind-related water blow-out, crab boats didn't leave the docks and the winds kept the canoe/kayak boats on shore. According to long-time locals, the water level was the lowest they had ever seen it. Chokoloskee Bay was virtually dry. The low water temperatures resulted in a significant fish die off. Snook, jacks, catfish and other species were all victims of the cold. This week things are back to normal. Going out on Sunday the skies were blue and all the boats were seen out again; tourists were back on the water.

However, the extent of damage to the fisheries, due to the cold, may not be realized for some time.

COUNCIL MEETING – PUBLIC COMMENT

Three members of the public spoke during the meeting on Tuesday, January 8.

Patty Huff said that she was the owner of an original Collier home and was upset when she discovered that two historic cottages had been demolished. She wondered if the Council and Mayor could look after historic structures, perhaps forming a committee to recommend that they be moved rather than torn down. The Mayor said that he was trying to save the house across the river and was talking to the owner.

Peter Rinkevich commended the Sheriff for slowing down traffic on North Storter and then asked how docks could undergo routine maintenance without having to get a permit first from DEP. The Mayor said he was working on the problem. Peter Rinkevich further asked about the barge at Pleasure Island and was told by the Mayor that it would be moved soon. Finally, the Mayor responded to another question about recycled water for gardens and said that a disclaimer was not necessary because sprinklers were mandatory.

John Wilson repeated thanks about the traffic control on North Storter and asked about the airport. The Mayor said that the City was talking to an attorney to handle the transfer from the County. He also said that the buildings in the abandoned development site near the airport would be demolished next week.

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We strive to present the facts accurately without political bias or personal opinion.

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