South Florida History

MAGAZINE

Vol. 23, No. 3
Summer 1994
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The Women of World War II

A Promoter's Dream

Pioneer Struggles

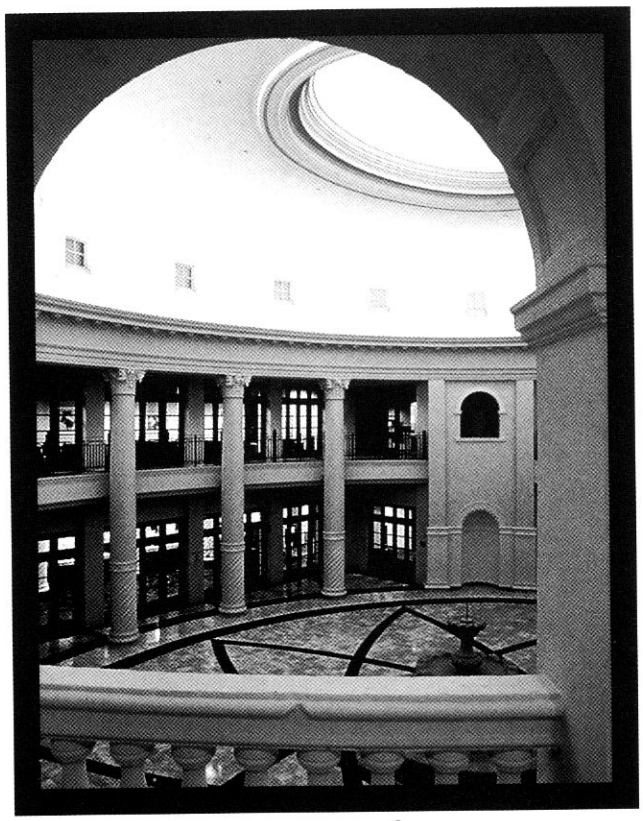
Hurricane Trivia

Published for Members of
Historical Museum of Southern Florida
Collier County Museum
Clewiston Museum
Loxahatchee Historical Museum

Memories are made of this . . .

THIS IS THE OMNI COLONNADE HOTEL:

a perfect marriage of ambiance and service



On a day when everything should be "just right", only one hotel can make it so. No where will you find a more exquisite setting for your event than at the Omni Colonnade Hotel. Rare marble graces the Colonnade's sweeping grande staircase and historic Rotunda. From intimate gatherings to lavish parties of up to 700. So regardless of the occasion, we invite you to visit and experience the magnificent ambiance of the Omni-Colonnade Hotel. Contact our catering professionals at (305) 441-2600 for additional information.

With its graceful columns and quietly elegant surroundings, the Aragon Cafe sets a romantic and intimate tone for fine dining.

Doc Dammers, our casual bar and grill is reminiscent of a 1920's gathering spot and the perfect place for those *little celebrations, lunch or dinner!*
(Recently listed "Best Happy Hour" by *New Times*)

OMNI COLONNADE HOTEL

Vol. 23, No. 3

On the cover: An original "Rosie the Riveter" in action as a airplane mechanic assistant in November 1943 during World War II. See *The Visual Record*, pages 14-21. (HASF, gift of Betty Newell, 1980-56-7)

Features

Published quarterly by the
Historical Association of Southern Florida
101 W. Flagler Street
Miami, Florida 33130
(305) 375-1492

South Florida History Magazine is a journal of popular regional history published quarterly by the Historical Association of Southern Florida.

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The Historical Association of Southern Florida is a nonprofit cultural, educational and humanistic institution dedicated to providing information about the history of southern Florida and the Caribbean, and to the collection and preservation of material relating to that history. Association programs and publications are made possible by membership dues, gifts from private sources and grants from federal, state and local agencies.

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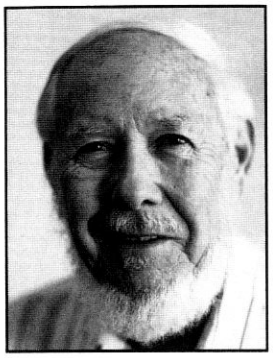
Editor's Notes

By Stuart McIver



How does a city preserve its history? Through books, pictures, old letters, scrapbooks, old newspapers, recorded recollections, artifacts from earlier times. And where are all these elements pulled together, preserved and presented to people who want to learn about what has gone before? In a museum.

Fort Myers, a city with a particularly rich history, is now facing a crisis. Severe financial problems resulted in a cost-cutting move that has seriously curtailed the operations of its excellent and much respected historical museum. Its professional staff — and it was a good one — has been terminated, and the museum is now open at reduced hours, using volunteers and part-time staff lent from the Edison Home.

The crisis, troubling as it is, is not without its hopeful signs. Throughout city government and the community at large intense concern has signaled a clear message. The museum must have a future.

"When you start dealing with a city's history, a lot of people you wouldn't expect to be concerned suddenly sit up and take notice," reported Randy Nimnicht, president of the Historical Museum of Southern Florida. He met with city officials and museum directors as a member of a visiting committee from the Florida Association of Museums. The committee's other members were Dan Hobby, director of the Fort Lauderdale Historical Society, and Linda Williams Mansperger, director of Spanish Point, of Osprey. Their mission was partly to render whatever help they could to Fort Myers but mostly to educate other Florida museums about the problems they might encounter in the future. A detailed report will be written and we plan to present its findings to our readers in the next issue of *South Florida History Magazine.*

★★★

D-Day has been on the mind of the American people this summer. Fifty years have passed since that memorable day when GIs forced open a tiny door which led to the defeat of Nazi Germany. We are observing the anniversary of D-Day with a story by Ruth Elsasser, one of the museum's faithful volunteers. Ruth, the first to enlist in the WAVES from Miami, shares with us her experiences as a woman doing her bit in World War II.

In addition, Carlos Plaza, a teacher at the museum, prepared *The Visual Record* on the role of South Florida women in the war.

During World War II many American GIs, men and women, saw Florida for the first time. They stayed in the finest of Florida hotels, many of them right on the state's sandy beaches, but they were not here as tourists. They were here training 16 and a half hours a day for the biggest war the world had ever known.

Florida weather meant outdoor training year-round. Just a year after Pearl Harbor, 147 Miami Beach hotels had become barracks for the Army Air Force Officers Candidate School, Officers Training School and a basic training center. More than a half million servicemen and women learned military basics on the sands of one of America's glitziest beaches. Among the celebrity movie stars who trained at Miami Beach was the King himself, Clark Gable.

Gable was offered a major's commission in the Army Air Force. He turned it down and enlisted as a lowly private. "Hell, I haven't got any more military experience than a chorus girl," he said. He later worked his way up to the rank of major and flew combat missions. The hotel where he stayed posted a sign in the lobby, declaring proudly: Clark Gable swept here."

In Broward County, the Hollywood Beach Hotel quartered Naval officers, while the Silver Thatch Inn on Pompano's beach was home for the United States Coast Guard Mounted Patrol. Radar schools were established at Fort Lauderdale Beach's Tradewinds and Lauderdale Beach Hotels and at the posh Boca Raton Hotel and Club in Palm Beach County.

After the war, men and women who had trained in South Florida came back to see the Sunshine State under more relaxed skies. Many decided to stay. Real estate people believe this was an important factor in fueling the state's postwar population boom. From 1945, the year the war ended, to the census year of 1950 Fort Lauderdale's population grew from 26,185 to 83,933 and Hollywood's climbed from 7,740 to 36,328. Dade County's growth also ballooned.

This edition also features an account of Florida's celebrated Land Boom of the 1920s, told to us by a tal-

ented story-teller, Vic Knight, of Delray Beach. He is the author of *Vic Knight's Florida*, a book which views the Sunshine State through the eyes of a native.

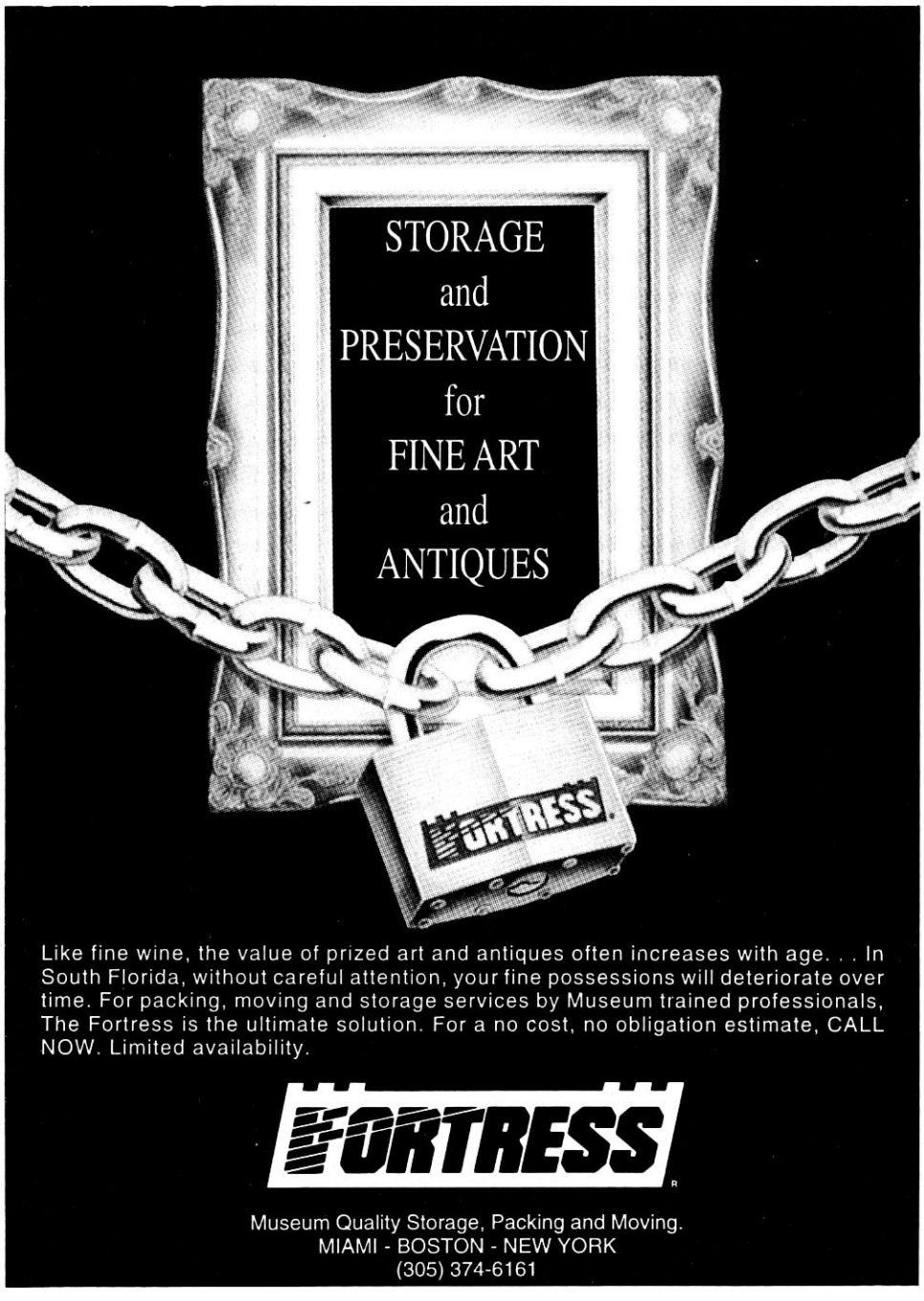
Jean Matheson returns to our pages with the story of pioneer days in the "Great State of Dade," a county which once was big enough to constitute a small state, maybe even a small country.

Our column which nominated the Indian leader, Sam Jones, as the greatest of all native-born Floridians has drawn the attention of Leland Hawes, award-winning historical columnist for the *Tampa Tribune*. He is inviting his readers to write our magazine with other nominees and we want to welcome others to join in with their comments.

Since the Sam Jones column ran in our Spring issue, the old boy has gained a lot of support in Broward County. A move is underway to raise $125,000 to erect a statue to Jones. Billy Cypress, director of the Seminole Tribal Museum in Hollywood, has commissioned a design, County Commissioner Gerald Thompson is backing it, and Charles Palmer, developer of Forest Ridge in the Pine Island area where Sam once roamed, has contributed $10,000 to the project. The tribal council is studying possible sites.

★★★

Historical Museum volunteers are an energetic lot. Still, I was surprised on a recent trip to the North Carolina mountains to see volunteer Joyce Kory whizzing down a rope from a 70-foot cliff. She is an active and accomplished rappeller, a member of that adventurous breed who enjoy descending from the mountains a lot faster than they went up.



Around the Galleries...

HISTORICAL MUSEUM OF SOUTHERN FLORIDA

Metro-Dade Cultural Center
101 West Flagler Street, Miami
(305) 375-1492

Exhibitions

PLACES IN TIME: Historic Architecture and Landscapes of Miami
April 21 - September 25, 1994
This exhibition showcases 140 platinum prints of historic sites in Dade County by architectural and fine art photographer John Gillan. The timeless images captured by Gillan are printed in the platinum process, a technique distinguished by extraordinary detailed images of high quality and longevity.

Treasures of Florida's Libraries
June 22 - August 28, 1994
This exhibition highlights rare and outstanding items from the special collections of libraries in Florida, including a 1792 George Washington diary and a leaf of the Gutenberg Bible.

Giants of the Swamp
June 30 - July 31, 1994
A photographic exhibition on the Big Cypress Swamp of Florida and the town of Jerome. Created by Cesar Becerra.

Mialhé's Colonial Cuba
October 1, 1994 - January 30, 1995
See the original works responsible for creating the 19th century world's view of Cuba by Pierre Toussaint Frederic Mialhé. Mialhé's depiction of colonial Cuba's landscapes and peoples were plagiarized throughout the world on tins and ceramics, cigar labels, albums and numerous printed works. Funding provided by the State of Florida Division of Historic Resources, Federal Express and First Union Foundation.

Historical Museum Golf Classic
October 26, 1994
Make history at this second annual *best ball* tournament beginning with a shotgun start at 12:30 p.m. at the historic Biltmore Hotel & Golf Course in Coral Gables. Spa Day for spouses. Limited to 32 foursomes. $250 per player. Call Patricia Helms at (305) 375-1492 for enrollment information.

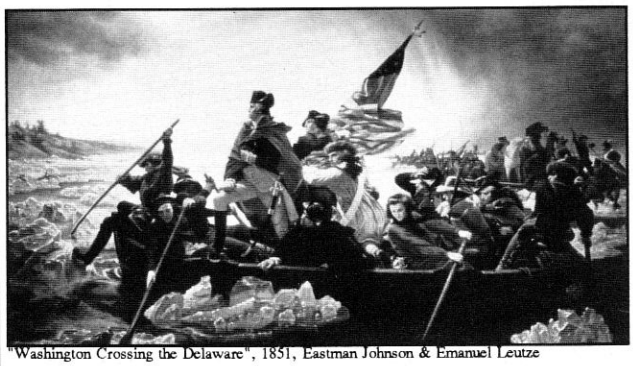
Harvest Festival
Saturday & Sunday, November 19 - 20
At the Dade County Youth Fair Grounds & Expo Center at Tamiami Park, Coral Way and 112th Ave. Celebrating two decades of this popular festival, this anniversary *Harvest* features 350 craft booths, folklife demonstrations, historic re-enactments, quilt display and sale, traditional South Florida foods, storytelling, continuous performances and more. Adults $5; Children (5-12) $2.

General Information

Open Mon-Sat. 10 a.m.-5 p.m; Thur. til 9 p.m.; Sun. 12 noon-5 p.m. Adults $4; Children 6-12 $2. Members free.

Also at the Metro-Dade Cultural Center:

CENTER FOR THE FINE ARTS
101 WEST FLAGLER STREET



"Washington Crossing the Delaware", 1851, Eastman Johnson & Emanuel Leutze

PICTURING HISTORY: American Painting 1770-1930
August 4 - October 30, 1994

Tues-Sat: 10am-5pm, Thurs: 10am-9pm, Sun: Noon-5pm
Adult admission $5. Students & Seniors $2.50
FREE Thursday 5-9pm, Closed Monday, 375-3000

This exhibition was organized by the Fraunces Tavern Museum with a grant from IBM. Additional support received from the National Endowment for the Arts. Technical assistance provided by The American Federation of Arts.
The Center for the Fine Arts is recognized by the State of Florida as a Major Cultural Institution and receives funding from the State of Florida through the Florida Dept. of State, the Florida Arts Council and the Divsion of Cultural Affairs. The 1993-94 exhibitions are sponsored in part by the Dade County Cultural Affairs Council and the Metropolitan Dade County Board of County Commissioners.

LOXAHATCHEE MUSEUM
JUPITER, FLORIDA

Burt Reynolds Park
805 North U.S. Hwy. 1, Jupiter
(407) 747-6639

Exhibitions

Touch of Life

June - July 1994

Four large hands-on components from the South Florida Natural History Museum and "Florida Fossils" from the Fort Myers Historical Museum.

Florida First Flight

August 1994

Natural light color photography of Florida artist Joel McEachern.

Florida Archaeology

September - October 1994

The Belle Glade Indians from the Florida Museum of Natural History and *The Science of Archaeology* from the Loxahatchee Museum explain the process archaeologists use to learn about Florida's past with artifacts, photographs and hands-on components.

General Information

The museum's permanent exhibit, *History Shaped By Nature*, including artifacts, photgraphs, maps and original documents, helps preserve and tell the story of this area's unique history. Visitors are also invited to tour the maritime exhibit at the Jupiter Lighthouse and the DuBois Pioneer Home, perched on an ancient Indian midden on the Jupiter Inlet. Open Tues.-Fri. 10 a.m.-4 p.m. and weekends 1-4 p.m. Closed on Mon.

Collier County Museum

3301 Tamiami Trail East, Naples
(813) 774-8476

Exhibitions

The Miccosukee: A Visual Commentary

August 8 -26, 1994

This color photographic exhibit offers a look at the youth of contemporary Miccosukee society and how they have adapted their traditional cultural beliefs and modern daily practices. Developed by Jacquie Spector, London-based photographer, the Collier County Museum and the Miccosukee Tribe of Florida with funding from the Florida Humanities Council.

Special Events

Songs of Old Time Florida

September 17, 1994, 2 p.m.

Songwriter, musician and folklorist Charley Groth carries participants back to Florida's old days and the hard times of rural folk amid the scrub palms and slash pines.

Old Florida Festival: History Learned by History Lived

November 5-6, 1994

This two-day living history program recreates Florida's past.

General Information

The museum and four-acre historical park is open Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Admission is free.

CLEWISTON MUSEUM

112 So. Commercio St., Clewiston
(813) 983-2870

Exhibitions

The Tampa Tribune

September 1 - December 31, 1994

An exhibition from the Florida Museum of History.

The Logging Industry of the Big Cypress Swamp

December 1-28, 1994

For those who have not yet seen this exhibition on its travels around the state, the Clewiston Museum serves as host for its final venue of 1994. Through a photographic chronicle, Cesar Becerra traces the remarkable logging industry of Florida's Big Cypress Swamp and the logging town of Jerome.

General Information

The Clewiston Museum, founded in 1984, is a growing museum, collecting and displaying items, large and small, important and trivial, which reflect the past of Clewiston and its surrounding area.

Open 1 to 5 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday, with seasonal adjustments. No admission fee is charged, however, donations are encouraged.

The First WAVE On Miami Beach

by Ruth Elsasser

WAVES company on review, Naval air gunners school in Miami. (HASF, gift of Mrs. Henry Perner 1985-29-1)

Anyway you spelled the winter season on Miami Beach, it came out G-L-A-M-O-R. This hot spot had it all: elaborate night clubs, tea dances in the tropical garden of the Roney Plaza Hotel, swimming and diving shows at the Deauville pool and elegantly dressed ladies shopping on Lincoln Road. Gambling, though illegal, was in the wide open, lush casinos and night spots.

On a seemingly peaceful Sunday, December 7, 1941, while Saturday night revelers were sleeping late and sun worshipers were oiling and frying their bodies, the news spread through cabanas, hotels and homes that Pearl Harbor had been bombed. In a very short time Miami Beach shed its glamor, ousted its hotel guests, and welcomed thousands of soldiers for basic training. Golf courses became parade grounds. Beach shops switched to selling military wear. "Gentiles Only" signs came down from restricted hotels, as they became Army barracks.

As the war became more devastating, and as my three brothers entered military service, I became restless in my job as social worker for the State Welfare Board. The first step toward more direct involvement was to become a home service worker for the American Red Cross.

As a Red Cross worker, I dealt with problems of families whose sons, husbands and brothers were away at war. In addition to the financial strain of having the family wage earner gone, many families faced the sticky situation of the bewildered young draftee away from home for the first time. Frightened and lonely, some simply cut and ran away from their units; they were then known as "AWOL" to the military — absent without leave.

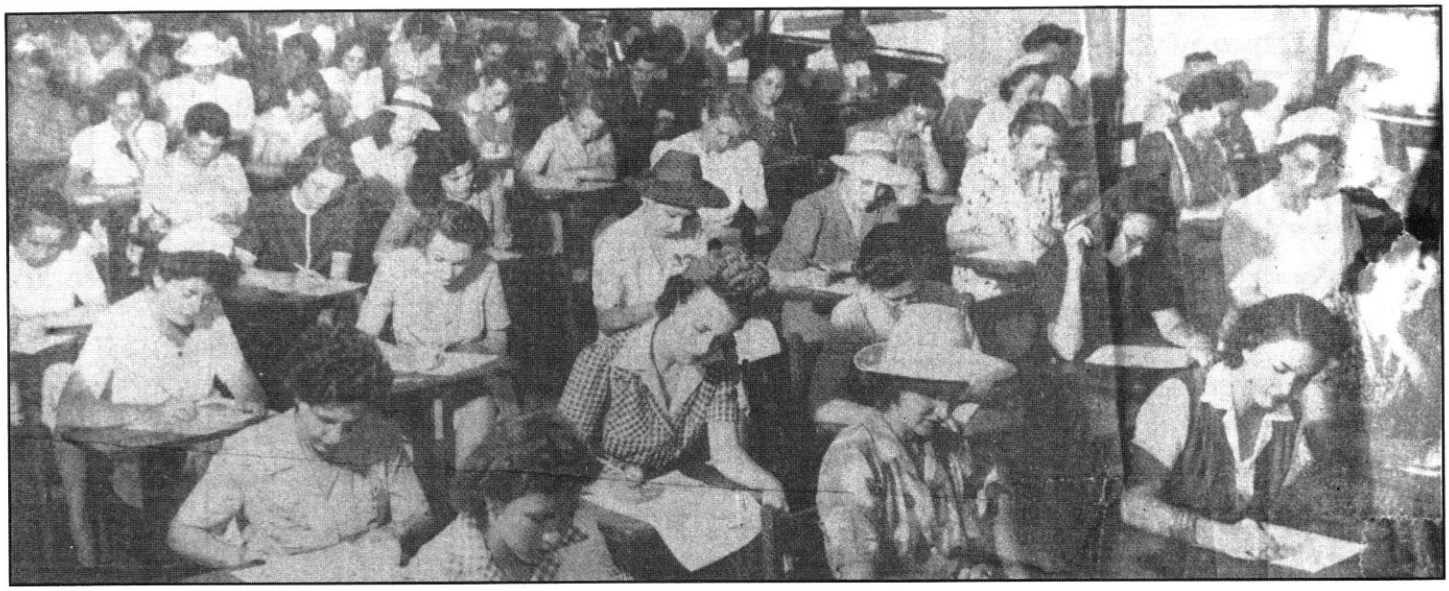
In time of war, AWOL could be classified desertion with dire consequences if the soldier or sailors did not return to duty by a certain deadline. It was one of my jobs to explain this to the family members so that they might persuade the serviceman to return to camp.

I can't remember how I learned about the formation of the WAVES. (Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service). But suddenly, there I was, pictured in *The Miami Herald* of September 2, 1942, taking the aptitude test in a roomful of eager, bright, serious, nervous young women. After that came the personal interview and the physical exam.

The physical was a definite test of one's poise under fire.

Ruth Elsasser, a Florida native originally from Cocoa, became Miami Beach's first WAVE in 1942. The photo here was taken the following year.

Elsasser has lived in the Miami area since her family moved from Cocoa in 1934 when she was a high school senior. A graduate of Florida State College for Women, she now manages the paperback section of the bookstore at the Wolfson campus of Miami-Dade Community College and has been a volunteer for the Historical Museum in the Museum Store since 1984. She has family throughout South Florida, including two brothers in Miami.



Ruth Elsasser is depicted in this Sept. 2, 1942 *Herald* photograph, seated third from the front on the far left side in her nurse's cap, taking the WAVES apptitude test with other women from all over the state. If they scored well on the test, applicants then underwent a personal interview with military brass, then the physical exam. Elsasser passed each hurdle to become the first WAVE chosen from Miami.

I was told to report to the Naval Recruiting Office in the Langford Building, S.E. First Street, Miami. This I did only to find myself in a throng of young fellows who had come to enlist. I was handed a bottle and sent down the hall and told to return with a urine specimen. I can still feel my scarlet face as I marched past the line of male recruits on my way back to the doctor's office.

All in all, I survived the beginning of my military career with outward dignity and inward chaos and uncertainty.

Even when pulling all of this out of my memory, I felt the same glow as when I was chosen for the very first WAVES officer class in the U.S.

My orders, dated September 26, 1942, told me to report to the commanding officer, USNR, Midshipmen School at Smith College, Northhampton, Massachusetts. My first classification was apprentice Seaman, Class V-9. I emerged 90 days later as an ensign with orders to report to the Commander, Gulf Sea Frontier, Miami, Florida. Thus, another 90-day wonder made the scene.

Much of the work of the WAVES officers in this command was to encode and decode messages and to see

Role Reversal. This greeting card and the inscription on the photograph above shows folks adjusting to the new role of women in the war effort. Ruth Elsasser on left in photograph. (Courtesy of Ruth Elsasser)

For young people in the military, Miami was a great place to be stationed. Miamians opened their arms, their homes and their hearts to service people. Besides organized entertainment, many local residents invited soldiers and sailors to their homes for meals and for a chance to be with a family for a little while.

For the WAVES, the hospitality was endless. Since there were so few of us in the beginning, we were a distinct curiosity. To start with, our uniforms were smart looking, having been designed by a top fashion designer. Even the officer's hat was

was a cabana at the Roney Plaza Hotel on Miami Beach? We were allowed to share the expense of renting a cabana among four of us, an exception to the rules of Roney Plaza management. In view of the fact that we were on different eight-hour shifts, there was never a traffic jam in the cabana. The Roney's pool, beach and tropical garden were considered the most beautiful in the area. Management and guests treated us royally. Of course, we were enthusiastic over the fact that male soldiers and sailors used the Roney facilities when they were off duty.

Center photo: The first WAVES officer class in the United States marching in Northhampton, Mass. Author is marcher at the end of the row, under the "SH" in the more prominent of the two SHEA signs. Top and bottom photos: Northhampton wasn't anything like the cabana on Miami Beach. (Courtesy of Ruth Elsasser)

that these messages were routed to the proper superior officers for action. The ultimate responsibility was to ensure that supply and troop ships passing offshore got through safely. Security was strictly enforced and emphasized daily. Even weather reports were restricted information for fear that such knowledge would be helpful to enemy subs.

As the U.S. presence increased in this area, sightings of German submarines diminished. In one incident, however, a German sub surfaced and shot down a U.S. blimp on patrol duty.

famous, having been styled by Mainbocher, a familiar name in *haute couture* of that day.

Because the Navy had not yet issued summer uniforms by the time my group was assigned to Miami, we were taken to a downtown uniform store for custom made white linen uniforms. We felt super gorgeous!

Since the Navy did not provide specific housing for WAVES officers assigned to Miami, I lived at home. Other WAVES officers found housing on their own. However, would you believe that our recreational hangout

My parents always seemed a bit startled when I walked in when they were having breakfast. I, of course, had just completed the 11 p.m. to 7 a.m. shift. Daughters working the overnight shift were, for the most part, rare creatures. However, the country was already becoming

accustomed to countless numbers of "Rosie the Riveters" working around the clock in war production factories.

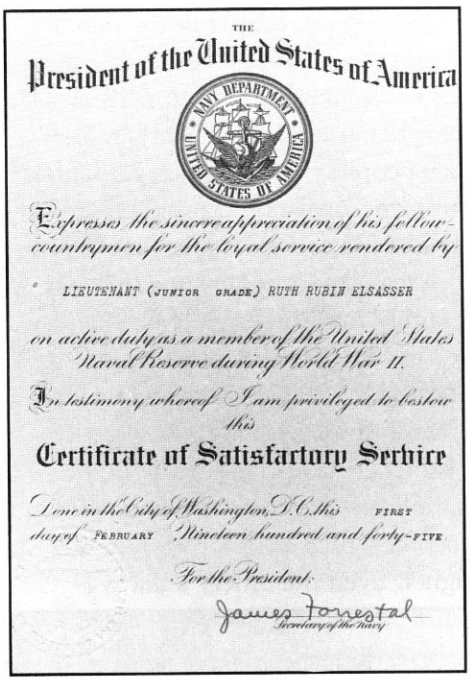
My family and I suffered the anxiety of receiving the dreaded report that my youngest brother was missing in action in Germany. Those nerve-wracking days of cruel suspense are hard to describe. Was he dead? Lying wounded beyond help? Being mistreated by the enemy?

Then one day a postcard came from a ham radio operator telling my parents that my brother's name was on an International Red Cross list. He was a prisoner of war in Germany.

The Red Cross broadcast their names nightly. As a patriotic gesture, many ham operators took down the names and notified families all over the United States. We were extremely fortunate that my brother came home at the end of the war after a year in prison camp. Of course, Miamians, as all Americans, coped with ration books, shortages and blackouts.

On November 7, 1943, I was detached from Gulf Sea Frontier and ordered to report to BUPERS (Bureau of Personnel), Washington, for reassignment. Little did I know that I would return to Miami the following February with my fiancee, who had just come back from duty in the Pacific. He had gone over early in the war with the America division and had spent many months in and out of the hospital with malaria attacks. He had accumulated much leave time, and I managed to get a one-week leave so that we could come home to be married in the presence of both sets of parents.

After a nightmarish trip on a train that was so packed with people (mostly military) that we had to stand in the aisle from Washington to Richmond, Va., we pulled into the Florida East Coast Railway station in downtown Miami early in the morning of February 18, 1944. We were both a total mess as well as exhausted and hungry. We were wondering if we should not have taken the easy way out by getting married in Washington and announcing the event to our parents later.



THE
President of the United States of America

NAVY DEPARTMENT
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Expresses the sincere appreciation of his fellow-countrymen for the loyal service rendered by

LIEUTENANT (JUNIOR GRADE) RUTH RUBIN ELSASSER

on active duty as a member of the United States Naval Reserve during World War II.

In testimony whereof I am privileged to bestow this

Certificate of Satisfactory Service

Done in the City of Washington, D.C. this FIRST day of FEBRUARY Nineteen hundred and forty-FIVE

For the President:

James Forrestal
Secretary of the Navy

My wedding day was the epitome of wartime Miami. While we were still at the F.E.C. station, my soon-to-be mother-in-law announced that we would have to be married that very day, because she was not going to waste a gas ration coupon going home to Hollywood and returning another day for the wedding.

Accordingly, our family group formed a military maneuver. The two fathers went off to find Rabbi Jacob Kaplan, arranging for him to marry us in his home at five o'clock that afternoon. The two mothers went off to a friend in the jewelry business to do something about rings. My husband to be and I went to City Hall for a marriage license. We were all to meet at five o'clock for the ceremony.

And meet we did! Proper clothes were not a problem, since we were both in uniform. Mrs. Kaplan was one witness. She went out on the street and grabbed the first passerby to be the second witness.

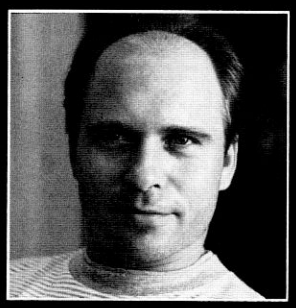
After the ceremony, our little family group went to a nice restaurant for our wedding dinner. Later we were escorted back to the F.E.C. station, where this eventful day had started earlier that morning.

We boarded a train for Cocoa, Fla., where we honeymooned at the Indian River Hotel for a few precious days before heading back to Washington. (Cocoa was where we had met as classmates in the sixth grade.) Our "Day In The Life Of" wedding day would have been, in normal times, at least "A Week In The Life Of," if not more. But during the war events — personal and otherwise — were squeezed into periods of time that seemed unreal!

Harsh events are often softened by the passage of time. Some things in the past that seemed very serious now give me a chuckle or two. Other things fill me with pride. Put it all together and it sounds like life! ★

TRIVIA

South Florida & Hurricanes



By Bryan Henry

The wind has to blow pretty hard for a storm to earn the designation as a *hurricane* — 74 miles an hour. *Tropical disturbances* are low pressure areas with winds of 8 to 18 miles per hour. A *tropical depression* is a storm with winds as fast as 38 miles per hour. Winds blowing at speeds between 39 and 73 miles per hour are classified as *tropical storms*. We're in the North Atlantic hurricane season now, which runs June 1 to November 30; however, hurricanes have been recorded in every month of the year except April. As South Floridians know, hurricanes are to be taken seriously, but here's some fun trivia anyway.

The 1926 hurricane that virtually wiped out Miami and Miami Beach, was one of eight that year, and was one of four active at the same time, which had not occurred in the United States since 1893.

The name Andrew cannot be used again (its name was recycled from the 1986 season). It has been retired, an honor reserved for all the "Big Ones."

After the 1926 hurricane (in 1927), the University of Miami decided on its nickname, the Hurricanes.

In the 1926 hurricane, the storm tide was estimated at 16 feet in Biscayne Bay. After the storm, more than 175 sunken boats were located in the bay, and another 140 were stranded along the bayfront. Thirteen bodies were also brought up from the bay.

The highest exact-count hurricane death toll in the United States was 1,836 from the San Felipe hurricane of Sept. 17, 1928, which blew Lake Okeechobee out of its bed and into adjacent towns and farms.

In 1857, members of the Jesuit Order of the Catholic Church established the Observatory of the College of Belen in Havana, Cuba, under Reverend Benito Vines who started the first system of hurricane warnings.

Norris Cut in Biscayne Bay was created sometime between 1829 and 1838, and most likely by the hurricane of Sept. 14-16, 1835.

Throughout history, more ships have been sunk by hurricanes than by war.

The South Florida Water Management District was created because of hurricanes in 1947.

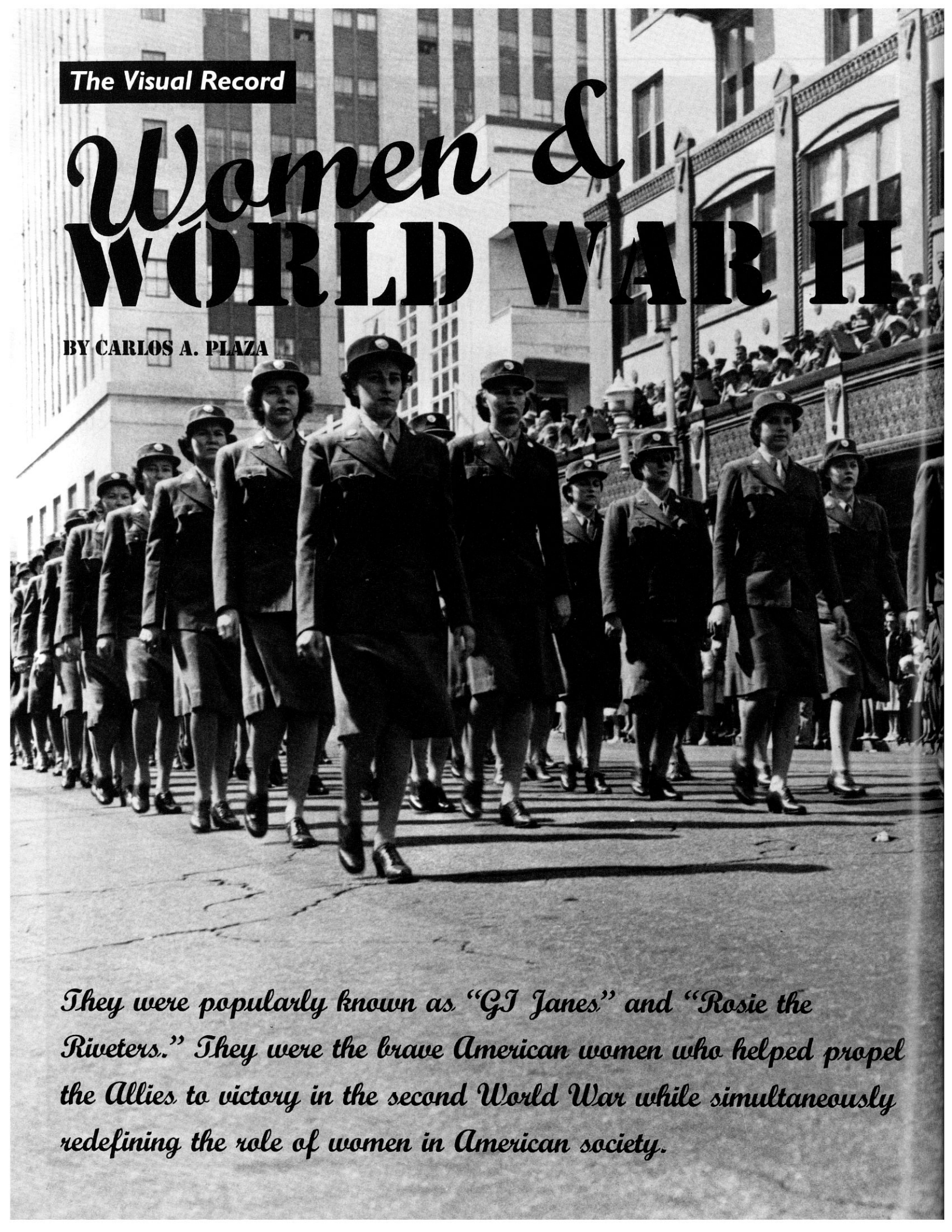
In October, 1495, Columbus was in a hurricane in Isabella Harbor (Dominican Republic) where six ships were sunk or destroyed. The only ship to weather the storm was Columbus'.

The average life of an Atlantic hurricane is about nine days.

On average, about 80 hurricanes and typhoons form each year worldwide.

One second of hurricane energy is equivalent to that of 10 Hiroshima atomic bombs.

An average hurricane releases as much energy as 100,000 atomic explosions. Its power output in 24 hours could supply the U.S. with electricity for six months.



The Visual Record

Women & WORLD WAR II

BY CARLOS A. PLAZA

They were popularly known as "GI Janes" and "Rosie the Riveters." They were the brave American women who helped propel the Allies to victory in the second World War while simultaneously redefining the role of women in American society.

It was obvious to most U.S. leaders that the practical necessities of war would call for challenging the social norms of the day. The U.S. could ill afford to leave anyone out of the war effort. President Roosevelt said in his Columbus Day speech of 1942: "In some communities employers dislike to hire women. In others, they are reluctant to hire Negroes. We can no longer afford to indulge such prejudice."

And so it was that women began to leave their restricted, low paying domain of domestic, secretarial and clerical services for the much more lucrative realm of the defense plant.

For many it was an economic opportunity that could not be passed up. The Great Depression had deprived millions of a decent living for more than a decade. Single mothers and black women, long a part of the work force, were eager to leave laundromats and kitchens and make their way into shipyards and aircraft factories. The majority had never earned nearly as much as they would at their new jobs.

One such Rosie the Riveter, later to be among the one-third of urban blacks who became homeowners after the war, credited the war for her improved quality of life: "The war made me live better, it really did. My sister always said that Hitler was the one that got us out of the white folk's kitchen."

Nevertheless, African Americans in the war effort — men and women alike — still faced discrimination and segregation and were given the less appealing jobs. Women in general were excluded from operating certain machinery, were openly discriminated against in terms of seniority and were paid less relative to men.

However, patriotism played a major role in attracting defense labor.

Machine gun instruction by a WAVE, Naval Air Gunners School, Miami, Florida. (HASF 1985-29-10)

Many women who were not as economically motivated to work as their African-American and single-parent sisters signed up, inspired by their sense of duty to country. At the same time, most married women, especially those with young children, opposed the idea of working away from home.

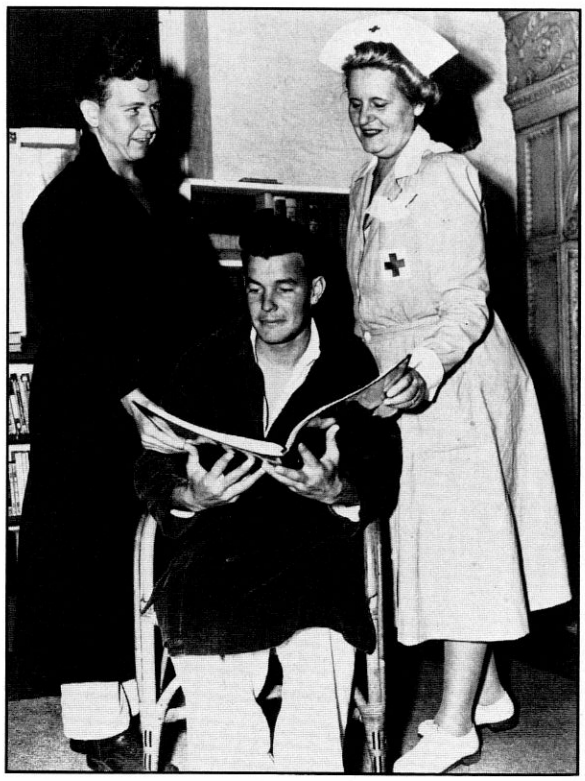
As the war industry began to feel the weight of an increasing labor shortage, women were bombarded by patriotic propaganda. It worked. By 1944, one-third of women defense workers were formerly full-time homemakers.

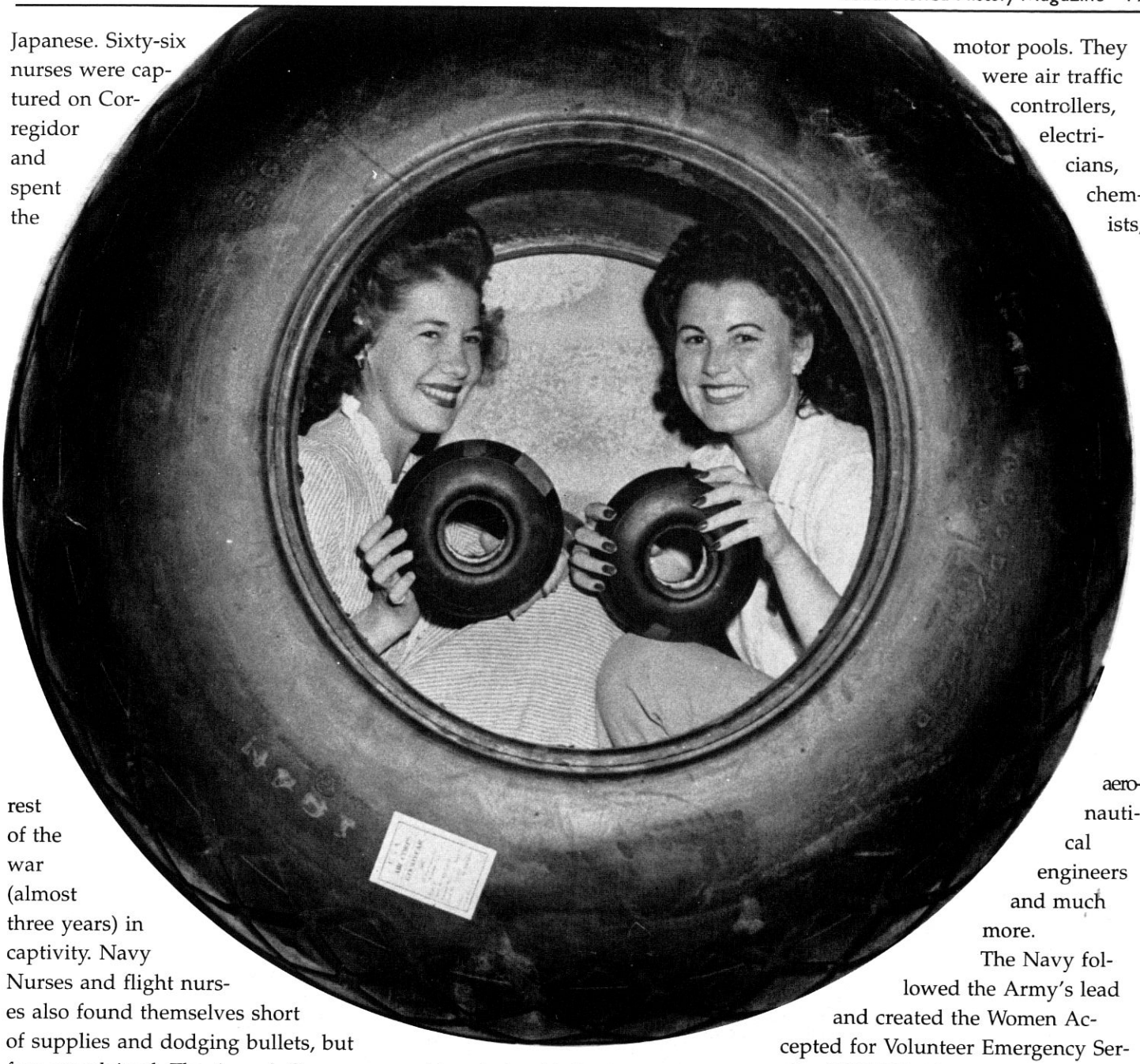
A world away from the home effort, Army Nurse Corps members in the Phillipines valiantly went on with their duties under hellish conditions as they were besieged by the

Left: Willie Todd, MIAD assistant foreman pump section, Engine Test Building, MD, at Miami Air Depot, Mar. 16, 1944. (HASF 1980-56-44)

Right: At the Nautilus Hotel in 1941. (HASF Miami News Collection 1989-011-18336)

Opposite: In a warehouse at Miami Air Depot, Jeann Lineberger and Georgia Stroud sit inside of a landing wheel of a PT-17 training plane, demonstrating the variety of tire sizes used by the Army, Mar. 15, 1944. (HASF 1980-56-43)





Japanese. Sixty-six nurses were captured on Corregidor and spent the rest of the war (almost three years) in captivity. Navy Nurses and flight nurses also found themselves short of supplies and dodging bullets, but few complained. The Army's Surgeon General recognized their valor and tenacity when he said: "There was no fear in the eyes of any of these women anymore — only pity and kindness and certainty. They have conducted themselves as coolly as the most hardened veterans."

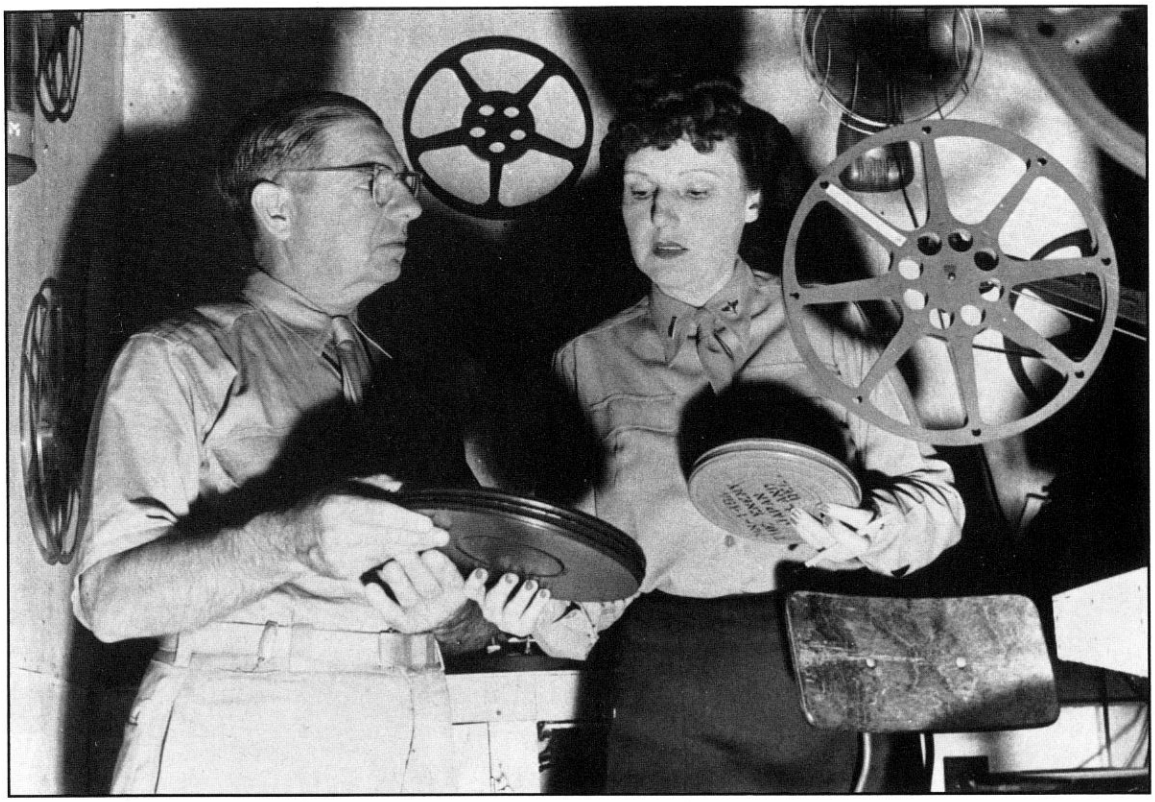
It was understood that women could do more. As a matter of fact, women had already proven their worth. Thirteen thousand women had served as their brothers' equals in the Navy and Marines during WWI. It was only logical that women could and should do their part in the military. Amid much Congressional debate, the several branches of the armed forces opened their ranks to women.

The Women's Army Corps (WACS) was the militarization of 6,000 women who voluntarily staffed mobile aircraft warning stations; they would grow to a force of 60,000.

The WACS initially freed men from clerical duties, but their responsibilities quickly expanded. WACS did everything from handling military communications to running motor pools. They were air traffic controllers, electricians, chemists, aeronautical engineers and much more.

The Navy followed the Army's lead and created the Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service (WAVES). The Coast Guard had its SPARS, named after its motto Semper Paratus-Always Ready, and the Marine Corps simply called their new women recruits Marines.

Throughout the war, women in the military spread into increasingly diverse occupations. Some WAVES, for example, instructed male recruits as gunnery specialists. The Women's Airforces Service Pilots (WASP) were highly skilled pilots who ferried 77 different types of aircraft, taught bombing, strafing and smoke-screening, and even put their lives on the



Above: WAC 1st Lt. Charlotte M. Kackley was safety director for the Memphis, Tenn., Chamber of Commerce before she enlisted. She served in the Signal Corps before becoming an Air WAC assigned to Miami Air Depot as assistant civilian training chief. Responsible for training film and the technical library, she is shown here checking film scheduled for showing to Depot workers who helped keep AAF combat planes flying. Raymond H. Milliman of Coral Gables is the projectionist assisting her in the photo, May 8, 1944. (HASF 1980-56-54)

Below: U.S. Army Recruiting Service, Miami Beach, 1942. (HASF 1985-136-69 and HASF Miami News Collection 1989-011-18448)

To cover the vast area of the M
around in scooters. Scooter op
a license. Here, Pat M. Gilder
licensed, makes a colorful pict
her star-spangled blouse with
Adjutant General's office, Dec

line as target towers and test pilots.

At the war's end, many women were happy to return to domestic life. Still, a good number wished to remain at their new found occupa-

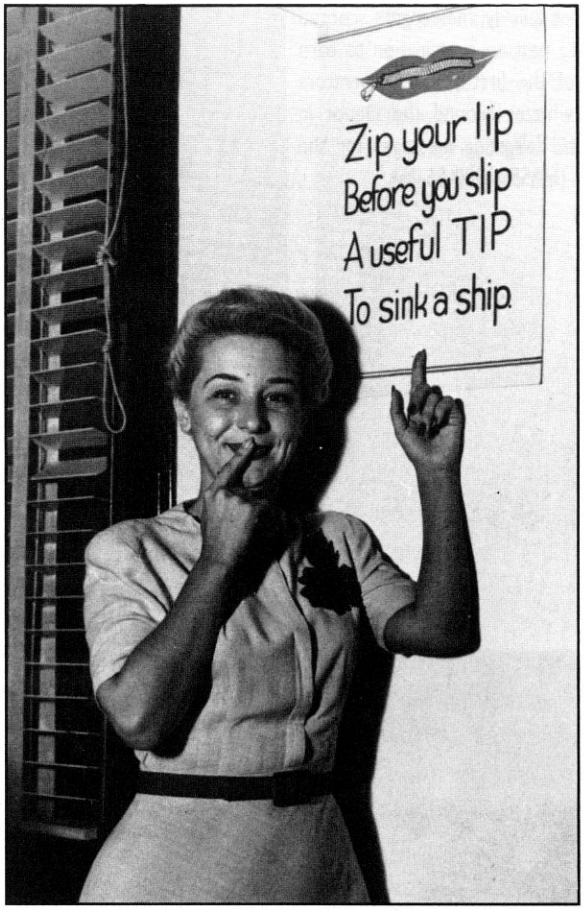
mi Air Depot quickly, messengers scooted
ators had to pass an examination to earn
eeve, one of the first scooter operators
e as she whizzes around the Depot in
p to match, delivering messages for the
17, 1943. (HASF 1980-56-15)

tions. Like it or not, most women defense plant workers were dismissed in order to make room for the returning veterans. Women who had run into as much or more discrimination in the military and had nonetheless proven themselves worthy, faced a similar plight after the war.

Many perceived the next decade of the 1950s as a time of happy homemakers "returning to normalcy." Yet the courageous women of the 1940s would never again be as dependent and uneducated as the prewar years had found them. They now knew what they could do, and their confidence had grown in proportion to their achievements. They took that new-found confidence home with them and passed it on to their daughters. That next generation would bloom and solidify the gains of their mothers in an era much more conducive to their needs.

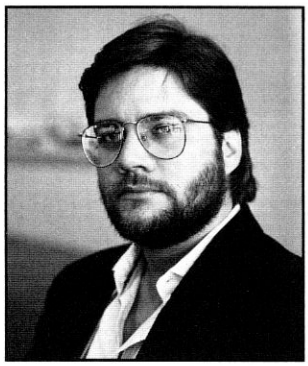
The American Women of WWII had won a war on two fronts, and all Americans were the better for it. ★

Joyce Tuggle of Hialeah, an assistant receptionist in the adjutant general's office at the Miami Air Depot, showed how simple it was to submit an idea for helping win the war, Feb. 18, 1944. Good ideas were awarded with cash, from $5 to $250. (HASF 1980-56-36)



(HASF Miami News Collection 1989-011-18442)

(HASF 1980-206-56)



Carlos Plaza is a teacher at the Historical Museum of Southern Florida and a student at Florida International University. He was born in Miami Beach in 1967, six years after his parents immigrated to South Florida from Cuba. He is a graduate of Hialeah-Miami Lakes High School and is studying international relations and education. He lives in Kendall with his wife Olga and his new son Andres.

Women in uniform could saddle up to the bar, too (with cokes). (HASF Miami News Collection 1989-011-18010)

First WACS at Miami Air Depot Oct. 23, 1945, from left to right: 2nd Lts. Barbara M. Lockton, Dorothy K. Davis and Narcissa D. Brooks, assigned to the Depot from Fort Oglethorpe, Ga. (HASF 1980-56-3)

The Florida Land Boom:

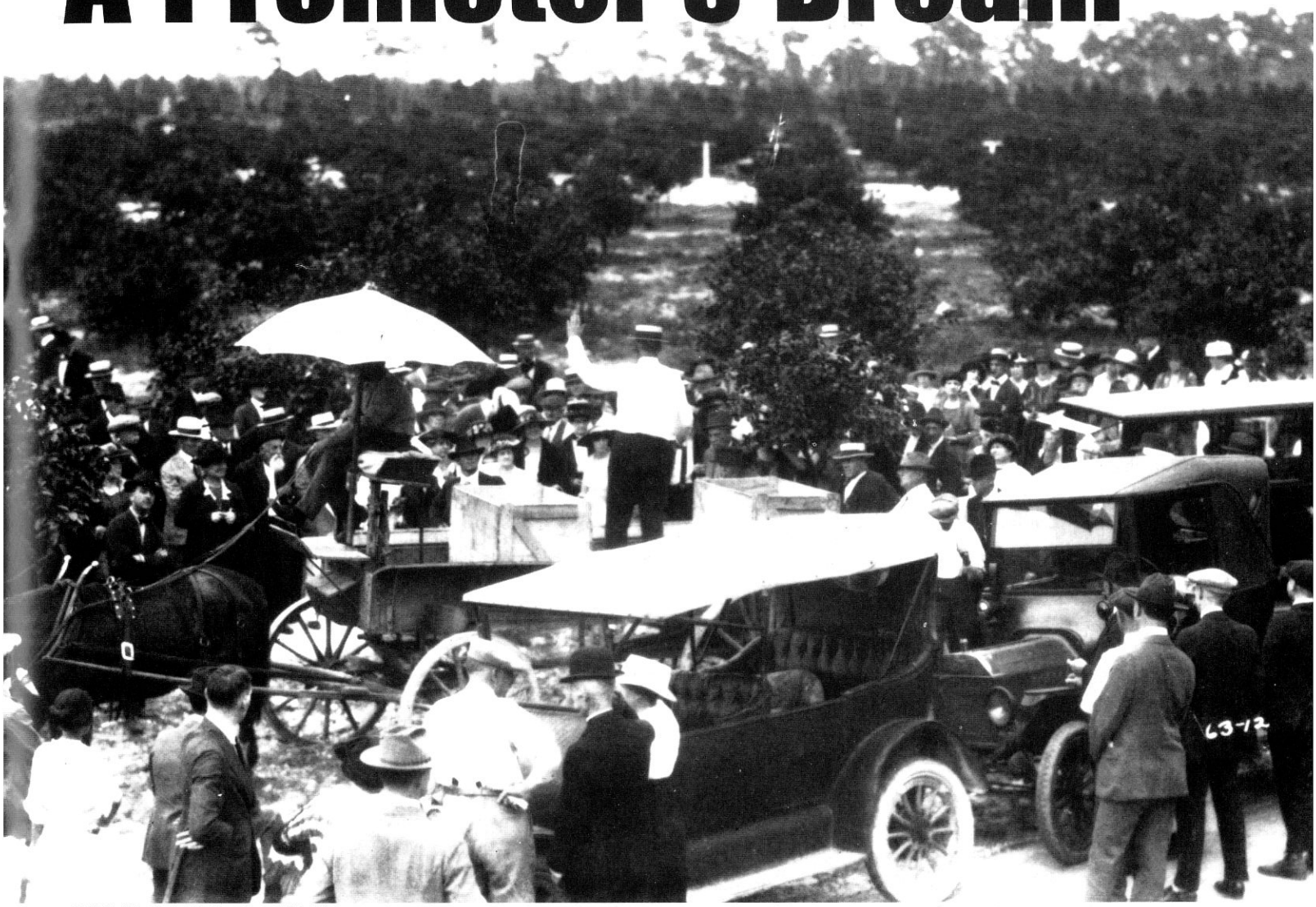
By Vic Knight

It was a promoter's dream, an ad man's vision. All of life's goodies coming to roost in one incredible event. It was an immense sales campaign for a very special product, and it had everything. Romance. Greed. Riches beyond the wildest dreams of avarice. It had the fastest fast-buck artists, the smoothest-talking salesmen, the sharpest land-handlers. . .

Add to all of this tropical moonlight, sex, soaring paper wealth, glorious sandy beaches and, of course, Florida's ultimate narcotic, her omnipresent sunshine. All beaming proudly over her 58,000 square miles of just one product for sale: LAND.

(HASF Matlack Collection 130-12)

A Promoter's Dream



(HASF Matlack Collection 129-12)

The astute ad man will further add into all this, an era of good-times, high-rollers, euphoria and the devil-may-care feeling of America's "Roaring 20s." All together, you have the one, the only, the original Florida Land Boom.

It was the hustlers — real estate promoters, the Binder Boys, wheeler-dealers — all part of Florida's Golden Decade of about 1919 to 1928. It was to dwarf all the gold rushes on the continent put together. It grew from the dreams of Florida's earlier visionaries: Hamilton Disston and the two Henrys — Plant and Flagler. Immediately following World War I, the momentum grew to a feverish level.

A Promoter's Dream?

It was Barron Collier with his advertising card fortune from Baltimore's streetcars. It was Carl Fisher from his famed Indianapolis 500 Mile Race. It was Joseph Young with his Hollywood-By-The-Sea bus-caravans. It was Charles Roser bringing his "fig-newton-fortune" from Ohio. It was George Merrick's Coral Gables, Ransom E. Olds, Sebring, Stetson, Deland, Chipley, and a hundred others.

The Boom and its prospects centered around specific areas: Miami/Palm Beaches, St.Pete/Tampa, Orlando/Central Florida, Daytona/Jacksonville and Tallahassee/Pensacola. Plus all points in between as the smallest of towns — or even no town at all but just open land — could capture and fire the imagination of a "boomer," and off they went to the races.

It was indeed a promoter's dream. And everyone wanted a share of the gold in the "Magic Decade."

It was "the eccentric Mizners." with their "I am Boca Raton! The Greatest Resort in the World" ad

campaign that would frighten even some of their own investors. It was Harry Kelsey, whose dream of Kelsey City would one day become parts of North Palm Beach and Lake Park.

In Tampa Bay, (that's right, IN Tampa Bay) D.P. Davis would follow the lead of Carl Fisher and dredge bay-bottom sand to create his Davis Islands, just as Fisher had been doing in Biscayne Bay. A half-century later, conservationists would recoil in horror at such an idea, but hey, this was the 1920s and the Florida Land Boom.

The names roll on. Tampa/St. Pete would enlist Mr. Snell and his elite Snell Isle project. In the Northeast, tiny Green Cove Springs had its own "angels."

Familiar names? How about J.C. Penney, Gail Borden, Mr. Hoover and his vacuum cleaner fortune, or Mr. Lynch of that stockbroker company.

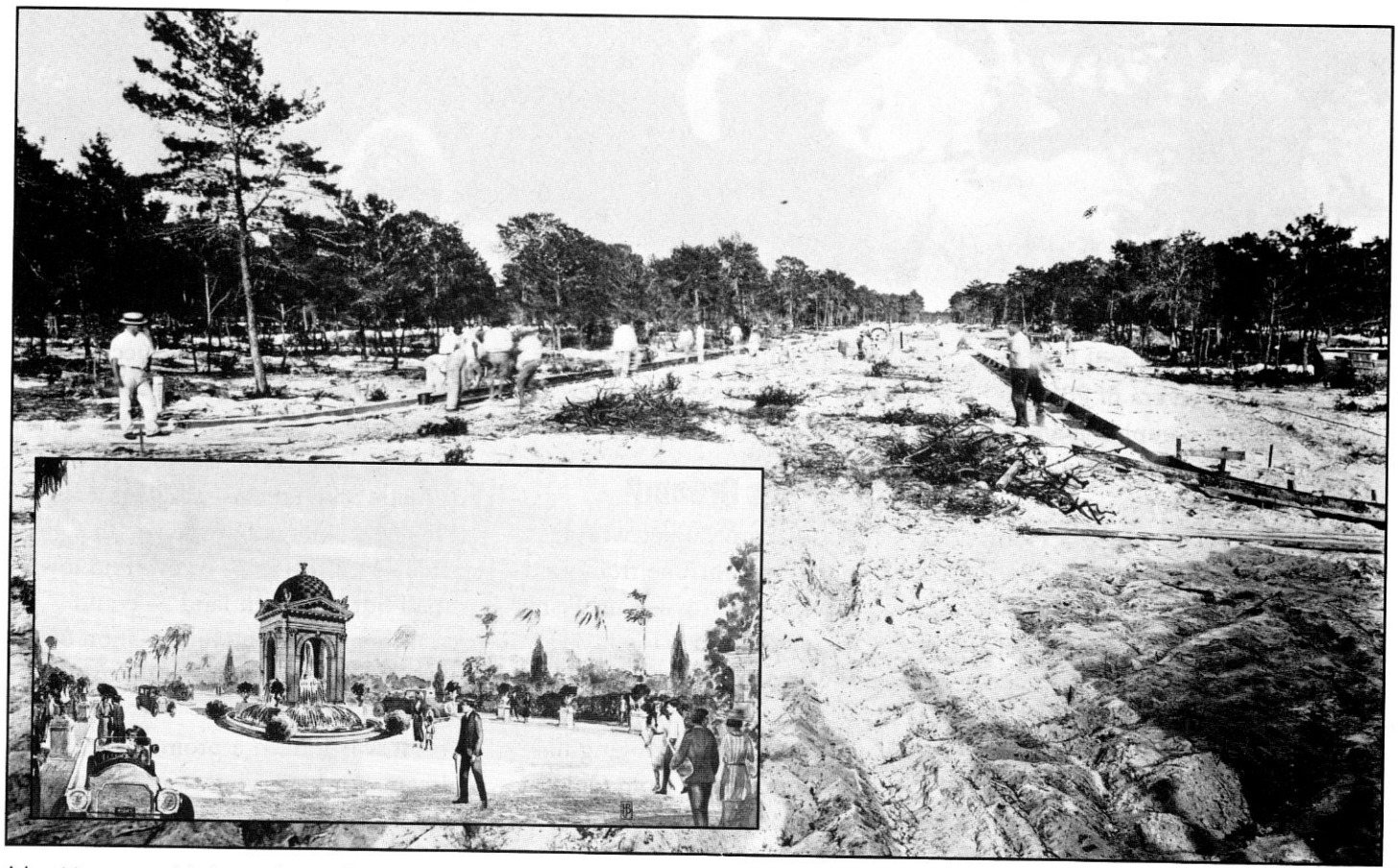
And down the southwest coast, the "Fearsome Foursome of Fort Myers" would include Henry Ford, Harvey Firestone, author John Burroughs and even Thomas Edison as they rode around the countryside in Edison's custom-made Ford Flivver, a gift from Henry. But it also included the "little people" who poured into Florida seeking to tap into the get-rich-quick land magic they'd heard about up North.

"Poured in?"

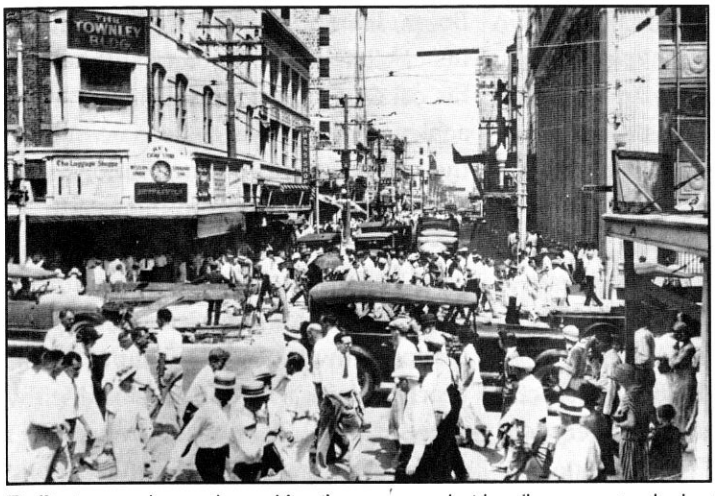
West Palm Beach soared to some 30,000 people by 1930, four times its 1920 population. Fort Myers annexed itself to eight times its size of a decade earlier. Financial problems beset dozens of overexpanded towns following the inevitable land crash that was to follow the Boom.

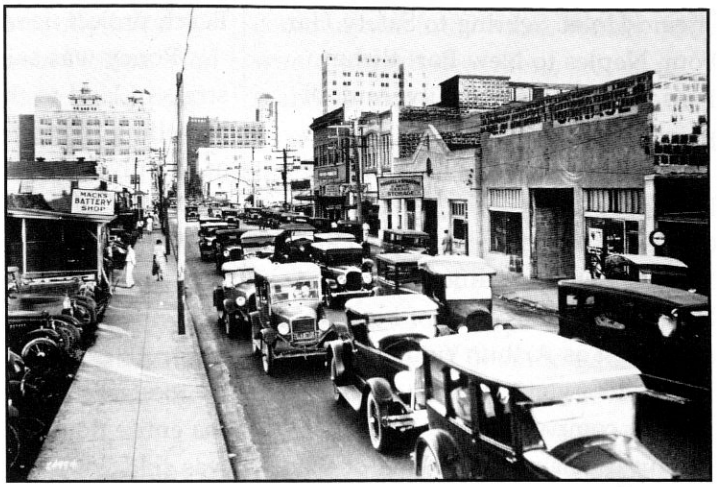
Sometimes called the "growth-engine" of the Boom, the "Binder Boys" were super salesmen who would stop at nothing to make a sale. They were young men on bicycles with standard uniform including knickers (called acreage-trousers) and blazer-jackets. This was said to be worn so they might recognize each other and not try to sell the same land to each other over and over again.

Binder Boys would simply "bind" a piece of land with a very small sum of cash and a slip of paper that said, in effect, that the bearer "owned" the land, although little cash had changed hands — maybe $500 on a $50,000 piece, with the actual down payment postponed as long as possible. With no intention of ever making that payment, the Boys would resell the binder, making a



Advertising art could do wonders with an artist's conception of Land Boom development entrances and gates. This one may have been one in Miami that was to be called "Fulford-By-The-Sea." Behind the glorious gates, prospects sometimes would find miles of open land, roads under construction, wooden plank-curbing and lots of deep, deep Florida sand.





Traffic jams and crowds on Miami's streets and sidewalks were standard, often with the action going on all night long, ca. 1926 (Florida State Archives)

profit on the deal as it was handed off to another speculator. Each buyer assumed the value would keep rising and the Boom would go on forever. The "players" would never actually see the land, only those small slips of paper — the binder.

Gathering steam and roaring full speed ahead, the Binder Boys could not know that they would be history within a scant 36 months time. During the Land Boom, parcels of Florida's geography would change hands three, four and five times in a single day! A Palm Beach tract sold in 1921 for $200,000 and sold again in 1923 for $800,000! Not bad. But in 1925 it sold again for four million dollars. (Hey, we're talkin' Florida land here!)

A 250-lot piece in Mr. Kelsey's Kelsey City, going for about $300 per lot in 1923, brought $1.7 million in 1925! In Tampa, land on the approaches to ole' "Dad" Gandy's new Gandy Bridge, soared from $50 an acre to about $10,000 an acre in 24 months.

Rest for the Weary

And wherever people went, places to sleep had to follow. (The southeast coast was seeing 2,500 new train passengers every day, and about half of them had one-way tickets.) So now, another phenomenon begins to skyrocket — the Florida Resort Hotel.

In St. Petersburg alone, in a single seven-year period, about 10 new resort hotels were born, among them the beautiful bayfront Soreno and Vinoy Park, the Suwanee and Princess Martha. And on the gulf at Pass-A-Grille, the fabled, pink Don Cesar. Downtown St. Pete looked out over her new "Million-Dollar Pier," which looked across the bay to D.P. Davis's new $50 million dream, Davis Islands. St. Pete's Fifth Avenue North took folks to her also-brand-new Million Dollar High School. Remember, these are 1920s-style dollars. They were worth a lot of money!

Similar track records were being set all over the Land Boom arena. Tampa's new Tampa Terrace Hotel, Miami's fantastic Biltmore, The Boca Raton Hotel, Lake Worth's new Gulf-

Tampa and St. Petersburg both soared in the Land Boom so that crowds were an everyday occurrence. Left: A spring day in 1924, downtown Tampa. (Tampa Public Library Burgert Brothers Collection). Right: St. Pete's famed Million Dollar Pier in downtown. (Courtesy of St. Petersburg Historical Society)

stream Hotel. Sebring to Safety Harbour. Naples to New Port Richey. Pensacola to Panama City. And all points in-between.

In Delray Beach, Mr. Albert T. Repp was to begin the "Name-Game," as he named his new Land Boom showplace edifice, The Alterep Hotel, combining parts of his own name, just as Arthur Vining Davis would do a generation later with his holding company to be called Arvida. But the name-game king of them all was old "Handsome Jack," who built his Land Boom dream hotel in western St. Pete, near the Disston empire-builder town of Gulfport (originally named Disston City). Handsome Jack became infected with the "backwards-spelling-tooth-fairy-syndrome." His full name was Jack Taylor. He named his dream hotel the Rolyat Hotel.

N.B.T. Roney, developer of the Miami Beach showplace, Roney Plaza Hotel, becoming incensed at the Binder Boys' activities, and set up an ambush for them at his Seminole Beach project near Hallandale.

Roney was said to have sold strips of land to the Boys and then, by selling adjoining strips to others at sharply lower prices, left the Boys no way of selling their land at a profit. With no prospects to turn to, the Boys, always low on cash, were simply wiped out. It makes a great story, but truth is, Seminole sales moved far too fast to affect the Boys. In fact, the entire development and every lot was sold with over $7 million in sales in a single day.

And, within a week, all buyers were said to have resold their lots to other buyers for over $12 million. Suddenly, within about 60 days, the Great Boom was imperceptibly slowing. Now the subsequent buyers, finding no new buyers, had to come up with that famous second payment. Many simply lost their investment, with the lots now reverting back to the original owner from whom Roney had first bought the land, a Mr. Wade Harley.

With the gentle slowing of the Boom, Harley had been able to "eat his cake, sell his cake, and still keep his cake." Quite a remarkable achievement. It was to become one of the last, fast rides on the Florida Land Boom merry-go-round.

Folks continued to pour into all parts of Florida. By the 1920s southeast Florida was experiencing a population growth of up to 500 percent yearly. Miami was said to have grown some 1,200 percent in just one season. Folks were "betting the farm" that Florida's Land Boom would go on forever. Northern newspapers were actually running editorials warning citizens against "investing in faraway lands you've never seen." (But we know who they were talkin' about, don't we?) Meanwhile, Florida newspapers were enjoying banner seasons. In one year, the *St. Petersburg Times* ran more than 25 million lines of ads, and still placed second to *The Miami Herald,* which ran 40 million lines, a world record in advertising, much of it in real estate ads. As the Boom reacted to negative press attacks, one Gulf coast newspaper, in banner, front-page headlines aimed at northern papers, shrieked, "Shut Your Damn Mouth!"

It is "High-Season," 1925. And the Boom goes rollin' merrily along. Land sales continue to soar. Bus caravans bring loads of prospects in from the North and Midwest. Miami streets abound with sales people, Binder Boys and prospects, sometimes all night long. Cars line the roads, some with

A "Binder Boy" on the corner of Southeast Second Avenue and Flagler Street in Miami, ca. 1926. (HASF 1962-24-70)

public street-dances. U.S. Highways 1, 27, 441, 41 and old 19 are filled with traffic flowing south, as even small inland towns enjoy new-found prosperity.

Everywhere you looked were handsome, giant "entrance-gates," often leading to absolutely nothing. Just gateways. Fronting for thousands of acres of Florida's famous white sand. Will Rogers once said Florida should erect a monument to the guy who first discovered that Florida's white sand was firm enough to hold a real estate sign erect.

Bus caravans, filled with "closers" and prospects, free-lunches and even rhumba bands, all delivering their prospects to those giant, empty gates dotting the landscape of the magic land called Florida.

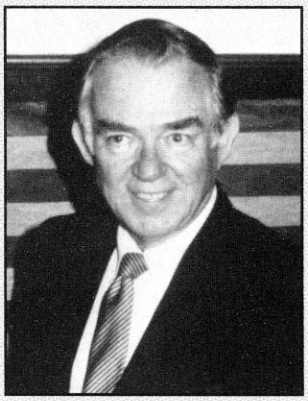
The "little people" were certain the Boom will just keep going on. They were unaware of an ancient Cracker sayin' known to all ole Cracker Boys when they're doin' their bin-ness with each other. It says, "Remember, man will not eat his own kind. He will, hy-ever, skin-'em..."

For now, the Boom continues to roar, seeking its own apogee, just over the mountain. We only have very small mountains in Florida. And the major-players cannot know that just beyond the horizon lies a truly incredible series of events.

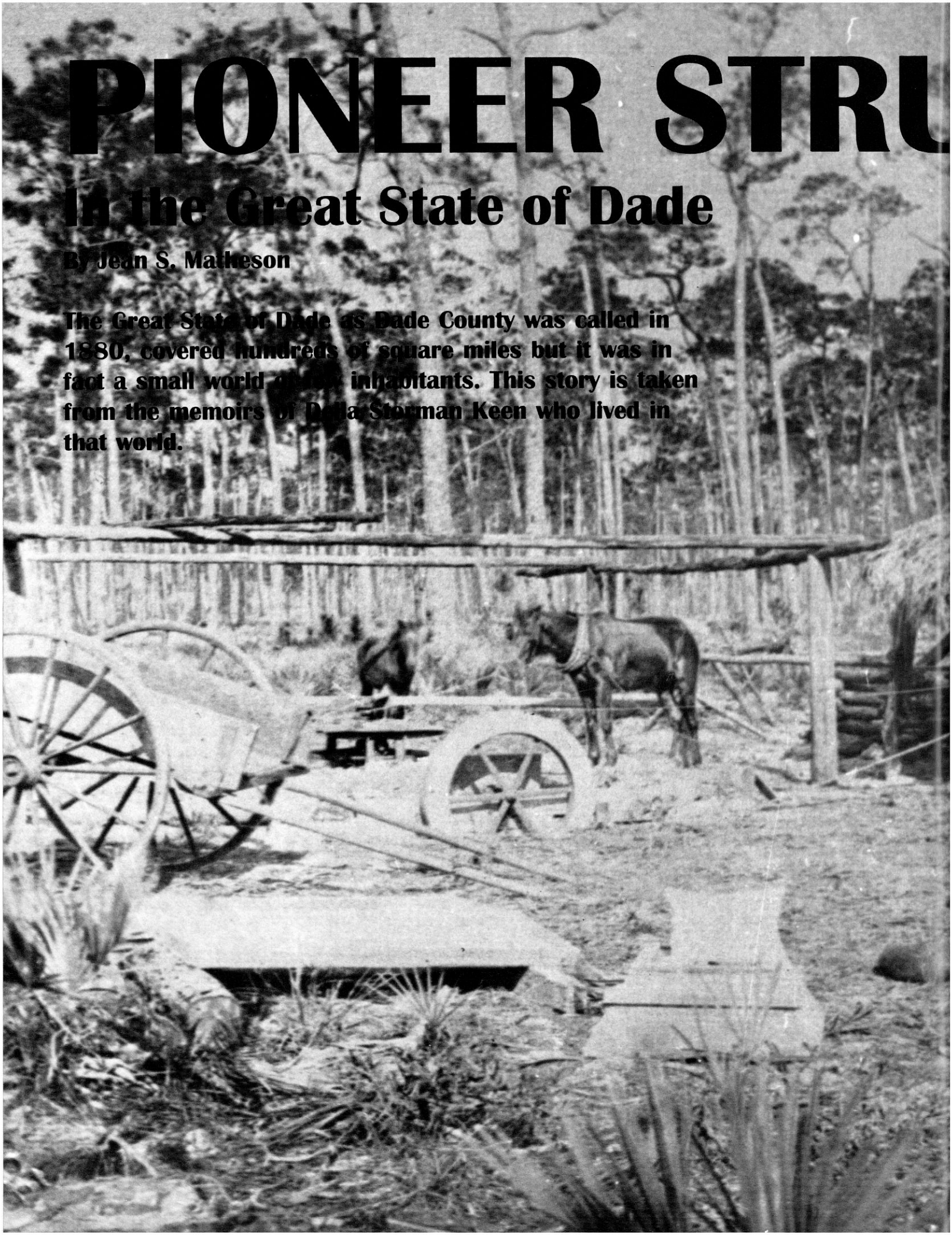
It will prove to be a series of events which, in the 1920s boxing world, would not be a famous "one-two punch," but rather a shattering one-two-three-four-five-six punch! Each punch was delivered directly to the solar-plexus of the Boom's momentum which had been surging across the land since the arrival of the land barons and empire builders back in the 1880s, a half-century before.

The events would bring about the downfall of the Florida Land Boom, which created entire new cities in its path, and new towns and communities in its wake. Which would foment new ideas, scams, scandals, and scoundrels. And which — although it would take more than five years to accomplish the feat — would finally lay the fabled Land Boom to rest among other vast volumes of Florida's incredible history. It would take all six punches to bring the Florida Land Boom to its knees.

Join us for the next issue when we'll take you on an incredible ride over the downside of the mountain. You'll get to go (for free) on the slide, the teeter-totter and the dunk tank of the bust! ★



Vic Knight was born in St. Petersburg, Florida, to parents descending from nine generations of Florida pioneer families dating back to the early 1800s. During WWII Knight moved to Indianapolis, Indiana, and earned degrees from Butler University and the Jordan Conservatory of Music and Broadcasting. He returned to Florida in 1965 to found Quality Broadcasting Corp., and eventually owned four radio stations in the state. A resident of Delray Beach, he is best known for his speaking appearances and as the voice of Big Band Radio of the Palm Beaches. This story was adapted from his first book, *Vic Knight's Florida*, published last year. (See SFHM Winter 1994 Review.) Knight's second book is scheduled to be published in 1995.

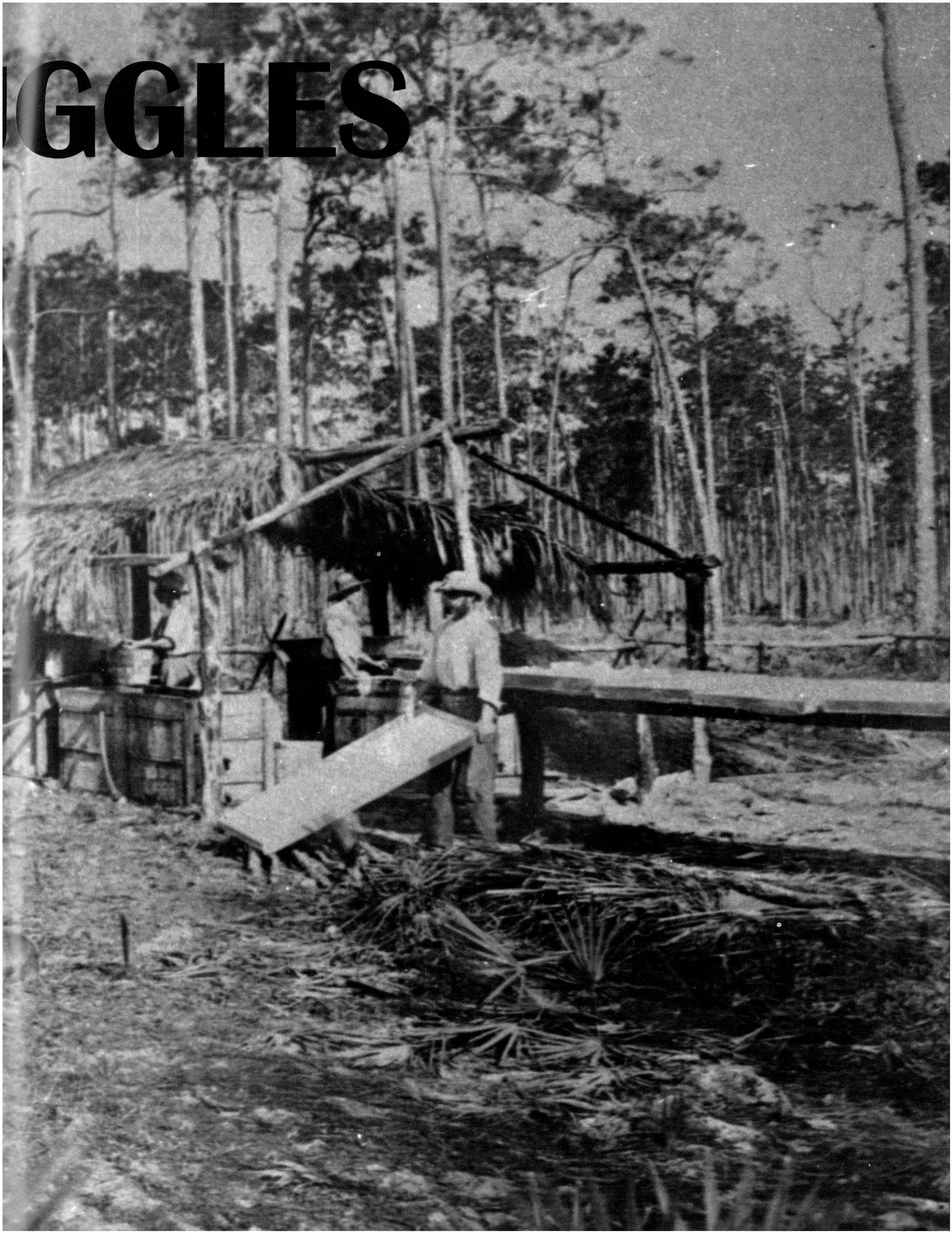


PIONEER STRU

In the Great State of Dade

By Jean S. Matheson

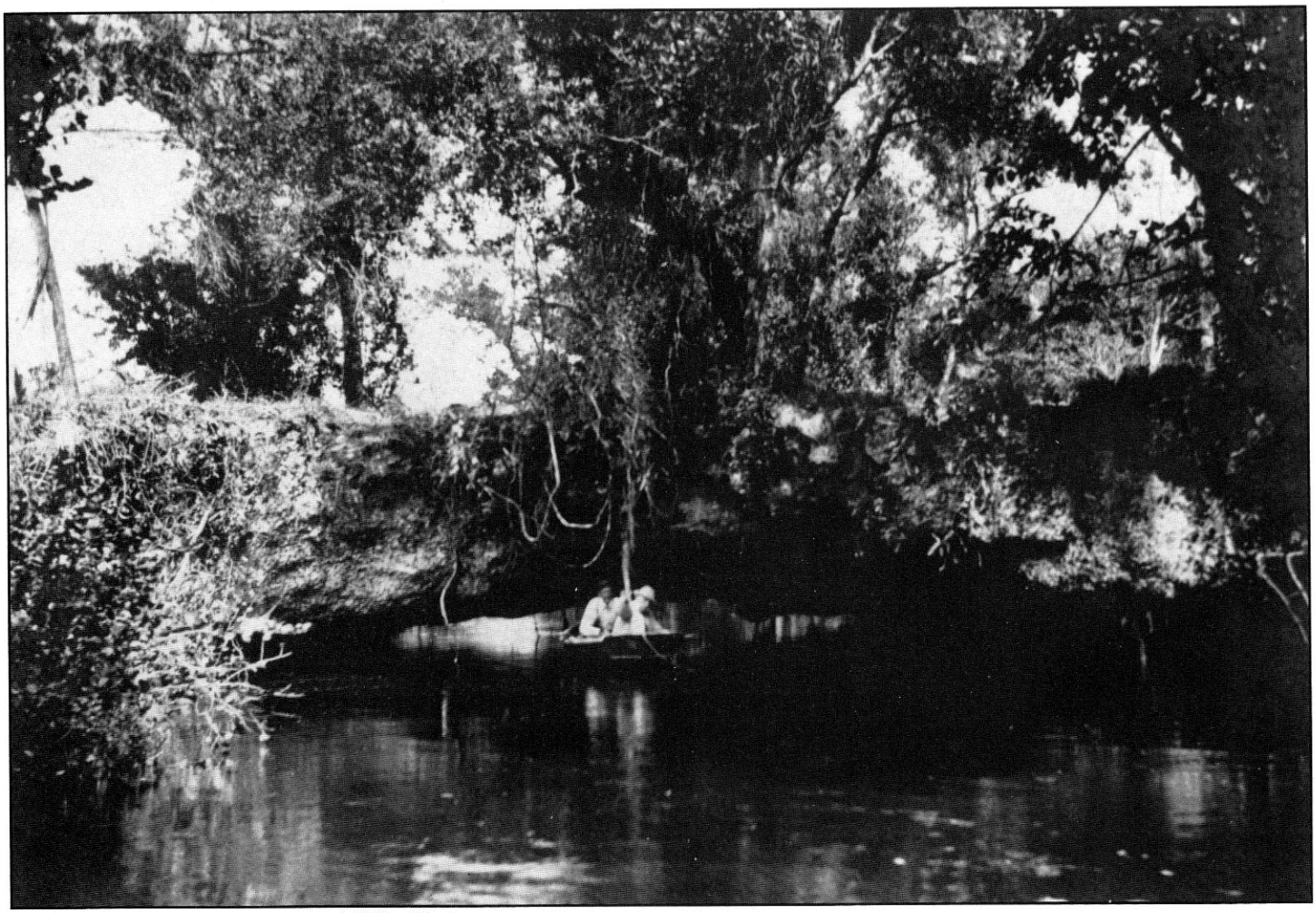
The Great State of Dade as Dade County was called in 1880, covered hundreds of square miles but it was in fact a small world of [illegible] inhabitants. This story is taken from the memoirs of Della Storman Keen who lived in that world.


GGLES

Dade County, which included the present Dade, Broward, Palm Beach and parts of Martin, was the largest county in Florida and largely uninhabited in 1880. For six weeks in the summer heat of 1880, Adam C. Richards walked from house to house to record the census of Miami in Dade County, listing 194 white settlers beginning with physician Richard Potter.

In October when the weather had cooled, Richards completed the census recording 64 Indians, their names spelled phonetically, beginning with medicine man, Teskob-i-mac-la.

Richards spelled other names as he heard them. He listed the eleventh family as "Stormont" instead of Storman. And when he mistakenly listed the children's middle initials and their ages incorrectly, he inadvertently captured the disarray of the Storman family in 1880. The previous summer the head of the house, John Storman, had been found dead in the water at the foot of their dock on Arch Creek, cause unknown. And fearing that the family could not make it without her father, the oldest daughter ran away with a Spaniard.



Arch Creek looking upstream, 1909. (HASF x-57-x)
Previous page: Charles Peacock's starch making mill, ca. 1880s. (HASF, x-253-2)

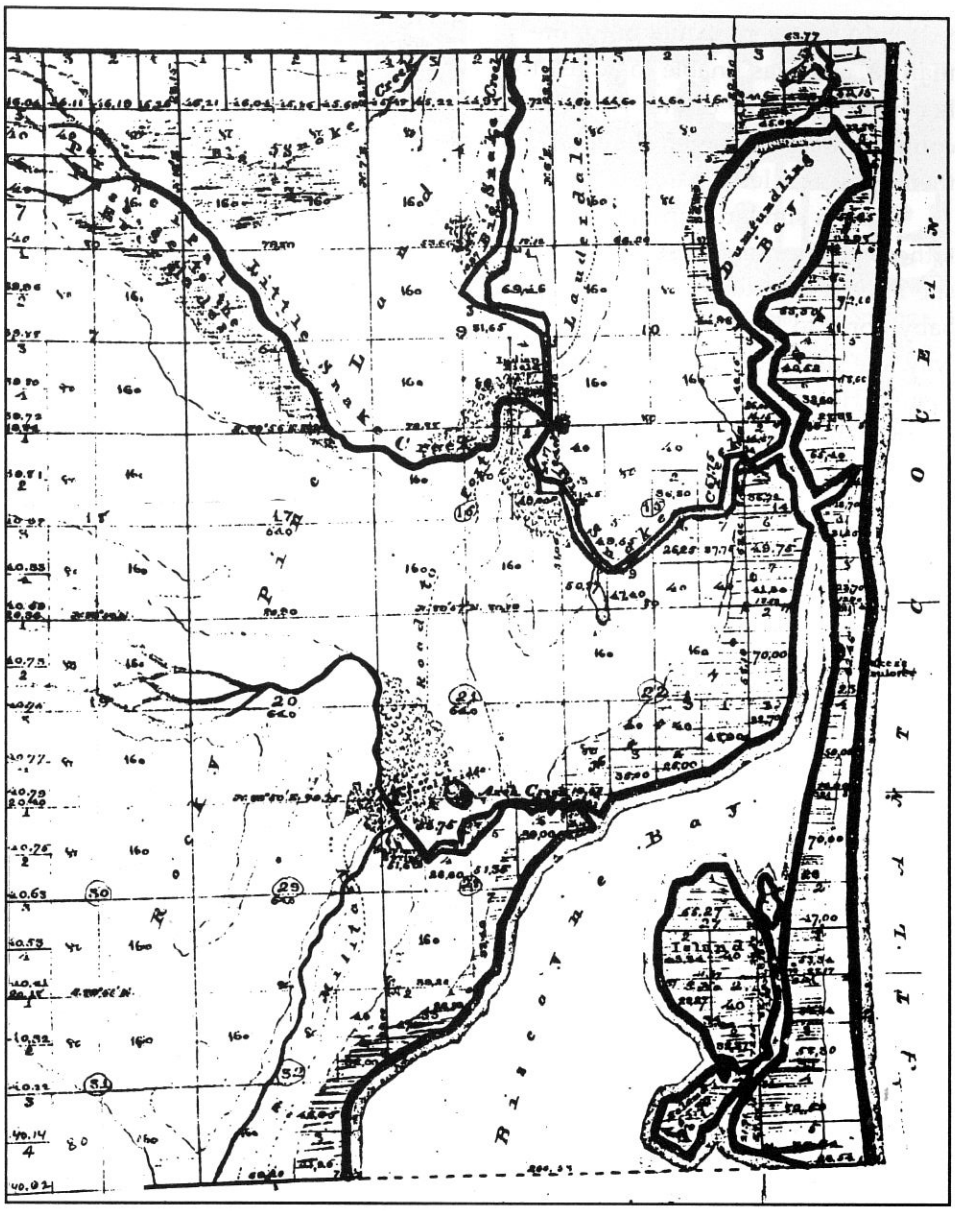
John F. Storman came to Florida from Georgia about 1868 with his wife, Martha Douglass Storman, and their children Frances and John Barzilla. They settled near Fort Meade on the banks of the Peace River, where three more children — Franklin, Della and Delia — were born.

John worked for a Fort Meade cattleman, John Collier. In 1874 Collier sent Storman to Miami with 100 head of cattle, the first cattle in the area. The lush fields of Miami had a high pH factor from the limestone soil, which proved deadly to the animals. When even the mule that pulled the family wagon died, John and Mary Storman found themselves without a livelihood and without a way to leave Miami.

In the pinewoods around Arch Creek, where the family lived, the coontie plant grew abundantly. From the coontie the Stormans began to extract starch in very much the same way the Seminoles had for years.

The three oldest children, Frances, John and Franklin, though still quite young, helped in the arduous task of starch making. They dug up the coontie, chopped the stems and roots and ground them to a pulp using a hand mill left by the previous owner of the house. Large boxes that John made were half filled with coontie pulp and half with water. The mixture was stirred, the water drained off, more water added, and stirred. The process was repeated until finally the starch was clean and left to settle; white starch on the bottom, brown starch on the top which was skimmed off. The white starch was placed on trays to dry in the sun, then put in barrels to be traded at the local stores for food.

There were two small stores on the Miami River. Near the bay, William Brickell's dry goods store was a large room attached to his house. Quite a distance away J.W. Ewan's grocery store was a room in a long building, which also housed the court house and two guest rooms.



This survey map of 1870 shows Arch Creek and Snake Creek each with two main branches, as well as Military Trail. The Storman homestead, however, is not included. (HASF 1980-238-5)

In the summer of 1879, John Storman went by boat to Ewan's grocery store. When he didn't return Martha went looking for him. She found him dead in the water at the foot of the dock. He had a bruise on his head, probably from a fall, and his boat was tied up with groceries in it. The family never knew how he died. Because there was no other work, Martha and her children continued to make starch after John's death.

On the 1880 Census, Martha Storman is listed as housekeeper, her sons John, 13, and Franklin, 12, are listed as starch makers and the two little girls, Ardella (Della) and Delia are listed as daughters. Frances, the eldest is not listed at all.

Within a year of her father's death, fearful that the family could not make a living without him, Frances married a Spaniard and moved to Bamboo Key. She was too

young to marry, probably not more than 15, and was unable to adjust to her husband's way of life. When she could stand it no longer, she took their baby and left.

Using a similar plan that her father had formulated before he died, she hired a boat to take her and her baby north to Fort Pierce. On the way, she stopped to see her family in Miami. Her oldest brother John decided to go to Fort Pierce with her, leaving Franklin, Della, Delia and their mother at the little house on Arch Creek.

Arch Creek was a deep stream that flowed from the Everglades and derived its name from the natural bridge that spanned it. All the main roads and trails in the area used the natural bridge to cross the creek. (The bridge collapsed in 1973.)

Arch Creek has been described as a tropical paradise: "the deep gorge near the Natural Bridge, the bridge itself, the tropical foliage covering the banks of the winding stream, the trees covered with immense orchids, the alli-

Isabella Peacock in a rare 1883 photograph. (HASF Ralph Munroe Collection 140-I)

gators sunning along the banks. . . ."

There were not a dozen families who lived in the area from Arch Creek to the Miami River at that time. One neighbor, Mrs. Ewan, mother of the store owner, held school in her home every Sunday where the Storman children learned their ABCs. Mary Barnott, a favorite neighbor of the girls, became a life long friend. In 1877, when Edward Barnott was offered the lonely job of keeper of the Biscayne House of Refuge, he went looking for a woman to marry. Instead he married a girl of 13, Mary Ann Sullivan. His young bride, Mary Barnott, preferred living at her mother's house on the mainland, which was near the Storman girls.

Another neighbor, Mrs. Peacock, hired mother Storman to do domestic work in the Peacock Inn when her husband Charles opened the first hotel on Biscayne Bay in 1882.

Several years after father Storman's death, Martha and the children worked for Jake Waters who owned a starch mill that was powered by a horse. The job lasted only two years but it had lasting effects on the family. In those two years Andrew Green, nephew of Jake Waters, fell in love with Martha Storman and they married. Young Frank Storman was so upset about his mother's marriage that he went to Fort Pierce to live with his older sister and brother.

In time, Andrew Green and Martha also decided to go to Fort Pierce, Martha hoping to proceed on to the west coast of Florida where she remembered her happy life before Miami. They sent most of their household goods ahead by boat and the rest Andrew packed in the wagon. The mare was so small that she could not pull the loaded wagon with the family aboard so the family walked from Miami — more than 130 miles — to Fort Pierce.

At the time there were no roads as such, only trails. They crossed the natural bridge at Arch Creek following the Military Trail that had been blazed during the Second Seminole War in 1838. They followed the trail along a ridge that separated coastal swamps and the Everglades. Further north when the path disappeared, they followed marks that were slashed on pine trees. They were able to live off the land, for game was plentiful.

About three days out, Jake Enfinger, who traveled with them, went in search of game. They heard a shot and when Jake didn't return, Andrew Green went looking for him. He found Jake unable to move, paralyzed from a rattlesnake bite. Jake had been able to kill the snake, cut his own leg to spill the venom and tie off the wound but it didn't save his life. After three agonizing days, Jake died and was buried somewhere along the Military Trail.

One month later the exhausted family — Andrew, Martha, Della and Delia — arrived in Fort Pierce in Brevard County. The Great State of Dade was behind them.

Jean Matheson moved to West Palm Beach in 1961 where she and her husband—a third generation Floridian—raised their two children. She fell in love with Florida history while falling in love with her husband in college and hearing his stories of how his family settled in the Everglades in the early 1900s. The Mathesons moved to Stuart three years ago, where Jean began investigating the community's history. This is her second story for *South Florida History.*

Book Review

by Stuart McIver

Selling the Dream: The Gulf American Corporation and the Building of Cape Coral, Florida. By David E. Dodrill. Tuscaloosa, Alabama: The University of Alabama Press. 328 pages. $39.95.

In 1957, two carnival pitchmen from Baltimore bought 1,724 acres at Redfish Point near Fort Myers. By the mid-1960s they had moved enough tons of dirt and talked enough people into buying lots and houses to make the Gulf American Corporation the biggest land sales company in the United States.

Selling the Dream is David E. Dodrill's account of how Leonard and Jack Rosen's aggressive selling practices made the company the industry leader. Too aggressive, the Florida Installment Land Sales Board would in time conclude. By 1966 Gulf American's sales revenues had reached $124 million, a total that made the company bigger than the next four Florida land sales companies combined. But in 1969 Gulf American's dazzling run ended.

The book focuses primarily on Cape Coral, the community the brothers developed on Redfish Point. As they, and other developers would, the Rosens platted a future city, then used high-pressure sales tactics to sell property to people of modest means, most of whom had never seen what they had bought. Hard-sell was the theme. As a marketing executive put it, "We built a company on street fighters."

Success at Cape Coral led Gulf American to launch Golden Gate Estates and Remuda Ranch Grants in Collier County and River Ranch Acres in Polk County. Company headquarters were established in Miami in an 11-story building at the corner of Biscayne Boulevard and 79th Street.

The innovative use of celebrities like sportscaster Bill Stern or baseballer Mickey Mantle in television commercials convinced many Americans that Florida would be a great place to live. A major sales executive hired principally for his name recognition was Connie Mack, Jr., son of the famous baseball manager and father of Florida's present junior United States senator.

Eventually nearly a quarter of a million people bought Florida property from Gulf American. A former salesman said: "At first we sold Cape Coral in Florida as a legitimate community, and today it is a community. Then we sold Golden Gate with roads, then River Ranch with nothing, and finally Remuda Ranch under water. Everything worked. One of the bosses said one time that eventually we'll reach the point where we'll just mail contracts and the people will send them in and we'll tell them where we'll put them." Over-priced lots were sold as investments, when actually there was no resale market for property in their communities. Lots were switched without the buyer knowing it.

Excesses in the industry led to bad publicity nationally and in 1963 to the establishment of the Florida Installment Land Sales Board. Repeated clashes with the FILSB were followed by the 1966 election of an implacable foe, Claude Kirk, as governor. Kirk, the state's first Republican governor since Reconstruction, believed the key to reining in the troublesome industry lay in taming its biggest offender. In the process, he forced the Rosens, staunch Democrats, out of business.

In 1969 GAC Corporation, an Allentown, Pennsylvania, finance company, acquired Gulf American with $200 million in GAC stock. By early 1976 GAC had driven the company into bankruptcy, the result principally of a total inability to understand the hard-sell nature of the land sales business.

The author provides Floridians with a valuable record of the operations of the state's biggest land company. Unfortunately, he fails to give the reader the flavor of how the sales were actually made. We don't hear the voices over the WATS line or sit in on the high pressure presentation over dinner and drinks. Somewhere in that fast-talking swirl of relentless sales pitches Gulf American and other land companies brought about their own doom.

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