

Palm Aire
Communities Council

Newsletter

Spring, 2022



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New Public Park Slated for County

A new park is coming near our neighborhoods in District 4. It doesn't have a name yet, and you can help.

Manatee County Commissioners have announced a 17-acre park will be developed on vacant land adjacent to Marjorie G. Kinnan Elementary School. The new park just a little north of Tallevast Road will be located on Prospect Road.

The \$2.6 million future park will feature amenities that the Department of Parks and Natural Resources say residents request most. It will have the first dog park in our district. In fact, it will have two: a small dog and a large dog play area. Both areas will have shade structures and doggy water fountains.

The park will feature a half-mile walking and fitness trail and two pickleball courts with slip-resistant surfaces near the small dog park.

Regarding pickleball, our District 4 Commissioner Misty Servia said, "As far as pickleball goes, we cannot build those courts fast enough, [Residents]...want them in every neighborhood, so we're excited to add those."

The yet-unnamed park will also include a lawn area for open activities, natural wetlands, and restrooms as well as ADA-accessible parking.

The county aims to begin construction on the park this summer, with completion by the end of the year, Servia said, noting that pandemic-related delays could push the opening back to 2023.

Here's how you can help: enter a contest to name the park. County Commissioners have established such a

Continued on page 3,

I hope this newsletter finds you all safe and well.

As a result of the changes made at the end of last year within Manatee County, our Palm-Aire community was moved from District 5, Vanessa Baugh Commissioner, to District 4, Misty Servia Commissioner. Palm-Aire Community Council's Board and the Municipal Service Taxing Unit Committee met with Commissioner Servia to bring her up to date regarding issues affecting Palm-Aire. Commissioner Servia expressed her appreciation for the information conveyed and seems sincerely interested in getting to know our community. She will be attending PACCI's March meeting. We are confident that she will be a positive ally. She is interested/willing to attend community meetings. If you are interested in having her attend your condo/HOA meeting, she can be contacted at misty.servia@mymanatee.org.

Sarasota County controls the light at Whitfield and University Parkway. After numerous requests, a study was done regarding the timing of the left turn light on weekends. As a result, the timing was increased allowing more cars through. This has helped greatly to move traffic off Whitfield onto University Parkway.

There is a new park being developed in South Manatee County. The park is located North of Kinnan Elementary, just North of Tallavast on the West side of Prospect. There is an excellent video available that describes amenities, etc., as well the park naming contest. The video is available at <https://youtu.be/GQxwx3Dp19Q>. Suggestions for naming the park may be sent to mymanatee.org/namethatpark.

To our snowbirds, have a safe trip back to your Northern home. To those of us that live here year round, stay well.


Barbara Robinson, President

The Palm Aire Communities

Avista	Desoto Woods	Misty Oaks
Broadmoor Pines	Eagle Creek Condos	Pine Trace
Club Villas I	Eagle Creek Villas	Preserves
Club Villas II	Fox Pointe	Rosewood
Clubsides	Fairway Six	The Gardens
Condo B	Golf Pointe	at Palm Aire
Conservatory	Highlands	Timberlake Village
Estates	Lakeside Woods	Woodlake Villas
Country Lakes	The Links	Woodland Green

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New Public Park

Continued from frontpage.

contest, and as Servia said, "We're always trying to engage the people at the local level, and sometimes it's really hard to do that, so we put it to the people because who else is better at naming the park than the people it will serve?"

Residents are invited to submit name recommendations through an online form at www.MyManatee.org/NameThatPark. At the end of March, Commissioner Misty Servia will allow District 4's Citizens Coalition on Growth oversight group to pick the best names before she brings them to the Board of County Commissioners for a final vote.

The winner will enter the pages of Manatee County history by being included in the formal proclamation naming the new park.

You must be a Manatee County resident to submit a name suggestion. Residents younger than 18 years old will also need to provide the contact information for a parent or guardian.



The Secret History of Art at the Olympics

by Dan Reeves



Olympic Gold Medal Winner, 1928. Cavalier Rouge by Isaac Israels, Oil Painting.

There were plenty of controversies at this year's Olympic Games in Beijing: Russian skaters doping, 15-year-old Kamila Valieva fell and failed to make the podium, human rights issues, espionage and diplomatic boycotts. However, none of these controversies will impact the future of the games as the controversy brought into question during the 1948 games, and changed the direction of the games forever.

Few realize that Baron Pierre de Coubertin, a French educator and the founder of the modern Olympic Games had a unique and distinct vision for the purpose of the games. In his view, the games should include only amateur participants and they should compete in both mind and body. To accomplish this, he not only established the Olympic sporting categories in 1912, he also included medal categories in the arts. So at the very onset of the modern games awards were given to artists in the categories of architecture, literature, music, painting and sculpture.

At every Olympic competition, awards were given in the arts. In fact, in 1948, John Copley a British artist won a silver medal for his Polo Players engraving, and at 73 became the oldest Olympic winner in history. Between 1912 and 1948, Olympic judges handed out 151 art focused medals.

When he restarted the Olympics, de Coubertin was adamant that the arts be included in the modern Olympics. He said, "There is only one difference between our Olympiads and plain sporting champi-

onships, and it is precisely the contests of art as they existed in the Olympiads of Ancient Greece, where sports exhibitions walked in equality with artistic exhibitions."

Over the years many famous artists were given awards for the work that they entered including the man responsible for reviving the Olympics, Baron Pierre de Coubertin. His work "Ode to Sport" was submitted under a pseudonym, and he was awarded the gold medal for literature.

The rules for entrants were these: all work entered had to be inspired by sports and not published or exhibited before the Olympic Games. The works were exhibited at the Olympics and awards were like the athletic events gold, silver and bronze medals were awarded. Artists were permitted to sell their works at the close of the Olympics.

The controversy in 1949 centered upon whether or not artists are true amateurs. The Olympic committee wrestled with the issue because they were working with the following definition of amateur. "An amateur is one who participates and always has participated in sport solely for pleasure and for the physical, mental or social benefits he derives therefrom, and to whom participation in sport is nothing more than recreational without material gain of any direct or indirect nature and in accordance with the rules of the International Federation...." (*Olympic Rules, 1949, p.18.*)

The reasoning was that many, if not most writers, architects, painters, musicians and sculptors who practiced their craft were paid for doing so. Furthermore, the Olympic Rules permitted them to sell their work when the games were over. The International Olympic Committee was pretty serious about the amateurism rule, even if the athlete was paid for playing a sport different from their Olympic sport. Jim Thorpe was stripped from his 1912 gold medals when it was later found out that he had received money for playing minor league baseball a few years before the Olympics and he used to play pick-up basketball for a few dollars.

The IOC officially began allowing professional athletes to compete in the Olympic Games in 1988, basically leaving it up to the individual sporting federations to decide if they would permit it. One of the reasons behind the change was since the elimination of amateurism in the Olympic Games, athletes are often funded to train through corporate sponsors and endorsement deals. Another was that the games should be a competition among the best athletes, regardless of amateur or professional.

I have no hopes for a reversal regarding the reinstatement of the arts.

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at Palm Aire Country Club

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Palm Aire Communities Council Board Update

Susan Romine

January 2022

January brought the good news that Sarasota County finally listened to our pleas about the timing of the light at Whitfield Avenue and University Parkway. The timing has been adjusted and is now set at a decent level for more than three cars to turn left on a weekend morning.

Our Bylaws amendments were presented for adoption. It had been over 20 years since they had been amended so it was well overdue. Fourteen votes were needed to pass and only 12 members were present, so the vote was held open to obtain the additional votes.

The Nominating Committee of Nick Barbi, Jon McDonald, and Susan Romine were appointed.

Speeding on Whitfield was discussed—a *monthly topic*.

President Barbara Robinson advised our representatives that due to redistricting our area was now in Manatee County Commission District 4. Our County Commissioner is Misty Servia. Commissioner Servia has been invited to our Annual Meeting in March.

Condo B asked for support for speed tables on Palm Aire Drive. They were asked to come back once their board had voted on the issue.

February 2022

The required number of votes were obtained for the adoption of the Bylaw amendments, so the motion passed. The amendments have been sent to the Clerk of Circuit Court to be recorded in the public record.

The request for speed tables on Palm Aire Drive was passed by the board of Condo B. Our board received the request for review. We asked to be advised of comments of Manatee County staff once they receive the request.

The Nominating Committee presented the current slate of officers for FY 2022-23. The election will be held at the March meeting.

The way-finding signs on Whitfield Avenue are getting worn, so we asked for volunteers to help find replacement signs.

Speeding on Whitfield was discussed – a *monthly topic*.

The right-turn-merge lane at Whitfield and University has become a bottleneck when people will not turn and merge onto University Parkway. For years we have asked County staff for language telling drivers to turn right and then merge, but they cannot find proper traffic language. The merge lane is one-quarter of a mile, so there is time to merge. We beg people to get out there and merge.

County Line Road

An undated photo of University Parkway as it used to be. It was known as County Line Road and separated the two counties. The single-lane dirt road that ventured not too far from what is now Washington Boulevard was eventually extended and widened to two lanes and paved with broken seashells and did not reach I-75 until the 1980s.

At the lower right are the same train tracks that cross the intersection today. It is believed that Rolf Pasold is pictured here. He and Pat Neal were partners in the land deal in 1980 that resulted in developing University Park. They petitioned each county to rename the road University Parkway in



1983, and didn't start developing the property until University Parkway reached the interstate in 1990. They felt that the new name provided a better identifier for the fast growing region.



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Message from Palm Aire Country Club

by Joe Rasset, General Manager

We are in the midst of a very busy season, which is a good thing! Palm Aire Country Club has been busy with new projects throughout the Club.

Our projects included:

- 🌴 Newly Renovated Champions Course
- 🌴 Newly Renovated Golf Pro Shop
- 🌴 New Carpet & Flooring installed throughout the Clubhouse
- 🌴 New Athletic Flooring installed throughout the Athletic Center Building
- 🌴 New Pool Salt System
- 🌴 Renovations to our Tennis Har-Tru Courts 1 & 4

This past month the Board of Governors of Palm Aire Country Club approved the purchase and installation of a system known as REME HALO. REME HALO is an air purification system which is designed to eliminate what is known as sick building syndrome by reducing odors, air pollutants, chemical odors, smoke, mold, bacteria and COVID-19. This system has been installed into our buildings which include the entire Main Clubhouse as well as our Athletic Center Building.

This progressive approach is in order to help ensure that the Clubhouse and Athletic Center Building are a safe environment for all to enter and enjoy. The effectiveness of this air filtration system means that our building will have "clean quality air" and thus are considered to be mask free areas. We still encourage and provide masks for those that are not comfortable within the building.

With all that we have done and continue to accomplish, isn't it time to consider Palm Aire Country Club as a place for you? Starting in May of 2022 Palm Aire Country Club, will be introducing a new summer program that we think our residential neighbors should consider and take advantage of, which is our Summer Clubhouse Program! Our new program allows for Summer Clubhouse participants to dine at the Club, utilize our Curbside Service for dining, as well as participate in Clubhouse Social Programs such as Mahjong and Bridge. In addition, our Clubhouse Summer Program participants will not be subject to blackout dates such as Mother's Day, Father's Day, Fourth of July and Labor Day.

If you have any questions or inquiries, I encourage you to reach out and contact Suzanne Gile, our Membership Director, at (941) 556-0782 or sgile@palmaire.net.



Seller's Market for sure

Reported from RASM on February 21, 2022 – The Sarasota and Manatee housing market starts off the year with the lowest level of inventory reported in January 2022. According to data from Florida REALTORS® and compiled by the REALTOR® Association of Sarasota and Manatee (RASM), closed sales increased slightly for single-family homes but decreased for condos in the North Port-Sarasota-Bradenton MSA, and the inventory of active listings declined to a record low number, with only 1,348 listings reported at the end of January.

“New listings tend to rise in delayed response to the increase in prices, and inventory rises when new listings outpace the number of properties that go off-market,” said 2022 President Tony Veldkamp, Senior Advisory at SVN Commercial Advisory Group. “In January, there were more new listings than closed sales in the region. While it’s too early to determine whether this is a trend that will continue through 2022, it is a figure that we will be watching closely. As sellers see a continued increase in home prices and interest rates, which eventually will lead toward more supply, they have to decide whether to take advantage of now being the ‘time to sell’ before the market levels off.”

New listings increased year-over-year by 1.2 percent for single-family homes but decreased by 19.6 percent for condos. Compared to December 2021, more new listings have been added to the market in the first month of the year. Month-over-month, new listings for condos increased by 35.6 percent, and new listings for single-family homes increased by 26.5 percent.

Median prices have increased for the third straight month in the two-county region. Single-family home prices increased 36.6 percent to a median \$464,500 in Sarasota County, while Manatee experienced a 29.7 percent increase to \$480,000. For condos, prices in January were \$350,000 in Sarasota, a 15.8 percent increase, and \$301,000 in Manatee, a 30.3 percent increase.

Buyers see the increase in prices and the increase in interest rates and put them in a tough spot to compete in the market before their purchasing power is out of reach.

According to Freddie Mac, the average commitment rate for a 30-year, conventional, fixed-rate mortgage was 3.45% in January, up from 3.1% in December. Today’s rate as of March 10, 2022 is 4.52% for a 30 year fixed mortgage. Although still a low rate we are uncertain if it will continue to increase.

The number of single-family homes bought with cash increased by 19.4% from January 2021 and condo cash sales decreased by 12.8 percent.

Properties continue to sell very quickly in this seller’s market. The median time from listing date to contract date is reported at 7 days for single-family homes and condos. In the two-county market, 100 percent of homes sold at or above the original list price in January.

At the end of January, the inventory of all active listings was 1,348 listings, down by 6.4 percent from December 2021, and down by 54.6 percent year-over-year. Single-family inventory decreased year-over-year by 46.7 percent in Sarasota and by 39.1 percent in Manatee. The year-over-year inventory for condos decreased by 69.9 percent in Sarasota and by 67.8 percent in Manatee County. Unsold inventory sits at a 0.6-month supply for single-family homes in both counties. For condos, supply is at 0.6-months in Sarasota and only 0.4-months in Manatee.

Monthly reports are provided by Florida Realtors®



Julie Jacques, Realtor, @GRI
Coldwell Banker Realty, Downtown Sarasota
100 North Tamiami Trail
Sarasota, FL 34236
941.323.1800 c

Julie.Jacques@cbrealty.com
Juliejacques.cbintouch.com

A sampling of recent sales: **Condominiums sold since December, 2021**

7052 W. Country Club Dr. N	176,000
7762 Eagle Creek Dr.	180,000
7020 W. Country Club Dr. N	215,000
8409 Gardens Circle	350,000

Single-Family Homes sold since December, 2021

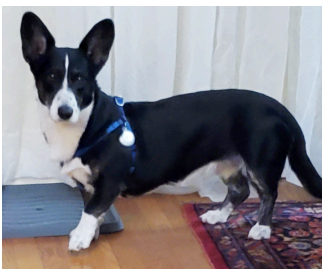
7417 Fairlinks Ct	500,000
8010 Desoto Woods Dr.	515,000
5640 Country Lakes Dr.	745,000
7715 Broodmoor Pines Blvd.	790,000

Information provided by Steller MLS System and sold by various Realtors.

Letters to the Editor

A "TAIL" OF THANKS!

The Palm-Aire communities can justifiably boast many things, peaceful, park-like settings, proximity to cultural gems, and beautiful weather, to name a few. Additionally, there are ties formed among residents within each community. Since 2012, we've seasonal residents at Avista and almost all of our "Florida friends" are from that community. Recently, we learned that many of the people of Palm Aire are incredibly compassionate, empathetic and generous with their time and for this, we are grateful.



On August 13th (a Friday, of course!), we picked up Maggie, a Cardigan Corgi that we were adopting. She was ten pounds underweight and frightened of everything when we got her. As we were walking her into our condo, the screen door

squeaked. She panicked and ran. We panicked too and spent the night looking and calling for her. The problems were that she didn't know us, she didn't know the area, and we weren't sure that she knew her name.

We posted on NextDoor, Lost & Found Pets 941, Paw Boost and notified the county sheriff. We continued to look and soon found that we weren't the only ones looking! So many responded to our posts with encouragement and valuable suggestions that we enlisted our daughter's help to keep up with the responses. On Sunday, we got a report of a sighting on the golf course. We saw her, but all she would do was run from anyone who tried to get close. While sitting and waving a chicken breast in the air near where she was last seen, I learned food was not a motivator. The only things that got fed that night were the mosquitos!

We needed to return to Illinois and were heartsick at the thought of leaving her behind. On Tuesday morning, we received a call from a young woman who had been walking her dog. She had trapped Maggie in a utility enclosure on Whitfield. I went and discovered that even a fresh package of deli meat wouldn't be enough to get Maggie to stop running. It was apparent that two of us would not catch her, so I returned home for reinforcements—my husband and a neighbor whom I hadn't seen

in 18 months. I said "Get in the car!", and I'm grateful that Charlotte did. It took about ten minutes and a flying tackle, but we had Maggie! We would never have been able to catch her on our own and we're so grateful to all the people of Palm-Aire who helped rescue our rescue! Since then, I'm happy to report, that Maggie is learning to be a family pet. We still have a long way to go with her rehabilitation, and she is thriving physically.

March 7, 2022, Addendum: When I first wrote of our gratitude to the people of Palm-Aire, I had no idea I'd need to add a second thank-you, this time to Palm-Aire and Mote Ranch residents. Despite the strides, we've made in the past six months (and twice daily Composure Chews), Maggie remains frightened of loud noises. This time, she managed to get out of her harness. She's a runner and it's amazing how much ground she can cover on her short legs! After 10 days, Maggie is home again thanks to Glenn and Cheryl (and possibly, Rachel Ray!). Special thanks, too, to Keena, Twyla and Kevin for all their help, and to all those at Avista and elsewhere who reported seeing Maggie who now wears a Martingale collar in addition to her harness.

Luke and Cathy Allen

I thought your "**Waiting in Line**" article was very thorough with one exception. I wish we could educate the neighborhood on the ease of making a right turn using the acceleration lane. It's so frustrating sitting behind a car and they are not realizing the ease.

Thanks, Jeff Welch, The Gardens

TRUCKS ON WHITFIELD.

What a special community we live in! We enjoy a collection of neighborhoods that each has its own distinct character. Palm Aire is a delicate, even fragile, community. We have two world-class golf courses which straddle Whitfield Avenue, requiring carts to cross that road numerous times to complete their round. We have owners in the various neighborhoods who drive their carts to and from the Golf Club using Whitfield as the only way to commute. We have bikers, both able and disabled, using Whitfield and other streets to get exercise. We have walkers (often with dogs) and runners who cross Whitfield. We have children who are picked up and dropped off on Whitfield by school buses on weekdays. We have wildlife like fox

squirrels, raccoons, and Sandhill cranes that regularly cross Whitfield as they live and feed. All these things make our Community charming, restful and desirable.

However, there are a few things that detract from our Community. We know that speed is an issue on Whitfield, and this Association appreciates that. We recently saw a black mustang illegally pass a moving vehicle on Whitfield, and speed off into the distance at a speed, we believe, to be 60 to 70 mph. Please keep up the pressure to enforce speed limits.

A more recent issue is that more and more large trucks have chosen to use our main thoroughfare, Whitfield Avenue, as a short cut to get to their destinations. Every weekday, literally hundreds of trucks, ranging from 6 wheelers to 18 wheelers, make their way down Whitfield. Many of them spew copious amounts of stinky diesel exhaust into our neighborhoods. Most are traveling over the speed limit. Many have essentially no mufflers, adding noise pollution on top of everything.

We often walk across Whitfield at the flashing red stop light on Whitfield. We have seen trucks dangerously drift through that light, where so many walkers and carts must cross. We have seen sandhill cranes dead on the road after being struck by a vehicle (likely a large vehicle that isn't able to

come to a quick stop?). We have seen EMS helicopters land on Whitfield to evacuate a biker who was hit and injured. We don't feel comfortable biking down Whitfield with speeding 18-wheelers whizzing past us.

These rigs don't need to be using Whitfield Avenue. The County has built major roads, like University Avenue, and Lockwood Ridge, to standards that are designed for these large vehicles.

We propose that these large trucks should be stopped from going through our community. Of course, if they are doing business in Palm Aire, they are welcome. But if they are just passing through, they pose a hazard to us and to the delicate nature of Palm Aire.

Can we approach Manatee County to have signs posted on Whitfield at University Parkway and at Lockwood Ridge Road to advise drivers that vehicles over a certain tonnage cannot use this road? For example, Honore has such a sign at Lockwood Ridge which prohibits large vehicles - "No through Commercial Vehicles 5 Tons or over...." Truckers would immediately use the major routes designed for their rigs, and Palm Aire would be a safer place for its residents and wildlife.

David and Susan MacLean
Preserves of Palm Aire



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Neighborhood Spotlight



Country Lakes is one of the largest single-family home neighborhoods in Palm Aire. It is the furthest northeast of the Palm Aire communities, northeast of Whitfield Avenue, and north of Old Farm Road (Mote Ranch). Country Lakes at Palm-Aire was incorporated in 1981. There are 156 properties in the neighborhood, and 155 homes.

All but one of the streets have "Country Lakes" at the beginning of the name; those with the most homes are the on "Drive" and the "Circle", with the others on the "Trail" and the "Lane". West Country Club Lane would seem to be in the Carlyle neighborhood, but actually, five houses on the east side (northeast of Whitfield) are part of the Country Lakes development. Country Lakes Circle connects to West Country Club Lane and the Carlyle neighborhood, allowing walkers and bike riders to visit the other neighborhood without accessing Whitfield Avenue. Original plans seem to indicate that there was to be another connection to the area that became Carlyle, but the property at that planned connection was later sold. Prior to the development of Carlyle, Country Lakes residents were treated to the lowing of cattle, and alligators were much more prevalent.

Country Lakes is made up entirely of single-family homes. There are three small lakes in the neighborhood. Over one-third of the homes are on a lake. A number of others back up a wooded preserve shared with Moat Ranch or Carlyle. Almost all of the homes in Country Lakes have their own pool and screened lanai. The curving, connecting streets provide an inviting atmosphere for bike riding and dog walking. Many neighbors know the dogs' names but struggle with those of the owners. While the first phase of development is now approaching forty years, there are a handful of original owners in Country Lakes. It is a wonderful place to call home. Our neighborhood website is www.countrylakes.org

—Mike Grubbs





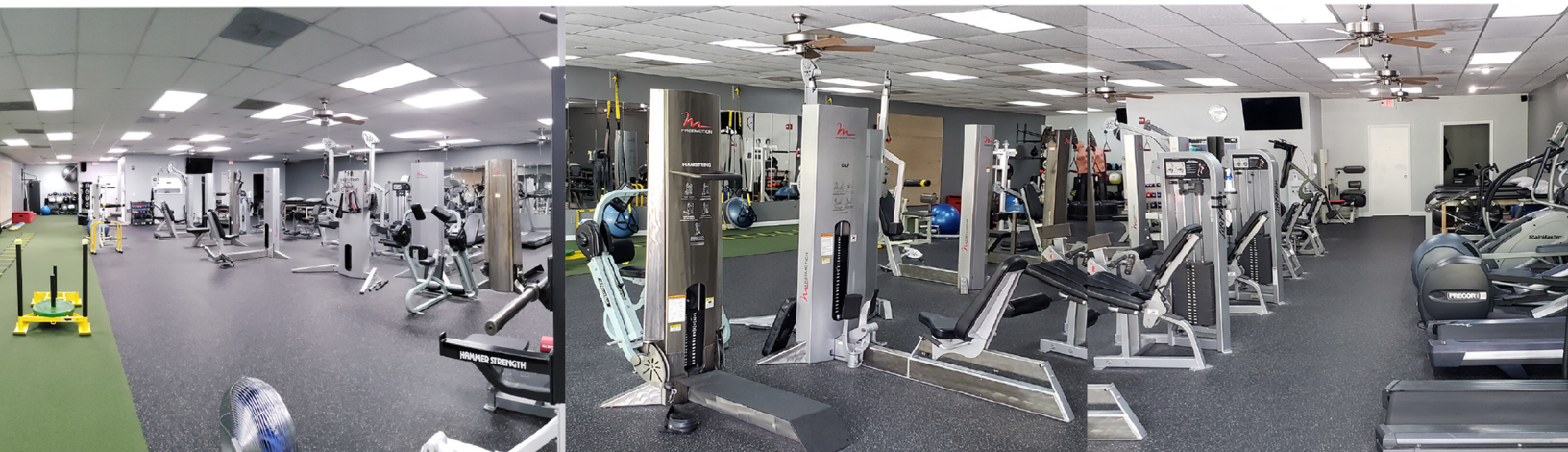
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Nanday Parakeets

by Marguerite Puca

Like so many of us, the Nanday Conure also known as the black-hooded parakeet appearing in this issue's masthead is not native to Florida. It appears to have come to the state in the late 1960s in either the Tampa or Miami area via the exotic pet import trade. Native to central South America, Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil and Paraguay, the birds found the climate congenial and once individual birds were either released or escaped, they were able to establish feral breeding populations throughout the state. As might be expected, wild colonies also exist in Hawaii, Puerto Rico, Texas and California.



There is at least one flock of Nandays that lives in the Palm Aire vicinity, and it can be seen and heard flying overhead during the day. They can be attracted to bird feeders with a selection of nuts and fruits, their diet in the wild. They will also be attracted to vegetables like broccoli, tomatoes, spinach and kale.

A mature parakeet is about a foot tall and weighs about five ounces. They are bright green with a blue

breast and a black head and bill, and red thighs! The average life expectancy is 20 plus years. Males and females look similar in size and markings. Pairs are monogamous, nesting in tree cavities and producing three or four eggs at a time. Fledging takes about eight weeks.

On the sociability scale, these animals like company. They roost in flocks of 20 to 30 individuals during the night and feed in groups during the day. While out and about they are in constant verbal and eye contact with one another. They can make good pets, but their need for companionship should always be kept in mind. Left alone, they can exhibit signs of stress and depression-like moping, feather pulling and screeching.

Do you think you might like to have one as a pet? Florida regulates the Nanday as Class III wildlife, meaning that you need a permit to show or sell the birds, but nothing official to keep them as pets. A Nanday could make a very good pet for the right person, in the same way, that a border collie is the right pet for some people.

In addition to a large cage to serve as a home, a diet of fresh fruits, vegetables, pellets and seeds, and water to bathe in and to drink, the Nanday needs attention! The bird thrives when it can see and hear other living things, either people or other parakeets. In addition, it is curious and likes mental stimulation. It can be taught tricks and to speak and understand up to 20 words. It will play with toys it is given, and would probably enjoy having to solve a puzzle to get a food treat.

Like a border collie, they are a high-energy species, needing at least four hours a day outside of a cage or a large flight cage in which to live.

They are also noisy, so would not be suitable for an environment where quiet is required.

On the affection scale, they are said to enjoy moderate petting and can snuggle when getting sleepy. Given their large beaks, they may not be suitable for small children to play with. One trait that may alarm novice owners is their habit of falling asleep on their backs with their legs in the air, as though they have died.

—Marguerite Puca resides in Club Villas II, Palm Aire

4 facts

1. In 1982 the Florida Keys declared themselves independent under the name "The Conch Republic". This lasted two minutes.
2. St. Augustine is the oldest continuously occupied European settlement in the continental United States, founded September 8th, 1565.
3. Benjamin Green, a Miami pharmacist, invented first suntan lotion.
4. Sprawling over 12,000 square feet, Solomon's Castle in Ona, Florida is a massive aluminum castle made from a variety of recycled items.

Neighbors in Our Midst

An interview with Jon MacDonald by Dan Reeves

I recently interviewed an interesting resident from Pine Trace, Jon MacDonald for our new column, Neighbors in Our Midst. Although he left Chautauqua, New York in 1972, he has been a resident in Palm Aire since 2000. Jon retired in 2017 and used to work as bartender and Beverage manager at the very popular Sawmill Inn Restaurant in Sarasota. He then spent 33 years in wine and spirit sales.



Jon MacDonald

Since retirement, he has worked part-time as a tour guide leading the Discover Sarasota Tours' popular City Sightseeing Tour. He says that of all of his jobs, this is the one he loves the best. He said, "This is the one job that I like to get up and go to! This is the most fun I've ever had collecting a paycheck." What follows are excerpts from our interview.

DAN: What prompted you to move to Sarasota?

JON: I've moved here in 1972. My mom and her husband-to-be, Curt Haug, had moved here from Western New York state. That's where I grew up Chautauqua.

DAN: So that's where your famous stepdad, the first director of the Van Wezel, is from?

JON: Well, that's where he met my mom. And, he ran YMCAs throughout the Northeast and then ended up at Chautauqua Institution. He started as treasurer there and ended up as president. He met my mom there; they fell in love and moved down here after he took his position as managing director.

JON: I came down to visit and I stayed in 1972. I thought this place was fantastic. For the last three years, I've been very, very proud to be a tour guide downtown working for Discover Sarasota Tours.

Believe it or not, I'd always wanted to be a tour guide. Any time I went on a tour, any vacation trip, Boston, Atlanta, wherever I turned to my wife and say, Janet, I want to be a tour guide when I finally grow up!

DAN: Well, you know, I've read a few reviews of your role as tour guide, and it turns out you've received some fantastic ratings and compliments on Trip Advisor.

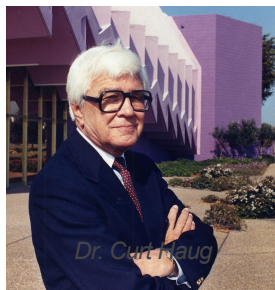
JON: Well, I'm one of the guides. We're all very, very good. I'm very proud of the reviews that I get, that our company gets for sure. My job is to educate our trolley patrons on Sarasota's colorful history, which is amazing, and its current great restaurants, theaters, museums, and so on. And I entertainingly do that so that my customers have fun. Almost customers report that they never knew there was so much history here, even if they've lived here 30 or 40 years,

DAN: That sounds wonderful. I know on your tour, you stop by the Van Wezel and that's where your stepdad used to be the director.

JON: Correct.

DAN: And, from what you've told me in the past, you spend more time there than any other spot in your tour. Can you tell me why you do that?

JON: Because of the Van Wezel story and my stepdad's contributions to Sarasota. My guests on the tours are heartfelt by this, they're like, "Aw, that's an awesome moment". I don't mean to sound corny when I say it, but that building is why I moved to Sarasota. My mom fell in love with a very good man. And, he elevated the culture of Sarasota from what John Ringling started by bringing outstanding art theater and cultural events to Sarasota at the Van Wezel.



Sarasota kind of laid dormant for years until the late sixties when we got urban sprawl. We got shopping centers instead of just downtown Sarasota. This town started growing in the sixties. By the late sixties, a plan for this wonderful theater called Van Wezel materialized. Timing is everything, and my stepdad, Curt

Haug just happened to see an ad in one of the trade magazines of a new theater opening in Sarasota.

He was running Chautauqua Institution in New York. He applied for the job and got it. And that's what brought my mom and Curt down here. So I came down, I became spoiled. I got to go see any show for free and meet stars and get autographs and pictures. I have a nice scrapbook of autographs and photographs and the experience was wonderful, but what I was saying, Curt elevated from an already growing cultural town into a huge cultural town because it had this incredible new performing space that artists from all over the country and the world wanted to come to perform. After all, word got out about how great a venue it is.

This theater is, as you know, in a beautiful city called Sarasota. Most performers like Pavarotti or, Count Basie, Leonard Bernstein or Lucille ball had never heard of our town, but they heard of it after they started playing here. And, they wanted to come back.

DAN: I understand that your stepdad used to call agents and say, I hear that, for example, Ella Fitzgerald is going to play in Miami. Can she stop in Sarasota on her way? And, Curt would convince the agent to let her take a side trip to the Van Wezel.

I also heard that he used to drive up to the Tampa airport and pick up the entertainers himself and bring them down. Did you ever go along?

JON: I never did. I was a young guy in my twenties at that time, just wanting to be a bartender and have fun, but I got to meet all these stars. I got to meet many stars.

I remember when he drove with my mom to the Tampa airport, picked up Grant and Lucille Ball.

DAN: Now there's a story about Cary Grant and your stepdad's glasses. Tell me about that.

JON: You can see in the pictures of my stepdad, that he looks a lot like Cary Grant. He's got that big, healthy, thick white hair. He prided himself that he did look like Cary Grant in his older age. So when he got to meet Grant, he says, "We kind of look alike. Don't we?" Grant paused and looked at Curt and said, "Even more so if you had horn-rimmed glasses like mine." Grant took off his eyeglasses and gave them to Curt. He had to change the prescription, of course.

DAN: So, I guess, that's how Curt Haug's horn-rim glasses became his signature appearance style for the rest of his life.

JON: Yes, that's right. He idolized Grant, and, after his next trip to Italy, Grant sent Curt two more pairs of specially designed Italian frames.

DAN: Now of all the characters you've met, which one stands out the most?

That's a tough question. Gary Grant was a true gentleman. I also got to go to see him at Ruth Eckerd Hall in St. Petersburg. Got a Christmas card from him. He was the ultimate of class, just like he was in his movies. So I would say I've had to pick one gentleman, without doubt, it's Cary Grant. Number two would be Burt Reynolds, and Reynolds was fun. Good guy class act. You know, his movies portrayed him as a goofball, but he was a true, blessed quality actor. And a gentleman that I admired. I loved Burt.

Tony Bennett also comes to mind, he performed at Van Wezel eight times and said it was the greatest acoustics he's ever sung in his life. And, that's big praise from him. Curt had an autographed picture of Bennett in his office.

DAN: What do you think Curt's most prominent success was?

JON: Other than marrying my mom, which was true, I mean, they were both blessed. They were there at the right time, the right place to find each other, second marriages for both. So that, that would be his number one achievement in life. But he raised the cultural status of this little fishing town called Sarasota to an entertainment hub, and he was proud of it. He loved Van Wezel. He loved it!

DAN: I read where he once said he was married to his wife and to the Van Wezel.

JON: I think that's probably true. Incidentally, they got married in the Van Wezel.

DAN: He wrote a book called the Performers at the Purple.

JON: Right, and it's anecdotal some humorous, some not so humorous about the different stars who performed at the hall. He also wrote about the true quality of these entertainers as people, not just as show people. Some were prima donnas who had to have all it all, but Curt wrote about them as human beings.

DAN: I believe he said something once that the Van Wezel sold more condominiums on Longboat key than realtors did.

JON: That sounds like him. He had a very dry, subtle way of patting himself on the back. Deservedly so. He befriended a lot of local artists, architects authors and musicians because there was this arts colony of people here, and he wanted to promote the arts, the Van Wezel and Sarasota.

JON: He learned about them. There were artists like Syd Solomon, one of the greatest Sarasota artists of all time, and, and the authors, like my namesake John D. MacDonald. He lived here through the sixties and the seventies. There was a colony, if you will, of all these artistic people.

DAN: He started the Van Wezel Foundation, which focused on fundraising, right?

JON: Exactly. He started it and he was its first president and not coincidentally that's the organization right now, that's pushing for a new concert hall and theatre for Sarasota.

DAN: Curt Haug has certainly contributed to our Suncoast during his 17 years as director. It's certainly been a pleasure talking to you, learning about you and your famous stepfather. Best wishes to you, and keep up the good public relations tour on the trolley.

JON: Thanks for having me.

To take one of Jon's sightseeing tours, go to discoversarasotatours.com

Dr. Curt Haug graduated from the University of Richmond in Virginia. During his successful career, his alma mater awarded him the honorary degree of Doctor of Humane Letters.

On November 19, 2018, The City Commission of the City of Sarasota passed a memorial resolution in honor of Curt Haug for his dedication to the Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall and the City realizing further that his death is a distinct loss to all citizens of our community and that he will be truly missed by all who knew him.

Flaggler Hotel Legacy in St. Augustine

by Richard Frost

I split time between the New York's Adirondack Mountains and Sarasota, and enjoy finding links between the two. Several years ago, I learned the first manager of Hotel Champlain, a prominent resort built on Lake Champlain by the Delaware and Hudson Railroad in 1890, had worked for legendary Florida developer Henry Flagler. I resolved to learn more about the latter.

Flagler grew up in a tiny burg named Hopewell in upstate New York. What made him different from many with similarly humble origins was a partnership he developed with another rural upstate New York native, a



man born near the Finger Lakes town of Moravia. Through various circumstances, both men made their way to Cleveland to pursue their fortunes.

That second man? John D. Rockefeller. The industry in which they prospered together was oil. Their personal wealth reached levels few can ever dream about.

Flagler was apparently not satisfied simply being among the richest people in the world. He needed new challenges. By the mid-1880's he decided Florida would be the place to take his next steps.

Tourists didn't travel very far south in those days. Excessive heat and humidity discouraged people. So did risks of malaria and other tropical infections. There weren't many places to stay. The journeying was difficult anyway.

Henry Flagler found himself in Saint Augustine, oldest permanent settlement in the United States. Travelers somehow reaching Florida almost always had that city on their itineraries. Spanish architecture had appeal, as did picturesque Castillo de San Marco, the stone fort built by Spain in 1672 to protect trade routes in the region.

Boarding houses accommodated guests, but Flagler saw potential for more comfortable space laden with more niceties. He began constructing Hotel Ponce de Leon, offering a level of luxury never before seen in Florida—or, for that matter, in many other places.

To manage his new creation, Flagler turned to Oswald Dunlap Seavey. Seavey's father managed a hotel in Maine. By age twenty, the son had taken charge of one himself, the Phoenix Hotel in Concord, New Hampshire. Work brought him to New York City and later St. Augustine, where Flagler hired him to staff, furnish, and manage his new Spanish Renaissance-style hotel. Hotel Ponce de Leon opened in 1888 and flourished.

Flagler soon built another only slightly more modest resort a block away. Hotel Alcazar boasted state-of-the-art health facilities, including workout rooms, Russian steam baths, Turkish saunas, and the country's largest indoor swimming pool. He put Seavey in charge there as well. When Flagler bought the only competing hotel in the city, Casa Monica, he turned that

over to Seavey, too.

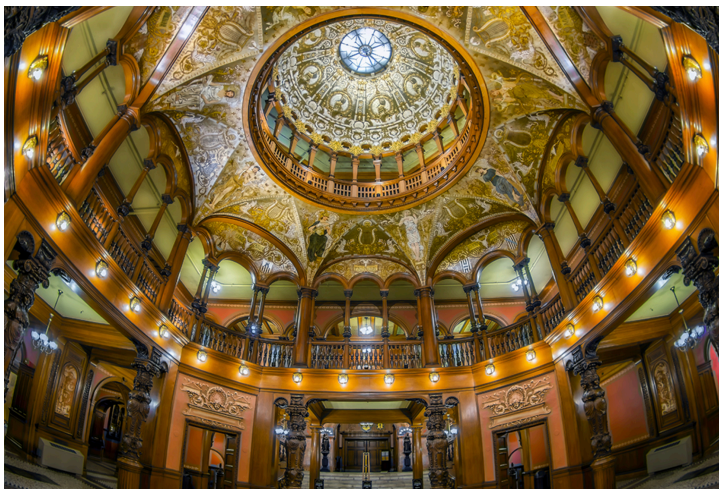
Florida's hotel season ran from January through Easter, so Seavey was available when Hotel Champlain opened in 1890. He moved seasonally for many years, running Flagler's Florida hotels during the winter, then heading north for summers at Hotel Champlain. He traveled with an entourage of key personnel, including the dining room manager and headwaiters. During Seavey's tenure, Hotel Champlain served as Summer White House for President William McKinley.

The Depression, rise of the automobile, and changing travel habits impacted grand hotels everywhere. The Alcazar closed during the 1930's. It sat empty for years until Otto Lightner of Chicago purchased the building to house his huge collections.

Precise closing dates for Hotel Ponce de Leon are elusive, but it was empty by the 1940's. At one point, it appeared the magnificent complex would be demolished. However, new life arose when, in 1968, it opened as Flagler College. Initially a women's school, it became co-educational three years later. Currently there are 2600 students.

Readers finding opportunity to visit Saint Augustine should stop at the former Hotel Ponce de Leon and Hotel Alcazar.

A personable junior communications major named Jamie led us around Ponce de Leon. The courtyard and entry lobby have been impressing visitors for well over a century. Flanking the main building, with its arched entryway and abundant Spanish-style terra cotta decoration, are wings once housing four



hundred guest rooms. Today these provide dormitory space. The lobby boasts pillars, a Tiffany glass dome atop the eighty-foot rotunda, intricate mosaic tile flooring, and murals by a painter who created the same for the Library of Congress.

The astonishing elliptical dining room with its 48-foot barrel vaulted ceiling once served the country's wealthiest people. There's Tiffany glass all around, plenty of 24-karat gold leaf, and reproductions of the original carved chairs. It still functions in food service, but now as a cafeteria and dining hall for students, albeit its two balconies empty of the orchestras that accompanied meals in Flagler's day.

A ladies' parlor still elicits awe. Arches and columns divide the space into three sections. Louis Comfort Tiffany made eleven Austrian crystal chandeliers during his career—and they're all here!

After visiting this campus, cross the street to the former Hotel Alcazar. Designed in Moorish and Spanish Revival style, and completed in 1889, this hotel was constructed of cast concrete with coquina and terra cotta design features. The front section today serves as Saint Augustine's City Hall, certainly among the more magnificent municipal offices in the United States. Sumptuous function rooms now host routine government committee meetings.

Beyond the large courtyard and arched colonnades stands three-story Lightner Museum. Eclectic holdings include plenty of art, cut glass, porcelain, and Gilded Age furniture. A music room boasts some remarkable mechanical instruments. The celebrated health spa's Turkish and Russian steam baths still look ready for use, though the huge indoor pool sits empty.

Flagler didn't rest on his hotel laurels. He bought a narrow-gauge railway operating in Jacksonville, hypothesizing correctly this would bring additional patronage to his resorts. Then he expanded his Florida East Coast Railway south, reaching Palm Beach, Miami, and eventually even Key West.

Many hotels are demolished after their resort usefulness comes to an end. In St. Augustine, they enjoyed a better fate, living on as a college, city hall, and museum. The public can still appreciate their charms.



Original indoor pool in casino, c.a., 1880-1897

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