

The Magazine of the **Florida Humanities Council**

# FORUM

FALL 1999



**How World War II changed the face of Florida**



# For the Duration

**I**n April, I moved from Washington, D.C., to Tampa, from the nation's capital to the nation's 21st-century state, to become the executive director of the Florida Humanities Council. I am planting my feet, and my heart, firmly in Florida soil. And what a state it is! Grand, colorful, rich in history and heritage, blessed with beautiful landscapes of ancient live oaks and over-sized flowers, occupied by large cities and small towns on a canvas of lakes, orange groves, and ranches stretching from the Panhandle to the Keys.

I feel like a traveler on a fabulous cultural tour, soaking in the remarkable beauty and diversity of the land and its people, learning something new everyday. It's an exciting journey, and I am happy to share it with you, our readers. The more I learn about Florida, the more attached I become to it and the more I care about what happens to it. I am an explorer looking to set down roots. I am making Florida home, not just an address.



So it was particularly interesting to me to be involved in this issue of FORUM, that tells the story of an important but increasingly forgotten period of Florida's history, World War II. "Florida at War" tells the story of great heroes and of the heroic efforts of ordinary people. It describes the memory and the bonds of history we share as Floridians. As this issue, guest edited by Gary Mormino and Kathy Arsenault, demonstrates, different people and places experienced the war in unique ways.

But this war, like other cataclysmic events in our history, is the story of America. At a time when our country is experiencing more fragmentation than unity, more anxiety than hope, the history of World War II reminds us of how a people united around a common cause can change the course of the world. As those who were there more than a half-century ago pass on, will we remember? Will our children and their children read the history books, view the newsreels of the time, go to the museums, visit the memorials and monuments?

The Florida Humanities Council hopes that this issue will help us remember the war long after the last soldier dies. A special section features Floridians reminiscing about where they were when they first heard the news about the bombing of Pearl Harbor. "Then and Now" presents the changes that have transformed Florida from pre-war 1940 until today. And woven throughout the articles and features are the visual and visceral images of wartime captured through a montage of powerful photographs. Now, it is up to us to remember.

— Fran Cary



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# FORUM

The Magazine  
of the  
**Florida  
Humanities  
Council**

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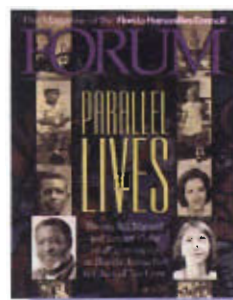


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## LETTERS

Thank you for the "Parallel Lives" edition of *Forum* (Summer 1999). It meant so much to me to be able to look back at that time in our lives. I was spell-bound by your feature writers and appreciated the supporting articles. I have read several *Forums* now, and I felt compelled to send this card of gratitude.

— Joe Lama,  
Tallahassee



I just want to congratulate the editors, the staff and the contributors for this month's issue of *Forum*, "Parallel Lives." It was absolutely fabulous and very moving. Thank you again. I'm thrilled to be a member of the council.

— Vera Hirschhorn, Boca Raton

Let me say that I thoroughly enjoyed and appreciated this entire issue, but especially the article by Bill Maxwell.

Although white, my experiences growing up in south Florida in the 1930s were different than those of many of my friends. Perhaps it was because my father was from Utah (but not Mormon) and unusually enlightened, and my mother was from Mexico and kind to all. What few black friends we had were always welcome in our home — and through the front door.

One of my earliest memories as a child was seeing a black man who had just been lynched hanging from a large mango tree in Goulds as we turned off U.S. 1 returning home from Miami. On another occasion the Klan burned a cross in front of a neighbor's house, our neighbor being an old veteran of the Spanish-American War and perhaps eccentric but not mean or in anyway active that we knew. Hate takes many forms. Yes, we have come a long way, and our children need to learn more about that period.

Congratulations on a fine publication. We'll look forward to future issues.

— Donald Gaby, Ormond Beach

### FORUM'S Guest Editors

This issue of *FORUM*, which explores the impact of World War II on Florida, was guest edited by **Gary Mormino** and **Kathleen Hardee Arsenault**. Mormino is the Frank E. Duckwall Professor of Florida History at the University of South Florida, and is finishing a study of Florida in the 1940s. Arsenault is the Interim Director of the Nelson Poynter Library at USF's St. Petersburg Campus.



Mormino



Arsenault

On the cover: Wings over Florida became a familiar sight. In October 1941, U.S. Navy dive bombers — "Tough as nails, deadly as arsenic" — practice maneuvers over downtown Miami.

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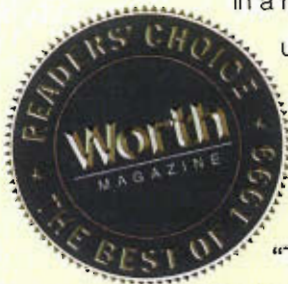
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## Parallel Lives takes to the road

Two Florida writers, one black and one white, explore the subject of race in "Parallel Lives," an FHC program visiting three Florida cities this fall. Journalist Bill Maxwell and novelist Beverly Coyle discuss coming of age in 1950s Florida when blacks and whites still drank from separate water fountains and attended segregated high schools. "Parallel Lives," the cover story in the summer 1999 issue of *Forum*, is sure to generate thought-provoking question and answer periods on the role of race in Florida, past and present.

If your organization is interested in sponsoring a "Parallel Lives" presentation, please contact Janine Farver, Associate Director, (813) 272-3473 ext. 20 or e-mail at [jfarver@flahum.org](mailto:jfarver@flahum.org).



Bill Maxwell and Beverly Coyle

## New on our web site:

"Making Florida Home," a new FHC exhibit, profiles Floridians describing what makes Florida home to them. The exhibit, which will travel to nearly 100 libraries and museums, is now available for view on our website at [www.flahum.org](http://www.flahum.org). Also on the site are grant information and applications, the Florida Center for Teachers seminar schedule and news about the 2000 Florida Gathering.

## New FORUM Editor

With this edition of FORUM we welcome our new editor, John Berry. He succeeds Rick Edmonds who served as editor since 1994. Rick blended a rare combination of journalistic savvy and humanities scholarship to produce issues of FORUM which investigated a wide array of history, heritage and public policy topics. Berry is a former editor of *Florida Trend* who has worked for several big cities newspapers and business publica-

# Humanities alive!

## FLORIDA COUNCIL COMINGS AND GOINGS

### Celebrating Florida's role in World War II

FHC will explore Florida's role in WWII with a special offering to veterans' organizations. Historian Gary Mormino, editor of this issue of the *Forum*, will moderate panel discussions with WWII veterans and with Floridians who worked on the home front. There is also a new Speakers Bureau presentation on WWII by historians Lynn Homan and Thomas Reilly. The talk is available immediately. Homan and Reilly are developing a traveling exhibit on the topic for FHC. It will debut in March of 2000 and travel to more than 70 sites around the state. Contact David Reddy, Resource Center Director, (813) 272-3473 ext.15 or e-mail at [dreddy@flahum.org](mailto:dreddy@flahum.org), or visit our web site at [www.flahum.org](http://www.flahum.org). Mini-grants and scholar grants are also available to investigate your community's role in World War II, the Korean Conflict or the Vietnam War. Contact Joan Bragginton, Program Director, (813) 272-3473 ext.19 or e-mail at [jbragginton@flahum.org](mailto:jbragginton@flahum.org).

### Need a Good Speaker?

A new brochure lists the FHC's excellent group of speakers chosen for their ability to give lively and informed presentations. They bring stimulating yet serious discussions to communities across the state, with a special emphasis on reaching rural and under-served audiences. The broad topics range from a dramatization of poet James Weldon Johnson to discussions of edible folk art, to censorship on the internet. Qualifying non-profit organizations may schedule up to three programs per year. There is a \$50 registration fee for each program. Events that do not qualify for FHC Speakers Bureau funding (member only events, fundraisers, banquets, etc.) can hire a speaker for \$300 to \$500. Contact David Reddy, Resource Center Director, (813) 272-3473 ext.15, e-mail at [dreddy@flahum.org](mailto:dreddy@flahum.org), or pick your topics and apply through our web site at [www.flahum.org](http://www.flahum.org).

## Humor and teachers

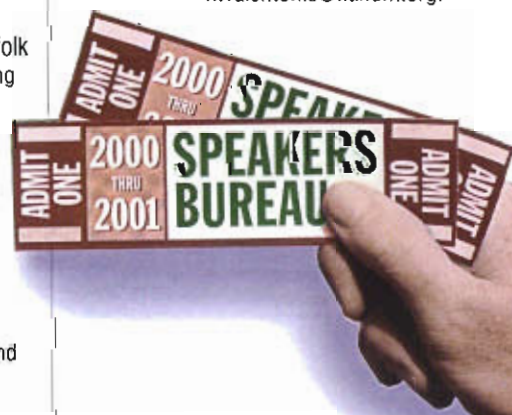
A special alumni seminar of the Florida Center for Teachers will explore the topic of humor. The seminar will be held on three different weekends, Feb. 24-26, Mar. 23-25 and Apr. 13-15 at Central Florida Community College in Ocala. The agenda includes a first-person performance of a famous American humorist, presentations on clowning, ethnic and political humor and the development and production of a CD-ROM. Information will be mailed later this fall to all alumni of the Florida Center for Teachers. Registration will be on a first-come first-serve basis. Contact Ann Schoenacher, Program Coordinator, (813) 272-3473 ext. 21 or e-mail at [aschoenacher@flahum.org](mailto:aschoenacher@flahum.org).

## Gathering at Fernandina Beach

The Florida Gathering, FHC's weekend celebration of Florida history and heritage, is slated for March 17-19 at Fernandina Beach. Located in Florida's northeastern-most corner on Amelia Island, Fernandina Beach is a historic seaport town with a rich and colorful past. Established in 1562, Fernandina Beach is the only city in the U.S. to have been ruled under eight flags. Join other Floridians for this weekend exploration of the history, heritage and environment of Fernandina Beach, including walking tours, boat trips, bike trips, music, entertainment and an insider's look at one of Florida's most fascinating and picturesque towns. Registration is open to the public and will begin in November. For more information call Michelle Valentoni, Membership Coordinator (813) 272-3473 ext.12 or e-mail at [mvalentoni@flahum.org](mailto:mvalentoni@flahum.org).



2000  
Fernandina  
Beach





# ON THE BRINK

*In 1940, the shroud of global war and the Great Depression hung over Florida. A new Florida was emerging, richer and older, less southern and more international.*

BY GARY R. MORMINO

**f**lorida in 1940 stood precariously between its rock-hard rural, southern traditions, particularly in the Panhandle and upper regions, and a swelling wave of northern influences, especially in the fast-growing urban Gulf and Atlantic resort cities. Technology was urging change. The automobile was bringing restlessness to the backwoods and bayous. The buoyant economy, boosted by a record flow of tourists, promised dramatic changes. Writers for *Florida: A Guide to the Southernmost State* (1939) hinted at these changes, observing, “politically and socially, Florida has its own North and South but its northern area is strictly southern and its southern area is strictly northern.”

In at least one respect, however, Florida remained a southern backwater. Segregation was the law and custom of the land. Vestiges of the Old South appeared everywhere. State holidays included January 19, Robert E. Lee’s birthday, and April 26, Confederate Memorial Day. To the state’s black residents, Florida’s culture and politics mirrored the South: a legacy of slavery, secession, Reconstruction, Jim Crow traditions, white primaries, and a frightening level of interracial

violence and lynching. Before 1940, Florida – not Mississippi or Alabama – led the South in per capita lynchings. The lynchings occurred not only in Perry, Newberry, and Madison, but also in Inverness, St. Petersburg, and DeLand. The 1935 state census underscored Florida’s heritage: three-fourths of the state’s residents were born in Florida or the South. Not a single classroom in Florida was integrated in 1940. And when the 1939 Florida legislature convened, not a single black, woman, or Republican took a seat.

Linking all Floridians was the land itself. Heat, humidity, and long growing seasons had forged a distinctive identity and attachment to the land. While it is true that all states possess unique sub-regions, no other southern state reflects Florida’s environmental diversity, the result of extraordinary longitudinal boundaries. Florida encompasses 8,500 miles of tidal shoreline. Tallahassee, the state capital, lies 20 miles from the Georgia border and 500 miles from Miami. Key West is 800 miles from Pensacola but just 90 miles from Cuba. Floridians adapted to a climate that could be oppressively humid, bone-chilling cold, or tropically wet. Elizabeth S. Morgan, a native of Havana, FL, writes,





LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

In 1939, acclaimed photographer Marion Post Wolcott captured America's rich and beautiful indulging at Miami Beach.



# Florida

## THEN & NOW



• On the eve of Pearl Harbor, Florida's population stood at 1.9 million, ranked 29th in the nation.

• On the eve of the millennium, Florida's population has passed 25 million, ranked fourth behind California, Texas and New York.

Largest Cities	1940	1998
Jacksonville	173,065	700,000
Miami	172,172	370,000
Tampa	108,391	290,000
Other Cities	1940	1997
Apalachicola	3,268	2,815
Boca Raton	723	68,432
Cape Coral	—	90,026
Clearwater	10,136	104,228
Coral Springs	—	102,916
Daytona Beach	22,584	64,138
Fort Lauderdale	17,996	151,976
Gainesville	13,757	100,000
Lakeland	22,068	75,265
Melbourne	2,622	68,056
Naples	1,253	21,202
Orlando	36,736	176,373
Pensacola	37,449	60,591
Saint Augustine	12,090	12,342
St. Petersburg	60,812	236,236
Sarasota	11,141	51,315
Tallahassee	16,240	140,643
West Palm Beach	33,693	79,783

Most Populated County	1940:	267,739 (Dade)
	1997:	2,070,739 (Dade)

Least Populated County	1940:	2,745 (Glades)
	1997:	7,000 (Lafayette)

Counties with a majority African-American Population	1940:	(Gadsden, Jefferson, Leon)
	1997:	(Gadsden)

Florida Population, Age 65+	1940:	131,000 (7%)
	1997:	2,800,000 (18.5%)

Number of Social Security Recipients	1940:	2,500
	1997:	3,100,000

Per Capita Personal Income	1940:	\$513
	1997:	\$24,799

Foreign-Born Residents	1940:	69,861 (3.6%)
	1997:	2,351,000 (15.3%)

Immigration: Country of Birth, Largest	1940:	10,949 (British Isles)
	1997:	600,000 (Cuba)

Motor Vehicle Registrations	1940:	579,000
	1997:	11,000,000

Total Number of Students, K-12	1940:	405,322
	1997:	2,300,000 (Public)

Average Annual Teacher's Salary	1940:	\$1,202 (Whites)
		\$605 (Blacks)
	1997:	\$35,915

Total Farmland Acreage	1940:	35,000,000
	1997:	24,300,100

Orange Production	1940:	28,600,000 Boxes
	1997:	226,000,000 Boxes

ORANGES



"Back then, time was measured by the seasons. The weather, that culprit or creator of crops and adventure, was at the center of intimacy among hunters and fishermen, mostly farmers by occupation.... They speculated about it, prayed about it, feared it, and held it sacred. Events were recalled by the kind of day it had been."

Most large cities boasted a few air-conditioned movie theaters or department stores, though private homes still relied on the cooling breeze of electric fans. Floridians reveled in air-cooled opulence at movie palaces such as the Caribe on Miami Beach, the Ritz in Marianna, and the Dixie Theatre in Apalachicola. In Tampa, Miami, and Jacksonville, Maas Brothers, Burdines, and Cohen Brothers showcased the latest fashions in air-conditioned comfort, drawing customers from the hinterlands.

Tourists flocked to Florida in roadsters or by train to pursue a variety of pleasures, fishing for largemouth bass on legendary Lake Apopka and hunting bear in the depths of Tates Hell. They shot turkeys in Vernon and took airboat rides into the Big Cypress. They played golf at Boca Raton and cast for bonefish in Florida Bay. They marveled at Bok Tower in Lake Wales and Sunken Gardens at St. Pete. The state's most popular tourist attraction was Marineland near St. Augustine; the most popular destination was Miami, drawing almost 2 million tourists in 1940. Travelers encountered a delightful series of small towns as they followed the Gulf Stream south along the old Dixie Highway, U.S. 1, where tourist courts, eateries, and gasoline stations had begun to reconfigure the landscape.

Even as prosperity brought change, Florida's writers memorialized the state's vanishing past. Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings's 1936 classic, *The Yearling*, the poignant story of the relationship between Jody Baxter and his adopted fawn, helped authenticate the denigrated Florida Cracker and became the first book dealing with a Florida subject to win the Pulitzer Prize. In

1940, Zora Neale Hurston, Florida's greatest native-born writer was at work on her autobiography, *Dust Tracks on the Road*. An anthropologist and gifted raconteur, Hurston drew her stories from the people she knew best — jook artists, mule skinner, turpentine "lifers," and phosphate miners. With folklorist Alan Lomax, she helped capture an oral tradition that was fading fast. Hurston frequently packed a loaded pistol during her research; woods riders and foremen were not accustomed to meeting black folklorists toting recording machines. Jacksonville native Stetson Kennedy dropped out of the University of Florida to work for the newly created Florida Writers' Project, a New Deal cultural unit. Kennedy interviewed ex-slaves, Greek sponge divers, and Riviera Conchs, publishing many of these vignettes in his 1942 book,





SPECIAL COLLECTIONS, UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH FLORIDA

A State of Contrasts, 1940: Guests luxuriate at the posh Jungle Prado Hotel in St. Petersburg (above); migrant vegetable pickers wait for a day's pay near Homestead.



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## Palmetto Country.

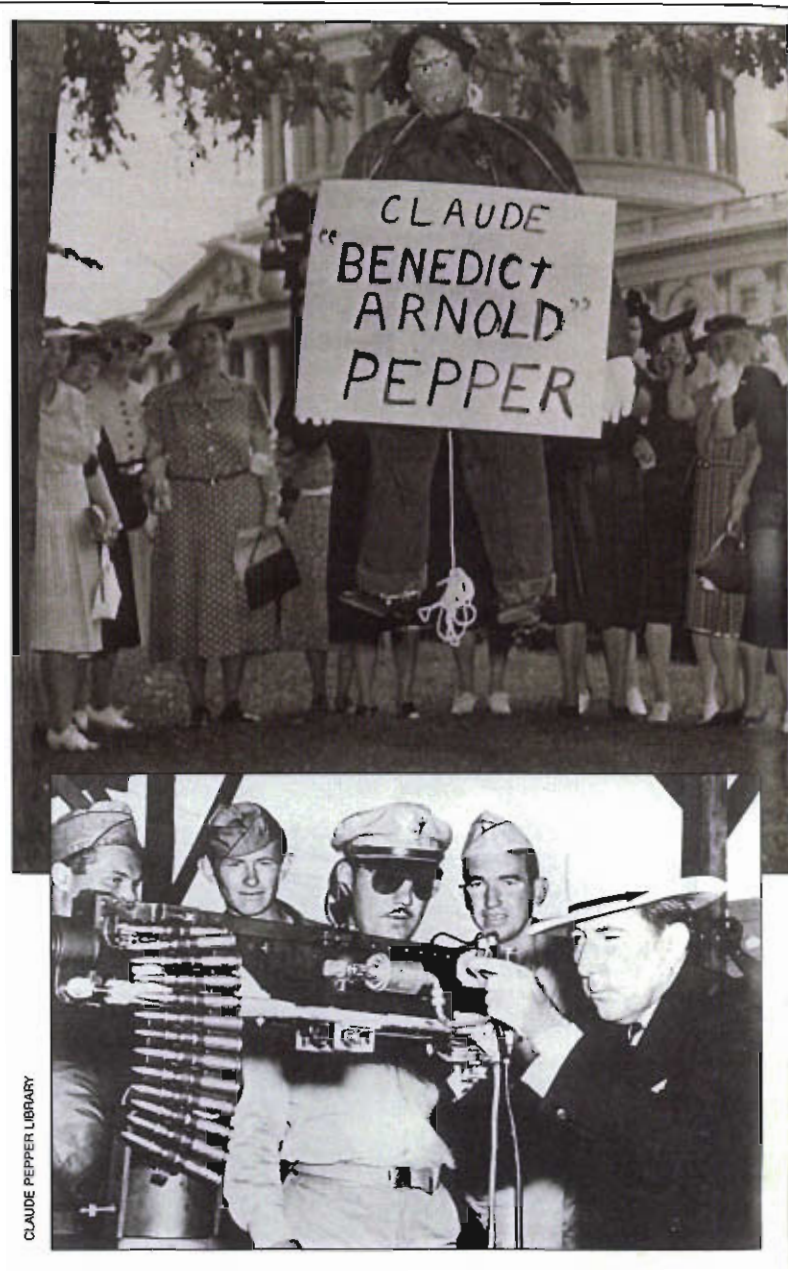
But while the state's writers dwelled on the recent, colorful past, few others shed tears for the vanishing world of Cracker Florida. The 1940 U.S. Census documents the transformations gripping the state. The depression decade of the 1930s had slowed down Florida's growth rate; still, the state grew by 429,203 persons and boasted a population of 1,897,414 residents. Twenty-seven percent of Florida's residents were black, the lowest percentage in state history. Although parts of north Florida were losing population as agriculture declined, thriving south Florida cities were attractive havens to thousands of displaced farmers from north Florida and other southern states. Clustered with cities and towns from Pensacola to Key West, Florida had become the South's most urbanized state by 1940. Almost two out of three Floridians resided in a city; Jacksonville, Miami, and Tampa topped the magical 100,000 plateau.

**T**he 1940 census reinforced what everyone knew but what every north Florida legislator wished to forget: north Florida was being dwarfed by growing numbers of urban residents living in central and south Florida. Nevertheless, North Florida's most powerful legislators, later called the "Porkchoppers," stubbornly refused to provide booming south Florida counties with the roads and schools they desperately needed.

Florida's population in 1940 included 69,861 foreign born, more than all other southern states except Texas. Immigrants tended to follow the crowds to Florida's more urbanized Gold Coast or Tampa Bay areas. Residents in the Panhandle's small towns rarely heard a foreign accent – unless it was a Chicago tourist headed toward Miami.

Photographs of the famed green benches of St. Petersburg or the delicatessens of Miami Beach acknowledge another significant demographic change: Florida was getting older. By 1940, Florida's median age had climbed to 29, matching the U.S. average, but three years older than the rest of the South. Florida's aging population was the result of two factors: the state's birth rate, the lowest in the South, and migration of large numbers of older residents.

Many Florida cities contained pockets of black or white rural migrants living in grinding poverty and wretched conditions. The New Deal's Federal Emergency Relief Administration and Public Works Administration helped some Florida cities install modern sewers and paved roads, but such programs generally assisted more affluent and politically powerful neighborhoods. Ownership of one's home, a central tenet of the American dream, was far from universal, and many structures were sub-standard. In St. Petersburg, two thirds of black households depended upon kerosene for lighting. Nearly 4,000 structures in Jacksonville lacked running water while another 7,000



went without flush toilets. Migrant workers suffered the most, paying outrageous sums – \$4 a week in Belle Glade – for a shack without conveniences. A federal investigator described Belle Glade's "Negro quarter" as having "no regular streets, just a jumble of alleyways, hodge-podge streets and footpaths, two- and three-story buildings most of which are shed-like, barn-like, ramshackle." Health care mirrored the housing crisis. A report indicated that 26 of 27 counties in north and west Florida lacked adequate medical care.

The 1940 census profiled 134,374 adult, wage-earning black males. Fully one-third still worked the land, although precious few owned the land they worked. Black females faced even more daunting occupational prospects. Of Florida's 85,464 black female wage earners, two-thirds were employed as maids, laundresses, or service workers. Few blacks were found in the professional ranks. Census takers surveying the state enu-





## Mr. Pepper Goes to War

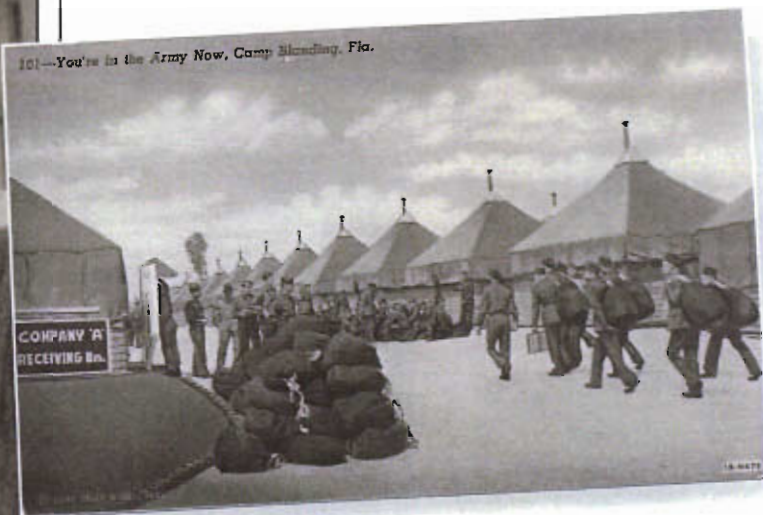
ASSOCIATED PRESS, CLAUDE PEPPER LIBRARY

In 1940, Florida's powerful senior U.S. Senator, Claude Pepper (right), worked tirelessly to bring military bases to his state. A supporter of America's first peacetime draft, Pepper was denounced by the Congress of American Mothers, who hung his coconut-headed effigy from a capitol tree (above). Vindicated, Pepper wrote in his diary, Dec. 7, 1941: "I could hardly believe Japan had attacked Pearl Harbor...yet the whole country has been stunned then calmly resolved that now we are going to accept the challenge and get it over....Well here it is - war - God strengthen us all."

merated 1 black chemist, 2 veterinarians, 3 artists/art teachers, 7 authors/reporters, 9 lawyers, 24 pharmacists, 39 dentists, 45 professors, 85 physicians, and 979 clergymen. Ambitious black Floridians such as poet James Weldon Johnson, activist A. Philip Randolph, blues musician Hudson "Tampa Red" Whitaker, and actress Butterfly McQueen fled to Harlem or Chicago.

Race cut deeply into a separated and very unequal education system. Because the State of Florida supplied little of the cost of local public education, enormous differences existed from county to county or even within counties. A completely segregated system of higher education, under-funded even at white institutions, added further barriers for ambitious black citizens.

White supremacy stood at the very center of Florida's political economy. No blacks voted in the Democratic white primary or served on a jury. U.S.



A postcard from Camp Blanding: "You're in the Army now."

Senator Claude Pepper, widely perceived as one of the South's most liberal statesmen, demagogued in January 1938, "Whatever may be placed upon the statute books of the Nation, however many soldiers may be stationed about the ballot boxes of the Southland, the colored race will not vote, because in doing so under the present circumstances they endanger the supremacy of a race to which God has committed the destiny of a continent, perhaps of a world."

If the state's social relations remained regressive and deeply mired in the past, its economy, as measured by the early days of the 1940s, was charting a new course. In 1933, the Depression's leanest year, Floridians earned a total of \$423 million in income. By 1941, income soared to \$1.05 billion. "The people of Florida now are eating high on the hog," proclaimed Governor Fred P. Cone, "Old Suwannee," a banker from Lake City. Florida's surge in income left the rest of the South behind. "There are no boll weevils in the tourist crop," beamed one Floridian.

The chief cause for optimism in America was war in Europe and a growing defense budget at home. Defense contractors, truck farmers, cotton brokers, lumber mills, and resort hotels benefited from Europe's tragedy. President Roosevelt found ardent support for his foreign policy among southern congressmen. Claude Pepper reigned as Florida's senior U.S. senator, dexterously promoting New Deal social spending and military preparedness while working tirelessly to bring home military pork. His counterpart in the U.S. House of Representatives, Robert "He Coon" Sikes, Democrat from Crestview, also proved exceptionally adept at securing military appropriations for hardscrabble northwest Florida.

Jump-started by New Deal initiatives, Florida was being transformed into a military powerhouse. WPA-constructed airfields became military bases; newly



dredged harbors welcomed Navy and Coast Guard vessels. Eglin Army Air Field encompassed 24 square miles of swamp and forest, while St. Petersburg hosted the Coast Guard at its Bayboro Harbor facility. A Clay County summer camp for Florida's National Guard became Camp Blanding. Home to 90,000 staff members and trainees, Camp Blanding ranked as the fourth-largest city in the state. Florida's climate and terrain provided ideal conditions for training thousands of urgently needed pilots. Flight schools, encouraged by General Hap Arnold, commander of the U.S. Army Air Corps, soon dotted the state. In Tallahassee, the student newspaper at Florida State College for Women considered the implications of the draft and war and pondered campus weekends "minus young men and debates and dances and corsages." Faculty, students, and local women quickly organized to support beleaguered Britain. "Everybody up here is knitting," wrote a first-year student. Winter Park claimed Florida's first Bundles for Britain chapter. At its peak, St. Petersburg's chapter went through 300 pounds of yarn per week.

**T**he war in Europe did not seem so far away. Refugees and emigrants from the embattled countries followed war news passionately. In Ybor City's Italian Club, veterans of labor battles spewed forth a torrent of anti-Fascist pamphlets and speeches. Greeks in Tarpon Springs, Finns in Lake Worth, and Czechs in Masaryktown raised funds for war refugees and anxiously read their newspapers to trace the battle lines racing across their former homelands. In June 1939, the German liner *St. Louis*, carrying 907 Jewish refugees from Nazi Germany, attempted to land in Miami. To the horror of Miami's Jewish community, American authorities refused asylum for the ship's desperate passengers. Also denied asylum in Cuba, the doomed ship returned to Germany where many of its passengers died in concentration camps. In December 1939 astonished stevedores at Port Everglades watched the German freighter *Arauca* sail into harbor chased by the British cruiser *Orion*.



Jaunty cadets from Lodwick Aviation Military Academy stroll from their Stearman PT-17 trainers, outfitted with Gosport flying suits and Aberdeen flying suits in Avon Park.

LAKELAND PUBLIC LIBRARY

In spite of, or perhaps because of, the military build-up and war talk, tourists returned to Florida. More than 2 million tourists sought the winter warmth of the Sunshine State in 1940. The *Miami Herald* waxed optimistically, "We've crossed our fingers and donned rose-colored glasses as the curtain goes up for the best tourist season in history." The first week in December traditionally marked the beginning of the official tourist season, and the *Herald* published an extra-large issue for Sunday, December 7,

1941.

That day in Tampa, "Salty" Sol Fleishman, a gregarious radio announcer for WDAE, was broadcasting music by Kate Smith. Around 1:20 p.m., Smith's voice suddenly disappeared and, Fleishman recalled, "A network announcer broke in to say, 'The White House has announced that planes with red markings are bombing Pearl Harbor.'" Smith resumed singing and Fleishman sat totally confused.

During a break, Fleishman wandered into the dining room of the Tampa Terrace Hotel and spotted Clarence Tinker, the commander of MacDill Army Air Field. "What's new?" Fleishman recalled Tinker asking. "I don't know. A funny thing happened a minute ago. CBS broke in and said Jap planes were bombing Pearl Harbor." Tinker literally spat out his coffee, reared from the table, and bellowed, "This means war!"

Across Florida, the terrible news was relayed across fences, over loud speakers and telephones, on the radio and in movie theaters. Floridians rushed to their atlases to locate far-away Pearl Harbor, and anxious soldiers, sailors, and airmen reported to their bases for duty. For military men or civilians, blacks, Hispanics, or Anglos, rich or poor, young or old, life in the Sunshine State would never be the same. ★





# "I REMEMBER PEARL HARBOR"

*Just another quiet Sunday afternoon when, suddenly, lives were changed forever. Some Floridians recall that fateful December day.*

**"T**hough just a lad barely seven years old, I can recall my father announcing the attack on Pearl Harbor, and listening to the radio intently. My hometown, Tallahassee, was "invaded" by young foreigners (British and Chinese) learning to fly P-39 fighter planes, then P-47s at Dale Mabry Army Air Base. My grandmother proudly displayed in the living room window her red-bordered rectangular flag with three blue stars in the white center field signifying three people (my Dad and two uncles) from her household were serving in the U.S. Armed Services. Close to half of the homes in Magnolia Heights displayed similar flags, but not many had three stars."

— LeRoy Collins, Jr., a Tampa businessman, attended the Naval Academy and is a Rear Admiral, (Ret.), USNR.



Navy Lieutenant LeRoy Collins and family, 1944

**"I** was in St. Petersburg with friends at Corn's Bowling Alley on 4th Street North at 16th Avenue. I believe we all headed for our respective homes soon after the news came through. My parents were greatly alarmed because my older brother, John, was a college freshman at the time,

and soon went into the Air Force. Our family strongly resisted any criticism of the Roosevelt administration since my uncle, Harry A. Wallace, was Vice President of the United States at the time."

— William P. Wallace lives in St. Petersburg and is active in civic and cultural affairs.

**"W**e turned on the radio at home and from that time through the war the radio seemed to become a huge part of our life. The crackling static from overseas broadcasts still stays in my memory. H.V. Kaltenborn, Lowell Thomas, and Edward R. Murrow became familiar voices to us all."

— Bettie Bazemore Barkdull, a social worker and dietetic/nutritional casework supervisor, lives in Tallahassee.

**"S**unday afternoons were Sunday chapel services at White Hall at Bethune Cookman College in Daytona Beach. Some of the students who had jobs were excused. I reported to the kitchen at White Hall as a dishwasher. We heard over the radio that Pearl Harbor had been attacked by the Japanese. We couldn't wait to prepare a note about what we had heard so we



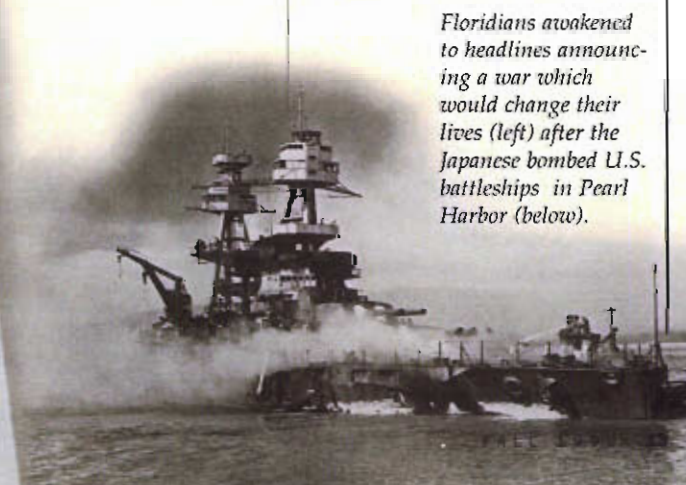
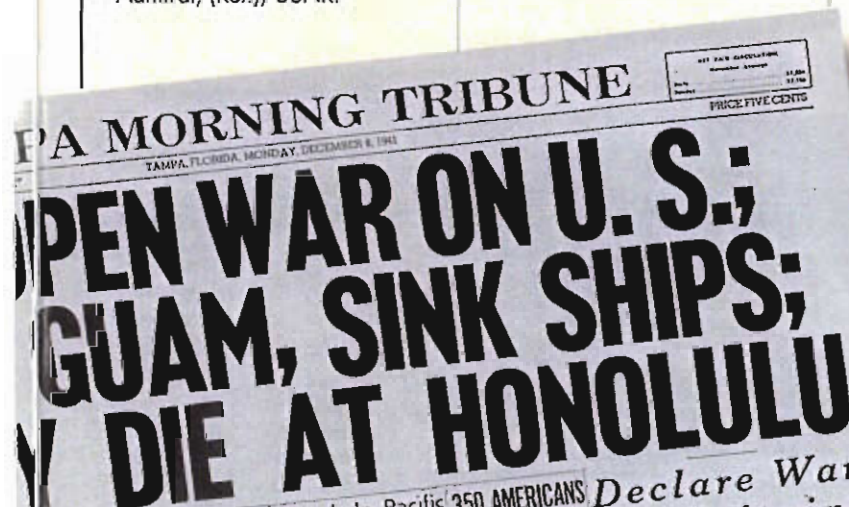
Robert W. Saunders

slipped the note to someone on the stage in White Hall. We requested that they give it to Mrs. Mary Bethune (president of the college). She announced to the student body about the attack. She remarked about serving our country and asked the choir and audience to sing "We are Climbing Jacob's Ladder." I recall that the male students were asked to respond with "Do I Think I'll Make a Soldier." After that there was silence."

— Robert W. Saunders, Sr., of Tampa, became the NAACP field secretary and played an active role in Florida's civil rights movement.

**"I** learned about the attack on Pearl Harbor over the radio while I was visiting my father who was a heart attack patient in St. Vincent's Hospital

*Floridians awakened to headlines announcing a war which would change their lives (left) after the Japanese bombed U.S. battleships in Pearl Harbor (below).*





# "I REMEMBER PEARL HARBOR"

in Jacksonville. I was a member of the House in the Florida Legislature and was deep into my first race for the U.S. Congress. I turned my law practice over to a treasured friend and enlisted early in 1942 as a private in the infantry."

— Charles Bennett was awarded the Silver and Bronze Stars for heroism in the Pacific. He returned to Jacksonville where he served in the U.S. House of Representatives, 1949-1993.

"It was cold, dreary and raining in the small town of Monticello. The radio news, accompanied by much static, was scant, sober and yet distant. I had never heard of Pearl Harbor. It was not until we learned of the death of Captain Colin P. Kelly, Jr., a few days later that war had become more of a reality. Although I did not know this young pilot from the adjoining town of Madison, I knew his cousins, aunts, uncles, and grandmother. War quickly became an actuality in a peaceful north Florida area."

— Lee Bird Leavengood of Monticello, who raised a family before obtaining an M.A. degree, is Director of Senior Programs in Educational Outreach at University of South Florida in Tampa.

"My sister and I both had boyfriends home on leave from the Navy. The four of us traveled from Tavares to Orlando to have lunch... Suddenly about 5:15 PM we realized the reporter was giving the news that the Japanese had bombed Pearl Harbor that morning and that President Roosevelt was declaring war. Then he said 'All men in uniform report to the nearest recruiting station immediately.' The sailors



Susan Nunes, then and now.

decided to take me and my sister back home to Tavares where we said tearful good-byes."

— Susan Nunes, who worked at the Kennedy Space Center, returned to Tavares and helps preserve and promote the history of Lake County.

"It took a few hours for my parents to realize that they had two sons of eminently draftable age. I bought an

afternoon 'Extra' edition of the *Pensacola News* with the huge word WAR screaming from the front page. I have kept that paper all these years. The next morning I joined my friends in the car pool for our daily ride to work as civilians at the U.S. Naval Air Station. Security had tightened overnight and we all had to show our identification. I went into the Army Air Corps."

— Jack Bond worked for Florida Blue Cross/Blue Shield from 1949 to 1979. He lives in St. Petersburg.

"I was setting up pins at the bowling alley on Aviles Street in St. Augustine. Unaccountably, at some point that afternoon, the bowlers all started walking out the door! In the street, the bowlers crowded around a newsboy hawking an Extra edition of the *St. Augustine Evening Record*. Some of the bowlers asked, 'Where's Pearl Harbor?' I knew because I had recently read a *National Geographic* piece about the U.S. Navy anchorage there. I thereupon delivered my first-ever lecture. (Should I add it to



Maryse Dale

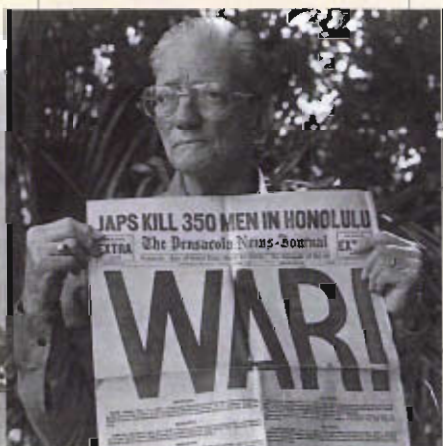
my résumé?) Little could I have known that 54 years and 8 weeks later, I would be testifying in the U.S. Senate Armed Services Committee Room in defense of Admiral Husband E. Kimmel, U.S. Navy Commander at Pearl Harbor on that fateful day."

— Michael Gannon is Distinguished Service Professor Emeritus of History, University of Florida.

"At Florida Southern College (in Lakeland), the students were helping to build new buildings designed by Frank Lloyd Wright. Pearl Harbor suddenly decimated the male contingent of the student body — and some of the female as well as a good many of the faculty. We girls were called out of class to form round-the-clock, seven-hour work shifts to allow the continuous pouring that was necessary. We considered it something of a lark: we got out of class, the work was not too hard, and, after all, there was a war on!"

— Maryse Dale of Plant City was a teacher from 1949-1990.

"I was, at the time, the Assistant U.S. Attorney and watching Sam Snead and Ben Hogan in a golf tournament at the Doral Country Club in Miami, Florida. Dan Mahoney, the Editor of the *Miami Daily News* was also there watching the match. A reporter asked Dan and me, 'Where is Pearl Harbor?' No one in the crowd knew nor had they ever heard of Pearl Harbor. Finally, someone said they thought it was in the Hawaiian Islands. The



Jack Bond (in 1944, left, and today, above) has kept the December 7, 1941 issue of the *Pensacola News-Journal* all these years.



**I** had ridden my bicycle to the office, (and) on the way home I stopped at a local drug store to treat myself to an ice cream soda. As I parked my bike at the curbing, one of the men told me, 'The Japs have bombed Pearl Harbor.' I didn't know where Pearl Harbor was. I forgot about the ice cream soda, so that I could hurry home to my wife and our infant son. At the nearest corner, a redheaded, freckle-faced pre-teenage boy was standing. I stopped to tell him the news and the youngster's face broke into an excited grin, and he commented, "Geeeee!"

— Loyal Frisbee, who fought in the Battle of the Bulge, succeeded his father as editor and publisher of the *Polk County Democrat* in Bartow. His son continues in that role today.

Loyal Frisbee today (above) and with General James A. Van Fleet (left).

docks to be with my playmates. Suddenly, mother was at the door. 'Son,' she solemnly managed in a weeping voice, 'We're at war.' I looked about me. The sky was still blue with little

white clouds frolicking around. I saw no smoke, heard no bombs.

Cortez was a settlement of commercial net fishermen located in Manatee County on Sarasota Bay — a closely-knit community of mostly blood kin. I didn't understand all the tears and long tender embraces exchanged between my aunts, uncles and older cousins as they departed into the unknown. Some didn't return. One aunt sent six sons."

— Thomas "Blue" Fulford lives in Cortez, where he worked as a fisherman.

scene was one of great confusion and puzzlement."

— George A. Smathers of Miami saw combat as a marine in the Pacific Theater. He served in the U.S. House of Representatives and Senate from 1946 to 1969.

**T**he day was absolutely beautiful, the kind that allows short pants and bare feet even in winter. I was playing alone on the back porch wondering if mother would let me go to the fish

**I**n the fall of 1941, I entered my sophomore year at Florida State College for Women, Tallahassee, Florida. On Sunday afternoon, the car radio was on and the program was interrupted. 'The Japanese have bombed Pearl Harbor. All military personnel report to your base immediately.' As young college girls we

knew life had changed from college 'good times' to real life in a world at war."

— Helen Herriott Landers is a historian at the Broward County Historical Commission.

**I** was in Ocala to teach the Men's Bible class of the First Methodist Church. I thought of my young wife and our year old baby daughter and knew our lives would be changed beyond my calculation. I had just been elected to the Florida State Legislature for the first time. I knew that had to change and made up my mind to resign from the legislature. I went home and wrote the Navy that I wished to enlist for service. After an agonizing month or two the Navy accepted me to be an Ensign. I served in the Navy in the North Atlantic in the Mediterranean and the Pacific, returning from the Navy in early 1946."

— Cecil Farris Bryant of Ocala served as Speaker of the Florida House of Representatives in 1953 and Governor 1961-1965.

Navy man  
Cecil Farris  
Bryant





**T**hey worked hard and did what they had to do. They had no choice. A generation of Floridians grew up in the Depression, briefly tasted the sweet relief of recovery, then sacrificed it to fight a world war. They grew up learning to scrimp and reuse and barter; they fished and crabbed and picked oranges and worked odd jobs and borrowed and helped each other. Their lives were commandeered by a war that upheaved Florida almost as dramatically as Europe. They married early in heady, romantic and uncertain days. They fought. Some died. When they came home they found their mostly rural, small-town state changed forever. So they built a new life and a new state.

Surely this generation of Floridians saw more, did more, suffered more and achieved more than any of this century. Whether decorated hero or everyday citizen, every Floridian who lived through those days has a story to tell.

Here are some of them:

### Charles and Virginia McIntosh

**I**t was no surprise that two boys who grew up together in Dade City, the county seat of rural Pasco County, would run across each other and catch up about the home folks – except that they were standing on the southeast coast of England, a half-hour before departing for the June 6, 1944 invasion of Normandy, and that within hours one of them would die.

Charles McIntosh grew up in Dade City and graduated from high

# HEROES ALL



Whether half a world  
away on the front lines or at  
home keeping vigil, the war  
demanded extraordinary  
things from ordinary people.

BY HOWARD TROXLER

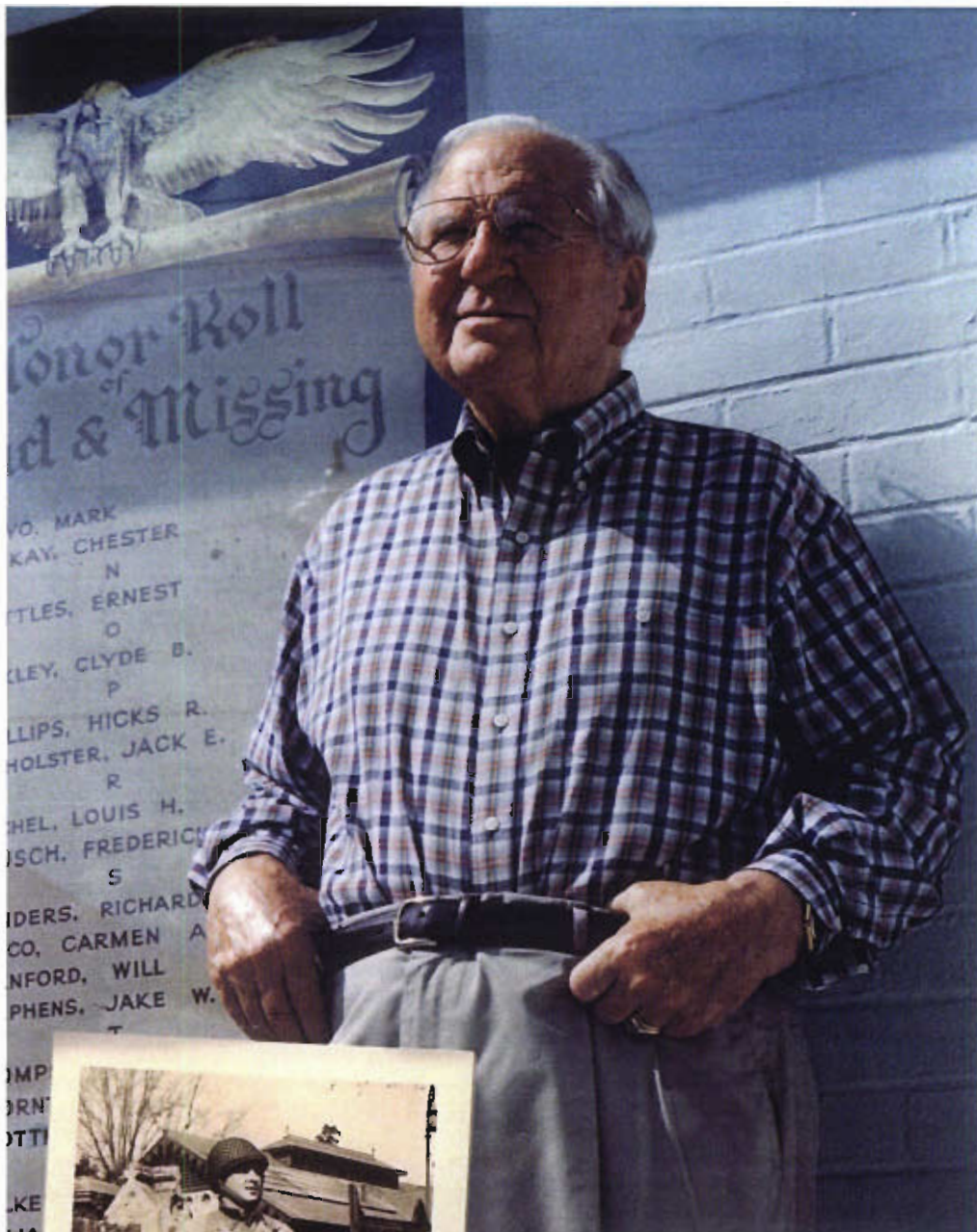
school in 1935 in the thick of hard times. Dade City, still a small town, was in the 1930s basically an intersection of two paved highways – five grocers, two corner drugstores, two banks. On the weekends people came from nearby San Antonio, St. Leo, Darby, Lacoochee and Trilby, to shop and catch up. Short on cash, the people turned to barter. “People would bring in chickens and eggs, or stuff they had raised, and trade it for goods. In those days, you could leave your houses open. It was not uncommon for my

mother to get people stopping by to ask for something to eat.” Train-riding hoboes knew that Mrs. McIntosh often left a loaf of bread on the back porch for them.

McIntosh headed to the University of Florida in Gainesville, relying on a New Deal scholarship, money his mother had borrowed against her insurance, and odd jobs. Even so, he ran out of money after three years and took a job in a Tampa meatpacking plant. He landed a better job with a credit company in Miami

*Howard Troxler is a columnist for the St. Petersburg Times.*





Charles MacIntosh marched with the liberating forces into Paris, and fought in the Battle of the Bulge. Now 81, he is the mayor of Dade City.

you were not going to be killed. That was not in your mind. You were better trained than whoever you were going to be facing." McIntosh's transport was hit and sunk and his unit swam to shore, with McIntosh dragging a seasick sergeant with him. "People wanted to dig in, but we were being shelled so much. I'll never forget this general officer came along, walking along like there was nothing happening. He yelled, "Get off this beach, get the hell off this beach!" Of the 65 men in McIntosh's unit, 10 were killed that day. Over the next year, McIntosh's V Corps fought through Europe. He marched with the liberating forces in Paris. He fought in the Battle of the Bulge. He crossed into Germany.

In Belgium near war's end, McIntosh met Virginia Lackman, a Red Cross worker from Illinois running a recreation center. Eleven days after Germany surrendered they married in Czechoslovakia, and were back in Dade City by the end of the year. Dade City had shrunk. Some of the stores had closed. By 1947 he was back in the Army. He retired in 1966 as a full colonel, spent 10 years at Syracuse University, finishing as dean of the graduate business school, another 10 years at the University of South Florida in Tampa, retiring as associate dean of the College of Business. He now lives with an ailing Virginia back in Dade City — where, at the age of 81, he has been mayor since 1982.

McIntosh led a full, rich life. His boyhood friend, Lawrence Madill, was killed within hours of their last meeting on the shores of England. Surviving D-Day was nothing but a lottery. Charles MacIntosh has never forgotten.



and savored that city's recovering prosperity. Successful at work, he was transferred to Lakeland and then to Tallahassee. As an Army reservist, he was called to active duty in early 1941 for what was supposed to be a one-

year stint. On Thanksgiving leave in 1941 in Tampa, he optimistically bought a suit, a sports coat and three pairs of pants and shipped them to his mother in Dade City for his return to civilian life.

Instead, in early 1942 he found himself aboard the *Queen Mary*, which had been conscripted for military use, with 10,000 others. He spent much of the next two years training in Ireland and England, rising through the ranks. By the morning of June 6, 1944, McIntosh was a captain, leading a task force of 65 men. In the assembly area he ran into Lawrence Madill, a boy he had grown up with in Dade City and gone to college with in Gainesville.

"We talked about Dade City, we talked about training. You knew that



## Pat and Mary Laursen

**H**.L. "Pat" Laursen was one of seven children who grew up in Dunedin, on the coast of Pinellas County. During the Depression he was the only child not taken out of school; his brothers worked in the groves that covered the countryside for a dollar a day. Pat helped his brothers pull stone crabs (\$1 a claw) and scallops (35 cents a pint) out of the Gulf for local restaurants. He got a part-time job at the Post Office making special deliveries for 9 cents apiece. "It was a nice little town," Laursen, now 85, recalls. The streets were dirt or brick; the only paved road led to faraway Tampa.

Pat caught Mary's eye while she was visiting an aunt in Dunedin. Mary had grown up outside of Kissimmee, raised by her grandparents after her father died of gangrene from a rattlesnake bite. For extra money, they sold gardenias, holly and mistletoe to a hotel in town. But her family never came close to the fate of some of her neighbors who moved into a communal "poor farm." Mary remembers Kissimmee as "a little old cow town," literally – sometimes the livestock wandered in the streets. She married Pat in 1938.

Pat was sorting mail on the morning of Dec. 7, 1941, when the news of Pearl Harbor came over the radio. He had wanted to join the Navy after high school, but was colorblind and underweight. Now the Navy would be less choosy. Pat's father had been a staunch isolationist – the family even quit the Baptist church after he made an unpopular antiwar speech. The Laursens already had two small sons (they would have four in all), so Pat asked Mary to sign the consent papers required for a father of small children to enlist. Mary wrestled with the question and signed.

Pat joined the Seabees, the Navy's engineering corps, and Mary took him down to the train depot in the middle of the night. Pat was excited about learning something new: "Maybe repairing radios or something." But at the base, a superior asked, "Does anybody have any experience at the Post Office?" And so Pat ended up in charge of the mail. All five of his brothers joined the various services. His sister, a congressman's secretary in



Pat Laursen joined the Seabees, where his post office experience landed him a job in charge of the mail. Mary followed him to Rhode Island, Hawaii, and finally back to Florida.

Washington, was transferred to a special job out west. Only after the war did Pat learn she had been a stenographer for the Manhattan Project.

Mary took a job processing oranges for 35 cents an hour, then later sold or gave away most of the family's possessions to join Pat at his base in Rhode Island. Pat finally shipped out and ended up in Hawaii for the duration; Mary moved back to Kissimmee and remembers the day the war ended – the church bells rang and the fire whistles blew, and everybody toasted with iced tea.

They came home to a Dunedin that looked the same, but was populated with different people. Many

newcomers had arrived, and many of their friends had left, some when a machinery plant had moved to Lakeland, others moving off with their wartime spouses. Only then did Pat learn six of his friends had been killed. He spent his career at the Post Office, active in veteran's groups. They had four sons, and today, after 60 years of marriage, have 12 grandchildren and six great-grandchildren. Would these children have done as well as the World War II generation, had they had to? The Laursens say yes. "People do," Pat says, "what they have to do."

## Red and Louise Wilborn

**T**ampa in the 1930s, Louise Wilborn remembers, "was just a sweet place. It was such an age of innocence. When I was probably 11 or 12, and I was the most protected kid in the whole world, I walked from my house to the streetcar line with the money to pay the city bills. You walked to Tampa Electric, to the gas company, to the phone company.

"I remember people coming to the back door and asking for food, which was always given by my mother," she recalls. "We didn't have opulence, but Daddy always had a job. You saw a lot of other people who were suffering. People tended to be more helpful and



sharing than sometimes that I see they are today." It was a matter of pride to be able to make a meal out of practically nothing. She remembers her Sicilian grandmother grabbing a stray celery leaf out of a grocery bag to use for seasoning. The neighborhood grocery store ran charge accounts for many of the neighbors.

Louise was a sophomore at Hillsborough High School when Pearl Harbor was bombed. "The next morning, walking to school, every place had a flag. We couldn't grasp the significance of this thing that had happened overnight." Some of the older boys at school, already 18, enlisted at once. Thus began one of the grimmer rituals of high-school life: the announcement of students killed in action. At least four died before her graduation. Several of her classmates married early.

Louise's father became the neighborhood air raid warden, patrolling the streets during blackouts to make sure not even a night-light was visible. Other citizens volunteered for rooftop patrols, scanning the sky for warplanes. Rationing became a fact of life: sugar, gasoline, shoes, nylons, rubber. "I loved shoes," Louise sighs. "I remember my father gave me his shoe coupon one time so I could buy an extra pair." For high-school students, a gas coupon became a precious ticket to popularity.

Louise was courted after high school by a red-haired Army Air Corps enlisted man stationed at Avon Park

who met her at a dance. Knowing only where she worked, he wrote her a letter addressed to "Louise Carter, Tampa Electric," declaring that he was hitchhiking to Tampa for a date. Her skepticism was understandable. Tampa was crawling with servicemen. "People would date them like crazy," Louise says. "It was a different time. It was kind of exciting. They would take you dancing, and spend money, and all that stuff. There were a lot of disappointments. A lot of them told the girls they would be back, but never wrote or called."

Yet Red showed up and took Louise to the Victory Theater, which was full, so they sat on a bench in the lobby and started talking, and that was the beginning of that. They married in 1946. They had two sons. Red spent 38 years in the school system, eventually becoming director of vocational and technical education, and died at the age of 64. Today, at 72, Louise Wilborn lives in the Tampa suburb of Temple Terrace.

Looking back, Louise is struck by how strongly Tampa rebounded by the end of the war. "Families that I saw who had been struggling all during the Depression years, suddenly everybody in the family had jobs, making money that they had never made before. They were going to work in the shipyards, or places that had sprung up because of the war effort. Suddenly they had more security than they had ever had."

But Tampa had changed. "We

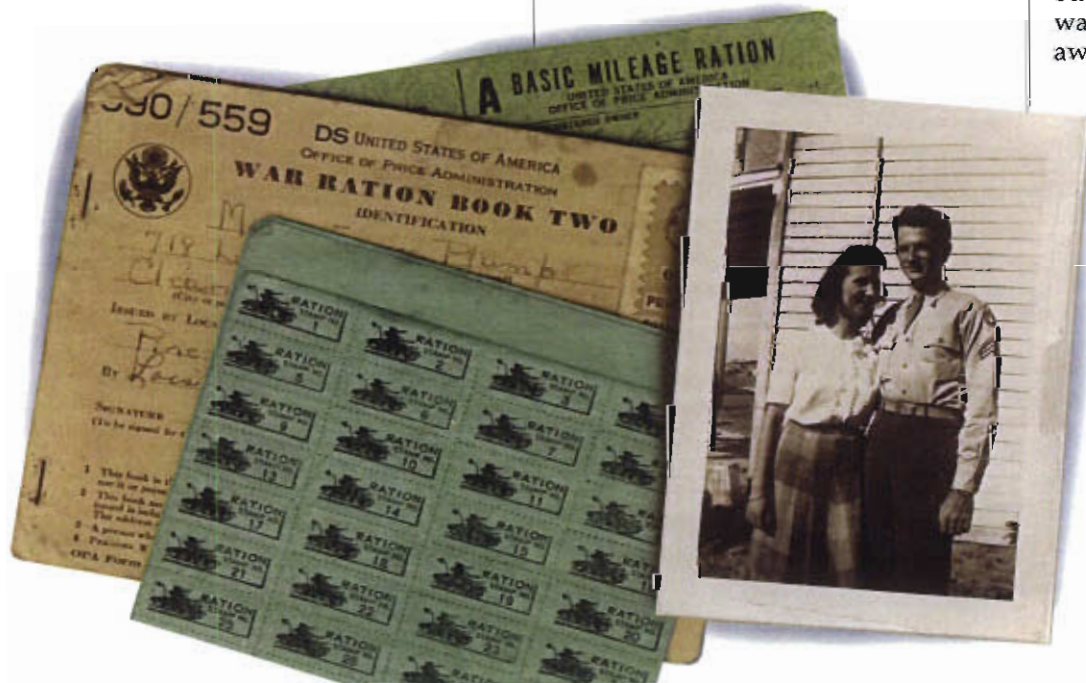
never had, after that, the kind of time that I remember as a child, where people visited," she says. "They'd sit on your porch. People would come by in the afternoon and sit in the yard and just talk. All that ended. It was just a totally different way of life. They wanted to get something done."

**M**ore than one out of five men in Florida served in uniform. By January 1, 1945, the total number of inductions was 211,593. Adding the Floridians in the Merchant Marine and various women's organizations, the number of Floridians was close to 300,000. Farm boys and mailmen, fruit pickers and phosphate miners, cigar rollers and drugstore clerks left small towns and big cities, their loved ones seeing them off at the depot.

It took less than a week for Florida to produce the nation's first war hero. He was Capt. Colin P. Kelly Jr. of Madison, a handsome, 26-year-old bomber pilot and a product of West Point. On Dec. 10, 1941, newspapers reported that Kelly, piloting a B-17 bomber in the Philippines, ordered his crew to bail out before he dove his plane into the Japanese battleship *Haruna*. Americans, eager to rally in the wake of Pearl Harbor, instantly made Kelly a folk hero, praising his "fighting Irish heart." In Madison, hundreds packed the courthouse for a tearful and patriotic tribute. In reality, the pilot never sank a Japanese vessel, but the legend of the brave Colin Kelly was born. In 1942, President Roosevelt awarded Kelly's son admission to the West Point Class of 1955.

Kelly was the first of a parade of Florida wartime notables. The *Miami Herald* ran an interview with a young hometown pilot named Paul Tibbets, who expressed concern about causing civilian

Louise Wilborn (with Red, left, during wartime) remembers when sugar, gasoline, nylons, rubber — even shoes — were rationed. Ration books like these (far left) were everyday facts of life.





## FLORIDA'S MOST DECORATED HEROES

**T**he Congressional Medal of Honor was awarded to only six Floridians, four of them posthumously, out of 441 given out during World War II:

★ **Robert Edward Femoyer**, 23, of Jacksonville, a second lieutenant in the Army Air Corps, who in his dying agony refused morphine to remain clear-headed while guiding his plane through enemy flak to safety.

★ **Alexander Ramsey "Sandy" Nininger, Jr.**, 23, of Fort Lauderdale, a first lieutenant in the U.S. Army, awarded the first Medal of Honor of the war. Volunteering to help another company under heavy fire near Abucay, Bataan, in the Phillipine Islands, Nininger repeatedly charged enemy positions with rifle and grenades, despite being wounded three times in the heavy hand-to-hand



"Sandy" Nininger, Jr.

combat. When they found his body later that day, Jan. 12, 1942, he was surrounded by dead enemy bodies.

★ **David McCampbell**, 34, of West Palm Beach, a Navy fighter pilot and air group commander who shot down 34 Japanese aircraft, the top ace to survive the war. His exploits included taking on an enemy force of 60 planes, with only one other fighter,



David McCampbell

shooting down nine and so disorganizing the enemy that it turned back. He retired from the Navy and settled in Eustis.

★ **Thomas B. McGuire Jr.**, 24, of Sebring, a major in the U.S. Army Air Corps, the second-highest-scoring fighter ace of the war with 38 kills. In an air battle on Christmas Day of 1944, McGuire repeatedly flew to the assistance of his comrades, shooting down three enemy planes before his guns jammed – then stayed in the fight, and forced an enemy plane into his wingman's line of fire. He was killed two weeks later.

★ **Robert Miller McTureous, Jr.**, 21, of Altoona, a private in the U.S. Marine Corps, filled his shirt and pockets with hand grenades



and single-handedly charged Japanese-occupied caves on Okinawa on June 7, 1945, to draw enemy machine-gun fire away from stretcher-bearers. He died of his wounds four days later. A park in Altoona was dedicated in his memory.

★ **James H. Mills**, 21, of Fort Meade, an Army private, was in his first day of combat on May 24, 1944, when he launched a one-man assault against German forces as the Allies broke out of the Anzio Beachhead. Mills charged enemy machine-gun nests, firing his M-1 from the hip to draw enemy fire away from his platoon. Several startled Germans surrendered.

In an amazing sequence, he killed four and captured 31. He survived the war and retired to Melrose – only to be murdered in a robbery in 1973.

– Howard Troxler







Capt. Colin P. Kelley

casualties. Tibbets later piloted the airplane that bombed Hiroshima. James A. Van Fleet, football coach at the University of Florida in the 1920s, led troops ashore at D-Day as a colonel, rose rapidly to the rank of two-star general, and spearheaded the important seizure of the Remagen bridgehead as Allied troops crossed into Germany in March 1945. (Van Fleet later commanded the Eighth Army in Korea.)

A former UF football player, Lt. Forest K. Ferguson, won the Silver Star at Normandy. So did Private Dennis D. Adams of Panama City. Five Floridians – from Bowling Green, Cross City, Dinsmore, Webster and Tarpon Springs – were in a battalion that landed at Omaha Beach and saw some of the toughest fighting on D-Day. Every member of the battalion was awarded the Bronze Star. Sgt. Ernest I. “Boots” Thomas of Monticello was the center soldier in the first photograph of the U.S. flag being raised on Iwo Jima, four hours before the famous AP shot. He was killed a week later.

**L**ouise Wilborn’s postwar memory that “people wanted to get something done” is an apt description. Florida’s wartime generation came home eager to make up for lost time. With tuition and books paid under the GI Bill, and an extra allowance for being married, vets jammed Florida’s schools. The Florida State College for Women in Tallahassee became Florida

State University in 1947. Enrollment in the state’s public universities tripled between 1945 and 1950. The GI Bill, allowing veterans to buy a home with no money down, led to an unprecedented boom in housing construction. Many grateful cities donated lots. By 1950, an amazing 40 percent of Florida’s housing stock was less than 10 years old.

Florida inherited a network of military bases and highways. Between the growing Cold War defense industry, and the conversion of bases to airports, hospitals and prisons (and in the case of Sebring, even a race track) fears of demobilization were soon allayed. One of the most important postwar events was the military’s acquisition of a sparsely populated area along the Atlantic coast for a missile proving ground named Cape Canaveral.

Postwar victory seemed at hand over the mosquito with a chemical that had first been applied in the jungles of the South Pacific called DDT. Advances in air-conditioning made Florida summers more bearable than ever. Transportation and technology accelerated the urbanization of Florida. Several smaller counties experienced sharp drops between 1940 and

1950: Dixie County, 44 percent; Gilchrist, 18 percent; Glades, 20 percent; Lafayette, 22 percent. The percentage of Floridians living in urban areas, the Census Bureau found, rose from 29 percent to 46 percent.

But perhaps the greatest legacy of World War II was that it exposed Florida to the vast cross-pollination of millions who passed through the state. In a Gallup Poll at the end of the war, for the first time, Americans ranked Florida as the place they would most like to live if they moved. They came to the state to sun themselves, to play, and ultimately to live. The postwar explosion had begun.

Miami writer Philip Wylie, in a prescient article in the *Miami Herald* at war’s end, wrote: “There will be two courses open to us, the citizens, businessmen and winter residents: We can seize the gigantic opportunities at hand and develop this unique region into a new heart of the new world – or we can go on being a tropical Coney Island.”

Florida is still trying to answer Wylie’s challenge. But the fact that this future came about at all is testament to a generation that lived through the war years. ☆

*Perhaps the greatest legacy of World War II was that it exposed Florida to the vast cross-pollination of millions who passed through the state.*



The GI Bill, allowing veterans to buy a home with no money down, fueled Florida’s housing boom.



# Dear Honey,

## The wartime life and letters of Majorie Kinnan Rawlings

By Betty Jean Steinshouer

**D**ecember 7, 1941: The elegant Castle Warden Hotel opened for business in St. Augustine. Its proprietor was Norton Baskin, also known in some circles as "Mr. Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings," for he had married the Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *The Yearling* on October 27, 1941. One of the conditions of their marriage was that he would open his own business and be his own man. That day of infamy, when the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor, the Baskins little knew how much their lives, the Castle Warden, and indeed their beloved Florida would be affected by the war raging abroad. Nor could they know the global impact they would have, through their devotion to each other, to their country and community, and to their friends around the world.

Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings – she would continue to use her public name – knew many people already involved in the war. Just in the small circle of her fellow novelists published by Scribner's, the Hemingways were flying off in different directions as war correspondents, Marcia Davenport was involved in the Czech resistance, and Sigrid Undset had Nazi officers living in her house in Oslo. In Cross Creek, Rawlings wrote to her new husband in St. Augustine, "Twelve bi-motored bombers, several towing gliders, just flew so low over the house, they almost touched the pecan trees across the road. Spooky."

If there was no escaping the reality of war at the Creek, Rawlings was even more aware of it when she came to Crescent Beach, where she and Norton had an ocean cottage. She wrote to

Virginia novelist Ellen Glasgow on April 14, 1942, describing "big tankers sliding as close as they dare to the shore, to evade the submarines." Rawlings confided to Glasgow, "They are hellish times, and take one back to an old Miltonian sense of Good and Evil in conflict."

The Baskins joined neighbors in becoming enemy plane spotters, taking shifts for two hours a day at an observation post set up not far from their beach house. The Baskins also aided the war effort in the campaigns for War Bonds. Norton hosted Hollywood starlet Veronica Lake at the Castle Warden, chivalrously carrying her fifteen pieces of luggage and reporting to his wife that Miss Lake sold \$85,000 worth – "not bad for St. Augustine." Rawlings herself bought \$25,000 worth of War Bonds with her first earnings from *Cross Creek*.

The war began to dominate Marjorie's life more and more. The filming of *The Yearling* had to be abandoned because the film crew was drafted and the resources for the making of movies were being diverted to the war effort.

The war grew worse. Marjorie wrote to her confidante and editor, Maxwell Perkins, "This part of the coast has become practically a military zone, and now passes are necessary to use the ocean road that leads to the cottage. I have black-out shades, and it is rather creepy alone here at night, with no traffic on beach or highway, convoys going by, bombers overhead, and the thought of saboteurs who land on isolated beaches.... We hear mysterious explosions out at sea, and never know the cause."

No one knew fully what it meant for Marjorie Rawlings Baskin when her hus-

band, at age 41, announced that he had to find a way to get into the war overseas. After the breakup of her marriage to Charles Rawlings in 1931, she had waited a long time to find someone with whom to share her life. Being with Norton Baskin, she said, was like coming into harbor after a long storm.

Marjorie wrote to Norton as he was enlisting that she now understood the pride of all women in male heroism and duty to country – not that she approved of it – but she understood it. "Women's pride in their men being brave is a strange thing – prehistoric, somehow – full of nobility – and as much to blame for the continuance of war as any other factor. I am terribly proud of you for what you have done, even while rebelling against it with every fibre...."

Norton Baskin signed up with the American Field Service, an American volunteer ambulance service that operated under British officers. Friends rallied 'round when they heard that Marjorie had a "damn hero, Hemingway-style" on her hands. Margaret Mitchell, author of *Gone with the Wind*, pointed out to Marjorie that the AFS had a high calling and had done excellent work in World War I. Rawlings wrote to her close friend, publisher Norman Berg, that, "They work in the front lines and in the last war their casualties were twice the ratio of regular army casualties.... But I wouldn't stop him if I could – it is what he wants to do, and a man has to make his own decisions about things like that.... Am being a good sport now, but shall quietly collapse after he goes!" Norton sailed on a troop ship out of New York Harbor on July 5, 1943.

*Betty Jean Steinshouer is an actress and writer whose passions include Willa Cather, Gertrude Stein and Laura Ingalls Wilder.*





UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA, SPECIAL COLLECTIONS DEPARTMENT

Fashionably attired by Abercrombie & Fitch, Norton Baskin, Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings, and dog Pat pose for a magazine, 1940 (above). Rawlings received Baskin's letters months after they were written (right).

Dear Honey -  
 You have been so wonderful about writing although in several letters I could tell you did not feel like it. How I hope that Ruby showed up and that she proves to be good for you. I think she is a good girl but hardly what you would call dependable.  
 Va). Norton Baskin  
 American Field Service  
 APO 885 1/2 Postmaster  
 New York City -  
 Sunday 9/4/43

Dear Honey:

I stopped at the Castle yesterday and found a letter from Ruth to you that had just had jumbled the numbers and sent it to me to send it on to you or not, as it might be but decided I'd enclose it, as after all I had apparently never been sealed. Jean Dell, I took the liberty of reading it would be, and interesting, but I was war and told Ruthie not to spend a lot of time on it. I decided it would be better if there had been some expression of how I might have a certain comfort for my painful. Hope I did right in how I was not suspicious that made me a privacy of mail. I was very close to reading it, but the contents made me feel I had done wrong. I drove into town in time to leave the laundry, as the laundryman. Fortunately made the necessary stop and I had left

We have been here almost a week and it is not half bad. The village boasts several movies but the pictures are not the latest - However "The Minister" is showing today - Was interested in your comments on the movie of Hemingway book. I honestly don't see how Ingrid could possibly be that bad. Must have been poor handling.

Yesterday we went to the races. There is a lovely track here - not quite up to standards but very pretty and colorful. Beautiful flowers and the color of the nation dress is really amazing

Norton's absence was exacerbated by the fact that Marjorie had no idea where he was headed - India, the Middle East, anywhere the British army was. After weeks of uncertainty, Marjorie finally celebrated her August 8 birthday on September 3, when a telegram arrived from Norton, stating that he had reached his destination. She had already begun her faithful vigil of writing daily letters to him. Their letters to each other often began "Dear Honey," and contained as much lightheartedness as they could muster.


Marjorie sent him the menus of dinners she made, news of the Creek and Castle Warden, and gossip about their friend Margaret Mitchell and other celebrities. "Rita Hayworth and Orson Welles got married! With her beauty and his brains - they'll fight like hell! Your friend Veronica Lake was doing a picture, seven months pregnant, had a fall, the child, a boy, was born prematurely and died in a few days. And Bette Davis' husband fell in the street and died shortly after. Think that brings your favorites up to date."

Norton's letters, usually arriving months after they were written, bore the mark of the censors whose job it was to make sure they did not give away the Allies' location or activities. Marjorie had asked Norton to describe the

flora and fauna of his surroundings. Sometimes he did this so well that the censors blacked out his descriptions for fear the enemy would distinguish the setting. One of the last letters on file from Norton's war duty, dated November 27, 1943, shows that his sense of humor was intact. He writes "Dear Dora," (addressing MKR's Jersey cow), "I feel like one of the foolish little pigs, living in huts made of mud, bamboo, and straw, but there ARE places of safety to run for if anybody comes huffing and puffing."

Christmas 1943 was hard for both the Baskins. MKR was horrified to learn that Norton had not received a single one of his packages, and "was in a jungle full of Japs and tigers, had been living for days on bully beef and tea, and was sleeping on the ground in a small tent without lights or a seat to sit on." She was relieved to learn that British sol-





*Vacations should be more than  
just beaches and umbrella drinks.*

While there's nothing wrong with a little rest and relaxation (we should know – we invented the sport), there's also nothing wrong with expanding your horizons. So pack up your sandals – and your curiosity – and head down to the Florida Keys.

Here, your thoughts will find endless ways to be provoked. From the Theatre Festival, Hemingway Days and the Mel Fisher Maritime Museum in Key West to the Historic Seacraft Race and Island Art Fair in the Lower Keys. From the Florida Keys Renaissance Faire

and Sombrero Cup Regatta in Marathon to the Indian Key Festival in Islamorada and the Island Jubilee in Key Largo. Of course, what would a cultural mecca like this be without some equally enlightening fishing and diving?

For reservations and information on cultural events, call 1-800-FLA-KEYS. Or visit our web site at [www.fl-keys.com](http://www.fl-keys.com). Because while the Florida Keys are a great place to unwind, we'd like you to get to know our deeper side.

**THE FLORIDA KEYS & KEY WEST**  
*Come as you are*



diers had invited him to Christmas dinner. He was glad to know that she was distracted from her loneliness by a surprise visit from black novelist Zora Neale Hurston, who drove over from Daytona when she got a depressed-sounding letter from Marjorie.

Perhaps because it made her feel closer to Norton, Marjorie kept up a massive correspondence with the many soldiers who wrote to her of their appreciation for *The Yearling* and *Cross Creek*, especially for her descriptions of food. One commanding officer wrote to Rawlings that *Cross Creek* should be banned in the military because it made the boys so hungry for home cooking. The chapter called "Our Daily Bread" brought such a response that Max Perkins decided that Marjorie should write a cookbook, the genesis of *Cross Creek Cookery*.

Scribner's had sold 52,863 copies of *Cross Creek* and 50,555 copies of *The Yearling* to the Armed Forces by early 1944. Marjorie was inundated with letters from soldiers. She responded to them all, and some became regular correspondents. One such letter was from a former prisoner of war who had spent three and a half years as a "guest" of the Japanese and had received copies of both *The Yearling* and *Cross Creek* from the Red Cross. He credited Rawlings' writing with greatly increasing his determination to survive anything that the Japanese military could "dish out" just to get back and enjoy the American way of life.

While Marjorie was seeing after the lives of men she had never met, her own personal hero was in India, getting ready to risk his life in the most immediate action he had seen yet – the battle for Burma. In early April 1944, she spent two tortured weeks, not knowing if Norton was dead or alive, having only sparse reports of harrowing battles. Marjorie finally heard directly from Norton, and he admitted to being one of the AFS men who drove his ambulance through heavy fire to an isolated forward British post. "He got out by the skin of his teeth," she said, "with his ambulance loaded to the roof, and lost all his personal belongings."

It seemed harder and harder for Marjorie to carry on alone, especially after a fire at the Castle Warden in late April 1944, in which two women were



ST. AUGUSTINE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The St. Augustine winter home of a Standard Oil Company magnate, the Castle Warden was constructed of poured concrete in the 1880s. Norton Baskin acquired the structure and ran it as the Castle Warden Hotel. In 1950, Ripley's Believe It or Not converted it into a museum.

killed. She wrote to Ellen Glasgow on May 24, 1944: "The burden of the war is inescapable, I think, and a great pressure from it seems to weigh on one whatever else one is battling, mental or physical."

Her spirits brightened when Norton joked around in his letters, making light of the danger he was in and threatening to ask for a tourniquet if his dysentery did not stop. But no amount of humor would make Norton better, for he had contracted amoebic dysentery and grew more and more ill. The AFS notified Marjorie that he was critically ill in a Calcutta hospital. Finally, Marjorie's fame and connections could help her Dear Honey. She called on her contacts in Washington (a General's wife as well as Mrs. Roosevelt) and within a few hours the Commander of the China-Burma-India Theatre had arranged immediate plane priority for Norton.

Norton arrived in Miami on October 28, 1944, by hospital plane and immediately flew to New York for advanced medical treatment. Marjorie nursed him there until nearly Christmas, when he was well enough to travel home to Florida. Dear Honey was home and well on his way to recovery, but the war endured. At least two of Marjorie's military pen pals were killed in action. She received letters from their mothers, telling her what it had meant to their sons to have Marjorie write to them so faithfully.

Marjorie's *Cross Creek* friend Dessie made it back safely from her tour in the Women's Army Corps and came to visit with five other WACs in tow. Marjorie described them as "a tough bunch of pistol-packin' Mamas." She and Dessie began to plan a trip to Alaska after Dessie's discharge in 1946. They never

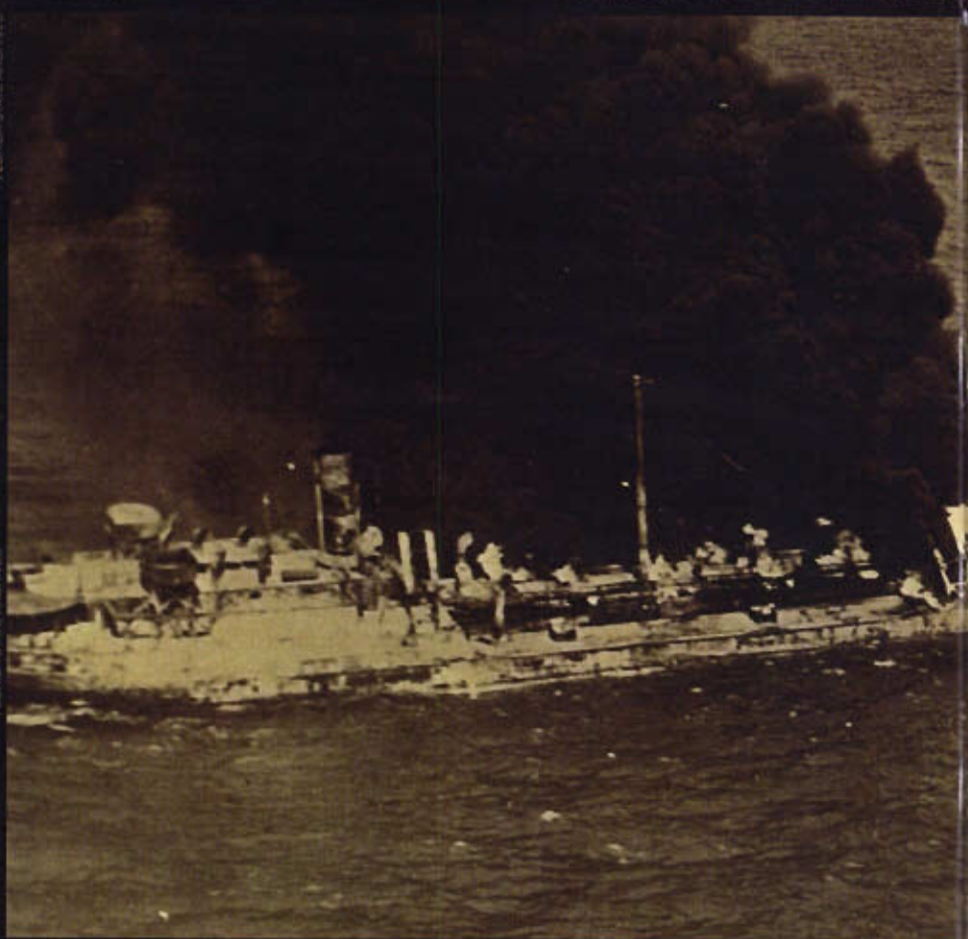
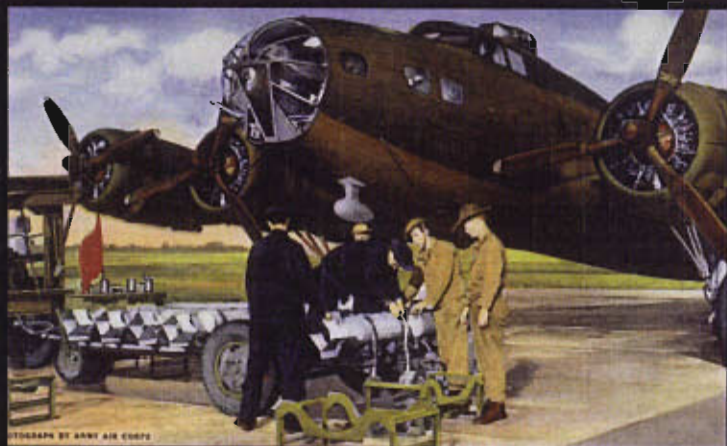
made the trip. Marjorie had been accused of libel by a neighbor she had written about in *Cross Creek* and the loss of the suit in 1946 was a painful blow. The very next year she lost her beloved editor and friend, Maxwell Perkins. The book she had tried to write during the war, *The Sojourner*, was not published until 1952.

Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings and *Cross Creek* would make one final contribution to the war's survivors in 1946, when she gave the old farmhouse over for the Christmas holiday to her friend novelist-critic Marcia Davenport and the embattled Czech Prime Minister, Jan Mazaryk. Mazaryk, who had fought long and hard for his country's freedom, found solace at the Creek. He wrote of finding "a silent healing, the result of the rough and tough creation of that mysterious land called Central Florida." Tragically, Mazaryk soon became a martyr to Czech freedom.

Although their joy at the war's final end was tempered by sadness, World War II was good for the Baskins in a business sense. Norton's hotel prospered long enough for him to sell it at a profit in 1946, and Marjorie's books sold exceedingly well and made her one of the decade's most popular novelists. *Cross Creek*, especially, brought balm to the wounded in body and spirit. A soldier from Marshall, Texas, Ernest Powell, expressed what the book meant in a poem he sent to its author during the war:

"Beauty touches many things on earth –  
A tree, a rose, a child, a limpid brook;  
And she bestows on mortals hope and mirth –  
Beauty's fingerprints are on this book." ☆





(Clockwise from upper left) Army Air Corps postcard of Flying Fortress bomber at MacDill AFB, Tampa; Serviceman on a stroll along Duval St., Key West; Naval base under construction, Key West, 1941; Tanker burning off Haba Sound after being torpedoed by a German U-Boat, 1942; Basic training, Miami Beach; P-38s on the tarmac, Page Field, Ft. Myers; WAVES on parade in Fort Lauderdale, 1944; Chow line, Camp Gordon Johnston, 1943.







# FORTRESS FLORIDA

The war brought dramatic changes to all Florida communities. Here's what life was like in three of them.

## Key West

### *A sleepy fishing village turns frantic*

**T**he frame houses with their narrow yards, light coming from the shuttered windows; the unpaved alleys, with their double rows of houses; Conch town, where all was starched, well-shuttered...lighted Cuban bolito houses, shacks whose only romance was their names...the girls in the doorway, the mechanical piano going, and a sailor sitting in the street....

— To Have and Have Not

That's how Key West resident Ernest Hemingway described his town in the late 1930s — a sleepy, shuttered fishing village with “five beer joints, three ice cream parlors, the five poor and the one good restaurant....”

Merili McCoy, who currently serves as a city commissioner, also recalled that before the war “Key West

was very, very quiet.” Downtown was so deserted, she said, that you could play football on downtown main street without fear of injury.

But that quickly changed in 1939, when President Franklin D. Roosevelt, realizing that war was inevitable, ordered a buildup of the island's naval station. The government began condemning and purchasing land all over Key West and the nearby island of Boca Chica. Land belonging to the military soared from 50 to 3,200 acres. The old railroad yard of the Florida East Coast Railway, blown out of business by the hurricane of 1935, became Navy docks and a housing project.

Like most other island dwellers, Key Westers depended on rainwater funneled from rooftops to storage cisterns, a limited and undependable resource. During World War I, the Navy had drawn plans for a 130-mile pipeline from the mainland, but it was never built. With war again looming, the old plans were dusted off and Congress approved \$2 million to build an 18-inch pipeline from Florida City.



When the war did come, military activity on the island became frantic. Anti-aircraft guns were hastily installed along the southern side from East Martello Tower near the civilian airport to the pre-Civil War Fort Taylor. The city aquarium, built by the Works Progress Administration only a few years earlier, became a rifle range. A fire bell in the city cemetery rang at 9 p.m. every night to announce a curfew. Air raid drills and blackouts became routine.

The Navy imposed restrictions on fishermen and tightened port security.

Fishing was allowed only in the Gulf of Mexico, and nighttime fishing was prohibited. Boats were banned within one mile of the Overseas Highway. Navy ships anchored at the harbor entrance and challenged all incoming vessels. Passwords and color-coded flags for different days of the week identified local fishermen.

Merili McCoy's father, Coast Guard Commander Carl Hilton, was captain of the port. Concerned about spies working the waterfront, he asked a local reservist to check a list to identify fishermen working from Key West. The reservist spotted only a few names he recognized. Next day, Hilton showed him pictures to go with the names and the reservist knew them all – but by their Conch nicknames such as "Copper Lips," "Frozen Lilly," and "Bring Back My Hammer."

Workers were imported from the mainland to make up for the island's labor shortage. In January 1942, civilian employment was 1,240 with a monthly payroll of \$210,000. By 1945 there were 3,370 employees and a monthly payroll of \$870,000.

Tiny Key West began bulging at the seams with people, which produced a desperate housing shortage. Single-family Conch houses were converted to two or three units. The Navy took over the Casa Marina, a Flagler System hotel, to house commissioned officers, their wives and dependents. The Casa Marina's normal occupancy was 200 persons, but during wartime close to 300 officers, plus their family members, stayed at the hotel daily. Not surprisingly, life in downtown Key West changed with the times. A Shore Patrol report suggested a much wilder reality: "Duval Street is a wide open honky-tonk area studded with



NATIONAL ARCHIVES

### Hitler's Soldiers in the Sunshine State

**T**hey were Uncle Sam's smiling workers and they looked like all-American boys. There were at least 10,000 of them, deployed in 25 Florida camps between 1942 and 1946. They were also members of the Wehrmacht, Hitler's armed forces.

These POWs were made to labor on military reservations or leased to private agriculture. Under the Geneva Convention, they were fed, housed, and clothed at the standards enjoyed by American stateside troops. Many of them considered their American captivity a lucky break, certainly safer than life in the war zone or the bombed cities where their relatives lived back home. Only 33 attempted to escape. By spring 1946, most of the POWs had been repatriated to Europe. There, with considerable justice, some found themselves turned over to Britain or France, spending another year or more rebuilding former enemy territories that they had helped to devastate.

— Robert D. Billinger, Jr., professor of history at Wingate University, is the author of *Hitler's Soldiers in the Sunshine State* (University Press of Florida).



German POWs relax in their Camp Blanding barracks, the walls festooned with pin-ups from *Screen* magazine (above). A German POW polishes his guitar outside the barracks at Telogia, located in today's Apalachicola National Forest. (below).



bars and so-called night clubs of fairly tawdry character." Indeed, during the early stages of the war, Key West had one of the highest venereal disease rates in the Seventh Naval District. But a crackdown on prostitution and diligent follow-up of VD cases helped reduce those numbers.

Off shore, there were far more serious goings on. German submarines began torpedoing ships along the Florida coast in 1942. During that year, U-boats hit 107 ships, including nine in the vicinity of Key West. Commissioner McCoy recently recalled walking along the beach and stepping in gobs of tar. "It came from the German submarines sinking our ships."

In addition to becoming a major convoy staging area, Key West served as a ship repair and maintenance facility. One to two hundred ships of various sizes visited the port at any given time. Between December 7, 1941, and V-J Day in 1945, an estimated 14,000 ships logged into Key West waters, including 6,000 merchant ships joining convoys.

Arthur Valladares, who still runs the family bookstore on Duval Street, remembered looking out on the horizon toward the reef and seeing the outline of ships against the sky. "They were anchored beyond the reef waiting to form a convoy," he said. "I didn't know until days later when I read in the newspaper that those ships were part of the invasion of Africa."

By June 1943, the threat of war had diminished so that the Navy permitted fishing both day and night in Florida Bay, far from the shipping lanes in the Florida Straits. And in late 1944, the offshore mine fields were removed, although minesweepers worked for months afterwards to clear derelict mines from the channels.

At the end of the war, Key West was no longer the remote fishing village of Hemingway's fiction. The economic base had changed from fishing and tourism to a reliance on military payroll — a situation that would remain for years to come. As Commissioner Merili McCoy remembered postwar Key West, "The economy woke up after a long and hungry sleep."

— Wright Langley

## Fort Lauderdale

### Creating a wartime boom

**F**ort Lauderdale, a city of fewer than 20,000 residents in 1941, was riding a wave of prosperity built around a flourishing tourist trade and a reviving construction industry. New stores and new automobiles were appearing again along the city's streets. As winter approached, hoteliers and restaurateurs looked forward to a promising tourist season.

As soon as people learned of the Japanese bombing at Pearl Harbor, however, the city's direction changed instantly. Within hours of the surprise Japanese attack, the Navy imposed a blanket of security over Port Everglades and Fort Lauderdale. The *Fort Lauderdale Daily News* reported the following day that residents were at first stunned by the news of Pearl Harbor, but quickly recovered. "Everywhere," the newspaper observed, "there seems to exist an attitude of I want to do what I can." Owner-publisher Robert H. Gore promised that "Japan will regret yesterday."

The city mobilized for civil defense. Airplane spotters stood atop the city's tallest buildings to search the skies for enemy airplanes. Block captains patrolled their neighborhoods each night, ensuring that sheets covered windows and that vehicle headlights had the top halves painted black. The Coast Guard built watchtowers along the coast and constructed barbed wire fences to restrict beach access to only those with special secu-

rity passes.

The Chamber of Commerce surveyed the assets of Fort Lauderdale and came away with a sanguine, but accurate, forecast. The city's climate, flat terrain, and proximity to the ocean made it ideal for military aviation, while its hotels and tourist apartments could easily accommodate members of the armed forces. Moreover, Port Everglades was close to sources of raw materials for war use, and its huge oil storage capacity could provide an ample source of power for industries that used the facility. Activities at the port meshed closely with those at the Fort Lauderdale Naval Air Station, located at the vastly expanded Merle L. Fogg Airport.

Thousands of pilots and crew members trained there, including future President George Bush who was stationed at the base for three months in 1943. Nearly five decades later, President Bush recalled, "I went off to Fort Lauderdale to learn to fly. Training up and down the East Coast... dropping dummy bombs and torpedoes in Lake Okeechobee...Miami. I saw 'em all. I had an ensign's stripe and an admiral's confidence. I was a Navy pilot."

The Chamber of Commerce's efforts to bring war-related industry to the area met with noteworthy success. Local businesses produced large orders of boats, shells, and radio and electronic equipment under demanding deadlines. Agriculture also contributed significantly to the war effort. Farms and groves on the periphery of Fort Lauderdale yielded rich harvests of beans, tomatoes, and oranges for marmalade, all of which were shipped north by rail. Although labor short-



George Herbert Walker Bush, standing in back row, second from right, July 1943. Fresh from Yale, Bush learned to fly TBF Avenger torpedo bombers at the Fort Lauderdale Naval Air Station.

GEORGE BUSH LIBRARY



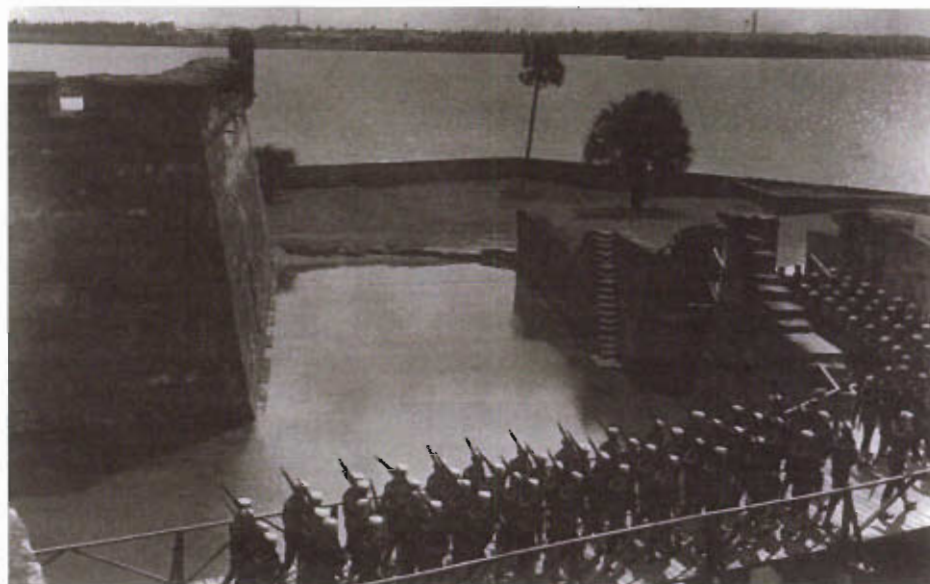
ages plagued local agriculture and industries, women stepped up to fill the unfamiliar jobs that servicemen left behind. Hundreds of thousands of servicemen passing through Fort Lauderdale's new military bases soon filled the city's empty tourist hotels and apartments. Military personnel and the families and friends who visited them became Fort Lauderdale's "new" tourists, enabling the city to maintain the vestiges of its familiar tourist economy. The city also continued to promote tourism to civilians throughout the war.

Ten months after news of the D-Day invasion, the city's police department broadcast the news of V-E Day (Victory in Europe) with a siren that emitted four lusty blasts. "Beyond that victory signal," the *Fort Lauderdale Daily News* noted, "there was little expression of jubilation anywhere in the city as the joy was tempered by prayerful thanksgiving in the hearts of the citizens."

By contrast, Victory in Japan Day, on August 14, 1945, unleashed an orgy of celebration. The *Daily News* pronounced "City a Bedlam as Happy Crowds Celebrate Victory over Nipponese." Citizens jammed downtown for "the most outstanding celebration in the history of the city." The V-J Day celebration drew "almost every automobile within a radius of ten miles of the city...into the downtown area," and vehicles stored in garages since shortly after the war began appeared miraculously on the streets. Soon after, "hundreds of people swarmed behind flags, torches, and a hastily assembled American Legion band to march through the business section of the city for hours before they staggered homeward completely exhausted."

The city had well earned its raucous celebration and the exhaustion that followed. Fort Lauderdale had experienced World War II close-up, from frightening offshore submarine warfare to crowds of uniformed soldiers and sailors filling its streets to bewildering economic dislocations. All this made the pleasant small town of pre-war days seem just a charming memory.

— Paul S. George



Servicemen drill at the Castillo de San Marcos, St. Augustine, during WW II

## St. Augustine Returning to its raucous roots

The nation's oldest city went to war with everyone else on December 7, 1941, when the local *St. Augustine Evening Record* put out an Extra! edition headlined in what staffers called the "second coming" three-inch typeface. But, in one sense, the headlines confirmed what everyone already knew: St. Augustine, inundated by hundreds of servicemen from the nearby Jacksonville Naval Air Station and the Army's Camp Blanding, had felt at war throughout 1941.

The numbers of visiting sailors and soldiers increased as NAS Jax and its auxiliary bases at Mayport and Green Cove Springs grew rapidly in 1942. The Navy pilots even used St. Augustine's small airport as a training field. Camp Blanding at Starke, home to 90,000 recruits and draftees, was suddenly Florida's fourth largest city. Each weekend, over a thousand soldiers and sailors visited St. Augustine, housed in the new Army Recreational Camp, a 500-tent city off San Marco Avenue between the Civic Center and Francis Field.

In some ways, St. Augustine had returned to its roots as the disorderly garrison town of Spanish and British

colonial times. On weekends, crowds of loud, alcohol-laced servicemen swaggered through the narrow streets. The Alhambra Hotel bar, on the corner of King and Granada Streets, was particularly noted for its spectacular displays of fisticuffs that ended with drunken brawlers stumbling through swinging doors into the sedate lobby. The M.P.s and Shore Patrol were in constant motion breaking up fights and throwing "fallen women" out of hotel rooms. Two houses of prostitution in west St. Augustine, one of them listed in the phone book under "seamstress," operated openly. Most servicemen who took advantage of their ministrations went immediately afterwards to the Florida East Coast Hospital on King and Malaga Streets to receive prophylactic injections.

The men of the Texas National Guard 36th Infantry Division from Camp Blanding earned reputations as the rowdiest and roughest carousers of all. In Glick's Famous Bar at 52 Cathedral Place they fed nickel after nickel into the jukebox to hear "Deep in the Heart of Texas." Patrons were expected to stand at attention while it played, even if a Texas patriot had to take the recalcitrant by the collar and make him stand. "God help the Germans if those guys were ever sent to Europe," was the widely held view of folks in the city. But on January 20-22, 1943, elements of the 36th were mauled by the Germans while trying



to cross the Rapido River in Italy, a defeat still bitterly remembered in Texas.

Like other Florida cities, St. Augustine suffered an almost total collapse of the tourist trade, which then, as now, accounted for 80 percent of the city's income, and the free-spending servicemen could not make up for that. With the advent of wartime gas and tire rationing, hotels, restaurants, attractions, and the city's other businesses were threatened with bankruptcy. Appeals for help to Senator Claude Pepper and Representative Joe Hendricks in Washington were unavailing. Then, an unlikely savior intervened in the person of Joseph P. Hurley, the newly installed Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of St. Augustine. Prior to assuming that post, Bishop Hurley had served as a papal diplomat, most recently as head of the American desk at the Vatican's Secretariat of State. In that capacity he had done numerous favors for Sumner Welles, American Undersecretary of State. Hurley now decided to call in some chits, and on June 3, 1942, he wrote a letter to Welles that began: "The City of St. Augustine is faced with a grave economic situation as the result of the war. I am informed by members of the local Chamber of Commerce that virtually every independent business in town is headed for collapse unless immediate relief is forthcoming."

Welles immediately arranged interviews for Hurley with various top brass in the armed services, which resulted in the U.S. Coast Guard opening a major training center in the city. By August the service had leased the Ponce de Leon Hotel, the enormous showpiece built by Henry Flagler in 1888, and three smaller hotels on the bay, the Monson, the Bennett, and the Ocean View. Soon, 2,500 Coast Guardsmen, joined later by women auxiliary SPARS, were ensconced in their new billets, taking training courses and spreading dollars throughout the community.

St. Augustine's citizens received more than an economic boost from the Coast Guard. Many of its trainees had been professional entertainers, musicians, singers, acrobats, and magicians. Every Friday night they staged a big band variety show at the

Lyceum, events that many St. Augustine seniors remember as "our Broadway days." During a 1944 hurricane, large, ten-oar Coast Guard lifeboats were seen rowing down Bay and St. George Streets.

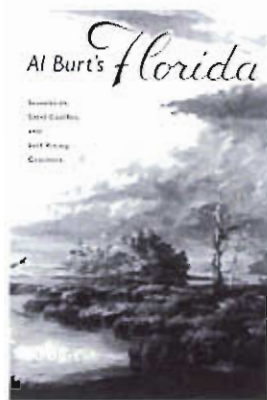
In its nearly four centuries, St. Augustine had survived more than its share of wars, storms, and sieges. Thanks to the Coast Guard, it survived World War II as well.

—Michael Gannon

*Wright Langley, publisher of Langley Press, is the co-author of Key West and the Spanish-American War. Paul S. George has devoted a lifetime chronicling Miami, where he is a professor of history at Miami-Dade Community College. Michael Gannon, Distinguished Service Professor Emeritus of History at the University of Florida, has enriched the study of Florida history with his scholarship.*

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ON THE HOME FRONT

# THE SKIRTED SOLDIERS

How the WACs came to Daytona Beach and saved the town.

By Gordon Patterson

In the first year of the war, as gas rationing kept tourists at home, Daytona Beach's economy went into a swoon and the city teetered on the edge of insolvency. Once-bustling hotels and restaurants stood empty at peak season. "It was like a water faucet being cut off," recalled Daytona Beach car dealer Saxton Lloyd. And bringing the reality of war frighteningly close to the city's famous beaches, German U-boats, like blood-thirsty sharks, prowled just off-shore in the Atlantic. "It was," recalled Lloyd, "a dreadful, depressing time."

Then, in 1942, relief came from an unexpected source when the recently-created Women's Auxiliary Army Corps, or the WACs, established a training facility in Daytona Beach. Between October 1942 and March 1944, more than 20,000 WAC recruits passed through town, and their modest monthly paychecks helped pump nearly \$5 million a month into Daytona Beach's depressed economy.

How the War Department in Washington came to choose Daytona Beach as a WAC training site is

the story of political pressure from a highly unusual source being applied to the highest level of government, the White House. It began when the first WAC training facility at Fort Des Moines, Iowa, quickly proved inadequate for the growing number of recruits, and rumors circulated that Daytona Beach was being considered for a second base.

Lloyd, who ran Daytona Beach Motor Co., said a group of prominent local businessmen dispatched him to Washington to win Senator Claude Pepper's support for the training facility. Pepper arranged for Lloyd to meet with a handful of military leaders, but the meetings proved inconclusive and he returned to Daytona Beach convinced that he had failed in his mission.

Even as Lloyd found frustration in the Pentagon, another behind the scenes campaign was being launched that would eventually win the day. This effort involved Mary Bethune, the black educator who established the Daytona Beach Literary and Industrial School for Training Negro Girls, which be-



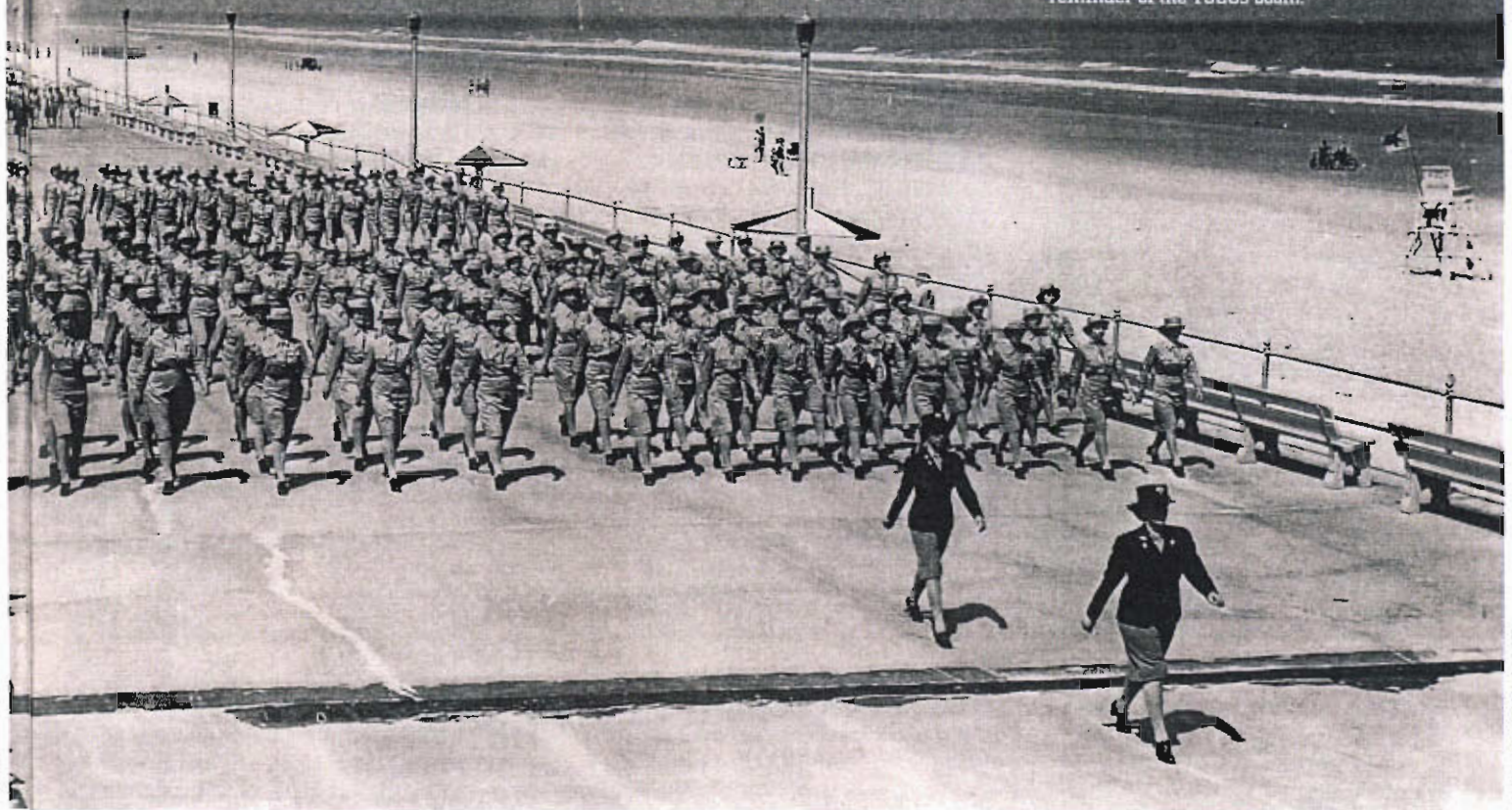
came Bethune Cookman College. Eileen Butts, who served as chairman of the Bethune Cookman Advisory Board during the war years, asked Mrs. Bethune to use her Washington contacts to win the WAC depot for Daytona Beach. "If we could get the WACs here," Mrs. Butts told her, "I do believe the tourists would come to see American women in uniform." Mrs. Butts made her pitch, then watched in stunned silence as the president of Bethune Cookman "took down her



*Gordon Patterson is a professor of humanities at Florida Institute of Technology in Melbourne.*



Waves of WACs parade down Daytona Beach's boardwalk, 1943. In the background, the Tarragona Arch stands, an uncompleted reminder of the 1920s boom.



HALIFAX HISTORICAL SOCIETY

**"My Darling (Mrs. Bethune always called me that)," Butts said, "you will get your wish. The WACs are coming to Daytona Beach."**

telephone receiver and telephoned Franklin Delano Roosevelt as coolly as possible." Apparently the president liked what he heard. "He gave her all encouragement," recalled Butts. "Mrs. Bethune thanked us for coming and told us she would keep in touch." A few weeks later, Butts received a call from Bethune. "My Darling (Mrs. Bethune always called me that)," Butts said, "you will get your wish. The WACs are coming to Daytona Beach."

The first recruits arrived in mid-October 1942, dressed in khaki uniforms with a collar insignia of Pallas

Athena, Greek goddess of wisdom and the protector of heroes. Colonel Don Faith set up headquarters for the WACs at the Wingate Building (on Volusia Avenue in downtown Daytona Beach) in mid-October. The battalion's original 400 recruits were billeted in the Osceola Hotel and Halifax Hospital. Eventually, the base spread to more than a hundred buildings.

The auxiliaries fell in love with Daytona Beach. "Gosh, I'm speechless," enthused Mildred Ayres, a member of the WAC band, on a postcard of local flora sent to her parents back in Irvington, New Jersey. "Look at the palm trees." Audrey Sewell later remembered her first impressions when she stepped off the train, "It was like heaven after leaving Pittsburgh," then she added: "A few days later, I got one of the worst sunburns of my life."

A constant stream of servicemen poured into Daytona Beach, a residual boost to the economy of having the WACs there. "Every soldier, flyer, marine and sailor came from everywhere with their weekend passes to see the WACs," WAC Recruit Doris Clarke told a Daytona Beach newspaper reporter. "They found they had

more in common with us than the civilian girls." Servicemen gathered on the beach to watch the WACs exercise. Occasionally, one auxiliary remembered, "Navy air station men would fly over and throw down notes. The notes would say things like 'I want a date with the one in red.'"

Not all of their memories were so positive. Some recruits were shocked by Daytona Beach's overt segregation. "The first thing I remember," recalled Clarke, who hailed from Stamford, Connecticut, "is walking off the train and seeing 'colored' and 'for whites only' on the bathrooms. I was shocked. I had been taught that the Civil War took care of that." Among the town's segregationists, there was concern that black auxiliaries might be assigned to Daytona Beach. That led Mary Bethune to recommend "Negro WAC troops receive their training at Negro colleges such as Atlanta, Fisk, Wilberforce, and Bennett."

At first, the press and public treated WACs as something strange and exotic. The *Daytona Beach Sunday News-Journal* published a glowing report chronicling a day in the life of a WAC recruit. One probing reporter wanted to know the color of recruits'

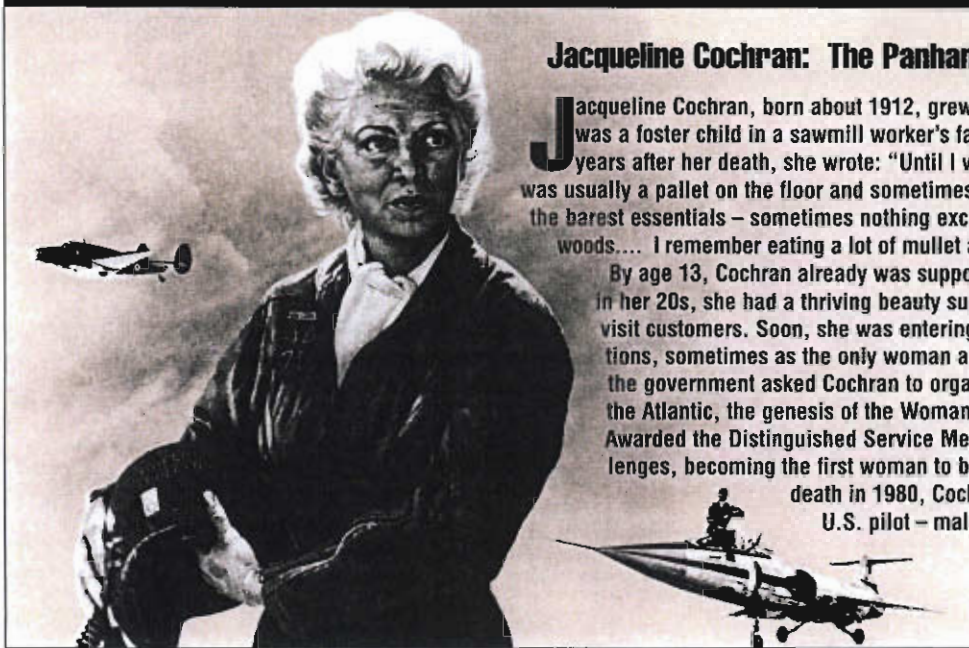


## Jacqueline Cochran: The Panhandle's Secret Weapon

**J**acqueline Cochran, born about 1912, grew up poor in the Florida Panhandle. She was a foster child in a sawmill worker's family, and in an autobiography published 7 years after her death, she wrote: "Until I was eight years old I had no shoes. My bed was usually a pallet on the floor and sometimes just the floor....Food at best consisted of the barest essentials – sometimes nothing except what I foraged for myself in the woods.... I remember eating a lot of mullet and beans...."

By age 13, Cochran already was supporting herself working in a beauty shop, and in her 20s, she had a thriving beauty supply company, piloting her own plane to visit customers. Soon, she was entering and winning cross-country flying competitions, sometimes as the only woman allowed to compete. When war broke out, the government asked Cochran to organize women pilots to ferry bombers across the Atlantic, the genesis of the Woman's Airforce Service Pilots corps (WASPS). Awarded the Distinguished Service Medal in 1945, she looked for new challenges, becoming the first woman to break the sound barrier in 1947. At her death in 1980, Cochran held more aviation records than any U.S. pilot – male or female.

– Kathleen Arsenault



FLORIDA STATE ARCHIVES

GI underwear. Unfazed, auxiliary Lois Reistma answered they were "khaki" and "the ugliest things you ever saw." Observers praised the caliber of the recruits. "They are," wrote news reporter Liliane R. Davidson, "the women of American, these WACs. As you watch them pass you'll think 'they are not as young as I thought, averaging about 30 years old.' They have the heterogeneous physical make up of all American groups.... But they all look like American women of the finest kind. They have that easy, friendly, intelligent, calm, eager look that spells American womanhood."

Inevitably, though, this new and daring innovation produced a spate of myths and misunderstandings, mostly of the sexual variety. The War Department's campaign slogan for the WACs, "Release a Man for Combat," added currency to the sexual folklore. "The hardest part," recalled WAC Recruit Anastasia Clyman, "was trying to convince the public and men in service that you were part of the service." Doris Clarke agreed. "A lot of people thought we were just camp followers." When the first WACs were deployed overseas in 1943 there was a public outcry, some of it undoubtedly coming from the nervous mothers, wives and girlfriends imagining their "boys" meeting a WAC in some exotic land.

Newspaper columnist John

O'Donnell claimed to have seen a "super-secret War Department policy" which authorized the issuance of prophylactics to "all WACs before they were sent overseas." Oveta Culp Hobby, then WACs director and later Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare, co-owner with her husband of the *Houston Post*, and one of America's richest women, denied the allegation and challenged O'Donnell to document his claims. O'Donnell retracted his statement, but the damage was done.

**M**uch of the public's hostility to the WACs grew from the perception that the women soldiers departed from the stereotype of the stay-at-home American woman. Rumors spread about WACs who "took over" restaurants and beauty shops. Local newspaper headlines warned "Wolves Beware, WACs in Orlando Learn Judo" and "Civilians Walking with a WAC Need These Rules." But probably, the most significant opposition to the WACs came from servicemen who did not want to be 'released' from their office jobs for combat.

The Army, however, considered the WACs a success. By 1943, the WACs were no longer merely "auxiliaries." The renamed Women Army Corps recruits moved into a new facility at Bethune Point, named after Mary Bethune. But soon after, the WACs

days in Daytona Beach came to an end. The War Department evacuated the WAC training center by January 15, 1944, when the facilities were transferred to Ft. Oglethorpe, Georgia, after that center was abandoned as a male soldier reception area. The new facilities were larger than those available in Daytona Beach.

On January 6, 1944, the WACs presented their final Sundown Revue, concluding with "Farewell Daytona Beach," a song written for the occasion by Captain Ruby Jane Douglas, who was a Daytona Beach WAC officer. Governor Spessard Holland hoped that the departing WACS would "spread the Good Gospel of Florida," and predicted that "probably many of them will bring their husbands back here to live." The training center became a convalescent hospital for wounded soldiers, and, eventually, home of Daytona Beach Community College.

More than 20,000 young women prepared for active military service in Daytona Beach and served their country with distinction. Many of the "skirted soldiers" fell in love with Florida and did indeed return to the Sunshine State to build successful careers and raise their families. And that's how the WACs saved wartime Daytona Beach – and gave the world a glimpse of things to come. ✨





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# Another Side of The War

Conscientious Objectors fought the battle against hookworm in Florida's backwaters.

BY NANO RILEY

**F**loridians who lived through World War II remember a state teeming with military camps. Few are aware that there was another group of men serving in Florida, no less patriotic but opposed to war. These were the conscientious objectors who spent the war laboring at Civilian Public Service (CPS) camps as an alternative to military service. Nationwide, 12,000 of these conscientious objectors were assigned to 151 camps, four of them in Florida.

During World War I, harsh treatment had been meted out to conscientious objectors. Many had suffered in prisons and some even died for their beliefs. Recalling this bitter episode, the Religious Society of Friends (the Quakers), the Church of the Brethren, and the Mennonites, Christian denominations with centuries-long traditions of non-violence, vowed on the eve of World War II not to let it happen again. In 1938, these churches held a conference to come up with a legally acceptable alternative to military combat. The plan they developed was patterned on the camps that Russian Mennonites created to avoid the Tsar's universal

draft order in the 1870s, in which young men in the Mennonite Forestry Service reforested huge areas in southern Russia. When Congress passed the first peacetime draft in American history, in September 1940, the churches stood ready to open Civilian Public Service camps, operating through the National Service Board for Religious Objectors.

The Church of the Brethren opened Florida's first camp, CPS 27, at Crestview, in Okaloosa County, in March 1942. There followed a second camp at Gainesville, an American Friends Service Committee camp in Orlando, and a Mennonite camp at Mulberry, in Polk County. The camps accepted all religious COs and even some political objectors.

Sarasota resident J. Virgil Miller, a retired college professor now in his seventies, remembers his days working at the CPS Mulberry Camp combating the debilitating hookworm problem that

affected 80 percent of the population in the rural South. Originally from Wayne County, Ohio, the young Mennonite was 22 when he left Goshen College in Indiana to serve at a former CCC camp in Dennison, Iowa. After six months in Iowa building soil conservation dams, he volunteered to come to Florida. Living in buildings leased from a local phosphate company, Miller and the other men at Mulberry conducted a sanitary survey of Polk County and talked to people about hookworm prevention and the need to install sanitary privies.

"We built a lot of privies," Miller recalled. "We lived in barracks – it was simple living. It was a relief training unit and most of us were college people, so it made it more interesting. Some learned Spanish in preparation for doing relief work in Spanish-speaking countries. Some of the campers held advanced degrees and taught courses for college credit at the camp.



POLK COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY



A conscientious objector paints a sign at the Civilian Public Service camp in Mulberry (above), where COs were housed in barracks like these (left).



We were also allowed to take courses at Florida Southern College in Lakeland weekends and evenings."

Miller said the Mulberry camp was a small unit with only 25 to 30 men serving under the Polk County Health Department's Dr. Lawrence Zell. "We were also involved in a typhus project in Bartow, where rats were isolated and poisoned," said Miller. "Dr. Zell also had us build portable housing units to isolate tubercular patients so they could be cared for at home."

In spite of the important work they were doing, draft resisters were always resented. "The community was mostly Southern Baptist and military-minded. We tried to be good citizens, but things were often tense," said Miller. "Some of the men tried to sing in the local church choirs, but some of the churches would not accept them. One fellow who was at Mulberry met his wife singing in one of the church's choir." At Crestview, Miller continued, "there was more hostility, but some of us were rejected in Mulberry. It was a little hard, because the community was very segregated. We invited some members of the black community to the camp. When we planned a dinner with both black and white members of the community, the white people politely refused. I guess it was too much for them, with us being COs, plus socializing with the blacks." The women at Florida Southern College dated some of the men at the Mulberry camp, but fellow students often chided them for associating with the draft resisters. One Florida Southern student refused to marry one of the Mulberry men because he was a CO.

**A**fter the war, many of the campers joined the United Nations cattle boat program taking cattle and livestock to replenish European farm animals. Some men in Virgil Miller's CPS unit later went to Puerto Rico and Paraguay and continued their sanitary privy project, practicing the Spanish they had learned in the camps. Miller himself volunteered for relief work after finishing college in 1946. He taught for a year, and then served in Germany and Holland for two years.

Conscientious objectors across the

nation performed the equivalent of \$22,000,000-worth of service, at a cost to the government of only \$4,731,000. Florida's CPS camps are all but forgotten today except by the men who were there, even though their efforts nearly wiped out hookworm in Florida's rural population. In 1995, Virgil Miller made a sentimental journey back to the site of the Mulberry Camp. There wasn't much left. "Now the locals barely remember we were there. I recognized

the site at the Prairie Pebble mine, but it looks quite different now," said Miller. Not even the Polk County Health Department has any record of the good works that Miller and his fellow conscientious objectors did at Mulberry – almost as if it never happened. ✧

*Nano Riley, a journalist who lives in St. Petersburg, attends the University of South Florida.*

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# A Very Private Battle

**Why the Florida Seminoles refused to join in America's war.**

BY PATSY WEST

**O**n the eve of World War II, the 586 members of the Florida Seminole tribe still lived, as they had for generations, in thatched, open-air chickees. All were illiterate except for a few men and youngsters who had broken tradition and begun to receive a formal education. The majority of tribal members spoke the native languages, *i:laponathli* and Muskogee. Some Seminoles resided on government reservations at Dania, Big Cypress and Brighton near Lake Okeechobee, but the majority lived in isolated camps in southwest Florida or in white-operated tourist attractions.

In the 19th century, the Seminoles fought three tribal wars with the government, and now, about a century later, they considered themselves still at war with the U.S. because no peace treaty had ever been signed. Stories of the tribes' persecution by the government had been passed down through generations. This oral history proudly underscored that the Florida Seminoles, though drastically reduced in number, remained unconquered.

So it was bitterly ironic when, in 1940, 64 of the tribe's young men between the ages of 21 and 36 were legally required to register to fight for their hereditary enemy. Back in 1924, Congress had conferred citizenship on all Native Americans born within the territorial United States, as thanks to the unprecedented number of Native American soldiers who fought in World War I. And with citizenship came draft eligibility.

The Seminoles had stayed out of World War I and, fearing its consequences, made medicine to ward off any harmful effects of the world conflict. Their worst fears were realized in the war's wake, when the 1918 influenza epidemic swept across the country, killing tens of thousands and reducing the Florida Seminoles' small population even more.

With the tribal members strongly opposed to contact of any kind with the federal government, registering for the draft in 1940 seemed unthinkable. In a symbolic demonstration of draft resistance, two Seminole women came to the schoolhouse at the Brighton Reservation, where officials waited for registrants, and ceremonially blew tobacco smoke on the building in reproach to this threat to their cultural well being.

Draft registration threatened to undermine the progress that at least one government agent had made with the Seminoles. Back in 1935, President Roosevelt had instituted the Civilian Conservation Corps-Indian Division (CCC-ID). To head the program in the impoverished Big Cypress Reservation, the Seminole Superintendent hired the most

trusted friend of the Seminoles, W. Stanley Hanson of Ft. Myers. This was a challenging job, as Hanson had to persuade men to work for the feared government and to accept pay for their work – a \$1.50 a day. Because of an old tribal edict against signing documents, some Seminoles refused to make their mark on receipts which showed that they had been paid. To allay suspicions, the standard fingerprinting of participants required for their CCC-ID identification cards was omitted for the Florida Seminoles.

Under the work program, reservation land was fenced, wells dug, and windmills installed. Roads were constructed on old truck trails and surfaced, bridges and telephone lines gave access to the isolated reservations. The 3 R's were taught. Hanson garnered the men's trust, weaning them

towards better feelings for government and toward better tribal economics. It was a relationship that would be tried in the months to come. When the Indian Office was told to handle the draft registrations, the superintendent tried to buck it to the state so that Hanson's efforts wouldn't be undermined. When that failed, Hanson himself was appointed by the Selective Service to carry out the registration process. He chose his close friend, the powerful medicine man and leader, Josie Billie, to assist him.

A couple of Seminoles did register, needing assistance to fill out the 8-page form, but the great majority did not. These young Seminoles followed the tribe elder's admonition that "no Indian should join the white peoples' services,"

and went into hiding.

The government responded swiftly. Seminole Superintendent Dwight D. Gardin told shopkeepers not to give credit to offenders and he refused CCC-ID work to anyone who didn't register. Ethel Cutler Freeman, who observed the Big Cypress Seminoles through the war years, wrote, "The government has once again lost their confidence."

Predictably, the Seminoles turned on Hanson and Josie Billie, labeling them sellouts. Reacting to tribal pressure, Josie Billie refused to have anymore to do with registrations.

Washington ordered Gardin to "take punitive action against the people who council (sic) against registering for the draft." Gardin requested the Federal Bureau of Investigation to arrest Seminole leaders Josie Billie, William McKinley Osceola, Cory Osceola, and John Osceola, but fortunately the FBI was too busy and short staffed to make the arrests.

In the Seminoles' matriarchal society, women were the heads of the family. One prominent matriarch, Ruby



Howard Tiger



Cypress, removed her family from the reservation. Mrs. Cypress took her sons Junior and Jimmie, her married daughters and their husbands and children and all set up a camp north of Ft. Myers across the Edison Bridge. Junior Cypress, who had been one of Hanson's top CCC-ID workers, finally gave in and registered for the draft. As Freeman, who visited the camp, observed, "The government literally starved them into signing.... They were all emaciated and starved."

Meanwhile, Hanson had traveled 2,136 miles to complete his registration, which included not only driving around South Florida, but also paying a visit to the Seminoles at the Silver Springs Seminole Village in Ocala. By June 1, 1942, 67 of the 108 eligible Seminoles or sixty-two percent had registered.

Even as this was going on, the Florida Selective Service officials decided to investigate the Seminole registration situation. Captain Ralph W. Cooper visited most of the readily accessible camps and concluded "the Seminoles had little knowledge of English and were somewhat unsanitary, which would appear to exclude them from participation in the draft process."

Based on Cooper's findings, the State Selective Service officials realized that if the Seminoles were forced to formally register, the few who would be eligible for acceptance would not be worth the distrust that had been generated. Still, Hanson persisted in registering Seminoles, and in February 1943 he glumly wrote: "No Seminoles called yet. Don't think they will be." Then, on September 18, 1943, Hanson enthusiastically reported, "Howard Tiger has enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps. He is the first Florida Seminole to enter the U. S. Services...." Howard was 17. He was one of the first three Florida Seminoles to attend school in Cherokee, North Carolina. Another of the Seminoles, Jack Osceola, remained stateside with the Army, while Tiger and classmate Moses Jumper, Sr., who was in the Navy, would see military action in the Pacific. After the war, Tiger would become President of the Seminole Tribe of Florida.

As the war continued and the draft decimated the work force, more and more Seminoles found gainful employment. And they enjoyed a measure of positive publicity. Crop picking involved entire families, which was lauded in the local papers under headlines: "Doing their bit to win the war," "The Seminoles Have Gone to War... Fighting the Battle of Production!" The war also launched the Seminoles into the cattle business, providing a ready market for their first economic venture. In 1944, the trustees of the Seminole cattle enterprise spent \$28,000 proceeds from cattle sales on war bonds. In retrospect, the mandatory draft registration of the Florida Seminoles was a costly failure in both social and economic terms. The registration drive rolled ahead relentlessly, ignoring the most basic questions such as, "How many of the age-eligible Seminole males are literate enough even to answer the enlistment questionnaire?" By refusing to sign draft documents, the Seminoles were doing the only thing that they knew in order to protect their most valuable asset, tribal sovereignty. ☆

*Patsy West is director of the Seminole/Miccosukee Photographic Archive, Fort Lauderdale and the author of The Enduring Seminoles (University Press of Florida).*



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## Fighting on Two Fronts

**F**or blacks during World War II, life in the military often proved frustrating, demeaning and, at times, terrifying. At Tampa's MacDill Field, recalled Master Sergeant Warren Bryant, "When the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor...all of the whites...were running around with loaded guns. We [blacks] had no guns and no idea of what was going on, so you can imagine what was running through our minds until we learned of the Japanese attack."

In the weeks following Pearl Harbor, African American leaders pledged a fight on two fronts — victory abroad against fascism and victory at home against racism. But the home front foe proved more unyielding. Wrote one reader to the *Pittsburgh Courier*, a black newspaper: "Please tell me how the President of the United States knowing that we are at war, allows the Negro soldier to be treated so intolerably? Does he condone the treatment of those soldiers in Alabama and those in Tallahassee, Florida?"

Segregation often produced bitter ironies, such as this wartime reminiscence of Herbert Krensky of Miami: "When we arrived in Ocala (in 1943), a platoon of German POWs wearing Afrika Corps uniforms were put aboard guarded by military police. They had been picking oranges in

the citrus groves of Central Florida and were being returned to their bases of detention....We stopped for a moment at the station that served Gainesville. On the platform were these colored servicemen, one of them wounded and hobbling on crutches. They tried to board the train with their tickets in hand. The conductor refused to let them board. He told them that since there were no colored coaches that they would have to ride in the baggage car."



An African-American 37 mm. artillery crew drilling on Mullet Key in Tampa Bay (top) and a soldier on guard duty at MacDill AFB, Tampa (above).



# PEACE AT LAST

Floridians greeted the surrender of Germany in May 1945 with the somber realization that victory was incomplete until the defeat of Japan. *The Miami Herald* noted the city's "conspicuous lack of merriment" surrounding V-E (Victory in Europe) Day. "Maybe it was long casualty lists in the morning newspaper," speculated a reporter. "Maybe it was the wounded servicemen who had been hobbling along Miami streets for many months." "For the duration" now meant an uneasy wait for Japan's unconditional surrender.

To Americans hoping for a quick victory in the Pacific, news from the battlefield brought little reason for optimism. The public was becoming all too familiar with the casualty lists linked with exotic place names like Saipan, Iwo Jima, and Okinawa. With grimmest expectations, the U.S. military braced itself for a long and costly siege of the Japanese mainland.

On August 5, 1945, Colonel Paul Tibbets was practically unknown in Florida, except to his former neighbors at 1716 S.W. 12th Avenue, Miami. In 1936 after enrolling in the University of Florida, he told his parents that he wanted to become an army pilot instead of a doctor. His father, a World War I veteran and a strict disciplinarian, exploded in anger, but his mother took his part, saying, "You go ahead and fly. You will be all right."

By early August 1945,

From Key West to Pensacola, Floridians threw the greatest party in the state's history.

Tibbets was a decorated pilot, having led the first B-17 bombing mission from England into Europe. On the obscure island of Tinian in the Marianas, technicians and crew carefully loaded "Little Boy," the single most important bomb of the war, into his B-29 Superfortress.

Colonel Tibbets stood by the bomb bay and called for a sign painter. Instead of a typical pinup, he requested that his mother's given name be painted in foot-high letters beneath the pilot's window. She had, he always remembered, assured him he would be "all right." The next day, *Enola Gay* became the most famous woman's name in America: Tibbets's plane had delivered the world's first combat atomic bomb, destroying the city of Hiroshima. Floridians prayed that the leveled city would lead to the war's quick end.

At the dawn of the nuclear age, technology seemed both terrifying and liberating.

Just hours after Hiroshima's destruction, Lee County commissioners offered the government a 7,500 acre tract of land "as a base for the atomic bombing of



hurricanes." When an August hurricane threatened the Gulf Coast, Bradenton Mayor Herbert Frink urged President Truman to hurl an atomic bomb against nature itself. The second atomic bomb hit Nagasaki, not the Gulf of Mexico. Japan grieved, while the world waited for its surrender.

Florida heard the longed-for news shortly after 7 p.m. on August 14, 1945, almost certainly the most deliriously happy day in the history of the state. Spontaneously and simultaneously, Floridians erupted in celebrations of peace. World War II had tested American resolve and the conflict had been long and bloody. Americans were tired of war and sacrifice, ready for peace and homecoming. In Key West, ten long blasts alerted the Conchs. At Port Everglades, all the ships in the harbor tied down their whistles. In Clewiston, locomotive whistles at U.S. Sugar Company heralded the message. In Quincy, "Big Jim," the giant whistle at the Fuller's Earth Plant, thundered the news. Mayor William R. Cade sounded 24 short blasts on Lakeland's light and water company's whistle.





Miamians erupt in glee, V-J Day, 1945 (below) and on East Flagler Street, Miami, minutes after Japan's final surrender, August 14, 1945 (bottom). On the Pacific island of Tinian, the crew of the *Enola Gay* poses before their fateful mission of August 6, 1945. Paul Tibbets is second from the right (right).



MIAMI HERALD PHOTOS, HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHERN FLORIDA

Everywhere, church bells, automobile horns, and gunfire added to the glorious cacophony.

No city escaped V-J Day's delirium as Floridians reacted in distinctive ways. In Pensacola and St. Augustine, crowds thronged Palafox Street and the plaza, where citizens had celebrated victories or mourned defeats since the sixteenth century. Palm Beach responded discreetly; only the bells of Episcopal Bethesda-by-the-Sea sounded. Officials roped off Clematis Street, but servicemen from Morrison Air Field hectored citizens and motorists to

make more noise. Across Lake Worth, working class West Palm Beach exploded in gaiety. An Alachua County ban on alcohol diminished neither the presence of liquor nor the ardor of the crowd in Gainesville. The *Daily Sun* described the scene at University Avenue and First Street: "Automobiles, motorcycles, trucks and anything else with wheels jammed the streets for a mile or so, while occupants of the vehicles sounded horns, screamed, rang cow bells, and hysterically expressed joy." The Snake Dance, a mild version of the Conga recently introduced in

Miami by Cuban bandleader Desi Arnaz, delighted revelers across the state.

Predictably, Miami celebrated with a gusto few cities could match. Crowds estimated at ten to thirty thousand flocked to Flagler Street; on Biscayne Bay, an impromptu regatta took place. One observer thought Miami "looked like Rio at Carnival."

Small towns were not immune to delirium. In Trenton, the *Gilchrist County Journal* proudly reported crowds milling until late in the night, "vociferous with joy but with little of the disorder that excitement brought in many cities." Everywhere, men and women in uniform reaped the benefits of service, kissing complete strangers without fear or regret.

"Young and old joined in the kissing contests," the *Tampa Tribune* reported gingerly, "Acquaintance was not necessary although some girls insisted in kissing only sailors and some servicemen preferred blonds." It was the greatest party in Florida history. The rituals of public celebration, so absent in modern Florida, are striking.

Photographs of V-J Day 1945 capture Florida, weary of decades of depression and sacrifice, exploding in ways innocent and understandable. But not everyone danced. Lost in the tumult and confetti were the thousands of families of fallen G.I.s. for whom the day's celebrations were touched with heartbreak. Jack Bell, "The Town Crier" for the *Miami Herald* and a veteran of the European Theater, had just returned to his popular column when the war ended. Surveying the humanity on Flagler Street, he spotted a solitary woman. He followed her into a church, where she knelt beside "a giant master sergeant" before an altar to the Virgin.

She attempted to light a candle, a task finished by the anonymous serviceman. "This one is for Edgar, my youngest," she explained. "He was killed in Germany. Edgar was my favorite son, my baby. And he doesn't know." ★

— Gary Mormino



*Max & Marjorie: The Correspondence between Maxwell E. Perkins and Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings.* Edited by Rodger L. Tarr. 624 pages. University Press of Florida, 1999. \$34.95

**M**arjorie Kinnan Rawlings once said that Maxwell Everts Perkins, the legendary Scribner's editor, had the ability to hold an author's talent in the palm of his hand and let it bloom there, unimpeded. Max was her friend as well as editor. Their relationship is beautifully displayed in Rodger Tarr's voluminous collection of 698 letters, notes and telegrams they exchanged over more than 17 years. Professor Tarr, who was given access to the Scribner's archives, writes a masterful introduction, scholarly but accessible to the general public. Then he does the rare thing: he lets each letter speak for itself, only removing space-wasting letterheads and greetings, and adding well-placed footnotes.

In an otherwise close relationship between the author and editor, two exceptions are jarringly apparent from these letters. Neither Perkins nor Scribner's provided any direct support to Rawlings when she was sued for libel over *Cross Creek*. No public statement on author's rights was made, no help with legal fees offered. And Perkins never accepted Rawlings' many invitations to visit Cross Creek, not even when he got as close as Gainesville on a trip with Ernest Hemingway. Although the movie *Cross Creek* and at least one of the recent stage treatments of the libel trial have an actor playing Max, he was never there. Their friendship was played out during her visits to New York and in correspondence.

## BOOK BRIEFS

We owe Rodger Tarr and the University Press of Florida a large debt for adding an important volume to what we know of Rawlings and her luminous editor, whose other clients included F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway and Thomas Wolfe. *Max & Marjorie* should be on the shelf of anyone who loves books and the making of them.

— *Scholar and actress Betty Jean Steinshouer travels the country portraying Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings.*

*The Tropic of Cracker*, by Al Burt. 224 pages. University Press of Florida, 1999. \$24.95.

**E**ver wonder what's the best way to eat a rattlesnake? Puzzled over the origin of the term "Florida Cracker"? Have an interest in alligator wrestling or catfishing? Al Burt has some answers for you in *The Tropic of Cracker*. This selection of articles he wrote for the *Miami Herald* during the 60s, 70s, and 80s, taken in one big dose, reminds us of a Florida that has nearly vanished.

The term "Cracker" comes from the popping sound made by long cowhide whips used by old-time cow hunters to drive their herd to Florida ports. Burt notes that "much of Florida's glitz and glitter rode into being on "skint knuckles and cow manure."

The best chapters in this collection deal

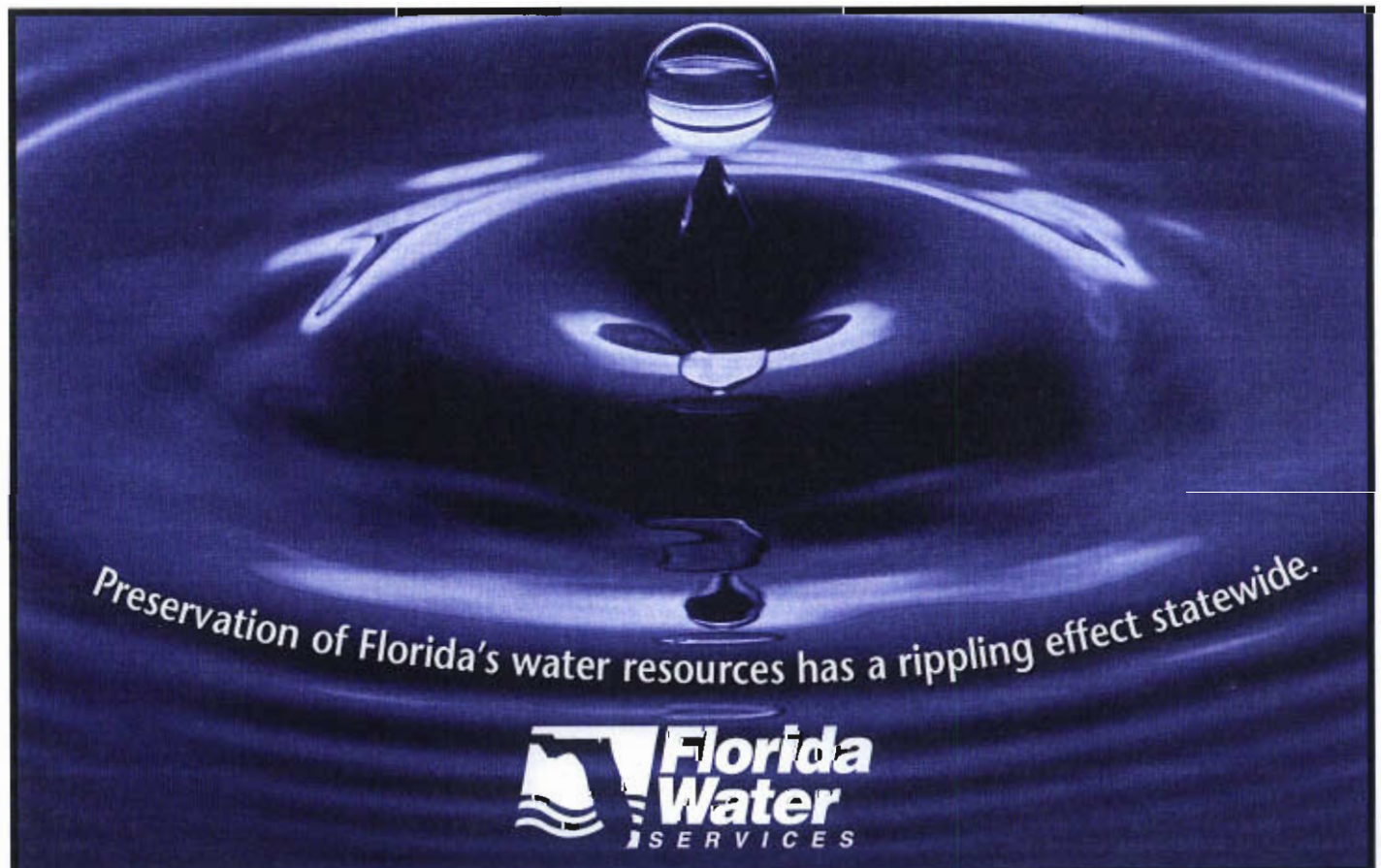
with the lives and relationships of three Florida authors. The first is an essay on Norton Baskin, a.k.a. Mr. Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings. It gives a humorous insight into their marriage. When someone asked Baskin what he did, Rawlings answered: "He's retired to stud." To which the visitor replied, "He looks mighty puny for that."

The piece on Zora Neale Hurston is informative, especially considering that it was first written in 1976, when Hurston was still largely neglected. It does identify her as being born in 1901 in Eatonville, Florida, the black township where she grew up. Researchers now agree that she was born in Notasulga, Alabama, in 1891. Burt notes that when she supported George Smathers over Senator Claude Pepper in the Florida primary she claimed, "I done promised all them colored men I'd sleep with 'em if they'd just vote for George Smathers." Burt celebrates Zora as contrary and original.

But the best chapter is the one on the novelist Harry Crews, mostly in Crews' inimitable language. Crews touches on his father's death in bed — with the whole family asleep in the same bed. He talks about his boxing life, his mysterious tendency to attract the wrath of strangers in bars, and his love of writing and teaching.

Other interesting Florida topics covered by Burt include the Keys' native Conches, Death Row at Raiford prison, scenic rivers, and the followers of British social theorist John Ruskin for whom the town southeast of Tampa is named. Burt's writing reminds the reader to treasure the best of natural, rural Florida before it's too late.

— *Kathleen Ochshorn is an Associate Professor of English at the University of Tampa*



Preservation of Florida's water resources has a rippling effect statewide.





*The Spy Who Came In From the Sea*, by Peggy Nolan. 130 pages. Pineapple Press, 1999. \$14.95

Their fervent support of America's efforts in World War II has bonded the eighth graders at Beach Junior High. Newcomer Frank Hollahan tries to break into the cliquy group of Jacksonville school kids by becoming an accomplished teller of tall tales. So, of course, nobody believes him when he stumbles upon a German U-boat depositing a spy on a deserted stretch of nearby beach. Undeterred, Frank follows the trail of the spy with the help of budding love interest Rosemarie and reclusive beach denizen Weird Wanda. Who is this man? What's in the chest the spy buried in the sand? Who planted the bomb in the storage locker? The teenage sleuths wrestle with these and other questions as the story moves briskly toward

a climactic scene where a crowd of patriotic citizens becomes unsuspecting targets of an assassin.

*The Spy Who Came in From the Sea* paints a rich picture of life in northeast Florida during World War II. For example, Frank's mom goes to work as a riveter at a St. Johns River shipyard, earning their keep and doing her part for the war effort as she waits for husband "Pops" to come home from the Front.

Author Peggy Nolan, a University of Miami graduate, taught elementary school and, after retiring, decided to chronicle her father's exploits in the FBI. The resulting first novel is an excellent, can't-put-down mystery for early teenagers.

— Susan Ryan, a K-12 program specialist in writing and science, was Lake County Schools 1998-99 Teacher of the Year.

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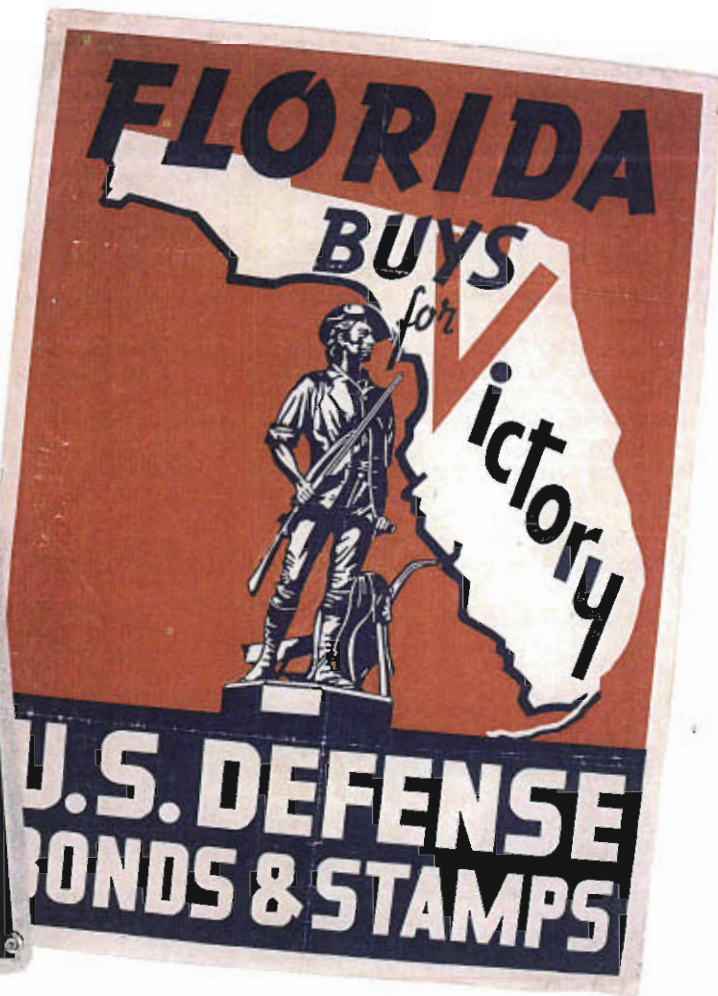
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