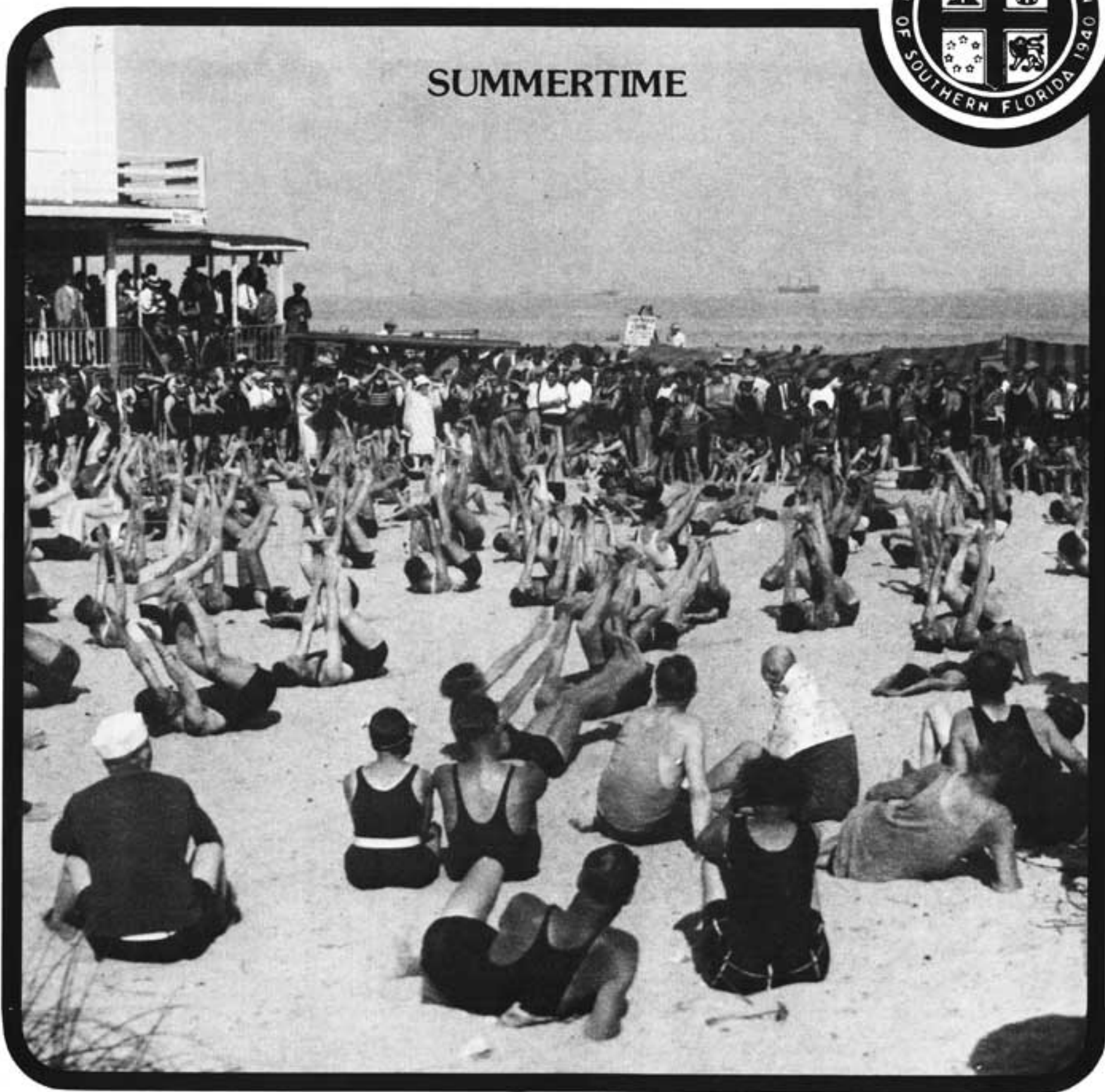


Update



SUMMERTIME



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COVER

A Physical Culture class on Miami Beach in 1926. Lumber schooners sail on the horizon. (Photo courtesy of The Romer Collection, Miami-Dade Public Library).

UPDATE

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THE TEQUESTANS

The Tequestans, HASF volunteers, began as a group of 20 women who had shown leadership potential in other organizations and had indicated an interest in history or the Museum. They were invited to a luncheon at the David William Hotel in October 1975 and heard from Arva Parks, Irene Shiverick, Pat Bowker and Randy Nimnicht about the potential for service in a volunteer troupe. These women formed the first Tequestan steering committee with each member choosing an activity that appealed to her: Docents, Museum Services, Annual Benefit, Special Events, Festival.

From this group came suggestions for other possible volunteers and these people were invited to a membership brunch at Lyn D'Alemberte's home in January. There was an enormous crowd and many volunteers were recruited. The following week the Special Events committee held a wine and cheese recep-

tion at the Museum for new volunteers and their spouses.

Patty Catlow immediately put her Museum Services volunteers to work in the gift shop and it showed a handsome profit for the year.

In April the Special Events committee held the first Attic Auction, and with a minimum of expenditure and effort raised \$2200. Later in the month they provided refreshments for the Charles Avenue Marker reception at the Museum. In May, they served lunch to the Florida Historical Society during its Miami convention, and continued serving as hostesses at all informal occasions at the Museum during the year.

The Benefit Committee organized the evening party in May in the gardens of Mayor and Mrs. Ferre's villa, "La Santa Marie", overlooking Biscayne Bay. As if to test the fledgling volunteers, the rain came down on party day and committee members made 400 phone calls post-

poning the party. Even with such setbacks, 360 guests came. The volunteers donated food and decorations and \$5100 was grossed.

During the spring and fall, Dorothy Fields, the Museum's educational coordinator, and Lucy Cogswell organized and trained Docents as tour guides for school children. The Docents were the pioneer volunteers at the Museum and the present group have taken over the design and decoration of the Board Room, freeing the staff for work on the remodeling of the Gallery.

A new steering committee presided over by Sherrill Kellner and Cathy Ezell met in the fall. Added to the steering committee was a liaison member from the Board of Directors of HASF who will keep the volunteers informed about the development of the new museum in the downtown complex and help us become more aware of the museum's problems and needs.

By-laws were approved with an important requirement that all volunteers must be members of the Historical Association of Southern Florida.

At the September brunch, 25 new volunteers were welcomed and Harvest assignments were made. All food and decorations were donated by the volunteers.

After six months of planning and preparation and hundreds and hundreds of volunteer hours, the first Harvest was held in November. This country fair attracted 4500 people, grossed \$10,100. and netted \$6000. More significantly, it ex-

WE GOOFED

I once had a college professor who in the course of his lectures would make notations on the blackboard to add emphasis to his discussions. Occasionally, he would misspell an easy word or say one date and write another. Invariably, the class would vibrate and someone would call the error to his attention. The professor's standard remark was, "Glad to see you're out there."

The errors we make in UPDATE are not intentional, as were the professor's, but, nonetheless, we are "glad to see you're out there" pointing out the error of our words.

In UPDATE, Vol. 4 No. 3,

we misspelled the name of Miami letter-carrier J. H. Bratley. Bratley had a daily 62 mile route and the fact that he was one of the best-remembered carriers can be attested to by the number of phone calls we received.

In our April issue, we incorrectly identified school teacher Ada Merritt as Z. T. Merritt's daughter. She was, in fact, his sister. In addition, in that same issue we twice incorrectly spelled the name of Mrs. Florence P. Haden.

Please let me reiterate that our goofs are accidental and we're "glad to see you're out there."

BESS

(Continued on page 5)

SAVE OUR ALAMO

by Valerie Fisher Lassman

"Remember the Alamo", a highly popular slogan emanating from the bravery of Americans at San Antonio, Texas is also applicable to a historic building here in Miami scheduled for the demolition crew in December of 1977, unless concerned citizens act quickly to preserve it.

The Alamo, erected in 1918, served a young Miami as the first Miami City Hospital. It was the winning design of architect August Geiger and the cost to construct it at that time was \$150,000. It was built on a forty acre tract of land near the city garbage dump in a cow pasture.

The three story stucco structure had open, breeze-filled verandas, french doors, tile floors and an aura of Spanish style elegance. It was crowned by a brilliantly gleaming copper cupola. Patients and visitors would sit in large Victorian wicker chairs and gaze out on the peaceful and verdant surrounding gardens.

The new hospital was initiated into the Miami mainstream by a critical flu epidemic. From the day it opened its doors it was filled to capacity with people seeking medical aid. At times, the daily census would be as high as one hundred. In order to handle the increased demands of the burgeoning population, two frame buildings were quickly added on either side.

During Miami's "Boom Years", the 1920's, the hospital flourished. Construction began on building a maternity ward, isolation building, private pavillion, Valerie Fisher Lassman is an English teacher in Dade County and holds a Master's Degree in English Literature.

operating rooms and nurse's home. Even though in 1921, surgeons still had to bring their own instruments to perform major operations, the hospital grew to a capacity of two hundred beds.

Although the country-like atmosphere was probably therapeutic for most patients, the surrounding pasture lands did pose a problem. In

his untimely death in 1924, the City Hospital was renamed Jackson Memorial Hospital in his honor.

The economic crash of the depression years, the 1930's slowed down expansion somewhat, but even during this time, a new operating suite was put up from salvaged concrete blocks and the hospital continued to meet

now sealed, reveal air conditioning units thrusting out along the sides of the building. The Alamo today, because of repeated modifications and changing functions, retains nothing of its former beauty. To the untrained eye, it taxes the imagination to appreciate her charm as the genesis to one of the largest Medical Centers in the United States.

Underneath the unattractive mantle of urban blight, the Alamo is still structurally sound and architecturally worth preserving and restoring. Through the combined efforts of the Save Our Alamo committee at Jackson Memorial Hospital and concerned citizens it can be saved from destruction.

In order to give the Alamo a new life, a plan has been drafted to move the building from its original location to a more visually pleasing area within the complex itself. There, in a garden like setting, the Alamo would be restored to its original design. Once more, people from Miami and visitors from all over could enjoy the french doors, verandas and elegant wicker chairs of a by-gone era.

Her new purpose for a renewed existence would be as a Visitors Information and Hospitality Center. Within will be a working museum of the history of medical progress in Miami. Plans towards this goal include furnishing rooms with medical equipment, art and furniture of the period, and staffing the building with volunteers dressed in period uniforms. The visitor to the Alamo would receive an orientation into Miami's past as well as the availability of modern comfort in a historical building.

(Continued on page 7)



Miami City Hospital (above) was filled to capacity from the day its doors opened. The facility was renamed Jackson Memorial Hospital in 1924. Today, (below) the original three story building has been dwarfed by the expanding medical complex. Volunteers are working to move the building and restore it to serve as a Visitors Information and Hospitality Center. (Photo courtesy of "Save Our Alamo")



1927, the medical staff requested that the administration fence off the area where surgeries were performed to prevent cows from grazing under the windows of the operating room.

It was at Miami City Hospital that pioneer physician Dr. James Mary Jackson was President of the medical staff. He also organized the Board of Health. Following

the community needs until the (70's) present.

The Alamo today is sandwiched between other larger buildings that have mushroomed up around her in the preceding decades of growth at Jackson Memorial complex. In recent years her once attractive exterior has been hammered, plastered and altered to her esthetic detriment. The verandas,

THE MOSQUITO MENACE

by Jean C. Taylor

For those who could not get away from it all in the North Carolina mountains or the various spas and resorts frequented by their more fortunate neighbors, summertime in South Dade was not one "when the living was easy". When the rainy season of late spring and early summer set in, the glades and sloughs filled to the brink with water and became host to uncounted swarms of mosquitos. The water covered the East Glade to a depth that Ed Vihlen maintains he often sailed a small boat from his home in Silver Palm all the way to Cutler and the water stayed there until the end of the hurricane season.

Life for the early settlers was a constant battle to foil these persistent winged pests. In 1905, when Flora Hill planned to join her brother, Will Anderson, and help him prove up his homestead on Coconut Palm and Farmlife Roads, her husband, John Hill, who was helping build the railroad extension to Key West, tried to discourage her. He wrote that he did not feel heither she or the children could endure the mosquitos along with the other hardships. Nothing daunted, Flora packed her things and arrived at Gossman's Siding where her brother met her with a horse and wagon. When he came into the coach Flora saw mosquitos full of blood hanging on his face and arms. He was covered with them. It was too late to back out then and Flora knew she would have to do her best to thwart the mosquito and make her life livable. The swarms of mosquitos were so bad they actually darkened the sun.

Will's cabin had no screens. The first few nights they sur-

vived by means of Will's smudge pot. This was the first and most common remedy prevalent in early days. A smudge pot was a large pot or bucket into which Will would put a few splinters off a "lighter knot". (The wood in a stump or log of Dade County pine that had been scorched by fire was so resinous it was red in color and would



Detroit Beach, 1912

but seemed to drug them so that they lost their will to attack for a few hours.

Will made an all day trip to Cutler for screening but none was available. He was, however, able to buy some insect powder. This paramécium powder was even better than a smudge pot for indoors. It was poured into a tin lid and set afire. One



Detroit Pavilion

Where the Waters of Canal and Ocean Meet near Homestead, Fla.



Florida City Beach, where the canal and ocean meet near Homestead, in 1913.

burn like pure pitch with a thick black smoke. This red pitchy wood is what the old timers called "lighter wood" as splinters of it could be easily ignited with a match and used to start a fire. It was also known as fat pine.) After the fire was going he would add palmetto roots and on top of that he would place a damp fertilizer bag to smother the flame and make a smoke. This didn't kill the mosquitos

practical joker in the Redlands endeared himself forever to his hostess by substituting gun powder for insect powder in the lids set up in the cabin to ward off the evening's invasion.

After three trips to Cutler, Will Anderson was finally able to buy a bolt of mosquito netting. Most of the settlers used the netting to drape over their beds in a tent shape, but Flora wanted more than night time

protection. They closed off the front door completely and tacked the netting over the door and windows of the main room. With the combination of the smudge pot, insect powder and netting they were quite comfortable in that room. Unfortunately the netting gave out before they could cover the kitchen windows so that it was still in line of attack. Will stood over Flora with a palm frond brush as she cooked to keep the mosquitos out of the food.

Annie Mayhew Fitzpatrick tells of a frolic at Dan Robert's home to raise money for the Redland Guild Hall. The Roberts had one room sealed more or less and all the babies were placed in there on the bed. Each mother was responsible for keeping her pot of smudge going near her child. They all seemed to know their own baby's cry and a set dance might pause momentarily while a mother scurried off to attend to her child and someone was found to take her place.

So much for indoors, but outdoors was another matter. Of course the trusty smudge pot or fires were used outside also. Horses and cattle were very susceptible to mosquito and horsefly bites and most settlers provided their beasts with a shelter and their own smudge fire. The Kosels' mule, Mike, learned to give the everpresent smoldering log a kick if the smoke died down. Trips to Cutler or Miami for supplies were usually made at night to protect the horse or mule to some degree from the vicious bites of the horse flies and deer flies. These were much more injurious to the animals than the mosquitos and could leave their bodies a mass of bloody sores. Croker sacks

were usually sewed into a rough blanket that covered the animal from heat to tail to ward off the attackers.

Little seven-year-old Mary Calkins arrived with her parents, Orville and Addie Mae Calkins and seven other families from Topeka, Kansas, to take up their homesteads filed in the Longview area west of what is now Florida City. They needed a compass and surveyors' tools to locate their claims and of course there were no roads or even paths. Each settler had to clear a path across the front of his own property and then the county would send a road roller to pack down the cleared area. The mosquitos were particularly bad in that August of 1910, but the road had to be built. Mr. Calkins was a professional musician whose respiratory problems had caused his doctor to advise him to seek a warm climate. Addie Calkins was the daughter of a wealthy Kansas family and was training for the Chautauqua stage before her marriage. Neither had ever done any hard labor.

Protection against the hordes of mosquitos was their most urgent problem. Since Mary couldn't be left home alone they took her along. Mrs. Calkins put a blanket down on the ground as a deterrent for ants and other attackers from below. Then she placed a large umbrella on the blanket and draped it with cheese cloth to keep out the flying pests. It was hot inside even in the shade as the cheese cloth cut off all the air, but Mary sat quietly on the blanket and drew pictures and colored them while her parents worked. Orville and Addie Mae had learned from the neighbors wise in experience how to protect themselves. In 1910 women and girls wore heavy, long black stockings and their

skirts dragged the ground. The mosquitos, however, were able to penetrate these defenses so newspaper paper was wrapped around the legs first and then the stockings drawn up over them. The arms of both men and women were wrapped in newspaper also and long shirt sleeves buttoned tight at the wrist with gloves covering the hands and extending over the shirt cuffs. They wore straw hats with cheese cloth or netting sewn around the brim that hung down around the shoulders, much as a bee keeper wears today. The mosquitos seemed to resent the covering and buzzed around the ears until their cacophony set the nerves on edge.

But it wasn't always so bad in the good old summer time. Where Krome Avenue and Palm Avenue meet was the old swimming hole. The canal was new and clean and the people of Florida City had floored and fenced off a section for young children and built spring boards for the older children and grownups. The children used to take their lunches and go in their bathing suits and stay all day alternating swimming and lounging and everybody was welcome. Evenings were largely given over to adults. When the mosquitos let up this was the most wonderful place in the countryside for the stay at home South Daders.

There was a very attractive sort of Club House built on the bank of the canal and it was used as a place of entertaining in lieu of the City Hall in the summer. The Woman's Club of Florida City invited all the clubs of the surrounding area to a party one summer afternoon and it was a scene of beauty that lingered with many of the attending guests. Looking toward the bay they saw the crystal clear canal

while all around were the virgin stretches of glades. The ladies had loaned their best china, glass, silver and table linens along with cushions and drapes to make it attractive and had gone all out in preparing the refreshments.

People in the Silver Palm and Redland areas often drove to Cutler, mosquitos permitting, for a swim and picnic or fish fry. After the F.E.C.

bypassed Cutler and the hurricane of 1906 destroyed many of the buildings, it was no longer the center of supply and disbursement of produce that it had been in the early days, but for many families it was the chief recreation place for both young and old. The young couples courting on their motorcycles made the Cutler beach one of their favorite gathering spots.

THE TEQUESTANS

(Continued from page 2)

panded the volunteer base and extended the Museum's community involvement. After a thorough evaluation, Tequestans are planning Harvest '77 with selective expansion and a firm resolve to keep it non-commercial.

The Docents played a significant role in the Harvest by organizing history contests for secondary school children. This was a rewarding experience for youthful historians and gave us all renewed faith that the schools can produce excellence. There were over 100 essays submitted and 60 entrants in the history bee.

After considerable debate the volunteers chose to call themselves Tequestans and met with Randy Nimnicht and Jane Martin to prepare a budget for '77 which was presented to the Board of Directors of HASF.

In January, the first directory was mailed to Tequestans.

A brunch for Museum Services volunteers was held at Bixie Matheson's in February. Ten new Tequestans signed on to help with the day to day operation of HASF: typing, filing, answering phones, mailings to the general membership, assisting in the library, taping and editing oral history, and of course manning the gift

shop. In short, they free the Museum staff experts for loftier pursuits.

A new group of volunteers has accepted responsibility for providing refreshments at HASF lecture meetings.

The second Attic Auction in March '77 raised over \$3800, nearly doubling the first year's proceeds.

The '77 Benefit at Mr. and Mrs. Edward Sweeney's home, the Kampong, was a memorable evening. The David Fairchild home and gardens have been faithfully preserved and enhanced, and we are very grateful to the gracious Sweeneys for sharing these beautiful, historic surroundings with us.

May marked the end of The Tequestans' first full year of operation, and new officers were elected at their first annual membership meeting.

Newsletters are sent out periodically to keep Tequestans informed about activities and opportunities for service. A permanent brochure outlining the opportunities for volunteer service in the Tequestans will be ready this month.

Although the Tequestans now number 135, there is plenty of room at the top. New volunteers—both chiefs and Indians — are always welcome. All ages are represented, from newlyweds to grandparents, and all anyone needs to do is join

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MIAMIANS IN SUMMER—UP AND AWAY

by Thelma Peters

The early-timers called Miami the Magic City and their enthusiasm for the little town was boundless until summer came — then anyone with a place to go and the money to get there went. Not that the stay-at-homes fared too badly; in spite of rain, heat, mosquitoes and general doldrums they found plenty of recreation. They went by ferry to Miami Beach, sailed and fished, climbed the old lighthouse at Cape Florida, swam in the pool belonging to the otherwise closed Royal Palm Hotel, and enjoyed ice cream sodas (10¢) under a ceiling fan at Seybold's. Miami summer was bearable and getting away was more a matter of status than of necessity though some claimed, with doctor endorsement, that their health required "taking the water" at a spa or the ozone atop a mountain.

In the long slack summers the news reporters had to grub for news and they seem to have haunted the railroad depot and the boat docks. Today, in those old newspapers, we have a record of who went where and how long they stayed.

At first there were only two ways to go — by train or by boat. Even as late as 1915 with Model T's proliferating and Florida getting a few roads, shell, brick, sand or mud, almost no one went "north" by automobile because as one old-timer remarked: "After Florida came Georgia and that was even worse." It would seem that more Miamians spent the summer in Florida than in any other state. It was kin-visiting time. If you had Conch connections you went to Key West. If your family came to Miami from San Mateo, Melrose, Palatka or Kissimmee (pioneers came

from all these towns) summer was a time for "going home."

Daytona Beach attracted many for it had beach hotels of which there were none at Miami Beach. At Daytona Beach a popular sport at the turn of the century was sailing along the sands in a kind of adult tricycle bearing a huge sail. Ocala was popular because of its proximity to

Springs, Georgia. Here among wooded hills a small spring flowed out of the rocks, so strongly sulphur as to smell not unlike rotten eggs. Before Europeans discovered Georgia the spring was known and valued by the Indians for its medicinal properties. By 1900, the Indians were long gone and the spa was typical of those in the



A group of Dade Countians gather on the rocks above the medicinal spring at Indian Springs, Georgia, in the summer of 1901. Edgar Peters in front. Behind Edgar (left to right) Pat Peters, Will Bush (with pitcher), Frank Peters, Mrs. Gamble (with dipper), Senie Douthit, Mrs. and Mrs. W. I. Peters with children Bill and Gladys. Back row (left to right) W. C. Sears, Solomon Peters, Mattie Peters, Mrs. Solomon Peters and Mrs. and Mrs. S. J. Seigh. (Photo courtesy of Hugh Peters, Jr.)

Silver Springs which had a bath house and a fine place to swim. Steamboats along the Oklawaha River, which was wild and beautiful, took off from Silver Springs, the source of the river.

There were a number of medicinal springs in northern Florida where people went to take the "cure." Two of the largest were White Springs on the Suwanee River and Green Cove Springs on the St. Johns. Both had large hotels and swimming pools so that you could bathe in the water as well as drink it.

One of the most popular spas for Miamians in the early part of this century was Indian

South at that time. There were three large wooden hotels and a cluster of frame cottages, a common characteristic being open verandahs and flocks of rockers where visitors took their ease between trips to the spring. The water, supposedly especially good for kidney ailments, was said to lose its effectiveness within a few hours of coming out of the ground. Those who were serious about taking the cure, therefore, had to make several trips to the spring during the day, each carrying his own dipper or cup and making a ritual out of catching the water and drinking it fresh.

In 1902 B. B. Tatum, the editor of the *Miami Metropolis*, his wife and his wife's mother spent their vacation at Indian Springs. "This is certainly an ideal spot for rest and recreation," he wrote back to his paper (*Metropolis*, August 1, 1902), "and the Dade County people are all enjoying the fine scenery, the atmosphere and eating to the fullest extent. The mineral water is undoubtedly efficacious but to our minds there is nothing so satisfying and healthful as plenty of peaches, melons, chicken, corn, buttermilk, et cetera, and we expect to continue to stay here and 'build up' as long as the money lasts." Among the Dade Countians Tatum listed as present at Indian Springs were Mr. and Mrs. R. Hudson Burr and family, Mr. and Mrs. T. J. Peters and family, E. G. Sewell, and Isidor Cohen.

Fortunately for us a photographer caught some of the Dade County regulars around the spring on a summer day in 1901. The spring itself seems only a trickle from a spigot. The little girl, Gladys Peters, with the big hat to the right of the photo (Mrs. Fred Whitehead), recently recalled her days at Indian Springs: "We went by train and when we got to the hotel Papa bought us a dipper to drink from at the spring. I think they cost a dime. Sometimes a lot of our family were there, cousins and aunts and uncles. We had a lot of fun together. I didn't care anything about the spring but we children went on picnics and hikes and we all loved to ride the little narrow gauge train to Flovilla ten miles away where the main line was. Sunday afternoon a band would play on the hotel lawn."



The steamer "Hiawatha" was docked at Silver Springs, near Ocala. (HASF postcard).

In 1921 one of the large hotels, the Wigwam, burned and this marked the beginning of the end for Indian Springs as a spa. Today the spring and its surrounding hills are a state park. Many South Floridians switched their spa-going to Hot Springs, Arkansas, a spa still popular with some of the old pioneer families.

In the summer of 1908, the *Metropolis* ran advice on what a young girl should take for a summer vacation in the way of clothes. "For the mountain or seaside resorts three muslin dresses, not too elaborate, half a dozen pretty white shirtwaists, a linen walking suit, a tailored suit, low and high shoes and tennis and dancing slippers." Her wardrobe would be packed in a box trunk (on sale at Budge's in 1908 for \$14.95) and travel on the same train with her, to be delivered to her hotel room often by the time she herself arrived.

Miamians who headed for Jacksonville, Savannah and New York sometimes chose coastal steamers, a little slower than the trains but considered very relaxing. The popular mountain resorts were all accessible by train or train-stage coach. The mountain resorts which were popular with Miamians around 1900 were Tallulah Falls and

Clayton in Georgia, and Asheville, Hendersonville and Swannanoa in North Carolina.

Fashions in vacationing change but there is no solid proof that today's travelers have any more fun than did the Miamians who went away in the summer of 1900.

SAVE OUR ALAMO

(Continued from page 3)

The Preservation Project of the Alamo will enable Miami to proudly recreate for future generations a reminder of the early years, and of how important the past is to our social, historical and educational futures.

The Alamo can serve as a symbol to the State of Florida and the nation of what a caring citizenry can do to preserve its proud heritage.

Since 1918 Miami has always needed the Alamo and she has never failed — today the Alamo needs us.

Editor's Note: Further information may be obtained by contacting Mrs. Penny Fleeger, Community Liaison, at the Volunteer Services Office of Jackson Memorial Hospital, phone 325-7318.

BOOK REVIEW



THEY ALL CALLED IT TROPICAL; TRUE TALES OF THE ROMANTIC EVERGLADES, CAPE SABLE, AND THE FLORIDA KEYS, by Charles M. Brookfield and Oliver Griswold. 8th ed. Miami, Historical Association of Southern Florida in cooperation with Banyan Books, 1977. \$1.95 in the Museum gift shop.

THEY ALL CALLED IT TROPICAL first appeared in serial form in the *Miami Herald* in 1949, two years after the dedication of Everglades National Park. Later in the same year, it was published in book form. At that time, many of the standard histories for the Park area had not yet been written; for example, Tebeau's *They Lived In The Park* was still fourteen years away. So, this little book filled a gap in the literature for South Florida. It gave those interested in the lower Everglades and the Florida Keys region a source of information on its history which was readable and did not require previous familiarity with Florida history to understand and enjoy. With time, of course, further events have affected some of the areas and topics, and some episodes have been more extensively documented.

This book recounts dramatic episodes from the region's past. Underlying each story is the theme of man's interrelationship with this unique environment. From foundering ships on the reefs to the creation of an im-

mense national park, the influence of the land on its history is paramount. Wreckers made fortunes off ships blown onto the coral reefs; Audubon painted exotic birds he could not find elsewhere; Perrine envisioned large-scale tropical plant introduction, but his death led Harney into the interior, where before only Indians had gone; Bradley died protecting an egret rookery from plume hunters, a crucial event in the national issue of the feather-trade versus bird protection. In its turn, each incident is told succinctly and colorfully.

With this publication, HASF adds another title to its reprint series. This edition, the eighth, has a new epilogue by Charles Brookfield. *They All Called It Tropical* was a natural for HASF to publish. Some of the objects in the Association's collections are connected with this book — the cannon from the Winchester, the lens from Carysfort Light, and the photographs and original map from previous editions. Part of the research for this book was done in George Deed-meyer's *Floridiana* collection, now a part of HASF's Charlton W. Tebeau Library of Florida History. The *Memoir of D D'Escalante Fontaneda*, an earlier HASF reprint, is a major source in the first chapter.

The association is pleased to make *They All Called It Tropical* once again available. Although out-of-print for a number of years, interest in it has not waned. *They All Called It Tropical* is for the young and the old, and for those interested in both our history and our environment.

Reviewed by Rebecca A. Smith.

REFLECTIONS ON BLACK HISTORY: Fun and Games Overtown

by Dr. S. H. Johnson as told to Dorothy Jenkins Fields

AUTHOR'S NOTE: Dr. S. H. Johnson, the first black medical doctor in South Florida to set up a radiological practice, was born in Key West, Florida, on January 8, 1900. In 1903, he and his infant sister, Ekaine (Nahara Johnson) Adderly, moved to Miami with their parents Ida (Roberts) and Sam D. Johnson. Five additional children were born after their arrival here. Bahamians, the Johnsons were originally from Harbor Island. Dr. Johnson was interviewed at his residence on May 24, 1977. This article was edited from the oral history tape recording which was made at that time. —Dorothy Jenkins Fields.

"Speaking about fun and play opportunities, I would like to go back to the time when I was 4th or 5th grade. Classes were held on what was Fourth street, now Eighth street, across from Greater Bethel AME Church. The boys at the recess period shot marbles and played a little baseball. That was primarily the extent of opportunities for fun. After school of course we had chores to perform. In our little community areas we played baseball or shot marbles or flew kites.

"When I became a little older, we would go fishing. Most of the fishing was done on the Bay around the docks near the Royal Palm Hotel. We fished along the area where Bayfront Park now stands. We would wade out to about our waist and dive down there and come up with quite a few oysters. Those were pleasurable and happy occasions. Further down, going north, there were quite a few seagrape trees. That would be in the area of the

Everglades Hotel. It would be fun to stand and watch the waves lap in just near the street. We would pick up seagrapes there. Keeping down to Sixth street was the old P. & O. dock which is in the area of the new Bicentennial Park. We fished there around the docks and some of the boys learned to swim. I

Brownsville, South Miami now S.W. 8th Street, Perrine and Goulds). Usually there were no more than three or five person per team. If the score was 65 to 42, it was alright. Baseball was a favorite sport.

"Some boys in the black community were fortunate



Virginia Beach

On Virginia Key along Bear Cut and Atlantic Ocean on north side of Rickenbacker Causeway. Exclusively for Negroes.

A 1964 color brochure distributed by the Metropolitan Dade County Park and Recreation Department advertised Virginia Beach on the Rickenbacker Causeway as being "exclusively for Negroes."

didn't learn to swim at that time, but I enjoyed wading around the water. All of these were wholesome activities that occupied our time.

"I guess I ought to put in here that we also did a little fruit stealing. Not a lot, but I can recall that there was a grove north of Northwest 20th street between 10th and 12th avenues that we got mangoes and avocado pears from. That was the boys' idea of fun.

"We had groups of baseball teams. Each little community area had its own baseball team. (Prior to the 1920's black residents lived in these sub-communities: Coconut Grove, Lemon City Colored Town now called Overtown or Culmer Park, Poka Moonshine now called

enough to have rifles, BB rifles or air rifles as they were called. They went hunting. You didn't have to go very far from Fourth or Fifth avenues going West. Certainly, north of 14th or 12th street where Booker T. Washington High School stands today. In that area going towards Seventh avenue there were woods, palmettos and pine trees. There were birds all around and they would shoot them.

"Before 1915, boys from the black community learned to swim in the Bay. The City of Miami did not provide swimming facilities for any residents. During the 1920's blacks were prohibited from swimming in any of the public beaches. I think that the YMCA probably afforded swimming facilities for white

youth. But, as blacks, we had no Y. In fact, there was no organized play program for black youth. As I think back now, it was a sad situation. We were able to get around that because it was a small place. Everybody knew everybody else and there was very little crime. I want to say one thing that always left me very sad. We had no opportunity to join the Boy Scouts of America. I wanted to become a Boy Scout very badly. I would see the white boys marching or going out to camp. My cousin, Lester Sands, lived in Key West. There was a black troop down there. When he visited us he would tell me about the good times his troop had. In later years that changed. But I'll always feel that I missed something special by not being allowed to join the Boy Scouts in Miami, because I was black.

"My good friend Leonard Davis and I often made our own fun. We combined a little business enterprise with pleasure. We collected empty whisky bottles, avocado pear and mango seeds from around the community. The empty bottles were sold to saloons for a penny each. It was easy to sell the seeds where groves were being planted.

"You asked about the Royal Palm Hotel. It didn't bother me to watch vacationers and residents enjoying themselves there. I guess because I was born into a segregated area and a segregated society I understood why hotels were not opened to the black community. Like my parents, I had grown to accept racial discrimination as a fact of life. There was a certain amount of acceptance that came from

our heritage. As children we questioned it. But the usual answer was that white people had all of the money and we were poor. We were told about slavery. Always in my family we were given to feel that if we worked hard and tried to advance we could lift ourselves up by our bootstraps . . . we could get some of the things that we desired and some of the things white people had. That was not to say, however, that would give us the opportunity to break the barrier, the racial barrier. Perhaps I should inject here that around the time when I was in 6th grade, Mrs. Budge (Frank T.) gave me a copy of one of Horatio Alger's books, *Store-boy*, *Ben Barkley*. I remember it today as I did then. I had no idea that Alger, a Harvard graduate, had written for white boys. He wanted to inspire them to look to the future and to have hope. I didn't know. I thought that any boy in America could do the same thing. I read and re-read that book many times. I am sure that it colored my life in a very definite way. If I have been successful in my life, much of the credit is owed to that book.

"I want to talk about picnics. This was usually a community affair. Churches would have picnics. In the summer, Miami was a ghost town. There was no Miami Beach. As a matter of fact, we called it Ocean Beach. Nobody lived over there at all. I can remember when there was one dwelling on all of the beach and that was South Beach, where there was a pavillion. Going north at about Fifth street is where the pavillion was. Going north there was nothing but mangoes as you would go along the beach, all the way up to Lemon City to the Old

House of Refuge. Boats that would run aground would be serviced there. The thing that was so delightful for youngsters was that there was a friendliness and camaraderie that perhaps no longer exists. It was a basket picnic affair. We went to Ocean Beach, not Miami Beach. We had to go in a boat. There were no causeways at this time. But, even the trip was a delightful thing. I can remember early in the morning, perhaps at 5 a.m., the Magic City Comet Band would parade up Second avenue and around Third avenue and that would wake up the youth and the others who knew that it was time to get ready to go to the picnic. We would get down to the boat. It left the foot of Flagler Street (where the Library is now) from a big building called the Fair building. We got on the boat and we went directly across to Miami Beach. Everyone opened up their food and it was just a joyful experience. We played out in the ocean and sometimes go up the beach and find a turtle egg nest. Sometimes as many as one hundred eggs were found.

"The picnics perhaps gave me more real joy and pleasure and experiences back in those days. Also, there was a barbecue pit there to barbecue pork and beef.

"Most interesting. When we went to the beach the whites were not there. There was a bath house. They rented bathing suits when women wore dresses. Men had their long trunks. We were allowed to go in and rent those suits in the bathhouse. When we were through, those same suits were washed out and rented to whites. I don't know whether or not this was general knowledge to

the white community, but surely the captain of the boat knew. It was not a secret.

"Easter Monday, the second Sunday in May was the Oddfellows' Anniversary Day and the next day there was usually a picnic. Usually our picnic day was Monday as I can remember. We always had full use of the pavillion and boat on Mondays. A full day was spent there. As Miami grew and got larger, the white power structure stopped the black community entirely from going to the beach.

"Later Mr. D. A. Dorsey purchased Fisher Island so that blacks could have a beach of their own. He owned the whole island. We had picnics over there and there was a bathhouse, but that was solely for blacks. That was in the early 1920's, when I was going to Morehouse and teaching school here in Miami. This island was available to the black community, courtesy of D. A. Dorsey for about six or seven years. By 1925, when the boom came, property values had gone up tremendously and taxes (real estate) probably forced him to sell.

"From then until we were finally able to get Virginia Key Beach, there was no place where we could tread on the beach of the Atlantic Ocean, at all. After Attorney Thomas came here during the 1940's to practice law, a few stalwarts decided that we were going to go someplace to get in the Atlantic Ocean to enjoy it. The county owned and still owns a good bit of the beach north of Baker's Haulover. This area was not frequented very much by whites. Attorney L. E. Thomas, a black lawyer and several other men from the black community decided that they would make a test

case from this situation. Attorney Thomas gave them the law and protected them from the legal aspect. They called the sheriff and told him that they were Negro citizens, and that they were going up to the beach to Baker's Haulover and go in swimming. They were not looking for trouble but we wanted to notify you in front if something happened we are taxpayers we are property owners and we know that this is county property. Attorney Thomas had looked it up and verified that it was county property. I believe that Jimmy Sullivan was the sheriff at this time. The sheriff is believed to have said, 'Now why do you boys want to get in trouble? You just want to stir up things. Why don't you stay on your side and don't do that?' But the men had already made up their minds and felt that as taxpayers the black community should also be entitled to swim there like anybody else. So they went. Thomas went with them, but did not go in. He stayed on the beach. Eventually a motorcycle cop came along. He stopped his motorcycle and asked, 'What are those boys doing over there?' and demanded that 'boys come out or face jail!' Thomas identified himself as an attorney and encouraged the officer to arrest the men so that a test case could be filed. 'We are ready to go to jail.' This response surprised the officer who retaliated by telling the men, 'I'll be back in a little while and you had better be gone when I return.' Evidently he called the sheriff's office. Nothing was done. The men eventually came out and went home.

"It is believed that the county commissioners called a special meeting to discuss this problem with Board

A DAY AT THE BEACH



Florida bathers wear the popular suits of the day as they enjoy the Atlantic surf. (HASF postcard).

When the Ishmael family started packing their Kansas possessions for the move to Florida City, then known as Detroit, her friends tried to convince Mrs. Ishmael that she would have no need for her black taffeta Sunday-go-to-meeting dress, but she brought it along anyhow. Lacking closet space in her wilderness home, she hung it in back of her bedroom door.

One Sunday when the neighbors, since there was no church built as yet, gathered on her front porch and started services, she donned the taffeta and stepped out of her own front door to attend. A few weeks later Ish and her neighbors, Mrs. Edward Stiling, Mrs. George Reynolds and Mrs. Maybelle Rue decided to walk the ties to the City of Homestead and — optimists that they were — do a little shopping. There was no road then so you walked the ties unless you had influence enough to ride the work train or hand car. Again the black taffeta came off its hanger for the expedition of great promise and scant accomplishment.

Much later on when a road was worn down along the tracks Mrs. Rue acquired a car and to celebrate invited her neighbors to go to Miami

Beach. What excitement and what planning! Ish wrote a friend in Miami to send her a bathing cap and that friend, being a real one, included red garters and sandals. Again the black taffeta came off the hanger — this time to be transformed into a bathing suit. Ish made (for those times) a short plaited skirt and bloomers. The neck of the bodice was modestly low and the sleeves long. Heavy stitched bands were at the throat and wrist.

The day came and they made their way by the circuitous route of Krome Ave. west to Redland Rd., north to about Cocopalm and then back winding around in the general area of the old road to Cutler. Eventually they crossed the famous Collins bridge and arrived at Smith's Casino and rented a dressing room. Mrs. Stiling, Mrs. Reynolds and Mrs. Rue having less complicated outfits went out first and joined others gaily bobbing on the guide ropes.

Ish clothed herself first modestly in a complete set of old underwear, and then donned her gorgeous costume — red cap, black suit, red garters over her long black silk stockings and red sandals. When she emerged

(Continued on page 11)

THE BELVEDERE BUNGALOW



Miami has had a variety of architectural styles but one that is almost forgotten is the belvedere bungalow of the pre-Mediterranean era and was first introduced and promoted by the Tatum Brothers in their Riverside Heights development (area of the present Orange Bowl) beginning in 1916. The belvedere was described in Riverside Heights ads as "a type of bungalow designed and built especially for life in the tropics." The price ranged from \$3,750 to \$6,500.

The dictionary description of a belvedere is a "structure designed to command a view." Belvedere bungalows were always two storied and the second story was smaller than the first story (with outdoor sleeping windows which open at a touch of your finger." Before air conditioning, sleeping porches were popular and the second floor of the belvedere was a refinement of a sleeping porch. Often there was only one room upstairs, never more than two, with windows on all sides for cross ventilation. Other features of the belvedere included eave

overhangs so windows could be left open except in blowing rains, a fireplace of native stone, porches trimmed with native stone, and built-in bookcases, china cabinets and kitchen cabinets before built-ins had become common. There was even a hide-a-bed built into a desk in some of the bungalows.

The belvedere shown here was the home of Mr. and Mrs. E. V. Blackman and was located at 1519 N.W. First Street, and the photo was taken about 1920. Mr. Blackman was an early pioneer who wrote promotional articles on Florida agriculture for the local newspapers, was editor of a periodical called *The Homeseeker*, a publication of the Florida East Coast Railway System, and served as chairman of some of Miami's early fairs.

If any UPDATE readers know of belvedere bungalows still in existence in Dade County would you please phone that information to the Historical Museum of South Florida, 854-3289.

—T. P.

A DAY AT THE BEACH

(Continued from page 10)

she fancied her appearance so much she decided it would be a shame to hide all that glamour in deep water, so she sat down on the sand where an occasional wave would wash over her. There were possible a dozen persons on the sand. In a few minutes a lady whispered, "Your suit is split down the back." Ish paid her no mind, deducing she was nosey or jealous.

Presently Ish became interested in watching little black things floating in the water, but she was never able to catch one as the waves washed in and out. When the bathers began coming out of the water a lady stopped and said, "Lady, the whole back of your suit is out". Ish was really indignant at that time and made a sudden move to face about and give an appropriate answer. It took just that movement and a wave to completely disintegrate her lovely suit. There she sat with

nothing to show of her gorgeous garment but the heavily stitched neck and arm bands. When her friends saw her they naturally went into spasms of laughter and then the seriousness of the situation dawned on them. They conferred a few seconds and then as Ish put it, "they just plain made a sandwich of me". Mrs. Stiling, tiny, went ahead and Ish dropped her arms over Mrs. Stiling's shoulders. Mrs. Reynolds, heavy set, brought up the rear and discreetly spread her skirt. Mrs. Rue marched militantly ahead to clear the way to the casino.

When they appeared on the beach clothed and more or less in their right minds, the people laughed again. Ish was always a good sport and could take a joke on herself in her stride, so all ended well.

The above was excerpted from Annie Mayhew Fitzpatrick's book, Lest We Forget.

REFLECTIONS

(Continued from page 9)

members. Shortly after that it was announced that a beach would be provided for Negroes. That was the beginning of Virginia Key Beach, exclusively for Negroes. It was recently closed for a while, but reopened to the entire community during the spring of 1977."

THE TEQUESTANS

(Continued from page 5)

HASF and choose a service area.

Although Tequestans have many goals, among them learning more about local history and helping the Museum achieve its full potential, they are extremely proud of their financial contribution to the Historical Association. Tequestan efforts in the first year raised 21% of the operating budget of HASF. In addition, Tequestans also made an impact on this community by making people aware of the many free educational services HASF provides.

Join HASF, be a Tequestan — learn and laugh with us!

Information on Tequestan membership may be obtained by calling the Museum.

PICTURING OUR PAST by Samuel Boldrick



Casinos have always been a favorite subject of conversation on Miami Beach. In the 1920's casinos were centers for family recreation. You could rent a bathing suit here, there were changing rooms and showers available. Some casinos, such as the Deauville (above) had Olympic size swimming pools, restaurants, and even dance floors. One feature that they did not have was gambling.



This is a 1925 aerial view of the Roman Pools which were located approximately where 21st Street beach is on Miami Beach.



Cook's Casino was a popular center. In this 1935 photo, the large building with a tower on the horizon was the original Roney Plaza Hotel. (All photos courtesy The Romer Collection, Miami-Dade Public Library.)

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