

FORT MYERS BEACH



A Tribute

MAY THEY REST IN PARADISE

**Mitch Pacyna • Martha Campbell
Bonnie Gauthier • Calvin Geckler
Becky Bodnar • Robert Rigaux
Zoe Underhill • Daymon Utterback
Jim Ohliger • James “Denny” Hurst
Nishelle Harris-Miles • Scott Lumley
Robert & Ilonka Knes • John Graham
Lucinda Keller • Karl Knobloch Jr
Jacques Roelofs • Stephen Winston
Jerry (JR) Sawyer • Karen Ebersole**



JUST LISTED!



265 MANGO ST. \$2,749,000



206 CONNECTICUT ST. \$1,195,000



5370-5472 PALMETTO ST. \$963,000

OUR CURRENT LISTINGS

OUR SOLD SINCE HURRICAN IAN

RESIDENTIAL PROPERTIES

7317 ESTERO BLVD #210	\$459,000
5100 ESTERO BLVD #4A4	\$525,000
6500 ESTERO BLVD #H302	\$525,000
8401 ESTERO BLVD #606	\$699,000
4192 BAY BEACH LN #835	\$899,000
206 CONNECTICUT ST	\$1,195,000
270 DUNDEE RD	\$1,499,000
143 GULF ISLAND DR	\$2,199,000
130 BAHIA VIA	\$2,250,000
265 MANGO ST	\$2,749,000
260 FLAMINGO ST	\$2,899,000
21521 MADERA RD	\$3,975,000
5370-5372 PALMETTO ST	\$963,000
5441-5451 OAK RIDGE AVE	\$1,149,000
254 OSTEGO DR	\$1,195,000
71 MANGO ST	\$1,994,000

BUILDABLE LOTS

5780 LAUDER ST	\$625,000
5583 ESTERO BLVD	\$799,000
2141 ESTERO BLVD	\$879,000
716 ESTERO BLVD	\$1,399,000
851 LAGOON ST	\$2,269,000
6060 GULF RD	\$3,750,000
711 ESTERO BLVD	\$3,999,000

COMMERCIAL PROPERTIES

1750 ESTERO BLVD	\$2,495,000
19171 SAN CARLOS BLVD	\$3,499,000

SOLD LISTINGS

7846 BUCCANEER DR	\$437,000
22748 ISLAND PINES WAY #403	\$475,000
5251 ESTERO BLVD	\$500,000
6662 ESTERO BLVD #B509	\$500,000
8170 LAGOON RD	\$555,000
117 HERCULES DR	\$600,000
132 ANDRE MAR DR	\$635,000
101 / 103 ANDRE MAR DR	\$650,000
7909 ESTERO BLVD	\$685,000
126 MADISON CT	\$689,000
105 MANDALAY RD	\$690,000
21750 MADERA RD	\$725,000
136 BAY MAR DR	\$725,000
5770 LAUDER ST	\$775,000
3071 SHELL MOUND BLVD	\$810,000
215 FLAMINGO ST	\$820,000
444 MADISON CT	\$860,000
250 ESTERO BLVD #303	\$880,000
250 ESTERO BLVD #505	\$888,000
250 ESTERO BLVD #606	\$890,000
424 PALERMO CIR	\$900,000
521 ESTERO BLVD	\$920,000
101 BAY MAR DR	\$925,000
239 PRIMO DR	\$940,000
8339 ESTERO BLVD	\$1,020,000
8211 ESTERO BLVD	\$1,050,000
277 IBIS ST	\$1,100,000
8351 ESTERO BLVD	\$1,100,000
1 BAYVIEW BLVD	\$1,650,000
5236 ESTERO BLVD	\$2,000,000
823 LAGOON ST	\$2,100,000
1550 I ST	\$2,200,000
60-64 AVENUE C	\$3,195,000
2430 COTTAGE AVE	\$3,200,000
3060 ESTERO BLVD	\$3,250,000
5950 ESTERO BLVD	\$4,800,000

SOLD BUYER

22676 ISLAND PINES WAY #142	\$380,000
7846 BUCCANEER DR	\$437,000
5251 ESTERO BLVD	\$500,000
6662 ESTERO BLVD #B509	\$500,000
108 VOORHIS ST	\$525,000
149 PEARL ST	\$550,000
8170 LAGOON RD	\$555,000
201 DELMAR AVE	\$580,000
140 MID ISLAND DR	\$600,000
240 MIRAMAR ST	\$605,000
243 ALBATROSS ST	\$630,000
129 CURLEW ST	\$650,000
2890 ESTERO BLVD	\$650,000
2880 ESTERO BLVD	\$650,000
101 / 103 ANDRE MAR DR	\$650,000
105 MANDALAY RD	\$690,000
21750 MADERA RD	\$725,000
136 BAY MAR DR	\$725,000
8 PEPITA ST	\$750,000
3071 SHELL MOUND BLVD	\$810,000
4451 ESTERO BLVD	\$850,000
4109 ESTERO BLVD	\$900,000
424 PALERMO CIR	\$900,000
130 COCONUT DR	\$925,000
4151 ESTERO BLVD	\$925,000
101 BAY MAR DR	\$925,000
239 PRIMO DR	\$940,000
530 CARLOS CIR	\$950,000
523 ESTERO BLVD	\$1,050,000
106-108 TROPICAL SHORE WAY #108	\$1,100,000
191 ABERDEEN AVE	\$1,200,000
2900-2902 ESTERO BLVD	\$1,200,000
582 ESTERO BLVD	\$1,300,000
553 ESTERO BLVD	\$1,300,000
750 MATANZAS CT	\$1,600,000
1 BAYVIEW BLVD	\$1,650,000
1550 I ST	\$2,200,000
3600 ESTERO BLVD	\$2,400,000
2870 ESTERO BLVD	\$2,500,000
457 ESTERO BLVD	\$2,850,000
2301-2307 ESTERO BLVD	\$3,100,000
60-64 AVENUE C	\$3,195,000
2430 COTTAGE AVE	\$3,200,000
3060 ESTERO BLVD	\$3,250,000



**HAVE QUESTIONS?
WE GOT ANSWERS!**

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FORT MYERS BEACH *Living*

A Best Version Media Magazine

An independently owned community magazine.

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FEEDBACK / IDEAS / SUBMISSIONS

Have feedback, ideas or submissions? We are always happy to hear from you! Deadlines for submissions are the 20th of each month, 6 weeks in advance of publication. Email your thoughts, ideas and photographs to gmooney@bestversionmedia.com. Submissions must be original and exclusive to Fort Myers Beach LIVING, at a maximum of 500 words. Fort Myers Beach LIVING reserves the right to edit submissions for clarity, space limitations and spelling.

IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS:

- Emergency: 911
- Lee County Sheriff's Office: 239-477-1000
- FMB Fire Department: 239-590-4200
- FMB Town Hall: 239-765-0202
- FMB Public Library: 239-765-8162
- Lee County Parks & Recreation: 239-533-7275
- Beach Elementary School: 239-463-6356
- FMB Water Department: 239-463-9914
- Trash Collection: 239-334-1224
- Florida Power & Light (FPL): 1-800-226-5885
- CenturyLink: 239-335-3111
- Comcast Cable Company: 239-432-9277
- FMB Chamber of Commerce: 239-454-7500

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ON THE COVER
A Tribute

Photo by
Betty Thomas



Fort Myers Beach Life

- ✓ Catch the Perfect Sunset
- ✓ Take a Boat Tour
- ✓ Listen to Live Music Day & Night
- ✓ Enjoy some of the Best Local Restaurants
- ✓ Mingle with the People on & off the Sand while Soaking up the Sun!

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on Fort Myers Beach!

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SUDOKU

- By Gary Mooney -

SUDOKU RULES:

Each row must contain the digits 1-9.

Each column must contain the digits 1-9.

Each box must contain the digits 1-9.

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Answers on page 12

PAIN Keeping you from doing the things you enjoy?



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Andrew Hodge, MD ABOS

Specializing in Knee and Hip Surgery

Aileen Padilla, DO

Specializing in Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation

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Dear Friends & Neighbors!

In the days ahead you may find yourself feeling like a grumpy bear just out of hibernation. You may have trouble sleeping; having anxiety, numbness or irritability; feeling “foggy”; difficulty in concentrating and depression. Please show yourself some grace and be easy on yourself, as you are likely feeling “The Anniversary Effect.” You may have experienced this in your life before after losing someone you love. Seems that when we experience a traumatic event, we can store that in our mind and bodies and when 365 days goes by our body remembers. Maybe, like how a nesting turtle will come back to lay her eggs on the same beach from which she hatched. 😊

So if you're not feeling yourself this month, it's OK. Get extra rest, go for a dip in the Gulf, take a walk, meditate, do art, start a journal or practice Yoga; just don't hesitate to ask for help, please! Call a neighbor you haven't seen for a year and see how they are doing. Express memories and feelings you had from last year. Stop by FMB Strong at 820 Buttonwood Drive. Cry! Hug! Smile!

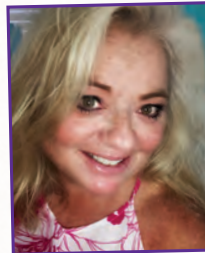
We are going to be OK. But really to say we are going to be OK isn't even close to how AWESOME we already are! We have been through the worst hurricane to ever make landfall in Florida history! We

are mighty, and we are strong -- FMB Strong!

Fort Myers Beach LIVING dedicates this issue to you ~ the survivors and to our lost friends / neighbors / loved ones -- may they forever rest in Paradise. And to our beautiful, funky little Island that was and will be again the most incredible place to live because of the people who make it so!

If you need help or have a loved one who does, contact FMB Strong, SalusCare, the Children Advocacy Center or call the United Way's 211 line for local resources. The nationwide Suicide & Crisis Lifeline is available 24 hours a day by calling 988.

I'll see you again on the other side of that brand new year!!!!



Sandy Sandness

Publisher

Fort Myers Beach LIVING

239-222-0129

ssandness@bestversionmedia.com

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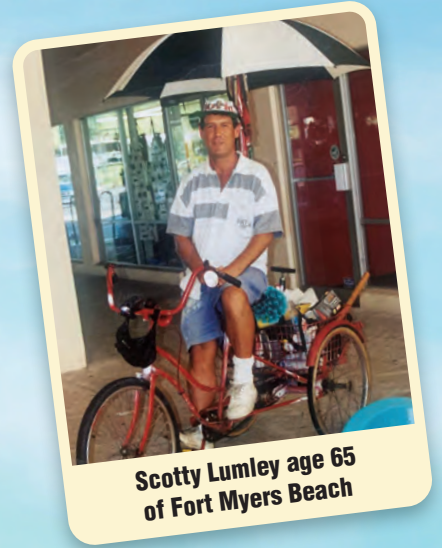
A Tribute MAY THEY REST IN PARADISE



**Bonnie Gauthier age 59
of Fort Myers Beach**



**Becky Bodnar age 80 & Robert Rigaux age 79
of Andre Mar Drive**

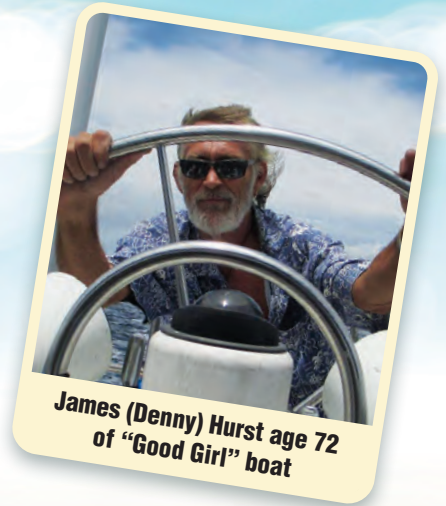


**Scotty Lumley age 65
of Fort Myers Beach**

*Calvin Geckler age 88
of Azalea Lane*



**Mitch Pacyna age 74
of Hercules Drive**

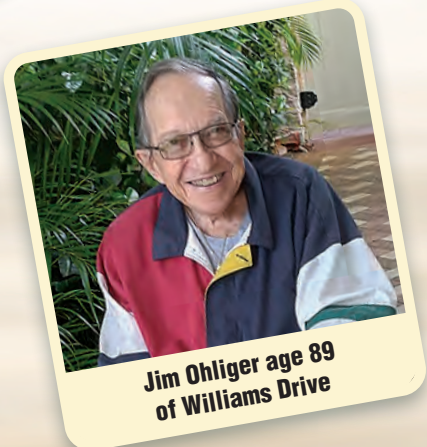


**James (Denny) Hurst age 72
of "Good Girl" boat**



**Martha Marti Campbell age 74
of Hercules Drive**

*Jacques Roelofs of
Seagull Drive*

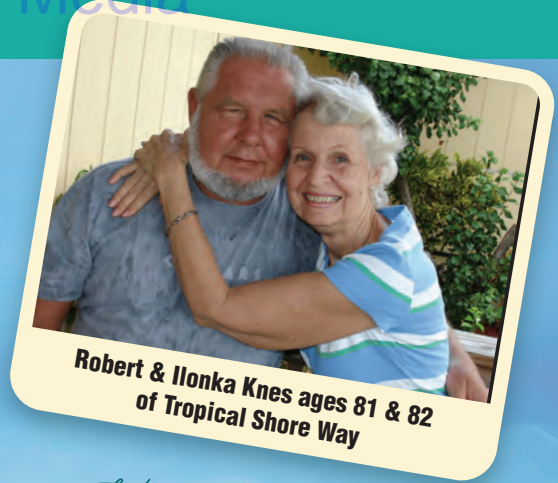


**Jim Ohliger age 89
of Williams Drive**



**Lucinda Keller age 85
of Carolina Street**

*Karl Knobloch Jr age 80 of
Estero Boulevard*



**Robert & Ilonka Knes ages 81 & 82
of Tropical Shore Way**

*Jerry (JR) Sawyer age
83 of Anchorage Street*

*Karen Ebersole age 76
of Bayside Estates*



**Zoe Underhill age 84
of Shell Mound Boulevard**



**Nishelle Harris-Miles age 40
of Seminole Way**



**Daymon Utterback age 54
of Seminole Way**

*John G. Graham age 93
of Chinook Trail*

*Stephen Winston age 81
of Bay Beach Lane*

A TRIBUTE TO

- By Sandy Sandness & Gary Mooney -

With the one-year anniversary of Hurricane Ian on September 28, 2022, it is already difficult to remember that there once was a colorful and vibrant Fort Myers Beach before that ominous date. *FMB LIVING* Magazine assembled these commemorative photographs of island businesses, restaurants, bars, cottages and related sights of what our world was like before Ian. These photos are just a small sample of the hundreds of Estero Island buildings and attractions we lost to Ian so if you do not see your favorite, then rely on your own heart to fill in the blank. In our new reality of obtaining permits and working with contractors, we hope these wonderful memories bring a smile to your face!



Key Estero Giraffe



Shamrock Irish Pub

TOP RECENT SALES FOR FORT MYERS BEACH

SINGLE FAMILY HOMES 6-28-2023 to 7-27-2023				CONDOS 6-28-2023 to 7-27-2023				
Address	Beds/Baths	Sq. Ft.	Sold Price	Address	Sub/Condo	Beds/Baths	Sq. Ft.	Sold Price
720 MATANZAS CT	2 Bed/1	858	\$1,550,000	8751 ESTERO BLVD	ISLAND BEACH CLUB CONDO #402	2+Den/2	1,448	\$850,000
370 BAYLAND RD	3 Bed/2	1,080	\$976,000	4137 BAY BEACH LN	WATERSIDE AT BAY BEACH #525	3+Den/2	2,082	\$850,000
305 DUNDEE RD	4 Bed/2	1,568	\$975,000	250 ESTERO BLVD	ESTERO ISLAND BEACH VILLAS #102	2 Bed/2	992	\$850,000
235 MIRAMAR ST	3 Bed/2	1,432	\$850,000	4191 BAY BEACH LN	WATERSIDE AT BAY BEACH #286	3 Bed/3	1,849	\$699,000
189 CURLEW ST	3 Bed/2	2,016	\$785,000	6400 ESTERO BLVD	SUNSET CONDO #401	2 Bed/2	991	\$625,000
8 PEPITA ST	2 Bed/2	1,148	\$750,000	4182 BAY BEACH LN	WATERSIDE AT BAY BEACH #774	2 Bed/2	1,390	\$615,000
136 BAY MAR DR	4 Bed/4	1,008	\$725,000	4183 BAY BEACH LN	WATERSIDE AT BAY BEACH #381	2 Bed/2	1,445	\$605,000
167 MANDALAY RD	2 Bed/2.5	1,190	\$705,000	4341 BAY BEACH LN	CASA MARINA #142	2 Bed/2	1,164	\$530,000
331 WASHINGTON CT	3 Bed/1.5	1,050	\$700,000	400 LENELL RD	WINDWARD POINT CONDO #303	2 Bed/2	872	\$430,000
209 MIRAMAR ST	2 Bed/1	672	\$695,000	22676 ISLAND PINES WAY	ADMIRALS BAY #142	2 Bed/2	811	\$380,000
131 MID ISLAND DR	2 Bed/2	1,200	\$549,000	7300 ESTERO BLVD	ESTERO BEACH AND TENNIS CLUB #402	0 Bed/1	517	\$350,000
				140 ESTERO BLVD	SANIBEL VIEW VILLAS #2305	1 Bed/1	383	\$261,500

LOTS 5-25-2023 TO 6-28-2023				
Address	Lot Frontage	Lot Left	Acres	Sold Price
3600 ESTERO BLVD	50	180	0.222	\$2,400,000
20 AVENIDA CARITA	35	119	0.16	\$1,010,000
4109 ESTERO BLVD	100	100	0.213	\$900,000
21750 MADERA RD	80	125	0.208	\$725,000
4801 ESTERO BLVD	50	120	0.152	\$650,000
4805 ESTERO BLVD	125	52	0.146	\$620,000
121 HIBISCUS DR	59	97	0.13	\$540,000

Based on information from the Florida Gulf Coast MLS, Inc. for the period 6-25-23 to 7-28-23 for FB01-FB07 • Best Version Media does not guarantee the accuracy of the statistical data on this page. The data does not represent the listings of any one agent or agency but the entire real estate community in the area. Any real estate agent's ad appearing in the magazine is separate from the statistical data provided which is in no way a part of their advertisement.



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Sunshine WINDOW
Fashions & Design

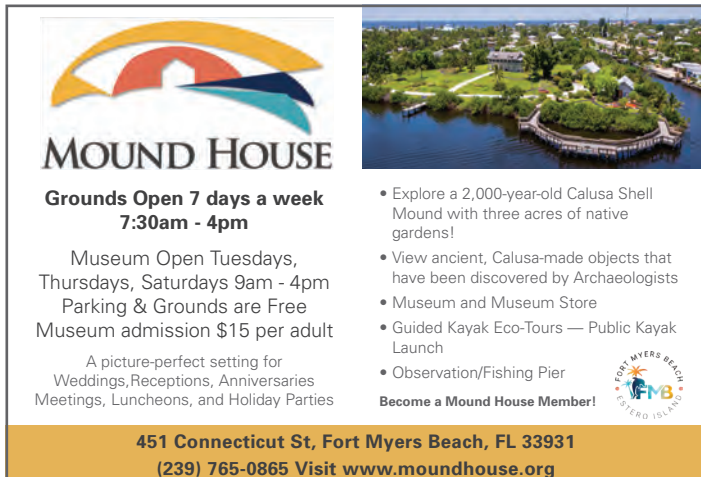
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- Museum and Museum Store
- Guided Kayak Eco-Tours — Public Kayak Launch
- Observation/Fishing Pier

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Hurricane Re-Entry Passes

New Passes Required for 2023

- By Gary Mooney -

The Town of Fort Myers Beach, in cooperation with the FMB Fire District and Lee County Sheriffs Office (LCSO), is issuing new Hurricane Re-Entry Passes for 2023. People who live, owns property or manages a business in the Town can receive two Hurricane Re-Entry Passes. It is essential to renew your 2023 passes as the Town will not honor those from prior seasons.



The Town's 2023 Hurricane Re-Entry Pass

To obtain your Hurricane Re-Entry Passes, visit the temporary Town Hall complex at 2545 Estero Boulevard Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. You need one form of identification, such as a driver's license with an FMB address, utility bill, deed, rental agreement, mortgage statement, or tax record that confirms your resident, property owner or businessowner status to receive your passes. If you are out-of-town, email hurricane@fmbgov.com with attached photographs and/or document files to prove your eligibility and include the address for where you want to Town to mail your passes.

Should a hurricane strike FMB in 2023, based on the storm's severity, FMB may close for up to 48 hours and possibly longer, until the Town, LCSO and FMB Fire District can verify the island's safety. Reopening benchmarks include access and mitigate findings from throughout the entire island from the air and ground; the completion of search-&-rescue and recovery efforts; the removal of security hazards such as electricity, gas leaks, roadway washouts, water line damage and unstable structures that threaten bridges and public right of ways; debris assessment and management; clearing and repairing roadways and establishing traffic patterns; and determining the best methods to manage perimeter controls.

For related questions or additional information, contact the Town at hurricane@fmbgov.com. ■



The Mayor's Message

- By FMB Mayor Dan Allers -

A year ago, Hurricane Ian struck our slice of paradise and challenged our will and resilience as no storm in our history. Ian has been a generational event; I pray it's the last I see in my lifetime and hope no one else will ever experience the heartbreaking events we did on that September day.

The word "generation" got me thinking about our community's roots and how those roots will influence our future. Why did past generations decide to make this island home? Did they embrace the island's natural beauty as we do? In the early 1900s the first homesteads were established here. The island quickly became a place that a diverse population wanted to call home or at least make it an annual vacation retreat. Since then, there have been many storms that impacted Southwest Florida, with some stronger than others, but never the likes of Ian.

From Hurricane Hazel, the first named storm in 1950 with winds of 85-mph, to Donna in 1960 at 125-mph that caused damage to 75 percent of the homes on the island, down to lesser hurricanes like Isabel in 1964 and Alma in 1965, these all battered our island.

In 2004, Hurricane Charley with wind speeds of 145-mph and a surge of 8 feet caused severe damage to Fort Myers Beach. At that time, it was the strongest storm to ever impact FMB. The following year Hurricane Wilma made landfall just south of the beach, with the island sustaining damage. With each storm people were lost, some moved away, and some new people moved in. With each of these events, as well as those in the first half of the 20th Century, the island rebuilt stronger and safer. Those who stayed accepted the new residents and the new residents embraced the core spirit of the culture that makes Fort Myers Beach special.

In the two-week build up to Hurricane Irma in September 2017, residents watched as the prediction of intense winds and storm surge filled our televisions, radios, and newspapers. Some people heeded the reports and acted on the evacuation warnings. With typical hurricane unpredictability, the storm turned at the last-minute, leaving the island with mostly minimal damage and nowhere near the media forecasts. Social media was flooded with words like "overhyped, fake news, I knew it wasn't going to be bad"; all this setting the stage for doubting the accuracy of future forecasts.

On September 28, 2022, the media's dire predictions of 155-mph winds and 13-foot storm surge became a reality. We lost some friends, others moved away, new ones will move in, and we will rebuild and construct new structures. There is no reason to fear that we will lose the island's culture and vibe. Just as previous generations did after each of the past storms, we will build back stronger, safer and carry forward with the core culture that has endured for generations.



Shuckers Cottage Beach Bar



Silver Witch



The Dog House



The Sea Gypsy Inn



Tuckaway Cafe



Beach Bar Pub



Cottages of Paradise Point



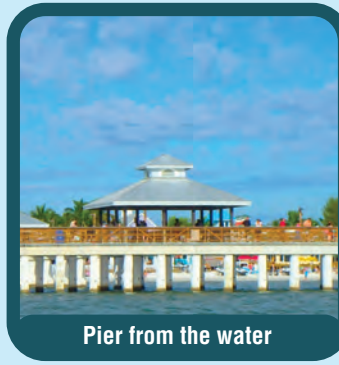
Fresh Catch Junkanoo

Over the last year we watched the hard work, passion, and determination of our neighbors as we recover from Ian, while simultaneously watching the artifacts of past generations getting hauled away in large trucks, lost forever. We never imagined something of Ian's magnitude could ever happen to us. And yet in just a few short hours we learned that a force much stronger than mankind's ability to stop it had different plans for our island. Our minds were numb, our eyes disbelieving, and our hearts wept with disbelief as we returned to the island to find it was in fact nothing we remembered. The history of small cottages and quaint little places we all loved to eat in and shop at were nothing but piles of wood. Neighbors crying and hugging each other as they wheeled what little belongings they had left, stumbling down the sand-filled Estero Boulevard. The uncertainty of what was going to happen to the future of our island was prevalent on everyone's faces. But like the generations before us, we're dusting ourselves off, facing the challenges head-on and starting to rebuild.

We're a generation accustomed to instant gratification. With technology driving the likes of Google and Amazon we are accustomed to having answers to any question at our fingertips or having virtually any needed items delivered to our doorstep the same day. Unfortunately, this led to a culture of impatience that is an unrealistic expectation after an unprecedented disaster. Demand is high, supplies limited and the urgency is real as everyone needs to get back to a sense of normalcy. Even though our resilient community has made do with what's available, we have a long way to go. It is going to take time and test our patience, but I have no doubt we will be back stronger, safer and better prepared than ever before. Should another community ever face a disaster like ours, let our successful recovery be the model they will look to for strength, support and hope.

As new buildings go up, businesses reopen, old and new residents return, and we move closer to the next generation of the FMB culture and landscape, it is important to remember and record our paths, both good and bad, in order to prepare us for the future. We will have challenges and we will have disagreements but if we are true to the successful efforts of the generations before us, we will continue to be the place our predecessors envisioned. And although some places will look different and new people will become part of our lives, it will always be a beautiful place to vacation or call home. Winston Churchill once said, "If we open a quarrel between the past and present, we shall find that we have lost the future."

The tragic events of September 28, 2022, are forever ingrained into our hearts and remembrances, but it is important to record our experiences and what learned. We can use these lessons to prepare future generations for readiness. I'm reminded of a quote from William Wordsworth, "Life is divided into three terms -- that which was, which is, and which will be. Let us learn from the past to wisely redevelop in the present, and from that present, to live better in the future." ■



Pier from the water



Red Coconut



Shrimp Boats



Times Sq looking down Estero



Trico



Dairy Queen



Local Color



MoJoe's Coffee Bar



Pete's Time Out



Plaka Greek Restaurant

September

**Wed., August 30
"Coffee With A Cop"**

@MoJoe's Coffee Cafe
"Coffee With A Cop" offers a unique opportunity for community members to ask questions and learn more about the Lee County Sheriffs Office and their work on Fort Myers Beach.
Time: 10am
Cost: Free
www.sheriffleefl.org

**Friday., September 1
AND EVERY FRIDAY
Fort Myers Beach Market**

@Times Square
In partnership with the Town of Fort Myers Beach, this Downtown FMB Market offers fresh produce, artisan foods, arts, crafts, clothing and more. Times Square is next to Lynn Hall Memorial Park with ample parking right next to the beautiful beach.
Time: Every Friday 9am-1pm
Cost: Free
www.41markets.com

**Friday, September 1
FMBAA Summer Show: "Fortitude"**

@Tribby Arts Center at Shell Point
As the FMB Art Association prepares to rebuild its iconic gallery destroyed by Hurricane Ian, its annual "Summer Show," this year entitled "Fortitude," is at the Tribby Arts Center through Thursday, September 7.
Time: Tuesdays through Saturdays 10am-3pm
Cost: Free
www.fortmyersbeachart.com

**Tues., September 5
FMB Town Council Meeting**

@DiamondHead Beach Resort
The FMB Town Council continues its efforts to rebuild Fort Myers Beach following Hurricane Ian. This meeting

occurs one day late, due to Labor Day on Monday, September 4.
Time: 9am
Cost: Free
www.fortmyersbeachfl.gov

**Thurs., September 7
FMB Chamber "Coffee Connection"**

@Cape Coral Museum of History
Start your day networking with your FMB Chamber friends with complimentary coffee and tasty breakfast treats.
Time: 8-9:30am
Cost: Free
www.fortmyersbeach.org

**Thurs., September 7
FMB Town Council
Management & Planning Session**

@DiamondHead Beach Resort
The FMB Town Council continues its efforts to rebuild Fort Myers Beach following Hurricane Ian.
Time: 9am
Cost: Free
www.fortmyersbeachfl.gov

**Sat., September 9
Mound House Eco-Kayak Tour**

@The Historic Mound House
Explore the winding mangrove creeks and hidden backwaters of the Estero Bay Aquatic Preserve. This unique 2-hour tour offers the rare opportunity to experience the abundant life within an estuary. The Mound House provides all paddling and safety equipment; ages 12 & up, weather permitting and participants must wear shoes and bring water.
Time: Every Saturday 9-11am
Cost: \$50 per person that includes Mound House admission; Mound House members \$20.
www.moundhouse.org

**Tues., September 12
FMB Local Planning Agency
Meeting**

@DiamondHead Beach Resort
The FMB LPA, appointed by Town Council, continues efforts to rebuild Fort Myers Beach following Hurricane Ian.
Time: 9am
Cost: Free
www.fortmyersbeachfl.gov

**Tues., September 12
Mound House Lecture Series:
"Connecting Communities"**

@The Historic Mound House
Yvette Carrasco, the Urban Ranger at the J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge, presents "Connecting Communities." Yvette will shed light on the Refuge's commitment to inclusivity, ensuring that people from all walks of life benefit from and contribute to the invaluable work of wildlife conservation. A complimentary wine and refreshments reception proceeds the lecture.
Time: Reception: 5:30pm; Lecture 6pm
Cost: \$7 for Mound House members and \$15 non-members.
www.moundhouse.org

**Thurs., September 14
FMB Chamber
Membership Luncheon**

@Bonita Bill's Waterfront Cafe
Join your FMB Chamber friends and hear from new FMB Town Manager Andy Hyatt. Our host this month features a beautiful Estero Bay view, nautical décor and a savory menu!
Time: 11:30am-1pm
Cost: Members \$30; prospective members \$40
www.fortmyersbeach.org

**Mon., September 18
FMB Town Council Meeting**

@DiamondHead Beach Resort
The FMB Town Council continues its efforts to rebuild Fort Myers Beach following Hurricane Ian.
Time: 9am
Cost: Free
www.fortmyersbeachfl.gov

**Thurs., September 21
FMB Chamber
"Business After Hours"**

@Salty Sam's Marina Pirate Ship
Join your FMB Chamber friends on the spectacularly-fun Pirate Ship for networking, tasty complimentary appetizers and a cash bar.
Time: 5:30-7pm
Cost: Members Free; \$15 perspective members
www.fortmyersbeach.org

SUDOKU

Answers from page 3

1	3	2	5	7	8	6	4	9
9	4	7	3	6	1	5	8	2
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4	6	1	9	2	3	7	5	8
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**Thurs., September 28
FMB Revival**

@Bayside Park

When Category 5 Hurricane Ian struck FMB on September 28, 2022, it changed our island community forever. Join your friends and neighbors as we commemorate this historic event with music, food and vendors and share your thoughts and memories.

Time: 11am-10pm

Cost: Free

www.fortmyersbeach.org

**Fri.-Sun., September 29
to October 1
Island Hopper
Songwriters Festival**

@Fort Myers Beach

This 10-day annual music festival runs from September 21 through October 1, with the final three days at various FMB venues. The "Island Hopper" draws some of Country music's greatest singer-songwriters from Nashville and beyond, featuring hundreds of mostly free shows in small and intimate locales where performers play their hits and tell you the story behind the songs.

Time: Fri.: 7-10pm; Sat.: 1-10pm;

Sun.: 1-5pm

Cost: Free

www.islandhopperfest.com

**Sat., September 30
Island Hopper
Songwriters Festival:
"Music On The Mound"**

@The Historic Mound House

FMB's own Sheena Brook along with Brian Sutherland headline the "Music On The Mound!" Admission includes beverages, appetizers & museum entry; limited parking at 216 Connecticut Street so consider alternative transportation or carpooling.

Time: 2-4pm

Cost: \$45-per-person

www.islandhopperfest.com

**Sun., October 1
Island Hopper Songwriters
Festival: Chris Janson**

@Pink Shell Resort

Country Music Star Chris Janson headlines the "Pink Shell Pool Party" that concludes the "2023 Island Hopper Songwriters Fest." Janson is known for his #1 hits "Fix A Drink," "Good Vibes," and triple platinum "Buy Me A Boat." "Rolling Stone" proclaimed Janson "a live legacy in the making!"

Time: 5pm

Cost: \$45-per-person

www.islandhopperfest.com



The FMB Strong Team!



- By Gary Mooney -

New Group Responds to Island Needs

"FMB Strong is an interesting organization," raves Tim Ryan, who is President & Founder of FMB Strong, Inc. "While Fort Myers Beach already had several charity groups prior to Ian who do amazing work, the hurricane devastated their brick-&-mortar locations while we have our building at 820 Buttonwood Drive, and that places us in a great position to help island residents."

Prior to Ian, Tim was in business with FMB Mayor Dan Allers in a firm called "Island Carts FMB." "We had 14 golf carts and we were doing great," recalls Tim. "As Ian began to take an ominous turn, we pulled all our golf carts off the island and stored them at 820 Buttonwood, as this is an elevated building. We even offered our competitors this space since we are off the main island, but to be honest, none of us ever imagined that Ian would be the catastrophe that it became. Even here on San Carlos Island, we still had roughly two feet of water in the warehouse and that was enough to sadly ruin all the golf carts. When the water finally receded, we had several inches of disgusting muck we had to clean out."

Tim was in Chicago when Ian struck. "I spoke with Mayor Dan over the telephone and we agreed that since we still had a functioning building while most others did not, we needed to use 820 Buttonwood as a hurricane relief center. When I returned a few days later, that became the focus, even though we like almost everyone else personally lost everything. Over time, we reached out to other island charities and served as the clearinghouse to quickly and efficiently get assistance and distribute supplies to our residents."

By October, FMB Strong became a 501c3 organization. Soon partnerships began with

the FMB Woman’s Club, FMB Community Foundation, the Lee County Sheriffs Office and Beach Baptist Church. “The folks at Beach Baptist under Pastor Shawn Critser are indispensable, not only in providing food and resources, but by their sheer number of community contacts. Another invaluable resource is Ed and Kim Ryan of Beach Talk Radio, who get out the word about FMB Strong. Tunaskin Aquatic Apparel is a great resource as well, Alex King and the King Family Foundation who made an extremely generous donation, Scott Allan of the Bayside Development Group is also a tremendous supporter and we could not do any of this without Mayor Allers who is an amazing guy! Finally, CareerSource through the Department of Labor allocated grant dollars to hire six fulltime FMB Strong employees and that was a game-changer for us.”

Survivors Helping Survivors!

Tim raves about his FMB Strong teammates. “Every single one of us lost everything to Ian and that makes us the perfect team to work with island residents, so we call FMB Strong ‘Survivors Helping Survivors!’ We establish personal connections so when you walk in, we know you by name and understand exactly what you are going through. That is what makes us unique – everyone here is a victim and a hero!”

FMB Strong is open Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. If you need food, supplies or related services, see FMBStrong.org, email at info@fmbstrong.org, call 802-239-1962 or simply stop in. “The website contains a donation link,”

says Tim, “as every penny except for a small amount to run the office goes to our community, so you can contribute via cash, PayPal, credit card or by purchasing merchandise like t-shirts. Now that Ian is almost one year ago, that initial rush of local, regional, state and national assistance is drying up while our immediate challenges remain so we are refining our network and strengthening our nonprofit relationships to coordinate and distribute supplies.”

Through July, FMB Strong provided over \$3 million in goods to island residents; distributed more than 400 generators; over 600 shop vacs and power washers; thousands of mops, rakes, brooms and tools; over a half-million pounds of food; fulfilled special needs requests such as a power scooter; hosted community meals; provided referrals for the homeless and those with mental health issues; offers a team of emotional support staff through Project H.O.P.E.; provides a safe air-conditioned place to cool off; works with Park Royal to establish a Survivor Support Group; and helps meet specific needs such as generators, microwaves, mini-refrigerators and beds.

“Providing community meals is a neat event,” emphasizes Tim! “We host this twice a month at a local restaurant, generally from 2 to 7 p.m. The meals are free to those in the 33931 zip code and we average 200 to 250 people per outing. This is a nice break for our guests and wonderful for the restaurant as we fill those venues!”



The Beach Pierside Grill & Blowfish Bar



Fire Station 31



The Pier Peddler



The Salty Crab Bar & Grill



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Tropical Jewelry



Beach Access



Beach cottages



Blue Beach House



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Mango Rita's



FMB Fishing Pier

Their Own Amazing Journey

In the long view, FMB Strong is taking the necessary steps to ensure its own existence. “We must be here for as long as the island needs us, to overcome Ian’s obstacles,” Tim says. “Many people are now realizing that this is a real grind that will take years. After Ian’s first few months, we noticed significant positive changes and thought, ‘O.K., this will move quick,’ but now progress is slow and that can be depressing. Our neighbors are doing their financial calculus to determine if their island dream is over or if they will need assistance for the foreseeable future.”

As for FMB Strong, “the CareerSource grant will expire at some point,” offers Tim, “meaning we must be responsible for our staff wages and related costs, as maintaining a brink-&-mortar site is a full plate. At a time when it seems like all the agencies who were initially here are pulling out, FMB Strong must remain well into the future, until every single islander recovers along their own amazing journey. This is not a sprint but a marathon; that may sound like a cliché but it is the truth. Help us help you and your neighbors by supporting FMB Strong!” ■



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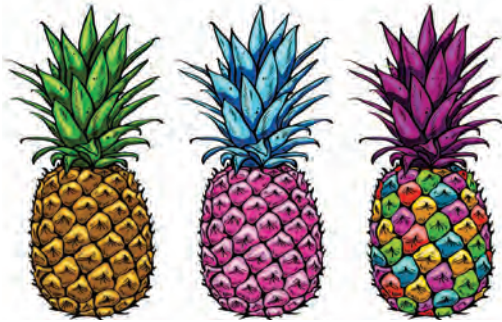
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Chamber Chat!

FMB One Year Later

As we approach the 1st anniversary of Ian's impact on Fort Myers Beach, it is often difficult to place this milestone into proper context: some days it feels like Ian was yesterday and on others, that Ian was a lifetime ago. So where is FMB one year later?

Island businesses in my opinion are doing really well, all things considered. Despite all our annual hurricane warnings and previous experiences from Charley, Wilma and Irma, no one really understood what a direct hit from a devastating storm like Ian would mean to us, including how long it would take to restore our community, from permits to supply chain issues to the difficulty in finding a reputable contractor and on and on. For FMB business to really recover, the island needs more people to frequent our establishments, as the bulk of our visitors and especially snowbirds have yet to return, so this is an ongoing challenge. Until these customers come back, FMB businesses rely on our local Lee County and Southwest Florida residents to get us through these challenging times. It is a complex equation to keep your doors open while operating with less customers and staff, so when you consider all of these things, the state of FMB business is amazingly strong!

One of FMB's major challenges to economic recovery is its lack of condominium units. While tourists stay in hotels or airbnbs, Snowbirds reside in condos for the entire season and we just don't have many available yet, so the faster we can get our condominiums up and running, the better we will all be. Despite this housing obstacle, I am thrilled with the number of reopened stores, restaurants and bars, and it is especially impressive how several are making their business-

es hum out of shipping containers, tents, and trucks thanks to the ingenuity of our island entrepreneurs!

So how do we sustain our business vitality when just roughly 10 percent of all island accommodations currently accept guests? Today, local residents and day trippers are driving our tourism market so, to augment that, the Lee County Visitor & Convention Bureau for the first time in its history is running a local marketing campaign, "Savor The Shore," to get Southwest Floridians to FMB restaurants, shops, stores and bars. On top of this, the island will receive a big boost at the end of this month with the Island Hopper Songwriter Fest from Friday, September 29 through Sunday, October 1, as well as the one-year commemoration celebration of Ian's anniversary at Bayside Park on Thursday, September 28, as these combined events are the unofficial start of our 2023-24 tourism season.

As for the FMB Chamber of Commerce, we are strong and continue to assist island businesses with their recovery; promoting FMB throughout the entire region; lobbying our local, County, State and Federal partners for ongoing assistance; and spearheading efforts like our successful campaign to retain the Beach Elementary School as well as ongoing collaborations to restore Times Square and the FMB Pier. We opened the new FMB Chamber Office at 100 Lovers Lane, Suite 2E, for the most part on Mondays through Fridays from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. and operate a Times Square satellite office from our cute-as-a-button mobile "Roxie" trailer on Wednesdays through Sundays from Noon to 6 p.m. We need volunteers to help man "Roxie" so if you have time, sign up for a shift at http://www.signupgenius.com/go/60b0948aaa72a2ff2-roxie#.

The FMB Chamber is your one-stop shop for reliable Hurricane Ian assistance information, so go to www.fortmyersbeach.org and see "Hurricane Ian Recovery Resources For Residents & Businesses" for every le-



Pink Beach House



Christmas in Times Square



Heavenly Biscuit



Beach Baptist Church



Beacon Beachfront B & B



Chapel by the Sea



Charleys boat house grill



Newton Beach Park

gitimate, available, and up-to-date program, agency, and organization that actively helps the island's recovery. The FMB Chamber attained a CareerSource Grant, our monthly Chamber Luncheons feature delicious meals and outstanding speakers who provide excellent advice to help us all move forward, and attendance at our monthly "Coffee Connections" and "Business After Hours" is terrific. The FMB Chamber will publish its annual "Visitor's Guide" this winter, we hope to soon reestablish our internship program with Florida Gulf Coast University, and will host the always fun "Christmas Boat Parade" on Saturday evening, December 2. My deep appreciation to Sherry, Doug, Mary, Amy & Emily who are indispensable to all these achievements.

One year after Ian, I judge FMB's moral to be OK. The first two questions I still hear are "How are you doing" and "How is your home" and those answers can change from day to day. Every week, however, someone returns to their house and that phenomenal news lifts all our spirits! As we all hopefully learned from Ian, it is hard to know what is coming around the next corner, so sometimes island progress seems painfully slow, then suddenly there is a flurry of activity and all of a sudden it feels like we are moving ahead at light speed! Just when many of us need a psychological boost, the grand opening of Margaritaville is on the immediate horizon; as I recently told Tom Torgerson, "you and Margaritaville are the locomotives that are driving us into

our future!" Margaritaville will bring hundreds to thousands of people to FMB daily and once they are here, they will spread out to see what else the island offers and that economic and emotional support will go a long way to keeping our businesses and shops open and financially successful.

On behalf of our 400-plus FMB Chamber of Commerce members, Happy Labor Day, see you at Bayside Park on September 28, at the Island Hopper Songwriters Fest from September 29 through October 1, and remember . . . "Island Life; It's *Our* Business!" ■

*Jacki Liszak, President
Fort Myers Beach Chamber of Commerce!*



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After Ian!

Betty Simpson

- By Gary Mooney -

Fort Myers Beach LIVING is catching up with some of our former Cover Story subjects, to learn what life is like for them "After Ian." This month we speak with Betty Simpson who we profiled in March 2022.

"Ian caused me to lose a lifetime of memorabilia including all my photographs and correspondence. Remember I was on FMB for 60 years, including 40 years in my house, and Ian washed all that away, including my car. It is devastating and for the first few months after Ian, all I could think about was returning to the beach and my home but there is next to nothing to return to, as Ian really turned my life upside-down."

Having lived on FMB for decades, Betty learned long ago that "once that firetruck comes down the street and says to evacuate, you go! I follow the weather closely so I know to never stay on the island if a storm looks like it may develop into a major hurricane, as I have a ground-level house, so I evacuated for Ian, just as I did for Irma 5 years ago. I first went to my son Jeff's home in Bonita Springs but water surrounds his house on three sides, so we left there for a Fort Myers hotel. If there is a next hurricane on FMB, I will evacuate as well, but I will do a better job of taking more of my important paperwork with me. I did take my essentials for Ian but assumed I would be back in my house within a day or two, never imagining Ian would inflict so much devastation."

As to if Betty will rebuild her home, "I am going on 92 so I am not sure yet, as it is difficult to obtain permits and find workers and multiple other issues, but I am 100% committed to returning to FMB! If I do not rebuild, I am looking at a couple of con-

dominium options. I still serve on the Bay Oaks Recreational Campus Advisory Board and the Cultural & Environmental Learning Center Advisory Board, as the Town remains important to me. Jeff returned to the island shortly after Ian to begin the restoration on my home and pool and today the house is down to the studs

while we are maintaining the site and the pool is gorgeous. We listed the property, so I am juggling a lot of balls in the air, but it still too soon to know my final decision."

While Betty contemplates her future, she currently lives in the American House assisted living center in Bonita Springs. "I first stayed with Jeff but his family needs their privacy so my daughter Julie, who is in the senior living industry, arranged for me to visit American House and the staff treated me wonderfully my first time through the door! I was not immediately receptive to assisted living and stayed in my room and did not interact with many people because I did not plan to be here long but I now have many friends. My unit is like a nice small apartment, I have lunch and dinner with a group of terrific ladies, partake in physical therapy and ride an exercycle for 15 minutes each day, and join in on almost every activity, so I keep moving! I am just four miles from Jeff's house so I see my family several times a week but it is a different life than the beach. A big help is that Ceel Spuhler, a long-time FMB friend, has the unit next to me, so we dine together, attend the Movie Night every evening, do arts-&-crafts and compete at Bingo! It is so helpful to have her here, as we share our marvelous beach memories, though we both miss our FMB homes!" ■



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St Peter Lutheran Church



The Goodz



The Outrigger



Times Square Clock



Pincher's Tiki Bar



Sunset Beach Tropical Grill



Fort Myers Beach Art Association

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