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# SHANGRI LA

• S T A R •

S

**April • 2023**

**Issue 2  
47<sup>th</sup> Year**

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Paradise Island for sharing this  
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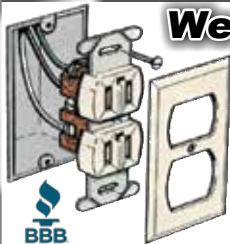
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## FIRST FRIDAY

---

**O**ur March 1st Friday almost didn't happen, but Fri-YAY it did!! We had burgers and dogs, plus macaroni salad, pasta salad and potato salad. Chips and lots of sweet deserts were also enjoyed. Thanks to Serena Libby for cooking the burgers and dogs. I counted about 30 residents, so it was a terrific turnout. We have first Friday the first Friday of each month. Come to the Clubhouse at 4:30 and enjoy food, friends and lots of fun! Bring a dish, or pay \$5 / \$5.00 for a delicious meal . . . you can't beat that with a stick ~

Also, butt's out on all other Fridays at 4:30. Great friends, great music, a heated pool and beautiful sunsets.



## THINGS TO DO

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### PINELLAS PEPPER FEST

**April 1st and 2nd**

It is the 16th Anniversary of **Pinellas Pepper Fest** and it's going to be **HOTTER** than ever before! This hot n' spicy food show is painfully delicious, big on flavor and cooked up to be one of the hottest events of the season. Specialty exhibitors will tickle your taste buds as they bring on distinctive, breathtaking and dynamite offerings in the form of sauces, salsas, seasonings, rubs, plants, food products, gadgets, kitchenware, hundreds of mild to wild samples and more. Let your temperature rise as you listen to live music during the 2-day extravaganza: 5010 81st Ave N, Pinellas Park – 727-322-5217 [pinellaspepperfest.com](http://pinellaspepperfest.com)

### TALL SHIPS ~ ST. PETE

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### PIER 60 SUGAR SAND FESTIVAL - April 7th thru the 23rd

The Pier 60 Sugar Sand Festival stands out as one of the best sand sculpture festivals in Florida, with world-renowned sand artists entered to win the best in show with their crazy-cool sand creations. Head to Clearwater Beach and get your ticket to peruse the expansive 21,000-square



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foot structure, and gaze at the artists at work creating their amazing sand sculptures. With free live music, fireworks, and sand sculpting classes there's more fun to have during the festival than grains of sand on Clearwater Beach. Additional amusements are available in Pier 60 Park for an additional charge. SEA you soon!

### **\$6 Sundays at the St. Petersburg Museum of History**

**Make your weekend historic! Enjoy a special \$6 Admission to the St. Petersburg Museum of History every Sunday—Now through June!** The Museum of History is open from Noon-5PM on Sundays. No reservations or pre-purchased tickets required. Just visit us on the St. Pete Pier. 335 2nd Ave NE

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### **Madeira Beach Wednesday Market - Feb 1, 2023 – May 24, 2023**

Occurs weekly on Wednesday - Makers Market featuring artisan vendors, live music, lunch bites & beach vibes, just steps from the ocean. Visitor parking is free at City Hall (300 Municipal Dr, Madeira Beach, FL 33708) and at the Winn Dixie (15200 Municipal Dr, Madeira Beach, FL 33708) located nearest the market. Paid parking is available in the Archibald Beach Park parking lot located off of Gulf Blvd. across from the market location. Market is located on Madeira Way.

### **For the Pups**

Dog Parks for small and large dogs at Eagle Lake Park, 1800 Keene Rd., Largo  
**Please remember to pick up after your dogs here in the park.**

## **BIRDS AND BLOOMS – THE PILEATED WOODPECKER**

**G**ood day neighbors and Happy Spring! I hope all is well! This month is dedicated to the Pileated Woodpecker. It is a very large woodpecker with a long neck and a triangular red crest that sweeps off the back of the head. The bill is long and chisel-like, about the length of the head. In flight, the wings are broad and the bird can seem crowlike. Pileated Woodpeckers drill distinctive rectangular-shaped holes in rotten wood to get at carpenter ants and other insects.



They are loud birds with whinnying calls. They also drum on dead trees in a deep, slow, rolling pattern, and even the heavy chopping sound of foraging carries well. Their flight undulates like other woodpeckers, which helps separate them from a crow's straight flight path. To learn more, you can visit [www.allaboutbirds.org](http://www.allaboutbirds.org) I hope you have enjoyed reading about this bird! If you have a bird or a bloom you want me to discuss, please give me a shout at 727-200-8917 or [vwbkrwmn@gmail.com](mailto:vwbkrwmn@gmail.com). By Aimee Stuyvesant



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## JOKE

An old cowboy walks into a barbershop for a shave and a haircut. He tells the barber he can't get all of his whiskers off because of his age and all the wrinkles on his cheeks. The barber gets a little wooden ball from a cup and tells the cowboy to put it in his mouth to stretch out the skin. When he's finished the cowboy tells the barber that that is the cleanest shave he's had in years, but he wanted to know what would have happened if he had accidentally swallowed that little ball. The barber replied "you just bring it back in a couple of days like everyone else does."



## CLEANING TIP:

A lot or you probably already know, I clean houses for a living. I thought I'd include some cleaning tips in the newsletters. Just some things I've figured out to make cleaning jobs a lot easier. As well as products (mostly from Dollar Tree) that I find work really well.



How to get mildew out of caulk. Don't bother. Rip out the caulk and re-caulk.

### RECIPE: EASY, PEASY MAC N CHEESY

#### Ingredients

- 1 (8 ounce) box elbow macaroni
- ¼ cup butter
- ¼ cup all-purpose flour
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ground black pepper to taste
- 2 cups milk
- 2 cups shredded Cheddar cheese



Bring a large pot of lightly salted water to a boil. Cook elbow macaroni in the boiling water, stirring occasionally until cooked through but firm to the bite, 8 minutes. At the same time, melt butter in a saucepan over medium heat. - Add flour, salt, and pepper and stir until smooth, about 5 minutes. - Pour in milk slowly, while stirring continuously. Continue to cook and stir until mixture is smooth and bubbling, about 5 minutes, making sure the milk doesn't burn. Add Cheddar cheese and stir until melted, 2 to 4 minutes. - Drain macaroni and fold into cheese sauce until coated.

If you've got a recipe you think we'll all like, I would LOVE to include it in the newsletter. Email: [shangrilalargo@gmail.com](mailto:shangrilalargo@gmail.com) or my cell: 352-807-3232

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John 3:16



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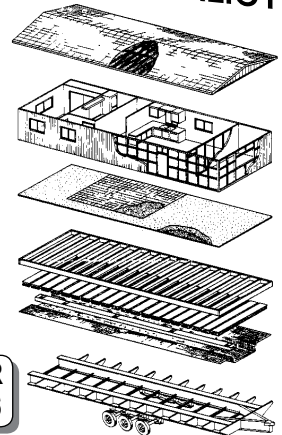
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7 ★ 6





## KNOW YOUR NEIGHBOR ~ Cecile Belanger

Cecile Belanger, Lot 157 was born in Montreal, Canada on December 15, 1950. The fifth child, she has a brother and sisters living in Canada. Cecile graduated from College Outremont in Montreal 1968. She received her secretary diploma in 1969. Her first job was at the University of Montreal as a secretary in the Dept. of OrthoPedagogie where students were taught how to treat children with learning disabilities. She moved to Gatineau, Canada in 2004. She worked as a secretary with “severely handicapped children” in an elementary school for two years. In 2006, Cecile began working as a substitute teacher and secretary in the school. In 2019, she retired. While teaching Tai chi as a volunteer in Ile Perrot, Canada, Cecile met Michel. They were married in 2004. Michel passed away April 24, 2022. Cecile has three children from a previous marriage: Nicholas, Martine and David. She has three grandsons: Hugo 22, Alec 20 and Felix 21, who all reside in Montreal. Cecile has a pet poodle. Sukhi who comes with her every winter. Cecile and Michel first came to Florida in 2015 where she taught Tai chi in Dunedin. Tai chi headquarters is in Florida and when they offered a “teaching session” to Cecile, they decided to take it for one year. “We fell in love with Florida” and decided to rent Lot 157 for three months here in Shangri La. When the owners called to say they were willing to sell, Michel and Cecile bought it in 2017. Cecile states she loves the weather, the pool, friends in the park and enjoys teaching Tai chi in Dunedin on a daily basis! Her many hobbies include reading, swimming, walking the dog, and “playing games on my tablet”. She sells 50/50 tickets for the HOA, plays marbles on Wednesdays and attends other activities in the park. What a pleasant and good neighbor to have in our park. Thank you Cecile for the interview.



Your Roving Reporter  
Polly Pifer

## LOVEBUGS

If you have lived in Florida long enough, you have likely seen them flying around or stuck to your car. Lovebugs often fly in tandem and can make for some uncomfortable conversations. “It caused me to have a very awkward conversation with my daughter, who when she was very tiny, she caught the little lovebug and she goes, ‘Dad, why does this bug have two heads?’ And I stumbled around and bumbled and said, ‘We’ll talk about it when you’re older,’” Florida’s Fourth Estate co-host, Matt Austin said. Austin and Ginger Gadsden are getting to the bottom of what lovebugs are doing, where they came from and how to clean them off of your car. The duo spoke with Dr. Norman C. Leppla with the University of Florida. He has dedicated his life to studying insects and he knows a lot about lovebugs. Now that we know what they are doing, Gadsden wanted to know about the big mess they leave on everybody’s car during lovebug season. “Those are eggs,” Leppla said. “They are insect eggs. They drop 300 or more and that’s what’s getting on your car.”

*continued on page 16*



It might look nasty, but Leppla said it helps if you get it off of your car as soon as possible. He recommends putting a coat of wax on your car at the beginning of both lovebug seasons. If you leave them on longer than a day he says you should use a wet dryer sheet to get them off. While that may be all you think you need to know about lovebugs, there's more. "They're not bugs. Technically, they're flies. They're a distant relative of mosquitoes. And a lot of their behavior is similar to what mosquitoes do," Leppla said. "They're not poisonous, they don't sting, they don't bite." Leppla also dispelled a common rumor. He said lovebugs were not created at a lab at the University of Florida. "We're pretty darn good at microbiology, but not that good," he said. "(Lovebugs came here) by themselves, essentially, from Yucatan, in about 1960, perhaps a little sooner, we may have helped them by moving things like turf across the new highway system. Florida was beginning to develop highways at that time. And we had lots of people coming here and they wanted lots of grass and other vegetation. So here comes the lovebugs with them." So, why do they appear to fly around with two heads? "Are they just living in ecstasy all the time?" Austin said. "Do they smoke little, tiny cigarettes?" Gadsden added. "What they are actually doing is guarding their paternity. So, it doesn't take very long, but then they take off flying and the male wants to make sure no other males are able to mate with that female," Leppla said. Austin and Gadsden were shocked asking if lovebugs are "control freaks" or "stalkers". "Well, in a way, stalker is not a bad analogy to what they do" Leppla said. "If you look closely, it's mostly the males that are swarming. They come out ahead of the females and they wait and then compete — we don't say stalk we say compete. And one of the males grabs the female and then it follows through with mating and flying away."

## FLORIDA GARDENING – MILKWEED

**M**ilkweed is the poster plant for pollinator gardens. Not only is it attractive, it's an important nectar source for bees and other insects. Milkweed is also well known for attracting butterflies and serving as a host plant for their caterpillars. Perhaps most famously, milkweed species serve as the host plant for the monarch butterfly. The Sunshine State is home to more than twenty species of milkweed, almost all of which are native. A couple of these species, in fact, are endemic, meaning they're found only in our state. Butterfly weed, *Asclepias tuberosa*, is one of the most available and popular native species of milkweed. It sports attractive, bright blooms and is very hardy. For these reasons it is frequently stocked in nurseries around the state. Butterfly weed grows as a perennial in USDA Hardiness zones 3-10a. From late summer through early fall it produces orange or yellow flowers. *A. tuberosa*'s vibrant colors make it attractive to a number of pollinators. Most milkweeds prefer full sun. They tolerate a wide variety of soil conditions, from clay to sand. Many Florida species used in the landscape prefer dry, sandy soil and are moderately drought tolerant. Milkweeds generally grow quickly, reaching a final height of one to four feet tall,



*continued on page 24*



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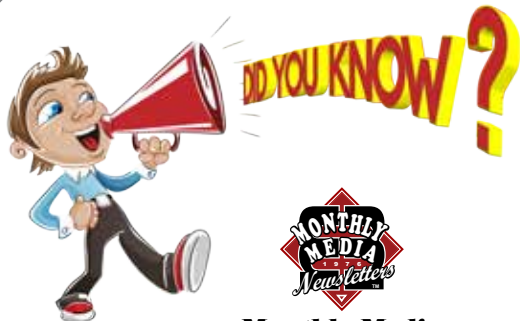
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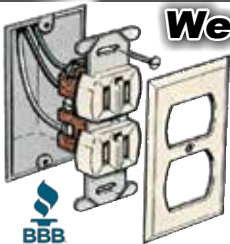
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depending on the species. You can plant them closely, about 18-24 inches apart. And whether or not the milkweed is being installed as part of a butterfly garden, plant multiple plants. Too few and you will be left with leafless milkweed and hungry caterpillars! Planting multiple species can also increase the attractiveness to butterflies and other pollinators. As a host plant for a number of pollinators, use of pesticides on milkweed is discouraged. As a result, expect some aesthetic damage throughout the growing season. Install milkweed behind ground covers or mounding plants to hide the stems but show off the blooms. Monarch caterpillars can consume a plant's leaves quickly, but do not usually damage the plant long-term. Aphids can also cause damage. Keep these in check with a blast of water from the hose instead of applying pesticides. Milkweeds get their common name from the milky sap they exude. This sap can irritate skin and is toxic if consumed in large quantities. Keep pets and small children away.

## DAY TRIPPIN' ~ DRY TORTUGAS

---

**D**ry Tortugas is a group of seven small islands located about 70 miles west of Key West, Florida, USA.

Here are some must-knows about Dry Tortugas:

1. National Park: Dry Tortugas is a part of the Dry Tortugas National Park, which was established in 1992. The park covers about 100 square miles of open water and seven small islands.
2. Fort Jefferson: The most famous attraction in Dry Tortugas is Fort Jefferson, which was built between 1846 and 1875. It is the largest all-masonry fort in the United States and is a National Historic Landmark.
3. Snorkeling and Diving: Dry Tortugas is a popular spot for snorkeling and diving due to its crystal clear water and abundant marine life. Visitors can explore the coral reefs and see various species of fish, sea turtles, and other marine creatures.
4. Camping: Visitors can camp on the island, but permits are required and can be obtained through the National Park Service. The campsites are located near the beach and offer a unique experience to spend the night on an isolated island.
5. Birdwatching: Dry Tortugas is home to a variety of bird species, including the Sooty Tern, Brown Noddy, and Magnificent Frigatebird. The park is a popular spot for birdwatchers and nature enthusiasts.
6. Transportation: The only way to reach Dry Tortugas is by boat or seaplane. The ferry to Dry Tortugas is available from Key West and takes about 2.5 hours each way. Seaplanes are also available for transportation.
7. Limited facilities: Visitors should keep in mind that there are no restaurants, stores, or other facilities on the island. Visitors should bring their own food, water, and other supplies. There are also limited restroom facilities on the island.

Overall, Dry Tortugas offers a unique and secluded destination for those who love nature, history, and outdoor activities.



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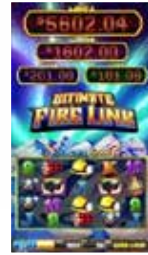
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## FLORIDA FISH AND WILDLIFE

*I'd like to highlight a different fish/wildlife species native to Florida each month.*

### AFRICAN POMPANO

**A**longside Amberjack on the reefs and wrecks are African pompano. Not to be confused with their smaller inshore cousins, these African Pompano can reach weights of over 30 pounds, and put up incredible fights on even heavy tackle considering their size and weight. African Pompano are round, silvery fish that are attracted to flashy objects and movement. They inhabit the middle to bottom of the water column



and often intercept jigs meant for jacks and Snapper. **Where to catch African Pompano:** African Pompano love structure and are surprisingly versatile in the depths they inhabit. They can be caught as deep as 250 feet while wreck fishing and as shallow as 30 feet on the reef. They prefer coastal waters, and are most common in temperature ranges between 65-80 degrees Fahrenheit. They are caught in tropical waters on both the east and west coasts of the US, as well as Africa, Asia and Australia. Pompano are schooling fish, so multiple hookups aren't uncommon if baits are fished in similar vicinities. When fishing shallower wrecks or reef fishing, live pilchards or cigar minnows work great when fished on one ounce jig heads or with an inline sinker. African Pompano can be reliably targeted during certain times of year in the right areas. Shallow wrecks during winter time can be relatively reliable, but these fish are still tough to catch with consistency. When fishing shallow wrecks, live chumming can be extremely effective. Cover the water column when targeting Africans and use spinning tackle on the reef. These fish can definitely be leader shy so it helps to avoid anything over 50lb fluorocarbon for leader. Always work for multiple hookups and cast behind the fish you hook when it gets closer to the boat. It is not uncommon to have 1 or more fish following the one you hooked. Having a pitch rod ready is clutch in this scenario.

### ALLIGATOR ENCOUNTER

**T**here have been 442 recorded alligator attacks as of 2021 in Florida since the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission began keeping records back in 1948, meaning you have a higher chance of being struck by lightning than being attacked by a gator. But they still happen, as evidenced by an 85-year-old woman who was killed by an alligator while walking her dog. So what should you do if you find one of these behemoths in the wild? **Leave it alone** The most effective way to avoid tangling with an alligator is to avoid it entirely.



According to the University of Florida, the following tips can lower your risk of encountering alligators.

- Don't feed wild alligators (it's illegal): It can make the gators associate humans with food and lose their natural fear of people.

*continued on page 28*



- Don't throw fish scraps in trash cans: Such scraps can unintentionally attract gators looking for an easy snack.
- Follow directions on signs: Don't go swimming anywhere outside of posted swimming areas.
- Swim during daylight hours: Alligators are most active at night, so daytime is probably a safer option.
- Keep an eye on children and pets: Never allow small children to play unattended near the water and avoid letting your pets too close to the shoreline, as they may resemble the reptiles' natural prey.

Anyone with concerns about alligators encroaching on their yards can install a fence that's at least 4.5 feet high. The university said that anything lower will likely not be able to keep them out, as gators can be effective climbers. In an interview, Dr. Frank Mazzotti — a professor of wildlife ecology with the University of Florida — if you're living near water, it's best to assume there's an alligator nearby. "I would say pretty much any body of water, assume there's an alligator there and behave cautiously, behave carefully, and be aware of your surroundings," he said. "Because what precipitates almost all incidents is people showing up next to the water." **Run away in a straight line** This advice may be the most obvious, but the best means to defend yourself is to run away from an alligator should you find one. According to Mazzotti, the trick is getting away as fast as possible. Contrary to popular belief, you should try to run away in a straight line and not in a zig-zag pattern, Mazzotti said. He explained that alligators have a four-chambered heart that allows them to sprint for short distances, though they can't do so for long, meaning that going the farthest distance in the shortest amount of time can help secure your survival. "The idea is that if you run in a zig-zag, the alligator can't find you," Mazzotti said. "Well, the reality is alligators defend their territory, and that territory has an end... The quicker you get away from that alligator in a straight line, the safer you're going to be." A straight line away from a gator isn't just the fastest route, either; it may also happen to be in the gator's blind spot, according to Wild Florida. If an alligator is attacking because you trespassed into its territory, then it likely just wants to chase you off, not hunt you down. **Fight back** If you find yourself in the unfortunate situation where a gator's managed to sink its teeth into you, then you likely aren't going to be able to run away. In that case, the FWC suggests you fight back, though you likely shouldn't try to pry the jaws open, as gators tend to have a very powerful bite force. "If an alligator bites you, the best thing to do is fight back, providing as much noise and resistance as possible," the FWC said in a release. "Hitting or kicking the alligator or poking it in the eyes may cause it to release its grip. When alligators seize prey they cannot easily overpower, they will often let go and retreat." Mazzotti agreed with the advice, adding that there are other things you can do to help ensure your getaway. "Stick your hand all the way down its throat, make it gag. Lots of times, after you are grabbed by an alligator, there is a time when the alligator releases its grip to reposition," Mazzotti said. "That gives you an opportunity to escape, but really, do everything that you can within your power and your proximity to be on that alligator because your life depends on it." That being said, the FWC also states that it's against state law to kill or harass an alligator without a permit, so the best course of action is to leave them alone if you're able. Furthermore, the FWC advises that anyone who suffers an alligator bite seek immediate medical attention, as such bites can often result in serious infection.



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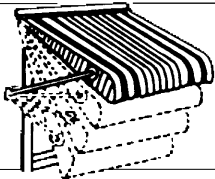
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## HISTORY OF TURPENTINE PRODUCTION

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The collection of turpentine, also known by its more formal name "Naval Stores," started during the Colonial Era. During this time England needed turpentine to free itself from foreign trade, and England's colonies provided this necessary material. The naval stores industry developed along the entire east coast of the United States. Initially, small farmers, supplementing their farm earnings, conducted turpentine. The primary products of this industry were tar and pitch -- both needed to seal ships. In the 1830s, the distillation process was improved and new products were developed. By the 1840s, the increased demand for naval stores in the United States made the process attractive to large southern plantation owners. The use of slave labor expanded the naval stores industry throughout the south. Large areas in North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia were put into turpentine production. Next to cotton and rice, turpentine became one of the South's greatest exports. Slaves were organized into small camps and assigned sections of trees to work. Once trees in the section had been worked and died, the trees were cut to board. This pattern continued until the Civil War, when abolition of slavery forced changes in the turpentine industry. No longer forced to work, many former slaves practiced subsistence farming and took jobs in the turpentine camps to supplement their incomes. Over time, this led to the development of African-American communities within the turpentine camps. Large camps could have as many as 100 workers. The workers and their families would live at, or near, a main camp. Over time, the extensive production of turpentine in the Carolinas and Georgia led to the destruction of the pine forests. Seeking new virgin timber, the industry turned south into Florida with its vast pine forests. This southward movement occurred in the 1900s. During this time the demand for labor led Florida to lease prisoners to the turpentine companies. Approximately 10 percent of the force in Florida was comprised of convict forced labor. In the 1900s, the average worker in the turpentine camps relied on the company for most of his goods and services. The camp provided small shacks or shanties for the workers and their families. In addition to housing, the worker was paid monthly. In the early 1900s, the average wage was based on the amount of trees worked. Workers could earn \$15-25 a month; however, in many camps the pay was often in the form of specie, scrip, or tokens usable in the company stores. By 1910, there were five working turpentine camps in Manatee County (Sarasota County 1921). Near Fruitville was the Hall and Cheney Camp. The R.T. Hall & Company Prison Camp was near Sandy and the Williams Camp was near Venice. The Hall and Harrison Camp was west of Cow Pen Slough, and there was an unnamed camp in the present Carlton Preserve area. Of these five camps, three are known to have used convict labor in addition to their paid workforce to harvest gum. In the 1920s, many of the turpentine camps were closing. The trees had been in production for ten years and the camps were being converted into timber mills. In 1923, the state prohibited the practice of leasing convict labor to private companies. This had a direct impact on at least three of the camps in Sarasota County and raised the cost of production. In the 1930s, two new camps were created at Sidell and Bee Ridge. Both camps provided housing and a commissary for the workers and their families. By the 1940s, production was in decline and by 1951 both camps were closed.



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## JOHN WAYNE

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The little known story of John Wayne and his real life Red River Ranch in Arizona. The famous Hollywood movie actor John Wayne had a long history with Arizona that stretches back to the late '50s when the Hollywood cowboy legend purchased 4,000 acres of farmland between Maricopa and Stanfield just southwest of Phoenix. He borrowed and paid \$4 million dollars for the acreage because his tax attorney thought it would be a good investment. John Wayne financed a cotton crop through the Anderson Clayton Company of Phoenix, one of the largest cotton brokers in the world. Then, due to a lack of time and farming experience, Wayne paid the AC Cotton company to farm the land for him. It soon became clear to Wayne that the Anderson Clayton Company didn't know how to farm cotton either. During Wayne's many visits to his cotton farm he noticed the farm of his neighbor, Louis Johnson, was doing considerably better than his own. The Duke's farm was struggling, so he called his brokerage people and asked who the best cotton farmer in the area was. They told him it was Louis Johnson. When everyone else was getting two and a half bales to the acre, Louis was getting four.

Convinced that Johnson was the farmer Wayne needed to make his floundering property a success, he called him. Explaining he couldn't come to Arizona because he was in the middle of making a film, he offered to cover all expenses if Johnson would fly to Hollywood to talk with him. Johnson agreed to meet Wayne, and the outcome of their discussion was that Johnson would manage Wayne's cotton crop for one year for \$14,000. If the farm produced three bales per acre, he would receive an additional \$50,000, and, if he produced four bales per acre, he would get an additional \$100,000. Johnson produced 4.22 bales to the acre that year, earning Wayne in excess of \$1 million dollars! But the success was not obstacle free. During the cotton harvest, agents from the bank showed up in the field to repossess 10 mechanical cotton harvesters. Louis marched over to the bank and signed a nearly \$800,000 note so that they wouldn't take the equipment. John Wayne was so impressed by the success of his newfound manager, the two decided to merge Wayne's 4,000-acre farm with Johnson's 6,000-acre farm and become partners. The 10,000 acre-farm became one of the largest in Arizona. The two partners had a running bet that if Louis was able to produce more than four bales per acre a year, the Duke would buy him a Cadillac. Every year but one Wayne bought Louie a new Cadillac car. Johnson renovated a bedroom for Wayne to stay in Maricopa when he and his family made trips to the Johnson residence. Often Wayne would come to the house to have Louis wife Alice help him shave off some weight for an upcoming movie role. Alice said, "I would follow a diet plan from a book called the Diet Watchers Guide," "It was a sort of an old-time Weight Watchers program." According to Alice, the real key to his weight loss was a specially designed bathroom in which every surface was mirrored except the ceilings and floors. "Wayne always said being able to see his body from every angle helped him to drop the weight." While the cotton business treated the two men well, federal government cutbacks on water allocations in Arizona in the 1960s, aimed at preventing Southwestern cotton farmers from putting others in the nation out of business, pushed Wayne and Johnson toward cattle ranching. Johnson and Wayne built an 18,000-head feedlot at Stanfield, Arizona just a few miles from Maricopa and soon expanded into cattle breeding with an operation in Springerville, Arizona that covered more than 50,000 acres. Wayne named the Arlington cattle operation the "Red River Ranch Land Co." after his favorite movie role as an actor. At the Springerville location, known as the "26-Bar Ranch" just outside Eagar, Arizona in the White Mountains, Wayne and Johnson focused on raising the highest quality Hereford bulls and then auctioning them off back

*...continued on page 39*

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at the ranch near Maricopa. These annual auctions attracted hundreds of potential buyers to the area from across the nation. Those auctions were a big event back in the day. In addition to the Springerville ranch, the feedlot near Maricopa expanded to 85,000 head, becoming the largest privately owned feedlot in the United States. However, in 1974 housewives across the nation, enraged by skyrocketing beef prices, staged a brief but powerful boycott, sending the Wayne-Johnson cattle operation into the red. We lost millions, Alice Johnson lamented. "It was amazing that Louis could just come to bed every night, close the door and not worry about a thing." To counteract the failing cattle prices, John Wayne and Louis Johnson reduced the number of cattle on their feedlot to 8,500, but the bankers were not going to let Wayne give up on the business. The bankers insisted he begin buying cattle despite being low on credit. They told Wayne to keep buying cattle until they told him to stop. Wayne and Johnson began buying in January 1975 and by June had expanded the operation tenfold from 8,500 to almost 85,000 head of cattle. The partnership between the two men ended in 1979 when John Wayne finally passed away of cancer, but many residents of Maricopa and Springerville still have fond memories of him. During his many trips to the Red River Ranch at the tiny community of Maricopa, Wayne would often drive through the downtown, stopping at local businesses. No one rushed him for autographs when he stopped. He was one of the townspeople. He loved the kids and would stand for hours signing things for them. Wayne would also often head out to his favorite drinking location, the Table Top Tavern in nearby Stanfield, Arizona and spend time with local farmers. When Wayne died in 1979, Louis Johnson decided it would be best for him to exit the cattle business also. The Wayne children were going to sell Duke's portion, so he decided it would be a good time to get out of the business rather than getting stuck with a partner he didn't know. When the Wayne children were auctioning off items from the Dukes estate, they surprised Louis and Alice Johnson by calling them out to their father's California residence. Alice had first visited there many years before, falling in love with an extravagant chandelier Wayne had purchased in Europe. "It was so weird seeing such a beautiful chandelier in his home, it just didn't fit his personality," Alice said. When they arrived for the estate sale, the children said they were going to vote on gifting the imported chandelier to Alice, and all seven voted in favor. "I was so happy I did a dance on the kitchen floor," Alice said. Louis Johnson, Wayne's cotton and cattle partner, died of cancer in 2001, and Alice, in her 80s, remarried a few years later. Between the years 1976 to his death in 1979 John Wayne became a partner with his close friend, Charles "Chuck" Kenworthy in an attempt to locate the Lost Dutchman Gold Mine treasure in the Superstition Mountains of Arizona. Kenworthy believed the mine and treasure were buried underground on a mesa top just north of Charleboise (Charley-Boy) spring at the top of Charleboise Canyon. Wayne became an investor in Kenworthy's Heart Quest expedition and he deeply wanted to accompany Kenworthy into the Superstition Mountain's to help with the work. But Wayne was at the time under doctor's care and he was forced to get updates and progress reports from Kenworthy while the Duke rested and oversaw operations at his Maricopa ranch. John Wayne was still keenly interested in the Superstition Mountains quest at the time of his death on June 11, 1979. John Wayne once said, for all his acting and movie rolls, some of his fondest memories were the years he spent farming and ranching in Arizona. Red River was the Duke's personal favorite film and his cattle ranch in Arizona allowed him to become in real life the cattleman he portrayed on the silver screen.



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