

Dear Reader,

An end ... and a beginning. Where did another year go? How is it that 2003 is already history and the days of 2004 our "present"? Will we make the best of our time, this precious present, leaving happy memories to bask in in another time?

Our first issue of the year will surely bring back pleasant memories of places visited, such as Gatorland (on page 16) where alligators still awe young and old. What a treat it is to be able to go back with your children, or even grandchildren, to one of Florida's original tourist attractions.

Daytona Beach, the land of racing, has changed drastically, but still caters to its fast and furious fans. (See page 6.) Comparing today's race cars and speed trials to yesteryear brings a real chuckle.

A lighthouse always appeals to our readers, and the one at Ponce de Leon Inlet, featured on pages 36-37, is a beauty. With so many means of transportation today, both for people and goods, one can hardly imagine the importance of our coastal light stations a century or so ago.

Bringing light to the Florida landscape, the Florida Highwaymen are now appreciated for their artistic renderings of seascapes, tropical trees, flora and fauna. In this issue, a small showing of their work can be found on pages 21 through 23.

In honor of Black History Month, we remember the great accomplishments of Howard Thurman, Mary Bethune, Jake Gaither and Jackie Robinson, beginning on page 29.

In the southwest part of our state lies Naples, known for its lovely winter retreats, beautifully preserved beaches and retirement communities. Who knew what unusual sport would become a tradition in such a dignified setting? I'm talking about swamp buggy racing, of course. The story starts on page 42.

For a hundred years, Floridians have celebrated the Florida State Fair in Tampa, and this year's centennial celebration promises to be a great one. And while you're at it, why not watch the Gasparilla Celebration's annual pirate invasion of Tampa and then truck on over to Plant City to the Strawberry Festival? (See stories, page 18-20.)

While we're celebrating, let's remember that yesterday's history is rich and festive in Florida. Enjoy and participate in her uniqueness!

In December, we introduced Yesterday in Florida to Naples at the Naples Press Club Book Festival where we signed and sold books. Naples is beautiful and tropical, and we met some lovely people. After talking with "snowbirds," we learned that it doesn't much matter whether you're a longtime, full or part-time Floridian, most have a strong desire to find out more about their chosen state. We want to send a big thank you to our retailers who have supported us through thick and thin, even though we're not a big money item. We've listed them on pages 46-47 and ask you to support them and tell them Yesterday sent you!

And, thanks to our readers, who really keep us going. Happy New Year to you all!

Mary Lou Merritt

Mary Lou Merritt
Publisher



Mary Lou



Hearsay has it that Rockefeller purchased The Casements, which was across the street from the Ormond Hotel, when he learned that he was being charged a higher rate for his rooms than other guests.

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Photos courtesy of Florida State Archives.

First Lady of Daytona 5

The first woman doctor in Daytona, as well as its first woman mayor, Josie Rogers opened doors for many to come.



The Highwaymen 21

Sunsets and cotton candy clouds mark one of Florida's great folk art schools.

The Eccentric Browns 41

Larry and Alex Brown dressed for the role and acted their parts well in the endless stage provided by Naples.



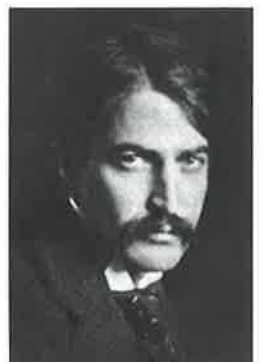
Swamp Buggy Races 42

Tumblebugs may have been born of necessity, but no one said you couldn't have fun with them, too.



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