

## Vero Beach Kamp/Sebastian Clambake Rally



Front row picture from left to right, TGO Ambassadors group picture:

Teri Henry, Bob Nebel, Ann Nebel, Susan Bonneau, Nancy Landry, Bev Miller; Bonnie Spain, Jackie Lammardo, Sue Leonard, Linda Barnes, Alicia Wyman and Gary Henry.

2<sup>nd</sup> row:

Gary Bonneau, Bill Lapio, Susanne Johnson, Linda Utz/ Lodge, Susie Jones, Theresa Sustakovitch, Lynn Barnes, Jerry Sustakovitch, Jerry Leonard, Sharon Wheir, Ruth Falusi and Ray Falusi.

3<sup>rd</sup> row:

Alan Miller, Bill Johnson, Mike Lodge, Eileen Lecik, Butch Jones, Steve Sohles, Jim Spain, Tony Lammardo, Jim Marigliano, Colleen Marigliano, Richard Wyman and Tom Wheir.

The TGO Ambassadors Kicked off the Season with a Rally at Vero Beach Kamp, located in downtown Wabasso, Fl. just 71 miles from The Great Outdoors RV Resort. The Rally was held from Nov. 2- leaving on Nov. 6, 2023. The Host, Gary & Teri Henry along with the Co-Host, Alan & Bev Miller, held a welcome back dinner for the 21 rigs that attended.

The group attended the 3-day Clambake Festival, at Riverview Park, just 4 miles from Vero Beach Kamp. The Event included, live entertainment, arts & crafts, vendors, beer, clam chowder, linguine with clam sauce, clam stripes, fried fish, shrimp, along with a variety of other food items. The proceeds go to local charities.

Most of the Members visited the Mel Fisher's Treasure Museum, and learned how the Sebastian area became known as the "Florida's Treasure Coast." On July 24<sup>th</sup>, 1715, a fleet of eleven Spanish Galleons and one French ship set sail from Havana, Cuba to Spain. All the Spanish vessels perished in a storm off the east coast of Florida, near present day Sebastian. Seven hundred lives were lost and over 14,000,000 pesos worth of treasure. When you enter Mel Fisher's Treasurer Museum you will join the millions who have witnesses the most spectacular collection of Spanish artifacts and treasures ever assembled. Some of the Members were able to feel a 5 lb. Troy of gold, from one of the ship wrecks. (Approximate value around \$500,000.) Just in case you are wondering, yes there is Security and you are constantly being monitored.

The Members had time to visit the McKee Botanical Gardens, which are located at Vero Beach, Fl. It is such a beautiful and peaceful place to visit. The children's section is outstanding with many wooden walk ways to send children on their own adventure. There is an old movie they play constantly, which takes you back to the 1930's era, which shows you how the Gardens were then.

Here is some History on the Gardens:

McKee Jungle Gardens was the vision of land developers Arthur McKee and Waldo Sexton, who purchased the 80-acre tropical hammock in 1922 with the intention of cultivating citrus. The property's natural beauty was deemed too special in its native state to disturb so McKee and Sexton identified a new purpose for the land. The two land developers employed landscape architect William Lyman Phillips, from the esteemed firm of Frederick Law Olmsted, to design the basic infrastructure of streams, ponds and trails while they focused their efforts on assembling one of the most outstanding collections of waterlilies and orchids – augmenting native vegetation with ornamental plants and exotic specimens from around the world. By the 1940's, more than 100,000 tourists were visiting the Gardens each year, deeming it one of Florida's earliest and most popular natural attractions.

As central Florida developed in the 1970s, attendance at the Gardens waned and the family owned establishment was unable to compete with the lure of far bigger tourist attractions in central and south Florida. McKee Jungle Gardens closed in 1976 and was sold to condominium developers. All but 18 acres were developed. These 18 acres, once the heart of McKee Jungle Gardens, lay dormant for 20 years.

A group of community visionaries understood the imperative of preserving these 18-acres and in 1994, with the help of The Trust for Public Land, launched a fund-raising campaign to buy the land from the developer who was finalizing plans for a shopping center. With bare hands, basic tools and unimaginable heart, volunteers of every age cleared the trails to reveal once again the jungle's treasures. This community effort touched so many that even a young girl gave her weekly allowance to help rescue the Gardens. November 18, 2001 marked the formal dedication of the saved, restored and newly named McKee Botanical Garden.

The Group then had scheduled a boat tour, of Sebastian Inlet.

The Captain Hiram's River King Cruise, on the Sebastian Inlet, had to be canceled due to winds, but we had reservations at the Blackfin Restaurant, next door to Captain Hiram's River Cruise, so we proceeded to The Blackfin Restaurant. They had great food with great service, also a view of the River and a Tiki Bar, so it turned out to be a great day. We returned to the Vero Beach Kamp in the evening for Trivia Night and nickel bingo in the club house.

On our last day, Vero Beach Kamp, cooked for us an enormous breakfast for only \$12.00 each. They had three kinds of egg omelets, pancakes, waffles, crapes, homemade strawberry and apple toppings, bacon, sausage, fruit platter, olive platter, mimosa, V8 juice, cranberry juice, coffee, Etc. Even the owner drove over to meet us and present the TGO Ambassador with a big basket full of fruit and candy for staying at the Vero Beach Kamp. Their Friendliness reminded me, how the Camp grounds use to be. It made you feel special. Thank you, Darlene, and her Crew for serving, checking us in, parking all of us, along with welcoming us into your home. It was a Job Well Done.





