

Delayed Snowbirds Right On Schedule

Snowbirds, from Page 1A

come by on the Key right now. Loefgren said rooms are starting to fill up for March, but occupancy rates are around normal.

In December, Longboat Key hotels and motels had a 34.9% occupancy rate, down from each of the past three years. In the same months, occupancy rates were 37% in 2005, 41% in 2004 and 39% in 2003.

The numbers are better than those on Anna Maria Island which shoed an occupancy rate of 30.4% in December.

This has been a warm winter up north as opposed to three straight harsh winters, and Loefgren said she wasn't concerned even if she and local business owners are keeping an eye on the Weather Channel.

We don't think too much about the weather, but it is in the back of everyone's minds," Loefgren said. "Everybody is playing a waiting game until the numbers are where we want them to be."

Hal Christensen, manager of Harry's Continental Kitchens said that February is when he expects a boom in business. He said things are pretty much running even with last year's rates, but that Longboat Key is losing tourism and that is the main problem on the Key.

"We are losing stores and business and it is having some effect," Christensen said. "We are losing tourism and the only way to make people realize it is when the Publix closes."

Ken Parsons, general manager of Café

on the Bay, which recently relocated to the Centre Shops on Gulf of Mexico Drive, said business at his new location is up from last year, but he recognized that the warm weather was keeping tourists away.

"It's better than last year, but if it's 60 degrees in Manhattan, people aren't coming here," Parsons said. "It's only three weeks into January, so we are still looking for a good season. Just because it is warm this week doesn't mean they won't be here next week."

Typically, Longboat Key sees a boost right after Thanksgiving, a lull in early December, then a boom starting in mid-January culminating with a hectic March when the Key is packed to capacity. Rooms have been filling quickly for February and March, according to Susan Bischofberger of Sterling Management, which handles season rentals on the Key.

Business has been very strong this year," Bischofberger said. "We're getting more than ever from up north. People started coming down early this year."

The season got off to a fast start when a cold snap hit the north in late October. Longboat Key ran huge advertisements in the New York Times and the Chicago Tribune. Both cities are having warmer than expected winters.

Hershatter, from Page 5A

available for emergencies - not yanked out of their civilian pursuits for long-term combat while full-time professionals relax in peaceful cities.

This misuse of military heroes calls for another Blue Ribbon Committee to investigate and perhaps recommend a court martial or two.

*We're told that we must stay the course
Until we reach the end;
The problem is we face a force
That's neither foe nor friend.*

*We've won the battles and the war;
The bloodshed now can cease;
As happened many times before,
We won, but lost the peace.*

Richard L. Hershatter is a retired Connecticut lawyer and novelist who writes a syndicated column of interest to Floridians. He can be reached at Banyan502@AOL.com.

Burgum, From Page 7A

He said, "I am tired of this nation worrying about whether we are offending some individuals or their culture . . . There are a few things that those who have recently come to our country, and some even born here, need to understand . . . This culture has been developed over two centuries of struggles, trials and victories by millions of men and women who have sought freedom. We speak mainly English, not Spanish, Lebanese, Arabic, Chinese, Russian, or any other language. Therefore, if you wish to become a part of our society, learn our language." Howard finished with a flair, "But once you are done complaining, whining and griping about Our Flag, Our Pledge . . . or, Our Way of Life, I highly encourage you to take advantage of another great American freedom: The right to leave."

Amen.



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The Beach at Longboat Key - 3 Studio Units available from \$499,900 - \$599,900; One 2/2 Priced at \$795,000. All Direct Gulf Front.
LaPlaya - \$525,000 2/1; Gulf Front
Silver Sands - Two 1/1's - \$599,900 Gulf View & \$659,900 Directly on the sand w/ full Gulf view! One 3/2 with lockout \$849,900

Bradenton Beach

Tortuga Inn - One 2/1 - \$399,900; Two Studio Units - \$475,000 Each; Full Gulf View; Newly constructed 2/2 - \$895,000 (Bay View)
Club Bamboo - Studio - \$519,900 Direct Gulf View; 1/1 - \$379,900 Pool View; Two 1/2's - \$399,900 Gulf view from bedroom & \$539,900 Direct Gulf Front
Club Bamboo South - Two Studio Units - \$455,000 & \$479,000 Both direct Gulf Front; One Studio across the road available for \$339,00 No View
Key West North - 2/2 \$699,900; Gulf AND Bay Views

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