

# The Longboat Key Volunteer Fire Department

During the month of August in 1953, there was a fire which started in one of the cottages at the Sleepy Lagoon Club on Dream Island in Longbeach, which was on the north end of Longboat Key. It didn't stop until six cottages had burned down.

There was not a fire department on Longboat at that time. Firemen from Sarasota had been called, but they came too late. Because of this fire, residents of Longbeach in particular, and residents of the Key in general knew they needed some sort of fire department.

The next day, 30 Key residents gathered and decided what they needed was to begin the Longboat Key Volunteer Fire Department.

**Ansel McMichen** was the first fire chief and **Cecil Scholfield** was elected the secretary and treasurer of the department.

They signed a bank note to start the fire department — nine donating the initial investment — for the total sum of \$1,500.

The Ladies Auxiliary began a fundraising effort immediately and raised more than \$1,000 in the first year.

They found a used fire engine in Clearwater, and **Melanie** and **Guy Paschal** volunteered to go up and drive it back. They bought it from the Clearwater Fire Department in 1953. It was a 1923 Brockaway Torpedo fire engine. When they landed on the Key, a group associated with the Civic Club Association greeted them with cheers. Everyone brought a sandwich in paper bags.

By 1954, they had found another fire truck to buy.

According to **Jane Corbett** in an article for the Daily News:

"In December 1954 a new fire truck, a heavy-duty BMC with dual rear wheels, was driven home from West Palm Beach, where it was purchased by Cecil Scholfield, secretary and treasurer of the Longboat Key Fire Department...Standing in front of the Picnic Pantry midway on the Key, it inspired the admiration of the islanders...Most of all, however, it won their confidence with its 350-gallon booster tank, Hale's midship's pump with the capacity of pumping 100-hundred gallons a minute, extension ladder,

axe, and 30-pound Kidde dry chemical extinguisher. Besides that, the 300-foot of three-quarter inch booster hose and 200 feet of one-and-one-half inch hose with fog and straight nozzles, in addition to the original 1,400 feet of hose, looks entirely adequate to take care of all conditions on the island."

The original volunteer firefighters were **Fire Chief Ansel McMichen, Will LePage, Bob Gerds, Cecil Scholfield, Bill Hewitt, John Ashcraft, Jim Johnson, Dick Myers, Walter Franks, Jud Hird, Howard Ridyard, Bob Cannon, Bert Koivu, Otto Bianchi, Harry Yerkes, William Hager, Charles Wickersham, Bob Hogan, Francis Darsey, Jr. and Gilbert Herringshaw.**

Fish fry's organized by the Ladies Auxiliary were popular and kept the volunteer fire department going. The hush puppies prepared by fire fighter **Jim Johnson** were considered legendary by the crowds, who came for the hush puppies and the recipe which was circulated.

For cooks at home, who want Jim's historic recipe here it is:

2 cups white corn meal  
1 cup all-purpose flour  
2 tablespoons baking powder  
1 teaspoon salt  
1/2 cup of chopped onions  
2 cups milk

Mix dry ingredients together, add chopped onions, then milk. Let better set about 10 minutes, then drop by spoonfuls into deep hot grease where fish are frying or have been fried. When golden brown remove and drain on paper, serve with fish. Makes 8 servings.

Another investment made was the building which housed the fire trucks and the mosquito control truck.

It was built by volunteers from the fire department, the Longboat Key Civic Club, and the Art Center.

The Art Center received help from the volunteer firefighters and Civic Club when it was time to build their photographic and lapidary studios.

We have **Lora Colvin Whitney** to thank for preserving the history and the hush puppy recipe in this history column today.

## Town Visioning Survey Survives 4-3 Vote

### Survey, From Page 1A

residents have never even been in this building."

Brown urged the Commission to continue the survey process so Townspeople could be educated on what the Key needed, and then they could help the process of determining what to do in the future.

Rothenberg felt there are very little changes that can or should be made on Longboat Key. He spoke for the three Town officials who did not want the survey.

"I am troubled that it will set up a situation that would be unfair to future commissions," said Rothenberg. "What we have here is a fully built-out retirement community."

Town of Longboat Key commissioners had met with Herb Marlowe on Sept. 11

to determine what the next step should be on the visioning survey. Marlowe is the consultant used by the Town to drive a visioning questionnaire and survey toward completion.

Revisions were made for the commissioners to examine during that meeting.

Marlowe hoped to assure the commission there was an accurate representation of what the community wanted in the visioning instrument he was steering.

The community had exercised their voice in a series of public meetings, focus groups and community interviews, according to Marlowe.

He also eliminated any questions where there was an established Town policy already in place, as well as to use questions, which would test the "validity of the core conclusions drawn from prior meetings."

As an additional benefit, Marlowe pitched how much the survey itself would cost the Town if his consultant group Arrington-Marlowe provided it, so the Town would not have to create it in-house.

Marlowe presented three methods with three price tags:

The first method would be mailed to a random sampling of 2,500 registered voters with a pre-announcement post card costing the Town \$19,000.

The third and most expensive version of the survey would be mailed to all property owners — an approximated number of 10,000 property owners — and cost the Town \$34,700.

They all include mailing and printing costs.

Marlowe did his homework, and reassured the Commission evident in the

complete reversal of at least two of their commissioners.

"The community has to own the plan. Town leaders come and go," Marlowe said on Thursday. "It is the public who will decide."

Marlowe will guide a committee which will be comprised of Mayor Joan Webster and Commissioner Bob Siekmann, Marlowe, Town Planning, Zoning, and Building Director Monica Daigle, and two members of the planning board which is yet undisclosed.

Commissioner Peter O'Connor felt that the committee refining the survey should have negative voices as part of the process.

"I need a critical voice on the committee."

Mayor Joan Webster volunteered.

### Sand, From Page 1A

tors and consultants which may place them to some extent out of the loop while contracted work is being done.

But, on the other hand, who made the decision to save money, rather than to spend money on Longboat Key beaches, McKenna wants to know.

McKenna — who seems to be the true force behind the group of neighbors who are fast becoming activists — wanted to sit the record straight.

McKenna, who had at first complained about the lack of Town involvement on this issue, came forward Thursday to commend St. Denis for finally talking to her about the gray sand issue.

"I want to set the record straight. St. Denis has been very kind to listen to me," McKenna said to the commission. "He has been in communication with me."

McKenna then proceeded to demand answers to her questions, after her initial burst of southern hospitality. She asked St. Denis if he said that there was white sand initially, where now there was gray

sand after the recent beach sand renourishment.

"You have to prove to me there was white sand 117 feet to the shoreline. Help these people," McKenna pleaded with St. Denis. "They are asking you for your help. We are asking in return for you to say, 'We are sorry, we don't know how this happened, but we are willing to help you.'"

St. Denis did admit to McKenna that gray sand did come into that area of concern.

"It did cover over the white sand," St. Denis said.

As a result of the stand by Sleepy Hollow residents, the commission is going to find a solution, which necessitates they approach FDEP.

The price of beauty may be a cost of \$100,000 to the Town, but in the near future I am sure Sleepy Lagoon residents are dreaming about a time where their beach will make the ratings placing them before Siesta Key beaches for once.

Diane Mason shared one thought before the meeting that seemed to define what the Sleepy Hollow neighbors feel is the

## Building Inspectors Get Hi-Tech

**Melissa Reid**  
Staff Writer

A new technology is being employed among Longboat Key's inspections crew. It's a mobile technology that allows the Town's building inspectors to instantly notify contractors regarding whether their job site has passed or failed an inspection. This service is designed to save time, and allow the contractor to instantly know the status of the inspection.

Butch Powell, building inspector for the Town of Longboat Key, said, "the contractor places an order for an inspection, you perform the inspection at the residence, and on your cell phone you connect to the website and enter 'pass' or 'fail' for that particular inspec-

tion.

"I have an idea that everyone thinks there isn't anything that can be done," Mason said. "But, if we were talking about

the south end of the Key, it would just take a phone call.

We are the elephant in the living room."