

Topics: Ship Captain, Hard Sacrifice, Velvet Curtain, and Railroad Tracks, in one story.

**Treasure in the Keys** © 2013 Steven C. Buren

Captain Knecht (connect) once had his own touring fitness and acrobatic show, where he and his sons Robert and Richard would entertain in High School auditoriums. Their routine was in precision flips and displays of natural strength, all in time with orchestration, which sounded something like the theme music from Star Wars.

At the end of the thirty minute routine, Robert and Richard taught the elements that they used for a proper diet and exercise. Then in an acrobatic finale, the two boys standing on their hands; ran across the stage and through the auditorium isles to the main entrances, to usher and greet the crowd of students, as they exited to their classrooms. In the following years, they earned their credentials in Guinness World Records for Pushups (7,026) and Setups (25,222). I caught the school performance in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade in '66, and in the 70's saw them on a news clip and a "What's My Line" TV-show discussing their Guinness record awards.

In '85, moving to Key Largo and looking for a room to rent; I answered an ad from Richard. He had a small bungalow where his elder brother Robert had moved out to get married. That became a nifty bachelor pad, directly across the highway from the Post Office on an isolated street. This place had a lot of shade, next to a 26 mile paved bike path, a half mile from the Park entrance, and even had wild chickens living in the trees.

Working nights at the Homestead Airbase, bore some uniquely hard sacrifices, and one of them was to use a treasured blanket to make red velvet curtains for sleeping in the tropical daytime. Another sacrifice was the 35 mile drive to work; but living in a paradise and driving a Spitfire made it a surrealistic dream. That car had some great associated memories, and it was another sacrifice to leave it behind when I left Florida.

Captain John and Arlene Knecht had their retirement business of the "Yellow Bait House" with their sons, and the Captain ran his shrimp boat twice a week to fill the live bait vats. Shrimping is done on dark nights, so on a few of my weekends, I took a cruise with Richard and his dad, and it was amazing to watch the interaction of maneuvering with shrimp nets by spotlight, that was a perfect scene for the role of an acrobat.

The local shipyard at the end of my street had this interesting array of old railroad tracks throughout their yard, used to trolley the large steel hull boats from dry-dock to the spit. Captain Knecht used a similar trolley near Miami to paint his ship, and work it into top form at the end of the shrimp season. Some of my buddies worked at this shipyard, and on several occasions it came in very handy to know a few of the local workers.

Life in the Keys, was a unique experience, and a treasure of an era in my earlier days, with endless events, timeless activities, and fascinating people of every expert profession. The islands are a place where the people are easy to meet, and going formal is to wear a new T-shirt; it was like living on a beach. If there ever comes an opportunity to return in retirement, my finishing days will enjoy the exciting comforts of this amazing place, with 80 islands in a string of 100 miles.