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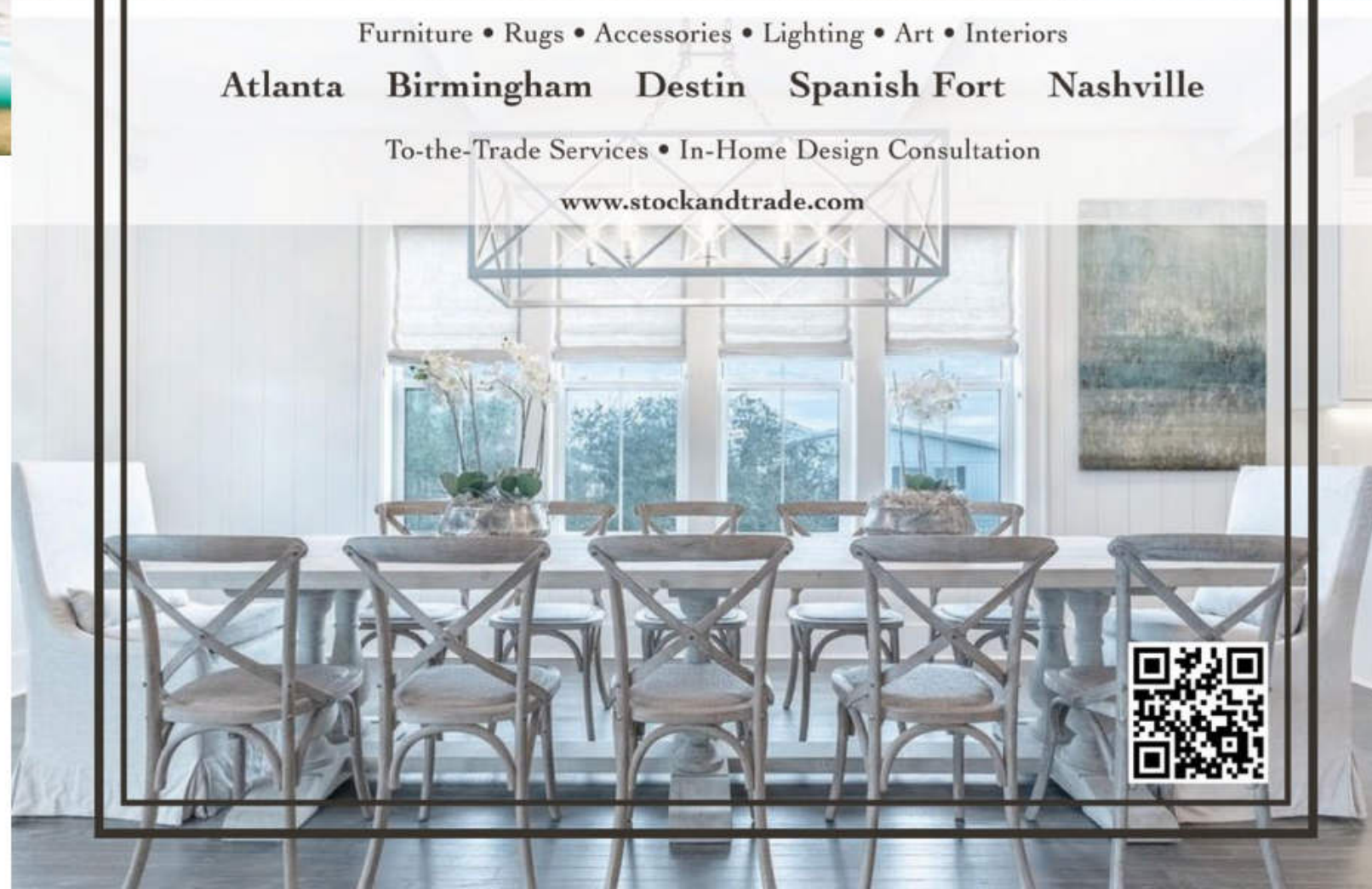
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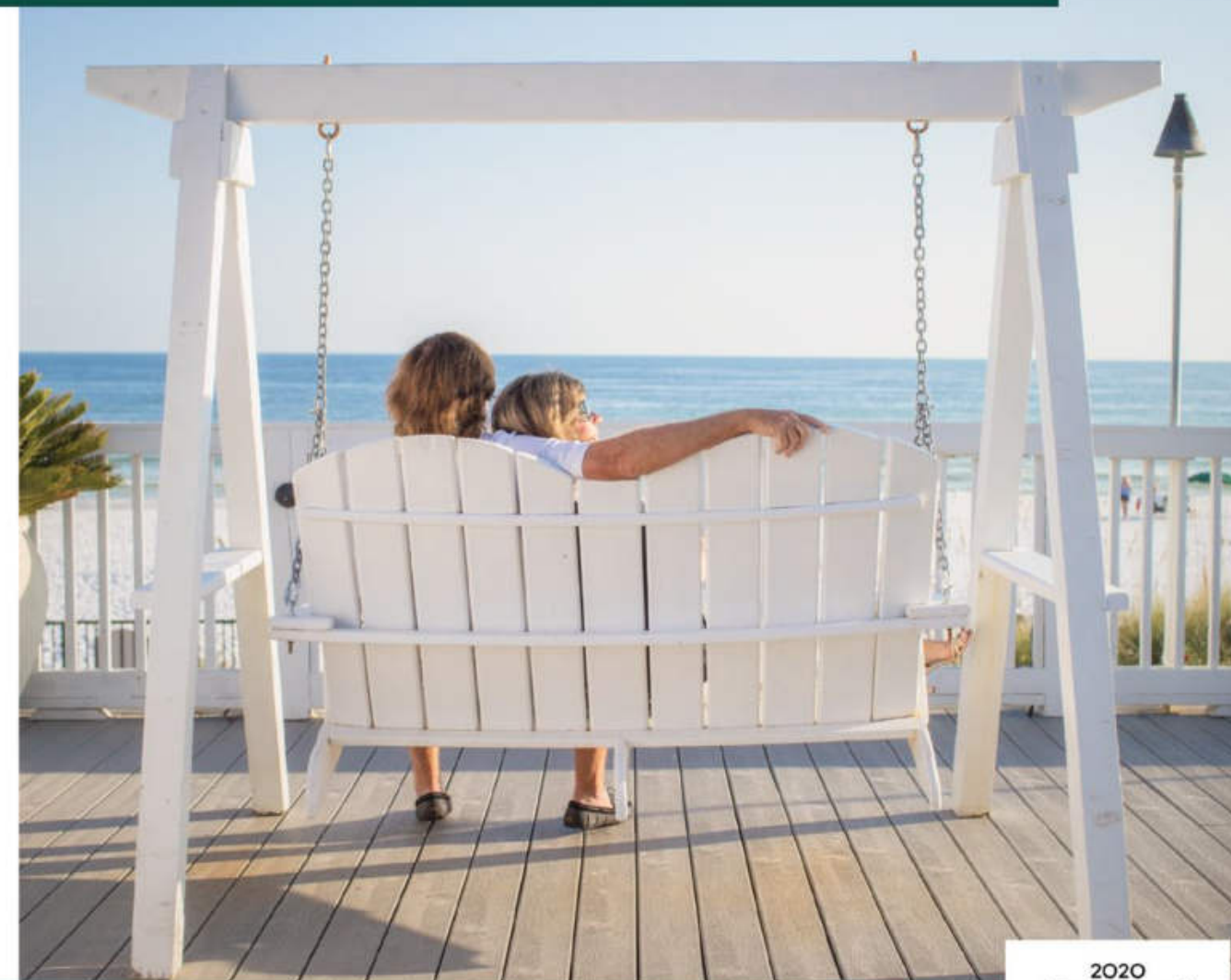
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Best of the Best

Here's to a Happy New You

As I sat writing this, just a week into the new year, I ponder the past months not in resentment, but in acknowledgement of the power of difficult times to bring better days and new beginnings. We've now traversed what most would undeniably agree has been the single strangest, and in many cases, life-altering time we've known. Yet, here we are, staring bravely and resiliently into a whole new year. An entire new opportunity to use what we've learned in the past to build a better future; hopefully wiser, more compassionate, and with more understanding and humility than we had just twelve short months ago.

In many ways, 2020 was a lot like the rollercoaster of life itself, complete with all the corkscrews, upside-down loops, hills, valleys and occasional shaky corners. The important thing, however, is that we're still on the tracks, having learned a little about hanging on and hanging in there.

With this first quarterly issue of 2021, we've chosen to acknowledge that past, but without dwelling too heavily on the year behind us. Instead, we're encouraged to focus on the positives we can create and the direction we can alter. The message of this issue of *Beach Happy* is quite simply "Happy New You." It's about looking ahead, taking that perseverance and persistence we all mustered to get here, and channeling it into the belief and determination that you can, and will, achieve your dreams and goals in 2021.

Much of this issue focuses on overcoming, growing, and reaching one's own potential. From encouraging pieces about influencers like musician and artist Chris Coleman, singer-songwriter, activist, and yogi, Michael Franti, actress Auli'i Cravalho, and dancer turned social media personality, Rebekah Letch, to resilient tales of heroes like Col. Moseley, instrumental in the rebuilding of Florida's Tyndall Air Force Base, and heartfelt stories like "Oh Captain, My Captain," and the influence of a life best lived.

Whether you picked up your copy of *Beach Happy* at a bookstore in California or the Carolinas, your favorite grocery newsstand in Atlanta or Houston, or grabbed a copy while visiting the beautiful Gulf Coast, we're just happy to be bringing the beach to you and helping you navigate the wonderful possibilities and potential ahead.

To sunshine, sand and better days!

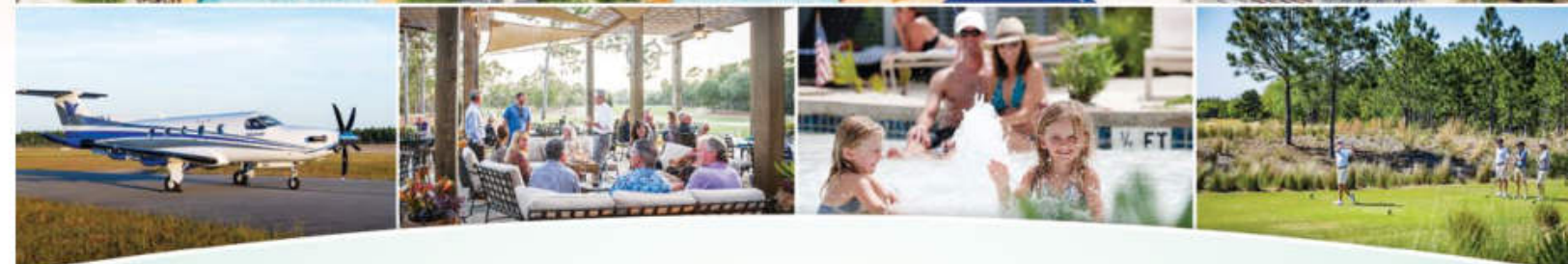


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ON THE COVER

Influencer, Rebekah Letch, photographer, Lauren Athalia, and 30A's Will Estell.



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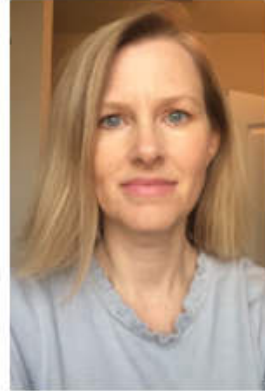
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CONCUNDA freestyle



International Social Influencer, Rebekah Letch on Dance, Entrepreneurship, and the Journey That Led Her to America's Best Beaches

Having just come through one of the most unprecedented years in American history, and certainly the strangest in most of our lifetimes, it's no secret that with those treacherous times came a lot of change for many among us. Some positive, some negative, and some simply serving as fuel for thought along the self-introspection highway. For many people, part of that change involved physical relocation from some of the largest cities in the world to rural areas dotting this country from coast to coast. As part of that mass migration to simpler and more serene places, many found themselves discovering just what makes the beach a great place to settle in.

By Will Estell

I sat down with my friend, and this issue's cover personality, Rebekah Letch, to find out a little more about her remarkable professional journey from Singapore to New York City to major cities around the world, and why once she hit the shores of Northwest Florida's Gulf Coast, she decided to make it her new home.

You originally came to the U.S. from Singapore as a teenager to pursue an advanced career in ballet. Tell me about how that came to be and what it meant to have the opportunity to achieve your dreams in the country where so many dreams come true.

I attended The Juilliard School at the age of 16, right after I won the prestigious Adeline Genée Prix De Lausanne competition in Hong Kong. I entered the competition without having a ballet teacher, and was the only student not represented by a teacher. It wasn't easy — I didn't have a studio and even trained in a swimming pool through an injury. But one thing was sure — I had to win, to prove something to myself, and I did. After that, I was asked to join every major ballet school in Asia and Australia, but I chose to go to Juilliard in New York City. I really wanted to come to America. It was one of the biggest achievements for me, having come from a small island like Singapore.

Tell our readers a little about your life in NYC during and after Juilliard.

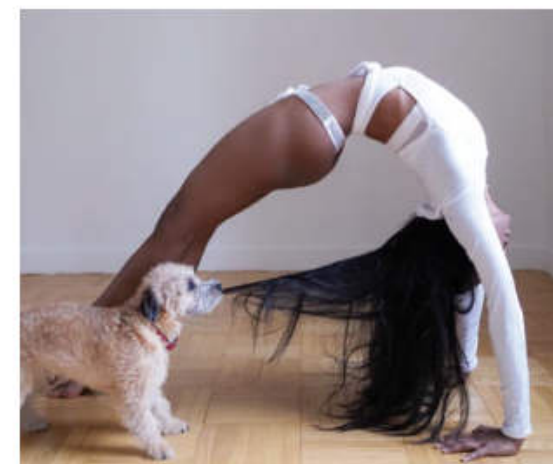
During my time at The Juilliard School, I suffered a bad meniscus injury and shin splints. I was not able to audition for a dance company, and I was afraid my ballet career could well be over. However, I wanted to pursue other fields, so I applied to the University of London. I studied Business Management and majored in Marketing. After that, I moved back to the U.S. and attended NYU, where I did a double major in Marketing and higher education with a major in Ballet Pedagogy from NYU's Steinhardt. While attending NYU, I auditioned for American Ballet Theatre and danced with them until 2012, when I graduated Valedictorian and moved to Italy.

What opportunities did your formal dance training afford you that you may not have had otherwise, and how much does that rigorous lifestyle impact what you do now as an influencer?

My dance training gave me discipline, in all aspects of my life. It taught me about endurance and grace during the most difficult times. It afforded me opportunities to travel the world at a young age. I competed from Singapore to

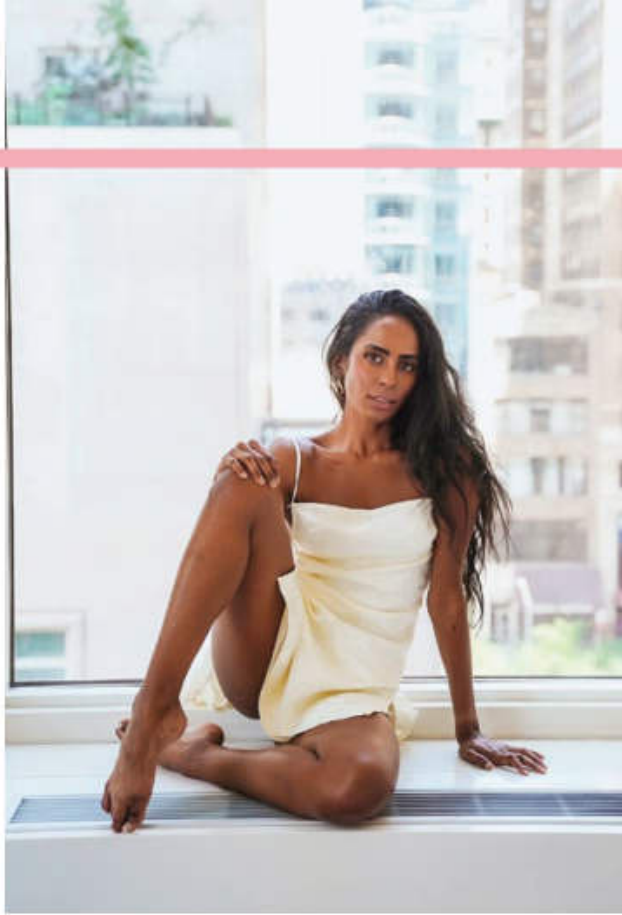
Australia, Japan, the U.S., London, even Russia, and winning many of those competitions meant prize money to keep it going. I also got to perform and be the star of many ballets in Asia as an Asean Brewery Scholar, which made me a ballet prodigy. There was even an Asian documentary show, called "Young Wonder," that I was a part of, as well as getting to be a judge on other television dance shows. My dance training has literally impacted everything I do as an influencer, from my dance videos to my technique and even my current yoga training videos.

Taking a turn at something totally outside of dance, you went on to co-found a beauty products company that quickly became the #1 selling beauty line on Amazon. How did that happen, and what did you learn along that fast-paced journey?



In 2014, I started a company called Radha Beauty while living in Playa del Carmen, Mexico. I had just started my Instagram page and was randomly posting my yoga pictures when the first picture I did in pointe shoes in a yoga pose went viral. I was immediately approached by a few brands and my page grew to 10K followers in less than six months. I didn't know what was happening at that time. People would follow me because of the way I moved when I did yoga and they would

comment they loved my long hair and skin color, which was all very strange to me [laughs]. The first product I brought to market was Argan oil, and it failed miserably. I lost my first \$20,000 investment. But that didn't stop me. I launched my next product after doing some quick competitor and market research, and that product became the best seller on Amazon in the beauty products segment. That really launched Radha Beauty, and within six months, we were doing \$300,000 in gross sales each month. It just kept growing and by the end of the first full year, the company did \$1,000,000 in sales, before growing to \$33,000,000 the following year. My partner and I decided to sell the company during our third year, as it was at \$75,000,000 in sales, just through Amazon. The company sold in 2017. During that venture, I learned so much about people and businesses, consumerism, and the power of scale. As the director of marketing and product development, I designed every single package, most very simplistic and basic



in design. So many people told me I would fail because the beauty industry was already so saturated. But, I didn't listen [laughing] and we made it... BIG!

When we first met this past summer, you had been visiting our beautiful beaches since the spring of 2020, and were staying in the area to get away from the issues that New York and other major cities around the country were facing due to the pandemic. You've since gotten rid of your Manhattan digs, and moved here full-time. What made you decide to make this area home?

I love living in Sandestin. I'm so addicted to the beautiful water, the sunsets, even the great seafood. When I got quarantined here during one of my visits, I realized such a new, simpler way of life. I have always been a big city girl, but I really needed the change since going through some of the ups and downs of life, including losing my precious dog last year. Once here, I found the water was helping me heal my heart.

Having lived in Singapore, London, Paris, San Francisco, and The Big Apple, what are some of the things you've been able to experience here that you had never done before?

So many great things! I have never shot a gun before, so going to a gun range and shooting a .45 was so exciting. I learned how to build my own fire in a fireplace. I have had unbelievable experiences visiting the Gulf and the Springs. I learned how to do Stand Up Paddle (SUP) Yoga and use a paddle board for the first time. I've learned a lot about the great outdoors. I even got to go to my first rodeo, which had

been a dream of mine for so long. I love where I live because it seems like a little bubble where everything is safe and perfect.

What does a day in the life of an influencer look like? Walk me through it.

A day in the life would be waking up at 7:30 a.m., walking my dog three miles, then coming home and making coffee, before I journal and meditate for a while. Then I usually get to my work emails where I respond to brands or hop on phone calls. After that, I often start filming content for brands like Alo Yoga, work on my new workout program for the Moving. co app, then film content for Revolve, the fashion and lifestyle brand I represent. With over 400,000 followers on Instagram and Facebook, sometimes it's a process to figure out what to do next to keep people engaged. Therefore, I always try to get creative and study new and exciting things so I can strive to do better each time.

If you could live anywhere in the world, no strings attached, where would it be and why?

NYC will always be my home and the place I would love to return to someday, post pandemic, but I love it here in this part of Florida, and I would love to live here as long as I can. I love the weather, the vibe, the friendly people, the homes, and the overall lifestyle of this area.

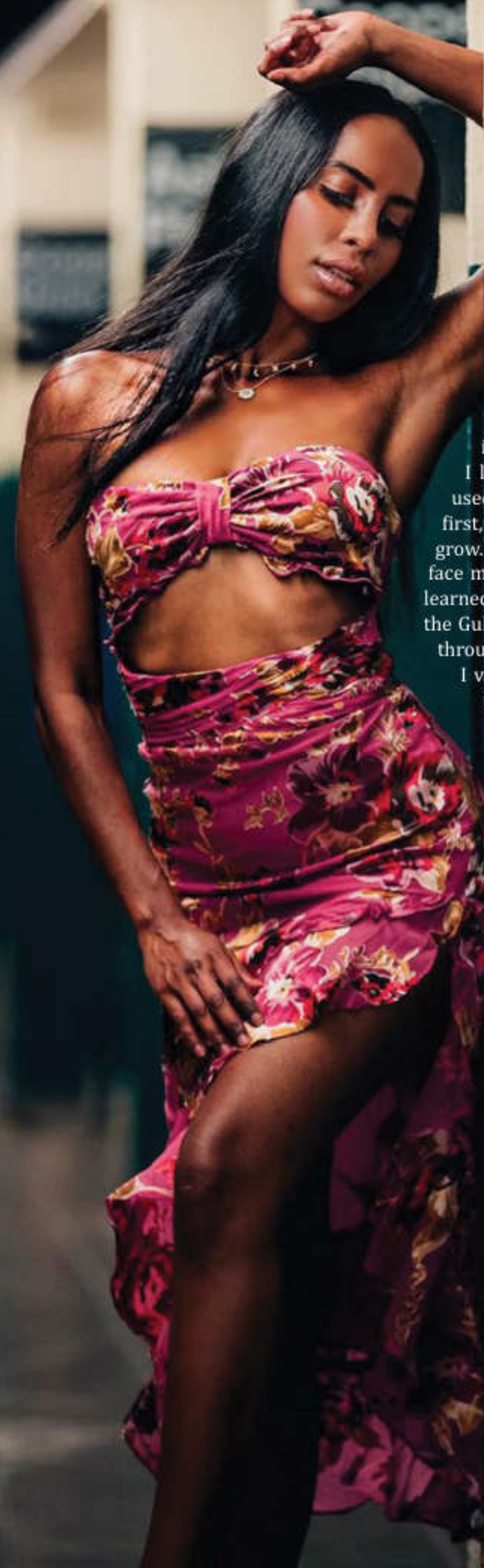
Aside from the work, tell me about some of your hobbies and interests. What do you like to do to get away?

I love spending time with my little Jackapoo puppy, Samson. I love reading books and magazines. I'm also studying Italian. And I love learning about new social strategies and trying to upgrade my skills by doing new workouts or yoga and fitness master classes. Cooking is something I enjoy, so I spend time looking for new recipes for healthy vegan and vegetarian dishes.



“When I got quarantined here during one of my visits, I realized such a new, simpler way of life.”

Place



What's the biggest thing you've taken from the year we just went through?

I learned so much about self-love. I learned about independence and being strong during adversity. I learned how to live without many things that I am used to. Some of my changes were hard to make at first, but necessary too. I believe times like these help us grow. Self-love and learning to recognize, live with, and face my own limitations was a hard but valuable lesson. I learned just how healing nature was, the springs, the trees, the Gulf, the Bay, even the first hurricane season I made it through. It was all powerful, healing, and strengthening. I valued the sense of touch more, a handshake, a hug, the presence of my friends and family. The whole past year taught me how to be kinder and more patient, more compassionate to people who may be going through things we don't understand. This pandemic changed me. And I hope it did all of us in some positive ways.

Any parting words for our readers?

Be yourself, but try harder to accept others for who they are, too. We don't have to be the same to give grace and show compassion and love. Sometimes, even uncomfortable conversations are necessary to advance our understanding of one another, and that's perfectly fine. Try to focus and enjoy the little things in life that make you smile and laugh. We are all human, and humans need social connection. The adversity we face and the resilience we respond with has the power to shape our lives, and so many around us too. With each challenge, we are given the opportunity to persevere, learn, and grow into stronger and more grateful human beings. I hope these are the lessons that we all strive hard to carry forward with us for many years to come. 📸

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WORK HARD & BE NICE

By Mike Ragsdale

MICHAEL FRANTI FINDS OPTIMISM IN TURBULENT TIMES

It's already tomorrow in Bali.

"I can report back to you that the future is awesome," said Michael Franti, some 14 hours ahead of our time zone. "We've already worked out the whole COVID thing for you. Cancer solved. World peace. It's all done."

Like his mood-lifting lyrics, Franti's jesting words feel reassuring. And despite a globe of distance between us, his ZOOM-ed voice rings crystal clear, as if he was sitting here in the room with me.

"This pandemic has blessed me with the opportunity to get all the technical gear I need to be a digital nomad," he explained.

Blessed? Even for a professional poet, it would be difficult to spin the word "pandemic" into a happy hook. Quarantines. Plexiglass dividers. Masks. Shut-downs. Social isolation. Economic hardship. Illness. And worse. Yet, for every pessimist churned out by the seemingly ruthless 2020 machine, an optimist emerged with equally fervorous conviction.

"People say to me that this is a hard time. It's a stressful time. It's a challenging time. But I like to think of it as an important time," said Franti. "The whole world has been asked to hit the pause button and look inside our hearts and say, how am I

showing up for life right now? How am I showing up for my own personal health, the health of my family, the economic health of our communities, and the health of the entire planet? Are there things that I could be doing personally to make my own health and my family's life better, and are there things that I could be doing to make the world better?"

Trying to make the world a better place is nothing new to Franti. In 2010, he and his wife co-founded Soulshine, a holistic retreat in Ubud, Bali, for yogis, and just about anyone else looking for a restful respite from the world's woes. Franti spent almost all of 2020 locked-down with his wife, Sara, and their children, in a lush tropical paradise, playing basketball, practicing yoga, and tending to his crops.

"We grow organic rice, fruits, and vegetables," he said. "We're surrounded by farms in Bali, but very little of the farming is done organically and people here pay a price for it. There are a lot of people with tumors and various forms of cancer that have been living very natural lives, working in fields their whole life. So we dedicated our farm to growing organically, and it's become a passion of mine to learn how to do that. I never thought I'd be a farmer at age 50."

As a family man, musician, entrepreneur, yogi, political activist, documentarian, hotelier, and now farmer, Franti wears many hats, if no shoes. He permanently gave shoes the boot in 2000, now wearing flip-flops only,



“HEY MAN, WE WANT TO DANCE! WE WANT TO LAUGH! WE WANT TO SING!”

when absolutely forced to, such as on a plane. Throughout all those endeavors, music has been the common thread that's woven throughout his multifaceted career.

A far cry from 2006's revolution-inciting *Yell Fire!* album, Franti 2020's release — *Work Hard and Be Nice* — is almost completely devoid of political angst or undercurrent. It's a happy album. A very happy album.

"When I first started in music, I was always pointing a finger at what was happening in the world and expressing my anger about those problems," said Franti. "But as I grew as a person, I started to realize there were areas I could have more effect on."

For example, early on, Franti had written a number of songs about the injustices of our prison system. "I'd never personally spent time in prison, thankfully, but in the early 1990s, I was invited to play in a prison in New York. It was eye-opening for me."

Franti performed in a section where the prisoners with AIDS were being held. "You had people who were handcuffed to their beds and dying," said Franti. "It was a really sad and dire situation to see."

So, Franti did his thing. Believing we should be investing more in education than incarceration, he began performing his original songs about injustice and the need for reform. "But then this guy (an inmate) said to me, 'I really appreciate all these songs that you wrote, but I really miss my girlfriend. I wish you'd sing a song about how much I miss my girlfriend.'"

Franti later performed walking along the war-torn streets of Iraq, Israel and the Gaza Strip. "I would sing my songs about the horrors of war and people would be like, 'Hey man, we want to dance! We want to laugh! We want to sing!'"

Because of his life experiences Franti found the need to rethink how his music serves others.

"Growing up, there were moments when I had suicidal thoughts or struggled with depression when my father was at the peak of his alcoholism," he recalled. "I had some people in my life that were there to inspire me to find that optimism. I also had music in my life that helped me get there. So whether it's farming, running a hotel, or making music, my goal is the same: to inspire optimism in people. That's really what my passion is."

Despite today's polarized political landscape, Franti believes there are common values that we all hold dear. He believes if we can unite on those common values, we can start to have important conversations about the environment, healthcare, immigration, and all the other awful things we witness on the nightly news. For Franti, two of those common values are working hard and being nice.

"I'm hard pressed to find anybody who doesn't think those two things are important," he said. "To work hard at whatever it is that you're trying to do, but to also be kind to other people."

Franti said he now writes all of his songs about optimism and getting through life's many challenges. But that doesn't mean he side-steps important issues.

"I think, in order to write a great happy song, you have to talk about the hard stuff," he said. "And then you see the transformation. Life is really tough, but I can still find gratitude. I can still find joy in the difficult moments. And even though things aren't perfect, we can try to get there."

Even a song as irresistibly cheerful as his 2010 hit *The Sound of Sunshine* comes from a place of personal struggle.

*I wake up in the morning at six o'clock.
They say there may be rain, but the sun is hot.
I wish I had some time just to kill today.
I wish I had a dime for every bill I got to pay.*





“
WHETHER IT'S FARMING, RUNNING A HOTEL,
OR MAKING MUSIC, MY GOAL IS THE SAME:
TO INSPIRE OPTIMISM IN PEOPLE.
”

"That song has been in commercials for resorts and all kinds of stuff, but it came from a time when I was really struggling both financially and musically," he said, recalling when his appendix ruptured on tour, throwing him into personal and professional depression.

Barring malfunctioning organs and global pandemics, Franti and his merry band are typically on the road six to seven months out of the year, with a goal of leaving behind just as many smiles as they do miles.

"I really believe that part of your success as a musician is not only the sound you leave behind, but the feeling you leave behind," he said. "We show up with all our gear and we meet this local crew that we don't know, and we've all got to get along really quick, and we've got to put on a great show, and then we've got to pack up and leave everybody feeling great — not just in the audience, but behind the stage."

To help foster a strong work ethic and warm demeanor within his crew, Franti came up with a motto for their last pre-COVID tour: "Work hard and be nice." He made t-shirts for his band and crew with that emblazoned slogan in bold type.

"As soon as the guys in the band and crew were wearing them, fans started asking for them too," he said. "So we put the shirts out on our merch table, and even though it wasn't

the name of the tour or the album, it became our top-selling shirt by far. So, I thought, I should write a song and make our next tour about this."

Franti said another lightbulb moment in his career was when he realized the best thing you can do to create energy in the hearts of other people is to be authentic yourself.

"People can see a mile away when you're not showing up as you," he said. "It's not only challenging for you to get your message across, but it's challenging for you as an individual because you're constantly comparing yourself to other people and thinking, man, I wish my music sounded like this other person's music, or I should wear this person's kind of clothes, or I have to show up in some way different than the way I am."

Instead, Franti believes you should focus on being your best and most authentic self. He once asked his friend Sammy Hagar how he achieved so much success with his Cabo Wabo-brand bars and tequila.

Sammy told him, "You know, Mike, I just built a bar that I wanted to hang out at. That was it. That's all I do. I don't think about what other people's expectations are. I figure there will be enough people in the world who like what I do."

Be yourself. Keep putting yourself into whatever it is that you do. Make it enjoyable for you, and there will be other people who also find joy in it. For Franti, these aren't just memes or lyrics or t-shirt slogans.

"My wife and I have a family motto inscribed inside our wedding rings: 'Be your best, serve the greater good and rock out wherever you are.' That doesn't mean be *the* best. It means be *your* best. What can you learn today that you didn't know yesterday? How can I be 1% better than I was yesterday?"

2020 is now yesterday, making way for a new year and new opportunities. But life will inevitably continue to present us with unique and unforeseen challenges.

"We held a cremation ceremony for 2020 at our hotel," said Franti. "We built a giant 2020 out of wood and set it on fire. It was just a funny way of saying 2020 was a rough year and we want to move on, but of course, there's no guarantee that the days ahead will be any better."

After all, a pandemic is a biological concern, one that doesn't simply "go away" just because we turn a page on human





“LIFE IS REALLY TOUGH,
BUT I CAN STILL FIND GRATITUDE.
I CAN STILL FIND JOY IN THE DIFFICULT MOMENTS.”

construct calendars. Even if COVID-19 does fade into the pages of unfortunate history, all our other worldly woes are still there: climate change, racial tensions, economic hardships.

“These things aren’t going to go away immediately, so the answer to me is that we have to change our perspective on the way we see things,” said Franti. “You can either wake up with the attitude of, ‘Oh man, I have to get up today and go to work.’ Or, you can wake up and be grateful that you’re able to get up – that you get another day in life. My advice is to switch that wording around. Change your attitude from ‘I have to do things’ to ‘I get to do things’ and see how it changes your life.”

Like most of us, happiness doesn’t always come naturally to Franti. He believes we all have to work at it.

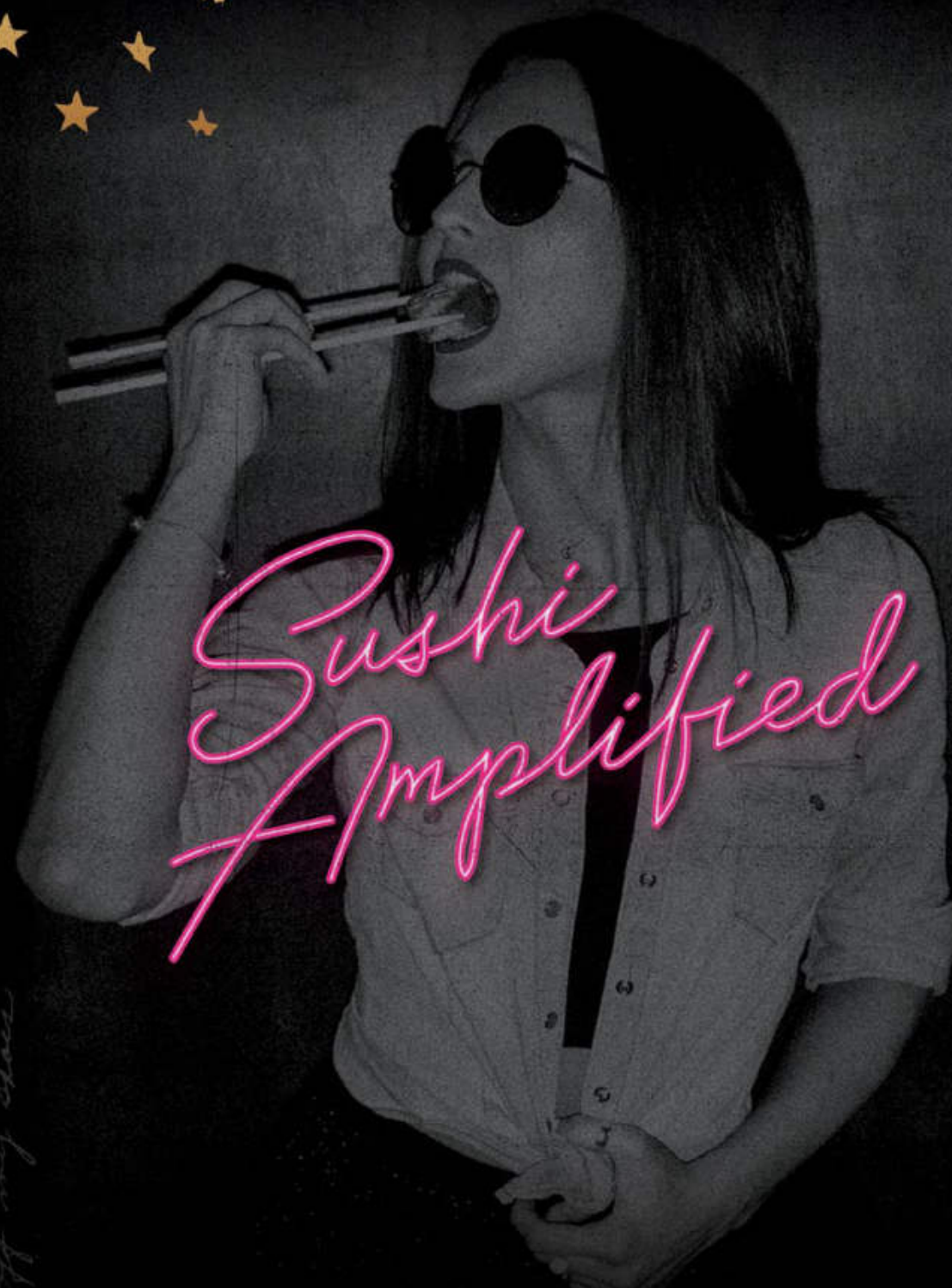
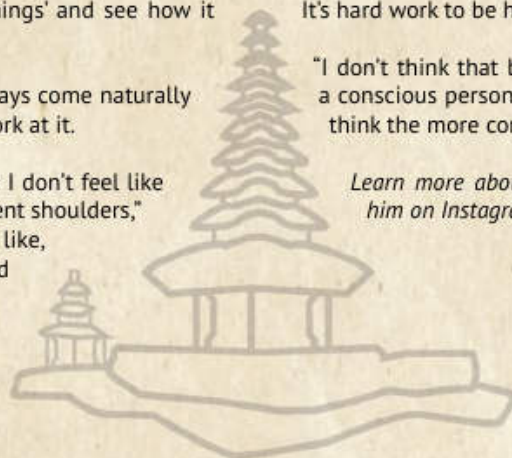
“There isn’t a day that I wake up when I don’t feel like there’s an angel and the devil on different shoulders,” he said. “One side is the cynicism that’s like, man, this world is so messed up. And

then there’s the other side: I’m never going to give up on it. I’m going to keep trying to do my part to make it better. Steph Curry doesn’t just show up at the basketball game to make that critical last-second free throw,” said Franti. “He goes up there knowing that he practiced every day to prepare himself for those moments. That’s how we have to be with our happiness and our optimism. We have to practice flipping that switch of our attitudes so when we do get in those moments that are challenging for us, we can take a deep breath and approach this with mindfulness and happiness and joy in our heart.”

It’s hard work to be happy. But it’s also rewarding work.

“I don’t think that being a beach happy person and being a conscious person are incongruous,” said Franti. “In fact, I think the more conscious we are, the happier we can be.”

Learn more about Franti on michaelfranti.com or follow him on Instagram @michaelfranti. @



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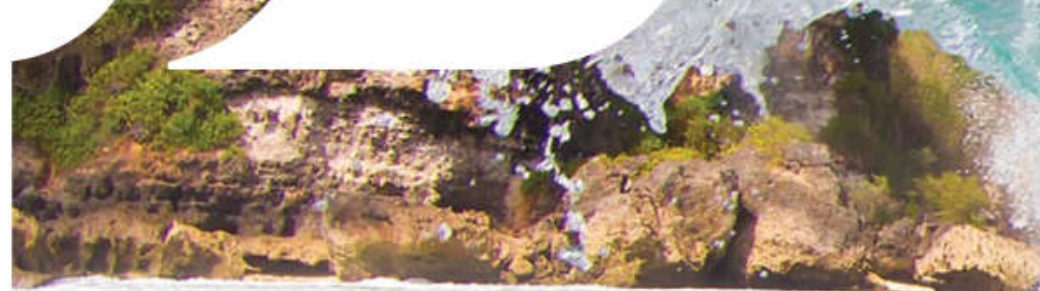


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Questions



The professional surfer, author, and motivational speaker talks about her favorite self-care activities and gives insight on getting a fresh start in the new year.



*with
Bethany Hamilton*

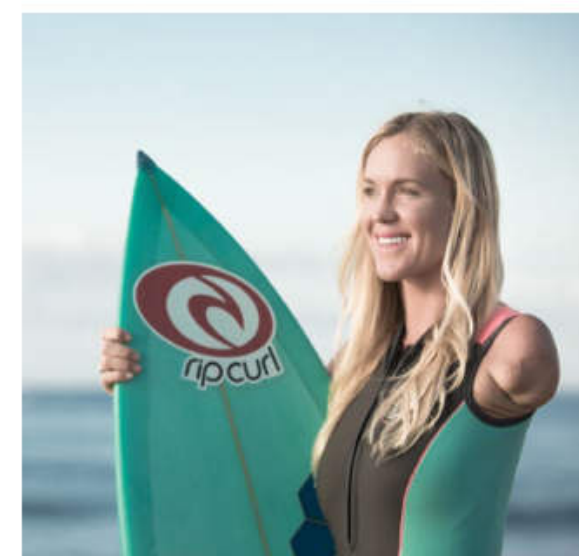
By Abigail Abesamis Demarest
Photos: Mary Ernsdorf
Trevor Murphy
Aaron Lieber
Mike Coots

“**Riding A Wave**
is kind of like drawing on a moving canvas.”



You may know Bethany Hamilton as the surfer who lost her left arm to a 14-foot tiger shark at the age of 13, but she is so much more than that. She's a wife, a mother, and an inspiration to people around the world as a professional surfer, author, and motivational speaker. Her online course, Unstoppable Life, offers its more than 5,000 members tools for coping with adversity and life's challenges.

It feels kismet featuring Bethany Hamilton as one of *Beach Happy's* influencers—our initials match, and she embodies the “Beach Happy” lifestyle—and we hope you enjoy learning a little bit more about her. Read on for Bethany's thoughts on surfing, details on her favorite self-care activities, and more.



1. What do you love most about surfing?

I really like the creativity, the thrill, and the challenge of surfing. Riding a wave is kind of like drawing on a moving canvas with your energy pumping! And it's always challenging me because no wave is the same. I like learning and trying to continually better myself. I also just love being in nature, in God's creation, and experiencing the beauty and peace it has to share.

2. What are your favorite centering self-care activities?

My number one is probably sleep. Getting rest is so critical and as a mom I feel it so much for both myself and my kids. When we are not well-rested, we can be grumpy, irritable, impatient, and emotional. But when we have good rest, we are more cheerful, pleasant, and able to handle whatever the day may bring. Especially being pregnant, I love taking naps and getting to bed early. Functional movements are also really important to me.

I make sure to move my body every day and to move it in ways that will support me for the future, be that strengthening, agility, flexibility or recovery.

Eating healthy is also important. Feeding myself and my family whole, non-processed foods (mostly vegetables) each day has become a huge centering point for my family and I as we care for our bodies.

3. What are your top must-have items to take with you to the beach?

My RS surfboard, a reef-safe non-toxic sunscreen, a visor or hat, a canteen filled with water, and a towel.

4. What has been the most important thing in overcoming adversity and challenges in your life?

Embracing a mindset of gratitude has been key, and I recommend it to everyone. When you start looking for things in your life and situations to be thankful for, it can really help get you out of the feeling of being stuck in adverse or unfavorable circumstances. Surround yourself with people who see the good in life and are going after their dreams and goals. They are contagious and that can urge you on to overcome adversity.

5. What is your advice for people looking for a fresh start in the new year?

If you are in that place of feeling stressed, unmotivated, and trapped by all the challenges coming your way, I hear you. 2020 was one of the hardest years of my life, and I'm very thankful for the tools and mindset I've learned over the years. Life can be so frustrating and dark at times. I've seen both sides that come from it -- the challenge and the good. Know that like me, you too can overcome.

I invite you to drop by my website to dive more into this. There, I share 5 Keys to Living an Unstoppable Life, and Appreciation is the first step in my A.D.A.P.T. approach. You can be unstoppable, and I'd love to help guide you in your journey. Visit me at bethanyhamilton.com/5keys. 📺

To learn more about Bethany Hamilton, follow her on Instagram (@bethanyhamilton) and check out her website bethanyhamilton.com.

Into the Light



By Susan Gunn
Photos: Alissa Greer

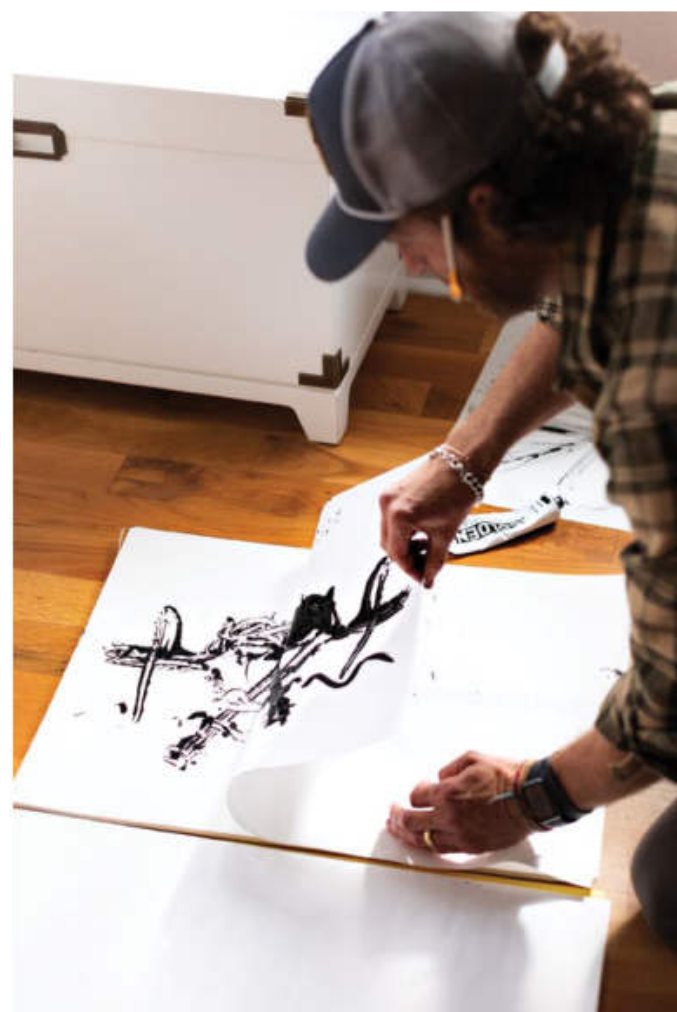
Artist and Musician Chris Coleman Finds Solace by the Sea

It's safe to say everyone has had a rough year. Lost in the elongated mire of 2020, each of us have learned to navigate a world quickly changed. Some entered this alternate universe already existing in a personal or professional transition, navigating the ever-changing path of life, which can sometimes leave one feeling lost. But it's important, especially now, to remember there's always hope. If we just open our eyes, we realize that moving forward with optimism is always possible. I was particularly reminded of this when I sat down to speak with musician and painter, Chris Coleman.

Walking into Coleman's home, I was welcomed with true Southern Hospitality... the offer of a cold beer. We quickly established a rapport through the discovery of our mutual love of the Georgia Bulldogs. I listened as Coleman began to talk unsolicited about his day. The sound of progressive acoustic music played in the background as I followed Chris to a seating area nestled among musical instruments and kids' toys. There were tubes of acrylic paints lying randomly near loose pieces of fine art paper, some still blank, but most bearing the signature images for which Coleman has become known. Spying at one wall, I noticed an informal gallery of unusual paintings, haunting images bordering the abstract; black-on-white figures, which struck something in me immediately. It did not take long to realize that I was in the presence of a beautiful, creative mind.

If Coleman looks familiar, it's because he is a self-taught, multi-instrumental singer/songwriter who toured as the guitarist of the popular rock band Kings Of Leon from 2009 to 2014. He is the Georgia-born son of Gale and Phyllis Coleman. He comes from a family





of larger-than-life cowboys and baseball players, and shared that he was a late surprise to his parents. The youngest of three, he muses about his brother Jeremy and sister Jessica, laughing, "I showed up and they said, 'Who's this punk?'" He admits that he prefers the mountains to the beach, "I've been a mountain man. If I could've lived anywhere before I came here, it would've been Montana. I love cold, I love fire and the smell of that." Lounging comfortably now in his cowboy boots, jeans, and t-shirt, palm trees in the background, he says family vacations to the panhandle made him appreciate the Gulf Coast. Like many folks with Floridian roots, he loves to surf. He even has blood ties to the area saying his great-grandfather Percy "Boss Red" Coleman, along with his grandfather, built part of Highway 98. "His ghost is running all up and down here, and that means a lot. This whole corridor is where my dad's family grew up."

Chris realized early in life that he wasn't like other kids. "I was just a quiet kid in the marching band, and I fell in love with creating music." He spent a lot of time alone fostering his growing interest in the arts. After graduating high school, he briefly attended college before leaving to play in local Atlanta band Luna Halo and working various jobs while obtaining his pilot's license. He had his first solo flight on the morning of September 11, 2001, and it is here, he says, his life took an unforgettable defining turn. The events of 9/11 were branded on his psyche, where they remain today.

"I grew up in a hermetically sealed world, great family, seemingly normal life, but it shattered my view of what the world really was. I went on a downward spiral, and it was a deconstruction of what I thought reality to be. I learned there was real evil in the world."

It was shortly after that when Coleman left the security of home and moved to Nashville. Through what he remembers as his angry years, he spent time writing music, playing, and auditioning for bands. In 2001, he met Holly Williams, a young singer/songwriter and the daughter of iconic country music royalty, Hank Williams Jr. After years of friendship and touring together, they fell in love and married in 2009.

Chris told me something his father told him, "Son, just keep working, if you work hard, something good is going to happen." For the next five years, Chris toured the world with the immensely popular rock band, Kings Of Leon. While Coleman still considers his bandmates among his closest friends, he says, "I was out in front of 80,000 people some nights, hungover, jet-lagged, depressed and miserable. It wasn't the





Kings' fault, it wasn't rock and roll's fault, it was my fault for having expectations of something I was going to get that was going to bring me some form of fulfillment. You know what the damndest thing is? What fulfills me now is thankfulness."

Chris made his last appearance with the Kings on September 24, 2014, at Red Rocks, and after amicably parting ways, he says he focused on starting a family with Holly. "I had an understanding with my buddies. I do love those boys, and I miss being out there at times, but I did not want to miss being a father. Things really transitioned after my first child, and what grace that is." He and Holly enjoyed writing and singing together, performing at the Grand Ole Opry, and playing with friends like Sheryl Crow and the late John Prine. Chris makes no secret of his choice to seek therapy for things in his past that haunt him and says he and Holly have fought for their marriage through times of trouble. In awakening from his darkness and depression, he says he feels like he has grown as a man, but also reconnected with that inner child who saw a scary world, and says, "that's okay."

One day in 2013, Coleman's creative nature led him to an art store where he purchased acrylic paints and an art pad. Once home, he sat down and painted a figure in black ink that had been on his mind for some time. The painter inside this musician had finally surfaced, and the signature works Chris produces now were born. By hand, rarely using brushes, he creates minimalist images that reflect his love of history and the Old West. "The aesthetic was there everywhere I went in life with my family—it was always John Wayne or Clint Eastwood. I was just steeped in it." Chris credits his wife Holly with encouraging him to pursue this organic creativity, saying, "Without her, I would still be looking at that first painting sitting on the floor against my wall."

"When I had my first studio, I painted three figures and put them all together, and a story unfolded. The warring soldier, the pioneering cowboy, and the native who was here first," he acknowledges the multi-faceted troubled history of our country. "They're here together in postures of unity, so I called it The Alliance. Maybe that's idealistic to think what could have been, but all I know is those are three among many of the major conflicting figures of that time in this country." This remains a recurring theme, with serial versions seen in his deeply thought-provoking and moving works of old America. At one point, as we talked, he reached for a clean pad and a tube of black paint. I watched his





eyes intently as he began to work quickly with his hands. After a short time, a figure appeared, leaving me in awe. Some might try to replicate his technique, but it would prove difficult. Chris' works strongly reflect his depth and are as profound as the mind of the man who creates them, evoking powerful emotion in the viewer.

Coleman bristles at the thought of his work being considered genius. "Cavemen were doing this 40,000 years ago," he laughed. "I spent so much of my time playing music for the wrong reasons — ego-based. I'm not quite sure what happened, maybe just life, but when you start creating and doing things because you're driven to, and you love—that's when the doors of opportunity fly open. I removed my ambitions for my own gain as 'the thing'—it should be the story, that's so much bigger than us."

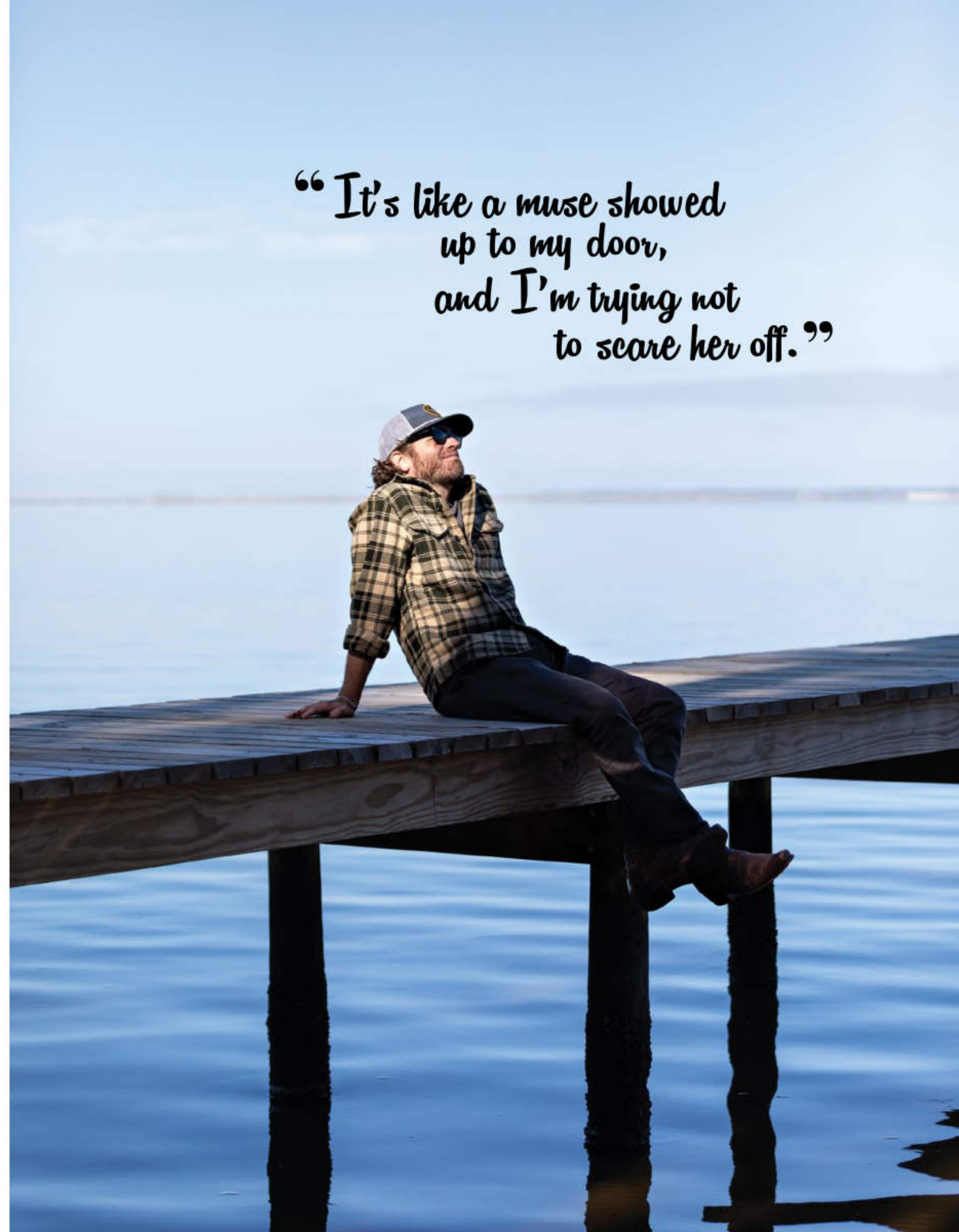
Chris has settled comfortably by the beach, finding peace in his writing, painting, and fiercely loving his family. He still plays music and heads to Nashville on occasion to record. When I asked him about the future, he said, "I can say wholeheartedly, I have lived a lot of the dreams I had as a younger man. I've also come through a lot of tragedy and trauma in my life. 2020 has been awful. It's been like breathing underwater. But, you know, it's like surfing and fighting in those crashing waves, but you take that deep breath—the buoyancy and truth, life, it always rises, and it's about acceptance. I'm so thankful that I can still be creative." He says with humility, "I feel like I'm walking with such boldness, confidence, and peace. It's like a muse showed up to my door, and I'm trying not to scare her off."

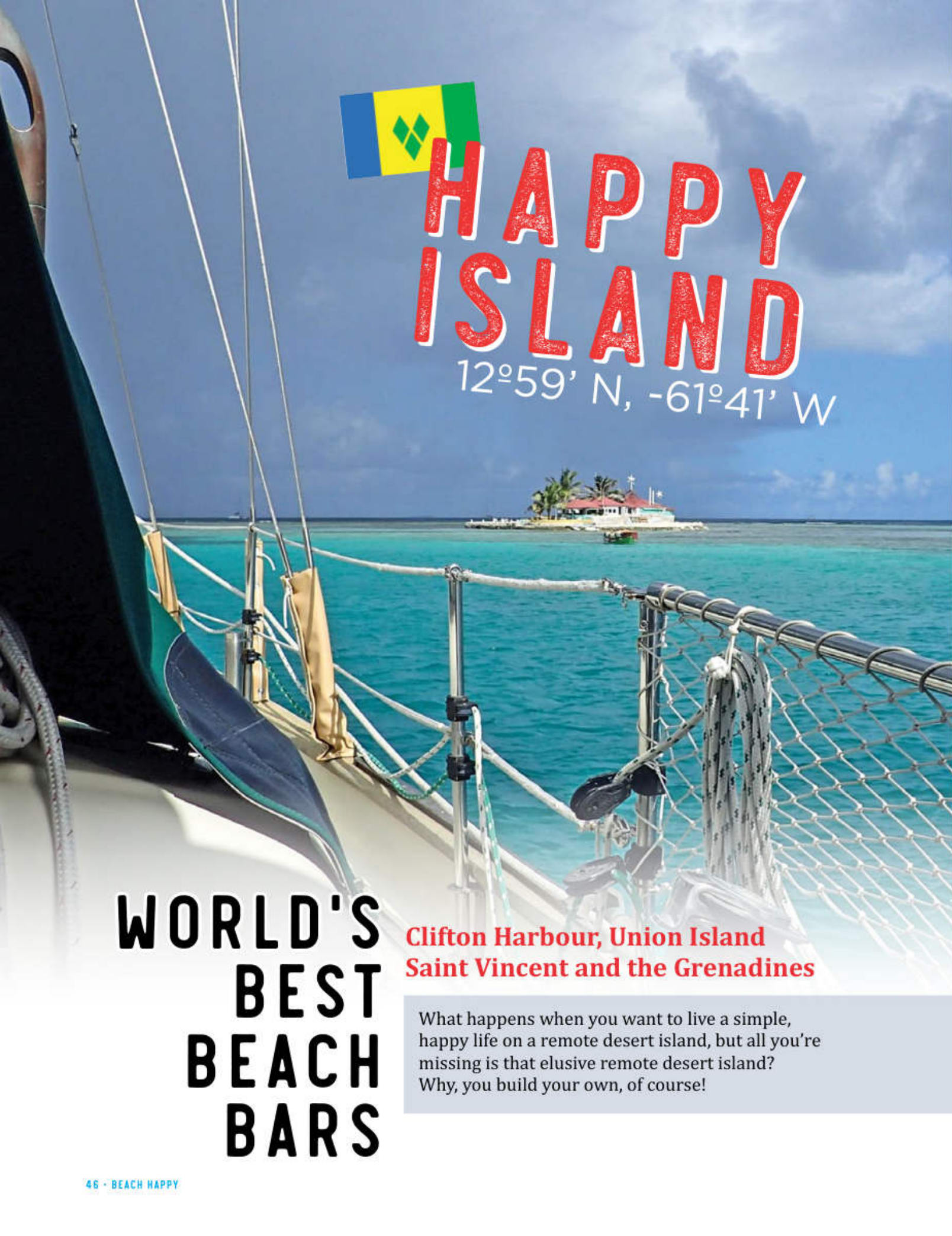
In my time spent with Coleman, I learned of the sincerity of his feelings for our country and its plights, past and present. He considers himself a work-in-progress, and is a positive, caring, kind-hearted man. With the Cowboy painting he gifted to me in hand, I walked out into the twilight and stopped for a moment to admire the evening breeze through the palms and the huge crescent moon lowering down toward the Gulf. I took in one of those long deep breaths Chris spoke of, and I had a sense of peace and hopefulness. Walking to my car with a smile, the sound of sand and gravel crunching beneath my flip-flops, I had a sudden urge to get home and put on my cowboy boots, if only for a little while. 🐾

Chris Coleman's paintings are sold as originals only, and can be purchased at his wife, Holly's shop, White's Mercantile in Nashville, Tennessee. He also takes commissions and can be reached through his website, www.chriscolemanart.com.

You can follow Coleman on Instagram [@chriscolemanart](https://www.instagram.com/chriscolemanart).

"It's like a muse showed up to my door, and I'm trying not to scare her off."





HAPPY ISLAND

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“
TASKED WITH CLEANING UP
ALL THE DISCARDED
CONCHS THAT LITTERED
LOCAL BEACHES,
JANTI CAME UP WITH
ONE HECKUVA
BRILLIANT,
HAPPY SOLUTION.
”



That's exactly what Janti Ramage began doing in 2002, deep south in the Grenadines, just a few hundred moist steps off the coast of Union Island.

Starting with nothing more than a pile of discarded conchs (known as "lambi" shells), Janti slowly, but surely, built his ecstatic empire from Clifton Harbour's shallow sea floor.

A byproduct of fishermen who plunder the conchs solely for their succulent meat, empty shells actually became a big problem on Union Island, where Janti served as the volunteer environmental officer. Tasked with cleaning up all the discarded conchs that littered local beaches, Janti came up with one heckuva brilliant, happy solution.

He began gathering all the discarded lambi shells until he had enough of a foundation to prop-up a small hut with a couple of chairs. Before long, a few people began rowing out to the tiny roost for sunset cocktails. Janti added a few more (okay, a *lot* more) conch shells here and there, a little bit of concrete mix to help bind the shells together, a few palm trees donated by imbibing friends, and Wa-Lah: Janti had created his own personal rum-soaked paradise.

Gradually, over the last 20 years, that one simple hut has morphed into a sizable isle with a dozen or more picnic tables, a tiny bit of indoor seating, and a space large enough for Janti to call the island his full-time home.

Janti is an all-smiles-on-deck Rastafarian, a religion based on the Bible developed in Jamaica in the 1930s, and later popularized in the '60s and '70s through Rasta-inspired reggae musicians such as Bob Marley. True to his environmental roots, Janti utilizes abundant solar energy to fuel the island's activities (mostly blender related), and he collects and filters fresh rainwater through a cistern system.

A natural reef largely insulates Happy Island from rough seas, while creating a blissfully serene spot for a swim. In addition to its unshakable happy aura, Happy Island serves delicious and affordable tropical concoctions, with a particular emphasis on rum punch and pina colodas. There's no food menu, but if you call or radio ahead (VHF Channel 16), Janti will be happy to arrange something delicious for you in advance. We recommend a Lobster BBQ.

Hours are decidedly – what else – "Island Time," so it's best to call ahead to make sure the blender's whirling before you drift out there. Another option is to bend your ear toward the island. If you hear music, it's Happy Hour... but then again, it always is here.

To learn more about Happy Island, visit facebook.com/happyislandgrenadines.

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BEACHES ABROAD



KOH MADSUM, THAILAND



WHY GO?

Everyone's heard of the famous "Pig Beach" in the Bahamas, but far fewer Westerners will ever make the piggy pilgrimage all the way to Koh Madsum, a tiny island in the Gulf of Thailand. In addition to that sought-after remote desert island vibe, Koh Madsum is famous for its portly residents. (The hogs – not the humans.)



HOW DO I GET THERE?

Koh Madsum is a scenic 30-minute boat ride south from Koh Samui, Thailand's second largest island. You can hitch a ride on a traditional longtail boat from the southern side of Samui, in the village of Thong Krut.



WHERE SHOULD I STAY?

Most people stay on the main island of Koh Samui, where there are unlimited options across all price ranges. However, there's also a posh island resort called The Treasure Koh Madsum that's located on the small island and a great place to stay over. (www.treasurekohmadsum.com)

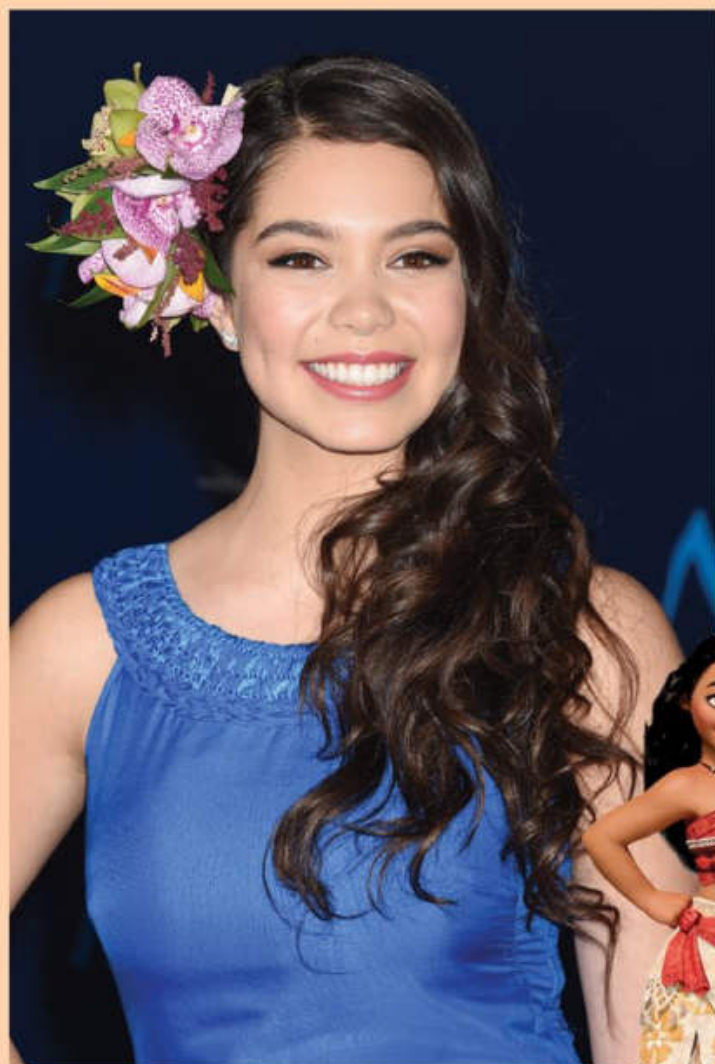


HOW MUCH DOES IT COST?

A private ride on a traditional longtail boat will cost a group about \$75 USD per day, while a private speedboat runs about 10,000 Thai Baht (\$326 USD). The speedboat can hold up to 22 people though, so if you bring along 20 of your bestest friends, that's just \$15 pp for a full day of snorkeling, and laying around on a beach like a fat pig.

THE INSIDE SCOOP:

You'll occasionally see wild monkeys running around on Thai beaches (along with a few wild Aussies and Russians, but that's a whole different story). However, you're not likely to see wild boars anywhere but here. Rumor has it that one of the island's residents was buying provisions at a market on Koh Samui when he noticed a family of four scared pigs huddled together, awaiting the fateful hands of the butcher. In a spontaneous moment of compassion, he bought the family of pigs, loaded them onto his boat and sailed them back to Koh Madsum, where they now live a life of tropical leisure. The original family of four has now grown to twelve, spanning three generations. A percentage of each Koh Madsum tour ticket sold goes to help feed the pigs and to benefit the island community.



Polynesian Powers

Actress Auli'i Cravalho Talks *Moana*, Growing Up Hawaiian and Her Blossoming Career

By Abigail Abesamis Demarest
Photo: Michael Simon

At just 20 years old, Auli'i Cravalho has already made quite a name for herself. She made her acting debut as the voice of *Moana*, winning an Annie Award for Outstanding Achievement for Voice Acting in an Animated Feature Production along the way. *Moana*—an animated Disney film about the strong-willed daughter of a Polynesian village chief—was released in 2016 to positive reviews, and went on to gross over \$690 million worldwide. Since then, Cravalho starred in the NBC drama series *Rise* and the Netflix film *All Together Now*—and she's just getting started.

Cravalho grew up in Kohala, located on the northernmost side of Hawaii's Big Island. Like *Moana*, Cravalho was always drawn to the water.

"Mom would take me to the beach whenever I was sick because Hawaiians believe that the saltwater heals you," she said. "I was also an avid swimmer. I was on the swim team, and we would sometimes have swim practice in the ocean. It's a lot more difficult when you have the waves working against you."

Cravalho was just 14 years old when she got cast as *Moana*, and even then she knew it would change her life forever.

"It was monumental to portray a character who is of native Polynesian descent, was a wayfinder, did things her parents could only dream of, and lived her truth," she said. "I was really, really proud to play that character, and I'm excited to see how far she'll take me."

Cravalho lives in L.A. now, pursuing her career in acting. And even though she hasn't lived in Hawaii for several years, her coastal roots continue to shape her into the person she is today.

"It's funny, because living in Los Angeles, I'm kind of a snob: I know a good beach when I see one," laughed Cravalho. "After growing up in Hawaii, it doesn't get much better than that."

As a result, Cravalho focuses much of her charity work on clean water and the environment. "I grew up seeing the beautiful ocean, and I want our beaches to be clean."

In addition to the beaches, Cravalho also misses the local Hawaiian eats. "My family

makes really good food," she said, including her auntie, who she said makes a delicious tripe stew. "Some people don't care for tripe, but I grew up on the dish, and it's one of my favorites." On the sweet side, one of Cravalho's go-to desserts is kulolo. "It's just taro, but it's sweetened to the point where it's this sticky, delicious gooeyness."

One of Cravalho's favorite local haunts growing up was a place called Hawaiian Style Café in Waimea. Kohala didn't have a large supermarket, so Cravalho's family would do their weekly grocery shopping in Kona or Waimea. "We'd always stop at Hawaiian Style Café, and I used to get pancakes in the shape of Mickey Mouse." Foreshadowing, anyone?

King's Hawaiian rolls were another favorite growing up, so Cravalho recently partnered with the brand to help raise money for No Kid Hungry (www.nokidhungry.org). The partnership helped provide half-a-million meals to children in need.

"King's Hawaiian was always a treat for my family, and I was really happy and excited to celebrate their 70th anniversary and their tradition of giving back," said Cravalho. "The Aloha Spirit means giving back. The fact that King's Hawaiian makes that part of their mission in addition to making really yummy bread made the partnership perfect for me."

As is often the case with young Disney stars, Cravalho's career is evolving and maturing. She will soon star in an Amazon series called *The Power*, a TV adaptation of Naomi Alderman's award-winning 2016 novel. "It's about these girls who are suddenly able to electrocute people at will," she said. "There's a power shift when women have this strength over the opposite sex, which I think is really interesting."

Cravalho said she also took time in 2020 to focus on her academic future, applying to various colleges. "I got to take a second and breathe and really plan for 2021," she said. "I'm really excited about college. I didn't know that it would be in the cards for me, so I'm happy that now it's a possibility because of *Moana*." 🍍



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“ PEOPLE DO GET TO START OVER

Every day, you get a brand new sunrise.
Nobodies become somebodies.

”

DESTIN

By Sean Dietrich

It's night and I am on a beach in Destin, Florida. I am sitting on the shore, watching the mighty Gulf of Mexico. It never stops moving.

Never.

A few hours ago, I was in a beach bar having dinner with an old friend. He looked good. He's a family man now, with a good job in Birmingham. Two kids. A nice wife. I haven't seen him in decades. Not since we were ugly young men, operating nail-guns together.

Long ago, we had things in common. His father left before he was born. Mine died when I was a boy.

Back then, we had the same idea on life. Namely: that life wasn't fair.

We had fun tonight. There was a band playing top-forty hits. The lead guitarist sang "Brown Eyed Girl" like a donkey with a sinus infection. And people danced.

My friend and his wife ordered fruity drinks and two-stepped until they were sweaty. I said Goodnight Gracie and left early.

On my way home, I stopped here. And the memories came back by the metric ton.

This used to be my beach. I haven't been here in years. We lived a few streets over. Our family's old block house was yellow. And tiny. I slept on a pull-out sofa. My sister slept with my mother. I would sit on the back porch steps when I couldn't sleep, and look at the night. And I'd wonder things. Important things.

Things like: why does the Pope wear pointy hats? Who invented drive-thru liquor stores? Is it bad luck to be superstitious? And why does it seem like life is out to get me?

Anyway, this town has changed. Once upon a time, Destin was a sleepy fishing village. It had one traffic light—two at the most. It wasn't swallowed by restaurants. There were only a few dives, a Shell Station, and the docks on the harbor.

But progress brought thousands of traffic lights, high-rise condos, and two Walmarts, located ten miles apart.

Two.

The old docks on the harbor were where I first got kissed. It was during the annual Destin Fishing Rodeo. I sat on wood planks. My feet dangling. A girl sat beside me.

I was the most un-handsome boy in four counties, and she knew it. She felt bad for me. And, since people our age were kissing, she kissed me. As soon as she planted one on me, I could tell that she wished she hadn't. I've never felt so hideous.

Those docks are gone now. They tore them down to build an amusement park resort. Think: zip lines, jugglers, fire swallowers, and funnel cakes.

Funnel cakes.

But at least this little patch of sand is still mine. It's the same place where I celebrated the five-year anniversary of my father's death, a lifetime ago.

I'll never forget it: it was two in the morning. I was a teenager. I waded into black water until I was chest-deep. I got lost in the stars.

That night, I stared at the big nothingness that hovers over the face of the Gulf. And I told the sky I wanted to start over. I wanted to begin again. I wanted to be someone else. Someone who wasn't ugly. I wanted a different life—one that wasn't unfair.

I closed my eyes. I held my breath.

I dunked myself.

I leaned backward into the Gulf. When I emerged again, I cried. Not because I felt different, but because I felt nothing.

I thought it would be a baptism of sorts. I'd hoped I'd feel different. But that's not the way life works. You get what you get and you don't pitch a fit. There's no use fighting it.

So I walked home in wet clothes and fell asleep on a cheap sofa bed in a block house.

That was a hundred eons ago. And tonight, I realize that I was wrong. So wrong, in fact, I had to write about it.

People do get to start over. Every day, you get a brand new sunrise. Nobodies become somebodies. Ugly people discover there's no such thing as ugliness. Fatherless boys with nail-guns become family men who dance with their wives. And the magnificent Gulf of Mexico will never stop moving.

Life isn't fair. But it's beautiful.

And so are you.



Sean Dietrich, nicknamed Sean of the South, chronicles life in the American South. Find him online at seandietrich.com.



Great Southern Café

Shrimp & Grits

Coastal Hot Spots to Enjoy This Southern Comfort Classic

By Abigail Abesamis Demarest

Two humble ingredients are the starting point of a big bowl of comfort. When it comes to shrimp and grits, it's rare to find two versions that are exactly the same. This ends up being a wonderful thing, as ordering this dish from different restaurants sends you on a delicious journey to find your ultimate shrimp and grits fix. From a cheffy twist with smoked bacon and sautéed veggies to a spicy take topped with Conecuh sausage, these renditions of the Southern staple are sure to appease your appetite.

Great Southern Café Seaside, Florida

Chef Jim Shirley's upscale take on shrimp and grits features a base of smoked Gouda cheese grits topped with blackened shrimp and a sauté of smoked bacon, spinach, portobello mushrooms, and cream. "I've prepared Grits à Ya Ya all over the country for many different crowds," Shirley told *Beach Happy*. "From a wedding in Napa Valley to major events in Chicago and Washington to the James Beard House in New York City and all the way back down to Florida, it's my go-to dish. A staple on my restaurants' menus for 22 years, Grits à Ya Ya has stood the test of time."

thegreatsoutherncafe.com



Crooked River Grill

Carrabelle, Florida

Located in the St. James Bay Golf Resort, Crooked River Grill serves up a diverse menu of coastal comfort cuisine. Shrimp and grits is a dinnertime staple here, featuring fresh Gulf shrimp and creamy grits made with half-and-half and cheddar cheese. A secret sauce sets their version apart, consisting of a special seasoning blend, white wine, lemon, bacon, and green onions. The sauce is mixed into the shrimp and grits, and the dish is garnished with bacon and scallions.

stjamesbay.com/coastal-dining

Crooked River Grill



The Noble South

The Noble South

Mobile, Alabama

Locally sourced ingredients reign supreme in the seasonally inspired fare at The Noble South, and their shrimp and grits recipe is no exception. "It's all in the local ingredients; our shrimp and grits are made with three extremely local things," general manager Myles Meade told *Beach Happy*. They get Claude's grits from Ken Jansen in Fairhope, Alabama. "They're super delicious and stone-ground," said Meade. Sizeable chunks of thick-cut bacon come from Bill E's Bacon, another Fairhope business, and of course, the shrimp is fresh from the Gulf.

thenoblesouthrestaurant.com

Dat Cajun Place

Panama City Beach, Florida

Founded by a husband-and-wife team with deep Louisiana roots, Dat Cajun Place is a local standby for Cajun-inspired fare, with a live jazz brunch on Sundays, and multiple screens for watching football (we suspect LSU and The Saints reign supreme here). Their shrimp and lobster grits has a base of creamy tasso and Gouda cheese grits, which is topped with sautéed shrimp, a grilled lobster tail, and brown Cajun gravy.

datecajunplace.com



Tacky Jacks

Tacky Jacks

Gulf Shores, Alabama

This waterfront seafood restaurant is the third (and newest) outpost of the popular Orange Beach hangout established in 1979. Tacky Jacks Gulf Shores sits on the Intracoastal Waterway and has an open-air bar plus a children's play area. Their take on the dish features grilled Gulf shrimp and Conecuh sausage over grits, served with a side of steamed vegetables. It's got a spicy kick thanks to a seasoned broth that's simmered for hours.

tackyjacks.com

Alphy's

Navarre, Florida

Alphy's keeps it simple. You can order their dish with plain or Cheddar Jack cheese grits. "We don't try to do anything over the top with it — we keep it simple, but there's still a lot of great flavors in it," kitchen manager Tyler Ferguson told *Beach Happy*. "Our grits are always nice and firm, and the dish is always consistent. When you order it the first time, it'll taste just as great the next four times you order it."

alphysfamilyrestaurant.com



Surf Hut

Surf Hut

Miramar Beach, Florida

Fresh Gulf seafood comes with a welcome side of beachfront views at this casual restaurant along old Highway 98. Surf Hut's parent company, Saltwater Restaurants, runs a wild fish processing facility where more than 250,000 pounds of fresh-caught Gulf seafood including shrimp, grouper, snapper, mahi-mahi, cobia, wahoo, and amberjack are prepared and distributed to Surf Hut and its sister restaurants every year. This ensures the seafood they serve their customers is as fresh as possible. For their shrimp and grits, large Gulf shrimp are dusted with Surf Hut's signature blackened seasoning and sautéed with a creamy Cajun andouille sauce. It's served on a bed of buttery Parmesan cheese grits.

surfhutdestin.com



It's Time to UNwineD in Panama City Beach

By Bentley Caldwell

If you've visited Panama City Beach in recent years, you're well aware of all the positive developments that have taken place in this long-time haven of beach fun and family getaways. Though the beautiful water and sparkling white sand remain unchanged, long gone are the days of MTV spring breaks and two-story motels, replaced instead by majestic, amenity-rich resorts and endless acres of upscale shopping, entertainment, and dining. In fact, TripAdvisor recently named Panama City Beach one of the top three beaches in the United States.

Another huge draw for people converging on Panama City Beach and its neighboring communities, is the growing number of major events hosted here. From outdoor beach concerts such as Gulf Coast Jam and Sand Jam to more intimate and upscale events like UNwineD, there's something for every taste along these shores.

UNwineD is set to take place this spring at Panama City Beach's Aaron Bessant Park, with 70 acres of expansive green space and a state-of-the-art amphitheatre, all just steps from the white sand and emerald water.

Panama City Beach is pulling out all the stops this year, determined to make 2021's event the best yet. *Southern Living* magazine will host an elite VIP event featuring Chef Kelsey Barnard Clark, winner of Bravo Network's "Top Chef." The party will also feature live music, craft cocktails, and a whole lot of delicious cuisine. Only 250 tickets will be sold to this special VIP kick-off party, and they include admission to the entire UNwineD weekend.

See demonstrations from "Top Shelf" Winner, Chef Kelsey Barnard Clark.



create

*Your
Space*

Stock & Trade Design Co. Shares Tips and Tricks

By Abigail Abesamis Demarest
Photos: Laurey Glenn
Jean Allsopp

Whatever your resolutions are for 2021, refreshing the space in your home can help lift your spirits and even change your outlook. We consulted with the experts at Stock & Trade Design Co. – a furniture store with locations in Atlanta, Birmingham, Destin, Nashville, and Spanish Fort – for tips on where to start.

"Our initial approach is always to keep it clean and simple," said Barbara Williams, Director of Corporate Projects and Senior Buyer at Stock & Trade. "We start by choosing furnishings with clean lines that are elegant and timeless – pieces that complement the client's existing furnishings."

Beyond new furnishings, Stock & Trade shared these tips for anyone seeking to start their new year with a new look.





A fresh coat of paint is always a great place to start.

"A fresh coat of paint is a great way to give a space a fresh look, and even create visual drama," said Christopher Rankin, Stock & Trade's VP of Brand and Product Development. "Ceilings painted in bold or contrasting colors, as well as high gloss or metallic finishes, can instantly transform a space."

Rankin said that even a single monochromatic palette – using one paint color with the tint varying from wall to trim to ceiling – can create an understated elegant change in the way it reflects light and creates subtle contrast. If you're unsure about what color to paint your space, Rankin recommends sticking to soft neutrals. There are classic choices like creams, taupes, and greys, but Rankin said that shades of blue and green can also be fairly neutral.

"Neutrals are just so much easier to work with," added Williams. "They give you a clean palette, and you can add in your personality as you go."



Art can dramatically change the personality of a room.

"When choosing art, our first suggestion is to choose pieces that you love and that speak to you," Rankin said. "Where space allows, large oversized pieces or groupings of several pieces can give a space some much-needed wow factor."

When creating a gallery wall, Rankin suggested using the exact same or similar frames to create a cohesive look. If the art you've chosen already has a common feel or theme, the frames don't necessarily need to be the same. Williams noted that some of the best gallery walls she's seen haven't been matchy-matchy, featuring art of different sizes and mediums. "They look more curated and acquired over time," she said.

Pick up a throw pillow (or four).

Throw pillows are an inexpensive way to update your space using color and texture. As an added bonus, they can easily be changed out if you want your space to reflect the current season or upcoming holidays. Mixing and matching throw pillows that vary in size, color, and texture can add even more visual interest to your space.

A word of warning though: there's definitely such a thing as too many throw pillows.

"You need to be able to sit on the furniture," Rankin said. Williams recommends no more than four throw pillows on a sofa, although that number can change depending on the size of your sofa. "You don't want to have to pull them off and throw them on the floor to sit down comfortably."





Update your lighting, and add dimmer switches to overhead lights.

Rankin and Williams both agree that lighting is one of the most important features in any room, as it sets the mood. Changing an outdated ceiling or wall fixture can profoundly transform your space.

"Good lighting can give a room a beautiful focal point," said Rankin. "It's also a great way to add a little bling to an otherwise subtle space."

This can take the form of a stunning pendant in the foyer, or a chandelier over your dining room table. "New lamps are also a great way to update a room, and can be used to add a pop of color," said Williams.

For overhead lights, use dimmers wherever possible, as this allows you to control the softness and intensity of the light. "We also recommend consulting professionals and educating yourself on the various options regarding light bulbs, especially when using LED bulbs," said Rankin. "Choosing the wrong bulbs can create intense, harsh lighting and cause paint and upholstery to appear to change color."

Get creative with window treatments.

In addition to offering practical functions such as buffering sound and keeping your neighbors from being able to see straight into your house, window treatments, like curtains and blinds, can also serve an aesthetic purpose.

If your home has low ceilings, Rankin recommends mounting the hardware for your drapes as high as possible. "It will draw the eye up, which gives the illusion that your ceilings are taller than they really are," he said. "When it comes to drapery hardware, we prefer to keep it simple and understated."



For more tips and inspirations, visit www.stockandtrade.com.



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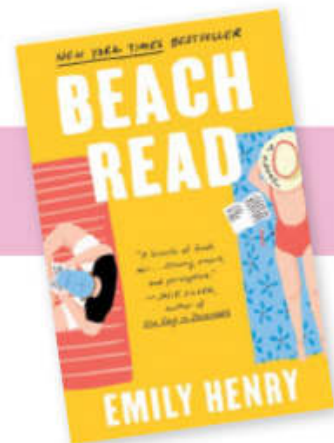


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Instant Best-Seller offers surprising depth

Don't be fooled by the title of this book by Emily Henry. *Beach Read* is not a book you can lightly skim over as you watch the ocean waves or lounge poolside while sipping cocktails. With all its depth and nuanced, complicated, memorable characters, it deserves more than that. It's not a light read, and if you only pay half attention, you're going to miss a lot. You might not want to be in public anyway while reading, in case this thought-provoking book makes you ugly cry.

The main characters, published writers Augustus Everett and January Andrews, make a pact with each other in a last-ditch attempt to kill the writer's block that has been stalling both their careers. Augustus will attempt to write the romantic, happy-ending book January is known for, and she will try to write the serious, often bleak fiction Augustus loves.

Even if you're not a writer, you'll be able to relate to the theme of *Beach Read*. It's about feeling stuck in your own life and unable to move forward in the face of unpleasant circumstances or challenges. January is dealing with some heavy heartbreak that has shattered her ability to believe that people truly can find their happily-ever-after moment.

While there is a storyline involving loss that will have you contemplating the people you've lost in your own life, there are plenty of genuine laughs as well. January, pardon the pun, is an open book. She doesn't have a poker face in public and that leads to a lot of hilarity, sometimes involving purse wine. Henry peppers her writing with just as many laughs as she does serious moments, so the book feels balanced. January's sense of humor makes every page of this book a delight.



For fans of the typical romance genre, there's still enough here to keep you interested. The banter between the two leads is lively and believable. You'll still be treated to many of the necessary plot elements a good romance book has, including butterflies in the stomach, steamy kisses, and obstacles that develop which could tank the budding romance.

Where *Beach Read* is different from the typical romance novel, though, is that this book digs deeper. It takes a close, introspective look at how these characters came to be who they are, what events — both good and bad — shaped them. We all have defining moments, but some of us never take the time to acknowledge them or work through them.

The underlying message most readers will take away from this book is that it's okay to feel stuck sometimes and to take a while to regroup, to figure out your next move. But it's not okay to close yourself off, let life's disappointments change who you are or where you want to end up. Your life, dreams, goals, and happiness are worth taking a risk on.

Through it all, feel how you feel. Embrace it, with no shame. Change what you can to get you where you want to go. Remember, everyone goes through heartache, no one's life is perfect, and, even when it seems like all is lost, there is always hope that you'll get your happy ending. After 2020, with all the past year of challenges, I don't think there's a message more needed than that.

If you can relate to the desire to have a much better 2021 then this is the book to help you heal and find some much needed perspective. I think you'll also be well entertained while doing your self-introspection.

Reviewed by Shannon Serpette



“If 2020 has kicked your butt, this is the book you should reach for to help you heal, or find some much needed perspective.”



Morgan Wallen's Stuck On 30A

Fresh off his CMA Award for New Artist of the Year, and his live performances on SNL, Morgan Wallen's new hit, "Somebody's Problem," pays tribute to a little blue sticker we hold near and dear.

The song instantly hit #10 on Billboard's Hot 100 Country Charts, and was the #2 most played song in the world on iTunes.

Wallen's new album, *Dangerous*, hit shelves and playlists around the world in January, setting the all-time record for the largest first day and first week sales of any country album in the history of Apple Music. *Dangerous* also hit the top position across Apple's "Overall Albums" chart in the US, Canada, and Australia, while simultaneously staking claim to being the Top Country Album in 62 countries worldwide.

*A 'Bama red 4Runner
pulled into the party,*

*with a **30A** Sticker
on the back windshield.*

*Two-tone tank top
slippin' off her shoulder.*

*Kinda girl when she steps
out, the world stands still.*



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Matches Made In Paradise



tips to make sure your beach wedding goes off without a hitch (and with one!)

You found your soulmate, you set a date, and you've decided you want a beach destination wedding. Now, the real work begins. Once the location is set, you'll want to hire a planner who specializes in destination weddings. We spoke with several seasoned destination wedding professionals to get some insider tips to help make your special day even more magical.

CATER TO YOUR TASTES

"It's important to search out the perfect venue and catering company to fit your needs," said Cheri Peebles of Grayton Beach Catering (www.gbcevents.com). "Once you choose the venue and the food, the rest will take care of itself. Many venues offer preferred vendors to include the above, as well as planners, rental companies, photography, bakeries, and floral."

GO LOCAL

One organic benefit of a destination wedding is that it allows you to embrace the local environment, using local flowers, backdrops and fresh cuisine. Cultivating the local food scene to serve at the reception is a way to honor and appreciate everything the community has to offer. Hiring local vendors can also help save on lodging and travel expenses, and they know things about a destination that out-of-towners might miss. "In terms of videography, for example, it's important to find a vendor who is experienced in the conditions/environment where you're getting married," said Cali Hlavac of Silver Shade Studios (www.silvershadestudios.com). "Choosing a destination on the beach is not the same as a backyard or a church, so bringing someone from your home state isn't always the best decision. Local videographers will have experience shooting on the white sandy beaches, and will know how to work with sunset lighting and more."

HAVE FUN

While the day is about you, a destination wedding is also very much about your guests and their experience. Planning your guest list as early as possible will help make sure accommodation availability doesn't become a stressful issue. Finally, be sure to plan some beach fun and enjoy spending time with your family and friends in attendance. Paddle boarding, biking, boating, or an evening surrounded by your loved ones at a beach bonfire will guarantee that you and your guests enjoy the full coastal experience.

GO PRO

A professional wedding planner will help alleviate the time-consuming pressures that can distract your focus from what the day is really all about. "For example, different times of year may pose different types of challenges," said Avis Glenister of Peach & Pearl Events (www.peachandpearlevents.com). "Let your planner take the reins. They'll know what venues are best for your aesthetic, specific venue nuances, and which vendors might take breaks at certain times of the year."

LET THERE BE LIGHT

"It's very important to check sunset times at the exact location before finalizing your ceremony time and printing invitations," said photographer Heather Durham (www.heatherdurhamphotography.com). "You want to make sure you have plenty of good light for your images during your ceremony and for 30-60 minutes after. Most brides want to have their ceremony start 1-2 hours before sunset so they can enjoy dreamy, golden hour light for the ceremony, post-ceremony portraits and cocktail hour."

PLAN ON PLAN B

"Book your planner and vendor A-team early on in the process, and be sure to have an alternate plan," suggested Brian Watson of Myrtie Blue (www.myrtieblue.com). "Since most couples come to the coast to enjoy an outdoor wedding and reception, dreams can be dashed if you're not prepared to deal with unexpected blows from Mother Nature (rain, wind, cold, etc.). Have contingency plans in place for as many possibilities that you and your planner can conceive. That way, there are no real surprises, and you can still plan a beautiful ceremony and reception no matter what circumstances might arise beyond your control."

Flying High Again

In the aftermath of Hurricane Michael, Tyndall Air Force Base is returning stronger than ever

By Martin Liptrot

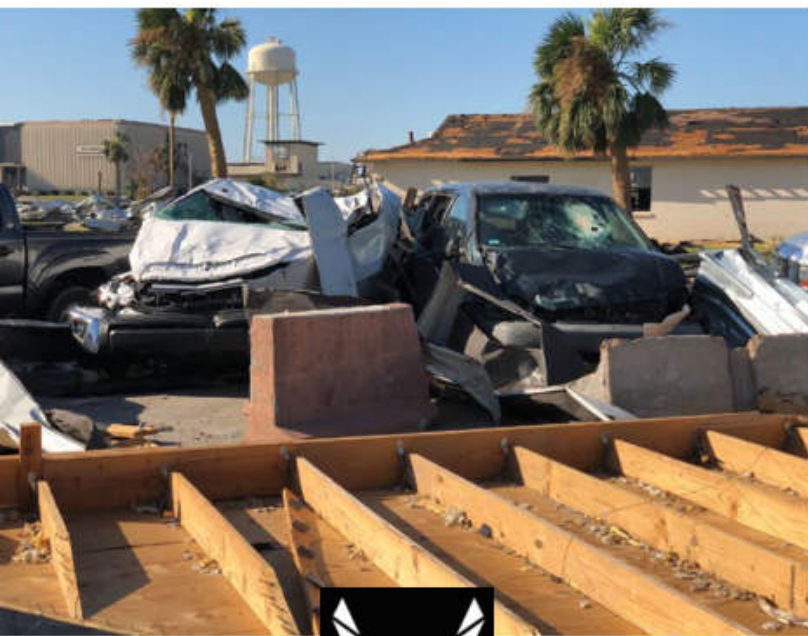
On October 10, 2018, Hurricane Michael became the strongest tropical storm to hit the United States since Andrew in 1992. Brewing at sea for over a week, it slammed the Northwest Florida Gulf Coast as a Category 5 storm with sustained winds as high as 160 mph. To say the storm was a monster would be an understatement. This was THE monster of all recent hurricanes, bringing with it destruction like most in its path had never seen or dreamed of falling victim to.

Destruction was widespread across parts of Florida, and many communities were obliterated, including Mexico Beach, Callaway, and other communities all around Panama City and Port St. Joe. And, what set directly in Michael's path? Tyndall Air Force Base.

Now, just north of two years later, the United States Air Force is deep into a long-running project to rebuild a base that serves as a critical security function for the air defenses of our great country, as well as the livelihood of the thousands of men and women, both military and civilian, who called it home.



TYNDALL AIR FORCE BASE



"Every building on the air base — 100% of them spread across 29,000 acres — was either badly damaged or totally destroyed," said Col. Greg Moseley, commander of Tyndall Air Force Base. "We were at the absolute epicentre of where Hurricane Michael struck."

Now, two years later, Col. Moseley is leading the project to rebuild Tyndall not just back to what it used to be, but what he refers to as the "installation of the future."

"In the days before Michael hit, I was working at the Pentagon in a policy role," he said. "The military has a system for monitoring the weather, and when it reached the highest warning level — HURCON 5 — that meant there was likely going to be a direct hit with substantial damage in the next 96 hours."

While local civilians and community groups were planning their own evacuations to safer ground, the Air Force had to decide how to not only move the 3,500 airmen and their families stationed at Tyndall but also the billions of dollars worth of high-tech equipment, fighter planes, service vehicles and digital hardware. They also had to quickly determine what would just have to be left behind to the ravages of the storm.

The morning after Michael made landfall, even combat-hardened airmen like Col. Moseley were shocked at the devastation.

"We had left behind a core team to ride the storm out and to maintain the integrity of the base," said Col. Moseley. The experts who remained behind were responsible for critical base facilities, such as the area's water treatment plant that supports nearby local communities including Mexico Beach, Parker and elsewhere. "Fortunately, we had no casualties, but when we watched the video footage from inside the 'Ride Out Shelter,' you got the real sense of the power of this thing."

Within the next 48 hours, countless phone calls were made to assess the damage.

On October 24, 1998, two weeks after the impact, V.P. Mike Pence visited Panama City and announced the base would be rebuilt — a huge relief not only to the military, as Tyndall is a key strategic asset, but also to the local community who see the air force base and its 25,000 strong family as a major part of its local economy.

"The rebuild budget is currently set at around \$4.9 billion. That could increase depending on what the final rebuild looks like, but we are all delighted to be remaining at the heart of this community," said Col. Moseley, a 1994 graduate of Niceville High School in nearby Okaloosa County.

“I remember returning from training missions and looking out of the cockpit window at the beaches, flying over The Red Bar, following 30A, and thinking, ‘This is the greatest commute in the world!’”

”

General Patrice Melancon, a 30-year Air Force veteran, was appointed executive director of the rebuild program and, with her project team of 48 personnel, set to work immediately.

"Reconstruction is projected to take 5-7 years to complete," said South Louisiana-native Gen. Melancon. "One of the biggest challenges we face is the fact that the Air Force mission cannot stop while we rebuild. This creates more risk and complexity to the whole program."

Tyndall Air Force Base is described by Col. Moseley as a "national treasure," because it is the only base in the continental U.S. that offers direct access to a large-scale training and exercise area — tens of thousands of square miles of airspace above the Gulf of Mexico.

"We can take off either east or west and then turn due south and out into the various combat training zones, from the runway to about 300 miles out to sea," he said. They can do so all without crossing civilian airspace or flying directly over residential areas. "With the training and maneuvers we are practicing — air to air combat, ground to air missiles, drone battles — all in the very latest fighter jets, we require this scale of air space."

Tyndall will remain the home of the 325th Fighter Wing, currently training pilots with F22 Raptor fighter jets, and will soon also be the home of three new squadrons of the USAF's most technically advanced F35 Lightning fighters.

"Tourists and residents may have seen our planes flying along the beach," explained Col. Moseley. "These are our airmen returning to base after training exercises out over the Gulf." They fly back to the coast in designated corridors, and then return to base at Tyndall, or to nearby Eglin or Hurlburt Field.

"I remember returning from training missions and looking out of the cockpit window at the beaches, flying over The Red Bar, following 30A, and thinking, 'This is the greatest commute in the world!'"

Tyndall will also be the permanent home of other vital services and expertise. The 53rd Weapons Evaluation Group, which investigates the effectiveness of all the Air Force's munitions and missiles, will be rebuilt there. It will also house First Air Force, which oversees all civilian, private and military air traffic flying anywhere in the United States, acting as an early warning to prevent tragedies like 9/11 from ever happening again.

There are new technologies too. The base recently unleashed a pack of Robo-Dogs to patrol its unfenced Gulf-facing boundaries. Their appearance and warning 'bark' alone will be enough to startle any unsuspecting paddle boarders or sailors who stray off course from nearby Shell Island. These 4-foot robotic canines can patrol the swampy, bug-infested, sweltering sand dunes and beaches all day before returning to their 'Dog House' to recharge their batteries and download their files.

"We want to make this the most resilient installation — not just the physical base so it withstands future hurricanes, but for the airmen who serve here, and by extension the community we are part of," said Col. Moseley.





“We recognize our responsibility as stewards of the natural world too.”

Being part of a community means working together to face tough and expected challenges such as the pandemic.

“I think we will all have to work hard to tackle the pandemic, but also the pandemic of isolation which these events have created,” said Moseley. “What does it mean for a young child or a teenager to have stopped going to school, seen their friends move away, live in temporary housing? This is something we discuss with the Bay County schools leadership as well as the wider local and business community every time we meet. Together, we are problem sharers so we can be problem solvers.”

Col. Moseley recalled how the personnel of the Air Force base worked side-by-side with the civilian EMS, firefighters and law enforcement officers directly after Hurricane Michael to clear roads, secure buildings, provide aid and relief efforts. “I know the local population values us, and we certainly value them,” said Col. Moseley.

Such mutual support and respect is more important than ever. During Hurricane Michael, 867 homes on the base were destroyed. So far, 97 have been rebuilt, with 500 more planned.

“That means more of our airmen and their families will be living in the local community, helping out at little league games, shopping in local stores and going to the neighborhood schools,” said Col. Moseley.

Located on the Gulf of Mexico, among Northwest Florida’s timber forests and state parks, there surely isn’t a more idyllic location for a military base. That beauty isn’t lost on Col. Moseley.

“Our base is 29,000 acres, but about 70 percent of it is pristine and untouched,” he said. “It’s home to a startling array of wildlife — deer, bears, nesting birds, sea turtles. We recognize our responsibility as stewards of the natural world too. We have a natural resources team that ensures we are protecting the environment while we continue to defend our nation.”

Good neighbors, indeed.



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The Craft Bar
Emeril’s Coastal
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Fleming’s Prime Steakhouse & Wine Bar
Grimaldi’s Coal Brick-Oven Pizzeria
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PF Chang’s China Bistro
Starbucks
Tommy Bahama Restaurant & Bar
Vin’tij Food & Wine
The Wine Bar

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Altar’d State
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Hemline
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Kittenish by Jessie James Decker
Lilly Pulitzer
lululemon (Now Open)
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Orvis
Peter Millar
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Southern Tide (Now Open)
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Courtyard by Marriott Sandestin at Grand Boulevard
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To Hell and Back

The Lore of Tate's Hell State Forest

By Susan Vallee



Carrabelle History Museum
106 Avenue B, SE
Carrabelle, Florida 32322
850-697-2141
carrabellehistorymuseum.org

Crooked River Lighthouse Park
1975 Hwy 98 W
Carrabelle, Florida 32322
850-697-2732
crookedriverlighthouse.com

Camp Gordon Johnson WWII Museum
1873 Highway 98 W
Carrabelle, Florida 32322
850-697-8575
campgordonjohnston.com

The World's Smallest Police Station
carrabellepolice.com/about
(featured on The Today Show, Ripley's Believe It or Not, and The Tonight Show Starring Johnny Carson)

The Big Bend Scenic Byway
floridabigbendscenicbyway.com

“Instead of Hell, you'll find
rollicking rivers, miles of
hiking trails, beautiful
campsites, and
one rare tree.”

Let's face it, Tate's Hell is a rather odd name for a state park, particularly if the concept of the state park system is to entice people to want to visit. Leave it to Florida to never shy away from the strange and memorable though. After all, we are known worldwide for being home to some of the most interesting people, places, and events.

As it turns out, at least in the case of Tate's Hell, the name is born from local legend. Folklore, if you will.

It is said that back in 1875, a farmer by the name of Cebe Tate headed into the forest searching for a Florida panther that was killing his livestock. Armed with a shotgun and accompanied by his hunting dogs, Cebe went missing for seven days. At which time after, a snakebitten, delirious Cebe emerged from the woods and collapsed in a clearing near Carrabelle, Florida. He lived barely long enough to whisper these final words to the local farm boys who found him: "My name is Cebe Tate, and I just came from Hell."

Now, whether or not Cebe experienced Hell during those torturous seven days and seven nights, or if Cebe was even real, is debatable. What is not debatable is the rich history of this pristine and protected area, now enjoyed by many visitors from around the country.

Here are a few notable happenings from this park with a past:

- People of the Apalachee lived in the area since at least AD 1000, their numbers totaling around 60,000 before European contact.
- In 1862, the Union blockade ship *Sagamore* encountered a group of Carrabelle citizens, who dubbed themselves the "Carrabelle Irregulars." During the battle that followed, 17 of the 21 Union soldiers aboard the *Sagamore* died.
- The Crooked River Lighthouse was built in 1895 to replace the Dog Island lighthouse destroyed by a hurricane in 1875. The lighthouse led boats safely through the channel for 100 years, until the U.S. Coast Guard decommissioned it.
- The year 1900 brought a hurricane that destroyed Carrabelle's coastal downtown. It was so bad, the town decided to rebuild inland.

The boom times of the lumber industry began in 1875, the same year as poor Cebe's demise. It's believed that the sudden influx of people, combined with the folklore being passed around to the masses, is the reason his legacy lives on.

Pine was harvested and planted throughout the area. In the 1960s, planting and production of pine ramped up. The ditches and logging roads began to change the natural movement of water dramatically. Heavy use of phosphorus

and nitrogen fertilizers also began to alter and impact Apalachicola Bay and surrounding waterways.

As part of an effort to restore the health of Apalachicola Bay, Florida purchased these 202,000 acres in 1994, and in a nod to local lore, christened it Tate's Hell State Forest. The land is between the Apalachicola and Ochlockonee rivers and contains more than 35 miles of rivers, creeks, and streams. The State Forest encompasses both the beauty and the untamed wild spirit of Florida (the real one, not the paved-over-paradise version). Instead of Hell though, you'll find rollicking rivers, miles of hiking trails, beautiful campsites, and one rare type of tree.

A popular area in Tate's Hell is the Ralph G. Kendrick Boardwalk. This boardwalk and observation tower overlooks a large area of rare dwarf cypress. The cypress trees there date back 150-300 years, yet only grow to a maximum height of 15 feet. It's speculated that a clay shelf prevents the cypress from reaching its typical height of 60-80 feet. As some evidence, forestry officials have even grown normal-sized cypress from the seeds of these dwarf trees.

Also found in Tate's Hell are rare wildflowers, grasses, and pitcher plants. The white birds-in-a-nest wildflower grows in only four Florida counties. Thick-leaved water willow, Florida bear grass, Chapman's butterwort, and the small-flowered Meadow Beauty are other endangered plants that thrive in Tate's Hell. Surrounded by the sounds of insects and birds, it isn't hard to imagine how wild and formidable this forest must have been during the unfortunate times of Mr. Tate.

Primitive and R.V. campsites criss-cross the state forest, many with gorgeous waterfront views. Park rangers are also putting the finishing touches on a canoe trail, to give visitors a guide for exploring the waterways. According to the rangers, large areas of the forest are dead zones for cell phone coverage, which might very well sound like Hell to some. For others, it's precisely why they make the trek to get away. 📶



Cebe Tate was the son of Jebidiah Tate, pictured above.

Tamara Allen, with the Carrabelle History Museum, shared her favorite version of the Cebe Tate legend. It just so happens to be in the form of a song, which feels rather appropriate.

Tate's Hell

by Will McLean (1919-1990)
© 1992, Wakulla Music, BMI

Old Tate left Sumatra along about dark.
He had his two big dogs and a puppy named Spark.
An old Long Tom shot-gun, a sharp Barlow knife,
That panther would sure have the chase of his life.

A little past moon down, the dogs struck the scent;
Through bramble and titi a-running Tate went;
For hours and hours, until it was dawn; Then Tate
knew that he was a long way from home.

He blew through his gun-barrel, the dogs did not hear;
The panther had killed them, and now Tate felt fear;
The sun was not shining, the mist it was thick;
"Oh, Lordy," Tate hollered, "I'm lost up the crick."

He leaned back to rest, and his eyes did not see;
The big rattler struck him above the bent knee;
The lick was so hard that a-sprawling he fell;
This was the beginning of poor old Tate's Hell.

He opened his Barlow and grabbed him some moss;
A cut he made one way, another across;
He wrapped his leg tightly and tied it with string;
The sickness came on him, his body turned green.

When Tate was discovered, these words he did tell,
"My name is Old Tate, boys! I've just been in Hell!"
These few-spoken words were the last that he said;
His spirit, it left him. Old Tate, he was dead.

Many thanks to Margaret Longhill of the Will McLean Foundation, P.O. Box 77, Holder, Florida 34445-0077
Phone (352) 465-7208 (books & recordings available)

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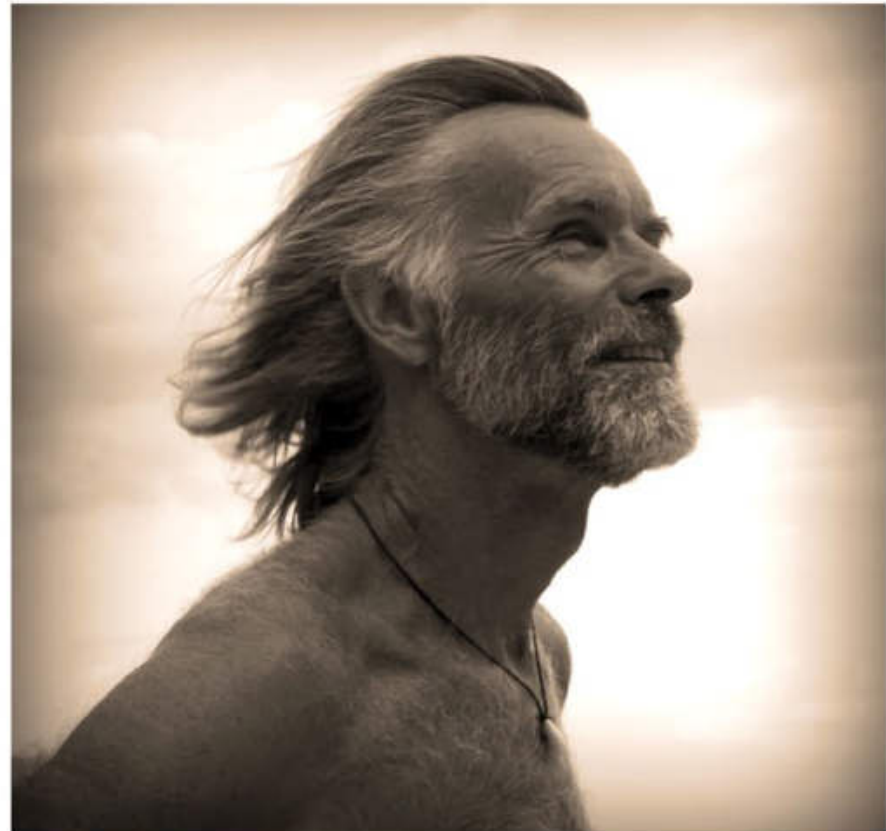


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Oh Captain, My Captain

By Mike Ragsdale

**"That's the funny thing about bucket lists, mate,"
Captain Nick once told me. "The less time you have,
the longer your list becomes."**



Angela and I first met Nick and Melissa twenty years ago. We landed in the Caribbean amped up for seven full days of all-inclusive Mai Tais. Our honeymoon five years earlier only lasted two days and three nights, so a week seemed like such an incredible indulgence.

After dinner our first night, Angela and I wandered through the lush grounds of the self-contained resort, looking for something to do. We strolled into the gaming pavilion, where a striking couple were cueing up billiards balls.

"You two fancy a game, mate?"

Nick's shoulder-length hair was already streaked with gray. He wore a white linen shirt, dark jeans and flip-flops; a formal attire uniform that I would eventually adopt as my own. In her late 20s, Mel carried an air of a supermodel, with an Australian accent only enhancing her seductive charm.

Captain Nicholas Brettingham-Moore. The very name drips of British naval admiralty. And perhaps at one time, in some romantic era long since gone, Captain Nick's ancestors held such lofty regal status. But something somewhere happened along the way. When you're from Tasmania – once an island prison colony, which, according to some, is where Australia's mainland prisoners banished the true troublemakers – something always happened somewhere along the way. Perhaps Nick's ancestors were smugglers or pirates, or perhaps one of them did something inappropriate with a princess, landing their lineage in continental confinement. Knowing Nick as I do now, it was probably a combination of the three. But for whatever reason, Captain Nick had grown up a "Tassie," until as a young man, he escaped to the sea.

When we first met, Nick was Captain of a 140-foot luxury yacht. His wife Mel was the ship's chef. With their crew of



eight, they sailed the seas at the whim of some European multimillionaire who rarely stepped onboard. Their charter boat crew sailed all over the world, catering to Saudi sheikhs and Fortune 500 CEOs.

For the rest of the piña colada-drenched week, the four of us became inseparable. We spent every waking hour together. I gobbled down their tales of nautical adventure and debauchery faster than the all-inclusive breakfast buffet bacon.

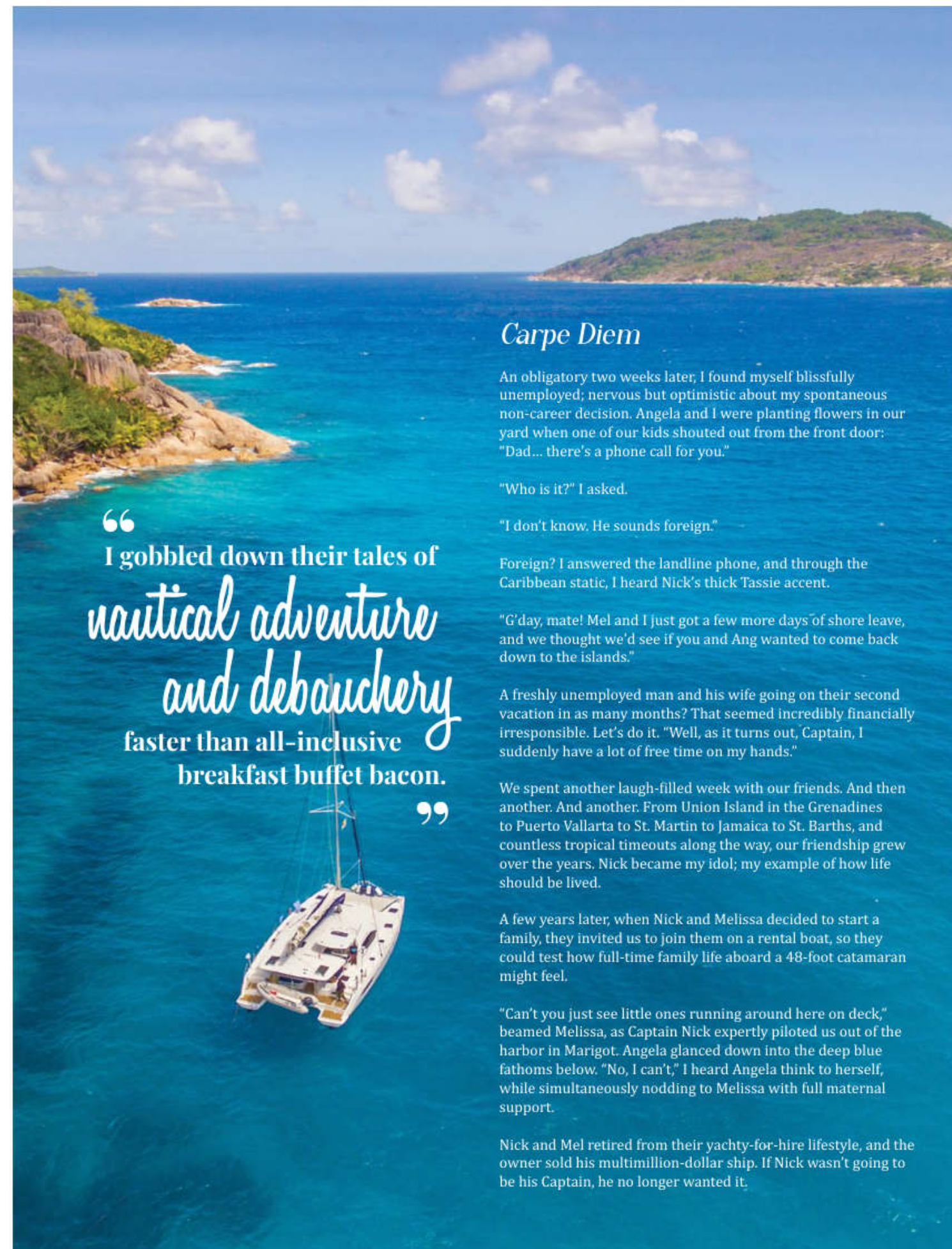
I became so visibly enamoured with our new friend that at some point Angela said, "I think you have a crush on Mel."

I thought about it for a moment. "Actually, I think I have a crush on Nick!"

My first bromance.

When it was time for our flight back to the U.S., Angela and I wept like babies. It was like saying goodbye to your best friends from summer camp. I flew home, worried we might never see Nick and Mel again.

Back in Alabama, everything about my life just seemed completely wrong. I went back to my corporate job, but I couldn't concentrate. What am I doing here? Why aren't we living on a boat and exploring the world like Nick and Mel? I suddenly perceived the passage and importance of time in a way that I had never experienced before. Something in me snapped. Two weeks later, I tendered my resignation. My co-workers were shocked. Angela was also surprised, but supportive. I didn't have another job lined up. I had no clue what I was going to do. At this point, we were living off our savings. But I knew I needed a big change in my life. I suddenly perceived that time was ticking.



Carpe Diem

An obligatory two weeks later, I found myself blissfully unemployed; nervous but optimistic about my spontaneous non-career decision. Angela and I were planting flowers in our yard when one of our kids shouted out from the front door: "Dad... there's a phone call for you."

"Who is it?" I asked.

"I don't know. He sounds foreign."

Foreign? I answered the landline phone, and through the Caribbean static, I heard Nick's thick Tassie accent.

"G'day, mate! Mel and I just got a few more days of shore leave, and we thought we'd see if you and Ang wanted to come back down to the islands."

A freshly unemployed man and his wife going on their second vacation in as many months? That seemed incredibly financially irresponsible. Let's do it. "Well, as it turns out, Captain, I suddenly have a lot of free time on my hands."

We spent another laugh-filled week with our friends. And then another. And another. From Union Island in the Grenadines to Puerto Vallarta to St. Martin to Jamaica to St. Barths, and countless tropical timeouts along the way, our friendship grew over the years. Nick became my idol; my example of how life should be lived.

A few years later, when Nick and Melissa decided to start a family, they invited us to join them on a rental boat, so they could test how full-time family life aboard a 48-foot catamaran might feel.

"Can't you just see little ones running around here on deck," beamed Melissa, as Captain Nick expertly piloted us out of the harbor in Marigot. Angela glanced down into the deep blue fathoms below. "No, I can't," I heard Angela think to herself, while simultaneously nodding to Melissa with full maternal support.

Nick and Mel retired from their yachty-for-hire lifestyle, and the owner sold his multimillion-dollar ship. If Nick wasn't going to be his Captain, he no longer wanted it.

“I gobbled down their tales of nautical adventure and debauchery faster than all-inclusive breakfast buffet bacon.”

Nick and Mel commissioned construction of their own catamaran, which they named *Sonrisa*; Spanish for “smile.” They designed her to live off the grid; powered by solar cells, wind turbines, water desalinators, Nick’s spearfishing skills and Mel’s world-class culinary talents. They gave birth to Benjamin, and with their brand new baby on board, they sailed *Sonrisa* across the Atlantic from France to the Caribbean. We were among their first guests.

I have to confess, it made Angela and I a little nervous seeing young Benjamin crawling around the boat without so much as a life jacket. I asked Nick, a lifelong waterman, about it.

“Aw, mate, this is where we live,” he said, very matter of factly. “Poor bastard better learn how to swim or he won’t make it very long out here, eh?”

It’s hard to argue with Tasmanian logic.

A few years later, Nick and Mel came to stay with us in Florida for five weeks. By this point, we had stayed with them so many times that such a long visit was the only possible way Angela and I could reciprocate their gracious hospitality. By now, Benjamin was four years old, and their second son had been born. “Hurricane Huon,” they dubbed him, after the whirlwind Tasmanian Devil-like carnage he left in his path. But when the Tassies went out to swim in our pool, I was surprised to see Nick and Mel strapping protective “floaties” on Huon’s chunky arms.

“Hey, you guys live on a boat,” I said. “I thought you said you didn’t want your kids wearing life jackets?”

“Aw, naw mate,” said Nick. “This one sinks like a rock. I got tired of having to dive down and get him every time he fell in.”

Over the years, I watched the stern, commanding Captain Nicholas Brettingham-Moore soften. He became a doting dad, as infatuated with his two boys as he was with his beautiful wife, right until the end.



Captain
Nicholas Brettingham-Moore
1954-2020



Captain Nick died yesterday, hardly 100 days after learning he had cancer. Yeah, *that* kind of cancer. Benjamin is now 14. Huon is 11. They decided to sell *Sonrisa*, to help provide for Melissa and the boys in the days ahead. “She’s not our boat without our Captain,” said Mel.

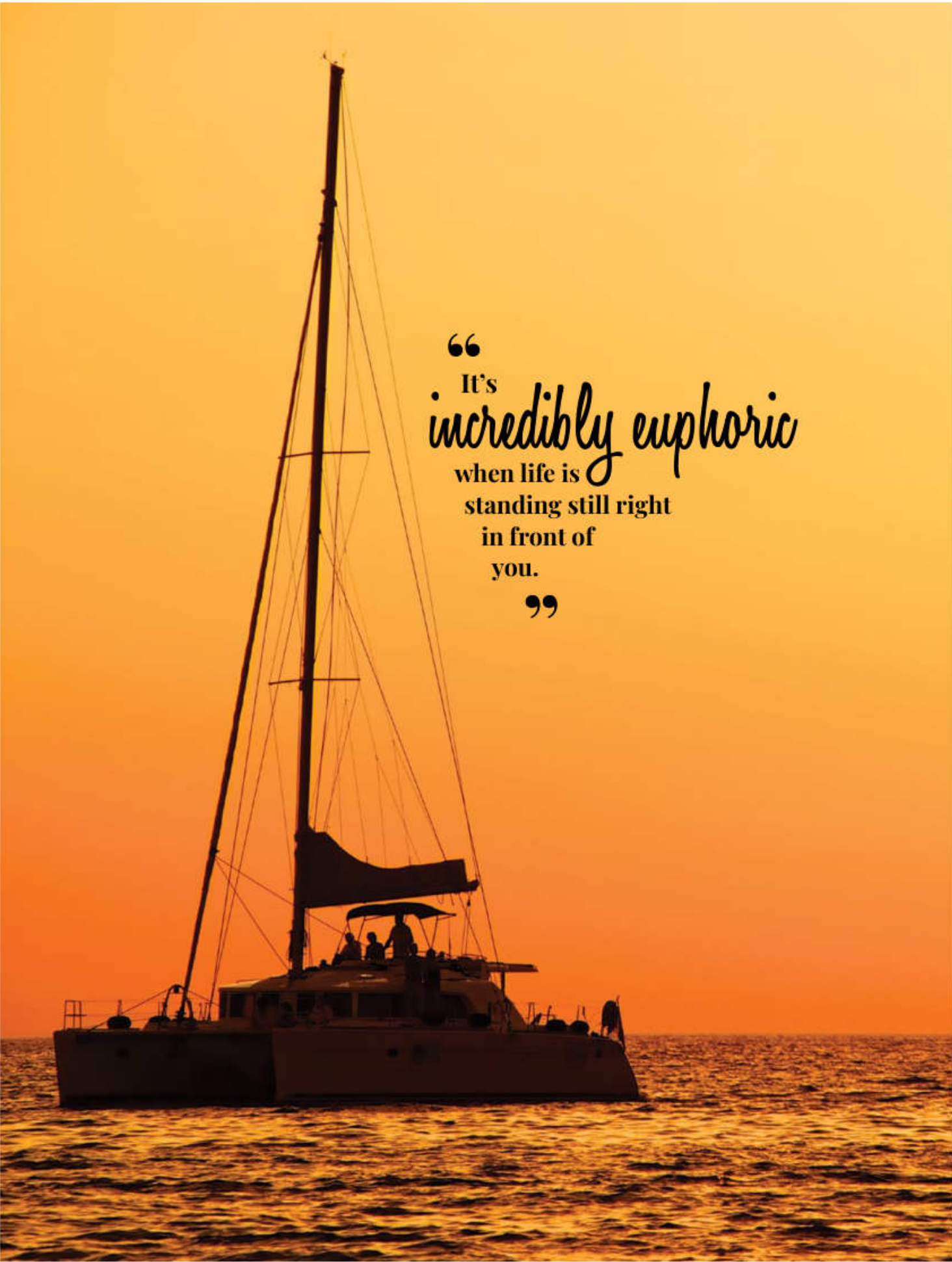
“*Sonrisa* was just a thing,” said Nick. “She brought us memories that we will always have. *Sonrisa* was just the vessel for making those memories.” But Melissa and the boys didn’t let her go before they kidnapped Captain Nick from the hospice for one last voyage together as a family.

“It’s incredibly euphoric when life is standing still right in front of you,” Mel told me a few days before Nick’s passing. “All we can see now is the light at the end of the tunnel, and it becomes a beautiful thing. It’s incredible how one can turn around the way you look at things and see the gifts you’ve been given. It’s just a beautiful, beautiful place, full of peace and hope and love. Nick is already focused on helping me find my next step in life. I’m honestly surprised he hasn’t been on Tinder to try to find me a boyfriend yet. He just wants the best for us.”

If you’re reading this now, it’s because twenty years ago, Captain Nicholas Brettingham-Moore changed the entire trajectory of my life. Whether he knew it or not, he inspired me to start a bold new chapter. It hasn’t always been easy. It hasn’t always been fun. But without Nick, I’d likely still be working a desk job. Our family probably wouldn’t be living at the beach. Without Captain Nick, we probably wouldn’t have had the courage to venture out to see everything this great big, wonderful world has to offer.

I’ve lost a friend I cannot replace. And I owe a debt I can never repay. All I can do is try to pass along Nick’s gift to me; to hopefully inspire others to live the life they’ve imagined. I hope you will help me honor his memory by doing something extraordinary this year. Quit your job. Strike out on an adventure. Start a charity. Move to the beach. Or just call up an old friend and tell them how much they mean to you, before your ship sails away without you.

Thank you for showing me the way, Captain. I couldn’t have gotten here without you. We’ll be along soon. Forever in your wake. 🌊



“
It’s
incredibly euphoric
when life is
standing still right
in front of
you.
”

An Insider's Guide To The Alabama Gulf Coast

By Christy Milliken

There's nothing quite like the white sandy beaches and pristine coastline of Orange Beach and Gulf Shores, Alabama, any time of year. Once you're settled in, there are options for as much entertainment, excitement or rest as you care to take in. As with many happy-go-lucky types, a few of my most memorable experiences at the beach have been discovered, not planned. So as we journey down this sandy path together, I will highlight some personal recommendations that anyone will enjoy.



DINING

There are a few landmark dining experiences that simply can't be missed, whether you're visiting for a week or a weekend.

LuLu's at Homeport Marina is owned by Lucy Buffett, little sister to Jimmy. LuLu's is open seven days a week for lunch and dinner. With its location just off Hwy. 59 at the Intracoastal Waterway, it makes for a convenient stop on your way into town or on your way back home. Consider it your official welcome to Gulf Shores, or your one last stop to say goodbye. With live music, a big gift shop, and a family-friendly atmosphere, it's guaranteed to be a fun, beachy experience enjoyed by all.

If you're looking for a more upscale dining experience, I highly recommend **Fisher's** at Orange Beach Marina. Fisher's feels like a home away from home, with two restaurants under one roof. You'll want to park the flip-flops and dress up for the fine dining atmosphere upstairs, but if a more relaxed vibe is what you need, **Dockside** downstairs will be exactly what you're looking for.

If you prefer a place that offers waterfront dining, **The Gulf** or **The Hangout** is a fun, family-friendly spot. With beachside access, you can enjoy the views from the comfort of your own barstool, or even stroll in the sand after your meal.

I wouldn't recommend leaving the beach without experiencing the **Sunliner Diner** in Gulf Shores. It's the perfect place for breakfast with a unique 1950's diner atmosphere. Known for their milkshakes, this is a one-of-a-kind experience for the entire family.

Insider Tip: Don't be fooled — the best Bushwacker can be found at **Pirate's Cove**, where pirates, dogs, and kids are all welcome. Dating back to 1935, you can arrive at this nostalgic little beach locale by boat and indulge in some serious people-watching. They serve some of the best cheeseburgers and wings anywhere on the Alabama Gulf.

Cobalt is a great little happy hour spot in Orange Beach. They also host a fun Sunday Brunch, perfect after a long beach weekend. The menu has something for everyone, and the views are wonderful year-round.

Tacky Jack's is a well-known staple of Alabama coastal dining, and boasts four locations, so no matter where you're staying, the drive to this local favorite is sure to be an easy one. They're open for breakfast, lunch, and dinner, so just drop by whenever the mood strikes.

Flora-Bama Lounge and Oyster Bar needs no introduction. Frequented by countless notable musicians over the years, including no less than Jimmy Buffett and Kenny Chesney, Flora-Bama has earned accolades, recognition, and entertainment-related plugs on a national level for decades. If you're one of the few people who's never been, Flora-Bama's atmosphere is as casual and comfortable as it gets. It's open daily and promises live music 365 days a year. It is kid-friendly for lunch, but you might want to leave the children with a sitter if you're venturing out for dinner and drinks.

FISHING

To get the real deep sea fishing experience, you'll want to recruit one of the many local fishing charters in the area, including **Cool Change Charters**, **Hookmaster Charters**, **Sea Spray Charters**, **Gulf Island Charters**, **Cold MIL Fishing** and **Summer Breeze II Charters**, among others. It's a good idea to research and find the charter that caters to the specific experience you want. Pro tip: Many of the local restaurants will cook your fresh catch for you. Ask your Captain which is their favorite.



RELAXING

For the golfers in the family, you can secure a tee-time from one of Gulf Shores' breathtaking golf courses, including **Kiva Dunes**, **Peninsula Golf and Racquet Club**, and **Craft Farms**. If you're not into golf, I highly recommend booking a massage at **The Spa** at The Beach Club.

ENTERTAINMENT

Whether it's due to rain or sunburn, some days you need a break from your beach break.

Be sure to explore **The Wharf** in Orange Beach for a multitude of shopping and dining options and the opportunity to take in seasonal attractions ranging from fireworks and festivals to unbelievable laser light shows. Pandemic aside, you can also usually catch an array of national talents performing live at the Wharf Amphitheatre.

San Roc Cay, located in Orange Beach, offers boutique shopping and excellent eateries, as well as a few opportunities for adventure. Want to try parasailing, diving, or a glass bottom dolphin cruise? The San Roc Cay Marina is the place to go for the best of watersport services.

If you've got kids in tow, head to **The Track** to burn off a little steam. Located on Hwy. 59 in Gulf Shores, The Track offers go karts, mini golf, bumper boats, a well-equipped arcade, and even a skydiving ride. The Track is a great place to spend a few hours with family or friends, and is sure to put smiles on the faces of everyone in your group, from the children to the grandparents.

After an afternoon of play, head back down the highway and stop at **The Hangout** where, as they say, "59 ends and the fun begins." Now home to an increasingly popular annual music fest, The Hangout offers great food, a lively family atmosphere, and an incredible gulf view. They also host live music most nights. The food and views only add to the great reputation that The Hangout has acquired as a must-try Alabama Coast hot spot.

NATURE

Before you depart, commit to spending some time at the **Hugh S. Branyon Backcountry Trail** in Orange Beach. The project is a collaborative effort among the City of Orange Beach, Gulf State Park and property owners along the trail's alignment. Offering guided eco-tours, paved trails for biking and hiking, a canoe trail and more, this is an excellent way to explore the wildlife and natural beauty of the region.

No matter what else you do though, take some time to breathe and enjoy coffee on your balcony while soaking in the sunrise. Walk the coastline and hunt for shells. Build a sandcastle with your kids and just enjoy being on one of the most beautiful beaches in the country. If you've been there, you know. And if you haven't, well, you'll find out soon. ☀

To learn more about the Alabama Gulf Coast, visit GulfShoresOrangeBeach.com.

10

Hot Must Haves

By Blake Estell

for the Beach and Beyond

Whether you're planning to spend this year on the sand, in the water, exploring your favorite coastal communities, or just pretending that you are, this gear is sure to add a little sunshine to your day.



1 IceMule Pro Large

If you want to keep 'em cool at the beach, this is the way to do it. At 23 liters, the IceMule Pro Large is an entry-level IceMule backpack cooler. The Pro Large can easily load up with 18 cans plus ice, making it an ideal backpack cooler. The Pro Large features a unique roll-top design that eliminates constant zipping and unzipping, making it easy to access what's inside. Not only does the Pro Large retain solid ice for over 24 hours, but it also features welded seams and can float right along with you in the pool, in the lake, in the gulf, or even in the hot tub. Try doing that with your more expensive cooler!

ICEMULECOOLERS.COM (\$99)

2 JBL Charge 4

Looking for a portable Bluetooth speaker that craves adventure as much as you do? Look no further than the JBL Charge 4, a full-on water proof, weather resistant rugged outdoor speaker, perfect for the beach or pool. Besides being waterproof and weighing just under three pounds, it has the ability to crank out your tunes with unmatched sound quality. This speaker's built-in rechargeable battery can deliver a whopping 20 hours of playtime from just a four-hour charge, and it keeps your smartphone charged at the same time, so the music can keep playing as long as you do.

JBL.COM (\$129)



3 Sharkbanz 2 Magnetic Shark Repellent Band

By nature, sharks are not after human prey, and most attacks result from the shark mistaking a swimmer for other fish and various marine creatures. Using patented magnetic technology, researched and tested by marine biologists on predatory shark species, Sharkbanz takes advantage of sharks' unique and powerful electrical sense (electroreception) to cause a highly unpleasant sensation that turns sharks away. Established in 2014, Sharkbanz Technology is the result of over a decade's worth of peer-reviewed scientific research. Since its inception, the bands have been used by beachgoers, divers, and athletes, around the world, to reduce the risk of a shark attack. The company, which has sold more than 70,000 to date, donates three percent of its profits to shark and ocean conservation groups. You can also check out some interesting videos of actual shark repellent tests, with various species, on the company's website.

SHARKBANZ.COM (\$84)

4 OME Wanderr 5-in-1 Beach Cart

The Wanderr is a first of its kind, durable, 5-in-1 piece of recreational gear, perfect for the beach. It converts from a pull-along wagon, into a field chair, low chair, fully reclining lounger, and even a cot. Fitted with a tough aluminum frame, the Wanderr can carry 150 lbs. of gear and offers a seating capacity of 250 lbs. as a chair, despite weighing only 30 lbs. It comes with dual cup holders, bungee cords to hold your cargo in place, and has a patented wheel design that allows for easy motion on sand, rocks, gravel, dirt, and pavement. Trust us, dear ol' dad will thank you for this one.

OMEGEAR.COM (\$329)



BEACH HAPPY GEAR

5 Pacific Breeze EasyUp Beach Tent Deluxe XL

The Pacific Breeze EasyUp Beach Tent is the perfect sun shelter and fun zone for the family. Made from durable fabric and a fiberglass frame, it weighs only 6 lbs and offers plenty of space for up to four people. Additional features include UPF 50+ sun protection, handy pockets for storing your personal belongings and electronics to ensure they are sand-free. Its polyethylene floor is waterproof, so you can set up on a damp area and still stay dry. Sand pockets and stakes are also included for added wind protection. The tent's interior holds perhaps the best feature (especially for Dad) the EasyUp Hub System, which uses an ingenious drawstring mechanism to allow a single-person set up in under a minute. And, it comes down just as fast, to be easily packed away into a compact carry case.

[AMAZON.COM](https://www.amazon.com) (\$89)



6 YETI Camino Carryall 35

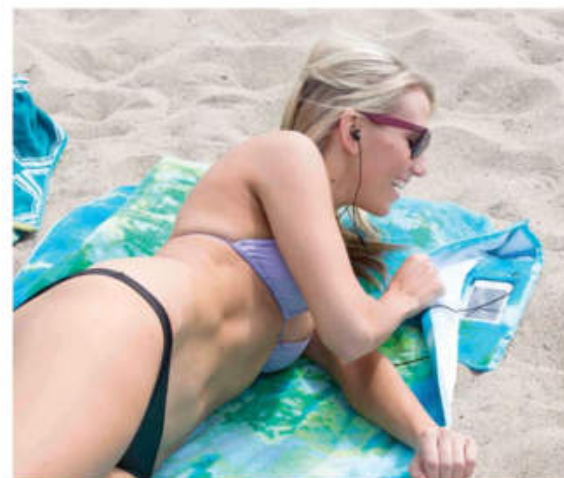
Just when you thought you had seen every YETI product available, here's one more! The Camino Carryall is the perfect everyday all-purpose waterproof bag to make your beach or watersport adventures simpler. It has a durable, dependable design that stands up to the elements and whatever you dish out, too. The Camino is made from the same waterproof and easy-to-clean material as the popular Yeti Panga Duffel bags, and will keep your wet gear contained in one area, while keeping dry items protected from water. Additionally, it features an ultra-tough barrier to protect it from the damage of sharp tools such as fishing or grappling gear. Though it's suitable to be carried by anyone, because of its strong construction and tougher look, we especially like the Camino Carryall 35 as a beach bag for guys.

[YETI.COM](https://www.yeti.com) (\$150)

7 The Tillow

The Tillow just may be the ultimate beach towel. It features a removable orthopedic foam pillow for ultimate comfort and relaxation, along with a touchscreen pocket for your smartphone, and a camouflaged water-resistant storage space to ensure that all of your precious belongings are safe from sand, water, and other elements of the beach. It measures almost three feet in each direction, giving you plenty of room to spread out while taking in your sun and fun.

[THETILLOW.COM](https://www.thetillow.com) (\$35)



8 Swimline Shock Rocker Inflatable Habitat

The Swimline Shock Rocker Inflatable Habitat is the top-of-the-line float from a company known for making great floats and pool liners. The Shock Rocker Habitat measures 72 inches across and is large enough to hold four adults, so you can ride the waves with friends and family. This particular Shock Rocker is made from heavy-duty vinyl that's designed to withstand not only the pool, but lakes, the beach, and even floating along your favorite creek or river. It features double hand grips and a slip-resistant finish for safety. Perhaps the best feature is the big hole in the middle that lets you dangle your feet in the water while you scope for fish and treasure.

[SWIMLINE.COM](https://www.swimline.com) (\$95)



9 Omega Seamaster Diver 300 M Collection

If you're a fan of horology, you already know that almost no other brand or line personifies the essence of time at sea quite like the iconic Omega Seamaster. Dating back to 1948, the first Seamaster was modeled after the waterproof wristwatches made for, and worn by, the British military during World War II. The Seamaster has arguably been a part of sporting history longer than any other timepiece, with Omega being the Official Timekeeper of the Olympic Games since 1932. You'll also find every James Bond of the past 25 years wearing a Seamaster. Now sized at 42 mm, every design detail of the newest edition of this icon has been rethought, including a new ceramic bezel with the diving scale in Ceragold or white enamel. The watches are powered by Master Chronometer Calibres 8800 or 8801, and offer extraordinarily high levels of precision, performance and magnetic resistance.

[OMEGAWATCHES.COM](https://www.omegawatches.com) (STARTING AT \$4,900)



10 Land Rover Defender

Recently named Motor Trend's much-coveted 2021 "SUV of the Year," this truck was born from a true legend. The new Defender personifies rugged outdoorsy fun, just as the original Land Rover Series vehicles (later named Defender) have for over 70 years. With the last original design Defenders rolling off the assembly line in 2016, this new Defender reflects a complete design upgrade to modern mechanicals, electronics, safety features and amenities – all while still paying homage to the simple, yet beautiful lines of the original Rovers. Though larger than their predecessors, the new 90s and 110s (two-door and four-door speak in Land Rover language) are built to conquer off-road ventures like almost nothing else can. Watch for these rare and sought-after beauties meandering through your favorite beach communities.

[LANDROVERUSA.COM](https://www.landroverusa.com) (STARTING AT \$47,000)



STRAP

YOURSELF IN, FOLKS!



TRX

TRX
can help get your
body **BEACH READY**,
without stepping
one sandy foot
in the gym.



A new year and fitness resolutions go hand-in-hand, but for beach bums, knowing you'll soon be seen in swim trunks or a bikini top is the most powerful incentive to get in shape. Engineered by a former U.S. Navy SEAL, TRX (which stands for Total Resistance Exercises) uses a patented system of straps and one's own body weight to provide a workout that you can quite literally do anywhere – whether you're deployed on a military operation, self-quarantined at home, or even out on the beach! We asked **Patrick Hoffner** of Alys Beach's Zuma Wellness Center and local trainer, **Sara Petit**, to show us a few TRX moves that can get your body beach ready before the warm weather returns.

NOTE: To avoid possible injury or health issues, we suggest you consult with your doctor and a professional fitness trainer before starting any new exercise routine.



1.

TRX FORWARD LUNGE WITH CHEST AND HIP OPENER

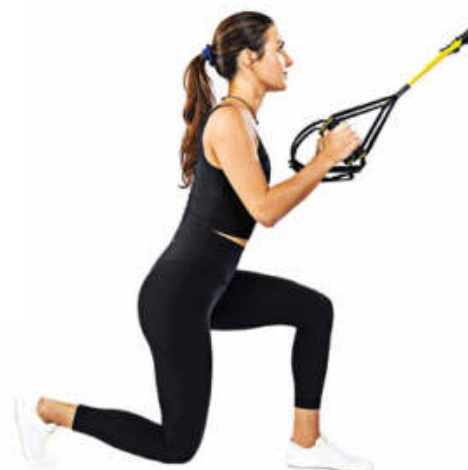
This exercise is designed to get your body opened up and warmed up before a workout. Stand facing away from the "anchor point," which is the place on the ceiling, door or wall (or beach cruiser!) where you connect your TRX straps. Step and lunge forward slowly, keeping tension on the handles of the straps, slowly fanning your arms back and forth above your head, all while staying down in the lunge position. As you return to your standing position, keep pressing on those handles for maximum arm benefit.



2.

TRX MID-ROW

You don't need a boat (or an expensive machine) for this row action. This super simple but effective exercise builds lean muscle in your arms, chest, back, and core. You can make this exercise more or less difficult simply by increasing or decreasing your body angle relative to the anchor point.



3.

TRX CYCLE HOPS

This movement is designed to build and sculpt your legs while also challenging your lungs with optional quick exchange hops. If you can't hop, you can scale it back with quick skip steps.



4.

TRX CRUNCH AND OBLIQUE CRUNCH

On the ground (or sand), slip your toes into the TRX straps, then prop up your torso using your arms or forearms. Bringing your knees up toward your chest crunch-style will help you develop a rock-solid core, while also adding muscle to your arms and legs. This exercise is good for any abs destined to see sunlight soon.



5.

TRX LUNGE

Hook both straps together, place one foot in the cradle facing away from anchor. Step slightly forward, bending your front knee into the lunge position. Be sure to keep your weight on front foot's heel, then push up using the back of the leg, engaging your glutes. Complete 15-20 reps on each side.



6.

TRX SPRINTER'S START

This is a lower body exercise designed to build definition in your legs. With the straps under your arms, do a one-legged squat while pushing your opposite leg behind you as far as possible. You'll feel the burn right away!

So what are you waiting for? Let's get this race to summer started!

To learn more, visit [TRXtraining.com](https://www.trxtraining.com).

What You Get FOR YOUR MONEY

It's a brand new year and fortunately, for the beautiful beach communities that dot the emerald waters and sugar-white sands of the Gulf Coast, there's no sign of anything other than increasing demand in this booming market. Even during the previous year, this particular area was gifted with some of the lowest inventory availability, coupled with some of the shortest time frames from 'on-market' to 'sold'. All the more proof that people from all over the country (and abroad) continue to discover, and flock to, what have become known as the best beaches in the United States. Here's a little snippet of just what you can get for your investment in a few of the coastal areas within this region. Hopefully, this serves as one more reminder why 2021 is a great time to buy at the beach.

Panama City Beach, Florida



435 Brady Way, 4 bed / 3 bath 2,300 sq. ft.
\$375,000



101 Smugglers Cove Ct, 4 bed / 3.5 bath 3,200 sq. ft.
\$724,000



7135 Dolphin Bay Blvd, 3 bed / 3 bath 2,684 sq. ft.
\$899,000



20413 Front Beach Road, 5 bed / 4.5 bath
\$5,600,000

Listings by: Brittany "Britt" Matthews Gonzalez, Beachy Beach Real Estate, 732-539-6720 | 850-231-3060,
www.brittsbeaches.com, www.TheBeachShow.com

Miramar Beach, Florida



01 Walton Way, Home Lot near the bay
\$199,000



60 Kensington Lane, 2 bed / 2 bath 1,525 sq. ft.
\$449,900



33 Cobalt Lane, 3 bed / 4 bath 2,754 sq. ft.
\$739,900



4758 Ocean Boulevard, Gulf Front Lot
\$2,295,000

Listings by: Stefanie R Greenwood, BlueMarlin.C21.com, 850-517-0921 | 850-837-7800

Santa Rosa Beach, Florida



Conifer Court, 331, 3 bed / 2 bath 1,530 sq. ft.
\$409,500



White Cottage Road, 4 bed / 4 bath 2,434 sq. ft.
\$799,900

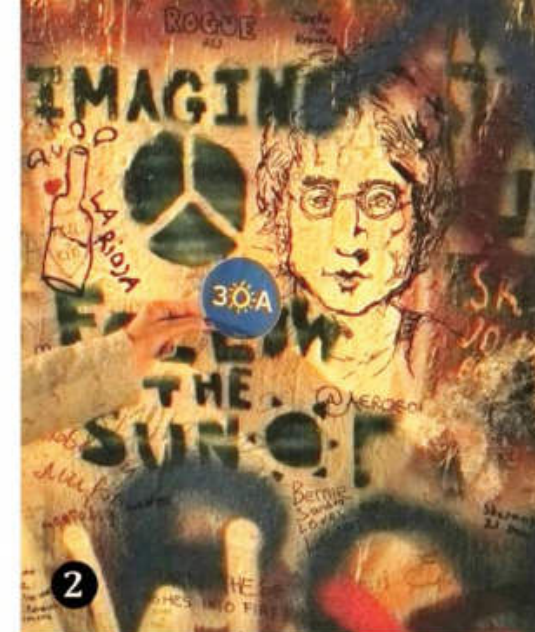


307 E Ruskin Place, 4 bed / 5 bath 2,583 sq. ft.
\$1,868,000



89 Kaiya Avenue, 5 bed / 6 bath 4,646 sq. ft.
\$4,395,000

Listings by: Brad Reese, Beach Properties of Florida, www.southwaltonfl.com, 850-797-7930



30A Stickers
Around the World

We've given away over 3 million of our famous 30A stickers to support local charities. Here are some of the photos fans have shared with us from all over the world. Have you seen a 30A sticker in a cool spot? Send us your photos to feedback@30A.com.



1. The Rainbow Mountains in Peru. Photo by Flashpacker Connect Guide Service.
2. Spotted hanging out at the John Lennon Wall in Prague, Czech Republic.
3. Amy Stoyles representing 30A at the Boston Marathon.
4. 30A along for the camel ride in Khuri Desert, India.
5. Kajsa Larsson, heli-skiing in Haines, Alaska.
6. 30A fan, Aldo, in Cozumel, Mexico.
7. Chilling with 30A at Icebarcelona in Barcelona, Spain.
8. On the coast at Cueva del Indio, Puerto Rico. Photo by Megan Lyons.
9. 30A in the snow, in Jungfrauoch, Switzerland. Photo by Elizabeth Anna.
10. 30A fan, Kris Kapitanoff, in Maasai Village, Tanzania.
11. A really dedicated 30A fan, as seen in Santa Rosa Beach, Florida.
12. Swedish Pro Golfer, Sophie Gustafson, repping her 30A sticker.



Man Versus Nature:

Through the Lens of the Beholder, to Us All.

Dave Davis of Old Man and the Sea Photography has been capturing the Gulf in all of her majestic glory for over six decades.

In 1959, at the young age of 17, Dave Davis joined the United States Army to serve and protect his country. Having an interest in photography, and wanting to capture his journey on film, he spent a good chunk of his very first military paycheck on a camera. It was the now-legendary Kodak Brownie Hawkeye.

Since that time, Davis – now 79 years old – has been photographing his journey and capturing memories for many others along the way. In the past decade-and-

a-half, Davis has gotten particularly serious about his photography, making it a second career.

"I'm 79 years old now, so I'm trying to get as many good photos in as I can before the good Lord calls me," said Davis. He named his company, Old Man and the Sea, after Earnest Hemingway's well-known 1952 classic. Like Papa Hemingway, Davis has been a longtime admirer of the sea, making his home along the Gulf of Mexico, around which, most all of his work is centered. In many ways, Dave Davis' photographic talent is a testament to art following art, one a novelist, the other a photographer, both lovers of the sea and purveyors of what they see.



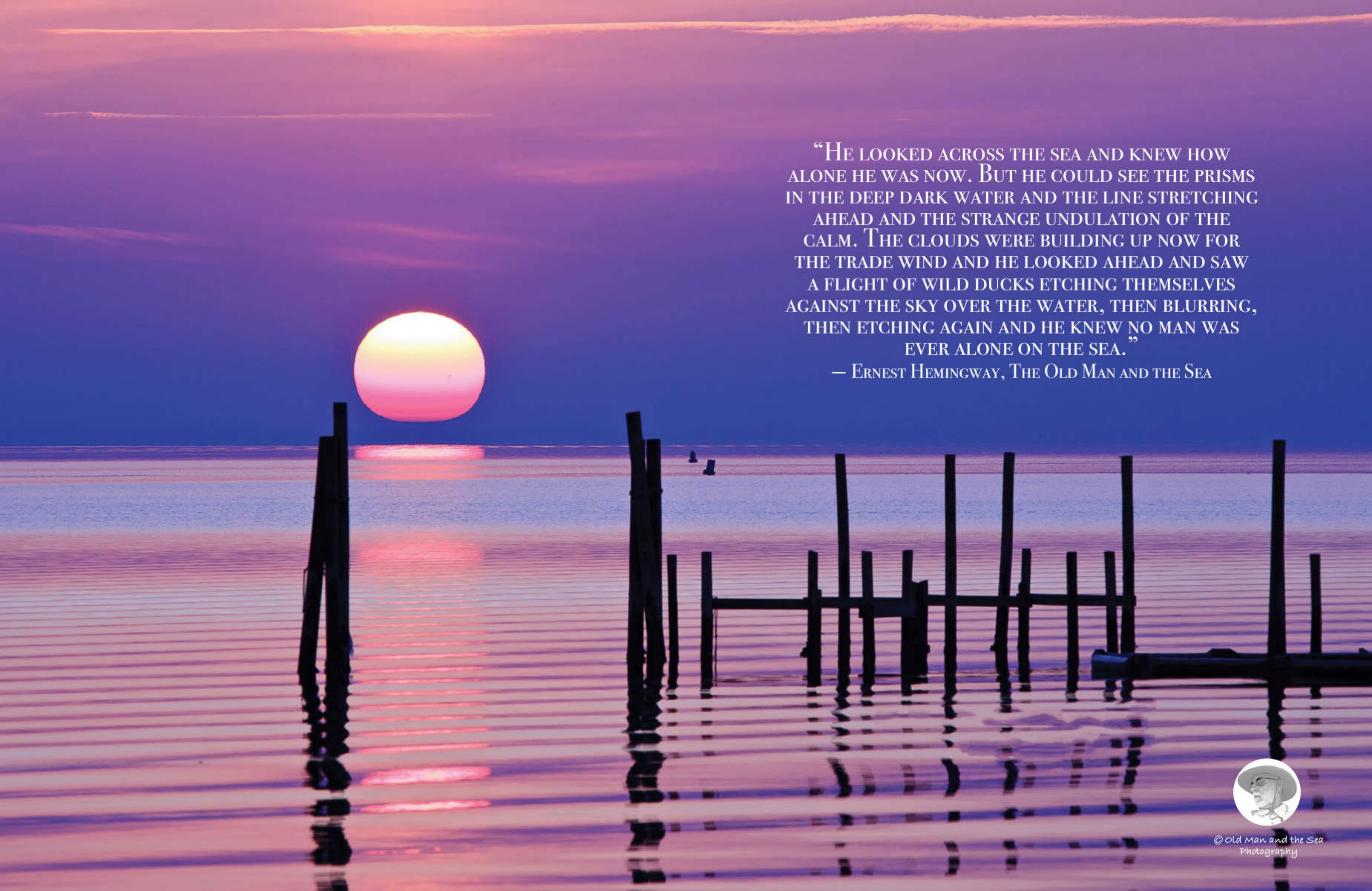
© Old Man and the Sea
Photography



© Old Man and the Sea
Photography



© Old Man and the Sea
Photography



“HE LOOKED ACROSS THE SEA AND KNEW HOW
ALONE HE WAS NOW. BUT HE COULD SEE THE PRISMS
IN THE DEEP DARK WATER AND THE LINE STRETCHING
AHEAD AND THE STRANGE UNDULATION OF THE
CALM. THE CLOUDS WERE BUILDING UP NOW FOR
THE TRADE WIND AND HE LOOKED AHEAD AND SAW
A FLIGHT OF WILD DUCKS ETCHING THEMSELVES
AGAINST THE SKY OVER THE WATER, THEN BLURRING,
THEN ETCHING AGAIN AND HE KNEW NO MAN WAS
EVER ALONE ON THE SEA.”

— ERNEST HEMINGWAY, THE OLD MAN AND THE SEA





By Mike Ragsdale

As Jesus hung on the cross, he turned to St. John and asked him to take care of his mother, Mary. It is believed that after Jesus died, John and Paul took Mary to Ephesus, Turkey. Paul was born in Turkey, and Ephesus was one of the largest cities in the world at the time. As Ephesus was essentially the New York or Paris of that era, it was an ideal place for John and Paul to preach to the masses about Jesus' teachings (hence Paul's "Letter to the Ephesians").

When a few folks began converting to Christianity, the merchants of Ephesus became pretty irate. Ephesians worshipped many gods, and the local merchants made their living by selling countless statues, paintings, and other artifacts representing the many different deities. Having only one God to worship would almost certainly cut into their profits.

One day, while preaching in Ephesus' amphitheater (which still stands today), the plotting merchants seized and imprisoned Paul. John began to worry for Mary's safety, so he moved her to a small cottage in the woods, a few mountainsides away from Ephesus.

We learned these facts while our family was on a year-long, around-the-world adventure. Being raised Catholic, our curiosity was piqued, and so we decided to visit Mary's final resting place, a place that Pope John Paul II declared a pilgrimage for Christians. We learned that popes and presidents alike have visited the site, and it's a place where many ailing people come to drink healing waters from the cottage's freshwater well.

After we toured the grounds, my son, Carlton, and I loitered around while my wife Angela and our daughter Holly went into the small gift shop. Nearby, I noticed a vigilant Turkish soldier standing guard, toting a compact submachine gun. A few weeks earlier, Carlton and I had had the opportunity to shoot a bunch of exotic weapons at a paramilitary training camp in the Czech countryside. To make idle conversation, I asked the guard, "Is that an MP-5?" trying to impress him with my knowledge of small arms.

He was not impressed. In fact, he didn't crack any hint of friendliness or emotion, and tersely replied, "I can't tell you."

"Or you'd have to kill me," I wise-cracked, making a tired cultural reference that he either didn't understand or didn't appreciate.

“
To make idle conversation,
I asked the guard,
‘Is that an MP-5?’
trying to impress him with
my knowledge of small arms.
”

There were a few people standing around to witness my uncomfortable Turkish comedic debut, so I did my best to shrug it off, recognizing that it was just his military training. He was no doubt strictly prohibited from conveying any kind of information like that.

Nonetheless, a few minutes later, as I was chatting with my son and a few other people waiting in the taxi queue, the guard nodded at me stoically and asked, "Where are you from?"

"We're from the United States," I said. He nodded, as if to say, "No shit, Sherlock."

"Where in the United States?" he asked.

"Florida."

"Where in Florida?" he persisted.

Over the years, I've found that very few people know where Santa Rosa Beach is, so I replied with my standard response for whenever I'm asked this question by a non-local: "It's near a place called Destin."

Suddenly, he smiled!

"Oh, I love Destin! AJ's is a very cool bar."

Apparently, the young soldier had once been sent to Texas for military training. After he completed his training, he wanted to see Disney World. So he rented a car and drove all along the Gulf Coast to Orlando. Along the way, he visited Destin, 30A, Panama City Beach, and, well, AJ's... which apparently made quite an impression on him.

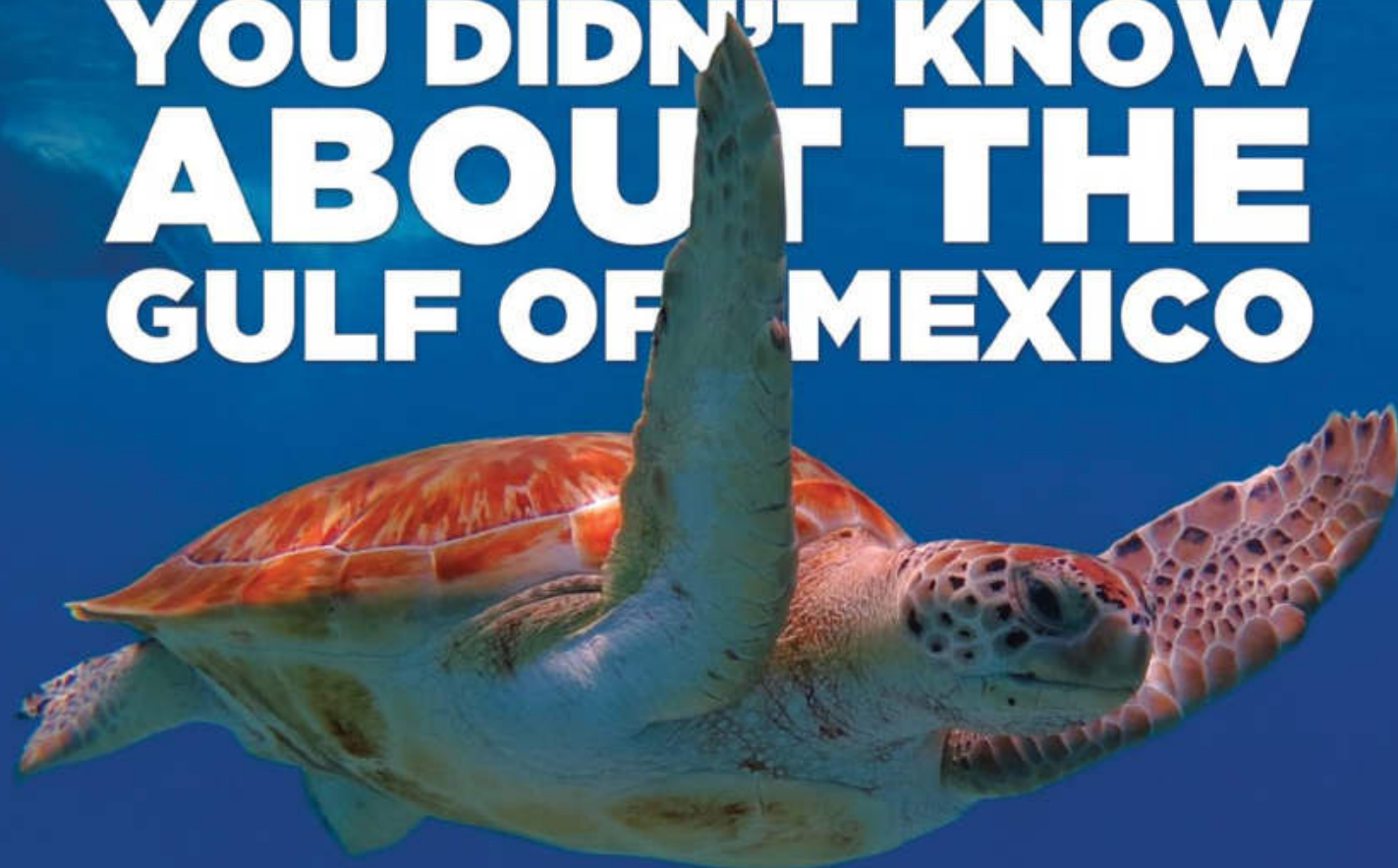
It's a small world after all. 🌐



beachhappy
CAFE

COMING TO WATERCOLOR, FLORIDA
SPRING 2021

SIX THINGS YOU DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT THE GULF OF MEXICO



1.

The Gulf of Mexico is the largest gulf in the world and the 10th largest body of water on the planet.

2.

The Gulf is home to more than 750 known shipwrecks, ranging from modern wrecks all the way back to the 16th century.

3.

The black coral that lives in the Gulf is one of the oldest living things on earth. A recent study dated the coral to be at least 2,000 years old.

4.

The Gulf is home to at least 49 different species of sharks.

5.

In 2014, an underwater brine pool known as "The Hot Tub of Despair" was found off the coast of New Orleans. This area is so dense with salt that it doesn't mix with the surrounding water, and animals that wander into it don't come out alive.

6.

The average depth of the Gulf is 5,200 feet, but The Sigsbee Deep, about 200 miles southeast of Brownsville, Texas, is estimated to be 14,000 feet deep!



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Introducing NatureWalk at the Watersound Origins® Community

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NATUREWALK
at the WATERSOUND ORIGINS® COMMUNITY

MODEL GRAND OPENING
Learn more at NatureWalkWatersound.com



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BIKE OF 30A

 **YOLO Electric**
BIKE COMPANY
YOLOBIKE.COM





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OUR LOCATIONS

Fort Walton Beach | Destin | Panama City | Panama City Beach | Pensacola | 30A | Crestview | Pace | Defuniak Springs

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