

# BEACH BUZZ

October – November 2000

Volume 1, Number 1

a publication of B.E.A.C.H.E.S. Foundation and its Chapters  
view more Beach Buzz articles online by clicking here

“Keeping Our Beaches Bare”

## Haulover's History Is Full and Fascinating - Now and Then

**D**o you know how Haulover got its name? Or that the great-granddaughter of the man who owned and gave Haulover to the county, to be forever used as a public park, is a naturist and regular user of the clothing optional beach section? Or that the popular and world-famous Lighthouse Restaurant was at the south end of the beach next to the pier, or that Black Americans were banned from using this park and beach?

This will be an ongoing series of articles about the area known as Haulover Beach Park. You are invited to help add to the history by helping with the research or recalling your early memories of the beach, before the existence of the clothing-optional beach, or the old dilapidated pier that was made completely unsafe during Hurricane Andrew and subsequently destroyed by a later hurricane.

The following first article in the series was printed in the Miami Herald in August 2000, written by Howard Kleinberg, a Special Contributor.

### A BEACON FOR SEAFOOD

By Howard Kleinberg

**O**f all the restaurants I've never been to in South Florida, the Lighthouse Restaurant on the tip of Baker's Haulover inlet was among the best—or so I am told. The landmark restaurant has been gone since it went up in flames in 1967, but many in South Florida remember it fondly for its ambiance and its food.

All I recall of it is that it was an interesting sight crossing north over the old bridge that spanned Haulover Cut between Bal Harbour and Haulover Beach Park. The restaurant was made distinctive by its 40-foot-high lighthouse tower and flashing white beacon light. Although it was not an official

lighthouse, the Coast Guard admitted its value as a beacon when, in 1963, it refused to give the owner permission to change the white light to a colored one, saying the white light was a beacon that appeared on its navigational charts and changing it to another color would create a different meaning to mariners.

Likely I never ate at the restaurant because it was at an opposite part of town from where I lived. But that's not a good excuse because I used to live just a few blocks from the equally (or higher) regarded Leonard's La Pena Restaurant on Bird Road and never got their either. (At the time my pocketbook was partial to Royal Castle, Tyler's Restaurants, and the Polly Davis Cafeteria in Coral Gables.)

Greek-immigrant Spiro Macris and two partners opened the Lighthouse in 1938 with 40 or 50 tables (accounts vary) at the stretch of State Road A1A that was more of a pass-through between Miami Beach and Hollywood Beach than

anything else. The county did not buy the area north of the cut to become a park until 1944. Prior to that, and perhaps afterward, there was a trailer park and

cottages in the vicinity of the restaurant.

The restaurant stood on the northeastern shore of Haulover Cut and the old bridge crossed quite close to it. Today's bridge is further west.

Not having been inside the restaurant, descriptions are not first-hand. But clippings indicate that over the 30-year lifespan of the landmark restaurant—which passed through several lessees—the original building was replaced and that by 1963, the capacity had grown to 500 tables. Large ocean-water tanks were inside holding live lobster, stone crabs, and huge sea turtles. According to a 25th Anniversary article in the Herald in 1963, a large dining verandah faced the ocean and customers were provided with binoculars to watch ocean-going ships. At the time, it was claimed that more than 3.5 million people had been served over the years.

In 1947, three turtles, one weighing 138 pounds, were stolen from the tanks and recovered at a West Flagler Street fish market, where the thieves had taken them to sell. Unfortunately for them, the owner of the fish market was the person who initially sold the turtles to the Lighthouse Restaurant,

recognized them and called police.

Throughout the destructiveness of hurricanes and recessions, the restaurant kept attracting tourists and residents alike until the early morning hours of December 22, 1967. Fire broke out and quickly consumed the building. The waters of the holding tanks steamed from the heat of the fire and cooked all the turtles, lobsters, and crabs.

The building was a total loss, but the public clamored for it to be rebuilt. Over the period of almost seven years after the fire, the county contracted with various companies to build and operate a similar restaurant there, but obligations never were met, leases revoked and in 1974, the Metro commission voted against rebuilding any restaurant on the site. ☆