



# Longboat Key News

January 23, 2026

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FREE

## InsideLook



Art Show hits  
this Weekend  
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gets last honk  
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## The Sun-Bleached Mecca: How Nick Bollettieri and IMG created the Center of the Tennis Universe

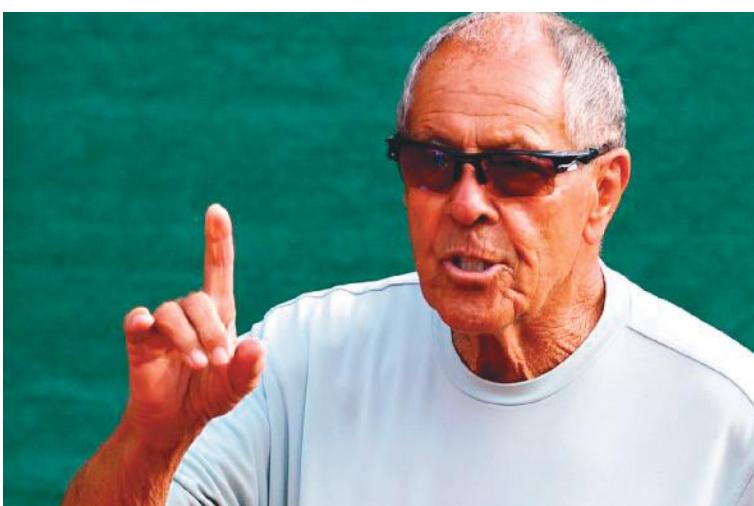
*The revolution didn't actually start in a Bradenton tomato field. It started in 1978 at the Colony Beach and Tennis Resort on Longboat Key, when a fast-talking former paratrooper rolled into town in a purple Cadillac.*

**STEVE REID**  
Editor & Publisher  
[sreid@lbnnews.com](mailto:sreid@lbnnews.com)

If you drive down 53rd Avenue West in Bradenton, Florida, past the strip malls and the swaying palms that define this stretch of the Gulf Coast, you eventually hit a fortress of sport that feels less like a school and more like a separate sovereign nation.

The gates of IMG Academy do not just open to tennis courts; they open to a factory of dreams, a sprawling, sun-drenched industrial complex where the raw material is talent and the finished product is greatness.

For over four decades, this patch of Florida soil has been the epicenter of the tennis world. It is where the modern game was forged in sweat, grit, and the relentless Florida humidity. And hovering over every square inch of those pristine hard courts is the spirit of one man: a sun-leathered, gravel-voiced maverick named Nick Bollettieri.



But to understand the fortress on 53rd Avenue, you have to rewind the tape. You have to go back before the sprawling campus, before the global fame, and head west—across the bridge to Longboat Key.

### The Colony Origins

The revolution didn't actually start in a Bradenton tomato field. It started in 1978 at the Colony Beach

and Tennis Resort on Longboat Key, when a fast-talking former paratrooper rolled into town in a purple Cadillac. Bollettieri was looking for a fresh start, and he found a kindred spirit in Dr. Murray "Murf" Klauber.

Klauber, the visionary orthodontist-turned-hotelier who owned the Colony, wanted to create the num-

See IMG, page 12

**KeyOpinion**  
*Greatest Show  
on Earth is  
Sadly a Clown  
Show in Plan  
to 'Vision'*  
**St. Armands  
Development**

*The City sits back passively like their job is to linger in a brothel in Amsterdam's Red Light District, waiting for sailors—and developers—to approach them with offers.*

**STEVE REID**  
Editor & Publisher  
[sreid@lbnnews.com](mailto:sreid@lbnnews.com)

It was T.S. Eliot who said the end is where we start. And that is apt for St. Armands Circle, a gem born from the vision and psyche of the great circus magnate, John Ringling.

Ringling imbued Sarasota with meaning, soul, and architecture—a true vision that extends from Ca' d'Zan and his namesake museum to the promenade leading into St. Armands Circle and beyond.

But now, we are seeing a complete ricorso—as if we are in the middle of a Carl Hiaasen-meets-Giambattista Vico cycle of history.

See Opinion, page 15

## Homegrown 'Sips' Expands as Corporate Giant Retreats

*In the delicate ecosystem of Longboat Key's post-hurricane recovery, a telling economic indicator might just be a cup of coffee.*

**STEVE REID**  
Editor & Publisher  
[sreid@lbnnews.com](mailto:sreid@lbnnews.com)

For nearly a year, the storefront at 3174 Gulf of Mexico Drive sat as a monument to corporate hesitation. A Starbucks banner promising "Coming Soon" hung in the window, fading under the Florida sun, while the space behind it remained dormant.

Meanwhile, just next door at 3172, the remnants of the Turtle



Chris and Justina

Coffee Bar told a darker story—a local favorite shuttered after Hurricane Helene sent waist-high floodwaters surging through its doors in late 2024.

But as the island turns the page

to 2026, a new narrative is being written on this stretch of the Gulf Coast. It is a story of retreat and resurgence, where a global coffee behemoth bowed out, and a local family stepped up to prove that Longboat Key is open for business.

### The Corporate Retreat

The saga of the "Phantom Starbucks" came to an unceremonious end this January. Originally announced in February 2025, the project was slated to bring the Seattle-based chain to the center of the Key, a move that promised to fill the caffeine void for south-end residents.

However, the project quickly became mired in the unique regulatory sandtraps of Longboat Key. Faced with complex zoning hurdles—specifically the need for a special exception permit to operate a restaurant in the C-1 commercial zone—and an incomplete applica-

See Sips, page 3

**A Life of  
Service and  
Stewardship:  
Remembering  
Randy Clair  
(1939–2026)**

*Longboater Randy Clair was known as the man who did the homework.*

When he sat on the dais at Longboat Key Town Hall, flanked by microphones and stacks of agenda packets, he wasn't just a commissioner; he was a maritime lawyer with a sharp eye for detail and a Merchant Mariner's internal compass for navigating stormy waters. Whether he was dissecting a pension plan or challenging a zoning variance, Randy brought a level of rigorous stewardship that helped shape the modern financial and physical landscape of the island.

See Randy, page 15

# EditorLetters



Longboat Key News and Sarasota City News encourages Letters to the Editor on timely issues. Please email to: [letters@lbknews.com](mailto:letters@lbknews.com) or mail to PO Box 8001, Longboat Key, FL 34228. We also print letters sent to Town Hall that address Longboat Key issues. We reserve the right to edit.

## Your article on Alma de España

To: Editor

Hello, Hermansen father and son. I enjoyed your review of this restaurant and look forward to eating there soon. For the first time, I noticed where you both live. Although I read your articles religiously while I am here from January to May, I never noticed your home addresses before.

My husband and I lived in Kenwood for about 40 years. We raised our 4 children there and enjoyed our time in this delightful neighborhood immensely. We especially enjoyed "cherry blossom time" every spring.

However, when we retired several years ago, we rebuilt our summer cottage on Robin Hood Hill in Sherwood Forest, across the Severn River from your son in Severna Park.

Our 10 grandchildren come to our home to spend the summers which delights our hearts!

We spend the bitter months of winter here on Longboat Key where I enjoy the LBK News greatly, particularly your weekly article. You might want to consider visiting one of our prized local restaurants, The Lazy Lobster. The owner, Mike, has given us two Wine Tastings through the Longboat Key Education Center these last two winters. It has really elevated my opinion of this restaurant greatly.

At the very least, you should sign up for The Wine Tasting next winter at the Ed Center at the Temple. Mike claims not to be an expert but I'm impressed with his wide knowledge of world wines. The hit, for me, from the Wine Tasting this past week was a sparkling wine from Tasmania! Thanks to you both, I feel more educated about the wines we enjoy drinking.

Nancy Prendergast

Longboat Key

## House Bill

To: Florida Delegate Robinson

HJR 213 will be before your State Affairs Committee Thursday morning. The conversations I am having with our citizens as the State Legislature is contemplating reducing or eliminating property taxes is, "how will we have ambulance service and fire service on Longboat Key and while we see they are protecting police from revenue reduction, where will the money come from to pay them"?

I have shared with you that 71% of our revenue comes from property taxes. Our Town Commission receives zero compensation for the jobs we do and we have had no outcry at our budget sessions in the five years I have served on Commission about property taxes.

HJR 213 while well intentioned, has far-reaching fiscal and operational consequences for not only Longboat Key, but towns and cities across Florida and the residents they serve (especially our senior population here). This may play well in sound bites, but the economic pitfalls are dire for every citizen and visitor to our state.

BJ Bishop  
Commissioner  
Town of Longboat Key

## Longbeach Village Association

To: Longboat Key Commissioner Sarah Karon

Thank you for your ongoing commitment to our district and the Town of Longboat Key as a whole. Would you be available to speak at the next meeting of the Longbeach Village Association on Wednesday February 4, around 6 p.m.?

We all had the opportunity to meet with you briefly as you were assuming your new role

**See Letters, page 6**



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**Sips, from page 1**

tion process that dragged on for months, the "Coming Soon" promise rang increasingly hollow.

By early 2026, the writing was on the wall. Franchisee Greg Sausaman confirmed that the project was no longer moving forward, marking a quiet end to what many had hoped would be a signal of commercial stability. The 1,800-square-foot space remains empty, a casualty of red tape and perhaps a corporate calculation that the juice wasn't worth the squeeze.

**A Homegrown Resurrection**

While Starbucks stalled, Chris and Justina Carter were busy brewing a different plan.

The owners of Sips, the beloved coffee spot that has anchored Whitney Beach Plaza on the north end since 2023, looked at the devastation wrought by Hurricanes Helene and Milton and saw opportunity where others saw risk.

In a move that mirrors the broader resilience of the island, the Carters announced they are expanding. Sips will open a second location in the very space that Hurricane Helene claimed—the former Turtle Coffee Bar at 3172 Gulf of Mexico Drive, directly adjacent to the abandoned Starbucks site.

"We didn't think we would grow to where we are today," Chris Carter noted regarding the expansion. But the community's support—evident in the lines of locals and remote workers who pack their north-end shop daily—gave them the confidence to bridge the gap to the south.

**The "Resurrection" of 3172**

The renovation of the new Sips location is more than a business expansion; it is an act of restoration. Workers have been busy gutting and reimagining the 859-square-foot space, scrubbing away the memory of the storm surge and preparing to bring life back to a darkened storefront.

Unlike the expansive corporate footprint planned next door, the new Sips will be intimate and focused. With a smaller footprint than their original location, the central Key shop will prioritize high-quality coffee, smoothies, juices, and acai bowls—a streamlined "grab-and-go" model designed for beachgoers using the public access across the street and residents craving a local touch.

**A Symbol of Recovery**

The contrast between the two storefronts—3172 and 3174—offers a microcosm of Longboat Key's post-storm identity.

On one side lies the empty shell of a national chain that found the barrier to entry too high. On the other stands a family-owned business, rooted in the community (Justina's parents run Performance Pilates in the same plaza as the original Sips), willing to scrub the floors, navigate the permits, and bet on the island's future.

As construction crews put the finishing touches on the new Sips, they are doing more than building a coffee shop. They are sending a signal that while hurricanes may wash away drywall and inventory, they cannot wash away the entrepreneurial spirit that defines this community.

The Starbucks sign may be gone, but Longboat Key is waking up—and thanks to the Carters, the coffee is already brewing.

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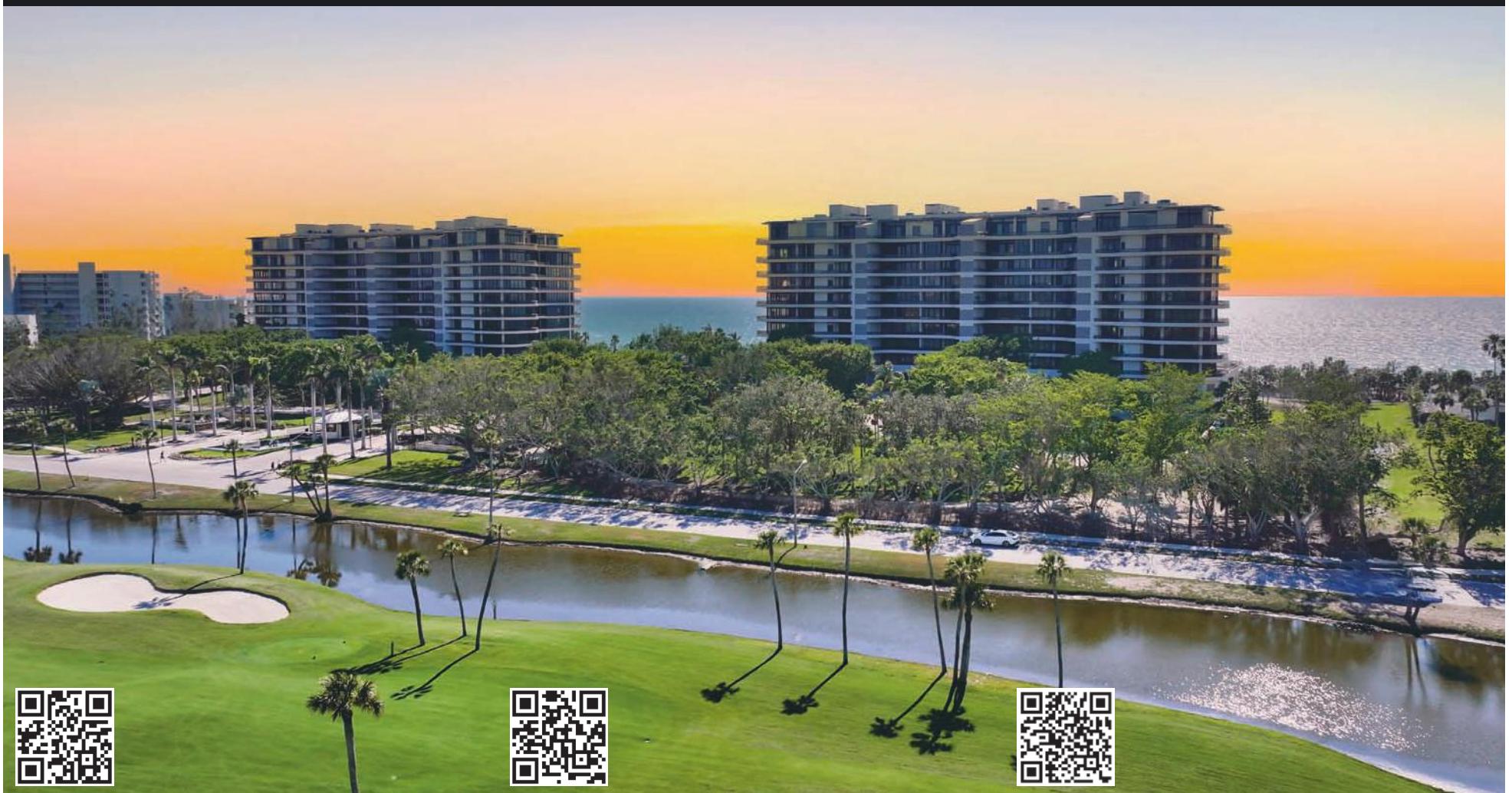


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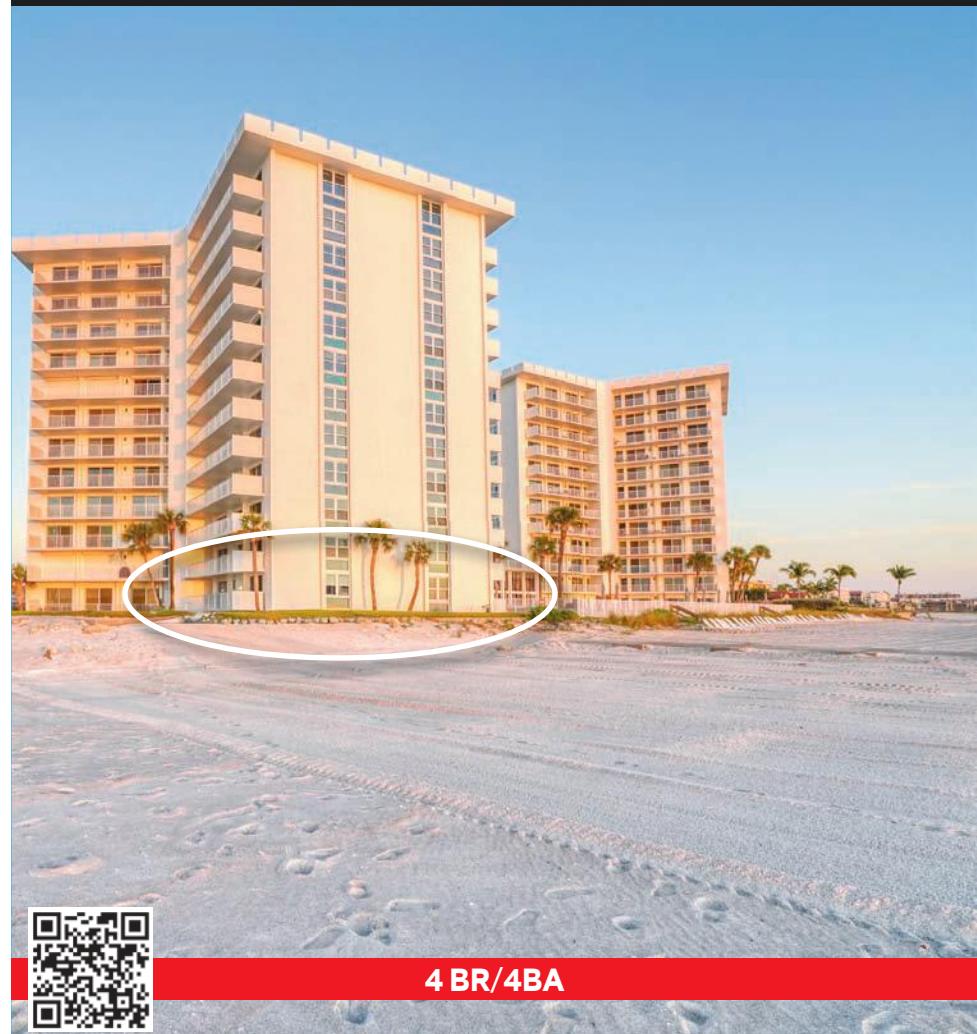


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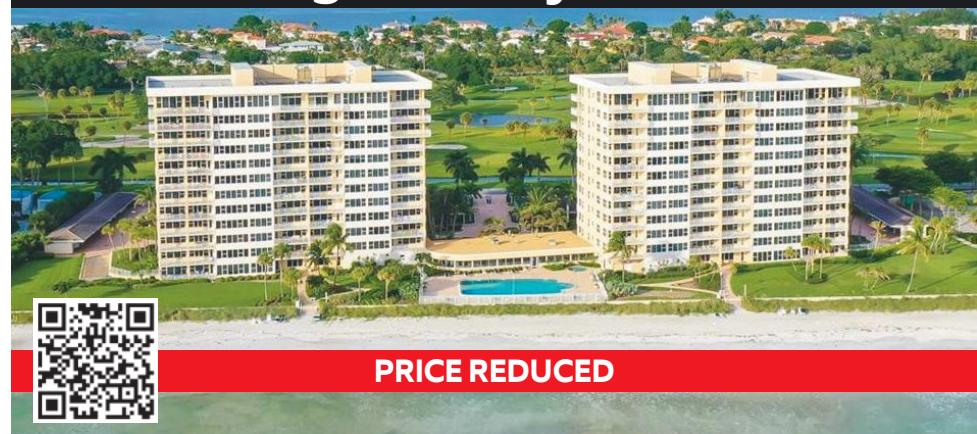


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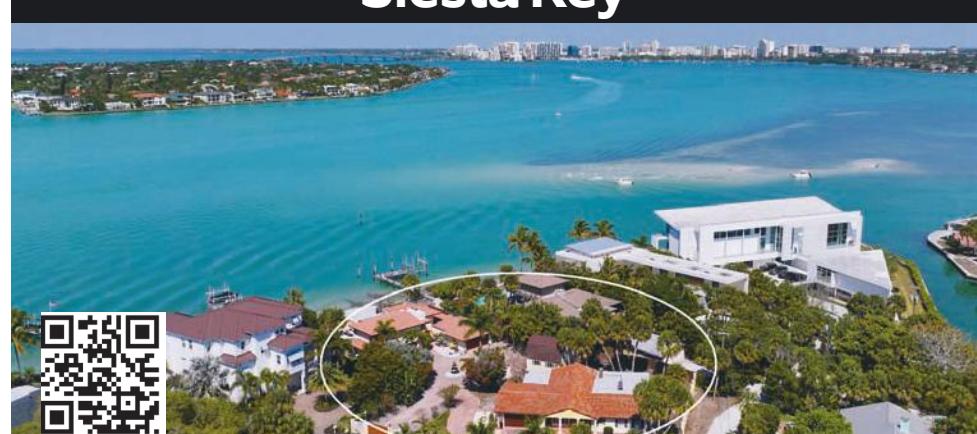


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**Letters, from page 2**

and you very kindly squeezed us into your busy schedule. We would welcome the opportunity to have you come and speak to our members in more detail about what you see as the current concerns for our district and the island. Please let me know if this would be possible. Have a great evening,

Jill Nemeth

Longbeach Village Association Secretary  
Longboat Key

**Raccoons**

To: Longboat Key Town Manager Howard Tipton

I've had four calls on racoon infiltration in the last two weeks in Country Club shores. Interestingly it's not just association's 1 they've come from 1 through 5. In fact, I had a family of 6 transversing my seawall cap 2 weeks ago. Is there something we can do, or should I advise them to contact a removal agency?

Gary Coffin

Commissioner  
Town of Longboat Key

**Buccaneer Site**

To: Debra Williams

Do you know what is going on with the proposed Buccaneer site? I see they have been fencing up around the building next door.

John Lynch

Longboat Key

**New Pass**

To: John Saputo

Thanks for your email on behalf of the Lighthouse Point neighborhood. Clearly as we have discussed several times, there is a significant problem to be solved to provide safe and reasonable access for boats in the New Pass area. The issue is particularly acute at Lighthouse Point. We have an opportunity to address that issue with this project and the LBK Canal Dredging project

currently being planned, as well. I sympathize, having similar issues at our home mid key.

I have copied our Town Manager here to ask that he reach out to LBK Town Staff and the appropriate Sarasota authorities to advise us on the dredging plan details for New Pass as a source of sand for Lido Beach and what is envisioned for your area as part of our own canal dredging project.

Steve Branham

Commissioner  
Town of Longboat Key

**New Pass**

To: Longboat Key Commissioner Steve Branham

Commissioner/Admiral B--concerning Lido Beach renourishment...I saw the equipment staged for the renourishment in New Pass...Can you check to see if they will use accreted sand from the area in front of mine and neighbors docks and I hope they plan on taking accreted sand from the island that forms at every low tide between our houses in Lighthouse Point and the Longboat Bridge? The neighborhood has begged for this opportunity for 20 years with no action. Now is the time to dredge so we can get our boats off of our lifts at mean and low tides.

John Saputo

Longboat Key

**Kudos to Officer Vandyke**

To: Longboat Key Mayor Ken Schneier

You have a fine police officer in Andrew Vandyke. Last Friday, January 16, I stopped by the Longboat CVS to return some items that were inadvertently left at my front door. The items were in CVS bags.

The manager of the store was called to handle my return. Because I didn't have a receipt, he told me he could give me only store credit. All fair and good.

Then he wanted clarification of why they were left at my door. I reported that someone must have left them for a neighbor but dropped them by me by mistake. After 48 hours of nobody claiming them, I decided to return them to the store.

I didn't need any of the items: a 12-pack of Canada Dry ginger ale, Oreos, Huggies diapers (little movers), three Alani energy drinks and a package of three Trojan condoms.

When the manager learned that I had not paid for the items myself, he told me that he

would not allow me to return them — which was his right. But then he refused to give them back to me.

I called Longboat police's non-emergency line, but it was answered by county dispatch, which sent Officer Vandyke to the CVS.

Officer Vandyke asked me to wait outside the store so he could talk with the manager. After a few minutes, he returned my items to me. I know this is all trivial, but it wasn't right for the manager to confiscate my items. Officer Vandyke did a fine job persuading him to do the right thing. I'm very grateful. By the way: Want some diapers?

Dean Congbalay  
Longboat Key

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# WHERE SARASOTA'S STORY BEGAN—AND BEGINS AGAIN

\* \* \* \* \* \* \* \* \* \* \*

## Preserving The Past, Defining The Future

BY JEFF LAHURD

Amid the plethora of downtown condominiums, the Mira Mar stands apart, for it was at this South Palm Avenue site that the foundation for modern Sarasota was laid over 100 years ago.

Seaward Development immediately recognized the importance of the Mira Mar Apartments and the former Mira Mar Hotel to the history of Sarasota. The Mira Mar Apartments were the catalyst to Sarasota's rapid transition from a fishing, ranching, and agricultural community into a stellar destination known nationally for attracting residents and tourists, a reputation still enjoyed. With overwhelming citywide support, Seaward Development will preserve the iconic apartment and return the building to its original condition. Thus, Mira Mar Residences will link Sarasota's colorful Roaring 1920s past to today's vibrant downtown for future generations.

### JEWEL OF THE GULF, RISING

In the early 1920s, the Mira Mar Apartments and Mira Mar Hotel and Auditorium were constructed. As a result, Sarasota's growth exploded. A.B. Edwards, the city's first mayor, estimated that it would have normally taken 50 to 100 years to duplicate what happened in Sarasota in less than a handful of years.

The community had always offered an abundance of natural ingredients to be a go-to retreat for wealthy Snowbirds and tourists: the highly touted "Salubrious Climate," the sparkling jewel of Sarasota Bay at its downtown doorstep. Add the unblemished tropical beauty of palm trees, moss draped oaks, annual verdant foliage, unmatched white sand beaches, and a veritable cornucopia of game, fish, oysters, and clams for fishers and hunters alike.

Visitors characterized Sarasota as follows: "This is a tranquil village that provides limited appeal for those seeking fashionable pursuits and entertainment. However, individuals seeking respite from the demands of daily life will find its peaceful atmosphere conducive to rest and rejuvenation."

In 1922, Mayor Everett Bacon and the city council met with Canadian born businessman Andrew McAnsh. Determined, indeed, this gentleman was the real deal, renowned as a "town builder."

Underscoring his bona-fides, Wichita Falls banker Charles Davidson was quoted in The Sarasota Times, "The buildings Mr. McAnsh constructed in Wichita were better in every way... and are bringing in more revenue today than when built seven years ago. And we want McAnsh back there and we'll give him anything he wants. That's the kind of man he is." That same sentiment was shared by John F.



VIEW SHOWING THE MIRA MAR & SARASOTA HOTELS, SARASOTA, FLORIDA

Smulski, President of the Northwestern Trust and Savings Bank of Chicago, stating, "I am confident that Sarasota has significant potential for future growth. Andrew McAnsh is assuredly going to put it on the map..."

Expectations ran high, and The Sarasota Times generated much excitement, regularly focusing on McAnsh, and his grand plans for Sarasota. As to why he chose Sarasota: "You ask me why I did not choose St. Petersburg, Miami, Palm Beach or some other place in Florida? All beautiful spots, but I like Sarasota above all else. And I have

seen them all... Money is only a matter of convenience. I have all the money I need."

*"But to know Sarasota and its people is to love both. No more cordial people could be found anywhere. That is honestly how I feel about it."*



MIRA MAR CONSTRUCTION SITE



VIEW SHOWING THE MIRA MAR &amp; SARASOTA HOTELS, SARASOTA, FLOR-

# From Village to Vision

BY JEFF LAHURD

When Sarasota broke away from Manatee County to form Sarasota County in 1921, the downtown area was defined by boarding houses, a hotel established in 1887 that had long since lost its former prestige, and a collection of one- and two-story wood or rusticated block structures housing residences and businesses. Near the foot of Main Street, the area around the bayfront suffered from the nascent fishing industry, marked by rundown shacks, old boats, tangled nets, flies, the smell of decaying fish, and whatever else washed onto the shore.

McAnsh sought major concessions before he would proceed—and got them.

Ordinance No. 312-A, “The City agrees to furnish water and electric service to the said Mira Mar Hotel and Mira Mar Apartments at no charge for a period of ten (10) years from the date of completion...” Sidewalk and street improvements were also promised.

Increasing expectations and illustrating what could lay ahead, on September 14, 1922, an architectural rendering of what his million-dollar hotel, temporarily called the Tamiami Inn, would look like, were revealed. Fronting Sarasota Bay, the elegantly beautiful hotel, incorporated the Mediterranean Revival style on a scale commonly associated with Miami and Palm Springs. The brick hotel would be fireproof, and “follow the Spanish and Italian style of architecture which lends itself so admirably to the enhancement of the tropical beauties of this section.”

The style was popularized throughout the state by the colorful architect Addison Mizner in Palm Beach. As the hotel offered an unobstructed view of Sarasota Bay, it was christened the Mira Mar—sea view. The Times put it: “[After] Years of hopes and rumors of a large modern tourist hotel for Sarasota, the indications now are that these hopes and rumors are to become realities.”

Ground was broken for the “Half Million Dollar Apartment House,” on October 5, 1922, and three weeks later a contract for the first unit of the new apartment house was let to the Carman Co., in what was the largest contract in the city’s history. Work began immediately and subsequently, the Mira Mar Apartments earned the moniker “the 60- day wonder” due to the continuous, round-the-clock effort required to complete.

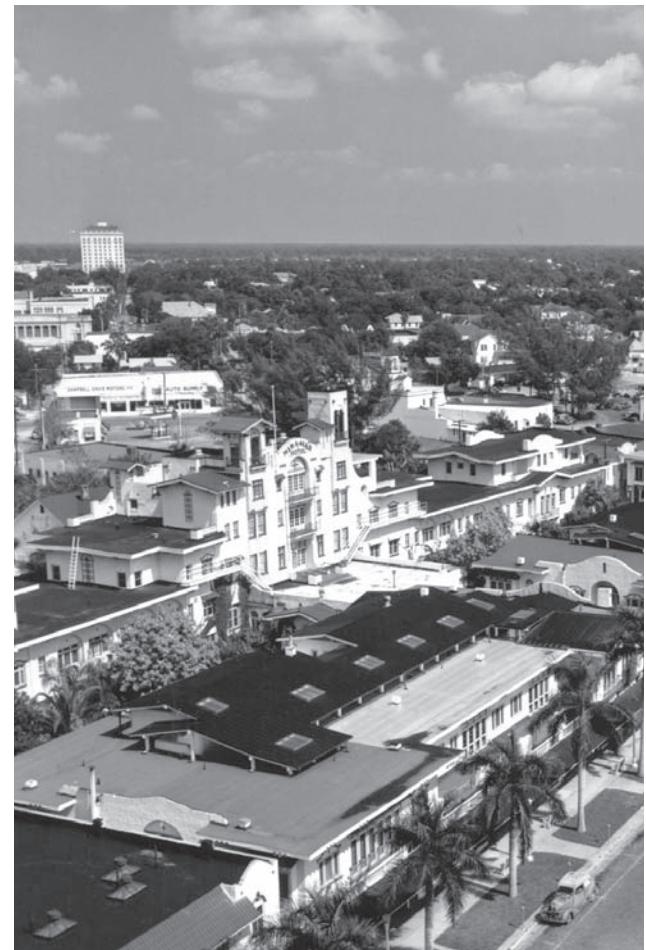
The modern apartments were available in one, two, or three-bedroom units with optional maid service. While the hotel would be operated seasonally, the apartments were available year-round. McAnsh and his wife Bertha lived in one of the three-bedroom apartments. Their son Byron stayed there during his visits to town. Residing on site enabled McAnsh to welcome new guests, and chat with them, which he found rewarding. All 25 apartments received annual updates.



TARPON FISHING IN SARASOTA



ANDREW MCANSH



MIRA MAR HOTEL

# A City Transformed

BY JEFF LAHURD

Immediately businesses sought to rent space in the apartments' 18 storefronts. Catering to affluent snowbirds, Abercrombie & Fitch opened a winter-only shop for each season. With fishing still a major tourist attraction, and golf becoming more popular, Gardner-Noble, a sporting goods store opened at Mira Mar. Their large tarpon sign became a point of reference for directions to other merchants. Harry Green, a writer specializing in advertising materials, was among the lessees, alongside Manning and French who provided clothing which included dress shirts, arrow collars, and a comprehensive selection of men and women's apparel.

Well-known surgeon, Dr. Jack Halton, who specialized in diseases of eyes, ears, and throat relocated his office to the Mira Mar, as did a beauty shop, which offered "A becoming bob," the latest style for the younger set. A. B. Edwards relocated his real estate and insurance firm there. So too, real estate man, C. E. Rowland, "Choice Property—Sterling Values."

The Mira Mar Café opened with an advertisement that emphasized modern dining preferences, mentioning that customers would be attracted by the scent of Maxwell House coffee and freshly prepared eggs with Beech-Nut bacon. Dissatisfied with the food provided? "If you have any kicks coming, see us."

Shortly after the Mira Mar Hotel opened, the

adjacent Mira Mar Auditorium debuted on January 19, 1924, quickly becoming Sarasota's social and cultural hub. Its grand opening, billed as "The Event of the Season," featured coloratura soprano Josephine Lucchese, known as "The American Nightingale," baritone Robert Ringling of circus fame, and acclaimed concert pianist Margaret Carlisle.

The auditorium anchored a thriving arts scene that blended sophistication with modern flair. It hosted touring orchestras, jazz bands, and theatrical productions, drawing national and international talent. Highlights included Frieda Hempel, the "Jenny Lind of Today," and Russian bass Fedor Chaliapin, hailed as the "World's Greatest Opera Singer." Adventurer Lowell Thomas captivated audiences with his lecture "With Lawrence in Arabia," while the Tennessee Serenaders brought spirited dance music to flappers and hotel guests alike—complete with a novelty left-handed banjo player.

For certain guests, the second floor offered a complete gambling room, operated by Conrad and Locke which ran the Golden Horseshoe in Chicago. Locals were banned, but snowbirds could freely gamble their money away. The auditorium, anchored on Palm Avenue, became the site of choice for local entertainers, fashion and flower shows, meetings, political rallies, fund-raisers, card parties, lectures, and art exhibitions.

After the Mira Mar complex was completed the rapidity of downtown Sarasota's growth was truly breathtaking. Indeed, the capitalists that were promised to follow McAnsh's lead to invest in Sarasota, came.

Construction immediately began on multi-story banks and hotels, along with churches, schools, improved roads and highways, a much-needed hospital (now Sarasota Memorial), automobile dealerships, residential developments, upscale restaurants, and the opulent Edwards Theatre (presently the Sarasota Opera House).

Those wishing to make money on the escalating real estate market were set upon by the numerous high-pressure real estate agents who came for the same purpose. Capitalizing on the boom, the Sarasota Herald started its presses in October of 1925, and This Week In Sarasota followed suit. Full-page advertisements filled all the newspapers. By 1925, the Chamber of Commerce issued a booklet calling Sarasota the City of Glorified Opportunity. The county became a combination of the California gold rush, the Oklahoma land rush, and the Bear stock market. Prominent real estate man and civic leader, Roger Flory recalled, "There were stacks of checks by every cash register, smiles on every face, money in every pocket."

# A FUTURE WORTH BUILDING

BY JEFF LAHURD



VIEW SHOWING THE MIRA MAR &amp; SARASOTA HOTELS, SARASOTA,



ANDREW MCANSH ON STICKNEY POINT BRIDGE



VIEW OF MIRA MAR FROM THE WATER

However, the devastating hurricane that struck Miami in September 1926, coupled with the onset of the Great Depression and the rationing restrictions of World War II brought Sarasota's booming growth to a halt. Banks closed, retail stores shut down, and newspaper ads were replaced by bankruptcy notices, going out of business sales, and public auctions. Concurrently, newcomers slowed to a trickle and city records indicated that more than half the taxes between 1926 and 1929 had not been paid. McAnsh and the Mira Mar complex were adversely affected, going into foreclosure and changing hands several times. In 1928 or 1929, he relocated his principal residence to Chicago, where he managed his business operations.

But the foundation he and the Mira Mar laid was firmly set, awaiting the end of the war for the inevitable resurgence. After the war, returning service men and women came with their families looking for stability, not a quick way to make money. The look of Sarasota changed dramatically as a result of the new modernist movement established by the Sarasota School of Architecture, which garnered international recognition. Once again, Sarasota became a go-to destination for tourists and newcomers wishing to start their lives anew - young couples with families to raise and retirees wishing to spend their remaining years in the sunshine.

To effectively manage the city's forthcoming growth, the city commission decided to implement a new system of local government led by a qualified city manager. In 1950, Ken Thompson was sworn in as city manager. For the next 38 years he channeled the city's growth in a manner which rejuvenated downtown Sarasota by beckoning the wealthy. Thompson's mantra became, "Keep your industry, send us your industrialists,"

Street improvements—widening, resurfacing, renaming, and re-routing became a major goal.

To offer newcomers driving through town an opportunity to view beautiful Sarasota Bay, and, hopefully, entice them to stay, U.S. 41 was re-routed along the downtown bayfront on fill dredged up just west of Gulf Stream Avenue. Unfortunately for the downtown area, the growth into the county which offered national stores, took much of their business. Huge shopping centers and strip centers offered free parking and convenience. Luxury hotels such as the Mira Mar and John Ringling Hotel saw a shift in demand too as beachfront lodgings and modern upscale motels became more prevalent.

The Mira Mar Hotel, its sea view blocked by new buildings, took guests into the 1970s. After a short stint as a retirement facility and its age showing, the city believed the costs to renovate it too high. In 1982, it was demolished. The Mira Mar Apartments were converted to office and retail use, which remained for more than a century.

The building was preserved from demolition by Seaward Development who have committed to an extensive rehabilitation of the building and the restoration of its place along South Palm Avenue.

Andrew McAnsh, known as a town builder, died in Chicago on October 23, 1946.

If he were alive and could walk through portals of his "60-day wonder," and into the revitalized Mira Mar, this visionary gentleman would marvel at what has transpired since his first Sarasota appearance—oh, so long ago.

# On Patrol



The following are actual police reports as written by Longboat Key Police Officers. They are edited for length, punctuation and to protect privacy.

## Jan. 16

### Highway

2:46 a.m.

Officer Pescuma was dispatched to the 5300 block of Gulf of Mexico Drive in reference to a highway obstruction. Dispatch advised that they are unable to confirm the caller's information and they did not leave a name or phone number. The caller stated that just south of the Center Shoppes, there are branches hanging over the sidewalk directly across from the north entrance. The branches are obstructing views and impeding the sidewalk. Upon arriving on the scene, Officer Pescuma observed branches hanging over sidewalk that could obstruct the view and interfere with walking, running or biking. Officer Pescuma emailed Public Works. Case clear.

## Truck

11:00 a.m.

Officer Pescuma was dispatched to Bayview Drive in reference to a disturbance that occurred. Upon arrival, Officer Pescuma met with the caller who stated that he left his residence around 11 a.m. and was driving westbound on Bayview Drive when a work truck with an unknown tag was backing up. The caller moved over to allow room to pass and while the work truck was backing up, the caller thought the work truck was going to back into his vehicle and he beeped his horn to get the other driver's attention. The driver in the work truck rolled down his window and started yelling at the complainant which raised concern. The complainant stated the driver was wearing a company sweatshirt for a plumbing company. The complainant called the company to report the incident. Later in the day, the complainant looked out his window from inside his residence and observed the same work truck driving by and beeping their horn. This was only a verbal altercation. The complainant wanted to document the incident. Case clear.

## Jan. 17

### Noise

3:05 p.m.

Officer Troyer was dispatched regarding a noise complaint to the 5500 block of Gulf of Mexico Drive. The complainant reported loud music and shouting coming from a pool party at a neighboring address. Upon arrival, Officer Troyer observed loud music and yelling coming from the pool area and observed there was a pool party taking place with multiple people taking part in the party. Officer Pescuma made contact with a man and informed him of the issue and town ordinance. The man agreed to turn the music down and comply with the town ordinance. Case clear.

## Alarm

11:30 p.m.

Officer Mathis responded to Fair Oaks Lane in reference to an alarm. Longboat Key Fire Department was still on scene at the incident location from a previous medical call. During the previous medical call, the residential burglary alarm was accidentally activated by Longboat Key Fire Department. Upon arrival to the incident location, Fire Department advised everything was fine. Case clear.

## Jan. 18

### Marine Rescue

11:45 a.m.

Officer Pescuma was dispatched to Lyons Lane in reference to a marine rescue. The caller was on another vessel and stated that there is a sailing vessel with one adult man onboard currently aground and listing to port. At the time of the call, the marine weather was NNW winds at 21 knots with gusts up to 30 knots, seas at 1 foot. High tide for Longboat Key was at 1:55 p.m. and the next low tide was at 5:20 p.m. Upon arriving on scene, Officer Pescuma met with Longboat Fire Department to get a visual of the vessel. Officers were unable to locate the vessel and relocated to Broadway Street, whereas the initial report was off of Jewfish Key. Officer Pescuma was able to locate the vessel south of Broadway and Sisters Key. Officer Pescuma along with R91 relocated and observed the vessel due East of Penfield Street. Officer Pescuma was able to establish communication with the owner/operator from land. It was determined that a vessel was unable to get to the sailing vessel due to shoaling. The man was able to use his kayak and paddled up the canal on Penfield Street where they made contact and EMS conducted a medical evaluation. The man said that he was anchored in the vicinity of the restaurant on Broadway and the other anchor didn't hold when the weather deteriorated. The man refused any further medical aid and Officer Pescuma transported him to Whitney Plaza where he was waiting for an Uber. Longboat Key Marine unit made note of the vessel's location. The man will make arrangements for removal of the vessel. Case clear.

## Citizen assist

5:50 p.m.

Officer Troyer was dispatched to Golf Links Lane in reference to a theft, that was changed to a public service. The complainant contacted the Sarasota Sheriff's dispatch center and he reported his boat lift was missing. Upon arrival on Golf Links, Officer Troyer met with the complainant who said he went to his empty lot and observed his boat lift was missing. The complainant had not seen the boat lift since 2023 as he resided at another residence. The complainant believed the boat lift may have been stolen. Officer Troyer checked the property and observed the dock was in a very poor state and appeared to be hurricane related damage. While checking the property, Officer Troyer observed the boat lift disassembled on the property. The complainant said the community paid a company to clean the canals after the 2024 hurricanes and they could have placed the lift on his property. No crime committed, informational report only. Case clear.



## Open Door

6:46 p.m.

Officer Troyer responded to Longboat Club Road regarding an open front door. Upon arrival, Officer Troyer observed the front door to the residence open. As Officer Troyer approached the front door, he was greeted by a small dog then the homeowner. The homeowner identified himself and said he had the front door open due to the nice cool weather. Case clear.

## Jan. 19

### Found property

8:20 a.m.

Officer Martinson was flagged down by an employee at the gas station regarding a found property. The employee handed Officer Martinson a black and red money clip which contained the owner's Florida Driver's License, Bank of America debit card, Discover card, school ID, Costco card and a \$5 bill. The complainant filled out a property receipt and Officer Martinson put the money clip into property for safekeeping. Case clear.

## Jan. 20

### Noise

6:38 p.m.

Officer Nazareno was dispatched to the 1600 block of Gulf of Mexico Drive for a noise complaint regarding possible construction noise or leaf blower at a resort. Upon arrival, Officer Nazareno made contact with Security Officer who advised that there were cleanup crews at the garage area for the construction area with vacuum cleaners, but were no longer in the area upon his arrival. The security officer was given a brochure for the town ordinance for sound violations. No violation was observed, and the caller did not wish to be seen or contacted.

## Jan. 21

### Vehicle

1:44 p.m.

Officer Van Dyke responded to the 3600 block of Gulf of Mexico Drive in reference to a suspicious vehicle. Upon arrival, Officer Van Dyke spoke with the caller who advised that two unknown men parked their vehicles in her driveway. The vehicle information provided to dispatch was a black Toyota SUV registered to a man in Sarasota. Officer Van Dyke located the two men nearby, and they said they were contractors working on the residence attached to the woman's residence. They relocated their vehicles. The caller was satisfied with the outcome of the investigation. Case clear.

## Parking

4:04 p.m.

Officer Pescuma was dispatched to the area of Longboat Club Road in reference to a car hauler illegally parked in the center of GMD. The caller did not wish to meet. Upon arrival, Officer Pescuma explained the reason for the interaction and issued citations for improper parking and unattended vehicle left running. Car hauler departed the area without incident. Case clear.

## Jan. 22

### Tractor

6:56 a.m.

Officer Pescuma was dispatched to the 4400 block of Gulf of Mexico Drive in reference to a suspicious vehicle. The caller stated that a tractor is going back and forth on the beach. The caller did not wish to meet. Upon arrival, Officer Pescuma observed the tractor and made contact with the driver of the tractor who was raking/grooming the beach. The woman provided Officer Pescuma with a valid FDEP permit that expires in Oct. 2026 for beach cleaning with mechanical equipment. Case clear.



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# BreakPoints



## IMG, from page 1

ber one tennis resort in America. He took a chance on Bollettieri, hiring him to run the program with strict stipulations: pristine all-white uniforms and early 8:00 a.m. start times. It was on the Colony's courts—surrounded by white sands and the Gulf breeze—that the “Bollettieri method” began to crystallize.

It was here that the concept of a “tennis boarding school” was accidentally born. Nick didn’t have dorms yet; he had his own home on the Key. He began inviting promising juniors to live with him, turning his personal residence into a makeshift dormitory for future stars like Jimmy Arias. The arrangement was chaotic and electric. The resort guests would watch in awe as these hungry kids, fueling their dreams on intense drills and sheer will, took over the courts. The Colony was the laboratory where Bollettieri proved his hypothesis: that immersion, not just instruction, created champions.

## The Move Inland

Eventually, the energy on Longboat Key became too explosive to contain. The operation outgrew the resort lifestyle, and Bollettieri needed a place where the focus was purely, brutally on the work. He borrowed money to buy a tomato field in West Bradenton, moving the operation inland.

He built a boarding school that was part boot camp, part survival experiment. In those early days at the new site, it wasn’t about sports science or biomechanics; it was about “Lord of the Flies” intensity. It was about waking up at dawn, running until your lungs burned, and hitting thousands of forehands until the motion was as involuntary as breathing.

The impact on the sport was seismic. Bollettieri didn’t just teach tennis; he professionalized the junior game. He created an environment where the best 14-year-olds in the world weren’t the best player at their local club—they were the tenth best player on their dorm floor. That competitive pressure cooker produced a level of mental toughness the sport had never seen.

## The Scoreboard

The proof, as they say, is on the scoreboard. The list of players who walked through those gates reads like a ballot for the International Tennis Hall of Fame. It started with Brian Gottfried, but the floodgates opened with the “Holy Trinity” of the academy’s golden era: Andre Agassi, Jim Courier, and Monica Seles.

Agassi, the rebel with the denim shorts and the return of serve that punished the world, was the prototype of the Bollettieri product—flashy, aggressive, and undeniably fit. Courier, who famously ran along the murky Bradenton canals to build his endurance, embodied the academy’s blue-collar work ethic. And Seles, with her two-handed dominance on both sides, changed the geometry of women’s tennis forever, bringing a power game that rendered the finesse of the previous generation obsolete.

But the conveyor belt didn’t stop there. The Williams sisters, Venus and Serena, spent pivotal formative years on these courts, refining the power that would see them rule the sport for two decades. Maria Sharapova arrived as a young girl from Russia with nothing but a suitcase and a dream, and she left as a Wimbledon champion. Boris Becker, Tommy Haas, Jelena Janković, Kei Nishikori—the academy became a United Nations of tennis talent. If you wanted to be World No. 1, all roads eventually led to Bradenton.

## A Community Transformed

This influx of global talent did more than just fill trophy cabinets; it fundamentally reshaped the Sarasota and Bradenton communities. In the 1970s, this area was a quiet retirement haven and agricultural outpost. Today, thanks largely to the academy (acquired by IMG in 1987), it is a global sports destination.

The economic impact is staggering. We are talking about hundreds of millions of dollars pumped into the local economy annually. It’s not just the tuition; it’s the families renting condos on Longboat Key for the winter season—bringing the story full circle to where it all began. It is the hotels filled with tournament players, the restaurants, and the real estate market that buoyed as “tennis parents” from Europe, Asia, and South America bought second homes to be near their children’s training.

The academy put Bradenton on the map in a way that oranges and beaches never could. When a tennis fan in Tokyo or a coach in Paris hears “Bradenton,” they don’t think of manatees; they think of forehands. The Eddie Herr International Junior Championship, hosted at the academy, brings thousands of visitors to the region every year, filling hotel rooms during what would otherwise be a lull in the tourism season.

## The Evolution

Of course, the academy has evolved. The dusty, grueling outpost of the 1980s has morphed into a gleaming, multi-sport behemoth. Today, IMG Academy spans over 600 acres and trains athletes in football, baseball, basketball, golf, and soccer. It features state-of-the-art weight rooms, mental conditioning centers, and a nutrition program that rivals NASA’s. It is a prep school where graduates go on to the Ivy League as often as they go to the pros.

Yet, for all the corporate polish and expansion, the heartbeat of the place remains the tennis courts. And though Nick Bollettieri passed away in late 2022, his legacy is woven into the fencing. He was the Pied Piper who convinced the world that to be great, you had to be willing to suffer a little, to work harder than the guy across the net, and to do it all under the Florida sun.

Bollettieri’s contribution was proving that champions could be made, not just born. He showed that if you took talent and applied supreme pressure, you created diamonds.

He was a polarizing figure—critics called him a drill sergeant, a huckster, a relentless self-promoter—but he was also a father figure to players who left home at 12 to chase a yellow ball. He cared deeply, shouted loudly, and changed the lives of thousands of kids who never made the pros but learned how to stand on their own two feet.

As you walk the grounds today, you see the next generation. They are hitting the same fuzzy yellow balls, grunting with the same exertion, dreaming the same dreams as Agassi and Seles did forty years ago. The Sarasota-Bradenton community has grown up around them, transforming from a sleepy coastal backdrop into a vibrant, international hub of athletic excellence.

In the end, the story of IMG Academy is the story of modern tennis. It is the story of how a sport moved from the gentle lawns of the elite to the hard, hot courts of the hungry. And it happened right here, in our backyard, because one man looked at a tomato field—and before that, the courts at the Colony—and saw the future.

## The Academy Hall of Fame: A “Who’s Who” of Tennis Talent

Over four decades, the courts on 53rd Avenue have served as the launching pad for arguably the greatest concentration of tennis talent in history. While hundreds of pros have trained at Nick Bollettieri’s and IMG Academy, a select few reshaped the sport entirely.

Here is a look at 20 of the most iconic alumni who spent formative years or significant training blocks honing their craft under the Florida sun.

### The Legends & World No. 1s

#### Serena Williams

- The Greatest of All Time honed her early, devastating power game on Bollettieri’s courts.
- Key Stats: 23 Grand Slam Singles Titles; Long-reigning World No. 1.

#### Andre Agassi

- The academy’s original superstar prototype—flashy, rebellious, and immensely talented.
- Key Stats: 8 Grand Slam Titles; Career Golden Slam winner; World No. 1.

#### Monica Seles

- Changed women’s tennis forever with her two-handed intensity and relentless aggression.
- Key Stats: 9 Grand Slam Titles; World No. 1.

#### Maria Sharapova

- Arrived in Bradenton from Russia as a child and left as a global icon.
- Key Stats: 5 Grand Slam Titles; Career Slam winner; World No. 1.

#### Venus Williams

- Developed the athletic, power-serving game that revolutionized the modern WTA tour alongside her sister.
- Key Stats: 7 Grand Slam Singles Titles; World No. 1.

#### Jim Courier

- The embodiment of Bollettieri’s “blood, sweat, and guts” work ethic.
- Key Stats: 4 Grand Slam Titles; World No. 1.

#### Boris Becker

- The German wunderkind spent significant training periods utilizing Bollettieri’s guidance during his prime.
- Key Stats: 6 Grand Slam Titles; World No. 1.

#### Martina Hingis

- The “Swiss Miss” utilized the academy’s resources during her meteoric rise as a teenager.
- Key Stats: 5 Grand Slam Singles Titles; Youngest ever World No. 1.

#### Marcelo Rios

- The incredibly gifted Chilean became the first Latin American man to reach the summit.
- Key Stats: World No. 1; Australian Open Finalist.

#### Jelena Janković

- The Serbian baseline specialist reached the pinnacle of the WTA rankings.
- Key Stats: World No. 1; US Open Finalist.

### Champions & Game Changers

- Mary Pierce: 2-time Grand Slam Champion (Australian Open, Roland Garros).

- Tommy Haas: Longtime Bradenton resident and former World No. 2; Olympic Silver Medalist.

- Kei Nishikori: The highest-ranked Japanese male player in history (World No. 4); US Open Finalist.

- Anna Kournikova: A global superstar who brought massive attention to the academy; Former Doubles World No. 1 and Singles Top 10.

- Jimmy Arias: One of Bollettieri’s original prodigies possessing a massive forehand; World No. 5.

- Aaron Krickstein: Another early academy pioneer famous for his teenage endurance; World No. 6.

- Max Mirnyi: “The Beast” spent decades at the academy; former Doubles World No. 1 and Olympic Gold Medalist.

- Sabine Lisicki: Known for one of the fastest serves in history; Wimbledon Finalist.

- Danielle Collins: A modern success story transitioning from college tennis to the pros at IMG; Australian Open Finalist and World No. 7.

- Sebastian Korda: The son of Czech legends Petr and Regina, training in Bradenton for the next generation; Junior Australian Open Champion and current rising ATP star.

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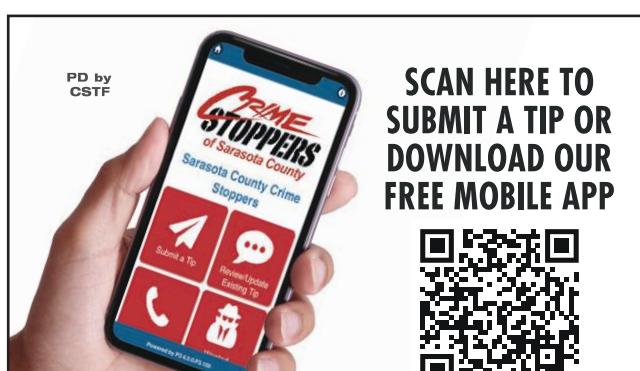
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[www.lbknews.com](http://www.lbknews.com)

Steve Reid, Editor & Publisher  
[sreid@lbknews.com](mailto:sreid@lbknews.com)

Associate Publisher  
Melissa Reid

Sales  
Lillian Sands  
Steve Reid  
[ads@lbknews.com](mailto:ads@lbknews.com)

Graphic Production  
Dottie Rutledge

**Letters to the Editor**  
[letters@lbknews.com](mailto:letters@lbknews.com)

# Editorial Opinion



## Opinion, from page 1

We are returning to the circus town, but this time it is not the work of a great visionary. It is the exact opposite: a pedestrian development push where the City of Sarasota is the ringmaster of a "Clown Show."

Immediately, the circus tent is rising for what the City is calling a "St. Armands Visioning Process."

To the uninitiated, this looks like good governance. To the veteran observer, it looks like a setup—a mechanism to manufacture consent for the unpopular.

### The "Zombie Project" and the Prop Spear

The current saga centering on the Shore Restaurant's renewed push for density and hotel rights is a textbook case of a "Zombie Project"—the bad idea that refuses to die.

A developer (Shore owner Tom Leonard) wants to redevelop properties on Boulevard of the Presidents into a "flagship" complex with a controversial third floor for residential or hotel use. Facing strict federal flood-zone renovations, the developer needs a zoning concession to make the project "pencil out."

Rather than rejecting a proposal that violates the district's intent, the City acts with a dysfunction that borders on farce.

### A Legacy of Failure: From Art to Sawgrass

To understand why residents are alarmed by this new "Visioning" process, one only has to look at the City's recent track record of entertaining the insane until public outrage forces a retreat.

Remember the Lido Beach Pavilion? The City practically laid out the red carpet to turn a cherished, family-friendly public concession stand into a "Daiquiri Deck."

Then came the Fillmore Parking Lot, where they entertained handing over a critical public asset for a private hotel. Then came the plan to turn Ken Thompson Park—one of our great green spaces—into a putt-putt golf course.

And let us not forget the "Art in the Roundabouts."

We garnered national attention for this innovative process; taxpayers bought actual artwork like "Seagrass" and "Poly." But then came the clowns in the City who bungled the bidding process for the pedestals. Instead of negotiating a solution to get the job done, commissioners argued about dumping the artwork in fields to save money.

The result? All they've done in the last three years is plant some sawgrass and left nothing in the largest, most important roundabouts. We let the community down. So, instead of a great vision, we got generic landscaping serving as filler..

### The Brothel Strategy

Now, this same crew wants to hold a process "with integrity" to determine the zoning at St. Armands.

The City sits back passively like their job is to hang out in a brothel in Amsterdam's Red Light



STEVE REID

District, waiting for sailors—and developers—to approach them with offers. They immediately entertain them, pull the curtain back, and try to tell us this is a legitimate "Visioning Process."

There is nothing legitimate about this. It is the laundering of political decisions through a "neutral" process. If the Shore project is approved directly, Commissioners own the precedent. If it is approved as part of a "Data-Driven Vision Plan," they can point to a consultant's binder and say, "The experts and the data and input told us to do it."

### Aging Beauty vs. Municipal Botox

The "Visioning Session" is asking the community to participate in a theater production where the final act—higher density and hotel uses—has already been written.

What is so special about St. Armands? It is the same reason people go to broken-down, old, aging Europe. Like Prague, Krakow, and Sevilla—it is the aging beauty.

Just like we see in the faces of those on Longboat Key, there's something beautiful about a human and a soul as they age. People have memories that show. That is something truly amazing. That is something that Botox, superficiality, and plastic surgery erases—and guess what you get? The soulless, vapid, empty look.

That is what I don't want to see at St. Armands Circle. We cherish the Circle for its unique, historic charm, not its potential to maximize floor-area ratios. We want to preserve it like Main Street in Sag Harbor or Nantucket or Bar Harbor or Santa Fe. If we can embellish the Circle, enhance it, and breathe life into its intrinsic beauty, that is closer to what we need to accomplish.

We do not want a Benderson/Leonard homage to Rodeo Drive, or the sterile look of an upscale suburban shopping center.

### Stick to the Snapper

Ultimately, there is a simple solution that requires no visioning sessions, no tax dollars, and no circus acts.

Tom Leonard serves us best as a restaurant owner, not a district-altering developer. The Shore built its reputation on hospitality, not hotel zoning. The community wants him to succeed at what he does best: serving great seafood and curating a top-tier dining experience.

It is time for the city to stop "visioning" ways to give developers what they want. It is time they stopped acting like clowns holding a prop spear, and started listening to what the residents have been screaming for years: Keep St. Armands St. Armands. Do not allow our treasure to be plundered by the modern circus.

## Randy Clair, from page 1

he loved.

Randall T. "Randy" Clair, a two-time town commissioner and devoted community servant, passed away on January 17, 2026, at the age of 86.

### A Lawyer's Mind, A Mariner's Heart

Born in Chicago in 1939, Randy's life was defined by the water long before he retired to the Gulf Coast. A 1961 honors graduate of the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy, he spent his early years mastering the discipline of the sea. He later earned his law degree from Northwestern University, embarking on a distinguished career with Amoco's International Law Department.

As a specialist in maritime law, Randy traveled the globe—from the Far East to the Caribbean—negotiating complex agreements that required both diplomatic tact and legal steel. It was a career that prepared him perfectly for his second act: retirement on Longboat Key.

Randy and his wife, Jean, settled on the Key in 1996, drawn by the same sparkling waters that had defined his career. But retirement for Randy did not mean sitting still. He felt a duty to protect his new home, eventually stepping into the public arena.

He served two distinct terms on the Town Commission, first as a Commissioner-at-Large from 2005 to 2009, and later representing District 1 (the southern end of the Key) from 2017 to 2020. His colleagues remember him as the "adult in the room"—a policymaker who refused to rubber-stamp decisions.

His impact was tangible. During his first term, Randy was instrumental in reforming the town's pension system. It was a difficult, often unpopular battle to reduce unfunded liabilities, but he argued passionately that fiscal responsibility was the only way to ensure the town's long-term survival.

He was equally vigilant about the island's character. A resident of Country Club Shores, he became a fierce guardian of the town's zoning codes, famously challenging construction projects that tried to skirt height restrictions. He believed that rules existed for a reason: to preserve the unique, low-profile charm of Longboat Key.

"He insisted on dotting every 'I' and crossing every 'T,'" a colleague once noted. If a decision was made, Randy ensured it was made correctly, legally, and transparently.

### Service Beyond the Dais

Randy's commitment to service extended well beyond Town Hall. He served as Secretary for the Country Club Shores Unit 4 Homeowners Association and brought his financial acumen to the Finance Committee at St. Mary, Star of the Sea Catholic Church.

Perhaps most close to his heart was his role on Congressman Vern Buchanan's Service Academy Advisory Panel. For years, the former Merchant Mariner helped interview and select the next generation of cadets for the U.S. Service Academies, seeing a reflection of his own youthful discipline in the eyes of local high school students.

### A Family Legacy

Despite his public battles and professional accolades, Randy was a family man first. He is survived by Jean, his beloved wife of 61 years who was his constant partner in life and on the golf course. He leaves behind three daughters—Kathy, Margaret, and Pamela—and four grandchildren who knew him not as the stern lawyer, but as the grandfather who loved boating and cherished their time together.

The community is invited to honor Randy's life and service. A Celebration of Life will be held at St. Mary, Star of the Sea Catholic Church (4280 Gulf of Mexico Drive) on Saturday, January 31, 2026, at 1:00 p.m. In lieu of flowers, the family requests donations be made to St. Mary, Star of the Sea or the Tidewell Foundation, in gratitude for the compassionate care provided to Randy in his final days.

The Town of Longboat Key has lowered its flags in honor of a man who served his country, his company, and his community with unwavering integrity.

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