



The Ghost Writer

10TH ANNIVERSARY SPECIAL, 2008

NEWSLETTER of the Friends of Fakahatchee Strand State Preserve, "Home of the Ghost Orchid"

Letter of Congratulations

Valinda Subic, Chief of District 4 in the DEP's Bureau of Parks, sent us the following letter:

The Florida Park Service is very fortunate that the Friends of Fakahatchee Strand have generously helped Fakahatchee Strand Preserve State Park achieve its goals since 1998. Happy 10th Anniversary!

The Friends have come to understand the uniqueness of the Fakahatchee Strand in that it is a preserve that is valued for its many species of flora and fauna.

Members of the Friends have worked hard to promote the Florida Park Service mission by:

- Promoting educational programs through guided canoe trips and swamp walks.
- Interpretive displays at local festivals.
- Repairing and maintaining the Big Cypress Bend boardwalk, including interpretive signs.
- Encouraging volunteer participation and retention.
- Working closely with the Park Manager for supporting the Preserve's goals.

In the years ahead and as the Fakahatchee Strand Preserve receives more public attention, we look to you for your ongoing dedication to the Florida Park Service mission. On behalf of our Division, best wishes for your continued success in the coming years.



Founding member Allen Caldwell (left) received the Mel Finn Award for his years of dedication to the Fak. Previous recipients have been Elsa Caldwell, Barbara Lewinski, Don Harmon, Dennis Marlin, Franklin Adams, and John Elting.

10TH ANNIVERSARY DINNER March 30, 2008

Over 70 members and guests gathered in the Seafood Depot in Everglades City for a gala dinner to celebrate ten years of FOF. President Nelson Tilden thanked Elsa Caldwell for organizing the event and introduced distinguished artist Sam Vinikoff, new Park Manager Renee Rau, and other VIPs.

Former President John Elting said that FOF is special; "we should clap for each other" because we are close to the top of District 4 in money and members. He then presented a certificate of appreciation to Craig Britton for being so hospitable at Ballard Camp and for keeping East Main open.

Carol Moseman, president of the Friends of the Museum of the Everglades (which is also 10 years old), gave a brief overview of the anniversaries occurring this year and the huge celebration planned for the Tamiami Trail 80th on April 26/27.

Franklin Adams recalled his friendship with Mel Finn and presented the award to Allen Caldwell whom he described as one of the "treasures" of the Fak.

The keynote speaker was Dennis Giardina who talked about "A Year in the Fak" with photos of everything in 2007 from fires to snakes and orchids and, of course, a few panthers of which there is an estimated 117 now alive.

The evening ending with the drawings for the door prizes, photos donated by Rick Cruz (left in photo below), which were won by Glen Stacell and Kathy Adams.



The Friends of Fakahatchee Strand State Preserve, Inc, a 501(c)3 not-for-profit corporation, is the Citizen Support Organization of Fakahatchee Strand Preserve State Park, the largest cypress stand in the world and the deepest slough in the greater Everglades. Its 80,000 acres are bordered by I-75 (Alligator Alley), US-41 (Tamiami Trail), SR-29, Fakahatchee Bay, and Picayune State Forest.

The Friends of Fakahatchee strive to aid in the preservation of this ecologically unique area and to educate the public about its importance.

THE FIGHT TO SAVE THE FAKAHATCHEE

by Franklin Adams

1913: The Lee Tidewater Cypress Company, a division of the J. C. Turner Lumber Company, purchased 127,000 acres including all of the Strand for the sum of \$1.4 million.

1922: Henry Ford, who was a winter resident of Fort Myers, visited the Fakahatchee and was impressed with its virgin wild beauty. He wanted to purchase the Strand and donate it to the State of Florida. The Lee Tidewater Cypress Company gave Ford an option to purchase their holdings for \$2.25 million. This was the first known attempt to preserve the Fakahatchee in its pristine unlogged splendor. The State of Florida refused the offer. The State already had enough 'swamp land' and this would remove the Fakahatchee from the tax rolls.

1932: Conservationists, primarily garden clubs, began a movement to protect the Strand as a result of the removal and sale of the Royal Palms from the Fakahatchee. They were not successful.

1944: The Lee Tidewater Cypress Company begins logging at the south end of the Fakahatchee. Their headquarters was established at Copeland. Oddly enough, the Federal government, which wanted the cypress for war time construction of wood boats, brought in California Redwood to construct the large frame locomotive barn and machine shop.

1947: Mounting public concern about the destructive logging of the old-growth Bald Cypress in the Fakahatchee began to emerge in the media. Everglades National Park was being dedicated by President Harry S Truman in Everglades City nearby. There was a last minute movement to include all the Fakahatchee in the final boundaries as part of Everglades National Park.

1948: The National Parks Association finally brought the attention of the National Park Service to bear on the Fakahatchee. Its report found "the area to be worthy of preservation". It also noted that the logging was advancing relentlessly north, destroying the once-pristine Fakahatchee ecosystem. Dan Beard, who became the first Superintendent of the new Everglades National Park, was sent to do a field inspection of the Fakahatchee. Beard strongly recommended that

the Fakahatchee be included in Everglades National Park's boundaries. The recommendation was tabled due to lack of authority and funds.

1957: By April 1957 the Fakahatchee had been totally logged out except for Big Cypress Bend, a few remnant trees, and a bird rookery swamp which had been saved at the eleventh hour by the National Audubon Society and is now known as Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary.

1962: An orchid lover named Melvin Finn, a Miami attorney, founded the Florida Nature Conservancy. His primary goal soon became the purchase of the Fakahatchee Strand to save it from land speculators, in particular, the Gulf American Land Company. Time was running out on the Fakahatchee once again. Mel Finn attempted to raise money through pledges and contributions to save the cut-over Strand but regrettably the Lee Tidewater Cypress Company sold their Fakahatchee holdings to the Rosen brothers of Gulf American. They paid \$100 per acre on paper and sold lots in the Fakahatchee for \$2500 for an acre and a quarter. They called the area Remuda Ranch Grants and constructed the building now central to Port of the Islands as part of the development plan.

Undaunted, Mel Finn and the new Nature Conservancy tried to get the State to purchase the Fakahatchee with funds from the newly passed 'Florida Outdoor Recreation Act'. Politics prevented the purchase.

1966: Congressman Paul Rogers introduced a bill to have the Fakahatchee declared a National Wilderness Monument by the Department of the Interior. Biscayne National Monument, now Park, was chosen instead. Gulf American began digging drainage canals on the west side of the Fakahatchee. Also in 1966, Gulf American Land Corporation, owner of Remuda Ranch Grants (the Fakahatchee), was cited by the State of Florida for illegal dredge and fill at Cape Coral, another of its developments, in Lee County.

Mel Finn continued the fight to somehow preserve the Fakahatchee.

THE FIGHT TO SAVE THE FAKAHATCHEE

by Franklin Adams

1970, April 30: Mel Finn & Franklin Adams met George Gardner (Special Assistant for the Environment for the State), Joel Kuperberg (director of Caribbean Gardens and co-founder of Collier County Conservancy), Ken Alvarez (biologist at Florida Division of Recreation & Parks), Nathaniel Reed, and Ney Landrum in Everglades City. The purpose of the meeting was for the group to visit the interior of the Fakahatchee in hopes that Governor Claude Kirk would support saving the Fakahatchee. Nathaniel Reed was Special Conservation Advisor to Governor Kirk and the aim was that he and Ney Landrum, who was head of the Florida Parks, would recommend to the Governor the acquisition of the Fakahatchee after they had seen its beauty. The following morning on May 1 the group entered the Fakahatchee with the exception of Franklin Adams whose mother had passed away during the night. The visit was a success, convincing all that the Fakahatchee was indeed worthy of preservation.

1971: Mel Finn has heart surgery. Complications two weeks later lead to the unexpected death of the "Father of the Fakahatchee".

1972: State of Florida agrees to resolve litigation against Gulf American Land Corporation (GAC) over illegal dredge and fill at Cape Coral. GAC agrees

to pay damages to the State by turning over their remaining holdings in the Fakahatchee.

1972: Florida passes the Land Conservation Act (chapter 259, F.S.) to purchase environmentally unique and irreplaceable lands. Later that year Florida voters approved a bond issue of \$240 million which began Florida's first major land acquisition program. The program was known as the Environmentally Endangered Lands Program (EEL). It was administered by the Division of Recreation & Parks in the Department of Natural Resources.

1974: The first purchase of Fakahatchee land was made in June, 1974. The optimum boundaries discussed at that time were about 80,000 acres.

1999: Nathaniel Reed, Joel Kuperberg, and others arranged for a memorial to Mel Finn. Finally, on April 24, 1999, a dedication ceremony for the monument that stands in front of the Park office in Copeland was attended by about 50 people including Fran Mainella, director of the Florida Park Service, and some early Friends of Fakahatchee. The monument memorializes Mel Finn's many years of devotion to his beloved "Fakahatchee", as he spelled it.

"FATHER OF THE FAKAHATCHEE"

Mel Finn
1916 - 1971

Georgia native, adopted son of Florida, U. S. Army Air Corps veteran, U. of Miami graduate, attorney, founder of the Florida Nature Conservancy, member of Tropical Audubon, South Florida Orchid Society and self-trained field biologist, he criss-crossed the cutover Fakahatchee, identified 45 varieties of orchids, nine found nowhere else.

Mel was the Fakahatchee's voice, dogged, persistent, abrasive, whatever it took; he badgered nature groups, led chest-deep field trips, wrote appeals to preserve this once mightiest of South Florida cypress strands. An ailing hear took him before his dream was realized but he had made his point. Florida funded acquisition, a buy-back program still underway.

Today, because of Mel Finn's vision and persistence, you enjoy the recovering Fakahatchee, main artery in the circulatory system of Southwest Florida. Outgrowth of Mel's dream, a wilderness greenway now stretches fifty miles from the southeast corner of Lee County to the waters of Florida Bay. Gulf of Mexico Greenway links are Corkscrew Regional Ecosystem Watershed, Florida Panther National Wildlife Refuge, Fakahatchee State Preserve and the Ten-Thousand Island National Wildlife Refuge.

Mel, you made believers out of the rest of us and were a pioneer in Florida's land conservation efforts.

Friends of Mel Finn - 1998



The rock on which the Mel Finn plaque is mounted was picked out by former Park Manager Greg Toppin and moved to this location in front of the park office in Copeland by Don Harmon of Harmon Brothers' Rock Company.

Remembering the Fak

by Pete Ray

In 1946 and '47, I had become aware that our Everglades hosted a number of orchid species. I had also turned 16 and attained the mobility that comes with having a driver's license. World War II was over and gas rationing had ended. At every opportunity, my swamp-stomping buddies and I would be off to the 'Glades to hunt orchids.

Here I must pause to note that at that time there were no laws against orchid collecting. Some of the species had already become difficult to find, but that only increased the challenge. No one gave much thought to the impact that a few collectors might have on these plants. Anyway, I wasn't killing the plants, just moving them from one place to another. Orchids don't die quickly, and it was only later that I realized that virtually all my specimens eventually died. What endured were the memories of those places and times. I wish I had taken notes and photos and left the plants alone. But this was a time when we were much more hunter-gatherers than we can be now, and harvesting nature's bounty was not only acceptable, but desirable. In the small-town Miami of that time, the best dove-hunting field in the area was at what is now the main entrance to Miami International Airport.

The biggest and best stands of cypress remaining in South Florida were in what is called the Fakahatchee Strand of the Big Cypress area. In the late forties, harvesting was being done by the Lee Tidewater Red Cypress Company, out of the tiny lumbering camp called Copeland, on State Highway 29, three miles north of Tamiami Trail. The timber crews gained access to the big trees on a network of narrow-gauge railways, a main line and many branches, back into the swamp. On this network traveled a coal-powered steam locomotive pulling flatbed cars, to carry out the logs, and a car with a crane tower. The latter was used to haul the logs from where they were felled (up to about 100 yards from the rail line) back to the line, and then to hoist them onto the cars.

It was a simpler time, a time before the paralyzing tort law system that encumbers everything today. A couple of teen-age kids could walk into Tidewater's office and ask if it would be all right if they rode back into the swamps with the timber crew next week. Without a moment's hesitation, the answer came back: "Sure, kids. Be here at 6:30 and bring your own lunch".

My buddy and I were up and on the Tamiami Trail out of Miami at 4:30 on the appointed morning, a crisp, clear November day. The night on that road was a blackness never seen in today's over-lighted world. Half an hour would pass without seeing another car, and the only light visible ahead of us was the reflection from the eyes of frightened animals: coons, possums, bobcats, and an occasional panther. Snakes and frogs, drawn to the warmth of the pavement, were crushed by the thousands every night. Insects by the millions impacted the windshield, making vision difficult.

We arrived at Copeland to find the crew busy getting everything ready for the day's work. Huge two-man crosscut saws were loaded on the rail cars (there were no power chainsaws then). The locomotive was fired up and the coal supply was loaded. The crew was friendly, mostly black men, some as old as sixty-five, but tough as nails. As first light tinted the sky, we all boarded one of the flatcars, and the train slowly chugged off into the vast cypress swamp.

Even though the area we were passing through had already been cut, it was still a place of beauty. The only trees being removed were the big cypresses -- trees three to six feet in diameter. Many smaller cypress trees remained, as well as other species, including many gigantic royal palms. We were showered with sparks and ash from the locomotive, but the crew wasn't complaining, and neither were we.

Several miles into the swamp, we arrived at the area currently being cut. The logging crew moved out to the uncut trees, and my buddy and I went to an area where we would be clear of falling trees. Wading in up to two feet of water, we picked our way carefully to avoid the many cottonmouth moccasins. The cottonmouth is a particularly dangerous snake, because it is not inclined to retreat when an intruder approaches. It just sits there, stone still, until you are within striking range. Its coloration makes it difficult to spot, but it does give one warning: a musky scent given off when alarmed. We were always on the alert for this smell, and when it was detected, we were on heightened alert until the snake was located.

Orchids and bromeliads were everywhere. This was (and still is) the prime habitat for the ghost orchid (*Polyrrhiza Lindenii*). We searched for specimens growing on smaller branches that could be cut off, since removing the plants from their host without harming them was almost impossible. *Epidendrum* (*Encyclia*) *Nocturnum*, the cockleshell orchid, was abundant, as were *Epidendrum Anceps*, *Epidendrum Difforme*, and *Epidendrum Rigidum*. *Epidendrum Tampense* (*Encyclia Tampensis*) was found here also, but the best specimens of this species were found in drier oak hammocks. The cigar orchid, *Cyrtopodium Punctatum*, was not to be found here, as it favors areas near the margin between cypress and grassland.

In a couple of hours, my buddy and I had each gathered a burlap bag of orchid plants, and the rest of the morning was spent watching the timber operations. Since the cutting of these giants was done with handsaws, only a few of them were down before lunchtime. They fell with a mighty crash, and then were dragged by the crane to the rail line, crushing everything in their path. It was not a pretty sight. Orchids and bromeliads on the cut trees were wasted, but the stumps were cut about three feet high, and many plants remained on the stumps.

Remembering the Fak

by Pete Ray

We joined the loggers to eat lunch, and they carried on their conversations just as if we weren't there, giving us a fascinating look at life in a tiny, isolated company town. Nothing was off limits, and stories were told that can't be recounted here. By and large, they seemed happy with their lot – no expectations, no disappointments. Southwest Florida was a frontier as wild as the wild West.

After lunch, we went for a long hike, trying to get away from the noise of the logging operation where we might see some animal life. We saw a cabbage palm that had had its heart torn out by a hungry bear, but the bear was not to be seen. We saw an alligator, small enough not to be a threat. Alligators were rarer then than they are now, having been hunted near extinction for their meat and skin. No sign of a panther was seen, though they must have been in the area. Panthers were never abundant, requiring a large range to support each animal. We headed back to the train with a few more orchids we had collected.

The ride back to camp was slow. The little engine barely could, with its load of giant cypress logs, and the shower of ash was heavier than before. The sun was low when we pulled into the camp. We said our goodbyes and thank-yous, and headed back to Miami in the gathering darkness.

Fakahatchee Strand is now a State Preserve. A few of the ancient giants remain, and the regrowth is now almost 50 years old. The main railroad line is now an unpaved auto road, called Janes Grade, and the elevated areas where the branch lines were make easy walking paths. It's an area well worth visiting. If you don't mind wet feet, you can see quite a few of the native orchids – with luck, a ghost orchid. Of course, gathering them is now forbidden. Cottonmouth moccasins, while still present, are much less common. If you go, you'll want to make your trip during the cooler, drier months of the year, but it's best to avoid hunting season.

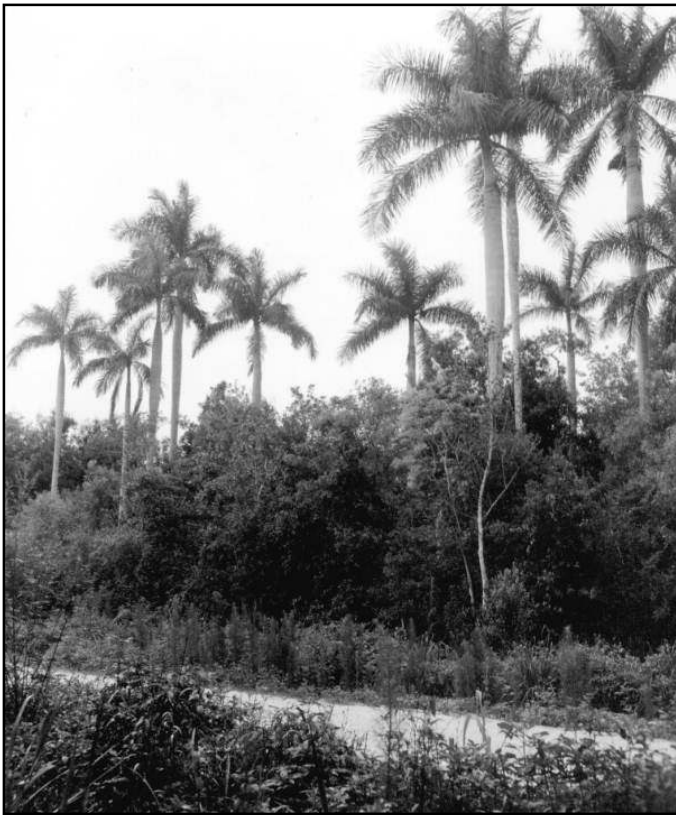


Photo from Florida State Archives

Janes Scenic Drive in 1967. It was named after the Janes brothers (J.B., Winford, and Wayne) who, with Alfred Webb, farmed tomatoes near Copeland. The Janes store and popular restaurant on SR-29 was torn down in 2002.

Peter C. Ray was born in Miami, Florida, on July 4, 1931. His parents had come from South Georgia in the 1920s, and had gone from instant wealth in the Florida real estate boom to near poverty in the Great Depression.

Peter grew up in Southwest Miami. Too young for military service, he graduated from Ponce de Leon High School in Coral Gables, and earned a degree in engineering at the University of Miami.

Young Peter spent many days exploring the Everglades, from the Big Cypress and Fakahatchee to the Keys and what is now Everglades National Park. He loved snakes, and liked to capture them for sale to Bill Haast's Miami Serpentarium. In the 1940s, alligators had been hunted to near extinction. The effect of this was a population explosion of garfish. They could be seen by the thousands rafted under bridges on the Tamiami Trail. The gars were seen as a pest, displacing bass and other edible fish, so Peter and his high school friends thought it both fun and public service to dangle a bare hook under their chin and snatch them from the water. The highway patrol took a different view. The dead fish attracted buzzards, and the buzzards were a potential cause of auto accidents, so that game was ended.

After graduating from college, Peter lived and worked for thirteen years at Cape Canaveral as an electronics engineer. There he met and married wife Beth and their three sons were born. In 1967, they returned to Miami, where Peter earned a law degree at the University of Miami. During those years, the family spent many days returning to the Everglades scenes of Peter's youth.

Today, Peter is a semi-retired investor, living near Bradenton. He maintains seven acres of tropical fruit trees and a collection of orchids.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM HISTORY

by Franklin Adams

The Fakahatchee Strand is probably one of the best examples of subtropical, strand swamp in the United States. The Strand harbors one of the largest concentrations and diversity of native orchids in North America and supports numerous rare and endangered animal species. It is also one of the core areas of the current range of the Florida Panther. The Fakahatchee Strand is linked hydrologically to the Everglades system and is particularly important to the estuarine ecosystem of the Ten Thousand Islands area.

In 1913, the Fakahatchee Strand was purchased by the Lee-Tidewater Cypress Company for \$1.4 million, with the intent of logging the cypress. Major logging did not occur, however, until 1944 as a war-time measure and then continued until the early 1950s. The lag time for commencing major logging operations may have been due to the real estate boom of the mid-1920s and the subsequent Depression years. It has been reported that in 1922 an agent for Henry Ford obtained an option to purchase the Strand with the intention of giving it to the state as a park, but the offer did not materialize.

By 1948, the southern 10 miles of the Fakahatchee Strand had been logged when Dan Beard, the superintendent of Everglades National Park, inspected the Strand and recommended it for a National Monument. At the time, approximately one million board feet of cypress per week were being removed from the Strand. It was pointed out that the density of mammalian life found in the Strand was greater than that of the Everglades National Park, including black bear, Florida panther, mangrove fox squirrel, and a wide diversity of other wildlife. Beard also commented on the picturesque beauty of the area.

While funding and authority to acquire the area did not materialize in the late 1940s, another attempt was made in 1964 under urging of Mel Finn, a Miami attorney and conservationist. However, once again, the effort to preserve the Strand failed. In 1966, the Lee-Tidewater Cypress Company sold the Strand to the Gulf-American Land Company, which later became G.A.C. Properties, Inc. They purchased the property with the intention of marketing the land as a part of Golden Gate Estates. Much of the property was sold in 1¼-acre lots. During this period, three sections of the Strand were donated to Collier County for a park.

In 1972, the Florida legislature passed the Land Conservation Act (Chapter 259, F.S.), which had as its purpose the conservation and protection of

environmentally unique and irreplaceable lands. Later that year, Florida voters approved a bond issue of \$240 million which set in motion Florida's first major environmental land acquisition program known as the Environmentally Endangered Lands (EEL) Program. The Program was administered through the Division of Recreation and Parks of the Department of Natural Resources.

Negotiations with GAC began in 1972. GAC attempted to regain possession of lots it had sold and offered to sell its holdings to the State. Negotiations were temporarily halted when GAC was prosecuted for dredge and fill violations at Cape Coral in Lee County. To resolve this litigation, GAC offered to pay for damages by trading land in the Fakahatchee Strand. Settlement of the litigation resulted in approximately 9,523 acres south of US-41 (Tamiami Trail) being acquired.

The first purchase of land creating Fakahatchee Strand State Park, made in June 1974, was the beginning of a continuous acquisition effort which is ongoing to this day. By 1978 approximately 44,000 acres had been acquired. As of January 1, 1999, the Preserve consisted of 69,896 acres. Of this, approximately 34,727 acres were acquired under the EEL Program. As that program came to an end, the acquisition effort was assumed by the Conservation and Recreation Lands (CARL) Program. Under the CARL Program, the project has been expanded to include lands between the older project and SR-29.

At this time, approximately 16,700 acres remains to be acquired. Since 1990, most lands have been acquired with Preservation 2000 funding. Hopefully, this noteworthy acquisition effort will continue with the use of these funds or successive funding until all reasonable efforts to complete the project have been exhausted.

Franklin Adams is the official historian of the Friends of Fakahatchee. and has served as a member of the board of directors. He was born in Miami and introduced to the Everglades by his father, a surveyor for the newly-formed National Park, when they went out hunting and fishing. As a youngster, he read Marjory Stoneman Douglas' *River of Grass* and later became a trusted member of "Marjory's Army". He was also a friend of Mel Finn and has been involved with many conservation groups in Florida, including the Save the Fakahatchee Strand Swamp Committee.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM HISTORY

Historical Photos from the Florida State Archives



Cypress was logged by the Lee Tidewater Cypress Company which shipped 40 cars of logs to the mill in Perry, FL, from Copeland at least twice a week. In 1945, about 250 men were employed and 750 people lived in the settlement.

The village of Copeland was named after David Graham Copeland (1885-1949), chief engineer for the Collier interests in the area. Copeland was a prominent local citizen, chairman of the Board of County Commissioners and on the Everglades National Park boundary committee. His extensive notes about the history of the area were used for Charlton Tebeau's book *Florida's Last Frontier; A History of Collier County*.



The C. J. Jones Company logged pine which was cut at their saw mill in Jerome, then a thriving town. When logging stopped and the mill burnt down in 1957, the church was moved and is now Everglades First Baptist (opposite the school).

FRIENDS OF FAKAHATCHEE – EARLY DAYS

From the newsletter ...

In October 2000, the Fakahatchee Newsletter announced a contest to “name the newsletter”.

On December 19, 2002, FOF was at the pre-release in Naples of the movie *Adaptation*, taken from the book *The Orchid Thief* by Susan Orleans.



FOF celebrated its 5th anniversary at a dinner meeting on December 5, 2003, with a specially-decorated cake donated by Park Manager Greg Toppin.

Member Russ Clusman wrote a special report “Lost for a Century” for the May 2004 newsletter about the rediscovery of the *Cranichis muscosa* orchid.

Park Manager Ralph Smith gave a presentation about “Black Seminoles in 1830s Florida” at a members’ dinner on January 21, 2005.

The format of *The Ghost Writer* changed from double-sided legal paper to its present 4 pages in March 2005. The new website was launched in January 2006.

Hurricane Wilma struck the area on October 24, 2005. Thanks to volunteers, the Boardwalk was opened just a month later and Jones Grade was cleared.

FOF PRESIDENTS:

Roger Dykstra
Elsa Caldwell
Barbara Lewinski
Lee Russell
Russ Reay
Patty Huff
John Elting
Nelson Tilden

From the scrap book ...

compiled by Allen Caldwell, digitized by Jim Woodard



An early meeting in the Copeland Baptist Church.

**Back row, left to right: Elsa Caldwell, Allen Caldwell, Debbie Owen
Middle row: Ray Porter, Cricket Porter, unknown, Mike Hart
Front row: Mike Owen, Marney Reed, Cindy Hackney, Roger Dykstra**



Another early meeting at the park office in Copeland.

Left to right: Cindy Hackney,, Roger Dykstra, Greg Toppin, Elsa Caldwell, JoAnn Toppin, unknown, Allen Caldwell