

A photograph of a sunset over the ocean. The sky is filled with clouds, and the sun is low on the horizon, creating a golden glow. In the foreground, the silhouettes of four people (two adults and two children) are standing on a beach, looking out at the water. To the right, a sailboat with a large, dark sail is visible. The overall mood is peaceful and scenic.

The
Continental
Magazine
Fall/1968

Florida: South From Sarasota
Try a Hunting Preserve

The 1969 Cars from Lincoln Mercury

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COVER—the picture was taken at Marco Island, near the Everglades, deep in jungly southwest Florida. Not long ago it had little habitation, but now it is bursting with costly residences and condominiums—and leisure. Photo from Alpha Photo Associates.

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For subscription information, write to the Continental Magazine, P.O. Box 658, Detroit, Michigan 48231. To change address, send your new address together with name and old address, exactly as shown on back cover, to the Continental Magazine at the same address. The Continental Magazine is published by Lincoln-Mercury Division of Ford Motor Company. Copyright © 1968, Ford Motor Company, Dearborn, Michigan. Printed in the U.S.A. All rights reserved.

*Memo to
Our
Readers*

We are particularly pleased by the way in which Gloria Jahoda has written about the lower west side of Florida—Florida, the state pawed-over by a thousand writers a year and rarely emerging so well-observed and interesting as in this story.

Mrs. Jahoda was raised in a Chicago suburb, did her undergraduate work in English at Northwestern, got an M.A. in anthropology, and had begun on a Ph.D. at the University of Wisconsin when she met her husband and was, as she puts it, "saved from a dissertation on 'The Changing Chippewa Woman.'" She taught at Wisconsin and later at Fairleigh Dickinson in New Jersey while her husband was getting a doctorate at Columbia, and then she quit teaching in 1957 to go into writing full time.



Her first two books were "Annie" and "Delilah's Mountain," both novels. Last year Scribner's published her third book, "The Other Florida," about the north of the state. Since the latter's debut she has been startled to see its catchwords and phrases on Florida real estate billboards.

Mrs. Jahoda has had a lifelong interest in music—classical, Dixieland, modern—and has written a biography of the English composer Frederick Delius, which Scribner's will publish in the spring. She is a pianist and once played professionally to earn tuition money.

Mr. Jahoda is a professor at Florida State University and the two live on a quiet Tallahassee street in a garden full of oleander, magnolia, coral vine, and bananas—perfect for a woman who describes herself as "a one hundred per cent unashamed romantic."

When not writing books and magazine articles, Mrs. Jahoda prepares radio and television programs on the music of Delius and the lore of Florida.

Our other contributors are mostly old friends. Mary Augusta Rodgers, who once reported for us on luxury hotels in the national parks, has written on paddle tennis as an insider. She plays a wicked game between writing fiction and articles for just about every major magazine in the country.

Jim Ericson (another graduate of Northwestern) teaches school in Brownsville, Texas, and hunts and fishes and writes magazine articles about both.

Bern Keating recently reported for us on the small hotels of the French Quarter and now he's back in New Orleans telling about the less celebrated restaurants that dedicated gastronomes (like himself) seek out in that city.



Where is everybody? Somewhere else, but not on this beach near Naples

Florida: South From Sarasota

*Not densely settled, slow in tempo,
the west coast between Sarasota and the
Everglades is for vacationers who prize
culture as much as sun and gamefish*

by Gloria Jahoda

BECAUSE I LIVE in Florida, cynics sooner or later ask me, doesn't paradise pall? Doesn't there come a time when tournament-sized gamefish, shaggy palms along sugary beaches, and sun-flecks frolicking on green water all cease to be enough? Maybe a few restless souls do get disenchanting. Now and then I suppose a complainer wanders even into heaven. But most Floridians love Florida with uncompromising ferrency.



One of the best-respected theaters in the South is the Asolo, in Sarasota

The lower west coast is one of the proudest stretches in the state. Full of vocal but dignified enthusiasts, it begins at Sarasota and continues for 180 miles down to the tiny communities of Everglades City and Chokoloskee Island, enchanting mixtures of 'twenties boom, sprawling shacks, mangrove bays, and a sprawling Rod and Gun Club. The fish, of course, are everywhere along these 180 miles. So are game animals and birds: deer, turkeys, ducks, wild boar, quail, and doves.

But southwest Florida doesn't depend on its natural attractions alone. Vacationers can lose themselves in a changing round of activity without touching a rifle or a fishing pole. This coast is given over to leisure, which includes the leisure of a working population. Spare time means courses in oil painting, subscriptions to Mozart festivals, and attendance at the state-sponsored Asolo Theater, which was brought from Italy to Sarasota and restored to its original 18th century grace in the Ringling Museum complex.

Retirees mingle with artists and tourists. Fishermen flock after hours to chamber concerts. Beaches, yachting, sailing, golfing, water-skiing, and dining and dancing are at hand when they are wanted. The hallmark of southwest Florida is urbane and rarely crowded

style, and the style is serious.

Sarasota, the entry into this haven of coconut palms and concertos, is classical Florida in many ways. There are the towering casuarina trees, the tide pools and shells, gardens of seagrapes and multicolored croton hedges, white causeways and gleaming high-rise cooperative apartments called condominiums. Sarasota golf courses, if flat, are ingeniously trapped. Sarasotans have their choice of eight clubs, which offer privileges to visitors.

Bars range from rock to dusky intimacy. Restaurants run the gamut from Armenian to Filet Mignon. At the Far Horizons Inn on Longboat Key, Danish pastries and soufflés are presided over by the former inspector of the Hotel d'Angleterre in Copenhagen. All this is delightful. But in Sarasota you can also see five different plays in three days during an Asolo Theater festival. Richard Fallon, its director, premieres new work even as he polishes Shakespeare, while New York critics watch and make notes. The Florida Gulf Coast Symphony has recently accepted the challenge of Beethoven's Ninth.

If seclusion is what you want, the Colony Beach Club resort on Longboat has it. Cottages are private; only the

pool, the Gulf, and the gourmet fare are communal. But not far away on adjacent St. Armand's Key lie temptations: the Yankee Traveler for casual clothes, the Casa Encantada for offbeat Mexican jewelry, and the Oehlschlagler Galleries for major American painting: Bohrod, Burchfield, Homer. Sarasota is no shorts-and-handana town. Shorts stay home or in resorts. Linen sheaths and blazers go to the Ringling complex for a Rubens collection, a circus museum, Ca D'Zan, the Italianate palace of John Ringling and his wife Mabel, and New College, which emphasizes an experimental tutorial system. If art is stylish, it is also worked at.

Not that the spectacular wilderness of south Florida is missing. Seventeen miles east of Sarasota lies the Myakka River State Park, a refuge of sawgrass, palm hammocks, and moss-festooned water oaks. For the Sundown Bird Rookery tour, make your reservations in advance and bring binoculars. As the hot light of afternoon dims you will hear hundreds of wings beating gently over your head: wood storks, egrets, herons, and ibises flying in to roost. The Myakka River's fragrance is a mixture of sweet marsh grass, distant salt spray, and the heady tang of Florida slash pine. At night, a "safari truck" probes the darkness with powerful searchlights to



Nowhere can you find more gorgeous exhibits of exotic birds than in Florida. This white peacock was seen in a sanctuary near Naples. Below: The leaping horses are signatures of the Ringling Art Museum, Sarasota



There are a dozen places between Sarasota and Naples where this scene could be repeated

discover roaming deer, boars, and armadillos. Alligators bellow restlessly and surprised possums freeze in their tracks. Commercialism and gimcrackery are absent; the Myakka River is a wilderness not to be "done" but to be absorbed.

The southwest coast of Florida is almost seasonless. Summers are hot and damp, but not much hotter and damper than summers anywhere else in the United States. The Gulf beaches are always cooled by brisk winds. In winter, the Gulf stays warm enough for northerners to swim in. Floridians shake their heads at such insanity; in sunlit temperatures in the seventies, they wait for what they call spring. During the autumn hunting season bland days alternate with crisp nights.

The fishing, naturally, is hard to resist; it is everything it is supposed to be. Summer is silver tarpon time; in fall the king mackerel run. The first frost brings redfish and speckled trout into sheltered coves and rivers. You can charter a boat with captain and crew or you can rent a runabout and be self-sufficient. If you catch your own pompano by day, you may migrate after dark to eat other people's *en papillote* at Sarasota's Buccaneer Inn.

Sarasota has two circus museums, one state and one private, but Venice, to the south, has the circus itself each winter.

The Ringlings have recently sold out to a Texan, but he has promised to leave the circus in Florida, to Venice's relief. When rehearsals begin, Venice is full. In summer it becomes a tranquil community of tasteful homes and sparsely populated but dazzling shores. Below it, Englewood and Punta Gorda Beach are quiet retirement communities of sand roads and palm groves. Marsh and shore birds have accepted human residents with surprising tameness.

An Englewood friend recently told me: "I trained a great blue heron to eat fish from my hand. Then he started coming to the back door at ten o'clock in the morning. I thought it was clever. Every day he came earlier. The last time he banged on the jalousie windows with his bill at 5:00 A.M. I shoed him away; he never dared to come back."

"What a shame," I sympathized. "Shame!" She was indignant. "I gave that bird an inch and he took a mile. Herons routing you out before dawn—you can't have that, you know!" Elsewhere in America, you usually don't.

Boca Grande, on Gasparilla Island, is a retreat which has been described as a mixture of Pago Pago and Beacon Hill. The not-quite-mansions of Bostonian Amorys and New Jersey Engelhardts are reticently shuttered. In bygone years the social fortunes of sojourners were

made and broken in the wicker-chaired lobby of the Gasparilla Inn. The understated elegance lingers, but today the Inn is more democratic. It is engagingly and anachronistically spacious, full of talkative Southerners in the summer and more laconic New Englanders in the winter. Boca Grande has everything but night life and a cemetery.

Where the Peace River empties into the Gulf the turquoise expanse of protected Charlotte Harbor is superb for sailing. Further inland, at the Eagle's Nest Hunting Lodge on the river shore, sportsmen fly down each winter for the quail hunting. A third of Charlotte County is state game preserve.

Today pelicans flap their wings over the water, and mullet flash against its ripples. Houseboats cruise neighboring creeks which lie soundless in white-gold sunlight and patches of piney shade. The get-it-done bustle of art-centered Sarasota seems leagues away; but it is less than an hour. Nearby, a health resort called Warm Mineral Springs is reminiscent of the German custom of "taking the waters."

For many years the most celebrated winter resident of Fort Myers was Thomas Edison. He planted the city's long avenue of soaring royal palms, and his house is a treasure-trove of ingenious lamps and unpretentious dignity. Only on Fort