Everyone living in Indian Rocks Beach or even Pinellas County during 1985 remembers Hurricane Elena. A Category 3 hurricane, she threatened Pinellas County’s coast for two days during the Labor Day weekend.

Elena developed near Cuba and quickly strengthened, reaching Category 3 status with winds of 125 miles per hour. Elena became a named storm on August 28th, moving to hurricane status the next day. By September 1st, it had reached its peak wind speeds.

Elena is remembered partly for its unusual route. It stalled off the Pinellas Coast for a full day, moved north, then looped back to the south, before turning again and heading towards Biloxi, Mississippi.

During the Labor Day weekend, Elena sat 80 miles off the Indian Rocks coast drifting slowly northward. While it never made landfall in Pinellas, it produced winds of 80 miles per hour and constant rainfall. When the storm looped around and began heading south, hurricane watchers thought it would eventually head towards Tampa Bay.

Over 300,000 people in the Tampa Bay Region were forced to evacuate. Parts of the Florida Panhandle and Louisiana also evacuated. At the time, it was one of the largest evacuations and shelter operations in US history.

The St. Pete Times noted, “In Pinellas, approximately 300,000 people were ousted from their homes. 160,000 of them went to nearby shelters. People in low lying areas, who did not evacuate, found themselves trapped in their homes by the rising water. In Indian Rocks Beach, tides were as high as 10 feet above normal that Saturday night.”

Elena destroyed the near-famous Indian Rocks Beach Pier. By noon on Saturday it had collapsed. Much of the sand from the Indian Rocks beaches washed away and it would be years before it was replenished.

After two days of sitting off the Pinellas Coast, Elena moved toward the Panhandle eventually coming ashore in Biloxi, Mississippi with 115 mile per hour winds. Though the Florida Panhandle was spared a direct hit, there was still significant damage from the 10 foot tidal surge.

The storm created $125 million in damage caused mostly by the 6-7 foot storm surge that hammered the Pinellas coast. Most of the reported damage was in Indian Rocks Beach.

Four deaths are attributed to Elena, but they were unrelated to the actual storm. The name Elena was retired due to the massive nationwide damage. Elena is the only storm name to be retired without causing any direct casualties.
Is there something you would like to see included in this newsletter? Please send all comments to bob@griffindirectories.com

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NEXT ISSUE SEPTEMBER
This newsletter is printed every other month and survives on local advertising. Please support the people advertising here. If you are an IRB resident wanting to advertise, you get a discount. We also offer discounts for advertising in our other issues, Madeira Beach, Belleair Area and Downtown St. Petersburg.
Call me for the next issue. For more information, or to read our other issues online, visit BeachNewsletters.com
ELENA DESTROYS THE PIER
by R.B Johnson, Mayor

When Hurricane Elena came howling up the gulf at the end of the summer of 1985, I was living in my family’s cottage right next to the Big Indian Rocks Fishing Pier. Built in 1959 by my grandfather, Carl H. Moseley, and his partner, Louis R. Snelling, Jr., it was the longest pier (1041 feet) in Florida at the time of its construction, and I never knew a time when it did not dominate my family’s life on the beach.

Everything would change that fateful Labor Day weekend. The surfers were out in force all day Friday, but Elena stalled to the north of the Tampa Bay area, and by sunset the beach never wide to begin with, had disappeared entirely, the huge waves now crashing directly on the seawall. That caught my attention, along with the fact that one of the pier pilings were close to shore was swinging like a long, loose tooth - an ominous sign. The authorities soon ordered an evacuation of the barrier islands, but I dawdled, reluctant to leave most of my personal possessions behind, including a large number of books. Like usual the pier was lit up by its lights that evening but for the first time that I could recall nobody was fishing. Around midnight I walked out to the snack bar/bait house to tell the fellow working there that it might be a good idea to close up shop. On my way I notice that the tops of the waves passed below me only a foot or two from the deck I was walking on, an unsettling observation as they would normally be about ten feet down. I think we were both relieved to get back to shore, because the structure was starting to sway more dramatically as the night wore on. As far as I know we were the last two people to walk on the pier. Soon after a police officer came by asking everyone to leave the island, and I drove over to Tampa to stay with my parents.

The next morning we receive news that our pier had almost completely washed away in the middle of the night. What we didn’t know was if the cottage was still there. With Elena stalled offshore from Cedar Key, I decided that I couldn’t wait several days to find out what the situation was. Since the three Tampa to Pinellas County bridges being closed, I drove around the north end of the bay to get to Clearwater, and from there made my way to the Walsingham bridge, which was closed but in the down position. After briefly considering swimming across, I parked in a neighborhood to the south of the roadblock and climbed up the bridge embankment, then ran across the bridge and down Gulf Blvd. There were no cars, no people, and no lights. Here and there sand had been washed across the road. At 8th Avenue there was a continuous flow of water from the Gulf towards the Intracoastal. When I got to our property I was relived to see, for the moment, the cottage was still there.

A quick glance around the corner confirmed that, yep, the pier was about a thousand feet shorter. From inside the cottage I looked out toward the shore. All I could see was the ghostly white froth of the waves as they smashed the seawall and flew up high into the air over and over. After finding no apparent damage to the cottage I headed back, only to be confronted by a police officer. Thankfully, I had ID proving my residence and he only told me to get the hell off the island, which I promptly did.

Monday found most residents parked in a long line waiting to be allowed back on the island. What was found was that the beach was gone, some seawalls were destroyed, along with the cottages immediately behind them, but perhaps most heartbreakingly of all was the solemn fact that the Big Indian Rocks Fishing Pier had vanished forever, scattered north across the coast. It was beautiful while it lasted.
In 2007, for the first time, the City is searching for a high school student to assist the City Clerk at City Hall. The position includes copying, filing and light typing and pays $8 per hour. They estimate a 15 hour week. Candidates must be 16 years old, have a valid drivers license and complete a pre-employment physical and drug screen. Preference will be given to IRB residents. Applications may be picked up at City Hall. The position will be filled August 1st. Call 517-0204 (Deanne O’Reilly) for more info.

CITY INTERN NEEDED. The City is searching for a high school student to assist the City Clerk at City Hall. The position includes copying, filing and light typing and pays $8 per hour. They estimate a 15 hour week. Candidates must be 16 years old, have a valid drivers license and complete a pre-employment physical and drug screen. Preference will be given to IRB residents. Applications may be picked up at City Hall. The position will be filled August 1st. Call 517-0204 (Deanne O’Reilly) for more info.

ELECTIONS - AUGUST 26 is the countywide primary. Several county officials are running for reelection, including our county commissioner - Karen Seel, Sheriff Coates and others. IRB resident, John Todia is running for Fire District Commissioner, District 2.

THE HIGH COST OF EATING: In 2007, for the first time in 27 years, Americans spent more money on food eaten at home than away from home. The number of meals eaten away from home (including fast food and restaurants) slipped to 205 meals per year from 2006’s 207 meals (Source, A.C. Nielsen).

HOA HAPPY HOURS are always the second Thursday of every month. July 10th is at My Place, Aug. 14th Salt Rock Grill, and Sept. 11th at Guppy’s. You can always find the full schedule and other activities at irbhome.com.

CAR BURGLARIES ON THE RISE. In May, there were seven “conveyance burglaries” in Belleair Beach, Belleair Bluffs and Indian Rocks Beach. All of the vehicles were unlocked. Items taken included wallets, loose change and/or cash from the vehicles center console. Extra patrol have been requested. LOCK YOUR CARS and report any suspicious persons or vehicles in the area. If you have information or questions, contact the Sheriff’s Office at 582-6200.

SAVE THE DATE - SEPTEMBER 20TH the IRB HOA are planning a bar crawl, trolley poker run. As of press time the details haven’t been finalized but it will end with a big party at Crabby Bill’s Loading Dock.
HOT OFF THE PRESS: The 2009 “Save Our Cottages” calendar will be ready for distribution in August. This limited edition calendar will be available at: The IRB Library, IRB Historical Museum, IRB Welcome Center, Kookie Coconut, Cookie Cutter, Cafe de Paris Bakery and IRB Tackle Shop. The cover features a tryp tych of a cottage beach scene in IRB. A tryp tych consists of 3 panels. Each artists, Violetta, Helen Tilston and Mary Rose Holmes painted one of the panels. As in previous years, the calendar profits benefit IRB Library and Historical Museum.

WEST PINELLAS LITTLE LEAGUE: Juniors Team (ages 13-14) won the Pinellas County Tournament of Champions June 4. This was a tournament of the top thirty-two Pinellas County teams. IRB’s Little League is always looking for sponsors, coaches or volunteers. Call 434-0511 help.

SUMMER SHELL ART CLASS is being offered at Bahama Bev’s new gift shop at 435 Gulf Blvd. The classes are July 2nd, 9th and 16th. Limited to seven people, the cost is $10 per person and includes supplies. Call Bev at 388-4391.

THE IRB HISTORICAL MUSEUM will be closed for the month of August and will reopen September 3rd. The Fall Luncheon is scheduled for Saturday, November 1st. The Board of Directors meet the first Thursday of each month and the public is invited. They can always use more volunteers. Call Patti Muneio at 517-8076.

HOW MANY FLAGS ARE THERE on the poles lining Gulf Blvd? Dean Scharmen of Public Works says there are 100! It takes two days to put them all up. They go up in May prior to Memorial Day and come down after 4th of July. They go back up again in November for Veterans Day.

ACTION 2000 DONATED $6000 for sixteen additional waste receptacles and fourteen cigarette urns. They will primarily be placed around the trolley stops where the trash seems to pile up.

PLEIN AIRE COTTAGE ARTIST STAR: A Canadian TV station is creating two documentaries on cottage artist Helen Tilston titled “A Day in the Life of an Artist” and “My Treasure” which features a favorite of Helen’s paintings. The videos will be on pleinaircottageartists.com in the Fall.

MORTON PLANT MEASE TRIATHLON, JULY 13 is still taking applications. Advanced registration is required. It features a 1/3 mile open water swim, 13 miles on a bike and a 5K run finishing at Sand Key Park. Athletes may register at www.MPM TRIATHLON.org or www.ACTIVE.com. Costs are $65 for individuals and $75 for relay teams. Proceeds benefit the Morton Plant Mease Foundation which provides philanthropic support to the four community owned hospitals of Morton Plant Mease Health Care.
FIRST ANNUAL IRB NEIGHBORHOOD NEWSLETTER READERS’ FAVORITES

In our Restaurant issue we asked you, our readers, to name your favorite Indian Rocks Beach restaurant in six different categories.

We also asked you, to tell us the name of your overall favorite restaurant. We had many responses. One lucky reader, Bill Fitzsimmons on Bay Pine Blvd. also won a gift certificate to a local restaurant. We have tallied all the submissions and determined our readers’ favorite restaurants. We would like to thank everyone who participated.

Here are the final results. Each restaurant will receive an award detailing their winning category. We look forward to doing this again next year.

The 2008 People’s Favorites are:

- Best Breakfast: Lighthouse Donuts
- Best Lunch: Keegan’s Seafood Grille
- Best Live Music: Jimmy Guana’s
- Best Sports Bar: Coasters
- Best Pizza: Pajano’s Pizza & Subs
- Best Wings: Red Lion Pub

People’s Favorite Restaurant:
Guppy’s on the Beach
CUSSO’S CLUB & CANTINA opened their new outdoor bar in May. They have also upgraded their menu. Now that the outdoor bar is open, the indoor bar has been converted to **non-smoking only**!

**OWNER OF PJ’s OYSTER BAR DIES** Owner Judy Vermont past away April 27th. She and co-owner Ed Rosicky opened the restaurant when they moved to the area in June of 1985. Ed and Bama will continue the traditions of PJ’s in IRB.

**DON’T WORRY, BE SUSHI?** Crabby Bill’s will be trying something new in the brick building that used to be Blue Marlin Sports Bar. It is being remodeled and will feature sushi. Bring your chop sticks. Crabby Bills is also adding more seating outdoors with a covered patio on the north side the Loading Dock Restaurant.

**NEW SPORTS BAR AREA OPENING INSIDE BREWMASTERS.** The staff of the closed Blue Marlin Sports Bar is converting Brewmaster’s existing inside bar into a sports bar. Everything else at Brewmaster’s remains unchanged - same menu, bottomless beer and wine, etc. Look for a grand opening 4th of July week-end.

**CORRECTIONS:**
We have a few corrections to the list of 175 closed restaurants published in the last issue:

**Archies** was located where The Phoenix Grocery was.

**Sebastian’s Deli** between 3rd & 4th Avenues was not included.

**Wimpy’s**, north of 15th Avenue, was not included.
- The only Nationally Accredited Montessori School in Pinellas
- Beautiful seven acre campus including equestrian facility
- Engaging curriculum including Spanish and Chinese
- Nurturing environment with small student/teacher ratios

Limited Openings: 2 Years  8th Grade

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Visit us online at
www.countrydaylargo.com
YOUR GOVERNMENT’S HURRICANE PREPAREDNESS

THE CITY of IRB - has an Emergency Operations Plan which was distributed to the City Commission and all employees in June. It outlines when the Emergency Operations Center will be activated, primary and secondary responders and responsibilities of all employees. Currently we contract with four disaster debris contractors and a monitoring firm to assist the city in a time of need.

The City has made arrangements with local contractors and vendors for “first push operations”, vehicle repairs, gasoline, food, communications and rental equipment.
Dean Scharmen, Director, Public Services

THE FIRE DEPARTMENT will help to notify the public and assist the city and police departments in securing the roads during an evacuation. All vehicles and staff will be moved to St Jerome’s Catholic Church on Hamlin’s Road until after the storm. EMS will remain active in the area.
Chief Russel Livernios, Pinellas Suncoast District

THE SHERIFF’S DEPARTMENT is prepared to help the City and the County in numerous ways. During an evacuation, they will help notify residents, direct traffic off the beach, and close roads so people can not re-enter the beaches.
After the storm, they will control the access points to the beach. You will need to show an ID with an Indian Rocks address, or a city issued official entry card.
Captain Tim Ingold, Pinellas County Sheriff Special Operations Disaster Preparedness Coordinator

POST OFFICE has a plan to protect the mail, the building, equipment, vehicles and employees. They will move mail to safer places within the building, and move equipment, computers and trucks off the beach. Employees have an 800 number to inform them of where and when to report to duty. If the IRB Post Office is closed or damaged, operations will be moved to the Largo or Seminole facility. Everyone will be notified by the media. Home delivery will be evaluated when the evacuation order is lifted.
Sherry Ulrich, Post Master, IRB

THE HISTORICAL MUSEUM on 4th Avenue, has shutters to protect the windows. There is no plan to move archives. The museum is insured by the City.
Patti Muneio, President, Historical Society
The Homeowners held their annual meeting, May 28 in the City Hall auditorium. Annual elections were held and Phil Wrobel was re-elected president for a third year. You can see the entire Board at www.IRBHOME.com

A NEW BOATING CLUB! At the annual meeting members voted to create a Boating Club as part of the Homeowners Association. There will be fun boating events, along with some informational meetings. There is no fee to join this group. If you are interested in becoming part of this, email boatclub@irbhome.com or call Bob Griffin, Boat Club Chairman at 517-1997. The first meeting will be at Brewmasters on Wednesday, July 16th with a Happy Hour on the deck from 6-7 and a meeting to plan events at 7PM.

THE MOVIES IN THE PARK evenings, attended by over 100 people, were a great success. Because the summer heat and rains are here, there will not be another one until the fall. If you have any movie suggestions please email movies@irbhome.com. The HOA thanks Dan Torres for all his help in starting this great family event.

THE TASTE OF IRB 2008 is November 8. Last year’s sold out event was attended by thousands and the Homeowners Association is using the profits to provide infrastructure to Chic-A-Si park. They are currently signing up restaurants, vendors, and other sponsors. If you are interested in having a booth in this event, call Phil Wrobel at 517-0525. This will quickly sell out again.

POST OFFICE FOOD DRIVE
For the 16th year, postal carriers collected food for the needy on May 10th. Over 350 carriers in southern Pinellas participated by collecting a record 2 1/2 tons of food. All the food collected in IRB was delivered to the Beach Food Pantry inside the Calvary Episcopal Church. Eight mail trucks, delivered 6,580 pounds of food. The West Coast Florida Postal Union branch, which includes IRB, took top honors nationwide by collecting 1,717,218 pounds of donations.

The month of April was the Food Pantry’s busiest ever. They handed out 3,000 pounds of food to 217 people representing 595 family members. This included 25 new patrons. At this rate, the food from May’s Food drive should just about be gone by the time you read this.

Many thanks to the mail carriers, the volunteers at the church and to the people of IRB who donated food.

The Beach Food Pantry needs your help all year. They also need volunteers to help staff the pantry, 3 days a week. If you can help, call Harvey Brillat at 595-4744.
SHelterboxes & Rotary

It's the start of another hurricane season in our area and for the next six months we will have a daily eye on the tropical forecast. Let's all hope that we get lucky again and avoid any serious storms!

Although we have a local perspective on serious storm disasters, natural tragedies happen anytime and anywhere. At any given time, windstorms, fire, earthquakes, flooding, tsunamis, mudslides and wars, can kill thousands and leave as many or more thousands of people homeless. We all know that fate spares some and changes, forever, the lives of others.

Compassion for those who survive nature's wrath is felt by all of us. As we read of the plight of the victims of the Myanmar and China devastation, and felt more directly, the pain of those left homeless after Katrina, we wonder, how can we help from so far away?

Tom Henderson, an ex-Royal Navy rescue diver, and a member of the Rotary Club of Helston-Lizard, Cornwall, UK and was struck by this same concern and decided, with the help of his local Rotary Club, to push forward the 'Shelterbox' initiative.

In 1999, Tom and his Rotary mates, developed what is essentially survival in a box, a Shelterbox. In an easily transported and deployed hard plastic box about the size of a large Igloo fishing cooler, is enclosed a 10 person survival tent, water purifying agents and containers, a practical tool kit, cooking equipment and thermal blankets/ground sheets-equipment meant to help 10 people survive up to 6 months of homelessness.

The first Shelterboxes were sent in January 2001 to the earthquake-hit region of Gujarat, India. Since that time, Shelterboxes have benefited over 500,000 people in 4 continents and 40 countries, including over 13,000 helped in the Katrina aftermath.

All Shelterboxes are distributed through the Helston-Lizard Rotary club. The charity is supported by international affiliates set up by Rotary clubs in the USA, Australia, Canada, Denmark, Germany and New Zealand.

For more details or to further the good works of the 'Shelterbox' program, please access their website at www.shelterbox.org for a look at this amazing concept.

This is another example of Rotary International's commitment to Provide humanitarian service through our motto of 'SERVICE ABOVE SELF'. We appreciate your continued support of the works of the Rotary Club of Indian Rocks Beach.

If you would like to participate more directly in the humanitarian efforts of Rotary, you are welcome to visit our weekly meeting at 7:15 am, every Wednesday morning for breakfast and fellowship.

Thank you and good luck to us all over the next 6 months!

David Kline, Past President
Rotary Club of Indian Rocks Beach
727-593-2605
Kline21@tampabay.rr.com
Indian Rocks was in full, active emergency mode. The Emergency Operation Center was at Yellow Banks. We worked 12 hour shifts, providing standby power to lift stations, debris removal from roadways, drainage maintenance, medicinal runs for evacuees, damage assessment reporting and giving assistance to the IRB Police Department and Fire Departments.

After the storm, we did damage assessments, debris and sand removal from roadways, drainage maintenance, and sand bagging areas where seawalls and homes were destroyed or damaged.

My parents lived on 18th Avenue. I lived in Seminole. They evacuated to my house during the event. We mostly experienced power outages and debris clean up around the house. Keeping my mom and dad informed about the storm was quite a chore.

Karen Sel, County Commissioner and IRB property owner We lived in Clearwater at that time, but my parents owned a 1920 beach house on Gulf Blvd and three condos in the area. When the storm passed we grabbed our shovels, hammers and other tools and joined the long lines of cars wanting to get back on the beach, all anxious to see what had survived.

At our old house, “old Gulf Blvd” which ran behind the house, to the west, had buckled in half and became a huge concrete barrier/seawall. The house was saved although it had some wind and water damage. It still stands today.

At the Reef Club condos, the entire deck and pool were destroyed. We were sad to see the Indian Rocks Pier and many older homes along the beach were swept away.

These experiences come to mind each hurricane season. It certainly affects how I approach a storm as a County Commissioner.

Carol Jean Geissler whose Father owned Dales Liquor Store. I remember the damage Elena caused. I worked as an insurance CSR. We had many claims. The erosion caused damage to many gulf front properties. We lost the Indian Rocks Beach Pier, our main tourist attraction. We lost the fronts of many beach front motels and cottages, including the Rainbow Cottages 990 Gulf Blvd.

Nick Feroni, owner of Pajano’s Pizza That Friday night Pajano’s closed about 8PM due to the storm. The hurricane was about 150 miles away, wobbling back and forth. I packed up the car and headed to Orlando, but there were no vacations, and we ended up in Sanford. Ironically, the weather was worse there. The major effect of the storm on me was the destruction of the IRB fishing pier. It was the reason I moved to my current Gulf Blvd location. It kept my place hopping. The absence of the pier has had a tremendous impact on IRB. Though it has been 23 years, the storm still stands out vividly in my mind.

Theresa Sarto, resident Elena 85 was a great experience and wake up call for a New Yorker never experiencing a hurricane.

We had a bakery called Coffaro’s Baker at 15th Avenue, next door to what is the Red Lion today. At midnight, we evacuated after making more than half of our orders for 100 wholesale customers. We had to leave it all in the store. We stayed in Belleair with friends. My husband and nephew, John Coffaro, remembered all the bread we left in the store and made a called city employee Randy Schwab, to collect the bread and donate it to the shelters, schools and churches where people were sheltered. We were thankful for that.

My son, James Sarto and Brian Mahoney stayed in house on 11th Avenue during the storm. During the storm, they drove a jeep down Gulf Blvd to Mahoney’s mother’s home on the Gulf between 7th and 8th Ave, to save important furniture and belongings before they were destroyed.
RICHARD ELENA - 1985
who were here

Ed Dickson, former resident I lived on 21st and evacuated to a friend’s house in Largo. I had a 25 foot sailboat and was worried about it, so, on Saturday, I paddled a surf board across the intracoastal to check on it. I was curious, so I walked over to the beach and saw the pier starting to fall apart. First a police helicopter showed up to check me out. Then two or three police cars. They questioned me. I guess they were looking for looters. There was about 3” of water in the middle of Gulf Blvd. I saw rows of Army trucks running up and down the road. They all had guns. I went surfing up around 28th Avenue. The water was full of debris and boards from the pier.

John Slaughter, Slaughter Plumbing My brother, Hal Gray, was employed by the Pier. There were huge pumps for the live wells that ran along the sides of the pier. When Elena intensified, they were unable to be moved. One minute the pier was there, and the next, it had broken apart and drifted off into the sunset, taking the retail shop and bathrooms right along with it. Slaughter Plumbing had originally installed the bathrooms, back flow preventers and pipes on the pier, and during major storms they would be come clogged. We stayed on standby for the pier during Elena’s fury to “keep things running”.

Matt Loader, owner Crabby Bills. We had just opened our IRB restaurant that year. It was a difficult time because we were on the mainland and heard terrible stories of the damage on the beaches. We were all staying with the family and employees at my Mom’s house in Seminole. We finally were able to get a glimpse of the beach close to our restaurant by going down Hamlin’s Boulevard. When we returned, we had a sign and some lighting blow down, but no structural damage. We were lucky.

Joan Johnstone, Planning and Zoning, long time city employee At the close of business, on Friday before Labor Day 1985, there was very little talk about the upcoming weather event. Suddenly about 10PM, it was starting to rain and blow. I did not want to evacuate since I was already in bed. However, about 11PM, the police came up and down the streets, with their loud speakers and told all residents they would have to leave the barrier island. We got up and loaded all the kids (4) and dog into our cars, and with a minimal amount of clothes, headed to our aunt’s home in Seminole.

There was no electricity all weekend. We couldn’t go anywhere. Aside for the rain and wind, you hardly knew a storm was sitting off the coast. Elena just sat there all weekend long.

When it was finally time to return to the beach, many residents started to assemble on Walsingham at Hamlin Road. By this time it was very hot and humid. Tempers were starting to boil.

It was amazing to see the beach. Everyone was there to see the damage. It caused massive erosion. Seawalls were 6-8 feet high, what a weird sight. George King, a local artist, had walls blown away, but the remaining walls still had pictures hanging on them.

Everyone had a story to tell. All in all, the city and its residents proved they could handle just about any situation.

Pat Pumlee, Pumlee Realty At the time, we own a condo at the Reef Club. Hurricane Elena seriously damaged the seawall and the pool was destroyed. The wash out was so bad it was likely to affect the entire building. The banks would not give the condo association a loan, so my husband took out a personal loan to repair the damage. The condo association agreed to repay him.

Johnson, Mrs. Virginia Armstrong, and Paul H. Holloway
MORE PROPERTY TAX REFORM
By Jim Frishe, Representative, District 54

In addition to increased tax rates that have made owning property unaffordable for many Floridians, Florida’s property tax system is rife with inequities and arcane rules which have built up over time to stack the deck against property owners and in favor of tax collectors.

Last year, the House of Representatives led the way in tax relief, by providing nearly $25 billion in property tax relief through statutory and constitutional reforms, including Amendment 1.

This year, the House of Representatives continued to build on the relief and reform, by successfully passing legislation to reform the practice of highest and best use, and change the composition of value adjustment boards.

Highest and best use is an unfair practice which taxes a property on its potential future uses, instead of its current value. This approach has been particularly devastating to small businesses such as beachfront restaurants and bed and breakfasts. The small mom and pop businesses I represent are being unfairly taxed based on what a future developer might do with the same land.

House Bill (HB) 909, which incorporated much of the same provisions of a bill I sponsored, corrects this by creating new standards and uniform procedures for appraising property that places less emphasis on highest and best use. This legislation will make it tougher for county property appraisers to assess a commercial property at its highest and best use, because it will require appraisers to assess properties based on the income they generate, not their potential.

Thanks to HB 909 appraisers must consider ‘the legally permissible use of the property’ as well as whether it needs zoning changes, permits or additional roads before it could be used for something different, such as a condo tower.

HB 909 will also change the composition of value adjustment boards, the panels which are designed to hold property appraiser accountable. Until now, these boards have been made up of elected officials and government bureaucrats. HB 909 changes this by requiring that private citizens sit on these boards as well, so that property owners can have full representation.

After passing overwhelmingly in both the House and Senate, this bill was sent to Governor Charlie Crist and I am confident the Governor will sign this common sense legislation that restores some fairness to our property tax system. If the Governor signs it, this bill will take effect September 1, 2008, meaning property owners will see the changes reflected in next year’s tax bills.

Property tax reform is not just about cutting taxes, it is about making fundamental changes to the way we tax property in Florida to create a more fair and equitable tax system, and we are just getting started.
REMEMBERING ELENA, continued

Vicki Begins, Century 21 Begins Real Estate  
We had just moved to Tampa one month before Elena. We lived on the water in Town N Country. Despite evacuation warnings, we stayed, as did other neighbors. Those few days were very intense. Our home was fine, but watching the water rise in the canal was a bit concerning. The second day, we moved our 43 foot boat and anchored it in the middle of the canal to prevent her from landing on top of the pilings behind our home. Knowing what I know now, I would definitely leave in the case of another big storm.

Carol and Mike McLaughlin, Pelican East Apartments  
We owned Pelican West, a small motel facing the gulf at 20th Street. We rode out the storm with friends in Clearwater. When we returned 3 days later, only 20% of the seawalls in Indian Rocks were left standing. Our seawall was fine. Our “deadmen” on the land side were all exposed but holding. About 6-8 feet of seawall was exposed on the beach side. It took 20 yards of sand to refill the back yard. We had large stone tablets forming a patio between the motel and the wall. They were all moved around. Many boards from the Indian Rocks Pier floated up into our back yard. Ironically, we had a second storm a few weeks later and we had to re-do our patio again.

Ginger Lyle PSFR Fire Department Secretary  
It was my fifth wedding anniversary and I will be spending it alone as my husband was out of the country on business. But I was not really lonely. I spent 2 1/2 days on the gym floor at Walsingham Elementary. I was one of the lucky ones, though. Our home had no damage. My husband could not locate me. It took a few days to get word to him.

Kip Downing, JD’s Restaurant  
We had just bought the restaurant. We had no restaurant damage, but when we walked over to the beach at 2nd Ave. the small houses had almost fallen over. They were sitting sideways and their roofs almost touched the ground. We walked on the roofs.

Elaine McCurey, former owner of The Beachcomber at 42 Gulf Blvd.  
The motel had 16 units. We heard about the hurricane in the gulf, and spent a lot of time watching the clouds and rough water. It was Labor Day weekend and we were fully booked. We received notice to evacuate and took several of our guests over to our daughter’s house in Largo around midnight. After 3 days, we snuck back on the island. The units on ground level were all destroyed. We had two tiki huts, they were gone. Our pool was underwater and undermined. The seawall was damaged and had to be replaced. The water went straight thru to the street. We saw houses floating in the water. The fishing pier just south of us was gone.

Nancy Brindley, 20 Gulf Blvd  
Our house, built in 1900, is probably the second oldest house in IRB. The old beach road built 50 years earlier was still running behind the house but hidden by 3-4 feet of sand. During Elena, we stayed. We are higher than many of the other houses on the beach. We did not have any damage, but the entire old road was exposed. There was a big seawall on the beach side of the old road, and a 36” water pipe was exposed. There was so much sand missing. The old road was three or four feet below our seawall. It was another five to six feet from the old seawall to the beach’s surface. We needed a ladder to reach the beach. About ten days later, another storm with 40 mph winds but very little rain pushed in four feet of new sand. It almost replenished what Elena had removed.
THIS SUMMER AT HERITAGE VILLAGE
Weekly Summer Camp, 2008 Living History Summer Adventure Camps at Heritage Village July 7-11 & July 14-18, Monday - Friday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.
Take a trip to the past and get a fun hands-on experience. Program fee is $150 per week. Historical members fee $125 weekly. Before and after care is available for an extra fee. Pre-registration is required. Call (727) 582-2426 for more information or to register.
Visit Heritage Village, Pinellas County's 21 acre living history museum, and enjoy more than 25 historic structures, museum galleries and a native plant trail. Some living history demonstrations and hands-on activities include pine needle and palm frond weaving, working in the heritage garden, net making, blacksmithing and traditional fiber arts. Currently on exhibit: Pinellas Passport: Your Ticket through Time; Christopher Still Prints: Clues to Florida's History and Natural Beauty; and Quick and Easy: Gadgets for the Home which presents a fun look at the labor saving devices used by "modern housewives" to tackle pesky domestic chores. It also features a hands-on area for kids in the Ralph Reed gallery. Tues - Sat, 10 a.m. - 4 p.m., Sun 1 p.m. - 4 p.m. Call (727) 582-2123 or visit www.pinellascounty.org/heritage.

GULF COAST MUSEUM OF ART
Victoria Block: August 9 - September 28- Impressionistic depictions of open fields and lush gardens in vibrant landscapes, though abstracting to time or place. Accompanying these paintings are vessels, slabs, and even books done in ceramic.
Studio Works: August 9 - September 28 The opening of Studio Works, an annual juried exhibition featuring the works of local talent of all levels.
Member’s Opening Reception for both shows - Friday August 8 7:00 - 9:00 p.m. Museum Members Free & Non-members $10 Artist Talk : Victoria Block 6:30 p.m., GCMA Galleries, RSVP 727.518.6833, ext. 207

JULY BEACH SINGLES EVENTS
Looking for love? Here are the events being held by the Beach Singles Group during July.

Wed. July 2: Cuso’s Club & Cantina 6:30pm - inside in the now non-smoking bar Indian Rocks Beach
Fri. July 18: Belleview Biltmore 6:30pm
Wed. July 30: The Venue on Ulmerton 6:30pm
Call Rita Shepard for more information, 415-9496
From the Desk of Sheriff Jim Coats

With summer in full swing, now is a good time to offer a few crime prevention reminders. When most people hear the words "seasonal crime prevention" they will think of winter holidays and the New Year. Frankly, certain crimes increase at specific times each year to include spring break and during the summer months.

One of the most obvious increases is in property crime such as burglary, theft and vandalism. Burglary falls into several categories such as burglary to a conveyance (vehicle), residential burglary, and commercial burglary. During the summer months it is not unusual to see an increase in the number of conveyance burglaries during the late night hours, and an increase in the number of residential burglaries during the daytime hours. Most conveyance and residential burglaries can be easily prevented by taking simple precautions such as locking doors, securing valuables, and using alarms.

Other property crimes such as vandalism, known as criminal mischief in our state, shoplifting, and grand theft auto all increase during summer months. It is not unusual to see a steady number of juveniles or young adults arrested for committing these crimes during the summer, so it is safe to say that increased parental supervision or enrollment in a summer youth program can result in a significant reduction of property crime. Simply stated, parents should know where their minor children are, and who they are with at all times.

Most property crimes are crimes of opportunity. If we eliminate the opportunity, we prevent the crime. For example, when visiting our parks or beaches, if we secure our purses or wallets, if we lock our bicycles, and avoid leaving sporting equipment unattended, we greatly reduce the opportunity for someone to take these items. Whether fishing, kayaking, or canoeing, bring only the equipment needed rather than leaving extra rods and reels, a fully stocked tackle box, or small electronics or other expensive items in plain view in an unlocked vehicle or unattended on shore. These are just a few examples of obvious ways to reduce property crime which are frequently not followed.

As your Sheriff, I am asking you to help us reduce property crime this summer by eliminating the potential and the opportunity for crime. For additional crime prevention tips please contact the Sheriff’s Office Crime Prevention Unit at (727) 582-5611. By doing your part you can help us to achieve our goal of “Leading The Way For A Safer Pinellas.”
NEW SIGN OF THE TIMES: USA Grocers installed their new sign on June 6th. This is the type of sign all businesses in IRB are supposed to have. Nabil is one of the first to conform to the new ordinance, and warns other businesses not to wait too long to start the process. As with most projects, it takes more time, and money than you think.

PLUMLEE GULF REALTY As of May 1st, Pat Plumlee and company are no longer associated with Century 21. They are now called Plumlee Gulf Realty. Pat has been practicing real estate for 40 years and says her name and reputation on the beach brings most of their business, not the Century 21 name. Pat along with her son Todd, have had an office in IRB since 1990 with have 42 working associates.

BELLA CAPRI UPDATE: Interior design selection, site work, and pool construction have begun. There is still time to purchase a residence and customize your interior. Anticipated completion is on schedule for December 2008.

SCOOTER RENTALS Beachfront Scooter Rentals rents scooters and bikes. They have a small office behind the Red Lion Pub and have their scooters displayed on Gulf Blvd. Call 394-4002, and ask for the resident’s discount.

PUBLIX BUYS ALBERTSONS - Publix acquired a majority of the Albertson Grocery stores in Florida. Included in the sale are the stores on West Bay and Walsingham. No plans have been announced regarding either store’s future. Albertsons kept the Largo Mall store.

AG ARMSTRONG’S PROPERTY First the Publix project was voted down. Now, the condo concept has failed, due in part to the real estate slump. Now they are trying to decide what is next. They talked of reintroducing a mixed use plan with a small grocery store, but recently withdrew the zoning change. Now with the Albertson sale to Publix, who knows if Publix is even interested anymore? Plans are currently on hold. More to come, we are sure.

CLOSED / OUT OF BUSINESS: Blue Marlin Sports Bar (May 1st) soon to be a sushi bar by Crabby Bills. The Maple Barn on Oakhurst (July 1st).
MORE LOCAL NEWS

ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP BOARD FORMING: The City of Indian Rocks Beach is currently accepting applications from City residents who are interested in being considered for appointment as a member of the Environmental Stewardship Board. The Environmental Stewardship Board has been tasked to work with the City to improve the environment through a responsible balance of education and regulation. For further information and an application, please contact Deanne B. O’Reilly, City Clerk, at 727/517-0204. Application deadline is July 11.

TOP VACATION SPOT! Guardian News, a British Travel Web site recently recommended Indian Rocks Beach’s Colonial Court Inn as one of the top one hundred beach vacations and one of the top ten family beach vacations in the world! Congratulations owners Laura & Jim Labadie

RATES ARE GOING UP! While the City of IRB decides how large the rate increase will be for our Sewer and Solid Waste services, Florida Progress has asked for an 8% fuel charge increase. Apparently, all three rate increases go into effect in the fall.

TURTLES ARE NESTING As of mid-June, twenty-four Sea Turtle nests have been discovered along the Pinellas County Beaches. The first nest was discovered on May 17th. Five of those nests are in Indian Rocks Beach. If you come across a nest, please keep a distance and DO NOT DISTURB IT! Please call 727-441-1790 x224 and provide them with the location so that these beautiful animals can be protected.

NEW FLORIDA VESSEL REGISTRATION FEES. Below are the new rates The Pinellas Tax Collector will process July, August, or September early renewals at the old rate if paid before July 1, 2008.

Class A-1 - Less than 12 feet in length, and all canoes to which have been attached: from $3.50 to $5.50.
Class A-2 - 12 feet or more and less than 16 feet: from $10.50 to $16.25.
Class 1 - 16 feet or more and less than 26 feet: from $18.50 to $28.75.
Class 2 - 26 feet or more and less than 40 feet: from $50.50 to $78.25.
Class 3 - 40 feet or more and less than 65 feet: from $82.50 to $127.75.
Class 4 - 65 feet or more and less than 110 feet: from $98.50 to $152.75.
Class 5 - 110 feet or more: from $122.50 to $189.75.

SEEN THE NEW SIGN at Heritage Village? There are actually two signs. The other one is on Walsingham. They will be displaying local events and information. The signs cost $85,000.
ACTION 2000 ANNUAL PRESERVATION AWARDS

Indian Rocks Beach’s Action 2000, in conjunction with the Plein Aire Artists presented 4 local homes and businesses with their annual Preservation Award. This year’s awards, presented by Action2000 President Jim Labadie, went to:

**THE BIES BOATHOUSE** was built around 1911 by Harry Ulmer. He used the house to store his three speed boats. It is now owned by the Brie Family. Accepting the award was Cappy Bie.

**GUPPYS on the Beach** was built in the early 1970s. It was formerly the La Cave Restaurant. Accepting the award was Guppy’s manager Paul Russell.

**JD’s RESTAURANT** was built in 1947. This was originally Moodie’s Beach Store, the first drug store on the island. Accepting the award was Jackie Downing and daughter Leslie.

**THE GOETHE HOME** was built around 1916 and used as the L.B. Moody real estate office. Accepting the award were present owners Arthur and Gretchen Goethe.
HURRICANE PREPAREDNESS
EVERYONE’S RESPONSIBILITY

By Karen Williams Seel, District 5
Pinellas County Commissioner

We have a great threat facing us this summer: complacency. Hurricane season started June 1, but since we have experienced such calm weather in the last couple of years, I am worried we have become too comfortable. We must not allow ourselves to feel so safe that we fail to prepare ourselves, our families, our pets and our businesses for the possibility of a hurricane.

Pinellas County has not experienced sustained hurricane force winds since 1921. We have come close, and many of us have had some experiences with hurricanes. I remember Hurricane Elena in 1985 (see related story) and I know many of you do, too, as it caused extensive damage along the coast. Do you remember Hurricane Charley in 2004, and the fear that struck our hearts as we watched a powerful hurricane moving directly toward Pinellas County? Who will ever forget the horror of Hurricane Katrina in 2005 as it devastated the city of New Orleans and much of the Gulf Coast? Many lessons were learned and those lessons were incorporated into our local and state emergency management plans.

Beach residents take hurricane preparedness seriously, but remember in the case of a hurricane, your area will be underwater. If you refuse to evacuate, the storm surge is deadly. A category 1 storm produces a storm surge of up to 7 feet, category 2 up to 12 feet. In a category 3 storm, the water will rise 15 feet above sea level. I hope and pray every person and pet in Indian Rocks Beach will leave when the evacuation order is given.

The key to successfully riding out a hurricane and taking care of your family in the days that follow a storm lies in one word: planning. Go to the county’s Emergency Management website or pick up a copy of the county’s Hurricane Guide to assist in your personal planning. The guide is filled with checklists, phone numbers and the information you need to get your hurricane kit together.

We encourage our businesses to prepare for the hurricane season. Part of the process for business readiness is to ensure that your employees have a plan. Business owners are asked to keep in mind that employees need time to prepare their homes and families before a storm so a plan should be put in place.

You can help those at your business or in your organization by setting up a Host Home program. We can assist you with this. The Host Home program matches families who live in evacuation areas with those who don’t. The guests help prepare and stock the host home, and then join the hosts to ride out the storm. It is a much more comfortable option to public shelters, which should be used as a last resort. At a public shelter, you are given 10 square feet. You would be sleeping on the floor, and it would likely be dark, hot and crowded. You would be safe, and that’s important. But a host homes avoids the use of a public shelter, and increases comfort during the storm and in the days that follow a hurricane, before emergency response systems can assist.

We are also asking residents to take an extra step this year. We realize that in order to make sure everyone is ready, we need to look beyond our own confines to that of others. Perhaps a neighbor living alone is not aware that there are special needs shelters for which they need to pre-register. Maybe a co-member of a club is not aware of the special planning needs of their pets. We’re asking our citizens to help each other.

Speakers are available to help educate groups within the county, which is another excellent way to help spread the message. Libraries sponsor presentations. Several videos are available on pinellascounty.org and are aired on our Pinellas County government television station, PCC-TV.

If everyone calmly makes a plan for themselves, and their businesses, and remembers to think about neighbors, we will be well prepared as a community. Please remember, the time to plan is now. Some important resources:

- Pinellas County Emergency Management: (727) 464-3800 www.pinellascounty.org/emergency
- Find your evacuation level: (727)453-3150 |gis.pinellascounty.org/hurricane_txt/
- Register for Special needs transportation: (727)464-3800 |www.pinellascounty.org/forms/special-needs.htm
- Sign up for the Community Notification Service to receive text emergency information on your cell phone: (888)689-8905
- Set your Specific Area Message Encoding (SAME) equipped all-hazards alert radio for Pinellas County: Enter code 012103
- If you know of someone who would like to receive the E-Lert newsletter, have them visit www.pinellascounty.org/emergency/subscribe.htm

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**INDIAN ROCKS BEACH MINI STORAGE**

WE NEED MORE SPACE

**C & C DRY CLEANERS**

ONE SHIRT CLEANED FREE!
PINELLAS COUNTY HAS NOT HAD A DIRECT HIT SINCE 1921. THAT STORM, A CATEGORY 2 PRODUCED 8 FOOT TIDAL SURGES ON THE BEACHES, AND OVER 10 FOOT SURGES IN TAMPA BAY. IT DESTROYED MANY BRIDGES, BUT NOT IRB’S. IT CREATED HURRICANE PASS BETWEEN CALEDONI AND HONEymoon ISLAND.

All three major Pinellas County bridges are in a Zone A. Unless you leave early, they may be unusable.

In IRB, a Cat. 1 hurricane will have water in the streets and over most seawalls, with a 5-7 foot surge, depending on the landfall’s location and timing of the tides. A Cat. 3 hurricane could flood 42% of Pinellas County.

Our closest shelter is Bauder Elementary, across the street from Seminole High. You can not bring pets. Largo High is also a nearby shelter. Oak Grove Middle School in Clearwater is the closest shelter accepting pets.

Not wanting to leave their pets is the main reason people do not evacuate. Find out where to take your pet now. Your veterinarian can advise you. A few shelters allow you to bring a pet, but there are restrictions. Service dogs are allowed in regular shelters and motels.

Family members with special needs are another common reason people do not evacuate. The County has a special needs program. Call the fire station, 595-1117 for info.

Employment issues may delay you from evacuating. Some companies, such as Home Depot and the Sheriff’s department, expect you to work. They should have a program to help families of employees.

Do not call 9-1-1 for hurricane information, only if you have an emergency. The county has a Citizen’s Info Line to keep you informed - 727-464-4333.

A VERY BIG PROPOSAL!

Have you seen this billboard over the roof of 688 Discount Liquors? Ron McVety bought it to ask his girlfriend, Missy Green, to marry him. The billboard went up June 3rd.

Ron and Missy, who are are remodeling a house at 1520 Gulf Blvd, were driving to work together that morning. She saw the photo on the billboard, and thought it looked familiar, before she realized that it was her. Then, she read the message... “will you marry me?”.

Ron pulled the car over, got down on one knee and repeated those four big words.

She said yes! Congratulations and best wishes to both!
STORM SURGE

Assistant Chief Rick Walker,
Pinellas Suncoast Fire & Rescue

In recently released reports, experts have predicted an active 2008 hurricane season. PSF&R has been trying to raise awareness of the dangers these storms present to our communities residing on barrier islands. The greatest hurricane threat is the storm’s surge. In Pinellas County, evacuation plans are implemented based on surge predictions and are shown on evacuation zone maps. Each category of storm strength, predicted by the emergency management experts, represents a “level” of evacuation. A Category One storm represents a Level A evacuation requirement continuing on through the five storm categories to a Level E evacuation. Each increase in hurricane Category adds five to seven feet of surge water to the prediction. A Cat. 5 storm that hits directly in this area could bring more than 30 feet of water on shore. The surge has the potential of moving water, higher than a two-story building, over the entire island. Our goal is not to scare citizens but to remind them that there is no safe way to protect you from that much water on the island and no safe rescue options during the storm. The only way to ensure your survival is to leave the area when you are ordered to evacuate. Seek high ground in a safe structure on the mainland. According to Rick Walker, the Assistant Chief of Operations at PSF&R, a public shelter should be your last resort. If possible make arrangements to go to a friend’s house on high ground. “A shelter is a life boat not a cruise ship,” states Chief Walker.
MORTON PLANT MEASE: YOUR EXPERT IN ROBOTIC-ASSISTED SURGERY

The new da Vinci® Surgical System is already changing how many surgeries are performed — with dramatically improved patient outcomes. And with more than 900 surgeries performed, Morton Plant Mease is leading the way in robotic surgery for urological and gynecological conditions in the Tampa Bay area.

Only a few small incisions are necessary to learn microneurosurgical instruments, including a long, high magnification 8x scope. Shifting of an operating console and watching a monitor, the surgeon uses hand controls that mimic the movements of a surgeon's arm. End each more accurately. And with spatial 3-D visualization, surgeons can achieve more targeted precision and control, carefully avoiding tissues surrounding lesions and nerves.


To find out more about robotic-assisted surgery at Morton Plant Mease, including a referral to a da Vinci trained surgeon and future informational sessions, call (727) 462 3000.

Morton Plant Mease

Morton Plant Mease - Health East
3331 McMullen Booth Road, Safety Harbor
Morton Plant Hospital - 300 Pinellas St., Clearwater
www.mortonhealth.com/about