



## Sanibel Author Captures Tales Of Paradise

by Di Saggau

**T**here is a great deal of history surrounding Sanibel and Captiva islands. It stretches far beyond the warm beaches, back over 300 years, to a time when natives roamed the islands. After 30 years of listening to innumerable tales, Jeri Magg has captured the fascinating details in a new book *Historic Sanibel & Captiva Islands, Tales of Paradise*.

Magg spent a couple of years, on and off, putting the book together, scanning the photos and deciding on sites to include. She told me why she wrote the book. "I was a volunteer at the Sanibel Historical Museum and Village for the past 10 years, so my historical curiosity was peeked. After reading the books written by Elinore Dornier and Betty Anholt, and listening to the questions from visitors to the museum, I decided that a map of the historical sites accompanied by pictures and stories might be an easy way for people to learn about the islands. If the book were soft-covered and light, it could be stuffed in a glove box in the car."

The book is a treasure chest of information. You'll learn about how Ponce de Leon first met the Calusa Indians in 1513 and how the Spaniards killed 80 warriors. Eight years later, he foolishly returned to the area and the Calusa exacted their revenge, killing 80 Spaniards. Ponce de Leon received an Indian arrow in the thigh, a wound that proved fatal. The next few centuries were flooded with pioneers, fishermen and clergymen in their quest to tame the wilderness in search of a better life.

By 1889, there were 21 houses and 40 families living on Sanibel, bringing the total population to 100. By that time Sanibel, Captiva and Buck Key were flourishing agricultural communities.

Magg covers everything from the construction of the causeway and bridge, to the early inhabitants who paved the way for what is enjoyed today on the islands. You'll discover how anthropologist Frank Cushing visited pioneer Sam Ellis in 1895 after the farmer discovered bones on his homestead and how President Theodore Roosevelt's men saved a little girl from drowning when he lived on a houseboat in Captiva to study local marine life.

I asked about any surprising facts she discovered during her research.

Magg said, "I didn't realize how many pioneers lived at Wulfert, and that there was an unsolved murder that took place there. The Island Store on Captiva was the hurricane shelter for the residents.

"Sometimes, while waiting for the storm to hit, they held the ultimate 'hurricane party'."

This is a book that will delight and intrigue you from start to finish.

Right now, *Historic Sanibel & Captiva Islands, Tales of Paradise* is available at MacIntosh Books, and Sanibel Island Book Shop. Keep your eyes peeled, as it will soon be popping up at other locations.