

Everglades Reporter

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Editor: Karen Mashburn

A Message from the President



David P. Reiner, II.

As I sit down to write this column, "The Swamp" by Michael Grunwald is drifting into area bookstores throughout South Florida and across the nation. Like several other Everglades books of late: "Stolen Waters" by W. Hodding Carter (2004) and "Liquid Land" by Ted Levin (2003), "The Swamp" takes an honest and critical look at the

state of Everglades restoration/deterioration and the forces which have plotted (and are plotting) its fate. I leave it to others to review the book, but recommend that anyone who wants to understand the history and politics of the Everglades and the struggles to protect it (or any natural resource) will find answers within its pages.

In the history of the Everglades, 2005 will be remembered as the great awakening of the people of South Florida. The continuing mismanagement of water quality and levels in Lake Okeechobee by the politically directed South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers led to unprecedented releases of polluted water into the Caloosahatchee and St. Lucie River systems destroying fragile estuaries and feeding massive red tides and beach closings on both coasts. The sugar industry, however, had their biggest harvest in years.

The tourist industry, devastated by the ecological damage, beach closings and massive fish kills finally rose up in protest. The sugar industry's stranglehold on the SFWMD and the politicians in the State and Federal government seemed to loosen – a little. Local and State politicians got an earful from irate citizens (one Sanibel resident sent dead fish and shrimp to the Governor - which netted him a visit from the FBI). Now is not the time for any of us to sit back and watch. If you live in Florida, call or write your state representatives (or from anywhere in the USA call or write your federal elected officials) and simply say; "It's time to stop supporting the sugar industry in Florida." They are destroying the Everglades ecosystem. It's time for the gov-

ernment to stop providing incentives to fuel runaway development in South Florida. It's time to stop the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers from permitting the filling of wetlands - period.

Finally, if you do nothing else, reach out to your friends and co-workers and ask them to join Friends of the Everglades. We need and appreciate your support – and theirs. There is hope but we need you behind us. I thank you and Marjory would thank you too.

David P. Reiner, II, President
On behalf of the Board of Directors

Cindy Lerner Honored

In conjunction with Women's History Month, Miami-Dade County Mayor Carlos Alvarez and the Board of County Commissioners, the Commission for Women and Park and Recreation Department honored Cindy Lerner as a 'pioneer' at the *In the Company of Women* awards ceremony at Vizcaya Museum and Gardens in March 2006. This award recognizes outstanding women who have made significant contributions to the quality of life for the community. Honored are 'pioneers' who have opened new paths for women, and 'honorees' who provide leadership in many walks of life.

Cindy is a member of the Board of Friends of the Everglades.

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Friends of the Everglades in Federal Court

by *Juanita Greene*

First Vice President and Conservation Chair

Our lawsuit against the South Florida Water Management District for allowing polluted farm water to be backpumped into ailing Lake Okeechobee finally came to trial in federal court in January. As this article is being written the trial is still continuing after three weeks of testimony.

The hearings brought forth an army of lawyers and their helpers plus tons of paper to bury the back half of the court room. The court has consolidated all suits that were filed on the same subject. That includes ours and subsequent filing by Earthjustice on behalf of the Florida Wildlife Federation. So there are two plaintiffs, us and the Federation, plus the Miccosukee Tribe of Indians which intervened on our side. We were the first to file, so the case is styled "Friends of the Everglades, et al."



Juanita Greene

Joining the South Florida Water Management District on the other side are the U.S. Sugar Corporation and the U.S. Justice Department representing the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Army Corps of Engineers.

It hurt to see our own government attorneys sitting elbow to elbow with attorneys for polluters and denying there is any reason these harmful discharges should require federal permits, which would guarantee better oversight, regulation, and performance. There was a time, 1988 and shortly after, when the Justice Department was on our side in the Everglades pollution battle. In fact it filed the first anti-pollution lawsuit, to protect federal lands in the Everglades.

The judge hearing our case is Cecilia Altonaga, appointed by President Bush in 2002. She is the first Cuban American woman to be appointed to a federal judgeship. Her long blonde hair drapes over her black robe and she often is hidden by piles of files stacked on her bench. She asked a lot of good questions, rejected a lot of objections from the defendants, and evidenced a good grasp of the issues.

The main question to be answered is whether the District should get a Federal Clean Water Act permit to operate three pumping stations embedded in the south rim of the Lake Okeechobee dike. The plaintiffs say requiring such a permit would help eliminate

pollution that comes with water diverted from its natural direction and sent north into the lake through some of the world's largest pumps. They are identified as S2, S3 and S4, housed in concrete structures about five stories tall. Legally described as the S2,3,4 case, we will refer to it as the Lake Okeechobee case. Much of the water sucked through the pumps into the lake comes from the sugarcane fields that cover about half a million acres south of Lake Okeechobee.

Now known as the Everglades Agricultural Area, this land once was the headwaters of the River of Grass. It was first drained about a hundred years ago when three major canals were dug south from the lake to the Atlantic Ocean. Further drainage ensued.

Our attorney is John Childe, from Palmyra, Pa., near Hershey. He came to South Florida in 1989 at the request of Lake Okeechobee fishermen who were seeking help for the seriously polluted lake. They had read in the newspaper about his winning an important Clean Water Act lawsuit on the Delaware River. Barbara Lange and Joette Lorion, then officers of Friends of the Everglades, sought Childe out in 1993 when the fishermen's case was being heard in federal court in Fort Lauderdale. The officers asked Childe to look into the water pollution problems in the Everglades. He has been with us ever since, receiving only some out-of-pocket expenses until recently. Now he gets living expenses because he has to spend most of his time here. While he used to stay in the homes of board members, he now rents an apartment.

The Everglades Forever Act

The case before Judge Altonaga is only a part of our current litigation. We also are challenging what is now recognized as the infamous Everglades Forever Act which was passed in 1994 and suspends enforcement of all water quality standards in the Everglades until the end of 2006.

Friends challenged the Everglades Forever Act but the court decided with the EPA determination that the 12 year suspension of standards was a reasonable compliance schedule. In 2003, however, the Legislature amended the act to allow continued suspension of standards until the year 2026.

Friends and the Miccosukees have challenged those amendments and are actively pursuing a case before Judge Alan Gold

It hurt to see our own government attorneys sitting elbow to elbow with attorneys for polluters....

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in federal district court. Consolidated with that case is the Friends and Miccosukee challenge of the numeric standards for phosphorus.

S9 Supreme Court Case

We are continuing on the famous S9 case which went to the Supreme Court. We and the Miccosukee Tribe filed separate complaints against the District for the S9 pumping, and the cases were consolidated. We won in the lower courts and the District appealed to the Supreme Court. There we won the primary issue argued by the Water Management District. But the court remanded the case to the district court to decide a factual issue raised by the U.S. Solicitor General: whether the water in drainage canals in part of newly developed western Broward County is distinct from water in the Everglades area known as Water Conservation Area 3, into which the S9 pumps the canal water. The case is before federal Judge Joan Lenard.

A decision either in the Lake Okeechobee case or the Supreme Court case (S9) will have nationwide implications. A favorable decision would extend the federal Clean Water Act to protect areas like Lake Okeechobee and the Everglades from major discharges from other water bodies of lesser water quality.

Unity Waters

Some important side issues carried over from the Supreme Court (S9) case are being raised in the current Lake Okeechobee case. One is the "unity waters" question that got the Supreme Court case sent down. The EPA has filed an argument (formal policy interpretation) regarding the need for a federal permit to transfer water. It claims that the water in the Everglades and Lake Okeechobee is the same as the water in the canals, so there is no need for a federal permit. The District and the U. S. Government argue that because both the lake and the Everglades are hydrologically connected they are not meaningfully distinct. We claim that such an argument defies logic. To say water in a series of canals used to convey polluted water from the sugar cane fields and urban areas is the same as the water in the Everglades and the lake makes no sense. The two water bodies are physically, biologically and chemically different.

To say that water in a series of canals used to convey polluted water from sugar cane fields and urban areas is the same as water in the Everglades makes no sense.

Taxation Without Representation

The other side issue raised in the current Lake Okeechobee pollution case is a constitutional question that is sure to be asked

with increasing frequency. It has to do with taxation without representation. The water management district has property taxing power and levies it with increasing weight. This is power that even the state and the governor do not have. Yet the district governing board is not elected, but is appointed by the governor. The district taxpayers have no representation, no power to throw the board members out of office. The District also claims that it cannot be sued in federal court because it is part of the state. This argument, too, is refuted by the plaintiffs.

The major underlying issue in the current case is whether Lake Okeechobee can continue to be used for water storage for farmers. If so the water needs to be cleaned before it is put in the lake, and a federal permit would better enable this to be done.

Expert Witnesses

A big boost for our side has come from our two expert witnesses: Herbert Zebuth, a scientist recently retired from the state Department of Environmental Protection, and Dr. Paul Gray, scientist with the Audubon Society, whose life work is on Lake Okeechobee. He daily witnesses its decline. Zebuth in his 23 years with the state declined all promotions that would take him out from under civil service protection. Thus he was able to speak out to protect the Lake and the Everglades. Recently he joined the Friends of the Everglades Board of Directors. Like Zebuth, Gray has the training and the information to document the abuses that have placed the Lake in peril. He has been on it for 10 years.

The Supreme Court case (S9) on unity waters will be ready for trial before Judge Lenard in September of this year.

No trial date has been set for our challenge to the pollution-extending Everglades Forever Act before Judge Gold. The defendant is the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, which decreed that the lengthy extension is not a change in water quality standards.

These cases have been fought in federal court since 1988, when the United States sued the state, and in 1989 when Lake Okeechobee fishermen sued Closter Farms sugar growers over polluted discharges into Lake Okeechobee. In some ways those were better days. The Everglades was in better shape and there was more hope for restoring it. Today the courts are seen by many as the last resort for cleaning up Lake Okeechobee and restoring the Everglades.



There are no other Everglades in the world. They are, they have always been, one of the unique regions of the earth, remote, never wholly known. Nothing anywhere else is like them: their vast glittering openness, wider than the enormous visible round of the horizon, the racing, free saltiness and sweetness of their massive winds, under the dazzling blue heights of space. They are unique also in the simplicity, the diversity, the related harmony of the forms of life they enclose. The miracle of the light pours over the green and brown expanse of saw grass and of water, shining and slow moving below, the grass and water that is the meaning and the central fact of the Everglades. It is a river of grass.



Marjory Stoneman Douglas
The Everglades, River of Grass

Nancy Fishman joins Friends as Administrative Director

Nancy Fishman has joined Friends of the Everglades as our new Administrative Director. We are pleased and excited at the possibilities inherent in having this experienced and knowledgeable Director on our staff. Below is a message from Nancy.



Nancy Fishman

Passion

For over twenty-five years I have been motivated to work toward improving the community that I live in. I have spent the majority of my volunteer and professional life advocating for excellence and equality in public schools and speaking up for women, children and families. My leadership, advocacy and organizational skills have been honed as a grass roots volunteer in a number of organizations and as an employee of nonprofit organizations. Now, as your new administrative director, I intend to focus my passion on Friends of the Everglades' mission; to protect, preserve and restore the Everglades.

Growing up in Miami, I have witnessed the explosive growth and the negative impact of urban sprawl. I am working with the board of directors, as guardians of Marjory's legacy, to

make sure our message is heard; let's stand together with one voice and ensure that laws are enforced and growth is controlled. Our organization is also confronted, as are all nonprofits today, with many challenges including limited resources and overextended volunteers. In order to remain visible among many other worthy causes, we need to expand our membership base and draw upon its varied expertise.

I am eager to apply my knowledge and experiences by assisting Friends' leadership to develop the organization both locally and statewide. I anticipate building personal relationships with many of you and invite you to contact me at nfishman@everglades.org or 305-669-0858 and let me know how you would like to become involved with your organization. I guarantee that your efforts will be rewarding.

The Everglades Coalition

The Everglades Coalition is a consortium of 41 local, state and national organizations committed to the protection and restoration of the Everglades ecosystem. The Coalition has become a means of coordinating environmental views and actions on issues concerning management and protection of the Everglades.

The annual conference has brought together environmentalists and public officials for 21 years. Friends, which helped found the Coalition, was well represented. For the sixth time, Friends' Conservation Chair Juanita Greene moderated a panel on the Everglades Agricultural Area, (EAA) where sugarcane now grows. Participating on the panel was our president David Reiner. The title of the Panel was: "Can the EAA Survive Development?" The general answer from the overflow crowd seemed to be, "No".

The 21st Annual Everglades Coalition Conference

by John Cunningham, Second Vice President

I would like to share with you some of my impressions of the Everglades Coalition 21st Annual Conference held January 26 – 29 on Hutchinson Island.

It seemed to me that while state and federal officials were enthusiastically reporting progress in several areas of Comprehensive Everglades Restoration, no one really knows how to solve some of the most difficult problems which still lie ahead. For example, Modified Water Delivery is a series of complicated projects designed to restore water flow into northeastern Everglades National Park. Yet any such restoration endangers urban areas east of the park, primarily through seepage. Several scientists at the conference reported on a system of canals, levees and pumps that will be constructed to minimize seepage, but as Friends board member Sue Wilson pointed out, these solu-

tions may cause even more problems, such as salt water intrusion from the bay. I left the conference contemplating the gloomy possibility that Mod Waters may simply be unworkable.

A particularly revealing moment occurred for me during a Concurrent Panel Discussion on restoration of water flow. Included were panelists from South Florida Water Management District, Army Corps of Engineers, and a hydrologist involved in Everglades restoration. During the question and answer phase, I asked the following question of the panel: "Some have charged that CERP (Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Project) is primarily a water supply plan for farmers and real estate interests. They say that while it provides enough water for the population of South Florida to double, it provides no additional water to Everglades National Park until at least 2020. Do any of you believe this charge is justified?" The response I got was silence. Not one panelist attempted to refute this position. When the discussion was adjourned, I rushed forward before the panelists could leave the table and asked several of the panel members, "Why didn't you refute my position?" Their reply was essentially: "Because you were right." That was a response I would have expected from environmentalists but not from government representatives responsible for promoting Everglades restoration.

Several public officials were featured as keynote speakers. It seemed to me that conference participants were rather indiscriminate in their praise of these speakers, regardless of whether that praise was deserved or not. For example, one of the keynote speakers was Bruce Babbitt, Clinton's Secretary of Interior. In March 1993, according to Harper's Magazine, Alfy Fanjul met privately with Babbitt, presenting him with an Everglades restoration plan drawn up by Florida Crystals' scientists. When Babbitt unveiled the administration's restoration plan in July of that same year, it bore (quoting from Harper's) "an uncanny resemblance" to Fanjul's plan. Yet the speaker who introduced Babbitt had nothing but glowing praise for his many contributions to the Everglades and the audience gave him two standing ovations. Perhaps we should pick our heroes more carefully.

Reservoir May Shrink

by Juanita Greene

One of the major projects called for in the Everglades restoration plan is a large reservoir in the sugar cane fields south of Lake Okeechobee. The reservoir is needed to store polluted agricultural water some place other than Lake Okeechobee in times of surplus, and to guarantee the farmers a reliable source for irrigation in times of drought.

Our Palm Beach County board member, Herbert Zebuth, recently retired scientist from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, has been fol-

lowing the project "to ensure that it provides as many environmental benefits as possible."

Herb is concerned that some of the land purchased for the reservoir may be used instead to expand the pollution cleanup marshes that have been installed in the Everglades Agricultural Area and are proving to be too small. Instead he argues that any expansion of the cleanup marshes, (called STAs for stormwater treatment areas) should be financed by some separate funding source.

"It must be remembered that without the reservoir, most of the water would still be discharged to the Everglades during Everglades Agricultural Area drainage operations" he said. After attending a Water Management District meeting on the reservoir he complained that, "There was no information provided regarding reservations of water for the environment. A lack of detailed information in all areas of concern is troubling."

The Swamp

The Everglades, Florida, and the Politics of Paradise

Today, everyone agrees that the Everglades is a national treasure. It's a World Heritage Site, an International Biosphere Reserve, the most famous wetland on earth. It's a cultural icon, featured in Carl Hiaasen novels, Spiderman comics, country songs, and the opening credits of CSI: Miami, as well as the popular postcards of its shovel-faced alligators and spindly-legged wading birds. It's the ecological equivalent of motherhood and apple pie; when an aide on NBC's *The West Wing* was asked the most popular thing the president could do for the environment, he immediately replied: "Save the Everglades."

This is the story of the Everglades, from useless bog to national treasure, from its creation to its destruction to its potential resurrection. It is the story of a remarkable swath of real estate and the remarkable people it has attracted, from the aboriginals who created the continent's first permanent settlement in the Everglades, to the U.S. soldiers who fought a futile war of ethnic cleansing in the Everglades, to the dreamers and schemers who have tried to settle, drain, tame, develop, sell, preserve, and restore the Everglades. It's a story about the pursuit of paradise and the ideal of progress, which once inspired the degradation of nature, and now inspires its restoration. It's a story about hubris and unintended consequences, about the mistakes man has made in his relationship with nature and his unprecedented efforts to fix them.

As this comprehensive look at the history, ecology and future of the Everglades unfolds, **THE SWAMP** unearths a wealth of new information:

- The little-known Second Seminole War, a seven-year effort to drive Indians out of the Everglades, was America's longest, costliest, and bloodiest Indian war; Grunwald calls it "America's first Vietnam." It cost almost ten times what the country paid for Florida in the first place; General Zachary Taylor was the only U.S. commander to burnish his reputation in Florida, earning the nickname "Old Rough and Ready," but his private papers show he considered the war futile.
- Governor Broward, a Florida hero who has been immortalized as the namesake of Broward County, accepted a gigantic bribe from an Everglades developer.
- South Florida has quietly deteriorated into a state of ecological collapse. Mysterious "red tides" wipe out dolphins, manatees, and oysters in its estuaries; its coral reefs are dying in droves, and Lake Okeechobee—once known as "the heart and lungs of the Everglades"—has turned the color of espresso. Ninety percent of the

Everglades' wading birds have vanished, and it is now home to 69 endangered species.

- In 1999, Florida Governor Jeb Bush met for an hour with lobbyists for Enron's water subsidiary, and seriously considered a plan to sell them the water of the Everglades—not long before the company's spectacular collapse. "We are going to get our ass handed to us on this," one of Bush's aides wrote in a memo obtained by Grunwald.
- In an interview, Al Gore admitted to Grunwald that an obscure battle over the proposed Homestead Airport at the edge of the Everglades may have cost him the 2000 presidential election.
- In an interview, an Army Corps official predicted that the restoration project will eventually cost \$80 billion, making it the most expensive public works project in American history. Grunwald also publishes internal Army Corps memos warning that the project is already dramatically over budget, behind schedule, and off track.

"Reviving ecosystems is the challenge of the future," says Grunwald at the close of his informative and provocative book. "It will require Americans to think on a landscape scale, to clean up their messes, to gore someone's ox now and then. . . . The Everglades is a moral test. It will be a test of our willingness to restrain ourselves, to share the earth's resources with the other living things that moveth upon it, to live in harmony with nature. If we pass, we may deserve to keep the planet."

About the Author

Michael Grunwald is a reporter for *The Washington Post* and is a frequent contributor to *Slate* and *The New Republic*. He has won the George Polk Award for national reporting, the Worth Bingham Award for investigative reporting, and the 2003 Society of Environmental Journalists Award for in-depth reporting on the Everglades. He lives in Washington, D.C.



Michael Grunwald
Photo by the Washington Post

Additional Praise for *The Swamp*

"Michael Grunwald digs deep and writes smart. The dying Everglades hasn't had a livelier or more compelling witness since Marjory Stoneman Douglas. *The Swamp* will sit cover to cover with her classic *The Everglades: River of Grass* on history's bookshelf."

—John Rothchild, author of *Up For Grabs*

Hold the Line

by Katy Sorenson

Former visionary urban planners of Miami-Dade County realized that our land was finite and proposed that we stop development before it destroyed the Everglades and our agricultural industry. In the early 1980s they created the Urban Development Boundary (UDB). This line serves to limit urban sprawl, protect our drinking water, protect our wetlands, help with flood drainage and protect us from even more traffic congestion. Holding this line will help maintain the quality of life for all our residents.



Katy Sorenson

Now some developers want to move the line. They tell us that, in order to let families experience the American dream, we need more land to the west and south. They claim that building more houses will make housing more affordable. With more land open to development, the argument goes, an increase in the number of housing units will bring home prices down. This isn't true. Over the last three years, over 60,000 new units of housing have been developed in our county. Has anyone noticed housing prices going down? In fact, if you think

about the \$400 a month it would cost to commute from land beyond the UDB, these houses would be even more expensive.

Moving the line would make life more expensive for all of us. Our infrastructure — including schools, police, parks, water and sewer lines — is already overburdened. We have an estimated \$6.8 billion

backlog of projects — and no funding. If we expand beyond the developed areas of our county, these costs will increase.

Hurricane Katrina demonstrated how devastating a major storm can be when a city has given up its wetlands for development. New Orleans had lost its natural storm barrier, and the results were catastrophic. Hurricane Rita taught us a different lesson. The planned evacuation of the sprawling city of Houston caused traffic jams over 100 miles long, and some people spent 12 hours in their cars going 36 miles. That was a planned evacuation. Imagine an emergency with no warning, a terrorist attack or a nuclear accident — we would be trapped. Thanks to these two hurricanes, we have seen some of what will happen if we move the line. Call, write, or e-mail to urge your commissioner to hold the line.

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The first Marjory Stoneman Douglas Environmental Award presented to Katy Sorenson

The award was presented to Commissioner Sorenson in recognition of her unflinching defense of our natural environment and the Everglades. The awards ceremony was held at the Founder's Day Event and Annual Meeting of Friends of the Everglades, March 26, 2006 at Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden in Coral Gables, Florida.

Pythons in Everglades National Park: Disposable Pets, Unwanted Giants

by Ray (Skip) Snow and Lori Oberhofer, ENP

Reports of exotic snakes in Everglades National Park include regular and increasing sightings of Burmese pythons (*Python molurus bivittatus*). Pythons in the wild today are a result of unwanted, intentionally, and perhaps accidentally released exotic pets. The Burmese python, a native to Southeast Asia, can reach a length greater than twenty feet. This python is a long lived (15 – 25 years) behavioral, habitat, and dietary generalist, capable of producing large clutches of eggs (8 – 107). Pythons in Everglades National Park have been observed along the main park road, in Long Pine Key, at Shark Valley, along Tamiami Trail, on the eastern park boundary, along canal levees, and in the remote mangrove backcountry.

The non-native python's diet in the Everglades includes raccoon, rabbit, muskrat, squirrel, opossum, cotton rat, black rat, cat (kitten), house wren, pied-billed grebe, white ibis, and limpkin. Sources of mortality include motor vehicles, mowing equipment, fire, and alligators. As *Python molurus* is known to eat birds, and to frequent wading bird colonies in their native range, the proximity of python sightings to the Paurotis Pond and Tamiami West wood stork rookeries is troubling.

In recent years more than 156 Burmese pythons have been removed from the park or adjacent lands. Multiple observations of individuals of different size-classes support the establishment of breeding populations of the Burmese python in Everglades National Park. The measured total length for snakes recovered ranged from 65 cm to 427 cm, including hatchling sized animals recovered in the summer of 2004 and 2005.

Burmese pythons present a potentially significant threat to the successful ecological restoration of the greater Everglades. Pythons are now established and breeding in South Florida. *Python molurus bivittatus* has the clear potential to occupy the entire footprint of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Project, adversely impacting valued resources across the landscape. Burmese pythons are widely bred in Florida and still imported from Southeast Asia as pets. Proposed management and control actions must include strategies for preventing their intentional release. In July of 2005 an Invasive Snake/Reptile Management and Response Workshop was convened. Workshop participants recommended strategic actions in three broad areas; (1) python control, (2) rapid response to invasive amphibians and reptiles in South Florida, and (3) public outreach and education. Action plans are being drafted and funding pursued.

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Visiting Marjory's Cottage in the Grove

by Giddy Bobeche, Board Member

I went to Marjory's house a couple of Sundays after Wilma tore through. The large tree that once stood in the front yard was toppled. Its once-numerous limbs truncated by chainsaws because the direction of the fall of the old tree had made Stewart Avenue impassable. This was my first visit to the historic cottage in the Grove. The cottage rests far back from the road so it would be easily missed between the towering estates that block it in. What could not be missed however, was the clear fact that the front yard of the cottage was being used as a dumpsite for all the debris thrown around by the storm. The front yard was filled, not only by vegetative debris, but also with terra cotta clay roofing from some unknown house, a tall plastic basketball pole and basket from someone's driveway, and plastic bags splitting open with leaves and branches. Litter of all sorts tucked in pell-mell in piles of vegetation over seven feet tall in places. It was a good thing that a member of Friends had reminded me to wear closed-toe shoes or I would not have been able to document the malaise with a camera.

So this is what is left of Marjory's Legacy; this is how she is to be remembered! The neighborhood has for years voiced opposition to the house being used as a museum, and now due to destruction caused by Hurricane Wilma, the apathy of the lease holders is plainly visible. It is a symbol of a greater backsliding of civic voice and environmental representation within the local community. A characteristic cottage in the Grove, home of a well known civic activist, author, and dedicated environmentalist, would make an ideal historic museum, and of course, a wonderful space where constructive dialogue could begin again about the future of the Everglades.

As we lose more and more of our open space, symbols such as the Marjory Stoneman Douglas cottage are more and more crucial to preserve. Many folks perhaps overlook the importance of having symbols such as the MSD cottage. However this cottage acts every day, just by existing, as the materialized expression of our historic memory and concern for the Environment. It is in this regard that Marjory's house is not a relic to be worshipped, but a living memory

to be preserved and revisited. Unfortunately this is not happening. The MSD cottage has been neglected year after year since Marjory passed away in 1998, and it will be a long time before the cottage will be in a presentable condition for public visits.

I carefully made my way to the house, stepping through the sculptural shapes of all the twisted hurricane debris and garbage dumped in the front yard. Carefully watching each step, my eyes came upon a trail of shingles that led me directly to the house, then upwards towards the roof. It was obvious at some distance that large swaths of roof shingles had been peeled off by Wilma's wind and thrown into the overgrown and broken shrubs creeping around the house.

As I slowly began to circle the house, it was as if more and more layers of neglect were being unraveled. Vents covering the large attic fan were open and would freely allow rainwater into the house should strong winds send raindrops sideways from the West as was the case during Hurricane Katrina. Whole armfuls of shingles slid down the inclined roof to gather like a pile of broken firewood on top of an alcove whose doors were left wide ajar. The back patio was overgrown with weedy plants, and a white wicker chair lay broken against the bricks and looked like a boot sticking halfway out of the mud. Screens on the French doors were ripped and several of the screen covers to the crawlspace under the house were thrown open. The scene from the back patio, looking toward the house, was almost too much to handle. The entire south side of the roof had lost all its shingles and lay exposed without one free blue tarp to cover it.

If left in this condition, all of Marjory's memories, dresses, photos, books, furniture etc. will be lost. We are in grave danger of having our founder's Legacy washed out of our collective memory. You can write to the Miami Herald to voice your concern regarding the neglect of the MSD cottage and to demand that action be taken now to restore this unique historic site and open it to the public. **Note:** The State of Florida owns the house. They are currently in talks with Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden to possibly dismantle Marjory's house and move it to Fairchild Garden.


**FRIENDS OF THE
EVERGLADES**
Founded by Marjory Stoneman Douglas

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