

Must read



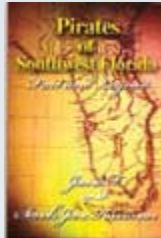
>> **Who:** Authors James F. and Sarah Jane Kaserman

>> **Book:** "Pirates of Southwest Florida: Fact and Legend"

>> **To buy it:** The book may be ordered by phone at 1-800-AUTHORS or through online services, including www.iUniverse.com, or by contacting your local bookstore. Cost: \$9.95.

>> **Author visit:** Saturday, Dec. 8, 1 p.m. to 4 p.m., The Variety Store, 3167 Stringfellow Road, St. James City, Pine Island.

>> **About the authors:** The Kasermans are historians and former school teachers, and the authors of several books about pirates. They teach the history of pirates in Florida Gulf Coast University's Renaissance Academy.



ing was: 'I've had my fun, now I'll do my time.' Fortunes had been made and stashed away. The County Jail was the punitive interest.

"The entire town had been involved and one or two got away with it. Old Totch Brown, he was in it up to his neck, but he paid a million-dollar surety and was never jailed."

The late Loren "Totch" Brown, a highly decorated World War II veteran of the Battle of the Bulge, may have been the ultimate in tough, calculating but charming piracy, when it came to "square grouper," as some people called bales of marijuana. He wasn't jailed for that, strictly speaking, but he didn't get away scott-free, either.

Novelist Randy Wayne White, who lives on Pine Island overlooking the Sound (where legend suggests treasure may remain hidden), described Brown, a Collier County native, in Outside Magazine.

"Totch was born in the mangrove backwaters of the Everglades. His father was a Cracker entrepreneur who fished, made moonshine whiskey, and smuggled rum for a living. Totch carried the family legacy into modern times by fishing and smuggling illegal flora from Central America. 'Pot hauling,' he called it. Because Totch was a brilliant waterman, the Coast Guard never caught him. Because Totch wasn't a brilliant bookkeeper, the IRS did.

"Not long after Totch was released from the penitentiary, he offered to join me on a trip to Panama. 'Randy,' he promised, 'there are men in Panama who will do anything I tell them to do. I've done a lot of business in those parts.'"

Brown spent about 18 months in prison, and forfeited about \$2.5 million, ultimately. Meanwhile, a lot of other people continued to sit in the penitentiary while he

Come all ye young fellows that follow the sea,  
To my way haye, blow the man down,  
And pray pay attention and listen to me,  
Give me some time to blow the man down.

— "Blow the Man Down,"  
a pirate sea shanty

went back to Panama. The FBI arrested most or all of the adult male population of that pirates' lair known as Everglades City on the night of its raid — 125 people. They also boarded a Columbian ship offshore, and they confiscated 14 fishing boats, 250,000 tons of marijuana, along with aircraft, weapons, and money, putting a temporary end to drug smuggling by sea in southern Collier County.

Nowadays, in addition to a variety of drugs, human smuggling is the big thing — an adventure in which somebody pays somebody else to run foreigners up to the beach of a forbidden but inviting place, to the tune of anywhere between about \$8,000 and \$30,000 dollars per person.

This kind of smuggling operates on the same principle as rum-running during Prohibition, and as drug-running from the 1960s to the present, say the historians: it requires "mother ships" that can sit out imperviously beyond the U.S. territorial limit, and fast boats capable of traveling 50 knots and upward, complete with high-tech navigational equipment and communications gear.

Those are used to pick up and ferry the cargo from mother ship to shore, in an operation that takes mere minutes if it's done well.

In 2006, say the Kasermans, human smugglers made \$32 billion, and that's in a business where your gross and your

net are probably not significantly different numbers.

"Collier County, for example, has hundreds of miles of coastline, thousands of uninhabited islands and limited Federal enforcement agencies," the Kasermans explain. "It's an ideal area, therefore, for Cuban migrant smugglers and other human traffickers to depart from the local shores, pick up Cuban migrants or other nationalities, and make a quick return with their human cargoes."

At least the contemporary pirates who smuggle illegals in from Cuba have not been reported to behave as badly as a couple of highly unlikable Southwest Florida residents some 80 to 100 years ago.

Between about 1906 and 1927, the Kasermans report, Horace Alderman and "Wicked" Frank Lowe were paid well to smuggle in Chinese illegals from Cuba.

But after taking the money from their hapless passengers, they frequently failed to deliver. Instead (lovely patriots that they were), they murdered their passengers, and threw their weighted bodies overboard.

If history is any indication, it will be another century or two before those men are finally mythologized, and written up as charmingly independent raconteurs, a.k.a. Pirates, worthy of the name. ■

"We heard later that they had agents waiting to go in and they held back until midnight and we followed them. It was terrible, women and kids screaming while they arrested all the adult males and took them away. There was a fatalism about the population. The feel-

# Jolly... Gleeful... Joyous... Merry



## Holiday Party

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