



# FLORIDA LIGHTHOUSE ASSOCIATION, INC.

A NOT-FOR-PROFIT CORPORATION

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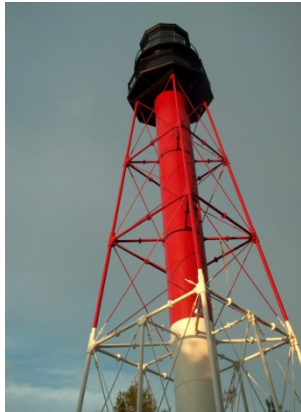
## Triumph at the Tower: Crooked River Lighthouse Relighting!

*By Stan Farnham (December 12, 2007)*

Two joyous triumphs happened in Florida Saturday December 8.

One, the award of the Heisman Trophy to Florida University quarterback Tim Tebow, drew rave news coverage statewide, for this *individual* effort.

The second Florida success story "switched on" just before 6 pm. It involved an unusual *collaboration of a team* of disparate people and groups, all working together. More than 240 people in this small laid-back fishing village of a population of just 1,200, gathered at the restored historic Crooked River Lighthouse near Carrabelle. We joined all those present by turning on small flashlights as the 112-year old Crooked River



Lighthouse beacon, dark for a number of years, shone brightly to once again guide mariners to safe harbor. The light also provides a symbol of hope and the spirit for a better future to a community with economic hardship.

Before the ceremony, clouds which had been around all day parted to let the sun shine brightly on the lighthouse causing the new red and white paint to glow.

When a small group formed in July 1999 to save the rusted forlorn lighthouse, most viewed the task of restoring the 103-foot hidden jewel as nearly impossible. But, with persistence, and local people putting aside their selfish self interest for the betterment of the community, this dream became a reality.

Florida Lighthouse Association supported their efforts from the get go, back when Tom Taylor was president. The City agreed to manage it and the deed was transferred to the city in August 2001. Restoration work began September 4, 2007 and was completed December 8, the day of this ceremony!

Carrabelle Lighthouse Association President Arlene Oehler, in her speech, cited the CLA founders. Her voice cracked from emotion when she noted that not only the lighthouse but the park pirate ship projects were finished just in time, literally finished earlier in the day.



The first CLA president, Barbara Revell turned and said to me, "I just never believed we would have this many people here; it's overwhelming." Another former president Mary Kaster, who traveled from Tavares, beamed. "This is just a dream come true," she exclaimed.

Oehler awarded certificates of appreciation to 19 people including all the founders with every one of them but one present (One had moved from the area). All the others continued in the quest. You can admire these people who were able to tackle and conquer adversity and persist.

Mary and I found them to be the kind of people you instantly like and

count as friends. Clearly they helped one another. Clearly they are heroes in a community where the heroes of June 6, 1944 practiced their landing on Utah Beach at Carrabelle Beach. The beacon now shines out over Carrabelle Beach into the Gulf.

Oehler said: "Barbara Revell started the Carrabelle Lighthouse Association in 1999 with friends like Ruth Varner, who went door to door to solicit memberships. John 'Lighthouse' Canetta, has worked as the historian for CLA since its inception. Amy Hartman wrote the Lighthouse Restoration Grant and continues her support as our website manager."

Other CLA folks: Mary Katzer (former president), Ron Treutel (former president), Mary Ann Shields, David Butler, Laurel Newman, Betty Roberts, and Mel Kelly (a former mayor).

Consider that among the 19 certificates, in addition to CLA founders and officers, were the lighthouse architect (Ken Smith), the City Administrator (John McInnis), the President of the Chamber of Commerce (Shelia Hauser, also a CLA organizer), State Representative (Will Kendrick) of District 10, key people of Worth Construction who did the work, USCG representative (Senior Master Chief Paul Zado), author (Bill Roberts), Carrabelle Mayor (Wilburn "Curly" Messer), and Florida Lighthouse Association president (me). All were at the ceremony.

Among the supporters were seafood workers, teachers, retirees, two councilmen, another former mayor, a former Chamber of Commerce president, CLA members and residents. Local news media helped (Franklin Chronicle, Oyster Radio, Forgotten CoastLine 98 and The Times). The librarian (Carolyn Sparks) is a member and monthly meetings are held at the library.

***When that many different people and different groups come together to achieve a common goal, no one should be surprised what can be accomplished.***



*In the above photos, Arlene stands with Mel Kelly, next Ruth Varner, then Chief Zado, John Canetta.*

The Florida Historical Commission people who review grants commented to us at a meeting in November how they like to see the community officials and community groups working together. Carrabelle sets a standard for that.

I believe in the "100 Factor" of giving 100% or more if you're going to do something. Here we see an example with a confluence of people and events to bring about positive results. Mary and I were glad we made the 450+-mile drive for this unique event and to honor the people and be a cheerleader for their efforts.



Mary Ann Shields



The Pirate Ship



Crooked River Lighthouse

The Pirate Ship proved to be a popular attraction as dozens “boarded” the ship to check it out. With a keeper’s cottage rebuilt for a museum and gift shop, the complex should draw visitors.



We stayed in the Old Carrabelle Hotel, originally built about the same time as the lighthouse. We ate at several local restaurants and cafes: Pirates Restaurant, Two Al’s, Carrabelle Junction, Posey’s (Panacea)...and attended the Holiday Boat Parade of lights. Immersing yourself in the area gives you a better understanding; along with “ask questions and listen.” Thanks also to Skip and Kathy Frink for their helpful comments and hospitality.

### **Cape St. George Lighthouse.**

The day before the ceremony we visited St. George Island. On our earlier visit in September we stayed at the historic St. George Inn. On this visit we were amazed at the remarkable progress, in just a few months, as we toured the site. Realize St. George Island has perhaps just 200 full-time residents. In fact, Franklin County, with the two lighthouses, has just 10,000 or so people.

You see the same can-do spirit at St. George Lighthouse Association. Dennis Barnell, the President, and key officers Jim and Terry Kemp and Eric Martin (who is also FLA Executive Vice President) attended the Crooked River celebration. Cape St. George Lighthouse will be lit soon, probably as early as a few months. *Collaborate. Cooperate.* Our happiest times happen when we are a part of something significant done together with others.



*With \$30,000 of pilings and two tons of rebar, the rebuilt 65-foot Cape St. George Lighthouse is “safe.”*

### **Aspirations for the Future.**

For lighthouse lovers, seeing a light lit that has not shined for a long time, is enough “to invigorate one’s soul,” as FLA vice president Gayle Stemac said. Florida Lighthouse Association wants to see *all Florida’s historic lighthouses restored and open.* Let’s see them all shining!

The Greek statesman Demosthenes said: "Small opportunities are the beginning of great enterprises." Is that not so? In fact great things are done with small things at a time.

We hope to work with partner *Visit Florida®*, and the local lighthouse organizations, to set up and promote a special tour of the Forgotten Coast with a focus on the restored lighthouses and others. Cape San Blas now has a gift shop. St. Marks Lighthouse is fun to visit. Franklin County alone has 200 miles of relatively undeveloped shoreline along U.S. Highway 98. Promoting this trail will help revitalize the economy in the area by luring businesses and heritage tourists. It will serve the purpose of another partner *Florida Trust for Historic Preservation* in protecting significant historical properties and opening our storied maritime heritage to future generations. *Indeed the beacon will shine on a better community.* Imagine having Cape St. George and Crooked River lighthouses with museums and shops join the present six open historic Florida lighthouses next year! A rainbow is on the way.

**More Information.**

[www.stgeorgelight.org](http://www.stgeorgelight.org)

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